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NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX

WORKSHOP

16 STORYTELLING TECHNIQUES

How to capture a unique narrative in your drawings

BOOK ILLUSTRATION

Build dynamic characters and compositions with artist **Jon Foster**

ART INSIGHT

GET STARTED ON PATREON

Artists share how they make it work for them

PRO SKILLS

TRAN NGUYEN

Follow the artist's book cover tips

INSIDE

SCOTT M FISCHER ON TAKING RISKS

THE CINEMATIC ART OF PHIL HALE

PLEIN AIR PAINTING WITH PROCREATE

FUTURE

ISSUE 170

PENCIL TIPS! STEP-BY-STEP ADVICE ON BLENDING, OUTLINING AND MORE

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Welcome to...

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

One of the many great things about being at the helm of this magazine is that I get to choose who we interview. I love finding out more about the lives, personalities and idiosyncrasies of artists. Sometimes I read a quote from an interviewee and it makes me think differently about their work. In my mind I've found a link between who they are and what I see in their art.

It happened in this month's interview with Scott M Fischer (page 34). He said: "I'd rather go too far than never push the envelope." Placed next to his images, I feel as if the art makes more sense. It's the same with Phil Hale (page 50), an extraordinary artist whom I've admired for a long time. Knowing more about his journey and process, I now weave this into the work that I see. I hope that you enjoy these interviews as much as I did. Please let me know who we should interview next.

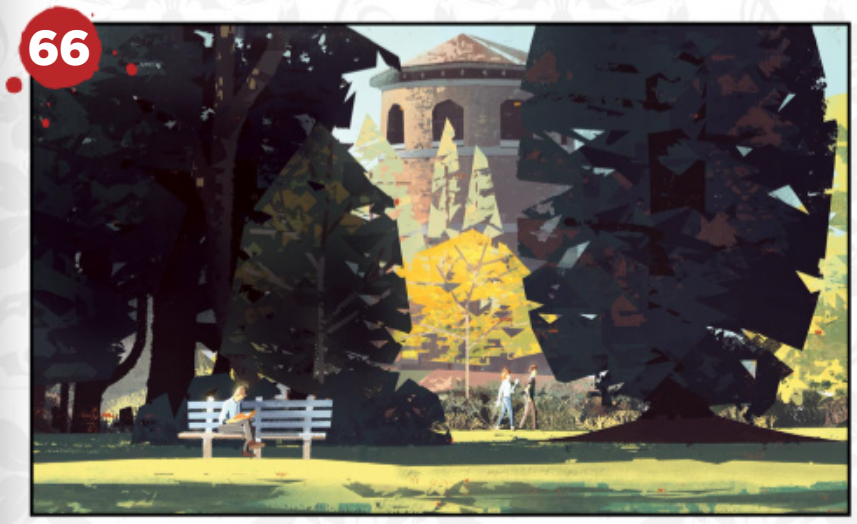
By the way, tickets are now available for our Vertex event! The world's leading 2D and 3D artists from the concept art and CG industries are gathering in London to share their knowledge with you. Don't forget to visit **www.vertexconf.com** for more details and to secure your tickets now!

Claire

Claire Howlett, Editor
claire@imaginefx.com

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

66



Let loose outside
Procreate, iPad and Mike McCain are the dream team assembled to create a plein air painting.

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Once upon a time...
Abigail Larson creates gorgeous work (that line art!) and gives a fine analysis of storytelling through art.

110

Beautiful book cover art
Can Tran Nguyen ever do wrong in her art? Here's yet another example of her exemplary work.

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UK readers can get a free pair of KitSound Race wireless earphones, worth £14.99 See page 4 for details

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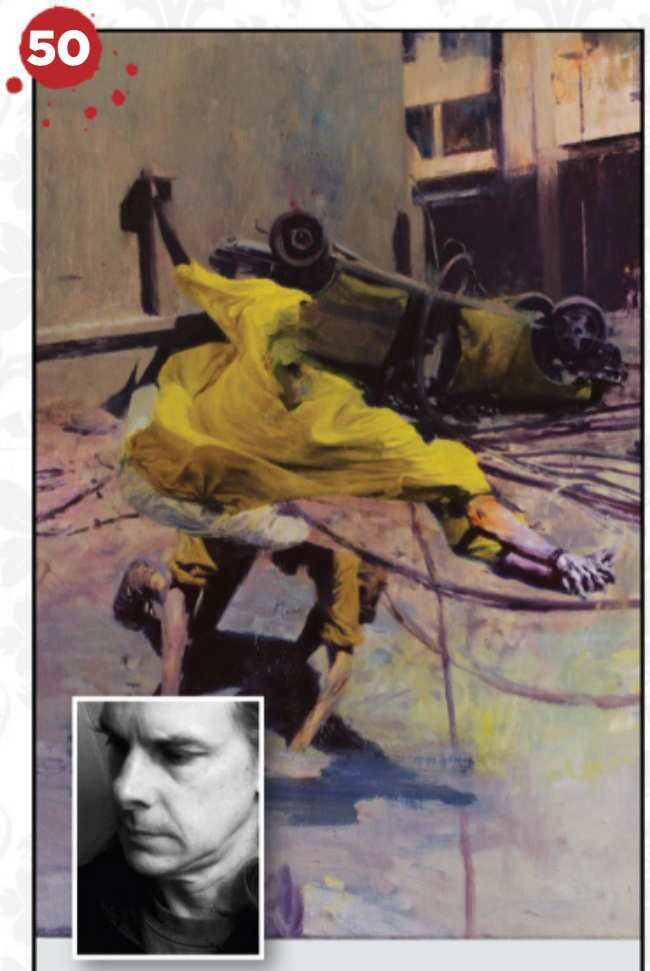
Artist Portfolio

SCOTT M FISCHER

"The key to storytelling is being an empath"

Scott takes the paranormal angle

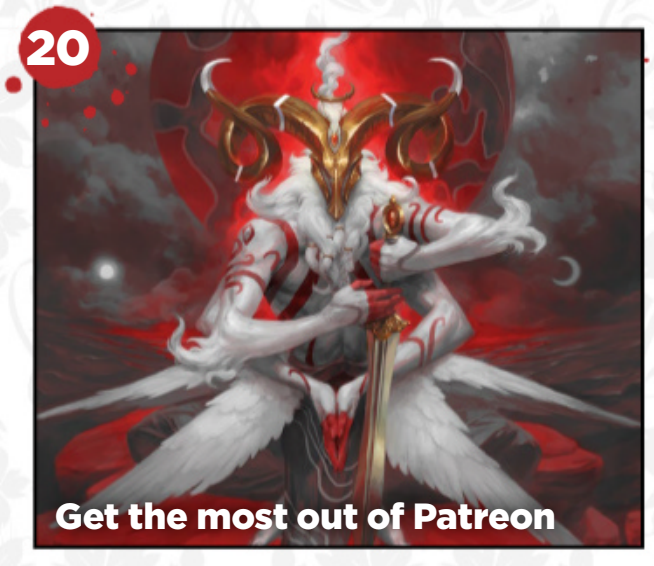


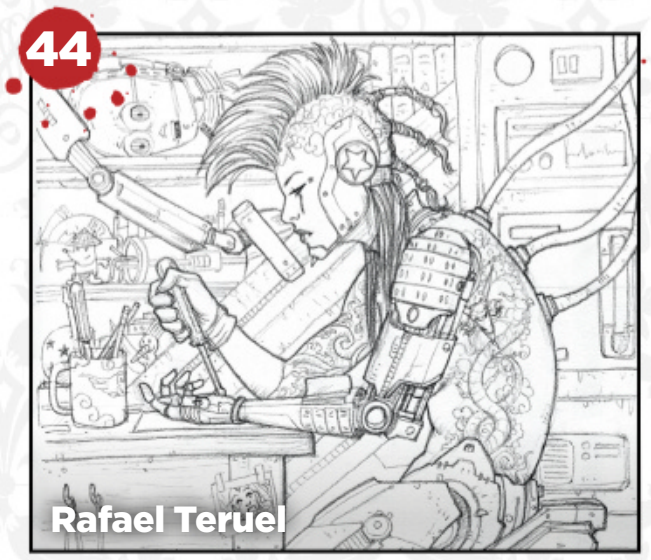
Artist Portfolio

PHIL HALE

"If I like a photo, I don't have to ask why"

Gut instinct serves Phil well





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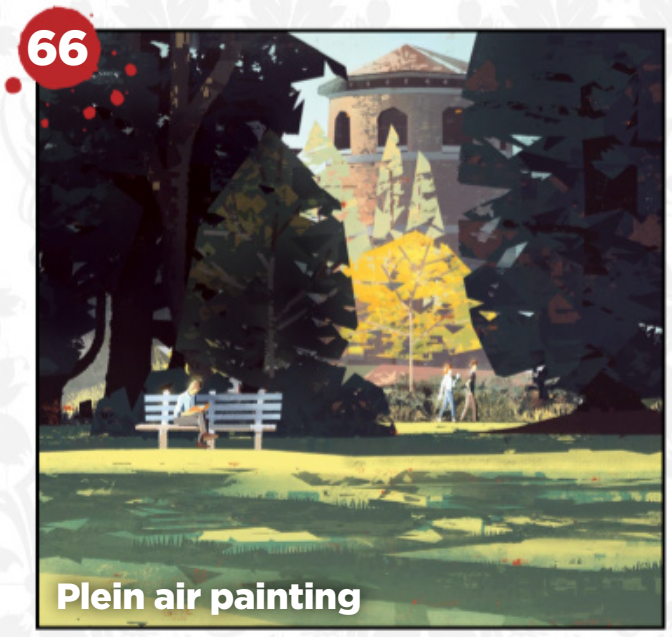
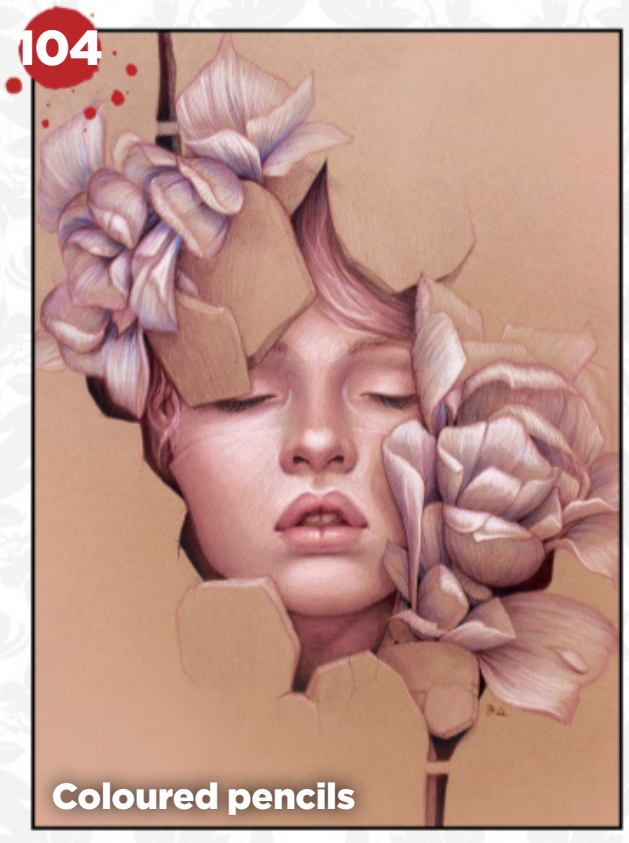
Jon Foster develops a commissioned piece, tackling initial ideation, greyscale development and colour ideas.

66 Be successful at plein air painting
Mike McCain shares his advice for a great outdoor painting experience, detailing equipment, observational techniques and the need to simplify.

74 Boost your skills at storytelling
Gain insights into Abigail Larson's process of creating expressive figures and settings to illustrate a story with her dark fairy tale art.

82 Draw muscles under stress
Patrick J Jones explores the rhythmic nature of muscles in motion as he harnesses the power of gesture.





Traditional Artist

100 Traditional art FXPosé
Explore this month's traditional art.

104 Workshop: Advice on using coloured pencils
Go beyond your comfort zone when using coloured pencils, advises Jennifer Healy.

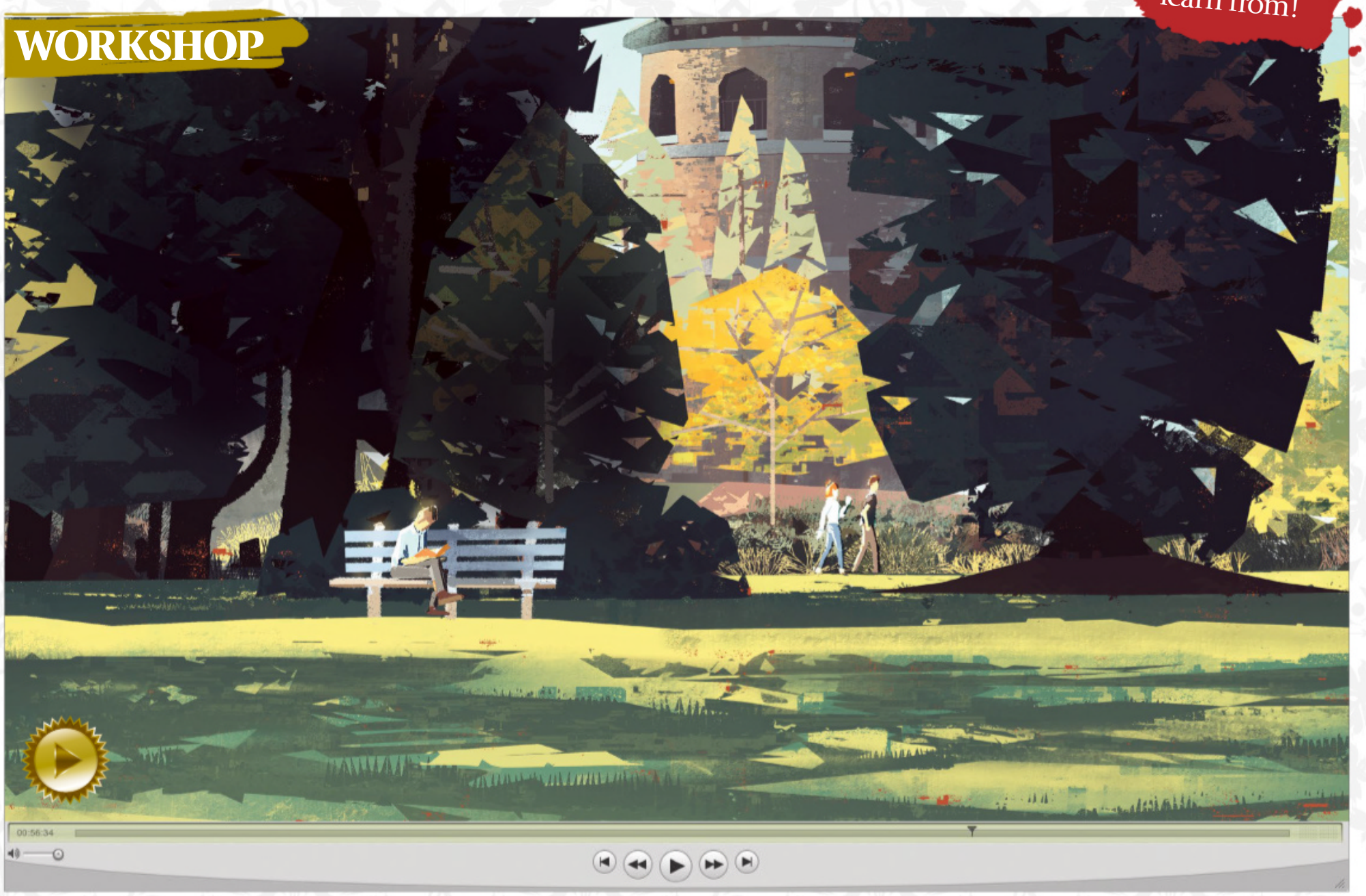
110 Workshop: Illustrating for a book cover
Tran Nguyen on how she captures a young adult book's narrative in a single image.

114 First Impressions: Tiffany Turrill
Competing with a fellow school pupil helped this artist to step up her art game.

ImagineFX Resources

Getting hold of this issue's workshop videos from the likes of Patrick J Jones and Mike McCain is quick and easy. Just visit **https://ifxm.ag/170bookillustration** and start downloading

OVER 1 HOUR of video tutorials from pro artists to watch and learn from!



GET YOUR RESOURCES

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

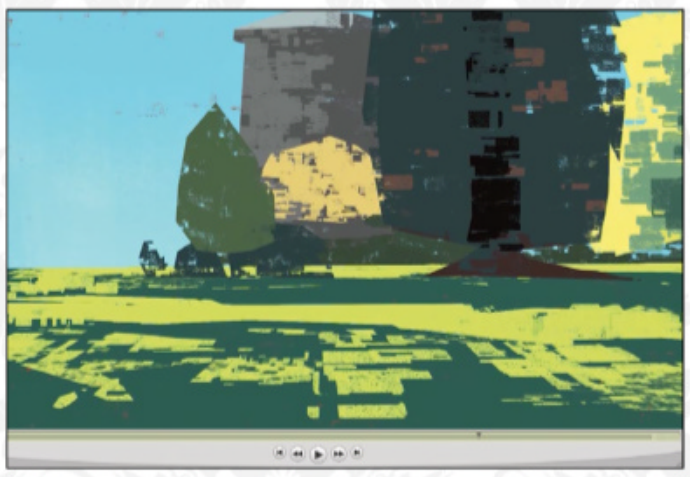
1 Go to the website
Type this into your browser's address bar (not the search bar): **https://ifxm.ag/170bookillustration**

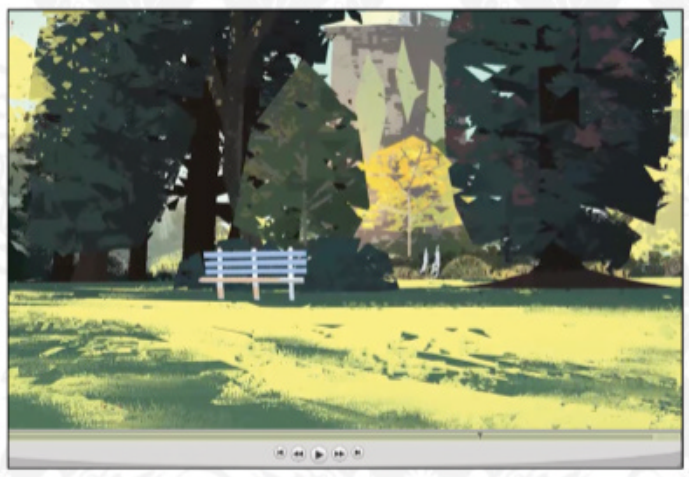
2 Find the files you want
Search through the list of resources to download.

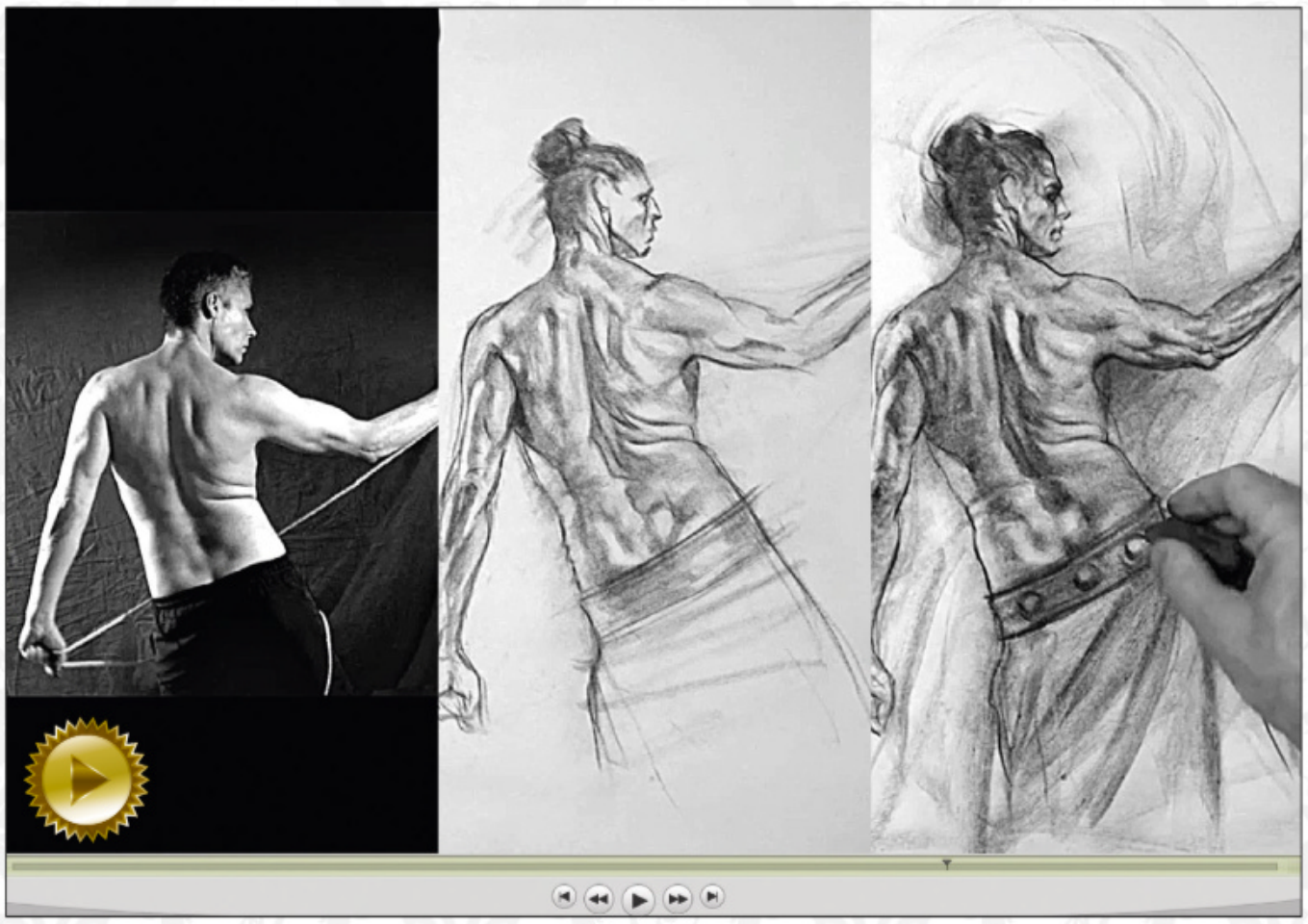
3 Download what you need...
Download the files or watch them via a bespoke YouTube link.

Get outside and start painting

Follow Mike McCain's video as he describes how he gears up for a plein air painting session, using Procreate on his iPad Pro. There are more insights from Mike in his workshop on page 66.





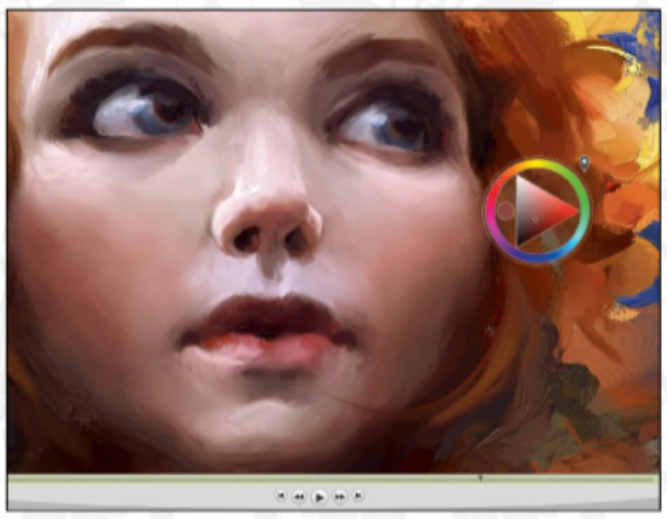


Work that body... and then draw it!

Watch Patrick J Jones as he shows how to capture the rhythmic nature of muscles in motion, in part four of his figure-drawing series. Turn to page 82 to read his in-depth workshop.

Watch a clip from Turn Your Drawing Into a 3D Model

Jama Jurabaev conjures up some digital art magic in his instructional video, which explains how Blender can turn a flat sketch into an editable model. Read our review on page 95.



Painter 2019: new brushes, performance tweaks and more!

There's a lot to like in the latest version of Corel Painter, the leading natural media painting software. Concept artist Magdalena Proszowska explains what's new in three short videos.

ImagineFX — NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

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FXPosé

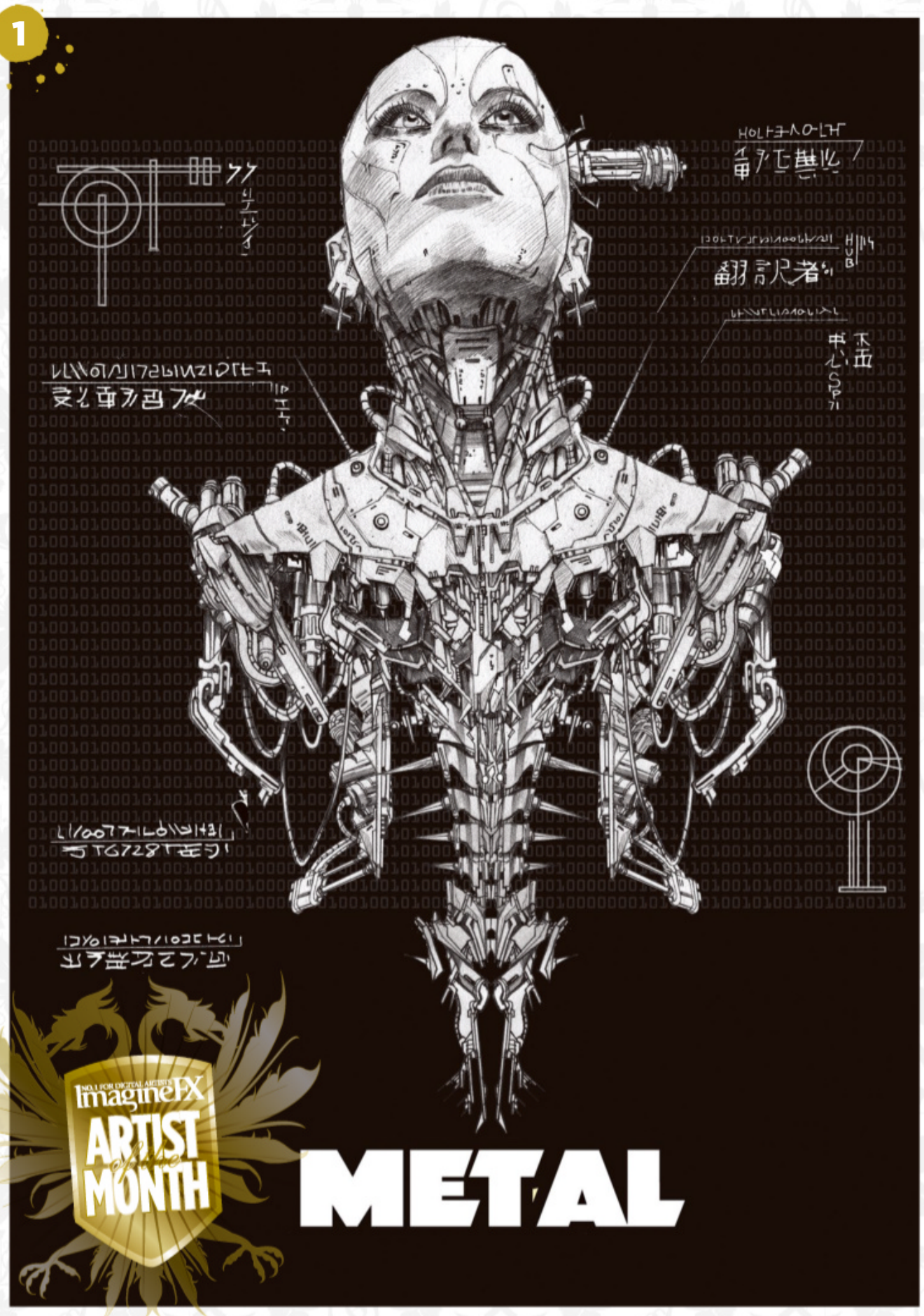
THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

Simeon Aston

LOCATION: England **MEDIA:** Photoshop, pencils **WEB:** www.metalmadeflesh.com

Simeon often draws his designs in pencil before adding colour digitally. His work is characterised by its hand-drawn qualities and bold colour motifs.

1



2

3

1 MMF METAL

"The original hard cover for award-winning graphic novel Metal Made Flesh. For this image I used various mirroring techniques and blended duplicates to create the torso."

2 ALIEN

"This portrait was inspired by one of my all-time favourite films. I presented a copy to Sigourney Weaver at a London Comic Con."

3 GHOST IN THE SHELL

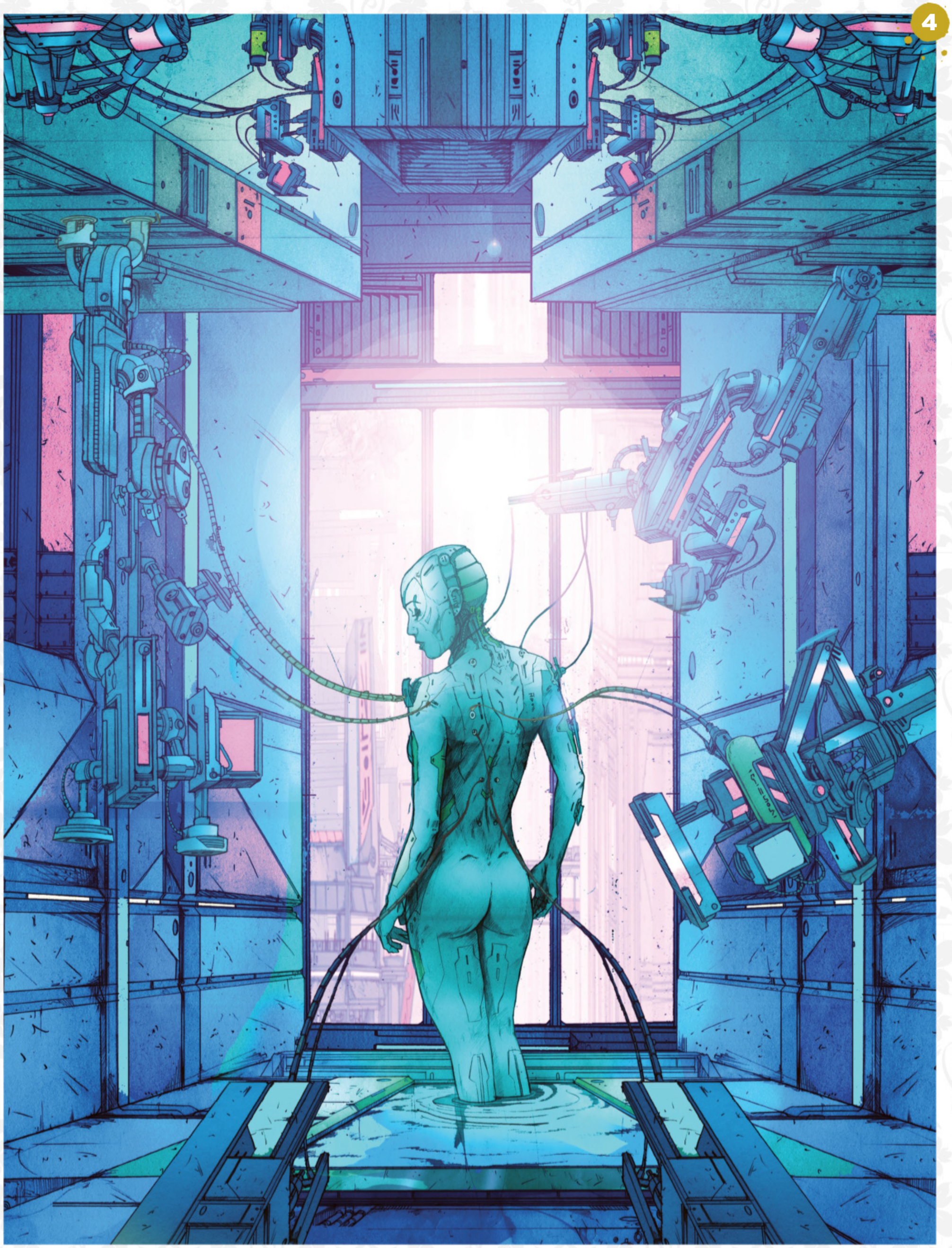
"My own take on the classic cyberpunk manga/anime duo. I used multiple layers and overlays to create a busy, digital cyberpunk feel."

