NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX

FUTURE

ISSUE 183

15 STEPS TO DRAWING CREATURES

Discover how to create movement and more with **Aaron Blaise**

FREE ANATOMY REFERENCE PHOTOS

INSIDE
THE SECRET LIFE OF FREELANCE ARTISTS
GARY VILLARREAL'S CONCEPT SKETCHES
LIGHT UP YOUR ART IN FLAME PAINTER

WORKSHOP
NEW BRUSHES IN PROCREATE 5

GET BETTER AT
ANATOMY

Step-by-step advice on how to use lines, form and values to concept realistic heads

CYNTHIA SHEPPARD WIZARD'S SENIOR ART DIRECTOR ON HER LIFE OF MAGIC!

Welcome to…

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS imagineFX

A change of decade has made me pause for thought on what I've achieved so far, and what my potential may be for the next 10 years and beyond. Personally, I had previously found it hard to look back. One reason I argued (to myself) is that I'm too busy to take a moment to reflect. I usually race to the next thing, my mind a whir of planning how to accomplish or manage the next task.

Recently, I've really tried to take stock; to look back and assess what was. It wasn't always an easy thing to do, but in and amongst the negative thoughts that seem to push through to the front of my mind, I was able to fondly remember situations of positivity and accomplishments. These weren't work achievements, but more simple and personal milestones. I love how I have maintained friendships with dear friends. I've come to recognise the value in the small things that make me happy: food, exercise, family time and being outdoors. I feel more calm, more able to shrug off creeping doubt. I move into this new decade older, but more at peace with myself – and this is honestly the best thing I could have hoped for.

Claire

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Cover art for
issue 175 by
Pernille Ørum

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NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX
Resources

Getting hold of this issue's resources is quick and easy. Just visit **https://ifxm.ag/better183anatomy**

WORKSHOP VIDEOS

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

Colors

Use custom brushes to create narrative-led art in Procreate 5
See how Rafael Sarmento edits his brushes in the new Brush Studio. There's more on page 80.

Paint on a slice of wood
Watch Liesbeth Tatjana bring her character to life in gouache. Her workshop's on page 104.

Anatomy photo references
Use our extensive collection of model reference poses to enhance your figure art.

PLUS 6 CUSTOM BRUSHES, INCLUDING…

SKETCH BRUSH
Christophe Young's Photoshop brush simulates a stick of charcoal – ideal for sketching out ideas.

MAXU GRAIN CLOUD
Max Ulichney created this Procreate brush for Rafael Sarmento, who uses it for overlaying colours.

RUSTY TEXTURE
Christophe uses this brush to rough out foggy or textured background. For extra control, use it as a Stamp.

ipso. For press freedom with responsibility

Widely Recycled

FUTURE
Connectors
Creators
Experience Makers

FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

Anton Fadeev

LOCATION: Russia **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Procreate **WEB:** www.artstation.com/shant

Graphic designer-turned-concept artist Anton's design experience helps him with his art. "I often paint unusual shapes and interesting colour combinations," he says.

1 RED FLOWERS

"I finally determined the basic principles of my creative process while creating this piece. It enables me to change anything in a composition without wasting time."

2 HUGE ROCK

"This is one of the sketches in a series of 'square landscapes'. I paint such landscapes in my free time just for fun."

3 DEATH TRAP

"Here's one of my very first paintings. I wanted to convey the tension between the characters using the colour palette.
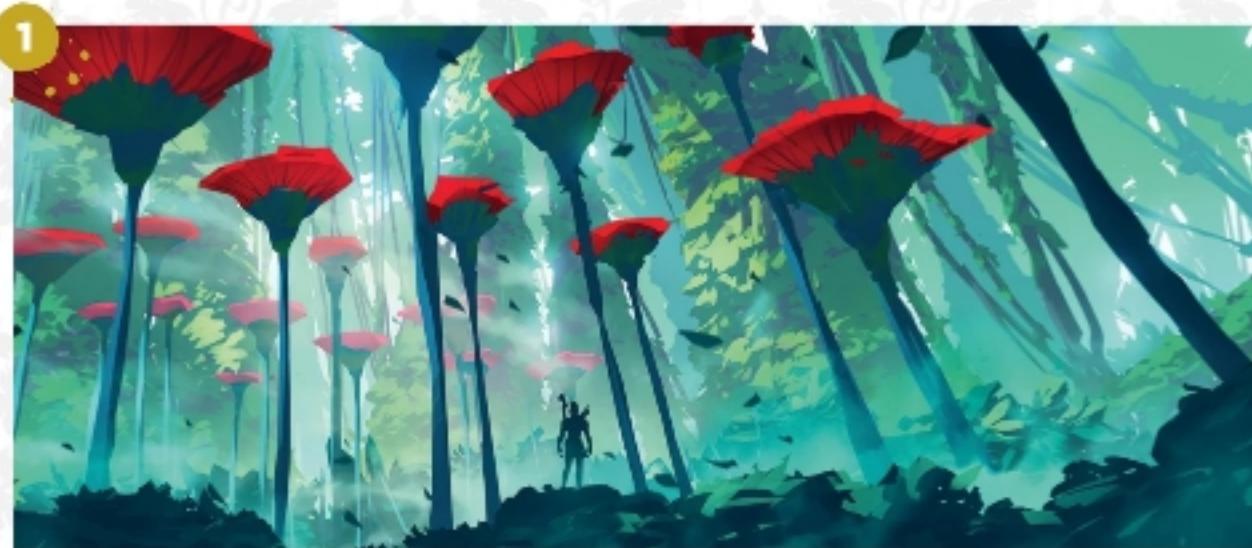
4 **HONOUR OF KINGS – LIBRARY**
"I've created a lot of similar-looking landscapes, but I'm probably more satisfied with this one than the others."

© 2019 Tencent Games

FXPosé

Juan Moore

LOCATION: Isle of Man **MEDIA:** Pencils, Photoshop, Painter **WEB:** www.juanillustration.com

Juan has recently moved into the world of fantasy art. He works on board game illustrations and tries to express whimsy and fun in all of his work.

1 MANANNAN'S FALL
"I like to illustrate the parts that aren't mentioned in the stories, such as what happens after the big defeat at the end of a story."

2 DANCING MONSTER
"This is some art for the fantasy card game Weird Alchemy. It depicts a spell that needed an awkward, yet funny image."

DANCING MONSTER

MOUSE DRAGON

3 MOUSE DRAGON
"Here's a tiny dragon guarding its cheese horde. I felt a little cuteness was needed to add to the fun and weird nature of this card art."

4 GOAT THIEF
"I like the idea that the monster can be a hero, so this poor, fat, troll-like creature is making his last stand against the dwarves he stole from."

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

FXPosé

Fiona Zechmeister

LOCATION: Austria **MEDIA:** Photoshop, InDesign, pencil **WEB:** www.fionazeich.net

Fiona has studied illustration and publishing, and is busy developing her 3D and animation skills. She works as a freelance illustrator and enjoys developing stories and ideas that connect emotionally with viewers.

1 VIENNA IN THE 19TH CENTURY

"The intention for this piece was to show how my home city could have looked in the past. In this scene a pigeon looks down on a busy St. Stephen's Square."

2 DETAIL OF THE MARIA THERESA MONUMENT

"In my spare time I often create studies from real life, join life-drawing sessions and visit museums. This one is a plein air painting done in gouache on paper."

3 LOVE IN TIMES OF VENGEANCE

"For this book cover I wanted to play with white space revealing a reversible figure. The story is set during a time of conflict in South America during the 1970s, and tells of a woman fighting for justice."

Love in Times of Vengeance

Manfredo Zaverpi
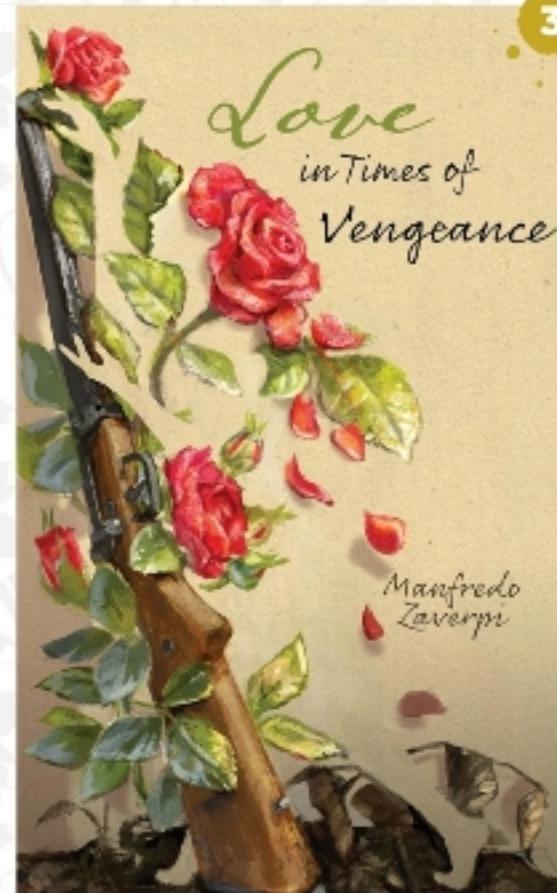
Rembrandt van Leeuwen

LOCATION: The Netherlands **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.instagram.com/clockweiz/

Freelance digital artist Rembrandt was mentored in the arts by his father and supported by his sister. He has a love for everything related to fantasy, science fiction and manga, which he channels into his own comic, Vingard.
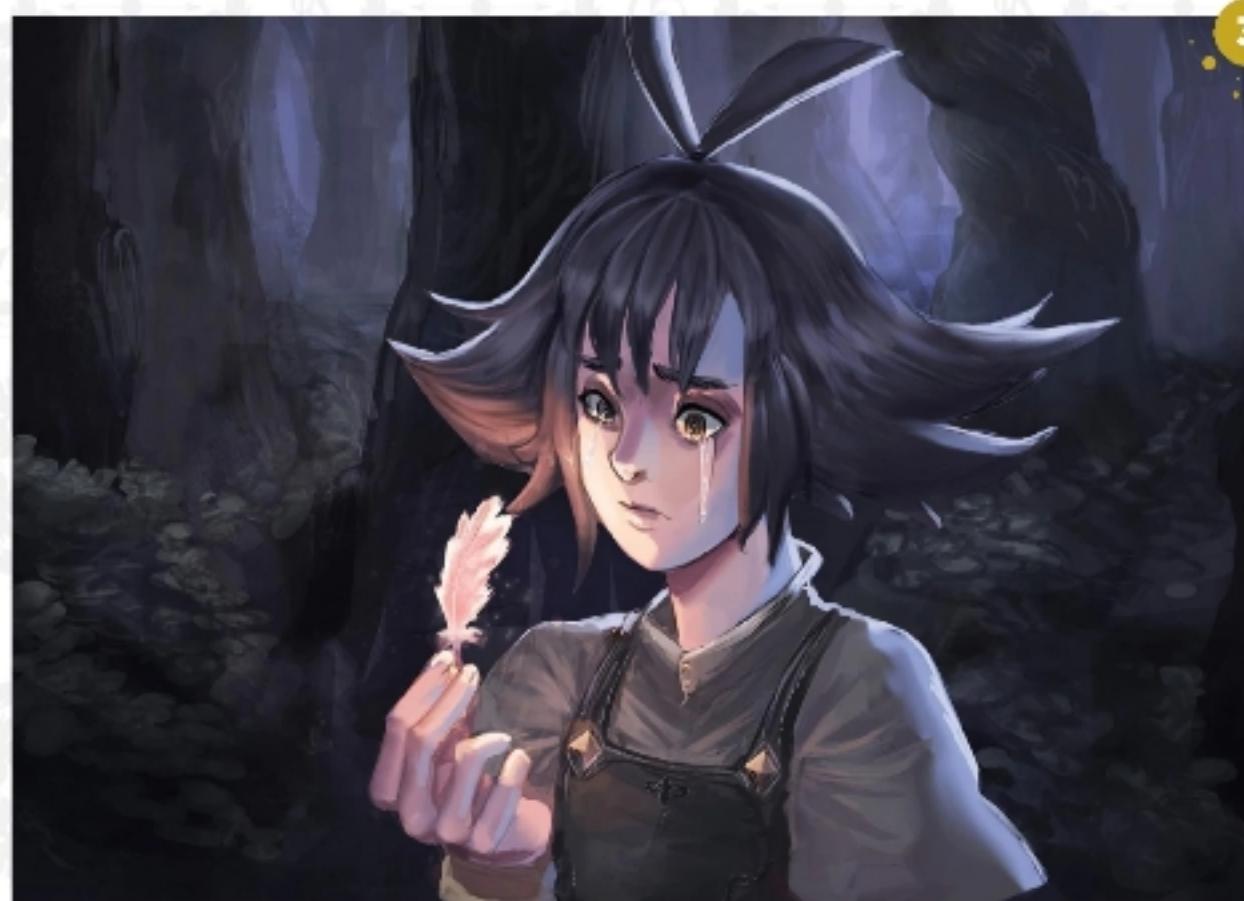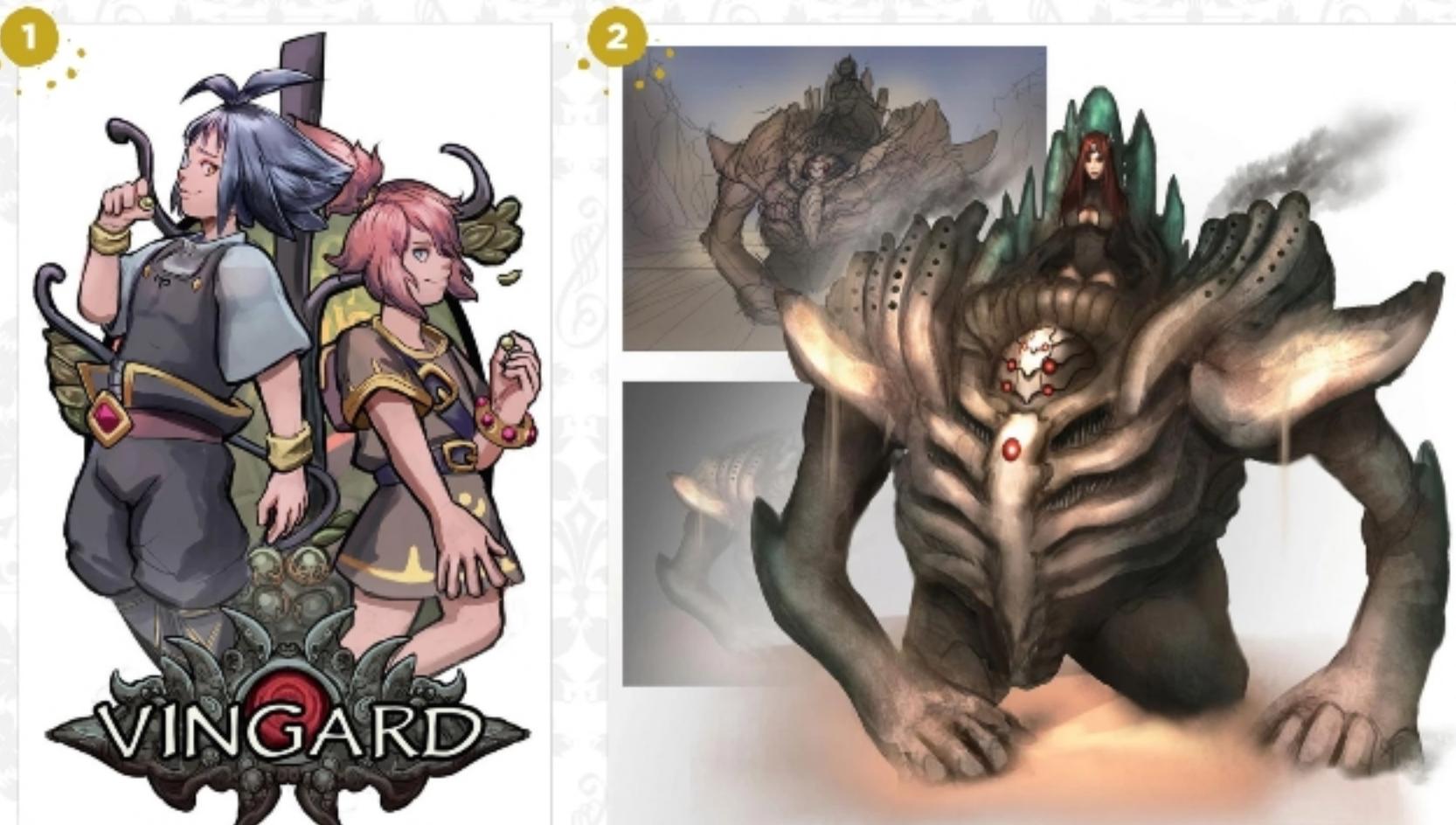
1 VINGARD
"The cover page to the first chapter of my comic Vingard. It follows the tale of the young Kollei and Moda as they face an unforgiving world of fantasy!"

2 DUNECRAWLER
"Created for the royal Mag'tur to traverse the stormy deserts. These dunecrawlers can withstand the dangerous forces that inhabit the sands."

3 FEATHER
"This moment, where a light stays with the young boy Kollei forever, will appear in a future issue of Vingard. The first instalment is now available on WebToon."

Janaina Medeiros

LOCATION: Brazil **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.janaina.net

"My work covers fairy tales and myths, with a style influenced by the Pre-Raphaelites, Art Nouveau and manga," says freelance artist Janaina. Since 2016 she's been illustrating books, card games, gallery shows and more.

1 PROTETORA DA ESPADA

"This painting was inspired by the story of the mysterious Lady of the Lake and the sword Excalibur from Arthurian legend."

2 ARIADNE & DIONYSUS

"Ariadne and Dionysus (in the form of a leopard) are two characters from the Greek Mythology. This was my first illustration of 2019."

3 LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI

"Art inspired by the poem La Belle Dame Sans Merci poem by John Keats. I created this illustration for The Enchanted Forest Fantasy Artbook, published in 2019."

"One popular misconception I would dispel is the idea that as a freelancer I spend all my time creating art I wish," says Iris Compiet.

The secret life of freelancers

Freedom fighters Going freelance isn't a shortcut to Easy Street. Independent artists tell **Dom Carter** all about the behind-the-scenes work that it involves

Thanks to the flexibility and autonomy it offers, working as a freelancer is a tempting employment option for artists. But that doesn't mean you get to do whatever you want, whenever you want. There are workloads to juggle, taxes to sort and pitches to present. You also have to knuckle down with a healthy dose of discipline, because the freelance lifestyle won't look after itself.

"It sends shivers down my spine when people tell me I'm 'lucky'," says illustrator **Iris Compiet.** "It implies we as artists had nothing to do with it, that everything was just thrown into our laps. 'Luck'

implies it's easy, when in fact it takes a lot of hard work and sacrifice. If it were easy, everyone would do it."

However, this doesn't mean you need to hang around if you're thinking of pursuing the freelance dream. Sculptor **Ellen Jewett** hit the ground running as soon as she finished her undergraduate studies. "To my younger mind, the self-employed adults in my life were rock stars. And if they could do it, so could I."

MIX AND MATCH

Of course, no two freelance careers are identical, and it's up to you to find a setup you're happy with. Crucially, this means that you can earn an ⏵⏵

"I only have an 'average' week or month as a freelancer when I work in-house for a client," says Giles Ketting.

VERTEX
THE EVENT FOR 2D & 3D ARTISTS

Ellen Jewett estimates that 80 per cent of her fluctuating workflow is spent on production, with the remaining 20 per cent dedicated to correspondence, marketing and admin.

❝ I thought the self-employed adults in my life were rock stars. And if they could do it, so could I ❞

Despite its hidden stress, the only thing Iris would change about freelance life is getting some assistance with order fulfilment.

➤➤ income through a variety of full-time and part-time positions.

For 16 years Iris took a day job as a graphic designer as she experimented with creating children's book illustrations. "The jobs were low paid and just not fulfilling to me. But because I had the day job I could figure things out without having to worry about making enough money to pay the bills."

Putting in the hours at a full-time role has more benefits than financial

stability. "I had done a bit of freelance work here and there in the past, but this time I was going all in," says freelance concept artist **Gilles Ketting**, who had worked in-house at several studios for a decade before taking the plunge.

"I think that having worked at several game studios before I went freelance made it easier, though. I had a lot of contacts in the industry and, of course, a CV that could back up my portfolio."

There's no shame in working in a job that's unrelated to your artistic aspirations, either. "Work on dispelling the notion that if things dry up, having

"When you project your potential earnings, be conservative in your hopes and expectations while being ambitious in your pursuit of goals," says Ellen.

to get a part-time job means that you have somehow 'failed'," says author and illustrator **Lily Williams**. "I worked at a bookstore for a while and loved it. I learned a lot, too!"

BALANCING ACT

If each freelance career is different, then the same can be said of the average working day. Deadlines

> ❝ **Don't overlook the administrative duties that going it alone involve** ❞

understandably dictate an artist's workflow, but it's important not to overlook the administrative duties that going it alone involves.

"I usually answer emails and do clerical work – send emails, money management, website upkeep social media, for example – in the first half of my day because I draw best in the afternoon," says Lily. "I don't allow myself to draw for more than about five hours a day because my body is my tool and I can't risk injury."

Without following a clearly defined routine, it's easy to spend too much time working, at the expense of a social life. This was a pattern that ➤➤

Gilles changes his daily routine to accommodate working hours in different time zones. "I don't think my clients necessarily expect me to do that, but it just makes things easier for both parties."

"Having time to work on my projects and skills is important, so I like being able to control how much of that time I keep or give to a client," says Sean Sevestre.

Lily Williams doesn't think that the uncertainty of a freelance career is a bad thing. "Uncertainty is scary, but liberating! You never know what could happen – good and bad."

CONTROL YOUR TIME

Here's how the pros stay productive throughout the day

1 Set achievable targets
"I used to make very long lists, but I wouldn't be able to keep up with them and it would make me feel like a failure," says Iris Compiet. "Now I tend to just make lists with two or three things I need to do in a day."

2 Dip into data
"If you think a project will take two weeks, start recording your accomplishments and then look back at the data," advises Ellen Jewett. "Did it take two weeks last time? Don't think about ideals, don't think what it should be – look at the reality and base future estimates on that."

3 Schedule breaks
"I found that having a simple timer on my desktop set to increments of 30 minutes works best," says Gilles Ketting. "I often divide my working day up in stretches of several 30 minutes blocks. This especially works if I must do something that I'm not too keen on doing, or have an approaching deadline."

4 Establish an order
"Make sure you know when your deadlines are," Sean Sevestre recommends. "I have a big whiteboard where I write those down as well as writing down things like what I plan on working on the next day… things like that."

5 Figure out what works best for you
"I use hard copy calendars and notebooks for everything," says Lily Williams. "For me, having something physical to flip through, reference and cross off is a necessity. Knowing and respecting how you prefer to manage your time is crucial. You might not manage your time like your peers and that's okay – as long as your work gets done."

Sean says freelance artists can save valuable time by reading the brief carefully. "You need to fully understand it in the beginning, no silly questions."

With some experience, Ellen says freelancers can start delegating tasks they don't like. "You can also shift your goals according to the evolution of your desires."

Being able to manage her day-to-day schedule is Lily's favourite part of being a freelancer.

66 I never assume that a job will come in, because that's a quick way to end up in a sticky situation 99

➥ Gilles found himself in when he started freelancing. "Nowadays I try to get up at a more normal time, especially since I realised that I'm most productive in the morning," the artist says.

"My admin work is often left for the afternoon and it's rare if it takes up more than 10 per cent of my day. Emails can take up quite a bit of time though, so whenever possible I like to call or Skype to get feedback."

Iris is another early bird. "The ideal balance would be two hours a day spent on emails, social media, admin and so on. Preferably done in the morning so the art is like a cookie for me. The 'not so fun parts of the job' are out of the way then and I reward myself by making art."

For Ellen, the key is to work smarter, not harder. "I'd say it's all about planning, refinement and constantly assessing and revising my routines. Although I think most witnesses would testify that I work very hard."

EMBRACE UNCERTAINTY

Thriftiness is a common trait among freelancers, which is unsurprising given that clients are under no obligation to work with you beyond the commissioned work.

"I try to live well beneath my means," says freelance artist **Sean Sevestre**, "as I never assume that a job will

Sean says time away from work is equally important as creating. "Go outside, do some exercise, smell some flowers, go to a pottery workshop."
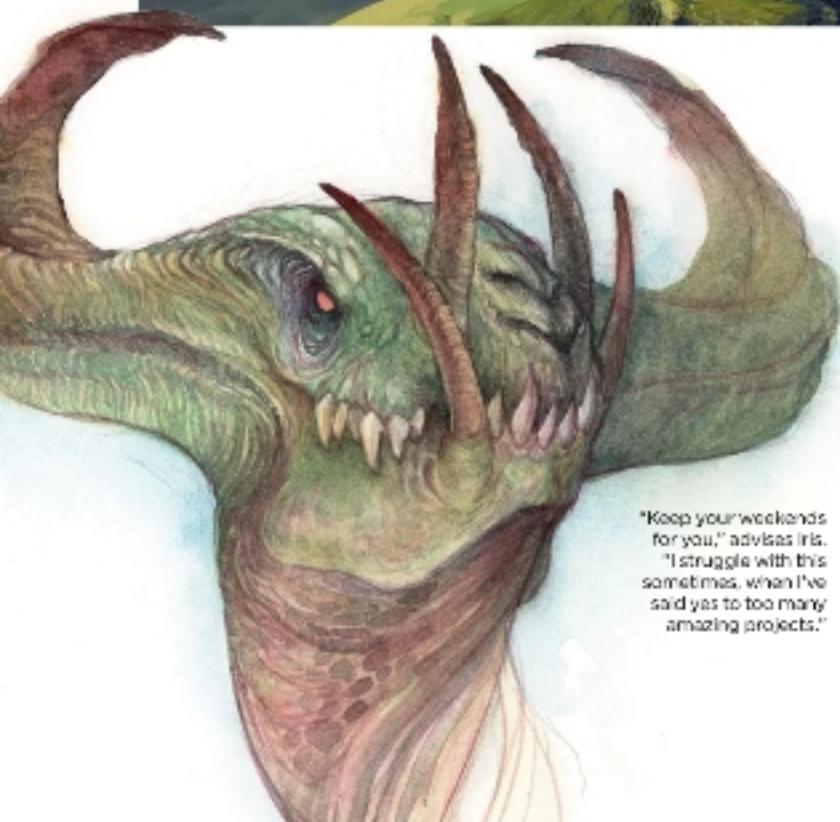
"Keep your weekends for you," advises Iris. "I struggle with this sometimes, when I've said yes to too many amazing projects."

come in, because that's a quick way to end up in a sticky situation. Make sure that you're able to handle your outgoings for at least a couple of months in advance, in case of an unforeseen dry spell."

Longer contract work makes it easier for Sean to take into account his expenses, but when he started out as a freelancer he was always planning for times without work. "I prioritise freedom over stability, and even freelancing can be stable over time. As long as you're nice to your clients, deliver your best work and deliver on time, people will come back to work with you again.

Despite this uncertainty, Ellen says that potential freelancers shouldn't wait for permission. "If you'd like to spend 30 hours a week painting, then start tomorrow! Don't wait for an audience or gallery or client to ask for your work – have it ready for them.

"The more you produce the better you'll get, and the more you'll find what you're looking for in your work. And if you post it all somewhere it can be seen, you'll greatly improve the chances of getting noticed.

"Ultimately, it's up to you to find a way of working that works for you and makes you happy," adds Sean. "That's the beauty of freelancing." ●

ILM's Alex Wuttke presented a talk at Vertex 2019 on dinosaur design.

Leading artist Loish will be giving a workshop entitled How To Be Your Authentic Self at this year's event.

Pixar, Loish and more set to attend biggest Vertex yet

2020 vision Industry-leading 2D and 3D artistic talent join the line-up at the ultimate CG creators event, which is now bigger than ever!

Vertex, the annual conference for 2D and 3D artists, returns for a third time in 2020. Taking place at London's Olympia Conference Centre on 27 and 28 February, the two-day event will feature inspiring talks from industry pros, portfolio reviews, networking opportunities, artist demonstrations and much more.

This will be the first time that Vertex is spread across two days. And to kick things off there'll be a presentation from Pixar in the evening, where the legendary studio will discuss how it utilises its proprietary Renderman technology to create its world-leading animated films.

Shortly after this there will be an animation panel, followed by a drinks reception with a twist as guests are asked to BYOA: bring your own animation. This will be a chance for

Oculus Medium expert Glen Southern and Atomhawk founder Ron Ashtiani gave talks at Vertex 2019.

attendees to get valuable feedback on their showreels from industry pros. This is an opportunity to benefit from world-leading creative insight – you won't want to miss it.

Meanwhile, day two will feature workshops from leading studios and artists, including Karla Ortiz, Lois Van Baarle, Even Mehl Amundsen, Beeple, Izzy Burton, games studio Media Molecule and many more

"I couldn't be more excited about Vertex 2020," says one of the Vertex organisers, and ImagineFX editor, **Claire Howlett.** "We're aiming for our biggest and most inspiring event yet. I already know it's going to be one hell of a show, just by looking at the stellar line-up of big-name artists!"

You can book your tickets for Vertex 2020 now by visiting **www.vertexconf.com.** Entry to the exhibition – which includes life drawing and artist demos – is free, while passes to talks and workshops start from £25, or £12 for students.

Portfolio reviews at Vertex are your chance to pick up tips from pro artists on how to improve your artwork.

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

Tamamo-no-Mae is an infamous Japanese legend, and I had the opportunity to capture her story for Month of Fear.

