NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX

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STEP INSIDE!

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE PERNILLE ØRUM

The talented artist shows us around her new studio

FUTURE

ISSUE 186

SAVE 25%

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DRAWING COURSES BY STAN PROKOPENKO

Here's my process for constructing hands from imagination or reference

1. START WITH SIMPLE FORMS

When I begin drawing, my first priority is the big, simple forms. The anatomy informs the design of my simple forms, but I don't start with anatomical details. For the hand, a box is a good starting place. Round off the distal edge to create the arch of the knuckles. Each finger can be a series of boxes or cylinders.

2. SCULPT THE ANATOMY

Once my proportions, perspective, and big forms are established, I move on to the secondary anatomical forms. I can add the three round muscle masses on the hand, and develop the fingers by contrasting straights and curves. I describe the form of the knuckles in small, geometric planes. This will make it easy to shade later.

3. FINISH WITH SHADING

I identify the direction of the light source and separate the shadows and lights. Then shade the details in the lights. I always want the big read to be the big forms (from Step 1). If the details overpower the primary forms (the box of the palm), then I've messed up. Anatomy is cool, but it has to support the picture, not take over it.

Welcome to…

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

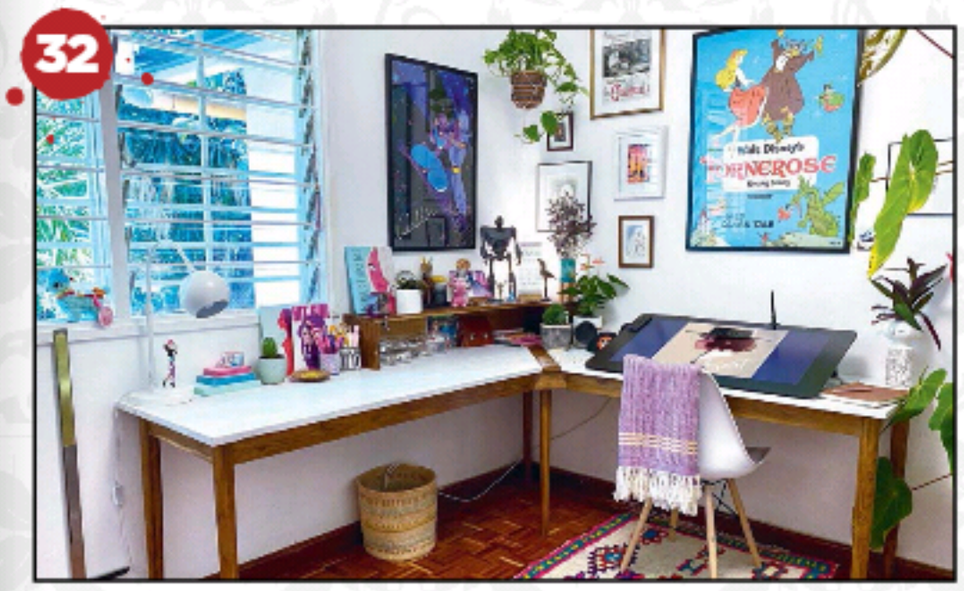
Enjoying your poster? It's great isn't it? We were thrilled to work with LightBox Expo to give you an extra gift this month. I hope you love Claire Wendling's official LightBox art. Will you be in Pasadena, California, for LightBox in September? Hopefully I'll see you there.

Talking of events, can I say a massive thank you to those who attended Vertex 2020, our event in London for 2D and 3D artists. We were overjoyed with how the day went and hope you were, too. If I met you there, don't forget to submit your work (see page 10 for the web link that tells you all the info you need to submit your work). Thanks again to Karla Ortiz, Goro Fujita, Even Mehl Amundsen, Lois Van Baarle and many more professional artists who s poke at the event and shared their knowledge. It was lovely to see these artists mingle with the attendees. It really is a wonderful and inclusive industry and I'm truly grateful to be a small part of it. Turn to page 29 for the show report. If there's an artist or company you want to see at Vertex 2021, please email me your ideas!

Claire

Editor-in-chief
claire@imaginefx.com

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



Out of Africa
An elegant and stylish art studio in Nairobi, which is home to the equally elegant and stylish Pernille Ørum.

From French comics to animation
I adore the work of Cécile Carre. I'm sure you will too, once you see her work and read her interview.

A beautiful gesture
Sketching is tricky, and sketching movement is even trickier! Luckily, Prem Sai GS is here to help.

Cover art for issue 124 by Sam Nielson

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

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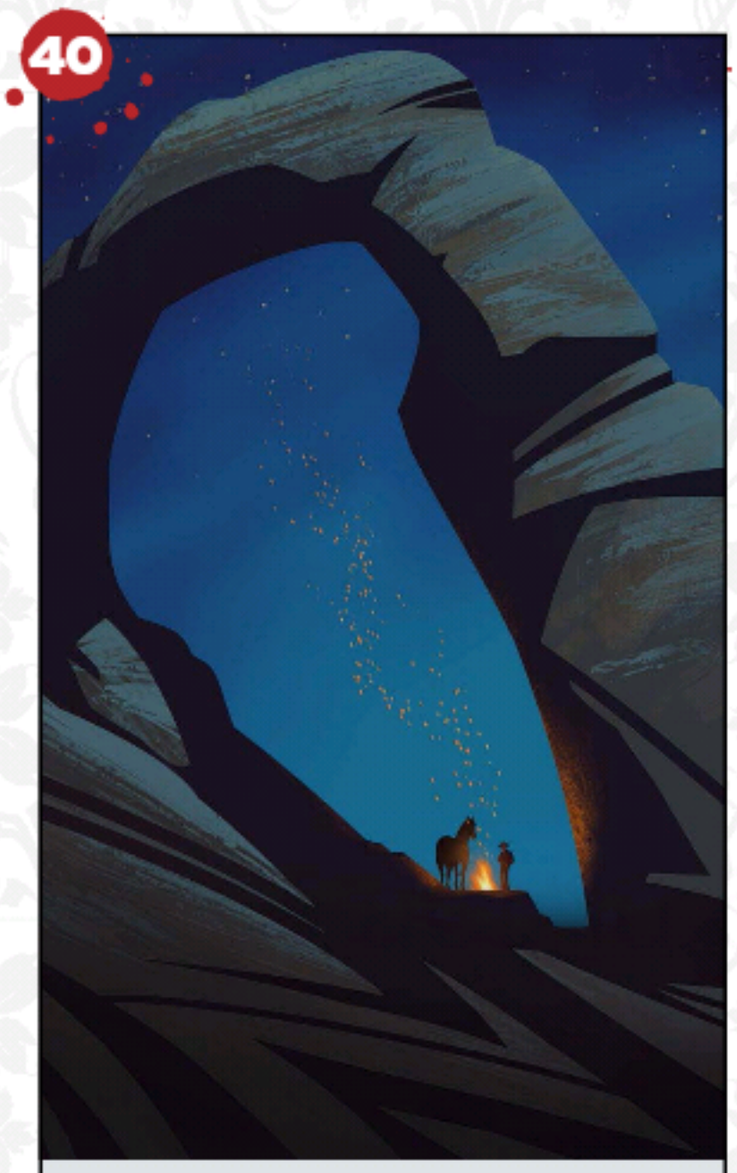
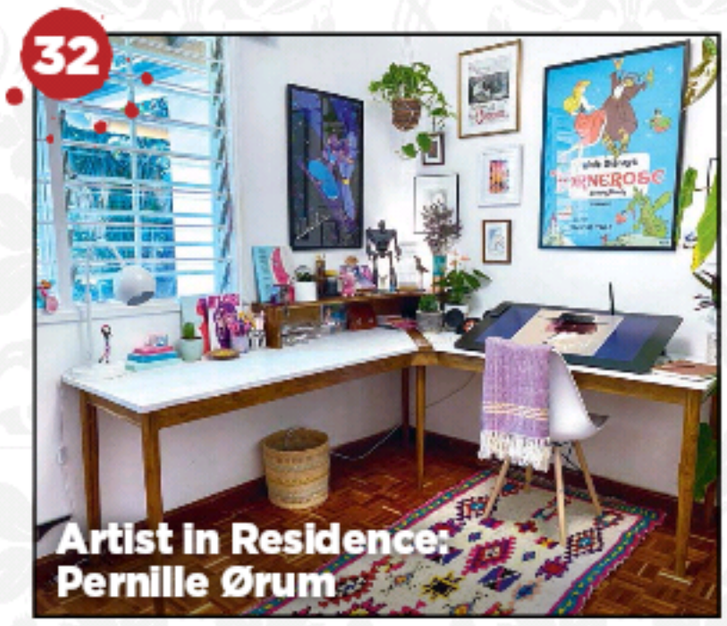
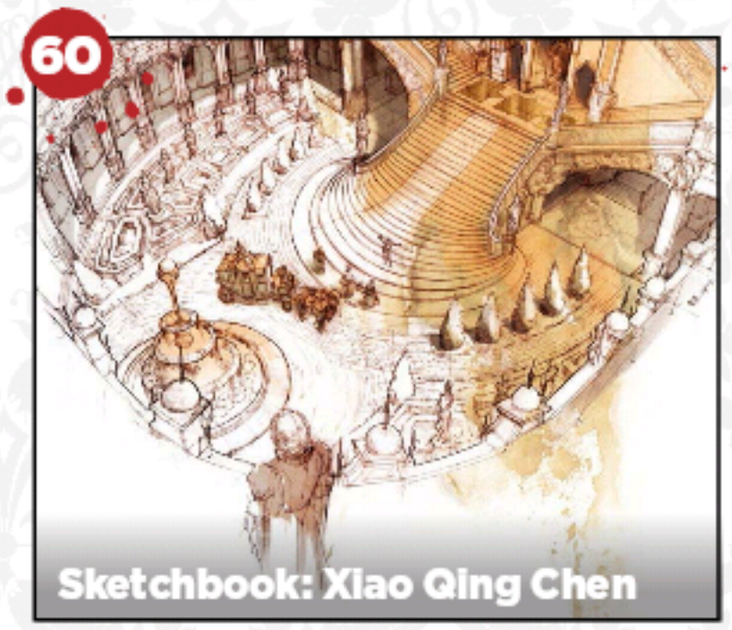
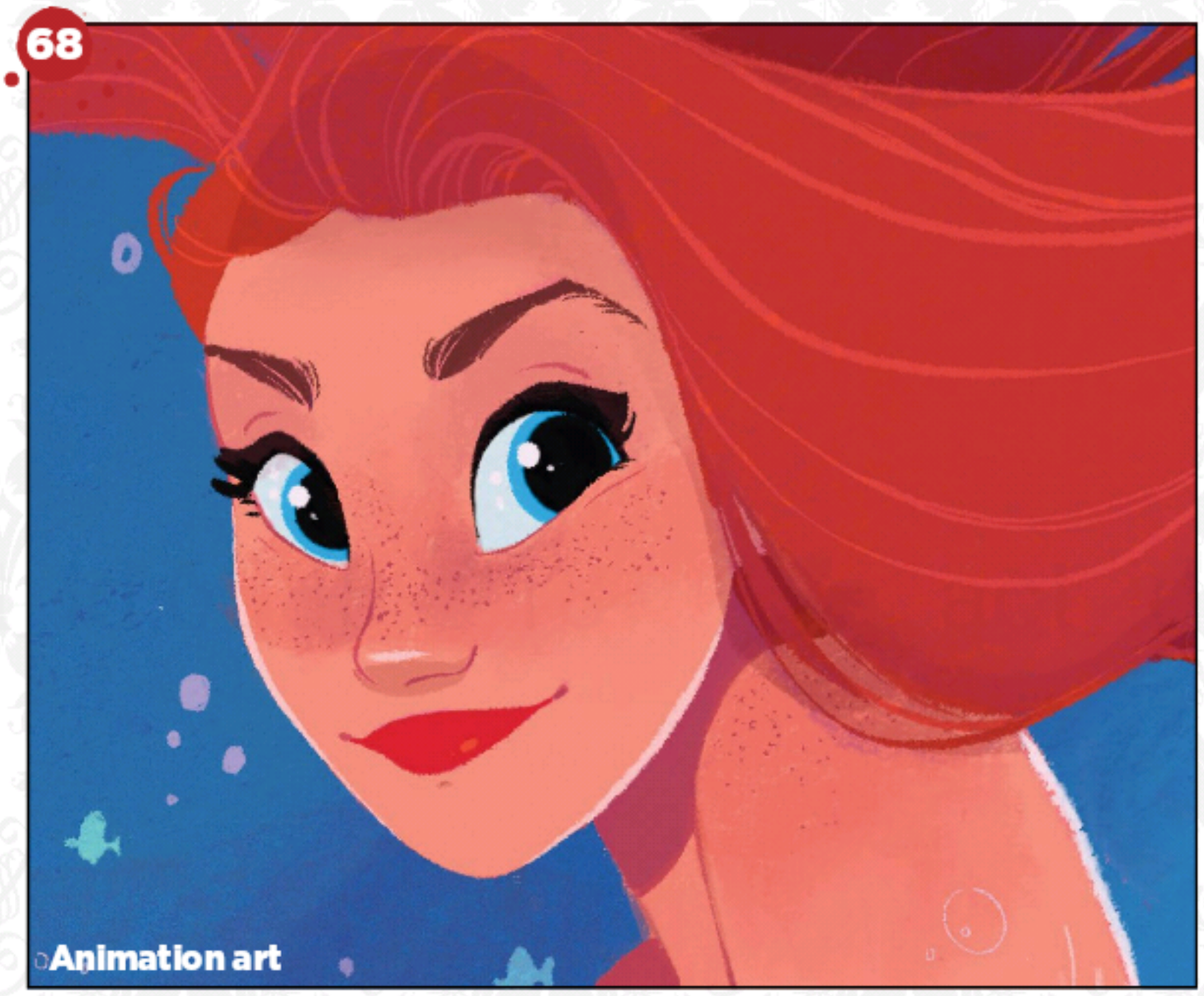


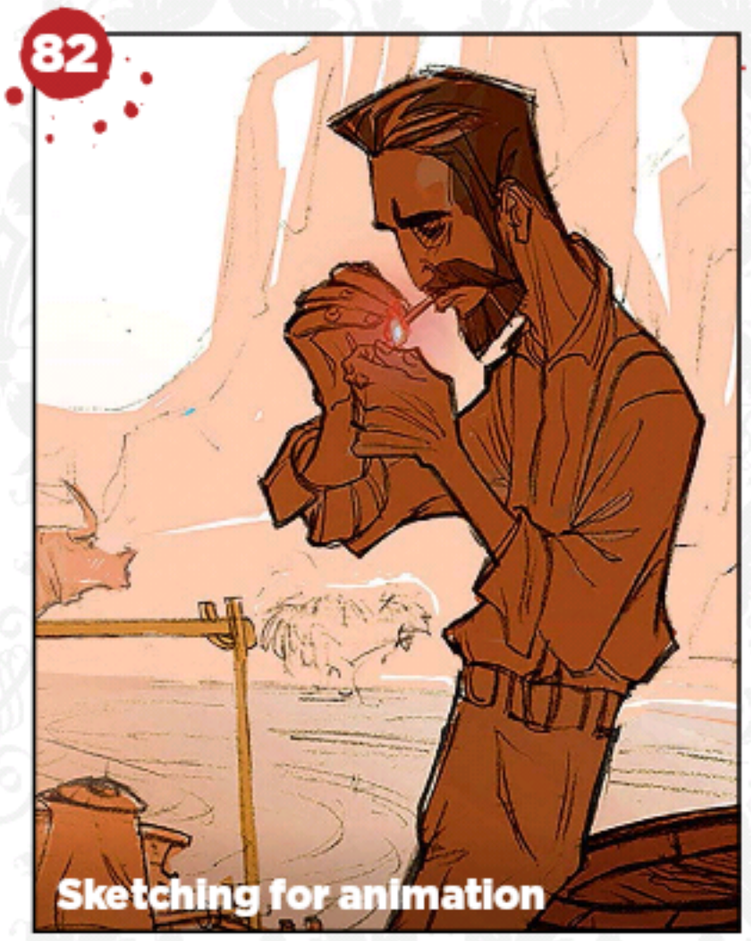
Artist Portfolio
TY CARTER
"I thought it was the coolest thing, that I just drew it from memory"
Ty, aged six, impresses with his art

Artist Portfolio
CÉCILE CARRE
"When you've got deadlines, there's no time to be fancy"
Cécile on being an efficient artist

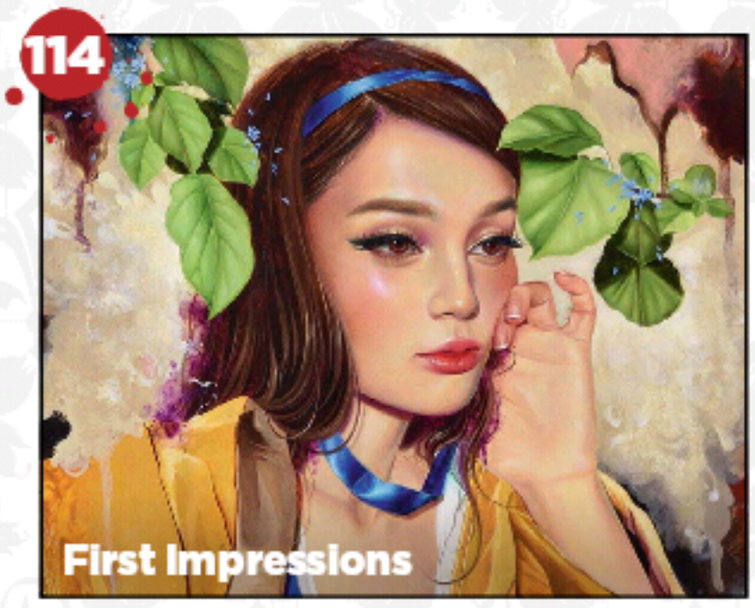








Workshops



Traditional Artist

ImagineFX Resources

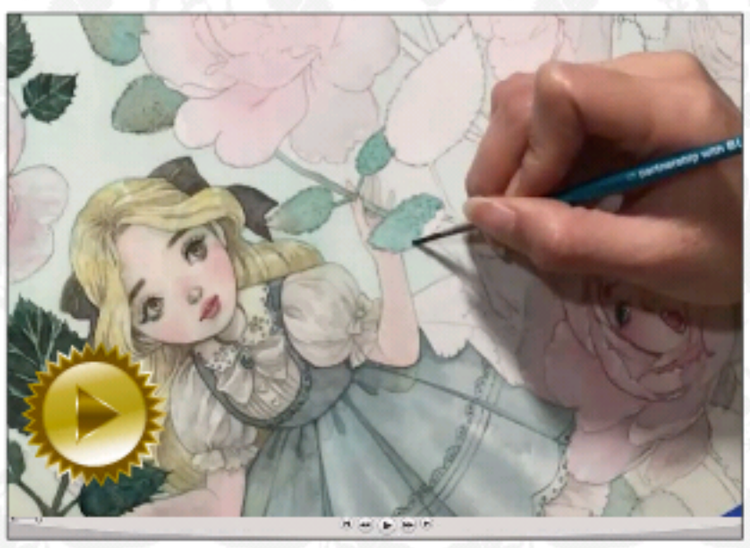
Getting hold of this issue's video resources is easy.
Just visit **https://ifxm.ag/splash186animation**

Paint stunning character art for animation

Watch how Amanda MacFarlane creates a mermaid and her laid-back companion using Procreate, ready for an animated project . Turn to page 68 to read more about her process.

Learn how to photobash a futuristic street scene

See how David Paget uses photos of city streets to create concept art. More on page 88.



Tell a story by taking a trip down the rabbit hole

Watch Karla RodrÍguez use watercolours for her Alice in Wonderland art. See page 100.

PLUS 4 CUSTOM BRUSHES, INCLUDING...

SOFT ROUND 300 PIXELS
David Paget sets this default Photoshop brush to a low Opacity when painting atmosphere.

HARD SOFT EDGED
David reveals that this brush has duel uses: for painting solid areas of details, and for smudging elements.

SAMPLED BRUSH 76
David's harder, rectangle-shaped brush comes in handy for applying delicate textures to objects.

ImagineFX

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THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

Carolane Bruneau

LOCATION: Canada **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Procreate, Blender, ZBrush
WEB: www.artstation.com/carolanebruneau

Carolane works in the games industry as a concept artist. "I have a passion for design and I love to use different mediums," she says. "My favourite part is the exploration I get to do when I create a concept piece."

3

1 THE WITCH
"I like to create characters in relation to the home-brewed beer I craft. This one was for the label of a pumpkin spice amber ale."

2 HUNTER
"This was the first time I did a complete character in ZBrush to paint over. He's an alien fish hunter who hails from a distant universe."

3 THE MEDIC
"I've been doing a series of near-future designs, all themed around the medical field. I ended this series with the medic himself."

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2

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

4

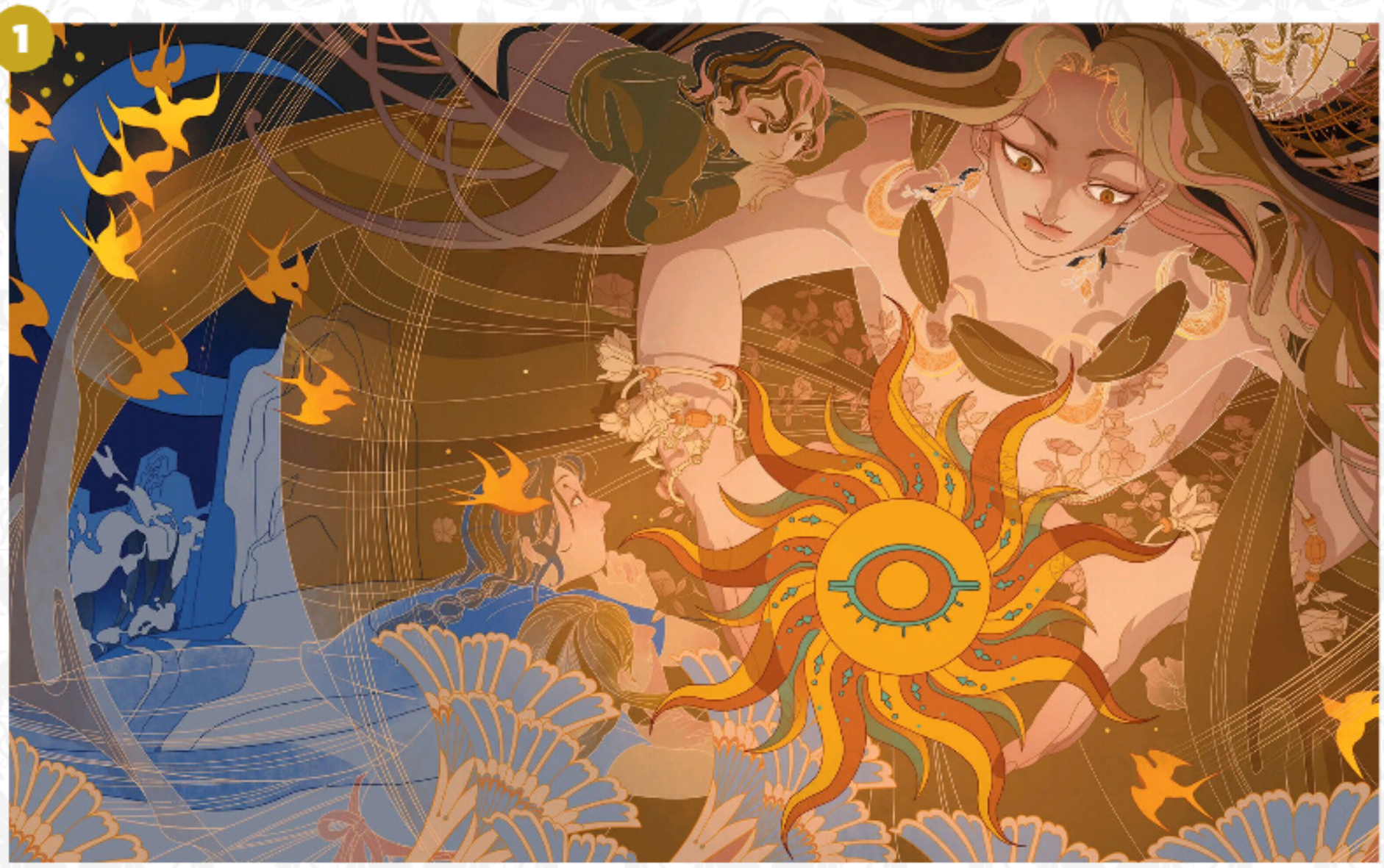
4 THE WINTER ORC KING

"I used ZBrush to create the base. I wanted to depict an Orc King who's a bit broken by all of his battles."

Fran Hu

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Paint Tool SAI **WEB:** www.franhu.com

Fran was born in a Mongolian village, and her work reflects the mysterious country stories inspired by mountains and rivers. "Now I live in New York, and those ancient stories collide with modern cities."

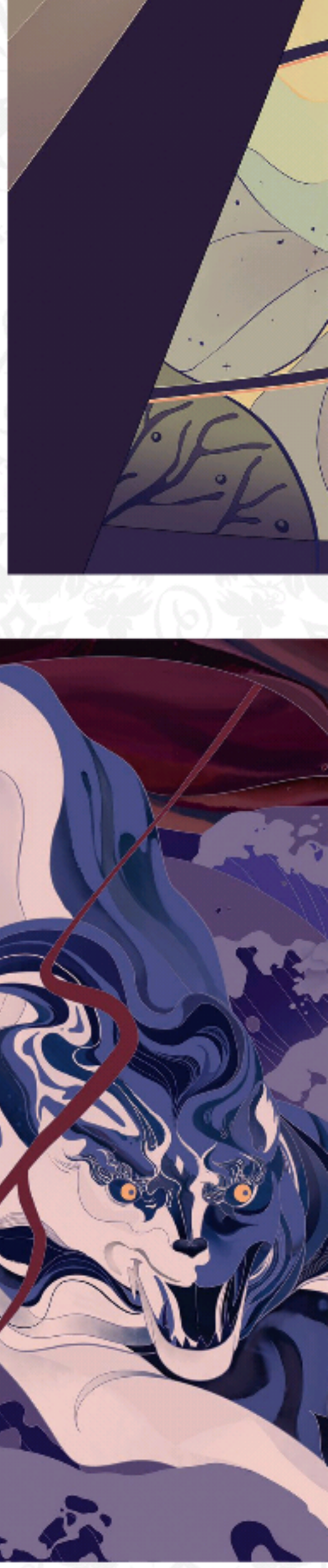


1 BEDTIME STORY
"This painting is for my own story, in which the position of the sun and the moon never changes."

2 DESIRE
"Each domino is carved with different temptations. When the hand of desire overthrows them, things will immediately get out of control."

3 ADVERSE LIFE
"This piece was inspired by a lovely story about three girls and their reversed lives when they grow up."

4 LET ME BE YOUR HARBOR
"This was drawn for the Dog Days – Art to the Rescue event, held in New York's Kenektid X Gallery. I hope people can feel the mutual protection between pets and people."



5 **SURPRISE ON THE WAY**
This is an illustration for a magazine. The article covers the attention to detail found in Japanese hotels.

Iris LaFontaine

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Procreate **WEB:** www.artstation.com/iris

Iris is a visual development student who lives in downtown Salt Lake City. After completing her studies she wants to embark on a career as a technical artist working in the gaming industry.

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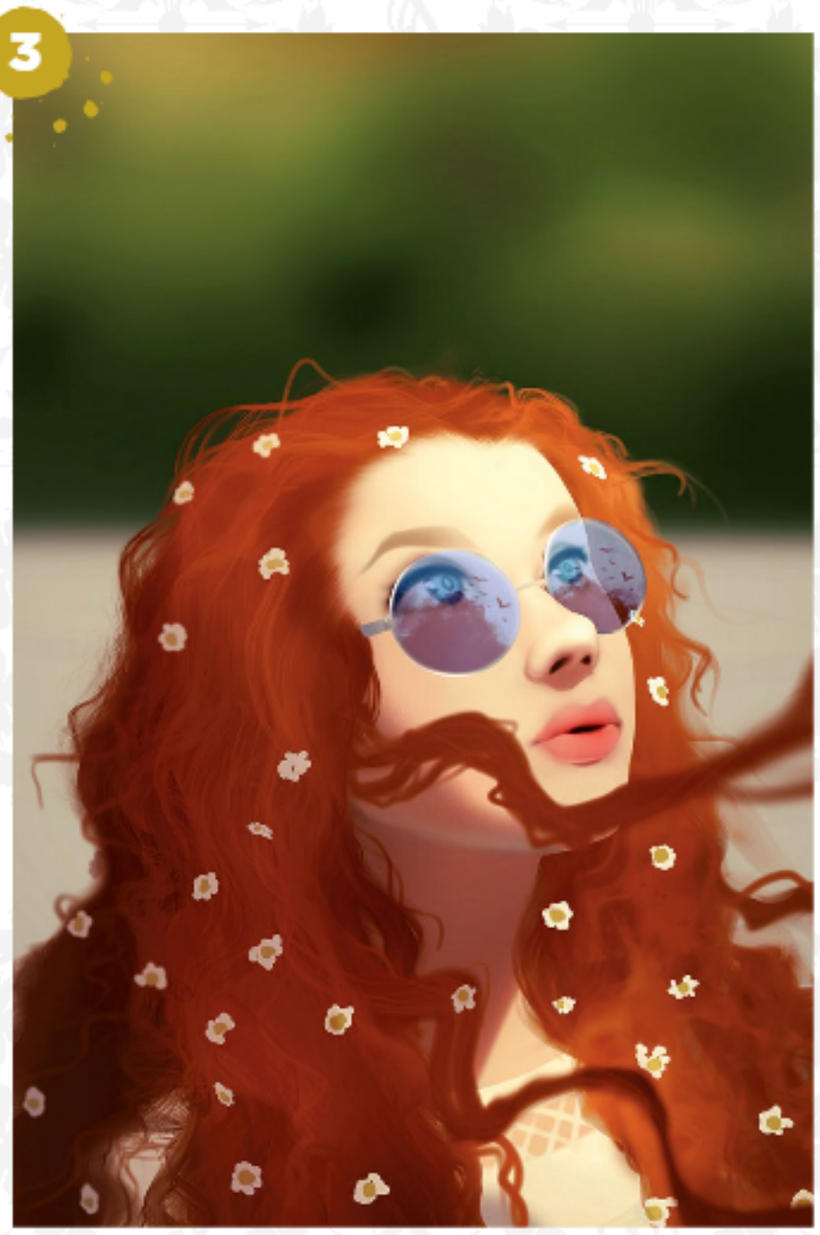

4

1 THE LOVE LETTER
"A young woman excitedly clutches a love letter just given to her. I enjoy painting a shadowy subject against a hot, sunny background."

2 WE'VE GOT ALL SUMMER
"I'm often inspired by settings or colour schemes in fashion photography. There's something so inviting about a sparkling pool, soda and a smiling girl."

3 GET FREE
"This started as a study, but grew a mind of its own. It's inspired by summers in the 70s, and teens with a skyward, hopeful gaze."

4 MERMAY 2019
"I wanted to portray elation, movement, swirling, dancing in water."

Matthew G Lewis

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Pencil, ink, Photoshop, Illustrator **WEB:** www.lostkeep.com

Matthew was born in the Deep South, but has ventured to faraway lands. "I've lived on rainy coastlines in the US, Central America and Europe. Currently, I fester away in Seattle bearing my loathsome pencil and brush."

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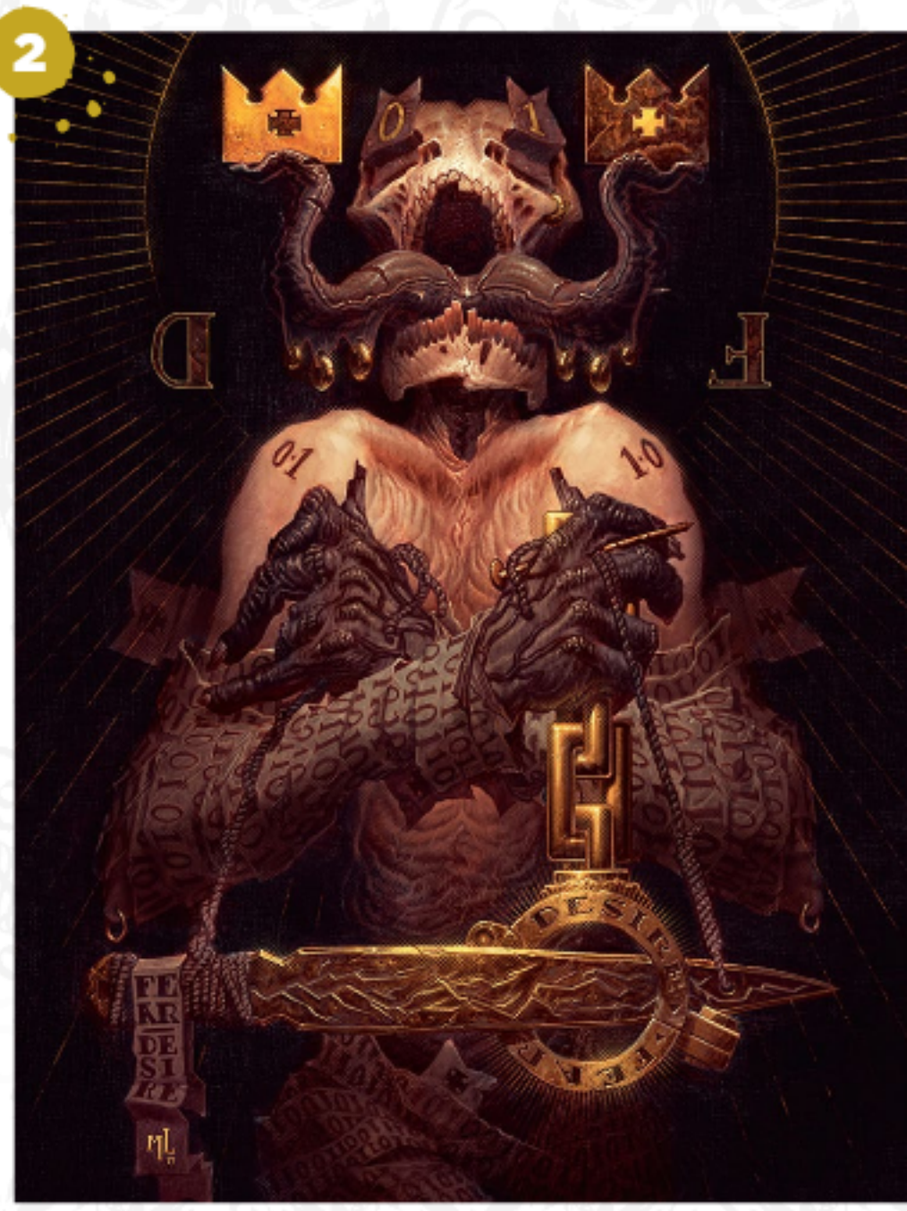


3

1 LOSTKEEP CHRONICLES II: UNWHOLIED TOLEDO
"This was inspired by my travels to Toledo, Spain and the research I undertook into its history with alchemy."

2 TUKROUN•KONMAN
"A creature inspired by the symbols and archetypes from Joseph Campbell's book Hero with a Thousand Faces."

3 LOSTKEEP CHRONICLES I: OUCH HANDS
"Based on my travels to Madrid's Prado museum and research into Goya's Black Paintings series."

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

Taraneh Karimi

LOCATION: The Netherlands **MEDIA:** Procreate, Photoshop **WEB:** www.taraneh.me

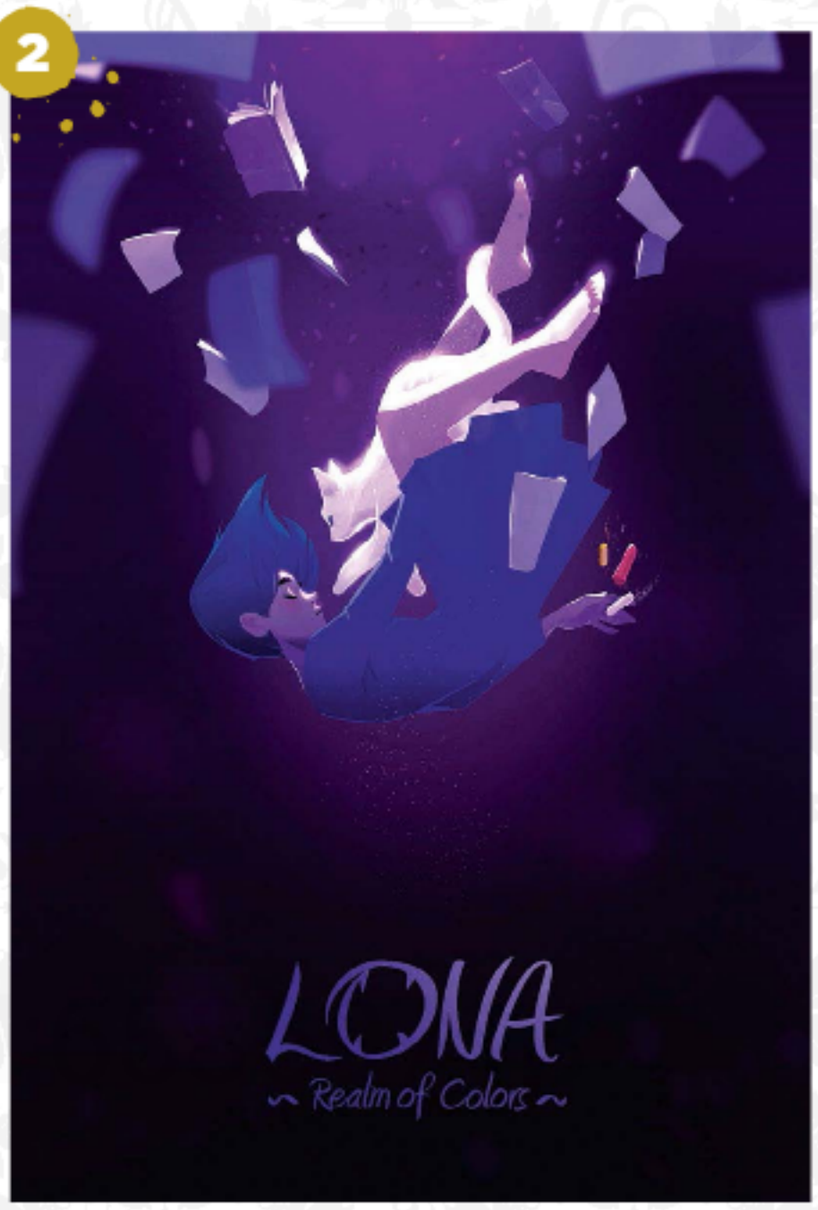
Concept artist Taraneh started as a graphic designer in Iran before moving to the Netherlands. "It was hard for me to progress in the industry because of where I come from, but that never stopped me from being an artist."

1 FIGHTER

"I love to capture those little candid emotional turning points when drawing my characters. I think we can all connect with them."

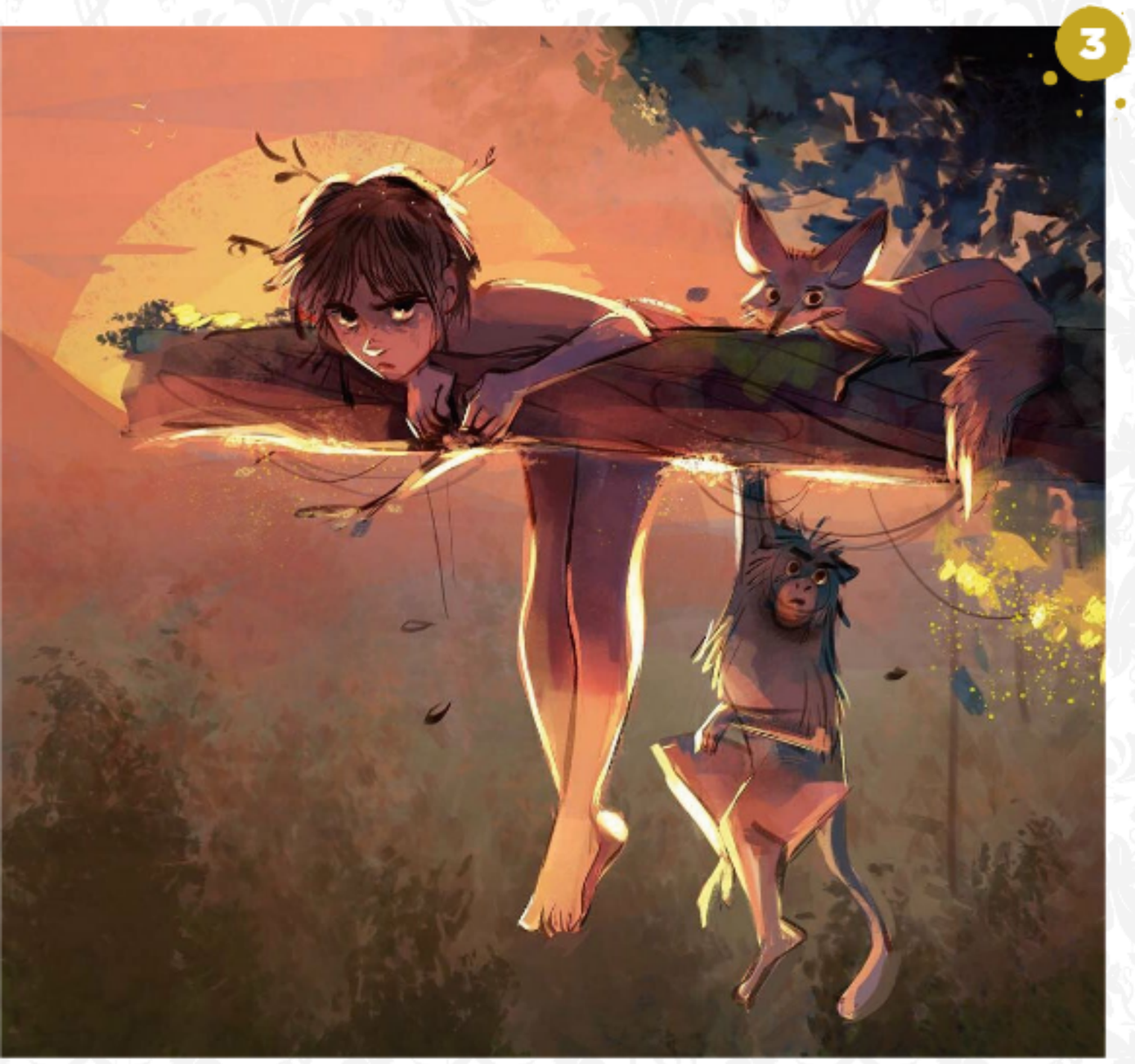
2 LONA, REALM OF COLORS

"This is from an indie game my team and I funded on Kickstarter in 2017. It's a point-and-click adventure art game for people who want a unique artistic experience."



