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NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

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ART**

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conjured this homage to
Howl's Moving Castle



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FUTURE
ISSUE 240

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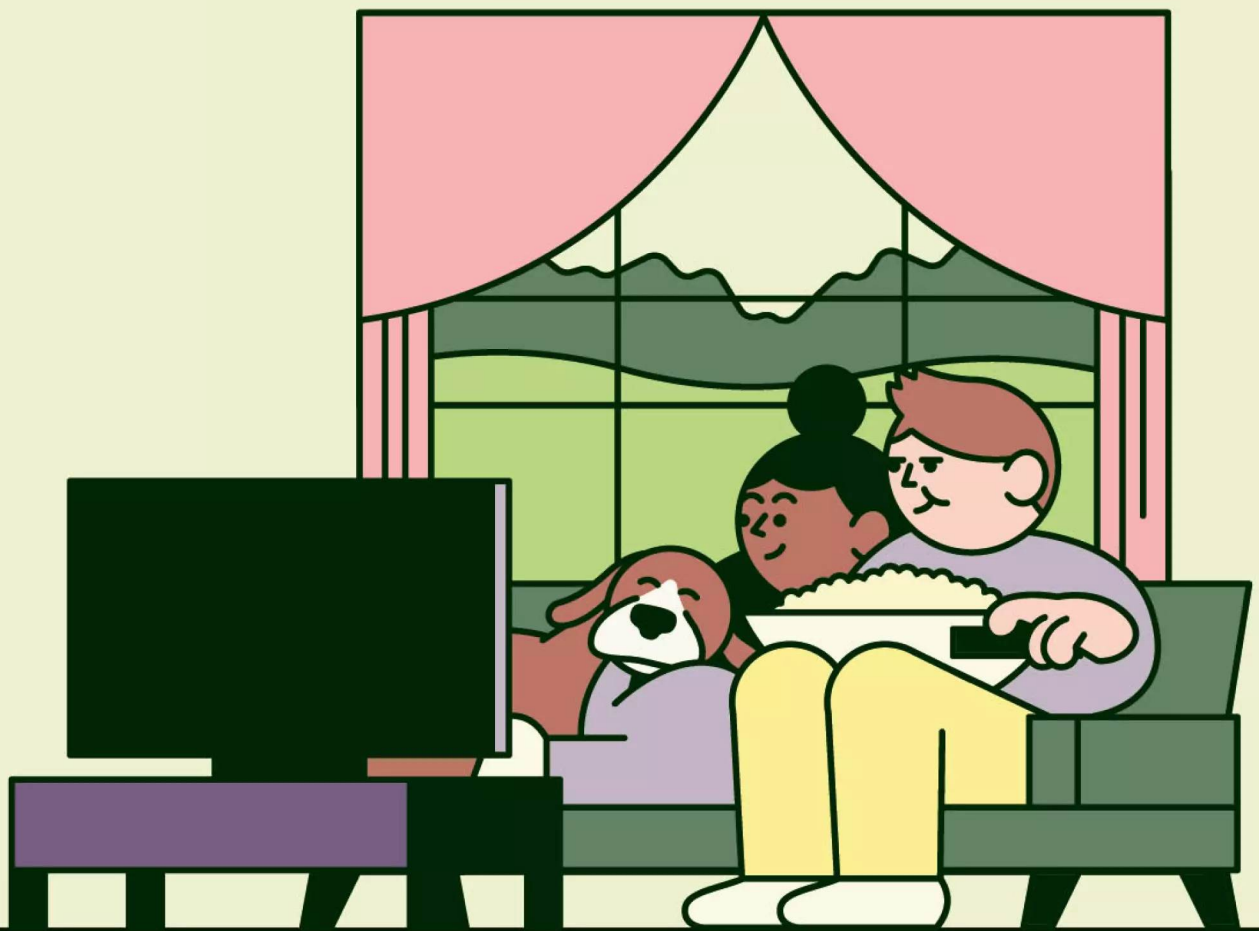
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Welcome to... NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX



We all have our heroes as artists, our favourite worlds and universes that have been built, the characters that inhabit them, and the monsters that roam them. We also have our inspirations, be that music, movies or an artist whose work touches us in some way.

All those things come into play when we talk about fan art, which isn't simply the recreation of someone else's work. It's an exploration of our love for those artists, characters and places, or of a style that has left a mark on us.

This month we put our focus on fan art, starting with RaidesArt's beautifully rendered homage to Studio Ghibli film Howl's Moving Castle, based on the book of the same name by Diana Wynne Jones. We also look at how working on fan art can boost your skills and career, and offer more practical advice throughout our tutorial section, which includes a wonderful step-by-step guide showing you how to create your own version of the classic grass-type Pokémon Venusaur in Photoshop.

I hope you enjoy the issue!

Rob

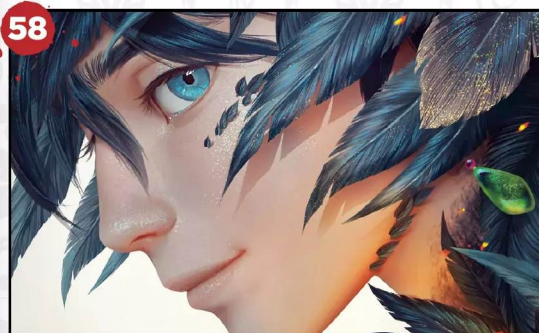
Editor

Rob.Redman@futurenet.com

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



Inside a comfortable Long Island workspace
Explore Greg Manchess' cosy studio, including art that has been to the International Space Station and back.



Create a stylised fan art portrait
RaidesArt reveals how she made her rendition of the eponymous title character from Howl's Moving Castle.



Develop a detailed Pokémon
Follow along with Juan Diego León's in-depth process for painting a stylised piece of Venusaur fan art.

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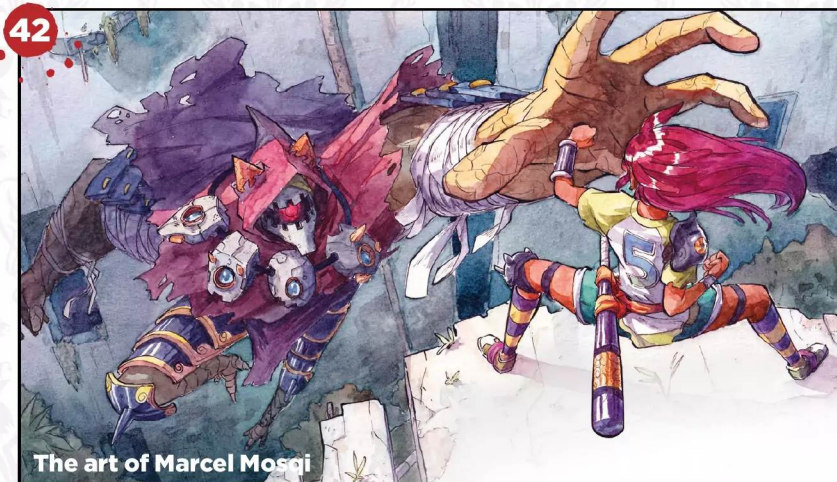
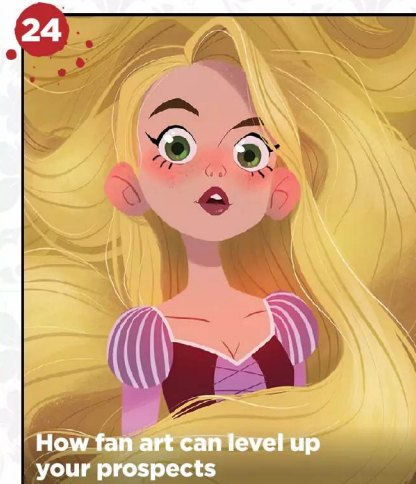
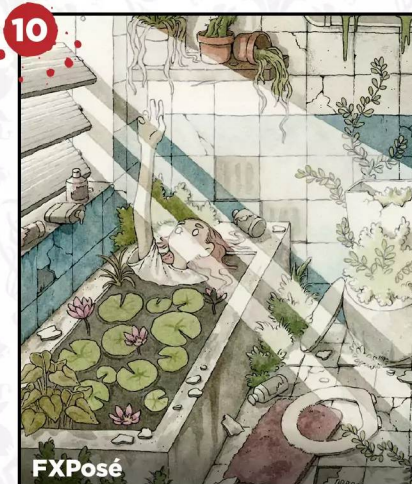
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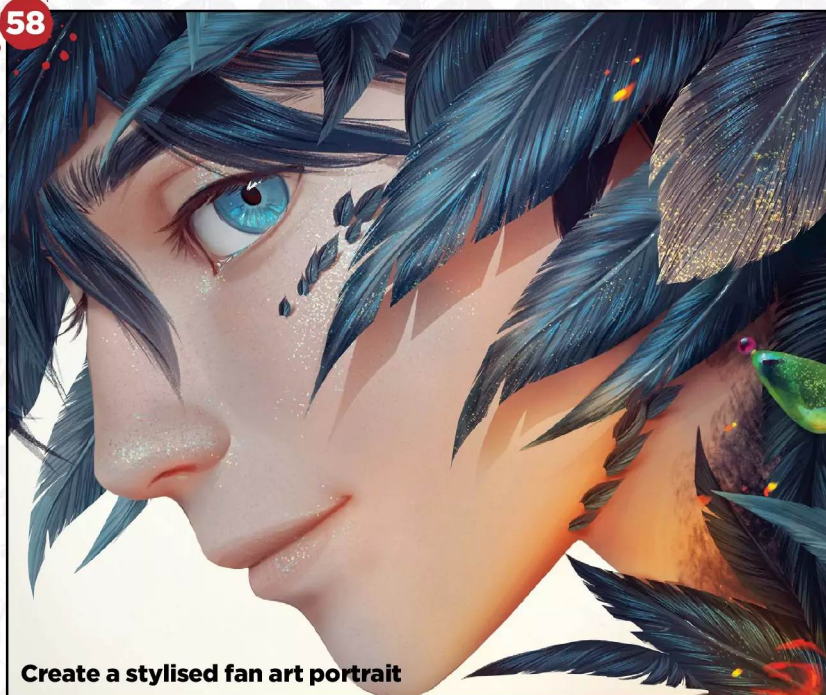
Make engaging Spider-Man art

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Develop a detailed Venusaur

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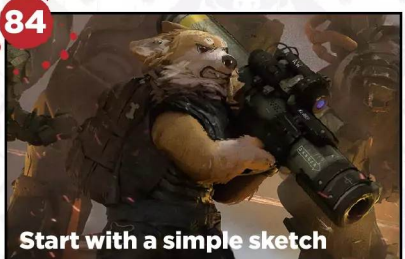
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Colour your shadows

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Start with a simple sketch

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Paint a stylish artbook cover

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ImagineFX

PERFECT YOUR PORTRAIT SKILLS

Artist **Brooks Kim** shows you how to master your character sketches



Enter a cavern of collectibles
Legendary artist Greg Hildebrandt introduces us to his array of trinkets

The life of a storyboard pro
DreamWorks artist David Colman tells us about his work on epic animation

Paint in vibrant watercolours
Make your artwork leap off the page with advice from Margaret Morales

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ImagineFX

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FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

ImagineFX
ARTIST
MONTH

1





Piyathip Unadirekkul

LOCATION: Singapore **MEDIA:** Procreate **WEB:** www.instagram.com/piyathip.art

Creating is Piyathip's hobby, and has helped her process difficult emotions. She enjoys using environment and atmosphere to set the mood of a scene, and draws inspiration from nature, abandoned places and her dreams.



1 HOPE

"This painting depicts the passage of time through difficult phases in life."

2 NATURE TAKES OVER

"This painting was my attempt at creating a serene environment through the juxtaposition of natural and human-made structures."

3 JUST ANOTHER WEEKDAY

"This digital painting shows an abandoned office scene. It's about seeing beauty in the mundane."

Vincent Coviello

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: www.instagram.com/vincentcoviello

Vincent is a concept artist and illustrator with a passion for creating new worlds and the creatures and characters that inhabit them. Most of the artworks pictured here come from his personal bestiary, which he titled Creature Compendium.

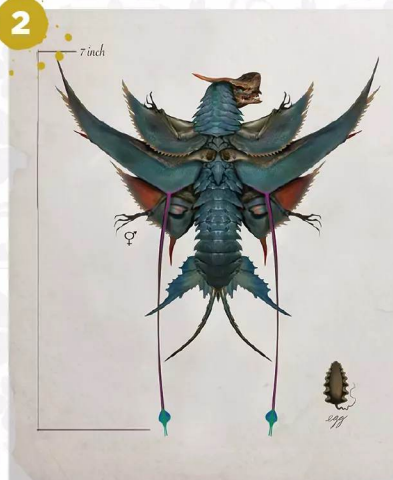
1 NOCTURNAL FAIRIES

"Fairies are typically associated with the time between dusk and dawn. However, there are also a number of nocturnal species. These fairies tend to be highly elusive."

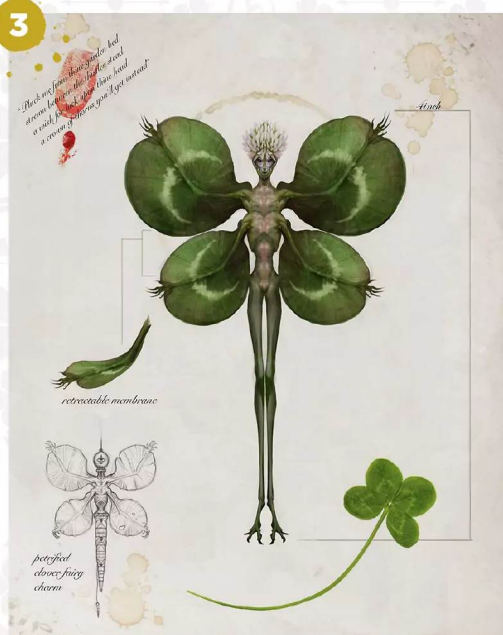
2 ROCK CRAB DRAKES

"Rock Crab Drakes are smaller sea dragons that are highly adaptable and can be found populating rocky coastlines, deep sea caves, or coral beds."

2



3

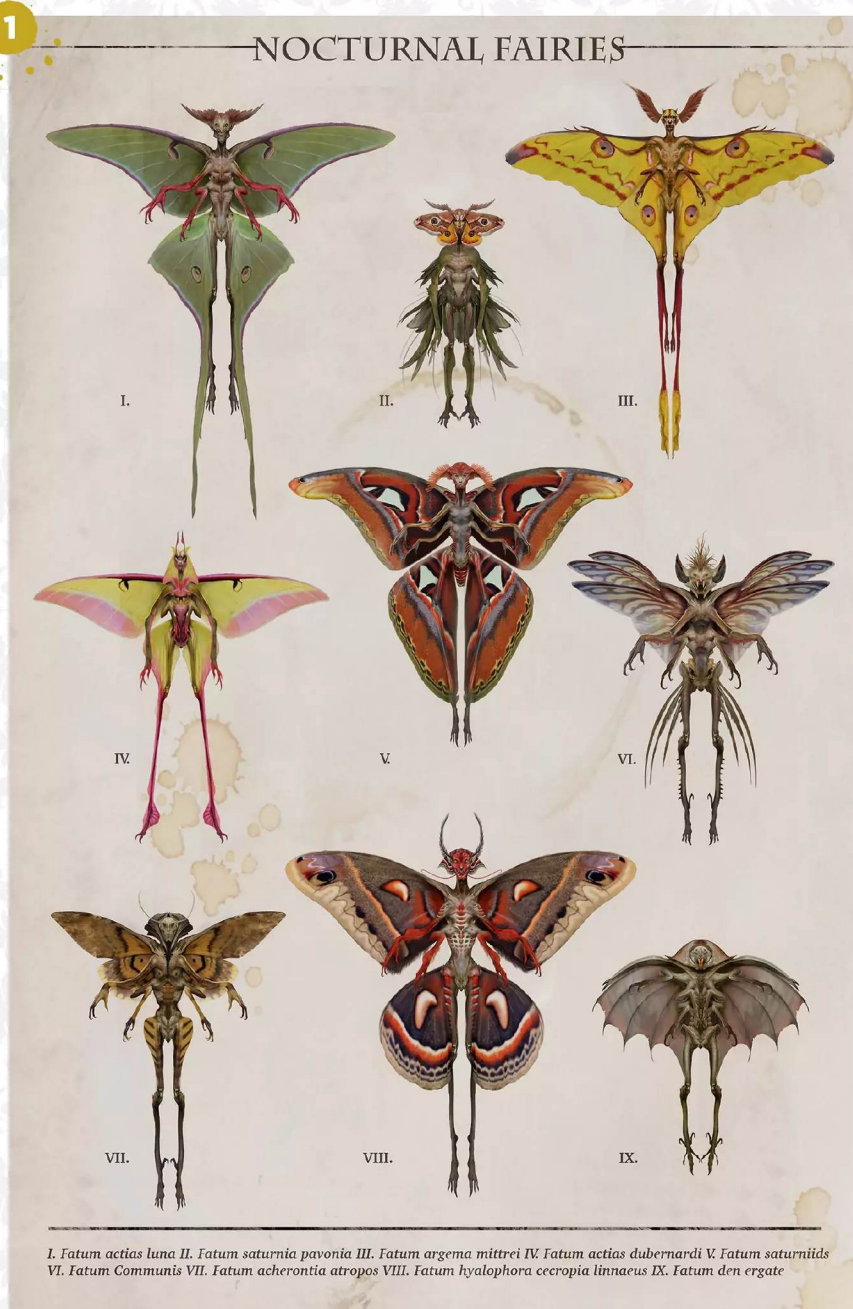


3 CLOVER FAIRY

"The clover has long been associated with magic and is highly prized. While the plant has magical properties, it's the Clover Fairy that's much sought after."

4 MERMAIDS

"Mermaids are part of a vast net of aquatic humanoids. Merfolk possess the unique 'false face' adaptation, believed to have evolved as a defence mechanism."





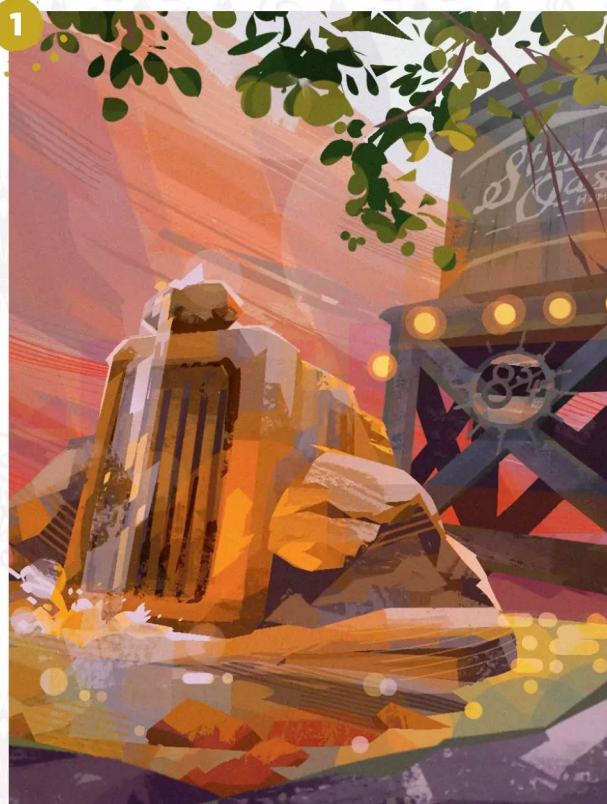
Kristen Wang

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Procreate, Photoshop **WEB:** <https://kris10wang.com>

Kristen is a vis dev artist and illustrator who draws inspiration from fashion, mid-century interior design and impressionist painters. She aims to imbue her work with a similar use of colour and expression.

1 STANLEY'S OASIS

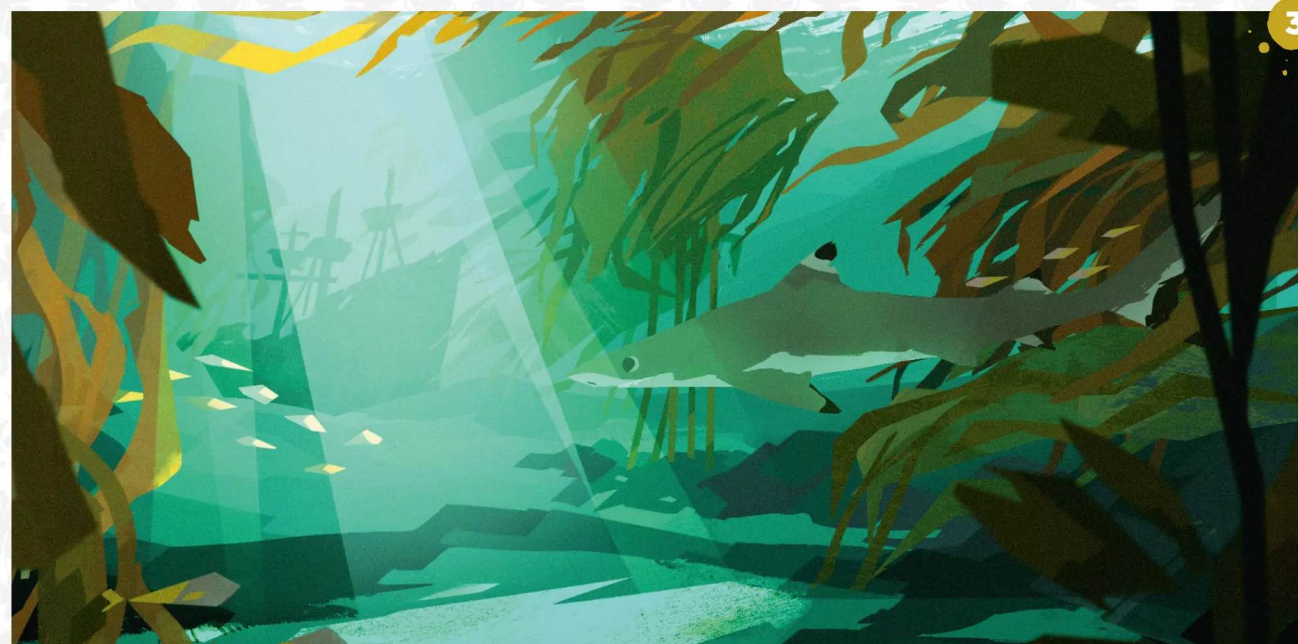
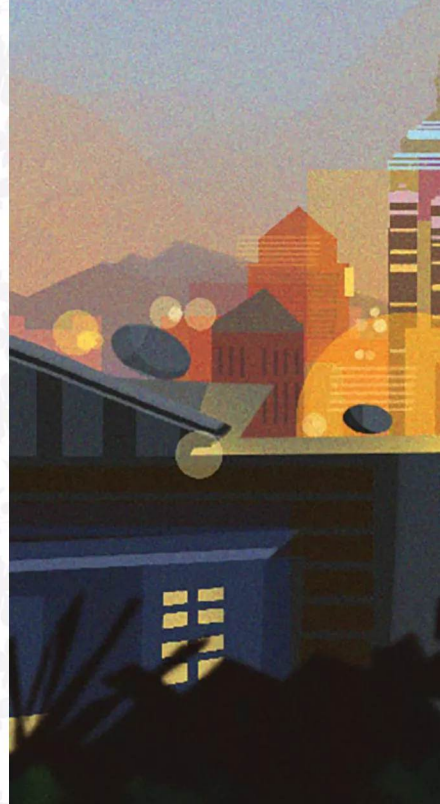
"Making the best out of a Disneyland queue by painting from life. I loved the juxtaposition of a cloudy day and how the warm lighting bounces off the rocks."



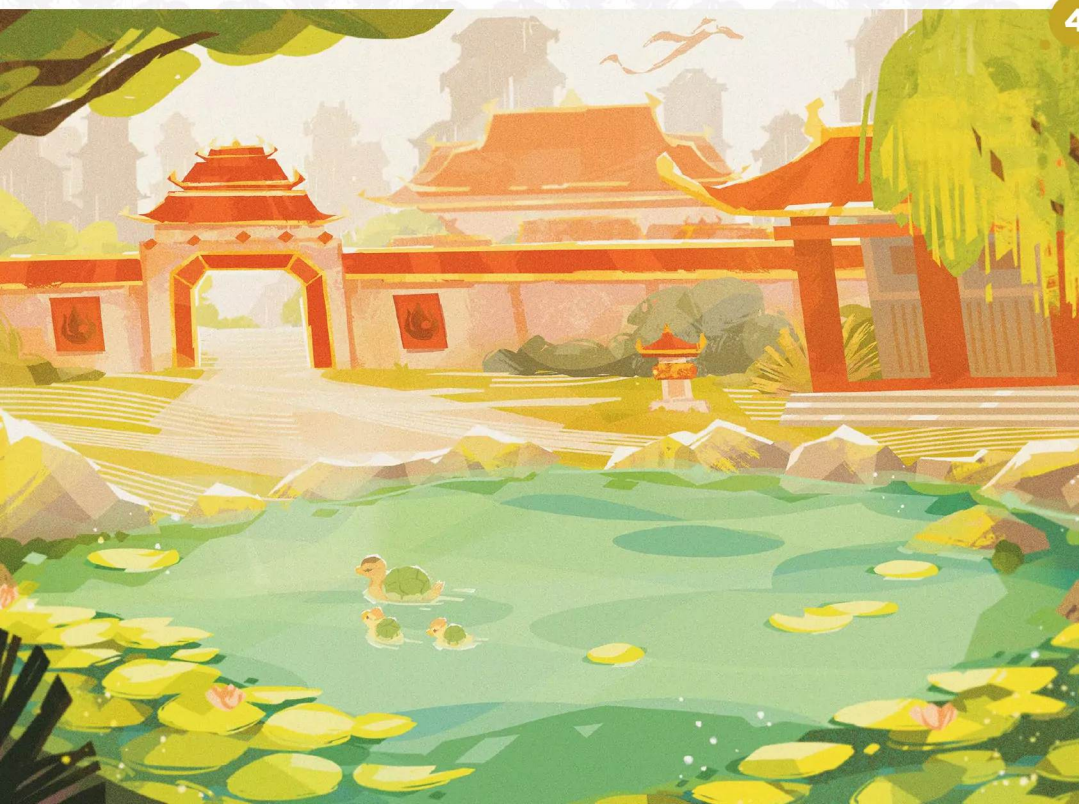
2 GOLDEN HOUR IN CENTRAL, HONG KONG

"This captures the sunset glow of the Central District in Hong Kong and its iconic historical buildings."

