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NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS **Imagine** **FX**

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10 TOP TIPS FOR
ENHANCING
YOUR SKILLS

WITH MASTER ARTIST ERIC CANETE



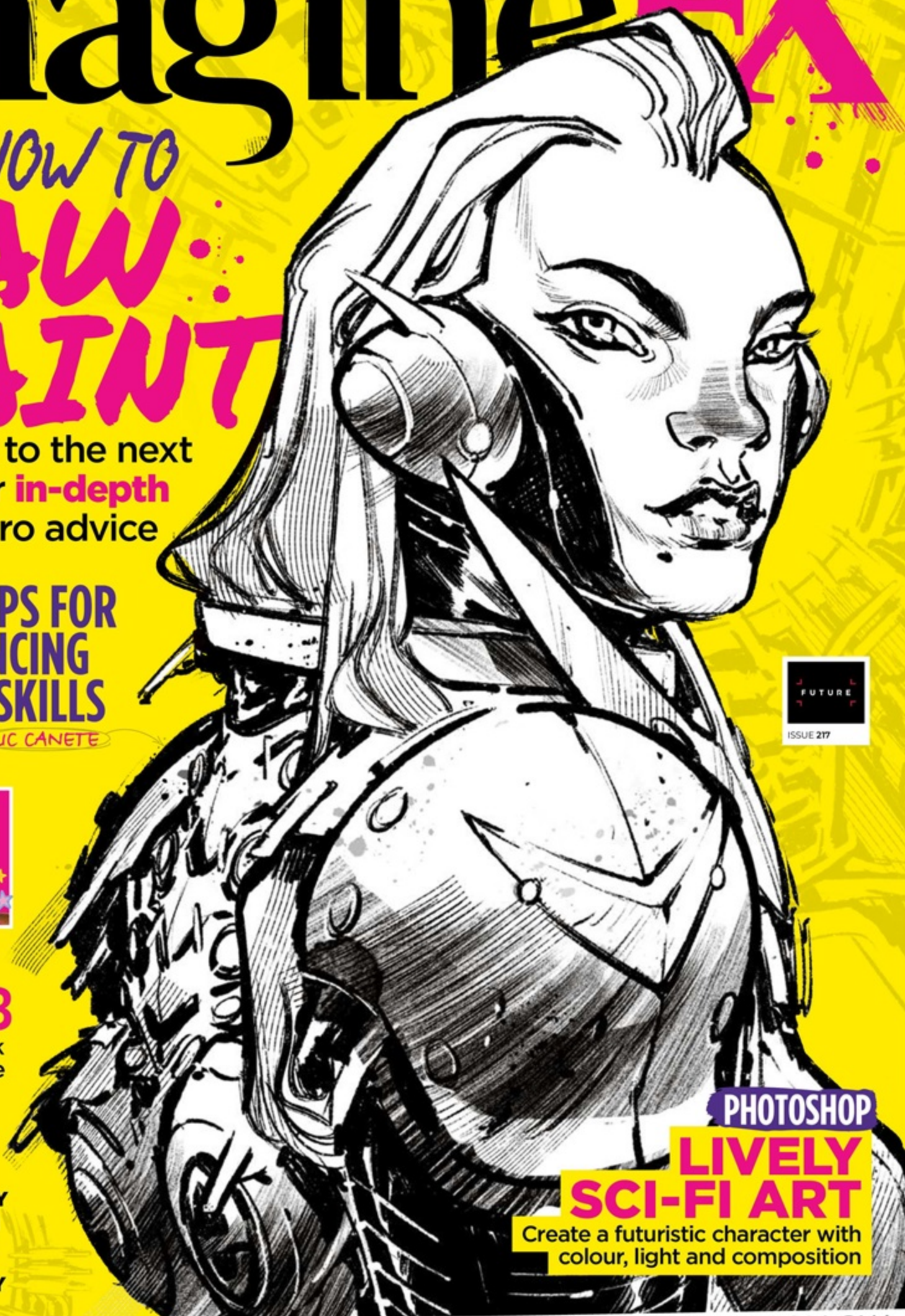
FEATURE

**LAND YOUR
NEXT BIG JOB**

Get ahead of the pack with our career advice

ALSO INSIDE

LEARN TO DRAW
NECKS THE EASY WAY
MASTER PAINTING AN
UNDERWATER SCENE
DRAW YOUR HAND
ANATOMY PERFECTLY



FUTURE
ISSUE 217

PHOTOSHOP

**LIVELY
SCI-FI ART**

Create a futuristic character with colour, light and composition

HEADS UP! HOW COMIC CREATIVES REIMAGINED THE LEGEND OF SLEEPY HOLLOW



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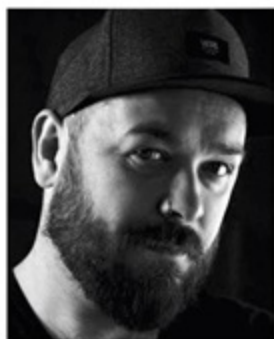
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Welcome to... NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX



Many much-loved stories have made it onto our big screens and wow us with gorgeous visuals, but it's less common to see them in printed form

– which is why we jumped at the chance to look at *Hollow*, a reimagining of the classic folklore story, *Sleepy Hollow*,

in graphic novel form. We spoke to the artist and authors to see what went into this creative process.

We also try to help you improve your own art and this issue is no different. We have a host of training, starting with ten top tips from our cover artist Eric Canete, who explains how you can develop yourself and your skills.

Michelle Hoefener has produced a workshop on mastering colour and composition to paint beautiful science fiction art, and we also have a fantastic tutorial on painting underwater scenes with watercolours.

If you're looking to nail anatomy in your work, Rodrigo Gonzalez shows you how to draw the neck, and in Charlie Pickard's series, he covers hand structure. Enjoy the issue!

Rob

Editor
Rob.Redman@futurenet.com

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



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Learn how the creators of this comic-book version of a classic approached their remix.



52 Cam Kendell's sketchbook

Discover the fantastical, story-rich designs of this professional illustrator and comic creator.



92 Create a beautiful underwater scene

Natacha Chohra demonstrates how she works with watercolour to paint an aquatic environment.

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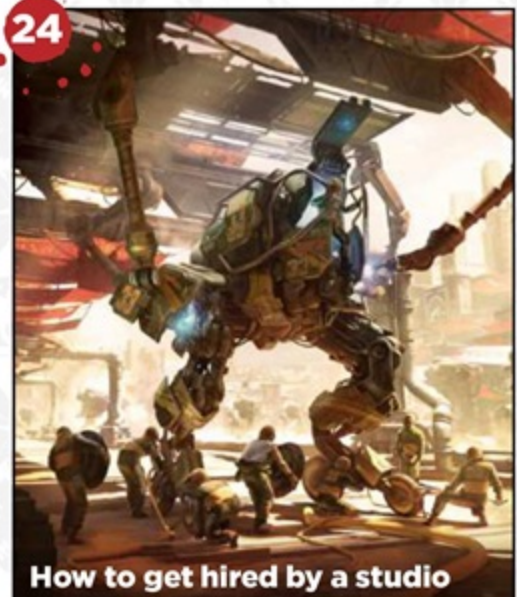
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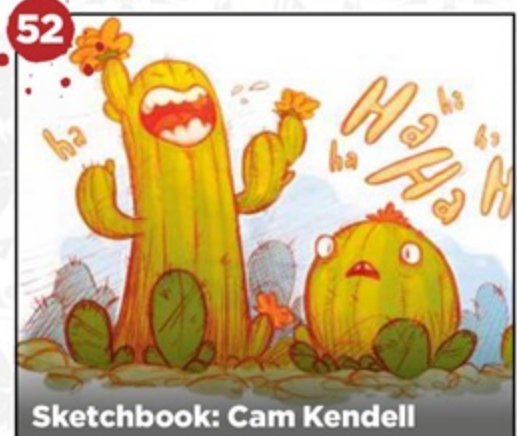
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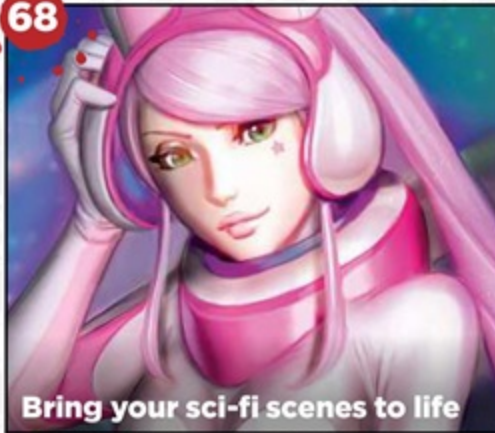
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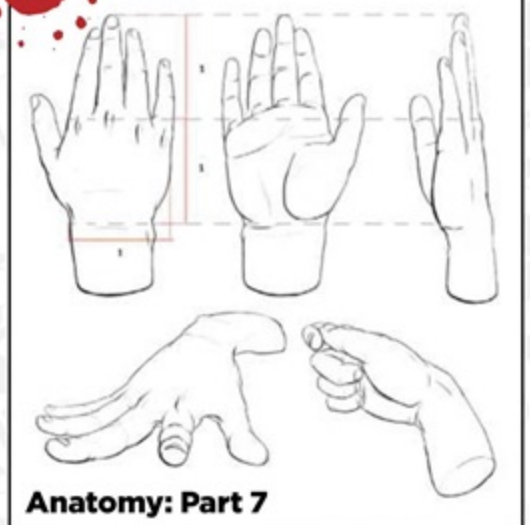
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Part 7 of Charlie Pickard's anatomy series, this month focusing on hand proportions.

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The fantasy artist answers our questions.

ImagineFX Resources

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

WORKSHOP BRUSHES



Download 5 Photoshop brushes for use in your own projects
Get hold of five Photoshop brushes from this issue's sci-fi tutorial by Michelle Hoefener.

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!

ImagineFX

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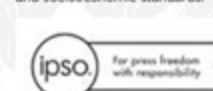
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Next month

Next month in...

NO. 1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX

EMOTIONAL PORTRAITS

Master introspective and macabre portraiture
with digital artist Laura H. Rubin

Also in the issue...

**Learn to draw
better mechs**

In-depth training
for designing mechs
with a guide from
Longque Chen.

**Create stunning
environments**

Concept artist
Robert Green
shares his steps for
environment art.

**Paint epic
landscapes**

Learn to paint a
story-focused image
with advice from
Blake Rottinger.

**Discover the art
of Dave Greco**

Explore the
wonderful work of
the talented artist
from Blizzard.

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for issue 151
by Tran Nguyen



FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

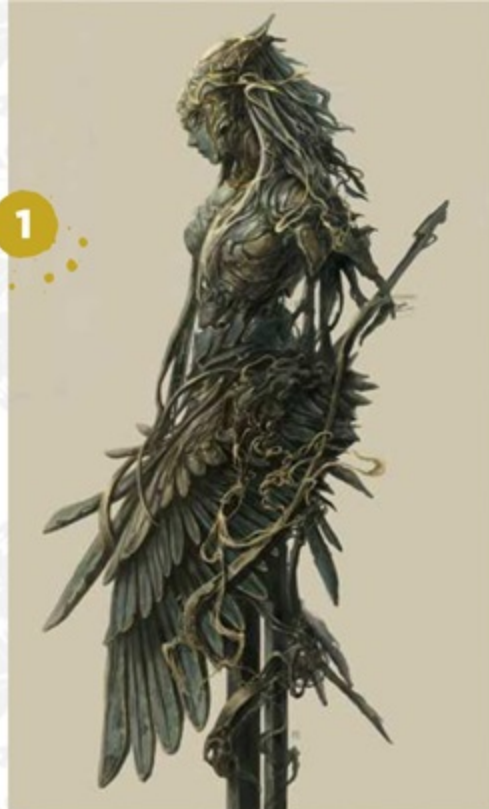


Patricio Clarey

LOCATION: Spain MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: www.artstation.com/patricio

Patricio has been working as an illustrator with Illozoo Agency for ten years, while also working on personal projects. "I've published three graphic novels and two art books; BIOTIC is my most ambitious project."

1



2



1 WINGS

"Wings is a giant sculpture clinging to the ground. It represents distorted freedom."

2 BIOTIC

"BIOTIC is the latest personal project I'm working on. It is a narrative art book, and I'm making the music for it as well."

3 FEELINGS

"A giant floating sculpture, which glows when someone approaches."

4 ADAPTATION

"Adaptation is a giant museum canvas the character visits. It represents the fall and adaptation of the human race."

3



4





5 ARROWS

"BIOTIC is full of symbolism, since there will be no text. This piece depicts a canvas in a museum that the main character of the story visits. It represents chaos."



Helene Letourneur

LOCATION: Réunion Island **MEDIA:** Procreate **WEB:** www.helenelet.com

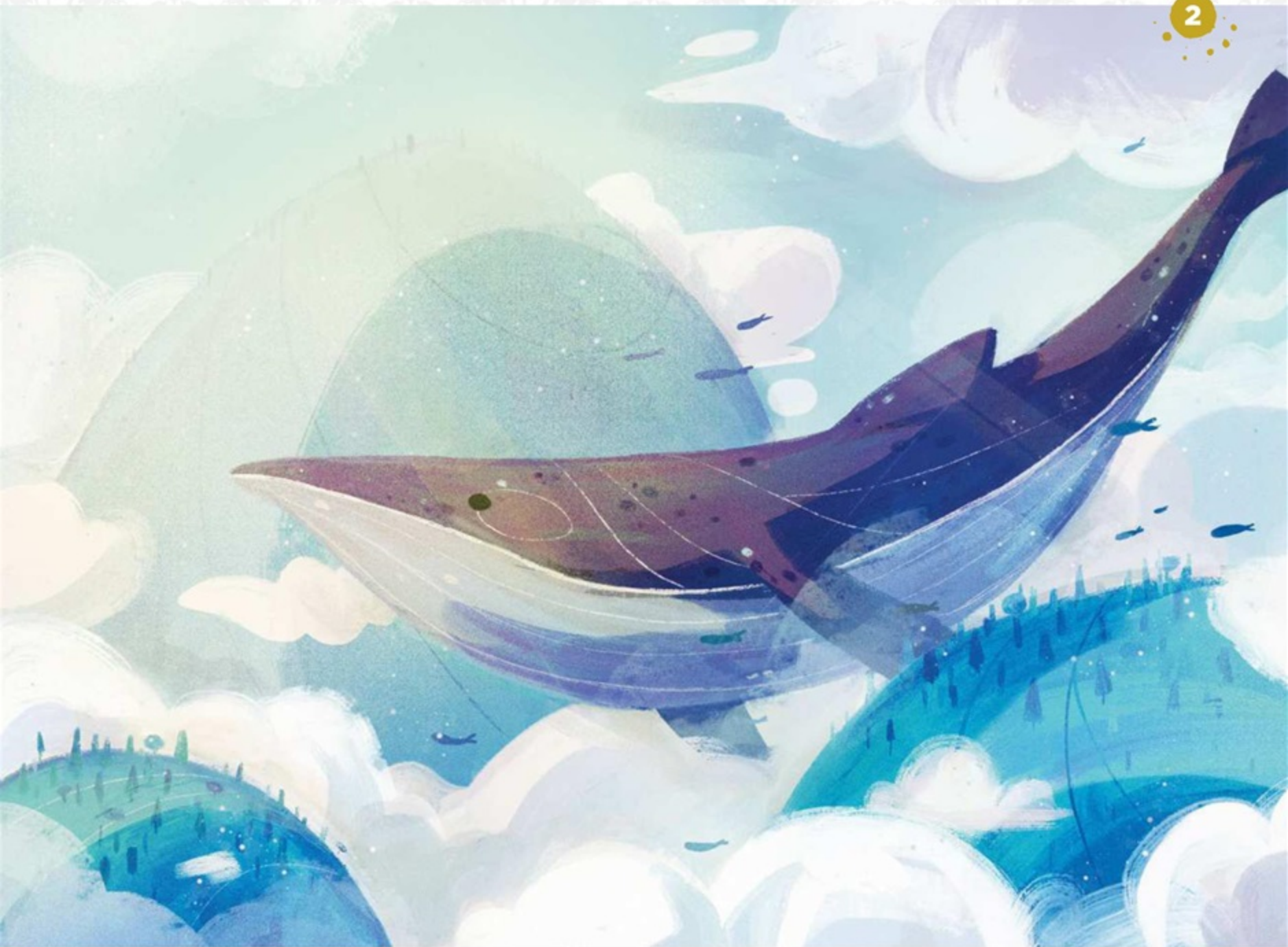
Helene loves telling stories inspired by the world around us. She illustrates children's books and scientific communications. Her work is recognisable by her use of blue and purple tones.

1 FRIENDS

"Inspired by another artist's work (Clémence Guillemaud), Friends is my view of a true and magical friendship."

1

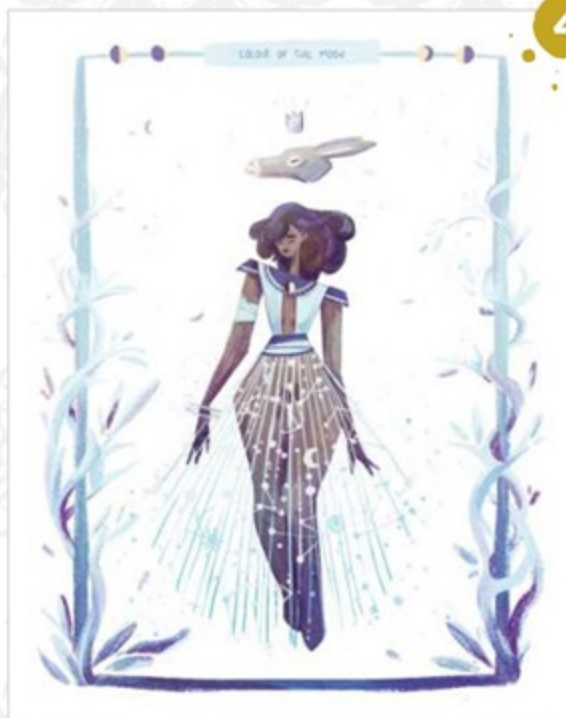




3



4



2 THE WHALE

"I loved drawing cetaceans when I was a child. I wanted The Whale to be a sweet and dreamy reminder of this period of time."

3 RÉUNION ISLAND

"I was born on Réunion Island, but I grew up in many places before later moving back to my birth place at the age of 25."

4 DONKEYSKIN

"This illustration is a tribute to the famous fairy tale Donkeyskin, and our childhoods full of dreams and imagination."



Penelope R. Gaylord

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: www.instagram.com/PENGPENGART

Penelope is an illustrator and concept artist who started her career in comics, but has since moved over to the animation industry. She has worked for publishers such as Penguin Random House and DC Comics.

1 SHOOFLY CLUB CONCEPT ART

"Concept art for one of my own intellectual properties 'Shoofly Club' - a young group of friends with overactive imaginations who solve mysteries."

2 SUPERS VIDEO GAME

"Fan art of my two favourite superheroes, Superman and Wonder Woman, having a moment of low-stakes competition on the sticks."

3 CAPTAIN MARVEL

"Cover image for the 'Captain Marvel' Little Golden Book, published by Penguin Random House, 2019. Book interiors were also illustrated by me."







Yutaka Toguchi (AKA Kindcoffee)

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Photoshop, Clip Studio Paint WEB: www.yutakatoguchiart.com

Yutaka is a Japanese-American artist who, much like the countries themselves, draws on both their styles. "I use digital mediums to design characters. When not doing commissions, I draw fan art of popular games."

1



2



3



1 PALADIN

"A commission depicting a client's character from a game they play. I learned a lot about composition and detail placement from this one."

2 JECHT

"My version of the character from Final Fantasy X. I wanted to create a very seaside feel by incorporating the sky and the ocean in the same piece."

3 WARRIOR OF LIGHT

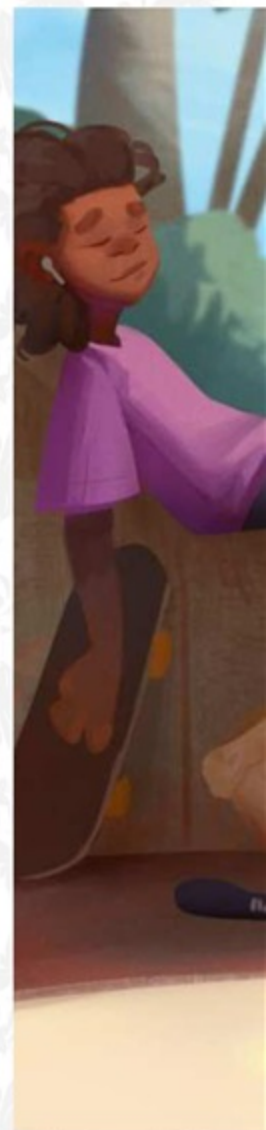
"This piece was the starting point for me doing the rest of the main characters from the numbered Final Fantasy series."



Luuk Ammerlaan

LOCATION: The Netherlands **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Procreate **WEB:** www.luukammerlaan.com

Luuk is a visual development artist who enjoys designing and colouring keyframes, props and locations. With his art he loves to portray dynamic action scenes and quiet slice-of-life moments.



1 STYLISED PORTRAIT

"This painting was done based on a movie reference. I like to do studies like this to practise my sense of colour and light."

2 A CHILDHOOD MEMORY

"This image represents one of my first memories. I was three or four and my dad used to bring me to the park and swing me around by my arms."

3 JUST CHILLING

"Made at the beginning of quarantine, I wanted this painting to give the viewer a feeling of being there with these characters and having a good time."

4 COAST SUNSET

"Created for the PleinAirpril challenge, this was painted from a reference; again the purpose was to practise my lighting and to simplify the design."





Lola Yiting Zhang

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Photoshop, Blender, 3D-Coat WEB: www.artstation.com/lolazhang

Lola Zhang is a concept artist who currently works at Sucker Punch Productions. After graduating from ArtCenter College of Design, she has worked on IPs such as Halo Infinite.

1 NIGHTMARE

"One of my daily character designs inspired by the colour palette and form language of a Batflower."

2 HALLUCINATING

"From personal project 'Mirage'. This frame depicts a moment when one of the main characters starts hallucinating, caused by his suit malfunction."

3 THE LIGHT

"A speed painting done in my spare time. The focus was on brush economy, capturing the lighting and subtle colour variations."

4 MORGAN LE FAY

"A character designed for The Legend of King Arthur Character Design challenge. A vengeful sorceress. Her motif was heavily inspired by the shape language of a mantis."



