

LOISH! OVER 40 INSPIRING SKETCHES INSIDE



1 NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

magFX

NEW WAYS TO

DRAW & PAINT

Create an engaging, surreal character with **Audra Auclair**

HOW TO AVOID A CREATIVE CRASH

ALSO INSIDE

15 WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR COMPOSITIONS

VISIT THE ART STUDIO THAT'S PART MUSEUM

ADDING GLOW TO AN OIL PAINTING



INTERVIEW

GORO FUJITA

We talk to the illustrator leading the VR charge



DRAWING SKILLS! HOW VALUES HELP CREATE DEPTH, WITH PATRICK J JONES



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



Reading this month's Artist in Residence instalment from Paul Davidson (page 32) made me want to jump on a train to Tyne and Wear, and demand entry into his studio-cum-museum. As Paul says, a studio should be a place that's both inside and outside of your head. How great to be able to surround yourself with real objects of inspiration? Beats my office desk any day...

I suppose artwork created in virtual reality is the next best way of getting inside an artist's head. Just watching the videos that accompany our interview with Goro Fujita (page 38) provided a glimpse of the artist's talent, as well as highlighting the potential of using VR in a studio's creative pipeline, where any method of speeding up the production process is a good thing. Then read how Martin Nebelong used VR to help him create an image for a book cover (page 76). Both artists make it clear that VR will be a key tool for those working in a range of fields within the art industry.

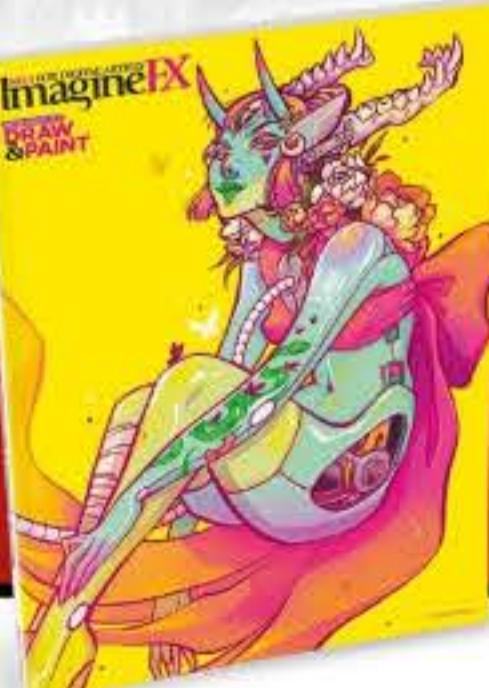
Finally, Vertex 2019 is just around the corner, and some big hitters have just joined the growing roster of 2D and 3D creatives who'll be there to pass on their knowledge. Find out more on page 31.

Claire

Claire Howlett, Editor
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EDITOR'S CHOICE Three of my top picks this month...

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Loish delivers a feast for your eyes

Even the loosest of sketches from the ultra-popular illustrator are enough to inspire. Am I right, people?

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Ways to work smarter, not harder

I found it interesting to read how different artists apply this business adage to their creative endeavours.

114



Ultra-realistic fantasy art

Dave Leri tells us that a balanced lifestyle, fresh air and rock music have helped him get to where he is today.

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Artist Portfolio

**GORO
FUJITA**



"I came up with an idea of worlds within worlds, to see how far I could zoom in"

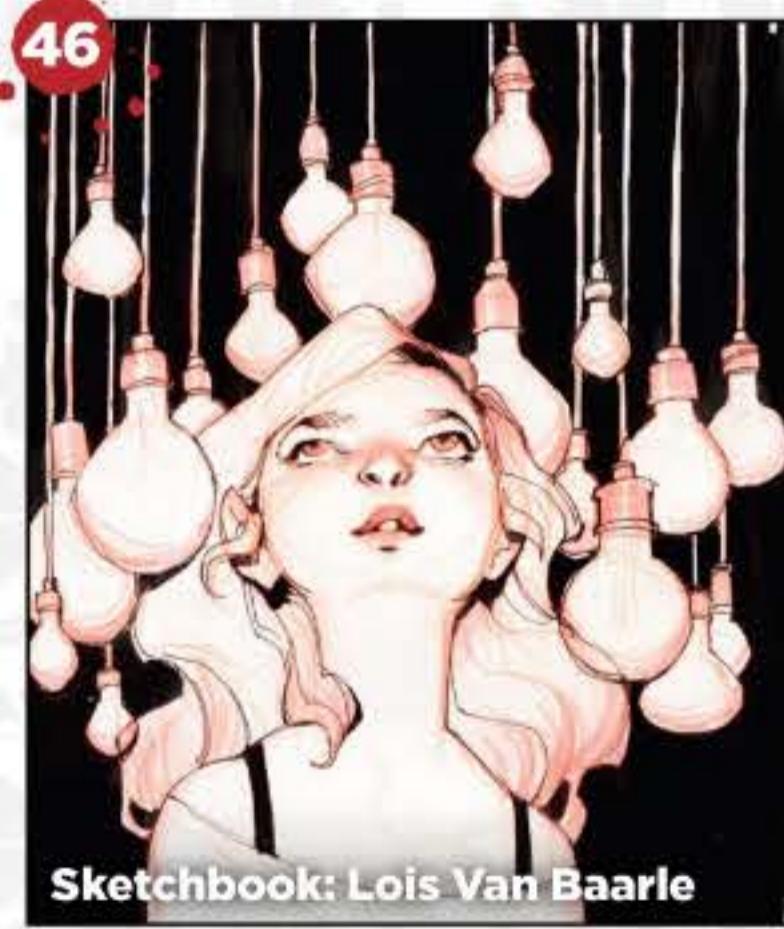
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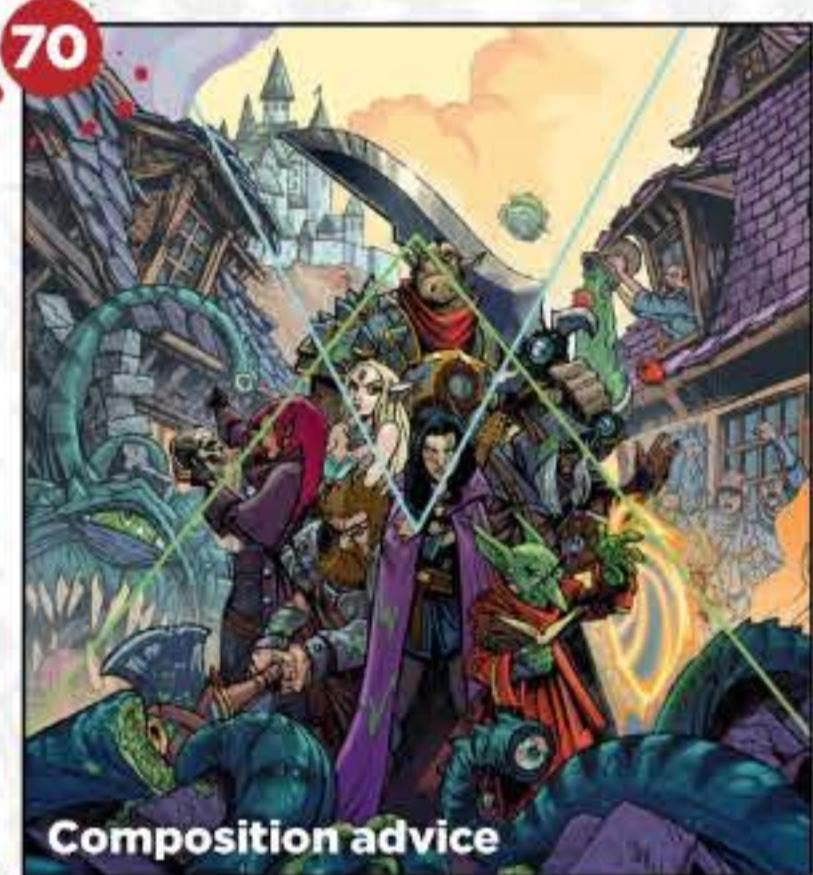
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Find out what type of music has influenced this artist's fantasy art.

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Getting hold of this issue's video resources is quick and easy. Just visit <https://ifxm.ag/draw171paint>

WORKSHOP VIDEOS



Create your best-possible composition in virtual reality

Martin Nebelong explains his techniques in his video, and his workshop's on page 76.



Think like a sculptor when drawing the human body

See how Patrick J Jones brings a sense of dimensionality to his studies. There's more on page 82.



Improve your Painting Process

We review this instructional video on page 95.



Watch Goro Fujita in action

Turn to page 38 for more on the VR superstar.

ImagineFX

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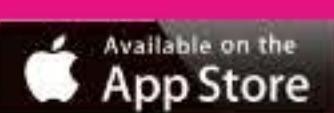
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EXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



Shan Qiao

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Photoshop, ZBrush WEB: <https://ifxm.ag/shan-q>

Concept artist Shan has worked for clients including Blizzard Entertainment, Digital Domain and Tencent, and is known for his innovative character designs.

1



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2



3



1 CROSSFIRE 10TH ANNIVERSARY

"I loved working with the Crossfire team. Everyone contributed their ideas to the art, and the result is so relatable."

2 SAMURAI DESIGN

"I enjoy making sculptures as much as painting. Sometimes I create character designs in 3D. Samurai characters are a common theme in my work."

3 PROLON

"I love dark fantasy worlds. I wrote a story, came up with 30 illustrations, and edited them into a five-minute animated short. It took me three months."

4 KOWLOON STORY

"I always challenge myself to build a rich and colourful world in one illustration. I create chaos with a certain logic, and let the viewer spend time exploring it."

4

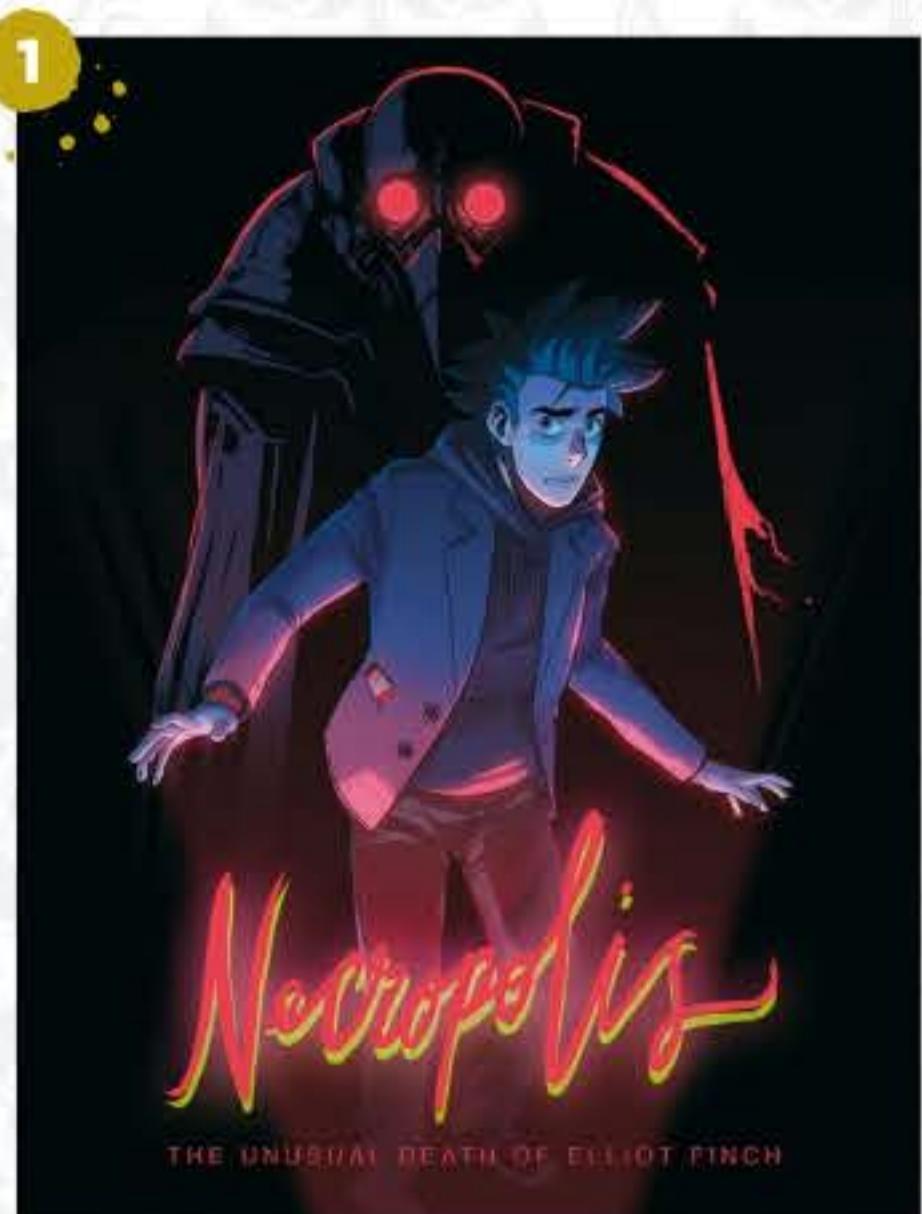




Patrick Warren

LOCATION: England MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: www.patrickwarrenart.com

Patrick is writing and illustrating his own graphic novel, entitled Necropolis: The Unusual Death of Elliot Finch. He's currently a freelance artist, following a stint as an artist and animator at Capcom.



1 NECROPOLIS - CHAPTER 1

"This front cover needed to catch people's eyes while feeling dark and ominous. I kept everything in the background dark, with the foreground figure underlit by the neon title."

2 GLITCH TUNNEL

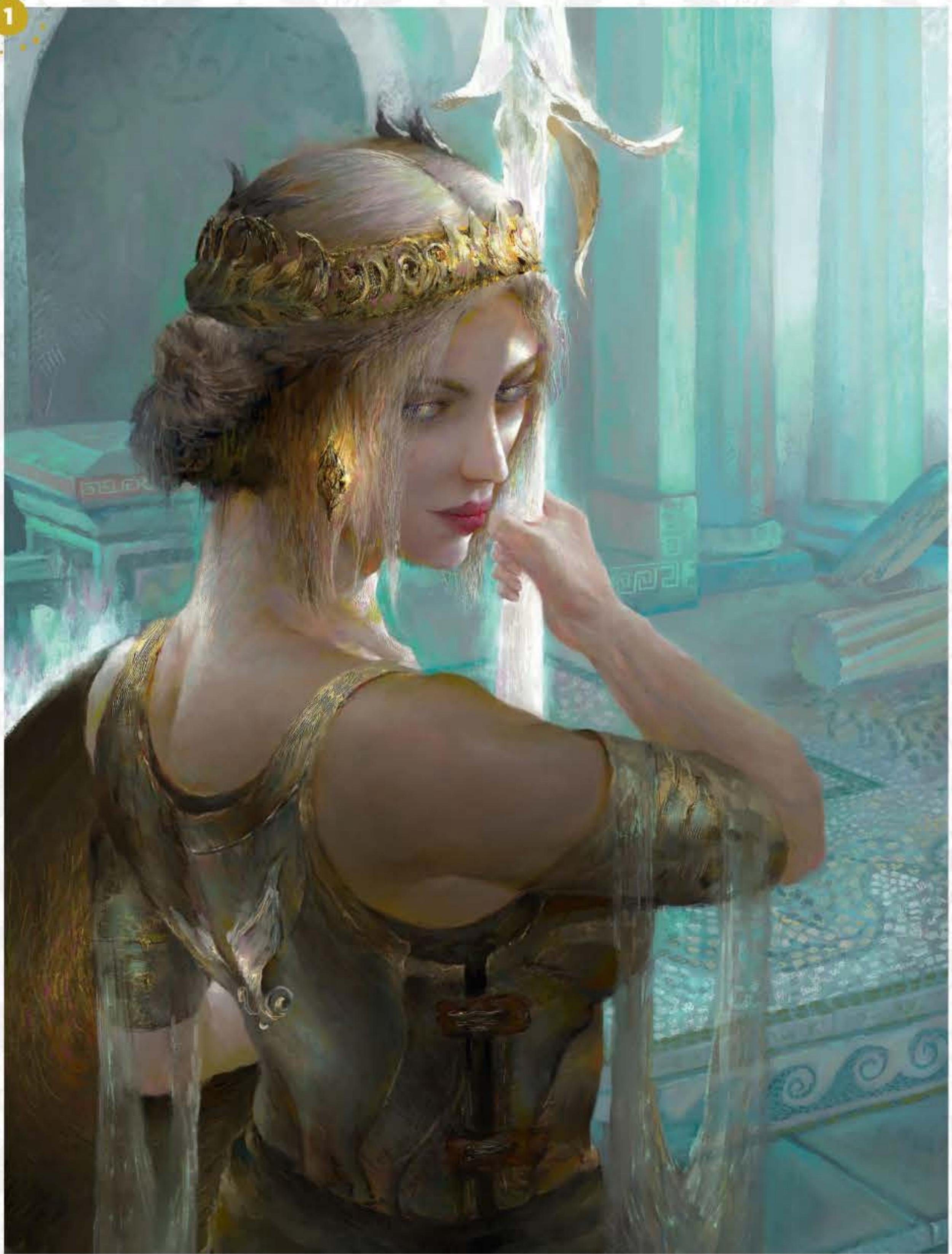
"I was interested in old VHS distortion and glitch art when I did this. I spent a long time getting the distortions and imperfections to look, well, perfect!"



3 CHARACTER COLLAGE

"Another poster-style image with a bunch of characters I invented. I wanted to make a cross between a 70s film and Capcom video game poster."



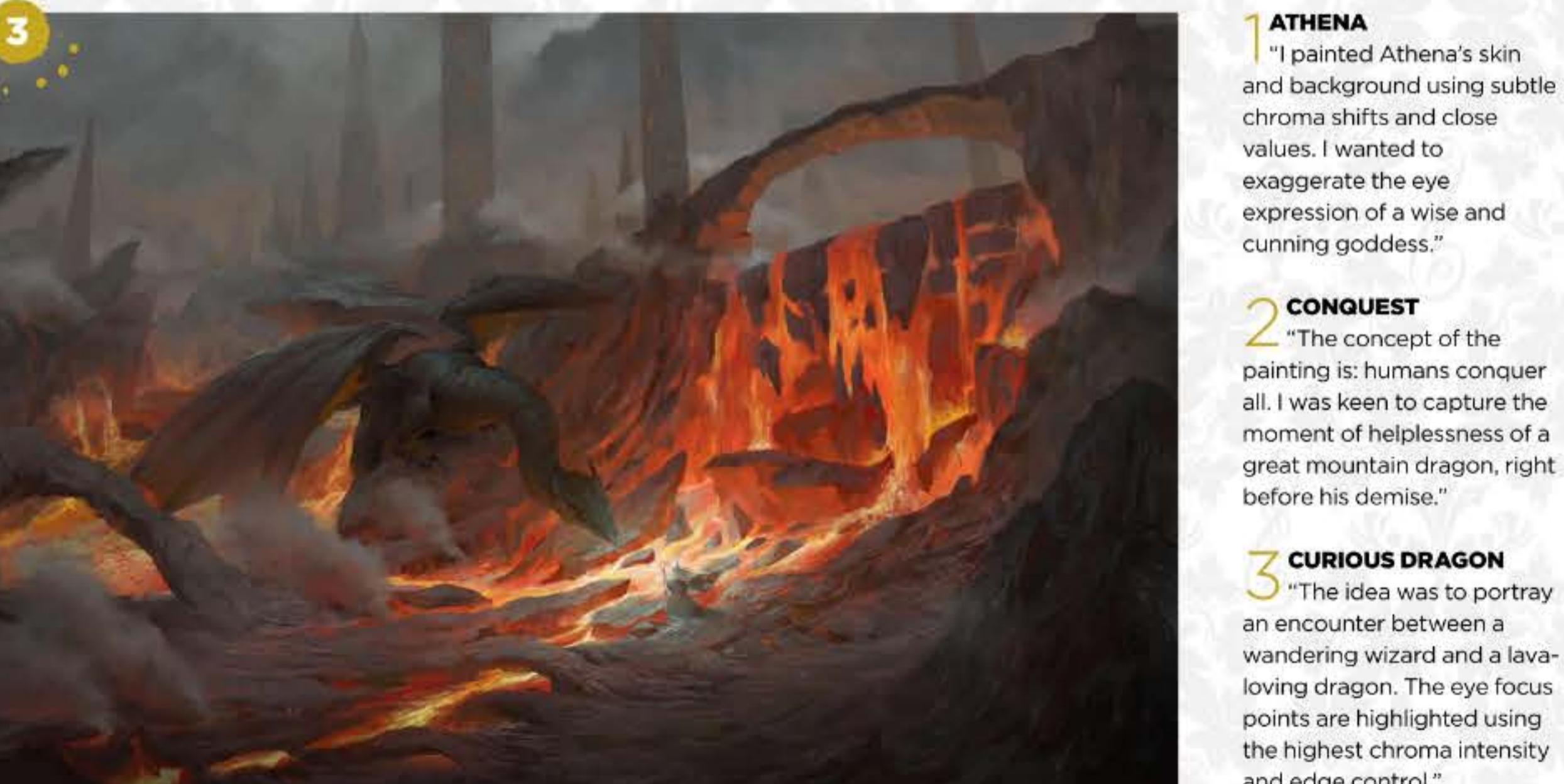




Sanjin Halimic

LOCATION: Bosnia and Herzegovina MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: www.sanjinhalimic.com

Illustrator and concept artist Sanjin likes to combine contemporary and classical painting techniques, themes and influences, and strives to produce paintings that tell a story or convey a certain mood.



1 ATHENA

"I painted Athena's skin and background using subtle chroma shifts and close values. I wanted to exaggerate the eye expression of a wise and cunning goddess."

2 CONQUEST

"The concept of the painting is: humans conquer all. I was keen to capture the moment of helplessness of a great mountain dragon, right before his demise."

3 CURIOUS DRAGON

"The idea was to portray an encounter between a wandering wizard and a lava-loving dragon. The eye focus points are highlighted using the highest chroma intensity and edge control."



Pablo Leon

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Photoshop, Maya WEB: www.artspabster.com

Pablo works as a background designer and painter for TV animation, while in his spare time he likes to hone his skills by exploring new methods, such as 3D.



3



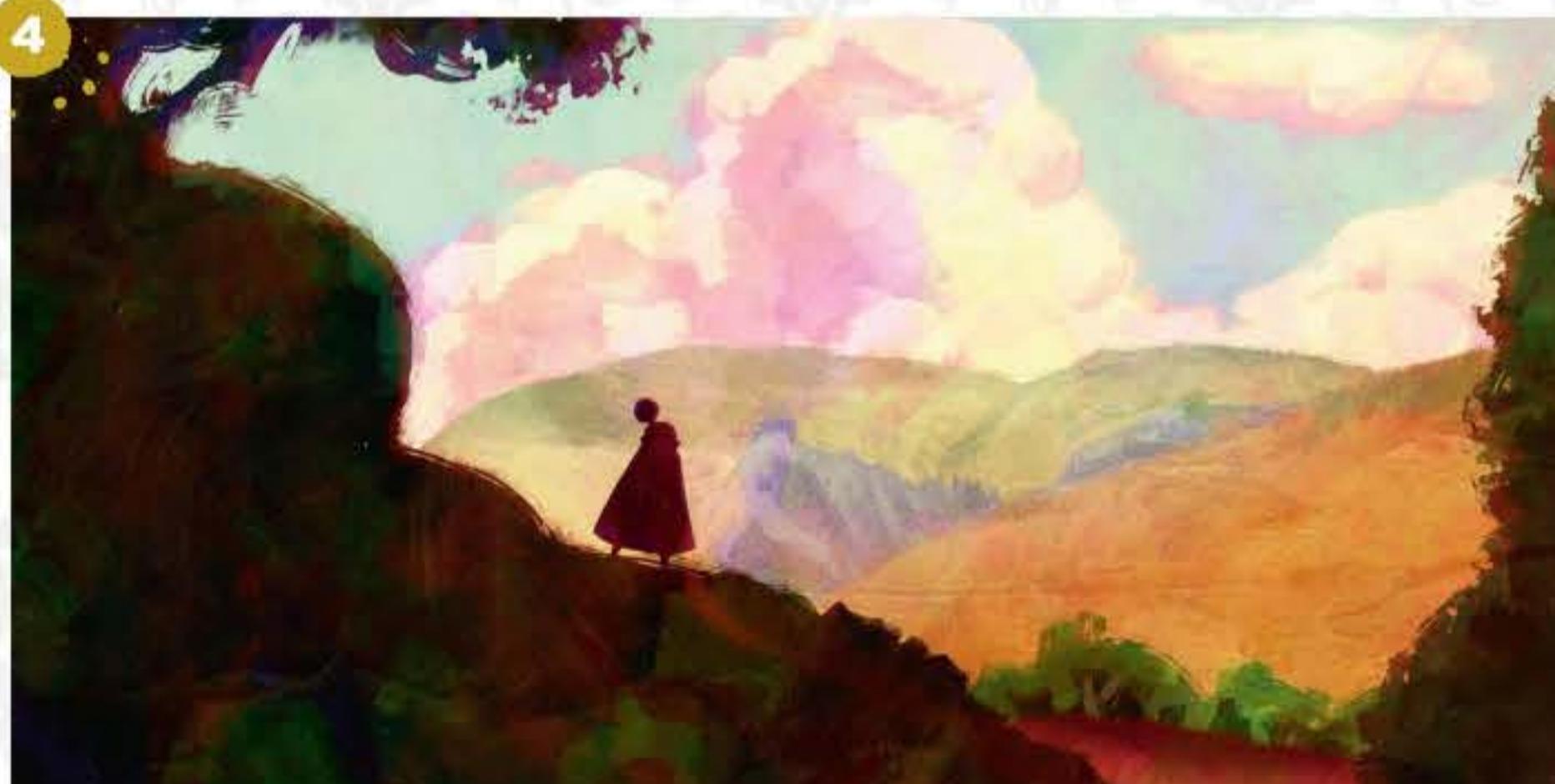
2

1 DEATH ISLAND

"I love experimenting with cloud shapes. I thought this piece was a great opportunity to try out something different."

2 THE OVERSEEING TOWER

"I painted this for a demo on stylised environments. I was pushing for a feeling of discomfort that someone can see your every move from high up in that tower."

**3 WE CAN BE
HEROES TOO**

"I wanted to illustrate the idea that these inner-city kids can aspire to be heroes just as much anyone else, no matter their background."

4 A TINY PRINCE
"The Tiny Prince embarking on a quest! I'm a big fan of the Californian Impressionism movement, and wanted to do my take on it."



