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with master Catwoman and
DC artist **David Nakayama**

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TO KICKSTART
YOUR ART

WORKSHOP

BECOME A COLOURIST

Make Marvel-ous comic
panels with Steve Ellis

BRIAN SUM INTERVIEW

Cyberpunk from the
master of mechs!

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



Hi, and welcome to issue 229 of ImagineFX! Comic art is a huge area for illustrators and designers, covering a massive range of styles and topics, so we thought it was about time we dedicated an issue to this, with a whole host of stunning inspiration and in-depth

practical resources to get you going.

Learn how to create fantastic comic illustrations with advice from our Catwoman cover artist David Nakayama. We also discover the wonderfully colourful cyberpunk mechs of Brian Sum, and explore Léo Chiola's methods for his totally bodacious Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles fan art. And get that muscle memory strengthened with our pro advice on starting a daily sketching routine.

For the traditional artists among you, we have some words of wisdom from Games Workshop artist Thomas Elliott, who teaches you some of the skills that you'll need to develop your own gritty science fiction characters.

Plus, you can also download an issue of our awesome sister title 3D World absolutely free!

Enjoy the issue!

Rob

Editor
Rob.Redman@futurenet.com

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



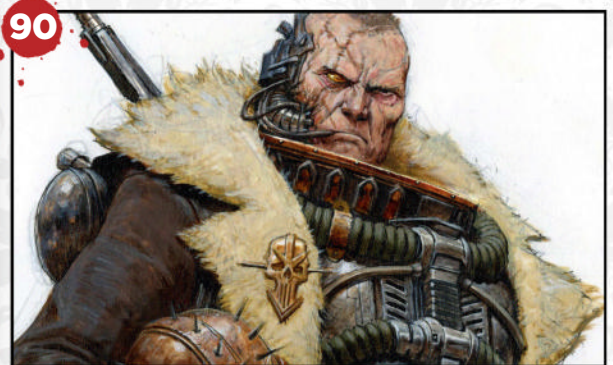
Artist in Residence

Explore the delightfully cosy mixed-media studio of Chilean comic artist Karla Diaz.



Draw distinctive comic art scenes

Childhood Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles superfan Léo Chiola puts passion into practice for his striking fan art.



Develop a gritty sci-fi character

Learn how to paint a moody military cyborg with Games Workshop illustrator Thomas Elliott.

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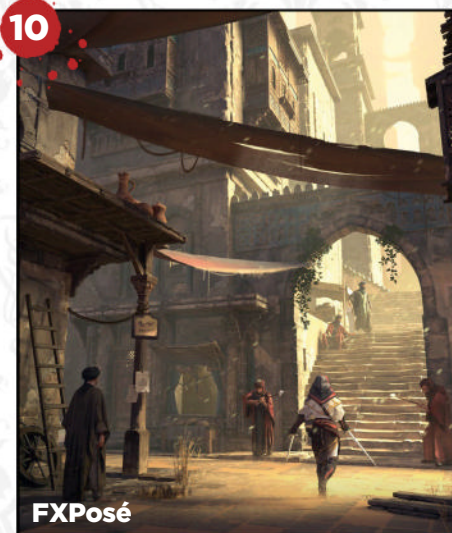
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FXPosé



Inside the art of tarot cards



The art of Brian Sum



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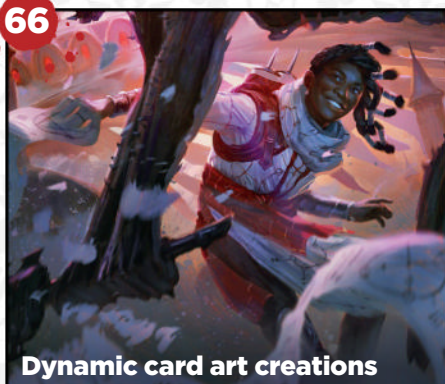


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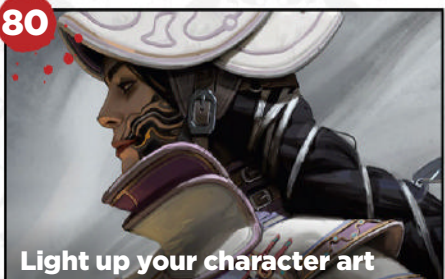
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GET YOUR RESOURCES

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

1 Go to the website
Type this into your browser's address bar.
<https://lfxm.ag/comicartist>

2 Click the download link
Find your files ready for download.

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

Next month



Next month in...
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DESIGN**
Special

Get inspired with our stunning character collection including art from **Tan Zhi Hui!**

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ImagineFX

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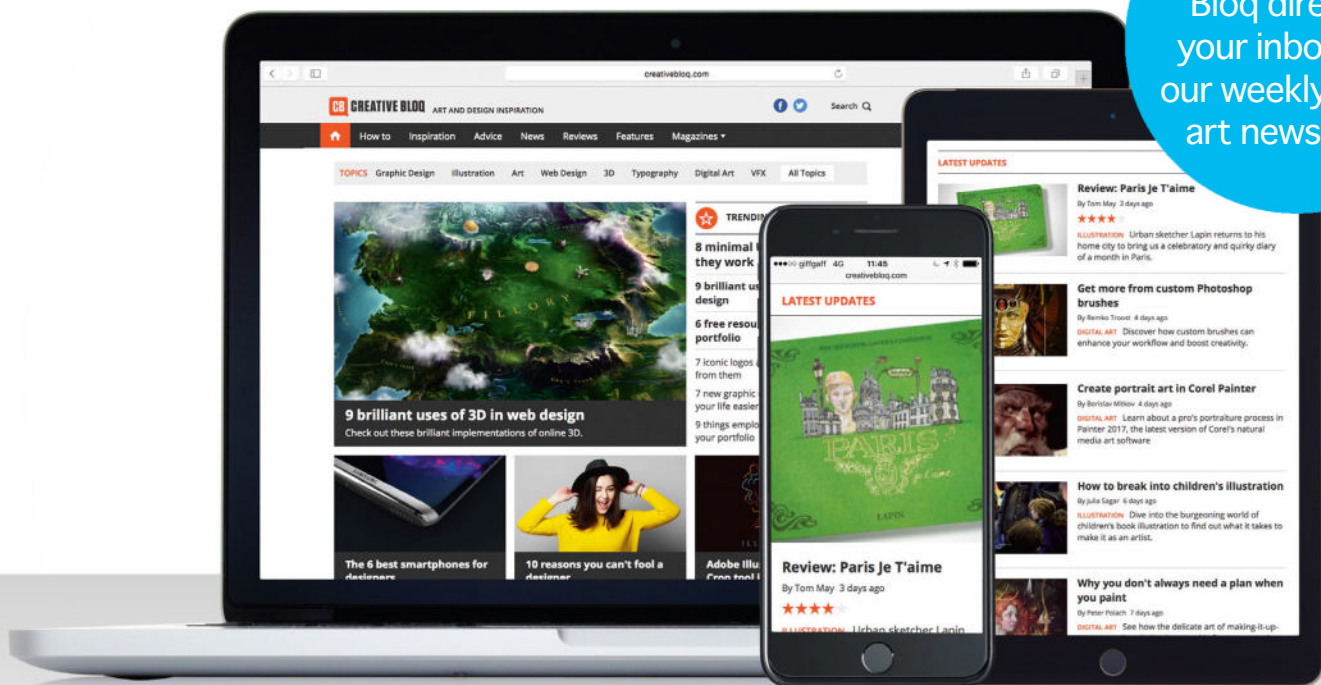
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FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



Paulo Loveranes Galamgam

LOCATION: Philippines **MEDIA:** Procreate, Blender **WEB:** www.artstation.com/paulog

Paulo is a licensed civil engineer who has been studying concept art alongside his full-time job. After his long grind and sleepless nights, he is now creating designs for game studios.



1 WANDERER

"A mercenary in a fantasy Middle Eastern world, hired to assassinate its corrupt ruler. He only takes jobs that involve executing bad people."

2 RED SAND

"Exploring an underground cavern containing otherworldly rock formations, searching for the hidden society that has lived in secrecy for hundreds of years."



ImagineFX

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1



3



3 ABANDONED

"These warriors returned to their hometown after a long-fought war against invaders, only to find everyone had fled after they were defeated."



Natalia Sorokina

LOCATION: Serbia **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Paint Tool SAI **WEB:** <https://nataliajw.artstation.com>

Natalia is a commercial and book illustrator who loves to experiment with different styles and genres in order to tell stories and bring emotions to life. She also creates her own comic series on her Jwitles Art blog.

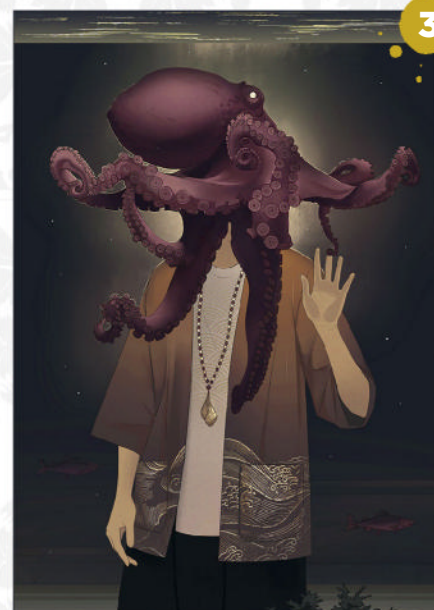
1 SISTERS

"These girls live with a cruel, drunken father in an old village. Life is bitter and dark. Still, their hope for a miracle does not fade."



2 FULL MOON

"A beautiful shape-shifter shows her true self. This piece recreates the mysterious atmosphere of old Japanese legends."



3 I SEE YOU

"Is it just an octopus behind the glass, or is it a soul, captive in a miserable body? All these illustrations are made for books by Anahit Grigoryan."

4 OUR LADY

"The embodiment of femininity, warmth, and motherhood. I was thinking about all the women who sacrifice everything for their families."





Magdalena Dianova

LOCATION: Germany **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Procreate **WEB:** www.instagram.com/magdalena.dianova

Magdalena is a freelance character designer who has worked with the likes of DreamWorks, Spin Master and 3dtotal. She also makes monthly tutorials on Patreon and has a love for fashion, cinema and space.

1 THOMAS

"Thomas is a sweet boy who's always there when you need him, but he's always three hours late. He was part of a short story I started developing for an Inktober challenge back in 2021."

2 JAZZ WITCH

"This 1920s jazz witch is part of an Inktober challenge where I was doing a crossover between witches and music genres. I had a lot of fun working on this one, because I was also experimenting with new brushes I was developing for my latest brush pack."

3 DORM ROOM

"For this illustration, I wanted to explore the cosy but slightly messy dorm room of a girl who studies botanics. I built a rough model in SketchUp to help me with the perspective, and to save time."

1

THOMAS

21 🇺🇸

♥
TARANTINO
DRAWING
BURGERS
COOKING

♥
> ASTROLOGY <
OLIVES
OVERSLEEPING

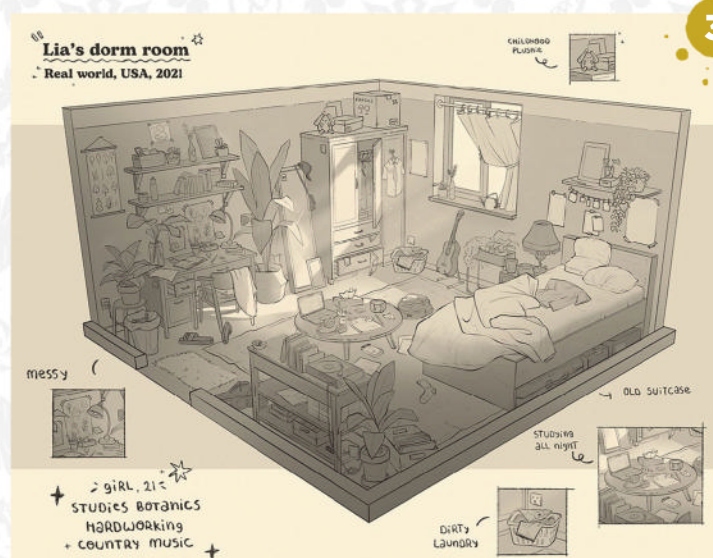


mecha
SKETCHES

2



3





4 CEREAL

"It's 7am and you're in the supermarket buying cereal because you had a craving in the middle of the night and ate the whole box."



François Bourdin

LOCATION: France **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Procreate **WEB:** www.artstation.com/franoisbourdin

François is a concept artist who works on video games, cartoons, board games, clothing and YouTube channels. He likes using flashy, out-of-the-ordinary colours and angular shapes with soft textures.



1 ORANGE LADY

"A reinterpreted study of a photo of a young girl. She has a dark look, but her eyes are illuminated. This involved researching a lot of textures."

2 BURNING SKULL

"I like the mix between classic elements, and those that present a challenge and make a fun, original image."

3 SLEEPING CITY

"In this piece depicting Parisian decor, everything appears to be frozen. Only the pigeons bring any sense of life and movement."

4 PURPLE LADY

"A three-quarter profile with my signature hard shapes and softer textures, complete with rounded and more realistic elements such as the mouth."







Cindy Avelino

LOCATION: Brazil **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** <https://cindyworks.com>

Cindy is a fantasy artist who has been working professionally since 2014. Her recent work is inspired by animals and nature because she loves the organic shapes, colours and textures they provide.



1 FIRST FLIGHT

"A father teaching his son, and having a good time in the process, by showing him how to fly!"

2 RENSHU, THE WATER TIGER

"2022 was the year of the tiger, which inspired me to create this character."

3 STARTALE

"She carries the stars from the ground to the sky. Only she can see the correct path to the heavens."

4 AIRON, THE GUARDIAN

"This is Airon, a character I created for a personal project."



4



5



6



5 THE MOON WORSHIPPER

"This piece depicts a Crowfolk individual who is also a moon worshipper."

6 THE LION WARRIOR

"What would a lion wear if they were a part of society? This tries to answer that question."



Oleksandr Zahorulko

LOCATION: Ukraine **MEDIA:** Procreate, Photoshop **WEB:** <https://alekzanderzagorulko.artstation.com>

Oleksandr is an artist who specialises in characters, and has drawn one every day for the past three years. He also creates game art for online trading platforms from his studio, A-ravlik.

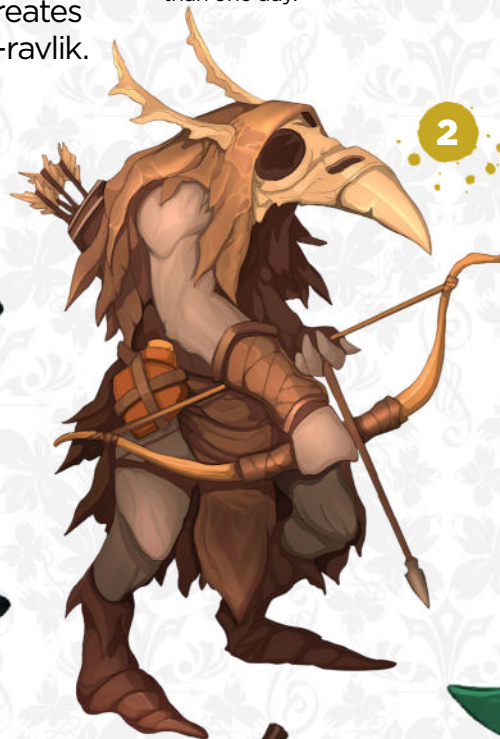
1 UNDEAD WORKER

"I draw my characters in sets. A set of undead, a set of demons, a set of goblins, and the like. My clients love this approach."



2 PLAIN ARCHER

"I don't like doing one thing for a long time. I draw my characters for no more than one day."



3 MECHANICAL LUMBERJACK

"I draw ideas for characters from video games, movies and anime. Sometimes I just draw something and it turns itself into a character idea."





4 SWAMP ELEMENTAL

"I don't have an art education and didn't learn to draw. I just drew every day for as long as I can remember."



Jenny Mati

LOCATION: France **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Procreate, Maya, Blender **WEB:** www.artstation.com/jennymati

Jenny is a freelance concept artist who works on video games, animations and board games. She loves working with colour and giving illustrations a warm, lively feel. "I draw a lot of my inspiration from point-and-click games."

1 HUT CLAY WORKSHOP

"This is a concept of a cabin for a personal video game project with my boyfriend. It's the home of the surfer and potter."

2 LITTLE HARBOUR

"A concept for a mysterious island harbour made for the same project. This is where the exploration of the island begins."

3 FRENCH COUNTRYSIDE HOUSE LIVING ROOM

"This concept represents a living room for my video game project. It's a large, cosy living space full of objects and mess."

4 LEAFEON FAN ART

"Fan art of a Pokémon in a forest. I wanted to show the freshness of Leafeon's attack with this piece."



3



4



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WWW.THEROOKIES.CO

Kiyoko – The Wind Master

YEAR CREATED: 2023

MEDIA: Photoshop

+ + + + + + + + +

"This splash art was created during a workshop with Félix Donadio at Artside School, based on a character I'd made previously. During the session I came up with the idea of creating a promotional image for the character to build a fuller project, as the VFX were also made during the school year."





Artist PROFILE

Julie Lafeuille

LOCATION: France




I'm an aspiring concept artist and worldbuilder currently studying concept art at Artside School in Bordeaux. I love to create, and have a particular taste for characters, props and VFX design, and hope to specialise in worldbuilding in the long run.

www.therookies.co/entries/23755

ARTIST NEWS, SOFTWARE & EVENTS Imagine Nation

AT THE CORE OF THE DIGITAL ART COMMUNITY



"I love how the Two of Wands turned out, and it was entirely thanks to Sasha [Graham, writer]. She provided such lush descriptions for each card, so it was easy for me to illustrate them," says Abigail Larson.

© Clip Studio Paint





A DAY IN THE LIFE OF...
Storyboard artist Daniel Hyun Lim introduces his daily schedule and shares advice for new graduates eager to make their break within the industry.
Page 32



TWO-IN-ONE WORKSPACE
We pay a visit to South America to explore Karla Diaz's cosy studio setup, which includes separate areas to work on her digital and traditional art.
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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.
Page 41

The art of tarot cards

Mystic readings Tanya Combrinck channels the world of tarot with the help of three illustrators

A strong natural affinity has always existed between fantasy artists and the tarot, but a recent surge in popularity is creating an opportune moment for anyone who feels called to paint their own deck.

Tarot is now seen by many as a component of self-care, similar to yoga or meditation. Rather than approaching it as an occult practice or divination tool, people are using the routine of drawing cards as a therapeutic method of making sense of life events by viewing them through the lens of the archetypes and narratives of the tarot.

A huge variety of decks have been produced to meet this demand, with different art styles and themes to

connect with all kinds of people. There are endless ways to interpret the ideas of the tarot, so every creator can produce their own unique take on the stories and symbolism. Even great artists including Salvador Dalí and Gustave Doré produced their own tarot cards.

Drawing a tarot deck was a career goal that illustrator **Abigail Larson** had held for years. She finally got her chance when the publisher Llewellyn approached her to draw the Dark Wood Tarot, a themed deck based on the premise of a witch exploring secrets in the woods, which represent hidden parts of the psyche.



“I had to find lots of reference images, and do a lot of research on tarot to make sure I understood everything”

“For an artist wishing to develop their storytelling skills, sometimes there's no better training than working on a tarot project,” says 78 Tarot's Delphine Malidore.



Nataša's book, *A Compendium of Witches*, collects stories of 29 fictional witches whose lives embody the customs and beliefs of niche societies.

“Llewellyn introduced me to Sasha Graham, the writer of the deck, and it felt like a perfect match,” says Abigail. “She sent me very detailed card descriptions as she was writing them, and I would start sketching out rough compositions for each card as they came in. It was a fairly organic flow. It took a little longer, but in order for us to nail down the amount of detail we wanted, it worked for us.”

INTENSE PROCESS

Even though she was given a detailed brief for each of the cards she illustrated, making the deck was still a huge challenge. “It's an incredible amount of work and research,” Abigail reflects. “The card descriptions allowed me to focus completely on the art side of the work, composing the scenes and characters, and making sure that everything reads clearly. I had to find lots of reference images, and do quite a lot of research on tarot itself to make sure that I understood everything I was putting into these cards.” ➡



Artwork by Selina Fenech, Mike Zaros, Pifano and John Teclrick

➡➡ The intensity of the work pushed Abigail to make her process as efficient as possible. “As an artist, I learned a lot about managing the basics all over again; composition, anatomy, colour theory, and so on,” she says. “Because I had to make so many illustrations on a deadline that all have a very specific purpose, each card was another exercise in my artistic skill.

“And at the end of it, we have a finished product that thousands of other people can enjoy many times over and discover something new every time they use it. Years after its release, I still get messages from readers who say this is their favourite deck and they use it for all their readings. That’s a wonderful feeling.” Abigail found the process so rewarding that she went on to illustrate two more decks following the Dark Wood Tarot.