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

2



3



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THE ROOKIES

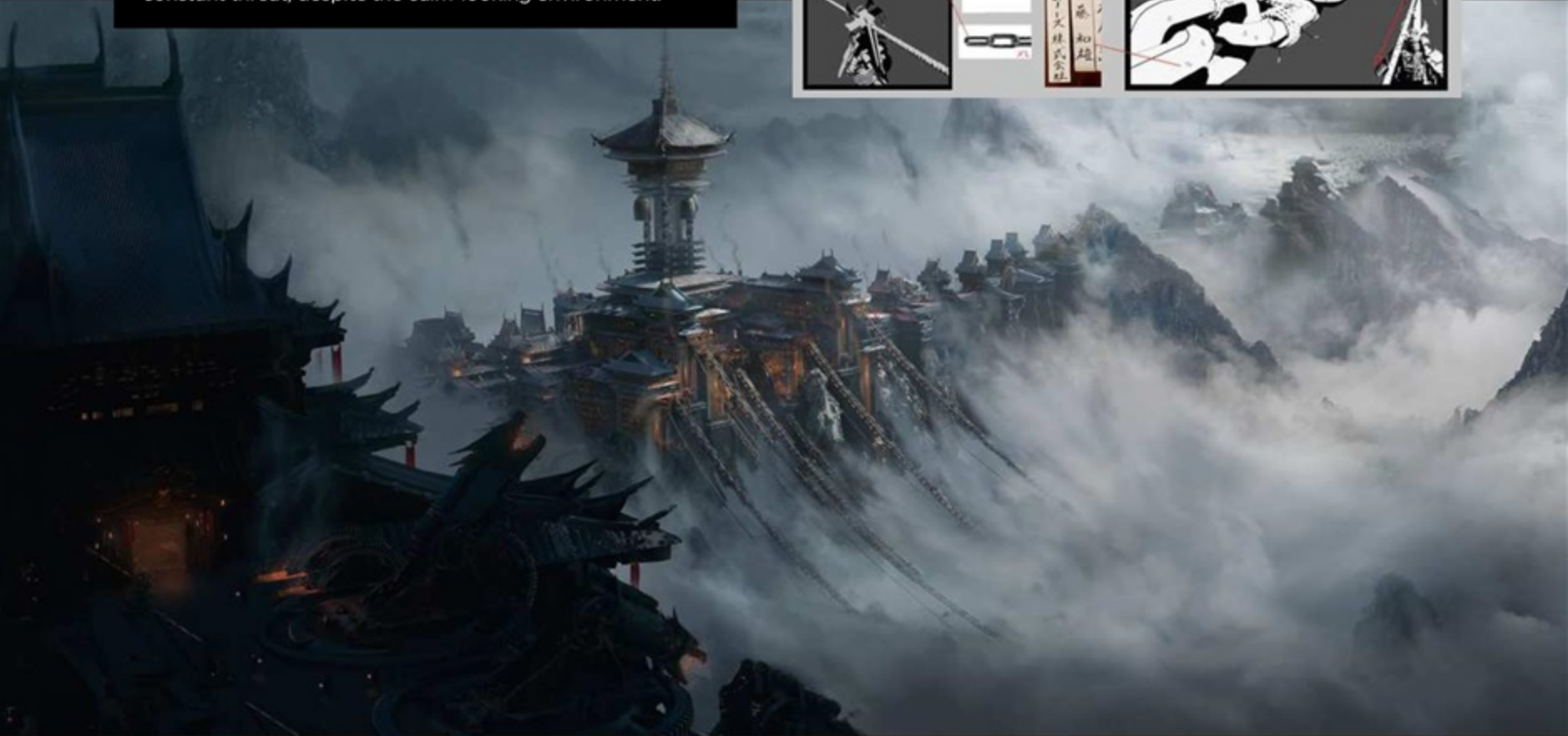
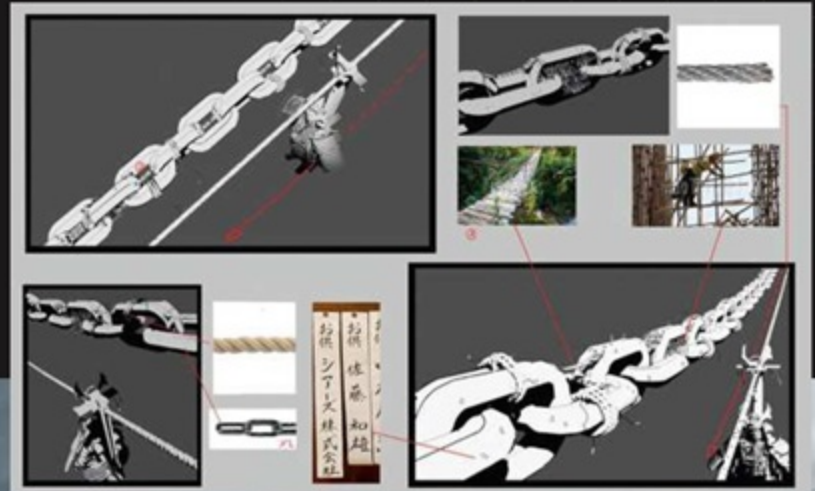
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WWW.THEROOKIES.CO

Tetsu no Hada

YEAR CREATED: 2022 MEDIA: Blender, Photoshop

"Tetsu no Hada is a personal project born from the closure of Japanese borders, therefore multiple cancelled trips. This project was a good outlet and a way to work on contrast, an element that is very present in this culture. The softness of mist and snowy landscapes, in opposition with the brutality of fire and steel, creating the feeling of a world under constant threat, despite the calm-looking environment."



Artist PROFILE

Legouini Clément

LOCATION: France



25-year-old Legouini Clément is a concept artist from Paris, who loves to create environments - exploring and discovering new cultures and their folklores, beliefs and traditions.

www.therookies.co/entries/17730

How to get hired by a studio

Career advice Tanya Combrinck finds out how to put together the perfect portfolio and showcase your skills to impress a top art director

Getting a studio job isn't the only way to have a career as a professional fantasy artist, but it does have some major advantages. Being surrounded by more experienced artists, regularly receiving their feedback and insight, usually means you improve much faster than you would as a freelancer, and the financial security of a regular paycheck means you can focus on your art without worrying about making rent.

But getting your first break can be tough. At the start of your career it can be difficult to know whether to produce work tailored to the studios you aspire to work at, or to lean into your own style.

"The path to your dream studio might not be a straight line, and that's

okay!" says **Dennis van Kessel**, concept artist at Atomhawk, a studio that produces digital art and motion graphics for the games industry. "If you are looking for your first break into the industry, I wouldn't worry too much about matching a certain studio's style – especially if their style is extremely specific. As someone looking to get their foot in the door, you're better off having a wide range of options rather than putting all your hopes on getting a job at one or two studios."

Your portfolio is of course central to your application, so getting it right is crucial. "Your portfolio is only as good as your worst piece," says Dennis. "Many artists fall into the trap of wanting to show off an incredibly



“Many artists fall into the trap of wanting to show off a wide range of skills... focus on your strengths!”

"Believe in the unbelievable", a piece by Atomhawk senior concept artist Gavin Manners for the studio's new website.



A WHIMSICAL WORLD

Freelance illustrator Maxine Vee discusses her tips for organisation as she shows us round her bright and colourful studio filled with inspirational art. **Page 34**



COSTUME CONCEPTS

We get the lowdown on a typical day (starting at 4am!) in the busy life of Phil Boutté, working on costume concept designs for film and TV. **Page 38**



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 41**





"If you want to be a specialist, you need to stand out at a high level, so the learning curve is steeper than that of a generalist," says Jesper Andersen of MOOD.

➡ wide range of skills, but that is only worth doing if you have a consistent quality level across those skills. Focus on your strengths!"

WORK HARD, AND KEEP LEARNING

Darren Yeomans, studio director at Atomhawk, advises that if you are targeting a particular art director with



your application – which is a good idea – make sure you do your research and include pieces that will pique their interest.

Take us on a journey to that final rendered image; we want to see how you got there!"

Remember to always prioritise quality over quantity. "Don't feel you have to show examples of every style and genre you can think of. Show us your style and what you are interested in," he says.

Dennis has one final important piece of advice that may sound basic, but it's something many artists don't do enough of: Apply!! "You cannot get hired without applying. A lot of people

“Make sure you’ve covered the basics – lighting, anatomy, composition – and clearly demonstrate this in your art”

Also remember that studios want to see that you have a firm grasp of the academic principles of drawing. "Don't forget your fundamentals," says Darren. "Make sure you have covered the basics – lighting, anatomy, composition – and have clearly demonstrated this in your artwork." He also notes that they want to see your process and ideation. "Too often we only see the finished piece, without any of the early sketches and ideas.

fear the rejection, but that is a normal and natural part of applying for jobs," he says. With each rejection you should ask for some feedback. "Work on that feedback and apply again at a later date, showing that you have taken on the feedback and significantly improved. In doing so you demonstrate a willingness to learn, to listen to feedback, and to work hard."

Atomhawk has produced a resource called StudioQuest, which will help



"Larger studios have more specialised roles, while indies and small teams will require artists that can do a wider range of work," says Dennis van Kessel, Atomhawk.



'Believe', artwork by intermediate concept artist Josh Hutchinson for Atomhawk's new website.



"If you want to stick to your own style as opposed to adapting to what's required by a studio, that's a valid option. It just means you will be waiting, maybe for a long time, for the right project to come along," says Julia Tolstova, Grafit.



Campaign artwork for Atomhawk's art competition in 2021, by senior concept artist Brock Grossman.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT APPLICATION ESSENTIALS

MOOD studio art director Jesper Andersen on how to get an edge over the competition

How should an artist go about approaching a studio or art director in the first instance?

It goes without saying that you need to do some homework; who is it you're approaching? What have they done before? Is there something that moves you particularly? It's great to tie your application or opening email with a personal experience that relates to seeing artwork or products from whomever it is you're approaching.

What are some common mistakes that candidates make in their portfolios?

Not daring to show your process. Nothing beats seeing the process towards the final image or design. We want to see all the choices you've made; show the steps in creating the artwork from sketch to final art piece, the research you had to do, what kind of story you wanted to imbue the artwork with, and the decisions your workflow was influenced by.

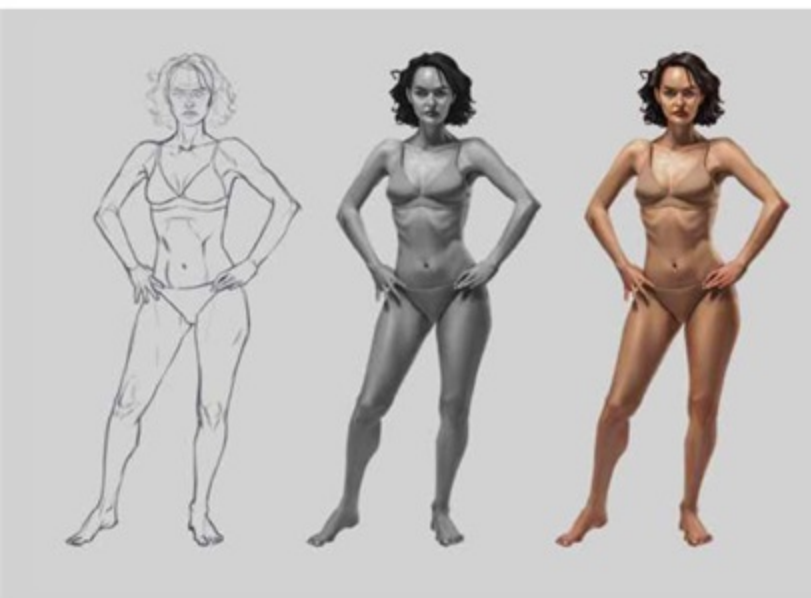
What are the most important core skills for working in an art studio?

Being a team player and being approachable – prima donnas are not something that inspires a team. Communication is everything, so if you can't express your ideas and explain your thoughts or criticism, then you're going to have a hard time. We scrutinise the portfolio, that's the thing that will get you in the door, but then the in-person interviews are really where we try to get a feeling for what type of artist we're dealing with.



Jesper Andersen is studio art director at MOOD, a visual development studio based in Copenhagen, Denmark.

www.moodvisuals.com



you prepare for life as a professional artist in a studio. You can check it out at bit.ly/3P5XxS5.

TAKING THAT FIRST STEP

Grafit is an outsourcing studio producing concept art, illustration and graphics for clients including Riot Games, Bethesda and Activision. Producer **Julia Tolstova** also advises against being overly selective about



your first job, as you can waste too much time waiting for an opportunity at your dream studio.

"Just go through the open door, get the experience and move on. There is something useful you can take from every working experience," she says. Taking a job that may not be

Artists' studies from Grafit. It's important to include these in your portfolio to show how you developed your sketches into a final artwork.

your first choice doesn't mean you won't reach your goal further down the line.

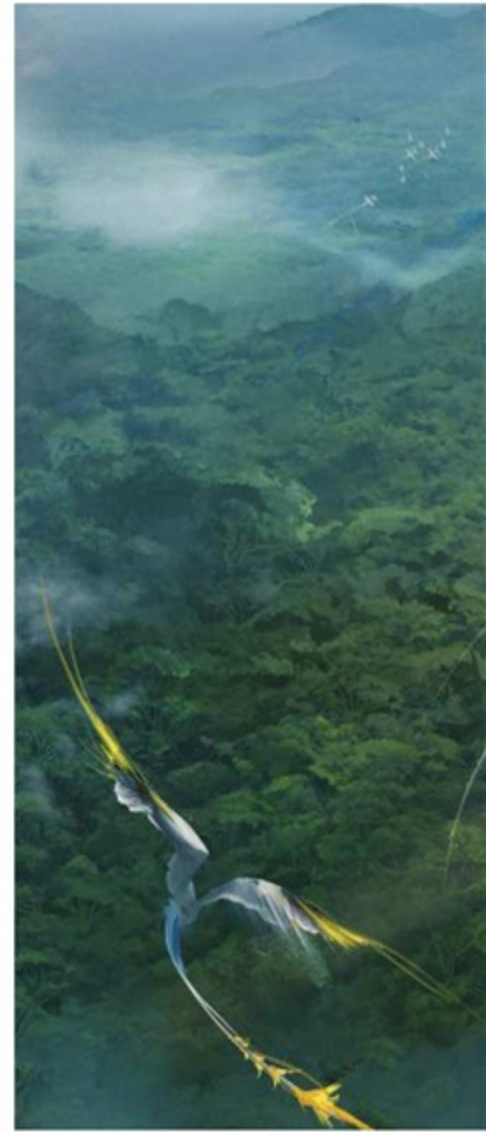
When preparing yourself for studio life, remember that outsourcing studios work on multiple projects with different styles, so one of the most important attributes that they will be looking for in potential new-starters is the ability to adapt to that range of styles. "The most important skill is the willingness and ability to learn new things – and quickly," says Julia.

Even if your style is quite different to what you see on a studio's website, Julia says you should apply anyway if you want to work for them, because they might have a suitable project waiting in the wings. "Don't hesitate," she says. "There are usually plenty ➡

“The most important skill is the willingness and ability to learn new things – and quickly”



Key art by concept artist Matias Tapia for an Atomhawk art competition, with the theme 'Forgotten Creation'.



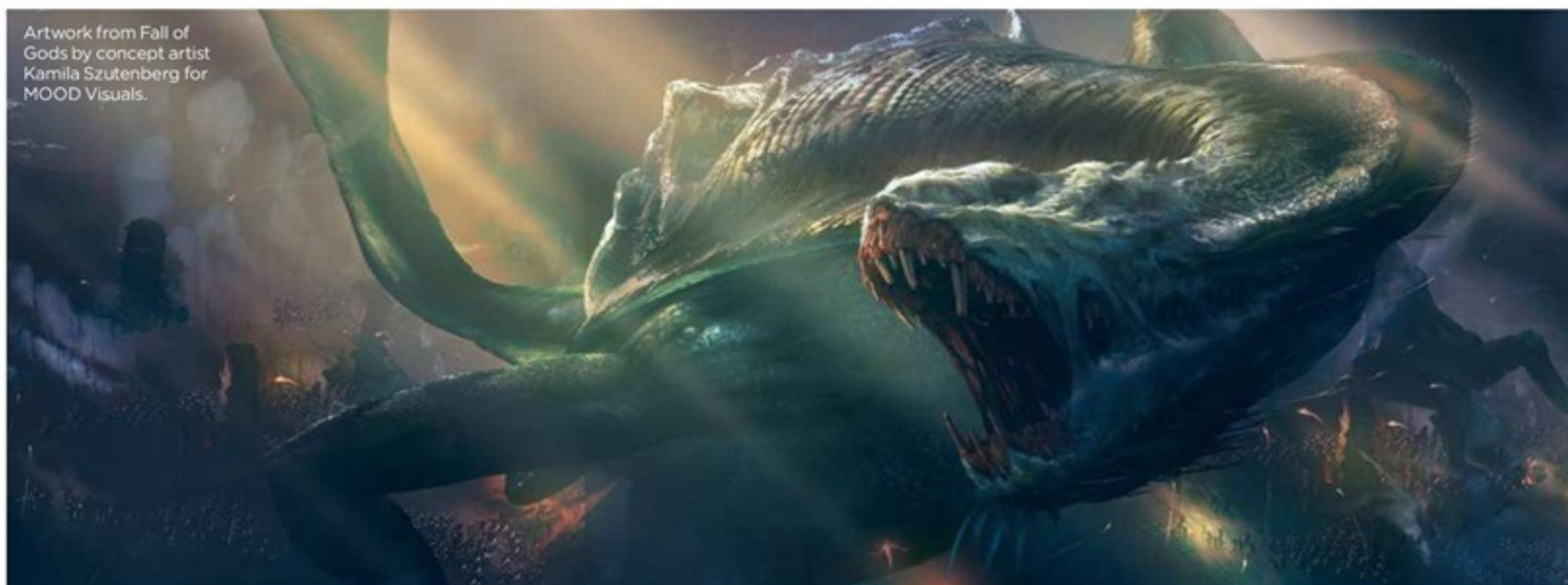
Art by Olle Wedenmark for MOOD's Fall of Gods – a Norse-inspired trilogy of fully illustrated, cinematic novels.

Artwork from the first episode of Atomhawk's StudioQuest series, in which senior artist Mauro Cerati breaks down his process of creating a mood piece for the game Project Canopy.



Fall of Gods art by Rasmus Berggreen, MOOD CEO and co-founder, who also wrote the books' story along with Michael Vogt.

Artwork from Fall of Gods by concept artist Kamila Szutenberg for MOOD Visuals.



➡ of projects under NDA or still in progress that we may not show for another couple of years. You never know, we may well be looking for someone with your skills right now."

A TEAM PLAYER

While it's your artistic ability that will get studios interested in employing you, it's important to remember that it's not the only thing that matters – you also need other skills such as the ability to communicate well and work as part of a team. Should you reach the interview stage, most studios will have devised methods of testing for these qualities, and you will need to demonstrate that you're a well-rounded worker.

"The ability to receive and apply feedback is essential," says Julia. "Artists need to understand that they are working to achieve what the art director, project and client require; not their own artistic vision." She also notes that sometimes artists with superior communication skills have been selected over candidates with better artistic abilities, because it was



'Roller girls', inaugural hero artwork for Atomhawk's new site, by lead artist Charlie Bowater.

clear that they would be easier to work with.

Like Dennis, Julia says there's no need to get disheartened by rejection. "Even if the rejection is because your skills aren't at the right level yet, if you then reapply at a later date and demonstrate great progress, that's a sure-fire way to impress us."

Jesper Andersen is studio art director at MOOD, a visual



development studio that has worked on titles including Hitman, God of War and Fall of Gods. "What we look for is

ideation – are your ideas any good? Is there thought behind how your mechanical design works? Are you able to convey a story in your environment through architecture or placement of objects?"

He emphasises the importance of getting your portfolio right. "I can't stress enough how important it is to be selective in your portfolio," he says. Kill your darlings. If you know that a piece you love is old and unsuitable, take it out. "Get your portfolio peer-reviewed. Growing a thick skin and knowing how to take critique and implement it for the betterment of

Artwork by Elina Akhyamova of Grafit depicting the biblical story of Salome.



“Knowing how to take critique and implement it for the betterment of your art goes a long way”



Artwork from Fall of Gods by Silas Amdi, lead concept artist at MOOD Visuals.

your art goes a long way, and often your fellow artists will spot or call out things that you didn't even consider."

STAY MOTIVATED

Jesper likes a portfolio that shows some range. "It's great to focus on a style that fits the role or studio you're applying to, but throwing in a curveball and showing, hey, you can actually also use Marvelous Designer to design character costumes, for example, is always a treat and it shows that you have talent and drive for much more than what you have initially shown."

If your portfolio lands you an interview, take this chance to demonstrate your motivation and desire to excel. "It's very important for us that the artists we hire can not only produce the quality of artwork we need, but can also function within a team. In particular, we want to see passion for the craft and an interest in developing your skills - knowing where you want to be as an artist is something we're always interested in and always support in-house." ●



An example mech for the 'Forgotten Creation' art contest, made by Atomhawk senior concept artist Gavin Manners.



Artwork from Fall of Gods by senior concept artist Rafael Kowalski at MOOD Visuals.

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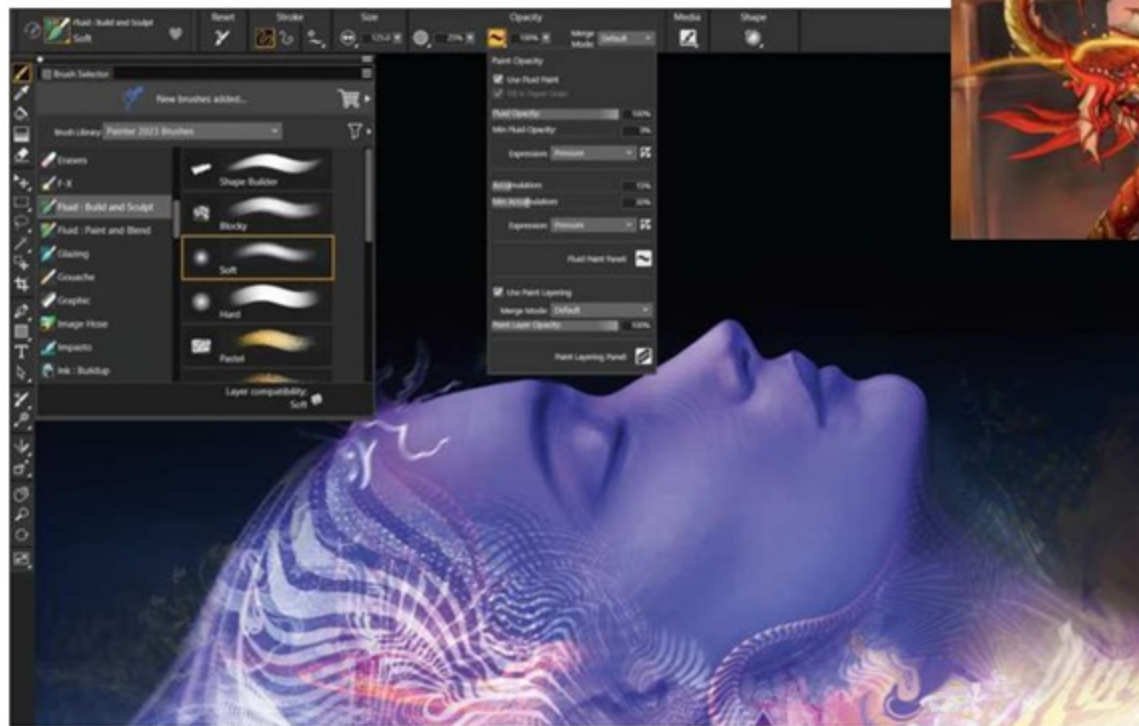
Simone Geerligs
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Android Jones, digital and multimedia artist.

"The brush technology has been invaluable in creating my artwork, one of my favourite parts about using Corel." – Alex Ruiz, renowned digital artist.



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"The brushes of Painter are unmatched by any program I have used so far." – Josh Burns, comic book artist.



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Maxine Vee

A place in the sun The illustrator reveals how her cosy, personalised work-space keeps her inspired



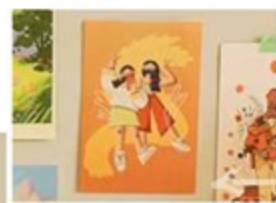
My little corner of the world is bright, colourful and cosy - everything I love about being an

illustrator! I spend a lot of time in my studio, so I wanted to transform it into a special place where all my creative juices and ideas can flow freely, while still feeling organised enough that I can get actual work done when needed too!

One of the best things I have in my studio space is my standing desk, which is set up against the wall. It's great because this desk is quite spacious, so it still gives me plenty of room to add my second monitor



'Porcelain Garden': I wanted to create a moonlit garden filled with these beautiful vases.



My sister painted this beautiful portrait of me and her posing in front of my mirror. The picture is inspired by the first time she visited my place, and she gave it to me as a housewarming gift!



A little silly Purikura photo of my partner and me in Japan. I like looking at this photo since it always makes me laugh, so I decided to frame it.

Sibylline and Heikala's art books serve as an inspiration for me. I don't usually work in traditional mediums but flipping through their works and reading their thought process makes me feel inspired to try different mediums I'm not comfortable with.

When I lived with my parents, I always saw my mum decorating the living room according to the year's season. At that time, flower walls were all over Pinterest, so I showed them to her. She surprised me by making these flowers and hanging them up in my bedroom. I love it so much. Every time I see them, they remind me of my mum!

