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NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX

PAINT LIKE LOISH

Techniques and inspiration
from the community's
favourite artist!



HER TOP PICKS...

J.A.W. COOPER
IAIN MCCAG
SACHIN TENG
ELIZA IVANOVA

AND MORE!

WORKSHOPS

**CREATE SURREAL
ZODIAC ARTWORK**

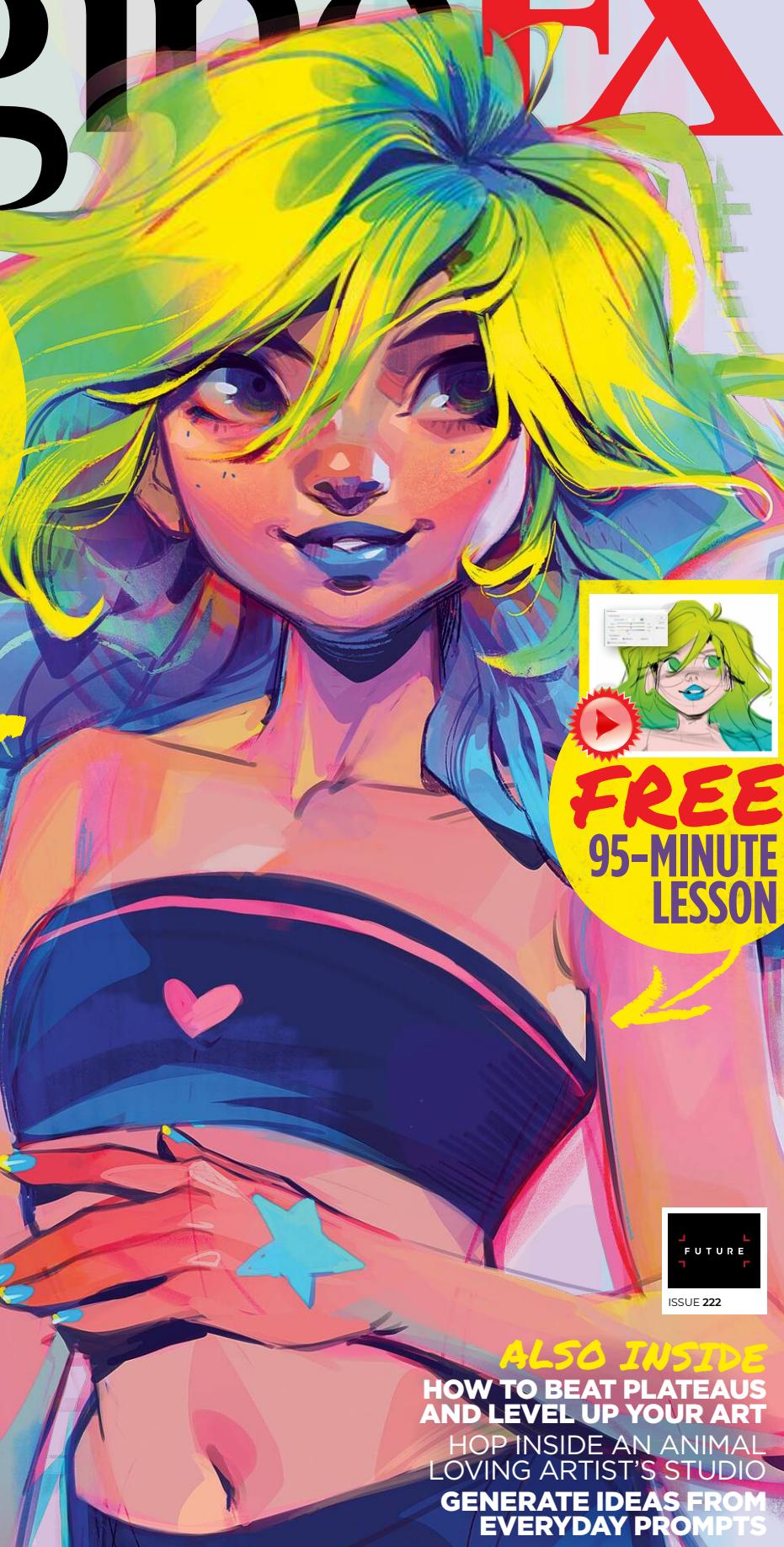


**BACK TO BASICS WITH
COMPOSITION THEORY**

INTERVIEW

TONY DITERLIZZI

The Spiderwick Chronicles
artist shares his influences



ISSUE 222

ALSO INSIDE
**HOW TO BEAT PLATEAUS
AND LEVEL UP YOUR ART**
HOP INSIDE AN ANIMAL
LOVING ARTIST'S STUDIO
**GENERATE IDEAS FROM
EVERYDAY PROMPTS**

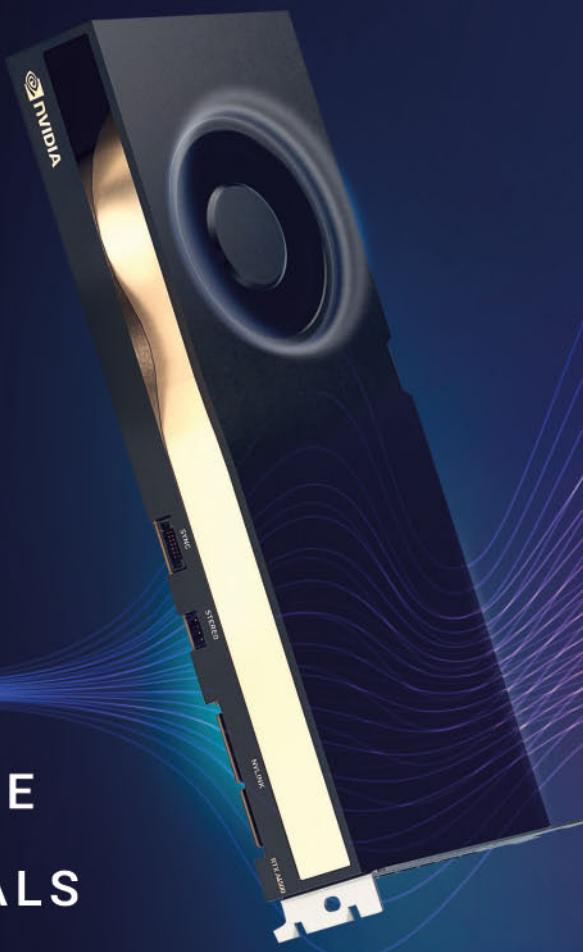


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Welcome to... NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS **ImagineFX**



Hello ImagineFX readers! It's truly an honour to be the Guest Editor for this issue. ImagineFX was the first magazine to ever print my artwork. Now, 17 years later, I'm so excited to be able to share some of my biggest artistic inspirations with you all, ranging from some of my earliest influences to some of my most recent.

Hopefully this issue will paint a more detailed picture of the art that has shaped my work, and later my career path. As a teenager, I stumbled upon Aurore Blackcat's website and was absolutely enthralled by her digital art. Her work has had a massive influence on my style, workflow and subject matter. Some of my other early influences like Jana Schirmer and Iain McCaig are also featured in this issue.

Artists who I discovered later, but were just as foundational to my work, can also be found among these pages. Mattahan's art has had a massive influence on my painting style, and Eliza Ivanova's work has changed how I approach sketches. I hope that you'll find their work just as inspiring as I do, and that you'll enjoy this special issue of ImagineFX!

Loish

Guest Editor
Lois van Baarle

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EDITOR'S CHOICE

Three of my top picks this month...

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Shaping Loish

Find out all about my journey and the amazing artists that have influenced my life and career so far.

68



Expert guide to radiating lines

Learn how the use of compositional lines can take the storytelling in your artwork to the next level.

90



Paint a gouache mountain

Discover the design and colour tricks behind Angela Sung's captivating sunset landscape scene.



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ImagineFX

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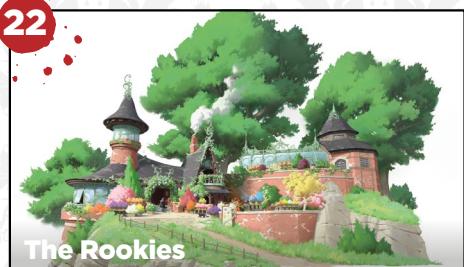
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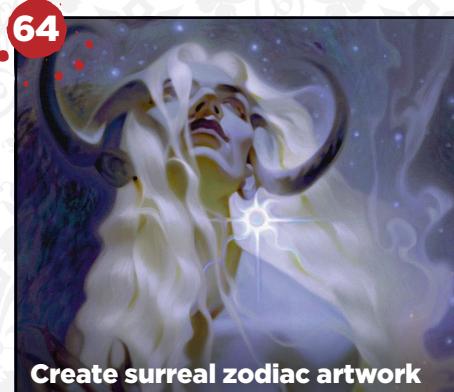


Artist in Residence:
Paige Woodward Scheier

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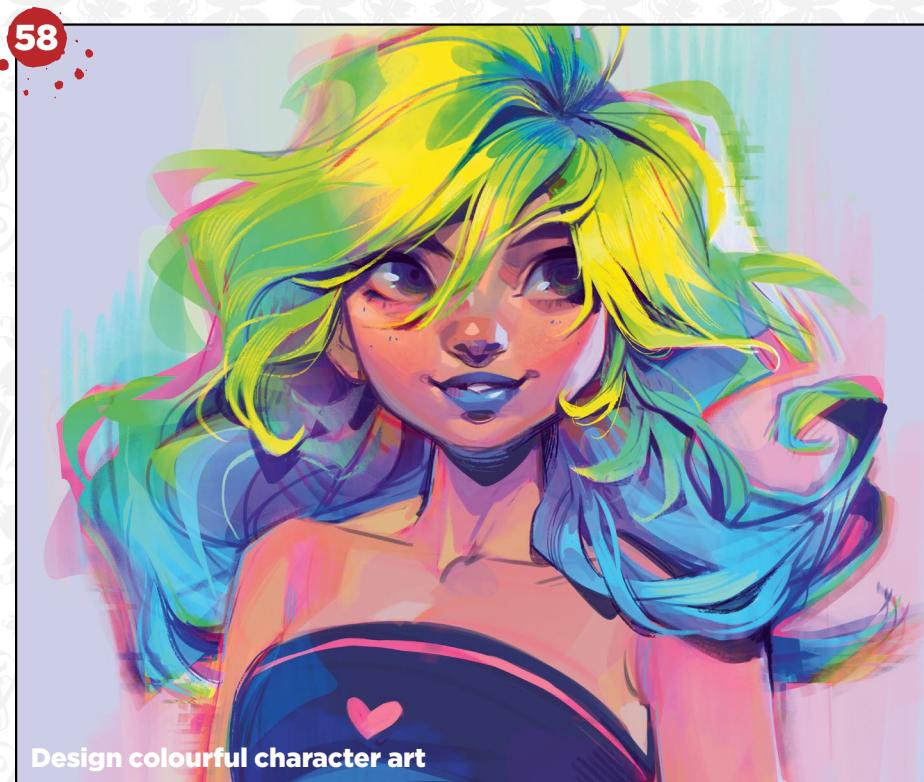
Sketchbook: Jens Claessens



Create surreal zodiac artwork



Guide to radiating lines



Design colourful character art



Design language



Develop ideas for drawing



First Impressions:
Tony DiTerlizzi

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64 Create surreal zodiac artwork
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Tyler Edlin takes real-world settings to create unique fantasy scenes.

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Paint a gouache mountain

Traditional Artist

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94 Humanise your animal sketches
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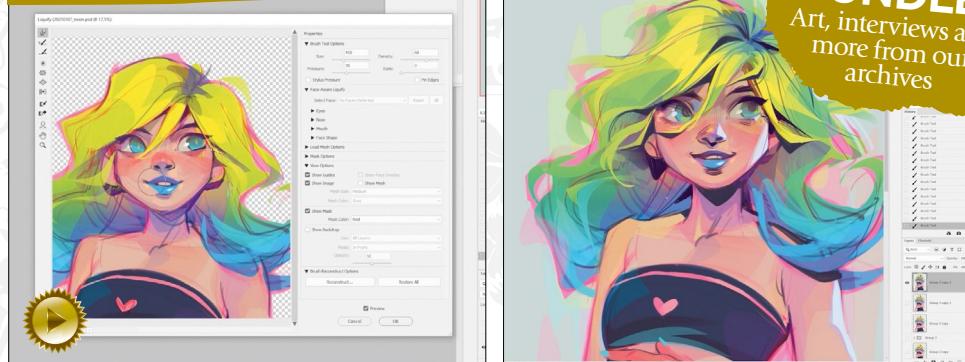
**96 First Impressions:
Tony DiTerlizzi**
The author and illustrator tells us about his defining works and influential advice.



NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX Resources

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

WORKSHOP FILES



Loish workshop: Follow along with her 95-minute tutorial

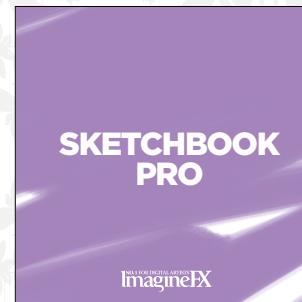
Our Guest Editor shares her advice on how to choose captivating colours for your character art.



Download 8 Photoshop brushes for use in your own projects

Spruce up your work with brushes curated by Loish, Sachin Teng and Valentina Remenar.

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!

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

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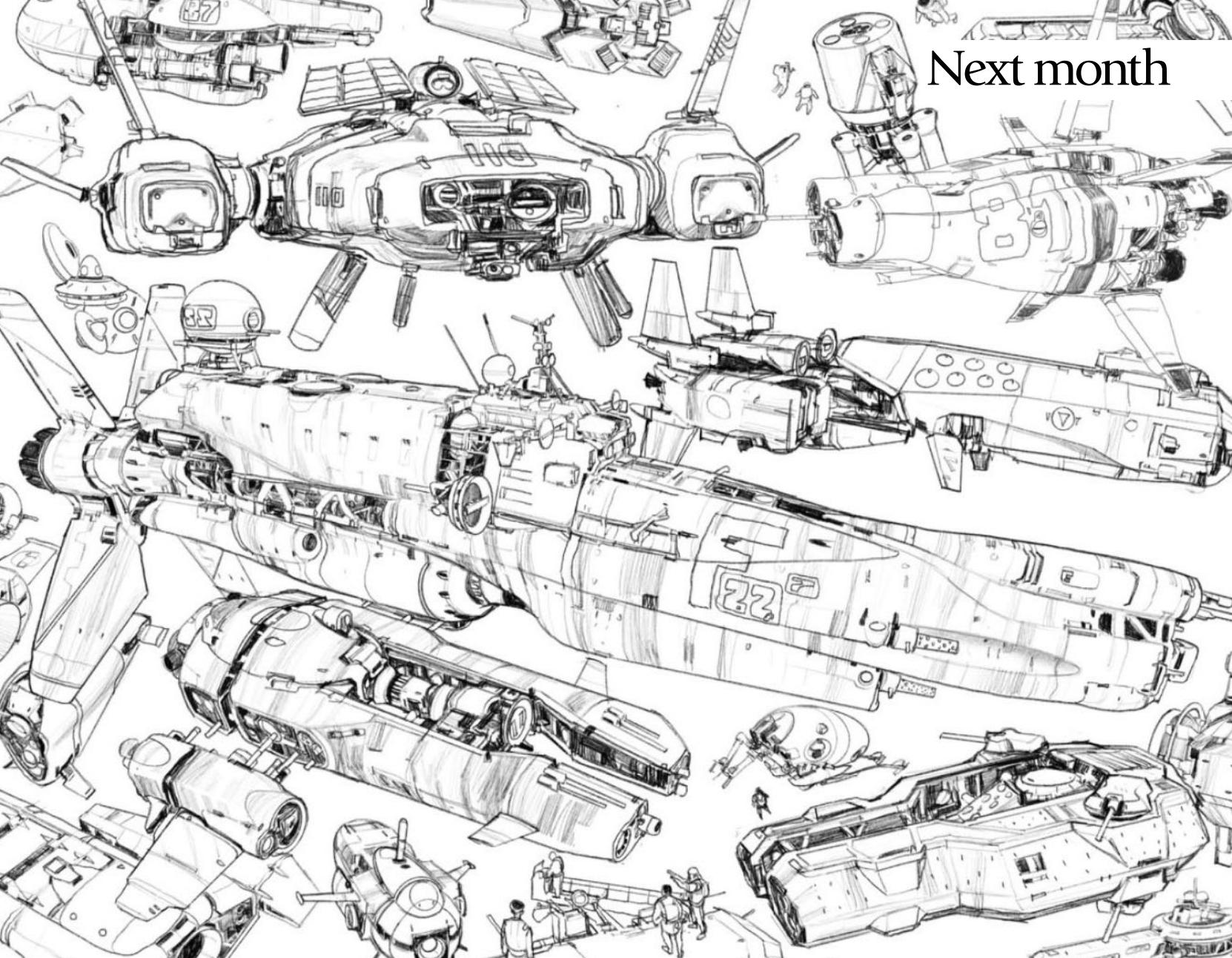
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Next month

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX

SKETCHBOOK

SPECIAL!

Explore a stunning collection of sketches from stars of the art world

Featuring
Sparth, Airi Pan,
Pernille Ørum,
John Howe,
Sergi Brosa,
Dibujante Nocturno,
Rodrigo Luff,
Cameron Scott Davis,
David Noren,
and loads more

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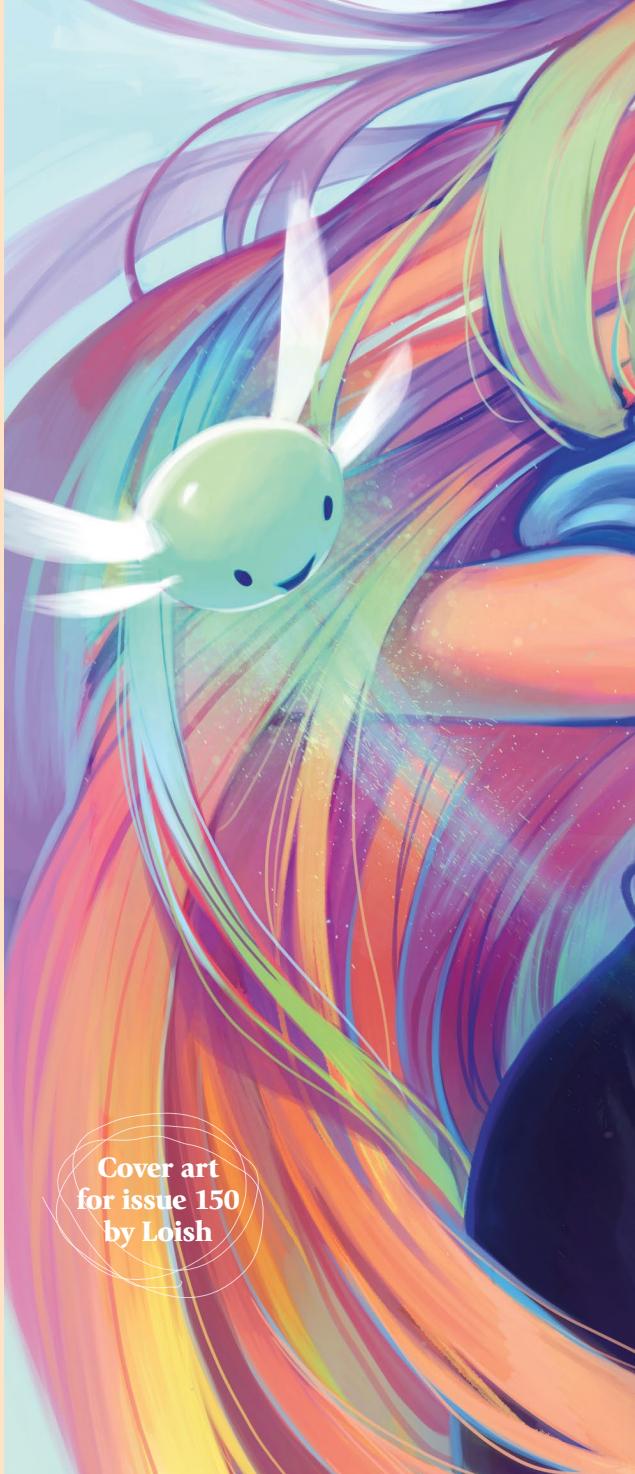
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EXPosé

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Hoang Lap (AKA Solan)

LOCATION: Vietnam MEDIA: Photoshop, After Effects, Procreate

WEB: <http://hoanglap.artstation.com>

Hoang Lap is a concept artist and illustrator. "I'm on a journey to find a deeper meaning in art. A journey of inspiration, sharing and healing. Every colour has its own meaning, and every shape tells a different story."



1



2



1 MIND'S EYE

"You might seek your answers with intelligence, but only with wisdom do you get what your heart desires."

2 THE LOVERS

"A love story told by sunflowers will have a different colour from other flowers. They represent the sun, and their nature comes from the sunlight."

3 THE RAIN

"Raindrops bring in the cold, sadness and solitude. The sound unearths memories we struggle to conceal. Would you be carried away by those emotions, or face them with tranquillity?"

4 LONESOME MELODY

"She stands high upon the clouds and sky, singing heavenly melodies of the stars and moon. But will her songs reach other people's hearts? And will she sing her heart's true desires?"





Xavier Collette

LOCATION: France MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: www.xaviercollette.art

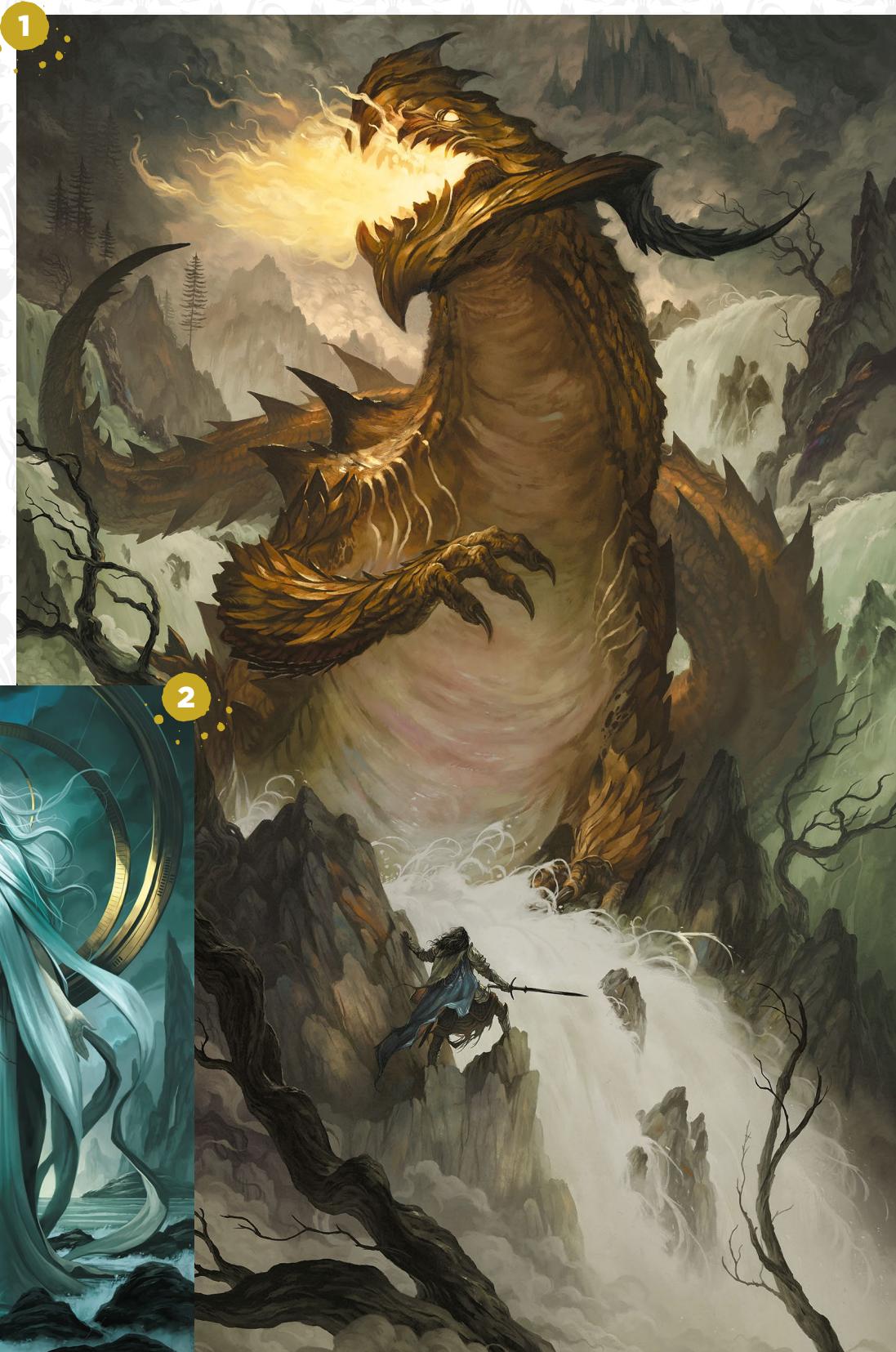
Xavier is a fantasy illustrator with 15 years' experience working on comics, children's books, board games and covers. Inspired by classic painters like Arnold Böcklin, his passion is to give life to fantastic worlds and characters.

1 END OF GLAURUNG

"An illustration of one of the most iconic scenes from the Tolkien universe: Glaurung, the first dragon, facing the hero Túrin."

2 NUIN

"This illustration depicts one of the main characters in the novel D'Hiver et d'Ombres, written by fantasy author Rozenn Illiano."





Brady Evans

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

Brady is an illustrator and character designer who uses vibrant colours and lighting to express moments of reflection and awe. This work is influenced by his upbringing in both East Asian and Pacific cultures.

1 COLOUR STRIKE

"This piece is based on an idea for a weapon that instead of injuring you, causes colour to burst from the surface of your skin."

2 MIDDAY MOON

"This painting was inspired by the moon peeking out from the clouds on a bright, sunny day."

3 TORA

"Created in celebration of the Year of the Tiger, 2022. Everything about his design references traditional Japanese lucky symbols."

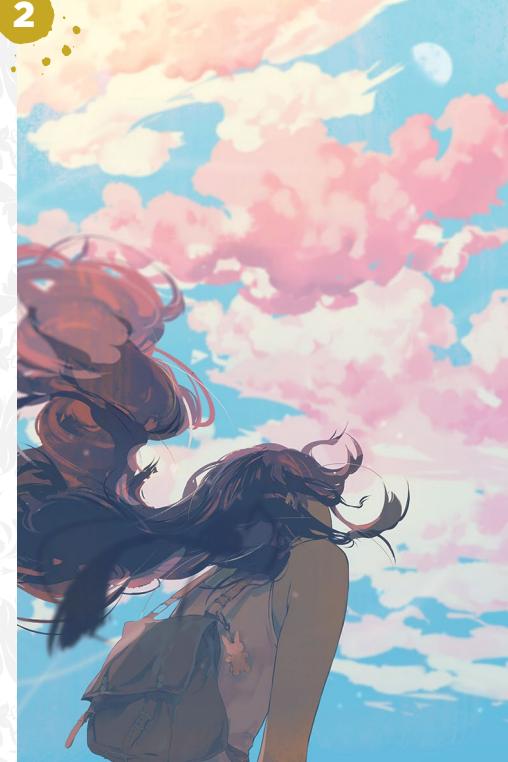
4 PIKAKE REST

"A character inspired by the Kamehameha Butterfly native to Hawai'i. She rests among fragrant and colourful flower garlands."

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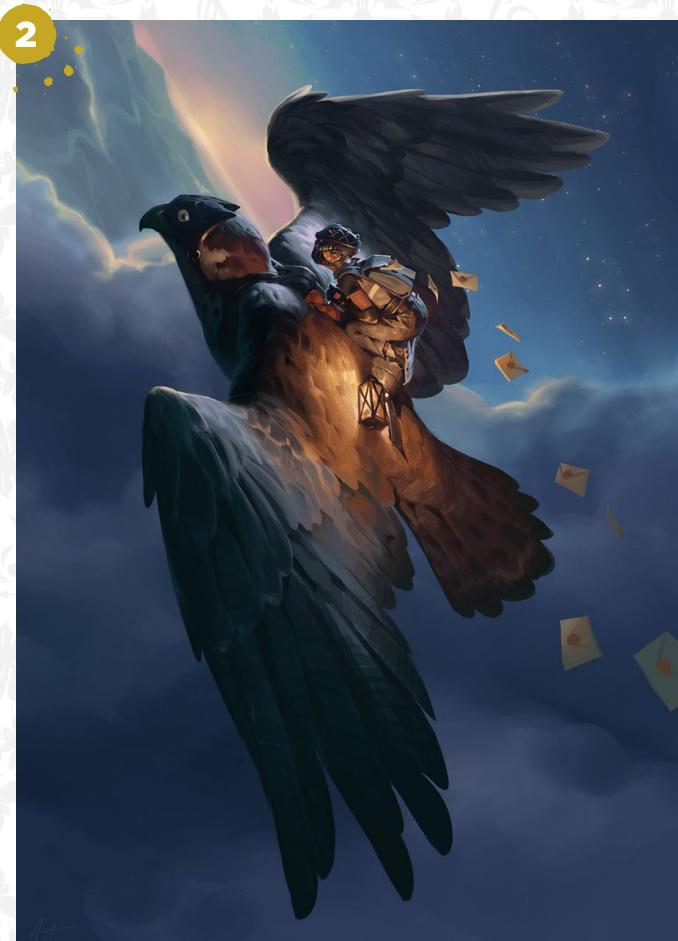
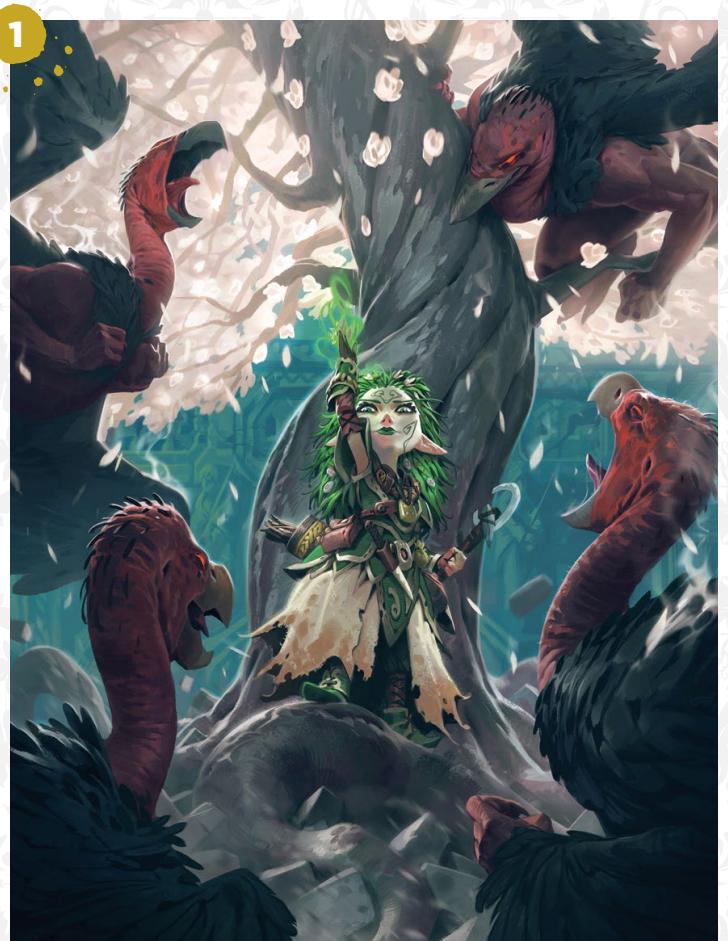




Alex Alexandrov

LOCATION: Bulgaria MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: www.artstation.com/alexalexandrov

Alex is a concept artist and illustrator who began working in the games industry at age 17. Since then he has gone on to work for the likes of Blizzard Entertainment, Capcom and Sega.