4 IZOBEL RISES

"One of the signature characters from Metal Made Flesh."

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

4



Fogarasi Hunor

LOCATION: Romania **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.artstation.com/fogarasi

Fogarasi studied art at university in Romania, but it was only after graduating that he started to develop his own stylised, cartoony approach. It was at that point he found his true passion for art.

1

1 AMERICAN BISON
"I was looking for a way to depict real animals in a stylised way, while still retaining the essence of the species."

2 WOOLY DINOSAURS
"Some different species of dinosaur-like mammals. In these quick drawings I'm concentrating on big shapes and silhouettes that communicate quickly and at the most basic level."

3 DINO DEER
"I took a more playful approach here, combining a few different species. This inspired me to make more dinosaur-mammal combos."

4 WOOLY CERAROPS
"These are some head design exploration sketches. These quick sketches enable me to explore and learn how to draw new forms."

2

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3

4

Erik van Wijk

LOCATION: The Netherlands **MEDIA:** Photoshop, ink **WEB:** www.erikvanwijk-art.nl

Erik has been working as a graphic designer for over 20 years. He's long been a fan of comic books, which are a big influence in his work. Other recurring themes include fantasy and animals.

1 ALL-SEEING TIGER
"A tattoo design that got out of hand and became more complex than I intended. It was an experiment in creating something with no black (or dark) line work."

2 THE LION KING
"A combination of King Richard the Lionheart and the Lion King, made into a bad-ass character. It was created for a CGTrader digital art competition, in the character illustration category."

3 TIME SLIPPING
"Time goes by so fast, it sometimes feels like it's slipping through our fingers. This piece is a reminder to enjoy and make the most of the time we have on Earth."

4 KNIGHT FOR LOVE
"I made this for an online Month of Love art challenge – except it took me longer to make than expected, so it was the only piece I made for the challenge that month!"

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

FXPosé

4

1

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

Joshua Wright

LOCATION: Australia **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.heliocentric.com.au

Most of concept artist and illustrator Joshua's work is for video game companies, but to keep things interesting he also creates his own board games. One, entitled Steamosaurus, features fancy steampunk dinosaurs.

1 TYRANT QUEEN
"The Queen of Claws, in all her terrifying splendour. Regal and mighty, she's the matriarchal carnivore that rules all of her cold-blooded kind."

2 DEEP ONE
"A classic Deep One. What is it that makes Lovecraftian beasties so fun to paint?"

3 STEGOSAURUS ARCHAEOLOGIST
"At home at either a dig site or the Paleopolis Museum, this academic delves into the mysteries of the even deeper past."

4 DAPPER RAPTOR
"A well-dressed steamosaur. He's the very epitome of urbane sophistication, yet more than willing to shred a few mammals to get the job done."

Sam Kemp

LOCATION: England **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Maya **WEB:** www.artstation.com/pixelpusherart

Sam started his artistic career in the theme park industry, but left to pursue his dream of working as a freelance concept artist and illustrator. He's documenting his journey on YouTube.

1 THE BOILER ROOM
"This was the first time I focused on incorporating 3D into an environment painting. I wanted the leaky, rusted boiler room to feel homely for the robot character."

2 FINAL STAND
"This concept was inspired by tall stories from the Wild West, and shows a character's attempt to stop a train using boxes of dynamite."

1

3

2

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

3 THE LATE SHIFT
"I've watched too many 80s sci-fi and horror films. I wanted to capture the exact moment the glass tank begins to crack, unleashing the creature inside."

4 THE DEVOTED
"With this piece I wanted to present an abandoned world, forgotten by everyone except the devoted servants seen in the courtyard."

"Having a regular monthly salary through Patreon gives me the stability I need to be able to invest in keeping my work creative," says Peter Mohrbacher (https://ifxm.ag/peter-m).

"Right away, I got swept up in it and lost interest in making art for things like Magic: The Gathering"

THE ART OF WAR
See how concept studio powerhouse Atomhawk worked with Aardman to create the unique look of this video game based on the First World War.
Page 26

SHINING EXAMPLE
US illustrator Laura Diehl's studio is such a sun trap that we're surprised her two pet dogs don't wear shades. (Laura, please make this happen!)
Page 28

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If there's something bugging you about ImagineFX or you want to sing our praises, please get in touch. We love hearing from readers near and far.
Page 33

© Wizards of the Coast

How artists can get the most out of Patreon

Pledge fund The creator-orientated membership platform has seen some artists rack up big sums, but is there more to Patreon than money? **Dom Carter** investigates

To many onlookers, Patreon can appear to be a numbers game. Artists who use the platform jockey for subscribers, and therefore funds, as part of a transaction for their work. As for the site itself, the statistics speak volumes. Set up five years ago, Patreon has sent over $150 millions to its creators, who in turn get to keep a staggering 90 per cent of received donations.

The site has had an impact beyond these figures, though. Patreon has put creators back in the driver seat and freed them up to create more personal work. For many, it's been the platform they've been waiting for.

"I'd been dreaming of Patreon for 10 years before it existed," explains **Peter Mohrbacher**, a fantasy illustrator whose passion had always lain in personal work. "After about seven years working in the games industry, I stopped seeking new employment because I wanted to pursue the dream of making a full-time living from my personal work. Not long after that, Patreon launched and I jumped right on board."

PLOUGHING ONE'S OWN FURROW

Thanks to Patreon, Peter's able to do just that, as well as supporting his favourite artists and feeling more incentivised to create. "Right away, I got swept up in it and lost interest in making art for things like Magic: The Gathering."

Illustrator and artist **Wylie Beckert** turned to Patreon out of

Michael Lim turned to the Patreon platform (https://ifxm.ag/michael-l) after he struggled to find mentees elsewhere online.

The support of Peter's fans on Patreon "means I don't need to act defensively when something doesn't sell well or an opportunity falls through."

Wylie Beckert released her first playing card deck, Wicked Kingdom, via Patreon (https://ifxm.ag/wylie-b).

frustration with the traditional career model of working for clients, brands and commissions. “I realised that if I was ever going to make it in the industry, I had to cut out the middleman and create that product myself,” she explains.

By setting up shop on Patreon, Wylie was able to concentrate on her own work. Seeing her art turn into a reliable income is an immensely gratifying draw to the platform for her. “There’s this poisonous misconception in our culture that if a creator isn’t creating sheerly for the joy of it, then they’re somehow less of a legitimate artist. Yet in reality, it’s a heck of a lot harder to create something worthwhile when you’re stressed about money or burned out after a long day at your ‘real’ job.”

BUILDING AN AUDIENCE

Despite the fulfilment it offers, Patreon won’t do the legwork for its users. “Having a fan base is key, and is probably one of the most important aspects of creating a Patreon page,” says **Michael Lim**, AKA Daarken. “All of the people I know who are making a decent amount on Patreon had a large fan base beforehand. With the oversaturation of art and tutorials online, trying to make a name for yourself can seem almost impossible.”

To attract an audience, and therefore more funds, Michael suggests offering personalised incentives. “If people think they’re receiving something that no one else

“The great thing about Patreon is that it can provide an additional consistent revenue stream,” says Michael. “People can make smaller monthly pledges to receive some training, without having to pay a large lump sum.”

© Wizards of the Coast

Patreon keeps Wylie accountable, which makes her work on new projects like her Reign of Sin deck. “Patreon has become a place for me to push myself, try out new techniques and explore new ideas.”

“Patreon’s recurring, monthly pledges is its greatest strength,” says Irshad (www.patreon.com/uncomfortable). “It changes the paradigm for money changing hands.”

Wylie used other creator's Patreon pages as a research tool while developing her enamel pin, created as a gift from new patrons.

> I realised that I had to cut out the middleman and create the product myself

does, then it becomes more valuable. It feels more like the creator created something specifically for them. Patrons want to feel like they are a person, and not a number."

UNIQUE REWARDS

This is exactly what Wylie did when she launched a Patreon-exclusive enamel pin, promising one to every patron who signed up by a deadline as a signing bonus. "My patron count nearly tripled in a month," the artist reveals. "This was a bit of a risky investment. Manufacturing and shipping around 700 pins cost me thousands of dollars and many days of stuffing envelopes.

"Yet while a lot of people dropped their pledge as soon as they got their pin, today [six months later] I still have about twice as many patrons as I started out with, and Patreon has gone from supplementing my

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

IRSHAD KARIM

The Canadian artist runs through the ins and outs of Patreon

1 Lay your groundwork
Patreon's a great tool for monetising an audience, but I don't find it to be effective at building one from nothing. Before you even think about launching your Patreon campaign, get out there and show people you've got something to offer.

2 Find your fit
Unfortunately, it's not a one-size-fits-all scenario. My Drawabox campaign has grown steadily since it was launched. I also draw a web comic, Orc and Gnome's Mild Adventures, which itself has a Patreon campaign – and it's a whole other beast to contend with. Balancing what to give away for free and what to hide behind a pay wall is an inherently uncreative decision.

3 Things can change…
The biggest problem I see is that Patreon may choose to implement some policy shift or other decision, and you're left to bear the brunt of those repercussions with no real control over the situation

4 Trust your community
Announcing to the world how much money you're making may discourage further contribution, especially if it's seen as a donation drive to support a product as a whole (as opposed to a direct exchange of services).

5 Connect with your crowd
Patreon's Discord chat integration is a seemingly minor feature, but truly an amazing one. It's simple to set up and enables you to build a stronger bond with your community. And that is how one succeeds on Patreon!

Concept artist and illustrator Irshad handles a range of duties at Silverback Games in Halifax, Nova Scotia.

www.patreon.com/uncomfortable

"If I hadn't been lucky enough to enter the field at a time when this platform was available to creators, I'd probably be building spreadsheets instead of strange fantasy worlds," says Wylie

For Irshad Karim, success on Patreon relies on putting in a lot of early investment for little or no return. "It's based on a mixture of hard work, knowing how to market yourself, and a hell of a lot of luck."

© Valve

commercial work to almost completely replacing it."

Patreon also gives creators the chance to support the development of other artists by sharing their knowledge. Concept artist **Irshad Karim** found himself moving on to the platform after spending time passing on his accumulated expertise via Reddit and amassing a large community in the process.

"People started asking how they could help contribute and give back for what they'd received," Irshad says. "At that point I hadn't thought about monetising the community. Rather, I figured it could help me develop a reputation, and then further down the road perhaps I'd offer mentorships or something, when I felt my skills and experience levels were ready for that. And so, my Patreon campaign (**www.patreon.com/uncomfortable**) – as well as the Drawabox website itself – was born.

"I've always seen Patreon not specifically as a way to make money, but as a means of garnering support," Irshad adds. "It just so happens that the easiest way for someone to support you is with a burger's worth of dollars each month."

> **"I've always seen Patreon not specifically as a way to make money, but as a means of garnering support"**

Michael is keen to point out that theft is still an issue on Patreon. "If you post rewards on your main page, new patrons who haven't been charged yet can still see those posts and take the rewards."

Giving back to the community is just as useful for the teacher as it is the student. "Tutorials serve a hidden purpose for me," says Wylie. "Normally, it's all too easy to zone out while working on a piece, and start to rely on habit instead of conscious decision-making – at which point, the quality of my work starts to suffer. Documenting the process as I go keeps me engaged, and reviewing my photos and notes after the fact helps me find ways to fine-tune my process."

TOUGH INDUSTRY CONDITIONS

Having achieved so much in such a short space of time, what does the future have in store for Patreon and its users? "There are a lot of creative

Creating tutorials makes Wylie mindful of how she works. "Process tutorials are one of my main Patreon offerings," she says.

industries where the pay and the terms of work continue to slide into unlivable conditions," says Peter. "Illustrators in particular have become abused and exploited by their industry.

"I'm hoping that an alternative to working for big companies will create the competition we need to help improve wages and terms."

For artists like Michael, though, Patreon hasn't really affected his freelance work because he uses the platform to offer a different service altogether. "Since the decline of my mentorship attendance, Patreon has enabled me to keep the lights on," he explains. "Without the monthly revenue stream from Patreon, I wouldn't be able to pay my bills."

Don't turn to Patreon for overnight success, Peter warns. "Expect slow growth most of the time. Run it in the background and don't promise a lot."

Don't confuse financial worth with artistic worth on Patreon, says Irshad. "There are plenty of people out there who are creating amazing works, but simply aren't getting the attention that they deserve."

Bram Ttwheam chose a softer art approach because it suited the narrative: "It's essentially the story of two peaceful men who have to react to events beyond their control."

We will remember them

Modernist warfare The stories of World War One feature in 11-11: Memories Retold, a new video game with heartfelt design by Aardman and Atomhawk

World War I games are usually split into two camps: those that capture the military aspects of war, and those that look at the human angle of the conflict. "11-11: Memories Retold definitely falls into the latter category," says Atomhawk's principal artist, Charlie Bowater.

"It's a character-led story that focuses on humanity in the face of absolute adversity."

Brought to life with a painterly art style inspired by a film Aardman Animations created for the Imperial War Museum, the game is essentially a giant, living painting created in an Impressionist style. Aardman chose to work with Atomhawk because the concept art studio was able to match its specific style.

Charlie Bowater hopes the art style enables the viewer to find a window into the conflict, one where "they can both have their own perspective within it and also connect with the characters of the game."

"The art style presented the unique problem of definition within an impressionistic world," says Aardman art director **Bram Ttwheam**. "We had to define aspects of the world players would interact with, and such a loose art style made it a difficult line to walk."

To solve this conundrum, controls for size, orientation and brush type were developed. "We also had to resist the urge to clean things up too much as that would mean moving too far away from the style," says Charlie.

"I think the art style reflects a different take on the conflict," she adds. "I hope that the suggestive, sometimes dreamy style enables the viewer to immerse themselves in the story and the game."

11-11: Memories Retold is available to play on PS4, Xbox One and PC now. More details at **https://ifxm.ag/11-11**.

"Despite being so suggestive, the style has a very specific look," Charlie explains. "We relied on a mix of specific brushes to achieve it."

Bram reveals that for such a challenging project, the biggest obstacle was time. "A great deal of coding time went into making a shader that was versatile enough."

Laura Diehl

Sun-kissed space This green tea-loving illustrator shows us around her light-filled digital studio, filled with cute critters both real and imaginary

This piece inspired its own original fairy tale, which can be found on my Patreon. It tells the tale of a lonely boy, a fearsome dragon, and a mysterious village without children.

Before we purchased this house in Virginia, US, three years ago, I was exploring possible studio spots. I chose the dining room because it receives beautiful natural light and is central to the rest of the house.

Just one problem: there was a low-hanging chandelier installed in the middle of the room. Once I had this swapped out for a ceiling fan/light combo, I was ready to paint and move in. Because it's open to the foyer on one side, with a sliding door to the butler pantry on the other, it doesn't have the closed-off feel of a spare bedroom. This is both a blessing a curse when the pups are being rowdy!

I'm primarily a digital artist. I was given my first tablet – a CalComp

These teak-wood trays and mirror came from a skilled Etsy crafter in Thailand. They feature both kodomas and soots – two of my favourite creatures from Studio Ghibli. They've now graced three versions of my studio. My Ghibli love also extends to a some adorable plushies and figures over on my drafting desk...

The butler's pantry hallway serves as a tea station. I love having a variety of loose-leaf teas. My favourites are green teas with plenty of umami. The mug came from fantasy artist Sheila Rayyan.

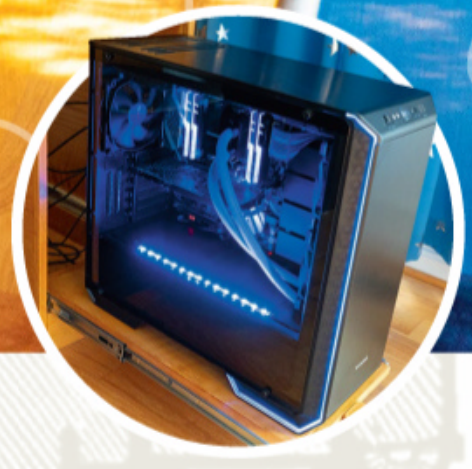
This piece started with the vision of a glowing sunflower seed. It took a step back and a number of months between starting and finishing, to find its final form and main character.

This piece has special meaning because it depicts myself and three siblings. We spent the first part of our childhood in Oklahoma, so the vast prairie setting is a nod to that. You can even see our old house in the distance.

This G-13 Logitech gamepad is programmed with all of my Photoshop shortcuts. Keys G10 and G11 are well-worn because they enable me to flick between my brush and Eyedropper tool (to sample colours). It's not the use it was intended for, but vital to my workflow.

Most of my shelves are devoted to art-of, educational and illustrated books that inspire me. The children's book The Polar Express inspired me to become an artist at a young age. Two recent additions to my library are FF Dot and Art of Mana, both lucky finds in Osaka, Japan!

I'm lucky to have a husband who is an IT professional. He's built and maintained my custom PC for the past decade. This latest build is based on a Ryzen Threadripper CPU, a Nvidia Quadro GPU and 64GB of RAM. All of my art gets saved to a storage server in the basement before being backed up to the cloud. He's even installed custom lighting and cabling in my favourite colours!



My desk was built by my father and grandfather. It enables me to work both standing up (with a gel mat) and sitting (with a drafting-height Steelcase chair). My favourite feature is the top, which is mounted with cabinet glides to allow motion to the right or left. This means I can easily switch between mouse/keyboard and art tablet/G-13 pad.

As a fledgling illustrator in 2003, I was shocked and honoured to be flown out to LA and awarded the Illustrators of the Future Gold Award. I've kept this neat suspended golden paintbrush trophy on display ever since.

Here I am at my main art perch. The foam armrest pads on my chair also double as a support for my Wacom when I want it at a more organic angle.

No studio is complete without a pair of lovable fuzzballs! These two Shelties have kept me company (in various stages of puppyhood) for the past two years. The big fluffy male is Link and the haughty female is Zelda. Yes, they're named after the video game characters.

> **I love listening to Studio Ghibli movie soundtracks while I work**

Creation Station Pro! – in 1998, while halfway through high school. Although I took a number of traditional media art classes throughout my time at college, digital has always been my first love.

These days I use a Wacom Intuos 5 XL. I enjoy a super large tablet because it translates roughly 1:1 with my screen size, allowing smooth strokes with my lower arm (rather than wrist). On and off I've tried to get into the whole screen/tablet thing, but find that my hand is always in the way. At this point, drawing down on the tablet and looking up at the screen are second nature to me.

YOGA 'N' YOGHURT

I like to start my day with yoga, a yogurt parfait and a cup of strong sencha tea. I'm most creative in the morning, so I gear my morning routine to deposit me in my computer chair by about 9-10am.

After a brief scan of the day's email, I dive straight into the art project at hand. Alternately, I'll spend a few hours in the living room scribbling or typing away on the couch. I'm currently writing short stories for an original fairy tale series of my own invention (see **www.patreon.com/lauradiehl**). I love listening to Studio Ghibli movie soundtracks while I work because they put me in just the right daydreamy mood.

I break for lunch and to let the pups out around 1pm. The later half of the day is spent either continuing on previous artwork, or working on client- or business-related tasks. I find that my energy naturally wanes around 4-5pm, so that's when I typically call it a day and the dogs walk me. Hah!

Having distinct "studio hours" really helps me maintain a healthy work-life balance – as does surrounding myself with natural light, plants and creatures.

Laura is an artist and storyteller. She specialises in children's fantasy, and has worked with clients such as Mattel, Pearson and Lerner. You can discover more of her art at www.ldiehl.com.

These adorable Totoro plushies stand watch over my studio. I like to think that they help my "little seeds of art ideas" grow into lush, fully fledged paintings.

"No, sir! I didn't see you playing with your dolls again!" The top drawer of my drafting desk is filled with dolls! Yes, highly articulated figures used for reference in a pinch. Complete with some miniature swords, shields, bows... and, er, a frying pan. Because why not?

It's the thought that counts, right? I originally purchased this solid oak drafting desk with the intention of using the drafting surface portion for art, which will notch-in at a variety of angles. In reality, it's become more of a glorified print storage and prep area.

Although not located in my office, this closet in our spare bedroom is sure to make guests wonder. It houses all the basic costumes needed for a fantasy reference shoot. These can be taken to the lighting kit that's set up in the basement as needed. Countless friends and family members have been "persuaded to volunteer" as models for me over the years.

This shelf houses copies of books that I've illustrated for clients large and small. I'm always delighted to hold a physical copy in my hand. Working away at a digital cover image can feel so unreal sometimes. The Magic of Melwick Orchard is a recent title that I created cover art for.

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Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS

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Submitting work

Hello, could you give me more information in regards to submitting artworks to be considered in FXPosé? (Or if this isn't the correct channel, then the means to do so?) Thank you!

Iris, via email

Claire replies *Hello Iris, we'd love you – or any other artist reading this – to submit your work to our FXPosé section. To apply to be featured, please send in the following to* ***fxpose@imaginefx.com****:*

- *Your full (real) name, location and website address*
- *A list of software you use (for digital artists), or media (for traditional artists)*
- *A little info for your biography section (no more than 50 words)*
- *A recent photograph of yourself*
- *Five high-res images of your work, with signatures and watermarks removed*
- *The title and a 30-word caption for each piece of artwork*
- *Please also outline any relevant copyright information and please specify in the subject line of your email whether you're a digital or traditional artist.*

DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE? Don't worry – you can still get hold of it. Visit **https://ifxm.ag/169-ifx**.

Our FXPosé pages are regularly browsed by art directors and those looking to hire new blood, as well as your fellow ImagineFX readers!

ArtRage is a decently priced painting program. Here's Phil Galloway's ArtRage workshop from issue 168.

Alternative software

I'm a relative newcomer to ImagineFX, having only started my subscription to the magazine at the start of summer. I've noticed that a lot of your workshop artists use Photoshop. I don't own a desktop computer or laptop, and even if I did I really don't fancy taking out a subscription to Adobe. So at the moment I'm just drawing on my Android tablet using Sketchbook. Can you recommend any more art apps, or if I buy an affordable PC, what (cheap!) painting programs should I be looking at purchasing?

Brian, via email

Claire replies *Hello Brian, first off, thank you for subscribing! The kind of creative software that you need depends entirely on what you want to paint and your budget. I'd take a look at ArtRage, or maybe try Corel Painter Essentials to see if you get along with that painting program, and then maybe you could upgrade to the more expensive version of Painter. Readers, what affordable software do you use and recommend. Let me know!*

ImagineFX gift shop

Have you ever considered putting the art that appears in ImagineFX – the bespoke paintings that you've commissioned an artist to do – on merchandise? I'm thinking sketchbooks, posters, portfolio folders and other artist-related goodies, but also how about items likes mugs or mouse mats?

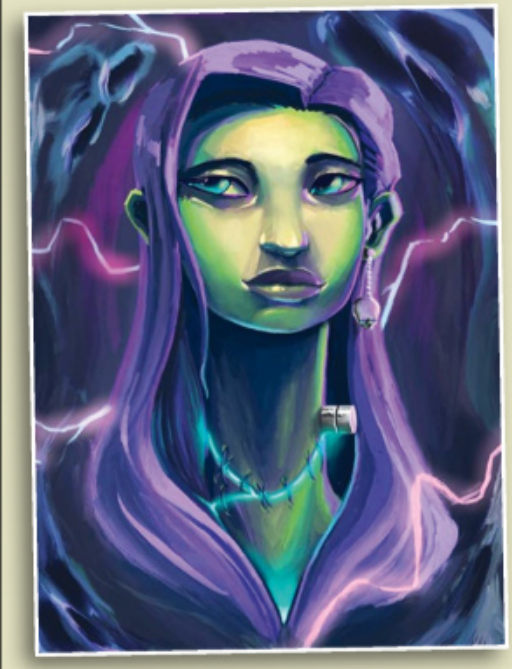
Rick T, via email

Claire replies *Hello Rick, nice to hear from you. A while back we were considering this, but it's not something that we're planning on doing at the moment. Usually, when we commission an artist we enable them to retain the rights to the image, meaning we only have the ability to publish the works in the magazine and online. It would get a little complex to add in rights for merchandise.*

I also know that a lot of artists are using other means to print and sell their work, and I love the fact that in this way they not only retain the rights but also the profits.

FRESH PAINT

New works that have grabbed our attention



Adam Du Buisson
@dubuisson_arts

Eric Messinger
@TheArtofEricMessinger1

Fickta
@ficktastudio

If you've created art that you want us to shout about simply tag us on Twitter or Instagram, or find us on Facebook!

Artist Portfolio

SCOTT M FISCHER

Drawing dumb, artistic whiplash and thinking like a squirrel: the US artist and illustrator shows **Gary Evans** how great art is all about risk

© Fox Television

There's an issue of Angel & Faith – the Buffy the Vampire Slayer spin-off – where Faith must make a career decision: become a corporate hired gun, or follow her true calling – slaying vampires. Faith is a kind of "What if…" version of Buffy. What if Buffy had a tough upbringing? What if Buffy made bad decisions? What if Buffy went rogue?

This is the sort of stuff Scott M Fischer feeds on. Dark Horse Comics asked the artist to illustrate the cover for this particular issue of Faith & Angel. So he put himself in Faith's position, tried to work out what she thought, how she felt. It's something Scott does with all the characters he draws, whether they're a vampire slayer in a comic book or a squirrel in children's book. But this kind of

© Wizards of the Coast

FAITH IN TRAD ART

"I created over 30 covers for the Angel & Faith book. I made many of them traditionally using Graphix Duralar paper."

BALDUR'S GATE

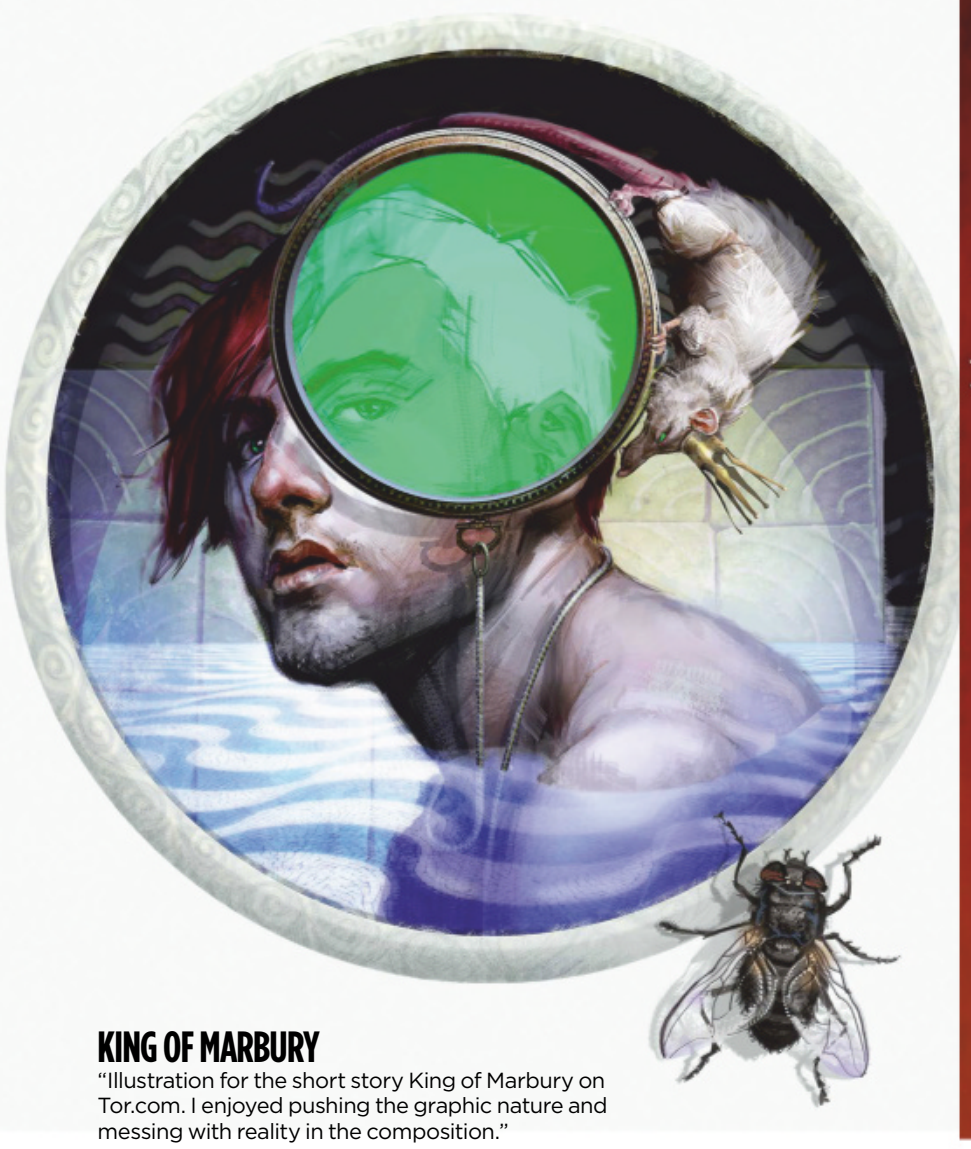
"This is the cover for the Betrayal at Baldur's Gate board game. This piece is all digital, but uses scanned textures to give it some grit."

Interview Scott M Fischer

BUFFY COVER

"A digital piece for the cover to the massive Library Edition of Buffy The Vampire Slayer season two for Dark Horse Comics. Created in Photoshop with scanned textures."

© Fox Television



KING OF MARBURY
"Illustration for the short story King of Marbury on Tor.com. I enjoyed pushing the graphic nature and messing with reality in the composition."

RABBIT MOON
"A personal painting on hand-engraved copper, using oil, acrylic and enamel. The rabbit and stars have been engraved through the paint and into the metal."

empathetic thinking can be a bit risky. Scott started to "What if…" his own life. He thought maybe it was time for him to make a career decision.

EXHAUSTIVE READING

Just reading Scott's client list is enough to give anybody burnout. It's not just the volume of work he does, but the countless industries, genres and sub-genres he does it in. He creates covers for novels, comics, middle-grade fiction and children's books – but also writes and illustrates children's books of his own. He's worked for Marvel, Tor and Penguin.

There's more. Scott also does game art, concept work and school visits. Sony, Disney and Microsoft are clients. He has a series of silhouette art, a series of car prints, a series of line art. He's been involved in the worlds of Halo, TRON, Star Wars, Harry Potter, Dungeons & Dragons and Magic: The Gathering. "Sometimes," the artist says, "I tell my wife I'm suffering from artistic whiplash!"

So Scott looked at Faith's life and saw similarities in his own. He took a risk: "I got into her headspace. I started to think about my own art journey, what it would be like to abandon commercial work and only chase personal paintings." This, Scott says, is the difference between a competent artist and an artist who pushes things that little bit further, goes that little bit deeper, challenges themselves. The difference is risk.

CROSS-HATCHING
"Cover for Angel & Faith. This piece was key for me in understanding that I could use crosshatching along with more rendered areas."

© Fox Television

> Sometimes, I tell my wife I'm suffering from artistic whiplash

NO LONGER TOP DOG

In 1994, Scott graduated from The Savannah College of Art and Design in Georgia. He's got this theory about art school: everybody who goes was probably the best artist in their high school. Then they get to college with hundreds of other kids who were the best artist in their high school, and so "the whole food chain shifts."

