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GLENN VILPPU WE TALK TO THE DISNEY LEGEND ABOUT HIS INFLUENTIAL CAREER



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



Out of all the skills needed for any artist, the one that most often seems to have the steepest learning curve for so many of us is the anatomy. This is a pretty fundamental aspect of art, as people figure frequently in projects from concepts to illustration and even costume

design. This month we aim to help you master the human form, with both inspiration and practical advice packed in, so read on to explore a range of methods that will help you in your next steps.

Among our expert advice, we talk to Glen Vilppu, the veteran Disney artist and trainer, who shares his thoughts on his career and a now influential approach to anatomy. If you're looking for step-by-step instruction on key techniques then look no further than Thomas Elliott's workshop, as he takes things a step further with a monstrous design based on believable anatomy. Meanwhile, you can learn a more vibrant, stylised approach with the team at Mad Boogie Creations. And with the New Year fast closing in, get inspired for 2024 as we talk to pro artists about their goals. Enjoy the issue!

Rob

Editor

Rob.Redman@futurenet.com

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EDITOR'S CHOICE

Three of my top picks this month...

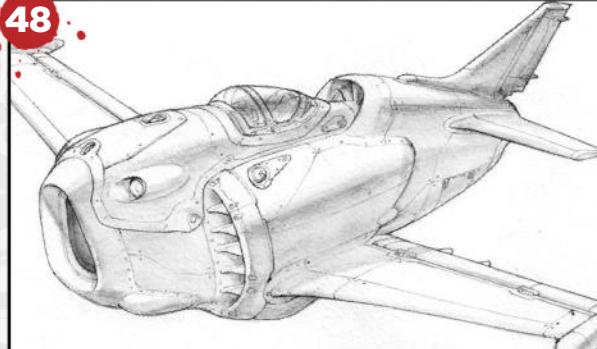
40



Legend interview: Glenn Vilppu

The masterful visual artist opens up on his illustrious career and influence on the anatomy in animation.

48



Inside a sketchbook of marvellous creations

Jonas Minnebo shares his doodles and drawings with Gundam-inspired mechs and makeshift spacecraft.

90



Paint a terrifying tentacle mutant

Thomas Elliott shows you his process for painting a monstrous sci-fi creature with a variety of techniques.



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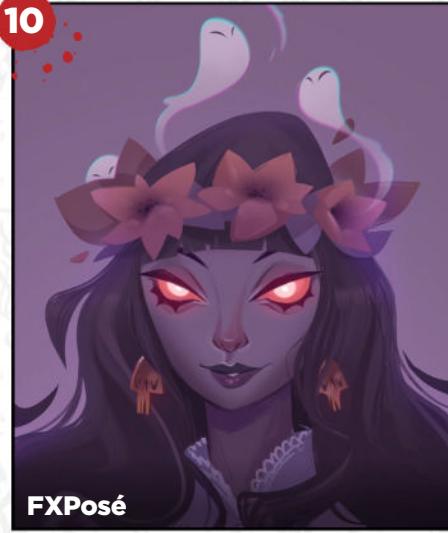
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Your art

10 FXPosé

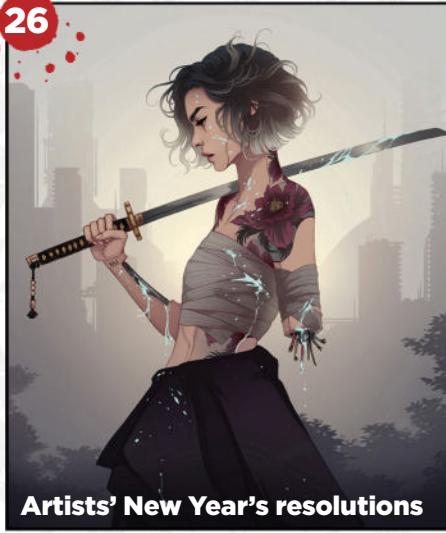
A round-up of digital art, submitted by you.

10



FXPosé

26



Artists' New Year's resolutions

News and events

26 Artists' New Year's resolutions for 2024

Prepare for the year ahead with the help of seven artists and their upcoming goals.

32 A day in the life of...

Jen Hancock

The costume designer tells us why having a supportive family is so vitally important.

34 Artist in Residence: Constantine Sekeris

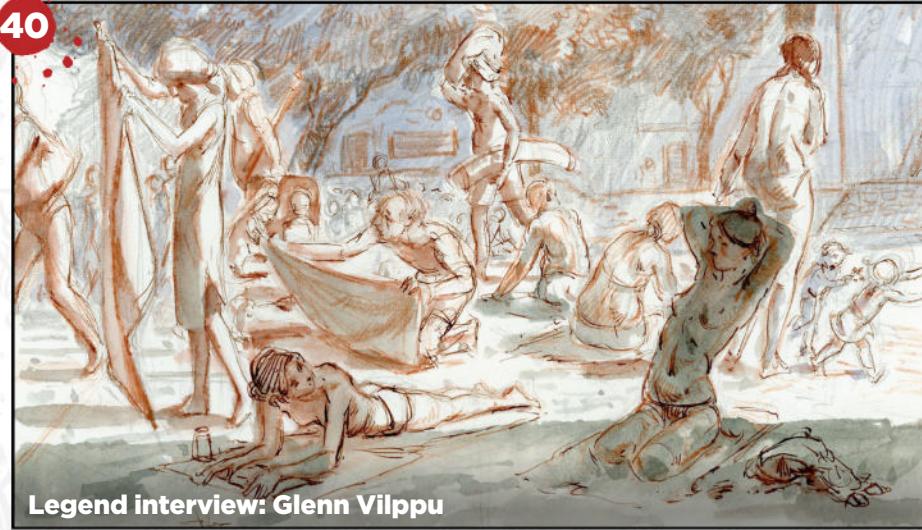
The creature specialist gives us a tour of his home studio, filled with memorabilia.

Features

40 Interview: Glenn Vilppu

We speak to the legendary Disney artist and teacher about his life, the intricacies of anatomy, and what he's most proud of.

40



Legend interview: Glenn Vilppu

Regulars

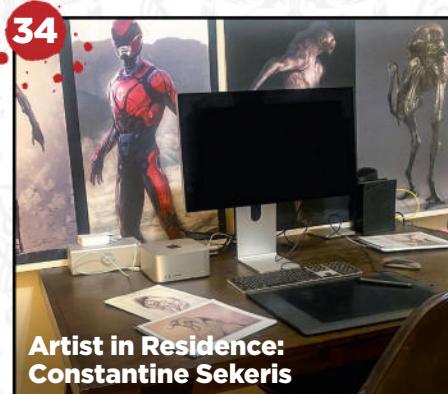
- 6 Next month
- 8 Subscriptions
- 24 The Rookies
- 33 Recent editions
- 39 Letters

24



The Rookies

34

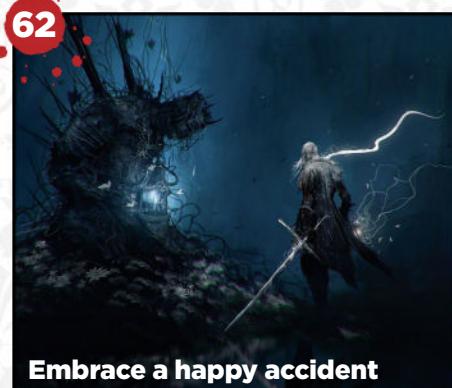


Artist in Residence:
Constantine Sekeris

48



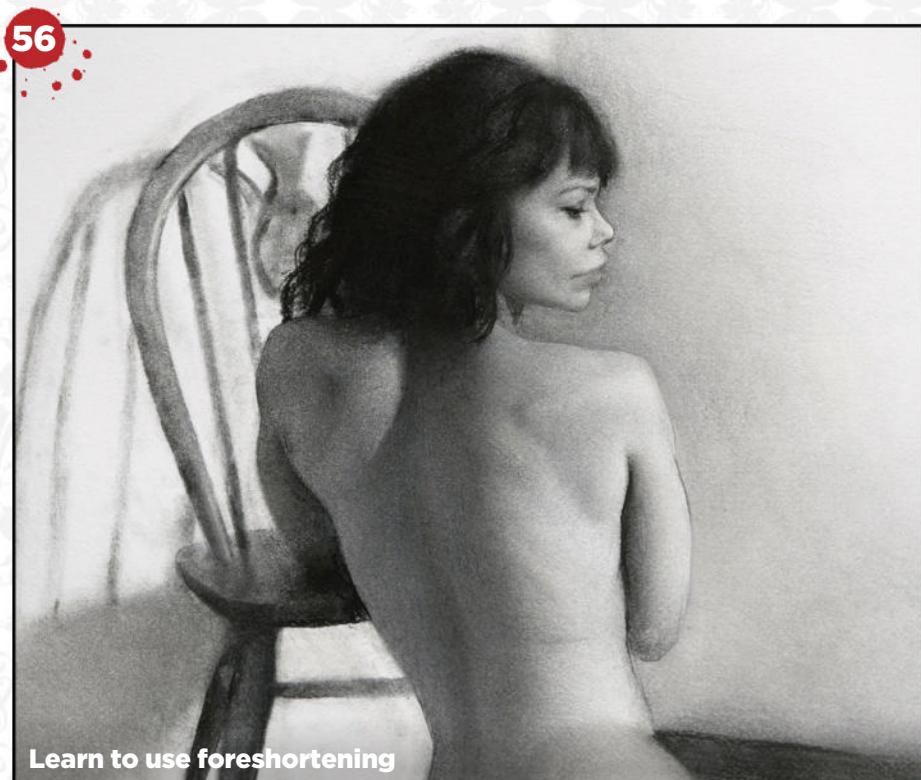
Sketchbook: Jonas Minnebo



Embrace a happy accident



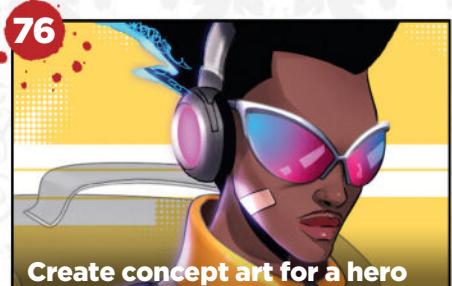
15 tips to improve sketches



Learn to use foreshortening



Capture delicate lighting



Create concept art for a hero



Paint a terrifying monster

Workshops

56 Learn to use foreshortening
Charlie Pickard helps you to develop one of the most striking tools for anatomy.

62 Embrace a happy accident
Alexandre Chaudret explains why your mistakes can turn into design elements.

64 15 tips to improve your sketching skills

From drawing faces to toolsets and taking notes, Rodgon tells us his key principles.

70 Capture delicate light at dusk
Lynn Chen picks out the vital lighting details in her adorable wintry artwork.

74 The tools of storytelling

Find out how comic artist Mario Alberti builds up a narrative in the art he creates.

76 Create concept art for a hero
Mad Boogie Creations share advice on designing a vibrant video game character.

82 Give character through detail
Check out Maxim Bazhenov's soulslike art as he develops the persona for a boss.

Traditional Artist

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

90 Paint a terrifying monster

Follow Thomas Elliott's workflow for making a sinister science fiction mutant.

96 First Impressions: Kimberli Johnson

How growing up exploring the desert and whimsical artwork influenced the artist.



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<https://ifxm.ag/anatomytechniques>

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Next month



Next month in...
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
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THE ART OF ZEZHOU CHEN

We talk to the Magic: The Gathering artist about his life and career

The secrets of volumetric light

Learn pro tricks for dramatic lighting in your scenes with artist Joshua Pillai

Give your work a moody vibe

Jolene Yeo shows you how to imbue projects with an emotional context

Paint whimsical character art

Discover how Tasia M.S. develops fairy tale characters in her gorgeous art

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ImagineFX

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THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



Eloïse Girard

LOCATION: France MEDIA: Procreate, Photoshop

WEB: www.instagram.com/girard_eloise

Artist and illustration teacher Eloïse has a biology and 3D animation background. Her illustration work takes inspiration from fairy tales and mystic creatures, as well as her passion for horror stories and mysteries.



1 THE UNSPEAKABLE PORTRAIT

"This is a reinterpretation of an 1844 painting by Franz Xaver Winterhalter. The colours evoke a Lovecraftian atmosphere, so I pushed this concept further."

2 KINGFISHER

"This resonates with themes of metamorphosis and warrior spirit. It was fun to imagine this half-bird, half-human character, drawing inspiration from both nature and mythology."



3 DANDELION MERMAID

"Spring has brought many flowers to my garden, including some considered weeds. Here, I wanted to show their beauty while associating them with the mermaid, my favourite creature."

4 FLOWER WITCH

"Since my teen years, horror novels have been a constant companion. I enjoy reimagining witches, ghosts and other evil creatures in illustrations. Don't worry, this witch is a good one."



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Fabio Montorzi

LOCATION: Italy MEDIA: Photoshop, Blender, 3DCoat, Unreal Engine, Medium, World Creator WEB: www.artstation.com/fabiomontorzi

Fabio transitioned into concept art after spending 15 years as a freelancer for luxury furniture companies. His main focus is environments, but he has recently broadened his work into vehicles and creature design.

1 THE ARENA

"This is a wide view of the fighting arena. I took some inspiration from the movie John Carter. The scene is almost 100 per cent 3D."





2 THE FIGHT

"This is one of the images I created during Jama Jurabaev's Unreal Engine for Artists course. I sculpted the beast in 3DCoat and the fighter came from BigMediumSmall."

3 THE SPACEPORT

"This is a recent creation of mine in which I tried to work on spaceship design. I used Jama and Aleksandr Kilimnik's QuickTools plugins heavily, and then rendered it using Unreal Engine."



Sebastián Lotero

LOCATION: Spain MEDIA: Procreate, Photoshop, Illustrator, After Effects WEB: <https://sebasloteroq.artstation.com>

Sebastián was raised on a diet of comics and manga. However, it was a Roy Lichtenstein exhibition that inspired him to pursue an artistic career. Since then he has merged design with illustration for clients like Awaken Realms.

1 WITCH HUNT

"This piece depicts a witch, bound and about to be burned. Wrapped in rage, she unleashes her powers. Her hair turns reddish, which breaks off her restraints and terrifies those present."

1



2 GOLEM

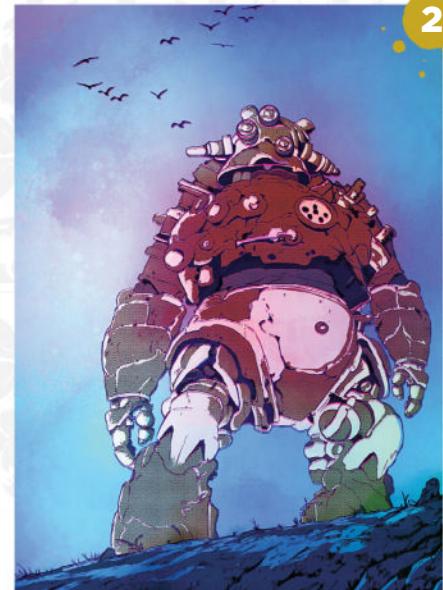
"An interpretation of the colossi that inhabit the world of Shadow of the Colossus, which represents the game's true message: the peace of these creatures and their life within that world."

2

3 CYBERPUNK MECHA

"A secret organisation deploys imposing cybernetic mechs, similar to the Evas, to confront existential threats in a dystopian metropolis. The balance of man, machine, and progress is considered."

3



2



4 THE NOMAD

"In this cyberpunk world, inhabitants turn to using implants or technologically advanced suits in order to adapt to their environment. This fusion blurs the line between the human and the artificial."

4





Jessica Madorran

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: www.jessicamadorran.com

Jessica is a freelance character designer and visual development artist who specialises in toys, TV and games. Outside of work, she shares her passion for recreating fairy tales with unexpected twists on her Patreon page.

1



1 WARRIOR CUPID

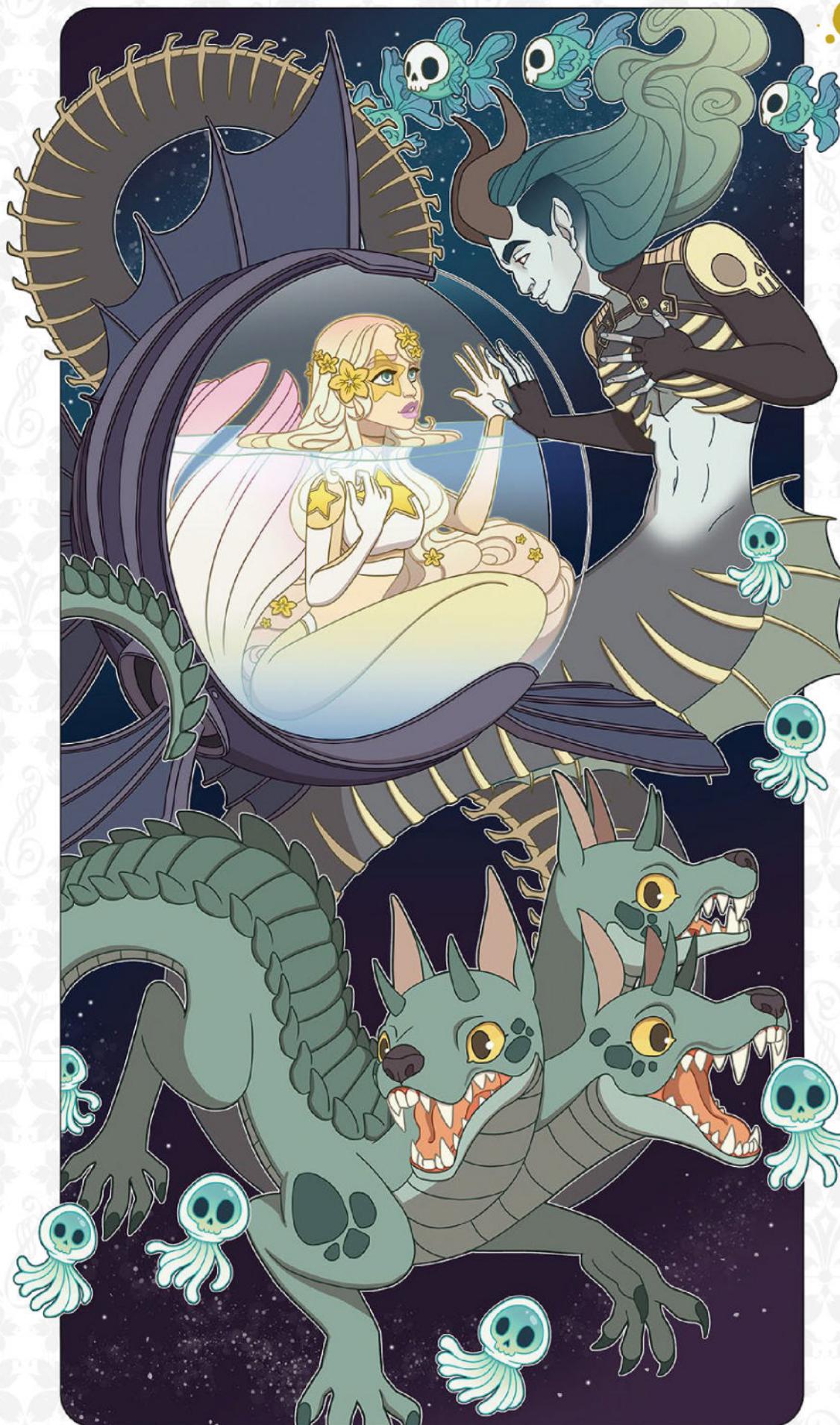
"This piece was created to show a character ageing through time. It started with a young cupid, who grew into a warrior cupid."

2 ALIEN TIGER

"This was an artwork to celebrate the animal of the Chinese New Year, which at the time was a tiger. This is one of the designs from a series of characters, which all had tiger-related themes."

2





3

3 TWISTED HADES AND PERSEPHONE

"Created for my Patreon. It's a new take on the ancient Greek deities Persephone and Hades, combined with The Star tarot card."

4 TWISTED ALICE IN WONDERLAND

"Another piece made for my Patreon. I created a Twisted Alice in Wonderland, mixing it with Dungeons & Dragons."



4



Šárka Štvrtňová

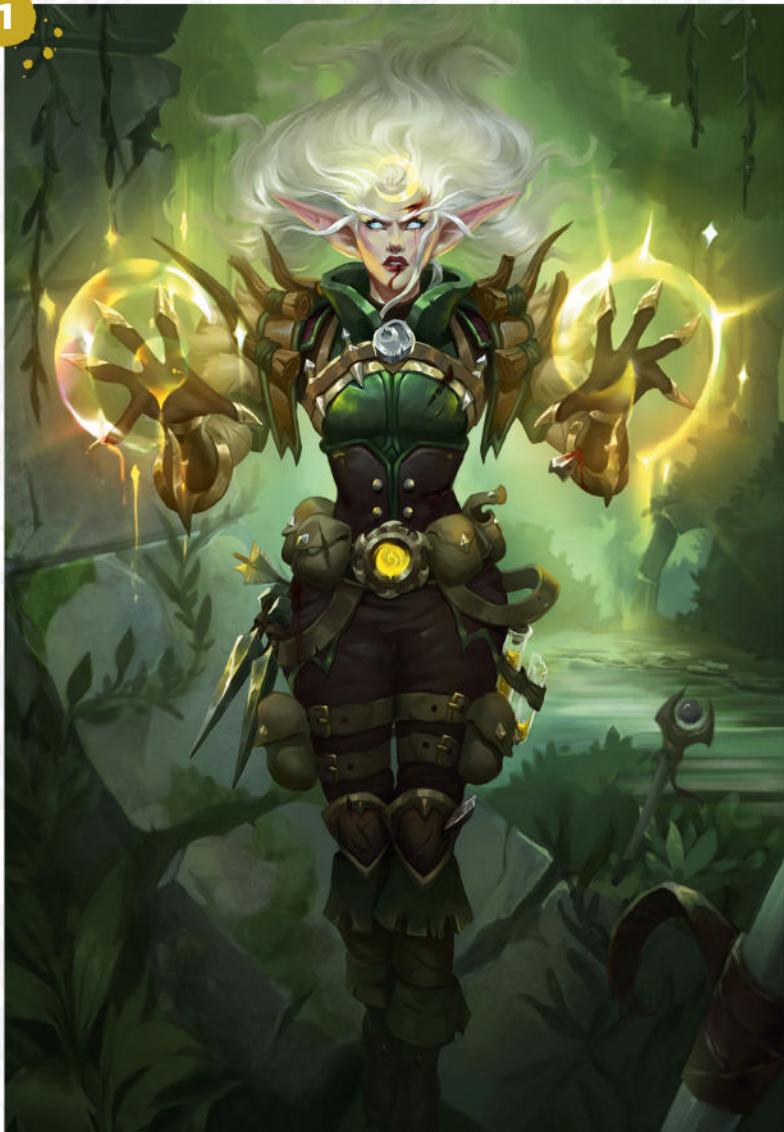
LOCATION: Czech Republic MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: www.artbyclaina.com

Šárka, also known as Claina, has a love of painting that started with a supportive teacher and a passion for video games. She loves creating a painterly look and mixing it with the magical effects of digital art.

1 BATTLE OF FERALAS

"Looking at this image, we see a character with many injuries, yet they still have so much energy that they're floating off the ground. This is a fight for nature's balance."

1



2 ASTALANNA

"The goal for this painting was to create an indescribable being; beautiful and supernatural, yet soft and human-like. They're almost angelic, but with the inner strength to lead and conquer."

2



3 DRAENEI MAGE STUDY

"With the help of a soft colour palette and warm, sunny lighting, this image depicts the perfect cosy summer day. It shows a Draenei mage student practising from her arcane magic scrolls."

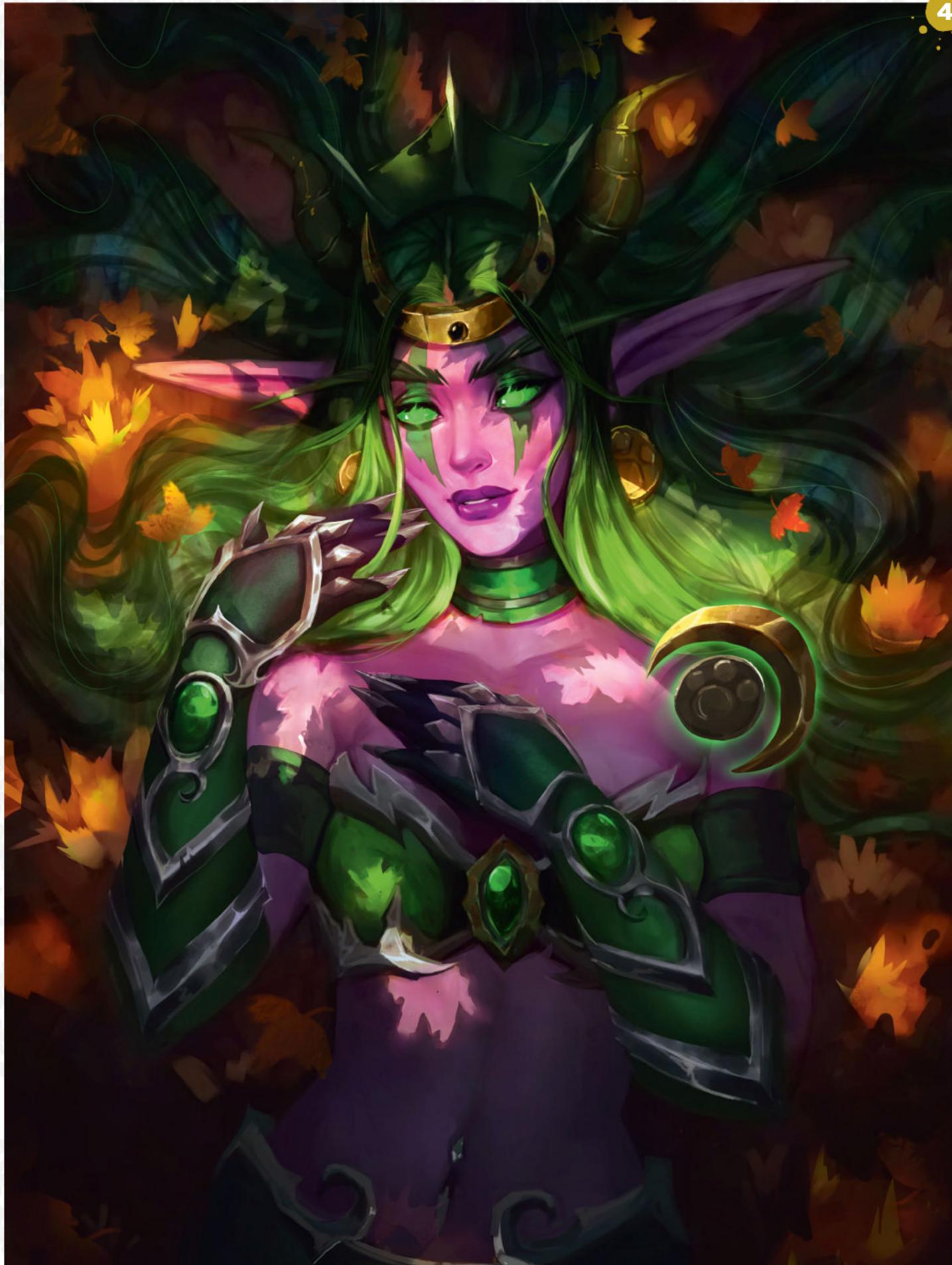
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4 THE FALL OF YSERA

"This image shows the freedom and looseness of a character lying in a pile of leaves. We see her playing carelessly with her hair and enjoying the sun shining through the leaves."