1 DRUID SPELL

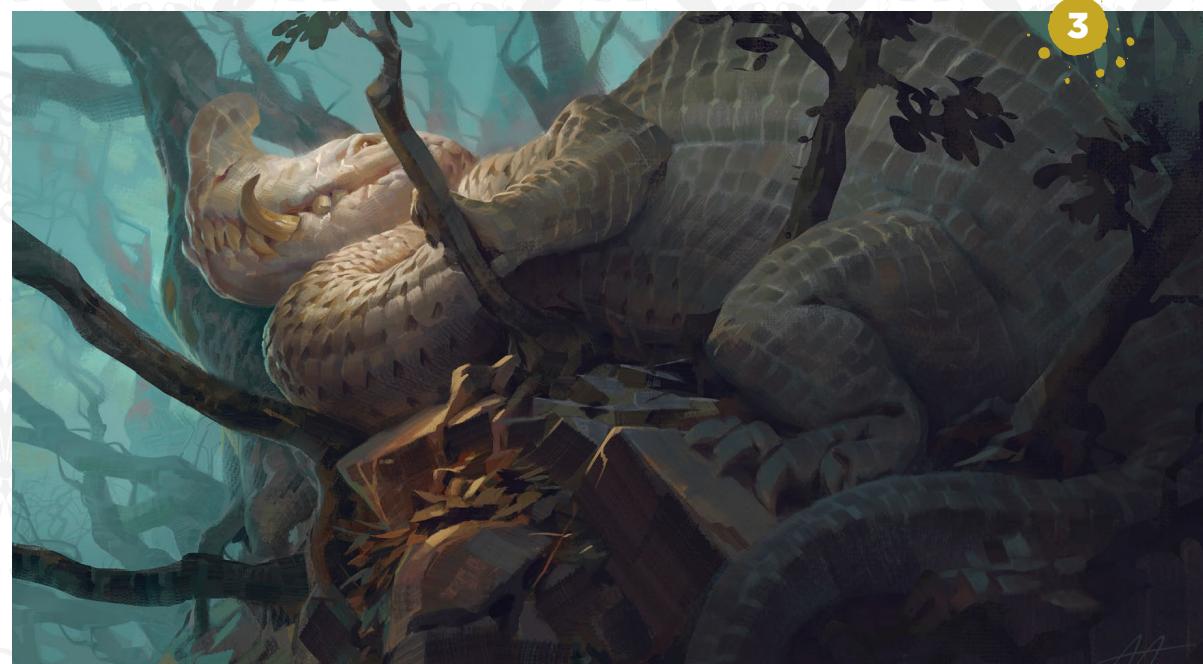
"An illustration for Paizo Publishing. I'm proud of this piece, which is rare for me. I'm always thinking there is something I can improve in some way."

2 EXPRESS DELIVERY

"I wanted this piece to be more traditional and look as though it came from the cover of a magical book rather than a movie."

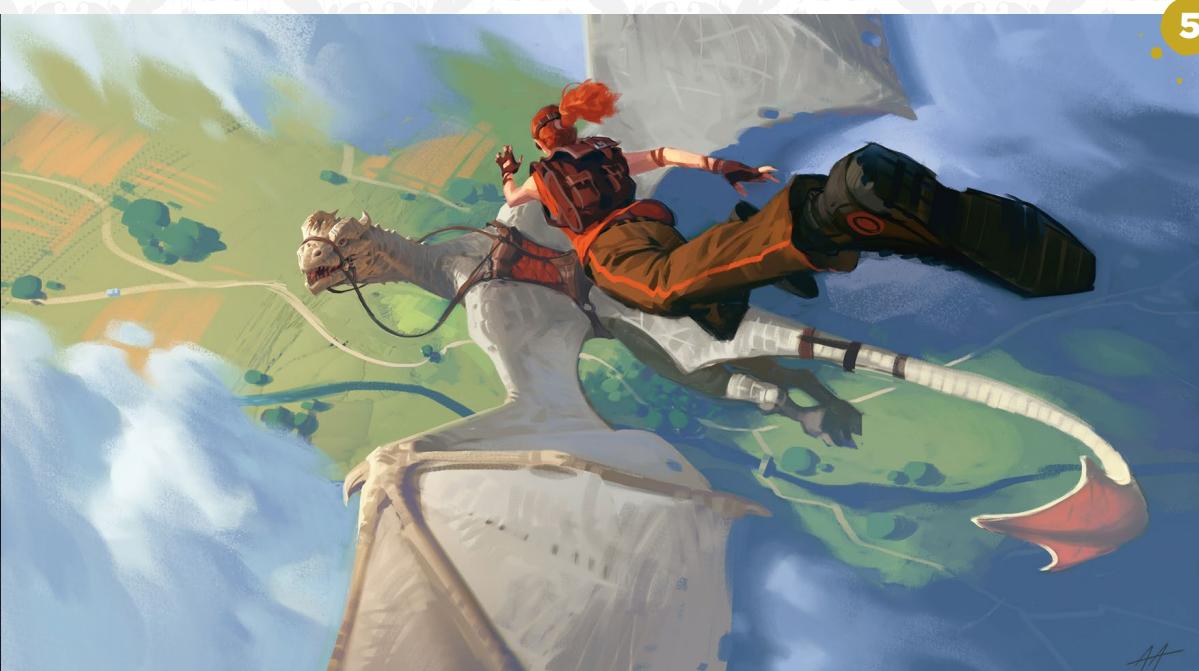
3 FOREST DRAGON

"This personal illustration came from the two prompts of a dragon, and a dark, crooked forest. Those prompts ended up providing enough inspiration for 30 more illustrations."





© Paizo inc.

**4 PUFF OF POISON**

“Another illustration for Paizo. I like working with them because they give me the freedom to explore my fantasy illustrations from time to time.”

5 DRAGON TRAINING

“This is a personal illustration that captures my fascination with dragons, and the idea of riding these magnificent, imaginary creatures through the sky.”



Michelle Xia

LOCATION: Taiwan MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: www.instagram.com/michellexia_ig

Michelle expresses her emotions through her art and draws her inspiration from the natural world. "I believe that everyone can have an extraordinary life, as long as they have the courage to pursue it."

1 THANK YOU

"I created this piece as a thank you to my followers. The happiness they bring me shines like water droplets shimmering in the light."

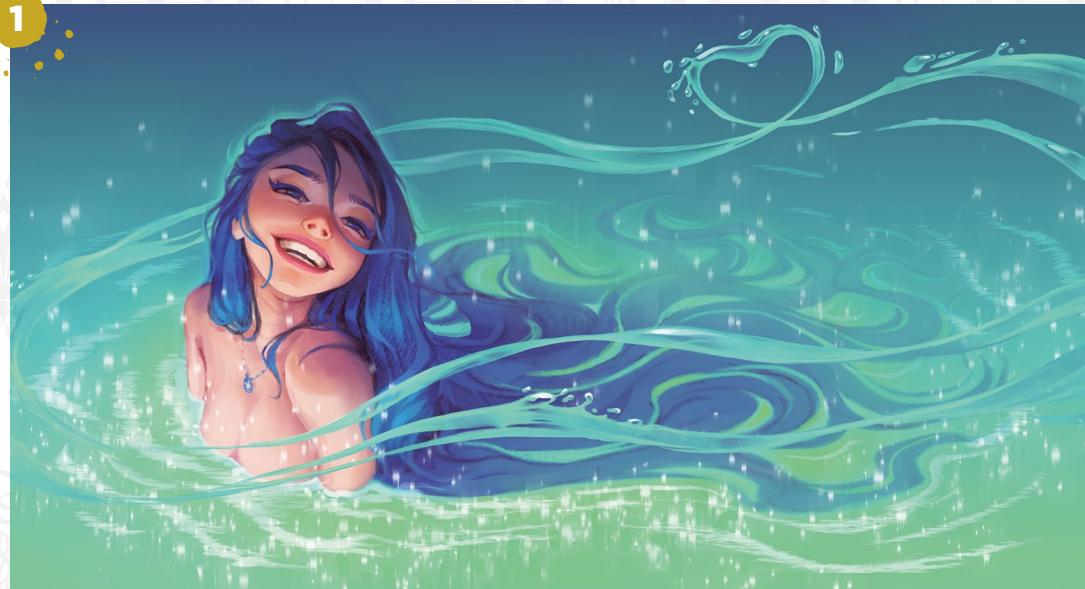
2 POPPY FLOWER

"In ancient Egypt, the poppy was thought of as a sacred flower. Love is as coquettish and charming as the poppy, showing both gorgeousness and nobility."

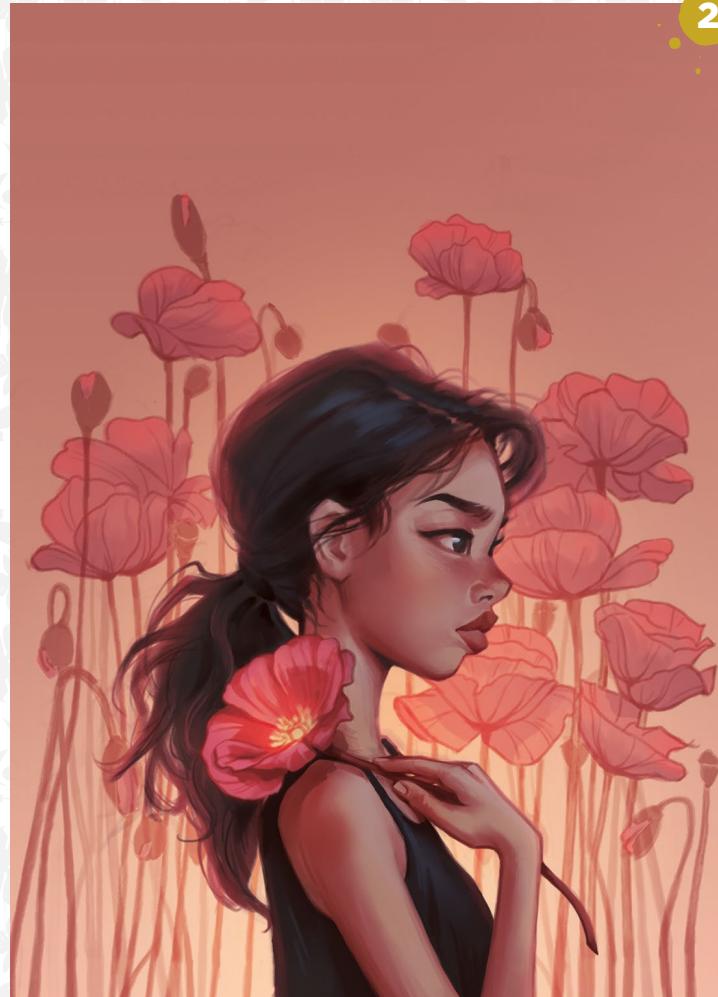
3 SWEET DREAM

"Not all dreams are bad. If your dream is sweet, then you will always smile when you wake up."

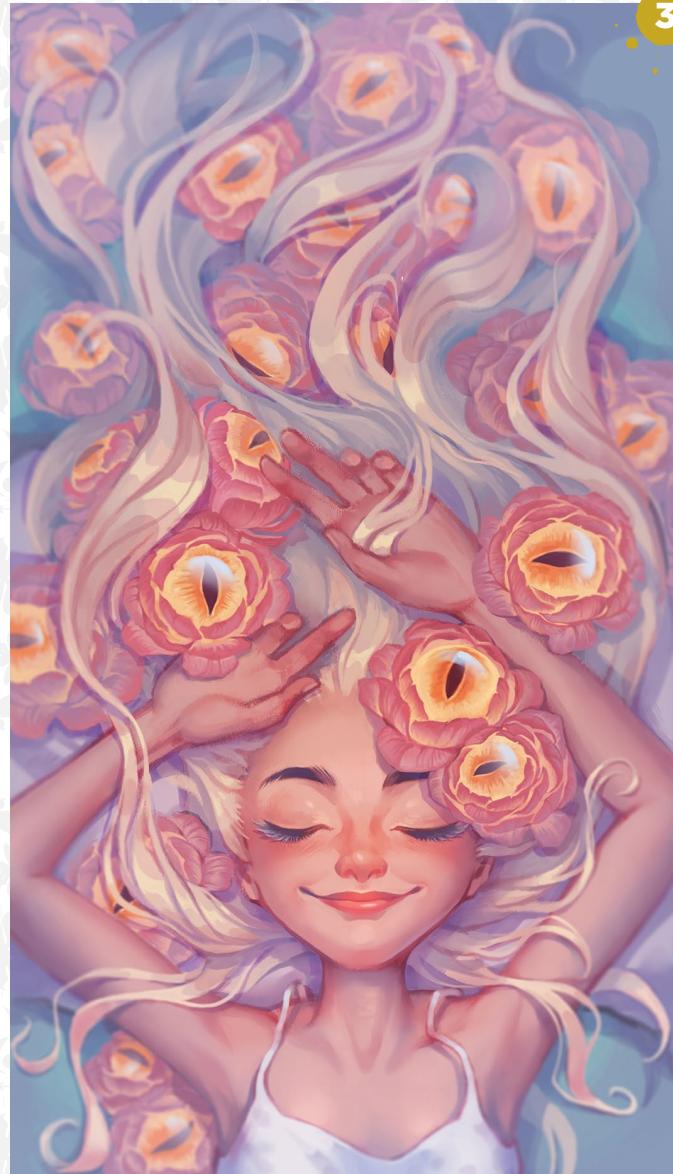
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**4 SAD**

"Pain can feel like you are falling into a bottomless abyss. Here, I tried to visualise that hurt and frustration."



Benjamin Ee

LOCATION: Australia MEDIA: Photoshop, Procreate WEB: www.artstation.com/theboyofcheese

Benjamin works as an art director and illustrator. He always strives to capture emotions in his narrative-focused illustrations and takes inspiration from artists like Jaime Jones and Wesley Burt.

1 SAINT VICTORIA

"This is my favourite visual from the fantasy universe I play in. Elite war-beings are depicted as heavenly, hiding a wicked truth."

2 AGENT CYCLONE

"My work isn't always doom and gloom, sometimes it can be full of life! I am not an enemy to using colour and brightness, I swear!"

1



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3



3 SELF PORTRAIT 003

"I like painting to express my feelings, and this is one in a series I made to process the hell that was 2020."

4 ANUBIS RETURNS

"This piece showing Anubis visiting an old friend is based on an idea I had while on a museum trip in San Francisco. It stuck with me for years until I finally decided to put it down."

3



4



Felipe de Barros

LOCATION: The Netherlands **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Krita, Blender, Procreate **WEB:** <https://linktr.ee/fdbarros>

Felipe describes himself as a professional amateur. "I am not a deep or particularly smart person, so I draw things that look cool. I will probably keep creating concept art and illustration until my arm falls off."

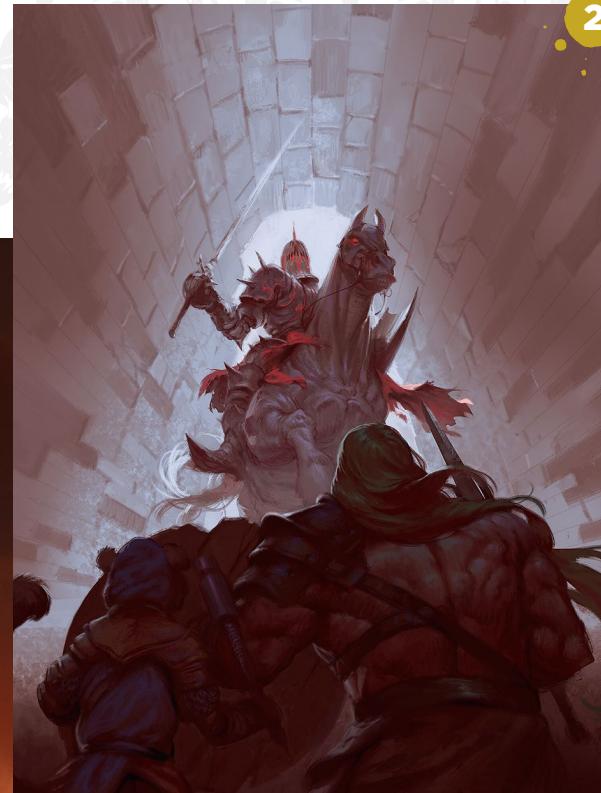
1 TYRANTUS

"This piece was done for a now-defunct card game. I love lava and I love dinosaurs, so this was an enjoyable one to make for me."



2 TUNNEL KNIGHT

"This was a fun book cover to work on. I like that the perspective in the background is also a composition and aesthetic element. I should remember to do this more often!"



2



3

3 REGENT

"I can't remember why I chose this name, but I like how the textures turned out. It was also a lesson in hue variation."



Beatriz Ramo

LOCATION: Spain MEDIA: Photoshop, Procreate WEB: www.naranjalidad.com

Beatriz is an architect and illustrator who combines analogue tools such as pencils and charcoal with digital software. After winning an illustration contest, she was encouraged to pursue an artistic career.

1 CHESSBOARD

"This was the result of me trying to introduce different patterns into my work. I really liked how this one turned out."

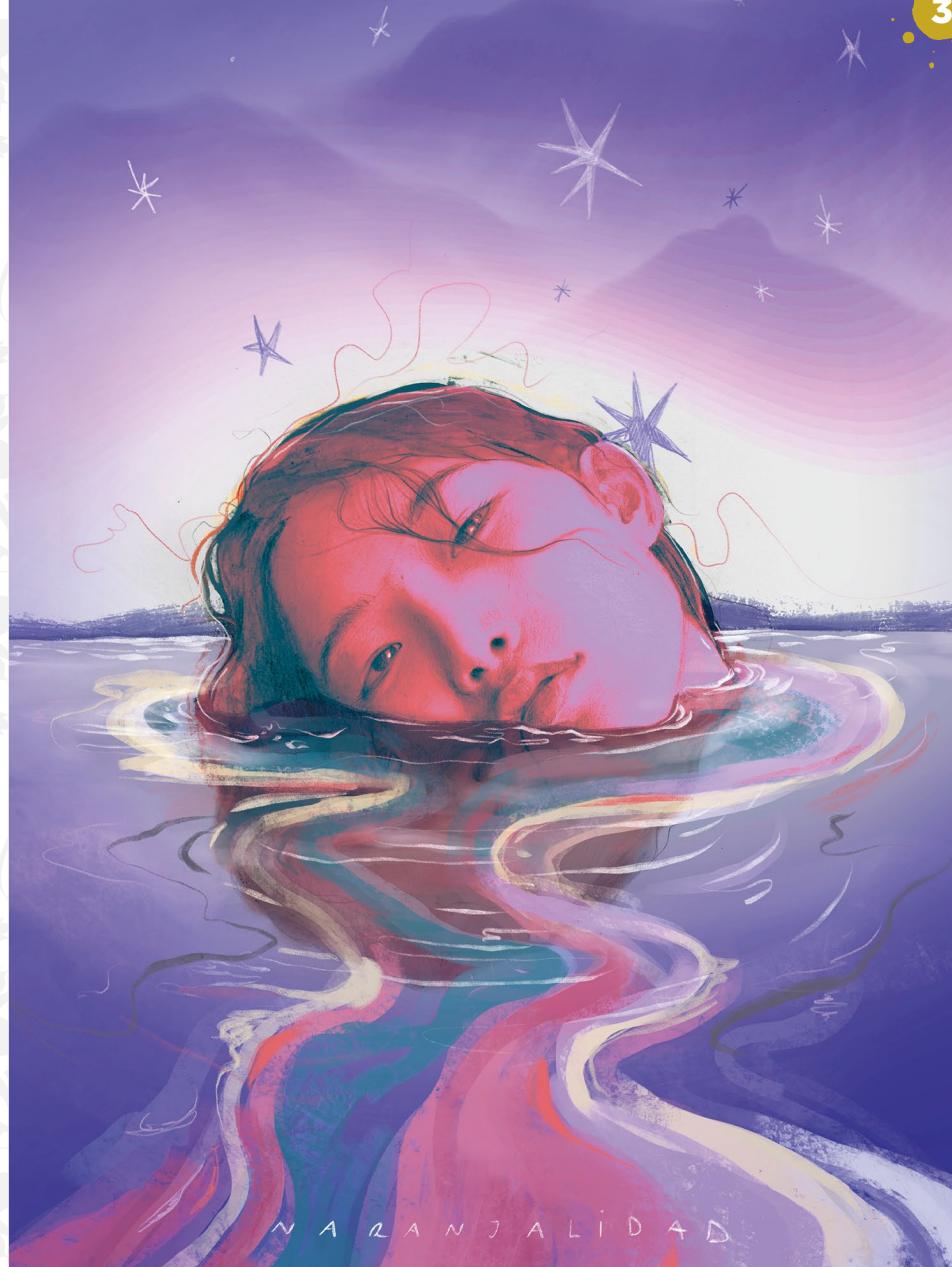


2



2 PENDING EAR

"I was inspired by the evening sunlight and how it turns everything blue and purple, but at the same time the faraway mountains and trees look like they are on fire."



3 BUBBLEGUM SUNSETS

"I made this piece last summer, inspired by late swims in the Mediterranean Sea on the Spanish coast. The original reference was by the photographer Min Hyun-woo."

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

4 WHITE BUFFALO

"This piece is inspired by the legend of the White Buffalo Calf Woman, who appeared to the nomadic tribes of the Sioux people around 2,000 years ago."





THE
ROOKIES

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

WWW.THEROOKIES.CO

House of Botanists

YEAR CREATED: 2022

MEDIA: Photoshop, Blender

+

+

+

+

+

+

+

+

+

"I created this image as part of my personal project, Avalon, with the aim of further defining the world's artistic direction right the way down to its smallest details."



Artist **PROFILE**

Valentin Perouelle

LOCATION: France



Valentin is a concept artist who graduated from the New3dge Concept Art school in 2021. He is a big fan of Studio Ghibli movies and loves stylised art direction.

www.therookies.co/u/valentinp





The Castle of the Waterfall Hollow, a piece Aleksandra Wojtas painted in her spare time to push herself out of her comfort zone.



"For a long time, I thought I had to use only one artistic style. I was wrong," says Aleksandra Skiba.



Rhigu's fan art of the Disney character Kida.

Levelling up

Bounceback **Tanya Combrinck** gets advice from four artists about pushing through when you hit a plateau

The exhilaration of seeing your skills grow and work improve is a great feeling, but like all good things, it doesn't last forever. Hitting a plateau in your abilities is disheartening, but you can take comfort in the fact that it happens to everyone, and there are ways through it.

"Artists often plateau because they stay in their comfort zone too long,"

says **Anna Podedworna**, an illustrator and concept artist working in games. "We often find success with one kind of style or

genre and stick to it, which can trap us in a positive feedback loop. You draw one thing because you get the most attention for drawing it, which then attracts more people who expect only that one thing from you. Before you know it, you might be stuck."

Trying something new will help you to escape the loop, whether it's a

“My greatest inspiration for staying out of plateaus were the people I worked with”

different genre, new subject matter, or transforming your workflow with alternative tools. "Your best guide is your fear," says Anna. "What are you most scared to draw? What software do you find intimidating? What subject do you find the most uncomfortable or out of reach? That's your North Star right there; it will guide you out of the plateau."

One of the toughest aspects of facing a period of stagnation is that it can take away your drive. "I follow the words of the great Charles Bukowski on that one," says Anna. "If it ➤





A DAY IN THE LIFE OF...

We meet the character designer and college professor Betsy Bauer, who fills us in on how she organises the stacked schedule in her non-stop working days.
Page 30



ANIMAL SANCTUARY

Nickelodeon artist Paige Woodward Scheier invites us to check out her studio space and meet her fluffiest of office companions.
Page 32



YOUR VIEWS, YOUR ART

Find out what your fellow readers have been talking about as we open up our latest letters. Plus, we feature art that caught our eye on social media.
Page 39



"Set yourself a minimum quality bar to pass on every piece and strive to push a little bit beyond that each time," says Anna Podedworna.



Rhigu is a character-focused fantasy illustrator who is particularly passionate about the mysterious and strange.

<https://rhigu.com>

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

DRAW WHAT YOU LOVE

Rhigu on embracing the inevitable and not fearing failure

What would you say to someone who feels their skills have plateaued?

Plateaus are natural and happen to all of us! Progress is never linear, so don't expect it to be. Try switching up your style or your process. Paint something you don't normally paint! It doesn't even need to be art-related; you can find new insight in the most unexpected places.

How can an artist improve the consistency of their work if they find some pieces turn out much better than others?

Paint what you're passionate about. If you don't care about what you're painting, it'll never live up to your expectations. It's impossible to avoid producing ugly art sometimes, and you should not be afraid to fail in this way. Failure can teach valuable lessons that are important to your growth as a person and as an artist.

How did you deal with these challenges as you were developing as an artist?

I still encounter these challenges every day! It took me a long time to learn how to deal with them. It was not always pretty. In my experience, art is uniquely personal. When things don't go as you'd hoped, it can feel like a hit to the gut. It's better to be patient with yourself, and learn how to navigate these challenges without causing yourself unnecessary damage, than it is to expect them to disappear.



→ doesn't come bursting out of you in spite of everything, don't do it."

For Anna, trying to control your motivation levels can often be counterproductive. "If you don't feel motivated to create, find something else to do. Your motivation will come back, or it will not. It's not like you can force it, anyway."

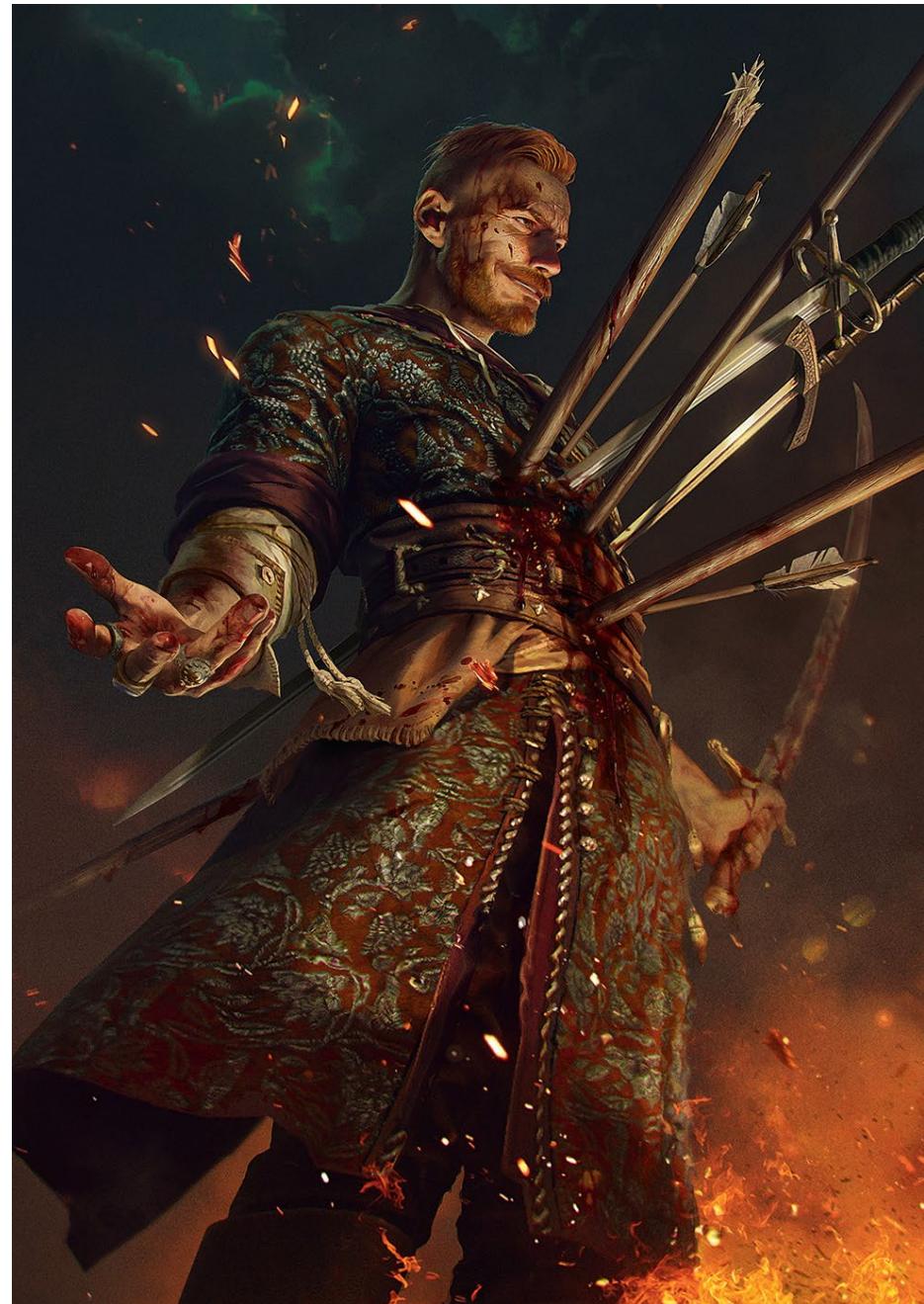
FINDING MOTIVATION

Viewing your craft through the eyes of others is a sure-fire way to keep things moving. "My greatest inspiration for staying out of plateaus were the people I worked with," says Anna. "In every company, on every project, you meet somebody new who offers a fresh outlook on creating art. Different art directors will have different philosophies and tastes. That alone has kept me on my toes throughout my career."