Artist PROFILE

Scott M Fischer
LOCATION: US
FAVOURITE ARTISTS: Andrew Hem, James Jean, Rich Kelly, Joao Ruas, Bill Sienkiewicz and Kent Williams
SOFTWARE USED: Alchemy, Photoshop
WEB: www.fischart.com

THE ANGEL'S IN THE DETAIL

Scott reveals his process for a comic book cover, the same process he uses for everything he draws

1 CREATE THUMBNAIL

This is the rough thumbnail. I create it in the sketching program Alchemy, which forces me to think clearly because there's no undo command. Thumbnails are really rough, and mostly for my eyes only.

2 SUBMIT FOR APPROVAL

Next, I take the Alchemy rough into Photoshop and bang it around until it's good enough to get my point across to the art director or editor. Likenesses are off, proportions are off and lots will change, but it's enough for now.

3 ATTENTION TO DETAIL

Once I have approval, I pay close attention to the details and hone my drawing. The aim here is to give myself a firm foundation to play on top of. In the next stage, I don't want to think about how to redraw a hand, I want to be liberated to just paint. So I'm doing my homework here.

4 TAKING RISKS WITH YOUR ART

Lately, I've been obsessed with lines and I try to use their energy to lead you around the piece. I'm a texture junkie, and have folders of scanned textures I can throw over an image to dirty it up and avoid the clinical feel that's often in digital art. I want the viewer to see my hand in the work, to know an artist was there making marks, taking risks. I'm not going to polish all of that out. It just isn't who I am.

CAT & MOUSE
"This is me taking the translucent Grafix Duralar technique into my fine art. The painting is about obsession and chasing your obsessions to the detriment of yourself and others around you."

CHASING YOUR TAIL
"A recent gallery painting exploring the idea that we often chase things that will never result in anything, but it's a part of the journey we must take."

Scott was nowhere near the best artist in his school. His teachers and schoolmates wouldn't have believed he could make a successful career in art. But success doesn't just come down to inborn talent. "A thirst for knowledge," Scott says, "is a whole other ingredient in success. We hear about this thing called grit, and what I lacked in skill I made up for with that. I simply would not quit. And by my senior year I graduated with a little plaque that said: Painter of the Year."

Step inside Scott's studio today and you'll see him standing at one of two desks. If he's doing something digitally, he's using an iMac with a Wacom Cintiq 22 HD tablet. If he's drawing, painting or engraving, then he's working on the desk that has a large, mounted light table and two daylight-replicating OttLites either side. He prefers certain types of paint – Gamblin FastMatte Alkyd oils, Acryla gouache, FW Acrylic ink – which he uses with sable brushes from either Rosemary & Co or Robert Simmons. He works on canvas increasingly less these days. He likes Grafix Dura-Lar, a translucent paper that enables him to work on both sides, and oil on copper into which he engraves detail.

MATURE THEMES
"This is the first piece that married the work I was doing in children's books with a more mature themes."

© Fox Television

> **We hear about this thing called grit, and what I lacked in skill I made up for with that. I simply would not quit**

CREATIVE DISTRACTIONS

There's a motorcycle in the studio. There's his new old fixer-upper guitar. There's a vintage BMX he's busy "tinkering with." He's not good with routine. His wife begs him to make to-do lists. Sometimes he does, then forgets to look at them. If Scott didn't have deadlines, he's not sure he'd ever get anything done: "I'm a creature of constant creative distraction. I'm pretty much doing something creative all my waking hours. I don't even want to leave the house – I'm so obsessed with making stuff. But directing that energy to the correct place is by far the toughest part for me."

Scott is a "process addict." He likes things done a certain way. Take an average book cover commission: sometimes he gets to read the entire novel, come up with his own ideas, and other times he'll receive instructions for something specific: say, a hero in a ruined city, the city emphasised, the hero small. Scott replies with a few questions, wants to know what the hero's wearing, body type, hair colour and length, maybe

KOI
"My most recent gallery painting. It's oil, enamel and acrylic on copper, then I engraved through the paint back down to the copper on the fish."

© Wizards of the Coast

TIME STOP
"Card art for the Magic: The Gathering. Created when I realised people were starting to appreciate the way I thought as much (or more) as my painting technique."

THE OBSESSION BEGINS
"One of my favourites cover from my run on Angel & Faith. This is where my obsession with creating form with hatch work, rather than just brushstrokes, started to take over."

© Fox Television

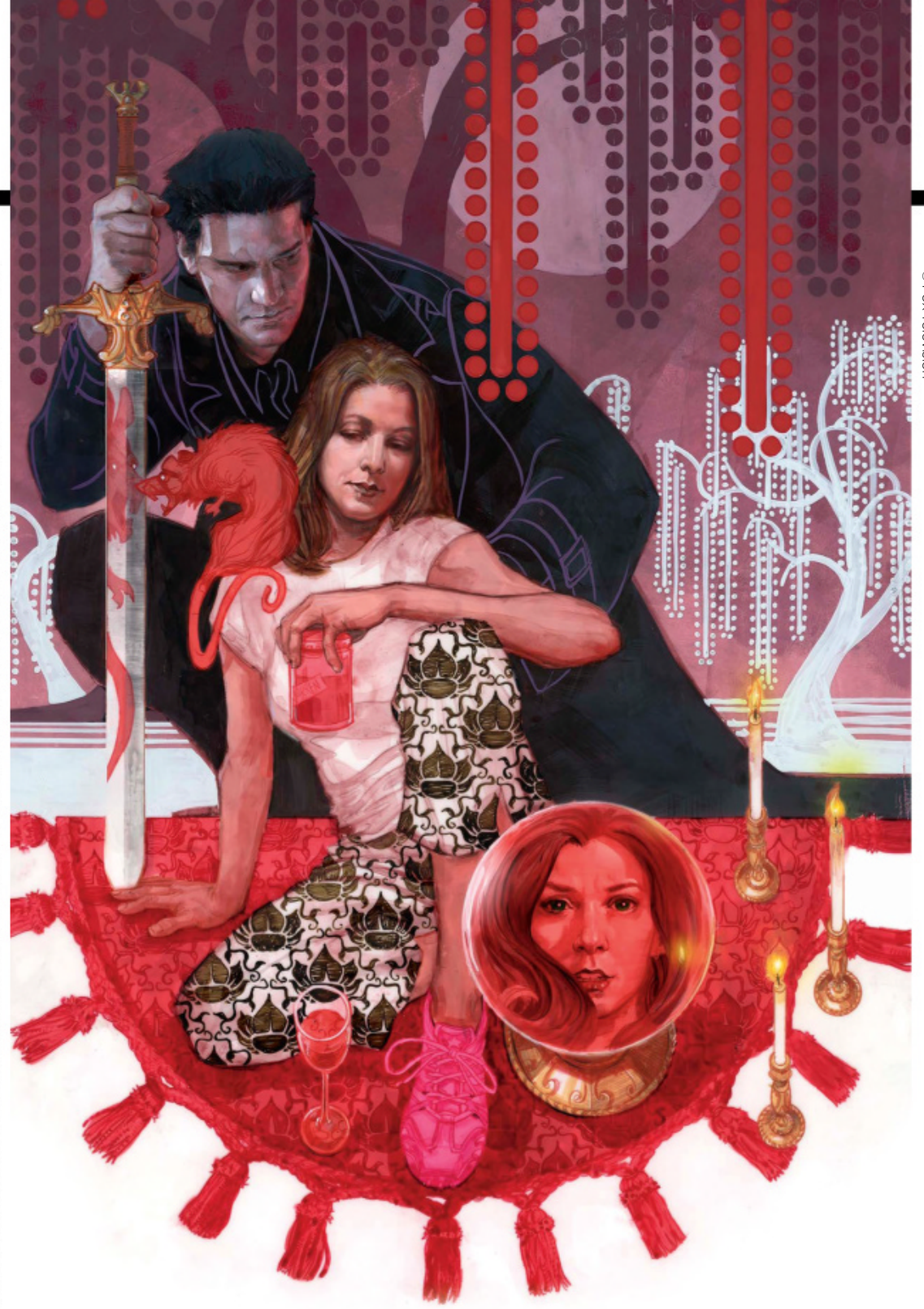
even eye colour if it's a close-up image. Increasingly, he receives "style sheets" from art directors. They contain a series of "cues" – environment cues, clothing cues, culture cues – examples of the vibe they're looking for. This makes Scott's job easier.

Either way, he works up four or five thumbnails. These will be rough and often very different to the final image. He uses Alchemy, a program that's tailor-made for working on the early stages of a project. He draws shapes rather than lines, like using a big Sharpie. Alchemy is built for speed, and has no undo function. This, Scott believes, is how it should be during the ideas stage. You don't want things to be too perfect, too detailed, too pretty – you don't want to draw darlings, because then it becomes harder to kill them. Or as he puts it, "Draw dumb."

ON THE SAME PAGE

Next, a tighter sketch. Sometimes the art director won't ask to see anything between thumbnail and finished piece. But Scott likes to send a slightly more refined piece to make sure they're both on the same page. So now he starts to pay attention to "the nitty gritty detail." For refining, he uses Photoshop. He screens-out his chosen thumbnail, so he can hardly see it, then redraws it on a new layer.

"Drawing," Scott says, "is redrawing." He's paying extra attention to his references now. He's using



© Fox Television

UNBROKEN PATTERN
"A triumph in this Angel & Faith cover is figuring out I could run the same unbroken pattern that's is on the rug right over the trousers."

TRICKLE DOWN
"A gallery painting on copper, engraving details through the paint. The painting is on the failure of trickle down economics."

GODIVA
"A gallery painting, comprising acrylic and oil on copper. I engraved and sanded through the paint to expose copper's reflective properties."

"Frankenstein" as a verb: building the image with bits of this, bits of that, using a load of photos to composite a single figure.

THE HEART OF THE MATTER

Scott's on the final stage. If he doesn't finish it in Photoshop, he prints it out and transfers it to canvas, illustration board or Grafix Dura-Lar. Whatever the project, it ultimately comes down to the same thing: good, solid drawing – "the true heart of the artist," he says.

When he first started out, Scott was "obsessed" with what other artists were doing. Slowly, over time, without losing any respect for them, he became less interested in the work of his peers and more interested in what was happening on the page in front of him. Something slightly strange happened: he wasn't fighting with his work anymore – he was having a conversation with it.

"If you can make it personal somehow – even if it's a generic unicorn assignment – people will see a glimpse of you in the work. The audience can tell when you're being genuine. Ask yourself: does the pose you drew do the job? If the answer is yes, great, but that's just the beginning. Now ask yourself: how can you tweak that pose and go beyond the expected?

> **"How can you tweak that pose and go beyond the expected?"**

"Making it personal can help with this. The key to storytelling is being an empath. You need to be able to get into your characters' heads. Even if you're painting a squirrel. What's their perspective? What are a squirrel's daily challenges beyond the script you read? What's it like to be small and fuzzy?"

IT WAS SO WORTH IT

Children's book squirrel, comic book vampire slayer… it's all the same. When Scott put himself in Faith's position and wondered whether or not he should quit all the commercial work and focus on personal stuff, the answer was never really in doubt. Were it not

QUING
"This painting is all about female empowerment. It's oil and acrylic on translucent Duralar, so most of the texture you see in the negative space is painted on the back of the paper and we're seeing it through the front of the painting."

for deadlines, regular challenging work, all those hours stood at the drawing table coming up with stuff for countless industries, genres and sub-genres, Scott wouldn't be where he is today. Some kids are the best artist in their high school, others have got grit. So who's bothered about a bit of artistic whiplash?

"Thankfully, I love it all. But, ironically, thinking about that Faith & Angel cover in that way did make it a personal painting for me. Risk. Take risks in your work, people. In any art form, the viewer can tell when you're putting it all out there, when you're operating at the edge of your ability. They'll reward you when it works and let you know when it doesn't. But I'd rather go too far than never push the envelope. If you want "safe," put down the brush and be an accountant. This game is all about risk. Don't cower in front of it. Embrace it."

PRISTINE ANGEL
"I took the normally square format of Magic: The Gathering art and went vertical with it."

© Wizards of the Coast

MAKE ART FOR YOURSELF

Scott explains why you're the most important audience for your art

"Looking back, a real breakthrough for me is my art for the 2003 Magic: The Gathering card Pristine Angel. Although I can certainly paint better than that now, it was a real moment in taking ownership over the art to a level I hadn't done before.

When we start out, all we care about is pleasing the client. But as we progress, pleasing ourselves becomes just as important. With Pristine Angel, I made the decision to indulge myself. Magic art is a horizontal format. I decided to paint this angel in a vertical format. I was sure to give the client everything it needed within the M:TG crop and even showed where I would crop the image for the card, but everything outside that boundary was for me.

I brought in interesting abstract elements, things that went beyond the assignment. In that way I took ownership of the art because, in the end, if we're pleasing ourselves artistically, I believe the audience will feel that. They'll understand that we're not just going through the motions to fulfil a checklist for an assignment. I started applying this logic of personal investment and fulfilment to all of my art.

And here's the crazy thing: it was at that point that people started paying attention to me. Even a client such as Wizards of the Coast treated me differently, started giving me special assignments, and loved that I painted beyond the Magic card size. It even started using the extended art in advertising and on other promotional products!"

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NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

Sketchbook

Rafael Teruel

Self-improvement is important to this Spanish artist, who uses his sketchbook to practise certain techniques and drawing styles

Artist PROFILE

Rafael Teruel

LOCATION: Spain

Freelance illustrator and concept artist Rafael has worked for several companies, including Games Workshop (painting for Warhammer and Warhammer 40K), Mynet (Legend of the Cryptids) and Bushiroad (Dragoborne), More recently he's been developing character designs for the video game industry.

www.artstation.com/rafater

JUMPING GOBLIN

"Drawing fantasy archetypes is always fun. Here's a jumping goblin who's just missed the bus."

SPACE MONKEY

"Part of my attempts at improving my sci-fi art skills, perfecting those hard surfaces and gun designs."

> "The Creatuanary challenge involves drawing one creature each day based on a list"

LOCH NESS MONSTER

"In January 2017, myself and two friends came up with the Creatuanary challenge. It involved drawing one creature each day based on a prompt list."

CYBORG SAMURAI

"I love mixing different cultures and themes. Here I've combined cyberpunk with samurai trappings and added some Easter eggs to connect the image with the audience. Can you find them?"

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

Sketchbook

“Underwater creatures always grab my attention”

VIKING INUIT

“This is a collaboration with my buddy Ricardo Padierne. The design is from his own IP and it’s been an honour to do some keyframes showing their traditions.”

FOREST CREATURE

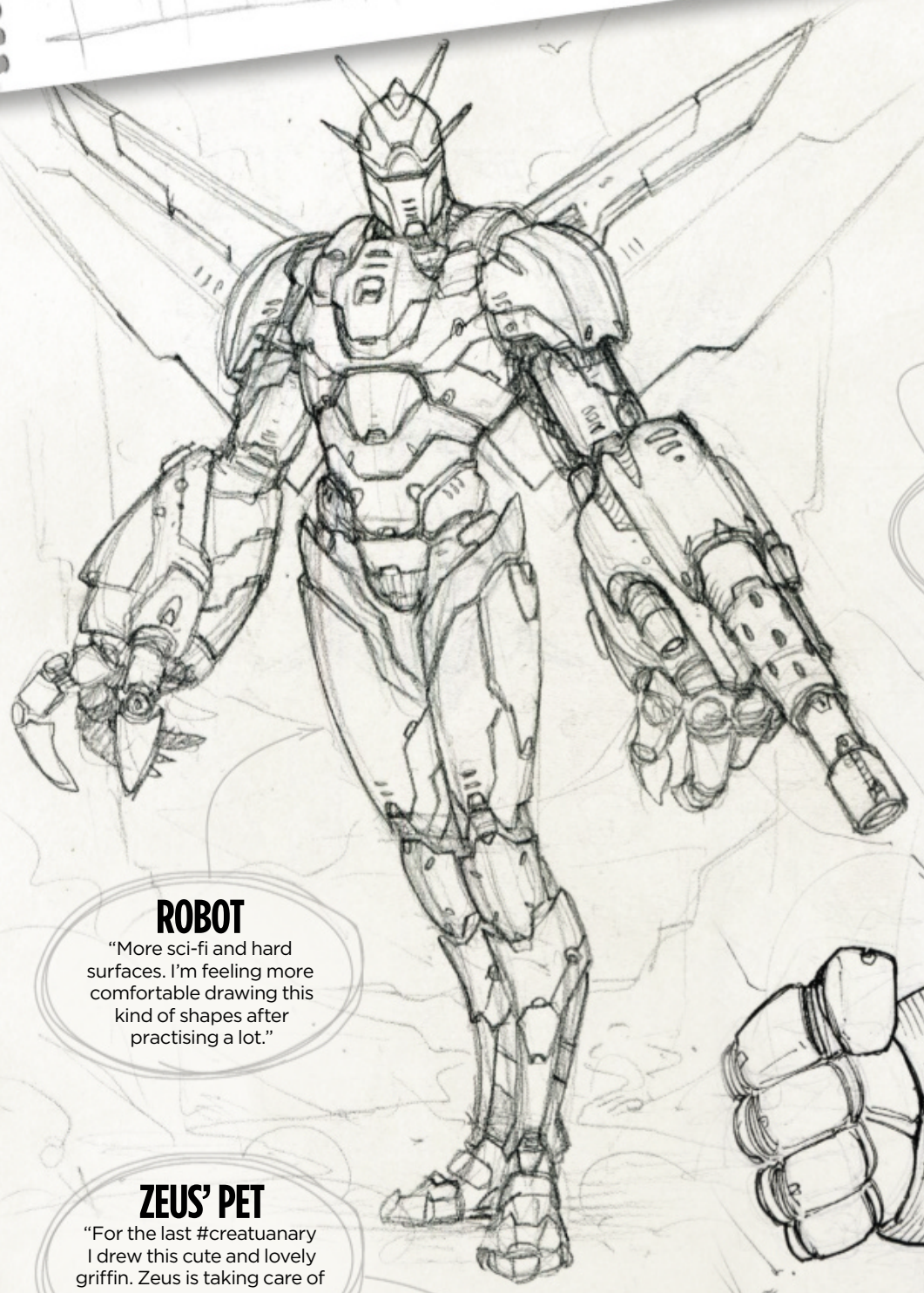
“I’m proud to introduce Feliciano the Faun. He’s often in trouble, but always escapes from dangerous but fun situations.”

EEL MERMAID

"Underwater creatures, especially mermaids, always grab my attention. In this case I played around with more stylised shapes and took inspiration from the movement of eels."

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

Sketchbook



ROBOT

"More sci-fi and hard surfaces. I'm feeling more comfortable drawing this kind of shapes after practising a lot."

ZEUS' PET

"For the last #creatuanary I drew this cute and lovely griffin. Zeus is taking care of her – she's still a cub and needs some love."

MANTICORE

"Combining real-world animals is a challenge. Here you can see the legendary Manticore, which has the head of a human, body of a lion, a tail of a scorpion and bat wings."

SPACE APE

"Do not mess with the ape – seriously! Annoy it, and it'll be the last mistake you'll ever make."

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**

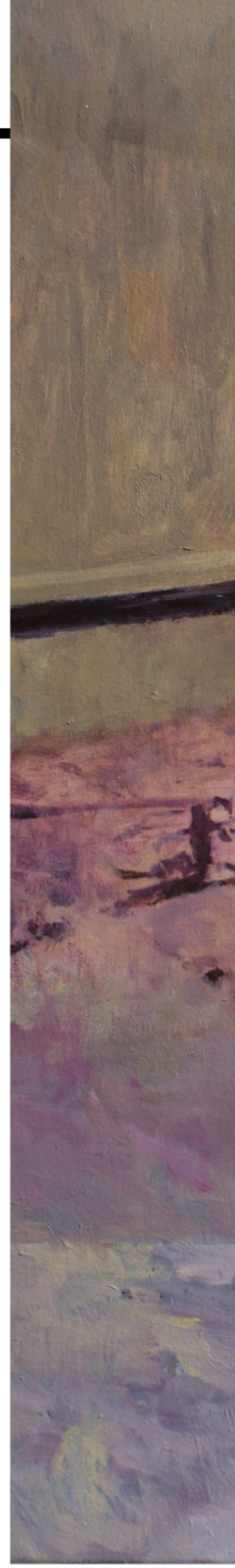
“Combining real-world animals effectively is a challenge”

CENTAURIDE

“This was done for the first Inktober after attending a Karl Kopinski workshop. He had a big effect on me and I started to draw with enthusiasm again.”

LIFE WANTS TO LIVE
"This was the core artwork for the Life Wants to Live show; everything else branched out from this."

BLACK CRACK
"One of two pieces done for the Prague Biennale in 2011. I had mixed feelings about them at the time...".



Artist Portfolio

PHIL HALE

Meet the hard-up artist's apprentice who ended up painting the UK prime minister. **Gary Evans** gives Phil's impossibly romantic career the cinematic treatment

Say we're writing the script for the film of Phil Hale's life. The opening scene would go something like this: Boston, 1979. Phil, 16 years old, an outsider, goes to work as an apprentice to a struggling artist, Rick Berry. He's there to learn, but also to help with commercial work. Phil and Rick ride the overnight bus to New York to try and get some commissions. Too poor for a hotel, they get some sleep on the road. They meet with Marvel. They meet with DC. Phil pitches ideas of his own – terrible ideas, he realises.

But the people at Epic Comics put some work his way. Watched by his mentor, Phil draws, paints, covers canvas after canvas, improves, each painting a bit better than the one before, particularly the anatomy. Rick knows how muscles work and move, and how that movement changes them. Phil's also interested in photography, filmmaking and music, but they're just things he does on the side. His focus is building a set of painting and drawing skills.

THE SCIENCE OF ANATOMY

Cue Phil's voiceover: "It wasn't an apprenticeship in the medieval sense. Closer to a particularly intense mentorship. That way of approaching anatomy, which has some powerful elements of science and engineering… well, it turned out to be a useful way to think about many aspects of art – and thinking in general. That was more important than any technical aspect he showed me."

Flash forward a couple of years: Phil, Rick and another artist, Tom Canty, build a studio in the loft above a second-hand bookshop. Phil sleeps there. A sense of doubt creeps in. Is

Artist **PROFILE**

Phil Hale
LOCATION: England
FAVOURITE ARTISTS: Edgar Degas, Francisco Goya, Gerhard Richter, David Shrigley and Diego Velázquez
MEDIA USED: Oils, linseed oil, soft pencil (no. 6), Aaton LTR Super16 camera, Nikon R10 Super 8 camera and Nikkormat 35mm camera
WEB: www.philhalestudio.com

INNER PALACE
"An early study for another piece, Life Wants to Live 2. It never quite made it to a full painting."

ENEMY
"Sometimes the source images determine how a piece develops. This was my favourite from the enemy show – it was hung as a diptych with another piece."

he really cut out to be an artist? Should he have been a photographer, a filmmaker, a musician? He sticks at it, and keeps learning and improving. Then, with a bit of luck and a bit of help from Tom, Phil gets his big break. Just 20 years old, he accepts an offer to work on illustrations for the new book by Stephen King.

LIFE-CHANGING DECISION

Every good film needs an "inciting incident" – that moment, early on, when the main character comes up against a problem. He must make a life-changing decision, which is when the film spins off in a new direction and the story really gets going. This is Phil's: his career is just getting started in US, but he decides to pack his bags and move to the UK.

> **"I had no idea who I was until I left the bubble of the east coast of America"**

"The toughest part was disengaging from some of Rick's ideas and philosophies and trying to find out my own instincts and strengths. He encouraged this as well," says Phil.

PREPARATORY DRAWING
"Initial sketch for the Enemy show – just keeping things active and ticking over."

ENEMY 2
"I wanted to get away from the monochrome palette a little (I had already used some lurid colour in Life Wants to Live). But this is a little more naturalistic while still being incorrect."

ENEMY 3
"From the Life show. Again, a big step for me, to see how these images could push against one another. I still have to follow up on some of the ideas here."

"But he's a pretty strong-minded guy. I had to break some kind of link in order to build my own system, to build a system that actually reflected my own interests and aptitudes, rather than being based on his."

RURAL RETREAT

England, 1987. Phil works on another Stephen King book and gets an even better deal: one per cent of royalties. All in all, he doesn't have to work for six years. He lives in Gloucestershire and paints. He also takes photos, makes films and plays music. He even builds his own recording studio. "I did art for myself," says Phil. "I had no idea who I was or who I could have been until I left the bubble of the east coast of America."

American artist moves to England and lives happily ever… that's not much of a movie. Our hero has to overcome a few obstacles, some problems. Things have to get a bit tricky. A good story needs conflict.

"The money ran out," Phil says. It's 1990 now. Because he hasn't worked for so long, he has no commercial contacts, and his style is different to the Stephen King stuff, and his girlfriend is about to have a baby, ➤➤

"CLUMSY AND DIFFERENT IS PREFERABLE"

Phil explains how he goes from photograph to painting, via an instinctively arranged collage

WORKING UP A COLLAGE

"I have folders and folders of images, almost all photographs (but not all). Some are spectacular just as themselves, some are very abstracted. I go through thousands of photos and set some aside. Then I work the images against each other. I make some drawings from the collage, four or five generally. These are pretty loose, with no rendering ever. Mostly I'm just looking for where the shadows meet the light – when I start actually painting this will give me reference points for locating the image. They help me orient myself.

"Sometimes the drawing is too specific: if you paint up to a line, the speed of your brushstroke and your brushstroke-thinking is slowed. So I create a series of drawings from the same collage, where each is distorted in one way or another."

DOING EVERYTHING TWICE

"I transfer the most promising to the canvas and knock in the basic values. It's amazing how completely this shows what is there. I try not to make this too refined because I don't want to be attached to any of it.

"I have to do everything twice. Once to test the ideas of the elements against the reality of how they show up on the canvas. And a second time to effectively use the elements as they occur. This used to mean doing each large painting twice. But that was also too tedious. Now I try to improvise a little more as some aspects fail."

KEEPING IT ACTIVE

"By the time the painting is maturing, the problems are almost always problems of development. As the surface becomes more refined (and often tireder) the impulse behind it gets less focused. And as it becomes more realistically rendered it tends to become more similar to any painting of a similar subject. So much of the issue is keeping the surface active.

"If I had to choose between producing a piece that was traditionally capable or clumsy and different, then clumsy and different is preferable. What I'm really trying to do is to choose and organise some images that have potential, and the potential to interact. And then creating an environment where that can happen. The thing I find least rewarding is when the assignment turns into a progression of steps – like making a cake. I stop being interested, and I stop being able to pay attention properly."

> If I like a photograph, I don't have to ask why. There's no real intellectualising going on

SOURCE

"There's a character I've painted since I was a teenager. I've probably painted a hundred or more of these. But this was a commission to an old friend and collector. Very stupid, but fun to do."

LOOSE, THEN FUSSY
"Another Enemy drawing. These were loose at first, but became fussier as I grew better at doing them."

and he's sleeping in his studio again. Phil has a "slight air of desperation" – never attractive to potential employers. Nobody wants to hire him, which worsens his air of desperation. Talk about problems.

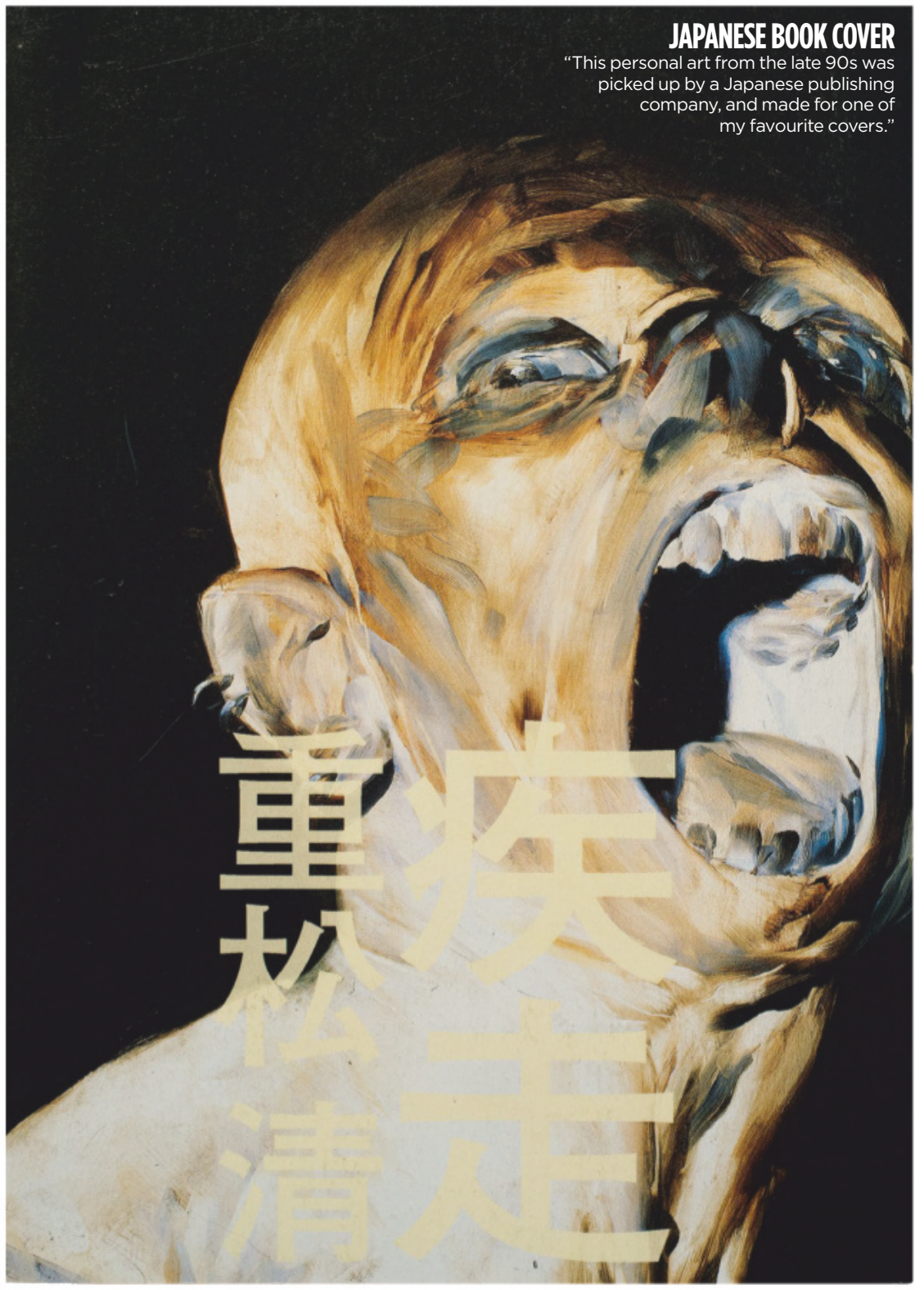
Step forward the old mentor. Rick helps him find work, which leads to a DC commission, which leads to jobs with Playboy, Penguin and Warner Bros. He draws with urgency now, poverty being a very good motivator, and earns enough money for a flat. He spends five years in illustration, wins three gold medals from the Society of Illustrators. We're halfway through our movie: still far too soon for a happy ending. Time for another problem.

Phil doesn't enjoy illustration. He could do better work if he didn't have to second-guess the feelings of the art director. He wants to put proper time into a piece, certainly more than a few days, weeks or whenever deadline is. Free of the brief, he could push an idea, pursue all possibilities. Phil turns to portraiture.

PHOTO INSPIRATION

Time for a montage. Key in hand, Phil unlocks his studio door. He presses play on his CD player: it's Wowee Zowee by Pavement. He listens on repeat, flicks through a folder full of images, mainly photos, and picks out a couple: a wrecked car and a horse's eye. The images "light up." He adds a third, a fourth, too many. It dilutes the effect. "If I like a photograph, I don't have to ask why," he says. "There's no real intellectualising going on."