3 JUNGLE GIRL

"Because the character is wild and free I wanted to keep the lines and the brush work in the same vibe. I love messy and unfinished artworks; to me, it's more artistic, emotional and real."



4 RAIN

"There's magic in finding little spots and corners that no one pays attention to and creating a story there. Even if it's small, it brings life to the world."

Ryan Kennedy

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Photoshop, 3ds Max, Unreal Engine **WEB:** www.rtkart.com

Ryan works as an architectural visualisationist who models and renders buildings for clients, but once he gets home he paints fantasy. "I love creating armour and monsters," he says.

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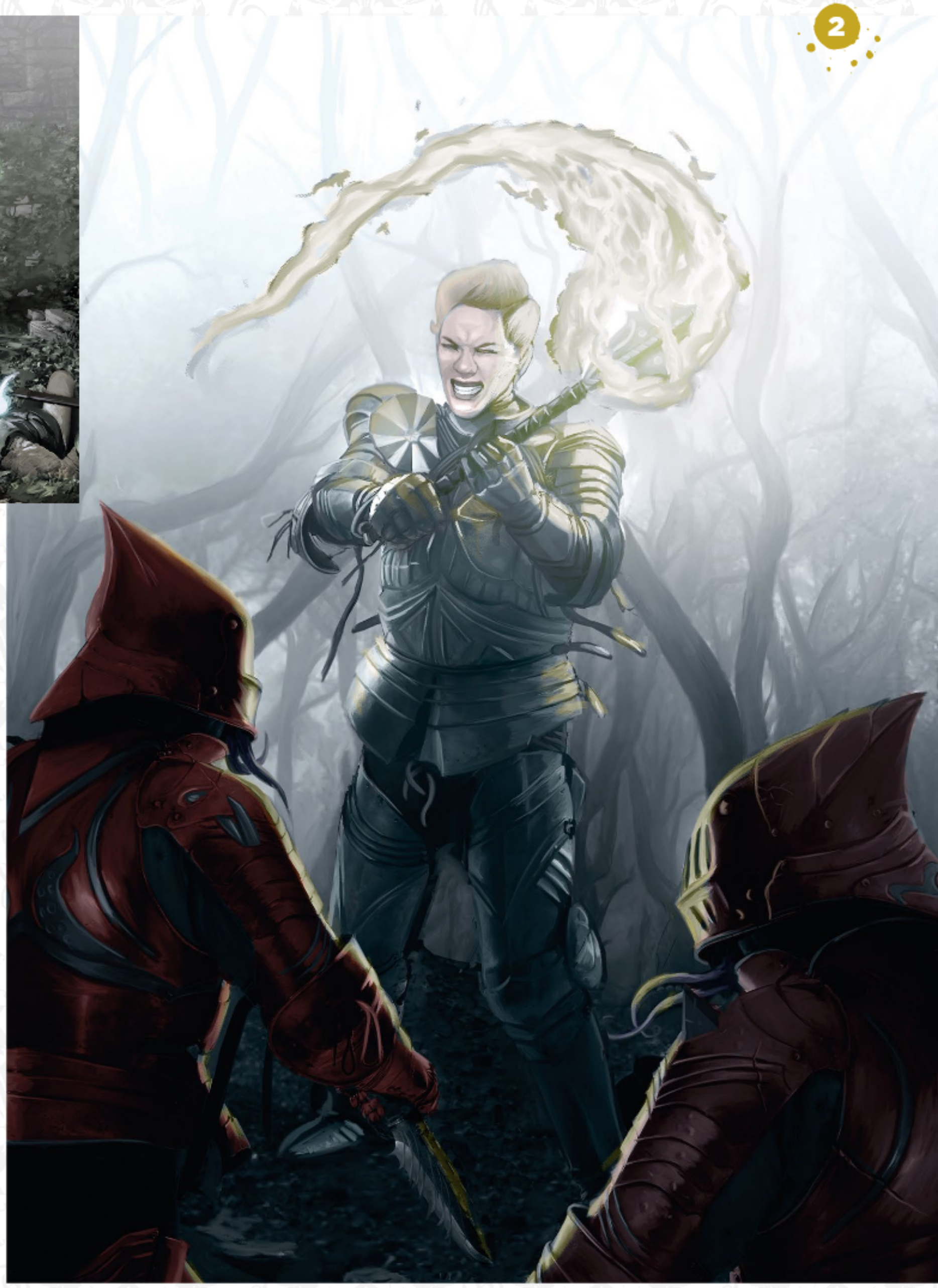

1 KNIGHT OF THORNS
"This is based on my love of Dark Souls. I wanted to capture a moment of post-battle silence."

2 SMITE
"I like art depicting special attacks – like those seen in – so I decided to capture the moment a paladin attempts to smite two monstrous enemies."

3 THE SACRIFICE
"It's fun drawing snakes, so I decided to depict an evil cult sacrificing a Conan-style hero to a massive hydra rising out of a pit."

4 VOLCANIC HELLKITE
"I knew I wanted to paint a dragon and I wanted it to breathe lightning instead of fire. From there the painting developed naturally."

3

4

David Calabrese

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.davidcalabrese.com

David is an artist who focuses on imaginative realism and high fantasy. He has a passion for depicting sword and sorcery, as well as things that go bump in the night. He also teaches illustration at The Hartford Art School.

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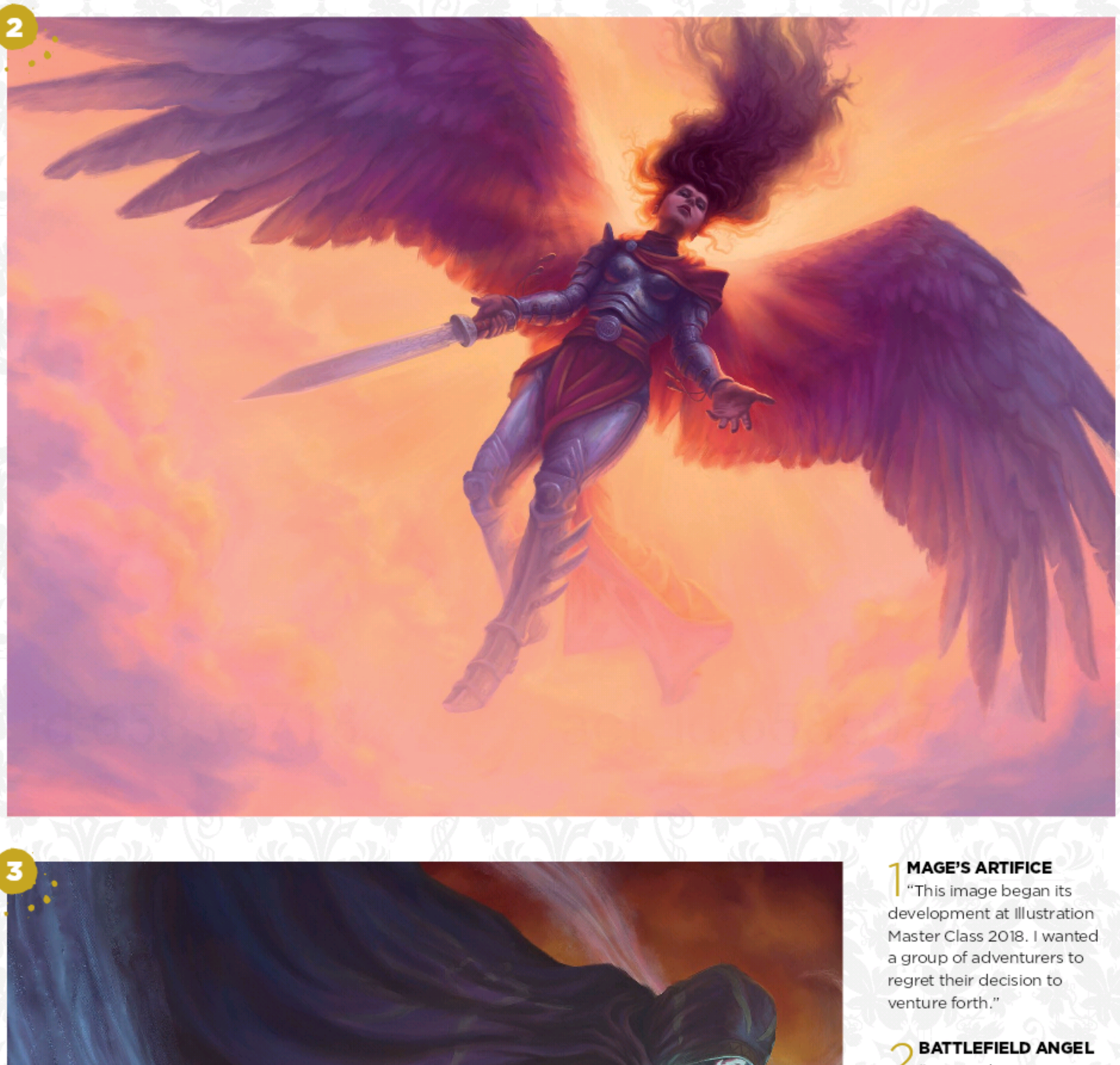


1 MAGE'S ARTIFICE
"This image began its development at Illustration Master Class 2018. I wanted a group of adventurers to regret their decision to venture forth."

2 BATTLEFIELD ANGEL
"I wanted to create a beautiful and powerful female character that my wife and daughter would be proud of. Her hair is a direct tribute to my wife's."

3 WIZARD
"I was keen to focus more on my process and simplify my typically complex images. The result was an improved technical execution and clearer storytelling."

How artists deal with illness

Ill will Poor physical or mental health can affect people in a number of ways. But how do artists maintain their creativity under adverse conditions, asks **Tom May**

There's no sugar-coating it: illness sucks, and can dramatically affect your ability to create art. But it doesn't always make it impossible.

Devin Kurtz, aka TamberElla, works as an illustrator and background painter at animation production studio Rough Draft in California, despite suffering from a chronic illness called CVS (cyclic vomiting syndrome) since she was six. "Luckily, I've improved a lot over the past five years," she says. "I hit a low point around 17, and have since prioritised sleep, healthy food and listening to my body. I have good medication, a good specialist and know when I need to get to hospital, so some of the fear element is gone."

Making art remains tough, though. "My condition tends to express itself when I'm under a lot of stress, so all-nighters and pushing myself beyond my limits are out of bounds. To get any personal work done outside of my job, I have to really prioritise the time I feel 'well', and use it in a productive way."

It also influences the kind of art she produces. "I think it's helped me avoid

VERTEX HITS NEW HEIGHTS

More attendees, more superstar artists, more advice and inspiration – this year's London conference for 2D and 3D artists was a resounding success!
Page 29

REMEMBERING QINNI

The popular young artist, who struggled with poor health for a number of years, died at the start of February. Fellow illustrators salute her achievements.
Page 30

NEW HOME, NEW STUDIO

Pernille Ørum recently moved to Kenya, in a suburb of Nairobi. Having finally unpacked she was more than happy to show us around her workspace.
Page 32

"Pushing myself too far in my teen years taught me how important self-control and self-care are," says Devin Kurtz.

"When I launched my depictions of mental illness, I was blown away by the support," says Shawn Cross.

some of the traps people fall into: of feeling they should be creating a certain type of art, rather than what they want to do," she says. "I make art that makes me happy, full stop."

And her advice to others suffering illness is simple: "Remember that your value as an artist is in no way connected to your productivity. We're surrounded by influences telling us to 'put in 110 per cent', push our limits and encouraging other damaging habits. But remember, you're taking care of your body not just for the 'you' of today, but for the 'you' of the future. So take care of yourself first and foremost, and ignore voices telling you you're being 'lazy'. You're being, in fact, incredibly brave."

DEALING WITH A SUDDEN ILLNESS

Illness came relatively out of the blue for Arizona-based concept artist and illustrator **Carmen Sinek**. By 2014, she'd carved out a successful career and was working on Magic: The Gathering. But then she suddenly started having seizures caused by a genetic disorder.

"It was very jarring," she recalls. "I couldn't drive or be at home alone, putting strain on my family.

"My condition tends to express itself when I'm under a lot of stress, so all-nighters are out of bounds"

I struggled to recall words. Eventually, it got more difficult to hold multiple concepts together in my head, the way I need to when I'm drawing. My thoughts would sometimes fall apart and disappear while working, and mid-conversation, leaving me suddenly confused."

Carmen increasingly struggled to produce acceptable work and still meet deadlines. "It was thanks to some patient art directors that I hung on as long as I did, but eventually I had to make the call," she says. And although she considers her career on "pause" rather than "halt", it's been tough to get back to creating art. "I can't imagine a life without making art, but it's hard to stomach the amount of time it takes to complete a painting now," she says. "It's only been a few months since I finally put my nose back to the grindstone, but I'm optimistic I'll eventually be able to make art that I enjoy and am proud of again."

"I work in a supportive environment for my day job, so my anxiety is usually manageable," says Toby Allen.

> **"My thoughts would sometimes fall apart and disappear while working..."**

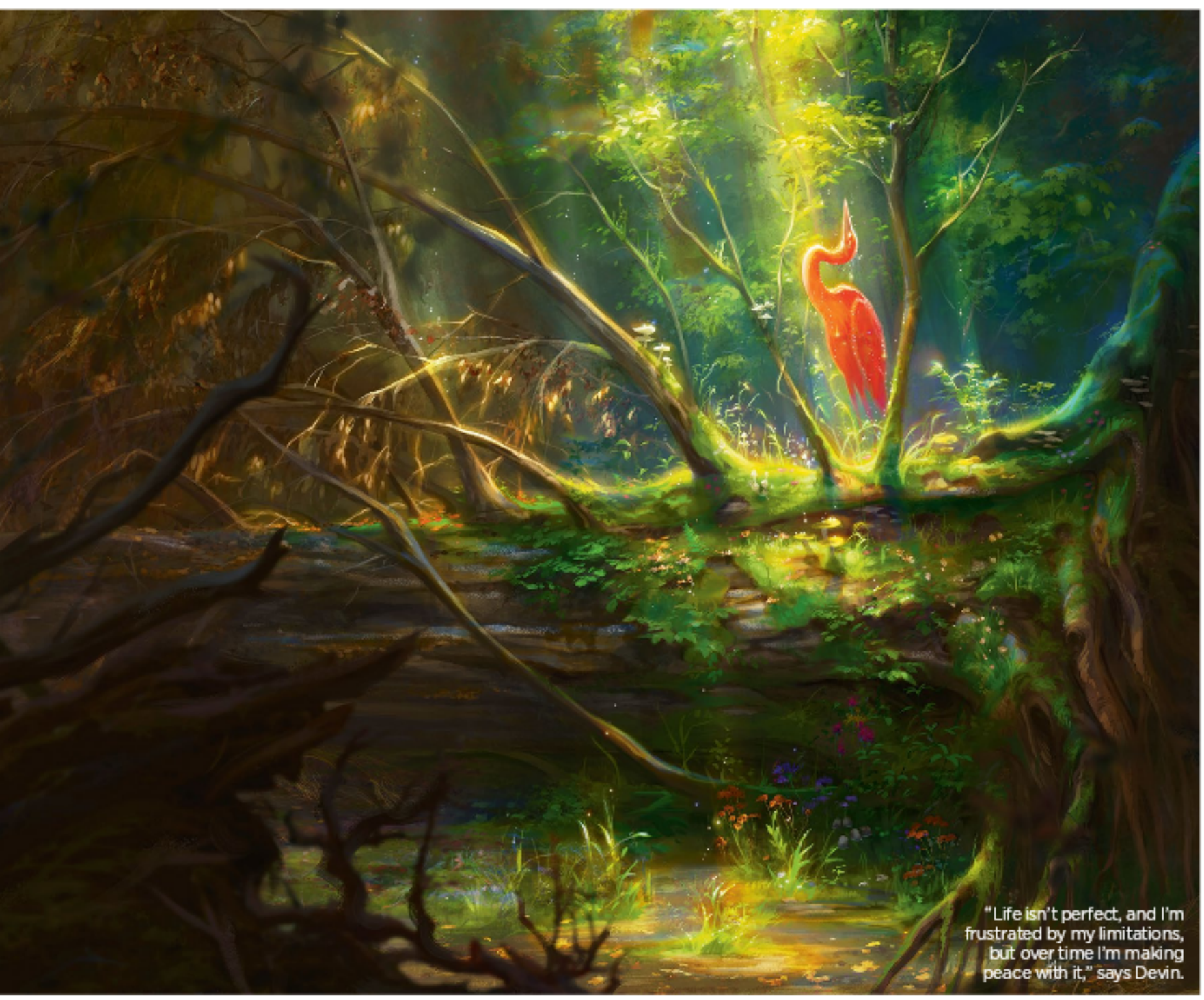
Like Devin, she's accentuating the positive. "I'd like to eventually return to working in some capacity, but my current goal is to focus on having fun," she says. "It's easy to lose passion and wonder for something when you turn it into a career, so this is an opportunity for me to rediscover that."

CREATURE COMFORTS

For some artists, illness itself can be the inspiration for creating art. Take **Toby Allen**, a British illustrator at Bear Hug Entertainment, who suffers from anxiety. "It's manageable on a daily basis," he says, "but when it heightens it can lead to art block or physical symptoms such as shaky hands, which can make drawing a challenge." To help himself, and ultimately others, he decided to draw different mental illnesses as fantasy monsters.

"The idea originated from a conversation with a friend who wondered what anxiety and bipolar would look like as creatures," he

"My employers have all been incredibly understanding with my illness, so I've had no complaints there," says Carmen Sinek.



"Life isn't perfect, and I'm frustrated by my limitations, but over time I'm making peace with it," says Devin.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

COPING WITH ILLNESS

Our artists offer their experience after struggling with poor health

1 Self-care
Put your health above all else, even if that means stepping away from your art. "All humans need to actively engage in self-care, but for those of us with an illness, that need presents itself glaringly and the cost of ignoring it is often devastating," says Devin Kurtz.

2 Build in breaks
If you're suffering from poor mental health, it's vital to build some space into your schedule, says Toby Allen. "Taking breaks where possible and allowing yourself time to decompress and not think about art can be beneficial," he says. "An artistic career, especially freelance, can be a lonely thing, so gathering a support network of friends and fellow artists can counter this."

3 Seek support
"It's easy to get discouraged in the face of illness and that's where the support of family and friends really shines," says Carmen Sinek. Social media can be a positive force here, too, especially within the online artist community, which many have found to be very nurturing and supportive.

4 Be realistic
"Don't give up until you're ready to give up," says Carmen. "An illness can't be countered by sheer grit alone. So be kind to yourself if you can't just fight your way out of it. Do what you need to do, to know that you gave it your best shot. And then forgive yourself if you can't do more."

5 See the broader picture
If you do have to abandon your art, either temporarily or permanently, don't see it as the end of your world, but a new beginning. "You're more than your art," says Carmen. "It just take you a little while to figure out what else you've got in there."

"Mental health professionals now use my artwork with their clients, and I couldn't be more honoured," says Shawn.

"Self-care, both physical and mental, is one of the best ways to promote mental health," says Toby.

recalls. "I ran with it and the response was very positive. That gave me the push to create monsters based on other mental illnesses, particularly ones people asked me to represent."

INK-BASED SOLUTIONS

Shawn Coss, an Ohio-based artist known for his work on web comic Cyanide and Happiness, took a similar approach. Based on his own experiences with anxiety and depression, as well as his work as an emergency nurse at a mental health hospital, he launched his collection of dark art depictions of mental illnesses, It's All In Your Head, in 2018, and has just Kickstarted Volume 2. Again, it's helped both him and others.

"I've been reached out to by mental health professionals who wanted to use the books in their therapy," Shawn explains. "Over 100 practices now use my book in their sessions." His advice to any artist suffering mental health issues is to talk. "Don't shy away from it, or try to bury it," he stresses. "Embrace it, understand it, and if it's too much at times, remember you aren't weak for seeking help. You're stronger for reaching out."

> **"Remember you aren't weak for seeking help. You're stronger for reaching out"**

Indeed, talking can help with all forms of illness. "Sharing my experiences via social media has been one of the most helpful things I've been able to do," says Carmen. "The support and encouragement I've received from the art community has gotten me through a lot of bad days, and made the good ones even better. My fear of being alienated from people I've come to know as friends and colleagues has been eased by the amazing people who've reached out to me, to make sure I know I'll always be welcome as a part of the community."

"I've received a lot of fan art and alterations of my 'monsters' that fit their own personal experiences," says Toby.

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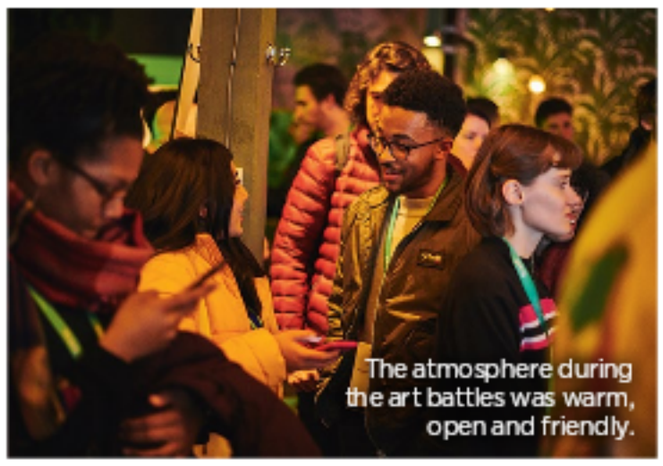

The atmosphere during the art battles was warm, open and friendly.


Facebook's Goro Fujita spoke about storytelling in VR.

Marvel Studios artist Karla Ortiz explained how the path to success isn't always linear.


Loish shared her early work from Oekaki boards and DeviantArt.


People weren't just talking about art, but making it, too.

Why Vertex 2020 rocked!

Better together Networking and learning opportunities were endless as Vertex, our 2D and 3D art event, returned for a third triumphant year at London's Olympia

Returning for a third year, Vertex is a conference for 2D and 3D artists organised by ImagineFX and our sister title, 3D World. This year, all tickets quickly sold out. So what drew over 1,200 artists to London's Olympia Conference Centre on 27-28 February? With so much going on, it's difficult to know where to start...

There were opportunities to receive feedback on your work from top professionals, including portfolio reviews and a Bring Your Own Animation meet-up. There were life-drawing classes, and live art battles. There were workshops on everything from character design to lighting. And of course, there were must-see talks from some of the creative industry's biggest names.

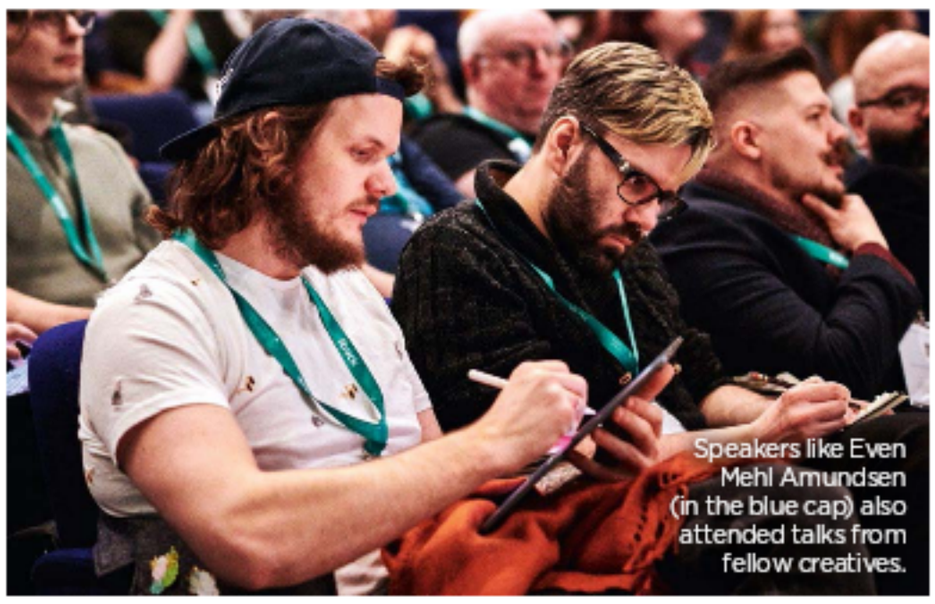
Highlights included Pixar technical artist Dylan Sisson revealing the secrets of Toy Story 4 and Onward, Tom Reed delving into creature design for The Lion King, and artists **Karla Ortiz** and Lois Van Baarle (aka Loish) sharing key insights from their own careers. Karla, for instance, told the audience: "It's okay to doubt yourself. We all do. You're not an artist unless you want to quit at least once."

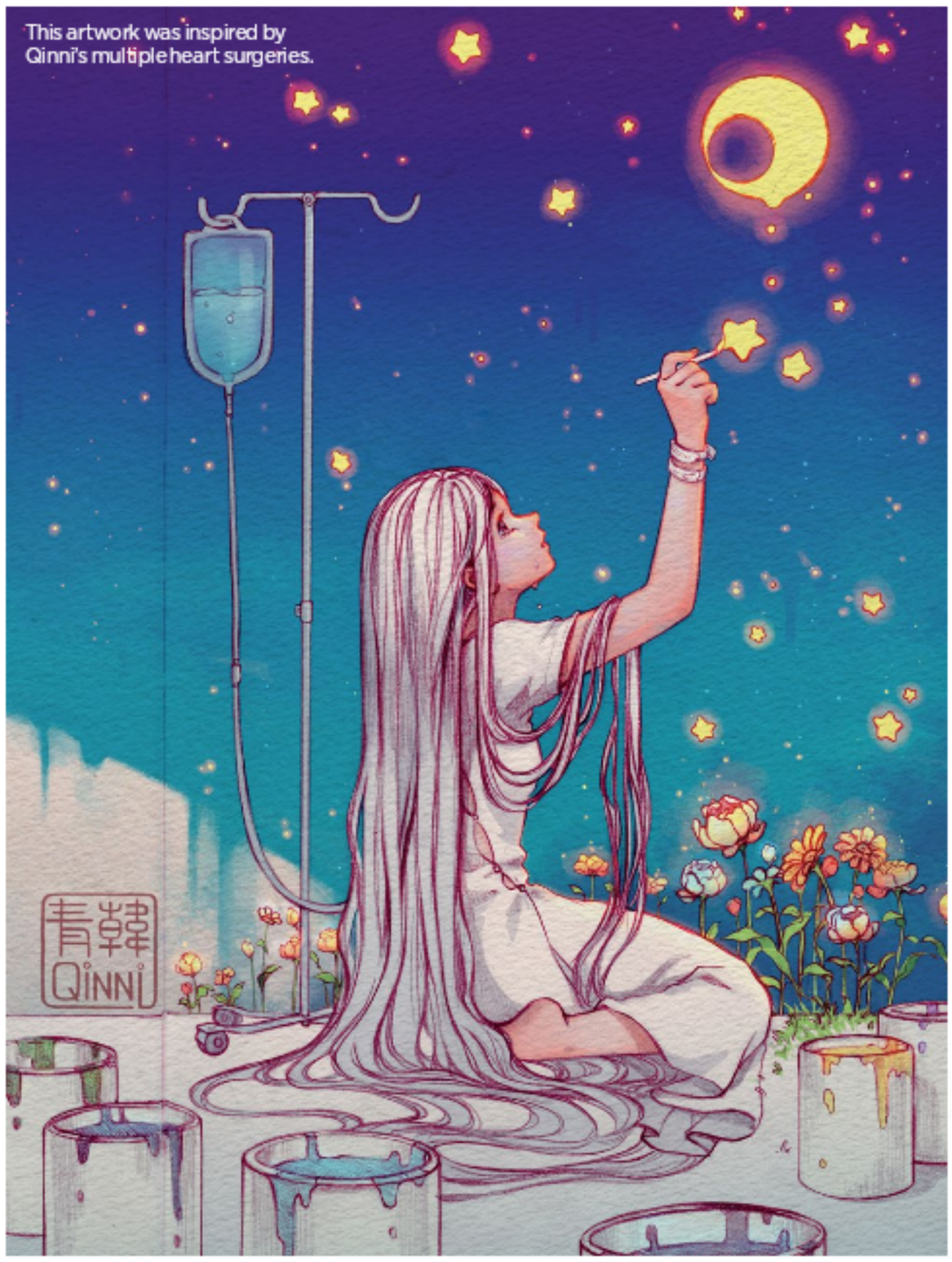
> **There were must-see talks from some of the creative industry's biggest names**

The highlight of Vertex, though, was how open and friendly everyone was, allowing artists and speakers to freely mingle, learn from one another, and progress their careers. Indeed at the talk How to Get a Job at ILM, supervising art director Jason Horley revealed that a recent hire was recruited after they'd chatted at 2019's Vertex, where she was advised to develop skills in 3D tools. If that's not a reason to grab a 2021 ticket, we don't know what is.

Next year's event is expected to sell out quickly, so don't miss out on your chance to attend. Register your interest at **www.vertexconf.com**.


Pixar's Dylan Sisson revealed secrets behind Toy Story 4 and Onward.


Speakers like Even Mehl Amundsen (in the blue cap) also attended talks from fellow creatives.



Qinni posted this piece, Daydreaming, on June 2018 to celebrate passing two million followers.

Art posted by Qinni online last November (left) and on her birthday in March (below).

Artists pay tribute to Qinni

Mourning star The art community is left reeling as a bright, young talent is lost to the world. Here, illustrators acknowledge the impact Qinni had on their lives

8 February, 2020 was a sad day for the art community as Canadian artist Qing Han, aka Qinni, died aged 29. This followed a long battle with cancer first diagnosed in 2015, when she was working at LA animation studio Titmouse as a background painter.

After leaving her job, she continued to share personal work with millions on social media; they in turn provided moral support and financial help with medical bills via Patreon.

Speaking to ImagineFX just one day before her passing, Qing told us: "Posting about my feelings online was like yelling into the void at first, which actually really helped. The amount of support that I received really surprised me; I loved that people actually cared.

"I couldn't really talk to my family about a lot of this stuff, so the internet was a great escape. My mother had to quit her job to become my caregiver, so a bit more financial stability was a godsend, too."

> She made me change my view of the art world and I wouldn't be where I am if I'd never stumbled across her works

Social media has been flooded with tributes via #galaxiesforqinni and #starsforqinni, including this portrait by Norwegian artist **Michy Mikolai** (right). "I was deeply saddened when I learned about Qinni's passing," Michy told us. "She left a big impact, and her unique talents and bright personality will be missed."

US artist **Ama**, meanwhile, told us: "She made me change my view of the art world and I wouldn't be where I am now if I'd never stumbled across her works online. Qinni, you can now paint the stars and skies with ease."

You can explore Qinni's art legacy at **www.instagram.com/qinniart**.

Artist and illustrator Michy Mikolai created this piece in tribute to Qinni when she heard of her passing.

Pernille Ørum

Visual boost The Danish artist on why she needs to be surrounded by items that inspire her in her new workspace

I love Los Angeles and the desert, which heavily inspires my decor. I made this drawing while setting up my office and looking for inspiration.

I recently moved to a suburb of Nairobi, Kenya, and one of my first tasks was to set up a studio. I spend most of my day in this room and to work well it's important for me to be surrounded by things that I love, inspire me, and remind me of why I love what I do. So I've created this colourful workspace in our Loresho home as my own private getaway.

Working from home requires a lot of self-discipline because I have a tendency to either work for clients or on my own projects as soon I get a free minute, which isn't good for inspiration. I have to tell myself to take breaks, not have lunch in front of the computer but in our beautiful garden, and to do something completely different to refresh my imagination and art muse.

Most days I start out by cleaning up from the previous day's work. Things have a tendency to pile up during the ➳

Everything outside my window is green, which gives the room another dimension of colour.

My new book, which I'm so proud of and have on display to remind me of the accomplishment.

I love having plants in my workspace. They clean the air and bring colour and life to the room. Hanging baskets free up valuable desk space.

The artworks on the wall is what I treasure most. I brought everything I could in a handbag when I moved here and love having them on my wall. Most of the painting are by friends of mine and I love looking at their art every day.

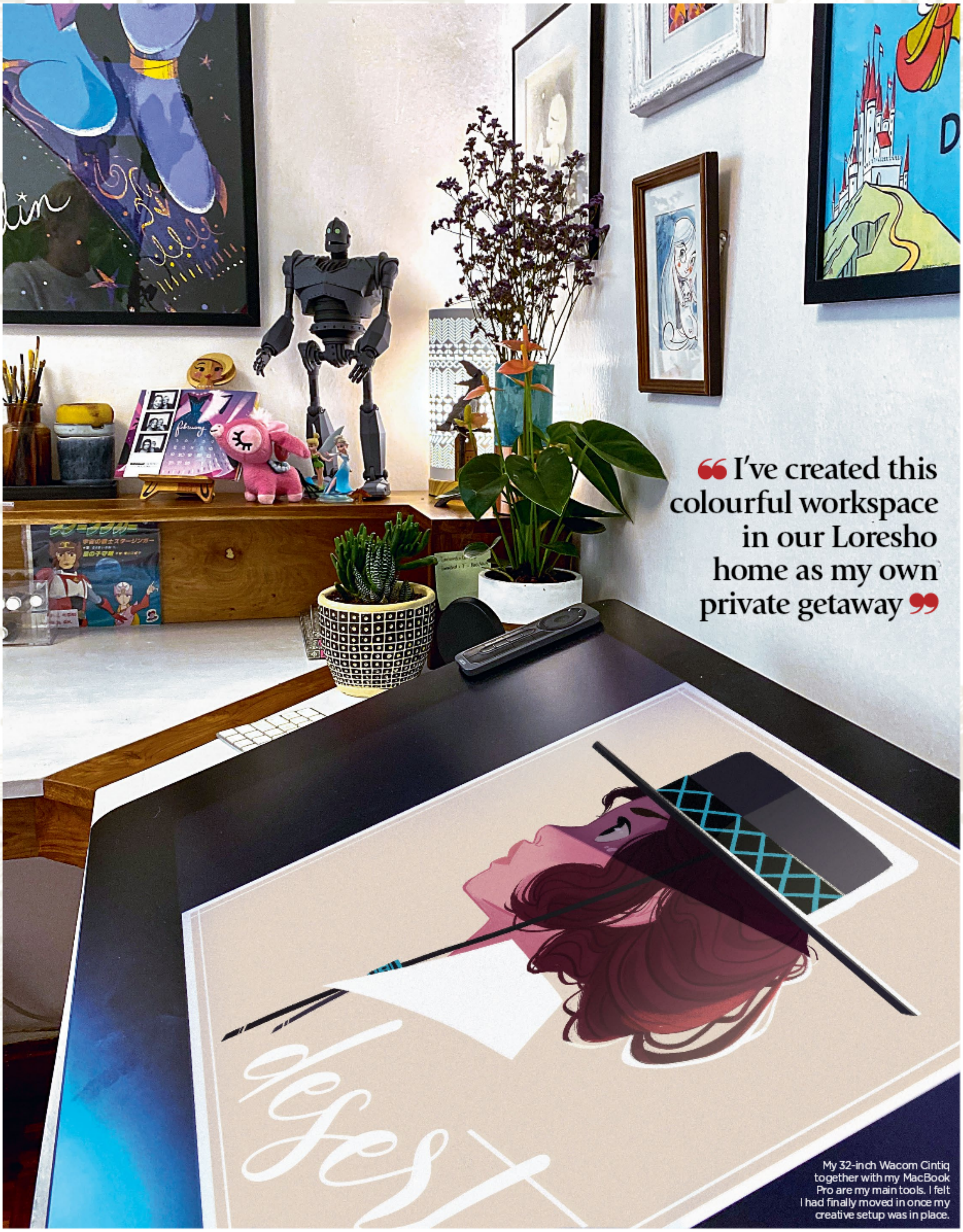
Office chairs that look great aren't easy to find, especially here in Kenya. But I like this chair and with my back pillow that I always use and my handmade blanket from Zanzibar, it's both stylish and comfortable.

I love the details on this desk, which I made in collaboration with TIRA Studio, based in Nairobi. It was important for me that the table top was white so it didn't detract from the colours of the decor, but we wanted to keep the beauty of the wood visible.

This is my painting area where I experience the natural light from outside and enjoy both the colours inside and outside.

One of my many 'after work' character designs. I love drawing characters that have a back story, even if I'm the only one who knows it.

Many of my friends have made such beautiful items, which I love having around in my workspace. The plushie was created by Neysa Bové, and Brittney Lee painted Calendar Girl.



My 32-inch Wacom Cintiq together with my MacBook Pro are my main tools. I felt I had finally moved in once my creative setup was in place.

My love for colour is one reason why I bought this beautiful vintage Moroccan rug, which makes me so happy every time I see it.

As well as working in Photoshop I like traditional media. I always carry my paper calendar and a pencil case, and I love buying small, cute books for doodling and note-taking.

day and when I'm done in the evening I just want to go out and do something else. Ten minutes spent tidying up before settling down clears my head and gets me in the mood for the work ahead.

DREAM DESK

The thing I'm most excited about in my office is my handmade teak desk by TIRA Studio. We collaborated on the design for my dream desk and the result is beautiful. It has unique details, is locally made and meets all my needs. I work both digitally and traditionally, and this desk enables me to keep the mess from the painting separate from my digital projects. It gives me a new sense of freedom, not having to clear up every time I want to work on something else.

"The thing I'm most excited about in my office is my hand-made desk"

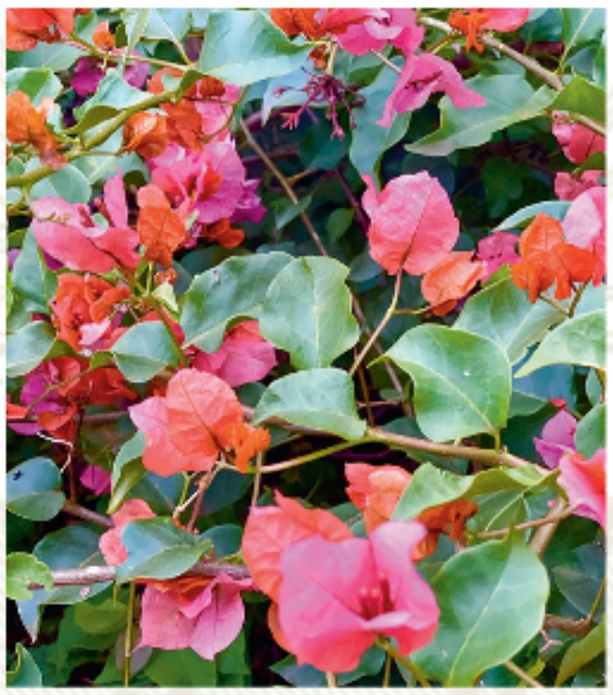
My office is filled with beautiful art because I'm lucky enough to have many talented friends in the animation/illustration industry and I love having their creations surrounding me when I work. Their skills inspires me to try new things and it pushes me to do better. I've gone to great lengths to get their artworks transported to my new home safely and carefully framed, and their paintings make this feel like my space.

I've just produced a new book: The Art of Pernille Ørum. It's published by 3Dtotal Publishing and will be available in the spring.

Pernille is a Danish character designer, illustrator and visual developer. She was the lead character designer for Warner Bros.' DC Superhero Girls and has worked with clients such as Netflix, DreamWorks, Disney Publishing and more. You can see more of her art at www.pernilleoe.com.

I've had this paint setup for year and I still love the aesthetics and simplicity of it. Everything I need is here and it has a calm and neutral look.

A new thing for me is to have my own lush, green and colourful garden. It's given me a new place to seek inspiration and it's what inspires me in my workspace decor as well.



My take on the actor Tippi Hedren who starred in the classic Hitchcock film The Birds. I painted this to celebrate Halloween.

In the same room, opposite my work desk, I've painted an old vanity area a soft pink and I love it so much. I would not be able to choose and work with colours against this background, which is why it's in the other side of the room.

I created his drawing together with 3Dtotal for the Earth Draw II project, raising money for tree-planting charities. It's inspired by the plant in our backyard.

This beautiful vintage Beanstalk rack was something I found in a print shop that was closing down and hadn't changed since the 80s. It holds some of my many plants and a fabric I hope to get made into something, when I have the time.

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

Follow us on Twitter: www.twitter.com/imaginefx

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Krita tips wanted

My name is Olivia, I'm in my final year of high school and am an avid fan of ImagineFX. My graphic design teacher introduced me to the magazine (around the time I had just started making my own digital art) and I instantly fell in love with it, so for Christmas I got a subscription and have absolutely adored every issue so far!

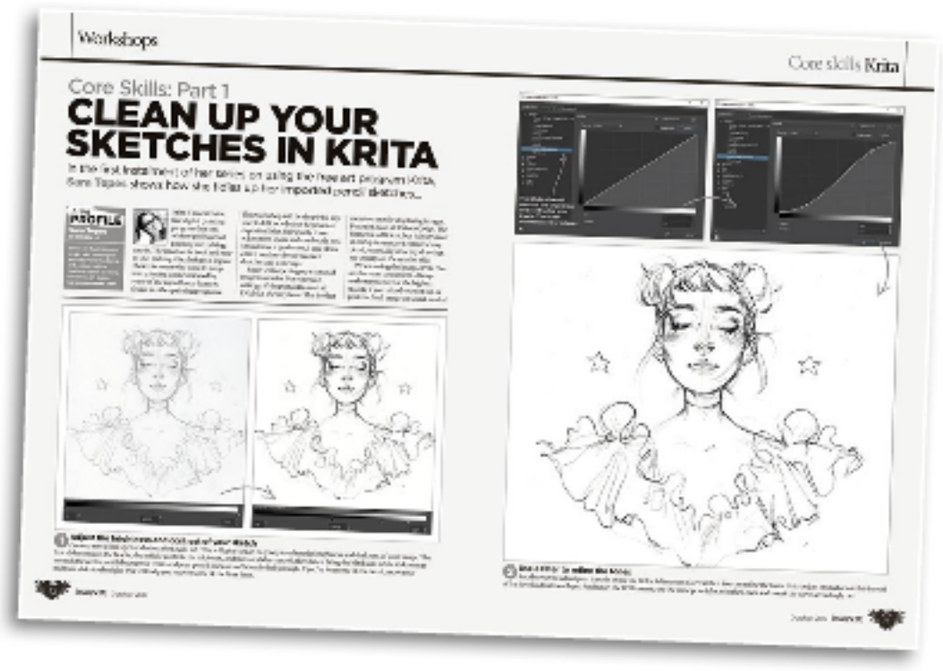
I was wondering if you knew of a drawing program called Krita? It's what I use and I'm finding it rather good so far, but I'm just starting out so I was wondering if you had any tips? Thanks!