When you're stuck in a funk it's easy to feel like you're the only one, but

"Enjoy the things that gave you motivation in the first place – movies, games, comics, and so on – to bring back those old feelings of wonder and drive," says Aleksandra Wojtas.

"It's all about tiny consistent steps, not making big, dramatic breakthroughs," says Anna Podedworna.



that is never the case, according to freelance gamedev and tabletop games concept artist

Aleksandra Wojtas. "My main advice for someone struggling with a plateau is to realise that they are a common and natural thing that happens to every artist at some point in their career, or more likely, at many points in their career."

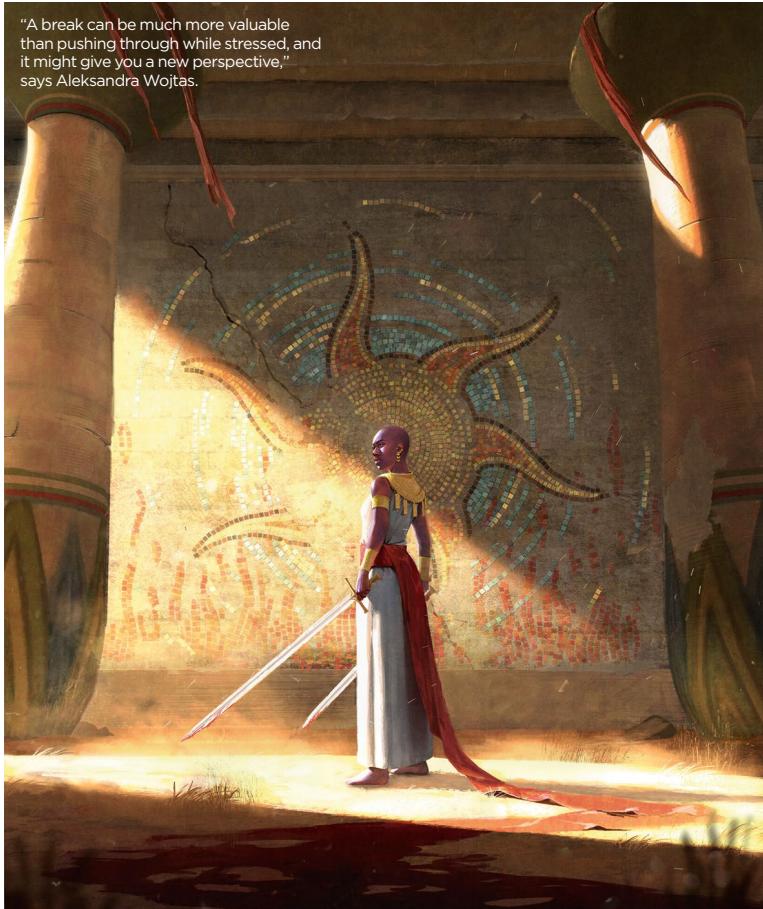
If your skills are close to professional level but not quite there, Aleksandra recommends finding a pro who will give you feedback. She rates portfolio review sessions at art events as "absolutely invaluable", and notes that

mentorships are another worthwhile option if financially feasible for you.

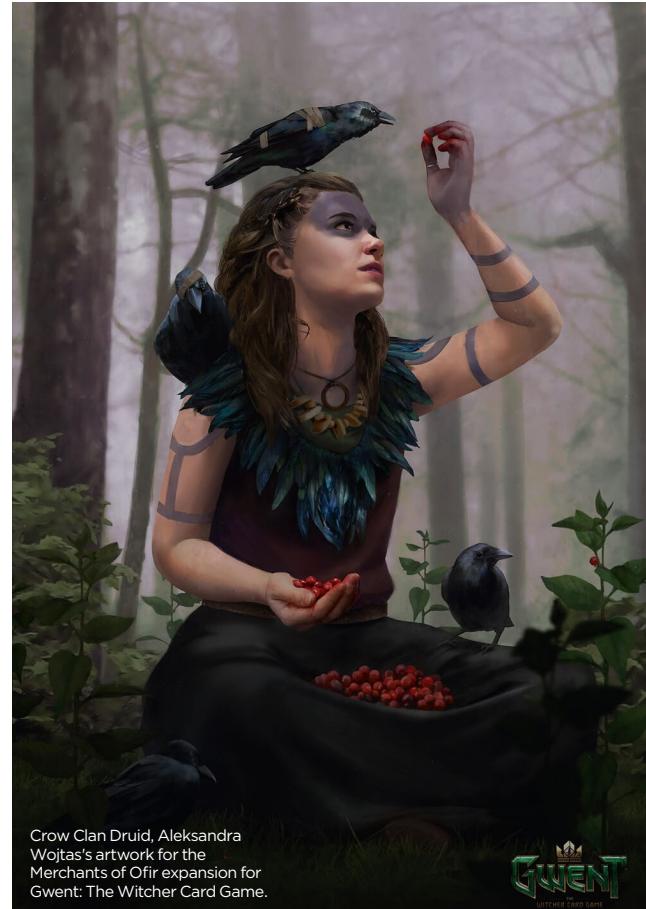
"Sometimes a simple observation from an experienced artist can give us a whole new perspective on what we can improve on," she says. "This exact scenario happened to me a while back, when an artist I admire made a single comment about my work that made all the gears in my head turn like crazy and broke me out of an extremely frustrating plateau."

Most of us strive to hit a certain quality level every time, and a failure to develop that consistency can be frustrating. "Take a step back and examine the work analytically," says

“A simple observation from an experienced artist can give a whole new perspective”



"A break can be much more valuable than pushing through while stressed, and it might give you a new perspective," says Aleksandra Wojtas.



Crow Clan Druid, Aleksandra Wojtas's artwork for the Merchants of Ofir expansion for *Gwent: The Witcher Card Game*.



Rhigu's piece *Song*, created for the Month of Love art challenge.

Aleksandra, who advises picking one of your stronger artworks and one of your weaker ones for comparison. "What makes them different? If I am equally happy with the overall idea I dig further and try to look at more of the technical aspects. Does the composition support the idea in both of them equally well? Do I have a solid value structure in both? Is the light consistent? Is the anatomy correct?"

ACCEPTING DIFFICULTIES

Developing an analytical eye and a structured, consistent creative process has helped Aleksandra to keep her momentum going. "When I was just starting out, my process was much more chaotic and as a result I had a really hard time with plateaus," she says. "I also felt like I must be doing something wrong because all the artists I was following on social media never seemed to struggle, which of course isn't the case. We all have times when work seems to flow effortlessly and times when we need to grind through it."

"Above all, what really helped me through plateaus is accepting them as they come and not letting them get to

me. I still find them hard, and I am always impatient to break through and see more progress, but I have learnt not to let them stress me out."

Navigating through a plateau is just as much about managing your own psychology and state of mind as it is



about developing your technical and creative skills. **Aleksandra Skiba** is a senior concept artist and illustrator at games developer Techland, and her advice is to put self-care first in times of doubt.

"It's important not to panic and whip yourself with criticism. The worst thing you can do is get frustrated and be unpleasant to yourself. We are not machines. Life is not a continuous progression, a line that always goes up. Sometimes our road is bumpy, sometimes we have to take a step back, and that's okay."

Aleksandra hit a plateau when she started to think that as her skills improved, there would be less for her to discover. "It was absurd, but I felt that way," she says. "It seemed that all I had left was to polish my painting, photobashing and 3D skillset. And yet, I felt that I didn't stand out among ➤



"Whenever I could not find inspiration to keep improving in myself, I looked outward and learned from others," says Anna Podedworna.

“All of a sudden I started learning new things and adapting techniques that I already knew for different purposes”

→ other artists, or that I aroused interest from employers."

HIT THE RESET BUTTON

A break from work was needed to escape this negativity and to reset. "I decided to play with stylised illustration using visible line art, because I wanted to speed up my drawing and this style seemed less time-consuming. It turned out that creating these illustrations was a challenge, because I had to use different artistic means in order to achieve a good effect.

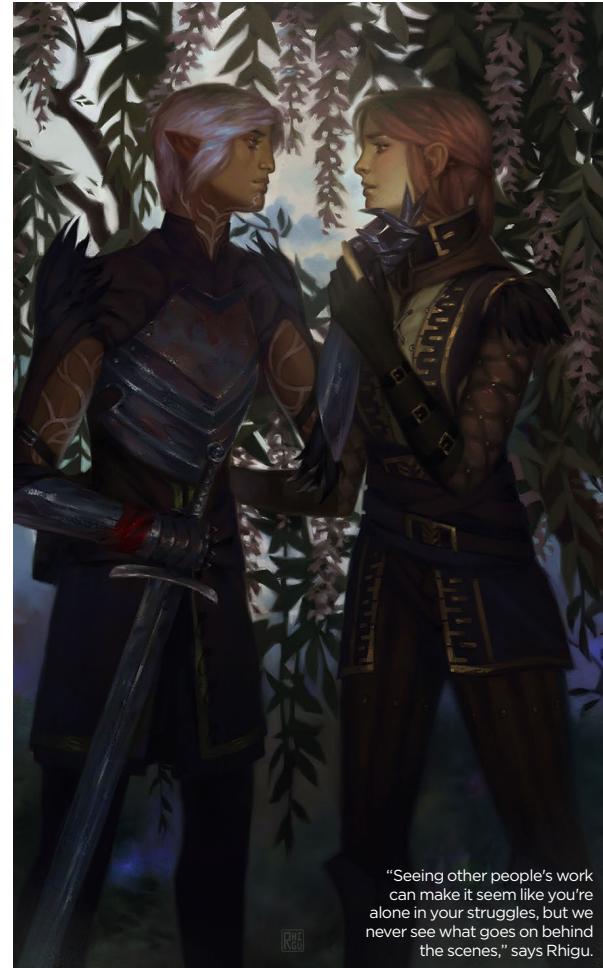
"All of a sudden I started learning new things and adapting techniques that I already knew for different purposes. I started to progress again because I could transfer what I learned from the stylised pieces to my more realistic illustrations, as well as the other way around."

Unfortunately, creativity is one of those subjects where the more stressed and self-critical you are, and

the more you try to catch that spark of inspiration, the more it slips away. In these times, it's a good idea to step back and immerse yourself in books, games or some other culture you find stimulating. "The most important thing is that you're driven by a sincere, inner need to create, and not by the pressure of what everyone else around you is doing," says Aleksandra. "Draw what makes you happy, and approach it as fun."

In the end, Aleksandra's plateau was a phase that led her in a new artistic direction that has resulted in a bigger following and more commissions. "I learned to keep an open mind and remember that art is a very subjective thing," she says.

On more than one occasion, the work she thought was her weakest output turned out to be the most commercially successful. "You can experiment however you like, and there will always be somebody out there who loves it."



"Seeing other people's work can make it seem like you're alone in your struggles, but we never see what goes on behind the scenes," says Rhigu.



"A plateau can be very dangerously combined with perfectionism," warns Aleksandra Skiba.



"Many of my works would not have been created if not for my friends, who helped me see that they love my work uncritically," says Aleksandra Skiba.

A day in the life of... **Betsy Bauer**

Perfect timing We learn how the visual development artist, character designer and college professor paces her work day



"This is my workstation. I promise the treadmill is more aspirational than functional, and that the desk rarely looks this clean!"

Betsy juggles her career as an in-demand visual development artist based in LA, while also maintaining a full-time professorship at an art school in Detroit.

"I'm a crazy person, and have two full-time positions, one as an assistant professor at College for Creative Studies in Detroit, and one doing my visual development work. Both are full days, so I get up at 5am, get dressed and do some makeup so I don't look like a raccoon. I teach from 5:30 until 8:15am. Usually I'm done with my college responsibilities by 10am, then I jump into my vis dev job.

"This piece from around 2018 was initially for a group gallery show, but has since become one of my favourite personal paintings. There are few films better than *My Neighbor Totoro*!"

I love the Pomodoro technique; setting a timer and working for 25 minutes, then taking a five-minute break to use the restroom or answer emails. I try to go through that three times, then take a longer break.

Lunch is around noon. If it's a less crazy day, I'll watch YouTube videos, or now that most of my work is remote, I might meet a friend at a restaurant. But on busier days, I might just take a few bites while I work.

I'll go through three or four Pomodoro cycles a day. Then when I'm finished, usually around 6pm, I walk my dog with my fiancé and get dinner. I'm in bed by 9:30 to 10pm.

I'm more of a planner. For a time, I took on all this work with no real

routine, and always found myself overwhelmed. I researched time management, and found that if I make a list of everything I need to get done that day, I don't have that constantly spinning in my head.

I've trained myself to set that timer and get to work, and those focused minutes are much more effective than those unfocused hours. The key to being a multitasker is to be a single tasker, and just get that done in an efficient manner."



Betsy is known for her work on *Tales of Arcadia* and is currently working on *Star Wars: Young Jedi Adventures* for Disney+ and Lucasfilm alongside her professorship. www.betsybauerart.com



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.

(Below) "This graphic tiger piece was an early exercise in mastering Procreate on the iPad, which I now find is an indispensable tool for art on the go!"



"This chubby friend is a character from a personal project that I'm (very) slowly chipping away at."





Paige Woodward Scheier

Animal house Say hello to the furry colleagues and tactile inspirations that inhabit the Nickelodeon visual development artist's studio space



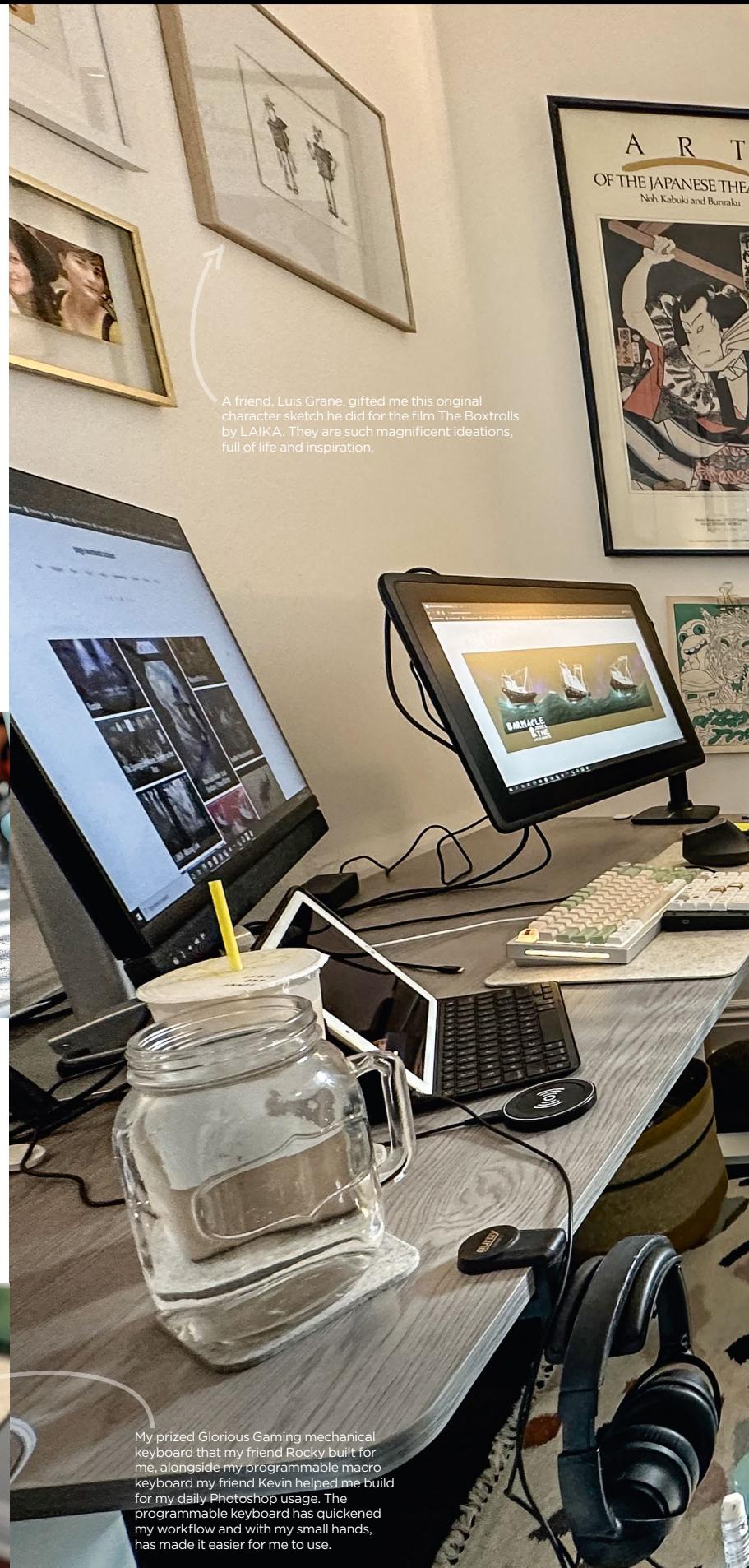
Funnily enough, this room used to be our pets' room, for the usage of our two cats and one rabbit. During the pandemic, my husband and I shared an office. We'd sit back-to-back, all the while conducting ourselves professionally in each of our productions.

It was tough, and we needed to have our own spaces to think, feel, and to be inspired. I moved out of the office and repainted and redecorated the pets' room to be what it is today. Winnie, our nine-year-old rabbit, is with me in the office, and she is a daily source of calm and centring of energy.

Often, my mornings begin with cuddling the two cats, Herbie and Odin, and Winnie the rabbit. Starting the day off with play and smiles sets the tone for me, even if I know a ➤



This is Winnie and what she does on a daily basis. She is nine-years young, and a cage-free bunny. She is both spicy and loving, I never knew bunnies could have so much zest!



A friend, Luis Grane, gifted me this original character sketch he did for the film The Boxtrolls by LAIKA. They are such magnificent ideations, full of life and inspiration.



My prized Glorious Gaming mechanical keyboard that my friend Rocky built for me, alongside my programmable macro keyboard my friend Kevin helped me build for my daily Photoshop usage. The programmable keyboard has quickened my workflow and with my small hands, has made it easier for me to use.

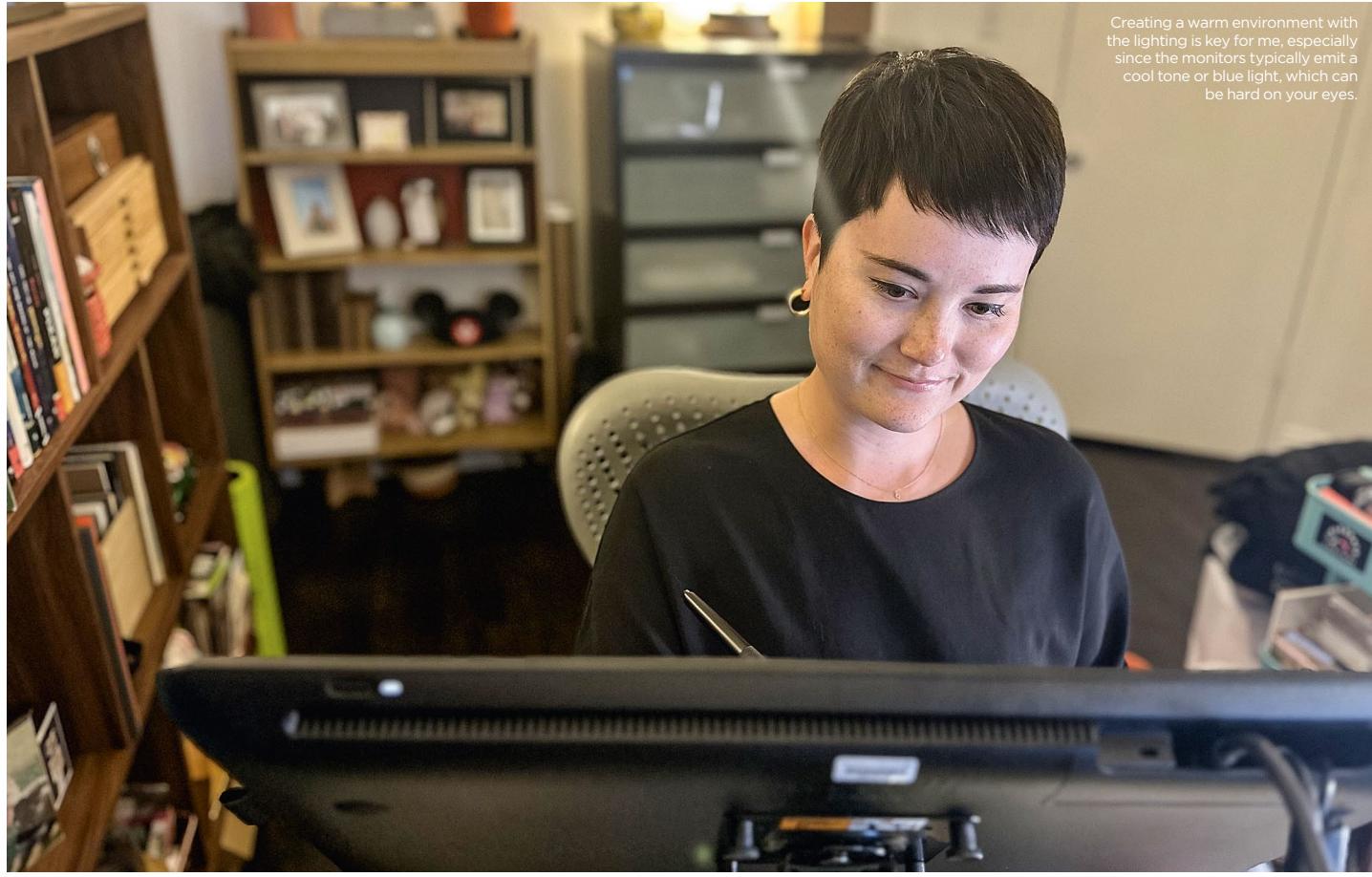
Artist news, software & events

This poster is from my mum, Doris Hardoon, who worked as a Disney Imagineer for almost 40 years! She worked on The World Showcase at the EPCOT Center. She paved big paths for women and designers and she is a constant inspiration to me.

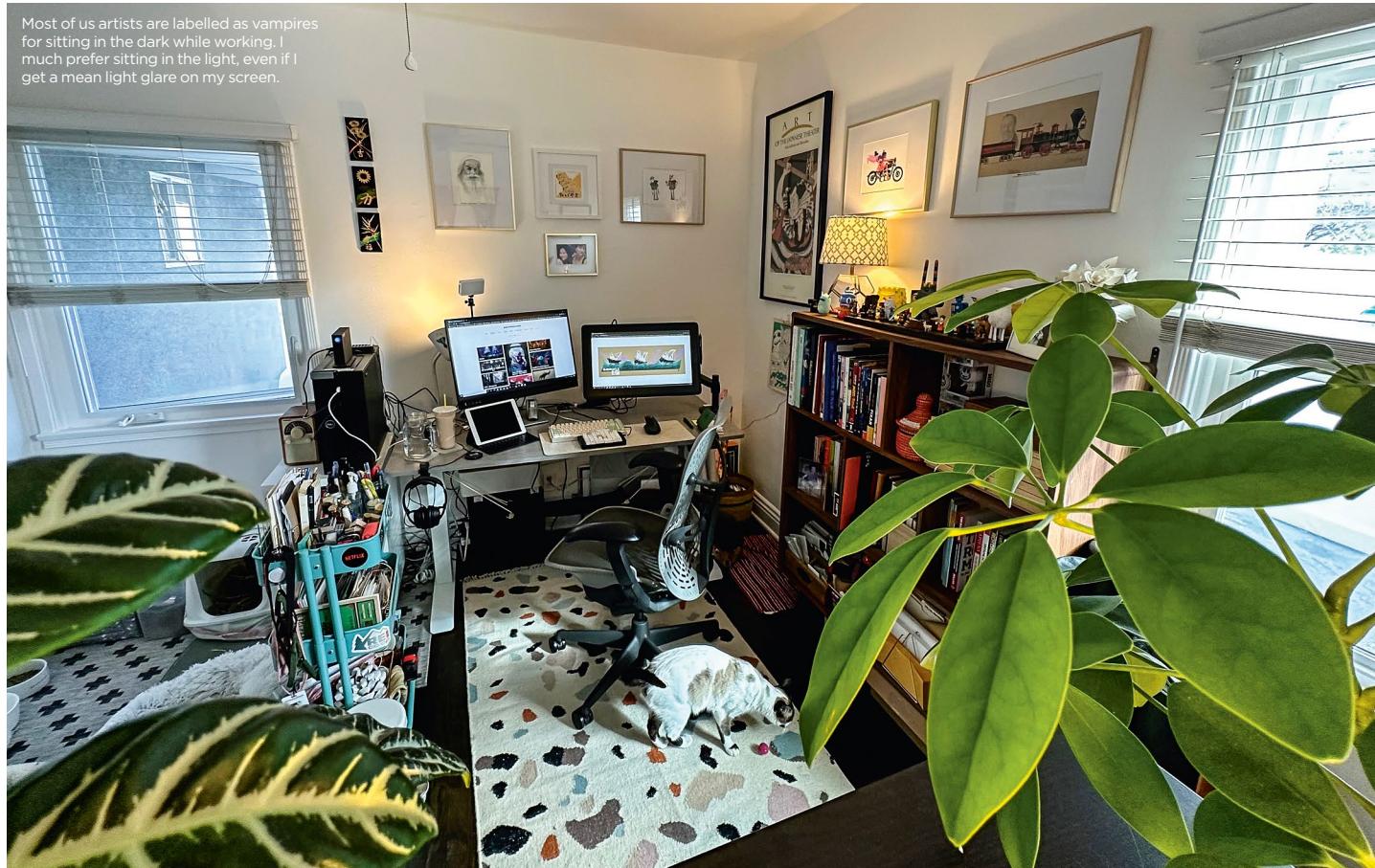
My uncle Bill Casey worked as a principal designer for Walt Disney Imagineering. The Lilly Belle, named after Walt's wife Lillian, was selected for the rendering for its rich history as Walt Disney's first train, which delighted young and old on the Carolwood Pacific Railroad in the back gardens of the Disney estate.



ImagineNation Artist in Residence



Creating a warm environment with the lighting is key for me, especially since the monitors typically emit a cool tone or blue light, which can be hard on your eyes.



Most of us artists are labelled as vampires for sitting in the dark while working. I much prefer sitting in the light, even if I get a mean light glare on my screen.



Odin, or Odi, is the newest member of the family and has quickly become part of our hearts. He is flirty, cuddly and strong, and we love him to pieces!



Little figurines bring so much joy to my daily life. Seeing all the colours, shapes and personality helps remind me to push my designs and thought process.



This shelf is a place of useful tools, things to read through, play with, and to hold precious memories. A little organised chaos never hurt anyone!



I had the opportunity to paint out the character design my boss, Christophe Lautrette, created. Painting each hair, drool strand, and it's crazed eyes definitely made it a fun piece.