CREATIVE CONTROL

Working with writers and a publisher has its perks, but for artists who want complete control over their creation,



making a crowdfunded indie deck offers greater freedom. **Nataša Ilinčić** has created decks both ways: she worked with a writer to illustrate Tarot of the Witch’s Garden for Llewellyn, and also made an indie oracle deck based on her artbook, A Compendium of Witches. An oracle deck is similar to tarot, but follows its own structure and features different cards.



Nataša accepted a brief to draw Tarot of the Witch’s Garden. “I knew it would take a long time and a lot of energy.”

Both routes have their challenges and rewards. The practicalities of physically producing and delivering her crowdfunded deck were quite an adventure for Nataša. Fulfilment was done from her top-floor flat, which meant carrying thousands of decks up three flights of stairs. “Despite having prepared and ordered everything ahead of schedule, things didn’t go smoothly,” she says. “Twice during quality check, I found that hundreds of decks had foiling imperfections and I had to request reprints from the



“The Dark Wood Tarot is a shadow deck; the readings are for a deeper inner-self reflection,” says Abigail.

manufacturers, which delayed the fulfilment.” This, in tandem with Covid, pushed her order beyond Brexit day, which meant extra customs fees for her to receive the deck in the UK from her EU manufacturers. “You have to be prepared for all eventualities during the production and fulfilment stages,” Nataša advises.

SOLO OR COMMISSION?

Following the crowdfunding campaign, distribution became much more straightforward, and a mass

“I still get messages from readers who say that this is their favourite deck”

market version of her deck is now sold by Lo Scarabeo.

“From a strictly financial perspective, as a one-woman team the profit on a single indie deck is bigger compared to a deck handled by a publishing house, but the print runs tend to be smaller and the risks greater,” she says.

While the practical side was tough, the drawing of this deck itself was enjoyable. “It came together smoothly and naturally,” says Nataša. “Having a relaxed timeline and full autonomy played a big part in that.” ➡➡

“Tarot is built along the hero’s journey, and it connects naturally to a vast number of the stories we all take in via TV, books and other media,” says Delphine.



Artwork by Patrick McEvoy and Quintin Gleim



KNIGHT OF PENTACLES
Quintin Gleim

INDUSTRY INSIGHT FUNDING AN INDIE PROJECT

Delphine Malidore on how to run an indie art crowdfunder

Having successfully funded 10 art projects, what have been your key learnings?

You always need a buffer in your budget. With our first project, we set what we considered was a realistic funding goal of \$20,000, and even then it was barely enough to cover all of the costs. Shipping costs could continue to rise, printing costs are increasing all the time, so we would always recommend having an extra 10 per cent in your budget for unforeseen costs.

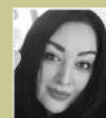
Also, graphics are really important; Kickstarter estimates 90 per cent or more of the successful campaigns include a video. Even if you hate being on camera, even if you don't include yourself, remember that you have only seconds to persuade people to help you.

How important is marketing?

You definitely need to factor marketing into your project's budget. You need adverts, you need to build a mailing list, and you need to keep building on every project that you create, especially now, as money is tight for a lot of people.

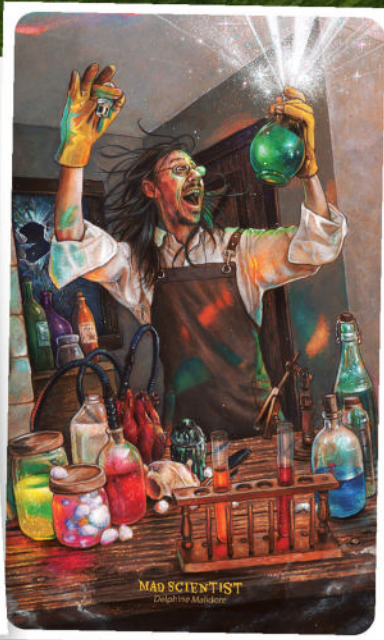
How do you handle the fulfilment of orders?

Having people to help is invaluable. Customer service can become overwhelming when you're having to deal with the unexpected, such as parcels going missing or being damaged on the way. While it's an additional cost, if you can have your project fulfilled by a third party it can be a massive weight off your shoulders, allowing you to focus on your backers and the ongoing work.



Delphine Malidore is the art director and co-founder at 78 Tarot, and also works as a full-time illustrator.

<https://bit.ly/3J8r7Fz>



"In the same way that thousands of poems and songs can be written about the seasons, thousands of interpretations of each card can be painted," says Nataša. Artwork from her Tarot of the Witch's Garden deck.

Delphine illustrated the Mad Scientist card for 78 Tarot's Halloween-themed oracle deck, Creatures of the Night.



Artwork by Chris Maldore and Matt Stawicki



"To an artist thinking about painting an indie deck, my advice is to take your time and enjoy expressing your vision in its truest form," says Nataša. Artwork from A Compendium of Witches.



“Our North Star is always to create a cohesive, readable tarot deck; it’s more than a collection of pretty images”

➔ For the Tarot of the Witch's Garden, the challenges were reversed; there was no project administration, but creating the artwork was harder. "The deadline meant that the work had to be produced at an intense pace," Nataša says.

"I enjoy giving the deserved attention to the smallest details and immersing myself in each piece, and for this project that was definitely challenging. As lovely as creating this deck was, it was also a long and strenuous marathon that left me with an arm injury."

For artists thinking about painting a deck with a publishing house and a writer, Nataša advises that you only do it for a project you love. "Make sure that you have a generous deadline in line with your needs, that you're treated fairly and respectfully, and that the other contributors are a good match in terms of values, ethos, and style," she says.

DIRECTING A DECK

The collaborative 78 Tarot project has been running since 2014 and is about to release its 10th deck. The initiative is

"Tarot is a playground for artists like me because the symbolism of the cards can really stir the imagination," says Abigail.



run by a small team, headed by 78 Tarot's co-founder and art director **Delphine Maldore**, that commissions dozens of artists to each create a single card.

With more than 80 artists working on each of the decks, there are big organisational and administrative challenges to keep in check. "We have to deal with deadlines, making sure the descriptions and prompts we've written as art directors are respected, and whatever additional things artists can throw at you along the way. It certainly can get interesting," says Delphine. "Our North Star is always to create a cohesive, readable tarot deck; it's more than just a collection of pretty images."

To help maintain the cohesive flow of the deck, all the artists are placed into an online group and work as a team. "This creates the chance not only for all of those artists to help one another with advice and feedback, but



Artwork by Iris Compiet



"78 Tarot has been the perfect opportunity to work with so many amazing artists, including some of my very favourites, who are icons to me," says Delphine.

FAE
Iris Compiet

so that we can see how the art looks side by side, even at a very early stage of the process," Delphine says.

The results have been well worth the effort. In total, they have sold more than 20,000 decks over the past decade, and their last Kickstarter campaign had over 1,000 backers. "It has gone so well that we have recently begun to expand into additional product lines," adds Delphine.

All of their decks thus far have been limited editions, but some of the upcoming sets will have an open print run. Delphine explains: "We'll be producing more oracle deck projects and even playing cards. It's a very exciting time and it allows us to hire as many artists as possible!"



Nataša's oracle deck contains additional cards based on natural elements, with symbology derived from myth and folklore.



"Tarot decks are now collectible items too. Many people who read them have several decks for different types of readings," Abigail says.

"My A Compendium of Witches oracle deck was painted at my own pace, and I had full control over it. It rang true to my voice," says Nataša.





Artwork for the Brawl Stars Race to Gem Mountain challenge created by Daniel.

A day in the life of...

Daniel Hyun Lim

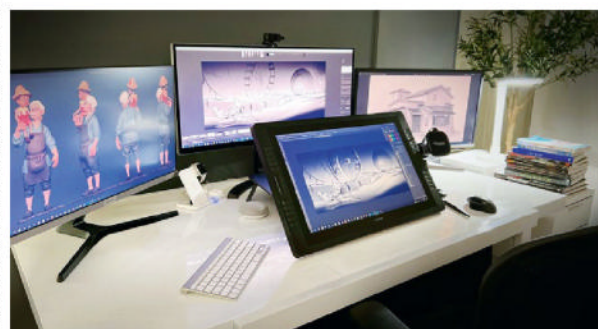
Learn smart The illustrator and storyboard artist opens up on his non-stop schedule, and explains why new graduates need to spend their time wisely

“My schedule is mostly based on when my kids wake up. So 7:30am I’m up and ready within 15 minutes. I drive to school, return, then check my email, have a coffee and bagel, and help my two-year-old and wife. If I’m really busy, I’ll have to put on my headphones and cease to exist in the house, but otherwise I help. My kid takes a long morning nap, and it’s golden for me. I can really work.

I’m at my computer by 10:30am and work for around three hours; that’s a good, solid block. Then I have maybe 30 minutes to eat before heading out to pick up my kid. When we get back I try to take a 15-minute nap and help out with any homework. I’m really bad at maths, so these number bonds are actually good refreshers for me.

I usually have an hour-and-a-half free before dinner time. If I have to drive my son over to his taekwondo afterwards, I’ll spend the time in the car brainstorming ideas. I help out with bedtime, and then from 8:30pm, that’s my time! I usually work, but also play games and watch movies. That’s my life in a nutshell.

The storyboard artist’s workspace packs in a number of screens.

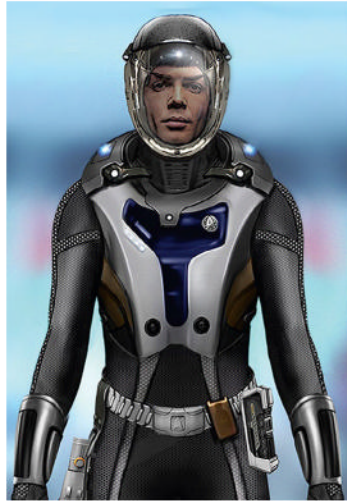


My heart always goes out to recent graduates. That’s who I have advice for: basically, be smart about how you spend your time. If you’re spending 90 per cent of your day playing games, maybe flip it. 90 per cent should be spent learning the basics, and taking classes you actually pay for so you have the incentive.

And don’t worry about anything else going on in the world. All this AI stuff, just forget it. Get in your little bubble for the next five years, and I guarantee you, whatever happens in the world, you’ll be able to adapt.”



Daniel has worked most recently on Red One for Amazon Studios and created storyboards for Disney’s live-action Pinocchio remake. You can see more of his art at www.daniel-lim.com.



Concept art samples made for Star Trek: Strange New Worlds.



Some of the VFX storyboarding that Daniel worked on for Star Trek: Picard.



A film poster sketch for Toy Story spin-off Lightyear.



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

Daniel helped to develop the initial marketing campaign for the game Cyberpunk 2077.





Karla Diaz

Clean and cosy Discover a studio of two halves as the Chilean comic artist gives us the grand tour



I live in Santiago, the capital of my country, Chile, and moved into this apartment with my partner a year ago.

I work as a freelancer, so my studio is set up at home. It's divided into two sections: one for traditional drawing, sketching and painting, and the other for all my digital work.

My digital work setup consists of a 2019 iMac, and the main software I use for my illustrations and comics are Clip Studio Paint and Photoshop. I also use Evernote for writing my scripts, and always have Spotify playing K-pop music. Yes, I'm a K-pop fan!

An old Wacom Cintiq tablet from 2012 helps with my graphic work, and it still does a great job. I don't use the original iMac keyboard. Instead, I



I love bright and vibrant colours in my work.



I've been drawing for as long as I can remember, but I'm always learning new things.



ImagineNation Artist in Residence

This is my LED lamp. I bought it ages ago, and it still works perfectly. I don't use it much anymore because I prefer to do my drawing using natural light.

My iPad Pro is one of my most cherished tools; like having a mini computer that accompanies me. When I work in cafes, I take it with me to draw or write, as well as when I travel.

I have two favourite books. The first is Mika Pikazo's artbook. Her compositions are inspiring and I love her vibrant colours. The second is Anatomy for Artists by Tom Fox.



I bought this miniature vacuum cleaner mainly because of its adorable cat paw shape, although in truth it doesn't actually pick up a great deal of dirt.

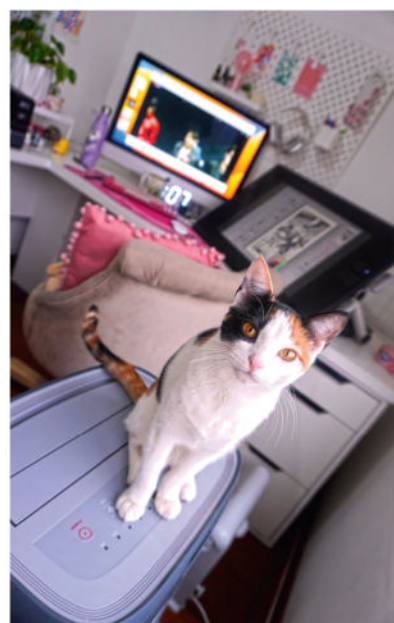
This sketchbook has been with me for almost two years, and I only have a few pages left. The size has been a challenge since I'm used to smaller sizes like Moleskine's sketchbooks.

This is my collection of compulsively purchased sketchbooks that, in my mind, I'll eventually manage to fill up. No, really, my plan is to complete them all!



I bought this Logitech POP Keys keyboard solely for its design and beautiful colours, but when I started using it, I realised how satisfying it actually is to type on as well. It's very comfortable, and the battery lasts for a long time too.

My cat Koko (left) is already a year old, very cuddly, and always demanding attention. He's also a rescue cat, and was quite ugly when he was little. My other kitten is Luli (right), who has been with us for two months. She arrived infested with fleas and dirt, but now she's beautiful!



Artist news, software & events

This is my panel where I organise my week by hand, which works best for me. Below there's a cork board where I put important information.

A new raindrop plant that I bought exclusively for this article, as my first plant died and looked very depressing. Now I have a care kit and fertilisers to prevent that from happening again.

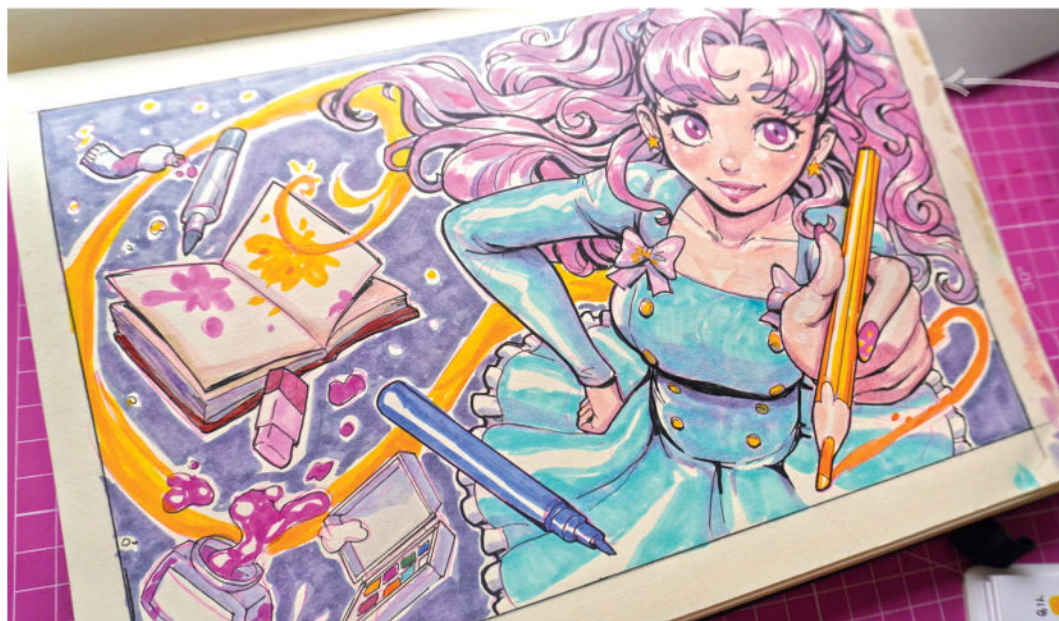
This is my Ikea panel. I love the design and how practical it is. Here, I have some postcards that I bought from SHEIN, pencils, and my Bach Flower Remedies that I use occasionally when I'm anxious.



I have an Epson L4260 printer for occasional needs, such as paperwork or printing photos.

This Wacom Cintiq 24HD is truly a relic! I bought it around 2011 when I made the jump from a used Intuos tablet to this one with a screen. It's been one of the best investments I've made for my work. It has survived several moves and still works flawlessly, and has never had a dead pixel.

This illustration was made with Copic markers as a collaboration with an art supplies store. The idea was to create an image using traditional techniques with the theme related to drawing. It was a pleasure for me since this store is one of my favourites.



“ I always keep plants to create a more pleasant and less sterile environment ”

ImagineNation Artist in Residence

My first encounter with Copic markers was through a gift from my partner. They gave me a set of 12 cool grey tones, and I fell in love with them as soon as I tried them out. As soon as I could, I bought a large set, and now I can't stop using them.



One of my newer pieces of furniture. I bought it from Ikea when I moved into this apartment. Too bad I underestimated the power of my compulsive purchases, and now I can't fit any more books in it.



➡ have a Logitech POP Keys, which I love because it's comfortable and matches my setup. One of my best investments were my silver AirPods Max headphones. The noise cancellation allows me to immerse myself in my work and has massively helped with my concentration.

I always try to keep plants to create a more pleasant and less sterile

My partner gave me these Ecoline paints. I first used them at university and always wanted to try them again, so this gift made me happy! They are similar to watercolours and require thick paper.



“I’m an eternal learner. I love taking courses on digital illustration, art, marketing, social media, and so on”

environment, along with some toys and mementos that I’ve collected. However, I don’t like accumulating too many things because they tend to gather dust, which stresses me out. The Ikea panel you can see serves more as decoration and a place to hang my headphones!

The other part of my studio is the table where I keep all my traditional drawing tools and my iPad. I use the iPad here to view references, watch videos, listen to music, and so on. I also use it for illustrating in Procreate, among other things.

My current favourite tools are my Copic Sketch Markers. I have two sets: the 72-colour E set, and the set of 24 colours Copic gave me to promote their manga drawing contest. I also have a small set of 12 cool grey Copic

Sketch Markers that were given as a gift from my partner.

Next to my desk, I have a small bookshelf for art and comic books. I plan to replace it with a larger one because it's getting too small! I have Loish's artbook collection, lots of French comics, and artbooks from various Japanese artists.

I always try to learn new things, especially drawing and painting techniques. I'm what they call an eternal learner. I love taking courses on digital illustration, art, marketing, social media, and so on.

Karla Diaz is a professional comic artist and illustrator from Chile, who has been drawing since childhood. She specialises in character design, comics and writing, and currently works for Sandstorm comics.
<https://karladiaz.squarespace.com>

Artist news, software & events

I use my sketchbook to explore different themes and techniques. It's still challenging for me to draw with ease. I think I'm very self-critical, but I'm working on it.



This is a selection of my favourite pencils, which include some Tombow graphites and well-worn Faber-Castell pencils.



These are my Apple AirPods Max headphones. They are incredibly comfortable, and the noise cancellation allows me to concentrate a lot.



Lately, I've been using a Sakura Papel Blanco Crema sketchbook, which is 21 x 30cm with 80 sheets. The paper isn't heavy, but it's sufficient for using Ecoline paint and Copic markers.



I'm not a fan of Funko Pops, but I had to have this one of Mr. T, my childhood hero. I bought it without its box at an antique market here, and it was very cheap!

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YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



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Our 50 tips for working with Procreate showcases a range of fantastic ways to boost your creativity.

Pages of Procreate

Hi ImagineFX. Just a quick one to say well done for giving a decent amount of pages to Procreate in your last issue. It was really good to see you dedicating a chunk of space to my favourite art app, and I loved the variety of tips and advice that you showed.

Thanks!

Sarah, via email

Procreate love

Good morning Rob and the ImagineFX team. I thought I'd share my gratitude for last issue and the volume of Procreate articles that you published. Sometimes it can feel like the old favourites, such as Photoshop, receive more time in the spotlight, so it was very welcome to see Procreate getting some love.

It seems to me like Procreate is right up there with other software these days, especially when I look at my Instagram feed. I love that I can use it anywhere too, not just on my desktop machine.

Anyway, I thought I would say a big well done for giving us non-Adobe users something meaty that we can get our teeth into. Keep it up!

Orla, via email

Rob replies Hi Sarah and Orla. Thanks for contacting us! I'm really glad you liked our recent Procreate coverage and I totally agree. While Photoshop and the like do have a substantial user base, it's also good to see newer software being adopted by artists, and we thought it was only right to give it some extra love.

If any of you would like to see your favourite digital art software covered more in the magazine then please write in and let me know. We're always keen to bring you workshops, tips and advice for your chosen tools, big and small, so reach out and ask. Thanks!



Abstract joy

Hello there. I'm writing to you to share my love of your last cover and the accompanying workshop. I always enjoy the training in ImagineFX and have learned many techniques following them, but this one, while as good as ever, also struck me in a different way.