2



3



4

3 IN SHARK WATERS
 "Imagining what lives below within kelp forests."

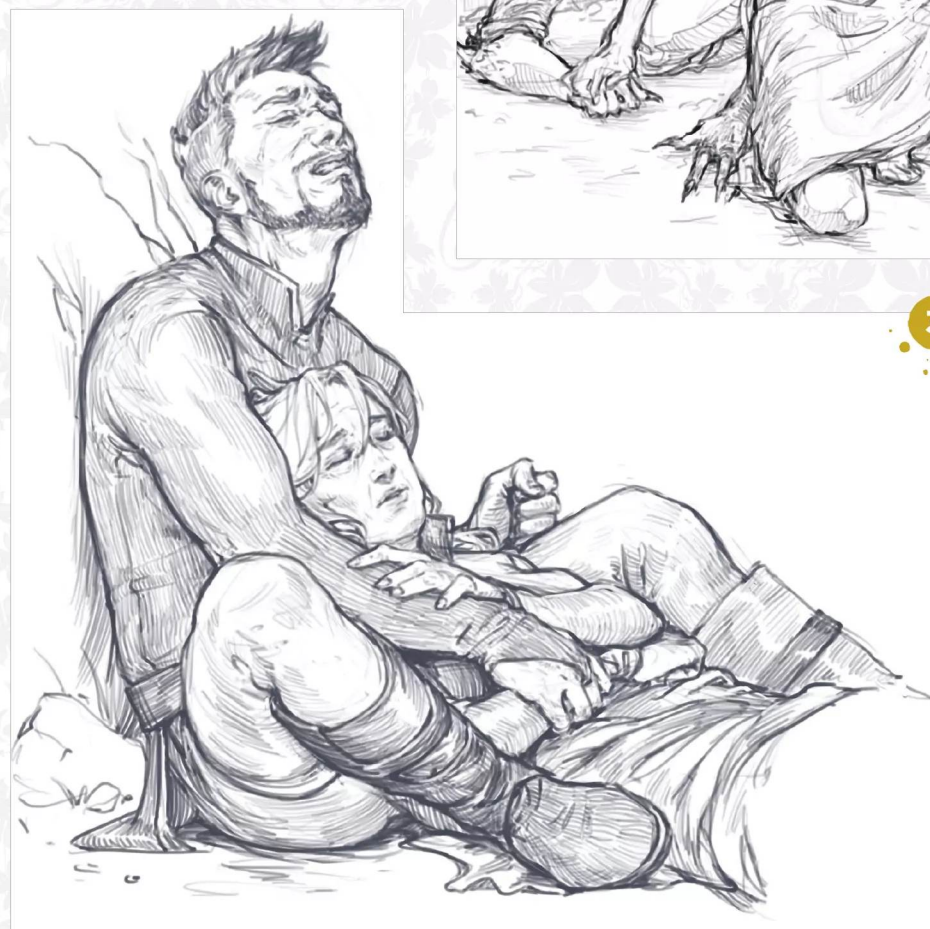
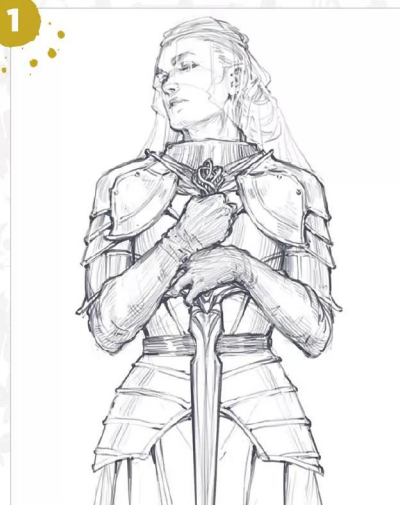
4 TURTLE DUCK POND
 "Illustration piece for the StreetsOfZine's Avatar: The Last Airbender edition. This is how I imagined the Fire Nation palace grounds under Fire Lord Zuko's reign."



Anna Havaska Sváb

LOCATION: Hungary MEDIA: Procreate WEB: <https://svanha.carrrd.co>

While working as a concept artist, Anna started taking on daily drawing challenges for fun in 2017. She likes drawing fantasy characters and scenes from books, and her sketches revolve around emotions and strong feelings.



3

1 LADY KNIGHT

"One of my favourite subjects is women in armour. Be it poetic or just as a striking change of the narrative, they are always interesting for me."

2

2 LEAVE HIM ALONE

"A small twist to the well-known story about saving a princess from a dragon."

3

3 WITCHER FAN ART

"This piece is fan art for The Witcher: Nightmare of the Wolf movie about Vesemir. I love all tragic love stories, and this one was heartbreaking."

4

4 SOMETHING THERE

"I like to use story dice to come up with small narratives for my daily drawings. I let everyone else fill in the details."





Nadia Höllwarth

LOCATION: Sweden **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Blender **WEB:** <https://nadelblaum.artstation.com>

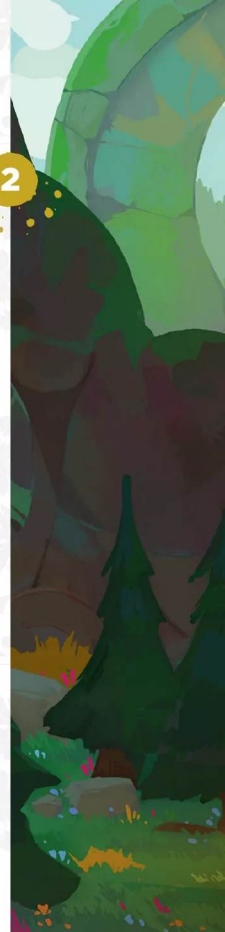
Nadia studied fine arts before embarking on a freelance career. Her style is a fusion of children's book illustration and concept art. "I love exploring whimsical designs that are connected to my daily life."

1 CAT ARENA

"I took the challenge to design a concept that would fit with the style of the online game Teamfight Tactics. I learned a lot about ratios, rendering and low contrast for games. Hopefully no cats will get injured!"



2



3



4

2 THE ADMIRER

"Influenced by Zelda, I wanted to capture that feeling of adventure with the story of an ancient civilisation through its ruins and this gigantic statue."

3 WORK WITH GHOSTS

"How do you depict intrusive thoughts? By changing them into cute monsters of course! However, in some way we're never alone in front of our canvases."

4 VEGGIE DRAMA

"Kids dressed as vegetables has always been an amusing thought to me. This is a play about veggies and their water consumption. Strawberry and avocado will inevitably clash."



Joanne Tang

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

Joanne is a freelance illustrator who draws inspiration from her everyday life. She always tries to highlight a sense of colour and light in her work, which is influenced by impressionist artists and film photography.

1 CHINATOWN CAR SHOW

"I saw this cute little car at the San Francisco Chinatown Car Show. I liked the contrast seen between the graffiti elements on the ground and the vintage car."

2 STUDIO CORNER

"This was a quick study of my fashion designer friend's studio. I attempted to simplify the brushstrokes and textures in this piece."

3 MELBOURNE CITYSCAPE

"This piece was a view I saw while living in Melbourne. The goal was to use simple graphic shapes to illustrate a complex scene."

4 SAN FRANCISCO DOWNTOWN

"This piece was a study of downtown San Francisco. I tried to use colour variations to push the sense of space in the painting."





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The Departure

YEAR CREATED: 2023 MEDIA: Photoshop

"This painting was done during my time under Drew Hartel's mentorship, and created for my own story The Boy and The Rain God. I made this piece in order to have a solid portfolio project, and to showcase my Burmese culture, which is pretty under-represented in mainstream media."



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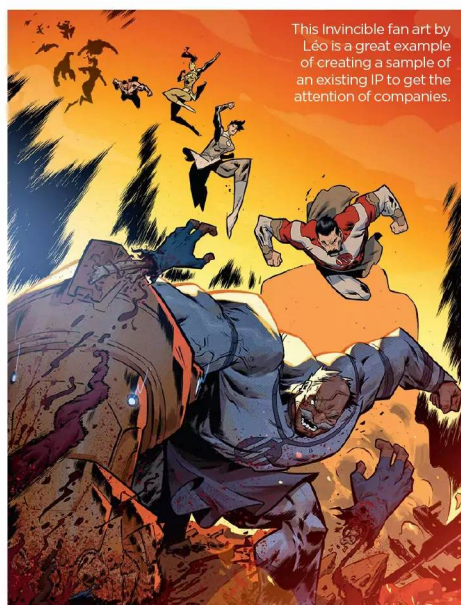


Artist PROFILE

Myat Hein Khant

LOCATION: Singapore
Myat Hein Khant is a visdev artist born in Myanmar. He dropped out of university to follow his passion for art and began taking online classes, before later moving to Singapore and developing his portfolio while learning under the mentorship of Drew Hartel.

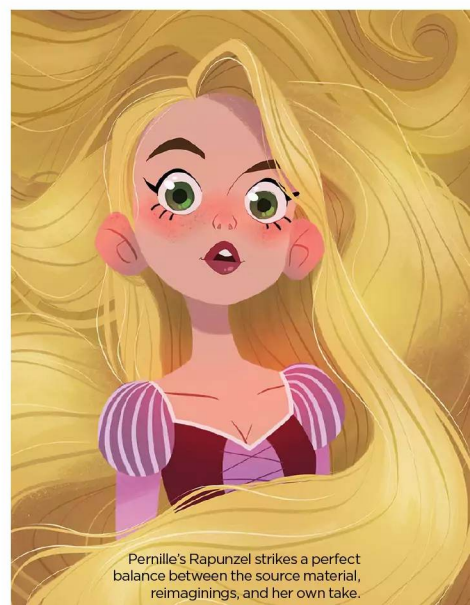
www.therookies.co/u/MHK



This Invincible fan art by Léo is a great example of creating a sample of an existing IP to get the attention of companies.



Fan art like this Call of Duty piece is very personal for Jejeunai. "I've never been able to force myself to create art for things I wasn't passionate about."



Pernille's Rapunzel strikes a perfect balance between the source material, reimaginings, and her own take.

How creating fan art can level up your prospects

Fans united Creators tell **Dominic Carter** how fan art has improved their skills, attracted clients, and introduced them to new audiences

There's more to drawing fan art than showing some love for your favourite subject. When shared properly, fan art tributes can grab the attention of studios and expand your profile with like-minded audiences. That's not to mention the fact that it's a fun way to keep yourself sharp.

This is a far cry from how fan art used to be perceived. No longer is it seen as the preserve of amateurs or

Nostalgia and love for a character, such as this Au Ra from the Final Fantasy universe, help Kassian decide what subjects they draw.



opportunists. In fact, fan art is now arguably a medium itself with its own unique benefits, and one that gives creators an opportunity to flex their artistic muscles with the help of some familiar iconography.

PASSION PROJECTS



For Marvel and DC artist **Toni Infante**, this elevation of fan art's status is a natural step. Like many artists, he sees himself as a product of pop culture, with his work having been shaped by the comics he read and the shows that he watched while growing up.

"I think pop art itself included elements akin to fan art; for example, Warhol's iconic paintings of Marilyn Monroe," he says. "Historical artworks of religious scenes also share some similarities with contemporary fan art,

don't they? Although heroes and mythologies evolve with time, our will to pay homage remains constant."

A love of pop culture is also a motivator for the Disney and DreamWorks artist **Pernille Ørum**, whose portfolio features plenty of fan art. "When I come across something that I like, I'm always itching to put my own creative spin on it," she says.



"Drawing is my way of expressing my admiration for stories, characters, or universes I'm passionate about. It's such a fun and engaging way for me to share my interpretation with others who share my interests."

Speaking of shared interest, fan artist **Kassian** believes that it can open up a lot of doors, even for artists who don't have much experience or a large following on social media. "Whenever I post a new drawing, I get several emails and direct messages from ➡





A DAY IN THE LIFE OF...

Creature concept artist Zachary Berger talks about the importance of looking after yourself to get the most from the career that you're passionate about.

Page 30



CREATING IN A COSY STUDIO

Greg Manchess gives unique insight on his studio, introducing us to dinosaur friends and his artistic process, plus sharing momentos that have been to space.

Page 32



INCREDIBLE READER ART

We pick out our top 10 artworks from the fantastic entries you submitted for our first Art Challenge, with the prompt Mystical Meets Machines.

Page 38

“Although heroes and mythologies can evolve with time, our will to pay homage remains constant”

Toni thinks his fan art, such as this piece for Hyrule Champions: Age of Calamity, succeeds because he knows the material so well he can sneak in lots of Easter eggs.





Kirby is one of the many computer game characters drawn by Toni that go down a storm on social media.

➤ people who are interested in commissioning me," they reveal. "I've also been approached by small indie studios offering me either illustrator roles or freelance collaborations on a couple of occasions.

"By creating fan art, you can tap into huge fandoms that share your obsessions, and if they like your style, you'll have a solid and supportive community cheering you on before you know it, especially when drawing characters from popular franchises. It's not just the fans but developers, voice actors, and other industry professionals that often appreciate

“My fan art led me to where I am now professionally, and I built my art career on it”

fan art. It's quite motivating when a concept artist or illustrator you admire likes or leaves a nice comment on your post, not to mention that it can help you build connections.”

CATCHING THE EYE

As for Toni, his fan art has resulted in commissions from the IP owners themselves, leading to him illustrating iconic characters such as Spider-Man officially. "Without realising it back then, my work always had a nice balance between the original designs and my own style," he says. "This seems to resonate with companies seeking fresh takes.

"My fan art led me to where I am now professionally, and I built my art career upon it. Of course, I often encourage my students to create fan



Léo has a "candid love" for characters such as Spawn, but his fan art is always something of a personal take on them.

art as well. What better way to catch the eye of Marvel than by showcasing their own characters?"

However, a word of warning amid all this promise of quick growth comes from the concept artist **JeJeynai**. "It does come as a bit of a double-edged sword," she says. "Being known for one thing or one specific fandom can come with expectations from an audience that there will be more to come.

"At times this can make it difficult to expand in different directions as an artist. That being said, it's also one of



Illustrations like this one of Hawke Flynn from the From Blood and Ash book series have got JeJeynai noticed by fellow fans and the publishing community.

the nicest and most rewarding ways to share the joy something gives you with others, and connect with like-minded people."

For Gearbox Software storyboard

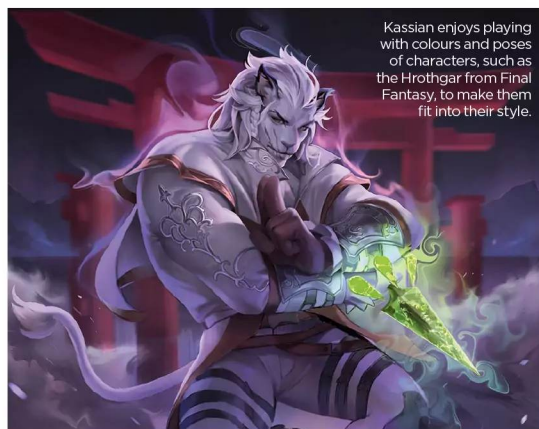


artist **Léo Chiola**, these external pressures and expectations are tuned out somewhat. "I don't really do fan art with an audience in mind, in the first place it's selfishly for me," he explains.

"But if I'm being totally honest, it is indeed helping me to grow my audience. With so many people now posting online and showing their ➤



Pieces like this drawing of Grifter from Wildcats is one of the ways in which Léo builds his portfolio.



Kassian enjoys playing with colours and poses of characters, such as the Hrothgar from Final Fantasy, to make them fit into their style.

Frozen's Elsa is one of many Disney princesses that are a staple of Pernille's portfolio.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT **SOURCE OF OPPORTUNITY**

Pernille Ørum talks us through her fan art journey

Has fan art ever directly led to receiving any opportunities or commissions?

While working as a character designer for a gaming company, I used to frequently post versions of fan art online. This helped me gain recognition and eventually led to me freelancing for some overseas companies. Although I also create original artwork, I particularly enjoy interpreting characters I love and sharing them with people who have similar interests.

Has creating fan art developed your audience?

Yes, I experienced this especially at the beginning of my online art journey, when I started posting my artwork. Not only did it attract an audience that was interested in my art, but it also helped me create a community of people who shared similar interests to me. Whenever a new movie comes out that I'm excited to watch, I enjoy creating some artwork to celebrate it. If others are as excited as I am, then my artwork will reach them.

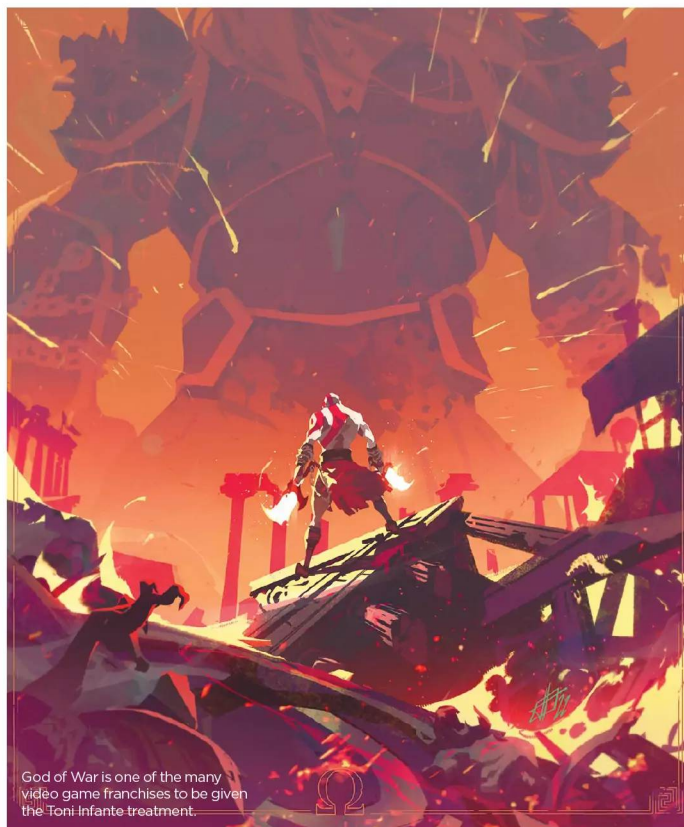
Has fan art refined your skills as an artist?

I started creating fan art when I was a kid, and it has played a significant role in my growth as an artist. At the age of four, I aspired to be an animator, and would often draw multiple renditions of Ariel and other characters from animation to improve my art skills. Initially, I was copying those drawings, but gradually, I began to create my own versions. I've continued drawing fan art, and even now, I always try to do it as much as I possibly can.



Danish illustrator Pernille is the creator of DC Super Hero Girls and has worked on the Hit-Girl comic series.

www.pernilleoe.dk



God of War is one of the many video game franchises to be given the Toni-infante-treatment.

➔ work, fan art can be an excellent way for artists to get discovered by an unexpected audience."

ARTISTIC ADVANCEMENT

Fan art isn't all about getting noticed though. As Jeleynai highlights, all that work will pay off one way or another. "Anything that can get you drawing and keep you happy will be beneficial for any artist's growth," she says.

"For me personally, I've developed a lot more confidence in my sketching from all the silly drawings I made and posted 'just for fun'. I never expected so many people to connect with my sketches, but it was helpful for me to be less precious about showing my unrefined work. It just ended up getting me to draw a ton more!"

It's a sentiment Toni can empathise with. "Fan art has pushed me to explore various styles, techniques,

“Fan art can be a great opportunity to try new tools and techniques”



Sometimes Kassian draws characters like League of Legends' Syndra because they identify with them.

Cinderella from the original 1950 Disney movie fits Pernille's style as perfectly as a glass slipper.



and approaches, and some of these are just part of my own style now," he says. "I've experimented with textures, line-art, flat colours and realism before mixing it into the style I currently have, which continues to evolve over time."

As for Léo, he approaches fan art as an opportunity to continue improving and challenge himself artistically. "The good thing is that you don't really have to think about the design, so you can focus on trying new and exciting poses or experiment with any type of shape," he reveals. "It can also be a great opportunity to try new tools and techniques you would be too afraid to try with a design of your own!"

Kassian, meanwhile, says a passion for fan art results in high expectations. "It works as a catalyst for growth as an artist and motivates me to explore new methods to get the exact vision I have in my head," they add. "It inspires me to continuously study other artists, overcome any obstacles, and strive to make the piece as good as possible."

COPYRIGHT CONCERNS

There is one thing to be wary of when it comes to fan art though, and that's the thorny topic of copyright. While all



Fan art like this piece of Xiao from Genshin Impact gives Kassian a chance to thank the professional artists behind video game characters.



Pernille's Barbie fan art takes its cues from the recent big-screen adaptation of the Mattel icon.



Fjord from D&D. Jejeynai says fan art can help artists connect with new audiences quicker.

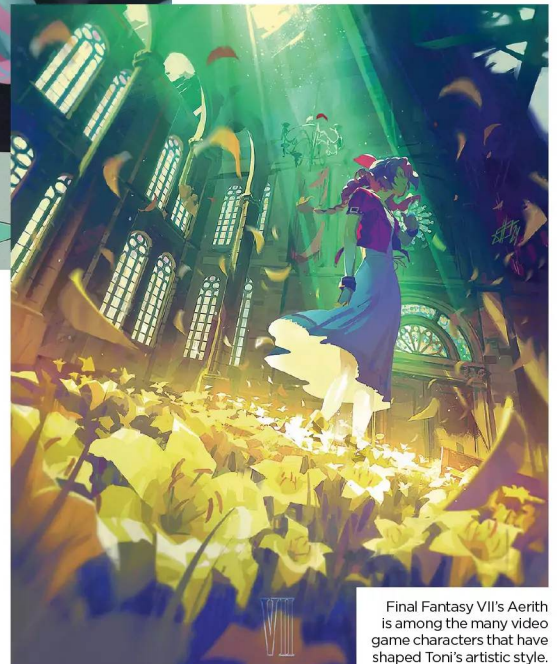
of our contributors have managed to avoid getting stung, they all underline how important it is to be careful.

"I've never personally run into any issues," says Jejeynai. "I've always tried my best to do research on the policy and stance of any IPs when it came to selling prints of fan art, and I do generally tend to be on the more conservative side when it comes to making any money from any fan art that I've created."

Pernille agrees that taking a more cautious approach is where it actually

pays off for creating fan art. "For me, making fan art is always a fun way to ease into or out of work, or even as an opportunity to sketch characters from a new series that I might have recently watched," she says. "At the moment I'm watching Yellowstone, and as I've always been fond of the western-style fashion, it's actually proved inspiring for my artwork."

"It's essential to note that creating fan art doesn't grant you ownership of the characters, which means that commercialising it isn't permitted."



Final Fantasy VII's Aerith is among the many video game characters that have shaped Toni's artistic style.

This design took hundreds of iterations and nearly a year to finally get right.



A day in the life of... Zachary Berger

Respect yourself The creature designer on why it's vital for concept artists to take care of themselves, and his work on the Avatar films



A signed poster from Avatar: The Way of Water takes pride of place in Zachary's workspace.

"I wake up at 7.30am, work out, and start my work at 9.30am, checking in with my supervising art director to see where we're at. I'm working a lot with our franchise partners as they're expanding into games and theme parks, and we're like quality control.

I'll also check in with another department called The Lab in the virtual production pipeline, to make sure that they're doing what the

production designer wants. So there's a lot of Zoom wrangling.

My job has been expanding into an overseer role. I never want to stop making art. I watch Dylan Cole, the production designer on Avatar, make time to create art for the movie, even as he has his eye on all departments at all times. He's been a good mentor.

Lunch is around 12.30pm. Everyone makes fun of me because I make the



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.

same thing every single day: a tofu wrap. It's like how Christopher Nolan wears the same thing every day; it's one less decision we have to make.

I work until around 7pm. My wife and I cook. I was doing personal art after dinner, but this year I've gotten more involved with guild meetings, trying to sound the alarm on AI. My wife and I try to have a conversation before bed, often when the deep stuff comes up, then sleep around 11pm.

My advice for people entering the field is to respect your body. I've had friends who've injured themselves because they don't, and they're out of commission for months. I want to be doing this for as long as I can - I love it! So it's a matter of allowing myself to be able to continue, and part of that is taking care of myself in both the physical and mental space."



Zachary considers himself lucky to have been working on Avatar during tumultuous years in the industry. He also

lists his time on Spectral for Netflix and Kong: Skull Island for Warner Bros. as career highlights. www.artofzachary.com

Zachary at work on his latest design project in his home studio.

© 20th Century Fox/Marvel Entertainment



One of the final designs for Ben Grimm, AKA The Thing, for the 2015 Fantastic Four movie.