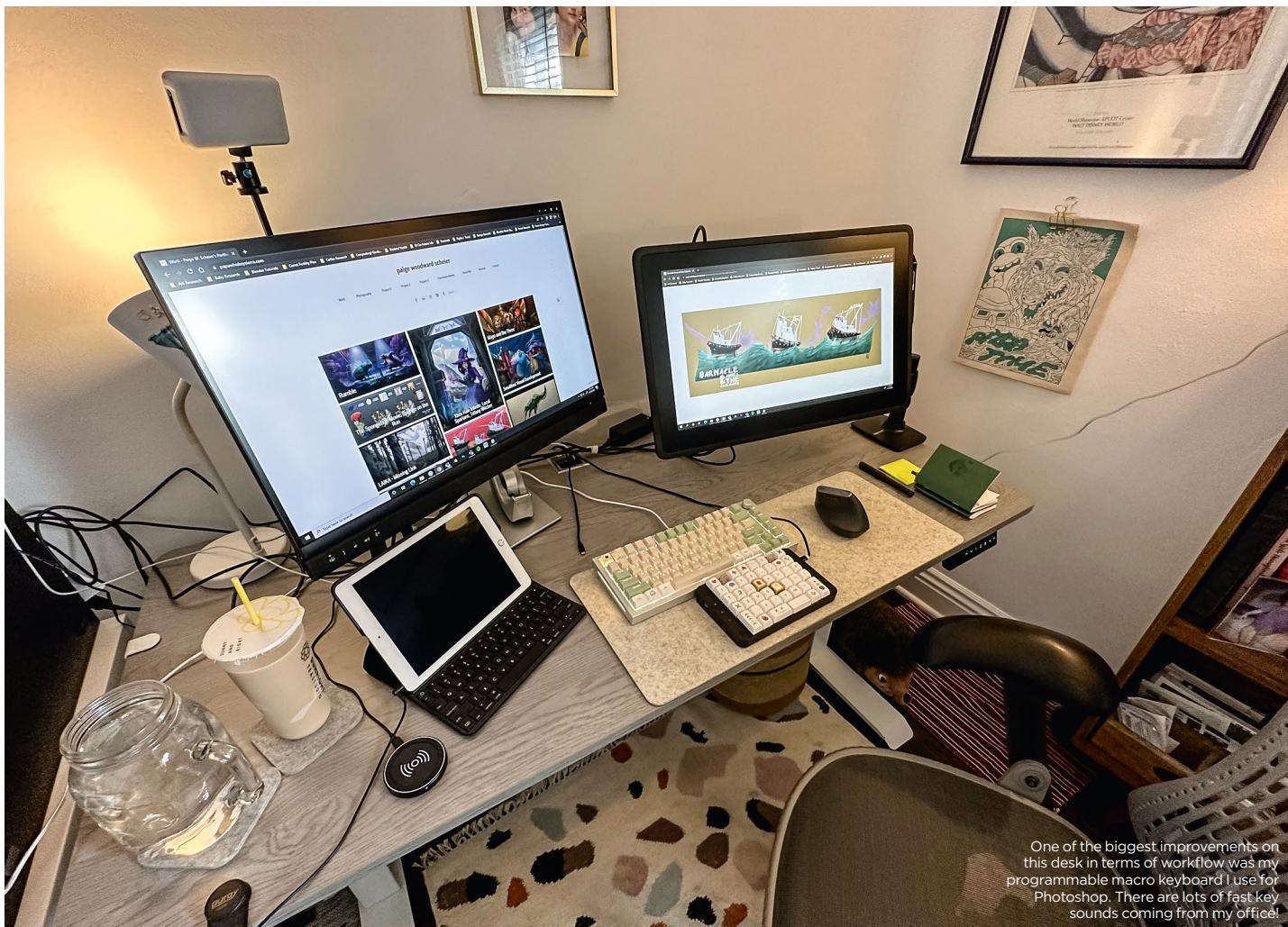
©Paramount

“With each and every new day, I’m even more exhilarated to see what lies around the corner”

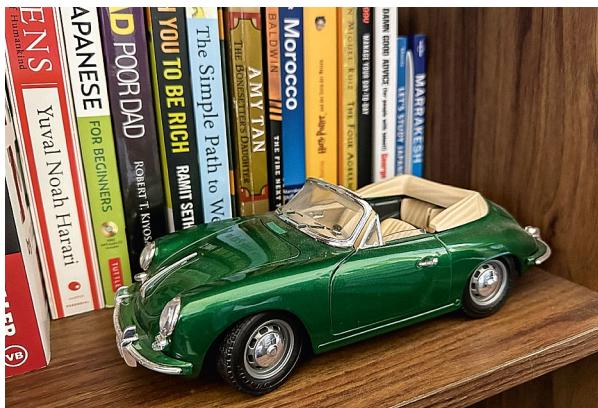


Barnacle Jones and the Salti-Naute is a personal project that I will one day jump back into. These boats were some fun and loose explorations for the Salti-Naute, the boat!

ImagineNation Artist in Residence



➡ huge deadline is looming over the day. Chatting with my husband about our intents for the day, and sharing fun music and videos that make us laugh is also crucial to getting going. After grabbing my hot water and coffee, I begin writing down my list of tasks to do for the day. I don't find I'm like most artists; I'm analytical and not as fantastically creative in my process.



I've had this 1960 Porsche 356 B Roadster since I was five years old. I'm amazed it's held up this long with all the playtime I had with it and my moves around the country. It's a reminder of both my youth and also my love for cars and design.

“I love my research and spend a day of doing so before I dive into my work. In a way, that’s my flood of creativity”

I'm not the type to sketch things out and have flooding thoughts of creativity in the middle of the night. I love my research and spend a day of doing so before I dive in. In a way, that's my flood of creativity, when I look through images and elements that do and don't pertain to my work.

WORKING BY FEEL

I am a very tactile person, and someone who needs to feel and know how something works. Even though I primarily work in Photoshop, I also love 3D programs. Just as many others found LEGO to be inspirational, I too love them and found comfort in building with my hands.

Programs like Blender have allowed me to express my analytical way of thinking and to complete my process.

as a visual development artist in the animation industry. It's also why a lot of the items in my room are physical objects, I like to hold them and feel the form and intent of the designer.

If you were to play Max Richter's song *Spring 1* out loud in my room, you'd find me smiling. It's the exact tone and frame of mind that my office and time spent in here is to me, and what all my objects mean to me.

With each and every new day, I'm even more exhilarated to see what lies around the corner with my next inspiration and design.

Paige Woodward Scheier is a conceptual designer who is passionate about art, design, movies, photography and tinkering. Through these, she has developed the abilities that form her core as a designer.

Artist news, software & events



A cement lamp I made at ArtCenter College of Design for a product design class. I'm amazed it still works in all honesty, as all the electrical parts are cemented in! The toggle switch is my favourite part.



I purchased this little cutie from a local shop in Pasadena. This cast iron dog was created by the master craftsman Nobuho Miya, who is a third-generation iron worker that continues the traditional Nambu ironware from the Kamasada studio, which dates back to the Meiji period. This piece is way heavier and rougher than you could imagine, yet feels so perfect to the touch.



My auntie Diane is an insanely skilled hand carver of wood. She does smaller pieces like this and extremely large ones too. She is a huge inspiration to me on a daily basis.

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Howe does he do it?

Hi. I read your last issue and have to say it is one of my favourites ever. As a massive Lord of the Rings nerd I pored over all of John Howe's art and love the fact that he is still involved in that world all these years later. It's truly remarkable that he has had such a hand in the visual development. Thank you for talking to him and sharing in the magazine.

Fitz, *via email*

Rob replies Hi Fitz, thanks for getting in touch and for your comments. I couldn't agree more. I've been a fan of John's work since I first discovered it in the 80s. As a fellow Tolkien nerd I couldn't agree more. He has really shaped how we see Middle-earth and its inhabitants, as well as the broader fantasy genre. There are many top talents in the fantasy art space, but he has to be near the top of the heap.

Fan delight

Hello ImagineFX crew. This is a quick note to say thank you for the wonderful feature you did recently on Toni Infante. I've been an admirer of his for some



DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE?

Don't worry – you can get hold of issue 221 at ifxm.ag/single-ifx.

John Howe shared plenty of his Tolkien-based art in our previous issue.



Toni Infante appeared last issue with some excellent inspiration and insights.

time and was very happy to see him in that issue. Not only to see his art, which I love, but to get some idea of his thought process. It was all really useful stuff and it has inspired me in my own work as well.

Duncan, *via email*

Rob replies

Hi Duncan. I couldn't agree more. What a fantastic artist and so good of him to share some of his work and thoughts with us. He was very insightful about how to progress certain areas of your artistic development and even his short tips for running a Patreon campaign were incredibly valuable. I'm glad you found that piece inspiring and hopefully you'll be back for more from some of our upcoming features.

Thank you!

Hi! I just want to say thank you to the ImagineFX team for making wonderful issues every single month and a bonus Christmas edition every year. I love to see how many people work on their creative design and the variety of it. It makes me feel connected and not alone in this industry and its struggles. It opened my eyes on a variety of subjects that you've covered in those issues and I'm always excited to wait for new issues to come. The colourful insights in every issue always brighten my days, so thank you very much.

Inez, *via email*

Rob replies

Hi Inez. It's great to hear from you and thank you for the kind words. It's always good to hear that what we do is helping to inform and inspire you, our readers. Art can be a very personal experience and everybody takes something different from it and have different journeys, but being part of a community can really open our eyes to what is possible and I'm so pleased that we can be part of that.

FRESH PAINT

New works that have grabbed our attention



Sarah
[@anebulouspurpose](https://www.instagram.com/anebulouspurpose)



Chuan Shin
[@shindesigns1](https://www.instagram.com/shindesigns1)



David Hoffrichter
[@davidhoffrichter](https://www.instagram.com/davidhoffrichter)

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

SHAPING LOISH

Paul Hatton learns about the defining artists that set Lois van Baarle on her upward trajectory in the art world, and the new influences she continues to find



Lois van Baarle has been impressing the art community for nearly two decades and what began as a hobby has evolved into a career. Through her evolving attitudes, the artist better known as Loish has never lost her creative passions, nor has she forgotten the community of artists that have helped her along the way. Speaking with ImagineFX, Lois traces her journey and influences.

"I've always been interested in art and have been drawing since I was small," she begins. "Ever since kindergarten, my peers and teachers called me an artist. However, I didn't really have an ambition to become an artist as a career for much of my childhood because I was told it wasn't possible."

This narrative led Lois to settle into drawing as a hobby, choosing to pursue other avenues of education and work instead. Thankfully, something changed that in 2003, otherwise the wider world might never have been blessed with her artistic talents.



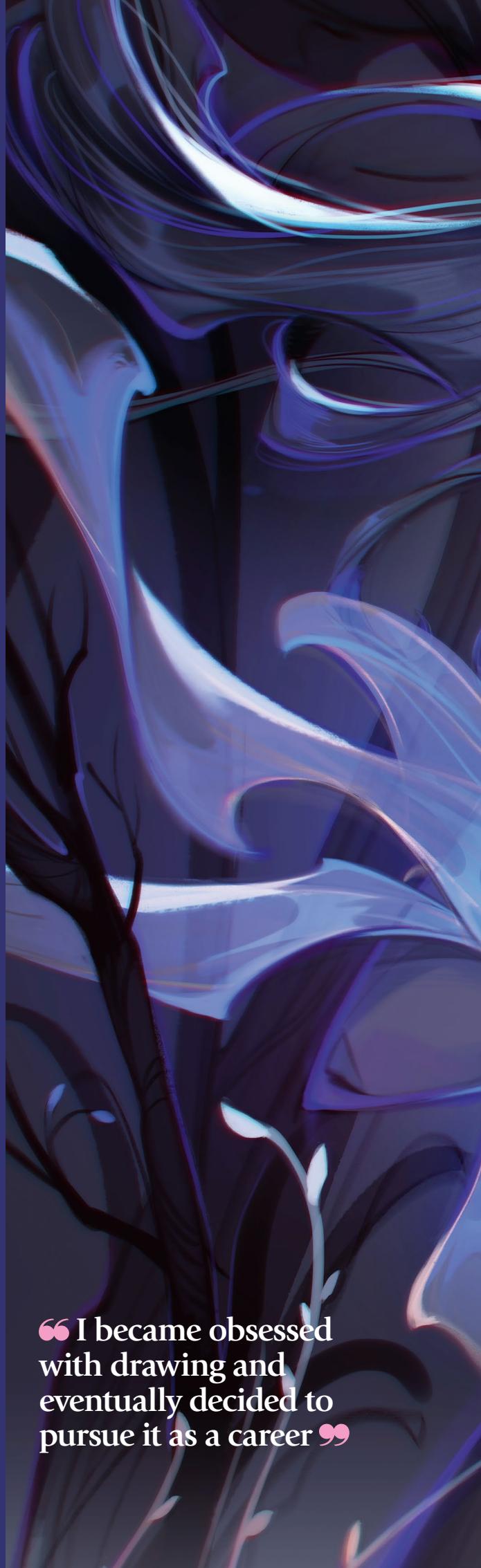
TURN TO PAGE 58
TO READ LOISH'S
CHARACTER ART
WORKSHOP

It was at this time, Lois says, that she discovered oekaki boards; places where artists can draw in a browser, post the results to a website and interact with comments about their work. "On these boards, I discovered numerous artists whose skills blew me away. I would spend hours on their art websites, noticing how they posted a mix of oekaki doodles alongside more finished pieces. My relationship with art completely changed from that point onwards."

With this newfound community, Lois was spurred on to draw more than ever before. It became not just something she did in her free time, but a truly rewarding social activity.

After joining DeviantArt, Lois discovered a number of different artists that would shape her style and her understanding. "I became obsessed with drawing and eventually decided to pursue it as a career. I knew that it would be hard for me to fully focus on anything else."

"In many ways, my influences not only impacted my art, but also helped to shape my decision to build a career in this field, and therefore influenced my life trajectory."



“I became obsessed with drawing and eventually decided to pursue it as a career”



INSPIRED BY MUCHA

"This is a more recent piece, drawn in 2020, that shows an Art Nouveau influence from Alphonse Mucha."



GRAB YOUR OWN STUNNING LOISH ARTBOOK

Signed collections of Loish's finest art are available now online. Head over to <https://store.3dtotal.com> to pick up yours today.

Interview

Leemage / Contributor / Getty Images



Heritage Images / Contributor / Getty Images

LAYING FOUNDATIONS

Alphonse Mucha's work heavily influenced the formative direction of Lois's art, particularly the way she creates feminine figures.

1 ALPHONSE MUCHA

"Mucha is one of my most foundational and formative artistic influences," says Lois. "Before I discovered his work, I was mildly interested in all kinds of random art genres. I liked contemporary art, anime and manga, Disney, and drawing realism. I was just trying random stuff out."

But after seeing Mucha's work in *The Art Book* by Phaidon, Lois's art took a whole new direction. She started adapting the way she composed her drawings and even began integrating flowing, feminine characters into her work, all reflecting what she saw from Mucha.

Among others, Lois recalls the day she first saw Mucha's *La Trappistine*. "I saw something that was somewhere between realism and stylisation. It was

elegant and the composition was exciting and unique. The beautiful and elaborate details were balanced with low-detailed areas in a way that made both stand out without them fighting with one another.

"Alongside this, the femininity of the figure was so inviting and beautiful. I stared at the image for hours and after that I became a full-on Mucha

fan, printing out the images and taping them to my wall."

Lois began creating versions of Mucha's artworks, integrating his techniques into her own geeky *Star Wars* fan art. "To this day, my work is mainly inspired by his. It's why my compositions look the way they look, and why I draw in a way that is realistic but also stylised and simplified."

OEAKAIS TRIBUTES

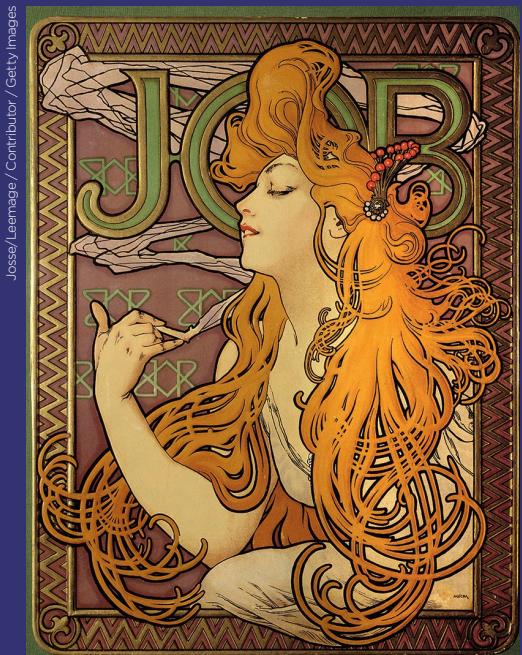
"These are oeakais that I created to emulate Mucha's style. Drawn some time between 2003 and 2004."





CHANGE OF COURSE

After initially treating drawing as a hobby, Lois's life course changed when she discovered online oekaki boards.



JOB CIGARETTE PAPER

A poster, designed by Alphonse Mucha in 1897, advertising the cigarette paper Job.

2 J.C. LEYENDECKER

After graduating from art school, Lois discovered the delights of Leyendecker. "I found this artist later in my artistic trajectory, around 2012," explains Lois. "A close friend of mine had one of his artbooks and I was instantly enthralled."

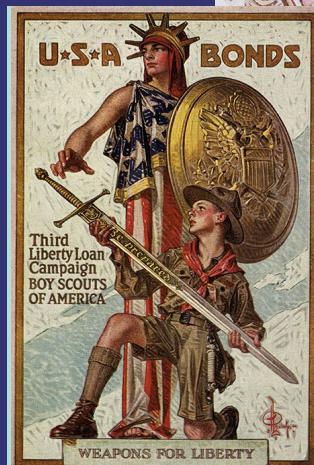
Through Leyendecker's influence, Lois's work took on a painterly and brown style. "His approach to volumes was like nothing I had ever seen before. I loved the way that everything felt so three-dimensional and tactile, almost like it had been sculpted."

LATE DISCOVERY

Since first coming across Leyendecker's work in a friend's artbook, much of Lois's art continues to be influenced by the painterly style and tactile nature of the American illustrator.

Lois exudes passion in the way she describes his work and Leyendecker continues to be one of her overriding influences, choosing to regularly include his artwork as part of her reference boards.

"I loved the sophisticated colour schemes featuring neutral tones with some bright orange accents. I loved seeing the thick, buttery brushstrokes. Most of all I loved how his artwork featured people and used interesting stylised elements and simplified forms to frame them."



STYLE INFLUENCE

"This is a recent piece influenced by Leyendecker, drawn in 2021."



SOPHISTICATED COLOURS

"This study was drawn around the time I first discovered Leyendecker in 2012."



Bettmann / Contributor / Getty Images

© P. F. COLLIER & SON

Interview

ORIGINAL TABLET DRAWING

"This is the first drawing that I ever made with a drawing tablet. I was trying to emulate Iain's beautiful side view of Padmé. Drawn in 2003."



STAR WARS FAN ART

"An oekaki of Padmé I drew in 2004."



3 IAIN MCCAG

"I discovered McCaig's work because he had done concept art for Padmé from Star Wars," Lois says. "I was a huge fan of Episodes I, II, and III, specifically Padmé's beautiful dresses and costumes. I loved her regal vibes in Episode I, but even more, I loved her Art Nouveau-inspired dress in Episode II."

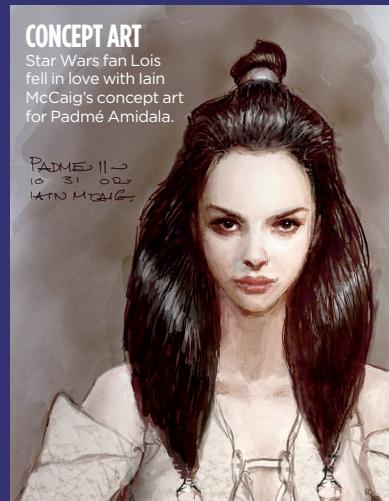
This is no surprise considering she's such a huge fan of Mucha. Lois continues: "When I saw McCaig's concept sketches for these dresses, I became obsessed."

She was particularly drawn to and blown away by the way that he was using shapes and layering the details of the costume designs. "His sketch featuring a side view of Padmé with



SHAPES AND LAYERS

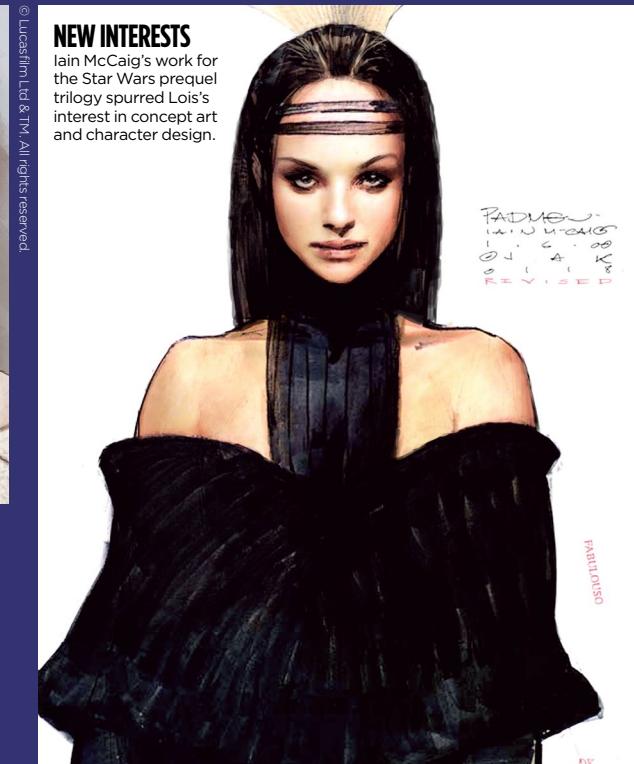
"More recent art that channels McCaig's approach to shapes and layers for his sci-fi designs. Drawn in 2022."



CONCEPT ART

Star Wars fan Lois fell in love with Iain McCaig's concept art for Padmé Amidala.

Padmé II →
10.31.02
Iain McCaig



NEW INTERESTS

Iain McCaig's work for the Star Wars prequel trilogy spurred Lois's interest in concept art and character design.

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“He was very patient with me as I awkwardly sputtered out what a huge fan I was”



DREAMLIKE VIBES

After discovering Mattahan's work through DeviantArt, Lois began adding more decorative elements to her own images



CHARACTER PORTRAYAL

The way Mattahan shows the sensitivity in his characters left a lasting impression on Lois.

4 MATTAHAN

Finding Paul Davey, also known as Mattahan, marked a change in Lois's art style. "I discovered his work on DeviantArt and the surreal, dreamlike vibes really drew me in," Lois says.

"He created paintings that showed an immersive level of detail and gave me the feeling the characters were frozen in a moment in time, surrounded by their thoughts and emotions. What I found so fascinating was the sensitivity with which he portrayed characters. I felt a strong sense of empathy with every character he conveyed."

"After discovering his work, I moved away from cute and funny themes, and tried to bring some of his sophistication to my art and characters. I started embellishing my art with more surreal decorative elements to give it more of a dreamlike feeling."

5 JANA SCHIRMER

Schirmer has been particularly active on oekaki boards, where Lois first came across her. On a platform typically used for simple pixel art, Schirmer created elaborate works.

"Jana's work was on a different level and sent shockwaves through the oekaki community," Lois says. "Not only was the technique incredible, the art itself was gorgeous; so lush and

complex, with a slight edge to it. The biggest shocker? These drawings were being made by a 13-year-old girl!"

"I still remember the moment she dropped a compliment onto one of my artworks. I was so honoured. She was a true legend and a big reason that I moved away from more flat colouring and started exploring more painterly styles."



PAINTERLY EXPLORATION

"An early attempt to emulate Jana's lush and three-dimensional rendering style."



APPROACH TO PORTRAITS

"A painting I made in 2006 influenced by Jana's painterly style and approach to pinup portraits."



COVER ARTIST

Jana Schirmer's fantasy artwork has previously featured on the cover of ImagineFX.



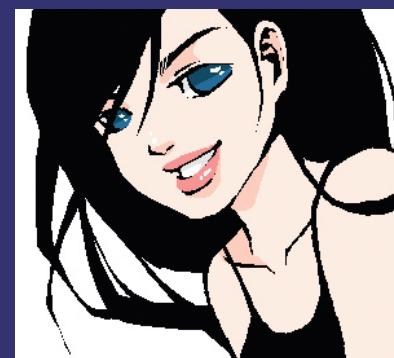
CAREER TEMPLATE

Lois has modelled her approach to sharing artwork online after Aurore's methods.



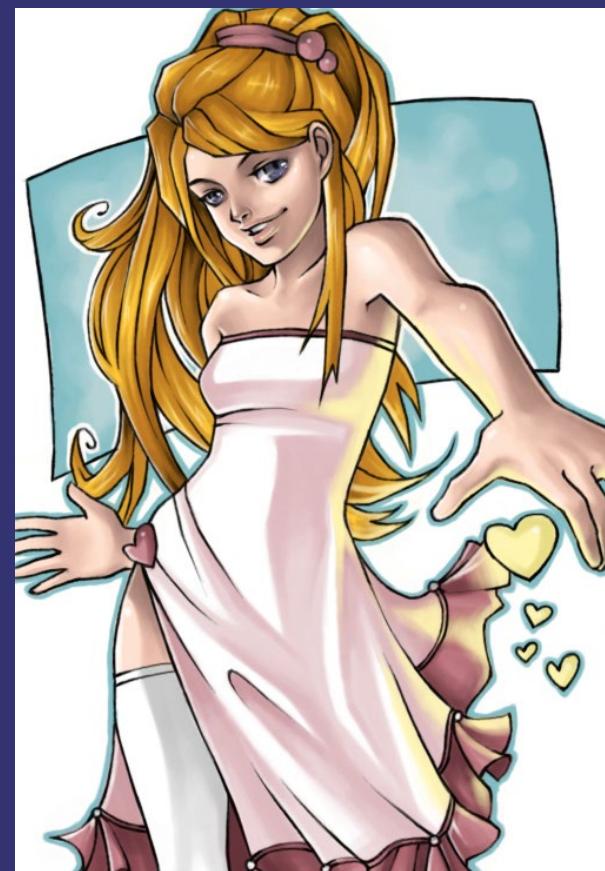
POWERFUL EXPRESSIONS

An example of the emotive expressions in Aurore's work.



CHANGING FACE

"This is one of my first oekakis where I tried to emulate the facial features and rendering style of Aurore. It was when I first started moving away from a more anime-style face. Drawn in 2003."



POSING PRACTICE IN PHOTOSHOP

"An example of a finished work from Photoshop, which emulates Aurore's style and posing. This one was drawn in 2004."

6 AURORE BLACKCAT

Ever since Lois first found Aurore's art on the oekaki boards, she has had a significant influence on not only her drawing style, but also on the way that she conducts herself as a digital artist.

Lois says: "Her work ethic, high output, and approach to drawing characters and sharing work online has become a template for me. She is the reason I started creating art and sharing it the way I do today. I truly owe a massive chunk of my artistic career to Aurore."

Alongside the professional side of being an artist, Aurore also influenced

Lois's art in more direct ways. She was stunned when she came across Aurore's series of zodiac characters.

"Aurore's work showed me how powerful posing and expressions were to making characters look interesting and fun. She uses a simplified style, but the images are still so vibrant and full of life because of the dynamic and cute poses. She also has a way of drawing faces that feel very warm, natural and welcoming."

"Because of Aurore's work, I started creating lots of fun little drawings in oekaki as well, which accelerated my artistic growth enormously."

“Because of Aurore's work, I started creating fun little drawings in oekaki, which accelerated my artistic growth”

1 ELIZA IVANOVA

Ivanova is one of Lois's more recent inspirations. "She makes you see the world differently, and inspires artists to approach their work differently. I'm definitely not the only artist that she has influenced!"

Ivanova creates mostly rougher sketches, but approaches it with a sophistication that elevates anything she draws to a work of fine art. "No matter the subject, it becomes poetic, mysterious and full of beauty. Her style is one of the most original I've come across in my 20 years of finding inspiring artwork online."

"She uses a mix of lines and shapes to build volume and does it in a way that makes anything she draws appear as though it's moving. You can just picture it in 3D."

"But it's also made with so much sensitivity. Looking at her art is truly an experience. Ever since I discovered it, it has changed how I build volumes and shapes in my work."

"Eliza inspired me to pick up a blending stump myself and emulate her sketching technique. I genuinely feel as though her art is transformative in this way."

LOISH PORTRAIT STUDY

Lois first saw Ivanova's art through Instagram and has become a major fan of her sophisticated approach.



TECHNIQUE TRIAL

"A page from my sketchbook I drew using Eliza's blending stump technique, and which is drawn from her style."



DISPLAYING MOVEMENT

In her own sketches, Lois has taken on Eliza Ivanova's use of lines, shape and volume, in order to display movement.

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Christmas 2022

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December 2022

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Sketchbook

Jens Claessens

Get an introduction to the characters and creatures in the concept artist's sketchbook and what inspires his varied subjects

DIGITAL PENCIL

"These sketches may look traditional, but they are in fact digital drawings on an image of a sketchbook."

