

# NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

# ImagineFX

FIRST LOOK!

## PROCREATE DREAMS

Discover why the new animation app hits all the right notes



### INTERVIEW

## LIGHTBOX EXPO

Community spirit shines at digital art's biggest event



MASTER SHOWING  
YOUR ARTWORK  
AT CONVENTIONS

### WORKSHOP

## 15 PRO TIPS TO LIGHT YOUR CHARACTERS

### ALSO INSIDE

LEARN TO PAINT A  
HORROR CLASSIC

BRING MANGA TO LIFE  
WITH DYNAMIC EFFECTS

LEVEL UP CREATURES  
WITH PROPS AND MORE



"We can't wait to see everything  
that's going to be shared with  
the world" — see page 32



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



The art community is packed with a wide range of events and conferences of all shapes and sizes, but none stand out quite like LightBox. For those at any stage of their career, or even if digital art is an escape that you enjoy as a hobby, LightBox has something on offer for all.

Some of the best artists in the world will be there to share their stories and pass on invaluable tips and techniques. The latest projects and portfolios will be on display, and there will be opportunities to hobnob with the movers and shakers if you're looking for a place at a new studio.

If you've ever considered attending an arts convention as an exhibitor we have you covered too, with a feature on how to make the most out of the experience. And if you're eager to increase your artistic skill set then look no further, as we have a host of in-depth workshops covering everything from adding dynamism to your action scenes and lighting your characters, all the way through to painting a classic horror monster.

Enjoy the issue!

Rob

Editor

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Three of my top picks this month...

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#### Learn to build dramatic lighting

Toby Willsmer shows you step-by-step how to paint an iconic horror movie villain in the form of a mummy.



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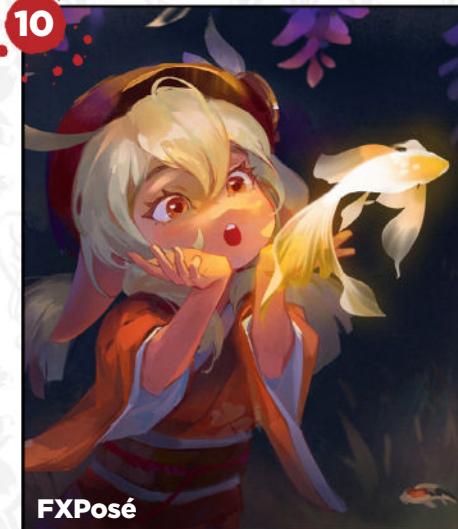
# ImagineFX

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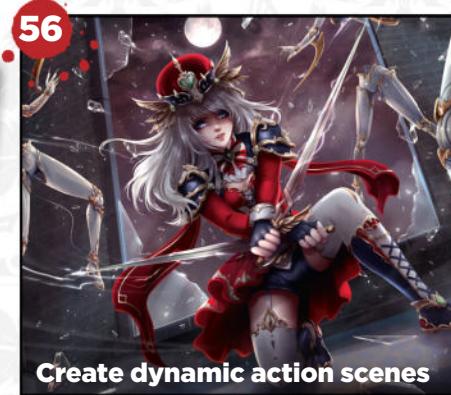


LightBox



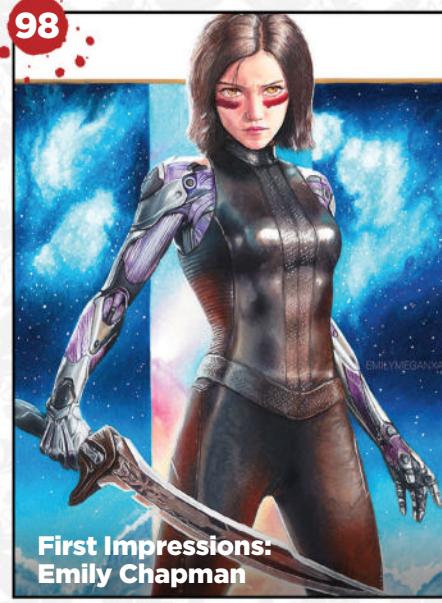
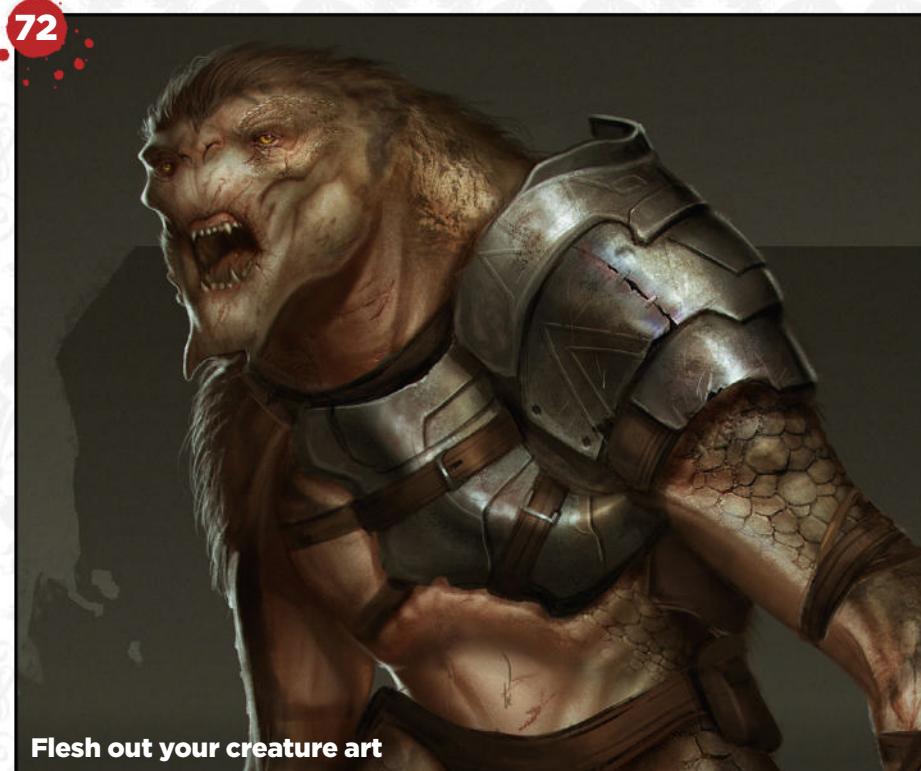
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Create dynamic action scenes



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

**1 Go to the website**  
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**3 Download what you need...**  
Save the files or watch the videos.

# Next month



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

## CHARACTER MASTERCLASS

Illustration sensation **Ross Tran** shares  
his secrets for breathtaking artwork

### Level up your key art skills

Adrien Cantone  
delivers a tutorial  
on creating key  
artwork for games

### Simon Kopp's sketchbook

We take a look at  
a host of sketches  
and doodles from  
the concept artist

### Wakanda to the Enterprise

Get to know film  
and TV costume  
concept designer  
Phillip Boutte Jr.

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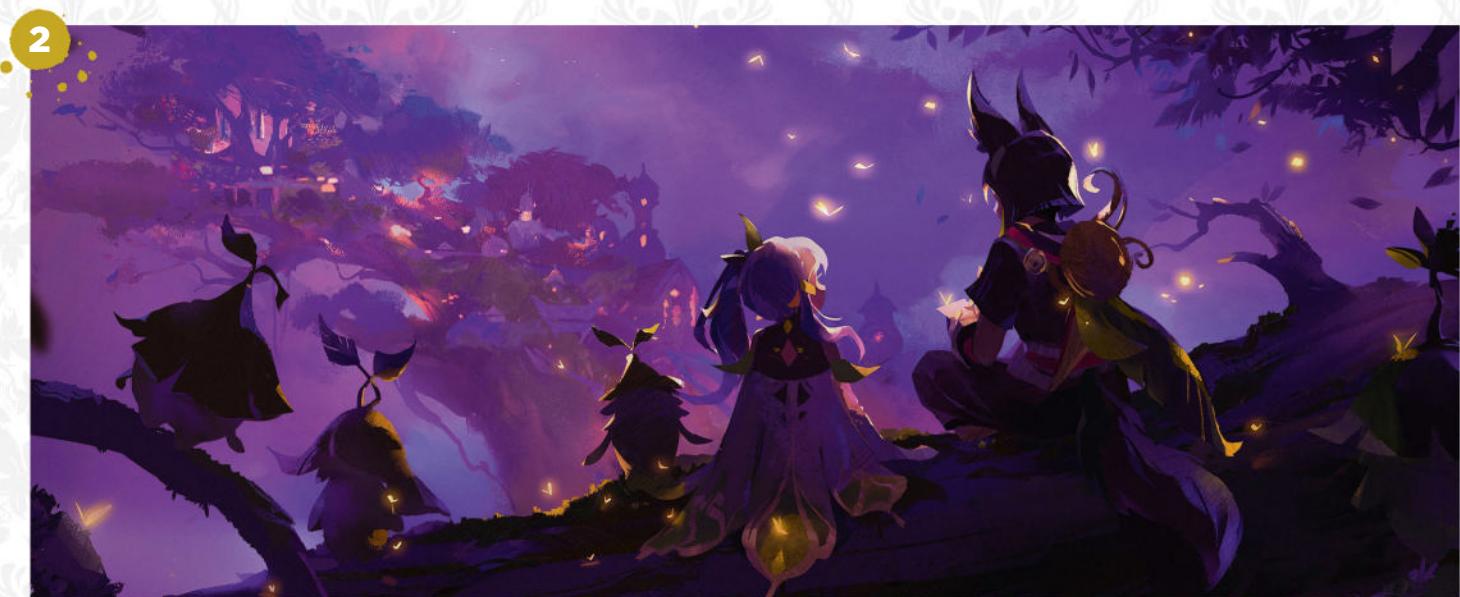
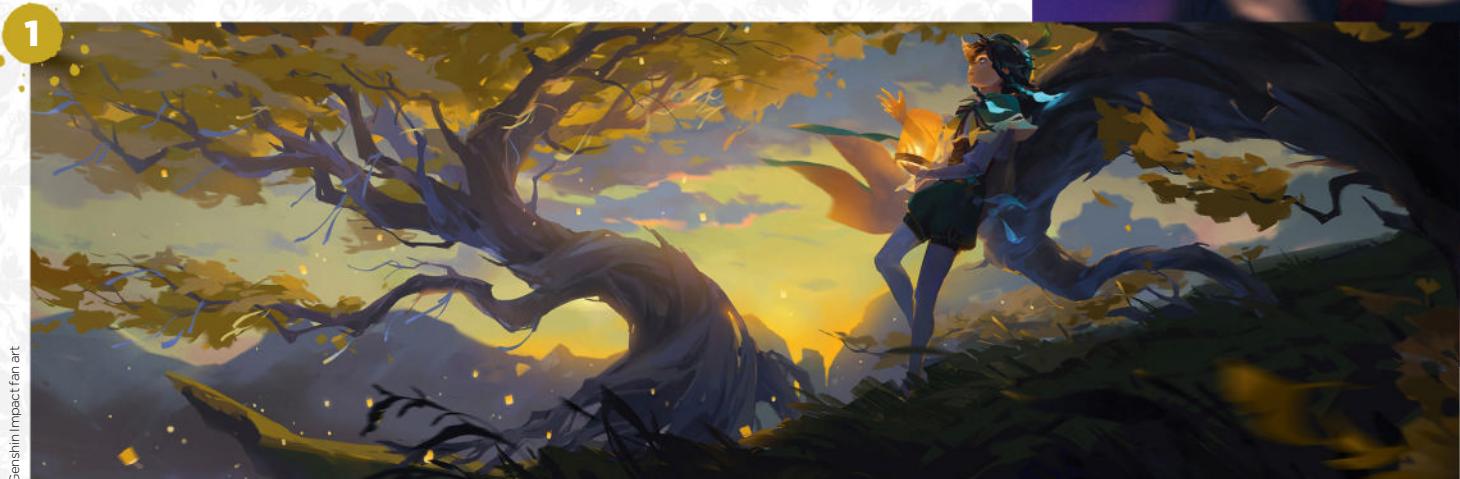
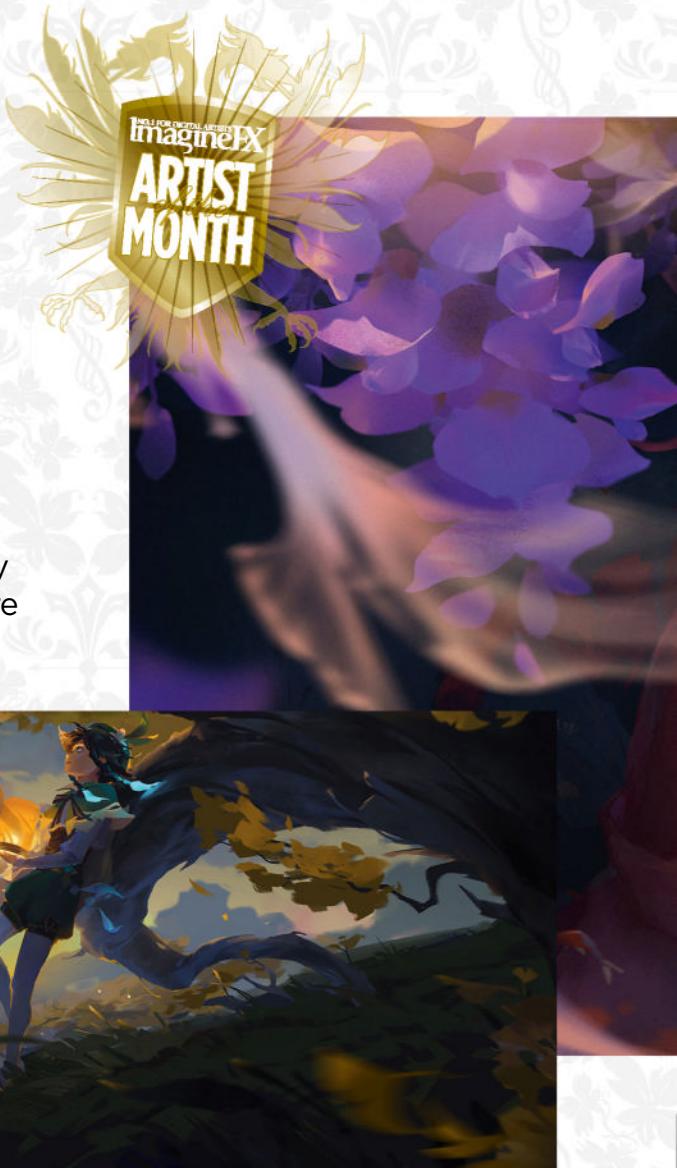
THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



## Lana Marushchenko

LOCATION: Ukraine MEDIA: Photoshop, Procreate WEB: <https://bit.ly/45Qd54f>

Lana is an illustrator who works in the gaming industry. "Animated movies have always been my biggest inspiration, they encourage me to capture special moments and emotions in my art."



### 1 IT'S ALWAYS THE DARKEST BEFORE THE DAWN

"Loneliness often accompanies freedom. Though it may seem impassable, never forget the flames in the sky lit by others."

### 2 SEE YOU IN YOUR DREAMS

"Inspired by the beauty of Sumeru City in Genshin Impact. I was thrilled to depict the atmosphere of the forest magic and the essence of dreams."

### 3 FOREVER CHILD

"Sometimes people want to remind themselves of what the world was like in childhood. It helps them to remember the importance of dreaming."

### 4 DIVE BACK IN TIME

"This Shiguang Dailiren fan art contains the spirit of summer warmth. It captures pleasant memories of my second home during my student years."



ImagineFX

Want to submit your work? Visit <http://ifxm.ag/getinifx>

3



Gerstha Impact fan art

4



Shiguang Dajilien fan art



## Robin Garrett Cuevas

LOCATION: Mexico MEDIA: Blender, Photoshop, Polycam WEB: [www.robingarrett.net](http://www.robingarrett.net)

Robin is a concept artist in the entertainment industry who is inspired by the likes of Halo and Borderlands. His pristine look is achieved via 3D modelling and texturing, as well as photobashing and painting.

1

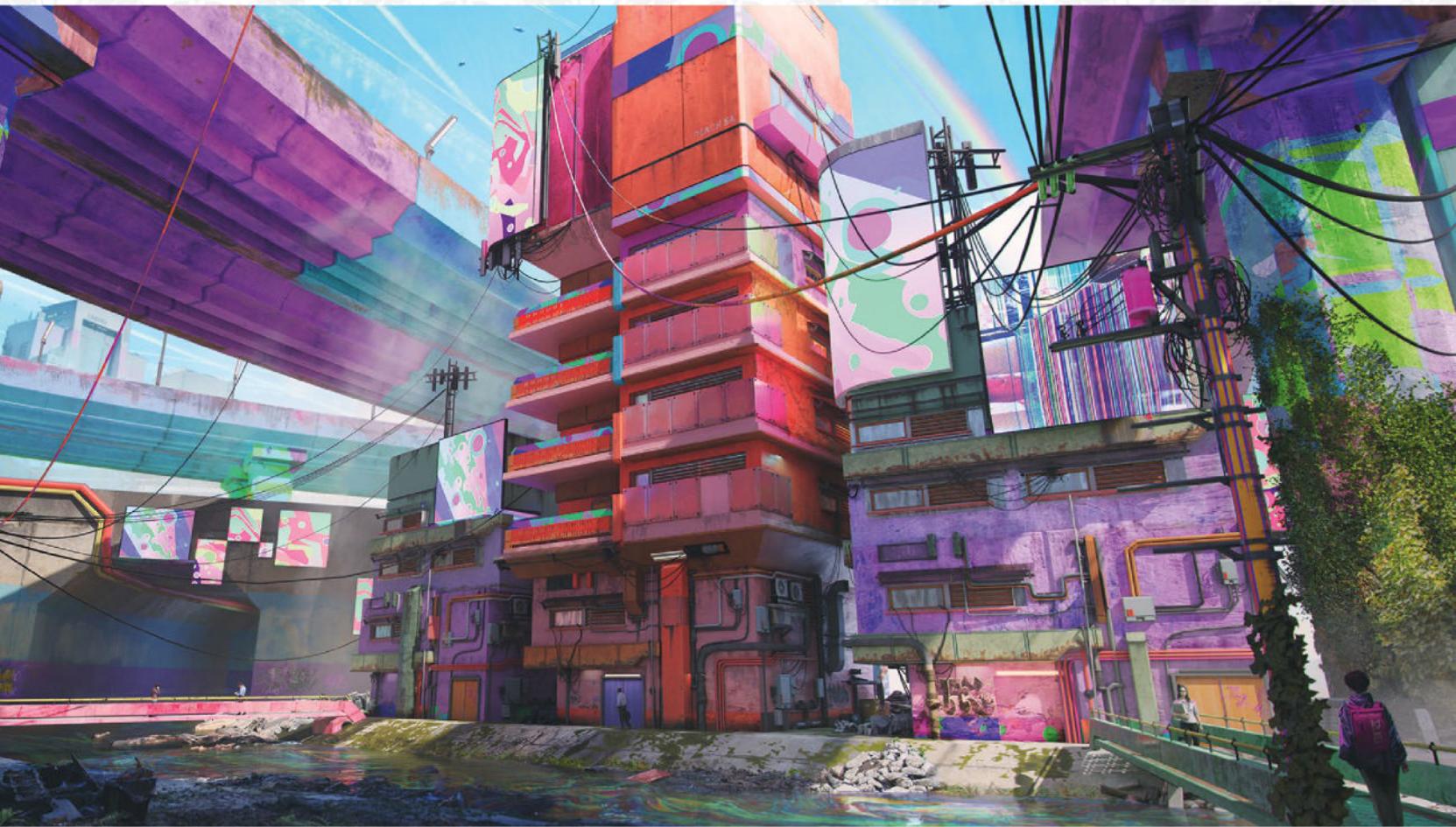


2



3





### 1 ATTIS CITY

"I designed an agricultural metropolis from the near-future where traditionally square crop fields would now become large, circular megastructures."

### 2 CYBERPOP

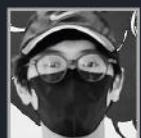
"Cyberpop is an aesthetic I've designed that aims to paint the bleak, dystopian future in a more colourful manner."

### 3 CEMENTIUM II

"I wanted to imagine a distant moon where the land is chemically identical to human-made concrete. Megastructures again!"

### 4 CYBERBRUTALISM

"Here I wanted everything to feel as miserable and artificial as possible. A bleak outlook into the marginalised areas of an almost post-apocalyptic utopia."



## Hui Zou

LOCATION: Taiwan MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: [www.artstation.com/peterskore](http://www.artstation.com/peterskore)

Through their artistic journey, Hui has found a distaste for practice and imitation. "Now I only draw what I like. I avoid human subjects because of the complex anatomy, and even backgrounds too. It's quite a challenge!"

1



### 1 FLAME OF PRECISION

"The core concept for this series involved solidifying entities of energy-like flames into physical forms. They combine samurai, hannya masks and archery."

2

### 2 THE REAPER OF EXILE

"This composition strives to integrate heightened sensations of ethereal suspension and chilling unease. The Reaper stands as the antithesis to the saint; a portrayal of contrasting dread."





### 3 CALIBUR OF ANOTHER DIMENSION

“The sword, upon striking, exiles adversaries.’ This concept is embodied in this artwork. The blade itself shall gradually contort and wane, consumed by its own act.”



## Gonzalo Ruggieri

LOCATION: Argentina MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: [www.gonzaloruggieri.com.ar](http://www.gonzaloruggieri.com.ar)

Gonzalo is an illustrator and comic artist who has been published in the US, Argentina, Spain and Serbia. His digital work retains the expressive looseness of analogue tools in order to achieve a painterly style.

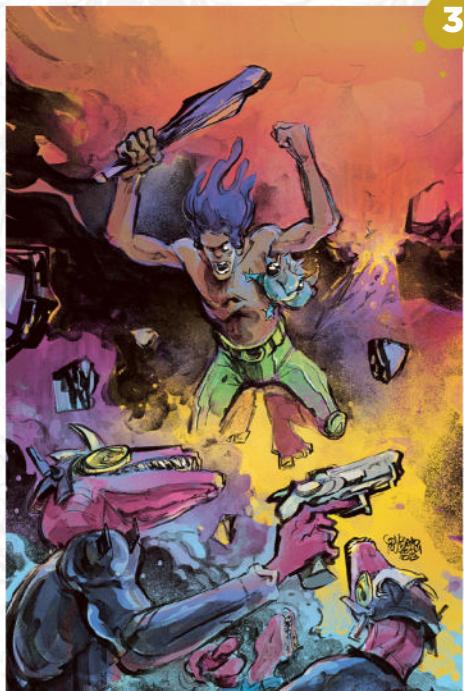
### 1 COVER FOR ILL VACATION

"I made this for a sci-fi adventure comic written by Steve Thompson. The repetition and contrast between the characters was the most important concept to represent."



### 2 SEQUENCE FROM METAL EAGLE

"This is from a spy adventure comic written by Matthew Kund. My main focus, as always with a comic, was to consider the layout and flow of the panels."



### 3 COVER ILLUSTRATION FOR COSMIC CAVEMAN

"A cover I did for a story written by Noah Ray and drawn by Clint Kisor. This piece features the action as the protagonist."

### 4 THE IRON GIANT

"A personal piece and tribute to one of my favourite animated movies. Published in Mutant, my art book released in 2022."





## Francesco Colucci

LOCATION: Italy MEDIA: Clip Studio Paint, Blender, Photoshop WEB: [www.artstation.com/gulikart](http://www.artstation.com/gulikart)

Francesco has a background in architecture, but now prefers to illustrate character designs with a cel shading style. "Vivid colours and contrasts define my art. I like to alternate lightness to define lines and shadows."

1



### 1 POP GIRL

"This character has a variegated design that harkens back to the rebellion of a post-modern, urban world. Voluminous and soft forms place them in an anime pose and dimension."

### 2 BLUE WITCH

"This character is a witch and priestess of the deep sea. The robes and colours refer to both mystery and darkness, while the lines and pose allude to ocean waves."

2



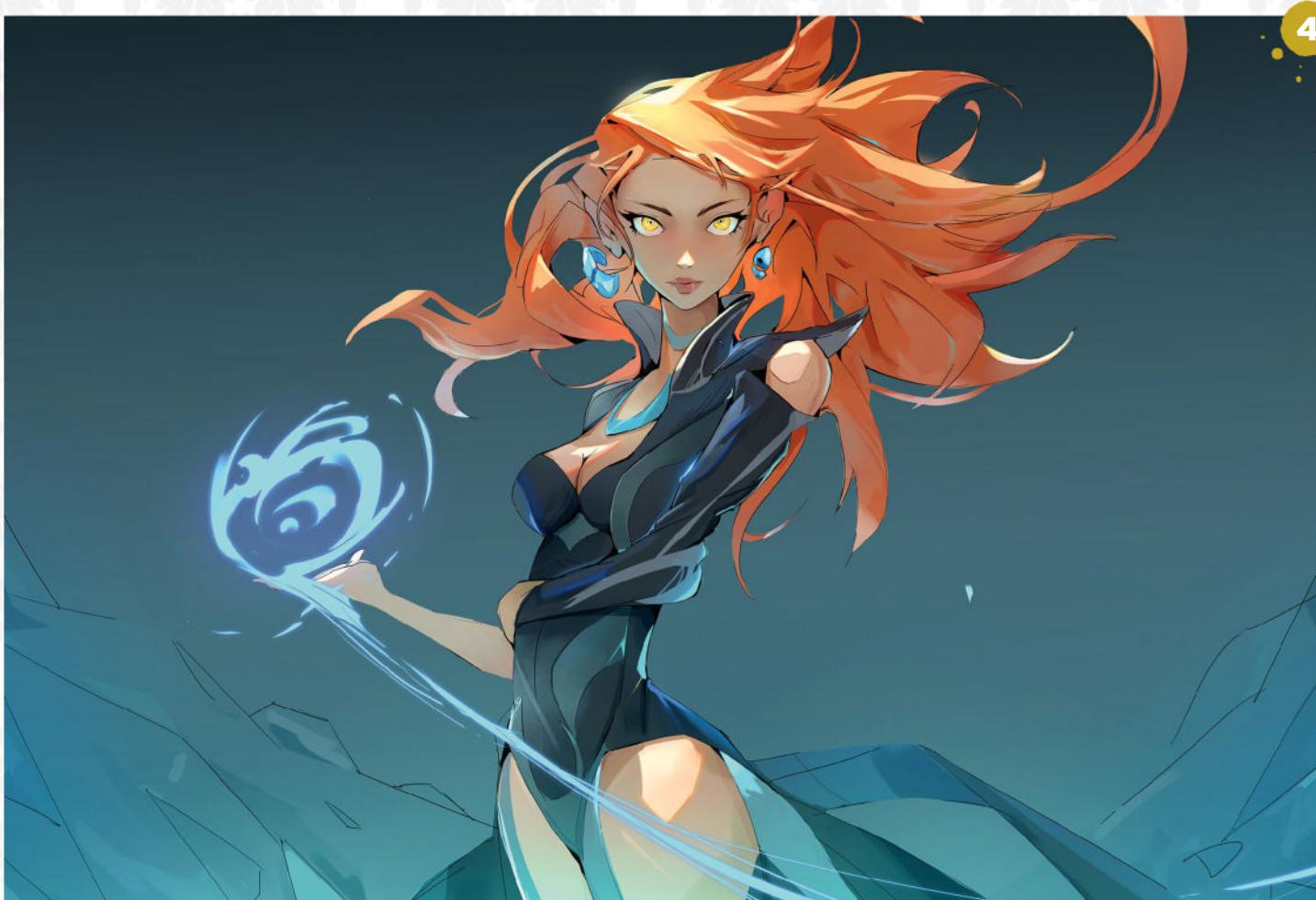
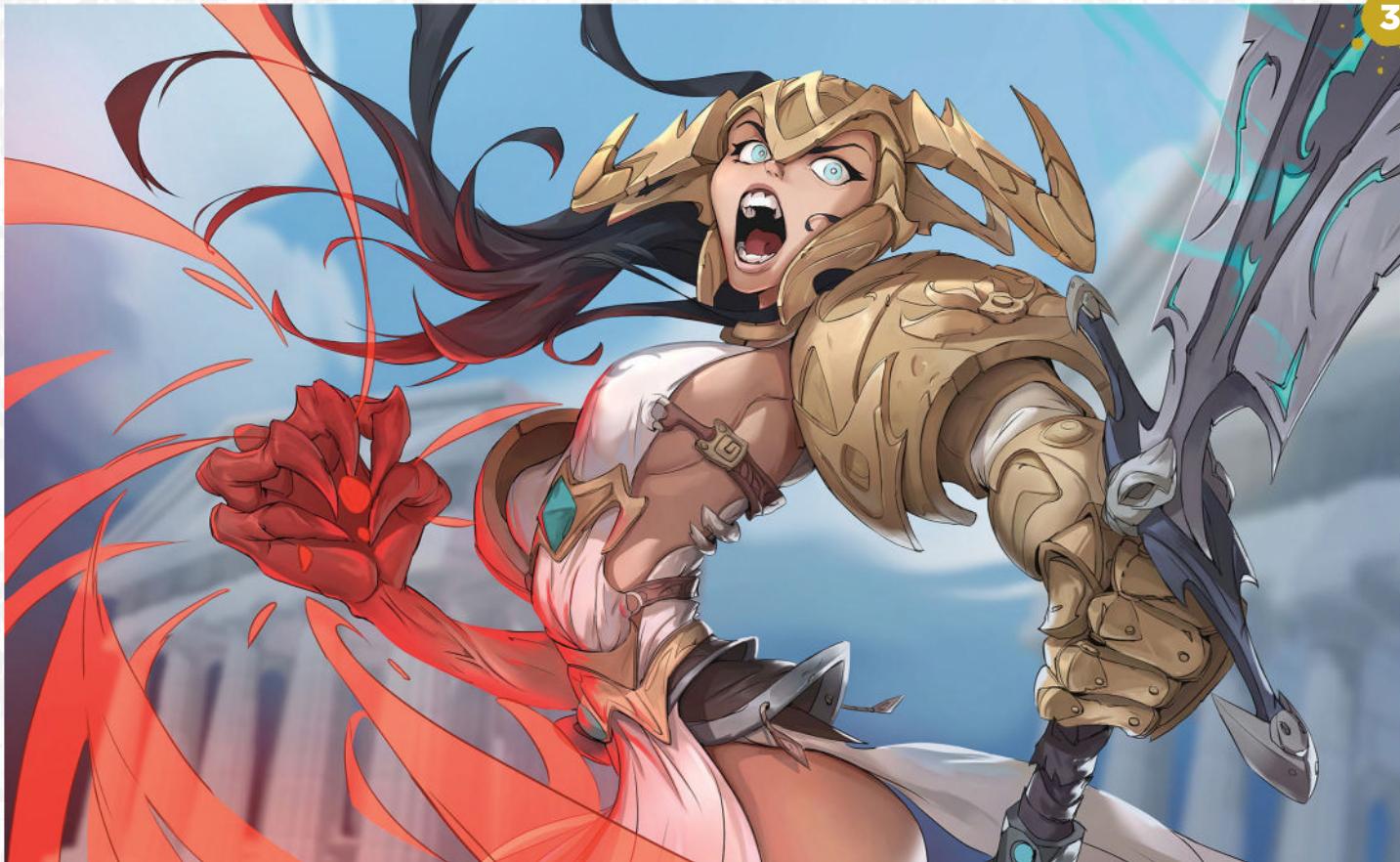
### 3 GREEK WARRIOR

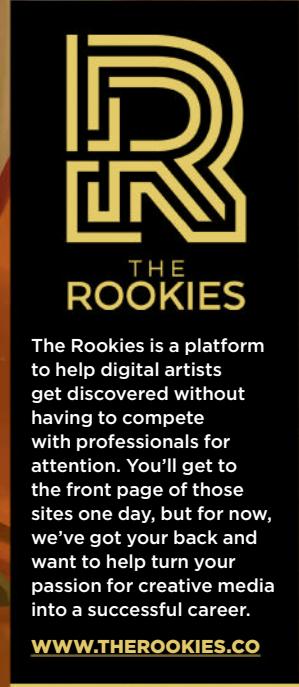
"The illustration depicts a Greek warrior in an imaginary fantasy setting. The lines of force converge and contrast so as to guide the eye to the focal points."