I'm a big fan of Sibylline's work and having her art on my wall always brightens my day, since her colour palettes have inspired me.



I always wanted to decorate my wall with some greenery; however, when it fell, it looked nice on top of my computer stand/desk, so I just left it there.

In 2020, I participated in the Mermaid challenge and drew a mermaid every day during May. I won first place in the challenge and was gifted the Cintiq 22! I use this tablet every day and love it so much!

My brothers made fun of me when they found out what my wire management looked like (you should've seen it before; it was a bird's nest), so I made sure to invest in a cable management box.

ImagineNation Artist in Residence



My sister has taken up a new crocheting hobby, and she made these beautiful flower coasters to keep in my studio since she knows how much I love tea.

➡ and my Cintiq 22. Not only does it also help me avoid getting too tired from sitting all day, but it also makes me feel like I'm getting a little exercise by being active while working – it's a win-win!

In addition to my work area, one of my absolute favourite things about it is my wall of inspiration, where I would put up a mix of prints from my favourite artists and prints made by me! So, when I start my day in the morning, having all these prints hanging on the wall reminds me of why I started doing all of this in the first place: creating artworks!

KEEPING PRODUCTIVE

While working from home has a lot of benefits, sometimes it can get distracting; one tip that has stuck with me is that it's important to develop habits that help me feel organised and in control of my day. I found out I am the most productive in the morning, so I manage my time using the Notion app to get all the essential tasks done first and then do other smaller jobs later in the afternoon.

Using Notion and my calendar has been a game-changer for my work. Before the end of every week, I use

“It's important to develop habits that help me feel in control of my day”



A wall of inspirational art prints.

the app to list my top priorities and deadlines for that week and fill up my days with other smaller tasks such as admin work, social media schedule, etc. I try to keep things flexible; that way, when something goes wrong, it's easier to identify what happened and fix it quickly.

I also try to limit myself from using too many resources at once – whether that means scrolling through social media while working or getting distracted by videos or text messages

from my friends. So, I try to keep my phone away from me during the morning unless I'm posting on social media or recording painting videos!

I'm thrilled with my space and feel lucky to do this for a living. Having this space makes me feel motivated to tackle any project that comes my way. But sometimes, I also need to remind myself to take breaks as well! As much as I love getting curled up, drawing, and painting all these crazy and fun ideas, going for a walk and taking



Celestial Library: A library where you can study the history of wishing stars, read about each fallen star, and learn anything celestial.



My dad made me this adorable crane. It reminds me of him since he loves creating and painting like me!



This stamp is quite unique to me since it's custom made, and I love using it to stamp my orders I send out to customers.



I wanted to have a small plant that can grow in the corner of my room, so I decided to get the hearty ZZ plant.



Originally my partner's plushie, I ended up claiming it since the meme represents me when I get super stressed with work, so it's a fun little reminder.

breaks is vital. Not only does it help me see my work from a fresh new perspective, but it makes me even more excited to come back to my little corner of the world!

Maxine Vee is freelance illustrator based in the Greater Toronto Area. She specialises in whimsical, colourful illustrations that have a soft and dreamy feel to them. She has worked with clients in the animation, gaming and publishing industries including Scholastic, HarperCollins, Penguin Random House and more. maxinevee.com



Celebrating my first year as a full-time illustrator and self-employed artist. I hung up prints from some of my favourite artworks I created that year.

A day in the life of...

Phil Boutté

Industry insight The costume concept artist has worked on the likes of Jungle Cruise, Black Panther and Maleficent

Usually, not on purpose, I wake up around 4 or 5am. When I'm not being lazy, I go to the gym because it's the only time I have to do that in my balancing of work and family. I actually go back to bed from 6 to 7am, then take my daughter to school and start work around 8am.

I try to make my mornings a mental sprint – to be as efficient as possible with design thumbnails. Sometimes I have my sketchbook next to me, and I'll do crappy sketches to warm myself up. Then I go into the computer and start roughing out thumbnails – head studies, different hairstyles, pose references. I render those so by the time I go to lunch, I have maybe ten thumbnails to show the designer. They can look them over and give me approval so when I come back, I'm ready to start doing the actual illustration of the costumes they're interested in. The later part of my day is trying to get the character standing in front of you, even if it's just an initial rough sample.

SELF-MOTIVATION

I pick my daughter up at 7:40pm, and it's dinner and family time after that. If I'm being realistic, dinner is sometimes them bringing me food while I'm still working at my desk. And that's about it. I feel myself start to wind down at 9pm.

Being a self-starter is key to working in this industry. Don't wait to be told what to do. Find what you want and surround yourself with like-minded people. If you want to be an artist, surround yourself with artists. I think there comes a certain point where you have to jump fully into it and not look back.



Phil has been working as a costume concept artist and production designer for film, music videos and television for the last 14 years, as well as one of the co-founders of 9B Collective, the first black-owned concept art studio. @phil_boutte



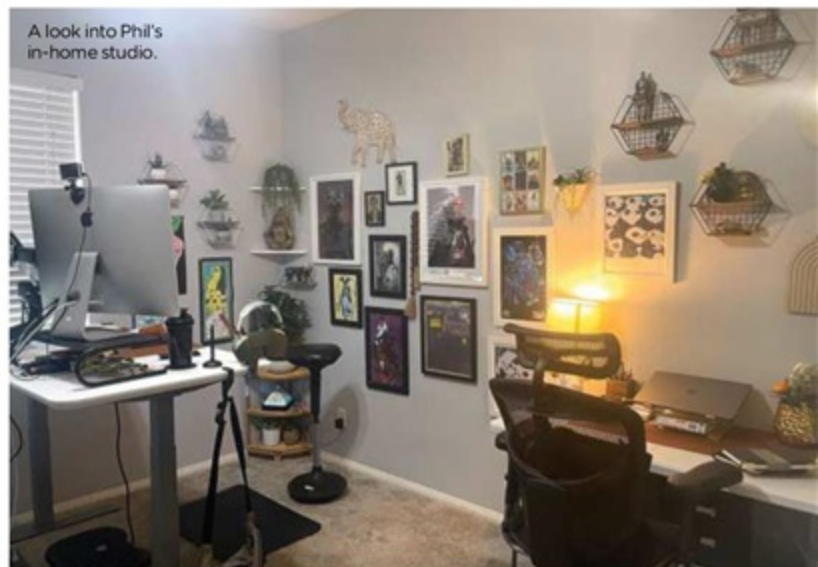
Concept Art Association is an organisation committed to elevating and raising the profile of concept artists, their art and their involvement in the entertainment industries. Its annual Concept Art Awards Show showcases and recognises behind-the-scenes individuals working in entertainment concept art.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

From Netflix show Jupiter's Legacy, concept design of the powerful Lady Liberty.



Concept design of Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson as Frank from Disney's Jungle Cruise.

A look into Phil's in-home studio.



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Winners will be announced during the awards ceremony in the Pasadena Civic Auditorium on Saturday, October 15th.

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Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



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AI confusion

I'm writing to talk about the recent coverage you have given to AI tools like Midjourney. I can't tell if AI is a good thing or bad for artists, or the wider industry as a whole. Surely this is just a matter of typing what you want to see and then hoping the computer spits out what you need? Doesn't sound like creativity or art to me.

Nina via email

Rob replies Hi Nina. I totally understand where you are coming from and it is easy to see AI as just this but, similarly to generative music, there is a lot of input and choice involved here. Iteration is key to success with AI art, as well as some skill with the text input in the first place. I've seen some real horror shows with prompts that you'd think might produce wonderful art. On top of that, I think AI will become part of a wider palette of tools that will find a place in some artists' workflow. It won't be for everyone, but as a tool for rapidly working out concepts I think it has some value. As with any new tool, time will tell. We will keep an eye on this space to see how it develops.



DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE?

Don't worry – you can get hold of issue 216 at ifxm.ag/single-ixf.

Martin Nebelung delved into Midjourney and Disco Diffusion last issue to explore how they can be used to generate some pretty cool imagery.



Issue 216 included some articles featuring AI tools for artists. Let us know your thoughts on these new tools.

No more AI please!

I'm seeing AI everywhere these days. I don't want it to take over my creative process and don't want it in my favourite art mag. Thank you.

Gerard via email

Rob replies Hi Gerard. Artificial intelligence is becoming ever more pervasive in many areas of life, and I don't see that slowing down any time soon. Here at ImagineFX we try to find a balance for what we cover in the magazine, with features and workshops on many different tools, as well as styles of art. When digital art tools started to really pick up, many people were fearful that the computer would take their jobs. As it turned out that's far from the case, with digital art being highly revered now.

So, while we will always look to cover everything from traditional to digital, I think there's a place for a little AI.

Thank you

Hello ImagineFX. I'm writing after reading the latest issue, which showed Guille Rancel's advice for painting science fiction cartoons. Something in that struck me and has changed the way I approach my own compositions. I'd never really considered what is behind the artist before. His tip talking about what the characters are looking at has totally changed my own perceptions of my characters, as I'd always had them looking at something within the art. Please pass my thanks on to him, as that has opened my eyes in a big way.

Claude via email

Rob replies Hi Claude. Thanks for getting in touch and so glad you've found some new possibilities for your work. It goes to show that, while step-by-step workshops can be really useful, sometimes a single tip or a new perspective can really be valuable. Have a look at page 92 for more nuggets of artistic advice.

FRESH
PAINT

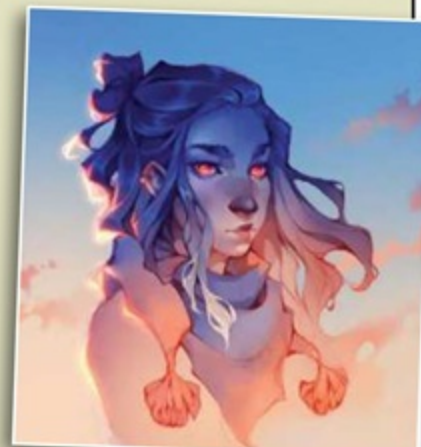
New works that have grabbed our attention



Stephanie
[@bymidnightoil](https://twitter.com/bymidnightoil)



Farhad
[@farhad.k_afs](https://twitter.com/farhad.k_afs)



Emma Chudoba
[@eyaninn](https://twitter.com/eyaninn)

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

FOLKLORE REIMAGINED

The creators of new comic book **Hollow** take us into their imaginative remix of American folklore classic, The Legend of Sleepy Hollow



Some stories endure and, as the decades roll by, each generation finds itself reimagining, reinventing, and repurposing that original story to make it anew. That's what makes a classic a classic: it has staying power and it's a two-way conversation between the storyteller and the reader. It's an enchantment, we might say. It's this kind of process that's at the heart of the work of the team who have brought *Hollow* to life on the comic book page.

Due for publication in late September 2022, *Hollow* will be published by BOOM! Studios and comes from the creative triumvirate of Shannon Watters, Berenice Nelle and Branden Boyer-White. Shannon and Branden (based in the US) are the writers of *Hollow*, and Berenice (based in Germany) is the project's illustrator.

The conversation begins with



Shannon reflecting on what makes the comic-book medium so distinct and special. "I think comics are a really



SPOOKY ADAPTATION

The *Hollow* comic is inspired by Washington Irving's short story, The Legend of Sleepy Hollow.

beautiful, interesting medium because they offer such an intimacy of sequential storytelling," she observes. "When somebody is sitting down with *Hollow*, or any comic, they are engaging in sequential storytelling, visual storytelling, that is just between the three of us and our colourists and the reader. It's lovely. It's intimate. When Branden and I write scripts, we're writing them for Berenice and no one else."

GROUNDING IN CHARACTER

Of the dynamic between word and image, Branden notes, "I come from a prose background and this is my first time writing a graphic story. The



difference of knowingly collaborating with an artist was really exciting. Having in mind the question 'Can we make

Berenice laugh with this description?', and then getting those images back and seeing them light the words on fire, it was like she had walked through the town and seen it and drawn it. It added vitality and encouragement to any rewriting that we had to do. That for me, was the

C-CLOP C-CLOP C-CLOP C-CLOP

ORIGINAL LEGACY

For the creators of *Hollow*, the opportunity to add to the visual heritage of the original legend has been a vital creative impulse.

SHANNON
WATTERS

BRANDEN
BOYER-WHITE

BERENICE
NELLE

HOLLOW

C-CLOP

© 2022 Brandon Boyer-White & Shannon Watters



➡ coolest part of getting to work in graphic storytelling."

Creatives never work in a vacuum, and our conversation moves onto influences on *Hollow* and its particular sensibility and tone. "Whenever you think about comics, you have to think of the writer and the artist as one," Shannon points out. "It might be a team of people, but the writing is nothing without the art. For me, *Hollow* is very much in the tradition that I love, which is the influence of slice-of-life manga and American indie humour comics (stuff

like *Giant Days*). I am always trying to ground stuff in character. Character is the most important piece and there are so many writers and artists in comics that really shine that way." Brandon adds that for their process and creative choices on *Hollow*, "I had comics inspirations in mind and particularly Patrick McHale's *Over the Garden*

“ We really wanted to honour the original story of *Sleepy Hollow* ”

SCHOOL DAYS

A contemporary story, *Hollow* draws some of its sensibility from 'slice-of-life' manga.

Wall because it's that love letter to autumn and to Halloween. It's just dripping with atmosphere."

A BRAND-NEW ADAPTATION

"Our wish list for artists was for somebody who could do a lot of great character acting," Brandon recalls. "All we had was an outline, but we knew we wanted to make the book very funny. It was also important to us that we work with somebody who could capture how eerie and how beautiful *Sleepy Hollow* is. We really wanted to honour the original story and the incarnations that have come after, right? In the original story, the descriptions of *Sleepy Hollow* are stunningly beautiful. And then, you've got so much great art over the centuries: whether it's paintings or the Disney animated short adaptation or the Tim Burton movie version. We wanted somebody who could bring our own unique take to life visually, but also somebody who would roll with that tradition of it being a pretty autumn postcard scene and who could also draw accurate settings, like the famous graveyard."

Brandon adds, "That was going to be important to us, and we also needed somebody who'd be really good at drawing horses! There are hundreds of panels of a ghost horse with its ➡



STORIES RETOLD

Hollow's narrative remixes the original American folklore for contemporary readers.

SLEEPY HOLLOW
For the Hollow team, expressing the charms of the real village of Sleepy Hollow was essential.

ANNUAL HOLLOW-EEN KICK OFF FESTIVAL

ANNUAL HOLLOW-EEN KICK OFF FESTIVAL

MOBILE BLOOD DRAW

SLEEPY HOLLOW PIZZA

AND NOW, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN...

"Comics is a small place, and it is an artform that continues to expand and grow. It makes sense that the progressive storytelling wing of comics has surged so intensely in the last ten years, because it is such an intimate medium and it allows such a person-to-person form of expression. The gatekeepers are thinner on the ground for comics. I always recommend that young people read *Understanding Comics* by Scott McCloud. It's a really important place to start to understand the terms for the things that you feel when you're reading a comic. The best way to learn comics is to make comics."

GHASTLY PURSUIT
Autumnal aesthetics inform the comic's colour palette.

C-CLOP C-CLOP C-CLOP C-CLOP

SHUFFLE
SHUFFLE
SHUFFLE

C-CLOP C-CLOP C-CLOP C-CLOP

UNCOVERING MYSTERIES
The real and the otherworldly collide throughout Hollow.

➤ own little personality." Hollow's illustrator Berenice interjects and wryly observes: "Guess who spent their whole childhood drawing horses? The horse is one of my favourite characters in the book. It really is its own character."



Berenice's observation prompts her to give an overview of the visual aesthetic for Hollow, and begins by noting: "We all come from such different backgrounds when it comes to graphic novels and sequential storytelling. So, it's super interesting. Brandon and Shannon each have their own story to tell."

BRINGING THE STORY TO LIFE

As Berenice describes her process, it becomes clear just how vivid the dynamic between word and image is. She explains, "I've actually been thinking a lot about the medium of graphic novels lately: especially what kind of place Hollow takes for me personally and from what I've seen in the [comics] market. Hollow bridges very nicely between kid's comics, children's books and adult books. It's a recent trend here in Germany to adapt classical literature into graphic novel format. I really like that Hollow has a light-heartedness and a magical element to it and this is something that you can portray very well with

“I like the characters to be very open and very welcoming in their expressiveness”

comics. You can intertwine a magical element into your storytelling and it just works on paper in a way that maybe would be different in film. Also, there's a certain magic to having the words in the script and then seeing it come to life as a picture."

Berenice goes on to address one of her favourite aspects of working on Hollow: drawing the comic's cast of characters and their unique personalities. "I really loved illustrating all of our own main characters. I think they are all very unique in their own backgrounds and in their dynamics with each other. It's something I always look for in a character, and when I have a script in front of me and it describes the

QUIRKY AND COLOURFUL

Counterpointing the American Gothic tone of the story is a light-hearted, playful quality.



feelings of the characters, I always try to make their expressions as clear as possible to read. I like the characters to be very open and very welcoming in their expressiveness."

She continues: "For Hollow, to illustrate each character and their emotions, they all have different body shapes. They're all different types of people, and so that was always something I was looking for: to be able to portray as many types of people as I can. The characters feel very ➤

STAYING TRUE TO YOURSELF

Brandon Boyer-White on the spirit of comics and creativity

"Embrace your love of stories, even if people are telling you not to. You just have to know that there are people in the world who feel the way you do, and know that you have a group of fellow comics enthusiasts who feel and love the way you do and move forward with that. Find your people. Keep listening to, reading, writing and drawing those stories together, because there is so much rebellion and resistance in joy."

DID YOU ORDER A PIZZA?

A semi-realistic sensibility characterises the illustration style for Hollow.





➤ unique to me. Plus, the landscape in which all of this is happening is very unique in its own way, so that was a lot of fun to illustrate. I love drawing landscapes."

VISUALISING THE SCRIPT

For Berenice, Hollow marks a major moment in her own emerging career, and she begins to unpack her process: "I stuck to a very traditional approach. I made the thumbnails first and then went on to the pencils. I did the pencils traditionally on A3 paper and then cut the pages and scanned them all in. Then, if I got the OK to go

NEW ENCOUNTERS

Aimed at young adults, Hollow captures details of American teen life.

CURSED

The magical at work under autumn skies.



UNDERTONES

A sense of the uncanny and unsettling threads through high school life in Hollow.

forward with the line art, I did that digitally and put it in the right format. I really love the mixed process between traditional art and digital art. I mostly work digitally these days, but I wouldn't want to miss working traditionally. So, I chose a process that would include both."

Of the fusion of digital and 'traditional' approaches, Berenice explains that her first step was to "read the script very carefully, of course, and then think about how a particular sequence might flow nicely when translated to a comic page. Then, I laid out the panels of this page in a small

thumbnail drawing. This stage is really just to get the first ideas out. The next step was the pencils stage, where I drew the panels on the page. For this, I used a light blue Pilot Color Eno mechanical pencil. I prefer these because their lead is very soft, yet they are not as dark as regular pencils. This allows me to work from a light sketch to a final drawing. For Hollow, I had already prepared a bunch of A4 papers with the format of the comic book printed on them, so I was able to work in the correct dimensions right from the start. Then I scanned the page and continued to work digitally from that

“ Comics are a really beautiful, interesting medium, they offer such an intimacy of sequential storytelling ”

REMIXING!

Shannon Watters discusses her ambitions for Hollow

"I hope that it lets readers take a second look at Sleepy Hollow in the context of the American canon, and also at the ways that other people have reinterpreted American folklore, seeing ways that they can remix their folklore in their work."



FRIENDLY FACES

This YA graphic novel bridges the tone of kids' and adults' comic books.



HOLD YOUR HORSES

The Headless Horseman of the original tale looms large in Hollow.

point on. For that I used a Wacom Mobile Studio Pro 13 and Photoshop. This was also the point where I usually sent in a batch of my latest pencilled pages to my editors for a first round of feedback. I did the corrections digitally, since that was easier than going back into the drawn page again. Once we agreed on all the changes that needed to be made to the pencils, I was given the OK to go ahead with the line art. This was followed by one or more rounds of feedback until we had the feeling that the page worked out this way."

A DEVELOPING STYLE

Berenice then elaborates on the deeper ride that she has taken into haunted, storytelling country: "My journey to finding a style has been quite clear from the beginning. I wanted to do a

semi-realistic style to have the opportunity to be as expressive as I want. I wanted a style that would allow me to draw pretty much everything, either in a more realistic way or in a more stylised way. So, this kind of flexibility was something I was looking for. To this day, I'm still not done finding a style. I'm still a university student studying illustration. I'm still very much

DON'T LOSE YOUR HEAD

Hollow visualises the menace and threat of the Headless Horseman's steed.

experimenting and I would say that my style is like a work in progress, always at any time." With just a short time until the book is published, Berenice makes clear her hope for the project: "I hope teenagers and tweens pick it up and see themselves in the characters and get a lot of joy from reading it. My dream would be that it becomes someone's favourite book, someone's favourite thing."



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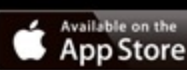


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Cam Kendell

Let the fantastical, story-rich designs of this professional illustrator and comic creator capture your imagination

Artist PROFILE

Cam Kendell

LOCATION: US



A creator of comics like Choose Your Gnome Adventure, over the past 9+ years Cam has illustrated board games, books, and many other projects. When not drawing gnomes and/or goblins he's hiking with his wife and kids or rocking the accordion.

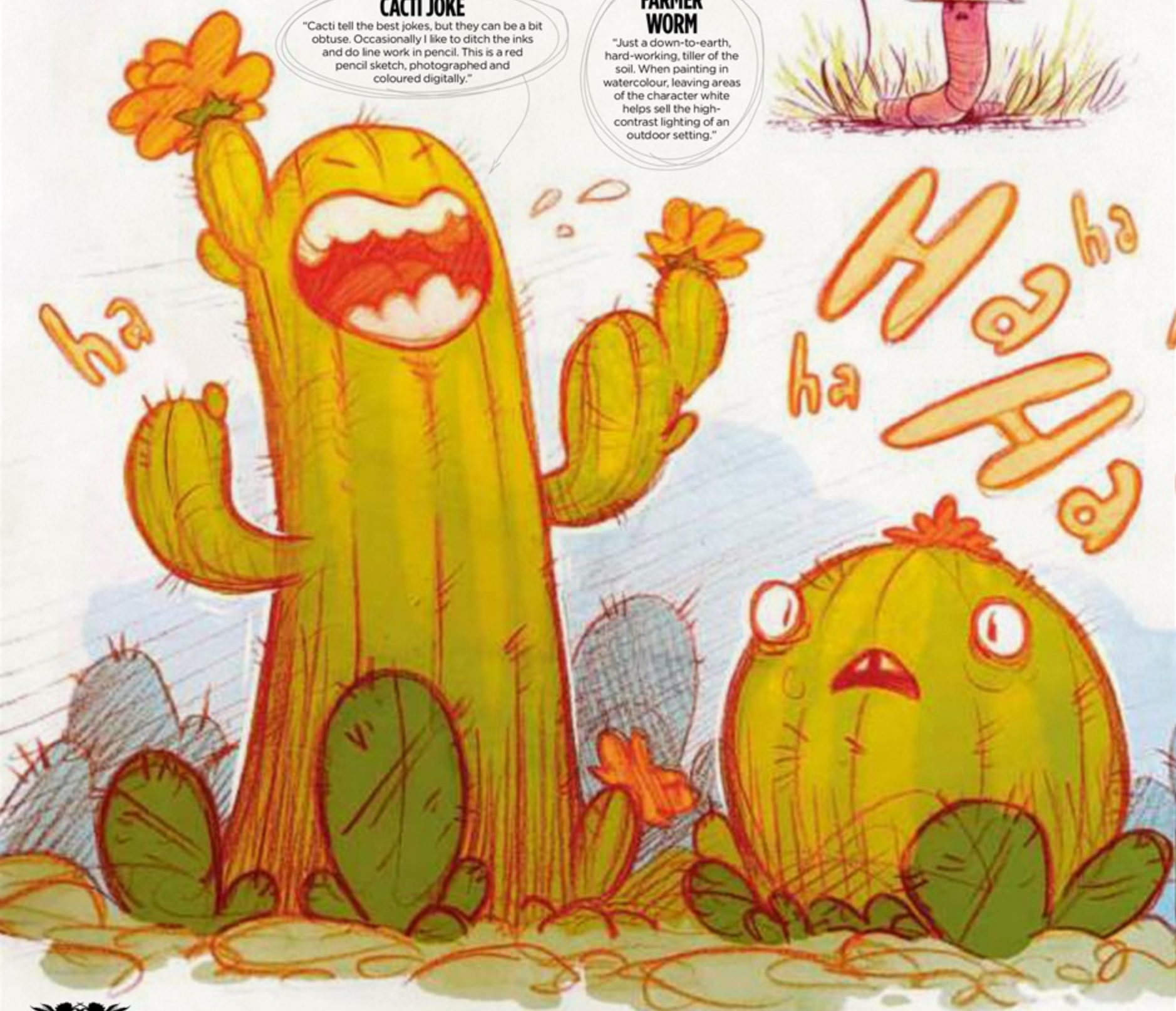
www.camkendell.com

CACTI JOKE

"Cacti tell the best jokes, but they can be a bit obtuse. Occasionally I like to ditch the inks and do line work in pencil. This is a red pencil sketch, photographed and coloured digitally."

