

PROCREATE SPECIAL ISSUE STARRING COVER ARTIST BO FENG LIN

1 NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

Imagine FX

ARTIST INSIGHT

WORKING TO A BRIEF

Learn how to be proactive with your commissions

50

PROCREATE TIPS & TRICKS

- SHORTCUTS TO SUCCESS
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EXCLUSIVE INTERVIEWS

MATTAHAN AND MAX ULICHNEY

Procreate artists reveal all

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



The landscape of the digital artist's toolkit develops rapidly, both for desktop machines and, in more recent years, for mobile devices, from tablets through to phones.

This issue we bring you a host of handy tips for Procreate from a panel of fantastic artists.

There are helpful pointers for artists of all levels, so whether you're a seasoned pro or just starting your artistic journey, there's something for you.

To help you further level up your skills, take a look at page 64 and learn how our stunning Wednesday Addams cover art was created by Bo Feng Lin. Or read all about Nadav Yacobi's creative process as he builds up a unique, mysterious character using graphite.

If you're more in the mood for inspiration we have you covered there too! Take a tour of the clean and colourful studio of Emily Chapman, or check out the awesome work and thoughts of veteran artists Max Ulichney and Mattahan.

Enjoy the issue!

Rob

Editor

Rob.Redman@futurenet.com

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Artist in Residence

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The art of Max Ulichney

We get insight from the creative mind of Max Ulichney, who talks about his artwork and popular brush packs.

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Create a bold fan art portrait

Learn how to create stunning, quirky illustrations with graphic elements from our cover star Bo Feng Lin.



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ImagineFX

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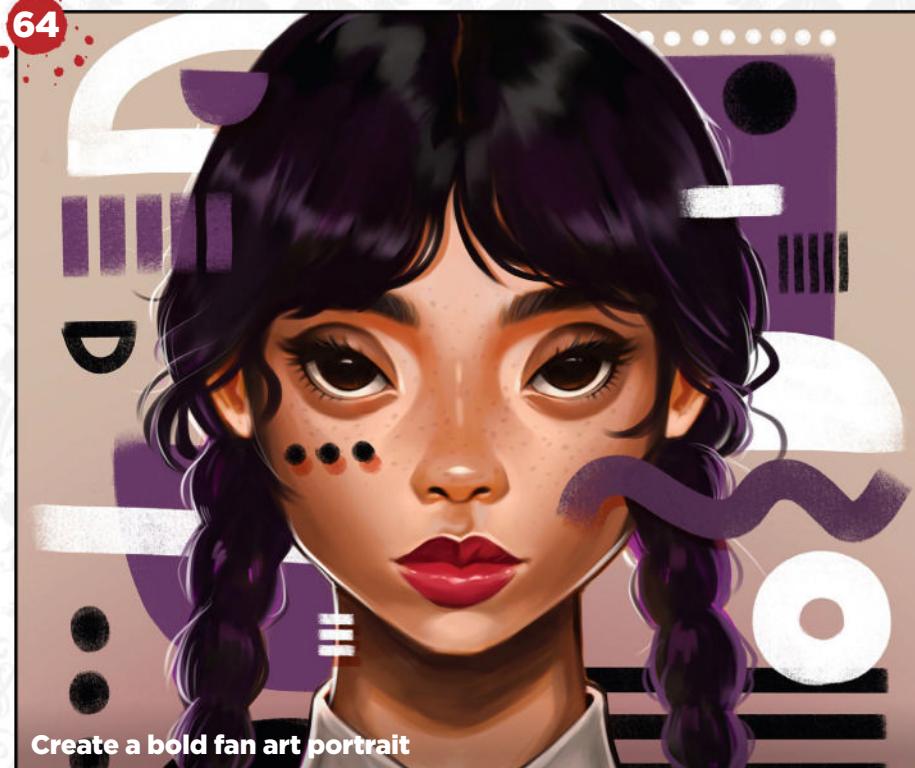
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GET YOUR RESOURCES

You're three steps away from this issue's resource files...

1 Go to the website
Type this into your browser's address bar.
ifxm.ag/fanartportrait

2 Open the Google Drive link
Find your files ready for download.

3 Download what you need...
Save the files or watch the videos.

Next month



Next month in...
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX

DAVID NAKAYAMA

Capture the artist's comic book style
with our in-depth workshop

Explore the art of tarot decks

We delve into the
diverse world of
the mysterious
card collections

South American workspace tour

Go inside a studio
with a view as we
visit the illustrator
Karla Diaz Castro

Discover new inspirations

Check out the
sketchbook of
Brazilian comic
artist Fábio Moon

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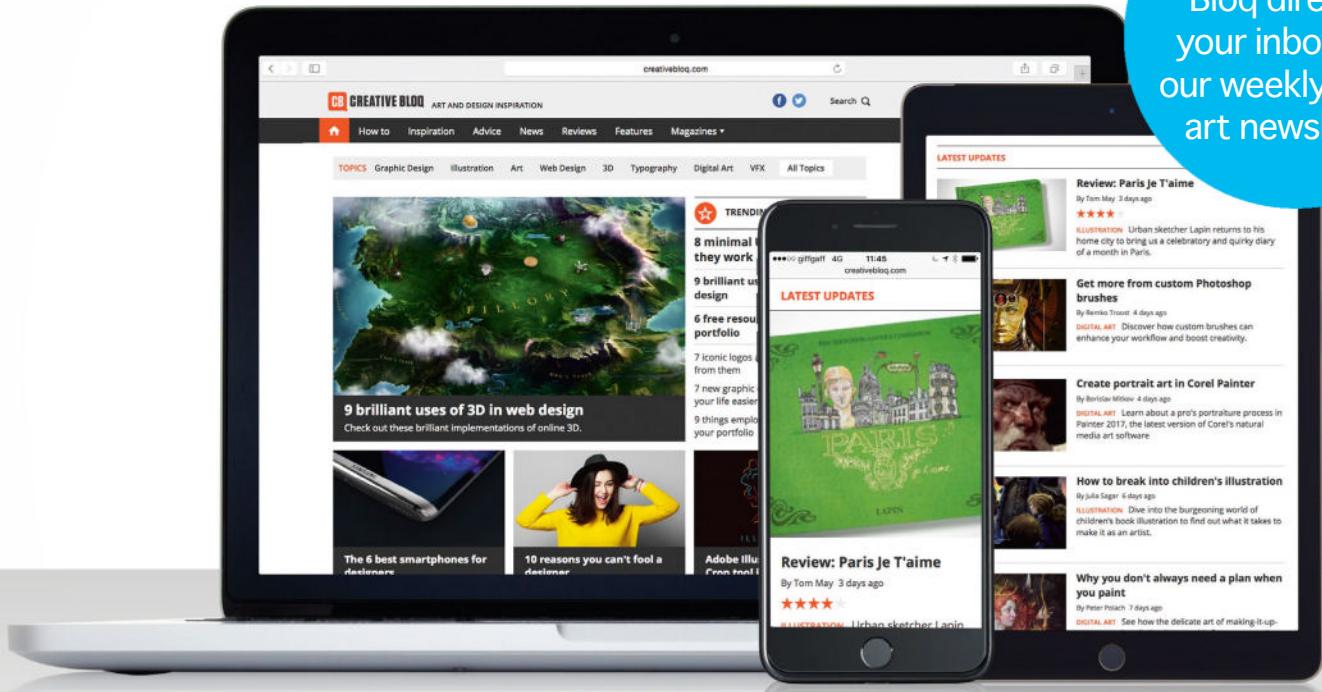
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FX Posé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



Tai Aoki

LOCATION: Japan MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: <https://taiaoki.com>

Despite growing up in the US, Tai lived in a Japanese household. "I took in influences from two very different cultures, which I think is what defined my current tastes."



1 BUY EGGS

"This is just me trying to express negative emotions, namely loneliness.

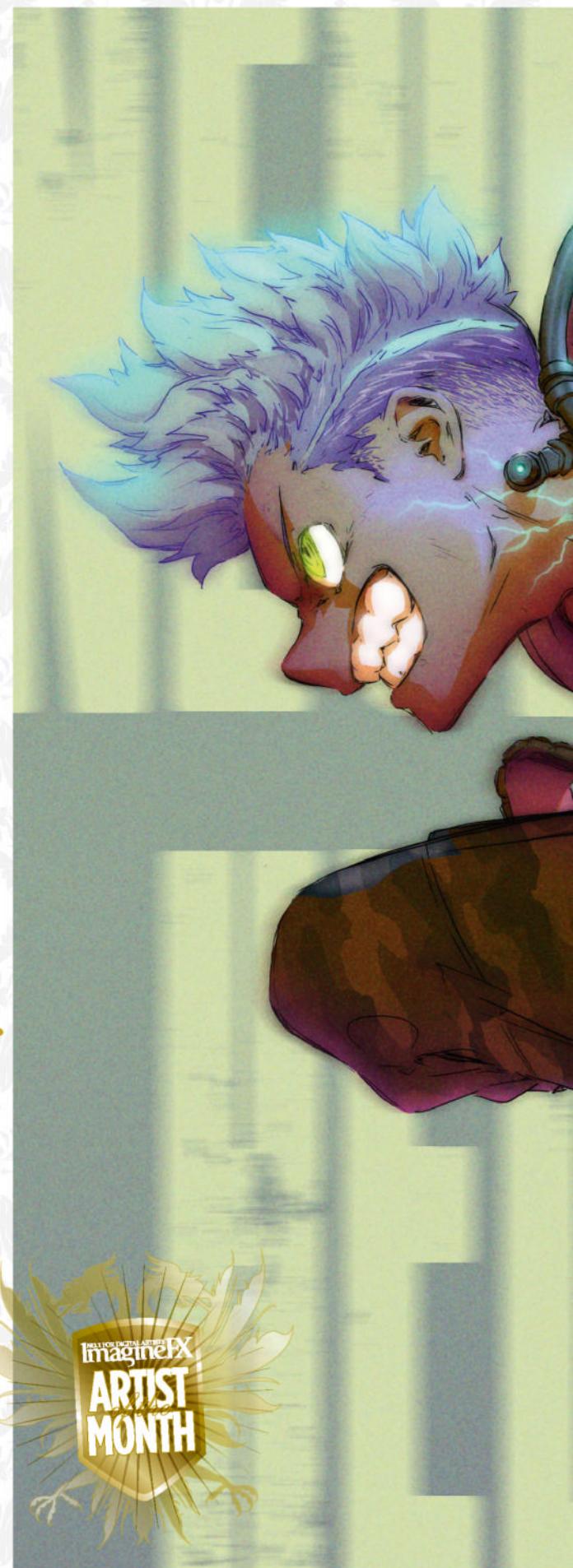
Regardless of how successful that was, I enjoyed experimenting with textures and crudely sticking in any ideas that came to mind."

2 LUSCIOUS

"He's a vampire that devours other vampires. This was an attempt at a more realistic render than what I'm used to, while maintaining a surreal feel through colours."

3 GIGA SLAPP

"I've always loved cybernetic limbs in sci-fi. I'm still improving on designing machinery, but I'm happy with the overall silhouette."



ImagineFX

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Pablo Hurtado de Mendoza

LOCATION: Spain MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: <https://pablohurtadodemendoza.com>

While studying design, Pablo developed an interest in negative space, contrast and graphic elements, which ended up shaping his illustration style. His work features visual metaphors and modern graphic language.

1 ONE HAND FREE

"This portrays the struggle between defiance and surrender. A man holds on to a thread, representing the tension between the individual and the collective."

2 INTERLOPER

"Here I explore the theme of invasion and violation of nature's boundaries. The hands symbolise our pursuit of autonomy and control in this relationship."



2



3

3 BLUE BLOOD

"An introspective artwork that delves into the paradoxical relationship between ego and self-censorship. It asks how to confront our own inner struggles."

4 PAUSED

"This is about dreams; a surreal voyage through the uncharted territories of the subconscious mind. The horse head may symbolise vitality, endurance, or freedom."



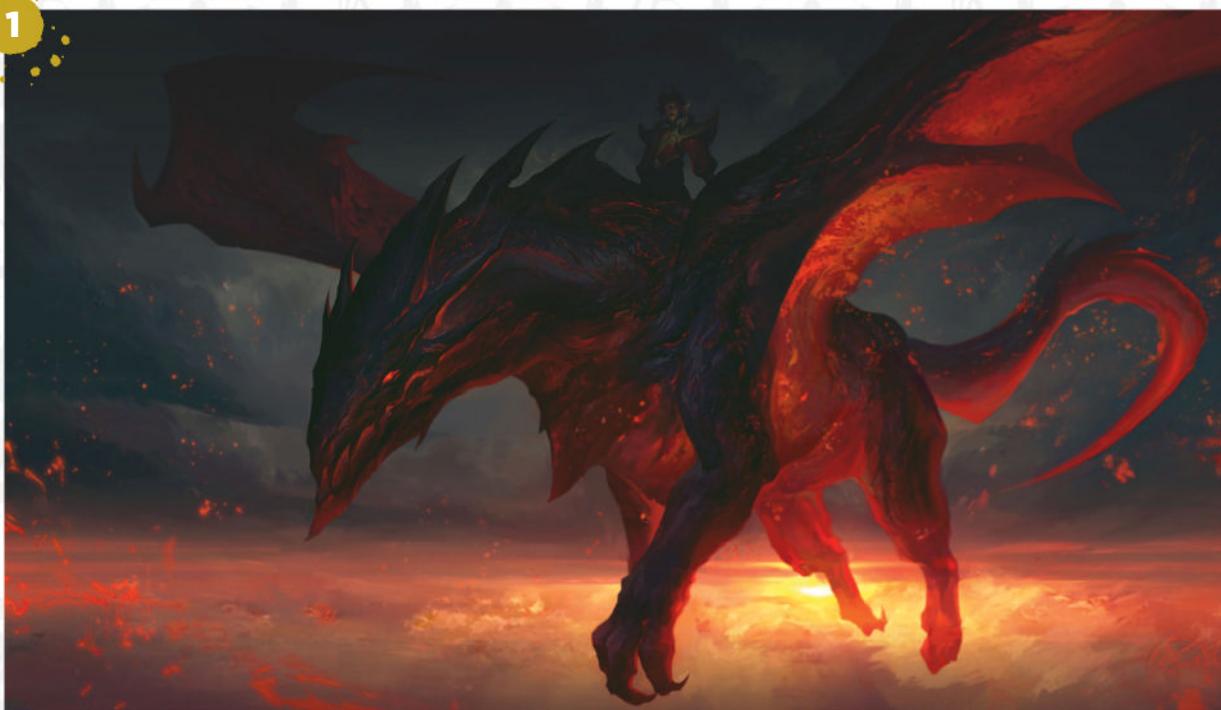


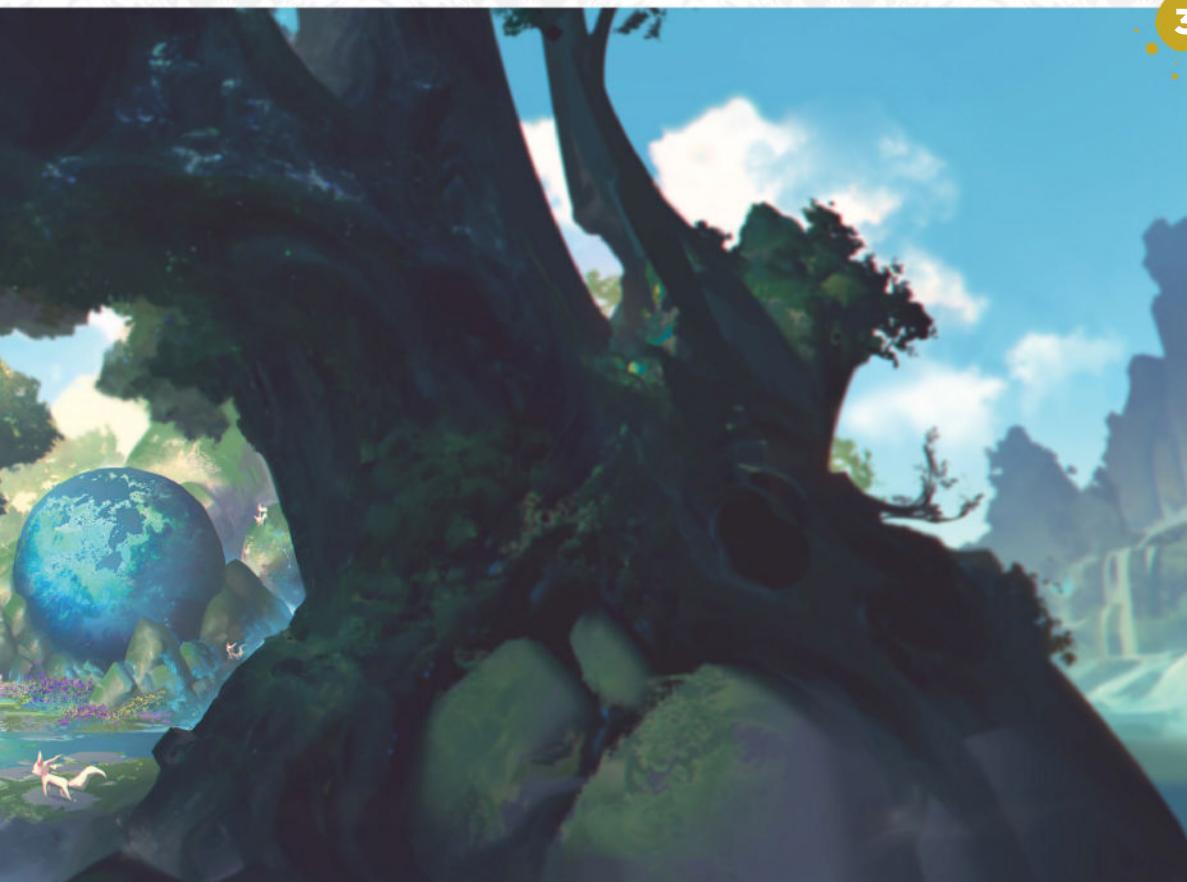
Richard Lay

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: www.artstation.com/richardlay

Freelance artist Richard believes that the only way to get better at a skill is to work at it for many hours. His main interest is worldbuilding, and his goal is to tell a compelling story through his art.

1





1 DRAGON RIDER

1 “I like the idea of a group of people who are powerful enough to tame dragons.”

2 ARSOLA AND KHASHUN

“This is a shot to establish the two characters I’ve been working on and the world they live in.”

3 AUSMANTYON TREE

3 “This piece was inspired by a Ghibli colour palette. I wanted to represent a place where the effect of magic is stronger and visible.”



Alvaro Escobar

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Procreate WEB: www.instagram.com/alvaroescbr

Alvaro is a freelance illustrator inspired by 90s anime such as Cowboy Bebop and Akira. His work is often described as dark and moody, and he uses it as a way to reflect on and express his emotions.

1 SPINELLI

"This is a stylised portrait that is heavily influenced by graphic novel art and my other artistic love: manga."

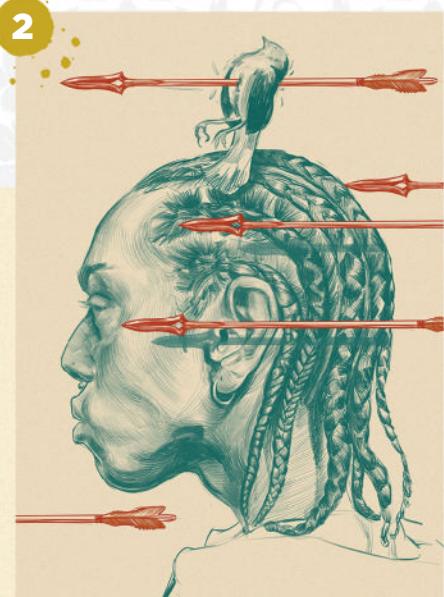
2 CLOSE CALL

"In this piece I consciously used a cross-hatching style and limited colour palette to achieve my desired effect."

1



2



3



3 SELF PORTRAIT

"An exploration of my ego and mental identification. Brushes that mimic traditional media were used to emulate gouache and coloured pencil."

4 SIDE EYE

"A combination of cross-hatching and spray painting brushes. Abstract elements such as the illegible graffiti and paint strokes were added haphazardly."







Yasushi Matsuoka

LOCATION: Japan MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: <https://yasuartstudio.com>

Yasu is a freelance illustrator specialising in elegant, whimsical illustrations. His artwork often features mermaids and fantasy creatures. When not in his studio, Yasu loves sketching and plein-air painting in forests.

1 REFLECTION

"This piece started as a rough gouache painting of a girl looking at her reflection in a pool. From there, the concept evolved into a faerie peering into another world."

2 CORAL

"In this piece, I wanted to incorporate coral in the character's anatomy. I also used neon colours to brighten up the deep sea. I imagine her as a guardian of the reef."



2



3



4

3 LEO

"This is part of a larger project, the Mermaid Zodiac series. In each artwork, I incorporated the birthstone and constellation of the zodiac sign."

4 BLUE-GOLD MACAW MERMAID

"I love the idea of mermaids that both fly and swim. Here is my take on a macaw mixed with a mermaid."



Kazuki Okuda

LOCATION: Japan MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: <https://isseinoissyou.michikusa.jp>

Specialising in people, creatures and landscapes, Kazuki is a freelance artist and illustrator whose work has appeared in picture books, animations, advertisements and stationery.

1 SCARY CURIOSITY FRAGRANCE

"This piece is the embodiment of a phenomenon, namely a scary fragrance that somehow tickles our curiosity."

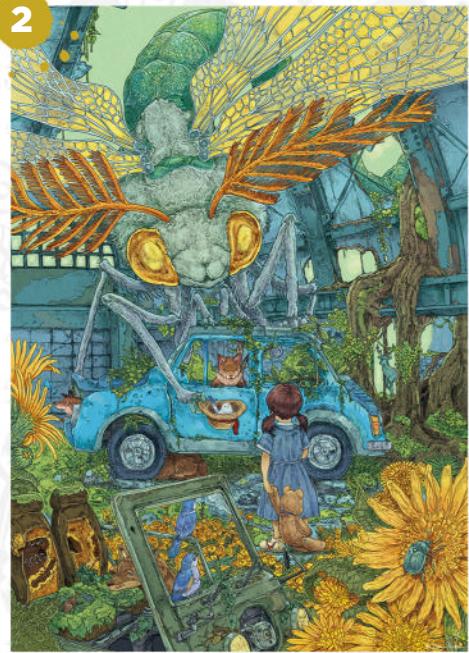
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2 ENCOUNTER

"Most people have experienced feelings of both fear and anticipation when encountering something unknown."

2



3



3 SPIRIT OF THREE SISTERS LAKE

"One in a series based on the Japanese concept of 'Yaoyorozu no kami' or 'eight million gods'. This piece depicts a lake filled with mud, which is circulated by creatures."

4 GOOD NIGHT

"Sleep has opposing elements of security and fear. Sleep, which gives life force and at the same time brings us closer to death, is mysterious to me."

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





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.

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The Negotiation Temple

YEAR CREATED: 2023 MEDIA: Blender, Photoshop

“Within is a personal IP inspired by my own experience with grief. This image is the environment designed for the embodiment of Negotiation, and where he tries to trick the main character into willingly forfeiting his soul.”



The Rookies



Artist **PROFILE**

Jairo Valencia

LOCATION: Colombia



I worked for the advertising industry for more than a decade until I decided to pursue my lifelong dream of being an artist. I am now doing all I can to become a concept artist in the gaming industry. It is the biggest dream I've ever had.

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ARTIST NEWS, SOFTWARE & EVENTS

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AT THE CORE OF THE DIGITAL ART COMMUNITY



"Hold on to as many rights as you can. The right to post final work to your website is invaluable. If you can gain additional rights on top of that, such as publishing or printing rights, always ask for them!" says Devin Elle Kurtz.



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF...

Video game artist Lisa Heidhoff explains how she balances her work life around a busy family schedule, and adjusting to the world of parenthood.

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BLOOMCORE MEETS BOHO

We peek inside Emily Chapman's studio, where the artist has mixed a mini jungle with RGB lighting and more for a colourful personal aesthetic.

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YOUR VIEWS, YOUR ART

Readers write in with their art news and opinions on what we've covered in ImagineFX. Plus, we feature art that's caught our eye on social media.

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"I have a folder with 16,000 images I use for inspiration and reference while drawing. Scrolling through it makes the process wonderful. It's something I look forward to," says Syd Mills.



"Don't be too trustworthy; you should only start work when you've been paid," Indiana Acosta says.



The art of working to a commission

Going it alone **Tanya Combrinck** talks to a trio of freelance artists about how they built their workflows and deal with client projects

Producing work that realises someone else's creative vision is an art in itself. You'll need to juggle tasks like pricing, contracts, feedback and payment, and there's opportunity for miscommunication and other inefficiencies to throw a spanner in the works. Building a solid process that works for you and your clients is essential for making sure it all runs smoothly.

Syd Mills works full-time as a freelancer whose client work includes book covers, character art and illustrations for tabletop RPGs. Her first piece of advice for those taking on commissions is that you start out small; begin with just three or fewer clients to make sure that you don't become overwhelmed.

Before you get going, work out your timescales and pricing. "Figure out how long it takes you to complete a non-commissioned piece, and understand that it may take much longer while working with a client," she says. "Requests for major revisions, delays in feedback, and personal life events can break up a timeline you assume will be smooth."

When you've got a sense of how long it takes you to complete an image, use this to calculate your minimum charge for a project of a

"It's not a sin to take the occasional project below the minimum price you've set if you're passionate about it," says Syd.

given length. "Build your pricing around the expectation that you deserve a living wage for what you do," says Syd. Take into account that you should be earning enough to build up some emergency funds, and remember to push your prices up in line with inflation.