### 4 SUPERNATURAL

"The subject is a fantasy-style sorceress. The lines and shapes allude to something vaguely familiar and dynamic, like the frames of a sakuga animation."

**Do you want to see your art on these pages?** Then email five pieces of your work and a short explanation about each artwork, along with a photo and a few details about yourself, to [fxpose@imaginefx.com](mailto:fxpose@imaginefx.com)





# Sleeping Fairy

**YEAR CREATED: 2022 MEDIA: Procreate**

"I created this piece outside of my schoolwork to embody what I like, and my personal universe. It's a peaceful scene in an idyllic forest, which features a sleeping nymph. With this artwork, I worked on creating warm and comfortable lighting to make the setting welcoming for a break, and to take a nap by her side."





## Artist PROFILE

### Joanne Mazuay

LOCATION: France



Joanne is an illustrator and junior concept artist finishing her last year at Bellecour École in Lyon. Inspired by heroic fantasy, she is particularly interested in working within the video game industry.

[www.therookies.co/entries/23139](http://www.therookies.co/entries/23139)

ARTIST NEWS, SOFTWARE & EVENTS

# ImagineNation

AT THE CORE OF THE DIGITAL ART COMMUNITY



Angela Zhang's checklist for conventions: petty cash, card reader, banner, portfolio book, modular shelves, USB charger and battery, business cards, packaging, pricing signs, and a tablecloth.





## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF...

Marvel production designer Craig Elliott takes us through his working day and offers his advice for the next generation of talented young artists.

Page 30



## THE POWER TO DREAM

One of the key figures behind new animation software Procreate Dreams tells us why the app could be about to force a major shake-up in the sector.

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## YOUR VIEWS, YOUR ART

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

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# How to exhibit at an art convention

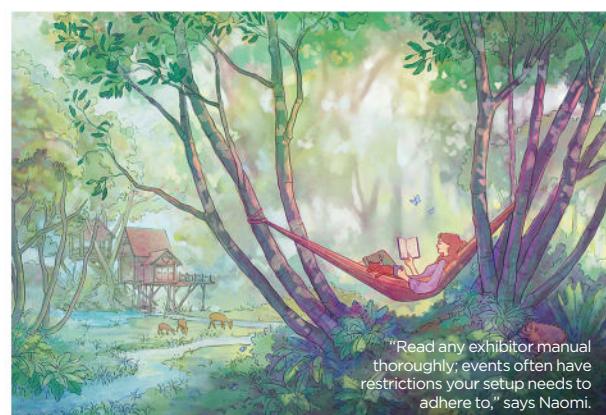
**Show time** Are you tempted to exhibit your work at a big art event? **Tanya Combrinck** gets expert advice from four experienced artists

**Having a booth at a large art convention opens up opportunities you won't find anywhere else. It's a chance to meet the people who enjoy your work, impress employers, network with other artists, and make a great profit by selling your work.**

"The sense of connection and satisfaction you get from knowing your work resonates with people is impossible to experience online, and is priceless," says **Naomi VanDoren**, an adventure fantasy artist and author.

While the rewards are great, every artist will hit a learning curve when they first start exhibiting. "Setting up a booth or table involves a significant amount of trial and error," says Naomi. There are also many logistical factors to juggle, attendance costs that will eat into your profit, and you'll need to experiment to find out what inventory works well for you.

**“The key is to start small and expand your offerings as you gain experience”**



"Read any exhibitor manual thoroughly; events often have restrictions your setup needs to adhere to," says Naomi.



"Exhibiting at major art events isn't just about selling art, but meeting collectors and fans, sparking fresh ideas, and networking with other artists or potential employers," explains Naomi VanDoren.

Thorough preparation is important, but so are attitude and expectations. Naomi advises you focus on staying positive and being ready for the fact there's a lot you won't be able to control. "Embrace the unpredictability and focus on building meaningful relationships with the audience, collectors and exhibitors," she says.

### TAKING STOCK

In selecting your inventory, keep it simple for your first few shows. "Stick to a selection of your best work; you can start with your top 10 prints, for example," Naomi recommends. "If you sell out, you can always take orders and ship them later."

Prints are a safe bet because they're easy to create and sell well. It's good to get them in standard sizes. Naomi also finds that books and pins are great sellers, although they're a little trickier to manage. "The key is to start small and gradually expand your offerings as you gain experience and understand what sells well," she says.

An eye-catching layout is also important. "Think about your ➤

### INDUSTRY INSIGHT

## YOUR FIRST ART SHOW

*Bruce Brenneise on taking your first few steps in conventions*

**If you haven't exhibited at a big show before, how do you get started?**

Reach out to artists who exhibit in your area and see if there's a chance to shadow them at a convenient future event. I had this opportunity with a major artist before I jumped into conventions; it was invaluable.

I also put the word out occasionally when I need an assistant at a particular show. I've made a lot of friends that way, many of those folks are now successfully exhibiting their own work, and of course it's a quid pro quo that benefits me as well. It's truly nice to be able to take a break to eat, use the restroom, or present at a panel knowing that someone is there handling your booth for you.

**How much inventory would you recommend bringing to a first show?**

Be careful about overstocking when you're just starting out; you don't want to end up with a shelf full of unsellable items. When I'm doing a trial run of a new print or item, I'll bring about five of that image per product type unless I have strong outside indicators, for example sales on my online store or lots of preceding demand from fans, in which case I might bring 10-20 of that item instead. I'll generally price my pieces higher, positioning my brand as more of a minor luxury, so the mileage may vary somewhat depending on the specific numbers.



Bruce Brenneise works as a freelance illustrator on RPGs, games, and sci-fi fantasy book covers.

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



"If you want to network with other artists, keep in mind they're running a business. Often the show is slow in the first and last hours of the day, so that's a better time to approach the busier artists," says Bruce Brenneise.

► display in layers. Start with a large print or banner to grab people's attention from a distance," Naomi adds. The next layer, visible as people get closer, should be prints grouped by size with signage for pricing.

Other types of merchandise should be kept together to make browsing easier. "Consider the edges of your table for items that invite a longer look, like books or bins of prints," says

"Conventions are a chance to build up a mailing list, so you have contacts not subject to the whims of social media," says Bruce.



© Wizards of the Coast

## “You have at most a few seconds to convince the passerby that they’re interested in what it is you’re selling”

Naomi. "My goal is a comfortable and inviting atmosphere where people feel encouraged to linger and explore while also making it clear what I offer."

### NAME YOUR PRICE

A freelance illustrator for games and sci-fi fantasy fiction book covers, **Bruce Brenneise's** first tip for those starting out at conventions is to look for items that have a good profit margin. "Somewhere between three and 10-times the cost of production is possible," he says. "Prints are a basic option that can and should have a lot of profit margin."

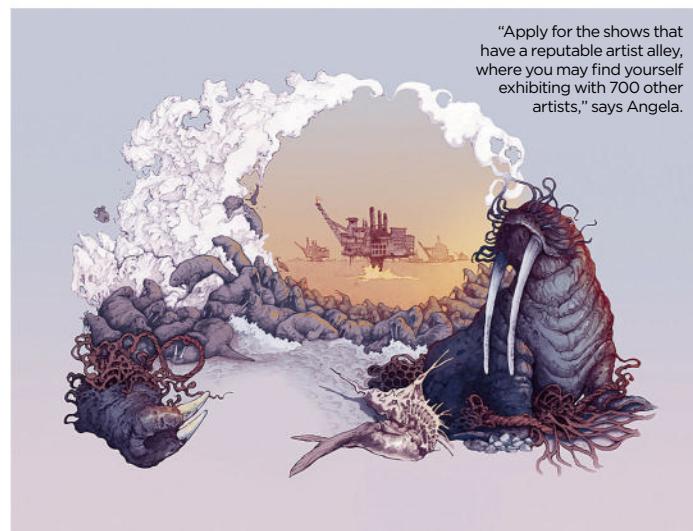
He also advises you shouldn't race to the bottom on price. "Conventions have a lot of upfront expenses to

cover, life is expensive these days, and very few artists starting out can afford to price like they're a generic Walmart. You're unique, so brand yourself like it and then price like it."

Bruce maintains that good lighting can make or break sales of a product, so make sure you use direct lighting to highlight your best pieces. "I also like to lay out products and prints so there are contrasting cool and warm overall colours," he says. "The same principles as good pictorial composition apply to setting up a booth, as you're also manipulating the eyes of the viewer."

A cohesive display makes a bigger impact. "You have at most a few seconds to convince the passerby that they're interested in what it is you're selling. A smorgasbord of very

# Artist news, software & events



"Modular grid shelves are the perfect way to display large prints. They fit nicely into a suitcase and can easily adapt to different table sizes," says Angela.

different subjects is more likely to miss the mark."

Sometimes potential employers will come to your booth, so make sure you have a fast way to get people to your portfolio. You could have it ready on an iPad, for example. "If you're at an event with lots of art directors, I'd suggest making postcards with a selection from your portfolio and your information on the back," says Bruce.

## STARTING OUT SMALL

When picking your first show, it might be tempting to dive straight into a big one, though illustrator

**Angela Zhang** urges caution here. "I highly recommend exhibiting at smaller, local conventions and art fairs before tackling a bigger show," she says. "You can experiment with different display setups, ➤





"Some art pieces do tend to sell more often than others. With experience you'll find which items work better," says Andy Brase.

➡ **pricing and inventory.** It will allow you to practise talking about your art, and get a sense of your audience. Just as you develop your style as an artist, your exhibiting style and confidence develops over time with experience."

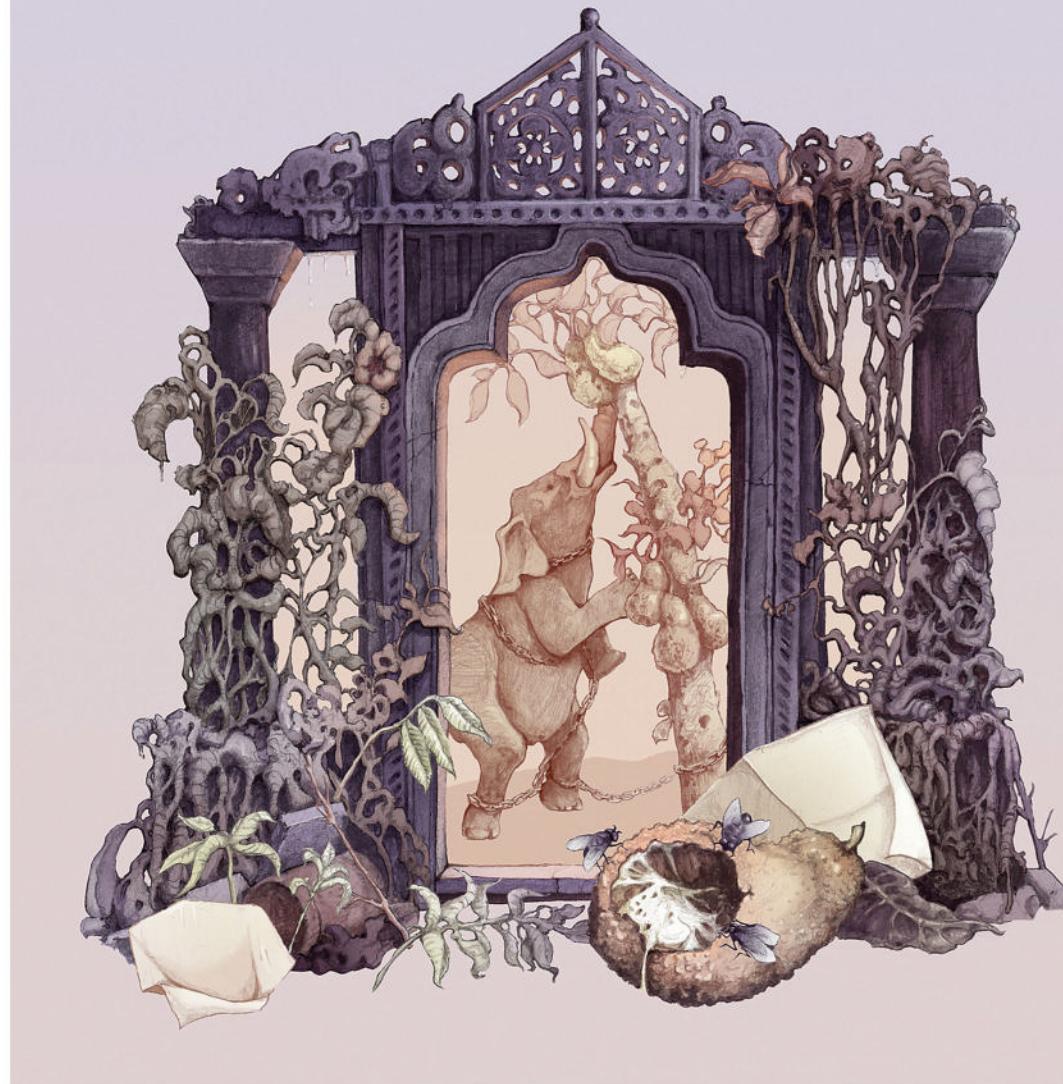
To draw people in, she advises arranging your display in a way that frames you. "A big part of the art show and convention experience is to meet the artist behind the work," she says. "I used to hide behind my large prints, but now I make sure to create an open window where I'm sitting or standing. This creates an inviting atmosphere for questions and conversations. It's no surprise that more people stopped by my table once I made this change."

## CONVERSATION STARTER

Although it's a bustling environment, big art conventions can actually be a great forum for deep connection and conversation. "I think these shows can be particularly beneficial for introverts like myself," says Angela. "Your table or booth provides a natural context to invite people to talk to you. Some artist alleys even provide walls between tables, creating a quiet environment to have in-depth, one-on-one conversations, which I love."

Angela also stresses how tricky it can be to manage your needs for food, hydration and breaks during the intensity of a convention. Take plenty of food and water with you. "Expect to stay for long hours at your table over 3-4 days, including time ➡

Angela recommends taking a bum bag, as they're a great option for holding your cash and phone.



"One thing I find many artists don't do is follow up with their new contacts after the show. It's a huge missed opportunity," says Bruce.

© Wizards of the Coast



“I used to hide behind my large prints, but now I make sure to create an open window where I’m sitting”

“When I started out, I made prints exclusively and had five copies of illustrations in each size, and 18 illustrations in total that explore different aspects of the same theme,” Angela recalls.

"I've expanded to include puzzles and wooden keychains because they make sense for the intricate artwork I make," says Angela.



Gatekeeper of the Dark, the main villain found in Andy Bräse's personal worldbuilding project



► beyond opening hours for setup, breakdown, and restocking," she says. You're there to make connections with people, and you'll be much less effective if you're in a bad mood due to hunger or discomfort.

## GENRE FOCUS

Angela's advice to start with smaller shows and view your first few outings as a learning experience is echoed by character and creature artist **Andy Bräse**. When you become ready for something bigger, think about whether you want to attend an event that focuses on a particular genre, or a very large show that covers a broader range of art.

If you're at a genre-focused show, tailor your inventory for that. "If it's a



game and fantasy art focused show, then playmats with your art might sell better here than at a comic show," Andy recommends.

Also think about the practicalities for customers of buying certain items. "Don't bring too many products that are bigger and more expensive," he says. "Things like art prints, smaller original art and original convention sketches are more likely to sell better than larger items." He advises bringing art materials as you may have time to produce sketches at quieter times.

If you're interested in meeting any potential employers, you won't be able to leave your booth for long periods to queue up to meet them, but Andy says that you might be able to sneak away at the very start of the day when there are fewer attendees.

When you're ready to take the leap, there's no telling where a big art show might take you. "Participating in these events is such a boost for your artistic journey," Naomi says. "It's a chance to dive deep into the art community, grow personally and professionally, and, importantly, they're fun!"

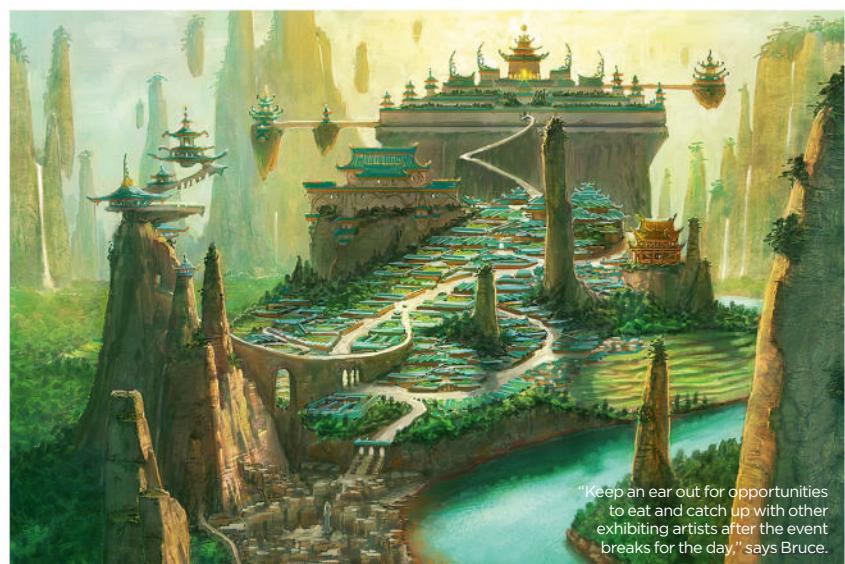
**“Participating in these events is a boost for your artistic journey”**

# Artist news, software & events



"It's good to have a large banner or some type of backdrop that shows your art on a larger scale and might catch someone's eye," says Andy.

"You can figure out what works better for you at a local show without much loss if things don't go as well as planned," Andy says.



© Draco Studios 2019

"Keep an ear out for opportunities to eat and catch up with other exhibiting artists after the event breaks for the day," says Bruce.



Craig created this image for a workshop featured in *ImagineFX* issue 154.

## A day in the life of...

# Craig Elliott

**Follow your bliss** The Marvel Studios production designer reveals his daily schedule, and why young artists should seek happiness

**"I wake up around 8am. Much of my morning routine is taking medication because I had a brain tumour and lost my pituitary gland. At 9am I'll log into Zoom, and the big morning meeting begins.**

We'll comb through any problems that the team has with, say, the handle of that sword or the roof tiles, and figure out how to fix it. Then I have my 'office hours', so individual artists schedule time with me. We often have a modeller review session. Especially working at Marvel, every thread and button is scrutinised.

Lunch is from noon till 1pm, but I have a little fridge in here, so I can

grab something while I work. Afterwards it's more meetings; a surfacing review for the characters, for example. On Fridays are the big executive review, where we present the week's work and give notes to the artists to revise.

### PERSONAL PROJECTS

I typically turn to something else after work, from 6-8.30pm or so. I'll do an illustration for Magic: The Gathering or Dungeons & Dragons, build part of my barn, or sculpt. I make dinner and put on a movie, and even then I have to work on something else while watching because I have all these



CONCEPT ART  
ASSOCIATION  
  
Concept Art Association is an organisation committed to elevating and raising the profile of concept artists, their art and their involvement in the entertainment industries. Its annual Concept Art Awards Show showcases and recognises behind-the-scenes individuals working in entertainment concept art.  
[conceptartassociation.com](http://conceptartassociation.com).

ideas. Eventually, I'll go to bed at around 11pm.

As for people entering the field, I think there's hope. I've done a lot of research on AI, and it's not where it needs to be to replace these artist positions. It might cut into entry-level jobs, so finding internships will be key.

Be smart, and use social media. Find a mentor so you can bypass that entry-level work. But mainly, as Joseph Campbell said, 'Follow your bliss'. All of this complicated stuff becomes fairly simple when you just think about following the thing that makes you happy.'

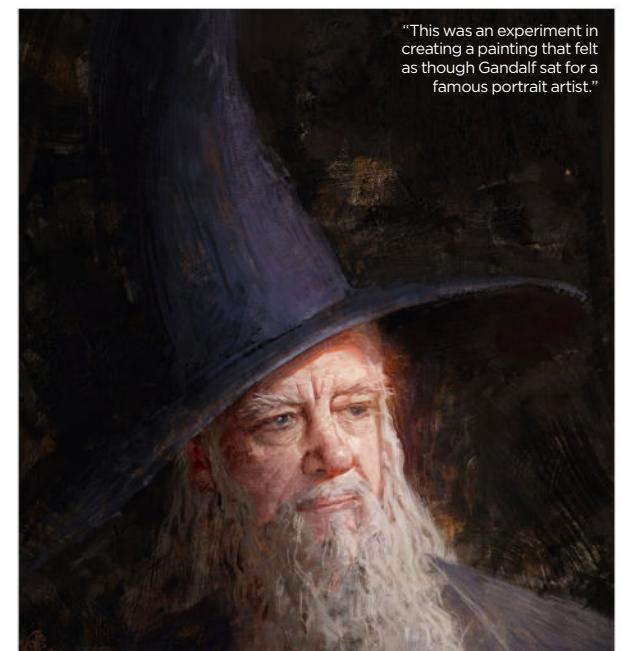


*Craig has worked for decades across films such as DC's Wonder Woman and Disney's Hercules, and is currently a production designer at Marvel Studios. A career highlight was working on *Treasure Planet*. [www.artstation.com/elliott](http://www.artstation.com/elliott).*

**“This complicated stuff becomes fairly simple when you think about following the thing that makes you happy”**



© Disney





Procreate Dreams includes the ability for users to work with both audio and video, as shown in this creation by agency 21-19.

# Giving artists the power to dream big

**The art of motion** As new animation software Procreate Dreams prepares to launch, **Ian Dean** spoke with chief product officer Claire d'Este to get the inside line on what awaits creators

**Procreate Dreams** is the upcoming standalone animation app for iPad from the creators of the award-winning Procreate, and it could be the best thing to happen to artists in, well, a decade.

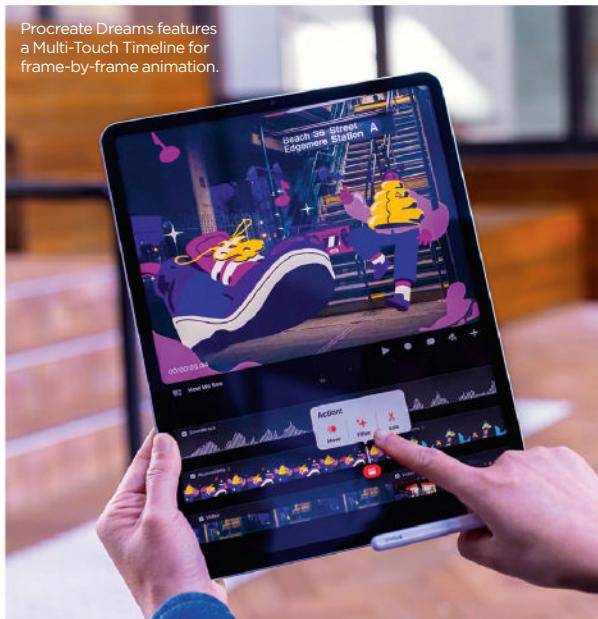
Procreate, the digital art app, recently celebrated its 10th birthday and rather than add iterative features to its established Apple-only software, developer Savage Interactive has announced something completely new in Procreate Dreams. Due for release on 22 November at a one-time cost of \$19.99, the app is designed to change how 2D animation is created. In the same way as Procreate made digital art more accessible, Dreams will enable everyone to make movie-quality animation.

## DEMOCRATISING ANIMATION

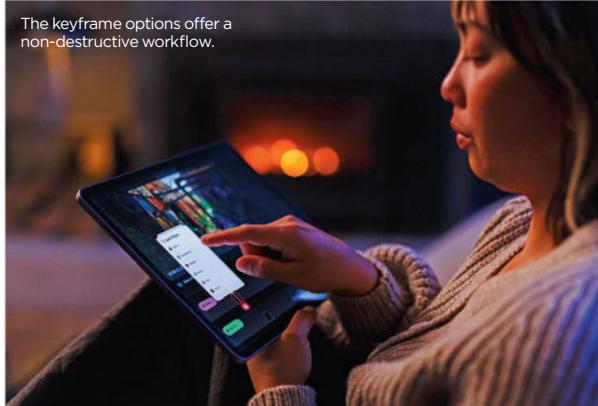
"A goal we had when developing Procreate Dreams was to bring animation to everyone," says Claire d'Este, the chief product officer at Procreate. "Traditionally animation software has been expensive and complex. We wanted to develop a product that anyone can pick up and have fun with."

Usually I'd raise an eyebrow at a dev's claims to make something as complex as professional animation easier, especially as it's being designed around touch controls on iPad, but ➤

Photographs by Procreate

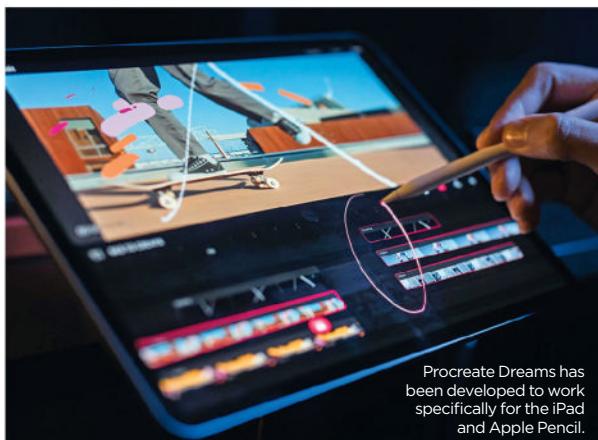


The keyframe options offer a non-destructive workflow.



► Savage Interactive has a proven track record. Procreate is easily one of the best digital art softwares available today, and something that I personally use almost daily.

Now Procreate Dreams sounds incredible, and will likely build on the simple yet effective animation tools, called Animation Assist, already in Procreate. The idea is to bring



Procreate Dreams has been developed to work specifically for the iPad and Apple Pencil.

“We’ve built an experience that helps both professionals and beginners alike”

animation to the masses. For example, the new Performing tool uses gestures on iPad to add keyframes based on your actions, and the art comes to life spontaneously in real time.