4







Michael Knapp

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

Michael has worked on many animated short and feature films. With a background in illustration and storyboarding, his work is graphic and immersive, with a focus on light, colour and atmosphere.

1 THE WELLSPRING

"Inspired by a story I'm working on, I illustrated an innocent moment of the discovery of lush life where there should be none. At first the existence of this subterranean forest seems magical, but the reason for it is far from ideal."

2 CHANGE OF PLANS

"I hate it when you've already escaped insurmountable odds and the solution to your problems is almost within reach, but there are hordes of crazed zealots between you and your goals."

2



1





3

3 ENDLESS VIGIL

"This image sprung from the desire to escape my city and have some solitude with my thoughts. Surrounded by many relics from an ancient civilisation, of course."



4

4 THE COLLECTOR

"I think someone has already noticed the egg is missing. This is essentially a poster for a movie that hasn't been made from a book that has yet to be written."



Jasmine Li

LOCATION: Canada MEDIA: Photoshop, Procreate WEB: www.jasmineli.art

Jasmine is a concept artist and art director in animation. She likes to paint the places she goes on adventures with her furry friend Aero and paint reimagined scenes of her favourite video game characters.

1 WALK IN THE FOREST

"I experienced this moment while walking in the forest with Aero. I wanted to capture the vibrancy of the Sun's rays piercing the dense trees onto the trail, creating myriad wonderful colours."

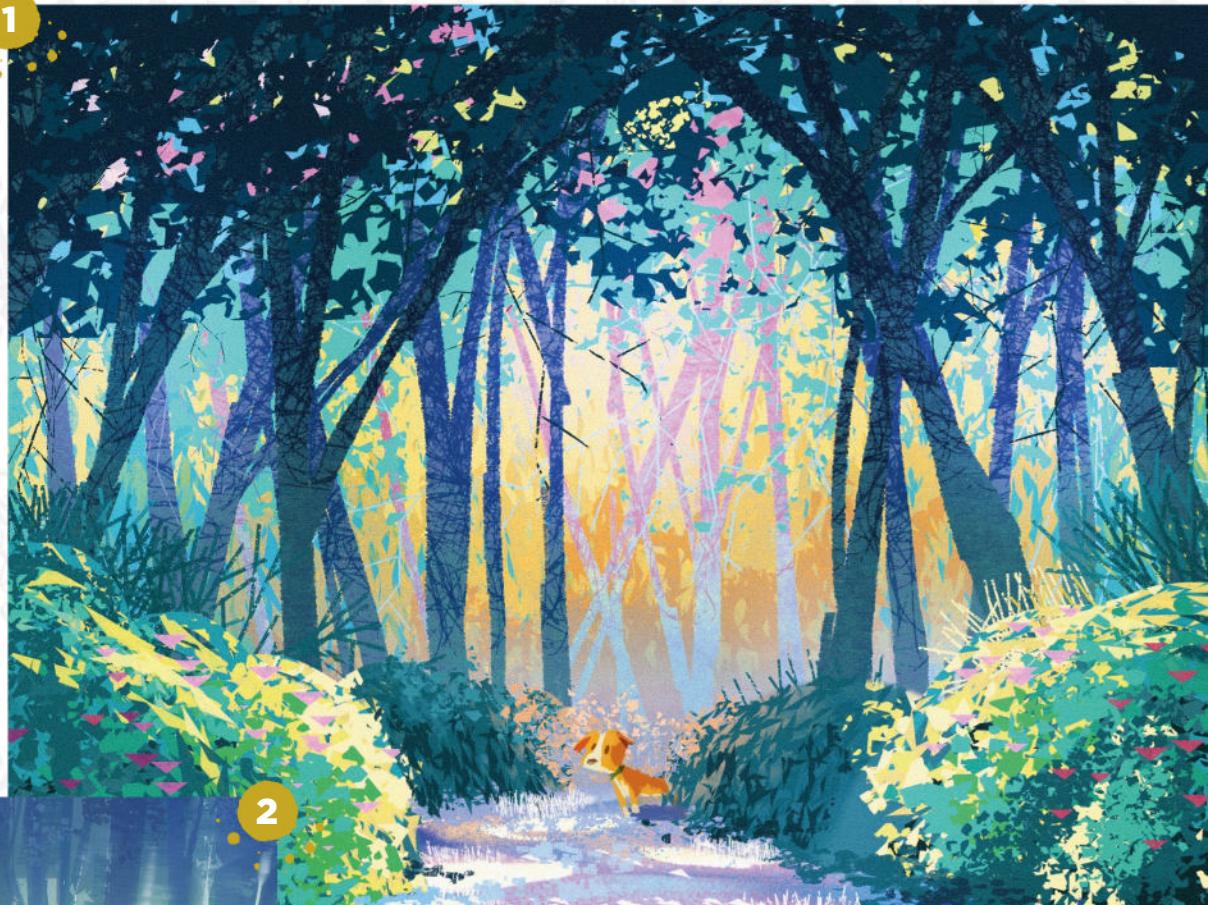
2 SUN BATHING

"Here I'm depicting my favourite Baldur's Gate 3 character, Astarion, catching a moment of respite by sunbathing in the woods."

3 SNIFFING AMONGST THE TREES

"I'm fascinated by the beautiful colours you find in the early morning, when the Sun's rays shine through the trees and bushes, and when the light bounces off Aero's coat just right."

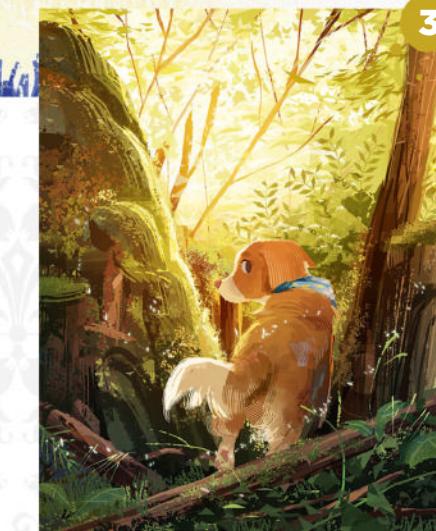
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2



3



4 WISHING TO BE FREE

"This is a depiction of Astarion from Baldur's Gate 3 before the events of the game, looking to the moon. I was deeply moved by his story, as well as the beautiful designs of the city itself."



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So Long, Caz!

YEAR CREATED: 2022 **MEDIA:** Toon Boom Harmony, Storyboard Pro, Photoshop, Blender, After Effects

“When I realised it was my last year at the California Institute of the Arts, I started to frequently reminisce about the past. Meanwhile, the unknown future after graduation was making me feel anxious and fearful. I wanted to convey my feelings through stories to more people, especially fellow graduates like me.”



Artist **PROFILE**

Jingqi Zhang

LOCATION: US



Jingqi Zhang is an enthusiastic storyboard artist who graduated from CalArts with a degree in character animation in 2023. She excels at discovering the humour and happiness in life, and relishes the art of storytelling through her drawings.

<https://www.therookies.co/u/JingqiZhang>





Amelia Leonards says: "I hear stories of a mythical golden age when artists could afford to live and die by the brush, swimming in a stream of well-paying work, but those times feel long gone."



Julia Metzger says: "I want to learn traditional painting and reconnect to my roots as an artist who started out on paper."

Artists' New Year's resolutions for 2024

Turning over a new leaf **Tanya Combrinck** meets seven artists to hear how they plan to tackle what the coming year brings in these challenging times

It has been a tough year in the art world in 2023. Strikes brought things to a standstill in the entertainment industry, change in the social media landscape has continued to diminish artists' online presence, and the galloping progress of generative AI, which has impacted incomes and created anxiety about the future.

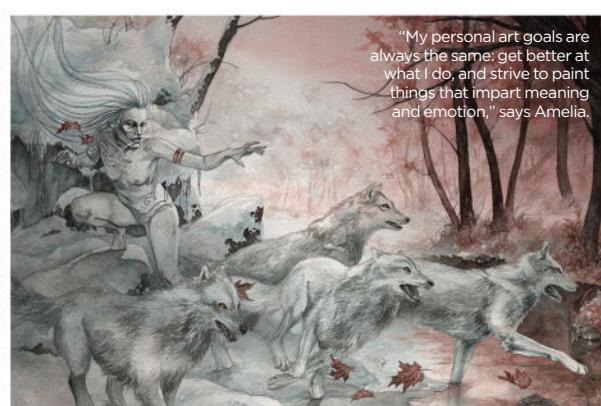
So, as the year draws to a close, we spoke to a range of artists about how they think these challenges will unfold in 2024, the intentions they're setting for themselves, and their hopes for the upcoming year.

Among the group, there's a trend growing towards returning to the basic elements at the core of one's creativity and focusing on personal work. Illustrator **Amelia Leonards** puts it like this: "It's time to imbue our work with as

much personality and humanity as possible. Anybody can click a button and generate an image scraped from stolen art, so it's important to show why we're driven to create."

THE EVOLVING THREAT

The use of AI-generated images is one aspect of a general business strategy that Amelia says has made it largely impossible for artists outside of the very highest tier to make a living from just working in traditional illustration. "Business is built around cutting as many corners as possible to increase profits and better the lives of a very select few, and the world around us is



"My personal art goals are always the same: get better at what I do, and strive to paint things that impart meaning and emotion," says Amelia.

increasingly championing the cheap, fast and fake," she says.

For individuals, Amelia's solution to this is something she credits to the US-based artist Timothy Von Rueden, who likens an art business to a table. "Your table should have four legs, or income streams, with a fifth leg ➡

“The world around us is increasingly championing the cheap, fast and fake”



A DAY IN THE LIFE OF...

We get a peek into the world of costume artist Jen Hancock, who tells us why being backed up by a strong support system is integral to balancing her life.

Page 32



A HAVEN FOR CREATURES

We venture inside the studio of concept artist and creature specialist Constantine Sekeris, as he shows us all of the awesome collectibles in his home workspace.

Page 34



YOUR VIEWS, YOUR ART

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

Page 39



"For 2024, I'm hoping to spend more time on personal illustrations and improve on my social media presence," says Mona Finden.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT FIGHTING BACK AGAINST AI

Mona Finden on the tools that will help to protect artists' work

What will be the biggest challenges in 2024, and how do you plan to face them?

Definitely the biggest challenge in 2024 is the development of generative AI, how companies will decide to handle it and what further regulations will be set. A lot of artists are already struggling, and many previously open doors into the industry are now being shut.

I've not been very vocal about this subject, but it's been on my mind the entire time. I've been using, and will continue to use, Glaze [software that affects the way machine-learning models read an image]. I encourage all artists to do the same. Very soon the Glaze team will also release Nightshade, which is a step up in keeping our copyrighted work safe from scraping.

It's also important to keep a cool head about this issue as it's easy to end up in a black hole of doubt and doomsscrolling, so keep improving and encourage each other, because in the end artists have a skill much more valuable than an algorithm.

What actions would you like to see in 2024 from people who hold power in or over the art industry?

I'd like to hear bigger companies take a firm stance against using generative AI. Some publishers I've worked with have included a clause in their contracts that it's not to be used, and I'd like to see more of this!



Mona Finden is a Norwegian illustrator who loves to create fantasy scenes, floral shapes and detailed characters.

www.monafinden.com



Eeva Nikunen says: "I think it's more important now than ever to focus on your own voice as an artist. It's the only way to stand out from the crowd."

➡ standing by just in case one of them fails," she explains.

More broadly, Amelia believes artists would benefit from organising to protect their interests collectively. "Screenwriters and actors have guilds, but visual artists tend to be woefully underrepresented legally," she says.

Amelia points out that it's perfectly possible to run a successful business while doing the right thing by artists. "I've had the good fortune to work with companies like Darrington Press and 78 Tarot that tirelessly champion and support artists. To nobody's surprise, that attitude leads to an all-round better experience for everyone, better art, and a better product."

Like Amelia, creating a steady flow of additional income streams is on the mind of other artists we spoke to.



Heikala wants to start working in 3D next year. "I like the idea of my little characters having adventures in strange new worlds," she says.



Among them is Finnish illustrator **Eeva Nikunen**, who has her sights set on the idea of licensing her work. "If you can find a comfortable balance between your authentic voice and what the licensing world is seeking, it can be a fantastic way for artists to generate additional income from the type of artwork that they already enjoy making," she says.

Eeva wants 2024 to be the year she puts more time into personal projects. "I think there is tremendous value in creating personal work," she tells us. "Many of the illustration opportunities that I've received in recent years have been the result of a client or publisher seeing something I've created as a personal project. Staying true to your own values and what you enjoy



"The pandemic taught us that life can change in an instant. We can't put all our energies into a single endeavour and hope it doesn't fail," says Amelia.

"The most important thing is making the art that you personally love," Heikala advises.

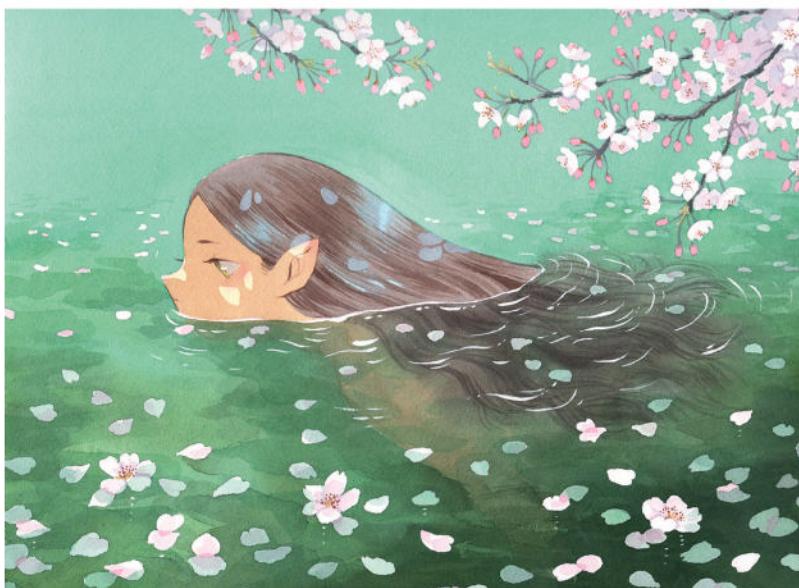
creating will bring you many more illustration opportunities that align with your artistic vision."

While Eeva ultimately views the use of AI art as "inevitable", she also hopes that a greater appreciation of the real deal will develop. "I want to remain optimistic and believe that original projects born from the inspired minds of artists who have worked on their craft will become even more valuable in the coming years," she says.

SOCIAL MEDIA MINDFULNESS

Heikala, another illustrator also from Finland, sees difficulties with social platforms as a tricky problem that will persist next year. "I think that with the ever-changing algorithms of social media sites, it will be an increased challenge for new artists to promote their work and for professionals to

“Developing friendships and connections within the industry strengthens us all”





Eeva says: "I've let outside influences impact my art too much. In 2024, I'm planning to cut on scrolling through social media feeds and focus on the paintings on my easel."



"I have some very pointed goals for the new year; I want to work more on my original IP projects and develop them into materials I can pitch to studios," says Philip Botté Jr.



© Wizards of the Coast

connect with their audience," she says. "These days it seems that no matter what you try, the exposure remains limited, and the situation is especially dire for newcomers who are getting started and have no built-in audience."

Given that it's so easy to spend a lot of time chasing an audience on each and every new platform that pops up, Heikala's strategy is to focus on her existing social media accounts for the time being, and wait to see which new platforms become popular before giving them her energy. "Having to constantly think about how my social posts are performing and how to best please the algorithm is extremely stressful," she explains. "I'm trying to be more mindful, to not despair over the things that are out of my control, and to focus on making art that I love."

Heikala's New Year's resolution is to make more "self-indulgent art" by

"In 2024, I hope more people in positions of power understand the value of art in all its variations, especially the human element as part of this. Not just on a monetary level, but the human experience," says Julia.

which she means "art that's just for me, on my terms, that I make just for the joy of the process". She adds: "It's the best way to find inspiration for new ideas and techniques, and that childlike joy is an invaluable resource that drives my creativity."

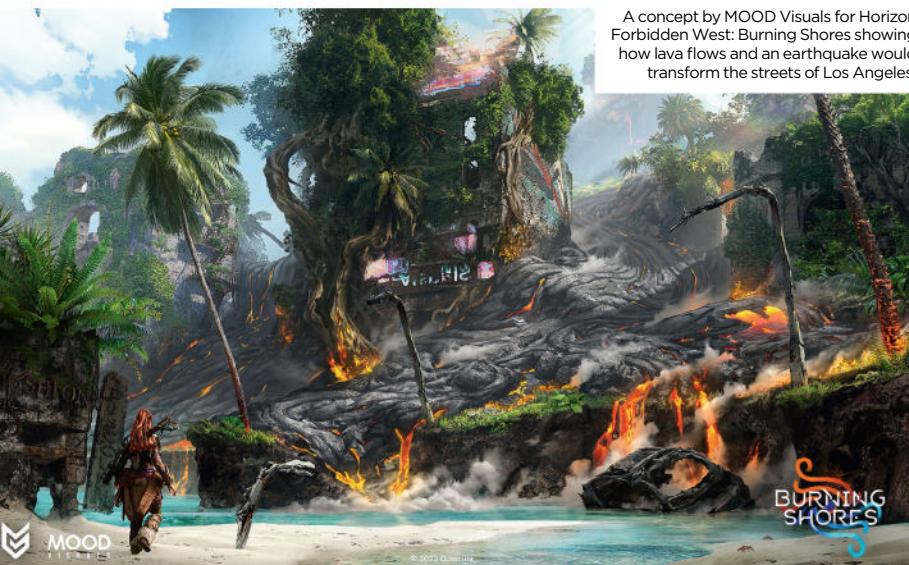
COMMUNITY FOCUS

This coming year, German freelance illustrator and art teacher **Julia Metzger** plans to put her efforts into building connections with other artists to bolster resolve in



these unpredictable times. She says she's going to focus on smaller artist communities, both online and offline.

"Having drawing sessions with my local community and exchanging experiences with artists and students is extremely important for us to stay grounded," Julia says. "Developing great friendships and connections within the art industry strengthens all of us, even as the landscape around us is shifting. There's peace knowing that there won't be any challenges I'll have to face alone, even if I can't name them yet." ➤



A concept by MOOD Visuals for Horizon Forbidden West: Burning Shores showing how lava flows and an earthquake would transform the streets of Los Angeles.



© 2023 Sony Interactive Entertainment Europe/Guerrilla Games

➡ In 2024, Julia hopes to see more creativity in the animation world too. "It was pure joy to see all the new styles of animation and aesthetics we've recently had in video games, movies and TV shows. Seeing them flourish further would be a dream for me," she smiles.

"Among my personal highlights recently were Guillermo del Toro's Pinocchio with its outstanding use of stop-motion, plus the newly released Blue Eye Samurai, which has a blend of 2D and 3D styles, as well as Puss in Boots: The Last Wish. I hope more

“It was pure joy to see all the new styles of animation and aesthetics”

people with influence will push for projects where this level of creativity and excellence can stay alive."

CALL FOR DIVERSITY

Among those hit hard by the film industry strikes that took place this year was the concept artist **Phillip Boutté Jr.**

"Surviving that was a true blessing, but one of the biggest challenges I've faced in my career," he tells us. His wish for 2024 is for those who hold power in the industry to begin "truly grasping what it means to be diverse and inclusive", and providing those with marginalised voices equity. Phillip explains: "It's very important to make sure that the artists behind the scenes are diverse in order to provide authenticity to projects, but also to inspire people to empathise and learn



from those that aren't from their own specific background. This provides something palpable and tangible on-screen, and we need much more of it."

Our final resolution comes from

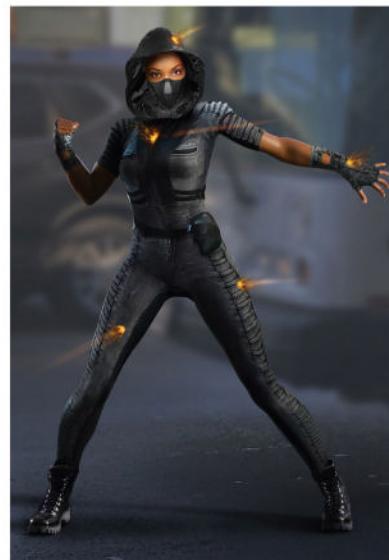


Jesper Sølling Andersen,

the creative director at the Copenhagen-based studio MOOD Visuals. He, just like the others, wants to make more art for himself next year, and also delve into 3D art; specifically using photogrammetry and Unreal Engine. On the latter target, he says: "Granted, it's another 'tool', but it can open up for so much more!"

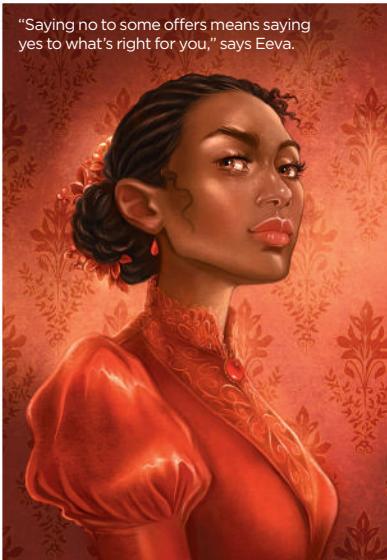
In the near future, Jesper would like to begin seeing more transparency in the creative industries. "Generally, we're a fairly closed-off club of several hundred-thousand people who all share in the same goal: to bring our worlds to life. If creatives and artists weren't here, how would we ever be able to envision the impossible, the implausible, or the fantastic?"

One of Mona Finden's Dungeons & Dragons characters conjures fire.



Phillip says: "I know that I'll face struggles, but I'll be a self-starter and put my best foot forward. That's all artists are really in control of. Just give it your best shot!"

Artist news, software & events





A day in the life of... Jen Hancock

Home comforts We learn why remote working is ideal for the costume concept artist's professional and family lives

"At 6am I start moving my kids out of the door. I have one in elementary, one at middle school, one at high school and one in college. I try to get a walk in with my husband, who also works from home. I'm at my desk by 9am, which works well as I'm in Utah, an hour ahead of the west coast.

My last job was ideal; someone on the team would open a Zoom call so

we could always bounce ideas off each other. When I start a job, I like to get to know the visual language of the designer. If we know the casting, I'll stalk Instagram to get an expression that communicates the character's vibe. And then there's feedback, so I'll turn something in and work on something else in the pipeline while I'm waiting for feedback, and repeat.



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.

It's great if I can build my lunch into an errand, like getting my child to the dentist for example. I do try and take breaks to be present as a parent, but then that pushes my workday later.

Dinner is around 5.30pm. That's the meal I'm most likely to eat at my desk as I feel pressure to finish my projects towards the end of the day. After that, I just have time to see the kids off to bed, and hopefully watch something mindless with my husband. We aim to go to bed at 10pm.

I couldn't make it work without my partner, so my advice for newcomers with families would be to have a good support system. Also, even though sometimes it's long hours and hard, there's always a light at the end of the tunnel. I'm grateful to be able to work from home. It's been really good for me and my family to work this way."



Jen is a freelance costume concept artist. Projects she has loved working on include Violent Night for Universal Pictures and Disney's Haunted Mansion, as well as the upcoming Descendants film. See more of her work at www.jenhancock.com.

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PRINT AND DIGITAL BACK ISSUES



Issue 234

January 2024

Incredible artists bring you a host of advice to up your game, from making animal-based characters to lighting and composition tips. We also learn how you can make your artbook dreams come true, and tour a Disney artist's studio.



Issue 233

December 2023

It's Colour Dodge time! Discover how YouTube phenomenon Ross Tran created this issue's gorgeous Hatsune Miku cover art. Plus, we talk to Phillip Bouthé Jr. about his concept art career, and learn how to boost artwork with backstory.



Issue 232

December 2023

We bring you the lowdown on Dreams - Procreate's exciting new animation tool, delve into the history of LightBox with co-founder Bobby Chiu, and industry experts give insights on exhibiting at art conventions.



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.

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ImagineNation Artist in Residence



On the left is a creature from my artbook MetamorFX, and on the right is a creature roughed for a gag moment in the Ghostbusters remake that was cut out.



Concept for Ghostbusters (2016), © Sony



This is my studio. I've recently moved into my new place, but I haven't been able to do too much as I've been busy on-site.

Constantine Sekeris

House of concepts We go hunting for superheroes, monsters and more as the concept artist and creature designer gives us a tour inside his new studio space



I recently moved into a bigger space and was able to expand my home studio. I haven't had time to fix it up yet, so it's still something of a work in progress for me to complete.

Throughout the COVID pandemic, I noticed my increased productivity when working remotely from home compared to the studio lot. But having

said that, I'll admit that I love the pros of working from the lot. I'm inspired and surrounded by amazing, talented artists who have become my friends. They challenge me when I get to see into their process, and I pick up on all their insightful tips.

Plus, working at the studio I become more involved in the fabrication and execution of my character or creature. I love the teamwork and camaraderie

brought by all of us working together to create something special.

HOME SCHEDULE

When I'm working from home, my day starts around 8am. I get dressed and then drive to grab my morning coffee or breakfast. It's my mental routine to break up the day with some formality.

I return to my studio and get started with emails, checking for any notes ➤

Artist news, software & events

Some early costume concepts done for House of the Dragon season one, working with amazing costume designer Jany Temime.

I've been very lucky to get awards for the concepts I've created, which you can see on the bottom shelf here.



House of the Dragon concepts ©HBO



This is my sculpting kit of tools and oil-based clay I have for when I want to step away from digital sculpting.



