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Illustration by Pascal Blanche

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



Although there are many and various aspects to our artistic journeys, and just as many areas and genres of art that we work in, there is one thing it's fair to say that we all strive for, and that's upping our game. Whether that means learning a new tool, improving on our anatomy skills, or discovering a new technique to add to our arsenal, we all want to become the best artists that we can possibly be.

The Gnomon Workshop is one of the biggest names in online training for digital artists, covering every area imaginable, with a roster of instructors that boast some incredible CVs. This issue we sat down with the team at Gnomon to find out more, and to show you what they offer for both the aspiring and veteran artists out there.

And if you're looking for more inspiration, then check out our in-depth feature on the art of Star Wars: Visions Volume 2, which includes fascinating behind-the-scenes work and conversations with the array of creators behind the new series.

Enjoy the issue!

Rob

Editor

Rob.Redman@futurenet.com

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Jessica Taylor's sketchbook

We explore inside the concept artist's sketchbook and discover her fantasy and nature-inspired creations.

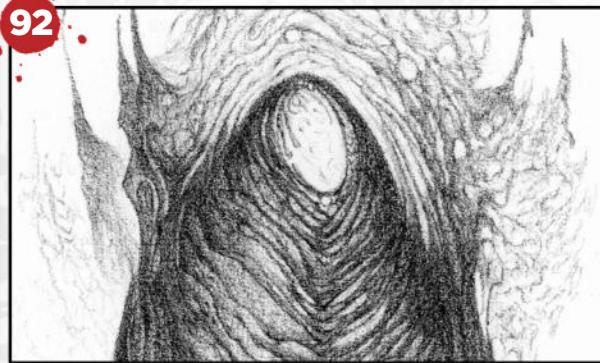
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Discover the art and artists behind the characters and worlds in the newest addition to the Star Wars universe.

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Build a story with marks and shapes

Learn to use automatic drawing techniques to develop your next project with ethereal artist Nadav Yacobi.

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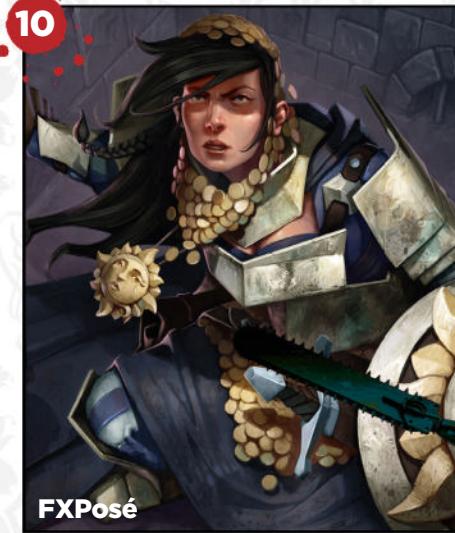
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Artist in Residence:
Joe Quinones



FXPosé



Finding your voice



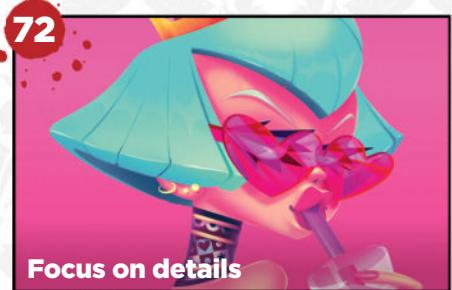
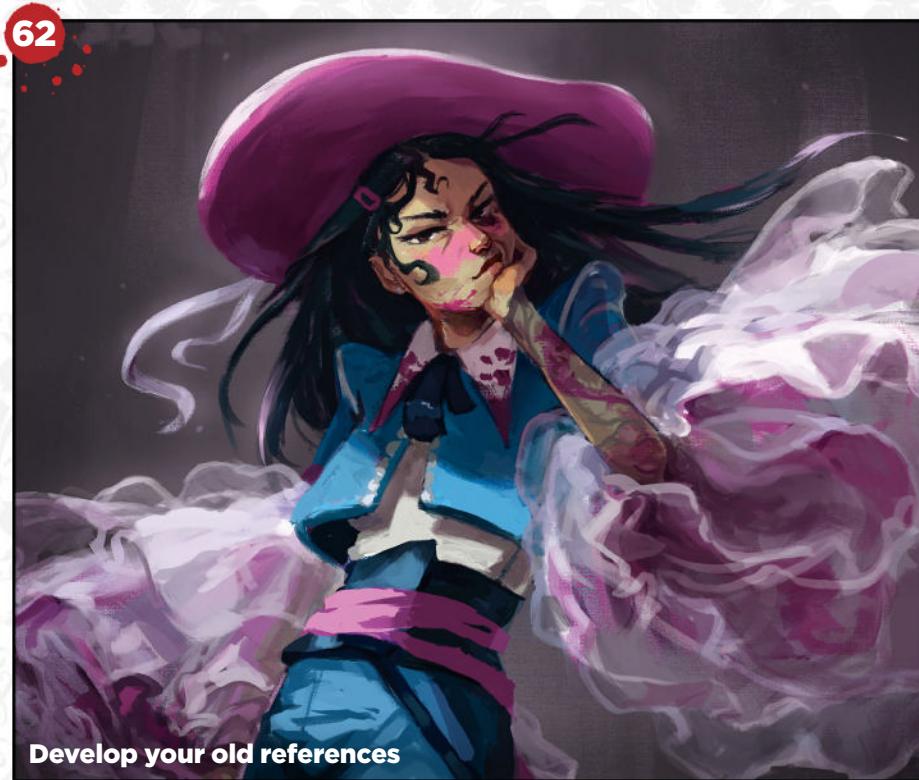
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Sketchbook: Jessica Taylor



Star Wars: Visions Volume 2



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We speak to the experienced artist about his inspirations and career development.

GET YOUR RESOURCES

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

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Type this into your browser's address bar.

<https://lfxm.ag/gnomon>

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Next month



Next month in...
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
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LIGHTBOX EXPO SPECIAL

We preview the big names headlining the most exciting event in digital art

Learn to draw dynamic action

Up your drawing game by adding movement, action and motion skills

Paint a classic horror monster

Discover the secrets behind creating a fearsome mummy in your artwork

Mixed-media studio tour

Illustrator Karoline Pietrowski and her canine assistant let us visit their home

ISSUE 232 ON SALE 26TH SEPTEMBER
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Artwork by Loish

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX

Editorial

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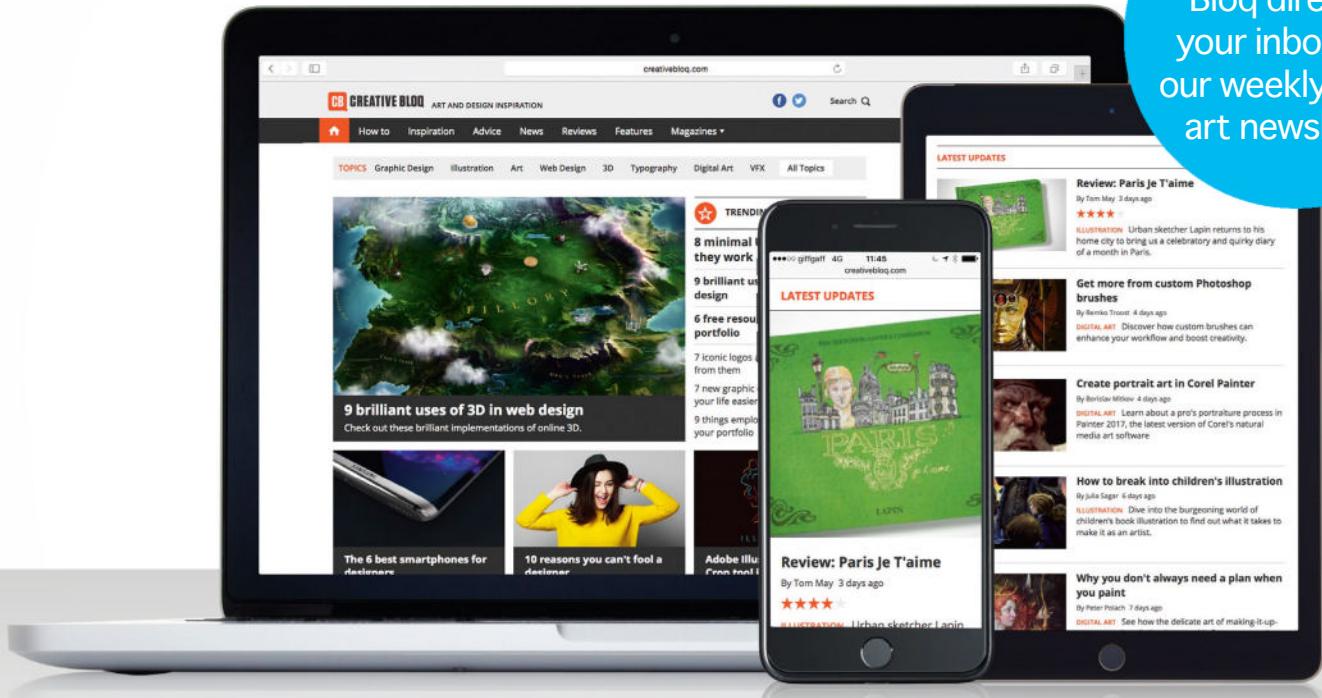


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for issue 134
by Karla
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EXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



Yekta Ömer Akyol

LOCATION: Türkiye MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: www.artstation.com/yekta

Yekta grew up on early 90s tabletop RPG books, point and click games, and sci-fi novels. Obsessed with painting from an early age, his work also draws on Medieval history.

1 SEWERS EXPLORATION

“For me, the perfect illustration tells an interesting story with just one panel. I often struggle to achieve this, but in a funny way.”

2 CLEAN CUT

“In this one I pushed myself to create a dynamic scene that was full of action, with an emphasis on a comic book style.”

3 AMBUSHED CLERIC

“Most of the time my main source of inspiration are the tabletop RPGs I play with my friends.”

4 THE CURSE

“Another big source of inspiration for me are Middle Eastern tales. I think I came up with this one after reading a children’s story book.”

5 DRAGON SLAYER

“Here I think I wanted to paint a stylised piece of chain mail and a dragon. The rest just painted itself.”





4



5





Alana Tedmon

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Photoshop, Procreate WEB: <https://alanatedmonillustration.com>

Alana is a freelance fantasy illustrator who studied in the online mentorship programmes of Visual Arts Passage. Here she discovered her deep passion for creating creature illustrations and working in the world of publication.

1 THE SUN'S BEHIND THE CLOUDS

"A sweet dumbo rat enjoys a stroll out in the rain during spring. She can enjoy the bad weather because she knows the sun is still there. It's just behind the clouds."

1



2



3

2 COMFORT FOOD

"Rats are my comfort subject when it comes to art and I imagine their comfort is sugary food. My pet rats adore dark chocolate as a treat when learning tricks."

3 THE GRIFFINFLY RIDERS

"Griffinflies were the largest insect to inhabit prehistoric Earth. This advanced dwarf-race of island-dwelling rats have learned to domesticate the griffinflies and scout out any invasive species that might threaten to destroy their fragile ecosystem."

4 SNAP

"A little daredevil shows off in front of his family by outsmarting kitchen traps and collecting their well-deserved cheese tax."





Khoa Viet Tran

LOCATION: Vietnam MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: www.artstation.com/vietkhoa

Khoa has a strong interest in creating characters and developing unique settings for worldbuilding. His art style draws inspiration from different cultures and mythology, as well as animated series and games.

1 RINGTAIL GIRL

"Deep in the heart of the forest, there resides a skilled archer known as the Ringtail Girl. Renowned for her nimble movement, this gifted archer's attire and tattoos take their inspiration from African cultures."

2 MARKETPLACE

"This piece is set in a post-apocalyptic world where people live in hot air balloons and use them as their primary mode of transportation. They are called Sky Nomads."

1



2



3 DEER SLEEP

"Introducing Dyani, a graceful centaur. As she slumbers, her hind legs are gently curled up, while her front legs and arm are folded inwards, creating a cocoon of safety and warmth."

4 SKYLANDIA

"A character exploration sheet for a project called Skylandia. As always, my goal here was to create engaging and memorable artwork, and pushes the boundaries of possibilities."





Luc Courtois

LOCATION: France MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: www.artstation.com/courtoisluc

Luc is a painter, visual development and background artist. He has worked on projects including animation for clients such as Sun Creature and The Line. Experimenting with digital painting is a recent development in his art.

1 LIGHT

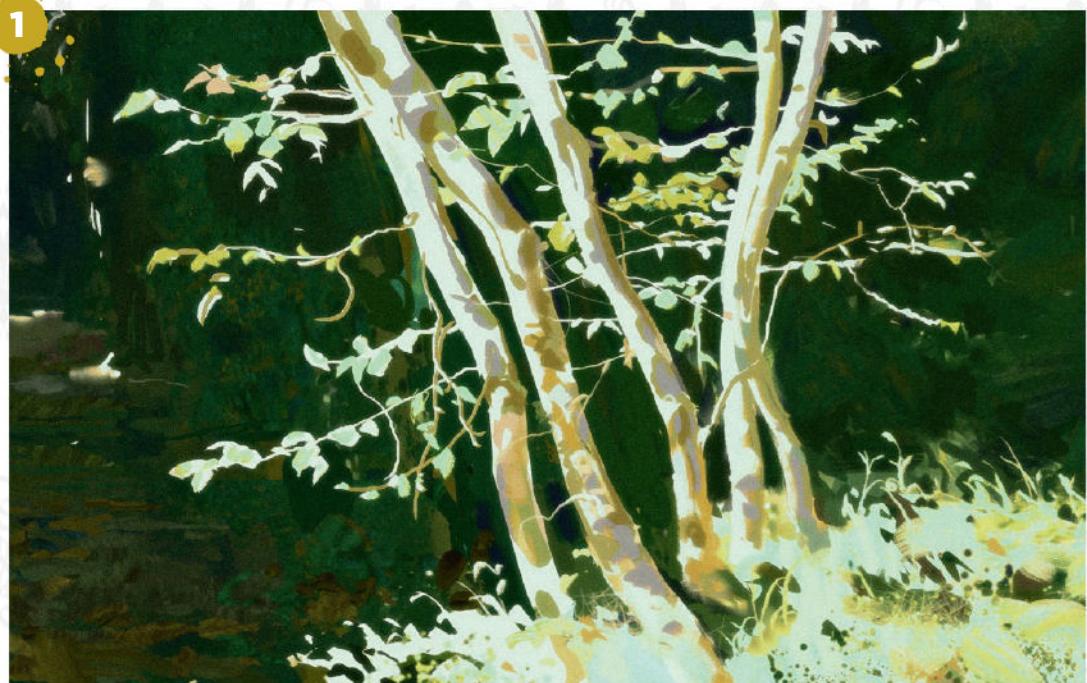
"This painting is part of my experimentation with digital media. I wanted to create something that was almost abstract and capture the essence of light."

2 ANOMALY I

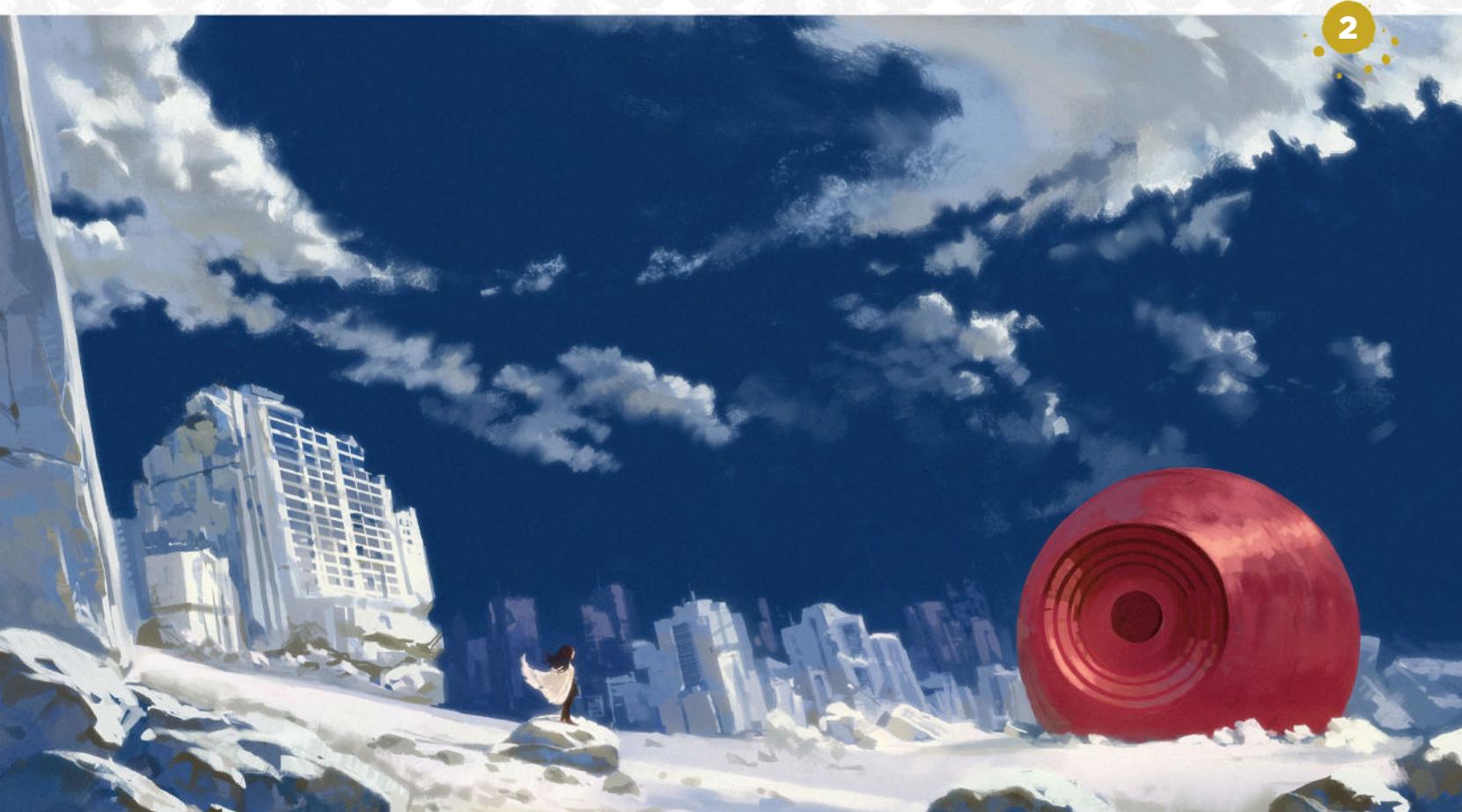
"This painting is part of a series where I wanted to show a desolate, lonesome world. I played with muted tones to show its stillness."

3 RUIN CITY

"Another one of my paintings that depicts a forsaken city. Here I wanted to elicit a feeling of hope by including lush vegetation and an ethereal light that pierces through the ruins."



2



3



4



4 COMING BACK HOME

"This recent painting was made while thinking about childhood memories and the feeling of coming back home after a long journey. I wanted the mood to be joyful and nostalgic."

1



Ozan Pulat

LOCATION: Türkiye MEDIA: Photoshop, Blender WEB: <https://ozanpulat.artstation.com>

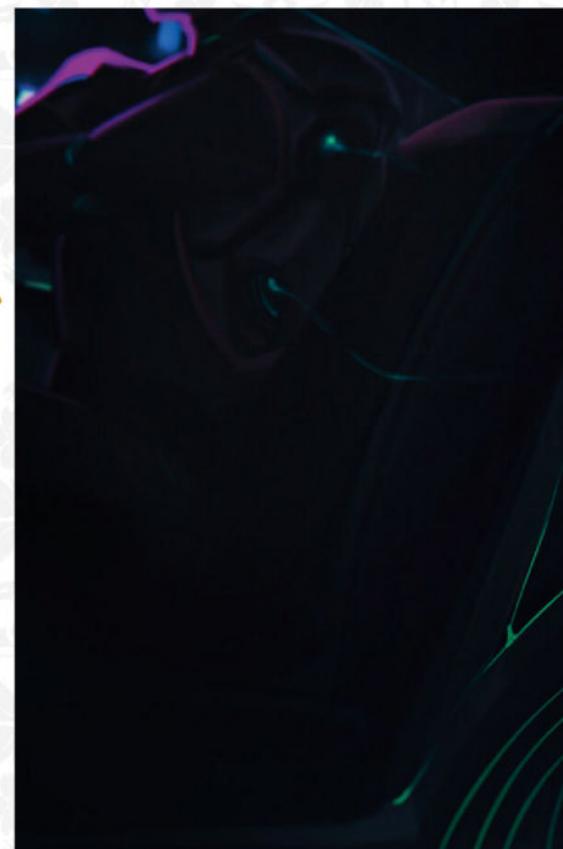
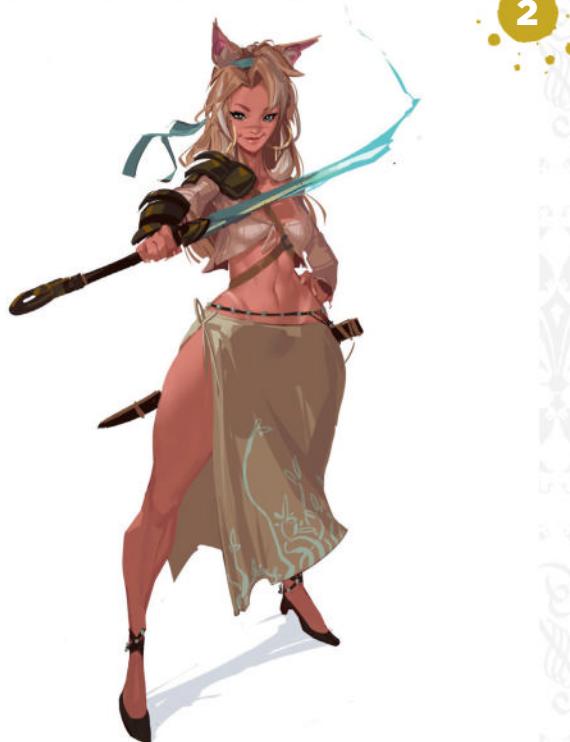
Ozan is a freelance concept artist and illustrator. He first discovered the magic of putting marks on paper at an early age, and hasn't stopped after realising he could combine it with his passion for games.

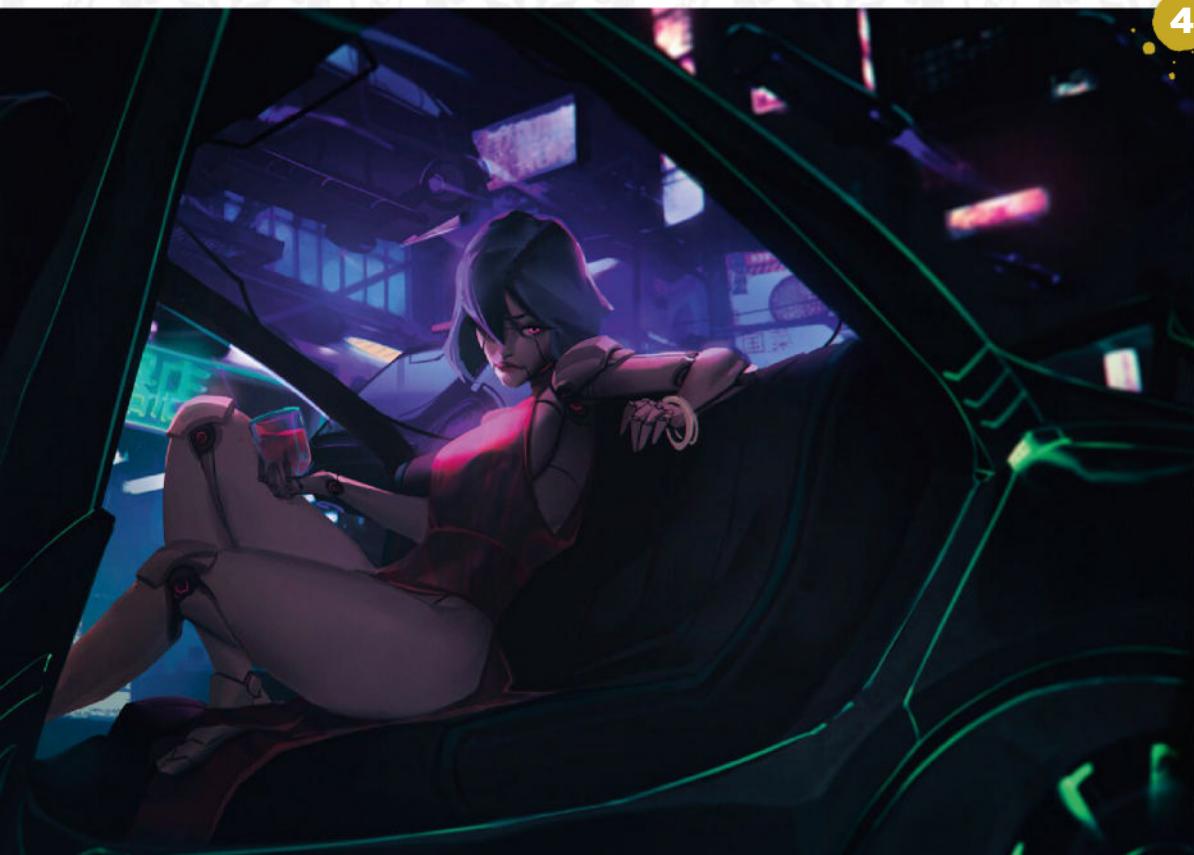
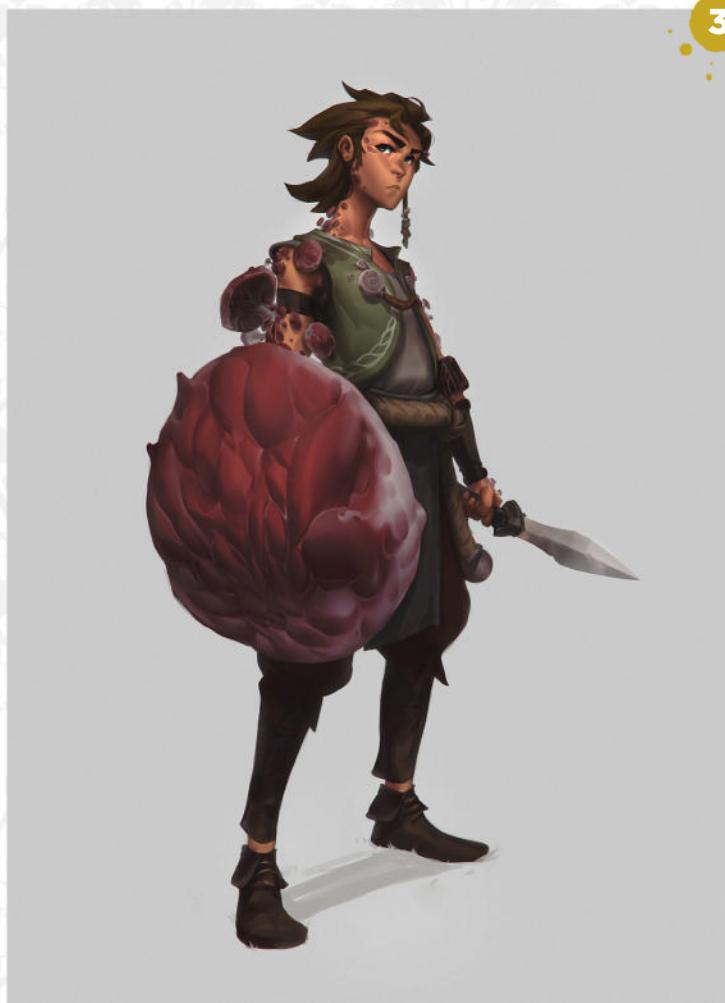
1 DISCORD CONTEST

"Sitting on your giant friend's shoulder is more fun than actually walking. Here I focused on the feeling more than anything. I love sitting in the passenger seat and observing my surroundings."