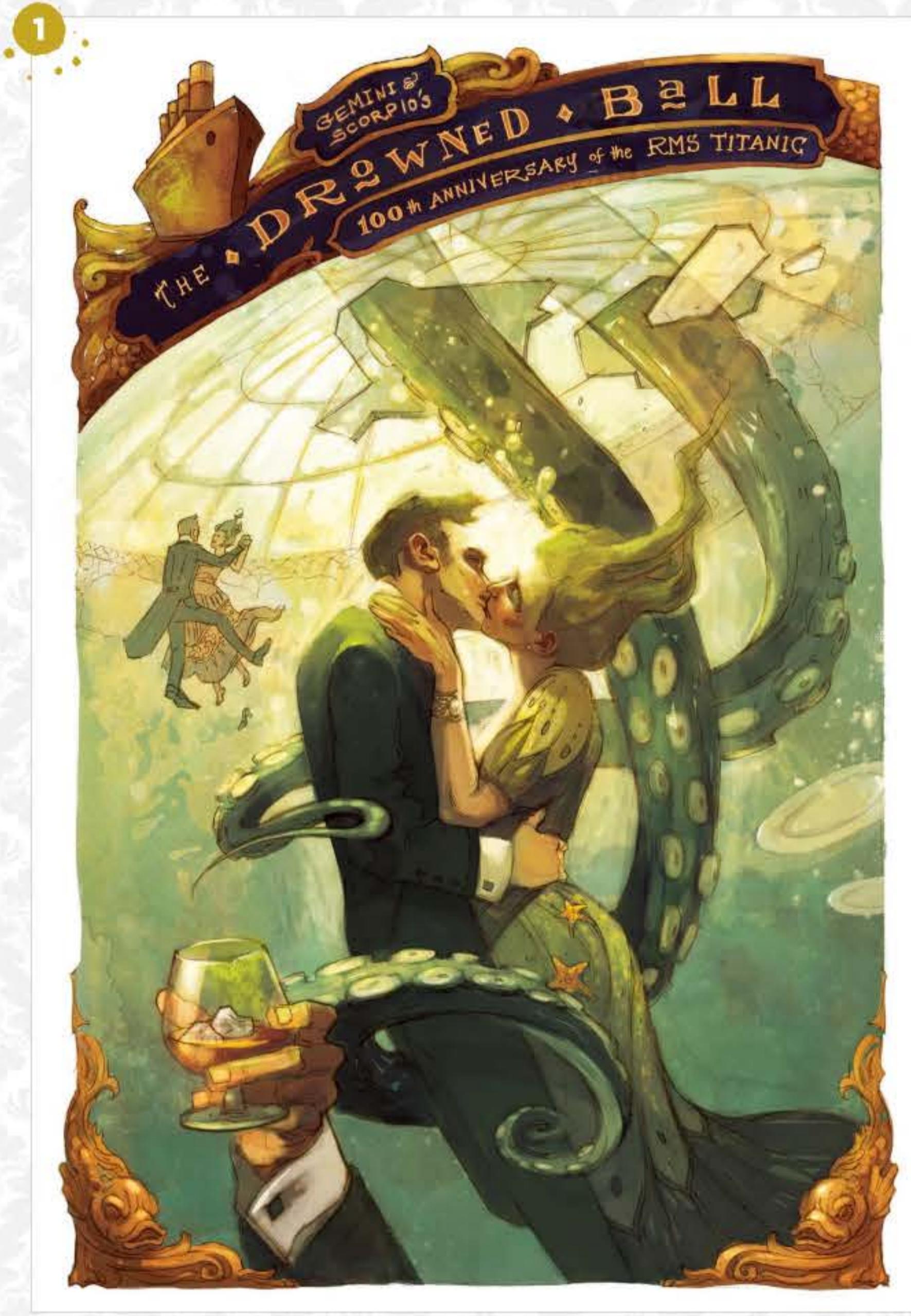
Zelda Devon

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Photoshop, pencil and watercolour WEB: www.zeldadevon.com

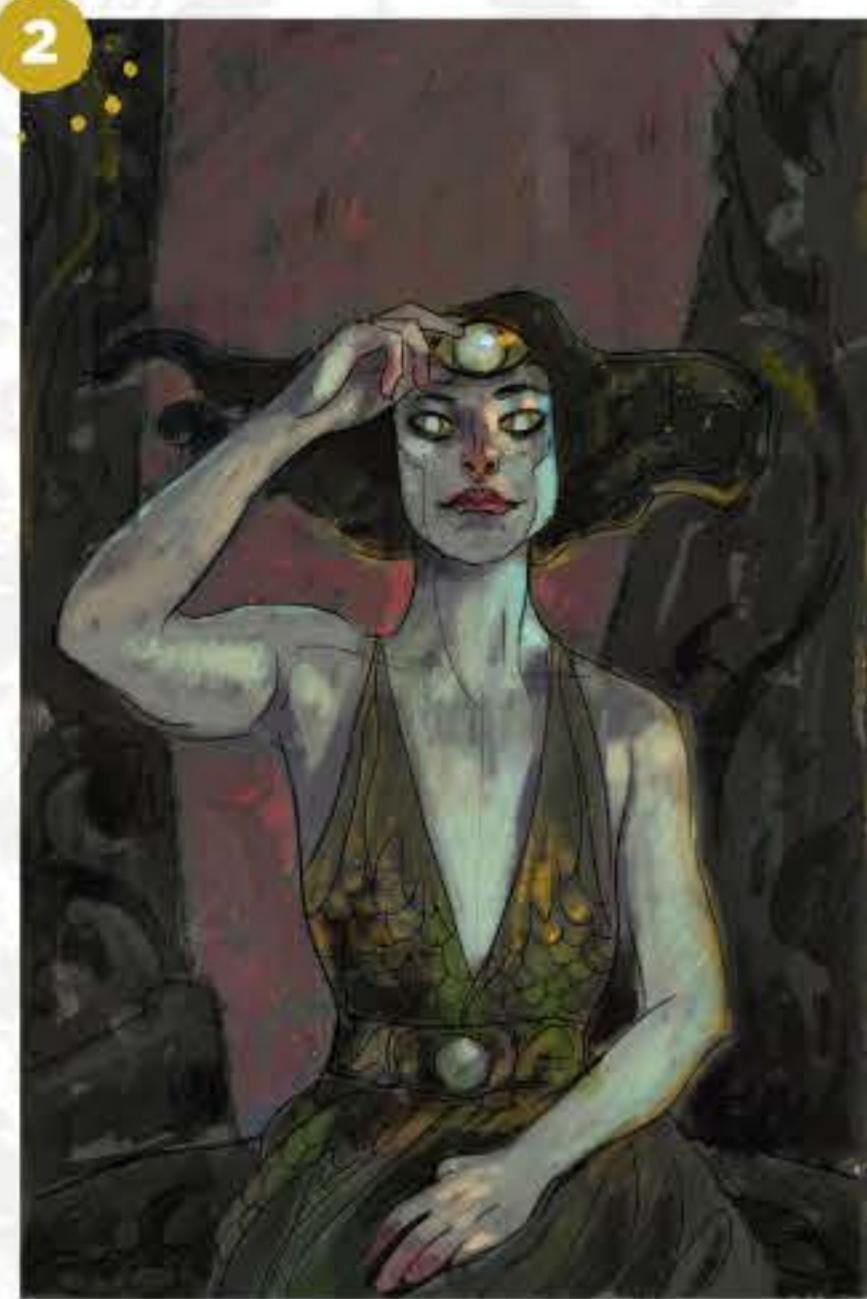
Zelda has been a full-time illustrator for about 11 years, and is based in sunny LA. "I love dark, sad, strange subject matter with a dollop of sex and death," she says.

1 DROWNED BALL

"Commissioned for a dress-up dance party, this poster celebrates the 100th anniversary of the sinking of the Titanic. I have a deep love of tendril-like shapes and elaborate turn-of-the-century ornaments."



2



2 MAGIC AMULET

"This is a fleshed-out version of a 30-minute speed painting for the Daily Spitpaint Facebook group. It gives me the motivation, a subject and a deadline for personal work."

3 SHOOTING ARROWS

"Another speed painting and personal piece. Even though my work is digital, I strive to give it a traditional feel. It was inspired by Alphonse Mucha and Gustav Klimt."





Rhiannon Shephard

LOCATION: Germany MEDIA: Photoshop, Painter WEB: www.rhiannonshephard.com

"I grew up in a world of art and a house full of props including dinosaurs, figures and castles," says Rhiannon. "It provided a great source of inspiration, and is still inspiring my work today."

1



2



3



1 LAGOON WRECK

"I was thinking of Treasure Island with this piece. I love nature and the different textures, colours and atmosphere it gives. I tried to capture all of that here."

2 GANNET VALLEY

"I wanted to experiment with rock forms, so blocked out some rough shapes and worked on that. I tend to work with autumnal colours so I purposefully went for a different palette here."

3 ADRIEN

"I focused on creating a contrast of soft and hard edges, while keeping a painterly feel. You can really see the brush strokes."



Danielle Burton

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

Danielle - known professionally as Rio - loves creating whimsical characters for various illustration projects, including her comic *Lucid Dreaming*.

1 MERMAID III

"Every couple of years I like to see how far I've progressed in my art. I do this by repainting this mermaid. This is my attempt from 2018."



2 BLACKBIRD FANART

"I've been falling in love with the art that we've seen from Jen Bartel for her new comic *Blackbird*. I couldn't resist creating some fan art for her!"

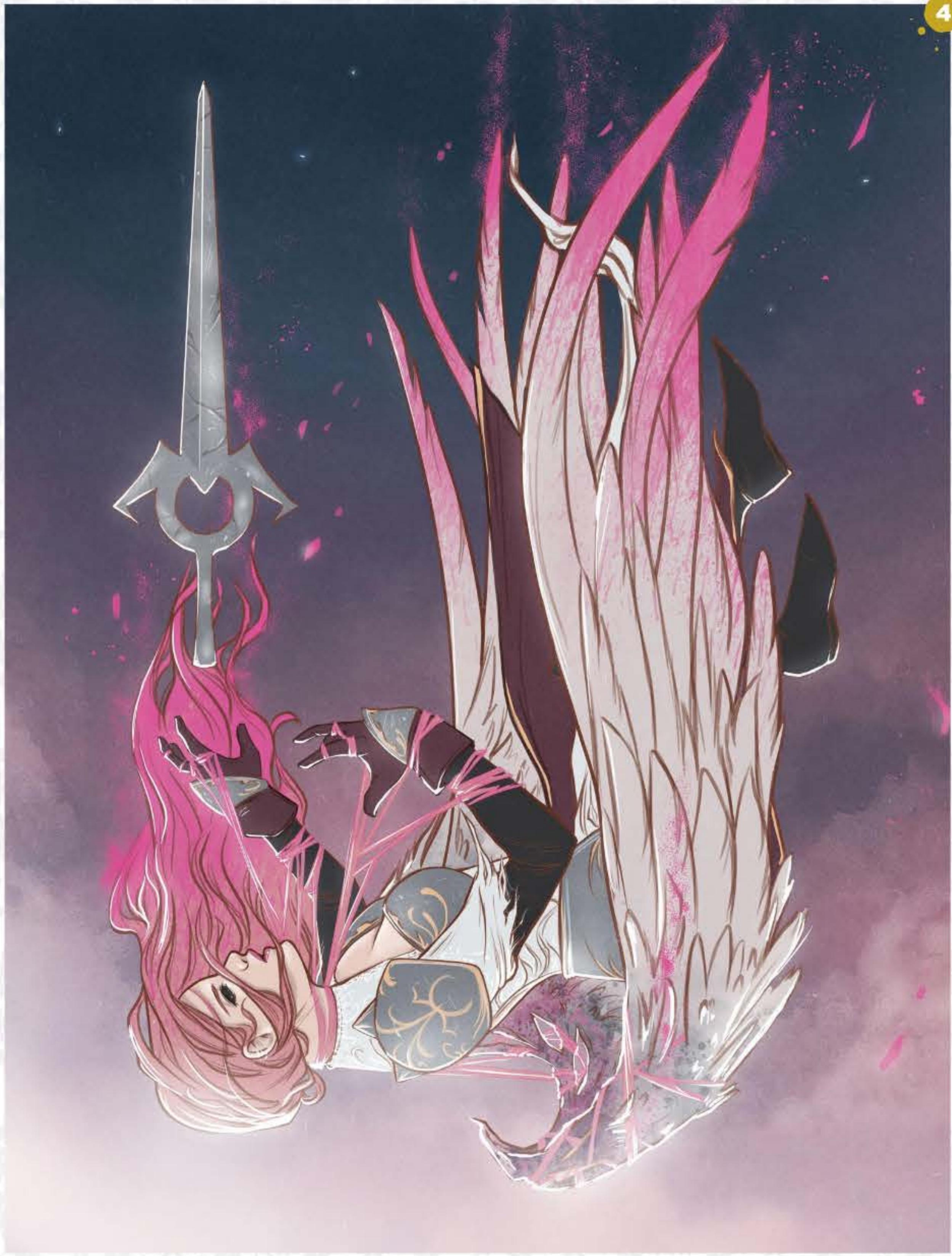


3 NIGHT ROSE



4 SUCCUMB

"This illustration was created for Light Grey Art Lab's show, a tribute to 25 years of Magic: the Gathering. I chose to illustrate Gisela and her tragic story."





Nagore Rementeria Muriel

LOCATION: England MEDIA: Photoshop, Procreate WEB: www.nagorerementeria.com

"I have a strong love for colour and telling stories through images," says artist and animator Nagore. "When I'm not drawing, I enjoy travelling and taking photographs, which serve as inspiration for my paintings."

1



2



1 DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE

"Alice in Wonderland has always been a great source of inspiration for me. I imagined a modern Alice going down the metaphorical rabbit hole of adulthood and the feeling of gravity that sometimes comes with it."

2 ALFONSINA Y EL MAR

"I was inspired by Mercedes Sosa's song of the same name. It's a story of unrequited love that tragically ends under the sea, surrounded by a host of mythical creatures."

3 AT THE CAFÉ

"I was walking around London when I saw sunset light entering a little café in a beautiful way. I wanted to spark the viewer's curiosity: what is the barista looking at so intensely?"

4 WILDLIFE PHOTOGRAPHER

"I'm fascinated by penguins and ice. I had recently seen an exhibition at the Natural History Museum in London, and got inspired by the beautiful photographs of the Arctic on display."

3



4



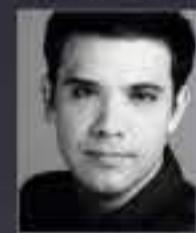
How to avoid a creative crash

Block busters The stresses of a creative life can weigh artists down and choke their productivity. **Dom Carter** learns how you can get out of a rut

Today's artists have to wrestle with creative satisfaction, a sense of industry identity and motivation - all within and around a hectic schedule. It's no wonder that these conflicting interests can lead to a creative crash, where people buckle under the weight of their internal and professional expectations.

To keep his mind active and his work fresh, illustrator **Randy Gallegos** has diversified his creative output along five genres, including a week-long series of daily still-life paintings. These genres allow for different types of experiments that also feed into other bodies of work.

"There are two kinds of experiments you can involve yourself in," Randy



explains. "Private ones, which allow you the greatest creative freedom as well as the greatest freedom to fail and learn; and public ones that you'll show to the world."

FIND THE FUN FACTOR

Making time for these sorts of experiments is difficult. But for Randy, trading leisure time for non-commercial work is a wise investment because he now has five revenue streams. "I never lack for work," he says, and the benefits don't end there.

When I did illustration, if I had a gap in my schedule then I'd get in a panic



Pauline Voß realised her painting crisis was caused by two things: "First, a lack of goals and intent; and second, an absolute overload of possibilities."



Randy Gallegos says, "The more you find your own voice through creative explorations, the less you worry about comparisons because you find increasingly that you're doing your own thing."

"When I did purely illustration, if I had a gap in my schedule I'd be in a panic reaching out to clients trying to fill it, and this could also tempt one into taking low-paying work just to feel employed. Instead, now if I have gaps, I have a large stack of other work I can be doing and I'm excited to get to it."

For self-described 'art things maker' **Petri Balanovsky**, finding this 'fun factor' is a crucial way to deal with a stressful workload. "I'm not saying you should half-ass your assignments and treat it all like a big joke,"

he says. "What I'm suggesting is you find ways to make





VERTEX IS COMING...

We're very excited about this year's event for 2D and 3D artists. Find out which pro artists are already on the guest list, and how you can attend. [Page 31](#)



SURROUNDED BY IDEAS

The compact studio of Marvel and 2000 AD artist Paul Davidson has been set up so that wherever he looks, there's fresh inspiration to be had. [Page 32](#)



WHAT'S ON YOUR MIND?

Our Letters page is the place to air your views on past and future articles in the magazine, ideas to share with your fellow artists, or just a place to say hi to us! [Page 37](#)



Patri Balanovsky says, "If your task list keeps getting longer and you find there aren't enough hours in a day, you're packing your calendar too tightly."



Patri believes your individuality is a key artistic asset. "Some artists might work faster, or they may have a better grasp of anatomy. You shouldn't let that discourage you."

► it fun for yourself. A spoonful of sugar and all that jazz.

"If there's a need for hundreds of sketches, for instance, keep them loose and get them done quickly, while enjoying the process. See how many you can do in an hour while still keeping them fairly readable and coherent. Challenge yourself – make it into a game."

GO COMPARE

There's no sure-fire route to creative success and fulfilment, though. Taking the advice of fellow artists can lead to personal comparisons. However, comparing yourself to others isn't as

The daily structure of Buddah Doodles helped Molly Hahn through a creative crash. "I needed something to help me set my sail in the right direction."



Hold on to your dreams.

counterproductive as it first appears. In fact, for digital artist and illustrator **Pauline Voß**, comparison is key. "If you don't have any reference points out in the wild, how are you supposed to know where you are?"



Having only discovered online art communities a little over two years ago, Pauline quickly made

"Different people deal with problems in their own way. This enriches the conversation, while sharing our stories leaves us feeling less on our own with our struggles."



For cartoonist and Buddha Doodles author **Molly Hahn**, known online as Mollycules, a healthy amount of comparison is a



“If there's a need for hundreds of sketches, for instance, keep them loose and get them done quickly”

friends and forged connections by being blunt and authentic about her creative struggles. This encouraged other artists to open up about their paths and purposes, and last year she presented these findings at her first talk at Industry Workshops London.

"One of the main things I learnt during those discussions is that it takes one to know one," Pauline says.

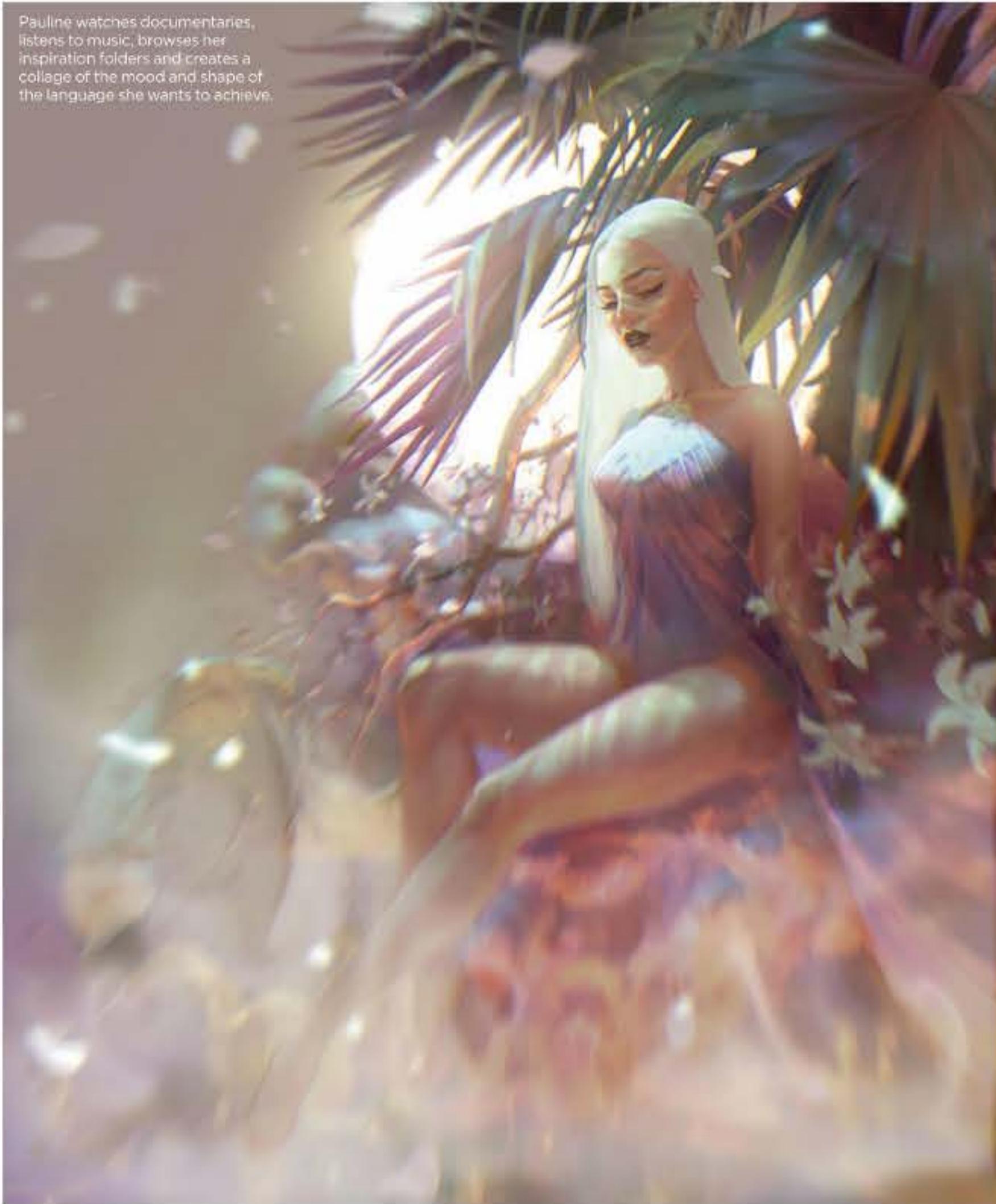
natural part of the desire to become a better artist. And like Pauline, giving a talk – this time at 2016's Trojan Horse was a Unicorn – proved to be a useful turning point.

"A few of the speakers I spoke to at the conference said things like, 'I wish I could do what you were doing, you have your own thing and that's what I've always wanted,'" says Molly. ►

Patri believes that, "Embracing these struggles and hardships means accepting they exist, first of all, and then dealing with each one as they come."



Pauline watches documentaries, listens to music, browses her inspiration folders and creates a collage of the mood and shape of the language she wants to achieve.



INDUSTRY INSIGHT

PATRI BALANOVSKY

The artist shares his thoughts on common creative crash causes

How do you overcome comparing yourself to other artists?

I'm not sure "overcome" is the right word to use here. It's more a question of attitude, so it's only an obstacle to tackle if you let it be one. Working in a creative field, competition and comparison are going to be part of your struggle. Use it to become a better artist instead of letting it intimidate you and ruin your mojo.

So there's a constructive way to go about it?

I think the best approach is to first let yourself feel your feelings. Don't deny them, they're just going to grow stronger. Once you let yourself be flooded with these feelings of inadequacy and dismay, you're ready to be constructive and productive about the whole issue.

Productive how?

Look for what you enjoy most about other artists' work. See if there's something they're doing that you can learn from and utilise in your own creative process. How "good" they are in comparison to you will become irrelevant the more you study their work. Who's to say what's "good" or "better"?

How do you stop yourself from burning out?

I believe burning out isn't a bad thing. The moment you're feeling you're "done" – that's when you're ready to step up your game. Burning out just means you've been working yourself too hard and have forgotten to enjoy what it is you do. It's just your brain's way of telling you it's bored and that you're stuck in a rut.



Patri is a concept artist, vis-dev artist and illustrator at Plarium with a penchant for stylised character rendering.

<https://ifxm.ag/patri-b>



Confidence helps Randy tackle the hurdle of the blank canvas. "This comes through either increased technical skill or meticulous pre-planning."



Patri says creative crashes are part of being an artist. "Accept these crashes, turn them into challenges and evolve them into life lessons."

» "I was honestly very surprised to hear this and it helped me to take a step back, get perspective on my situation, and have more confidence within myself for what I've built."

CREATIVE EXERCISES

Of course, not every artist feels at home on stage, but hearing how Molly developed her inspirational Buddha Doodles books demonstrates that structure can be the secret to climbing out of a creative rut. "When I started Buddha Doodles in 2011, it was at a time of great confusion around my cartooning career," she reveals. "The freelance work that was supporting me financially was also taking a toll on my creativity and ability to focus on my own art.

"A fellow illustrator who I met at a convention suggested that I do a daily sketch practice and share it online, so I did just that. Doing this was not only personally therapeutic, but it helped me to hone my craft by challenging me to create a new visual story every

Molly worked hard to hone in on what makes her happy. "I cut back and refocused on what I do best and what works for me."



Offer your shadow LOVE.

“The freelance work that was supporting me financially was also taking its toll...”

day. I didn't know it at the time, but this was the idea that would eventually morph into Buddha Doodles."

HARD WORK PAYS OFF

For Patri, his design muscles were stretched by the 'Silly-houette challenge', which involved turning a single shape into creative solutions. "Ironically, working in a constrained manner eliminates any misconceptions you may have about the limits of design and style," he says. "Trying to solve a shape and turn it into something that has a story, appeal and purpose is difficult and therefore very gratifying when done right."

And in a way that's all creative crashes are: a problem to be solved, whether that's by exploring new skills, shaking up your work process, or discussing your problems with others.

"Conversations like these open us up and educate us, make us better artists," says Pauline. "And being allowed to simply be human makes everything better for everyone." ■

Self-care is crucial for Pauline when it comes to getting over a creative crash. "My favourites are deep conversations with friends, going to the cinema, sauna sessions and weekend trips away."



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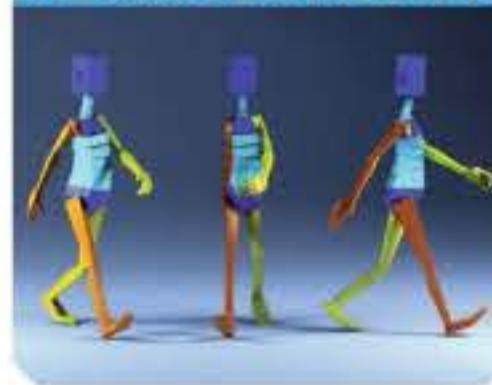
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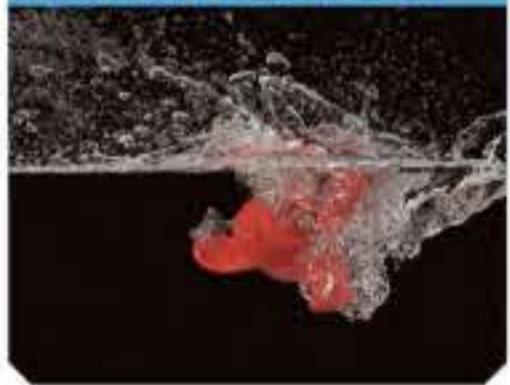
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ILM and Atomhawk now confirmed for Vertex 2019

Added dimension Leading 2D artists join 3D talent for talks and workshops at the ultimate CG creators event

The second annual event for CG specialists, Vertex, is just around the corner. Hosted in London's Olympia on 8 March, the conference is a valuable opportunity to hear inspiring talks from industry pros covering workshops, career advice, portfolio reviews and much more.

Headlining this year's line-up are ILM and Atomhawk, who join the likes of Blender, Milk and Framestore Pictures to provide industry insight. In his talk



about art direction for film, ILM's supervising art director **Jason Horley** wants to convey that there are multiple ways to get into the world of CG.

"There isn't just one path that you have to follow to be a successful concept artist," he says. "In addition to telling our own personal stories, we also want to give some insight into the different aspects of film making we're

“In addition to telling our own stories, we also want to give some insight into the different aspects of film making”



Attendees at this year's Vertex will hear insights from Jason Horley, who worked on *The Last Jedi*'s visual effects.



involved in as an art department, by showing the progression of our work from pre- to post-production."

Meanwhile, Atomhawk's founder and director **Ron Ashtiani** is looking forward to meeting new artists across all specialisms.

"I'll be talking about the opportunities that exist for artists within the games industry and how to approach finding the right role in the right kind of studio," Ron says. "I'll also be sharing some insights into the personal and professional attributes that make an artist a valued asset to a successful art team."

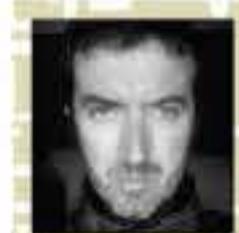
Buy your tickets for Vertex 2019 at www.futureevents.uk/vertex/begin. Entry to the exhibition, which includes life drawing and portfolio reviews, is free while access-all-area passes are priced at £49, or £25 for students.

Ron was the art director for Marvel's *Guardians of the Galaxy*, which included the Milano spacecraft, painted here by Roberto F Castro.



Paul Davidson

Creative clutter This veteran comic illustrator is proud to display his sources of inspiration and fresh ideas



I've set up my studio in the smallest room in the house. It's my favourite place in the world, but the workspace needs to be controlled. My 'rabbit hole' is truly a place where you can find yourself lost in, if you're not careful...

Ever since I was a young boy I've had a drawing corner filled with things of interest to me, and my studio is no different. I love the controlled clutter, and the business of it all, but put a piece of paper in front of me and I'm still able to quieten my mind. I live just a minute away from the beach in

Whitley Bay, north-east England, so my day starts with my girlfriend and I walking our cockapoo, Dolly. But by 10 in the morning I'm sat in the studio, under starter's orders.

Typically I hit the ground running if I'm faced with a deadline. Drawing a comic book for Marvel requires a certain amount of work produced every day, so there's not much time to let the mind wander.

BLUE IS THE COLOUR

As well as working on commissioned assignments, I'm developing my own comic book property: Blue Vortex. This dual approach gives me more ➤

The human skeleton is a bit of a studio cliché, but it does look cool. The choice of objects around me is very deliberate. Everything is there to inspire and/or remind me to think in a certain way.



Steampunk and sci-fi are my favourite genres, while the animation cels of Orko, from the classic 80s He-Man cartoon series, all serve to inspire.

Artist news, software & events

An Imperial scout trooper from Return of the Jedi. Star Wars had a huge impact on me, and this model reminds me to think like my younger self.

When I'm not scanning in art and prepping illustrations to be print ready, the iMac enables me to listen to music and watch films. I used to paint digitally, but all my work is now traditional.

A copy of my art book, which is for sale on my website. It's a 25-page A4 glossy collection of unpublished works, personal projects that I'm developing, or experiments in illustration techniques.