My sketches for an upcoming creature design sketchbook that I've been working on.



I was humbled to spend over two years on Avatar: The Way of Water with some top talent.

JAMES CAMERON'S
AVATAR
THE WAY OF WATER

© 20th Century Studios

ImagineNation Artist in Residence

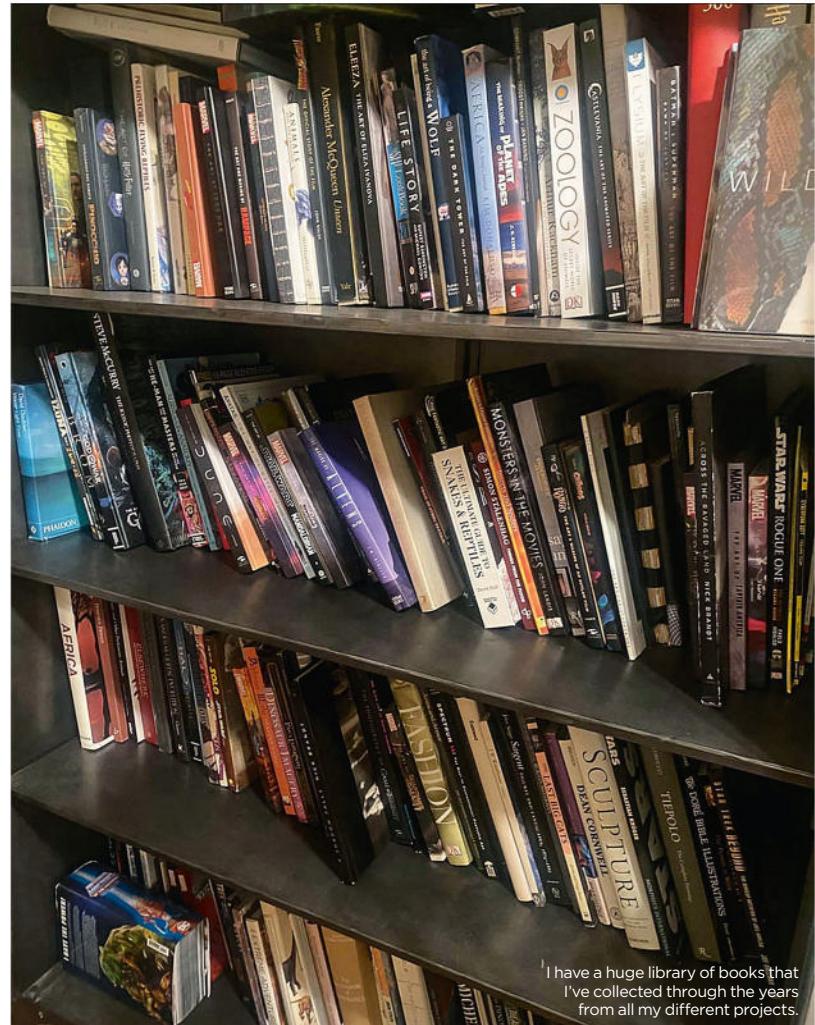


► I might have been sent. I make a list of what I need to have completed before the end of the day. This helps to keep me focused and stick to a regimented time schedule.

As I prepare to tackle a character or creature for the day, I love to start by sketching in a 5x7-inch sketchbook. My process was developed as a young artist and set the tone I adhere to as a career concept artist to this day. As a kid, I carried a sketchbook everywhere I went. That simplicity afforded me the chance to sketch a lot throughout the

Demon designs for the movie Constantine that I did when working at Edge FX back in 2003. However, the project didn't happen for us in the end, unfortunately.

I'd done this sketch many years ago, and later took the time to refine the design in ZBrush and KeyShot.



I have a huge library of books that I've collected through the years from all my different projects.

day and it became a discipline. It was just the intuitive thing for me to do.

I like the smaller booklets because they allow me to keep my exploration of silhouettes small, so I can see how they'll look from a distance and if the sketch works. Plus, this process allows me to make all of my mistakes at the sketch phase until I get something that works. I'll elaborate the sketch further once I get into 3D using ZBrush.

CONSISTENT PROCESS

When I'm designing a superhero for either Marvel or DC, especially when it comes to the costume concepts, I'll repeat the same process, sketching to explore simple graphic shapes. Here I'm looking for a quick graphic read from a distance that tells the viewer who this superhero or character is.

I then jump into ZBrush and explore the design and character in greater detail, applying textures that will allow for movement and functionality. The next step is to pose and transfer my character into KeyShot to render it out with realistic lighting, playing with the textures and colour further. Once I've found something I like, I complete it in Photoshop, adding some atmosphere, adjusting the colour, and polishing for dynamic presentation.

I do all my work on a 27-inch, 5k display from a Mac Studio M2. I don't like to have my arm over my screen when I work in 3D, so when I want to draw, I traditionally sketch.

I also make staying healthy a top priority. The sheer level of stress that comes with the pressure to perform at the highest level every day, meeting

“For the sake of keeping my mental state fresh, I'll workout every day to rejuvenate both my body and mind”



Wonder Woman is one of my favourite characters that I conceptualized for Batman v Superman.



I have an armature ready to go when I want to tackle a creature or character for a project.



An early design sculpture of The Thing for Fantastic Four, from when I was working in practical FX.

deadlines, carrying heavy workloads, and the amount of hours I keep on a weekly basis definitely takes its toll.

For the sake of keeping my mental state fresh, I'll workout every day to rejuvenate my body and mind. I made it a habit to work in a healthy manner and going to the gym does that for me. I can't overstate this enough: your health comes first. I wouldn't have the stamina I do if it weren't for my health.

Finally, the most important advice I can offer you is to never, ever stop drawing or sketching!

After graduating from ArtCenter College of Design, Constantine started his career in practical FX as a creature and character designer, and has since worked on films including Thor: Ragnarok. See more at www.artstation.com/artofconstantine.

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ISSUE 235

GLENN VILPPU WE TALK TO THE DISNEY LEGEND ABOUT HIS INFLUENTIAL CAREER

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Traditional Artist Workshop

In depth Fantasy explorations

EXPLORE NEW FANTASY WORLDS

DAMJAN GJORGIEVSKI shares his methods for drawing fantasy subjects, as he did them. Into creating new work for his artbook using graphite pencils

If you want to get to grips with pencils, then check out the tutorial on just that in our last issue.

Pencils rule!

Hello Rob. I'm a hobbyist artist and work on my iPad using Procreate and, while I love it, I haven't ever tried my hand with the more traditional tools, mostly through nerves about not being any good. Last month you had a tutorial by Damjan Gjorgievski that totally opened my eyes and now I'm happily sketching away with pencils as well as my Apple Pencil, and I love it! Turns out there was no need to worry after all.

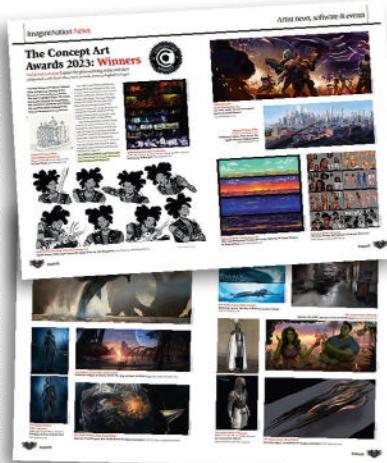
Abed, via email

Rob replies Hi Abed, I'm so glad that tutorial encouraged you to reach outside of your comfort zone. It's a really fantastic workshop! But more importantly it sounds as though it has inspired you as well as shown you some new skills, and that can only be a good thing.

While there are people out there who only use certain media, I think it's worth remembering that it's your creative vision that comes through in your work, not the tools that you used to share it. Good luck with your next projects, and who knows,



DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE?
Don't worry – you can get hold of issue 234 at ifxm.ag/single-ifx.



Last month we teamed with the Concept Art Association to share stunning Concept Art Awards-winning work.

maybe there's some clay in your future... No matter what road you follow, do share your work with us. We'd love to see it!

Inspiration overload

I'm reaching out to say thanks for your last issue. I was feeling a little creative block and that really helped me. I love your usual gallery section but the extra Concept Art Association winners pages helped to inspire me even more. There were some familiar names there, along with a few new ones that I've been checking out. Thank you!

Jess, via email

Rob replies Hi Jess. Thanks so much for reaching out. It's a pleasure to hear you were inspired by the magazine and the art we share. Workshops and features can be a great resource, but sometimes all you need is that spark you get from seeing what the rest of the community is up to, from your peers to the seasoned veterans. I hope that block has gone for good!

Artists come first

Hi ImagineFX. I'm writing to ask you to please do more about AI and how to use it best. I'm really interested in using it as part of my work, but not sure how best to go about this. Thanks in advance.

Iain, via email

Rob replies Hi Iain, and thank you for getting in contact with us. This is a tough one for me for a number of reasons. I can see how AI can be a useful tool as part of a wider workflow, but as the situation with AI currently stands, particularly the brazen disrespect being shown for artists' rights and livelihoods, we won't be publishing any tutorials or workshops on the topic. We're proud that ImagineFX is a magazine for artists, art tools and techniques, so for now we'll focus on those things.



New works that have grabbed our attention



Roeve
[@roeve](https://instagram.com/roeve)



JJDM
[@jjdmdesigns](https://instagram.com/jjdmdesigns)



Neri
[@nerimitsu](https://instagram.com/nerimitsu)

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

DIGITAL DRAUGHTSMAN

Glenn creates drawings both traditionally and digitally, including this picture made in Procreate.



Glenn Vilppu

Dominic Carter talks to the renowned visual artist about his varied career and influential approach to anatomy

When you're watching animation from Disney, Marvel or Warner Bros., it's likely Glenn Vilppu has had a hand in it somehow. Not only has he worked on film and TV productions for all three studios, the internationally acclaimed artist and animator's approach to life drawing and gesture has gone on to become a standard across the industry.

We caught up with him to learn about his journey, and some of the approaches he teaches aspiring artists through the online Vilppu Academy.

Can you tell us a little about your background as an artist?

I've really never done anything else except being an artist. Well, outside of part-time jobs and things like that to get myself through school.

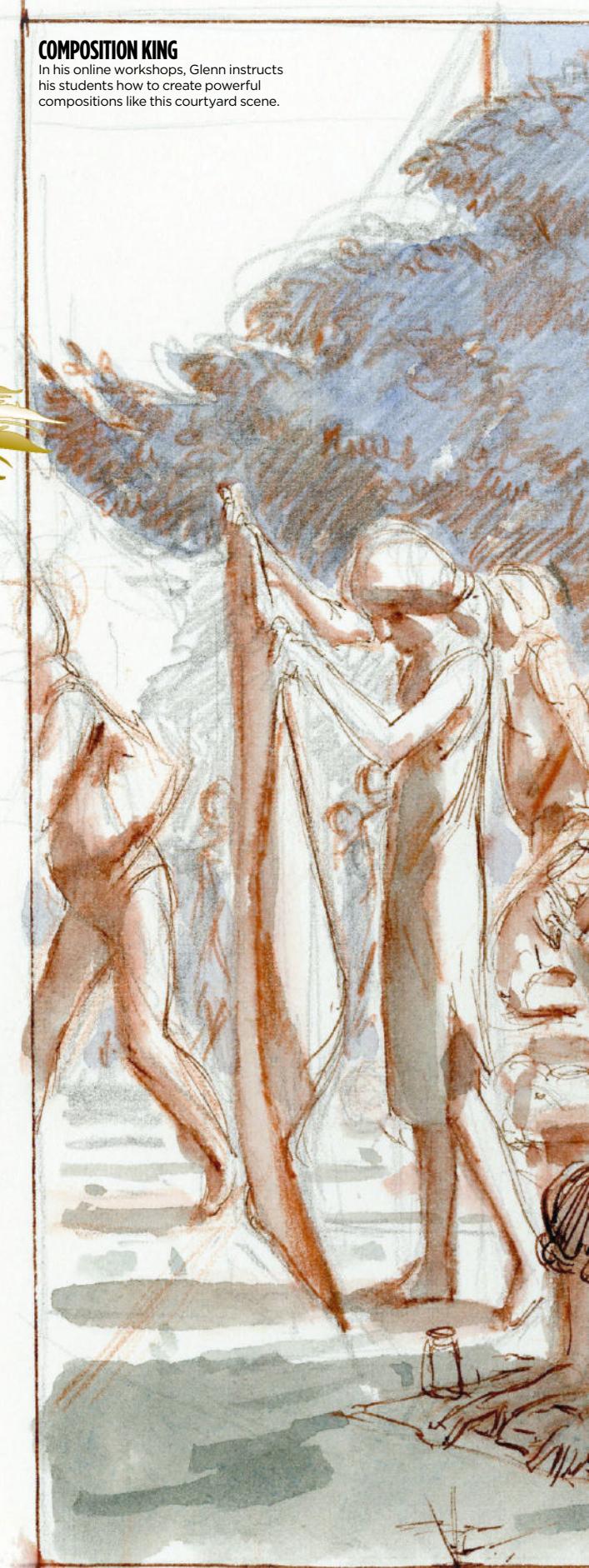
My father was an engineer by profession, but he was also a Sunday painter. I remember being six years old and watching him work on a portrait of my mother while I was on the floor and tracing things out of one of his books. That was the beginning.

But first of all I needed to learn English. My background is Finnish, although I didn't learn Finnish until I started school. Although I was born in the United States, we moved over to Finland right away. And so when we finally came back to Finland in 1939, I lived in a Finnish community where I didn't have to speak English.

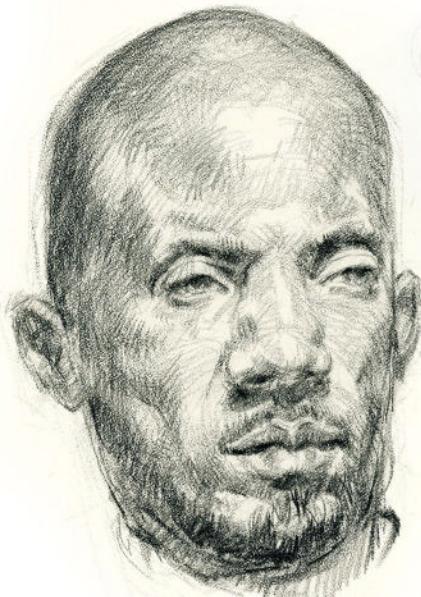
Drawing was one of the things I did to compensate for not speaking. I took art classes on Saturday when I was in high school. Originally I started out at what is now CalArts, and then the ArtCenter College of Design where I had a full scholarship. I chose not ➤

COMPOSITION KING

In his online workshops, Glenn instructs his students how to create powerful compositions like this courtyard scene.







GETTING AHEAD

In his 10-week portrait course, Glenn explains how to draw everything from planes to expressions.

► to continue on after graduating from high school though, because I was too young and wasn't ready for the rigours of the school.

I went into the navy for a couple of years, then came back and went to ArtCenter. I would eventually start teaching there as a student. After I received my bachelor's and master's degrees while teaching, I taught at the ArtCenter for 13 years. Many of my instructors were born in the 1800s, and I started there in about 1959.

I finally left in 1974 and started my own school. My primary reason for leaving at the time was that I felt they were downplaying the fundamentals of drawing. Everybody was going totally abstract. There was no need for fine artists to be able to draw.

At my own school I focused on nothing but drawing and painting, and part of that was learning about anatomy. I taught myself in school as they wouldn't teach anatomy. They wouldn't even allow a skeleton in, so I really had to learn it myself. I did this with paintings from my imagination that were focused on composition and



DISNEY DRAWINGS

These sketches are from a lesson on how to draw clothed figures taught in Disney's Tokyo studio.

an analysis of the Old Masters. I don't use photographs and still rarely do.

But the primary focus was on the composition and organisation. I went through the same traditional steps of doing sketches, building them up and turning those into paintings, and in the process of doing that I was able to construct the figure. This was a very, very traditional approach, but not an academic approach. Everything was based on the need to take, to organise your picture while using the drawing in order to communicate.

After five years of having my own school, teaching drawing, painting, head painting and figure painting, I did a lot of things. I basically had a one-man show every year for 20 years.

At the age of 40 I really needed to take a step back because I was pretty much burned out. I had students who went to work at Disney, and students working there already. I called them up and Disney hired me, even without me knowing a thing about animation.

I started teaching there with my basic approach of taking and drawing

GLOBETROTTING GLENN'S TRAINING

Glenn was sent to teach all across the world by Disney, from Vancouver to Sydney, and Paris to Burbank.



Artist PROFILE

Glenn Vilppu

LOCATION: US

FAVOURITE ARTISTS: Pontormo, Michelangelo, Adolph Menzel

MEDIA USED: Silverpoint, water soluble pencils, fountain pen, oils, charcoal, conte crayon, Procreate

WEB: <https://vilppuacademy.com>



“At the age of 40 I needed to take a step back because I was pretty much burned out”

FABRIC FOCUS

When it comes to clothed figures, Glenn relies on seven basic folds in order to quickly and effectively communicate form.

from the imagination. Being able to construct the figure was exactly what was required within the animation industry at the time.

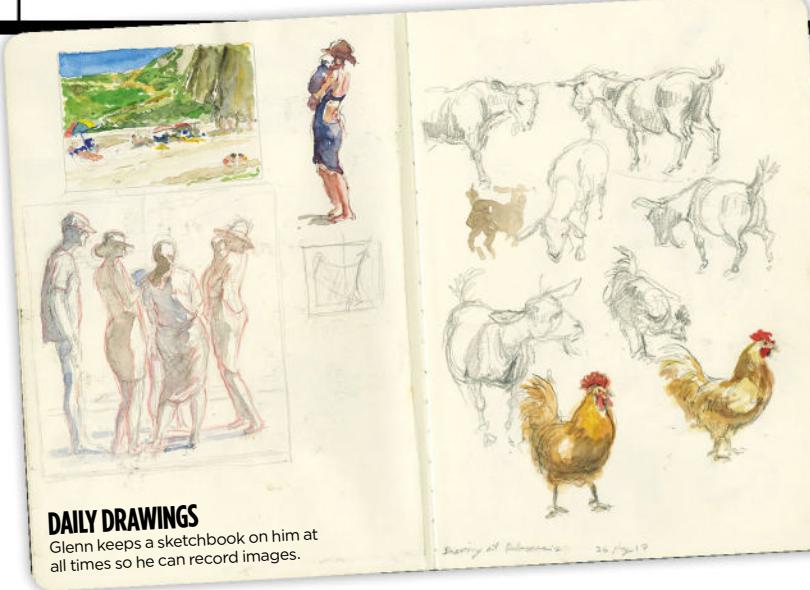
In the process, I developed my drawing manual, which has pretty much become the standard now. But it's very, very fundamental, the main point is being able to capture action. The focus is on communicating the gesture, the action of the figure, constructing the figure, and being able to do that from imagination. At the same time, my interest in doing that came from a place of realism. I had to take and really understand anatomy in order to teach myself.

What are the steps you would suggest to a person taking and studying anatomy?

Well, the first thing is to study. If you don't know what the shoulder looks like, or how it works, get your books and study it. Take and draw from the Old Masters, look at them and try to understand how they use anatomy. Take a whole Michelangelo or Da Vinci and learn it inside out.

Gian Battista Alberti put it very clearly. He said that to be able to communicate, to show the state of mind of your subject, you need to ➤

Legend



DAILY DRAWINGS

Glenn keeps a sketchbook on him at all times so he can record images.



ANIMAL ART

Just like his approach to life drawing, Glenn's animal art is built on form and structure.



CAPTURING CHARACTER

Glenn's portraits deftly capture character and personality, as well as accurate anatomical proportions.

► know the figure from the inside out. You need to know the bones that are needed, and the other muscles, you need to take and draw the figure in real-life situations. And you need to do all of this so that you can show the state of mind of your subject. That's so you can capture the gesture and show the action of storytelling. And that's really the direction that I've taken my teaching and studying of anatomy.

I've now been studying anatomy for probably 60 years, and I'm constantly seeing things that I don't recognise, or know how they work. I'm constantly digging into my resources, books and apps to try to understand anatomy. But it's not just copying anatomy, it's knowing that understanding anatomy is to be able to draw form, to describe form, to be able to look at it and see it in many different ways.

For instance, I suggest for people who like drawing the head that they should be able to draw the skull from any angle from imagination. It takes time. There's no one way. Just taking and copying anatomical plates doesn't really do it justice; you

have to take and apply anatomy, and you have to make the anatomy and use it in many ways.

You have to draw a figure in action if you want to understand anatomy in action. And to do that you really have to be able to construct the anatomy. That means knowing how and where the insertions are, how everything looks while it does things. Part of learning how to do that is to draw from the Old Masters' paintings, and try to take and draw.

How did the Old Masters use anatomy? What are those bumps that they used?

As for tools, I find students are often really good at copying anatomical plates. But when it comes to drawing from the model, it's almost as if they've never studied anatomy. You have to apply





“You have to draw a figure in action if you want to understand anatomy in action”



ANATOMY IN ACTION

An underlying understanding of the human anatomy allows Glenn to draw from both life and imagination.

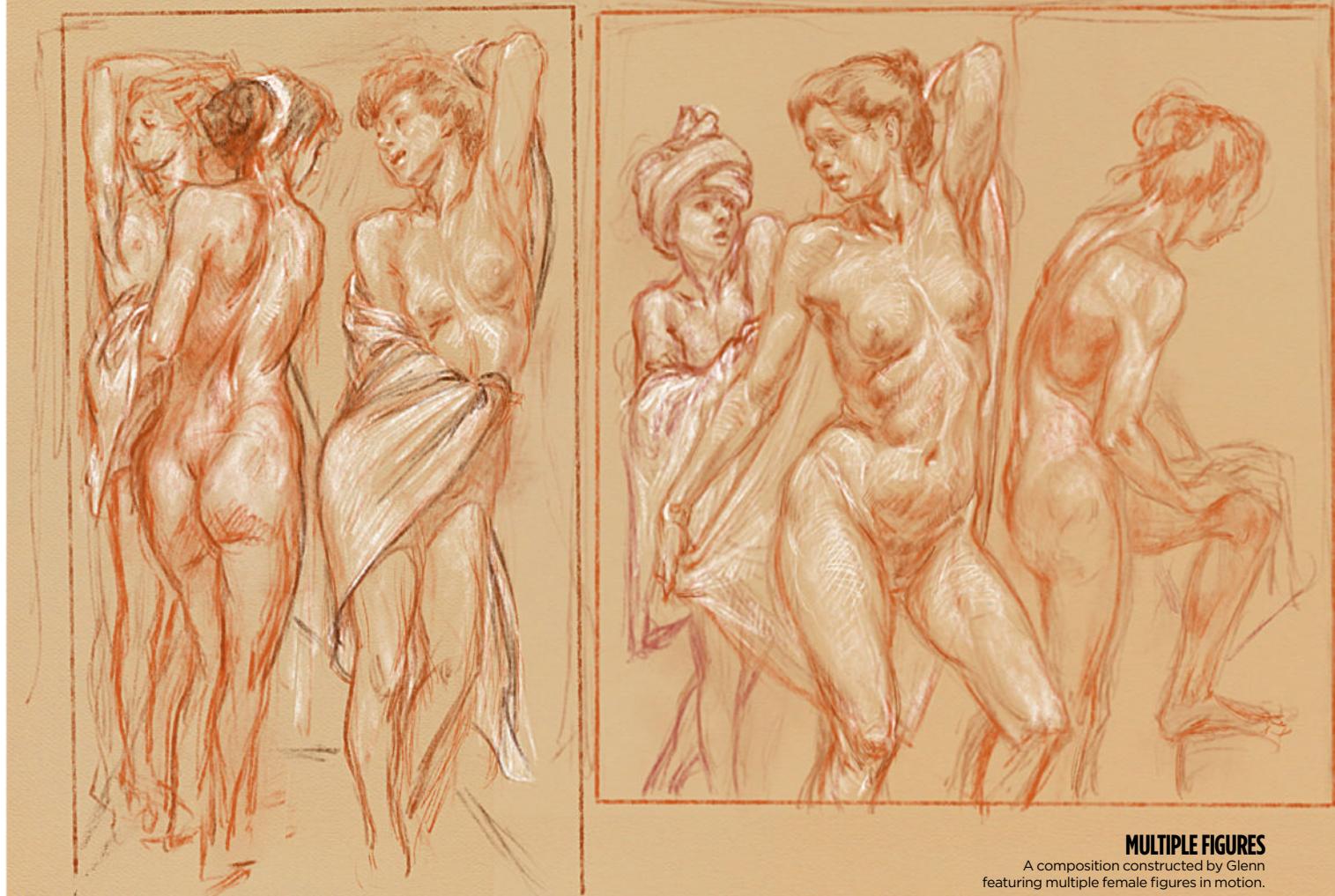
it. You have to see how it works, and that comes down to doing a drawing where you don't understand the anatomy, and you're digging up your books and analysing it to see what those bumps are, and how to make it all understandable.

Like Bridgeman or Cambiaso, you go back and look at Michelangelo's old anatomical studies. It's constantly looking and analysing, but it's not academic copy. I don't copy. You could categorise my approach as 'analytical construction'. 'There aren't any rules' is my sort of motto. No rules, just what the tools are.

How do you describe form when working with anatomy?

That's the critical element here. My drawing manual is actually a drawing manual. It's a step-by-step process, taking and developing the drawing. And that's what allowed me to take it and work in animation.

Drawing from imagination is a constructive approach, but it's still focused on dealing with showing the gesture. Showing, literally as Alberti said, is the state of mind viewing the subject. That's animation. Animation is movement; it's not static. And if you study tradition and the work of the ➤



MULTIPLE FIGURES

A composition constructed by Glenn featuring multiple female figures in motion.

► Old Masters, you'll find it's all about movement.

I don't spend a lot of time copying tones, I'm not so concerned with the fancy surface rendering of things. That is, of course, part of the end result, but it relies on being able to understand the form and anatomy underneath. One of the main points I always teach first is that no matter how realistic you draw, it's not real. It's an abstraction. Everything we put it on, whether it's an iPad or a piece of paper, it really is just an abstraction that communicates a symbol for something. Don't copy, analyse: that's the first thing that I tell my new students.