Phil draws four or five sketches based on the photos, each sketch distorted somehow, loose. If it's too tight now, it'll choke the piece later. He transfers the most promising sketch to the canvas – again, basic values. He knows he's got something now, but still doesn't refine, doesn't want to become too attached because he's going to paint over it. "I go for instability, uncertainty, confusion, unprofessionalism. It opens up a much larger field of options."



JAPANESE BOOK COVER
"This personal art from the late 90s was picked up by a Japanese publishing company, and made for one of my favourite covers."

> "I go for instability, uncertainty, confusion, unprofessionalism. It opens up a much larger field of options"

TUNING THE HAND
"I try to start the day by drawing, to loosen up and tune my hand in to my head."

LIFE WANTS TO LIVE 2
"Another significant development. I would probably do it a little differently now, but was learning to give up some kinds of slightly neurotic control."

He paints now, keeps the surface looking "active." If he loses that, it starts to look like a similar painting, a genre piece. He's finishes, then starts over. The first piece tests elements on the canvas, the second is "to effectively use the elements as they occur."

ANOTHER PLOT SHIFT

London, 2000. Phil wins third prize in the National Portrait Gallery's annual competition. The following year, joint second. He paints a portrait of Sri Lankan bowler Muttiah Muralitharan – six feet tall, three feet wide – which hangs in Lord's, the legendary London cricket ground.

Then, in 2007, he receives a commission as big as they come. He paints Tony Blair, the UK's prime minister. Blair comes to power promising to be a new kind of politician, but ends up being more of the same, maybe even worse. Blair ages quickly during those 10 years. One critic writes that Phil's portrait feels "more honest than anything [Blair] has said about how he was feeling towards the end of his term in power."

This is what Phil aims for in his work: "I hope it has real information in it, and that it's what it is, not some projection or fantasy or fraud. I'd love the paintings to work like photographs – less on a craft level and more as carriers of unregulated information."

FROM THE STASH
"A drawing for Enemy that never made it to a finished piece. There were quite a few of these..."

So in the script for the film of Phil Hale's life, how would the final scene look? Painting Tony Blair isn't a bad ending. It could end with one of his many successful gallery shows in Europe or in the US. It could end with Phil earning a reputation as one of the leading portrait painters working today, critically acclaimed, an artist's artist. Or it could end another way altogether…

BIG-SCREEN ILLUSTRATOR

Phil's work is often said to have a cinematic quality. How does he do it?

"I always feel as if I'm figuring out the story myself as the piece comes together. But I'm also trying to keep that knowledge and pursuit completely compartmentalised, or it will interfere with what might be possible with the image. The real moment of creation is when I'm pushing the collage images against each other. And the surprise is that the images which seem complementary – a burning car, a building in rubble – are the most uninteresting.

The toughest thing for me is trying to keep the image out of the genre, and sometimes the genre is just art. Richter might have been talking about deer, but now a black and white deer painting is about Richter. I want to avoid that as much as possible. Drippy paint reaching to the bottom of the canvas is bad. But that's painting and painting is bad. Mostly.

I'm still stupidly excited by how simple additions generate an entire universe that's arbitrary and personal and unknown. A man's dim face in the foreground, a pale square behind. Some kind of farmer. What's in the barn?

My own ideas are kind of boring. By using photos that I didn't take myself the pieces are charged with unpredictable foreign information, and often connected to an entire world out there that's only accessible through those bits of info. I try to go with the flow of the images without trying to corral them."

SERVILE
"Car crashes; what a terrific subject. A beautiful thing ruined in a second."

"I'd love my paintings to work like photos, as carriers of unregulated information"

The best movies have a closing scene that connects to the opening. It's the same, but different, almost the opposite, because our main character has somehow changed. Over 30 years ago, Phil Hale left the US as an outsider, left the philosophies of Rick Berry to "build a system" that reflected his own interests. So who is he today?

We're in London, 2018. Phil, 55 years old, goes to work in his studio in Hackney. He's still an outsider, but he's a bit less of one: his wife's English, his children are English, he's even thinking about becoming English. As for work, he photographs global advertising campaigns, he runs a film production company, he plays music and he paints. But now he doesn't distinguish between each discipline.

ENEMY 4
"There were three versions of this; too many opportunities. The parts that look crisp and capably handled were easy to do; all the indeterminate stuff was a nightmare. But I learned a lot."

TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

"One epiphany was that all these things are aspects of the same thinking tool. Each informs the other. I spent the first 20 years as a painter with the misunderstanding that I was developing a set of painting and drawing skills. But as I found myself increasingly interested in photography, film, collage and music-making, I found that I could transfer some of the practices of image-making to these other disciplines.

"And it became clear to me that the mental model – the process and practice of improvising with elements and relationships – was what I was building all along."

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NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX Workshops

Advice from the world's best artists

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Patrick J Jones explores the rhythmic nature of muscles in motion as he harnesses the power of gesture.

Photoshop, Painter, ZBrush & Cheetah3D

PAINT DYNAMIC ART FOR A COVER

Jon Foster runs through his approach for developing a commissioned piece, tackling initial ideation, greyscale development and colour choices

Artist **PROFILE**

Jon Foster
LOCATION: US

Jon has been working as an illustrator for over two decades. His work has featured in national parks and television projects, appeared in National Geographic, and DC and Dark Horse Comics titles, and been used by publishers around the world.
www.jonfoster.com

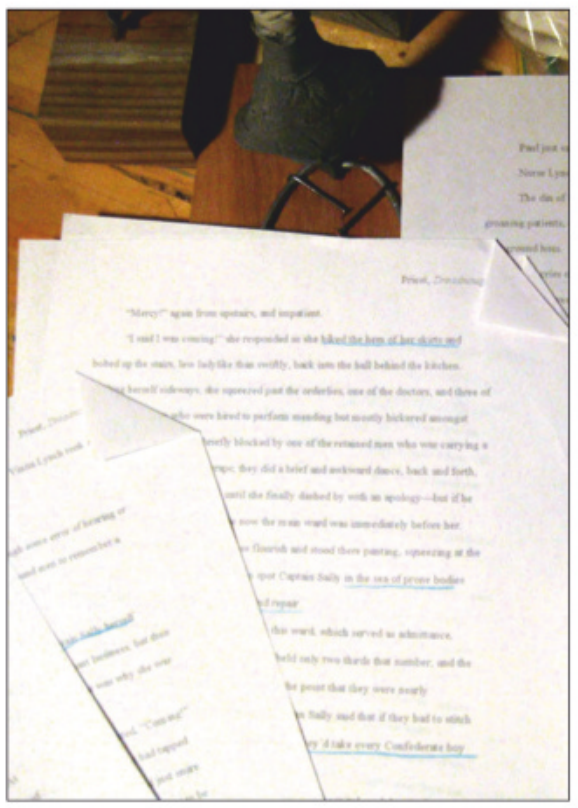
It's always a thrill to get a job from ImagineFX! In this case I was asked to create the cover art, and document my creative process.

However, I've chosen to go more into what I consider the foundations of developing an image: how to come up with good ideas and compositions rather than, say, what brushes I use. Indeed, I don't use any exotic brushes in Photoshop or Painter. It's more important to know how to use those brushes, and the creative decisions you make with them.

With that said, I'll cover the initial reading of the script or synopsis as supplied by the ImagineFX team, how I try to gather what's important from the story and then the process of distilling that information into an image. Then we move on to working out your ideas in thumbnail and sketch form for the team to review. In this case there wasn't a lot of reading to do and the job brief was very specific. This meant that ImagineFX had a clear vision of what it wanted, so the initial steps were truncated into producing rough comps for approval, but just for clarity I've included the process that's more common when making book covers.

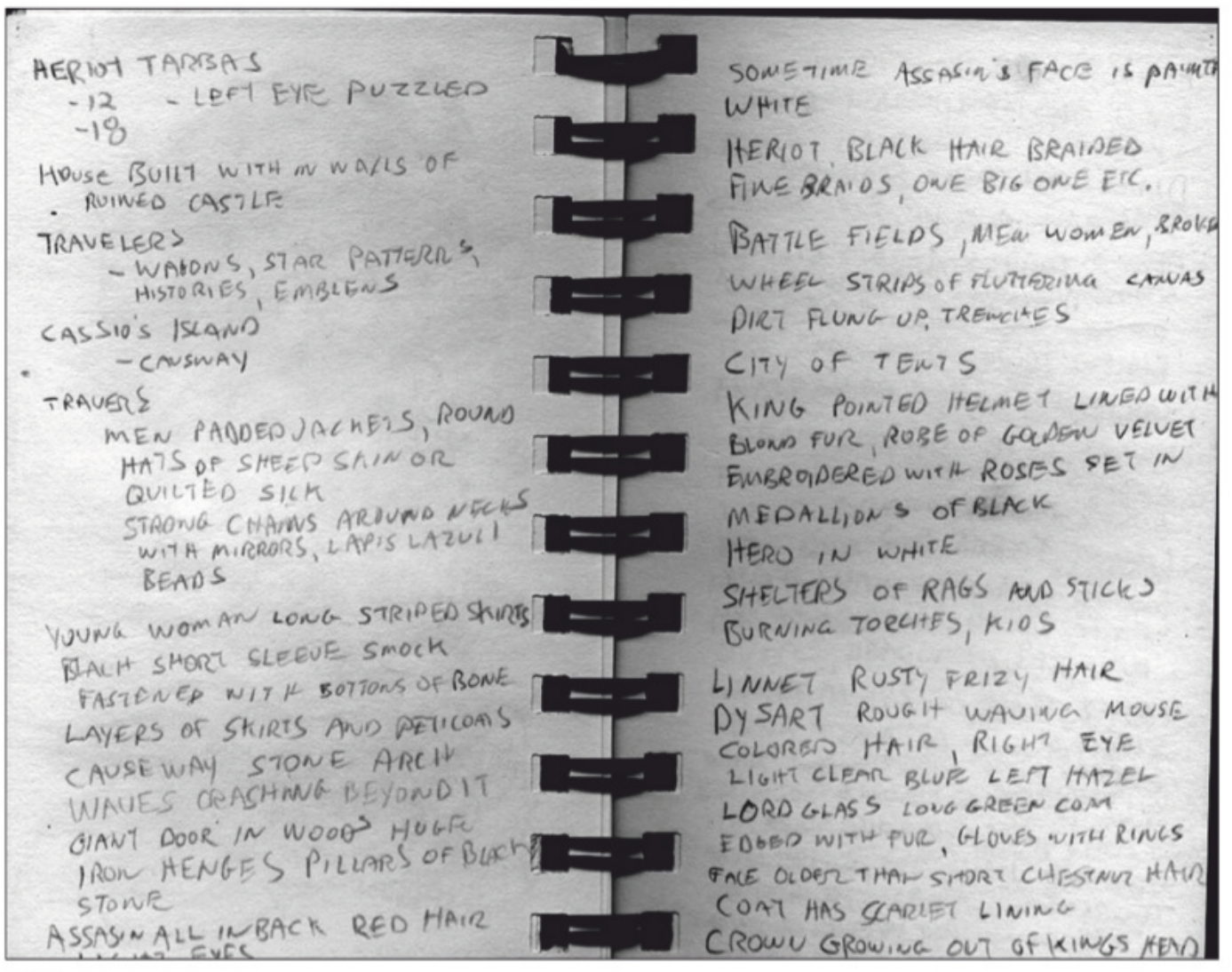
Next, I discuss how important working on your composition in greyscale is, to make sure your selected idea is conveyed accurately. For me, colour is a confusing element if it's applied too soon, so I leave it for the second half of the process.

I hope you get something from this article that's of help to you, or that it reaffirms what you already know!



1 The task at hand

I begin all my assignments by reviewing my commission at length. Often for a book cover I'll receive the complete manuscript to read, but sometimes the art director will only provide either a synopsis of the story or a specific image concept. While reading I underline what stands out to me in the story, as well as pertinent details about any characters I'll be depicting.



2 Generate ideas based on the story

I'll link underlined segments of the transcript to a basic few ideas that I think will work for the cover as well as what interests me about the story, and write these down in my sketch book. The act of hand-writing creates a direct link to my thinking process, and helps to generate new ideas.

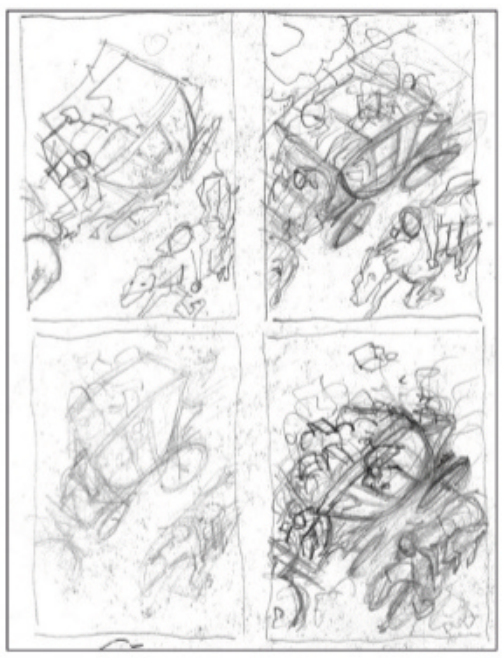
3 Make thumbnails of your ideas

Thumbnails are quick, little drawings of your cover idea. I recommend keeping it simple and focus on the abstract composition of your cover. Because thumbnails are a kind of visual artist shorthand you can make many of them quickly – indeed, you should make lots!

You'll find that the more ideas you put down quickly in thumbnail form, the more ideas will start to form. It's like a vicious circle in reverse! You may make 20 thumbnails and end up with the first one being used, but this is a good thing. I often have to work out all other ideas to make sure the first is the one I want.

4 Combine your ideas

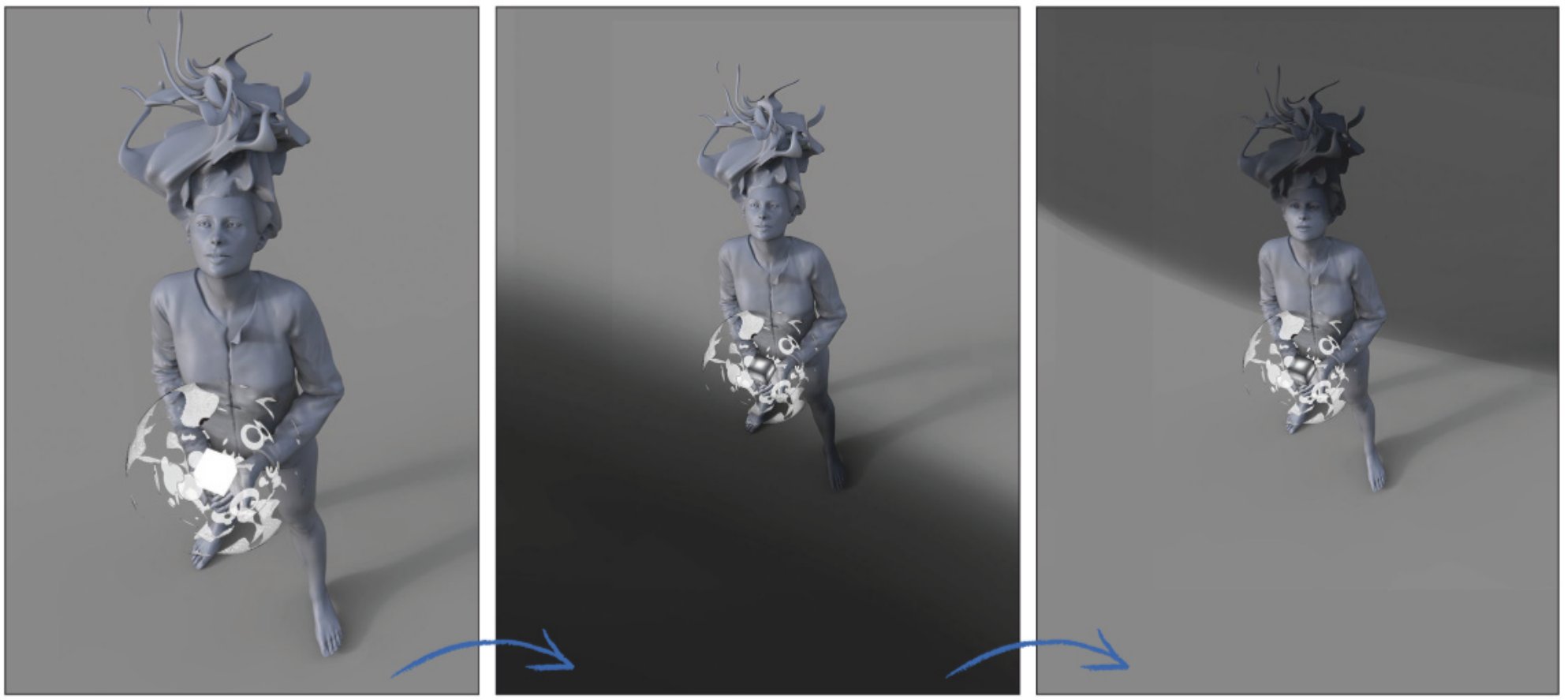
Review your thumbnails and see what's working and what isn't. You may want to combine several into a new sketch, which is fine, of course. I like to have a lot of thumbnails to review so that I can develop the image that I had in mind. This process in the professional world is just for your eyes, not the art director's.



5 Use your references correctly

After finding the thumbnails that you like or think will work best (three different ones would be good), start to work up a rough comp for each. These will become rough sketches that you'll show the art director. Now is the time to take any photo references to help inform your drawing and, more importantly, the lighting of the scene and characters. Don't skimp on this part, and don't just find something online that's close, either. Take your time to set up a photo shoot with either a professional model, a friend or yourself. I often just use friends and myself for these reference shoots.

Reference is important, but remember it's there to serve your vision of the illustration and not for you to slavishly copy. I like to think of reference as suggestions and some cool answers to topics that I was unfamiliar with.

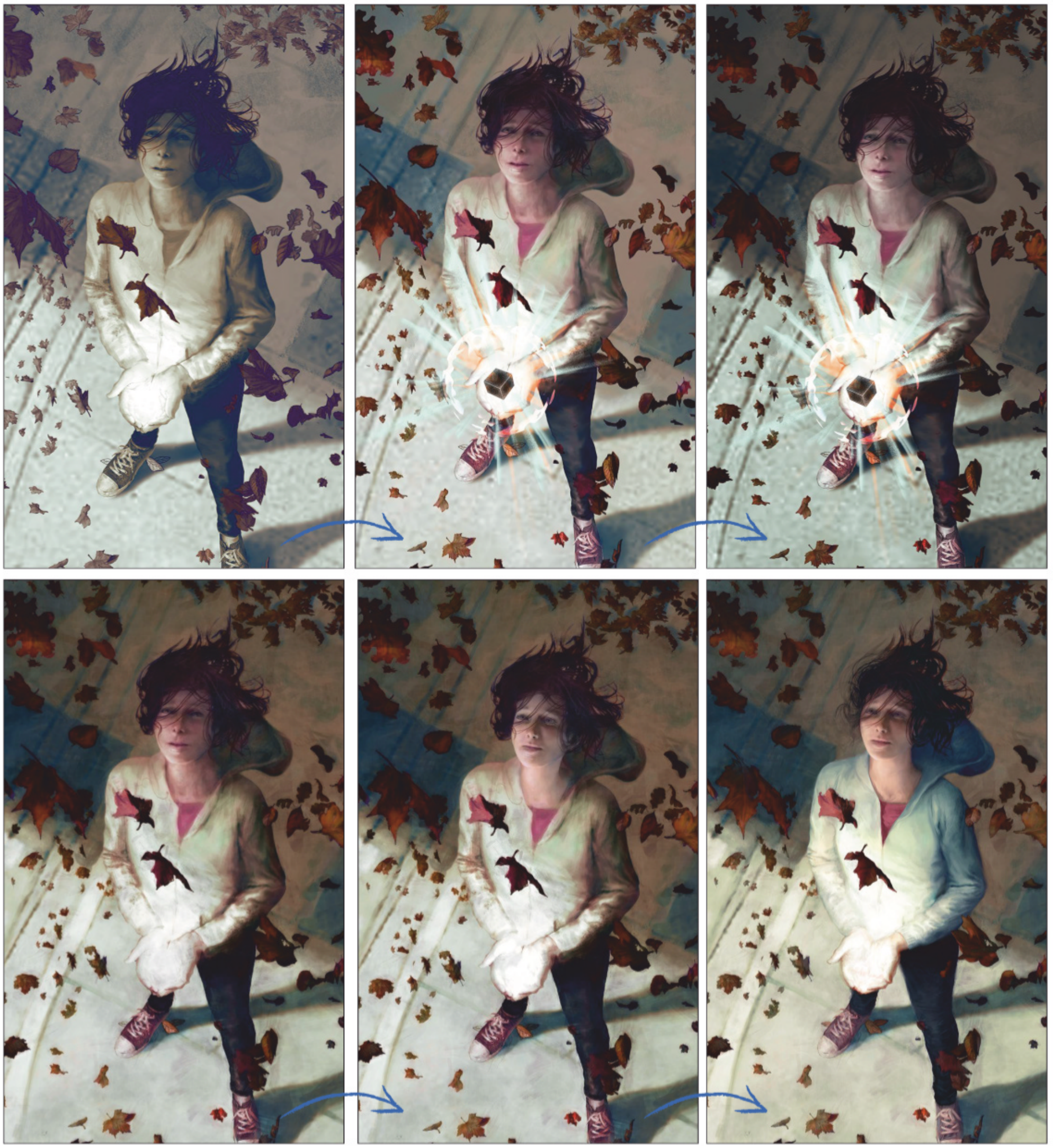


6 Create and combine your reference sources

This isn't always necessary, but I often find myself creating bespoke reference for my illustrations. Maybe a gun or shield made of foam, or figures in a 3D program. I like doing this because I can easily move the camera around the figure and change the lighting to see what works best. I find that this works better when combined with an actual model photoshoot, rather than simply referring to the computer render.

7 Develop your sketch in greyscale

After presenting your three sketches to the art director you'll either have the go-ahead for one of them or you'll be asked to make changes. Either way, you'll start to work up the final sketch in detail, usually only in greyscale, and usually using Photoshop. I do a large part of my painting in greyscale because it enables me to see the value and shape aspects of the composition more clearly and without the distraction of colour.



8 Colour variations

When the black and white version of the illustration is pretty far along I'll start to add colour in Photoshop, confident that I can do this without getting lost in the process. I begin by making sure my file is in RGB mode, then use the Selective Color window to adjust the white, neutral and black values of the image. The colour options won't do anything at this point because there's no colour in the piece yet, but it does set up a subtle tri-tone of colour, and is a cool or warm foundation for your image's colour palette.

You can now repeat this process as many times as you like. You'll be able to use some of the colour sliders because now there's some colour in the image. This will only take you so far with colour, and you're still going to have to make some colour decisions, so at this stage I add a Color layer and paint colour on top of the tri-tone layer. This layer can be adjusted in the same manner as you did with the initial greyscale layer with the Selective Color window. I might add another Color layer to carry out some more colour experiments, or a Multiply layer to add some colour and also to darken certain areas.

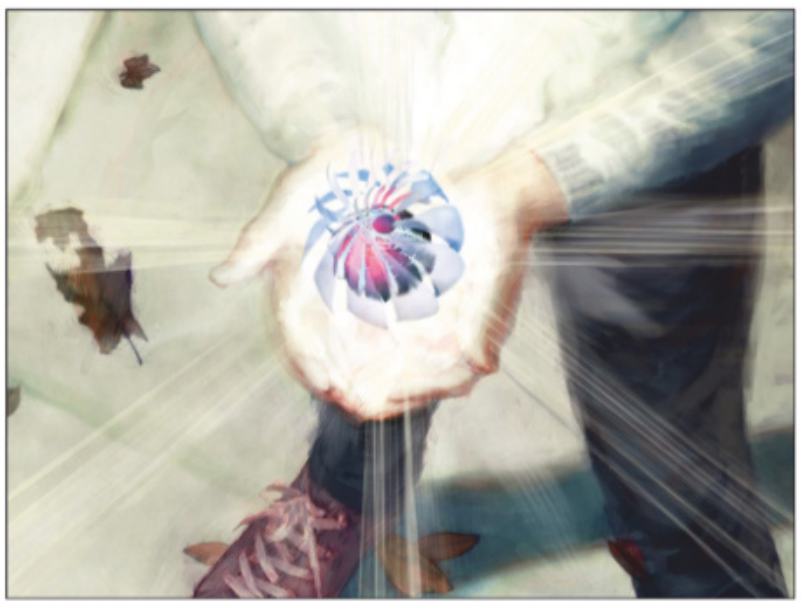
9 Pick from your chosen palette

Once I'm happy with the direction my colours are going I'll flatten all my layers, although I save the initial greyscale layer in case I need to come back to it. This new Color layer is now a basic palette for me to pick and choose colour from, for painting into the piece until it's finished. Sometimes I'll bring in photo reference to sample colours from when needed, or overlay a photo reference in Multiply or Overlay mode to kick-start a colour theme to the piece. But mostly I use the above-described approach.

Not all colours you want to use are in the image at this point, but if you select a colour from your chosen family of hues and saturations you can change it to become a new colour that still belongs in your colour palette. You can make it lighter, darker, warmer or cooler – your choice!

10 Carry out a basic check for errors

I recommend flipping the image on the horizontal axis, or hold it up to a mirror if you're working traditionally. This is a simple step that will help catch any glaring anatomy or proportional mistakes that are present in your image.



11 Finish, then refine some more

Paint until you think that the image is finished, then take a break before coming back to it and painting some more. This is where you'll advance your technique and develop your eye for the new and exciting in subsequent pieces. Here, I'm not entirely happy with the alien object, but I run out of time to depict something that looks cool and will read clearly as other-worldy. The trick is to start your projects well before the deadline, of course!

12 Make any requested revisions to the art

Once you send your image to the art director you can expect to be asked to make some small tweaks and revisions. Make those changes and then send it off to them, and start looking forward to your next assignment.

Procreate & Photoshop

BE SUCCESSFUL AT PLEIN AIR PAINTING

Mike McCain shares his advice for a great outdoor painting experience, detailing equipment, observational techniques and the need to simplify

Artist **PROFILE**

Mike McCain
LOCATION: US

Mike is a Seattle-based illustrator and a game director at Harebrained Schemes, where he directed the games Shadowrun: Dragonfall and BattleTech.
https://ifxm.ag/mccain

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 8 now!

There's so many great ways to learn and practise art these days. When it comes to studying light, colour and value, I've found no substitute for painting en plein air – which just means 'the act of painting outdoors.' Each time I go out to paint, I learn something new, which feeds back into my imaginative work.

Plein air painting might not sound much different than doing a photo study. Yet even the best cameras don't capture much of the colour and value that our eyes can perceive. Not to mention the sounds, smells and emotions of a place. It's also a great excuse to ditch the desk and get outdoors: science says that just spending time in nature can reduce stress and anxiety!

I work in Procreate on an iPad Pro, but you can plein air paint with anything. Of course, traditional mediums are fantastic, and you can foster an even deeper discipline and appreciation for colour temperatures by working with oils or watercolours. There's also plenty of tablet PC options out there like the Surface, and I've even seen some incredible studies done just by finger-painting on a smartphone using Procreate.

So regardless your tool of choice – next time the weather's nice, I challenge you to go outside and paint! I hope you'll find it as fun and beneficial as I have.

1 When and where should you start your plein air adventure?

You don't need to find some epic vista – I had a blast just painting my parents' backyard. A boring view for photography can still be great for painting. I usually start one to two hours after sunrise, so that the light isn't changing too fast, but it's still more dramatic than midday. Sunny and overcast are different but equally valid. Just avoid windy days if there are too many clouds in the sky!

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PROCREATE

CUSTOM BRUSHES: MM BRANCHES RADIAL

Suggests bushes and foliage by painting in a counter-clockwise circle.

MM GEO

This brush is great for vertical textures like tree bark or peeling paint.

MM ROCKY II

Ideal for imperfectly filling lasso selections. It's also great for smudging.

MM TRIS

Used for foliage, negative space cut-outs and energetic shapes.

2 Before you go, make sure you're prepared

The following should be on your plein air packing list, starting with your iPad or other art materials, water, snacks, jacket and hat if the weather could change, camera (or phone). Consider a high-protection case for your iPad or tablet – worrying about damaging your device will just distract you from painting. I also like to bring a tripod (Google 'caddie buddy' for an iPad tripod mount). And use the bathroom before you start. Seriously!

3 Choose your spot

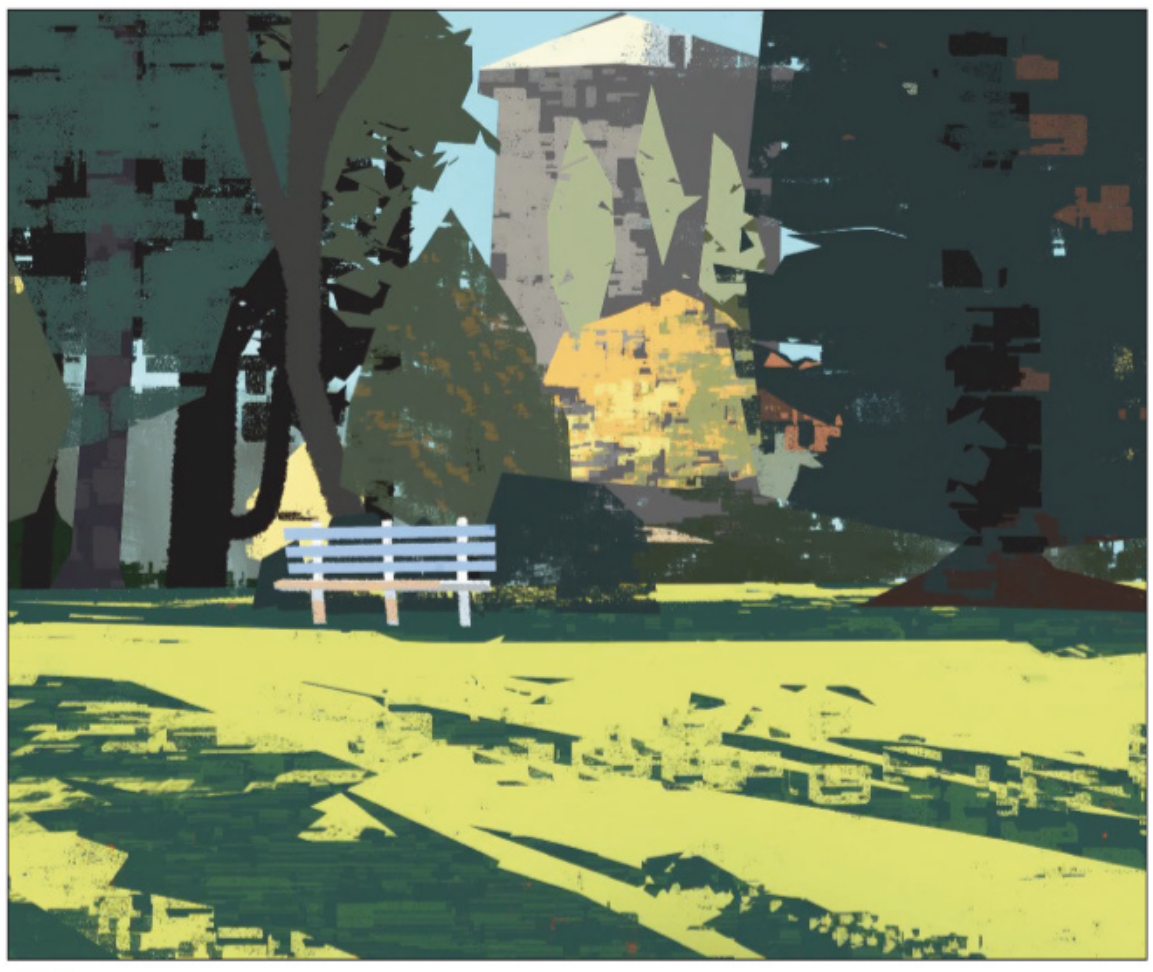
Once on-site, look for a spot that will have full shade for a couple of hours. It also needs to give you a view with contrast, have visual interest and good fore-, mid- and background separation. The location should excite you in some way, and isn't in people's way too much. Passerby will sometimes want to peek and ask questions, which can be distracting if you're deep in painting mode.