Payakan was easily the most complex and difficult creature design to crack in Avatar: The Way of Water. The final design was a collaboration between many talented artists.



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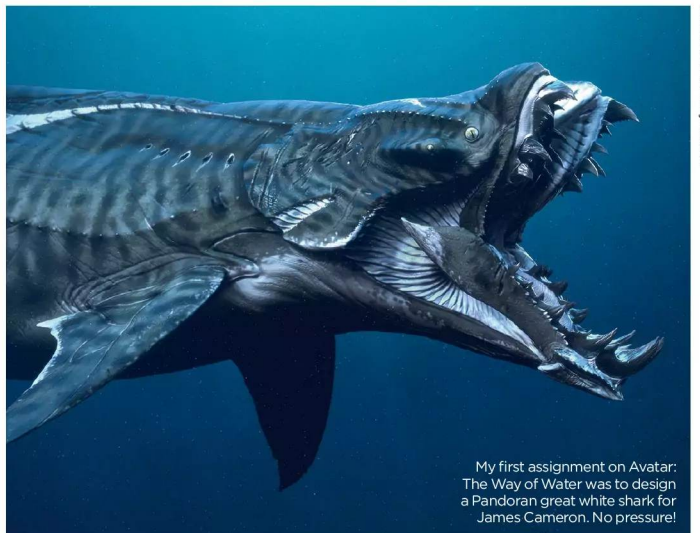
The near-final ghost-hunting suit design for the 2016 Netflix movie Spectral. The production designer and director were trying to go for a bit of a badass Ghostbusters vibe.

“This year I’ve gotten more involved in guild meetings, sounding the alarm on AI”



A collaborative piece with Imery Watson of the near-final Spectral design. This was part of a massive presentation that helped get the movie greenlit.

© Netflix



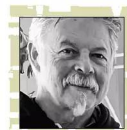
My first assignment on Avatar: The Way of Water was to design a Pandora great white shark for James Cameron. No pressure!

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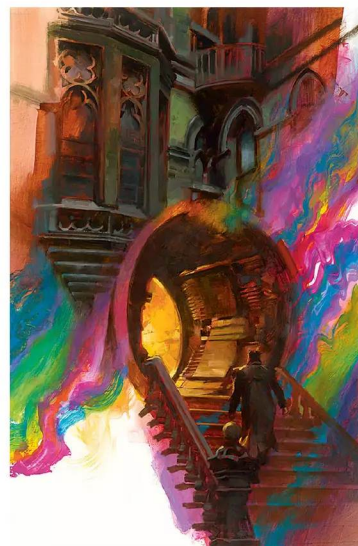
Greg Manchess

Cosy comfort The artist opens up his Long Island studio space packed full of inspirational goodies



My studio is in a small island house built in 1940, with no room for easels or even large wall space. But the back end is full of windows, and I love working in the light.

I have to block direct sunlight with a piece of cardboard, but on overcast days the light is just right. I can look out across a farm field and a bank of trees filled with squirrels, chipmunks, and a variety of bird life. You know when the hawks come through as every creature freezes in place, and then they all scatter. ➔



An interior illustration of Chooka Frood's house created for The Demolished Man.



ImagineFX

This is an original J.C. Leyendecker preliminary painting study. It keeps me humble and inspired to paint from the heart.



The ubiquitous stack of books for research on assignments, writing, and the sciences, especially about neuroscience, performance and the myth of talent, and simply for the joy of reading. Hold a book in your hands, and the world reveals its mysteries!

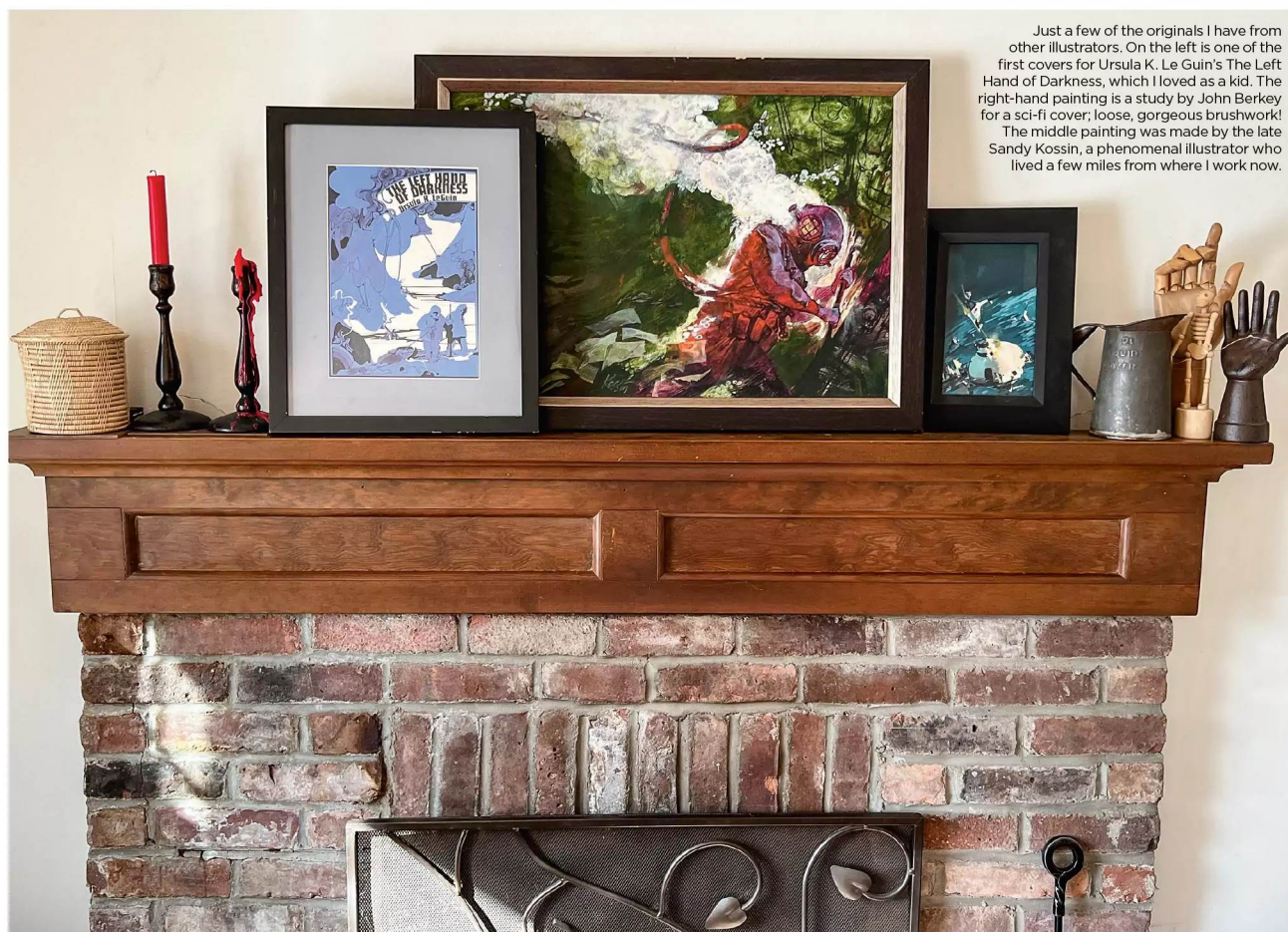
A tiny metal diving helmet. I've done a series of paintings of all sorts of helmets and this keeps me thinking about other subjects I'd love to turn into a series, or perhaps novels. Helmets mean that an adventure awaits.

A row of animal sculptures to draw from, predominantly dinosaurs. I've been a fan since a small child, like basically every other kid!

A biplane model that keeps inspiring me to refine my next novel, which is about gryphon pilots struggling to maintain their way of life against a greater enemy that's out to eradicate them. And of course for the love of biplanes.

A partial stack of my journals. I've kept work diaries my entire career. Every job, every painting I've ever done over the decades, every day of my adult life, with notes and highlights about my professional life, and sometimes personal life. Some of that will go into my forthcoming book about painting.

A small copy of the polar bear sculpture in the Musée d'Orsay by François Pompon. Such life in that piece! It helped me keep the characters of the polar bears alive in my widescreen novel, *Above the Timberline*.



Just a few of the originals I have from other illustrators. On the left is one of the first covers for Ursula K. Le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness*, which I loved as a kid. The right-hand painting is a study by John Berkey for a sci-fi cover; loose, gorgeous brushwork! The middle painting was made by the late Sandy Kossin, a phenomenal illustrator who lived a few miles from where I work now.

➤ I have my lamps for painting at night, and a drafting table that can handle my larger canvases. Artists generally only paint in certain sections at a time anyway, so I can roll the canvas back and forth across the table to accommodate. I like to work flat on a hard surface, at a gentle tilt. I stand to paint like one might at an easel, but the angle is much easier on my neck, and I can see large parts of the painting all at once.

“My studio isn't perfect, but I've learned that what's important is the comfort”

I paint primarily using oils on pre-primed linen, and lately polyester. I can store loads of paintings in one drawer because I don't use stretcher bars, as I don't like the bounce of a stretched canvas. You only need stretchers to prime the fabric you're going to work on. Don't think that you have to keep it on the stretchers. Once it's dry, you can take it off. That way, when shipping to get them scanned, I roll the paintings image side out and insert them in a thick tube. It's really fast and very protective.

WORRY LESS, PAINT MORE

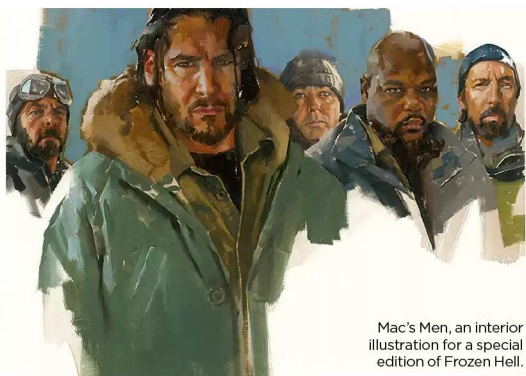
I've learned through long years of experience that there's no 'right way' to paint. Sure, there are efficient ways, but it's not like we're supposed to follow someone else's rules about it.

Painting is a very personal, expressive endeavour of laying down pigment. Aren't we supposed to be breaking rules and being creative anyway? Once you've gotten some simple basics down for how to go about it, then build your own method!

It's the image that communicates, no matter how it's created. Worry less, paint more. My studio is like that: feel it first. It's not perfect, but I've learned that what's important is the comfort; Scandinavians call it 'hygge'. You'll paint better if you're comfortable, but it doesn't have to be big or perfect.

Being forced into a space that I like to dream in allows me to think bigger, to push ideas larger than the space around me. It helps me remember to make images and attempt things on a grand scale.

Greg has freelanced for over 45 years, primarily oil painting, and won national awards for his work in movies, publishing, comics, and more. This year, he's set to be inducted into the Society of Illustrators Hall of Fame. www.manchest.com

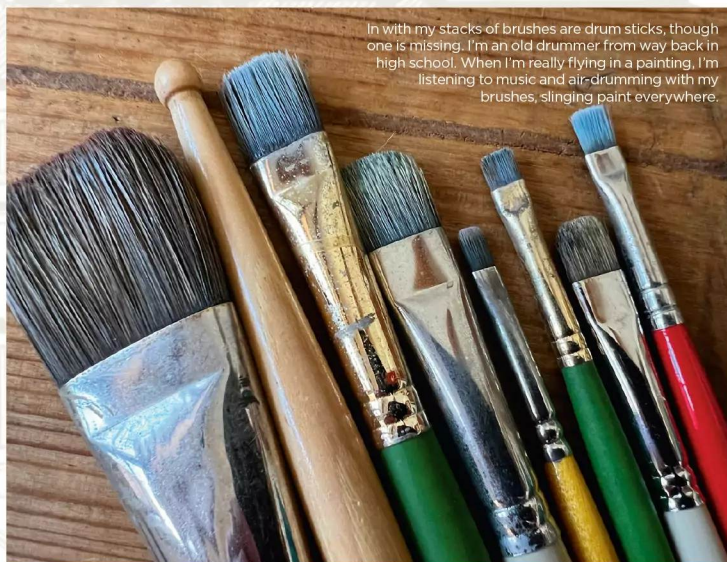


Mac's Men, an interior illustration for a special edition of *Frozen Hell*.

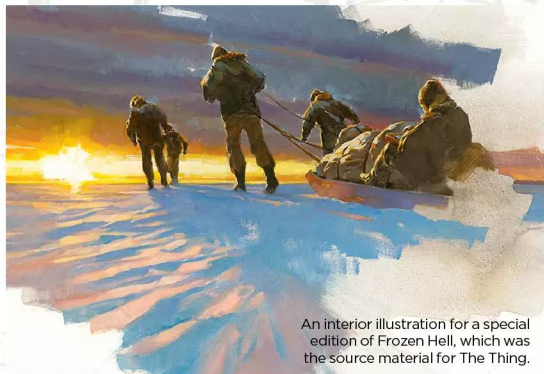
Artist news, software & events



Mission patches I continue to design for the NASA Dragon capsule crews that go to the International Space Station. I'm currently working on the Artemis crew patch for the next Moon mission. The patch on the right, Crew 7, is the current crew, while the Crew 1 patch has actually been to the space station and back!



In with my stacks of brushes are drum sticks, though one is missing. I'm an old drummer from way back in high school. When I'm really flying in a painting, I'm listening to music and air-drumming with my brushes, slinging paint everywhere.



An interior illustration for a special edition of Frozen Hell, which was the source material for The Thing.



Copies of my widescreen novel Above the Timberline, which is based on one painting I did for a how-to video about my work. It was written over five years and contains 124 paintings.



Old phones and old typewriters. I like seeing the history of technology in objects around me, and being reminded of how far we've come, and how far we have to go. This keeps me dreaming.

Flight Line, a personal piece for a new novel I'm working on.

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Gaëlle Seguillon showed us how to incorporate 3D elements in jaw-dropping fantasy art last issue.

There be dragons!

Hello ImagineFX, I'm an artist from Brazil and I try to include lots of tools to make my work easier and more varied, so it was really helpful to see the tutorial from Gaëlle Seguillon in last month's issue. I'm no expert when it comes to 3D software, but I can see the benefits of using it and her advice was so useful for me. Please cover more of this and other similar tools in the future.

Vitor, via email

Rob replies Thanks for getting in touch Vitor! I'm so pleased that Gaëlle's great workshop has helped you out. I couldn't agree more that keeping a broad suite of tools and skills can be a real boon for an artist. As long as your fundamental skills are looked after, it doesn't really matter what tools you use, whether it's brushes and paints or 3D and virtual reality, so we'll definitely be covering some of these options in our upcoming issues.

Spectacular vehicles

Just a short note to say thank you and congrats. The last issue was great! That tutorial on drawing science fiction vehicles was just what I needed, as I've been struggling to know how I should approach things like the lenses on lights, and John's explanation has really helped me nail it. Thanks again!

Barti, via email

Rob replies Hi Barti. It's great to hear from you and to know that John's tutorial was of use. We always strive to help artists improve their skills and being able to call on such talent is a great way to do it. Keep your eyes peeled for more in future issues, or keep an eye later in this one for training on all sorts of topics, from the theory behind colouring your shadows to painting a Pokémon fan art piece.



Flying fantasy

Hi Rob. Having been a fan of his for so long I was grinning like a kid in a sweet shop when I saw you'd featured Grégory Fromenteau last month. I love odd fantasy art, especially when there are things flying that wouldn't normally be, and he's a real genius at that kind of art. I'd love to see some of my other favourites too. Maybe you could get Stephen Tappin in to do something?

Eddie, via email

Rob replies Great to hear from you and wonderful to read that you enjoyed our big interview! Grégory really is a master of his craft and I totally get your love for flying fantasy art. I'm rather fond of that myself and have a few favourites of my own that I'd love to get in the mag, like Ian McQue. I've long been a fan of Stephen Tappin. His work is stunning and always manages to inspire me to work harder at my own art. I think you're right and that he'd be a fantastic addition to an upcoming issue. Watch this space and we'll see if we can get him in!

Aquatic life took to the air in our interview with Grégory Fromenteau.



DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE?

Don't worry – you can get hold of issue 239 at ifxm.ag/single-ixf.

FRESH
PAINT

New works that have grabbed our attention



[@haintbone](https://instagram.com/haintbone)



[@harry_conway_illustration](https://instagram.com/harry_conway_illustration)



[@angelikarasmus](https://instagram.com/angelikarasmus)

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

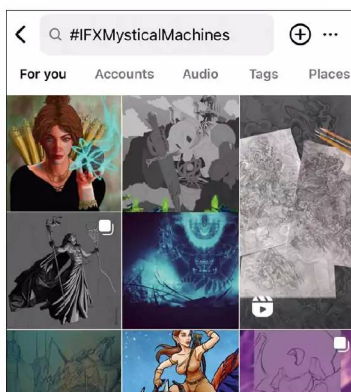
ImagineFX ART CHALLENGE

Celebrating your art Discover our favourite entries as ImagineFX readers let their imaginations loose

Back in March we launched our first ever ImagineFX Art Challenge – and you didn't disappoint!

We received a range of artwork for our Mystical Meets Machines theme, ranging from delicious digital pieces to gorgeous traditional work. The IFX team loved seeing the variety of ways you interpreted our prompt and had a tough time picking our favourites.

A big thanks goes to our passionate community for your incredible entries and making our first Art Challenge a success. We can't wait to see where your creativity takes you next!



Murielle and Karin Regenass www.tiktok.com/@regenassart



Simone Perlina
www.instagram.com/simo__world



Jessica Lund
www.instagram.com/jessamyart



Kate Becker www.instagram.com/katebecker.art

Challenge accepted Keep an eye on our social media channels for all the latest ImagineFX Art Challenge details and you could see your art in a future issue! **Visit page 3 for all our social channels**



Ruth Lamich www.instagram.com/ruthlamich



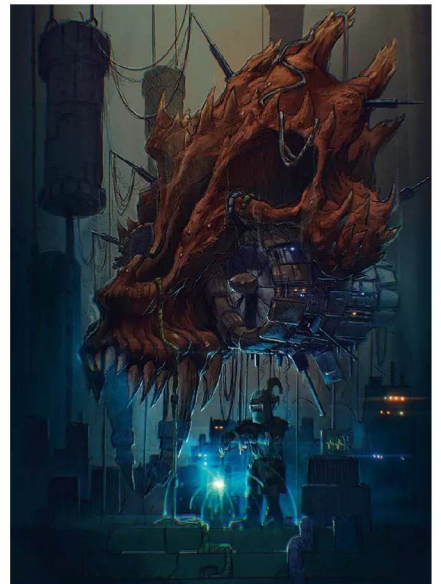
Mat Sadler <https://matsadler.com>



Michelle Tolo www.artstation.com/michelletolo



Anna Meshchanova www.instagram.com/anna_meshchanova



John Walters www.instagram.com/jwalters.infinity

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PRINT AND DIGITAL BACK ISSUES



Issue 239 June 2024

Get the secrets behind making magical characters in Clip Studio Paint, just like our stunning cover art. We chat about getting into game art in our big interview with Grégory Fromenteau, and teach you the basics of powerful values.



Issue 238 May 2024

We go all out on manga with a full feast of tutorials, including the vibrant cover from our star artist Julio Cesar. Blizzard's Aeri Pan shares her mission statement in our big interview, plus we visit Wayne Barlowe's curious studio.



Issue 237 April 2024

Learn how to design incredible book cover art with bestselling artist and author Tony DiTerlizzi. DC artist Liam Sharp also talks about his creative formula, and we get expert advice on painting a ferocious fire-breathing dragon.



Issue 236 March 2024

This month's awesome cover star Daniela Uhlig shows you her pro techniques for creating Procreate portraits. Plus, we discover what life is like in the games industry, and how Aaron Blaise made an adorable Disney-style animation.

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Interview

THE ART OF

MARCEI

MUSQU



Marcel Mosqi

UNEVENLY MATCHED

Marcel shows what happens when you have a height advantage but don't play in the same weight category.

Dominic Carter talks to the artist about how he started working in video games and why he loves painting in watercolours

French artist Marcel Mosqi is keeping things old school with his watercolour illustrations in an increasingly digital world. We caught up with him to learn about how he broke into creating paintings for video games, why he loves to work with unpredictable mediums, and the reasons he's thankful that the NFT craze has died down.

How did you get started as an artist, and what path has your career taken?

After a year or two of art school where I wasn't doing great, I started working in a small animation studio founded by other young, motivated people. We were very inexperienced at the time so it didn't last, but that was a wonderful experience. From this point I became a freelancer and struggled a lot to find work for a few years, until I started working regularly as a letterer for a French manga publisher. I'd wanted to be a manga artist for a long time, so I did some manga fanzines in the ➔



CHAINED ECHOES
This trading card illustration of Glenn is one of four pieces Marcel made based on the Chained Echoes game.



SKY ATTACK
An A3 commission for Billy Sky where Marcel tried out a dramatic sky.

➤➤ early 2000s, a webcomic called Spunch Comics with friends in 2012, and sent multiple manga projects to publishers over the years.

I began to focus more on illustration after discovering watercolours in 2018 and started working on personal commissions. But as I was gradually filling my social media pages with watercolour works, I received more and more professional illustration or design requests for video games, board games, tabletop role-playing games, or animation projects.

As I wanted to work on games, I focused my portfolio and online posts in that direction. Now I work mostly on video games via indie developers or video game publishers, doing key art, character concept art, and sometimes background concept art.

How has your art developed, and what has driven those changes?

When I was making fanzines and webcomics I had to draw fast, which I never really succeeded in doing. I always tried to focus on broad shapes and kept details very light so I didn't have to spend too much time drawing my characters or backgrounds. As I began to work more on illustrations, I gradually added detail to characters,

but it's something I still have to think about actively when drawing, and I always have to go back to my sketches to add in more.

The way I use colour has changed a lot since I switched from digital to watercolours. It immediately felt a lot

“The feeling of painting in watercolours is great, the way the brush slides on paper”

more comfortable. Finding the right tools is very important, whether they are digital or traditional. In my case it kind of made different things from my past experiences click together.

Influence and feedback from fellow artists and others on the internet are obviously another important aspect,

FOREST FIGHT

Creating this combative fantasy scene took Marcel longer than he expected to complete. “I never learn.”



as an external opinion about your artwork is always useful. We used to post drawings on forums in the early 2000s to get feedback, but now there are so many more possibilities to communicate online, and that's a good thing for artists.

What attracts you to creating work using watercolours?

The feeling of painting with watercolours is great, the way the brush slides on the paper thanks to the water, and how the colours mix together is quite unique and relaxing. Also, when I realised that there were waterproof Indian inks and I could use my good old G-pen again, I quit working exclusively on the computer.

There are more practical reasons too; it just seems easier to me. To my surprise, it made more sense to me to find the right nuance by mixing the colours and water together on a palette rather than with a colour wheel in a piece of software. And even if you can't control exactly what watercolour paint will do on the paper – and that's part of the point of using it – paradoxically I feel more in control.

As for the fact that you can't undo anything, that's a difficulty but also a good thing for me. If I can use an undo button and colour sliders I'll spam them all day, lose a lot of time

Artist PROFILE

Marcel Mosqi

LOCATION: France

FAVOURITE ARTISTS: Tatsuya Yoshikawa, Yuzo Takada, Akihiko Yoshida, Mateusz Urbanowicz, Kinu Nishimura, Hidari

MEDIA: Watercolour

WEB: www.artstation.com/mosqi

DESIGN ILLUSTRATIONS FOR GAME PROJECTS

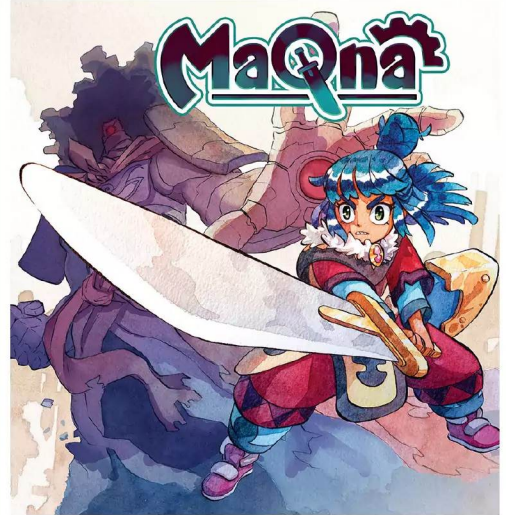
Marcel explains the four key things that artists should keep in mind when creating artwork for video games

Composition: Focus on the main point of the illustration and don't try to use too many ideas. The simpler the message is, the easier people will be able to understand it just by looking at the picture.

Organisation: Elements should be organised and layered depending on their importance. Aside from the game's logo or title there's no text to explain things, so you have to lay it all out to communicate the strengths and what it's about.

Art direction: Illustrations need to be in line with the game's art direction by respecting the main colour choices, plus its vibe and design. People need to remember it alongside other things they've seen about the game such as trailers, screenshots and key art.

Format: A game's main key art is often required to fit different formats such as Steam's store page, box art, and even more vertical formats. This can be a real puzzle that requires a lot of sketching to figure out a solution.



MAQNA MOCKUP

This concept cover art piece for the fantasy role-playing game MaQna features Marcel's original character, Sofia.



and won't leave anything to chance, which is a pretty fun thing.

On Instagram you say no to NFTs. How come, and do you think the NFT craze has passed?