Secondly, you have to be drawing constantly. Every day. The great artists, even going back to the Greeks you'll find Apelles, never went a day without a line. Michelangelo's advice has

PREPARING PALETTES

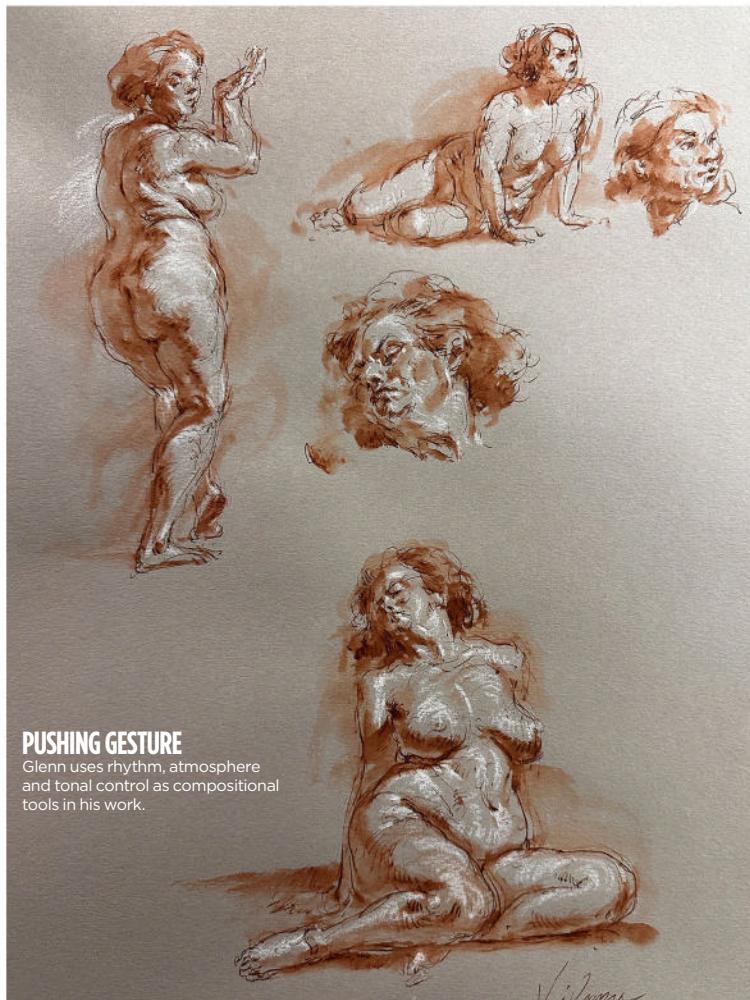
Establishing colours and values is one of the basic approaches to painting composed art.



always been to just draw. That's my advice too. Very rarely can I be caught without a sketchbook in my hand. I'm drawing all the time. That's the main element of drawing. So you draw, and you have to have that curiosity. If you don't understand something or don't recognise it, you can't draw it. Study, take and dig up. It's the curiosity and how you can use these things, but at the same time, use them in a way that's applicable.

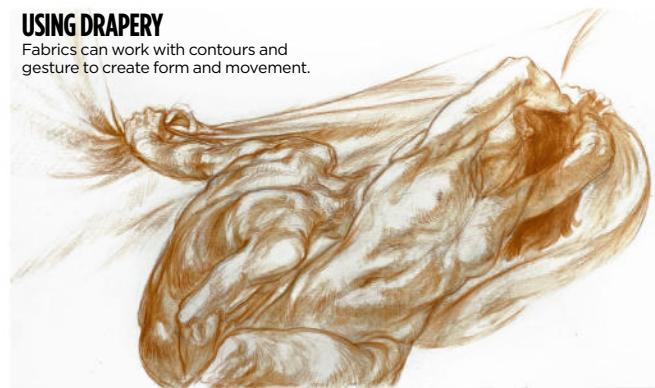
Anatomy is drawing that has to function. It has to take, communicate, and that's the abstraction. Drawing is nothing more than thinking. And the legacy of my drawing is that it can be categorised as analytical construction. But it's to a point, there's a purpose in the drawing. It's not just scribbling. Every line has to have a reason. In my old age, I know that there's a lot more intuitive taking and going back, and picking up themes I had 70 years ago.

“I’m much better today than 10 years ago. And I hope to be better 10 years from now”



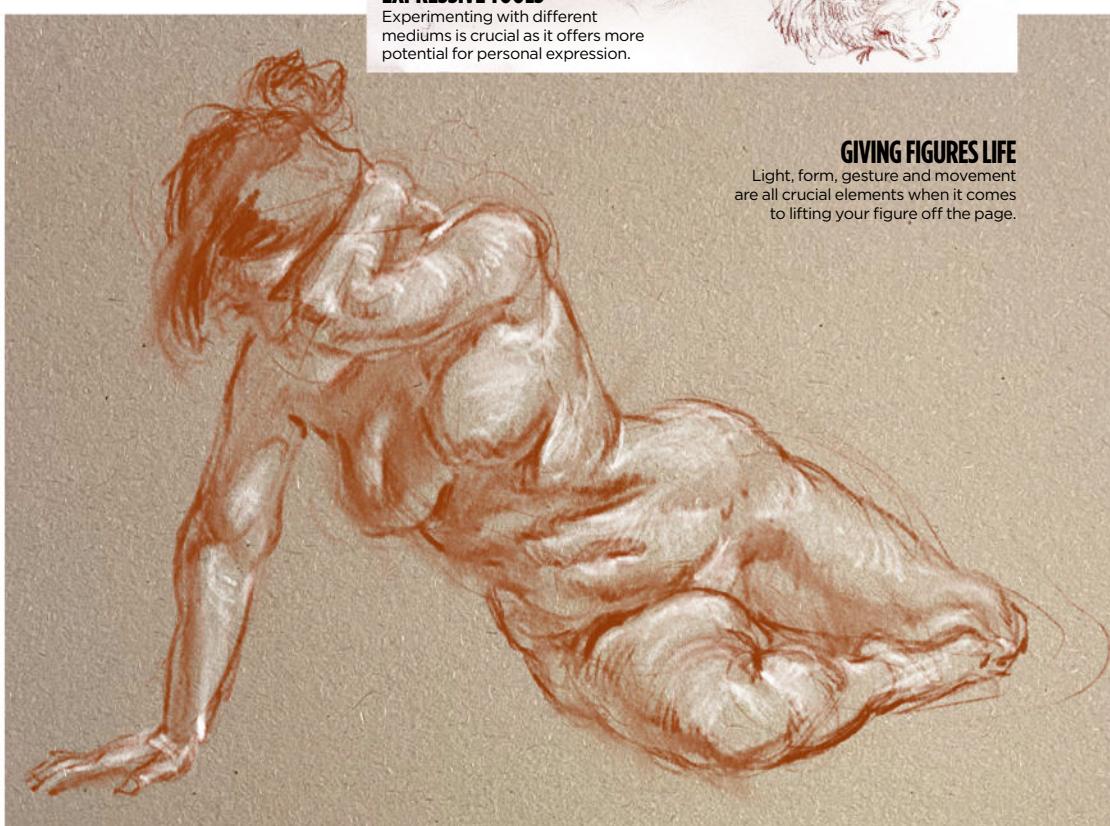
USING DRAPERY

Fabrics can work with contours and gesture to create form and movement.



EXPRESSIVE TOOLS

Experimenting with different mediums is crucial as it offers more potential for personal expression.



GIVING FIGURES LIFE

Light, form, gesture and movement are all crucial elements when it comes to lifting your figure off the page.

What's your daily schedule?

Oh, I draw. I'm in Germany at the moment, giving a seminar. I've just come back from a couple of weeks in Florence doing the same thing. Today I took in two short, quick oil sketches [portraits] while also working on the paintings. The paintings are drawn from imagination, they're figurative.

I do an awful lot of analysing of the Old Masters. I'm constantly recording, I probably record 10 hours a week. Drawing and painting, that's what I do. I'm a teacher, that's my goal.

What are you most proud of?

My students. I get messages constantly from students thanking me for their career. And that's satisfaction enough. I don't exhibit paintings, I have no interest in that. The work I do is for myself and my students.

Today I'm much more intuitive. I'm applying all those years of studying and I'm a little bit more direct, but I'm still much better today than I was 10 years ago. And I hope to be much better 10 years from now.

Sketchbook

Jonas Minnebo

Makeshift spaceships and Gundam-inspired mechs are part of the experimental designs in the concept artist's sketches

Artist **PROFILE**

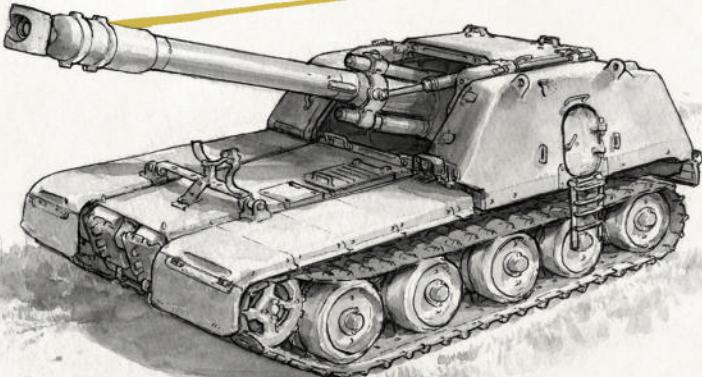
Jonas Minnebo

LOCATION: England



Concept artist Jonas works in the video game industry and specialises in creating mechanical and sci-fi designs. He has kept sketchbooks throughout his life and increasingly used them for recording personal work. Jonas is fascinated by the imaginative side of drawing and focuses on generating new ideas and interesting designs in his sketches.

www.artstation.com/azelinus

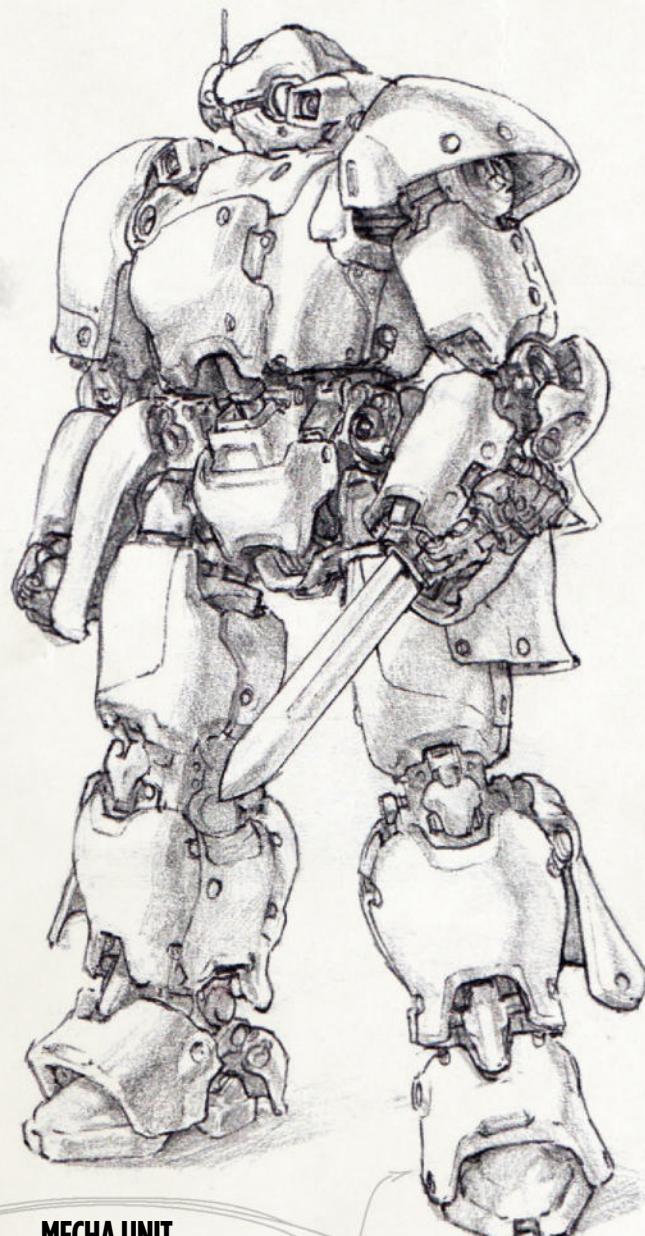


SELF-PROPELLED GUN

"This self-propelled gun started out its life as a mash-up between the Bandkanon 1A and a Soltam L-33. This was an attempt to push the shading's refinement using black watercolour paint over a ballpoint pen line-art base."

SET OF COSMONAUTS

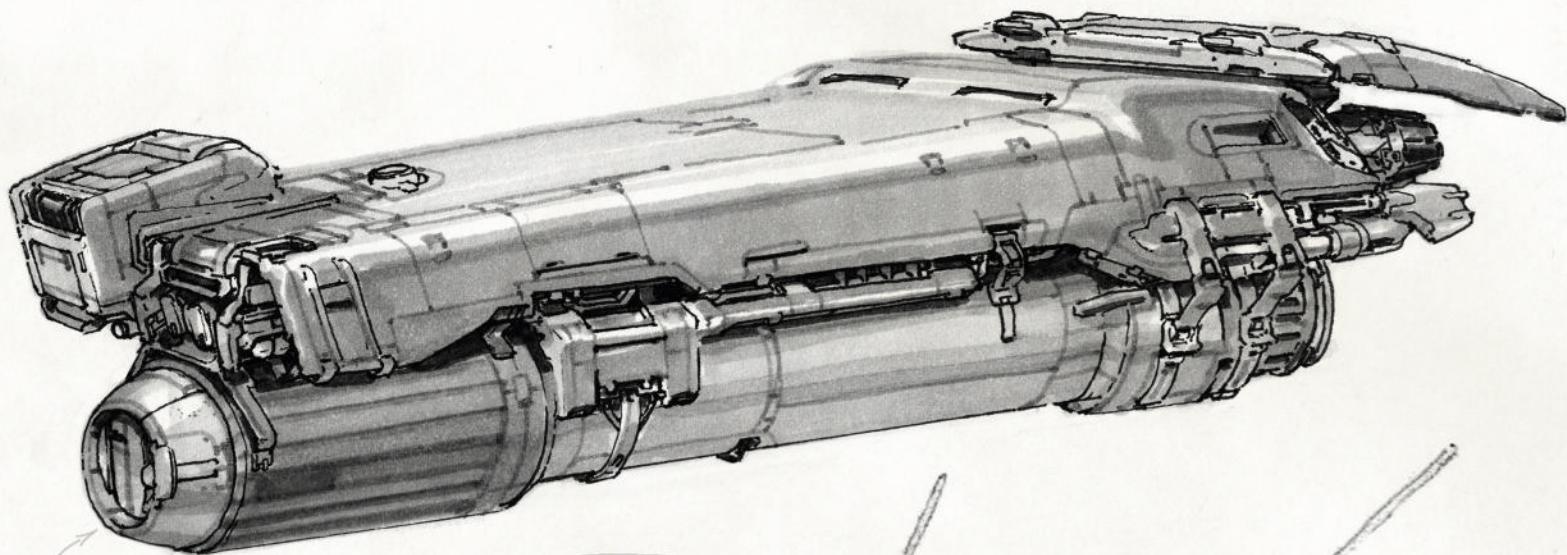
"Some astronauts in a makeshift style to accompany the spaceship designs I was doing at the time. These were also a workflow experiment, using watercolour pencils to create an overall gradated base to refine with pencil shading."



MECHA UNIT

"I'm a fan of Gundam design, and I wanted to make a more humanoid mech design, inspired loosely by the style of a Zaku. Done in ballpoint pen with pencil shading on marker paper."



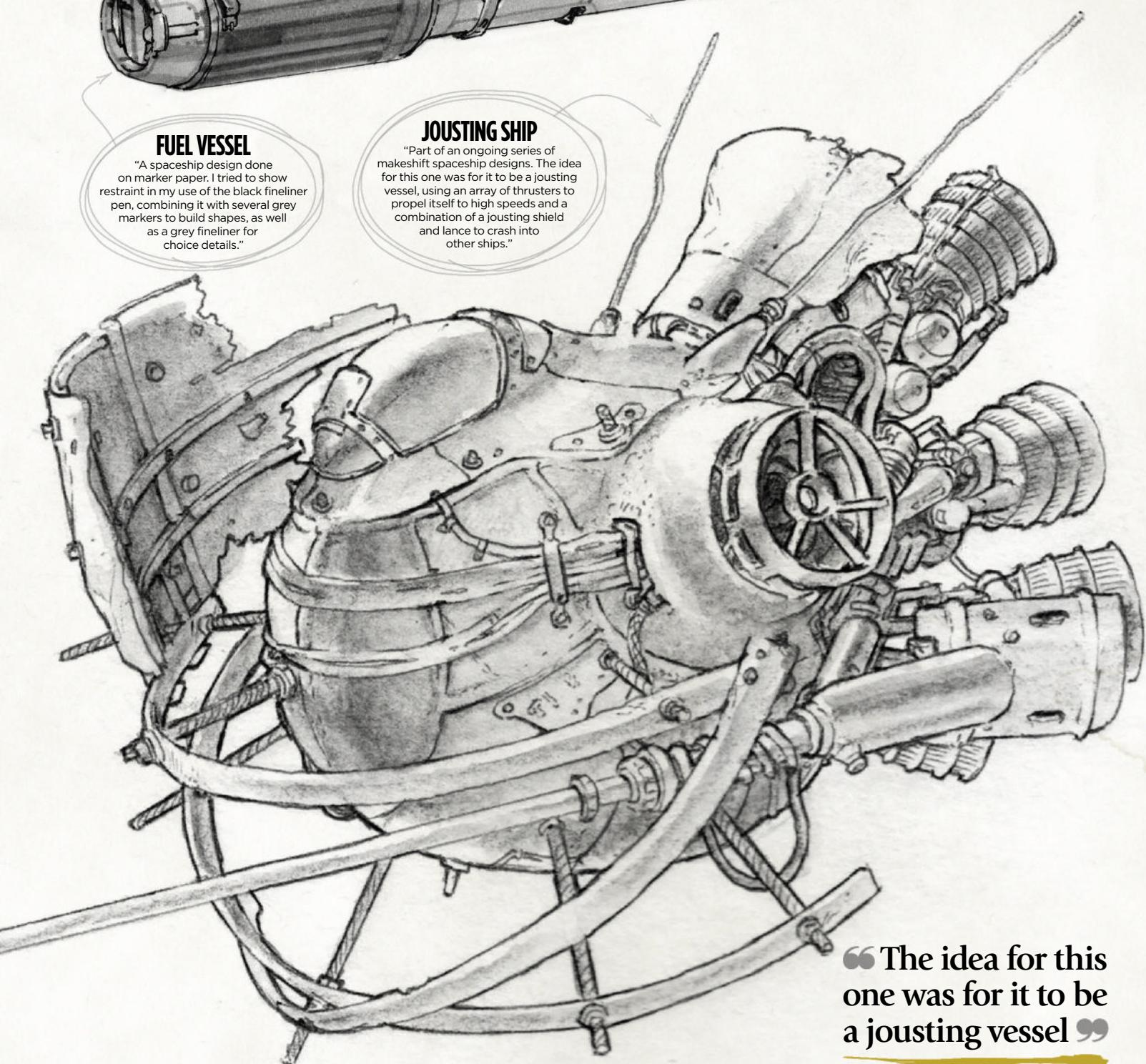


FUEL VESSEL

"A spaceship design done on marker paper. I tried to show restraint in my use of the black fineliner pen, combining it with several grey markers to build shapes, as well as a grey fineliner for choice details."

JOUSTING SHIP

"Part of an ongoing series of makeshift spaceship designs. The idea for this one was for it to be a jousting vessel, using an array of thrusters to propel itself to high speeds and a combination of a jousting shield and lance to crash into other ships."



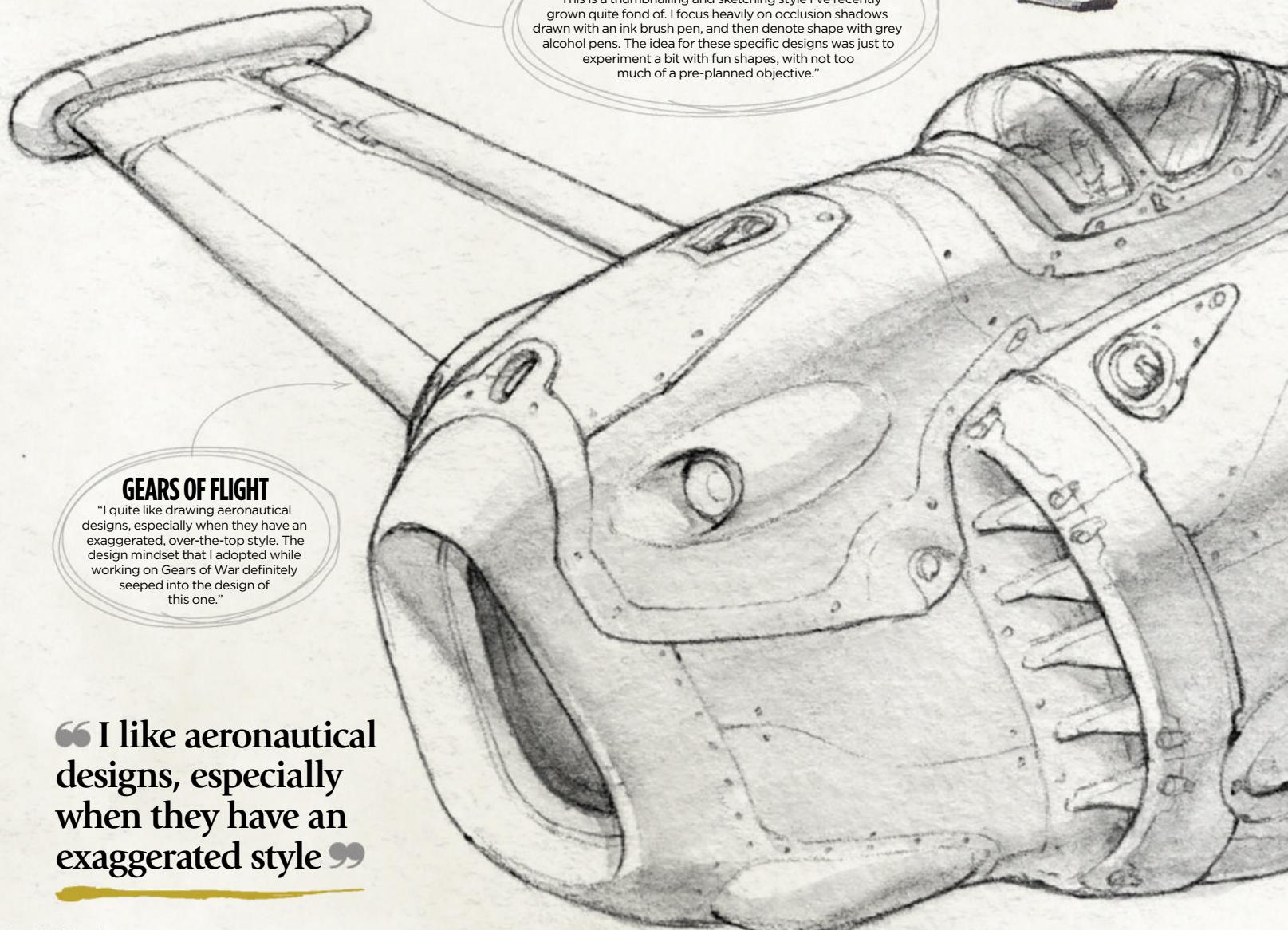
“The idea for this one was for it to be a jousting vessel”

Sketchbook



WALKER MECH SKETCHES

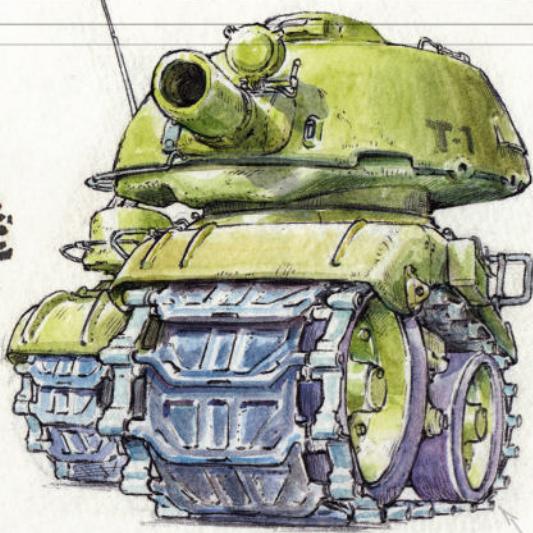
"This is a thumbnailing and sketching style I've recently grown quite fond of. I focus heavily on occlusion shadows drawn with an ink brush pen, and then denote shape with grey alcohol pens. The idea for these specific designs was just to experiment a bit with fun shapes, with not too much of a pre-planned objective."



GEARS OF FLIGHT

"I quite like drawing aeronautical designs, especially when they have an exaggerated, over-the-top style. The design mindset that I adopted while working on Gears of War definitely seeped into the design of this one."

“I like aeronautical designs, especially when they have an exaggerated style”

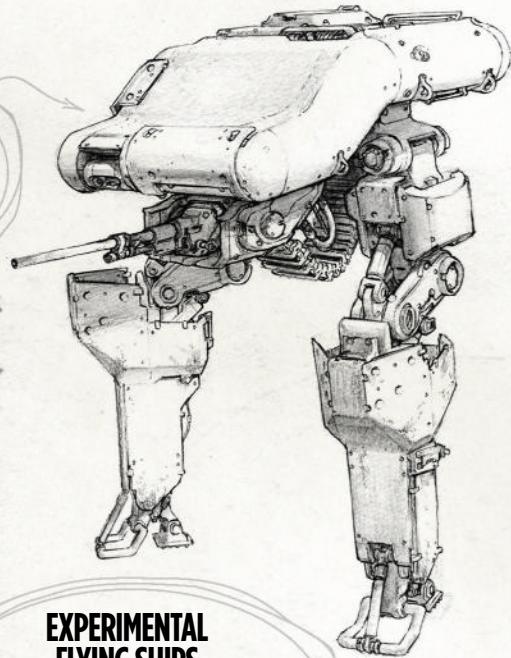


TONK

"A silly tank design, featuring a side tank attachment. This was done first in ballpoint pen, then shaded and coloured with watercolour. The original inspiration was a meme of a tank, which I tried to emulate roughly from memory. It ended up being surprisingly similar!"