Meanwhile, the Multi-Touch Timeline is the beating heart of Procreate Dreams, from where you can edit, organise and navigate projects. This enables you to mix drawing, cel animation, keyframing, video editing and compositing in one space using gesture controls for ease.

## SOFTWARE SIBLINGS

What's interesting is how Savage Interactive envisioned Procreate and Procreate Dreams working together as a suite of apps. The process of moving art and projects from one app to the

other will be seamless and in-keeping with the team's decade-old approach of making digital art accessible.

The app has been developed with Apple Silicon in mind. This ensures the new app can eke all the power out of an iPad and run impeccably on the iPad Pro. The new painting and compositing engine developed for Procreate Dreams has some startling stats behind the simplicity, such as a boast of being able to work on raster projects with resolutions up to one million by one million pixels. The new app also supports all of Procreate's brushes, ensuring working from painting to animation is effortless.

All in, Procreate Dreams is shaping up to be the year's most important new digital art software launch. The Savage Interactive team hopes that it will do for animation what Procreate has done for digital painting and illustration: to pull away the roadblocks stopping everyone from creating animated films.

## INDUSTRY INSIGHT ANIMATION FOR EVERYONE

*Why Procreate Dreams is set to open up a complex world*

To find out more about the ins and outs of Procreate Dreams, we caught up with chief product officer Claire d'Este, who revealed all on the software's features and the motivations behind its creation.

### What have you learned from Procreate's success, and the way that artists use it?

Procreate has been in the hands of creatives for over a decade and one of the things that keeps artists coming back is how it feels when they're painting. The painting engine and hundreds of gorgeous brushes are the heart of Procreate. We've learned that as we continue to develop products, focusing on the core experience is key.

### Will Procreate and Procreate Dreams work together?

Animation Assist in Procreate has received a lot of love over the years and revealed just how much our community wanted to see more animation tools from us. We wanted to bring these tools to creatives while protecting the simplicity and delight of Procreate, which is first and foremost a drawing and painting app.

We've aimed to make it easy to work with both apps. Artists can import frame-by-frame animations from Procreate into Procreate Dreams with drag-and-drop to continue working on



Weronika Marianna made full use of the next-generation engine for her painting and compositing work.

more complex projects. You can also import static Procreate artworks, with all of your layers, masks and blend modes, and bring it to life by adding motion and sound.

### How did Procreate influence Procreate Dreams?

We've been listening to the community. Procreate Dreams introduces features animation users have been requesting for years: more layers, larger resolution, support for video and audio, and a next-gen painting and compositing engine.

We've also developed a file format. You can open a 1TB file in an instant, with no loading, saving or export times, and use iCloud synchronisation for easy file management and backups. This file format will first arrive in Procreate

Dreams and be the foundation for the next generation of Procreate products.

### Will this new app be an Apple exclusive like Procreate?

Yes, Procreate Dreams will launch as an iPadOS exclusive application, taking full advantage of the advanced capabilities of both the iPad and Apple Pencil. We have worked with Apple hardware and iPadOS for years, and our team are experts in harnessing the power of Apple's technology.

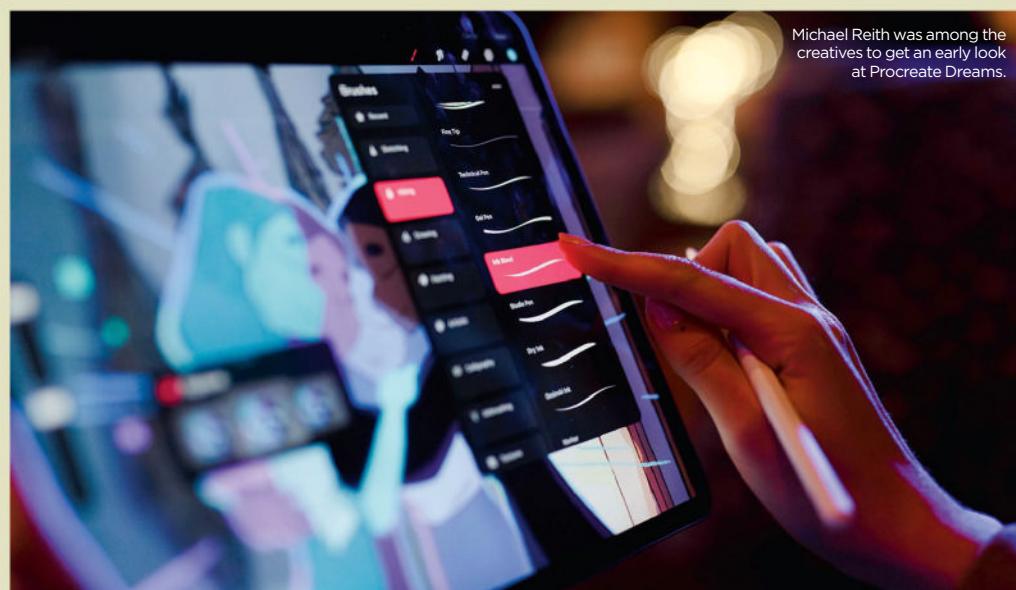
We can keep focused on squeezing the most out of the Apple hardware, including the GPU. This means we've been able to make advances such as supporting projects up to one million by one million pixels, and more layers than creatives will ever need.

### What needs to change in the way animation is created?

As it stands, animation is a discipline that requires many hours to deliver a high-quality final product. It can be intensely repetitive and arduous, and many animators feel that they can't enjoy the process of realising their creative vision. We have built an experience that helps both professionals and beginners alike to create in a way that's intuitive, allowing them to get totally lost in the process of creating, and fall in love with their craft again.

### Are there particular uses for Procreate Dreams?

We hope to see it used for all forms of content creation. At its core, it's all about storytelling. We can't wait to see ➤



► everything that's going to be shared with the world once it's in their hands.

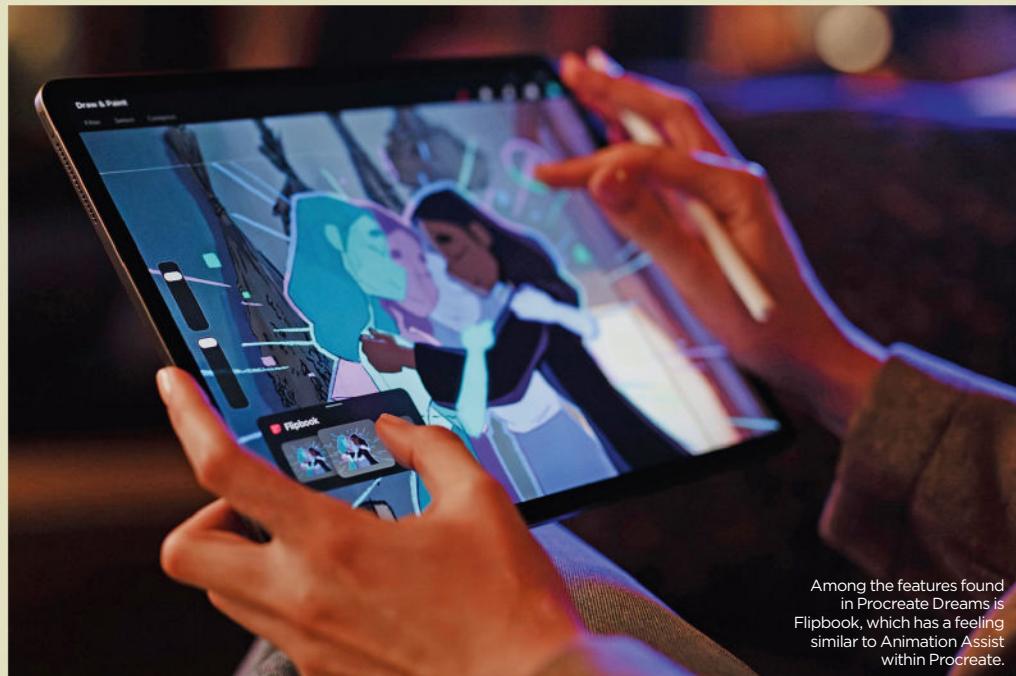
## Can you explain a typical animation that can be created?

Procreate Dreams is a 2D animation app with the capability to edit video, add audio and more. I'm especially excited to see all the unique art styles that will come to life now that you can animate with all of Procreate's brushes.

The creatives we've commissioned so far have made mind-blowing cinematic shorts, artistic painterly scenes, anime, graphic loops, and playful video drawovers. It's fantastic to be able to empower artists of all kinds.

## How do you ensure Procreate Dreams can be used by pros and newcomers alike?

Quite simply, we've developed a product that doesn't get in your way,



Among the features found in Procreate Dreams is Flipbook, which has a feeling similar to Animation Assist within Procreate.

**“We love the process of creating, and it's wonderful to be able to empower those creatives to do their best work”**

so that every artist can focus on the creative process. Whether you are a professional or a beginner, it should just feel good to make stuff.

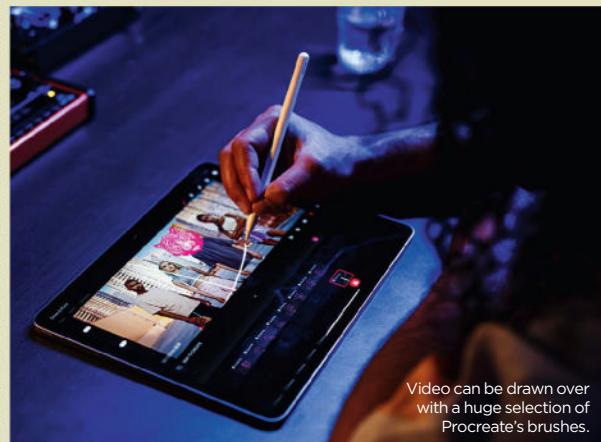
One feature we're particularly excited about, Performing, allows anyone to animate. It automatically adds in keyframes by recording your actions. You don't need to be an expert on easing or complex geometry, you can just respond to the movie as it plays.

Another thing we know professionals are going to love is the speed. Procreate

Dreams is really fast. It has real-time playback rendering so pros don't have to wait for RAM previews every time they make a change. Creatives can now instantly play their project as they make edits, making so much more time to experiment and play.

## Will Procreate users be familiar with the UI and processes?

Procreate Dreams both looks and feels like a Procreate product and has the core painting and drawing experience that our users love. Procreate Dreams will also include Flipbook, which transforms the UI into a focused format, and feels like a refined version of Procreate's Animation Assist. Our



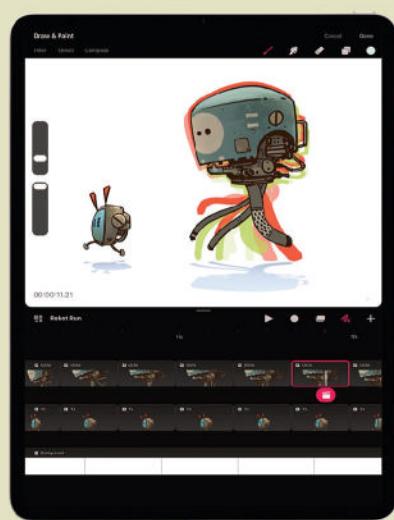
Video can be drawn over with a huge selection of Procreate's brushes.

goal is to ensure that new users, as well as those that know and love Procreate, will feel at home in Procreate Dreams and focus on what they want to create.

## How long has Procreate Dreams been in the works?

We've been developing Procreate Dreams for over five years. This is a huge moment for us as a company; this is only the beginning, and we're thrilled to finally share what we have been working on with the world.

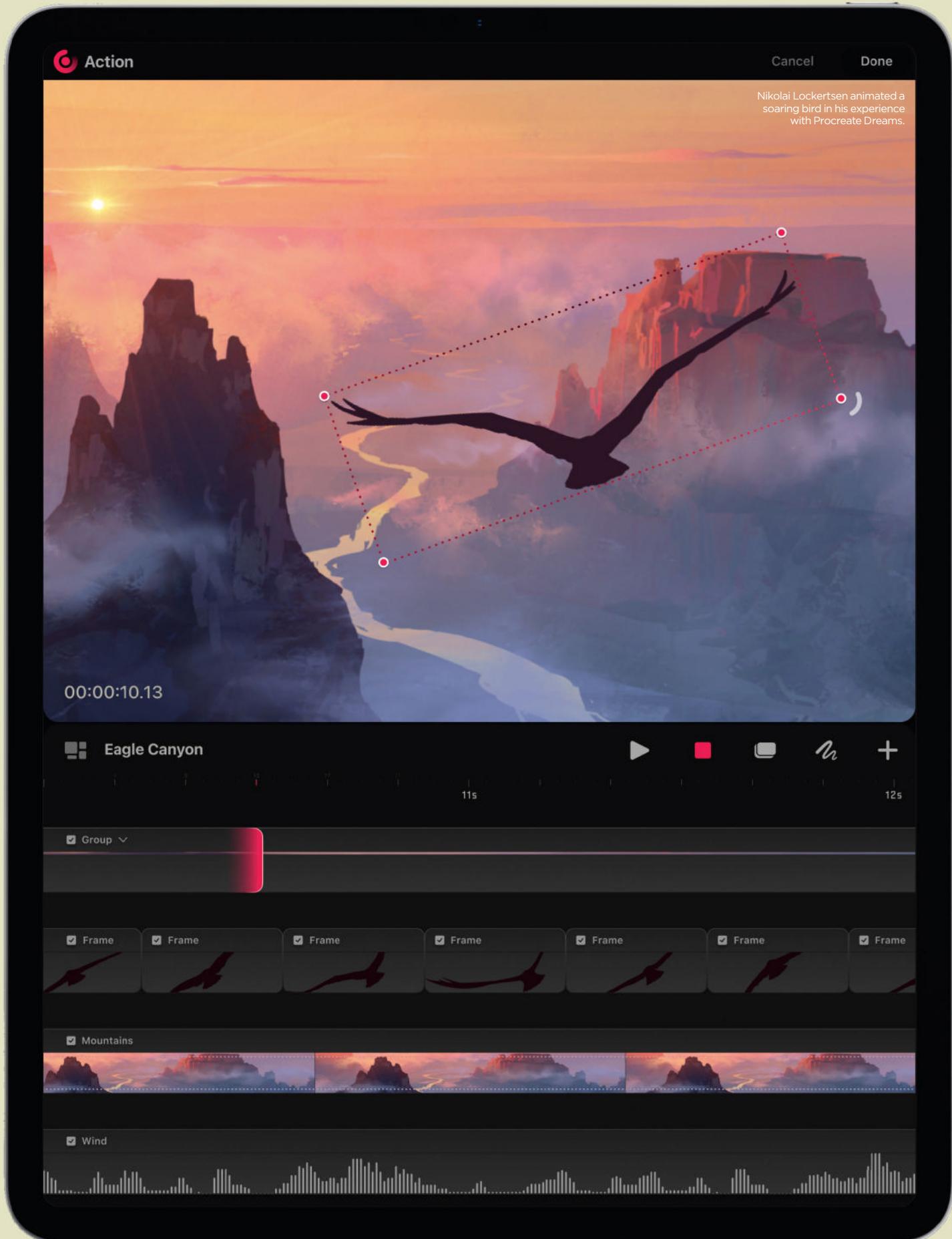
Although we have developed a suite of incredible new tools, we are particularly excited by Performing. It really does introduce a whole new way to animate. Above all, I think we're all most looking forward to seeing what people will make. We love the process of creating, and it's wonderful for us to be able to empower those creatives to do their best work.



The app has been developed to make full use of the power available in Apple's latest hardware.



# Artist news, software & events



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## PRINT AND DIGITAL BACK ISSUES



### Issue 231

November 2023

Expert educators at The Gnomon Workshop share the processes behind their art. We also visit a galaxy far, far away with a look at the making of Star Wars: Visions Volume 2, and learn to paint a fantasy-style self-portrait.



### 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 Ulichney in exclusive interviews.

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# Letters

## YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



Contact the editor, Rob Redman, on [mail@imaginefx.com](mailto:mail@imaginefx.com) or write to ImagineFX, Future Publishing, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA, England



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The Star Wars: Visions animations are wildly varied in style, but remain true to the feel of the universe.

### Feel the Force!

Hi ImagineFX! I'm writing in to say I loved the Star Wars: Visions article from your last issue. I find it fascinating to see stylistically innovative projects and the look of those is mind-blowing. It really shows what can be done with one universe in terms of style. This sort of thing, along with the artwork in the new Spider-Verse and Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles movies, pushes my passion and I hope to one day work at a studio that produces these kinds of projects.

**Maria, via email**

**Rob replies** Hello Maria! Thanks for writing in. I'm so glad you enjoyed that piece. We did too, and I couldn't agree more. The more traditional-looking projects can be beautiful, but it's nice to see creators pushing the boundaries.

Good luck with your journey, and I hope that highlighting projects like this helps to inspire you and others to reach those goals. Keep in touch, and if you have any of your art to share with us and the community, send it my way.



**DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE?**  
Don't worry – you can get hold of issue 231 at [ifxm.ag/single-ifx](http://ifxm.ag/single-ifx).



Our friends over at The Gnomon Workshop offer all kinds of training for digital artists.

### Cool cover creation

Hey Rob. I just wanted to drop you a quick message to say that I loved the latest issue. Pascal Blanché is one of my favourite artists, so it was exciting to see him on the cover. What a cool bit of art it was too! I love his style and use of colour. Have you seen his artbook? It's full of very cool stuff.

**Dexter, via email**

**Rob replies** Hello Dexter. I'm glad you liked it, and yes, Pascal is one of our favourites as well. It's always a pleasure to work with him, and his art has graced our pages before, as well as those of our sister title, 3D World. His book, *Derelict Planet*, is definitely one for the art lovers. Nice to hear from another fan!

### Gnomon recommendation

Hello there. I'm getting in touch to say a huge thank you for your latest issue where you featured The Gnomon Workshop. I've learned a lot of new skills from their courses and highly recommend them to anybody looking for long-form training, where you can really get stuck in to a project and refine some of your techniques.

**Susanna, via email**

**Rob replies** Hi Susanna. Thank you so much for getting in touch with us and for your kind words. I'll be sure to pass them on to our friends over at The Gnomon Workshop. I totally agree about them being an excellent resource for artists who are looking to hone their skills. They are a fabulous repository for learning a whole range of new techniques.

In fact, we've teamed up with them to offer all our readers a discount and more training. Head on over to page 72 to learn more about this exclusive offer, plus an awesome Gnomon tutorial on creature art.



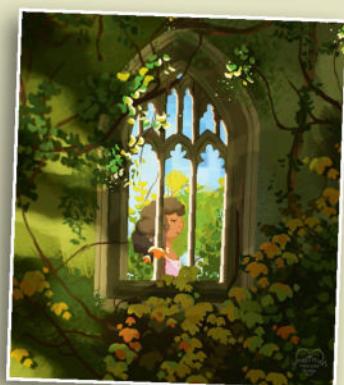
New works that have grabbed our attention



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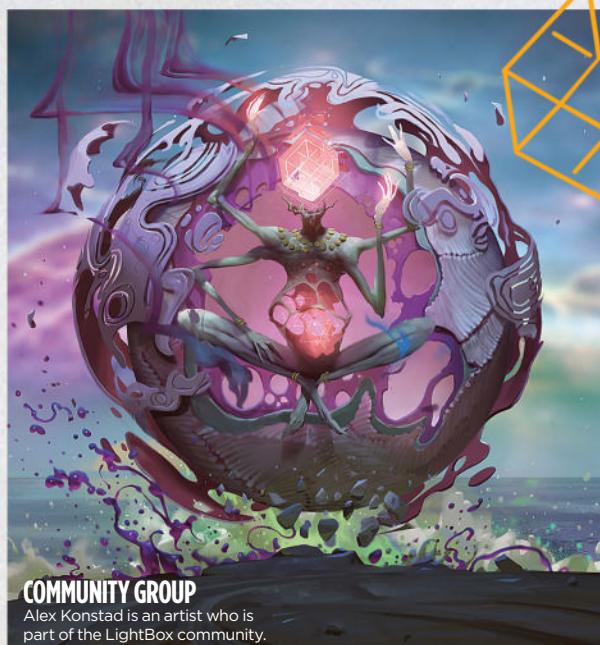
**Umaimah**  
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If you've created art that you want us to shout about simply tag us on X or Instagram, and use the hashtag #imaginefx

# SPIRIT SHINES AT



**Bobby Chiu**, the co-founder of Imaginism Studios and **LightBox Expo**, talks about creating a space for artists to showcase their work and become part of a supportive community



## COMMUNITY GROUP

Alex Konstad is an artist who is part of the LightBox community.



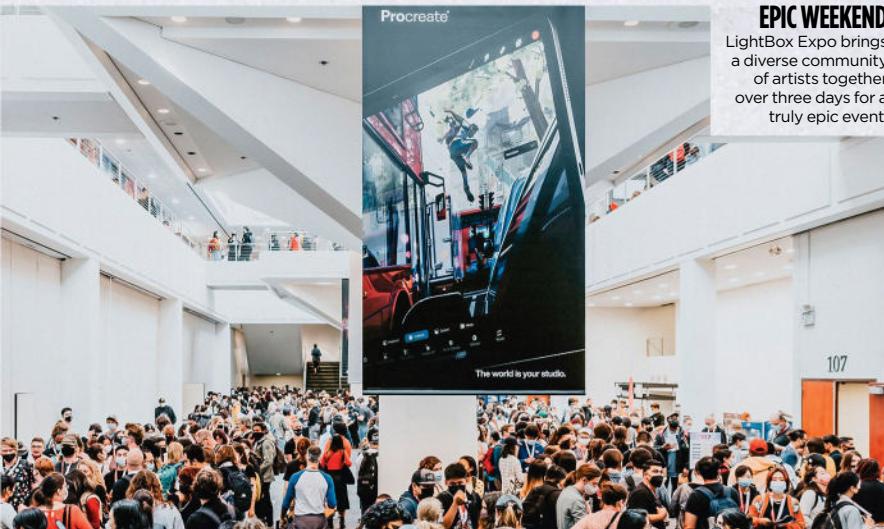
Creative communities have been a necessary feature of the creative life for centuries, and for Bobby Chiu the adventure of bringing together a community of artists and illustrators from around the world is a mission that he's so clearly committed to. Bobby established Imaginism Studios in 2005, and within that he has overseen development of the Schoolism online training and teaching courses for burgeoning new artists.

In a conversation with **ImagineFX**, Bobby takes us through how and why LightBox Expo was created and what it means to him, and also to the global illustration and image-making community across the disciplines of concept design, illustration, and work for video games.

Our conversation begins with Bobby recalling the earliest moment in the genesis of LightBox. "I think the biggest reason is because I got discovered at San Diego Comic-Con, way back in the day," **Bobby** explains. "Tim Burton was looking for artists for [his film] *Alice in Wonderland*, so that's how I was discovered. But back then, you'd go on TV and wouldn't see anything about San Diego Comic-Con. It wasn't on peoples' radars at that level."

## DESERVED RECOGNITION

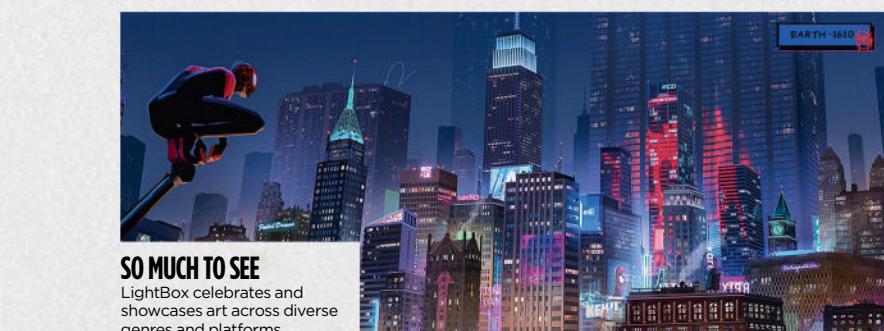
"Comic-Con's still amazing. I still love it. But it has kind of become an even bigger thing: that's where you go to meet celebrities. And fewer and fewer people are going there for comic book artists in general, and so I just felt ➤



**EPIC WEEKEND**  
LightBox Expo brings a diverse community of artists together over three days for a truly epic event.



**FOUNDING FATHER**  
Bobby Chiu, who created this image, established LightBox.



## SO MUCH TO SEE

LightBox celebrates and showcases art across diverse genres and platforms.



## VARIETY SHOW

At LightBox Expo, creatives working across a whole host of media participate and gather together.



► like, 'We need our own home now. A new home. Something that will be dedicated to us'.

"So, I have a friend named Jim Demonakos. He's incredible. He created The Emerald City Comic Con in Seattle. And when he sold it, it had over 100,000 people attending. It was absolutely staggering. But I knew that he didn't have anything to do at this point and so I called him up, we visited a convention, and at the end of that little visit he said to me, 'Let me guess: you want to start a convention?' And I said, 'Yes'."

From that modest affirmation of his ambition, Bobby immersed himself in the creative, practical and logistical thinking about what a convention of artists could become. Of that initial process, he remembers: "It was such a great experience to go through setting up a convention. It can be a daunting process, and going through it just the one time I realised, 'Wow, this is such a difficult thing to do and it takes very specific people.' It just so happens that Jim and I have those pieces."

In breaking down the earliest phase of developing what has now become

#### CREATIVE FESTIVAL

LightBox Expo is an annual celebration of the creative spirit.

LightBox, Bobby emphasises the value of building on relationships across the film, TV, comic and gaming worlds. In turn, a community has now evolved and he notes that his Schoolism teaching and training courses feed into the LightBox philosophy.

#### BUILDING A COMMUNITY

"For me, Schoolism, which has over 100,000 people in that community, they're all artists," Bobby says. "It wasn't done on purpose, but I now have a very big network of artists, directors and producers."

“It was such a great experience to go through setting up a convention”

"Also, before the Covid pandemic happened, we were doing a lot of in-person Schoolism workshops, where we would go to all sorts of cities around the world each year, including places like London, Florence, Beijing, Shanghai and San Francisco. We'd do 10-14 workshops every year and I would bring four to six incredible, legendary, artists with me. That's a truly staggering amount of unique artists and creators. ►



#### TIME TO LEARN

Artists working across movies, comics, TV and gaming deliver a range of masterclasses about their processes and methodologies.



## GROWING PRESENCE

The illustration and concept community has seen a significant growth in the presence of women creatives in recent years.



## DIGITAL NATIVES

Approaches to the creative use of the digital realm is key to the work undertaken at LightBox Expo.

## GROWING GENDER DIVERSITY IN ART

How women have asserted their place working in the concept art industry

Bobby Chiu says the gender diversity within the concept art industry is changing, which LightBox is keen to reflect within its line-up of artists and speakers. "Twenty years ago, especially in animation, it was such a male-dominated industry," Bobby says. "Now, in most schools, there are more women than men studying and we definitely see a shift in that. One of our goals at LightBox is not to just show the most popular people, but to show the people that deserve a spotlight for the things that they're doing, and that means diversity. That means that we have a Women in Concept Art panel and a Women in Animation panel. We have all sorts of things that will hopefully make people feel seen. Also, it gives an opportunity for many people to talk to those people who are trailblazing and making it easier for the next generation of artists."



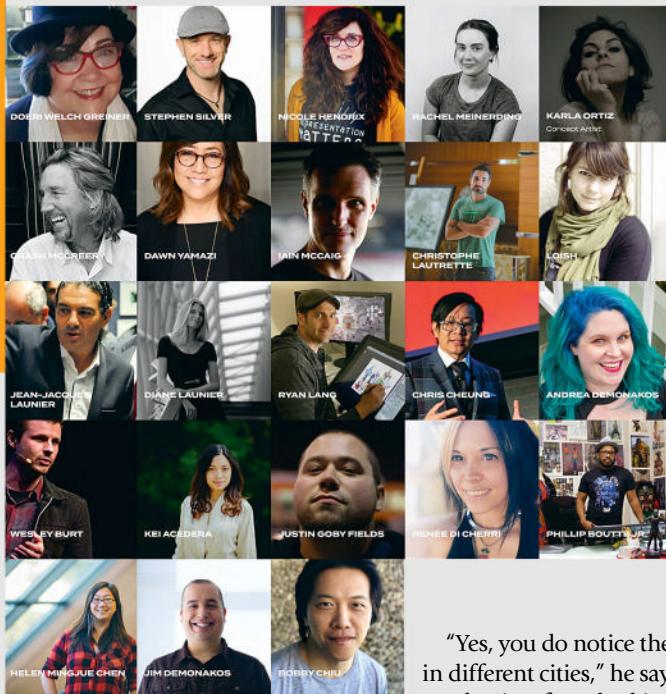
## TOGETHERNESS

Supporting and guiding each other through the creative industries underpins the LightBox ethos.

## THE LIGHTBOX ADVISORY COUNCIL

Bobby Chiu explains how feedback at LightBox is aided by a range of insights

Part of the composition of LightBox comprises its Advisory Council, and Bobby explains its contribution to the work of the convention and the mood of the community. He says: "The main thing that we don't want is to have a totalitarian kind of view about who presents and who attends, things like that. Even if I don't want to, I still have my own tendencies of things that I like and don't like. Having the Advisory Council means that when we vote on artists' work, I only have one vote among many and that's done, of course, so that LightBox will grow in a healthy way."