Artist PROFILE

Jens Claessens

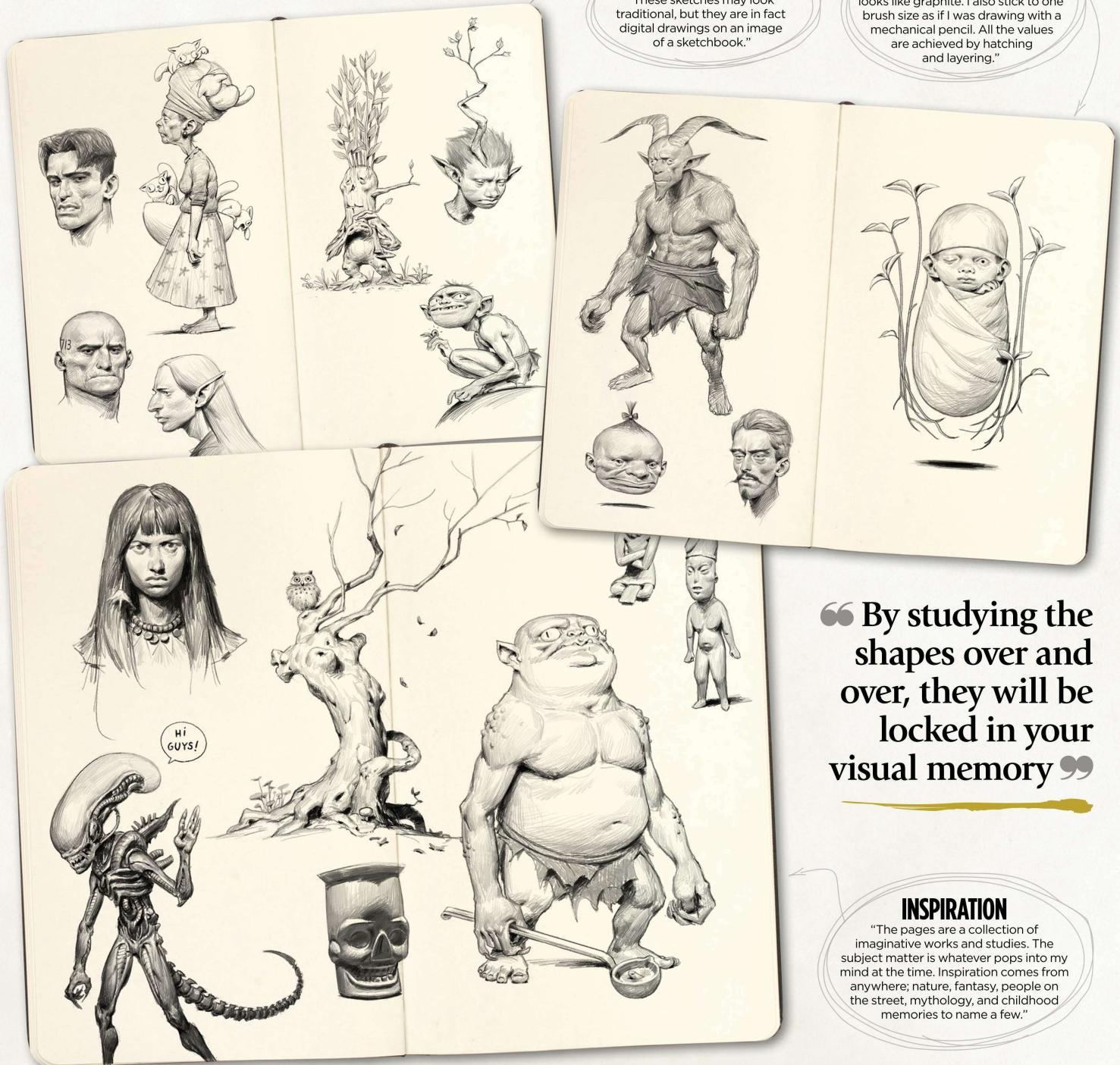
LOCATION: Belgium



Jens is a concept artist working in the animation and games industries. He also has a strong focus on his personal projects, and enjoys creating artwork live during his Twitch streams.
linktr.ee/jensclaessens

HATCHING

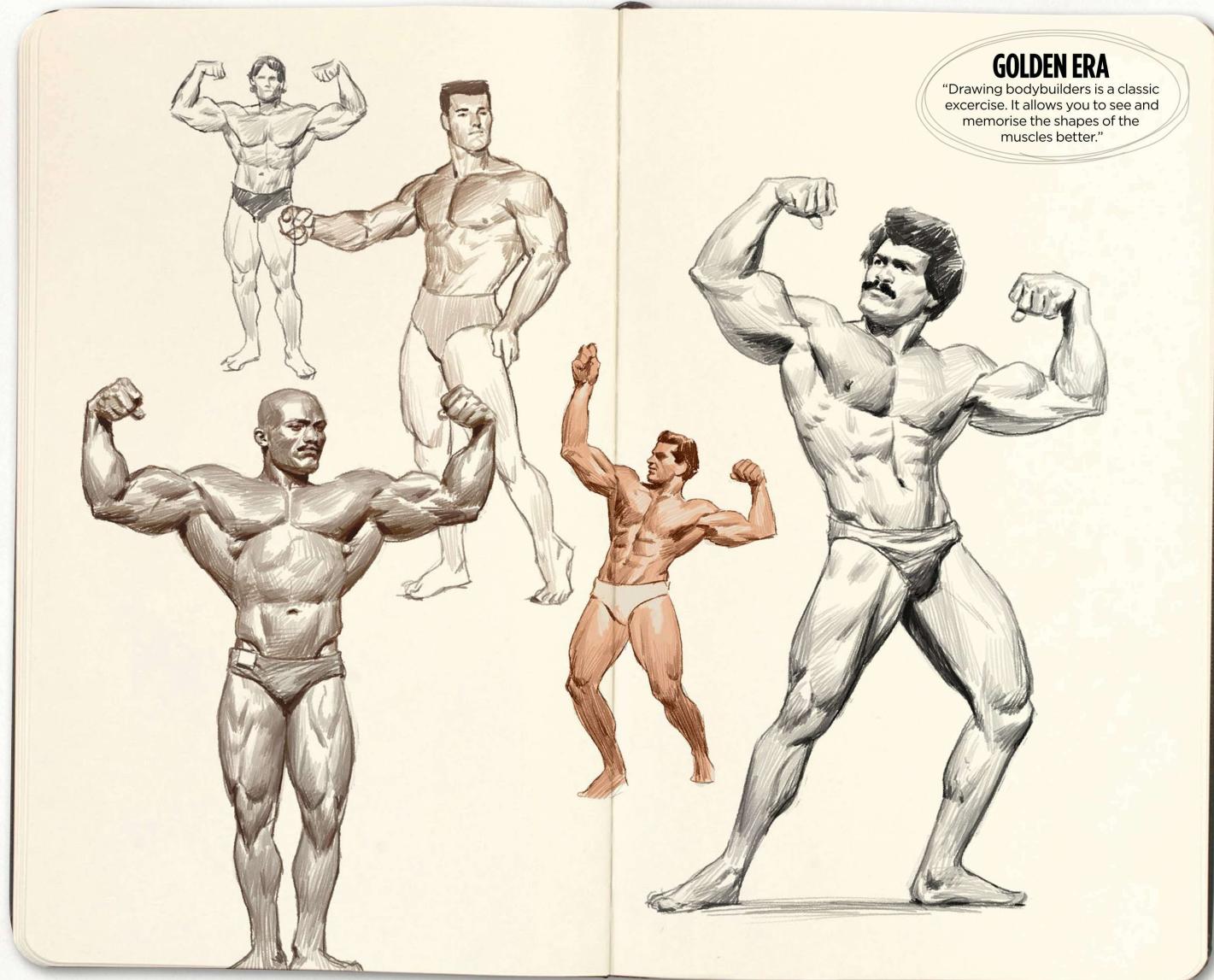
"These were done in Photoshop with a brush I made that looks like graphite. I also stick to one brush size as if I was drawing with a mechanical pencil. All the values are achieved by hatching and layering."



“By studying the shapes over and over, they will be locked in your visual memory”

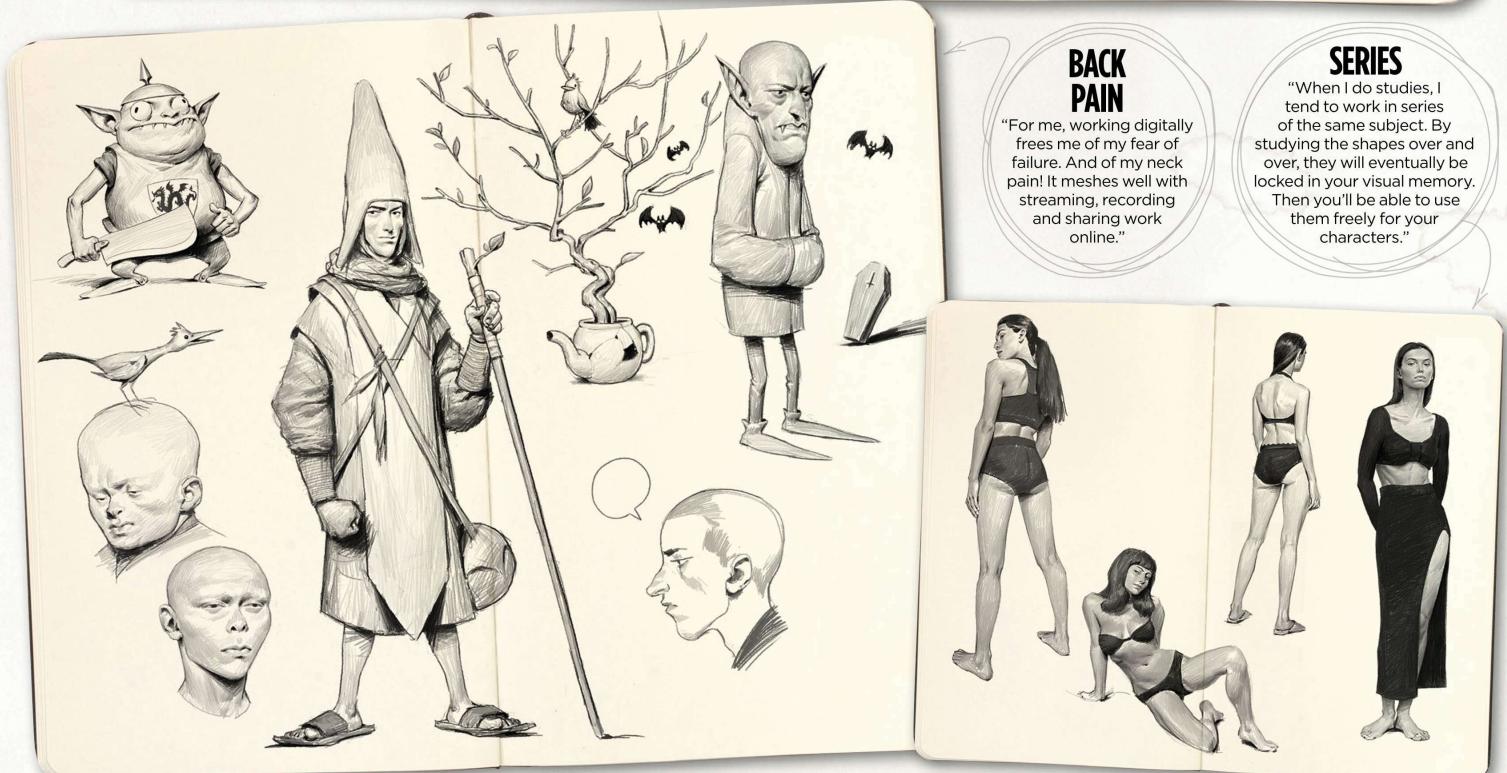
INSPIRATION

"The pages are a collection of imaginative works and studies. The subject matter is whatever pops into my mind at the time. Inspiration comes from anywhere; nature, fantasy, people on the street, mythology, and childhood memories to name a few."



GOLDEN ERA

"Drawing bodybuilders is a classic exercise. It allows you to see and memorise the shapes of the muscles better."



BACK PAIN

"For me, working digitally frees me of my fear of failure. And of my neck pain! It meshes well with streaming, recording and sharing work online."

SERIES

"When I do studies, I tend to work in series of the same subject. By studying the shapes over and over, they will eventually be locked in your visual memory. Then you'll be able to use them freely for your characters."

Sketchbook



IMPROVEMENT

"By sticking with the same technique, I greatly improved my control over the 'pencil'. The key to improvement is repetition of a good idea."

THE HUMAN CONDITION

"As a character-oriented artist, my interest is with the unusual, the full breadth of shapes the human body can take. Not just the beautiful."



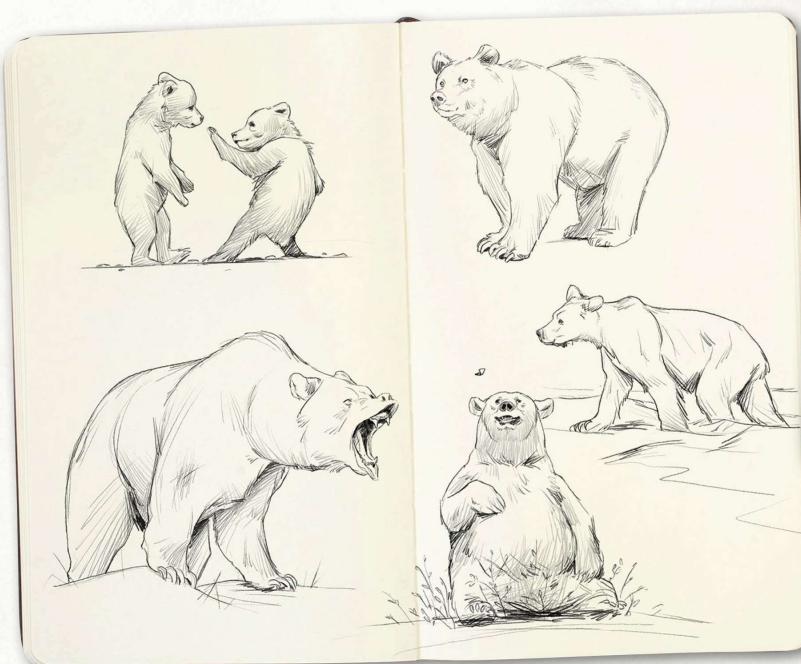
MUGSHOTS

"I try to find references away from the usual places like Pinterest. Mugshots, historical photos, medical textbooks, your influences are part of what makes your work unique."

“ Human beings come in all shapes and sizes. Your character designs should reflect that ”



Sketchbook Jens Claessens



CHALLENGE

"These bear sketches were part of the daily drawing challenge on my discord; one page of animal sketches per day, for a month."

PROPORTIONS

"Human beings come in all shapes and sizes. Your character designs should reflect that."



Sketchbook

ANIMALS

"When drawing animals I like to show them in motion, interacting with food, hunting, and so on. It makes for interesting drawings."





“By varying the detail on a sketch, you can create focal points”

FOCUS

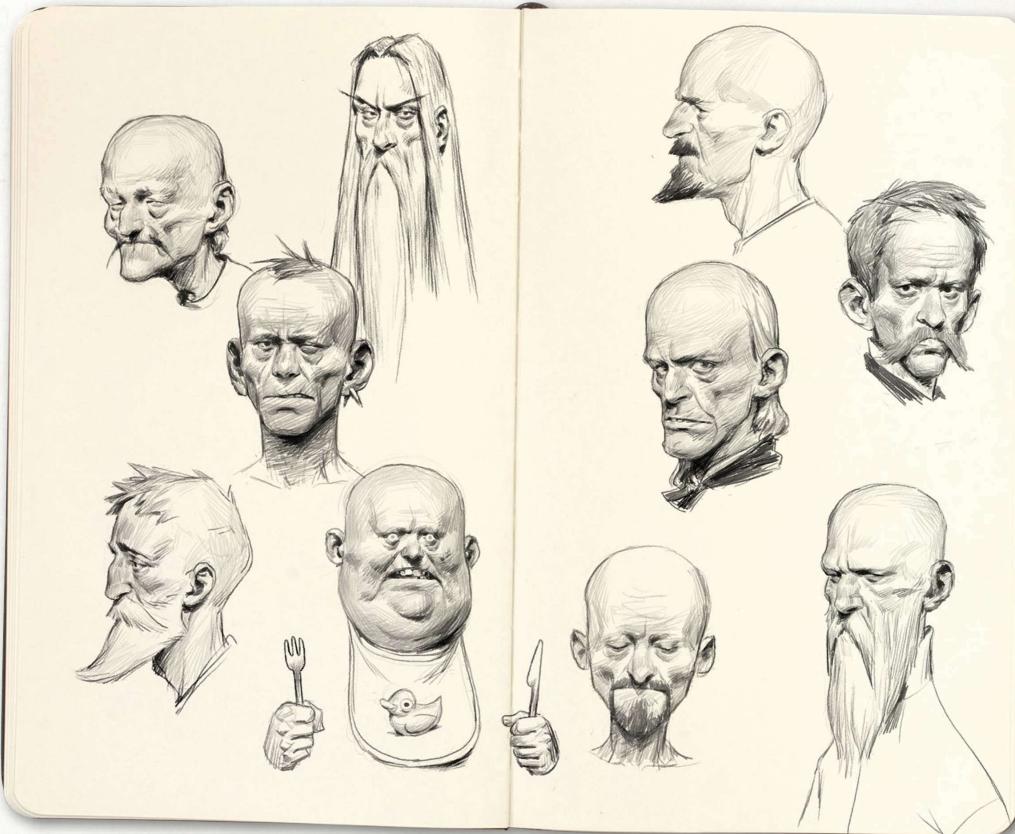
“By varying the detail on a sketch, you can create focal points. Here, the eye of the viewer is guided towards the face.”

SWITCH IT UP

“Switching between imaginative drawings and studies can help you avoid artist's block. Same with switching mediums, working in colour, and the like. If nothing works, go for a ride on your bicycle!”

FACES

“For the longest time I was addicted to drawing just faces. It turned out to be one of my biggest assets working as a concept artist.”



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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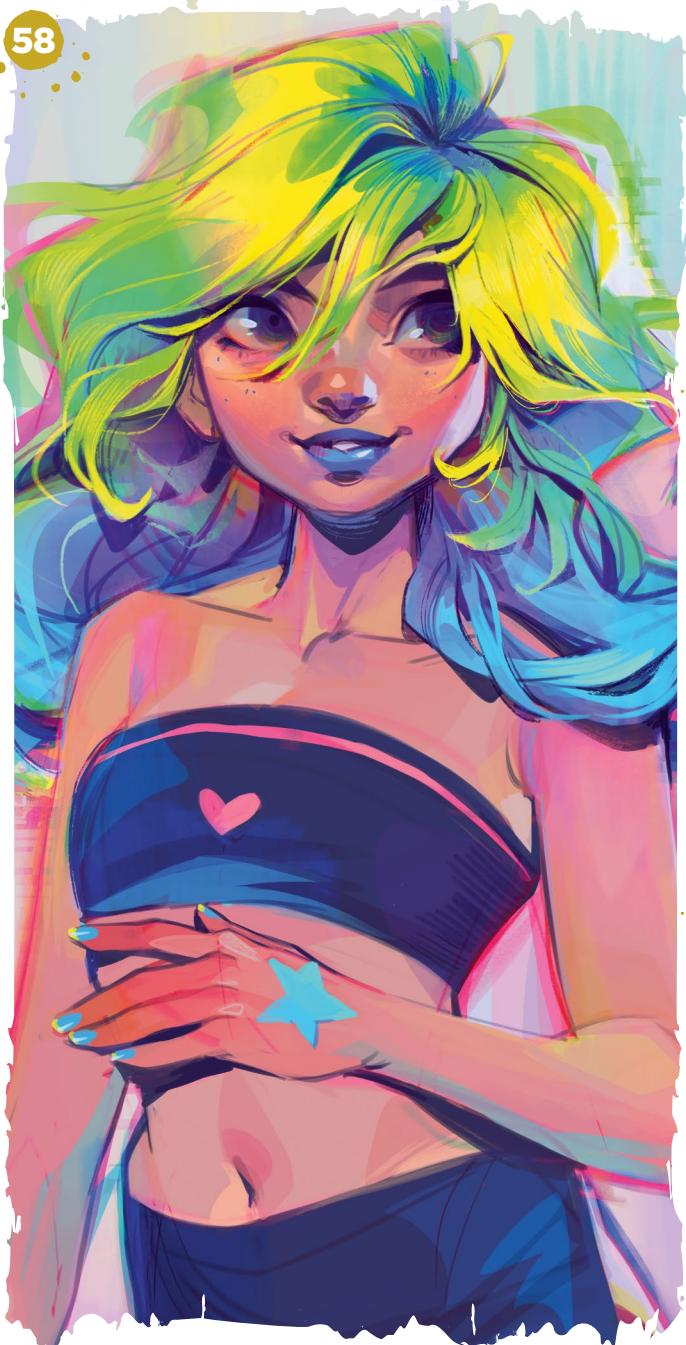
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Expert advice on the power of persevering by Patrick Gañas.

Photoshop DESIGN COLOURFUL CHARACTER ART

Loish shares her advice for developing an eye-catching colour scheme to use in your digital character artwork



Artist PROFILE

Lois van Baarle

LOCATION:
The Netherlands

Lois divides her time between personal art and character design work. She also creates regular Patreon tutorials. <http://loish.net>



This is a redraw of an older image that I first made back in 2003. For the original I used highlighters, so when remaking the image digitally, I wanted the colours to be just as bright and vibrant as the highlighter ink from my original drawing!

When working digitally, creating a bright colour scheme is easier said than done, given that there isn't a

specific setting for neon colours. In order to create a similar effect, it's much more about how the colours interact with one another. The relationships between the highlight and shadow colours are what determine whether the colours look bright, so it's really important to think about the palette as a whole throughout the process.

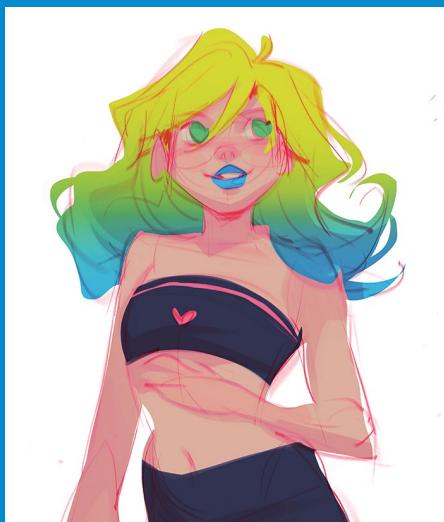
Over time, I've developed a number of tried-and-true digital art

techniques that always help me to create bright colours that still feel unified and cohesive. Digital media has so many helpful tools to use for this purpose, including colour-editing tools, which allow me to tweak and modify as I go.

However, at the end of the day, it's ultimately about old-fashioned colour theory, which applies to any medium you use, whether that be traditional or digital! ➤

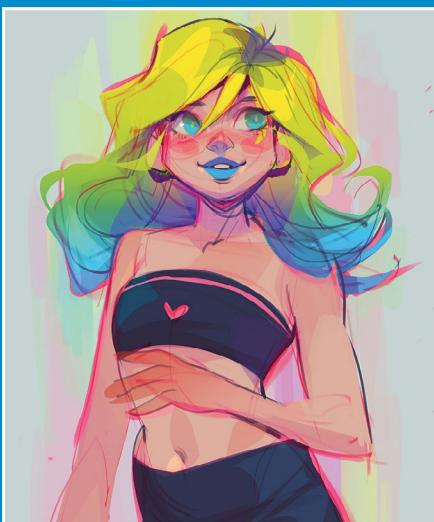
How I create... A VIVID COLOUR PALETTE

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1 Basic colours

First, I add flat colours below my sketch. When choosing these, I like to start with one colour and move on from there. That makes it easier to ensure they interact in a harmonious way. After that, I set my sketch layer to Multiply and change the colour to something that blends well with the flat colours below.



2 Choose highlight and shadow colours

The key to making colours vivid is ensuring that your highlight and shadow choices are interesting and vibrant. Rather than simply making them lighter or darker versions of the base colour, I use Hue Shift. In this case, yellow highlights and purple shadows worked well together.



3 Amplify the vibrancy

Finally, I break up any flat areas by using colour variation, for example adding purples, blues and greens to the shadows. This gives an iridescent sort of effect. Whenever possible, I try to use colours already on the canvas so that they are distributed over the painting in a way that catches the eye!

In depth Vibrant colours



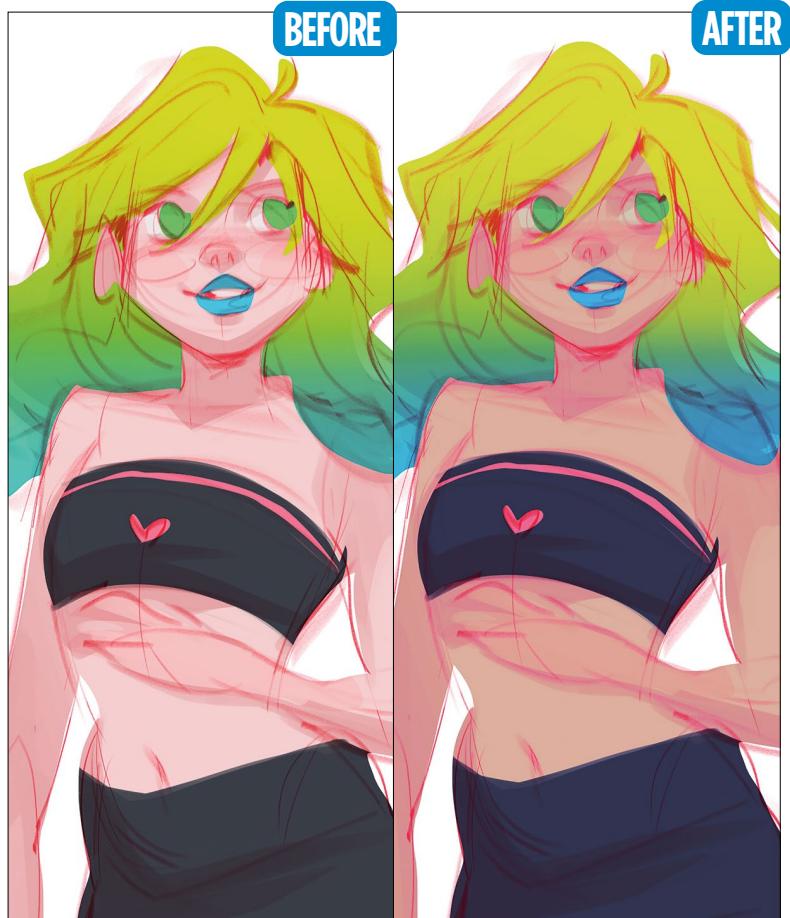
Workshops

TIME TO UPDATE



Original drawing

This is the original version of the drawing that I created back in 2003. Back then, I had a much more simplified and chunky style. I like revisiting older pieces every so often. It's always interesting to see how I approach the same subject with an updated skillset.



Colour modifications

One of my favourite parts of creating digital art is the ability to modify the colours. Tools like Selective Color help me amplify specific aspects of the colour scheme. For this drawing, I found it helpful to tone down the whites and intensify the reds and pinks for an electric, glowing feel!

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: HARD ROUND BRUSH

This hard round brush is my all-time favourite! It's just a standard hard round brush, with the opacity and size linked to pressure. This makes it great for both bigger shapes as well as adding in finer details.

BEFORE



AFTER



Highlights

A technique that I often find helpful for giving more dimension to my character art is adding a bright highlight on one side. It's fairly easy to do and instantly gives a lot of depth. I tend to draw these on a separate layer on top, so I can easily tweak and adjust them.

In depth Vibrant colours

Freckles

I like to get a rough colour scheme down at an early stage and then use the colours already on the canvas to render and detail. In this case, I used a dark blue for the freckles and a bright teal for the shine on the eye. Those colours were all picked from other areas of the image.

BEFORE

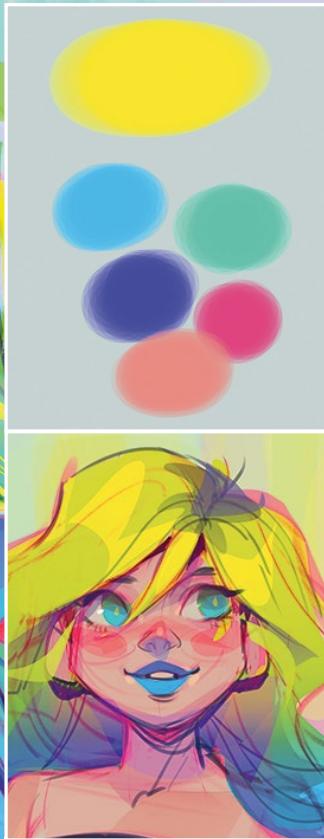


AFTER



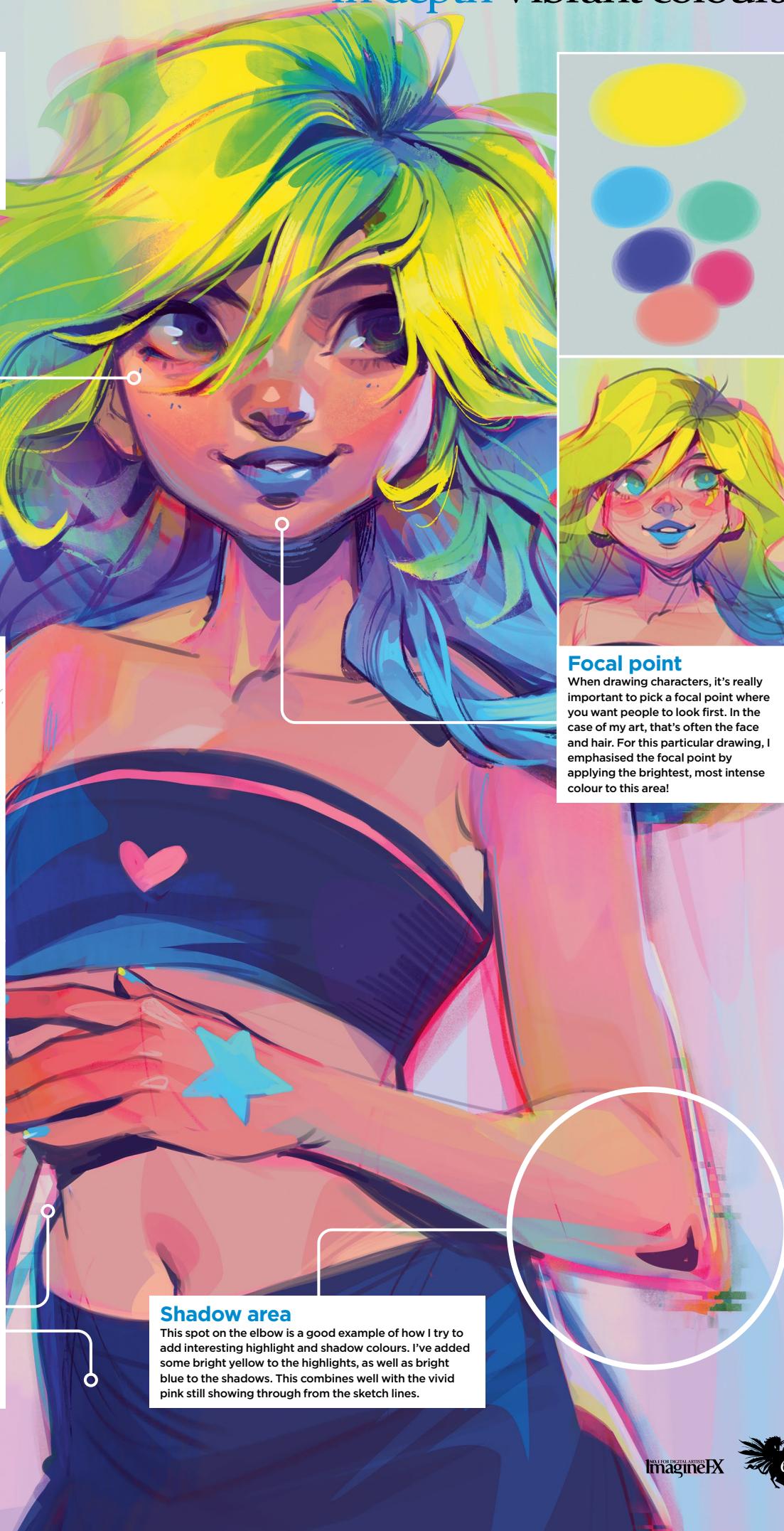
Changing the colour of the sketch lines

Artists often draw their sketch lines in black, but this doesn't usually do much for the colour scheme. I always recommend setting the sketch layer to Multiply and then changing the colour of the lines to something brighter. This creates way more interesting shadow colours and mid-tones.