I collect original animation cels. I love the nostalgia, and I admire their beautiful simplicity. It's easy to be too fussy, and it takes great confidence to strip away any unnecessary detail.

In 1998 I produced an ongoing comic book series called Dwarflords for Games Workshop's Warhammer Monthly magazine. I have my favourite pages from that series stuffed into corners of the studio.

“ My ‘rabbit hole’ is truly a place where you can find yourself lost in ”

ImagineNation Artist in Residence



» control over my time. Creating a book - or more accurately a universe - from the ground up is a daunting endeavour, but I've set up my studio so that all my inspirations and influences are on show to aid me in my task.

This book is years in the making, but in many ways it started during my early attempts at creating inspiration corners. An artist's studio should be exactly this: a place that's both inside and outside of your head; somewhere that feels familiar enough to have a creative conversation. Like one big experiment, a lifetime of collecting objects that have inspired me will come to fruition with this creator-owned comic book. Blue Vortex is a direct result of this studio that I sit in.

“An artist's studio should be a place that's both inside and outside of your head”

Interior page from my sci-fi comic Blue Vortex, all coloured by hand. I'm hoping for a 2019 release date.

Alex Toth's designs are truly inspirational. I try not to look at other artists' work too much, because it can influence your own voice.



‘Solve et Coagula’ is Latin for separating something into its constituent parts before synthesising certain elements into a new thing, and this is how I see my studio. I sit among all of its curiosities and inspirations - the books, drawings, models and so on - and spend my days making something of my own in a new way.

I surround myself with this collection every day, and I love it. My studio

offers up new genre examples and exciting ideas. Someone once said that the secret to creativity is knowing how to hide your sources. For some reason I didn't get the memo.

After a decade spent working as a concept artist in the video games industry, Paul returned to his first love, comic books, and now produces sequential art for Marvel and 2000 AD. You can see more of his work at www.pauldavidsonart.com.

Artist news, software & events



SFX



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Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



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Can you help?

I'm a huge fan of ImagineFX, and have been for many years. I was buying the magazine when it was in its original, smaller size.

My entire back issue collection was lost in the fire that destroyed most of the town of Paradise in California, late last year. So I was wondering if you guys have any back issues in the ImagineFX office that you would be willing to send to me?

I work freelance, creating comic book artwork, and I lost all of my art tools in the disaster. I was able to save my laptop in the little time I had before we were told to evacuate the neighbourhood. I hadn't downloaded any of the assets from my copies of ImagineFX in a long time and now I'm kicking myself for that oversight. I would appreciate any help that you could possibly give.

There are assistant programmes out there for everyone except artists, and as you know, we work in a very expensive field. Thank you in advance.

Robert, via email



Digital back issues of ImagineFX are available to buy through the app, and many come with the original resources, too. You can also buy the most recent print editions via our subscription website.



We believe our regular tips-based articles can be applied to whatever art program or traditional media you use.

Claire replies Oh Robert, I'm so sorry to hear this. I wish you the very best of luck in recovering from this horrendous event.

Unfortunately, we only have a few spare print copies of the most recent issues. These are usually the ones that you can buy online at www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk.

I know it's not the same, but you can purchase digital back issues using the ImagineFX app. From issue 85 onwards, the resources that originally came with the print version of the magazine can be downloaded. Furthermore, the iTunes version of the app has a 'Complete your collection' option that enables you to buy copies going back to December 2009 (currently 119 issues) for just under £0.40 an issue. I'm sorry we can't be of more help.

Affordability issues

I love this magazine, and the artwork and interviews that you run are fantastic. However, there seems to be a strong focus in your workshops on programs that I think a lot of people won't be able to buy.

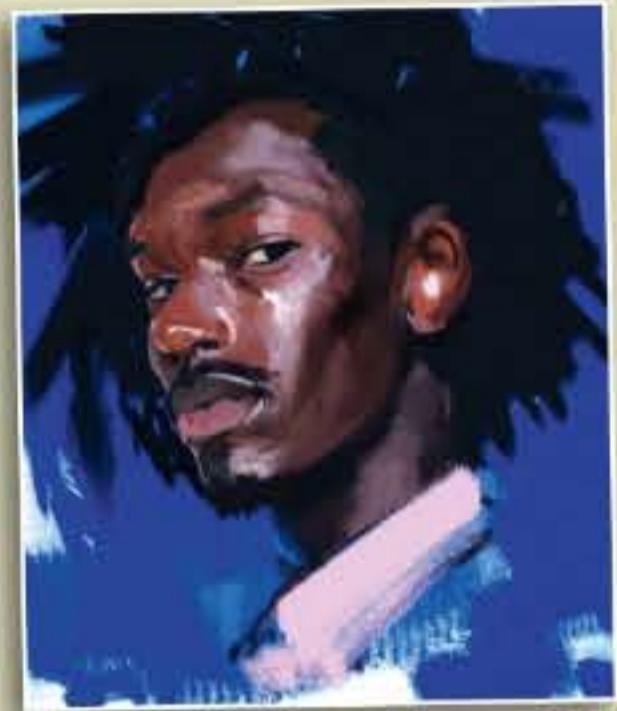
For instance, I can't afford an Apple iPad – even the most basic model – and most of the step-by-step articles are based on Procreate or even Photoshop, which can cost an arm and a leg. I'm finding it a little frustrating that I can't create art using the programs and tech your artists use, purely because of a price point. Have you got any plans on featuring workshops that use Sketchbook and other low-cost apps? I know that there's nothing better than paper and pencil, but when you need to get a sketch down without carrying loads of pens, pencils and art pads... well, digital's the way to go for me!

Sentientdark, via email

Claire replies I do appreciate the not-insignificant cost of a subscription to Photoshop, but it's the leading program for artists, which is why it features so often in the magazine. I'm always on the lookout for artists who use cheaper apps and software such as Procreate Pocket or ArtRage. And we also have more general-advice articles, such as character or concept art tips, that can be applied using any software – or even that pencil and paper pad you mention!

FRESH PAINT

New works that have grabbed our attention



Darrenr4 @big_diff



AURA @aura.arts



Johanna Tarkela @lhuin

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

GORO FUJITA

Critics say virtual reality is a niche concept that's yet to find its feet. **Gary Evans** meets the Japanese artist who wants to prove them very, very wrong

Goro Fujita recently went to a dinner party with friends in Pasadena, California. After the meal, a group of guests got out their musical instruments and started to play: a guitarist, a man on piano in the corner, another plucking a double bass, and a drummer beating a drum box with his hands.

Goro wanted to join in. So he opened his laptop, put on his virtual reality headset, and slipped a controller on each hand. While the musicians played, he painted and animated them using Quill, the virtual reality illustration software.

"It was a meta-moment for me," Goro says. "I was painting and animating them while listening to their live performance. At one point, I imagined the animated characters were playing the music! It's crazy to think how far technology has come

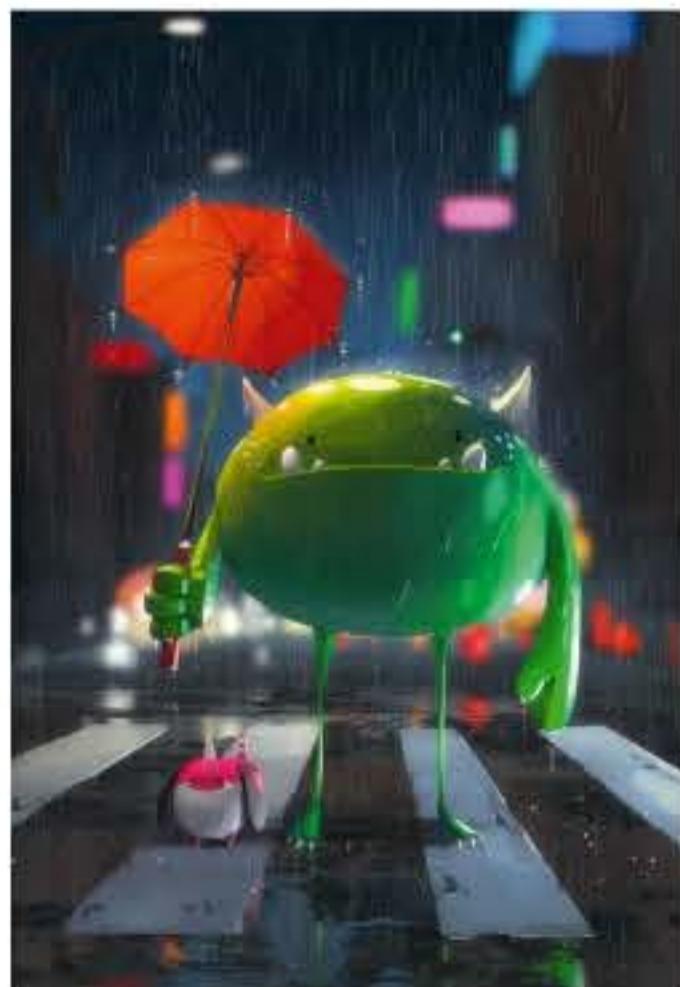
that it enables artists to create animated pieces in almost real time."

It's a good story, but is it anything more than that? Goro's worked on many successful animated movies that didn't use VR. The technology's been available for some time and while some say it's the future of digital art, critics still regard it as a niche concept. What can this tool do for art that ➤

MEET JEAN CLAUDE

An example of Goro's live stream painting work from 2016. "With freestyle work, every decision is spontaneous and you get a lot of happy accidents," he says.

“It was a meta-moment for me. I was painting and animating them while listening to their live performance”



CROSSWALK MONSTERS

"Good art can be well executed. Great art conveys personality, story, emotions and goes beyond."

► couldn't already be achieved? This is the problem that Goro faces every day: "Whenever I design a VR experience the most important question I ask myself is, 'Why VR?'"

ALIEN INSPIRATION

Born in Japan and brought up in Germany, Goro wanted to work in animation after seeing a short film called Alien Song (1999). Victor Navone's piece shows a green, one-eyed, 3D alien singing and dancing to the Gloria Gaynor song I Will Survive.

Artist PROFILE

Goro Fujita

LOCATION: US

FAVOURITE ARTISTS: Zorn, Sargent, Picasso, Craig Mullins, Tadahiro Uesugi and Carter Goodrich

SOFTWARE USED: Quill, Photoshop, Procreate
WEB: www.facebook.com/goro.fujita



before... well, no spoilers here. It contains many of the characteristics that would later make Goro's work so good: it's technically proficient, but it's also captivating, whimsical, funny and just a little bit weird. "I knew 3D animation was the thing I wanted to do for the rest of my life," he says.

Goro found a university near Berlin that specialised in 3D animation. But studying at The German Film School for Digital Production was expensive. To raise money for fees, Goro and

FLYING FRIENDS

"One of my favourite subjects to paint is robots. I like the idea of giving technology a personality."

a friend founded a company that developed software, sold hardware, carried out programming and web design... a bit of everything. "I consider myself a fairly technical artist, but I'm still very 'right-brained' and don't do maths and programming well."

A QUICK LEARNER

The business lasted a year, but he made enough money to pay for some of the school fees. His grandmother helped with the rest, his parents with living costs and so, in 2002, Goro enrolled in film school. The three-year course required him to create 12 film projects. There wasn't enough time to perfect these pieces, but he learned how to work quickly and efficiently – all good practice for what was to come.

In his second year, Goro met Stephan Stoelting, an artist who painted using Photoshop and would become his mentor for the next 12 months. Goro became interested in digital art, learned the fundamentals and then started doing daily speed paintings. By graduation, he'd completed over 350 of them. He says these speed paintings – 30 minutes, start to finish – were the reason why he switched from animation to illustration at the school.

"In the beginning, I made every possible mistake, but the longer ►

“I knew 3D animation was the thing I wanted to do for the rest of my life”

SEE THIS
IN ACTION!
TURN TO
PAGE 8



JAM SESSION

"I was invited to dinner with friends, and a spontaneous jam session took place. So I picked my own instrument and animated them in Quill."

THE MUSHROOM COLLECTOR

Goro explains how every new piece starts fast and rough, before he gets down to the details



1 SHAPES, NOT LINES

The robots in my paintings show human emotions. I find the juxtaposition an interesting concept to explore. Here we see a mushroom collector, MU-05, that finds a rare glowing mushroom. When I start, I'm thinking in shapes rather than in lines. Often I start blocking in shapes directly. In this case, I did a super-quick sketch to block out the perspective and composition.



2 FAST AND ROUGH

Next, I block in characters and elements on a separate layer. The key is to keep it rough and fast in the beginning. When I start a painting I imagine how the scene would look when the lights are turned off. Then I start illuminating the scene, thinking about key, fill and bounce light. It's a good way to keep track of the lighting – especially in complex scenes. I also always try to be as efficient as I can. For the forest I create a master tree that I duplicate, distort and change several times.



3 ADDING GLOW

I paint the mushrooms using a Soft brush. Adding the glow helps me to evaluate the intensity of the light and how the surrounding elements will be affected by it. I slowly start introducing light to the ground plane surrounding the mushrooms by simply painting over it on a new layer. I then add more background elements, like the distance hills.



4 FINISHING TOUCHES

I do subtle colour adjustments using Levels and Color Balance. I also apply a vignette to pull the focus more towards the centre of the image. Done and done!

Artist Portfolio

MARSHMALLOWS

"If I had to choose one word to describe my style it would be whimsical, as you can see here. However, it took a while to find my own groove."



► I kept up with it, the more I was able to see the good and bad, and was able to improve bit by bit. I got to the point where I could apply my skill-set on a professional level."

Still, he thought of illustration as a hobby, not much more. Goro wanted to become a character animator. He was certain of that. Early on, he got the chance to try out both fields.

After film school, Goro took up a range of roles at various German studios. He worked as a matte painter, graphic designer, character animator, visual development artist, background artist and concept artist. His first job in art was visual development for a live-action horror feature that was never made. His first job in character animation? Working on a television commercial for a supermarket chain, animating "little cartoony price-tag characters." Thankfully for Goro's career, things would get better.

LIVING THE DREAMWORKS

In 2008, he accepted a job in visual development at DreamWorks Animation. He spent seven years there, worked on *Megamind* (2010), *Madagascar 3* (2012) and *Penguins of Madagascar* (2014).

Then Goro had a stint at the Facebook-owned Oculus Story Studio,

“Drawing a line in 3D space was something that I’d never done before...”

working on virtual reality film *Henry* (2015), which won an Emmy. When the studio closed in 2017, Goro joined Facebook's team in Menlo Park, California, developing the virtual reality painting tool called Quill...

A polymathic software engineer called Íñigo Quílez invented Quill at Oculus Studio. He developed it as part of the production of *Dear Angelica*

BIKE RIDE

"I love to tell stories and over the years I've found myself creating cute, uplifting and positive art. That became my comfort zone."

(2017), a short film about memories. It was painted entirely by hand in virtual reality and, up to that point, widely regarded as the most beautiful VR film ever made.

"I still remember the magical moment when Íñigo let me try his first VR painting tool prototype," Goro says. "Drawing a line in 3D space was something that I'd never done before."

Íñigo claimed that Quill had an infinite canvas. I wanted to put this to the test and came up with an idea of worlds nested within worlds, to see how far I could zoom in. I still remember vividly when I first zoomed





LITTLE RADISH

"I begin a painting by thinking in shapes rather than in lines. Often I don't even do a drawing, and start blocking in shapes directly."

in and out of these worlds and being in awe. This was a ground-breaking moment for me."

TELLING STORIES

Ever since leaving DreamWorks, Goro wanted to work on animated short films. He finally got his chance in 2017. The concept was a VR picture book, each page featuring an animated vignette that up to four users could view at their own pace. He designed it for the social VR platform Facebook Spaces. But why not tell this story using traditional animation tools? As Goro said himself, "Why VR?"

Goro's picture-book story lasts two minutes in total. Using Quill, Goro made the whole thing – from idea to finished piece – in just three weeks. "Using the traditional 3D production approach, this would have taken me more than a year. It proved to me how powerful creation in VR can be. Regardless whether the output is VR native, live action or animation, I'm convinced that the VR workflow will be deeply implemented in future entertainment productions.

"You can manipulate, paint and sculpt in all axes at once, which wasn't possible before. This makes creation in 3D environments extremely fast and efficient and, most importantly, ➤>

BEYOND THE FENCE

"The goal was to create a first-of-its-kind, multi-user narrative that people can enjoy together with their friends as avatars in virtual reality."



FAILURE: A KEY INGREDIENT FOR GROWTH

Goro, once terrified of public speaking, has become a hit on the convention circuit

"I noticed during school that guest speakers tended to show only their professional work. This resulted in a presentation filled with awesome visuals but, for a student it, could feel a bit abstract or even discouraging, because reaching that level of expertise seems far away."

What I try to do in my talks is to put things into context. I usually show my failures as well as my successes – how



QUILL LIVE DEMO

"Quill enables users to paint in virtual reality on an infinitely scalable canvas."

I started compared to where I am now – so the students can relate to it and get inspired by it. The ultimate reward is when I can enable people to follow their dreams and inspire them by sharing my own experience.

Public speaking was something I was terrified of back in school. I didn't like that about myself and wanted to make a change. I would take every opportunity to speak even as my rational brain was trying to stop me. After a while, what was scary turned into a passion, and what was stressful turned into excitement.

I still have a lot to learn, but I see my talks as a stage performance. I want to take the audience on a journey, and leave them feeling inspired. It's important that you have fun at what you do, and always take challenges whenever you have an opportunity. Never be scared of failing. Failing is a key ingredient for growth."

MAKING OF...

"Behind the scenes of my VR experience, Beyond the Fence. I'm convinced the VR workflow will be imbedded in future entertainment productions."



HOW WE GOT ENGAGED

"This is the way I remember the moment after I proposed to my wife, painted in Photoshop."

THE LAST OASIS
"Here, I wanted to explore how I could take advantage of the free movement of all-in-one VR devices to enable viewing of room-scale Quillustrations in the future."



DAY TRIP

"My biggest inspiration when learning art was Craig Mullins and the more I created, the more my own personality started to shine through."





► fun. Content and assets created in Quill can also be exported to other 3D applications, which makes it a powerful tool for the entertainment industry and can benefit all kinds of departments down the production pipeline, from previsualisation to final asset creation."

NEW AND UNEXPLORED

So it's faster, but what about the end result? The tricky thing about VR, Goro admits, is that it only makes sense if you're in it. A 2D representation doesn't do a piece justice. You can't judge VR by how it looks on a monitor.

Take his most recent project, *The Last Oasis* (2018), a post-apocalyptic adventure and the first of its kind. Goro

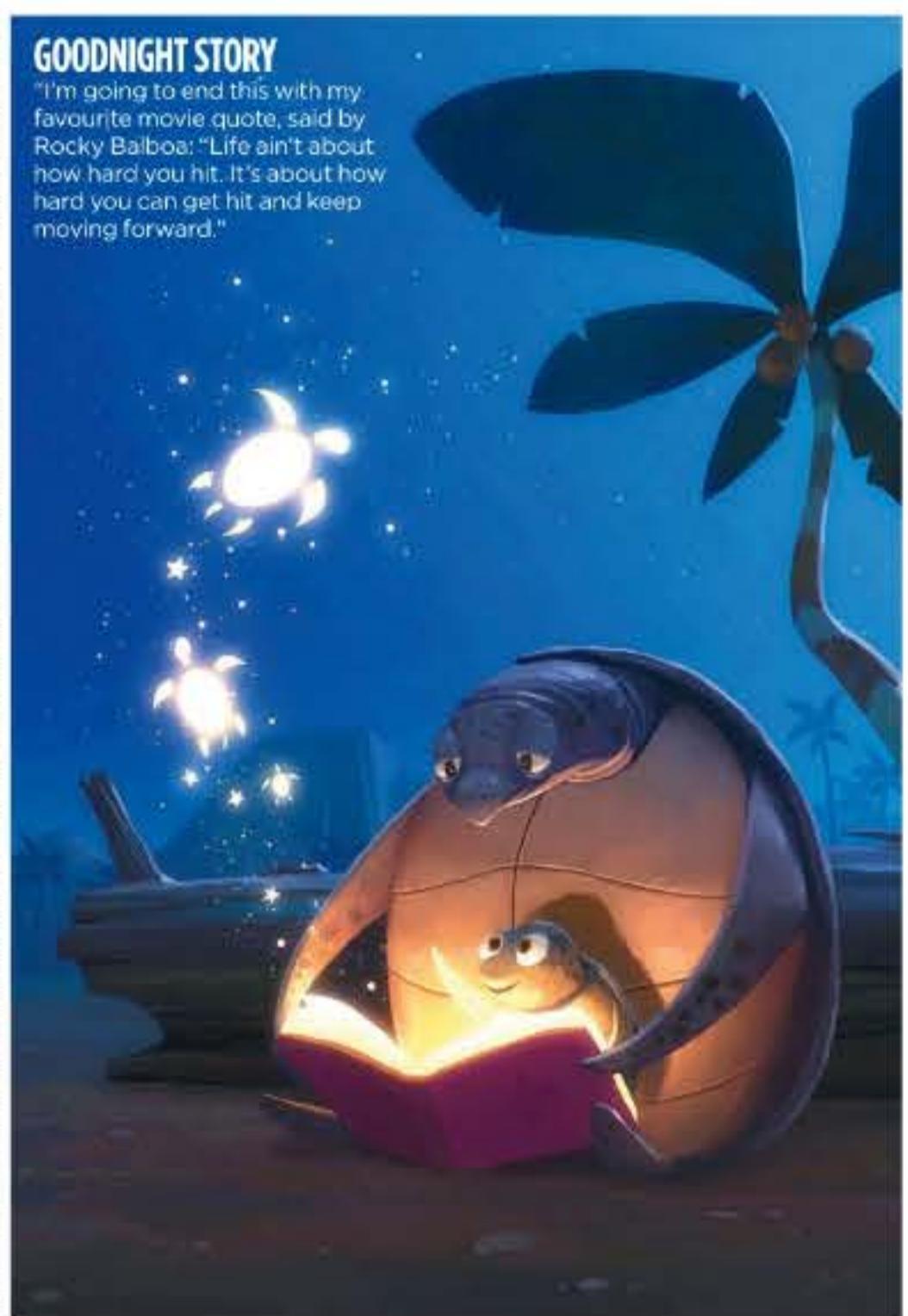
painted it in VR using Quill in just five days. The story is about a survivor, a scientist in a bunker who moves from room to room looking for artefacts that might help him save what's left of the outside world. Or rather, as the viewer, you move from room to room. Watch the trailer and *The Last Oasis* looks like a pretty good animation. However, put on the headset and it becomes something completely different.

Goro made the piece specifically for Oculus Quest, a new all-in-one headset

“The audience becomes the camera, so traditional film language doesn't apply”

GOODNIGHT STORY

"I'm going to end this with my favourite movie quote, said by Rocky Balboa: "Life ain't about how hard you hit. It's about how hard you can get hit and keep moving forward."



out this year. The Quest has no wires. You can move freely. You're untethered. Goro always dreamed of jumping into a painting and living in it. VR is that dream made real. It is, he says, the purest form of artistic expression. And it's still a young medium.

Goro compares VR to the early days of film, an unexplored landscape, but with a difference. In a film, the director carefully chooses the shots, the angles, the framing. In VR, you look where you want to look and go where you want to go. "The audience becomes the camera," Goro says, "so traditional film language doesn't apply anymore."

It's the inventing of this new language that Goro Fujita is interested in. It's here he finds the answer to his own question: why VR?

"When I designed *The Last Oasis*, I wanted to explore how I can take advantage of the free movement of all-in-one VR devices to enable viewing of future room-scale 'Quillustrations.'

"Whatever I create, the experience has to be best consumed in VR and include things that other media can't provide. In VR, you feel presence, and the audience actually becomes the camera, which is very different from traditional film."

Sketchbook

Lois Van Baarle

These loose, monochrome sketches are instantly recognisable as the work of the superstar illustrator. Discover the stories behind them...

PLAYING WITH SHAPES

"I love to stylise the shapes in my drawing and see if I can exaggerate or push it beyond what I would normally draw."

CLINGING

"My drawings usually don't convey complex stories or worlds, but instead focus on capturing a certain mood or emotional state."

GIRL GANG

"Sometimes when I finish drawing one face, I want to draw another, and then another until a cluster of characters takes shape."

Artist PROFILE

Lois Van Baarle (Loish)

LOCATION: The Netherlands



Lois has been drawing her whole life. She currently works as a concept artist and character designer for clients such as LEGO, Guerrilla Games and Amazon. She recently published her second book *The Sketchbook of Loish*, the successor to 2016's *The Art of Loish*, both of which were published by 3Dtotal and successfully funded through Kickstarter.

www.loish.net





BREAKABLE

"Inking is a challenge for me, but one thing I really enjoy about it is using negative space to give more definition to the shapes and forms."

“I love to stylise the shapes in my drawing”

Sketchbook



ANGULAR

"This one was created for the Inktober prompt 'Angular.' The first thing that came to mind was bearded men, so that's what I went with."



STUDY: HANDS

"When I do anatomy studies, I usually try to focus on the overall shape and gesture, rather than getting all of the details right."



FLOWING

"One of my favourite things to draw is hair – it enables me to create flowing shapes and lines that lead the eye around the drawing."



STUDY: CATS & DOGS

"I love using a sketchbook to practise and bring new things into my visual memory."

SCARF

"This one was drawn at the beginning of autumn, when scarf and coat weather returned for the year."



BUN

"I like to experiment with ways to balance more highly detailed areas (in this case, the bun) with rougher, more simple areas."

Sketchbook

“My sketchbook pages can be a mix of styles and ideas”



SCORCHED

“Ever since I saw a burnt forest on vacation in Canada, I’ve been drawn to the imagery of a forest that’s damaged but regenerating.”



VARIOUS DOODLES

“I usually doodle whatever comes to mind, and as a result the sketchbook pages can sometimes become a random mix of styles and ideas.”



SKETCH PAGE

"These sketches were drawn from reference. I'm not only practising faces and expressions here, but also how I can translate the reference material into my own art style."

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Get better at telling stories with your art, with pro advice from cover artist Jon Foster and Abigail Larson. We explain how to make your time on Patreon a success, and interview illustrators Scott M Fischer and Phil Hale.



Issue 169
January 2019

An exclusive look at the game art for Sable, we discover what recruiters want from game artists, visit Polish studio CD Projekt Red - home of The Witcher series and Cyberpunk 2077 - and talk to Halo lead artist Darren Bacon.



Issue 168
Christmas 2018

Character art advice from cover artist Mel Milton, add texture and colour to your portraits, and pencil shading techniques. Elsewhere, we talk to Magic: The Gathering's Svetlin Velinov and fantasy painter Vanessa Lemen.



Issue 167
December 2018

Patrick J Jones kicks off his eight-part series on figure drawing, we talk to SIXMOREVODKA and book artist Shaun Tan, and list the 15 best online art schools. Plus Wayne Haag reveals how he generates epic scale in his art.