► "So, having Jim and me together really created the perfect scenario. And, for an event of this size, you've got to be really well-versed in creating events. For example, I don't speak Italian, so those kinds of experiences really helped me with everything with LightBox as well."

In turn, this expansive travelling and working dynamic also fostered powerful networks as Bobby explains: "When you meet somebody and travel with them, then those connections can be very deep."

Zeroing in on how LightBox offers a range of spaces for creatives to show off their work and connect with their colleagues and the wider industry, Bobby observes the ways that creative sensibilities and approaches to the work are distinctive to particular cities and countries.

"Yes, you do notice these differences in different cities," he says. "You don't get that just from looking at videos. In China, for example, the artists are so organised and well behaved, and their way of showing positive feedback isn't as wild as, say, Florence or London. London's very interesting, too: I'd do all these workshops around the world, and so after a point you know the jokes that are going to hit."

### GLOBAL VARIETY

"The art is quite different, too [around the world]. The art in Dubai was

### OLD SCHOOL

Despite our digital age, the traditions of observational drawing still endure today.



### HOTTEST TICKET IN TOWN

Over the years, LightBox Expo has accrued a significant following and level of attendance.



### A PLACE TO BELONG

LightBox fosters a spirit of connection and belonging among all of its attendees.



“When you meet somebody and travel with them, those connections can be deep”

phenomenal, with cultural references to Middle Eastern topics. In a general [meeting] everyone was better than they thought they were, probably as they were so far from the leading hubs of entertainment. London on the other hand, they knew how good they were because they'd been working on all the top projects for a super long time. Yet they don't get the credit for it, most of them. There's a vibe there: they know that they're good, and they know that they don't always get the credit that they should."

For Bobby, the opportunity to create an environment that fosters recognition for artists is key to the LightBox spirit and, again, what he's doing now with LightBox ties right back into experiences earlier in his career. "In terms of me being an artist, and having worked on big properties, you realise how little people and audiences know; even artists about the artist behind their favourite movies, games, animation and ►►

# Procreate

## MEET THE PROS

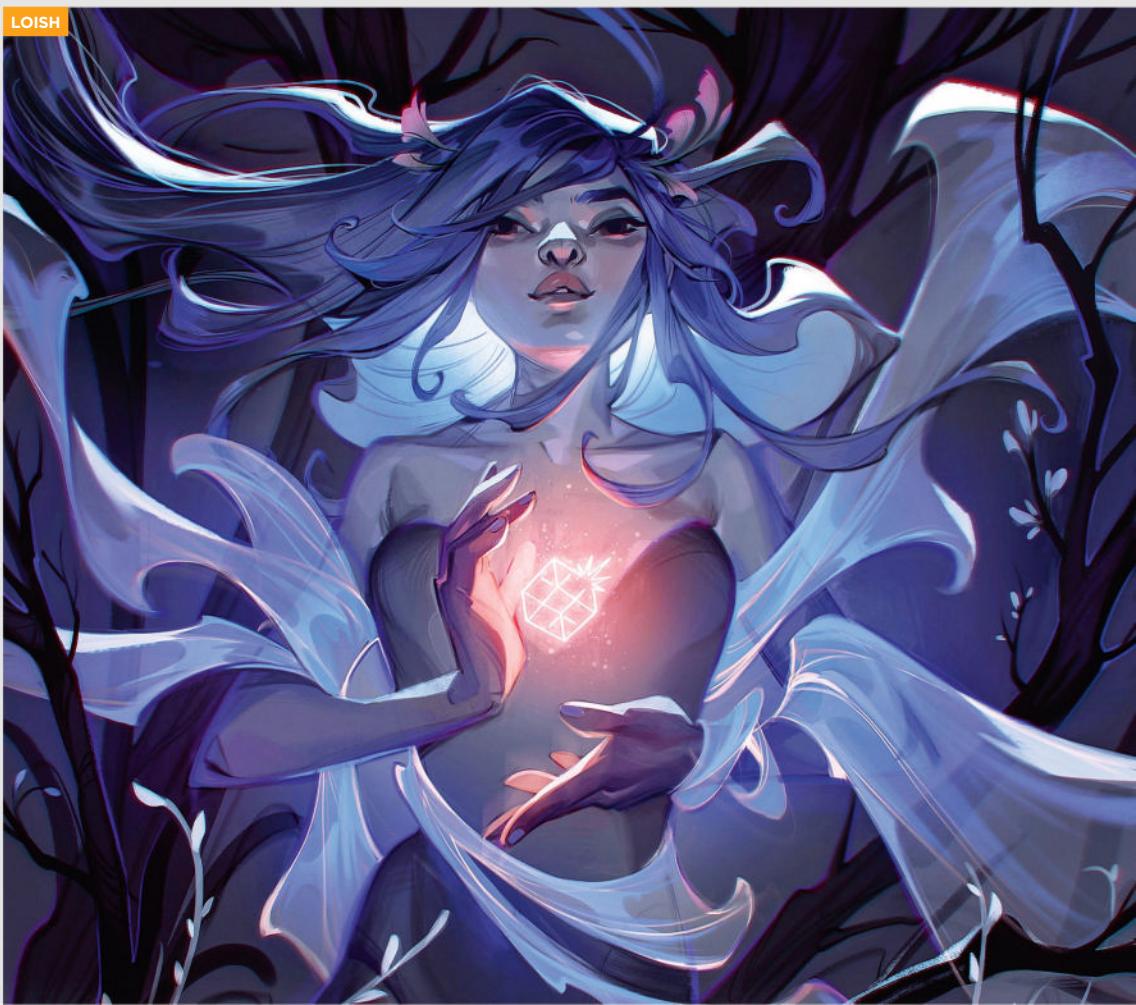
The attendees at LightBox Expo engage with creative practitioners and industry leaders.

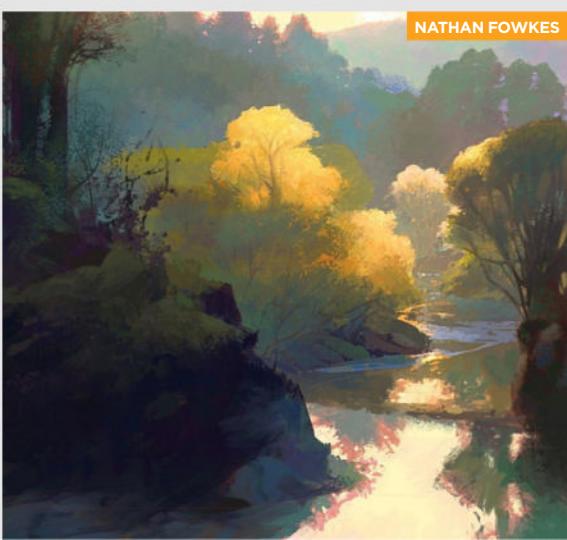


## DREAM VOCATIONS

LightBox encourages the possibility of a working life in the creative industries.

# Feature





## FAN FAVOURITES ON THE LIGHTBOX BILL

A host of creatives, both established and new, are set to appear at the 2023 edition

Bobby Chiu identifies some of the artists who are part of the LightBox world, and starts by referencing the involvement of Robert Kondo, an Oscar nominee, co-owner and co-founder of Tonko House studio, and formerly of Pixar. He also emphasises the involvement in this autumn's LightBox convention of Alex Konstad, Nikolai Lockertsen, Nathan Fowkes and Djamila Knopf. There is Peter de Sève, of whom Bobby says: "He is a legendary illustrator and character designer. Peter will be attending and will bring with him a range of original art from productions."

Bobby then makes a point about the work of the artist J.A.W. Cooper, noting: "They are most known for their independent work as seen on Instagram." From the game design space, he notes two artists, namely Sam Nielson, who works as a concept artist and teacher and is one of the principal character designers for Super Mario Bros., and also Airi Pan, a senior concept artist working at Blizzard. And finally, Bobby references an artist well known to ImagineFX readers: Loish.



## RECOGNITION

At LightBox Expo, award ceremonies like the Concept Art Awards showcase creative success and inspiration.

► illustration. So this is our way of putting the well-deserved spotlight on these artists and creators, because a lot of the time, you don't even know who the creator of this thing is that you're absolutely loving.

"And the thing about this is that I'm thinking, 'This should be different: all the toys generating billions of dollars? It was an artist that designed those toys loved by so many. People would love to know who designed it.' You can see evidence of that in a Netflix series like *The Toys That Made Us*."

A feature of LightBox Bobby talks excitedly about are the ways that it offers artists a space to become industry-aware. He notes: "That's the other giant part of LightBox; artists make a pilgrimage from all over the world to this one spot. It's a wonderful opportunity, once a year, to exchange information. There's tons and tons of

## LEVELLING UP

The Expo schedule includes sessions that allow artists to refine their processes.



talks and workshops. It's like you're entering your Instagram feed and your heroes are all around you." Bobby also believes artists' online lives become all the more real: "When you meet each other, you already know each other and so there's this instant connection."

## AWARENESS FOR ARTISTS

That opportunity to connect and celebrate remains at the heart of LightBox and there's certainly scope for the event to continue building its reputation, as Bobby attests. "That's the absolute goal: to create much more awareness about the artist behind our favourite things," he says. "We already know that there is interest amongst the 'normies'. The ultimate goal is to raise the level of the artists to the same level as the actors and the directors."

Bobby ends our conversation with a heartfelt affirmation of the value of the creative life. He says: "Number one: being an artist is awesome because you don't have to be 250 pounds of muscle. As long as you can move a brush around, whether you're

“This is our way of putting a well-deserved spotlight on these artists and creators”



## TIME TO PLAY

A sense of playfulness suffuses the atmosphere at LightBox.

younger or older, it doesn't really matter. The other part to all of this is that we take on art because that's our interest, that's our hobby. Usually, people don't get to do that for a living. For almost all of us artists that's the case that we find ourselves in.

"While you might not become the best artist in the world, as long as you put in the effort you'll get to the upper echelons of the art community where you're 0.1 per cent of the population. I feel like everybody is able to do that."

"One thing that I find has changed is just the idea that working in games, animation and art is a viable choice now. The common thread that you used to hear was, 'My parents didn't think it was a good idea'. Those stories have gone away."

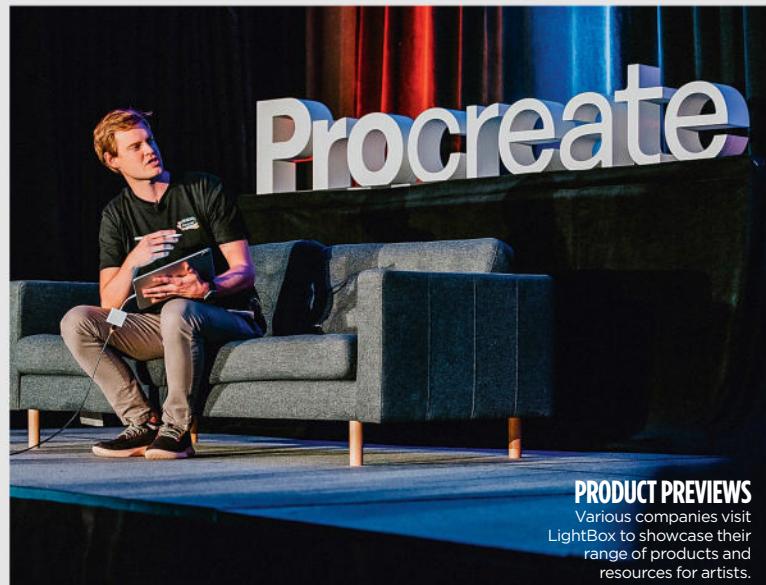


## CLASS IN SESSION

LightBox Expo offers its attendees a range of masterclasses.



# Procreate



## PRODUCT PREVIEWS

Various companies visit LightBox to showcase their range of products and resources for artists.

# Sketchbook

# Jake Posh

Discover how the budding concept artist and illustrator gets creative with his wacky creature combinations and studies

## WICKWALKERS

"Whenever I get the chance, I love filling up a sketchbook spread with a complete narrative."

## MONKEY MONKS

"Injecting a little attitude into some primates."

ELLIE FERNBRIGHT  
DRYAD ADVENTURER  
(END ANTHROPOLOGY)



WICK WALKERS



CHIMP

ORANG UTAN

BABOON

## ORC DRAGONS

"Drocs? Combining cool-sounding words is a sure-fire route to fun designs."



## AXOLOTL LORD

"Often I'll do literal studies and then try drawing some stuff from imagination with all that in mind, keeping the shape language, forms and anatomy intact but adding stylisation."

## Artist PROFILE

### Jake Posh

LOCATION: US



Jake is a freelance concept artist and illustrator for the game industry, looking for his first big gig. He has worked on a variety of projects for clients and himself, and is always excited to create new worlds or populate existing ones with creatures and characters. When Jake doesn't have a pencil in hand, you'll find him spending time with family and friends. <https://linktr.ee/jakeposh>



“In an effort to figure out my process, I created the ramblings of a madman”



### THE FOOLS

“I love waking up and sketching something new, starting the day on my own terms. Preferably something that's unique to me. Masked clown adventurers? Sure, let's run with that.”

### I LOVE FROGS

“I love all animals, honestly. And I think you have to if you want to make compelling creature designs; sprinkling a little realism in there can really help to ground them. That's why I do these, buffing up the ol' visual library.”



### THE HORNTODD

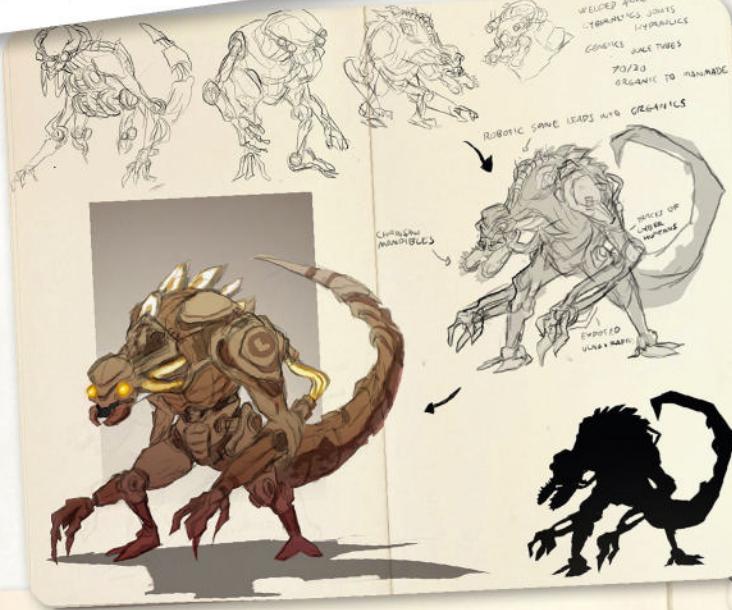
“In an effort to figure out my process, I created the ramblings of a madman. But really, I think about process a lot.”



### ORC WEAPONS

“They make your innards ‘outers.’ Starting with silhouettes is always a fun time, figuring out which bumps and curves on the weapon are bone and which ones are blade.”

# Sketchbook

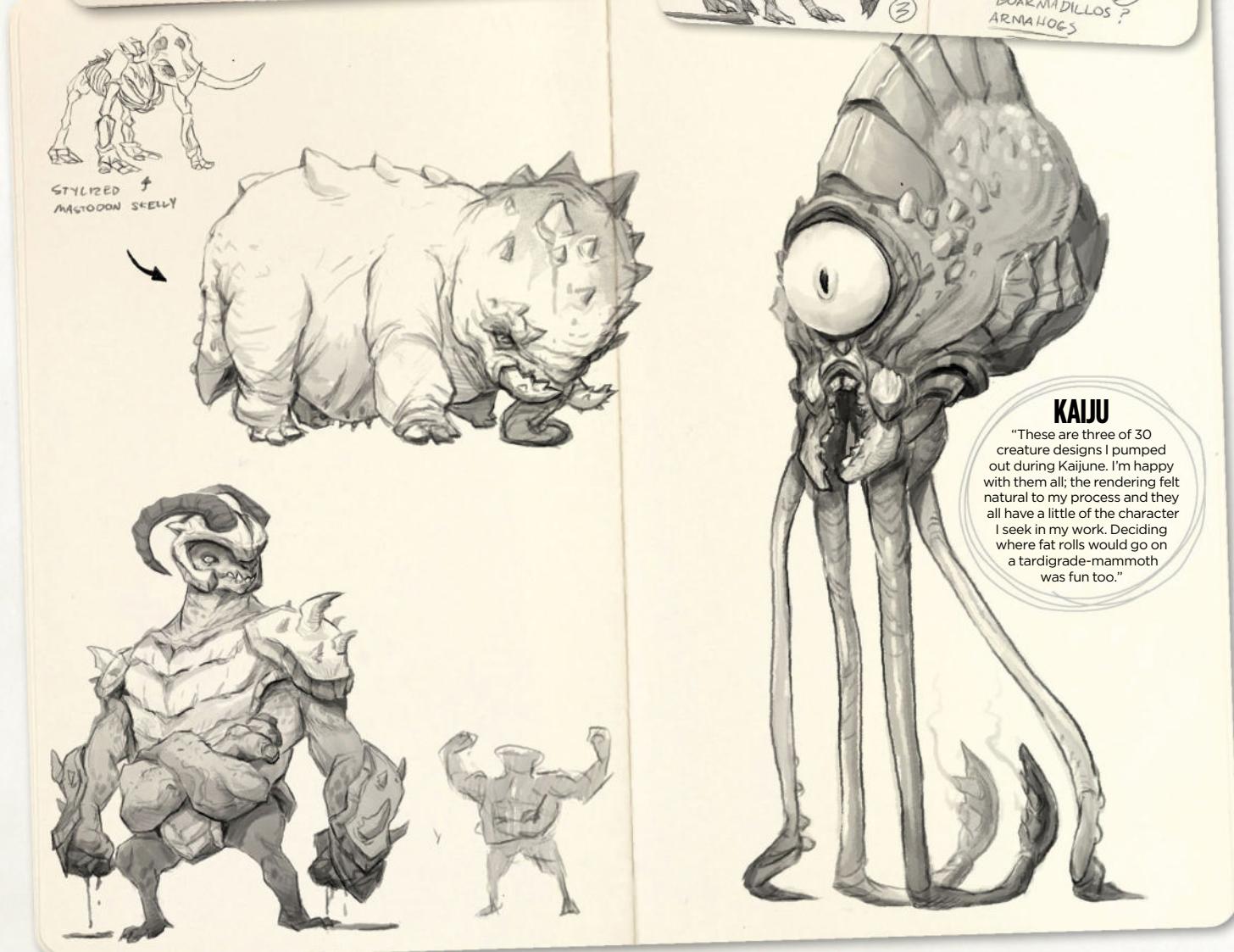


## TAR PIT BEAST

"I use my sketches for two things: exercising my brain and preparing for my next project. This was the latter, thinking about what cyber-creature would look the coolest behind a line-up of specialists."

## ARMAHOGS

"I'm trying to get a job in the concept art industry and have been told 'iteration is key' multiple times. A lot of my sketches lately have been practising that, in this case the ways that you can mix an armadillo with a warthog."



## KAIJU

"These are three of 30 creature designs I pumped out during Kaijune. I'm happy with them all; the rendering felt natural to my process and they all have a little of the character I seek in my work. Deciding where fat rolls would go on a tardigrade-mammoth was fun too."



## MORE KAIJU!

"The Whiptail is rather self-explanatory, but I think the Borehound is actually a pretty fun design."

## STUDIES

"Don't quote me on this, but I think these are all Peruvian cultural studies. I love ancient civilisations and all the awesome patterns and shapes they used in their clothing and statues. Really inspiring stuff."

**“I use my sketches for two things: exercising my brain and preparing for my next project”**

**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](mailto:sketchbook@imaginefx.com)

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**ISSUE 231**

**TAP FOR TEXT-FREE COVER!**

**SITH** **THE PIT** **JOURNEY TO THE DARK HEAD** **I AM YOUR MOTHER** **THE BANDITS OF GOLAK**

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**NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS**

# ImagineFX Workshops

**Workshop assets  
are available...**

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



Advice from the world's best artists



56

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Why personality is the key when Nikolas Ilic crafts a character.



# Clip Studio Paint CREATE DYNAMIC ACTION SCENES

**Jolene Yeo** explains how she sets up her action scenes, from finding a pose to adding excitement with elemental effects

In depth Dynamic action



# Workshops

## Artist PROFILE

Jolene Yeo

LOCATION: Singapore

Jolene is an illustrator for Collateral Damage Studios. She paints in a variety of styles and has worked on colouring books. Jolene has also co-written a book, How to Draw Manga, which is due for release in 2024. [www.collateralds.com](http://www.collateralds.com)



Action scenes can be daunting, as these illustrations tend to lean on the more complex side with so many factors to consider. Developing an understanding of movement and anatomy, coupled with framing and lighting, can help bring a scene to life, even in a 2D still. Together, they can create a suspenseful atmosphere.

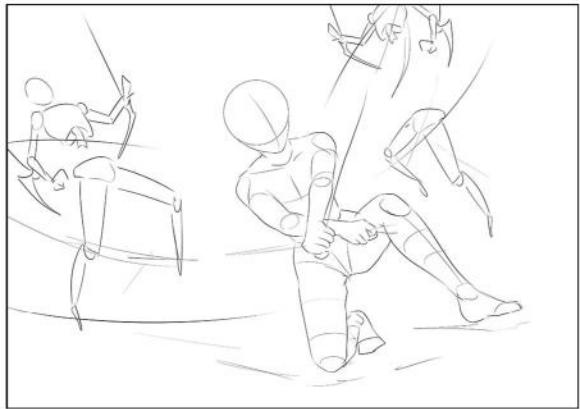
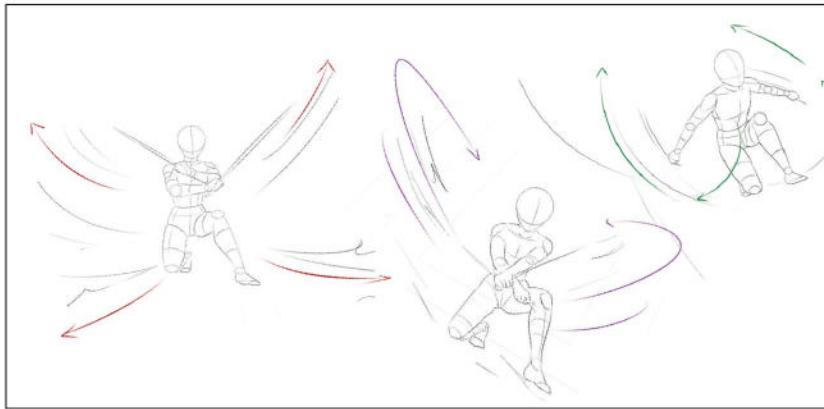
At a young age, I tried to draw a couple of action scenes, but quickly realised it was not as simple as I

thought. The character's pose had to be impactful enough, and it ended up looking lackluster and lacking any action at all. I realised I needed to study movement, and how real people or animated characters moved in battle in films, cartoons, anime or games. Breaking down the movement frame-by-frame helped me understand how the human body functioned in those scenes.

With that in mind, do note that you may need to do some posing yourself! Studying poses or watching

action scenes may be helpful, but your artwork will need a personal touch. Often we try to look for stock images online, but sometimes they don't seem to fit our needs. You can be your own best model, especially with dynamic poses as it can be tricky to find someone executing the same pose and angle you need.

This tutorial will be fun as we dive into creating a dynamic action scene. While we'll focus on a more anime art style, these tips and tricks will still apply to other art genres.

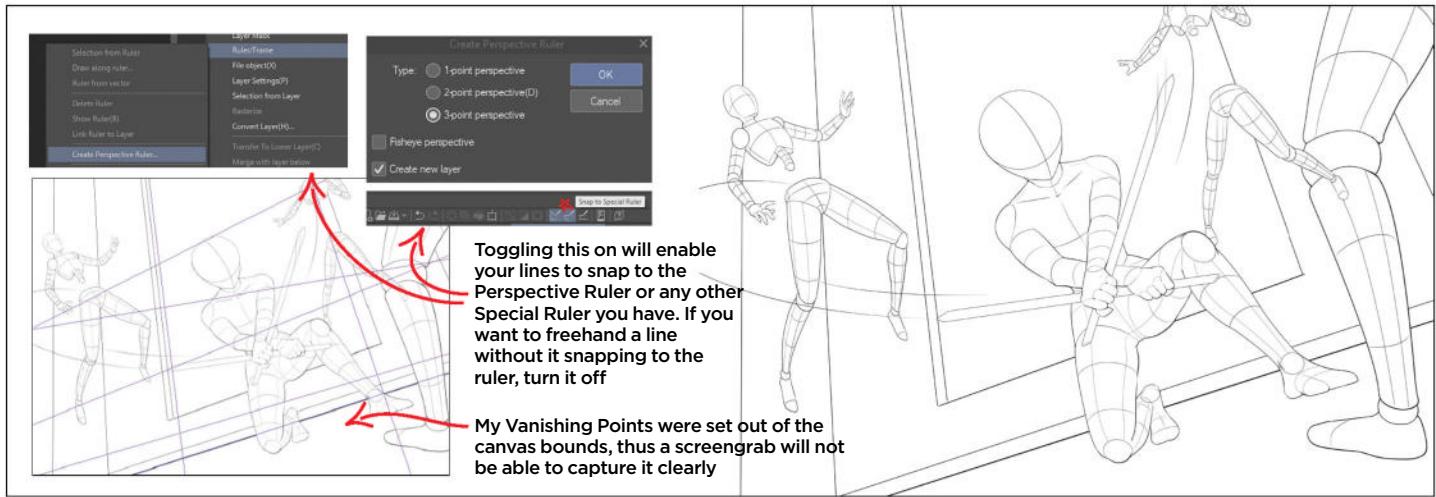


### 1 Practise your posing

Having an interesting pose is key to capturing the viewer's attention, as well as expressing the action. Most importantly you need to have a base story, scenario, or setting. Here I want to draw a dual-wielding girl fighting off some marionette enemies, so I start sketching action poses with this in mind. It's important to try a few poses to warm up and explore. For these, I use myself as a reference. With the self-timer on my phone camera, I take a photo of myself doing the action. This helps me understand the action and anatomy, and gives me a reference point.

### 2 Find the right pose

After selecting your favourite pose, start to roughly sketch the scene's other components. It's great to have an idea of what the enemies look like, as sketching a human is different from a fantasy creature. Think about how the actions of the main character affect these enemies. Are they falling back from a punch? Getting impaled by a spear? Or perhaps being sliced in half?



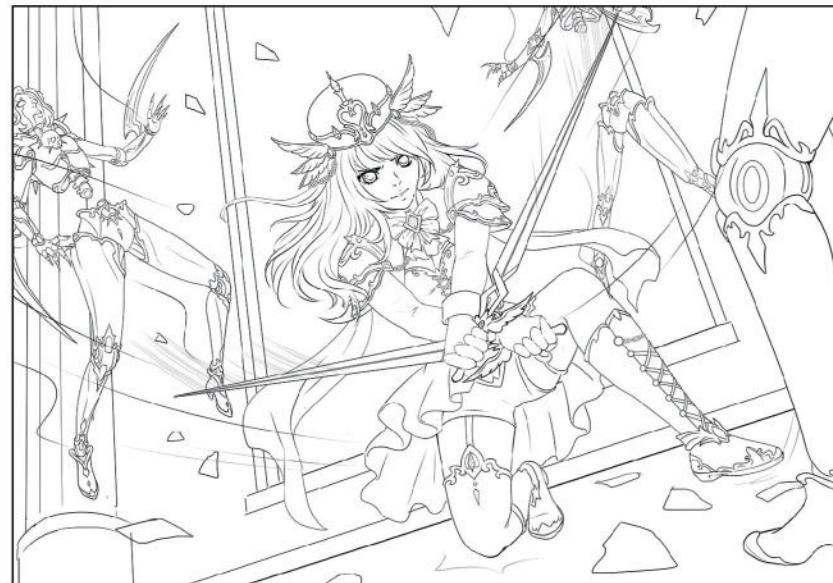
### 3 Begin to make refinements to the sketch

As this scene can be quite complicated, it's always good to refine your sketch and ensure that the anatomy and perspective work. You'll notice that I've drawn some guidelines for the bodies and cleaned up the sketchy lines to make them more readable. For the background, I utilise the Perspective Ruler in Clip Studio Paint. I do this by using the Perspective tool and then tweaking the Vanishing Points to fit my scene. In this example, I use a three-point perspective, but you can use any other option that applies to yours. Also note that while my character is leaning forward slightly, she still somewhat follows the perspective grid that I've used.



## 4 Create a base design

Now that we've drawn our pose, let's move on to basic designs for the characters. You'll want to start with simple clothing ideas before diving into any of the more complicated details such as armour trimmings. Keeping the guidelines on will also be useful to ensure the clothing follows the forms and curves of the body.