FARMER WORM

"Just a down-to-earth, hard-working, tiller of the soil. When painting in watercolour, leaving areas of the character white helps sell the high-contrast lighting of an outdoor setting."



BEHOLDABLES

"Three floating, cyclopean eye-ball monsters, lovely to behold. Are they family? Friends? Perhaps, they're fierce frenemies? Absurd creatures are regular staples of my sketchy hours."

“ Absurd creatures are regular staples of my sketchy hours ”

GOBOS

"Occasionally (truthfully, more often than not) I find myself sketching goblins and other goblin adjacent creatures. Sometimes a quick ink scribble is enough to get the idea out of my head and onto paper."

ADVENTURE PARTY

"Some of my most satisfying sketches result from an unplanned stream-of-conscious juxtaposition of random characters. Just looking at them immediately evokes a sense of story and shared adventure."

Sketchbook

COACH FRANCIS

"Character exploration for a story in the works in which Frankenstein's monster teaches Physical Education at the school. When designing characters, pushing shapes and proportions further can help to create memorable and easily recognisable silhouettes."



“Subverting the narrative is always a delightful endeavour”

PATCHYBUN

“Subverting the narrative is always a delightful endeavour. Far too often eye patches, scars and the like are reserved for so-called ‘bad guys’. Has a cute bun-bun never lost an eye?”



FUNGAL SKULL CROWN

“Sometimes an imagined still-life is just what the doctor ordered. Stylistically I strive for art that dances on a delicate line located somewhere between whimsy and macabre grittiness.”

AVAST YE

“Magenta ink and watercolour. Extreme facial hair is a relatively recent artistic passion. In contrast, pirates have been in my art DNA from childhood when I dressed as a pirate for Halloween at least five years consecutively.”



Sketchbook

VAMP

"I love playing with large blocks of ink. When painting with watercolour, I love playing with shifts in colour."

LONG BEARD

"The absolute longest of all the possible beards in the entire world. The extreme facial hair fascination continues. This piece was an exercise in colour and was created digitally on a tablet."



GOBO CHEF

"Character design studies are simultaneously an exercise in storytelling. Clothing, equipment and accessories can all be used to hint at an untold backstory."



FORBIDDEN TOME

"I don't think we need to say much here. I mean, we all know what's going on with this ink and pencil masterpiece of a sketch... don't we?"



“Clothing, equipment and accessories can all be used to hint at an untold backstory”

CHICKEN SUIT

“Sketchbooks are playgrounds. A space for getting out of your comfort zone. But also a place for pushing boundaries, and drawing a guy in a chicken suit.”

BOK

BOK
BOK

DOG FIGHT...ER

“The pug warriors of Ch'ewbowen are stalwart, loyal and capable with the sword. Ink and watercolour sketch.”



B'KAW

BOK

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

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ImagineFX

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Advice from the world's best artists



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Artist insight

LEVEL UP YOUR CREATIVE PROCESS

Artist PROFILE

Eric Canete

LOCATION: US

Eric Canete works in comics as an illustrator doing sequential art and covers, as a storyboard artist in the animation industry, and as a visual development/concept artist for video games. www.ericcanete.com

Illustrator and comic artist **Eric Canete** provides 10 pro tips for working smarter and building confidence



Even with a 30+ year career as a working professional, I still approach every opportunity to level up my craft with a sense of enthusiasm and delight. However, I've come to find that the learning I'm doing now is profoundly different from the learning I did

when I first started as an artist, illustrator and storyteller.

Asked for advice by younger artists, I'm often very poor at giving good, actionable feedback when it comes to the 'pixel pushing' part of creating images – I have little to offer the kids these days who are all just SO GOOD! Instead, I find myself sharing insight into the more

cerebral aspects of the process; concepts that I don't believe are taught nor mentored enough. Here, I break down ten key aspects of the creation process that I think about as I strive for an image that's not just well drawn, but also evokes a clear narrative – along with some internal mechanisms that keep me energised until I can call something 'finished'.



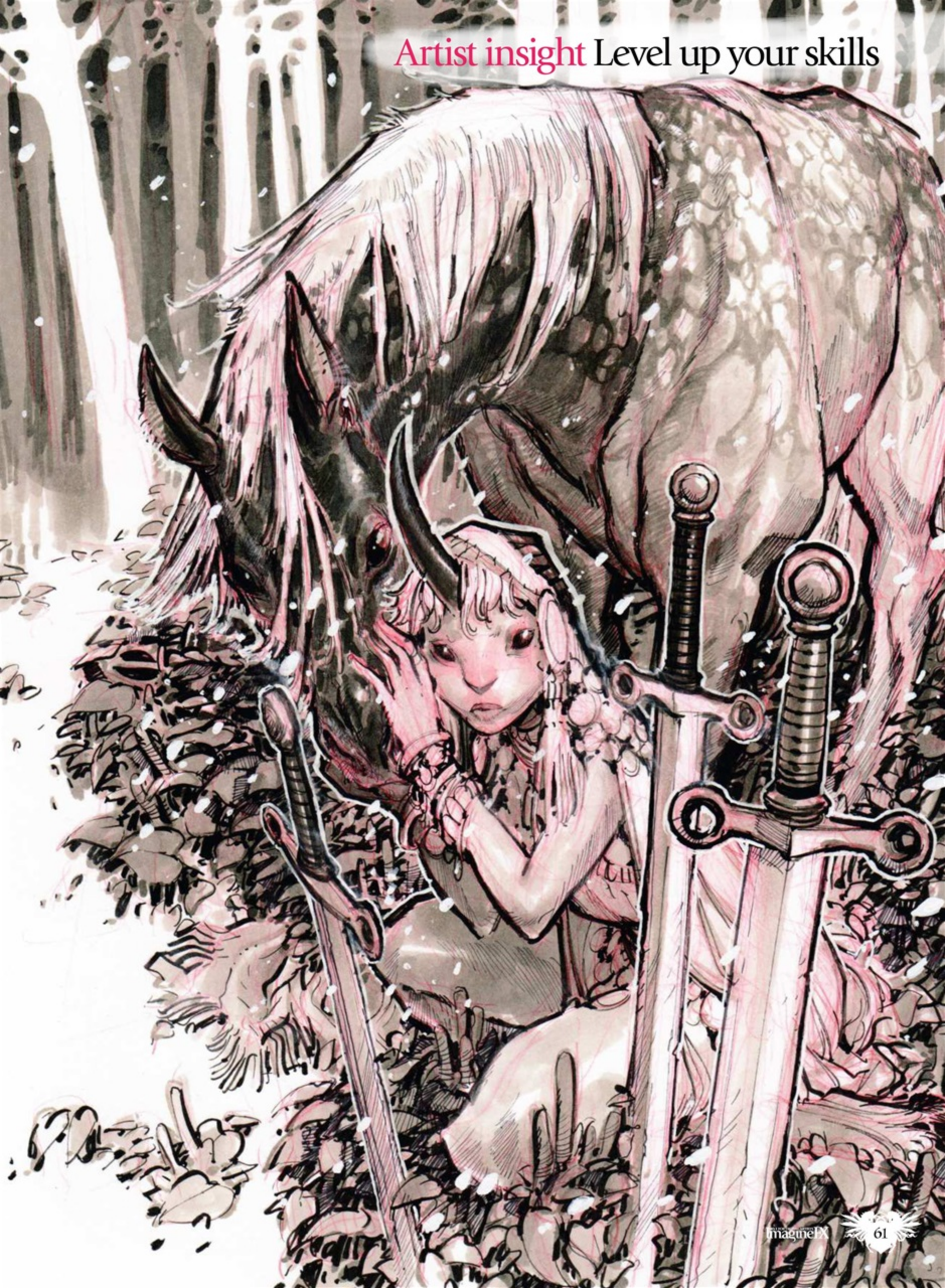
1 ZOOM OUT

I'm guilty of this myself: I get so excited about an area of the painting or drawing that I get lost in the experience of rendering, but in the end it doesn't really contribute to the intent of the final image. I had to develop an internal mechanism which reminds me to contextualise an area I'm working on, and apply it to the bigger picture; this helped me to evaluate how much time and resource to devote to each part of the drawing.

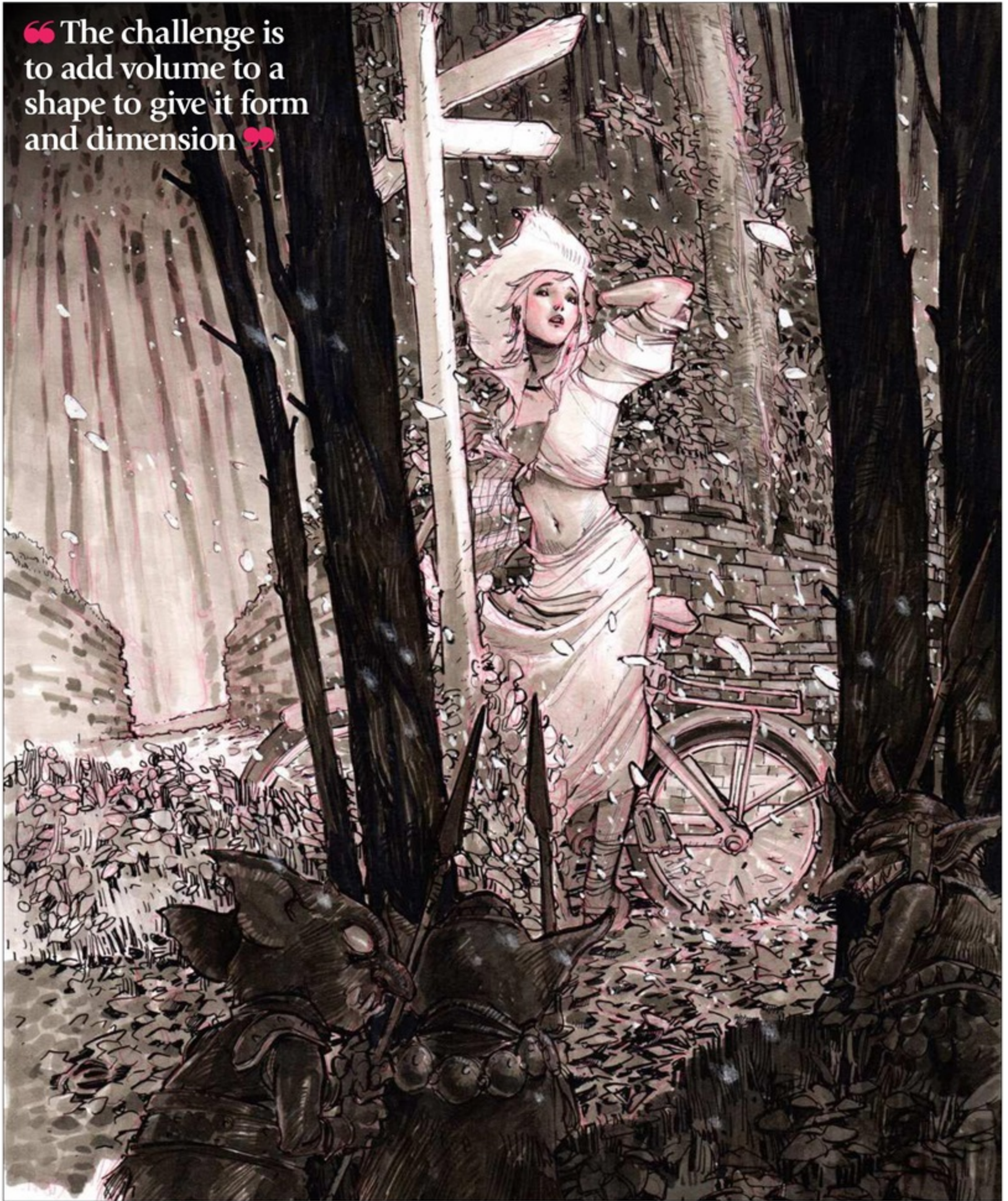


2 STEP AWAY

It's common to toil away on an image for so long only to lose track of what's working and what isn't. This is an opportunity to take a break to clear your mindset. I'm often working on multiple drawings at any given time, in various stages of completion. This has led me to solutions that I simply could not see originally, now that I'm looking at it again with fresher eyes. ➡



“The challenge is to add volume to a shape to give it form and dimension”



3 LIGHT SOURCE IS KEY

In a two-dimensional drawing, the challenge is to add volume to a shape in order to give it form and dimension. Try to be strategic about the light source – where shadows fall and where light areas are at their highest contrast – in order to communicate that volume. There are also instances when it's ideal to 'cheat' an established light source for the sake of legibility and clarity.



4 RENDER TO COMMUNICATE

Accuracy is key for communication – gold needs to look like gold, hessian needs to read as hessian, and so on. In my enthusiasm to start a design, I sometimes skip over a critical prelude in the process: research! I cannot emphasise enough how important it is to find the appropriate source materials that can help you (and your viewer) best understand the properties of a subject or an object.



5 WHAT'S THE STORY?

Look for opportunities to incorporate some narrative in drawings and designs. It doesn't have to be heavy-handed – the way a character wears their sash or how they hold their pose, the materials used for the construction of a gun or a backpack, the in-world 'how and why' they build cars or spaceships – all of these are potential storytelling elements that can help give an image more nuance and depth.



6 BE COMFORTABLE WITH FAILURE

Plan drawings by doing thumbnails, but be aware that is not a guarantee an image will be successful in the final. Be mindful throughout the process, spotting problems and coming up with potential solutions. If something makes sense in the rough stage but isn't working while moving into a finished piece, be comfortable with starting over and incorporating the changes of lessons learned. ➡➡

7 A KID WITH CRAYONS

It's odd that this needs to be said, but somehow I'm compelled to anyway since I've met many artists whose anxiety gets the better of them: drawing is supposed to be fun. As creative people, we have a tendency to overthink and be unfairly critical of our own work. But... if you can find your way to have a joyful experience in whatever you draw or design, then maybe the experience will move you further away from fear and doubt, and closer to the elation that you felt when you were a kid with a limited set of crayons drawing away on random sheets of paper.

“As creative people, we have a tendency to overthink and be unfairly critical of our work”



8 BE HUMBLE, BE A STUDENT

My professional approach to stay humble is to take the position that I am the least talented/experienced artist in the room. More importantly, this is a mechanism that compels me to retain an open-to-learn mindset and to ask as many questions to the 'expert' of how I can improve. The most effective way I can do that is not to get hung up on what I already know, be as curious about whatever is being shared with me, and try to incorporate what an exceptional artist is willing to share and teach.



9 MAKE 'PROBLEMS' SMALL

YouTube, online how-to's and other easily accessible resources available to an artist who's trying to level up their craft can quickly become overwhelming. Rather than trying to learn everything at once, all at the same time, I methodically compartmentalise what I want to learn into specific tasks that may chain into one another. As an example, in the case of an anatomical study of the arm, the chain would be: hands to forearms to upper arms to shoulders to torso, and so on. This method keeps the tasks and mental load manageable for me.



10 COMP FOR CLARITY

I try to make each element in the image as clear as possible. In my compositions, that means being very aware of how lines merge together or how designs contrast against each other. In the case of 'Dino Wrangler' above, I composed the big shapes by strategically 'stacking' them; the light-grey foreground shape of the woman and pillar, plus the dark-grey midground shape of the lizard monster creature, plus the light-grey shape structures and buildings = separation and depth. ●



Tech focus

AI-POWERED ILLUSTRATION

Discover how AI creation tool Midjourney was the starting point for **Edward Denton's** 'HMS Journey'



"The initial image behind HMS Journey was created with Midjourney, an AI text-to-image generator, before editing and cleaning up in Photoshop. I've been blown away by the recent improvements with AI image generation and now I really believe it's going to change the art world forever. The images can still be a bit of a Rorschach test and in editing

you have to ensure that the design you see is communicated clearly to others, but in their raw form they can still take your breath away. The key to working in AI is to learn and study the great artists of the past. You need to be able to reference a library of artists who create artwork relevant to your subject matter and in a similar style to what you want to produce. Here I referenced John Berkey as I love organic spaceship designs and his expressive style."



Artist PROFILE

Edward Denton

LOCATION:
New Zealand

Edward is a 2D and 3D artist currently working in the games industry as a lead environment artist on strategy game Star Atlas, but he cut his teeth working in the film industry at Weta Workshop.
<https://bit.ly/3ymkitX>

Photoshop

BRING YOUR SCI-FI SCENES TO LIFE

Michelle Hoefener illustrates how to use composition, colour, materials and lighting to create a captivating sci-fi character

Artist PROFILE

Michelle Hoefener
LOCATION: US

Michelle is an illustrator and concept artist who has worked on various artwork for Midway Games, Soda Pop Miniatures, Dynamite Entertainment and Riot Games.
<https://bit.ly/3NN9kmD>



In this workshop we will be working from an initial black and white sketch, moving onto line art, colour blocking, rendering, texturing, final polish and effects. We will be using contrast, area of focus and storytelling to bring a scene depicting a female spaceship pilot who has just landed on an alien world to life. We will use stock photos to bring out the realism of the materials and environment and Photoshop effects like Gaussian Blur,

Sharpen, channels, various brushes, the Smudge tool and the Mixer brush to help bring out the materials and details.

Concept art is also a focus in this workshop and how it helps with the storytelling and mood of the scene. I chose colours for the costuming based on alien, electronic, vintage and astronaut themes. Colour is also important when designing what the character is wearing as well as materials. For this scene I have chosen a mood of wonder, and otherworldly adventure as the pilot

pulls off her space helmet and checks her headset before venturing out into the alien world.

Focal point is also important in this scene and helps to create the feeling of mystery as some parts come into focus while others fade into the background. Light and shadow also help to create the sombre mood of mystery on the dark, otherworldly planet, and help to pop the volumes to further develop the feeling of realism in the scene, helping the viewer to feel like they are really there.



1 Thumbnail

First I use the hard round point brush to sketch out the black and white composition for the scene. I focus on the storytelling and show the female spaceship pilot after she has landed on the alien planet, as she takes off her helmet and adjusts her headset before stepping out into the mysterious alien world.



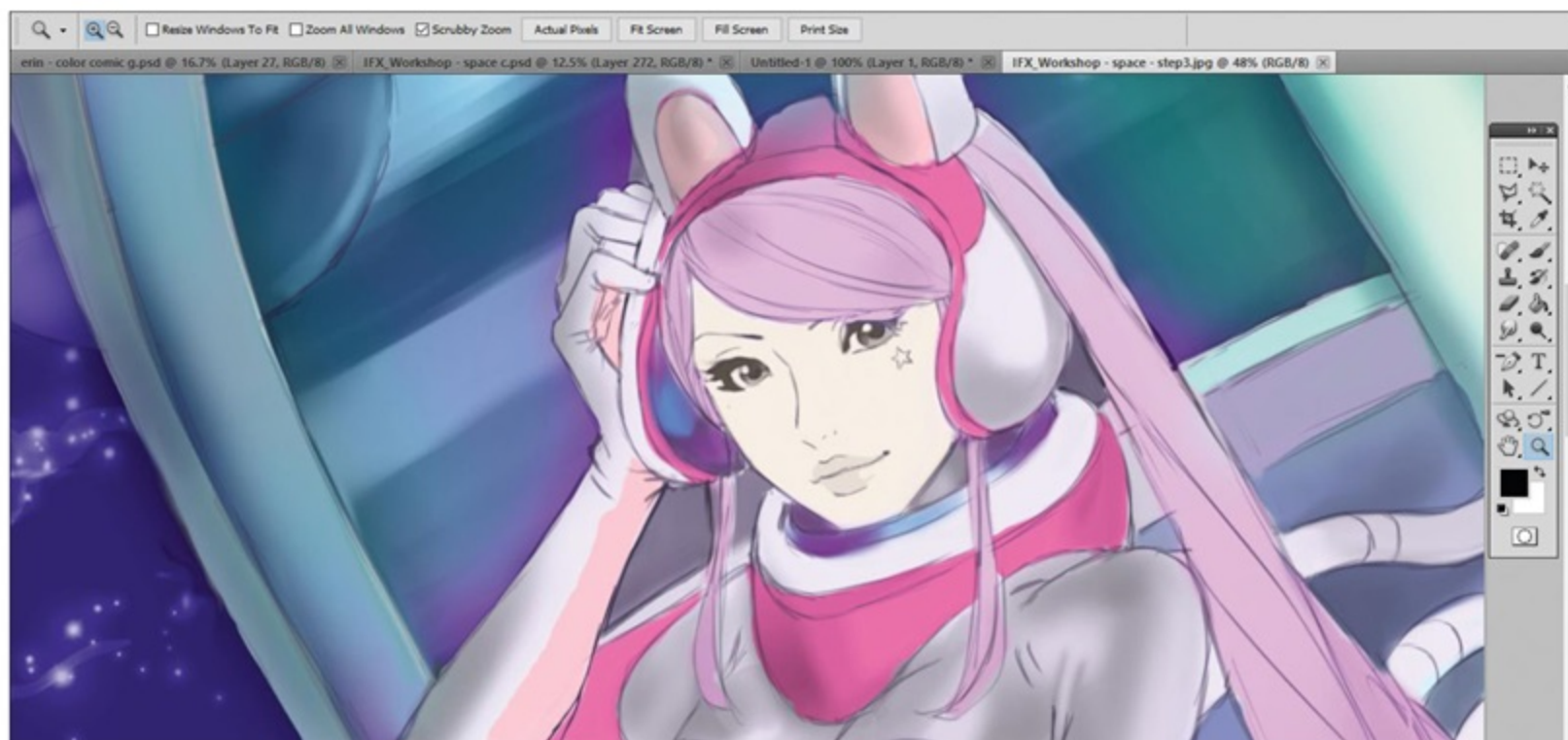
2 Line art

Next, I add a white layer above the thumbnail layer and set it to 80% opacity, and then I add another layer on top of that and add in the detailed line art using the round point brush. Some large curves are easier to add line art to by rotating the canvas with the shortcut R. ➡➡

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

In depth Sci-fi scenes





3 Colour blocking

In this step I choose the colours for the scene, character and objects. I decide on a warm colour and lighter values for the foreground and cool colours and darker values for the background, because the environment is a planet in black space with white, astronaut-inspired objects within it.

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: EMBERS

I finalised the details of the art with the embers brush to bring out glints and air particles.

STARS

I use the stars brush to create a fully detailed cosmic sky for the alien world in this sci-fi scene.

HARD ROUND POINT

I use this brush to create the first black and white sketch and to quickly lay out the composition.

ROUND POINT

With this round point brush I create the line art that I used to define the details.

AIRBRUSH

I also soften and harden the edges while painting using Alt + click-dragging up and down.