2 ISA

"This piece was relatively quick to draw, but I think it's one of the best indicators of what I enjoy about art the most: dynamic shapes!"





3 MUSHROOM FIGHTER
"This fungal fighter with a giant mushroom shield was designed to realise one of my core beliefs: that swords are better than guns."

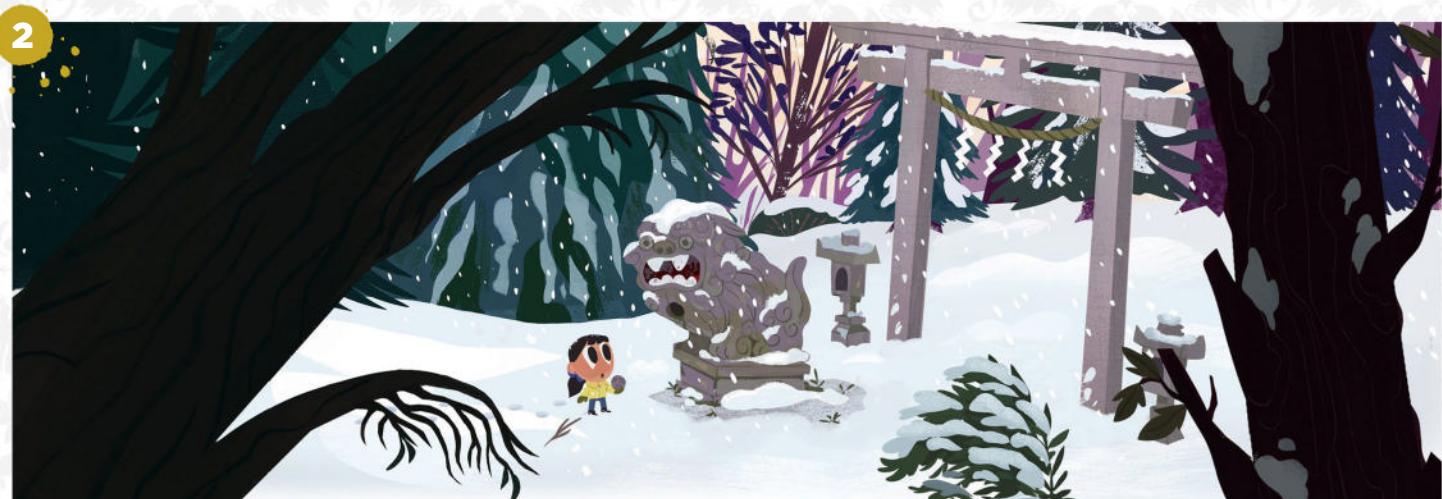
4 NEON CITY
"My primary goal here was to control where the viewer looks. I decided to make a low-key piece with a high-key accent."



Sarah Kieley

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Photoshop, Procreate WEB: www.sarahkieley.com

Sarah makes art for animation. Her work uses colour, mood and nostalgia to create a cosy, happy feeling. In her spare time she draws, travels and dances with her pet dog, Peaches.



1 TORONTO

"This painting of three kids from Toronto brings up a lot of nostalgia for me. I loved growing up in the city and playing in the streets until the golden hour finished and the street lights turned on."

2 KOMAINU

"This is inspired by many trips to Japan. I love komainu statues, which are better known as lion-dogs, which you often find when visiting Shinto shrines. They seem to have a life of their own."

3 TRAIN



3 TRAIN

"Another Japanese-inspired piece. I absolutely love train travel and all of the incredible old trains that you can find while wandering through both the beautiful countryside and cities around Japan."

4 MAGICIAN'S APARTMENT

"I liked the idea of a magician living in a small apartment, with all of the crazy knick-knacks and spell equipment to explore stuffed inside."



5 ANIME GIRL

"This is a painting of a tween in her bedroom in the early 2000s. I love nostalgia, and the manga magazines and Neopets say it all."

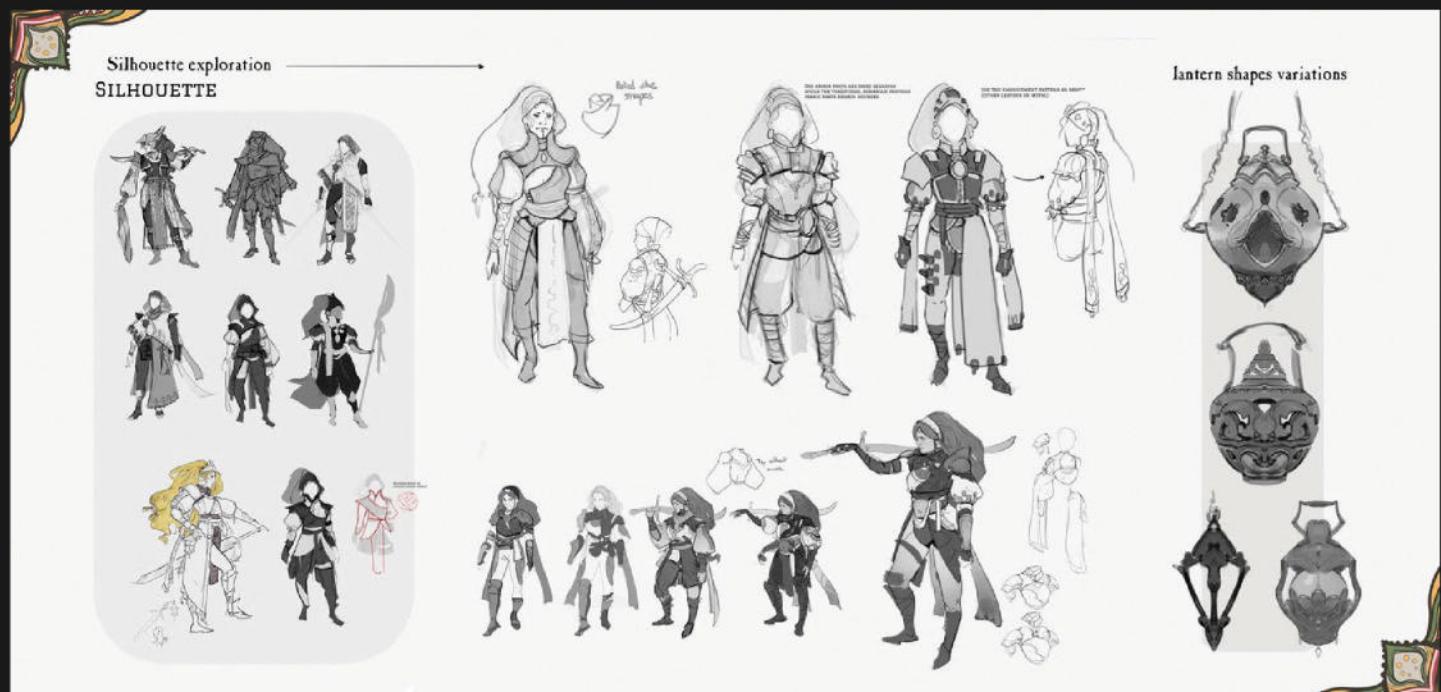
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ROOKIES

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Men at Arms: Angua von Überwald

YEAR CREATED: 2023 MEDIA: Photoshop

+

"This image is a piece done for New3dge's graduation project.

The goal was to focus on creating a video game character inspired by Terry Pratchett's Men at Arms, while being able to seek elements from other cultures in terms of design elements."





Artist **PROFILE**

Anne Fichet

LOCATION: France



Anne is an artist based in France. She is focused on concept art, particularly for character design, and is mostly inspired by video games and fantasy.

www.therookies.co/entries/23047

ARTIST NEWS, SOFTWARE & EVENTS

ImagineNation

AT THE CORE OF THE DIGITAL ART COMMUNITY

"We wanted to design people with an emphasis on the banal and the stress of everyday life," says Ryan Kingdom.





INFLUENTIAL SURROUNDS

We tour the studio of comic book artist Joe Quinones, who explains why his wall-to-wall memorabilia collection serves to inform and inspire his artwork.
Page 30



FINISH YOUR COLLECTION

Check out what we've featured in our recent editions of *ImagineFX*, and make sure you fill any gaps in your library with our back issues in print and digital.
Page 36



YOUR VIEWS, YOUR ART

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

Cards on the table **Tanya Combrinck** looks at how a strong, cohesive voice contributed to the success of four tabletop RPGs

"We've been so lucky at how many people clicked with Triangle Agency's vibe immediately," says art director Ryan.

"1920+ is an alternative dieselpunk-ish universe based on the historical realities of the early 20th century," says Jakub Różalski.



It isn't easy to stand out in the crowded tabletop role-playing game marketplace. One aspect that sets some games apart from the rest is their voice: a combination of artwork and writing that supports a clear core game concept to create a distinctive setting and atmosphere. A voice that fascinates and ignites curiosity is a sure-fire way to tempt people into your world.

Triangle Agency is a game that takes place in a corporate world that has been infiltrated by reality-altering "Anomalies", and players must take the role of paranormal investigators. The game contains multiple realities and perspectives that are represented by different art styles. For art director



Ryan Kingdom and lead designer Caleb Zane Huett, creating a strong aesthetic for the game was all about selecting the right team of artists.

"It was important to us that the game have a wide artistic range. You're playing someone who can shape reality with their imagination, fighting monsters equipped to do the same, and we wanted the art to showcase some of the infinite ways that can be done," says Ryan.

TEAM BUILDING

The game is split into three parts: Reality, Anomaly, and Competency, each of which is visually distinctive. "When we picked our core team, we spent time talking about who could be the voice of each perspective,"

says **Caleb**. "We looked for artists who could handle one of those parts, whose styles we loved, and complemented ➤



“When we picked our core team, we spent time talking about who could be the voice of each perspective”



▶ each other well without trying to match them directly."

Triangle Agency was funded on Kickstarter, so selecting people who would create compelling artwork to attract backers was crucial. "For our big, splashy covers and promotional images, we wanted people who could create that perfect TTRPG art feeling of an immediate vibe and, on second look, a level of detail that implies a whole world behind it," says Caleb.

STYLES AND THEMES

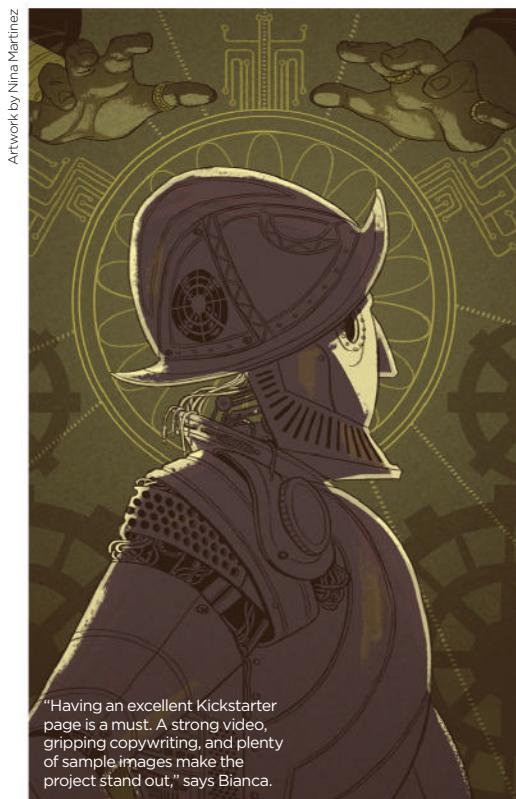
Switching between art styles can help with the depth and layering of a world by helping players view it through multiple lenses. "A great example is Nathan Rhodes' work compared to the other members of our team," says Caleb. "His pieces present us with the Agency's perspective on the world, rather than a literal representation. By helping readers see those distinctions, and then sticking to them, differing styles actually boost the storytelling rather than undercut it."

The grind of corporate office work is a theme within the game that its creators wanted to reflect in character design. "The relationship mechanics are what ground your character in the real world and make their decisions matter, and we wanted our designs to



"The adventure authors were excellent at collaborating with the artists to make sure that the narratives shone through the art," says Bianca Canoza.

reflect that warm mundanity, with characters who did not necessarily look like they're built for adventure," says Ryan. "Working with G.C. Houle on the designs has been a dream, making supernatural characters who are frumpled from spilling their coffee on the subway to work, or who just came from their nine-hour shift at the deli; peoples' grandmothers, mail-carriers, co-workers. It works well in contrast with the clean, sharp, and



"Having an excellent Kickstarter page is a must. A strong video, gripping copywriting, and plenty of sample images make the project stand out," says Bianca.

corporate feel of the Agency and the bright, colourful chaos of Kanessa Bryant's Anomalies."

When you're looking to fund and sell your game, Caleb believes that relationship-building is key. "My top recommendation is to spend time in the community you want to be a part of, see how you fit, and make sure you're uplifting the people around you as you build your project," he says. "We've made it so much farther than we expected, and it's because people in the community have helped us."

DEFINED FOCUS

A clear and precise focus on the nature of your offering is essential for effective marketing. "You really, really need to know what your game is. Like, exactly what it is, and what it wants to be," says Caleb. "If you can't describe your game quickly, if you can't articulate what is unique about it, if you aren't making sure every detail is pointed toward a clear goal, you will struggle to market your game. Art and design are your best tools to communicate what your game is, but they'll only succeed if they have a strong promise to share. Then your game needs to make good on that."

Damien Mammoliti created maps based on 4x4 grids containing areas that were discoverable to players, who would place location cards on the squares.

“We wanted the adventures to be a cohesive whole that blend imagery with words”





A range of art styles was also used to great effect by game designer

Bianca Canoza (AKA momatoes) for her apocalyptic role-playing game ARC, in which players race against the clock as they create their own stories about the end of the world. Bianca illustrated the core book and an online adventure herself, and used different artists to create a distinctive look for



In this map, arranging the robot so that the discoverable locations landed in the grid, while keeping it anatomically correct, was a challenge for Damien.

each of the four separate adventures featured in the game.

ARC's adventure zines benefit from a synergistic marriage of artwork and writing. "We wanted the adventures to be a cohesive whole that blends imagery with words seamlessly," says Bianca. "That was the driver in the art direction: make it a harmonious unity."

In a game where players build their own narratives, the artwork serves as a springboard for the imagination. ➤

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

SET YOUR GAMES APART

Damien Mammoliti on making an impression in TTRPGs

What do you need to know if you're thinking of creating your own TTRPG?

Due to the recent boom in Dungeons and Dragons, and open markets such as Drive Thru RPG and the Dungeon Masters Guild, it's easy for anyone to create a product and put it online for sale. So there are a lot of them on the market right now!

If you want to stand out from the crowd, you're going to need a team. You'll need great writers, people with ideas beyond what is typically seen, and ideas that can span well beyond even your first initial drafts.

Start with a world, a setting in time and place to anchor your ideas. You need artists to help bring this world to life, people who can translate those writers' ideas into something tangible and marketable for people to get interested in.

What would you attribute the success of Roll Player Adventures to?

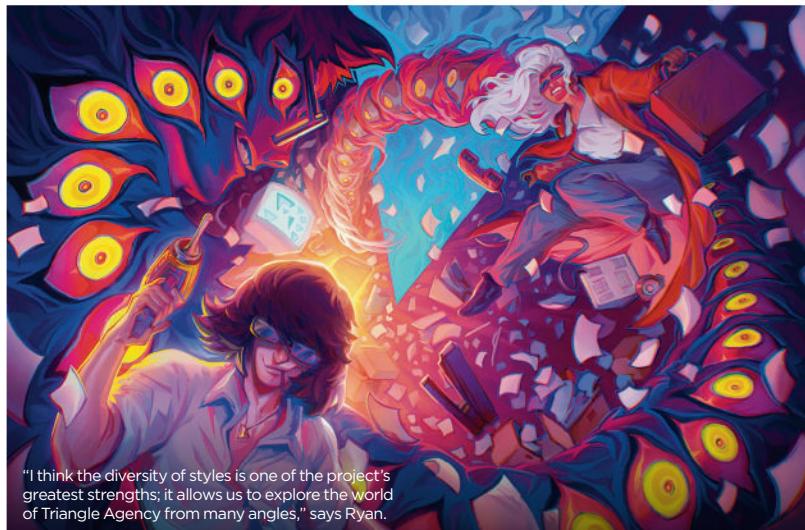
I think what helped Roll Player Adventures was tapping into that older style of TTRPG, the kind you used to remember playing with your friends at the table, but packaged in a new and interesting way.

Don't be afraid to find new and different ways to experiment with the TTRPG setting and what it can mean. It doesn't just have to be a manual or book; it can be a board game, a product, a setting. Anything that involves rolling dice, laying out player stats, and exploring a world can be a TTRPG. Open your mind to the possibilities, and give people something that they've never seen before!

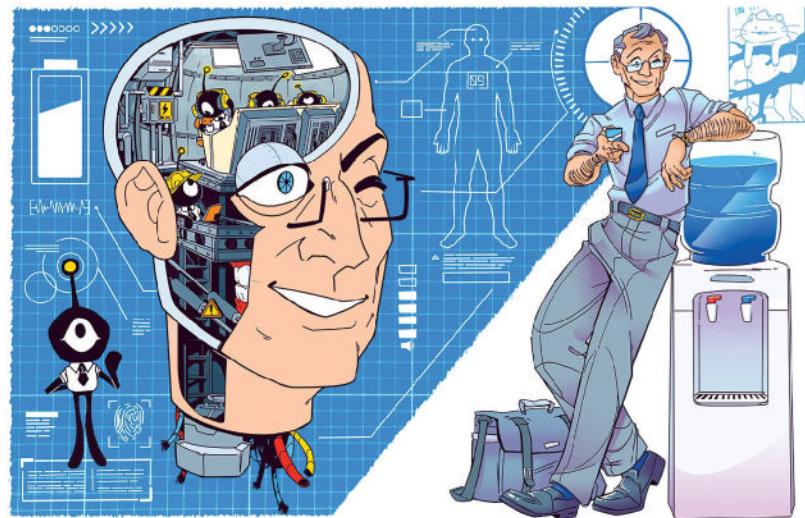


Damien Mammoliti is a freelance cartographer and artist for TTRPGs, board and video games.

www.artstation.com/damie_m



"I think the diversity of styles is one of the project's greatest strengths; it allows us to explore the world of Triangle Agency from many angles," says Ryan.



► "Art should evoke curiosity and wonder," says Bianca. "I believe that the art should not necessarily provide the truth, but glimpses into what the truth could be for each player."

FINDING A VOICE

Bianca maintains that a strong voice is key to making a successful tabletop role-playing game, and it's one of the first things you should think about in your design process. "Having a voice ensures that your TTRPG feels full-bodied and complete, and elevates it beyond the generic," she says.

"This voice must be consistent with the concept that is the backbone of your game. A weak or inconsistent voice dilutes the messaging and muddles the meanings that the game intends to convey. So the words, art, even layout, should work cohesively to bring full force to that voice."

Sometimes tabletop RPGs are borne out of pre-existing worlds and aesthetics, as was the case with the

"Establishing our vision early allowed us to identify where we wanted to keep the visuals consistent, and where we wanted to break out," Ryan says.

hugely successful *Scythe* and its sequel, *Expeditions*, which are set in the 1920+ universe made by **Jakub Różalski**. 1920+ is an alternative history world based loosely on the Polish-Soviet war, but featuring mecha, dieselpunk airships and other technology that contrasts strikingly with rural scenes painted in a 19th-century impressionist style.

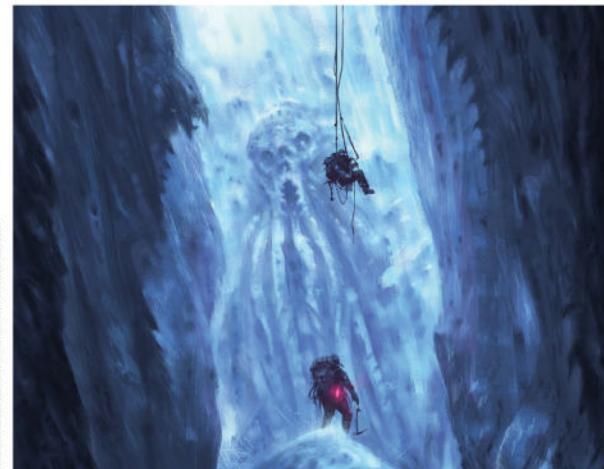
It's this juxtaposition that provides the visual hook for the world. Jakub created it through exaggerating an observation from the historical period. "The world was rapidly changing and becoming industrialised, but it was still

“Having a voice ensures that your TTRPG feels full-bodied and complete”

"The art style of each illustrator was so important to us, because it conveyed evocative narratives that go beyond mere photorealistic depictions," says Bianca.



Artwork by Alydy Aquirre



"I try to make my illustrations tell an interesting story, to be a portal for the viewer, taking them to other worlds," says Jakub.

full of mysteries, undiscovered places, centuries-old traditions, secrets and adventures," he says. "I have always been fascinated by the almost surreal contrast between the past and future in those times. On the battlefields, the first planes, machine guns and tanks co-existed with melee weapons and cavalry with lances! Village people still walked without shoes as the first planes flew over their heads and the first huge agricultural machines began to appear in the fields."

Jakub never intended for his 1920+ universe to be the basis for a game, but board game designer Jamey

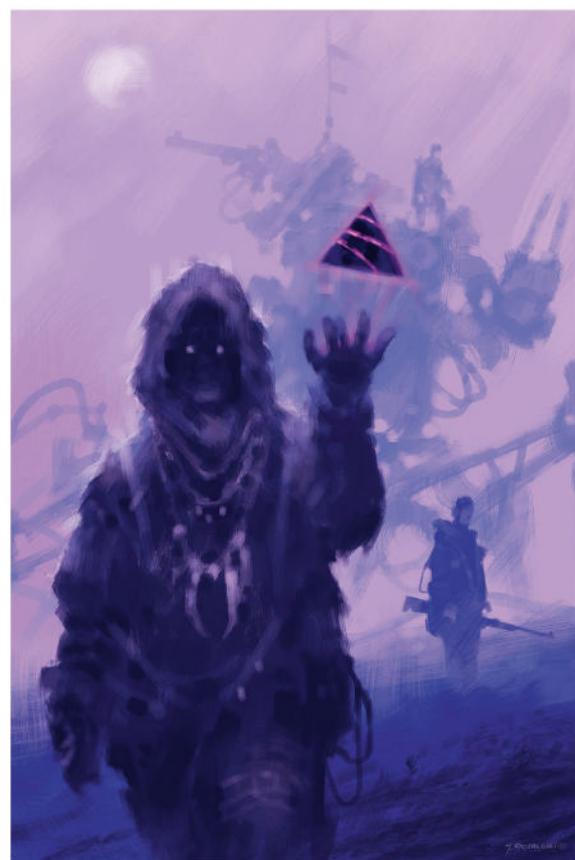
Artist news, software & events



Jakub's paintings have visual references to Eastern Europe, 19th-century painting, Slavic aesthetics and impressionism.



The Pendant of Duality; card art for Roll Player Adventures created by Damien Mammoliti.



Stegmaier saw the potential for an RPG in this rich world with its Slavic and agricultural aesthetic.

"Usually, as the author of the world, I have complete creative freedom and the elements of the game are based on my ideas and visions of the world," says Jakub. "Of course, when working on a game, as a product with certain rules, compromises are necessary, but Jamey and I have known each other for so long that the whole process is very intuitive." For Jakub, the result is a unification of artwork, writing and game mechanics that has drawn in legions of fans. 



"I found the core of the process was creating a sense of exploration, journey, dark secrets, and building a sense of danger," says Jakub.

"The range of art styles was a blessing, as it really conveyed the diversity of stories that players can embark on," says Bianca.

ImagineNation Artist in Residence



Joe Quinones

Enter the Batcave The comic artist assures us there's a good reason he owns so much Batman paraphernalia



I've been working in the comic book industry for 16 years now, and much of that time has been spent in my Somerville apartment where I've had an ever-rotating and rearranging studio. The space is always evolving to suit my needs and improve upon my artistic workflows.

Since I work from home, I try to maintain a studio that is as utilitarian as it is inviting, adorned in objects that will inspire and fuel me creatively. My shelves are packed with comics, graphic novels and manga, as well as several books that serve more directly as reference tools, such as highlighting my favourite artists, anatomy, drawing, painting and colour theory.

Also prominent are my collectibles: figurines, LEGO sets, sculptures and artwork. Being a life-long fan of the medium, I'm an unabashed nerd, so to a degree this is simply my hobbies colliding with my professional life.