Kat Birmelin

Military manoeuvres This artist has embraced Japanese culture after relocating to a military base in the country

My studio in Japan is bigger than the small room I was using in our old house back in Ohio. I have one large window that allows a lot of natural light in for most of the day. We live on a military base in the city of Fussa, and during the warmer months if I leave my studio window open, I can hear the military band playing from the outdoor amphitheatre across from our building.

I have two working desk areas. The first is my corner computer desk where I waste a lot of time online. It's also where I research, find reference, answer emails and work digitally. A few months ago I bought a Huion tablet, and it's been nice to work on sketches, as well as edit my finished traditional pieces.

My second desk is my traditional workstation. I also have a lightbox underneath the glass surface area that my husband built for me, so that I can transfer my final sketches on to watercolour paper. He also installed a monitor above my painting desk so that I can glance up at any of my digital references, instead of bouncing between my desks.

I work in watercolours, and sometimes gouache or ink. My ➤➤

CREATE

MAKE
GOOD
WORK

DONATO
WANTS YOU

My husband has teased that my studio looks like the kind of place the Junk Lady from the film Labyrinth would come for a holiday

❝If I leave my studio window open, I can hear the military band playing from the amphitheatre across from our building❞

ImagineNation Artist in Residence

Keeping up to date with all these Japanese holidays, especially the changeover of the new Emperor of Japan.

My Funko Pop shelf: Han, Boba Fett, She-Ra, Liliana and Chandra are keeping it funky in here!

Here's a keychain featuring the Pokémon character Slowpoke, among some of my art treasures.

I worked on this artwork, entitled Leta, in SmArt School while being mentored by illustrator Rebecca Leveille-Guay a few years ago, and it's still one of my favourite pieces.

Chopstick rests are just one of the things I've fallen in love with collecting in Japan. I have over two dozen, and they make great brush rests.

I painted Pandora in SmArt School with Teresa Nielsen. I've been interested in using textile patterns with my figures lately.
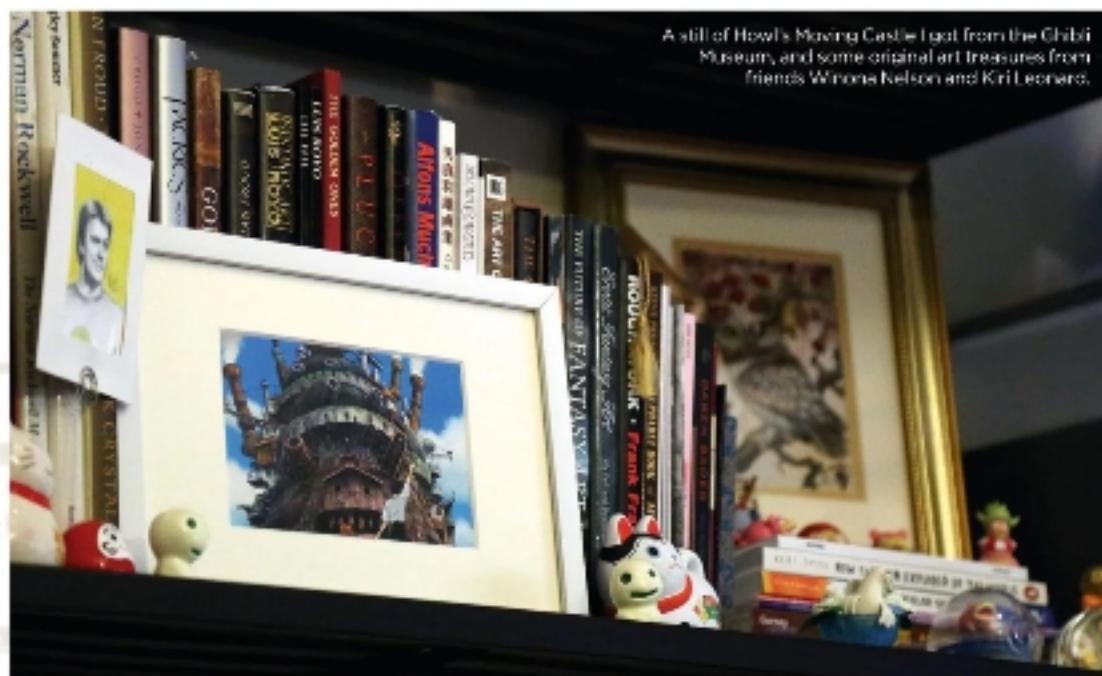
A still of Howl's Moving Castle I got from the Ghibli Museum, and some original art treasures from friends Winona Nelson and Kiri Leonard.

> 66 Most of my work these days is personal, and focused on the feminine side of fantasy 99

A page from my themed sketchbook of Japanese women and textile patterns I've been working on for fun in between projects.

Howl's Moving Castle: I feel a kinship to Howl's messy castle.

This is one of the things I've started collecting since living in Japan. They're sprinkled throughout the house. The eyes are blank, and when you set a goal you draw one in, and when you finish your goal you fill in the other eye!

A friend joined a priory a while back, and one of her sister nuns sent me this as a thank you for sending them Japanese snacks.

My husband bought and set this up so I can glance up at my references while I paint.

"There's a lot of art hung up on my studio walls, including a few original pieces I've collected from friends"

favourite brand is Winsor & Newton, although I've also taken to using some Japanese brands such as Holbein, Kusakabe and Kuratake. Over time I've started using a variety of palettes, but the two I use the most are my trusty college palette, and a smaller custom travel palette that I have filled with colours based on the set used by the Japanese animator and filmmaker Hayao Miyazaki.

MYTHS AND FOLKLORE

Most of my work these days is personal, and focused on the feminine side of fantasy. Since the move to Japan, my interests have swayed towards local figures from myth and folklore, as well as geisha and oiran. I even have a sketchbook dedicated to my studies of Japanese women and textile patterns.

There's a lot of art hung up on my studio walls, including a few original pieces I've collected from friends of mine. It's a nice reminder of my friends and community all the way on the other side of the globe. It's also a great source of inspiration for me. My studio also contains my library of books I couldn't part with, and various knick-knacks and collectables, including trinkets my husband has picked up for me on his travels. *Originally from Elgin, Illinois, Kat's been living in Japan for nearly four years with her husband and their two dogs. See more of her work at www.katghirmelin.squarespace.com.*

I found this old guy antiquing on a visit back to the US. He's so weird. I had to have him!

I love all the natural lighting that I get in... unless I'm trying to trace on my light table, of course!

An original Rebecca Leveille-Guay: One of my most prized pieces from an artist I very much look up to.
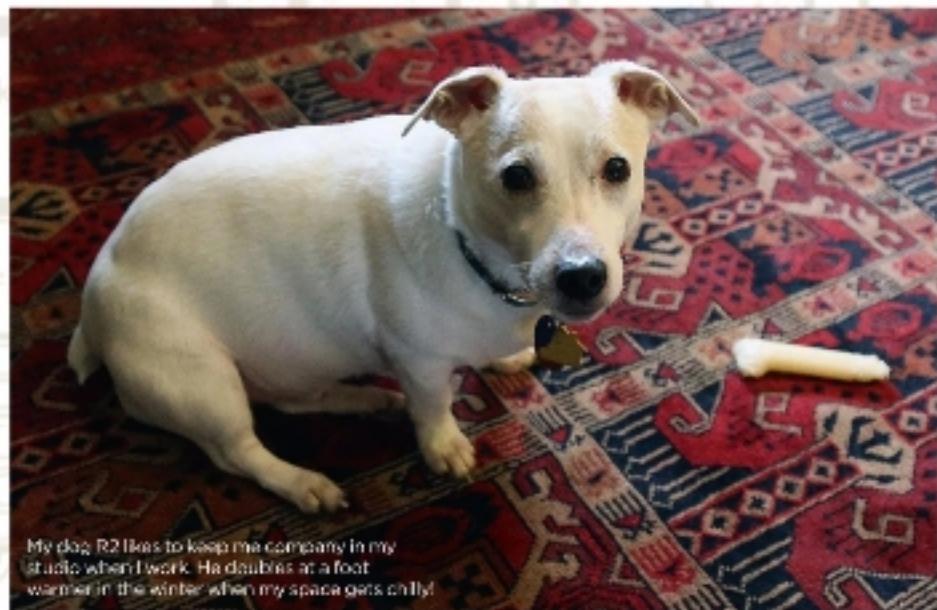
My dog R2 likes to keep me company in my studio when I work. He doubles as a foot warmer in the winter when my space gets chilly!

I never understood the need for multiple palettes until working on multiple projects. The square one is my favourite travel palette.

Here to kill these guys!

The Red Bull was done for Month of Love. The Last Unicorn continues to be a favourite film of mine, and I loved trying to get a tapestry effect in the background of this piece.

One can never have too many reference toys! Also on show is a small original Rebecca Guay to keep my company while I paint. I try to keep her lessons in mind.

Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS

Contact the editor, Claire Howlett, on **claire@imaginefx.com** or write to ImagineFX, Future Publishing, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA, England

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Be risky!

In your November 2019 issue you asked for feedback on a workshop by Ivan Khomenko. It's a little raw compared to most of your magazine's great content.

My children are all grown up with their own children now. I would much prefer that you occasionally publish articles that are a little risky than deprive my children or any maturing children of a chance to see something of the world they'll have to live in some day. Those are tough judgement calls and I admire your track record in making them.

I'm dealing with some online blog editors and publishers about a book of short stories I'm trying to promote. They're concerned about an image of a young woman on the African Savanna 100,000 years ago because she's dressed in hyena skins (no exposed body parts beyond arms and legs and nothing sexual, and she's carrying a spear). I'm told by them that my image suggests "reductive or fetishised stereotypes of native folks."

That's pretty close to an attempt at prior restraint and, as an enthusiast for freedom of individual expression in the arts, I say to you: "Don't be that editor." Keep up the good work Claire.
Jerry Smetzer, via email

Claire replies *Jerry, I appreciate your time in telling me your thoughts regarding Ivan Khomenko's workshop. I would like to reiterate that I never want to offend anybody, it's not our job to do that. However, as I said previously, we're not a magazine for children, therefore I can only strive to find the balance.*

It's hard for me to comment on your anecdote because I haven't seen the art in question, nor do I know the publishers

Reader Jerry thought Ivan Khomenko's workshop was "a little raw" but worthy of inclusion in ImagineFX.

involved. I feel that as a society we have made great gains in the past ten or so years to move forward in terms of representation of different groups and ideologies. It's a subject that I mull over at the helm of ImagineFX. Maybe the publisher was being cautious with their decision, but as the people responsible for their output, it's only their decision to make.

Asking for help

I felt I had to write in with regards to the editor's letter from Claire in your Christmas 2019 issue. She talked about avoiding going to events after having children because she felt exposed. It struck a chord with me.

I recently had gone back to work after having my first child and was having trouble fitting back in. I wasn't able to socialise with co-workers in the same way as I did before I had my son. My job hadn't changed, but I felt disconnected.

What struck me most was Claire's comment on the fear not being able to hide behind the safety of an email. I think this sums it up one of society's problems: the destructive way in which we can hide behind social and digital communications instead of seeing people face-to-face. I hope that Claire's comments made people feel that they are not alone in feeling this way.

I spoke with my co-workers about how I felt. What surprised me was that they had no idea, but they were supportive and we've worked out a few things to help me keep connected.
NP, via email

Claire replies *NP, thank you for writing in. I'm glad you managed to speak with colleagues to work out a way forward. Most of us in work are striving to cope with our own workloads and home issues, so we may miss a chance to peel back the layers to see what's underneath an issue with a fellow worker. It's here in places just under the surface, that we'll spot signs that someone feels left out or needs extra support.*

DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE?
Don't worry – you can get hold of it at **https://ifxm.ag/buyissue182**

Claire's recent editor's letter struck a chord with reader NP, who has recently returned to work after having a child.

CYNTHIA SHEPPARD

Garrick Webster talks to the dark queen of Magic: The Gathering about art direction and her fantasy illustration career

KAREN MEMORY
Cynthia Sheppard's cover image for a novel published by Tor Books, commissioned by Irene Gallo.

REMAIN
Romantic and realistic – Cynthia will always love painting vampires.

Known and revered around the world for the work she does as a senior art director on Magic: The Gathering (MTG), Cynthia Sheppard is a busy woman. At any one time, between 100 and 200 illustrations will be in progress as future card sets for the game are constructed. Cynthia will be world-building with Magic's writers and commissioning artists to bring their ideas to life. In addition, there are always portfolios to review, ensuring that Magic is benefiting from the best and brightest fantasy art talent out there.

"In short, things are busy," says Cynthia. "Magic is on track to commission over 3,000 card illustrations next year – a number that's been growing year-on-year. Just yesterday I had a meeting with the art team where we discussed which art directors are handling which projects for 2023, then went back to my desk to give feedback on art that will be released in 2021."

Imagine that: 3,000 illustrations in 2020. It's a breathtaking figure, and an indicator of how popular MTG has become around the world, but Cynthia seems to take it all in her stride. Art directors are everyday people, she insists. However, let's not forget that beyond MTG, Cynthia is a successful and influential illustrator in her ▶▶

> 66 **Magic is on track to commission over 3,000 card illustrations next year** 99

LIBRA
In 2017, Cynthia created the artwork for the Llewellyn Astrological Calendar.

Interview

2019 © Wizards of the Coast, LLC

➤➤ own right. She might be taking a break from freelance projects while she processes those 3,000 images, but since her career kicked off in 2002 she's worked for a range of top-drawer clients in fantasy publishing and gaming. Tor Books, Pyr Books, McGraw-Hill Ryerson, Asimov Science Fiction, Fantasy Flight Games, Cryptozoic, together with her current employer Wizards of the Coast… the list goes on.

ARIES
Here Cynthia depicts the zodiac character for the Llewellyn Astrological Calendar.

ASHIOK
One of Cynthia's most recent MTG cards is Ashiok, Dream Render.

KEEPING BUSY

Once in a while, Cynthia has the opportunity to paint a Magic card herself, and Ashiok, Dream Render from the 2019 War of the Spark set is a recent example. In addition to that, she always has one or two personal projects on the go.

"They tend to live under the umbrella of practice and exploration, which is important to keep from getting rusty while I'm not painting as

Artist PROFILE

Cynthia Sheppard
LOCATION: US
FAVOURITE ARTISTS: William-Adolphe Bouguereau, Edmund Blair Leighton, John William Waterhouse
MEDIA: Oils, Photoshop
WEB: https://ifxm.ag/c-sheppard

> 66 **Being around other creative people has been instrumental in my growth** 99

my full-time job," she says. "My favourite simple indulgence is doing oil portrait studies to test out various techniques, or just for something relaxing to do on the weekend."

Even those are busy for Cynthia. She sometimes likes to record songs with one of her friends, or build furniture for her house, a doer-upper in Renton, Washington, not far from Seattle. Most of her space at home is treated like an art studio, filled with paintings, while

the rest is under construction. When she goes out, it's often to hang out with other artists.

"Unlike other places I've lived, Seattle has a huge and thriving art community," she explains. "Being around other creative people all the time has been instrumental in my growth. I've been part of small, online critique groups over the years, and I strongly recommend finding other artists to bounce ideas off of and trade honest feedback with, but it's more fun when it's in person.

Long-term readers of ImagineFX will already know that Cynthia is always willing to share her techniques with others. She used to answer reader ➤➤

WONDERLAND 1
As an exploration, Cynthia revisited her 2007 Wonderland Deconstructed image for a YouTube tutorial.

MAGIC DO'S & DON'TS

Cynthia Sheppard shares some crucial advice for artists keen to paint for Magic: The Gathering

"Apart from common-sense stuff like don't be rude and don't be demanding, one of the most common things inexperienced artists can forget when reaching out to an art director is that we're just regular people," says Cynthia. "It's okay to be yourself, even if you're shy or nervous or march to the beat of a different drum. Remember, you're applying to work as an artist, and in any introduction situation, your work does about 95 per cent of the talking."

She also advises that it's not a great idea to shower their personal accounts with portfolio links. On the other hand, don't be too nervous when you get in touch. "It's not the end of the world to make imperfect first contact," says Cynthia. "A lot of us, especially those of us who come from an illustration background, have made plenty of faux pas. We super get it."

And the final core piece of advice is to understand MTG before getting in touch: familiarise yourself with the game and the artwork and hone your portfolio to suit. "Artists have to be aware that an illustration on a card is more than just a pretty picture. It's a communication tool that gives players insight into how the card functions in gameplay. And while we do work with artists who explore a variety of styles, our core is still rooted in fantasy realism," says Cynthia.

To submit your work for consideration at Magic, you can send portfolio samples to **artdrop@wizards.com**.

REVIVING MELODY
This 2014 MTG card is a favourite for Cynthia, as she adapted the myth of Orpheus and Eurydice into the artwork.
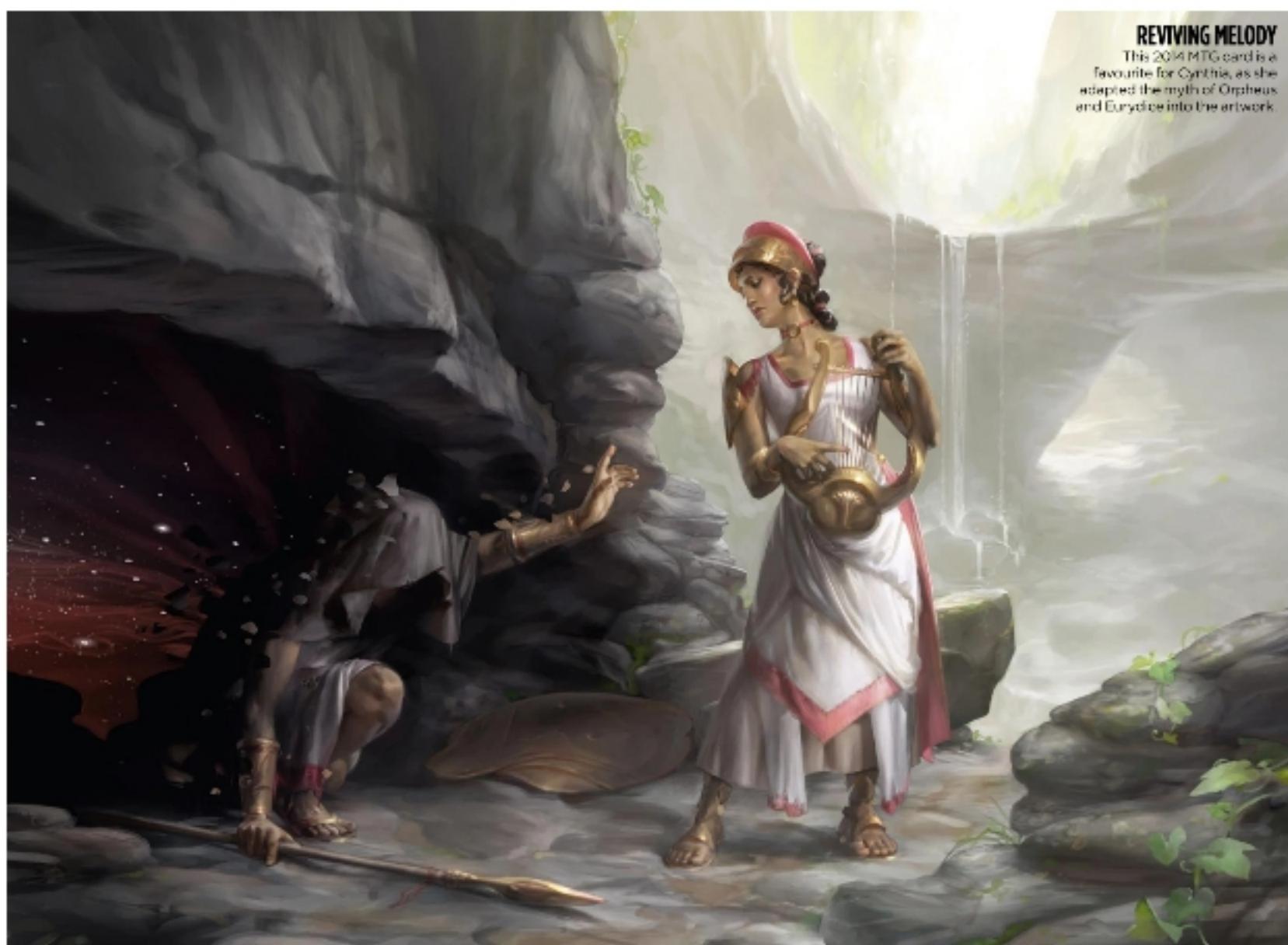
Interview

THE WAX MOTH
A personal work painted up from Cynthia's sketchbook, inspired by a particular species of moth.

BAT WINGS
An image Cynthia created during a live demo for students at the 2019 Watts Atelier Illustration Bootcamp.

➤➤ questions right here in the magazine in the popular Q&A section, creating mini workshops about how to accurately depict various elements of a fantasy painting.

Indeed, she continues to share her knowledge with fellow artists via YouTube and live workshops. In 2017, she did an exercise where she revisited her 2007 digital painting Wonderland Deconstructed to produce a three-part video series and a brand-new image entitled Deconstructing Wonderland. You can watch the video by visiting https://ifxm.ag/cs-wonderland.

"The biggest difference between my work 10 years ago and now is that I learned to care about it differently. Or rather, I've always cared about my work, but I didn't always know how to show it," she says.

> ❝ **I've always cared about my work, but I didn't always know how to show it** ❞

STUDIES
Cynthia often paints with oils to relax when she has spare time.

"Technical execution comes from observation and practice, but I also had to learn to take my time and pay more attention to every part of an image. The 10-years-ago-me might have, say, concentrated extremely hard on a face and hands, then left everything else to chance. Or perhaps I would have started with a figure, then made up the background around it with no real planning. Today, I would do thumbnails and get hold of reference for everything."

The result is images that are sharper, with pinpoint anatomy and great balance in the composition. This, in turn, has enabled her to focus more on the drama and storytelling in her paintings. Her use of light and flashes of bold colour within an often-muted palette has taken her work to a new level, and it's little wonder Cynthia has thrived in the field of book cover and gaming card illustration.

FIGURES WITH FANGS

One thing has stayed the same, though. She still loves a good vampire image. "A vampire painting has all the hallmarks of a figure painting, usually with more romantic gestures and swooshy dark capes."

Indeed, realism and romanticism combine in her works and like many artists, Cynthia admits that she was obsessed with accuracy as a ➤➤

WONDERLAND 2
This is Cynthia's new take on Alice, entitled Deconstructing Wonderland, from 2017.

MOMENTUM
This personal piece became an
award-winner and was licensed
by a magazine publisher in 2014.

KEEPING IT PERSONAL

How doing personal artwork helped Cynthia Sheppard launch her career

Although Cynthia's role as a senior art director at Wizards of the Coast keeps her constantly busy, she continues to pursue her own personal projects. In fact, her non-commissioned work could even be called the secret to her success. It helped her launch her career, and it has helped to keep her in the industry eye ever since.

"Around 2008, I started revamping my portfolio to include samples of work that were more ambitious and geared toward the type of work I wanted to be doing professionally, rather than random project samples that didn't reflect my own voice," she says. "Posting personal work only and shopping it around at conventions got me my first solid, long-term industry work."

In between professional jobs, Cynthia's always looked for opportunities to develop the style and content of her paintings through personal projects. In 2014, her painting Momentum, which features a scribe sitting in front of stone horses that are crashing out of a rock edifice, won a Gold Award in Spectrum and was later licenced by Asimov's Science Fiction magazine.

THE DROWNING EYES
Cynthia's book cover illustration for the novel by Emily Foster.

LEARNING TO LEAVE
Cynthia painted this piece during a difficult time in her life.

➤➤ teenager. Realism and Imitationalism are what powered her early paintings and she was highly critical of herself if the work didn't come out looking like the natural world. Her tastes have broadened over the past 20 years, but she's still drawn to Academic Realism and artists such as Edmund Blair Leighton, William-Adolphe Bouguereau and John William Waterhouse.

This might be why, consciously or subconsciously, Cynthia tends towards painting human figures over creatures. Of course, she can and does paint a mean dragon, but rarely feels the urge to create extravagant monsters. "Before I knew that fantasy illustration was a career, I thought portraiture was my calling, so I gravitated toward human figures and faces from an early age," she says. "I may always primarily be a figurative artist, but I wouldn't mind doing more creatures once in a while!"

LEARNING VIA TRIAL AND ERROR

With her dedication to realism, it's surprising to learn that Cynthia dropped out of art school and instead of studying has developed her skills through a wide range of experiences. She's attended workshops, learned from peers and mentors, watched online and live demos, and honed some of her techniques through good old trial and error. Originally from Fairfax, Virginia, she gained a good grounding in art in the family home, which was full of her father's paintings – one of her earliest inspirations.

"Before I knew how to read, I can remember looking at a big Salvador Dali tome from the 1960s and a National Gallery show catalogue with Rembrandt and other Old Masters," she says. "By the time I hit grade school, I already solidly owned my 'art kid' identity."

And for Cynthia, an artist's training is a lifelong journey. Even when she's juggling hundreds of new pieces for upcoming MTG cards, she's absorbing ideas and inspiration. Art directing is helping her become a better artist.

"One of the most fascinating things about getting to look at that much art constantly is that you get to watch other artists grow, too. As they discover, I discover. I learn from everywhere, and that means I'm also totally shameless about asking other Magic artists about their work or watching their tutorials for insights into their process. We all learn from each other!"

66 By the time I hit grade school, I already solidly owned my 'art kid' identity 99

Sketchbook

Gary Villarreal

This artist enjoys putting extraordinary characters and creatures into scenarios that are overflowing with storytelling craft

Artist PROFILE

Gary Villarreal
LOCATION: US

Gary graduated from Texas A&M University from the Department of Visualization. He's since worked in various industries ranging from videos games, AR and VR experiences, and films. Gary is known for his traditional render style and has grown a love for storytelling, which further immerses viewers into his character's worlds.
www.artstation.com/villarrte

ANACONDA BABY

"I wanted this piece to be different. Two contrasting characters that no one thinks of in one setting. I later imagined an innocent baby next to a python. Maybe this was part of a ritual that all babies needed to go through?"

GOAT FATHER

"Planting good seeds in the minds of the next generation and guiding them should be our main purpose in life. That's what inspired this drawing."

AZTEC PUPPET MASTER

"Aztec culture is intriguing, and I've always enjoyed drawing indigenous characters. So, why not make a puppet master in this theme?"

MUSHROOM COLLECTOR

"This character picks mushrooms for a living, a skill that was passed down to him over the generations. Those that once guided him, now accompany him as he works."

" Aztec culture is intriguing, and I've always enjoyed drawing indigenous characters "
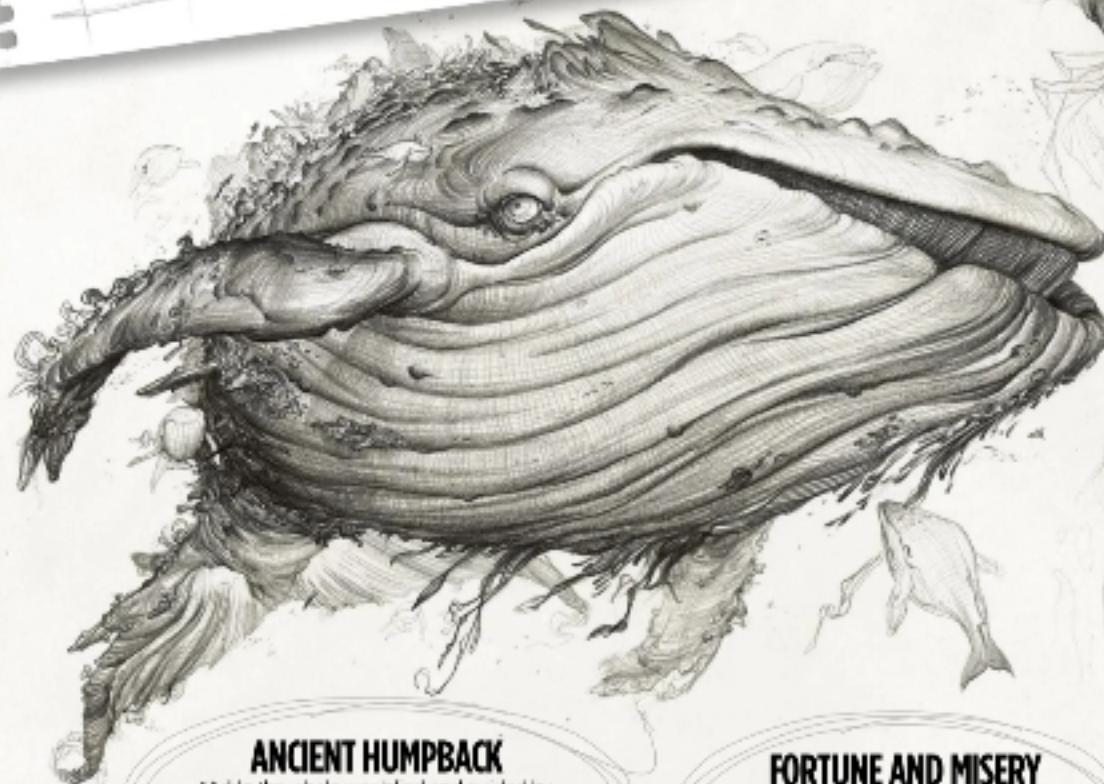
ANCIENT HUMPBACK

"Arklo the whale was blind and guided by those around him... I love marine life and felt I needed to explore this area more. I began with sketches of a humpback whale, but wanted to add a mystical element to it."

FORTUNE AND MISERY

"We can work ourselves endless hours, acquiring riches, climbing the highest peaks and still never see the sky. I drew this royal character being suffocated by her internal struggles. Paying the price for all those she once betrayed."