4 Key light

Now I begin the blocking in of the lighting. I choose a key light to illuminate the scene from the front right, which casts dark shadows behind the character, spaceship and planet landscape behind them. I choose this kind of lighting because of the dark, exploratory feeling that comes from the moon's surface in space.



5 Rendering

I continue building up the lighting and volumes with the airbrush tool, using dark values to bring in the shadows and accentuating the ambient occlusion in crevices. I smooth out the line art, blending it in with the mixer tool and smudge tool to create a realistic painted feel. As I render, I soften and harden the edges of the airbrush by hitting Alt and click-dragging up or down.



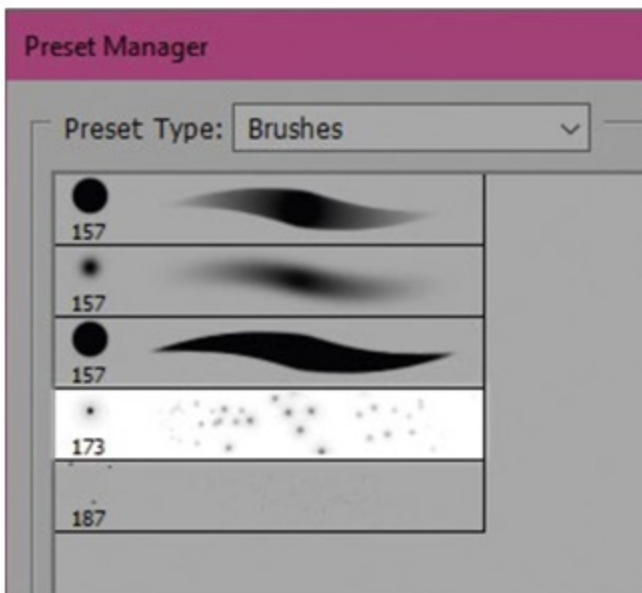
6 Materials

Next, I differentiate the materials like metal, hair, skin and plastic. For metal, I keep the specular highlight large, soft, saturated and medium toned. For plastic, I add a bright, sharper, smaller highlight. For skin and hair, I add subsurface scattering over the lit or highlighted areas with the airbrush using a fully saturated red for the skin, and a fully saturated pink, purple or blue for the hair.



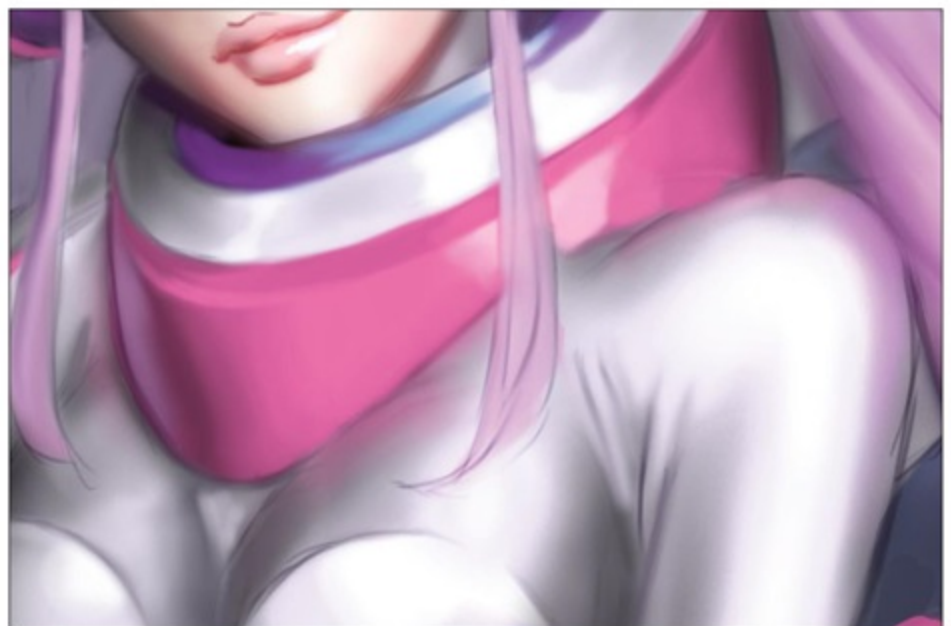
7 Photo reference and textures

In this step I add a photo of Saturn to the sky on a screen layer, a moon crater photo to the planet surface on an overlay layer using the Distort tool, and metal photo texture to the spaceship shell, softly erasing out the texture where the ship goes into shadow.



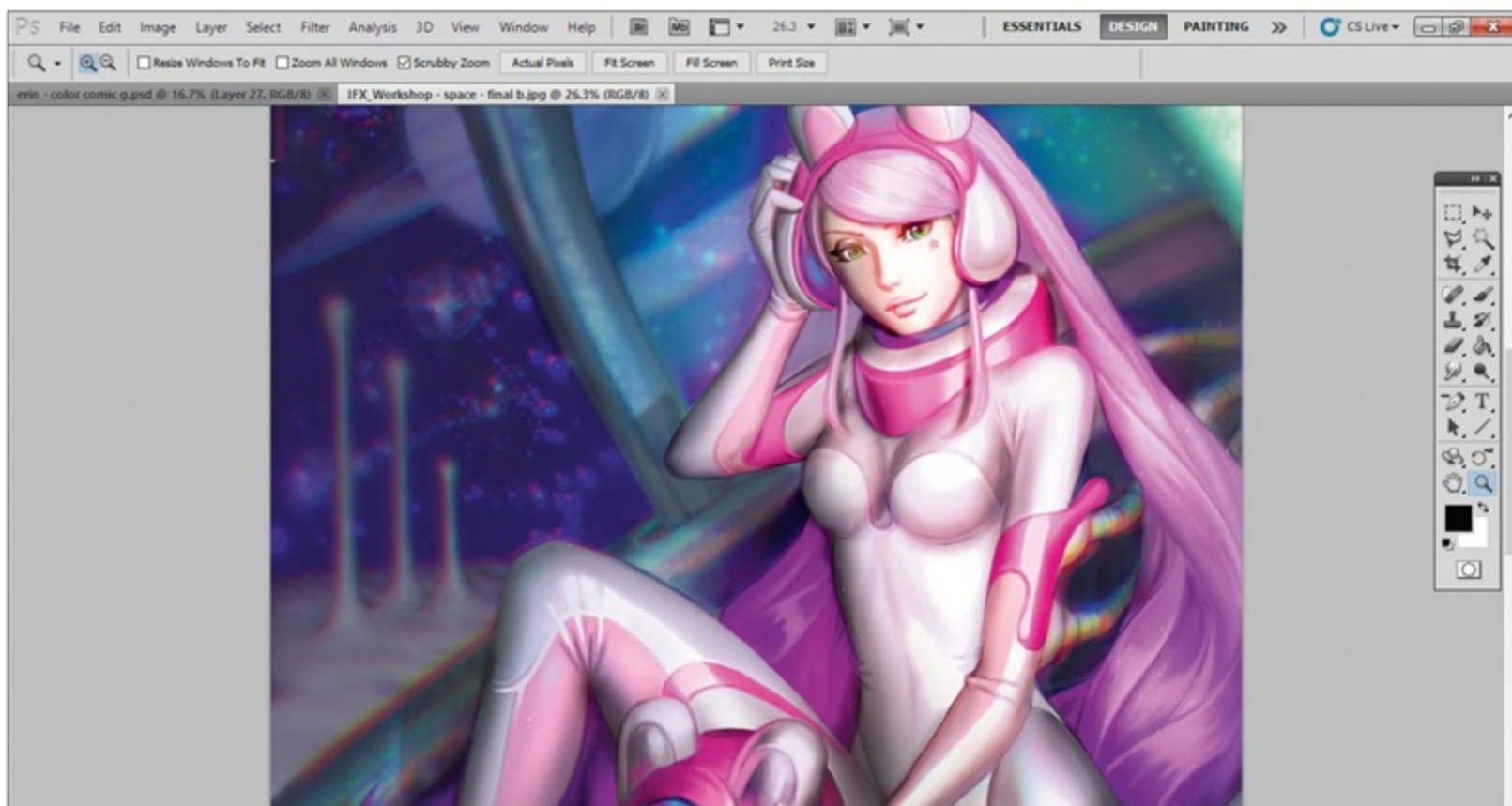
8 Stars brush

Now I add a full starry sky with the stars brush. I adjust the size of the brush as I paint with it using the Alt key and dragging the cursor left or right to make the brush larger or smaller. I also add stars to the sky behind the spaceship's transparent top.



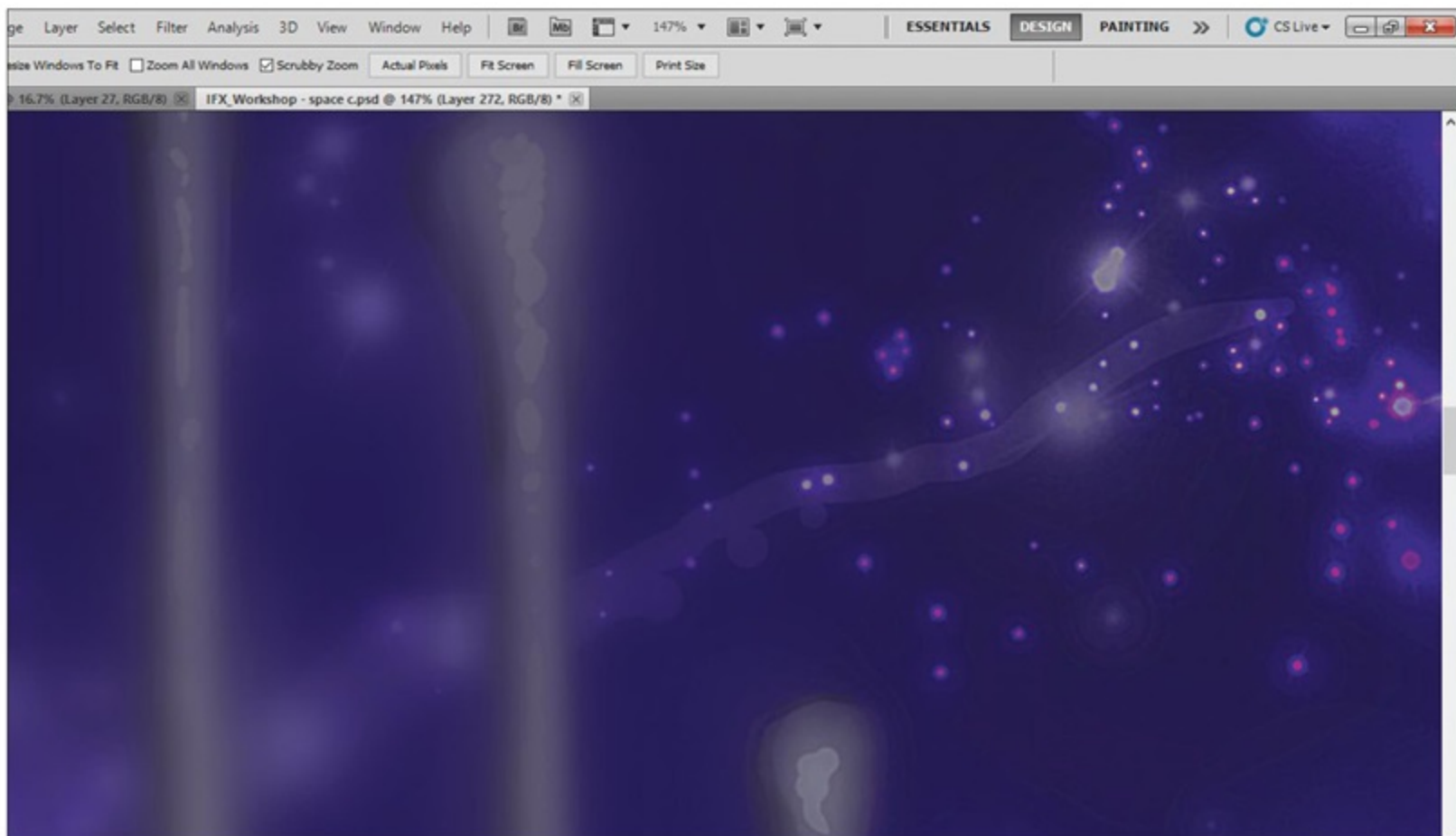
9 Specular details

Next, I add some finishing specular details, like wrinkle highlights, detailed hairs and facial highlights. I also add detail to existing highlighted areas to bring out the realism. This is an important finishing step, because it quickly details the important parts of the painting. ➡➡



10 Colour and value focus

I use a large airbrush and darken the edges with a dark, blackish blue on a new layer. I then use a light red on an overlay layer to pop out the character from the background. I also create levels adjustment layers to add contrast to the foreground and to reduce contrast in the background and around the edges of the scene.



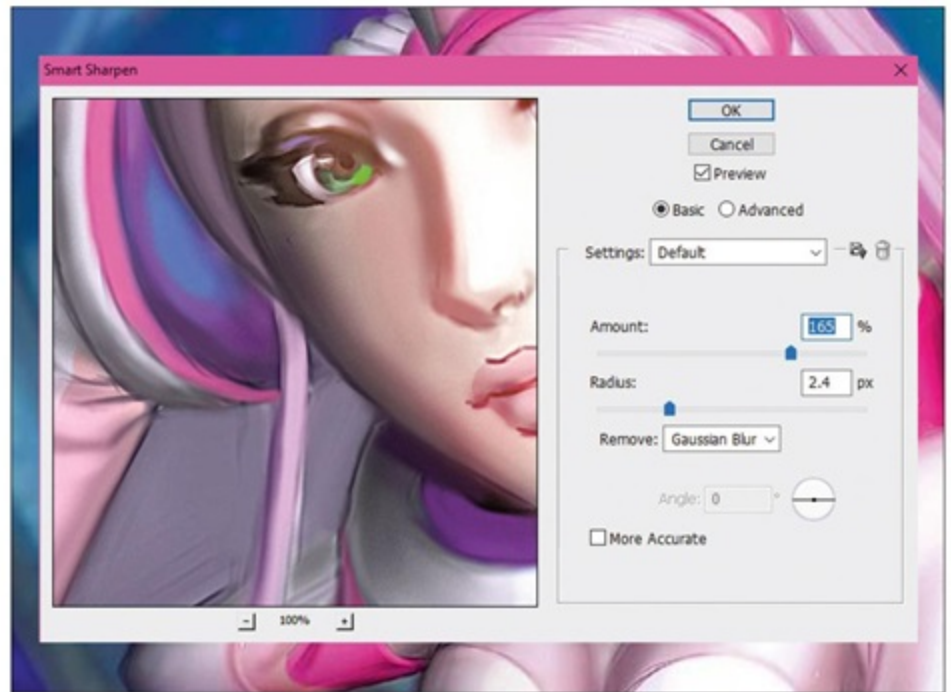
11 Blurring

Now I hit Ctrl+Shift+C to copy merged layers, and then I create a new layer and hit Ctrl+V to paste. On this layer I use the Gaussian Blur filter. I then use the airbrush to erase out the focal point areas in the foreground.



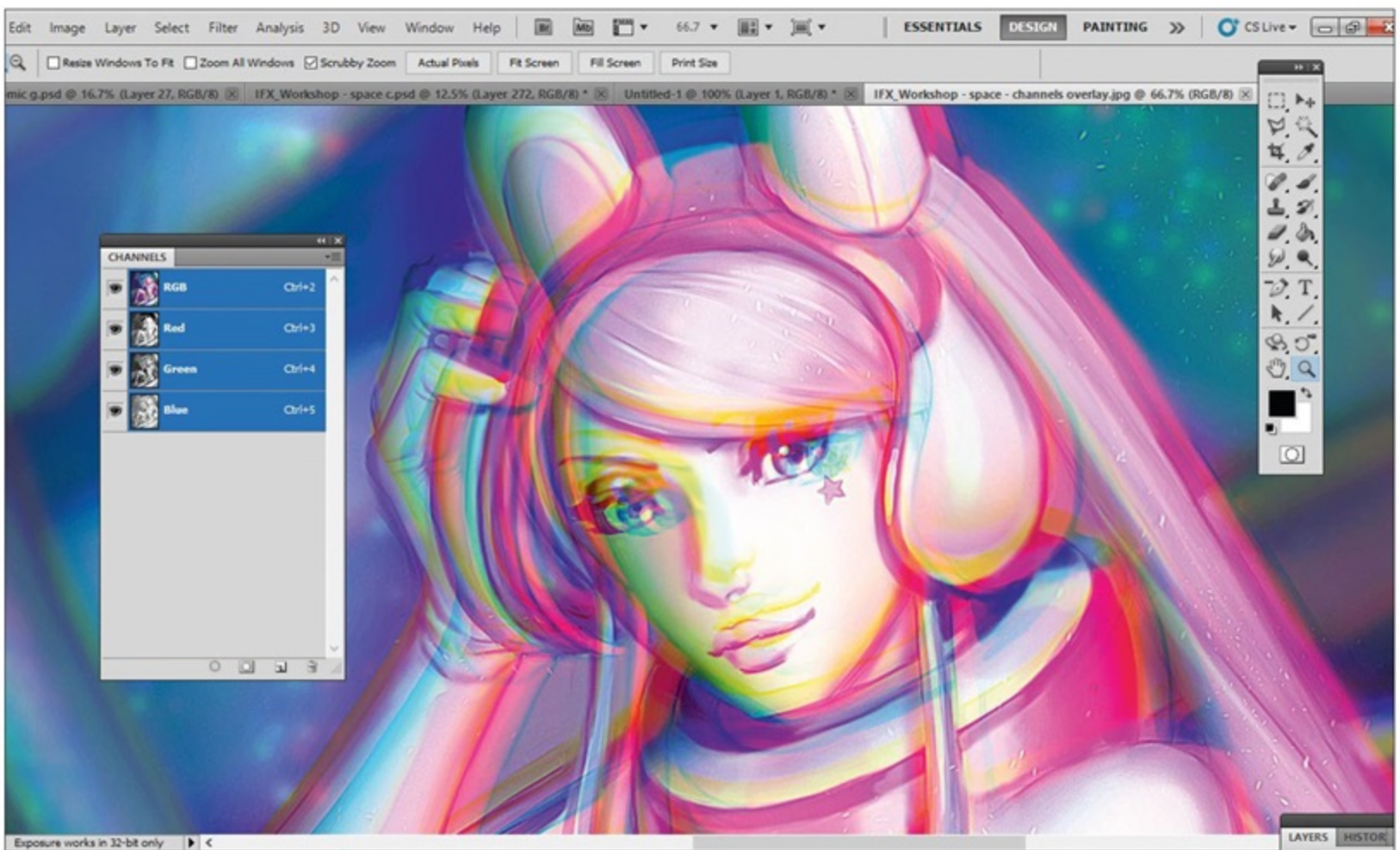
12 Add particles

I use the embers brush to add particle details on specular highlighted areas and in the air. I add bigger embers by enlarging the brush by hitting Alt and click-dragging left or right, into the foreground and smaller ones further back. I erase any particles that cover up important areas or where there are too many of them.



13 Sharpening

Now I hit Ctrl+Shift+C to copy merged layers, then I create a new layer and hit Ctrl+V to paste. On this layer I use the Smart Sharpen filter to create a crisp, clear foreground and focal points. I erase the edges of this layer with a large airbrush to keep only the important areas sharp.



14 Channels

Finally, to add some iridescence to the space scene, I go to Image>Duplicate. In the new file, I go to the channels, select the red, blue and green channels and slightly move them each separately in different directions. Then I flatten the artwork and drag it into the previous PSD file on top. Now I erase this top layer with an airbrush to only remain around the edges and in receding areas.

Tech focus

SCENE BUILDING: COMPOSITION

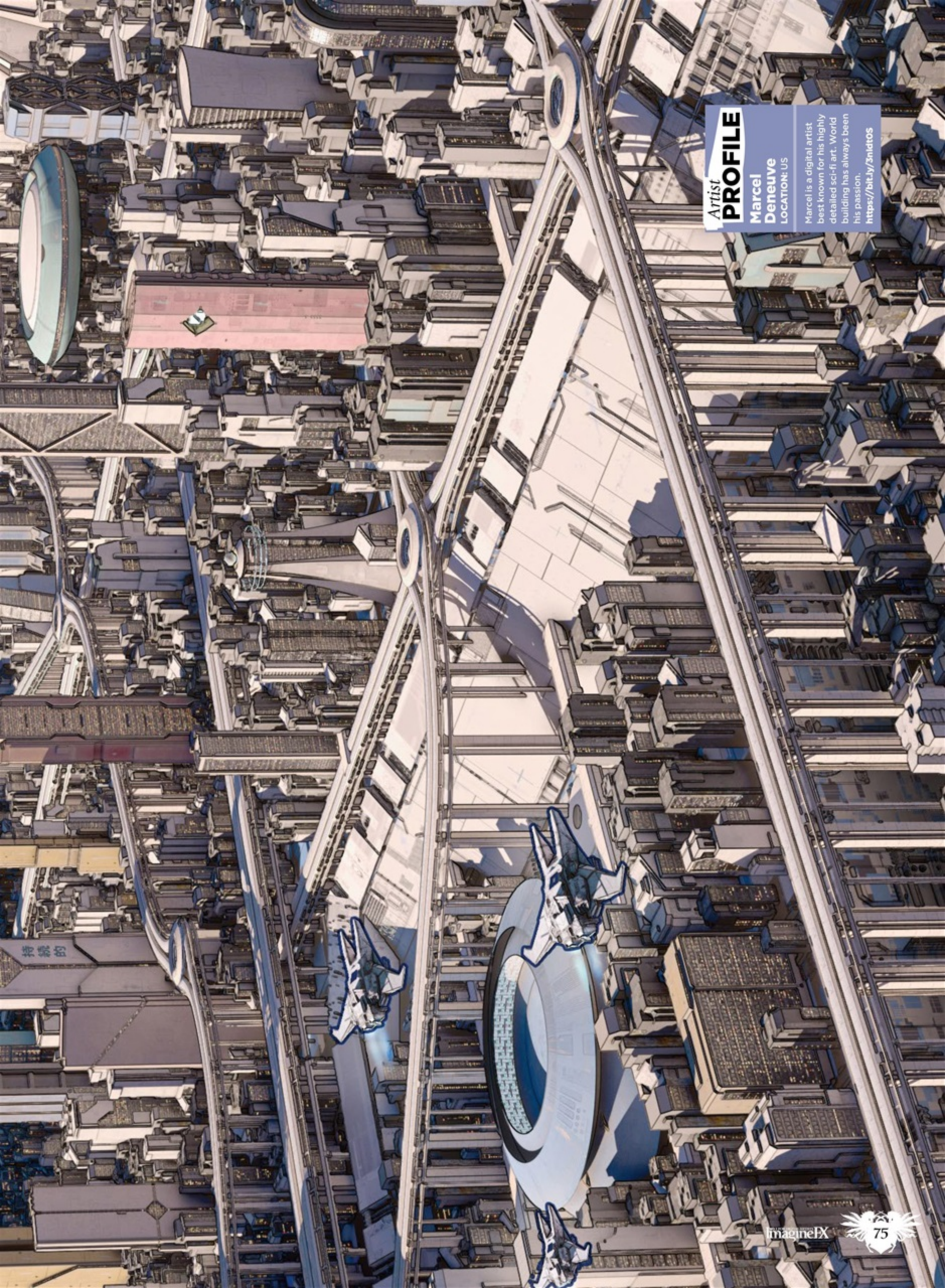
How **Marcel Deneuve** brought the incredible 'Harmattan' civilisation to life



'I started by making a simple blockout with primitives in 3D: cubes, cylinders, and so on. At this stage I'm

always trying to find a pleasing and balanced composition with proper camera placement and a nice directional light. Adding buildings and creating actual infrastructure is the next step. It is very important here to have a good mix between textures and actual geometry so that

the scene isn't too 'heavy' for work and rendering. The final part is post-processing – the moment when the whole thing comes to life. It's all about colour correction, overpaint and adding different kinds of effects. For scenes like this it's crucial to study the largest cities in the world. How are they structured? How do their transportation 'veins' work? What types of buildings are there? Try to observe and learn as much as possible about them.' ●



Artist
PROFILE

Marcel Deneuve
LOCATION: US

Marcel is a digital artist best known for his highly detailed sci-fi art. World building has always been his passion.
<https://bit.ly/3nldtos>

Core Skills

DRAWING NECKS: AN EASY GUIDE

Learn a fundamental anatomy skill for your character designs with **Rodrigo Gonzalez's** quick guide to drawing necks

Artist PROFILE

Rodrigo Gonzalez
LOCATION: US

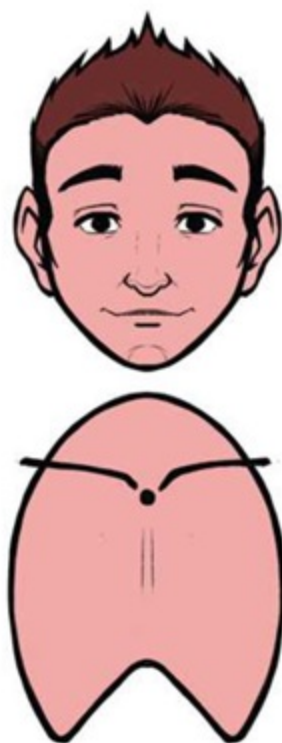
Rodrigo Gonzalez, AKA Rodgon The Artist, is an illustrator and art teacher from San Diego, California with a passion for helping others learn drawing fundamentals. rodgon.com



Learning how to draw the neck and connect it to the head and body has always been a difficult area to navigate for artists. With the following lesson, I will explain how to approach this task in a very simple process that will help you accurately and precisely draw this difficult area, so that you can start creating some more dynamic and expressive poses.