Olivia, via email

Claire replies *Hello Olivia, nice to hear from you and thank you for subscribing! Also give thanks to your graphic design teacher, they clearly know what they're talking about! We have heard of Krita – it's a great free program to get started with. We recently did a Core Skills series on Krita, which ran across five months of ImagineFX. I think you would find these editions helpful. Some of our previous editions are still available in our online shop. As for other suggestions,*

DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE? Don't worry – you can get hold of it at **https://ifxm.ag/buyissue185**

Sara Tepes put together a five-part series for us on the basics of Krita, and how to get the most from the free software.



Artists regularly provide anatomy advice in ImagineFX, including Oliver Sin whose work appeared in issue 183.

ArtRage is a good, cheaper alternative to the likes of Photoshop, or if you have an iPad, Procreate is a fantastic painting app.

Anatomy special

In the past your magazine published the How to Draw & Paint Anatomy guide. I would love to buy it – I suppose it was two issues of the magazine together with video tutorials. Is it still available?

Romana, via email

Claire replies *Romana, thank you for your email. This is currently out of print, but I'll pass on your request to get this reprinted. We create a variety of special editions and they are in stores, but also available here: www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk/design.*

I want to see this artist!

Firstly, thanks to you and the team for all your great work. Love the magazine – in fact, it's the pillar of inspiration for the work I do. Can't wait to get the little notification each month: "Your issue is ready to read."

I wondered if you'd ever considered interviewing and doing a feature with Matt Rhodes. His use of colour – particularly in his Tellurion personal project – blows my mind. I'd never actually considered how powerful a storytelling tool colour can be, until looking at his work. The way his line-work is deepened by the use of various blending layers and soft fills – it's all deceptively simple, but extraordinarily effective.

I've been experimenting trying to learn from his techniques, and I just think it'd be a great feature piece in ImagineFX one day. Maybe in one of your colour-focused issues…?

Aidan from Sydney

Claire replies *Aidan, thanks so much for your considered suggestion for ImagineFX. Matt Rhodes is a great call, and would be perfect in our next edition of ImagineFX. It's a comic art issue, so I hope he'll be free to offer some guidance for us all.*

FRESH PAINT

New works that have grabbed our attention

Małgorzata Kmieć
@mkmiec.art

Henriette Boldt
@henridoesart

Thomas Kleinberger
@thomas.kleinberger

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

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ARTIST PORTFOLIO

TY CARTER

Gary Evans talks to the US visual development artist about the making of Spies in Disguise, and the time he received an April Fools' phone call from Pixar...

MIDNIGHT ARCH
From Ty Carter's self-published book, Wasatch, depicting the southern Utah region in a simplified but exaggerated style.

GRANDPA'S FARM
Keyframe painting from Ty's in-development short film based on his childhood and tall-tale memories with his grandpa.

On 1 April 2008, Ty Carter takes a phone call from "Pixar." The American is in his first year studying animation at Brigham Young University (BYU) in the city of Provo, Utah. He quickly decides that the caller is a fellow student trying to prank him.

Ty is looking for a summer internship, but so far has received nothing but rejection letters. Now he's supposed to believe Pixar is calling to talk about a paid internship with free accommodation in California? Yeah, okay. Ty pranks the caller right back.

Ty: "You're going to ask who my favourite Pixar character is, right?"

The caller: "Excuse me?"

Ty: "It's Shrek!"

The conversation continues like this for a little while, back and forth, until, finally, excruciatingly, Ty figures out the caller is really a Pixar recruiter.

"Needless to say," Ty says now, "I didn't get it. I butchered that one."

AN IDEAS PERSON

It's 2016, and Ty is about to start work on a new animated film. He's now a visual development artist at Blue Sky Studios. He starts work early in the development stage of a film, coming up with paintings that convey the movie's big idea, usually a specific character in a key scene.

Ty is an ideas person, a brainstormer who can suggest new or interesting takes on things. Questions that Ty always asks himself include what will make this movie different? What's special about this story and these characters? In this film, Spies in Disguise, lead character Lance Sterling (voiced by Will Smith) is the "world's greatest spy." That gives Ty plenty to work with: "It's funny, right? Because, if you're the best spy in the world, and everybody knows who you are, then… are you really a good spy?"

Growing up, Ty liked to trace dinosaurs in his colouring books. Aged six, his parents set him a challenge:

JELLO
"I love Jurassic Park so much that I started caricaturing my favourite scenes into simplified, almost cartoon styles," says Ty.

> **"I remember thinking: I want to be able to do this. I want to draw like this"**

could he draw a dinosaur freehand without looking at his colouring books? It turned out pretty good: "I thought it was the coolest thing ever, that I just drew it from memory."

Jurassic Park (1993) was a big thing for Ty. He was eight when it came out. It wasn't just the film that hooked him – though it's still his favourite movie – but a companion book called The Making of Jurassic Park. The book was full of detailed, technical drawings of dinosaurs. It contained work by pioneering concept artists Mark 'Crash' McCreery and Craig Mullins. "I remember thinking: I want to be able to do this. I want to draw like this. It was a phase that changed the way I was looking at everything." ➳

JAPAN, SPIES IN DISGUISE
"I developed the look and feel for Japan," says Ty of his work on Spies in Disguise, here depicting Kimura's covert hand-off of the super-tracker.

Ty started taking his art seriously. Still very young, he was thinking about anatomy, making things more realised, rendering them out. He was still using pencil and paper, but his granddad was a keen oil painter, so Ty was encouraged to experiments with his paints, experiments that usually ended up with all the colours muddying to grey ("I must have wasted so much good paint," he says).

All this stuff would prove useful later on, but Ty wasn't yet picturing a career in art. The terms concept artist and visual artists weren't as common as they are today. It wasn't something your average kid wanted to do when they grew up. Ty's dream was to make films: "There's just something special about watching a really good movie. It's escapism. For 90 minutes you experience life in another world, as another person, doing something you'd probably never do."

> "There's something special about watching a really good movie. It's escapism"

TECHNICAL SKILL, ARTISTIC SKILLS

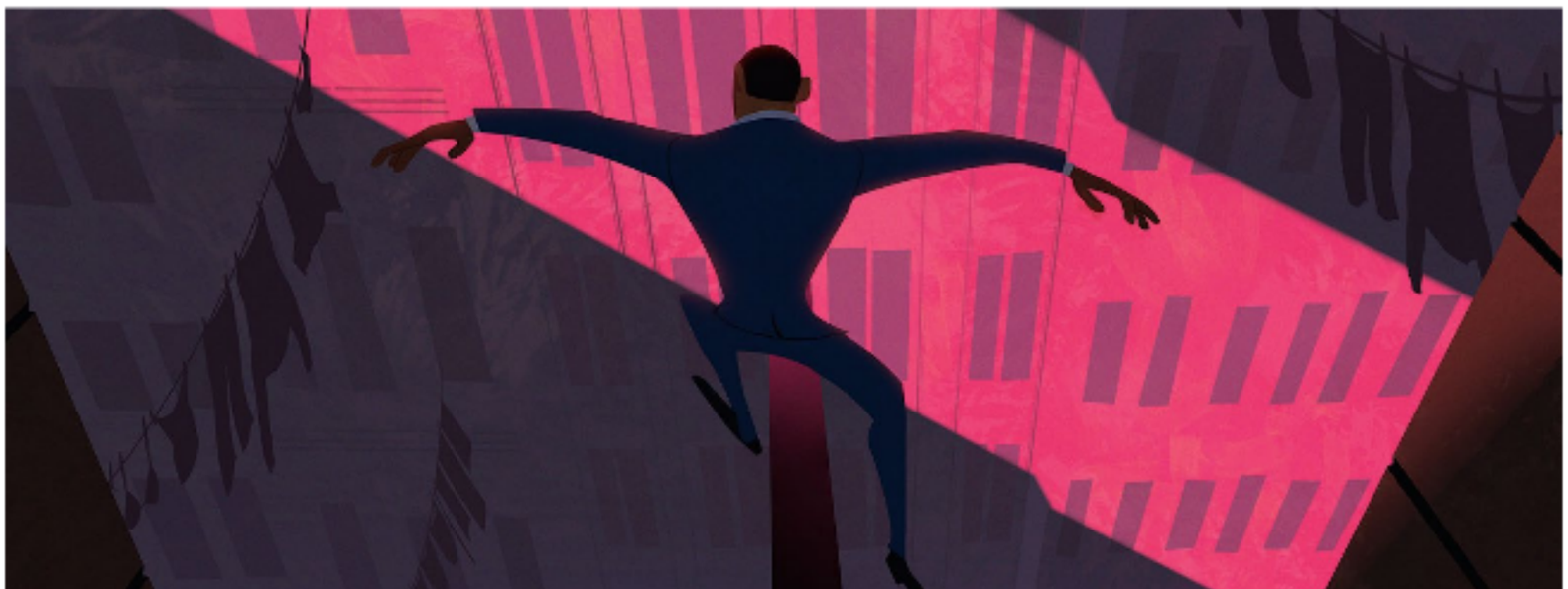
Once Ty has images that get across the big idea behind Spies in Disguise, he starts designing detailed locations and gadgets for Lance's missions. His aim at this stage is to work very quickly so he can flood the directors with ideas. He has no idea what the directors are looking for – they might not know at this stage – so it's important to present as many options as possible.

What makes Spies in Disguise visually unique is its stylised appearance, realistic lighting, with really pushed shapes. Lance, for example, is very long, almost stretched, his outer appearance mirroring his high opinion of himself. The

LANCE IN ACTION
Keyframe illustration of Lance Sterling in action, capturing the essence of the stealthy character and the film's graphic look.

Artist PROFILE

Ty Carter
LOCATION: US
FAVOURITE ARTISTS: Mark 'Crash' McCreery and Craig Mullins
MEDIA: Maya, Photoshop, Mario Paint
WEB: www.tycarter.com



STRONG, SHARP SHAPES

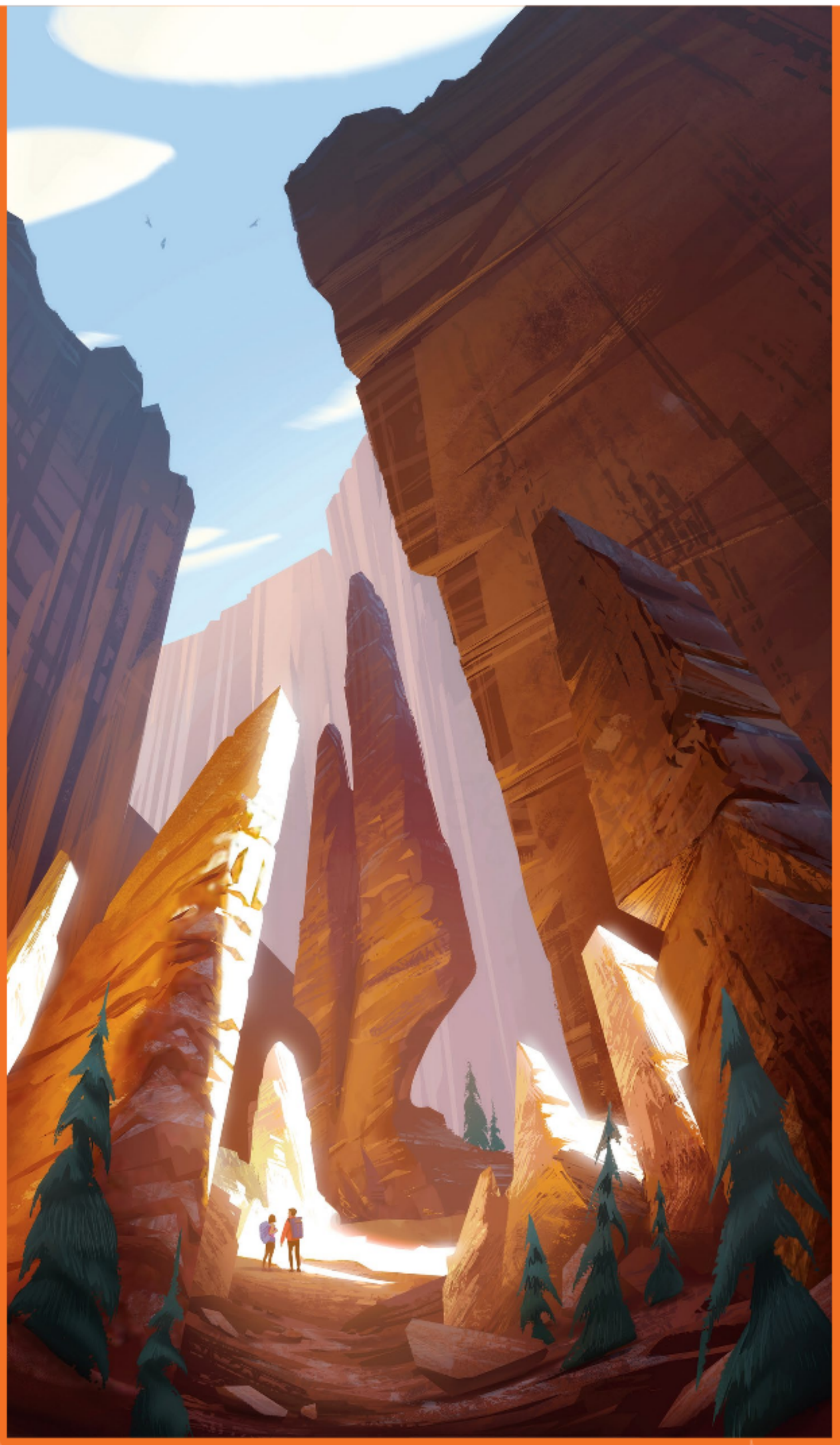
Ty Carter uses values, lighting and texture to paint a rocky setting

1 QUICK VALUES

"I lay in my values and establish a hierarchy of layers: fore-, mid- and background. When those are working I consider the local values before adding any colour. I add some light effects to see how the shadows might affect the design. Then I add local colour and work out a harmony."

2 LIGHTING CHOICES

"Next I lay in my key lights and focus on the exposure. Do I want to expose for the light or shadow? I let the story dictate this decision. Here I allow the light to blow out, in order to see the vast environment in the shadows."

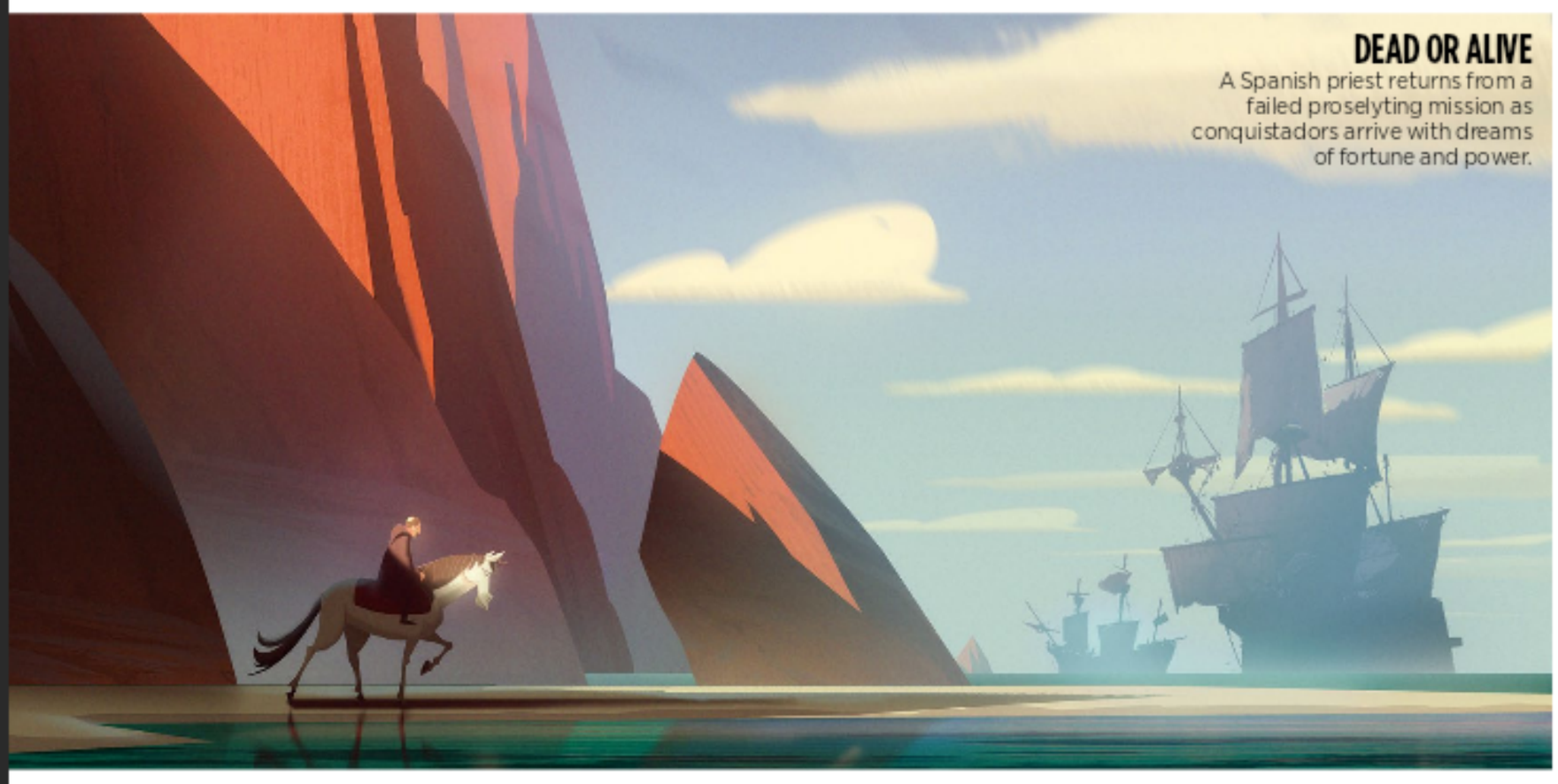


3 ADDING TEXTURE

"The general colour scheme and lighting pass is effective, so I can start adding textures. I try to keep any material rendering as graphic as possible. Then I add in some blue fill light from the sky."

4 TIME FOR THE FUN STUFF

"Secondary light – such as bounce – makes the scene unique due to the red rock. I add a strong atmosphere to capture the searing sunlight. It conveys the warmth created from all the light bouncing around. Then I add scale cues, like the birds and tree details. Clouds help to complement the sky and balance the composition."



DEAD OR ALIVE
A Spanish priest returns from a failed proselyting mission as conquistadors arrive with dreams of fortune and power.

directors are happy now, so the film moves into the production stage.

Ty always knew he wanted to make movies, but the problem was he grew up in Salt Lake City, not California where films were made, and he was good with the pencil and paint brush, but not the video camera. He sat down with his dad and tried to work out what to do at university. Ty was always interested in advertising, architecture, transportation design… he certainly wasn't against any of those things. But they gave him a feeling that this was "getting away from the main dream."

The other problem was also the cost of the big art schools. Ty's family couldn't afford them. His dad's line was: "I love you, but this place costs more than our house!"

> "Because the style of Spies in Disguise is so pushed, we've got to design everything"

VENICE, SPIES IN DISGUISE
"This is an early development of Venice, created to explore the graphic shape-design and materials," says Ty.

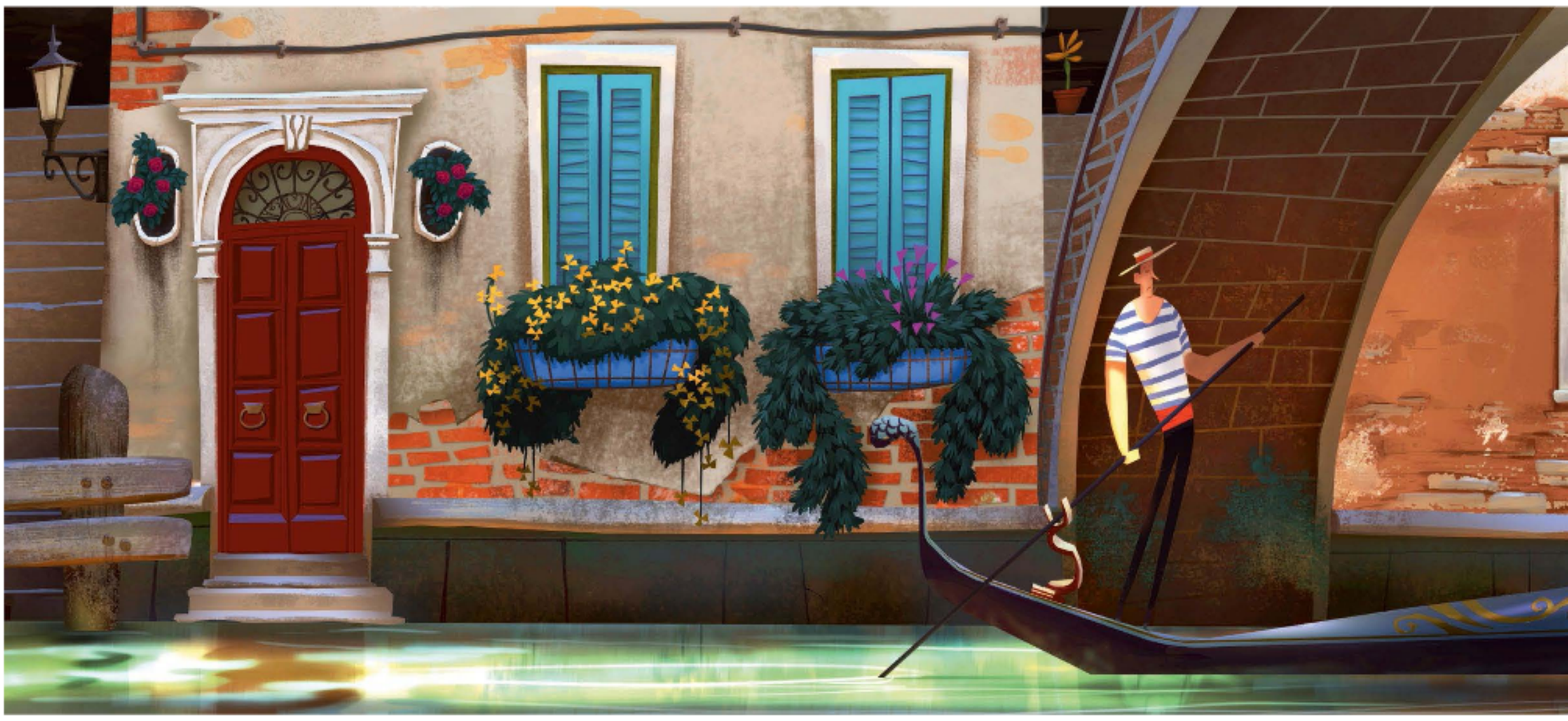
Ty wasn't instantly sold on his dad's idea to study animation, either. He didn't draw cartoons. He didn't have a particularly cartoony style. But the more he thought about it, the more he realised animation incorporated advertising, architecture, transportation design… It was "design for everything." Plus, BYU was cheaper than most other universities, and the animation programme had a good record of students going on to get work at big studios, so it was a possible route into the film industry.

Animation at BYU brought more choices, but not necessarily in ways that Ty hoped. Did he want be a materials artist or a visual development artist? Did he want to do modelling, lighting, rigging? "Holy cow! I just wanted to come here, design and paint." Fortunately, Ty got some good advice from a professor, who told him to develop one artistic skill and one technical skill. Ty was already pretty good at painting – thanks to his granddad – so he focused on getting better in Maya, modelling, putting materials on things, and that became the technical skill.

DESIGNING FROM THE GROUND UP

In the production stage of Spies in Disguise, Ty gets to work on sequences. One of the film's big sequences takes place in Venice. Ty creates concepts for canals, bridges, gondolas, buildings, shop fronts… "When you're making an animated movie, you've got to come up with what every single thing is going to look like. Nothing is free. Because the style of Spies in Disguise is so pushed, we've got to design everything. There's no reusing stuff from other movies."

He'll spend months on this stuff – first concepts, then final designs, props, sets, layouts – before passing it on to the modelling department, which will build the designs in 3D. This goes on for a couple of years. As the film nears completion, Ty does a bit of everything, including colour keys and colour scripting, ensuring the colours and lighting of the film are



COZY CANOE
Another piece from Ty's self-published book, Wasatch: two lovers enjoy a sunny afternoon on the pristine Silver Lake.

consistent, but that they're also representative of the action of their corresponding scenes. A sequence full of danger, for example, may feature lots of red.

At the end of his first year at university, Ty put together a portfolio and applied for internships "everywhere". He was rejected by most, but heard from three places, one of which was Pixar ("It's Shrek!"), and another was Disney.

His summer internship at Disney in 2008 was "totally life-changing." Everybody he met was willing to help him learn. They were kind, generous with their time. Officially, because of union rules, Ty wasn't allowed to work on any films, but he was encouraged to build up his own vis-dev portfolio. This meant, by the end of his second year at BYU, he was able to land another internship, this time at Pixar, with the salary and the paid-for house near San Francisco – everything he missed out on the year before. At Pixar, he went straight into production work, designing sets and props, concept paintings, and material callouts for Toy Story 3 (2010) and Cars 2 (2011).

ALL-STAR STUDENT TEAM

At BYU, third-year animation students get together to make their own end-of-year movie. But now, after his hands-on experience making movies, Ty didn't want to wait that long. He started putting together an all-star team of fellow students to work on his own short film. He couldn't pay his team, but he did put them in touch with professionals he'd met during his internships. DreamGiver (2011) went on to win a student Emmy award and was screened at the Cannes Film Festival. He'd made his own film (see it at **www.vimeo.com/36833415**).

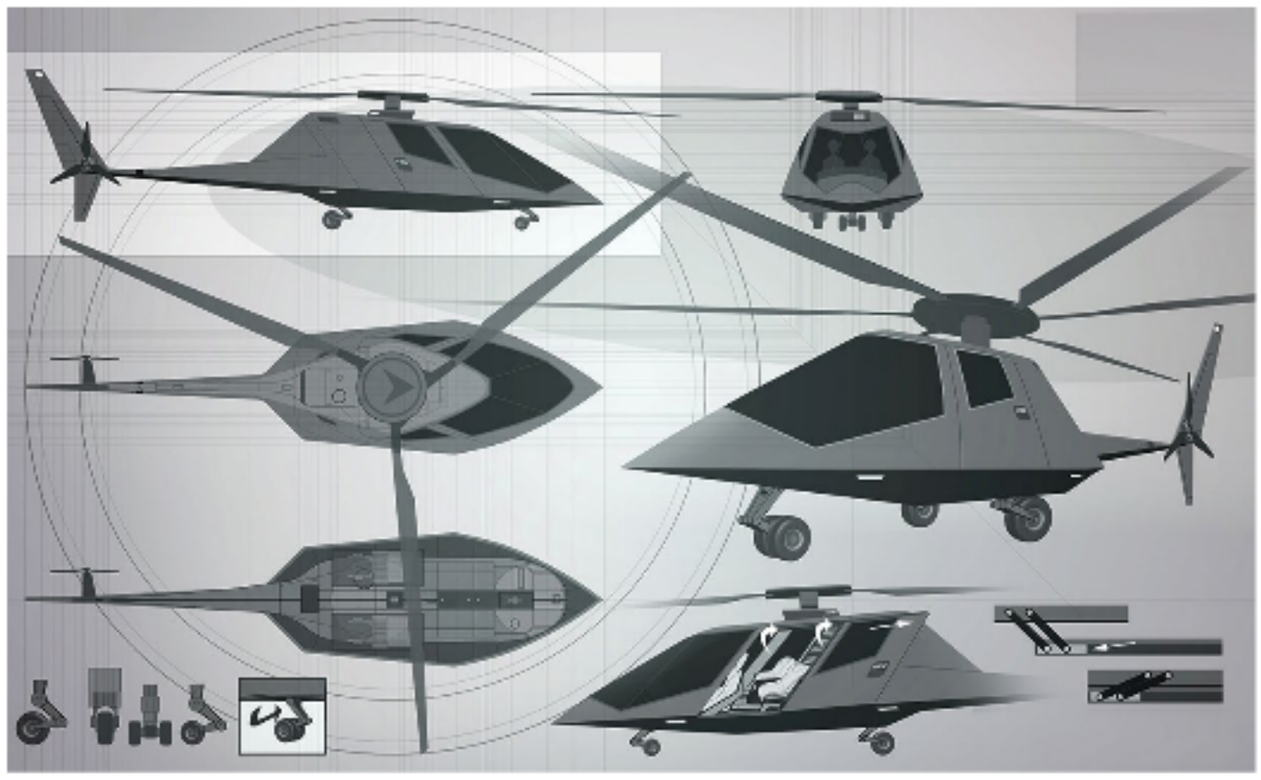
WALTER
This piece from Spies In Disguise is a colour key for the young Walter seen in his living room.

After college, Ty worried he'd never get back into a big studio like Disney or Pixar. Legendary artist Bill Perkins – art director on Aladdin (1992) – gave him some good advice: don't worry about the studio you work for, worry about the artists you work with. With that in mind, Ty's next stop was Blue Sky Studio in Greenwich, Connecticut, not far from New York City. After a two-month internship, he accepted a full-time job, working on Ice Age: Continental Drift (2012), Epic (2013), Peanuts (2015), and most recently, Spies in Disguise (2019). Next is Nimona, set for release in 2022.

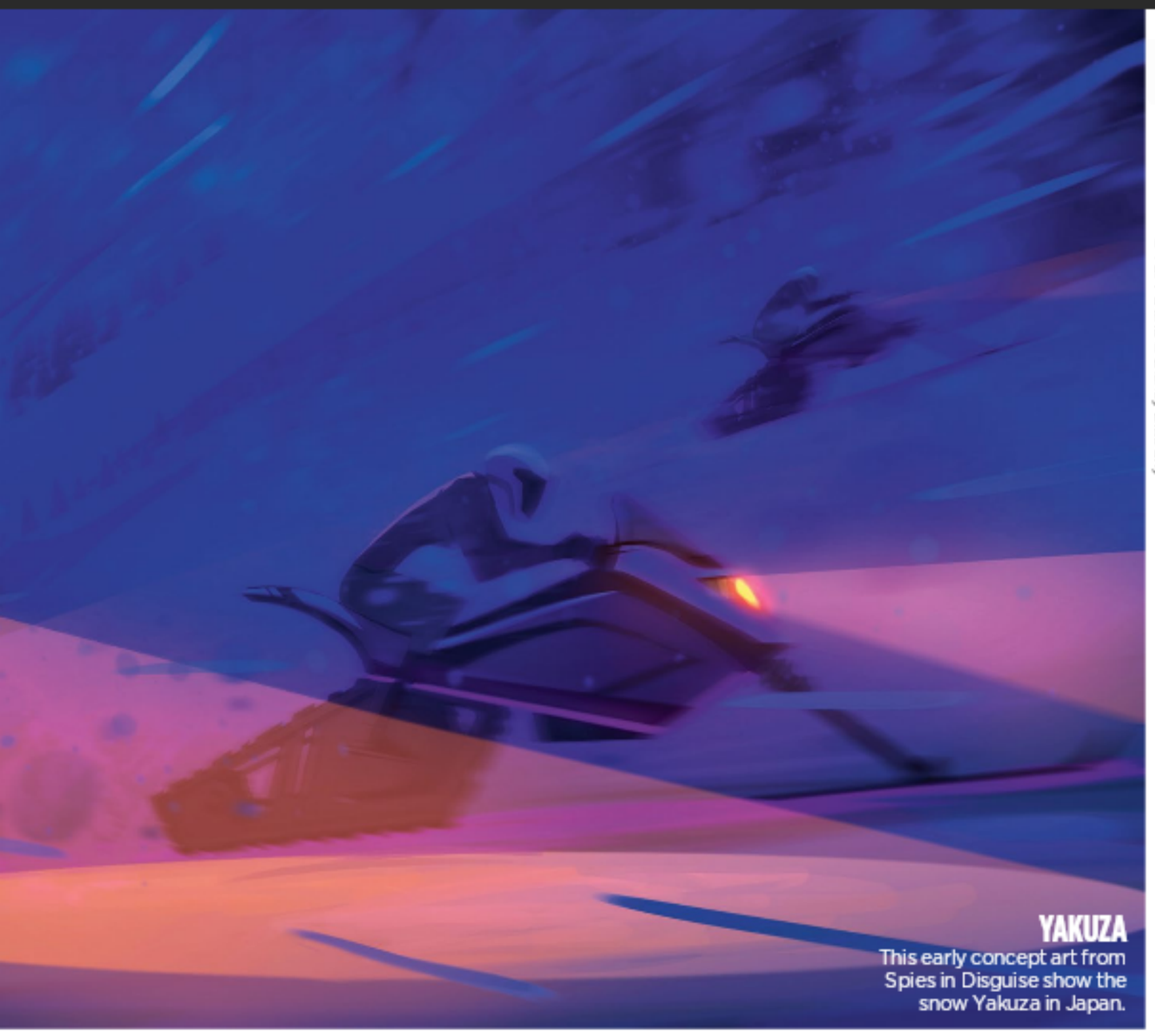
> **"Basically, I share tips and tricks on things I wish I known 10 years ago"**

Ty also teaches now, via Patreon. He passes on Bill's advice and the advice of the professor who said develop one artistic skill and one technical skill. He helps his students focus on "the main dream," and how to achieve it.

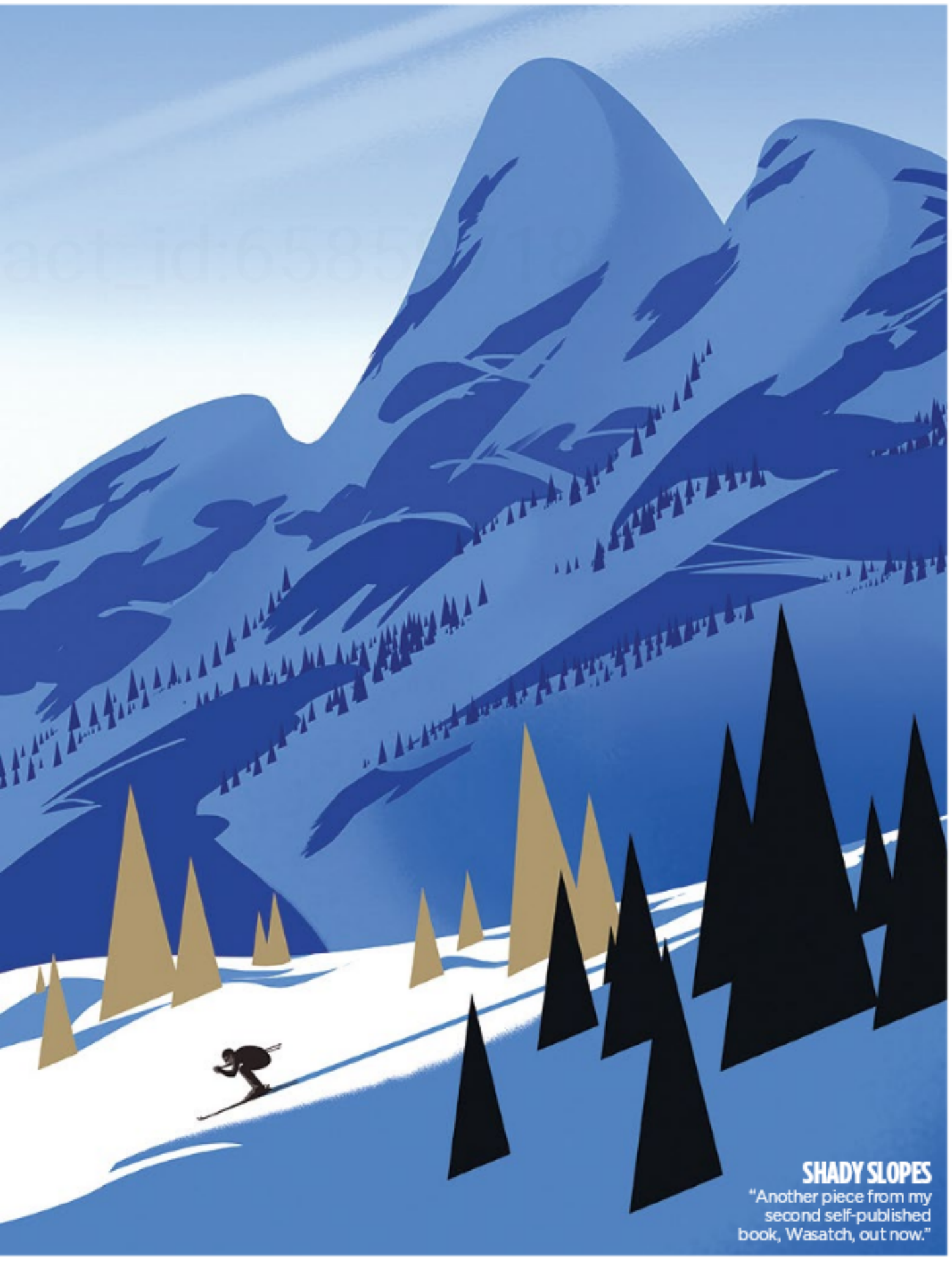
"Basically, I share tips and tricks on principles of design and colour, things I wish I'd known 10 years ago. I just knew that I wanted to make movies. I wanted to do the art and create the worlds – create worlds where characters could live in, but which took us to a different place."



KILLIAN HELICOPTER
From Spies In Disguise, this piece is a design breakdown of the bad guy's helicopter.



YAKUZA
This early concept art from Spies in Disguise show the snow Yakuza in Japan.



SHADY SLOPES
"Another piece from my second self-published book, Wasatch, out now."

TY CARTER

PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Ty reveals how to find the art education that's right for you

"I think art education is overpriced. I started my Patreon mentorship programme because I was fed up of hearing how much people were paying at these schools. If you leave a big school, you could be $150,000 in debt, and I don't think artists understand how much money that is and how long it takes to pay back. Going to these schools isn't bad. It's awesome. You're getting a fantastic education. And when you land that dream job, you're going to be making great money, but you're probably going to living in an expensive city and so it's going to take time to pay off $150,000.

When I was an intern, I felt like I learned more in eight weeks than I did in a year at school. Why was this the case when I had great teachers at school? It was because I had these one-on-one mentors. I had these people helping me 24/7. Then I started thinking: what if I set up a programme where I could mentor artists one on one? So I started this mentorship programme through Patreon."

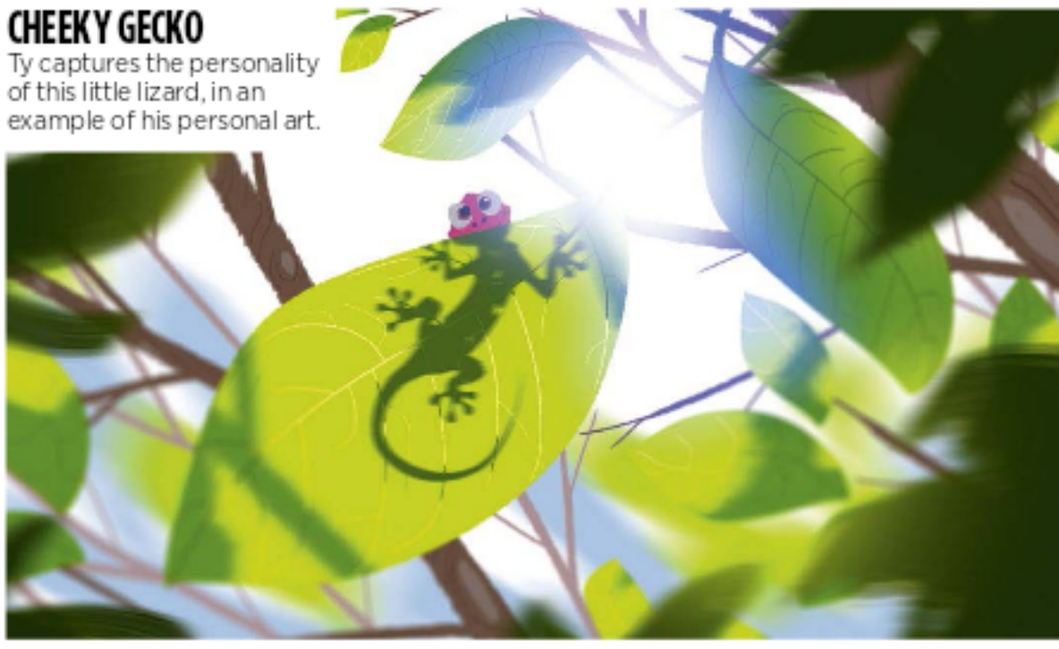
Ty's tips on art education

1 "Find a place where you can learn the principles of design and colour. These could be a class, or online tutorials, but makes sure whoever's delivering these principles knows what they're talking about and that you understand them. And you need to focus or what it is you need to learn."

2 "Build a network. That's where school comes in handy. The friends you make in class – that's your network. But the cool thing today is you meet these people through social media platforms, too."

3 "Find mentors. You, the artists, are the future. Contact a potential mentor who's working in the industry now. But also approach a possible mentor who used to be in the industry, but have either retired or are now teaching. If you've got the past, present and future covered, you'll learn and grow so much more."

CHEEKY GECKO
Ty captures the personality of this little lizard, in an example of his personal art.



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PRINT AND DIGITAL BACK ISSUES

Issue 185
April 2020

Ilya Kuvshinov's cover art heralds our popular manga-themed issue, with pro advice on painting manga faces, new rendering techniques and more. We reveal the modern masters of manga, and speak to Camilla D'Errico.