RANDOM SKETCHES

"Most sketches that live in my sketchbook are thoughts that randomly came to mind. Others originate from daydreams. These are ideas awaiting their turn to become something bigger."
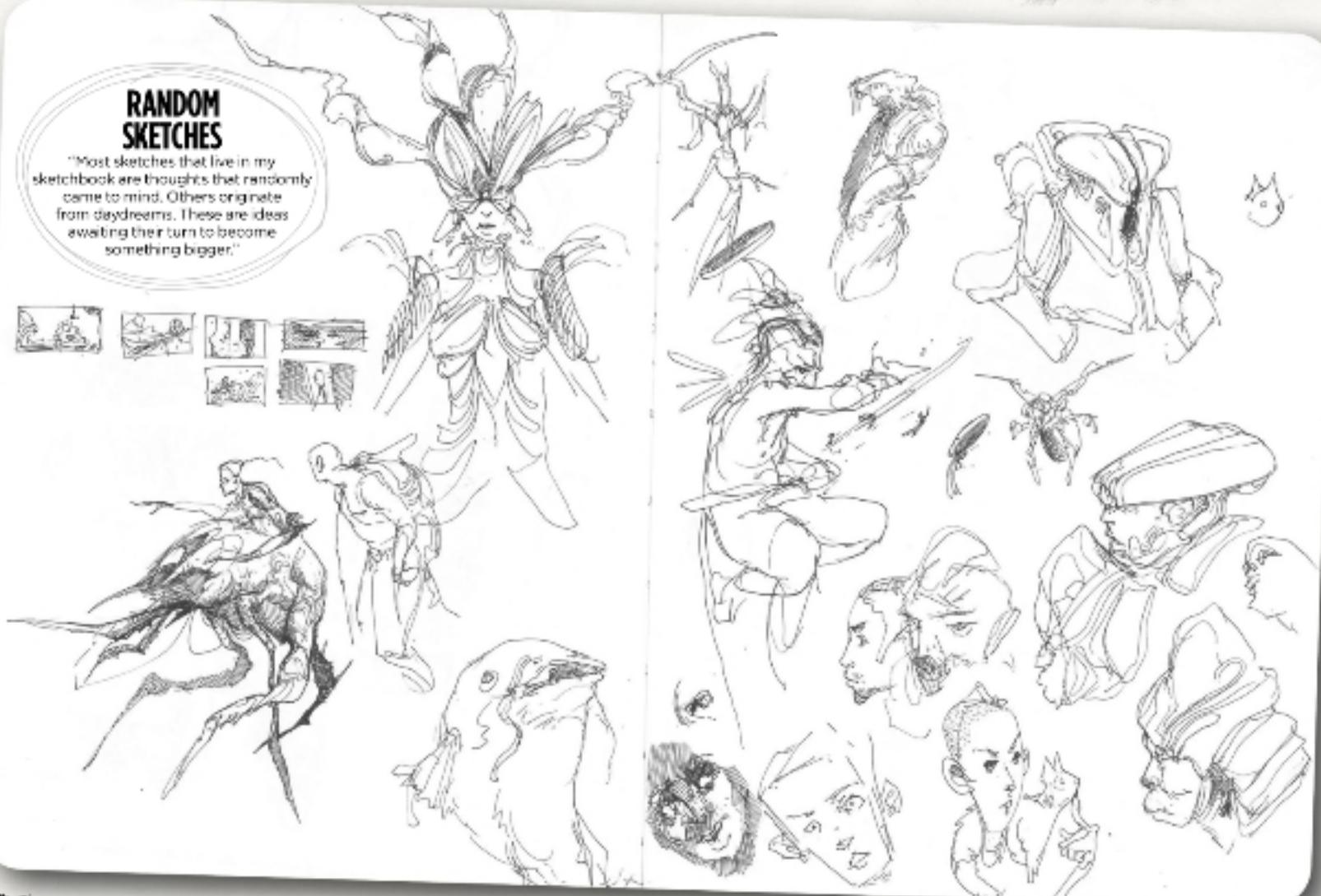
TWIN
HEADS
"We all have a dark side that we need to embrace. This inspired this drawing of the twins. One is loving and forgiving, while the other is filled with hate and condemns all souls that pass for judgment."

SNAIL
ARTIST
"We all have our insecurities as artists. We develop our shells, a thin build-up of calcium, to feel protected until we feel ready to help others. That, my friend, is the key to our existence."

Sketchbook

> 66 I've always been fascinated with cybernetic characters... 99

ROMANTIC IDEATION

"This is a snapshot of the sketches I produce before working on the final piece. I try working on areas that'll give me trouble down the line, such as hands or composition."

ROMANTIC STORYTELLER

"Have you ever wondered what the likelihood of meeting our lovers was? What if there was a character who wrote our love stories long before we were even born? That's the thought that sparked this drawing."

ORANGUTAN FARMER

"I can't help but laugh when I walk by this place at home. I imagined having this god judging the harvest of his fellow orangutans. Each one nervously placing their dried-up herbs in his pipe as he smokes away."

BEE KEEPER

"The buzzing sounds from the bees were the only sounds that pushed his fears aside. If at any moment he felt threatened, a subtle twitch of his wrist would unleash a swarm of bees from his suit."
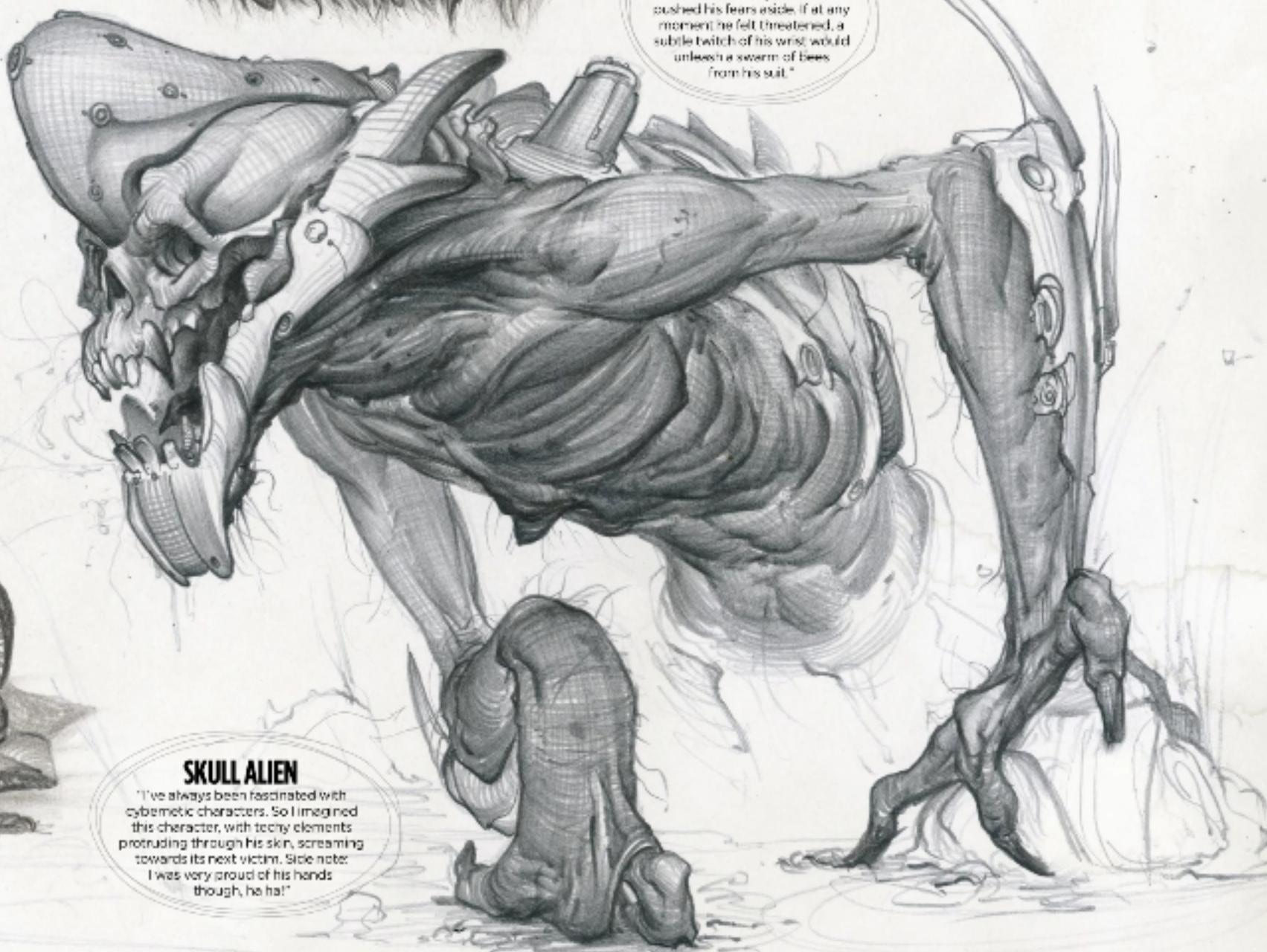
SKULL ALIEN

"I've always been fascinated with cybernetic characters. So I imagined this character, with techy elements protruding through his skin, screaming towards its next victim. Side note: I was very proud of his hands though, ha ha!"

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Boost your portrait art skills with the help of Jenn Ravenna and cover artist Daniel Bolling Walsh. Gain insights on watercolours and pencils, and bolster your portfolio to help you secure a job at Magic: The Gathering.

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FLY
"An album cover for BlauDisS's I Dreamt I Could Fly. The creative freedom enabled me to play with the theme of flight."

— ARTIST PORTFOLIO —

ANNA DITTMANN

The illustrator tells **Gary Evans** about balancing the necessities of freelance with the otherworldly concerns of her art

Anna Dittmann's childhood home – a Victorian house in San Francisco – is best described as "having character." The decor: carnivorous plants, an assortment of percussion instruments and 75 wall-mounted deer skulls. The occupants: five children, lodgers from all over the world, and a chicken that was saved from the street.

Anna's dad is a sign maker. He's working away in his basement shop,

kilter, seemingly ordinary figures set against extraordinary shimmering, swirling backgrounds of light, colour, pattern and texture.

"It was a very colourful childhood," the American-German says, "and I was never lacking creative stimulation."

MUNDANE NECESSITIES

A few years back, Anna swapped San Francisco for Edinburgh. She's best known for her covers for books and comics (HarperCollins, Scholastic,

> ❝ Personal work does take less of a priority these days, but commercial projects can be just as stimulating ❞

where he also tinkers with "musical inventions." He's the one supplying her with sketchbooks, with tips to improve her drawing skills. But Anna's first canvases were her bedroom walls.

There's no reason Anna couldn't have grown up to be an accountant. She could have decided on a career in data entry. But the old Victorian place does seem a fitting childhood home for a budding artist, for an illustrator who would grow up to specialise in the dreamy and the surreal, creating art that's at once realistic and a little off-

DC Comics). She has exhibited her art in galleries around the world. Throw in the occasion commission for posters, album art, advertising and even tattoos, along with attending conventions and teaching workshop, and it's clear she's pretty busy.

Being self-employed means Anna starts the day with the freelancer's "mundane necessities." There are contacts to read, sign and send out, paperwork to file, pricing to calculate, taxes to tally up. Self-promotion is very important. That means posting ▶▶

Interview

SAIL
"I wanted to capture a dream-like state of suspended motion. The male figure and fashion were a fun departure from my usual subject matter."

BRAMBLE
"I wanted to portray a state of confusion. The surrounding imagery is meant to disconcert by merging a setting that's not quite land or sea."

➤➤ regularly online, replying to comments and messages, and being generally sociable on social media. It's the same with art directors. It's important to maintain relationships with regular clients. Anna recently upgraded to a sit-stand desk to help with posture, and she makes sure to take regular breaks to make a cup of tea, do yoga, and cook.

"If I can, I like to focus my attention on one project at a time. When there's an opening in between work, I'll set aside time for personal art. I use those periods to experiment more with subject matter and style. Personal work does take less of a priority these days, but commercial projects can be just as stimulating. They do require a different mindset, as there are often more adjustments involved and generally a longer turnaround. I enjoy the challenge and feeling of satisfaction when both the client and I are pleased with the final product. Communicating effectively is key, from interpreting the initial brief until the final touch-ups."

There's a phenomenon common among freelancers. Let's call it the Freelancers Paradox: when you're busy with work, you wish you weren't; when you have no work, you panic.

"With freelance," Anna says, "comes hectic periods of sitting at a computer for days, or slow periods where you have an unexpected holiday, but couldn't plan for it. The unpredictability has been one of my bigger obstacles. During a busy period, I can forget to take a break. And when work is slower, I can become restless and anxious.

> ❝ Because art is so intertwined with my day-to-day life, it can play a big role on my mood and self-esteem ❞

PAINTING SWIRLS AND SHIMMERS

Movement is such an important part of Anna's painting style, as she explains...

"My favourite illustrations are those that feel lively, not static. I love incorporating movement into my work: it helps to see the image as a whole before ploughing ahead. Rather than just focusing on the figure, I like to make sure the piece flows entirely before getting caught in the details. I used to be intent on getting every detail of a portrait technically correct, without telling much of a story in the process. I hope the viewer's gaze moves fluidly throughout the composition by following the path of gesture and shape. Sketching or envisioning a quick composition at the start is an important part of my process. This is often before even starting a proper sketch, so it can be the most minimal idea.

For a shimmer effect, I find it useful to include areas of rough texture or abstracted shapes. Adding a little extra detail, sharpness or splattering into a more simplified area can create a sparkling impression. Carving out specific areas to add more detail can help diversify a painting and provide a focal point. I try balancing busy and quiet areas for more visual contrast.

I'll often play around with shape when starting a composition. It might remain just a shape, or evolve into something nature themed. Nature is often my go-to because of the varied and dynamic imagery. Observe and take photos of anything you find visually intriguing. My camera is filled with an assortment of random photos that can sometimes be the base for my next project – whether that be unusual plants, an interesting piece of fabric, or a colourful sunset. You never know what will ignite the creative itch later."

"Because art is so intertwined with my day-to-day life – it's my hobby and my means of income – it can play a big role on my mood and self-esteem. With all that said though, I wouldn't have it any other way. I'm so grateful every day to be doing something that I'm passionate about."

PEACEFUL OASIS

Aged 13, Anna got into digital art, and was instantly hooked. Before that, she used pencils, acrylics, charcoals… whatever she could get her hands on, whatever would look good up on her bedroom wall. But painting digitally freed her up to experiment without worrying about wasting materials. She taught herself, watched online tutorials, learned through trial and »

TAVUK
Depicting movement in her art is important to Anna, "whether it be billowing wind or hair, airborne or underwater imagery, a paused gesture or faded texture".

BAIT
Like the carnivorous pitcher plant, this portrait portrays an alluring figure with a potentially darker motive.

>> error. She would come home from school and spend the rest of the night painting. Getting better became an obsession. So did sharing work online, receiving compliments from strangers, the thrill of it. But art was also a "peaceful oasis."

ONCE UPON AN IMAGINEFX

Anna took a few traditional art classes in high school, and an art teacher told her to look into art colleges. She won a scholarship to go to Savannah College of Art and Design in Atlanta, Georgia, graduated in 2015 with a BFA in illustration, and remembers her time there fondly. She was surrounded by a ton of creative people, and got to spend all day drawing. She'd earned a little money doing graphite portraits for family and friends, but Anna's first big project, still a freshman in college, was the 2012 cover for ImagineFX, issue 84.

"It was my favourite magazine and one of the few text resources I would purchase, so I was over the moon about the cover commission. I say this not to brown-nose – it's genuinely true! My style has developed a lot since then, and I wish I could have tackled some things differently. But it gave me a rush of motivation, and a sense of

> ❝ ImagineFX was my favourite magazine, so I was over the moon about the cover commission ❞

SNOW WHITE
Anna's take on the classic fairy tale character for our 2012 cover helped to motivate the artist.

accomplishment as a budding professional illustrator."

Anna continued to work part-time through college on commercial projects, saving to spend time abroad. Growing up, Europe was her second home. Her mother's German, so Anna's also has German citizenship. But it was Scotland that she fell for ("completely in love").

"It's gorgeous, and I find it so inspiring. I'm very lucky to have a flexible job and the opportunities available to have made such a leap of faith."

HISTORY AND MYTHOLOGY

Afternoons, early evenings – whenever she's taken care of all the mundane freelance stuff, Anna paints. Her workspace – laptop, monitors, graphics tablet – is by the window in the living room of her flat.

She starts by sketching in black and white. She tweaks values. She tweaks composition. After spending a bit >>

BAUHINIA
"This was created as part of a series for an exhibit while in Hong Kong. I was inspired by the flora and fauna of the area."

DRIFT
"Underwater imagery never ceases to fascinate me. Something about the slow motion and ethereal atmosphere captures my imagination."

ROSE ÉTERNELLE
The cover for Rose Éternelle, written by Ophélie Duchemin. The novel is a retelling of Beauty and the Beast.

Commissioned by Gwladys Viscardi

TANGLE
"The combination of feminine and natural beauty are reoccurring themes in my work. I drew reference from my butterfly collection."

PAS DE TROIS
A French adaptation of Swan Lake written by Gwladys Viscardi. The story is set in a medieval world with European, Middle Eastern and Asian influences

➤➤ of time being "generally nitpicky," she looks for references that will help her refine the sketch.

She's inspired by history and mythology, by movement, textures, nature, by lyrics and melodies, or a person's expression. Anna loves the way artists such as Alphonse Mucha and Gustav Klimt contrast patterns and figures. She loves Egon Schiele's more experimental figurative work. Her own concepts often start as happy accidents. A loose line or wayward brushstrokes suddenly takes on a life of its own, and Anna goes with it.

Next, she throws in textures on a variety of Photoshop layer modes ("Soft Light, Divide… whatever feels best"). She also adds colour with layer modes, and likes using Curves to manipulate hues. She's on to details now. Finally, she sharpens the image.

ENTER THE GECKO

As if to help her slip away from the real-world necessities of freelancing and into the otherworldly concerns of her art, Anna has brought a bit of the Victorian house in San Francisco to her flat in Edinburgh. There's the ever-

INK
"What started out as a female portrait with swirling hair became a creature floating within inky depths."

growing collection of houseplants. There's the pet gecko she likes to let wander around. "If I could, I'd fill all my space with plants and animals, bringing a bit of nature and inspiration indoors." But, crucially, there's also the same "unique kind of joy and thrill" she felt coming home from school to spend all night working on her art.

"For me, great artwork inspires emotion, or makes me want to paint, or both. I can fall in love with artwork

66 I can fall in love with art in a style that deviates from my own, because of the emotion and connection it inspires 99

THE SIREN'S LAST SONG
The cover for Jordan Heikkinen's novel The Siren's Last Song. The death of Ophelia from Hamlet inspired the basis of the composition.

REDISCOVERING INSPIRATION

Anna's approach to beating artist's block depends on the nature of the job

"How I create an image depends a lot on whether an illustration is commercial or personal. I'll be more methodical about client work from the onset. A brief may be specific or open-ended, but I'll tend to sketch out a few compositions to see what works best. These will be rough, monochromatic sketches created either digitally or on paper. I'll gather my references and inspirations throughout the sketch stage, and won't tend to deviate greatly from the sketch selected by the client.

With personal work, my process is much looser. I'll jump straight from a sketch to the rendering, and will continuously play around with composition throughout the process. To initially feel inspired, I'll get lost in a rabbit hole of new and old creative works that give me the painting bug.

Artist block can happen in both scenarios. With commercial work, I can often hit a wall in the later stages after staring at a painting for too long. I find it helpful to take a day or so away – either engaging with personal art, focusing on admin, or distancing myself from the computer. This normally does the trick, and I can return to a piece with fresh eyes. When it comes to personal art, I'll often paint a variety of diverse sketches before deciding to move forward with one. I have to throw myself into the inspiration spiral, and be patient with the journey."

BLUSH
"I'm often inspired by the shifting seasons. It was a spring evening that drew me to the florals and colours of this place."

in a style or subject matter that deviates from my own, because of the emotion and connection it inspires. If it's art that gives me the urge to pick up my pen, then I'll normally pop it into my inspirations folder and refer back when I'm craving the impulse to paint.

"Even at a young age, I liked to escape into fictional words by consuming all the fantasy and sci-fi media I could get my hands on. Painting is like a departure from the real world to a fictional one. It gives me a platform to create environments and characters that only exist in my mind. I can be fairly introverted and soft-spoken, but I feel that I can be more expressive and emotional with art. I'm not very descriptive about my personal work, because I prefer to leave the interpretation to the viewer. But I like when art leaves me with a lingering curiosity. I'm drawn to softer pieces that feel suspended in time."

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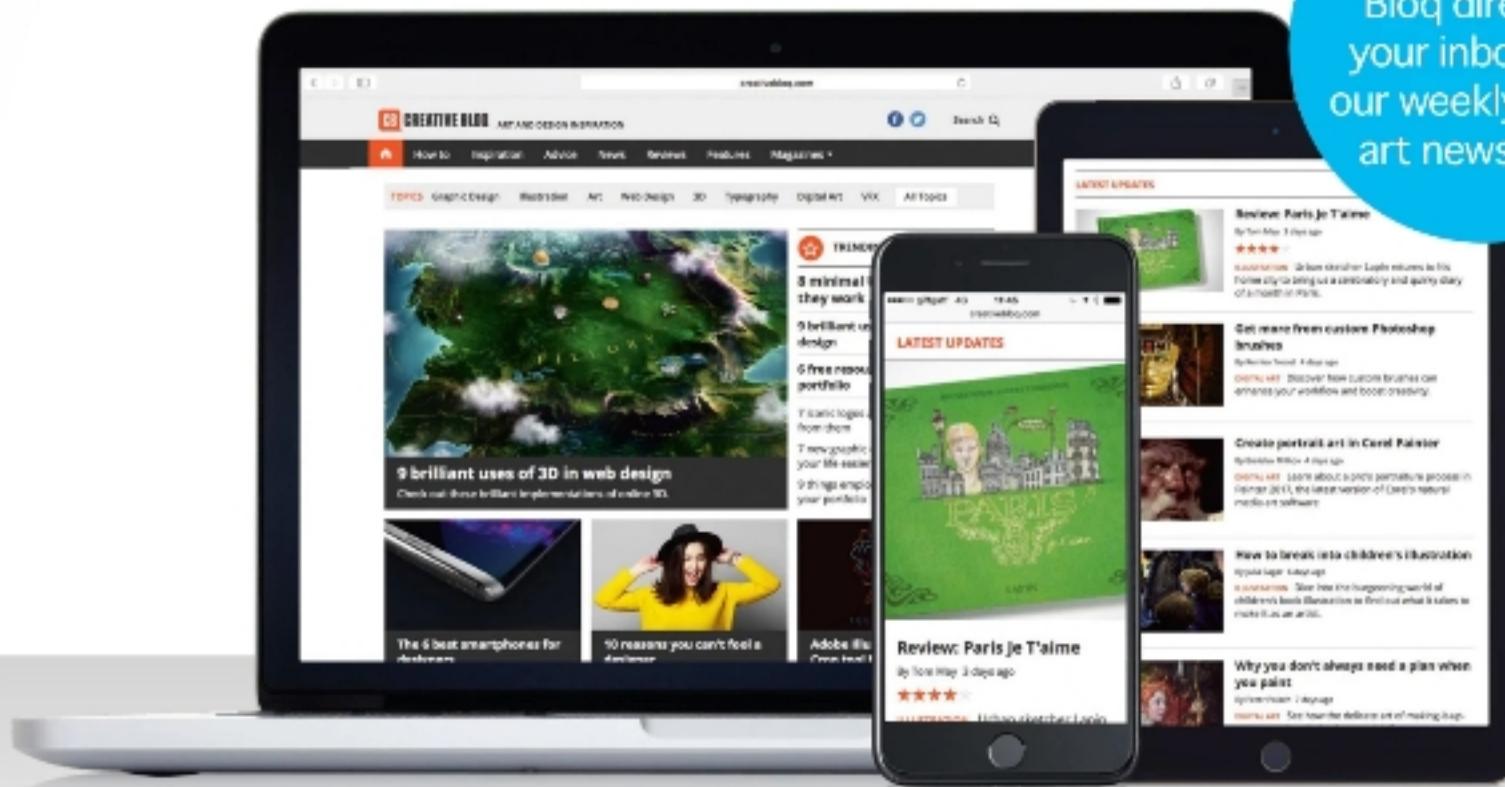
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This issue:

Artist Insight
15 TIPS ON DRAWING REALISTIC HEADS

Portraiture is **Oliver Sin's** favourite form of artistic expression. Here, he reveals the techniques he uses to create his stunning charcoal artworks

Artist PROFILE

Oliver Sin
LOCATION: US

After graduating in 1996 from the Academy of Art University in San Francisco, Oliver worked as a game concept artist at LucasArts. He has since returned to his old school to be a professor of art and 2D animation.
https://ifxm.ag/oliver-s

This workshop will take you through all aspects of my drawing method, which I've developed over the years and now pass on to my students as art professor at San Francisco's Academy of Art University. Over the next few pages I'll reveal my key composition techniques, which range from establishing a point of view to applying key illustration principles for creating an accurate and expressive likeness of the human head.

You'll also learn how to apply what I consider to be the essentials of human facial anatomy, and explore how the concepts of value, shapes and plane changes affect a portrait's underlying structure. Elsewhere in this article I'll reveal my techniques for creating depth and dimension, and investigate how contrasting shapes are used to enhance depth in an illustration.

If your figure drawings are looking a little flat, then fear not – I'll also be covering how to create the illusion of three dimensions when drawing on a flat surface. I'll examine how edges – contours as well as changes in value – are used to convey three-dimensional form. And it's important to remember that not all portraits have to work in isolation. In this article I'll also be demonstrating how expressive hands, facial hair and the right choice of background can all enhance the finished piece, and make for a more pleasing viewing experience. So grab that charcoal stick and let's start drawing!

1 EXPRESSIVE USE OF LINE

I drew these portraits with expressive lines by using only the tip of the vine charcoal, without blending with the flat side. I use lines to depict the form of the head. It's been said that a line is a moving dot, or a point in motion. A line can guide a viewer's eye by defining edges and outlining shapes. Lines used to outline a shape are called contour or contour lines. The five types of lines are vertical lines, horizontal lines, diagonal lines, zig-zag lines and curved lines.

> 66 A line is a moving dot that can guide the viewer's eye by defining edges and outlining shapes 99

2 CONSIDER YOUR SHAPES

A shape is a closed contour, created when a line is enclosed, or when the ends of a line meet. All shapes are two-dimensional – they have both length and width. There are two types of shapes: geometric and organic. Geometric shapes include circles, triangles and squares. Organic shapes are those irregular, uneven shapes that seem to follow no rules; these expressive shapes are typically not man-made. I use mostly geometric shapes to depict a contour lines head drawings.

3 UNDERSTAND FORMS

Form and shape are related. I think of forms as three-dimensional shapes. In art, the term form refers to an object that has length, width and height. I encourage you to develop your understanding of form, and how to create the illusion of form in head drawings, by studying the effect of light on objects. I prefer top lighting, which highlights the top-facing planes and casts extreme shadows. It's best to use a single light source to light the head for portraiture.

4 THE POWER OF VALUES

Value refers to the lightness or darkness of a tone. Value is crucial in a drawing because light and dark values describe the form of an object. All objects have a highlight, light, mid-tone, core shadow and reflected light, and I often apply this five-value system to my portrait drawings. Value is the key to the illusion of light, and a realistic drawing depends on a range of values. When drawing portraits, light and shadow translate from simple planes and shapes into detailed variations of value and line.

Light reflects off the roundness of the forehead.

Full light areas indicate the direction of the light source.

Form shadow on the cheek.

Half-tone area.

Cast shadow.

The shape of the cheeks is created with a shadow edge.

Reflected light is seen around the chin.

Reflected light separates the jawline from the cast shadow on neck, which makes the face look round.

A cylinder can be seen in the shape of the neck.

The egg shape can be seen in the overall shape of the head.

Form shadow.

Don't be afraid of extreme darks and contrasts.

Highlights.

The cheeks and nose resemble spheres.

Reflected light is seen around the edges of the nostrils.

Cast shadows and hard edges are created when two surfaces overlap.

Hard-edge cast shadow.

5 APPLY A FIVE-VALUE SYSTEM TO YOUR PORTRAIT

Geometric shapes can be found throughout the face: an egg shape for the head; spheres in facial features such as the cheek and nose; and a cylinder for the neck. Light reflects off the roundness of the forehead.

Don't be afraid of extreme darks and contrasts. Reflected light can be seen around the edges of the nostrils. Cast shadows and hard edges are created when two surfaces overlap. There's a hard edge on a cast shadow of the neck in this example. A form shadow is created on a object as its surface turns away from the light source, and it has soft edges. A cast shadow is created when light is blocked from an object. It has hard edges, with an abrupt change from light to dark. ➤➤
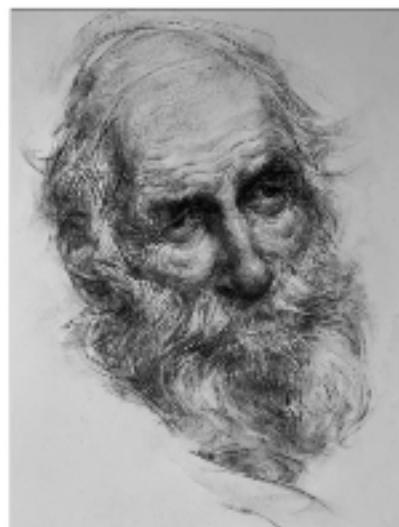
6 COMBINING LINE AND VALUE

Line and value work together to create a likeness of the model. Value refers to the lightness or darkness of a colour or tone. Drawing areas of value alone ensures an artist becomes more aware of masses, forms and light. Drawing lines encourages the artist to study, judge and plan before drawing. The knowledge gained from line-drawing helps the artist make decisions about the edges of each area of tone as they develop the values. When drawing portraits, light and shadow translate from simple planes and shapes into detailed variations of value and line.