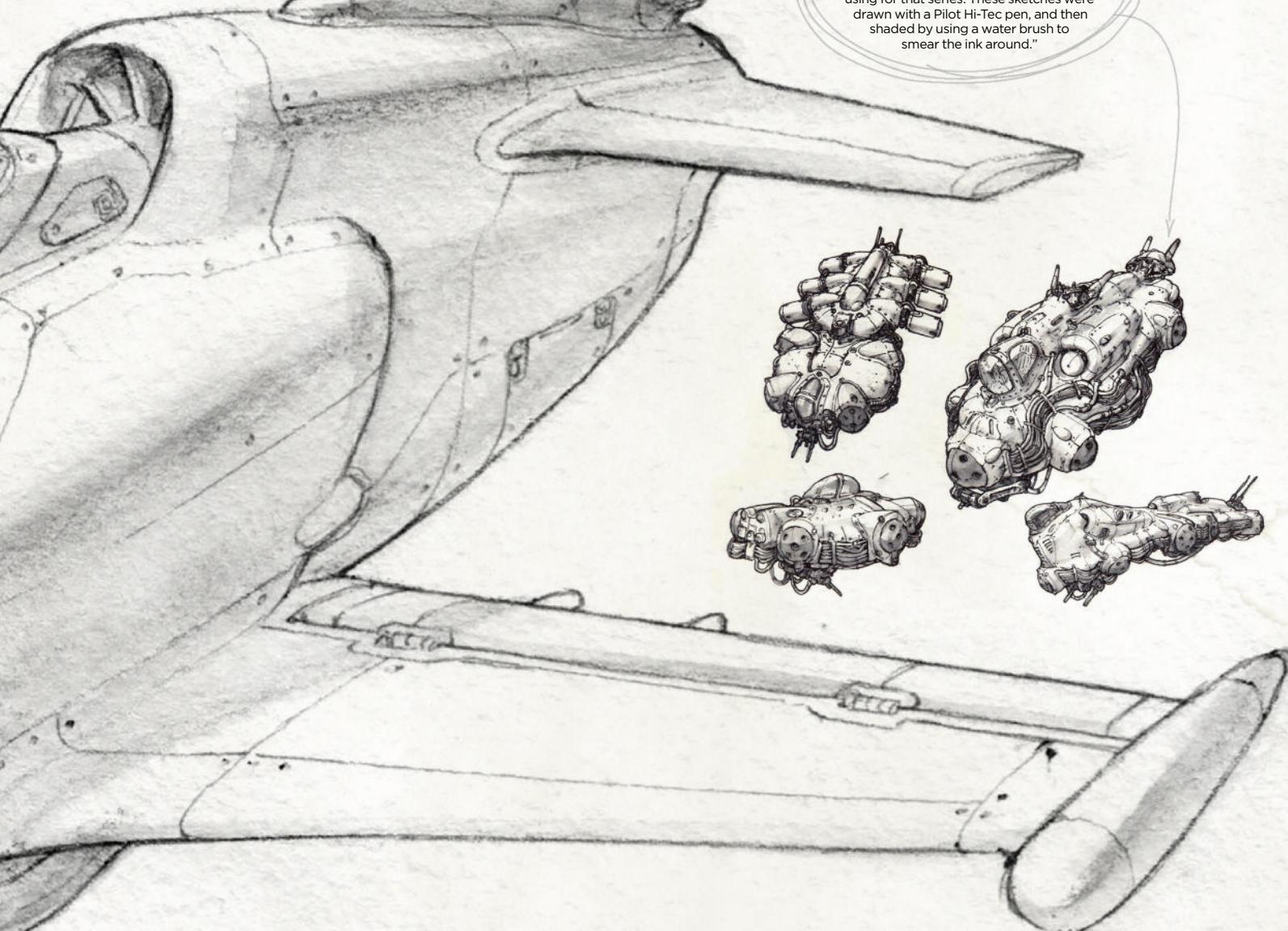
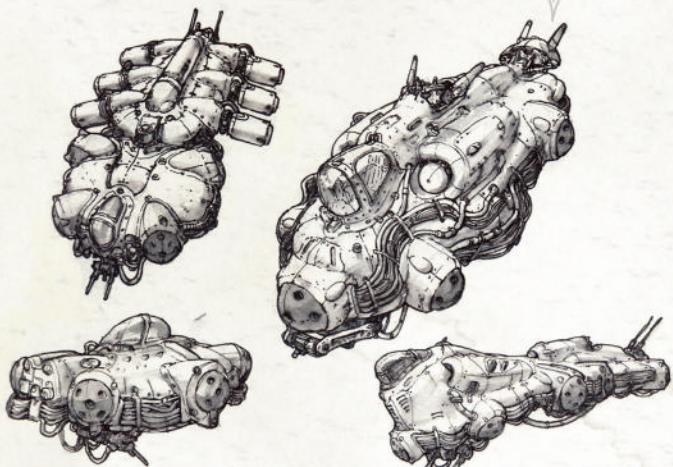
WALKING WEAPON PLATFORM

"A bipedal mech for which I did a fair amount of preliminary sketches. I first had a far wonkier drawing of the idea, which I redrew after doing technical sketches for various parts. The detailing style was based on references of heavy tank armour."

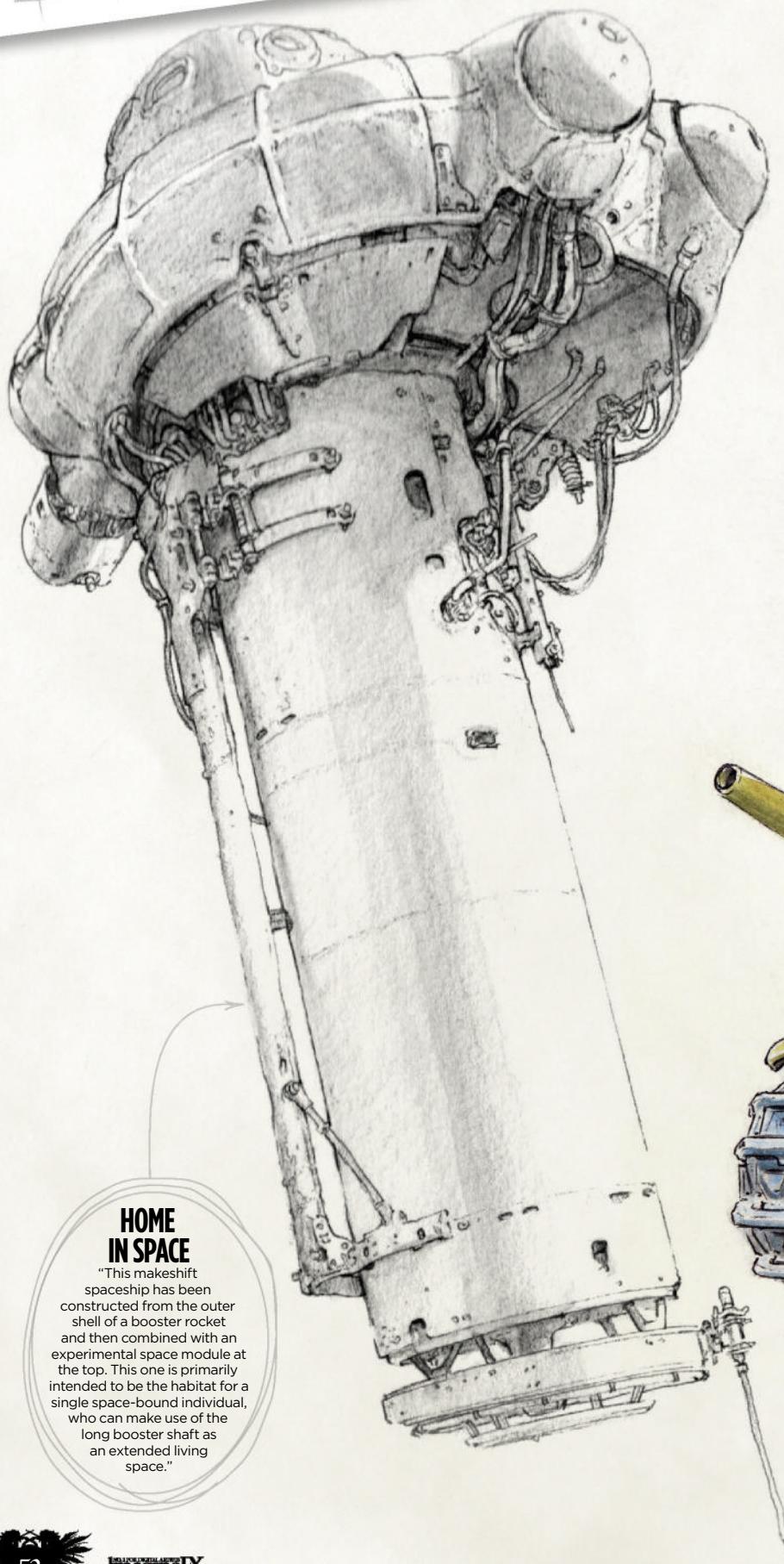


EXPERIMENTAL FLYING SHIPS

"These drawings were done at the beginning of my series of makeshift spaceships, and are in a way the precursors to the style I ended up using for that series. These sketches were drawn with a Pilot Hi-Tec pen, and then shaded by using a water brush to smear the ink around."

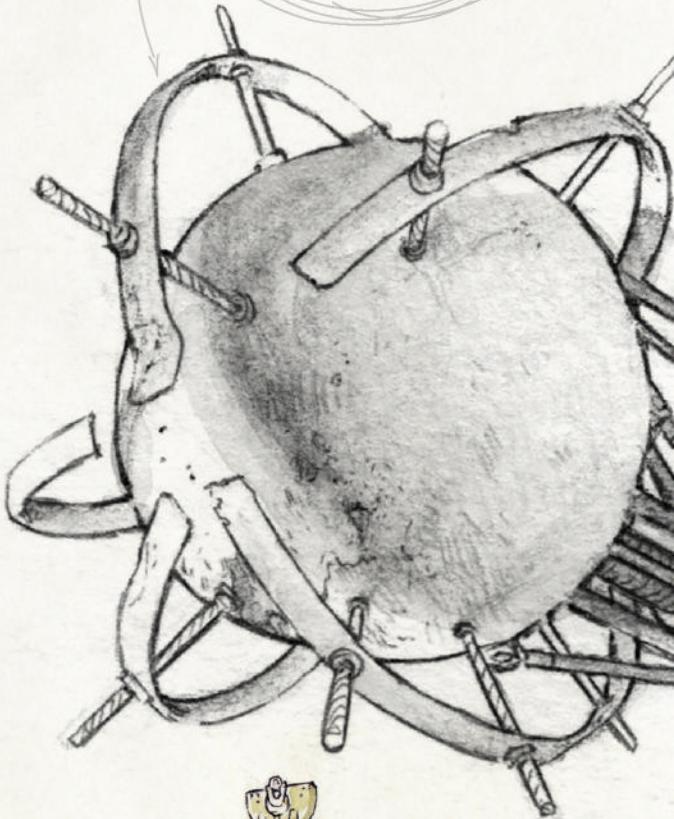


Sketchbook



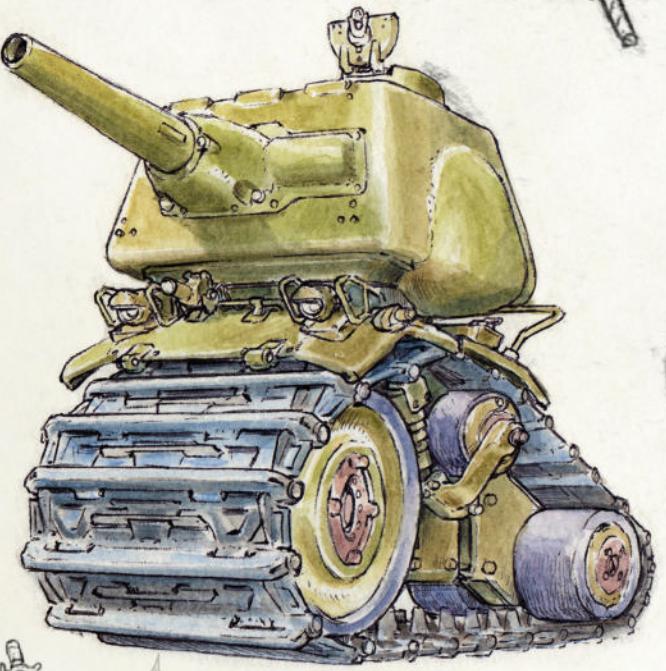
HOME IN SPACE

"This makeshift spaceship has been constructed from the outer shell of a booster rocket and then combined with an experimental space module at the top. This one is primarily intended to be the habitat for a single space-bound individual, who can make use of the long booster shaft as an extended living space."



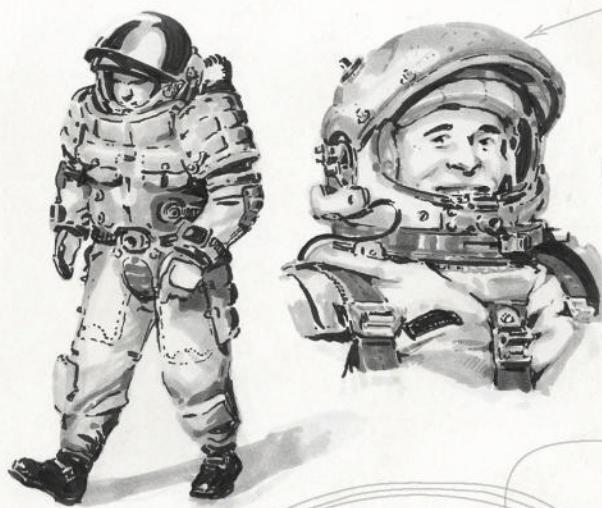
MORNING STAR

"This spaceship design was inspired by the idea that basic principles of physics could be used for combat in the absence of real weapons, this vessel would rotate around a central point in an effort to spin a wrecking ball at its far end and into other ships."



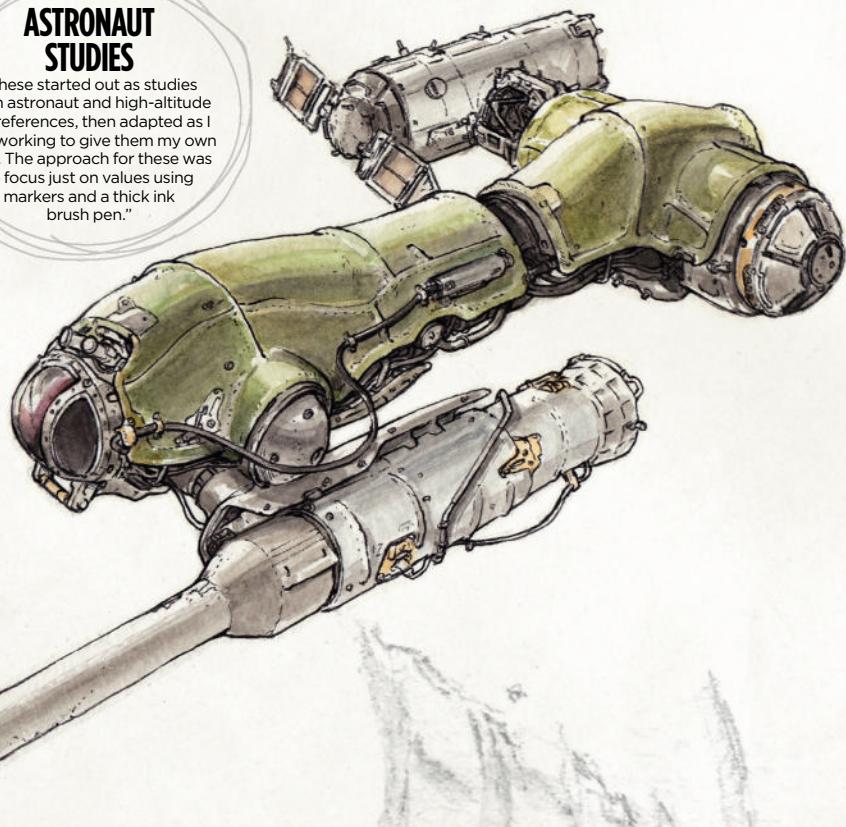
METAL SLUG TONK

"I quite enjoy the exaggerated stylisation of the game Metal Slug, and wanted to evoke that in this one. I also wanted to draw more tanks using the style of my other silly tank design, so I had to do another one."



ASTRONAUT STUDIES

"These started out as studies from astronaut and high-altitude suit references, then adapted as I was working to give them my own spin. The approach for these was to focus just on values using markers and a thick ink brush pen."



EXPERIMENTAL STATION

"This ship shares the DNA of the other makeshift vessels I've created for my series, but the aim with this one was to have a larger and more interconnected vessel, which uses a number of separate modules that are rigged together. It was also the first ship from this series that I did with colour, using watercolour paint."

“This vessel would rotate around a central point in an effort to spin a wrecking ball”

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Advice from the world's best artists



This issue:

56 Learn how to use foreshortening

Charlie Pickard teaches us an important tool for anatomy.

62 Embrace your happy accident

What first looks like a mistake could be a missing ingredient.

64 15 tips to improve your sketching

Revel in the joy of creating art in your sketchbook with Rodgon.

70 Capture delicate lighting at dusk

Lynn Chen details the complex elements in her adorable scene.

74 The tools of storytelling

Discover a comic artist's keys to creating a narrative in your art.

76 Create concept art for a hero

Practise working to a brief for a vibrant protagonist character.

82 Give character through detail

Maxim Bazhenov uses design elements to build personality.

Workshops



Artist insight

LEARN HOW TO USE FORESHORTENING

Anatomy expert **Charlie Pickard** introduces his vital tips so you can become a master of perspective and improve your figure drawing

Artist PROFILE

Charlie Pickard

LOCATION: England

Charlie is a classically trained fine artist and illustrator who works, exhibits and teaches out of his studio in London.
<https://bit.ly/3R3Dc23>



One of the most challenging topics in the life drawing room, and in drawing more generally, is that of foreshortening; where a body part is coming more or less directly towards the viewer and appears shortened.

And that intimidating feeling isn't without good reason. So often a

strongly foreshortened limb can present us with a view of the body we're entirely unfamiliar with, and our usual drawing methods can fail us when we attempt to represent it.

But despite what looks apparently difficult here, there's actually a lot more similarity between the strongly foreshortened view and conventional positions. With just a slight change

in our thoughts and approach, we can realise that all positions contain foreshortening in some degree. In a fashion, we already know how to draw this seemingly challenging topic, and this realisation will lead us to possessing a much more confident control over the form in our drawing in all positions. So, let's get exploring the intricacies of foreshortening.

1 TERMINOLOGY

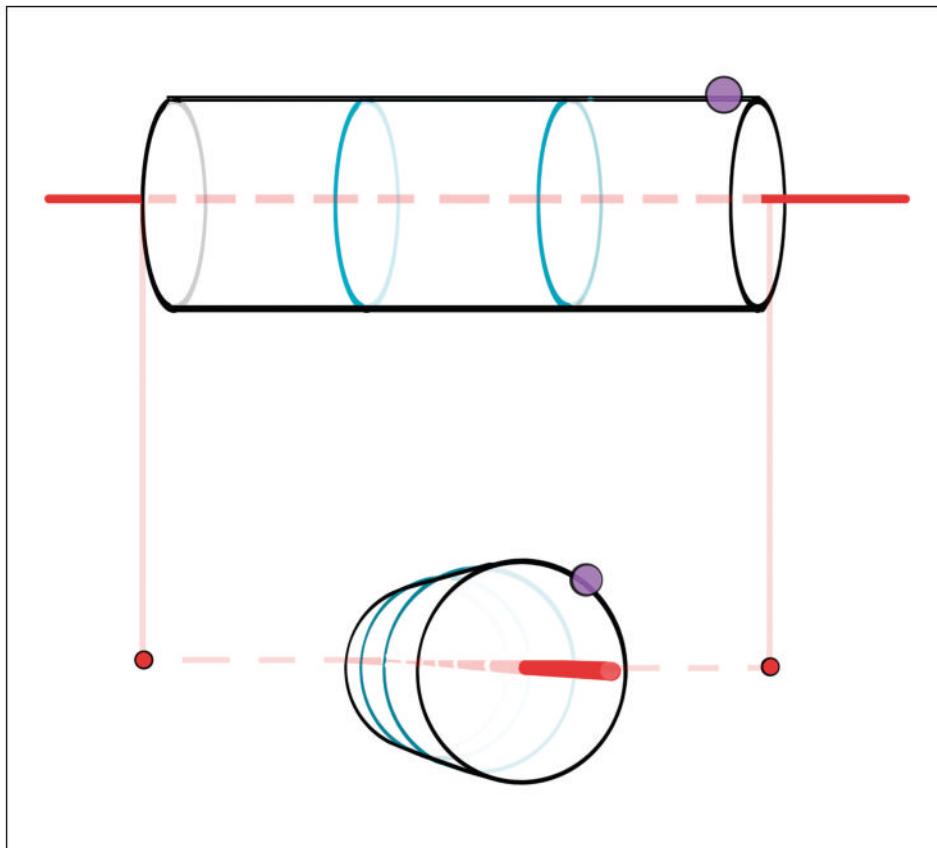
The first important concept for us to cover before we get into the more complex ideas is some of the useful terminology. We'll find it helpful to look at these using the fundamental form of the cylinder. We have three important concepts in this vein that we need to be able to accurately define.

• **The outline contour:** This is the outer limit of the object within our vision. After this line, the object disappears beyond our vision.

• **The central axis:** This is an imagined axis line going directly through the centre of the form. In the human form this is often made up of a literal shape in the bones. This line is often the main area that's shortening in the form, and is a useful and simple way to track the amount of foreshortening that's going on

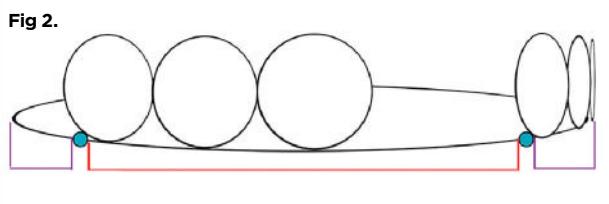
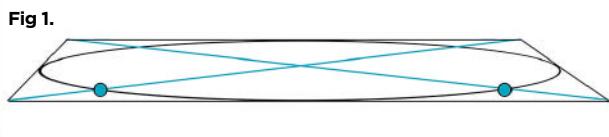
• **The cross contour:** These are lines that move across the form, they're called the cross contour because that's exactly what they do; move across the contour. These lines make up all of the internal information in the form and are often undervalued by students.

The cross contour lines can be thought of as moving perpendicularly to the central axis line and can be tracked in relation to it. These cross contours are often the element that changes the most as part of the process of foreshortening, and are the most important element when we're looking to communicate this effect to the viewer. ➡

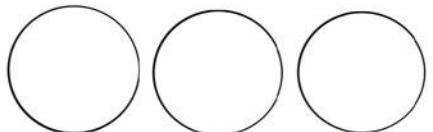


“With a slight change in our thoughts and approach, we realise that all positions contain foreshortening to some degree”

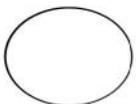
Workshops



● Before 45 degrees
Slowly changing shape,
minimal foreshortening
(basically circular)



● 45 degrees
Starting to foreshorten



● After 45 degrees
Fast changing,
max foreshortening
(strong elliptical)



2 ACCELERATING THE PERSPECTIVE CHANGE

Now that we're familiar with the terminology, there's a concept about how planes move in space that's best explored by tracking how an ellipse changes as it moves around a circle in perspective. The first thing we'll do (Fig 1.) is find the 45-degree point on our circle, giving us our halfway point for it, which offers an easy way to track how far our ellipses have actually travelled in space.

Once we've placed ellipses as they move around our circle (Fig 2.) we can begin to see an

interesting pattern emerge in the resulting shapes. Note that the ellipses closer to the centre than 45 degrees don't differ that much from a circle. Even though they do become slightly elliptical in shape, we can see it's an extremely subtle effect; a slow change in the shape.

If we now move our attention closer to the edge, we can see a much different story being told. The ellipses near the edge rapidly change, quickly getting thinner from that 45-degree point. What we notice here is a speeding up of changes in the shapes near the edge.

It is, of course, expected for the ellipse to become thinner towards the edge. But what's perhaps less obvious is that this relationship isn't linear, but it speeds up! This is important as it means that as planes face us, the distortion we'll observe will be minimal. In fact, often the distortion of planes facing us is barely noticeable at all.

Meanwhile, the planes nearer the edge are where the real action happens. I'm going to name these the foreshortened planes as they're where much of the shortening is happening most dramatically.

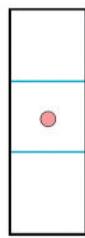
3 DOMINANT CONTOUR

You might be wondering how this is useful. Well, it's best demonstrated if we return to our cylinder. It's a useful form because it only ever displays two planes that are clear shapes, a circle and square, and are perpendicular.

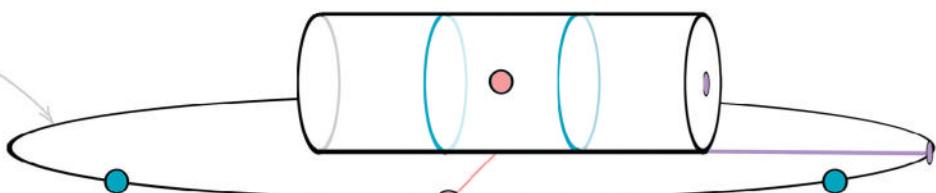
As you can see, this means one of these planes will always be in the slow-changing, undistorted part of the turn, while the other will be in the foreshortened part. The only exception is if both face 45 degrees.

Because of the accelerating nature of the positions, there will always be a dominant contour that's only slightly distorted, while the other plane will always be strongly distorted. This teaches us what we're actually seeing as we observe foreshortened positions: it's just a flipping of which plane is dominant.

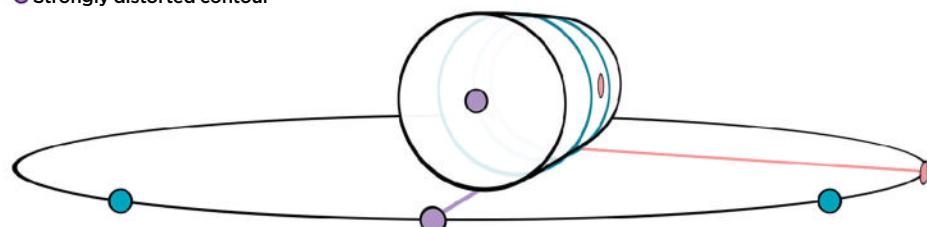
This leads us to the key realisation that there's always a plane in deep foreshortening. It's not a special relationship of form, just a contour we're not used to seeing. If we learn the shape of the cross-section, we learn how to draw something in deep foreshortening.