Issue 184
March 2020

Cover artist Ramón Nuñez paints a fun character piece for our cover, while Antony Ward reveals how to depict wet skin. Pro artist tell us how they turned failures into successes, and we talk the enigmatic illustrator Heikala.

Issue 183
February 2020

Elevate your human and animal anatomy skills with the help of Oliver Sin and Aaron Blaise, and discover new brush techniques in Procreate 5. We also talk to MTG's Cynthia Sheppard and illustrator Anna Dittmann.

Issue 182
January 2020

Learn how to paint striking fantasy portraits, starting with Fatemeh Haghnejad's ethereal cover art. We interview John Burton and Djamila Knopf, and find out what successful artists have in common.

RESOURCES ARE INCLUDED WITH PRINT AND DIGITAL EDITIONS*

Issue 181
Christmas 2019

Issue 180
December 2019

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November 2019

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Issue 177
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July 2019

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Issue 173
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*Resource files are available from issue 85 onwards.

ARTIST PORTFOLIO

CÉCILE CARRE

From being headhunted out of school to moving to New York to work on new animation titles, this artist's career is on the up, discovers **Beren Neale**

As an animation artist, French-born Cécile Carre is an all-rounder, working in storyboarding, visual development, character art and 2D animation. You can see her highly expressive work online, with oodles of loose, funny personal pieces updated over the past few months on her Instagram page. Recently working on the 2019 animation Klaus, and now brandishing a freshly printed US work permit, she's poised to embark on top-secret projects in New York. Yet unlike one of her beloved Disney characters, none of this was written in the stars.

As the daughter of two doctors, growing up in France's idyllic Réunion, an island in the Indian Ocean, animated TV shows were banned in the house – although Cécile and her three sisters did fill up afternoons endlessly drawing. Perhaps something of the island's surrounding volcanoes, rainforests and coral reefs would later inspire her in her creative career, but initially Cécile was all set for a career in engineering.

GIANT
"I have a big family so when we organise family meeting, we need to feed them all. This day there was a giant paella."

ENGINEERING A CAREER IN ART

However, after a year in this field, things weren't quite right. "It was not fulfilling me," she recalls. "It's probably like any first-level job – but it's even more frustrating when you've ➳

Artist PROFILE

Cécile Carre
LOCATION: US
FAVOURITE ARTISTS: Boulet, André Franquin, Gotlib, Hayao Miyazaki, Moebius, Cyril Pedrosa, Claude Ponti, Albert Uderzo and Olivier Vatine
SOFTWARE: Procreate, Photoshop, Toon Boom Storyboard Pro, TVPaint
WEB: www.artstation.com/carrececile

DREAM FOREST
"When your dream was full of wonderful and crazy original ideas, but you barely remember anything when you wake up."

chosen a field that you then realise you don't even like that much. I didn't feel useful. I didn't find a strong meaning to the job. I was like a minion and I felt completely useless. It was defeating and disappointing."

Hopefully, if any of this is going to ring true to ImagineFX readers, it'll be Cécile's response to this bleak situation. She turned to art, scouring online art websites like Café Salé (**www.cfsl.net**) and devouring illustration resources such as Glenn Vilppu's online drawing classes. She drew late into the night after work, and finally decided – with the support of her parents and partner – to go into art full-time at 24.

Initially, it was comics that Cécile was interested in, inspired by her love of such comic book artists and cartoonists as André Franquin, Albert Uderzo, Gotlib, Moebius, Olivier Vatine and Didier Tarquin. "We're very

"For a year I was constantly drawing, sketching and preparing a portfolio for the Gobelins entrance exam"

lucky in France that there are a lot of public art schools, with grants available," she says. "Studying art is encouraged, and not just the commercial kind. That's why [France has] a lot of different kinds of comic books and animation styles."

The artist had also developed a love for Disney films and the work of Hayao Miyazaki, who co-founded Studio Ghibli. After undertaking some research which suggested that a career in animation was more realistic than comics or illustration, her sights became set on the renowned French art school Gobelins, based in Paris.

"For a year I was constantly drawing, sketching and preparing a portfolio for the entrance exam," Cécile says. "I was looking on the internet for every source of information that I could get about all the jobs in animation, just to be prepared." It was this steely determination that would get her headhunted for the animated Christmas film Klaus while she was finishing school.

WHERE DID MY TIME GO?
Comic art by Cécile, capturing that feeling of losing hours on your smart phone.

PREPPING FOR GOBELINS

So, artist decides to get into art, then bags a job working on a mainstream animated film straight out of school? Well, not quite. Cécile is keen to reveal the realities of this fairy tale story.

"When I was preparing for Gobelins, I was drawing for eight hours a day. When I was working on my final graduation piece it was more like 12 hours," she says. "When I would go on holiday, I would never draw, but mainly because you get a little disgusted by it… I didn't even know

act_id:658597 18

what I wanted to draw for myself, you know?"

This strict, no-work-on-holiday rule sounds a bit like the imposed recovery time that high-performance athletes have after training, to make sure they're as effective and efficient as possible. "I really think that way," she agrees, and the reality is that, although she's in demand for professional work, "I'm only recently, slowly, getting back into personal drawings."

In school Cécile took easily to character work, but was less confident about background art. "When I was younger, I always wanted to become a comic artist. When I did drawings for myself they were character-oriented ➳

CHILDHOOD MEMORIES

"Playing board games such as Monopoly is a chance to be four years old all over again."

FOCUSED

"Personal illustration based on an original idea by my dad."





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BUCOLIC
Cécile used Procreate to paint this peaceful countryside scene.

➳ – very expressive and dynamic poses – but I didn't like doing the backgrounds. I started the course in 2014 and finished it in 2017, and we had to work on everything!"

THE STAGES OF ANIMATION

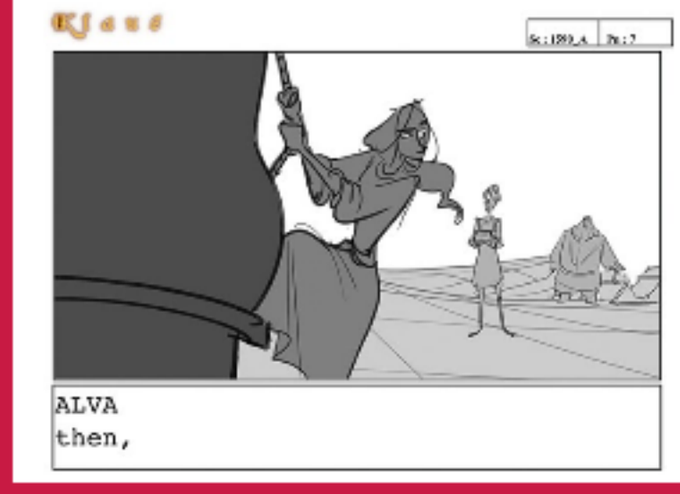
Culminating in her graduation film Burn Out, Cécile studied in all areas on the animation process: script, storyboarding, visual development and animation. "A storyboard is made of very simple black and white rough drawings. The purpose is the communication, the narration through staging, as if you're the director and you want to relate what's happening in the scene: where do you put the camera? What is the character doing? What scene comes next? You're working on how to translate the script, but with very, very basic drawings," she explains. With visual development, "it's about narration through design and colour," the artist continues. "This is about the background – if you're designing a room, you're gonna try and tell something about the person who lives in that room. Is it messy? Is it owned by someone who is young or old? Should you use warm or cold colours? This is all about the authenticity of detail."

> **Storyboarding is usually simple, black and white. It's mainly about narration through staging…**

There's a lot of communication between these two stages of pre-production, Cécile explains, with decisions made in one stage often influencing the other (even retrospectively). But when it comes to the animation stage, "you're really just completely focusing on narration with acting and action – the way the person moves, which relays their personality, what they think. You're ➳

FIRECAMP AT THE MOONRISE
Another example of Cécile's personal illustration work, created using Procreate.

CÉCILE CARRE



LEARN STORYBOARDING BASICS

Exactly what does storyboarding entail? Cécile breaks down the main stages of storyboarding an animated film, drawing on her experiences from working on the Netflix feature Klaus

"Storyboarding is the next step after the script is written. The task is to translate the script into images – rough black and white drawings – choosing the staging and acting based on the information and emotion you need to give the audience.

Pre-production stage

During this stage we exchange materials with the vis-dev team, which is going to provide some visual elements for us to use (character designs and background designs, for example). Sometimes we also create characters and backgrounds during the process of storyboarding – elements that aren't described in the script.

Understanding the director's vision

We work closely with the storyboard supervisor and the director. We always start with a meeting with the director, who takes the time to explain the goal of each single sequences. They will specify the tone of the sequence, the way they think the character should act, the rhythm, and so on. It's important that we understand the director's intentions, so that we're able to tell the story visually in the most clear and effective way.

Dividing the script between artists

The storyboard team is a small number of artists – around five or six working in-house – so we split the script into short sequences (two to three minutes of the film equals two to three pages of script). Generally, each one of us is responsible for our own sequences, but we work together on complicated sequences. We also brainstorm together when we need fresh ideas, gags and so forth.

Presenting the first storyboard draft

We then spend around a week or so making a very rough first draft of our sequence, before we meet the director again. At this stage the characters are barely recognisable – they closely resemble potatoes! The purpose is to work quickly on the staging and the overall rhythm of the sequence, which enables us to check we're going in the right direction. Once the director is confident with the structure, we can go deeper into the details, adding grey tones, cleaning up the drawings and developing the acting.

Build up your storyboarder's skill-set

Although this isn't a step, it's worth mentioning that the job of a storyboard artist is a demanding one. You need to have a wide range of skills: a good sense of composition and acting, perspective drawing, expressive gesture drawing, and of course have some good film references in mind. But the biggest challenge for me is to fully understand the director's intentions. That is why you also need very good communication skills."

also thinking about technical stuff, like physics."

Burn Out is the short story of Stella, a space mechanic who breaks down on a desert planet, then meets her childhood self who reminds her of her lost dreams and career compromises. No doubt based on several conversations that Cécile had with herself when making her career change, it's a four-minute showcase of all the above skills, which may leave you having a similar conversation with yourself (head here to watch it: **www.vimeo.com/carrececile**).

Cécile spent three and a half months scripting Burn Out, storyboarding it in Toon Boom Storyboard Pro, then visual developing it while at Gobelins. The same amount of time was spent on it on an exchange program at CalArts in California. Here she reworked bits, collaborated with voice actors, worked on final backgrounds, did the rough animation in TVPaint, and then final colouring and compositing (combining all visual elements into single images).

It was this full skill-set that no doubt caught the eye of the creator of the Despicable Me franchise, Sergio Pablos. "Actually, [Burn Out] was the only form of portfolio that I had at the time," says Cécile. "I think that Sergio saw some potential in my animations, and a good sense of acting that would benefit the storyboard process."

The film was 2019's Klaus, and Sergio Pablos had "very high standards! You can tell if you've seen his work – he's a perfectionist," Cécile says. "So it was a real challenge to work on his project and I learned a lot, and it was a very rich experience. There was a great atmosphere among the artists, because we were all super-happy to work on this very challenging project." The resulting Netflix-released film was received well by audiences and critics alike, achieving a 94 per cent rating on Rotten Tomatoes.

INNER DEMONS

"Yes, it's cosy and warm inside, but your demons are just waiting for a moment of inattention to sink into your mind. Sometimes only fresh air can clean it up."

> **"It was a real challenge to work on Sergio Pablos' project and I learned a lot"**

PERSONAL PROCESS

For someone who has displayed a regimented, single-minded approach to her craft, Cécile is the first to admit the importance of patience in her

CÉCILE CARRE

MEETING IN THE SEA
Cécile's Procreate artwork captures the essence of summer, albeit underwater!

MAKING A PORTFOLIO FILM

As part of her final year in animation school while studying first at Gobelins and then at CalArts, Cécile created an animation portfolio piece called Burn Out. Here's how she made it...

How did the film come about?
I started my graduation project during my last year of school, September 2016 (in Gobelins). Then I moved to California for an exchange program with CalArts in January 2017. So I finished my graduation film there, in April that year.

Was it your idea?
I was forced to do it because you need to make a graduation short film to get your degree at Gobelins. If I didn't have to, I would probably not have done it. It's hard to stay motivated and confident – it's a four-minute short film, but you have to spend seven months full time working on it!

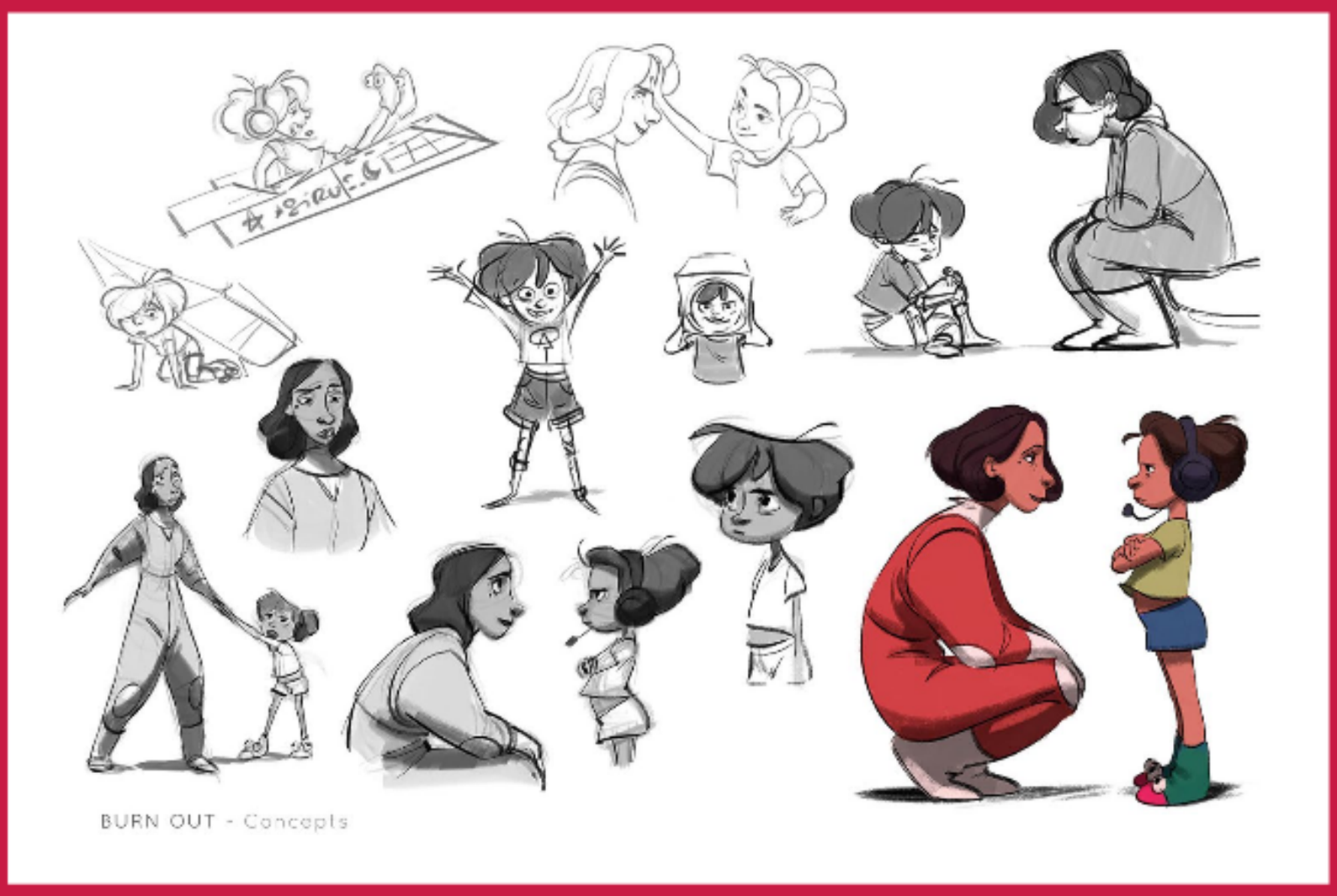
I got the idea for it from my own experience of reconnecting with my passion for drawing when I was an engineer and decided to quit to study animation. And as for the sci-fi/fantastic style, I just chose a style that I knew I would enjoy doing and that I was familiar with. My influences were Moebius, Disney, Miyazaki, Alice in Wonderland and The Little Prince.

How did you write the script?
I think I started with images or ambiances that I liked, and then tried to make a story that made sense out of it. We had writing teachers helping us at Gobelins who gave us a lot of feedback, which was helpful because it was my first time writing a script. I also received useful feedback from the teachers at CalArts, and from my friends I was working with, of course.

CHILDHOOD CAVE
A still from Cécile's short film Burn Out, which features a stranded astronaut and a young, oddly familiar friend.

What was the reaction to your film?
I was very happy with the positive response to my film. It was selected in a lot of festivals and shared a lot on social networks – I guess it helped to come from CalArts and Gobelins! What makes me the most proud is when someone tells me that this film gave them hope, motivation and inspiration in their own life.

Was it your first animation where you worked on all aspects of production
Yes it was the first piece I did all by myself. But during the three years in Gobelins, we had the opportunity to try all these aspects of production during short exercises or team projects. You can find some of these projects on my vimeo channel: **www.vimeo.com/carrececile**.



CHARACTER CONCEPTS
Cécile's studies of the two characters from her short film.

REVEALING THE STAR
A sequence of scenes from the end of Burn Out, showing space mechanic Stella setting a new course.

BEACH LIFE
"Ignore social media take a book to read, and remember to stay hydrated at the beach."

CONCEPTS
Cécile created these tree house concepts for a visual development class at CalArts.

process. "If I'm working on a character then I'd start with references – I feel this part is easily forgotten," Cécile says. "Because you want to start drawing at once, you're often too much in a hurry." And what would she be looking for? "I look for various pictures. It may be one of some clothes, or something that looks specific and authentic for my character."

She'll then make very loose, expressive sketches, always putting the character into action, "so they're not just standing there, doing nothing," she explains, "because you can get inspired by the way the character will act. It will give you more ideas." At this stage she's looking for a couple of striking silhouettes. "From there I try to understand why a silhouette works, because when I do the rough drawings I don't think about anatomy, about anything technical. I'm just letting myself go.

> **When I do the rough drawings I don't think about anatomy, about anything technical. I'm just letting myself go**

"If you try and do everything at once, you'll end up with something that's very stiff. You may also repeat something you've already seen, or make something you think you should be making." Working in a world where original (often personal) story is king, this is the last thing that the artist would want.

CHANNELLING THE 'FRENCH STYLE'

Going back to her love of comics, this desire to create something that doesn't remind someone of something else, is what Cécile loosely calls the 'French style'. "Culture is encouraged in France, so there are a lot of personal projects that come alive," she says, "because personal style is valued. But also, I think especially in comic books, where you have to draw so much all the time, artists naturally find a style that's also the easiest for them to draw. When you're drawing that much, and you've got deadlines, there's no time to be fancy and think, 'where to place this line?' You need to be efficient and keep it simple."

That combination of memorable, expressive style borne out of necessity, all driven by an ambition to become better, fits this illustrator to a T. And this return to talk of French comics, once again, may just hint at a future career move for Cécile, once she's conquered animation. "I think I would like to do comics in the end," she says, "because comics really involves almost everything."

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Sketchbook

Xiao Qing Chen

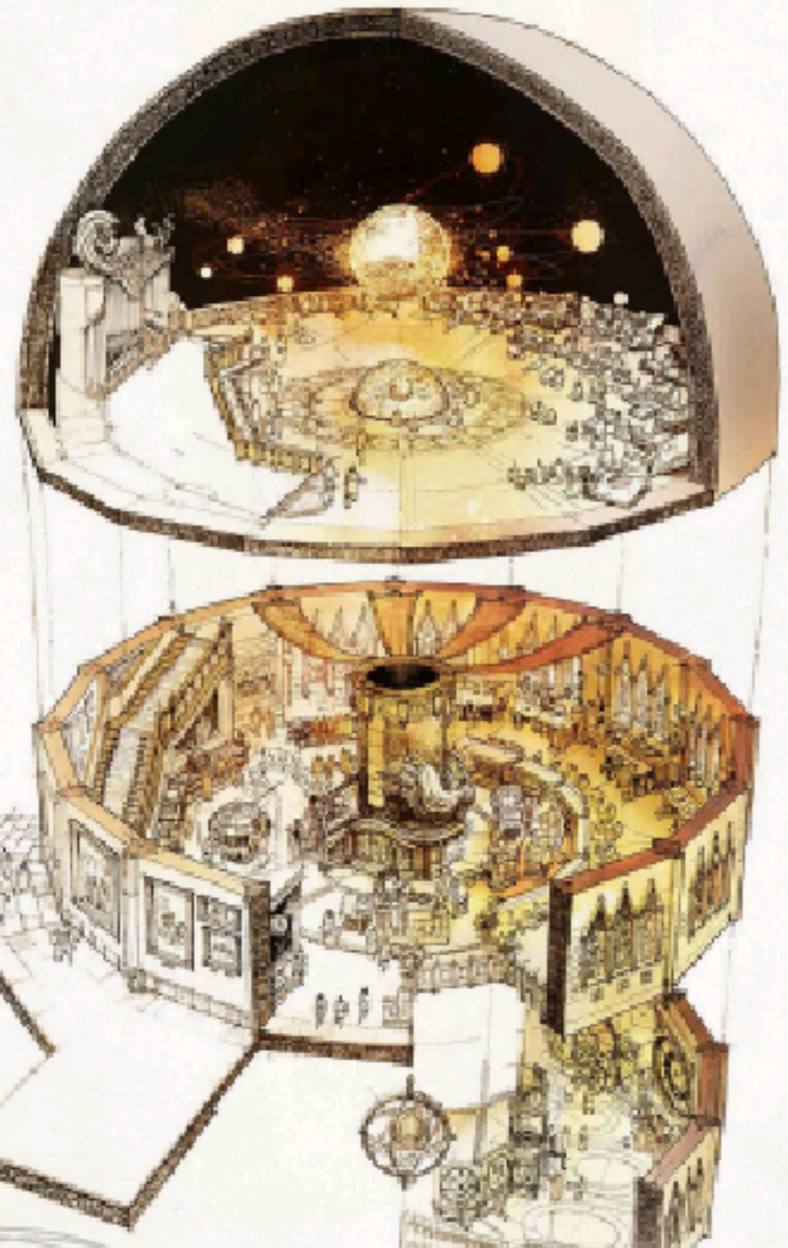
This theme park designer draws on her travel experiences to help her create awe-inspiring fantasy environments

Artist PROFILE

Xiao Qing Chen
LOCATION: US

Xiao Qing is a concept designer who's creating theme parks at Walt Disney Imagineering. She's an avid travel sketcher and enjoys observing daily happenings as inspirations for her work. The artist is involved in various projects, including one of the biggest expansion of Tokyo Disney Sea: Fantasy Springs. She believes sketching is a great way to improve your way of "seeing" and to help design better visitor experiences.
www.xqchen.com

PROTEST
"The people protest and fight for their beliefs. Their collective voice seems so small as the cathedrals tower over them."



GRYFFINDOR COMMON ROOM
"The Harry Potter series has always been one of my favourite stories. I always wanted to tackle the challenge of redesigning the common rooms for all four houses – to have four distinctive designs that fit into the same world."

KUCHING SHOPHOUSES
"Elevational studies help with quick design comparisons of the same subject matter."

THE PRINCESS RETURNS

"The long-lost princess returns to the palace, while the evil duchess watches s quietly from afar."

> "The Harry Potter series has always been one of my favourite stories..."

Sketchbook

HUFFLEPUFF COMMON ROOM

"Designing using a cutaway section view gives a big picture of how the space will work in terms of circulation and scale. It also gives me space to be creative with little secret rooms that cater to each house's talent for specific elements, like Hufflepuff's green thumbs."

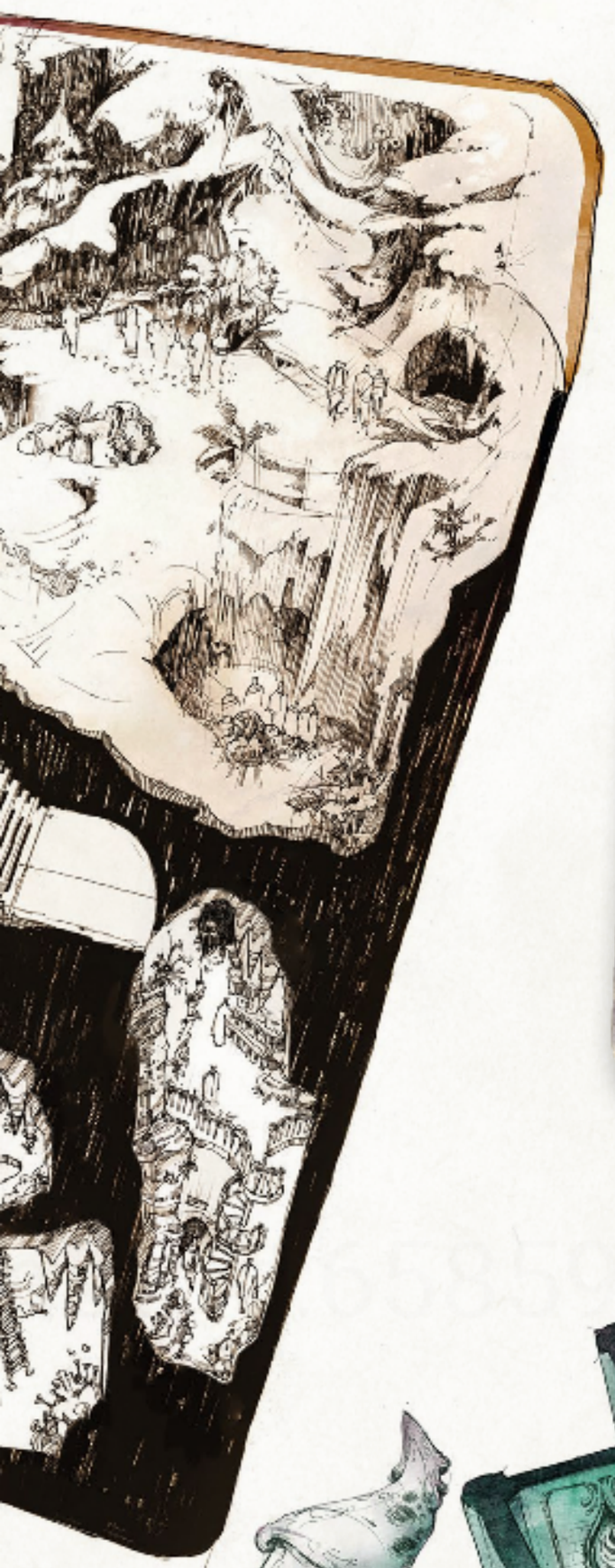
FANTASYLAND

"Travel sketching helps fuel my day-to-day creativity that often involves designing spaces. Real-life observations are crucial in helping build my visual vocabulary."

Fantasyland

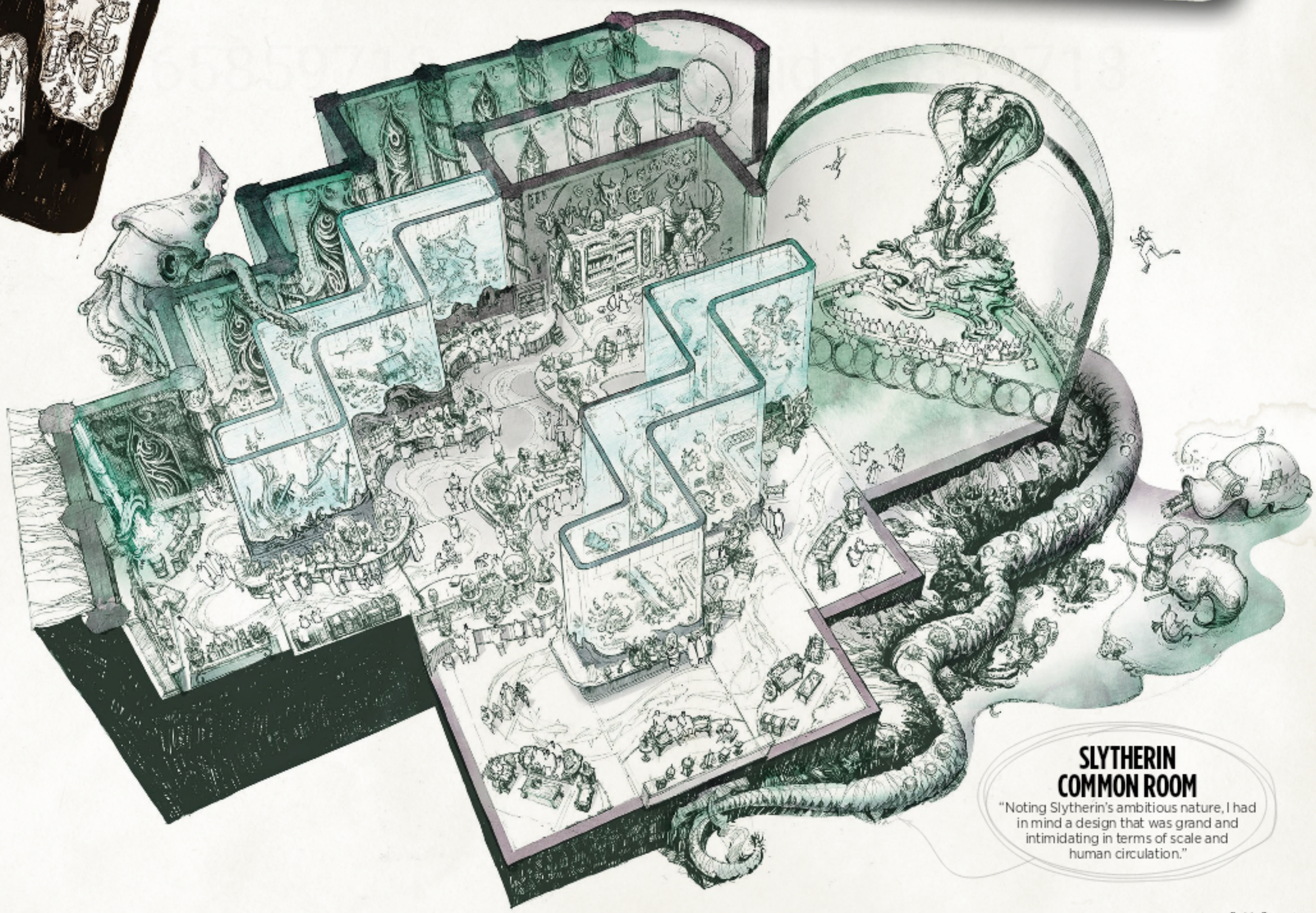
> "Real-life observations are crucial in helping build my visual vocabulary"

Sketchbook Xiao Qing Chen



HOGWARTS

"Watercolour is almost always my go-to-medium while travel sketching. The portability of my kit means I can be low key with my setup, so I can observe the crowd and space without disrupting it."



SLYTHERIN COMMON ROOM

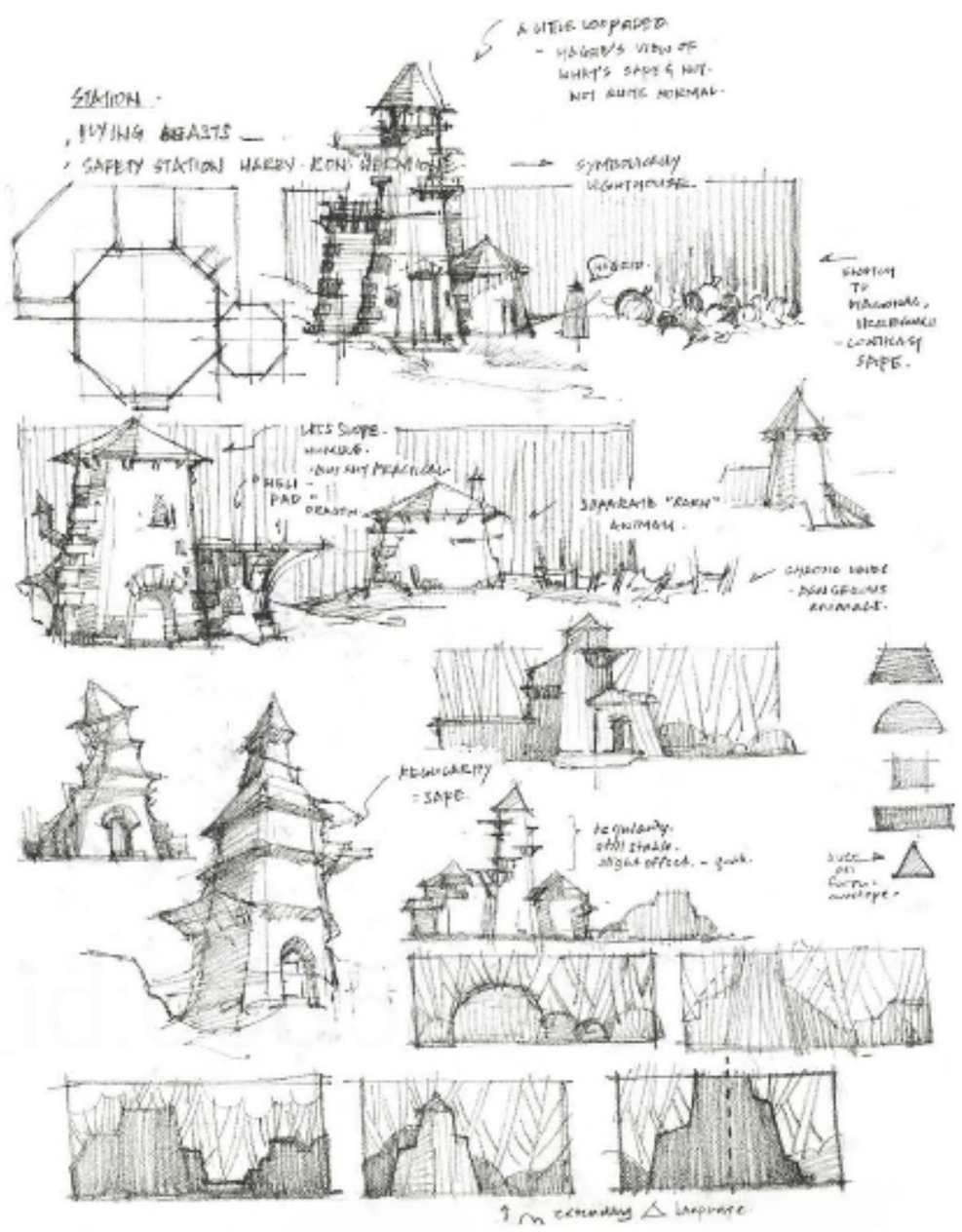
"Noting Slytherin's ambitious nature, I had in mind a design that was grand and intimidating in terms of scale and human circulation."

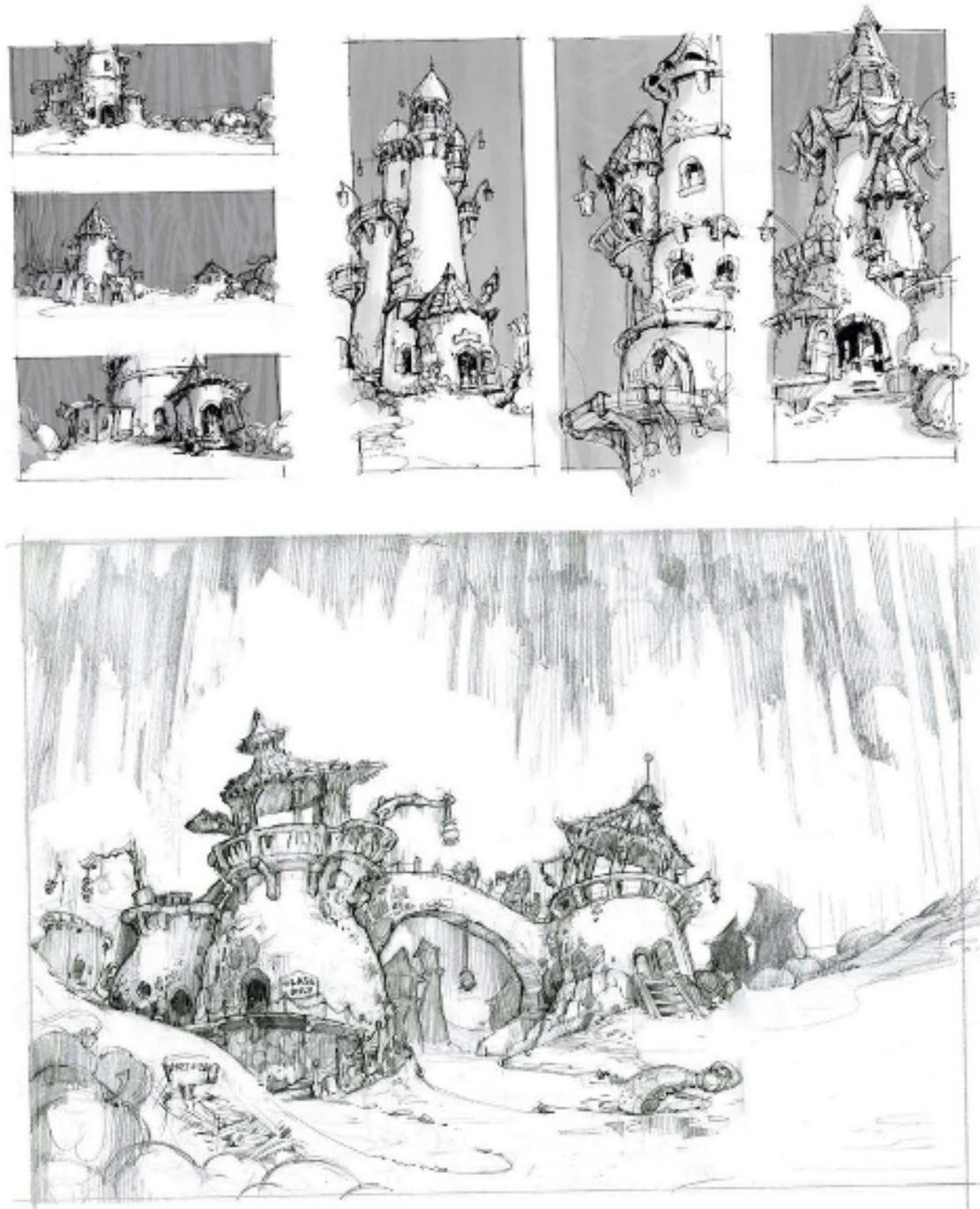
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

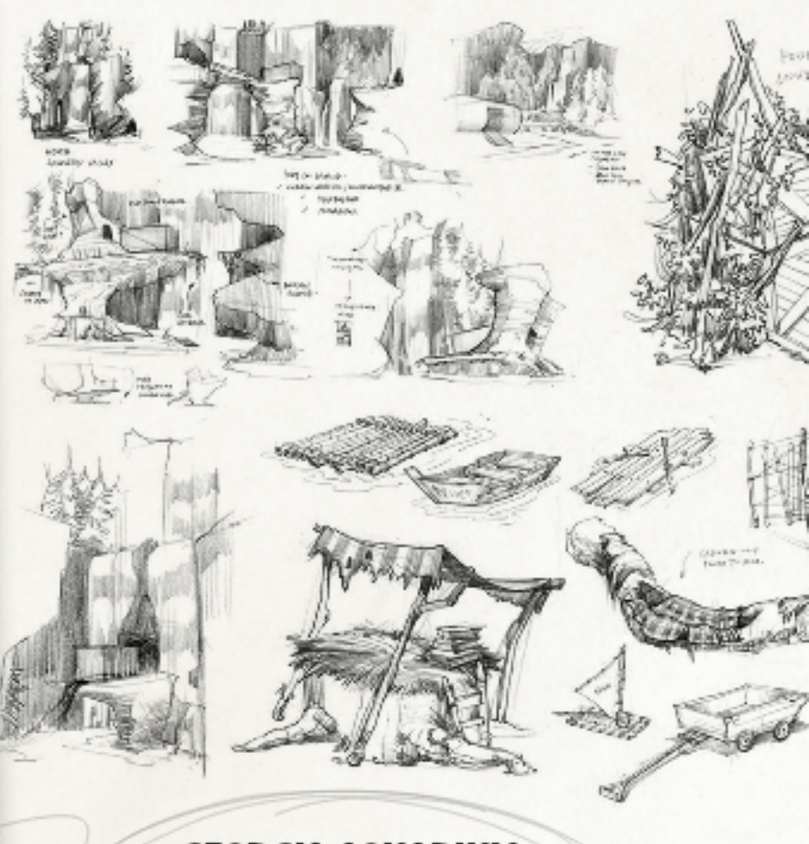
Sketchbook

HAGRID'S HUT

"These are loose explorations of my take on redesigning Reubus Hagrid's hut – an important story set in the Harry Potter series."