I've always enjoyed Star Trek: The Next Generation and was excited to be approached for this cover.



My own personal relief sculpture of Howard the Duck! This was a gift sculpted by my friend Jesse Farrell, based on my design from my run on Howard the Duck back in 2015.

However, these items truly do bring me joy, and help to inspire and inform my work. I'm lucky to count many artists as friends and we'll often trade or gift our artworks to each other. This accounts for much of my original art collection. I just love looking at these, getting up real close and poring over their every detail.

Okay, yes, I do own an inordinate amount of Batman paraphernalia, but hear me out. I love him! As a kid I'd already begun to discover a love for comics, but when Tim Burton's 1989 film Batman came out I was hooked. I was entranced by his otherworldly vision of the character and that ➤

“These items bring me joy, and help to inspire and inform my work”





While I work digitally more frequently now, I still prefer pencil and ink on paper. Nothing beats that tactile experience, though I do sometimes miss the Undo button.

ImagineNation Artist in Residence

My room has two windows so I can get as much natural light as possible and a nice, cool breeze when the weather allows.

My Batman cowl from a trade on Instagram. It was for a Halloween costume, but I've since used it for reference.

My LEGO Millennium Falcon! I worked on building this in my downtime between jobs. It took me a year.

Maquettes of Batgirl, Wonder Woman and Black Canary. I've been lucky enough to draw all three professionally.



Some more favourites from my display cabinet. I just love Batman, okay? He and Superman were my first comic loves.

I often keep recent work and work to be done on this little wood display, so they're always at the front of my mind.

An old Ikea cabinet that I've had for years and years. It's filled with the likes of my paints, charcoals and pastels.

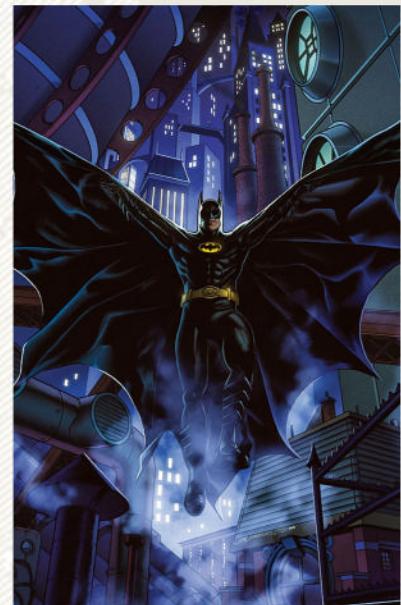
My book shelf is vaguely organised by publisher, comics, concept art, art, and film productions.



Two of my prized pieces of original art, featuring a couple of my favourite characters: Catwoman and RoboCop. These were both created by friend and fellow comic creator Wilfredo Torres.

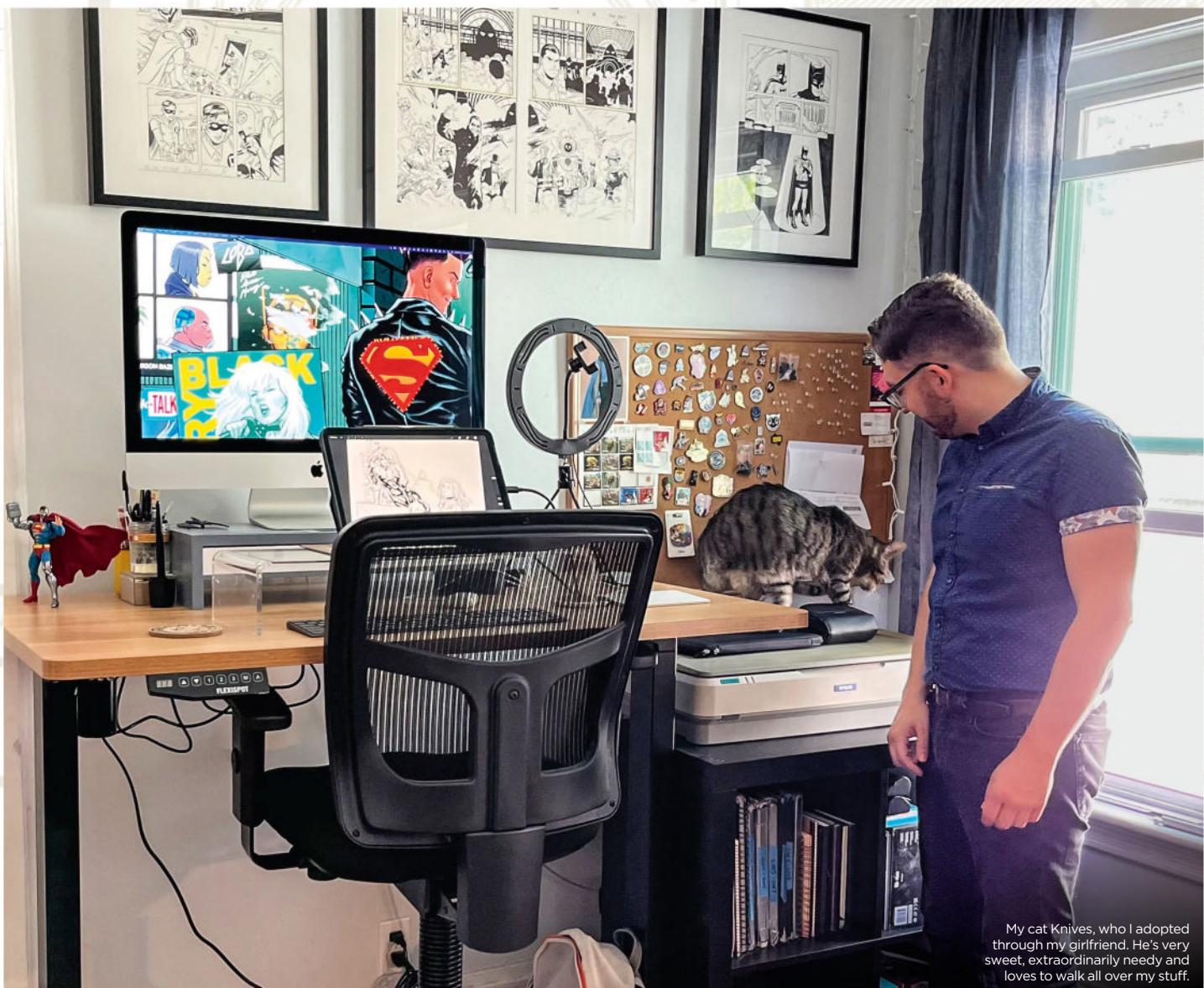
Artist news, software & events

My Batman: Black and White collection. I love this series and the focus it puts on artists and their individual styles.



Courtesy of DC

My cover for issue 1 of Batman '89. I tried to evoke Tim Burton's films as succinctly as possible.



My cat Knives, who I adopted through my girlfriend. He's very sweet, extraordinarily needy and loves to walk all over my stuff.

ImagineNation Artist in Residence



I was lucky enough to befriend Mike Allred and his wife, as we were all mutual fans of each other. I own several Allred pieces and cherish them all, particularly this oversize Metamorpho page.

► love was reflected back to my interest in comic books. I dove deeper into the hobby afterwards and have never left since.

In 2020 things came around full circle when Sam Hamm, who was the screenwriter for Burton's two Batman films, and I paired up to craft a six-issue mini-series for DC Comics, titled *Batman '89*. The series served as a direct sequel to the events of Burton's *Batman* and *Batman Returns*. It was

This sign was crafted by my father. He was a carpenter and enjoyed working with his hands. I love having these links to him close by.



“It was great fun and so satisfying to return to a world that helped set me down my path in the first place”

great fun and so satisfying to return to a world that helped set me down my path in the first place. So really all those Batman collectibles work as reference material, while still looking great on a shelf, of course.

DIGITAL VS TRADITIONAL

My workflow is also something that's always evolving. I tend to jump back and forth working traditionally and digitally. The immediacy of digital makes it indispensable due to time, but nothing can replace the feel of working traditionally.

I think a lot better with a pencil on paper, so often initial sketching and/or thumbnailing will be done that way. I'll then switch to my iPad and Procreate, where I do the majority of my finished drawing both for single illustrations

and sequential work. From there I'll transition over to inking my pencils. Depending on the time constraints, I'll either complete inks digitally, or I'll print out those pencils on board to then ink traditionally. The latter is definitely my preference.

I find that nothing can replace the feel of putting pen and brush to paper and I love the unpredictable happy accidents that will occur without the benefit of an Undo button. Things will then port back over to my desktop and Photoshop, where I'll scan my inks and add digital colour.

*Joe Quinones is a comic book artist and illustrator who has worked on several beloved titles including *Howard the Duck*, *Spider-Man* and more. Most recently he illustrated DC mini-series *Batman '89*. See more of his work at www.joequinones.com.*

Artist news, software & events



Bibliothek.

Courtesy of DC



I went to school at Rhode Island School of Design, where I became close friends with illustrator Paolo Rivera. We keep in touch and occasionally collaborate on projects. These Spider-Man pages were from art trades.



I made out like a bandit with these art trades by Mike Allred (left and right, from SOLO) and Evan 'Doc' Shaner (middle, from Convergence: Shazam! #1).

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PRINT AND DIGITAL BACK ISSUES



Issue 230
October 2023

Discover a range of stunning art in our character design special! We also speak with pro artists Betsy Bauer, Kenneth Anderson and Luis Gadea, and delve into the art of Wayfinder from Joe Madureira's Airship Syndicate.



Issue 229
September 2023

Learn from comic experts, with in-depth tutorials from the artist behind our Catwoman cover, and Marvel's Steve Ellis. We also visit the cyberpunk worlds of mech master Brian Sum and discover what goes into tarot card art.



Issue 228
August 2023

Turn your Procreate skills up a notch as master artists share their pro tips. Learn how to create quirky fan art like our cover star Bo Feng Lin, and read all about the worlds of Mattahan and Max Ullichney in exclusive interviews.



Issue 227
July 2023

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

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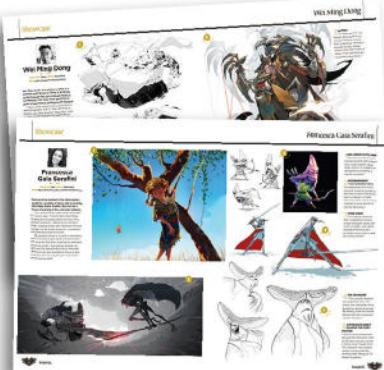
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Our special issue from last month showcased a huge variety of unique character designs.

Inspiration special

Hi everybody at ImagineFX. I'm getting in touch to say job well done on your last issue. I love the magazine and really enjoy the training you usually have in the pages, but I have to say I loved the amount of inspiring images you had in your last issue. It was great to see such a diverse collection of art. I hope you do more of these in the future.

Thanks!

Sophie, via email

Rob replies Hi Sophie. Thank you so much for getting in touch and glad you liked our recent special issue. I completely agree that sometimes a simple dose of inspiration can be as rewarding as learning a new skill. We will definitely be keeping this sort of idea for the future! Please do let us know what else you like about the magazine, so that we know what kind of content works for you.

Love the insights

Hello team! Fab job on the special issue you did last month. I really enjoyed the



CORRECTION
The subscribers' cover of issue 230 incorrectly attributed the artwork, which was created by artist **Sasha Tudvaseva**



Betsy Bauer and Kenneth Anderson were both featured in our last issue, sharing their stories and art.

variety of art you showed, and the interviews with Betsy Bauer and Kenneth Anderson were fantastic too. I'm always interested to hear from new artists. I look forward to more!

Darius, via email

Rob replies Hello Darius, thanks for contacting us. I'm so glad you liked our special issue and the artist interviews. It was a pleasure to be able to share so much art in one issue but agree, those interview pieces were fantastic.

Being able to talk to some of the top talents in our community and industry is always an absolute honour, and to be able to share that with you all is a joy. We have many more of these artist interviews coming up in future issues, so keep your eyes peeled for those!

Wayfinder

Hi ImagineFX! More game art content please! I absolutely love game art and design and want to make that my career, so always find value in articles like this. Wayfinder is a great looking game, so knowing a little about the concepts and art process is awesome!

Please talk to more game dev studios so that we can all benefit from their thoughts and experiences. Plus it's great to be able to see the art for the sake of the art, away from the final results, however fun that might be.

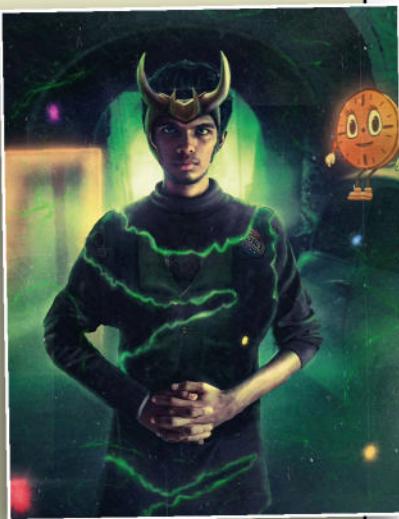
Thank you!

Frankie, via email

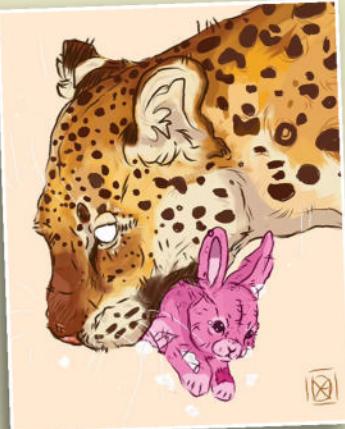
Rob replies Hi Frankie, thanks so much for writing in, and for your kind words. We're big fans of video game art and the concepts behind them at ImagineFX. It's a fantastic field, and one that covers such a multitude of genres and styles. Being able to talk to the creative teams behind these games is always a joy.



New works that have grabbed our attention



Ruban Lourdhu
[@ruban_lourdhu](https://www.instagram.com/ruban_lourdhu)



Danielle Alencar
[@dany_enyka](https://www.instagram.com/dany_enyka)



Nikoloz Baloo Kuparadze
[@baloosketchbook](https://www.instagram.com/baloosketchbook)

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

PICTURING POSSIBILITIES

Four expert artists who teach for **The Gnomon Workshop** talk through their creative processes with **James Clarke**

The learning never stops for a creative. Experience builds and so, too, does the opportunity to investigate new approaches and ways of thinking about one's work. In turn, there is always a chance to see creative process from new perspectives and learn from one's fellow artists. The Gnomon Workshop provides a space for these encounters to flourish.

ImagineFX discusses process and aesthetics with several Gnomon artists and workshop instructors, namely Pascal Blanché, Andy Park, Hamish Frater and Rembert Montald. Each artist addresses the issues of style, technology and technique.

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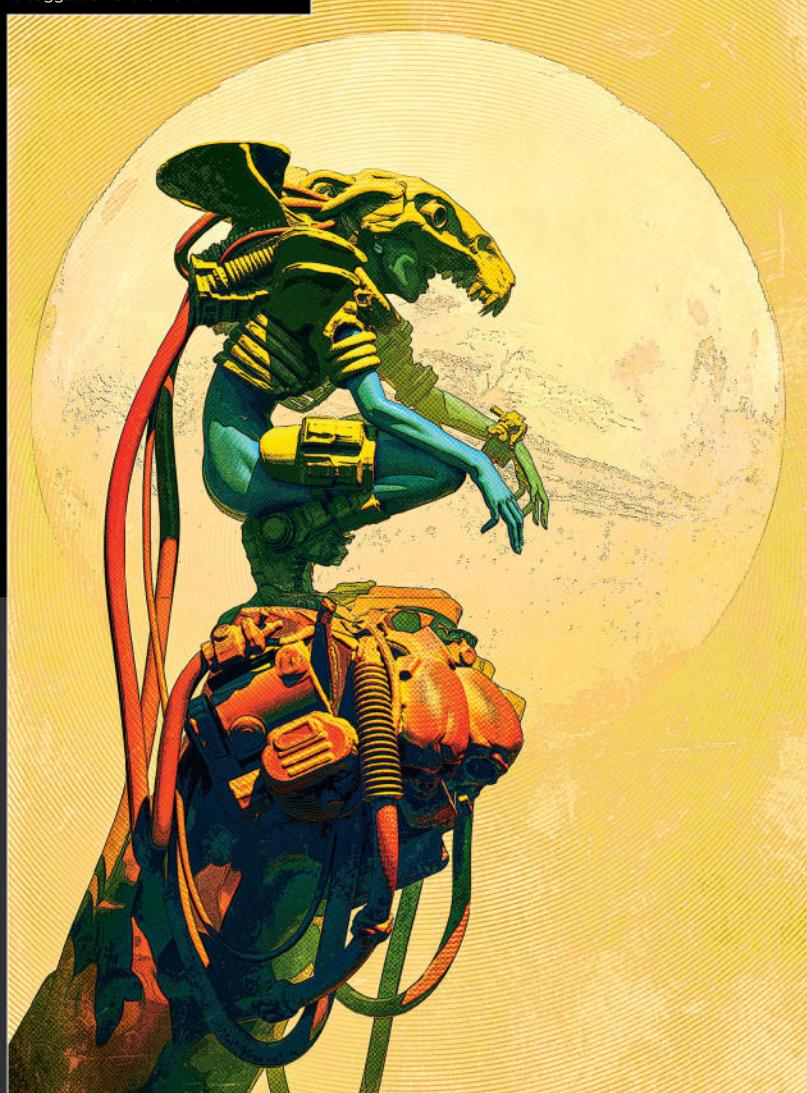
Creating a Monolithic City in Unreal Engine 5 JIANFENG LI (ALLAN) Senior Environment Generalist at DNEG	Designing Environments for Games JAMES LEWIS-VINES Lead Concept Artist at FUSE Games	Creating Complex Materials for Games in Substance Designer KAT TAMBURELLO Senior Texture Artist at id Software	Designing Mechs in VR Using Medium ANDRE LANG HUYNH Senior Concept Artist at WB Games Montreal
Large-Scale Water FX in Houdini MIGUEL PEREZ SENENT CG Supervisor at Industrial Light & Magic	VFX for Games: Creating a Fantasy Scene KEAGAN WILLIAMS Senior VFX Artist at Kefaf	Creating a Swamp Scene for Games with SpeedTree & Photogrammetry ADRIEN PAGUET-BRUNELLA Senior Environment Artist at Haven Studios	Stylized Environment Creation for Games RODRIGO BREA Senior Environment Artist at Retro Studios

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BIRD OF PREY

Pascal Blanché's artwork fuses both natural and hi-tech elements together to suggest an entire world.



STANDING OUT

The potential for a striking silhouette is evident, even in a richly coloured image.



PASCAL BLANCHÉ

How masters from the 1970s and 80s continue to influence the work of this issue's cover artist



Of his image *Bird of Prey*, created for The Gnomon Workshop, Pascal explains: "Bird of Prey is an illustration I created for a tutorial using 3ds Max, ZBrush, KeyShot and Photoshop. My work is typically an homage to sci-fi covers and artists from the 70s and 80s. I like to take the influences of the masters from those days, artists like Moebius, Frazetta, Corben, and Drillet, and apply a slightly modern take using digital tools.

"I enjoy blending elements of fantasy and sci-fi to create a style all of my own. At heart, I'm more of a sculptor than a painter, and all my work is created with 3D tools. It's then

textured and rendered before being touched up in Photoshop. I use a mix of 3D objects to compose the main elements of my subjects in 3ds Max. This technique is generally used to create kit-bashed models, and from my perspective, it's a great way to approach design.

"Every model has its own constraints, and when kit-bashing, I always find interesting new silhouettes I wouldn't have thought of otherwise. It's like 2D custom brush techniques;

“I enjoy blending elements of fantasy and sci-fi to create a style all of my own”

COVER ART COMPOSITION

Each shade of an image is carefully composited in Photoshop.

but applied to 3D. When it comes to ZBrush, it's pure sculpting. And KeyShot is my favourite rendering tool, mostly for the speed and the different layers that I can extrapolate from the composition."

Of his use of colour, Pascal explains that his key rule is 'no white, no grey.' "All shades of the illustration are carefully separated, recoloured and composited in Photoshop. I reuse multiple passes from the render, including the Z-depth and even the Normal pass, to create masks that allow me to control the final look."

BELIEVABLE DETAIL

The textural details bring plausibility to a fanciful image.



★ HAMISH FRATER ★

The art director and instructor explains the challenges of correctly placing mech creations in his compositions



For his image Pack Horse Pass, Hamish Frater notes: "The image was made for my video tutorial: Mech Illustration with Story and Character. It depicts a caravan of merchants passing through a small settlement in a post-apocalyptic world."

He then defines the through-line of his workshop process. "The workshop covers the full creation process for the image, from initial ideation, reference gathering, and sketching through to the final colour painting and finishing touches in Photoshop," he adds. "I generally use 3D as a base for my paintings, and the workshop covers how best to combine the flexibility a

3D package gives you with the more expressive and textural look you can achieve from freehand painting in Photoshop. Each chapter begins with a short lesson relevant to that stage of the pipeline, then we put that lesson to use creating the final image."

Hamish then turns his attention to lighting in an image, emphasising: "This is a great chance to harmonise the colours and bring out the mood. I further emphasised the reds in the environment, lighting them with a

“ Each chapter begins with a short lesson relevant to that stage of the pipeline ”

DIGGING DEEP

Atmospheric effects and nuances contribute to the spatial depth.



warm early evening sun spilling into the scene. I held off going too blue in the shadows; I wanted a slow, relaxed mood, so I kept a lot of colour-contrast out of the lighting."

A notable dynamic in Hamish's work is his atmospheric perspective. He explains: "I love creating depth in an image, and the low-angle sun cutting through the layers of the atmosphere helps with this. You can emphasise the atmospheric perspective, lowering the contrast of distant objects and letting the haze of the atmosphere take over."

Of the fundamental compositional issues found in Pack Horse Pass, Hamish says: "Getting tall, vertically proportioned mechs to fit nicely in a 16:9 horizontal image wasn't easy. In this chapter, I do a few contrasting composition roughs in 3D and eventually decide to go with what we see here. A close-up foreground mech spills out of the shot and acts as a divider, breaking it into smaller, more manageable chunks."



COMPILED COLOUR

Shade and colour work in relation to each other for a sense of place.



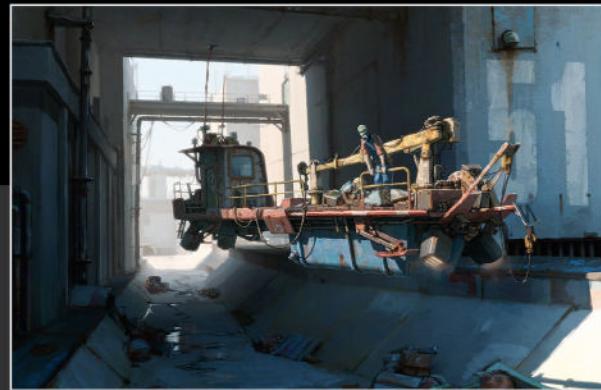
FINDING PERSPECTIVE
The low-height view of the subject emphasises scale and enormous size.

ADDING IN CONTRAST, COLOUR AND DETAIL

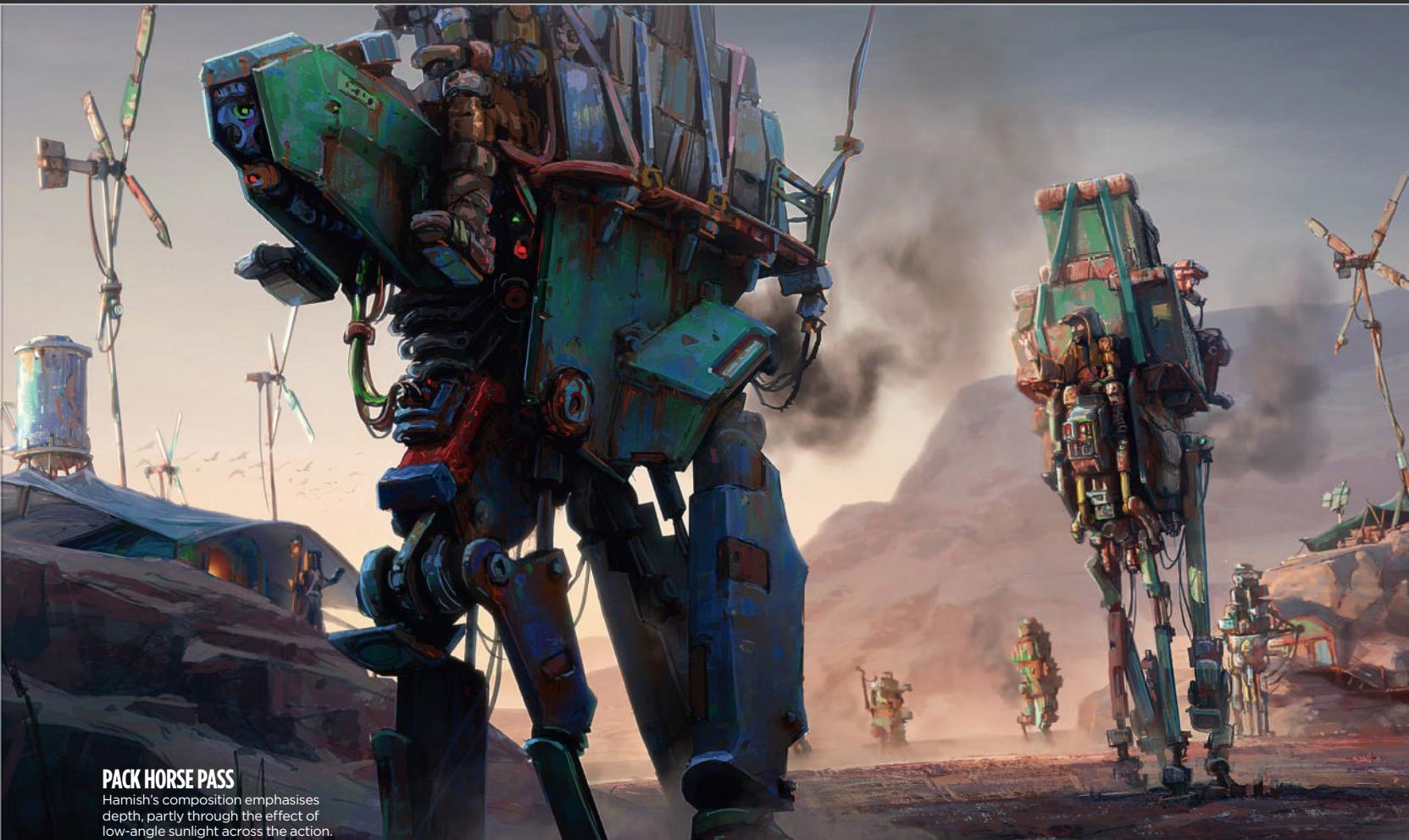
Hamish Frater identifies the process he follows for creating the satisfactory final touches to his images

"I love putting detail into an image but always have to remind myself to keep it to the focal points. This includes colour, too; your most saturated and contrasting colours should appear where you want people to look. It's good to have a plan from the beginning and keep

it simple until you get confident with colour. I decided on a simple complementary scheme. The environment reference I liked had a red tone to the desert sand, so I complemented this with the green tones you see on the mechs and the settlement pieces."