NFTs were advertised to artists as a way to certify their ownership of their artworks and earn royalties on each sale, but it doesn't look like that was the point or even what NFTs are good at. As far as artworks are

PUMPKIN PALS

This Halloween-themed witch and her costumed canine were a welcome return to working on cold-pressed watercolour paper.



MAQNA BACKGROUND

This challenging piece saw Marcel make a video game background with watercolours.

concerned, they're just speculation material. It's funny how something that was supposed to authenticate the creator/owner of an artwork led to so many art thefts, as anyone can take any JPEG from anyone and then make it their own NFT.

I think the NFT craze was only supported by people who just wanted to create value out of nothing and earn a lot of money through speculation or scams. It doesn't have much to do with art, and it looks like it's over now.

Last year you put together an artbook. What made you want to create it, and what did you learn from looking over your work?

Actually, I didn't really want to make an artbook to begin with. I'd made a self-published one with a collective I was part of a few years ago and that

was quite a lot of work, so I didn't want to make one by myself. I also never thought a publisher would like to publish an artbook that wasn't any way related to any known franchise or made by a famous artist.

But Spanish publisher Ominiky Ediciones proposed making one with my past artworks, and to take care of the distribution. That went very well and I'm glad I had the opportunity.

Going through all of these old drawings made me realise that I don't have as much time as I once did to work on my own personal stuff, which is partly a good thing. I also noticed a few technical changes, like the fact I use more pigment in my colours now than I used to, and that I've improved my anatomy work a little, but lost a bit of the spontaneity and dynamism along the way. ➡➡



MAQNA CITY BACKGROUND

The streets and shops in Marcel's Maqna background are bursting with hidden details and bustling character moments.



QUEST MASTER

Marcel sketched the details for this drawing digitally before finishing it up in his traditional watercolours.



Quest Master: Developer: Skydevlopem, Julian Creutz: publisher: Aopage Entertainment

➤ Do you ever suffer from burnout? If so, how do you deal with it?

I think I came very close once or twice, and I couldn't work or do anything for two or three weeks. I'm not sure how to deal with it, but if I'm not too depressed I'll just try to do something that differs from my daily routine, something new and not work-related, plus I try to avoid any kind of pressure and to relax. The most efficient way to

afternoon for it, as it takes time to set up. I like to have natural light, and I feel it's better to have long painting sessions for the efficiency and colour coherence. But that's more chaotic and depends a lot on work and life stuff.

Of all the work you've created so far, what are you most proud of?

There's no specific illustration I'm most proud of, but what I really want

“I'd recommend trying out different techniques to find the mediums that you enjoy, and don't get bored”

avoid burnout, for me, is to take vacations from time to time, but that's always difficult as a freelancer.

Can you talk us through your average working day?

In the morning I'll usually work on sketches for ongoing and new works, and I also take care of emails, invoices, quotes and administrative matters, which is part of freelancing. If I have painting to do, then I usually take the

to do is to convey a feeling or tell a story with an illustration, character or background. I don't always have a clear idea of what I want to do from the beginning. It often starts with a vague impression or a feeling, then I try to find the best way to represent it. I feel like I succeed when I manage to express it, or when someone makes an illustration theirs, not by making an NFT out of it, but by interpreting it and relating to it in their own way.

ANGRY BIRD

Instagram users can watch Marcel's step-by-step process for this piece on his reels.

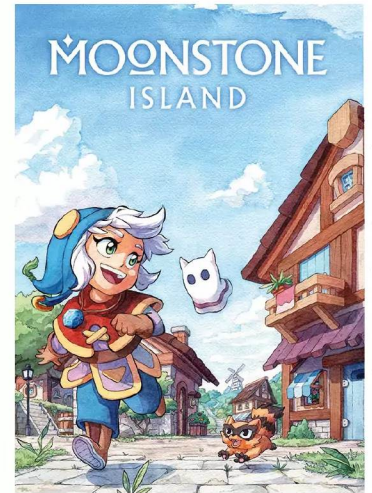


CREATING DYNAMIC POSTER ARTWORK IN WATERCOLOUR

Marcel explains how he made this piece for Metroidvania game *Astalon: Tears of the Earth*, made by Jon Lepage and Matt Kap

This is a poster illustration that needed to show the three main characters dynamically. I was allowed to change the designs a little to make them closer to my style, so I added in ornaments and more details to the character in the foreground to make them the centre of attention. I also made the cape of the wizard go behind him to stand out more thanks to the colour contrast. Then I lightened the background colour around the characters so they pop more due to the saturation and contrast difference.

I tend to think about colours beforehand and make sure I know where I'm going before I start painting, as correction is often impossible with watercolours. To save time, I first paint all the similar colours in one area. This allows me to prepare my palette with these kinds of colours and creates a sense of consistency in terms of tones. Here I painted the warm colours first, especially the yellows and golds. Because they are surrounded by blues, they could have easily turned into a bad green if I didn't do this.



Moonstone Island Developer: Studio Supersoft, publisher: Raw Fury

MOONSTONE ISLAND

Key art for Moonstone Island, a cute open-world deckbuilding life-sim from Studio Supersoft.

What's next for you? Do you have any exciting projects coming up, or are there other areas of art you'd like to explore?

I love working in the video game industry and there are things I'd like to do more of, such as being more involved in the artistic direction of a small game, and working more closely on the development side with a small team who have the same tastes.

In my free time I've worked on a couple of mock-ups and concept art pieces in order to make watercolour backgrounds for video games, such as SaGa Frontier 2 on the original PlayStation console, which impressed me so much as a child because of the hand-painted backgrounds. There are many different possibilities and I'm working on finding an idea or a project that would benefit from the use of watercolour backgrounds.

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

Maybe don't be like me; instead find and go to a good art school if you can. Keep being curious and search for great and different artists in various styles and study them, because the more you know the 'vocabulary' and possibilities, you'll be able to integrate them into your own art.

In a similar vein, I'd recommend trying out different techniques to find the mediums that you like, and don't get bored. We need to practise a lot to improve, so try to keep having fun drawing and don't pressure yourself, to avoid suffering from burnout or becoming frustrated. ●



Astalon Developer: LABS Works Publisher: DANGEN Entertainment

ASTALON POSTER

An alternate poster for Astalon, a cool pixel-art Metroidvania game from Jon Lepage and Matt Kap.

Richard Anderson

From iconic fashion to futuristic mechs, the concept art director talks about his influences and stylistic sketching choices

Artist PROFILE

Richard Anderson

LOCATION: England



Richard is a senior artist and concept art director in entertainment. For over 20 years he has worked on numerous big-name video games including Arkham Knight, films such as The Creator, and many more projects for the likes of Marvel Studios, Universal Pictures and Riot Games.
www.artstation.com/flaptrapsart

NUTS 2 BUTTS, MARTIAL MONKEY, AND TWISTED TEMPLE

"Daily sketches I created for Inktober 2022. I collaborated with co-workers to come up with inspiring subjects or phrases for each day's sketch. This exercise is beneficial for artists, especially those who are new to the creative industry. It's a great challenge to see where your imagination can take you with just a single word or phrase."



SYD MEAD MECH

"This is a robot that belongs to a series I've created. It's heavily inspired by Syd Mead, one of my all-time favourite artists. I love mimicking the marker style from the 80s and find a lot of inspiration from that era. I drew it using my custom brushes that I've made to look like markers."

“ I love to mimic the marker style from the 80s, and find inspiration from that era ”

NEW YEAR'S EVE

"I draw a lot of inspiration from classic illustration. One favourite genre is fashion illustration, as I'm fascinated by how these artists can convey so much in minimal brushstrokes. Here, I aimed to emulate this style using broad, continuous strokes for basic shapes, and finer strokes for intricate details."

CONTROL YOUR FLOW

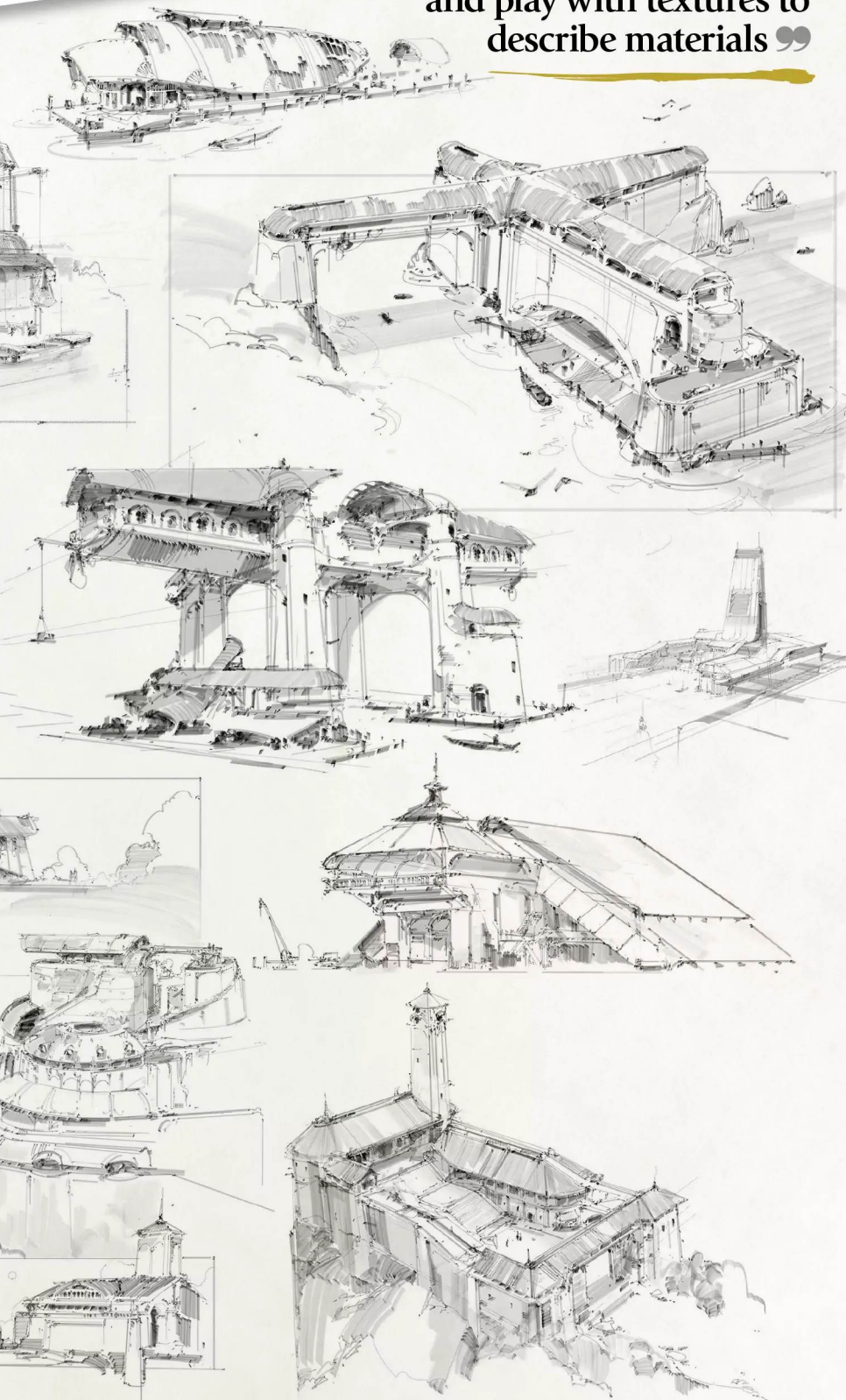
"I have an idea for my robot series to implement a control testing station. In this design, I'm prioritising form over function, striving to create a cohesive flow while avoiding 90-degree angles. As you can see, I'm being precise about the direction of my brushstrokes."

Sketchbook

“I prefer to use broad, precise strokes to give form, and play with textures to describe materials”

IDEAS FROM ODD PLACES

“I’ve always had a fascination with creating and designing castles. To come up with unique ideas and shapes, I take inspiration from common or unusual sources such as photos of half-built B-29 bombers in factories. I then break down these shapes into basic forms and let my imagination take over. Sometimes I begin with a fantasy concept, but if it doesn’t come together, I switch to a sci-fi setting to see if it works better. I try to remain flexible with my ideas and let the primary shapes guide me before adding my own personal touch with medium and small details.”





BUYERS AND SELLERS

"I have a vivid imagination of nomadic creatures inspired by various references. Unlike castles, I like to take photos of characters and regular things, and try to add a mystical touch. These two have normal, possibly attractive eyes, but as you examine more closely, you'll notice something uncomfortable or threatening; it's as if they want to mutilate each other. I use broad and precise strokes to give form, and play with textures to describe materials."

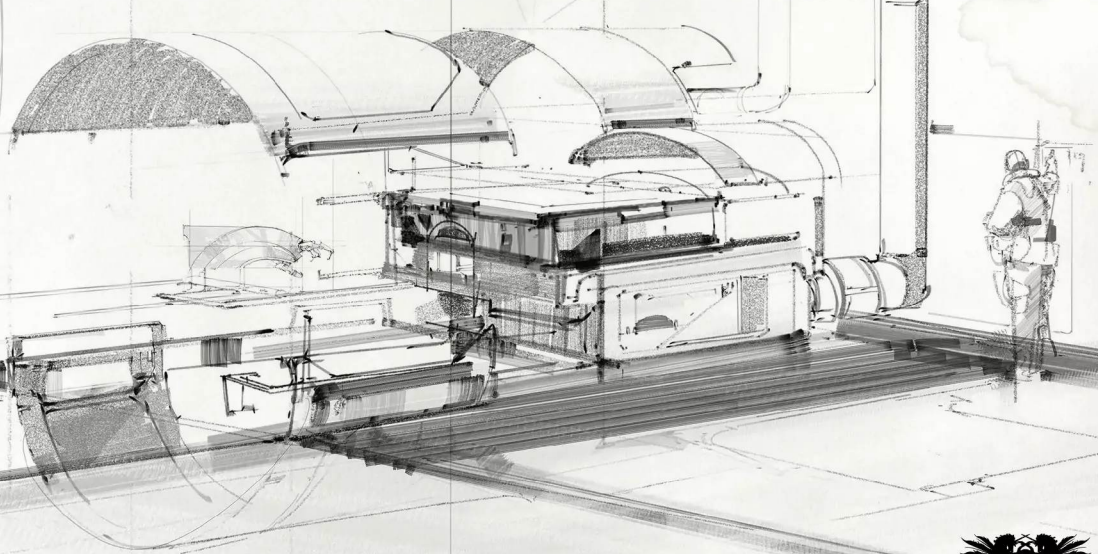
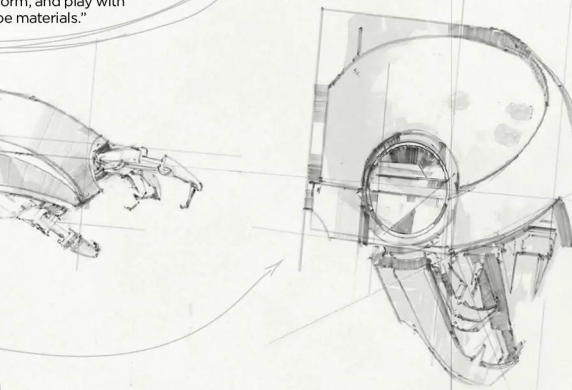


3D PRINTER

"An idea for a machine to 3D print robot parts inspired by classic industrial design aesthetics. The drawing techniques used were similar to those for drawing with a marker. The goal for the design of this machine was to maintain a balance of large, medium and small shapes while being intentional about all marker stroke directions."

BOTS AND FLOW

"These are robot design concepts that I created taking inspiration from the classic golden age of illustration. Utilising knowledge of industrial design, I aimed to create a concept that flows smoothly throughout the edges while keeping sharp angles in precise areas. These designs were created using brushes I made to imitate the classic Prismacolor markers that were the industry standard in industrial design from the 70s to the 90s."



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Sketchbook



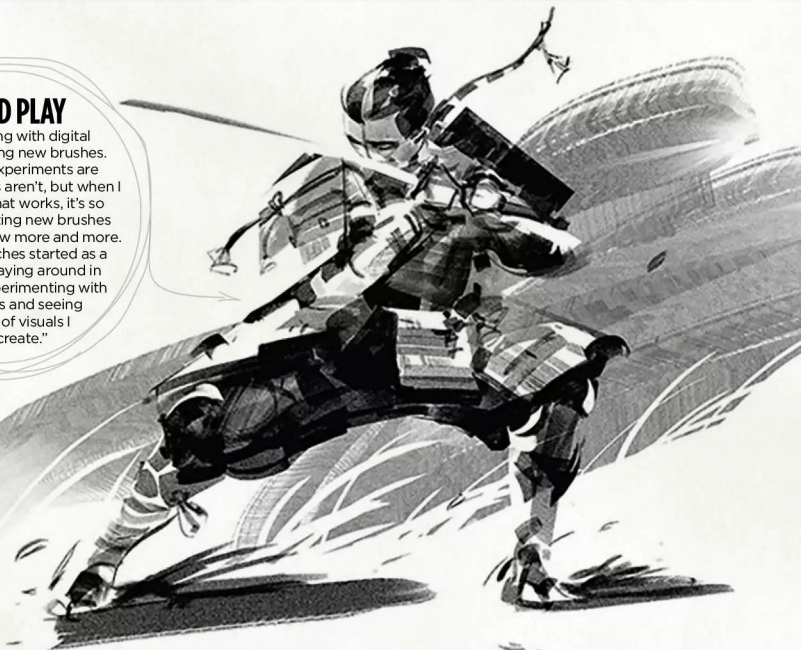
INKTOBER 2023

"I compiled a list of my favourite comics and characters to draw in my own style. Here are a few of my favourites! Clockwise from top-left: Nightcrawler, Conan the Barbarian, Wolverine, Rocket Raccoon, Punk Rock Jesus, and Spawn."

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

SWORD PLAY

"I enjoy playing with digital tools and creating new brushes. Some of my experiments are successful, others aren't, but when I do find a tool that works, it's so satisfying! Creating new brushes inspires me to draw more and more. These two sketches started as a result of me playing around in Photoshop, experimenting with new brushes and seeing what kind of visuals I could create."



I STILL DRAW ARMY MEN

"Sometimes I find it funny that I still get excited about drawing an army man or a ninja, even at the age of 42. Despite growing up, my artistic interests haven't changed much since I was seven years old. As for my work process, I like to start by thinking big and creating large shapes with broad strokes. Then I move on to medium-sized shapes, where I can experiment with different brushstrokes and line styles. Finally, I focus on small details, such as highlights and sharp lines that help convey the overall image to the viewer in one glance."



“Some of my experiments are successful, others aren't, but when I find a tool that works, it's so satisfying”

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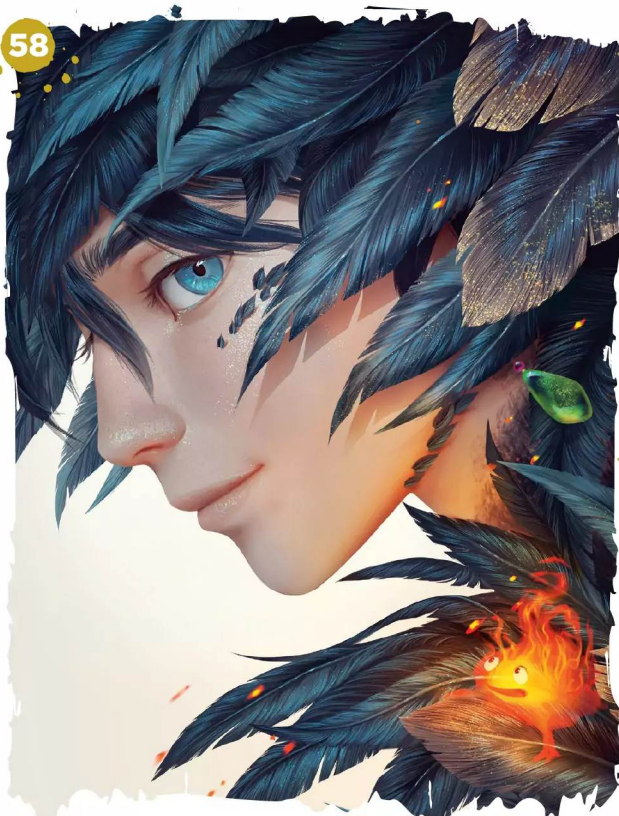
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Workshops

Advice from the world's best artists



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



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Uzuri uses Procreate to paint a standout homage to Spider-Verse favourite Peter B. Parker.

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Get an introduction to creating powerful shadows in your art with Charlie Pickard's guide.

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Brock Grossman draws a small but ferocious commando corgi with a mechanical sidekick.

ArtRage Vitae

CREATE A STYLISED FAN ART PORTRAIT

Illustrator **RaidesArt** pays tribute to much-loved Studio Ghibli film *Howl's Moving Castle* with a semi-realistic portrait piece

Artist PROFILE

RaidesArt

LOCATION: Germany

Raide is an illustrator with a focus on semi-realism, portraiture and lighting in her artwork. Her twin sister Leffie is also an artist.
<https://bit.ly/3U24cAy>



This tutorial is based on my own rendition of Howl from classic Studio Ghibli movie *Howl's Moving Castle*.

My main aim was for a semi-realistic recreation of the character that keeps his features recognisable.

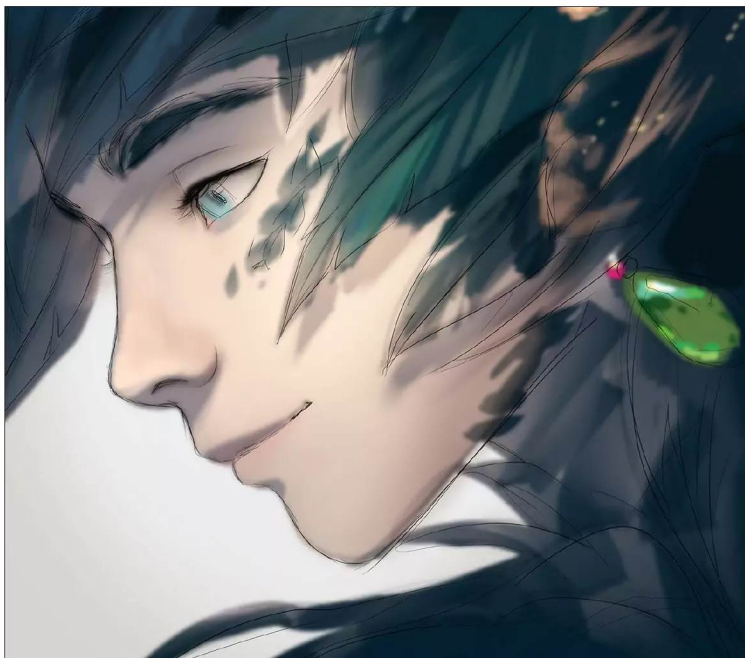
Rendering, lighting and texture will be the focus of this workshop. Over the next few pages, I'll guide you through the process behind my portrait from the first sketch to the finished illustration.

We'll go over some key concepts that are an integral part of my own workflow, such as the choice of colours and using layer blend modes. Along with that, I'll give you tips into how I create the illusion of depth in my pieces, as well as insight on my general thoughts throughout the creative process.

Even though I used ArtRage Vitae, the techniques described here can be applied in any drawing software. I used the standard brushes available by default in the program, and in

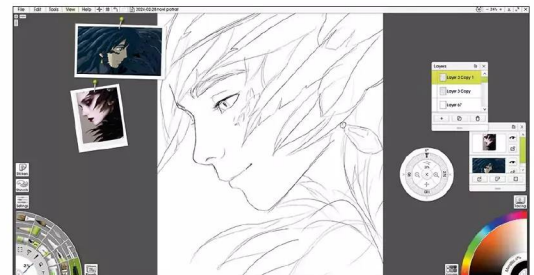
order to follow my workflow, you should be familiar with the settings and brushes of your drawing app of choice. Knowledge of blend modes and how to set them up in your software will also be important.

This tutorial is for the more experienced artists out there, so I won't be explaining the basics of facial anatomy, colour theory and so on. Instead, I'll focus more on the rendering aspects, and which tricks I apply to quickly achieve a crisp and semi-realistic result.