7 CONTRASTING VALUES

Value contrast is the best way to create the illusion of depth. Areas with a lot of contrast will come forward; areas with little contrast will recede. In this piece, as the scarf wraps around the neck I pushed it back visually by lowering the contrast, using similar values within it and drawing a thin line to suggest an edge. It becomes less visible as it recedes, instead of outlining its shape which would give it its own separate value.

I applied the same approach at the crown of the head by gradually lightening the value of the hair so it recedes into the background. Reducing value contrast at the perimeters of the face draws the eye to its centre, where I used high contrast between the left eye socket and the forehead.

8 FORESHORTENING WHEN IN THREE-QUARTER VIEW

When the head is viewed at three-quarter angle, the perspective of the facial features are skewed. Foreshortening causes the closest parts of an object to appear larger than those farther away. Study proportion variation and measure the distance between features. Three-quarter view places the emphasis on the closest eye as the focal point. The eyes and eyebrows reveal the mood of your subject – they can show emotion and personality. The near side of the face is wider than the far side because of foreshortened perspective. The cheekbone is more defined on the far side of the face, with a harder contour line.

9 HEAD DRAWING VS PORTRAIT DRAWING

There's a difference between head drawing and portrait drawing. Head drawing focuses on shapes, plane changes, anatomy, form and the perspective of the head. Portrait drawing is an artist's representation of a person's spirit: their expression, likeness, personality and mood. The "form" of the head refers only to the external appearance of the face.

To draw spirited portraits, you must consider what message – or perception – a portrait will communicate. The artist's personal perception is the common denominator of every work of art he or she creates. Each artwork reflects the unique perspective of the artist, no matter the style or subject. I would say that a good drawing features something that comes from within the artist.

" A good drawing features something that comes from within the artist "

Stretch in the neck

The Adam's apple projects slightly in a rounded form.

The slashing angle of the major neck muscle gives the neck a feeling of power.

From the front and semi-front views, the top neck lines appear to come down and over the middle and bottom neck lines.

Compression the front of the neck.

Compression in neck reinforces gesture.

Stretch in neck.

The extremities of the back of the neck are shorter than the front line.

The neck side view is very seldom straight up and down. The natural position is for the neck to tilt forward as it leaves the shoulders. This angle is usually more pronounced in a woman than a man.

From the side, the neck pit resembles a "V".

Collarbones.

A long neck will look longer from the front if the chin is lifted slightly. When the head is turned with the shoulders facing forwards, the line beneath chin enters the neck and follows on to the pit between the collar bones.

As this model thrusts her head slightly back and lifts her chin, the back of her neck compresses. At the same time, she gazes downward, which conveys an air of arrogance.

10 CONTRAPPOSTO OF THE HEAD AND NECK

The position of the head and the neck establish the attitude of the portrait and hints at the emotion of the model. Besides the angle of the head, look for the stretch and compression in the neck that reinforces the gesture. The word contrapposto describes the twisting action of the torso. When a figure twists the torso,

it often stretches and compresses, as does the neck.

Train your mind to recognise contrapposto and its effect on the neck. I often ask models to thrust the head forward and upward, and the stretch of the model's neck expresses a haughty gracefulness. One of my favourite poses has the model, with a dreamy look in their eyes, looking at the viewer over their shoulder. ▶▶

A beautiful curved line from the back runs into the neck.

Graceful indifference... the stretch of this model's neck as she moves her head slightly back expresses pride. If a model lifts their chin slightly, the back of the neck compresses and the way the eyes lower adds a feeling of seduction.

The collarbone is prominent on the shoulder's contour.
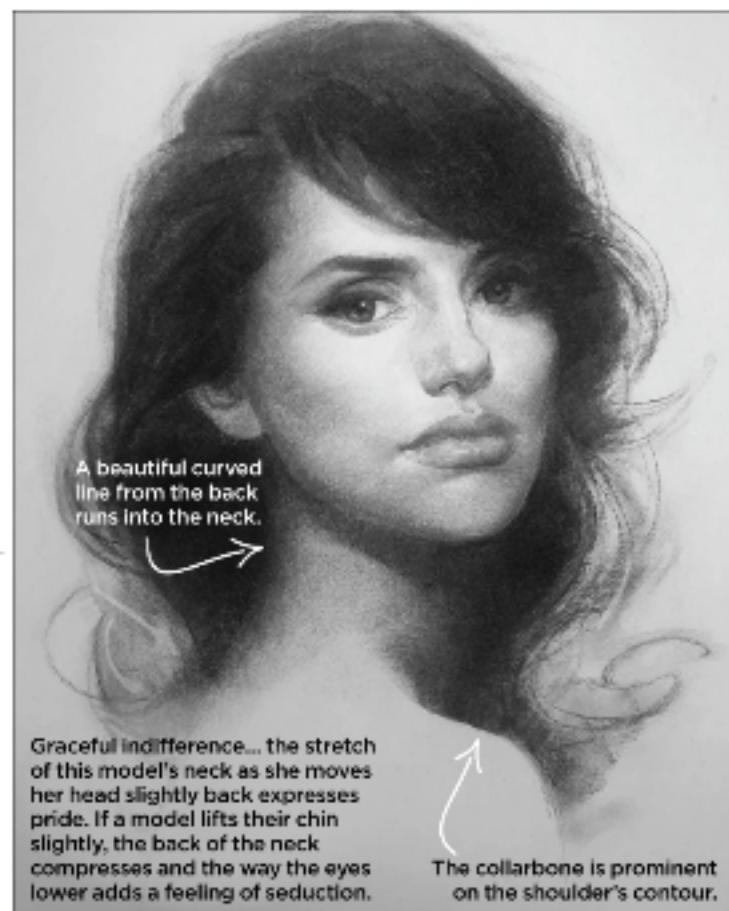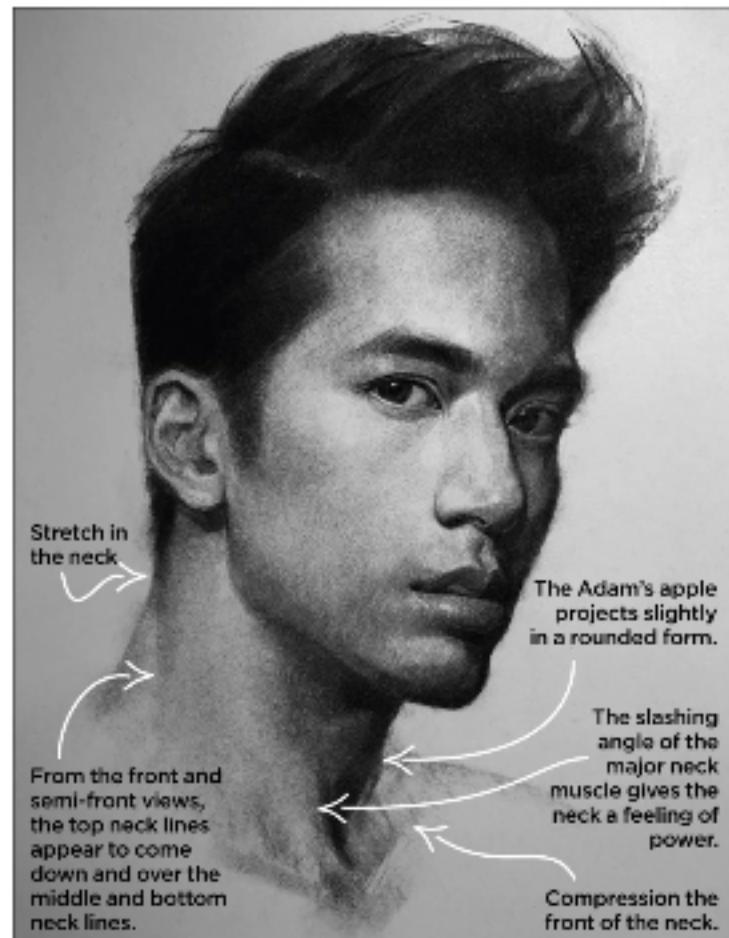
11 HOW TO DRAW AN EXPRESSIVE PORTRAIT

Oliver develops an expressive portrait from start to finish in vine charcoal

A Draw the shapes

Use vine charcoal to map the position of the head by marking the top, bottom and side boundaries with straight lines. Straight lines enable you to observe the subject as a whole and examine the relationships between key blocks so you can define them accurately on paper.

Draw a ball shape for the skull and a U-shape for the jaw. Establish the cross where the middle line of the face crosses the eyebrow line. Identify and divide the head into thirds: one-third from the hairline to the eyebrows, one-third from the eyebrows to the nose, and one-third from the nose to the chin. The lower lip is halfway between the nose and the chin. Avoid specific details – just map out the head's general proportions.

Continue to use straight lines to define the large shadow areas, such as the eye sockets. I'd draw the eye sockets shapes first, then the base of the nose shape before the mouth shapes. Define the approximate shapes of the head's outline and mark the eyebrow. Notice the shape of the chin's bottom plane, which is foreshortened because of the angle of the head.
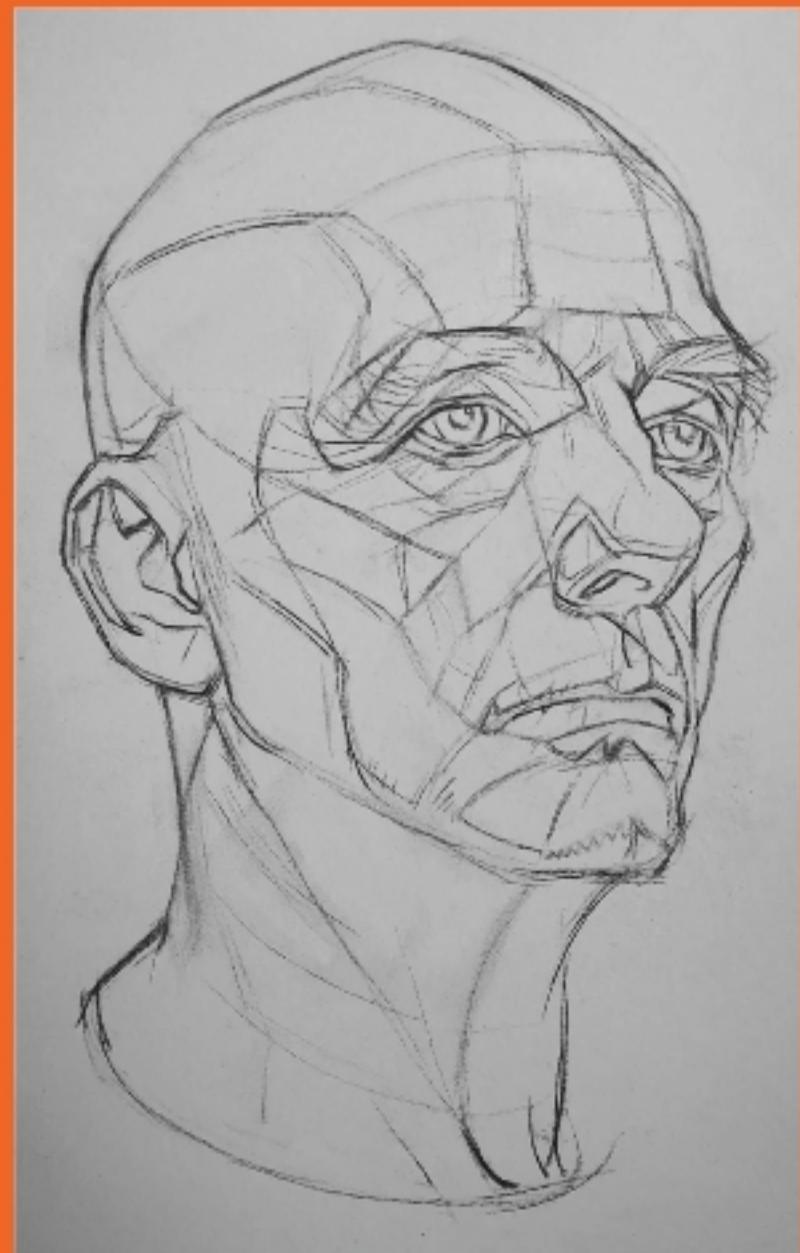
B Define planes

Continue to define the shape of the ear, which aligns with the brow line and the bottom of the nose. Define the planes of the forehead, cheekbones, nose and chin with straight lines. Study the proportions and relationships of the shapes to one another. Avoid adding details such as the pupils and nostrils for now.

Use lines to define areas of shadow and where planes meet, such as the front, sides and slope of the forehead, and the front, wings and base of the nose. Mark the shapes and positions of the brow arch, cheekbones, temporal bones, chin and jaw. Treat this drawing as a blueprint.

Use the broad side of the vine charcoal to begin blocking in values to build the structure of the head. Remember that all objects have light, middle, and dark values when exposed to light. Hatch the shadow areas of the head, such as the eye sockets, and continue into the dark shadow of the cheekbone and other shadow areas. Train your eyes to unify the shadow areas, while avoid seeing individual facial details. You could reduce the textures by blending the surface with your fingertips or a stump.
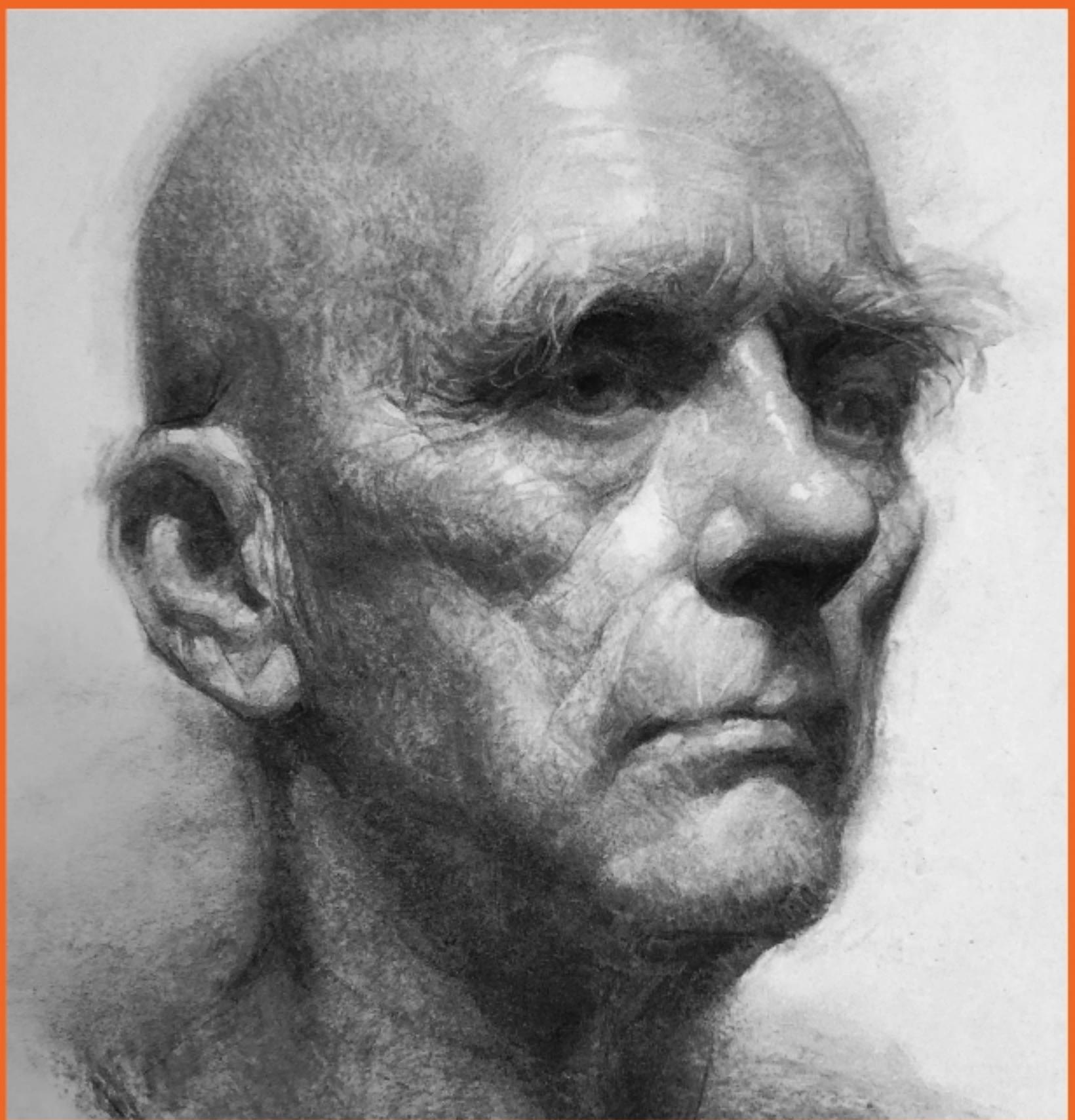
C Start detailing

In each area where you work on details, reexamine the shapes of the different parts, paying attention to the strokes so that there's variation in hard and soft edges. Wherever you add detail, shade the entire area first, then pull out highlights with an eraser and then use a charcoal pencil to emphasise the shadows.

Wrinkles can enrich the drawing with texture and details. Wrinkles shouldn't stand out and must correspond to the shapes of the facial features. Focus on conveying an impression of wrinkles, rather than drawing all of them.

Finish by reexamining the light, mid-tone and dark values, as well as the edges of the face. Each of the three major values should be further rendered into three more values, together with the highlight, for a wide value range that captures the forms. The edges of the face shouldn't form one continuous line, but instead contain rhythm, spatial relationships and variation.

Reinforce the boundary between light and dark on the chin to solidify this facial feature and softly represent the structure and texture. Finally, reinforce the dark areas even more by adding willow charcoal with vine charcoal. ➤➤
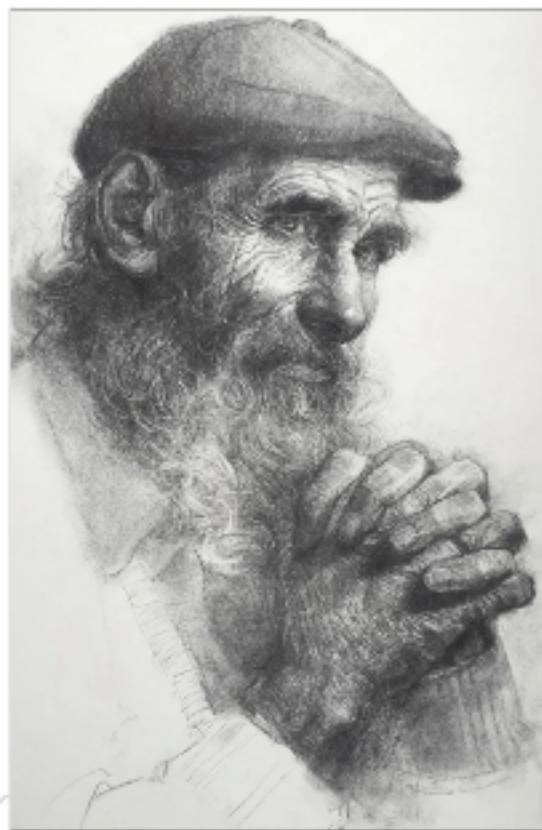
12 EXPRESS MOOD WITH THE HANDS

Hands add emotion and feeling to a drawing. Including the hands can turn a regular portrait into a character study: a candid, unposed approach that reveals the subject's personality. On a philosophical level, hands represent the way we touch and feel objects, or even other people – how we "connect" with the outside world.

Hands deserve a place of honour in a portrait drawing. Often the most expressive and revealing portraits incorporate the hands and props. They tell a story and establish a serious mood. Note that hands are a contributing but subordinate element of the drawing and shouldn't detract from the portrait. Because the face remains the focal point, render hands with softer tones and less-defined shape and form.
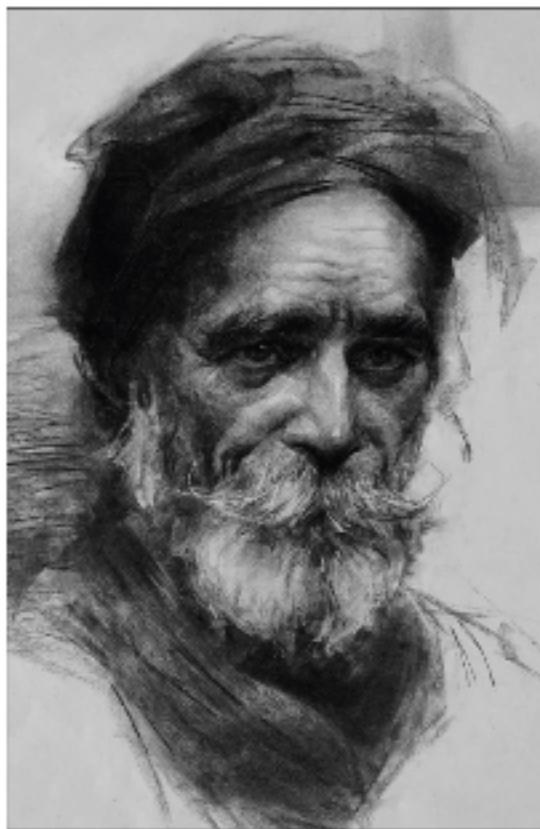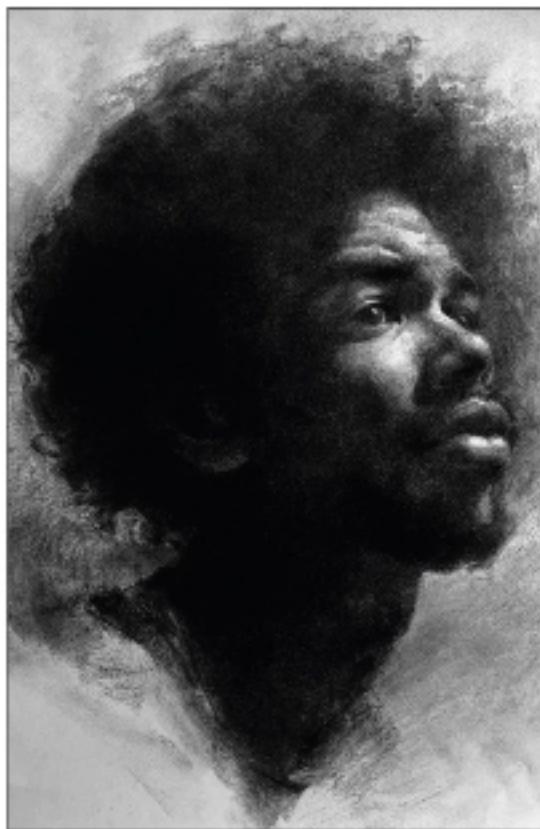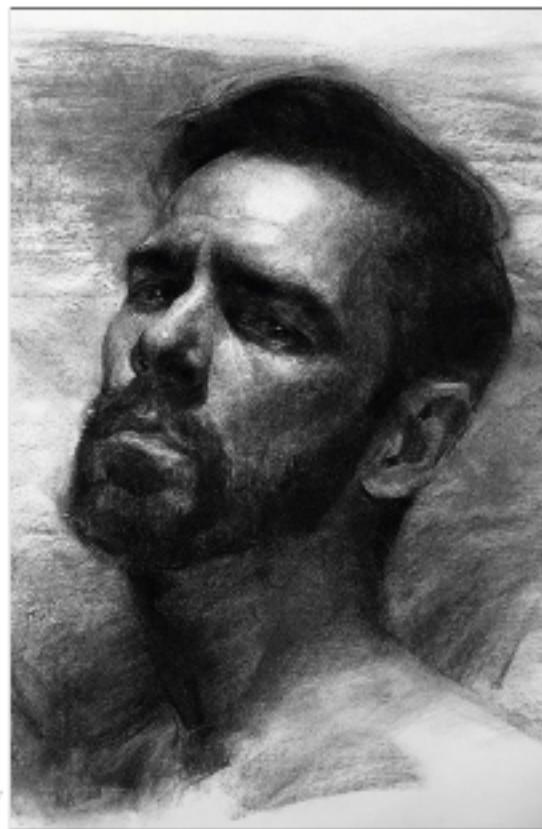
13 CONSIDER A TEXTURE BACKGROUND

The texture background can play a key role in the visual statement of a drawing. A background can give an artwork a soft, calm look, or liven a piece with an energetic striking approach. Incorporating a creative background in your art shouldn't take the focus away from the subject.

Concentrate on the lights and darks of the subject when selecting a background treatment. If the subject is light on one side, a dark tone behind will show the contours more clearly. Use the background to show off the contrast and enhance your work, not compete with it. There's no formula for achieving the right background, so be creative!
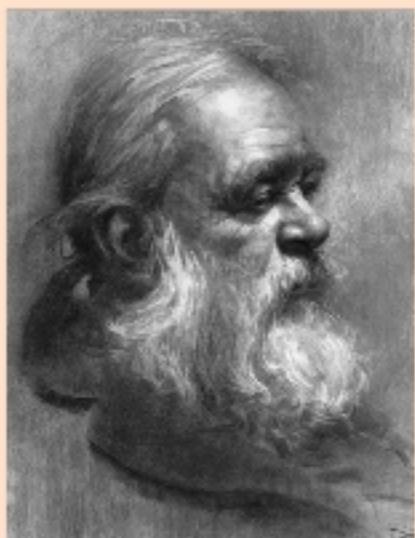
14 FACIAL HAIR

Every moustache or beard is different, but there are several key things to look for. The nose casts a shadow on the moustache, and the moustache casts a shadow on the mouth. If the moustache is very full, it may cover the upper lip. Think of the moustache as a large upper lip that wraps around the mouth, producing larger shadows. Follow the light and shadow on the head if the planes aren't visible in the facial hair.

Pay attention to the beard's shape, and train your eye to see that hair has no definable edge, like smoke. Rather than drawing individual hairs, treat the beard as a mass of light and shadow, keeping the edges soft.

Hard edge.

Soft edge.

Lost edge.

Hard edge.

Soft edge.

Lost edge.
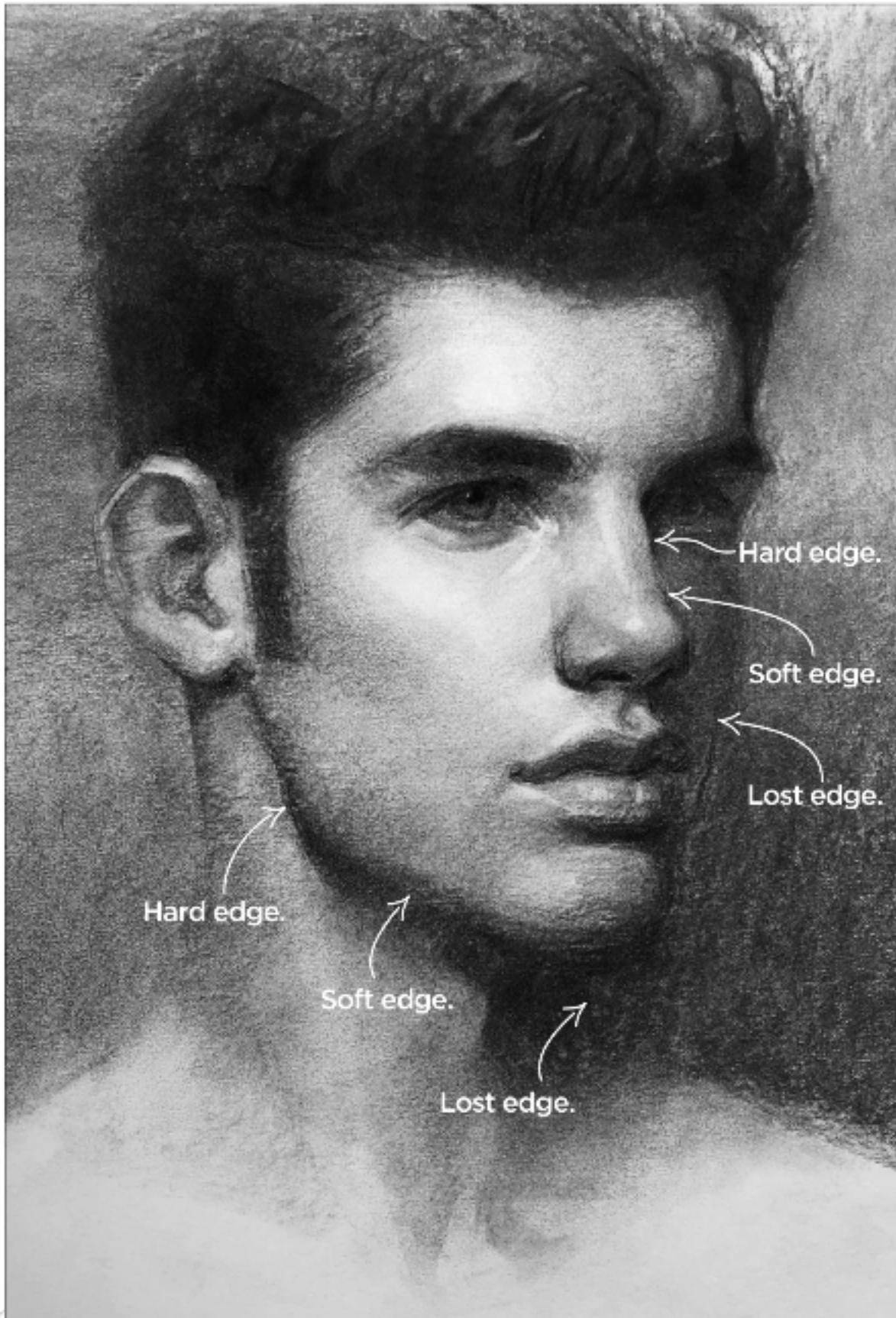
15 USE EDGES TO CONVEY FORM

When an artist mixes soft and hard lines, or edges, in the right places, it sets up a path for the viewer's eyes, creating the illusion of three dimensions on a two-dimensional surface. When edges are soft, an element can seem to recede.