"I always make sure I understand exactly what the client is looking for before I set a price," she says. "Rates depend on the specifics of the job, typically number of characters, cropping (whether it's a full or half body), the outfit or armour, any ➤

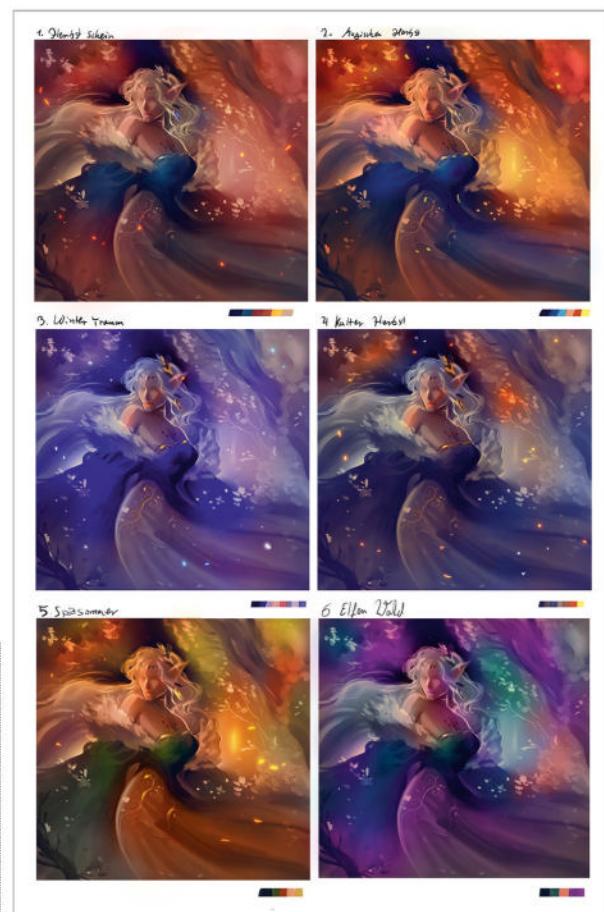
“Personal life events can break up a timeline you assume will be smooth”



© Devin



"When implementing feedback, I make sure I understand exactly what they're asking for, and I don't take anything personally," says Syd.



► accessories, and environment. I repeat these exact five things to almost every prospective client I speak to so they know what information to provide."

Should your quote go beyond a client's budget, Syd suggests offering a lower price for a simpler artwork that is quicker to create; it might have fewer characters, closer cropping, a less detailed environment, and so on.

If she's working without a contract, Syd takes 50 per cent of the payment before she starts work. To ensure that communication is effective, she prefers to conduct it via email so that it's easy to keep track of the conversation. "I always want clients to feel comfortable asking questions and giving feedback, so I try to use language that specifically solicits these," she says.

"If I suspect a suggestion they make is untenable, I may give them a heads up, but I actually prefer to go ahead

and implement the feedback just to see what happens. I have a lot of faith in my ability to visualise, but practically every time a client suggests something I'm unsure of, I'm pleasantly surprised by the result."

EARLY PREPARATION

A freelance character illustrator, **Indiana Acosta** has found that using an onboarding document to introduce clients to her process is an efficient way to make sure communication is thorough and effective. "It has saved a lot of time for me and my clients," she says.

Indiana's workflow document is an eight-page PDF she sends clients to set a clear framework for the project. Her first page details what information she requires, such as reference images and mood boards, and gives a visual example of the kinds of sketches they might like to send her.



Indiana sends clients a series of thumbnails with various colour composition options.

Next, she gives examples of the kinds of initial sketches they can expect to receive from her in the thumbnail stage, and clearly states that now is the time to make any major revisions. For each stage in the process, she gives visual examples of what she'll deliver, what kind of direction she would like to receive, and how much change is permitted without incurring an extra fee. "During the project I send over many screenshots to make sure that I'm painting what is needed, and ►



“I always want clients to feel comfortable asking questions and giving feedback”

“Art directors are just people too. Sometimes what they’re trying to communicate with the information they give us upfront doesn’t come through exactly as intended,” Devin says.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT IMPLEMENTING FEEDBACK

Devin Elle Kurtz on effective communication and changes

What are some of the learning curves for less experienced artists?

Communication is often the biggest. Artistic ability is quite separate from understanding what art directors are asking for. Taking feedback, making sure it's thoroughly understood, and applying it is also a big one. Anticipate that early on you'll probably misunderstand feedback or direction, and proactively ask for clarification.

Another common pitfall is taking feedback personally and feeling hurt when elements of an illustration need to change for a project. What has helped me in this regard is making sure I spend time doing personal work that I have total control over.

How do you implement feedback effectively?

Ensure you really understand what's being asked for! I'll describe my understanding of where the problem lies, and what my solution is. Then I'll make the change in a non-destructive way so if my updated version doesn't hit the mark, I can go back to the previous one.

I work with a lot of layers in Photoshop, and do my best to keep every file as layered-out and organised as I can. This allows me to make changes easily, and saves a lot of time, even if it takes more time to set up.

I've also gotten quite adept at quickly mocking up global changes using Photoshop Adjustment Layers like Levels, Color Balance and Gradient Maps. This allows me to make quick, non-destructive edits that I can integrate into the full layer structure if they're approved.



Devin Elle Kurtz is a digital illustrator and visual development artist working in animation and publishing.
www.devinellekurtz.com

©Adobe

“Before I jump in, I take some time to restate to the art director exactly what I think the project is asking for, in my own words”





"If you're doing private commission work, commercial rights to the artwork, the client's ability to sell and profit off of it, should not be automatically included upon delivery. That should be a separate fee," says Devin.



"Working as a freelancer has meant a lot of figuring out what advice and criticisms from others I should listen to versus disregard," says Syd.

► overall I talk with the client every one to five days," she says.

Indiana also states her terms of service: she takes full payment at the start, but will give a 50 per cent refund during the early stages if requested. If it's a private commission, she retains all rights to her images, and issues a non-commercial license to the client.

COMMERCIAL COMMISSIONS

The degree of control you have over the terms that you set for your projects will depend on whether



you're taking private or commercial assignments. **Devin Elle Kurtz** works as a freelancer in the animation, gaming and publishing industries, and notes that companies tend to have their own processes, terms and timelines.

"While I do sometimes miss the greater authority I had over these terms in my private commission days,

getting to work on IPs that I'm inspired by and seeing my work on store shelves makes the commercial route most appealing to me," she says. Devin is represented by a literary agent who negotiates better terms and pay for her.

A freelance career often means working with new people for each assignment, so you're always starting cold, with little sense of what will appeal to the person who has commissioned you. Devin has some tried and tested techniques for dealing with this.

"Before I even jump into working on sketches or ideas for a new project, I take some time to restate to the art director exactly what I think the project is asking for, in my own words,

“I save all of the reference sheets that I create for each of my illustrations”



"My brain doesn't like working for long periods, and I don't fight it on this; instead I break a work day up into multiple short bursts of productivity," Syd says.

and I include any ideas I have about what direction I'm going in for the artwork," she says. "This step alone has made a huge difference in my ability to nail the early sketches."

Don't hold back on asking questions; it saves time in the long run. "If I'm even a little bit unclear about a character detail, setting description, or anything else, I'll ask for clarification. If possible I'll even include a reference photo of what I think is being asked



"Don't forget to keep doing personal art," says Indiana. "It helps keep burnout at bay and gives your portfolio a push."



"When I first started out I drastically underpriced my work. Think about how many hours it takes and what you want to earn per hour," Indiana says.



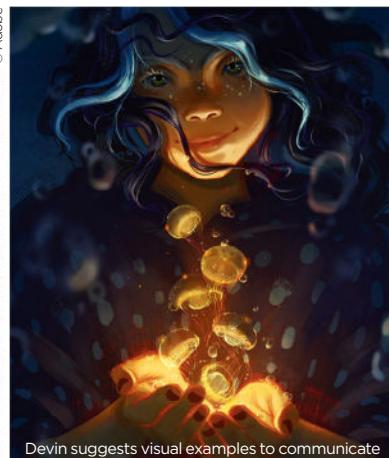
"I stick to a strict workflow that explains clearly when big changes can be made, and charge extra for revisions at a later stage," says Indiana.

for, which allows the team to very directly say yes or no," says Devin.

MAKING AMENDMENTS

Another good trick Devin uses is to ask which of her portfolio pieces are closest to what they are looking for, as often a particular illustration will have been their reason for hiring her. "I save all of the reference sheets I create for each of my illustrations, so I can reopen them and pull from the same inspirations again," she says.

If Devin receives a request she thinks won't work, she focuses on explaining her reasons clearly. "Let's say a character in dark clothes is silhouetting clearly against a light wall. If the team wants to make the wall colour dark, I might say something like: 'Compositionally, the character is currently reading clearly due to the value contrast between their dark clothing and the light colour of the wall. If we darken the wall, we will lose that value contrast, and will likely need to resort to workarounds like a rim-light or changing the clothing colour



© Adobe
Devin suggests visual examples to communicate ideas. "Words can be misleading, but a photo or sketch can help get on the same page," she says.

in order to maintain that clear and immediate read that leads the eye toward the character as a focal point.'

"I'll describe what is currently working, explain how the change would impact it, and if possible provide some solutions." Using this technique allows her to find alternatives that everyone is happy with nearly every time. 



As burnout can be a risk for freelancers, Syd keeps weekends work-free so she can recharge.



Lisa made this image of the death of the legendary King Arthur as part of an ArtStation challenge.

A day in the life of... Lisa Heidhoff

Family time The video game illustrator and concept artist on combining her career with motherhood

"I wake up around 8:30am. My husband takes my older kid to school, and I take care of the other child. I used to try to fit in work at every single spare moment, but it just wasn't sustainable. Now I enjoy the downtime. I do errands, clean or spend time with my younger child until I get lunch.

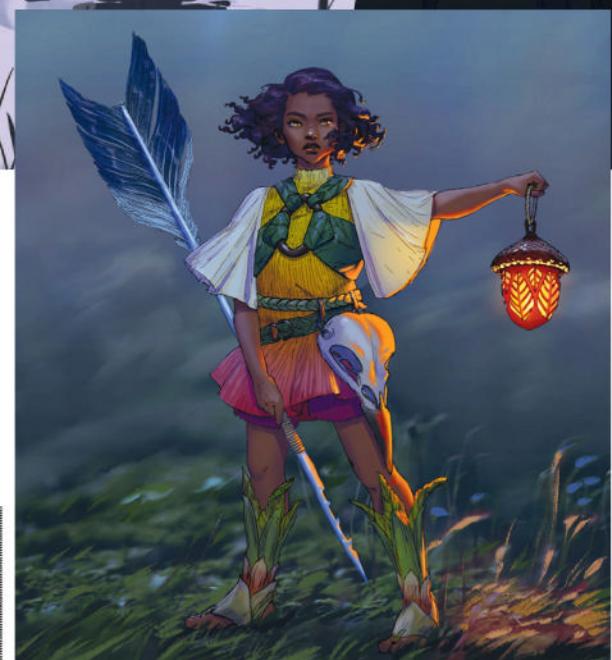
After lunch, we pick up my older child, then my husband takes his lunch break. If I'm lucky, I can work from 2:30pm to 4:30pm. Then we do homework, have dinner and get ready for bed. The kids are usually in bed by 8pm, then I start my real work day; 8:30pm until 11:30pm or 12:30am. The house is so quiet, I can really focus.

I've learned to be so efficient with my time. To unwind, I usually listen to an audiobook. Right now, it's The Lord of the Rings, which has been soothing.

PATIENCE AND FORGIVENESS

I had this identity crisis when I had my first child; do I work, do I not? Does that make me a bad mother? A bad artist? How can I do this so the things I find important are included without pushing out anything else? It was a huge struggle. Some days it still is.

My advice for any artists who are also parents is to be forgiving with yourself. There are so many things I've learned from being a parent that are invaluable. It's taught me how to



Concept artwork for a tiny warrior character envisioned by Lisa.

multitask. It's given me a level of patience I would never have otherwise. But I think also the forgiveness I'm trying to exercise for myself specifically is important."

 **Lisa is currently freelancing for various game producers. She recently fulfilled a lifelong goal of designing a Magic: The Gathering card. You can see more of Lisa's art at <https://lisaheidhoff.com>.**

In partnership with

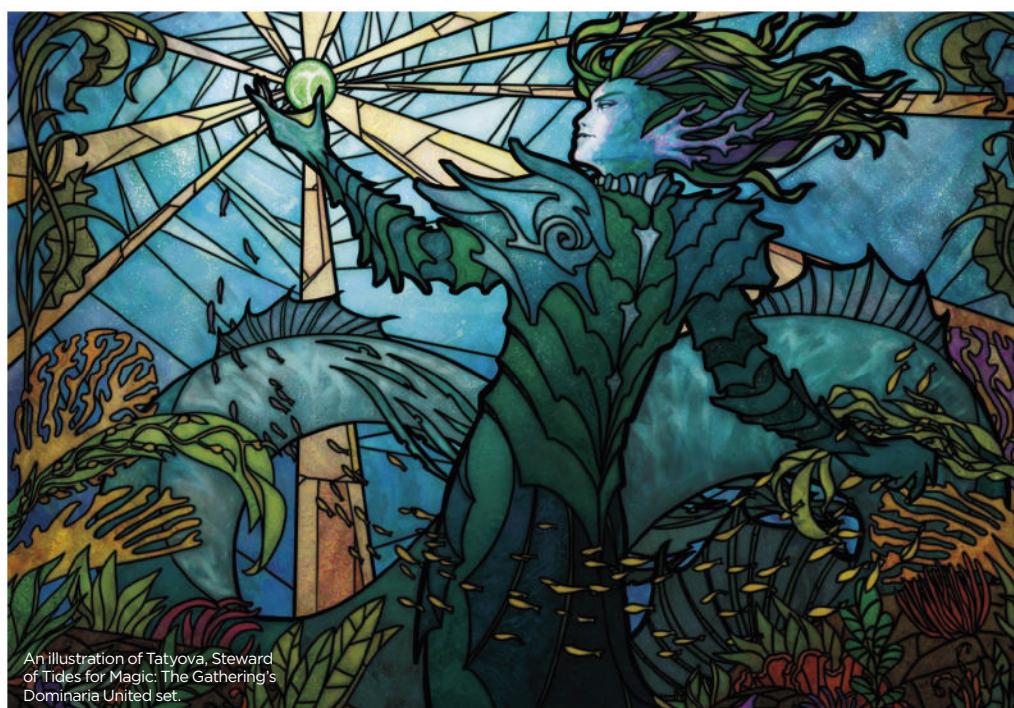


CONCEPT ART
ASSOCIATION

A collection of Lisa's quick ideas for a group of colourful ladies from outer space.



© Wizards of the Coast



An illustration of Tatyova, Steward of Tides for Magic: The Gathering's Dominaria United set.

“My advice for artists who are also parents is to be forgiving with yourself”



CONCEPT ART
ASSOCIATION

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.
www.conceptartassociation.com

ImagineNation Artist in Residence



Inspired by Ancient Greek mythology, my depiction of the sun god Helios, lord of the cosmos.



Emily Chapman

My aesthetic A personal haven where bloomcore meets splashes of boho, pastel and RGB



When my partner and I first moved into this house, I knew straight away that I needed this (formerly living) room as my studio, which featured a wonderful bay window! I love having a ton of natural daylight, as this is absolutely essential for traditional work, which is the medium most of my commissions are in, so it was a perfect fit for me!

For my aesthetics, I wanted to go for a clean, fresh look, so I chose primarily white units for the room that would then complement and allow for colourful accents! This is where I introduced pretty RGB lighting combined with hints of Gothic vibes, like my love for crescent moons. I ➔

Artist news, software & events



ImagineNation Artist in Residence



My main workspace table where all the magic happens! Featuring sketchbooks of creature doodles and two mask painting projects.

➡ feel like my studio reflects my personality entirely!

Fairly recently I took an interest in indoor plants. Collecting and caring for them became quite an obsession, which is great when you need a break from art or work! Artists often need a hobby to separate them out of their daily grind and I found this has been really beneficial and peaceful. They also decorate my room beautifully. I



“Collecting and caring for my plants has been really beneficial and peaceful”

My ever growing collection of artbooks, magazines and other forms of inspiration and study material. An essential horde for every artist!

love feeling like I'm in my own personal little jungle!

THE FREELANCE LIFE

For me, no two work days are ever the same. I actually often forget what day it is as everything is rather sporadic! I always try my best to stick to a weekly schedule, which I attempt to plan out every Sunday. However, each day changes as I may end up waiting for clients to reply, a client with a deadline reaches out, I feel the need to try out a new medium and work on personal art, or I end up doing too much housework in the day that leaves me with no time towards the end!

The nature of my work is rather varied, as I seem to wear many hats as



Aloy from Horizon Zero Dawn. This fan art featured on Guerrilla's 2020 Community Spotlight video!

a freelance artist! My primary vocation are private traditional commissions, which range from characters in TV/movies and games, personal RPG and D&D characters, pet portraits and more. For these I predominantly use Prismacolor Soft Core Premier pencils. These are such a dream to use as they are a waxy consistency that allow for superb blending.

Artist news, software & events

I was sent this along with a few other goodies from Santa Monica Studio for drawing a portrait of Kratos which was featured on their social media and in their PS4 thank you video!



Plant guardian
Bulbasaur and my little
karesansui garden and
gong as a reminiscent
taste of Japan.



Every now and then me and my partner treat ourselves to a visit to a toy store where I usually pick out a dinosaur or creature of some sort! I have always had a love for dinosaurs and they're a great excuse for reference material!



Desperately trying to keep on top of my time management by using this very haphazard weekly whiteboard! It can help add a little more sense to my very hectic (albeit non-existent) schedule!

Another craft I offer are personalised kitsune mask paintings. These I really enjoy as I love painting on unconventional canvases and objects. Thinking about how a design would work on a mask shape is a great challenge, and it's always super satisfying finishing a tangible piece of art in your hands!

I also work in digital on my iPad Pro and Apple pencil for contract gigs of TTRPG illustrations, character and creature designs by studios that may reach out every now and then. Soon, I would really love to concentrate on this avenue for my career and work as a full-time creature designer for TV, film and games.

Emily Chapman is a freelance artist working in both digital and traditional mediums. She focuses on creature and character designs, alongside traditional fan-art commissions from pop culture plus customised kitsune mask paintings!
www.artstation.com/emilymeganx



My favourite Marvel character, Venom, being a helpful little PS5 controller holder.

One of my most prized possessions! During the height of Destiny, I befriended a senior hard surface artist due to my fan artwork of the game circling the Bungie studio. Every few months we used to send each other parcels (I'd send British snacks and chocolate along with my art), and one time he sent me this: a very special, rare metal Ghost figure that are only given to Bungie employees celebrating the launch of Destiny complete with a signed box from his team! I was absolutely floored and couldn't believe his kindness!

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PRINT AND DIGITAL BACK ISSUES



Issue 227

July 2023

Set your creature art ablaze with the secrets behind our fierce Hydra cover. Batman artist Dustin Nguyen discusses working with comic royalty, and Marvel's Steve Ellis shares how he creates and inks his stunning comic panels.



Issue 226

June 2023

Learn how to create stunning fantasy characters with awesome comic artist Ann Maulina. We also explore how artists are fighting back against AI art, and speak to illustrator Jean-Baptiste Monge about his career and inspirations.



Issue 225

May 2023

Read blockbuster concept design insight from The Sandman and Dune artist Deak Ferrand. Olga Andriyenko paints witches with attitude in Clip Studio Paint, and we get the lowdown on five top entertainment art schools.



Issue 224

April 2023

Manga master Acky Bright shares the secrets of his black and white art style. Star Wars and Dune concept artist Colie Wertz talks about his career in an exclusive chat, plus pro design skills advice and a host of awesome tutorials.

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Career change

Hello, I'm reaching out to say I found your article on moving to a role in a studio really interesting. I see a lot of talk about leaving to become a freelancer, but it's rare to find information about joining an existing team and I find that odd. I get that it can be exciting to be your own boss and to have what looks to be a lot of freedom, but the reality can be quite different. When I did this I found the business side of things took over and I became less creative, so thanks for highlighting some elements of going the other way.

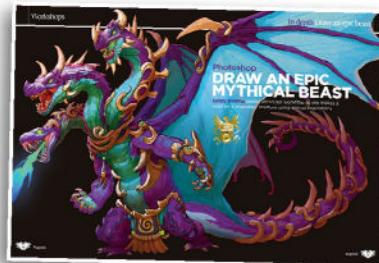
Hannah, via email

Rob replies Hi Hannah. Thanks for writing in! I completely agree. Taking ownership can be exciting and very rewarding but it isn't for everybody. For some, security and not dealing with taxes and invoicing is more valuable. More importantly, some people find it more creatively satisfying to work in a team, where they can bounce ideas off each other and feel that sense of being part of something bigger.

Our feature last issue looked at ways of moving from working solo to a position at a studio.



DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE?
Don't worry – you can get hold of issue 227 at ifxm.ag/single-ifx.



Cindy Avelino created our last cover, plus a wonderful tutorial to accompany it.

What a cover!

Congratulations ImagineFX team! So far this year all your covers have been absolutely awesome. I think the best yet, and I have been subscribing to the magazine for years.

I particularly liked Cindy Avelino's from last month. The colours are just gorgeous and I love the texture that she put into it. You're on a roll for sure and I'm really excited to see what the next ones will look like.

Genevieve, via email

Rob replies Thanks for the kind words Genevieve. It's really good to hear that you like the covers, and hopefully you've found the accompanying training useful too!

We have some great covers coming up and I really hope you enjoy them as much. There are some truly great artists out there and we look forward to featuring as many of them on the cover as we can.

Visual balance

Hi Rob and the ImagineFX team. I know they're only short, but I really appreciate the technique focus articles you do. I find these as much about inspiration as anything, but there have also been some really useful nuggets of information in there as well.

I particularly liked the one in the last issue on maintaining visual balance in a piece of art. It's something I was kind of aware of, but that article made it really clear and now I know how to better put it to use when working on my own art.

Jesus, via email

Rob replies Hi Jesus, thanks for writing in, and really happy to hear you find the technique focus articles informative and inspirational. There's definitely a place for the longer-form tutorials, where diving a bit deeper into a process is really valuable, but I agree that sometimes a more easily digestible bit of training can be really beneficial too.

If any readers have thoughts on this, or any other content they would like to see in the magazine, please let me know.



New works that have grabbed our attention



Rocío Rodríguez
[@rociorodrigue](https://instagram.com/rociorodrigue)



Dan
[@_dann](https://instagram.com/_dann)



Shannon Rose
[@sacrinoxia](https://instagram.com/sacrinoxia)

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

Interview

THE ART OF MAX ULLICHNEY

Dominic Carter speaks with the illustrator about his love of Procreate and how he makes his popular MaxPacks brushes

GOUACHE GETAWAY

When he's not working on personal projects, Max's main business is his MaxPack brushes. This piece was made with his gouache brushes to celebrate a Procreate update.

Max Ulichney



© Procreate

IMAGINEFX



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Interview

LITTLE MERMA

Max painted this piece for Nucleus gallery's MerMay exhibition. "I had wanted to show here for years, so I basked in the moment."



Max Ulichney has worn many hats. As a recovering graphic designer with a background in CG, he now splits his time between working as a character designer, art director and president of the top-selling Procreate brushes company MaxPacks. We caught up with him to learn more about his work, and hear how artists can get the most out of his custom-built brushes.

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

I grew up in a family that valued art and creativity, and I was always drawing my own superheroes and

comic strips. My dad in particular is a great artist; he worked in advertising and as a painter when I was young, so I always saw art as a valid career path.

I began interning at my father's advertising agency at 16 years old, where I did a lot of graphic design and illustration. Designing logos really built up my sense of shape language and composition. I also worked as a caricature artist through high school and art school, which developed a lot of my character design muscles. They were both formative jobs and they were the best art gigs I could get in Ohio, but they weren't what I wanted to do with my life.

My real career began after graduating from Columbus College of Art & Design, and I left Ohio to work in visual effects in Los Angeles. A week after landing in LA, I secured a job at sister companies A52 and Elastic, where I ended up staying for 15 years doing visual effects and animation work. While there, I acted as a CG

SITTING PRETTY
This fun character study was made with MaxPack brushes inspired by pioneering artist and Disney animator Mary Blair.



artist, and ultimately as both an art director and director.

Currently I'm working as a character designer for features and TV. I'm also working for myself as the president and brushmancer of MaxPacks.

How has your art developed over the years, and what has been behind those changes?