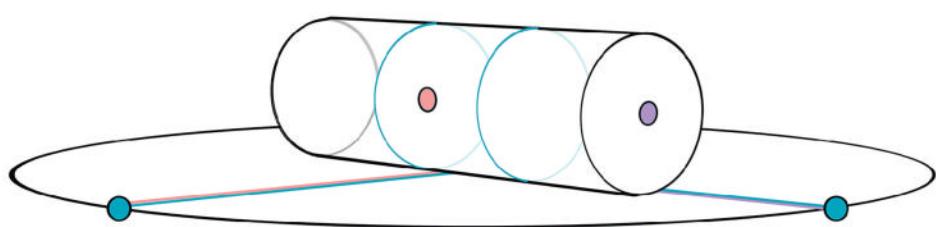
Side-view contour



● Dominant non-distorted contour
● Strongly distorted contour



● Dominant non-distorted contour
● Strongly distorted contour



● Equally distorted at 45 degrees

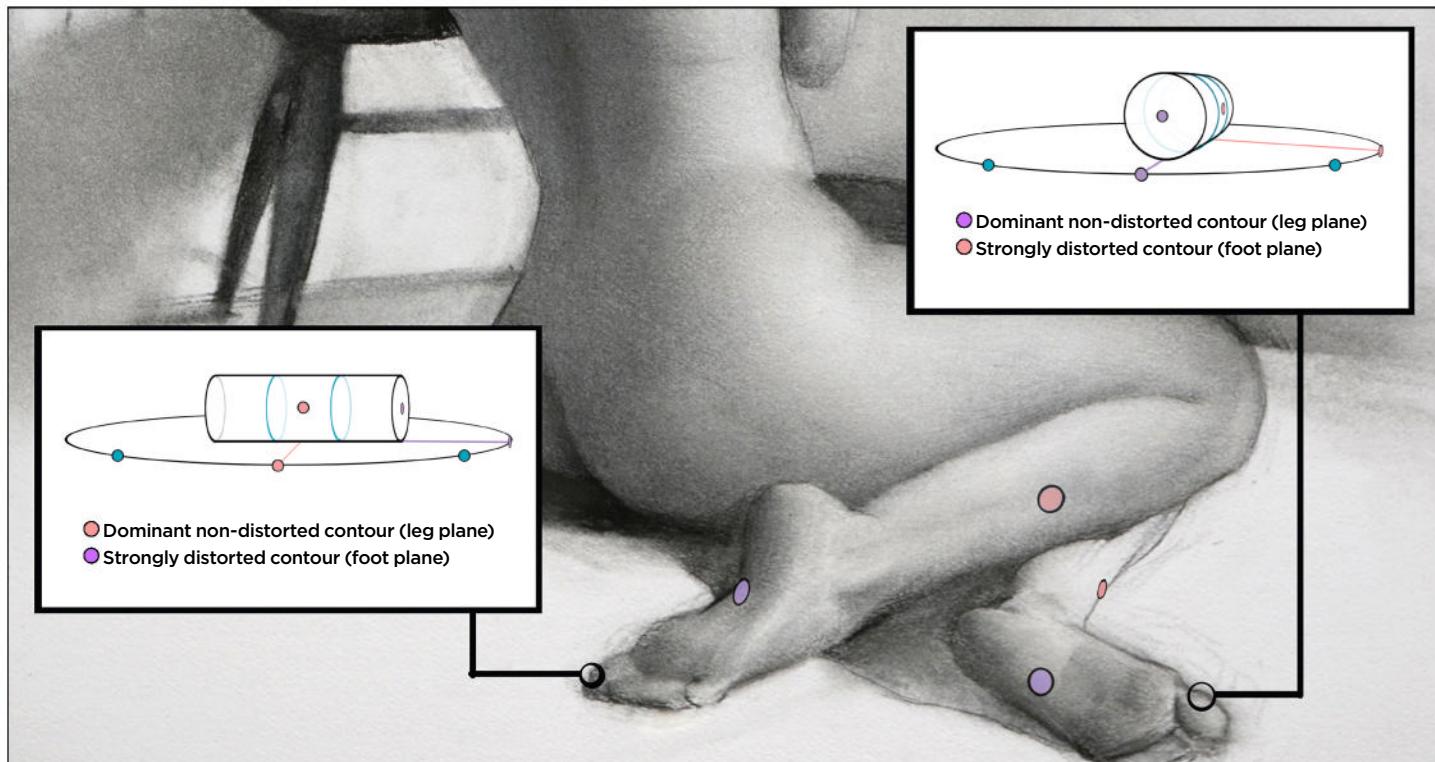
4 A PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

Let's have a look at how this concept applies to an actual study from life. We can see this in full effect pretty clearly in my life drawing here. If you direct your attention to the lower legs, you can see this is occurring in pretty much the same way as our diagrams.

The leg itself isn't that much different to a cylinder, it just has a foot-shaped plane as opposed to a circular one. This means we can track this plane to see the effect. Look at the bottom plane of the foot. It's undistorted for the most part on the lower foot, while the leg is shortened considerably. In the other leg

the reverse is true; we observe the foot plane foreshortening strongly, while the leg plane remains undistorted.

So make sure to ask yourself whenever you make a figure drawing, which is the dominant contour? And how can you make sure that's clear in your drawing?

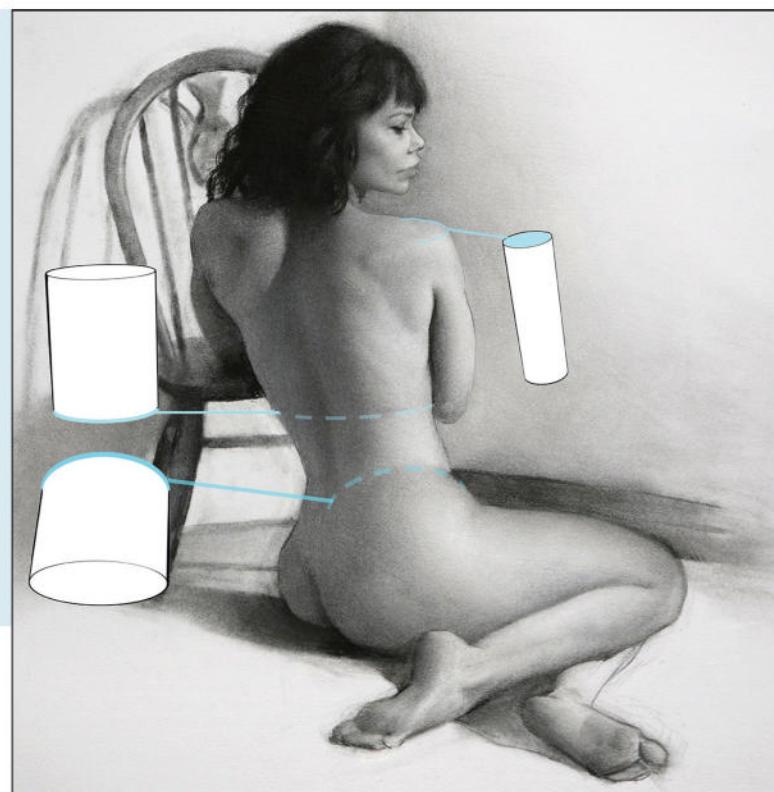


5 BE SURE TO PAY ATTENTION TO THE CROSS CONTOUR

In fact, the importance of this contour cannot be overstated when we talk about how to depict form. It's also a huge source of mistakes from beginners, so it's definitely worth your attention. You won't always draw it as crudely as a line going over the form, but it's a consideration that should always be at the forefront of your mind when designing more subtle shapes.

You can see this in my drawing. While it's a fairly unforeshortened view, the model's lean and gesture is largely communicated by a few carefully chosen halftones picked to communicate that the hips face up and the rib cage faces down as a result. These tones fairly closely follow this cross contour, and this is no mistake. ➡

“If we learn the shape of the cross-section, we learn how to draw in deep foreshortening”

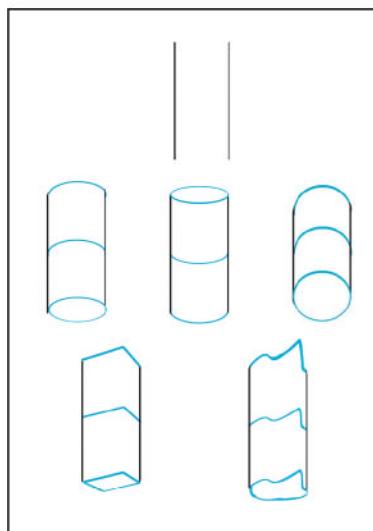
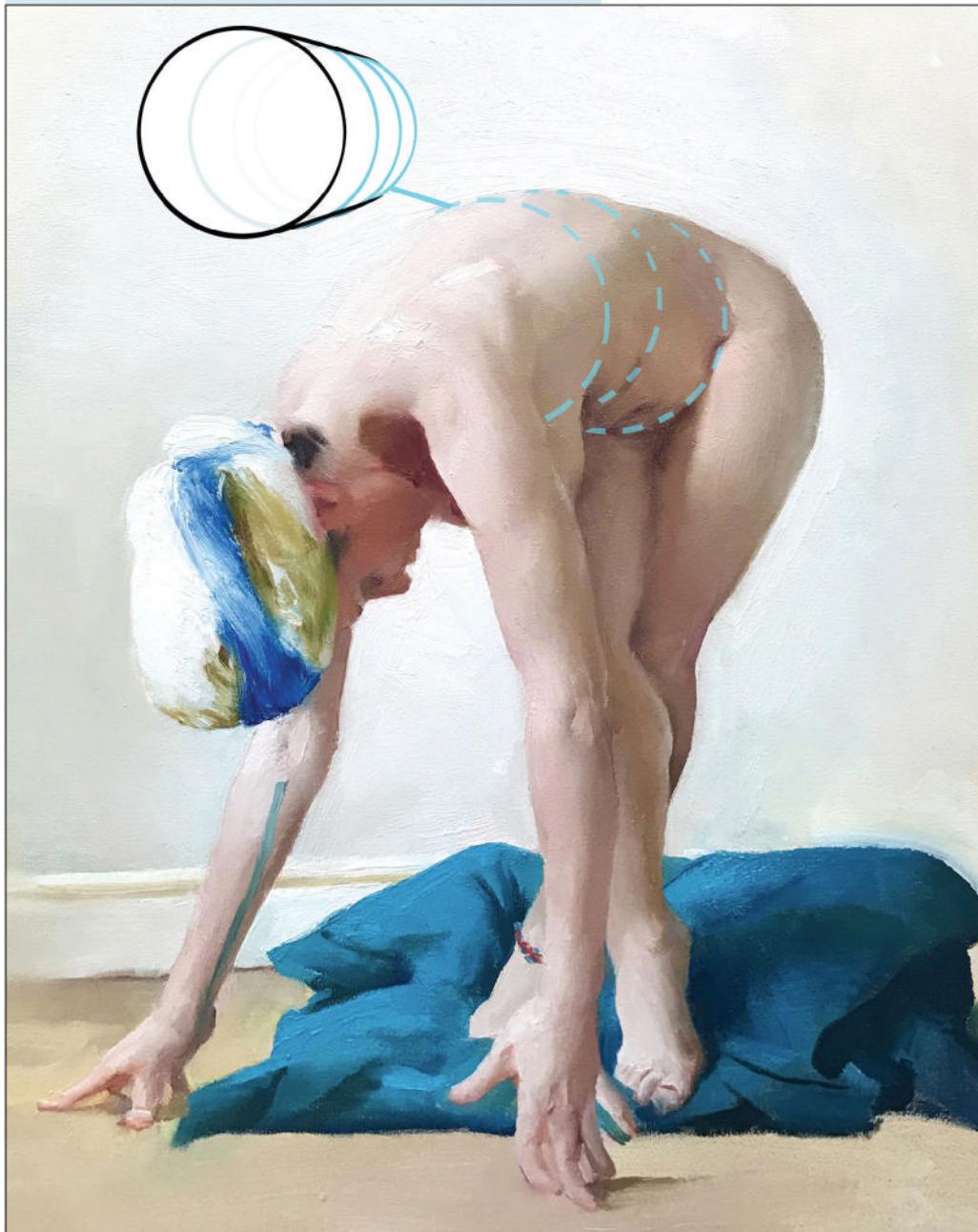


Workshops

6 STRONG FORESHORTENING WORKS EXACTLY THE SAME

Now let's have a look at another example of a more dramatically foreshortened position. If we pay attention to the highly foreshortened torso below, we can see how these concepts still apply, with the only difference being that the cross contour bends more dramatically as it's now the less-distorted contour.

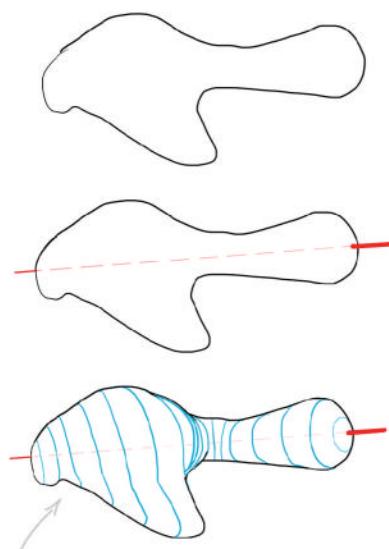
Again, the main player here is the cross contour. Our challenge is to find which details will best express this information, and in this case I used the folds created by the bending over of the figure. The exact details will be different each time, but our approach stays the same.



7 THE IMPORTANCE OF THE CROSS CONTOUR

I think the usefulness of the cross contour is most strongly felt if we take a look at just how much we can change what two lines mean on a page. As you can see to the left, the only differences in these illustrations lies in how I've handled the cross contour. The vertical lines are exactly the same in each.

In this way, we can see just how much we can change the form's orientation, position, and even the character of the surface just through the use of this cross contour. It's a magical effect, so try it yourself next time you're sketching.

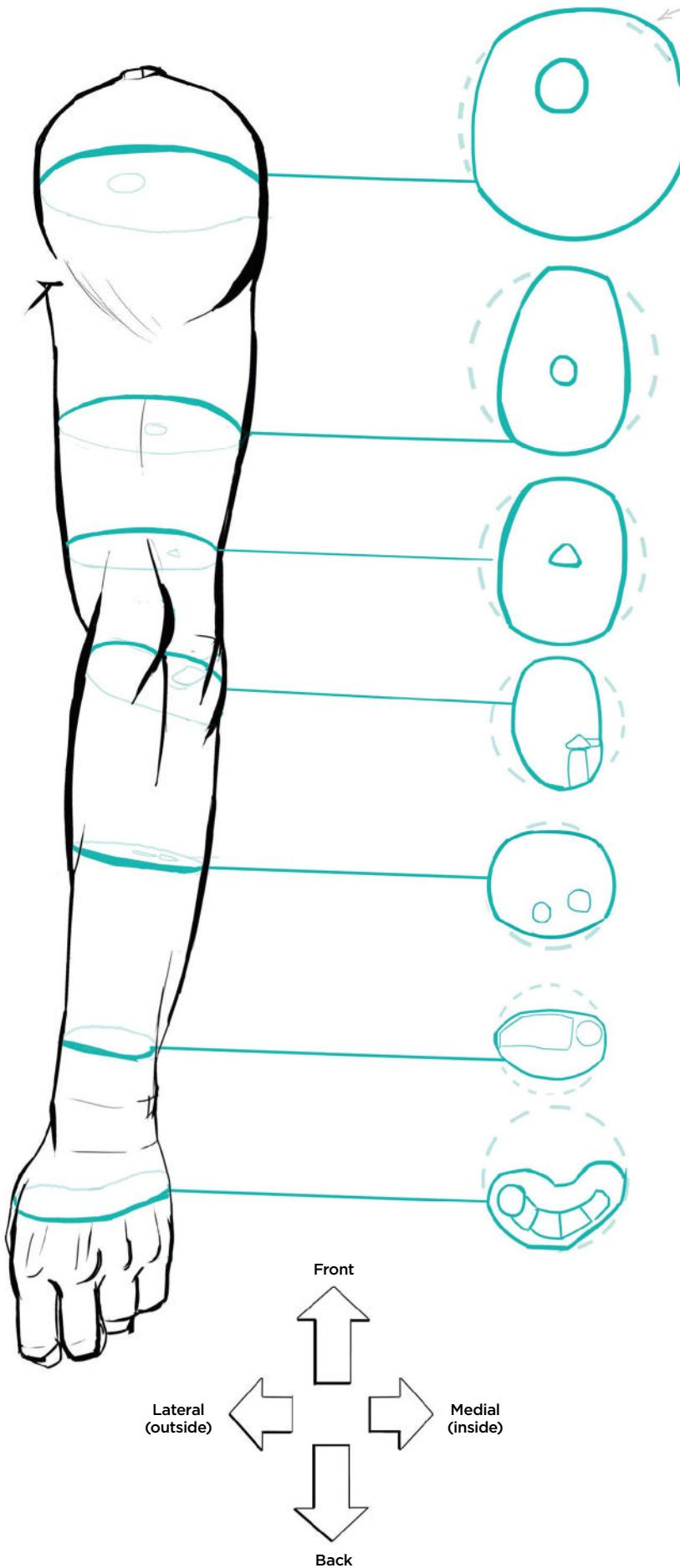


8 TRY SOME DOODLES

Of course, as we learn these ideas, our goals shouldn't start and end with pure representation of reality. We want an understanding of these concepts that's flexible enough that we can apply it to whatever we want to represent, design or entirely invent in our images. In order to do this, we need exercises that will help us to build an intuitive sense of both form and foreshortening.

My favourite version of this type of exercise is what I like to call the doodle shape exercise, seen above. With this exercise, we can draw any random shape, decide a centre line for it, and then wrap cross contour lines around it. Try to visualise the form you're expressing as you add these lines in. This gives us a great general path to form imagination. We can also use this principle more generally in all of our drawings.

Artist insight Foresshortening



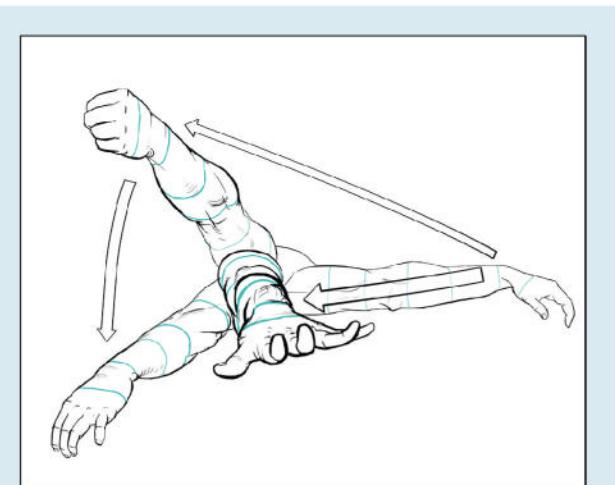
9 LEARN THE CROSS-SECTIONS

Once we've gained an intuitive understanding for inventing the form using this more random concept, you might have the desire to apply it to something more specific like the figure. The basic concepts here can hold just as true and be just as useful. All we need to do is learn the different cross-sections of the human body.

Of course, learning these cross-sections is simple in the case of the cylinder as they're merely the rectangle and circle. However, this isn't the case for the more complex human form. Fully understanding the cross-sections of the body is an often overlooked area of study, even among students of anatomy. This explains a lot of the difficulty that's often experienced when it comes to foreshortening.

Study these cross-sections well and you can unlock a powerful control of the human form at any angle you might want to draw. Seen left are some of these for the arm, but I'd recommend you have a look at these for the full body. This can be intimidating, but don't get discouraged. Many of these cross-sections are not too far from a circle so can often be simplified to an ellipse if you're in doubt on a drawing.

“We need exercises that will help to build an intuitive sense of form and foreshortening”



10 DON'T FORGET TO PLAY

This is all theory, and we only know that we've truly learned anything in drawing when we know it in our hands, so make sure that you play with these ideas in your sketchbook. Shorten the forms and try to focus on drawing out the cross-sections to place details.

Why not invent views of some objects? A little game I like to play is to start off by drawing a flattened view of the object, as you can see above, then project the form into deep foreshortening by drawing ellipses off of the object, in this case the arm. This can be an extremely fun way to doodle, so try it out! 🎨



Technique focus

EMBRACE YOUR HAPPY ACCIDENT

Why **Alexandre Chaudret** channels advice from the legendary Bob Ross when developing his designs



"This piece was created during the pre-production phase of the video game *Lords of the Fallen*.

During these early stages of creation where we're establishing the artistic direction of a project, it's important to focus on the design elements,

composition and mood. Some of those elements will follow you along the entire production.

I often collapse all my layers to create chaos, which brings back the sensation of traditional painting, and of crafting without any safety net. Happy accidents sometimes lead to the best design ideas!"



Artist **PROFILE**

Alexandre Chaudret

LOCATION: France

Alexandre is an art director and illustrator whose goal is to bring epic and twisted stories to life. He has art directed the games Othercide (2020) and Lords of the Fallen (2023).
<https://bit.ly/3SD0xdj>

Artist insight

15 TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR SKETCHING

Illustrator and art teacher **Rodgon** shares a range of advice to up your drawing skills while maintaining the pure, simple joy

Artist PROFILE

Rodgon
LOCATION: US

Rodgon, also known as Rodrigo Gonzalez, is a cartoonist who aspires to teach the whole world how to draw. He has the heart of a teacher and the soul of an artist. <https://bit.ly/49Y0ejx>



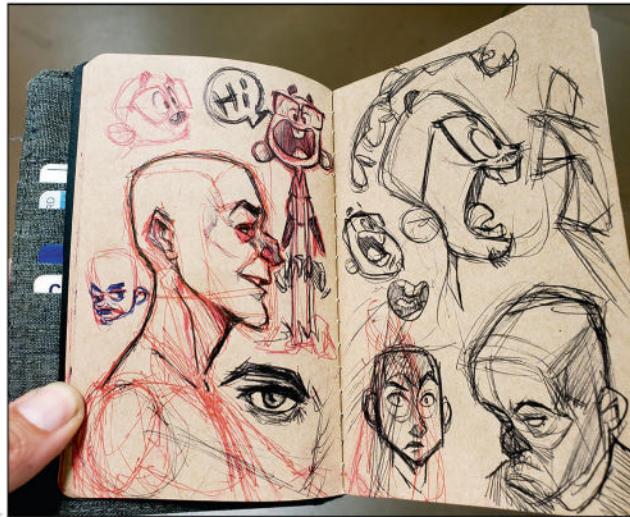
Over the last 20 years of being a professional illustrator, I've learned a thing or two about sketching and good drawing habits. Let me teach you a few fun methods to help improve your artwork at lightning speed!

Sketching isn't just something we do for fun. We sketch to improve, conceptualise ideas, and sketch for pretty much every project we do.

Even though there's no wrong way to sketch, there are highly effective habits you can develop to become much better, much quicker.

However, please remember that finding quick ways to complete a task through tips and tricks is fun, but not always the best way to learn. Instead, the goal should be learning through understanding rather than merely developing through the use of copying or imitation.

Oddly enough, I figured out early on that my sketchbook was the key to everything in my artwork; the way I used it and my relationship with it. In this set of tips I'll demonstrate the techniques and exercises that you want to keep in mind while you're sketching. By doing so, you'll train your brain, your hands, and your imagination to draw increasingly better art without the need for any outside instruction.



1 SIZE DOES MATTER

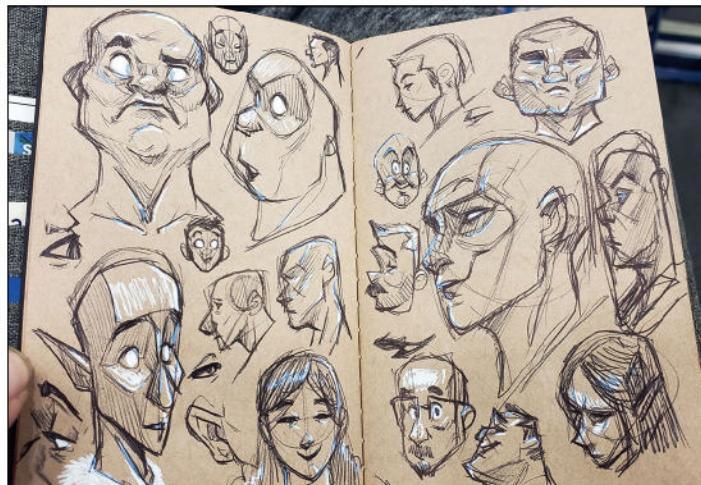
Choose a sketchbook that you can easily carry with you anywhere, any time. Big sketchbooks are awesome and they have their purpose, but if you want to improve quickly, you'll need to be able to draw as much as you possibly can. Having a sketchbook that you can only use at home, or that requires more effort to take with you, will hinder that goal, so make sure to get a book you can carry anywhere. Extra bonus points if it opens flat for more drawing space on each page.

“But if you want to improve quickly, you'll need to draw as much as you possibly can”



2 USE IT OR LOSE IT

Now you have a sketchbook, we need to make sure you use it. This is where people normally struggle the most due to life being life; things come up and don't always go as planned, so we have to make the most of the time we do have. I'd recommend starting with 15 minutes a day at least, as dedicated time for drawing has no substitute or trick. As this is how we build our muscle memory, it's needed to improve. Draw more, improve more.



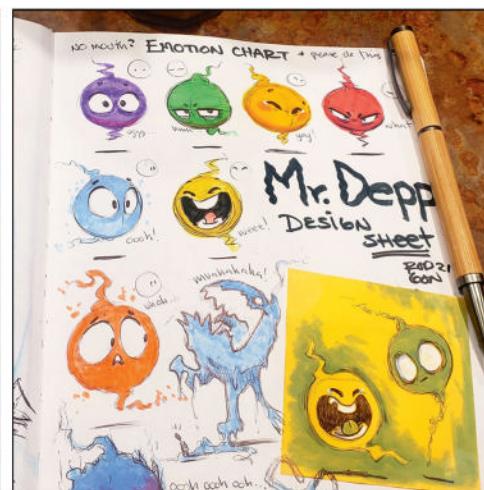
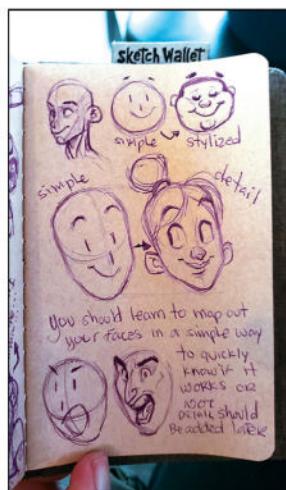
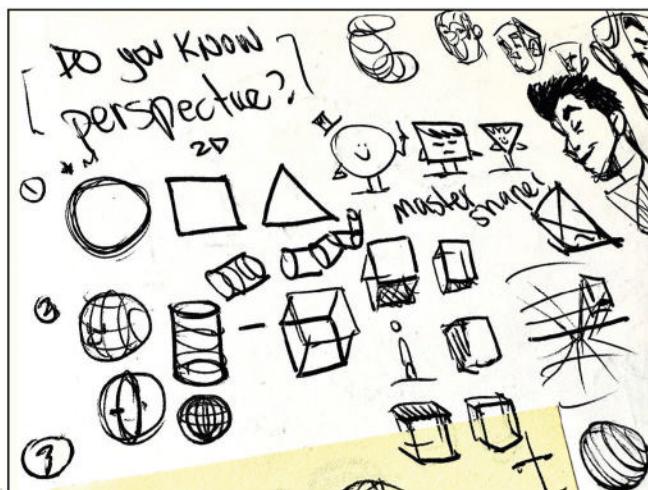
3 THE BEST LEARNING TOOL FOR AN ARTIST

Your sketchbook is something really cool. It might look like a simple, white-paged book with nothing in it, but when you use it right, you can have it be your best learning tool. Don't just aim to draw pretty pictures, instead aim to have it unlock all the secrets you still need to unlock and use all that knowledge when you do an epic piece. My favourite way to do this is by giving myself a theme on each page and using my drawing time to learn about that at my own pace.