I would never have thought about adding those kinds of graphical elements into my own illustrations. It seems an obvious thing to do now, but I'm so glad that you covered it. What a fantastic idea, and one I'll be sure to start playing with in my own art. So thanks to you and the artist.

Tetsuo, via email

Rob replies Hi Tetsuo. Thanks so much for your kind words and for writing in. I couldn't agree more! It's always great to get some useful advice for increasing your skills and confidence in your art, but even better to be inspired to try new things, and our Wednesday cover definitely does that. I'm so glad you found some inspiration from Bo Feng Lin's artwork.

Last month we showed you how to add playful graphic elements into your fan art.



DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE?

Don't worry – you can get hold of issue 228 at ifxm.ag/single-ixf.



New works that have grabbed our attention



Umaimah
[@coloured_braids](https://instagram.com/coloured_braids)



Tom Dale
[@tomdaleillustration](https://instagram.com/tomdaleillustration)



Miss Debbi
[@miss_debbi](https://instagram.com/miss_debbi)

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

THE ART OF BRIAN SUM

Dominic Carter talks to the mech master about honing his cyberpunk visions, character designs, and his new artbook



The future may be impossible to predict, but thanks to the art of Brian Sum we have a decent idea of what it may look like. That's because the prolific cyberpunk artist, who has worked with the likes of ILM, BioWare and Microsoft, has developed a style that has defined the mech genre.

With hundreds of his illustrations recently released in *AFTRMRKT* (www.aftrmrktstore.com) – an artbook that has been over seven years in the making – we caught up with Brian to learn more about his work and what putting the compendium together has taught him.

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

I got my first real experience as a concept artist with BioWare working on *Dragon Age: Origins*. At the time I was still experimenting and learning the tricks of the trade. It wasn't until I started working on *Mass Effect 2* that I

found a passion for the sci-fi genre. Over time I guess I've kind of followed what I enjoy designing and have evolved to becoming an industrial design and hard surface specialist.

Which artists have inspired you the most and why?

I've been inspired by so many artists through the years, but if I had to choose the ones that have had a huge impact on my work, they would be Syd Mead and Moebius. Syd Mead's vision of the future feels awe-inspiring yet grounded, and his work remains timeless even today. I've always been drawn to his technical drawings and his draughtsmanship.

I love Moebius's surreal dreamlike style. His work is playful, and his designs offer an interesting range of varieties. Both are great artists but it's their ideas, whether it be architecture or costume design, that really makes them masters of their crafts.

Outside of other artists, where do you get your inspiration from?

I get most of my inspiration online these days, just because it's the ➡



AFTRMRKT ASSEMBLY

Brian's artbook comes as either a standard or special edition. This mech appears on the standard cover.

AFTMRKT NEW CORE

This artwork was a 1/1 NFT in CYBERPUNK VOL. 2, a compendium of NFTs centred around a cyberpunk theme.



■ The industry has grown so much that concept artists almost need to be specialists ■



BASEWARE-EX5

Brian describes this piece as a bare-bones Europa Baseware core livened up with spare parts.

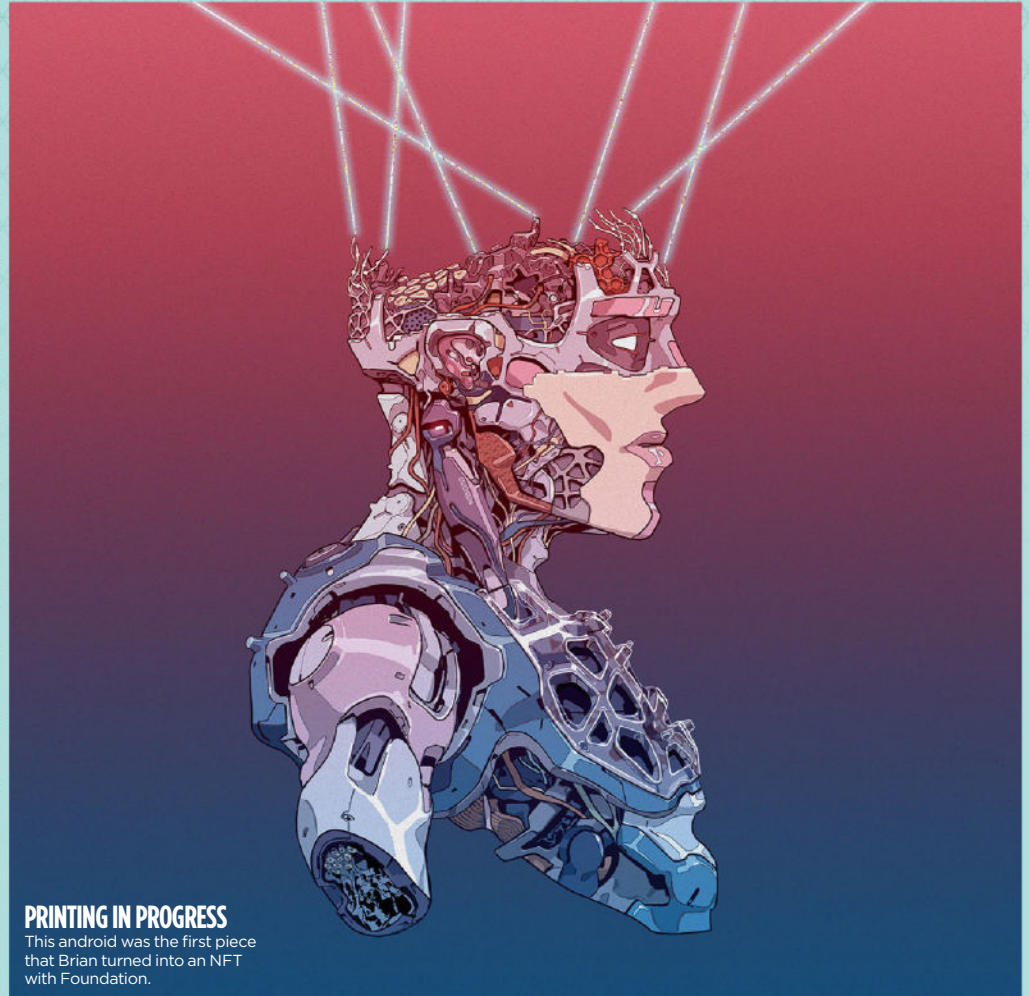
➡ most accessible method. Like most artists, ArtStation and Instagram provide a lot of material to inspire, or more like a good kick in the butt to make cooler stuff. I used to use Tumblr before everyone left. There were several curated sites that provided great sci-fi, cyberpunk content. I haven't really found anything that compares to that now.

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

I think as new technologies have emerged, new tools have made it easier for us to create better concepts at a faster pace. I use 3D more and more now in my workflow depending on the specific needs. Looking back at my older work, I guess I can say that it's a bit more refined now. I try to focus on the core essentials of a design, whereas before I tended to go down the micro-detailing rabbit hole. Tight deadlines, especially when trying to finish my artbook, made it necessary to really pay attention to efficiency and what's really important in a design.

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

The piece Printing in Progress is one of my favourites because I like how the details turned out. It gives off a really



PRINTING IN PROGRESS

This android was the first piece that Brian turned into an NFT with Foundation.

effective retro cyberpunk vibe. I would say that I'm also just happy completing the artbook. At the tail end of the project, I could feel the weight on my shoulders. Aside from the artwork, figuring out all the other aspects of getting the book made took a lot of work and stress.

Which tools do you use to create your work?

These days I sketch mostly in Procreate on the iPad Pro. For everything else,

New tools have made it easier for us to create better concepts at a faster pace

such as rendering and colour work, I use my desktop Cintiq Pro and Photoshop. For 3D work I use 3D Coat and Blender. I'm dabbling in Adobe Medium and Gravity Sketch in VR, but they haven't replaced my workflow on the PC as of yet.

Can you tell us a little bit about your workflow? How do you approach creating a new piece?

I have various different approaches. Sometimes I'll dive right into blocking quick, solid silhouettes in Photoshop just to explore interesting shapes. Many times, I just start with quick line sketches in Procreate. It's nothing revolutionary. I think I just try to search for shapes that spark an idea and I just continue that train of thought. If the sketch doesn't work out, I just start another one.

I'm always mindful of past designs I've done, and try to make sure I do ➡



TENTACLES

Brian uses form and colour to communicate personality and character. Take this pink mech with flowing leads, which has a more feminine feel.

Artist PROFILE

Brian Sum



LOCATION: Canada

FAVOURITE ARTISTS:

Syd Mead, Moebius

MEDIA: Photoshop, SketchUp, 3D Coat, Blender, Adobe

Medium, Gravity Sketch

WEB: www.artstation.com/sum

THE MECHANICS OF DESIGNING A MECH

Learn the key principles behind creating your own machine with expert advice

Brian's industry-leading mechs come in all shapes and sizes, but they're all united by design principles that show them off to their full potential. Here he shares five important tips to keep in mind when designing a mech of your own.

Small palette

Generally, don't use too many colours. Choose a main colour, a secondary, and at the most a tertiary colour.

Build a silhouette

Focus on an interesting and readable silhouette. Zoom out and see if the shape reads well.

Rest areas

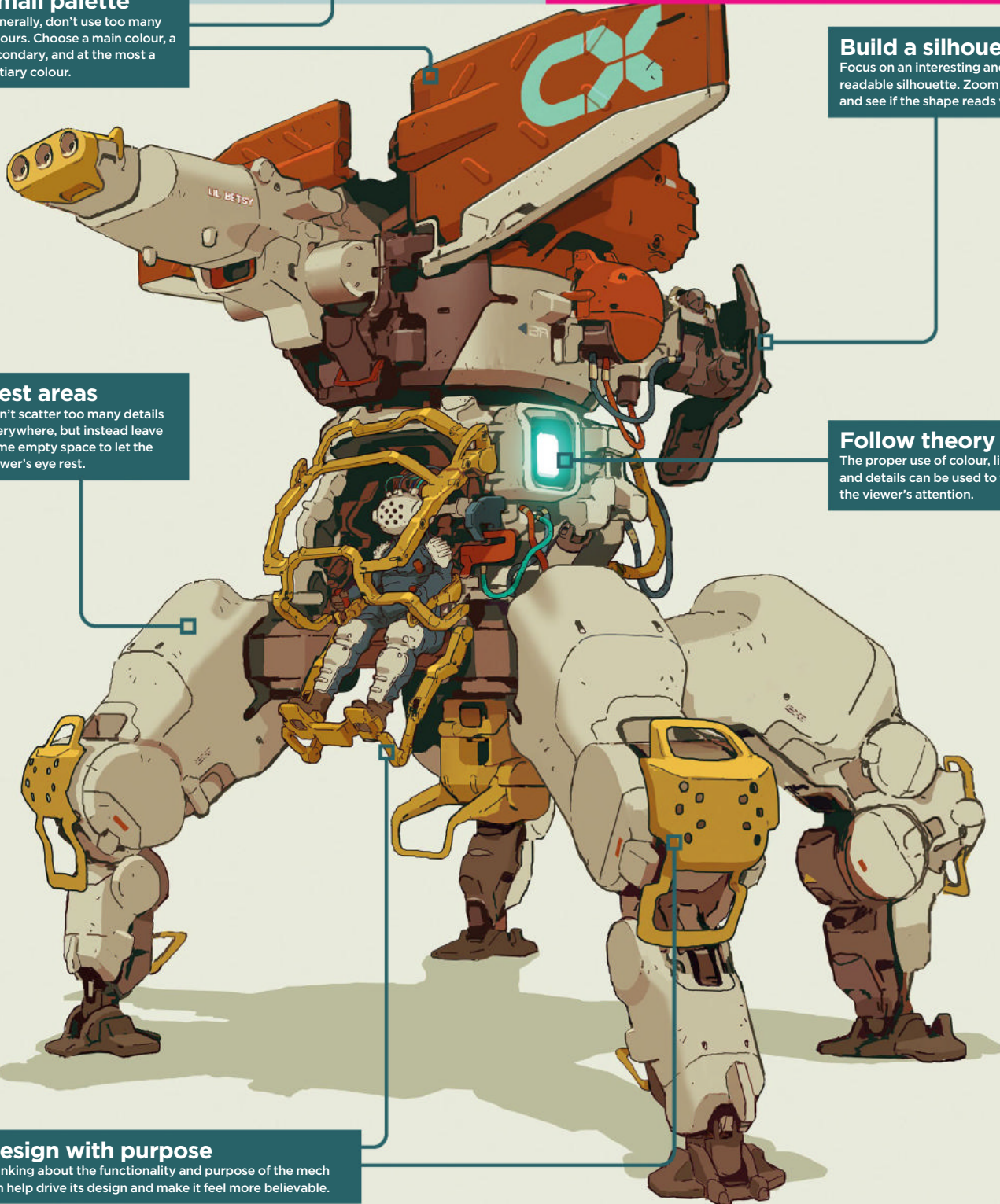
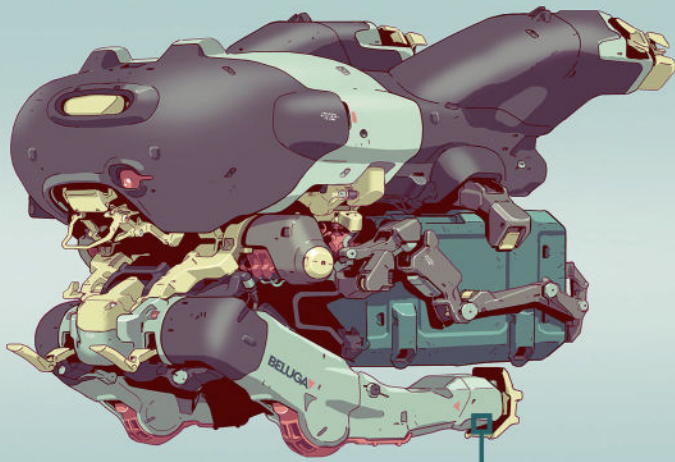
Don't scatter too many details everywhere, but instead leave some empty space to let the viewer's eye rest.

Follow theory

The proper use of colour, lights, and details can be used to focus the viewer's attention.

Design with purpose

Thinking about the functionality and purpose of the mech can help drive its design and make it feel more believable.





DESERT STORM JOURNEYMAN EDITION

Brian says it could get worse than trekking Crugg's dunes. "You could be flopping about in wet socks."

➡ something different from the last. Most of my designs are intended for a larger universe or story I'm developing, and it's important I develop a broad range of characters and designs.

Mechs feature heavily in your artwork. What is it about them that interests you?

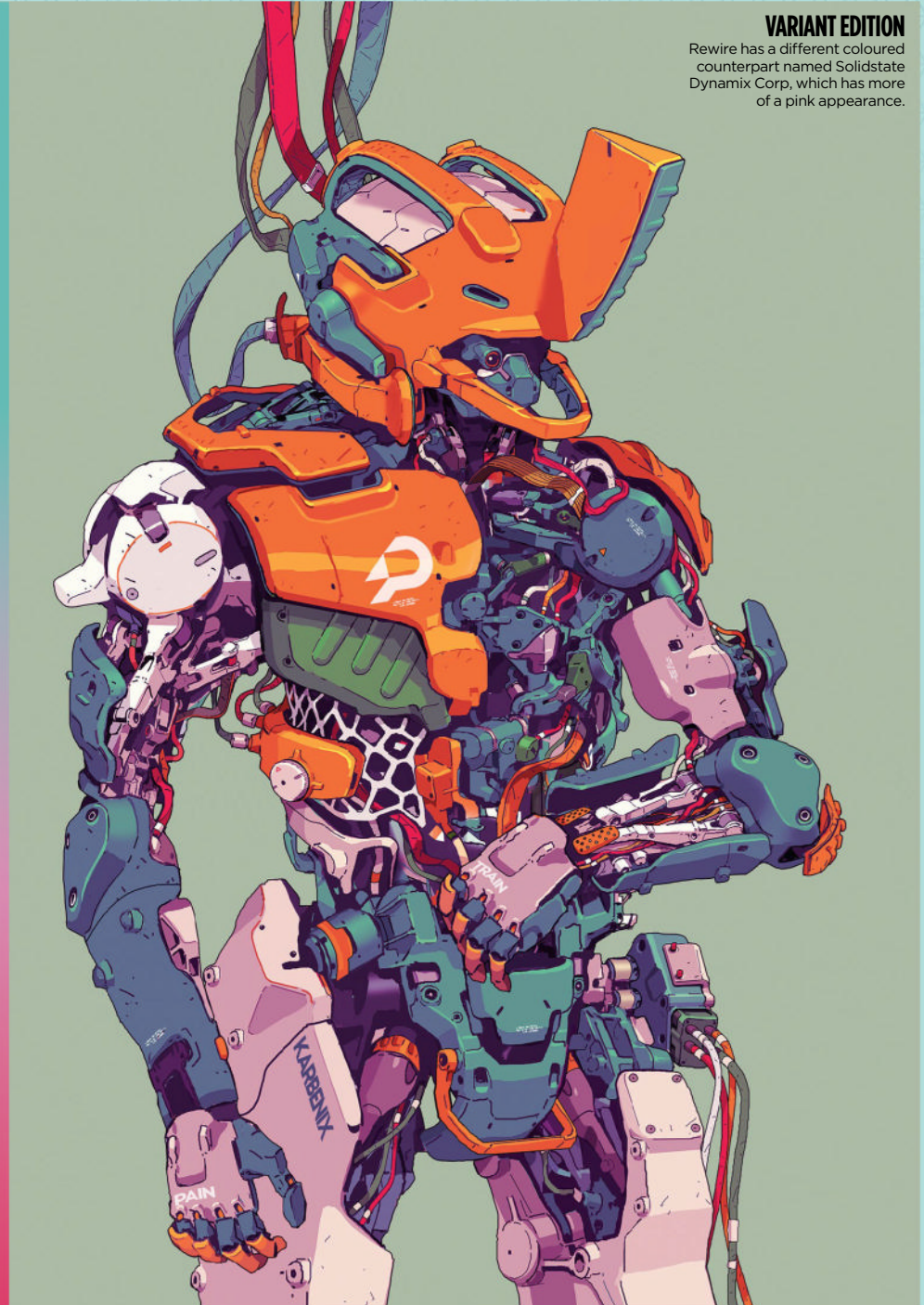
I grew up watching the original Transformers cartoon, Neon Genesis Evangelion, Akira, and Ghost in the Shell to name a few. I became obsessed with robots as a kid. Over time, this translated into a passion for industrial design. Designing mechs allows me to have fun with shape design while keeping things believable and grounded with familiar mechanical machinery.

You've recently been working on a new artbook. What was it like putting that together, and what can readers expect?

The AFTRMRKT artbook has been over eight years in the making. I've learned a lot throughout the long process, not just in the making of the artwork, but also in book production, marketing, and the logistics side of things. This book is a collection of all the sci-fi and cyberpunk themes I love to design. It's targeted at any reader who enjoys mech design, weapons, vehicles, spaceships, and all things cyberpunk related.

What do you feel you've learned about your artwork while putting the book together?

While making the book, time became precious. This was because I knew that I had limited time to complete it as the years went by. I became more aware of how long a piece would take and how to find the right balance of just ➡



VARIANT EDITION

Rewire has a different coloured counterpart named Solidstate Dynamix Corp, which has more of a pink appearance.

REWIRE

Brian explains how he manages to create a sense of character and functionality within his mech designs

"As a starting point, I knew I wanted to create a design that involved a lot of detail. I wanted a contrast between a cleaner outer protective shell around an intricate network of inner machinery. The connected wires and open panels help to indicate that this mech is perhaps in the middle of receiving repairs or upgrades.

"His helmet design implies that he's perhaps in some sort of sport mech, or at least a fighter of some kind. I really enjoy

getting lost in all the details and had a lot of fun interweaving cables and ribbons throughout, which is a common theme in many of my designs. I use cables and screw holes to keep things tactile and grounded.

"Colour plays a big role in helping to create areas of focus and separation. The orange parts make a clear distinction between the outer armour and the interior mechanisms, as well as helping to focus attention on the head and chest area."

■ The AFTRMRKT artbook has been over eight years in the making. I've learned a lot ■

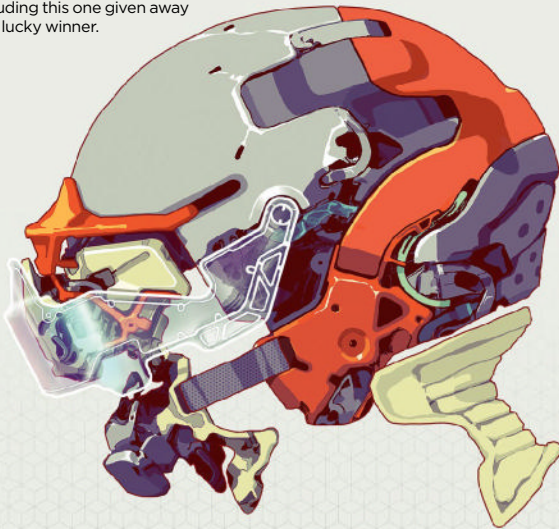


CYBERPUNK COWBOY

Brian's mechs are often inspired by jobs, or in the case of this android outlaw, a gunslinger from the Old West.