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February 2018

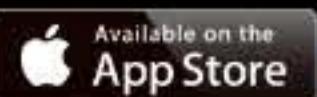


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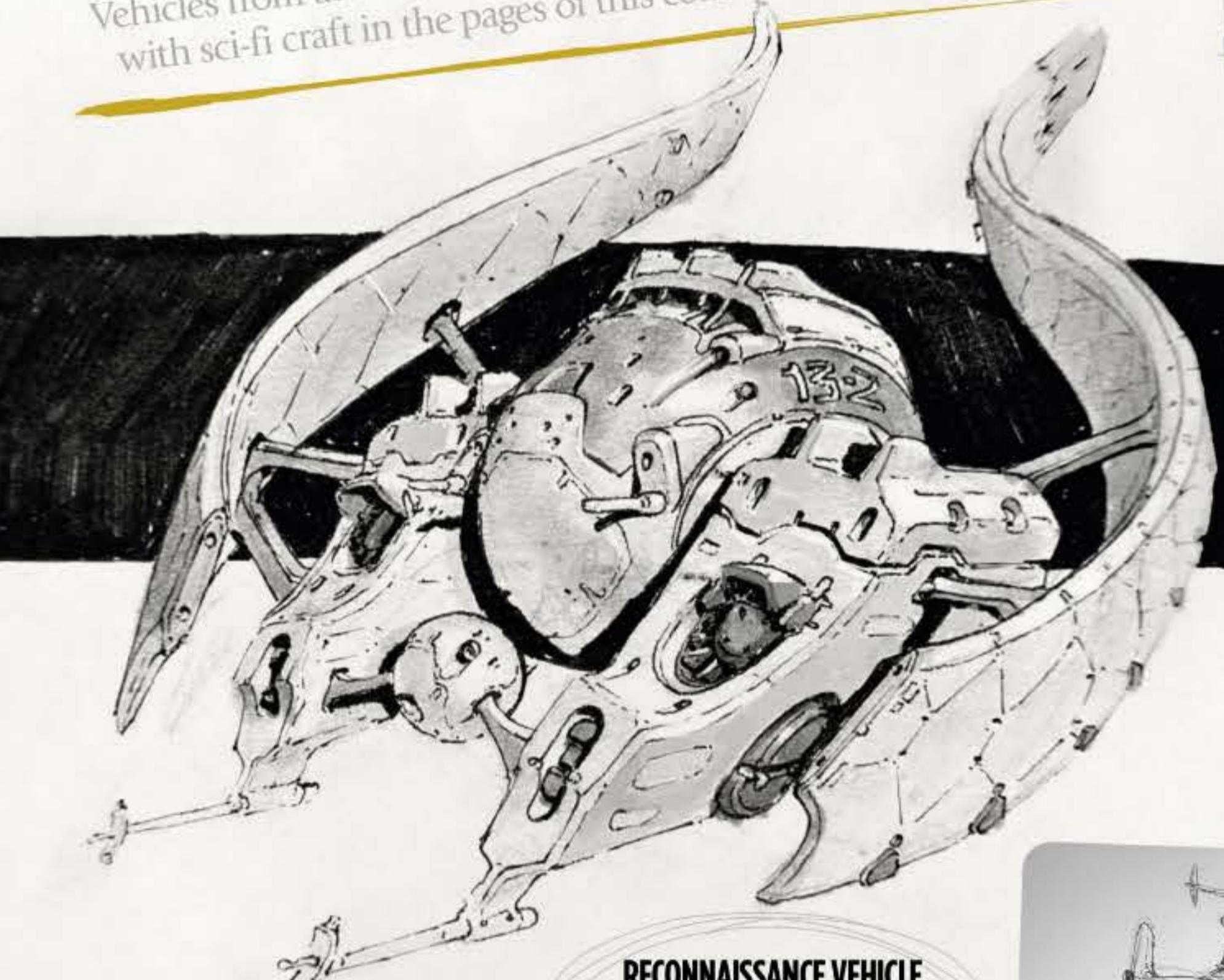


*Resource files are available from issue 85 onwards.

Sketchbook

Michał Kus

Vehicles from an alternative take on World War II jostle for space with sci-fi craft in the pages of this concept artist's sketchbook



RECONNAISSANCE VEHICLE

"One iteration of my armoured scout car that I'm designing for the German army. It's from my personal project, Project: 1952. I want to keep the look and feel of the technology grounded to WWII, but with fresh twists and visual hooks. I find that designs grounded in reality are harder to do than, say, sci-fi artworks."



Artist PROFILE

Michał Kus
LOCATION: Poland



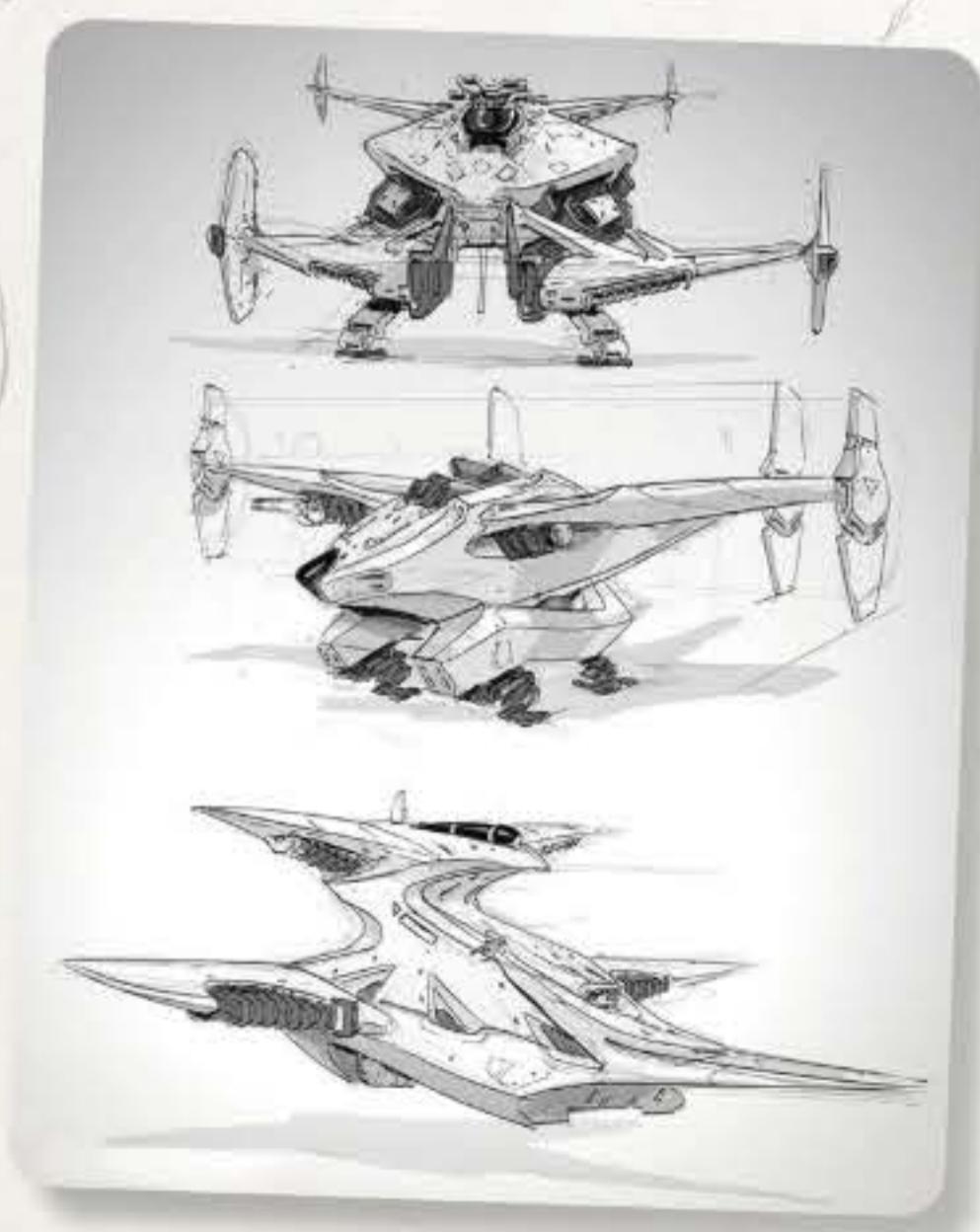
Michał is a concept designer, illustrator, educator and co-founder of Focal Point School. He's worked in the entertainment industry since 2011, spending half of his career in-house for various studios and the other half as a freelancer. His clients include Platige Image, Valve, Disney and EA. In his spare time he loves to create designs for his personal project, Project: 1952. www.artstation.com/michalkus

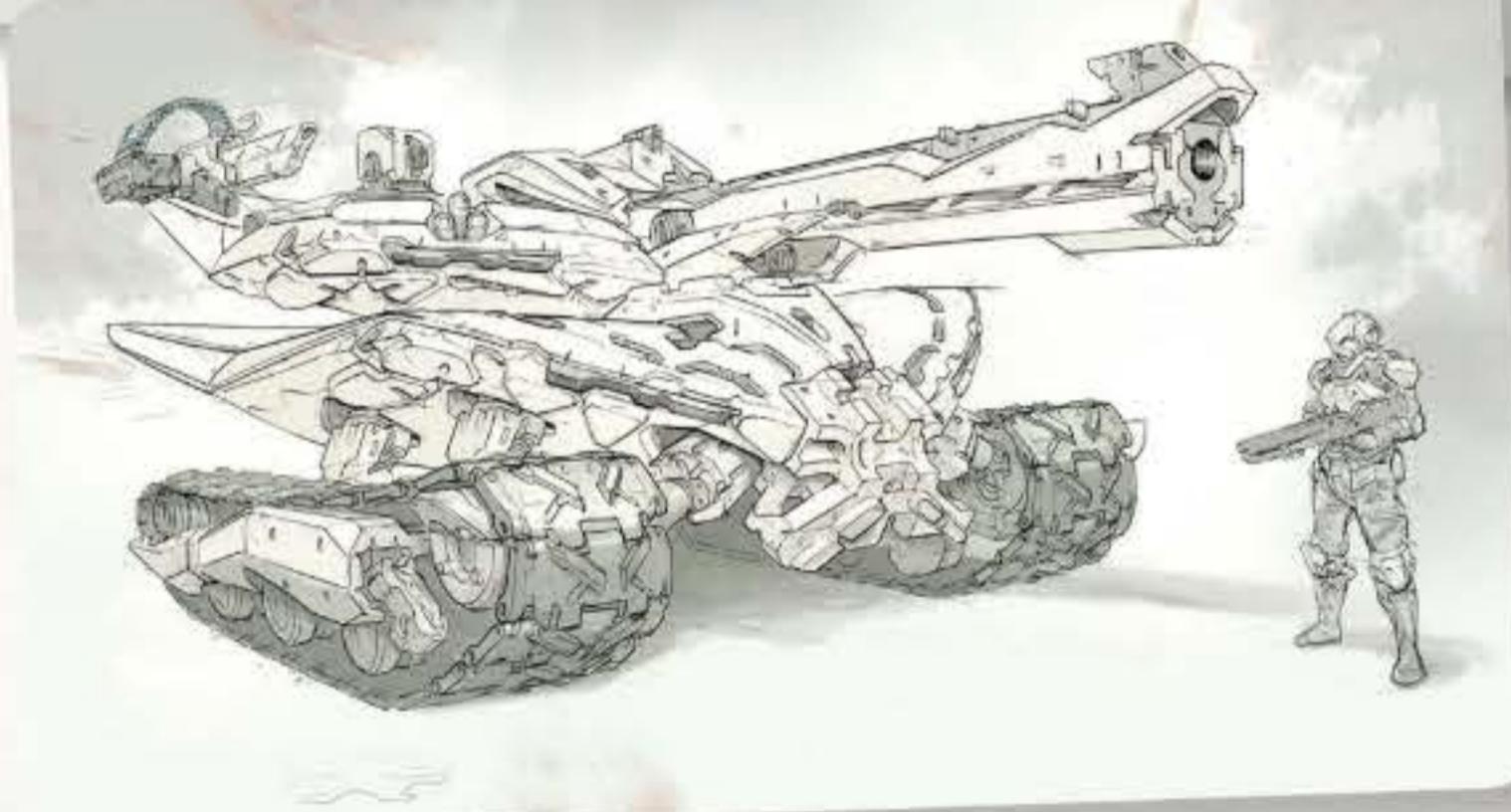
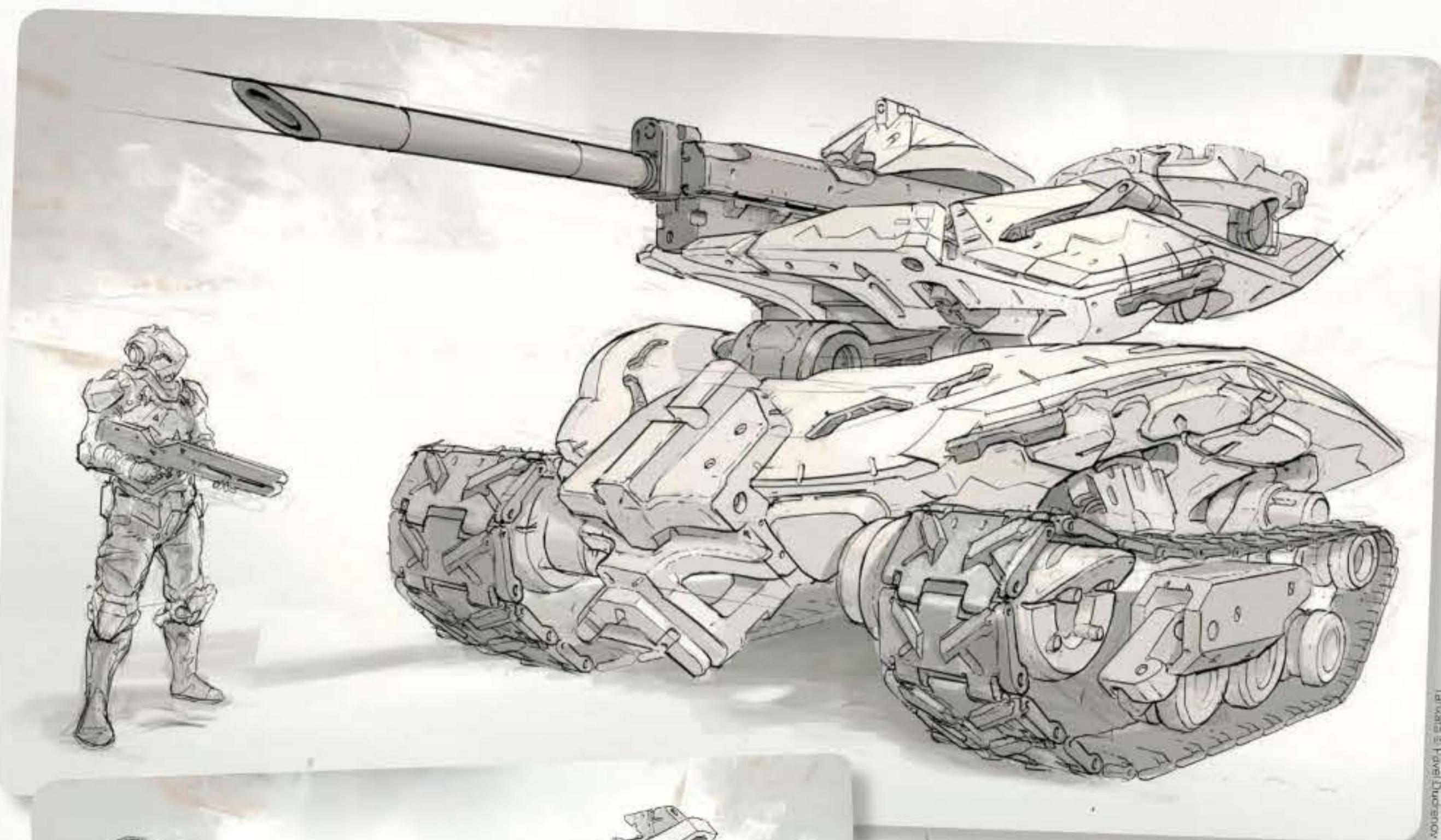
INTERPLANETARY INTERCEPTOR

"This design, done in ink and markers, has the familiar form factor of the TIE fighter from Star Wars. I tried to experiment how far I could push the design language of something that was already well established in our pop culture."

SPACESHIP

"Here's a set of exploration sketches that I did as a recorded demo for my CGMA class. I focused on how to depict shapes efficiently in a short amount of time while maintaining a decent level of detail."





SCI-FI TANK DESIGNS

"A series of tank designs I did a while ago for the game project Tankata. Both of these designs belong to the same faction. Above is the light battle tank, while the main battle tank is pictured left. It's always a good challenge to draw something in the same design style, but with a different function."

“I focused on depicting shapes efficiently in a short amount of time”



LUNAR RACE CRAFT

"Colour can dictate the emotional reaction of your audience. This design was done as a demo to showcase how to quickly render your vehicles and show off a colour scheme in a short amount of time."

Sketchbook



TRANSPORT SPACE SHIPS

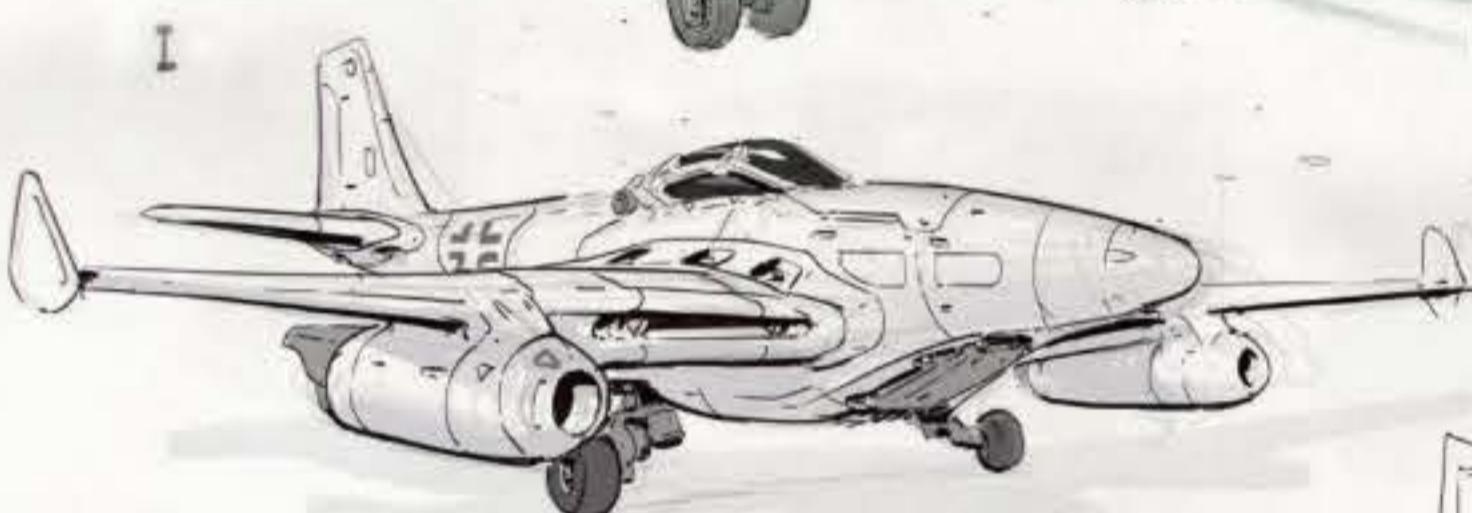
"These were done as live demos during my class at Focal Point School. We focus on design language, its philosophy and on the core foundations, rather than what tools to use. These are ideas we tend to forget as we try to become successful concept designers."



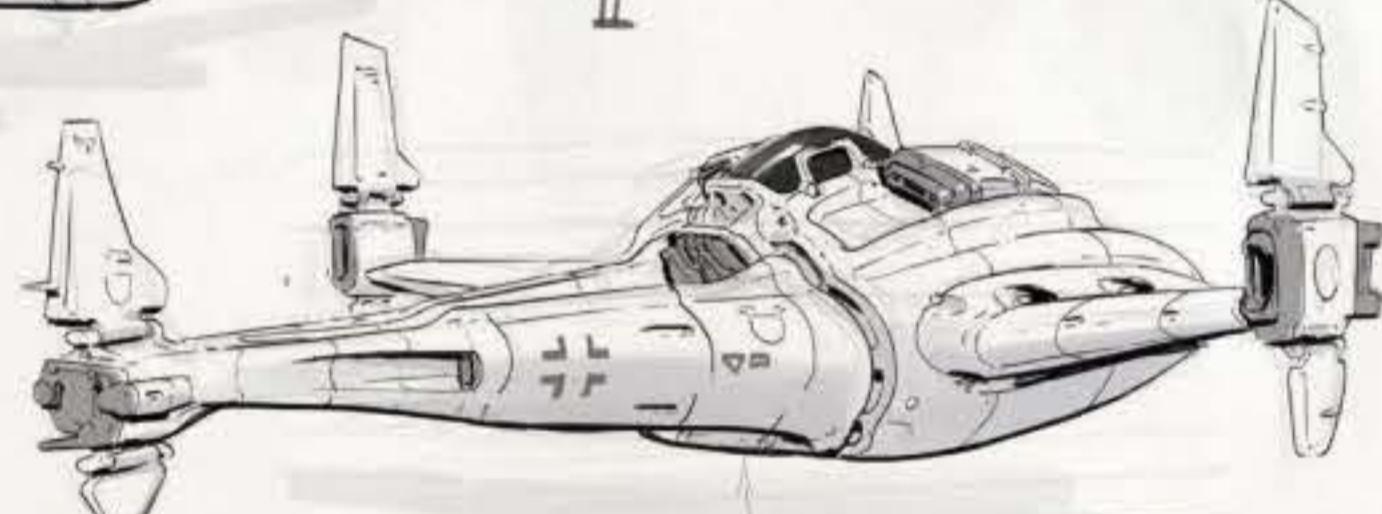


DRAGON GUNSHIP

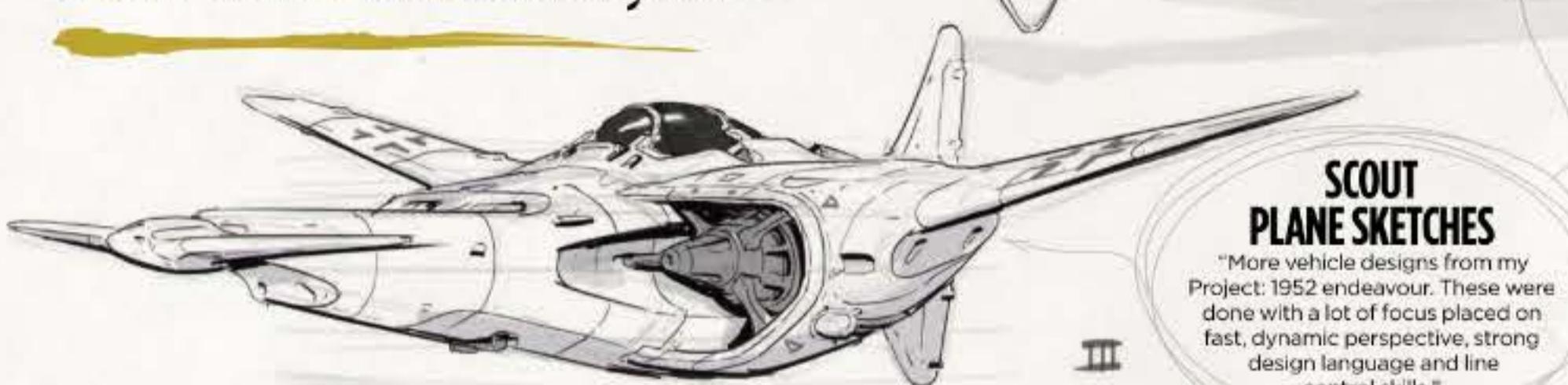
"Here are some of the more refined line sketches during a fast but fun run at Platige Image. I was tasked with exploring the designs of the lead character's gunship for the short film Polish Legends: Dragon."



II



“A successful concept designer should be able to work with different styles”



SCOUT PLANE SKETCHES

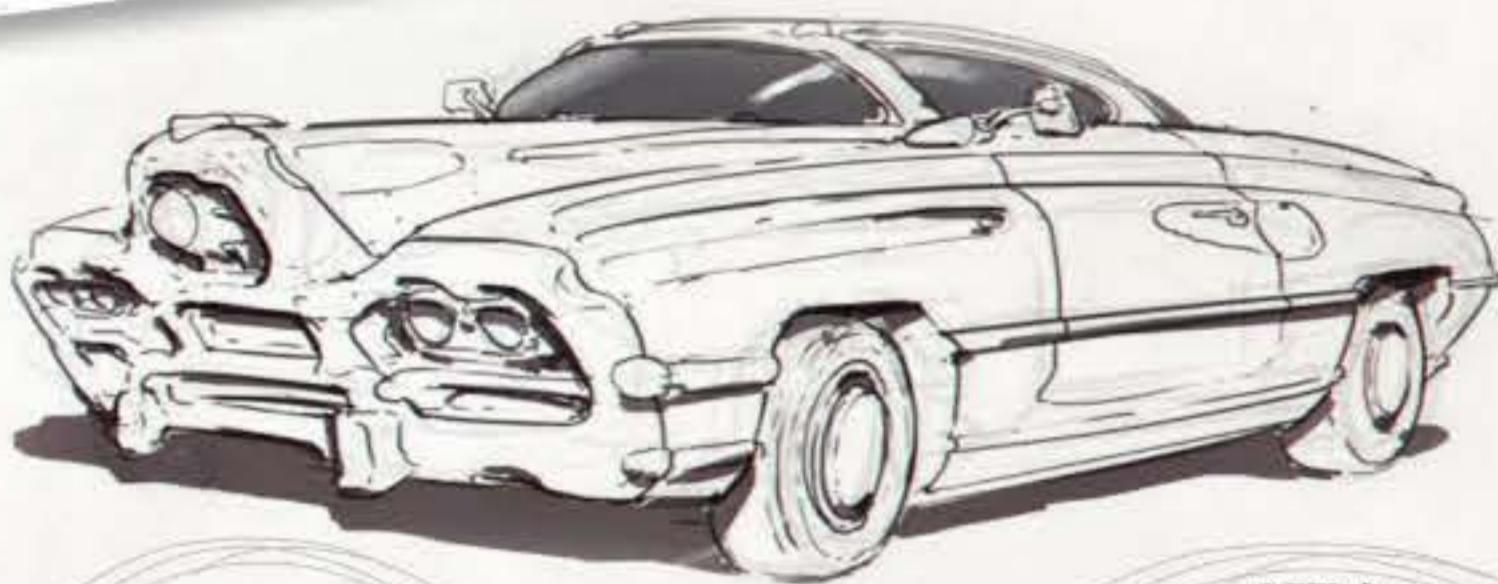
"More vehicle designs from my Project: 1952 endeavour. These were done with a lot of focus placed on fast, dynamic perspective, strong design language and line control skills."

SPEEDER DESIGN

"A successful concept designer should be able to work with different styles. Note how the overall form and main shape of this craft is the same as the sketches above. However, the smaller details within the main shape give away the actual style and technology level. I've moved from a WWII/diesel-punk style to a more sci-fi look."



Sketchbook



JAGDPANTHER DESIGN

"The Jagdpanther was the feared tank hunter during WWII. I gave my version a slight redesign to fit into the universe of Project: 1952."

This was done with ink and marker pens."

RETRO CAR DESIGN

"To get out of my artistic comfort zone I like to visit different time periods and tech levels on which to base my new designs. This sketch was created during a live demo where I talked about how the appearance of a car can change over time while the function remains essentially the same."



SNOW ORCS

"I'm not much of a character concept artist. However, as an artist we have to embrace design as a whole."

By understanding the fundamentals and being able to see everything as basic shapes, things become clearer."



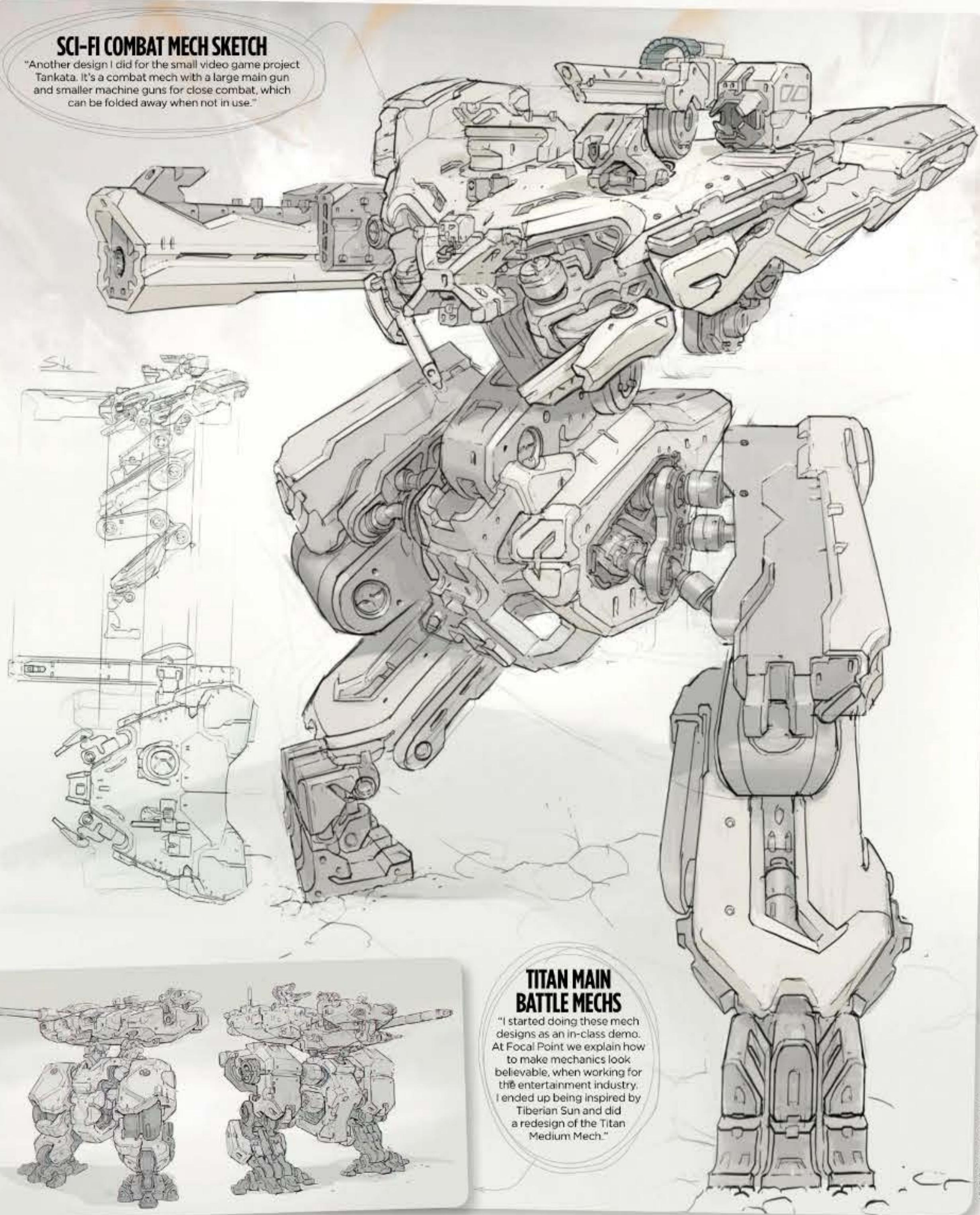
“I regularly challenge myself to take inspiration from the world that's around us...”