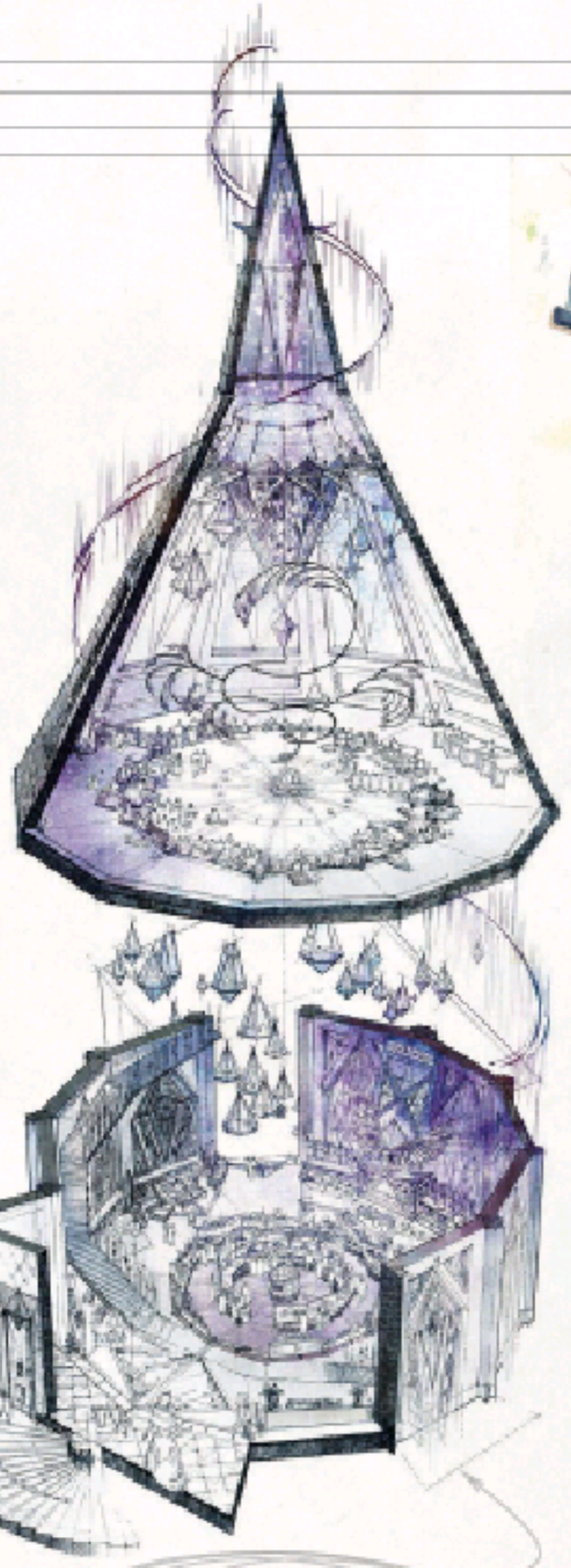


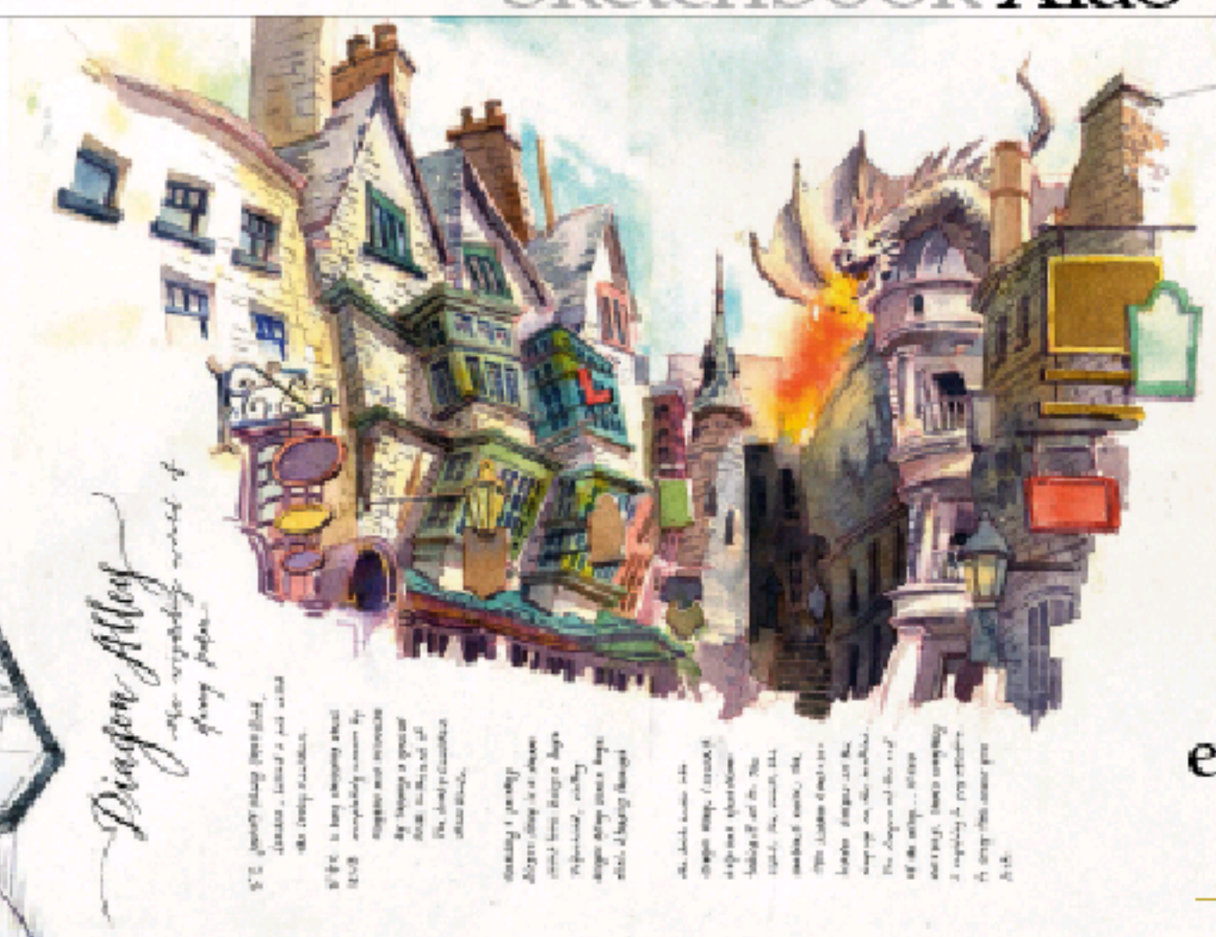




GEORGIA AQUARIUM

"These graceful marine creatures present a new live painting challenge since they're constantly swimming, requiring longer on-the-spot observation and memorisation time."





DIAGON ALLEY

"Keeping a travel journal everywhere I go helps me see better through the act of drawing and painting. Proportional studies, lighting studies as well as experiencing all the senses on the spot makes an experience much richer."

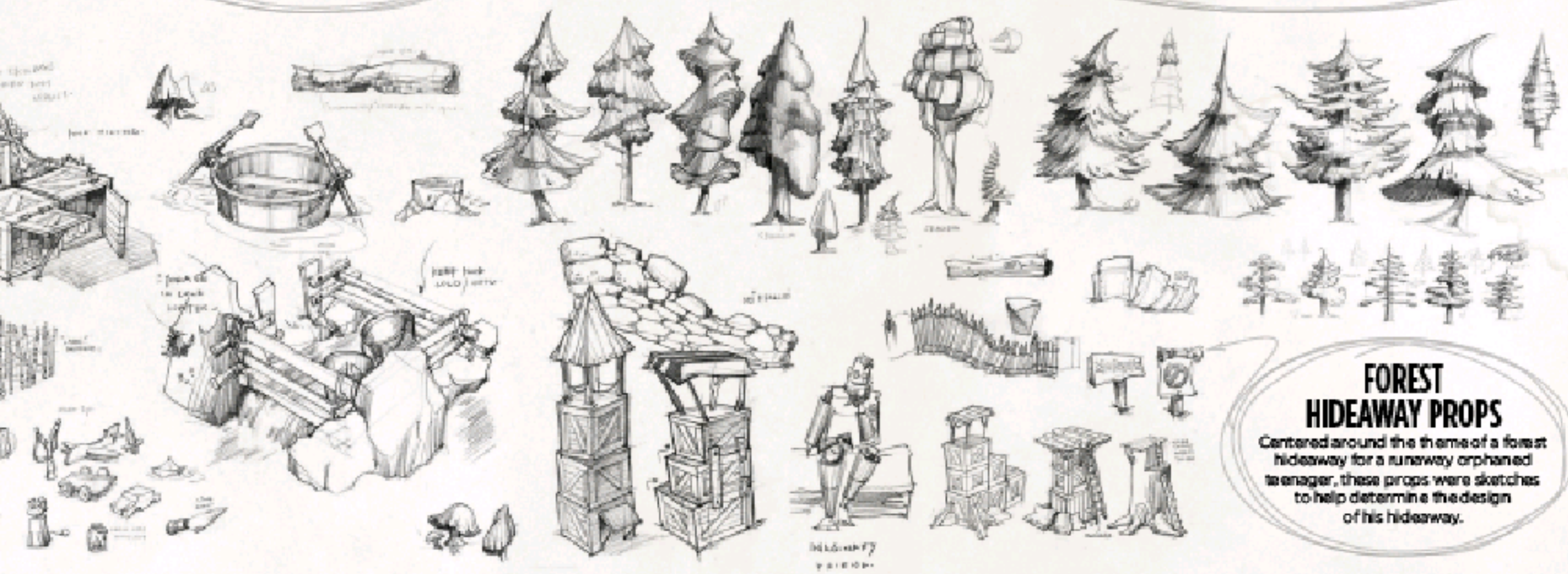
> "Keeping a travel journal everywhere I go helps me"

RAVENCLAW COMMON ROOM

"With vivid descriptions of students from each Hogwarts house, as well as the geographical location of each room, it's fun to illustrate spaces that fit each house in terms of personalities and fulfilling their needs."

THE ARCHITECT

"The architect observes from afar, admiring the city he has painstakingly designed, as the parade marches in celebration of the new prince being born."



FOREST HIDEAWAY PROPS

Centered around the theme of a forest hideaway for a runaway orphaned teenager, these props were sketches to help determine the design of his hideaway.

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

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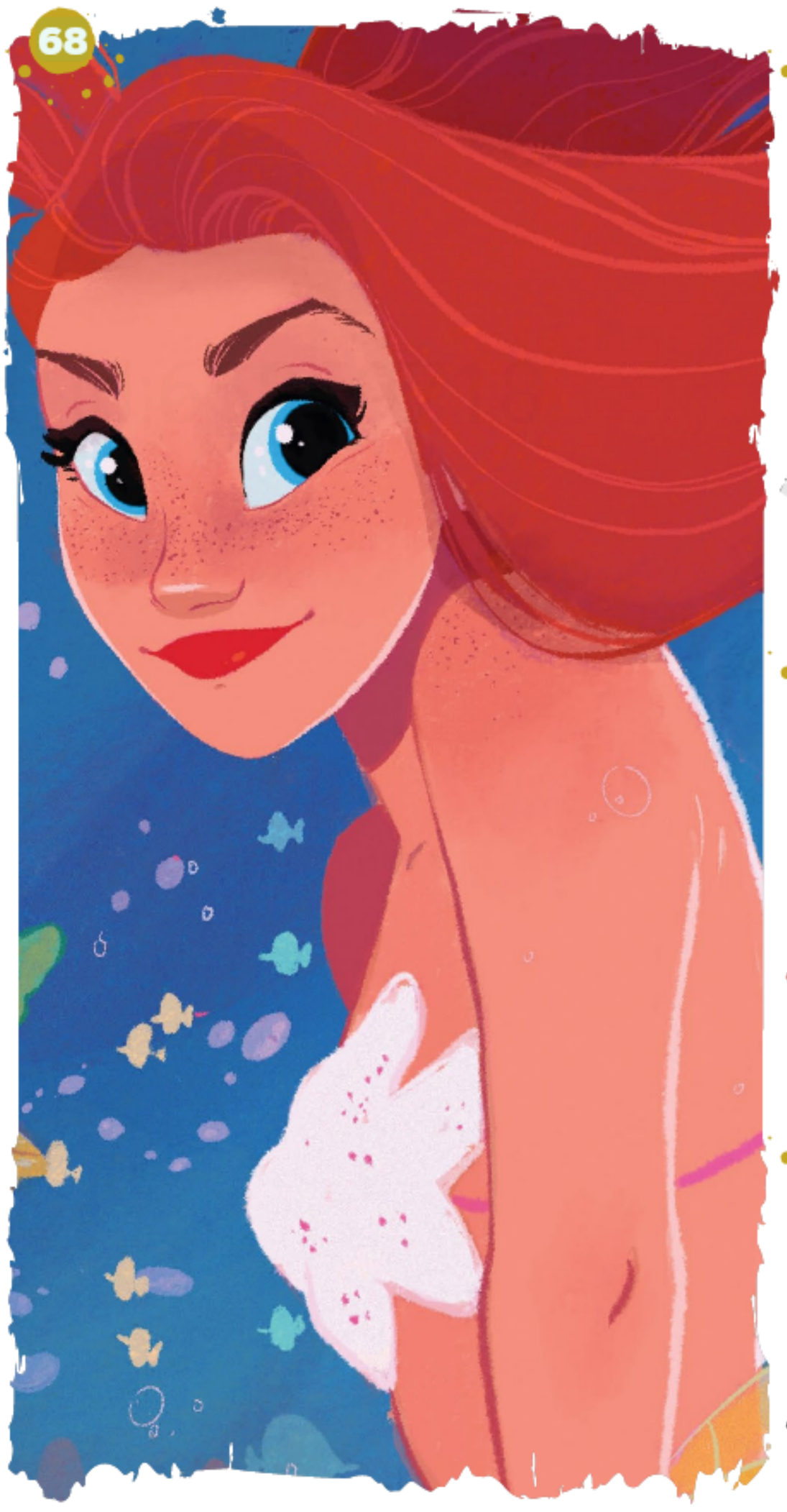
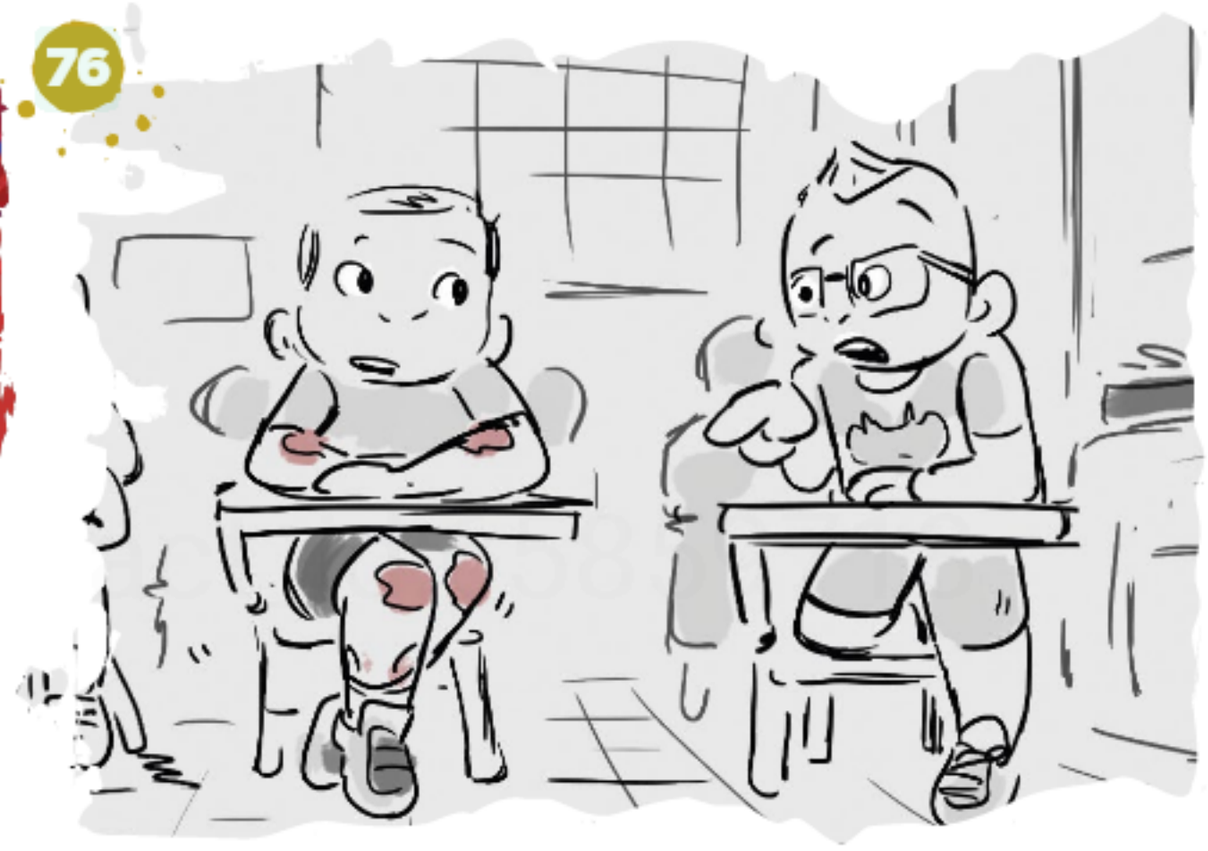
Download each workshop's resources by turning to page 8. And if you see the video workshop badge, you can watch the artist in action, too.

ImagineFX VIDEO WORKSHOP





This issue:

Procreate

MAKE A SPLASH IN ANIMATION ART

Character designer **Amanda MacFarlane** reveals her process for painting a mermaid, including how she course-corrects her colour choices

Artist **PROFILE**

Amanda MacFarlane

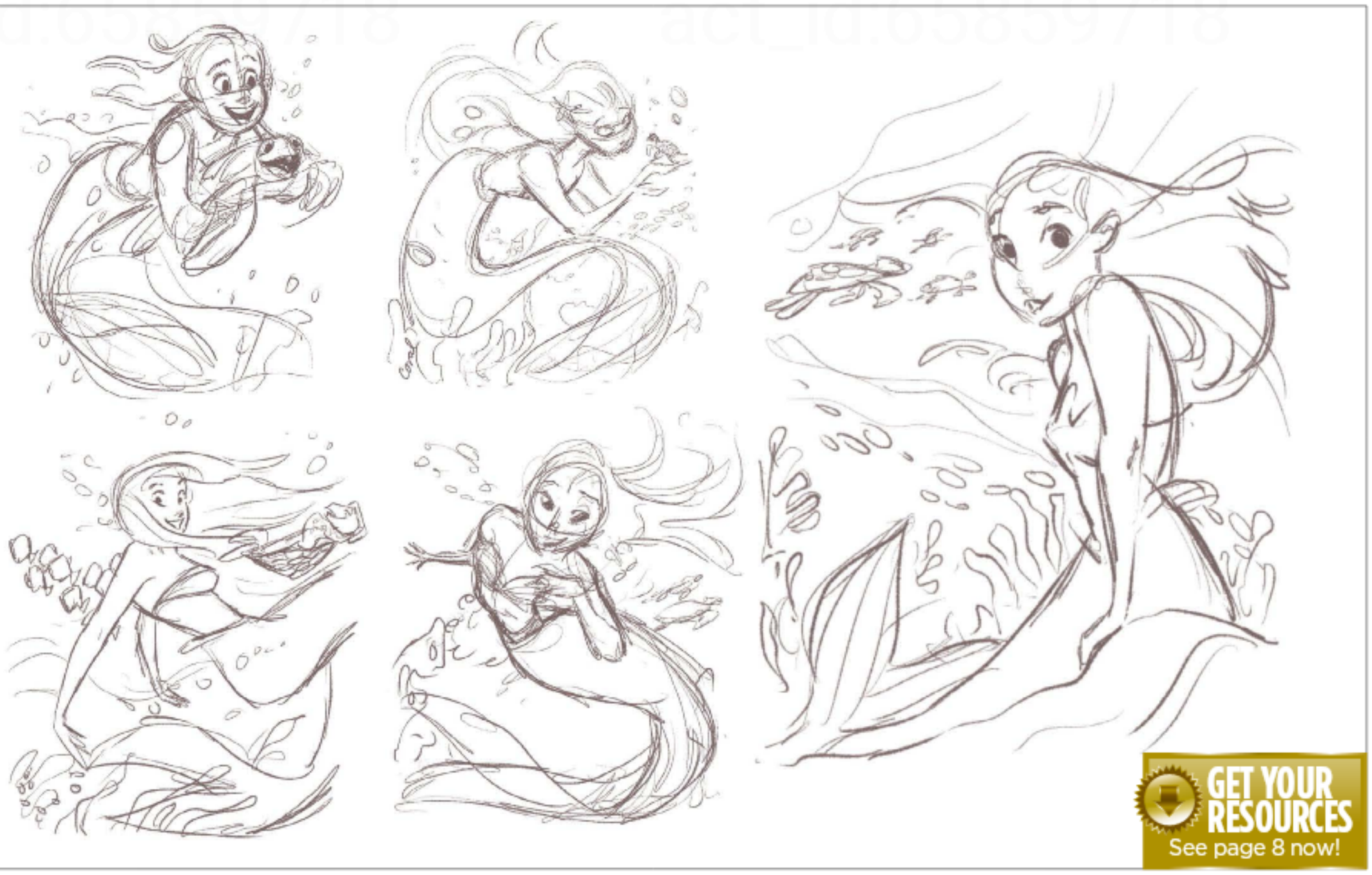
LOCATION: US

Amanda is a freelance character designer who's worked for companies such as Hasbro, Elastic TV and Warner Animation Group. https://ifxm.ag/a-macf

In this workshop I'll be walking you through my process for painting this issue's cover art and explaining my thought process as a character designer. I want this to feel like we're just old friends sitting down together with a cup of coffee and talking about what art piece we've been working on lately.

I love designing characters and figuring out the world around them, so I can't wait to share this art experience with you. I'll be covering concepts and which character works best with your overall idea, how to create a strong colour theme and be talking about two key brushes I use.

Making art that people enjoy is one of the best feelings in the world, but if you're not happy with it, it'll bug you to death. Here you'll see hard work paying off and be encouraged to never give up on that project of yours. You can walk away from it for a while or change it up a bit, but don't give up on it forever. Sometimes you just have to look at it at a different angle to see what you're missing. Come with me, get ready to dive into this colourful cover art and don't forget to have fun along the way!



GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 8 now!

1 Developing the concept of the mermaid

I couldn't be happier during the early stages of a project. This is where ideas are born and creativity thrives. When I was given the chance to draw a mermaid for the cover of ImagineFX, I jumped at the opportunity! Mermaids are magical and so much fun to draw. I quickly start sketching a few in Procreate to choose from, and come up with five different images to show the ImagineFX team.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

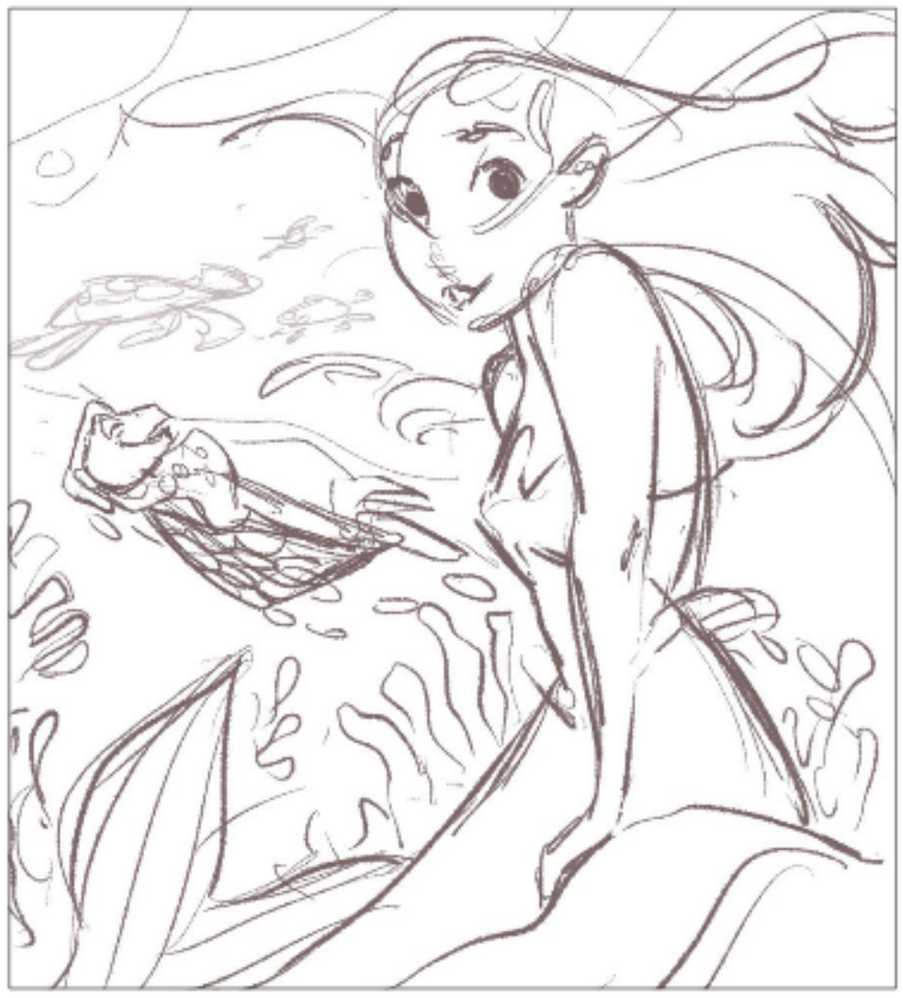
PROCREATE

CUSTOM BRUSHES: INK BLEED

I use Ink Bleed for outlining characters plants and bubbles. It's also ideal for filling in flat colours.

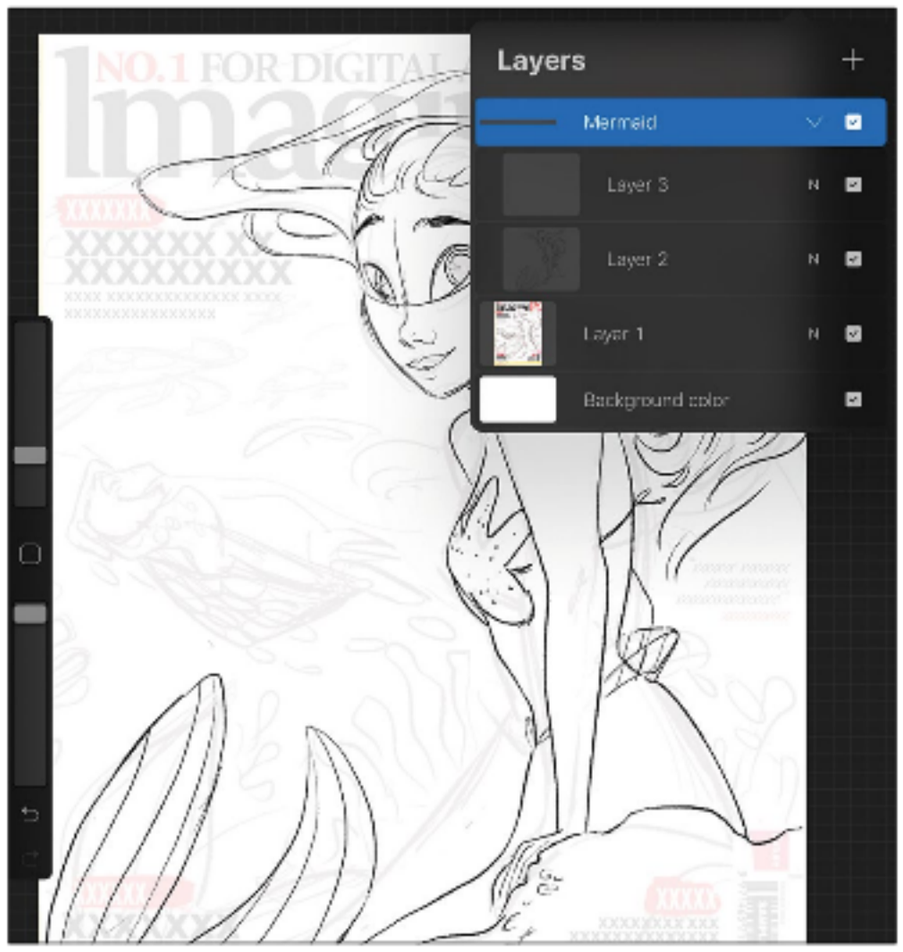
STUCCO

Stucco is great for blending, lighting, shading and texture.



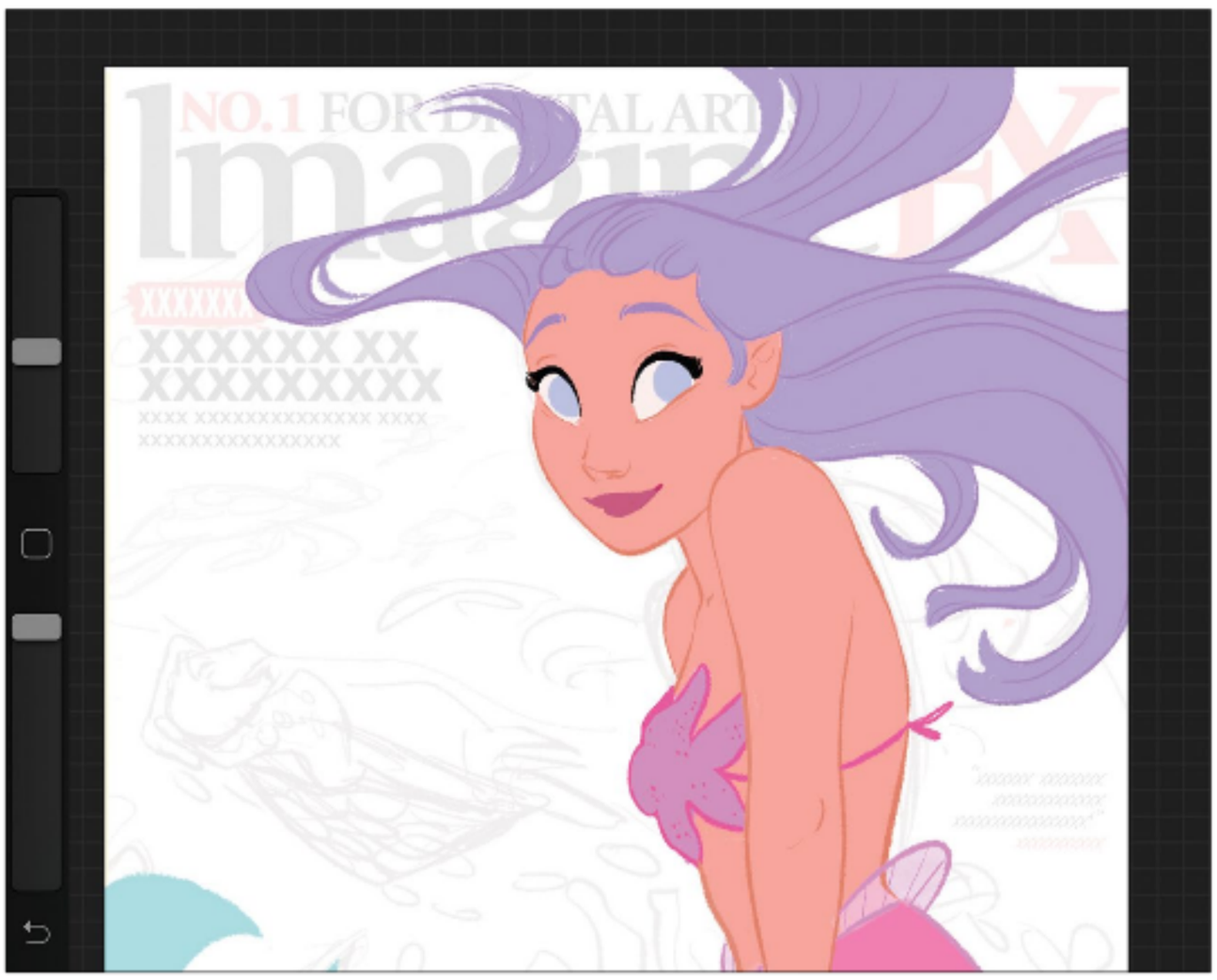
2 Designing the right look

Picking the right image to develop is important. It must catch your eye and draw people in. We feel this one does the trick. She's looking directly at the reader with a bashful yet fun and inviting personality. When I draw a character, I try to get in their mindset. It really helps, even if you're not a mermaid! With this specific character, I want her to pull you in and feel like you're about to take a colourful, exciting journey through her world.



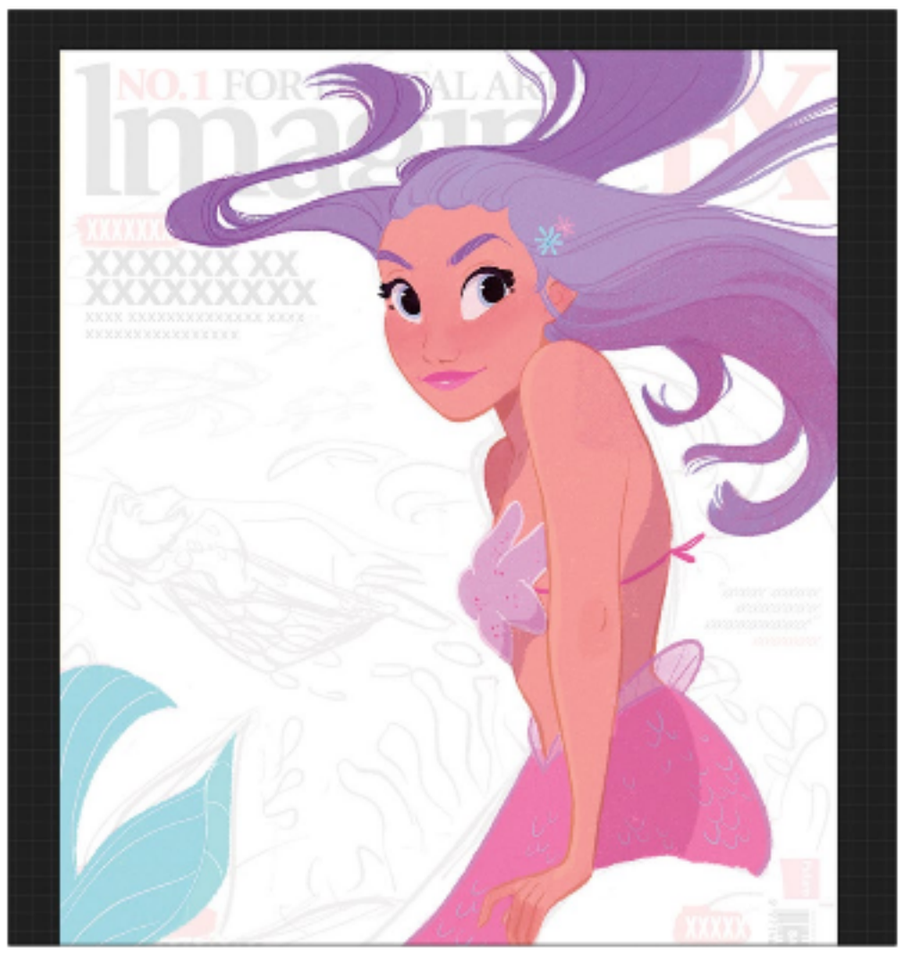
3 Defining the lines

After adding layers in Procreate, I begin by reducing the Opacity of the original image and drawing over it to get the look I want. Drawing over a rough sketch is a lot like tracing, but instead of making it exact, you get to play with what looks best for the design. Whether it's changing the volume of your character or discovering which eyes look best, I like to draw over with black ink to help define the look. Here I use the Ink Bleed brush in Procreate's Brush Library. It's very versatile and has a great feel to it.



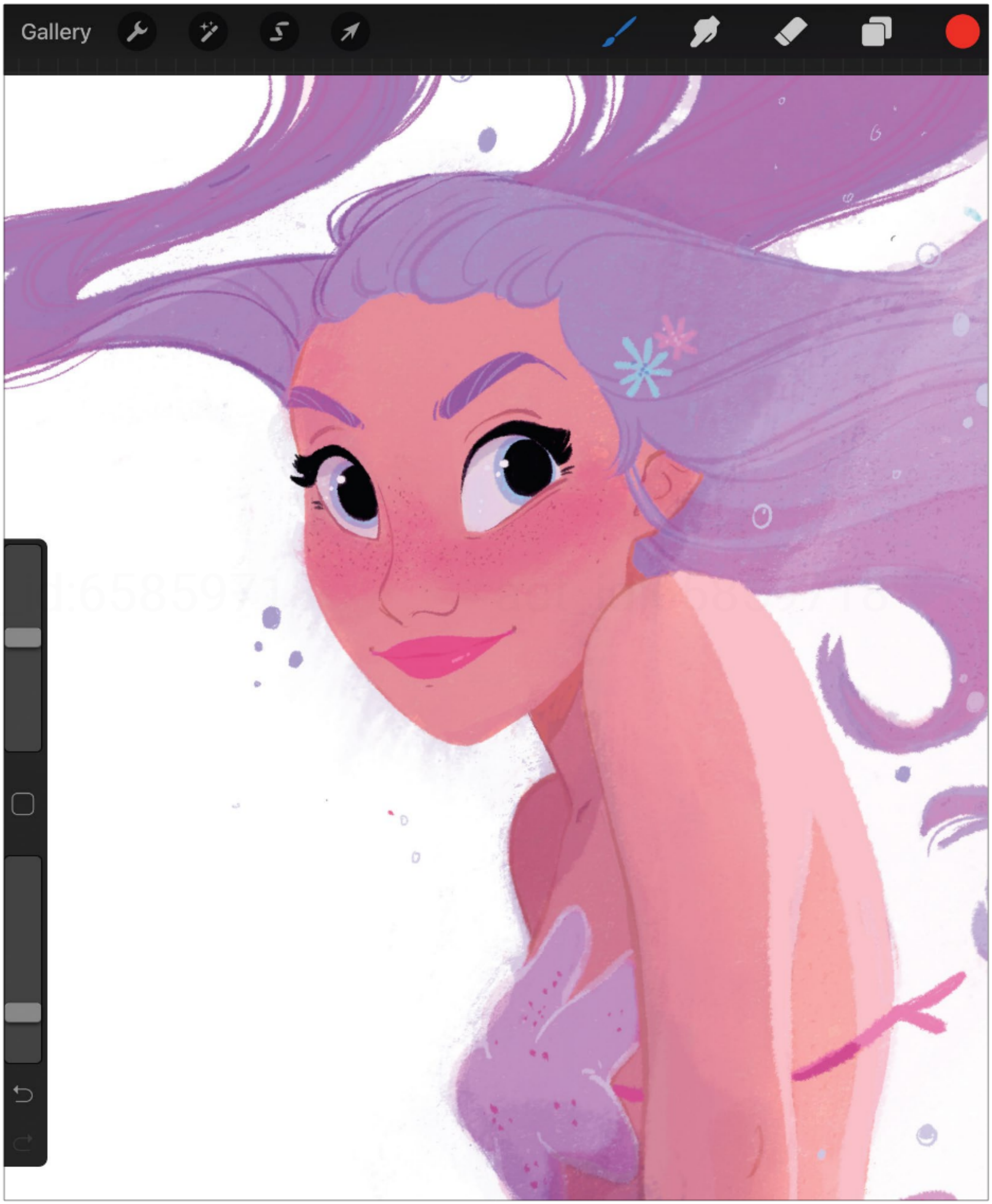
4 Adding colour to the line art

When you have your inked version in front of you, you can hide the original image or get rid of it all together, and reduce the Opacity of your black lined art. Once you have a colour scheme in mind, choose a slightly darker colour outline for your character as you draw. I use the Ink Bleed brush again for both lining and flat colour. It's easy to fill bigger areas when you outline – just drag and drop the paint – but make sure you fill colour on a different layer, in case you hate it!



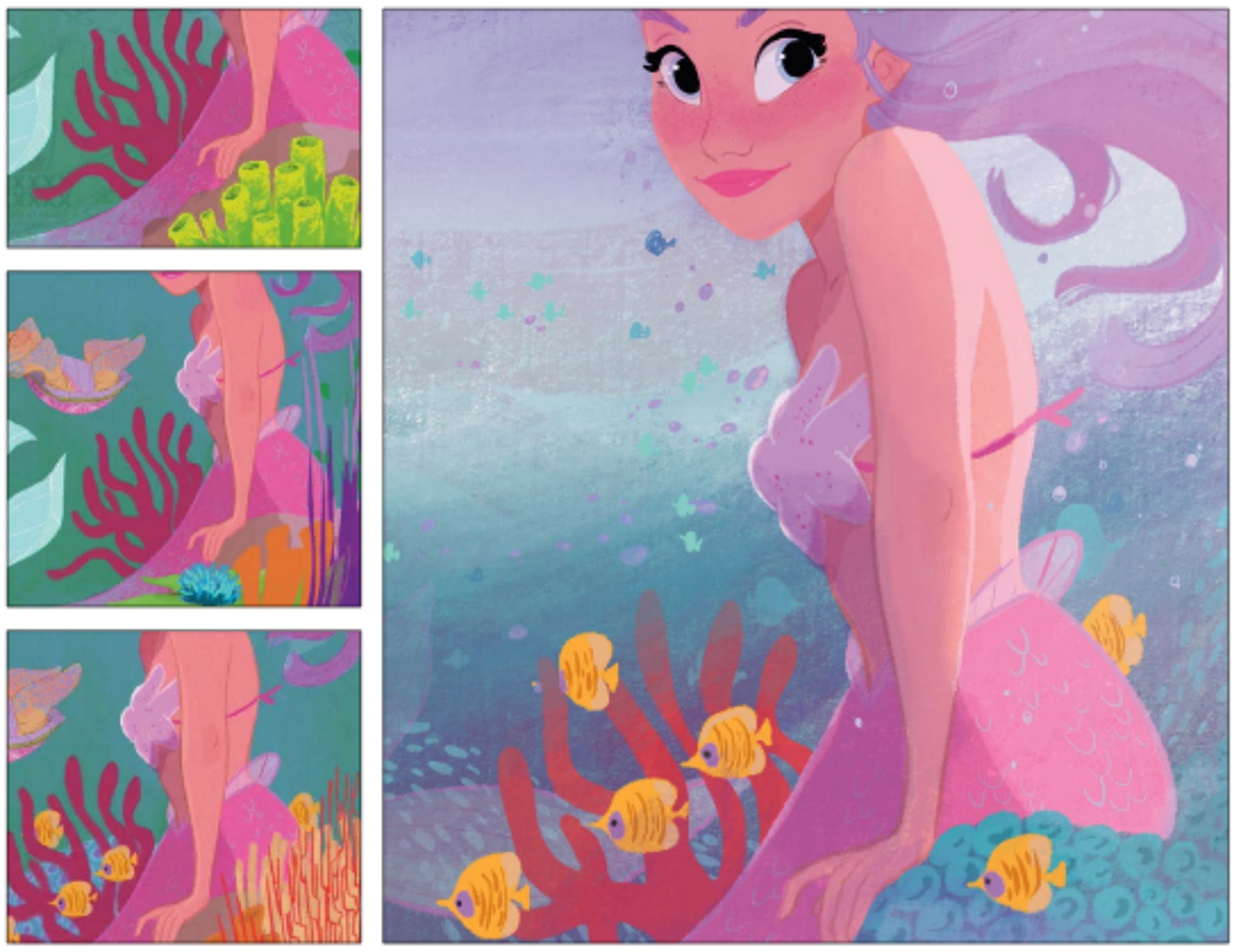
5 Finding depth in your art

I do love flat colours, but for this image I think that different tones are required. To add more depth, you can add blush and shading. I click a hot pink for blush and chose Procreate's Stucco brush from the Painting menu. Play around with the percentage of the Opacity when adding extra colours to your character's skin tones. Then click the Blender and use the same Stucco brush to create a smoother look to the skin.