CATCHING THE EYE
Traditions of lines of perspective help to draw and direct the viewer's attention.



PACK HORSE PASS

Hamish's composition emphasises depth, partly through the effect of low-angle sunlight across the action.

PLAUSIBLE DESIGN

Andy Park's character designs manage to find the dynamic between fantasy and plausibility.



ANDY PARK

Why small details make a huge impact when designing superheroes' costumes



Gnomon Workshop instructor Andy Park discusses his image The Goddess of War, and begins by noting:

"When designing comic book characters for the Marvel Cinematic Universe, I'm thinking about bringing reality to their look that, traditionally in comics, is taken for granted. It's accepted that a superhero wearing tights running around is normal and is nothing out of the ordinary; or that their outfit would be impractical for what they need to do as heroes."

"But the challenge in live-action is that the acceptance barometer is

much steeper than that. We try to answer the 'why?' when it comes to why they would wear what they wear. It's our attempt to bring believability to these unbelievable heroes."

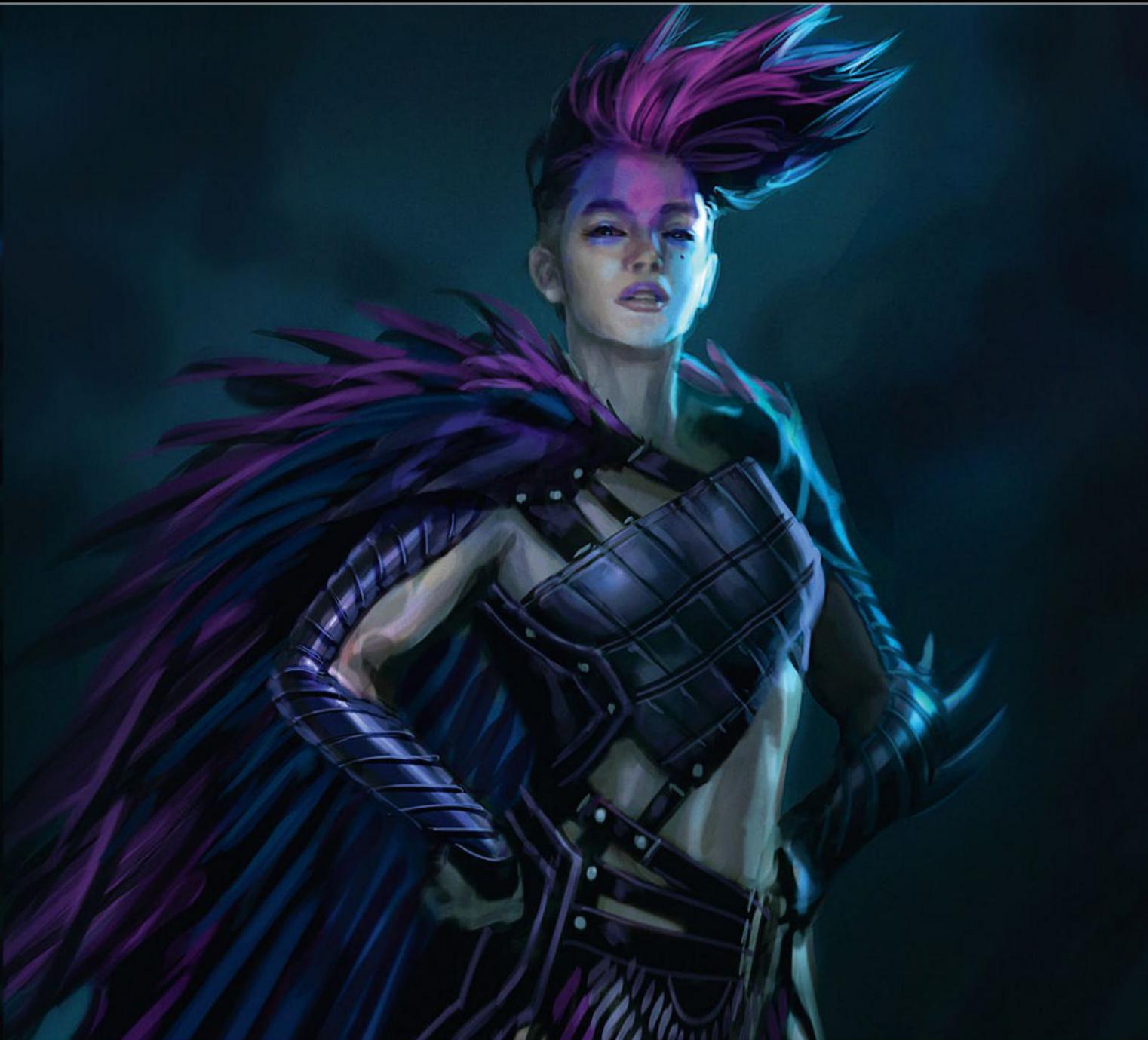
Andy then shifts his attention to the process of detailing. He explains: "With the need to create a reality to the looks of these heroes and villains comes the importance of describing the details of their costumes, which

include their clothing, accessories, helmets, and any other elements that complete the look of the character, including the look of their powers and effects. Rendering materials properly is of utmost importance. This is where reference is paramount.

"When designing costumes, it's important to be able to communicate the look of different materials and fabrics. Patterns and textures help define the look and feel of so many aspects of costumes. Different sheens on fabrics and hard-surface materials tell a particular story about what a character is wearing, and why they're wearing it. Therefore, the need to

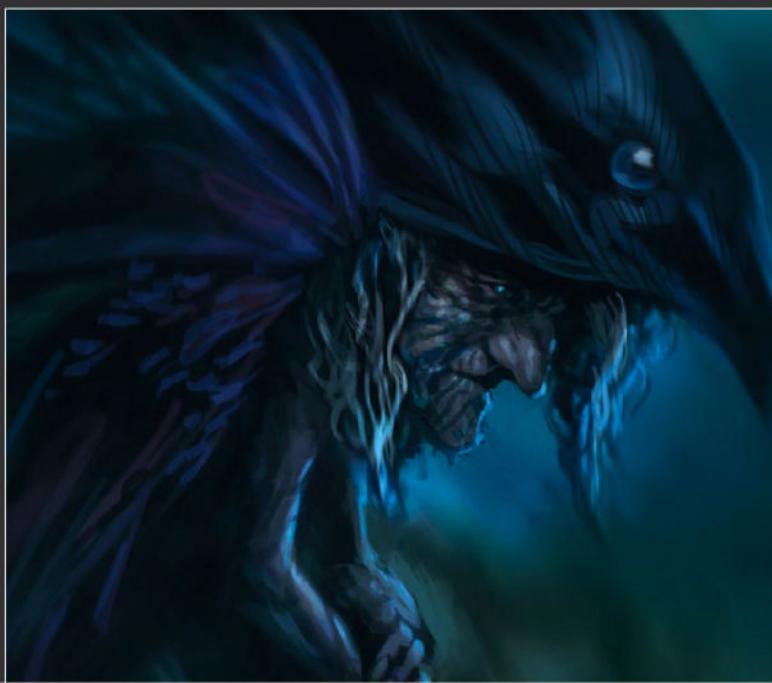
“In this line of work, an emphasis on reference can't be stressed enough”

The Gnomon Workshop



render these things accurately is incredibly important."

Of his overarching process, Andy notes: "To create my concept designs, I primarily paint using Photoshop. But I also utilise 3D programs such as ZBrush and KeyShot. For reference, I will almost always use photography. In this line of work, an emphasis on reference can't be stressed enough. For live-action, it's all about trying to convey realism to the director and producers. They need to know what the character will look like, and the more you can close that gap from their imagination to what it can and will look like on film, the better."



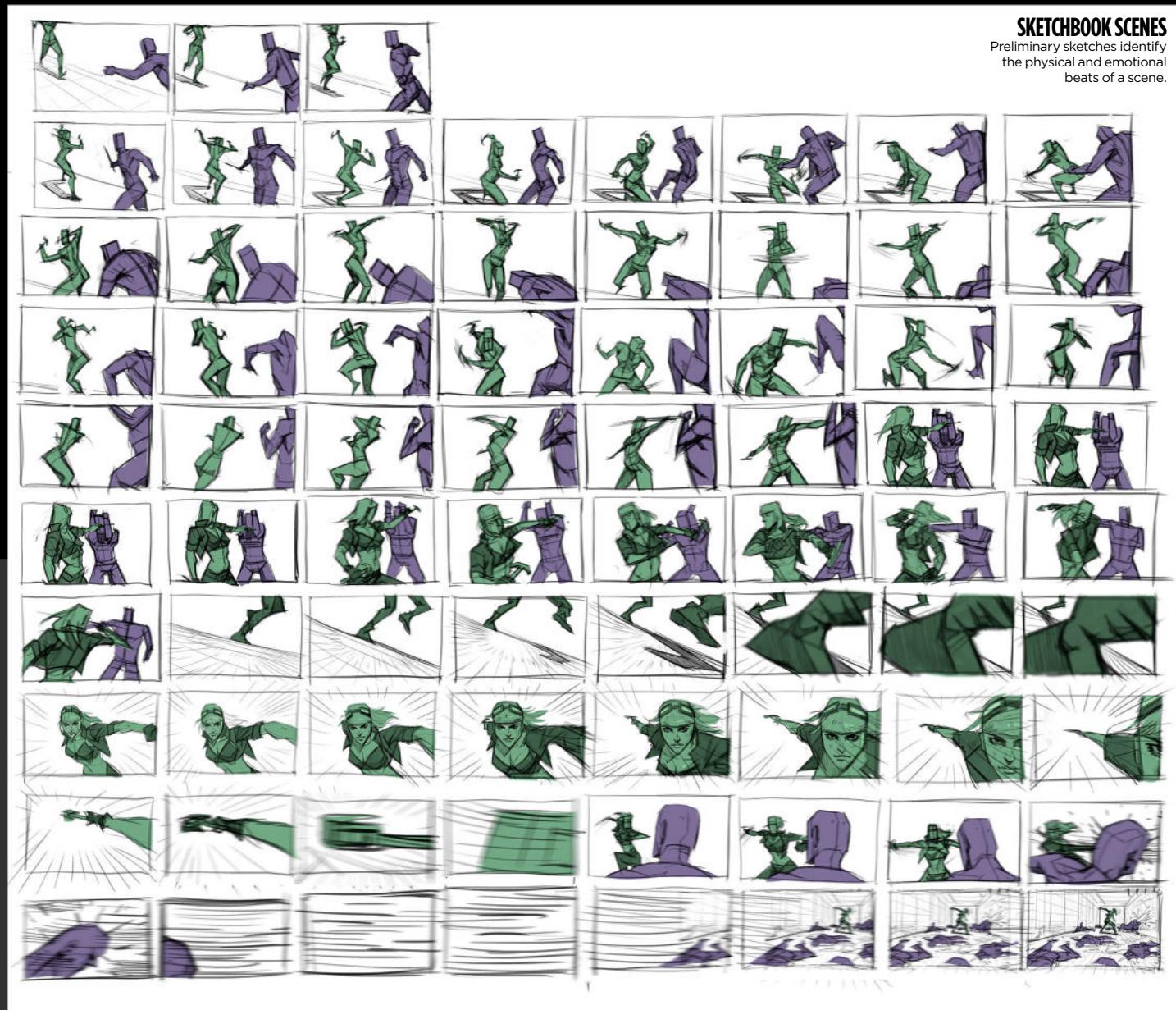
COSTUME CLARITY

Indicating the distinct materials that comprise a given costume is a key aspect of Andy's work.

REAL-WORLD TOUCHES

Reference to reality throughout the design process imbues Park's images with believability.

Feature



SKETCHBOOK SCENES

Preliminary sketches identify the physical and emotional beats of a scene.

REMBERT MONTALD*

A library of references and finding a connection with his scenes is a vital part of the process for the artist



"I always try to imagine myself in the shot," explains storyboard and concept artist Rembert Montald. "I ask myself questions: How do I feel? What would I do in this situation? If it's an action shot, I look at references from various films, and I try to pull moves from them."

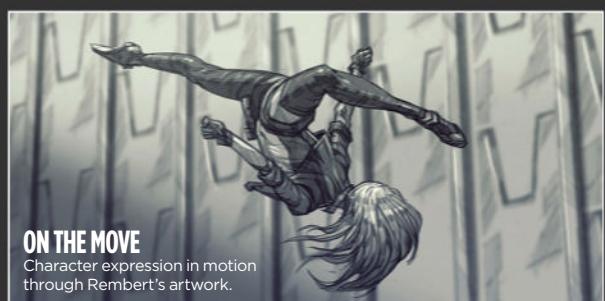
"So, on my first day after receiving a script, I'm mainly searching for, and gathering, references. The same goes for emotional beats. I've generated an entire library of movie stills over the years that I can search through for expression references."

Of his use of monochrome, Rembert explains: "The monochrome pictures I draw are intended to add colour to the drawings. When I use them, they are fairly desaturated; this can elevate the image because most of what we see with our eyes is fairly desaturated. Nowadays you can have hot pink and other neon colours."

"As for more colourful images, I would almost completely eliminate the line work since it would dilute the pigment. If there is an elevated moment in the story, it would be a downer to have desaturated colours. Ultimately, the story will dictate to everyone involved what it needs."

STANDOUT COLOUR

Monochrome elements allow for character action and poses to be dramatically emphasised.



ON THE MOVE

Character expression in motion through Rembert's artwork.

TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY

Rembert Montald reveals the influences that sit behind his art and its subjects

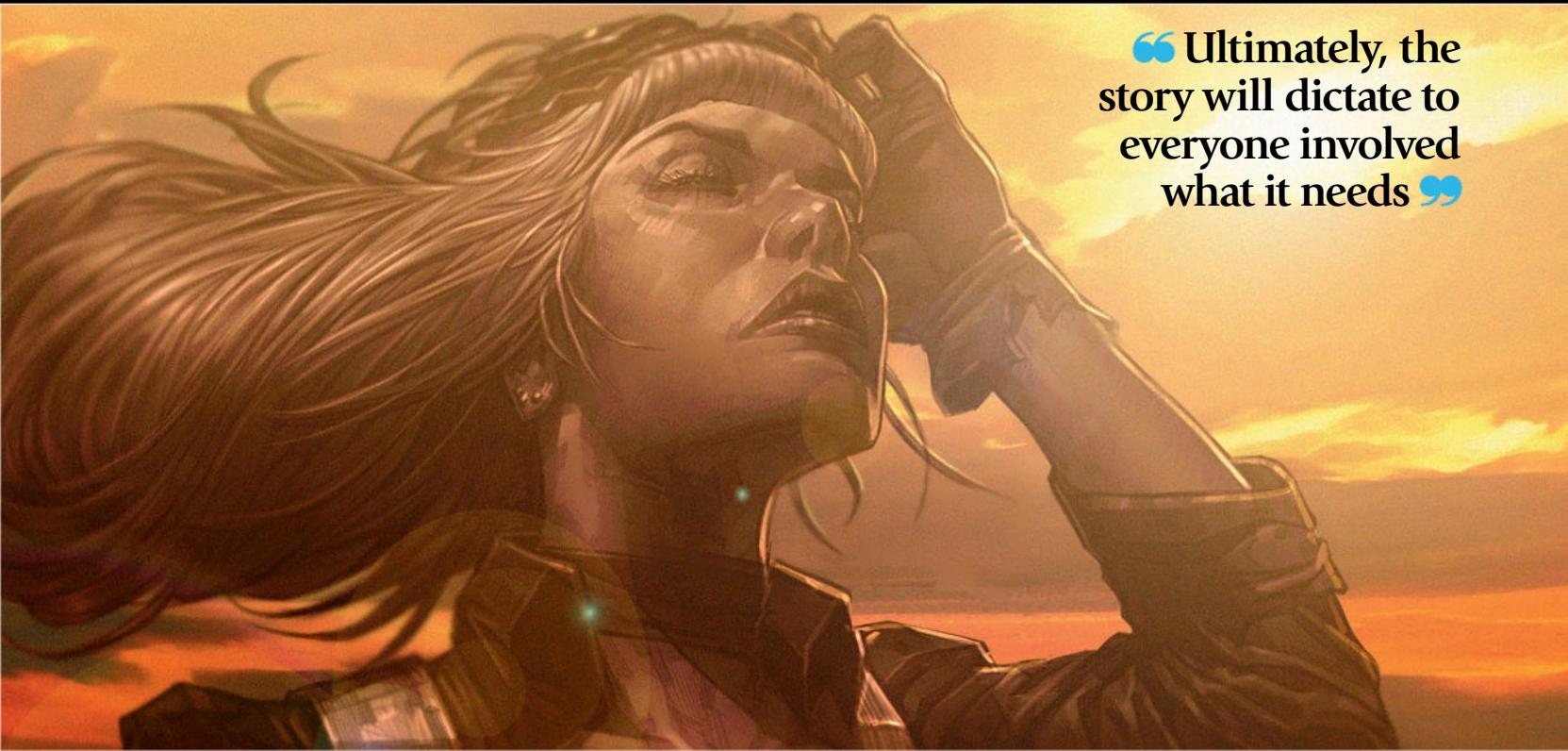
"Some masters of lines I admire are Ivor Hele and Gil Elvgren, particularly his charcoal drawings. I've been using digital-only for my work, so it became work. While traditional feels more like meditation to me. I also draw subjects that are dear to my heart and my surroundings. I cannot explain the joy that good drawing gives me."



ADDING DRAMA

Rembert's use of colour emphasises elevated dramatic moments.

“Ultimately, the story will dictate to everyone involved what it needs”



CHARACTER INSIGHT

Expressing the inner life of a character in a given moment.



NEXT MONTH

Learn from the best in the game with an exclusive Gnomon workshop

READY REFERENCES

A library of reference images from films inform Rembert's creative choices.

Sketchbook

Jessica Taylor

The concept artist opens her sketchbook to share a selection of gorgeous fantasy and nature-inspired artworks

TRAVELLING WIZARD

"A grumpy wizard taking a break. While on his travels, he found an old fallen tree to sit upon."

A KNIGHT

"I quite like how I rendered the armour, but wish I'd rendered his weapon more."

DEAD SEA

"There's no particular meaning behind this one, I just think fish and skulls are cool."



HARVEST WITCH

"This harvest witch brings in her finds from her garden. She's very friendly!"



Artist PROFILE

Jessica Taylor

LOCATION: Canada



Jessica has lived her whole life in Canada, surrounded by the country's wonderful landscapes to draw her inspiration from. After she graduated from Ryerson University with a degree in architecture, Jessica moved on to a career in concept art and illustration. She works alongside artist and partner Phil Moss.

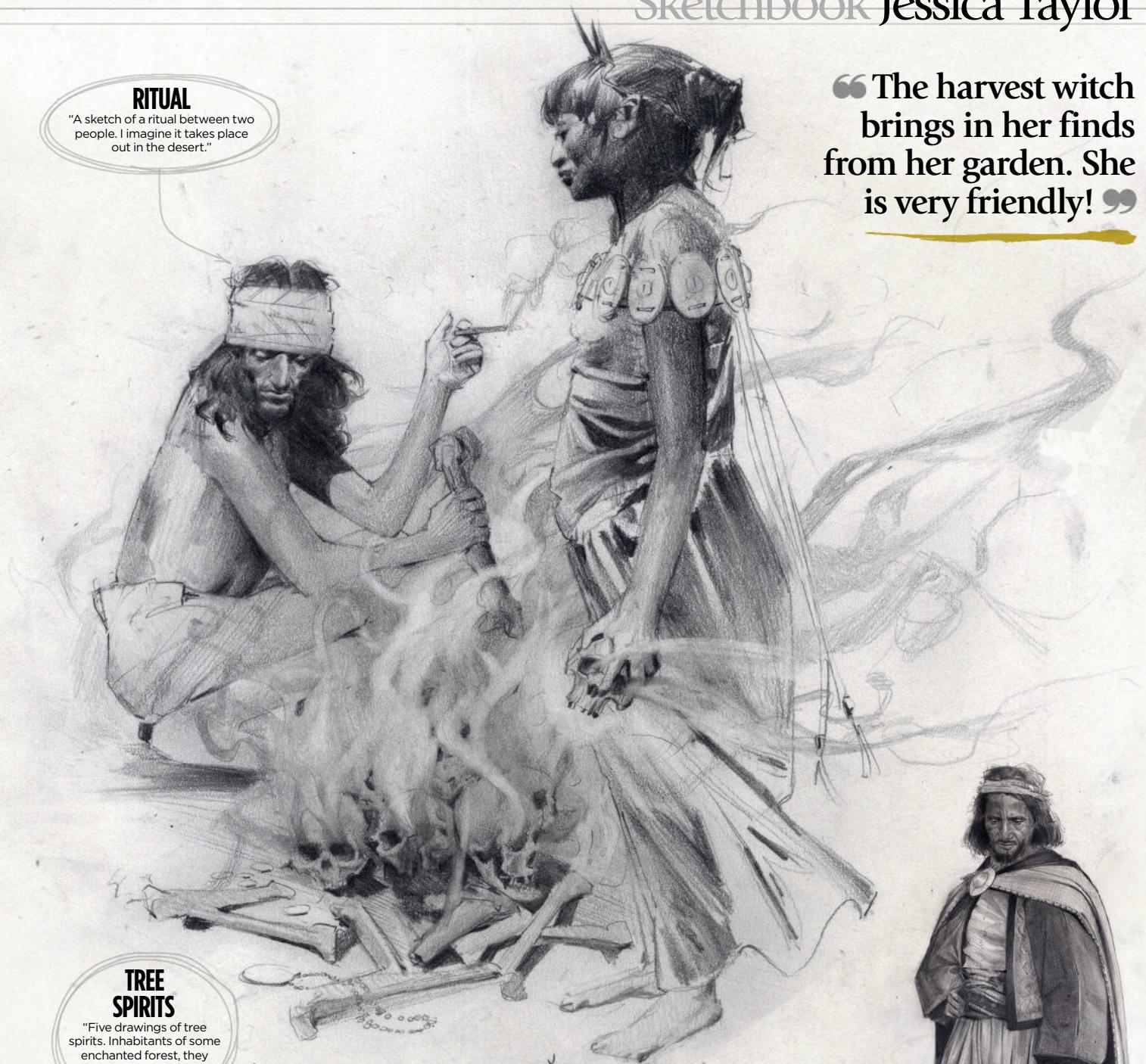
www.artstation.com/jessertaylor

Sketchbook Jessica Taylor

RITUAL

"A sketch of a ritual between two people. I imagine it takes place out in the desert."

“The harvest witch brings in her finds from her garden. She is very friendly! ”



TREE SPIRITS

"Five drawings of tree spirits. Inhabitants of some enchanted forest, they give wisdom to those who ask."



WIZARD

"A more elegant wizard. I used this drawing to get better at rendering clothing."

Sketchbook

FISH STUDIES

"Just some fun fish studies I did in my free time. I hadn't really studied fish much prior to this sketch."

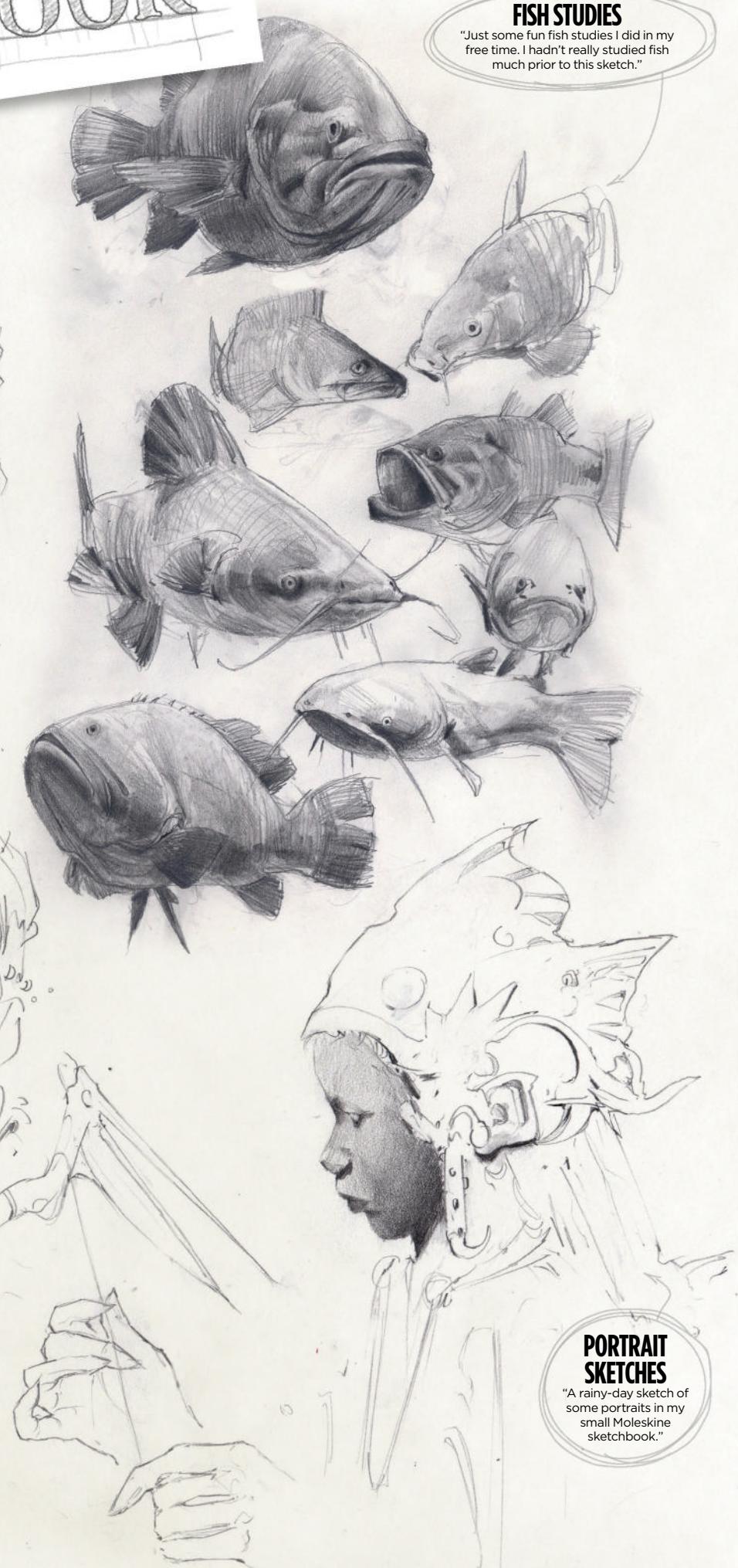


A LONE SCAVENGER

"Roughly done, but I like this sketch. Maybe I'll get around to fully realising this character one day."