EXPLORATION CRAFT

"One of many designs I did to explore the influence of nature, such as birds. I regularly challenge myself to look beyond the source material and to take inspiration from the world around us rather than, say, an imaginary sci-fi setting."

SCI-FI COMBAT MECH SKETCH

"Another design I did for the small video game project Tankata. It's a combat mech with a large main gun and smaller machine guns for close combat, which can be folded away when not in use."



TITAN MAIN BATTLE MECHS

"I started doing these mech designs as an in-class demo. At Focal Point we explain how to make mechanics look believable, when working for the entertainment industry. I ended up being inspired by Tiberian Sun and did a redesign of the Titan Medium Mech."

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

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Patrick J Jones thinks like a sculptor and works on overlapping forms, as he explores the illusion of the third dimension using tonal value.

Procreate

RENDER A SURREAL SCI-FI CHARACTER

Illustrator **Audra Auclair** taps into the influence of music to inspire a cyborg femme concept with bright hues and expressive lines

Artist PROFILE

Audra Auclair

LOCATION: Canada

A Victoria-based artist who specialises in exploring the surreal and beautiful human form with her fusion of fine art and illustration.
www.audraauclair.com



I'm often asked how I get my ideas. I honestly recycle a lot of my favourite features/themes to fit

what I'm trying to express in an artwork. Preferring a balance of beauty, edge and the surreal, I use the human form to hint at undertones of emotions.

You can express a lot through something that appears merely aesthetic. A mask is a nod towards disassociation, a huge third eye

expresses existentialism, a demon's horns symbolise the dark side of humanity, and bright colour is used as a juxtaposition against dark undertones.

Using anatomy in this way isn't new, but that's okay. To me, art is firstly a form of therapy, secondly a relationship, and thirdly a skill/job. Artists usually desire to be unique, but it's important to remember that most ideas have been done before. If you relieve yourself of that pressure, you allow yourself to experiment and

grow. Let your brain take you where it naturally wants to go.

If you can't express what you wish to, then it's likely you need to focus on fundamentals. Learning fundamentals helps considerably when exploring surrealism. If you're too stiff and focused on fundamentals you should loosen up in a sketchbook or use abstraction to create new shapes and ideas. My workshop will show you the technical side of how I created my cover art and explain my inspiration behind it.

1 Inspiration and concept

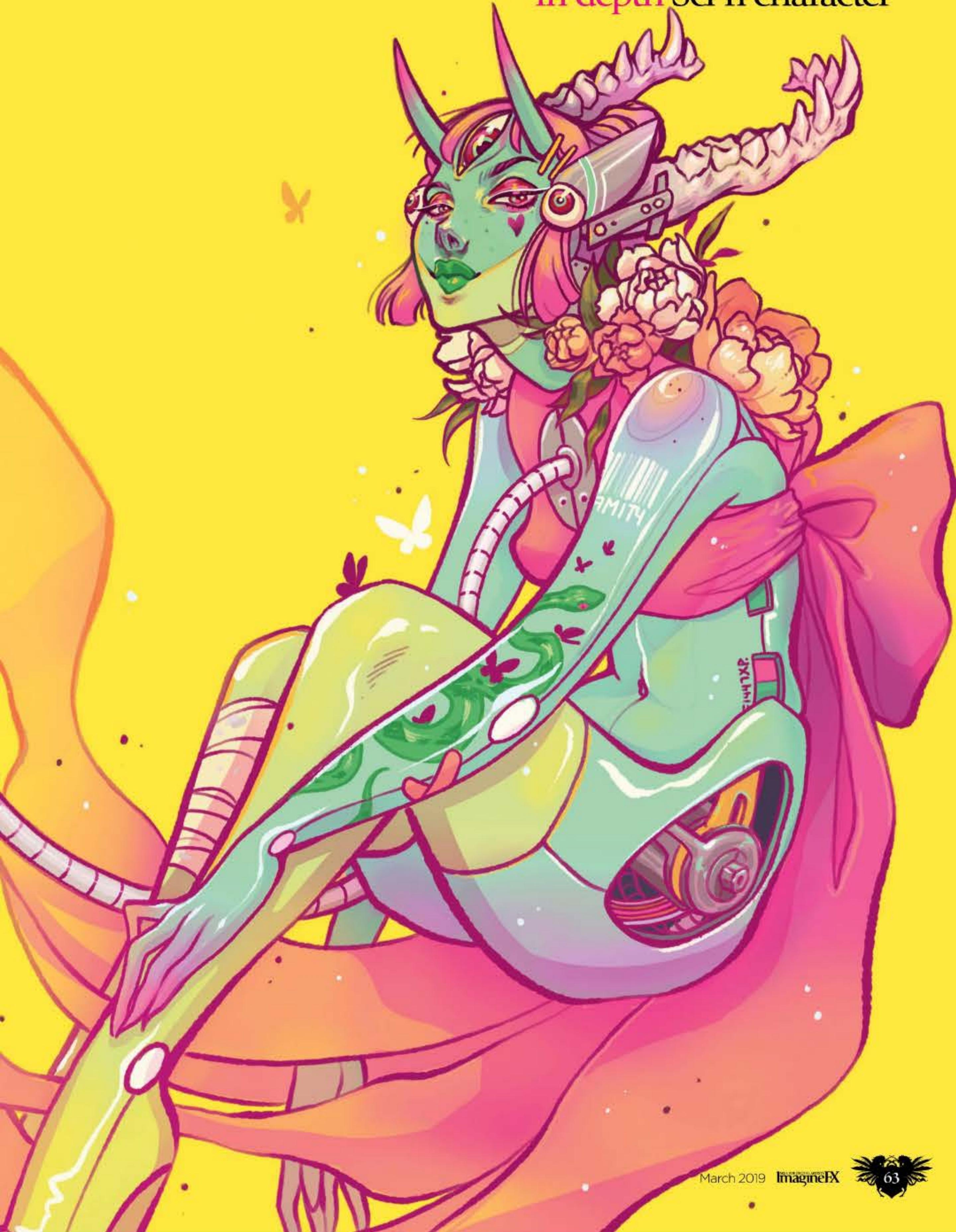
Music, emotions, nature and societal issues have driven my art in the past. I know I want to create a character that's robotic and cold, but is balanced with natural vibrant elements. To help me get into this mind space I listen to Grimes and Kimbra. Their music channels the feelings I want to communicate with this image.



2 Drawing loose thumbnails

I begin with rough thumbnails on a grey background. The grey is easier on the eyes. It's also a mid-tone so it's easy to add quick highlights and shading if needed. I try a few different poses that fit my brief and avoid settling on my first sketch. After I've warmed up a bit by sketching, I find my concepts improve drastically. ➤

In depth Sci-fi character



Workshops



3 Real-life references

I consider if I need any reference material for the painting. For the headpiece I think about how it's put together and anchored to her head. I have some knowledge of teeth after studying anatomy in my spare time so I'm comfortable creating the jaw without reference. I'll often source hand references using a photo of my own hands, which I then accentuate and stylise.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PROCREATE

CUSTOM BRUSHES: MATT PENCIL 02

Pencil created by artist Mateusz Urbanowicz. I use this for sketches.

DRY INK PEN

This pen is ideal for creating clean but grainy final lines and details.

SOFT BRUSH AIRBRUSH

Used for gradients while frequently adjusting the Opacity level.

STUDIO PEN

This clean-edged pen is good for erasing and colouring in flats.



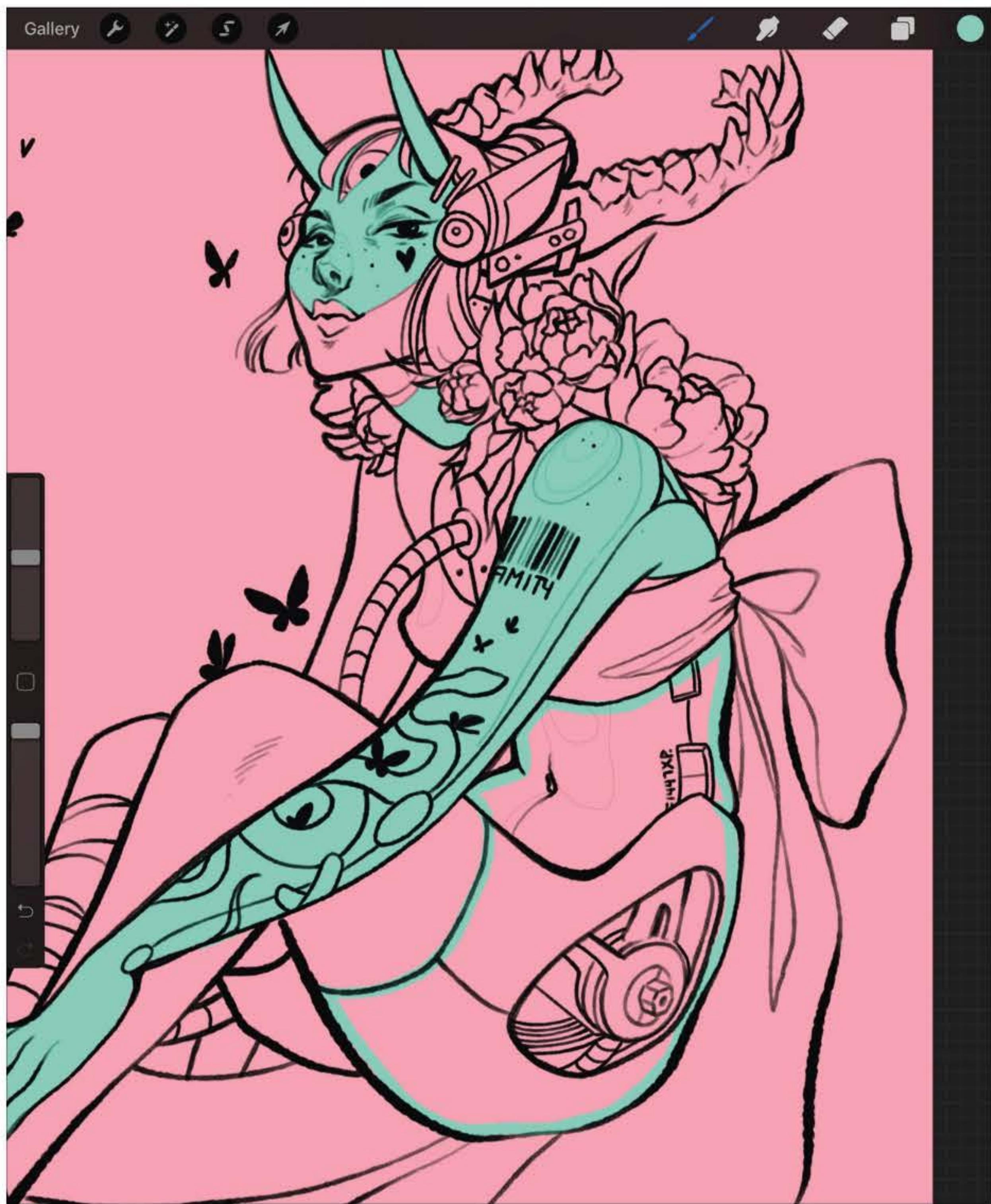
5 Inking the clean sketch

Much like in step three, I reduce the Opacity of the clean sketch to 30 per cent or less and uncheck the box from the original rough sketch so that it's hidden. I select my ink brush and trace the clean sketch, paying more attention to line weight and exaggerating some of the shapes slightly so the line art doesn't look stiff. After the final lines are complete I'll hide the sketch layer.



6 Generate a simple background

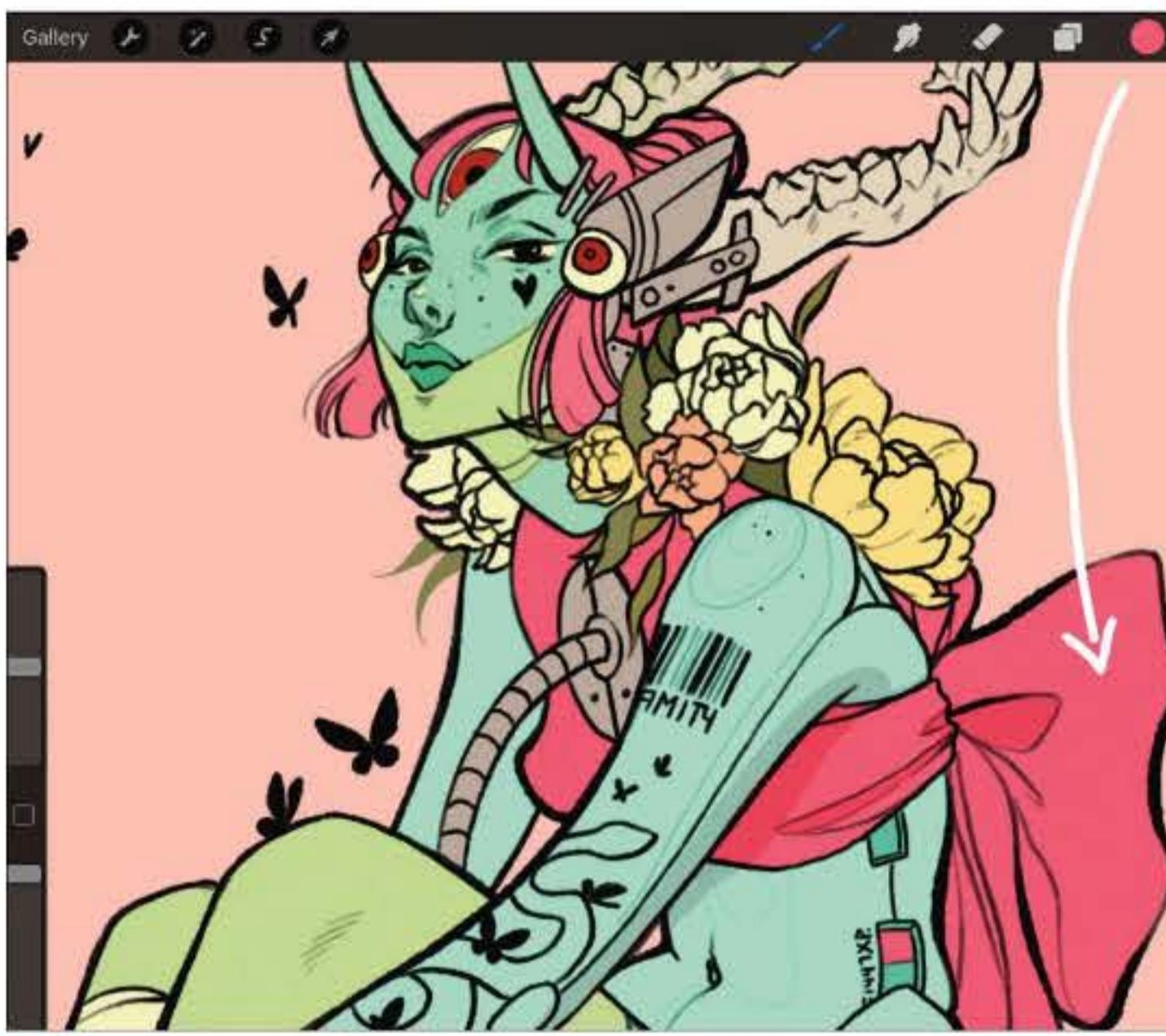
For this step I change the background colour by clicking the background layer and experimenting. Sometimes I have a colour palette in mind when I begin a painting, sometimes I don't and often the palette changes as I go along. With digital art it's easy to compile different swatches in the top right of the canvas, enabling you to see what you think is best.



7 Sectioning the flats in the artwork

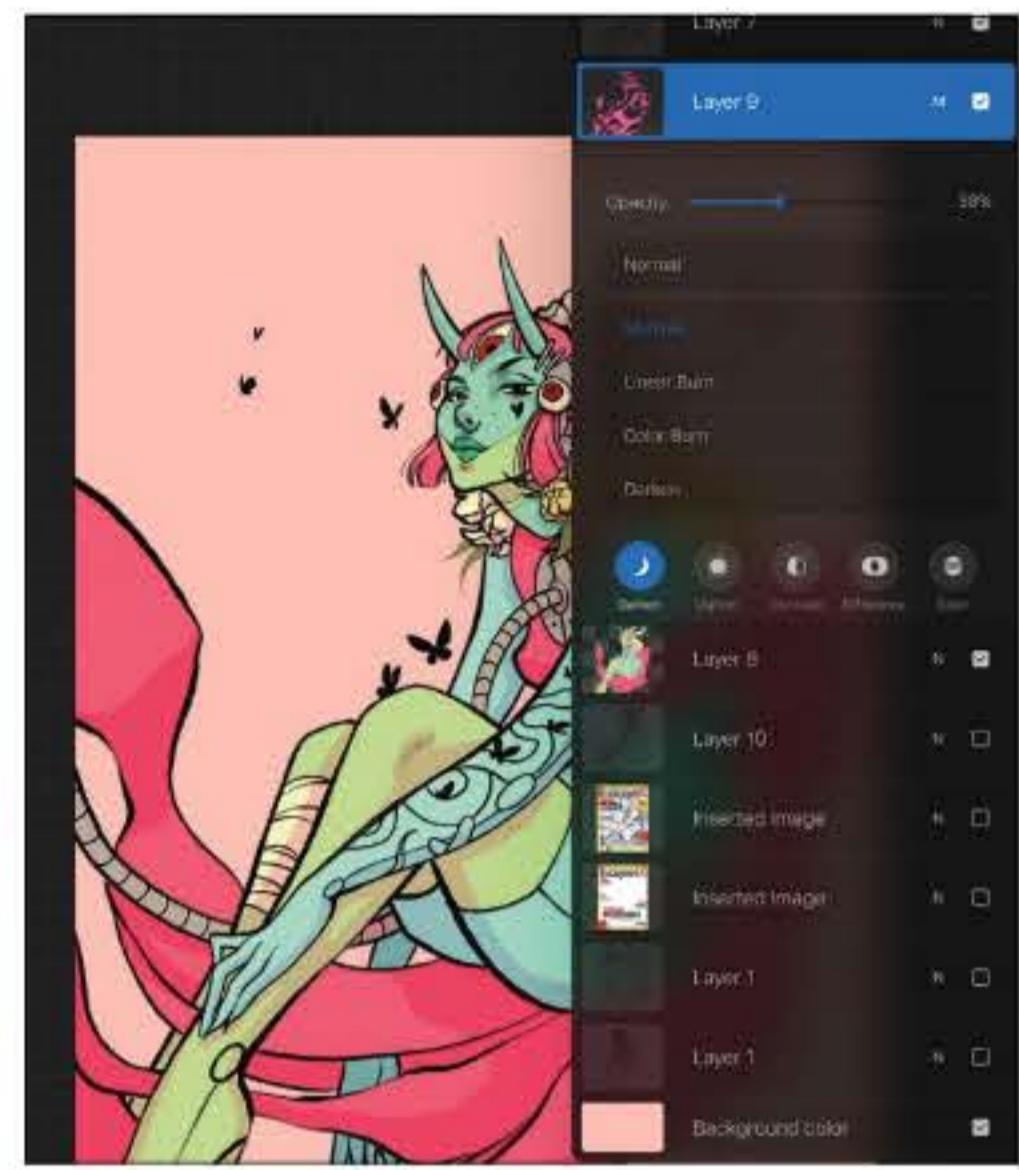
Now I'm going to colour the character. To begin this process I like to use a technical ink brush that has sharp edges. This will be important for the next step. I use the brush to outline a specific area with the colour that I want to apply. ►►

Workshops



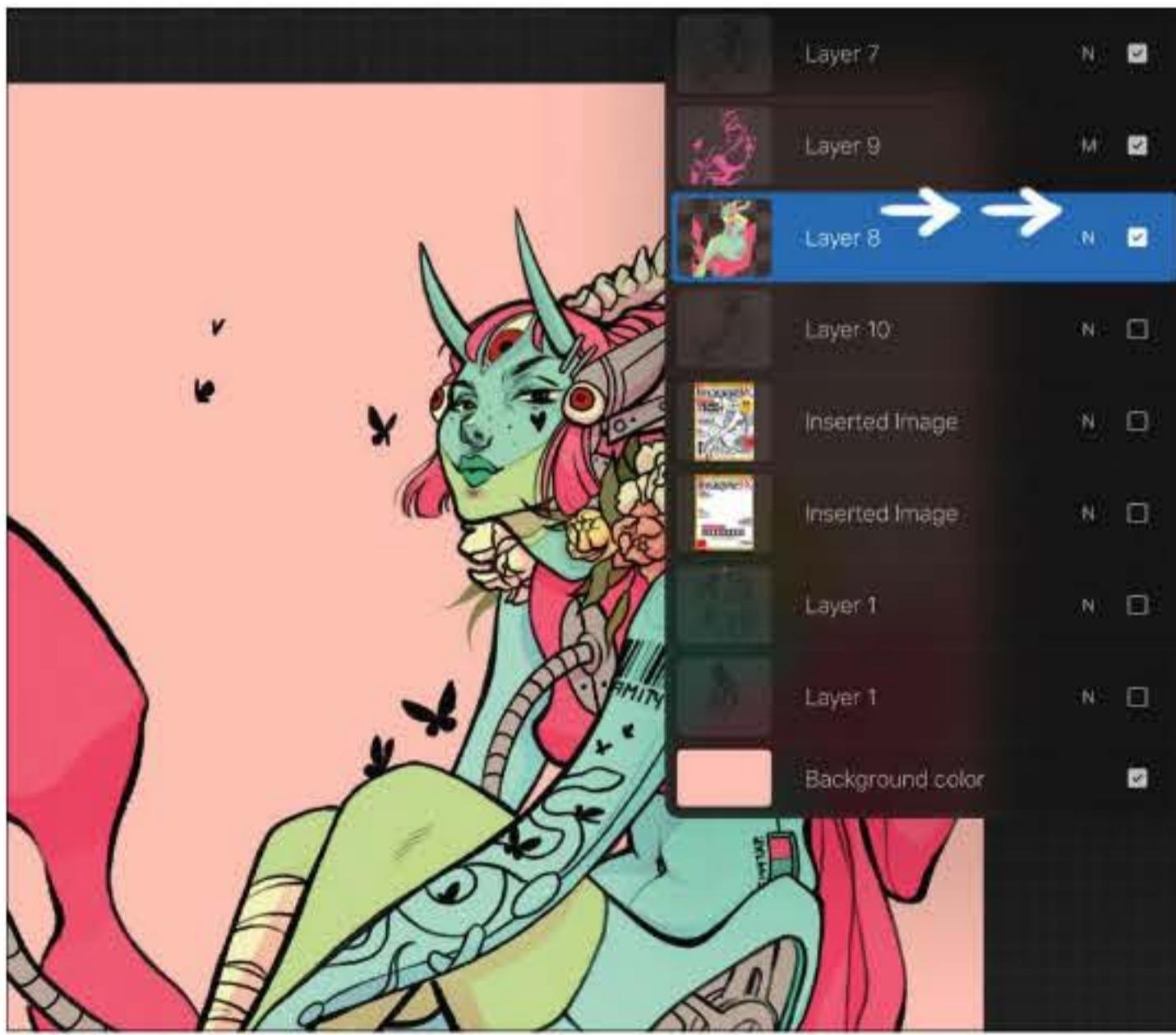
8 Filling the flats

To fill the section I drag a colour from the top right into the area that I wish to fill. If it doesn't completely fill the area then try dragging the colour over again, but this time hold your stylus/pencil in the section until a blue bar pops up at the top of the screen. Drag left and right while still holding the pencil down: this changes the threshold of your colour fill.



9 Bringing in a shadow layer

After I decide on the light source's location I create a shadow layer between the line and flat colour layers. I set the layer to Multiply and reduce its Opacity. Avoid using black/grey for the shadows; using a colour adds more life. I try out several colours before deciding to use magenta. I clean it up with the Eraser tool, which is set as the Technical pen or Soft airbrush for softer gradations.



10 Locking layers for accurate painting

At this point I want to begin adding some various tones to the character. But to do this I need to lock the flats layer first. I select the flats layer and lock it by swiping right on the layer with two fingers. This ensures that we can paint on the layer freely without spilling out of the flats layer.



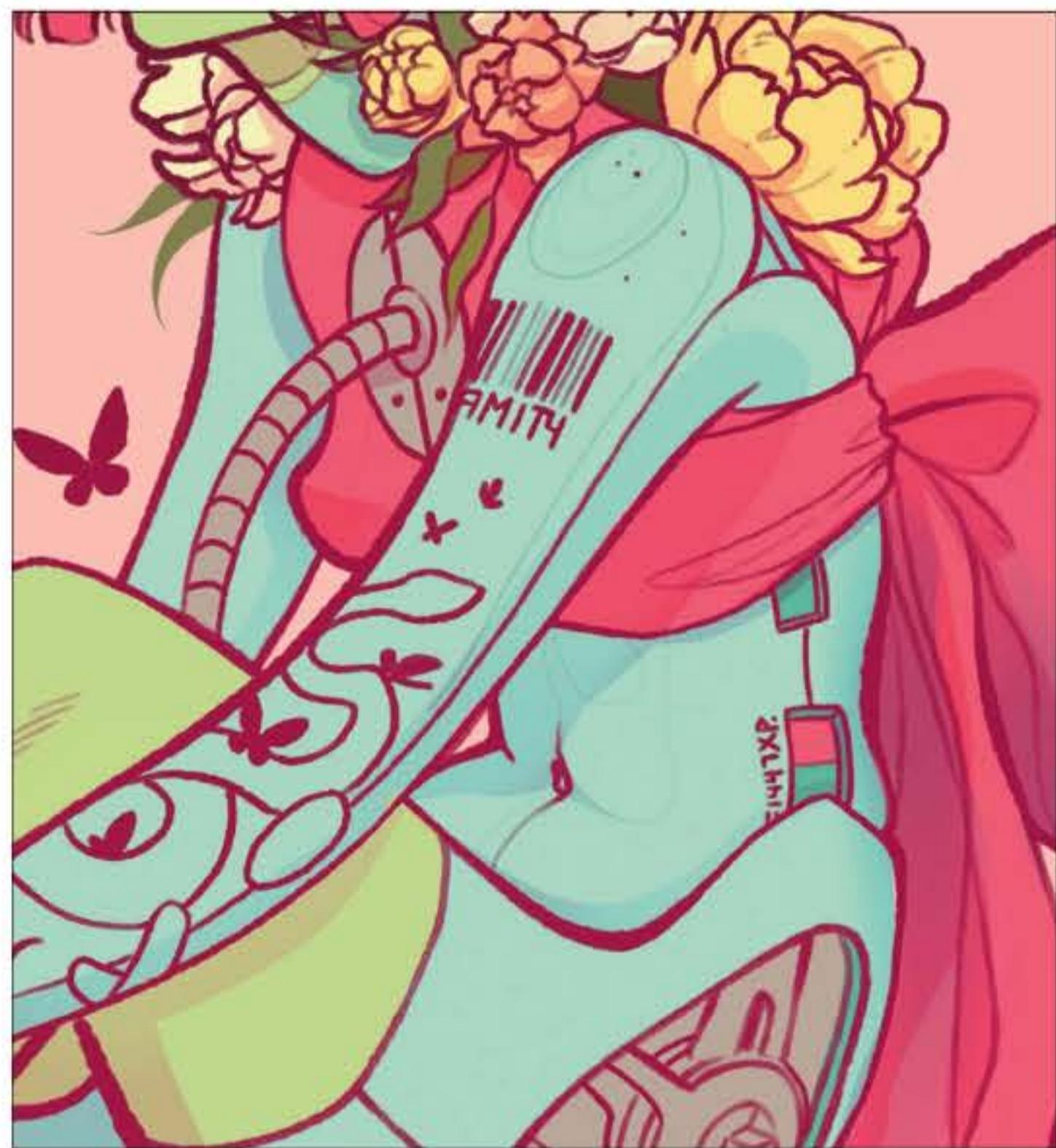
11 Airbrushing the horns and skin

I'd like to create a feeling of warmth in her skin, and I love the look of the pink on the turquoise because it still feels cold and unnatural. On the locked flats layer I select the Soft airbrush on a low Opacity and begin to add pink tones. You can also use the Selection tool and select specific areas to use the airbrush on.