RUNNER – ADVANCED GEAR

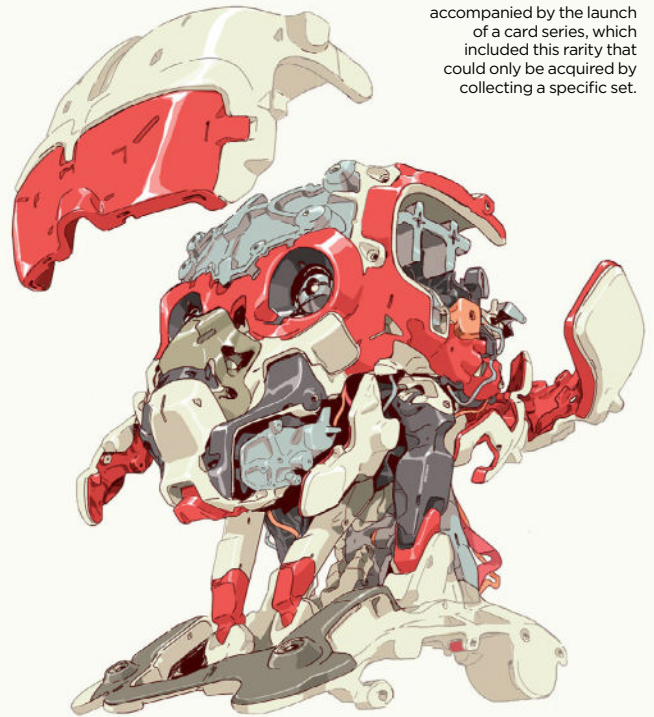
Several of Brian's artworks were turned into collectible NFTs ahead of AFTRMRKT's launch, including this one given away to a lucky winner.



RUNNER
ADVANCED GEAR

SYSTEM UPGRADE

AFTRMRKT was accompanied by the launch of a card series, which included this rarity that could only be acquired by collecting a specific set.



➡ enough detail for each design. Some designs with too much detail didn't necessarily make the piece better and it would take a lot more time to finish. I've also learned to pay attention to the idea or story behind a design as it relates to the larger universe that it exists in. This helps to give it more character or purpose rather than just focusing on a cool-looking design.

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

I think having the artbook project helped me in many ways deal with



ON THE MARKET

AFTRMRKT, Brian's artbook, has been eight years in the making and launched with the help of enthusiastic backing on Kickstarter.

“I've learned to pay attention to the idea or story behind a design as it relates to the larger universe that it exists in”

potential burnout. If I were to just draw mechs with no larger purpose in sight, I think things would get repetitive and boring. But I always try to focus on creating something different with each new piece, whether it be its silhouette, its backstory, and so on. Having the one design exist as a part of a larger universe allows me to have fun imagining each mech's purpose and function.

Another thing that helps me avoid burnout is to have a balanced lifestyle. I make sure I exercise regularly, and I've been doing more meditation. Mental exercise is just as important as physical exercise.

As a freelance concept artist you've worked with big names like Microsoft and Netflix. How do you balance working with these clients and your own personal work?

It was difficult to juggle between the two. I was essentially working two full-time jobs. I had to carve out a strict routine where I would designate specific time within a day for each of them. During the eight years of

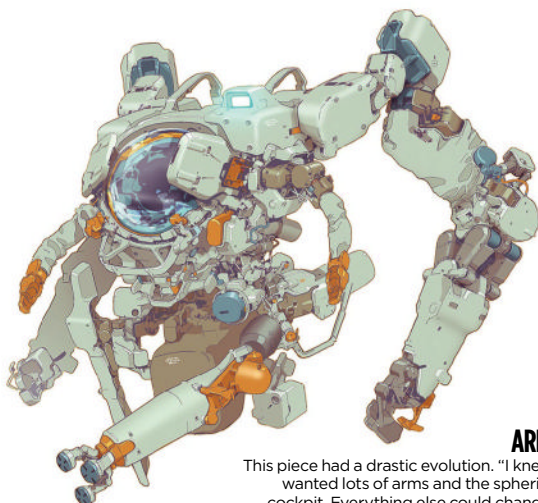
working on my artbook, I've also had two children, so we can make that three full-time jobs.

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

My goal for AFTRMRKT was always to develop a universe rich with interesting characters and engaging stories. The artbook serves as a launchpad towards more exciting adventures to come.

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

When it comes to finding a job in the industry, I would say that if your passion aligns with what is in demand in the industry, then you're in a good spot. The key is to find what you love doing, and then focus on being great at it. The industry has grown so much that concept artists almost need to be specialists, whether that be in environment design, hard-surface design, or character design. ●

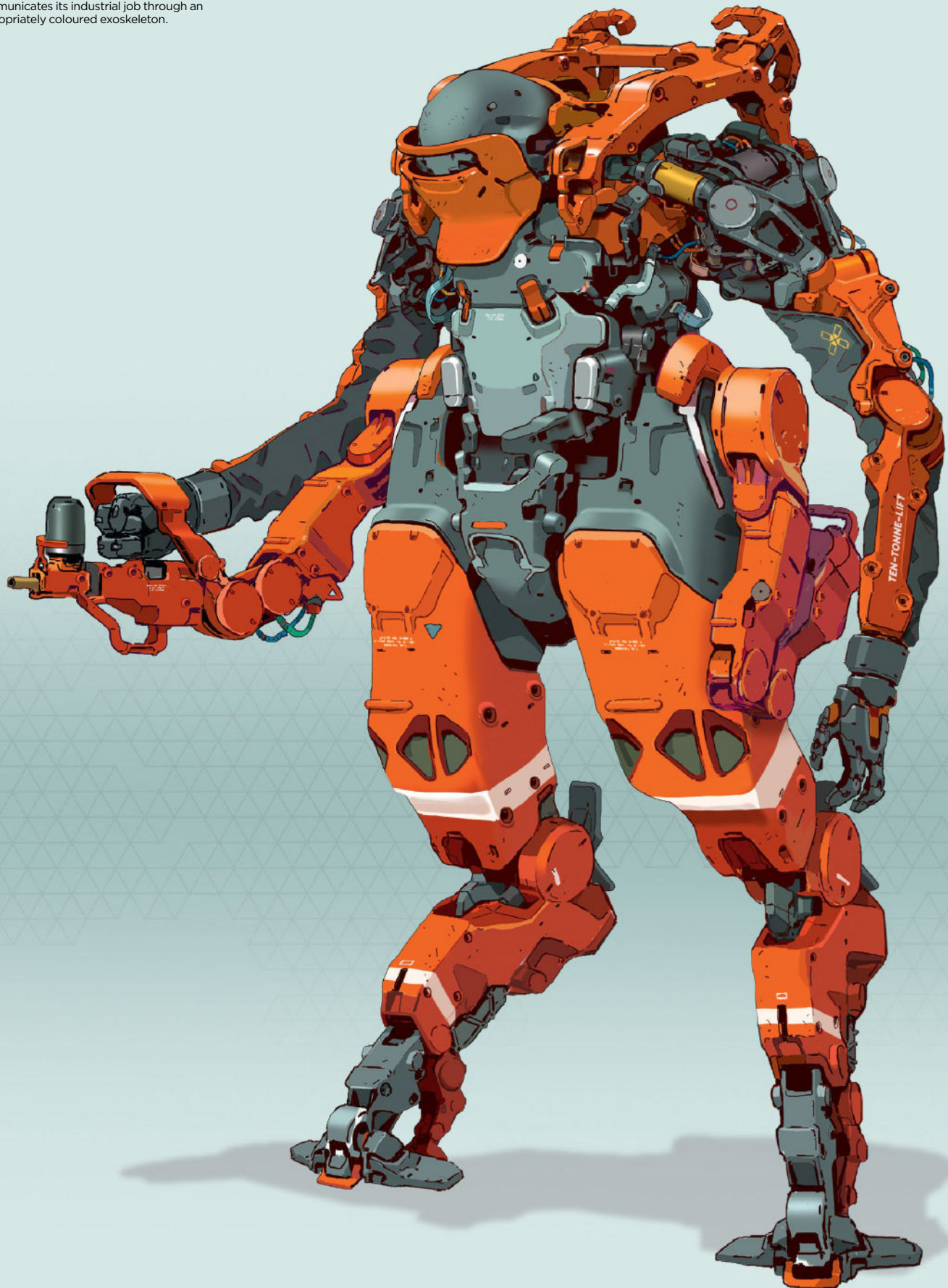


ARMS

This piece had a drastic evolution. "I knew I wanted lots of arms and the spherical cockpit. Everything else could change."

HEAVY WELDER

This concept design from Brian's archives communicates its industrial job through an appropriately coloured exoskeleton.



Nadav Yacobi

The artist's daily experiences, self-insights and emotions come to life as ethereal beings and fantasy spirits that tell a story

Artist PROFILE

**Nadav Yacobi
(AKA SpectreIV)**

LOCATION: Israel



Nadav is an independent artist creating fantasy art that features creatures and mysterious beings inspired by his emotions, stories and real-life experiences. He shows and sells his art online.

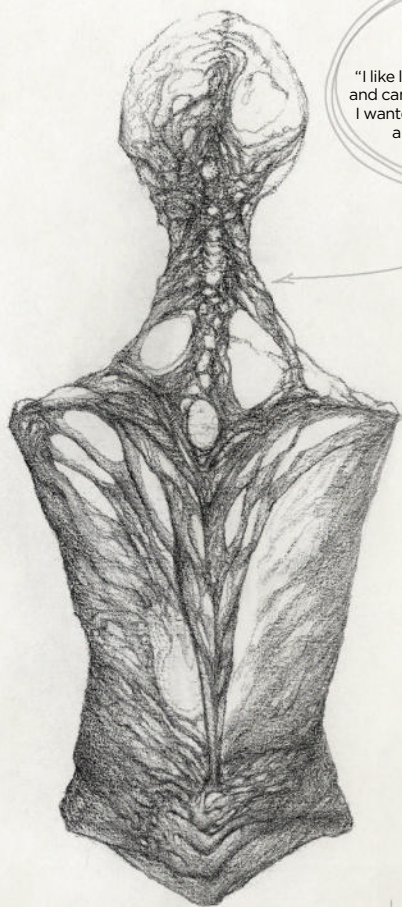
www.instagram.com/spectre.iv

PATH OVERSEER

"A spirit who watches over pathways, either letting other spirits pass through or capturing them. It's a metaphor for the mental force that lets our emotions take over, or suppresses them."

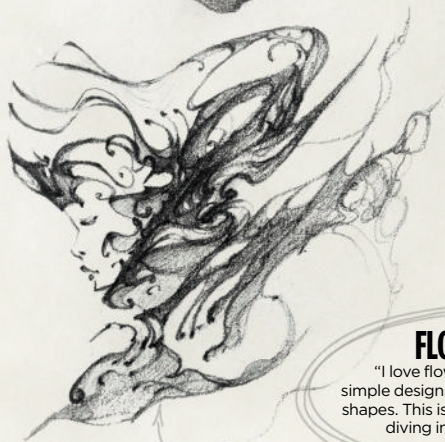
ORGANIC BACK

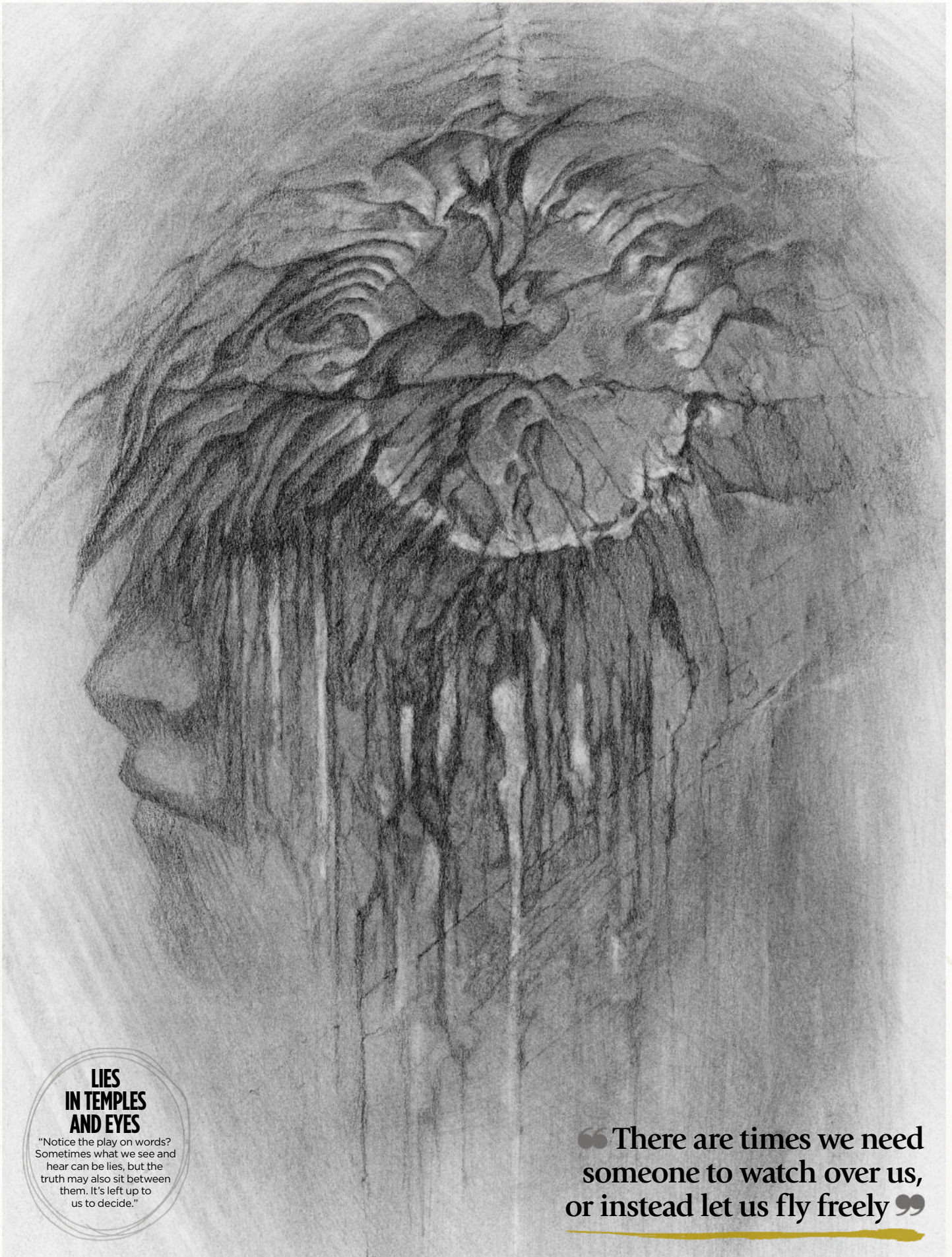
"I like looking at different statues and came across some with backs. I wanted to explore how I'd draw a back with my organic style of artwork."



FLORAL SPIRIT

"I love flowers, whether they are simple designs or complex yet organised shapes. This is one I wanted to try before diving into a full set of flower spirit drawings."





**LIES
IN TEMPLES
AND EYES**

"Notice the play on words?
Sometimes what we see and
hear can be lies, but the
truth may also sit between
them. It's left up to
us to decide."

“There are times we need
someone to watch over us,
or instead let us fly freely”

Sketchbook

“My subjects often speak of inner insights and expression of emotions”

GUARD FROM ABOVE

“Spirits can be harmful or helpful and cheer you up. There are times we need someone to watch over us, or instead let us fly freely. This is a spirit of emotions.”

SPIRIT GATEKEEPER

“This started as a small doodle in my sketchbook that I forced myself to continue to completion. Little did I know this would open up my journey into my spirits project and be my first spirit drawing.”

CHAOS SEEKER

“He’s hovering, searching for chaos. I drew him while looking for ideas for another chaos spirit, my drawing of Nyx, the Daughter of Chaos.”



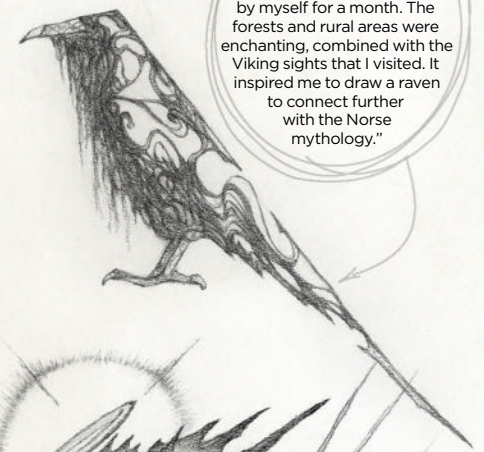
CONSCIOUSNESS CLARITY

"A drawing about clarity of the mind. My subjects often speak of inner insights and the expression of emotions. Then I found myself taking a break, stretching and reflecting, similar to this pose."



SETABLAZE

"Setting things on fire!
Or just a fun, cosy
fireplace spirit."



ANCIENT WISDOM

"I took a trip to Denmark by myself for a month. The forests and rural areas were enchanting, combined with the Viking sights that I visited. It inspired me to draw a raven to connect further with the Norse mythology."



HALLOWS SPIRIT

"I drew this close to Halloween, so I came up with a hallows spirit in the essence of the day."

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

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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.



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Advice from the world's best artists



This issue:

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Learn the process that DC artist David Nakayama follows when he creates eye-catching cover art.

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Bram Sels explains how he finds fun compositions for his latest Magic: The Gathering artwork.

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The process behind Léo Chiola's bodacious TMNT tribute art.

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Dustin Panzino turns basic blocks into full compositions.

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Steve Ellis completes his comic art masterclass with an in-depth look into colouring workflow.

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Experimentation helps Sara Hermellin complete her rouge.

Photoshop

CREATE A STRIKING CATWOMAN COVER

David Nakayama details his process for designing and illustrating eye-catching cover art for DC Comics' most iconic femme fatale

Artist PROFILE

David Nakayama
LOCATION: US

David is an illustrator best known for Marvel and DC cover art, and has also worked for the likes of Hasbro, Warner Bros. and Epic Games. <https://bit.ly/3NfcdLI>



Catwoman is a complex, fascinating character who's stood the test of time, having recently celebrated her

80th anniversary. As the story goes, Selina Kyle starts as a thief on the streets of Gotham and almost immediately becomes Batman's definitive female counterpart.

In that role, she might be his greatest threat one issue, or most

passionate love in the next. In the most recent storyline, The Gotham War, she becomes a crime boss in her own right, putting her and Batman on a collision course and into the worst dilemma they've faced yet.

When a new storyline is about to kick off, it's the perfect time for a publisher to bring in a new cover artist. This instantly, and visually, communicates to comic shop owners and readers alike that the content is

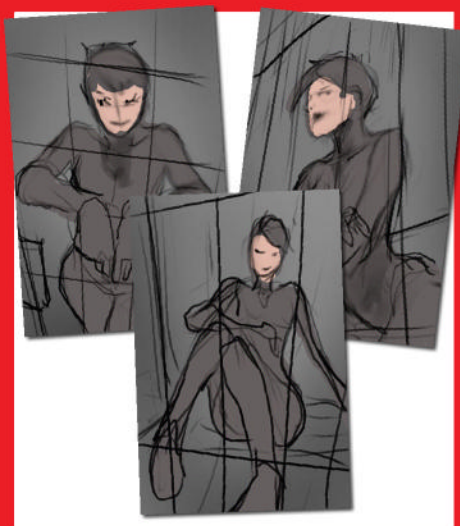
fresh, exciting, and a great place for new fans to jump on board.

My task with this cover for Catwoman #51 was to make a big, splashy entrance; an iconic shot of the character doing something eye-catching and in a style that demands attention. Easier said than done!

On top of that, this series has a long history of amazing cover artists, and I'd have to measure up to that incredible legacy. No pressure!

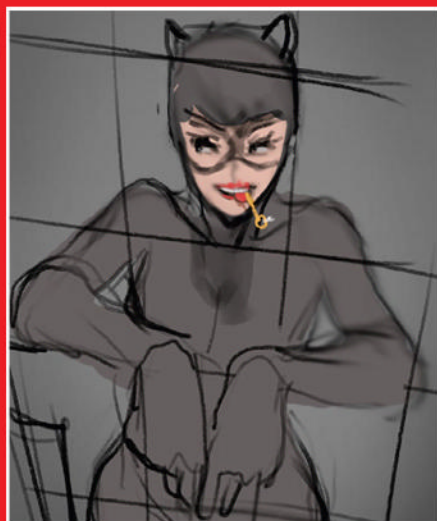
How I create...

AN ARRESTING CATWOMAN



1 Design and characterisation

One of the most important parts of cover design happens in the initial sketches. What are you communicating, and how can you make it visually arresting? Our story sees Selina sent to prison, so I research jail cells and imagine the best angles. The hook is that her face shows only smirky confidence.