4 KEEP YOUR TOOLSET SIMPLE

When an art material is luxurious we'll tend to wait for the right art piece to use it, which doesn't lend itself for growth. Instead, we'll use simple and inexpensive materials in the form of a pen – a simple ballpoint is best – and then something to add colour such as a highlighter or cheap set of watercolours. Keeping your sketching materials both affordable and easily replenished will allow you to keep your focus on what you're drawing while not wasting a precious marker or pen. This means you can draw without fear that much more.



5 START OFF SMALL, BUT THINK BIGGER TOO

If you want to get better, you might have to take a step or two back. Sometimes we get so caught up with drawing an idea that's pretty or cool that we forget to implement the little things, like perspective and anatomy. I like to tell people to focus on the simplest way to draw something first, and slowly progress to adding in more as you learn more. Having the ability to draw something, even if it's super simple, can lead you on a good path. Complicated shapes like the human body can be simplified in any number of ways. ➡

Workshops

6 HAVE FUN WITH YOUR KNOWLEDGE

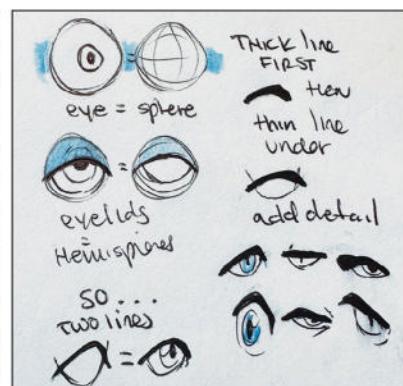
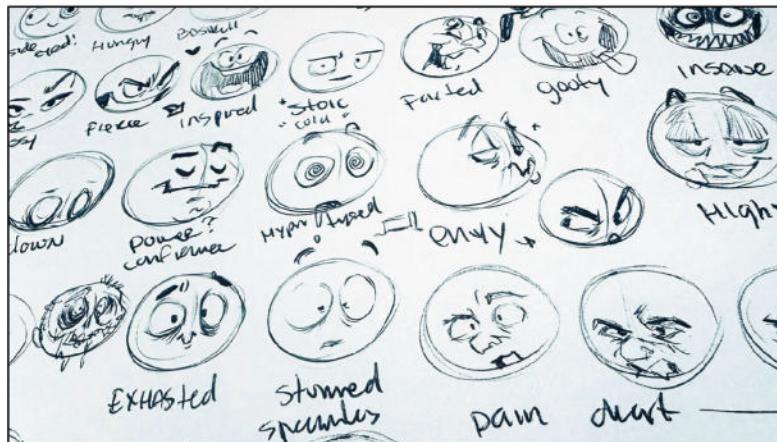
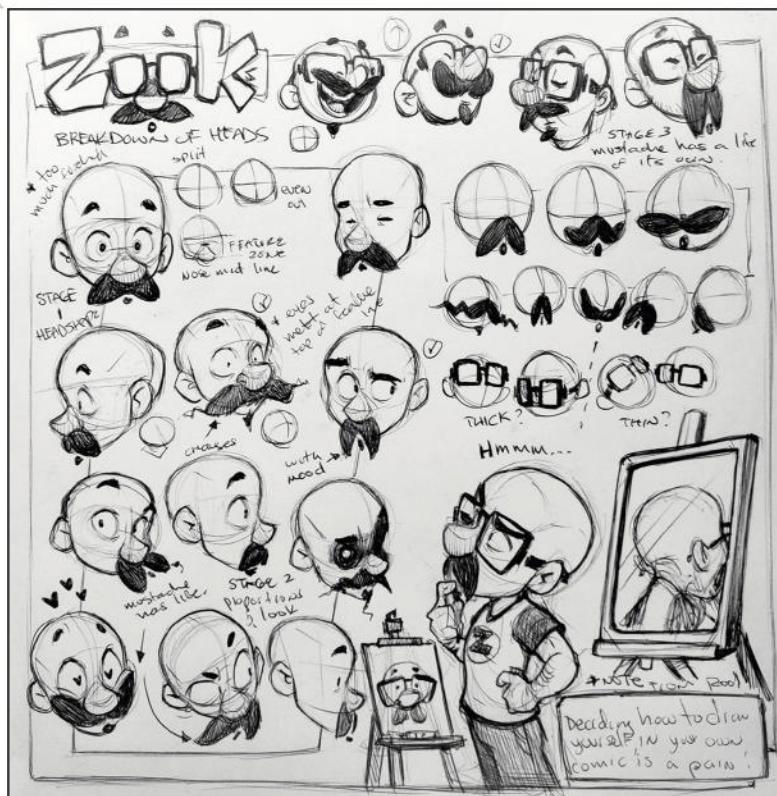
The best tips I was ever given were to practise my basic shapes, and to try implementing anything I learned right away in a fun, creative manner. I would create little characters out of simple spheres and boxes, and it made my time spent training in perspective so much more fun and challenging; a little more geared towards drawing perspective for characters instead of scenes. This can be as simple as drawing a happy little face on your spheres, or adding arms to each side of a box to learn a bit more about depth and mapping.

“Try implementing anything you learn straight away in a fun and creative manner”



7 I HATE DRAWING THAT...

You hear it time and time again: draw your fundamentals. We're told this a lot, but don't always know precisely what it means. Fundamentals are the building blocks for your designs. There comes a time you choose to make art your career, which is when you need to learn how to compete with the pros. Drawing with the fundamentals in mind is how you get there. The first of all these fundamentals for you to pick up are perspective, but not how you imagine it, and anatomy. Combined with your imagination, those are all you need to create entire worlds.



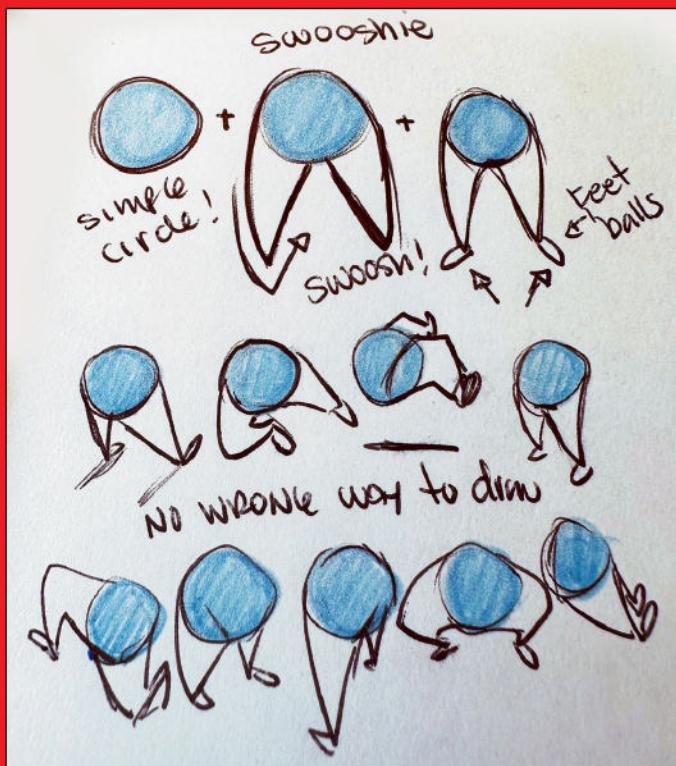
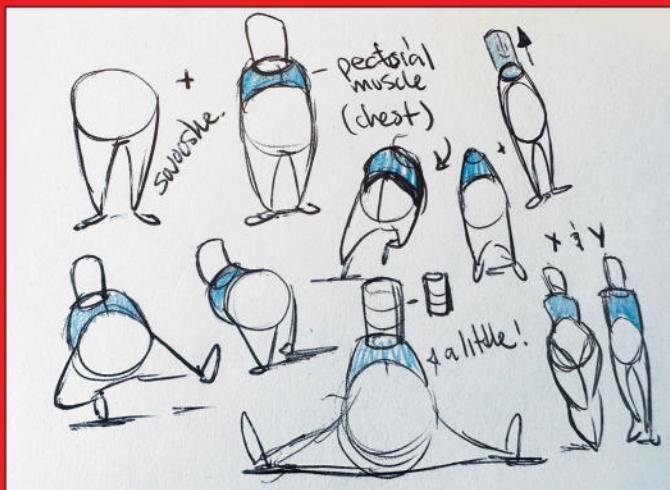
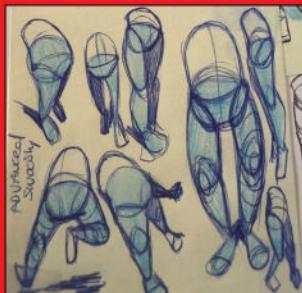
8 EASY PEASY EYES

Eyes are simple to sketch! They can be drawn with two lines if you learn just a bit about overlapping shapes. Start with a curvy line and make it a little thick to represent your upper eyelid and eyelashes. You can draw a thinner line intersecting the thick line to close the eye, then just add style!

9 HOW TO DRAW A HUMAN BODY IN THREE EASY STEPS

A Meet the swooshie

Let me introduce you to the swooshie. It's one of my master shapes and has helped me sketch people much easier. A swooshie is a circle with two little horns. If you add on little circles to the bottom you now have a pair of legs too! Remember, there's no wrong way to draw a swooshie.



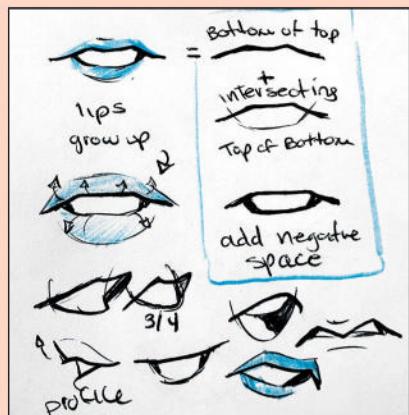
B Bring in the body

The next step is to draw the chest and head, which can be done by adding a little more volume on top of your swooshie, and a circle a little smaller than the body. Your head grows from there, and that's how you find your collarbone easily.



C Finish with a pair of arms

Add two little triangles on the side of the circle, which will guide the positioning of the arms. From there you can draw simple shapes such as sticks or cylinders to find where the arms finally go. This is how you can use basic shapes to your advantage.



10 MOUTHS TOO?

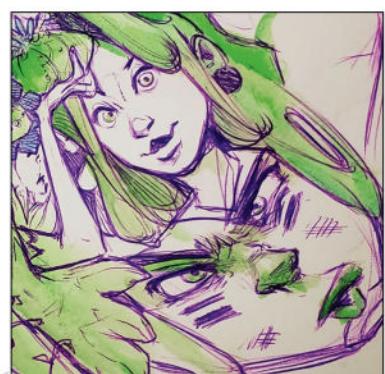
You'd be amazed to know that learning to draw the mouth and eyes are similar. You can start the same way, with a curvy line that will represent the bottom of the upper lip, and another line intersecting it to create the top of the bottom lip. More volume can then be added to the top and bottom lip to meet the look and style that you're seeking. ➡

Workshops



11 LIVE YOUR LIFE, DRAW YOUR LIFE

As artists, we have to live life to give life to our art. Without life experiences, journeys, adventures and heartbreak, we won't be able to fuel good art for long. We need to learn to live outside of our mind sometimes so we can have experiences to be inspired by, and that will help us draw more interesting art. Take your sketchbook with you all the time and draw everything around you.

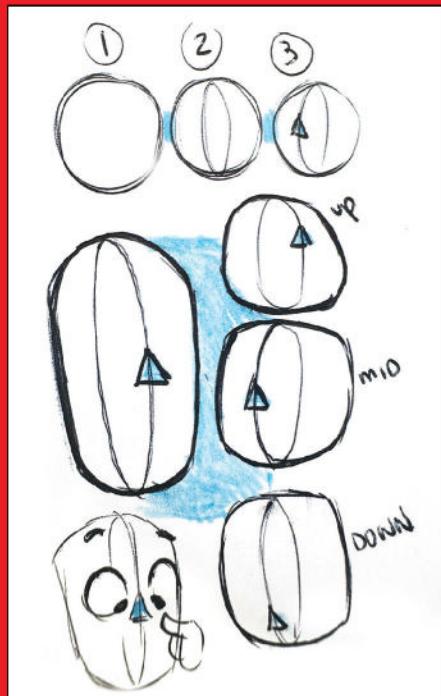


12 DRAW THE SUBJECTS THAT YOU LOVE MOST

Remember how cool it was to learn something new when we were kids? We'd think of everything we could draw using those wonderful new skills! Drawing what you love the most will give you that joy for your entire career. Never give up drawing the things that got you into art. It's a solid way to avoid burnout.

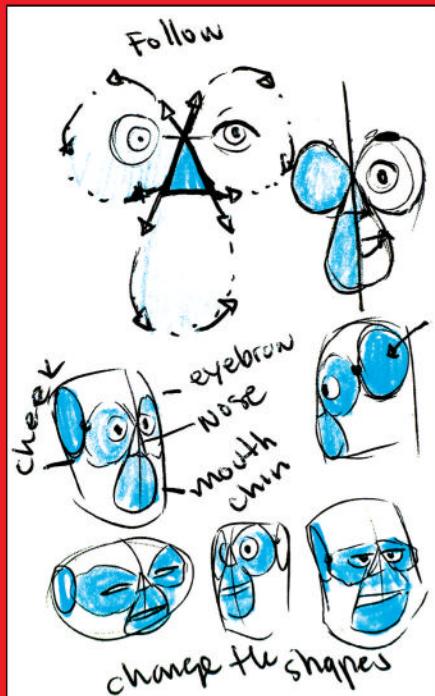
13 DRAWING FACES MADE SIMPLE

Three quick steps to sketching out all the key features



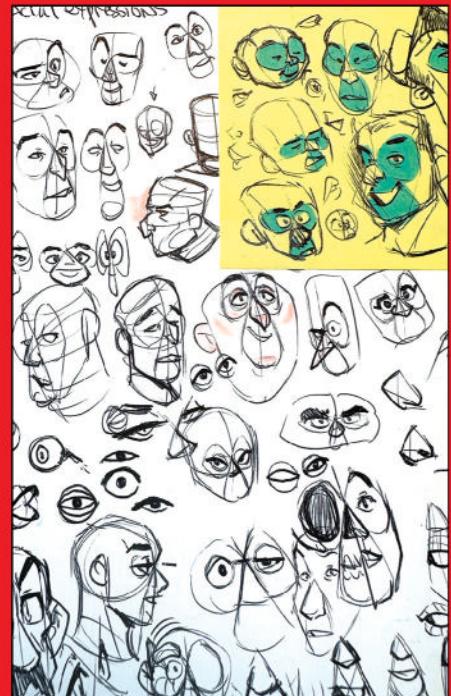
A Base head and nose

Draw a head shape, any head shape, and divide it in half with a circle. Proceed to draw a triangle where you'd like your nose to be on the shape. If the nose is high it'll make the character look up, and if you place it lower they'll be looking down.



B Complete the details

Use the same triangular lines to start the face and follow your lines up to find the eyebrows. If you follow the bottom lines it gives you the cheekbones and provides guides for the mouth and chin. One more circle at the temples brings depth.



C Experimental fun

The guidelines from the triangle helps you build the nose, and gives specific areas for the eyes and mouth. This is great for when you want to be more anatomically correct. Change your shapes to get fun characters and use different styles.



14 LOVE THE JOURNEY, IT'S A LONG ONE

Learning how to love the sometimes monotony that comes with exercises and practice can be difficult. But it seems clear to me that whenever someone actually enjoys practising the so-called boring stuff, they seem to succeed much more often. That's why you should learn to enjoy that pathway of learning. It will pay off at the end, I promise.



15 DON'T TAKE IT TOO SERIOUSLY

Making notes next to your doodles that don't look quite right is absolutely vital to using your sketchbook for good growth. Being self critical should never lead to you feeling sad, it should be done as if you were trying to teach a younger version of yourself. Once you find that you can explain something, you'll know you truly understand it. Even when I'm teaching my art lessons via livestream every day, I'm still learning this way too.

Photoshop

CAPTURE DELICATE LIGHTING AT DUSK

Lynn Chen paints a scene at sunset, using contrasting colour temperatures to illustrate a whimsical moment

Artist PROFILE

Lynn Chen
LOCATION: US

Animal lover Lynn is a visdev artist based in Los Angeles. She creates colour keys and splash images for games and animations, working for the likes of Warner Bros. <https://bit.ly/3MO1kv6>



The concept of the lamplighter is part of an ongoing personal project. It's a series of illustrations featuring Momo the corgi and his hamster friends going on adventures. I'm already familiar with the characters as I find it hard to resist placing them in various imaginative scenarios.

The inspiration for the lamplighter struck me when I stumbled on some

beautiful photo references of snow-covered streets lit up by warm lamps. It's an enchanting moment when the night hasn't yet started and the snow casts a soft blue glow. The contrast between the serene, warm lamp light and the wintry setting is magical.

It made me wonder about who goes out there everyday to light these lamps. Personally, I think Hammy has the perfect job here. Picture him, carrying a match as tall as himself,

strolling from lamp to lamp and lighting each one. Job done!

I've always believed art is more compelling when it tells a story. Our goal as artists is to convey a narrative and capture the mood we're aiming for. Once that story comes through, the image is finished and we can move on to the next. The moment we start to forgive the imperfections in our personal work, it frees us up to explore and practise more.

How I create...

AN ADOORABLE WINTER SCENE



1 Rough sketch

I start off with loose sketches in Photoshop to figure out the composition and character poses. These initial sketches are rough and don't take much time to make. After the first sketch I'll tone down the layer's Transparency and start another sketch in a new layer. This not only allows me to quickly explore other options, but also helps to push the exaggeration.



2 Create shapes

I usually start blocking shapes using local colours that incorporate a subtle hint of the ambient light. For example, here we have the blue ambient light from the sky, so every surface facing upwards receives a gentle soft blue colour shift. Ambient light might not be the strongest light source in the scene, but it's the key to establishing the colour harmony of the image.



3 Paint the lighting

Since we have a cool ambient light, I usually design a warm key light to enhance the contrast. In this case, the candlelight serves as the key light, being significantly stronger than the sky light. As a result, the surfaces lit by this candle, like the hamster's back, are no longer blue, but instead look much brighter and warmer than surfaces facing away from the candlelight.

In depth Delicate lighting



Workshops

COMPLEX LIGHTING

Candlelight blends

I used the Screen layer blending mode to mimic the candlelight. The flames of candles aren't always yellow and red; at the bottom of the flame where the wick burns they often have some blue. I used another Screen layer on top of the flame for extra glow.

Colour variations

To recreate the material I used value and colour shifts. The burned match head looks mostly black, but because of its uneven surface it still has some colour variations. The top of the match still catches hints of the sky's cool light, while the side facing towards the lamp catches warmer lighting.

Cool sky tint

Ambient light comes from the sky. Surfaces that are facing away from the candlelight and towards the sky would naturally reflect that blue ambient light. For instance, the hamster's pink nose appears more purple because of the blue tint caused by the sky.

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: TEXTURED BRISTLE

Used for my animals. It's more opaque and great to chisel out shapes with an illusion of hair and fur.

TEXTURED BLOCK

Typically used for any elements that require a hard surface.

Subsurface scattering

One way to show the intensity of the light is to apply subsurface scattering wherever it applies. Candles have some translucency near the top where the light is particularly strong, which lights up the wax and makes it appear brighter and glowing.



Warm illumination

Candlelight is a point light source, which means the light is at a specific location in the scene and radiating in all directions, like a sphere. Because of that, this warm light affects not only the hamster's back but extends to all its surroundings. This includes the background tree, the snow under the lantern, and the back of the hamster.

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Technique focus

THE TOOLS OF STORYTELLING

Mario Alberti explains the key elements that develop a narrative within his artwork

Artist PROFILE

Mario Alberti
LOCATION: Italy

Comic book artist and writer Mario loves to tell stories with his images, seeking out beauty in the process. His long list of clients includes the likes of Marvel, DC and Sergio Bonelli Editore. www.marioalberti.com



"Whether I'm working on a comic book, illustration or storyboard, the storytelling is vitally important. I must understand which element or piece of information is relevant in that frame, and build a path that will naturally guide the viewer's eyes towards it."

Of course, this relies on readability and composition, but there are other tools to be aware of like movement, light, colours, costumes and camera placement. Comics, being a kind of one-man-band show, are a particularly formidable test in that regard. Storyboards also have the added challenge of developing a style that will allow for speed. These frames are from one of the scenes I developed for Gareth Edwards' science fiction movie The Creator."





Photoshop CREATE CONCEPT ART FOR A HERO

Make a video game character with **Mad Boogie Creations**, blending the creative process and practical considerations

Artist PROFILE

Mad Boogie Creations

LOCATION: Brazil

Mad Boogie Creations is a Brazilian outsourcing studio that creates whimsical illustrations and visual development work for clients globally, and also develops its own original IPs. www.madboogie.com

In this workshop, we'll design the main character for an imaginary game called Blade Rush: Delivery Hero. It's a fast-paced, action-packed PC game set in a vibrant, futuristic city. Players control Leo, a young adult who reinvents himself as a delivery person after losing his job.

But Leo isn't just any delivery guy, as he has modified his roller skates for incredible speed and agility, fast becoming a local legend. As his fame grows, he launches his own delivery app, QuickWheels, to compete with the big corporations.

Our challenge was to bring this character to life, balancing aesthetic appeal with functionality in a 3D world that mimics 2D art. We had to explore stylisation, clothing and gear that blend streetwear with futurism, and a character design highlighting his agility, resourcefulness, and a rebellious spirit.

This guide is ideal for artists who want to understand the intricacies of character design within video game development, from conceptualising ideas to realising them via technical aspects. We've also provided you a character briefing if you want to take a shot at your own vision.

So join our artists Gus Lima, Julio 'MZ09' Cesar and Amanda Duarte in creating Leo; a game hero, and a symbol of resistance and innovation.



In depth Character concepts



Workshops

BRIEFING

Action-filled game 'Blade Rush: Delivery Hero' is based in a futuristic city. Players are put in control of protagonist Leo, a young adult who has reinvented himself as a delivery person after losing his job to AI. To complete his work, Leo uses modified rollerblades that grant him lightning speed and agility, becoming a legendary local figure in the process. To compete against the major corporations of his world, Leo has launched his own delivery app called QuickWheels.

1. Visual Style & Aesthetics:

- Art Style: 3D art style mimicking 2D aesthetics
- Emphasise bold, expressive lines and dynamic lighting to create a vibrant, painting-like appearance in a 3D space.
- Use of non-photorealistic rendering techniques to achieve a stylised look.
- The art should capture a futuristic yet relatable urban environment, blending styles taken from both cyberpunk and modern streetwear.
- The character's design should communicate agility, resourcefulness, and a rebellious spirit.

- Emphasise a mix of practicality and style in clothing and gear, hinting at advanced technology.

2. Physical Appearance & Attributes:

- Age: Early 20s.
- Build: Athletic, lean, agile, optimised for speed and manoeuvrability.
- Face: Youthful with expressive features; a friendly yet determined look.
- Hair: Consider various hairstyles.

3. Costume Design:

- Clothing: A blend of functional athletic wear and trendy urban fashion. Jackets, hoodies, and cargo pants, all with a futuristic touch.
- Rollerblades: Highly advanced and customisable. Sleek, but with a high-tech appearance as well.
- Accessories: Multi-functional backpack, and sunglasses with app interactions.
- Colours and Materials: Vibrant tones; materials that also suggest durability and flexibility.

4. Additional Props and Equipment:

- Variations of this backpack with compartments and technological enhancements.

1 Study the brief and begin collating your ideas

Once you've studied the requirements from your brief, begin by gathering inspiration from various artists, movies, books and even real-world photos. Build a comprehensive reference board that you feel matches the style and mood of the character. This board will serve as your starting point, and can be shared with the client to ensure early alignment on the art direction.

In depth Character concepts



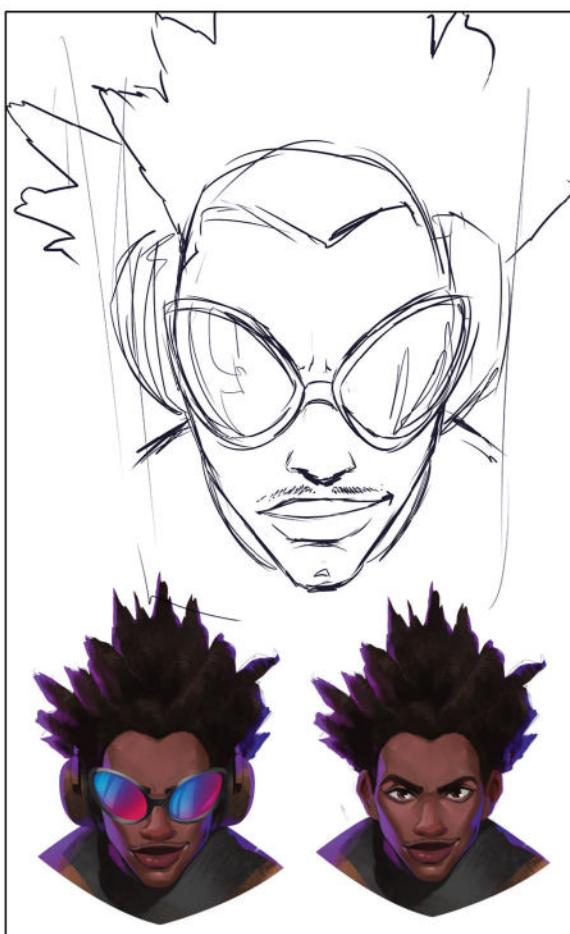
2 Conceptualise the character

Start with quick, rough thumbnails to work out the character's basic shape, their visual weight, and any distinct features. This step is all about exploration and speed, allowing for a broad and varied range of ideas. Focus on the silhouette, posture and overall uniqueness to make sure your character design stands out.