4 Observe and plan your painting session

Think and study before you paint. Frame the scene with your hands. Don't try to include too much – focus on what you're most visually excited about. Here, I'm enjoying the window view of the lit tower peeking through the shadowed midground wall of trees, while the bench guy in sunlight provides a strong secondary focus. Before I start, I take a picture so I can refer back to this lighting later.

5 Block-in shapes

I squint to simplify the scene into shapes and start blocking them in. Working digitally, I can afford to easily move elements around as I go. This isn't pretty, but I'm just working to get colours and shapes down quickly. I'm also roughing in a light and shadow colour for each shape, so that I can start to establish my composition and the value-colour relationships.



6 Simplify and interpret the scene

You're not here to record what you see, you're here to interpret it. You decide what to change, what to emphasise, what to leave out. Compare my block-in to the original photo. You'll see where I've adjusted parts of the composition, ignored areas of foliage to create a clearer view of the tower, and simplified shapes relationships wherever possible. I'm designing from observation, not blindly recording.

7 Don't chase the light

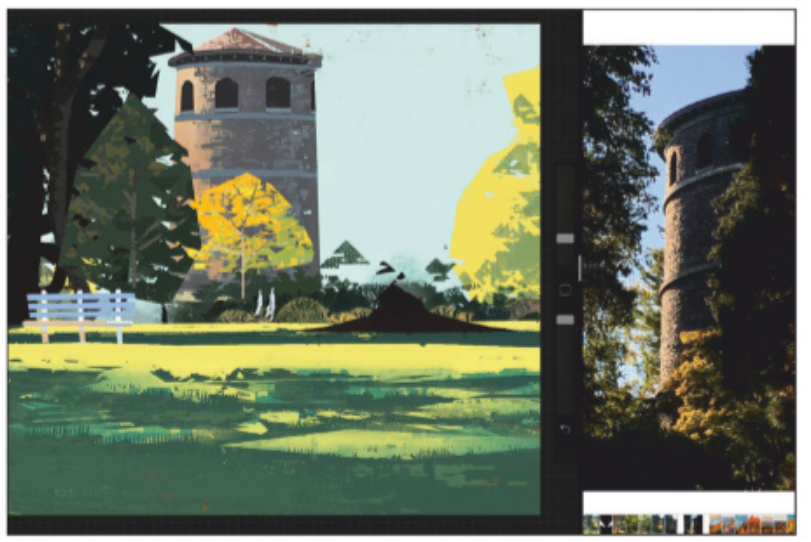
In just half an hour, the lighting has changed significantly. The sun is hitting the midground trees, removing the value contrast that highlighted the tower. When this happens, it's critical to stick to your original plan. If you chase the new lighting, your painting will end up inconsistent or you'll just churn. Instead, I'm painting based on a combination of observation, memory and general lighting knowledge.

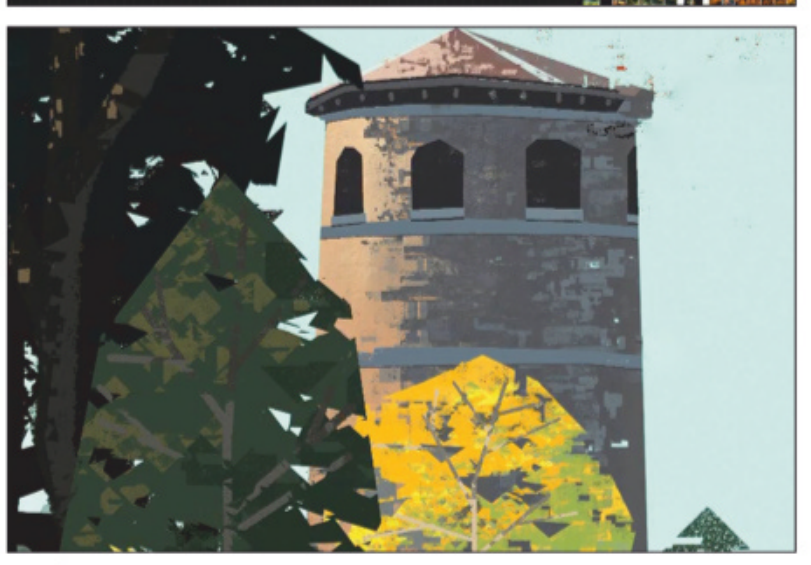
9 Negotiate with green

Green is the trickiest colour to paint. It can easily swing towards garish, or appear lifeless. I've failed to capture the temperatures of the grass here so far. I simplify shapes, add a richer middle tone between areas of shadow and light, and tint a bit of complementary red into the grass layer to reduce its intensity. Oil painters call this approach "smuggling reds".

8 Clarify and abstract objects

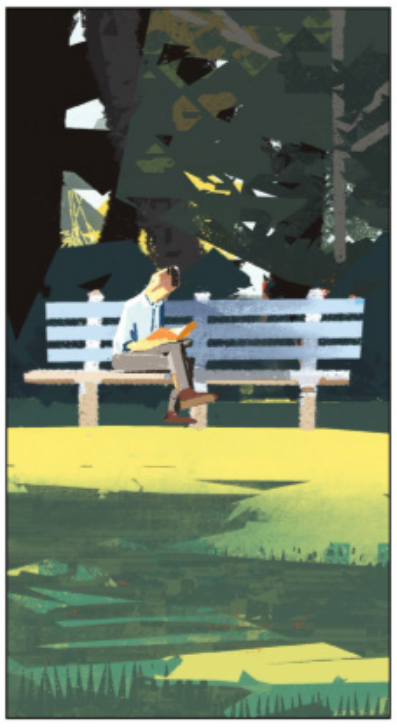
Now I refine shapes and add textural information. I'm trying to abstract all this foliage into something both communicative and graphically pleasing. Remember that everything in nature is either a cylinder, a sphere or a cube. If you study how lighting works on those primitive shapes, you can extrapolate that to anything.





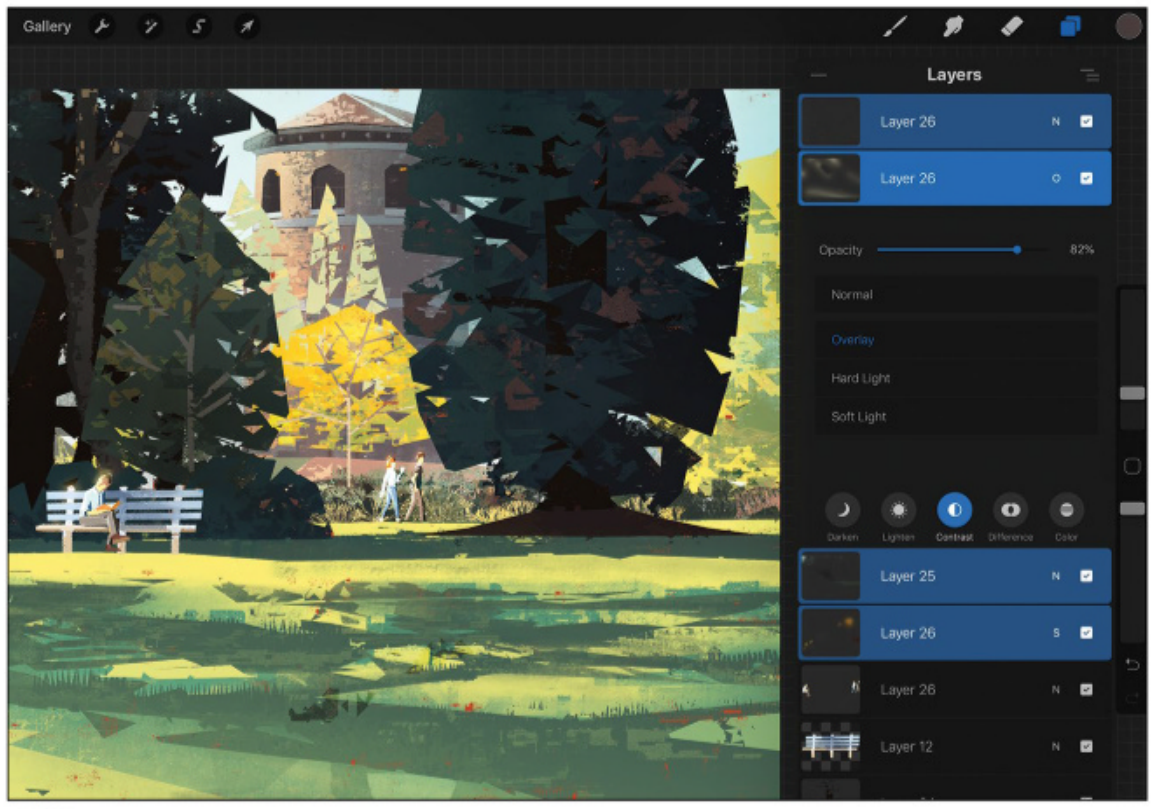
10 Finish rendering (anywhere!)

I'm finishing this piece at home now, using my memories and photo reference. (Working on the iPad, I'll splitscreen my photo right next to Procreate.) Capture the essence of the scene on-site – lighting, value, colour, mood – and leave when you need a break, and finish the painting later. I can sink into rendering details when I'm not worried about changing lighting conditions or passerbys.



11 Add people or critters

In other work you might want to add figures first, but in plein air I think it works to mostly stage the scene first before dropping people or animals in, if they don't take up too much compositional space. Now I can place them in reaction to the scene. I personally always like to add people or area-appropriate fauna, even if I didn't directly observe it. Doing so adds liveliness.

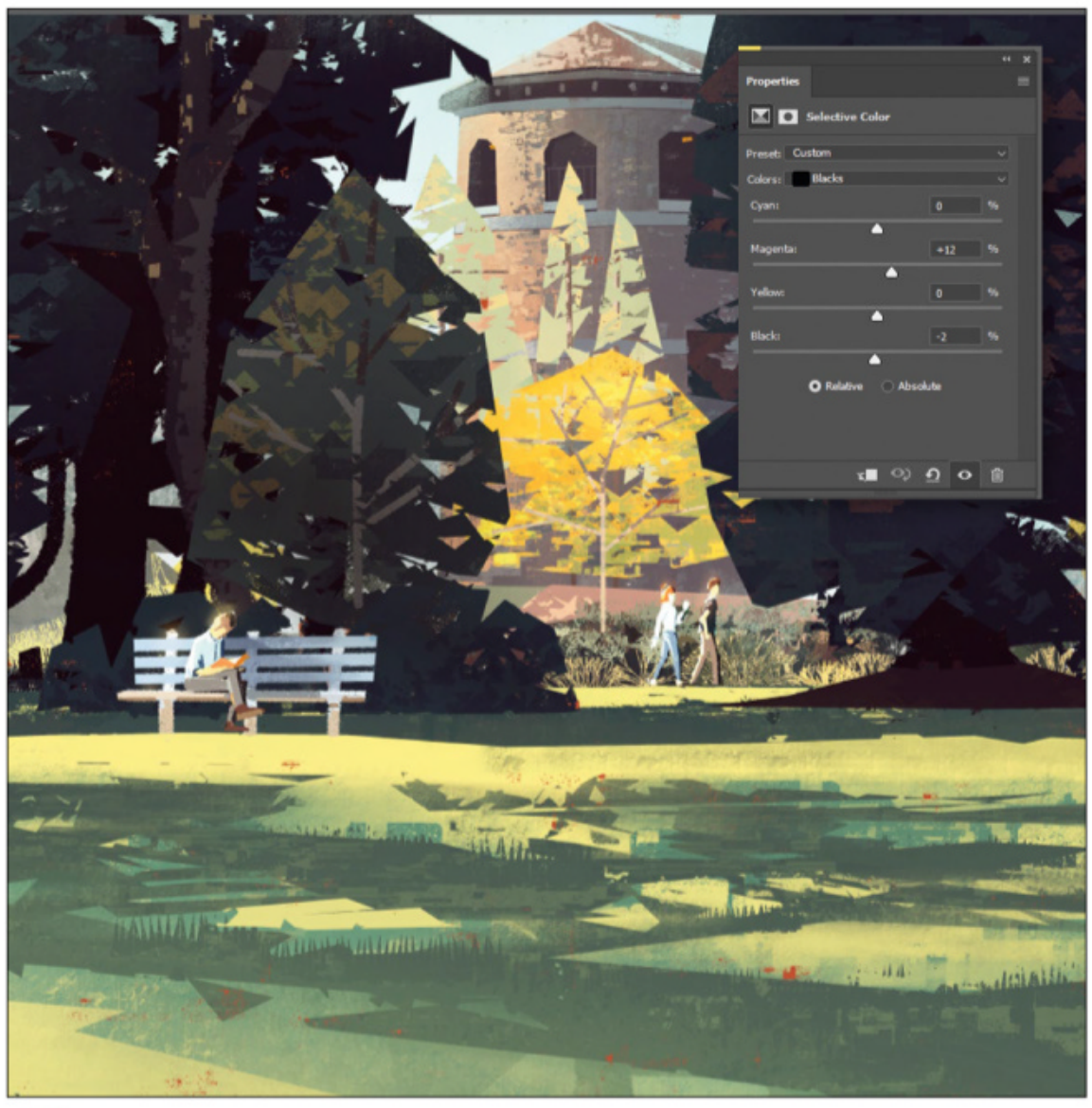


12 Overlay some soft lighting

I try to paint "flat" until I'm happy with the painting's construction and rendering. Now, using a soft Round brush, I paint areas of tinted light and shadow on an Overlay layer to quickly suggest diffuse and bounce lighting. I also add Color Dodge layers to intensify areas of direct light, and finally a Screen (or Additive) layer to selectively bloom out some of the brightest spots.

13 Apply the final touches

I like to add some more naturalistic touches at the end to keep a piece from feeling too stiff. I selectively smudge a few edges and texture areas so that everything isn't too uniformly crisp or detailed. I fade out some areas with Procreate's built-in Damp Brush. Finally, I bring back in just a little texture from the red base that I started with. This helps unify my colours.



14 Adjust colours in Photoshop

I love Procreate, but Photoshop has much better colour adjustment tools. I also find that my darks tend to be less rich than they looked on the iPad. So I take five minutes to adjust them in Photoshop before I call anything done. Here, I just warm the image slightly, tone down the grass a bit more, and deepen my blacks with magenta, using a Selective Color Adjustment layer. Done!

Next month

The brilliant illustrator Audra Auclair is creating next issue's eye-popping cover art!

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

Fresh ways to get painting!

From anatomy to VR, we've got the world's most inspiring artists to help you create your best art

All this… and more!

Lessons in virtual reality
Martin Nebelong shares how he uses VR as a base for a concept illustration.

How to avoid a creative crash
We speak with artists about tips and techniques to keep on painting.

Composition techniques
How to quickly develop dynamic and compelling compositions.

Figure-drawing masterclass
Professional artist Patrick J Jones on how to use values to create depth.

ISSUE 171 ON SALE IN THE UK *Friday 25 Jan 2019*

Artist insight

BOOST YOUR SKILLS AT STORYTELLING

Abigail Larson offers insight into her process of creating expressive figures and settings to illustrate a unique story with her dark fairy tale art

Artist **PROFILE**

Abigail Larson
LOCATION: Italy

A graduate of VCUarts, Abigail's work has appeared in galleries, publications, games and comics. She's worked with DC Comics, Sideshow Collectibles, Pelican Publishing, SYFY and Universal Pictures.
www.abigaillarson.com

I didn't always know I wanted to be an illustrator, but I did know from an early age that I loved telling stories with my drawings. I had a composition notebook that I filled with sketches of different characters, and I would write their stories in the margins of the page.

In high school, I learned about the field of illustration, and felt that might be a path I would want to take. So I went on to art school to learn everything I could about design, fine arts and illustration. Once I had a portfolio ready, I set up a website and started emailing every company I could think of to work with.

At that time I received very few responses, but as I kept practising on my own and taking small jobs, my work gradually improved and I started receiving replies from bigger companies. I also started to develop a larger following online

I've worked with many wonderful clients on some incredible projects, and I'm happy to be able to share some of the tips that I've picked up over the years while working professionally. I'll walk you through my process, and show you how to take a passion for character building to creating an exciting piece that tells that character's story.

1 WHAT'S THE STORY?

Illustration is more than a lovely piece of art. It's also a companion to a story. So while a story typically starts with a character, as you're brainstorming your concept try to think about the tale you're telling. What kind of setting will it have, what the mood should be, how expressive are the poses, and so on. Think about the situation you want to depict, and if you want, act it out and shoot some photos for reference to help you understand how people move naturally in various situations. Then sketch them out loosely. This is a great way to warm up for your final concept.

> Think about the situation you want to depict, and if you want, act it out and shoot some photos for reference

2 CHARACTER DESIGN

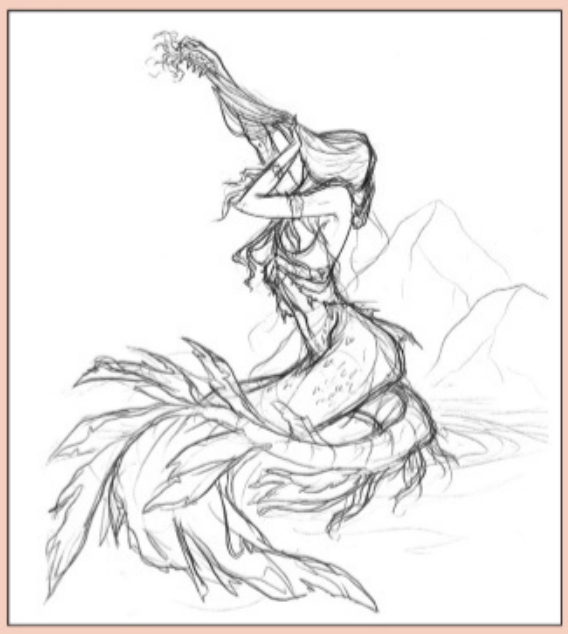
Get to know the subject of your art. If you're going to be drawing them multiple times throughout, say, a picture book, get a few poses down on paper to look back on as reference when you'll need to position the character in a certain setting for an illustration later on.

3 KEEP SKETCHES LOOSE

It's tempting to jump right into your final sketch if you have a specific idea bubbling around in your head, but it's still a good idea to produce some loose sketches first, to warm up for your next round of drawings. Loose sketches are great because in addition to giving yourself some practice, quick gestures will show you right away if the pose and composition are right. As such, it'll be easier to fix these issues in a loose drawing, rather than a final or detailed sketch. This is also a good time to play around with different features for your character, such as facial features, and their clothing and equipment.

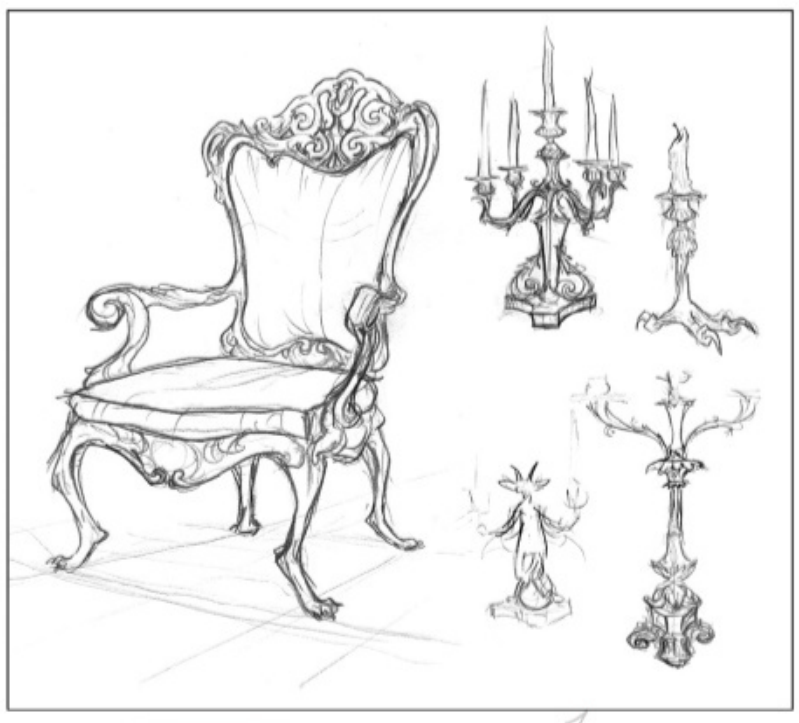
4 CONSIDER MOVEMENT

Having a sense of movement in your illustration makes it more engaging to the viewer, and helps their eyes move around the composition and explore what's happening. Think about your characters in loose shapes while you're planning your piece. How are they interacting with the rest of the scene and other characters? How do their postures change? Do their shoulders tilt? Is their back arched? How are the legs positioned? And above all, are the subjects in harmony with each other?



5 CHECK YOUR SHAPES

For tackling the form of your subject to convey a message to the viewer, think about the subject of your drawing in a silhouette. This helps you understand their shape in the composition, and you can see how you might want to position them in a way that describes the mood and story of the illustration.



6 WARM-UP STUDIES

It's helpful when mapping out your art to take some time to practise the focal points in your piece before going into the first sketch. I like to do studies of the objects I'll want to add as details, and do some figure studies to warm up. This is also good practice even when you're not planning a new piece, but simply want to keep in form.

“Your character’s expression conveys their feelings, but it’s not limited to their facial features”

7 BE EXPRESSIVE

Your character’s expression conveys their feelings at the time, but it’s not limited to their facial features. Expression can be found in their pose and movement, and interaction with their environment and other characters. Exaggerating features like wide eyes and upturned eyebrows can express fear, and slightly lowered eyelids and curved lips can show contentment. Note: pulling too far in any direction can lead to your character looking cartoonish.

8 FROM ROUGH TO FINAL

See how distinctive angular art develops from loose, rounded shapes

A Basic shapes

Start with a loosely sketched concept with basic shapes to build up your subjects. You might want to do a few different poses before you decide which one you like the most. Although my style has angular lines, my roughs stay loose and rounded until I achieve the desired shape and composition.

B Bring in details

This is when the character's details start to come out. Draw with heavier lines to develop their form and add details to the character and setting. I like to paint in quick tones in Photoshop to help me see the silhouette, and work on the composition.

C Apply flat colours and adjust tones

Finally, I have the inked version that I scan into Photoshop to colour. Final details have been added, and I start colouring by separating the character from the background and applying flat colour in light tints. Then I adjust the tones for each object until I'm happy with it.

9 SHOW WEIGHT IN YOUR ART

Think about the effect of gravity on your character. Are they positioned in a normal setting, or are they floating or falling? How does the drape of their clothing or hair change? If there's a strong wind, the character's hair and clothes will reflect that, and if the air is still, the drapery should hang down. A character with billowing clothes and hair often adds drama, so if the situation calls for it, bear in mind the direction of the movement.

> **"Is your character positioned in a normal setting, or are they floating or falling?"**

10 EMOTION THROUGH COLOUR

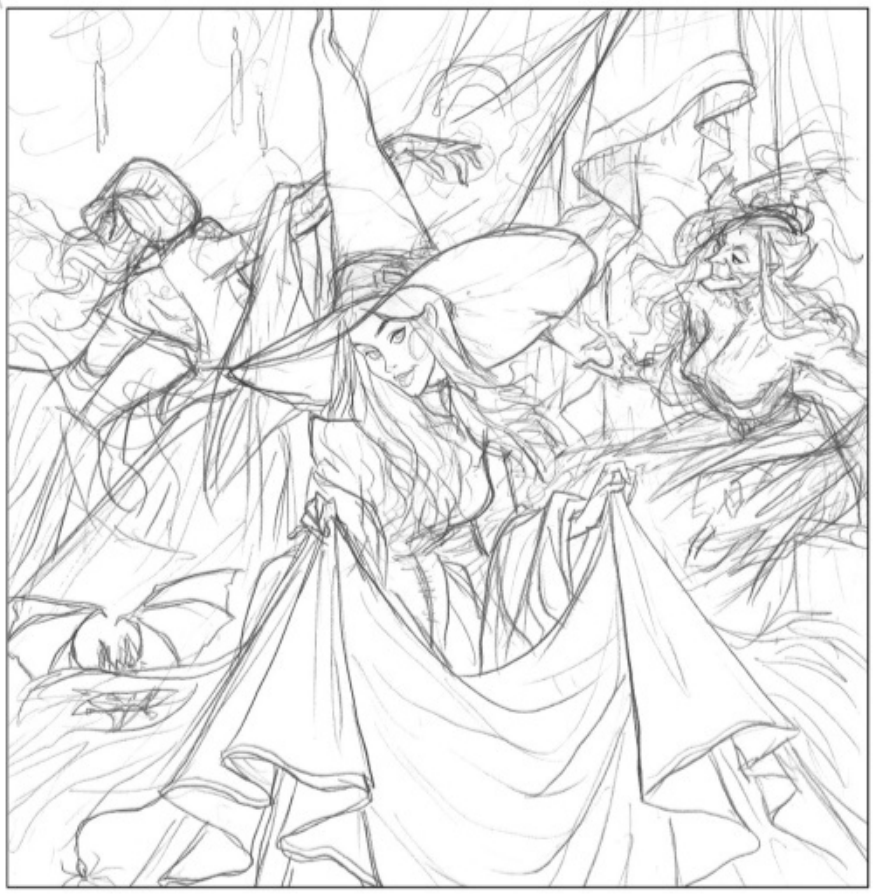
You can convey emotion with a figure's expression, but also with the mood of your piece. A sad illustration might show a character looking down, with emphasis on a "low" emotional state, and using a desaturated colour palette can accentuate this. Warmer, more saturated colours present a happier mood, and desaturated cooler colours do the opposite.

11 TRICKS WITH COLOUR

It's important to understand the fundamentals of colour theory, but you can learn from observing nature, and studying your favourite artists to see what palettes you enjoy the most. Rich, vibrant colours like reds and purples can convey passion and power, and cooler subdued tones can give a calm, or even bleak and sad feeling (depending on how they're used), and warmer tones can add a sense of comfort and serenity.

12 BRING BALANCE TO YOUR ART

Lots of practice studies will help you find balance in your composition. Ideally, you'll want to have your characters and their environment to be harmonious with each other. This starts with a composition that enables the viewer's eyes to move around the scene with ease, and is helped by the use of colour and tone, which will set the subjects apart from each other and their environment, while still being connected to it.



> Ideally, you'll want to have your characters and their environment to be harmonious with each other

13 MAKE USE OF TONES

Before colouring a piece, I lower the piece to 50 per cent grey in Photoshop, then bring out or push back each item in greyscale. I do this at the beginning, so I can see if I have the right amount of contrast in my piece overall, and that it reads easily to the viewer.

14 GET TO KNOW YOUR SETTING

Even if I don't need to draw an entire room or landscape for an illustration, I like to sketch it out in its entirety anyway, just so I can get an idea of the setting, and understand the space and perspective. In some cases, I'll paint the background separately, and then have the subject dropped in on another layer in Photoshop, so that I can move them around if I need to.

15 COSTUME CHOICES

What a character wears tells the viewer more about them, so it's important to consider their wardrobe when you're planning your illustration. What's the time period? What are they doing in this scene? If it's a fantasy character, you get a lot of room for design, but it does help to have some kind of historical context to base their costume on, and build from there.

16 DETAILS BRING A STORY TO LIFE

A character in a setting isn't quite enough to tell their story. This is when details come in. Small details in the costume, or in objects in the room or environment will help make the composition more interesting, and it will give the viewer more hints about the story.

Figure drawing: part 4

DRAW MUSCLES UNDER STRESS

Patrick J Jones explores the rhythmic nature of muscles in motion as he harnesses the power of gesture

Artist PROFILE

Patrick J Jones
LOCATION: Australia

Patrick is a figurative artist author and teacher. His art technique books, The Anatomy of Style and The Sci-fi & Fantasy Techniques of Patrick J. Jones were both award-winning best sellers. His next book on drawing the figure, Figures from Life, is now on sale.
www.pjartworks.com

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 8 now!

In this month's instalment we'll do a study of the male back and arms, exploring the natural rhythm of muscles and the expressive nature they display as they counter-balance and work in union to move the body with style and grace. As someone who loves anatomy this is simply a beautiful thing to observe, but being an artist also it opens a world of possibilities, of flowing shapes, lines and rhythmic tones.

Use the two photos shown here to draw from, and reference them against the supplied Tug-of-War study sheet on page 89 to identify the muscles and their interactions. My first book, The Anatomy of Style, was initially all study sheets documenting my knowledge of anatomy, but then became a more voluminous book. Taking those first notes and learning anatomy memory clues and basic structural shapes gradually fed my subconscious, and freed me up to draw gesturally.

Reference photo of the author in a relaxed pose. Notice the appearance of the back muscles...

...and how the shape of those muscles change when the body carries out an action.

WORKSHOP MATERIALS

PENCIL
General's soft charcoal pencil, Pitt charcoal pencil

CHARCOAL
General's compressed charcoal sticks

ERASERS
Kneadable eraser, mono eraser, electric eraser, pencil eraser, grip eraser

MISCELLANEOUS
Paper stumps, tissue paper, washed and dried shammy leather cloth, newsprint

THE SHAPE-SHIFTERS WITHIN US

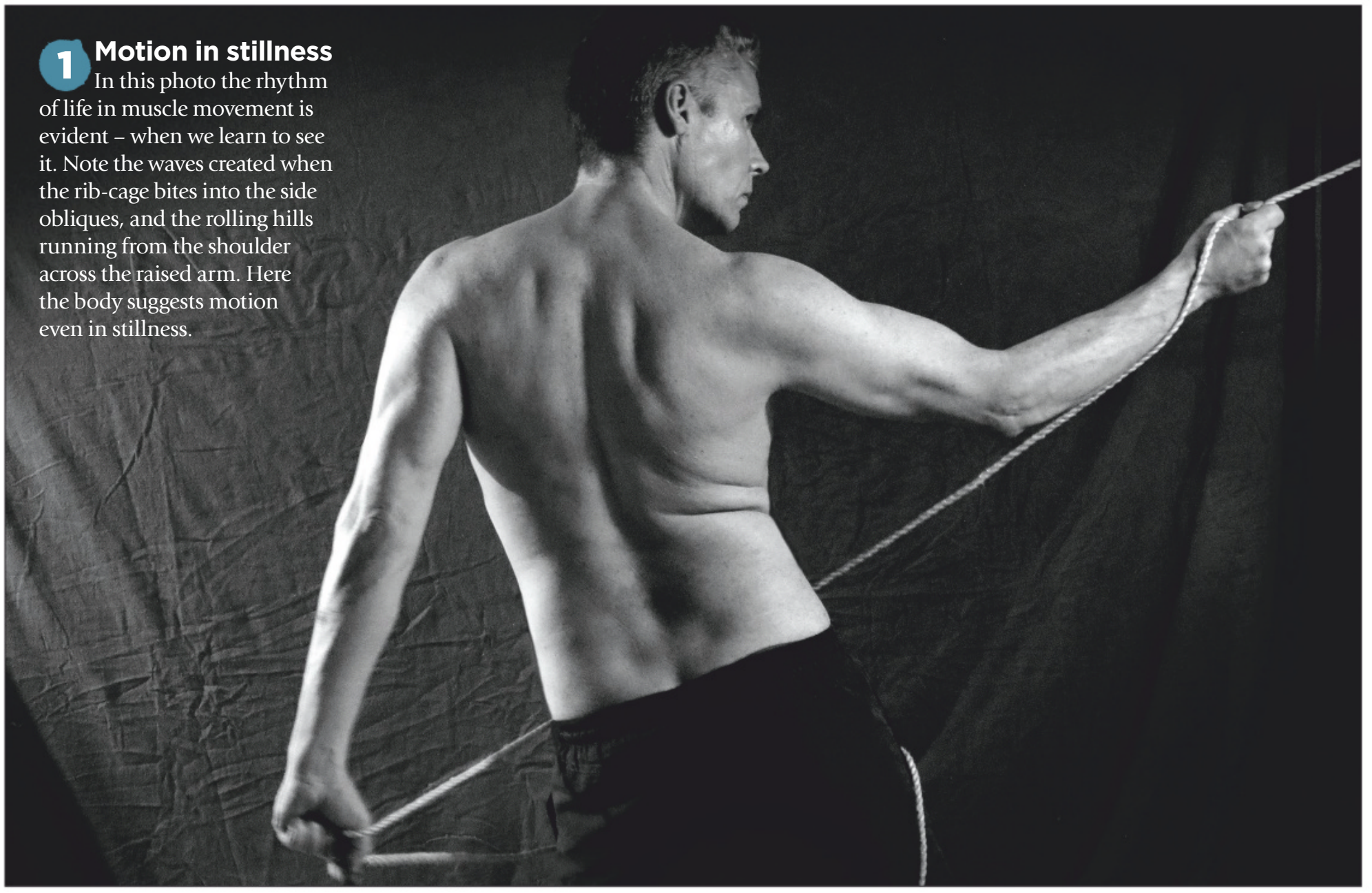
Yet why do live studies when we have anatomy books to study from? The answer is simple. Anatomy is basically the same for everyone in a non-action pose, but the moment we move, the muscles change shape and affect each other as they jostle and push against each other. In other words, muscles are shape-shifters.