You can further blend a subject into the background by making its lines soft. A soft-edged drawing creates a fuzzy, dreamy effect, whereas a drawing with too many hard edges will look unnatural, creating visual tension because too many areas are competing. This will confuse viewers because there's nowhere for their eyes to rest. I don't mean you should never use hard edges, but you should use them sparingly for emphasis, keeping lines hard at your focal point.

In my portrait drawings, I generally use a proportion of roughly 85 per cent soft lines and 15 per cent hard lines. If you understand and master the power of controlling edges in your drawings, you'll be amazed at how much your portraits will improve. ●

Artist insight
15 STEPS TO DRAWING ANIMALS

Acclaimed animator, director and wildlife artist **Aaron Blaise** share his observational and illustration advice to help improve your animal artwork

Artist
PROFILE

Aaron Blaise
LOCATION: US

Aaron is a world-renowned wildlife artist, animator and Oscar-nominated director. He also runs the online art education website Creature Art Teacher.
http://ifxm.ag/ablaise

Long before I was a director and animator with Walt Disney Feature Animation, I was a lover of wildlife. Growing up as a bit of a wild child in the swamps of south Florida, I would typically be found running through the woods, barefoot of course, tracking animals. I would draw them in my sketchbooks or even collect the bones of animal kills and save them for later study.

It was always my dream to be an illustrator for National Geographic and to see the world. Instead, I went on to Disney and a successful animation career, but I still found a way to pursue my love of drawing animals by working on classic films like The Lion King and Brother Bear. Now I want to share some of the knowledge from my years of studying animals with you!

1 OBSERVE FIRST

Before you start to draw, stop and really look! Take a moment to observe and study the animal. How does it move? Often you'll notice patterns of movement. What's the animal doing? Can you anticipate where it will be next? If it's a hot day it might be heading for shade, for example. These sorts of details can be crucial in helping you capture details because animals often won't sit still and pose for you – especially in the wild!

> **❝ I do my homework on what animals I'll see in a certain area ❞**
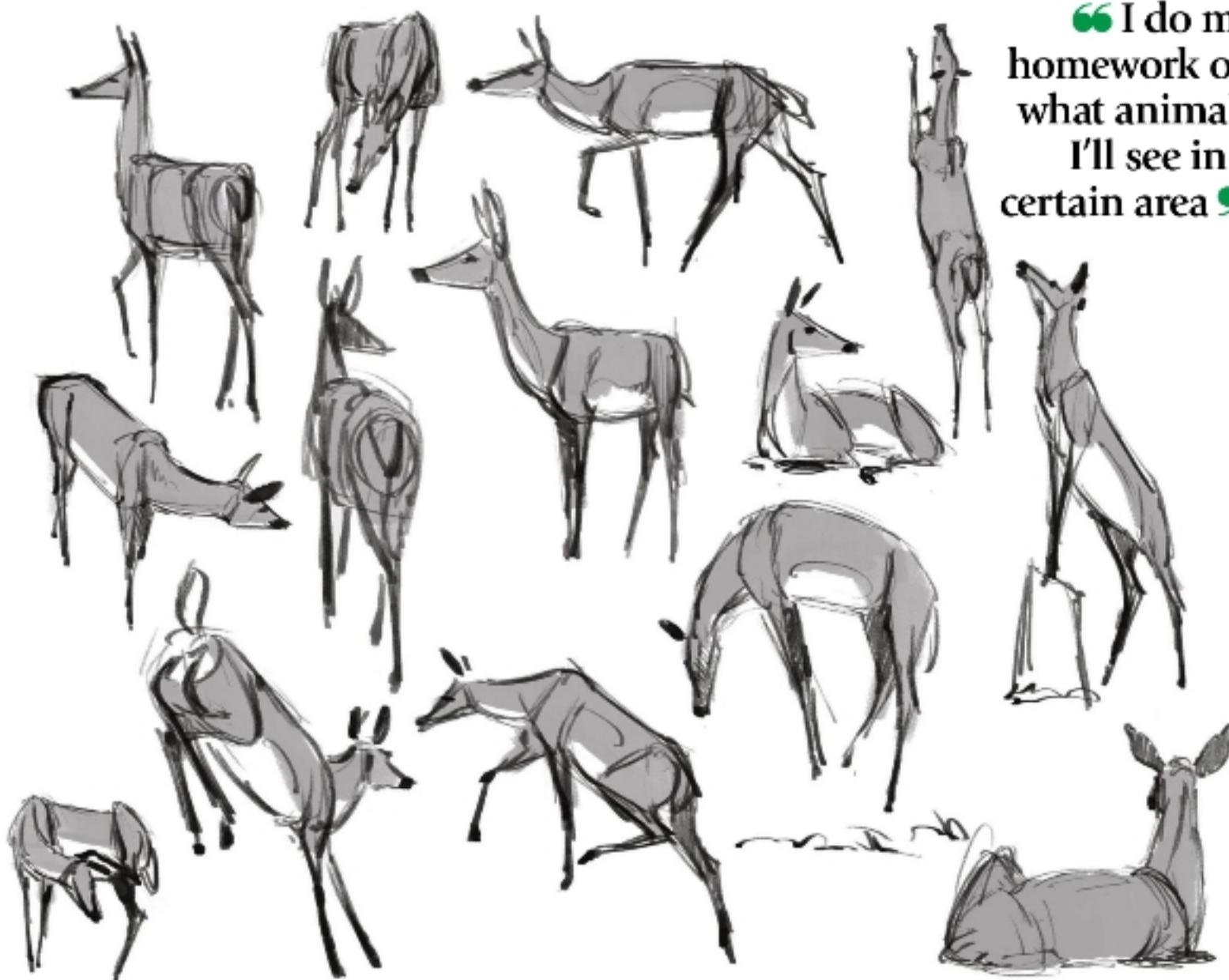
2 DO YOUR RESEARCH BEFORE YOU GET THERE

I do my homework on what animals I'll see in a particular area. For instance, on a trip to Alaska I may try to learn everything I can about grizzly bears, muskox and moose before I arrive. I'll study books and do research to learn about their muscles, skeletons and patterning. I'll even watch live webcams of an area to give me a sense of the environment. This information will aid me when I'm on location, and save a lot of time.
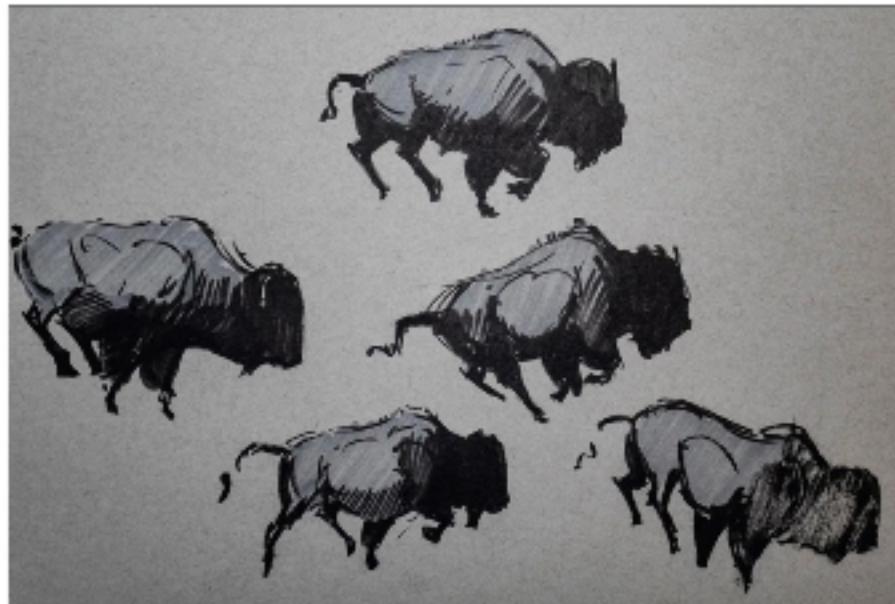
3 TAKE A MENTAL PICTURE

Animals often don't sit still. To combat this I've developed a technique of taking a mental snapshot. I don't stare at the animal the entire time I'm drawing. Instead, I'll glance at the animal and then quickly look away to my page. By doing this the last image of the animal that I saw is frozen in my mind. Combined with my research on anatomy, I'm able to get an accurate drawing down on the page. ➤➤

4 BREAK THE BODY UP INTO SECTIONS

This is an observation I've made over the years. Most quadrupeds can be broken down into six main areas: the head, the neck, the front legs and shoulders, the body, the rear legs and hips, and finally the tail. This may seem like a simple observation, but once you break the animal up this way you can overlap those areas in any orientation in space.
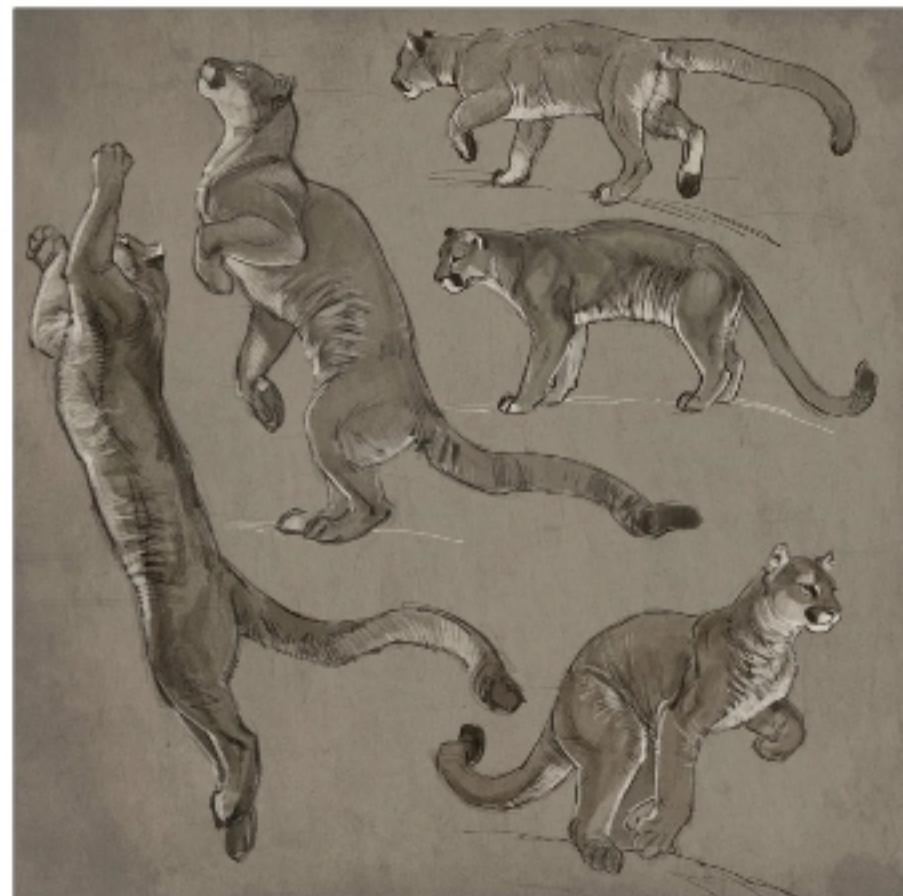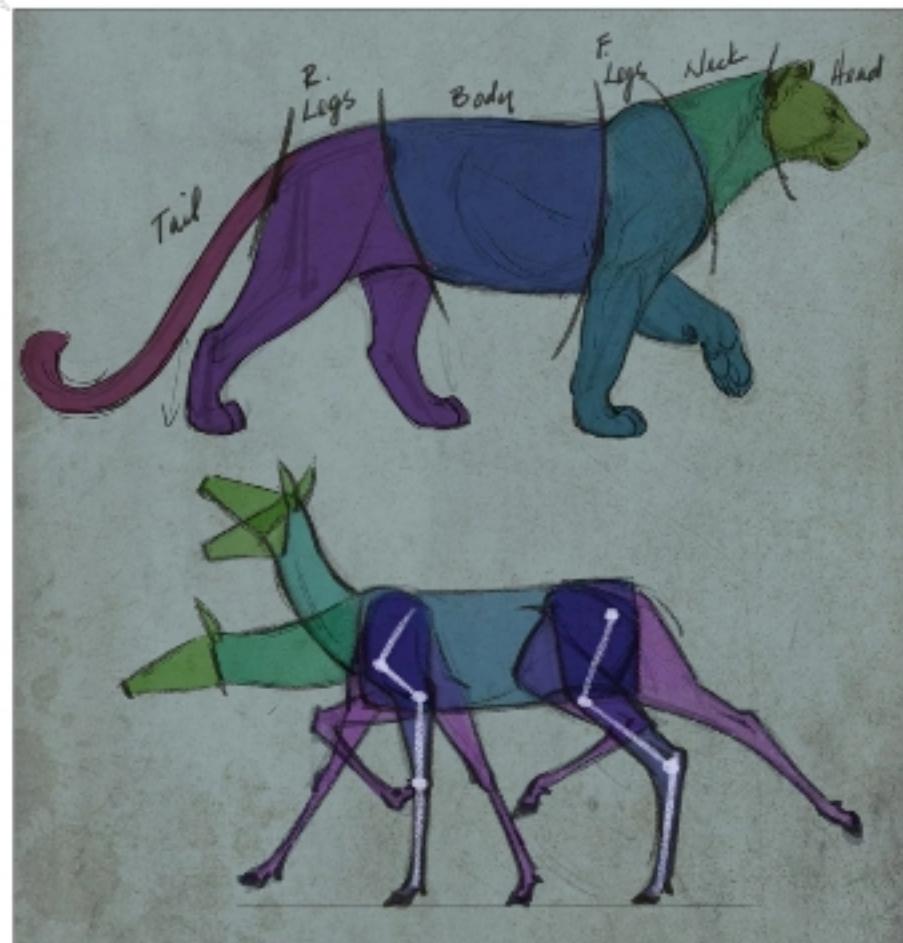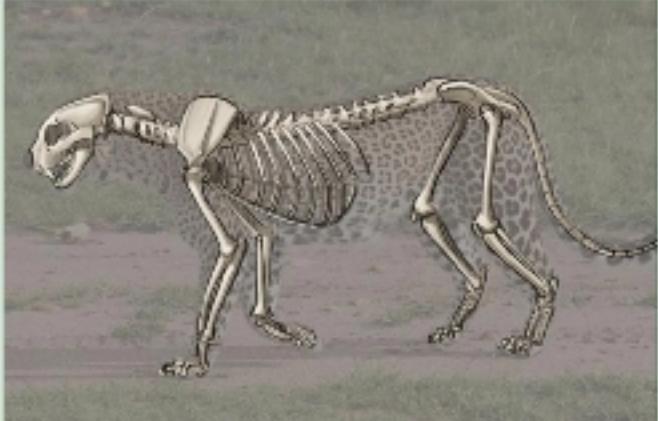
5 UNDERSTAND BASIC COMPARATIVE ANATOMY

People ask how do I know all these details about the animals I draw? The answer is: I don't! But I do know comparative anatomy. Most animals, especially mammals, have all the same "parts" – just spaced out differently. And this is true of humans as well. Once I understood that I have basically the same parts as a lion, just in different locations, it was a eureka moment in my ability to draw them.

6 WATCH YOUR PROPORTIONS

Now that you understand that most animals have the same bones and muscle groups as you do, it's just a matter of playing with the proportions and getting those correct. This is primarily a matter of practice and repetition. But once you start to get the spacing and proportions right, you'll be able to draw your subject in any pose or angle.

7 USE BLACK AND WHITE INK ON MIDTONE PAPER
How to enhance a pencil drawing of a lion's head with inks, bringing it to life

A Create a rough sketch

First lay in a rough drawing in pencil bearing in mind all the tips you have already learned so far. It's okay to be loose at this stage. This can give your work a dynamic edge! You'll refine the image in the later steps.

B Add darks to the drawing

Next, use a brush pen and/or ball point pen to lay down the darks. Use waterproof ink here in case you want to add watercolour or a wash later. Try to work in one consistent direction so you don't smear the ink.

C Use white ink for highlights

Now use a white pen (I like Sakura Gelly Roll pens for this) and add final accents and highlights. Because you started with a mid-tone and not on white you can go lighter and make it pop! Use markers to add more shading.

8 STAY LOOSE AND FIND THE FLOW

This is similar to step six if you want to get down a gesture of your pose right away. The animal is likely to move on you, so you need to get the essence of the pose fast. If you're drawing a tiger or lion you need to get the action and don't worry about every stripe and whisker. Instead, look for the line of action and rhythm to the pose.

9 CAPTURE GOOD SILHOUETTES

The basics of good animal drawing are not that different from drawing a good human character. You want their pose to read as clearly and concisely as possible. If your silhouette isn't clear then the drawing won't be understood by the viewer. It's the same whether you're drawing an elephant, a bear or any other animal.
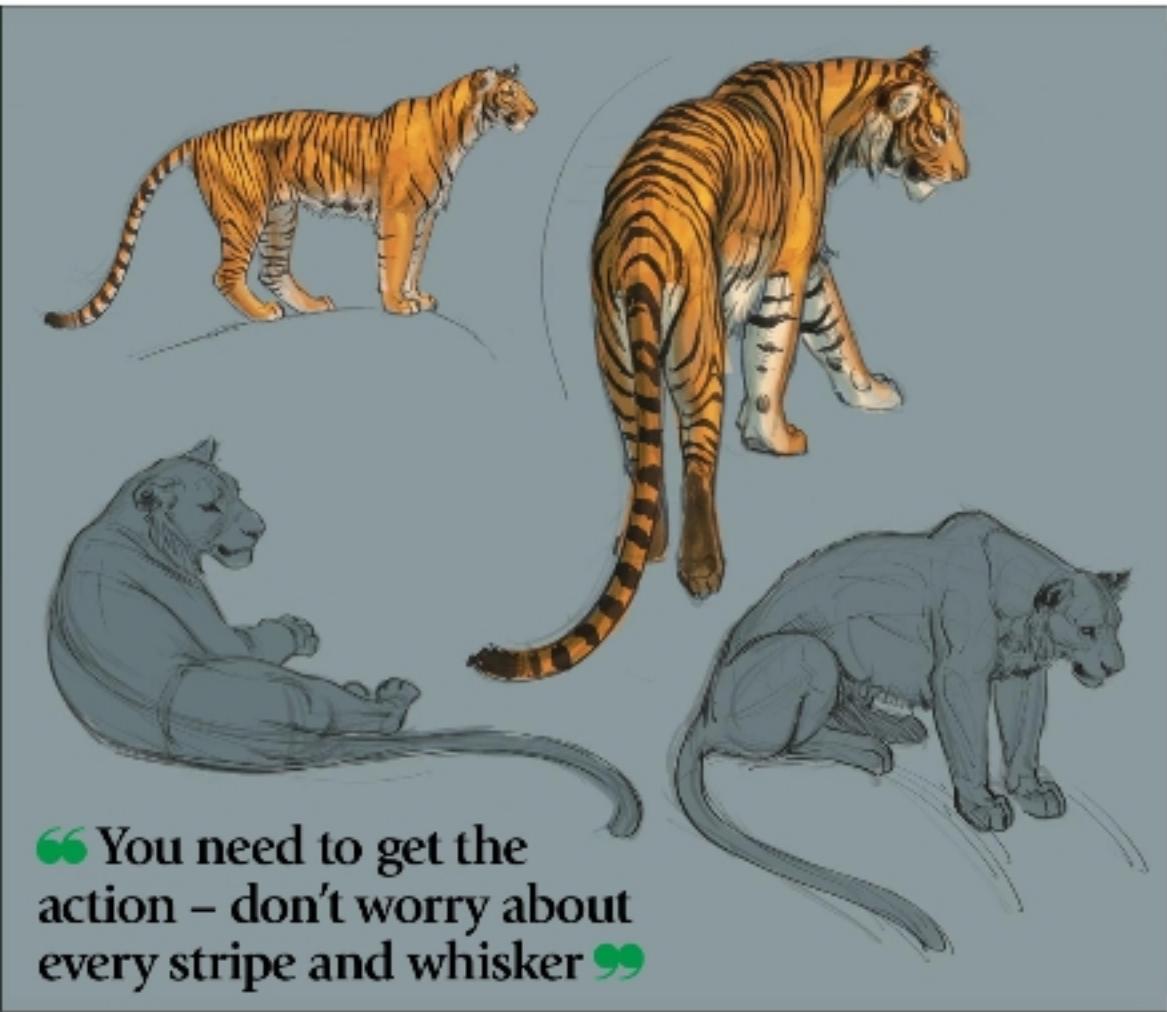
> 66 You need to get the action – don't worry about every stripe and whisker 99

Lots of loose, stretchy skin between the knee and belly.

Even with big, bulky elephants, always look for the gesture and good silhouette.

Notice how low and droopy the elbow hangs.

Here are some drawings from behind. Notice the droopiness of their butts, and how the ears attach.
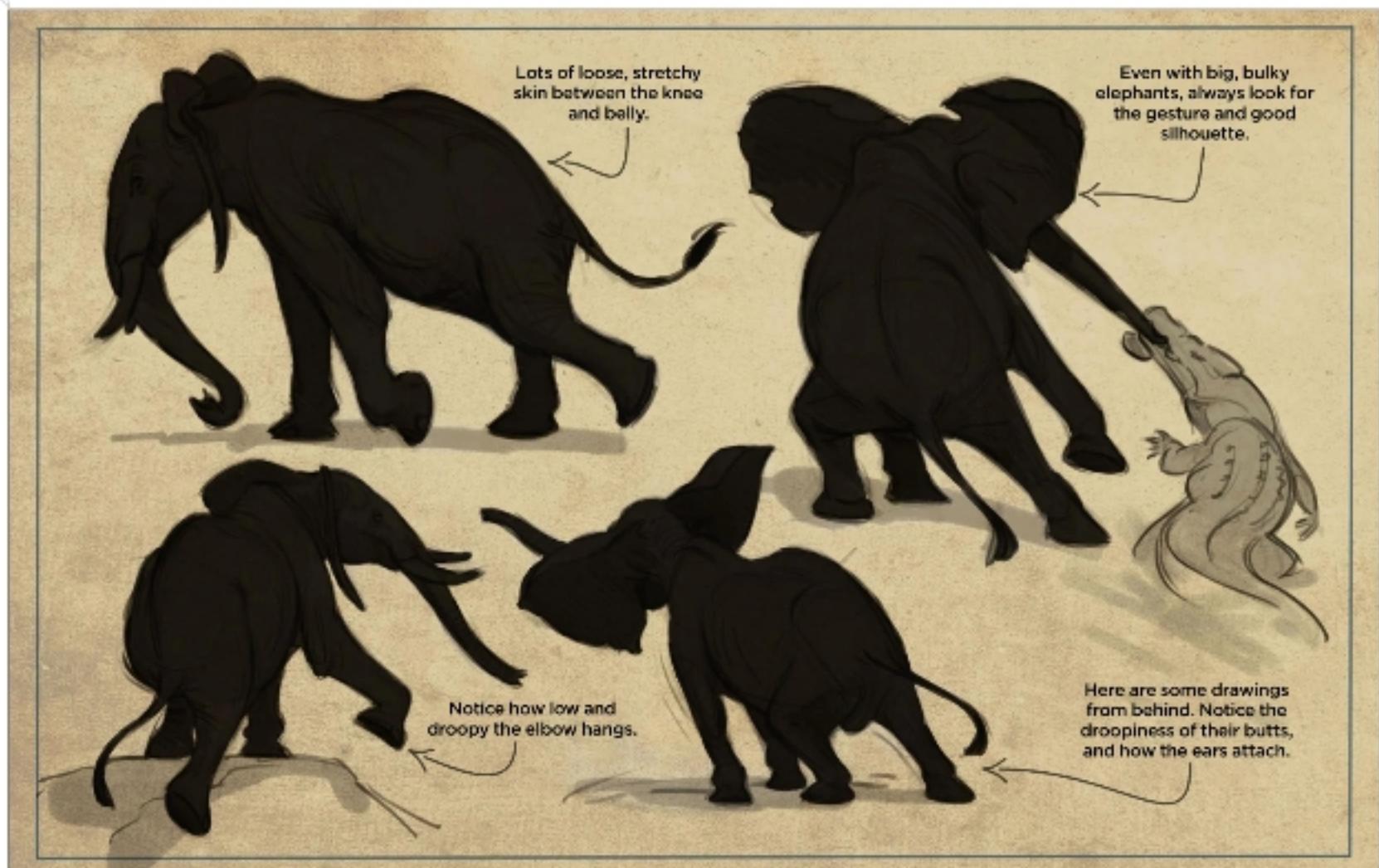
10 USE OVERLAPPING SHAPES TO CREATE DEPTH

Once you're happy capturing the different shapes of your chosen animal, try overlapping them. This will give your image a sense of depth and space in the frame. Properly overlapping each shape will give your drawings a sense of believability and life.

11 CREATE ACTION AND DRAMA

Animals are living creatures. If you've been out in the wild drawing you'll have noticed that they're always on the move. You should be capturing this in your drawings as well. While there's nothing wrong with a good animal portrait (so to speak), I've found that images of animals in action always get a bigger response and have more impact. Work hard to develop a sense of drama and life into your images. ➤➤

12 BE MINDFUL OF LIGHT AND SHADOW

Proper use of light and shadow in your image can help enhance the feeling of drama that we discussed in step 11. I'll often push or exaggerate the lighting of nature to heighten that feeling. Used properly, a dramatically cast shadow can deeply enhance the mood of your image as well as give it a sense of time and place.

13 LOOK FOR THE BIG SHAPES FIRST

A typical mistake that I see artists make is they get too caught up in the details right away. You don't need to do that. Instead, get down the big shapes first. For example, if you're drawing an elephant then find the big "bean shape" of the body and lay that in, followed by the triangle or wedge shape of the head. Get their placement right and the rest will come together quickly.

14 LOOK FOR EMOTION AND PERSONALITY

Whether drawing an animal that's realistic or cartoony, try to get as much personality as possible into the image. As humans we look for this naturally and gravitate towards it. Use that to your advantage whenever possible. A little exaggeration or emphasis can go a long way.

> 66 A dramatically cast shadow can deeply enhance the mood of your image 99

15 BE SELECTIVE WHEN DRAWING YOUR ANIMAL'S HAIR AND FUR

There's no need to be too detailed here. You don't need or want to draw each and every hair on an animal. Instead, make marks in key spots to suggest it. Places where the body bends are a great spot to indicate a hair break. ●

Photoshop
PAINTING REALISTIC RAIN EFFECTS

Christophe Young shares his painting process for creating rain and water droplets, and integrating them into a sci-fi character illustration

Artist PROFILE
Christophe Young
LOCATION: Canada

Christophe works at Behaviour Interactive as a character concept artist for the multiplayer horror video game Dead by Daylight.
https://ifxm.ag/c-young

This illustration started as a study to create compelling water effects on a character, and evolved throughout the process. Normally, I like to start with some quick gesture drawings or portrait studies to get a feel for a new character as I design and illustrate them. However, in this case I focused on painting materials such as glass, metallic fabrics and condensation. Therefore, the initial sketches I explored were more about identifying where I could add the materials and make the best use of the canvas' real estate to work on the different effects, while still bringing the character to life.

When doing more advanced material studies such as these it's important not to let the design fall by the wayside., so I try to keep form language, proportion and detail density in the back of my mind when planning the image. I try to learn about the properties of the materials I'm planning to paint, such as how they diffuse or reflect light, if they're transparent or how they refract light. How much will Fresnel reflections affect the colour or distortion of the reflections? This might be advanced theory to some artists, but much of the illustration relies heavily on these principles. ➤➤

How I create...
A RAIN-SOAKED EXPLORER

1 Initial blockout
I establish where the different light sources might be coming from, what kind of materials each part of her costume will have, and the overall mood/colour scheme. Since she's standing in the rain, I'm shooting for something more sombre, making use of cool colours overall to give a kind of moon-lit feeling, but inserting a warm light source in her helmet to draw attention to her head.

2 Detailing the scene
I often add a black layer set to Color above my painting to turn it into a greyscale image. This enables me to focus on the values and the contrast of details without worrying about colour. The value range of each material is unique and important to the overall legibility of the image. Nailing the values and density of detail at this point is crucial to creating an appealing painting.

3 Finalising the picture
I try to keep the colours and values in separate layers for as long as possible to give me optimal control over both, but once I'm happy I merge everything and start a final pass over the whole illustration. This includes the rain, smudging certain edges to create a balance between hard, soft and lost edges, and adding the glow effects around the lights and the helmet display.

Next month in...

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

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ISSUE 184 ON SALE IN THE UK *24 January 2020*

THE WET LOOK

Three stages to painting a wet visor realistically

1 Transparency Materials that are transparent tend to distort objects under them that are close to the edges, but in the centre the image stays pretty clear. I use this to my advantage to show clarity in her portrait, even if she's wearing a big helmet.

2 Fog I blur out parts of the visor to give the impression of foggy condensation.

3 Droplets As condensation forms, areas of water become too heavy to support themselves and start to run off the glass.

Rain effects

I try to illustrate the beam of light refracting through falling rain droplets. Because the rain is falling quickly and vertically, only a few droplets will pick up the light as a lighter streak passing through the beam. These effects can become noisy pretty quickly, so less is more.

Drops of water

I create a water droplet effect by using bevel and emboss effects on top of my brush strokes. To give the impression that the light is refracting through the droplet, I invert the direction of the light in the Bevel & Emboss editor.