When I was starting out in my career, I fell out of the habit of making personal work for many years, instead focusing on building my career and my CG skills. At Elastic I worked primarily on commercials, with ➤

Artist PROFILE

Max Ulichney

LOCATION: US

FAVOURITE ARTISTS: Milt Kahl, Cory Loftis, Bill Watterson, Marc Davis, Charley Harper, Monet

MEDIA: Procreate, vine charcoal, gouache, oil

WEB: <https://maxulichney.com>

“Designing logos really built up my sense of shape language and composition”

BRUSH WITH GREATNESS

Max reveals what artists should keep in mind in order to get the most out of his brushes

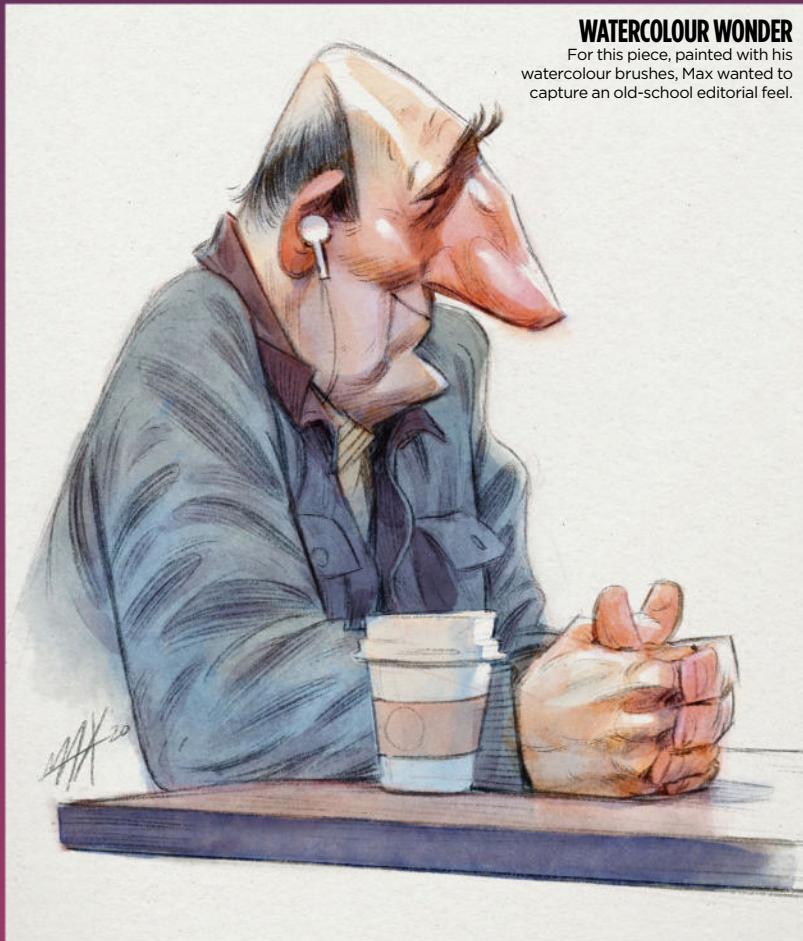
Use the biggest brush size you can to get maximum texture and character, then work loose at the beginning of a piece. Don't be afraid to get messy and paint outside the lines. Just because you can zoom all the way in and paint with a one-pixel brush doesn't mean you should. Keep zoomed out and embrace strong mark-making and visible brushstrokes. That's where your visual interest and energy lives. You can always clean up later if you want.

The default behaviour in Procreate is to be able to paint with your finger, but I love the Smudge tool, so I have set my finger to use the Smudge tool in the Preferences. If you set the size of the brush to be around the size of your fingertip it feels intuitive. Now you have a fast way to blend an edge or create texture without switching your brushes.

COLOUR COORDINATION

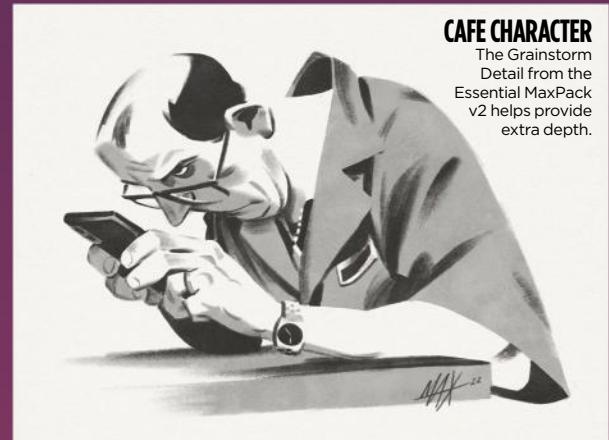
Max likes to keep his colours loose in the early stages of painting. "I prefer to paint with the largest brush size I can manage to get the maximum character of marks. I'll leave plenty of imperfections as that's what adds charm, warmth and energy."

Interview



WATERCOLOUR WONDER

For this piece, painted with his watercolour brushes, Max wanted to capture an old-school editorial feel.



CAFE CHARACTER

The Grainstorm Detail from the Essential MaxPack v2 helps provide extra depth.



CENTURION STUDY

In this piece, Max let the pencils show through more than usual. "I like how it allowed me to stay a little more graphic."



DEL THE FUNKY HOMOSAPIEN

Max exaggerated the details of the Deltron 3030 rapper. "As a character designer, I think in terms of shape strongly when it comes to line work."

» every project needing a different aesthetic. That variety was fun and challenging, but as a result, I developed a bit of an identity crisis in my personal work.

When I would sit down to create something for myself, I didn't know what my personal aesthetic was, so my artwork at the time was much more experimental, trying on styles to see what felt right to me. It was frustrating

They were such an easy source of inspiration and I was able to use my caricature skills again.

My art was doing better and better on social media as I found my voice, and making friends in the art community helped push me to improve. It was during this time as well that I discovered many of the artists I take inspiration from. Developing good taste and having

“I found my sense of success in the act of simply sitting down to sketch, rather than wanting to make a great piece”

not loving my results, but I still loved the act of making art.

I set myself a challenge to draw at least once a week and that's what cracked it for me, ultimately. I found my sense of success in the act of simply sitting down to sketch rather than wanting to make a great piece every time. It freed me to not judge myself, and in the span of a couple of years my style began to emerge naturally.

I developed a weekend habit of going out to cafes, parks or bars and sketching people out in the world.

varied sources of inspiration helped me build up my skills quicker and with better focus.

I found my personal work was often a counter to my day job at the time. When my work days were focused on detail-oriented production work, my personal art got sketchier and looser in reaction. As my career moved into art direction and managing teams, I was more likely to go for an increasingly rendered and ambitious illustration, sometimes employing my skills in lighting that I honed on the job.



Creating my MaxPacks Procreate brushes also marked a turning point, encouraging me to use more texture and painterly mark-making in my work. That's the sweet spot I live in now, revolving around caricature and character design, employing playful colour and lighting, and focusing on strong brushwork.

What is it about Procreate that appeals to you?

Procreate is so easy to love. Working on my iPad makes digital painting feel playful again. When the first iPad Pro with Apple Pencil came out, I'd been growing tired of my desktop Photoshop setup. Even with the nicest 24-inch Cintiq at home, it was so hot, clunky and glitchy, and Photoshop felt

BLOSSOMING ROMANCE

This couple was painted with brushes from the Wash Series of MaxPacks, and detail was inked in with the Fountain Pen Toothy.

so slow, analytical and interface-heavy that I felt like I was working, even when trying to make art for myself.

But Procreate had a minimal interface, and with the Apple Pencil it was so fast and intuitive that it made me want to sketch all the time and from anywhere. It brought joy back to my process and sped up my artistic growth dramatically.

Your MaxPacks brushes in Procreate are incredibly popular with artists. What made you create them?

I made my first Procreate brush the night I bought that first iPad Pro with Apple Pencil. My initial experience playing with the new Pencil was at the Apple Store, and the only app they had set up to draw on was the Notes app,

which actually has a great little pencil with nice tilt shading. I couldn't find anything like it in Procreate, so I dug into the brush palette for the first time and built my own.

In the past I'd made my own Photoshop brushes on occasion, but I hated the interface and never developed a taste for it. The Procreate brush interface made more sense to me and I found I enjoyed it. As much as I loved working in Procreate, frankly I wasn't in love with the brushes that came built in. So as I needed a new brush, I made it.

Over time I'd amassed a neat little collection of these brushes, and people started asking me about them after I posted a piece online. It took a couple of years of people asking me if they could buy them before I caved in and developed and launched MaxPacks.

What did you feel other brushes were lacking that yours could improve upon?

At the time that I was getting started making brushes around 2015, many of the built-in Procreate brushes were fun, but not as flexible as I wanted for nuanced painting. Others felt as if they were made to show off the brush engine or work well in an in-store demo scenario.

I had an idea of what I wanted to use, but I couldn't find it offered by other brush sellers. I saw a gap in the market to provide a premium product made by a working professional illustrator. The brush space has improved in recent years, although I still believe that I have the best products available.

What are the biggest challenges you've encountered while creating Procreate brushes?

I developed skills over my CG career that made me good at reverse-engineering reality, which translated well to creating great brushes. But that doesn't mean the job is easy.

Let's say we're talking about creating oil painting brushes, which I happen to be developing at the moment. The number of variables in play is overwhelming. The texture of the painting surface could be canvas or board, textured or smooth. The paint can be thick and opaque, dry and scratchy, or thinned down with turpentine or linseed oil. The brush shape can be round, flat, fan, angled, or something else altogether like a palette knife. ➤



WHAT'S HIDDEN UNDER THE ICE?

Max explains the creative approach to making this chilling commission

This was a commission for Procreate, which was looking for a piece with characters, strong lighting and colour, and a bit of storytelling. I was thinking of a polar explorer in the vein of Sir Edmund Hillary, but wanted to flip the idea and an alien light source gave me the juxtaposition I needed.

I wanted drama so I picked a low, wide camera angle. This perspective was a challenge for the poses, and I kept having to rework my sketch for clearer silhouettes and to push my proportions. I used Procreate's Symmetry tools and QuickShape features to create the alien markings and distorted them with Liquify to refract them under the ice.

It was painted with my Retro MaxPack, with the Gouache Flow Rough Detail as my main brush.

© Procreate

COMPLEX COMMISSION

This piece for Procreate proved an uphill struggle. "I took on a lot of challenges, trying to balance a wild colour palette, unusual light angle and source, and reflective and refractive materials."



TRACKERS

This duo were painted with brushes from the Gouache MaxPack. "I was undecided on including an environment when I started, but felt it was important for context."



WATERCOLOUR WITCH

Another piece inspired by cafe clientele. "Her posture was hilarious."



FEATHERED FRIEND

This suffering sea dog was the first painted with Max's new Paint Bristle brushes. "You can get streaky dry brush effects with the tilt. So fun."

► These preferences change dramatically in different painting styles across history. Renaissance styles used thin layers and glazes to achieve soft blending and translucency. Impressionism, meanwhile, was all about strong, visible brushstrokes and texture. So my biggest challenge is organising the chaos to understand the scope of my needs.

I spend a lot of time doing heavy research, zooming into notable artists' paintings and styles, trying to figure out how thick, thin, dry or wet particular strokes are. And then I categorise paintings into what marks they have in common.

Let's say I'm trying to make an impressionist-style brush. That tends to be done on canvas with thick, relatively dry paint applied with a round or filbert style brush. I can then create the elements I need for this by dry brushing on canvas and capturing a filbert brush tip. I have to consider all of that for just one small subset of brushes in this pack.

So when I say oils, everyone will have a different idea of what that

means in their minds. I need to do my best to meet a huge variety of expectations and simplify all of that into an approachable product.

What advice would you give to aspiring artists hoping to follow in your footsteps?

If there's anything to be learned from my varied career, I think it would be that it's worth following your curiosity wherever it takes you. Take chances and move in the direction you're excited to explore.

On a practical level, I'd say that commercial studios are a great option for young artists who may only be considering film and television jobs. You get more opportunity to have a greater creative impact at smaller studios, and they will help you to develop an understanding of the whole creative pipeline better.

“You get more opportunity to have a greater creative impact at smaller studios”

I loved getting to do concept art, 3D modelling, lighting, camera work, stop-motion, compositing, on-site supervision and directing, all at a single studio. The variety of work is exciting, and you can discover what you love quicker and lean into that. Ultimately, it taught me that I'm happiest working within the pre-production field, and that's where my animation career is now.

One word of warning I might offer, however, is that I stayed at one studio for 15 years. I learned a lot there and it developed me mightily as an artist. But I also learned that my sense of loyalty after all that time led to me sticking around longer than I probably should have done. Check in with yourself and stay only as long as you're benefiting and growing.

Sketchbook

DaCosta Bayley

Known for his unique robot designs full of character, this self-taught artist shares his sketches

Artist PROFILE

DaCosta Bayley

LOCATION: Canada



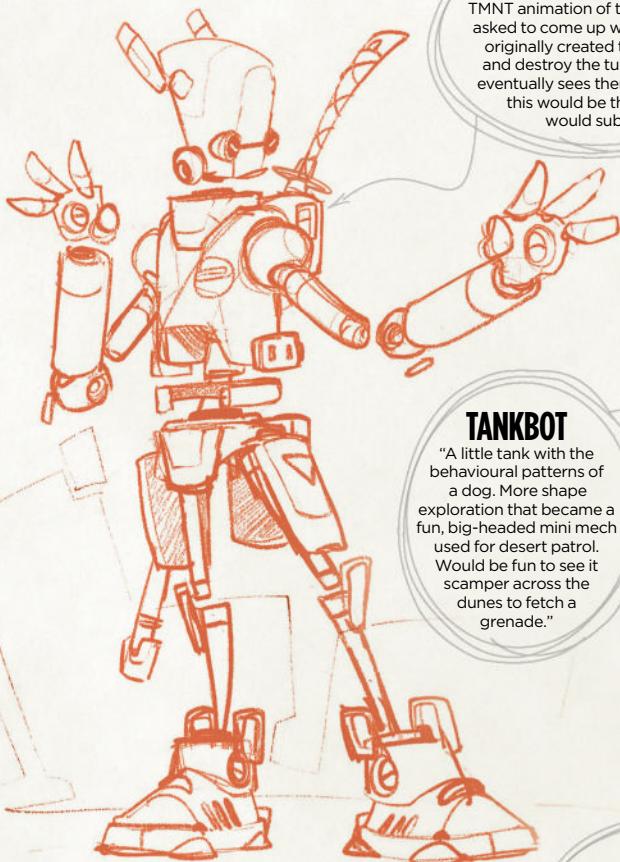
A self-taught, award-winning illustrator with an insatiable love for all things robotic, DaCosta has been creating

professionally since 1995. Working under the studio name 'CHOCOLATE SOOP', DaCosta has produced designs across various media and collaborated with artists worldwide. DaCosta is the founder of the long-running 'MARCH of ROBOTS' drawing challenge on Instagram.

<https://chocolatesoopstudio.com>

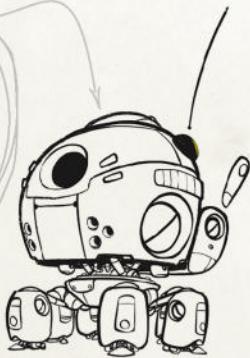
CYBER NINJA

"This guy was inspired by the TMNT animation of the 80s. If I were asked to come up with a character originally created to hunt down and destroy the turtles, but then eventually sees them as brothers, this would be the design I would submit."



TANKBOT

"A little tank with the behavioural patterns of a dog. More shape exploration that became a fun, big-headed mini mech used for desert patrol. Would be fun to see it scamper across the dunes to fetch a grenade."



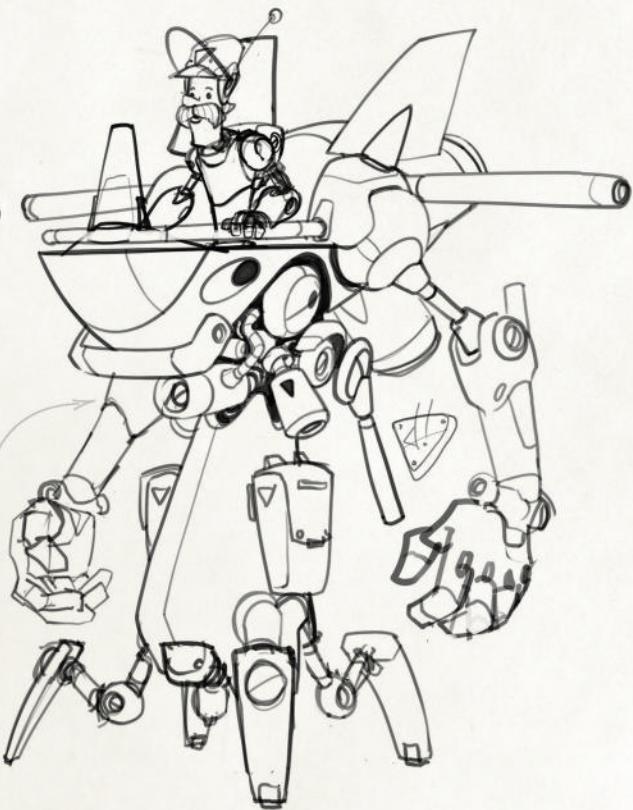
THE GRAVE WALKER

"A Scooby-Doo cartoon bad guy meant to scare folk away from oil deposits discovered under the local cemetery. I love the quirky monsters from that animation."

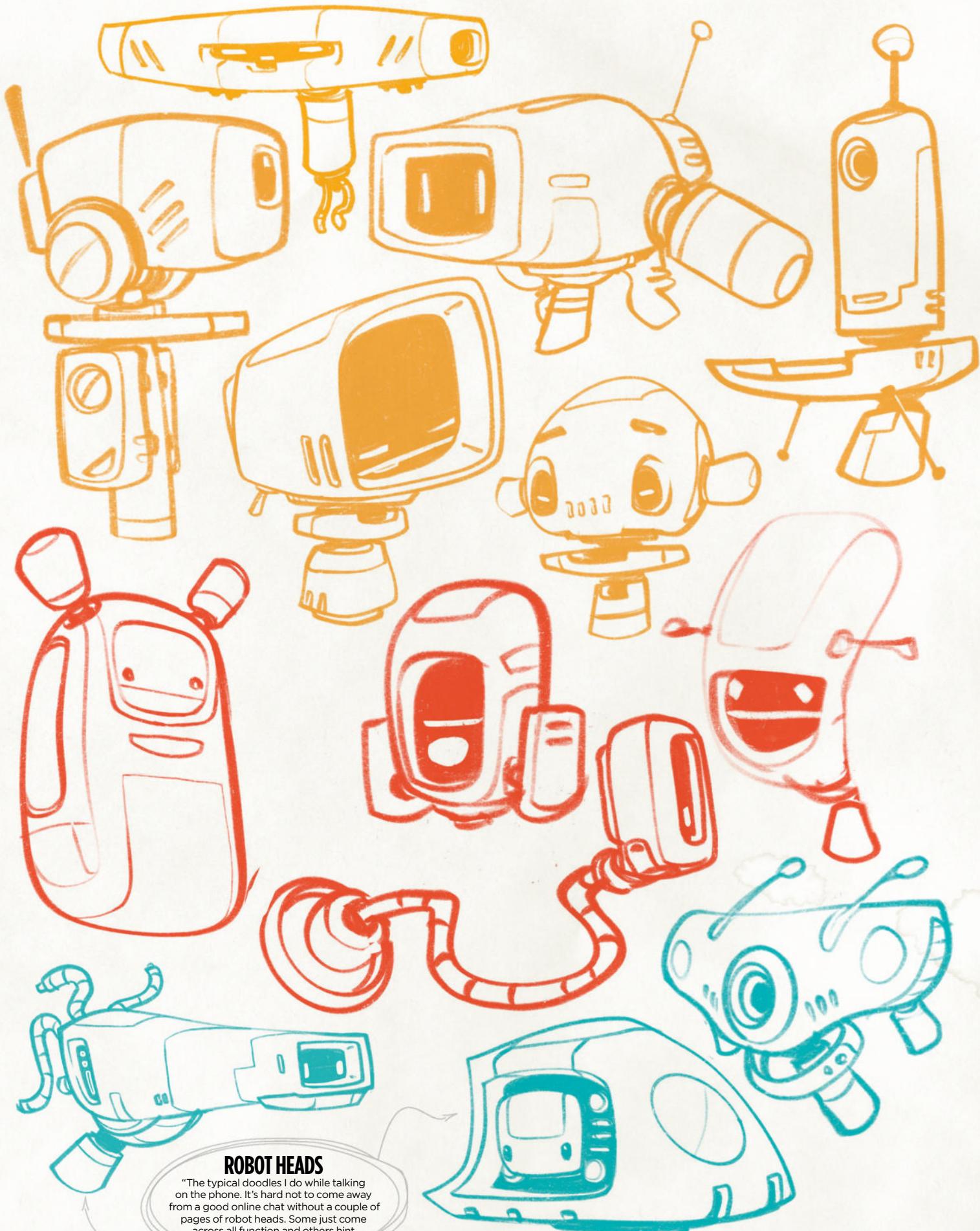


FLATFOOT

"Standard-issue mech unit for beat cops of the future. Living in a city patrolled by friendly police in mechs would be exciting."



“I'll come away from a good online chat with a couple of pages of robot doodles”



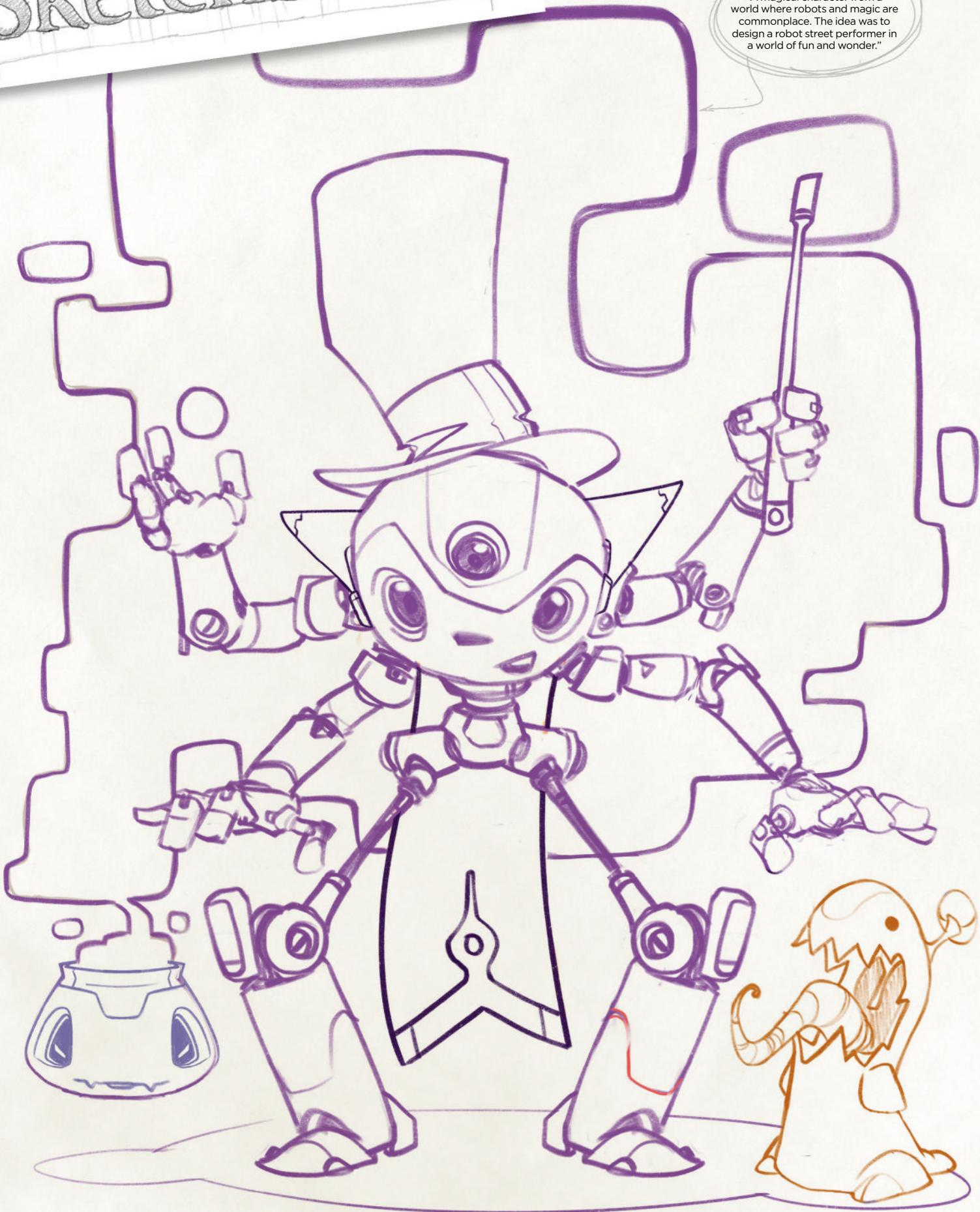
ROBOT HEADS

"The typical doodles I do while talking on the phone. It's hard not to come away from a good online chat without a couple of pages of robot heads. Some just come across all function and others hint at a personality."

Sketchbook

PRESTO

"A magical character from a world where robots and magic are commonplace. The idea was to design a robot street performer in a world of fun and wonder."





CREATIVE SPRITE

"A playful character ready to throw down. Many characters are simply exploration with no goal or story. Most end up being notes later or become stickers I can produce."

STATE OF MIND

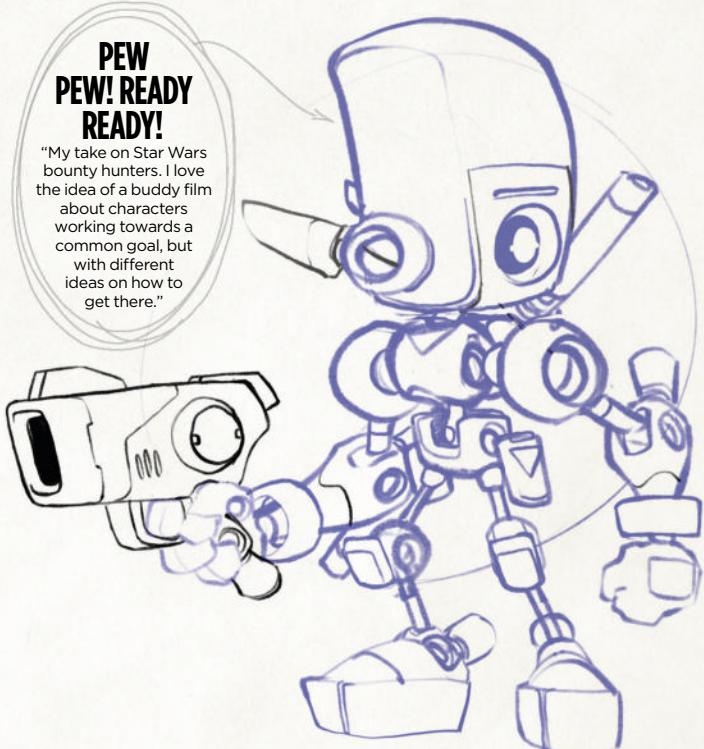
"Inspired by finding the calm in today's chaos. This is all about the artificial and the organic. The juxtaposition of the flora bursting out the cold shell of a robot in a way that could be interpreted as thought seemed fun."