## 5 Plan out details

Once you have a clean base, you can start to add design elements onto the characters and setting. This can help convey the theme and style direction of the piece as well. I enjoy ornate details, thus I add filigree details to the armour, as well as the enemies, so they're not just plain marionettes. This is also a form of visual storytelling, as now viewers will have an idea of what the people in this setting dress like and what type of creatures may dwell in this place.



## 6 Lighting sketch

For more complex pieces, I like to do a rough lighting sketch in black and white. It doesn't need to be perfect, just a rough idea as a busy scene can become overwhelming due to the amount of elements that need painting. It's good to use this as a reference point, even if the final piece ends up looking different, as it's great to have a starting point for reference.



## 7 Flats and layer management

When it comes to filling in flat colours (or base colours) I prefer to sort them out by folder, while I also break down parts individually, particularly when I'm dealing with a lot of details. I like to keep each part organised and separate in the event that something needs to be altered. However, if you find this too much for you, the most important thing is to separate the foreground, the main focus (the character), the other background characters (if necessary), and the background itself. You don't want to have them all on one layer, as it keeps it easier to edit and move elements around, as well as add special effects between these layers. ➡

**WORKSHOP BRUSHES**

**CLIP STUDIO PAINT**

**CUSTOM BRUSHES: GLASS SHARDS BRUSH**

I used this to create glass shards, saving me time. The brush is by Chikuto. <https://bit.ly/3QO90Ju>

**DUST PARTICLES**

A handy brush to add a dusty effect. This brush is from ぱーらめんと. <https://bit.ly/3QOGCHt>

**CLOUDY BRUSH**

Helpful for background clouds and smoke. It was created by Voizel. <https://bit.ly/3QO9iQA>

# Workshops



**Ambient occlusion**



**Enhanced shadows**  
(I like to use Multiply mode on a separate layer)



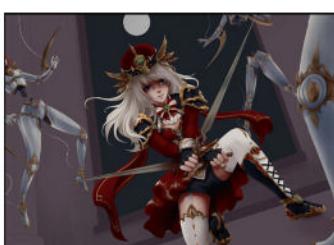
**Ambient lighting**



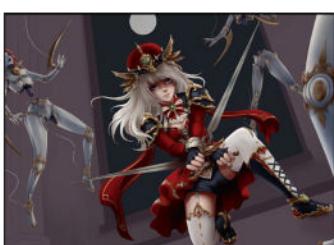
**Specular reflection**



**Special layer effects**  
(Such as Glow Dodge, or Color Dodge in Photoshop, and Soft light)



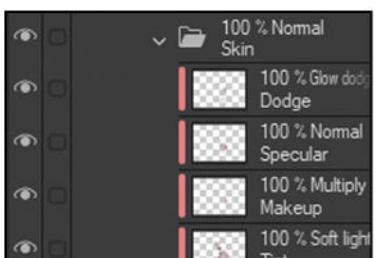
**Drop shadow and colour adjustments**



**Background shadows**

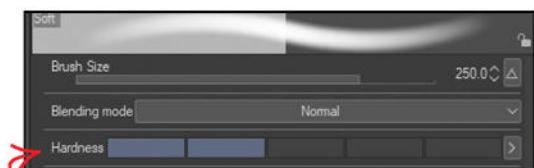
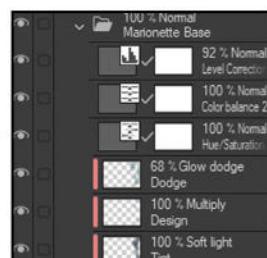


**Background lighting**



How these steps look in layers within the file

Example of colour adjustments being used for specific folders

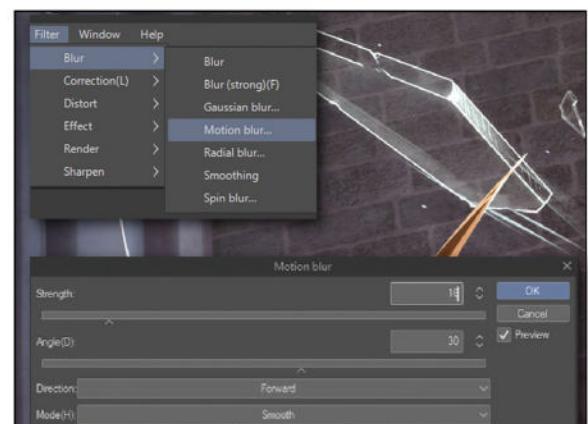
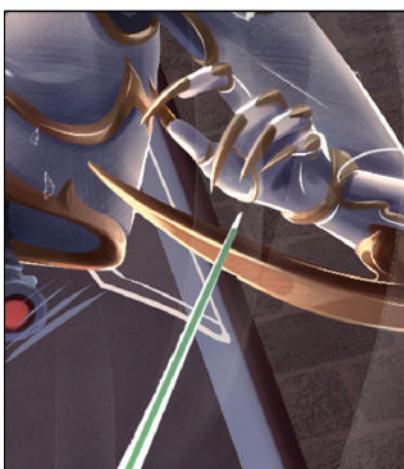
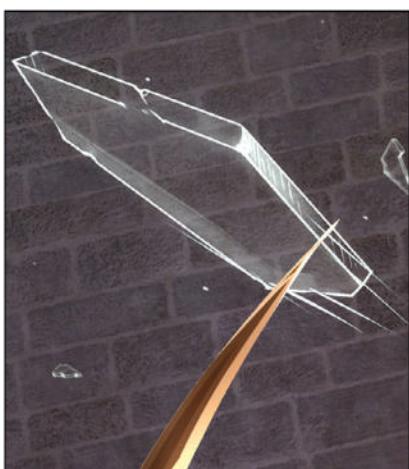


I often change the Hardness of this tool when painting, with lower Hardness when I'm doing soft gradients and maximum Hardness when I'm painting drop shadows. For specular reflection, I use the G-pen tool

## 8 Colouring process

As this tutorial focuses more on setting up the scene and adding in other effects, I won't go into too much detail about my rendering process as it can vary from person to person. This is a breakdown of my process up to this step. I tend to paint each of these steps in their

separate layers within the folder, as that is what feels best for me and aids in my work process, however please feel free to do it in your preferred method. I use mostly brushes that come with Clip Studio Paint, though I do also utilise some brushes available from Clip Studio Assets that are free to download and use.



## 9 Create the movement

To give a sense of movement, we must add motion lines. For the sword, lower the opacity of your brush and draw the movement arc. Do this quickly and fluidly, and don't worry about trying to make it perfect, as that will look stiff. Don't draw movement lines for everything, as it will look messy.

## 10 Apply Motion Blur

Now that we've drawn the basic motion lines, we can take it a step further and add some movement blur. This filter can be found by going to Filter>Blur>Motion Blur. Play around with the values and settings, as these will differ according to your illustration.



## 11 Elemental effects

Your illustration should be quite close to completion now, but I like to amp it up a little and add some elemental effects. You can go as flashy or as subtle as you like, and I'd also recommend drawing them on a new layer. I want to add some lightning bolts emitted by the swords. I do this using the G-pen, however you can find brushes that give a similar effect as well. If using the G-pen, draw in slightly jagged lines, all in one go and jerking your pen sporadically, and putting emphasis on corners to make it look more natural.



## 12 Provide glow elements

The effect doesn't quite look complete without a little glow. Duplicate the effect layer and set it to Glow Dodge, then go into Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur and set it at around 6-10 for a nice glowy effect. You can also do this for some motion lines to make the action look more interesting.



## 13 Enhance atmospheric effects

It's good to separate the foreground, midground, and background for more visual clarity and depth of field. To do this we can add some atmospheric fog by creating a layer between them and gently brushing with an airbrush set to a low opacity. In this image, I painted in some puffs of smoke and dust settling from the impact of the main character's landing.



## 14 Finish with touch-ups

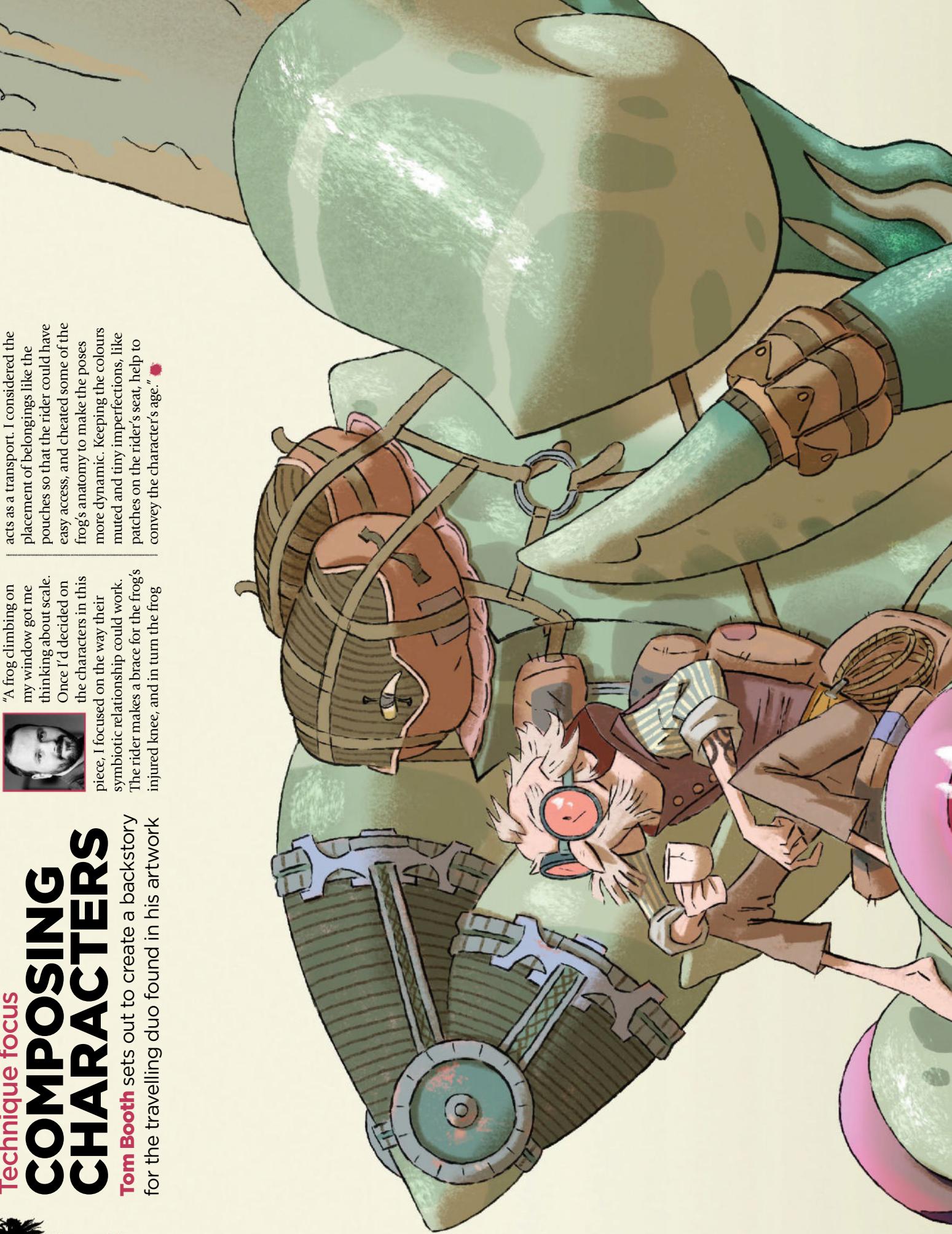
Once I'm mostly done with the image, I'll go back in to clean up more of the details and edges. I also add some particle flecks for more drama and tweak the colour balance a little. Now our dynamic action scene is complete!

"A frog climbing on my window got me thinking about scale. Once I'd decided on the characters in this piece, I focused on the way their symbiotic relationship could work. The rider makes a brace for the frog's injured knee, and in turn the frog

## COMPOSING CHARACTERS

**Tom Booth** sets out to create a backstory for the travelling duo found in his artwork

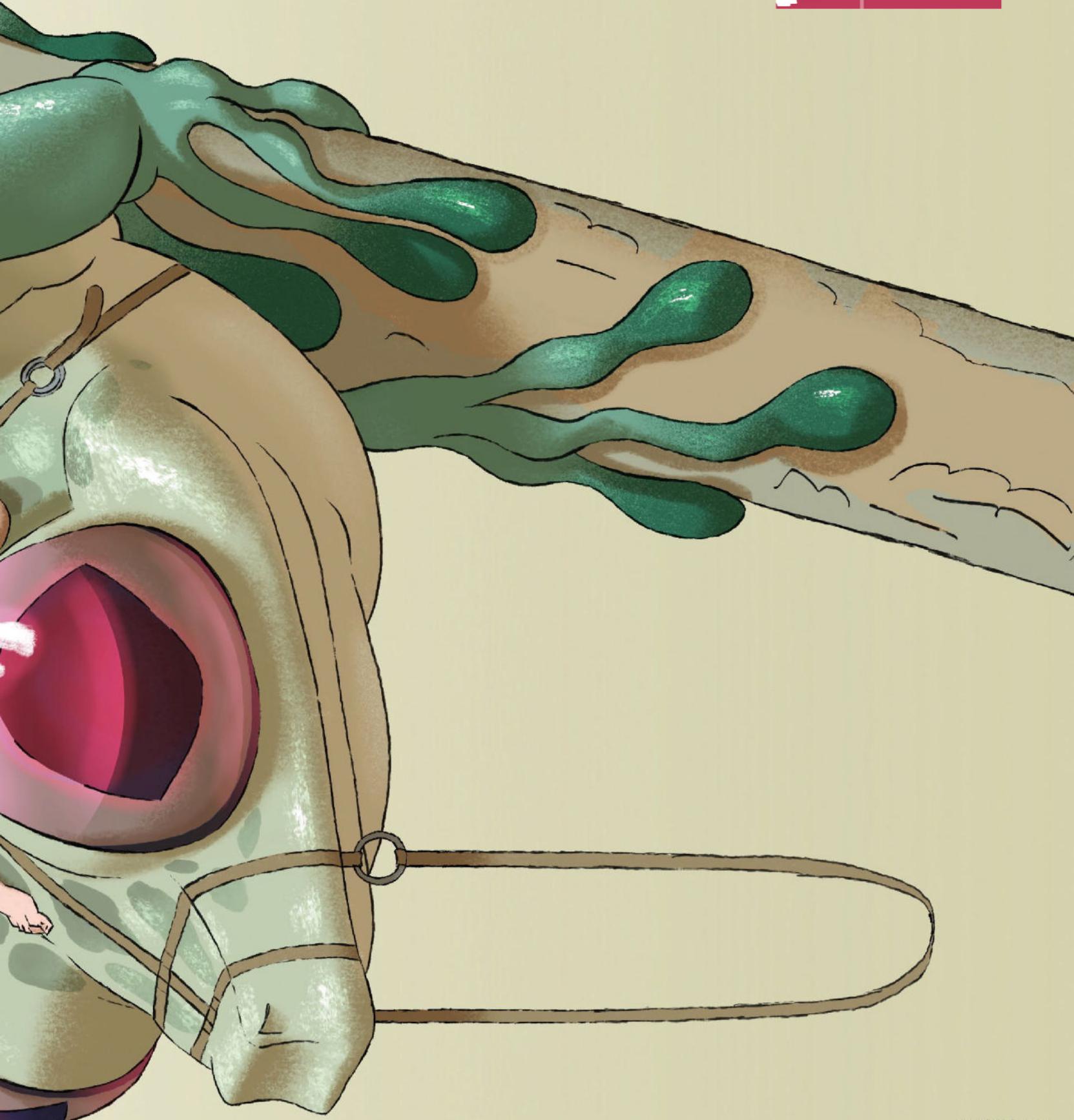
### Technique focus



acts as a transport. I considered the placement of belongings like the pouches so that the rider could have easy access, and cheated some of the frog's anatomy to make the poses more dynamic. Keeping the colours muted and tiny imperfections, like patches on the rider's seat, help to convey the character's age." 



# Tech Focus Character composition



## Artist **PROFILE**

**Tom Booth**  
LOCATION: US

Tom is a children's book author and illustrator, and a designer for TV, film and video games. He has worked with studios and publishers including DreamWorks, Supercell and Penguin. [www.tom-booth.com](http://www.tom-booth.com)

## Artist insight

# DEVELOP LIGHTING FOR CHARACTERS

**Shirley Tan** shares her expert advice on creating accurate lighting setups to bring the best out of the characters in your paintings

### Artist PROFILE

#### Shirley Tan

LOCATION: Singapore

Shirley is a graphic designer working for Collateral Damage Studios. She is also enthusiastic about anime and manga illustration and co-wrote *How to Draw Manga*, which will be published next year. Shirley has great interest in 2D and 3D design, and loves to incorporate the best of both worlds into her pipeline. [www.collateralds.com](http://www.collateralds.com)



Many artists may think of lighting as an afterthought, the icing on the cake or the cherry on top of the pie, but that cannot be further from the truth. Lighting is an essential part of any painting, and it can make or break a piece.

With lighting you can create focal points in your piece, change the

mood in a painting and help with storytelling. Lighting can direct the viewer's eyes to the important parts of the painting you want them to focus on, bringing their attention to the story you want to communicate. It also affects the overall colour tone of your painting and with that, helps to set the mood and atmosphere necessary to support the narrative behind your artwork.

We can study lighting examples from screenshots of our favourite movies, stunning photography and animated films. When studying a screenshot, look out for the light sources, light direction and light intensity, and how it guides the eye to the subject. We can also reference the colour and tone, and see how these colours affect the mood and atmosphere of the scene.



### 1 STUDY REFERENCES

Choose a good reference for lighting, which affects the overall colours and mood of your painting. Study the reference well and make sure to note where the light is coming from. Common light sources are the Sun, or artificial lighting like lamps and digital screens. We must always light the scene in the same direction, so the shadows should always reach the same way.

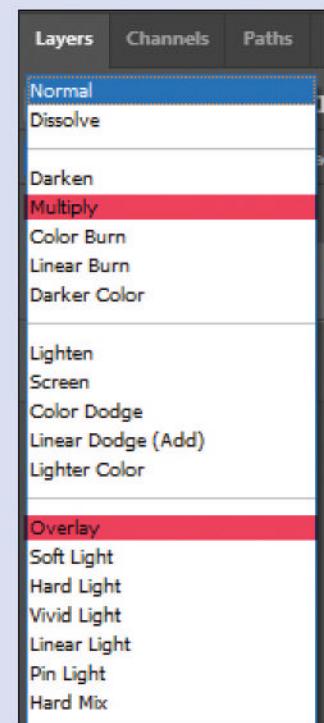
“With lighting you can create focal points, change the mood in a painting and help with your storytelling”



### 2 THINK ABOUT REFLECTIONS

Study how the materials in your reference reflect the light sources around them. For example, metal materials would reflect light more, whereas a wooden material would reflect light less.

# Artist insight Character lighting



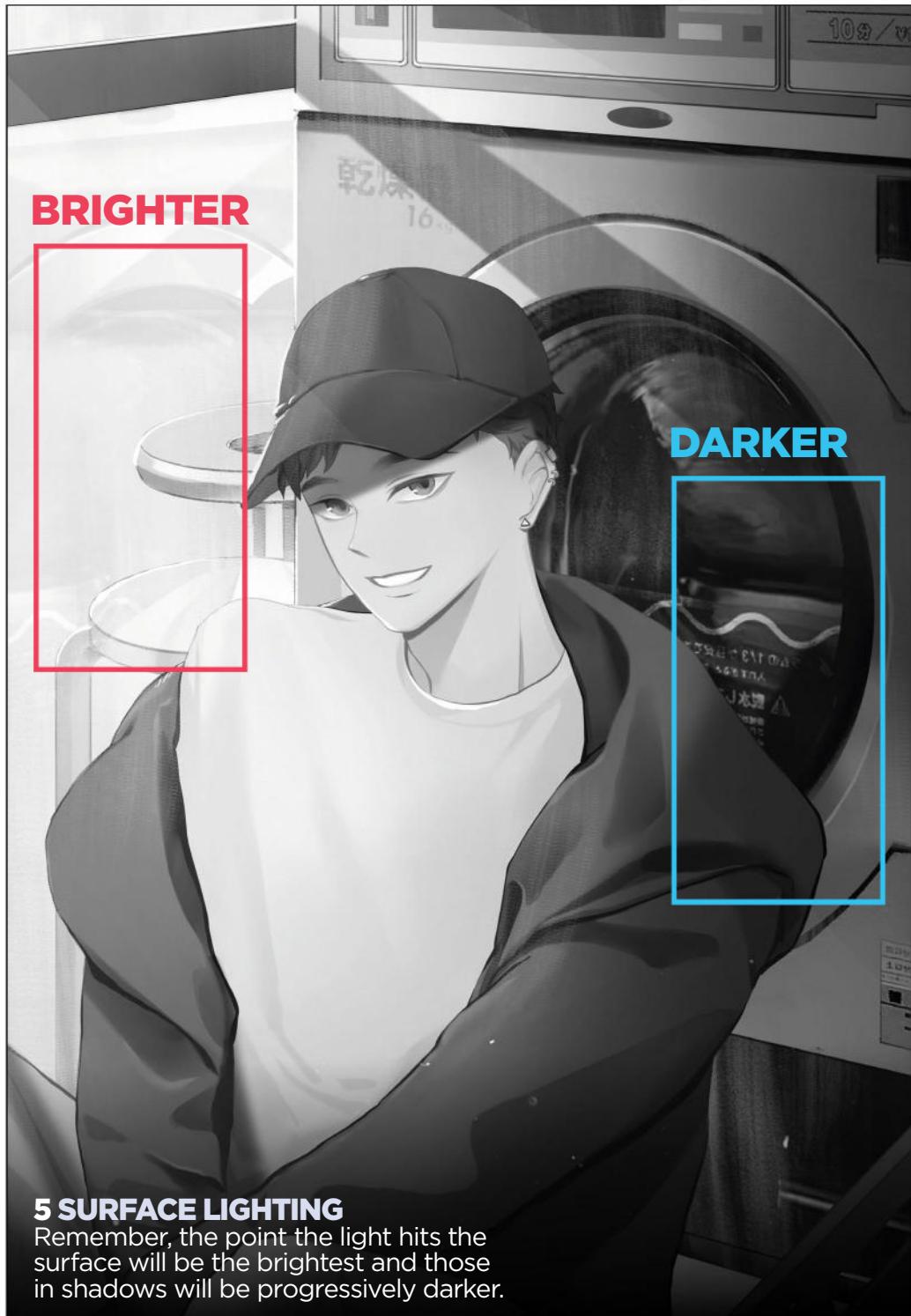
## 3 BLEND MODES

Use various Blending modes to paint in the lights and shadows. For example, you can use Overlay mode to paint in the lights and Multiply mode to paint in the darker shadows.



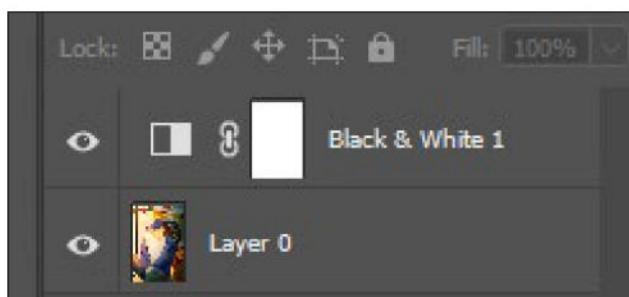
## 4 CHECK YOUR VALUES

Check the black and white values of your painting often to make your work stand out more. Try to make more contrast at the focal point.



## 5 SURFACE LIGHTING

Remember, the point the light hits the surface will be the brightest and those in shadows will be progressively darker.



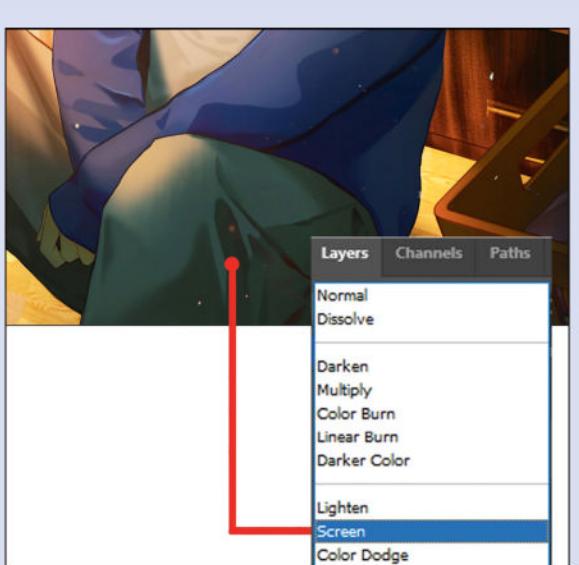
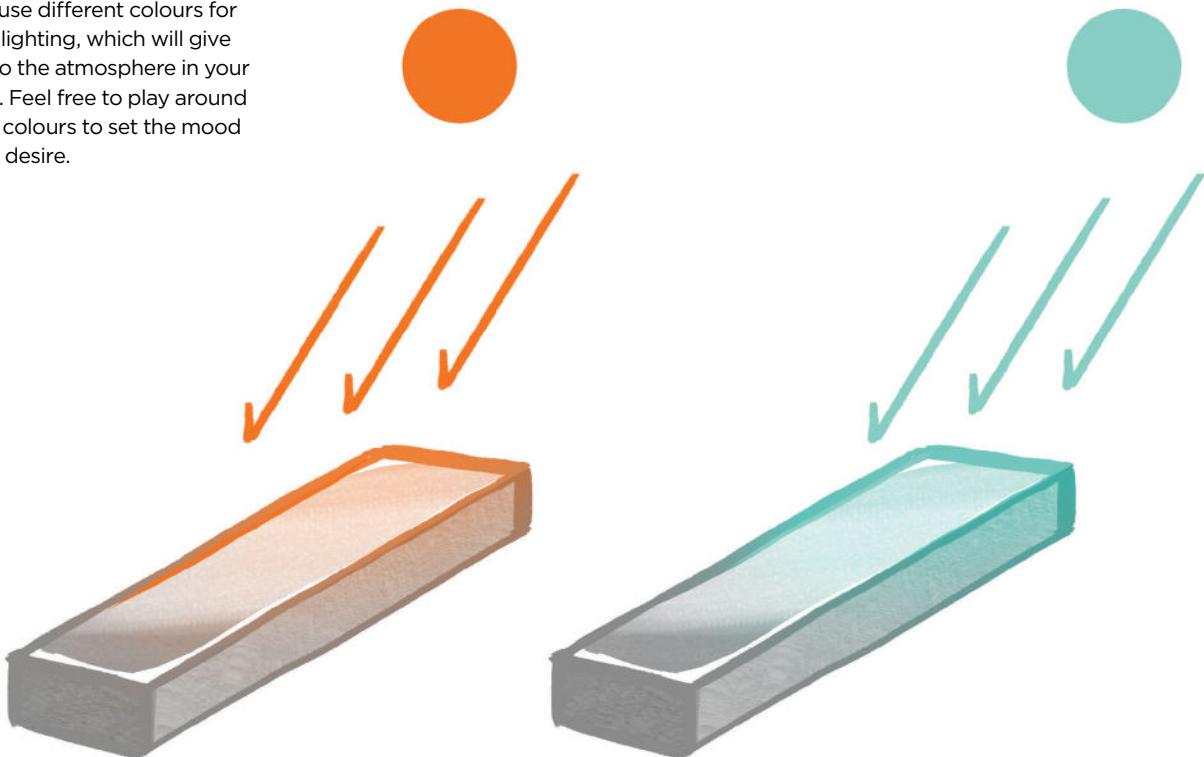
## 6 ADJUSTMENT LAYER

There are various ways to check the black and white value. My preferred way is to create a new Adjustment layer on top of your painting, and select Black & White from the dropdown option. Leave this at the top of all your layers, and turn the Adjustment layer on and off to frequently check on your values. ➡

# Workshops

## 7 PLAY WITH COLOUR

We can use different colours for artificial lighting, which will give variety to the atmosphere in your painting. Feel free to play around with the colours to set the mood that you desire.



## 8 ADD ATMOSPHERE

To create an atmospheric effect, especially for indoor environments, we can try to add dust particles with a spray brush, and put it on Lighten or Screen mode. This also helps to separate the elements from each other and your character to stand out more.



## 9 NIGHT LIGHT

The lighting in night-time scenes relies heavily on the use of artificial light sources, of course. In this painting, our primary light source is coming from the glow of the machines in the laundrette.

## 10 DIFFERENT LIGHTING SETUPS

Discover how to experiment with various lighting scenarios to create a range of moods from your initial image



### A Base image

To begin with, let's create the base image. Start out simple and create your painting in ambient lighting first. We don't want to introduce any strong light sources at this point in our process.



### B Afternoon sunlight

For the piece in afternoon lighting, I decided to bring in the sunlight through the windows. The late afternoon sunlight will elongate the shadows and bathe this piece in an orangey-gold glow.