6 Placing an overlay to your character

After I'm satisfied with the colour, I like to add a separate layer on top that's a light purple, pink or fuchsia with a Giant Stucco brush that's turned down to about 20 per cent Opacity. This is almost like seeing your character through a different colour lens. It creates a softer image.

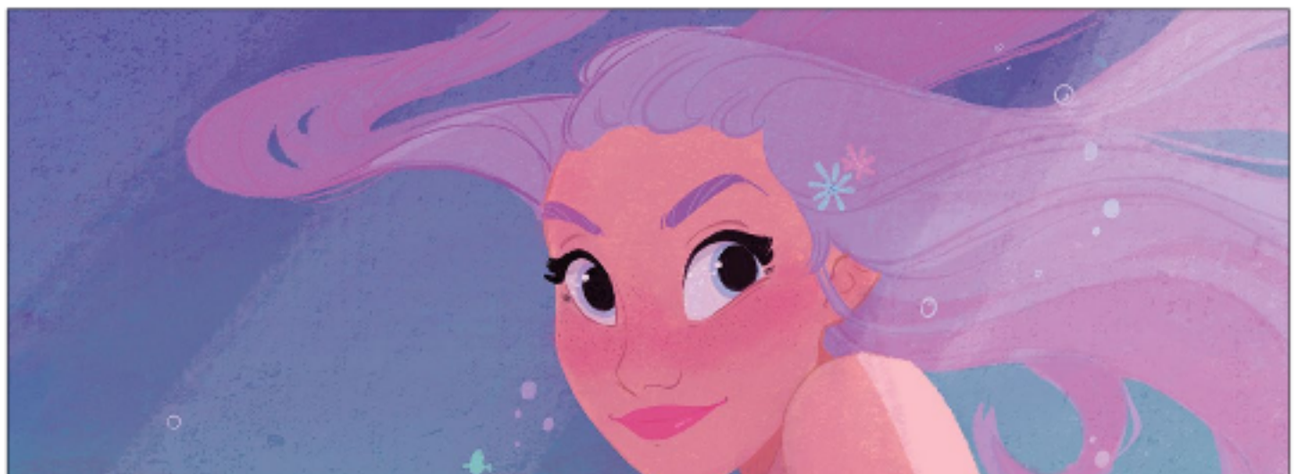


7 Researching the background elements

Are you still putting yourself in your character's shoes, or tail? For this next step, it's helpful to see the mermaid's world as if you were there. What sort of ocean is she in? I want her to be around corals and sea turtles, so I look up different images to get a feel of what will work. I go through a lot of different types of coral and seaweed until I find one that complements her style. By keeping it simple, I make sure that the scenery doesn't take attention away from her.

8 Introducing a companion

I add a turtle as a sidekick. Sometimes it takes a while to get colours right on an extra character. You want them to complement the main character. First his colours are too dim, then too bold. Changing the turtle's colours highlights that the mermaid's colours are wrong. Everything blends too much and I need to make a change.



9 Take a step back

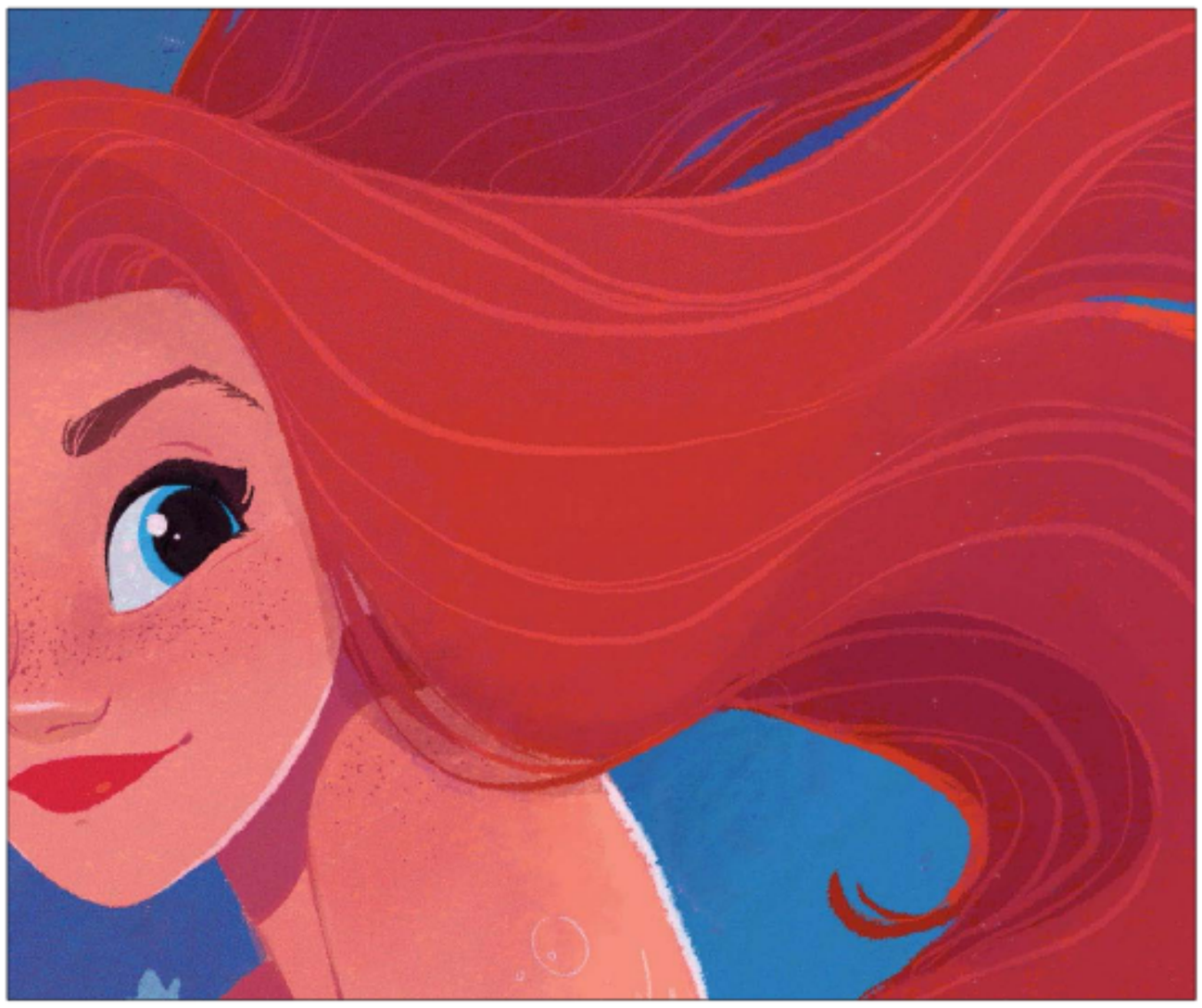
After you paint an entire picture, step back and look at it, then ask yourself some questions. Do the colours complement each other? What was your focus in the beginning? Here, it's the mermaid. She has to draw people in and make an immediate impression. Her personality is there, but something's off. Everything blends too much. She needs to stand out more.

10 Finding what works

Sometimes it's good to go in a completely different direction, just to see if it will work. I draw another mermaid in almost the same position, but this one is more shocked and aggressive instead of inviting. It ended up not being the right personality for the cover, but the colours spark a bolder image in my mind.

11 New colour scheme

Finding a new colour scheme can feel like a daunting task, but don't let it get you down! You'll be proud of yourself when you stick it out and see the end result. I colour her tail yellow and add bright red hair. This brings out the contrast with the blue ocean behind her and gives me the idea to paint the turtle green.

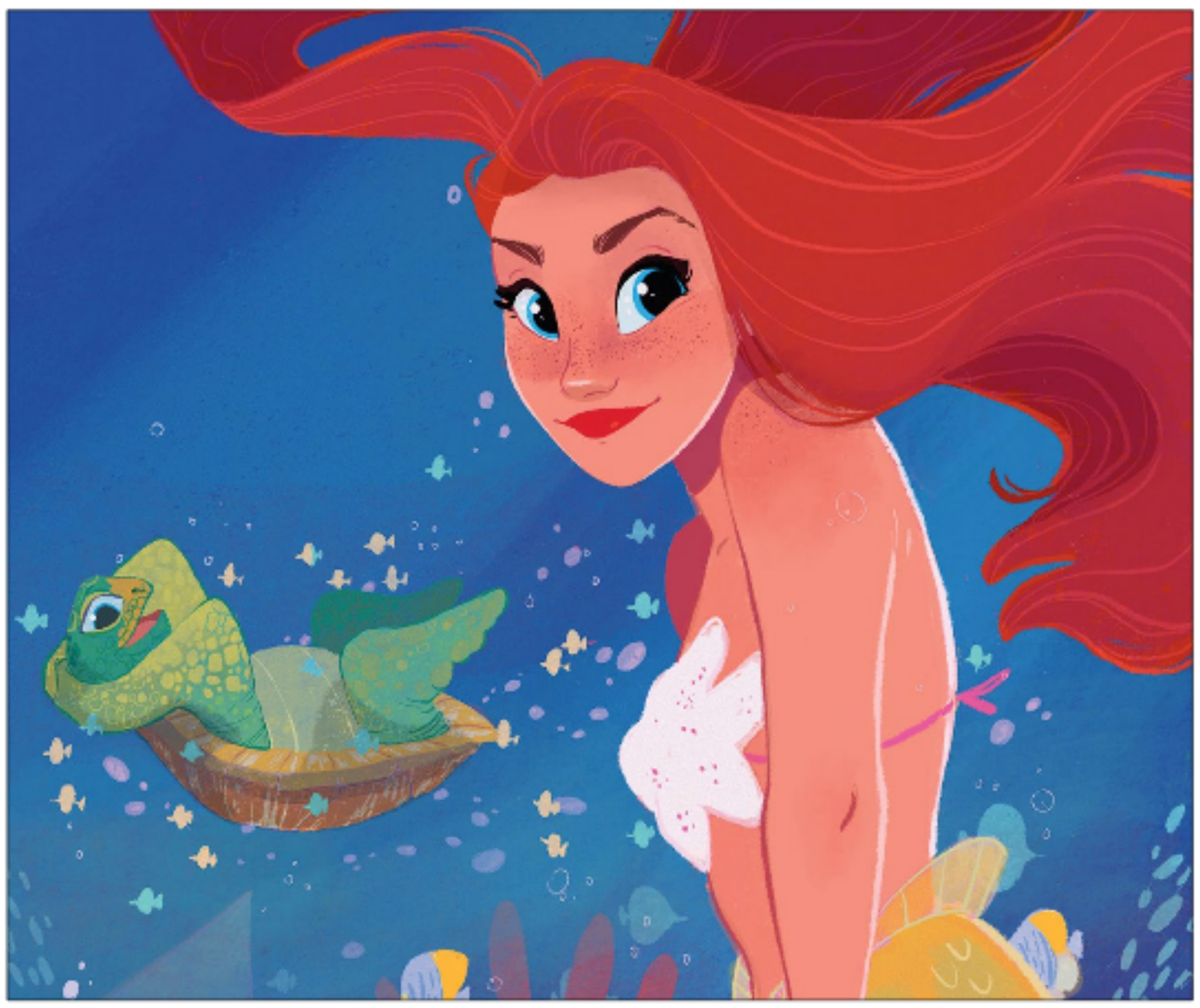


12 Painting extra details

Once you're happy with your colours, go through the picture and add little details here and there. Paint strands of hair floating in the current, freckles on the skin, bubbles in the way and scales on fins. Anything that you want, really! You've done the hard part. This stage is just the icing on the cake!

13 Applying highlights

Sun rays piercing the surface of the ocean sets off highlights on your characters and objects in your environment. How bright or dull these highlights are depends on the texture that the light hits. Here in the blue background I use the Stucco brush with different shades to create different depths, waves and rays.



14 Make your composition pop!

Making these last few changes really starts to bring everything together! My mermaid is now bold and the centre of attention, and her cute little sidekick matches her beautifully without taking too much of the limelight. When you've finished working on your layers, save the image. If you then want to play with contrast or noise, open it back up as a single image and have fun with it! Really, there's no exact way or list of how to paint. With art there is no right or wrong way. Just find out what works for you and don't forget to have fun!

Next month

We interview the fantastic Viktor Kalvachev about his career.

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

Create invincible comic art!

The best sequential artists on the planet reveal their techniques in our comic art special

Artwork by Viktor Kalvachev

All this… and more!

Terry Dodson workshop
Terry shares his comic art process with us, in an exclusive workshop!

How to paint a battle scene
Artist Steve Ellis goes into an epic battle to save all of our art skins!

Create a Marvel cover
Toni Infante gives his insight into the making of a Marvel cover.

Learn comic inking skills
Spanish artist Pepe Larraz reveals how he inks his way to comic greatness.

ISSUE 187 ON SALE IN THE UK *17 April 2020*

Photoshop

STORYBOARDING MASTERCLASS

Artist **PROFILE**

Mark Evan Lim
LOCATION: US

Mark is a freelance storyboard artist and concept designer in the animation and themed entertainment industry. From a young age he's loved telling immersive stories and visualising them in exciting ways. www.markevanlim.com

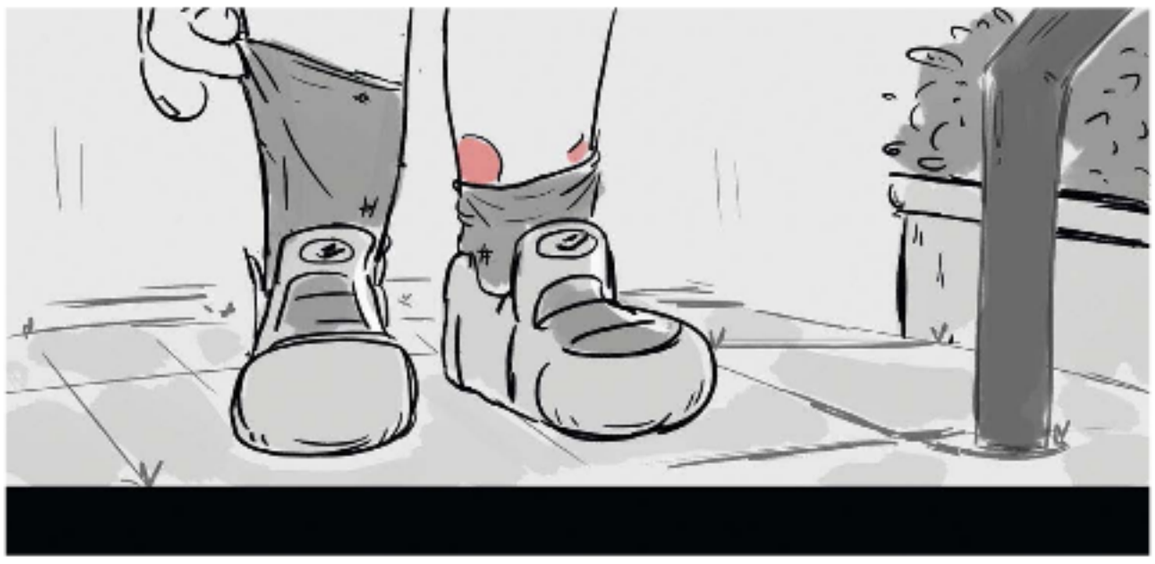
Animation artist **Mark Evan Lim** uses Photoshop's Layer Comps tool to streamline his storyboard process

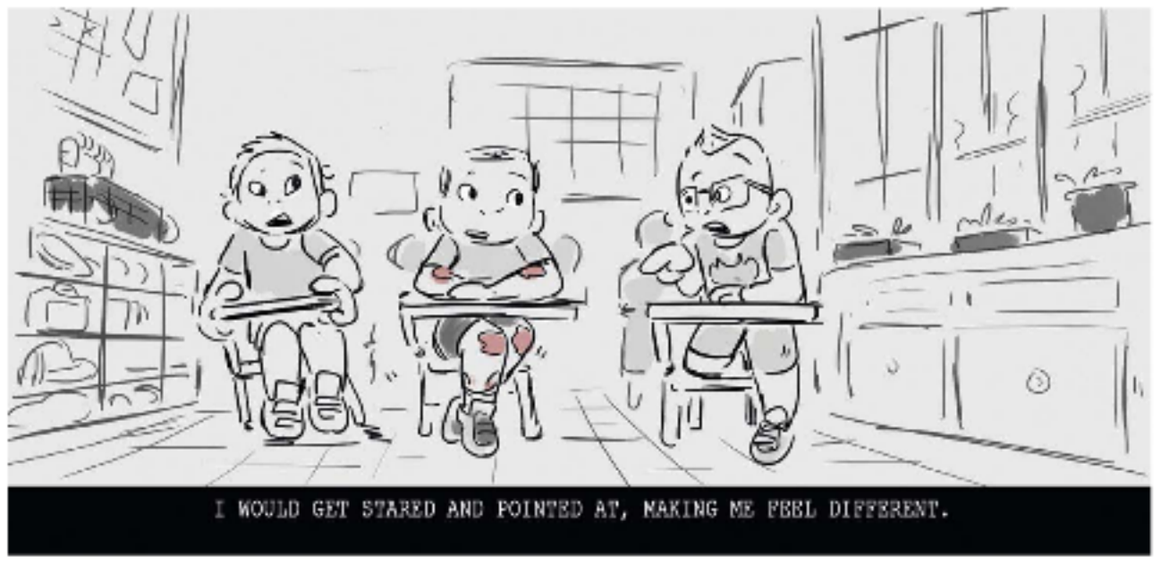
In this workshop we'll be learning about Layer Comps and how this Photoshop tool can help you speed up your workflow and organisation for (but not limited to) storyboarding. My aim is to highlight this menu set, explain how layer comps work and convince you to try them out. We'll be starting this workshop with the assumption that we have thumbnails and a story locked, and that you're ready to dive into the drawings.

It's important to know that your layer comps are non-destructive: you can always delete them and have your layers just as you painted them. They mainly serve a purpose of viewing your layers differently. Before we start, I'd like to mention that I'll be using a five-panel story here, but you can create as many layer comps as you need for your story. ➳

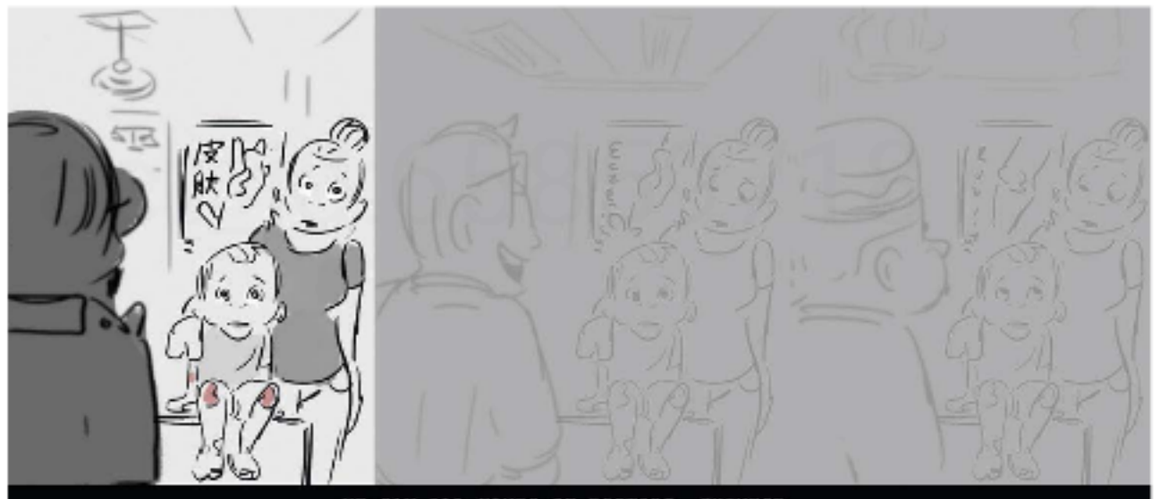

GROWING UP, I WOULD SCRATCH MY SKIN UNKNOWINGLY EVERYDAY...


ALL THE TIME.




I WOULD GET STARED AND POINTED AT, MAKING ME FEEL DIFFERENT.


WE RESEARCHED ALL OVER THE PLACE FOR DOCTORS WHO HAD A REMEDY, I FELT LIKE A PATIENT.

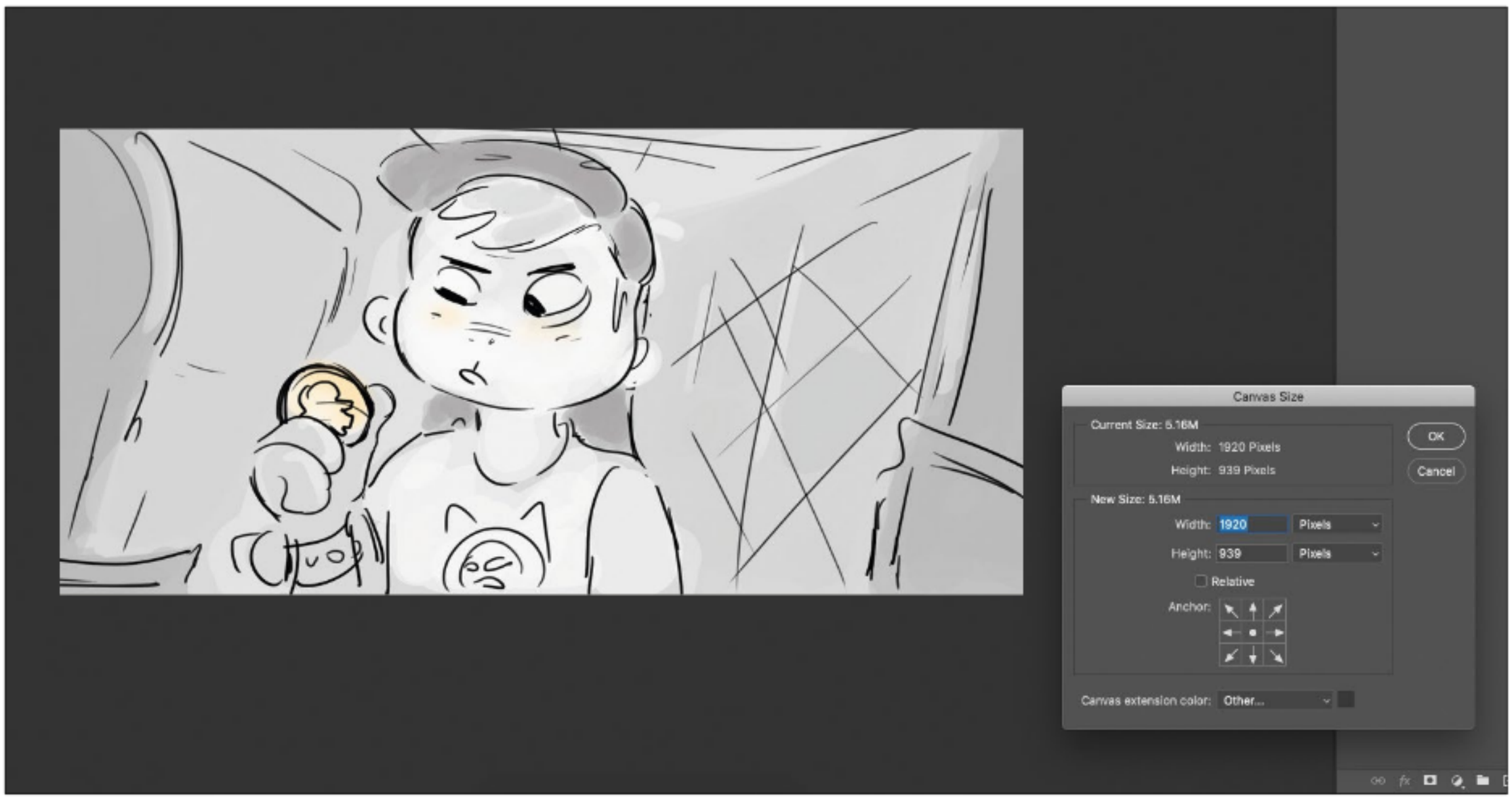

WE SAW ALL KINDS OF DOCTORS, CHINESE -


MALAY.


WESTERN -


BUT ALL THAT YEILDED WERE REMEDIES - CREAMS, BANDAGES, BATHS, I WAS WRAPPED UP EVERYDAY.

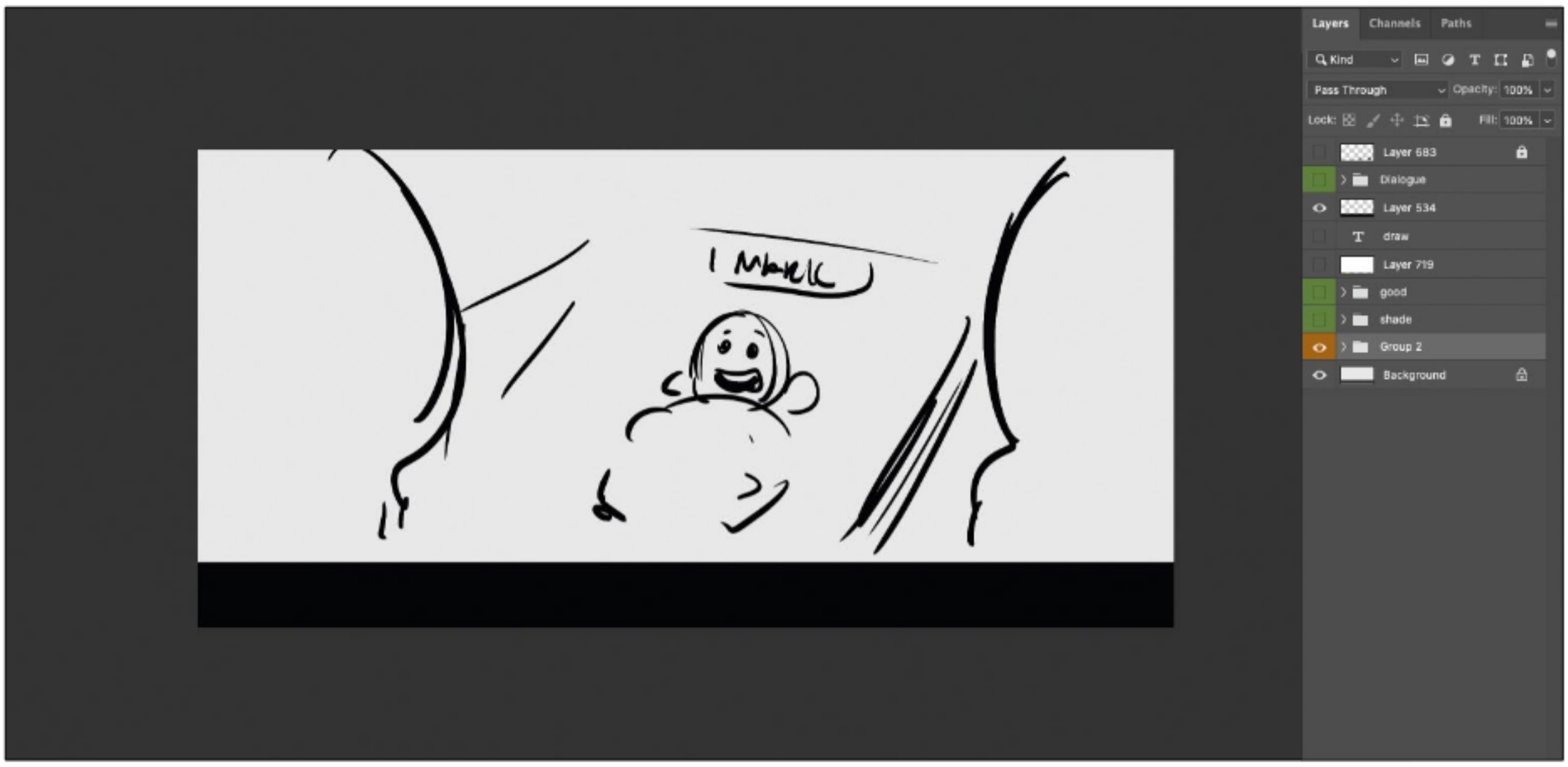

I LOOKED LIKE AN EGYPTIAN MUMMY.



1 Setting up your document

You've got your thumbnails and script ready to go – now it's time to start drawing! I usually start by establishing my aspect ratio. You might want to check the requirements of your project or assignment before you begin. For this workshop, we'll be working in 1,080x720, which is a pretty common resolution for most animation projects. Your canvas is set and it's now time to draw!

The best part about the Layer Comps tool is that it can accommodate how you work. No more folders within folders, if you don't like that. It's completely up to you. We'll be working with five panels from an excerpt from a storyboarding project as an example. Making use of the Layer Comps tool will enable you to create, manage and organise multiple layouts within a single Photoshop file. Think of each layer comp as a screenshot of the current layers you have visible.

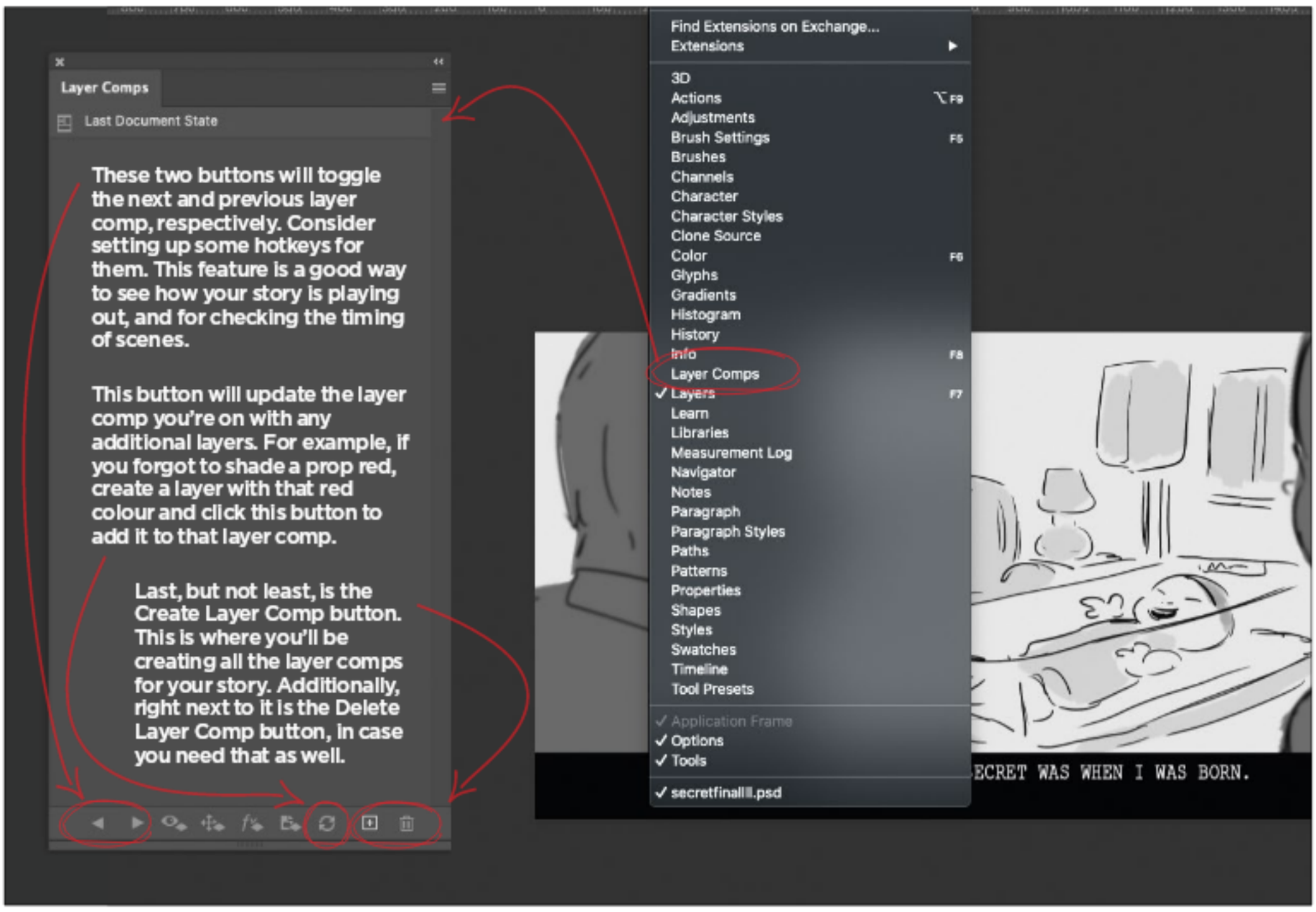


2 Adding text and starting your drawing

The next step is optional, but if your story has dialogue, I usually block out a black rectangle at the bottom for any text or sound effects that I might use. From here I bring in my thumbnails from the iPad and start cleaning up. When I clean up my drawings, I usually split my layers up from the back to the front (back-, mid- and foreground). It's important to stay organised; this will help with the layer comps later on.

3 Add layers of line art and build up tones

Here, I lay down my Line, Tone and Dialogue layers. You can add more layers if necessary, such as an additional Polish layer. It helps to think about your shot like a layered cake and gradually build up from the line work to the tones. Next, it's time to create our layer comps.



4 Exploring the Layer Comps window

On Photoshop's top toolbar, click Window>Layer Comps and a window will pop out. This is the Layer Comp window that enables you to manage and organise your shots and scenes. The tool gives you the flexibility to rearrange shots, test out breakdowns and edit – all from one panel. ➳

PRO SECRETS

Create hotkeys

I recommend setting up hotkeys for the Update, Next and Previous Layer Comp buttons. You can do that by going back up to the top toolbar, clicking Edit>Keyboard Shortcuts.... Find the Layer Comp panel menu set and set your hotkeys for these buttons.

PRO SECRETS

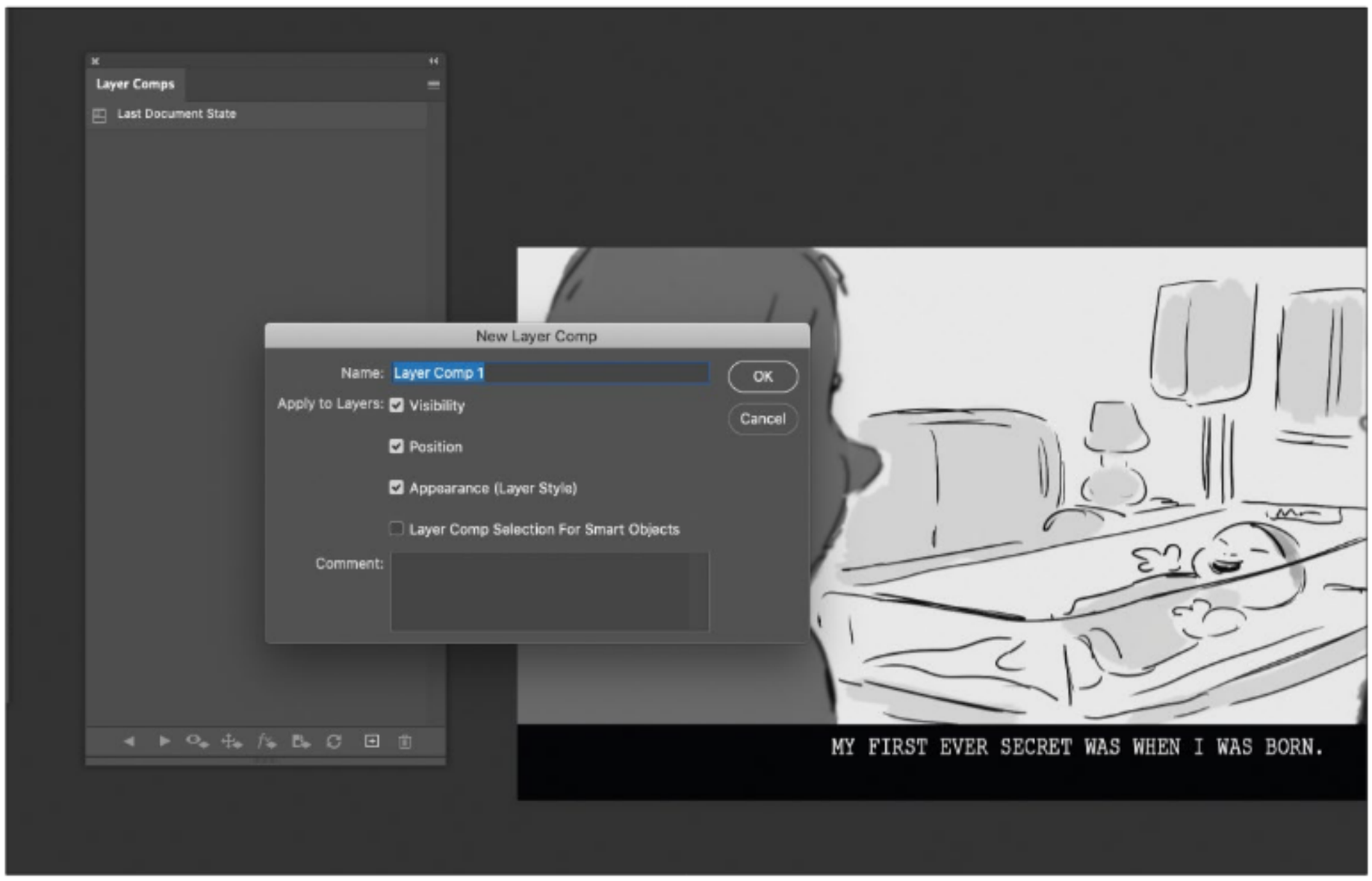
Stay organised

Keep the corresponding layers that are related to each layer comp on top of each other, so you don't have to spend time searching for it. I'd also advise renaming the layers as you go and grouping them, too.

PRO SECRETS

Export to a new folder

When exporting layer comps, choose a directory that's a folder. Imagine exporting a 500-panel story... I'd hate to have all 500 images living on your desktop or Downloads folder! Create a dedicated folder for the story and export it there.



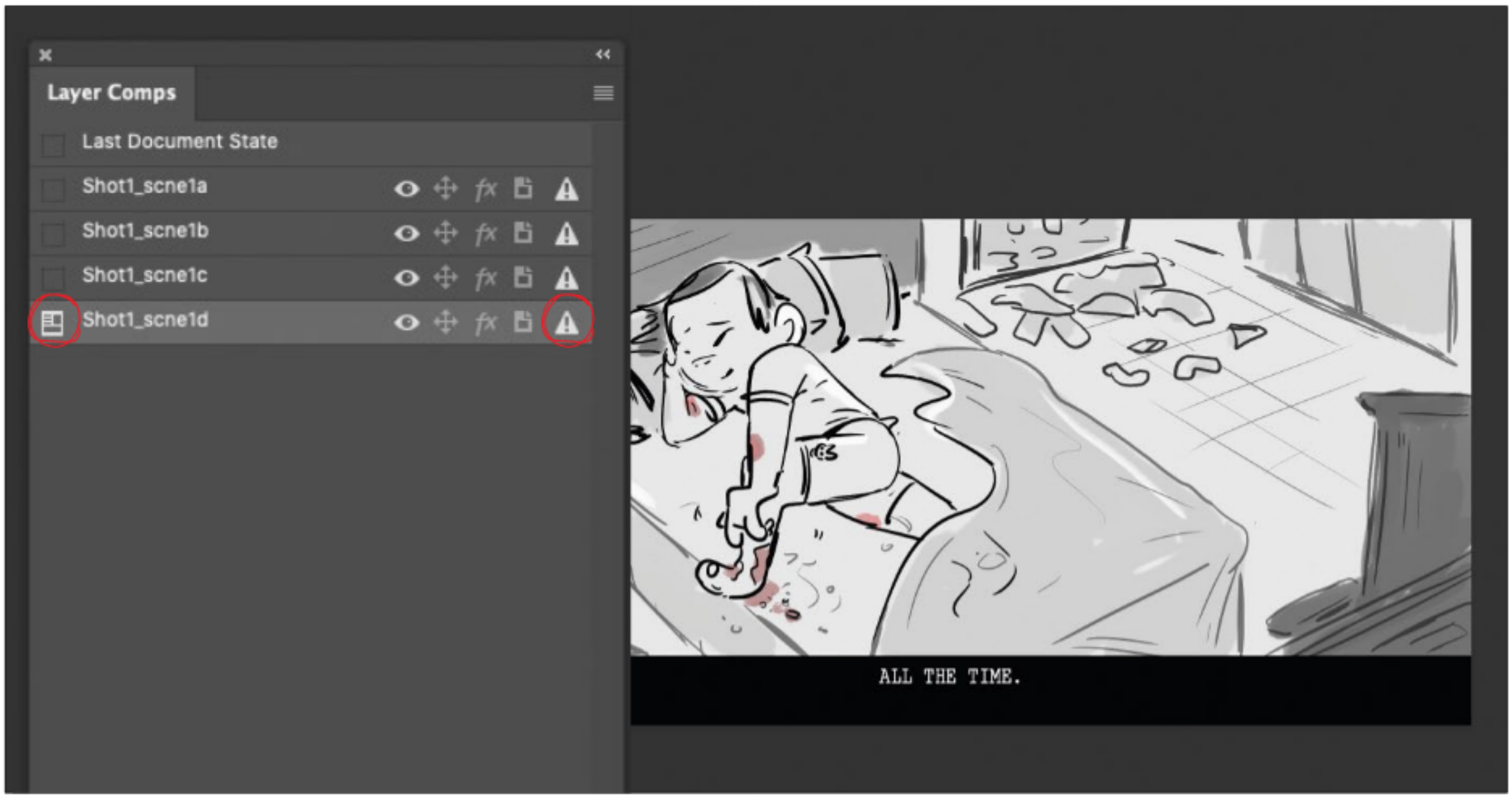
PRO SECRETS

Think beyond storyboards

While this workshop is for storyboarding, you're not tied to just using the Layer Comps tool for that. I've found it to be an excellent way to quickly export comics and thumbnails, and showing works-in-progress to clients.