Focal point

When drawing characters, it's really important to pick a focal point where you want people to look first. In the case of my art, that's often the face and hair. For this particular drawing, I emphasised the focal point by applying the brightest, most intense colour to this area!



Shadow area

This spot on the elbow is a good example of how I try to add interesting highlight and shadow colours. I've added some bright yellow to the highlights, as well as bright blue to the shadows. This combines well with the vivid pink still showing through from the sketch lines.

Technique focus

CONSIDER COMPOSITION

Ruan Jia explains the development of the structure in his fantasy character art from initial concepts through to final render



"This character, Aresha, comes from my personal work Black Dragon Crown. Before painting I think about the composition I want and find good reference pictures, then

determine the movements of the characters. I wanted this picture to have a spiral composition so I drew the wings accordingly. I also changed the colour of the dragon to white because I felt the final colour tone would be more attractive."

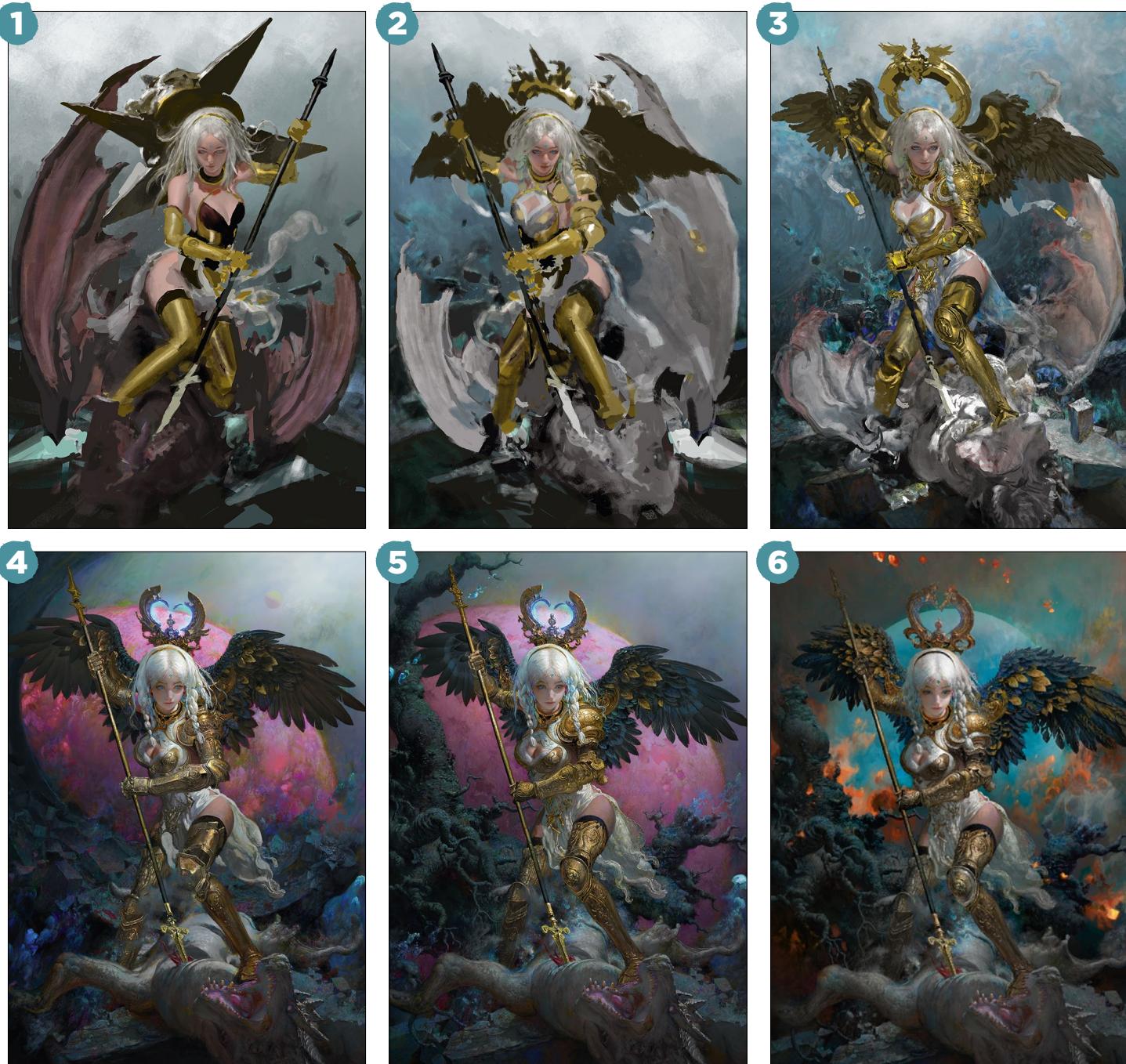
Other changes I made included the addition of the planet and the replacement of a stone with a tree in the background. I also added extra details to the armour plates because they are an important part of the overall composition."

Artist PROFILE

Ruan Jia

LOCATION: China

Ruan Jia is a CG and concept artist based in China. His work has featured in video games including Guild Wars, the Halo series, Diablo III and many more.
<https://bit.ly/3EeXDTg>





Photoshop CREATE SURREAL ZODIAC ARTWORK

Valentina Remenar reveals how she uses symbolism to create deeper meaning within her surrealist paintings

Artist PROFILE

Valentina Remenar

LOCATION: Slovenia

Valentina is an illustrator, surrealist and graphic designer who enjoys creating dreamlike paintings with a touch of symbolism to them. <https://bit.ly/3USuDYE>



For each of my surrealist works, I strive for symbolism in the painting. With this piece, I wanted to create a surrealistic image inspired by the zodiac sign Aries.

The painting depicts my personal character, Lucien, who embodies the many traits of Aries. He is brave, fearless, holds a deep sense of justice and, as a prince, is a natural leader.

Likewise, he possesses the negatives associated with this zodiac sign. He is aggressive, self-centered and pushy, to name but a few.

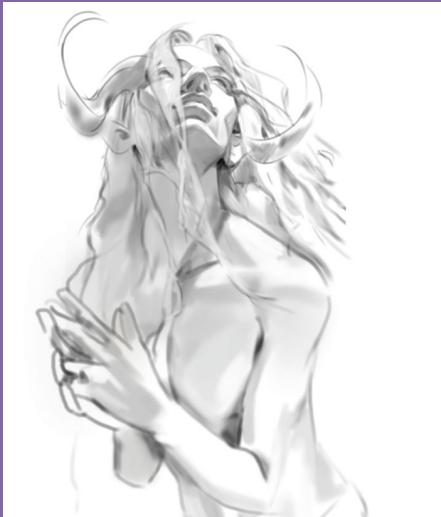
For this painting, I picked a sign that matches his personality. He even looks like a ram on account of his horns. You can see the direct symbolism in the fact there is a burning brazier next to him, as the element of Aries is fire. You might also have noticed that the ash rising

from the brazier takes a form similar to stars in the sky as it climbs higher into the air.

Since this is a zodiac-inspired piece, I wanted to include a cosmic atmosphere with a symbolic nod to the birthplace of the zodiac: the stars. The ruling planet of Aries is, in fact, not a planet at all, but our own sun. You can see the symbolism here too as Lucien's earring depicts the sun in a surreal style.

How I create...

A ZODIAC-INSPIRED CHARACTER



1 Make a sketch

First of all, I created the character in Blender so that I had a more realistic reference, as well as perspective, pose, lighting and composition. Using that reference, I then created a rough sketch in Photoshop using the default brush, and roughly blocked in the shading, lighting and bounce light values respectively.



2 Colours and light

Now happy with the sketch, I added a Hue/Saturation layer to change the black and white sketch to sepia colours. I then added colours on new layers on top of both the sketch and Hue/Saturation layers, using Multiply and Hard Light to my liking. I also added another Hard Light layer for shadow to bring out the character's volumes.



3 Refine details

The refinement process heavily involves colour tweaking through several adjustment layers to make the artwork more vibrant and to add contrast. Among my layers, I used a mixture of Color Lookup, Vibrance, Gradient Maps and Exposure, among others. I also began the process of painting in details with textured brushes.

In depth Surreal zodiac art



Workshops

BUILD COMPOSITION



Lighting

When I create more complex and detailed artwork, I always try to simplify my base layers as much as possible. The same goes for when I bring in light and shadows. I add all the shadows on one layer with a single, flat colour, which helps me figure out the lighting.



WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES:
PLASTIC WRAP - LIGHT
90 PIXELS!



This brush was used for adding textured details on the hair.

SAMPLED BRUSH 8 1730



With this brush I added final touches to get oil painting-style results.

 **GET YOUR
RESOURCES**
See page 6 now!

In depth Surreal zodiac art

Impressionist elements

For the background I used the Pissarro 1 brush from the Kyle's Paintbox brush set. I found this brush can give quick and effective results similar to the impressionist paintings from old masters. For this specific piece, I tried to recreate that kind of texture and atmosphere.

Mixer Brush

When I finish the painting with default brushes, in the final stage of the process I duplicate then merge all of the layers so I'm left with a flat image. I use this flat image for adding details with the Mixer Brush. Since I want to create a more traditional look, like a physical oil painting, I use the Mixer Brush as it provides a better texture and blends colours more effectively for the results I want.

Hands

A lot of the time when I draw hands, I actually look at my own or take a photo reference of them. I did the same for this painting. Although I do use 3D models for reference most of the time, I'll still use myself as a reference, especially if I'm trying to make a character more expressive or lifelike, because 3D models can be a little stiff.

Complementary brazier

Besides a strong focal point on the character, I also wanted to keep a focus on the brazier because of the fire symbolism connected to the Aries zodiac sign. However, I didn't want to make it too distracting because the character is still the main focus of the painting. This is why I put the brazier in the lower half, towards the bottom corner of the drawing.

Texture

For the final touches I used a paper-style photo texture in order to create an appearance similar to a traditional oil painting. I also made use of a Levels adjustment layer for the texture so that I could tweak the brightness to change the amount of grain included in the drawing.

Photoshop EXPERT GUIDE TO RADIATING LINES

The composition lines of **Sachin Teng** map out visual language to communicate ideas and stories throughout her artwork

Artist PROFILE

Sachin Teng

LOCATION: US

Sachin Teng is an eclectic illustrator working in fields from editorial and advertising to comics and animation. www.sachinteng.com



Composition is visual storytelling in its most concise form, reduced to its most simple geometry. How do you express longing or grief without words or facial expressions? How do you convey motion and rhythm without movement?

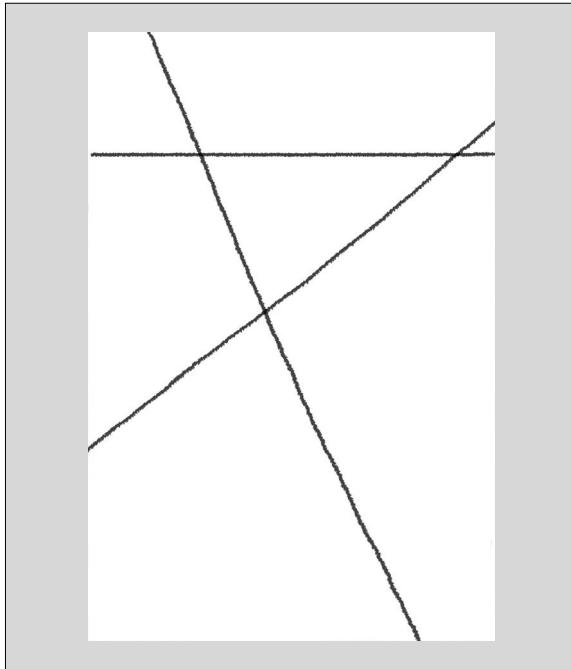
Composition is your macro storytelling. Simple shape and colour are sculpted into your leading lines, as they're called in photography, also known as radiating lines within the painting world.

These are edges, formed by things like perspective lines, silhouettes and intersections, that guide the eye through the canvas and provide flow and momentum moulded to create and reinforce different emotions and actions. Highly organised and symmetrical radiating lines result in a rigid but powerful mood. Frantic and wavy radiating lines might create a chaotic, flowing style. Your method is dependent on your intent.

Line art, rendering and all the minutiae of your subject matter are your micro storytelling. They are the

skin wrapped around the meat and bones. They create a face for your framework, giving it character, personality and style.

I don't believe in a one-size-fits-all composing convention. For me, golden ratio, harmonic armature, formal and informal subdivision, and similar devices are useful but can be restrictive. Visual storytelling requires a visual language. It's important for you to try to create your own, because to say things that haven't been said before requires using your own words.



1 What are you saying?

The two characters are drawn together and from two different worlds. In its simplest form this poster can be expressed as two converging triangles or lines. These lines draw you towards the point of intersection, pulling the two triangles together. You don't have to stick strictly to this, think of it as a guide.

2 Macro to micro

Rather than trying to define all the tiny details and line art from the start, I began by blocking out generic shapes and colours to define the core relationships in the composition. The idea was that the flood literally fills up the canvas, pushing the character all the way to the very top. This is visually expressed by the top having little space and the bottom having a lot. ➤

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: CONTE_H

I use this brush to create clean lines, particularly to create separations in screenprinting while still managing to maintain a natural tooth.

In depth Radiating lines



Workshops



3 Find your lines

The two main characters making eye contact are the focal point, so I started looking at what the radiating lines are. They more or less converge along the two triangles, and I continuously adjusted them as I worked on the poster. Most of the time I don't actually draw these lines, but you can if it helps you keep track. Simply draw them on a separate layer. Keep everything on separate layers, as you will need to adjust the positioning constantly.



5 Visual syntax

I started final line art once I'd decided on a sketch. I began with the focus of the artwork first because, ideally, if it's truly the focal point it's where your eye will go first. Personally, I began doing line work here before the rest because I wanted to establish a visual language. That way I know what everything is working towards.

4 Get the idea across

At the sketch phase, especially if time is short, I personally prioritise getting the idea across over the construction of a 1:1 final composition. I apply rough line work and some colour washes, usually a separate layer of 10-20 per cent opacity on Multiply, on top in order to establish mood and texture.



6 Colour and shape

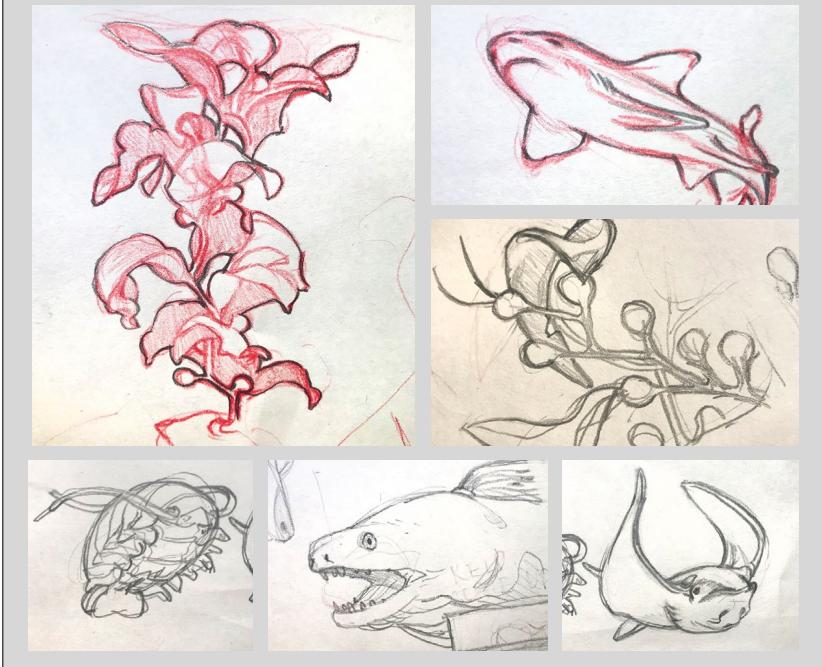
I start mapping out colour schemes and blocking out details, especially important because this is a screenprint with limited colours. The top section is calm and empty to juxtapose the bottom, wild and busy. The top is highly saturated and the bottom desaturated. Only the two characters have unique colours – red and yellow – while all the others have an analogous colour scheme to unify them together.

In depth Radiating lines



7 Line of action

Lines can be used to express action as well. Line of action is often used to refer to drawing people, but objects and backgrounds have these as well. Here I'm defining the macro structure for new elements. I wanted a strong vertical focus for the kelp and a spiralling line for the sea creatures. My goal was for the spiral and verticals to read as a rising flow to reinforce the flood filling up.



8 Automatism

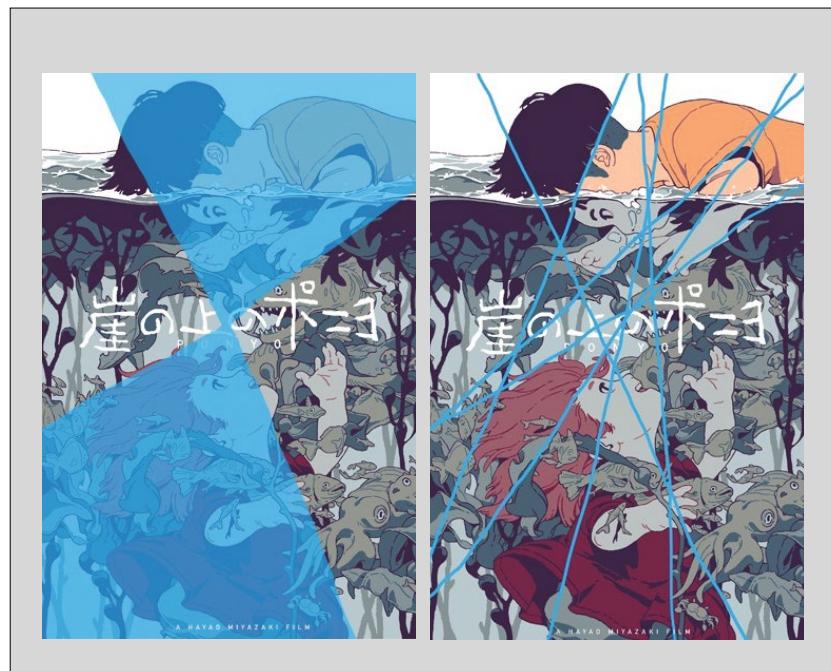
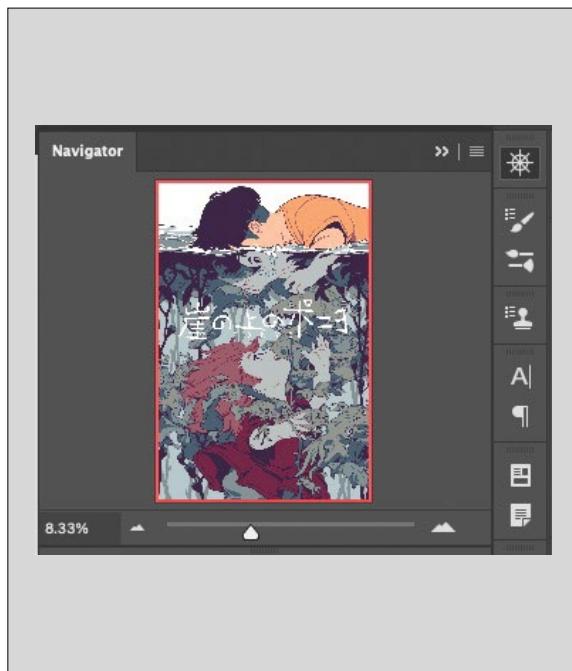
Automatism was implemented by surrealists to suppress conscious control over the making process. I don't quite do it the way they did, but I often draw or paint separate studies and drawings to avoid the bias my brain has to force it into what I already have, rather than letting it fall naturally into place. I import all these drawings onto separate layers, collage them together and draw over them.



9 Compartmentalise

Continuing the theme of macro to micro, I worked on different groups separately, in this case the characters were first, then the kelp, and then the sea creatures. I compartmentalise and group together similar elements if they are meant to be read together. When you're cooking, you don't mix the ingredients all at once. They're cooked individually and added together when they're ready. ➡

Workshops

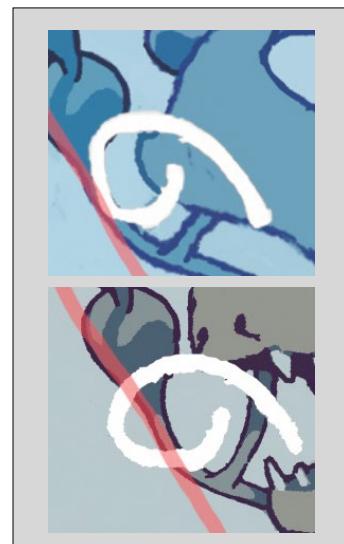


10 Take a step back

Always make sure to routinely step back from your image, or zoom out on your computer when you're painting and drawing. Your image should look and read just as well at five per cent as it does at 100 per cent. This way you're always aware of whether your macro structure is holding together. Don't lose the forest for the trees.

11 Supporting subject matter

The radiating lines have been shifted and adjusted many times since the beginning of the project. And now that new subject matter has been introduced, things like the kelp and sea creatures can also be used to reinforce these lines. Radiating lines don't need to be contained to the subject matter they're leading. The important part is they're still reinforcing the main idea of being drawn together.



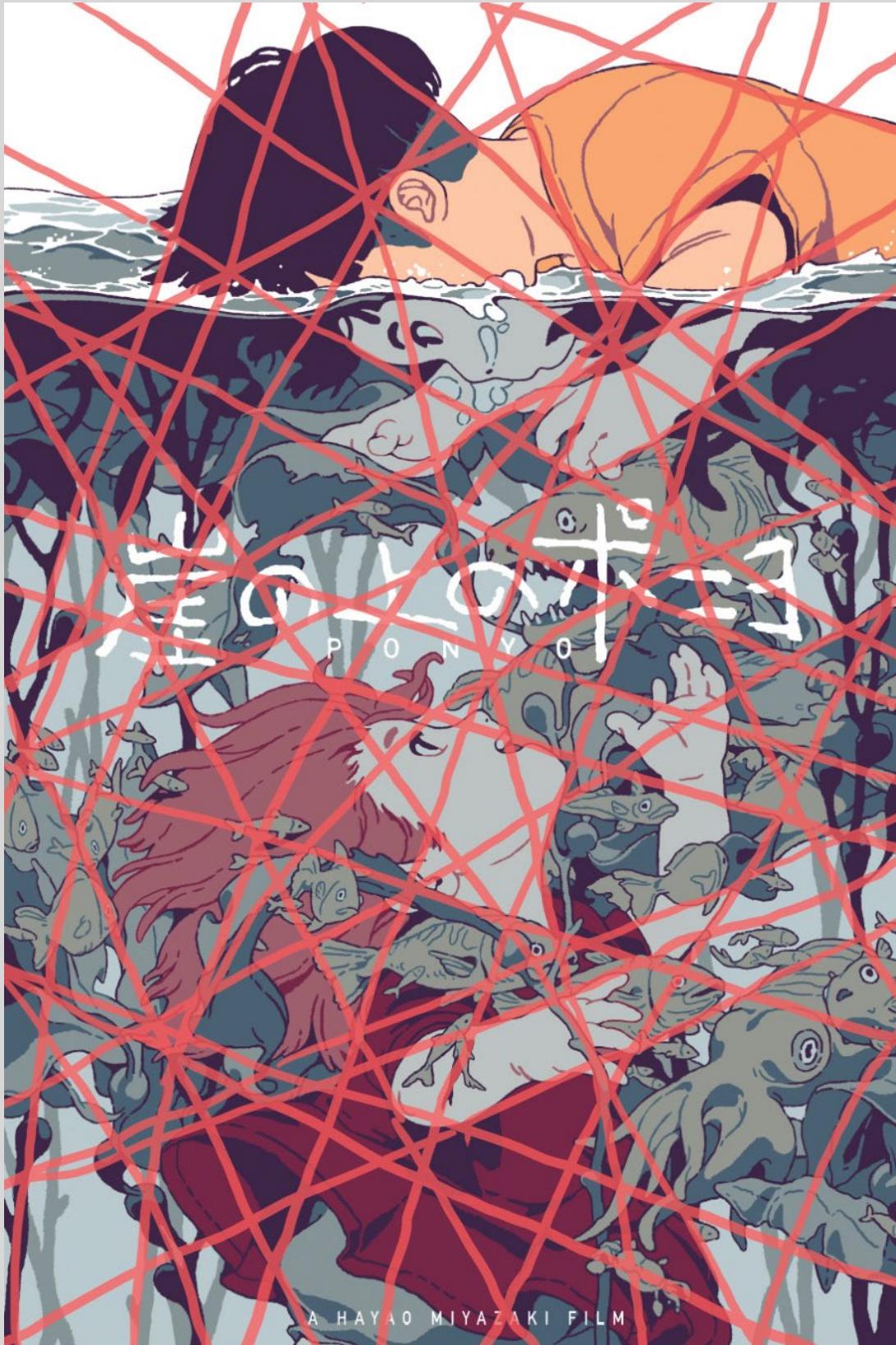
12 Separate structures

In addition to the radiating lines for the main characters, there is an entirely separate set of lines for the sea creatures. To reinforce the spiral, I used a V-shaped or zigzag structure for the sea life, a common compositional theme for old Japanese woodblock prints, which I thought would be a nice art history reference. This zigzag is then reinforced by the separate set of radiating lines.

13 Avoid tangents

Tangents are when two edges touch or overlap in a way that makes the subject difficult to read or separate. Make sure to avoid tangents and reposition any elements that make them to create legible images. A major part of telling a story is people understanding what you're telling them. Poor legibility means a breakdown in communication.

In depth Radiating lines



14 Communication

There are many more radiating lines throughout this poster that I didn't highlight. All art has them. You make them all the time in your own work and you don't have to find them all. But the ones that are easy to find and jump out at you have a big enough impact for you to notice them. Those are the ones you need to be aware of and manage so they are communicating what it is you're trying to say.



Technique focus

DESIGN LANGUAGE

Tyler Edlin on crafting fantasy settings with inspiration from the real world



"Building a world like this takes both time and patience. The best thing that you can do is plan and sketch. If you want to create a fantasy setting, ask yourself, 'What is the design language going to look like?' For me, creating a design language combines

two different, unrelated facets. For this piece, I combined the shapes of various sea anemones with the functionality of a fortress that included a hint to Islamic mosques. Everything that we need for a fantasy setting exists within the real world, you just have to interpret it in your own personal way."

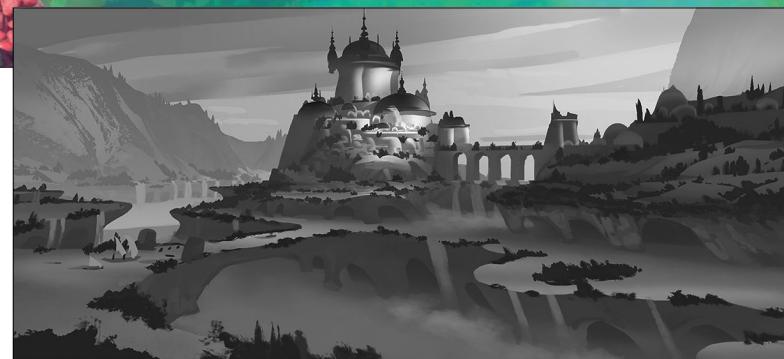
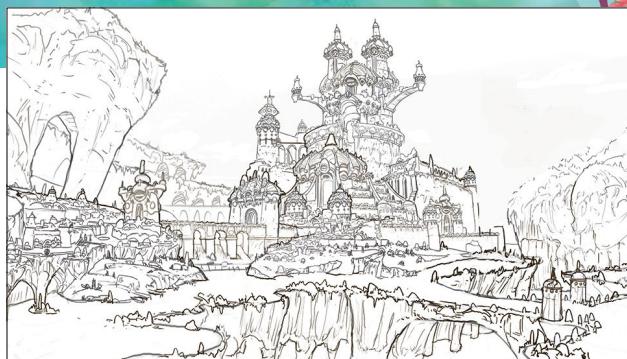
Tech Focus Design language



Artist PROFILE

Tyler Edlin
LOCATION: US

Tyler has 12 years of professional experience as an illustrator and concept artist working with clients such as Epic Games, Blizzard and Sony. He now runs his own art studio and teaches online.
<https://bit.ly/3URbq9c>



Photoshop & Traditional Media DEVELOP IDEAS FOR DRAWING

J.A.W. Cooper demonstrates their thought process, turning a kernel of inspiration into a finished, gallery-ready image

Artist PROFILE

J.A.W. Cooper

LOCATION: US



In this tutorial I will take you through my ideation process as I work on a drawing for an upcoming solo show at the Nucleus gallery.