RESOURCES
WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: SKETCH BRUSH

This simulates a stick of charcoal with a wide and sharp edge, for sketching.

OIL PAINT

This has a subtle paint texture, but still allows for plenty of control.

TEXTURED PAINT

Use sparingly in areas you want to add a hint of texture or grit.

RUSTY TEXTURE

I like to rough out foggy or textured backgrounds with this brush.

The dark arts

To frame my subject, I like to let details and shadows merge with the dark background. This comes from a traditional painting technique known as chiaroscuro, where only the parts exposed to light are detailed, and shadows melt together. Because our eyes are drawn to detail and high contrast, this leads our eye to the important parts of the subject, such as her face.

Light and shade

Confidently defining and alternating between light and shadow shapes helps convey form and rhythm in your design. Because light travels in parallel lines, make sure that all the planes facing the same direction share the same greyscale values.

Procreate & Snapseed
BRUSH SKILLS IN PROCREATE 5

See how **Rafael Sarmento** makes full use of Procreate 5's new brush engine to create a scene bursting with narrative

Artist
PROFILE

Rafael Sarmento
LOCATION: Brazil

Rafa is an internationally published illustrator, with clients including Universal Pictures, Wizards of the Coast and Riot Games.
https://ifxm.ag/rafael-s

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 8 now!

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PROCREATE

CUSTOM BRUSHES: MAXU SKETCHY SARMENTO

Created for me by Max Ulichney, it emulates the Staedtler 8B pencil.

MAXU GRAIN CLOUD

Replaces the soft airbrushed look with a tasty grainy texture.

MAXU INCREDIBLY SMOOTH INKER

Has characteristics of pen and brush – ideal for gestural sketches.

With the release of its fifth version, Procreate places even more creative power in the hands of artists of all levels, from beginners to seasoned pros. Not only does it come with a range of new tools and a rebuilt engine that now runs faster than ever, there's also a revamped brush system: the Brush Studio. This feature offers a collection of redesigned and new tools for modifying or creating your own brushes, which gives the artist even greater control over their mark making.

If you're already familiar with my work, you'll know that I'm a huge fan of portrait art, which belong squarely in my comfort zone and is my sandbox for experimenting with new ideas. But I'm actually a huge fan of storytelling-driven imagery, too. The art of conveying a narrative within a single illustration is something that will never cease to fascinate me.

So for this workshop I'll create a fantasy-esque image that will serve as a testing ground for the brush experiments that we'll be doing, which actually fits pretty well with the way I visualise and execute my ideas. To be honest, since the entire process is totally intuition-based for me, I'll try not to fill the workshop with (too much) verbiage and general chit-chat. So, let's see where our illustration will take us. iPads at the ready… let's go!

Stroke properties

Spacing	11%
StreamLine	None
Jitter	7%
Fall off	None

1 Launch the Brush Studio
This is the interface of Brush Studio – you just need to click the brush you're using to open the configuration sliders, just like in the earlier versions of Procreate. Here, you'll also find a "canvas" where you can test your selected brush, with real-time updates on the brush stroke's structure. This is helpful if you're new to what each slider does, or just want to have a play around.

2 Letting ideas flow
My creative process works as a balancing act between order and chaos, where I usually "listen" to what the image asks me, and discover all the subsequent problems that I'll have to solve. When I say to people "follow the idea", I mean follow your gut feeling, and allow the lines and shapes to dictate the next steps in an intuitive yet thoughtful way. So the sketching part is when I start letting the intuition flow. ▶▶
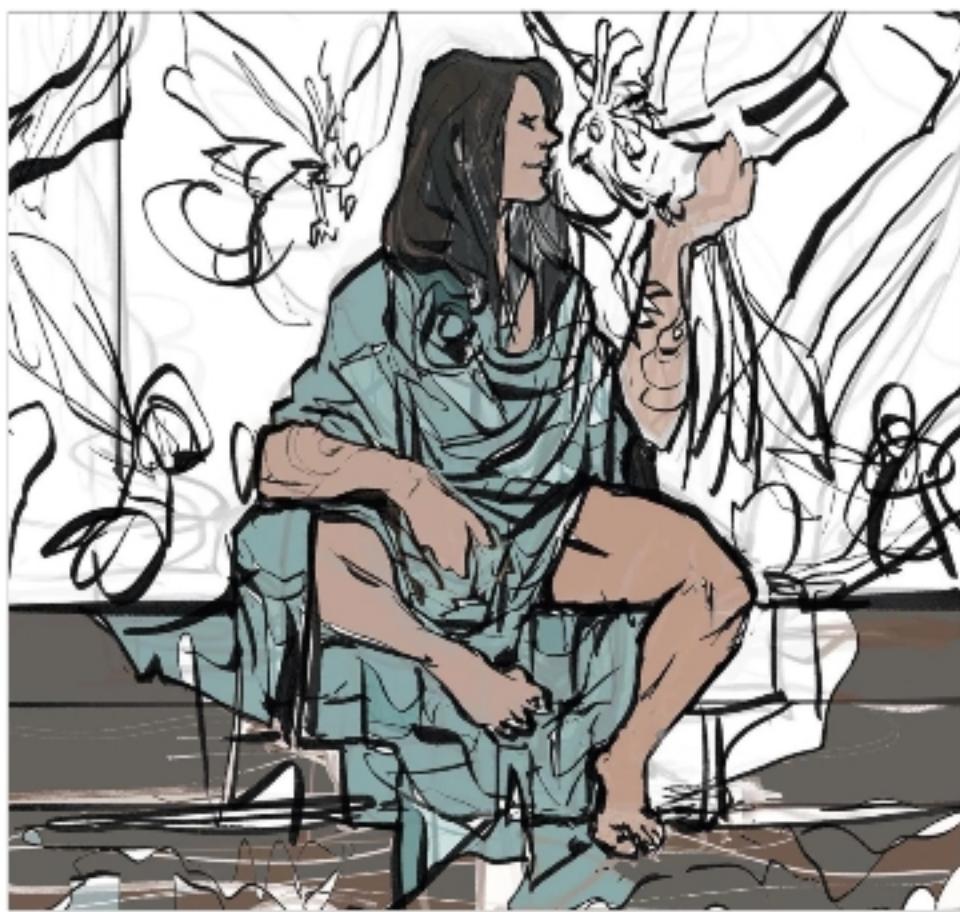
3 Lay down the foundation

I like to use ink brushes for my layouts and sketches, since they afford me a little more spontaneity during the gestural portion of the sketching. This is when I scribble away, searching for the right shapes and poses I'm looking for. The brush I'm using here is the Max Incredibly Smooth Inker, which you'll find as a free download with this issue's collection of resources.

4 Let's do some colouring

With the very loose first sketch laid down, it's time for putting some basic colours to work. Using the Recolor feature, I can instantly fill the areas I want to colour, always adjusting the threshold so that it doesn't leak (very much) over the gnarly lines. Sometimes colour leaks into other areas, which can lead to unexpected and fun results – and fun is what we're looking for here, right?
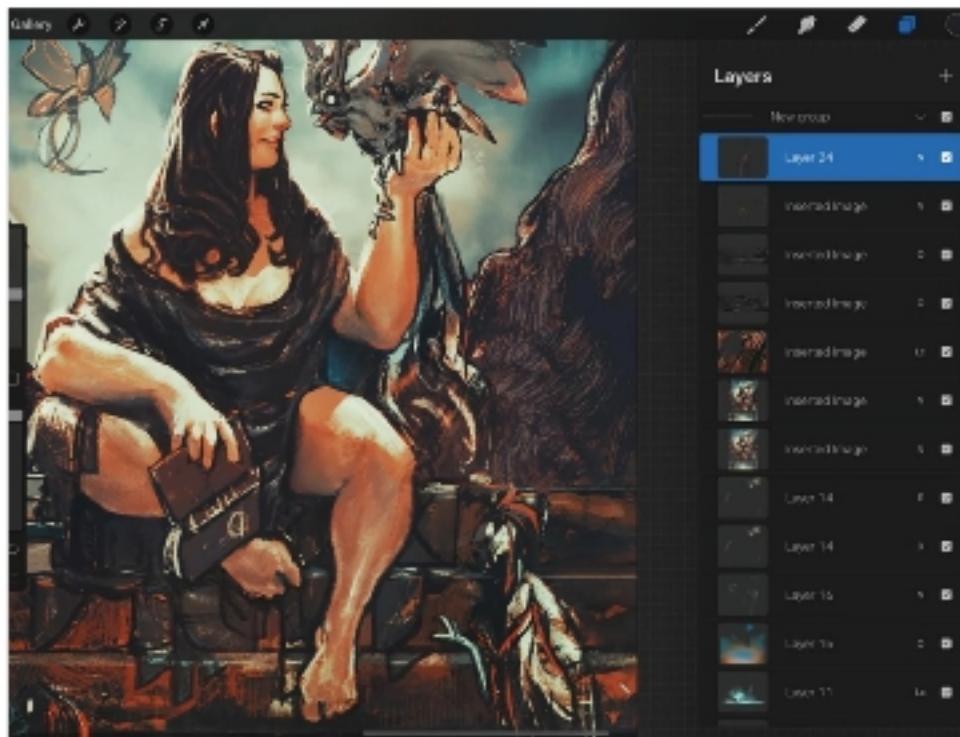
5 Shaping the shapes

Now that I have a basic composition to start working with, I grab a special brush: the Sarmento Sketchy. This was created for me by the illustration wizard and brushmancer Max Ulichney, the creator of the world-acclaimed MaxPacks brushes for Procreate. It has the "dent" I'm looking for to lay down the first coats of digital paint over the base colours from the previous step.

6 Checking the values

Here's where the fun begins. With all the elements (mostly) recognisable, it's time to start messing around with the composition again. We want the viewer to have a clear reading of the image, so I check and adjust the value range of the elements. This is key for ensuring clarity in the narrative of the composition.

7 Shortcut to adding textures

To achieve certain effects I like to use external photos and textures when I need to get things done faster. One of the best places for finding copyright-free images is Unsplash (www.unsplash.com). It's also a great source of inspiration. Because I have an idea of what I want the background to be like, I'll use an image created by Paweł Czerwiński, which I'll modify accordingly to fit the composition. ➤➤
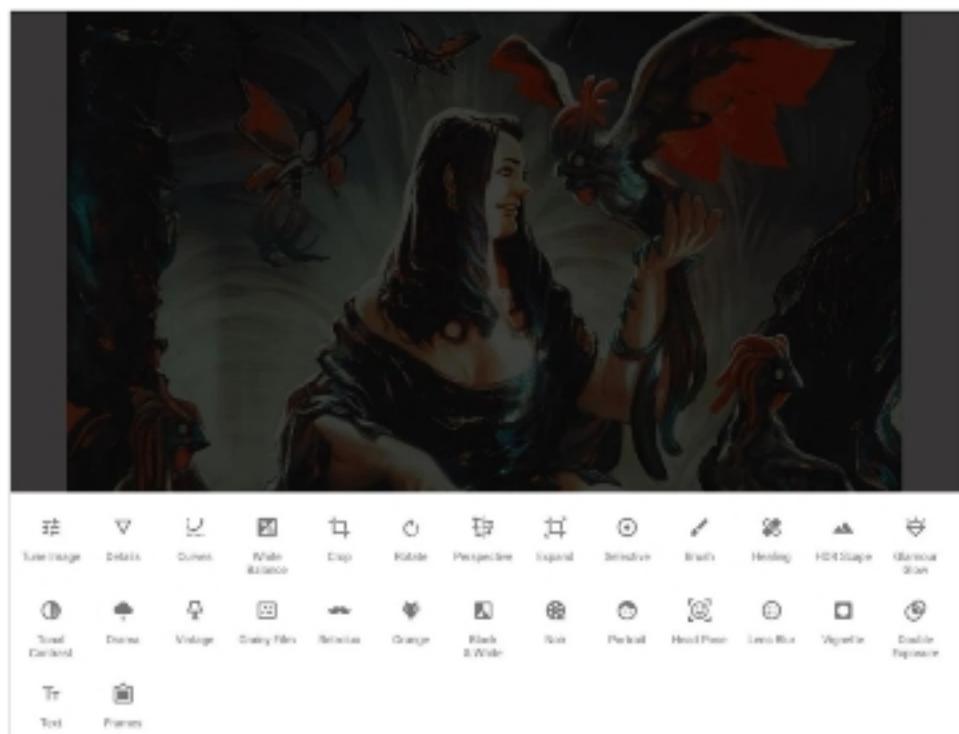
8 Setting the mood using Snapseed

Although Procreate offers some amazing colour editing tools, sometimes I need to quickly produce certain looks that I can test with my colour palettes, to hopefully develop the right atmosphere and feel in my painting. Here, I'm using Snapseed, a speedy photo-editing app. It's not a mainstay in my creative toolbox, but it's there when I need to make quick adjustments.
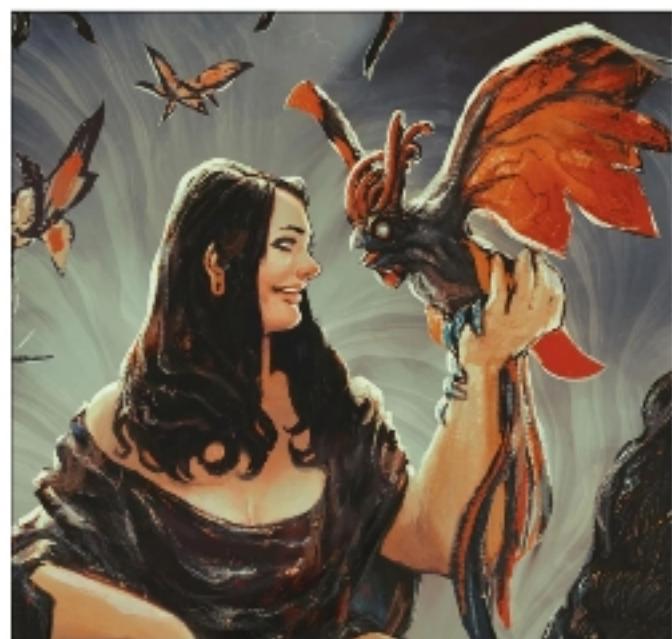
9 Experimenting with layer modes

Because Snapseed enables you to save both your chosen "looks" and the order of effects you used to achieve them, you can quickly change the overall mood. After trying some iterations of colours over the image I generated in Snapseed, using layers properties such as Soft Light, Exclusion and Darker Color, I start experimenting with Procreate's new built-in Salamanca and Styx brushes, adding textures and editing the artefacts to fit the context.
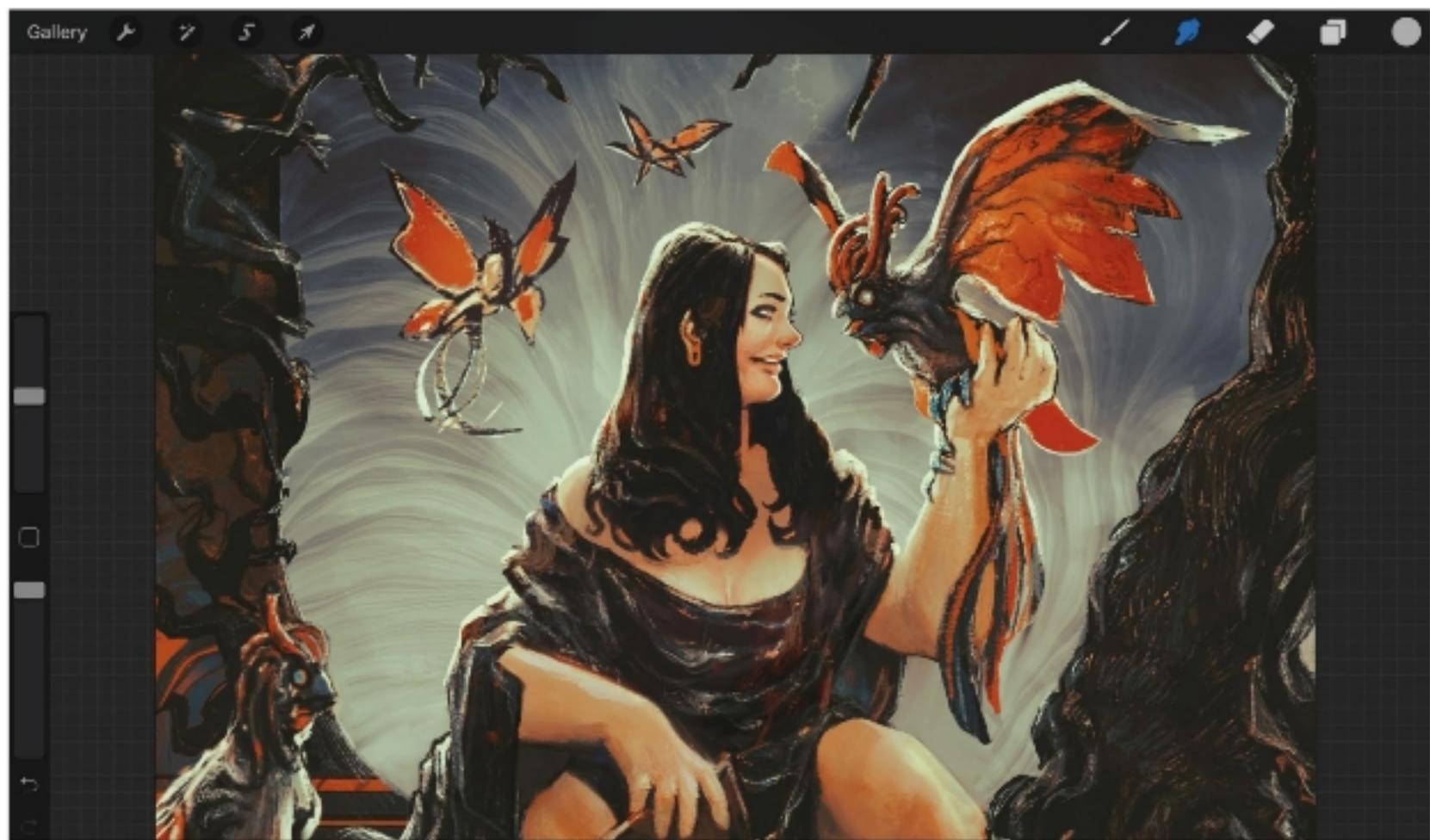
10 Rearranging elements in the composition

As I mentioned earlier, my painting process is largely guided by the problem-solving aspects that the image offers. I'm both the mark maker and editor, so here is when I begin to "destroy" and reconstruct certain parts, rearranging the visual context and editing the content. I want to create a better sense of balance in the composition, and push the illustration in the direction that I'm envisioning. I love doing this!

11 Boosting as sense of story

Now that everything is properly placed, I start rearranging objects to increase the hints of storytelling that I'm trying to convey. The new Splatter brush that comes with Procreate 5 is a great way of getting the water right, with the speckles and drips in the places exactly where I want them to be. Those creatures chilling on the water won't get wet by themselves!
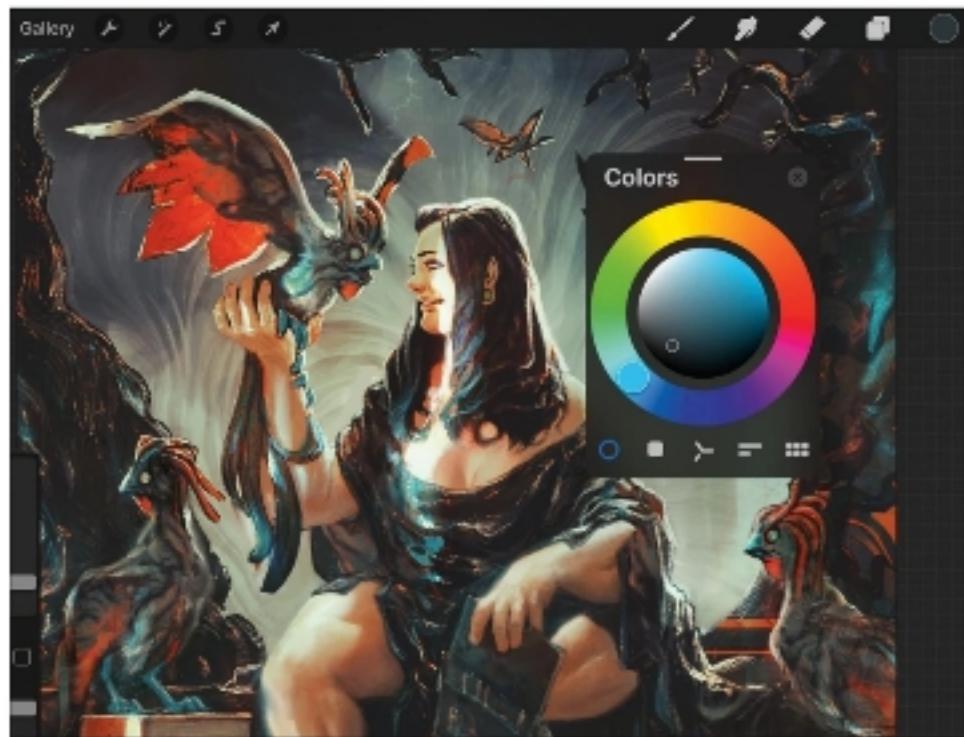
12 Bringing in a new light source

Here's a great example of how inspiration can hit you randomly. I thought the image was going in an interesting direction, but something was lacking. Then I suddenly came up with the idea of adding saturated light to the scene, which would be worth the effort of having to balance the composition again. I use my Sketchy Sarmento brush to give the light a bit more weight.
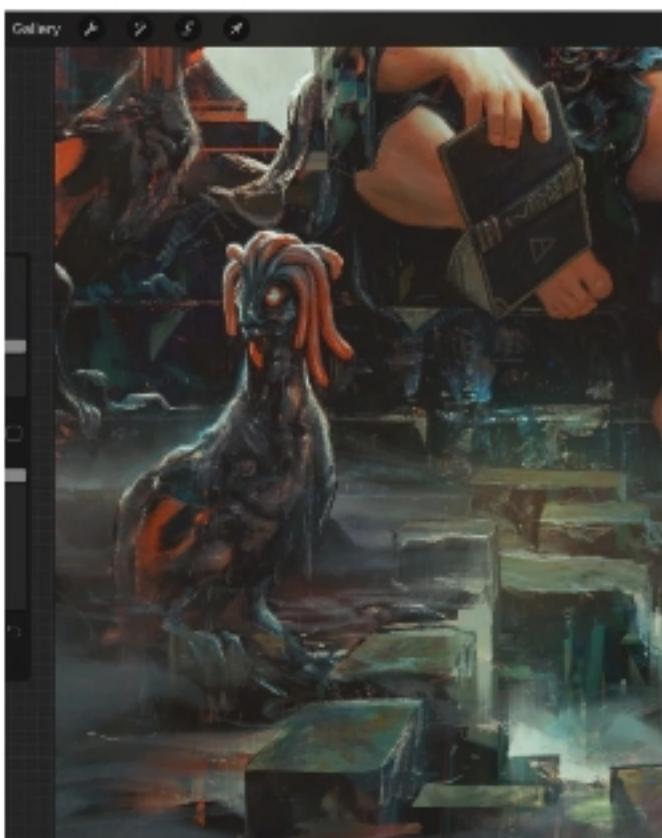
13 Refining the designs

Now I start polishing and adding specific details. Because I didn't design the creatures before beginning the painting, I start consolidating some of the overall ideas that will complement their designs. I avoid overworking them because this will draw some attention away from the central figure. Instead, I do just enough to help the viewer's eyes travel throughout the scene.

14 Wrapping things up

During this final stage I generally use some lightly textured brushes to add a little grain to certain areas, such as the Max Grain Cloud brush on an Overlay layer. Everything else from here is just fine-tuning, and minor colour and contrasts tweaks. All I want from this whole experience is that you take these tips and make them yours! Thanks for your company on this short journey – it was fun! ●

Core Skills: Part 2
EXPLORE FLAME PAINTER'S TOOLS

In this second instalment of the series, **Harvey Bunda** shows how to use the program's new tools including Symmetry, and its Photoshop plug-in

Artist PROFILE
Harvey Bunda
LOCATION: Philippines

Harvey is Gunship Revolution's creative director and co-founder. He's produced artworks for Marvel, Hasbro, Mattel, Lucasfilm and Wizards Of The Coast.
www.harveybunda.com

As well as helping to make your artwork pop with its extensive range of particle effects, the latest version of Flame Painter has several new features that will enable you to streamline your creative process and save time. Version 4 introduces a range of features that include the advanced Brush Creator, the Symmetry tool, a Photoshop plug-in and complete support for multi-touch gestures when using a pen display, such as one from Wacom's Cintiq line-up. Furthermore, artists can take advantage of the new Navigator panel, a range of new Filters, Selection and Canvas Size tools, and an Advanced Palette panel.

These additional features have been thoughtfully incorporated into the Flame Painter interface, which means navigating the program remains an intuitive process. In the same vein, switching between Flame Painter and Photoshop becomes a seamless operation.

I'll be giving a brief overview of all these additions in this month's instalment. I'll also be looking at the Symmetry Tool in a bit more detail. Once you get the hang of this tool, you'll be able to create a range of dazzling effects for your character and environment compositions. I'll also showcase how it's possible to customise some of the new tools using the Properties panel.

You'll spend most of your time in Flame Painter using the Brush tool. Her I've used it to create the purple flame effect.

Spend time playing with the Particle settings to create unique visual effects.

1 Investigate the packed Tools panel

The Tools panel lies at the heart of Flame Painter. Open it to access the Brush, Pen, Eraser, Fill, Pick Color, Edit Vector Layer and Symmetry tools. You can also set the Canvas size here, and choose the Selection, Transform, and Undo/Redo tools. ❯❯

Click here to select the Symmetry tool.

If you're using a Rotational Symmetry Lines greater than three for your symmetry, try to limit where you paint because it can easily end up looking like a nebulous white effect.
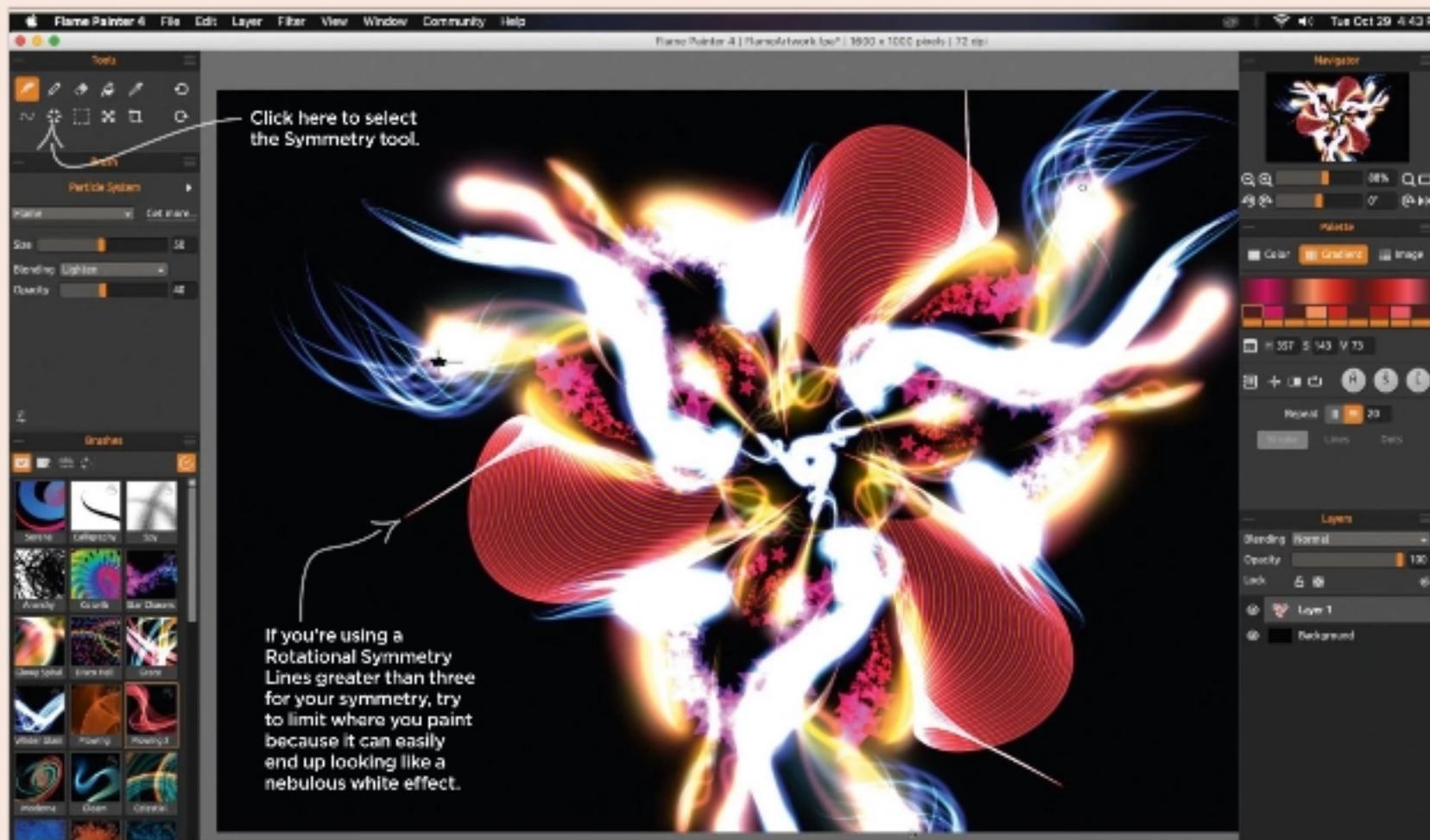
2 Painting with the Symmetry tool

The Symmetry tool makes it possible for you to paint symmetrically with the Brush tool. You can toggle the Symmetry tool on and off on its Properties panel, and set the number of Rotational Symmetry Lines from zero to eight. You can also toggle the Mirroring effect on or off.