12 Colouring the lines

Now that I have my colour scheme sorted out I begin to adjust the colours of the lines. I select the lines layer, then swipe right with two fingers on the layer to lock it. We can now change the colours of the lines easily! You can use any brush for this: the Technical pen is good for easily covering sections, but you can also create smooth gradients on your lines with the Soft airbrush.



13 Detailing the character

This is another of my favourite steps. I create a layer at the top of the other layers – this will be the detail layer. On this layer I add different skin tones and details to the eyes, and enhance her tattoo and hair piece. I use a variety of brushes for this portion, but I really favour using pencils and dry brushes/pens for this stage.



14 Acting on feedback and final edits

The ImagineFX team suggests using yellow as the background and it really helps to create contrast against the turquoise. I take a final look over the piece, and make minor tweaks, add texture and highlights, and completing the details of the mechanics. I could spend more time during this stage but I want to keep the art clean and simple, to retain the focus on the face. Now the image is complete! ■

Next month

Concept artist Asia
Ladowska paints a
stunning portrait
piece for next
issue's cover!

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Plus all this...

How to find your art style

Pro illustrators on honing your skills and standing out from the crowd.

Take a trip into the surreal

We find out what makes the comic and book illustrator Sachin Teng tick.

Fantastically designed beasts

Have fun with your creature art with Guillermo Pérez Rancel.

Figure-drawing masterclass

Patrick J Jones reveals what pitfalls to avoid when drawing the arm.

Artist insight

CREATE POWERFUL COMPOSITIONS

Illustrator and comic artist **Steve Ellis** reveals how he comes up with energetic designs that catch the eye and direct the action on the page

Artist PROFILE

Steve Ellis

LOCATION: US

Steve has worked for DC, Marvel and Wizards of the Coast, and also teaches art. He's created the comics High Moon, The Only Living Boy and The Only Living Girl. <http://steveellisart.com>



I used to rely on my art instincts when it came to composing an image. My earliest professional work was in comics, drawing an average six panels per page for a total of 130 separate compositions per book. It was a boot camp for composition! I learned to be focused and clear, with simple and strong compositions.

As I transitioned to painting I wanted to be able to do more complex images with multifaceted stories in a single image. This meant that I had to get more involved in learning the tricks of composition.

I tried to figure out why some beautifully rendered images fall apart while other seemingly less-finished pieces held my eye. Why do some images leap off the bookstore shelves

while others just sit there? Almost always it was composition that set them apart. To learn more I read books such as Michel Jacobs' *The Art of Composition: A Simple Application of Dynamic Symmetry*, and looked at art ranging from Old Masters to the cover of the latest Hawkeye comic through the lens of composition. That started a journey for me which continues to this day.



1 WHAT'S THE STORY?

Whether it's a professional brief or notes for a personal piece, my first step is to think about the story. Which elements are crucial to telling the story, which are secondary, and which add tertiary support? This is how you figure out the hierarchy of elements in your piece. Here, I wanted the confrontation between the warrior and the dragon to be paramount, but I needed the secondary elements such as the wrecked wooden platform to support the central narrative of the piece.

2 THINK WITH THUMBNAILS

Start with thumbnails that are the same size ratio and orientation as your final image. If I thumbnail at the wrong dimensions I'll end up with all my balances off-kilter, and have to rework my design. During this early stage I solve much of the design problems before even thinking about the final image. The delicate balancing of elements can lead to a strong image, while a slight misplacement can change or alter the impact of the image you're creating.



Artist insight Powerful compositions

3 SHAPE MATTERS

Plan for the outside shape of the image. Because this is a personal piece, I was able to set its size. I don't have this luxury for commissioned pieces and have to react to the dimensions provided. Everything in your image needs to relate to the border dimensions. That's why the canvas size is crucial. It creates the framing device for the image - the shape that the viewer will be looking through. Once the outer dimensions are established, I can approach the design from a few different directions.



“Once the outer dimensions are established, I can approach the design from a few different directions”



4 HARNESS THE POWER OF TRIANGLES

I often base my compositions around strong, simple shapes. Here, I wanted the heroes in this piece to have an individual moment to themselves, but also to fit together as a team. Because a triangle is a strong shape I composed the team so that its various elements led the eye to the orc paladin's head (the green triangle). And because the background is also arranged as a downwards-pointing triangle (the blue triangle), it created a diamond shape where the heads of the main figures are approximately placed. All of this is meant to pull the reader towards the expressions on the characters' faces. ➤

Workshops



5 CREATING DRAMA VIA A POINT OF VIEW

For an emotionally effective piece, I want the viewer to place themselves in the head of the warrior. I want our hero – and thus the viewer – to feel overwhelmed and outmatched, but still willing to fight. To achieve this, I decided to place the villain above the midpoint of the picture. I canted the angle a bit to throw the viewer off-kilter as well. That way, the villain is literally looming over us as well as the boy.

6 SYMMETRY OR ASYMMETRY

Symmetry is great at telegraphing order and calm, but it can be pretty unexciting. Sometimes, as with this portrait, I design while thinking about bilateral symmetry, but I vary the elements a bit to keep the piece feeling active: the expression in the eyes, and the positioning, shape and size of the different tentacles, for example. I also balance the background elements without repeating them, so that they retain a sense of energy.



7 CONTRAST AND DETAIL

These can be great ways to draw the eye to a specific point on an image. When creating this dragon, I wanted the focus of the piece to be mainly on the face of the dragon, especially his mouth and eyes. I'll often do greyscale filters on my work to see if my contrast is working or not and in this case, the highest area of contrast is where the mouth meets the fire. Secondary to that is the eye and the line of light running up his neck leading to his mouth. As for detail, the crispness and amount of detail is higher in the face than in other places – especially the tail, which sinks into the distance.



8 BIG, BOLD DESIGN ELEMENTS

Sometimes it pays to be blatant with your design elements. Just look at any Norman Rockwell Saturday Evening Post cover. I'll often use a giant circle on one of my points of interest in a piece, creating a halo around the main character or action. This draws the viewer's attention to anything that breaks out of that circle. Taking this approach also works with other simple shapes, such as a diamond or a triangle.

9 DEVELOPING DYNAMIC SYMMETRY

Great compositions use geometry. Here's an example of how dynamic symmetry helps to take this piece to a deeper compositional level...



A Line art

Using my initial sketch, I draw a line from the top right corner to the lower left corner. Then, from the top left corner I draw a line at right angles to the first line. This is the primary point of interest, and where I'll paint the dragon's eye.



B Identify edges

I draw a line straight across at the primary point to establish the dragon's eyeline. Then I place a line from the bottom right corner at a right angle to the original line. These help me establish important elements like the edge of the platform, the orc's side and the dragon's wing.



C Checking placement of elements

Next, I repeat these steps, starting at the top-left corner. Using these guides, I locate the edge of the platform, the left wing and the warrior's hands. This enables me to see that the warrior is right in the middle of the diamond shape. The dragon's head, shifted right, is now in the upper diamond. ►

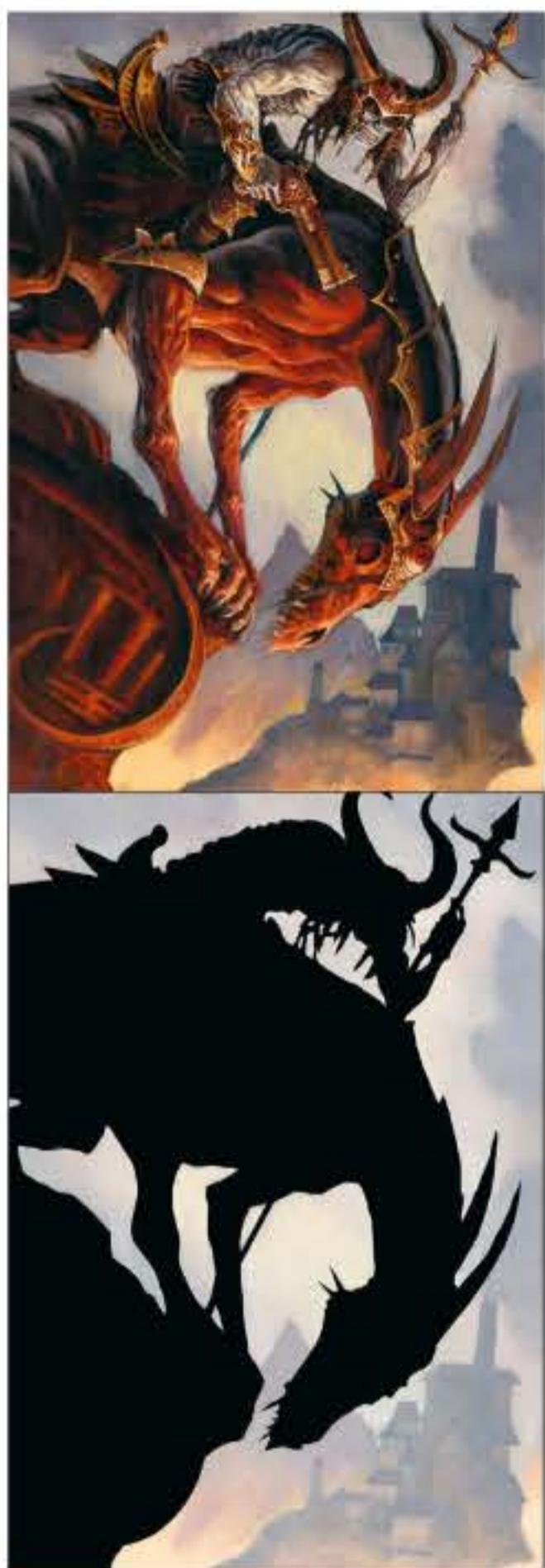
Workshops

“Sweeping action or movements across a piece will draw the eye from one side of an image to the other”



10 GUIDE THE VIEWER THROUGH YOUR ART

Sweeping action or movements across a piece will draw the eye from one side of a composition to the other. Using strong, direct action lines built into elements of the picture can move the eye to the point you want. In non-action pieces or in the calmer areas of action scenes I use elements such as flowing cloth, curling smoke or even directional brush strokes in the sky – all subtle trails that the eye can follow to the image's focal point. Here, I used the waves, the tentacles and the shape of the sail to direct the eye.



11 ASSESSING THE SILHOUETTE

When I'm planning a painting I think about how the image will look as a silhouette. Compositionally, the silhouette is the outer edge of the main forms of the foreground objects or figures. If it works in black and white as a composition then there's a good chance that the composition should work fine in colour, if you don't mess around with the colour values too much. I also make sure that the silhouette is interesting and background elements don't compete with it.

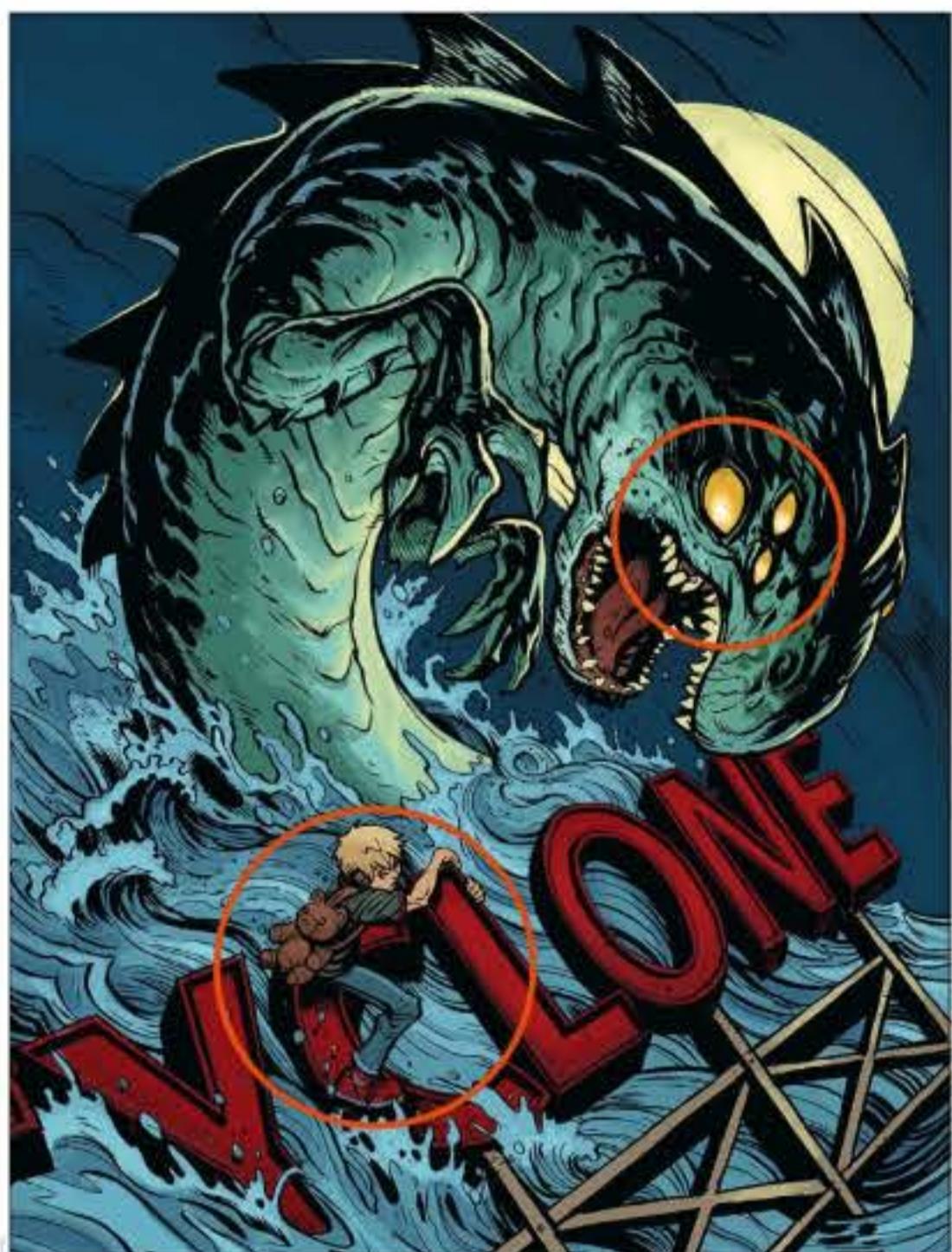
12 APPLYING THE GOLDEN RATIO

Sometimes when dynamic symmetry doesn't feel right for a piece, I use the Golden Ratio. This Greek mathematical equation expresses itself as a spiral. Many of the most famous pieces of art use this ratio to decide on the placement of elements and as a natural way to lead the eye across an image. It's so embedded in our natural world and our humanity that we often use the ratio without realising it. In the case of this image I used the spiral to create a harmony for the elements of interest, such as the wolf's eyes, Morrigan, the tree and the ravens.



13 FINAL PRODUCT

I believe it's important to think about the final home of the art. Is it a game card or book cover, or will it hang on a wall? Gallery art has different compositional needs than a card image or a 6x9-inch comic book cover. While a strong composition will work on many levels, the intensity of detail needed for a larger reproduction may not be necessary for a tiny card. Simple shape compositions can be strongest for small pieces, but might seem too simple when enlarged.



14 BE CLEVER WITH COLOUR

Colour is an amazing tool for composition. In a piece where I want something to hit hard I'll use a lot of contrasting value of colour as well as complementary colour. A bright warm colour in the middle of a field of cool can really pop out of a scene and draw the viewer's eye. I made the word 'Cyclone' a dark red so that it would contrast against the blue of the water, while the eyes of the serpent are bright yellow against the dark turquoise of the sky. I also highlighted the boy with yellow and a lighter skin tone, to bring him forward against the sign and the water.



15 STAY LOOSE

While such advice can help to create strong images, if they ever become restrictive I throw out the rules and do some unstructured sketching. I use bigger, looser, bolder strokes and shapes and then go back to these tips. In the end I never want to lose the spontaneity in the image, otherwise it loses its fun. If making the art isn't fun for me, it won't be fun for the viewer.



Quill, Marmoset Toolbag & Photoshop **USE VR TOOLS TO BUILD UP AN IMAGE**

Freelance illustrator **Martin Nebelong** paints in virtual reality to create the base for a book cover illustration, before finishing it in Photoshop

Artist PROFILE

Martin Nebelong
LOCATION: Denmark

Martin is a Danish freelance artist, working part-time for Canadian startup MasterpieceVR and on a freelance basis for a plethora of clients both big and small. <http://ifxm.ag/martin-n>



In this workshop I'll be taking you through the process of making an illustration for a Danish author, Nanna Foss, who's written a paranormal sci-fi book series called Spektrum, aimed at a teen audience. I'll take you through the steps of quickly mocking up and composing the scene in Quill (VR), and once this is done, I'll talk about how to light and present the scene in Marmoset Toolbag to add mood to the VR sketch.

With those elements in place, I'll finally take the illustration into Photoshop and add finish and details through the use of textures and painting. My workshop is mainly focused on the steps before Photoshop, because there's been plenty of ImagineFX tutorials by better artists than me on this part of the painting process!

Creating art in VR is still in its early days, but it's evolving at a rapid pace and it's exciting to see how much the tools have already improved over

what we had just a year ago. In my daily work as an illustrator, I find that VR sketches works well compared to traditional sketches. It gives you more freedom when you're composing the scene, enables you to easily reuse elements, and makes it simple to experiment with light, colours, material properties and so on.

This scene is set outdoors and VR is great here, but for architectural scenes and difficult perspective compositions, I've found that it's extremely powerful too. ➤



**GET YOUR
RESOURCES**
See page 8 now!

Workshops



© Tellerrup. Photo and editing: Thomas Buchtberg and Danielle Frister

1 Character and environment breakdown

Nanna describes the scene for me in detail: "The main character is a boy, between 15 and 16 years old. He has black "manga hair", black clothing and a snakebite-piercing in the lower lip. He has a goth tattoo on the lower arm with the text 'Courage is resistance to fear, mastery of fear – not absence of fear'. He has a bow in his hands. He looks frightened/angry but determined. The boy is standing in a clearing surrounded by burned eucalyptus trees. Just outside the clearing we see another boy who looks 16 or 17 years old, muscular with broad shoulders and brown hair. Visible among the trees around the characters, we see glittering, scary eyes – as if the wood is filled with monsters who are watching them."



2 Sketching in VR

Let's fire up VR and Quill. I make sure the scene grid is turned on, and choose the Ribbon tool for the initial drawing. I sketch out the main character, in the same way I would on paper, but with the difference that I constantly rotate the model to make sure it looks good from all angles and that the figure is balanced.



3 Giving the figure shape

Because I'll be lighting the scene outside of VR, it's crucial that the characters and surroundings have a mass to light in the first place. Otherwise you'll just be looking at thin ribbons and will have light shining through them. For this I use either the Cube brush or the Capped Cylinder brush. I fill in the figure around the sketch, while rotating it to check the silhouette from all sides. Using the Selection tool I can adjust the character if needed.



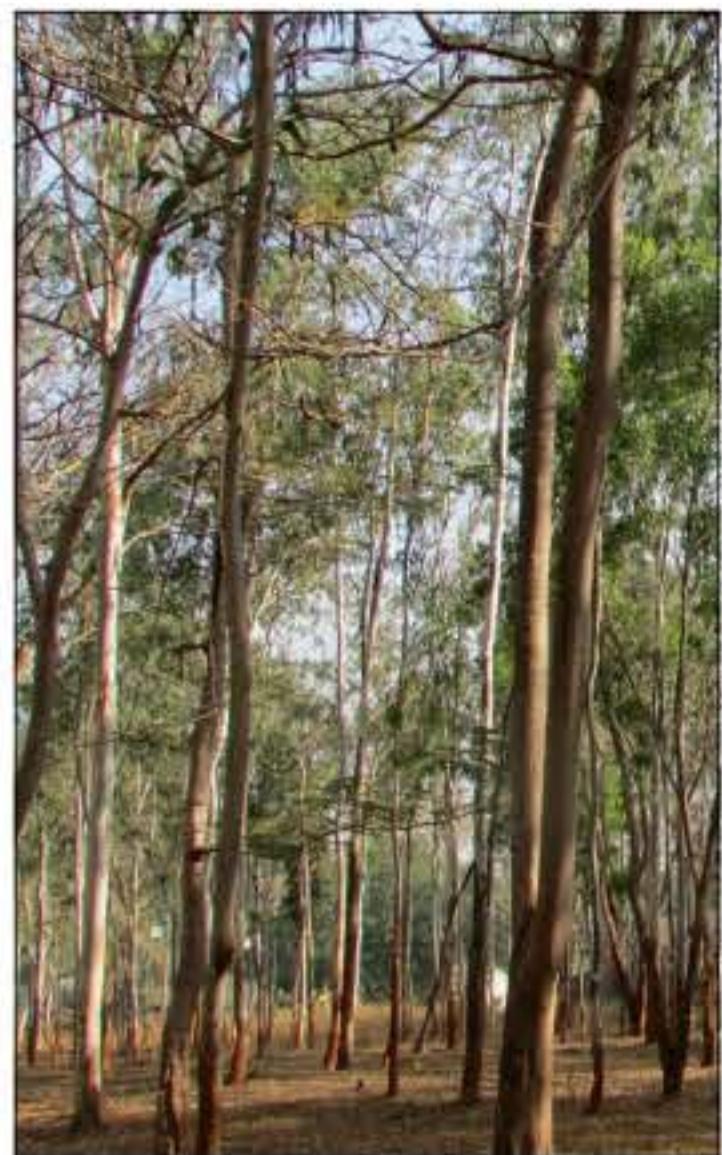
4 Adding a ground plane

I select the Capped Cylinder brush and draw in a ground plane. I use big strokes for this step because I don't need much detail here. I focus my efforts on the main part of the image, which is the area around the character. I use a grey colour for the ground, and then add some colour variation with the Recolor tool.



5 Using reference in VR

After also drawing the secondary character, I look up some references online for the eucalyptus trees, and open up a desktop overlay in Quill via Oculus Home. You can pin your desktop in VR, and look at a browser window with reference images (or even your favourite TV programmes). It's also possible to import reference directly in Quill, but often I find that approach to be a bit slow compared to a window overlay, which enables me to easily search for new images.



©ababy.com/MemoryCatcher and Vilasvarasimha



6 Drawing the first tree

I add a new layer, either through the Layer menu or by pushing up on the thumbstick of your left hand. Using the Capped Cylinder brush, I draw in the stem of the first tree, and then the branches. Remember to have Pressure Sensitive Size turned on for this. Once I'm happy with the form, I use the Optimize tool to make sure that the tree isn't too heavy, from a polygonal standpoint.



7 Duplicating the tree

I then select the tree using the Selection tool, hold down the left trigger and the right grip button and drag out a copy of the tree. By turning it and scaling it slightly, I make it look like a new tree. I also select some branches and reposition them. I repeat this process until I've created a small forest. ➤



8 Finishing up the mockup

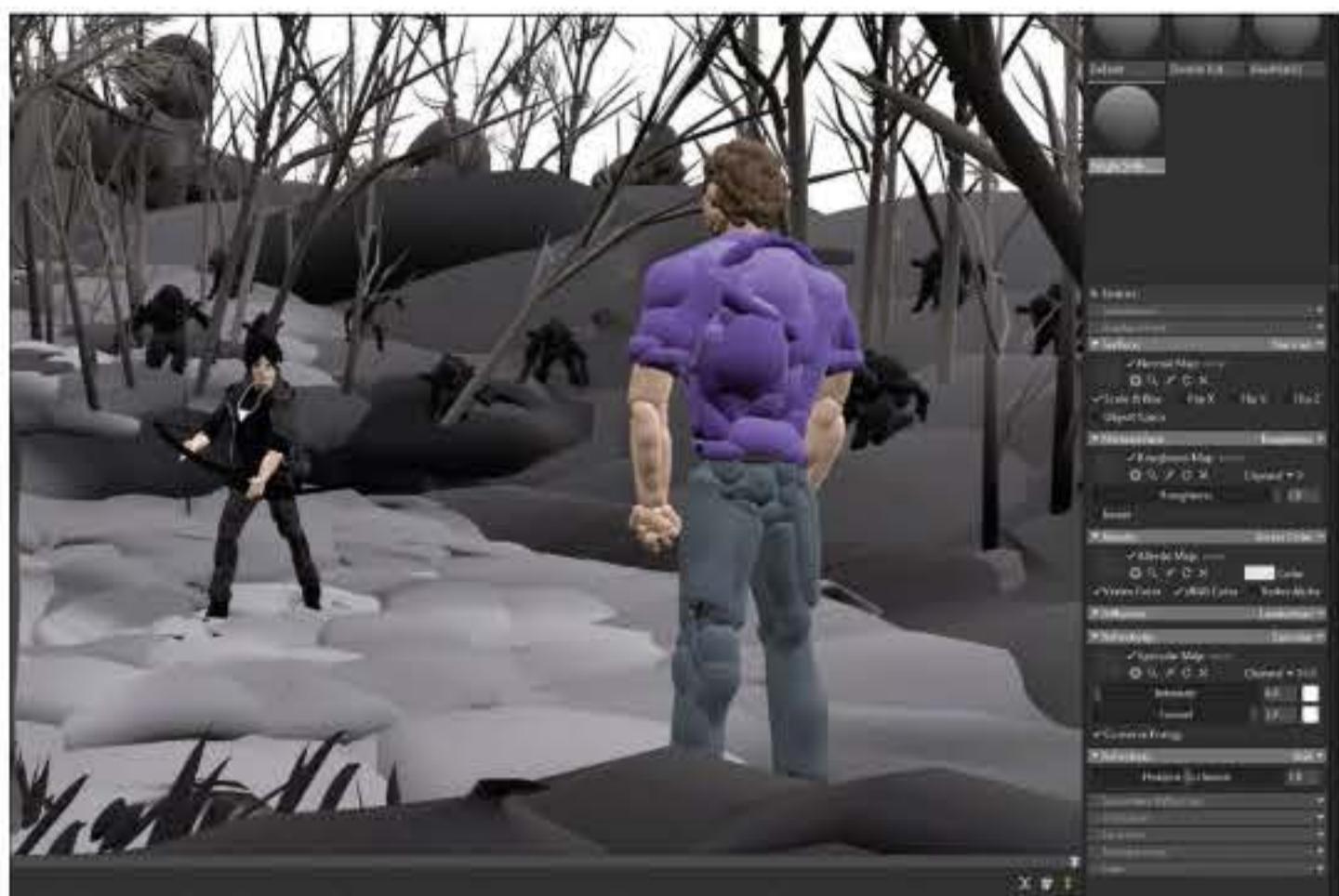
Once I'm happy with the overall look of the scene, I go in and refine the face of the main character and the overall shapes of both him and the boy in the purple shirt. For this I mainly use the Rounded Cylinder brush and the Cube brush to make sure that the form is solid.



9 Exporting the model from VR into Marmoset

After adding final details to the scene, it's now time to take it outside of VR. To do this, I export the scene from Quill as an FBX file. In the Export menu you can turn off the Export Curves and Export Animation options to keep the file size more manageable. To help me add mood to the scene, I import the model into Marmoset Toolbag,

but you could just as well use Blender and EEVEE, for example, which is a lot like Marmoset Toolbag, or for that matter any 3D program that supports vertex colour. Both Marmoset and Eevee are real-time viewers, so any changes you do to your scene are visible instantly. I like this, since I can very quickly achieve just the look I want. Here's what the model looks like without any tweaks.