“Many characters are simply exploration with no goal or story; they might later become stickers”

PEW PEW! READY READY!

"My take on Star Wars bounty hunters. I love the idea of a buddy film about characters working towards a common goal, but with different ideas on how to get there."



Sketchbook

Wu Liu

We drop in on the concept artist's laboratory as he experiments with bizarre new characters through his sketchbook



QUICK IDEA

"Sketchbooks are great for generating ideas. Here we have a punk girl, and other small shape studies."

SCARLET BLADE WIELDER

"The cursed scarlet blades are dangerous. To wield them, he uses braided ropes to seal the power and stop them killing him."



SIMPLIFY

"I spend a lot of time experimenting with simplification, especially muscles, expressions, general shapes, and so on."



“My family often saw me making bizarre faces when I was sketching”



Artist PROFILE

Wu Liu

LOCATION: China



Wu has been working as a concept artist in the video games industry for eight years. As an art nerd, his main inspirations come from comics and everyday life, and sketchbooks are his favourite way to experiment and record ideas.

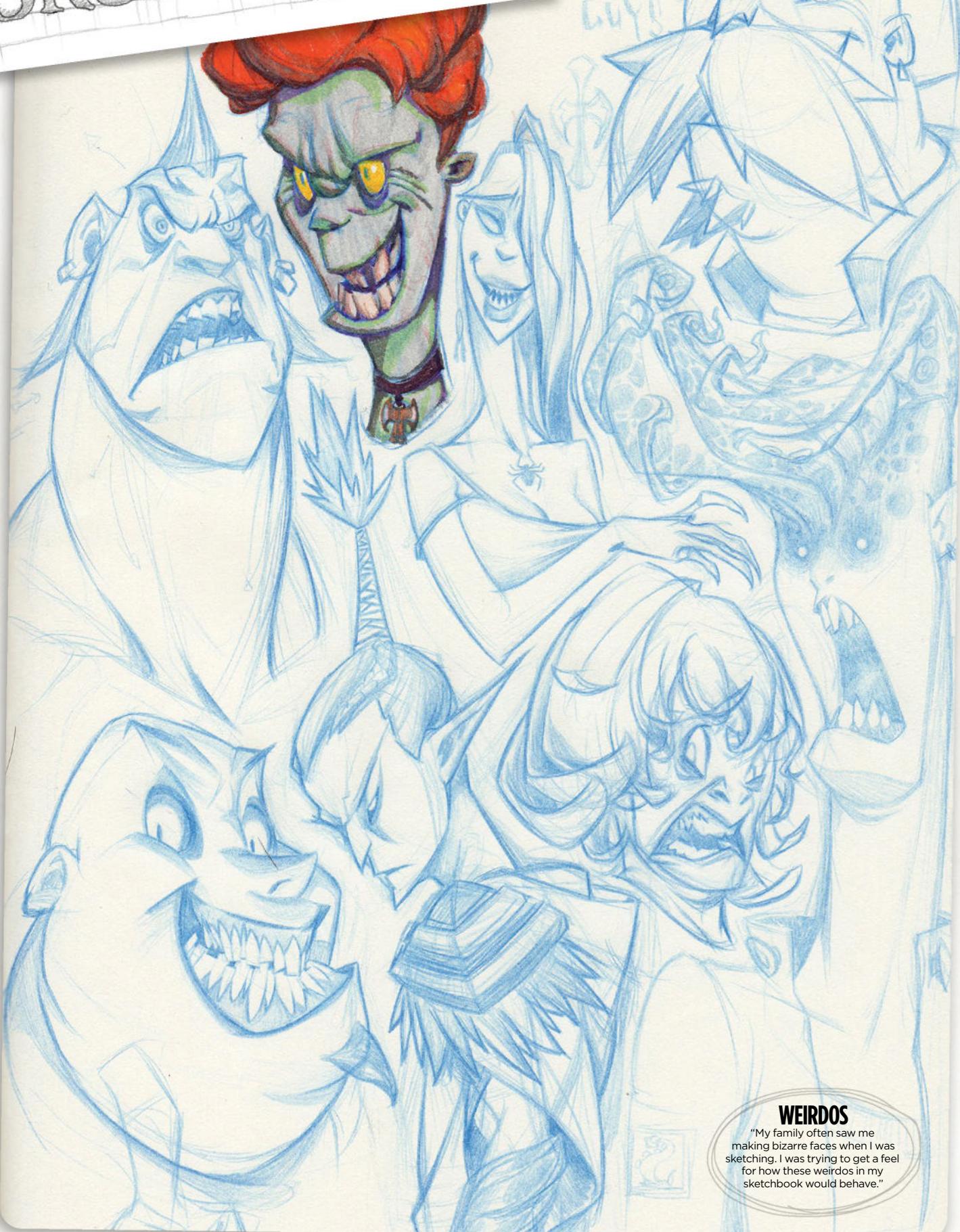
<http://piaoliudefive.artstation.com>

FACE PUZZLE

"A fun way to draw portraits with unusual shapes is to create a puzzle with faces, filling as much space as possible."



Sketchbook



WEIRDOS

"My family often saw me making bizarre faces when I was sketching. I was trying to get a feel for how these weirdos in my sketchbook would behave."



BIRD CARER

"You can see why he's the Bird Carer, with his hair and personality."

EXPERIMENT

"Trying wild creatures, ideas, poses and styles in your sketchbook makes practise much more interesting."



FUN DOODLES

"I try all sorts of things that could make me laugh, such as a floating skull in a flame, a silly giant wearing armour made from a human shield, and a random dude with a candle on his head."



CACTUS BATTER

"The cactus character was one of the themes I made for my personal practice."

“Trying wild creatures, poses and styles makes practising more interesting”

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

MATTAHAN

“It can be helpful to emulate an artist you like, but don’t be so dogmatic about it that you never develop your own style (also, credit them) ”

Dominic Carter talks to the EarthNight artist about making art for video games and how he keeps his creativity sharp

Depicting everything from fantastical scenes, afro-futurism and down-to-Earth moments, the art of Paul Davey – also known as Mattahan – has won him a legion of fans and attention from a variety of industries. We caught up with him to hear how he makes work so good it stops social media scrollers in their tracks.

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

It's a story you've definitely heard before; I've been drawing for as long as I can remember so it becoming my profession was inevitable. I made a tiny name for myself releasing free icons and wallpapers in the early 2000s. Job offers of various sizes have been appearing in my inbox ever since. My career has been all right. I've

been able to live off it without ever having to get a day job. But there's definitely room for it to grow.

Which artists have inspired you most and why?

I consciously avoid being inspired by other artists because I like to tell myself that my work is 100 per cent original with zero outside influence. That said, there are some artists I like.

These include Akwaeke Emezi, who radiates brilliance all the time. It really aggravates my imposter syndrome.



© Cleaversoft

EARTHNIGHT
Set in a dystopian future after a dragon apocalypse, EarthNight is a mesmerising, painterly platformer brought to life in Mattahan's art style.

Yagazie Emezi is incredibly brave and cool, and then there's Lois van Baarle; I'm jealous of her success, but she deserves it. I've also adored James Jean's style since his work on Fable and it's been amazing watching it evolve.

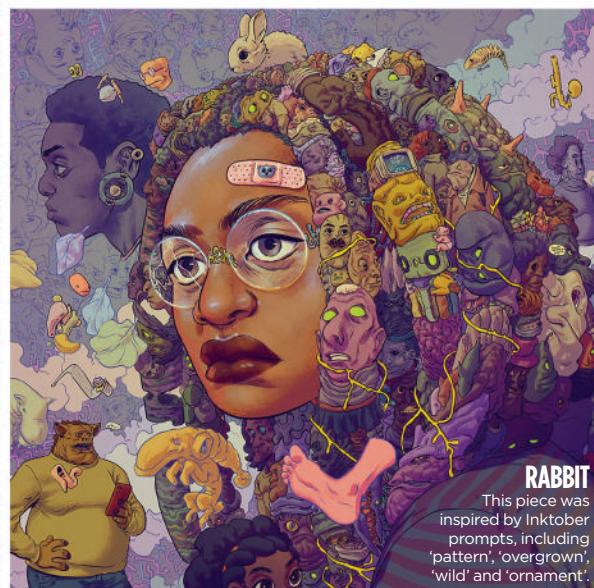
Finally, I really like Arne Niklas Jansson, AKA Arne from Android Arts. I don't know why some game developer hasn't hired him or at least licensed his designs. He's done redesigns of games I would have otherwise regarded as unassailable.

How has your art developed over the years, and why?

I'm motivated by a strong desire to outdo my previous work, so every new piece has to have something more than the last. It's all about complexity now. With social media being the main outlet for my work, I'd like people to stop for at least a few seconds before they scroll on.

Which tools do you use to create your artwork?

Procreate and Photoshop. But I do think it's important to work with ➤



RABBIT

This piece was inspired by Inktober prompts, including 'pattern', 'overgrown', 'wild' and 'ornament'.

Artist PROFILE



Mattahan

LOCATION: England

FAVOURITE ARTISTS: Akwaeke Emezi, Yagazie Emezi, Lois van Baarle, Arne Niklas Jansson

MEDIA: Procreate, Photoshop
WEB: www.mattahan.com



POWERFUL PERSPECTIVE

Mattahan's work can take a turn for the sci-fi, such as this strange landscape where buildings appear to pile on top of each other.

BATH

This piece, which is loosely based on a reference photo of fellow artist India Mayes, is one of the few Mattahan has on display in his home.

Interview



METRO

All is not as it first seems in this picture, as the commuter is accompanied by a strange companion. Could it be the algorithm on their phone come to life?

► traditional media occasionally to not become reliant on the easy fixes that come with a digital workflow. Having said that, I don't practise what I preach. All of my sketchbooks are mostly empty.

You're known online as Mattahan. Can you tell us the origins of this pen name?

I came up with it when I was 12 and it's slightly embarrassing. So no.

The Cleaversoft game EarthNight is based around your art style. What was it about your art that appealed to the developers?

I think the idea of a hand-painted video game resonated with them. I'd worked with them on some smaller games prior to that, so when they were considering making a big one I pitched the idea of a platformer that took place on the back of dragons. Twelve years later, EarthNight was born.

“There was value in working outside of my comfort zone and expanding my skill set”



© Cleaversoft

ART WITH A BITE

Critics praised EarthNight for its hand-painted approach, created entirely by Mattahan.

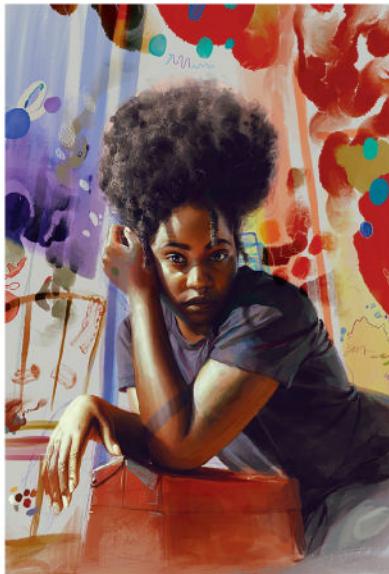
How was creating art for a game different from your other work as an artist? And what were you tasked with creating for EarthNight?

Everything. Backgrounds, concept art, most of the animation, the logo, all of it. It was much more of a grind than personal work; I did not enjoy that aspect of it. But there was value in working outside of my comfort zone and expanding my skill set. Bringing those experiences back to my personal work has certainly improved it

though. EarthNight was also the first time I'd worked with a team on a large-scale project.

How does your Jamaican heritage manifest itself in your work?

My character designs tend to look Jamaican. The main character of EarthNight wore a uniform from a school near where I grew up. There's probably more Jamaican-ness in it than that, but if so it's innate rather than deliberate.



SLICE OF LIFE

When not creating fantastical worlds, Mattahan captures everyday moments filled with personality.

You've been working on a graphic novel with Saul Williams, *Let There Be Dark*, that's due out this year. Can you tell us what readers can expect and what you're creating for it?

It's my work in conversation with Saul's. That's an untested chemical reaction, so to be honest even I can't really say what you can expect from the final product.

What does your average working day look like?

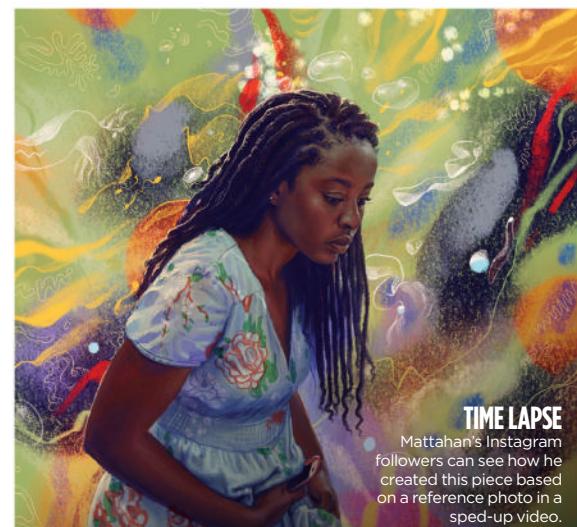
The ideal version starts with a small workout (preferably outside), then breakfast and a couple of hours of personal work. After breaking for lunch I get down to three to four hours of paid work, often with a snack thrown in. In the evenings I unwind, have dinner, then get to sleep at a reasonable time. Often the workouts don't happen, the personal work is unconstrained, paid work starts in the evening, and I go to bed late.

Do you ever feel burnout? And if so, how do you deal with it?

All the time. The only solution is to step back from what's causing it, but capitalism makes that difficult.

Tell us how you doodle to stay sharp, and other tips for keeping your creativity flowing.

Doodling is unbridled creativity, without any constraint from a plan or a goal. You're never short of ideas if you doodle regularly, because inevitably you'll find that some of those doodles can be developed further, into something more ➤



LET THERE BE DARK

Mattahan talks us through the creation of this piece made for Saul Williams' upcoming graphic novel

'Graphic novel' only partly describes Let There Be Dark. It's a collection of free verse and personal essays accompanied by my art. Sometimes that's sequential, other times it's representative illustration, other times my work is in response to his. This piece falls into that last category.

The process was typical for me: doodles to get started, the main figure once I'm warm, more doodles when I feel stuck, then colour to pull it all together. I used a layered approach for the main figure. Not literal layers in Procreate; you can do it that way if you want to play it safe, but my puny iPad can only handle so many layers.

First I did a rough sketch with a big brush in one colour. The big brush enforces roughness; this stage is more about proportion and composition than anything else and a smaller brush will have you getting bogged down in details. Then I added some values with a slightly smaller, translucent brush, just enough to turn the blob from 2D to 3D, not yet enough for a recognisable face. Next, I laid down colour. The benefit of the translucent brush is that you'll smooth out the roughness of the previous steps and create space for the next.

After this it was time to add details. If you work like me, it's still too soon for your finest brush. This step is about turning your skin-coloured blob with a vague face-like geometry into a blurry face. (You're tempted to skip this step. You want to get a tiny pencil brush and start drawing eyelashes. Okay, but when everything looks whacky don't say I didn't warn you.) To check for weirdness, flip your canvas horizontally. Because you didn't start drawing eyelashes, it's trivial to adjust feature placements as needed. Now get your small brush and start rendering a face.

You get the gist. As for general tips: keep flipping throughout, don't let yourself get carried away only to find you've spent hours drawing a melty face. Also check your reference frequently. If not for likeness, then for lighting. Finally, take breaks. Don't stare at it until you hate it.

DEEP DIVE

The author of Let There Be Dark describes it as an exploration of "the boundless mystery and beauty that connects deep sea, deep space, dark skin, and why we close our eyes when we kiss."



► substantial. At the very least, they are a record of you at a particular point in time. Which, as far as I'm concerned, is what art is all about.

I doodle daily, it's how I like to start my work day. It can be as easy as my energy levels require it to be while still 'counting' as work. I leave them to sit for a while before reviewing them. Whatever stands out or seems interesting enough gets embellished or redrawn or painted.

Another creativity exercise is to just explore random ideas that you might have. It doesn't have to be through drawing. The other day, I had an idea for how to revamp transportation systems in cities. I wrote it all up in a

BOOKS

This image is the third and final piece of Mattahan's own art that he has on display.



STREET SCENE

Even something as everyday as a street can be transformed into something wonderful in Mattahan's eyes.

big note with diagrams and stuff. It was a completely infeasible flight of fancy that I won't be able to 'use' for anything, but it really warmed up my creative muscles.

It's easy to come up with something and be like, 'No that's silly', but try to resist that urge and do take your ideas seriously. Save the evaluation for after you've explored them.

Of all the artwork that you've created to date, which are you most proud of and why?

I'm quite proud of and (See Books on p57, Bath p53, and Knot p55) [Mattahan often names his art with emojis] for mostly the same reasons. They're expressive, intricate, and don't have any glaring flaws. They cover a theme I revisit often in my work; intrusive thoughts and what to

do with them. One figure tries to ignore them, another shakes them off, and one soaks in them. These are the only pieces of mine I have hanging in my home. I can't look at the rest, there's too much I want to change.

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

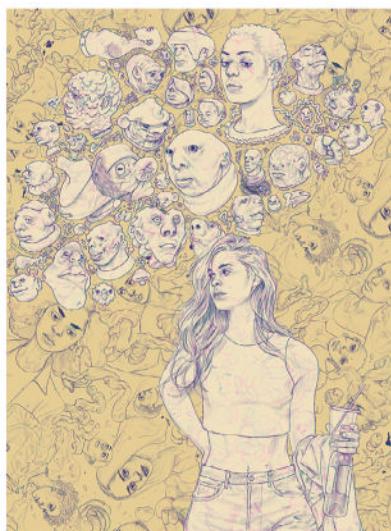
Let There Be Dark is such a huge project that I haven't really thought about what comes after it. I've played around with original characters for years so maybe it's time to really do something with them.

What advice would you give to aspiring artists hoping to follow in your footsteps?

Draw a lot. Draw from photo reference or life. Try to put yourself into your work. Neither human nor AI can do that better than you can. This is advice to follow in my footsteps, but you may want to walk somewhere else. So don't take it too seriously.

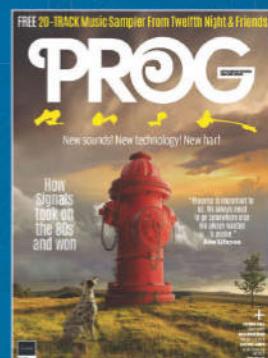
DOODLES

Mattahan's detailed doodles allow him to process and work through ideas that might carry over into finished pieces.



“Another creativity exercise is to just explore random ideas that you might have”

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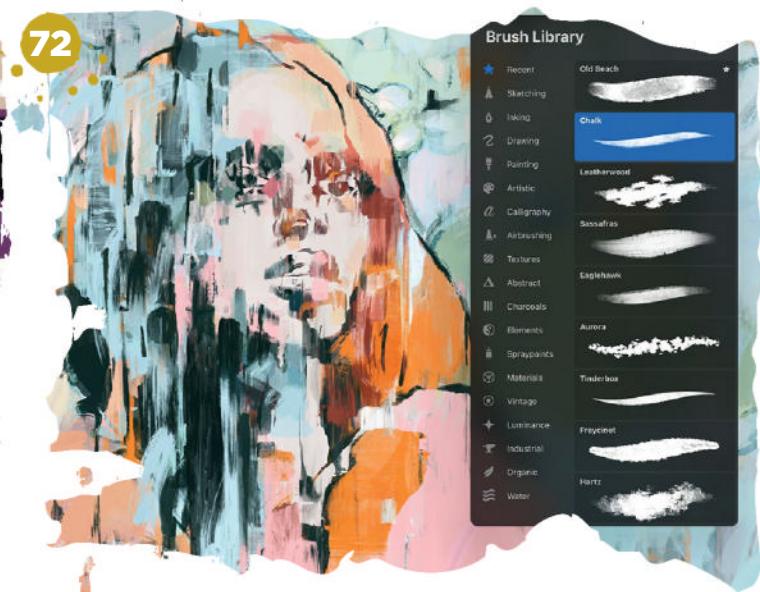
ImagineFX Workshops

**Workshop assets
are available...**

Download your resources by turning to page 5. And if you see the video workshop badge, you can watch the artist in action, too.



Advice from the world's best artists



Brush Library

Recent	Old Beach
Sketching	Chalk
Painting	Leatherwood
Artistic	Sassafras
Calligraphy	Eaglehawk
Airbrushing	Aurora
Textures	Tinderbox
Abstract	Freyja
Charcoals	Hertz
Elements	
Sprays	
Materials	
Vintage	
Luminance	
Industrial	
Organic	
Water	

This issue:

64 Create a bold fan art portrait

Bo Feng Lin takes an in-depth look at the creation of this issue's striking Wednesday cover art.

70 Learn to embrace your references

Translating observations and emotions from real life into artwork with Alone Lee.

72 50 tips and tricks for Procreate

Five pro artists share their expert advice to help raise your game.

82 Control the focus of your image

How Luiz Prado makes the focal points of his artwork stand out.

Procreate CREATE A BOLD FAN ART PORTRAIT

Bo Feng Lin shares the process behind his quirky Wednesday Addams painting, which features suitably abstract elements

Artist PROFILE

Bo Feng Lin

LOCATION: Germany

Bo Feng Lin is an illustrator and artist based in Hamburg. He specialises in stylised portrait illustrations with abstract twists featuring a range of bold and vibrant elements. www.bofenglin.com



In this tutorial I'll show you step by step how I create a digital illustration from start to finish using Procreate. You'll get to see how I work with shades and highlights to shape the character, and add in extra

details and abstract shapes to complete the painting.

I'll be using some of my own brushes for this tutorial, but you can use the default brushes in Procreate just as well. If you want to try out my custom brushes, you'll find them in the assets for this workshop.

Nothing I'm showing you here is exclusive to Procreate and can also be applied to other drawing apps such as Photoshop. This lesson is great for beginners and experienced artists alike. Afterwards, you'll have a basic understanding of my general working process.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PROCREATE

CUSTOM BRUSHES: ALLROUNDER

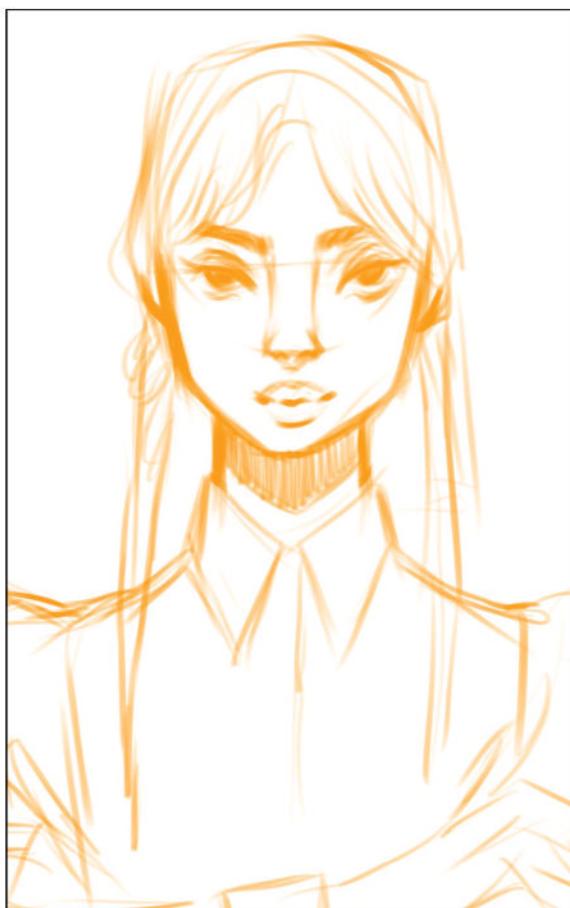
ALLROUNDER ROUGH

DEFAULT BRUSHES: SOFT AIRBRUSH

FINGERPAINT 1

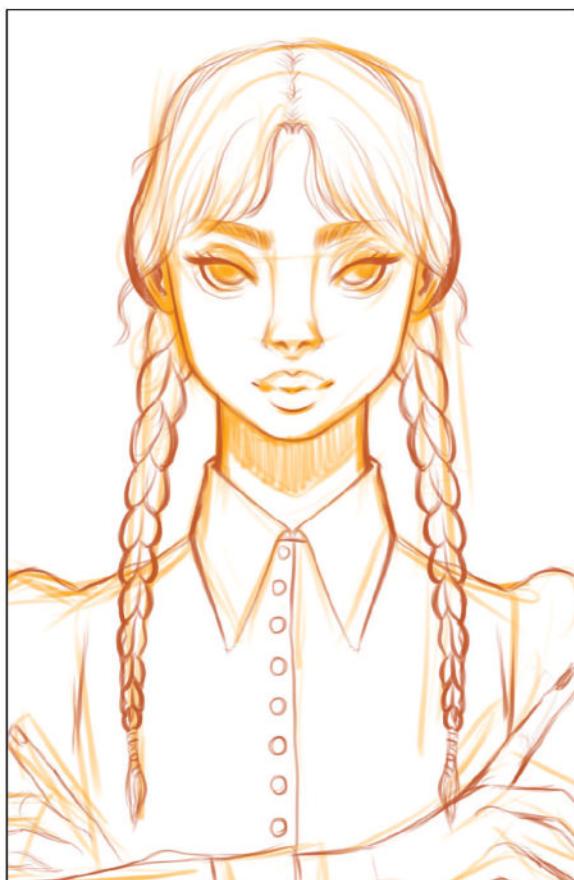
These are the brushes used for this tutorial. The first three were for the portrait, while the last was for the abstract shapes and background.