2 Refine the idea

With cover art the underlying idea is so vitally important, as critical as the actual drawing and sometimes more so, that it's worthwhile to spend extra time at this stage thinking it through. My editor likes the front-on angle of my first composition, but feels we need an additional detail, like a key that she's smuggled in!



3 Value blocking

With the concept locked in, it's time to plan the piece visually. The cell bars give us a sense of pattern and perspective, and frame the face. Planning value contrasts is the real key to lead the viewer's eye. Her all-black outfit is a great value contrast on its own, with her pale skin contrasting against the dark material.

Cover artwork from Catwoman #51 (March 2023). © and TM DC. Art by David Nakayama. Used with permission



DETAILED TOUCHES



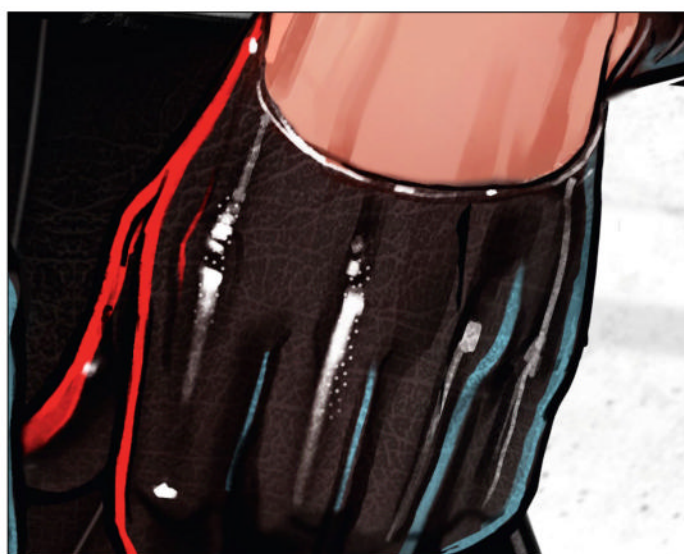
Adding attitude

I sketch some different ways to achieve the look for the smuggled key. This adds an even more confident smirk to our cover character and makes it that much better conceptually. It gives the reader a sense of pay-off when they get the joke, and improves the visuals by drawing our attention up towards Catwoman's face.



Noise overlay

To create the textures in the image, I've used a combination of painted elements and texture overlays. Grab any noise texture, perhaps a photo of a weathered wall or old parchment, set it to Overlay, and dial the Opacity until it looks good.



Create contrast

I play up the value blocking in the image further by adding emphasis to the hands with a pair of half-gloves. Then I make sure to keep the immediate background lighter to pop the character's figure, but also go a step further by vignetting the figure with an additional cast shadow from some unseen window, which creates a dark/light/dark/light rhythm of contrasts that all work to draw our attention to the face.

Rim lighting

One of my favourite techniques is rim lighting, which helps to establish form quickly, emphasises the silhouette, and feels dramatic and cinematic. It's an opportunity to add a splash of colour as well. I opt for both red and blue here, which suggests police lights in addition to looking cool.

Specular hotspots

My all-time favourite technique, perhaps. I adore little white sheens, and they're an important cornerstone of my style. Fortunately, Catwoman's costume is ideally set up for this, and I've taken every opportunity to add glints on every cloth fold I could. Like rim lighting, they help to reveal form quickly.

Holding Lines

Having been a concept artist and art lead in video games for 12 years, I learned to work in many different styles. But for comic cover art, I've hitched my wagon to this particular style, which juxtaposes fully painted interiors with heavy black holding lines. I like the detail and nuance of modern digital painting, but I also like the traditional look afforded by line art. For me, this combination is the best of both worlds.

Subtle textures

In the same way the value, colour, detail and such can help set up useful contrasts in the image, so too can texture help to set off one area from another. It's a bit of a subtle detail, but here you can see that the prison walls and bars have a gritty, dirty texture, and it's contrasted with a shiny leather on Catwoman herself. The pose and colour help here as well, but it all adds up to her feeling luxurious, even when placed in this grimy setting.

Contrapposto pose

I'm often tasked with drawing superheroines, and communicating sex appeal is all about attitude and posing. In life drawing classes, you've perhaps heard a teacher explain contrapposto. Well, they're right. Opposing the lines of the shoulder and hips always works, and that's what underscores the pose here. In other perspectives, try to find twists and S-curves, and you'll often get a good result. The one thing to avoid is looking forced or strained; a beautiful pose is lyrical and relaxed, with flowing lines rather than sharp turns.

Artist insight

MAINTAIN A DAILY SKETCHING HABIT

Henry Wong presents a range of tips to help you stay consistent and motivated when it comes to studying and drawing every day

Artist PROFILE

Henry Wong
LOCATION: England

Henry is a senior concept artist and is currently working for Thatgamecompany. He has worked extensively in the video game and animation industries for companies such as Sony Pictures Animation, Paramount Animation and Netflix.

<https://bit.ly/3qwxz2N>



Doing art studies and sketches while trying to explore and learn new techniques on a daily basis can be extremely daunting for some people.

You can so often find yourself frozen in front of a blank canvas, not

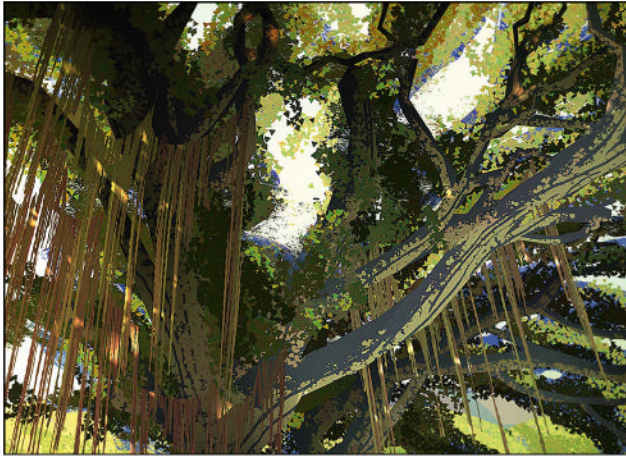
knowing where to start, or you find yourself unable to finish a painting forever while attempting to achieve your perceived idea of perfection. It could also be a simpler problem, where you're just having difficulty finding time to do personal art, or to improve yourself.

I'm here to help troubleshoot your brain with helpful ideas I've picked up along the way, so you can overcome these barriers. I've found these tips incredibly useful all these years later, and they have helped me out in other facets in life, including my professional work.



1 SET ASIDE TIME DEDICATED TO PRACTICE

It's important to identify when you can start and how long you can dedicate to learning each day or week. You don't particularly require a lot of time, just anywhere between 30 to 90 minutes a day is all you really need, which could go before or after work or school. Another aspect is that you should time your studies and sketches and not go over the limit you set for yourself. You can always come back to the image if you feel there is something worth exploring, or if you're close to a breakthrough in ideas.



2 CONSISTENCY IS KEY

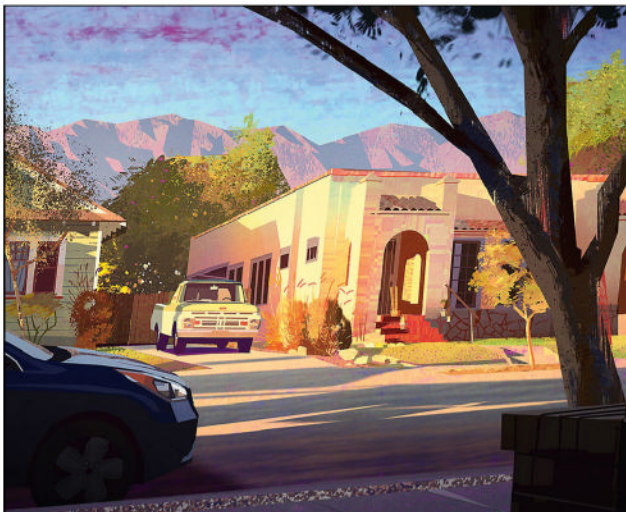
Making sure you clock in your daily and weekly hours is most important. What you're trying to do is create a positive habit in your daily schedule that you dedicate to self-learning. If you miss too many days in a row, it often breaks your learning momentum and makes it exponentially harder to return to the schedule you set for yourself. Find that time of day and stick to that allocated amount of time.

“You should time your studies and sketches and not go over the limit you set”



3 REFERENCE IS KING

I find it important to have references, as it gives a starting point for images and ideas to be inspired and evolve, and it's extremely common in the professional workspace to help develop projects. Therefore, make sure you find references and do your research before you start. It will give you a lot more momentum in your learning process and can solve many problems that you may have as you progress in your quest to gain new skills.



4 ART IS EVERYWHERE

Reference is certainly important, however finding the right reference can be difficult. You can often find inspiration in other forms of art outside of painting and drawing. Examples could include cinematography in movies, compositions in photography, historical objects in museums, shapes and textures in fashion design and costumes, and even the set design and lighting in theatre. Art and inspiration is everywhere around us.



5 TOPIC OF THE WEEK

Another aspect of not knowing where to start is perhaps the paralysis that comes from choice. Art is a behemoth of a subject with many encompassing topics to learn, and you may feel that it can be overwhelming. You can break it into bite-size topics, so instead of studying human anatomy as a whole, focus on hands and gestures for the week. Once you're done there, you move on to the next topic, such as posing, skeletal structure, and so on. ➡

Workshops



6 MIX IT UP

Weeks upon weeks of studying human anatomy can eventually get a bit dull, so feel free to take a week or two to explore adjacent subjects such as animals, compositions, lighting and form. They'll all eventually enforce one another in your learning process, and you'll run into parallel thinking to solve your problems. What worked on one problem may or may not solve a similar issue, what's important is to keep staying motivated and be open to exploration.



7 KEEP IT SIMPLE

Painting or drawing something within a time frame of 30 to 90 minutes can be challenging, so it's important to identify the most important aspects in the study. Where is the light coming from? What's the main form? What's the focus? This in itself is once again breaking down the focus of your study to further bite-sized pieces to digest. In doing so you'll find that you build efficiency, within which you'll develop speed and discover that a drawing or painting that used to take you a whole week to identify or break down may now only take you one sitting to break down and simplify.



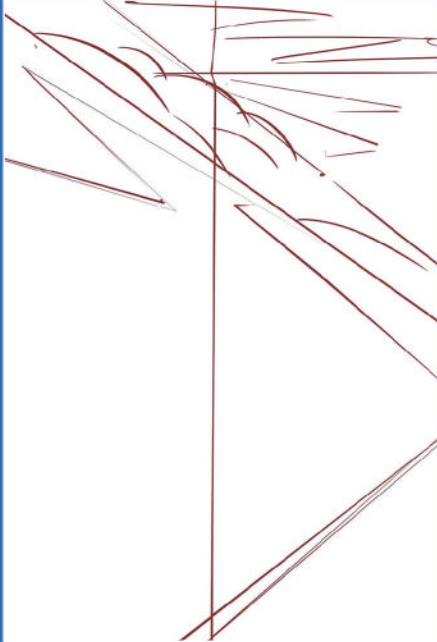
8 DON'T BOTHER WITH FINDING PERFECTION, JUST POST IT!

What people often find hard is knowing when a painting is finished. They continue to endlessly render an image without ever knowing what the exact end goal is, or never post it because they feel the image isn't good enough. This is why I

think it's important to set a time limit, and whatever you complete by the end of the timer, save it, post it on social media, and then move on to the next task. This helps to condition you to be less precious with your images so that you can focus more on the concepts and exploration of drawing and painting.

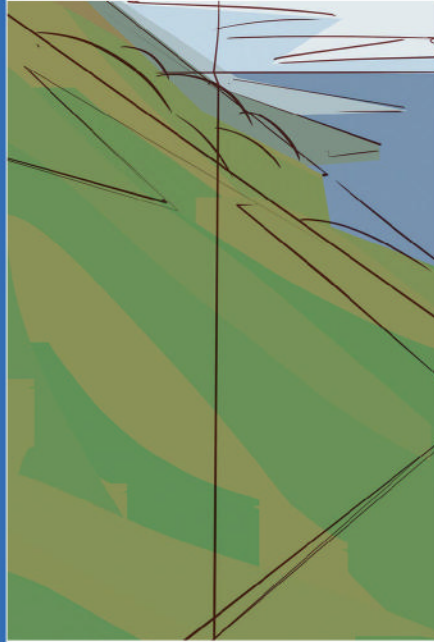
9 STUDYING EFFICIENTLY

Henry Wong offers an example of how to quickly establish a painting



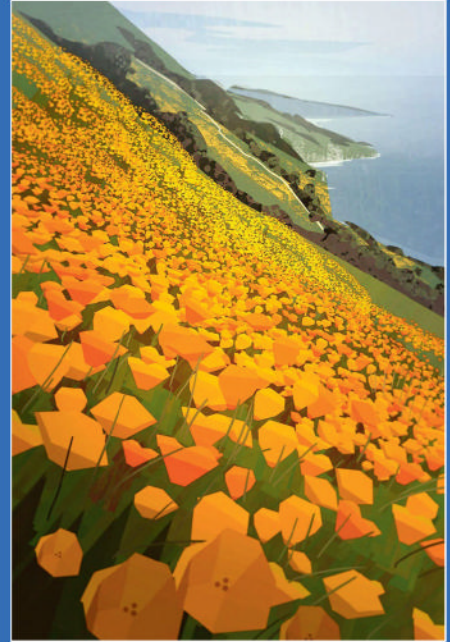
A Initial set-up

To start off, establish the most important aspects broadly, such as the perspective, horizon line, big and medium shapes, and composition.



B Broad values

Now I start to drop in my values, lighting and colour palette. I apply it broadly and abstractly, making sure my image and values are readable.



C Play time

This part is where I have the most fun! I refine the details and play around with brushes, stamping and duplication, rhythm, and shapes in my image.



10 SOCIAL MEDIA CAN BE YOUR FRIEND

I think a lot of artists are inherently vain. We like people to recognise our work whether we express it outwardly or not, and there's no easier way than gaining it through social media posts. People like seeing work in progress or artistic journeys as they allow them to peer into your thought process for a brief moment. Just remember that you're not doing this for likes and follows; you're here to learn and grow. Those likes and follows will come naturally as you improve as an artist and people follow your journey. And who knows, maybe you'll get hired to create artwork that's related to the subjects or styles that you naturally gravitate towards. ➡



11 KEEP NOTES TO RECORD CREATIVE DISCOVERIES

As you move along in this journey, you'll often discover new realisations about the way you work, what you now perceive that you didn't perceive before, and certain eureka moments in your images. Make sure you write down or sketch those ideas in a notebook or sketchbook as you go. These are little sparks of creativity that will help provide further fuel for your artistic journey, both professionally and personally.

12 DISCOVER YOUR ART SHORTCUTS

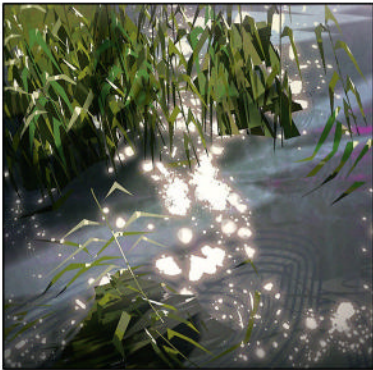
The more you study and sketch over a period of time, the more you'll become efficient in the tools you use. Make sure to remember all of the new techniques and shortcuts you acquire along the way, and before you know it this is usually what becomes a natural style in your work. I often find that the elusive 'style' in people's work is just decision-making skills that they've developed over time, which often starts with techniques and shortcuts.





13 GROUPS AND FRIENDS

Studying and drawing by yourself can be lonely and difficult to get motivated for. Having a friend or group, or joining a monthly art challenge can help boost your enthusiasm for creating art and studying. Not only will you be able to encourage one another, you'll often find inspiration from others on how they approach subjects that you may want to try out for yourself. There are lots of fantastic monthly challenges running, including #heavyjan, #pleinairpril, #mermay, #sketchtober, and #drawcember, as well as plenty of groups dedicated to art on a variety of Discord channels such as Warrior Painters, HEAVYPOLY, and more.



14 TAKE A BREAK, DON'T BURN YOURSELF OUT

Trying to create an image every day, alongside the general burdens of life such as work and personal time, can become stressful for some. I know this first hand, so it's important to know when burnout is encroaching. Common identifiers can be when drawing itself becomes stressful, or feeling indifferent to what you're trying to learn or do. Take a break – a day or two, the weekend, or however long you need – and try resuming when you feel better.



15 HEALTH COMES FIRST

Burnout is very real; it happened to me early in my career. Big life changes such as moving to another country, physical health problems, or big family events can all be extremely stressful and anxiety inducing. If you feel like you're forcing yourself to perform while spinning too many plates, I think it's best to stop and take an

extended break, and wait for the spark to return. I hope that all of you who are interested in the artistic journey would like to do this for life. There's certainly no real finish line to sprint towards; it's an extremely long marathon that stretches throughout your life with plenty of ups and downs along the way, so take your time and just try to enjoy it. ●





Technique focus

DYNAMIC CARD ART CREATIONS

Bram Sels explains the choices behind the structure of his artwork for a recent Magic: The Gathering set

Artist PROFILE

Bram Sels

LOCATION: Belgium

Bram is an art director at Axis Studios and an illustrator for Magic: The Gathering. His notable work includes art for Love, Death + Robots, League of Legends: Tales of Runeterra, and Magic: The Gathering's War of the Spark trailer. <https://bit.ly/3IUmeZE>

© Wizards of the Coast



"The machines are marching, better get your scrolls ready!"

This illustration is for the Scrollshift card in

Magic: The Gathering's recent March of the Machine expansion. When creating this piece, my main goal was to achieve a dynamic and fun composition that would pull the

viewer into the card. I spent a significant amount of time designing the thumbnail and ended up with a light-on-dark-on-light structure. When you're working on a Magic: The Gathering art, it's crucial to make thumbnails, to prevent you from getting lost in detail and keeping the overall composition strong and readable at card-size."

Artist PROFILE

Jacob Gonzalez

LOCATION: US

Jacob is a concept artist at Axis Studios. He is in love with Destiny and has been part of the team since high school. <https://bit.ly/3Zy2d19>

Procreate & Photoshop

DRAW DISTINCTIVE COMIC ART SCENES

Turtle power! **Léo Chiola** lives a childhood passion as he shares his creative process for a Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles tribute

Artist PROFILE

Léo Chiola

LOCATION: Canada

Léo is a storyboard artist at Gearbox Software and has worked for the past seven years as a comic artist, illustrator and character designer in the entertainment industry. <https://bit.ly/3JOrdYQ>



The Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles franchise has always been one of my favourites. I'd love to work on the actual comics for IDW, so I created this illustration as a first sample of how I'd draw the characters.

The concept was simple. I wanted to show all the Turtles together in a ready-to-fight kind of pose with the threat of the main villain Krang in

the background. So much TMNT art has been done, so I tried to bring something new by differentiating the shapes of the Turtles and setting the scene in a futuristic New York.

Most of the time I start sketching the layout in digital so I can easily establish the composition. For client work, I'd do a couple of layout propositions but in this case, I moved on right after my first sketch. I then print it in blue, which is easy

to remove in Photoshop, on a smooth 11 x 17-inch Bristol board, do a tighter pencil drawing, and start inking with a brush pen. Once I'm done, I scan and clean in Photoshop.

I've already established the palette with a colour rough during the layout stage, so I can focus on the execution without worrying much about the mood I want. Keeping the colour simple is the key, especially with a heavily inked image.

How I create...

A COMIC ILLUSTRATION FROM SCRATCH



1 Sketch in Procreate

This step is the most crucial. If it doesn't work at this stage it won't work by adding ink or colour. Here I focus on the energy and shapes, rather than technical or anatomic accuracy. I also create a perspective grid with the Drawing Guide tool. I establish the vanishing points and draw the grid by hand on a new layer.



2 Ink with a brush pen

When I'm confident with my pencil stage, I start inking with a brush pen; for me a Pentel Pocket brush. I love to exclusively use a brush to have a more organic, natural feel in my lines. I also use screentones, which are amazing to add more values to an image. They are expensive and can be tricky, so it's better to not overuse them.



3 Build your flat colours

This is the backbone of my colouring process. I separate each area by using a different colour, following the general mood I established with the colour rough beforehand. I create my selection with the Lasso tool in Photoshop and have all my flats on one layer, which I can then select with the Magic Wand tool.