“Inhabitants of some
enchanted forest, the
trees give wisdom to
those who ask”



PORTRAIT SKETCHES

"A rainy-day sketch of some portraits in my small Moleskine sketchbook."

Sketchbook Jessica Taylor



SNOW WHITE

"A quick illustration of my take on Snow White."

COWBOYS AND BABUSHKAS

"This was mostly a study to render clothing again, with some babushka sketches."



CANADIAN TREE

"A tree from my walks on Mount Nemo in Canada. It stood out, asking to be drawn."



PRIEST STUDY

"A study of a priest. This piece took a long time and a lot of effort to finish."

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

A LONG TIME AGO IN A GALAXY FAR, FAR AWAY....

Trevor Hogg has a conversation with the artists responsible for the characters and worlds featured in **Star Wars: Visions Volume 2...**

Just as much as mythology from various cultures shaped the imagination of George Lucas, he also has a deep understanding of character design and worldbuilding, which are an integral part of the vast universe created by him that has captivated generations of filmmakers. Channelling that creative spirit are animation studios from India, Ireland,

the UK, South Korea, Chile, Spain, France, South Africa, and Japan, all commissioned by Lucasfilm to provide their own creative interpretation for the Disney+ anthology series *Star Wars: Visions Volume 2*.

A prevailing theme for El Guiri Studios' episode, *Sith*, is what inspires an artist to create. "For me, animation is art," says Rodrigo Blaas, the studio's founder and director. "We had 14

minutes to tell a compelling story and create character archetypes simple enough that the audience could right away understand our visual intention. Setting that up in the simplest way possible allowed us to be experimental with our look, and make the painterly visuals part of our characters."

In the episode, a Sith Master seeks out his former padawan, Lola. "We always tried to make the Master look as imposing and intimidating as possible through his height and gaze," states art director Carlos Salgado. "However, Lola needed a more delicate balance; she's a strong character but in conflict, who can be sweet and brave."

The worlds are divided between the White Canvas and reality. "In Lola's inner world, the idea was to create a beautiful chaos, where each element could be different but was in harmony

EMOTIONAL ART
Producing a painted reality in brushstrokes that evoked Lola's emotions and backed the narrative of using the force to create art was the most vital challenge in *Sith*.



“Julian and Dorota were meant to be visible from first sight as being bad guys”



Star Wars: Visions Volume 2

CHASE STORM

2D effects were utilised for the storm chase scene that featured in Sith, the Visions episode created by El Guiri Studios.



Courtesy of Lucasfilm and El Guiri Studios

with the environment," explains Carlos. "In the real world, we wanted to create a big contrast after going through Lola's world, so we found it interesting to make it almost hellish and hostile when it reveals itself, and then go darker and darker."

SHAPES AND SILHOUETTES

Rifting on the famous parental reveal is Aardman's *I Am Your Mother*, which is centred around a more nurturing relationship. "We worked hard on the character shapes to have a strong and recognisable silhouette line-up," states director Magdalena Osinska. "Julan and Dorota were meant to be visible from first sight as being bad guys, and mother and daughter; they purposely look, behave and move similarly."

Discovering key poses drove the initial character explorations and influenced the shot design. "Stop-motion is unlike any other animation in the sense that you can't really go back and correct something that doesn't exactly work," Magdalena says. "I'm not a huge fan of animation" ➤



PAINTERLY BATTLE

Sith's distinct lightsaber fight saw smears of paint created as blades clashed.

Courtesy of Lucasfilm and El Guiri Studios



IMPOSING MASTER

The Sith Master had to appear as imposing and intimidating as possible through height and gaze.

Courtesy of Lucasfilm and El Guiri Studios

Feature

blocks compared to key poses, as it can sometimes restrict the animator. I like to see the journey and flow that the animator took between the poses."

The story occurs over the course of a day. "It starts early morning, goes into midday, then when the race happens goes into sunset. We go through many colour and lighting stages. When the characters argue the light turns red. Then when all seems lost, they are literally in a dark tunnel, where the light is blue as their emotions cool. Then it becomes orange and pink as they start working together again."

In Punkrobot's *In the Stars*, two sisters band together to battle the occupying Imperial forces among environmental devastation. "The visual features and characteristics we

aim to emphasise with the characters are always tied to their psyche, their backstory, and how they need to develop narratively in the short film," states Chris Peter, the art director. "For example, with Koten, we wanted to highlight her tough, introverted, agile and protective nature. As for Tichina, we needed a character who exudes energy, hope and determination.

"That's why Koten is designed with angular and stylised forms. Koten's silhouette conveys a pragmatic language, somewhat colder but also protective and kind-hearted. Another detail is that her hair partially covers her face. This helps portray her as more introverted, and within all that toughness and angularity, we also find a trace of fragility and fear of loss.

SISTERLY TRAITS

The character designs for sisters Koten and Tichina were tied to their psyche, backstory, and need to develop narratively in Punkrobot's *In the Stars*.

Courtesy of Lucasfilm and Aardman



PRECISE COLLABORATION

Magdalena Osinska describes the collaboration of Aardman's camera and set departments as faultless.



Courtesy of Lucasfilm and Aardman

"On the other hand, Tichina has a rounder shape with large, expressive eyes, which helps us perceive her as more cheerful and outgoing. She may be small, but she's just as brave and daring. We took inspiration from the fox and the sea lion as representative animals for these two sisters. The same storytelling approach applies to the

MOOD LIGHTING

The colour and lighting schemes reflect the story arc in Aardman's *I Am Your Mother*.

Officer, a cold and despotic character. Her face is slim with sharp angles. This shape unconsciously evokes the image of a cranial tool, projecting a sense of death and extermination. Additionally a large military coat protects her frail and slender body."

INFLUENCES FROM THE EAST

Duality is a significant part of Asian culture, which is reflected in Studio Mir's *Journey to the Dark Head*. "We tried to get many inspirations from Korean culture for the concept and look," notes director Park Hyeong Geun. "Dolgarak's temple was based on traditional Korean temples, and the statues inspired by Seokguram [Grotto]. We established the statues representing good and evil as we saw the parallel between the Force in Star Wars and yin and yang; we think they both represent the eternal cycle of birth and death." ►

Courtesy of Lucasfilm and Punkrobot



Star Wars: Visions Volume 2

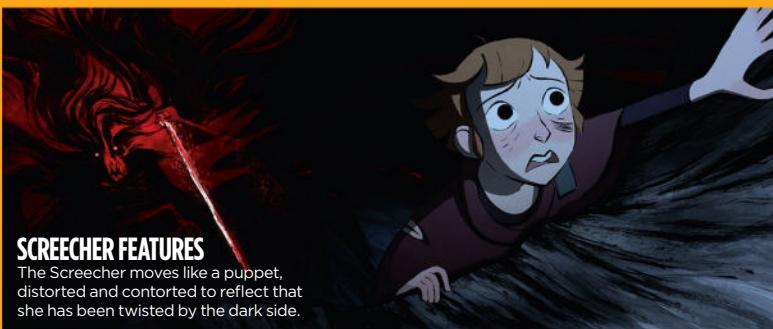
SPEEDER VISION

One of the first images that came to mind for Screecher's Reach director Paul Young was of the kids speeding across an open landscape free from their workhouse on a bunch of rattling speeders.



SCREECHER FEATURES

SCREECHER FEATURES The Screecher moves like a puppet, distorted and contorted to reflect that she has been twisted by the dark side.



SCREECHER'S REACH

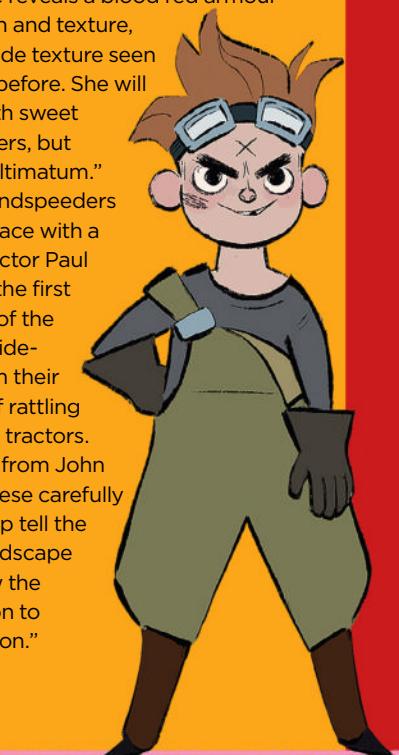
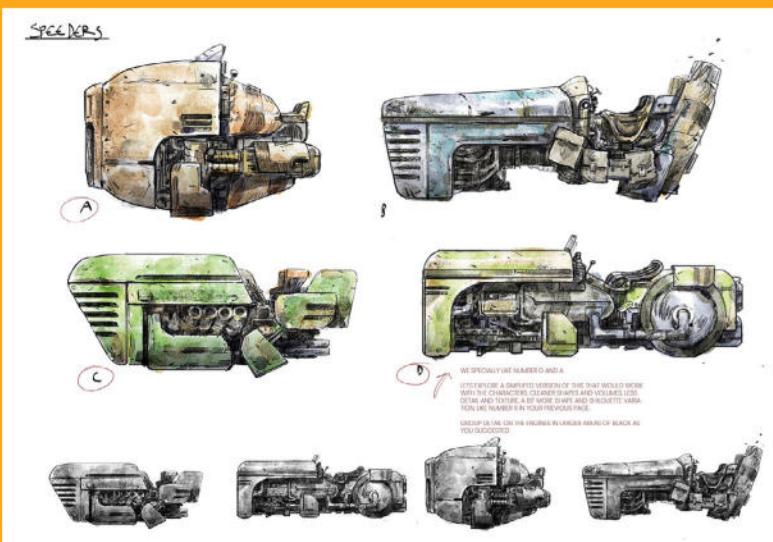
Cartoon Saloon embrace a dark fairy tale as a desperate girl seeks salvation

"For the witch inside the cave and the real form of the woman, we wanted to portray someone that has been completely consumed by the dark side, a hollow shell of her former self," states art director Almu Redondo. "She almost moves like a puppet, distorted and contorted. Twisted by the madness that has grown on her caused by the dark side possessing her completely. The Sith Mother is affiliated to a rare Sith order; mysterious, elegant, and poised as a beautiful flower with her cape in the shape of petals, revealing her true nature as she pulls down her hood. She reveals a blood red armour with an aggressive design and texture, reminiscent of the dark side texture seen in the cave hallucination before. She will lure Daal into her side with sweet words and inviting manners, but sharp as a blade on her ultimatum."

A striking visual is of landspeeders skimming across the surface with a planetary backdrop. Director Paul Young explains: "One of the first pictures in my head was of the kids speeding across a wide-open landscape free from their workhouse on a bunch of rattling speeders that looked like tractors. We shared some images from John Ford films, which have these carefully composed vistas that help tell the story. We can use the landscape and composition to show the transition from oppression to freedom across the horizon."

FARMYARD REFERENCE

DESIGN REFERENCE
A tractor was used as a design reference for the landspeeders in Screecher's Reach.



Feature

Courtesy of Lucasfilm and Aardman



COLOUR MY WORLD

Colours can dictate the mood of entire sequences, as demonstrated by this colour script for *I Am Your Mother*.

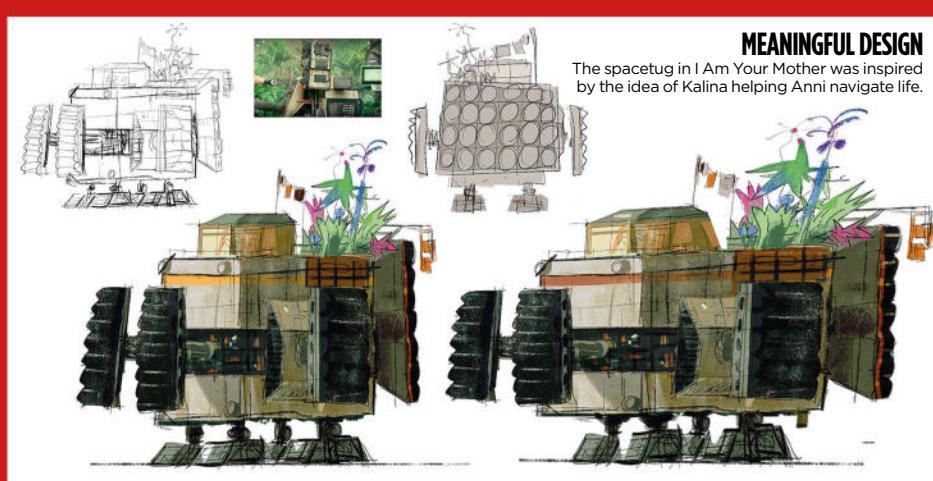
“I like to see the journey and flow that the animator took between poses”

CHARACTER LINEUP

A lineup of the main characters in Aardman's *I Am Your Mother*, featuring Z1 and the mother-daughter duos of Kalina and Anni, and Dorota and Julian.



Courtesy of Lucasfilm and Aardman



MEANINGFUL DESIGN

The spacetug in *I Am Your Mother* was inspired by the idea of Kalina helping Anni navigate life.



RECYCLED ROBOT

A power droid was reinterpreted for *The Bandits of Golak*.

Courtesy of Lucasfilm and 88 Pictures

Courtesy of Lucasfilm and Aardman

Star Wars: Visions Volume 2

Courtesy of Lucasfilm and Punkrobot



SKYDIVING CHALLENGE
One of the most complex sequences to execute in Journey to the Dark Side is when Ara skydives to rescue Toul.

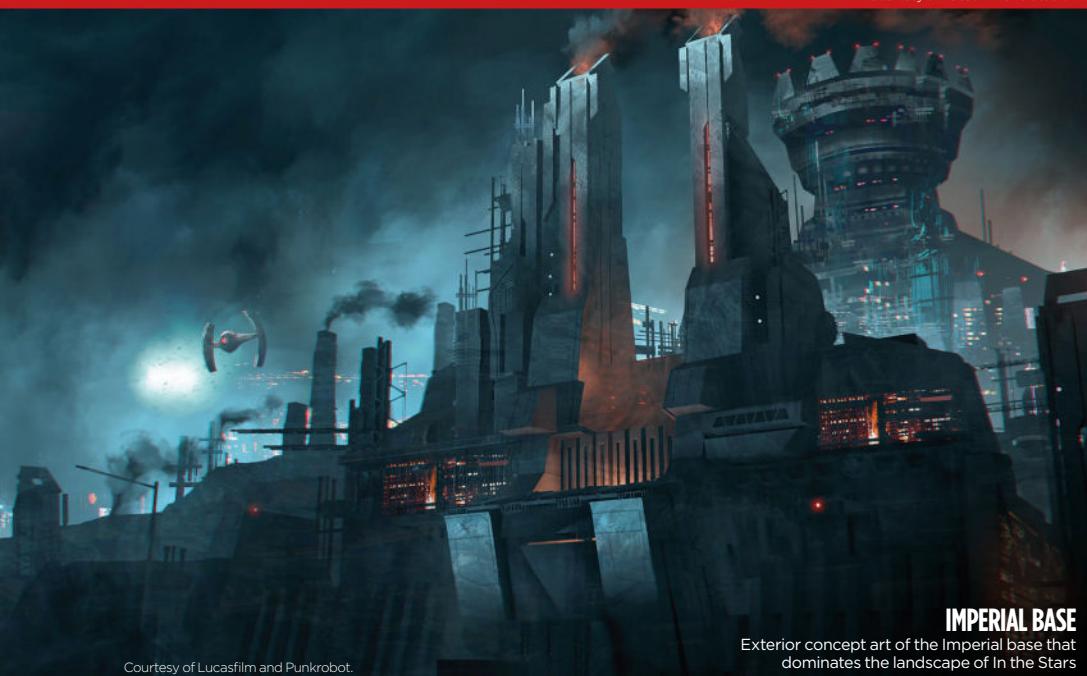
Courtesy of Lucasfilm and Studio Mir



KOTEN CONCEPT

The character design of Koten highlights her tough, introverted, agile and protective nature.

Courtesy of Lucasfilm and 88 Pictures



IMPERIAL BASE
Exterior concept art of the Imperial base that dominates the landscape of In the Stars



SIBLING CONTRAST

In The Bandits of Golak, 88 Pictures treated Rani as a ball of energy and Charuk as a simple, affectionate boy.



Daniel Clowes

KRATU

Special attention was paid to character details such as the earrings worn by Kratu.

Courtesy of Lucasfilm and Triggerfish

► Ara and Toul were designed to be imperfect and complementary of each other, as the director explains: "Basically, we wanted to add our pair to the tradition of the Jedi-pilot duos. And Bichan, of course, had to look like a cunning, almost seductive villain. We tried to incorporate Korean traditional costumes for Bichan and Ara's outfits so that they could provide a fresh new feel, different from what we typically see in the Star Wars universe, while Toul keeps this presence with a familiar Jedi style in line with the world."

Courtesy of Lucasfilm and Studio Mir



GOING WITH THE FLOW

The flow of camerawork was matched to the mood and emotions of the scenes in Studio Mir's Journey to the Dark Head.

■ The choices of their colour are direct inspirations from the clothing worn in the northwestern part of India ■

Story beats influenced the design of the spacecraft flown by Ara. "Since the Jedi side was losing, we intended to give them a rough transportation ship where all the main battleships were out on the frontline," states art director Kang You Tae. "Bichan's spacecraft contained the characteristics of Bichan or Sith, inspired by a bat and a snake head. As for the speeder, we made a large back section to secure a room for a battle on its surface. We also wanted to highlight the fact that Ara renovated the speeder to have more accelerated power to speed through the clouds. The final design includes a large rear part and boosters on both sides."

A warm colour palette was devised for 88 Pictures' The Bandits of Golak. "It's a rather hot planet with not much flora going for it," explains Milind D. Shinde, the executive producer, and founder and CEO of 88 Pictures. "However, the denizens make up for the lack of colour. The choices of their colour are direct inspirations from the clothing worn in the northwestern part of India. We realised teal, yellow and pink were the primary colours in almost all northwestern Indian clothing. We tried to mix those up a little and made all of the characters pop out with extremely vibrant and detailed clothing." ►

Courtesy of Lucasfilm and Studio Mir



ARA AND Toul

Journey to the Dark Head's lead characters Ara and Toul were designed to be imperfect and complementary to each other.

SPECTRUM OF GOOD AND EVIL

Studio Mir followed the tradition of representing light and dark through the colour of the lightsabers in Journey to the Dark Head.



Courtesy of Lucasfilm and Studio Mir

Star Wars: Visions Volume 2

NO WAY OUT

It was important to LeAndre Thomas that the pit feel deep and inescapable.



REAL-WORLD INFLUENCES

The juxtaposition between the pit and Crystal City reflects disparities that exist in the real world.



LIGHT SOURCE

Assisting the story are a variety of light sources ranging from the sun, handheld torches, heaters and flashlights to city lights.

CLASSIC HAIR STYLE
Livy's afro puffs are a callback to the famous buns of Princess Leia.



THE PIT

Visuals tell the story with dialogue not prominent in D'Art Shtajio's episode

"We wanted to keep the film simple," reveals LeAndre Thomas, the director, writer and executive producer. "The planet is mostly vast and empty so the focus remains on the people and the problem at hand. The pit itself is a key visual element, we really wanted the audience to feel just how dark and horrifying it is. The idea of a giant pit is something we see in the Star Wars universe often. There's the Sarlacc pit, the pit to the Coruscant Underworld, and when Luke Skywalker finds out who his father is, he also falls down an enormous pit. The element of duality is something often represented in Star Wars, and we see that in the pit compared to the Crystal City glimmering in the background. One space is being pushed deeper and deeper underground while the other is ascending higher and higher above the surface; that disproportionate separation is meant to reflect some of the real-world issues we see today."

The character designs were challenging. "The set piece of them being prisoners in the same garb made it harder," explains Arthell Isom, the lead production designer and executive producer. "We chose fun, distinct traits for the main characters Crux, Eureka, Livy, and the Old Prisoner so they would stand out. I'm known for always wearing different hair styles and this was a great opportunity to do the same with our characters. Livy's afro puffs are a call back to the very famous buns of Princess Leia. Crux's hair is more simplistic and rugged to show his grit. Eureka sports an afro with one dread. The Old Prisoner has a greyed afro to showcase his resilience in surviving hardships."





FLEA MARKET CONCEPT

A warm colour palette was developed for The Bandits of Golak, as demonstrated by concept art of the flea market.

Courtesy of Lucasfilm and 88 Pictures

➡ The character design for the Inquisitor went through the most iterations. "It all started with the Sixth Brother," remarks Ishan Shukla, the director. "I wanted to place him in this animated world. But as the designs progressed, it became increasingly clear that having an Indian inquisitor would be much cooler.

"We took inspirations from Indian mythology heavily for this one. A very specific demon [Asuras in Hindi] was known as Vritra, who was the main adversary of Indra, the king of Devas; a master strategist and brutal warrior. With a long, pointy moustache and red sparkling eyes, Vritra had it all. We then juxtaposed those drawings over a couple of Inquisitors, which resulted in this cunning villain; someone who takes his time, circles around their prey and then gets into the fight."

SOUTH AFRICAN VIBES

Embracing the central Star Wars concept that an unseen power known as the Force connects all things is Triggerfish's Aau's Song. "We were careful not to take a too simple and expected approach by imposing an African veneer over the look of the whole film," states writer and director



MYTHOLOGICAL TOUCH

By viewing the Sixth Brother through the lens of Indian mythology, 88 Pictures was able to come up with the design of the Inquisitor in The Bandits of Golak.

Daniel Clarke. "Star Wars draws from all sorts of cultures and aesthetics for its panoply of worlds, but never just one. Nadia Darries [co-director] and I are both South African and trusted that our experiences and what we love would naturally emerge in the look and feel of the world. Primarily, the landscapes – rocky cliffs, birds and nature sounds – are all drawn from the Western Cape, the area we both grew up, especially an area called Chapman's Peak."

There is a nostalgic quality to the creators' visual aesthetic. "To us, these

■ To us, these characters are real, living individuals that truly exist somewhere ■

LIGHT INSPIRATION

The lighting for Aau's Song was primarily inspired by the bright blue skies and warmth of South Africa.

characters are real, living individuals that truly exist somewhere," remarks Nadia. "The animation and design stem from a place of wanting to respect the fact that they have history, memories, and unique cultures. Our concept artists put love into exploring the small details, like the carabiner on Abat's belt, or Kratu's earrings."

The lighting was primarily inspired by the blue skies and warm intensity of South Africa and Cape Town. Daniel notes: "From a style point of view, we looked at a lot of adventure films from the 80s and 90s that used high-key lighting, and were primarily concerned with sculpting light in a heightened, theatrical way, rather than the naturalistic approach so often used now. We cut the frame and characters into large, confident shapes with broad swathes of light, embracing hard shadows, and prioritising the feel of a shot over continuity or practicality."



STRIKING A POSE

Hétis is a rebellious and idealistic teenager, so her outfit and hair leans more towards a circus.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

The final design lineup of Hétis, Loi'e and Jon for The Spy Dancer.



THE SPY DANCER

Imbuing the spirit of the French Resistance during the Second World War is Studio La Cachette's entry to Star Wars Visions

"We wanted to design the city and the space cabaret to feel like the architecture of the early 1900s in Paris, with the metallic structures and the high ceiling with a glass dome just like the Grand Palais or the Galeries Lafayette, and the interior of the room was drawn after real Parisian cabarets' interior layouts, like the Moulin Rouge," explains director Julien Chheng.

"Our main character being a dancer, we created a dress that allows her to almost fly in the room during her performance and that can create various types of shapes that make her unique, and can absorb all the attention of the troopers. Her dancing skills are inspired by the specific style of dance that real performer Loie Fuller is famous for. In the early ages of cinema,

some black and white footage of her dancing was colourised frame by frame giving her veils a fascinating look; this was really the starting point for her design and the animation style."

The character of Loi'e was given a charismatic silhouette that conveys years of resilience and strength. "She looks like a diva, with her headgear keeping her hair perfectly tamed, and her eye expressions," states Julien. "I wanted the audience to feel like she's tired of this spy game and she is losing hope. Hétis is the opposite. She is more of a rebellious teenager, idealistic, so her outfit and hairstyle leans more towards circus. The officer was tricky, as we had to make his silhouette resemble the old officer who took Loi'e's baby. I wanted him to have the same colour skin and nose shape as Loi'e, and one eye covered by a metallic patch, which makes him look like a bad guy, and also hides the secret of his other eye's colour from the audience."



FILLED WITH NOSTALGIA

Easter eggs include the torso of C-3PO being used as a dressing room mannequin.

FLOWER POWER

The white flower dance was inspired by Loie Fuller, then expanded and elevated to a point where Loi'e can shapeshift and even disappear.

GET IMAGINEFX DELIVERED DIGITALLY!