To see more Procreate brushes available from Bo Feng Lin, visit <https://bit.ly/41RmeY2>



1 First rough sketch

I start with an empty canvas, which is always set up so it's ready for high-quality prints if needed. I like to use DIN-standard sizes for prints. The file size can get quite big, so be mindful that the bigger the size, the fewer layers you'll be able to utilise in Procreate.



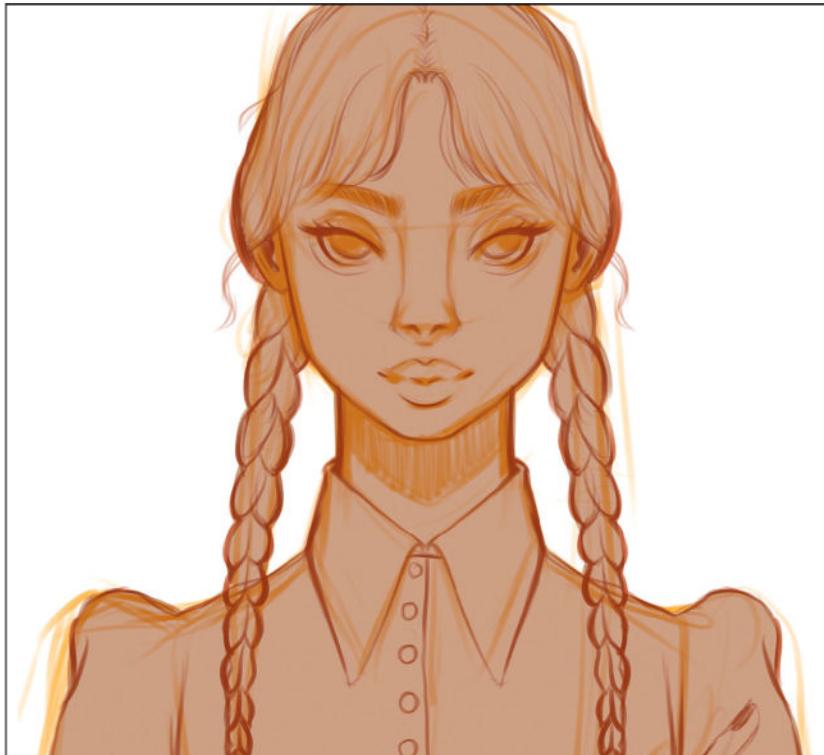
2 Add clean outlines

With the initial sketch, create a new layer on top and draw a cleaner version of the sketch using a darker colour that separates the outlines from the original. I prefer to use a colour that's the same temperature as the sketch, but darker. For example if the sketch is yellow, I'd go with orange or red for the outlines. ➤

In depth Fan art portraits

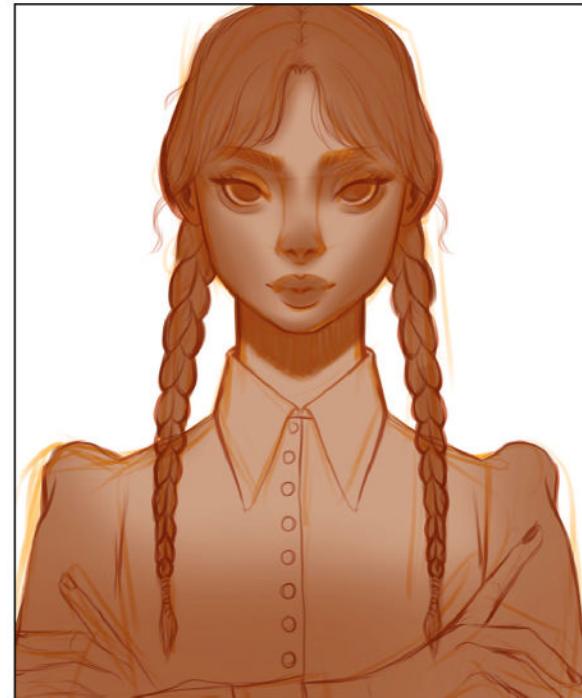


Workshops



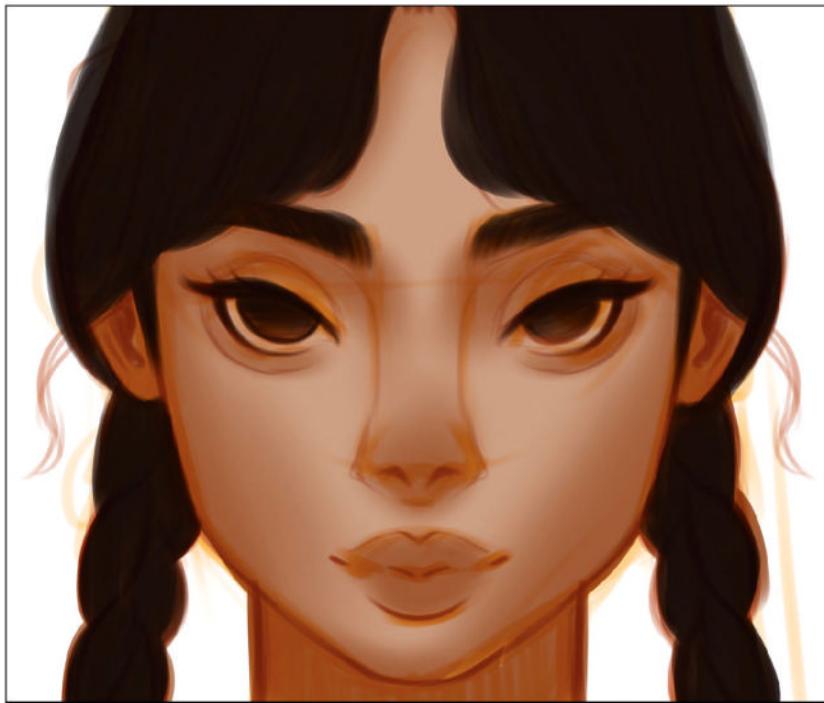
3 Select base colour

On top of our sketch layers I create a new layer, which is set to Multiply. On this layer I'm adding the base skin tone of our subject. I like to go a bit darker on the tone because I'll work on the highlights later in the process.



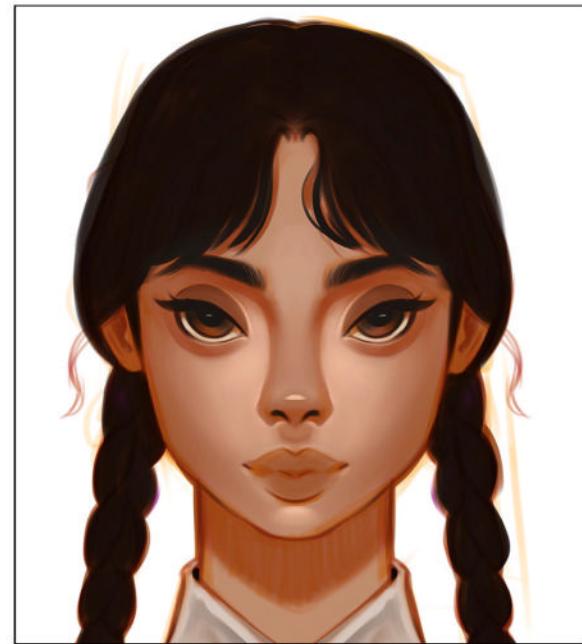
4 Clothing details

Once I finish the face, I focus on the outfit, continuing with the same steps as I did for the face. Add a base colour for the clothing and darker shades where there are creases. It's good to use a real reference for this step if you want to make it look more realistic.



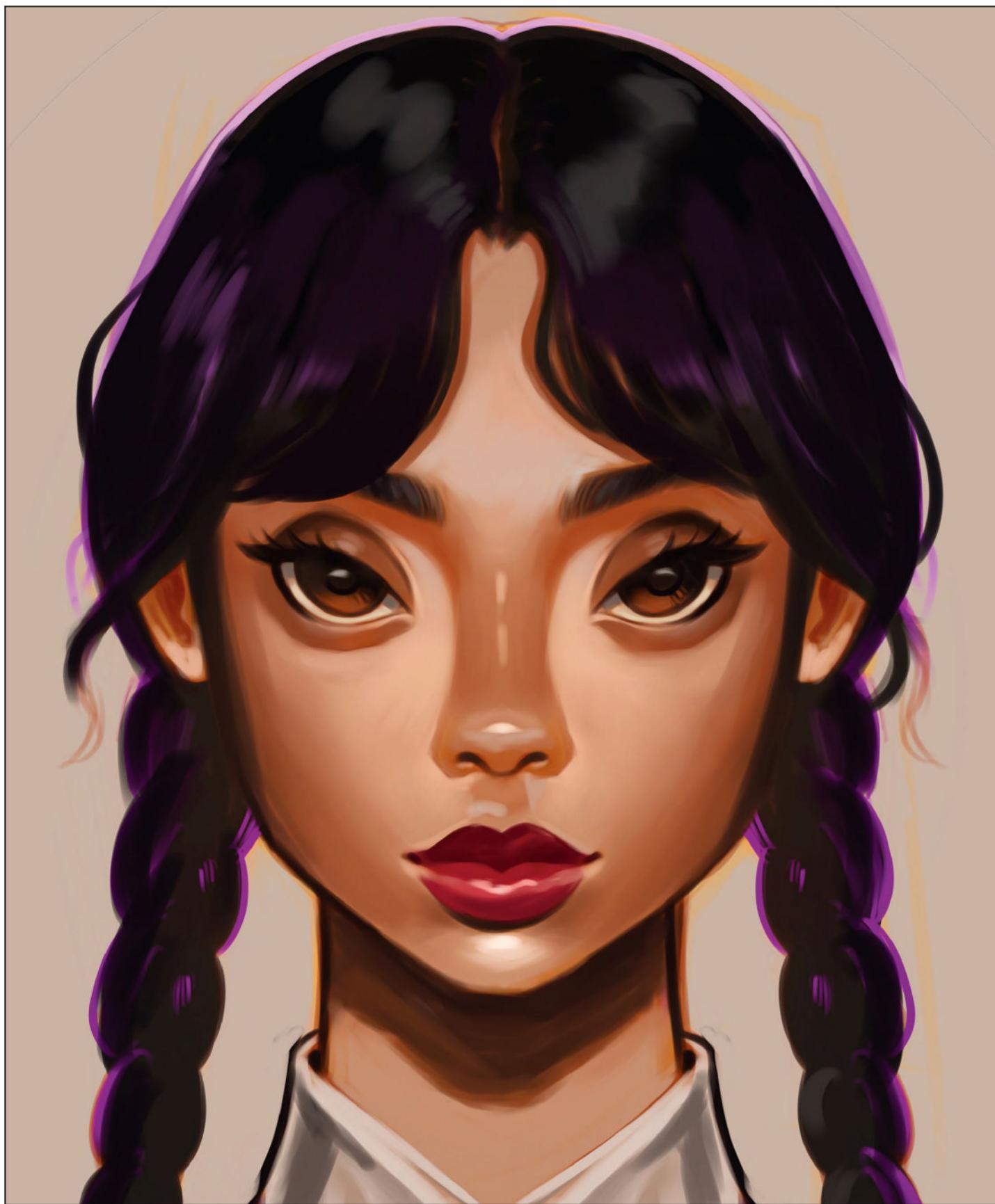
5 Face details

Now that we've established our baseline for the portrait, I like to focus on the facial features. On a new layer I paint in the eyes, eyebrows and hair. Since they all have a similar colour, I like to keep them on the same layer. When painting dark hair or eyes, try to avoid using a solid black, and instead pick a colour that is almost black. Working with solid blacks makes the contrast too strong and would take away from the balance in other areas of the image.



6 Add highlights

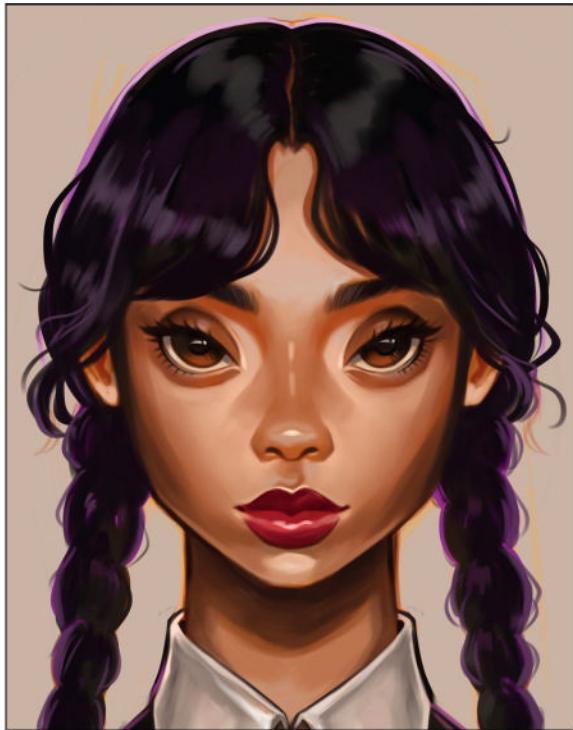
In this step I'll add in highlights, particularly prominently around the nose area. Use a fine brush that can give clean highlights in and around the eyes, nose and mouth, and a soft airbrush for broader areas like the cheeks, forehead and bridge of the nose. It's a good idea to create a new layer in case you want to amend any strokes, as you can simply use the Eraser tool for corrections without damaging the layers underneath.



7 Background colour

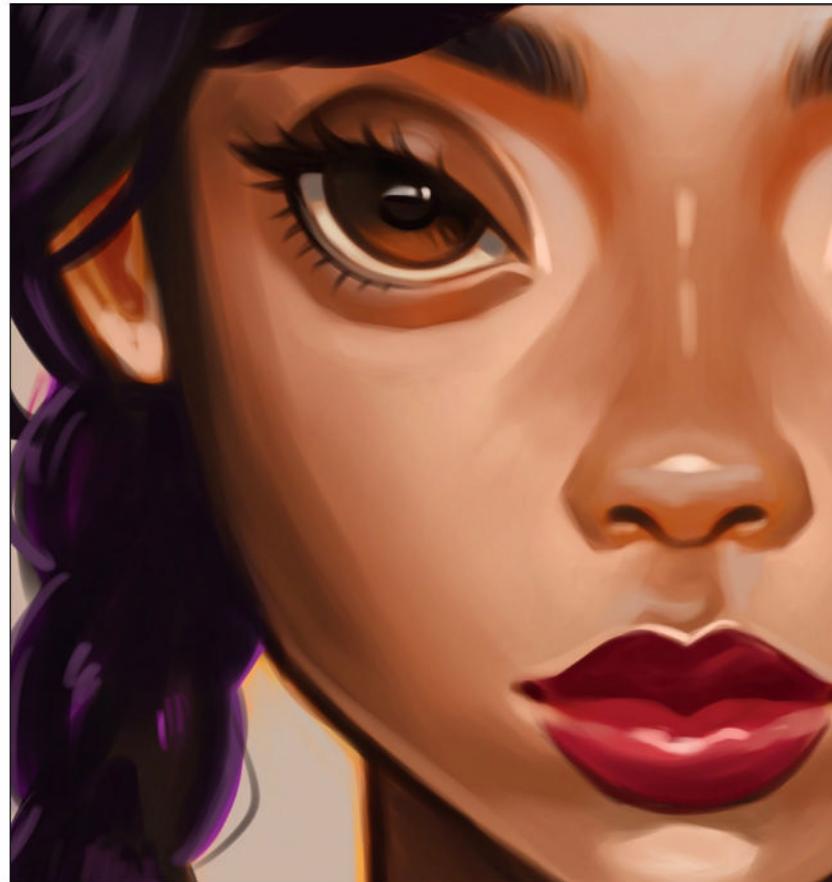
While adding more details to the portrait, choose a background colour that supports the image. I chose a fairly neutral colour that isn't too overpowering, but of course you could use a much more vibrant colour, depending on the mood you want to give the piece. I played around with the colours and added a subtle violet outline, which matches with the Wednesday Addams character. ➤

Workshops



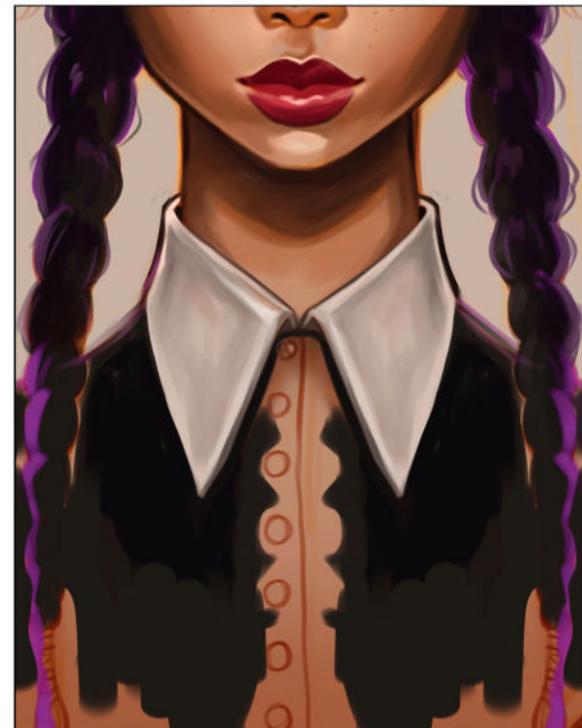
8 More details

I like to add details only where they are necessary. Keep some of the strokes rough around the cheeks to make it interesting. Add just enough highlight to grab attention, but don't go to crazy!



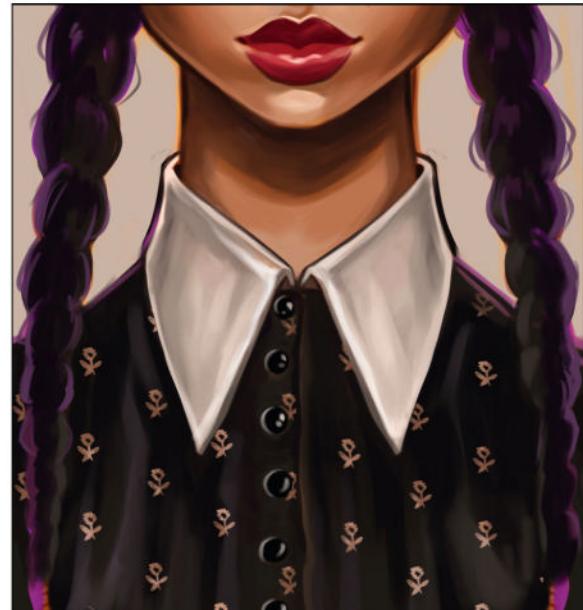
9 Facial features and makeup

I like to introduce final facial features such as freckles, birthmarks, tattoos or makeup to round out this stage of the image. I do this on a separate layer, which allows me to make adjustments if needed, or if I want to change the colour using Adjustments>Hue, Saturation, Brightness.



10 Paint the clothes

With the face finished, I turn my attention to the outfit, again following the same process I used when working on the character's face. The first step here is to select a base colour for the clothing and add darker shades with the folds and creases.

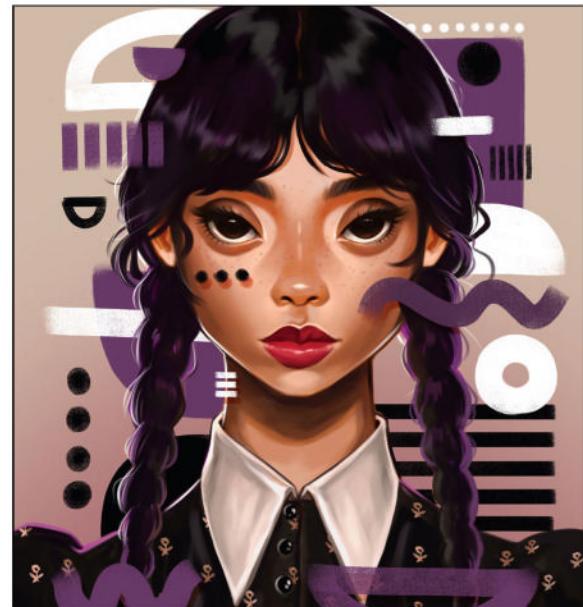
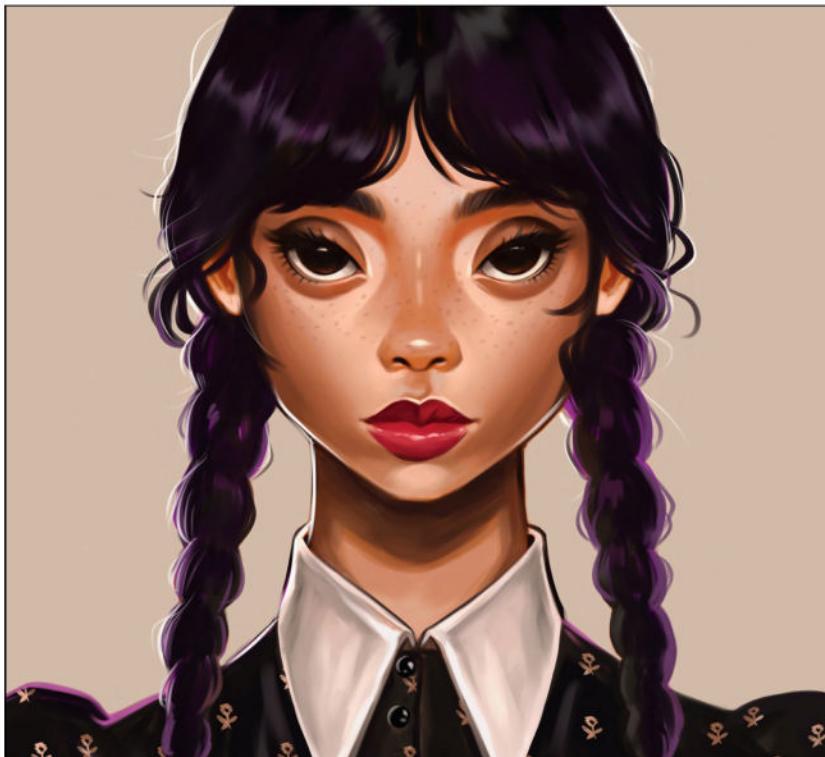


11 Clothing highlights

Once the base colour and darker shades for the clothing are established, I'll add the highlights. Depending on the material these can vary. Wednesday seems to wear a typical cotton shirt, which is only partly reflective, therefore I'm not going too crazy with the highlights. To select the right highlight colour, I choose a shade that's brighter than the base colour, and less saturated. I apply the highlights with the Allrounder brush, the same brush that I used for the skin.

12 Create a pattern

Wednesday's iconic black outfit features a pattern of golden roses. I create those by drawing one rose on a separate layer, which is duplicated several times for all the roses needed. You can shorten this step by merging a bunch of roses into one layer, duplicating it and shifting the new layer to match the required pattern, then merging all the roses into one locked layer. Finally, I paint the shades and highlights missing from the roses.



13 Cropping and composition

Once the portrait is done I crop the image to the desired composition, but only after preserving the main file by making a duplicate; this way we maintain the original without accidentally creating steps that can't be undone. Initially I had her hands in the sketch as well, but I think this crop looks much stronger.

14 Abstract shapes

To complete the image, I add bold shapes behind and in front of the character. There aren't really rules here, so any interpretation works well as long as the shapes don't overpower the portrait. I like to have a good balance between portrait and shapes, and try to carefully select the colours in order to complement the character instead of distracting from them. In terms of shapes I keep it basic, but add freehand shapes as well to provide contrast to the rigid and geometric appearance.

Workshops



Technique focus

EMBRACE REFERENCES

Alone Lee explores being inspired by emotions, observations, and imagination



"Observations, feelings and expressions all run through my works. The observations here include having a great month in Phuket and watching the sea every day at sunset. As for the feelings, these include sensations like the wind and the waves, but also the people around me and feeling happy in myself."

For the expression, let's take the ocean waves. First I gathered every reference I could find. I had no clue how to do it at first, and described them using messy lines. This was a good exploration process though. We don't usually draw something and look for references to see how others have approached it, which is also great, but here I embraced a spirit of adventure by imagining myself on an isolated island." 