In depth Comic process



DEVELOP AN IMAGE



The pencil

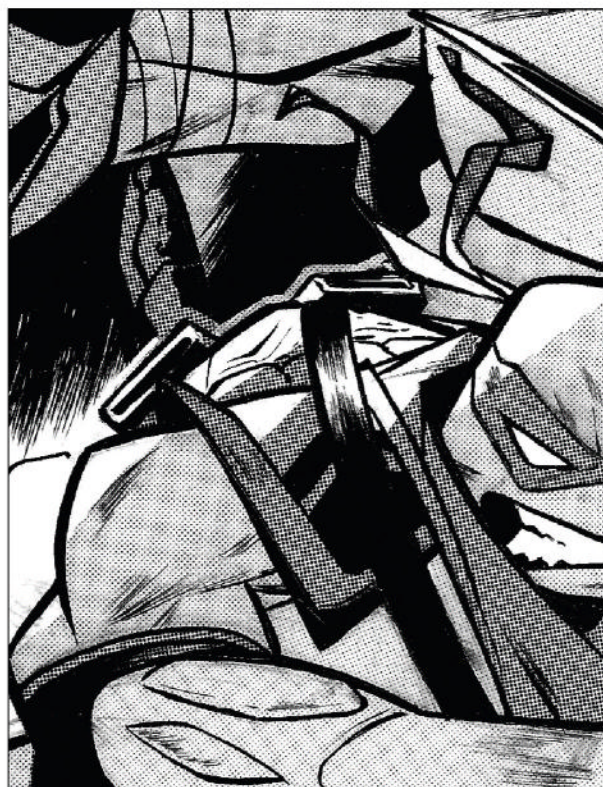
This is my pencil stage before rolling on to the inking. I use an HB mechanical pencil and try to be precise, while at the same time not caring too much about the line quality, as my final lines will be inked. Depending on the complexity of the image, sometimes it can be rougher or tighter, whatever helps me to get the most confidence for the inking stage!

Creating the colour rough

After my layout is ready, I jump directly to the colour rough. It must be quick, but I always try to figure out all my colour and lighting problems at this stage so I can use it as a guide for the final colour. Find the right palette and don't lose yourself in detail!



GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 5 now!



Cut it right

Beware of the screentones! Before applying my screentones, I always think about whether there will be a strong highlight somewhere that I can let become visible. It's important to think ahead as the screentones bring an amazing texture, but they will tone down your colour and highlights if they are applied at the wrong places.



RESOURCES WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: THE GOOD BLOKE

This brush gives you all the hardness of a classic round brush with a subtle, rectangular soft edge. I use it to define the shadows.



Life on the edge

I love to balance my rendering with soft and hard edges. With ink, I like to use a brush pen for feathering the transition between black and white. With digital colour, I use a brush with a subtle soft edge that allows me to bring in some softness when needed. Remember, contrast is key!

Let there be light

I establish where my lights are coming from during the colour rough stage, so when I'm working on the final colour I don't have to think too much about it. Here I have a strong, hot red rim light coming from the back of the Turtles, and another cold blue direct light coming from the top right.



Areas of focus

I always try to apply the mantra "more is less" in my artworks. Here you can see that the further we go from the foreground (Leonardo), the less rendering I apply. I didn't even render Donatello, I just applied flat colours.

Smoke and mirrors

Sometimes in comics you don't colour your own work, but when you do, don't hesitate to take some liberties! I added this smoke in the foreground over the ink to bring some depth into the image. It's subtle, but it really helps to make it more organic!

Technique focus

BEGIN BUILDING THROUGH SHAPE

Vis dev artist **Dustin Panzino** reveals how he starts to formulate new compositions from basic blocks



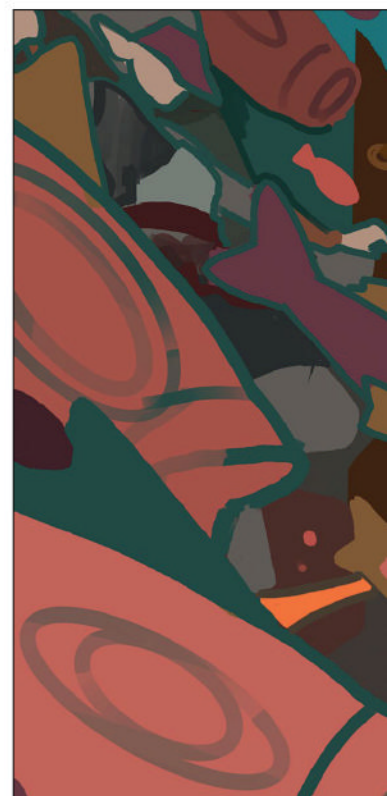
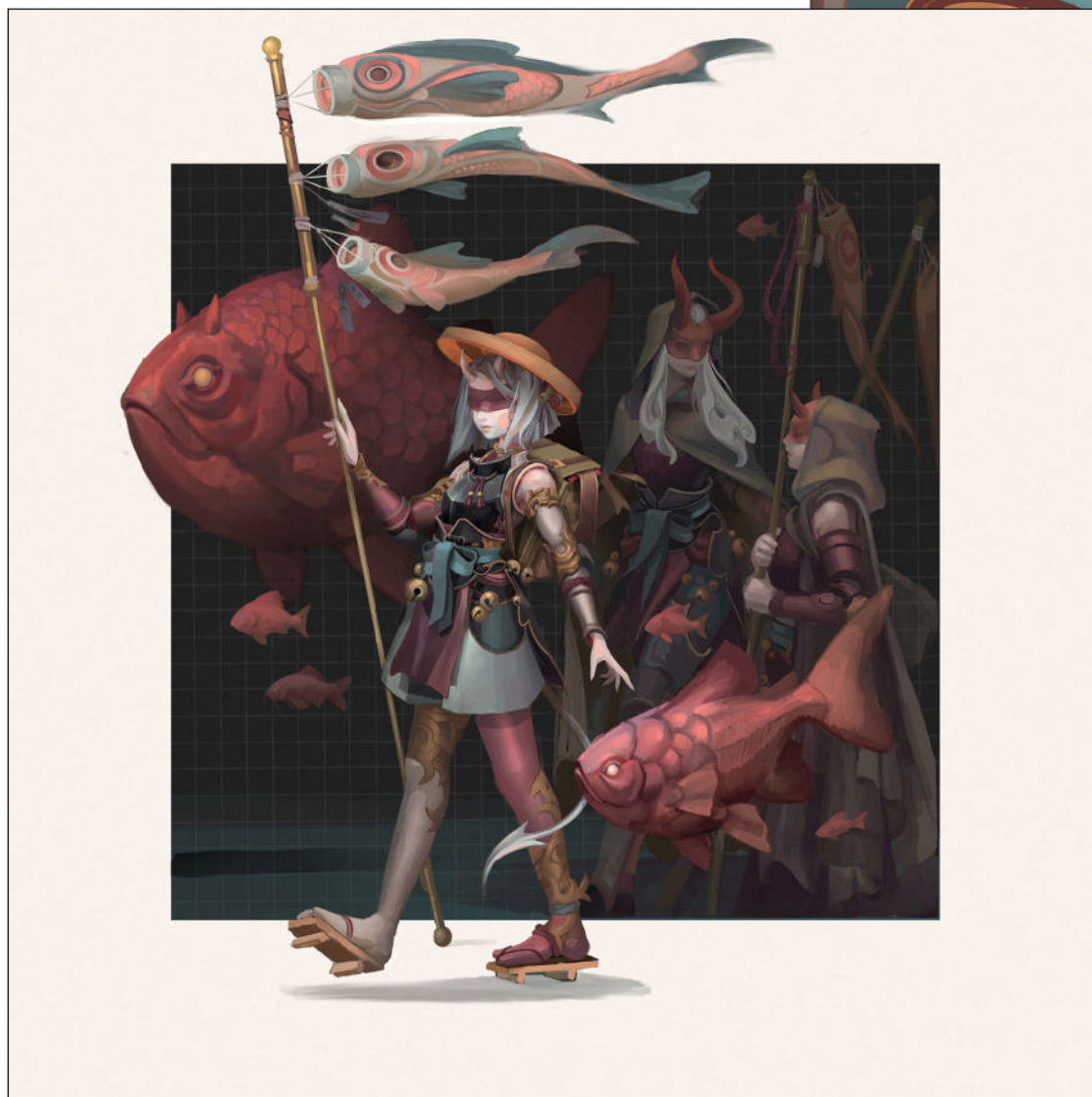
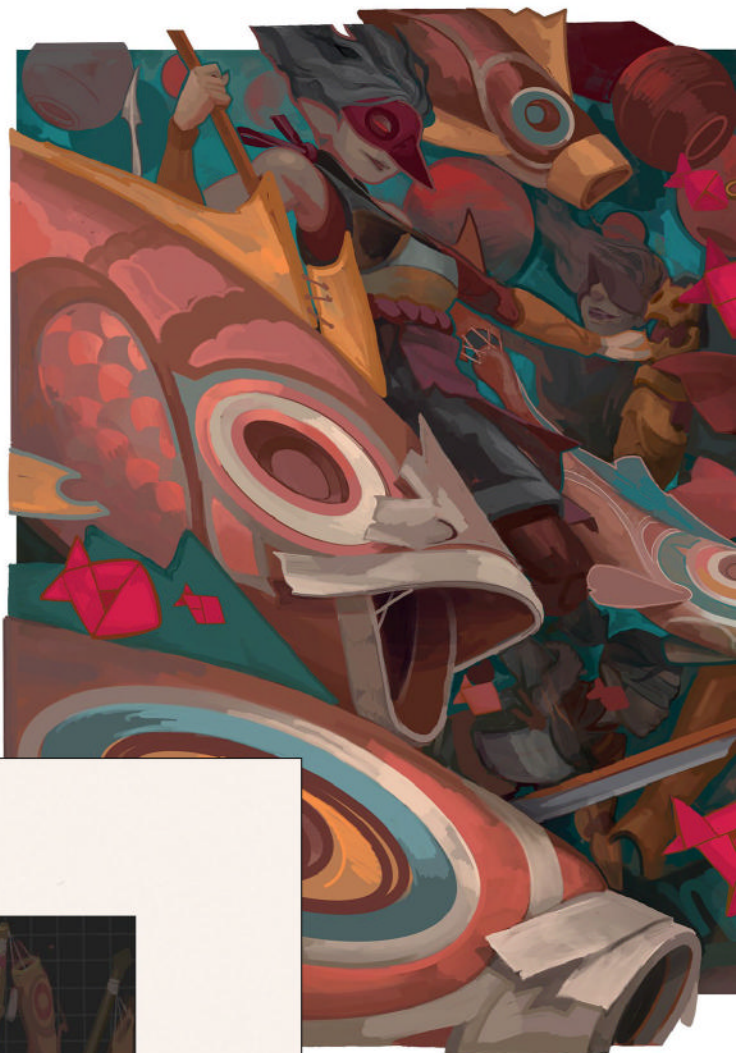
"When starting a new illustration, I sketch with the Lasso tool or a large, blocky brush. I rarely use line work.

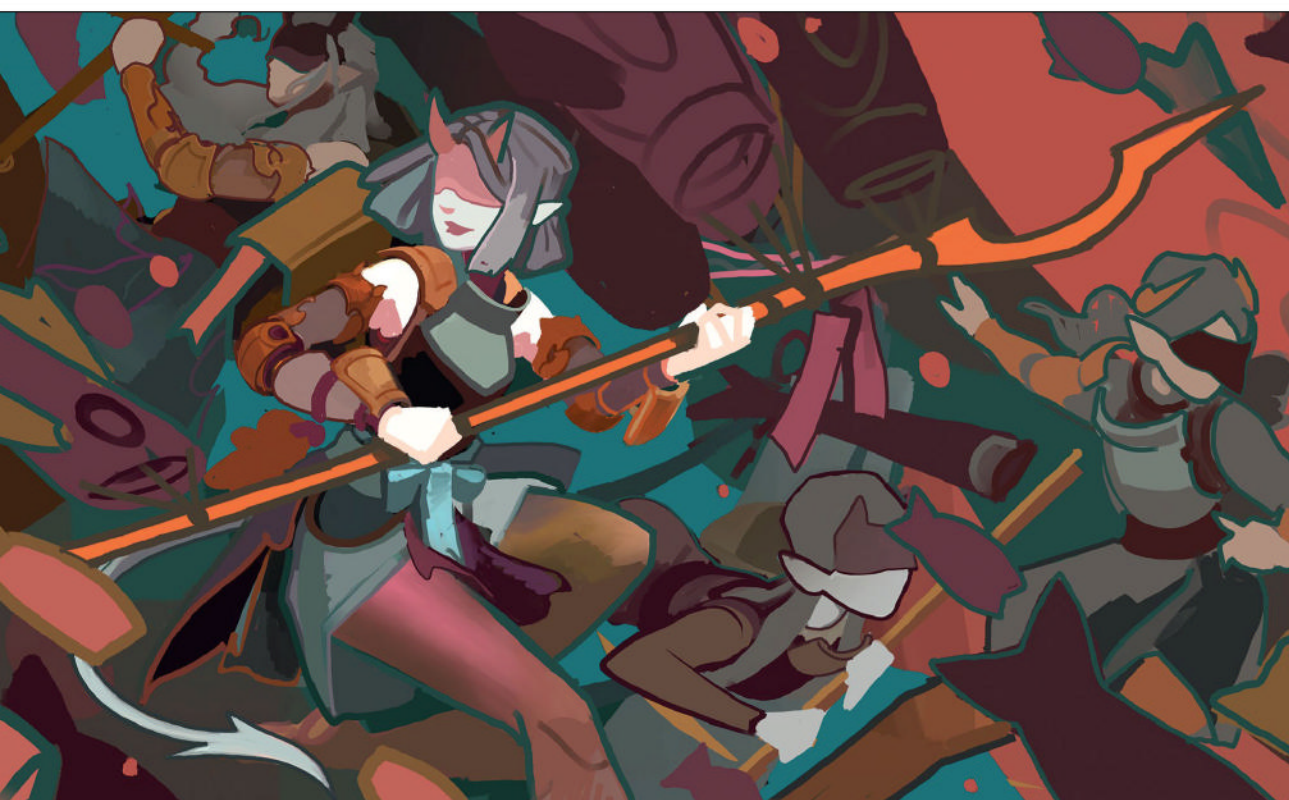
The goal is to get quick shapes down to carve out the composition.

I'm focusing solely on the shape language, local colour, and the movement that they create until the composition becomes something I feel strongly about. This makes

tackling more complex images far more manageable. After that I'll paint into those established shapes and build the piece up from there, only adding detail and rendering when complete.

I'll often design characters separately. This way I'm not worried about figuring out their look while composing an image. It also helps manage complex images, especially ones with multiple characters." 🍷





Artist PROFILE

**Dustin
Panzino**
LOCATION: US

Dustin is a visual development artist currently based in Los Angeles. He started his career as an oil painter doing gallery work, but would later transition to a position within the video gaming industry come 2020.
<https://bit.ly/30O6fXK>

Clip Studio Paint & Photoshop

PART 2: COLOUR A COMIC BOOK PANEL

Steve Ellis returns to complete his in-depth workshop, as he explains the thought process and techniques behind colouring

Artist PROFILE

Steve Ellis
LOCATION: US

Steve paints, draws and writes comics and fantasy art. He has co-written, penciled, inked and coloured work with clients like Marvel, DC and AMC TV. His focus has been on bringing to life personal projects like Iron Killer, Thornclaw Manor and Moonshine Bigfoot. www.steveellisart.com



Welcome back for the second and final part of my workshop on creating a comic page for a new project. In the first part I talked about designing the characters, and drawing and inking the page for a new project called Iron Killer, which I'm working on with Shannon Eric Denton and Kevin Grevioux. It's a Mad Max-like setting with demons.

In this part I'll talk about the ways that I use colour to give life to the characters and the world. We're going to go over the colour design, and how to use colour to establish

the world you're creating, as well as tell the story of the individual page.

On new projects, it's important to have a clear idea of the colour range you're working in. You're going to be working on the book over multiple panels and pages, and it's vital to have a theme to keep the world consistent from panel to panel and page to page. It's also important to create enough of a colour range that you have room to be inventive and make the book fun. Consistency is great, but you also don't want to be so constricted that it looks boring.

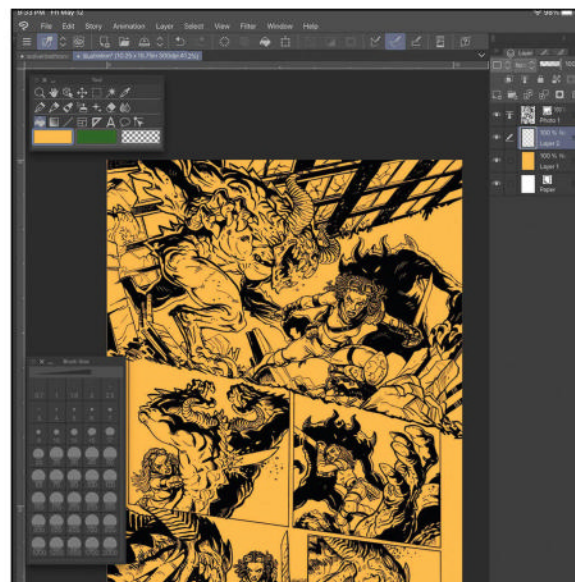
The wonderful part of creating the world, designing the characters, and

setting up the colour schemes is that you have complete creative control over how the page looks in the end. This also means you have one last chance to see if there is anything you can do to prop up the ink art, and use the colours to tell the story. It also gives you an opportunity to right any wrongs in the ink art, which you can't do when working in the traditional role of a colourist.

The entire time I'm colouring, I'm thinking about making a beautiful page, but also about using colours to clearly highlight the crux of each panel, and to move the action from panel to panel in a fluid pattern.

DID YOU MISS OUT ON PART ONE?

Grab a copy of issue 227 by visiting page 54!



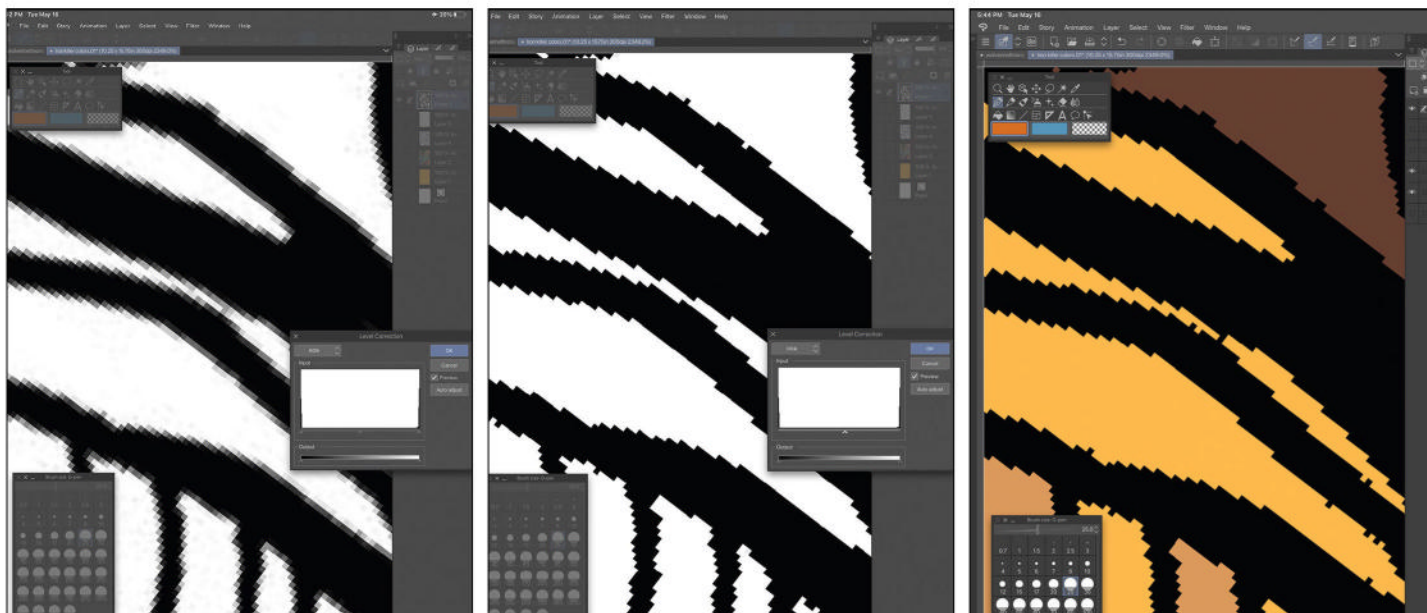
1 Make the inks transparent

The first steps are to prep your file for colour. You don't want to just jump in on the inks layer and colour directly, because you'll destroy the original ink lines and it won't print well; there will be a nasty little thing called anti-aliasing that will blend your ink into your colours, causing all kinds of grey to mix with the colour. I set up a file in Clip Studio Paint with a white background layer, a blank colour layer, and an ink layer that has the ink file on top.