The digital edition of ImagineFX magazine is displayed on a tablet. The cover features a futuristic, steampunk-style character with a chainsaw arm and a mechanical head, set against a red and yellow background. The title 'ImagineFX' is at the top, with 'NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS' above it. A large 'GNOMON WORKSHOP' logo is prominently displayed in the center. Text on the cover includes 'DISCOVER THE GNOMON WORKSHOP', 'Get the lowdown on the biggest name in online digital art education', 'PROCREATE ICONIC CAT REIMAGINED', 'Put a futuristic twist on a classic character', 'TAP FOR TEXT-FREE COVER!', 'ISSUE 231', 'BEHIND THE SCENES OF STAR WARS: VISIONS VOLUME 2', and 'ALSO INSIDE: SEE INSIDE A BATMAN SUPERFAN'S STUDIO, LEARN TO PAINT YOUR FANTASY PORTRAIT, OPEN YOUR MIND WITH AUTOMATIC DRAWING'. A 'SAVE \$100 ON AN ANNUAL ONLINE GNOMON SUBSCRIPTION' offer is also present. A small illustration by Pascal Blanché is visible in the top right corner. A green circular badge on the right side of the tablet says 'GO DIGITAL!' and 'Our digital editions come with the same resources included in the print edition!'. The tablet is set against a red background with white swooshes.

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Advice from the world's best artists



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Anna Hollinrake remixes old references for her character art.

68 Paint a fantasy self-portrait

The workflow that transformed Alex Out into an art goblin.

72 Focus on details

Jefrain Gallipoli puts a modern spin on a playing card design.

74 Design a stylised Japanese robot

How a famous maneki-neko cat becomes an adorable cyborg.

80 Work with an intention in your art

The goals Max Frorer set before jumping into his sci-fi artwork.

82 Create a detailed mythical sphinx

Emily Chapman paints a beast that boasts a legendary history.

Photoshop

DEVELOP YOUR OLD STUDIES

Creative director **Anna Hollinrake** sets out to create a story-packed image as she gives old references new life



Artist PROFILE

Anna Hollinrake

LOCATION: England

A BAFTA Breakthrough Brit, Anna is co-founder and creative director of game studio Electric Saint. Among nine years in games and animation, she worked as an art lead on Fall Guys. <https://bit.ly/3sbhRuJ>



When I paid a visit to the Legion of Honor museum in San Francisco, I wasn't prepared for the abject beauty and craftsmanship on display at Guo Pei's Couture Fantasy exhibit. So much so that I spent three hours moving from piece to piece, drawing frantically until my iPad died.

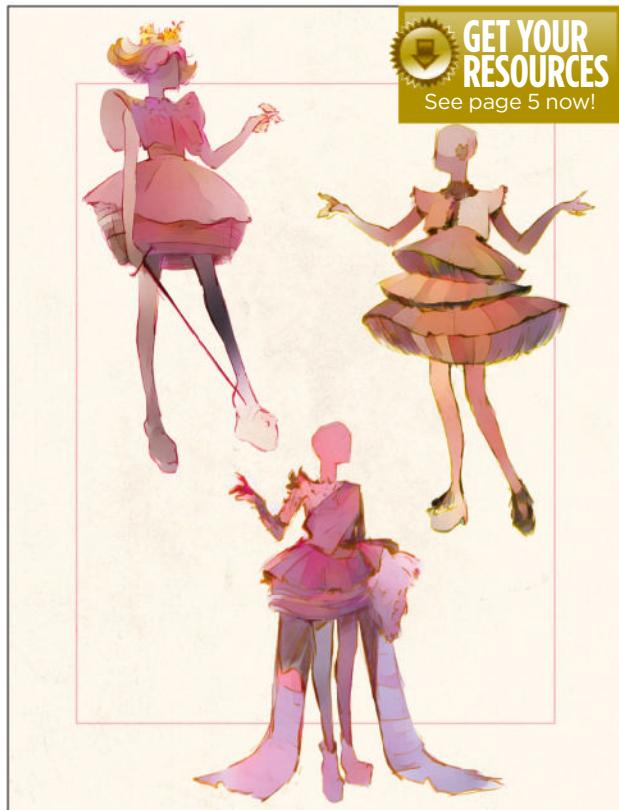
I wanted to do a fully fledged illustration inspired by what I'd seen, but crucially they weren't my

designs. However, it wasn't like I was lacking in reference. One search into my Google Photos led to a wealth of potential directions with personal experience, I just needed a solid shove to actually use them.

In this tutorial, I'll be going through my thinking and painting process for Midsummer Tournament of the Well, directly inspired by one of Guo Pei's incredible designs. I've worked as an artist in games and animation for almost nine years, and

recently founded my own games studio Electric Saint, but my process is still ever changing and developing, so I hope you can find something useful, or at least commiserate as I repaint a leg for the fifth time.

If you have a study you'd love to jump from into a worldbuilding project, or an overflowing camera roll of things you swore you'd paint later, consider this a draw-along to get you going. Let's start making some interesting new paintings!



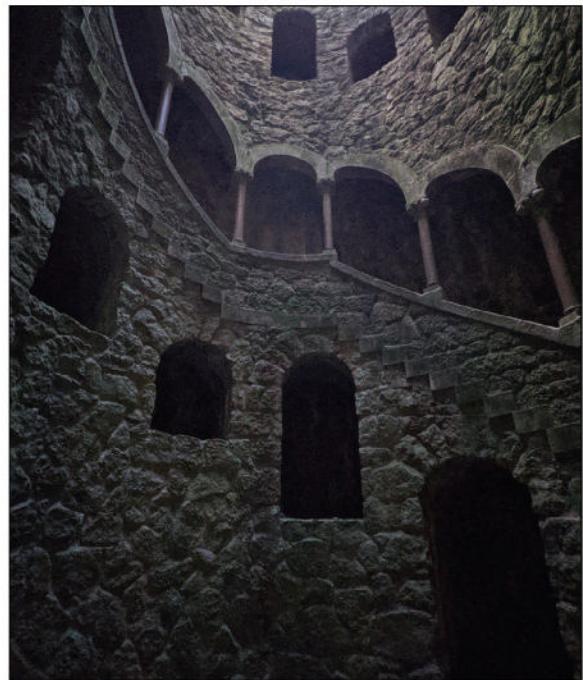
1 Identify what most excites you about your study or sketch

At the Couture Fantasy exhibit, I drew sword girl after sword girl. This makes this step relatively easy for me, as I want to take a high-fashion sword girl into a full illustration, but also making sure I'm creating something new. If you don't have as clear an idea, for example if your study is of a landscape or loose sketch, try to think about what might be challenging or unusual to mash up with other references. ➤

In depth Develop studies



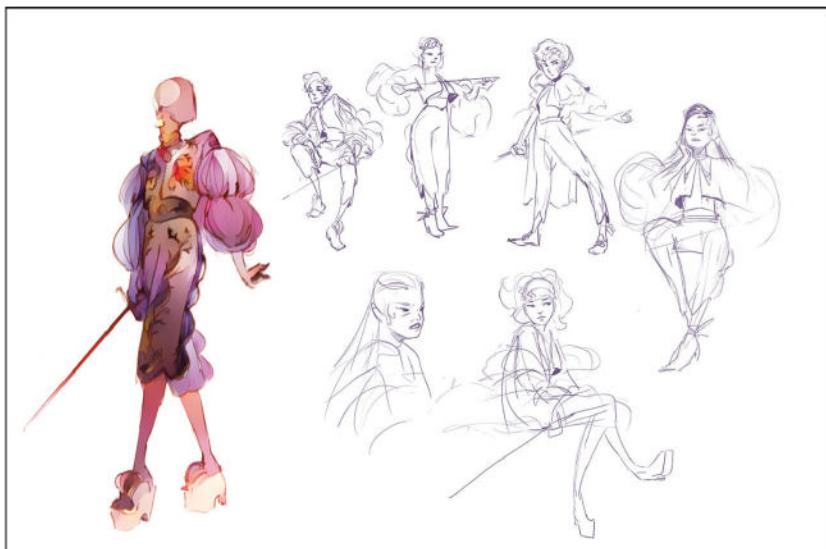
Workshops



2 Expand your world with reference and add contrasting themes

If I'm working from a character, I'll usually look for an environment I've previously visited to spark some ideas, and vice versa. I tend to keep my mood boards more pared back nowadays to avoid my clarity of vision getting muddled, so I always try to find a specific location to contrast with my sketches. The outfit that I'm working from is very light, airy and clean, so I start with thinking about adding some grit to the high fantasy look.

I loved the cropped jacket and trousers that could almost have been from a uniform, and stumbled upon my photos from Portugal, where I visited the Quinta da Regaleira. It's a beautiful gothic castle with a weathered fairytale look, but also has a garden full of strange sculptures, and a foreboding spiral of carved steps that leads deep into the ground called the Initiation Well. This gets me thinking about a wealthy finishing school with beautiful uniforms but a dark secret; dangerous duels that happen in murky chambers deep underground.



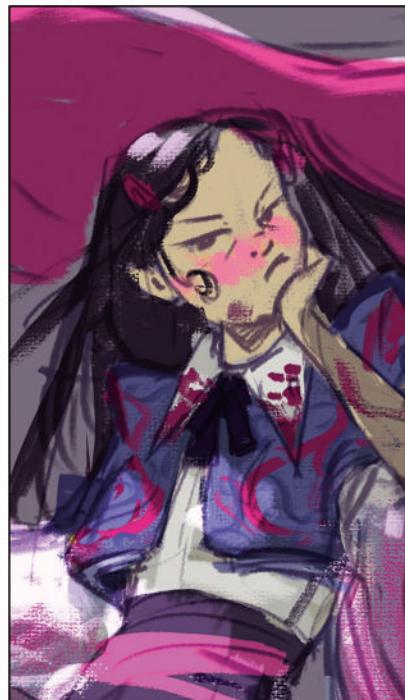
3 Start sketching, but think about character

It can be easy when approaching a fashion-based piece to not think about character portrayal and instead just pour lots of effort into costumes. I want to avoid that! I start sketching some potential characters with dynamic poses and expressions. I've accepted I'm just not a silhouette person; I both think in line and prefer to be more playful with who my characters are early on. I start quite close to the reference, and then gradually branch out. I end up choosing a girl with long, dark hair and a malicious glint in her eye. There's something fun in creating a haughty, Mean Girls-esque Regina George type of character.



4 Refine a sketch

I want to focus on what the main features of this character are, so I take a piece a little further. Not much further, but I think about her facial expression and some of her costume details a little more. As I'm doing this I'll be making up a story in my mind about her; how she talks to people, how she feels about duelling. While they don't necessarily feed into the image, it helps me build out an image of her in my mind, and I find it's easier to solve costuming problems at this stage rather than in the final image, although that's something I have a bad habit of doing because it seems easier in the moment. That almost never turns out to be the case!



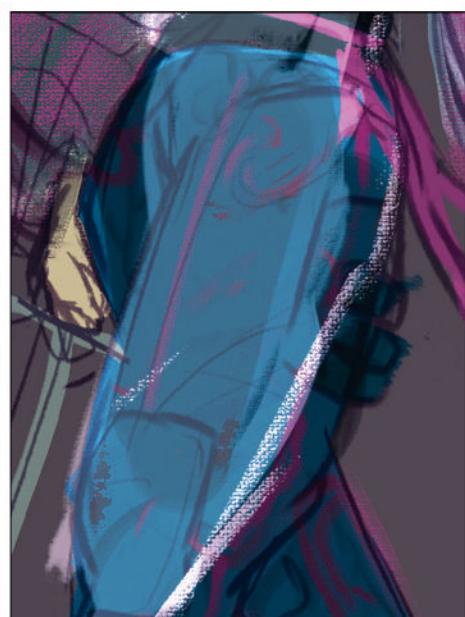
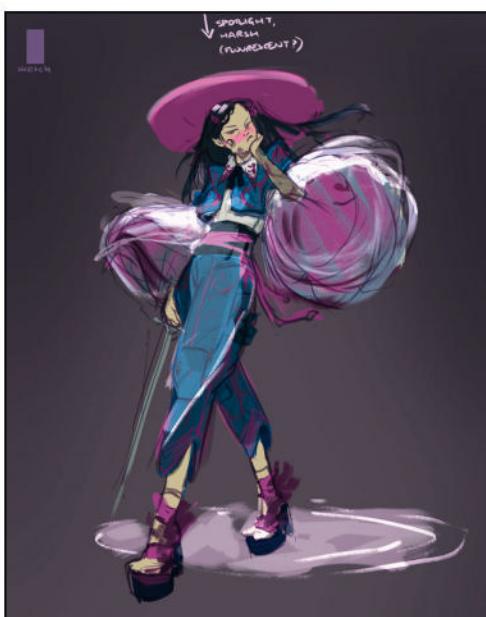
5 Start the piece

Now that I have my character, I want to tell a story with her movement. I want to reference the runway strut I saw in a lot of the mannequins into her pose, but I want it to be both threatening and confident. I try to capture the in-between point of movement rather than at the beginning or the end as it feels less static, and I'll often act out the movement myself to get a feeling of where the weight of the character should be. With this piece, I liked the idea of her striding toward the camera after a fight, pushing her jaw back into place. Is she gearing up for her next challenge? Is she swaggering away from her latest battle? Either way, I start with a sweeping line of movement and build my sketch from there.

6 Blockout your shapes

After adding in the costuming elements, I go to colour immediately because working in greyscale isn't very fun or interesting to me, no matter how hard I try. When I do this, however, I try to make a conscious decision to think about my lighting early on so that it's not just an afterthought, or ends up looking muddy and flat.

Her head is also getting lost, so I add a hat to balance the shapes. I'm not entirely sold yet, but it helps draw the eye directly to the face rather than getting caught in the sleeves. Make a checklist when preparing to jump into the painting phase of an image. Have you decided on lighting? Have you got a rough idea of your colour palette? Are you happy with your silhouette?

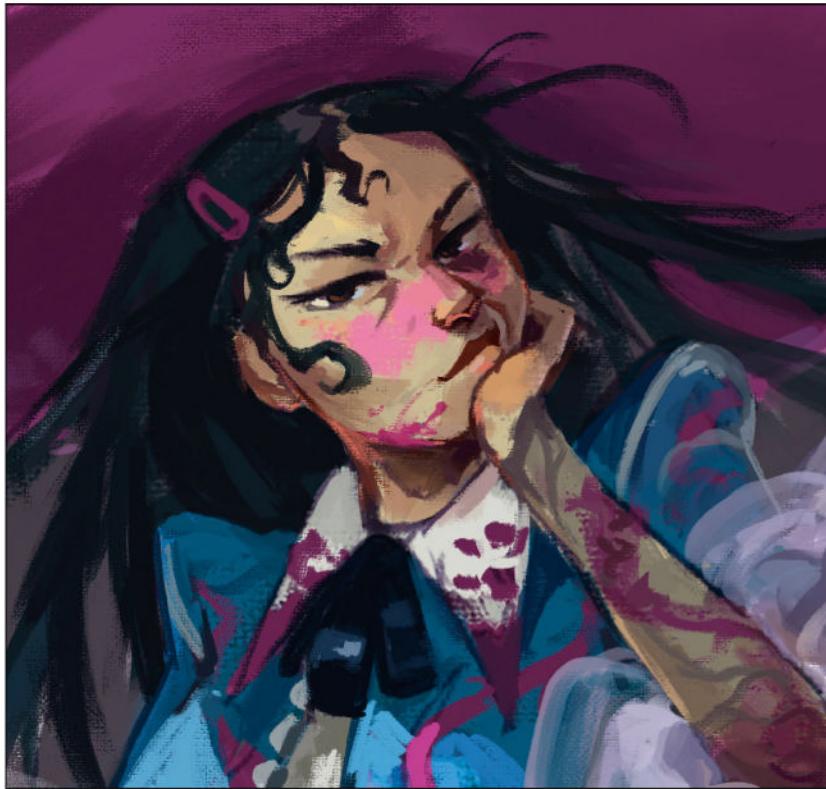


7 Put a background in early and keep it simple

When doing character illustration it's so easy to just ignore the background as an afterthought, but I encourage you to keep it in your mind! I want to capture a dingy chamber underground with harsh overhead lighting, so it's hardly complex. However, even if it's just some quick shapes and gradients, it will feel a bit more tangible than

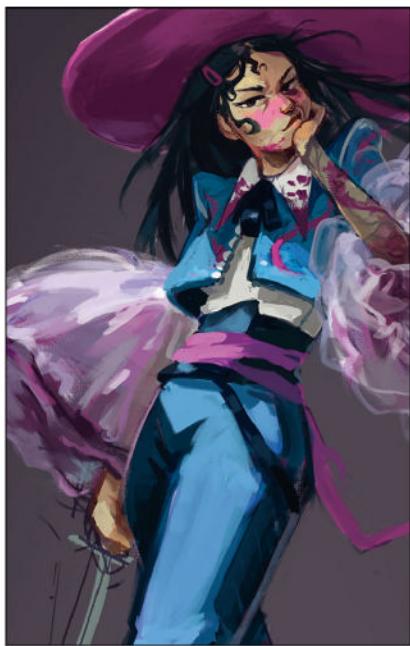
a flat colour and can help with your thought process. Also, don't be afraid to simplify; over-detailing can be such a problem and designs are rarely ever sold by just painting in increasingly more granular detail. While I liked the idea of having brocade embroidery on the trousers and jacket, I was finding that the patterns were really competing with the sleeves and the face. ➡

Workshops



8 Think about expression

I'm the most guilty of drawing blank-faced characters staring into the middle distance. However, that doesn't make for as compelling an image, especially when we're trying to give our character some bite. Don't be afraid to twist expressions and play with angles, as it makes for interesting art. I decided to really push her sneer into something a bit unflattering; it gives her much more personality.



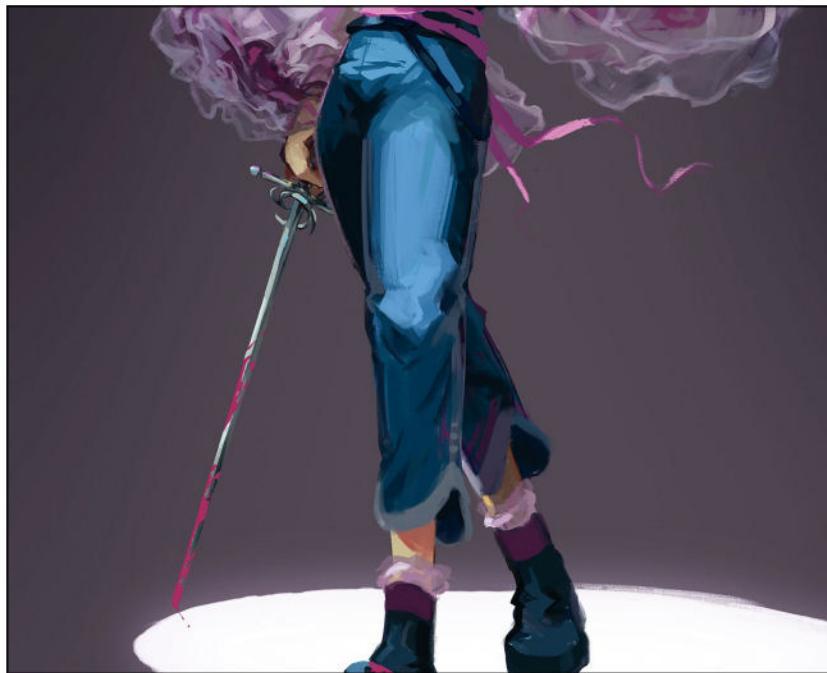
9 Get more reference when you need to problem solve

I've never painted tulle material before, so this became an opportunity to do a mini study. I found that it was much more opaque at the edges, and creased in almost gravity defying ways much more than I anticipated. Don't try to brute force your way through figuring out how a material, expression, or atmospheric effect looks when you can just Google it.



10 Be your own reference

I could not for the life of me figure out this front leg and foot moving toward the camera in a foreshortened perspective, redrawing it multiple times over. I was also finding that the detailed heel was just far too complicated and was competing with the rest of the image in regards to contrast and visual detail. I also acknowledge that while this was a fantastical finishing school, having extremely complex heels be part of the uniform challenged my suspension of disbelief, and eventually I looked for some inspiration close to home, taking a photo of myself wearing my platform Doc Martens and holding my violin bow. This really helped! Whenever possible, get in front of your mirror or phone camera and enjoy feeling extremely silly as you do it.



11 Solve new design problems off-image

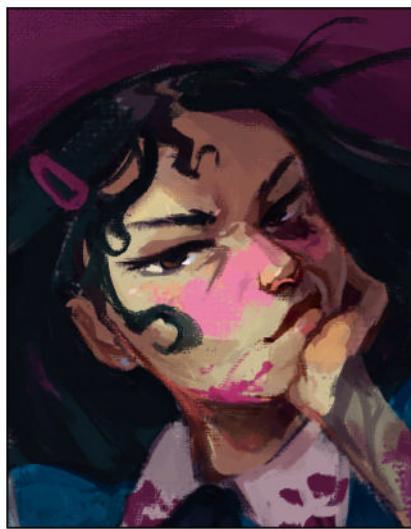
As I mentioned earlier, when possible, solve design problems away from your main image. I didn't have a clear idea of the look of the sword; no sketch, no reference. I ended up noodling and painting over it multiple times, which was a bit dumb and a waste of my time. A Biro sketch in a lined notebook is a much better option.

In addition, I think I could have taken the sword further. I love adding personalisation to accessories, and even though it's a weapon, it still belongs to someone at a school. I'm almost certain that the students would customise these items, such as adding charms, however impractical, or colourful grips. That's another vote tallied for sketching designs in advance rather than trying to just get something there.



12 Tell a story with your background

Now for painting the background. I'm drawing upon the textures in my reference here; dark, weathered stone, and dust. As you might have guessed from the title, I've imagined that these duels take place at the bottom of a well, which could also be an explanation for the circle of light, so I keep it all simple and murky. However, I want to suggest a bit of formality to these duels by putting markings on the floor. There's also a sinister implication there that this has been happening for a long time. What has happened here in the past? Have people died? It doesn't hurt that the diagonal lines and circular sweeps add a bit of depth to the scene, too.



13 Harmonise the image

To tie everything together, I increased the darkness of the shadow on the face and body to match with the overhead lighting, and also put some shadow on the tulle that fell outside of the spotlight. Looking at an image for a long time, you can become desensitised to contrast and saturation, so it's worth



checking your values, flipping your canvas, and looking at the painting on different screens. Concentrate on your main focal points. Don't crank up the contrast and saturation on everything, it's okay to let lower-priority parts have lost edges or similar values. In addition, think about the mood and tone you're trying to set in your image.



14 Final pass

Let your painting sit for a day or two before you decide it's done; what I like to call the marination pass. I'm a big believer in spending an extra 30 minutes polishing a painting after you've slept on it, because your fresh eyes tend to forgive overcritical 1am thoughts, or notice obvious errors you were too busy to notice. Here, I really didn't like the size and stiffness of the hat, and wanted something that felt in-keeping with the rapier sword design. I reduced it down and added a ribbon for a little more movement, which sits together better now.

Photoshop PAINT A FANTASY SELF-PORTRAIT

Alex Out shares how he fittingly reimagines himself as an art goblin with the help of his trusted value-to-colour workflow

Artist PROFILE

Alex Out

LOCATION:
The Netherlands

Alex is a full-time art student and part-time turbo nerd. In the future, he aspires to become a character concept artist and illustrator.
<https://bit.ly/3QnnCj5>



As a digital artist, I tend to spent a lot of my time sitting in weird poses while working on a piece in the little art cave that is my room. This has earned me the moniker of 'Art Goblin' among my friends, so I figured there would be nothing more fitting than a goblin self-portrait.

To start I wrote down some key features that define my appearance

and mood. These would be my yellow coat, bleached hair, frogs and my bad habit of putting a pen in my mouth when I focus. With these features in mind, I started off with my first rough sketch, establishing the overall volumes and flow of the piece. After that I went in to clean up, defining the features and smaller shapes within the drawing.

I decided to use a greyscale-to-colour workflow, given that I wanted

to establish the value relationships between the different materials and surfaces before I jumped into the colouring phase. Doing so, I used a combination of Multiply, Overlay and Soft Light layers to slowly bring colour into the piece. And after building up the image with layers, I created a final version to paint over normally and sprinkled in some highlights and colour variation on top to finish up my artwork.

How I create...

A GOBLIN-THEMED PAINTING



1 Plan your hierarchy

While creating the initial sketch for the illustration, I took time to focus on the focal point of the piece, and how I wanted the hierarchy of my shapes to support it. The large shape of the frog supports the smaller shapes and detail of the goblin, and helps to direct the viewer's attention towards to our green friend as well.

2 Develop contrast

Setting up the values, I made sure that there was a rhythm between the lights and the darks of the piece. This is especially visible looking at the surfaces of the frog, coat, goblin face and hair. Additionally, I used a broader value range in areas of interest, such as the frog's eye and the goblin's face, to increase the contrast.

3 Add colour

To build up the colours I used brushes with varying opacity and saturation with Multiply, Overlay and Soft Light layers. This gave me a lot of control and wiggle room when it came to adjusting the hues. This also helped me keep control of where my highlights and colour variation would be strongest, such as the goblin's face.

In depth Fantasy self-portraits



Workshops

PORTRAIT DETAILS



Custom brushes

I used two custom round brushes that have their opacity bound to pressure sensitivity alongside the previously mentioned layers to help slowly bring colour into the piece. Because of the opacity in the brushes, I had a lot of control in bringing the values to colour, which is important since the black and white version often doesn't match the values of the final piece.



Facial colours

Of note are some of the small colour variations around the goblin's face. The contrast in colour with the warm, red-tinted nose and ear against cold cyan highlights on the skin helps to draw the attention of the viewer and adds some visual variation.

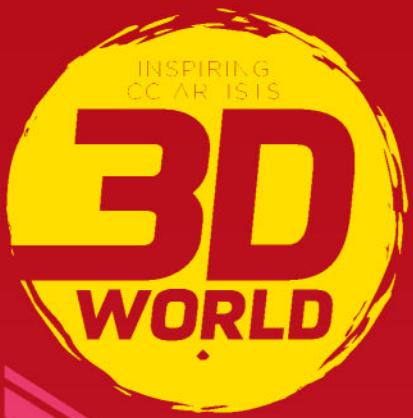
Drawing hands

Hands are often, next to the face, a focal point for characters. As they are important to the viewer, I made sure to group the details of the frog's eye, and the goblin's sleeve and sketchbook together to make it more readable. The stickers themselves also show some personality, with a hint of complementary colour shown against the yellow.