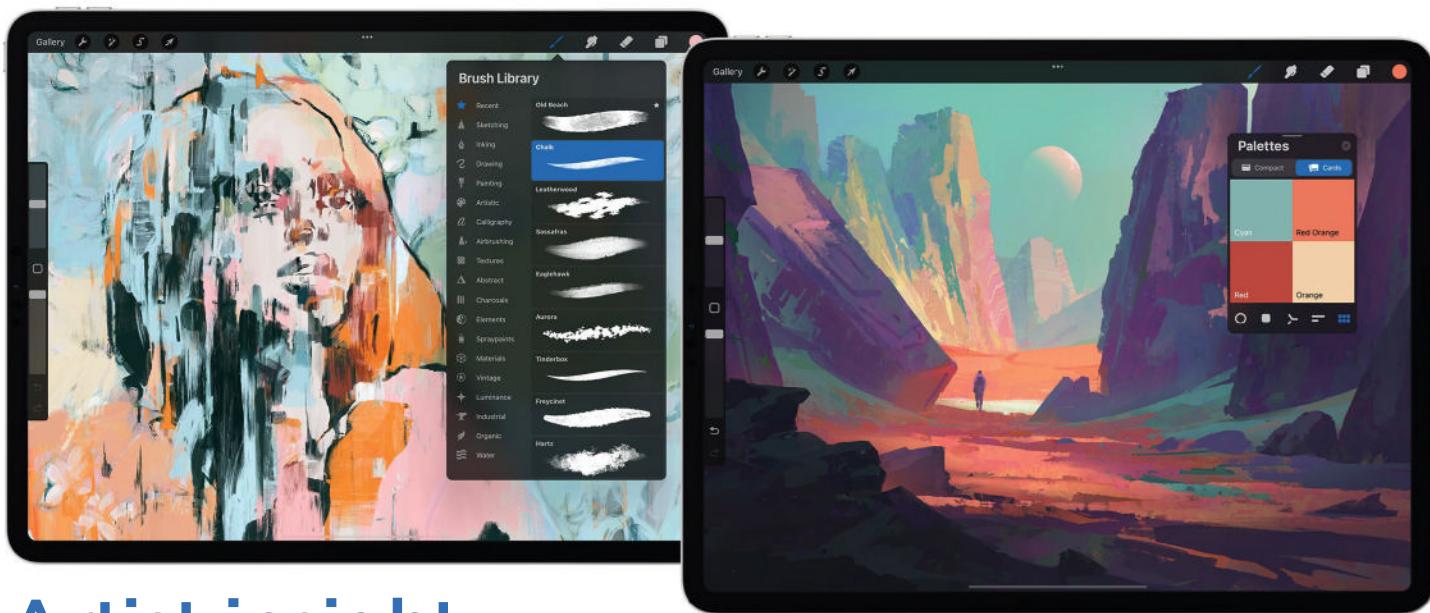


Artist **PROFILE**

Alone Lee
LOCATION: China

Alone is a Chengdu-based freelance artist who divides her time between personal work and her role as a visual development artist on an animation team.
www.alonelee.com

Workshops



Artist insight 50 TIPS AND TRICKS FOR PROCREATE

Five expert artists share their wealth of knowledge to boost your software skills up to the next level

Whether you're just starting out on the adventure of learning a new software, or been plugging away at your favourite program for years, there's always some nifty little trick you wish you'd known sooner. And that's exactly why we sought out the expertise of a panel of Procreate masters to share their favourite tips.

We've covered everything from shortcuts to workflows, so beginner, intermediate or veteran, get ready to find out which Procreate pointer will change your game!



1 DRAW USING THE SYMMETRY GRID

There are a multitude of drawing assist tools that will help with your art, but the Symmetry tool is a great way to create uniform pieces. You can create unique shapes or use the tool to draw symmetrical faces like the piece shown left. To change the centre point of the grid, simply move around the blue dot. You can also customise the Symmetry tool to sit horizontally, vertically and at any angle in between.

Artist PROFILES

Kei-Ella Loewe

LOCATION: The Netherlands



Kei-Ella is a South African digital artist currently living in The Netherlands. She started teaching herself how to illustrate with Procreate software in 2021. <http://keiella.art>

Sweeney Boo

LOCATION: Canada



When she's not busy drawing witchy girls and hairless cats, Sweeney is working with major comic publishers. She has also authored and illustrated graphic novels. www.sweeneyboo.com

Alexandra Zutto

LOCATION: US



Alexandra is an artist and illustrator based in Brooklyn. She has a talent for 3D-style artwork that features a vast array of colours, abstract shapes, and natural elements. <https://bit.ly/3Ok5Bkw>

Kate Correa

LOCATION: US



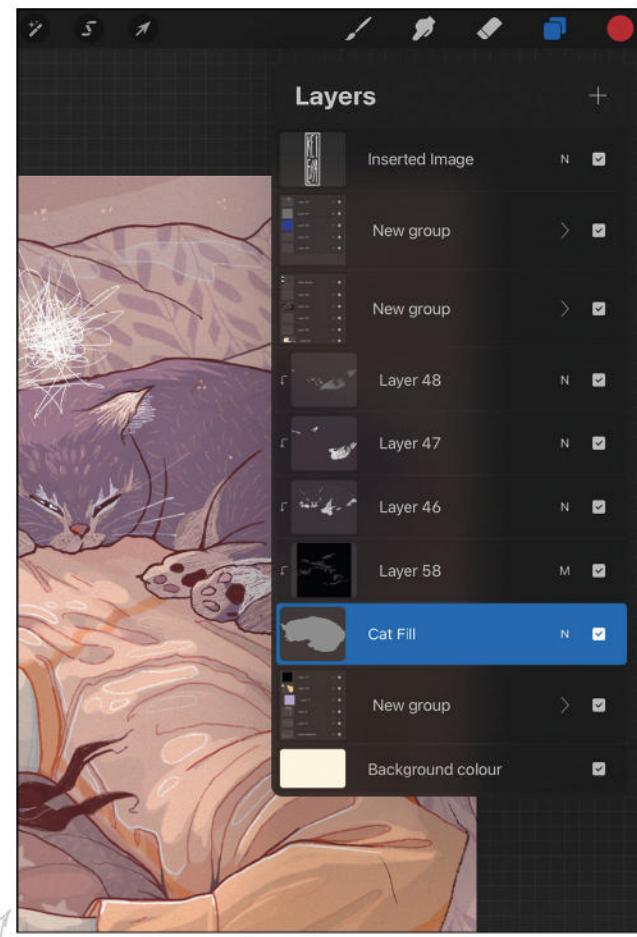
Kate is a Chilean-American visual development artist and illustrator based in New Jersey. She is keen to pursue a career in vis dev, layout, and background painting. <https://bit.ly/3MC14tO>

Mygel Edoloverio

LOCATION: Philippines

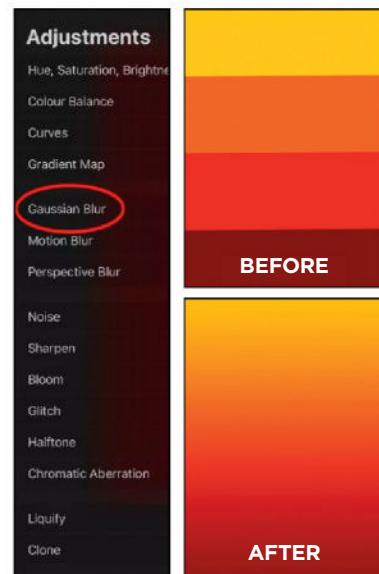


Born and raised in Manila, Mygel is a package of illustrator, animator and 3D artist. Over time, he has developed a love for using strong, warm colour palettes. www.mziegfield.com



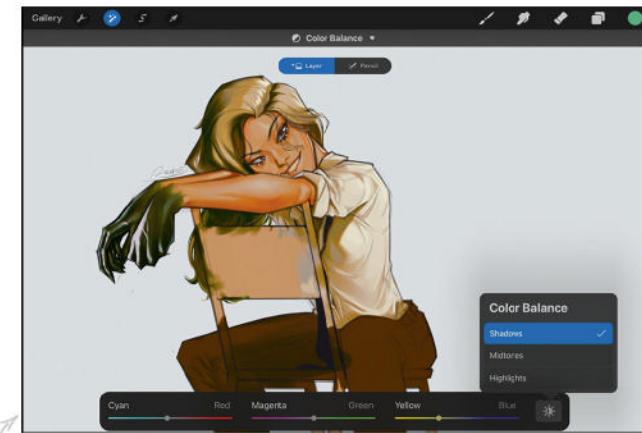
2 CLIPPING MASK LAYERS

Most of my artworks have a line-art layer on top and my fill or shape layers underneath. Each shape layer has a few layers above it as clipping masks so I can shade, detail and play with colour more easily. [Kei-Ella Loewe](#)



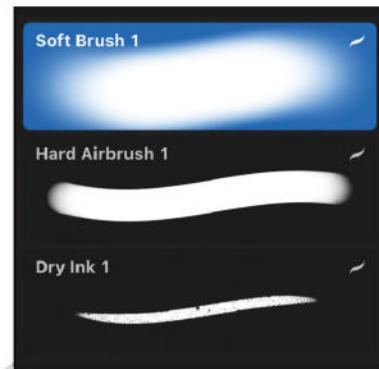
3 THE VERSATILE GAUSSIAN BLUR

The Gaussian Blur setting is the perfect way to achieve a uniform, soft blur effect on your creative pieces. This can be used to blend colours for your backgrounds, create a motion blur look (although there is a specific motion blur effect) or produce a soft glow for your lighting effects. It's a great tool to play around with to achieve some unique looks in your pieces.



4 TRY COLOR BALANCE

If you want something with even more control, you could instead use the Color Balance adjustment. It lets you push the shadow, mid-tone and highlight values between CMY and RGB. It's great for subtle hue shifts when used correctly. You could even swap it from Layer to Pencil mode by tapping on the arrow beside the tool name in the banner, which allows you to paint the changes onto the layer, rather than affecting the layer as a whole! [Mygel Edoloverio](#)



5 SWEENEY'S BRUSHES

The main brushes I use are the ones that came with the Procreate library. I like Dry Ink for pencilling and inking because I love its texture, and use Hard Airbrush or Soft Hair Brush for my colouring and shading. I'll also sometimes download or buy extra brushes if I'm looking for particular rendering or patterns for my artwork. [Sweeney Boo](#)

20 OF THE BEST PROCREATE BRUSH PACKS

Our pick of the leading brush sets to enhance your illustrations in Procreate



Sargent's Oils

Price: \$6
<https://bit.ly/458kDjf>

Want to paint like a master without the mess? These oil brushes might be the answer. This set is inspired by John Singer Sargent and was created using actual brushes being applied to canvas.



Procreate Watercolor Kit

Price: \$16 personal / \$19 commercial
<https://bit.ly/42PQLXA>

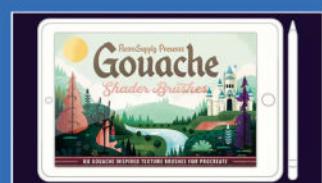
This 12-brush set has a wonderfully authentic watercolour feel and texture. The pack includes video tutorials and mock-ups to give you a head start.



Procreate Smudge Brushes

Price: \$9
<https://bit.ly/3pL3mfL>

This set includes 18 brushes tested for use with Procreate's Smudge tool. The brushes can be used to create colour blending effects and varied textures.



Gouache Shader Brushes for Procreate

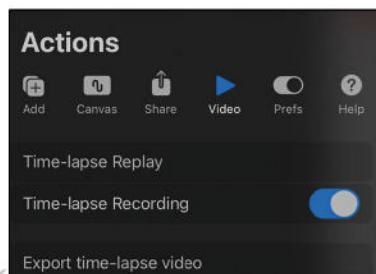
Price: \$19
<https://bit.ly/3MAq6lw>

Get rich gouache effects in Procreate in minutes. This mega pack from creative resources site RetroSupply offers a whopping 68 gouache brushes! ➡

Workshops

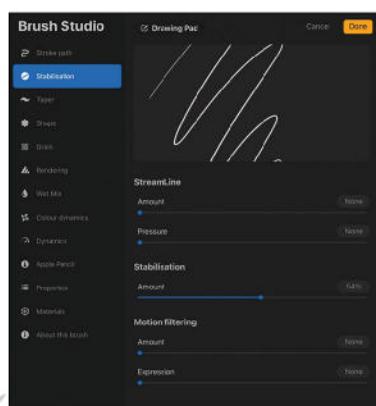
6 SHARE YOUR LAYERS

Another cool tip is the ability to move any layer from one artwork to another. Do this by tapping and holding the chosen layer, then press the Gallery button in the menu. Next, open the Layer menu and drop your layer in its place. **Alexandra Zutto**



8 MAKE A TIME-LAPSE

Procreate allows you to record and download your entire drawing process. When you start a new canvas, go into the settings, and then Videos. Make sure that the Time-lapse Recording option is enabled. At any time, you can export your video, which is extremely handy to share on your social media profiles! **Sweeney Boo**

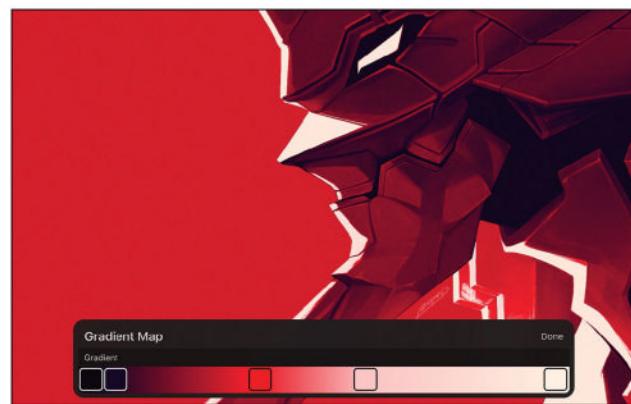


11 ADJUSTING THE STABILISATION FOR YOUR LINE WORK

I love clean, crisp line work and often increase and decrease the Stabilisation on my favourite line work brushes to make the process more relaxing. To do this, click the brush to open up the Brush Studio and increase Stabilisation for your long, smooth lines, or decrease it for shading, hatching or any fuzzy bits in your work! **Kei-Ella Loewe**

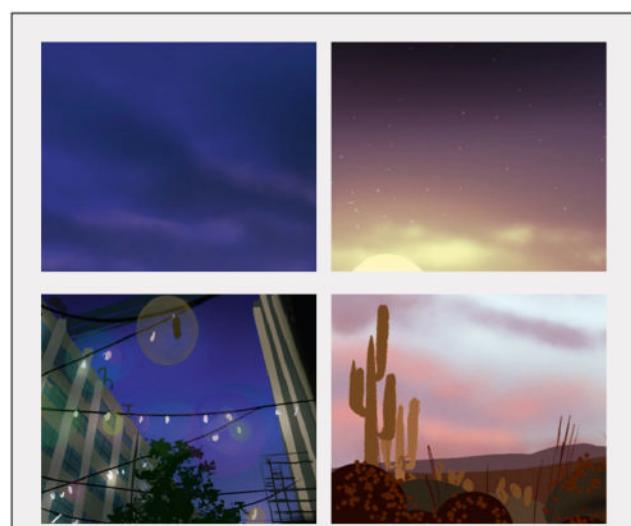
7 CREATE MOODBOARDS

Moodboards are image collages of artworks that inspire you, or reference images! This is usually my first step as it helps create a vision and aids in my research. I make a new Procreate file and merge the inspirational art together to make the reference while I work. **Kate Correa**



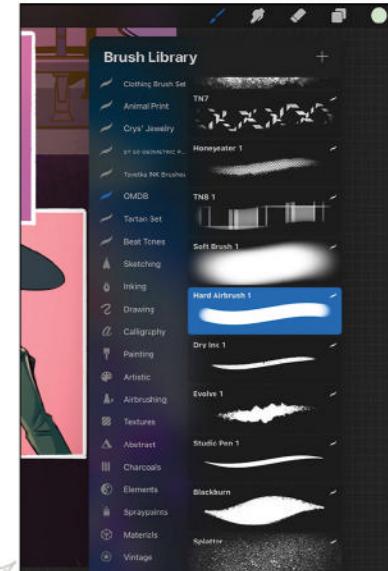
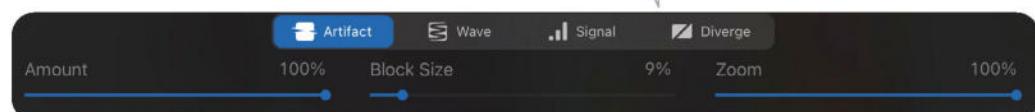
9 DISCOVER GRADIENT MAPS

The Gradient Map offers a powerful method of colouring layers. It takes the shadows, mid-tones and highlights of the layer, and allows you to assign a colour per value. You can add more colour stops to fine-tune which colours affect which values; perfect for colouring black and white pieces! The tool even lets you save your gradient maps. **Mygel Edoloverio**



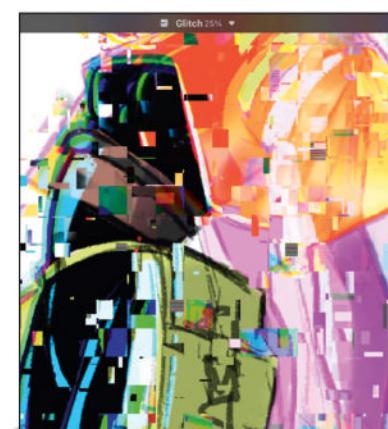
12 MAKE THUMBNAILS

I start with small, loose sketches. Then I use simple shapes like triangles, circles and squares to block out the thumbnail to help figure out my composition, and create varieties of colour thumbnails. It helps to create simple palettes (maximum five colours) to avoid overthinking the process. **Kate Correa**



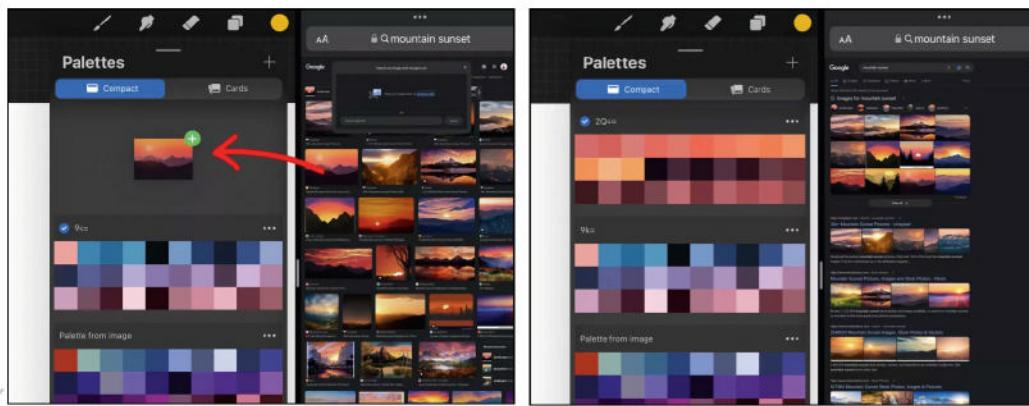
10 ENSURE CONSISTENT BRUSH SELECTIONS

When working on a book project, I usually limit the amount of brushes used to avoid being overwhelmed, but also for consistency in rendering. Even though the brushes are already available in the library, I like to create a new section and paste all the brushes I need so I don't lose time looking for them! **Sweeney Boo**



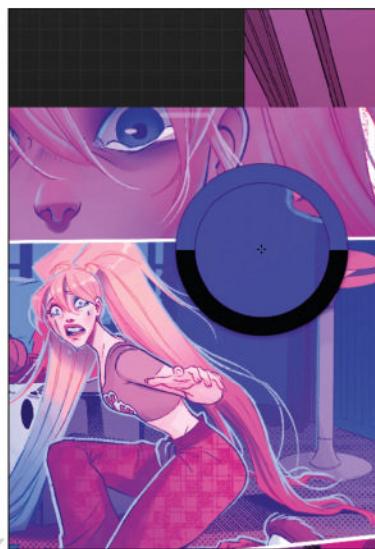
13 THE GLITCH EFFECT

In the Adjustments section, there are some great tools available. The Glitch adjustment will take your layer and make it look like it's glitching out! If you're drawing a broken screen, a video game character or whatnot, it's super handy and fun. But outside of that, it also just looks extremely cool! **Sweeney Boo**



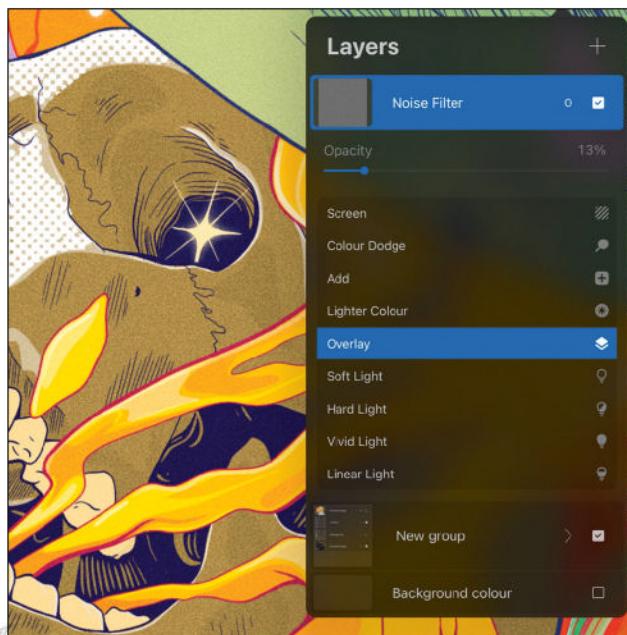
14 CREATE CUSTOM PALETTES

When it comes to palette options, Procreate has plenty on offer for artists. One of the coolest tips allows creatives to import any image from Google directly into the app, and Procreate will then turn it into a custom colour palette. As another fun method, you can also import your own palette directly from an image taken with the camera on your iPad. Handy!



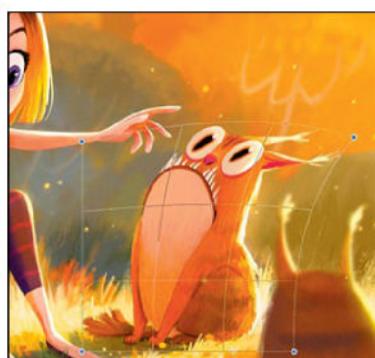
15 SIMPLE SAMPLING

Speaking on sampling colours, you can simply hold a finger on the colour in question, and Procreate will automatically sample it for you. This quick process avoids so many extra steps of having to click on buttons and tabs like other drawing softwares require. **Sweeney Boo**



16 ADD A NOISE FILTER

I always add a noise filter at the end of my process to give my artworks a vintage, organic feel. Make a new layer, then go to **Adjustments>Noise**, and drag your finger across the screen to make it 100 per cent. I usually use the noise layer at plus or minus 13 per cent opacity on an Overlay layer. **Kei-Ella Loewe**



17 WARP TRANSFORM MODE

Procreate also has a Warp transform mode. With up to 16 adjustable nodes and intuitive depth layering, Warp can be used in conjunction with the Freeform and Distort transform modes to create precise and powerful changes in your work.



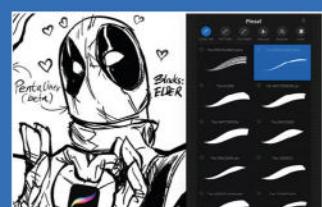
20 TOP PROCREATE BRUSH PACKS CONTINUED...



Procreate Lettering and Paint Brushes

Price: \$9 personal / \$14 commercial
<https://bit.ly/3lnqCH9>

This collection from Petra Makes of StudioBurg is an essential package. It includes a selection of brushes that cover most basic illustration and graphic design needs.



Comic Ink Brush Set

Price: Pay what you want
<https://bit.ly/420nnAI>

Georg's pack of Procreate brushes is a tribute to the American comic book illustrator Will Elder, who helped launch MAD comics in the 1950s. It's a perfect addition for any illustrator and a must for budding comic artists.



Pencil and Charcoal Brushes

Price: \$9 personal / \$14 commercial
<https://bit.ly/3MFwqyA>

Swiss designer Kim (AKA MiksKS) has a whole bunch of brilliant brushes. This collection makes it easy to sketch on the go, whether with clients or just to capture a moment in a coffee shop.



Flora: Vegetation Brushes

Price: Pay what you want
<https://bit.ly/3MnELW1>

Matthew Baldwin's collection of vegetation brushes is great for any concept artist, enabling them to instantly set a scene and master the painterly effect digitally. ➡

EXPERT GUIDE TO GESTURES

Learn these vital shortcuts to save time on your next Procreate project



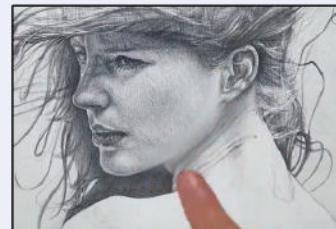
18 PINCH TO ZOOM AND ROTATE

Ever since the smartphone became a part of our everyday lives, so has pinching to zoom in and out. Procreate adds an extra twist on this pinch gesture by rotating your image when you spin your two fingers around in a circular motion.



19 QUICK-PINCH

Every artist needs to step back and see the entire picture every now and then. Painting with Procreate is no different, except it requires only a quick-pinch to fit your canvas to the screen. For the best results, try lifting your fingers from the screen at the end of the gesture.



20 PAINT, SMUDGE AND ERASE

Some gestures are so intuitive we instinctively know how they work. If ever you've used Procreate without an Apple Pencil, you'll know that tapping the Paint, Smudge or Erase tool, then touching your canvas is the first place to start.



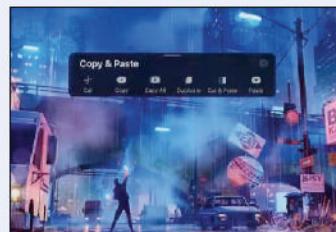
21 TWO-FINGER TAP TO UNDO

Tapping with two fingers to undo has become so ingrained with Procreate users that some even forget it doesn't work in all apps. Procreate can undo up to 250 actions. To undo a series of actions, you can tap and hold two fingers on the canvas.



22 SINGLE TOUCH GESTURES

Imagine being able to perform these gestures with a single tap. Single Touch Gestures are great if you prefer simpler gestures or have limited mobility. To activate these, go to iPadOS Settings>Procreate and toggle Single Touch Gestures Companion on.



23 THREE-FINGER SWIPE DOWN TO CUT, COPY, AND PASTE

The Copy & Paste Companion performs Cut, Copy, Copy All, Duplicate, Cut & Paste, and Paste actions. Perform a three-finger swipe downwards on your canvas to bring it up, and tap the 'X' to cancel it.



24 THREE-FINGER SCRUB TO CLEAR

Sometimes you just want to empty a layer of its contents to start afresh. No problem! Simply place three fingers on the canvas and gesture left and right to scrub out the contents of that particular layer, literally wiping the slate clean.