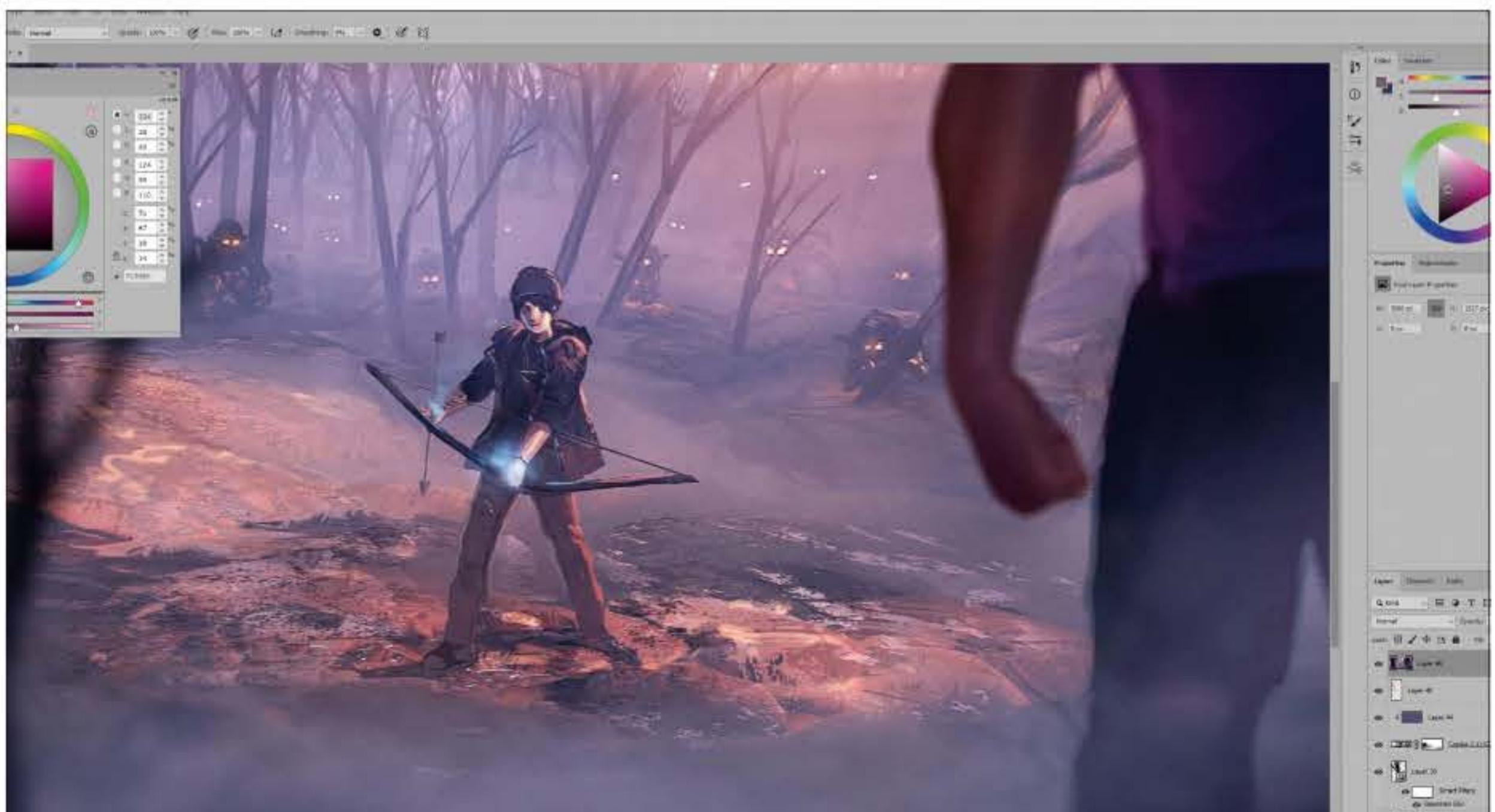


10 Tweaking my materials

I make a new material and set the Albedo channel to Vertex color and Roughness to one. I set Reflectivity to Specular and Specular intensity to near zero. I create materials for different elements, such as the trees, ground and the boy's necklace. For the skin, I set the diffusion to Unlit to achieve a smoother look to the surface. I then mix in a colour to ensure the material matches the lighting.

11 Marmoset effects

I light the scene with an overall HDRI image, and place a light as the sun. I use a directional light for this, and adjust the intensity to a fitting amount. I add various other lights to achieve the look I want, and create a Fog element for a more moody look. I also tweak the camera settings to introduce depth of field, noise and lens effects. I then render out various camera angles, and once I've picked one, I render this version out and exit Marmoset.



12 Use Photoshop to add polish to the composition

Finally, after exporting the render from Marmoset Toolbag, I take the model into Photoshop. Using a combination of custom painting and photo textures, I start to add more finish to the scene. I end up tweaking the main character quite a bit, but use the background pretty much as I had created it in VR. I hope this workshop has given you an idea about how to use VR as a mock-up tool for your own illustrations.

Figure drawing: part 5

CREATE DEPTH BY USING VALUE

Patrick J Jones thinks like a sculptor and works on overlapping forms, as he explores the illusion of the third dimension using tonal value



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



Welcome to part five of my eight-part series on drawing the figure. In this instalment we'll be working with my regular life-model Alana, placing our focus on the gluteus while creating depth using tonal value. The forms of the gluteus offer the best shadow and light options to clearly see – and draw – structure and depth.

On our paper surface we can only draw across two dimensions. We can draw up and down, left and right, but we obviously can't draw 'inside' the flat paper, because that's the impossible third dimension of depth. Yet this doesn't mean we can't create an illusion of the third dimension.

It was the illusion of the third dimension that first drew gasps of

amazement when the Old Masters such as Rembrandt and Caravaggio displayed their huge oil masterworks. Imagine a time when photography and cinema didn't exist. Now imagine seeing a giant canvas filled with heroic figures, painted with the illusion of 3D space. Having stood in front of these paintings myself, I can attest to the fact that you can almost feel it's possible to step inside the canvas. This was not only the height of visual entertainment – to the average person it was a feat of magic!

THE DRAWING CHALLENGE

Using charcoals and pencils makes the illustration process a harder task, because we don't have the benefit of colour and glazes. Furthermore, in most cases we can't match the grand

canvas work of the Old Masters because pencil drawings are usually small-scale affairs. However, there are ways around such obstacles.

To create the greatest illusion of depth using monotone values we'll need to think like a sculptor and draw the body as if it's a dimensional landscape of overlapping forms with a sense of weight and volume. To do this we work with tonal value, from the darkest value (black), toward the lightest value (white). In this case the white value is the bare paper.

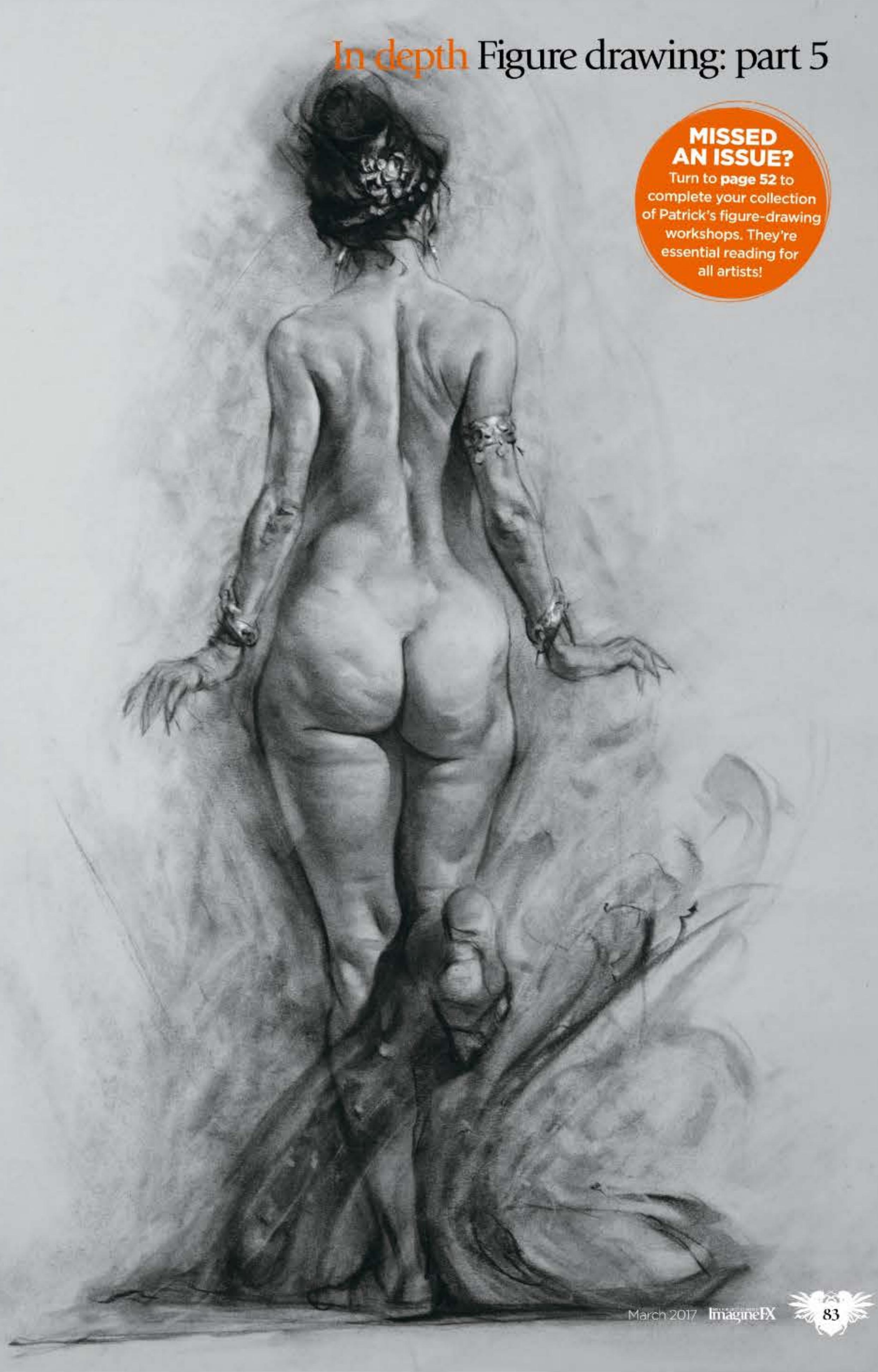
I'll begin with simple shapes, drawing big to small, and will assess how I'll construct the drawing before I make a mark. Always be on your highest alert in the early stages, because there's no point in rendering a badly constructed drawing. ►

**GET YOUR
RESOURCES**
See page 8 now!

In depth Figure drawing: part 5

MISSED AN ISSUE?

Turn to page 52 to complete your collection of Patrick's figure-drawing workshops. They're essential reading for all artists!



Workshops



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

1 Looking for clues

Although this looks like a symmetrical stance, the hips are tilted downwards to the right. Look to the left side pinch of the waist for the clue. The hips are a fused mass, so the tilt affects each side. The pinch indicates the oblique muscles bulging between the ribcage and hips.



2 Making changes

To give the figure's pose more movement I tilt the shoulders toward the higher hip. I also pull the right arm out a little using a small piece of willow charcoal. Note the sacrum triangle above the gluteal midline, and its orientation. The angle of the sacrum will show us which way the hips are tilted.

In depth Figure drawing: part 5



3 Entering the third dimension

I explore the body landscape, feeling the depth of flesh, as if drawing in the third dimension. Drawing the corners of the gluteus as I would a box but with softer edges helps me to clarify the idea. Notice how the back side of the gluteal masses resemble an upside-down butterfly. This is a visual clue known as a mnemonic.



4 The power of illusion

With everything in place I add some greyscale tone with the broad side of my charcoal. The tone immediately brings in a sense of volume to our illusion of the third dimension. I'm keeping everything light to begin with, in order to have the freedom to change shapes and tones before going into detail. ➤

Workshops



5 Adopt the mindset of a sculptor

There's now enough charcoal on the newsprint surface for me to shape the flesh using my fingers alone. I'm thinking like a sculptor. This has the two-fold effect of making the illusion of flesh softer as well as fading the image. With the image knocked back I now have a less-confusing drawing to put line on top of.



6 Thinking ahead

I use a scrap piece of newsprint to stop from smudging as I draw. I could use reworkable spray fixative at this stage, but it would make blending and also erasing highlights more difficult later, so I prefer to leave my options open as long as possible. When you do use reworkable fixative, spray it very lightly and in stages.



7 All fingers and thumbs

Alternating between finger smudging and pencilling, I work from dark to light tones to find further illusions of depth. I've pulled the standing leg inward more before detailing. As noted before, the early stages is the best time to make changes.



8 New opportunities

By adjusting the leg inward more in the last step the figure is now more solidly balanced. I was lucky to see opportunity for change before I added heavier line work, which is more difficult to erase. Every stage is a new opportunity to rethink and improve the drawing.



9 Adjusting shapes

I continue to smudge into the flesh until I have a good mid-tone to pull out highlights with my kneadable eraser. By reshaping the pliable kneadable eraser as I go, I can vary the shape making. I think of my erasers as drawing tools rather than as mistake-fixers.



10 Stay focused as you erase

I don't fear the hard-edged marks the kneadable eraser makes because I'm thinking ahead to the next blending stage. If I were to blend as I go here, the plotting of the highlights would be less focused. Note how a dirty eraser leaves less gummy marks when erasing. ➤

Workshops



11 Working with a light touch

I take my shammy cloth and soften edges. This takes a light touch, and is something you'll need to feel as you go. The landscape of flesh now has all the value and softness I need to start thinking of style. I title the drawing *The Entity*.



12 Feeling the pinch

I pull out the brightest highlights with a pencil eraser. Extreme highlights on flesh are usually found on oily parts of the skin such as the nose and forehead, but also where flesh gets pinched. The pencil eraser also has a brush on the end for sweeping away erased particles.



13 Time for a little black magic

Now I work into the absolute darks to achieve the greatest sense of dimension. The darkest darks will be in the occlusion shadows (where flesh meets flesh). I also add some energetic strokes here to bring back my gestural hand, which can become stiff in the drawing sense of the word, after a lot of structural drawing.



14 The art of conversation

To finish I tame the strokes down and shape them with my smudgy fingers erasers and tissue to create a mystical swirl. What is the mysterious 'Entity' in the title? Well, I like my drawings to be open to interpretation so the viewer can use their imagination. In this way, art becomes a conversation.

THE DIMENSIONAL GLUTEUS STUDY SHEET

The tilt line of the sacrum dimples indicate the tilt of the hips, the trochanter bones of the femur and the gluteal masses.

Note how one gluteus overlaps another, as indicated here by the shadow at the gluteal line.

The line between the hip crest and the great trochanter bone is relatively straight and shows the boxy form of the female hips.

The gluteus is relaxed on the non-weight-bearing leg and has a rounder shape.

NEXT MONTH!
Part 6: Discover how to draw natural-looking arms using gesture, structure and rhythm.

Gluteus medius bulge.

The top of the great trochanter bone shows here a little down from the gluteal line.

The widest part of the hips is usually in line with the gluteal fold.

The straighter gluteal fold is created by the biceps of the leg pressing upwards on the weight-bearing leg.

15 Gluteus study sheet

Although the two gluteal masses seem simple there are subtle differences, especially in a three-quarter view or with one leg relaxed. To avoid a 'double bubble' shape study each gluteus separately, working outward from the central gluteal line.

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1 **NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS**

ImagineFX

Reviews



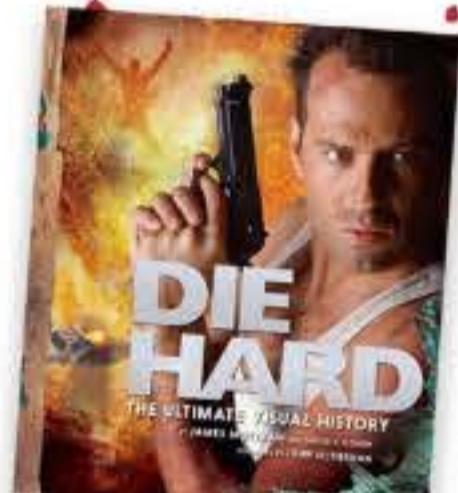
Artist's Choice Award

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...



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ON TEST



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A look back on the films that turned Bruce Willis into a bona fide action hero.



RATINGS EXPLAINED

★★★★★ Magnificent

★★★★ Great

★★★ Good

★★ Poor

★ Atrocious



Surface Pro 6

MULTI-TOOL We find out if Microsoft's latest two-in-one device has kept pace with the iPad Pro and laptop rivals like the MacBook Air

Price £779 (Core i5, 8GB RAM, 128GB); £949 (256GB); £1,949 (Core i7, 16GB RAM, 1TB) **Company** Microsoft **Web** www.microsoft.com

The Surface Pro 6 is the latest version of Microsoft's successful two-in-one tablet-PC combo. There's not a stack of improvements over the previous generation, but it does up the performance significantly. However, as a creative the question is whether it's either as good a tablet as the iPad Pro, or a potential laptop replacement that can take on your current ultra-portable device?

The short answer is that no, it's not as good as a tablet as the iPad Pro. And it doesn't do as good a job as a laptop when it's, well, being a laptop. Yet where the Surface Pro 6 wins is in its flexibility as a tablet, a laptop and a fully powered Windows machine that you can dock with a keyboard and monitor when you get to a desk.

Surface Pro 6 starts at £779 for the Core-i5, 8GB RAM and 128GB storage

The Surface Pro 6 sticks with the familiar Surface Pro design, with a chunky bezel around the display and the kickstand at the rear.

version. You also need to buy the Surface Pen (£100) and the detachable Surface Type Cover (£125) that attaches to the bottom edge of the Surface Pro with a special docking point. This is galling, because both are essential to the Surface Pro experience. The problem with the added extras is that, by the time you've added them on, you're looking at the same price point (or more) for an ultra-portable laptop.



The Surface Pro 6 features Microsoft's specially designed 12.3-inch PixelSense touchscreen display with 2,736x1,824 resolution. This gives you 267ppi, which is slightly more than the new iPad Pro. Microsoft has kept the same 3:2 screen from before; clearly it feels the resolution is high enough without affecting battery life.

COLOUR OPTIONS

Two colour profiles are available: Enhanced and sRGB. The latter profile will give you more accurate colours, but comes with the loss of some contrast. Enhanced is the default mode so you'll get more punchy colours and improved contrast, but skin tones are left alone.

As a touchscreen display, it's extremely accurate. Windows 10 features a tablet mode to make using the touchscreen more accessible, but



it's also possible to use the standard desktop with touch. It's up to you. Tablet Mode does require a little refinement and it isn't a patch on iOS as a tablet operating system, but it does mean you don't have to switch devices when you want to migrate from laptop mode to tablet mode.

One of the advantages of the Surface Pro 6 is that you can achieve top-spec laptop-grade performance in a tablet. Okay, so there's no discrete graphics as with the higher-end versions of the Surface Book 2, but there is Intel UHD graphics with both processor options: the Core-i5 8250U and the Core i7-8650U. Both are now quad-core processors instead of the dual-core units used previously, so there's a definite jump in performance versus last year's models – we're talking somewhere in the region of 50 per cent better.

BETTER BATTERY LIFE

Previous versions of the Surface Pro have disappointed in the battery life stakes; they certainly weren't able to last all day. This version does appear to turn a corner and we found we could get around eight hours of constant use. We've seen some tests that put it around nine hours, but we found this to be unrealistic.

As well as the usual platinum finish, the Surface Pro 6 is available in a sleek-looking black case. The design could do with a refresh – especially when considering those thick bezels – although the kickstand is one of the best around. When attached, the

At 2,736x1,824 the Surface Pro 6's screen resolution is slightly more than an iPad Pro's.



keyboard turns the device into a near-laptop, providing you can put it on a desk or table. It's nowhere near as rigid or useful as a laptop if you need to work with it on your lap (an ergonomic nightmare at the best of times) or a tray table on an airplane or train. If you often work in these scenarios we really would recommend a laptop instead.

There are also two cameras in the device: a rear eight-megapixel unit and

a front-facing five-megapixel video-calling camera. Both are capable of 1080p HD video and you can also use the front-facing camera for Windows Hello face recognition to unlock the device with your face.

The Surface Go 6 is a powerful two-in-one device and remains the best hybrid laptop-tablet for most people. It's not as powerful as the Surface Book 2, it's not as good a tablet as the iPad Pro and it's not as good as being a laptop as a laptop. It also needs a design refinement and a move to USB-C. And pricing can get expensive once you add the core accessories.

Yet it's easy to overlook all this because Surface Pro 6 is a flexible device that can be your constant companion, especially if you want a Windows 10 PC that can be coupled with the excellent Surface Pen for painting sessions out and about.

“One of the advantages of the Surface Pro 6 is that you can achieve top-spec laptop-grade performance in a tablet”

The Surface Pen is an essential accessory and works fantastically well as a device to both negotiate the desktop and use with Windows Ink, Office apps and of course, your painting program of choice.

The Surface Pro 6 sticks with single DisplayPort and old-style USB-A ports instead of USB-C, while there's a microSD slot under the kickstand.

The display is bright and colours are punchy. This makes it ideal for watching video on, if you're not in the drawing mood.

DETAILS

Features

- 12.3-inch 3:2 Pixel Sense display with 10-point multi-touch
- Display resolution: 2,736x1,824 (267ppi)
- Intel UHD Graphics 620
- Intel Core i5-8250U or Core i7-8650U (both quad-core)
- 128GB, 256GB, 512GB or 1TB SSD
- 8GB or 16GB RAM
- 770g
- 292x201x8.5mm
- Windows 10 Home

Rating



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Atey Ghailan shows how this contemplative study grew from a basic idea of a character reading a book.



Idea → How → Goal → Start drawing



The artist shows early on why it's not just the idea that counts, but what you want to achieve with the idea.



Atey likes to cover the canvas as early as possible, then build up his environment before working on the characters.

Character work starts with blocking out the main shapes, making selections for detailing straightforward.



Improve Your Painting Process

THE BIG PICTURE Video games illustrator Atey Ghailan pulls back the curtain on how an empty canvas develops into a fully fledged painting

Publisher Atey Ghailan **Price** \$5 **Format** Download **Web** www.artstation.com/snatti/store

Process is a bit of a vague word to describe something that's critical towards creating the best artwork you can. Essentially, process is the sequence of steps you go through to make your painting.

Yet more crucially, it's the intent that informs those steps. Are you aiming for efficiency and clear visual communication to hit a tight deadline, or is realism perhaps your goal, whatever the cost in time and effort?

Half a hour may not sound like much time to go through an entire painting process, but Atey Ghailan packs more than enough ideas into this brief but engaging video to help you develop or refine your own process. The first few minutes show new artists in particular how to refine their basic ideas until there's a clear purpose in your mind, and you understand not just what you are painting, but why.



DETAILS

Topics covered

- Forming ideas
- Developing goals
- Covering the canvas
- Painting the environment
- Painting characters
- Water and reflections

Length
32 minutes

Rating
★★★★★

Atey then dives into the fundamentals of building a painting up from nothing. He shows the steps he takes while also suggesting alternative paths you might follow, depending on your own strengths and interests. As an artist with a background in environments, for example, Atey reveals that he prefers to establish the setting first and then move on to the characters; you might prefer to do it the other way round.

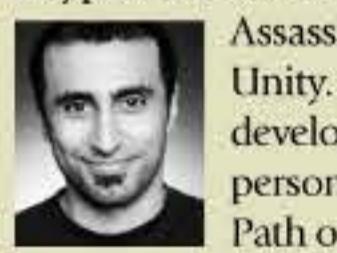
Atey largely takes a step back from the nitty-gritty of Photoshop tools and settings to focus on the bigger picture of process, but his choice of subject matter means that you do get some helpful advice on creating convincing reflections in water. His narration is rather rapid at points, but his enthusiasm and understanding of his craft carries you along, and you'll be surprised how much you can learn in just over 30 minutes. ●

ARTIST PROFILE

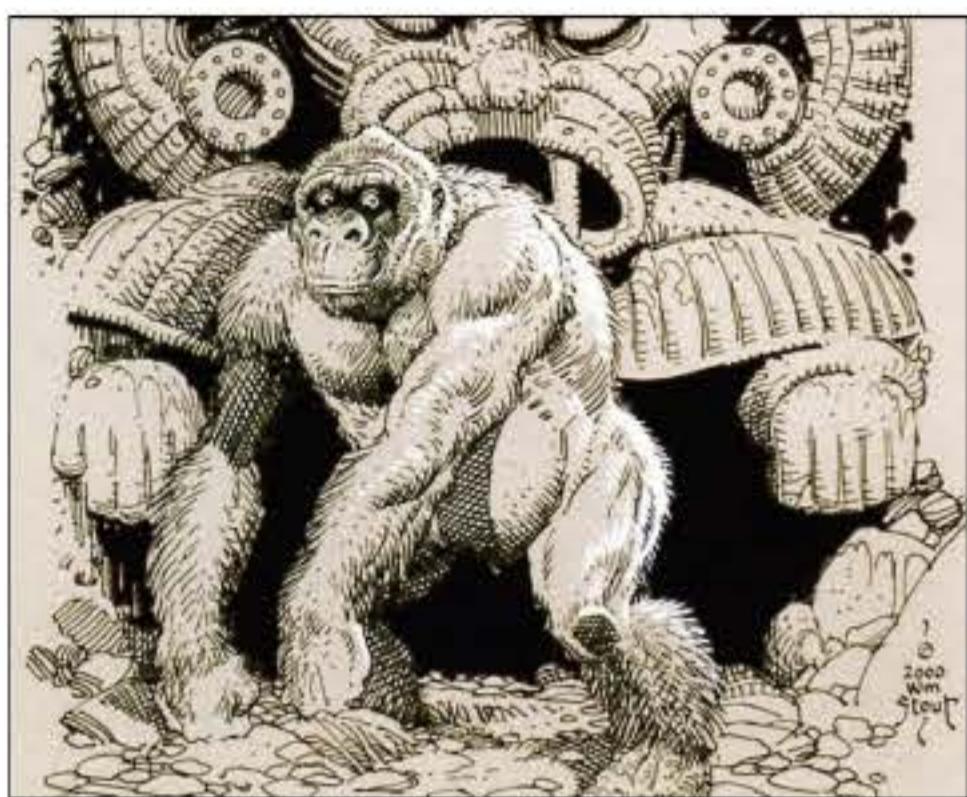
ATEY GHAILAN

Originally from Sweden, Atey is now based in Los Angeles and is a senior illustrator at Riot Games, the video game developer and e-sports tournament organiser behind League Of Legends. He was previously a freelance illustrator and concept artist, creating material for Star Citizen, Galaxy Saga, Legends Of The Cryptids, Chaos Drive and

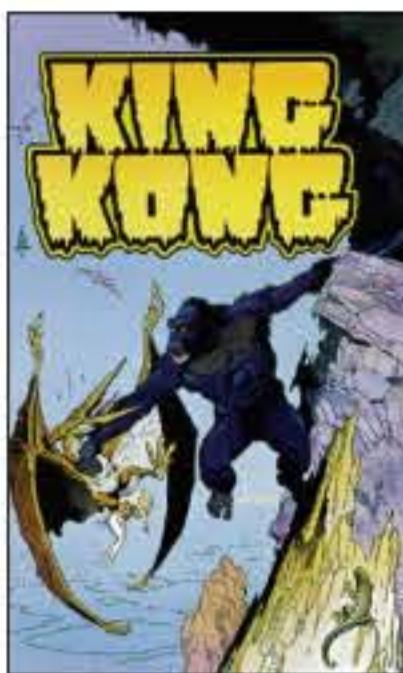
Assassin's Creed Unity. He's also developing a personal project, Path of Miranda.



www.artstation.com/snatti



The giant ape from the 1933 film made its presence felt throughout William's career.



A collaborative effort between William and the late comics artist Dave Stevens.

Fantastic Worlds: The Art of William Stout

TOP BILLING Nearly 50 years of a diverse creative career are celebrated within this handsome retrospective of the influential American artist



Author Ed Leimbacher **Publisher** Insight Editions **Price** £50 **Web** www.insighteditions.com **Available** Now

The 1933 black-and-white version of King Kong was the first film artist William Stout ever watched at the age of three. Within its frames were all the ingredients that would be found later on in his work: monsters, dinosaurs and women in distress.

This doesn't mean that William's career has been neat and predictable. With the help of over 500 colourful and black-and-white reproductions, this book shows the diversity of his creative talents and his willingness to experiment. William himself is also on-hand to guide readers through his



story, "I always let the problem dictate the style and solution."

Having William involved with this book makes for a more intimate and entertaining retrospective. Cartoonist and painter Robert Williams provides some dramatic context for the artist in his foreword, but it's not long until we glimpse the illustrator's childhood doodles. These sketches, including a triceratops, the invisible man, and of course King Kong, are a fascinating way to follow the trail of horror and dinosaurs that define William's output.