2 Set up a base colour

With the ink layer set to Multiply, which makes the white spaces between the ink lines transparent so you can see the lower layers, I take my first colours layer and drop in a base colour. This colour may not end up in the final page, but it sets the mood and allows me to play back and forth with colour and value. It works a lot like a grisaille underpainting in oil paints. ➡





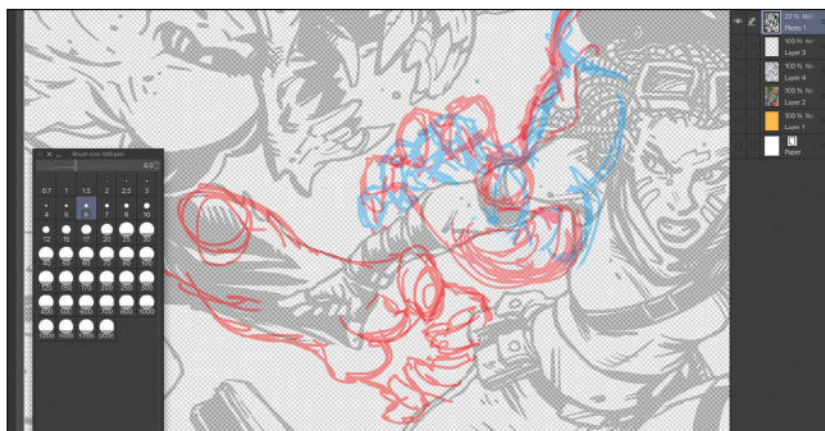
3 Clean up the ink lines

Since I did the artwork on paper, you can end up with minor smudges and grey areas that show up on the scan. These can interfere with the colour and make the inks look dull, so I use Level Correction or Curves in Clip Studio Paint to sharpen the blacks and remove any grey areas in the inks. It takes a little playing around with, but the idea is to get the black to be solid black and the white to be solid white, so when you turn on the base colour layer, you don't see anything interfering with the clarity of your line-art.



4 Identify storytelling problems

In the previous part of this series, I swapped out the art of the character Gale in the first panel to make her pose more dynamic. Before I go to final colours, I like to look at the page and see if I've made the drawing clear, and as I was laying in the first colour, I wanted the hands to act as a contrast element for Gale, so they need to have a lot of black, but still read as hands. It's time to use the joy of drawing on screen to fix this.



5 Fix the line-art

I quickly shut off all the colour layers and go into repair mode. I lower the opacity of the ink line so I can draw on a layer above it to repair the art. Once I've figured out the proper shape, size and gesture of the hands, I create another layer for inking the hands and arms. I'm using the G-pen to ink the lines here.



6 Flatten the repair

Once the arms are inked, I erase any artwork from the lower layer that would overlap and interfere with the new art, and do any last touch-ups before I flatten the repair layer into the ink layer. I also spend a little time finessing the lines to make sure they flow together.



7 Set up colour flats

Now I need to create colour flats on a colour layer below the ink layer. I set the ink layer as a Reference layer using the lighthouse icon in the Layers panel. In Tool Properties I set the Fill Bucket to Refer Multiple. Now when I use it, the colour will fill up to the edge of the black lines, but on the colour layer instead. At this point the colours I drop in aren't final colours, but I'm thinking about themes of colour I want for the finish.



8 Cel Shading on top of flats

I assign all the areas with flat colours that are easily selectable, and now select areas of colour, such as the big green demon in panel one, using the Magic Wand tool and colour on a new colour layer I call the shadow layer. After selecting a colour area, I choose a colour that's a shade darker and draw in a darker shape over the colour. I use the ink as an indication of light direction and go through the whole page, establishing darker and lighter colours for every colour area. ➡



9 Create a bleeding colour background

I don't want a colour going behind all the panels because I like the clarity that white panel gutters lend toward readability. In the first and fourth panel the artwork 'bleeds' outside panel borders to the edge of the page. I create a sharp line of colour on the bottom of panel one and a fading colour area behind the characters in panel four that fades into the white of the page.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

CLIP STUDIO PAINT

DEFAULT BRUSH: G-PEN

This has a nice sharp edge for drawing and allows for some lovely, variable line work.

PHOTOSHOP

DEFAULT BRUSH: AIRBRUSH

This brush allows me to create soft transitions in background colours when I don't want edges.



10 Highlights

Now I establish a third, lighter colour for every object that needs it. These are essentially highlights, but I try to use them to further the story. The contrast draws the reader's eyes, so rather than following natural rules of light, I often put highlights in areas that accent the action or reading direction of a panel. In the last panel there's a glow under the demon's head where it's getting stabbed, which adds to the action but not the reality of light.



11 Backgrounds and skies

Here's where the colour flats layer really helps. I save the Clip Studio Paint file as a PSD to preserve the layers and move into Photoshop. I can select the sky from any panel as a single shape and colour it with no impact to anything else. Instead of the hard-edged G-pen tool, I use an airbrush to lay subtle colour changes in the sky, which sets them in the background.



12 Storytelling with the sky

In order to draw the reader's eye to the point of interest in every panel, I use my airbrush to create lighter areas in the skies behind the characters. By making areas of higher contrast, I can use the colour to point out important areas. In panel two I lighten the sky around the knife going through the demon to accentuate the action. I'll also add white highlight areas on the figures to draw the eye to faces and key moments.



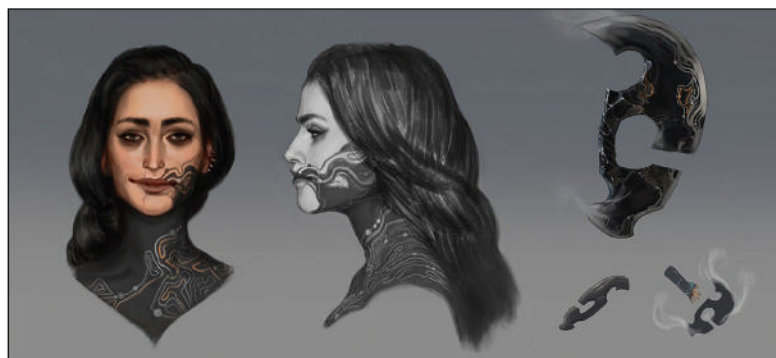
13 Create an atmosphere

For the building in the background of panel one, I selected the ink line of the building, created a new layer above the ink layer, and filled it with a blue-grey. This gives the sense of atmospheric perspective and depth. It gives the sense of a much bigger world and sets the figures forward at the same time.



14 Add glows and colour holds

To make glowing eyes and light flares on swords and other metal objects, I create a new layer above the ink layer in Screen mode. Using a soft, low-opacity airbrush, I draw a haze around the eyes. The Screen effect makes the colour glow over the inks. On another layer on top, I then add white highlights to really punch it out.



Technique focus

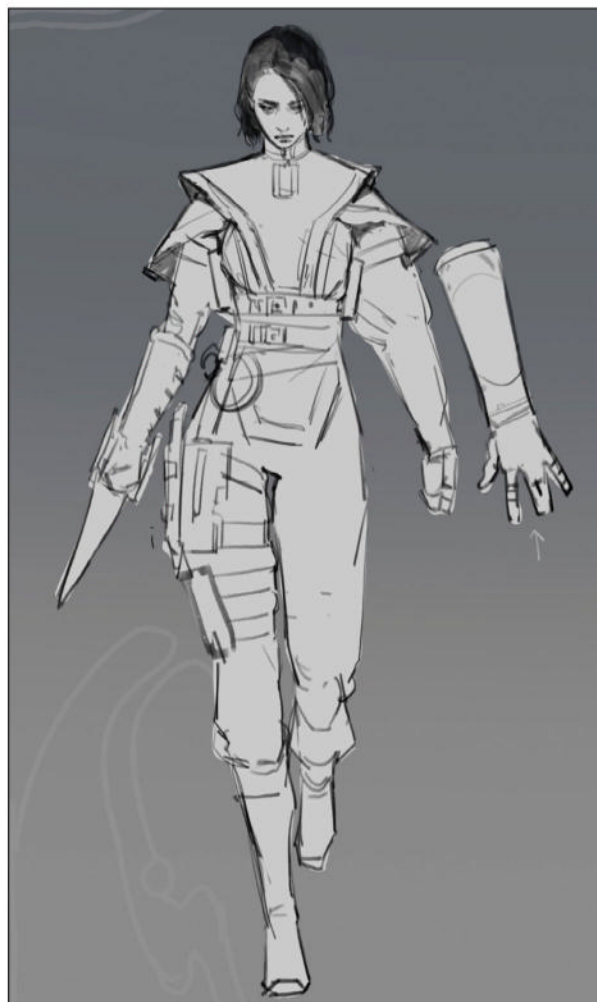
LIGHT UP YOUR CHARACTER ART

Sara Hermellin experiments with layers on her quest to perfect the scene for a rogue creation



"For this character artwork, I used a combination of Multiply and Overlay layers to explore different lighting scenarios in a fast, non-destructive way. I wanted to create a rather moody and dramatic lighting effect, so after a few tries I

settled on this direct, cold light from behind. The face of the character was not lit, which fitted with her design as a rogue, but the main read of the image wasn't very clear. To fix this, I made use of the mist surrounding the character to create a brighter background and bring the focus back to her upper body."

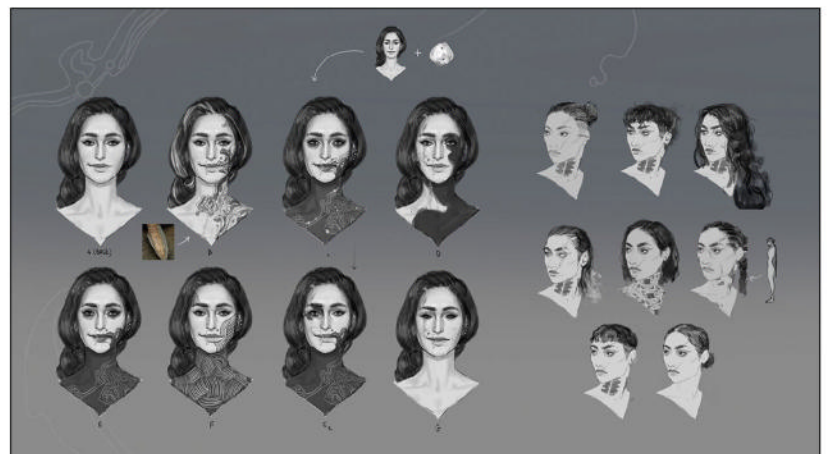




Artist PROFILE

Sara Hermellin
LOCATION: France

Concept artist and illustrator Sara is a recent graduate of New3dge Concept Art School, and specialises in designing characters. She loves mixing sci-fi and fantasy elements within her projects. <https://bit.ly/3qnn8yx>



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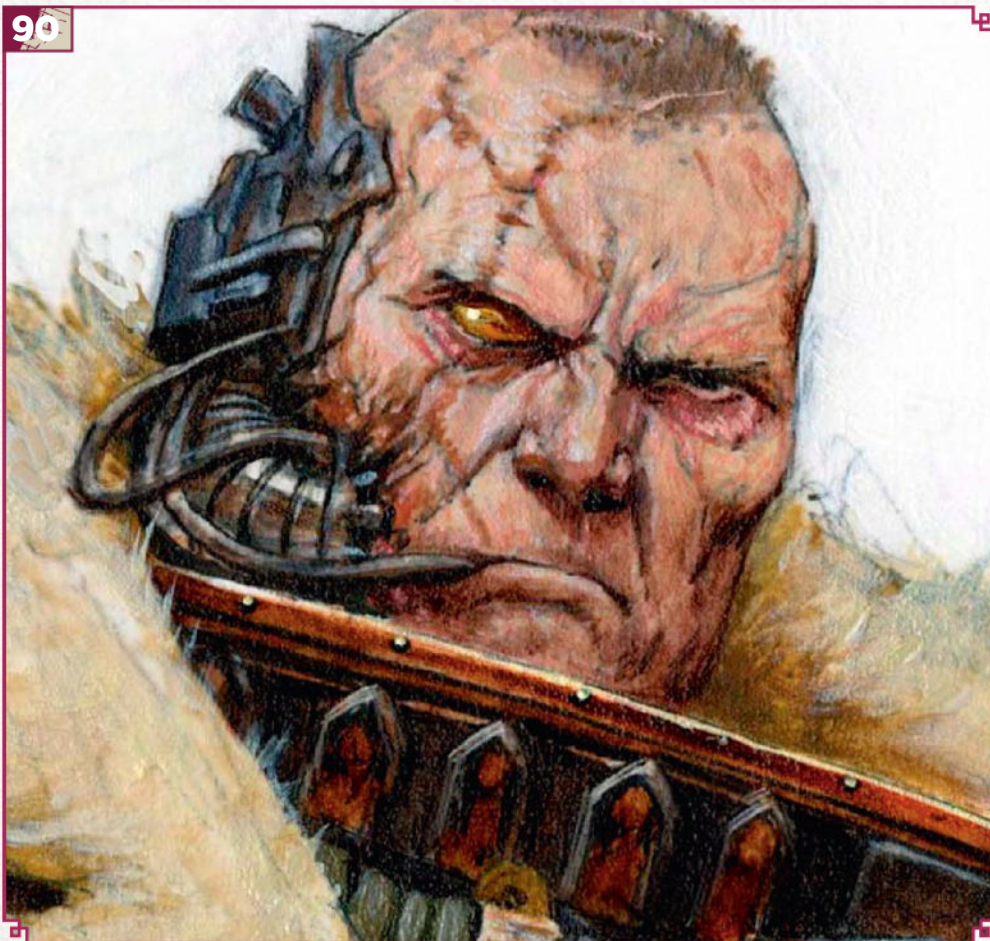
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Traditional Artist

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This issue:

84 Traditional FXPosé

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

90 Workshop: Paint a gritty sci-fi character

Learn how Thomas Elliott builds up his moody military figure.

94 Traditional sculpting with a twist

Tomàs Barceló mixes typical tools with toys in his sculpt.

96 First Impressions: Glenn Arthur

Find out why growing up near Disneyland influenced the artist.



FXPosé

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS



Ornélie

LOCATION: France **MEDIA:** Polymer clay **WEB:** <https://ornelie.com>

Ornélie is a self-taught sculptor who works as a 2D animator on feature films. Her sculptures are inspired by her dreams and fantasies of past eras, as well as gothic, surreal, and Victorian visions.



1 BLUEPEONY

"I emphasised the delicate ivory shades here to contrast with the bright, Asian-influenced colours. It retained a Victorian spirit that is dear to me."



2 ODONATA

"This sculpture depicts a dragonfly queen revealing her magic colours, such as the iridescent insect crown that sits upon her head."

3 GHOST BRIDE

"What tragedy happened here? The ghost story was a pretext to a floating spectre and to work on the transparency of the character's fabrics."

4 UNDERWATER

"I focused on suspension here; everything is liquid or aerial. I also wanted to make this piece amusing. The glass bubbles were blown by artist William Geffroy."





James Wintle

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Sketchbook, ink pens, markers **WEB:** www.jwintleart.com

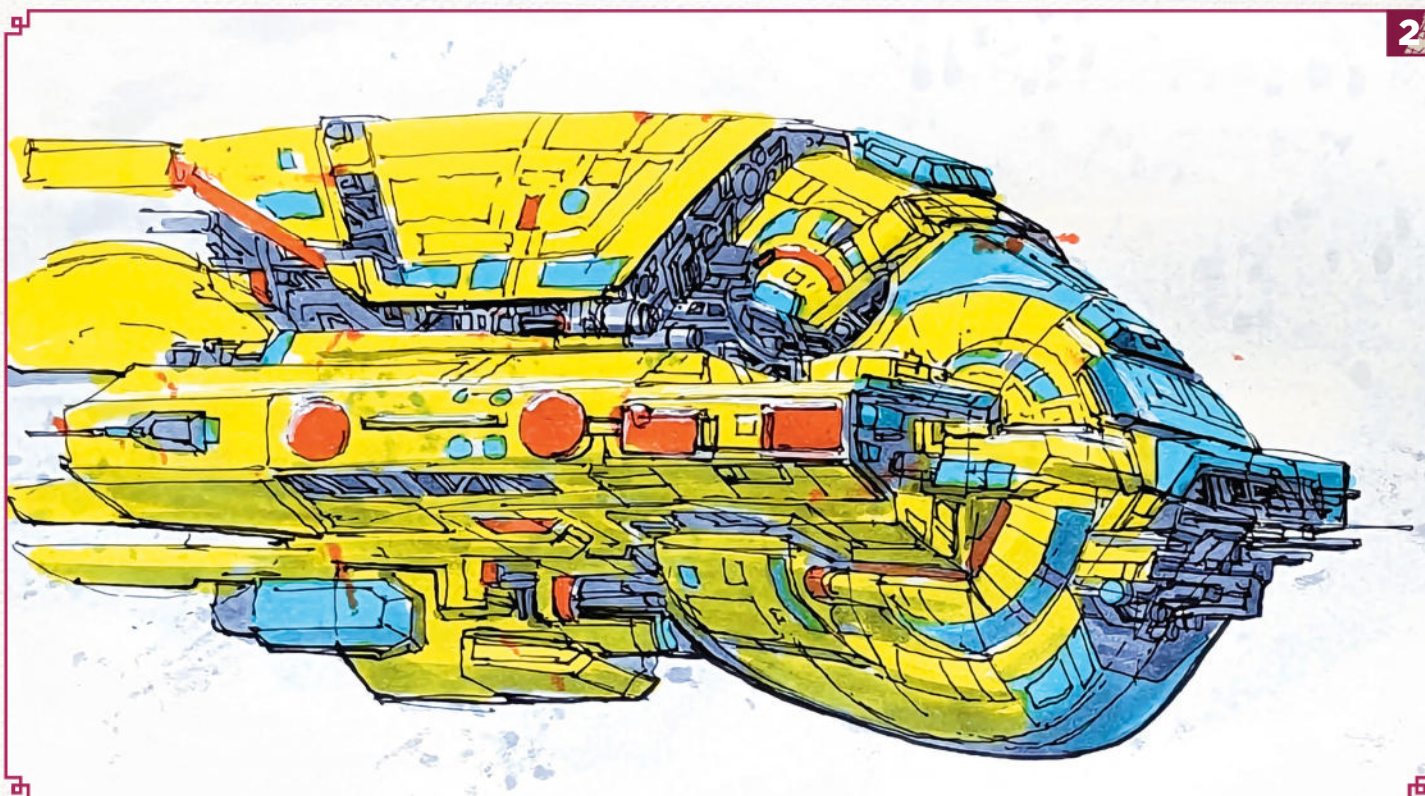
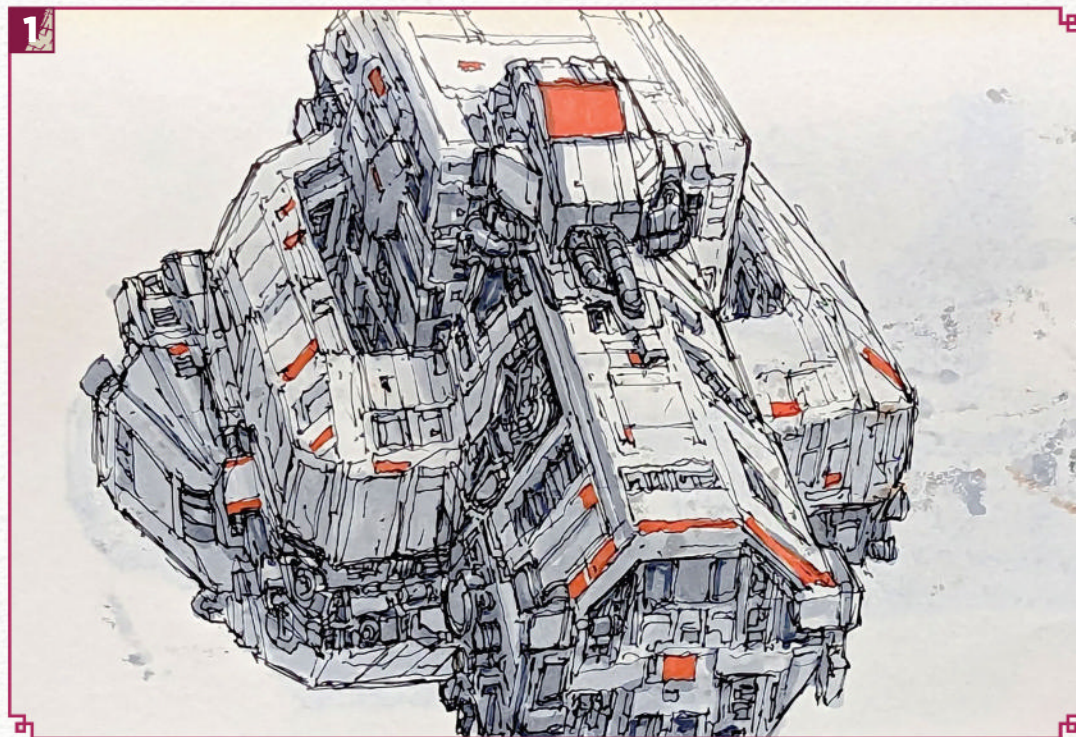
James is an IT worker by day, but also a freelance concept artist who specialises in the sci-fi genre. His projects include board games, book illustrations and film concept art.