Add to the fact that we're all different shapes and sizes with different personalities and degrees of expression, and we end up with unlimited chances for expression using the human figure. Look at the way a boxer moves compared to a ballerina and you'll see a world of difference in expression of line and tone within what is basically the same human anatomy.

Of course, studies by nature are a notoriously slow affair, with a studied drawing usually ending up on the stiff side. Unfortunately, I'd also not drawn for a month before this assignment. I'd been in the US for the wonderful IX show on imaginative realism, where I was giving a lecture on my latest book, Figures from Life which is about the gesture of anatomy. On that note, the best way to counter stiffness borne of outrageous rust is to draw lots of gestural drawings beforehand. Okay, with that said, let's get started…

In depth Figure drawing: part 4

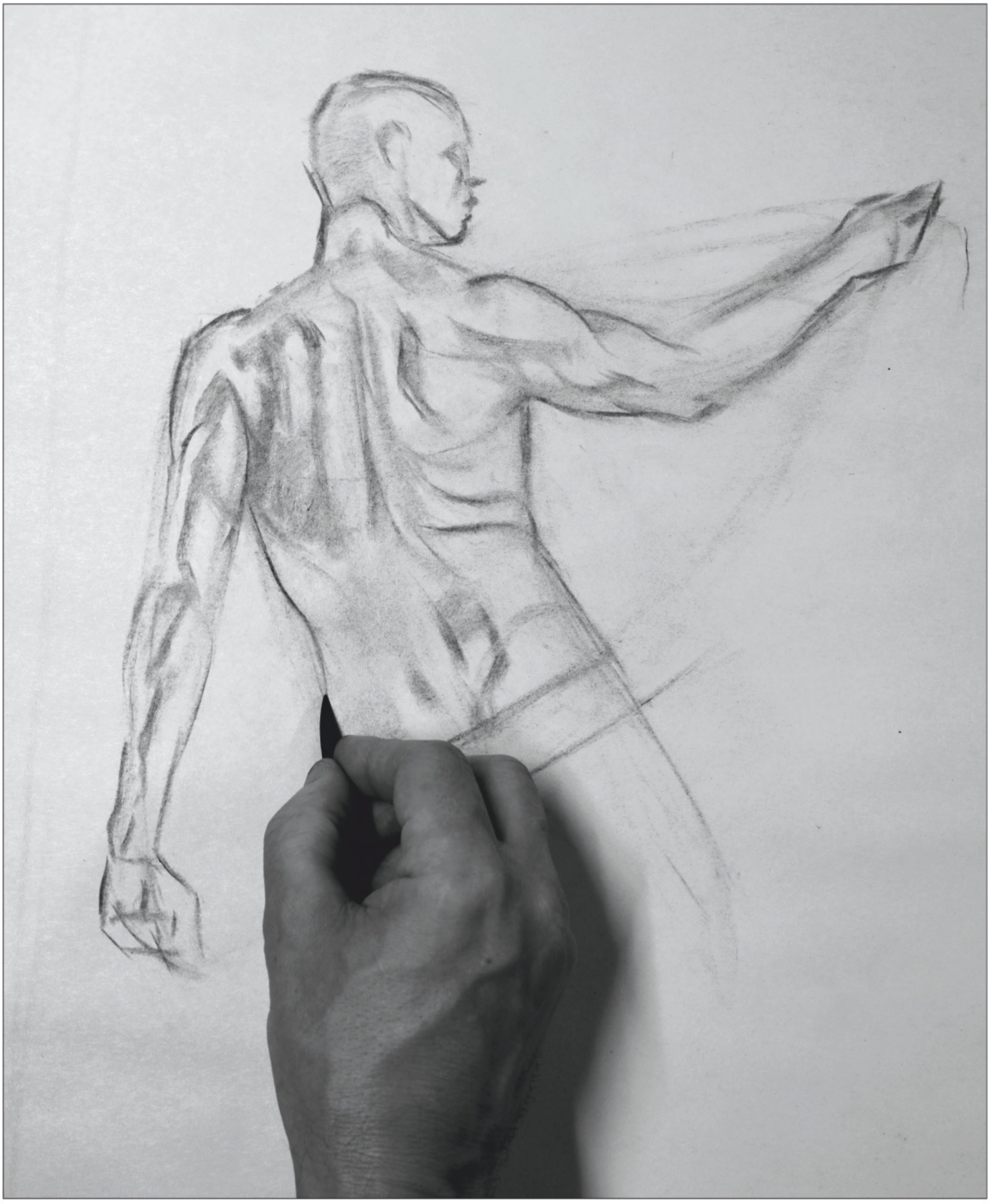
MISSED AN ISSUE?
Turn to **page 42** to complete your collection of Patrick's figure-drawing workshops. They're essential reading for all artists!



1 Motion in stillness
In this photo the rhythm of life in muscle movement is evident – when we learn to see it. Note the waves created when the rib-cage bites into the side obliques, and the rolling hills running from the shoulder across the raised arm. Here the body suggests motion even in stillness.

2 In search of simple
Using my two-finger-wide sharpened charcoal piece I draw in the simple shapes to begin with. The male figure is notoriously blocky and therefore I need to find as much gesture as I can. By finding simplicity we can uncover gesture, even in blocks. Remember that gesture is king. If we work only with structure in mind then our drawings will be stiff. Keep lines long and loose whenever possible.

3 Working the pinch
I work on the 'pinched' side of the body first because the distances between forms is shorter and easier to judge than on the wider, longer stretch side of the body. This is a tip I learned from master draftsman, Steve Huston. As usual I'm working with simple shapes first, which makes it easier deal with the complexities ahead.



4 Get down the shapes of the muscle blocks

With the block-in stage mostly complete I once again employ the help of gesture to regain some fluidity. By working from one muscle to another it becomes apparent that they share similar shapes at their borders. It's time to dance, time to chase the rhythms of muscle and flesh.

5 Drawing with rhythm

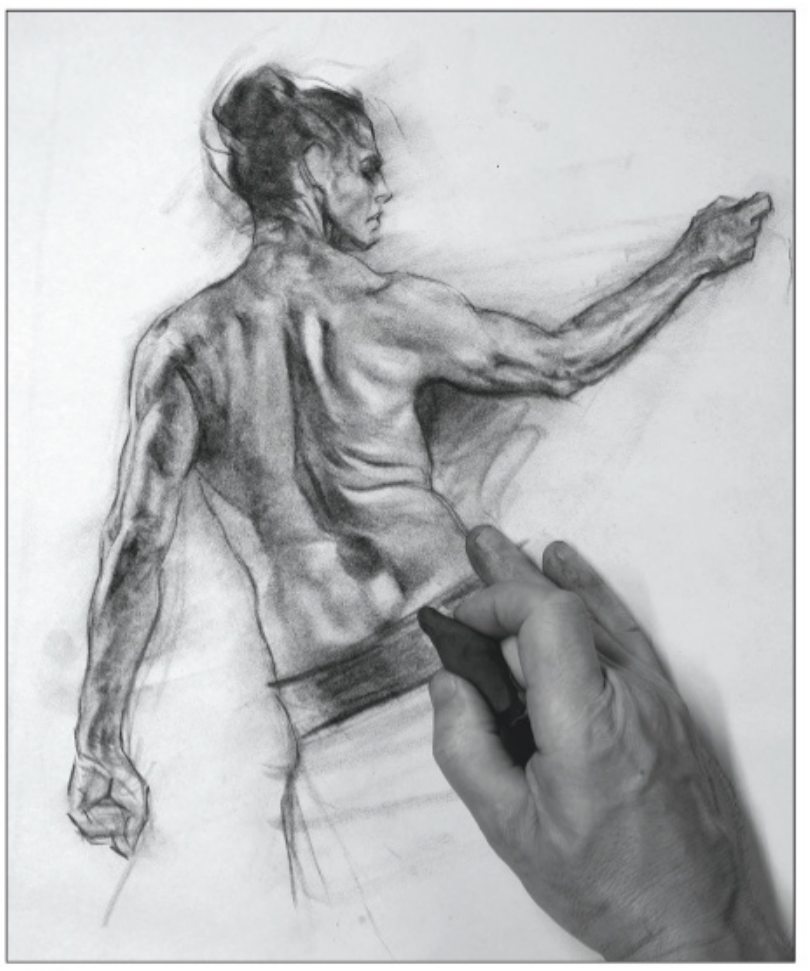
Continuing down the model's left arm I continue the dance by drawing from one side to the other in rhythm. Note the natural flow of things, and how the forearm bulges are higher on the outside, like much anatomy such as the calves of the legs. I'm chasing rhythms here: left to right, high to low…

6 The great motivator

I title the art, The Pearl Fishers, after a piece of opera I first heard as a young boy. To get into the mood I play the music as I work and find it a great motivator with its similar echoes of rhythm and gesture. Next up is Madame Butterfly, to really get the passion flowing!

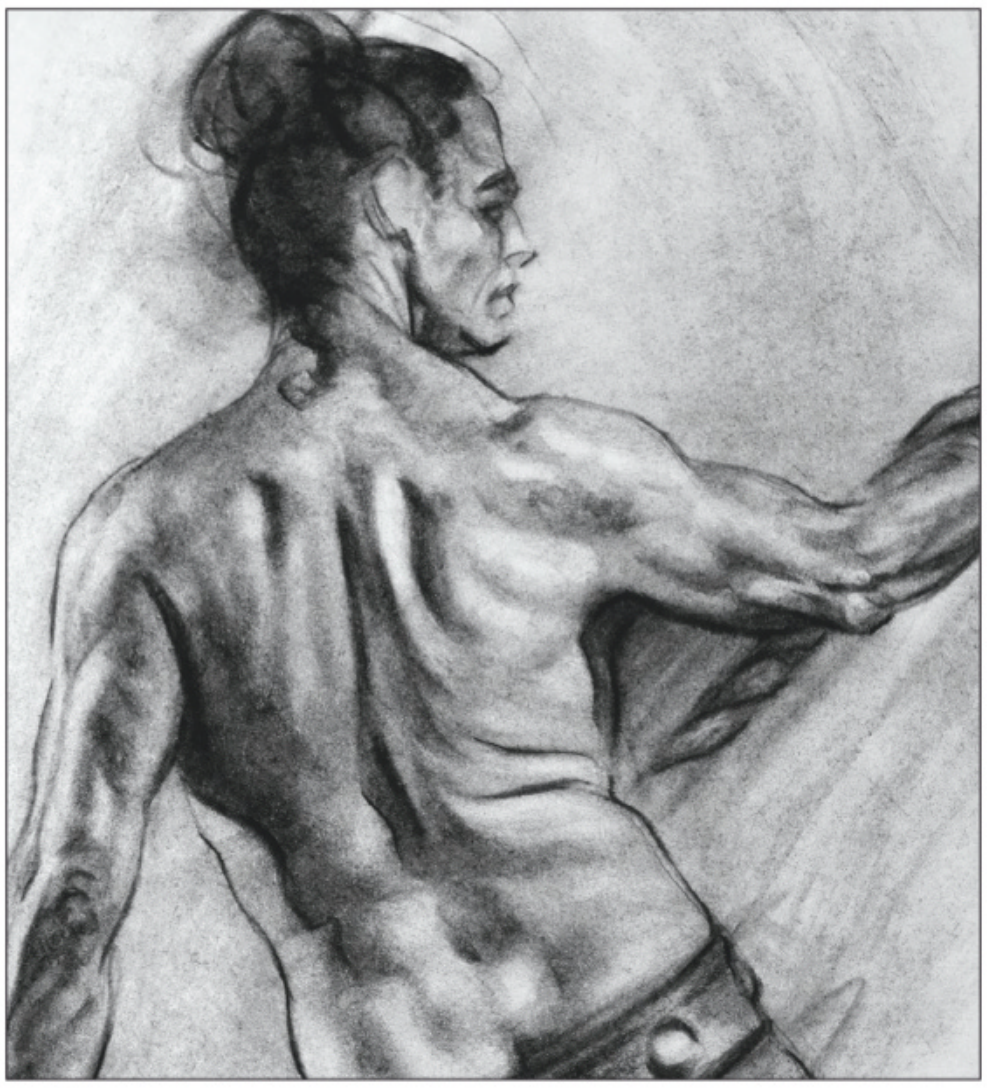
7 Rendering with rhythm

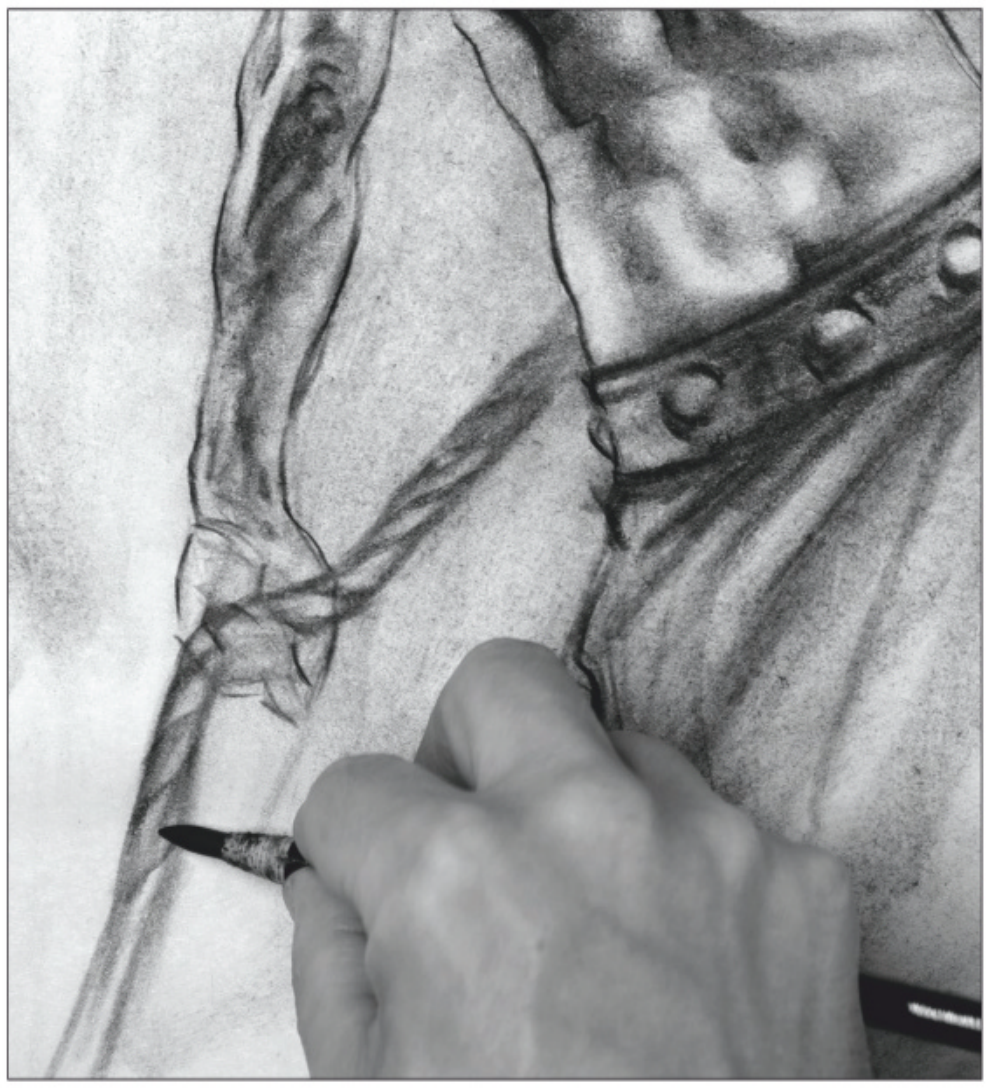
With the rhythms taken care of I dust the drawing back with tissue to achieve a softer undercoat that I can work the darks and lights out of. I begin rendering the forearm and hand – an area so complex that it'll have its own workshop – and up into the upper arm, rendering with the same rhythm as before.



8 Ripples and echoes

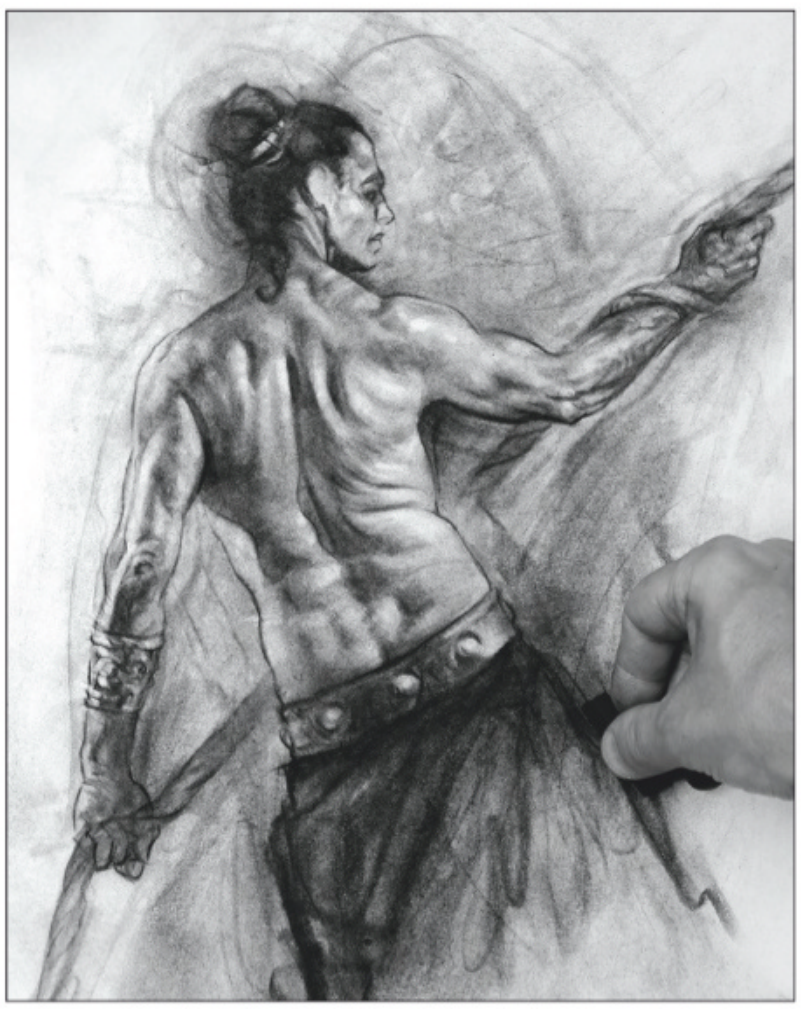
Laying in the darks reveals the nature of muscles pushing into flesh to create ripples. See how the scapula pushes into the rhomboid muscles, creating wave-like echoes all the way down the spine to the sacrum dimples of the hips. All this poetry leads me to draw a sensitive face, such is the power of rhythm.





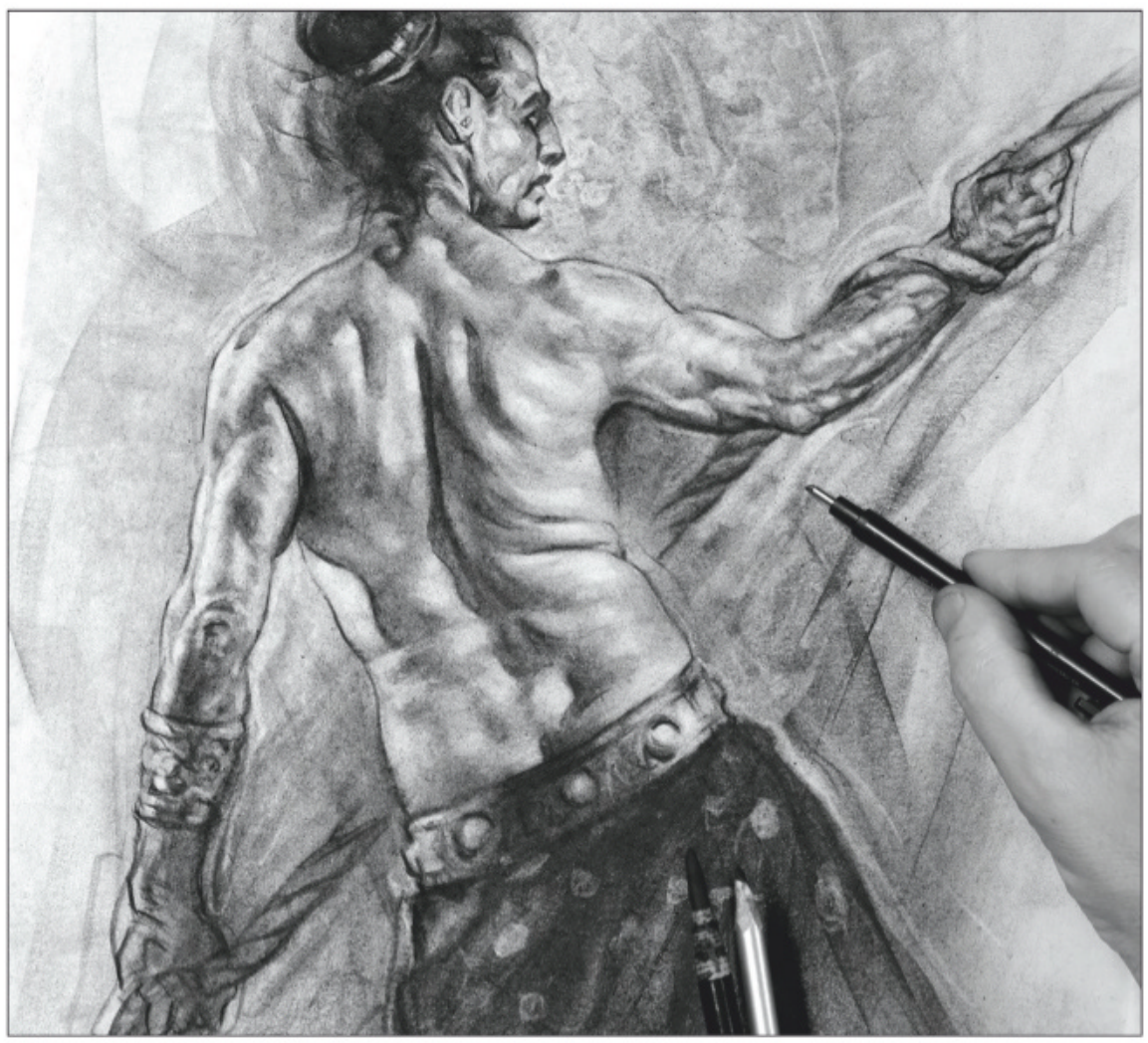
9 Avoid getting stuck in Render Hell

We could call the drawing finished because the more we render, the stiffer a drawing becomes. But as this is a study I'll continue to draw the minutiae and see if Render Hell raises its ugly head. I've also drawn a thicker rope than I posed with in the reference, for added authenticity.



10 The clammy touch

Drawing the arm bracelet leads me into a stiff corner, and feeling the clammy touch of Render Hell I take a piece of compressed charcoal and engage my gestural hand again. I also add some abstract shapes in the background with willow charcoal for added movement.

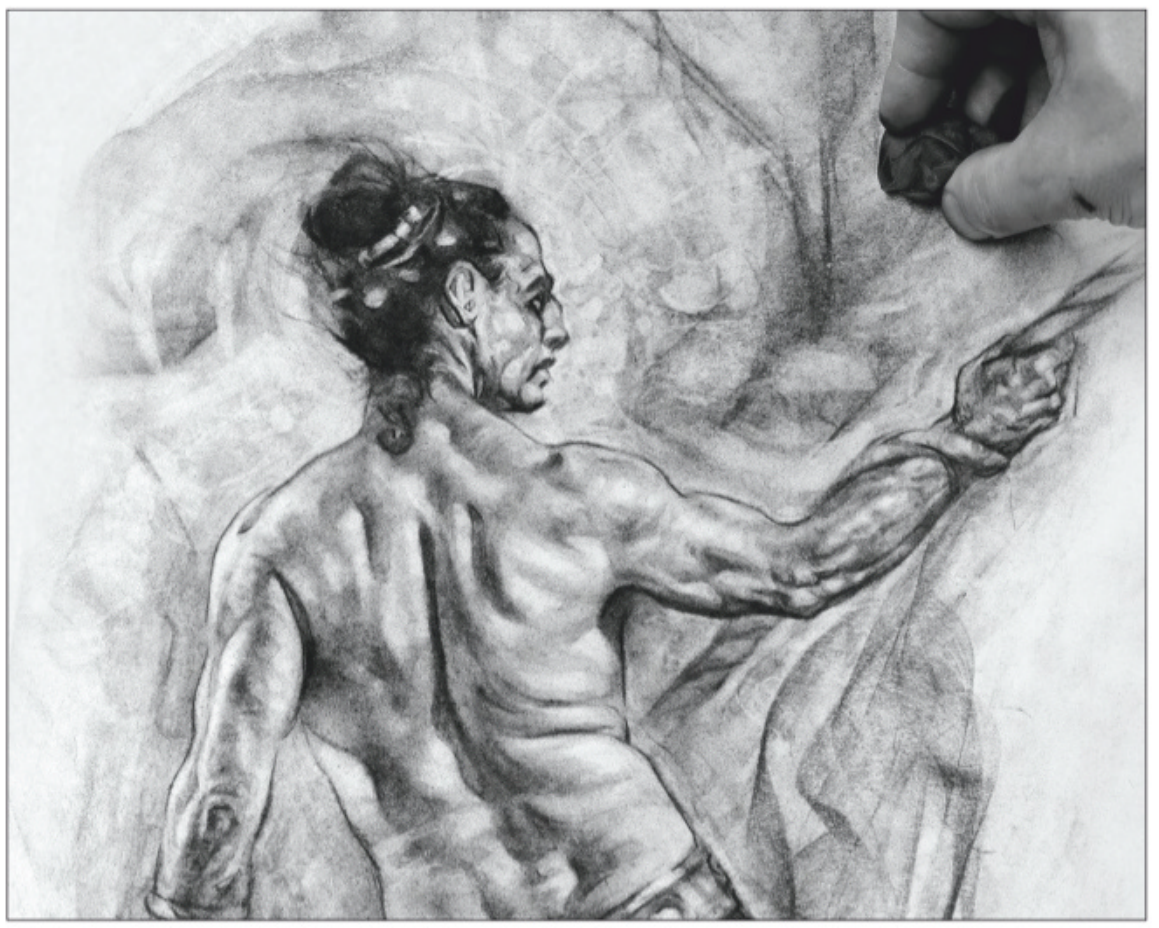


11 Detailing the sarong and adjusting the face

I add 'gold' spots to the fisherman's Lavalava sarong with an eraser, which feels a touch feminine for a fisherman, but I like the spots too much to let them go. To counter this I draw a rugged face. This may not be an improvement, but nothing kills creativity more than the fear of failure, and so I blaze ahead regardless.

12 The beautiful antagonist

I continue highlighting with erasers and detailing with pencils. Note the beautiful antagonistic nature of the tricep and biceps of the raised arm as they work in sync. The triceps are lengthening to enable the bicep to contract and shorten. The opposite is happening on the straight arm.



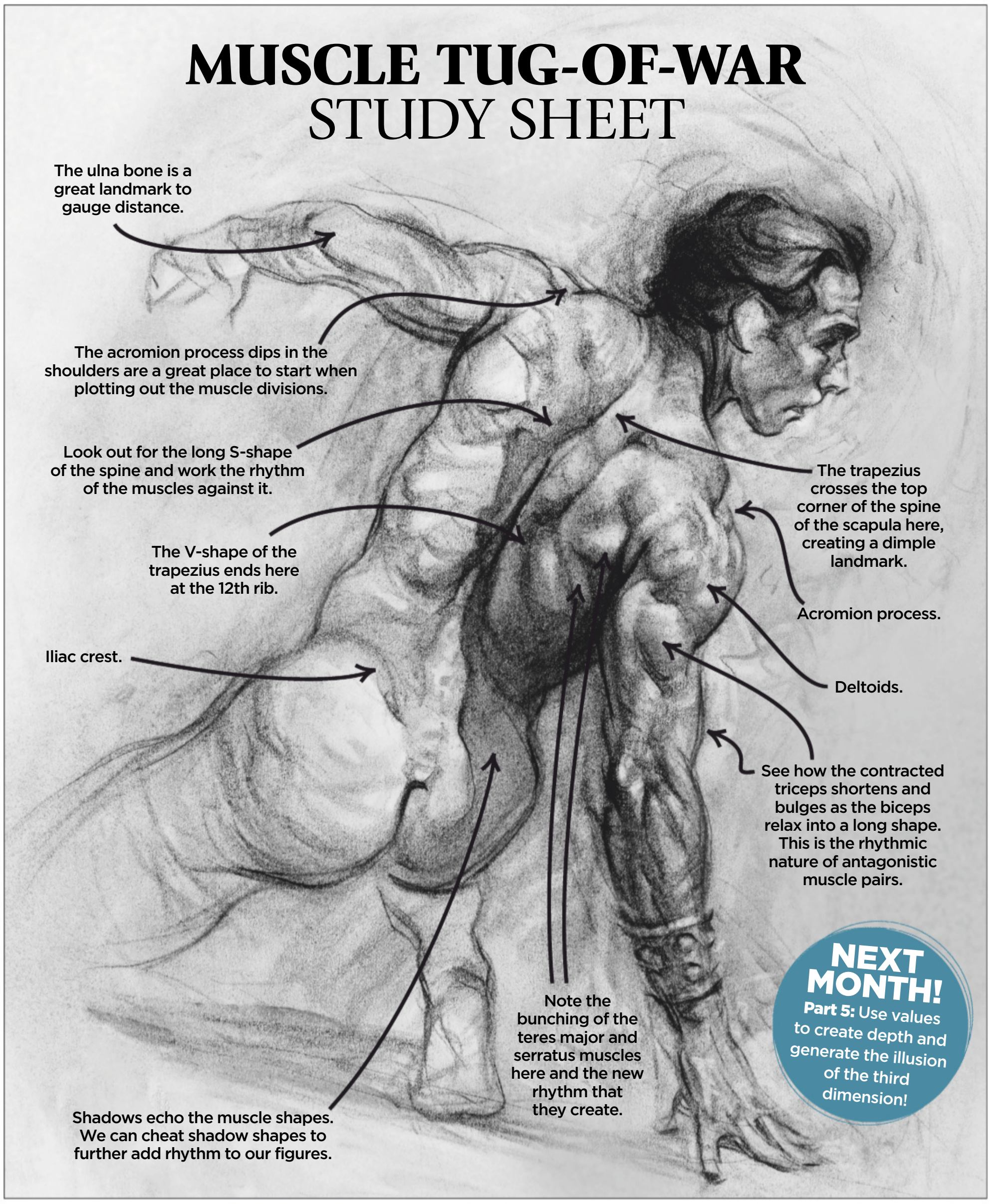
13 Playing the long game

As I suspected, the continued rendering has killed a lot of the gestural energy of the earlier stages. However, experimentation wins out when playing the long game, and I'm all in as far as art goes. I swirl around some abstract storm clouds to see what happens. There are no mistakes in art. You just have to think of every stroke as a learning experience, regardless of the finished drawing.