### C Evening moonlight

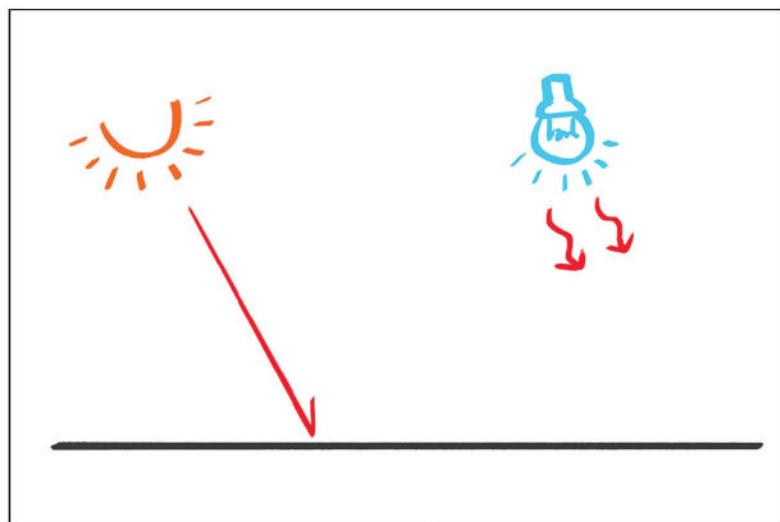
We can also transform this ambiently lighted laundrette into a creepy piece at night. I introduced weak lighting from the artificial lights from the machines and the dark moonlit streets outside the window.



### 11 LIGHT RAYS

For extra atmospheric effect, we can add rays of light filtering in from the window, which is currently the main light source.

“The late afternoon sunlight will elongate the shadows and bathe this piece in an orangey-gold glow”

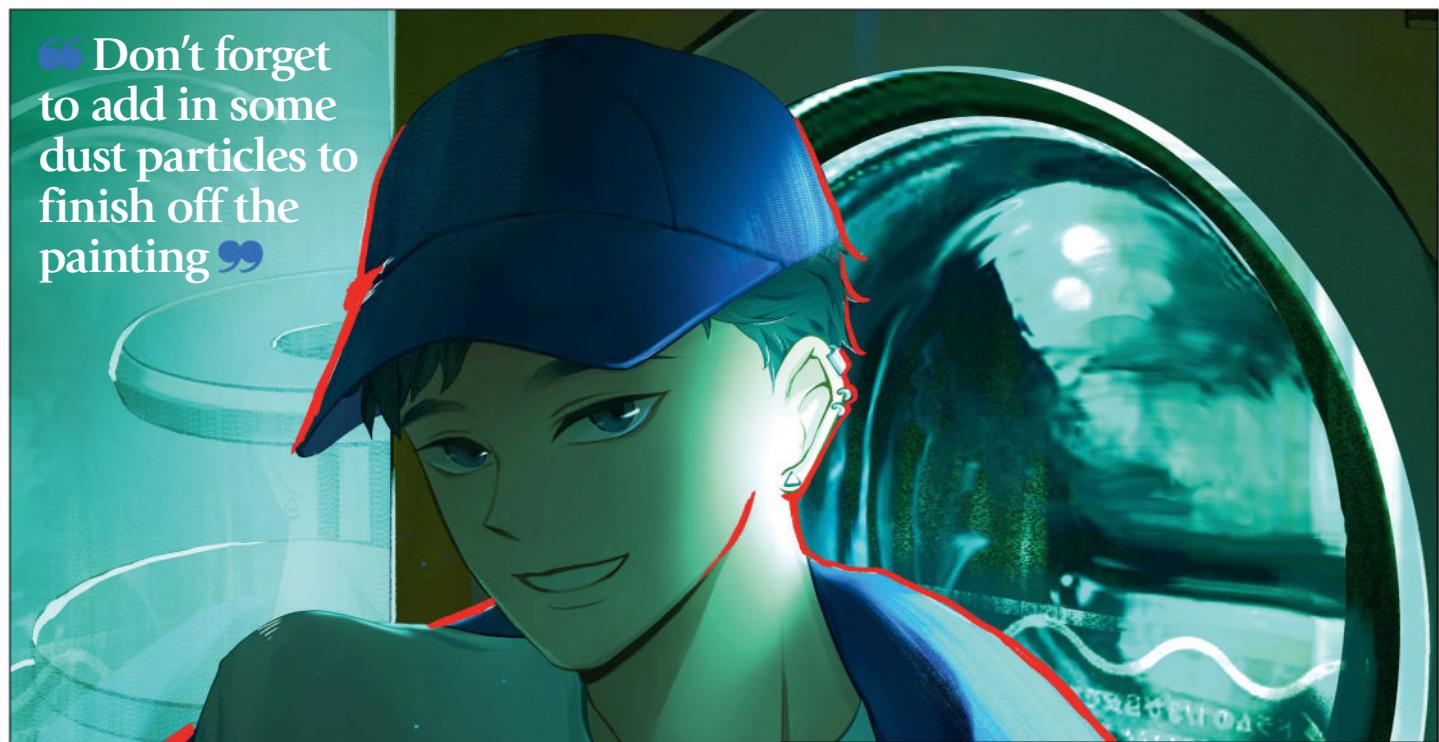


### 12 NATURAL VS ARTIFICIAL

Artificial lighting doesn't affect a large area in comparison to the sunlight, so you'll need to remember not to light a large part of the environment from the beginning. The parts of the environment that aren't affected by the soft glow should still be shrouded by the shadows. ➡

# Workshops

“Don’t forget to add in some dust particles to finish off the painting”



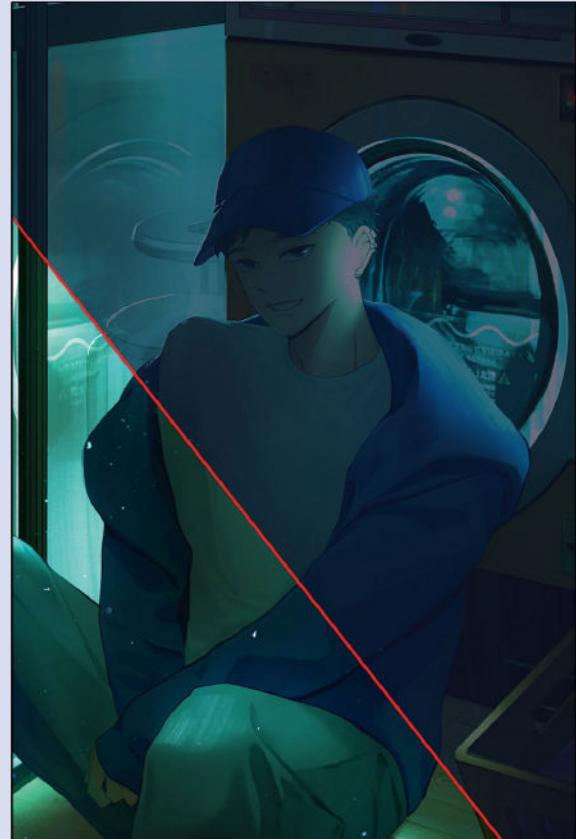
## 13 ADD RIM LIGHTS TO YOUR CHARACTER

As the night-time character is mostly back-lit, don't forget to add rim lights. This will help your character stand out against the background. The colour of the rim lights can be the same as your artificial lighting.



## 14 SPOOKY SCENE

For this painting, I'm trying to explore a creepy vibe, so I'll steer clear of making the artificial lighting come out too strongly. Here you can see the black and white value comparison for the day (left) and night (right).



## 15 MOONLIGHT AND DUST

Although we don't have sunlight in the scene, we'll still have weak moonlight filtering in from the window. And don't forget to add in some atmospheric dust particles to finish off the painting.

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# Workshops



## Technique focus

# VARY DETAIL

**Shannon Hallstein** reveals how she guides her audience to focal points



"In this piece I wanted to tell a story and direct the viewer's eye using both light and colour. I researched my subject, then sketched out some thumbnail compositions before taking one of them from Procreate to Photoshop. Here I started painting by blocking in colours, and carefully

adding details once I was happy with the values and shapes. When adding detail, I concentrate it where I want the audience to look, surrounding the focal point with enough value variation to be interesting. Leaving areas around the focal point more suggestive gives the audience an opportunity to focus where you most want them to look."



### Artist PROFILE

**Shannon Hallstein**  
LOCATION: US

Shannon has been a visual development artist and character designer working in animation for five years across multiple well-known studios, including DreamWorks, Warner Bros., and Walt Disney Animation Studios.  
<https://bit.ly/3E46IP7>

# Photoshop FLESH OUT YOUR CREATURE ART

The Gnomon Workshop's **Kyle Brown** shares his workflow for adding weapons, props and more to your characters



## Artist PROFILE

### Kyle Brown

LOCATION: US

Kyle is a concept artist living and working in Los Angeles. He also serves as an instructor with the Gnomon School of VFX, Games and Animation, as well as the College for Creative Studies, which is based in Detroit.

<https://bit.ly/44JxcjH>



Today we're going to be adding costumes, armour and weaponry to a creature design. The point of this

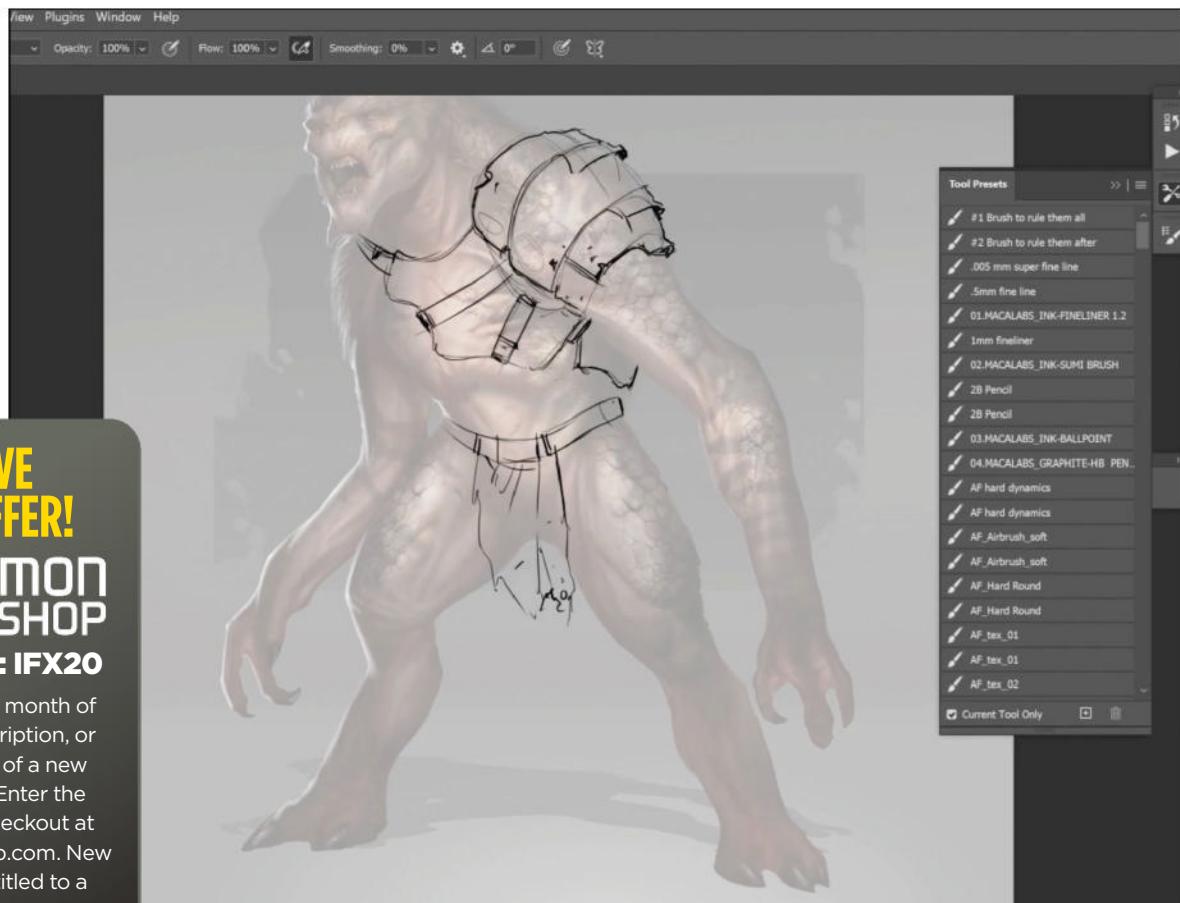
process is that we want a character, or really a creature that is a character, to have a bit of a personality and some brains to them. We want to

show that this isn't just this wild beast, there's some semblance of intelligence, so it uses weapons and props, and dresses itself in clothing and armour for protection.

This is a great way to tell extra story and convey more character in your design. And to me, once you have the initial creature blocked out,

it's this fun, additional layer that you can work up alongside your design to get even further iterations out.

We'll use a variety of layers, brushes and techniques to build the items, which will give us something much more complete and believable in terms of the character and their narrative journey.



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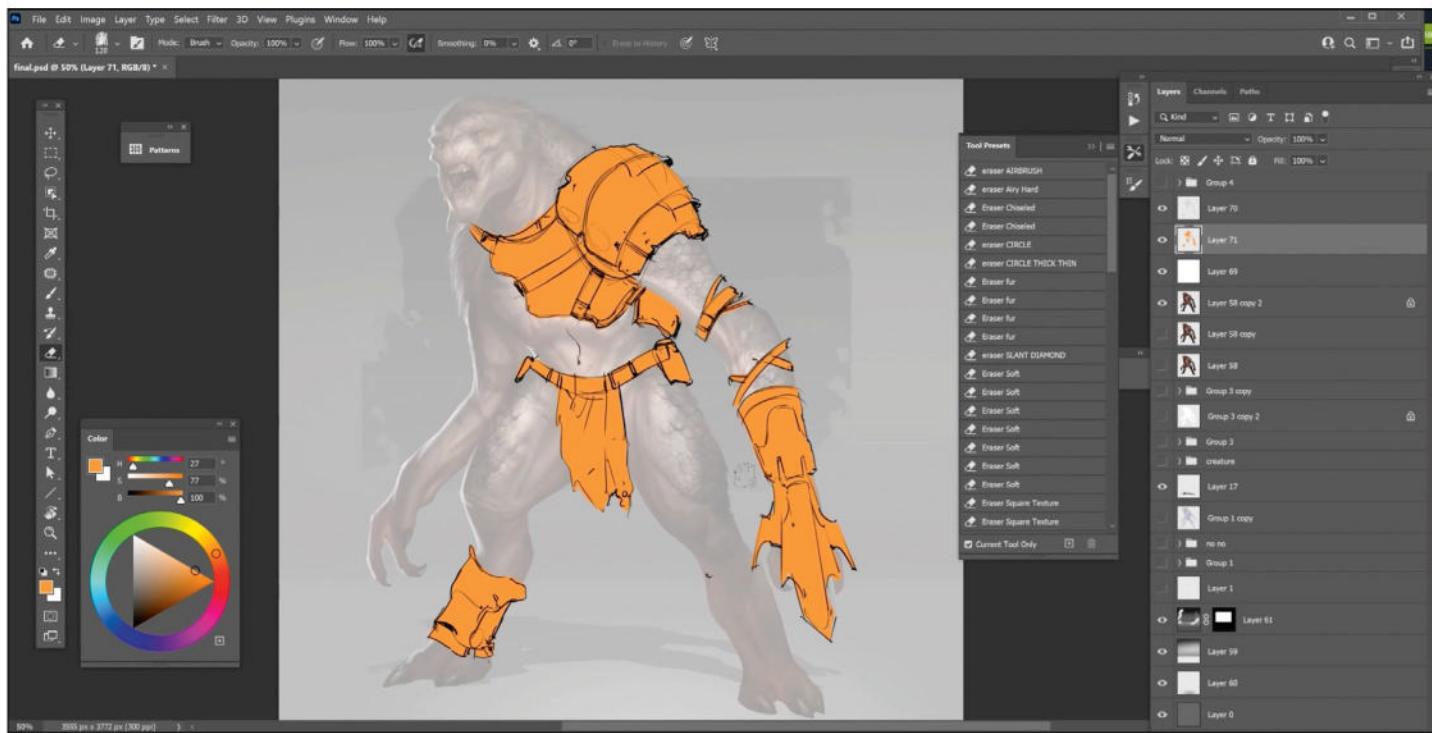
For help, contact [support@thegnomonworkshop.com](mailto:support@thegnomonworkshop.com).

### 1 Create initial form lines

First off you need to establish the shapes of the armour and get the cuts in the plates or the leather straps. They will serve as form lines that help reinforce the directionality of those shapes and the form as a whole. You have to be deliberate with the placement of those lines and make sure that these areas you're dressing feel like they're actually enveloping or sitting on top of the creature. ➤

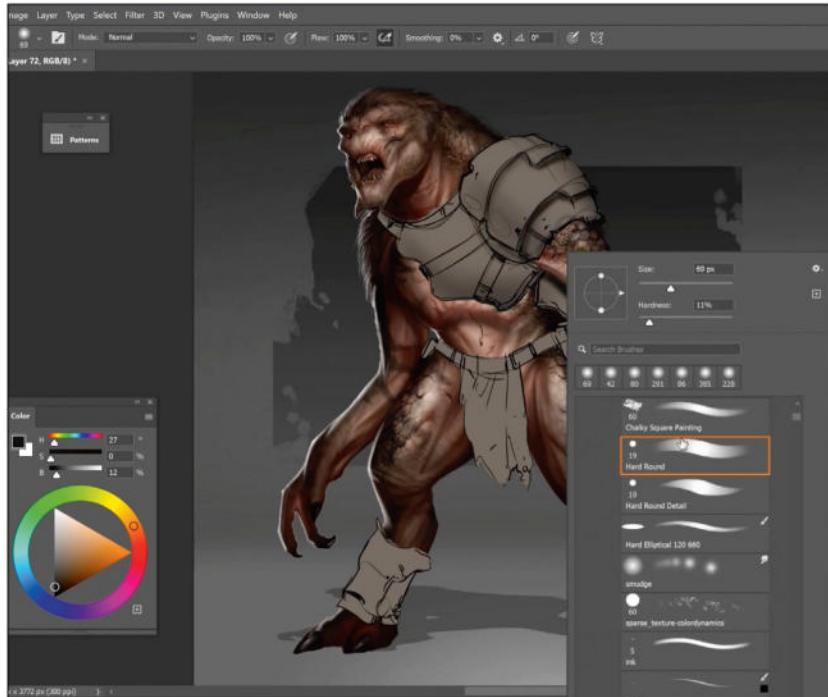


# Workshops



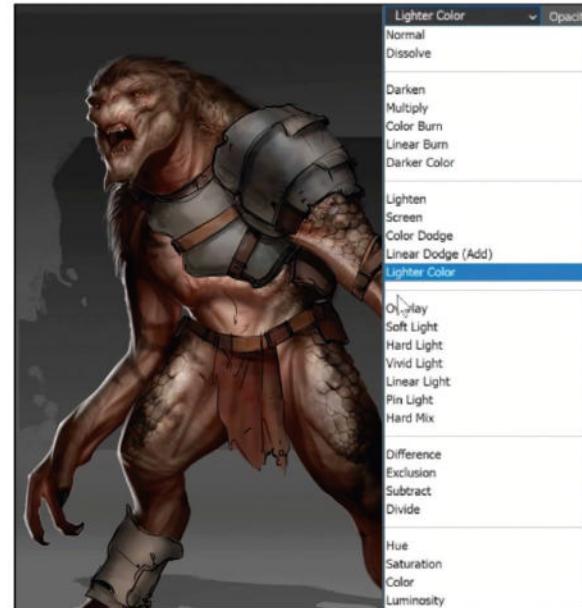
## 2 Make silhouettes to use as a guide

Now you want to colour blockout the areas so you can quickly identify where you've painted or not. It's similar to the flattening process in comic book illustration, or for those of you that work in 3D and utilise clown passes or material ID passes, you can do that and then grab selections from there. This is more so I can have a clean silhouette to work with as I paint, because it's going to be an organic, fluid process.



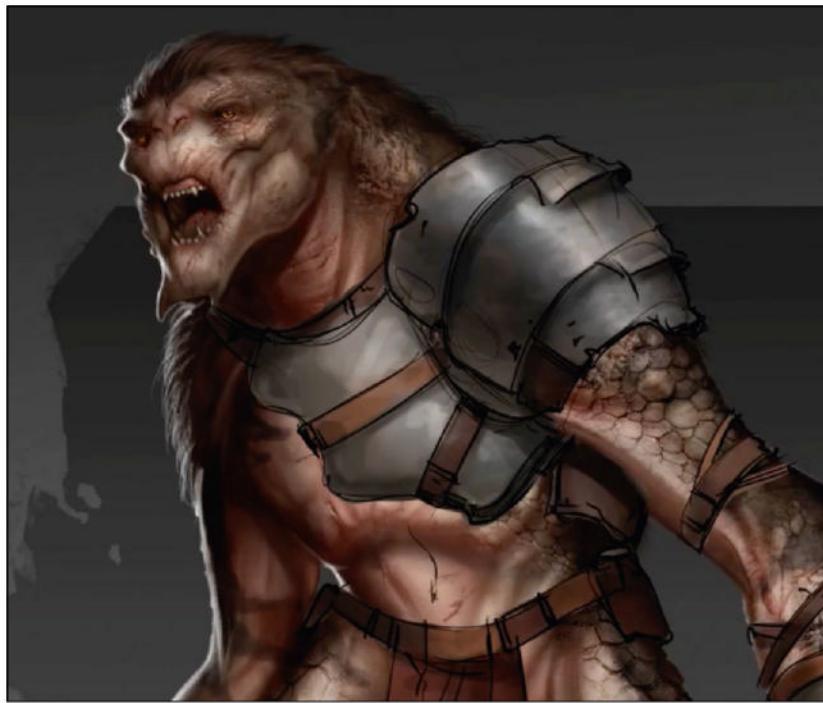
## 3 Initial painting

Desaturate the values and create a Multiply layer set on top of, or a clipping mask attached to, that base layer and just go in and render out some of the shadows. You can do this with an Overlay layer as well if you'd like to handle both your shadows and highlights on the same layer, but this is a bit more of an organic process and with it being the metal, I can go in here and just quickly blockout these forms. Use a brown brush and smudge it to give more texture to the natural elements and chunkier brush strokes to fill in the metallic areas.



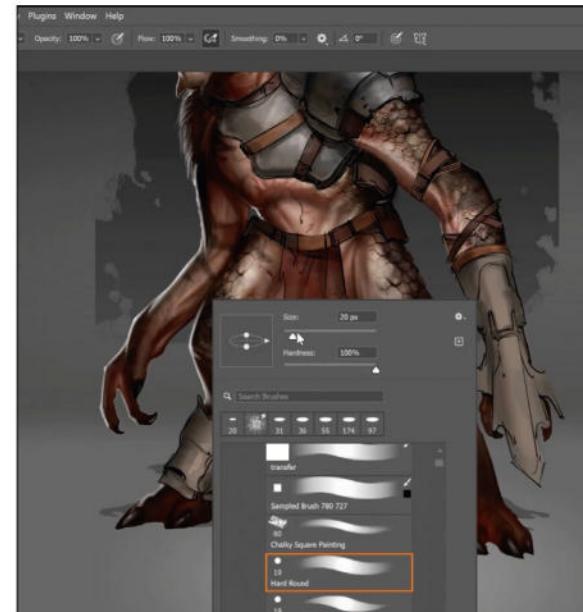
## 4 Secondary forms

Now I want to describe some of the secondary forms in terms of the leather straps. I do that by just locking the active pixels so I can quickly block over what was already established. I'm also thinking about the harmony of the material, the choice of material and the colour. You can either contrast it by doing something extreme, getting that break in-between what the material is and what the creature itself is, or you can harmonise it a bit more. I want this to feel like science fiction or a goblin; it's this almost predatory creature.



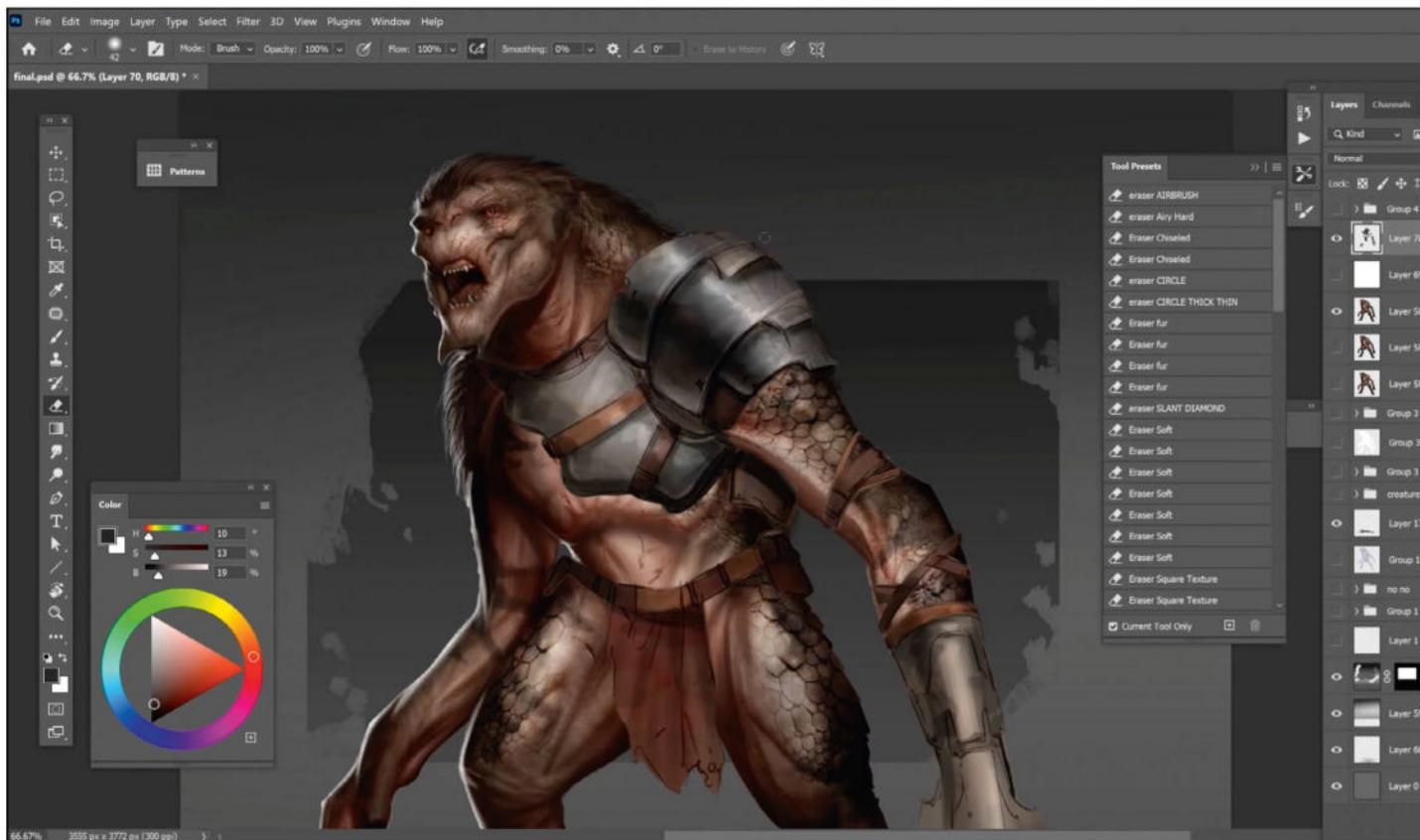
## 5 Natural materials

For the more natural materials like the red loincloth, I'll quickly wash over with some different, natural tones to get that break-up in an opaque hue. I'm not worried about being too precise. With the metal, I'm putting in some blues while washing in warmer tints to get those variations in this imperfect surface.