1 Draw out your blueprint

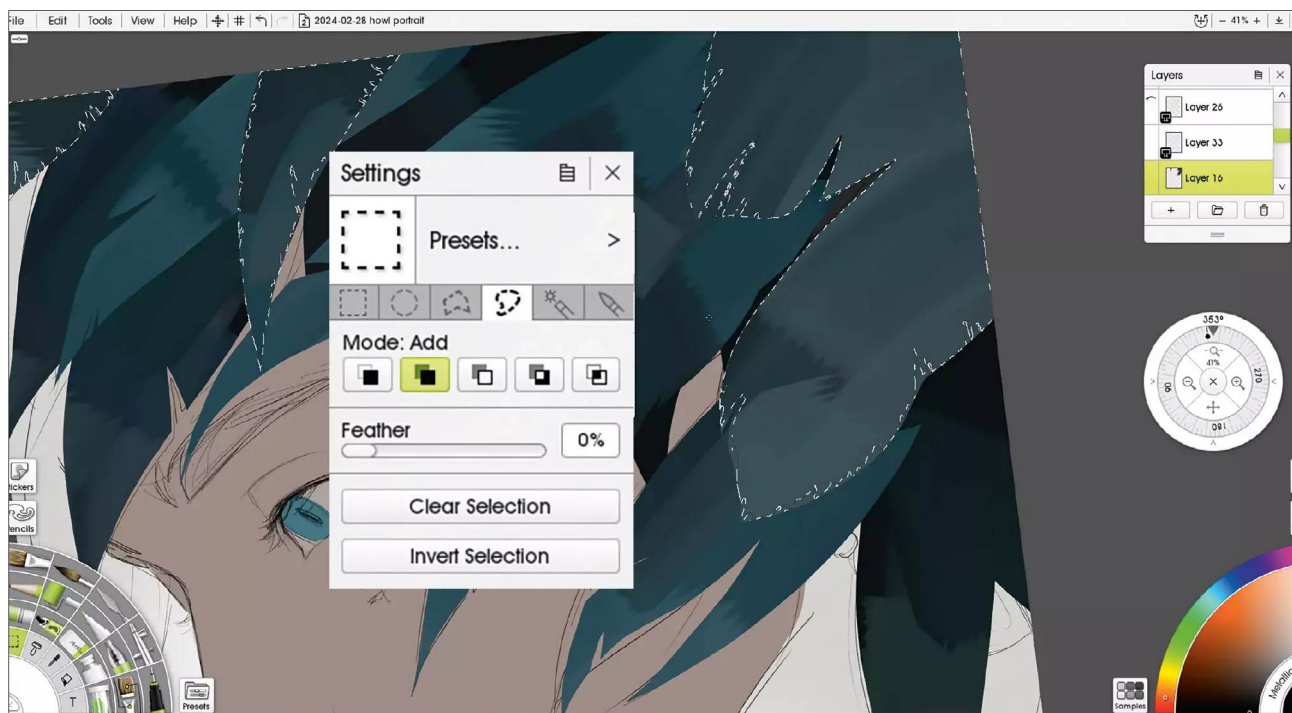
I always find it easier to create an illustration if I have a general reference that I can use as a guide. This is why I enjoy creating a quick thumbnail sketch, with which I can explore the composition, colours and lighting of a piece. While I don't necessarily stick to that sketch throughout, it's helpful for me to have a general idea of what the finished illustration could look like.



2 Sketch the proportions

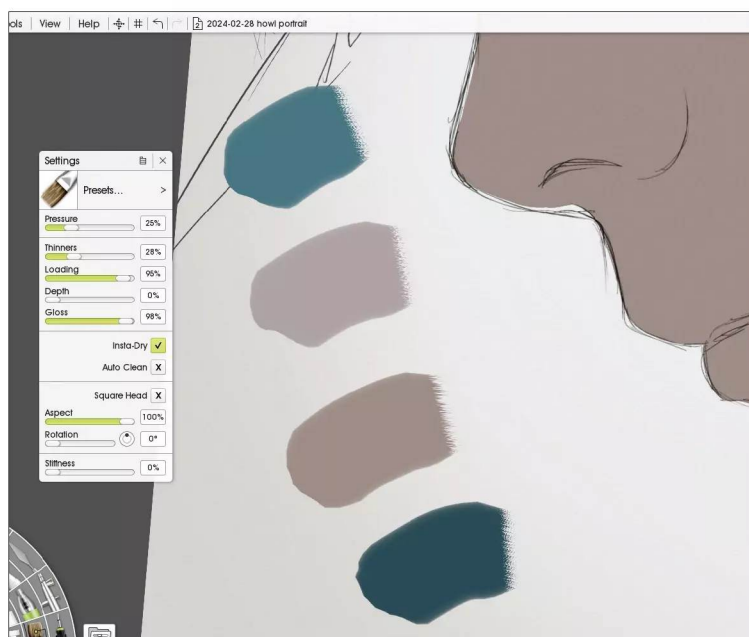
The key to stylisation is to push the proportions to fit my style, while not swaying too far away from the original design. In order to accomplish that, I loaded up the thumbnail and reference images of the character into ArtRage and used them as a guide to create the sketch. I blended the general proportions of the character with my style, which meant making the eyes more realistic and the nose larger than the original. ➡





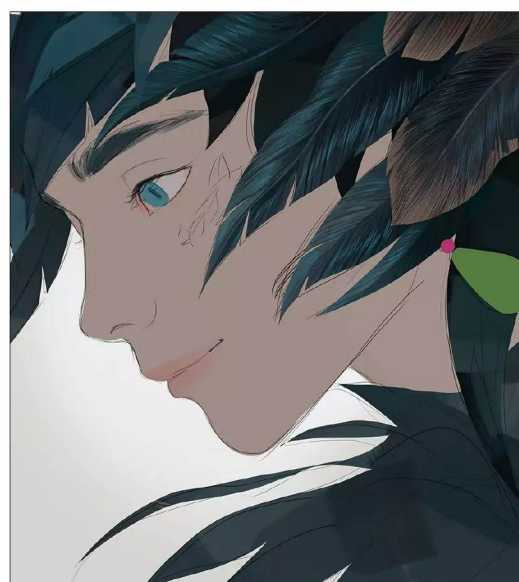
3 Block in initial versions of the feathers

Using the Freehand Selection tool in ArtRage, I outlined the silhouette of each individual feather. I wanted them to be layered on top of each other to increase the sense of depth within the painting. In order to create this effect, I made multiple layers that each had numerous feathers, with all of the feathers on each individual layer the same distance from the viewer.



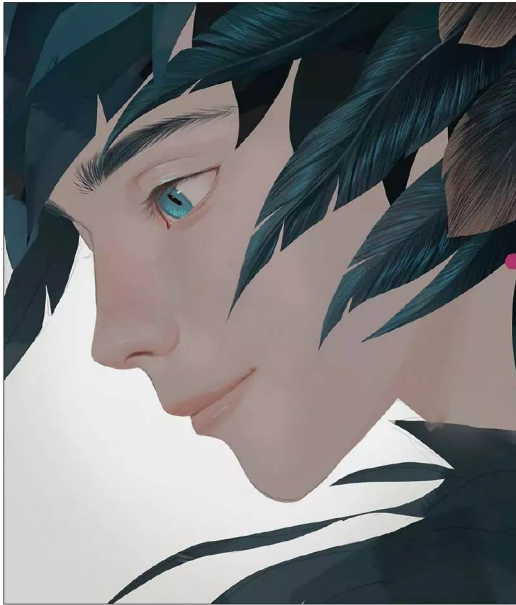
4 Pick the colours

I used relatively muted, almost grey and middle-toned colours as a base. I did this because I knew I wanted to add brighter and slightly more saturated lighting later on. In general, duller colours paired with saturated colours make them appear even more vibrant and rich. I used the Paint Roller tool and slightly varied the hue and tone to create more depth in the feathers as well.



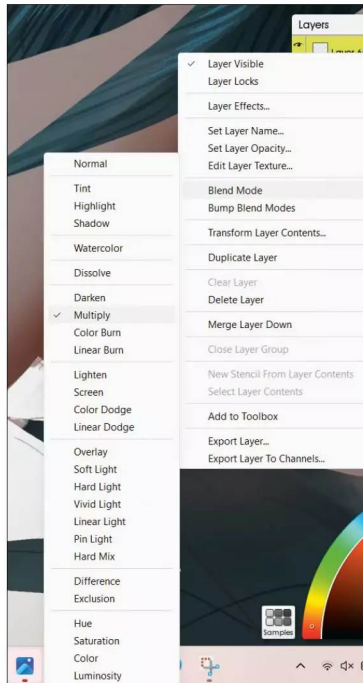
5 Shade the feathers

For this piece I decided to work on the feathers first since they were an integral part of the portrait. I started by adding texture to the top layer of feathers, and used the Oil Brush and a dark blue to add individual diagonal strokes across them, indicating their fine surface. I also highlighted the parts of the feathers that face the light source with a more saturated, lighter blue.



6 Switch to the face

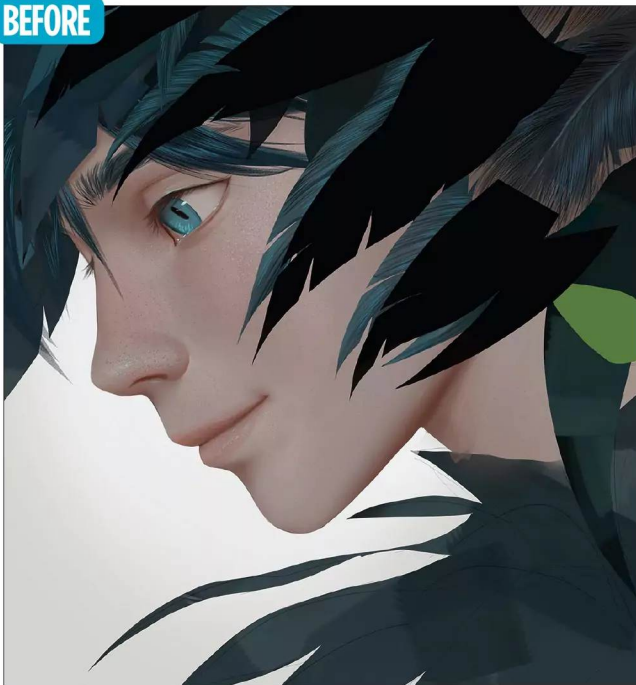
After working on the feathers for a little while, I decided to shift my focus and began rendering the face by adding very fine, soft shading. I colour-picked the skin tone, and shifted the tone and hue to a slightly darker, saturated and reddish colour. I used that colour to apply a little depth underneath the nose, along the cheeks, under the eyebrows, and along the chin.



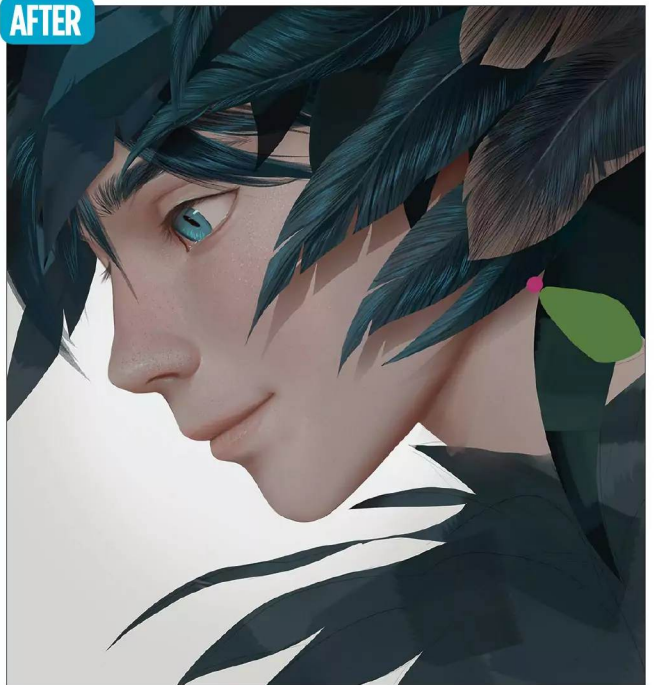
7 Add more volume

I enjoy layering the shading in multiple smaller steps, increasingly adding depth to the overall face each time. To achieve this effect I created multiple layers, each set to the Multiply blend mode. A light reddish colour in the shadows added warmth to those regions, while I mostly used the Airbrush for smooth transitions.

BEFORE

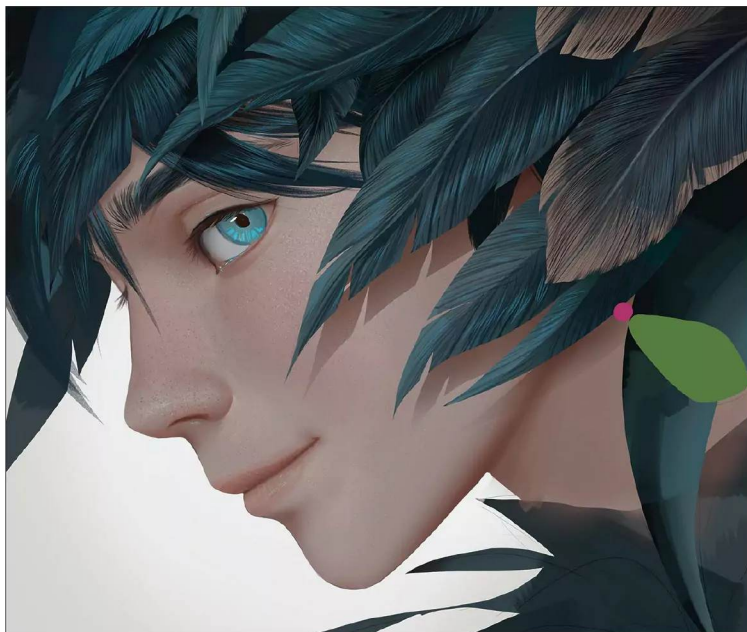


AFTER



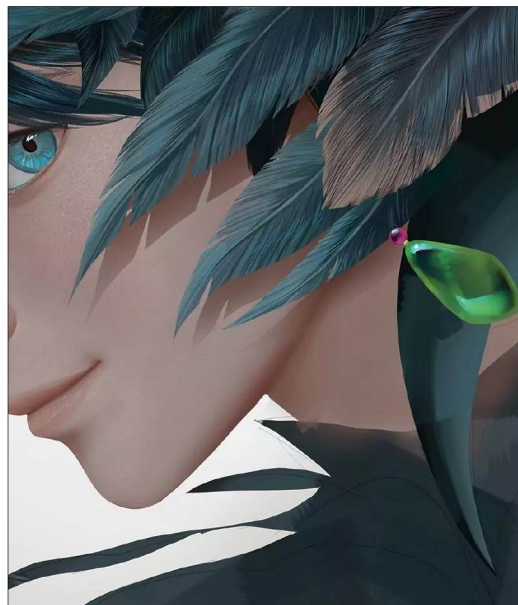
8 Cast a shadow to bring additional depth

In order to create more depth, I decided to add a cast shadow of the feathers along the character's cheeks. The displacement between the shadow and the feathers established the distance between them. To get that shadow effect, I duplicated the feathers, locked their transparency, and filled the silhouette with a dark red colour. I then set the layer to the Multiply blend mode to darken the region. ➡



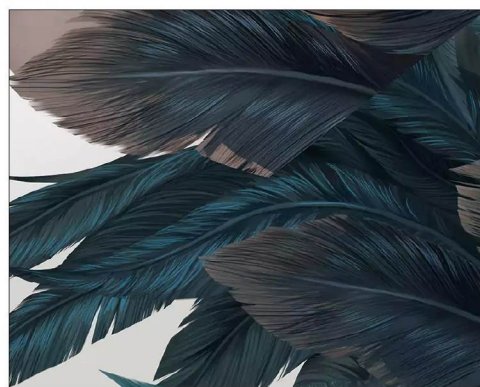
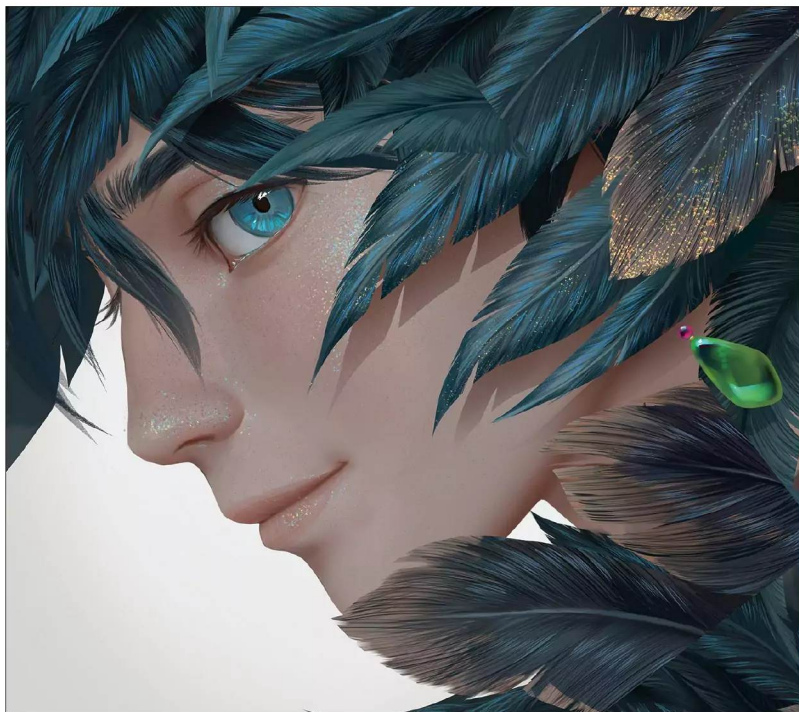
9 Change of direction

After a break, I noticed that the overall direction of the composition tilted towards the left. I decided to break that direction to establish a closer connection with the viewer by making the character look directly at them. I made sure to paint the edits of the eye on a layer above the original, so that I could easily switch back and forth between the two versions.



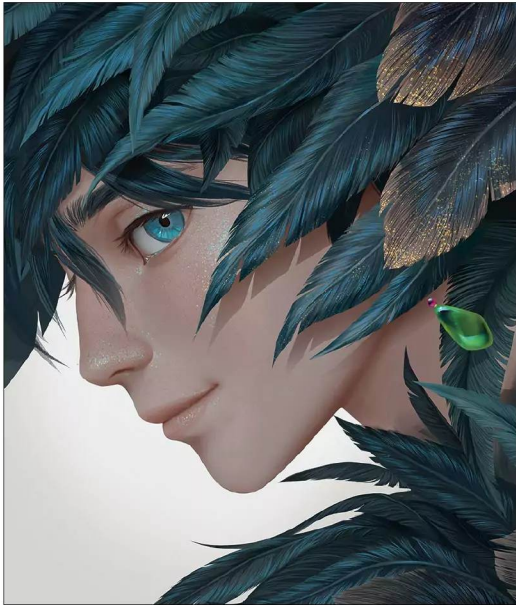
10 Paint the gem

The green gem is a small yet important detail in the painting. An object appears shiny when bright highlights are paired with dark shadows, so I used a dark blue for the shading and a light blue for the highlight. As well as that, I brought in a saturated mid-toned green between the shadows to make the gem glow.



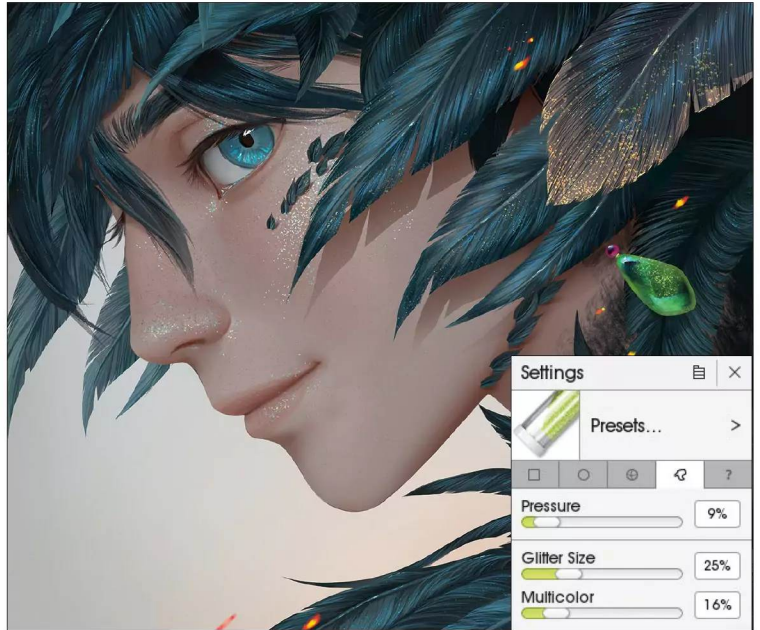
11 Re-use assets to speed up the process

I like to re-use certain elements when I'm working on time-sensitive projects, or when I quickly want to test something out. I saved some time during the rendering process of this piece by using the feathers I'd previously painted, but with duplicating, repositioning and rotating them. Afterwards, I made sure to edit them individually to prevent them from looking copied and pasted.



12 Continue rendering

At this point, I continued painting and refining the feathers. I applied the same techniques I'd previously mentioned and made sure to add finer strokes of blue along the highlighted regions. I also added variation to the feathers by erasing small sections, which made them appear rougher and thus livelier.



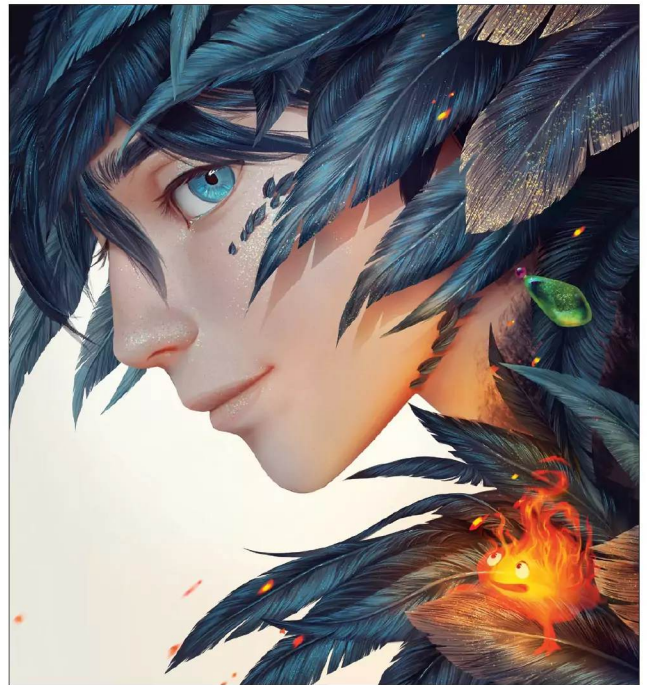
13 Additional details

To round the painting off, I decided to include more texture and details. I added a sparkly texture throughout different regions of the piece with the Glitter Tube. In the settings panel, I also adjusted the Multicolour value to 16% to create some variation within the tones and hues of the glitter itself. Doing this makes the effect appear richer and less flat.



14 Implementing feedback

After spending some time rendering Howl, I noticed that the piece overall felt a little cool. I asked for feedback from my sister Leffie, who thought adding Calcifer might improve the piece. I implemented her feedback and painted the character in the bottom-right corner, and added Calcifer's glow at the very end of the process.



15 Final colour edits

After a few hours' rendering, I was happy with the result and decided to edit the colours. The piece felt a little too dark overall, so I added more contrast and brightness. I also slightly upped magenta in the shadow regions, and added warmth to the highlights in GIMP.



Artist **PROFILE**

**Rob
'SketchCraft'
Duenas**

LOCATION: US

Rob is a full-time concept artist and cartoonist. He's currently drawing *Spawn Kills Every Spawn* for Todd McFarlane, and has previously worked on platformer games *Crash Bandicoot 4: It's About Time* and the *Spyro Reignited Trilogy*.
<https://bit.ly/4cU4zp7>



Technique focus

BLOB AND DRAW UNIQUE FIGURES

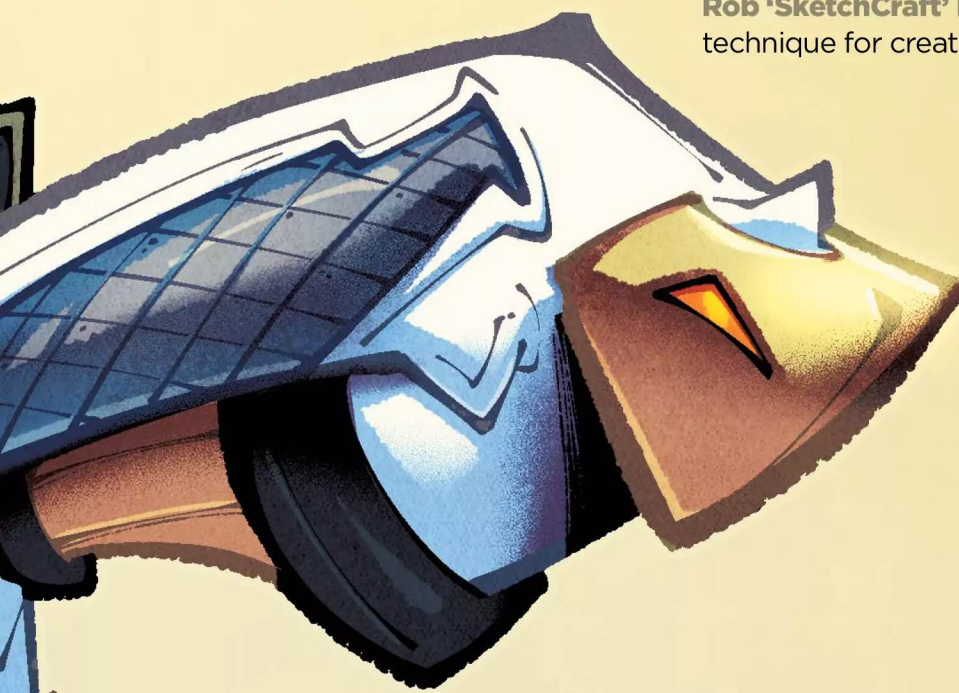
Rob 'SketchCraft' Duenas introduces us to his fun technique for creating attention-grabbing artwork



"I always thought that Power Rangers would be killer as an animated show, so I designed them as such in Photoshop, with diamond-shaped brushes for lines and chalk brushes for colour.

I work with the 'blob and draw' technique. You start off by 'blobbing' in the character pose in full silhouette, then layer on the figure lines over the blobs in order to give them some structure. Next, it's time to dress them up, so blob some clothes over the figures, then dive straight back in and draw over the blobs with more lines to refine those details.