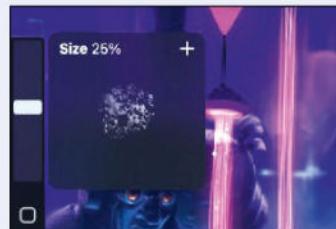
25 THREE-FINGER TAP TO REDO

The opposite of the two-finger tap is tapping with three fingers to redo. It's a great way to flick between recent actions when deciding if you want to keep them. Just like undoing, holding three fingers on your canvas will cycle through up to 250 actions.



26 FOUR-FINGER TAP FOR FULL SCREEN

Like to work with just a brush and zero distractions? That's precisely what full-screen mode is for! Turn it on with a quick four-finger tap. Perform another four-finger tap to bring the interface back, or tap the full-screen indicator in the top-left corner.



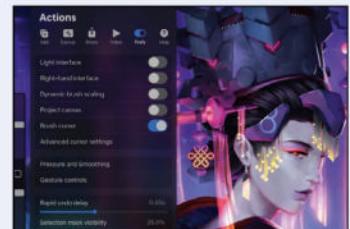
27 PRECISION SLIDERS

All sliders in Procreate are easy to understand and use. As you slide up or down the brush sliders, so does the Size or Opacity of the brush. If you hold the slider and drag your finger sideways, the increments of the slider become more precise as you slide up or down.



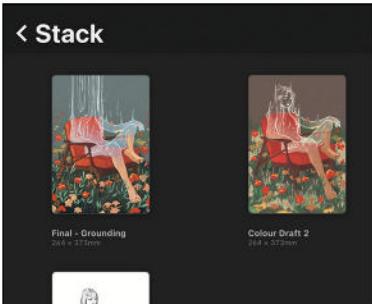
28 TAP-AND-HOLD GESTURES

Procreate comes with tap-and-hold gestures that aren't obvious, but handy cutting down time spent in menus. For example, you can tap and hold Active Color to swap between your current and previous colour, among other options.



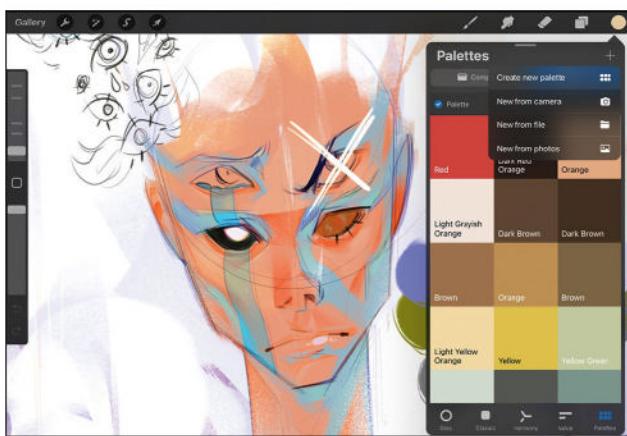
29 CUSTOMISING YOUR OWN GESTURES

The Gesture Controls panel is where shortcuts can be modified for a variety of tools throughout Procreate. To open the Gesture Controls panel tap Actions>Prefs>Gesture Controls. Options include setting multiple shortcuts for the same function.



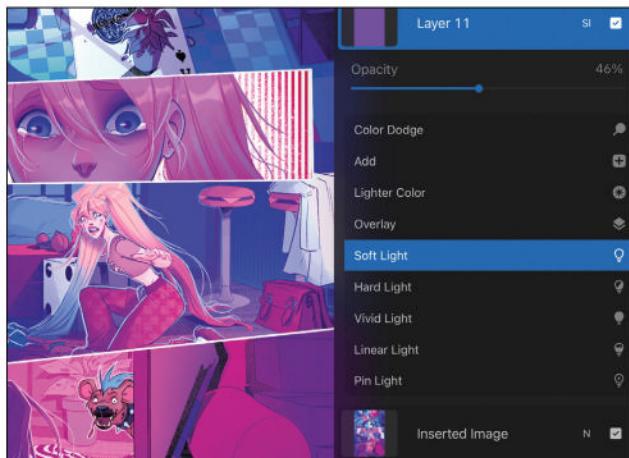
30 WORK NON-DESTRUCTIVELY

Use a Mask layer to add and erase while keeping the original layer intact. I even duplicate my entire canvas between stages in case I want to go back to a previous version, giving me more freedom to experiment. **Kei-Ella Loewe**



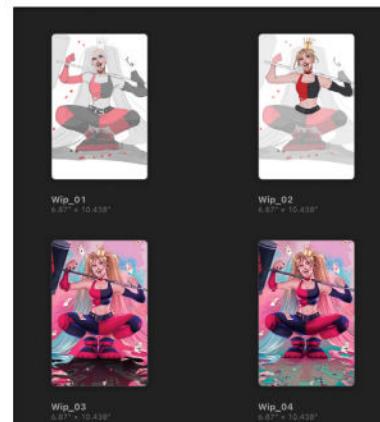
31 PALETTE PROWESS

Palettes are a great way to have all the colours you need in one easily accessible spot. You can make a new one from scratch and fill it out as you go, with various options for creating palettes from other sources too. **Mygel Edoloverio**



32 COLOUR EXPERIMENTS

I love playing with the Layer options when I colour, let's say I'm done with a piece but not entirely sure of the colouring. I'll paint an entire new layer with a flat colour, like blue, purple, or maybe even a gradient, then click on the Layer options and play around with Darken, Color Burn, Linear Burn and so on, as well as their opacities. If I like an option, I keep it, and repeat with other colours until I'm satisfied. **Sweeney Boo**



33 LAYER LIMITATIONS

Depending on the resolution of your canvas, Procreate has a limited amount of layers. This could make it hard for those who like to keep their process unflattened for rework and notes. I prefer to save file iterations throughout in a format such as WIP 1, WIP 2, and so on. **Sweeney Boo**

34 COLOR HARMONY

Procreate's Color Harmony tool is great for figuring out colour schemes. With modes for complementary, split complementary, analogous, triadic, and tetradic colour schemes, you just pick a colour, and the tool figures out the rest from your choices! It's useful when you're still in the process of choosing your piece's overall colour scheme. **Mygel Edoloverio**



20 TOP PROCREATE BRUSH PACKS CONTINUED...



Gouache Paintbox

Price: \$12 personal / \$15 commercial
<https://bit.ly/3OIVAnB>

Lisa Bardot has a few brush packs available on her site, but her gouache pack is especially unique. Another excellent gouache brush pack, this one can help you emulate Mary Blair's classic Disney magic digitally.



Brushes and Foil Textures

Price: \$14 personal / \$17 commercial
<https://bit.ly/2xVSNv5>

If you're designing event flyers or wedding invites, Summit Avenue has you covered with this set of 12 confetti brushes and 24 foil and glitter textures. Perfect for adding a touch of sparkle.



Procreate Paint Box

Price: \$12 personal / \$15 commercial
<https://bit.ly/3Oh64nD>

Ben Lew's Paint Box pack has an excellent selection of brushes, from wet pencil to bristly brush and his go-to watercolour 'Gwosh'. He has updated the set with four pastel brushes from his Pastellesque set too!

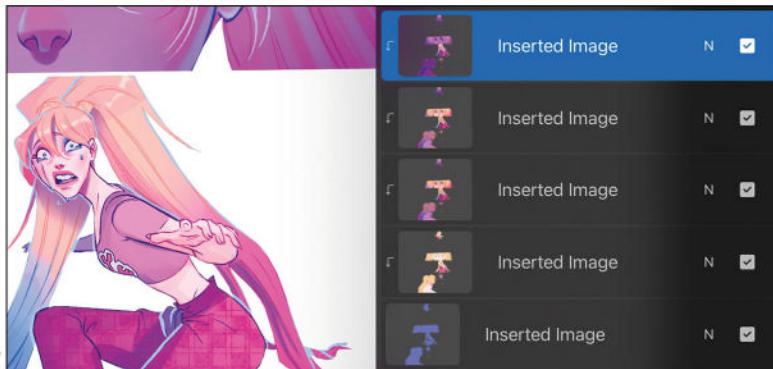


Splash Vol.1

Price: Free (but donations welcome)
<https://bit.ly/3Mdb58L>

Artist Matthew Baldwin describes his Splash Vol.1 Procreate brushes as "so splashy you'll have to have a towel handy!" The bumper set of 48 wet media brushes injects a splash of wet and watercolour effects. ➡

Workshops

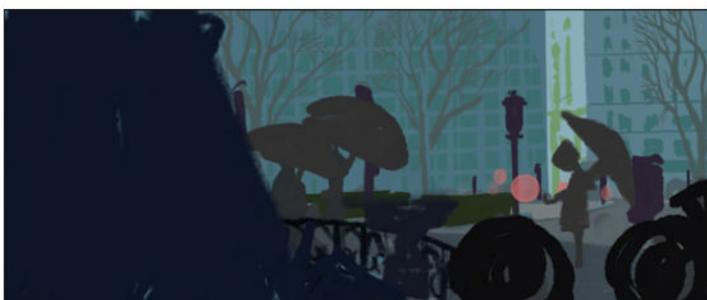
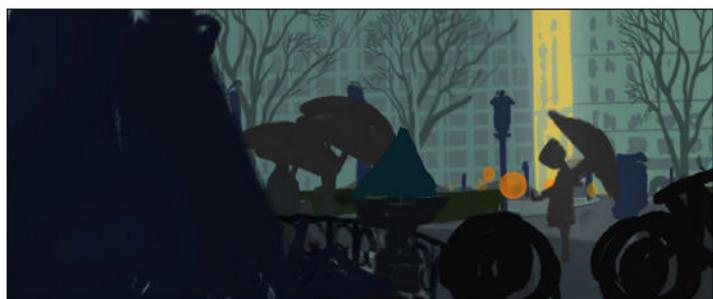
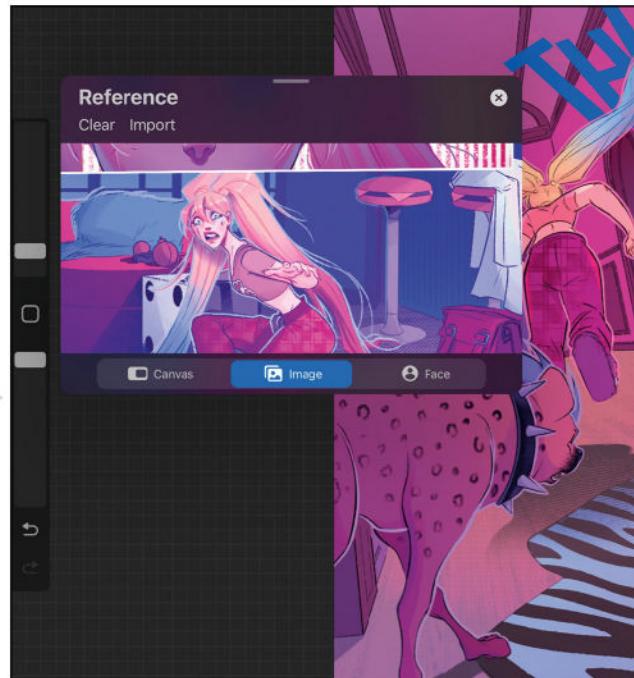


35 DEVELOPING SHAPES

When I colour, I usually start by creating a flat shape. I'll then create new layers that I'll attach by using the Clipping Mask option. That way, any new layer of rendering will be attached to that one shape, and there will be no spillage or going outside the shape to worry about as you develop it. [Sweeney Boo](#)

36 ADD A REFERENCE

A lot of us like to have references available when we draw. Procreate has a tool for that in the Actions section, where you simply enable Reference. This opens a tiny window you can move around and resize as you'd like. You can then import the image you need, and even sample colours from it. [Sweeney Boo](#)



37 VALUES ARE IMPORTANT!

Create a new layer and make it fully black, set it as your top layer, and place it in Saturation mode. Here you have an instant black and white filter to check your values. While in the black and white filter, use the 'Hue, Saturation, Brightness' mode to experiment with any layer that has incorrect values and experiment with all the sliders. Once satisfied with a good value, turn off the filter, and you'll see results you never imagined trying. [Kate Correa](#)

38 TURN ON THE 2D GRID

If you want to make sure your work is in proportion, the 2D Grid is the way to go. Perfect for keeping your 2D shapes in hand, the grid also helps to align your strokes. The grid is highly customisable; you can set its size, position and rotation, alongside tweaking its colour, opacity and thickness to ensure that it doesn't get in the way while working on your image.

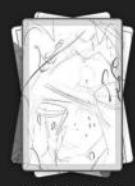
Procreate



Personal Sketches
2 artworks



HarleyQuinn_#29_Colors
4 artworks



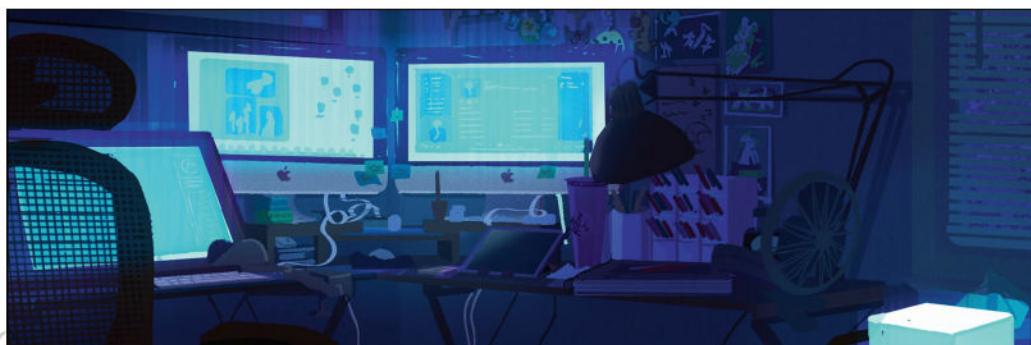
HarleyQuinn_Layouts
32 artworks

39 IMAGE STACKS

Our Procreate interface can easily get crowded with all those drawings that we have in progress at any given time. You can easily select multiple ones and drag them on top of another, which will create a Stack, essentially a folder, that you can then rename. By using this tool, you can categorise all of your projects with ease! [Sweeney Boo](#)

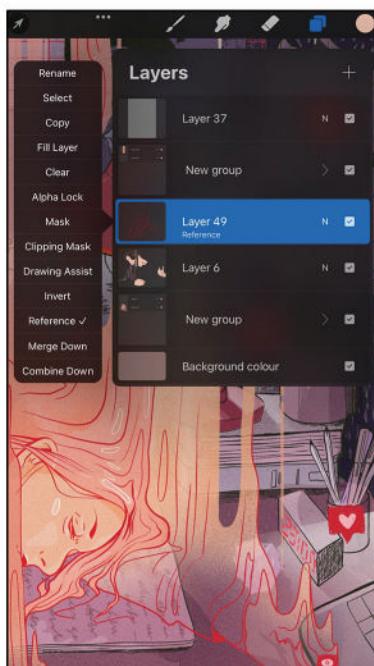
40 FEEDBACK SOUNDS

One of the lesser-known features in Procreate is the Feedback Sounds option. This will emit audio feedback based on your inputs, such as a clicking noise when drawing out an area with the Select tool, followed by a ding when you complete your selection. Feedback Sounds are one example of the accessibility features in Procreate, in this case helping artists with visual impairments.



42 KEEP YOUR WORK ROUGH

It helps to set a timer for 30-60 minutes to get the raw motion and looseness of your artwork. I also love to zoom out from my canvas to focus on the composition, so that I don't overwork the smaller details, and put my brush into larger sizes to get big, rough textures. **Kate Correa**

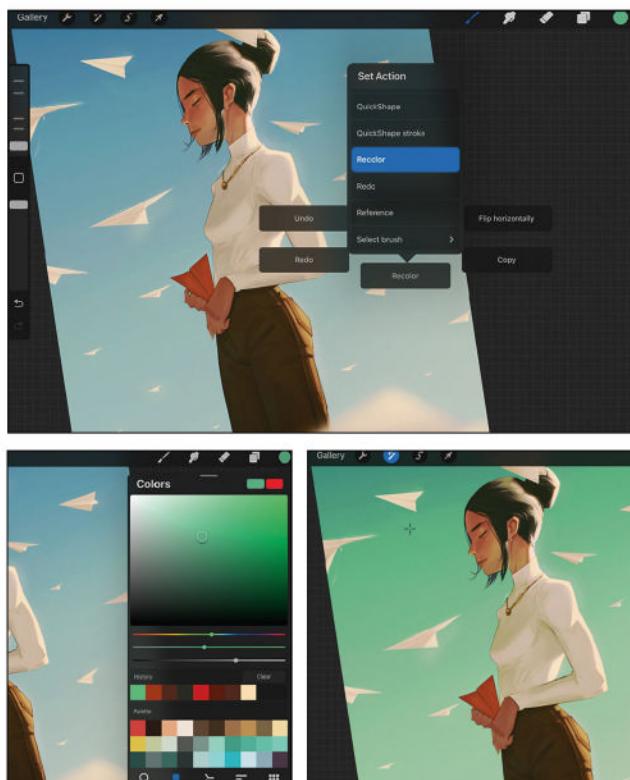


43 USE A REFERENCE LAYER OPTION FOR EASIER FILLING

To create fills or shape layers in seconds, select your line work layer then select the Reference layer option. Then, in a new layer, drag and drop in colour. Click Continue Filling at the top of the screen and keep tapping the areas that you want to fill. **Kei-Ella Loewe**

41 GROUP LAYERS

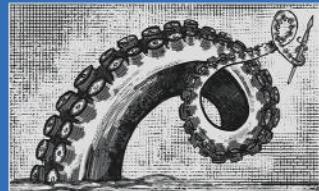
To select multiple layers and organise them into a group, slide each to the right one by one, then press Group on the top of the menu. This helps a lot when you have a complicated artwork with hundreds of layers. You can also use it for your animations. **Alexandra Zutto**



44 RECOLOR TOOL

Looking to swap out a specific colour on your layer? In the QuickMenu overlay, you can bring back the Recolor tool by assigning it to one of the outer bubbles by long-pressing them. Recolor is highly flexible, as playing with the Flood value determines how much the tool will influence your selection's neighbouring colours. **Mygel Edoloverio**

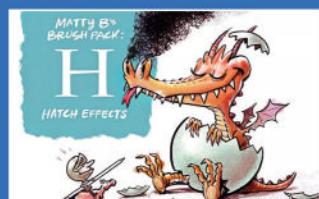
20 TOP PROCREATE BRUSH PACKS CONTINUED...



Vintage Engraving

Price: \$7
<https://bit.ly/3MeZ870>

Another Procreate brush set from MiksKS, this one allows you to capture the look of a black and white engraving. You can combine a few for a classic cross-hatching effect, and pick from a worn-out or clean-cut style.



MattyB's Hatch Effects

Price: Pay what you want
<https://bit.ly/3MB5sqD>

This fantastic brush pack from MattyB offers all sorts for the budding or professional illustrator. Lines, dots, scribbles, marks; if you can name it, it's covered in this pack, with a total of 35 different brushes included.



Nikko's Brushes

Price: Free
<https://bit.ly/3pWkUph>

The well-respected Procreate digital artist Nikolai Locktersen has made his own five favourite custom brushes available to download. Also check out his site to see the phenomenal artwork he's created with this small set of tools.



Sketch and Ink

Price: \$10
<https://bit.ly/459BXoa>

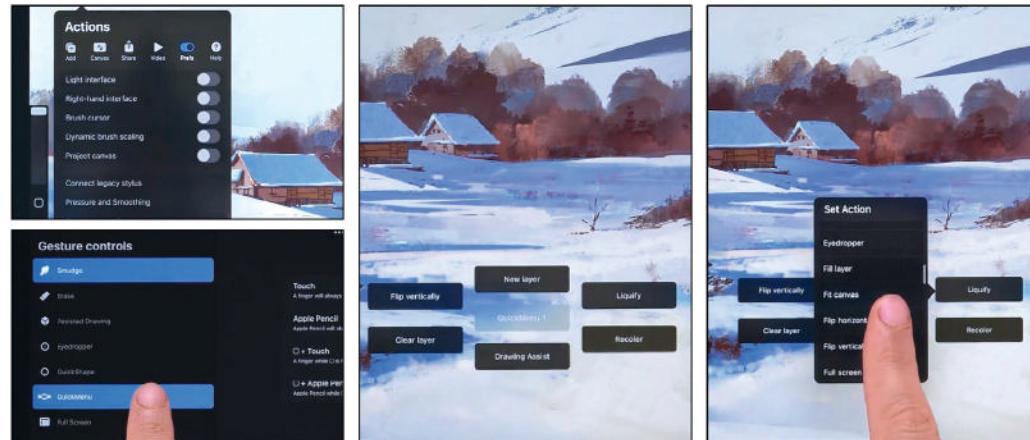
This selection of nine brushes from DizzyTara includes a variety of shaped ink pens as well as a board marking brush. It's a great little package of inky brushes to try out for all of your sketching endeavours. ➡

SHORTCUT YOUR WAY TO SUCCESS

Discover six nifty tricks to complete your arsenal of Procreate options

45 CUSTOMISE YOUR PROCREATE SHORTCUTS TO THE WAY YOU WORK

QuickMenu is Procreate's secret weapon for setting up shortcuts to all your favourite actions at the flick of a finger. Although it has been a feature for some time, many don't realise it's waiting to upgrade your Procreate experience. QuickMenu features a fully customisable six-button radial menu, which you can set to your most used actions for instant activation without ever leaving the canvas. Best of all, you can set up multiple QuickMenus for your various workflows such as sketching, inking, colouring, or any other regularly performed tasks.



A Go to Actions>Prefs>Gesture Controls>QuickMenu to set a gesture to activate your QuickMenu.

B Return to your canvas and perform your chosen gesture to activate your newly prepared QuickMenu.

C With the QuickMenu activated, tap and hold any of the six buttons to select and assign an action.

46 FLIP AND DRAW WITH PAGE ASSIST

Page Assist is a great tool for sketching ideas, taking notes, life drawing, scrapbooking and comic creation in Procreate. It's ideal for conceiving and ideation, or for those wanting to turn an iPad into their own personal art journal or comic creation tool. Following up from our last tip, combining Page Assist with the QuickMenu creates a classic sketchbook flow with the feeling of finishing one idea, then flipping straight over to a new page to get started with the next completely uninterrupted. This can be achieved in two straightforward steps.



A Head over to Actions>Canvas and toggle the Page Assist option on to change any of your Procreate documents into this satisfying flipbook style format.

B Add the Next Page and Previous Page shortcuts to QuickMenu. With this, you can now flip through and add pages without having to touch your timeline or layers panel.

47 CREATE THE PERFECT SHAPE OR LINE YOU NEED WITH QUICKSHAPE

This one is good for instant and precise shape and line making. The QuickShape tool feels like magic every time it snaps those rough, hand-drawn lines and shapes into perfect forms in the blink of an eye. Beyond that, the tool also provides options to further fine-tune your shapes just the way you need them. Give it a go!



A To get started, draw a line or shape of your choice and then hold down on the canvas. The stroke will now snap into a perfectly formed line, arc, poly-line, ellipse, triangle or quadrilateral shape.

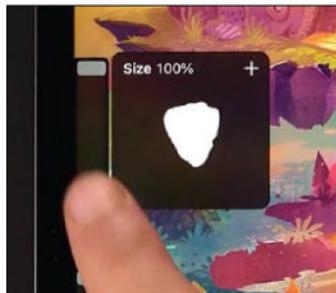
B Keep holding on the canvas, then drag to scale or rotate your shape or line. You can also hold a second finger on the canvas while dragging to rotate the equilateral shape in 15-degree increments.

C After you've lifted away from the canvas to create the shape, you can tap Edit Shape in the notification bar. Various shape options and transform nodes will appear for further adjustments.

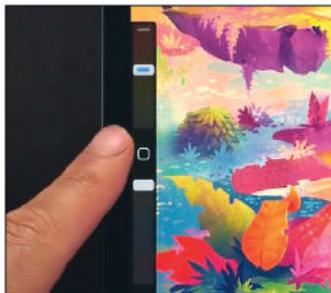
48 SET AND FORGET WITH THE BRUSH SIZE MEMORY OPTION

Consistent brush size and opacity settings are vital when outlining or inking, and you can easily achieve this by having your favourite settings for your go-to brushes ready using Brush Size Memory. Represented as small horizontal marks on the brush slider, these settings mean you can maintain perfect stroke consistency, return to a

piece at a later date with the brush size and opacity settings intact, or even carry them across to a completely new canvas. Because you're never working on just one project, you can save up to four of these memory settings for every brush in your library. Brush Size Memory is just like your favourite collection of fine-liner or brush pens that come in a pack of different sizes, but it's available at a single flick of a finger.



A Tap the light grey marker on the Brush Size/Opacity sidebar, and tap the '+' in the top-right to memorise.



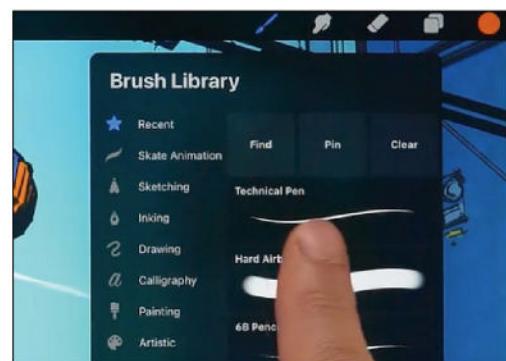
B Tap, slide or flick up or down near the memory marks to quickly switch between the settings.



C Now you can reproduce consistent line weights and opacities while you work on your next piece.