## 6 Add definition

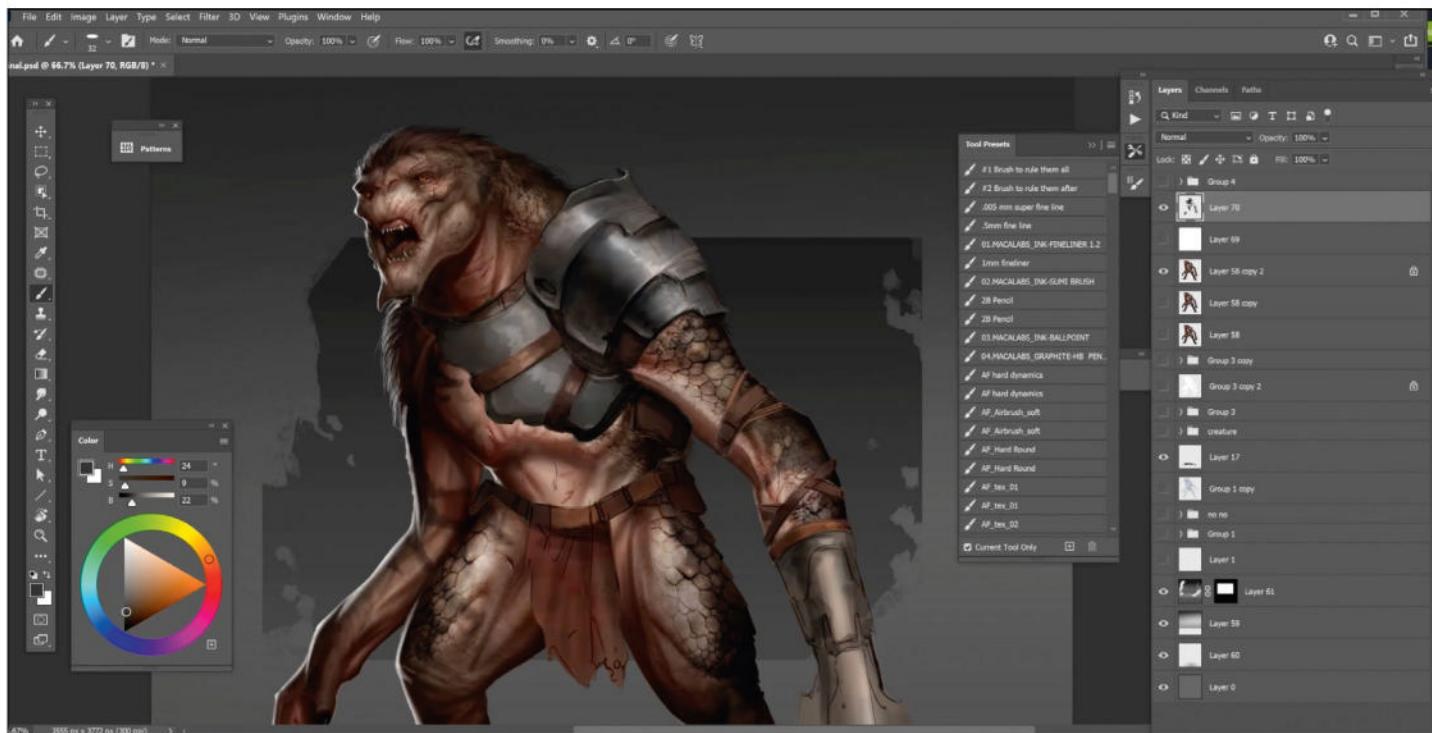
Continue now to rendering over the top. I want to get those chromatic shifts in that give the metal that natural flair, so in an Overlay layer I'm going to do some embellishing. It's the same thing; rough in the approach here, and using a brushstroke back and forth to get this chiselled aesthetic, this hammered metal, to show that it's not a perfect-looking surface.



## 7 Take a step back to consider your approach

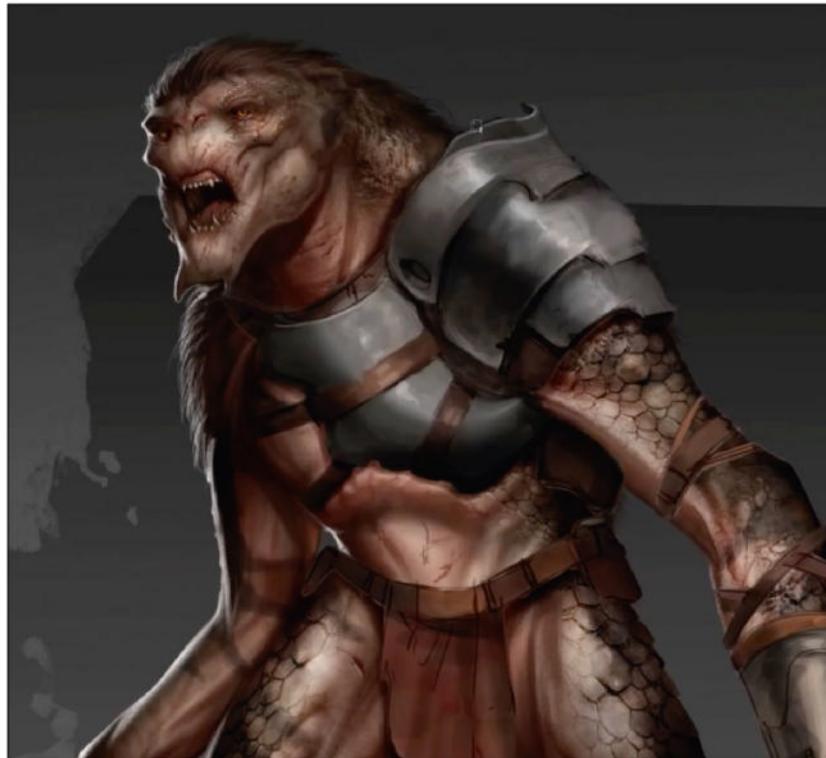
We've now removed almost all of the initial line work. Some artists want to maintain more of a painterly aesthetic in their work, but you can choose to either bring those lines back in or not. Alternatively, you can work with opacity to balance between the two. ➔

# Workshops



## 8 Cement your chosen style

When you're trying to establish a design language for something that's supposed to feel alien and from beyond Earth, it can be tricky to come up with elements that feel relatable to the audience. In this case I wanted both an alien and medieval look, so I introduced leather seams that bind everything together and make it more believable. They give it that extra touch that starts to feel a little alien or exotic too.



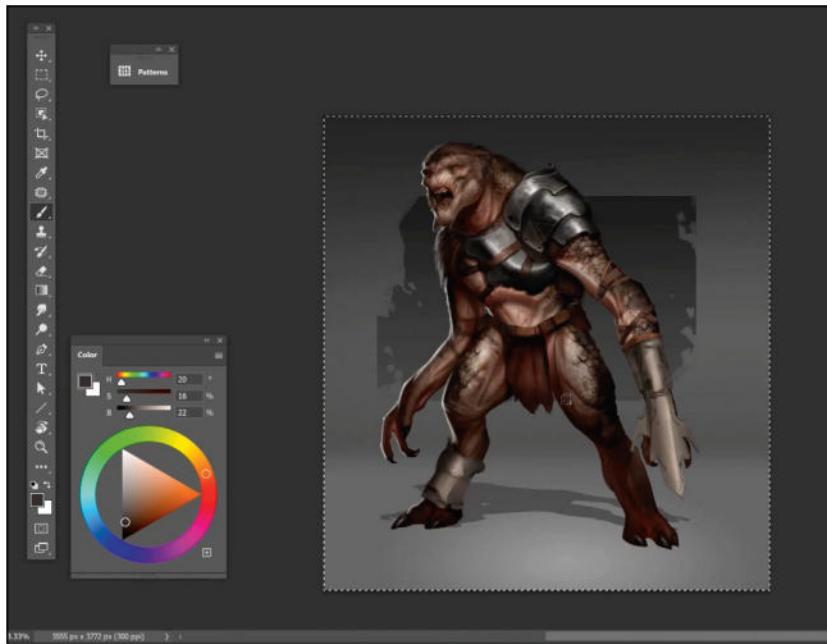
## 9 Shadows and highlights

Introducing darker areas that act as shadows between the armour and the creature is key. To do this you'll want to make sure you know where your light sources are. The smaller the shadow, the closer the object is to the creature and vice versa. Also remember that highlights on the armour following the shape and form appropriately are vital for creating shape.



## 10 Signs of wear and tear

On an Overlay layer I can work in brighter and darker areas. I want to include some battle bruises in the armour to show where it has been dented and busted. Whether it took a laser blaster or just blunt trauma to the armour, introducing these details adds real life to the story. Breaking up the specular read will help to show how the metallic surface has been affected in battle.



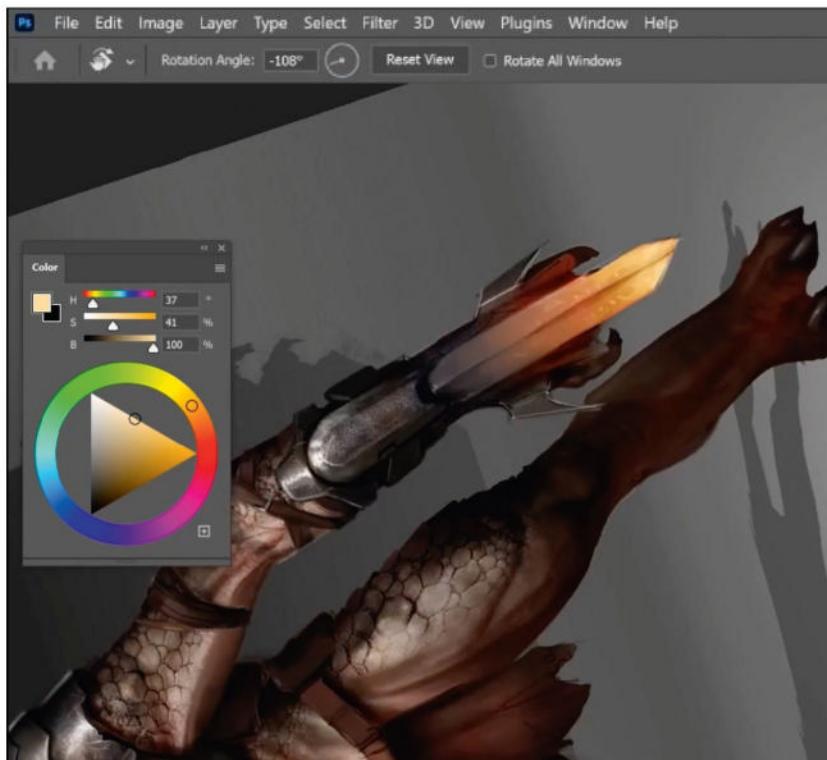
## 11 Define edges to bring contrast

You'll want to make sure you're getting that contrast between what's metallic and what is the organic tissue of the creature itself. There's a tendency to use big, giant brushstrokes that can often feel soft. So what I'm trying to go through and do is chisel out some of these edges, even if graphically just to go back in and catch some of these rivets and divots in the surface with sharper, more aggressive lines, a few scratches, and some edge highlights.



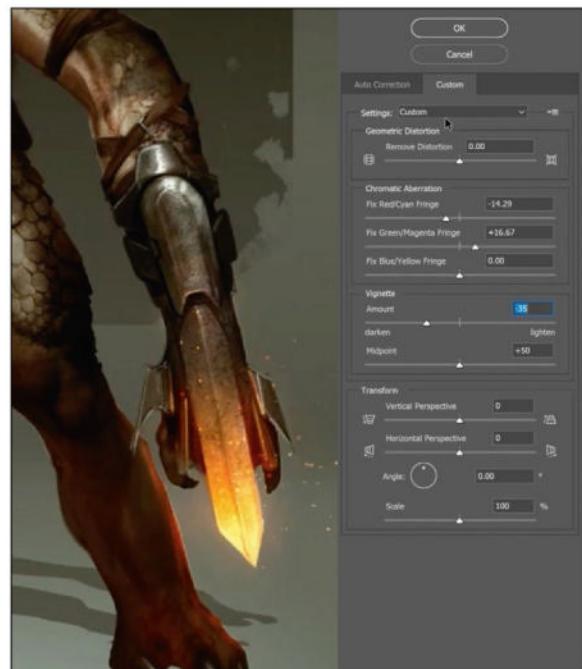
## 12 Consider it as a whole

After working on your piece for a while, you might find it's hard to have the energy to continue. So for me, I try my best to just step back for a second and start to think about it as a whole new design. Yes, it's on this creature that I've been working on. And yes, it has to work smoothly with what I've already established, or what I'm trying to think about. Is it a design as a whole? But the element that's sitting on top can't be lesser than the overall piece, because it will detract from what I'm trying to achieve and can fall apart.



## 13 Rotate the canvas

To help with the brushstrokes, I'm using the hotkey 'R' to rotate the canvas. It's an invaluable tool when you're working on an illustration, as you can rotate around and get the best angle to work on whatever shape you're looking for. But ultimately it just comes down to observation here, and with a normal layer you can paint opaquely based on the references that you've gathered.



## 14 Final details

I've created an ignited blade that adds some lovely visual interest. At this stage it doesn't have anything to do with blend modes or other technical options; whatever gets you the desired effect is the way it works. For me here, I might want to wash a colour in, but it's about observation because we might have the darkness of the blade, but then almost a semi-translucency as the blade heats up and becomes ignited.

# Workshops



## Technique focus

### LAY DOWN 3D FOUNDATIONS

**Max Liu** walks through the worldbuilding process as he develops a sci-fi scene ready for paintover



"In this worldbuilding concept project, lands are shrouded with poisonous gases and survivors take shelter in the highlands. Using this setting, I came up with keywords for my hero character's base: post-apocalyptic, functional, and aircraft.

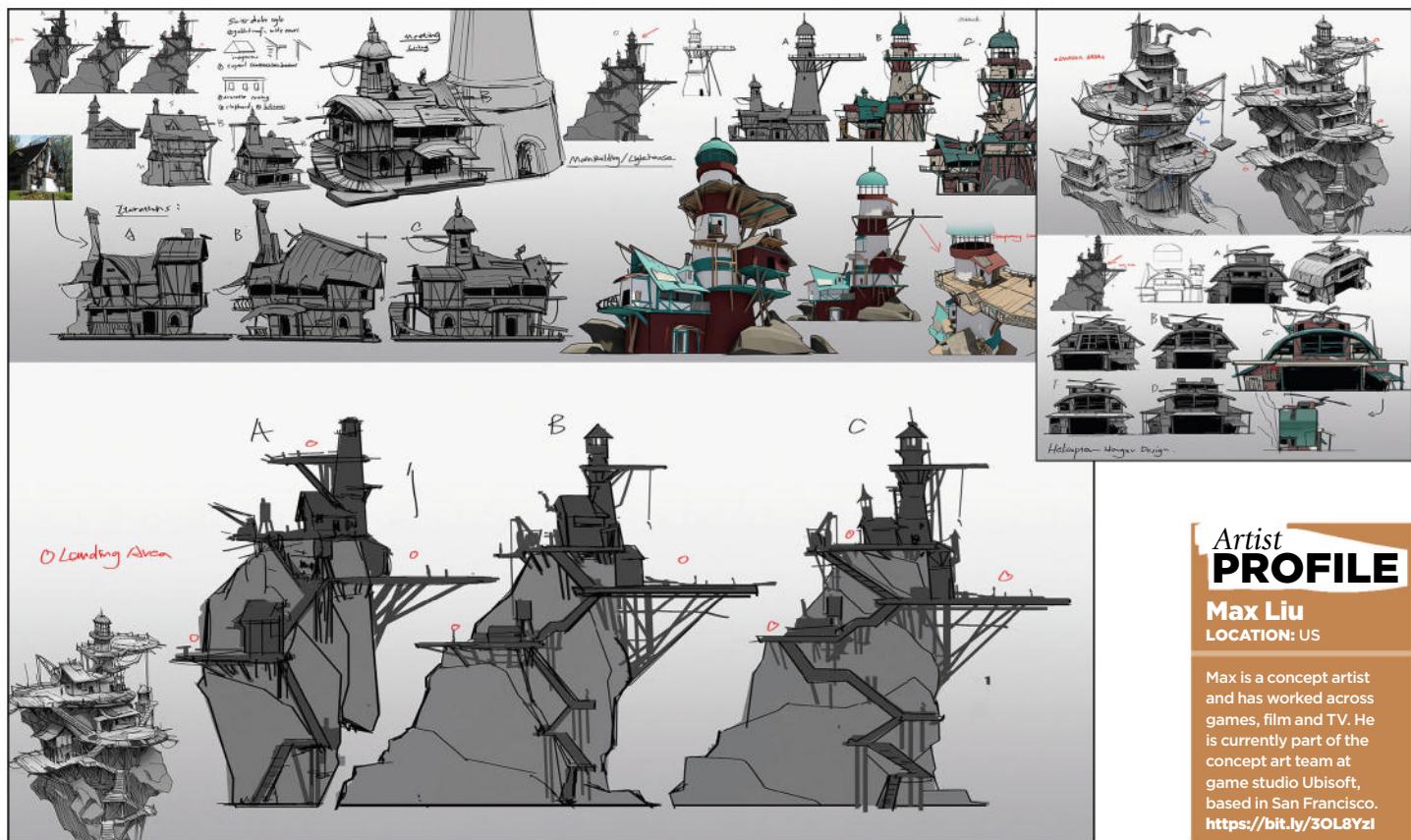
I started sketching ideas for the home base, which needed to be on a mountain with enough vertical space

to land an aircraft. I then modelled and textured the whole scene in Blender to get a rough 3D base for the paintover.

In these shots, the camera follows the hero's path as they approach the landing area, which provides the audience a clear look at the world from their point of view. I chose yellow, red and teal as the main colour palette as it gives the scene a positive and refreshing vibe."



# Tech Focus 3D foundations

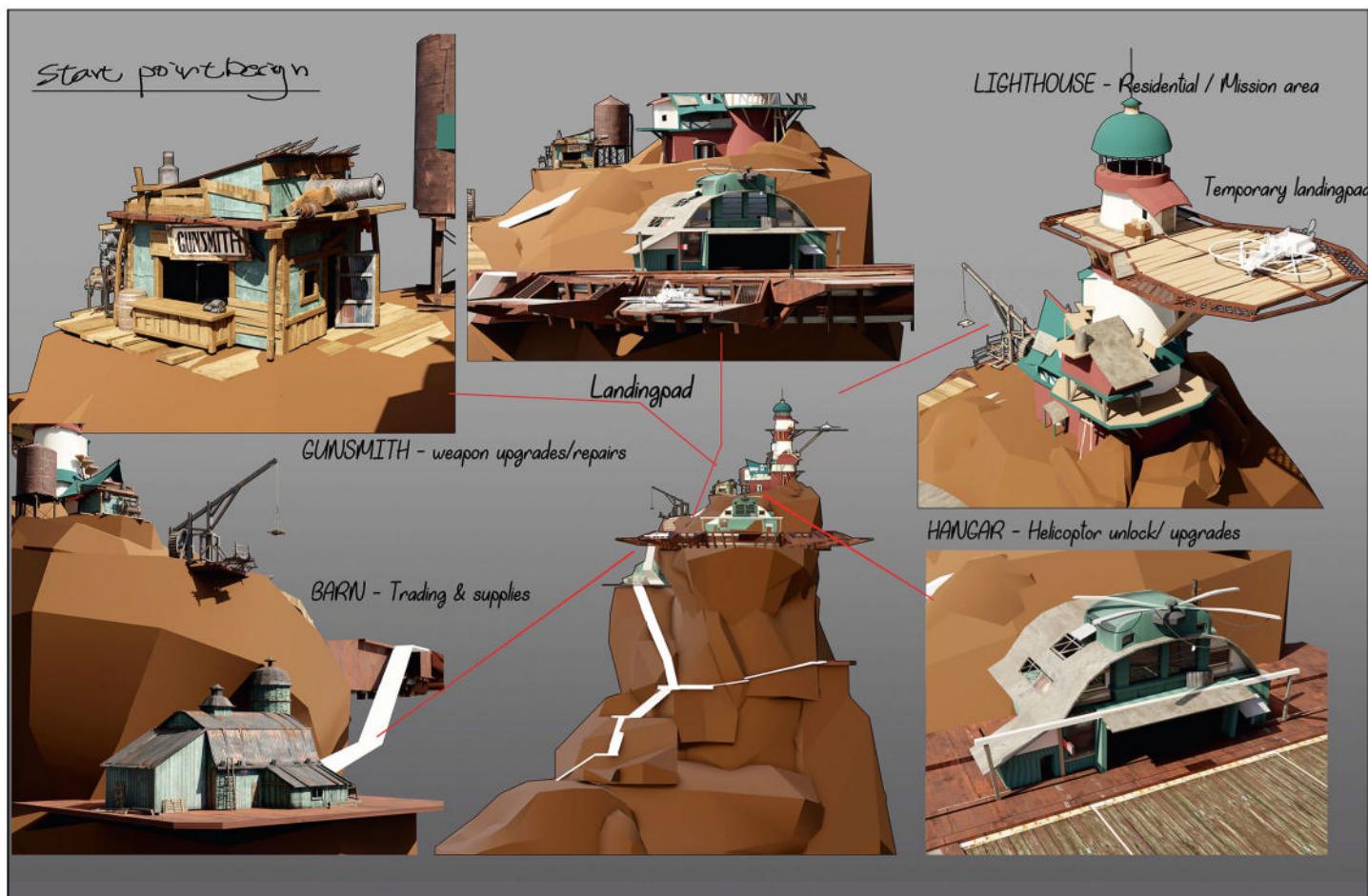


## Artist PROFILE

**Max Liu**

LOCATION: US

Max is a concept artist and has worked across games, film and TV. He is currently part of the concept art team at game studio Ubisoft, based in San Francisco.  
<https://bit.ly/3OL8YzI>



## Krita

# LEARN TO BUILD DRAMATIC LIGHT



Comic illustrator **Toby Willsmer** explains his techniques for creating standout lighting and shadows in your illustrations

### Artist PROFILE

**Toby Willsmer**

**LOCATION:**  
New Zealand

Toby is a freelance illustrator in the comic and publishing worlds. His work is known for its vibrancy and dynamics. [www.willsmer.com](http://www.willsmer.com)



In this workshop I'll be focusing on some of the techniques I use for adding dramatic lighting and shadows.

In this illustration I really wanted these elements to be key, and I'll be guiding you through the steps that I usually take when working on this type of composition.

We'll start from the early sketching stages, all the way through to the completed illustration. This includes some post colour adjustments to

help make your finished illustration pop off the page.

I'll be explaining what to keep in mind such as light sources, and lighting figures and surroundings when drawing and painting them. We'll also be looking at shadows and how to use them for storytelling and movement in your artwork.

For this piece, I'll be using the painting software Krita and will explain the default brushes I used for this illustration, and how to give the finished piece extra life using a filter

layer. Almost all of my work is figurative-based and having a basic understanding of anatomy will really help you when it comes to adding dramatic lighting to enhance figures.

Whether you're a beginner or honing your skills. Concentrating on the early drawing and blocking stages will really help you to achieve the right balance of light and dark in your composition. This practice will greatly benefit you when you begin to paint your illustrations. Okay, so let's get stuck in!

### WORKSHOP BRUSHES

#### KRITA

##### DEFAULT BRUSHES: BRISTLES-3 LARGE SMOOTH

I use this dry brush the most; every stage from the sketch, to filling and defining details.

##### TEXTURE SPRAY

For textured fades at smaller sizes, and at larger sizes for textures like stone or debris.

##### WET BRISTLES ROUGH

Used in the background at larger sizes for filling areas, and for the smoke effect at smaller a size.

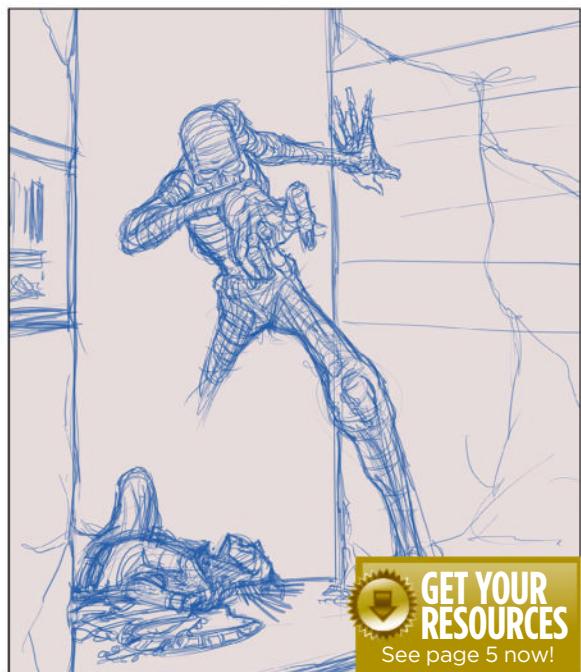
##### WATERCOLOUR TEXTURE

Mostly for background wall textures, starting large and adding smaller sizes on top for depth.



#### 1 Initial idea sketch

When starting an illustration I'll keep it very simple, defining the basic shapes with simple lines to build up the composition I have in my head. There's no right or wrong way to do this and it'll involve a lot of trial and error. If something doesn't work, then don't hesitate to bin it and start again. Essentially, it's a rapid brain dump of ideas until I'm happy.



#### 2 Build the composition

From there I'll work into the sketch, starting to map out the figures and surroundings. Working with a strong light source can be scary, knowing where to use black, and where not to, will ultimately define the image. Here the background and wall shadows will be mostly black so there's no need to draw any details in those areas. They'll be mapped out in the next stage. ➤

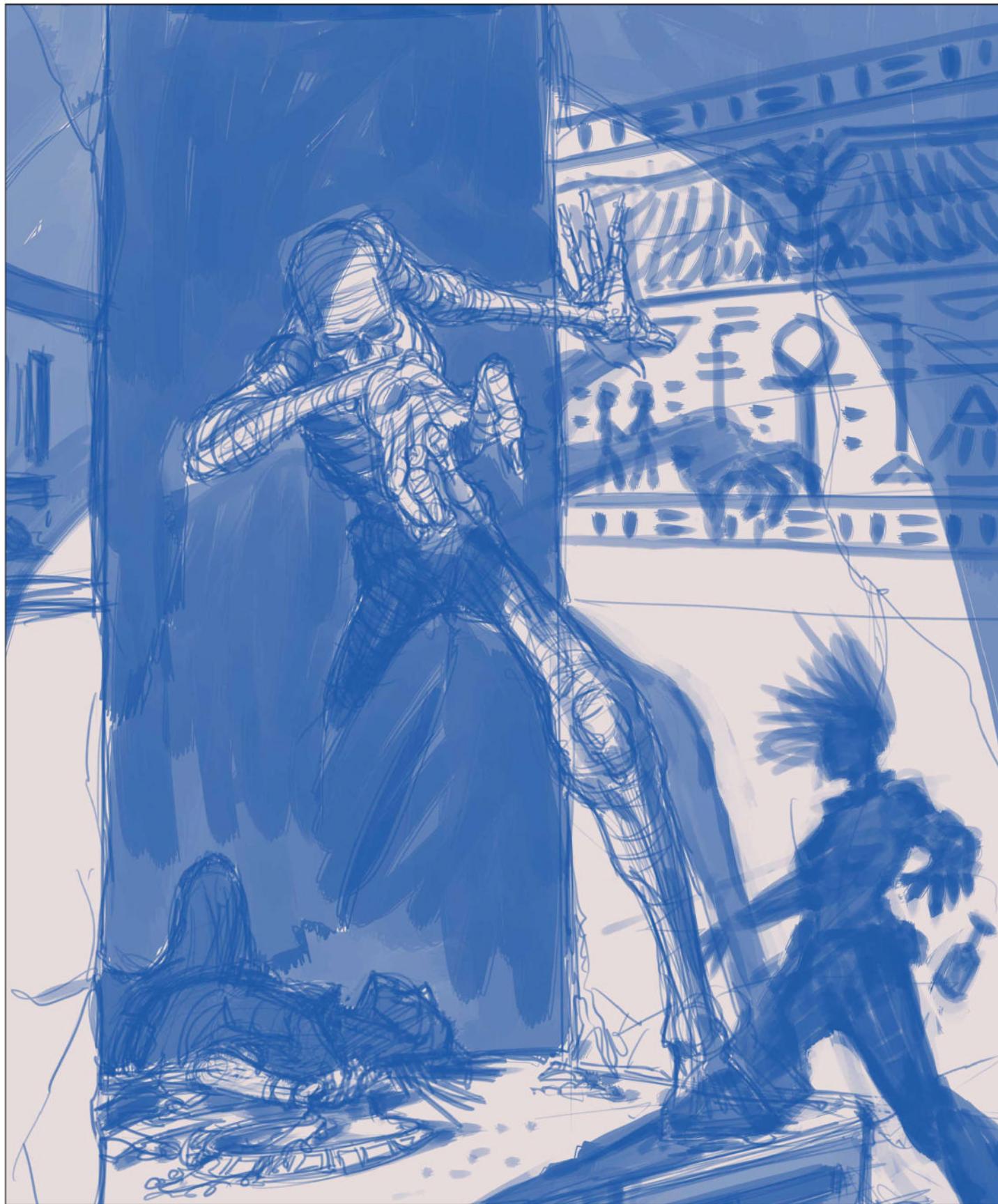
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In depth Light and shadow



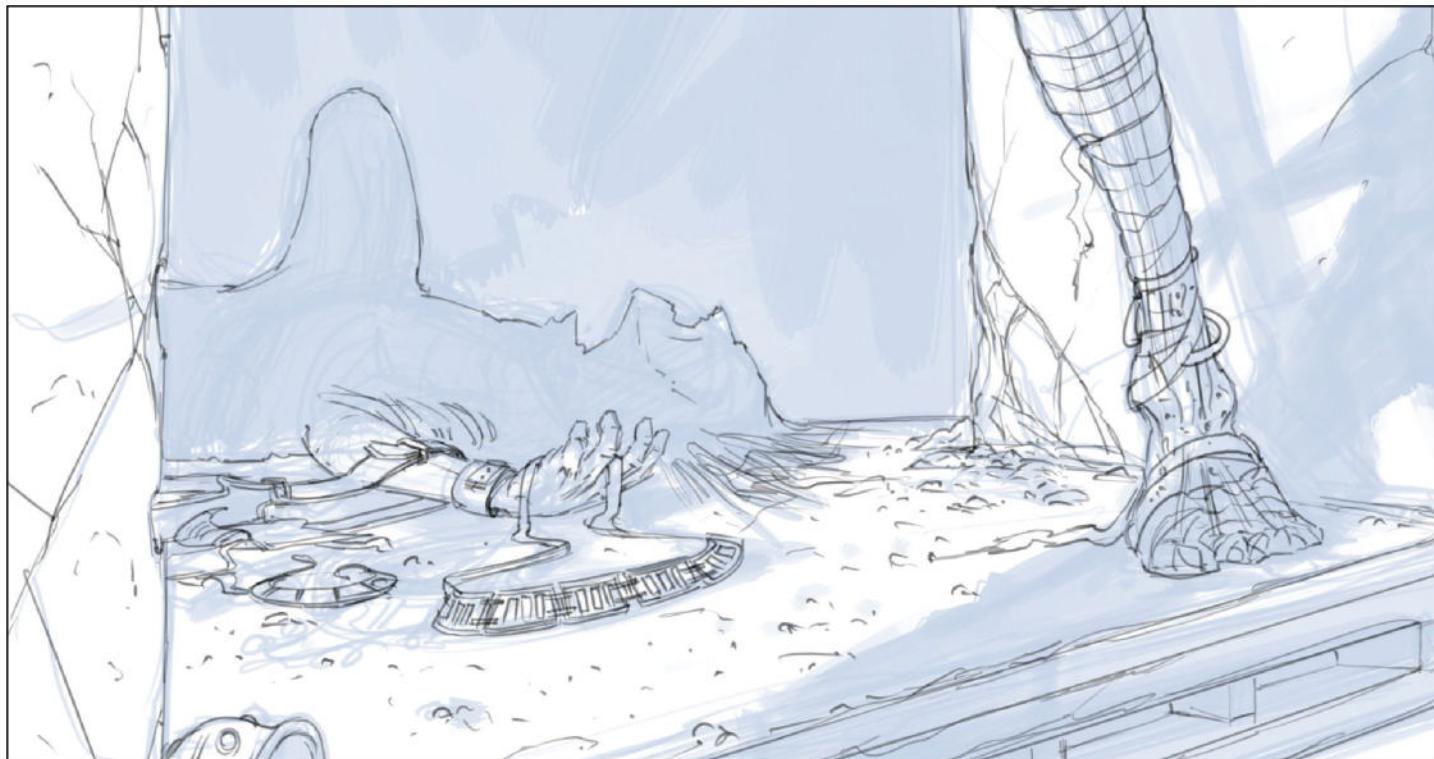
# Workshops



## 3 Figure out the placement of your light source

Deciding where the light source is positioned will dictate where the shadows fall on the figures and are cast on the surroundings. In a separate layer, I'll go and quickly block out the blacks and shadows using a dry bristle brush at a medium size. This helps me to see where the focal points will be, and which parts will need to be detailed when I draw the outlines.