3 Sketch the basics

With rough sketches, try to capture the character's gesture, posture and basic physical attributes. This is a good place to start suggesting some loose details to flesh out the character like clothing, props, or even dynamic poses and expressions. This step is important for you to start visualising a solid base for the character's physicality, personality and presence, which are all vital components.



4 Design the face, hair and build

Develop close-up and refined sketches to explore various ethnicities, expressions and facial features. Consider different hairstyles and builds, ensuring the character's appearance aligns with his personality and role in the game. Explore any unique, memorable details that can serve as a signature element to make the main character stand out and be instantly recognisable. ➤

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: KYLE'S PAINTBOX - GOUACHE SOFT

Used for sketching. This is a modified pencil brush from Kyle Webster.

KYLE'S FX BOX - ADD WATER SLOWLY

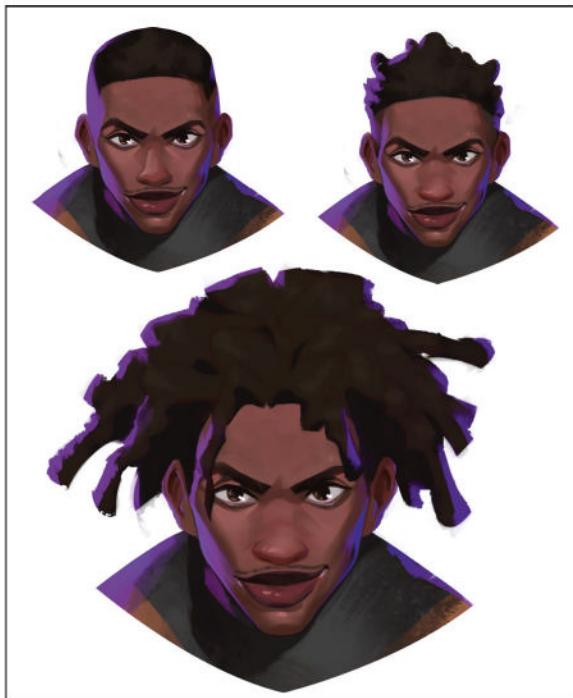
This brush is great when it comes to blending.

HARDSOFT FLIPPED

Hardsoft Flipped is used for soft and hard edge rendering.

See more Photoshop brushes available from Mad Boogie Creations at <https://bit.ly/49njCpA>

Workshops



5 Perform style studies

Do preliminary studies to determine the finishing style and overall aesthetics. This involves experimenting with different rendering techniques to find the best fit for the game's hybrid 3D/2D art style. That helps to identify potential deal-breakers like overly complex details and elements that could complicate development later on.



6 Create the outfit and props

Experiment with different clothing styles, blending functionality and fashion to reflect the character's backstory and the futuristic urban game setting. Don't forget to mix high-tech elements with streetwear trends as the brief requested, but keep in mind that it should be an outfit that's practical for a fast delivery hero.



7 Refine the line-art

With the conceptual ideas now approved, we can begin to refine on our design. Choose a neutral pose that showcases the character's personality, attire and accessories most effectively. Collect all the design elements into a single illustration, and clean up the line-art to prepare for the final version.



8 Develop your character's colour palette

Utilise colour theory to select a harmonious palette. One trick is to choose three main colours. Start with an overall tone to set the character's mood, add a secondary colour for contrast and depth, and finally pick the most vibrant tone for the accents and key details. Here we ended up breaking down many of the main shapes to add a little more contrast and interest to our character design.

In depth Character concepts

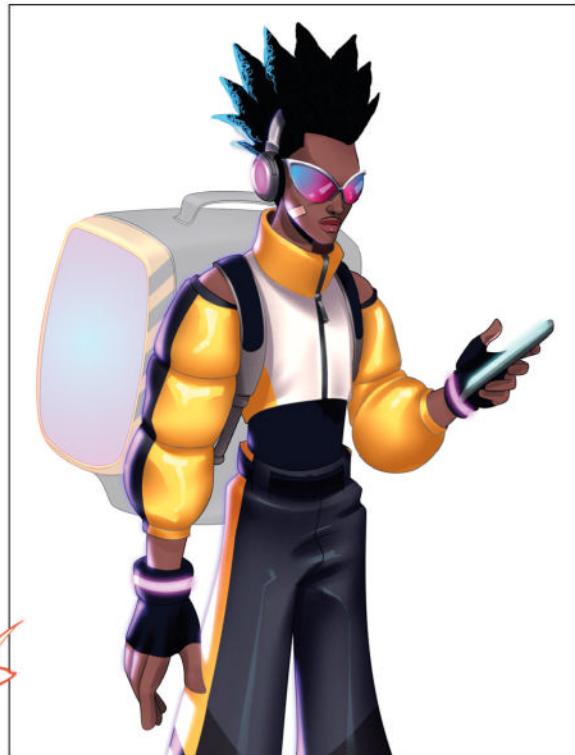


9 Choose materials and textures

References with real-life photos for specific types of materials, like fabrics, skin, and metallic and reflective surfaces are great to assist 3D artists. One interesting and interactive element you could consider is adding studies of wear and tear or environmental effects.

10 Make a turnaround

Draw front, side and rear views of the character to provide a clear reference for the 3D modellers. Sometimes this is requested in a T-pose (upright with arms outstretched). Separate any overlapping elements to ensure that you show the fully resolved design. This step doesn't need to be fully rendered, unless stated by the client, so a clean line-art version with flat colours should do the trick.



11 Consider motion and visual effects

Create expression model sheets and gesture studies so that you can visualise what this character looks like when animated, making sure it's brought to life in a unique and striking way. What's Leo's body language like when he's happy, sad or tired? How do his movements reflect his personality, for example when he's roller skating, interacting with objects, or expressing urgency? Given that the project's art direction is to incorporate a 2D aesthetic in a 3D environment, some of the game's visual effects would be animated frame-by-frame rather than rendered in 3D. That means part of the concept art process is to visualise and design how elements such as powers, lightning, flames and dust would look.

12 Finalise the design

Integrate all your elements into a finished concept design, ready for modelling and animation within the game's development pipeline. This is also the time to double-check everything is on the model for consistency. Even consider creating a final board that includes the character in different contexts and lighting conditions. You might eventually be tasked with creating additional assets such as character portraits for in-game dialogues, UI screens, marketing illustrations or more. But that's a whole other part of the process!

Technique focus

GIVE CHARACTER THROUGH DETAIL

How **Maxim Bazhenov** adds personality and story to his creations by building up design elements



"This illustration is a personal concept art piece of a Dark Souls boss character, who is grounded and yet also maintains an epic persona.

I started my work with a 2D sketch that captured the overall design, vibe and dynamic of the character. Then I created a 3D base in Blender using

cloth simulation and some basic sculpting. After that, I started my overpainting process in Photoshop, adding all the colours, details and illustrative elements.

Composition is super important, even if you're working on character concepts. Always pay attention to the silhouette of your character and try to tell a story with every detail."

Artist PROFILE

**Maxim
Bazhenov**
LOCATION: US

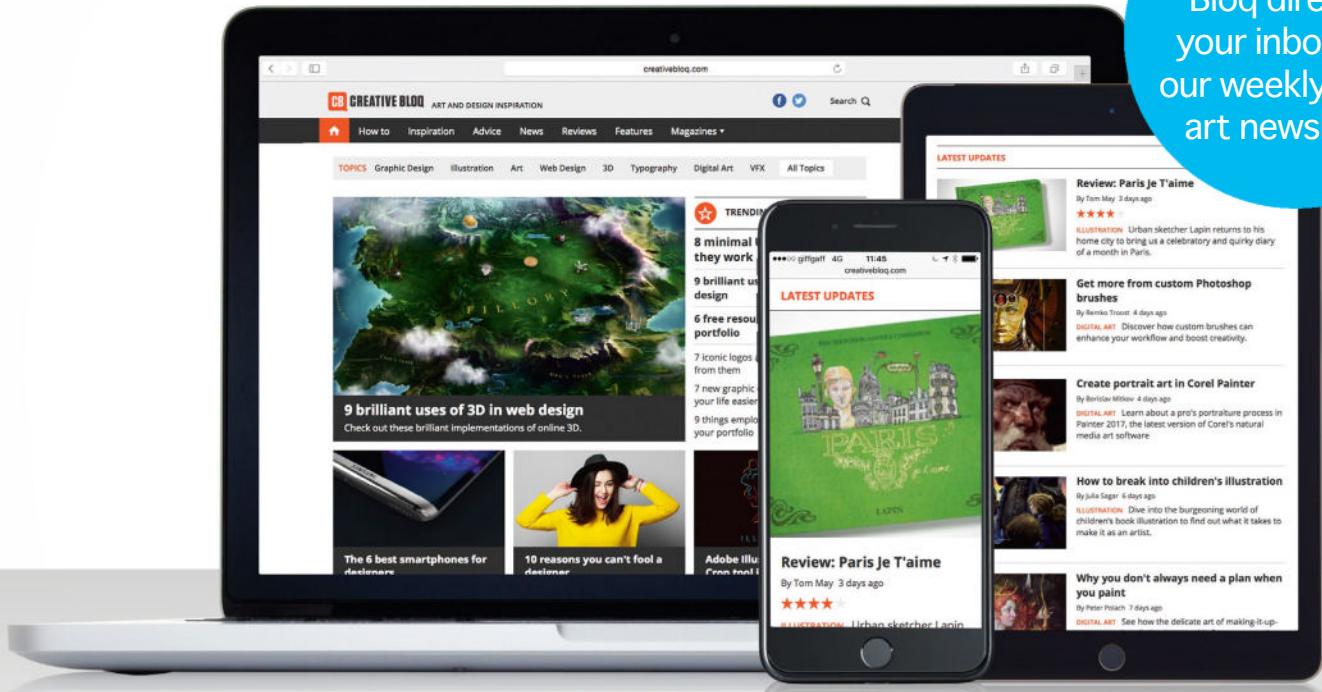
Maxim is a senior concept artist working at Blizzard Entertainment on Diablo IV. He adores all things medieval and always strives to create the most epic characters possible.
<https://bit.ly/3sLuiOA>

Tech Focus Reveal character



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Traditional Artist

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90



96



86



This issue:

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

90 Paint a terrifying tentacle monster
Follow Thomas Elliott's guide to making a mixed-media mutant.

96 First Impressions: Kimberli Johnson
The artist reveals the whimsical work that has inspired her career.

FXPosé

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS



Kei Meguro

LOCATION: US/Japan MEDIA: Pencil, graphite, Photoshop

WEB: www.keimeguro.com

Kei Meguro is a Brooklyn and Tokyo-based visual artist and graphic designer. Having received a BFA in graphic design at the School of Visual Arts, she has now cultivated her own photorealistic aesthetic.



1 CAPRICORN

"This image from my Zodiac series represents the discipline, perseverance and reliability often associated with Capricorns."

2 PISCES

"I'm absolutely fascinated by the universal language of astrology. Pisces is a water sign that represents transformation, spirituality and emotions."

3 CHRYSANTHEMUM

"This represents life, death and transformation. I believe that in a lifetime, all of us evolve and shed old parts of ourselves. The more we let go, life gives."

4 TRANSFORM

"A reminder for myself and everyone that you can heal and evolve simultaneously. Our growth is not linear, and we all have our own pace."





Janice Sung

LOCATION: Canada MEDIA: Watercolour, gouache WEB: www.janicesung.com

Janice creates paintings often featuring flora, fauna and feminine subjects. She is inspired by the timeless beauty of Renaissance paintings, the intricate elegance of Japanese and Chinese traditional art, and the world around us.

1 HERA & GALANTHIS

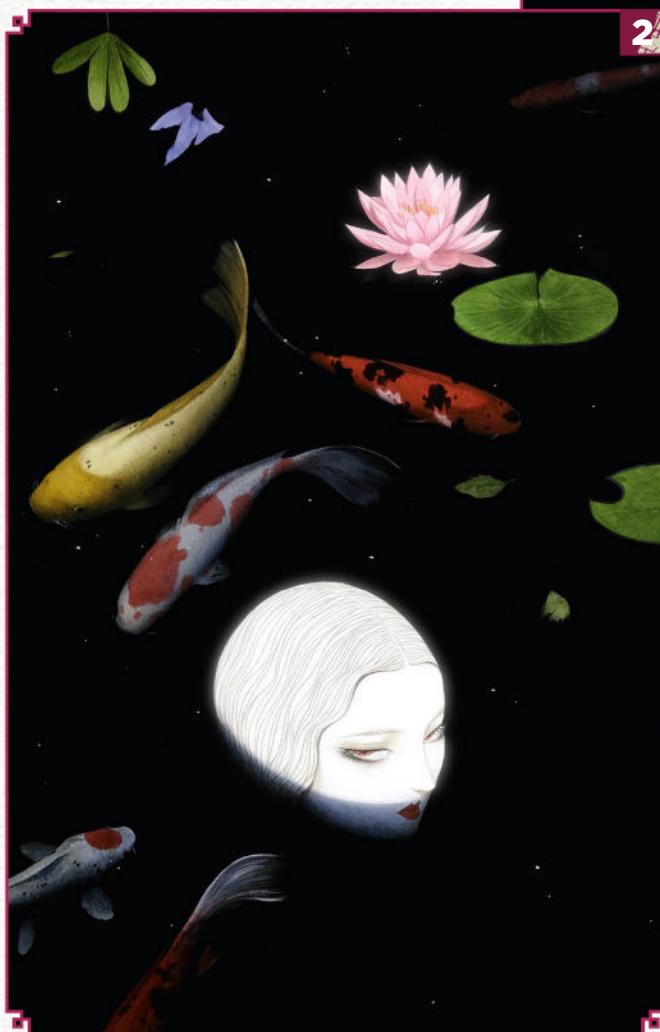
"In ancient Greek mythology, the tale of Hera and Galanthis is one of deception and transformation. When Hera was fooled by Galanthis, the goddess retaliated by turning her into a weasel as punishment."

2 ABYSS

"This artwork emanates an air of mystery and foreboding, offering merely a tantalising glimpse into the secrets that lie beneath the surface of our waters."

3 OYSTER

"Oyster stands out as one of my most intricate pieces. Adorned by over 100 pearls, her elegance reaches unmatched heights."



4 **DIANA**

"Accompanied by her loyal civet companion, Diana embodies a timeless narrative of the exquisite bond between humanity and animals."







Pencil

Acrylic

Oils

PAINT A TERRIFYING TENTACLE MONSTER

Illustrator **THOMAS ELLIOTT** gives us his step-by-step guide for mixing traditional mediums as he creates a horrifying mutant creature

Over my time as an artist, I've developed many excellent tricks and learned from a number of pitfalls while painting traditionally, which is a medium I love. Those vital tidbits of advice are what I want to share with you in this workshop.

As artists, we have the unique ability to pull things into existence from our minds! It always gives me great pleasure to bring the horrific denizens of my imagination to life. As a result, I know the importance of realism; if something is believable it becomes that much more real.

MATERIALS

PENS AND PENCILS

- 5B pencil
- Fineliner
- Biro

PAINT

- Clear gesso
- Winsor & Newton Professional Acrylic
- Cobra Artist water-soluble oils

MISCELLANEOUS

- 300gsm paper
- Liquin

That's why I'm always paying a lot of attention to the technical side of character creation. Elements such as the lighting, anatomy, understanding colour, and how best to describe the materials is absolutely vital. I often find myself adding lots of detail, and it was a goal with this image to paint efficiently, meaning I could lay down plenty of details at an early stage and have them still be useful at the end.

I'm always using various methods, from digital to oil painting, and pen and ink. I love how each medium requires you to think differently and offers different advantages. This is why my work often features lots of

mediums, as I aim to combine the best qualities of each. In this tutorial I use a variety of tools including oil, acrylic and Photoshop.

I'll start off following the typical approach of creating thumbnails, and explain my thought process as I work from a pencil drawing through to underpainting, overpainting and the finishing touches.



Thomas Elliott is a leading artist in the wargaming industry. He worked in-house at Games Workshop for over five years and is now the art director and lead illustrator for Archvillain Games. www.artstation.com/thomaselliott

Traditional Artist Workshop



1 Create thumbnails

The cornerstone of any good picture. These are super quick biro scribbles with the aim of quickly exploring ideas and interesting shapes without investing too much time. I knew I wanted to do an evil humanoid mutant with tentacles, and there were a few directions I could go with. One was a thin mutant carrying a huge gun, while another was a hulking, top-heavy mutant charging towards the viewer.



2 Choose your direction

After about an hour of caffeine-fuelled thumbnail madness, I started to figure out what exactly I wanted to do. I liked the design possibilities of the hulking mutant but felt the action pose might be a bit much, so I focused on doing a static pose that allowed me to show off the design of the character. This is the thumbnail I eventually went with. You can already see a lot of the bigger design choices present here such as the triangular composition, the strong, open pose, and having all of the tentacles showing on one side of the figure.



3 First pencil drawing

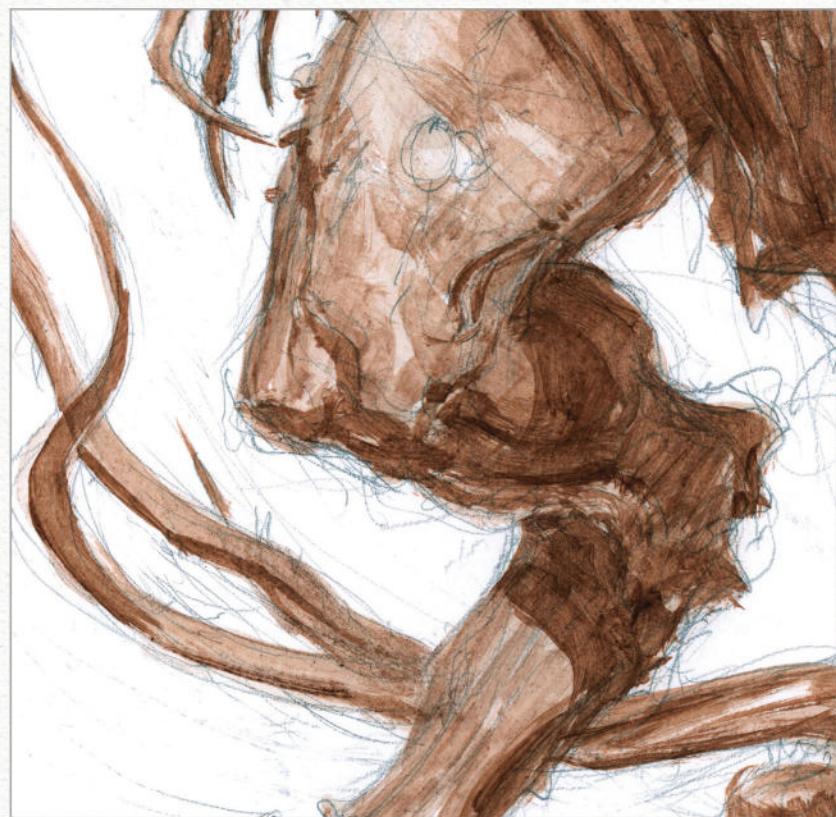
Happy with my chosen thumbnail, I grab a piece of paper and begin to sketch the character properly. The goal at this stage is to get all the important information down. Try not to be too precious with the drawing; if something isn't working, rub it out and redraw until you're satisfied. Even though the sketch is detailed, don't render anything as all that will come later.

In depth Mixed-media monsters



4 Initial underpainting

After fixing the pencil with hairspray, move on to the first layer of paint. Using sepia acrylic, we'll block-in the shadows. Knowing exactly how the light is falling on your character is one of the most important parts of making it look realistic. After you've established where the shadows are, use thin washes for a rough local tone.



5 Hard and soft shadows

It's the shapes of your shadows that describe how light is falling on your character, and good shadows tell you what the forms are. A trick to help with this is thinking about the softness of the edges of your shadows. Light falling off a curved form will create a soft-edged shadow, whereas you'll find harder shadows appearing in conjunction with a sharper surface.



6 Make a fineliner layer

Having gone over the pencil drawing with acrylic, we've now lost some of the details, so let's go over again in fineliner to give definition and clarity. The idea is that the black pen lines will be visible in the final painting, so be careful where you put them.



7 Seal and prime the surface

So far we've been painting directly onto the paper. As the oils in oil paint destroy the paper if applied directly, it's important to seal the surface. I use three thin coats of clear gesso to prime the paper as it's translucent, so it retains the work done so far.

8 Digital colour sketch

I have a good idea of what colour I want my mutant; I was thinking bruised blues and purples would look cool. Scan in the underpainting and then paint on top of it using Photoshop to create a colour sketch. This gives us something concrete to refer back to as we move forward. ➤

Traditional Artist Workshop



9 Acrylic colour block-in

Block in the colours using acrylic paint. This has a few advantages over oil including the fact that it dries quickly, which means that we can apply multiple thin layers in one sitting. At this stage we want to tint the underpainting with colour, but still have the pen and underpainting showing through.

10 A slight hiccup

Disaster! I blocked in the colours after a long day at work and completely overdid it. The colours aren't quite what I wanted and I've gone in far too thick in places, obliterating my lovely underpainting. While it's tempting to believe I've ruined it, I remind myself that the picture is only half done, and there are stages to come that mean I can fix this further down the line. The moral of the story is don't work when you're overtired.



11 Switch over to oil paints

For the next stage of the painting process, we'll switch over to oils. I find that they offer a higher degree of control when compared to acrylics, as you can mix them with mediums to get the precise consistency you want, they have a nice rich glossiness to them, and the colours stay consistent as they dry. For these reasons, I preferred using oils for the latter stages of the painting.



12 Add shading

Now go over the painting, focusing on shading it with oil paint mixed with liquin. As liquin makes the paint translucent and speeds up the drying time, we can tint areas with colour while keeping the information beneath visible. Going over the painting like this allows us to make adjustments, deepen shadows and tweak colours.

In depth Mixed-media monsters



13 Oil recommendation

When I say I'm using oil paints, I'm specifically working with Cobra Artist water-soluble oils. I just can't recommend these paints enough as they remove the need to have harsh chemicals in your studio.



14 Use an appropriate brush size

One piece of advice to speed up your painting is to always use the biggest brush possible. When you're doing detailing work it can be tempting to get out the smallest brush you can, but this can slow you down big time. I recommend buying high-quality brushes that hold a tip that allows you to cover areas and work small.



15 Final highlights

Now we've gone over and shaded our painting, it looks more like we wanted initially. The final stage is to put in highlights. This is the last chance to tweak colours and adjust forms through placement of highlights.



16 Successful areas

Overall I feel pleased with how my picture came out despite the hiccup halfway through. Some areas I feel are successful are the big hand and the legs. If you look you can see the pen underneath the paint; this is what I was hoping for as it means the underdrawing is playing a part in how the finished picture looks, which makes for an efficient process. I would have liked to have seen this effect in more areas such as the face and tentacles, but that's a lesson for next time! 🎨

First Impressions

★ Kimberli Johnson ★

Discover the artist's whimsical influences and community love



Where did you grow up and how has this influenced your art? For the most part I grew up in the Wild West, where Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid once roamed. The Western United States still has lots of wide-open space and public land. I grew up adventuring through the desert and forest with my dog and cousins. My cousins were very knowledgeable about faeries, so we spent our time looking for faerie rings and wildlife, which I think was very formative for my art.

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

Folklore and nature have had a huge impact. Also literature. I grew up on Tolkien and C.S. Lewis, and my dad read me The Lord of the Rings when I was too young to read on my own. Those sparked my imagination; I remember doing fan art and fan fiction of Reepicheep from The Chronicles of Narnia in first grade.

Was there a painting in your early years that changed everything?

When I was very young my mum worked in a framing shop. Some



FANTASY MENAGERIE
Kimberli's artwork features a variety of animals taking on fantasy adventures.



“I grew up adventuring through the desert and forest with my dog and cousins”

days I'd join her, and always loved it when people brought in James C. Christensen art. It was so fun with fish swimming through the clouds, old men with exaggerated noses and women in decadent ball gowns. The whimsy really caught my eye.

Can you tell us about your first paid commission? Does it stand as a representation of your talent?
My first paying job was right after college. I was hired by a company

that made textbooks. The art direction was to draw two children turning off the lights to conserve energy as they head out the door on a winter day. At that point I was still using digital painting and that piece never made it into my portfolio.

What's the last piece that you finished? How do the two differ?
The last painting I finished was a Dungeons & Dragons character that I recently made for a one-shot. The two paintings are very different. I like to think my skill has improved, but also fantasy art has my heart in a way that the textbook art never will, and it shows. Also, since then I've gone back to my traditional ➡

Kimberli Johnson

STRAWBERRY FROG

This delightful image was displayed at the Springville Museum of Art in Utah.



Traditional Artist Interview



▶ painting roots, and I use ink and watercolour in my work.

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

To be completely honest with you, I'm also working part-time as a legal assistant. For me it takes some of the financial stress away and that allows me the peace of mind to focus on my art, and take on the jobs that really appeal to me.



EMELINE KNIGHT IN TRAINING

Kimberli wrote and illustrated the charming children's book, which was released in 2019.

COMIC CREATION

Scenes taken from the Unlikely Adventures of Pip Swiftfoot, a web comic made by Kimberli.

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

When I was in college studying art, the professors often talked about how cutthroat the industry was, but this has not been my experience of it at all. I've met some of the most lovely, wonderful people through art. The people have always been very genuine in wanting to help one another and lift each other up where they can.

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

A while back I did a painting of a little chipmunk on an adventure with a basket of acorns and berries, and I think that I can relate to that.

“Another artist's success does not take away from you. When one rises, we all rise”

Just a little guy wandering through this big and sometimes scary world just doing my best and hoping that it's all enough.

What advice would you give to your younger self to aid you on the way?
Another artist's success does not take away from you in any way. When one rises, we all rise.

What's your next step in either art or life?

I have a young reader graphic novel out on submissions and another pitch in the wings, so hopefully you'll be seeing some more graphic novels from me in the not-too-distant future.

Kimberli Johnson is a comic book creator who lives in what used to be the Wild West. She writes young reader comics, and draws cute critters and magical folk. Kimberli has worked with the likes of The Jim Henson Company, Archaia and more. See more at www.kimberlistudio.com.



URGENT APPEAL



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

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

We must act now.

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

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

Will you help us by donating?

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

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

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

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

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