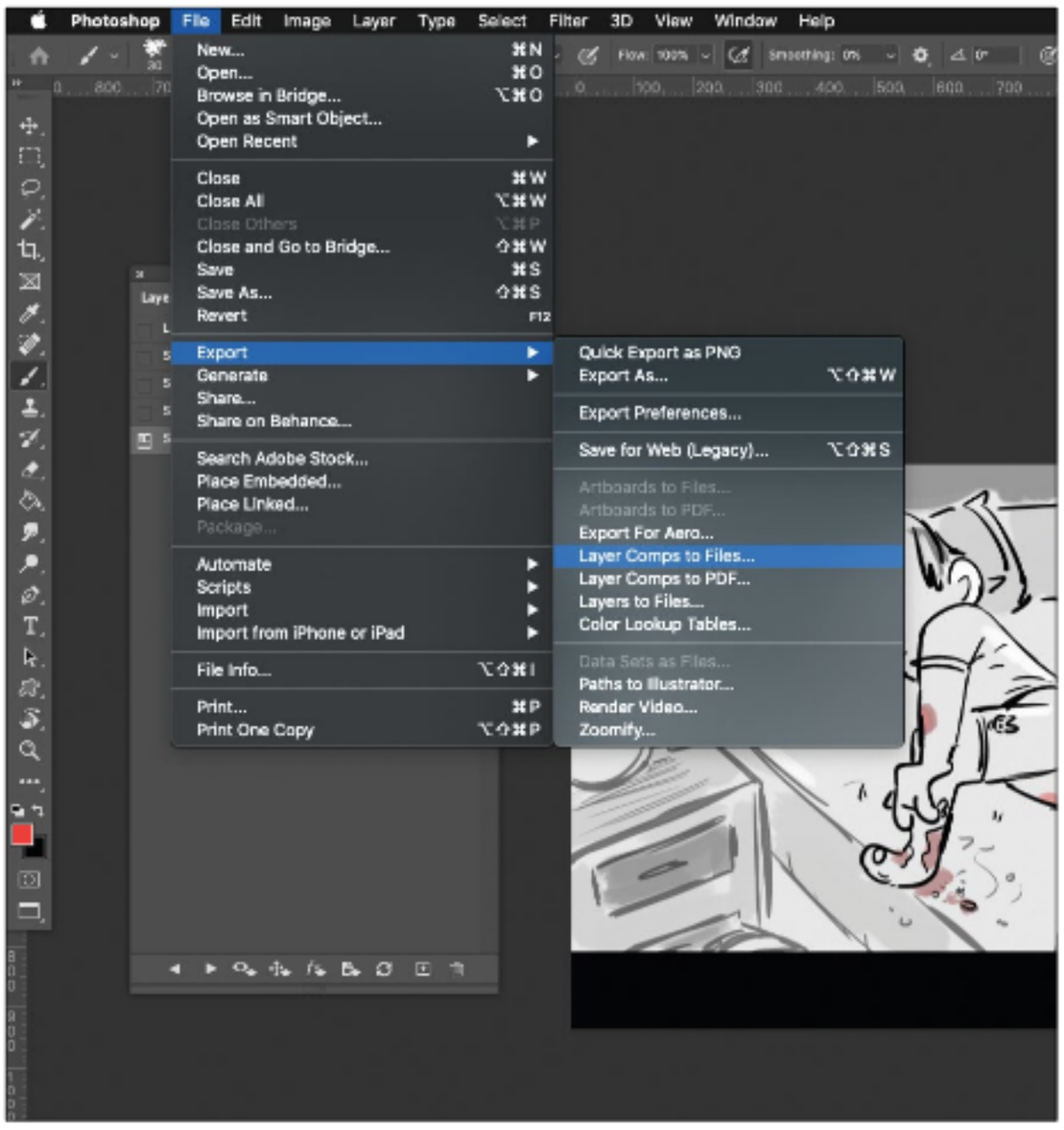
5 Making your first layer comp

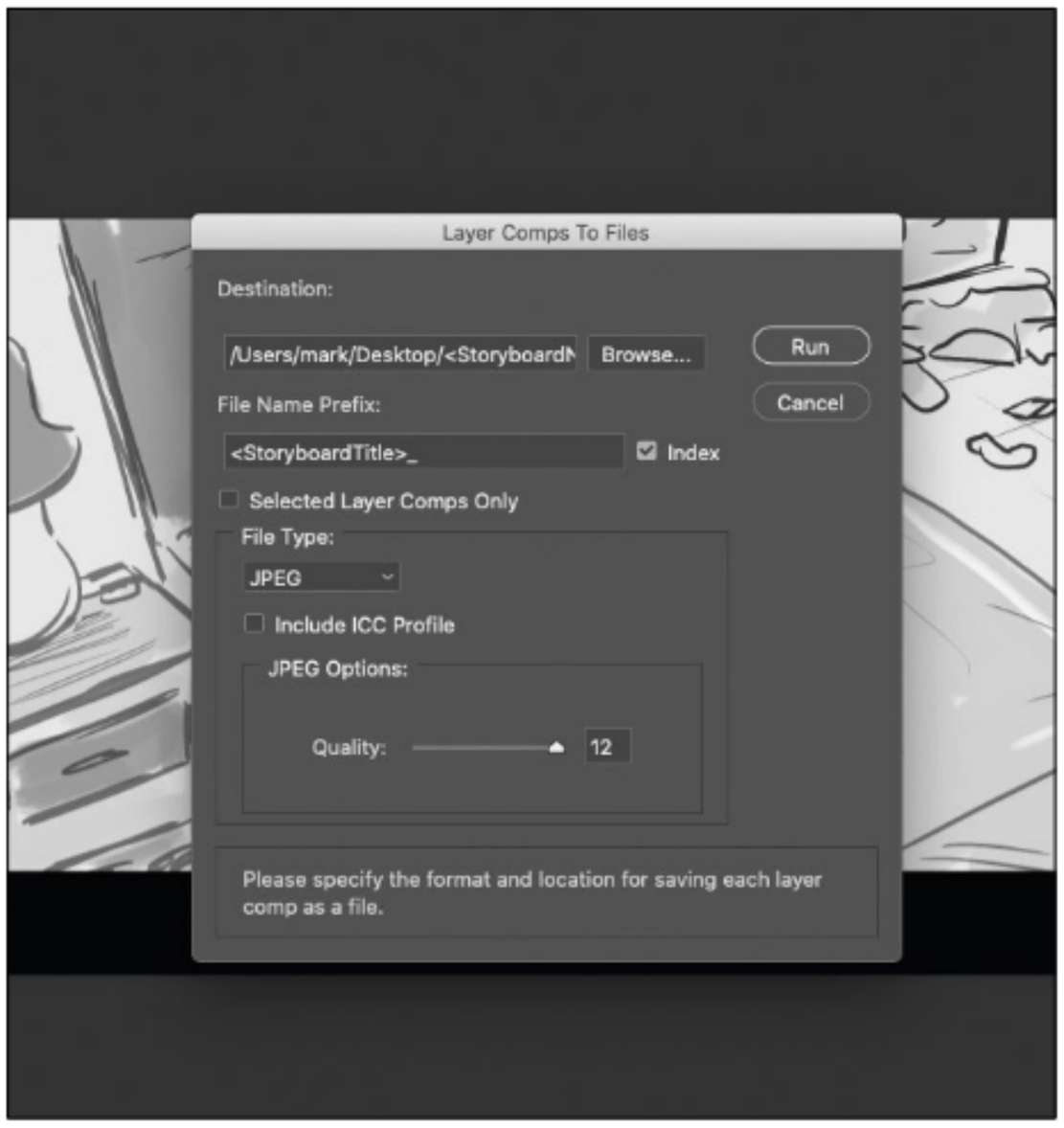
So now that we know a little bit more about layer comps, let's create our first one. Click the plus icon and the window shown above should pop out. This is where you can rename the layer comp. Next, make sure to check the Visibility, Position and Appearance (Layer Style) boxes, and then press OK. Voilà, you have your first layer comp!



6 Rinse and repeat for your next storyboard panel

Now you can turn off those layers you just drew and start repeating the steps for your second panel. If you need to reference the panel before, just click the small box next to the layer comp's name and all the layers used in that panel will be turned on. Keep on creating layer comps for every shot until you've finished your story. As you go, you can see how it all looks by pressing the arrow buttons in the Layer Comp window. If you see a exclamation mark next to your layer comp, it means that it hasn't been updated and some of your new layers haven't been added to it.



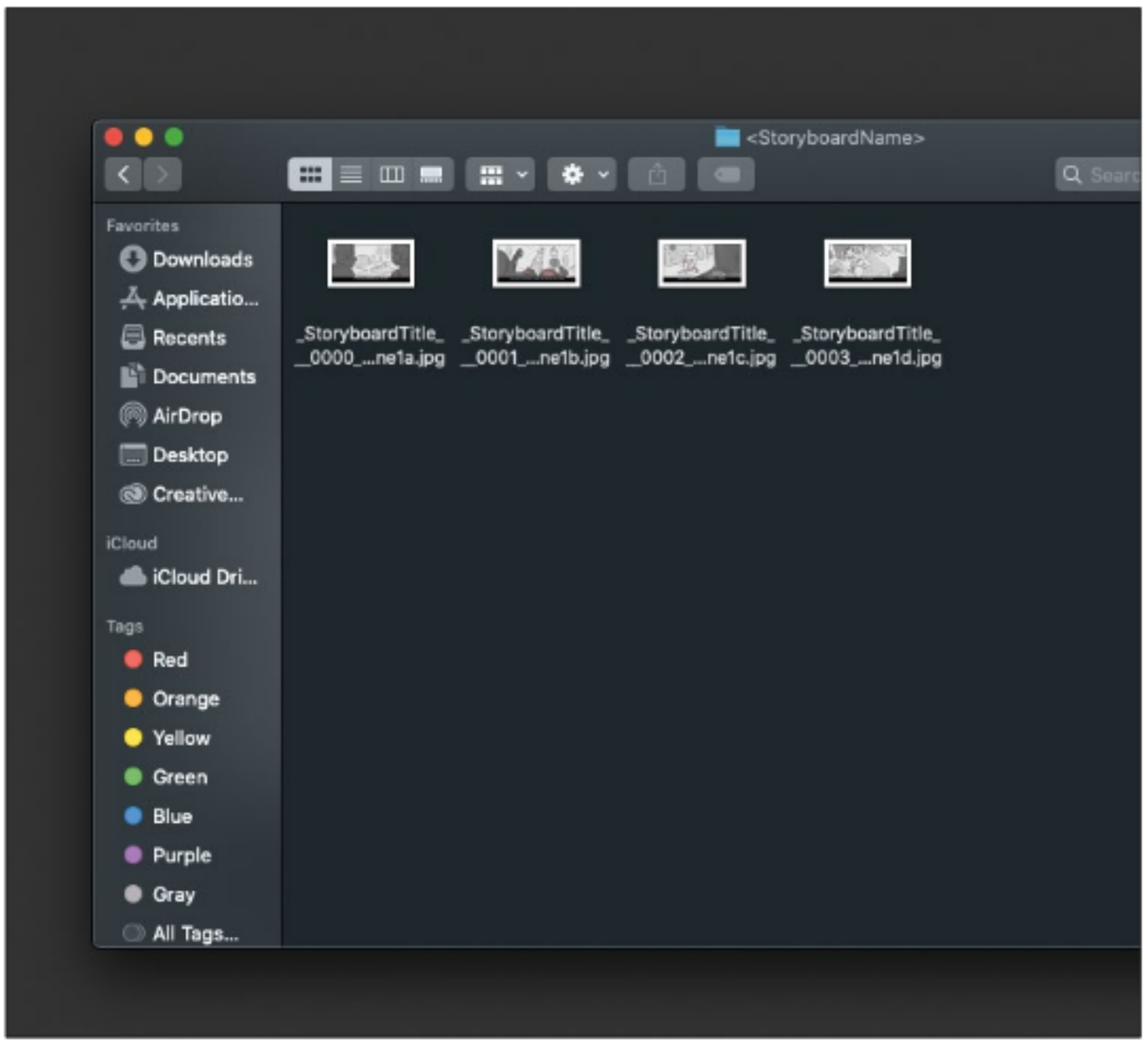


7 Preparing to export your layer comps

At this stage you have your layer comps and you're ready to export them, so here's how to do it. In a similar fashion to exporting a regular image from Photoshop, select File>Export>Layer Comps to Files. Here you'll be given several options to choose from. These include which directory you want these layer comps to go to, or what file type should these be.

8 Exporting your layer comps

When you're done, click Run and it should start exporting each layer comp. A window will pop up telling you when the process has completed. From here you can go to the directory set and see all the comps/images there.



9 Checking your exports

All the images have exported to the directory set. This is where you can either combine them into a PDF, or keep things as they are for a pitch or presentation. You now have a folder of all your panels ready for the next stage of your creative process. I hope this all makes sense and you find a place for layer comps in your workflow.

Artist insight

8 WAYS TO SKETCH FOR ANIMATION

Character designer **Prem Sai GS** presents his insights on how to inject movement, originality and emotion into your artworks for animation

Artist PROFILE

Prem Sai GS
LOCATION: US

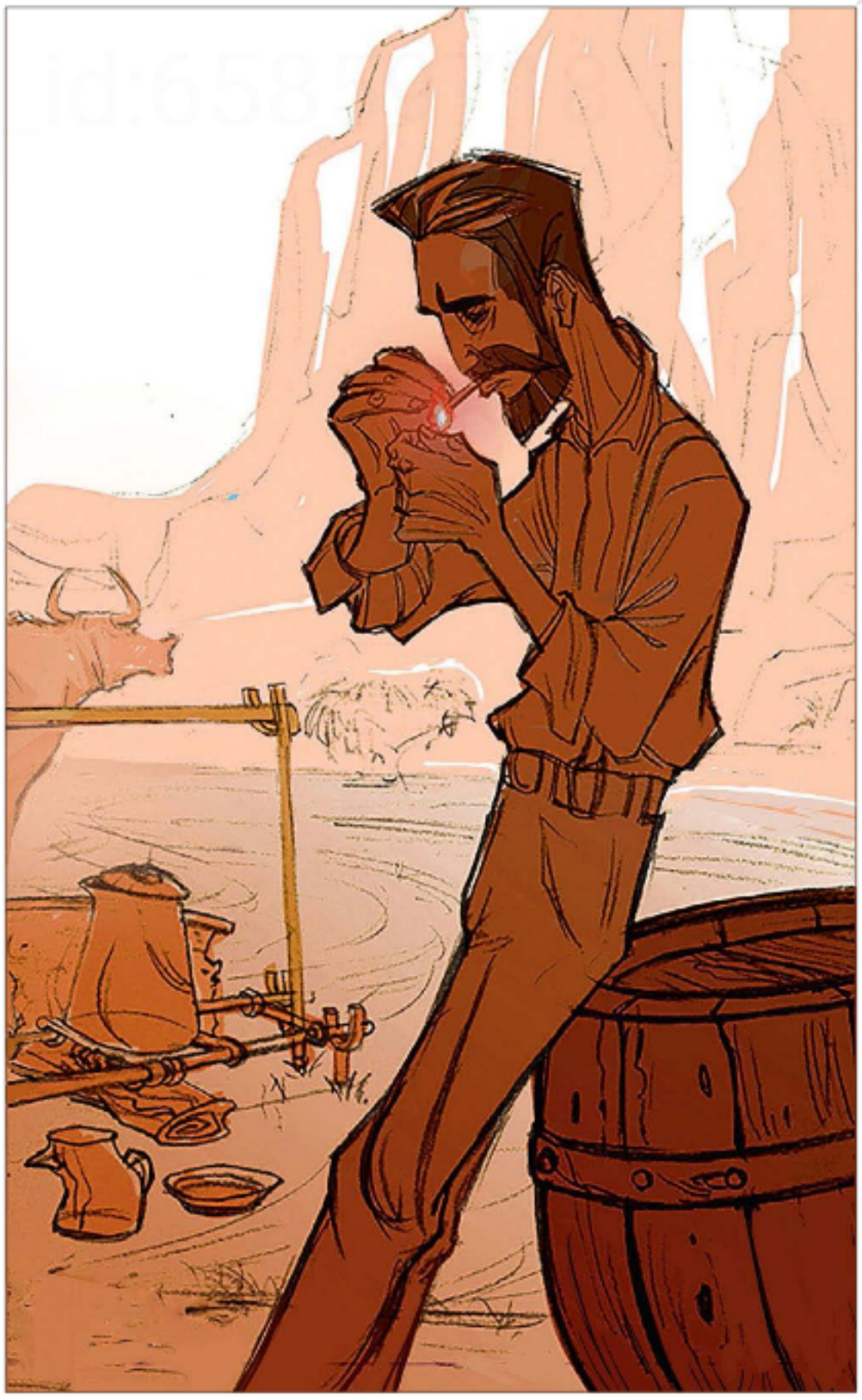
Prem is a character designer and storyboard artist from India, now based in Los Angeles in the animation industry. He's worked at DreamWorks Animation, Warner Bros. Animation, Duncan Studio and other independent studios. Prem was recently a story artist on the second season of Netflix's animated series Green Eggs and Ham.
https://ifxm.ag/psgs

Quite often as artists, we fall into the trap of copying our subjects line for line, shape for shape, and render everything out exactly the way we see them based on our knowledge of light, form, composition and so on. When we're done, we stand back for a much-awaited "ah-ha" moment… only to realise the piece we'd worked so hard on looks perhaps accurate, but also rather stale and lifeless.

How do we imbue life into these pieces that almost suck the life out of us to get them done in the first place? Even more importantly, how do we make it a unique experience for the viewer in a way that's representative of our individuality?

In the following few pages I've gathered some of the things that have worked for me in tackling this subject. I'm still learning every day, but these are ideas that have presented themselves over countless sleepless nights on my own little artistic adventure. With your permission, I'd like to invite you on a trip into the unspoken, ambiguous and intangible facet of art-making.

> **"Often we fall into the trap of copying a subject line for line…"**



1 SOUL OF THE SUBJECT

I like to think that art is a meditation, by the end of which you have something to show. The act of drawing is the opportunity to project ourselves on to the subject and practise empathy. The saying "feel the pose" couldn't be more true. Think of all the times we shudder as we play computer games for instance, where we feel the pain of getting hit on-screen. Become the subject, feel the curves and the straights with your body as you put down the lines or the paint. Being present in the moment and standing back occasionally to view the work from a distance is also an effective way to make sure you're saying the things you intended to say.

2 EXPLOSIVE MARK-MAKING

Some of my favourite pieces have an unrestricted expression of spontaneity where the artist didn't hesitate. According to neuroanatomist Dr Jill Bolte Taylor, the average human emotion lasts 90 seconds, after which the chemicals causing the emotions are flushed out of the body. This means we have about 90 seconds to put an idea down in its full vitality before we're swept away by a different emotion, unless we choose to stay in that emotion. This is why it's crucial to create an instant impression to capture the emotion we're after, and then expand on it for the duration of the artwork.

3 STUDY PEOPLE IN MOTION

If you wish to bring movement into your work, start by studying moving subjects. Photographs on the internet are fantastic references to research different objects and cultures, but at the same time most of them are meticulously posed still images. Along with the elements that we're looking for, quite often that rigidity also gets transferred into our work. Get a sketchbook, leave your dark corner and go see some living, breathing, moving people in your neighbourhood. They're all around us waiting to be drawn. Stare at them, make them a little uncomfortable. And when they're shifting around uneasily, draw them. It's fun! Regularly studying people and their behaviours helps you build a library of emotions to pull from when you're back at your desk creating work.

4 RHYTHM AND FLOW

Feeling out the rhythms of your subject is key to adding dynamism to the work. Nature is full of rhythms. Playing with fluid lines and shapes to mimic nature will help bring more life and vivacity to your drawings.

> It helps if you know the subject inside-out before you start – whether it be a one-inch moth or a 15-foot mammoth

5 KNOW YOUR FORMS AND ANATOMY

Often we're so busy focusing on structural accuracy that we miss out on the expression we were trying to convey in our drawings. So it helps if you know the subject inside-out before you start – whether it be a one-inch moth or a 15-foot mammoth. It's like an actor who needs to know their lines before coming to set, so that they can focus on the performance and experiment with different ways of delivering it, rather than having to look down every now and again to remember what to say. If you know your anatomy lines then the rest will follow.

6 DON'T BE LIMITED BY WHAT YOU'VE SEEN BEFORE

Free yourself from conventional wisdom. It's limiting. Often our desire to bring an image into a finished, desirable house-style significantly affects the heart of the image. Experiment and find things that haven't been done before in your own unique way that's both true to the story and your personal experiences. Caricature and exaggeration help immensely in this area, as we all have a different way of seeing things. We wouldn't have such a variety of stories and styles if artists hadn't taken that left turn. Explore and strive to bless the world with something fresh!

> Our medium gives us a perfect outlet to let our emotions out

7 INSTIL YOUR LIFE EXPERIENCES INTO YOUR WORK

Remember those times when we were frustrated, depressed and disappointed with how things were going in our lives? Or the times we were happy and exuberant? Let it all out on the monkey you're going to draw the next day! In this example, I wanted to convey how unaware we are to the flood we create in our own lives, while being aggravated at the unfairness around us. Our medium gives us a perfect outlet to let our emotions out, and sometimes in the most entertaining way. Let your life experiences come through and then expose yourself to a few more!

8 LET THE HAND DO THE DESIGNING

Focus on your character's personality as you work to develop their look

A Feel your way in

Don't overthink the initial design process. Let the hand do the designing based on the knowledge you've already accumulated about the subject. In this stage, I try to forget all rules and think only about the personality of the characters based on the story. This helps me come up with a few original thoughts that aren't influenced by artworks I've seen before.

B Use references

In the next stage, I can take my initial idea and make it more developed based on references I have gathered. Here, I have the luxury to go slower and use structure and form to bring the design to a more finished look.

C Work within the design's limits

Once I'm content with how the design turned out, I might play with some poses to see if the design works in different views. Often I might find some poses that might not work for a specific design, as they break character. Always stay aware of the limits of each design.

Photoshop

PHOTOBASHING TECHNIQUES IN CONCEPT ART

David Paget shows how to use photobashing and classic matte painting techniques to help create concept art

Artist PROFILE

David Paget
LOCATION: England

David is a concept artist working in games, film and animation productions, as well as a lecturer in concept art at Teesside University.
www.davidpaget.com

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 8 now!

When working as a concept artist in film and game productions, I'm often asked to produce a variety of images. The context of the image can vary drastically (and the deadlines!); I might get to work one particular image for several days, but sometimes I may only get a couple of hours.

As a professional artist, you need to be able to adapt quickly based on the project you're working on. As such, you'll need to adjust your workflow accordingly. And that's what I thought we could look at in this workshop. I want to introduce a standard industry practice called photobashing that's quick and fast to produce, while explaining how you can use these techniques to create an original design ready for production.

Let's create a scenario: I'm a concept artist hired to work on a film production. The production team has scouted a location and found a street it wants to film on. The team then sends me a photo (or plate) of that street and say, "We're shooting a movie here but we need you to change the background into an epic sci-fi city and we need the design completed as soon as possible." My task is to create a photo-real, sci-fi city concept (within a few hours) ready for production. Let's go!

Photographs supplied by Carrie Le

1 Inspiration and developing the mood

No matter what project you're working on, I always recommend that artists spend time looking for inspiration to help establish the general mood of their image. This can be done with movies, video games, TV shows… whatever helps get you in to your creative rhythm. Inspiration from real-world locations can also massively influence your work, so I look at cities such as Tokyo and Hong Kong to draw influences on my design.

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: SOFT ROUND 300 PIXELS

This default brush is fantastic for painting atmosphere when set at a low Opacity.

HARD SOFT EDGED

A great brush for painting solid areas of detail. It also has a 'natural' soft smudge.

SAMPLED BRUSH 7 6

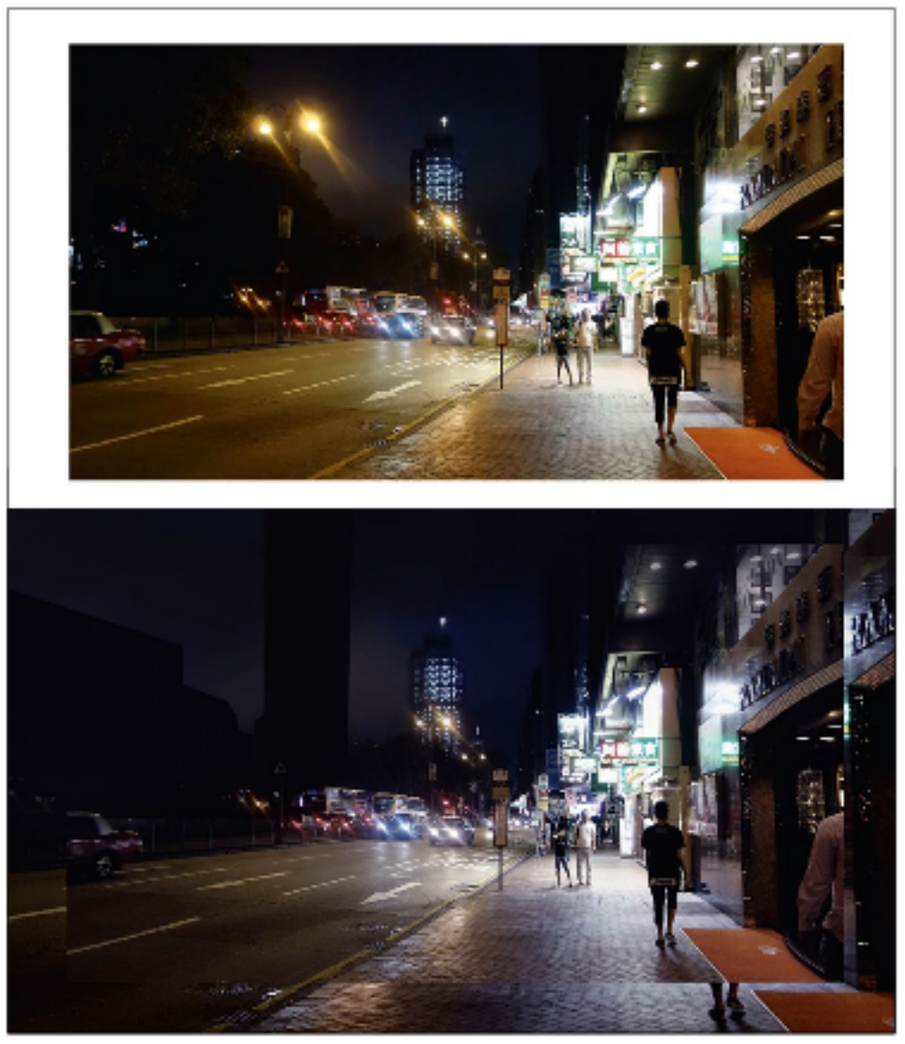
A harder rectangle shaped brush with a delicate texture. Good for hard-edge surfaces.

SAMPLED BRUSH 3 19

Great for textured atmosphere when used large on a low Opacity.

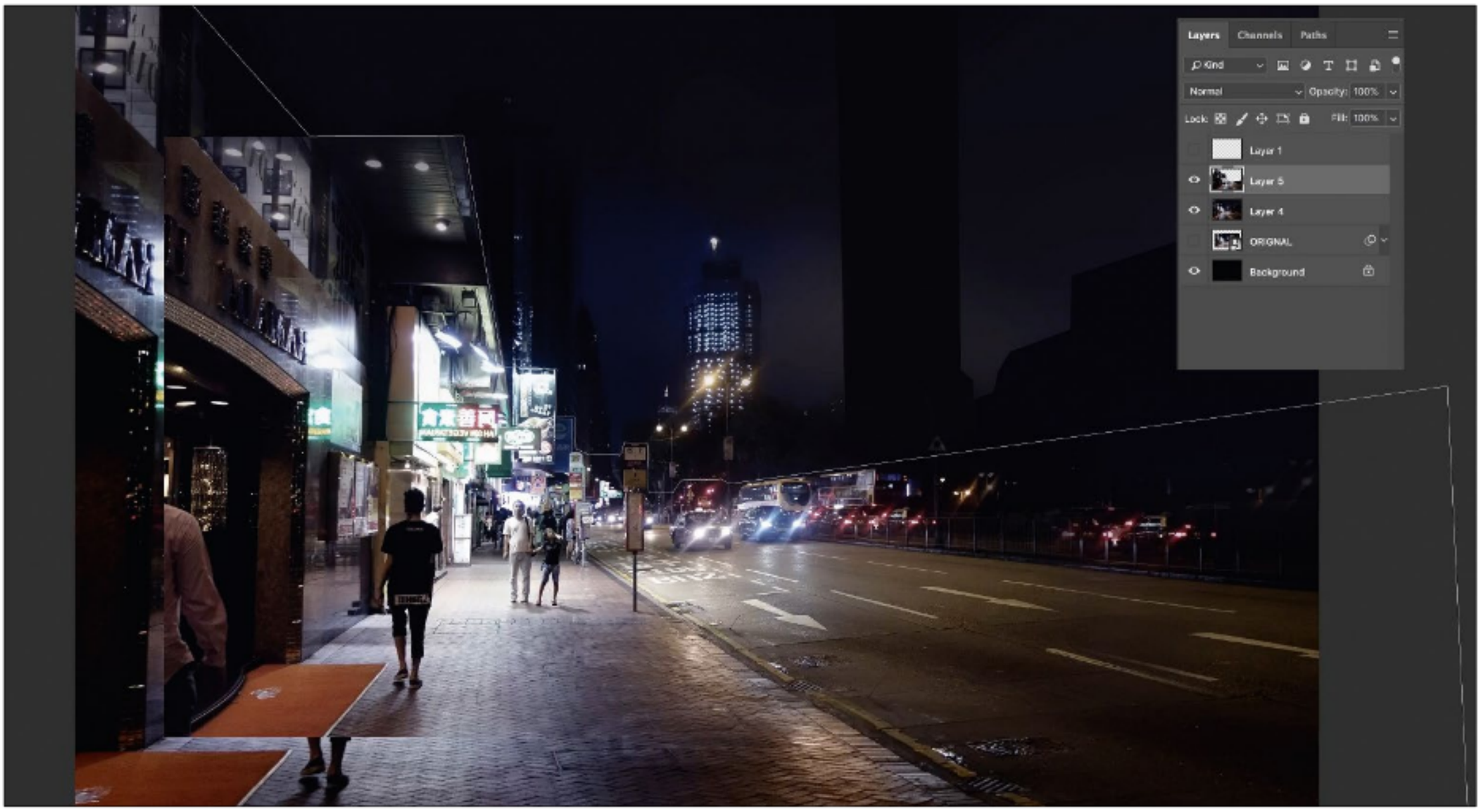
2 Research, research, research

An artist is only as good as the tools they use, and the same applies to their research. For photobashing techniques, you need to gather a large amount of research and reference images to use within your work. First-hand photos you've taken yourself are best, but you can find high-quality references on websites such as photobash.org, fotoref.com, cubebrush.com and artstation.com.



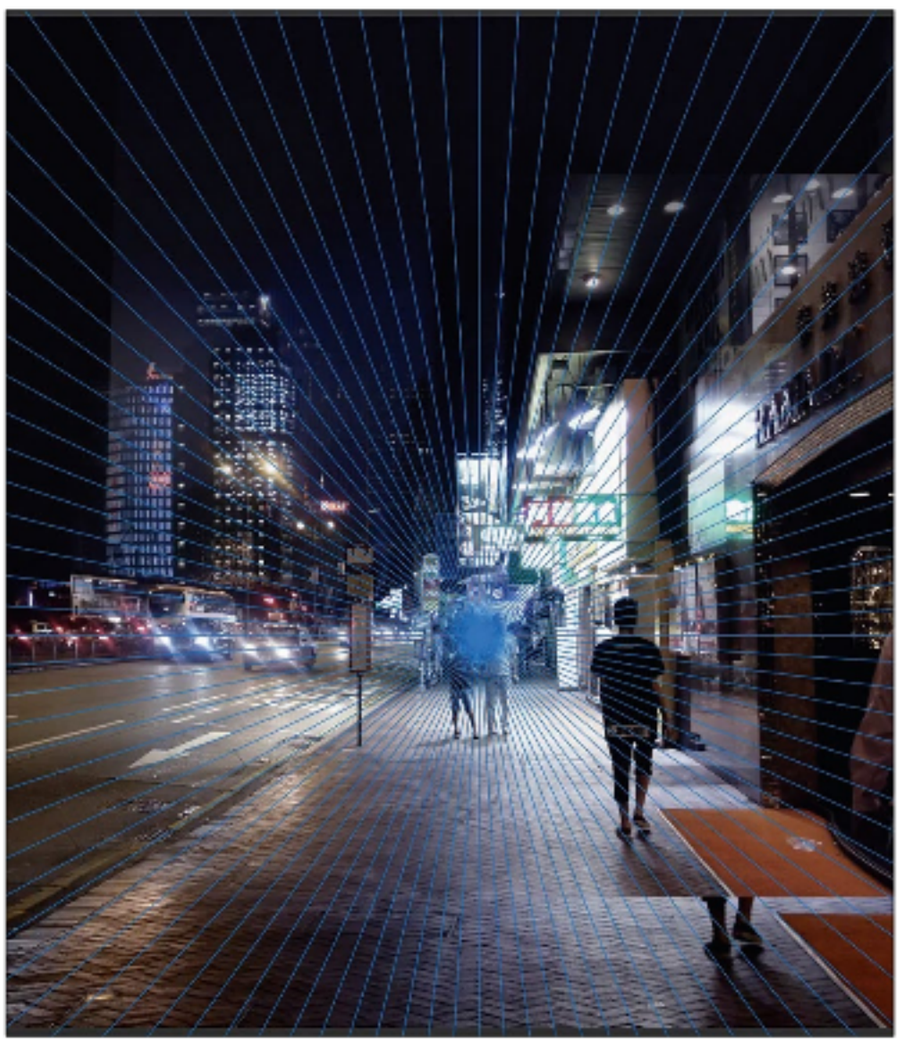
3 Super-rough sketch

I open my base photo in Photoshop and do a rough sketch of my idea on top. It looks bad, but the point of this is to quickly get an idea down and visualise the space. I'm not committing to any ideas – I just want to get things going. I also crop the image to fit within the canvas dimensions required by my client (thanks ImagineFX!).



4 Splitting the image into layers

Now I have an idea of what I can do, I need to split the original photo into a few different layers. Ideally, I want to split the foreground elements from the background because this is the area that I intend to edit the most. I can do relatively quickly this by selecting areas with the Polygon Lasso Tool, and then copying and pasting the parts that I need.

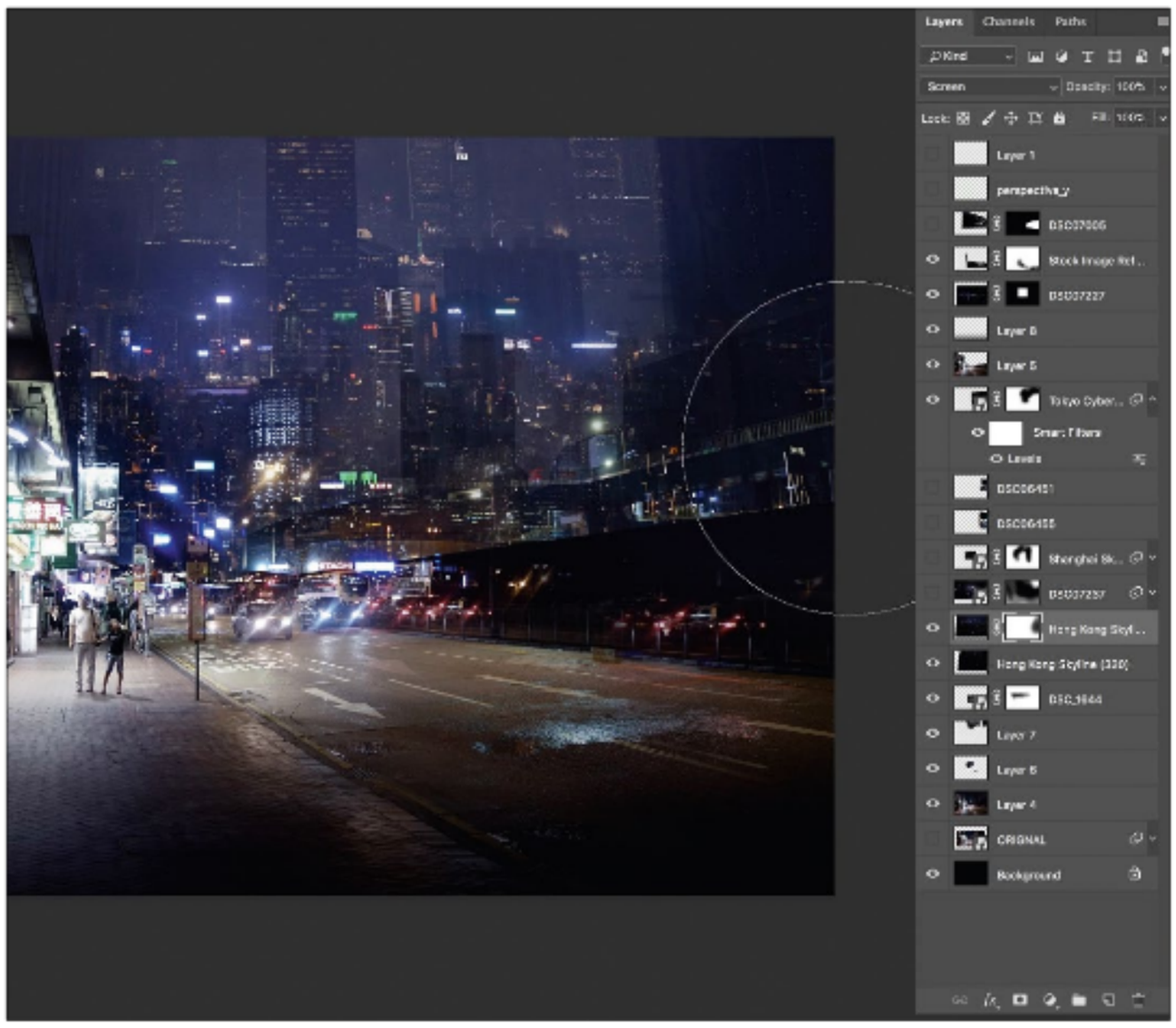


5 Quick perspective

I need to make my design look believable and any references I bring in to my design need to match the same perspective as the original photo. If I don't do this, it'll break the illusion of the final design. I lay down a perspective guide to help me using a fantastic plug-in available for Photoshop called Perspective Tools v2.

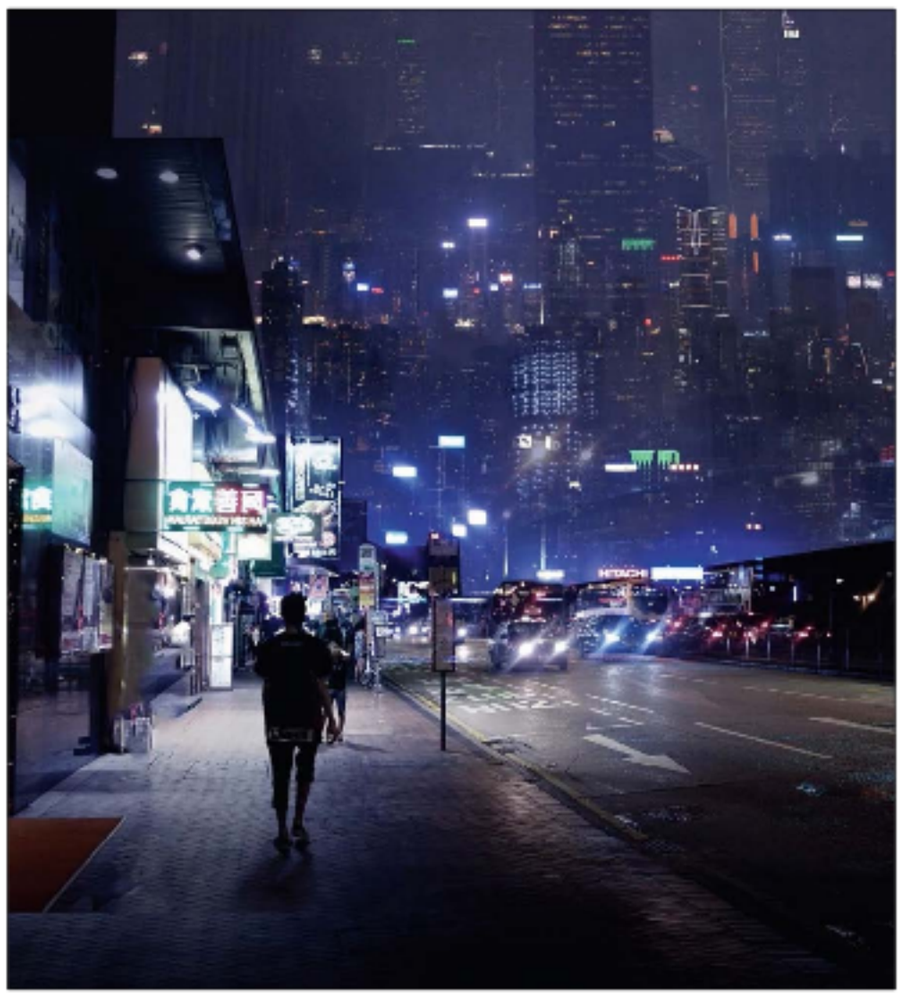
6 Laying the foundations

Now I begin laying down a variety of different references into my design to try and build the city. My design is set at night, so I'll spend a bit of time playing around with different Layer Properties to create different effects with the references. I find settings such as Screen and Lighten work well for this kind of scene, but there's always an element of experimentation to this.