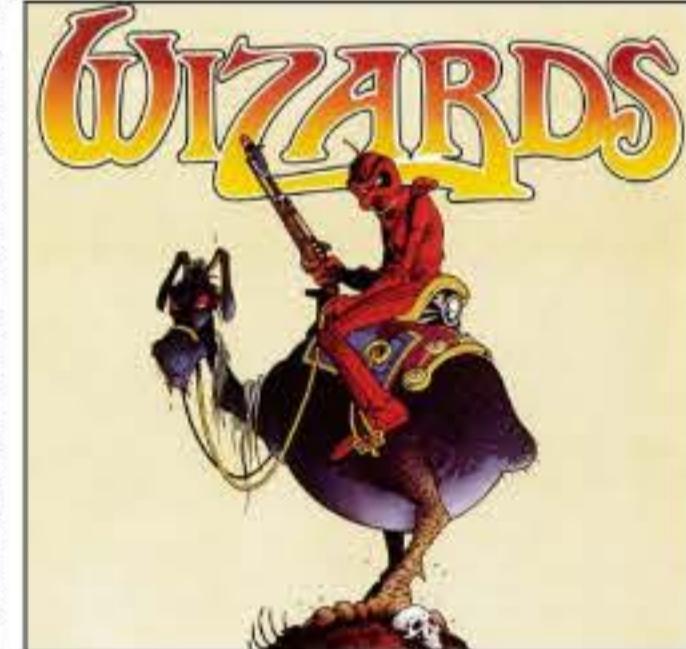
The rest of the book is split into chapters that cover key facets of

“Witty captions accompany every drawing, advertisement, poster and dinosaur”



William painted this classic fantasy composition in 1989. It's based on Edgar Rice Burroughs' 1913 tale *The Monster Men*.

William's professional life. We skip from influences to movie posters via comics and bootleg covers, ending up with a look at his current and unfinished work. Given the sprawling nature of his clients, it makes sense for the chapters to be split by the type of work and not necessarily the time in which they were created. Other sections are referenced when necessary, so readers can jump back and forth as the mood takes them.



The original version of William's poster art for the animated science-fiction 1977 film *Wizards*.

Each reproduction in this coffee-table book is thoughtfully laid out, with appropriate images given full-page room to breathe. Not only that, but witty and personable captions accompany every drawing, poster, advertisement and dinosaur.

Introductions to each chapter give further insight into William and his career, creating a portrait of a man whose career is driven by artistic desires with a moral compass pointing firmly towards serious social interests. His own admission that he's nothing special, just a hard worker, raises the bar for other artists, though. If William isn't a genius, who is?

RATING ★★★★★

The Art of Ralph Breaks the Internet

GET REKT The arcade game antagonist is back, and this time he's online. Discover the concepts that were created for Wreck-It Ralph's internet adventure

Author Jessica Julius **Publisher** Chronicle Books **Price** £30 **Web** www.chroniclebooks.com **Available** Now

Back in 2012, Wreck-It Ralph came for your nostalgia via the video games you played growing up. In the long-awaited sequel, *Ralph Breaks the Internet*, Disney brings the story up to date and makes it relevant for a new generation of young audiences by taking the characters online.

The transition from gaming arcade to Wi-Fi router, both in terms of the story and animation, is explained by a



Concept artists with international backgrounds were encouraged to bring this aspect into their work.

host of Disney animators via columns and captions designed to look like social media statuses. This gives you a good idea of the clever artistic choices found in the film, and by extension, this lavish art book.

Packed with enough pictures to make an image search jealous, *The Art of Ralph Breaks the Internet* details how the creative team updated old friends and made new ones, plus how

they found innovative ways to realise real sites like Google and Facebook.

All of the charm that made the first film a success can be found in these pages, and it looks like Disney has managed to use the internet as more than just window-dressing to create a story that couldn't have been told with computer games. We give it a like.

RATING ★★★★☆

Die Hard: The Ultimate Visual History

DIE HARDBACK Take off your shoes and socks, slip on a white vest and look back on the films that turned Bruce Willis into a bona fide action hero

Authors James Mottram and David S Cohen **Publisher** Titan Books **Price** £35 **Web** www.titanbooks.com **Available** Now

The release of *Die Hard* 30 years ago almost single-handedly reshaped the action film genre. And over the course of four sequels, the series has tapped into modern trends and events to keep the landscape in check. In the pages of *Die Hard: The Ultimate Visual History*, we learn how the seminal films came to be.

In a refreshingly straight-talking foreword, filmmaker John McTiernan



Bruce Willis dukes it out with Andreas Wisniewski in the depths of Nakatomi Plaza, from the first *Die Hard* film.



The book features storyboards and concept art from all five *Die Hard* instalments.

reveals the hoops he and the team had to jump through to get the first *Die Hard* on screen. It sets the tone for the following chapters, which reveal the creative journeys of each film with the help of photo inserts, storyboards, diagrams and replica script samples.

The bulk of the book is given over to *Die Hard*, following the movie's evolution from the novel *Nothing Lasts Forever* through to the iconic action

thriller. Shorter chapters are dedicated to these sequels, while a meagre section looking at the series beyond the big screen caps off the book.

With a John McClane flashback film reportedly in the works, this is the ideal way to immerse yourself in the world of the anti-authoritarian action hero. Yippee ki-yay IFXers!

RATING ★★★★☆

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NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS **ImagineFX**

Traditional Artist

Inspiration and advice from the best pro artists



This issue:

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

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Eeva Nikunen takes you through her creative process and shows how you can add atmosphere and glow to your fantasy work.

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Find out what music is playing in this artist's cosy studio, and how it has influenced his work.



FXPosé

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS



Kai Carpenter

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Oils on masonite WEB: www.kaicarpenterart.com

Kai uses archetypal imagery to explore psychological themes. He invokes myths and fairy tales to express emotional realities found in dreams and memories.



1 TSURU NYOBO

"Based on the Japanese folktale The Crane Wife. I love using real objects to create visual obfuscation and texture around a figure."

2 DREAMER

"I like mermaids as a symbol of the dreaming self. Human consciousness, but with a body that can traverse the unconscious."

3 AQUARIUS

"I created this painting for Llewellyn Worldwide's 2020 Astrological calendar."



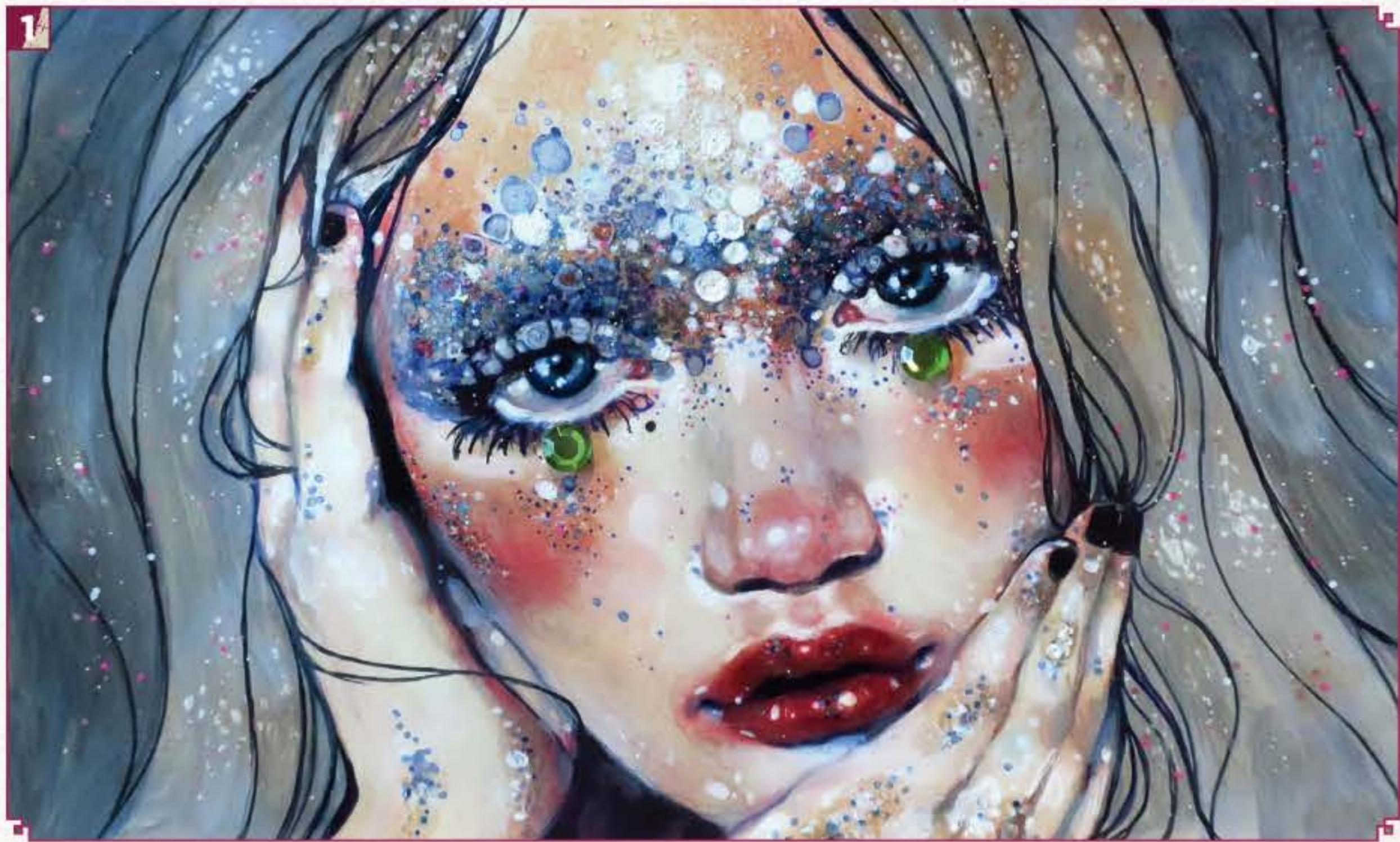




Kristin Baugh Shiraef

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Ink, graphite, acrylic, oil pastels, coloured pencil, paint pens, markers WEB: www.kristinfineart.com

"I never quite know how a piece will turn out when I start one," says Kristin, an illustrator who also works in video game development. "I let each work take me on a journey that I hope, in turn, will take my audience on as well."



1 BENEATH CRYSTAL WATERS

"This piece was inspired by the magical life that must abide beneath the waves. I began this piece in graphite, followed by coloured pencil, acrylic paint and white paint pen."

2 DAYDREAMER

"Inspired by an Instagram photo from the lovely cosplayer Anzu (@anzujaamu). I used graphite, coloured pencil, paint pen, ink and metallic ink to create this piece."

3 COLOUR ME PINK

"Also inspired by one of the playful shots of Anzu. I began with graphite pencil, followed by an acrylic wash, colour pencil and metallic gold acrylic paint."

4 LOVE LOVE

"I didn't quite know where this piece was going when I started it, but I loved the outcome. I used cut-out textile paper for the background, crown and dress."





Traditional Artist Workshop



Oils

PAINT A FANTASY PORTRAIT WITH OILS

Explore **EEVA NIKUNEN'S** creative process as she paints a portrait in oils, and learn how you can add atmosphere and glow to your fantasy work



The process of creating an oil painting can't be rushed, as Eeva learnt through trial and error in her studio.



Eeva believes one of the most exciting things about oil painting is that there's always something new to learn.

The beauty and technical skill of the Old Masters has long fascinated me. The use of lighting and composition in Renaissance era artworks, and the elegant portrait paintings of the 18th and 19th centuries, has always been inspirational. It's helped me bring some of that luscious use of colour and refined brush work into my own art. And for the past few years I've been practising my skills with oil paints, and it has quickly become my favourite medium to work in.

For many years, graphite pencils were my primary medium; I was a little intimidated by oil paints. I tried all other colour mediums, including acrylic paints, coloured pencils, watercolours and even digital painting before I had the courage to finally try my hand at oil painting.

LEARNING FROM THE MASTERS

To get started, I took a few oil painting classes here in Finland, taught by local museum and gallery artist Emmi Mustonen. I learned a lot about traditional oil painting techniques at her Old Masters oil painting workshops. After learning the basics, I was able to implement some of these traditional techniques into my own art. The more you paint with oils, the more you discover how much there is still to be learned.

In this workshop, I'll demonstrate how I create an oil painting from start to finish. My technique consists of working in layers, and in this workshop you'll see my painting go through many different phases.

Oil painting requires a lot of patience. It's a very slow, but also



The work of the Old Masters has had a strong influence on the direction of Eeva's painting style.

forgiving medium. When I first started experimenting with oils, one of the hardest things for me to grasp was getting comfortable with the ugly and awkward stages, and waiting for the paint layers to dry. But I've learned to enjoy the process, and to trust that by the end, the painting will eventually start matching the vision I had for it in the beginning.

Working with oils is a constant learning process. I've discovered that using different transparencies of white paint enables me to paint the illusion of mist and glow. This gives my paintings a magical atmosphere.

I hope that this workshop will inspire you to find what techniques work best for you.



Eeva's work is inspired by the stories and imagery of Finnish and Russian folktales, as well as the heroes and heroines found in classic literature. You can see more of her work at www.eevnikunen.com.

Traditional Artist Workshop



1 Sketching the idea

I begin my painting by drawing a sketch on toned sketchbook paper. This sketch will work as a guide throughout my painting process; however, I'm always open to the possibilities of making changes along the way. Oil paint is a forgiving medium, and if something doesn't look right, you can always paint over it.



2 Transferring the sketch

I print out a photocopy of my sketch, and I'm now ready to transfer the sketch onto the painting surface by using white transfer paper. I prefer to paint on a toned surface, and that's why I've covered my painting surface with an even layer of Raw umber paint.



3 Tracing the sketch

I place the piece of transfer paper in between the painting surface and my sketch, and then trace the lines of my drawing with a pencil. The traced lines now appear on my painting surface. The transfer lines will work as a guide for me when I start the underpainting process.

4 Painting the underpainting

I start painting by using only Titanium white and Raw umber paint. My main focus at this stage is to cover all the lines left from the white transfer paper, and paint all the main elements of my image on to the painting surface. I'm not too worried about detail at this point, because I can keep rendering each part of the painting when I'm adding the colour layers.

In depth Fantasy portrait



5 Introducing colour

I start to add the first layers of colour. I use my underpainting layer as a guide as I mix various tones of dark and lighter shades of colours on my palette. The first colour layer often looks a bit odd. But I know that once I apply more layers and colour tones, the painting will eventually start coming together.



6 Making adjustments

I decide that the way I've painted the nightgown in my underpainting wasn't working, so I paint a new colour layer on top of the previous one to hide the mistakes I made earlier on. I also use a piece of sandpaper to scrape away some of the earlier layers that I had painted.



7 Adding stars and sparkle

Now I add stars to my night-time scene by using a wide coarse brush that's been dipped into Titanium white paint mixed with a lot of painting medium. I simply flick the paint off the brush using my finger. This is a great technique for adding stars and sparkle, or even flakes of falling snow, to a painting. ►

MATERIALS

BRUSHES

■ Synthetic artist brushes from my local art store ranging from size 0 to 6

PAINTING SURFACE

■ Ampersand 3mm gessoboard, 8x10 inches

OIL PAINTS

■ Old Holland: Raw umber, Titanium white, Indian yellow

■ Winsor & Newton: Ultramarine blue, Yellow ochre, Phthalo blue, Prussian blue, Cadmium yellow, Sap green, Alizarin crimson

■ Mussini: Zinc white, Translucent white, Flesh tint

PAINTING MEDIUM

■ Winsor & Newton Liquin fast drying medium

VARNISH

■ Gamblin Gamvar varnish in gloss

TRANSFER PAPER

■ Saral wax-free white transfer paper

Traditional Artist Workshop



8 Applying glazes to bring depth to the scene

I wait 24 hours for the white paint to dry, and then apply a glaze of Ultramarine blue over the white dots. I repeat this process many times during the painting process using different colours of glazes. I've found that using this layering technique enables me to create a lot of depth within the painting.



10 Bringing in detail and use of reference

During this step I paint more detail into the nightdress by using transparent Zinc white paint. When I paint historical clothing, I refer to paintings by portrait artists from the 18th century. They were masters at painting fabrics. Whenever I arrive at a stage of the painting where I need some more inspiration, I flip through my favourite art books for ideas.



9 White paint creates a glow

To establish the illusion of glowing elements, I paint thin layers of translucent white paint to the background. I apply zinc white paint on the edges of the crescent moon to create an illusion that it's glowing. I use three different whites in this painting: Titanium white for highlights, Zinc white for transparent layers and Translucent white to create mist.



11 Snowflakes and glowing stars

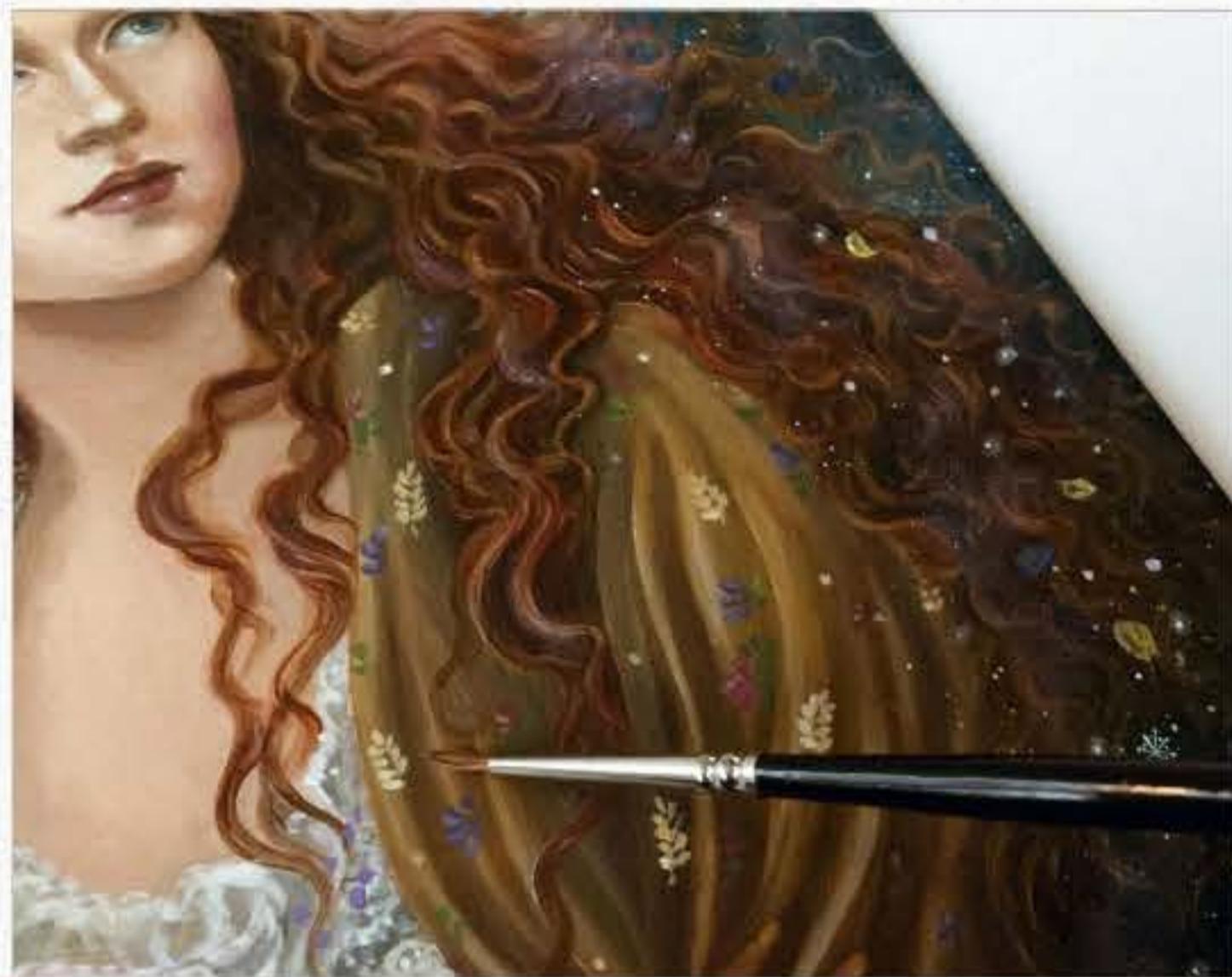
I depict glowing stars by painting the centre with a dot of Titanium white and adding a circle around the dot with transparent Zinc white. I also paint tiny snowflakes with Titanium white paint. Once the dots and snowflakes have dried, I can add thin glazes of different colours on top of them.

In depth Fantasy portrait



12 Generating atmosphere

I want this painting to convey the feeling that the character is standing outside on a mild winter's night. I add moving leaves and snowflakes around the character to create the illusion of a gentle breeze. I also paint the character's hair in motion to emphasise that she's affected by the prevailing weather



13 Painting patterns on to fabric

I paint flower and leaf patterns on to the cloak using a tiny brush. I pay attention to the folds of the fabric and try to imagine where the pattern would be visible, then paint the flowers and leaves accordingly. Looking at reference images of painted or real fabric also helps during this stage.



14 Final glazes create a bluish tone

To give the illusion that the pattern is part of the fabric, I paint dark and light glazes on top of the pattern. The most common paint mixture I use for shadows is a mix of Ultramarine blue and Raw umber paint. This mixture creates a wonderful bluish tone that's perfect for any areas that are in shadow.



15 Varnishing the painting

When the oil paint layers dry, they lose some of their original glow. Adding a final coat of varnish will bring the shine and depth back to the painting. I apply two coats of gloss varnish with Gamvar. Each layer of varnish needs to dry for at least 24 hours after application. And then I call the painting finished.

Pencil

Ink

Gold leaf

WORKING WITH INK AND GOLD

GINA NELSON reveals some of the steps she uses when creating illustrations in ink and gold, along with a couple of useful tricks she's learnt through trial and error

Mixing humans with nature and the idea of nature taking over is a subject that truly fascinates me. For this workshop I wanted to create a piece that showed a figure who had embraced nature and ascended to something like a forest spirit, shedding her humanity and transforming into a new being.

Most of my ideas for finished artworks come to me while I'm on

the train. Commuting and being surrounded by people often has me longing for nature, I suppose that in a sense the figure in this piece embodies that longing.

I knew from the start that I wanted to add gold to this piece, even though all the intricate shapes would make it tricky to work with. I felt it was important as the gold would bring a sort of "holiness" to the figure.

Once I had finished the ink work I had to work quickly to paint glue

onto the areas I wanted to add gold to. The glue dries in about 15 minutes so it was vital to lay the gold down in sections, but also important to get it right as there are little to no opportunities to touch up gold. It's an intense process that requires a lot of focus, but it's absolutely worth it.



Gina's a self-taught artist who works as a lead artist in the video games industry. Explore more of her art by visiting www.ginanelsonart.com. ➡

Step-by-step: From pencils to ink and then adding gold



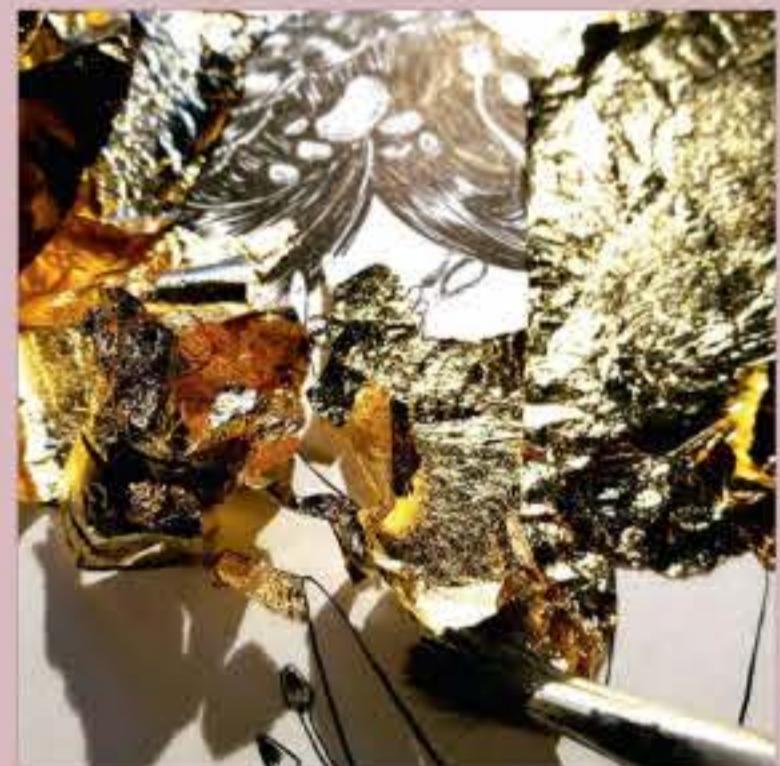
1 SKETCHING AND PENCILS

I always try to work on an idea as a rough sketch first. This gives me the opportunity to play around with what's in my head and start to flesh out my thoughts before committing to what would become the final artwork. Once I'm happy with the sketch – usually done in my sketchbook – I pick the surface I'm going to work on and create a fairly neat pencil version.



2 TIME TO ADD GOLD

Working with gold leaf is quite a tricky proposition. It sticks to the slightest bit of moisture and will tear if you so much as breathe on it. I use tweezers when adding gold sheets to my artwork and pat it down using a dry toilet roll to ensure that it's stuck to the glue evenly. This part of the process has evolved over time, with me making a few mistakes along the way – as you can imagine!



3 GOLD BRUSHING

It's vital to allow the glue to dry properly. I usually wait about an hour before brushing off any gold because if the glue hasn't dried the gold will tear and leave dull glue marks all over it. I use a fairly old brush for this, something with hard bristles to clean away any unwanted gold. At this point you can be quite rough with it. Anything that's been glued down won't be going anywhere.



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Points of interest: A hybrid approach

Lighting is key

When working with glue I find that it's helpful to keep a small light on the drawing at an angle. This enables me to see the wetness of the glue on the page to make sure that it's neat. If it starts becoming too matte I need to go over it again before applying the gold.



Erase your lines

I always make sure I erase my pencil lines before adding large areas of black. The pencils can show as slightly silvery through the ink and you'll lift the ink if you erase over largely filled areas, therefore it's good to do this once all the basic lines are done.

Only highlight what's important

By keeping her face white and creating natural curves and lines that draw attention to the character's face, I'm highlighting the areas I want the viewer to see as important.

First Impressions

Find out what music is playing in the background of this artist's cosy studio...



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

I grew up in the small town of Harborcreek, PA, which is right on the shores of Lake Erie. While it's pleasant in the summer and has some beautiful sunsets, the winters can be pretty rough. They broke their snowfall record this last winter with 198 inches of snow. I'm not sure if that's influenced my artwork in terms of style, but it definitely was a reason for staying inside and having to keep myself occupied for extended periods of time. Much of that time was spent drawing and trying to learn to paint.

Can you describe the place where you usually create your art?

It's just a basement. I'm a little embarrassed when I compare it to some of the beautiful studios of my fellow artists that I've seen. At least it's cosy and seems to get the job done. I create my paintings on a



DEATH SQUEALER

"Just a personal piece, with the title being a nod to Frazetta's masterpiece."

• *Dave Leri* •



WREATHED IN WISTERIA, DRAPED IN IVY

"This was an illustration for a story in Realms of Fantasy magazine."

large, old-timey drafting table. The room is full of props, costumes, weapons and a lot of little maquette sculptures of the creatures that appear in my paintings.

Do you have an art tool or ritual that you simply can't live without? Well, I drink an awful lot of coffee!

“I've worked another job for the past 20 years that has gotten me out in the fresh air”

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

Definitely not. I always enjoyed picking away at my art projects in my free time when I was young. I had assumed that when I was able to do that all day, every day, it would be a whole lot of awesome.

I did the freelance thing full-time right out of school for a couple of years and found that the solitude, the sedentary nature of the job, and

my inability to be disciplined in my sleep schedule was unhealthy – both physically and mentally. Much respect for the people I know that do this kind of work for years. You have to love doing art all the time.

I've worked another job in the mornings for the past 20 years that has gotten me out in the fresh air, around other people and given me a lot of exercise. It's helped to bring balance to my life.

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

The music I listened to growing up, whether it was hard rock, classic rock or metal, has seeped its way into my work over the years. Some of my paintings have ended up with titles that are derived from either lyrics or the titles of songs that I like.

Has your painting style evolved?

It hasn't changed much, at least in terms of what I'm trying to accomplish. I've gravitated towards artists and artwork that manage to make imaginary scenes, creatures and so on believable. In the early 90s I attended a convention where an artist named Fred Fields was exhibiting some of his hyper-realistic paintings. He was apparently influenced by James Bama. That had a big impact on me, and I would be thrilled if I could ever paint half as well as either of them.

What does the future hold for you?

I'm fairly content working on private commissions right now. I've had the opportunity to work on some fun paintings for really nice people. There are some large-scale personal works that I've wanted to start for a while now, but I need to work through the backlog of projects that I still have promised to people before I can even think about that.

Dave has been working as an illustrator for over 20 years. He lives in Columbus, OH with his wife Lora and their cats Mia and Zoey. You can see more of his paintings at www.daveleri.com.



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