I'll demonstrate how I start with a word list and use that to generate the kernel of an idea as a quick thumbnail sketch. From there, I'll refine, build, augment and edit a rough drawing in Photoshop until I

J.A.W. Cooper was born in the UK and grew up in Kenya, Sweden, Ireland and Southern California. With two ecologist parents, animals and natural objects feature strongly in their work. Cooper lives in Portland and is an advertising art director, illustrator and a fine artist.

www.jawcooper.com

WORKSHOP MATERIALS

PENCIL
Blackwing 602 graphite pencil

FILM
Matte archival drafting film (Dura-Lar)

PAPER
50lb recycled bond paper

BOARD
96lb Bristol board

TAPE
1/4-inch drafting tape

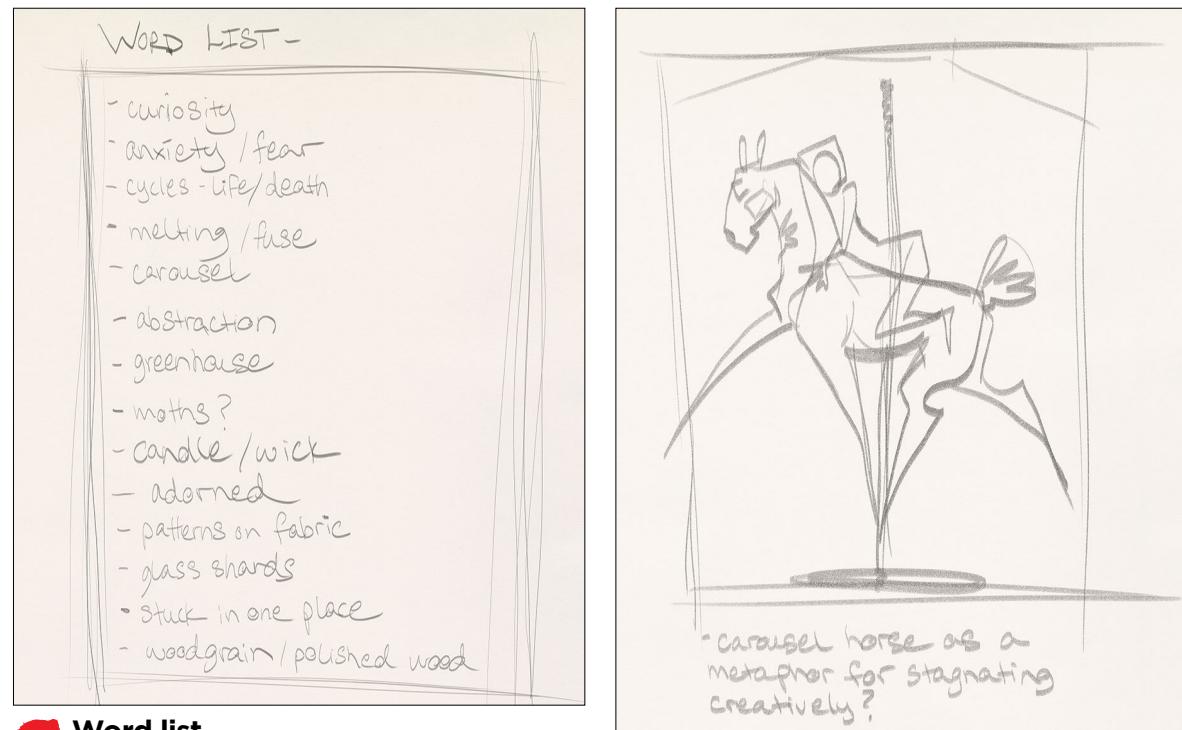


arrive at something worth turning into a finished drawing. Finally, I'll take my rough sketch and use it to make a refined graphite drawing on matte archival drafting film.

I use this ideation process to generate ideas for both commercial and personal work. The execution process demonstrated here is just one of many ways I like to work with some of the various sets of tools I enjoy creating with. Some of the

materials will create specific effects, but even if you only have graphite pencils and bond paper at your disposal you should be able to utilise these methods and techniques.

I believe the most important lesson here is to take the time to look critically at your own work during various stages throughout the process, so that you can fix mistakes and seize opportunities as they present themselves.



1 Word list

I carry a notebook with me everywhere I go and maintain extensive word lists that help me ideate for shows and individual pieces. I jot down everything from colours to motifs, emotive words and possible titles for future pieces. When it's time to start a new piece, I scan the lists and pull out any words that jump at me without thinking about why. Here, I wanted to make a piece on creative stagnation and these words stuck out to me.

2 Rough thumbnail

While scanning the list of words I chose for this piece, an idea began to form of a carousel as a metaphor for creative stagnation. A carousel moves you forward, but that movement is in a repetitive cycle and takes you right back to where you started over and over again. I also wanted to include a rider as a humanising element. During the sketching phase, I worked in Photoshop. ➤

In depth Ideation process



Workshops



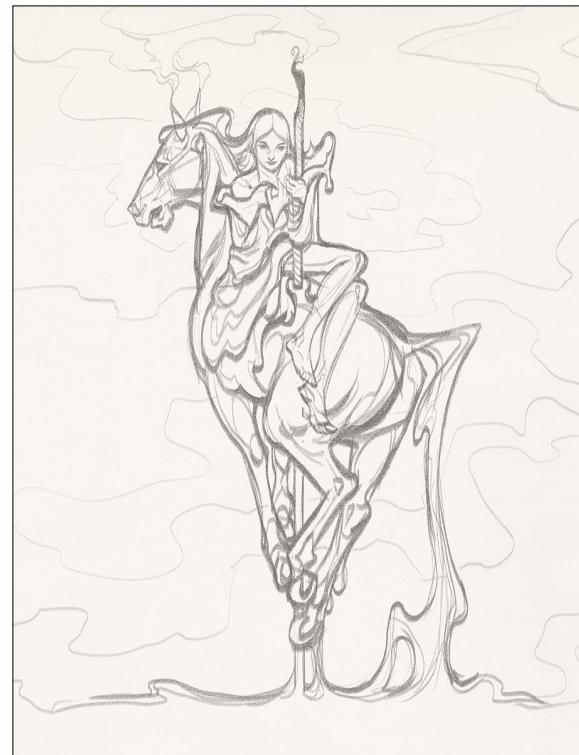
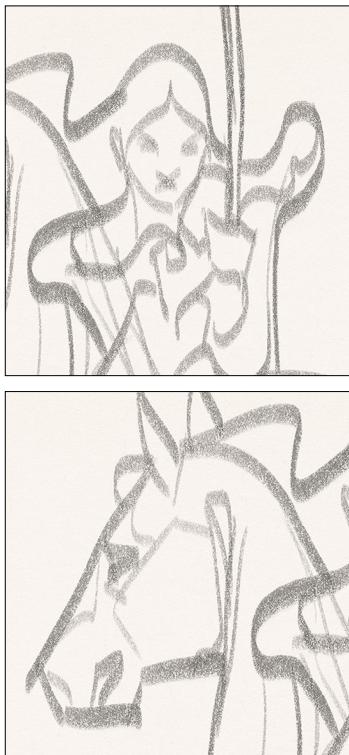
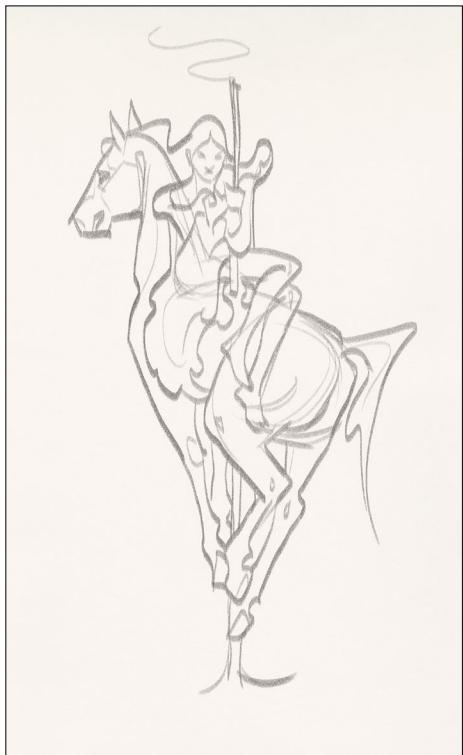
3 Fleshed-out concept

I began thinking about the theme of creative stagnation and wanted to include the feeling of being too close to your work to see that it's not going anywhere. Candles and melting were in my word list and the pole of the carousel could easily double as a candle wick. I wanted the horse and rider to be melting into each other.



4 Gather references

Since I knew I'd need a lot of horse references for my upcoming show, I went to a local rodeo event to take photos. Looking through them with this specific concept in mind, I quickly realised that I wanted to change the horse and human's poses to be more dynamic. I made some quick sketches to capture poses, anatomy and facial expressions I thought could be useful. I also did a quick photoshoot using myself as the model to get a pose for the rider.

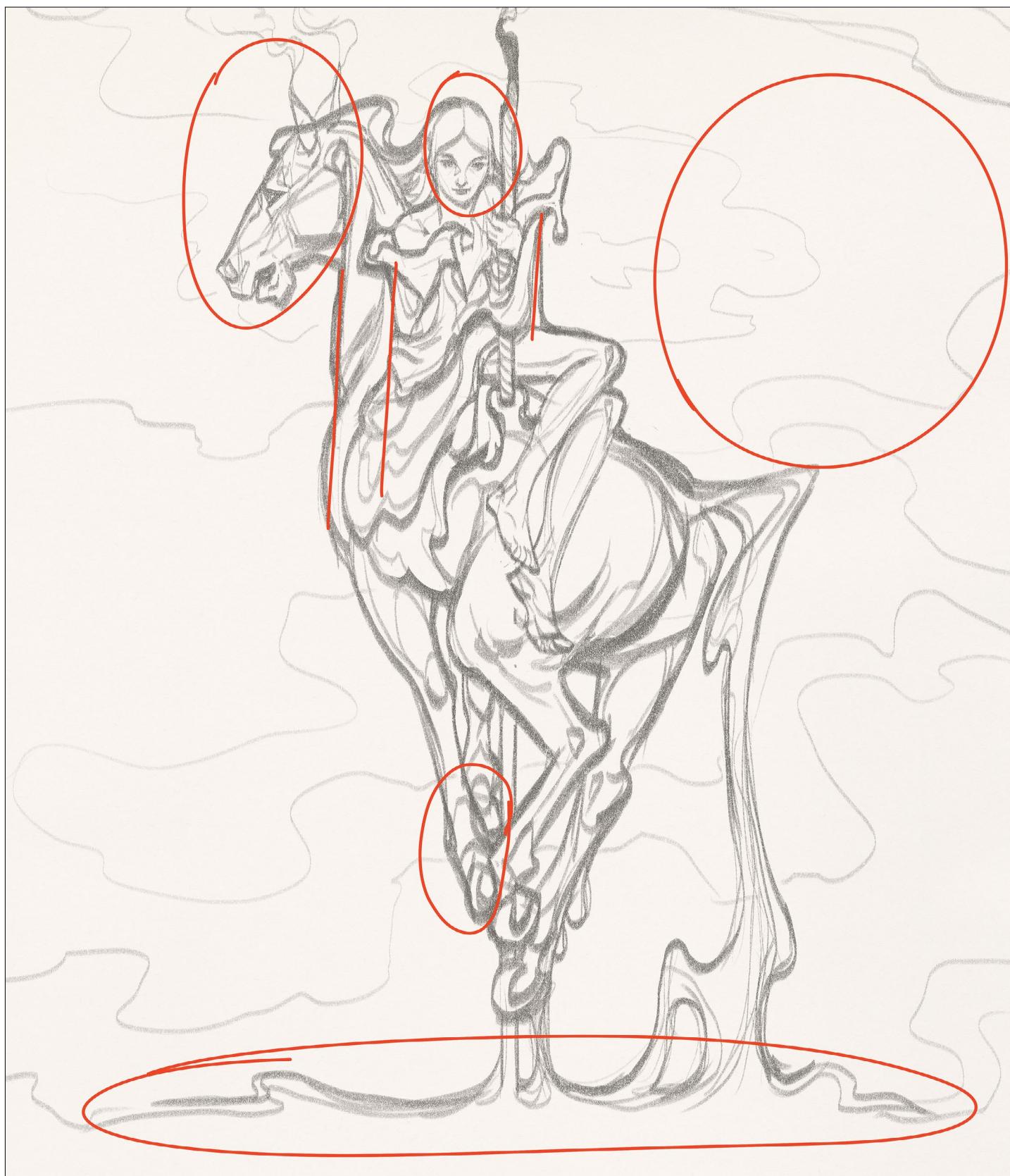


5 Rough sketch

Using the knowledge I gained from my reference photos, I crafted a more dynamic pose by blocking things in roughly, in order to see how it felt. I liked the idea of having all the weight in the composition at the top and balancing on a small point, where the carousel pole hits the ground.

6 Develop the rough

I liked how the drawing flows so I added more details, focusing on anatomy and trying to get the dress of the human to read as candle-like. I added waxy drips and smoke, and tested out any ideas that struck me.



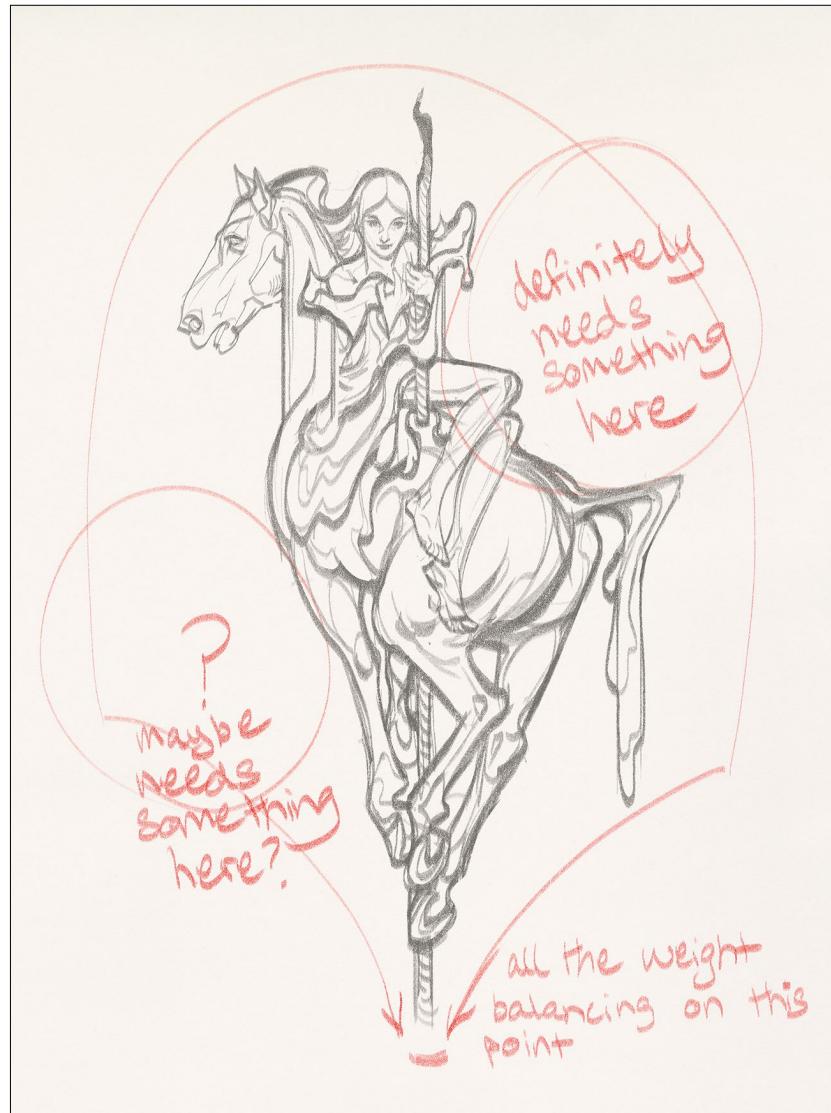
7 Analyse the latest draft

This is the most important part. I take a step back to look critically at the piece regarding the strength of the concept, readability, anatomy, gesture, composition, and so on. Preferably I'll look at my piece the next morning so I can approach it with fresh eyes, and I circle everything that bothers me. I felt the horse's face and expression were too soft, the human's face was slightly crooked, the front hooves of the horse needed more definition, the wide base of drips negated the precariously balanced composition I am after, and there was a blank space in the upper-right corner where I felt something should be added, I just didn't know what. ➡

Workshops

8 Look at composition (right)

I fixed the parts of the drawing that were bothering me and moved on to focus on the composition. I really wanted a top-heavy feeling with the visual weight up high and balanced over a small point. I wanted whatever I added to also support the concept and aid with the flow. I saw an opportunity to accentuate the verticality of the piece and drips by straightening the horse's neck, and the sides of the dripping candle gown. This is anatomically incorrect but more interesting to me, especially in the area the horse's head meets the neck. I always look for chances to break or stretch anatomy with intention!

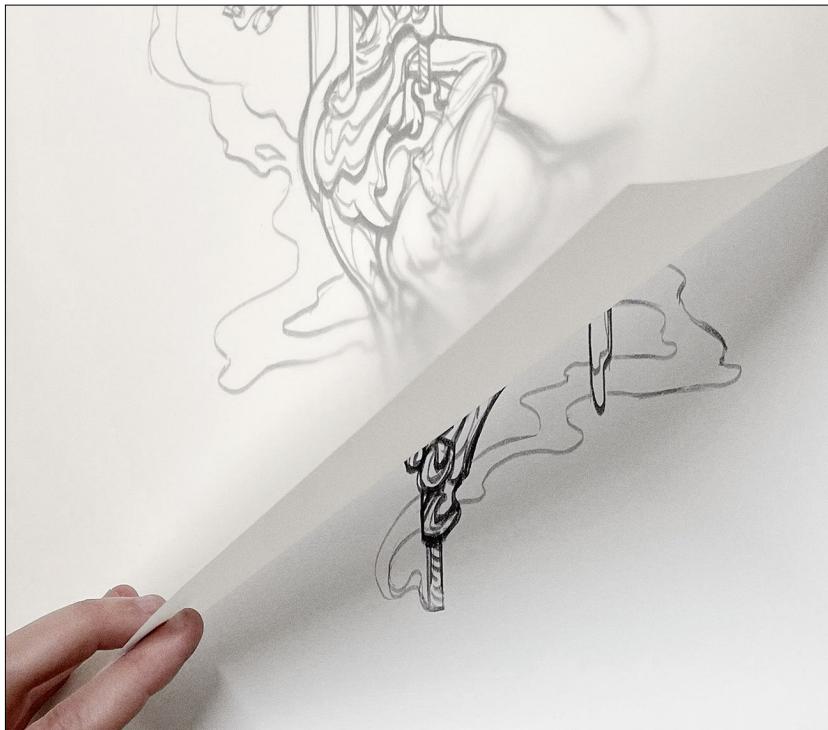


9 Finish preparatory sketch

I added a thin wisp of smoke that curls around the composition as well as a moth drawn to the extinguished flame for balance. The preparatory sketch was finished and I was confident in moving on to the final drawing.

10 Gather materials

For my final piece I switched over to traditional media. I used Dura-Lar Matte, an archival drafting film. It's similar to frosted Mylar and has enough tooth to take graphite beautifully. I find Dura-Lar doesn't smudge much so I use it for drawings I don't want to tone, where the line work is the focus. I also gathered drafting tape to secure the film to the front of my rough drawing, my Blackwing 602 graphite pencil, and a scrap of Mylar with a folded corner as a handguard.



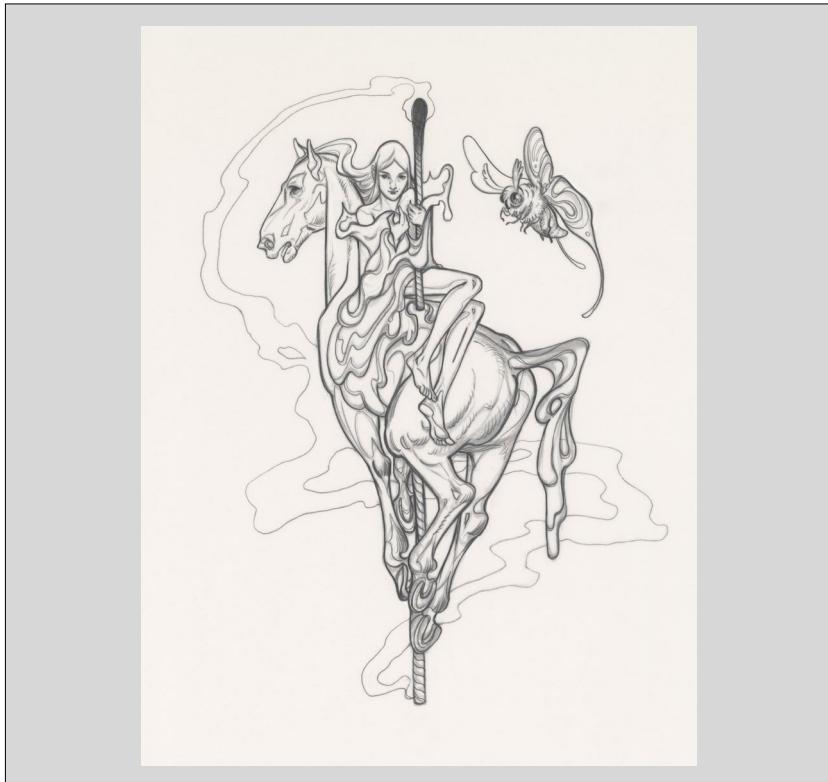
11 Start the final drawing

The Dura-Lar Matte is taped on top of my preparatory drawing on Bristol board. The Dura-Lar is obviously semi-transparent so transferring the drawing will be easy, but if you were just using paper you could do the same thing using a lightbox, or even by taping your piece to a window.



12 Almost complete

I want to demonstrate the usefulness of having a handguard to prevent smudges. You can use paper for this if you prefer, but I like using Mylar and Dura-Lar scraps because their transparency makes it easier to plan my movements as I'm drawing. Folding the corner up makes it easy to grab and move the handguard as you work on different parts of the drawing.



13 Finished drawing

And with that, the piece is all done! In this instance I've chosen to leave it secured to the preparatory sketch because I like having that second layer of information ghosted at the back, still remaining visible.



14 Detail photos

The texture of traditional media is so delightful and really makes the work come to life when viewed in person. Graphite catches the light like liquid mercury and you can see the energy behind each individual pencil stroke. Carousel is complete and ready to be framed for my upcoming show at Nucleus! 

Workshops

Technique focus

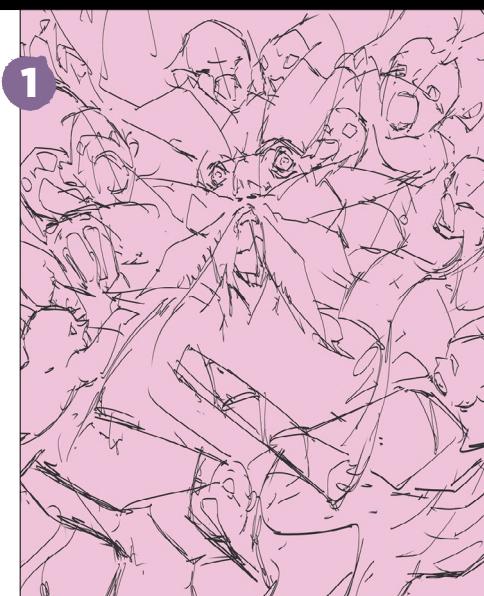
PACE YOURSELF

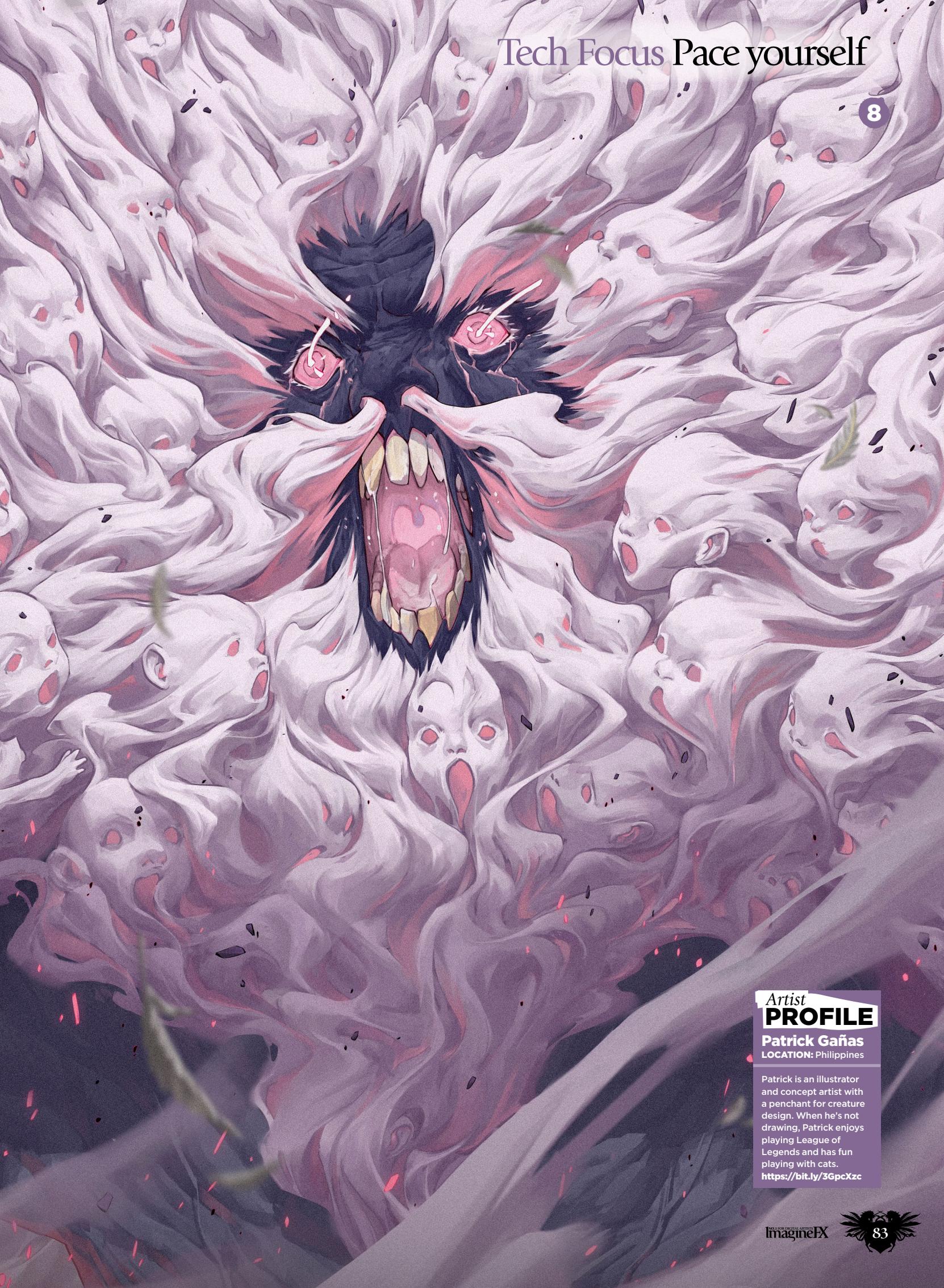
Patrick Gañas reveals the backstory behind his creature and the challenge he faced in the design



"This artwork follows the story of a creature I designed called Kapre. It depicts a world that lulled the Kapre to sleep with a spell that he broke a century later. Waking from his trance, he remembered a fire that swallowed his children. Having

forgotten that he caused the fire, he unleashed his rage on anything in his path. In his wake, peace will slumber, and the world shall know wrath. The sheer number of heads in this artwork called for perseverance. Enjoying the process makes it easier, including the breaks in between. Remember that pacing is king."