My main brushes for building up the layers, edge control and smooth transitions. Which brush I use will depend on how opaque the strokes are required to be.

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Technique focus

FOCUS ON DETAILS

Illustrator **Jefrain Gallipoli** explains why the smaller highlights were important in bringing his royal, playing card-inspired character to life



"My friend Michelle Catalanotto set me a challenge to create a card for a poker deck, and of course, I had to choose the iconic queen of hearts for my character. I felt this was the

perfect opportunity for me to flex my rendering skills and create a modern version of a classic playing card, while keeping my signature character stylisation.

What I quickly discovered with this piece is that the highlights,

much like the cherry on top of a cake, were what made this artwork pop and brought the queen character to life in such an amazing way. For me, it's all about finding those little details that can bring your artwork up to the next level."

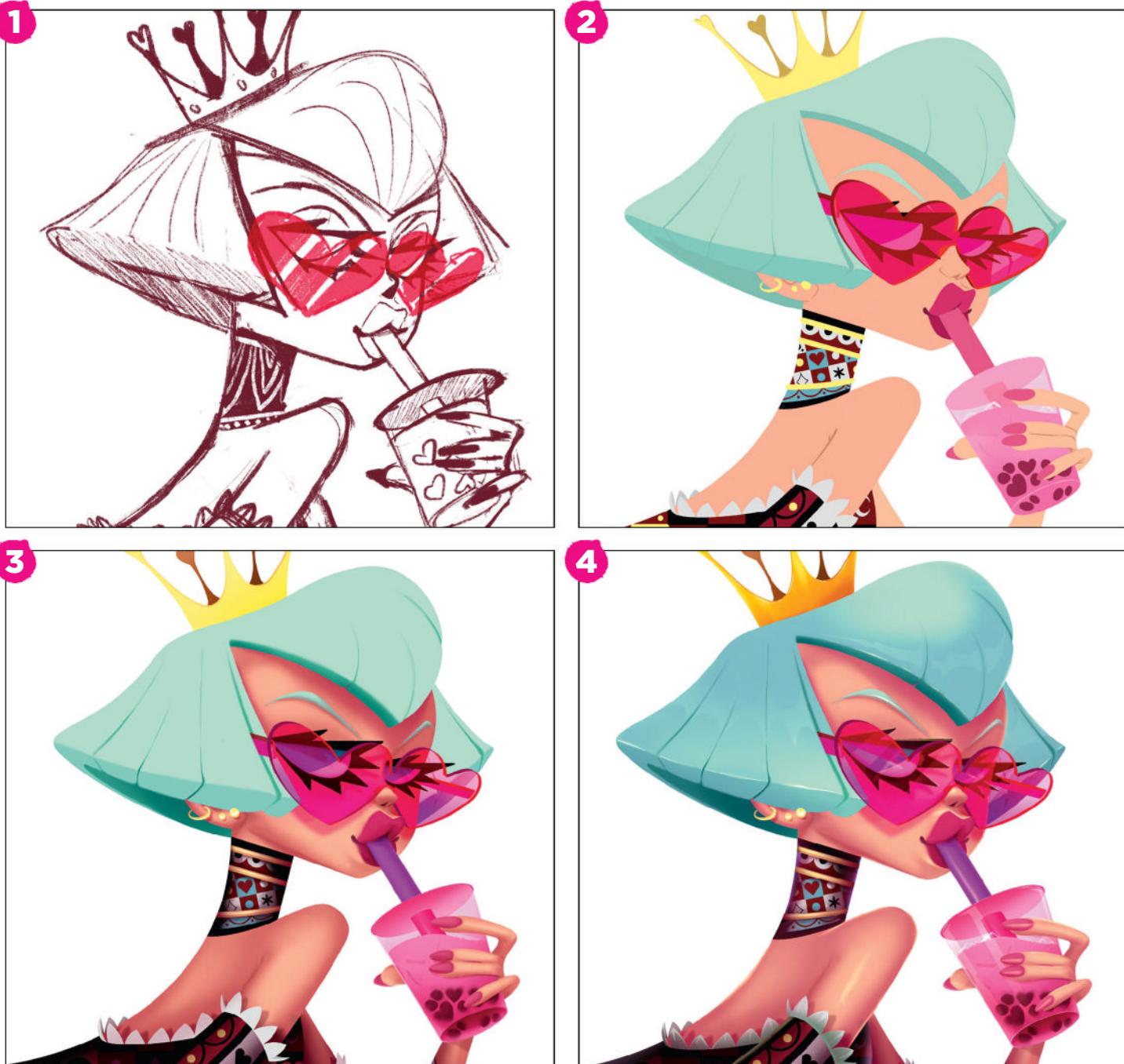
Artist PROFILE

Jefrain Gallipoli

LOCATION: US

Jefrain is a Venezuelan digital illustrator and art director currently based in Los Angeles. He loves to create colourful and unique characters with plenty of flavour.

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





Procreate DESIGN A STYLISED JAPANESE CYBORG

Robot master **DaCosta Bayley** breaks down how he recreates a well-known cultural figure as a futuristic feline character

Artist **PROFILE**

DaCosta Bayley

LOCATION: Canada

DaCosta is a self-driven, award-winning illustrator, art director, and writer who has an insatiable love of storytelling and all things robotic. He works under the studio name CHOCOLATE SOOP Inc. <https://bit.ly/3DHXUxy>



In this workshop, I'll walk you through the basic steps I follow when creating my art in Procreate, from start to finish. I begin with canvas size and resolution, set-up with high-

quality print outputs in mind. With Procreate, you must balance the canvas size and resolution with the desired output needs.

I wanted to design a mechanised version of the classic beckoning cat, also known as the maneki-neko in

Japanese. Traditionally the right paw is raised to signify an invitation to money and happiness, and the left paw is for good people. For me, a big-headed Frankenstein cyborg cat with weaponised limbs felt just so disturbingly fun to create.

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PROCREATE

CUSTOM BRUSHES: STUDIO PEN D


My standard brush for filling in colour. The fill colour tool is fast, but there is a lot to be said for doing it manually.

WATTERSON 2.0


This brush has great texture and movement. It's my favourite brush for final inking.

PERFECT PENCIL


This is my go-to for loose sketching, as it allows me to explore the energy before getting caught up in the details.

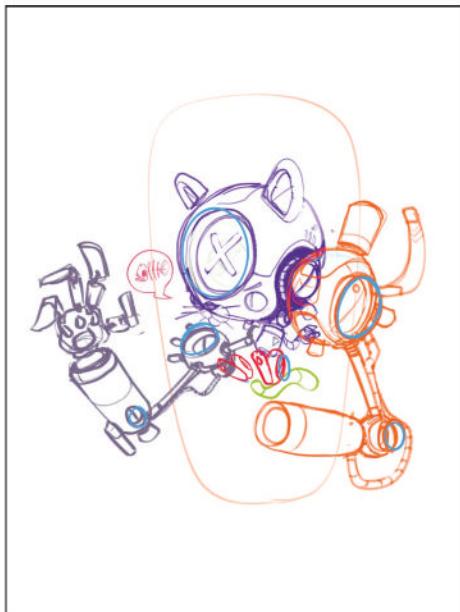


1 Find the initial spark for your character

I usually start off with a fat brush like the Cartoonist to explore the shapes and proportions. I don't want to get caught up in the details for now, so finding a solid silhouette is the primary focus at the beginning of my process. For me to be satisfied, it has to have good energy and expressive shape language. ➡

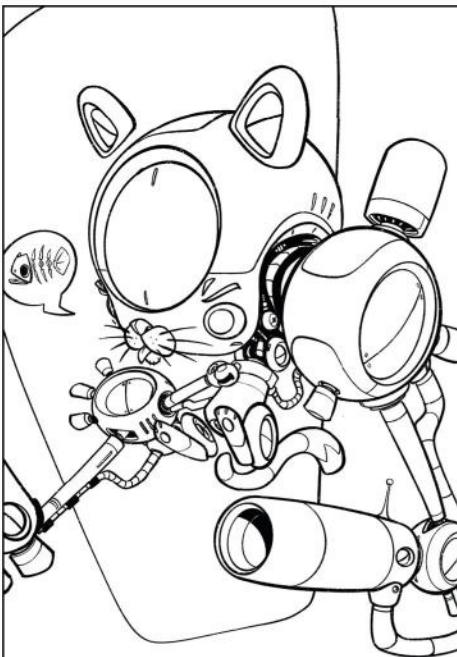


Workshops



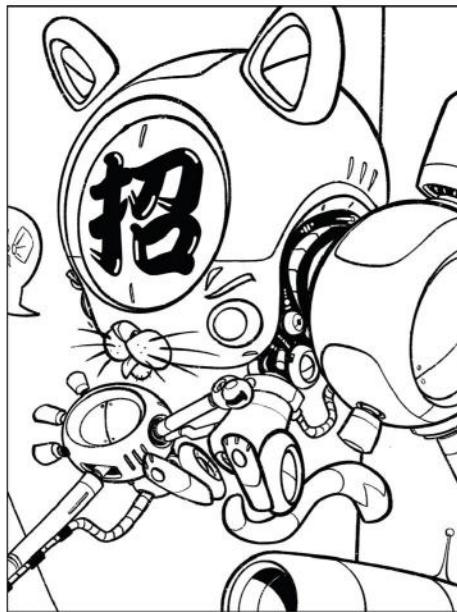
2 Arrange the elements

Once I'm happy with the art's direction, I move on to refine the form. Switching over to the Perfect Pencil, I continue to define the different parts on separate layers to slide them around and adjust composition. Using different colours for each layer helps me to quickly assess their relationship to the other pieces of the puzzle.



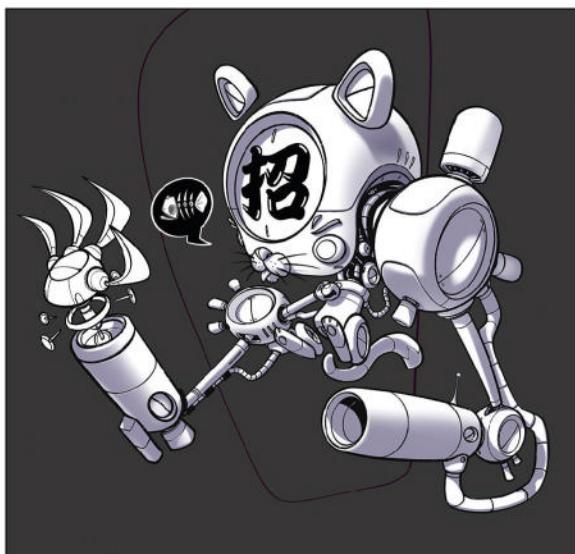
3 Inking stage

Without question, inking is one of my favourite stages to work on. Laying down the right contour lines with a great texture makes the form pop. I use a modified Watterson 2 brush from the Procreate MEGAPACK XXL created by Georg for most of my pieces.



4 Kanji character

Traditionally maneki-neko are shown holding a gold coin with kanji, the Japanese characters, most commonly 'sen man ryou', translating to 'billions of dollars'. I decided to use the kanji 'maneku', which means invite. Using a font styled from the Edo period, I paste it to a new layer, use Warp to set the position, and merge it with the line layer.



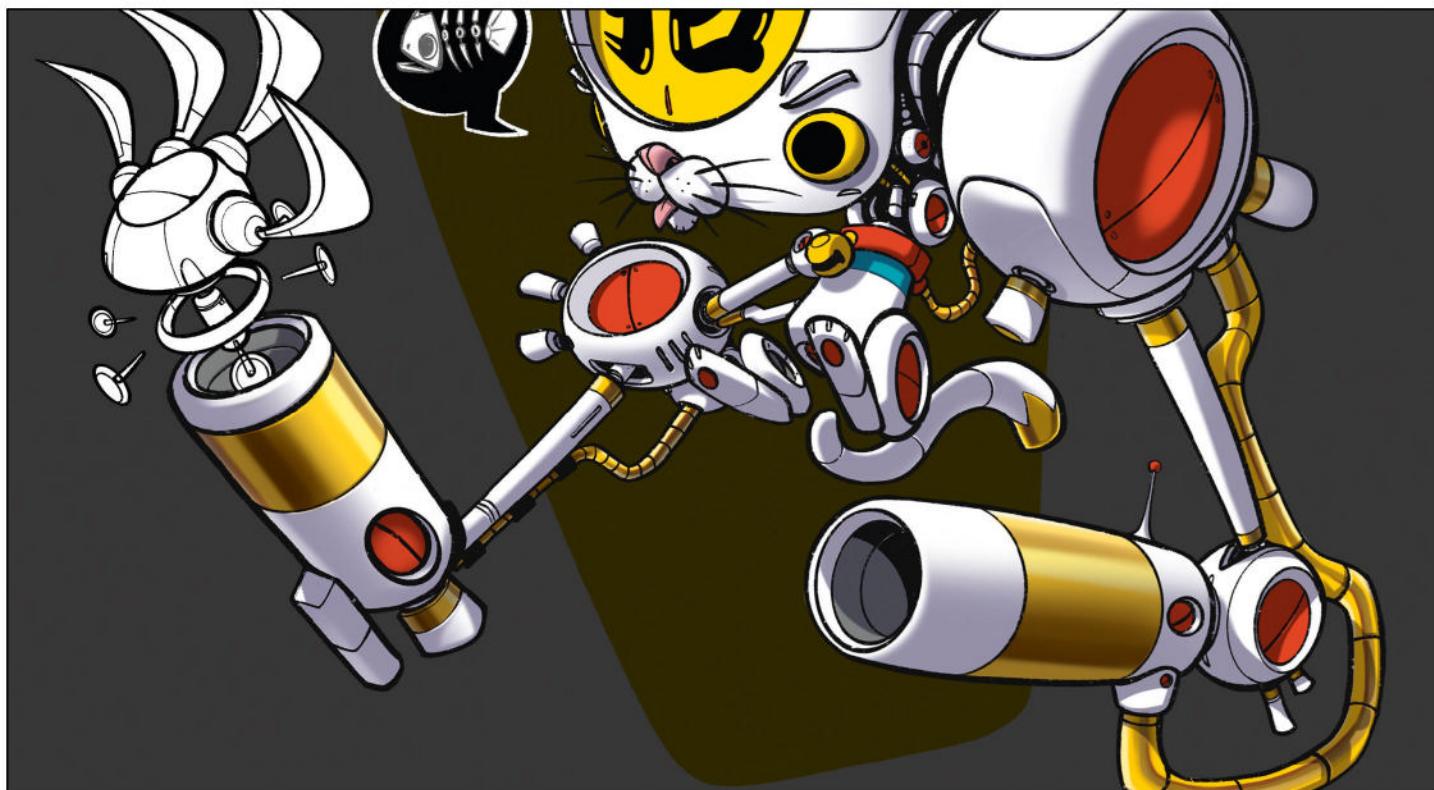
5 Create shadows

Building the shadows are next. I'd normally mash the layers together, but for this piece I've kept the parts separated and grouped – the background frame, far arm, claw, body, feet, ears, tail and close arm – this way I can do a little floating animation when I'm done. As a result, the shadow pass and all subsequent steps must be done this way as well, including the previous inking. The shadow layer is set to Multiply, and selecting a lavender grey colour and using a combination of soft and hard edges, I lay down the shadows to show the volumes and reveal how light interacts with the shapes.



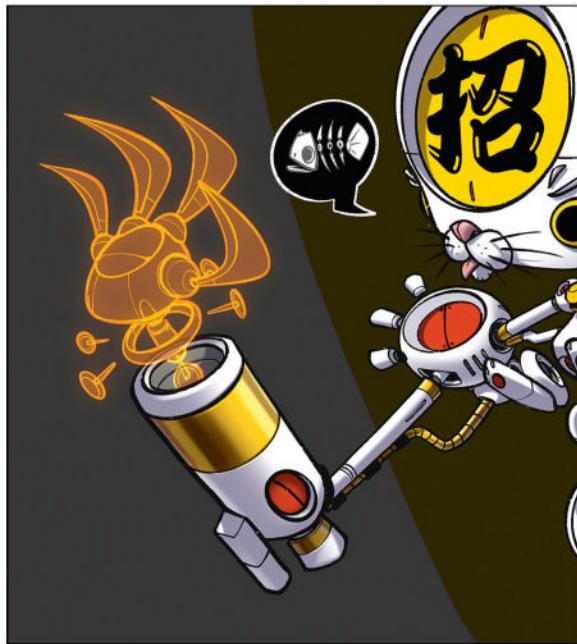
6 Block in the colour

Picking a colour palette can be tricky at times, as colour has a big impact on the feeling of the final piece. There are many colour schemes for the welcoming cat, but I decided to go with a classic white body, red collar, jade green bib and yellow accents, using a modified Technical Pen to fill the flat colour in the shapes.



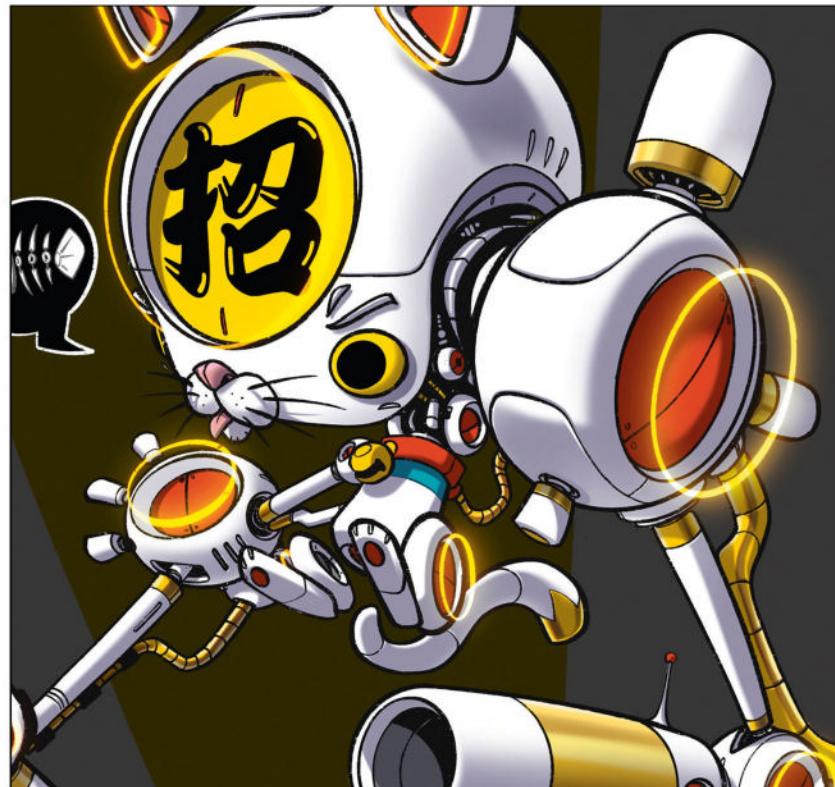
7 Add accents to bring materials to life

To take the materials up a notch, I add a brushed gold finish to the yellow on the arms and cables using a soft brush. It's important to match the level of detail in the reflection with the style; too much can be distracting and too little will leave it feeling flat.



8 Holographic claw

There are a couple of ways to achieve this effect. Create a new layer below the line work and use it as a guide silhouette of the claw, then fill that with the desired colour, in my case orange. Going back to the line layer, Alpha lock the layer, fill it with colour and change the blend mode to Add. You can then duplicate the line layer, use a little Gaussian blur and change the blend mode to Add, or use Bloom to create a similar look.



9 Glowing rings

The approach here is exactly the same as the claw. I create the ellipses in the medium orange colour, duplicate the layer and change it to Add, and also bring a little Gaussian blur into the mix to test out. ➤

Workshops



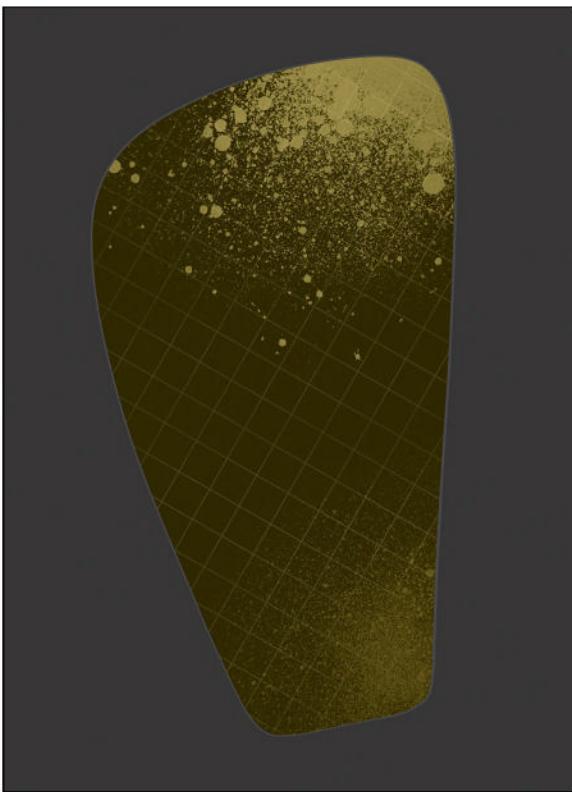
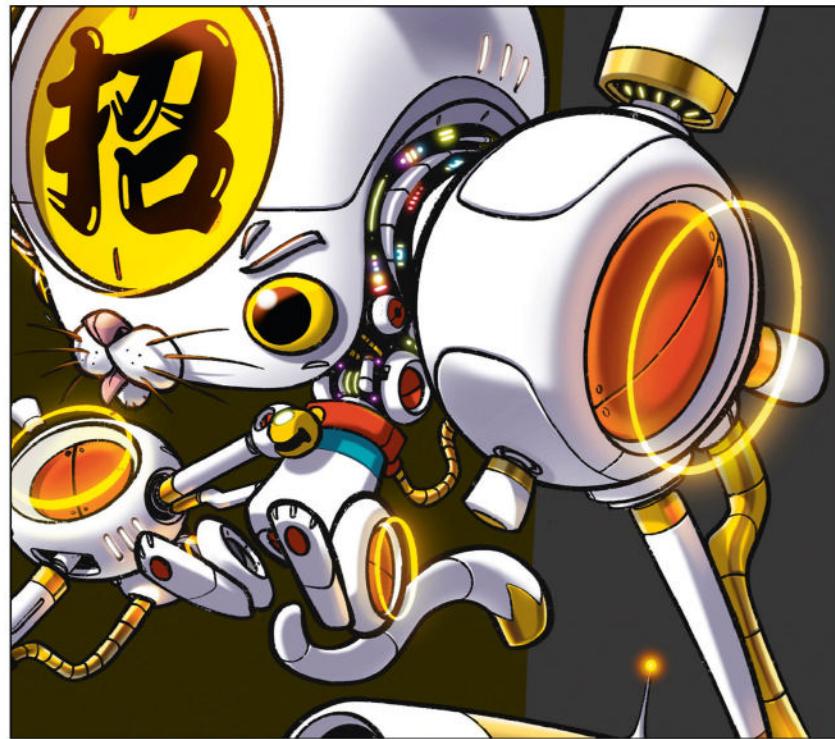
10 Give your character a glow

Now that the rings are added, we should show their light on the forms. To do this, bring in a new layer in the Add blend mode and set it to Clipping Mask. I also use a Default Medium Airbrush to paint in the soft glow.



11 Blinking lights

One of the elements that screams robot are the little blinking lights, for which I used a modified Light Pen from the Default brush set in Procreate. Create a new layer set to Normal, and using the Light Pen select your colour, setting the Saturation and Brightness to 100%. Create dots and lines where you want to indicate a light source. Next, make a new layer set to Add and use a Medium Airbrush to paint the light spill onto nearby objects. Remember to add a falloff effect by reducing the intensity of the light on objects further from the source.



12 Create a frame

It might be my love of industrial design, but I like using a shape in the background to frame the character or object. The shape can be one that adds directly to the story of the piece or simply brings texture and colour, adding a little extra touch to the composition. I used three default brushes for this: the Grid brush found in the Texture set; the Fat Nozzle from the Spraypaints set; and Mad Splashes from the Water set.



13 Accent light

I like using an accent light for the final touch and adding more polish to the image. Create a new layer set to Add and choose a colour that will be either complementary or contrasting. As my image is an overall warmer colour, I chose a teal blue. Using the same approach as adding the glow from the rings, paint the light coming from the light source below the character.

Technique focus

WORK WITH INTENTION

Max Frorer on the areas of focus he took into his science-fiction artwork



"I designed this piece with a focus on the graphic colour choices, pattern, line work, and shape. I started with larger shapes and worked my way from macro to micro. Once I felt confident with my colour palette and shape direction, I went in with line

work, thinking about form and texture, with the goal to only show moments that inform the viewer about the image's statement. In order to maintain simplicity and cohesion, I used Photoshop's default 100 per cent Opacity Circle brush for almost everything and mocked up rough 3D perspective reference blockouts."





**Artist
PROFILE**

Max Frorer
LOCATION: US

Max is a concept artist from New Hampshire. He currently works for the ProbablyMonsters game studio in Seattle, where he focuses on character design and worldbuilding. Outside work, he loves collecting miniatures, rare moths and cool lamps.
<https://bit.ly/45ctShO>

Procreate

CREATE A DETAILED MYTHICAL SPHINX

Discover how creature art specialist **Emily Chapman** plans out and paints a semi-realistic beast inspired by ancient mythology

Artist PROFILE

Emily Chapman

LOCATION: England

Emily is an illustrator and concept artist. She enjoys all mediums from digital painting through to traditional drawing and 3D sculpting.
<https://bit.ly/3YmOUTj>



Folklore and ancient mythology is a topic I enjoy delving into for rich inspiration and study material. For this personal artwork, I wanted to attempt creating my own version of the fabled sphinx, a creature that has appeared in both ancient Greek and Egyptian mythology.