14 Behold the shape-shifters

I work an oily sheen into the flesh by contrasting the darks and lights more. I'm left with a drawing more rendered than I would like, but I've cemented further knowledge of how muscles work and shape-shift into my subconscious, and that makes it all worthwhile.

MUSCLE TUG-OF-WAR STUDY SHEET



15 Tug-of-war study sheet

With studies I go into great depth identifying muscle landmarks and shapes; in this particular study I'm interested in how all that knowledge flows into gesture. If we learn our anatomy well enough it'll embed itself into our subconscious and enable us to draw gesturally.

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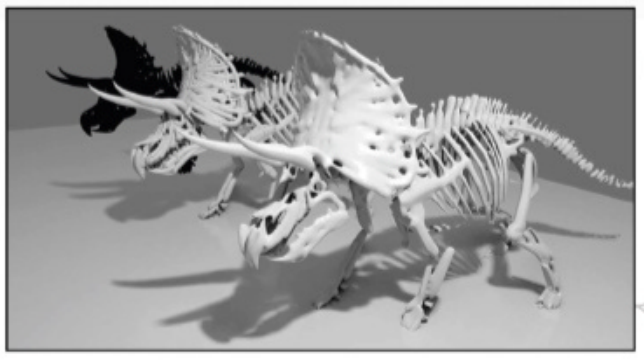
ImagineFX Reviews

Artist's Choice Award
Art resources with a five-star rating receives the ImagineFX Artist's Choice award!

The latest art resources are put to the test by the ImagineFX team…

5 PRODUCTS ON TEST



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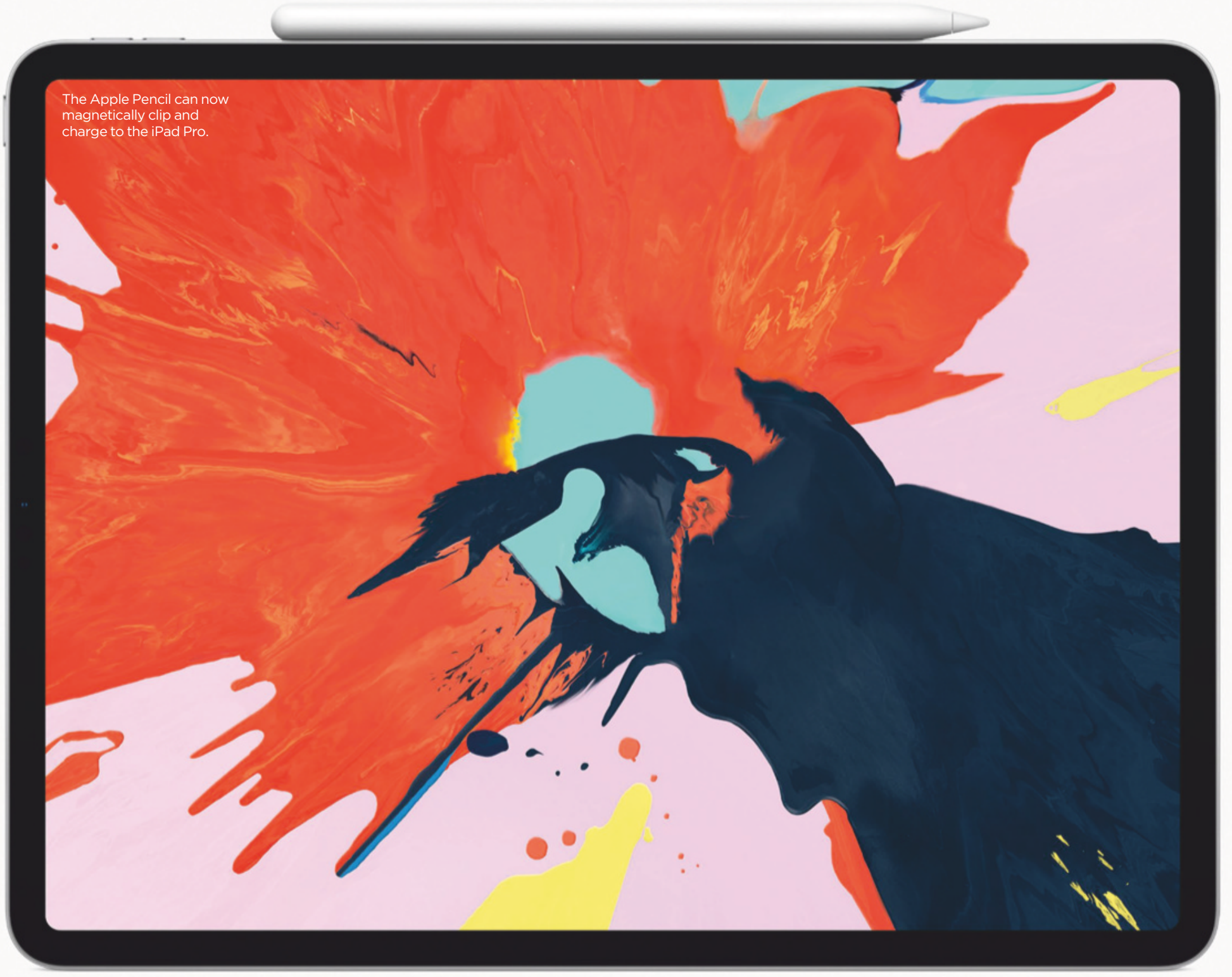
Learn the fundamentals of Photoshop for in this manual packed with pro advice.

RATINGS EXPLAINED ★★★★★ Magnificent ★★★★ Great ★★★ Good ★★ Poor ★ Atrocious



iPad Pro

SHINY AND NEW If you need pure power on the go, the new iPad Pro certainly delivers – for a high cost

Price £769 **Company** Apple **Web** www.apple.com

The new iPad Pro 11-inch is designed to offer users freedom. It's an ultra-thin tablet fighting against the most powerful laptops on the market – and it's giving as good as it gets.

Let's not beat around the bush: the iPad Pro is an expensive device, especially when it doesn't offer a desktop-class experience. The base price of £769 isn't terrible, but you'll be spending another £300 for the keyboard and Pencil, and you'll probably want the LTE version, adding another £150 to the cost. So for the base 64GB storage size you're spending £1,219 – roughly the price of a Core i5 MacBook Pro. If you want the maximum 1TB of storage, you'll be spending over £2,000.

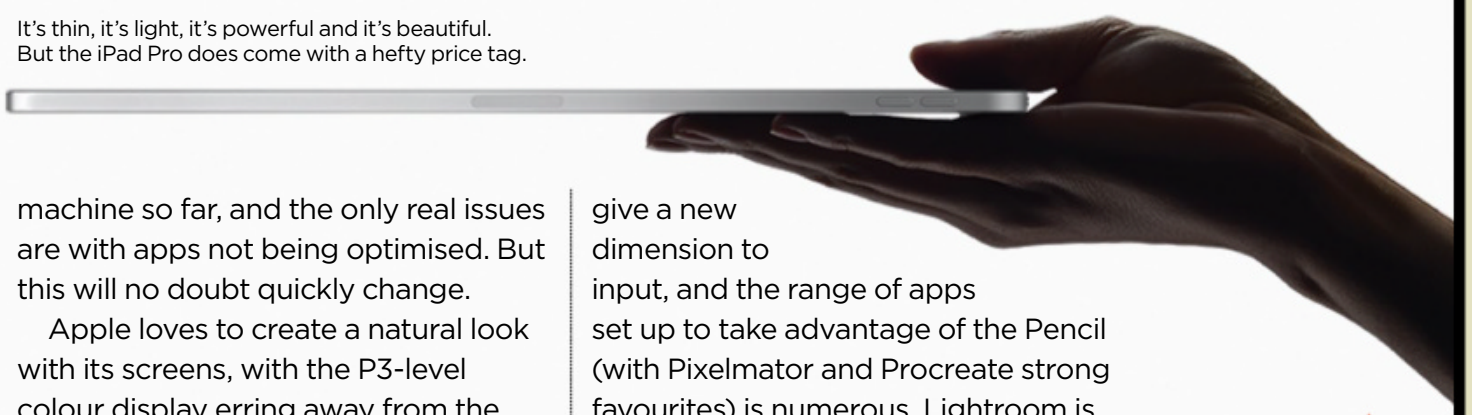
There are few tablets on the market that can even come close to the raw power of the A12X Bionic chip, though, an engine developed by Apple specifically for the new iPad Pro. In our benchmarking tests it outstripped the nearest device by nearly double, and thrashed a number of Windows laptops too, including the Microsoft Surface Pro 6 and the HP ZBook X360

Apple claims the vibrancy and saturation offered by the iPad Pro's screen is the industry-leader.

G5. This power translates into speed. Combined with 6GB of RAM there's very little this tablet can't manage... as long as there's a dedicated app for it.

We saw a demonstration of the forthcoming Adobe Photoshop for the iPad, and the speed at which it can zoom while managing over 100 layers was impressive. We've had no moments of slowdown with the

The A12X Bionic chip is crazy fast, so hook your iPad Pro up to a monitor and blaze through tasks.



It's thin, it's light, it's powerful and it's beautiful. But the iPad Pro does come with a hefty price tag.

machine so far, and the only real issues are with apps not being optimised. But this will no doubt quickly change.

Apple loves to create a natural look with its screens, with the P3-level colour display erring away from the punchier colours of tablets like the Samsung Galaxy Tab S4. For those wanting truer colour reproduction for creative projects, Apple is claiming industry-leading quality in terms of the vibrancy and saturation on screen.

give a new dimension to input, and the range of apps set up to take advantage of the Pencil (with Pixelmator and Procreate strong favourites) is numerous. Lightroom is also available, and the aforementioned Photoshop is making its way in 2019.

There are a few new features for this incarnation of the iPad Pro, with Face ID replacing the home button and fingerprint scanning combo. The facial recognition is swift and easy to use, although we did manage to cover the camera most of the times we picked up the new Pro.

> **"Combined with 64GB of RAM, there's very little this tablet can't manage… as long as there's a dedicated app for it"**

The 2,388x1,668 resolution translates to a 264-pixels per inch sharpness, and looked great for every task we tried. The peak brightness of 600 nits is on the low side, because it means the screen isn't HDR-compliant – although the iPad Pro is capable of playing back HDR content.

The Apple Pencil has also been redesigned. It now magnetically clips and charges to the side of the iPad Pro, and there's a double-tap function for switching between modes in apps.

Variable pressure levels and the capability to use the edge of the tip

The lack of home button means the interface is navigated with gestures. It's incredibly intuitive, and you can easily jump between apps and multitask across two apps.

For all its power and precision, though, the iPad Pro is still just an iPad. That means you can't use it as a full laptop replacement, but as a second machine, you'd be hard-pushed to find better out there.

DETAILS

Features

- Liquid Retina display
- 11-inch LED-backlit Multi-Touch display with IPS technology (12.9-inch model also available)
- 2,388x1,668-pixel resolution at 264 pixels per inch (ppi)
- ProMotion technology
- Wide colour display
- True Tone display
- Fingerprint-resistant oleophobic coating
- Fully laminated display
- Anti-reflective coating
- 1.8 per cent reflectivity
- 600 nits brightness
- 12-megapixel camera
- Four-speaker audio

System Requirements

Syncing with iTunes:
PC: Windows 7 or later, iTunes 12.9 or later
Mac: OS X 10.11.6 or later, iTunes 12.8 or later

Rating

★★★★☆

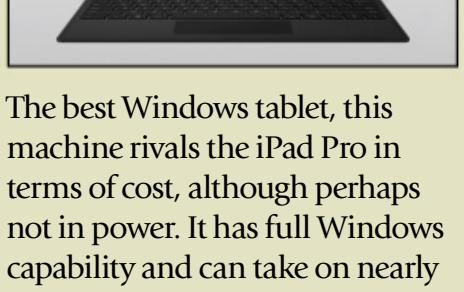
IN FOCUS

ALTERNATIVE TABLETS

Not quite feeling it with the iPad Pro? How about these options…

iPad 2018

Web www.apple.com
Price £319



This tablet offers a large display, Apple Pencil support and a much lower cost than the all-powerful iPad Pro. It's not in the same league power-wise, but if all you want to do is sketch or edit photos, the iPad 2018 is perfect.

Surface Pro 6

Web www.microsoft.com
Price £879

The best Windows tablet, this machine rivals the iPad Pro in terms of cost, although perhaps not in power. It has full Windows capability and can take on nearly any other Windows tablet when it comes to performance.

Galaxy Tab S4

Web www.samsung.com
Price £599

The Galaxy Tab S4 is one of the best machines for the Android user. The large AMOLED screen is full of bright colours and responds well to the touch, and you can buy an actual pencil to use as a sketching tool.

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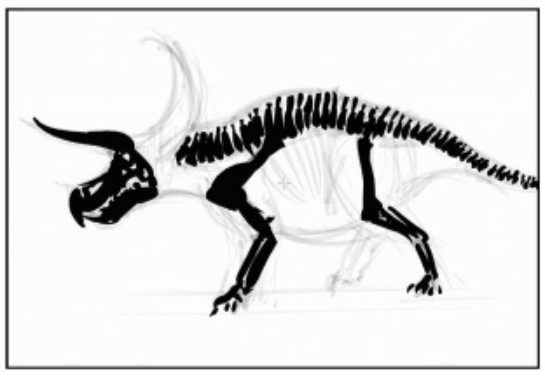
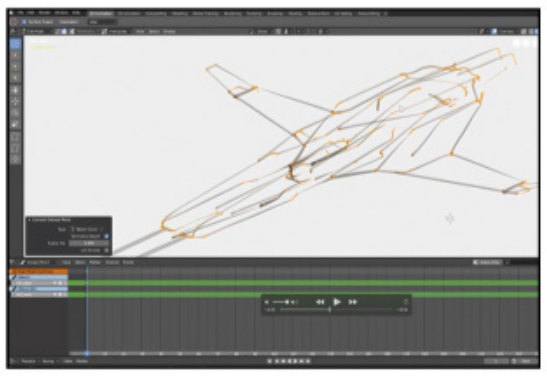
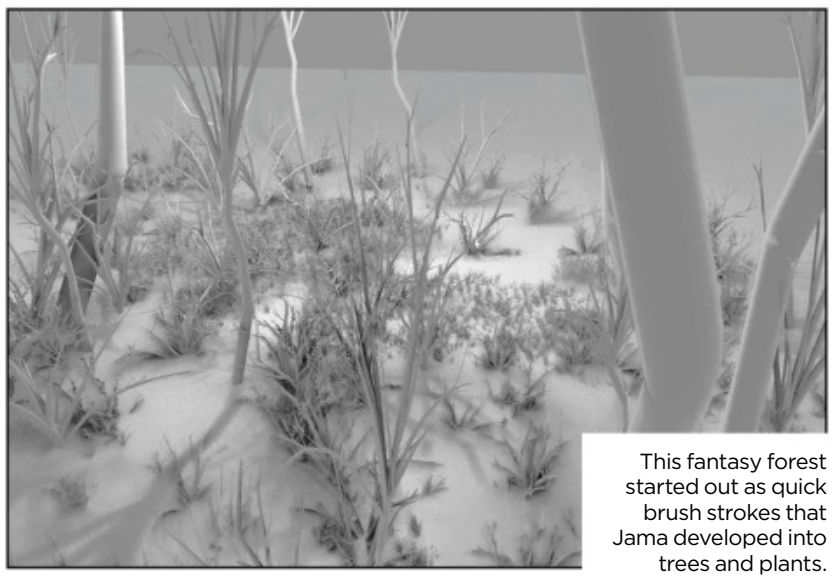
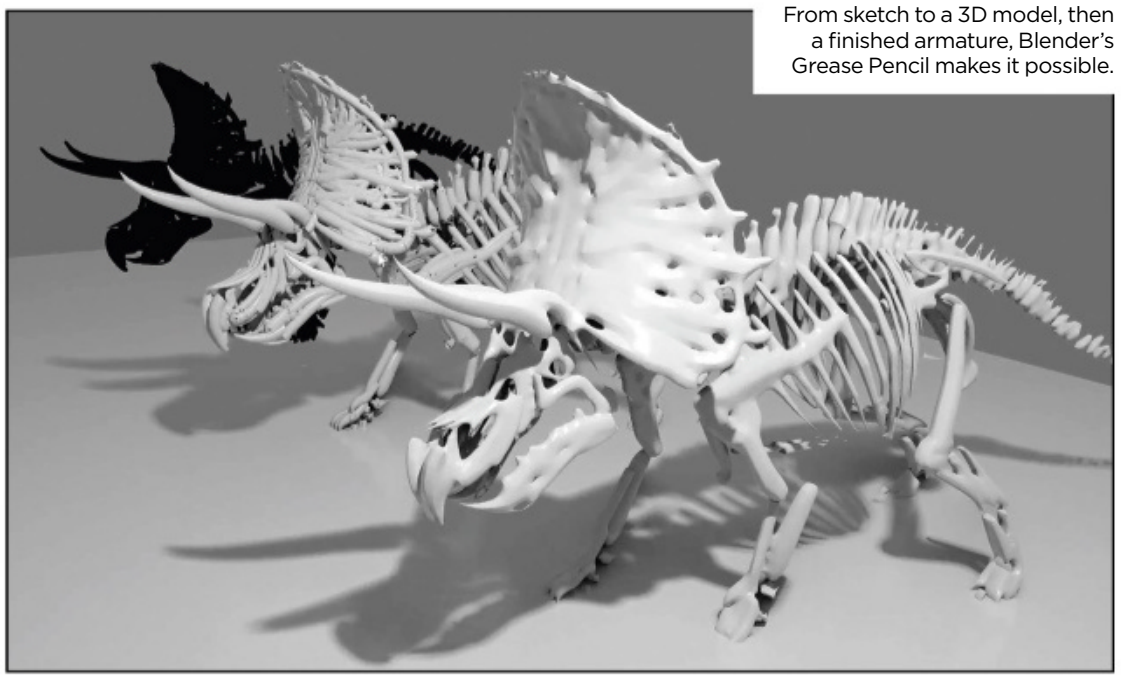


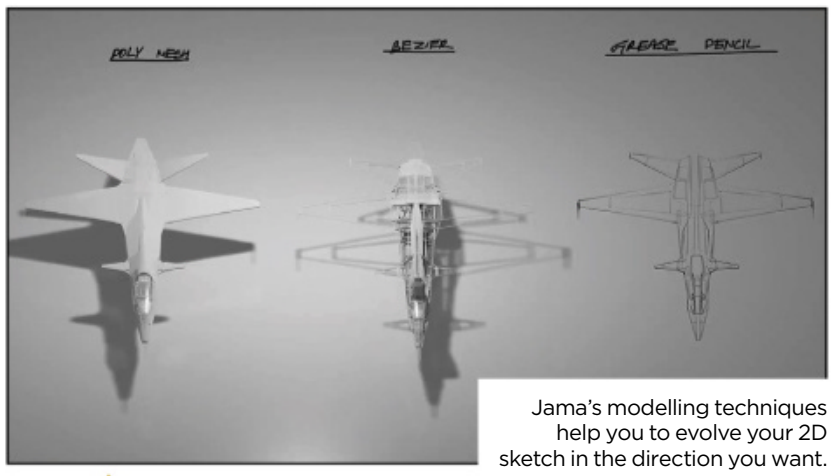




This fantasy forest started out as quick brush strokes that Jama developed into trees and plants.



From sketch to a 3D model, then a finished armature, Blender's Grease Pencil makes it possible.



Jama's modelling techniques help you to evolve your 2D sketch in the direction you want.

Turn Your Drawing Into a 3D Model

GREASE IS THE WORD Jama Jurabaev shows how a free program can help you cross the divide between 2D artist and 3D sculptor

Publisher Jama Jurabaev **Price** $22 **Format** Download **Web** www.gumroad.com/jamajurabaev

No other creative software has the potency of 3D programs like Maya and ZBrush – but no other software has such a steep learning curve. Wouldn't it be great if there was a way to draw inside your 3D program, with brushes that are familiar to artists, then turn it into a 3D model. Well, it turns out there is...

Blender is a free but very capable modelling, rendering and animation package with a gem of a tool called Grease Pencil, named after the pencils traditional animators sketched with. You use Grease Pencil to draw on a plane inside Blender – then you use Blender's 3D tools to add the third dimension to your drawing.

Jama Jurabaev guides you through the process in this video, showing a few different possible ways to develop your line drawing into a full 3D form. In the most jaw-dropping sequence, a flat side-on sketch of a triceratops rapidly becomes a rounded-out dinosaur skeleton. Blender enables Jama to set up the basic form and proportions, then pose the creature to make it feel more alive. Jama's personable narrated chapters are punctuated with silent time-lapse videos that show the techniques he's just discussed in more detail.

Once you've grasped the basics, later chapters explore some of the potential of Grease Pencil. You'll see how Jama uses it to create surface details that would take longer to add in something like ZBrush, and how a few quick brush strokes can become organic-looking plant formations.

With plenty of 3D files to download and open for further study, this is a masterclass on a tool that could enable you to cross the divide from 2D drawing into 3D modelling – and it's a tool you can get for free.

DETAILS

Topics covered
- Grease Pencil basics
- Modelling a polymesh design
- Modelling with extrusion tools
- Lighting basics
- Modelling organic forms effectively
- Surface detail
- Surface offset
- Creating foliage

Length
204 minutes

Rating
★★★★★

ARTIST PROFILE

JAMA JURABAEV

Jama is a concept artist, illustrator and a matte painter, working for the film and game industry in London. Projects he's worked on include Jurassic World: Fallen Kingdom, Ready Player One, Kong: Skull Island, Doctor Strange and the upcoming live-action version of Aladdin. Jama originally studied aerospace engineering, but decided in his mid-20s to switch over to concept art. He's since expanded into art directing and directing.

www.jamajurabaev.com

The art team designed six land-based biomes to help them create the look of the Ancient Greek environments.

One version of player character Alexios, painted by Gabriel Blain.

The Art of Assassin's Creed: Odyssey

HITS AND MYTHS Travel back to Ancient Greece and explore its reconstructed ruins with Ubisoft's art book

Author Kate Lewis **Publisher** Titan Books **Price** £30 **Web** www.titanbooks.com **Available** Now

The unique angle of the Assassin's Creed games involves transporting players to the past and Ancient Greece is the destination in the series' latest instalment, Odyssey. For the game's creators, this setting posed unique challenges and creative opportunities: with so much of that world reduced to inch-high ruins, how do you make an environment that's both playable and credible?

In their foreword to this art book, Ubisoft art director Thierry Dansereau and Assassin's Creed world director Benjamin Hall reveal that by working with experts and historians they were able to recreate the era's lost glory. And in the process of their research, they discovered artistic blessings that would take the release to spectacular new heights.

Following a prologue that sets the scene by outlining the Greek victory at the Battle of Thermopylae and the climates players will encounter, the book's 13 chapters cover key cities and locations. Snippet-length history lessons are interspersed with a closer look at characters from the game, following their development from digital concept paintings all the way through to refined heroes.

> "By working with historians the directors were able to recreate the era's lost glory"

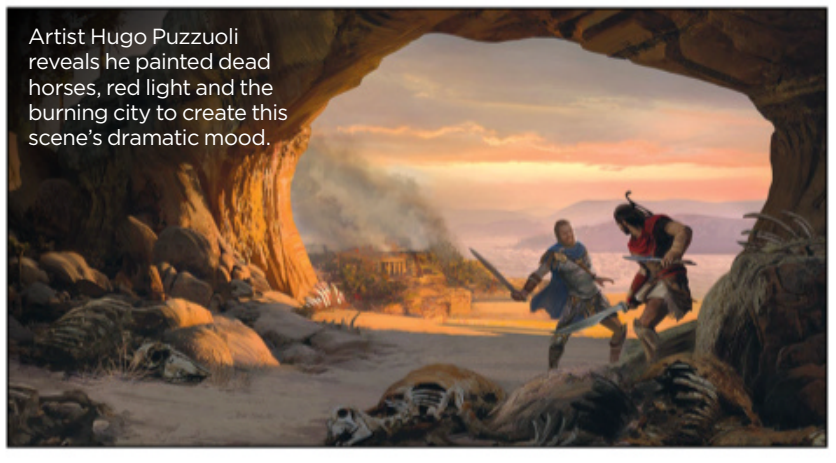
Thanks to insights from the game's artists, we learn that mythology and research both had a hand in determining the look and feel of certain elements in Odyssey. Weaponry, ships and architecture have a consistency about them that clearly communicate the academic legwork that's gone on behind the scenes.

A game set in Ancient Greece wouldn't be complete without mythological horrors, and thankfully The Art of Assassin's Creed: Odyssey doesn't disappoint. Here we see Ubisoft take on old favourites including Medusa, the minotaur and the cyclops, with each one finding innovative ways to nod back to their origins, along with the odd embellishment thrown in.

Concept art of player character and mercenary Kassandra, as painted by Yan Li.

Storyboards from a scene set on Mount Taygetus provide the rawest insight into the creative process, with the majority of the art in the pages appearing to have come from the end of the pipeline. But when the finished art looks as sumptuous as it does, it's hard to complain that we don't see more of the process.

RATING ★★★★☆



Artist Hugo Puzzuoli reveals he painted dead horses, red light and the burning city to create this scene's dramatic mood.

Hokusai Manga

SMALL IS BEAUTIFUL Explore the sketches of seminal Japanese artist Katsushika Hokusai in this collection of over 900 illustrations

Editor Kyoko Wada **Publisher** Thames & Hudson **Price** £25 **Web** www.thamesandhudson.com **Available** Now

Originally published over 200 years ago, the first volume in a 15-book series of Katsushika Hokusai's drawing manuals, known as Hokusai Manga, would go on to become a bestseller. And as this condensed collection shows, public appetite for the artist's work is still going strong.

Broken down into three pocket-sized volumes (each one measures 11x15cm), this collection covers illustrations of Edo Life, The Wonders Of Nature and Flights Of Fancy. Taken from original copies of Hokusai's drawing manuals, also known as an etehon, the art in this book is as crisp as the original woodblock printings.

Katsushika Hokusai's skill at storytelling is evident, such as in this artwork of a samurai riding a warthog – backwards, of course!

Each volume opens with a preface to provide some context, and closes with a Q&A for further insight. Readers also learn about the state of publishing at the time and how Hokusai's pictures relate to Japanese society.

The range of subject matter in these books is the main draw, as they give an insight into Hokusai's immense talent. Everything from cooking utensils to demons are depicted with a unique character that, just as they did upon their first release, will fascinate casual readers and scholars of the artist.

RATING ★★★★★

The collection features black and white artwork with only a pinky orange serving as a contrast colour.

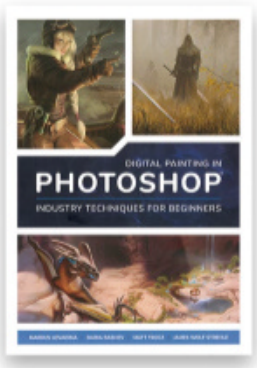
Digital Painting in Photoshop: Industry Techniques for Beginners

PHOTOSHOP PRIMER Learn the fundamentals of Adobe Photoshop for digital painting in this manual packed with expert advice

Editor Annie Moss **Publisher** 3dtotal Publishing **Price** £30 **Web** www.3dtotal.com **Available** Now

Those who are new to digital art will have experienced a moment of trepidation upon opening Photoshop. With so many tools to master and a new artistic language to learn, it's easy to get overwhelmed. These are the fears this manual aims to dispel as it explains everything you need to know about the industry behemoth, from firing it up to laying down that final brushstroke.

Concept artist James Wolf Strehle explains how to use the Warp tool to adjust the shape of a dragon's head.



Although geared more towards those looking to move into the video games and CG industry, this book is still useful and accessible to hobbyists. The writing style is straightforward enough, and an image-led layout stops the manual becoming bogged down with indecipherable instructions.

Split into an introduction and three comprehensive tutorials, the expert contributors in this book guide the reader through the process of painting landscapes, creatures and people. These tutorials assume a certain level of artistic skill on behalf of the reader, but their real strengths lie in showing you how to work quickly and effectively – both key qualities for making it in the digital art industry.

A detail from Daria Rashev's steampunk character workshop.

Topped off with a glossary of terms and basic functions, this guide will still be a useful reference point once you've worked through its exercises.