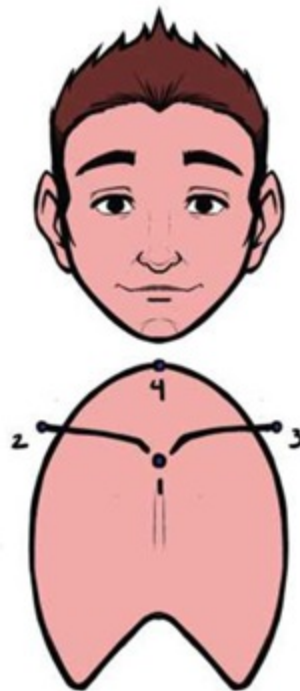
I will not be teaching you a style in which to draw. Instead, I will aim to show you a visual process that will allow you to apply this technique to any style you might love and want to refine. Learning how to understand and simplify human anatomy will help you with every aspect of your designs and you can even apply this technique with animals, monsters and pretty much any character that might have a ribcage and a skull.

The following steps will show you how to simplify the complex muscles in your neck and will teach you a simple step-by-step process that will help you develop a simple, fun and very accurate depiction of real anatomy and placement on every character you draw, be it comic book characters, cartoons, and pretty much everything in between. And with a little bit of practice, this process will become second nature.



1 Start with the collarbone

The first step is finding where the base of your neck connects to your body. The magical point to make it easy is learning where the collarbone is on your body. The collarbone tends to extend a tiny bit past your ribcage; so, we start with simple lines and a dot to mark the middle.



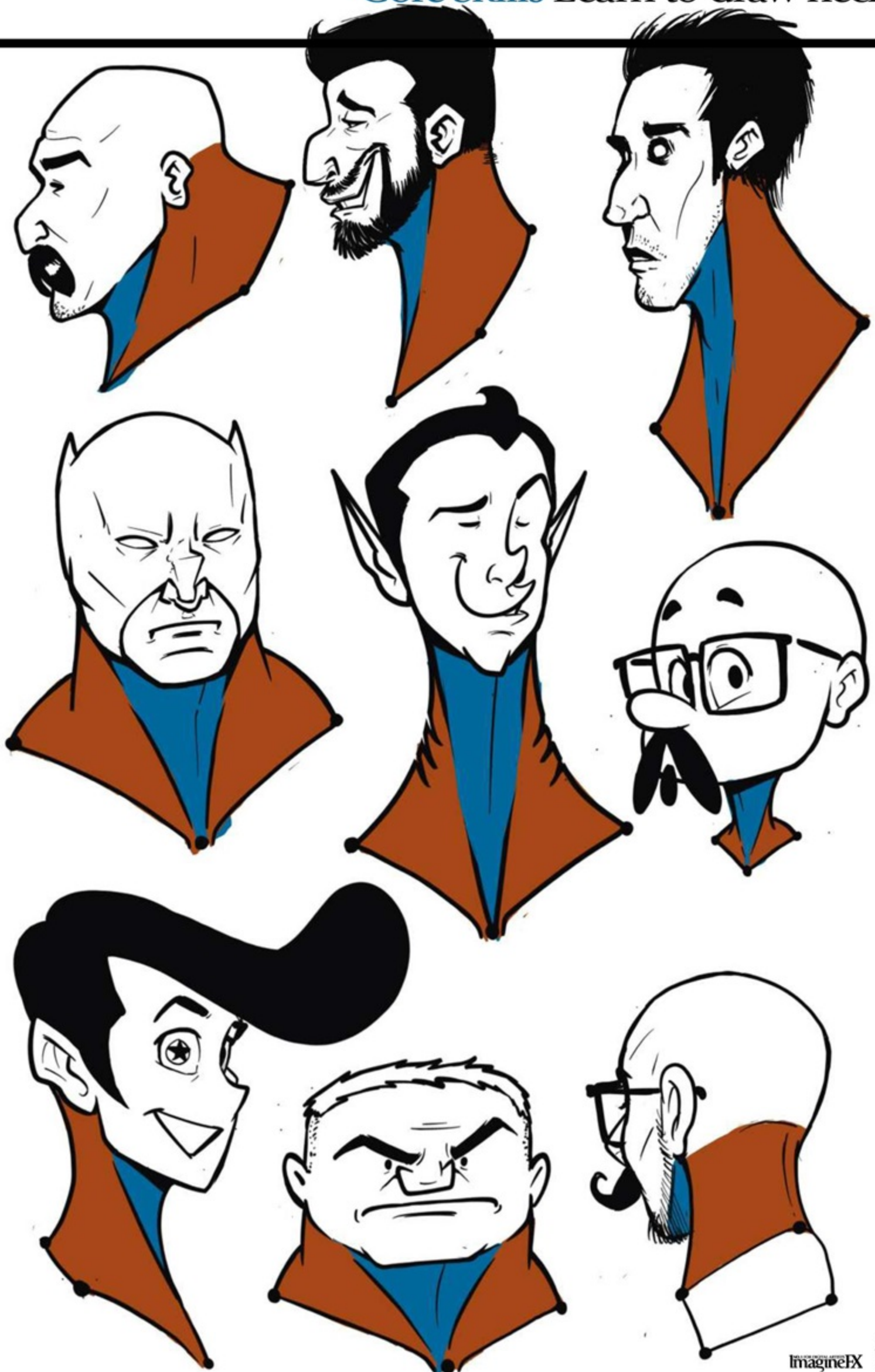
2 Identify landmark points

The next stage will be to identify the four major landmarks that will help you with drawing an accurate neck. Point 1 is the mid section of your collarbone. The second and third points will be the edges of your collarbone, which is also where your shoulders connect to your body. Finally, Point 4 is the vertebrae on your spine at the top of your ribcage.



3 Create a base shape

Now we need to connect all four points into this shape, seen above – somewhat resembling a baseball diamond – with the bottom collarbone edges slightly straight and the back section round. This will provide you with a natural curve for your trapezius muscles, as well as the natural flow of your muscles. This will come more into play when we consider profile and side views. ➡





4 Front neck muscles

Your neck muscles have a natural flow to the bottom of your ears behind your jaw. To simplify this, we locate the bottom of the ear and connect it to the middle of the clavicle. This will provide you with the simplified version of the front neck muscles and space for the throat and Adam's apple.



5 Exterior neck muscles

The next step is to connect the bottom of the ears again to the sides of the collarbone. This time you will want to have a little curvature to achieve a nice flowing neck line. This will change depending on how big your character's neck is or how muscley they tend to be. Make it thinner or thicker to match your character.



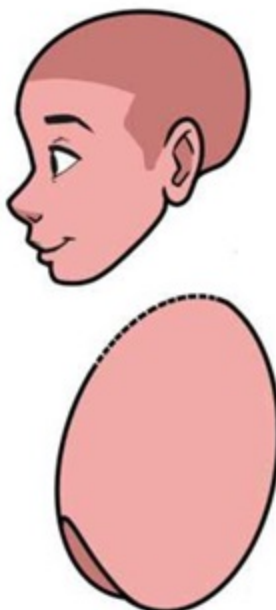
6 Bring it all together

Once you have all the lines connected, you can start creating the solid shapes that will make up the parts of your neck. I have colour coded these with two solid colours to represent the basic shapes that your neck will consist of. Making them into solid shapes will help you see what muscles overlap and what doesn't show.



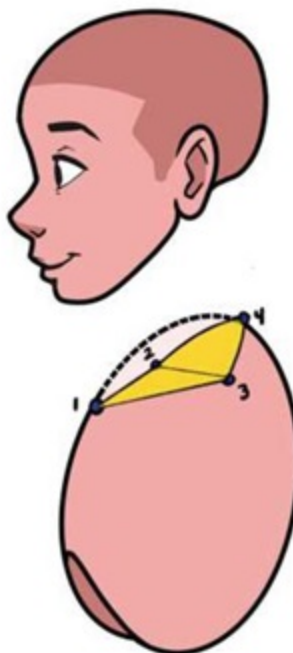
7 Add style and refine

The final step is to take those elements and adjust your linework to only show what you need for your design. Not every style will require all the defined parts of your neck drawn out, but understating that they are there will help you with placement even in the simplest of character designs.



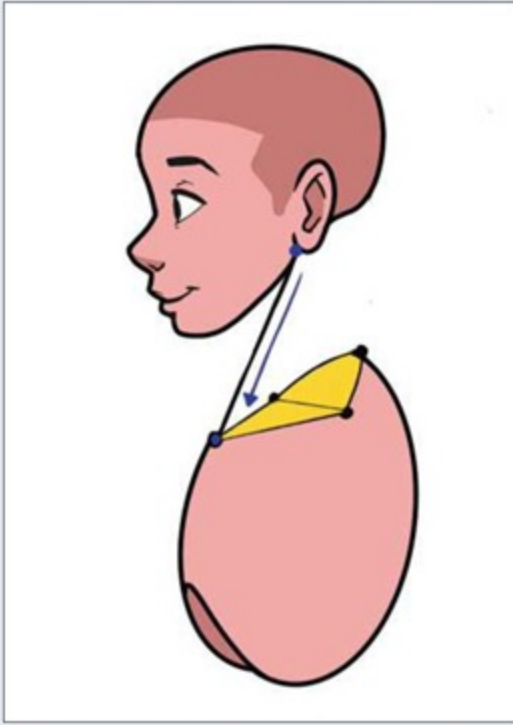
8 The neck in a profile

When it comes to drawing the neck from a side or profile view, we need to understand that our necks are not completely at the top of our bodies. Our necks tend to extend a little from the front-top of our ribcage, with the highest point being the top of our ribcage and the lowest being our collarbone in the front.



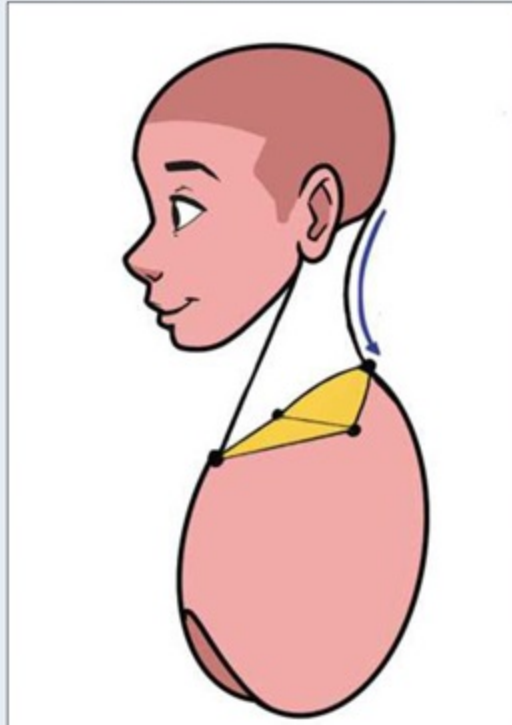
9 Angles and perspective

As we map out the same points as we did on the front view, we have to make sure to take into consideration the slight angle forward of the collarbone, and that the shoulder points should be drawn in a perspective view – with one closer and one pushed further back, as opposed to a flat line.



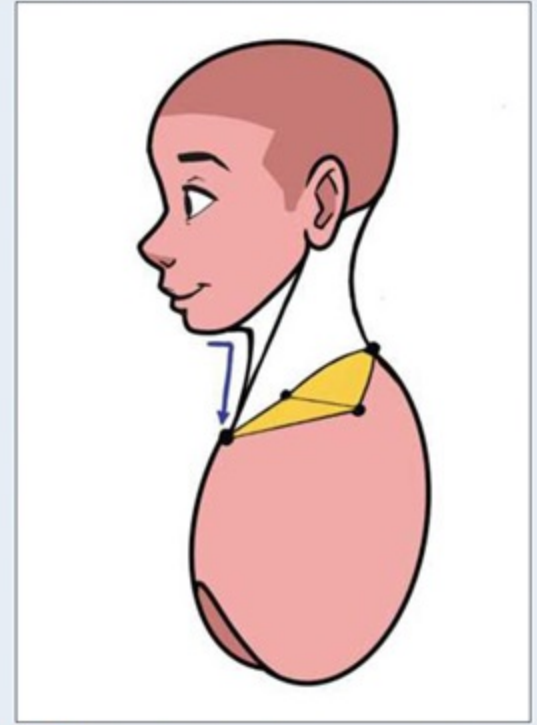
10 Connect the dots again

It is quite easy to start mapping out the muscles in the neck on a profile view. We follow the same guidelines as the front view and we connect the bottom part of the ear to the front middle of the collarbone (Point 1). Keep in mind both sides of the neck as you go about drawing profiles. If the head is turned, you would see the other side too.



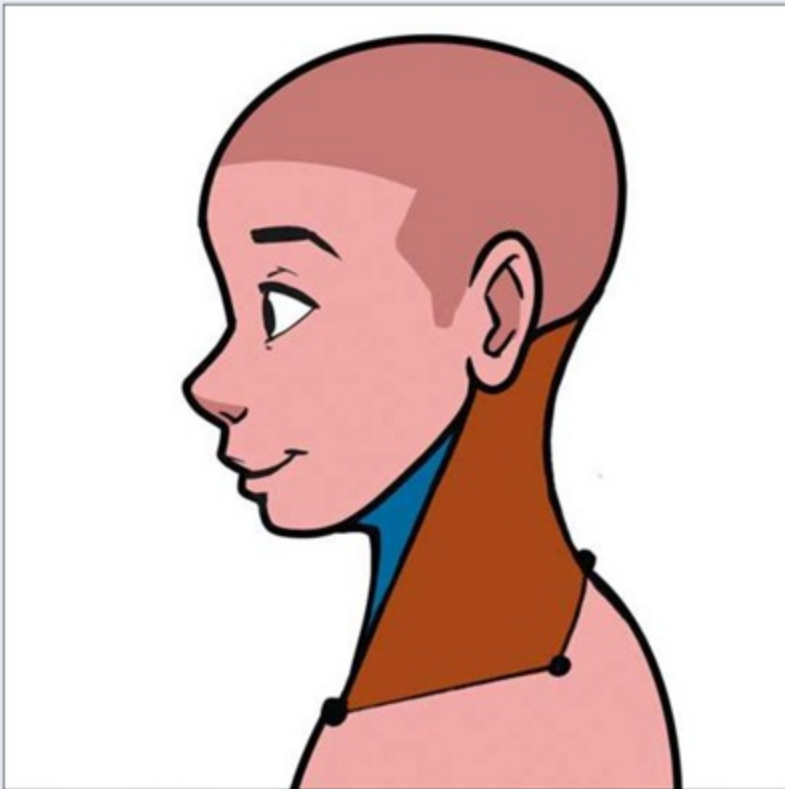
11 Back of the head

The back of the neck will be the main part where Point 4 is used. This is where the neck and the head connect via the spine. This comes in the shape of a curved line that will go from the back of the skull down on to the top of the ribcage. The spine has a natural curve and this is the best way to simplify it.



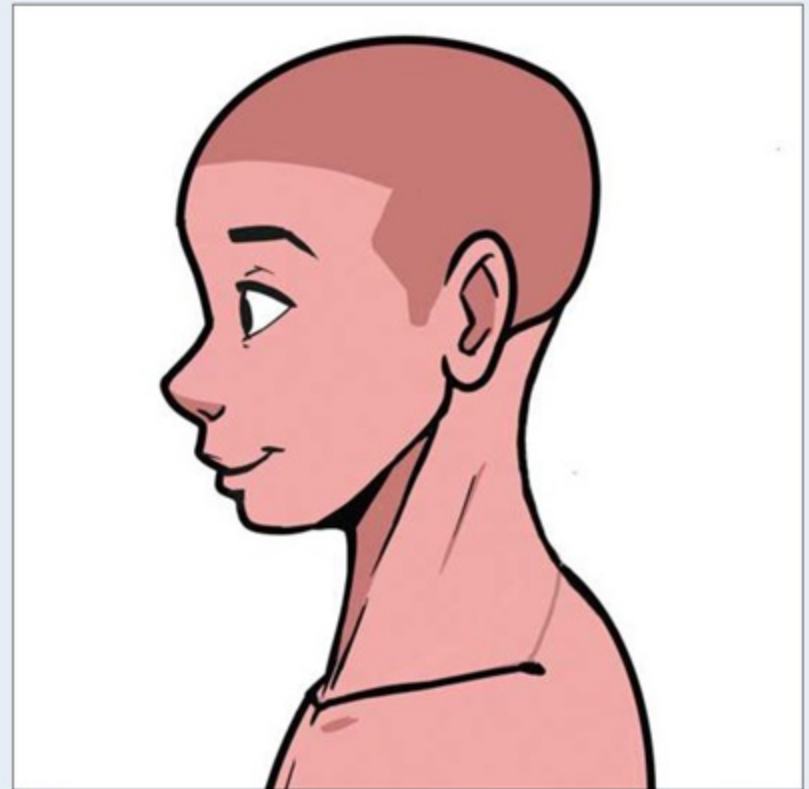
12 Single line for the front

The front of the neck is the skin that tends to stretch from under your chin and down to your collarbone. This can be simplified with a line that goes from your chin, back towards your throat and then curves down on to the middle of your collarbone. This part becomes much easier to draw when you leave it last.



13 Visualise solid shapes

Much like we did on the front view, we will now create solid shapes for each section of the neck. In this case we can break it down to the back of the neck and the front of the neck. When we keep things simple, it is easier for us to be able to recreate this process in many different angles and positions.



14 One process, many styles

By learning this process, you open up the ability to draw necks in a wide variety of styles. Since this is based on real anatomical features, it can be simplified or given greater detail to match what is required for your style. So have fun with the process and keep practising to obtain the best results! ●

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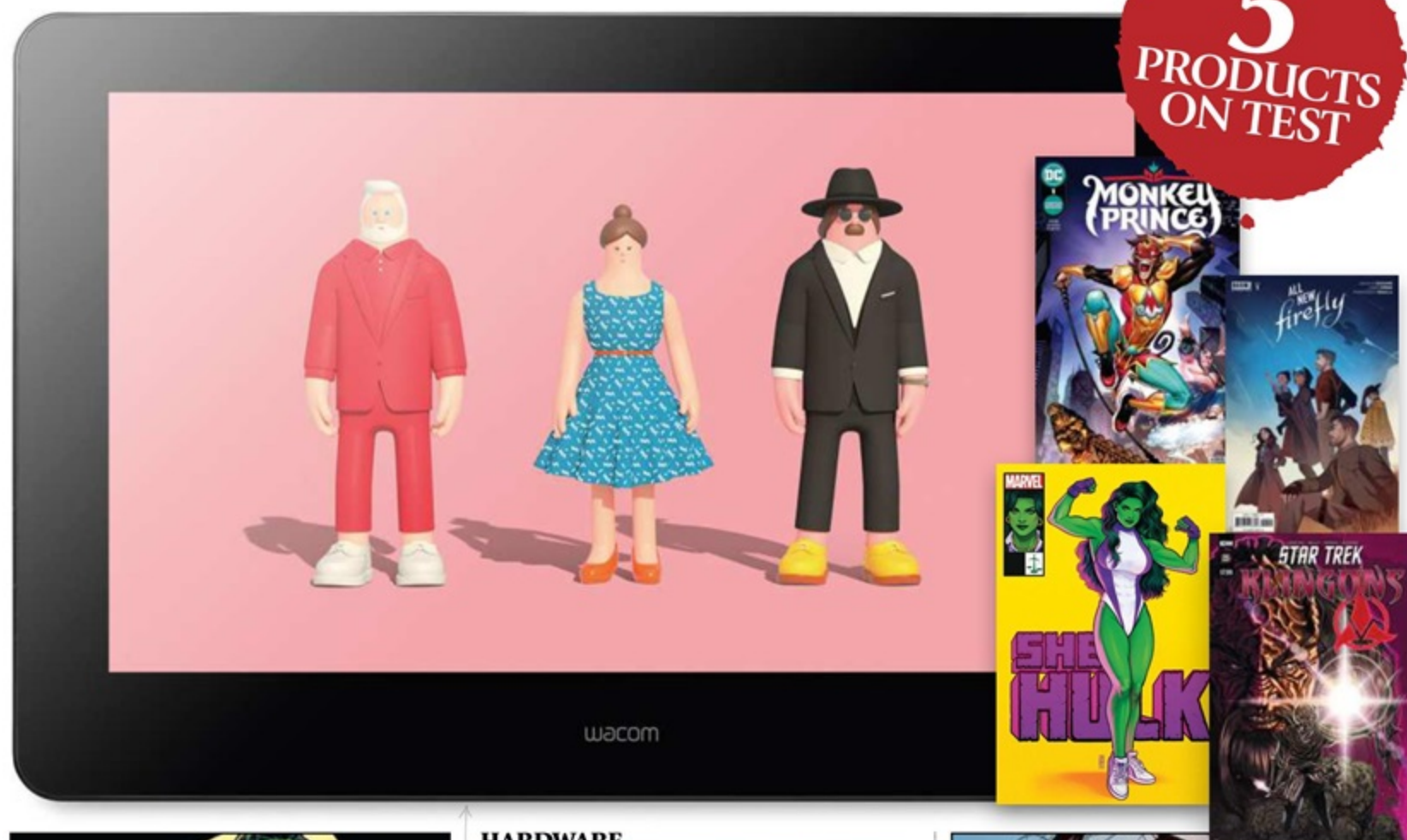
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Artist's Choice Award
Art resources with a five-star rating receive the ImagineFX Artist's Choice award!

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

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PRODUCTS
ON TEST



HARDWARE

82 Wacom Cintiq Pro 16

What's it like to create with this powerful, premium tablet? We test it to find out.

COMICS

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We check out this new, five-issue series starring the superhuman lawyer.

84 Monkey Prince

Discover this whacky combination of superhero action and Chinese fantasy.

85 All-New Firefly

Join the much-loved crew of Serenity on brand-new adventures in this relaunch.



85 Star Trek: Klingons/Ferengi

Two one-shots, focusing on the franchise's alien species, offer a new perspective.



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

The Cintiq can also be used with the optional controller.



All images © Wacom

Wacom Cintiq Pro 16

JOYOUS CREATION We test out and rate this high-performance pen display to determine whether it is worth its premium price

Price £1,350/\$1,500 **Company** Wacom **Web** www.wacom.com

Although there are a number of tablet manufacturers out there, Wacom is one of the longest standing and has a great reputation for quality. In recent years others have upped their game, keeping Wacom on its toes, so it's interesting to see if the latest incarnation of the Cintiq line can keep them at the top.