Once you have everything in the right place, dim the lights, lower the opacity, and draw over the full figure with your final lines. And that's how the magic happens, folks." ●



Procreate MAKE ENGAGING SPIDER-MAN ART

Uzuri breaks down how she illustrates an attention-grabbing character portrait with colour, brushstrokes and expression

Artist PROFILE

Uzuri
LOCATION: US

Uzuri is a freelance artist focusing on character-driven art with strong colours and dynamic brushstrokes. She has worked with Dark Horse, Topps and more.
www.uzuriart.com



Some of my favourite artworks to create are subjects inspired by characters in animated films and TV. Because of that, I wanted to tackle illustrating a portrait of Peter B. Parker from the gorgeously animated Spider-Verse films, paying homage to the moment he pulled his mask over his face.

This was a great starting point. The challenge was to create an engaging

portrait that achieved this pose on a vertical digital canvas. It wouldn't show most of his arms but needed to remain dynamic.

I used most of the canvas's limited space by tilting him to convey that he's leaning forward. By having him also look at the viewer, it creates engagement and becomes a focal point for the rest of the illustration. A slight smirk with narrowed eyes and furrowed eyebrows also gives him a

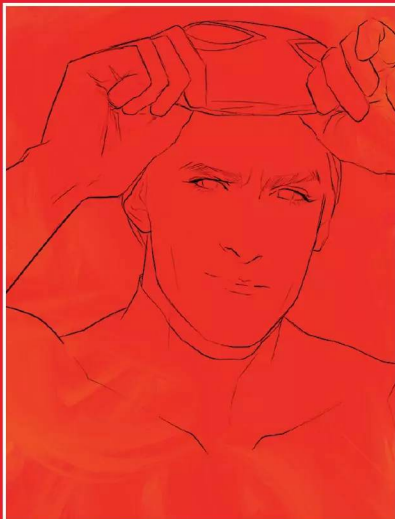
determined expression, which allowed me to avoid creating a static pose and face.

My final task was to elevate the finished line work with rendering, light and shadows, bright colours, and noticeable brushstrokes. This helps to increase the energy of the portrait, while utilising the brilliant colours and stunning rendering that's become a trademark look for the Spider-Verse films.

How I create...

A PERFECT PETER B. PARKER

GET YOUR RESOURCES
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1 Build the base

I start by drawing mostly finished line work on its own layer. Inspired by traditional techniques, I made a red layer beneath my line work to mimic an underpainting. This helps the brushes blend more efficiently and creates more tones when I paint.



2 Create contrast

As the background and suit are almost the same colour, I made most of the shadows and light sources red-hued. This draws attention to his face as it's a different colour. For more contrast, the blue is largely flat with limited shading and lighting.



3 Focus on the character

I begin colour grading and make final, more engaging changes. A yellow overlay complements the existing colours, and I frame the piece with more blue at the top. To make him the focus, I add a solid yellow outline that matches his skin.

In depth Engaging artwork



UZURI
2023 ART

ENTICE THE VIEWER

Lighting colours

The primary light reflecting on Peter is red, which can be seen framing his face, ears and forehead, and under his nose and arm. However, I made the light source on Peter's fingers purple to convey the brightness of the blue present in the artwork, and to make them more distinguishable.

Brush selection

To make the artwork more interesting visually, I used two different brushes for the rendering stage. The Coloring/Rendering Brush was used for Peter's face and much of his suit, while Round Touch was used to highlight the web designs and eye outline on his suit, as well as the blue on both the top and bottom of the artwork.

Eye details

To make his eyes more lifelike and distinguish them from the shadows around the area, I added in small blue, red and yellow details to his pupils and bottom lid. It creates an effect that not only matches the existing colours, but also makes his expression that much more intense while achieving contrast from the shadows.

Palette purpose

This piece heavily relies on three primary colours: red, blue and yellow. To prevent them from clashing, each has a purpose: yellow in the centre is the focal point, red surrounds yellow and serves as a light source, and blue frames the piece. This also draws the viewer's attention to Peter's facial expression and eyes.

Sharpened layers

Once the artwork was finalised, it was important to provide more separation from the solid colours and brushstrokes used to render his face and much of the shading and lighting. To do this, the painted layers were sharpened by 100 per cent, which helped to make the individual paintstrokes more visible.

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PROCREATE

CUSTOM BRUSHES: LINEWORK PEN

My go-to pen for sketching and inking, each stroke conforms to the pen's weight.

COLOR/RENDERING

This brush colours and blends simultaneously to create visible strokes and a painterly effect.

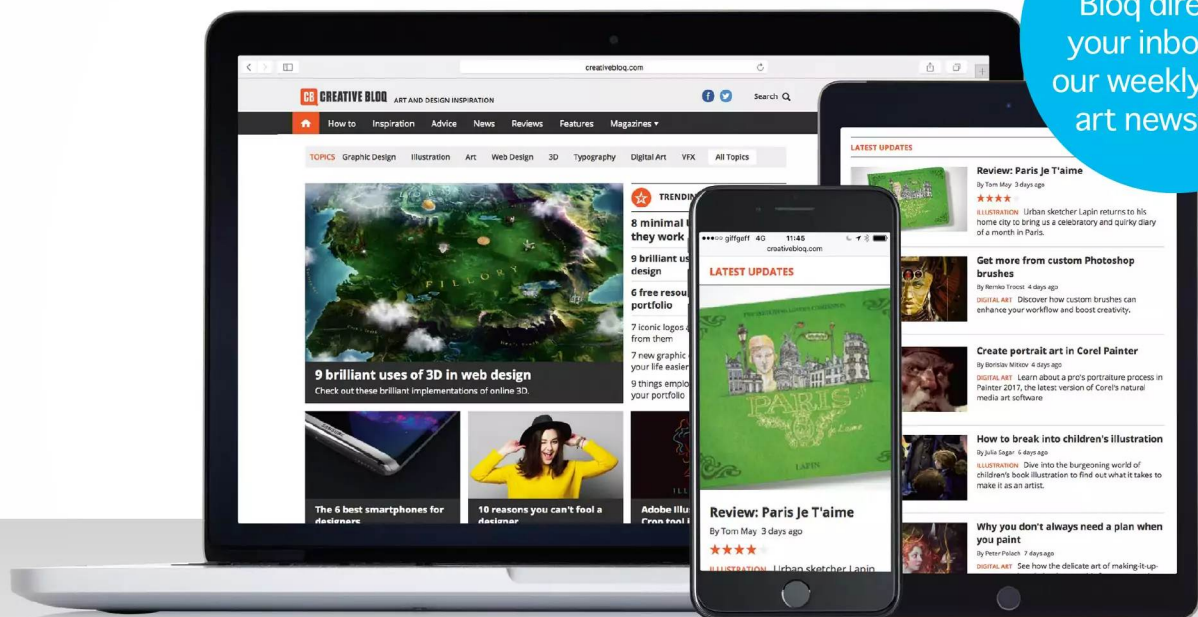
ROUND TOUCH

This one can be used to cross-hatch, apply small details, and fill in large areas with colour.

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DEVELOP DETAILED VENUSAUR FAN ART

Follow along as **Juan Diego León** paints a beautiful Pokémon and shares his expert advice on using realistic lighting effects

Artist PROFILE

Juan Diego León

LOCATION: Peru

Juan is a storyteller, art director and vis dev artist. He has worked on films and game projects since 2008, and recently teamed up with Disney, including creating art for TCG Lorcana. Outside of work, Juan likes creating colourful characters and making fan art.

www.jotadeart.com



Every time I start to create a new Pokémon illustration, I always like to transform them with my own personal style. Bright, vivid colours, dynamic silhouettes, and unique or little-

explored expressions are all elements that I love to use in my work.

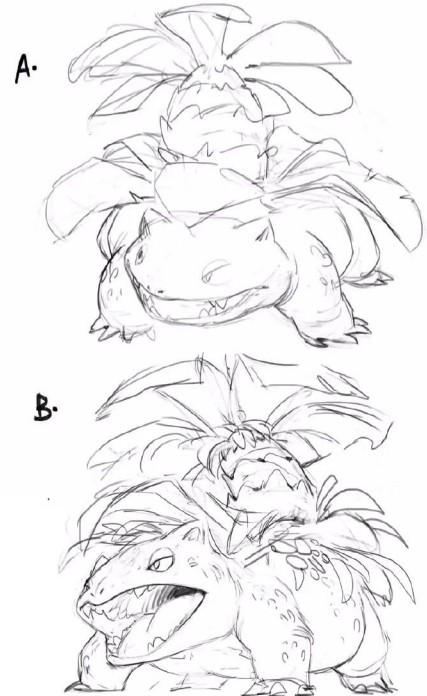
In this case, I'll show you the process used to illustrate Venusaur, from the idea and references all the way to the colours, lighting and post-production. This is my workflow for

all my illustrations. I discovered it little by little, adding in different processes as I worked on various new projects. You can learn from playing with 3D or 2D tools, so always try to add new skills that can help you improve your illustrations.

AdobeStock/Alberto Mannino



AdobeStock/Chansorn Panitip



74
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CUSTOM BRUSH
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WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES:
JOTADÉ BRUSH SET

To download a selection of Juan's Photoshop brushes for free, visit <https://bit.ly/4aSHjGk>

1 Set up your Photoshop canvas and collect necessary references

Get started by creating your canvas. In my case, I like to work at 5,000 x 5,000px at 300 DPI. This way, I can ensure that I have a good resolution to my illustration, and if I want to print them or use them for social media, I can always show my art at a high resolution. When planning out my pieces, I use PureRef, which you can download online for free. It's a useful tool that allows you to collect and check all the visual references you might need for a project. You also can add text, and keep the program above all other windows while you work to keep track of your inspiration as you go.

2 Create design sketches

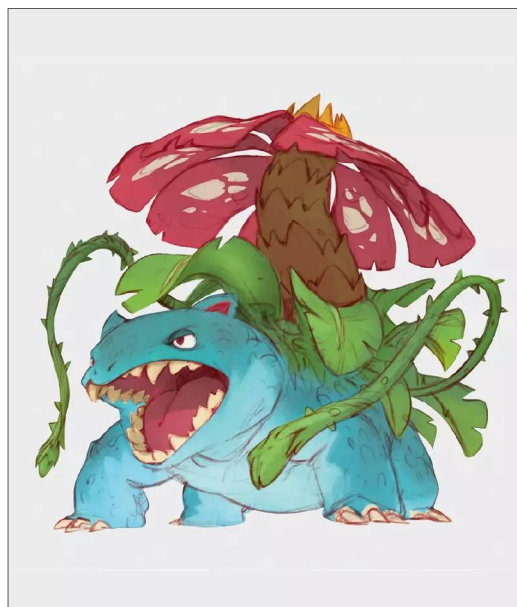
After listing the most important characteristics of your subject, explore with some sketches to see what pose would best represent the character, in addition to giving you a different and original view that perhaps hasn't been explored much before. I try to make the pose dynamic, always in movement, and give the character a cool facial expression. This part is difficult, which is why it's important to take your time experimenting with your sketch as you search for something that looks great. ➡





3 Keep your silhouette balanced

I always like to use the Lasso tool to create the edges of the character, and at the same time start to see what the silhouette would look like. Try to make something that's balanced, with complex silhouettes in some parts, and a more simple look in others to help you balance the interesting parts of the character. By creating a clear silhouette, it's also going to be easier to read the movement and posing of the character, as well as where they're looking.



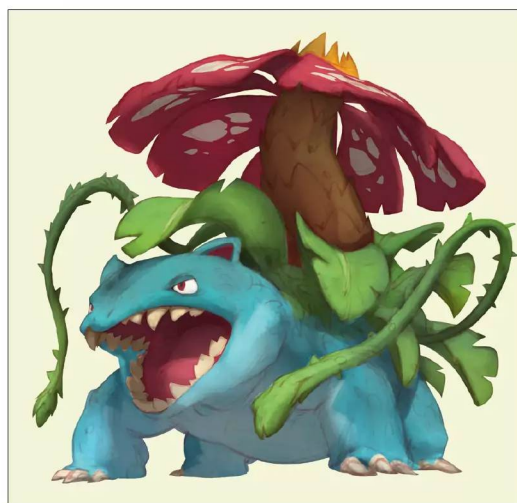
4 Apply local colours

The next step is to add the local colours. Look at your references and try to pick out the most neutral colours in the character. Using the Lasso tool, you can select different areas and add the spot colours under the guidance of your sketch. Another good tip is to always try and check over the greyscales, which will enable you to better see the contrast in your colours.



5 Create light and shadow copies

After finishing with the local colours, we can move on to the lighting and shadow process. What I usually do is mix all the base colours of my character and make two extra copies. On one version, let's call it version A, I add more light using the Color Levels and Balance, and usually add a warmer tone in general. Then for version B, I use the same technique to darken it and move towards cold colours. At the end, I'm left with three versions of my character: the original with neutral colours, the illuminated version (A) and the shadow version (B).



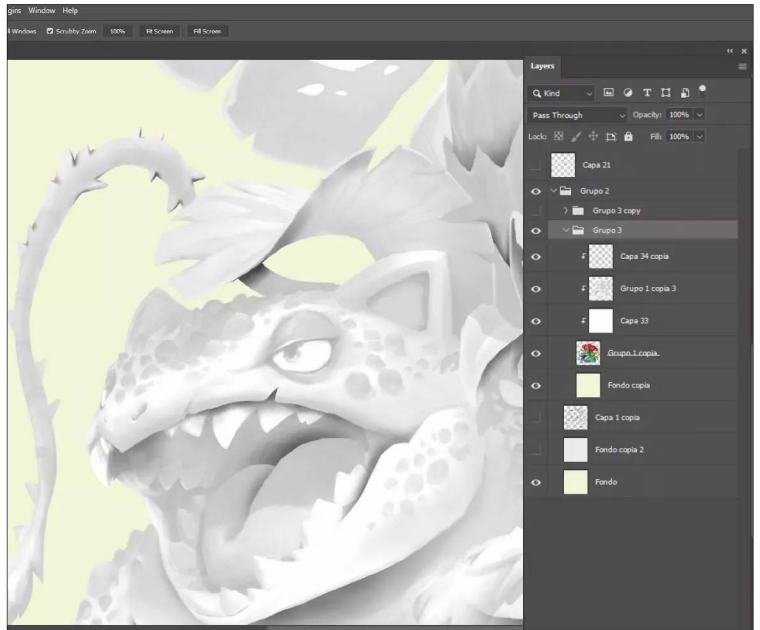
6 Mask in lighting effects

Following on from the previous step, to add the shadows, I create a mask on the shadow copy (B) and begin to paint the parts where the light would fall, while thinking of my character as a volumetric object. This way I only worry about the position of lighting and shadows and don't have to think about the colours. Using this method, I can also reveal the illuminated version of my character (A) and quickly create the illusion of light. When you've done this, take your time to polish the shadows and light in a more detailed way.



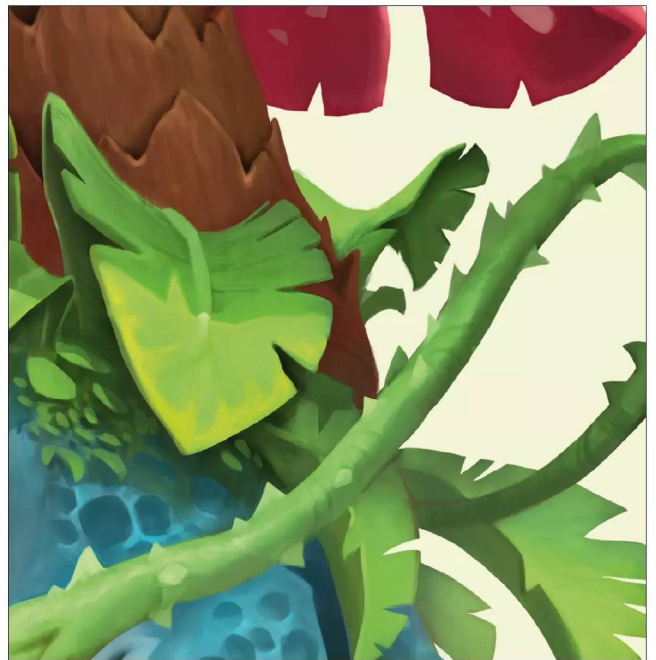
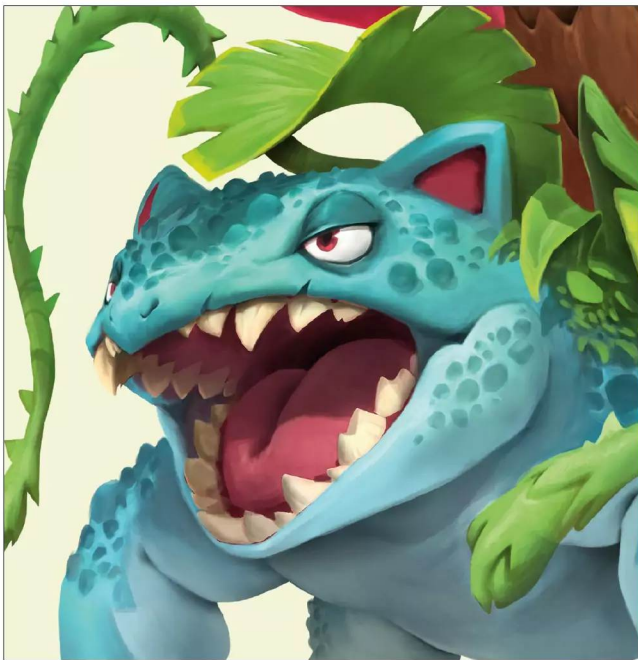
7 Start rendering

Create a layer on top and begin painting, mixing the colours, making the transitions smoother, adding in details, and rendering your character. This part is where I usually spend more time, because you have to be aware not only about light, but also the materials of what you're painting. In this case, we have Venusaur's skin, leaves, flowers and vines, and every element has its own material reflections, roughness and so on.



8 Add an ambient occlusion layer

When I finish with the rendering, I add a layer of ambient occlusion. I do this by creating a completely white layer and lowering the opacity to be able to see the limits of my character and reinforce the volumes, lighting and shadow areas using that ambient occlusion. This is a technique used more in 3D rendering, but the ambient occlusion can reinforce the volumetrics of your character and painting in general. I recommend you investigate this, as it's a very cool addition!



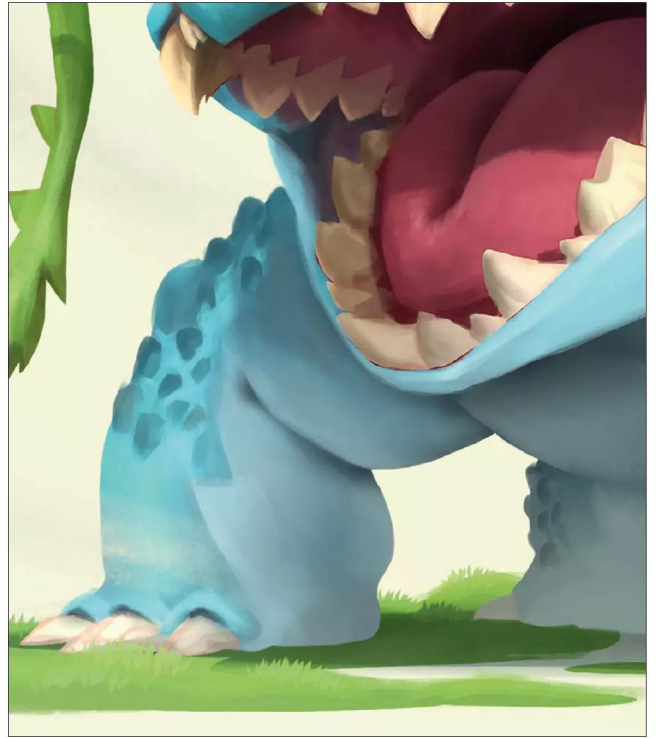
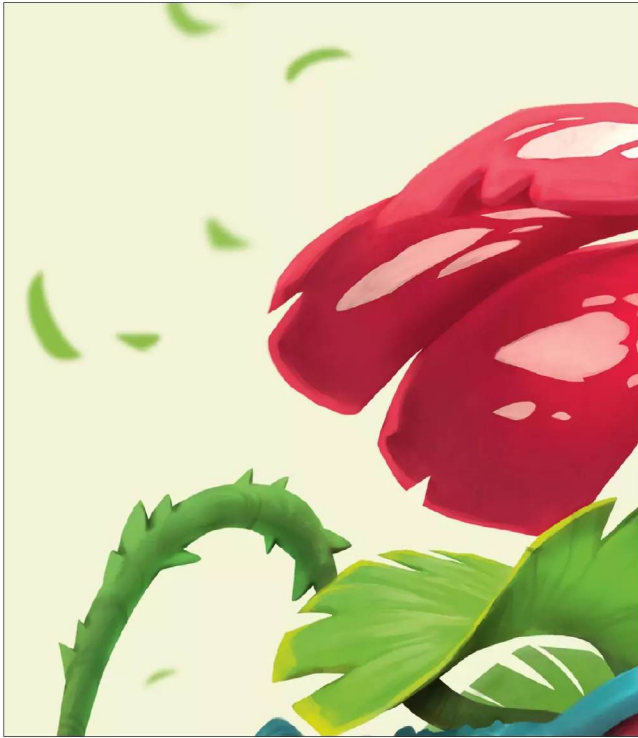
9 Expand the details with another rendering pass

Let's take a second pass at the rendering. In this part of the illustration, we can take care of the small details such as the shine on the leaves and the skin, and how the materials react to light. For this, we can guide ourselves from our references again. I'd suggest you have a decent image search to find a whole lot of references, as this is the best way to work when you're rendering. You can also try out different brushes for different effects, as sometimes they can create a great final texture on the character. ➡



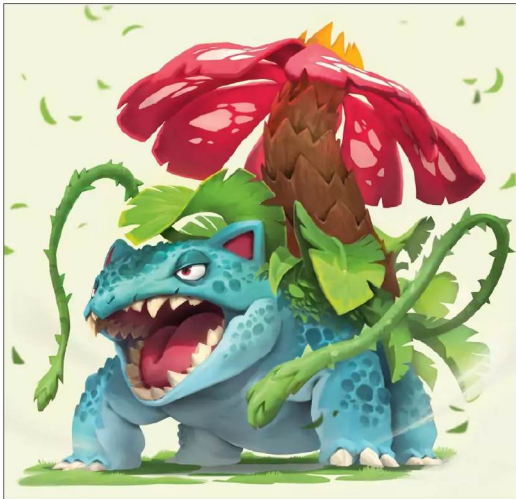
10 Use subsurface scattering on the leaves

Whenever you paint organic characters, you should look out for a way to add subsurface scattering for the skin, or in this case the leaves, petals and plants in general, which should have this effect. Take a look at how this works in real life and try to apply it to your character. This is also a good way to show the viewer how the light can affect the character in a more realistic or stylised way, depending on what you're after.



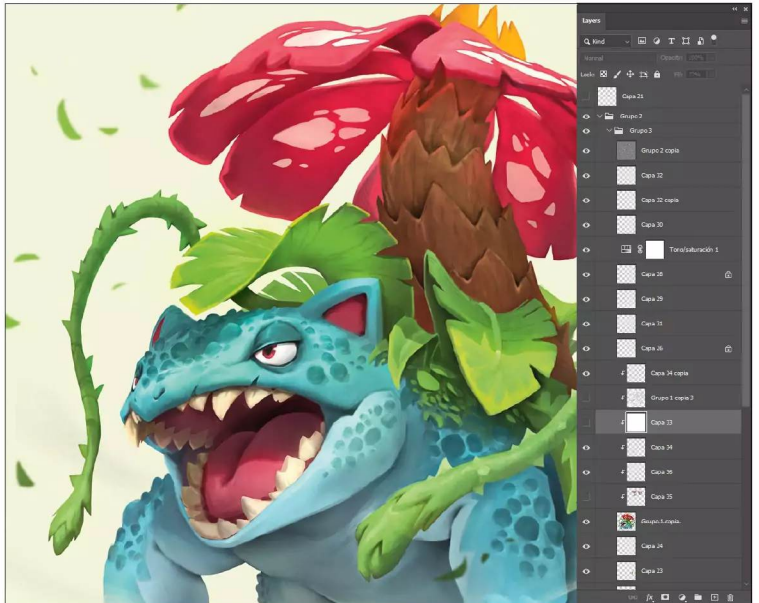
11 Complement the character with a surface, shadows and detail

When the character itself is ready, it's great to add details to their surroundings that complement the illustration. I'll usually add in a surface under their feet, along with plants or other elements that can provide colour to accompany the storytelling.



12 Adjust in post-production

When you've got all the elements just the way you want them, you can make post-production tweaks. Typically, I'll add a general colour correction, as well as the Color Dodge or Hard Light blend modes, which will often improve the highlights in a fire, rim lights, the sky, and sometimes the bounce colour of the floor. These tools can help you to create a strong general atmosphere within the illustration, and can also blend the character's colours, background and any additional elements together in a more natural way.



13 Apply final filters

When I'm finishing up with my illustrations, I'll generally make a copy of everything and then apply the High Pass filter, before using the Soft Light blend mode. With these effects, we can highlight the finer details of the illustration much better, which will make the image appear sharper in general. However, one extra tip I'd recommend here is that you lower the opacity so that the overall effect is more subtle and not so pronounced. ●

Technique focus

LEND TECHNIQUE AND PERSONALITY

How **Julian del Rey** began developing his characters using stylised shapes

Artist PROFILE

Julian del Rey

LOCATION: Spain

Julian is a conceptual artist, visual developer and art director based in Spain. He has worked on video games for over 10 years for companies like Blizzard and Riot Games. <https://bit.ly/3VPcVbu>



"I've liked superheroes ever since I was little, and I've always been fascinated by fantasy, and of course by Dungeons & Dragons. My idea with this piece was to combine these two passions into a single identity. Added to this is my obsession with expressing myself through forms.