Click here to access the Transform tool.

You can use your mouse, pen tablet or even your fingers to transform your particle effects. Use two fingers to simultaneously move, rotate and scale the layer or selected layers.

You can turn off the ability to use two fingers for canvas rotation in Preferences>Tablet> Tablet options. Note that you'll still be able to move or scale using two fingers.

3 Relocating and transforming your effects

Sometimes it's hard to paint your particle effects exactly where they need to be. In these instances I usually use the Move and Transform tool to place my effects in the right location on the canvas. You can also use this tool to rotate and transform your particle effects.

You can click the Get More link within the Brush Particle panel to access the online store, enabling you to purchase unique brushes.

Create your own brushes by changing and customising your selected brush's settings, then saving it. Choose 'Save as new brush preset' on the upper right tab on the Brush Creator panel.
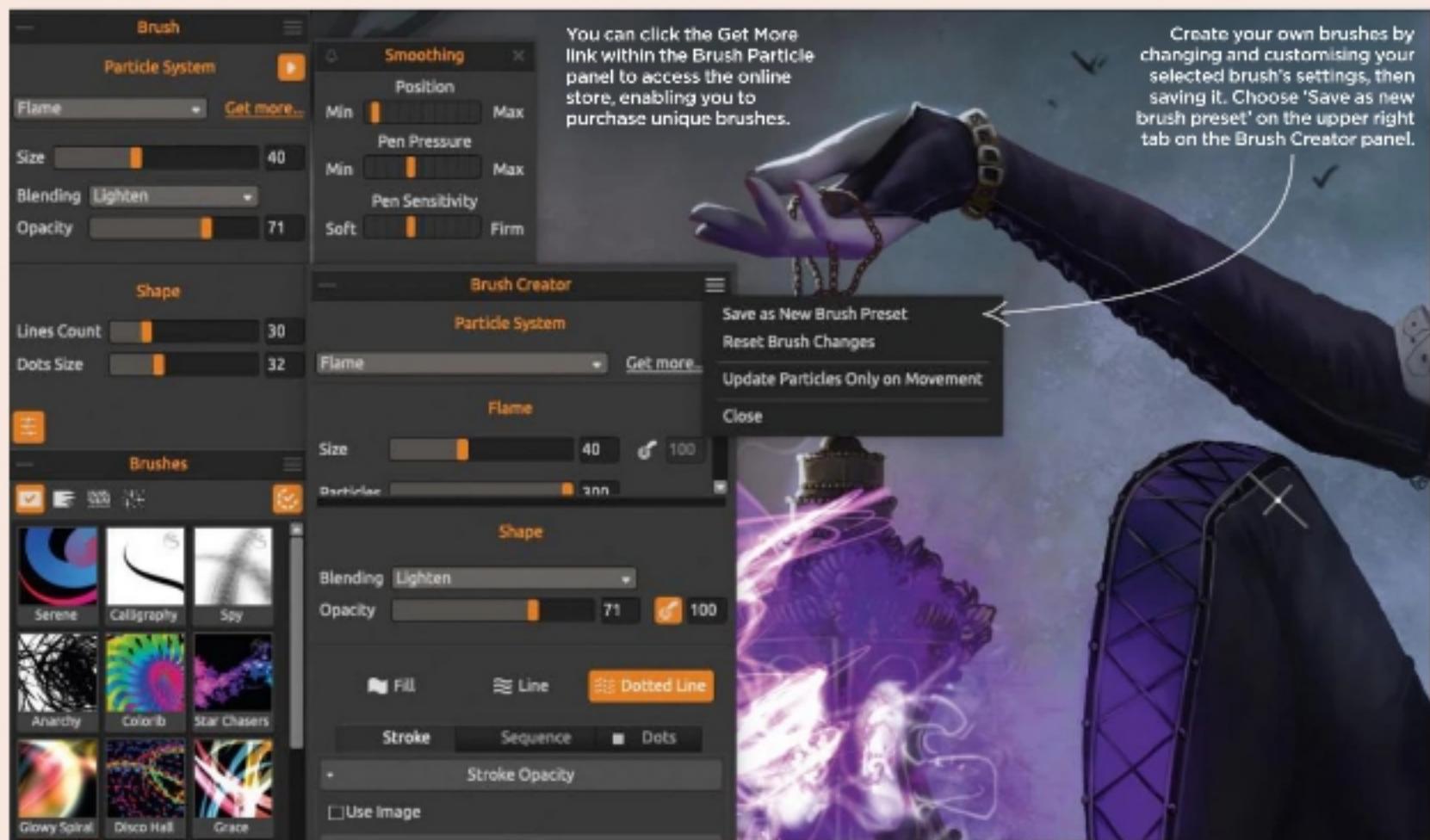
4 Getting to grips with the Brush Particle system

The Brush Particle system lies at the core of Flame Painter, and enables you to adjust all of the settings of your chosen brush, including its overall size and dots size. It also has its own blending options: you can access Normal, Lighten and Darken modes from this panel.

Launch both Photoshop and Flame Painter 4. Next, create a new document in Photoshop.

Still in Photoshop, click Window >Extensions>Flame Painter Connect. A Flame Painter Connect panel on the right side of the screen will appear.

Click the PS icon that's under the Layer panel to quickly switch your canvas between Flame Painter and Photoshop.
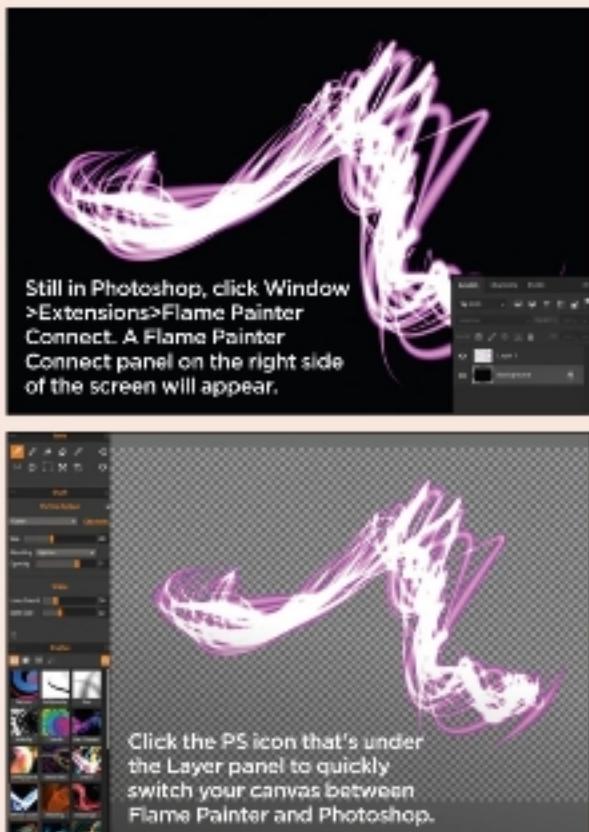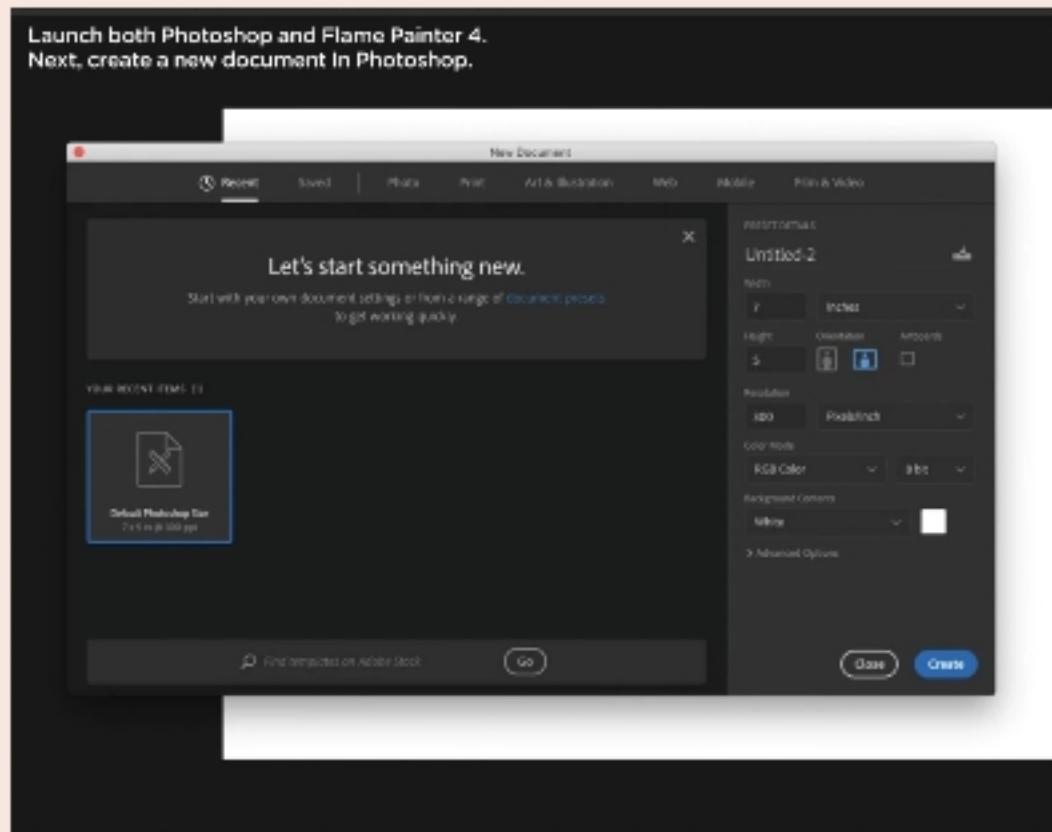
5 Launch Flame Painter Connect to work with Photoshop

Flame Painter Connect is a plug-in for Photoshop. It's a communication channel between Photoshop CC and Flame Painter 4 for transferring layers between the two programs. Download and install Flame Painter Connect from the registration email you receive once you've bought Flame Painter, or by accessing your Flame Painter Community account. ●

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

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

5 PRODUCTS ON TEST
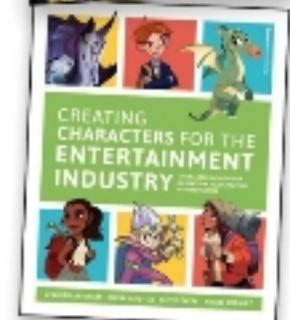
HARDWARE

92 Yoga A940
We take a look at Lenovo's all-in-one PC, which is aimed at artists who want to buy a complete workstation on a budget.

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When you need to create the image that sums up your idea, concept artist Charles Lin shows you how it's done.

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Discover how the designs of Borderlands were given an upgrade for its latest entry.

97 Painting Portraits in Acrylics
Learn the basics of portraiture with this guide by artist Hashim Akib.

97 Creating Characters for the Entertainment Industry
Pros reveal how to develop characters for animation, illustration and video games.

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

Artwork by Mike McCain

With its vibrant 4K 27-inch screen, Lenovo's Yoga A940 gives you plenty of workspace to draw on.

Yoga A940

PC ONLY

PACKAGE DEAL We take a look at Lenovo's all-in-one PC, which is aimed at artists who want to buy a complete workstation on a budget

Price £1,700 (Intel Core i5 model); £1,785 (Intel Core i7 model) **Company** Lenovo **Web** www.lenovo.com

Artists usually have two main choices when buying an all-in-one computer. If they're Apple fans, than the iMac (or iMac Pro) is the obvious choice, while Windows users (who have a few more options) usually go for Microsoft's Surface Studio 2.

The Lenovo Yoga A940 is pitched as an alternative to both, and while it does a few things the same as its main rivals, there are some important differences. The biggest differentiator of the Yoga A940 is price. The base Intel Core i5 model costs £1,700, while the Core i7 version comes in at £1,785. That's a fair bit cheaper than the Surface Studio 2, which starts at £3,194, and the iMac Pro, which begins at £4,899. However, Apple's latest 27-inch iMac is priced about the same: £1,749.

The relatively low price of the Lenovo Yoga A940 compared to most of its competitors should make it a compelling option if you're after a budget all-in-one PC. Of course, the Lenovo Yoga A940 isn't exactly cheap, but it offers some good value for money – on paper at least.

The Yoga A940 has a built-in wireless charging mat, although it won't charge the stylus or mouse, which both require batteries.


One of the reasons why the iMac Pro and Surface Studio 2 are so expensive, is that Apple and Microsoft have put some of the latest hardware in their devices. Meanwhile, Lenovo has kept costs down by using older, slightly less-powerful components in the Yoga A940. That's not to say they make the A940 a poor performer. For a lot of day-to-day tasks, it does a fine job of keeping up. But compromises have been made that keep it from being a real powerhouse of a workstation.

HARDWARE LIMITATIONS

Take the processor. The Intel Core i7-8700 was launched at the end of 2017. In terms of CPUs, that makes it pretty long in the tooth. Yet while the processor is old, but still decent, the GPU of the Lenovo Yoga A940 is more
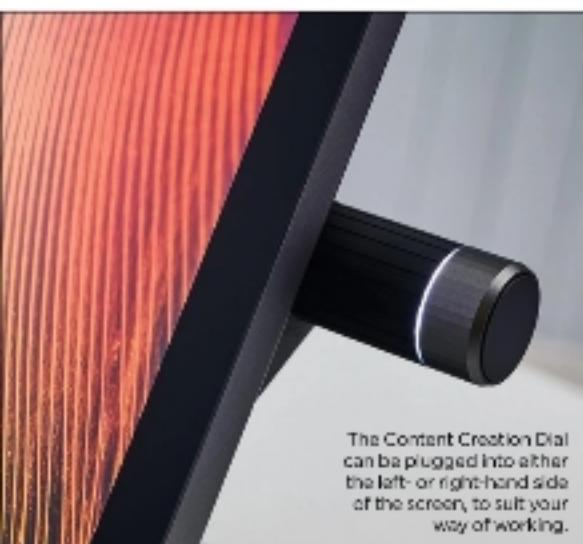
The Content Creation Dial can be plugged into either the left- or right-hand side of the screen, to suit your way of working.

The wireless keyboard and mouse complement the stylus, and make for an uncluttered working environment.

By positioning the screen as low as it can go, you can comfortably draw on it.

> 66 **The Yoga A940's dual-hinge design makes it easy to position the display so that it can be used as a digital canvas** 99

can then use this dial for various tasks, such as scrolling through pages or zooming in and out. It supports a number of creative tools including Photoshop, and you can set it up to work with other programs as well.

ADAPTABLE TOUCHSCREEN

Perhaps the best aspect of the display from a digital creative's point of view, is that it's a touchscreen, and a digital stylus is included. The screen can be angled and tilted up to 25 degrees, and its dual-hinge design makes it easy to position the display so that it can be used as a digital canvas. This makes it a much more useful tool than the iMac, for example, which doesn't come with a touchscreen.

Digital art looks particularly impressive on the Lenovo Yoga A940's excellent display, and the touchscreen is fast and responsive, despite the underpowered GPU. The included stylus is of decent quality. It's battery-powered, with a button that can be used to switch drawing tools when used, and with a good level of sensitivity. The touchscreen also has a decent palm rejection feature, so even if you accidentally rest your wrist or palm on the screen as you draw, it shouldn't cause issues.

Lenovo has made an excellent all-in-one PC that comes with some great features for artists. If you've been after a stylish all-in-one for your creative work, but have baulked at the high price of the iMac Pro or Surface Studio, then this is a fantastic, cheaper alternative. However, if you want an absolute powerhouse of a workstation that can handle intensive workloads, then stumping up more for an all-in-one device with newer components will pay off in the long run.

concerning for creatives who do a lot of graphic work. That's because it comes with the AMD Radeon RX 560X, a mid-range graphics card that's aimed at consumers rather than professionals. If you're looking for an all-in-one workstation for doing intense graphical tasks, such as 3D rendering or high-resolution video editing, then the Radeon RX 560X just won't cut it.

What's perhaps most disappointing is that while the GPU isn't great, the Lenovo Yoga A940 comes with a fantastic 27-inch 4K screen. It features 100 per cent Adobe RGB support and

Dolby Vision – with the former especially important for artists who need accurate colours. Why is this disappointing? Because, while the screen is so good, it feels like a missed opportunity to not back it up with a powerful graphics card. When working at 4K resolutions, the AMD Radeon RX 560X will struggle due to its limited memory, for example.

One neat design touch is that on either side of the screen is a USB port (covered by a magnetic cover). You can plug in Lenovo's Content Creation Dial, which is included in the set. You

DETAILS

Features
- Intel Core i5 or i7 CPU
- Windows 10 Home
- 27-inch touchscreen
- 3,840x2,160 resolution
- 16GB RAM
- 1TB hard drive
- 256 SSD
- AMD RX 560 4GB graphics card
- 3 x USB 3.0, 1 x USB 3.1, Thunderbolt, HDMI
- 3-in-1 card reader
- 1080p webcam

Rating
★★★★☆

Charles Lin's process starts with a set of test compositions, each showing the environment from a different angle.

Charles shows how simple steps can take you all the way to a keyframe that sums up the fantasy world you've created.
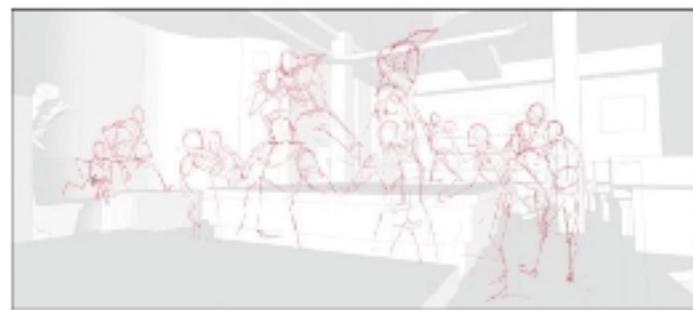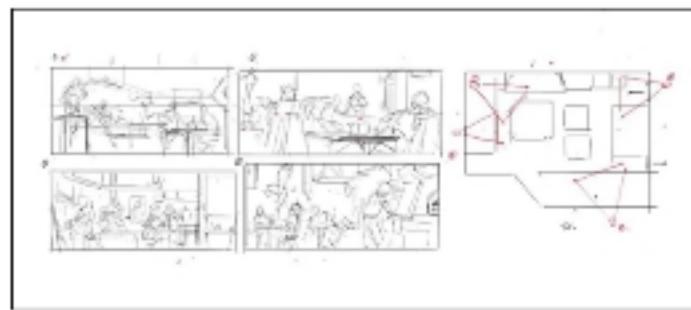
With a composition chosen, Charles works up each figure, taking care to make each one look and act in a distinctive way.

The digital inking stage sees Charles finesse the detail while using line weight to separate out different planes.

Designing Keyframes Step by Step

DONE IN ONE When you need to create the image that sums up your idea, concept artist Charles Lin shows you how it's done

Publisher Foundation Art Group **Price** $10 **Format** Download **Web** www.foundationartgroup.com

Keyframes in games or film concept art, which is what Charles Lin's video is about, differ from animation keyframes. Here, a keyframe is an image that sells the concept, communicating not just the setting but a sense of the characters and storyline, too.

Charles takes you through the process of conceiving and drawing a keyframe. His image is based on an environment he made in a previous tutorial, but you don't need to have watched that to follow this. With a bar room brawl as his idea, he starts with a few different compositions, then selects one and works it up – which is where this video really takes off.

Charles shows how you can develop your bare-bones idea into a fully realised image. He riffs on the idea of a bar fight to suggest what every character in the scene is thinking and

doing. Participants and onlookers alike each have a motivation, and Charles draws them accordingly. If you're new to character design or your multi-character scenes tend to feel a bit dull, you'll find Charles' insight invaluable.

There's plenty of technique advice as well, including a drop-dead simple way to create a composition that's guaranteed to work, and how to use overlapping elements to establish depth. Line-work artists will also appreciate the substantial focus on drawing in line and using different weights to separate focal planes.

Charles is talking predominantly to beginners and students here, but his advice is so well-rounded and so clear that it's a useful primer regardless of your experience. Every idea is stripped down to its basics so that it feels simple. As Charles says, creating a good keyframe is about doing the basics really well.

DETAILS

Topics covered
- Composition choice
- Character design basics
- Avoiding tangents
- Parallax principles
- Digital inking
- Conveying depth with line weight
- Value washes

Length
137 minutes

Rating
★★★★★

ARTIST PROFILE
CHARLES LIN

Based in Melbourne, Australia, Charles is a freelance concept artist with a background in industrial design. He is also active in education, passing on his knowledge to students. Recent clients include BBH Singapore, Film Victoria and The Hour Glass. Between 2016 and 2018, Charles was a senior lecturer at FZD School of Design, covering foundational concept art skills for entertainment design, while also creating costume, environment and prop concepts.

www.charleslin.art

The cybernetically enhanced Troy and his twin psychic sister Tyreen are the main antagonists from the game.

The grim-looking Holy Broadcast Center lies within one of Pandora's many shantytowns.

The Art of Borderlands 3

LOOT BOOK Return to the dangerous world of Pandora with this look at how the designs of Borderlands were given an upgrade for its latest entry

Author Chris Allcock **Publisher** Titan Books **Price** www.titanbooks.com **Web** £35 **Available** Now

The road to Borderlands 3 was littered with questions. What could the creative team do that they haven't done before? What was the best the game could be? As the game's art director, Scott Kester, reveals in his introduction, "Whatever we did next, it was obvious that it couldn't just be 'more Borderlands.'"

The answer was to push everything further. And this included the cell-shaded graphics that had defined the previous instalments. Everything had to be rebuilt or redesigned from scratch because the creative team moved on to the newer Unreal 4 engine.

In The Art of Borderlands 3 we get to see how these elements developed from rough sketches all the way through to the game's polished assets. Broken down into five main chapters, the book looks at characters,

environments, creatures and enemies, weapons and vehicles. Artists who were involved with the creation of each section introduce the chapters, but the bulk of the pages are dedicated to dozens of creative iterations.

And while there's plenty here to amaze and delight players familiar with the earlier games in the series, artists who haven't picked up a Borderlands release will be able to appreciate the ideation on display too. Unsurprisingly,

> ❝ The character design chapter is where the genius of the creative team shines ❞

The concept artists grouped weapons into distinctive families that shared forms and deadly functions.

given that Borderlands is a human-focused series, the character design chapter is where the genius of the creative team shines. We track the development of Vault Hunters and NPCs through multiple drafts, and even the designs of old favourites like Siren Lilith are pushed in some unconventional directions.

The environments in Borderlands 3 also break new ground as the game moves beyond Pandora and its moon, Elpis. In terms of production this was an exciting challenge, and as readers we're treated to a detailed look at new worlds. This includes a look at roaming landscapes, epic civilisations, and the

The playable character Moze and her armoured mech went through several design interations.

signage and trinkets that go into making these cosmic worlds.

No book about Borderlands would be complete without a look at its weaponry, and this one doesn't disappoint. Boasting one billion unique weapons, the Borderlands 3 team had a tough job creating firearm families that looked and behaved in their own way. Even from a quick glance, you can see how they fit into their own groups.

We would have welcomed added insights from the artists behind Borderlands 3. Comprehensive as this book is, it feels like it's just scratching the surface. But maybe the mark of a good art book is one that leaves you wanting more.

RATING ★★★★☆

Painting Portraits in Acrylics

FACE FACTS Learn the basics of portraiture and how to unleash your own painting techniques with this guide by artist Hashim Akib

Author Hashim Akib **Publisher** Search Press **Price** £15 **Web** www.searchpress.com **Available** Now

Rather than taking a formal learning approach in his book, artist and author Hashim Akib explains useful portrait painting concepts while also encouraging you to explore your own style.

It opens with an introduction to tools and materials, before setting aside chapters to compositional exercises, colour theory and detailed painting tutorials. So far, so familiar.

Working from one reference photo, Hashim Akib explains how he paints skin tones and uses just a few extra brush marks to describe the face.

But this book's selling point is that it knows it's a jumping-off point for further experimentation.

Hobbyists will benefit from the advice on paint application and colour mixing, while experienced artists will appreciate the technical know-how on display in the step-by-step guides. The final chapters show you how to push what you've learnt even further with lessons on texture, profiles and unusual expressions.

As Hashim says in his introduction, photography has had a huge impact on portraiture. With this in mind, his guide is a valuable exploration of how contemporary portraiture can still be relevant today, and what you need to consider if you want to create engaging paintings with personality.

RATING ★★★★☆

For this portrait piece, Hashim uses earthy and dark neutrals, which frame the warmer colours.

Creating Characters for the Entertainment Industry

CHARACTER CHORES Professional artists reveal how to develop original character designs for animation, illustration and video games

Editor Jenny Fox-Proverbs **Publisher** 3dtotal Publishing **Price** £30 **Web** www.3dtotal.com **Available** Now

Market forces have their say on a character design just as much as art direction. This guide looks at how they impact animation, illustration and video games differently, and what artists should keep in mind.

Beginning with an introduction that looks at how to interpret a brief for
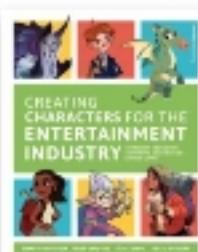
Kenneth Anderson discusses why it's important to create a biography to inform your character designs.

these mediums, as well as an outline of how the creative pipeline works, readers gain practical insight of what to expect if they're hoping to break into the character design industry.

However, the bulk of the book is set aside to tutorials. They're a fascinating chance to look at what goes into designing the same character for different platforms and how these subtle changes help them to achieve unique goals. And as well as being useful artistically, these tutorials elegantly show how to tackle the various feedback hurdles you're likely to encounter when working as a pro.

Once you've digested these chapters you can put everything you've learnt into action with a batch
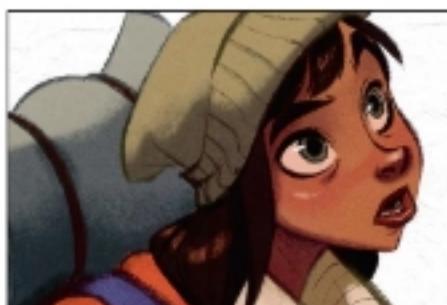
Detail of Cécile Carre's take on the adventurer, created for a hypothetical animation project.

of blank bonus briefs. Just like the rest of the book, these are a balance of business needs and creativity, and are the perfect way to round off this novel approach to an evolving topic.

RATING ★★★★★

Workshops assets are available...
If you see the video workshop badge then you can watch the artist in action. Turn to page 8 to see how you can get hold of the video.

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX

Traditional Artist

Inspiration and advice from the best pro artists

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FXPosé

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS

Sam Mann

LOCATION: Canada **MEDIA:** Mechanical pencils, alcohol-based markers, acrylic paint markers, watercolour, inks **WEB:** www.instagram.com/syrya

"Watching fantasy movies with my family as a kid helped shape my taste in art," says Sam, who's currently in her last year of animation school.

1 LYDIA
"This is a character from a project made using alcohol markers. The earthy palette emphasises the cool hue in her eyes and shirt."

2 REVERENT
"I wanted to push the sharp contrast between the deep black ink and the playful pastels while displaying her elegance."
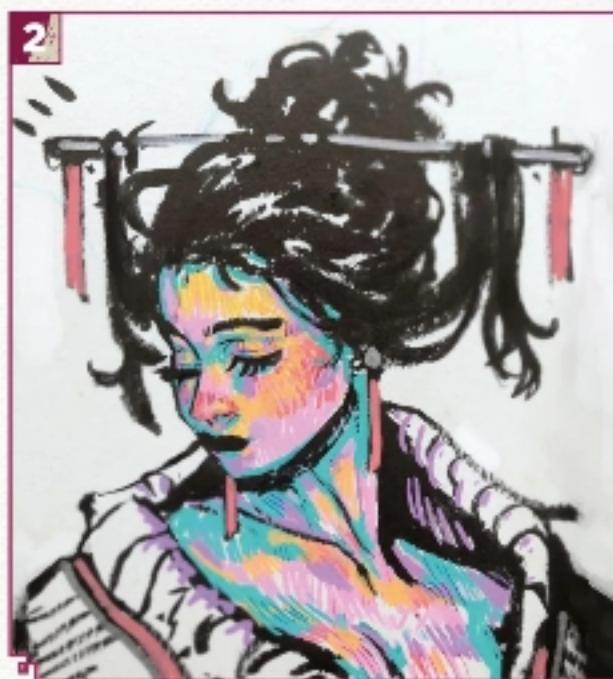
3 SOLEMN WISP
"When I was applying the first wash on to this sombre ghostly figure, I was able to push the pigment from the hatched colour pencil sketch to add another level of texture and depth."