# In depth Light and shadow



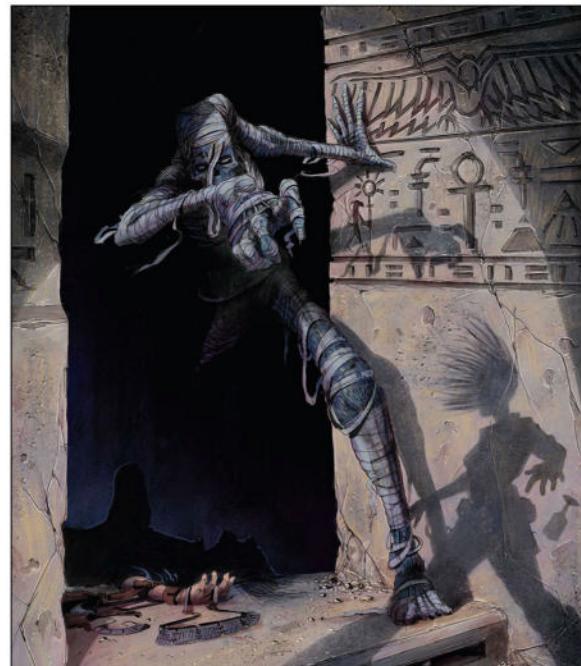
## 4 Draw up the outlines from your rough sketch

Now comes a fun bit: detailing the outlines from the messy rough. As I'm going to have some parts in near darkness, there's no need to draw any details there. It's just suggesting shapes to define what it is, only detailing the parts that will be well-lit in the illustration. At this stage I'll keep all the main parts in separate layers for the ease of shifting parts around.



## 5 Turn the lights on

Once the outline is done, I'll flatten the layers and make a new layer for the shadows. The main light source won't be visible in the illustration, but it'll dictate how the shadows will fall on the walls. I'll use the dry brush for the hard-edged shadows and a spray brush at varying sizes to add tone, textures and fades.



## 6 Add the base colours

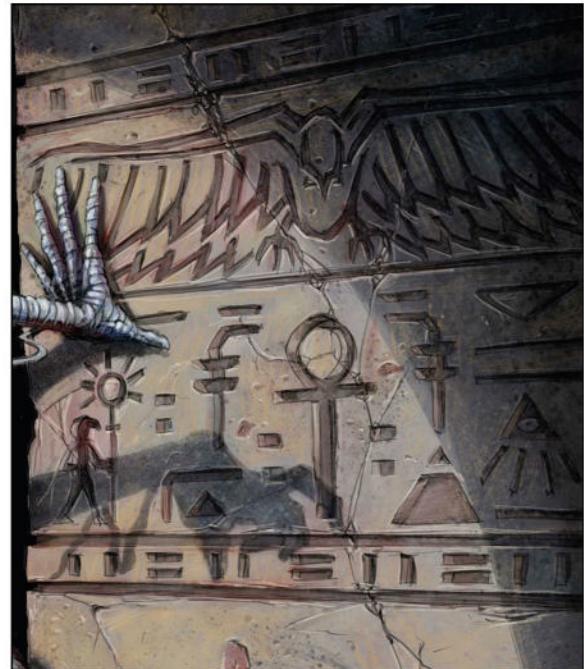
Once I'm happy with the outline and shadows, I'll flatten them into one layer and begin adding base colours in a new layer beneath it. This speeds up my workflow as I can make any adjustments before I paint on top of the outline. I'll use a mixture of Krita brushes, including both wet and dry brushes and the spray brush, keeping it loose and messy as I add colour. ➤

# Workshops



## 7 Define the focus areas

From here I'll begin defining the main focal points in a new top-level layer, primarily utilising dry and spray brushes to work in the details. My preferred approach involves minimal layer usage, typically with a top-level colour layer, an outline/shades layer, and an undercolour layer at the bottom. This makes it easier for adjustments throughout without being bogged down by too many layers.



## 8 Detail the wall shadows

I like to guide the eye around the illustration to tell the story, and here I use hieroglyphs to link the shadow figure and mummy. I'll use a watercolour texture brush in Krita at varying sizes for the wall textures, overlapping the brushstrokes to give depth. Then adding some details and defining edges with the dry brush. Backgrounds are typically looser, giving the main focal parts more pop.



## 9 The shadowy figure

I wanted the third figure in the piece to only be a shadow on the wall. This dictates that there's no detail to add, but instead we create movement in the hair and pose to give the figure some life. As the figure is on the wall, I made sure the wall texture can still be seen by darkening the cracks and adding subtle highlights.



## 10 Paint the mummy

With the mummy being the main focal point of the illustration I'll spend more time here refining it. I'll initially add the glow in the eyes and pay more attention to the areas that are well-lit, leaving the parts that are in shadow looser so they don't pull your eye away from the main parts of the mummy character.



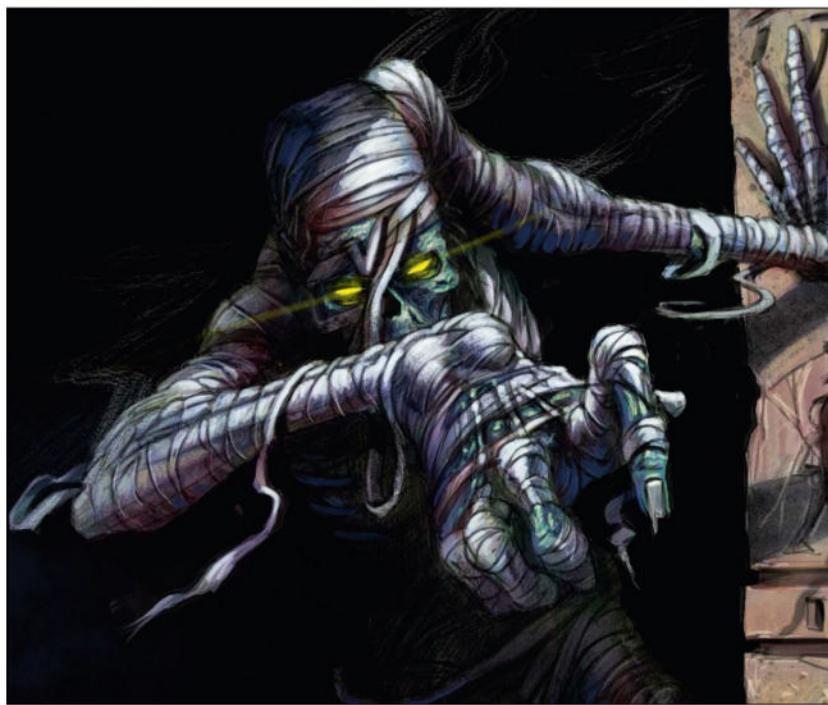
## 11 Dealing with the dark

As we're using dense shadows and deep blacks, we need to make sure things don't get too heavy. To deal with this I'll add in some subtle ambient lighting to define the darker areas of the mummy. As this isn't a main focal area, we can subtly suggest shape and form with minimal detailing needed.



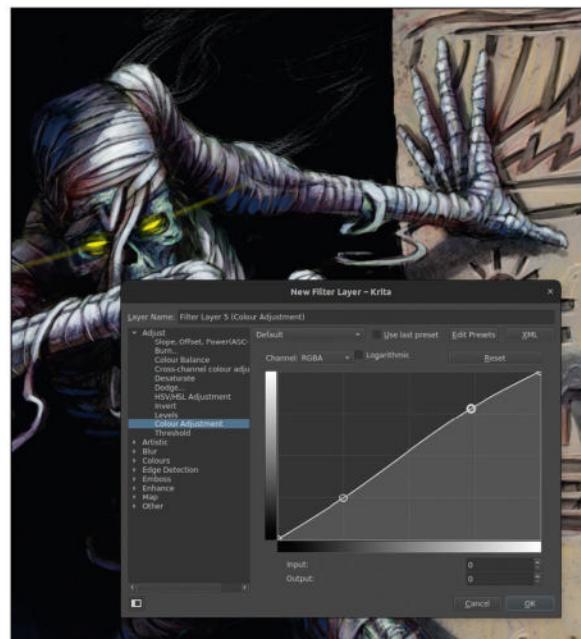
## 12 Lurking in the shadows

Using the light source we'll reveal part of a background figure, with the rest of that figure in deep shadow. To define the body shape I'll add a subtle blue to make the dark areas more visible. Where the figure's head is closer to the light, I'll loosely define some facial features in the same subtle blue.



## 13 The good stuff

This is where the image really comes to life, by adding all the little extras from smoke to the glowing eyes. This makes the wall and hieroglyphs a little more defined, and adding those small details tightens up the smaller focus areas like the wall texture and crack highlights. I usually do these with the dry brush at small sizes with different opacities, creating depth in those details.



## 14 Individual colour adjustments

The illustration is complete, but sometimes a slight colour adjustment may be needed. This will be different for everyone depending on your requirements. Here I used a filter layer at the top level, enabling a small RGBA adjustment for the entire image. By locking the darker tones on the curve and subtly enhancing the lighter end, the overall image gains a more contrasting pop.

## Technique focus

# CLEAR AND INTERESTING CHARACTERS

**Nikolas Ilic** on the decisions that ensure his creations are full of life and visual appeal



"I approach all of my character design work by considering what ultimately serves the character's personality the best. I want to convey a version of the character that is both clear and will be easily read by the viewer. I then proceed to push the shapes and

silhouettes of the character to make them as unique and appealing as possible. I also keep in mind design principles such as contrast, where I break up the proportions in order to keep the eye engaged, and prevent everything from becoming too even. This all helps to give my characters their visual appeal."



# Tech Focus Appealing characters

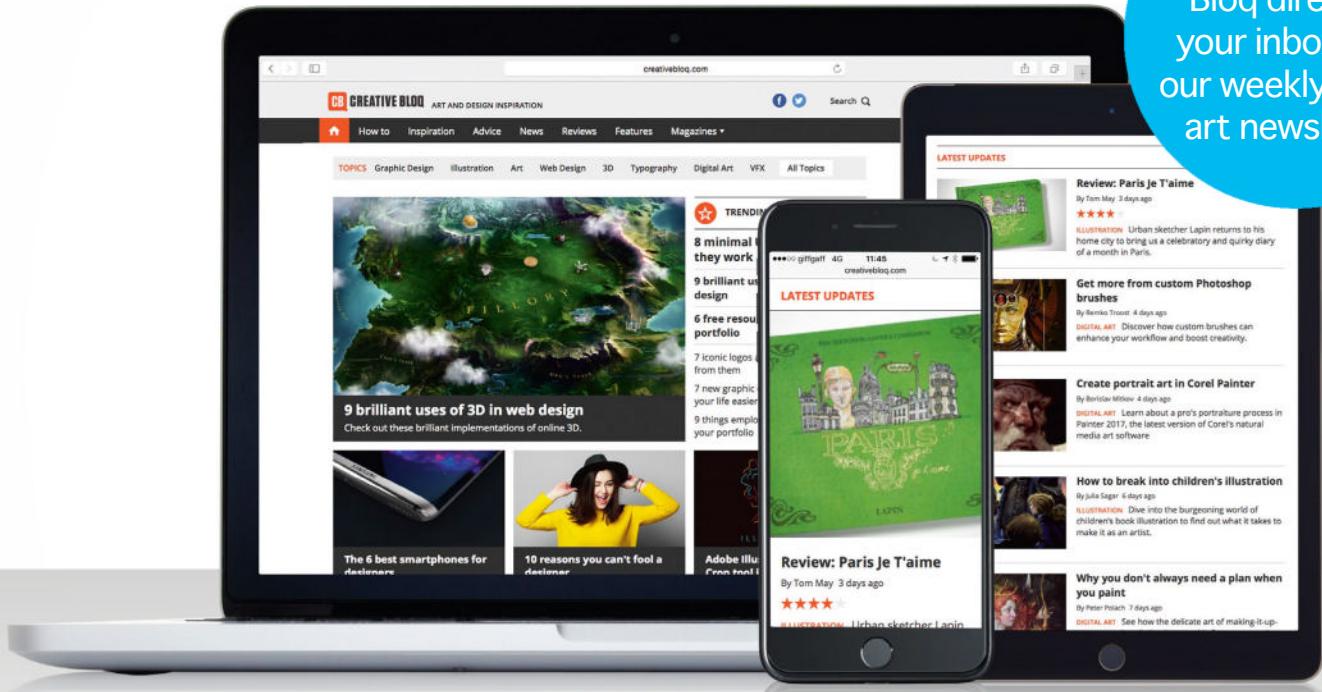


**Artist PROFILE**  
**Nikolas Ilic**  
LOCATION: US

Nikolas is an Emmy Award-winning production artist who specialises in character design, illustration and visual development for the animation industry and children's books.  
<https://nikolas-ilic.com>

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# Traditional Artist

Inspiration and advice from the best pro artists

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The multimedia artist shares her influences and industry insights.

# FXPosé

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS



## Chris Hong

LOCATION: Canada MEDIA: Watercolours, colour pencils, alcohol markers, acrylics

WEB: [www.chrishongart.com](http://www.chrishongart.com)

Chris is an independent artist and content creator with over 500,000 fans on social media. She creates rich, deep colours and textures in her art by slowly building up mixed-media layers.

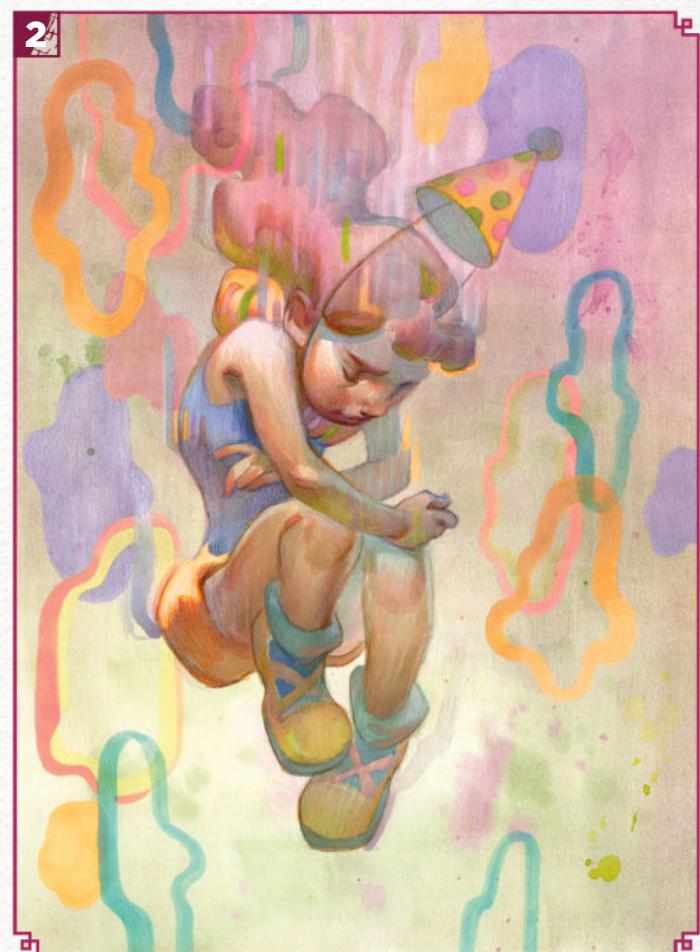


### 1 IL PLEUT

"The character is swimming in thought as their troubles swirl all around them. The umbrella underwater symbolises the feeling of helplessness."

### 2 PASSING GHOSTS

"The abstract, blobby shapes represent the thoughts that keep us up at night. This piece was inspired by when I was feeling particularly anxious."



### 3 BLUE BEAR

"I had fun building up the fur texture. I worked dark to light with a watercolour and marker base, then drew in the hairs with lighter colour pencils on top."

### 4 EXTRA PEPPERONI

"The heart-shaped pepperoni symbolise unhealthy relationships. While they may feel temporarily satisfying, they're ultimately toxic."





## Lobster Robin

**LOCATION:** Belgium **MEDIA:** Acrylics, wall paint, paint markers, ink markers, spray paint **WEB:** [www.lobster-robin.com](http://www.lobster-robin.com)

Lobster Robin is a painter and street artist with a background in illustration and animation. His colourful, psychedelic work explores life from unusual perspectives by combining a painterly style with the roughness of graffiti.

### 1 ABSTRACT FACE

"Exploration of abstraction in characters. This allows for more freedom as they don't have to look like anyone, and it boils them down to shapes and colours."



### 2 AM I GOING UP?

"In this piece, I ask myself the question of where I'm going in life in the midst of the chaos of being a full-time artist."



### 3 EQUAL UNDERNEATH MATERIAL

"A piece about our connection to nature and how we are all the same underneath the layers that divide us. Skulls represent our humanity to me."

### 4 THE STONED APE THEORY

"This piece centres around the theory that psychedelics are partly responsible for our curious nature. It's an ode to the wonders of the universe."



*Pastels*

*Conté crayons*

# CAPTURE THE DETAIL IN TACTILE SUBJECTS

REBECCA DE MENDONÇA combines two mediums to create drawings that express the essence and energy of various natural forms

For this tutorial, I'm going to use soft pastels and Conté crayons for drawing, rather than painting. There has always been a debate about whether pastels are a drawing or painting medium, but personally I believe it depends entirely on the way that you use them.

Here I'll be using limited colour to capture the energy and texture of

natural forms by changing my mark making and getting a feeling for the flow of line. As I draw each piece, I like to hold it in my hand so I can feel its weight, and use my other senses alongside sight.

I want to convey more than just what it looks like. What does it feel like? Is it hard and spiky, and heavy to hold? Or light and fragile, and can be easily crushed in my hand?

Whatever the subject matter might be, we're able to convey all of those sensations through the quality of the marks that we make.



Rebecca specialises in pastels, producing lively and energetic work. She teaches around the UK and co-founded The New Pastel School. Her book *Pastels for the Absolute Beginner* is available now. See more at <https://rebeccademondonca.co.uk>.



## 1 Test out your materials

Pastels and Conté crayons vary in hardness. To test out how they behave, do lots of experiments, pressing as hard as you can, then just letting the pastel graze the surface of the paper. See how they smudge. Notice how some make an intense mark, while others are subtle. You can use these variations to get great contrasts in your work.

**“As I draw each piece, I like to use my other senses as well as sight”**

### MATERIALS

#### PASTELS

- Unison pastels
- Pan pastels

#### OTHER ITEMS

- Conté crayons (including shards)
- Willow charcoal (including shards)
- Faber-Castell Pitt Pastel pencils
- Pencil rubber (cut into small pieces)
- Scalpel



## 2 Experiment with marks

There are so many different ways that you can draw with pastels or Conté crayons. I like to break my sticks in half and use them on their ends, twisting and turning; on their edges for linear work; and on their sides for making broad, sweeping strokes. By alternating all of these as you draw, your pastel can dance around the surface.

## 3 Twisting lines and fragile leaves

If you want to practise your drawing, it's always good to have an object in front of you, rather than a photograph. As my paper is light in tone, I loosely sketch in a mid-tone base layer, using PanPastel powder applied with a tissue. This gives me a base to draw over with darks and lights.



## 4 Let yourself relax and go with the flow

To get a feel for the flowing curves, I use a brown Conté crayon on its edge, twisting and turning around the form. At the sweetcorn's base, I press hard to give weight and shadow, while higher up, as the leaves grow thinner, I reduce the pressure. ➤

# Traditional Artist Workshop



## 5 Drawing lights on top of darks

One of the many joys of drawing with pastel is when you put a light over a dark. So I draw in the fine details of the corn, and sharp shadow lines with a broken shard of black Conté. I emphasise light on the leaves with a soft white Unison pastel, and cut into edges to make shapes more delicate.

## 6 Light as a feather

Holding the peacock feather as delicately as I can, I draw it with brown Conté crayon, equally as delicately letting the strokes float off at the ends. I smudge it lightly to give a soft base for the eye.

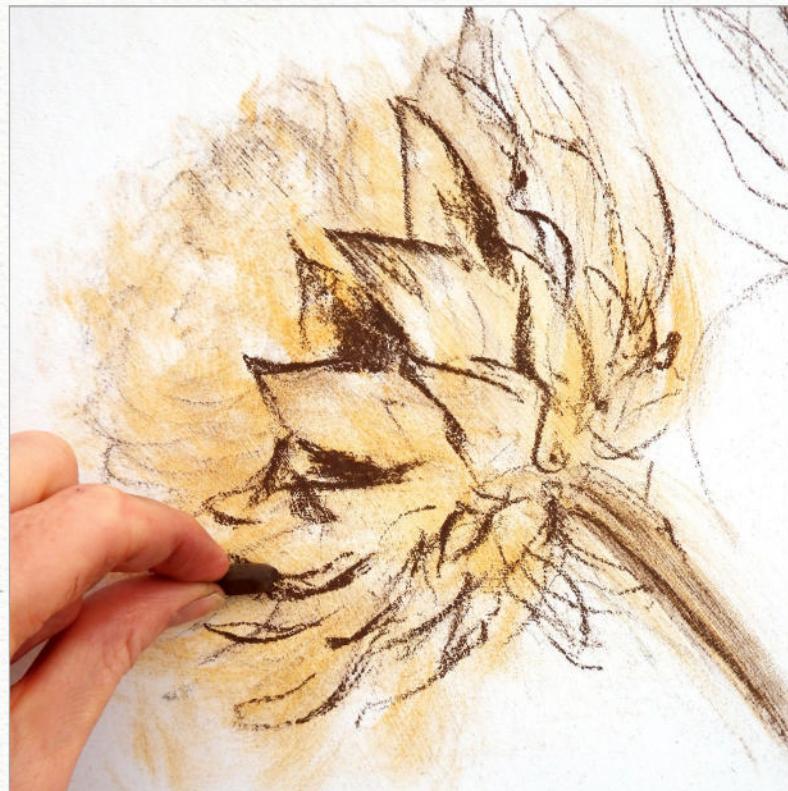


## 7 Pure pigments for vibrant elements

For the intense colours of the feather's eye, I use Unison pastels and Conté crayons. If you don't have the right colours, you just have to go with what's in your box, mixing them on the surface. I make marks in the direction of the fronds, smudging lightly. Leaving some flecks of white showing through helps create shimmer.



**8 Pastel pencils for the fine lines**  
For the thin lines running through the eye, and for the finest ends of some of the fronds, I use a really dark Faber-Castell Pitt Pastel pencil. I keep the point on pastel pencils with a sharp scalpel, also useful for cutting shards of pastel for details.



**9 Strong and spiky character**  
The essence of this dried artichoke head is in the hard, spiky leaves, in contrast to the soft, fluffy seeds in the centre. To get that strong feeling, I make hard, aggressive marks with Conté crayons and Unison pastels, working with speed and energy, creating strong tonal contrasts. Using soft pastels adds to the weight and solidity of the form.



**10 Try using shards for the light and prickly parts**  
For the finest prickles, I use shards and sharp edges. If you drop your pastels and they break, keep those little bits! Remember, an edge is as good as a point. Pastel pencils are great for fine work, but if you need intense highlights, a broken soft pastel can give more exciting results.

# First Impressions

Emily Chapman

A host of creative endeavours led the artist to her craft



Where did you grow up and how has this influenced your art? I grew up in Chester, in the north-west of England. I don't believe this place had much influence on my art. Much more of an influence were nature, astronomy, folklore, deities, mythology and pop culture.

**You're a child, you see a piece of art that changes everything. Where are you, what are you looking at, and what effect did it have?**

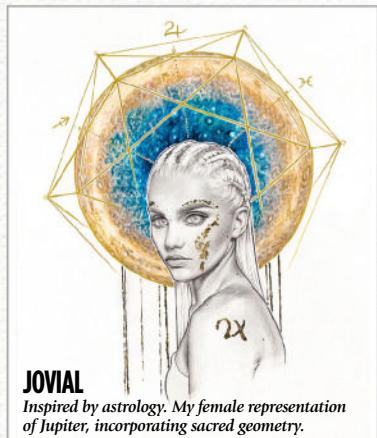
There's no single artwork, but I was obsessed with early Disney movies. My mum would have Disney movie marathons as my 'babysitter' when I went to her work after school.

I think that Disney was my first inspiration, as I used to regularly draw my favourite characters. I believe that's where I began my observational skills, along with igniting my own imagination.

**What was your next step? Did other interests vie for your attention?**

**What was the deciding factor?**

As a teenager, my career path was photography. I did self portraits and



JOVIAL

*Inspired by astrology. My female representation of Jupiter, incorporating sacred geometry.*



ALITA

*A coloured pencil piece of Alita: Battle Angel as I just loved her character so much.*

KINTSUGI KITSUNE

*Hand-painted and designed to resemble a porcelain artefact repaired by the art of kintsugi.*



experimented with special effects makeup and Photoshop, where I created my own original characters. I then became interested in cosplay, where I realised I love more physical art and ended up concentrating on my hobby of drawing and painting.

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

Concentrate on what you love to draw the most, and start studying fundamentals early, especially anatomy of humans and creatures.

**Tell us about your first paid commission, and does it stand as a representation of your talent?**  
I think it was a graphite pencil portrait of a pet or person through

**“I think Disney was my first inspiration, as I regularly drew my favourite characters”**

Facebook. I suppose it represents my observational skills, as I've always been good at utilising references.

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

It was a kitsune mask painting, and couldn't be any more different, from the canvas material and medium through to the style!

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

Yes and no. It's awesome when you work for cool companies and draw the things you love. But sometimes, you have to draw things of less interest, and at times that can be slightly stale and repetitive, but I still feel incredibly grateful to be where I am today.

Being in control of your schedules can be challenging, so I've found that daily lists are more manageable. I also didn't anticipate how stressful social media and doing your own taxes would be.

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

Unfortunately it hasn't. Due to the rise of AI imagery, ongoing strikes across the entertainment industry and increasing layoffs in studios. It's made the industry heavily saturated, and harder for freelancers.

Most of my income is from personal commissions, which aren't guaranteed, especially now during the cost of living crisis. Luxuries such as artwork aren't necessities. However, I can't imagine myself doing anything other than art.

**What character or scene that you've painted do you most identify with?**  
Cosmic Witchcraft, as I feel that she represents how I'd look if I were a tiefling witch!

*Emily is a freelance multi-medium artist working on coloured pencil fan art commissions, original fantasy character portraits, and personalised kitsune masks. [www.artstation.com/emilymeganx](http://www.artstation.com/emilymeganx)*

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