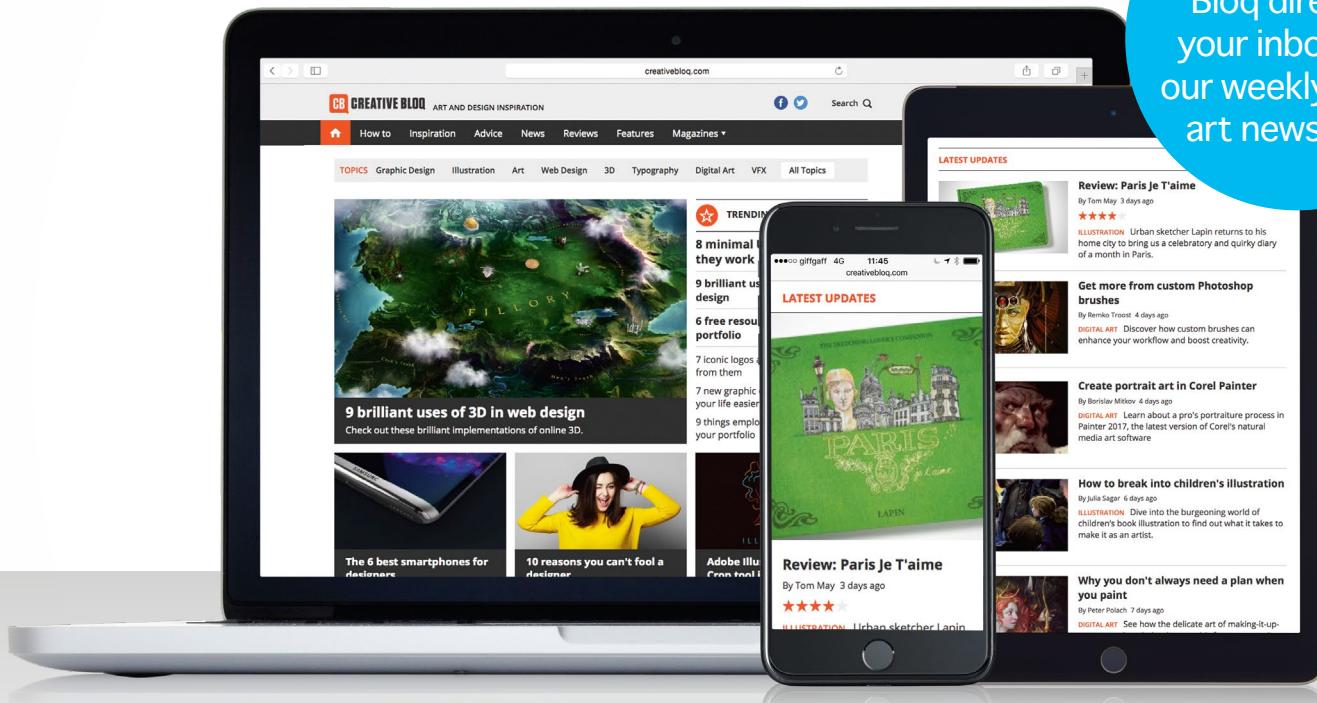
**Artist
PROFILE**

Patrick Gañas
LOCATION: Philippines

Patrick is an illustrator and concept artist with a penchant for creature design. When he's not drawing, Patrick enjoys playing League of Legends and has fun playing with cats.
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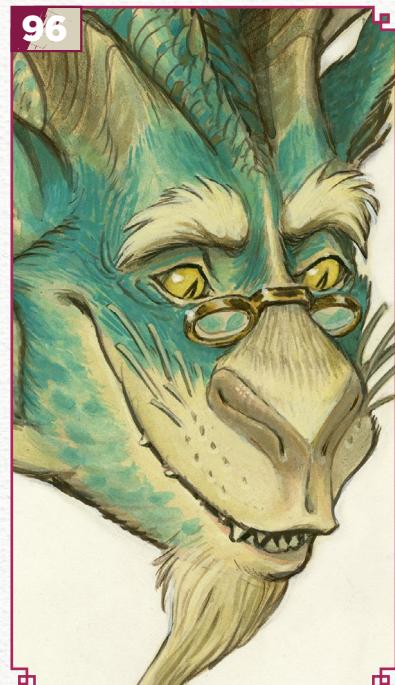
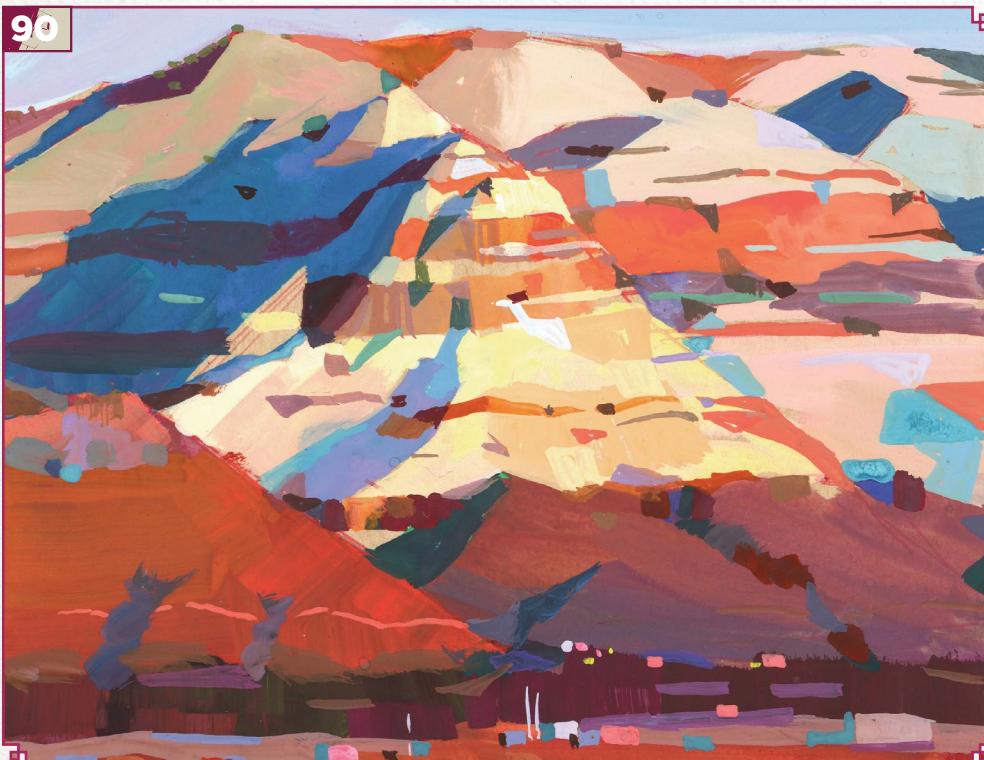
3D

Digital art

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Traditional Artist

Inspiration and advice from the best pro artists



This issue:

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

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Angela Sung on the design and colour choices in her landscape.

94 Humanise your animal sketches
Learn to anthropomorphise critters with Dimitris Pantazis.

96 First Impressions: Tony DiTerlizzi
The author and illustrator shares his influences and top advice.

FXPosé

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS



Olivier Villoingt

LOCATION: France MEDIA: Oil-based clay and resin WEB: www.olivervilloingt.com

Olivier is inspired by Norse and Celtic mythology and the symbols they contain. "I'm fascinated by the omnipresence of this savage nature, full of ageless creatures playing by laws unknown to us."



1 THE WATCHER

"I wanted to sculpt a strong character who could share his confidence despite the difficult moments that everyone goes through in life."

2 THE SEER OF THE WANING MOON

"For this piece, I was inspired by the description, 'Since time immemorial, the Seer of the Waning Moon knows all, sees all, visible or invisible, tangible or not, she perceives the Web of Wyrd.'"

3 AGELESS MEMORIES

"I imagined a character whose life was so long that his memories are a burden and his immortality is considered a curse."





4 THE HERMIT
"The Hermit has spent centuries listening to the world and its every change, trying to understand his place in the midst of chaos."



Simone Perlina

LOCATION: Italy MEDIA: Pens, markers, fineliners WEB: www.instagram.com/simo__world

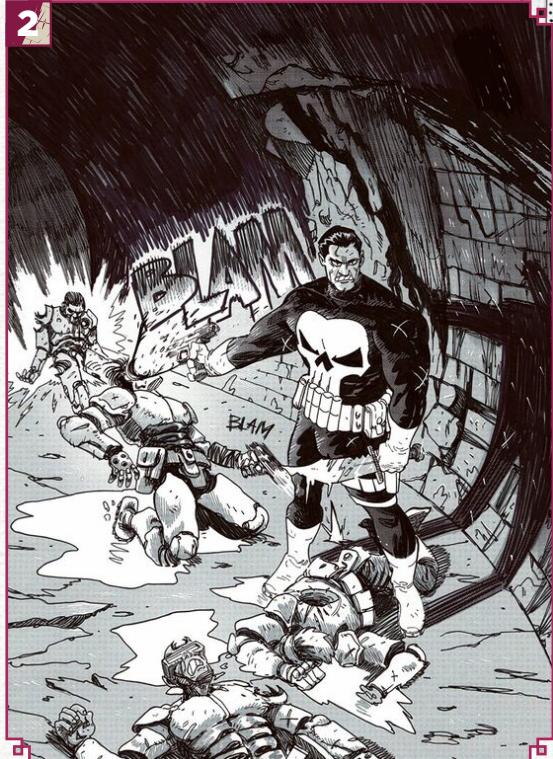
Simone is an illustrator for a marketing company who also draws comics, his biggest passion. He is inspired by manga and artists such as Mike Mignola, Daniel Warren Johnson and Eduardo Risso.

1 JIN KAZAMA

"I couldn't resist after watching the Netflix series! An iconic figure that reminds me of my childhood as a Tekken player."

2 THE PUNISHER

"Fan art for my Marvel portfolio. The influence of Daniel Warren Johnson is visible and his dynamism spreads throughout."



3 NATHAN NEVER



4 DREDD

"This character doesn't need an introduction. The iconic helmet has been emphasised by screentones as in James Harren's works, and by red fine-tipped Uni POSCA pens."

Inspirational art

JUDGE DREDD

4





Gouache

PAINT A MOUNTAIN AT SUNSET

ANGELA SUNG shares the design and colour choices in her landscape scene

For landscape paintings, there is always a new way to solve a problem but never a right approach. The limitations of gouache test my problem-solving skills and also makes the process challenging and fun. Trying different ways of applying gouache paints to convey important information is my go-to painting method.

Painting the moments that have deep impacts on my life keeps me excited and motivated. In this tutorial, I focus on explaining the design and colour application to define a specific moment in time at the Oliver Lee Memorial State Park in New Mexico.

It was a special moment when I got to relax with my wife and doggies

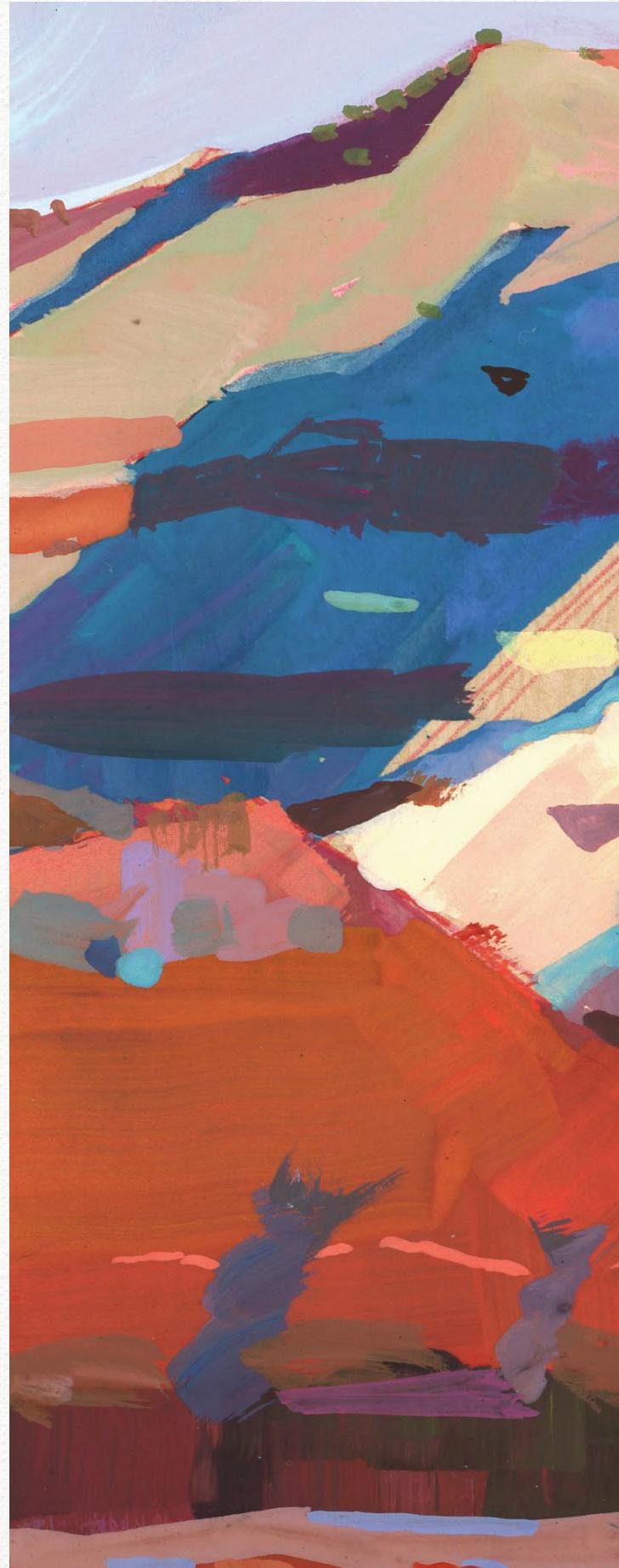
after a long day, watching the sunset in this amazingly beautiful but lesser-known state park that we randomly stopped by.

I find that the beauty of painting traditionally is that you don't have the option to hit $\text{Ctrl}+\text{Z}$ or adjust your hue/saturation with a single click. You just have to rely on your instincts and knowledge to create colour harmonies.

I hope that you can learn something from this tutorial. If you'd like more details about my classes, visit www.warriorartcamp.com.



A plein air painter who works in animation, Angela applies what she learns from traditional paintings to digital work and has taught students across the world. www.angelasung.com

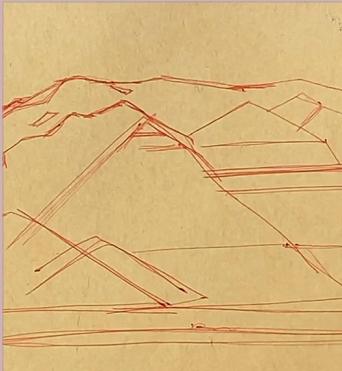


In depth Gouache



Traditional Artist Workshops

Step-by-step: Colour with gouache

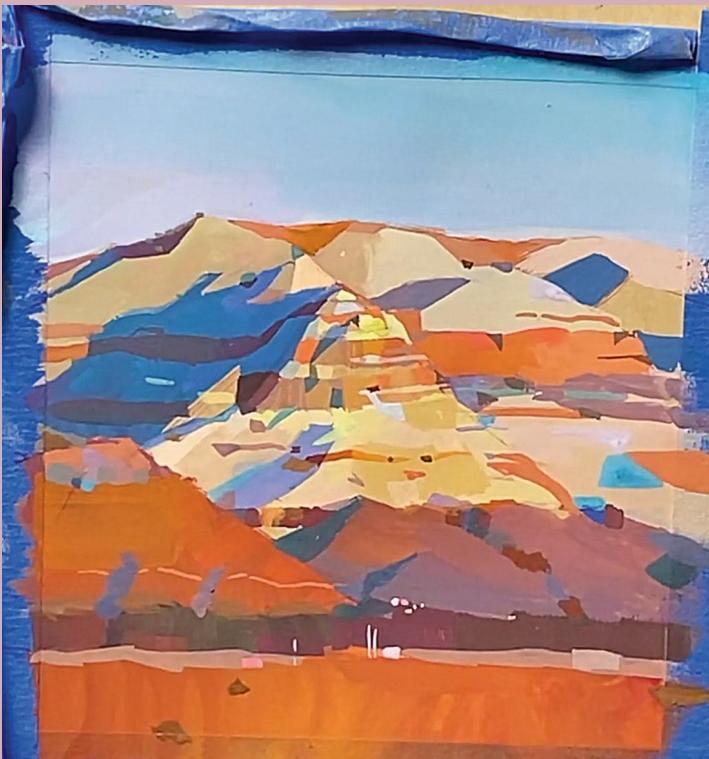


1 PENCIL SKETCH

I keep my sketches super simple because I do not want to get too precious with them. This way, I can focus on the design, rather than making a beautiful sketch that I will feel bad about covering up later. I love using toned paper because of its natural warmth, and it just looks nice with my red ballpoint pen.

2 BIG COLOUR RELATIONSHIPS

After blocking in the sky and shadow shapes, I started painting the lighter side while focusing on the huge colour relationships between each section. I want to make sure they are harmonised and vibrant when different temperatures are placed next to one another.



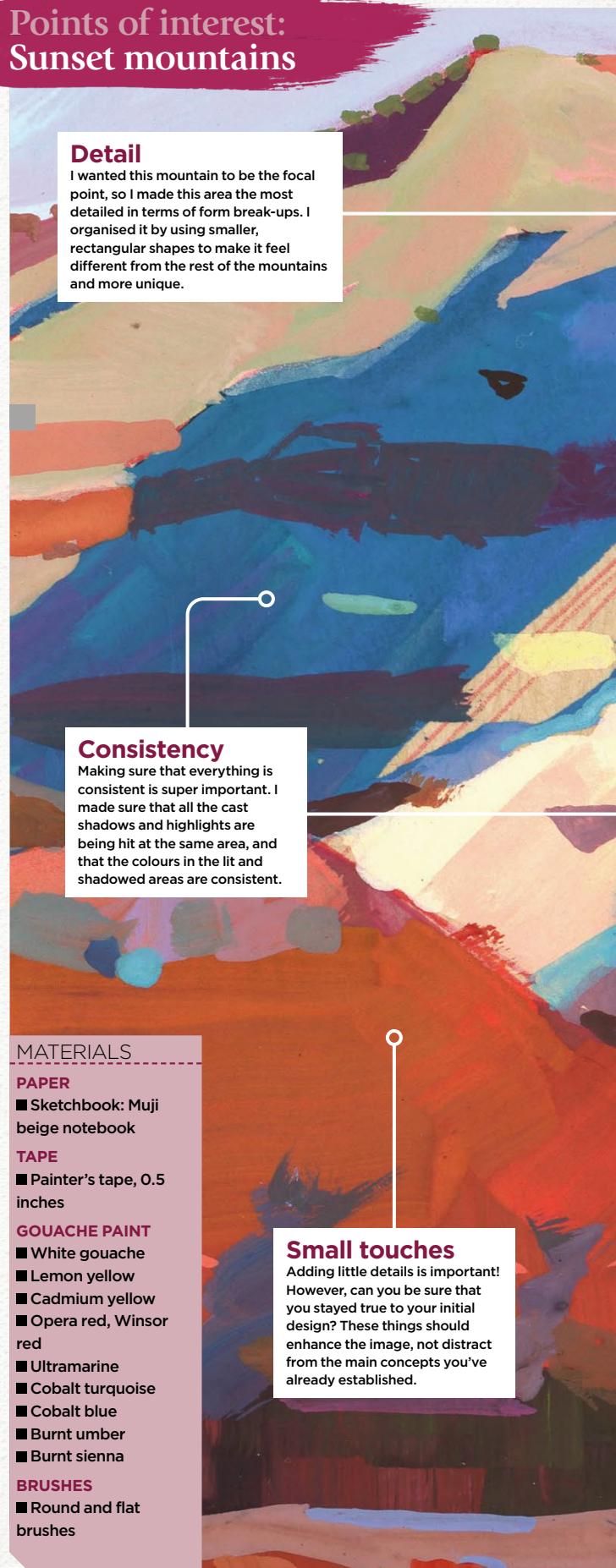
3 CARVE SMALLER SHAPES

When the big relationships are established, chiselling out the smaller shapes and details becomes easier to manage. Working from big to small is important. The big ideas help you maintain a structure for your image, while the small details help your viewers stay on your image longer. That's why focusing on the cool versus the warm in the smaller shapes is so important.

Points of interest: Sunset mountains

Detail

I wanted this mountain to be the focal point, so I made this area the most detailed in terms of form break-ups. I organised it by using smaller, rectangular shapes to make it feel different from the rest of the mountains and more unique.



Consistency

Making sure that everything is consistent is super important. I made sure that all the cast shadows and highlights are being hit at the same area, and that the colours in the lit and shadowed areas are consistent.

MATERIALS

PAPER

- Sketchbook: Muji beige notebook

TAPE

- Painter's tape, 0.5 inches

GOUACHE PAINT

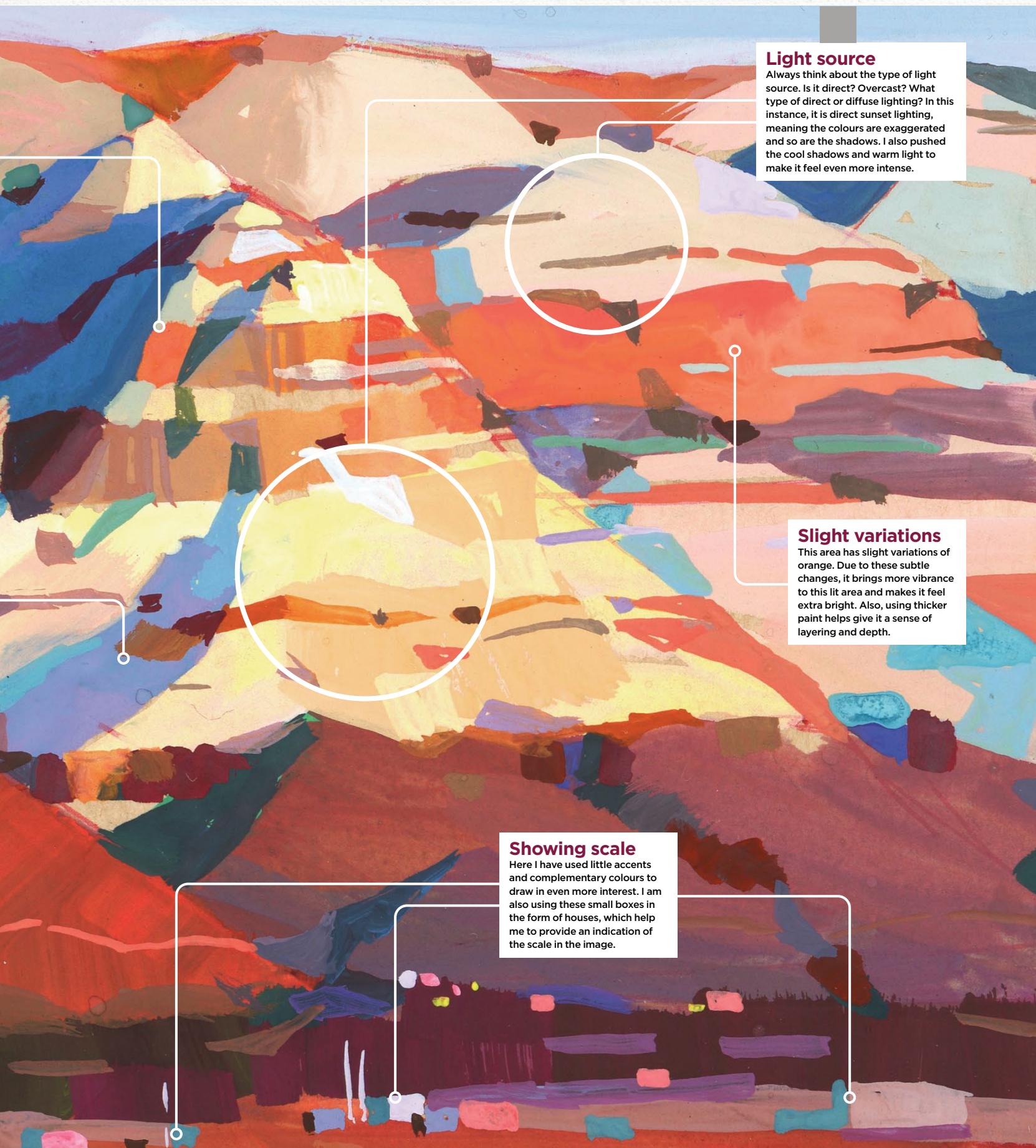
- White gouache
- Lemon yellow
- Cadmium yellow
- Opera red, Winsor red
- Ultramarine
- Cobalt turquoise
- Cobalt blue
- Burnt umber
- Burnt sienna

BRUSHES

- Round and flat brushes

Small touches

Adding little details is important! However, can you be sure that you stayed true to your initial design? These things should enhance the image, not distract from the main concepts you've already established.





Technique focus

HUMANISE YOUR ANIMAL SKETCHES

DIMITRIS PANTAZIS shares how he adds style to his anthropomorphised critters

Before we can get to giving our character their human style, we need to get a handle on their basic shape. Using references, I find that quick sketches help me to understand the animal's anatomy and familiarise with its forms.

After that, it's time to begin the stylising. I do that to add a more personal spin to the character. I do lots of exploratory sketches to better define in my mind what the animal looks like, and then begin to anthropomorphise them. Part of this process is giving them their own character. For this dude, I wanted a

goofy but cute gecko, so I created some designs to help me visualise how that might be possible.

That leads us to his clothes and accessories. It's important to add details like this that emphasise your ideas. I had a story already, which I again developed through sketches. And with that, the character now lives on paper, not just in my mind.

 **Dimitris Pantazis** is a freelance illustrator who does a little bit of everything, from comics and character design to illustration and creative design. www.dimitrispantazisart.com



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First Impressions

★ Tony DiTerlizzi ★

The author and illustrator shares his influences and tips



Where did you grow up and how has this influenced your art? I grew up in Jupiter, Florida, which back in the 1970s and 80s was a small town. I spent summers fishing, snorkelling and exploring the nearby rivers, beaches and coves. As a Boy Scout, I often camped in my backyard or nearby woods where I'd capture snakes, lizards and insects to bring home and sketch. I was fascinated by all living creatures and inspired by their endless variety and forms.

I'm still in awe of the natural world to this day, from bizarre deep-sea fish to colourful insects and birds of the rainforests. Mother Nature has had a tremendous impact on the art and imaginary worlds that I have created.

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

My parents purchased a large coffee table book that collected the paintings of Norman Rockwell. I still recall rainy afternoons poring over this book and the spell Rockwell's art cast over me. Every illustration was a story. The figures acted out their emotions while the props and staging supported the sentiment Rockwell was conveying.

Each painting was a portal, a still life of an idealised, bygone America that I wanted to visit again and again. The cover of this magical book featured his iconic piece Triple Self-Portrait. I would say that image has had the biggest impact on me. Many years later, I experienced the surrealness of the original painting hanging next to my artwork during my retrospective at the Norman Rockwell Museum.



NEVER ABANDON IMAGINATION

My self-portrait showcases characters I've drawn over my 30-year career as a professional illustrator.

Tell us about your first paid commission, and does it stand as a representation of your talent?
At the urging of my high school art teacher, Tom Wetzl, I participated in quite a few student art contests. If I was fortunate enough to win, I'd receive a ribbon or some scholarship money. But there was one prize that

stands out, which I had won from an illustration I'd rendered for Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*. The contest was sponsored by a local printer, who then published the winning images in a hardbound book. The excitement of seeing my art printed in the pages of a storybook was intoxicating.

“The excitement of seeing my art printed in the pages of a storybook was intoxicating”

This opened a door of possibilities and I began to consider children's book illustration as my major in art school. I realise now it was these moments that validated my talent and foretold who I'd become as an illustrator. Looking back, I clearly see the influence of Rockwell, but also my growing awareness of typography and design. ➤



Traditional Artist Interview

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

Recently I refreshed the book covers for *The Spiderwick Chronicles*, which celebrate their 20-year anniversary next year. Also, I've illustrated new cover art for the WondLa trilogy in anticipation of the animated series that is coming up on Apple TV+.

The difference between this newly created art and the illustration I drew back in high school is that, thankfully, I am technically better today than I was as a teenager. Though each new, subsequent piece of art that I create is built upon those that came before. My latest piece is merely a culmination of 50-odd years of drawing and painting. I didn't realize it back then that my artistic skills would take decades to master and I've still so much to learn.

However, similarities between the old and the new remain. I still create single images to convey a story and rely on design and typography. In fact, the updated *Spiderwick* logo was drawn by hand, just as I had done for the Charles Dickens piece way-back-when.

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

There are a lot of things that 50-something-year-old Tony would say to daydreamy teenage Tony!

Don't stop drawing. Even if you are talented, it is a skill that takes years to refine. Also, open yourself to feedback from others about your artwork, even if you



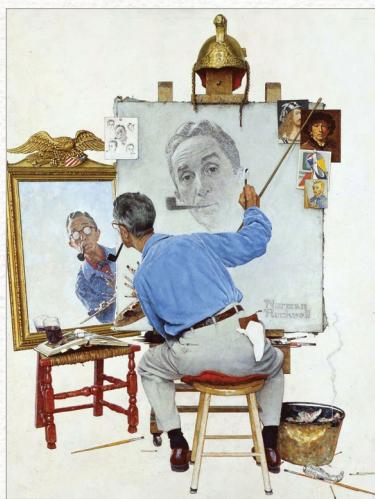
THE SPIDERWICK CHRONICLES

I redesigned the dust jackets and updated the logo to celebrate the series' 20-year anniversary.



A CHRISTMAS CAROL

Published when I was just 16, this led me toward the path of children's book illustration.



TRIPLE SELF-PORTRAIT

One of Norman Rockwell's masterpieces and an inspiration for many aspiring artists, including myself as a youngster.

don't agree with them. Your teachers, friends and family usually react from the heart and want you to succeed. Copy every artist you love. If you want to learn how they did it, you must become them. Being afraid is also okay. Taking chances and pushing yourself reveals what you're capable of.

Failure and frustration are part of success. I never get it right the first time. Ever. In fact, there are times I never quite figure it out. But I take the experience of creating and what I learned and apply it to the next illustration. Success isn't money, and it isn't fame. It's a

» There are a lot of things that 50-something-year-old Tony would say to daydreamy teenage Tony! »

feeling of accomplishment and creating something that didn't exist before. Satisfy yourself first. If you love what you do, others will too.

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

It is beyond what I imagined it would be. I am living the dream and incredibly grateful for all the people that help make that happen.

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

I can only comment on children's publishing since that is primarily where I work these days. Over the past decade, I've been excited to see a diversity of artists supported and showcased in children's book

illustration. As book creators, we need to offer young readers the opportunity to see themselves in the stories crafted for them. Diverse artists and authors can certainly help provide that. For me, this has been a welcome change.

What character or scene that you've painted do you most identify with?
I'd say my 2017 self-portrait *Never Abandon Imagination* is the piece I relate to most. That scene perfectly shows what it is like in my head, with each of my imagined characters patiently waiting for me to tell their story in words and

pictures. As you can see, it is quite crowded in my brain. But, to bring it back around to Norman Rockwell, this image was painted for the exhibition poster of my retrospective that hung in his museum. That was certainly a full-circle moment for me.

What's your next step in art or life?
It's all about creating more books and telling more stories, improving my dad skills for my teenage daughter, and trying to be the best husband I can for my amazing, supportive wife. Like I said, I am living the dream.

*Tony has been creating children's books for over 20 years including *The Spiderwick Chronicles*, *The Spider & The Fly* and *The Search for WondLa*. www.diterlizzi.com*



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