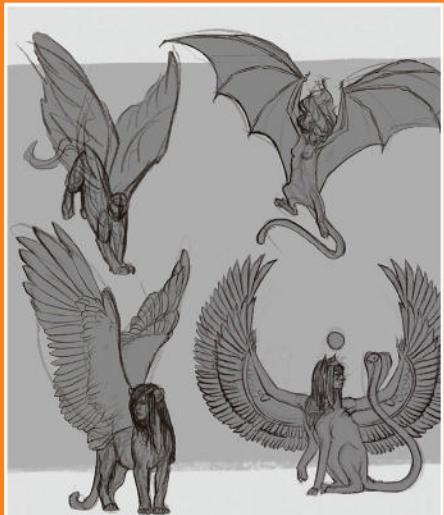
My style preferences usually seem to gravitate towards realism or semi-

realism, as I often like to imagine what fantasy or sci-fi creatures would look like within our universe and reality. In order to achieve this, it's always a priority to study and use direct real-world reference material of animals, creatures and textures that have existed in nature. Using references is paramount to your learning, as you'll gradually build up a mental library that will help you out in your future pieces!

According to the lore, a sphinx consists of a human female, a lion and bird wings. Initially I gather relevant references for a mood board, which will help keep my design work grounded. With this, I start sketching to generate concepts and ideas. Once I land on a sketch I like the most, I'll continue working on that thumbnail by playing around with the posing, forms and composition until it's ready for the rendering phase.

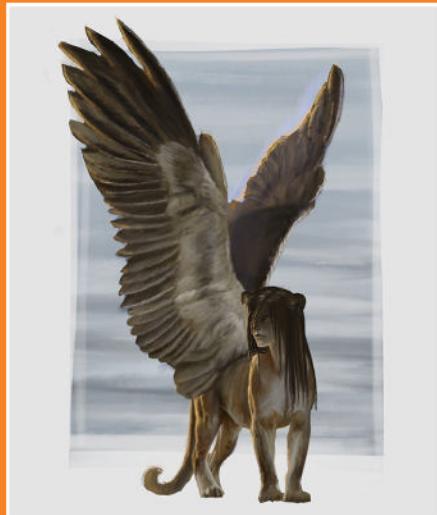
How I create...

A LEGENDARY CREATURE



1 Sketches and thumbnails

The first stage of design is sketching! Keeping everything super loose, I try to get a feel for the creature by playing around with shapes, lines of energy, proportions and animal elements. I'm always referring back to my mood board of real-world material; do I want to go down my realistic route, or the classic Egyptian-style Sphinx?



2 Initial design idea

I've decided to go with a neutral and calm pose, as I want to focus on a realistic depiction of a sphinx that could possibly exist within our own world. The mood I want to convey has a slightly majestic feel and look, as if a wildlife photographer had managed to snap a shot of this creature after landing in the early evening.



3 Design changes

I felt that the long, straight hair wasn't working for this character so I changed it to a wavy, windswept look that suggested she is slightly unkempt, being a wild animal. Initially I chose a neutral background, but later opted for a more moody environment that depicted a sunset skyline on the side of a mountain instead.

In depth Mythical creatures



Workshops

SPHINX FEATURES

XXXXXX



Feather textures

Consulting my mood board, I studied references of wings and feathers to help build suggestive but believable feather textures. I started with large sections of a mid-tone, then went over with a lighter shade to show areas of highlighting, and finally used a darker shade to implement depth and layering of the inner wing feathering.



Facial expression

I wasn't fond of the aggressive, lion-style facial expression I originally gave her. So I instead chose a softer, human-looking face. Even though I was going for a more realistic style, I kept revisiting the original depictions of sphinxes I'd collated and how they appeared ethereal, and wanted to emulate that impression.

Anatomy

It's imperative to ensure that your creature has a relatively believable body composition. Referring to my mood board, I studied lion references in a range of angles to help me further understand their skeletal and muscle structure. So for the wings, we could imagine they would protrude and grow from above her scapula.

Light sources

To add an atmospheric touch, I applied a bright yellow, warm-toned rim light catching the feathers and edges of the fur, along with a soft brush bloom effect using the Add blend layer. I then chose a cooler bounce light on the opposite side reflecting the blue in the sky.

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SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS



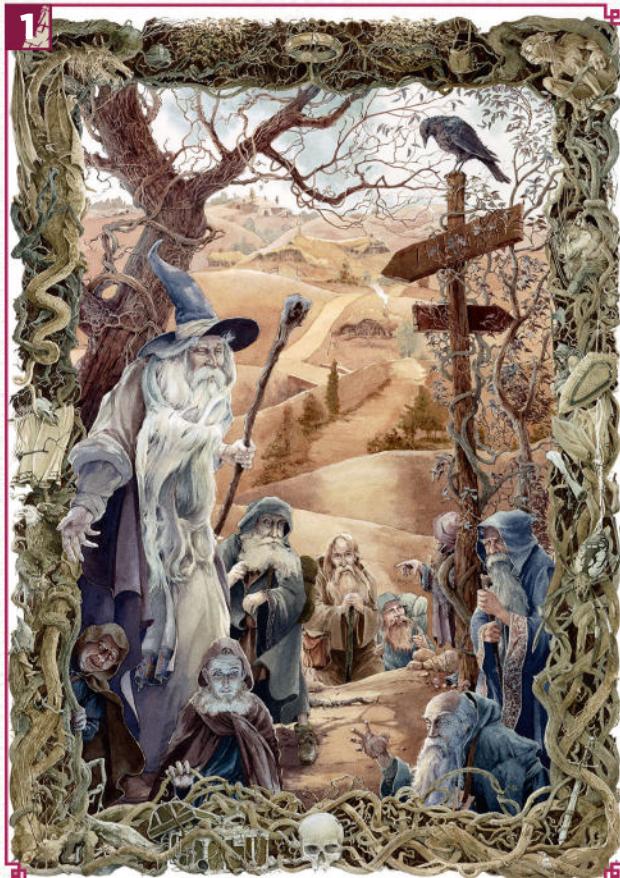
Gary A. Lippincott

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Watercolours WEB: www.garylippincott.com

In an increasingly digital age, Gary describes himself as an illustrator's illustrator. His fantasy and faerie themes represent a mastery of vibrance and depth, which he claims is only possible with traditional art.

1 THERE AND BACK AGAIN

"Being a fan of Tolkien's books, I wanted to depict Gandalf and his companions starting their epic journey. The border of this piece took longer than the main image and consists of the stories' other subjects."



2 FAITH AND FAIRIES

"I love the blending of nature and fantasy. This piece offers the viewer a glimpse into the beautiful habitat that is occupied by the wee folk."

2



3 WE'RE ALREADY GONE

"A commission painted for a CD cover. The musician gave me the lyrics from some of the songs and let me interpret them to create this gateway to the music."

3



4 MAKING MAGIC

"A wizard in his workshop is a favourite subject, probably because I like to see myself reflected in his magical arts. This was the cover of my self-published artbook in 2013."





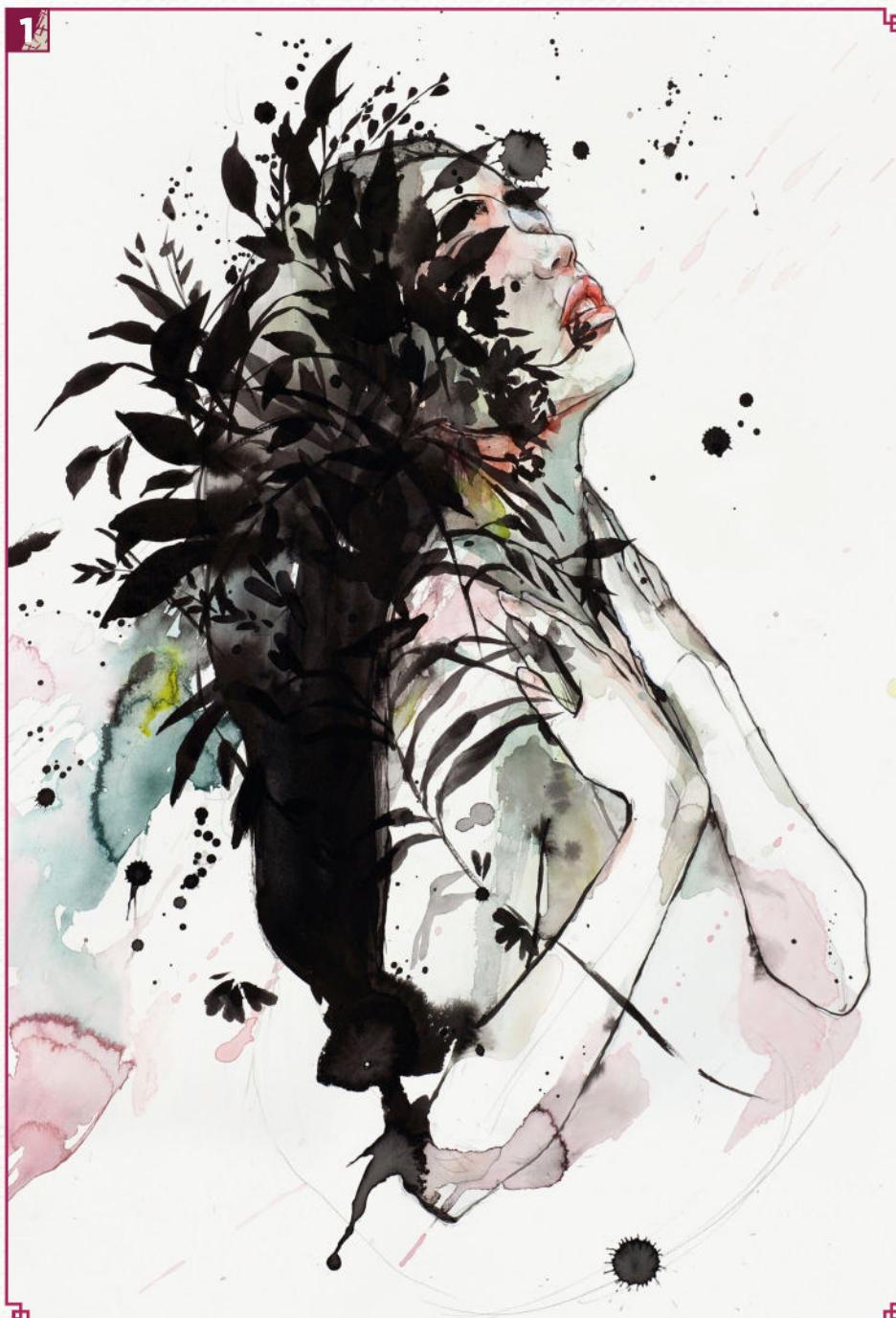
Agnes Cecile

LOCATION: Italy MEDIA: Watercolours, acrylics, ink WEB: www.agnescecile.com

Agnes has been following her art vocation for more than a decade. She specialises in creating dreamlike images, which show emotional portraits that blend into natural elements.

1 DARK SPRINGTIME

"The changing of seasons is refreshing and inspiring for me. I made this painting during the first dark-heavy days of spring."



2 A NEW LAND IS RISING

"The roar of the waterfall, the stillness of the dry branch; a new land is rising. This watercolour painting portrays a rebirth with calm and melancholic water imagery."

2



3



3 DEEP SURFACES

"This painting investigates the search for the self. The floral body is chaotic, colourful and in constant growth. The inner self is a dark water mirror, a liquid identity with no shape."

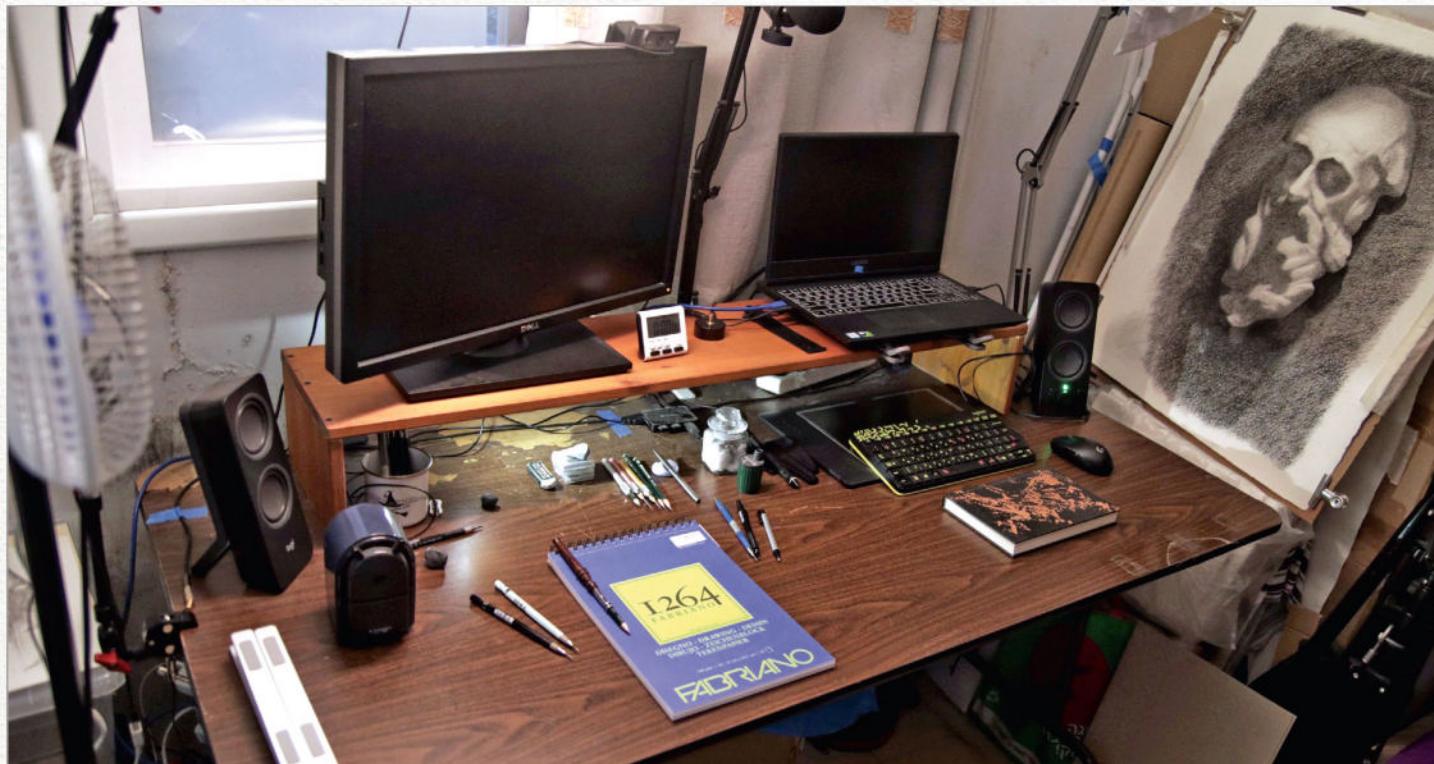
4 LUNAR RABBITS

"With the Lunar New Year, we're now into the Year of the Rabbit. The porcelain ornaments across her body are painted blue, including floral patterns and tiny rabbits running around the moon."



Traditional Artist Workshop





Pencil

BUILD A STORY WITH MARKS AND SHAPES

NADAV YACOBI, also known as SpectreIV, shares how to use and experiment with automatic drawing to develop an image

For me, experimenting with automatic drawing exercises started my long journey with the artwork that I create today. From 10-minute warm-ups doodling in my sketchbook, it quickly turned into my main artistic practice.

But what if I decide to stick with these doodles for an hour or more, and continue to develop them? This is how I approach my projects, big and small. It makes the process fun and fresh in every step, until there's nothing more to add and the flow becomes gradually slower as I work on the fine details.

MATERIALS

PAPER

■ Fabriano 1264 paper, 180gsm

PENCILS

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

ERASERS

■ Kneaded eraser
■ Tombow MONO Zero 2.3mm eraser

Drawing is fun and relaxing for me, and by doing that I learned to enjoy the process, the speed, and the rhythm. I care about finishing a drawing just to see which story and journey I'll make next, and in this article, I'll share my process.

My intention for this drawing is to have an image of a character with a face. I have a target in my mind when creating the first marks, as it helps to move in a character direction when starting with free, abstract shapes.

The tools are also a big part of my artistic process and a journey in their own right. I encourage everyone to test out different papers and pencils,

because in traditional art the feeling of the tools might make a change in your process. From soft to hard materials, or textured or smooth paper, they can impact your working style. I like drawing paper as it has some tooth. That way the graphite can build up and create darker tones. It also has a slight texture that looks pleasing, and can help you out a little with the rendering.



Nadav Yacobi is an independent artist drawing and creating fantasy art of creatures and mystical beings

based on real-life experiences, stories and emotions. www.instagram.com/spectre.iv

Traditional Artist Workshop



1 First marks on paper

The key point here is to draw freely and have fun! Start by laying down initial marks and creating abstract shapes, thinking of them as marks rather than lines. This can also be a warm-up in a sketchbook before bigger works, as it's calming and meditative.

2 Explore your marks and shapes

Slowly build more marks on your paper while still exploring. Some marks will be more intentional, while some will be more for composition and layout. You may find a raw feeling and story in your work, which could be left as it is.

3 Create and refine specific shapes for focal points

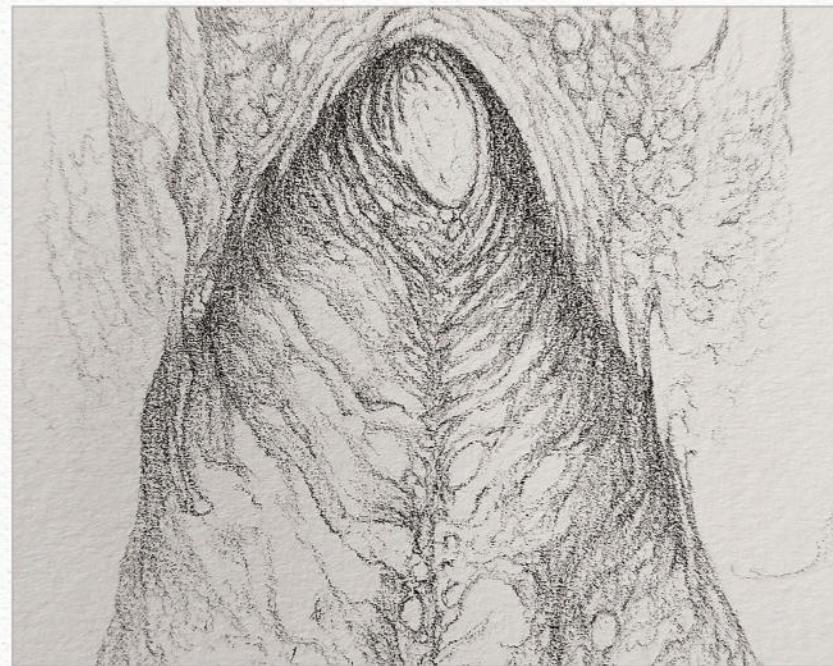
As denser areas build up, try to find a recognisable shape to lean on. Gradually these shapes will become clearer and turned into a focal point. This is the time that a story also starts to form when drawing without a specific idea in mind.



4 Work on a main focal point

Start to think of the main place you want to lead the viewer within the piece. This will be the most detailed area, with support from other elements around it. Add details where necessary and take more overall looks at the image, stepping back from the art to see

how it comes up as a whole. You can also flip the page to get a new look. Is it well aligned? Is there enough free space? Can I add an element, or darken or lighten an area to make parts more readable? Adding story elements helps deliver my intention better, as does creating a scale element to better show relative scale and dimension.



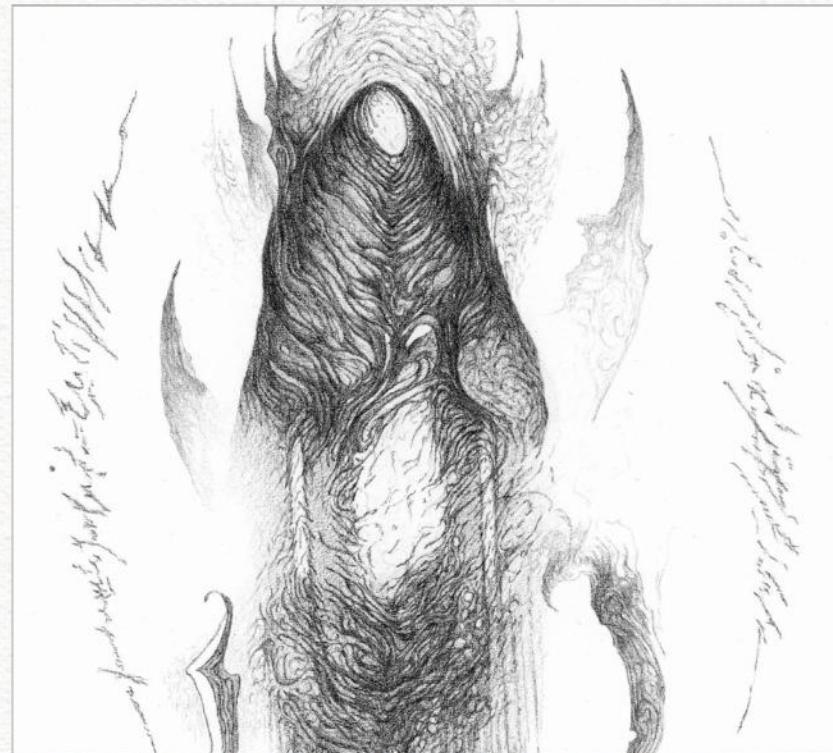
5 Intentional mistakes

At this point, think about adding a subtle abstract element, what I like to call an intentional mistake. It's easy to dive into a meditative state of refining and detailing. For me, the excitement and interest comes from when I don't overthink, and subtly breaking the clear design. Consider it as a composition element, not to distract from the main subject, but added for additional interest for both the artist and viewer.

6 Develop details

Now we'll progress more into the refining of shapes. I think a lot more about the dimensions, weight and forms of what I wish to show. While a darker value reads as the far end of an object, white in the subject can express

closeness to the viewer, like a sculpture, but light tones in the background can show distance. Details are sometimes the result of the paper texture, which can do the job. I like to put down darker and finer lines just for the interest and richness of the detailed area.



7 Changes for story elements

As the story develops along with the drawing's progress, alter some elements to fit better. Here the spirit inspires storytelling, so I changed the middle area to resemble a scroll. While I'm satisfied with the direction I've set, I think about how I can show it more clearly, so I chose to darken an area to make it pop out.

8 Finishing touches

Thinking more about the drawing as a whole while you wrap up, you can carefully adjust the remaining elements to make the pencil illustration feel both harmonic and visually pleasing in terms of its values and flow, and from that the composition and story as well.

First Impressions

★ Omar Rayyan ★

Omar shares his first artistic steps and biggest influences



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

I grew up in the deserts of Arabia, in an international expat community, which gave me exposure to multiple cultures but little artwork except for imported cartoons, like early Bugs Bunny and anime.

Not until high school did I really see the potential expanse of the art world. The house we were renting had a full library of art books, all the classic museum masterpieces and such, and fellow American students had brought comics over, in particular Epic, giving me a first glimpse into the world of fantasy and sci-fi illustration.

So from movies, comics, TV, and classical art I filled sketchbook after sketchbook with a fusion of their influences. By the time I got to art school I was deep into the 19th-century art movements and a love of the golden age of illustration.

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

Nothing and everything. Studying paintings has you seeing the world around you as paintings. Daily life gives food for narrative subject matter. Having animals helps

How has your art style evolved?

I started out as a kid sketching mostly from my head in pencil and ballpoint pen, no colour. At art school I had to figure out colour and settled on watercolour and pen

“In the beginning I took any job, no matter how small, just to learn the trade”



THE WINNING HAND

Or the losing hand, depending on your point of view. A genial moment in a tavern when the predator has the upper hand on his prey.

and ink as my preferred medium, after the great illustrators [Arthur] Rackham and [Edmund] Dulac.

As I began to get book cover jobs, I dropped the crow quill pen and worked the watercolour brush as my drawing tool, studying mostly oil paintings for inspiration, and trying to get that same weight.

By the time I started doing more private commissions, I've moved more into oil. I started handling it the same way I handled watercolour, preferring the strength of the drawing and glazing transparent colour over the top, which fit with my growing love of Flemish and Northern Renaissance painters. ➤



Omar Rayyan

CHRYSANTHEMUMS

An offering towards seasonal, fashionable beauties in oil. An opportunity to explore the dynamics of floral bouquets and fluffy pets in a limited palette.

Traditional Artist Interview



THE ROYAL LOBSTER HUNT

On the surface a routine depiction of acquiring a seafood dinner, yet also steeped in esoteric symbolism.

» But as I'm moving further away from commercial book illustration I'm feeling a pull to a more loose and painterly approach. Painters like [Giovanni] Boldini, [Antonio] Mancini, [Joaquin] Sorolla and [Mariano] Fortuny are catching me with their energetic usage of both brush and colour.

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

I'm not sure what was the first paid commission. In the beginning I took any job, no matter how small, just to learn the trade of commercial illustration; local paper editorials, ads, murals, and so on, looking for where I would fit and playing with approach, though still influenced by turn-of-the-century illustration.

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

I'm now doing mostly private commissions and works for galleries and art shows, as opposed to book illustration, which I mostly did for the first part of my career. I don't think much has really changed in the nature of the narrative, but starting out with a language of line and fairly monochrome palette, I've



BOCCE BENEATH THE BEGONIAS

I always liked old botanical illustrations, their devotion to detail and science. Exploring the microcosm underneath can be just as rewarding.

gotten more into looking at colour, shape and brushwork. As my eyes get older and weaker, I think I'm getting more impressionistic.

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

Yep, though I have been very lucky. Having Sheila, my wife, in my life has contributed greatly to both the direction and success of my career. Finding the right partner to pair up with was not mentioned in art school, but is very important. The life of being artists is demanding,

time consuming and at times financially stressful, but the right person in the studio, and your life, can make all the difference.

What does the future hold for you?

More painting, more looking, and learning to put the two together.

Omar Rayyan has been a professional artist for several decades. His early work was mostly in the children's illustration market. His recent work includes images for Magic: The Gathering, limited edition book publishers, galleries, and private art collectors. www.studiorayyan.com

“ Having my wife in my life has contributed greatly to both my direction and success ”



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