4 GALE
"Hatched planes on the face and neck give the figure 3D form. I sketch and hatch with one colour, the use a new colour to suggest shadow."
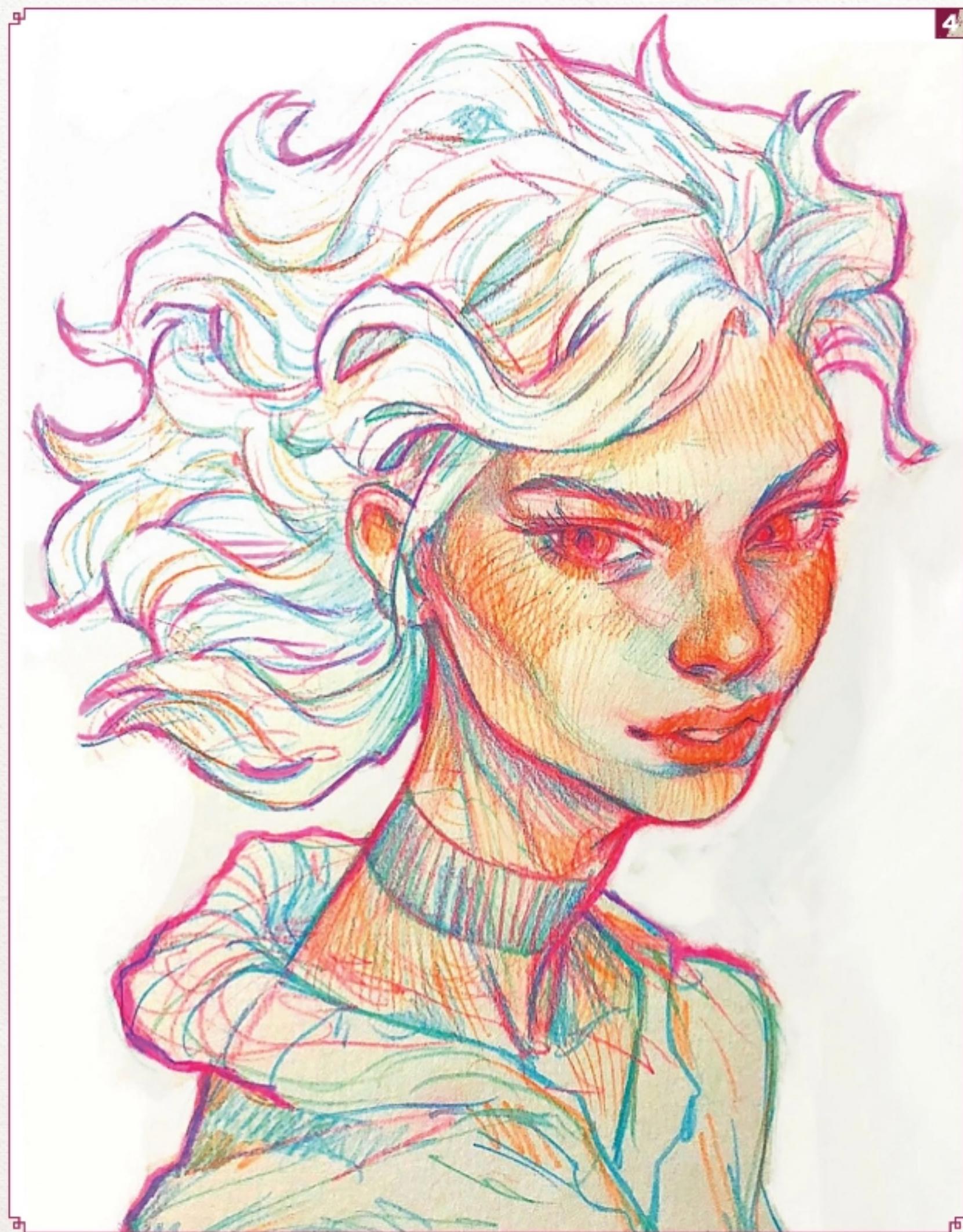
Laura Aldofredi

LOCATION: The Netherlands **MEDIA:** Watercolours **WEB:** www.lauraaldofredi.com

"Art and its power of communication have always fascinated me," says illustrator and animator Laura. "My wish is to keep making beautiful visual solutions."

1 INSIDE OUT

"Concept illustration visualising the Delphic oracle motto: 'Know thyself'. The stars refer to coordinates that help find the right path in the exploration of the self."

2 MASHA AND BEAR

"My illustration for the Russian fairy tale Masha and the Bear, representing the moment when the Bear prepares to enter the woods."

3 TEA PARTY
"Another artwork from my Masha and Bear series, showing an example of their daily life. I took inspiration from illustrations of Victorian tea parties."

VIDEO WORKSHOP
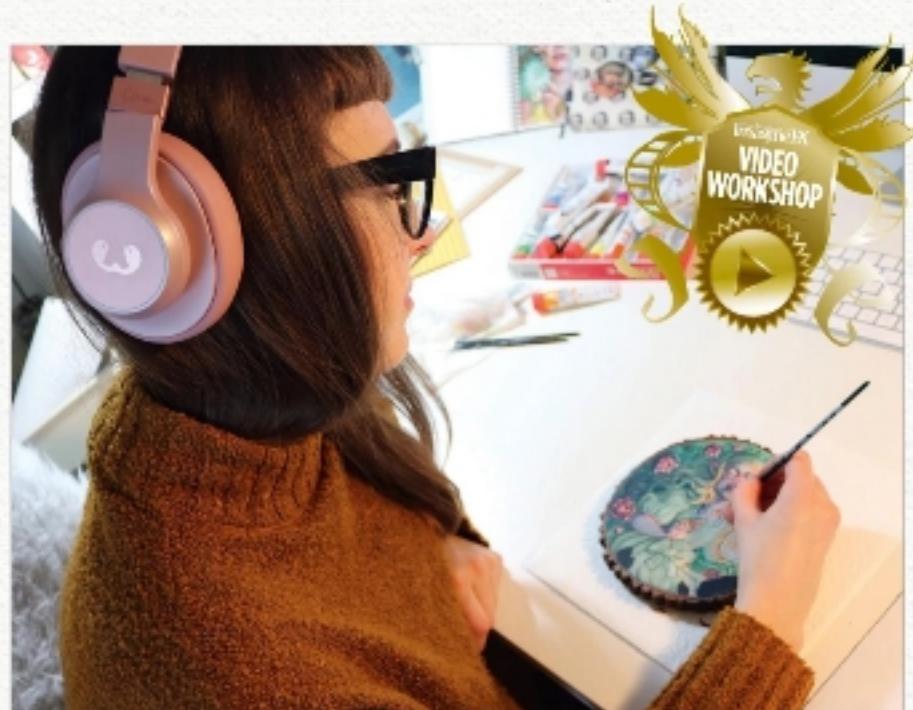
Gouache

CREATE A UNIQUE GOUACHE ARTWORK

See how LIESBETH TATJANA transfers her carefully planned character concept to a wooden surface using digital and traditional tools

When I'm not busy working in my home studio in the Dutch city of Rotterdam, I like to take inspiration from my many fantasy-related hobbies. I love reading fantasy novels by authors such as Robin Hobb and JRR Tolkien, or preparing for my Dungeons & Dragons games that I play with friends. I enjoy video games, too – anything from the Final Fantasy or The Legend of Zelda series.

Although most people know me for my traditional artwork, I actually started out as a digital artist. When I was 13 I discovered the art community on DeviantArt and begged my parents to buy me my first tablet. I taught myself how to use Photoshop and spent all of my free time designing my own characters and building fantasy worlds.

MATERIALS

PAINT
- Holbein Acryla gouache
- Generic gesso
- Amsterdam acrylics
- Liquitex acrylic
- Round slice of treated wood

TOOLS
- Da Vinci Nova brushes
- Lukas matte finishing spray
- Photoshop
- Bamboo tablet
- HP ENVY printer

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

It wasn't until I entered art education that I fell in love with traditional mediums and I haven't looked back since. Recently, I've discovered gouache and consider it my dream medium.

I usually work on round slices of wood as a canvas. I started painting on these because I really appreciate the natural, "hand-made" looking aesthetic. Every slice of wood I paint on becomes a one of a kind: a tangible work of art that you can hold in your hand.

However, still being spoiled by the convenience that digital art programs offer, I still like to use them to my advantage. In traditional art there's no Undo button or a Hue/Saturation slider, so it's important to make most of your creative choices before you even pick up a brush. After all, there isn't much you can do when you suddenly realise halfway through a painting that certain colours aren't working, other than redoing many hours of your hard work! Planning ahead will save you a lot of time and enable you to focus on the fun part of the creative process: the rendering.

In this workshop I'll be showing you how I plan out a painting from start to finish. I'll cover how I do thumbnail sketches, how to use digital tools if/when you need them, choosing the colours, how to transfer the drawing on to the primed canvas and taking you through how I "sculpt" everything into the final product.

Liesbeth is a freelance fantasy artist and character designer based in Rotterdam, The Netherlands. Art has always been a part of her life, and she loves creating her own stories and characters. You can discover more of her art at www.instagram.com/liesbethtatjana.

1 Sketching thumbnails

I always start with rough thumbnail sketches of my idea. Because my canvas is a round slice of wood, I love to make the composition flow with the roundness of the canvas and I do my best to capture that movement. I always sketch a few different options, but this time I chose the first one.

2 Prepping the slice of wood

The wood that I work on is treated and lacquered. This isn't ideal for painting on, so I prime it with two or three layers of Gesso to create a decent base. It helps to create texture and ensures that the paint adheres to the canvas. Two or three layers should be enough.

3 Sketch the final composition

I use my chosen thumbnail sketch to render out a rough drawing. I trace the slice of wood directly on the paper to get the shape and size right. During this drawing stage I make the final decisions about the composition and proportions. I don't render details out too much because I'll end up tracing it again later.

4 Choose your colour palette

Photoshop helps me to choose my colour palette for the painting. I first use some random colours that I put on different layers so that I can slide the Hue/Saturation individually until I find the palette that I want. You can also experiment with the lighting on a separate layer.

5 Transfer the drawing to the canvas

Next, I photocopy the drawing in my sketchbook. I made the drawing the same size as the slice of wood, so I simply place my sketchbook on the scanner and press Copy – no size adjustment necessary.
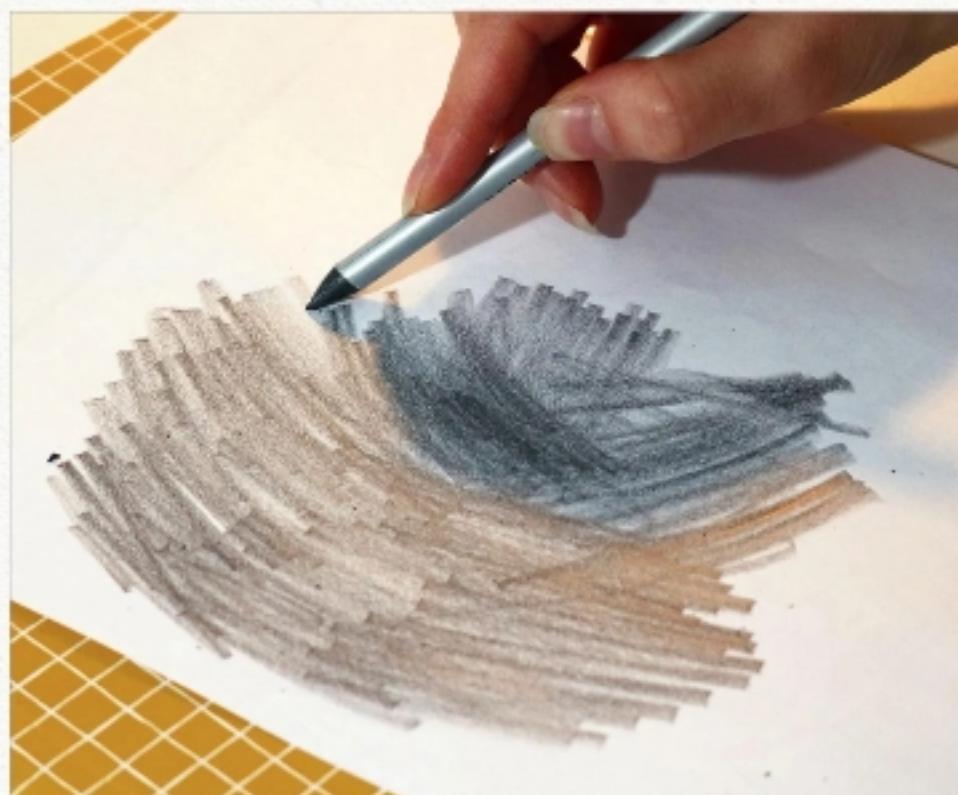
6 Reverse tracing

I flip the photocopy over and use a graphite watercolour pencil to cover the paper with the pigment. I use graphite because it doesn't smudge too much. I cut it to size, secure it with tape and apply pressure with an ink pen to trace the drawing.

7 Define the final lines

Because the reverse trace is pretty light, I go in for one last time with a pencil to define the lines using a mechanical pencil. It doesn't need to be too neat because I'll be painting over it and referencing the original drawing during the painting process.
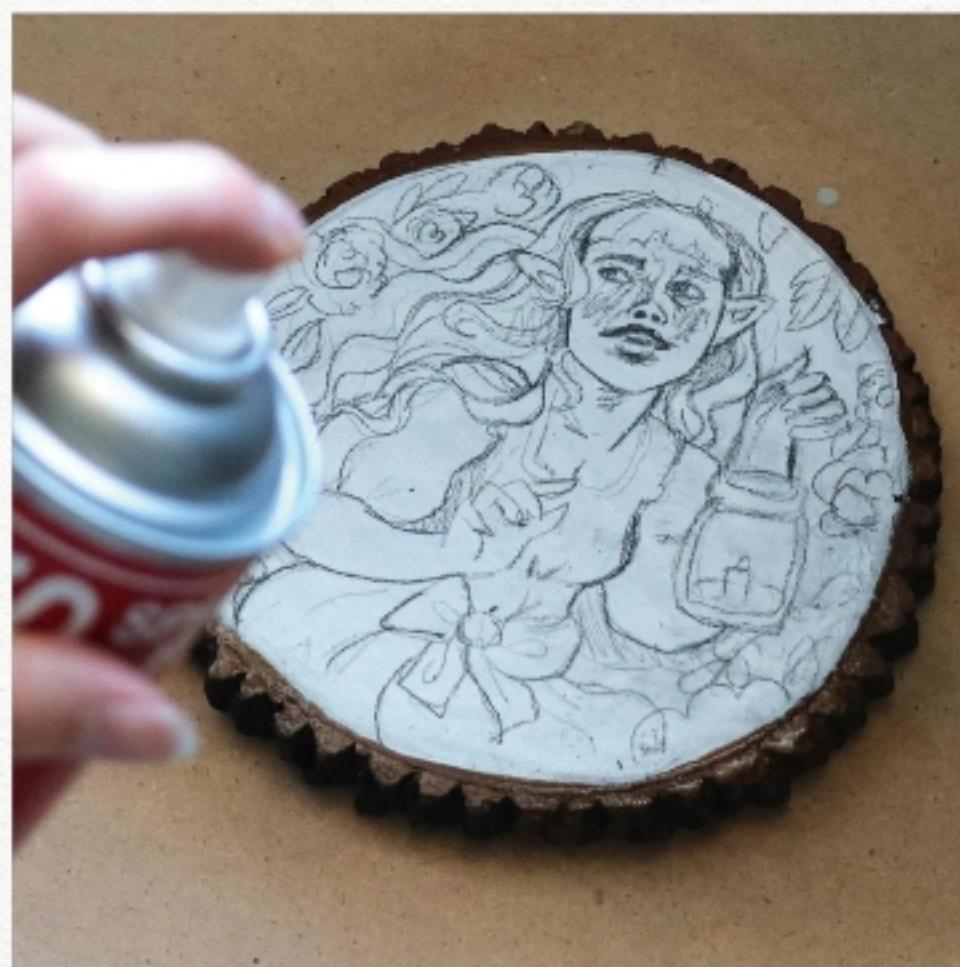
8 Spray with finishing spray

The pencil lines will smudge if I just went in with paint, so I use a matte finishing spray to seal the drawing. I usually do one later and make sure to open a window or do it outside! One layer should be enough to protect the drawing. ➤➤

9 Apply transparent acrylic colours
I begin with a layer of acrylic, which is a lot more forgiving than gouache when you want to work in a transparent layer. At this stage I still want to see the drawing underneath to help me as I place my chosen colours on the wood canvas.

10 Colour blocking with gouache
Once the first transparent layer is on, I move on to gouache. I block in the basic colours, keeping my chosen colour palette in mind. I'm not being particularly neat at this stage, so the artwork can start to look messy! The gouache is opaque, and things might move around a bit.

11 Define the line-work
I love coloured line-work, so I keep defining the lines while painting. I match the lines with the surrounding area and make it part of the lighting story. Keeping the line-work on show during the painting process prevents me from straying too far from the drawing's original shapes.

12 Rendering the composition

Now I just chip away at the painting for a while. I block in the colours while referring to my chosen colour palette. I also look up references for the flowers, the pose, the hands and the dress, studying their shapes and how these objects react to light.
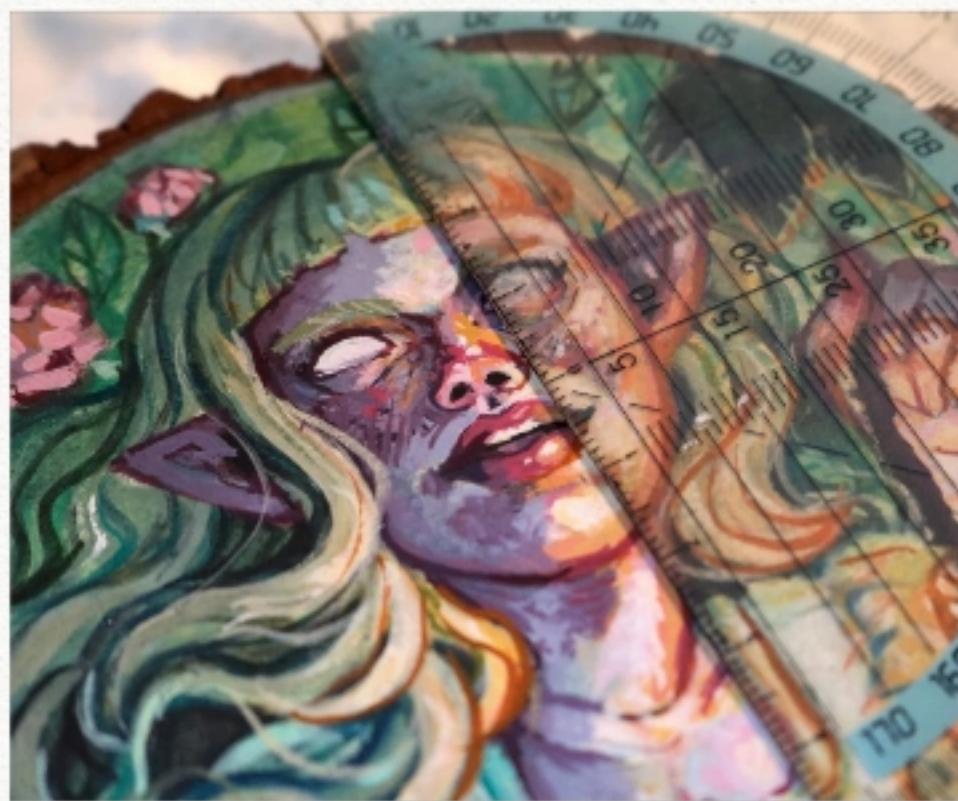
13 Checking the proportions

When rendering, I sometimes lose focus and things get moved around a bit. The face is the centre of the painting so it needs to be right. I check the facial proportions and notice that the ears are lopsided. A quick repaint fixes this.
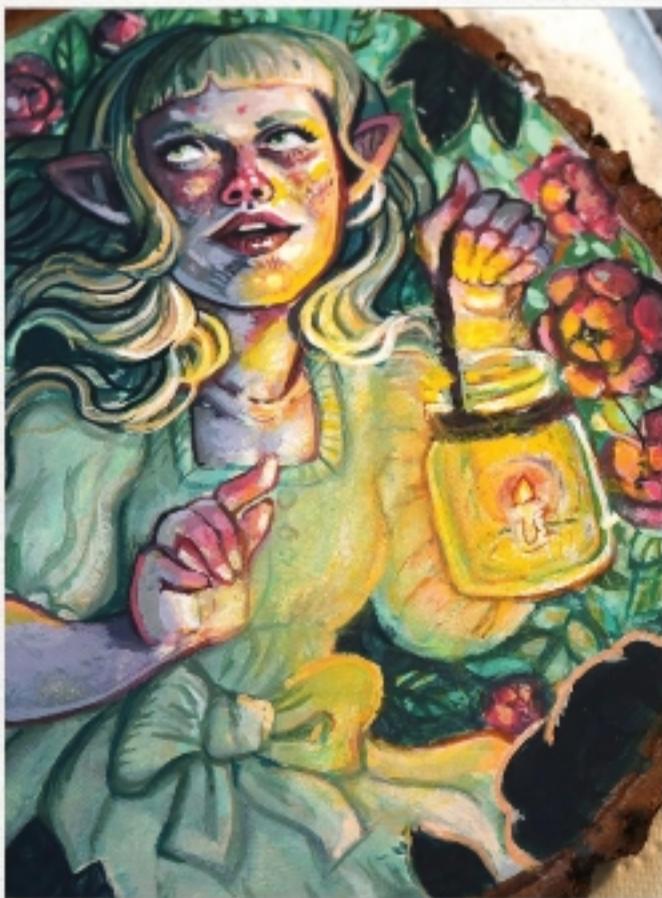
14 Concentrate on the lighting

This piece has a strong light source from the candle. I find references of candles in jars and study how objects around the candles react to the light, always over-exaggerating slightly. I always leave this part until last, because the lighting is my favourite painting step.

15 Finishing 'sketchy' touches

I add a bit of "sketchiness" back into the painting by applying flecks, random dots and cross-hatching to selected areas. I prefer my paintings not to look too polished, but am always a little worried about taking this distressing stage too far. Once I'm happy with my mark making, I call the painting finished. •

Acrylics

PAINTING MAGIC CARD ART

**MILIVOJ ĆERAN** paints a character from Magic: The Gathering making a dramatic entrance

For this short workshop I'll be explaining how I painted card art for Magic: The Gathering. The character is called Archway Angel, which is from the Magic set Ravnica Allegiance that was released at the start of 2019. Dawn Murin, a senior art director at Wizards of the Coast, gave me guidance over where to take the image.

Angels are majestic, dramatic characters. Because this particular card set is based in the city of Ravnica that's full of Gothic architecture, I designed the armour for the angel accordingly, giving the plate armour a Gothic look with a fantasy twist. My goal was also to contrast the majestic angel with the weathered, ageing architecture, by adding a lot of texture to the stone walls.

Milivoj's worked for Wizards of the Coast, Blizzard, Sideshow Collectibles and Paizo Publishing. Visit www.mceran-art.com.
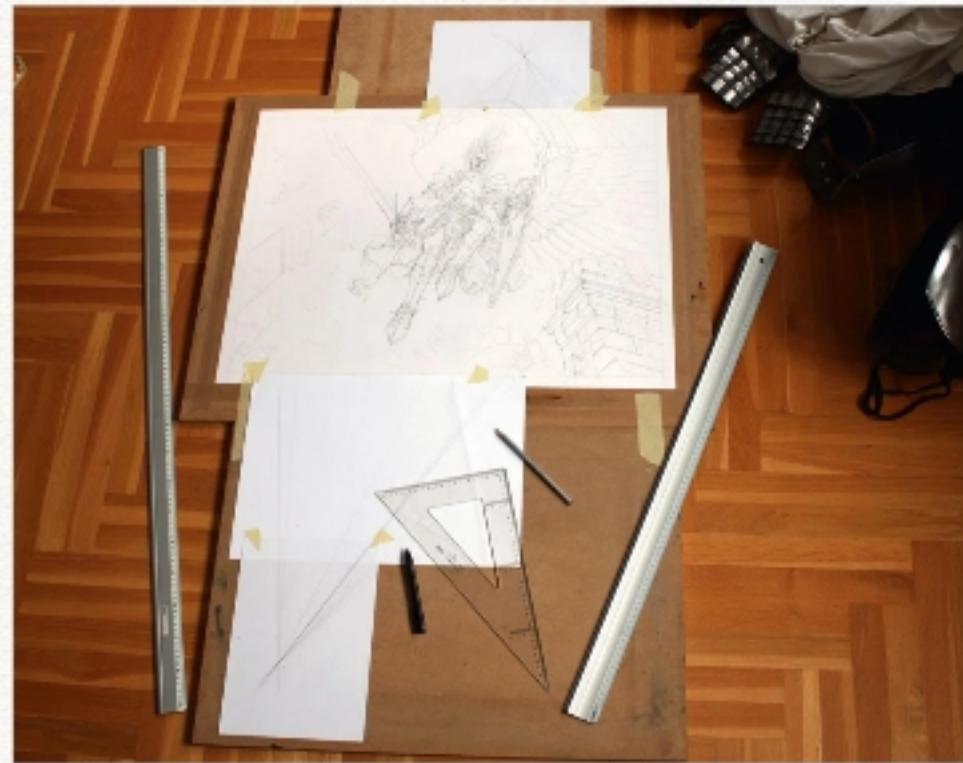
1 Establishing the perspective

Getting the perspective correct from the get-go is crucial if the painting is going to be effective. To help me achieve this I establish the upper and lower perspective points, which lie beyond the frame. Extra sheets of paper and long rulers are a must for this step, as is real-life plate armour for reference! ➤➤

MATERIALS

PAPER
■ Fabriano 5,300gsm, hot pressed

BRUSHES
■ Karačić, synthetic brushes: Flat (4-7cm), and Round (00-12)
■ Da Vinci Nova, synthetic Round brushes
■ Cottman (Winsor & Newton), Round synthetic brushes
■ Wide House Flat brushes (5-10 cm)

AIRBRUSH
■ Compressor: Sparmax Aircomp AC20
■ Pistol: Rich AB-300

ACRYLIC PAINTS
■ Winsor & Newton Galeria
■ Amsterdam Talens
■ Vallejo acrylic gouache

MASKING AGENT
■ Schminke Rubbelkrepp (blue tinted)

2 Masking the important parts

After I've stretched the paper on the wooden board and finished the tight drawing, I mask all the areas that I want to stay white (the sword, leaves, and a few highlights and rim lights in the angel's hair and wings) using my masking medium (liquid latex). This will protect these areas from my colours.

3 Applying the first layer of colour

I wet the whole surface with my widest brush (10cm) and work using a wet-in-wet watercolour technique, establishing the main colours and the direction of light. The focal point is the angel's head, where the light is coming from. I also work on the background silhouettes, the angel's face and hair, and her armour.

4 Adding texture and rays

I apply my first washes and texture to the city's walls. To prevent any deviation from my carefully constructed drawing I enhance the lines and bricks with brown acrylic lines using a fine brush, before applying the washes. I use the wet-in-wet approach to paint more light rays and darker cast shadows from the angel.

5 Removing the masking agent

I remove the masking agent, rubbing it away with my fingers and an eraser. The white that's revealed is actually the paper surface. This covering enables me to paint freely with a lot of wet-in-wet and wide brushes, without worrying about ruining the light (white) areas.

6 Painting the white areas

At this stage the artwork looks weird – as if someone's cut out those white areas in Photoshop – but I'm perfectly happy with this. It enables me to paint these key areas in the same wet-in-wet watercolour manner, by adding diluted layers and texture with acrylic colours to a clean white surface.

7 Artist at work!

This is me working in my studio. The angle of my table can be adjusted, which helps when working on large artworks because I don't have to bend over the painting for long periods of time. Here I work on the leaves using a small brush.

8 The devil lies in the details

I use my smallest brush to add details to the artwork. I paint decorative elements on the angel's armour. They probably won't be visible at the printed card size, but add to the painting's "epic" feel.

9 Final adjustments with the airbrush

Finally, I add darker shadows using my airbrush. To strengthen the glowing effect of the angel's head and sword, everything else in the composition needs to be darkened. This ensures the lighter areas will stand out more. ●

First Impressions

✴ Rebecca Yanovskaya ✴

A delay to this artist's first paid commission proved beneficial...

Where did you grow up and how has this influenced your art?
My childhood was spent mostly in Toronto, but two formative years were spent living in Italy, where I discovered my love of classical artwork and decorative arts. This influence can be seen in my fantasy work, and I often look to my picture books for inspiration.

Does one person stand out as being helpful during your early years?
In technical terms, my art tutor played a pivotal role by exposing me to the artist mediums, giving me a useful head start among my peers. More personally, the practical and emotional backing my mother gave me as a young artist was essential.

Tell us about your first commission
It seemed like a dream come true – a large private commission with subject matter that I was enthusiastic about. The project didn't go forward, as often happens, and yet I'm glad it didn't! It was too early and too big of a project to tackle so early on. Thanks to that delay, when I came back to the project I was able to meet my expectations.

CESIUM
"I love dance and all that its chaos imposes on the human form. To be able to symbolise an abstract periodic element was even better."

EVENTIDE
"This work opened me up to new possibilities – a greater melding of paint and gold than I'd ever used before."

What's the last piece you finished, and how do the two differ?
My latest piece is aptly titled Small Wonder and it's the very opposite of the first in many ways. Where the first was oversized, this one is smaller than my hand. Where the first had multiple figures and a chaotic environment, this is a single

> 66 **The practical and emotional backing my mother gave me as a young artist was essential** 99

figure very much in control. They both represent opposite ends of my creative interests.

Where do you create your art?
I work the way I draw – all over the place. I love to have my work taped to a board and move all around with it: curled up on the couch, the dining table, an armchair, sometimes even the floor!

THE DEFENDER: MAGE
"The pleasure in working on this throwback to my fantasy heroes was intense!"

Is making a living as an artist all that you thought it would be?
I would say that it's as expected, with both good and bad aspects magnified. I find new reasons to love it every day, but understand the drawbacks as well.

What advice would you give to your younger self to aid you on the way?
I would tell her not to obsess over the details and instead focus on being prolific! Had I focused more on completing pieces, then the details would have fallen into place.

What does the future hold for you?
The fun thing about freelancing is that I never know what new skill a client is going to ask of me, or what dream project will appear in my inbox! I'm looking forward to exploring my artistic evolution in my upcoming solo show at Haven Gallery, on New York's Long Island in 2020.

Rebecca is one of the few ballpoint pen artists who's working in fantastic realism. Epic scope and moody atmosphere define her style, with influences such as Neoclassicism, theatrical costuming, and decorative arts. Explore more of Rebecca's work at www.rebeccayanovskaya.com.

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