RATING ★★★★☆

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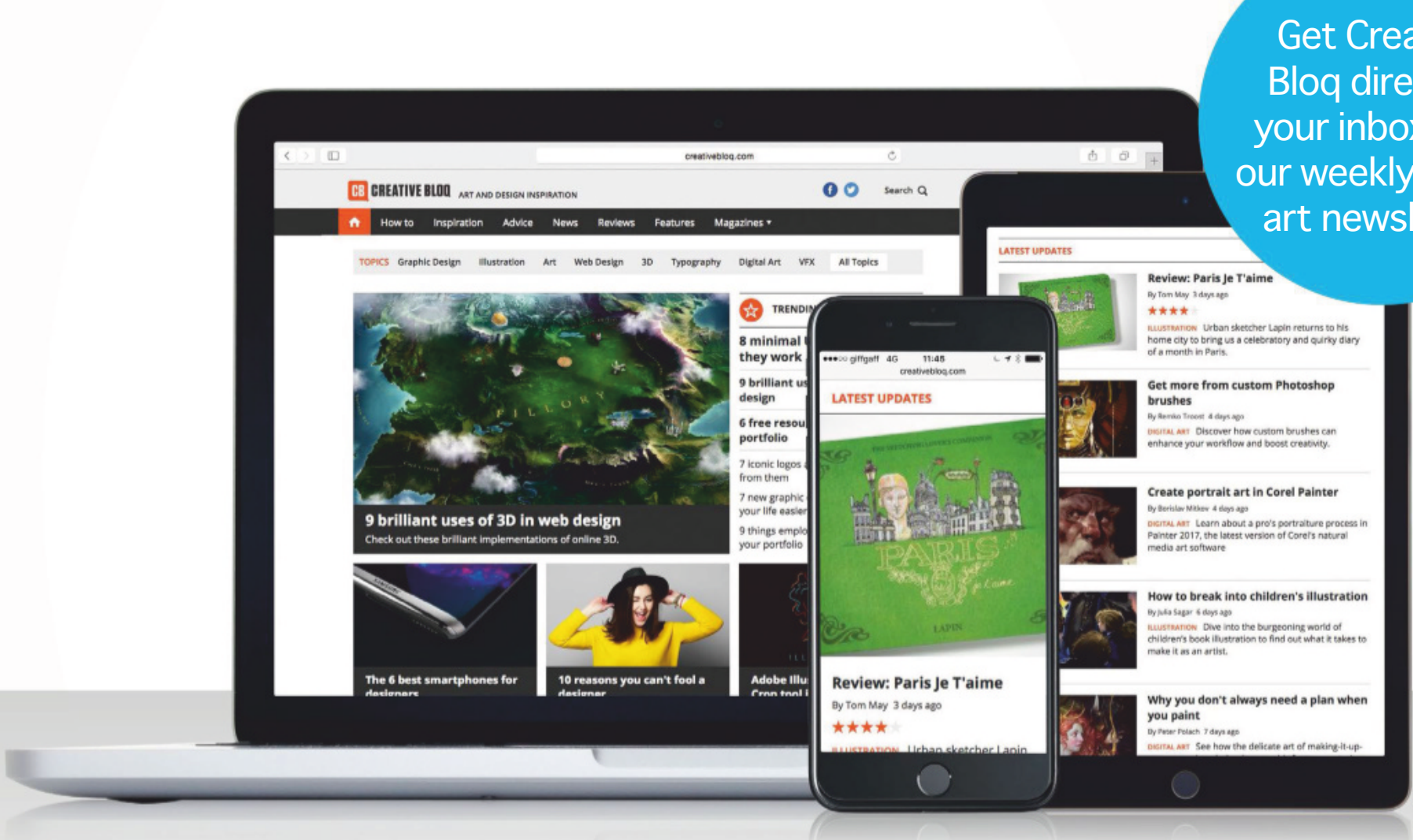

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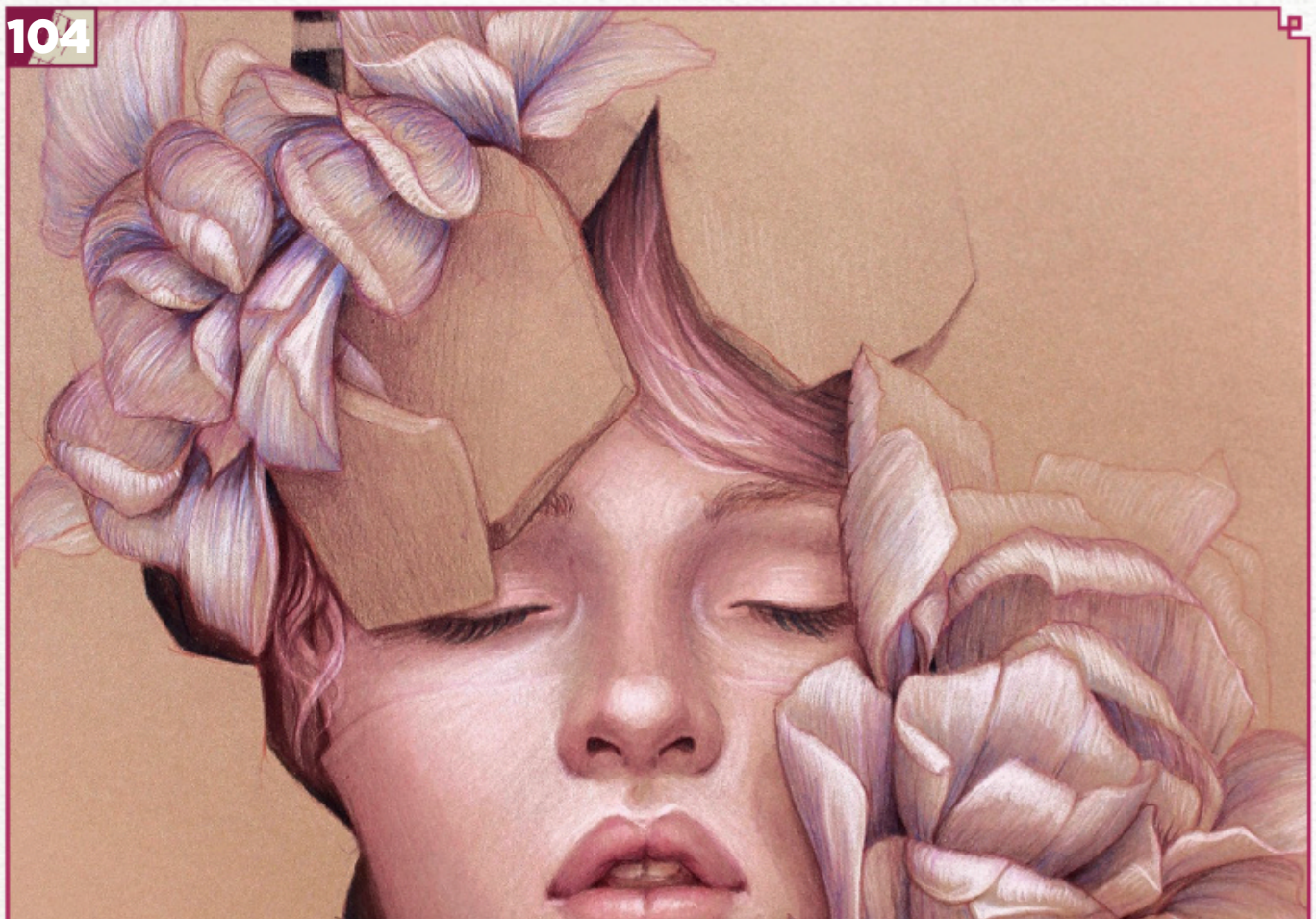
Inspiration and advice from the best pro artists



This issue:

100 Traditional art FXPosé
Explore this month's selection of the finest traditional art, that's been sent in by you!

104 Workshop: Advice on using coloured pencils
Jennifer Healy encourages you to go beyond your comfort zone for better results, when working with coloured pencils.

110 Workshop: Illustrating for a book cover
Tran Nguyen reveals how she captures a young adult book's narrative in a single image.

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Competing with a fellow school pupil helped this US illustrator to step up her art game.

FXPosé

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS

Olivier Menanteau

LOCATION: France **MEDIA:** Graphite, Indian ink, watercolour, pencils **WEB:** www.möön.fr

Working under the pseudonym Moon, Olivier started out doing graffiti, before turning art into a career. "My work is mostly influenced by nature," he says.

1 DAY 81; 365 SQUARES VOL.2
"For my 365 Squares Vol.2 project, I created a 6x6-inch square every day for a year. This piece, in Indian ink and watercolour, was the cover of my project artbook."

2 PATTERNS
"After I'd completed my 365 Squares project, I was keen to work with bigger squares and play with the scale of the elements."

3 DAY 190; 365 SQUARES VOL.2
"I wanted to play with outfits and accessories on this one."

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

4 ON ELDER'S SHOULDERS
"A piece made for the Descendents show at Inverarity Gallery. 'Generation by generation, we steal the idea of freedom and claim it our own...'"

Patricia Ann Lewis-MacDougall

LOCATION: Canada **MEDIA:** Watercolour crayons, coloured pencils, acrylic ink **WEB:** www.pat-ann.com

"As I grew up, I discovered other people who wanted to be artists and we would inspire each other to keep drawing," says Patricia. "I'm still like that today."

1

1 YOUR RIDE
"I did this early in my career, using coloured pencil on vellum. It's a sad tale of a little girl who finds out who's waiting for her after death."

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

2 **SPRING FLING**
"I like to design women who are proud and care-free. Spring fling is just that. I used Neocolor II Watersoluble crayons on illustration board to capture Spring and her feathered steed."

3 **YOU'RE A BIRD, I'M A BIRD**
"This little love letter between two friends was one of my first attempts with Derwent Inktense Pencils on illustration board. I like the bold, strong, yet translucent colour."

Pencil

ADVICE ON USING COLOURED PENCILS

JENNIFER HEALY shares her expertise for working with coloured pencils, encouraging you to move outside your comfort zone for better results

Over the next few pages, I'll be sharing my 15 top tips for working with coloured pencils, and discussing how important it is to leave your comfort zone to explore the possibilities when working with traditional mediums. In addition to tackling how to use the actual pencils, I'll look at relevant tools and materials, such as blending stumps, identifying the tooth of paper, using different erasers and much more. I'll also provide a short three-step tutorial on how I blend lips with coloured pencils.

The most consistent trait I have discovered with any medium I've ever used is that trial and error is inevitable. The trick is to keep trying, practising and to persevere through the process. I know that I've often felt discouraged when diving into a new medium, but also found that pushing through the hiccups was extremely rewarding.

Learning how to work with a medium takes persistence. Learning any medium can be difficult at first, but it can also be enjoyable. Whatever path you choose for your artwork, your passion will always show within each and every masterpiece!

US artist Jennifer paints both traditionally and digitally. She's keen to raise awareness for PTSD and mental illness through her work, which you can see more of by visiting www.jennifer-healy.com.

1 Layers and a stump

How you blend your coloured pencils together makes a huge difference to the final effect. I prefer softer blending, which is achieved with a blending stump. After each light layer, I very gently blend the coloured pencils with the stump. Don't push too hard or the colour will stick, making it more difficult to softly blend. I repeat this process as often as I need. After many layers it produces a very soft and delicate look. There's some trial and error, though. Sometimes when blending too softly, the colours already layered will pick up off the paper.

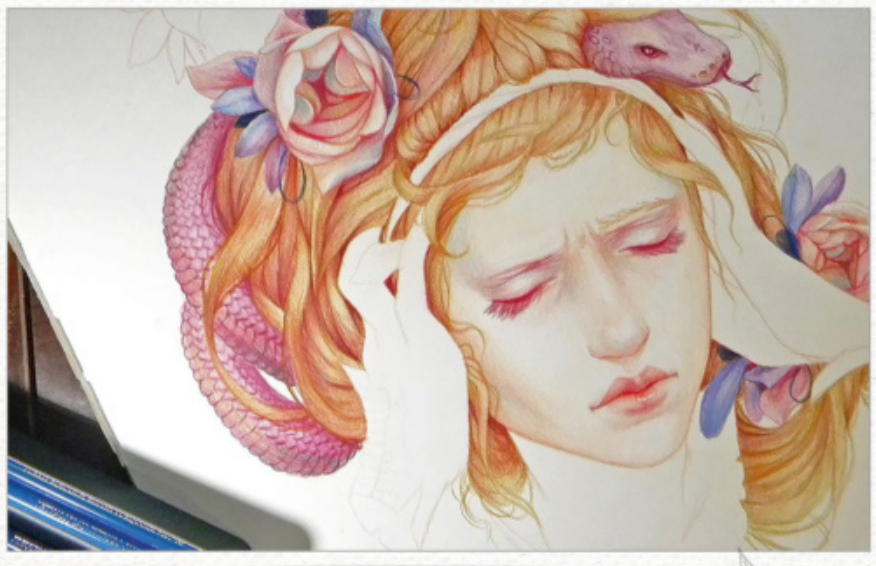
2 Tooth of the paper

The grain (tooth) of your paper is very important when using coloured pencils, just as it is with watercolours. Rough tooth is when you can see the ridges on the paper more easily. It provides a grip for coloured pencils to bind to when layering. It also provides a distinctive texture to a piece. Smooth tooth is when the ridges are very fine and are harder to see. I find this type provides easier blending with coloured pencil work and watercolour work. It's also easier for a medium to come off of the paper, though. There are levels of tooth in-between as well.

“Don’t push too hard or the colour will stick, making it more difficult to softly blend”

3 *Use multiple colours for a solid colour*

Adding subtle colours to a solid colour item creates a more interesting effect. When painting any item, I try to incorporate many colours into it. The main colour will be whatever colour I'm using, but I'll also add very subtle hints of purple, blues, pinks, yellow, orange and so on. This gives a wonderful sense of life to the subject I'm painting, something that's especially important for painting skin tones. Skin is never just one solid colour, of course. Depending on lighting, emotions, freckles and so forth, skin will have all sorts of subtle colours in it. This rule can is true for a number of other subjects, too.



4 *Lightfastness of coloured pencils*

Coloured pencils have something called lightfastness. This determines the pigment's resistance to fading or changing its hue over time. This is especially important when under the UV rays of sunlight because it'll cause the fading to be faster. Different brands of pencil will have different ratings. Each colour itself will also have its own rating. So, it's a good idea to do some research on whichever brand you're using, and the colours in the range. If you plan on selling your work, this is a important aspect to be aware of. Generally, the higher quality the brand, the more lightfastness is provided.

5 *Oil- and wax-based pencils*

Both oil- and waxed-based coloured pencils have wooden shafts surrounding the medium. The most common binder used in coloured pencils is wax. The waxed-based pencils are easy to erase and blend. They're prone to something called 'wax blooming', however. This is where the waxy binder comes to the surface of the artwork, changing its sheen. Oil-based coloured pencils are less common. The oil-based binder in these pencils are harder to break than the wax-based ones. They have a unique layering effect and can be more easily controlled in this way.

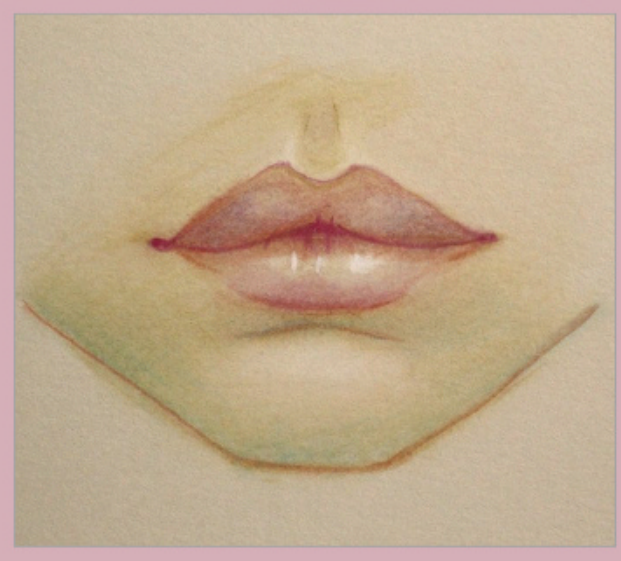
6 Step by Step: Blend lips with coloured pencils

1 PREPARE FOR COLOUR

Begin with an outline so you can see where your highlights and shadows will fall. The outline will also help you see if everything looks okay before placing your coloured pencil layers down. Erasing an outline is much easier than erasing multiple coloured pencil layers.

2 BLEND WITH A STUMP

I like to start out with soft gentle layers to gain a better idea of lighting placement, shadows and the colour palette. After each soft layer I'll gently rub the blending stump across the paper where I've just coloured. I keep repeating this process until it's blended to my liking.



3 ADD OUTLINES

After I have applied many layers of coloured pencil I'll check the overall look before I begin this final step. If it's finished then I'll begin to add outlines to the lips. This step is done with the coloured pencils only. The blending stump isn't required for this last part.

7 *Coloured pencils on top of watercolour*

I like to merge coloured pencils with watercolours and have found it is much easier to use watercolours first and then layer coloured pencils on top. If pencil is used first, then the watercolour paint may not bind to the waxy surface that the coloured pencils have left behind. This can leave beads of paint and water across your work. But if you put the watercolour paint down first and then the coloured pencil, it can produce a beautiful effect. This is a fun technique to test out. Both mediums have unique qualities and textures. Combining the two elements creates a medium all of its own.

> "Unifying your colours will bring harmony and cohesiveness to the piece"

8 *Unify your colours*

No matter what medium you're using, it's a good idea to make sure that your artwork has unifying colours. This consists of a particular colour palette, mood and a way of spreading these across the entire art piece. Unifying your colours brings harmony and cohesiveness to the piece as well. You can also achieve this by using a tinted paper, or painting the background before starting your work. This will show through whatever you lay down on top of it, thus giving it an appearance of cohesion. When I use coloured pencils, I'm fond of using tinted paper produced by Kraft.

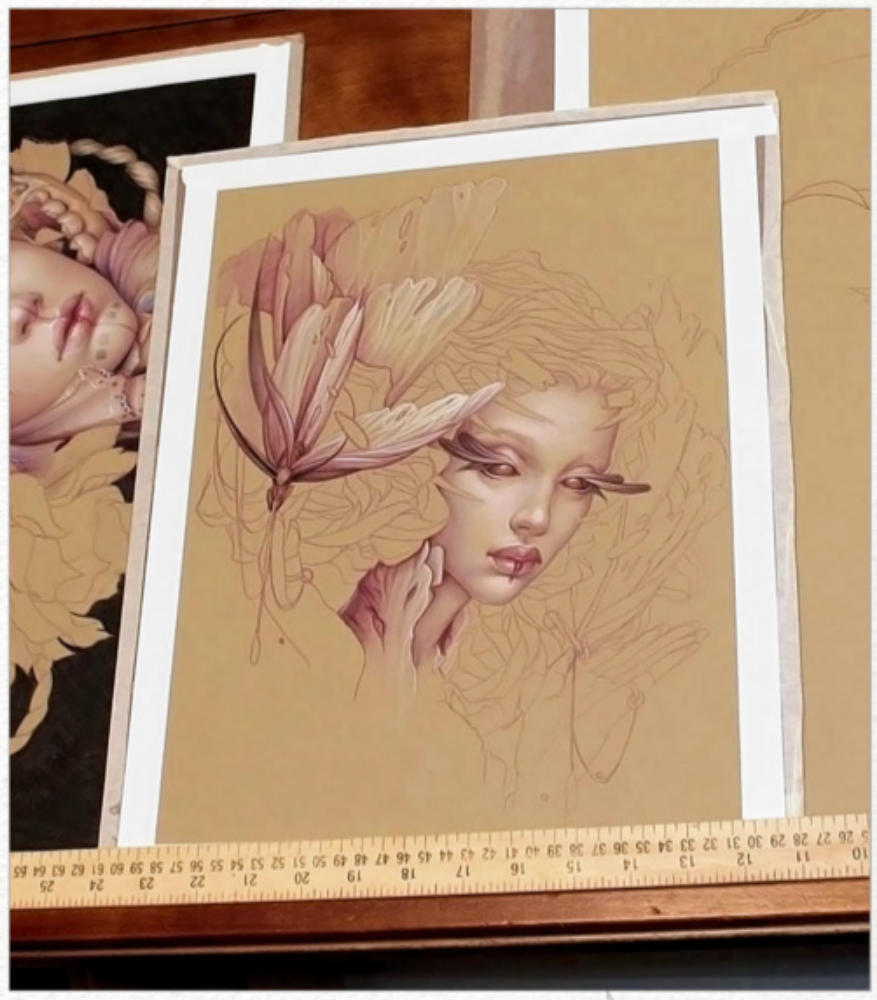
9 *Outlining*

I prefer to use a distinct outline in my artwork, whether it's using thin outlines or bold outlines. This helps to give a distinct look to a piece and is useful for achieving a certain mood. It can help pinpoint the viewer's eye to a certain area. It also gives a stylised look, if that's what you are hoping to achieve. However, it isn't all about the final effect. When at the beginning stages of a piece, I find an outline defines the work before I add coloured pencils or paint.

"A kneaded eraser is best for lightly picking up coloured pencil"

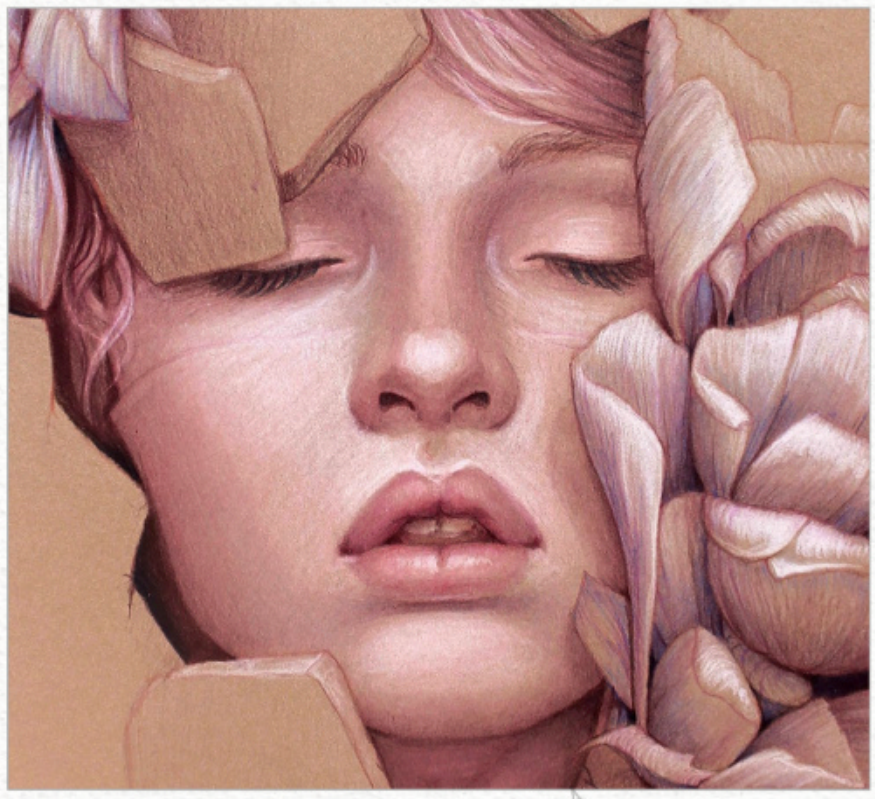
10 *Making use of erasers*

Using the right eraser is crucial for coloured pencils. A gum eraser works best when trying to fully erase an area that's been covered by coloured pencil. A kneaded eraser is best for lightly picking up the coloured pencil binding off the paper. This works wonders when correcting mistakes, or if you're deliberately lifting colour from an area such as the eyes. The kneaded eraser has a consistency like putty and is true to its name. You'll have to knead the eraser before using it, and then knead it again after picking up the coloured pencil off of the paper.



11 *Keep your paper straight*

I always prefer to mount my paper to a board. This can be done by applying a layer of matte medium and carefully placing the paper on top of the board. If mounting paper isn't an option, I like using tape on my paper when working on a piece. This helps me keep it neat and tidy. It also provides a sturdy surface so I don't accidentally bend the paper. Whether you're using coloured pencils or watercolour, these methods are very beneficial, especially for watercolour because they reduce the chance of the paper buckling after adding water.

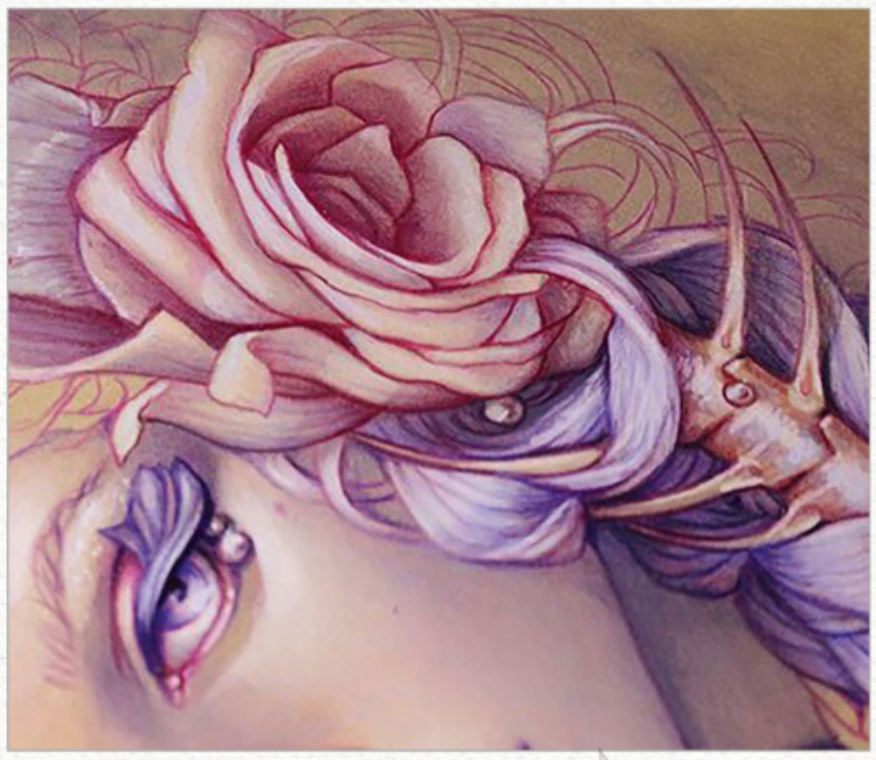


12 Add other mediums

If you prefer to use only one medium that's perfectly fine. However, if you do want to experiment, please don't feel intimidated by the trial and error process of using multiple mediums within one piece. I was unsure at first, and it kept me from exploring so many wonderful opportunities. Each medium has its own traits and effects. Each can provide specific textures. Using different mediums can be extremely interesting and fun for both the artist and the viewer. It's good to understand the mediums you're using, though. This helps provide some idea of how a medium will work before applying it.

13 Bring the canvas to life

Dip into your experiences to add a special layer of authenticity to your piece. This means using something like a memory, feeling or scent when creating your work. For example, the special feeling you experienced when sitting down with a friend at a coffee shop, or a memory of a childhood experience. You can be abstract or use hyperrealism. Whatever you choose makes the piece unique to you. I've found that people resonate with these pieces the most.



14 Trial and error

It's good to follow the rules of whatever medium you use, but there's nothing wrong with stepping outside of the box if it means achieving the effect you want. Remember when I said that using a certain type of eraser works better than the other? You may find that using a rubber eraser actually gives the best result for you. Or using watercolour over coloured pencil looks better. Whatever it is, trial and error will occur when you step outside of that box. But don't be intimidated! The process is entirely fun.

15 Contrasting concepts

My final tip that I'd like to add is to use contrasting concepts within one piece. For example, I love to use beauty and ugliness in my artwork. I'll use the beauty of colours, flowers, the softness of skin or hair, and the female form. I'll also tend to use something that's the opposite to all of that, such as bones, insects, sharp teeth, or anything that may provide discomfort to the viewer. Somehow this provides an interesting concept to a piece. Especially when the 'ugly' parts are harder to spot at first. To me this is a very stark representation of what life is like.

Acrylics

ILLUSTRATING FOR A BOOK COVER

TRAN NGUYEN elaborates on her painting process for the young adult book Spin the Dawn, revealing how she captured the book's narrative in a single image

This painting was done for the cover of Elizabeth Lim's Spin the Dawn, which will be released by Penguin Random House in 2019. The book follows the teenage Maia as she competes to become the imperial tailor. Maia finds herself on a journey on the reimagined Silk Road that helps her develop into the person that she's meant to become. The story takes place in a fictionalised version of 1800s China.

Alison Impey, the art director at Penguin Random House, reached out to me to illustrate the book cover. We decided the best way to capture the essence of the story is by depicting Maia in a moment of strength and determination. We wanted the character to be surrounded by the elements that help her find her true self – things like Chinese embroidered fabric, shimmering golden thread and her avian companion, Edan. I also wanted to capture the story's lively spirit by posing Maia in an action stance with her magical scissors in hand and having cloth billow around her.

The painting is executed traditionally with acrylic and coloured pencil on paper, and I made sure to use colours that convey old China, shifting between different blue and yellow gold tones. The elements and colours that make up the composition work together to help showcase the overall mood and atmosphere of the book.

Photo by Jo McCune

Tran is an award-winning freelance artist who paints traditional art with hints of fantasy and surrealism. See more at www.mynameistran.com.

Step-by-step: Creating a cover that stands out on bookshelves

1 BRAINSTORMING MULTIPLE COMPOSITION OPTIONS

I start off with very rough sketches to explore different compositions. After several iterations, I narrow it down to my favourite three and bring them into Photoshop to add value and flesh out the general tone of the sketches. I'll send them off to Alison (the book's art director) where she'll approve the one that she finds most compelling.

2 FROM REFINED LINES TO PAINT STROKES

After Alison approves one of the sketches, I refine it into a line drawing where I scan, enlarge and print it onto watercolour paper. Once it's printed, I'll retrace the drawing with Prismacolor Verithins to prepare it for the painting phase. Enlarging and then printing the drawing will often blur it, so this helps redefine its lines.

3 CREATE VALUES AND BUILD UP FORM

I block in large areas with flat acrylic washes, then create value by overlaying glazes on top of glazes. Afterwards, I use Prismacolor Verithins to push areas of dark value and clean up edges. Acrylics and coloured pencils complement each other well if applied gently. By switching between the two media, I establish form in the scene.

© Penguin Random House. Art director: Alison Impey

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Points of interest: A heroic seamstress

Visual storytelling
Little touches of details can go a long way to help tell a story. In the book, Maia befriends the court magician, named Edan, who later turns into a hawk and helps her on her journey to complete her given tasks. To help convey their relationship, there should be a visual connection between the two. One way is to tilt Edan's head slightly towards Maia and intertwining them with the golden thread.

Adding depth to the narrative
It's important that book covers read well at a distance, so try to avoid cluttered compositions. A standalone depiction of the main character will often work, but if you want to add more depth to it then a subtle hint of a background is enough for the viewer to fill in the blanks. Adding a hazy silhouette of mountaintops can say a lot about the ambience of the book.

MATERIALS

PAPER
- 300lb Arches hot press watercolour paper

BRUSH
- Escoda Opera Round 6 & 8
- Winsor & Newton Winton filbert 12
- Winsor & Newton Monarch filbert 10

PAINT
- Golden Acrylics in Hi-flow, Fluid and Heavy Body
- Liquitex Acrylics in Heavy Body

COLORED PENCIL
- Prismacolor Premiere Pencil & Verithin

The bigger picture
When creating works that involve type (title and author's name), be mindful of your composition. Try to dedicate a section of the painting where there's little value change and remember to give the composition room to breathe. Don't be afraid of negative space. Think of the big picture and how it will look on book shelves. A clean, bold design will stand out the most.

Setting up focal points
Using colour and value to establish focal points will help to direct the viewer's attention. Establish warm areas of yellow against cool blues to draw their eyes to where you want them to go, such as the warm glow of Edan's eyes. Areas of high contrast will also help to emphasise the most important parts of visual storytelling.

First Impressions

Tiffany Turrill

Competing with a fellow school pupil helped this illustrator step up her art game

Where did you grow up and how has this influenced your art?
Gonna get heavy here! I grew up in Texas in a tumultuous family, and didn't have the best childhood. There were many threads of mental illness, abuse and economic hardships, but ultimately the environment pushed me towards escape in books, movies and telling my own stories. My doggedness to leave that environment draws a direct line toward my career.

What, outside of art, has most influenced your artwork?
I originally set out to be a concept artist for film because I loved Star Wars Episode I so much. Film and special effects has been hugely foundational for me. Other than that, I'm one of a million illustrators who dreamed of going into marine biology or paleontology. Basically I'm a horse girl, but for dead things in the ocean.

THE EARNEST WORK
"A personal piece that came together very quickly, inspired by a Mary Oliver poem."

THE DREAMING
"Promotional work for the new Sandman series. The assignment was very free-form, which was great!"

Does one person stand out as being helpful during your early years?
There was one other art kid in grade school with whom I had a silent competition. It made me try to draw better. Although my family didn't understand me or my artistic bent, my grandmother made sure I went into art education. The kind words and support of professors, illustrator friends, and co-workers really keeps me going some days!

> "I set out to be a concept artist for film because I loved Star Wars Episode I so much"

What was your first paid commission piece?
An extremely 00s job, two pages in a 'Bush Countdown' calendar during my senior year. I received $300 and cut my teeth on uncomfortable conversations with nightmare clients! Yikes.

© 2018 DC Comics

What's the last piece you finished, and how do the two differ?
Just wrapped my first comic cover with DC/Vertigo! It took considerably less time, the composition and rendering are much more confident. The business experience was better, too

What are your painting rituals?
I am a reference FIEND. I will collect images for hours, familiarise my brain with anything I can find, then just draw. I use tracing paper like Photoshop layers, tweaking the forms slightly until the forms and correcting with each layer. Also, tea.

How is your art evolving?
In many ways I've become much more myself during my time freelancing. I learned digital painting on the job and have never felt completely comfortable with it, so leaning into pencil and watercolour felt very natural.

What advice would you give to your younger self to aid you on the way?
Trust your gut. When you aren't committed to a project or a style, the work suffers. If a would-be client seems difficult or unprofessional, thank them and move on. Explore styles but don't chase trends. Learn to advocate for yourself. Develop a life outside of art, and put in the work with people you care about.

How has the industry of fantasy art changed for good since you've been working in it?
I'm a relative newcomer to fantasy art, as I spent 10 years doing concept work for video games. Fantasy is very chill and welcoming! There's a bit more professional bandwidth to suss out a personal style, which is refreshing. It takes a bit more time, though; I went full-time freelance in 2015 and am just gaining traction.

Tiffany is an illustrator working in publishing and games. She specialises in dark art, folklore and creature design. See more at www.tiffanyturrill.com.

IMAGE COURTESY OF LUIS NIEVES

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