At first glance, not much has changed. The typical Wacom build quality is obvious, in both look and feel. The Cintiq range has always looked classy while feeling robust; this version is no different, and in some ways better. Some older Wacoms had ExpressKeys on the top surface and while they worked fine, after a few months it would feel like dust could get into the gaps. This never impeded the functionality at all, but the move to the rear of the device helps things feel fresh and new. This move also helps artists who like to lean on their device, as I do. There is a slight learning curve to having ExpressKeys

on the rear, but it doesn't take long and soon feels very natural. There are buttons on either side of the device too, so equally suitable for left and right-handed users.

THE DRAWING EXPERIENCE

The Cintiq Pro 16 features multi-touch, which has been improved on previous generations. Again, this is an incremental change but a noticeable one, and while I don't know what has been done behind the scenes, I would say there is a clear improvement in palm rejection over the last model.

As much as touch interaction is great to have, the pen is clearly the main way users will work with the Cintiq and this is one area that Wacom has always excelled in. The Pro 16 ships with the Pro Pen 2, with 8,192 levels of pressure and 60 degrees of

This tablet can be connected by USB-C or USB, plus HDMI.



angle sensitivity. These figures might not sound miles ahead of the competition, however the Wacom Pen feels excellent in the hand – well built, weighty and responsive.

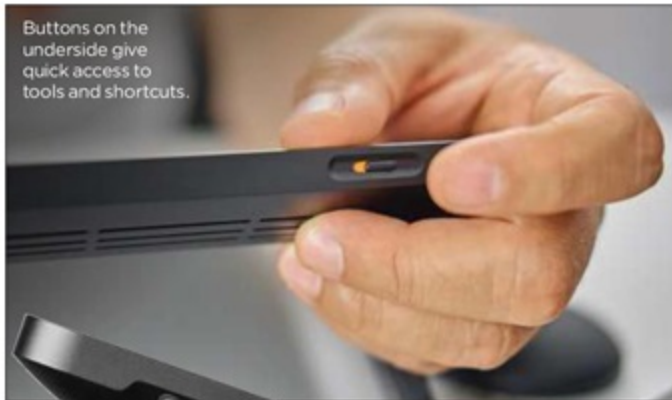
The button action is lovely, they are well placed and the nibs are excellent. The puck-shaped pen holder contains a number of spares, including some felt nibs which are wonderful to draw with, acting in conjunction very much like traditional pen and paper, so none of the sliding-on-glass feel. This may be in part due to the laminated screen, which has a fine texture that also helps

The Pro Pen 2 is one of the best pens out there, with excellent feel and build quality.

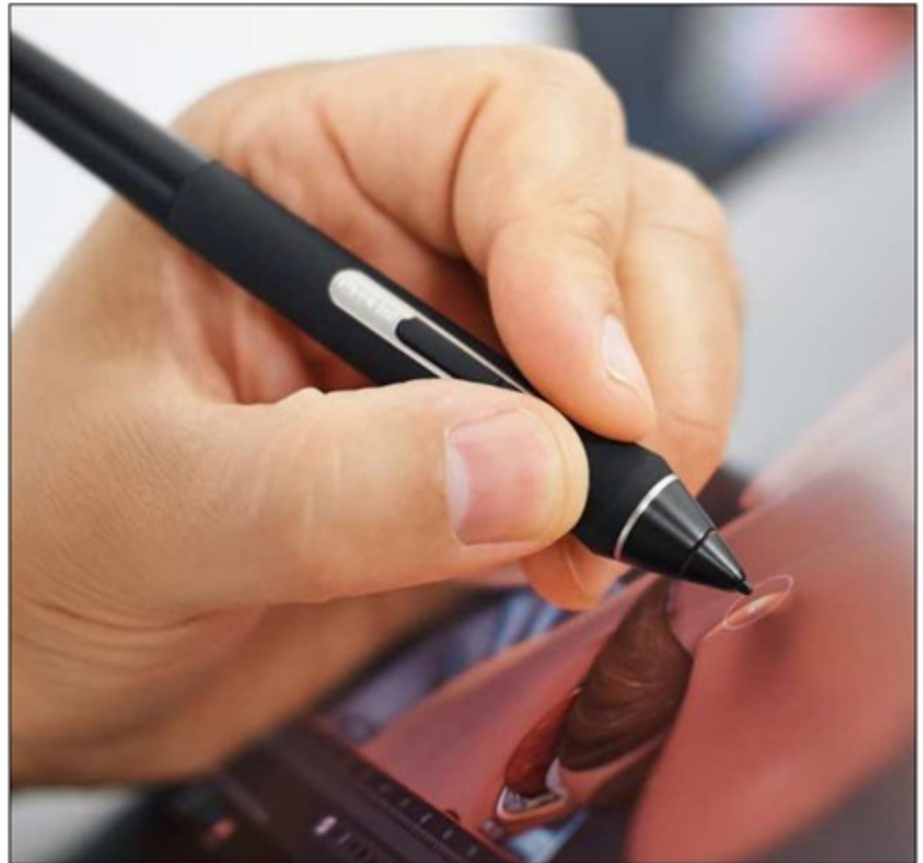




The ExpressKeys on the rear help keep things clean without reducing functionality.



Buttons on the underside give quick access to tools and shortcuts.



The built-in legs allow the tablet to be raised up to a natural-feeling 20-degree angle.

“The gap between the Pro Pen 2 nib and the screen’s surface is tiny, so it really feels like engaging with the art”

with glare reduction. I tested this in a number of environments with differing lighting conditions and glare was never a problem.

This takes us neatly to the display itself, which is a 16:9 4K screen with 300 cd/m2 brightness. While this may not be ground-breaking, compared to a modern phone, iPad or laptop screen it is plenty bright enough and reduces eye fatigue that can be caused by more intensely bright monitors. Clarity and contrast levels are excellent, as is colour accuracy at 98% Adobe RGB. Other options beat this, but in daily use you’d never know.

The laminated screen aids the drawing experience better than many other options too. The gap between the Pro Pen 2 nib and the screen’s

surface is tiny, so it really feels like you’re engaging with the art, rather than hovering a little above it. This helps in the enjoyment and accuracy of drawing on the Cintiq.

Another improvement here over older tablets is the quality of strokes. There’s no perceptible wave or wobble, other than that which is manually drawn, whereas older models could display some odd artefacts when zoomed in and stroke tails are natural looking and smooth, once you dial in the pressure settings to your way of working.

BEST-IN-CLASS

A tablet is usually only as good as its support and Wacom has done well here. There are VESA mounting points

Wacom remains the go-to option when the very best build quality and pen experience is needed. Drawing is a joy, and it’s adaptable to any studio.

should you need them, but the fold-out legs are excellent. Little flex and they raise the device by 20 degrees, which will feel about right when used on a standard-height desk and chair. Options are always welcome.

The same applies for connectivity. You can power up then connect via USB-C, but if your host machine is a little older you can use a separate USB and HDMI cable. While many companies will offer just the latest option, it is nice to see Wacom thinking of the rest of us.

In a world where much is made of the environmental impacts that companies have, it is also good to see Wacom ships the product in fully recyclable packaging. No plastic wraps here at all, and Wacom should be commended for the move to be more sustainable.

So, all in all the Cintiq Pro 16 is a worthy successor. It doesn’t break the mould or change the game in big ways, but makes a number of small moves to keep the Cintiq at the top of the tree. Yes, you pay more for a Wacom but it is money well spent, as I have full confidence that the Cintiq will last for years, just like every other Wacom I have from the last couple of decades. If you work in a visual creative field, or eschew the mouse for a more natural interaction, the Wacom remains king of the hill. ●

DETAILS

Specifications

- Display size: 39.6cm
- Resolution: 3,840 x 2,160 pixels
- Product weight: 1.9kg (4.2 lbs)
- Dimensions: 41 x 26.6 x 2.2cm
- Colour gamut coverage ratio: 98% Adobe RGB (CIE 1931) (typ)
- Response Time: 30 ms (typ)
- 8,192 Pen Pressure levels (pen and eraser)
- Integrated fold-out legs for 20° stand adjustability
- 8 ExpressKeys
- 16.7 million displayable colours
- 13 replacement nibs
- Multi-touch

System Requirements

- PC: Windows 7 or later (latest service pack/build)
- Mac: macOS 10.14 or later (latest update)

Rating





She-Hulk

A NEW START Get to know the superhuman lawyer in preparation for her upcoming live-action series

Issues 1-3 **Writer** Rainbow Rowell **Artist** Rogê Antônio **Publisher** Marvel Comics

Sometimes, a comics publisher hitting the 'superhero reset' button is perfectly understandable.

Take the case of Jennifer Walters, aka She-Hulk: she's spent the last few years undergoing a tortuous and sometimes traumatic series of twists, but there's also a Disney+ series coming later this year.

To prepare the ground for this, Marvel has chosen to get back to basics and establish an easy jumping-on point for the character with a new five-issue miniseries.

Writer Rainbow Rowell quickly sketches out how down-on-her-luck Jennifer Walters currently is, with her recent departure from the Avengers meaning that she has to return to working as a lawyer. Rainbow's script focuses on characterisation and humour, and some of her choices work



very well, especially in terms of establishing Jen as an engaging protagonist. This is also helped by the enjoyable visuals from Rogê Antônio, who gives us a version of She-Hulk that's vibrant, characterful and sexy.

However, too much of the narrative revolves around the lesser-known Jack of Hearts (especially in issue two) and his mystery resurrection. As a narrative hook it ends up feeling less than compelling, and Jennifer's relationship with Jack isn't really strong enough to justify how much space it's currently

“Rogê gives us a version of She-Hulk that's vibrant, characterful and sexy”

taking up. Combined with the extremely gentle pacing, the result feels too much like a place-setting opening arc for an ongoing title, rather than a five-parter that's got something to prove.

There's still light and frothy fun to be had with this current incarnation of She-Hulk, though; here's hoping that the final two issues deliver something a little more focused and compulsive.

RATING ★★★★★



Rogê Antônio's visuals pack in maximum expressiveness into each page, whether it's a conversation or a fight scene.

It might now be tricky to live an ordinary life as the successor the legendary Monkey King...



Monkey Prince

Issues 1-3
Writer Gene Luen Yang
Artist Bernard Chang
Publisher DC Comics

DC's occasional habit of making blatant plays for the Chinese audience is in evidence again with its latest miniseries, an oddball escapade in which mythological characters cross paths with DC superheroes.

The centuries-old Chinese fantasy epic Journey To The West has been adapted countless times, and here it's used as the springboard for the adventures of Marcus, a nervous, bullied Gotham teenager who suddenly discovers he's the son of the legendary Monkey King and heir to his anarchic abilities.

Soon, he's renaming himself the Monkey Prince, facing off against his bullies and accidentally battling Batman, while also confronting a demon-possessed Penguin in an all-ages adventure that does its best to keep the pace high and the gags numerous.

There's an infectious level of energy and enthusiasm in the first three issues, although the storytelling is very routine once you look past the mythic weirdness. However, the comic's bright, upbeat approach is enhanced by Bernard Chang's art, which pulls off a bunch of striking layouts and serves to keep the comic's tone whimsical and cartoony at all times.

The blend of superhero action and lurid Chinese fantasy is sometimes a little awkward, but otherwise this is a daft and likeable romp that should go down well with younger fans.

RATING ★★★★★

Get ready for brand-new adventures starring the series' familiar, much-loved characters.



All-New Firefly

Issues 1-3

Writer David M Booher

Artist Jordi Pérez

Publisher BOOM! Studios

This relaunch of the monthly *Firefly* comic brings in a new creative team, and returns the series to first principals after the expansive *Earth That Was* arc.

The crew are all together again (along with newbie Leonard), but things are not going well. Kaylee is captain now and the ship is running dangerously low on food and fuel. Following a tip-off from Jayne, the crew investigate *Requiem*, a smuggler's moon. When they get there, however, they discover a monastery under attack from a dangerous gang of local hoodlums.

Plot-wise, it's standard-issue *Firefly*, but David M Booher's script does a fine job of honing in on what originally made the TV show so memorable: its strong characterisation. Jayne is the focus of this initial arc, and the story probes at both his fundamental untrustworthiness and his occasional, unexpected capacity for kindness. Kaylee, meanwhile, is struggling with leadership, but Booher smartly avoids pitting her against Mal, who seems quite happy to step back and support her. It's a neat shift in dynamics.

Jordi Pérez's lightly stylised art and Francesco Segala and Gloria Martinelli's colours capture the space Western vibe perfectly, bringing a real earthiness to the book. It's a credible continuation of the show, which understands why we fell in love with these characters all those years ago.

RATING ★★★★★☆



In upcoming one-shots of this alien-focused series, the Trills and the Vulcans will also be receiving their own spotlight stories.

Star Trek: Klingons/Ferengi

ALIEN ORIGINS Two one-shot comics kick off a new series shining the spotlight on the franchise's diverse alien species

Format One-shots **Writer** Jackson Lanzing, Collin Kelly, Christina Rice **Artist** Timothy Green II, Andy Price, Maria Keane **Publisher** IDW Publishing

With any humans limited to fleeting appearances, *Star Trek*'s alien species take centre stage in this pair of one-shots. As *Trek*'s most famous extraterrestrials, the Klingons are unsurprisingly the focus of the first issue, which chronicles the formative days of the warrior race's most formidable ruler, Kahless the Unforgettable, and how he reputedly fought off an entire army at the legendary Three Turn Bridge.

Opening with a rare scene of Kahless displaying his more tender side, as he first bests and then befriends a multiple-tusked, boar-like creature, writers Jackson Lanzing and Collin Kelly neatly evoke the spirit of Akira Kurosawa's samurai films as they



play with notions of honour. Keeping dialogue to a minimum, they often leave it to Timothy Green II's manga-flavoured art to tell the tale, resulting in several exhilarating fight scenes, as he combines visceral figure work with imaginative layouts.

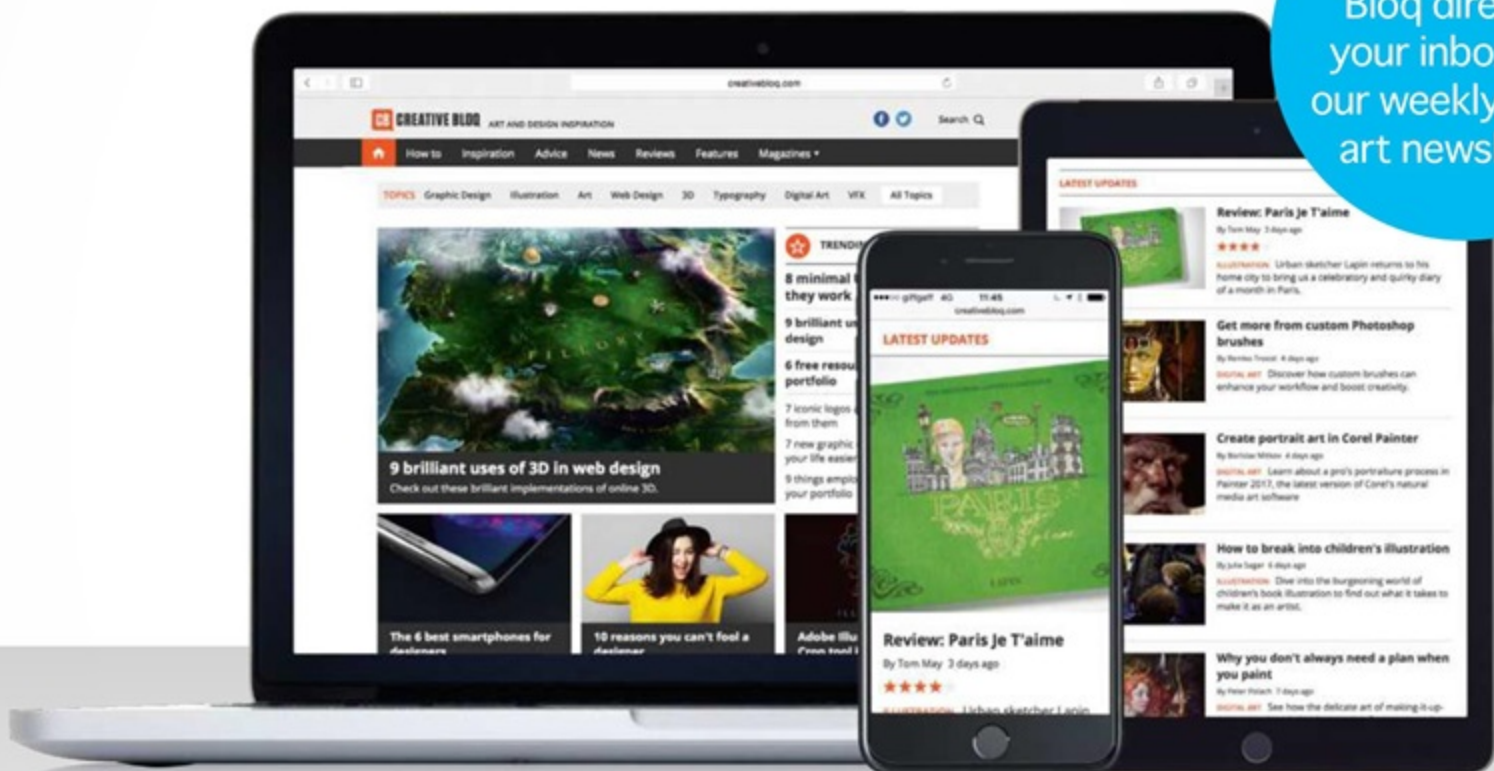
In contrast, there's an offbeat, caper-esque quality to the second special's story of the Ferengi, as Deep Space Nine barkeep Quark becomes embroiled in a plot to smuggle women off their home-world. Aided by Andy Price and Maria Keane's vibrant artwork, Christina Rice's boisterous script explores one of the more dubious aspects of Ferengi culture: their belief that women not only shouldn't earn money but shouldn't even wear clothes. She handles it deftly, mixing pathos with sly humour. A promising new series of one-shots, bringing a different perspective to the *Star Trek* universe.

RATING ★★★★★☆

“The manga-flavoured art combines visceral figure work with imaginative layouts”

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This issue:

88 Traditional FXPosé

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

92 Workshop: Create an underwater scene

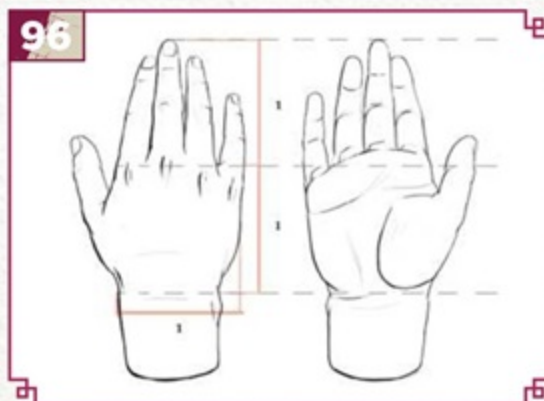
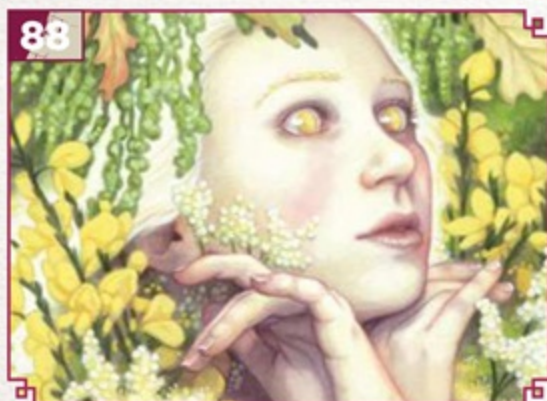
Natacha Chohra paints an alluring scene with watercolours.

96 Workshop: Simple tricks for hand structure

Part 7 of Charlie Pickard's series on anatomy fundamentals.

98 First Impressions: Emily Fiegenschuh

The fantasy artist discusses her style, projects and influences.



FXPosé

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS



Elisabeth Alba

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Ink, watercolour, acryla gouache WEB: www.albailustration.com

From charming animal portraits to mystical enchanted imagery, Elisabeth Alba strives to spark joy and wonder in those who view her fantastical work.



1 THE HIGH PRIESTESS

"The High Priestess card from the Tarot of the Owls deck that I illustrated, written by Pamela Chen. I really love painting celestial skies!"

2 THE EVERYDAY WITCH'S COVEN

"This is a book cover illustration created for author Deborah Blake for her upcoming book with Llewellyn Worldwide."



3 SPIRIT OF THE WOLF

"A pet portrait commission. The collectors wanted their beloved dog, Bigby, leaping through the forest surrounded by all of his favourite things."

4 BLODEUWEDD

"A personal piece depicting Blodeuwedd from Welsh mythology. She is the wife of Lleu Llaw Gyffes, cursed to never have a human wife."





Bodo August Krühn

LOCATION: Poland **MEDIA:** Oil **WEB:** linktr.ee/voidbrush

Bodo is a self-taught fantasy illustrator who made the leap from a passionate hobbyist to a full-time artist in 2021. "Now I live my dream of working digitally and unwinding traditionally."

1 **AKANKIVIKELO**

"The magic of these Kelo trees is very potent due to the nourishment provided by the enchanted hagstones."

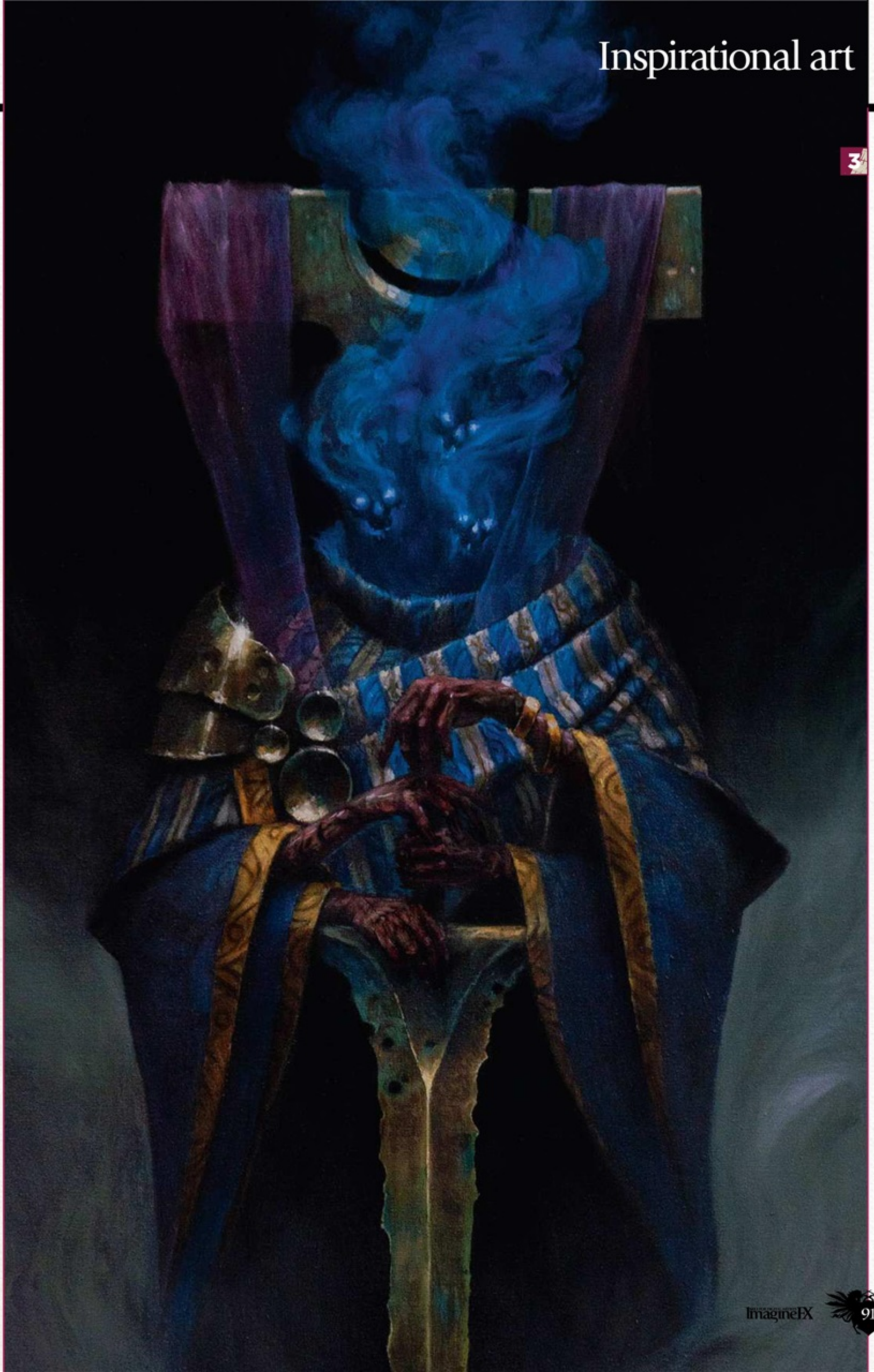
2 **MOSSTRONAUTS**

"The first oil painting I ever worked on during a stream. It's since gone through some dramatic changes and looks wildly different nowadays."