49 GET YOUR FAVOURITE AND RECENT BRUSHES

Finding your go-to brushes as you add more packs to your library is a challenge, as is trying to remember the fifth-last brush you picked up when experimenting. However, locating your favourite brushes can be fast and simple. At the top of the Brush Library is the Recent Brushes folder, where you'll find your eight most recently used brushes.



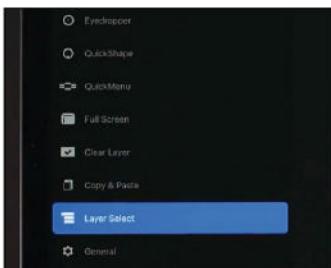
50 FIND LAYERS WITHOUT ENTERING THE LAYER PANEL

Layers have become ubiquitous in digital art, helping artists separate their compositions into complex yet relatively easy-to-manage pieces. But every digital artist also knows layers can be tricky when it comes to finding where an individual piece of the puzzle sits within a layer

stack, especially if that object happens to sit hidden in a grouped layer. And this is where Procreate's Layer Select comes in handy. Layer Select is a shortcut that finds any layer without having to open the Layers Panel, even if it sits buried among a collapsed group layer. Handiest of all, it does this with a simple finger touch or tap of an Apple Pencil.



A To get started, tap Actions>Prefs>Gesture Controls>Layer Select.



B The next step is to toggle on a Layer Select shortcut. A strong choice for this is the Modify button plus touch.



C Use your preferred gesture to tap an area of your canvas. This will display the layer that part of your artwork exists on as a small pop-up.

20 TOP PROCREATE BRUSH PACKS CONTINUED...



Dry Marker Brushes

Price: \$10 personal / \$14 commercial
<https://bit.ly/3pVpofQ>

There's nothing better than the comfort of an effortless dry marker look, right? This brush pack, created by Latin Vibe, gives you 12 stunning brushes inspired by dry markers to try out in your next Procreate session.



Magdalina Dianova's Brush Pack

Price: Minimum \$5
<https://bit.ly/3oJkrQ>

A range of soft pencils to rough inking brushes, as well as a little bonus brush for you to play around with at the end! Magdalina's pack is great for your sketching and line work needs.



Texturific Bundle

Price: \$18 personal / \$22 commercial
<https://bit.ly/3MDuEhj>

Featuring 30 shaders, 14 liners and 14 pastels, Lisa Bardot's Texturific Bundle is packed with wonderfully textured brushes that can help you create all kinds of effects and art styles, without having to go near a pen and paper.



The Retro MaxPack

Price: \$25
<https://bit.ly/3M9b8HO>

The Procreate master's pack of 70 brushes features an eclectic mix of nostalgia. Included are a variety of pencils, inks and pastels, a host of new gouache brushes and sponges, and some versatile grungy texture brushes.

Technique focus

CONTROL YOUR FOCUS

Luiz Prado shares his techniques for reinforcing an image's key focal points

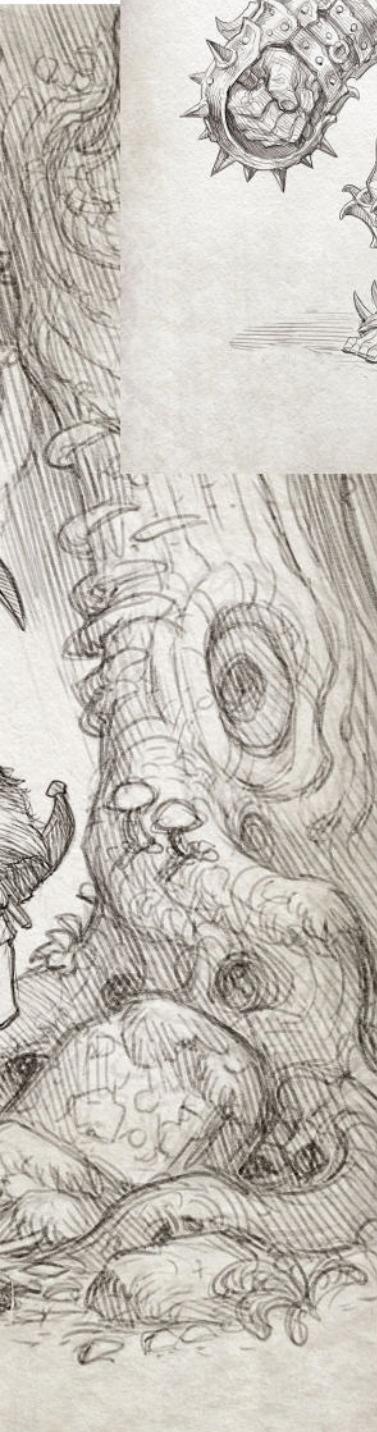
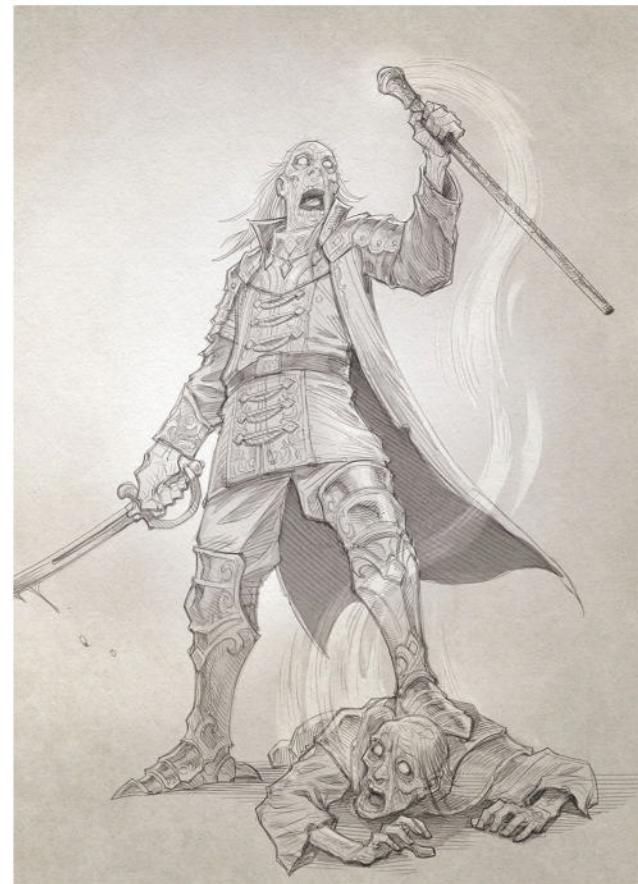


"It all starts with a strong idea. Usually I draw loose thumbnail doodles to get a feeling of how to translate what's in my mind into the concept, all thinking about the themes of the design. What elements can I bring in that would tell the story behind the concept? After all, you want people to be able to learn the history behind your art when

they see it. As for technical approaches, it's always better in the drawing phase to work from light to dark. You want to be able to control the areas of focus by reinforcing them with stronger and sharper lines. Keep your lines working in your favour to suggest volume and textures. Apply most of these in your focal points and allow them to get more loose in the peripheral areas. Most of all, have fun exploring."



Tech Focus Key focal points



Artist PROFILE
Luiz Prado
LOCATION: Brazil

Luiz Prado is a self-taught artist who is inspired by comics and games. After graduating from college, he decided to pursue an artistic career while working in an unsatisfying day job and working on side commissions.
<https://bit.ly/3LWWiFY>

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Traditional Artist

Inspiration and advice from the best pro artists

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FXPosé

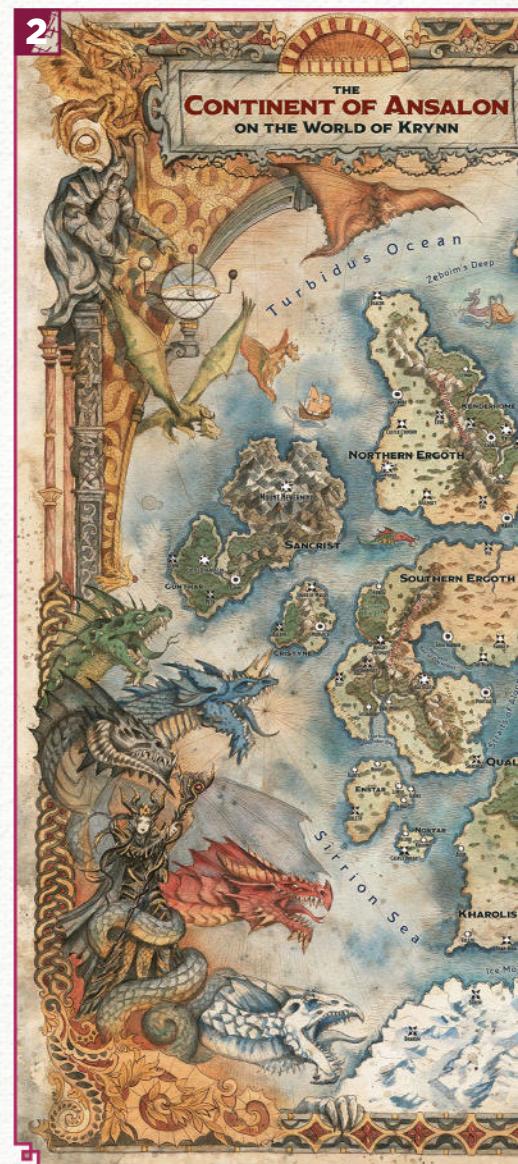
SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS



Francesca Baerald

LOCATION: Italy MEDIA: Pencils, ink, watercolours, acrylic, oil WEB: www.francescabaerald.com

Francesca's home country of Italy is the perfect place to find inspiration, both in terms of history and nature. "I'm always looking forward to my next adventure!"



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1 KALIMDOR

"I spent days and nights playing World of Warcraft. You can imagine my joy when I was asked to draw the lands of Azeroth! I truly enjoyed revisiting all those places."

2 ANSALON

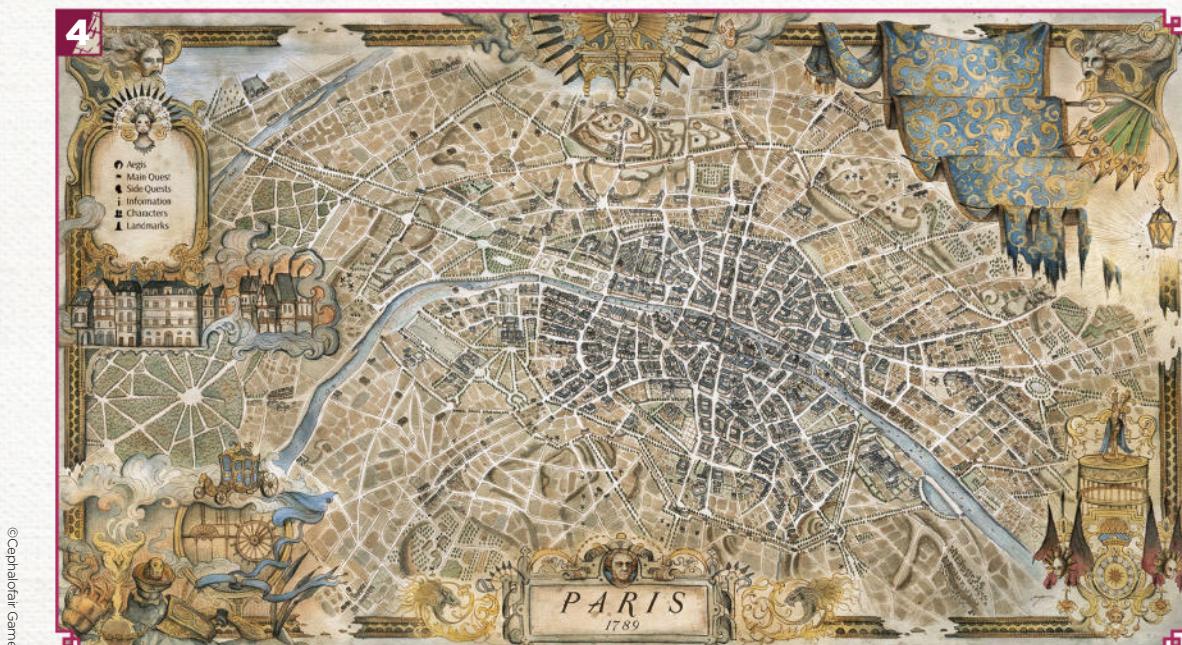
"Drawing DnD dragons is always a joy, but doing it for Dragonlance is even better! I'm so fond of the setting Weis and Hickman created, it has sparked my creativity since I was young."

3 GLOOMHAVEN

"Sometimes games like Gloomhaven have the power of linking together thousands of people. I had the freedom to interpret the map in my style, it was fantastic."

4 STEELRISING PARIS

"Steelrising has such an intriguing visual style, mixing revolutionary France with mechanical designs. It was fascinating to merge these aspects of the game in my map of Paris."



©Wizards of the Coast

©Cephafair Games

©Spiders



Kacey Lynn Brown

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Graphite, watercolour, ink WEB: www.instagram.com/untroubledheart

Kacey is an illustrator with a fondness for all things fairy tale and fantastical. She is greatly inspired by the natural world and seeks to bring its beauty into each of her imaginative creatures.



1 ROSE FLOWER FAE

"These faeries have human features for relatability, but also contain a creature-like spirit. It's a fun challenge to combine the elements of flower and 'human' in a pleasing way."

2 IRIS FLOWER FAE

"Faeries take the meaning of flower crowns to a whole new level! An iris is an impressive flower, I wanted to capture the grand effect of its beauty."

3 MUM FLOWER FAE

"I love the idea of faerie beings existing in the most common places, such as a flower garden. This concept inspired me to create a series of flower faeries."

4 MARIGOLD FLOWER FAE

"At first glance, these creatures appear simply as beautiful blooms, but on closer inspection, the magic is revealed. I imagine them floating gently among the other wildflowers."

3



4



Pencil

VISUALISE EMOTIONS WITH GRAPHITE

NADAV YACOBI (AKA SPECTREIV) shares his method of creative expression, building up a unique character from initial experimentation with simple shapes

For me, drawing is the most straightforward way to experiment, explore, and dare to create something I would not have tried otherwise, without being judged or criticised. This drawing is an example of that. I had an idea in mind but also had a 30-day deadline. My intentions were to focus on Nyx, the Greek goddess of the night

and first child of Chaos. Thinking about what a 'night goddess' and 'child of Chaos' mean to me led me to visualise a figure in the night sky, with the moon behind her. I also wanted to surround her with an air of mystery and ethereal feelings.

I started drawing shapes on paper, keeping my intentions in mind, guiding my shapes and flow of the marks and lines I created. Then, with

a process of trial and error, the image slowly builds up, until I start to focus on more specific details and finishing touches. The final outcome is the result of having fun with the process of drawing.



Nadav Yacobi is an independent artist creating fantasy art based on real-life experiences, stories and emotions. www.instagram.com/spectre.iv

Step-by-step: Explore unique character design



1 SIMPLE SHAPES

My love for design really shows here! I try to draw simple shapes to catch the attention of the viewer, and to ensure they're easy to understand from a distance (like a thumbnail test for readability). Shape exploration can often be as large as a piece of printer paper, or just a small doodle on a notebook. An interesting shape is an idea that can go far for big projects, as well as small ones.



2 COMPOSITION AND FLOW

With the shapes done, I tend to use pencil marks to adjust the elements of the whole 'picture' I build. If I add a circle, it can focus the attention in one place, or if I put a mark in a rather clean area, it can shift the flow of the drawing to a specific area. I try to look at the whole drawing and think hard about how to build harmony, in order to balance with the heavily detailed areas I plan to have later.



3 FOCUS POINTS AND LEADING ELEMENTS

Who doesn't like details? It's probably the most fun part of the drawing for me, making everything more defined and bold. I think about which elements are the most important for me to show and make them bold, like the face. Then I envision invisible lines that can help lead the viewer's eye to it, making areas bolder and clearer, like the hands, the edges of the horns, and feet.



Traditional Artist Workshops

In-depth: Key compositional details

The face

Wherever there is a face, it will catch people's attention. This is my main reason for adding a face here, as a main focal point. We can make sense of what we see here as a figure and not an abstract shape. When drawing with an expression mindset, I try hard to give visual clues for familiar objects that I intend to show.

Horn elements

I searched for secondary elements to complement the story and add interest. The horns are composition elements to enhance the face area, but also echo a crescent moon shape.

Chest and forms

When working with black and white, I think of values as a way to help emphasise forms. Here, the brighter chest area is intended to show it as a closer object to the eye than the area surrounding it, which is darker and more distant.

Moon expression

As an important secondary element for the story in this drawing, I wanted to show a moon as a circular shape, but not as clear as a circular line. I drew an area that is circular and bright over a darker area, which complements the figure as well.

Simple, seamless shapes

I tried to think of a way to show a shape without adding much attention to it. Clean, gradual shading can do that job just right.

Fading effect

Trying to express 'fading' with a pencil is something I like to experiment with, as it's a hard and dry media without many soft qualities. I figured that fewer lines and less density can show the effect of fading away or dissolving, which I made here.

Texture decorations

Drawing a heavily textured area shows more interest in a place, like a dress with decorations. I draw it slowly, letting the paper texture show, and emphasise it with darker lines.

MATERIALS

PAPER

■ Fabriano 1264, 180gsm paper

PENCILS

■ Faber-Castell 8B
■ Mechanical pencil, 2mm 8B lead
■ Mechanical pencil, 0.5mm 2B lead

ERASERS

■ Kneaded eraser
■ Tombow Mono Zero 2.3mm eraser

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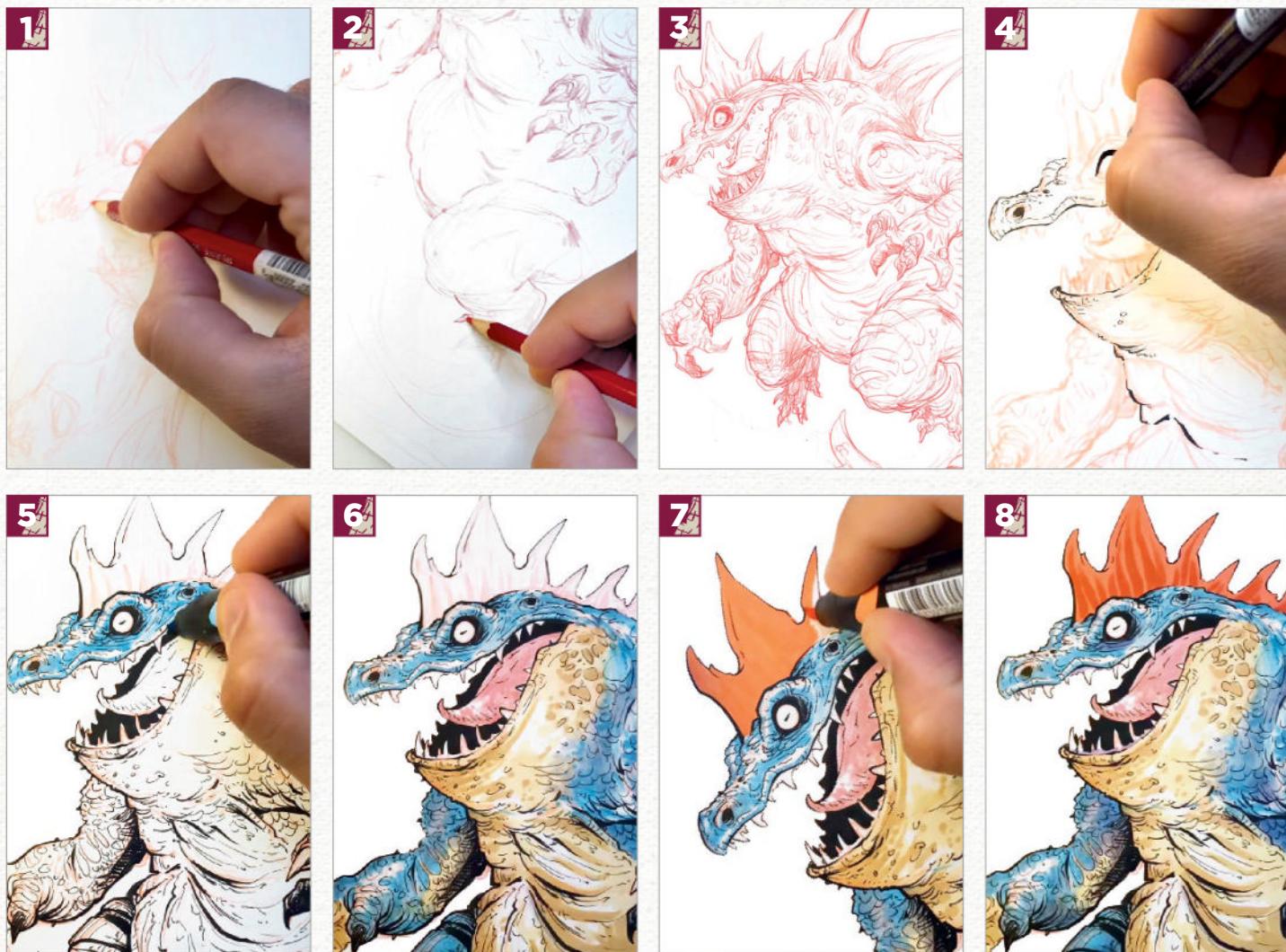
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Traditional Artist Workshop



Technique focus

FIND THE RIGHT TOOLS

LEONARDO GONZALEZ explains why specific pens and pencils are so important to his creative process, including his Pokémon fan art

This piece features my interpretation of the final evolution of one of the best Generation II starter Pokémons: Feraligatr. For these fan art pieces, I try my best not to do a complete overhaul of the creature's design because, honestly, they're iconic and perfect already!

I begin every doodle by using a red coloured pencil, either a Col-Erase Prismacolor or a Ticonderoga. Using red allows me to quickly build my illustration without creating a huge mess on the paper. I can quickly map

out the composition of the doodle, anatomy, perspective, lighting and textures without having too much build-up just as long as I work lightly. For any erasing, I'll use a regular kneaded eraser that my dog hopefully hasn't stolen or chewed, as he's quite a sneaky pooch!

Another advantage of the red pencil is that it allows me to ink right over the drawing without smudging or clogging my inking pens. Once the pencil stage has been completed, I'll begin inking using a Zebra disposable fine-tip brush pen.

Thanks to this pen, I can achieve both thick and thin lines, and once the fine tip wears after lots of use, they are great for making bold lines. After the inking is all finished up, I'll then break out my Prismacolor markers, watercolours, or acrylics to colour in the doodle.



Leonardo 'LaGonza' Gonzalez
is a freelance
illustrator and tattoo artist
working at Clockwork Tattoo
& Art Gallery in Connecticut, and has a
deep love for monsters. You can see more
of his work at www.lagonza.com.



First Impressions

Danica Sills

Painter and illustrator Danica takes us on her artistic journey



Where did you grow up, and in what ways has this influenced your art?

I moved around a lot growing up. That was such a huge motivation for me to immerse myself in my art, it gave me a feeling of home and identity no matter how alone or new I felt. I was perpetually the new kid growing up and painfully shy. Creating art gave me an identity; I wasn't just the new girl, I was the new girl who could draw.

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

Nature for sure! I don't think it's terribly obvious in my work but being out in the world taught me to see the beauty everywhere. The smallest moment could spark new ideas for emotions, colours and compositions for my work.

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

My very first paid artwork was actually a poster contest I won way back in junior high! That was the moment that sparked my love for reaching out to others with my art. I wouldn't say I was particularly gifted as a kid but it did show me that if I push myself to practise, art could be my future.

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

“The smallest moment could spark new ideas for emotions, colours and compositions”



HOSTSKULL
Oil, 8 x 10in. This character was created with the simple goal to make me happy. I combined some of my favourite elements and colours.

I'm pleased to say that I've made a lot more progress from my art way back then! My most recent painting is my Skull King Echo painting. In a lot of ways they're similar, at least at the heart of creating them. My recent pieces I've been really pushing myself to find the same joy of exploration and growth that I had when I was younger. I've been

pushing myself to find the perfect combination of characters, colours and emotions to spark that same hunger to create like I had as a kid.

What character or scene that you've painted do you most identify with? I see myself the most in the character from my Ghostskull painting. I used myself as a ➡



SKULL KING ECHO

Watercolour and
gouache, 11 x 14in. I
repaint this character
every few years in order
to see the new paths my
art has taken.

Traditional Artist Interview



BLUEBIRD

Watercolour and gouache, 8 x 10in.
She was inspired by the bittersweet
feeling of knowing that everything
changes with time.

“Being independent has opened up exciting ways to work, but it comes with a lot of unique challenges”

model so that part's obvious. I feel like it's the perfect combination of things that I love. I have a hard time resisting the desire to paint a skull or moon on everything. It feels like my personality in painted form.

What are your painting rituals?

Nothing too glamorous. I like to get myself a hot drink and get to work cleaning my space. I love resetting my studio before each painting session. I put all my tools and paints and everything I need within reach and organised, so when I start painting I can just sink into the process and cut out distractions. It helps me find that perfect flow state where I can just get swept away with my painting.

Is creating art as a career all you thought it would be? What does the future hold for you?

It's wildly different! I originally planned on working in a studio in some form. Being independent in my work has opened up so many exciting ways to work, but it also comes with a lot of unique challenges. I am so excited for the future! I have a few larger projects in the works, card decks, art books and more. The large, long-term projects are really where my passion is at. I'm planning on pushing more in that direction over the next few years.

Self-directed artist Danica Sills is a watercolour and oil painter who loves creating haunted, magical artwork. www.danicacalls.com



CHILL AIR

Watercolour and gouache. I wanted this character to have the feeling of an eerie summer night on the edge of fall.

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