After many years perfecting my line work technique, it seemed like a good time to take the stylisation of my shapes further in order to develop greater personality for my characters. I then rendered each part of the character with warm shadows, cold lights and layer adjustments to harmonise the colours."



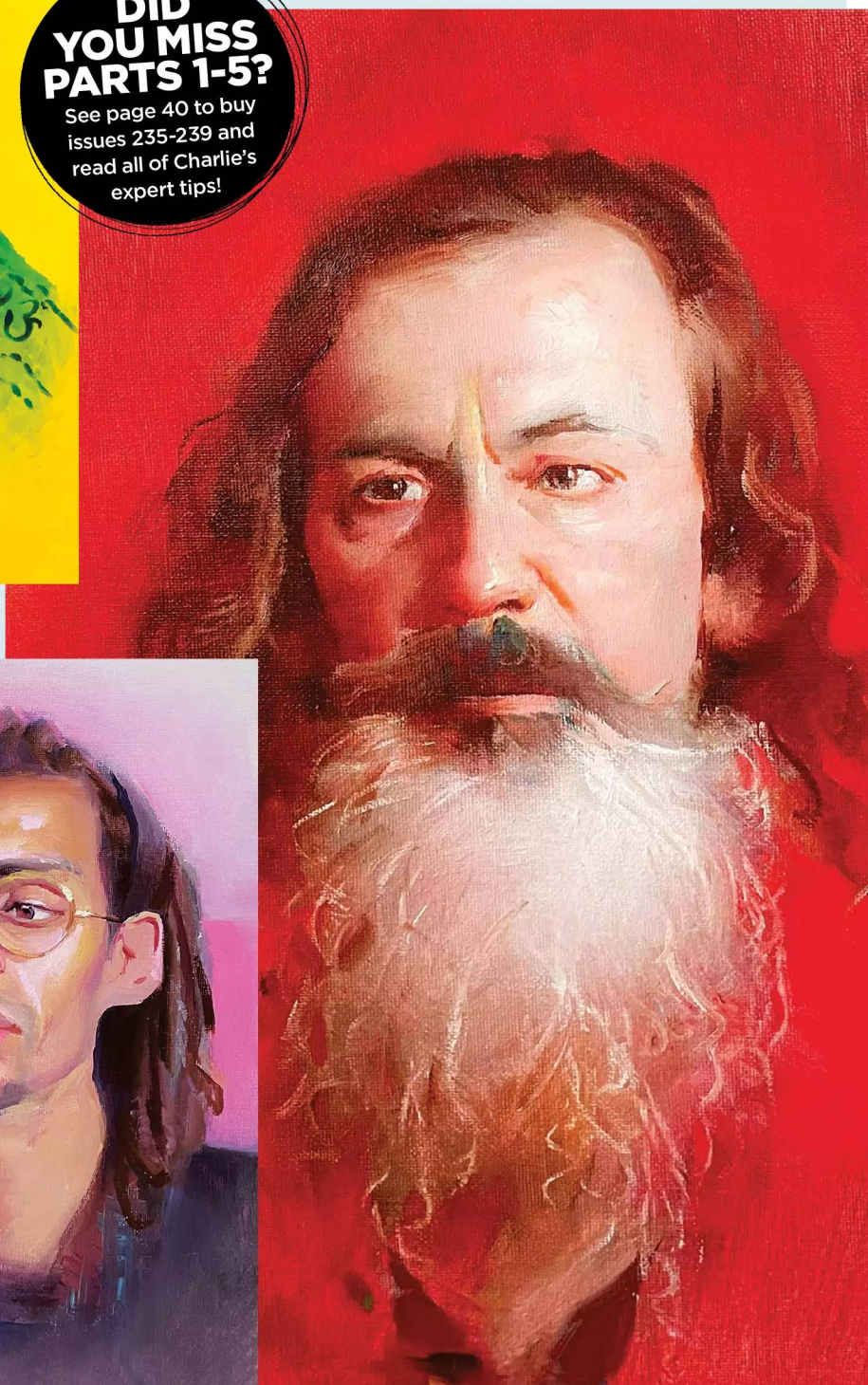
Tech Focus Develop personality





**DID
YOU MISS
PARTS 1-5?**

See page 40 to buy
issues 235-239 and
read all of Charlie's
expert tips!



Artist insight PART 6: COLOUR YOUR SHADOWS

Charlie Pickard shares his expert tips for creating powerful shadows with colour, including perfecting your skin tones

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/3R3Dcz3>



Shadows are one of the most underrated areas of an image by students. The first mistake often made is an over-insistence on creating dull, black shadows. However, shadows are often some of the most exciting and chromatic parts of an image. If handled properly, they can be a

powerful tool for controlling the mood of our work and truly placing a character into an environment.

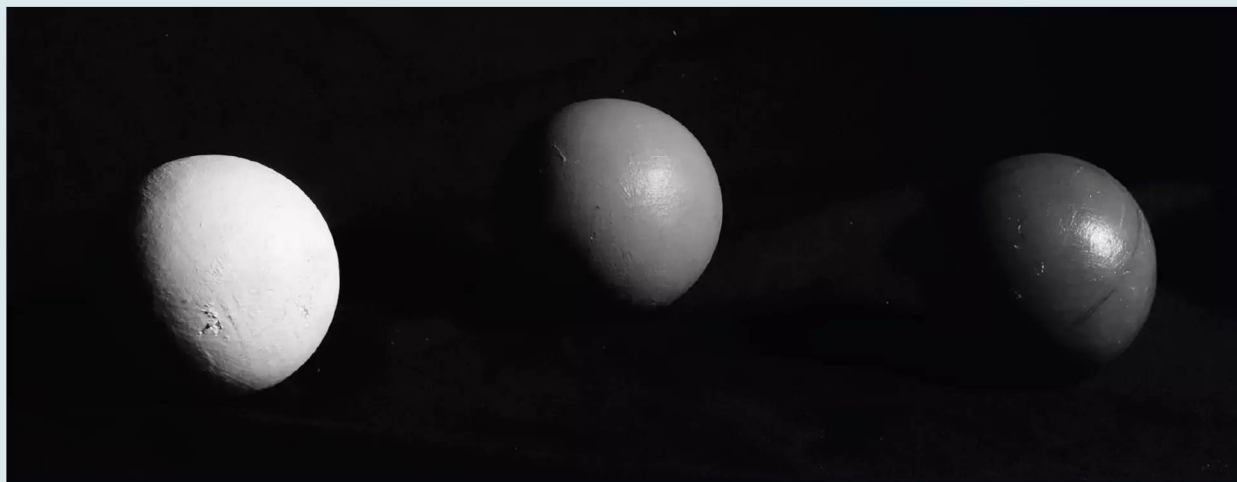
Much of this over-insistence on black can be traced back to the one overriding idea many people have about shadows: that they are dark. Our artworks will always be an expression of our knowledge of a subject, so if we can improve our

knowledge of how shadows work, we can improve our depictions of them and access some of the strength of expression contained within.

However, shadows are also often a source of confusion, and the level of variety can feel quite overwhelming at times. Adding to this, there are a few slightly inaccurate ideas floating around that confuse the topic, and many students give up on trying to understand shadows.

The following are a few ideas and strategies that I've found accurate, but also simple enough to easily be understood and applied.

“If we can improve our knowledge about how shadows work, we can improve our depictions of them”



1 PICTURE THE MOON

The first element we need to engage with is the idea that the shadow in its simplest form has no colour or value at all. It's perfectly black if only an object and a light source are present and nothing else. The shadow is

defined as the area the light can't reach, so it makes sense that in this simple setup they would be perfectly dark.

If we want to see evidence of this kind of lighting in nature, we need only look to the moon. With the perfect darkness of

space, we only see the light shape as it catches the sun.

This was how many traditional schools of painting encouraged artists to look at nature, and the strong separation of shadows and lights are key to creating any believable scene. ➡

2 SHADOW VALUES REQUIRE AN AMBIENT LIGHT SOURCE

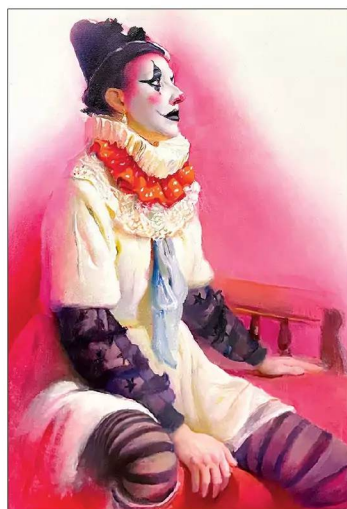
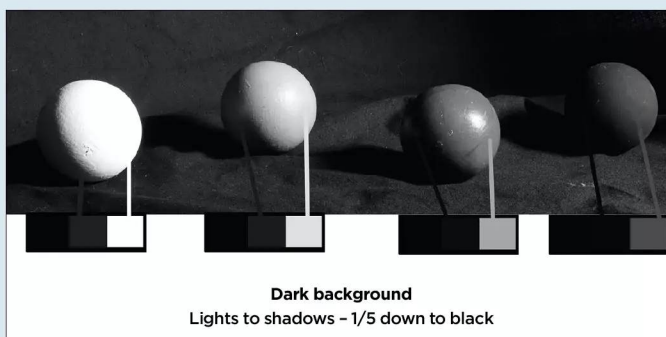
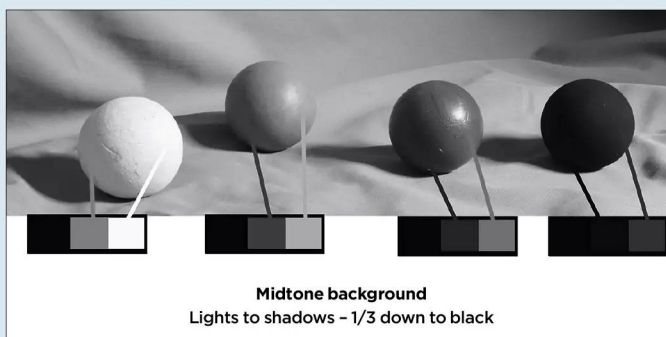
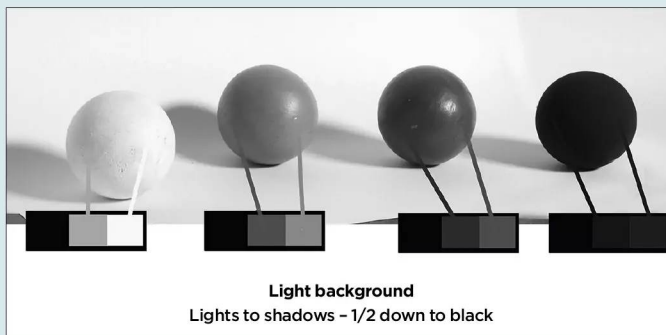
Now, you might be wondering, I just said that creating overly black shadows was a common error for beginner artists, but I just described how the first thing we know about them is that they are black in an ideal scenario. So how can this be an error?

The answer to this lies in realising that while these black shadows are absolutely how lighting works in the abyss of space, we don't exist in space. Objects on earth always exist within an environment. This environment reflects the light thrown onto it, and this environmental and ambient light is the real reason for the shadow colours that we perceive.

You can see in the example images here that the relative values of the shadows change depending on the environment I place the objects in, rather than the main light source. This is a vital consideration for us. The light doesn't create the shadow, the environment does.

The value changes may initially seem a little random as you look at these different scenarios. However, we can note a few things, the first being that the darker the background is, the darker our shadows will be, and vice versa.

You may notice, though, that each object also has its own value shadow, so how do we keep those consistent? The best way that I've found to control this in imagery is through the ratio between the lights, the shadows and absolute black. Whatever this ratio is should remain constant within the scene. If we can manage that, we'll have taken a big step towards creating realistic shadows in our artwork.



3 PAY ATTENTION TO THE RATIO

To give you an example of how this works in practice, let's take a look at a painting I created that had a lot of moving parts and various local colours going on.

As you can see in the black and white version of the image, the secret to the whole piece remaining consistent, even through all of the complex values, lies in maintaining this ratio. For this image, I knew each object was going to shift halfway towards black as it moved from the light and into the shadow. Try it yourself; it's surprising how well it works.

“Shadows are made visible by ambient light, so it makes sense that their colours also follow the environment”

4 THE WARM LIGHT AND COOL SHADOWS MYTH

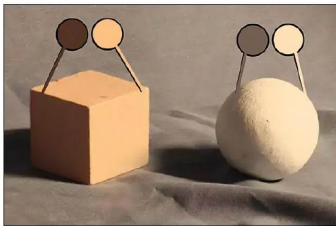
As we move past the pure value relationships of objects and into the exciting world of the colours of our shadows, I want to dispel a common idea that I don't think quite holds up.

There's an idea that warm light = cool shadows and cool light = warm shadows. Let's examine that. As you can see below, on one side of this image I've placed two objects in a range of lighting conditions, one white ball and one skin-tone colour block under consistent warm and cool lighting conditions.

For our first examples this idea holds up quite well. We observe this warm light/cool shadow relationship quite cleanly. However, in the examples underneath this concept doesn't exactly hold up in the same way. We observe that I can use the same warm light source and create a scenario where there are warmer shadows instead. Similarly, within the cold lighting scenario, I can create cooler shadows.

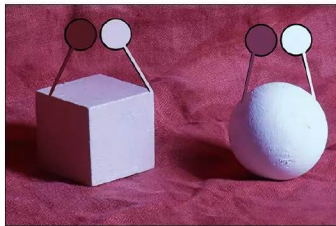
Clearly this idea isn't the full story, so what's actually going on? And what ideas can we actually rely on to predict these colours?

Warm light



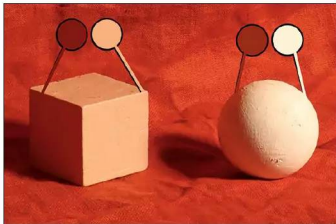
Warm light - cool shadows
Obeyes rule

Cool light



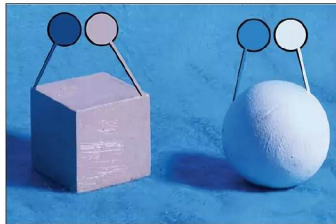
Cool light - warm shadows
Obeyes rule

Warm light

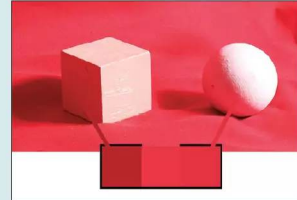
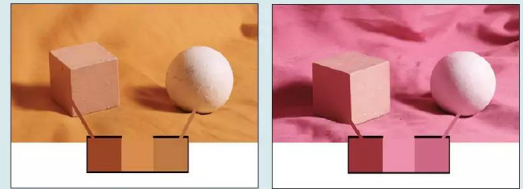


Warm light - Warmer shadows
Breaks rule

Cool light



Cool light - Colder shadows
Breaks rule



5 SHADOW COLOURS FOLLOW ENVIRONMENTAL COLOURS

One thing we might have noticed in the previous example is that to change this shadow-colour relationship, I simply changed the background colour. Here lies the simple secret to control shadows. As we already said, shadows are made visible by ambient light, so it makes sense their colours also follow the environment.

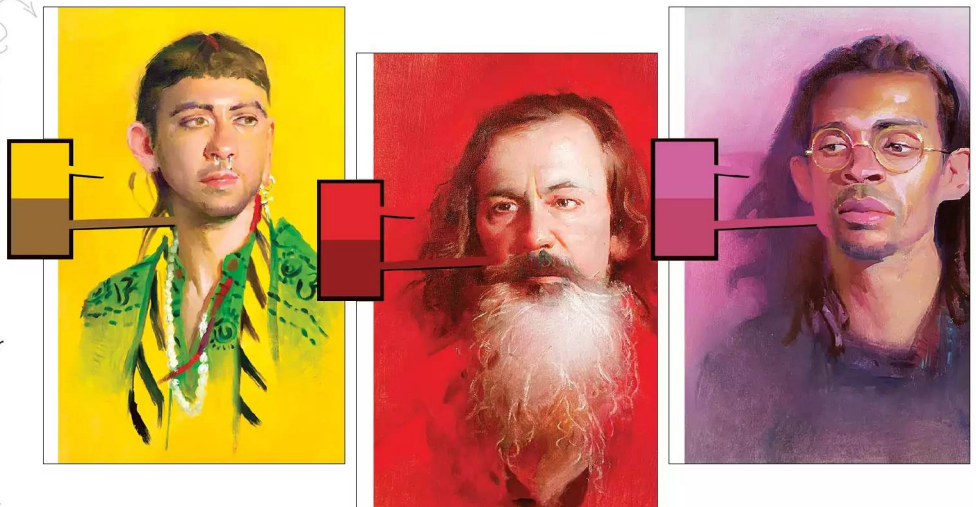
It seems obvious an object can only express the colours of the light source acting on it. Since the ambient light is the only light acting on the object, it makes sense the shadows' colours can only be a result of the colours of the environmental lighting, as in the examples above. Note that in all the coloured environments, the shadows are always close to this environmental 'home' colour,

So next time you're depicting shadows, look first at the environment surrounding them. That will be the first clue to what colour you should start with.

6 GIVE IT A GO IN YOUR OWN WORK

This understanding of the shadows as being a direct result of the background colour is one of the most powerful tools we can use in our own paintings. It's one of the real secrets to sitting a subject inside an environment believably and can go a long way to creating a realistic atmospheric effect.

Try it out for yourself. Start your image with your background colour and every shadow you add, start them out as the colour of the background and then deviate from that starting colour. This can be an effective way to gain a sense of harmony in your colour choices. ➡➡



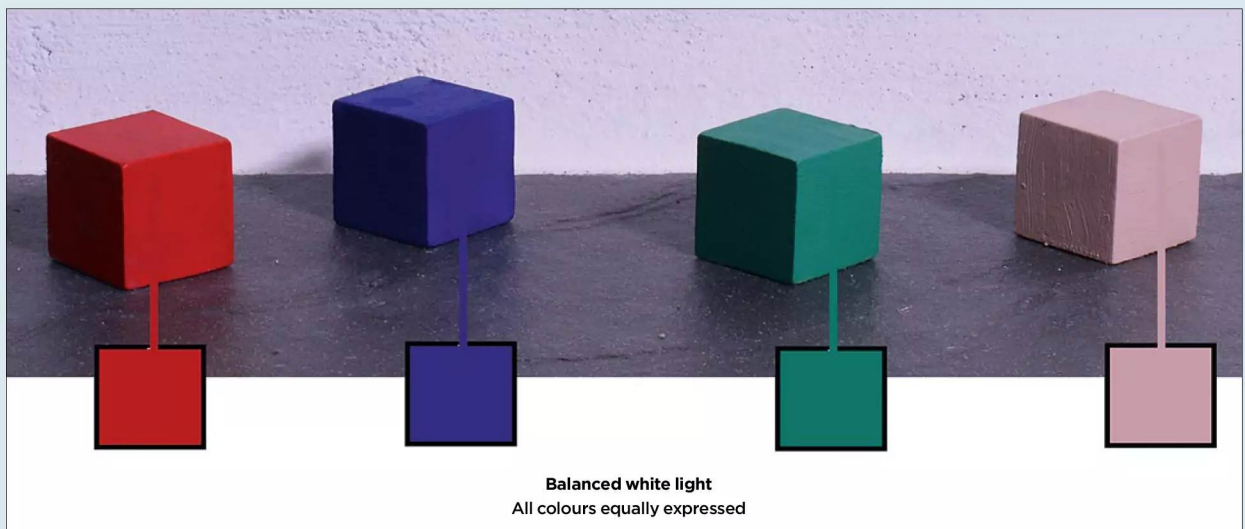
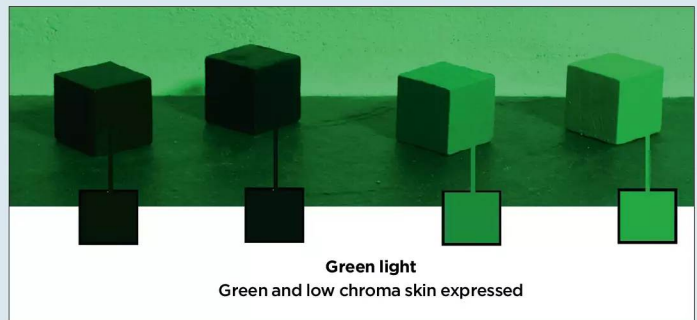
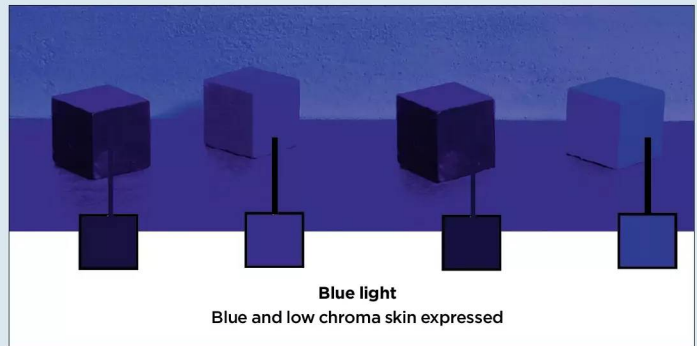
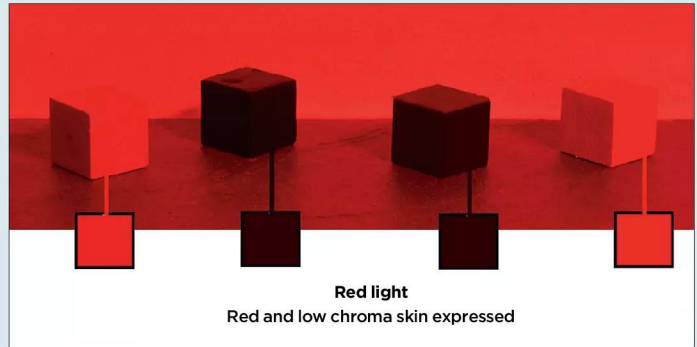
7 COLOURED LIGHT SOURCES

We've learned so far that shadows are primarily caused by the light sources of the environment, leading us to a natural and important question: how do coloured light sources actually affect objects? There are noteworthy surprises here best seen when we take a subject to extreme conditions. Here I've photographed four cubes in red, blue, green and a skin tone. Let's see what happens when we take this setup through extreme lighting scenarios.

What we'd expect from our knowledge of colour mixing is that if we throw a strong red light on a blue object, we'd perceive a purple colour on the object. But when we actually do this in our setup, we see this isn't the case as the blue object becomes black instead.

In fact the only objects that aren't black in these extreme lights are those that are the colour of the light source itself. This leads us to an important relationship in coloured light sources. Lights mixing with objects is a subtractive relationship and the objects can only display the colour thrown on them. As blue paint has no red component, it can't display red and appears black, and so on.

We can see the skin tone retains its brightness in every light and shifts all over the place in colour. As it's a low chroma colour and this is a mix of multiple colours, it can shift wherever it needs to within the colour space. We can truly see here how much colour potential there is in skin! This is one major reason skin tones can never be said to be one specific colour, as it's highly dependent on the lighting and will shift dramatically all over the colour wheel.



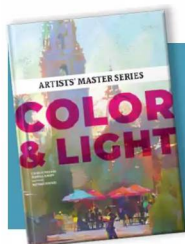
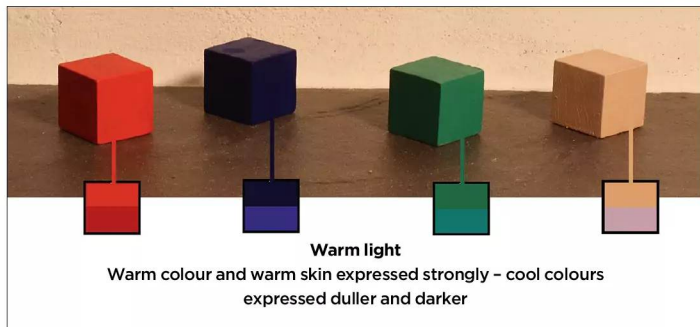
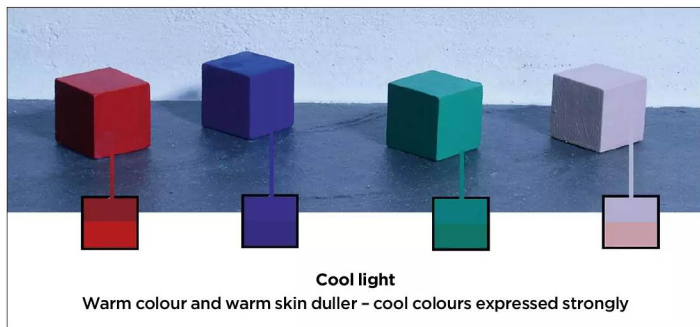
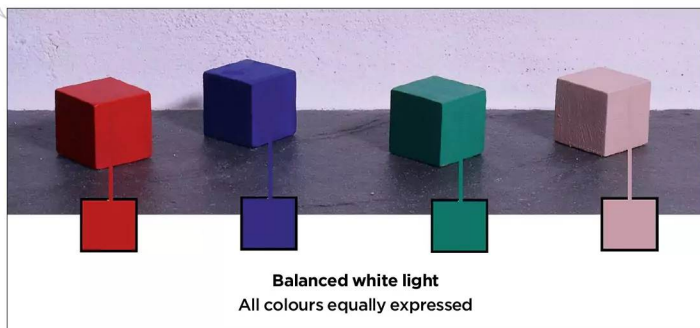
8 USING WARM AND COOL LIGHT SOURCES

Obviously those more chromatically strong light sources are uncommon in natural environments, so let's look at a setup you might encounter, a balanced white light against a warm and a cool light source, and see its effect on the colours we perceive.