3 **THE MAGISTRATE**

"The Magistrate is a creature of authority. It is the embodiment of legislature, judiciary and executive power fused into one."





Pencil

Watercolour

Gouache

CREATE A BEAUTIFUL UNDERWATER SCENE

NATACHA CHOHRA demonstrates how she works with watercolour to paint an aquatic environment teeming with marine life and home to a captivating mermaid

To keep things fresh and interesting when I paint, I always like to find new ways to challenge myself – and attempting an underwater portrait certainly provided just that!

I created this piece for a marine-themed online auction that was organised by an art collective I am part of. Having mostly painted 'full body' mermaids before, I fancied a bit of a change so opted this time to go for a more intimate, close-up

portrait of the siren, with no complicated background scenery – just the main character of the piece looking straight into the viewer's eyes as if they are about to let them in on a secret.

My medium of choice is watercolour, a medium that is notoriously unforgiving and at times hard to control, but over time I have come to embrace its unpredictable and fluid nature. Although mistakes made in watercolour can be almost impossible to correct, sometimes a

happy accident makes for an interesting outcome. Initially 'La Sirène' was not meant to be so 'blue', but a moment of inattention on my part and the blue-tinged wash meant for the background spilled across her face and hair, which in the end worked out very well for the overall underwater effect of the piece.



Natacha is a French artist living in the UK who enjoys creating ethereal and whimsical art. See more of her work at www.natachachohra.com.

Step-by-step: Paint a captivating portrait with watercolours



1 PENCIL SKETCH

I am not much of a planner with my art and work a lot by instinct, so apart from a super-quick thumbnail sketch to establish general composition, I tend to develop the drawing straight onto the page with the help of my reference photos. I just keep the pencil work very light in case I need to rub some off or make changes.



2 INITIAL COLOURS

I make sure to never start painting until I am one hundred per cent happy with my initial drawing. After scanning it (just in case!) I lay a single colour wash over the page, which helps me to set the desired tone of the painting. I then block all the main colours, again keeping the washes thin and light to start with.



3 FINAL DETAILS

I then build colour up on my painting slowly, taking my time, adding layer upon layer of thin colour washes and making sure each layer is fully dry before moving onto the next one. This helps give a soft and muted quality to the piece. Then the fun part, adding detail! I always work on faces first, and paint the background last.

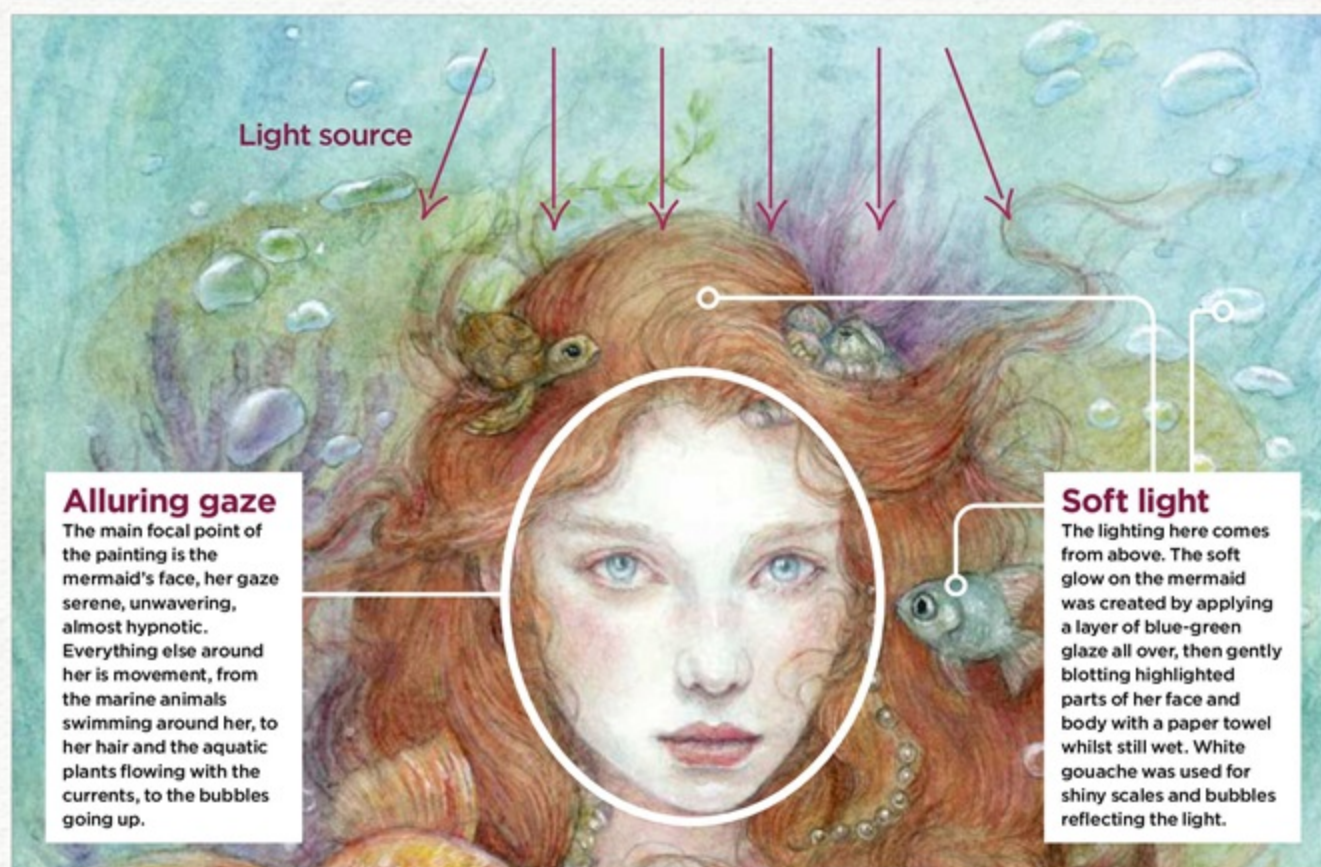


In-depth: Highlighting key focal points



Aquatic companions

I wanted the goldfish to be the most forefront element in the painting, so I used subtle shading behind it on the mermaid's skin and hair, painted the fish with bolder colours, and highlighted the scales to create emphasis and make it stand out from everything else in the background.



Light source

Alluring gaze

The main focal point of the painting is the mermaid's face, her gaze serene, unwavering, almost hypnotic. Everything else around her is movement, from the marine animals swimming around her, to her hair and the aquatic plants flowing with the currents, to the bubbles going up.

Soft light

The lighting here comes from above. The soft glow on the mermaid was created by applying a layer of blue-green glaze all over, then gently blotting highlighted parts of her face and body with a paper towel whilst still wet. White gouache was used for shiny scales and bubbles reflecting the light.

MATERIALS

PAPER

- Sketchbook for thumbnailing
- Arches cold-pressed watercolour paper, stretched on MDF board with Scotch delicate surface masking tape

PAINT

- Sennelier pan watercolours
- Super Vision layered watercolour tubes (Ocean Paradise set)
- White gouache for highlights

BRUSHES

- Cheap, old paintbrush for washes
- Winsor & Newton sable brushes for detail

PENCIL

- Graphgear 1000 mechanical pencil

Artist insight Underwater scenes

Distant shoal

I added the hint of a shoal of fish far above the mermaid near the water surface to give a sense of depth and distance.

Marine ecosystem

I like to think of elemental faery folk as being part of the organic ecosystem which surrounds them. This is what I tried to represent here by adding barnacles and aquatic plants to the mermaid's body, as if to make her an integral part of the marine habitat surrounding her.

Simple backdrop

In this painting the background is the least important component: using cooler and more faded colours on the corals and sponges, and refraining from adding too much detail to them, helps push the main character of the painting (and her fish companions) to the foreground.

Visible movement

I like to keep pencil lines from my drawings visibly showing through the paint. This was particularly useful here to help create the flow and movement of the hair and the aquatic plants.

Extra details

The bubbles were an afterthought: when the painting was almost done I felt that the composition looked a little empty. Once I had added the bubbles I then worried that it was too 'busy', but I now actually like them there.

Anatomy quick tips

SIMPLE TRICKS FOR HAND STRUCTURE

CHARLIE PICKARD continues his ten-part series of quick tips on anatomy; this month, he explores a few simple approaches for structurally solid hands

The hand has a notorious reputation for being one of the most difficult forms on the body to get right. The reasons for this are obvious: the hand boasts 27 small bones, which enable it to vary in its superficial shape more than any other area of the body.

The reason for this complexity is the hands are often our primary tool for manipulating the environment



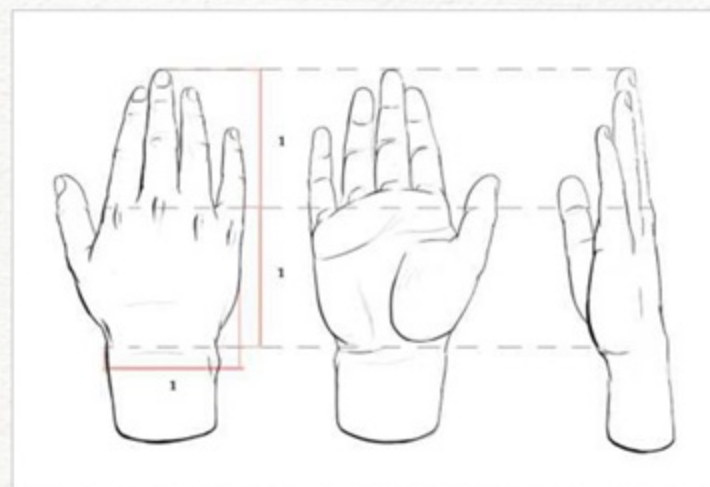
around us and as such, they need to be as flexible in function as possible. As artists, the hand offers us one of the highest potentials for expression in our drawings and due to this, it is absolutely worth the time it takes to master them.

Luckily for us, while the superficial image of the hand is incredibly complex, there are a few simple structural ideas of the hand that remain remarkably consistent

regardless of position. These will be our guiding light when approaching learning this difficult form, so let's take a look and explore how to approach them.



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



1 A few useful proportions

As always, we can start our study with a careful look at the simple orthographic views. From the dorsal (back) view the body of the hand exists within a one-by-one square, if we double this measurement upwards, we can place the top of the fingers. The body of the hand connecting to the thumb is an addition to this general proportion. The body of the hand is generally thicker towards the bottom and thinner as it becomes the finger. This general tapering shape continues through all of the fingers.

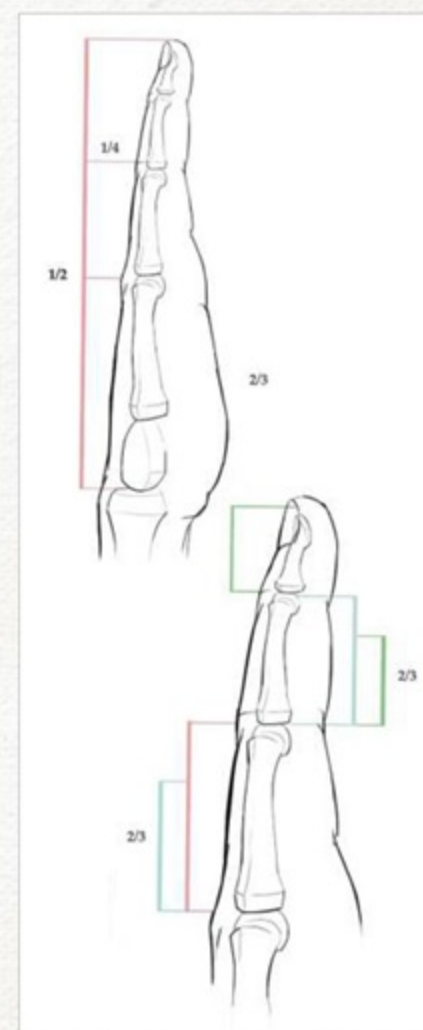
The longest finger is the middle finger and they get progressively shorter out towards each side. This creates a rhythmic curve, most clearly seen at the start of the fingers on the palmar (frontal view). This general rhythm is repeated through the fingers and serves to connect the general sizes of each finger along with its individual details.

2 Finger sizes

An important proportional element often difficult to maintain control of is the sizes of the various parts of the fingers. Luckily for us, while each finger will be a different overall size, the relationship between parts will be quite consistent regardless of the size.

The first proportion I find most useful is that we can break the overall finger into quarters. As already stated, the body of the hand represents half of the overall height that each finger reaches. Alongside this, the end of the first knuckle of the finger lies one quarter of the way down. So if you have placed the entire finger, you need only cut the shape in half and you have that first knuckle. This is a massive boon when trying to place the basic proportions quickly.

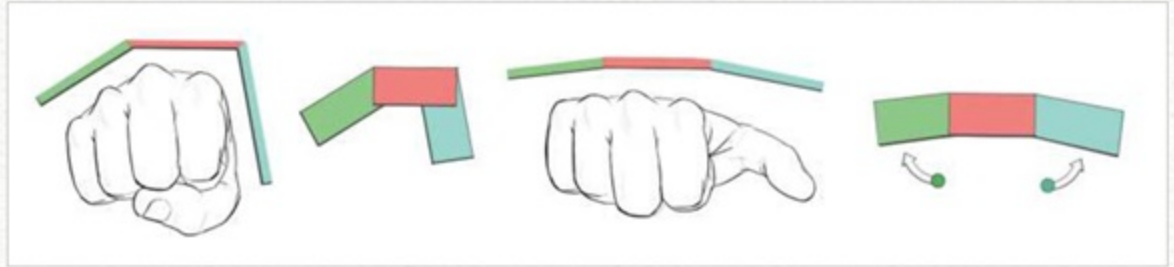
Seen right, we have a slightly more nuanced proportion relating to each part. Each smaller finger bone as it rises out of the previous one is $\frac{2}{3}$ the size of the previous finger. Capturing these proportions along with a general taper to the finger will help to build a believable shape.



3 Plane structure

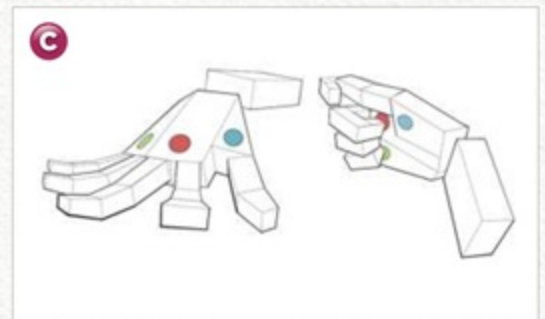
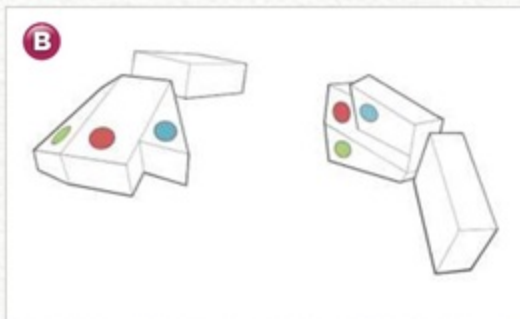
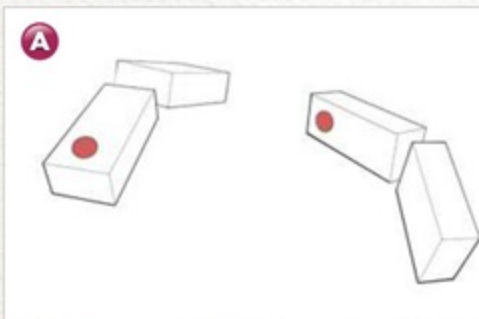
As we begin to look for structures that we can rely on consistently regardless of the hand's position, I find it helpful to look at a hand shape that we are all familiar with – the fist.

If we take a careful look at this iconic shape we can observe clear, three-plane breaks creating the shape of the knuckles, and therefore the body, of the hand. The central plane (in red) connects the index and middle finger with two planes leading off each side, in one direction towards the thumb (blue), in the other towards the little finger (green). These three simple planes are, in my opinion, the most important concept to understand for structural hands.



If we also examine how much movement we can create in these planes, by testing the two extremes of movement within a fist, we can see that they are not all created equal. While there is an impressive amount of movement available in the thumb (almost 90 degrees!), there is far less available to the little finger side and the central plane is, for the most part, immovable. Try to make these positions with your own

hand and see what it means. From this, we can see that much of the changing shapes of the hands are caused by these moveable planes and regardless of the pose or position of the hand, this central plane will always remain consistent, which is fantastic news for us! Due to the unchanging nature of the central plane, it will serve us fantastically as our central structural pillar that we can build our other structures out of.



4 Basic approach

Let's take a look at a couple of simple demonstrations:

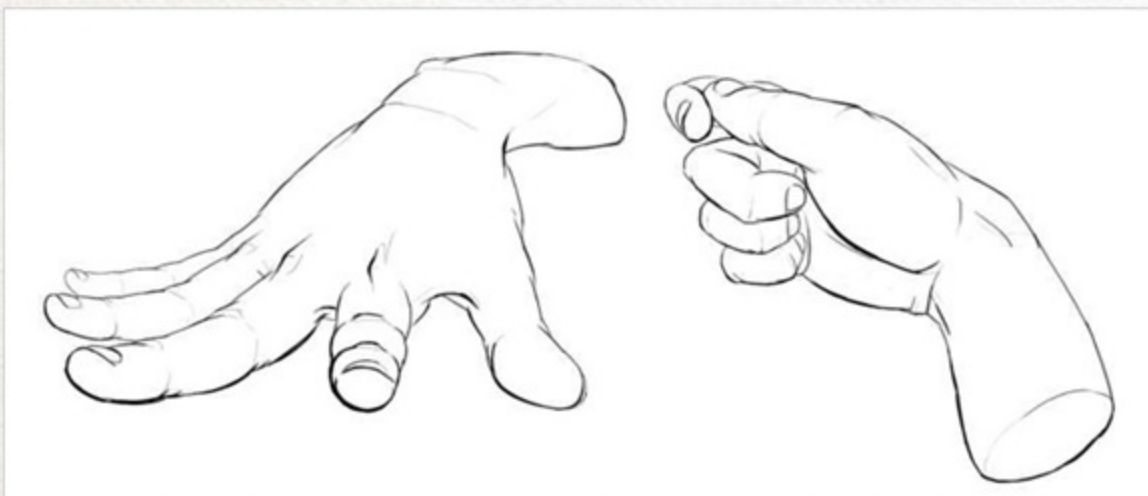
A Here we can really see how simple this approach makes setting up the initial perspective of the drawing. It may not look like much just yet, but all of the crucial positioning and posing information is already here. You may not feel able to visualise a hand, but anyone can visualise two blocks.

B Next, we attach the two additional, moveable blocks. To work out how much you want these to be moved, reference the initial red block; this is a crucial step in deciding the final shapes of the hand, so some experimentation may be required here.

C The final set-up step here is adding the fingers and thumb as simple blocks. Remember to consider the diminishing sizes of

each finger along with the rhythmic connection we spoke of earlier.

As far as placing the perspective of these fingers, they will be fully aligned with the blocks. You can see how the effort we originally went to placing these blocks was well worth it, giving us a great setup for placing these varied forms. With that, we have a pretty solid simple hand with a clear pose. This general method will work for hands of any position.



5 Finish with small details

Once all of the large perspective and structures of the hands have been established solidly, the major work of the drawing has been done. It may be surprising, but adding the small folds and details is quite simple once we have a solid structure to hang them on.

As always, the best way to understand these concepts is to draw and experiment, so get started and try out a range of hand shapes and expressions. Happy drawing! ■

First Impressions

✧ Emily Fiegenschuh ✧

The fantasy artist discusses her style and latest projects



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

Nature has been a huge inspiration, in the last decade especially. Natural elements and organic shapes have always been a feature of my work, but recently I've been incorporating nature into my pieces more deliberately. I've gotten a lot better at identifying different plants in the process. Learning new things is always fun!

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

My first job out of art school was at a studio, designing collectibles. Shortly after I left that job, I landed my first freelance assignment with Wizards of the Coast, illustrating two creatures for the 3.5 edition of Dungeons and Dragons. They were an asperii, a magical flying horse, and myconids, basically mushroom people. Hopefully it's apparent that my draftsmanship skills have improved in the last two decades,



THE FAERY GODMOTHER OF WINTER/THE QUEEN OF SWORDS

One of my soon-to-be published tarot deck illustrations. I loved painting all the details of her winter crown and the seeds of the pomegranate.

CHILDREN OF THE FOREST

I made this painting for a gallery show in 2015. It has become my most popular image.



THE LOOKOUT

This painting was printed in Llewellyn's 2020 Magical Faery Calendar. I illustrated three faery calendars for Llewellyn Worldwide from 2019 through 2021.

“I like to build up the gouache in transparent layers, rather than use it opaquely”



but I'd say the subject matter was a pretty good fit for me. I still like to incorporate elements of humour and whimsy in my pictures like I did with the myconids.

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

The biggest difference between the art I'm working on now, and my early illustrations for D&D, is that these are full illustrations – complete scenes with many characters and other elements to juggle. While they are more complicated to work on, there has also been a satisfying element of freedom to these illustrations because I've been able to put my own spin on them. While I still have to work within the guidelines of the theme the author has chosen, it's a collaborative process and we're creating something new. My work is not as limited by the framework of an established world or style guide.

Is your art evolving? What's the most recent experiment that you've made?

The subject matter of my artwork, fantasy, has always been consistent. I've also always used water-based media, usually gouache, for my illustrations. What has evolved the most is the technique I use to paint with gouache. While technically 'incorrect', I like to build up the gouache in transparent layers like one would with watercolours, rather than use it opaquely.

How has the art industry changed since you've started working?

When I was first looking for freelance work, most of us were still sending out physical portfolios. That has all changed now. I can't think of any client that has asked to see physical samples recently.

There's also no more last-minute rush, paintings in hand, to the final FedEx pickup for the night. Now everything is submitted digitally. While more convenient, the downside to sending digital art files for traditional artists is that the client never sees the original, so they have nothing to compare when trying to colour match. They have to rely on what's shown on their screen. This makes it more difficult to get a faithful reproduction of my artwork in print.

What does the future hold for you?

I'm working on a tarot card deck with Llewellyn Worldwide. It's been a fun but challenging experience, with 79 paintings to complete! I'm looking forward to its eventual release. Once that is finished I hope to continue working with clients, but also to branch out with more personal work.

Emily has illustrated for many clients including Wizards of the Coast, Inhabit Media, and Llewellyn Worldwide. She is the author of *The Explorer's Guide to Drawing Fantasy Creatures*, a how-to-draw book for creature enthusiasts. See more of her work at www.e-figart.com

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