1 RECOMBINATOR

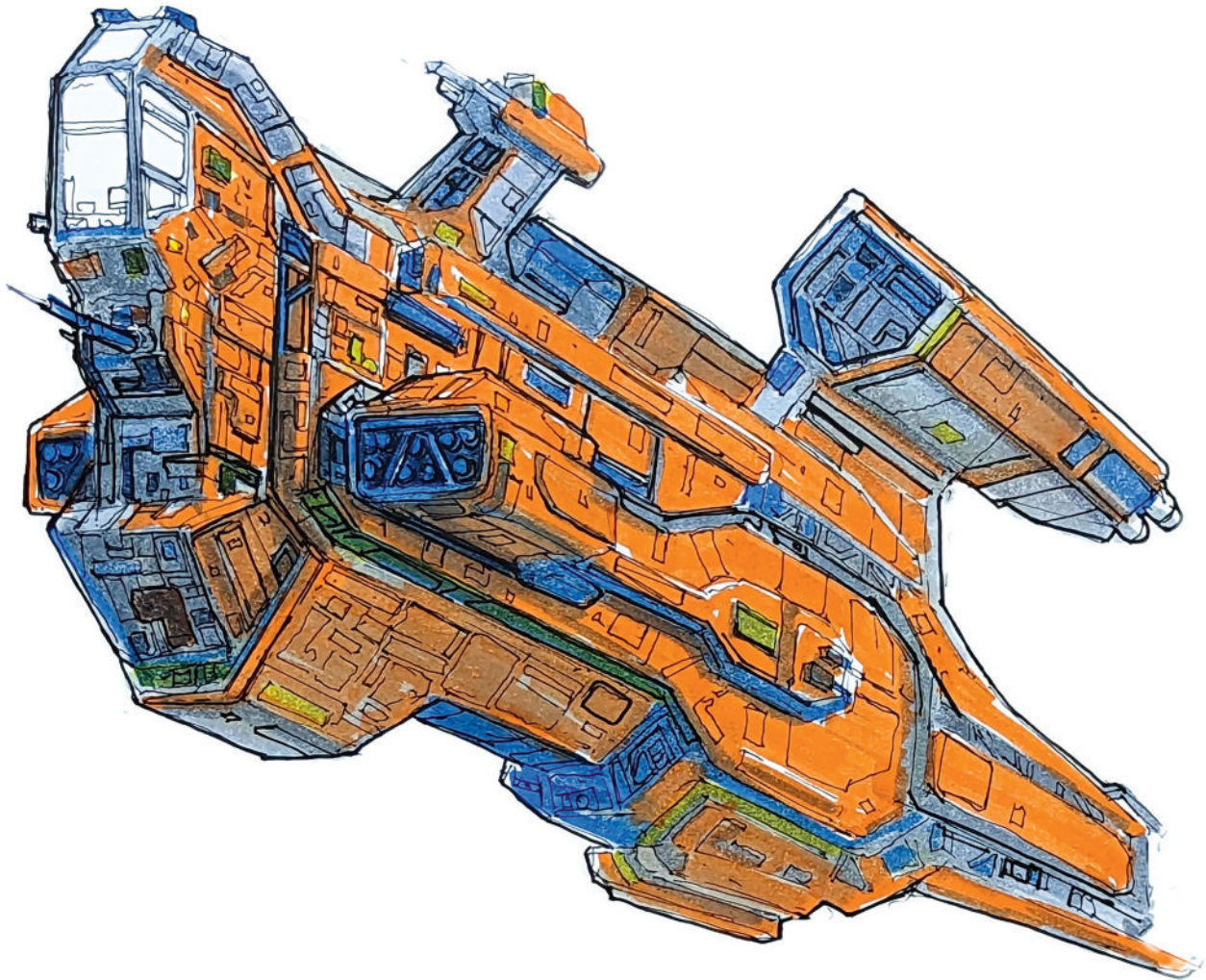
"Sketching spaceships is the ultimate design exercise, with as little or as much functional complexity as desired. My drawings begin with random ink marks or marker splotches from a previous page."

2 DRAGONET

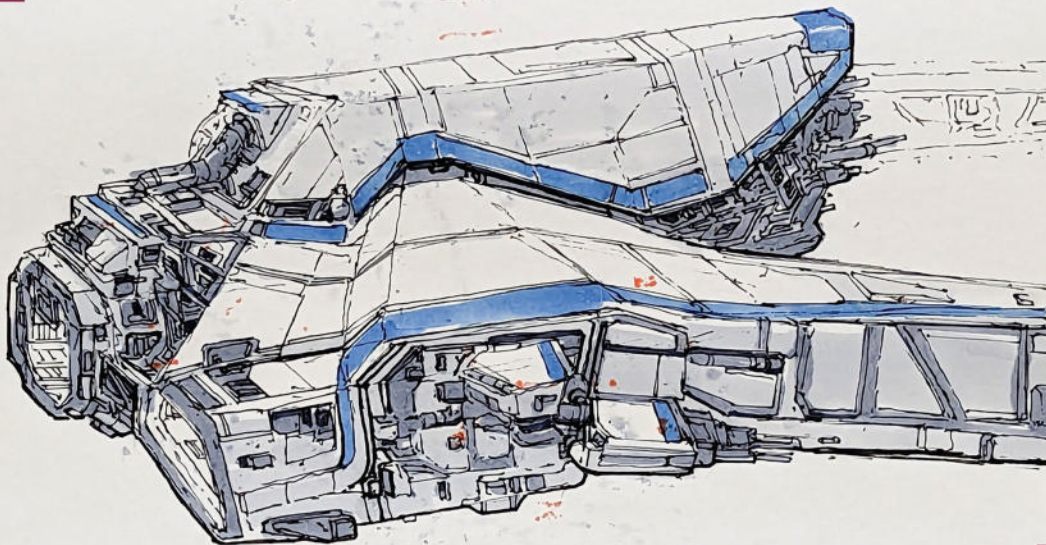
"Sometimes I begin a sketch as a simple colour pattern with markers, and the spaceship becomes a vehicle for conveying that colour palette in an interesting way."



3



4



3 REDTRO

"My work is heavily influenced by the sci-fi greats of the 20th century. Syd Mead, Ron Cobb and Chris Foss are among many artists whom I constantly strive to learn from."

4 TWINHULL

"I develop and accentuate the shapes and forms that I discover in this noise, at the same time considering the functional aspects such as engines, cockpits, weapons, sensors and utilities."



Idan Knafo Kerbis

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Copic markers and ink, acrylic ink, coloured pencils **WEB:** www.instagram.com/artofidan

Born in Israel, Idan moved to the US to attend art school and follow his dream of drawing superheroes. He takes inspiration from modern and classic comic artists, as well as movies, animation and video games.

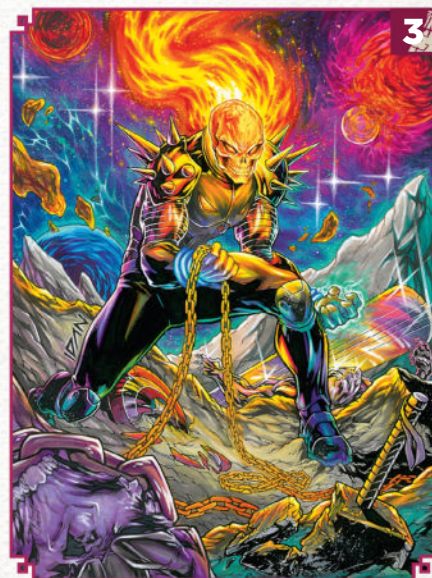
1 POWER RANGERS

"Variant cover for a Power Rangers comic published by BOOM! Studios. Jason David Frank was my favourite Ranger, and drawing him on a published book was a dream."



2 COSMIC BLACK PANTHER

"This piece was challenging for me. The gauntlet has many colours and trying to balance them all at once seemed tricky. I had a few attempts on a smaller copy."

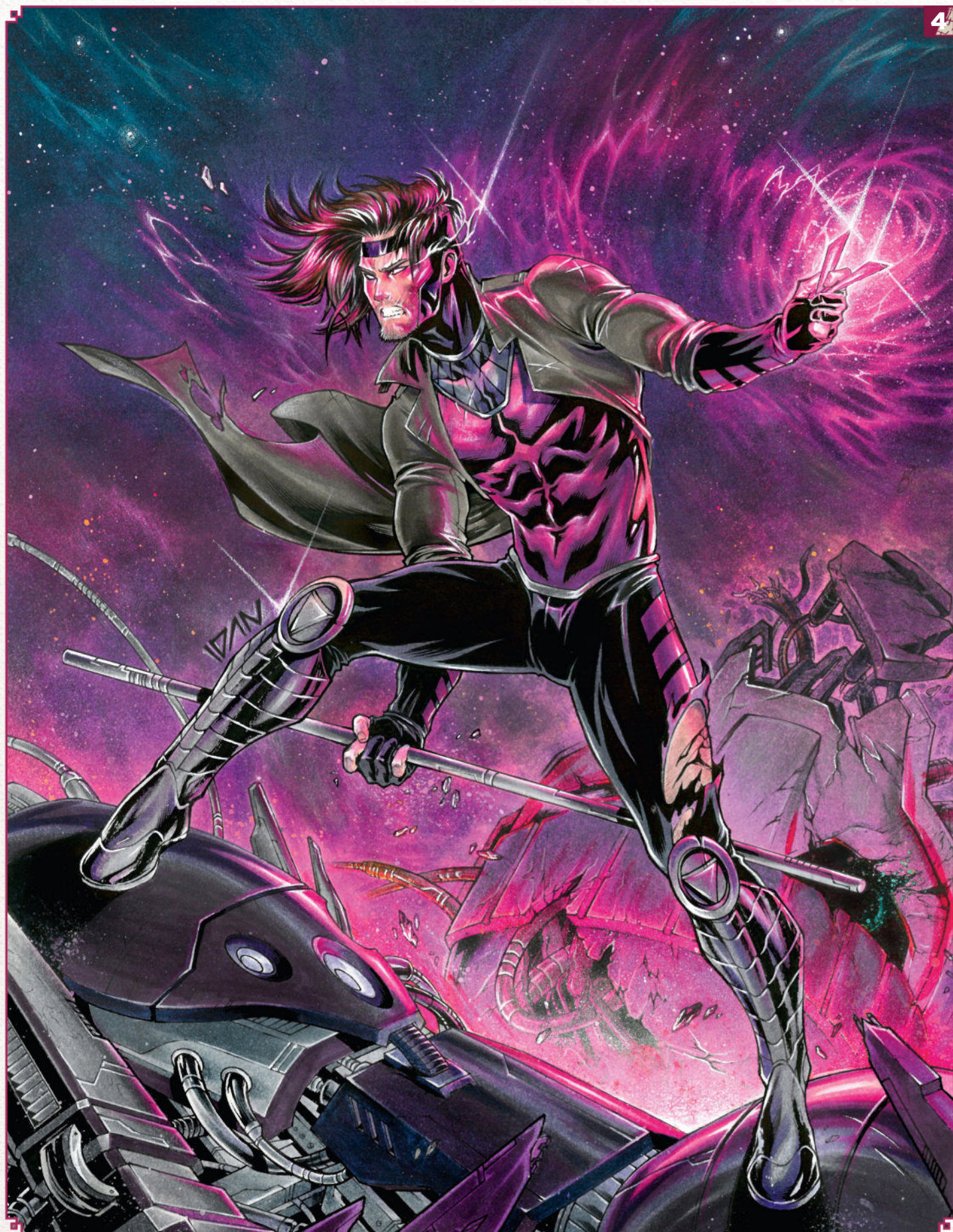


3 COSMIC GHOST RIDER

"One of my favourite Marvel characters and stories. I was so happy to get the request to draw him. I had to add all the small details and easter eggs."

4 GAMBIT

"My favourite X-Men character. I get excited every time I get a request to draw him, and feel like the kid who watched the cartoons years ago and doodled all day."



Pencil

Acrylics

PAINT A GRITTY SCI-FI CHARACTER

THOMAS ELLIOTT explains how he packs a trove of storytelling touches into a painting from his personal science fiction universe

Let me introduce you to Commander Frankon. He's mean, militaristic and doesn't really like people. I've been slowly building my own dark science fiction universe and this is a character I've drawn a few times over the years, and I wanted to do a polished painting to give him a definitive look.

In the story, Frankon is from a dystopian industrial world that has a harsh chemical atmosphere and an even harsher political climate. I wanted him to be a reflection of his environment, so many of the design choices were made to accentuate his gritty character.

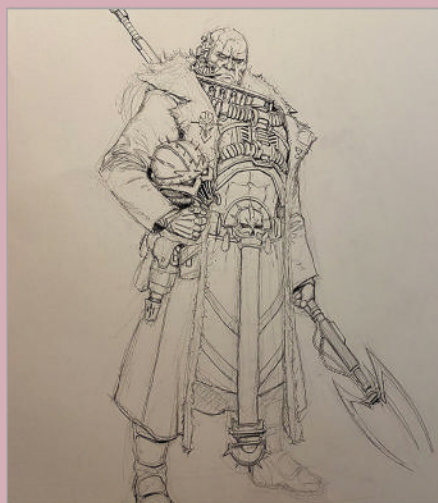
I like his military trench coat, cybernetic modifications and general

demeanour, which add to a hard, unforgiving aesthetic. Outside of getting him down on paper, I had no more goals other than to have fun and create the best painting I could.



Thomas is an illustrator, concept artist and self-confessed sci-fi nerd based in Nottingham. See more of his art at www.artstation.com/thomaselliott.

Step-by-step: Build from sketch to paints



1 METICULOUS PROCESS

Painting from your mind is challenging, but when it's a figure, people know when it doesn't look right. As a result, I have a methodical approach. I go stage-by-stage and make sure I'm completely happy before advancing. I began by sketching the character in pencil, which I love as I can rub out and rework until I'm totally satisfied. After the pencil has been established, I'll go over it in fineliner to lock in the details.



2 INITIAL BLOCKING IN

I use a layer of PVA and two layers of clear gesso to seal in the underdrawing. From there, I begin blocking in areas with burnt sienna acrylic. There are lots of advantages to starting a painting this way. It gets you thinking about your light source, which dictates shadows. It can also provide insight into how you'll add colour, as areas that will have a dark local colour will be blocked in more heavily than lighter areas.



3 ADD FINAL COLOURS

Once the painting has been blocked in, you get your first glimpse into how the final picture will look. From here I begin to add colour, building with lots of translucent layers. You can do this in oil or acrylic, but as acrylic dries much quicker I use it at this initial stage. The goal is to work in acrylic for as long as possible and switch to oils for the final stages, when I need extra control for subtle shading and edge definition.



MATERIALS

PAPER

- 300gsm paper

PAINT

- Winsor & Newton Artist Acrylics
- Cobra Artist water-soluble oils

OTHER

- 5B pencil
- Fineliner pen
- PVA
- Clear gesso
- Liquin

In-depth: Delve into the details



Forward plans

I knew that the face would be the make-or-break for this painting. It wouldn't matter how good the rest of the painting would appear if the face looked goofy or off. With that being the case, I made sure to pay particular attention to it at every stage. I put a lot of planning into it and if you look at some of the pen work I used to define the shape of the face early on, it's still visible in the final painting.



Light source

As the goal of this painting is just to show what Frankon looks like, and as he has lots of different materials on him such as metal, leather, fur and flesh, I decided to go with a simple top-down lighting arrangement. When painting the picture I keep in mind where the light source is at all times so the shadows and highlights on different parts of the painting all point towards the same spot. This helps create a cohesive and believable surface.

Play with the pose

Thumbnails are an important part of any picture, and this one is no exception. Going into this painting I had an idea that I wanted Frankon standing in an assertive and commanding pose. The challenge would be to have him in this sort of static position while looking dynamic and engaging. In these biro thumbnails you can see me playing around with variations on the pose. In the end I settled on one and used the diagonal of his trident to spice up the silhouette, and add direction to an otherwise up-and-down pose.



Simple lighting

Lighting is key to making any picture look believable. It tells us what the forms are through the shape of the shadows, can give us information about the materials depending on how the surface reflects the light, and the colour of the lighting can tell us about the environment the figure is in. From messing up many pictures in my time, I've learned that it's much better to do simple lighting correctly than to attempt something theatrical and do it wrong.

Liquin advantages

When the time comes to use oil, I mix Liquin with the paint for a more workable texture that's good for fine detail. It speeds up drying time and if you add enough, it gives the paint a translucent quality that allows you to get precise variations of tone.

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Technique focus

TRADITIONAL SCULPTING CONTRASTS

TOMÀS BARCELÓ opens up the toy box as he blends the old and new in an intriguing character sculpt

This sculpture of my character Kronen Dhalo combines old techniques with the modern, and more traditional sculpting materials with old toys, among other assembled objects. Dhalo's face was modelled using clay and casted in plaster, which I carved to better define the shapes and give it a texture that resembles an old wood. I created the composition from a real wooden frame, and the head with plaster, clay, and reused objects such as broken toys. Through a silicone mould I created a resin version, to which I added new assembly objects, before finally wrapping up the project by painting it. I love playing with the contrast between the ancestral and futuristic, to emphasise what is eternal in our history.



Tomàs Barceló has been a sculptor since he was a child, but didn't know it until the age of 21. Aside from creating art, he also leads sculpting courses on Domestika. <http://linktr.ee/tomasbarcelo>



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First Impressions

✧ Glenn Arthur ✧

Influences from Disneyland shape the artist's work



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

I grew up in Orange County, California, within earshot of the Disneyland fireworks. Growing up in such close proximity to several amusement parks and tourist attractions really taught me to pay close attention to storytelling and details. All of the intricately themed lands and the ornately detailed designs have inspired me endlessly.

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

Rococo and Victorian women's fashion and aesthetics have always had a profound influence on my artistic style. Old fairy tales and spooky lore have also heavily inspired my work, as well as pop culture and cartoons from my childhood during the 1980s and 90s. And of course, I've always had an extreme fondness of beautiful flowers and cheeky hummingbirds.

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

My first real commission was for an album cover over a decade ago for a band that I still work with today. My style, technique and skill have immensely evolved since then, but I'm still proud of that first piece.

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

The latest painting I finished was my own spin on the singing white rose from the golden afternoon scene in Alice in Wonderland. My artistic style has become much more refined and precise since that early commission. I also lean much more



THAT FAMILIAR WITCHING HOUR

A crystal-loving witch with her ghostly familiar cat friend.

into colour these days, whereas I used to work with much more monochromatic colour schemes back then.

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

My favourite characters and scenes to paint are anything that come

from the Haunted Mansion ride at Disneyland. I remember being enamoured with Madame Leota when I was a child, as well as the stretching portrait of the tightrope walker precariously balancing over a very hungry-looking crocodile.

I've always been attracted to the strange and macabre, so seeing ➡



THE THIRTEENTH HOUR
A Victorian-styled woman,
blended with an ornate
cuckoo clock.



➡ an entire dark ride devoted to unrested spirits and all things spooky was a huge thrill for me! I couldn't help but paint my own version of what I imagined happened to the tightrope walker after the rope snapped. That hungry crocodile finally got what it had been waiting for.

What are your painting rituals?
Coffee, a cat purring in my lap, and my favourite music playing in the background. I also spend a lot of time standing back and staring at my works-in-progress to keep the bigger picture in my mind. It's all too easy to get lost in the details if I don't take breaks in order for me to analyse the process.

Is creating art as a career all you thought it would be?
I can't say that a career as an artist has exceeded all of my expectations, because I never actually expected to have an art career in the first place. My artistic journey has been a lot

“ I also spend a lot of time standing back and staring at my works-in-progress ”

A GOLDEN AFTERNOON

A piece inspired by the singing white rose from Disney's Alice in Wonderland.

THERE'S NO TURNING BACK NOW

Glenn was inspired to create this image by the stretching tightrope walker from the Haunted Mansion ride at Disneyland.



like exploring uncharted territory. Sometimes it can be scary, but at other times it feels like I have discovered paradise.

What does the future hold for you?
Hopefully it contains plenty of drawing and painting, and puttering around in my garden. The older I get, the more that I truly love to relax at home and beautify my own surroundings. Although my

personal idea of beauty includes a lot of year-round Halloween decorations, sentimental objects, random oddities, and wall-to-wall art. I'm something of a maximalist in that way.

A touch of whimsy and a splash of the macabre can always be found in Glenn's work, while every painting he creates is lovingly punctuated by one of his signature hummingbirds. To see more of his art, visit <https://glennarthurart.com>.

HOPE AND HOMES FOR CHILDREN



URGENT APPEAL



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

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

We must act now.

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

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

Will you help us by donating?

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

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

Please quote **FP22 - Tec** when making your donation.

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

HOPE AND HOMES FOR CHILDREN



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Maestro only	
Card no.	Issue no.
Start date	Expiry date
Security no.	on signature strip
Signature	Date

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

Name of taxpayer	Today's date
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Please let us know if you would like to hear from us:

☐ by phone ☐ by email

☐ please tick here if you would NOT like to hear from us by post.

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

You can view our privacy policy here www.hopeandhomes.org/privacy.

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