As you can see above, I've kept the white light source in the bottom half of each square to compare how the colours change. Both of these kinds of light contain all the colours in the spectrum, just in different

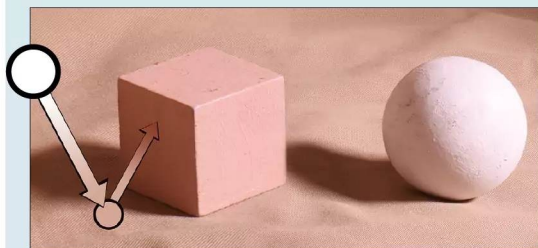
proportions. Due to this, we can observe that all the colours are represented in all the different lighting scenarios. All that changes are which colours are emphasised.

In the cool light, colder colours like the blue dominate strongly and the warmer hues, like the skin and the red, are duller and darker. Under the warmer lighting the opposite effect happens. In fact, the skin in this lighting is positively chromatic! This difference is more a matter of emphasis, but it has some effects on the shadows we'll perceive.



ARTISTS' MASTER SERIES: COLOR & LIGHT

This article is an excerpt from the Artists' Master Series book that Charlie wrote in partnership with 3dtotal Publishing. In the book he delves into this and many more topics in greater detail, with in-depth tutorials from other artists featured. To carry on learning, check it out at <https://bit.ly/4837PM9>.



9 CHROMA WILL COMPOUND WITH EACH NEW BOUNCE

One way this strongly affects shadows is how the low chroma colours in the environment will compound in colour when affecting similarly coloured objects. We can see that here, as the environment is a warm grey – which creates a warm light source for the shadow – and the skin cube is also a warm grey, the colours will add together to make a much more powerfully chromatic orange colour within the shadow.

Just compare it to the shadow created on the white ball, and note how much more intense the chroma is. This can lead to some surprisingly coloured shadows where you might not expect them on otherwise grey objects.



10 A POWERFUL EFFECT FOR SKIN

One place we see this effect quite strongly is skin tones. Often the skin will become its own light source for reflected lights and this creates this compounding effect. The light comes in white, is made into the warm grey skin tone and then bounces back into the shadow, creating an intense high chroma colour.

This is one of my favourite effects for creating vibrant colour in skin tones. Look out for it next time you're painting a model and you may be surprised by how much strong colour you can get out of it. As always, this advice will only mean something to you once you get to grips with it in your own artwork, so try it out for yourself. Happy painting! 🎨





Technique focus

START WITH A SIMPLE SKETCH

Brock Grossman explains how he developed a commando corgi from initial rough drawings

Artist PROFILE

Brock Grossman
LOCATION: Canada

Brock is a concept artist and illustrator based in Vancouver, working in the video game industry. He previously studied illustration at Savannah College of Art and Design, and freelanced for major companies. <https://bit.ly/4alWqlG>



"The inspiration for this piece was the contrast between a small animal character and the large robotic companion that aids it in battle. The inclusion of the large rocket launcher was funny to me too, like it was almost too big for the dog and he could barely hold it. The dog's design is based on a corgi, as I really like the breed and think their small stature fits perfectly with the idea and contrast I was aiming for. One good tip I'd recommend for creating illustrations like this is starting out very simple with rough sketches to nail down your idea."



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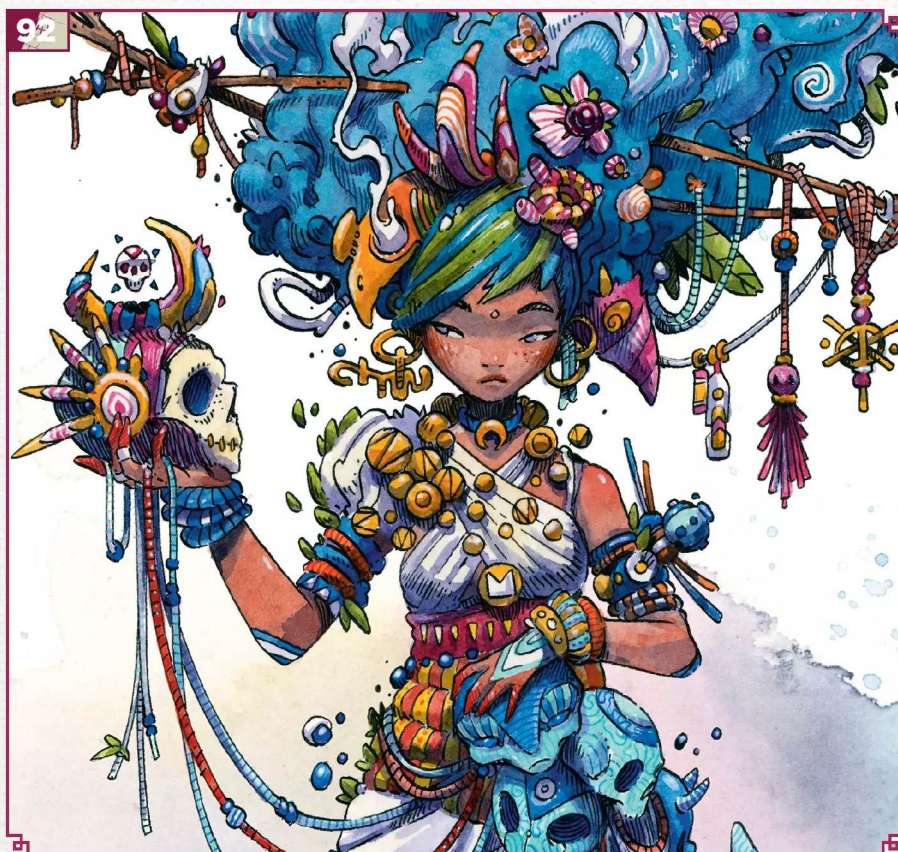


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Inspiration and advice from the best pro artists

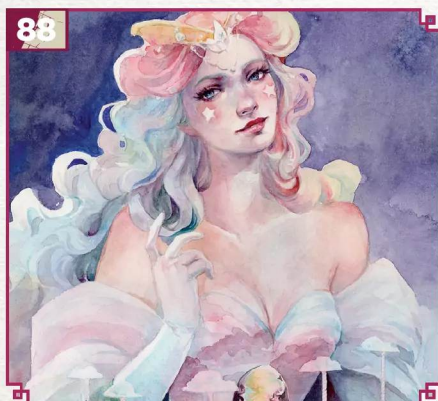


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Lord of the Rings inspirations and the joy of life as an artist.



FXPosé

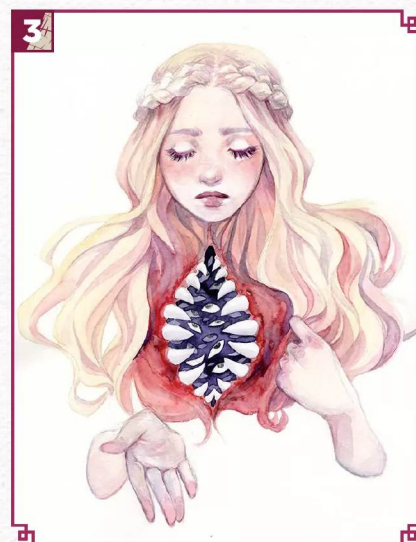
SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS



Sarah Stone

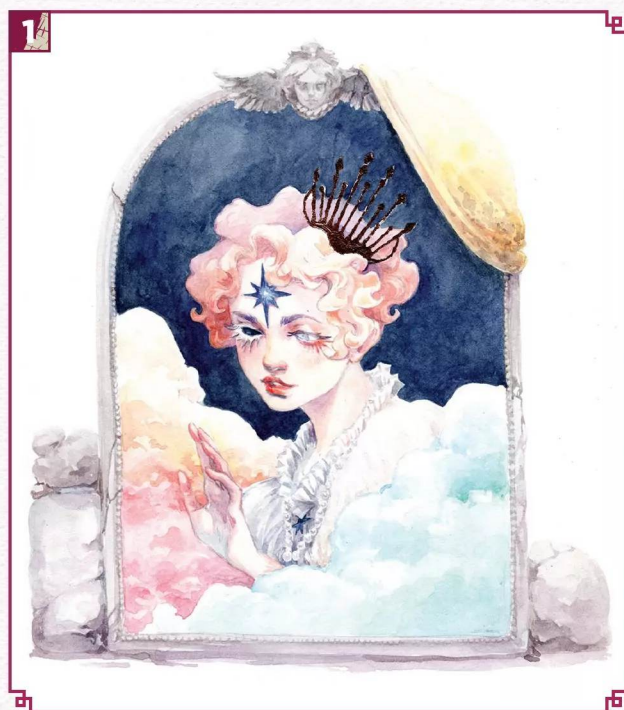
LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Watercolour, ink **WEB:** www.sysparkle.com

Sarah creates magical, character-driven illustrations using watercolour. Her dreamy, atmospheric works draw heavily from mythological themes and contain undercurrents of dark fantasy.



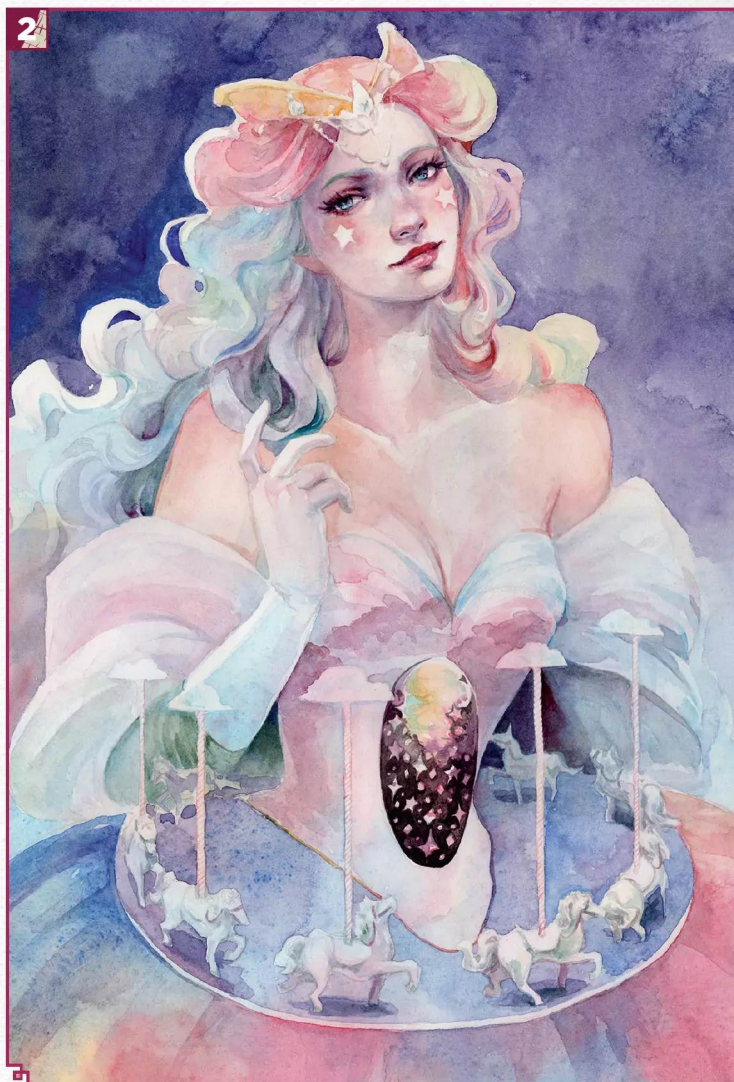
1 SOFT TOUCH

"This piece was inspired by medieval framed illustrations in illuminated manuscripts, and my love for pastels and candy floss."



2 CAROUSEL

"Carousel was the first large-scale watercolour painting I made. I've always been inspired by Victorian circus imagery."



3 INNER TORMENT

"While I enjoy the playful fantasy of my other works, I do like to include a contrast with unsettling themes, which can be both subtle and overt."

4 JADE

"A large mermaid with Art Nouveau-inspired designs in the corners. Her colouring and name evoke the symbolic nature of the eponymous stone."





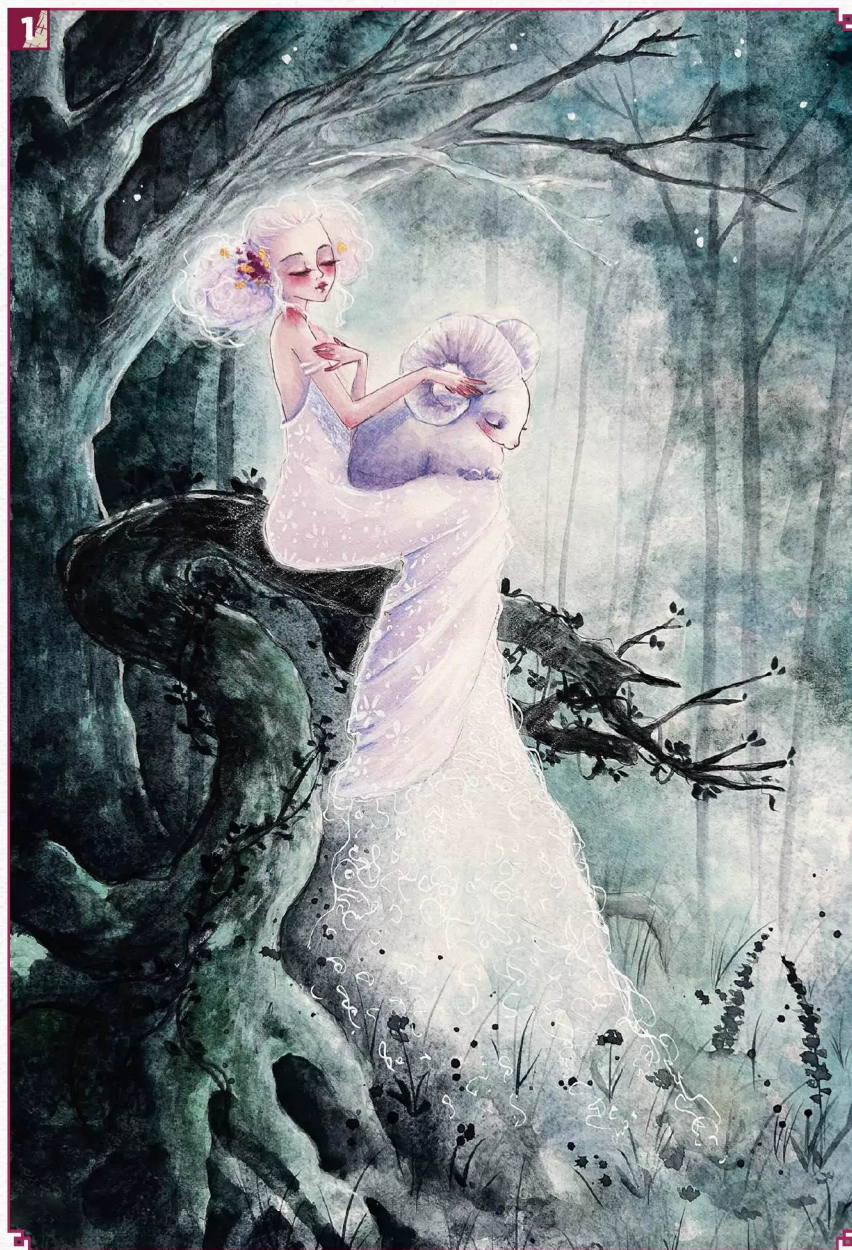
June Leeloo

LOCATION: France **MEDIA:** Watercolours, gold leaf, pencils, Indian ink, clay **WEB:** www.instagram.com/juneleeloo

June is a painter, sculptor and poet who mostly works with galleries and makes books. Her work is dreamlike and whimsical, and has been described as a new generation of fairy tale art, inviting viewers into a peaceful haven.

1 THE ARIES

"This painting is part of a series based on the zodiac signs. The zodiac is a theme that I've painted several times; I absolutely love the mythology behind each sign."



2 HADES AND PERSEPHONE

"In 2017, for Inktober, I developed a whole story about the myth of Hades and Persephone, but with a twist. People liked it so much that I made a book of it."



3 THE SUN

"This is a painting I made for an upcoming tarot deck. I naturally paint with greens and blues, but in this one I enjoyed exploring a warmer palette."

4 THE VIRGO

"Another painting from the zodiac series. I like to create dreamlike, whimsical atmospheres. Nature, seasons, myths and literature are things that inspire me a lot."



Watercolour

PAINT A STYLISH ARTBOOK COVER

Find out how **MOON** builds the star character to feature on the front of the latest volume in his gorgeous 365 Squares series

This image was created for the cover of my latest published artbook, 365 Squares vol. 3. The series is a challenge I set for myself that consists of drawing every day for a year on a square piece of paper. I completed this challenge for the third time from January through December last year.

If you've ever created books, you know that deciding on a cover design

is always tricky, as it's supposed to represent the spirit of the book as a whole. After multiple attempts, I finally chose this design, which is composed of several elements that can be found in the 365 different illustrations in the book: a female character, skulls, masks, ornaments, vegetation, bird heads, and a colour scheme characteristic of my work.

This illustration was entirely done using traditional techniques – Indian

ink and watercolour – like 99 per cent of my creations. With this kind of composition, I experiment a lot, especially with the initial sketch. I primarily seek out a visual balance before moving on to the next steps of inking and colouring, at which point I can't go back.

Moon is an artist, illustrator, painter and graffiti artist. He mainly publishes his work through artbooks and social media.
www.instagram.com/moon_mxtr

Step-by-step: Create a delicate character



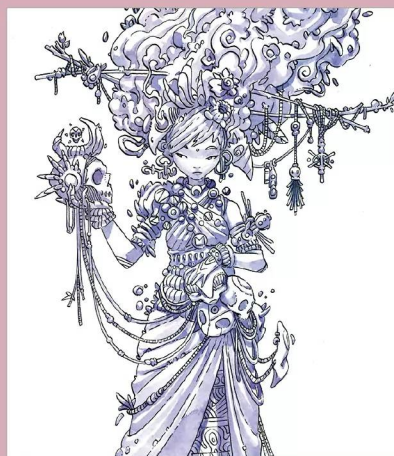
1 INITIAL SKETCH

I start off with the graphite sketch. This stage is where I'm really looking out for the right pose, the balance of my shapes, and the overall intention. I do my research on the same paper, drawing, erasing and starting over until I'm satisfied. This stage can take more or less time depending on the inspirations I have.



2 ADD THE INK

In my creative process, the next step is inking. I blur my graphite lines with a soft eraser, then, with a fine-nib pen and Indian ink, I trace directly over my preliminary sketch. I'll more or less faithfully follow my initial drawing, but will also remove or add elements. This is the last moment at which I can still change details.



3 PLACE SHADOWS

In this particular drawing, I started by applying a first layer of watercolour to place my shadows. Sometimes I start with the colour first and then add the shadows afterwards. I used a purple mixed with blue that overlays well with the colour layer that will come after. Watercolour allows for easy work with the transparency of colours.



In-depth: Developing the details

Hatching

Once the colours have been applied, I'll come back to strengthen the shadows, but this time with my nib pen and cross-hatching. This is a way to rework the transition between my initial inking and the watercolour colouring part. It also allows me to introduce texture in a different way.

Playful hair

My characters often have significant masses of hair, and I enjoy incorporating elements into them. It's a game for me to create structures of wood and ropes. It's about finding balance, the right tension in the ropes, and allows for adding ornaments.

Backdrop

Since my characters are rich in colour and graphic elements, I often use abstract backgrounds. All the colour work on the character is done in wet watercolour on dry paper because I need to know how my colour will diffuse. For backgrounds it's different; I work on wet paper to achieve this blended look to contrast with the character.

Triangular build

As this is the cover of the third book in my 365 Squares series, I wanted to reference the number three without it being too obvious. I opted for a triangular construction that guides the eye's journey from the character's face to the skull in her right hand, then to the masks beside her other hand, and so on.

Colouring

When I work on this type of illustration, I really enjoy using many different colours. I find that it works well on rather white backgrounds. Generally, I decide on one or two main colour areas and then play around with warm contrasts to have more impact and clarity for each element.

MATERIALS

PAINT AND INK

- Lefranc Bourgeois Indian Ink
- White Nights watercolours

BRUSHES AND PENS

- Acrylic brushes no. 6 and 10
- White gel pen
- Conté Atome 1423 pen nib

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First Impressions

✧ Iryna Khymych ✧

The artist talks
fantasy inspirations
and industry life



Where did you grow up and how has this influenced your art?
Until I was 14 years old I grew up in a

small town in western Ukraine called Irshava. I've been creating art since second grade and have always been fascinated with the human figure and portraiture. I remember art teachers telling me that I needed to know how to draw and paint other things besides people.

However, my real love of fantasy art wasn't born until I watched *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring* in 2002 and discovered Donato Giancola's work. It was there and then that I knew what I wanted to paint for the rest of my life: fantasy art.

What, outside of art, has most influenced your work throughout the years?

Nature and architecture. I bring my camera with me everywhere I go and have thousands of pictures that I've photographed of beautiful skies, incredible golden-hour lighting, moss, the shadow between two marble walls, water fountains and leaves. I try to look at the world with the wonder of a child and get inspired by the smallest of things.

Is there a painting that you saw in your formative years that changed everything? What was it?

Oh my gosh, yes! It was Donato Giancola's *Elegy for Darkness: The Lady Shalott*. I was breathless when

“I look at the world with the wonder of a child and get inspired by the small things”



ANNA DREAMING

My inspiration for this piece, created in oils on board, came from Monet's Haystacks series.

I saw this glowing white figure being carried by these men and a knight holding her feet; it's just so exquisite! To this day it remains one of my favourite pieces of his and it was the painting where my love of all things glowing came from.

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

Everything and more! Every day I get up and I get to do what I love. How could this life not be the best?

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

You know, it's really hard right now to see the good in the art industry with the rise of AI art. It seems ➡

Iryna Khymych



DAWN

I feel a real connection to this piece. It's a depiction of Eos, the Greek goddess of the dawn.

IMAGINEFX



Traditional Artist Interview

➡ like we, the artists, have to always fight and prove that our skills are worthy of being paid for.

That being said, I do love the fact that today you have so many resources if you want to become an artist. You have instructional videos, SmArt School, Schoolism and New Masters Academy just to name just a few. This has made becoming an artist much more accessible, and just browsing on Instagram today I'm amazed by these teens who draw or paint way better than me when I was their age.

What advice would you give to your younger self to help you along the way?

Be patient and practise a lot. I tell this to people who reach out to me for advice all the time. You may not see the improvement, but I promise you that if you practise and are consistent with it, it will pay off.

Tell us about your first paid commission, does it stand as a representation of your talent?

My first commission was actually with Tor Publishing and it was for their promotion of V.E. Schwab's *The Invisible Life of Addie La Rue*, which is a book that I loved. It was absolutely perfect for me, because it combined my passions for both reading and painting. On top of that, it was such an honour to be included in a project with one of the best authors out there.



VIN

My take on Vin, the lead character from Brandon Sanderson's epic fantasy *Mistborn* trilogy.



PHOENIX RESTING

Inspired by *Flaming June* from the 19th-century artist Sir Frederic Leighton. Created with oil on linen.

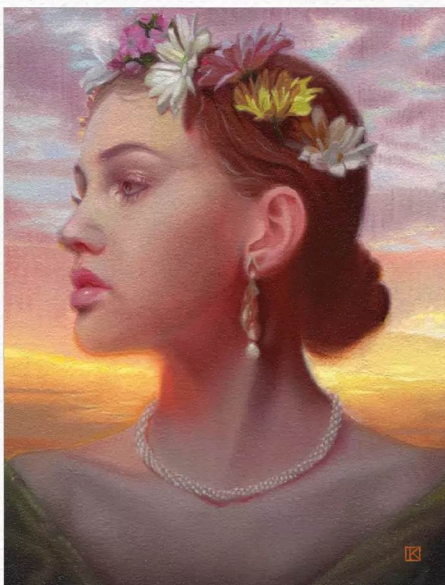
What's the last piece you finished? How do the two differ?

The last piece I finished is actually for a group art show with the WOW x WOW Gallery called *Anna Dreaming* and, honestly, looking at Addie and Anna, I've come such a long way. Sometimes it's hard to see progress, but then questions like this make you look and evaluate your past work and compare the

“I love the fact that today you have so many resources if you want to become an artist”

TESSA IN SPRING

The awakening of nature and its fleetingness was the subject for this oil on paper piece.



two, and you can't help but see how you have grown.

I highly recommend this exercise for artists who think they aren't improving. My edges, my values and my handling of the medium have significantly improved. Thank you to my mentor Howard Lyon!

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

I would say Dawn. I love painting Greek goddesses and this one just spoke to my soul. After all, without dawn things wouldn't glow!

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

I'd like to concentrate on loosening up my brushwork, on more value control, and on creating a better narrative in my pieces. That's easier said than done! But I have no doubt that with the help of my mentor, Howard, I'll be able to achieve all of my goals.

Ukrainian-born artist Iryna now lives in New York. She works as a freelance illustrator and is passionate about combining art and literature when painting strong characters and all things glowing. To see more of Iryna's artwork, head to www.iryakhymych.com.

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URGENT APPEAL



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