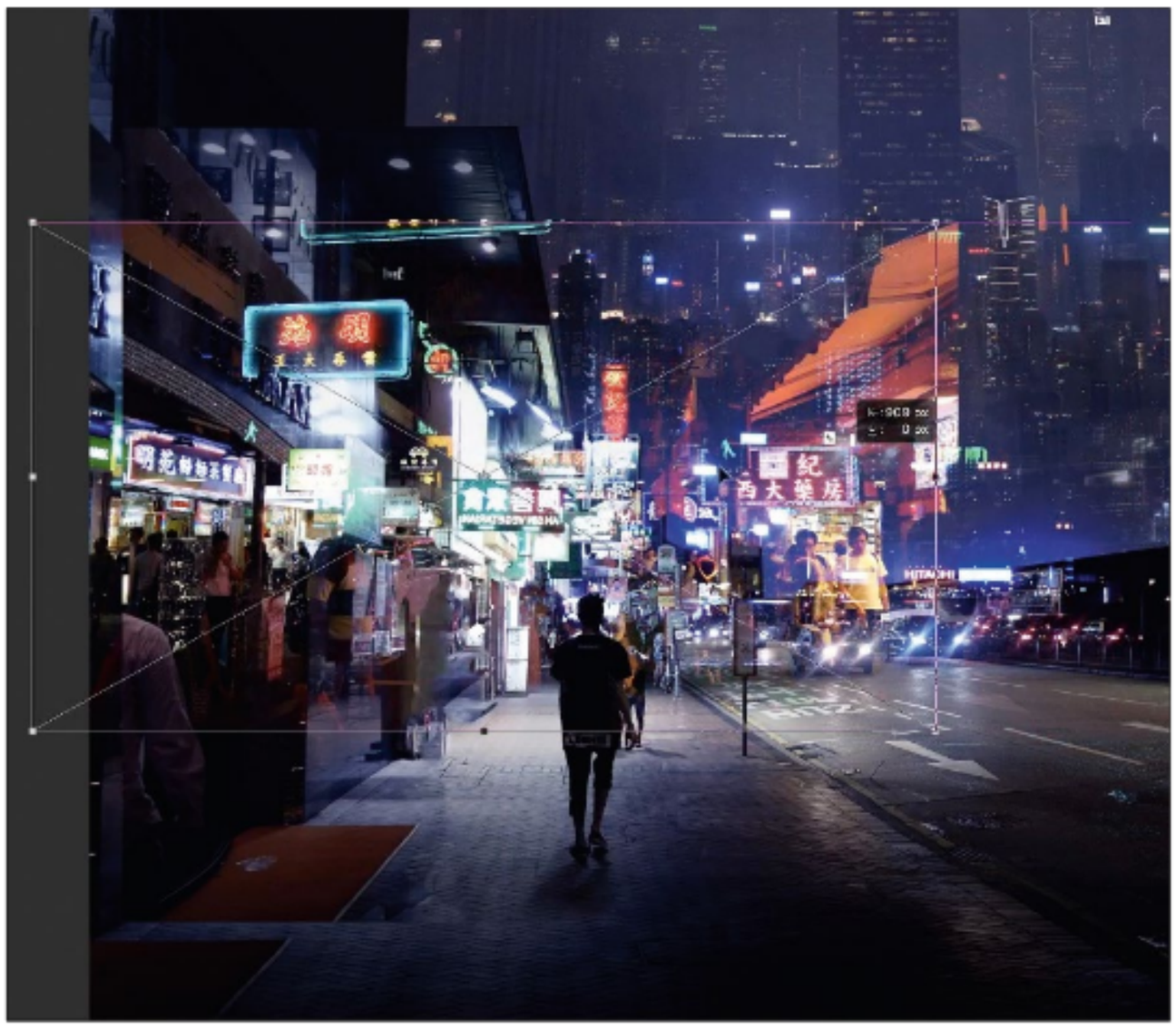
7 Make use of Layer Masks

I'm selective of the references I use and sometimes only want certain areas to stand out. However, I also don't want to delete areas of the original references in case I want to use them elsewhere in the image. Layer Masks enable me to hide or retrieve areas of a reference without damaging the original source material.



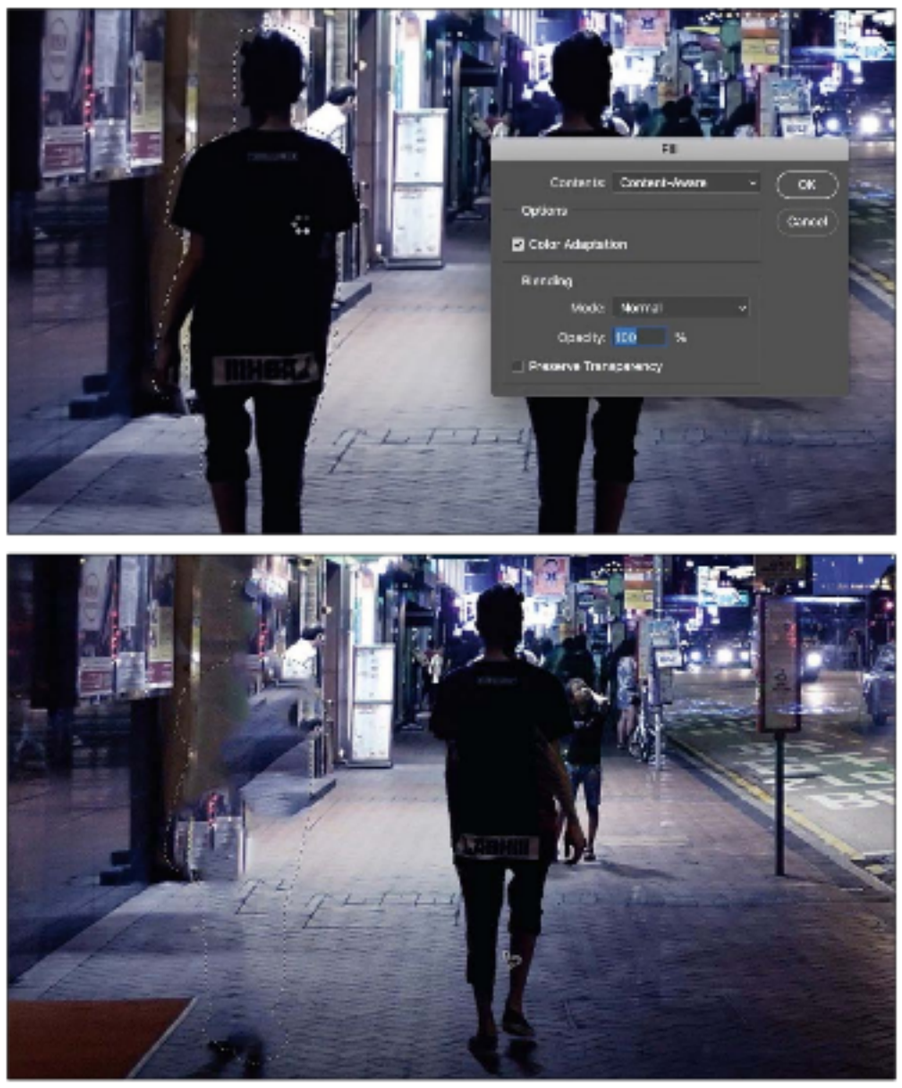
8 Adjusting the composition

Now I've laid down a good foundation for my image, I want to adjust the elements of the composition so there's a better balance of elements. Using the Rule of Thirds, I'm going to reposition the guy in the foreground so he sits better within the focal points of the image. Even though I'm using photobashing techniques, I still need to apply traditional art theories to balance the design.



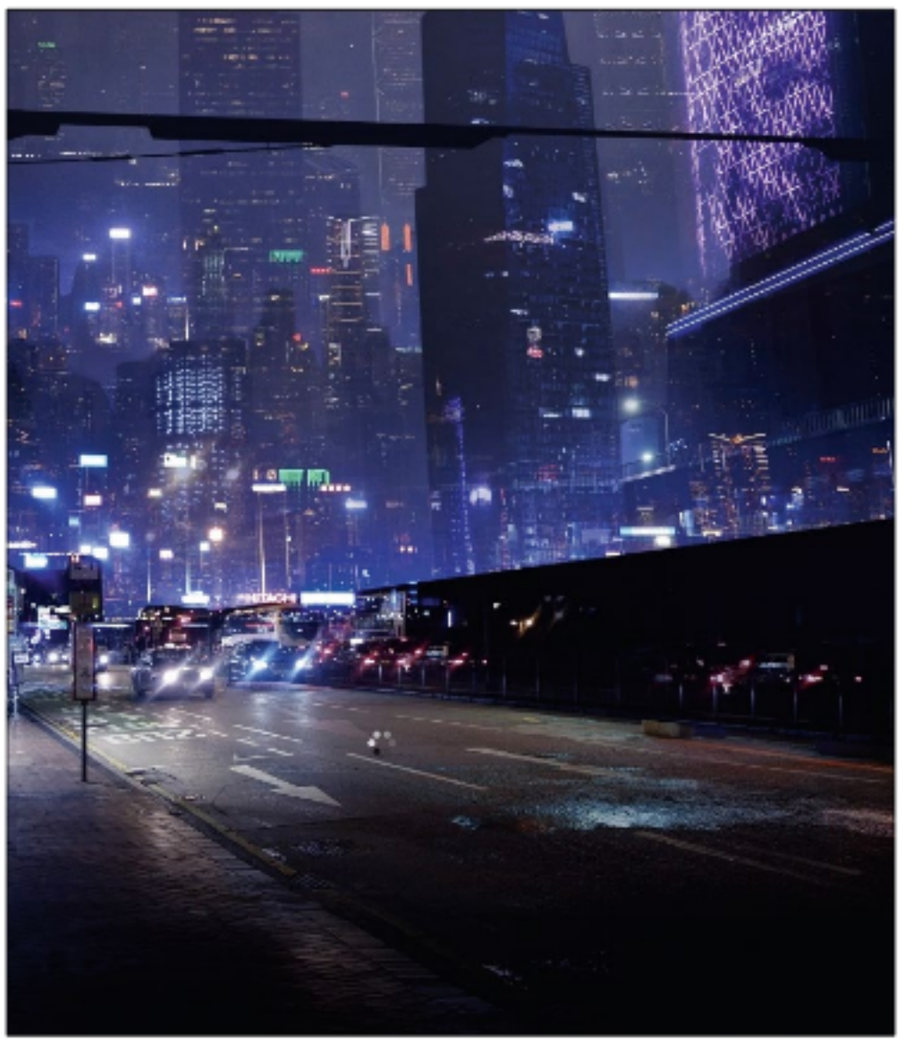
9 Factor trial and error into your creative process

A lot of people who ask me about this process assume that I know exactly where everything goes and that things run perfectly from start to finish. The honest answer is, that's not true. Yes, I'm experienced and have an idea of how things will go, but every image created presents new challenges. There's always an element of trial and error and, if things do go a little wrong, it's nothing to worry about.



10 Seamless editing with the Fill tool

Using photo references in your work presents challenges because you need to maintain a consistent visual style. By moving the foreground character, I've created a problem in that I need to patch the reference. I could paint this manually, but that takes time. Instead, I select the Fill tool, check Content Aware and press OK.

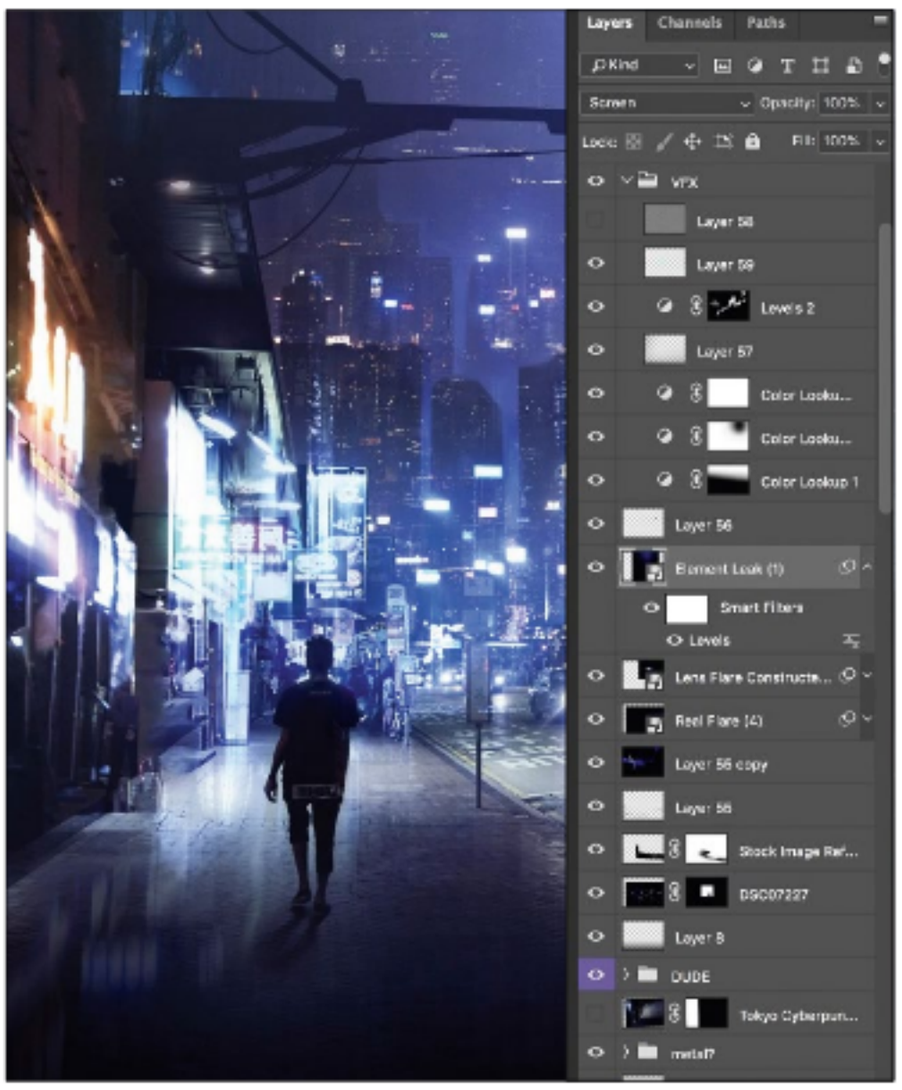


11 Laying in some atmosphere

The references I'm using quickly begin to cluster and make the image look flat. Using the Gradient tool and a soft blue/purple colour, I create some new layers and gently overlay some atmosphere into the scene. This is a quick way to push back elements in your scene and to also help establish a sense of distance in the design.

12 Overpainting the scene

When taking the photobashing approach, a point is always reached where a manual touch just can't be beaten. So I begin overpainting on top of my scene to help finesse and blend the elements in better. I also paint in more atmosphere to enhance the distance as well as small elements of smoke.



13 Last adjustments and tweaks

With most images I make, towards the end I add some post-production edits. I like to play with Adjustment Masks at the top of the scene to subtly adjust colour values, and experiment with settings in Color Lookup to see if this sparks any more ideas. I also add a noise layer over the top to add a little film grain to the image.

14 Final thoughts...

Photobashing methods are a great way to quickly create production concepts. It's not necessarily easy and you still need an understanding of composition, colour theory, perspective and so on for it to work well. And because it's an approach that uses photo references, some people refer to this as cheating – but it's not. It's just a different kind of tool and one I really recommend that you experiment with.

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX Reviews

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

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

5 PRODUCTS ON TEST

HARDWARE

96 Wacom One
We find out if Wacom's latest pen display is ideal for artists on a budget, or whether it suffers from too many corners being cut.

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John Wallin Liberto offers an in-depth painting session that takes you into the head of a professional concept artist.

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Discover how concept artists visualised an original take on the espionage genre for Blue Sky Studios' newest animated film.

101 Beginner's Guide to Fantasy Drawing
A host of artists show you how to create classic fantasy artwork of your own.

101 The Moviemaking Magic of Star Wars: Ships & Battles
The design process behind the iconic vehicles from Star Wars is revealed.

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

Wacom One

MAC & PC

The Wacom One has a 13-inch display, with a matte surface that gives enough feedback for precise strokes.

ONE TO WATCH We find out if Wacom's latest pen display is ideal for artists on a budget, or whether it suffers from too many corners being cut

Price £360 **Company** Wacom **Web** www.wacom.com

The Wacom One is designed to be an affordable entry point for artists looking for a pen display. It's been designed to work with Windows, Mac and certain Android devices, and could be a step up for many new 2D and 3D artists looking to find more natural ways to create artworks, at a fraction of the price of Wacom's Cintiq displays.

We were also interested to see what the Wacom One could offer in a post-iPad world, particularly bearing in mind Apple's new Sidecar feature, present in MacOS 10.15 Catalina. This enables a newer iPad (prices starting at £349) to be used as a second screen or drawing display with more recent Macs, without running any additional software.

Artwork by Brian Matyas

The Wacom One needs three cables to connect to a computer: one for USB, one for HDMI and one for its own power. While the fact that the Wacom One needs its own power supply is annoying, it also means that it won't be drawing power from a laptop, which is the case for iPad solutions.

On both Mac and Windows, the Wacom One was plug and play. There are USB-C adaptors included for both the HDMI and USB cables, which meant that the Wacom One worked with no additional dongles needed for our two test computers: a Razer Blade 15-inch gaming laptop and a 2017 15-inch MacBook Pro.

> "Viewing angles hold up well for colour accuracy when viewed off-centre…"

WORKMANLIKE CASING

The Wacom One unit is housed in a utilitarian plastic case. There are a couple of fold-out legs that stow away flat when not in use. There's also a single power-lead that has a HDMI and USB connector. There's no adjustment

The nib removal tool is built into the tablet, and lives underneath one of the fold-out legs.

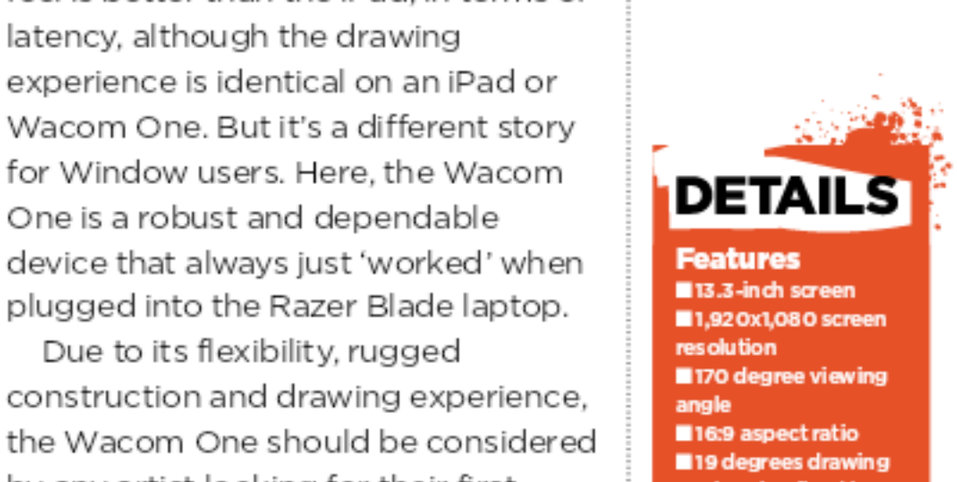
The supplied stylus only features one configurable button, but doesn't require charging, or a battery.

in the legs, and the placement of the power lead means it's difficult to turn the screen around so that it could act as an upright second monitor.

The supplied stylus is a more basic solution than those included with the Wacom Intuos range. Yet it still features 4,096 levels of pressure sensitivity, and drawing felt precise. There's only one button on the stylus, which can be mapped to a particular function using the Wacom drivers. The Wacom One itself lacks any configurable button.

The screen resolution is 1,920x1,080, which for the size is fine, especially when working with Windows. Another size benefit is that viewing angles hold up well for colour accuracy when viewed off-centre, even though the screen can only manage 72 per cent of NTSC colour gamut coverage. The screen's one downfall is that it isn't very bright. This might be a problem when working in a room with overhead lighting, because the matte surface tends to spread out diffuse reflections.

When compared with an iPad with an Apple Pencil, which can connect to a Mac using Sidecar, the screen difference and quality is overwhelmingly in the iPad's favour.



The Wacom One's clean look is soon spoilt by the three cables needed to connect it to a computer, and a power supply.

Sidecar also implements dynamic software buttons on the touch display of the iPad, making it a better experience both in use and value: when the artist isn't using Sidecar, they also have an iPad to use. The Wacom feel is better than the iPad, in terms of latency, although the drawing experience is identical on an iPad or Wacom One. But it's a different story for Window users. Here, the Wacom One is a robust and dependable device that always just 'worked' when plugged into the Razer Blade laptop.

Due to its flexibility, rugged construction and drawing experience, the Wacom One should be considered by any artist looking for their first drawing display, as long as they don't work in a bright room.

The built-in, fold-out legs enable the display to be set at 19 degrees.

DETAILS

Features
- 13.3-inch screen
- 1,920x1,080 screen resolution
- 170 degree viewing angle
- 16:9 aspect ratio
- 19 degrees drawing angle using fixed legs
- 225x357x14.6mm
- 1.0 kg

System Requirements
PC: Windows 7 or later, HDMI port and standard USB-A port
Mac: OS 10.13 or later, HDMI port and standard USB-A port

Rating
★★★★☆

IN FOCUS

THREE MORE TABLETS

Artists on a budgets should also consider these creative solutions…

iPad and Pencil

Web www.apple.com
Price £438

While the price of an iPad and Pencil may be a bit more than the One, the iPad is often on sale. When used with a Mac that runs Sidecar, the iPad is a better deal, due to the brighter screen and when not in use…it's an iPad!

Artist 13.3 Pro Drawing Tablet

Web www.xp-pen.com
Price £234

Offering the same size screen for less money than the Wacom One, and with programmable buttons, this XP-Pen could be a good alternative for those artists not loyal to the feel of a Wacom.

Cintiq 13 Pro

Web www.wacom.com
Price £499

The old Wacom Cintiq is on sale for only £139 more than the One. With double the pen pressure, a touch screen and software buttons and a Pro Pen, this is a great price for a screen that answers most of the issues with Wacom's One.

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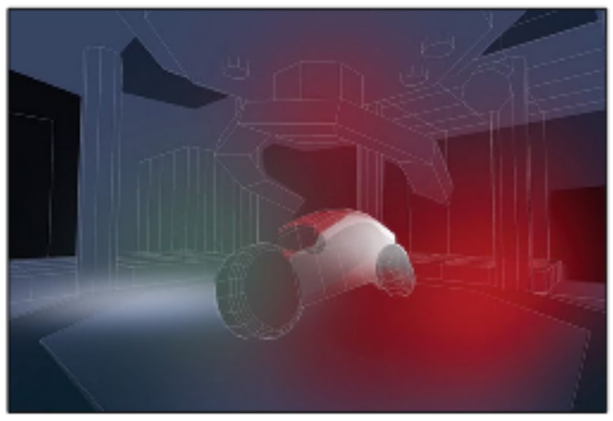
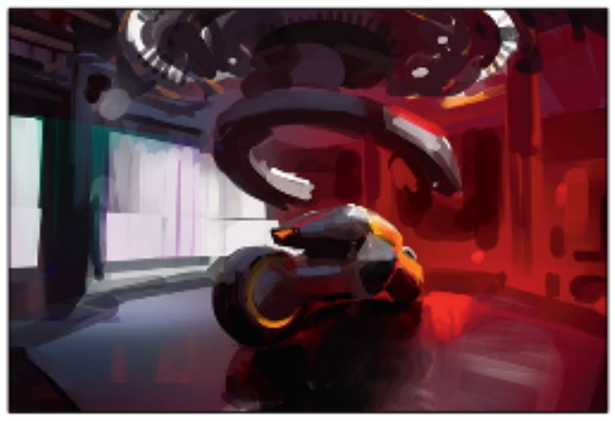
A grab of a 3D model gives John Wallin Liberto a template, while providing key perspective details.



In his video John creates a concept art piece from scratch in three hours, revealing lots of tips on the way.



Whether you're painting texture on a future motorbike or scales on a dragon, sometimes it pays to hold back from detailing the whole surface.

The trick with background elements like this tree is to provide enough detail to make it convincing, without distracting from the focal point.

Cyber M/C

VROOM WITH A VIEW John Wallin Liberto offers a painting session that takes you into the head of a professional concept artist

Publisher John Wallin Liberto **Price** $5 **Format** Download **Web** www.gumroad.com/johnliberto

You might not think that motorcycles and dragons share many visual similarities, but then, not everyone thinks in the same way as John Wallin Liberto. At one point during this concept art video, he compares adding texture to his motorcycle image to painting scales on a dragon – both benefit from you suggesting the surface rather than rendering it in full detail.

This is the sort of insight that artists normally only get from years of experience, but there are plenty more on offer in this video. John paints an entire concept piece pretty much from scratch (only the 3D model base was made before he started recording) in just three hours, showing what's achievable in such a limited time.

The 3D base provides a foundation for gauging tricky factors like getting the perspective of the wheels; then the rest is just a question of blocking out light and dark areas, establishing the colour scheme and rendering detail after detail. The benefit of John recording in real time is that you get to see the wrong turns every working concept artist takes. He's also always ready to re-use elements to save time.

While you're watching a lot of rendering take place, what the video is really about is design and composition. You'll see how John is always thinking about the function of objects in the scene, and how different elements relate to each other, for example when he resizes a ceiling ring because it's too similar to another element.

It's a session that marries creativity with pragmatism, a blend that enables concept artists to takes of flights of fancy while meeting their deadlines. There's much to learn here; you'll just have to forgive John's occasional dodgy British accent!

DETAILS

Topics covered
- Starting with a 3D base
- Blocking out
- Colour and lighting
- Rhythm vs repetition
- Rendering and detailing
- Painting texture
- Light and reflections

Length
176 minutes

Rating
★★★★☆

ARTIST PROFILE
JOHN WALLIN LIBERTO

John is a concept artist working at Oculus VR. He's been involved in the video games industry since 1999 and has worked on AAA titles such as Halo 4 and 5, the Gears of War franchise and the Battlefield series of games. Outside of the video games industry, his film work has included Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban and Tim Burton's Big Fish. John's commercial client work has included Samsung, Intel and Nokia.

www.artstation.com/captflushgarden

José Manuel Fernández Oli painted this key art of a chase scene along Venice's canals.

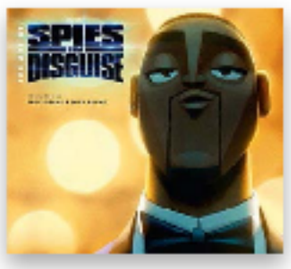
The Art of Spies in Disguise

PIGEON STOOL Discover how concept artists visualised an original take on the espionage genre for Blue Sky Studios' newest animated film

Author Blue Sky Studios **Publisher** Titan Books **Price** £30 **Web** www.titanbooks.com **Available** Now

The spy genre is filled with an array of hallmarks that make it a gift to filmmakers. Sharp suits. Futuristic gadgets. Explosive set pieces. But to earn its keep, a good espionage movie should riff on these elements. Spies in Disguise, the latest animated film from Blue Sky Studios, certainly finds an original angle as it transforms its protagonist, top agent Lance Sterling, into a pigeon.

Given that Lance's pigeon persona is the selling point of the movie, it's no surprise that a sizeable chunk in the introduction of the book is dedicated to how his human and avian character designs match up. Besides a plumage in the shape of Lance's snappy bow tie, subtle visual cues such as the shape of the legs and the eyebrows help to marry these two designs. It's a clever demonstration of how a character can be boiled down to their simplest elements and transferred into new context, and is something that budding concepts artists would do well to study.

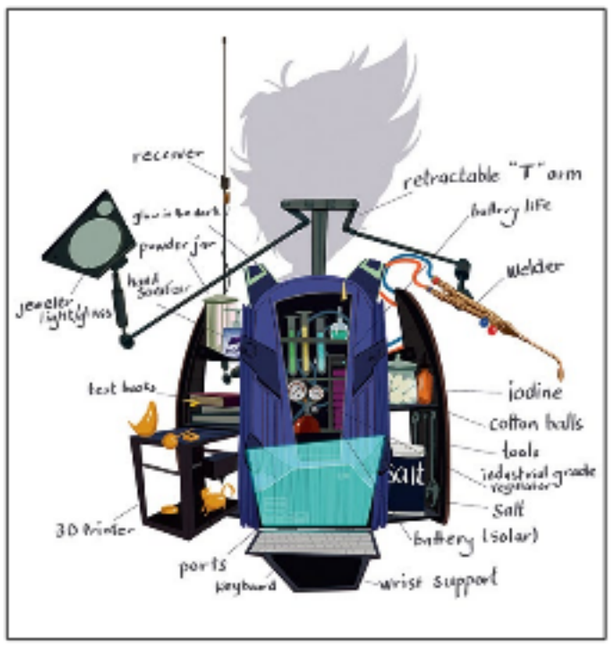


Artists explore Lance Sterling's facial expressions and their pigeon equivalent.

In fact the character design chapter – which makes up nearly half of the book – packs plenty of sketches and iterations and make for a rewarding read. We see how a range of personalities are communicated in different ways, and notes from production and character designers explain why the final designs were eventually settled on.

> "The character design chapter packs plenty of sketches and iterations"

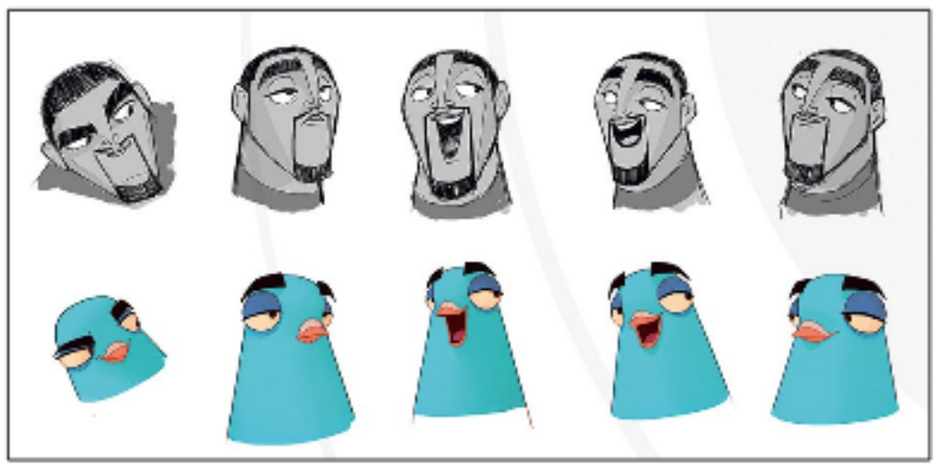
Unfortunately, this is at the detriment of the rest of the book, which appears to be in a race to the finish as it rattles through locations, technology and vehicles with a palpable sense of brevity. The wealth of concept art from all stages of the pipeline is some compensation, although the presentation is light on annotations and it's difficult to get a true sense of how all the various elements link together.



It was a challenge to fill a key character's backpack with scientific kit without straining credibility.

By the end, the book does away with chapters completely and instead bundles together the colour script with a brief style guide for an unremarkable conclusion. This is a shame because there's clearly a competent creative team at work, but The Art of Spies in Disguise doesn't give them the opportunity to spread their wings.

RATING ★★★☆☆



Beginner's Guide to Fantasy Drawing

MAKING MAGIC A host of experienced artists show you how to create classic fantasy artwork of your own in this easy-to-follow, sensibly priced guide

Editor Marisa Lewis **Publisher** 3dtotal publishing **Price** £15 **Web** www.3dtotal.com **Available** Now

Fantasy illustration is big business, with legions of artists eager to learn the tricks of the trade. To help aspiring fantasy artists take their first steps, this step-by-step guide walks readers through the basics of drawing together with how to craft characters and creatures.

As is the case with most beginner's guides, this one takes you on a whistle-stop tour of the tools you'll need, useful techniques to keep in mind, and even the basics of anatomy drawing. The gap between what these tips outline and what they achieve in later tutorials is sizeable though, with a certain degree of artistic skill expected of the reader.

Martin Abel's chapter on design techniques shows how to a give a wizard a new narrative by changing his colours.

This leap can also be found when the tutorials frequently instruct artists to conduct research outside of the book. While this is a necessary skill to develop, it crops up so often that a more focused and in-depth approach might have been more beneficial.

Yet there's still a lot for novices to enjoy. Studies of real-life animals provide the basis for creating mythological beasts, and the thought processes behind character designs are packed with insights. Just make sure you use this guide alongside more comprehensive books on how to draw.

RATING ★★★☆☆

The Moviemaking Magic of Star Wars: Ships & Battles

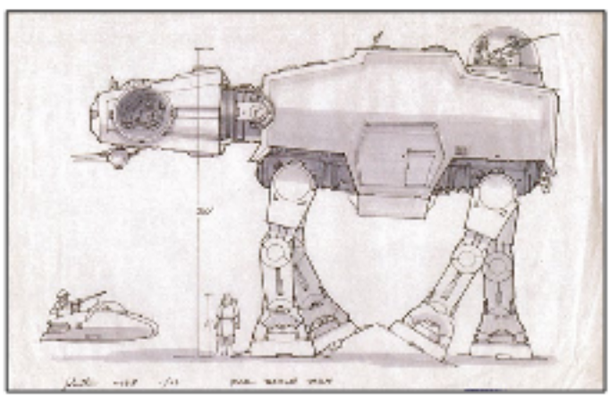
MODEL EXAMPLE The design process behind the iconic vehicles from Star Wars is revealed in this concise behind-the-scenes book

Author Landry Walker **Publisher** Abrams Books for Younger Readers **Price** £23 **Web** www.abramsbooks.com **Available** Now

Niche behind-the-scenes facts are the order of the day in The Moviemaking Magic of Star Wars: Ships & Battles, and you'd be hard pressed to be better served on the subject by another book.

Covering each instalment of the cinematic sci-fi series right up to The Rise of Skywalker, the creative teams generously share how the vehicles were made with the help of beautiful interactive features such as pull-out artworks and 'lift-the-lid' imagery. We see how George Lucas' early sketches were fleshed out, and even learn about the clever and in some cases cost-effective techniques used to realise these ideas. There's also a fascinating glimpse at rejected designs.

Ralph McQuarrie's concept of the Rebel hanger from A New Hope; the book's lift-the-lid art reveals that his original version was set outdoors.



Given that the art of the legendary Ralph McQuarrie was so influential to the look of the original trilogy, it makes sense that these three films receive the most attention. And while the prequels, sequels and side-stories receive less coverage, you're certainly not left feeling short-changed.

RATING ★★★★★

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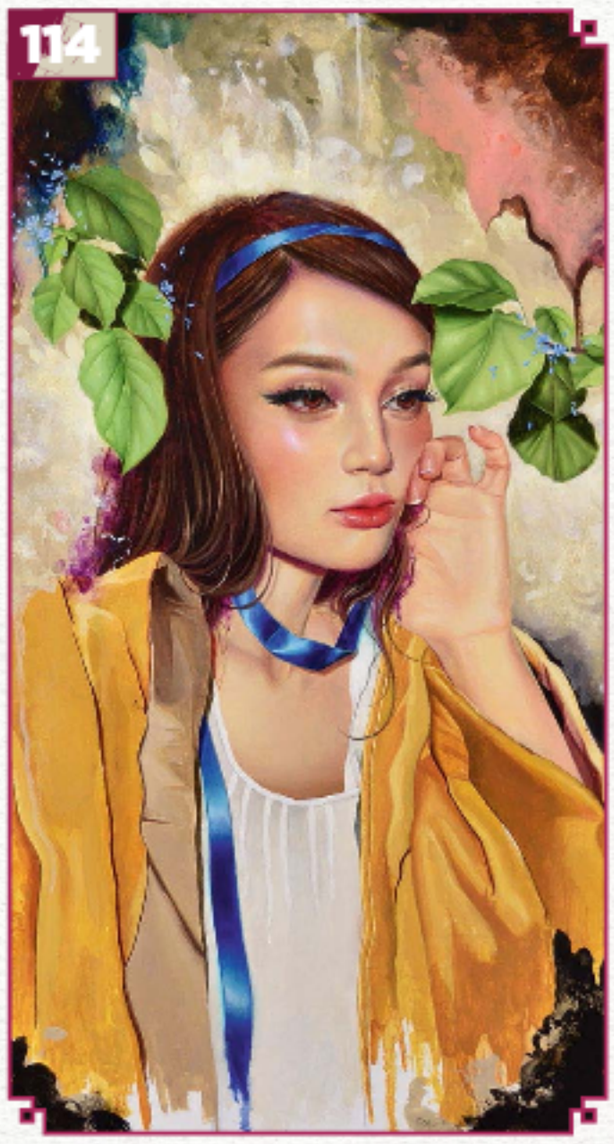
Traditional Artist

Inspiration and advice from the best pro artists



This issue:

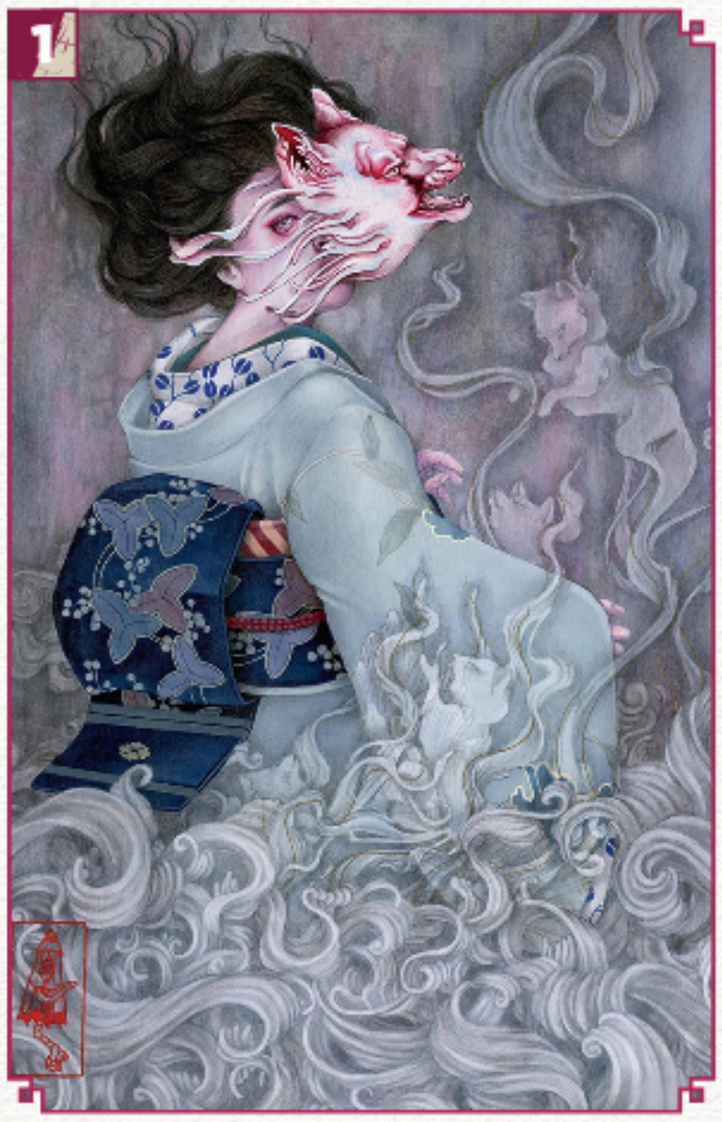
FXPosé

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS

Etara

LOCATION: Italy **MEDIA:** Acrylic, watercolour, graphite **WEB:** www.etaraart.com

Etara focuses on the study of acrylic colours. "My work involves uniting natural and surreal elements, creating a dreamlike world in the process."



1 SMOKE OF GODS
"Kitsune, the yōkai foxes, are powerful shape-shifters. They enjoy fooling humans and often appear in the guise of beautiful human women to deceive men."

2 ANCIENT EYES
"This painting represents the moment before the transformation from human to dodomeki – Japanese yōkai with arms covered by tiny eyeballs."

3 LIKE PETALS ON SNOW
"The subject of this painting is the yuki-onna, the yōkai of snowy mountains, with ice white skin and surprisingly red lips."

4 THE QUIET BRIDGE
"Hashihime are goddesses who inhabit old bridges. They were turned into demons by the intense jealousy they felt during life."

Lily Seika Jones

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Graphite, ink, watercolour, gouache **WEB:** www.lilyseikajones.com

"I'm constantly looking at the world through a mythological lens," says Lily. "I find inspiration in work from the golden era of book illustration and love the way watercolours lay down an aura of mystery and nostalgia."

1 AESOP & CHARON
"An ancient cat-like being smoking a long pipe as he waits for his pal, the ferryman of the dead, to join him for a chat."

2 LETHE
"The poplar branch dripping with the water of the River Lethe (Forgetfulness) and its association with the god Hypnos, was the inspiration for this piece."

3 PSYCHOPOMP IV
"This hare, creeping from a dewy web out of the mist, is one of the many guides through the underworld that I drew for this series."

4 HYDRUS
"One day a lone coyote crossed my path in the marshes near my house. I envisioned him as an ancient benevolent being who could be summoned out of the mist."

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 8 now!

Watercolour

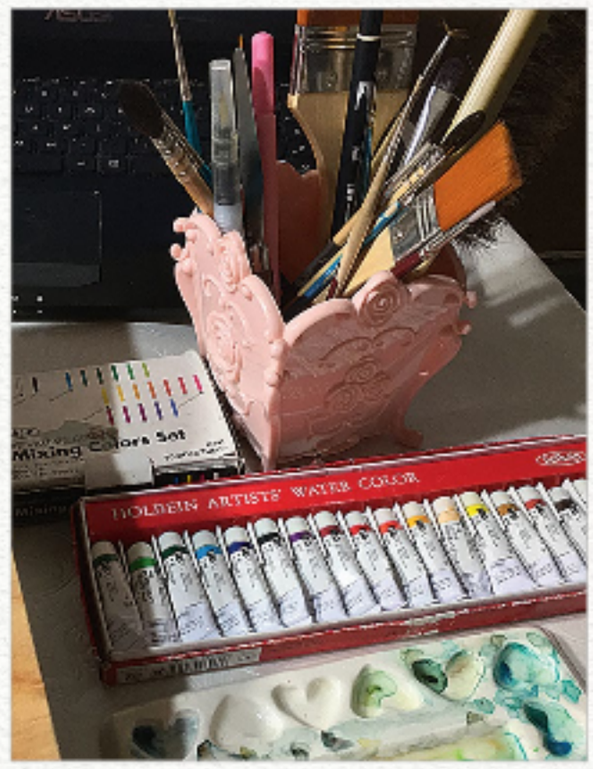
TELL A STORY WITH YOUR ART

KARLA RODRÍGUEZ uses composition rules, digital sketches and traditional media tools to paint a scene from a children's classic tale

This painting's theme is Alice in Wonderland, which was suggested by a convention I was invited to attend as guest of honour. I wanted to do a storytelling piece rather than a portrait because I was keen to push my skills. I always feel the need to perform well at public events; having to also create the artwork only added to the pressure.

I love doing ethereal compositions with women as the main characters, but at the same time I like to tell stories with them using composition rules to help distribute the elements in the illustration. I recommend studying composition rules and lines of action – these techniques enable you to draw engaging illustrations.

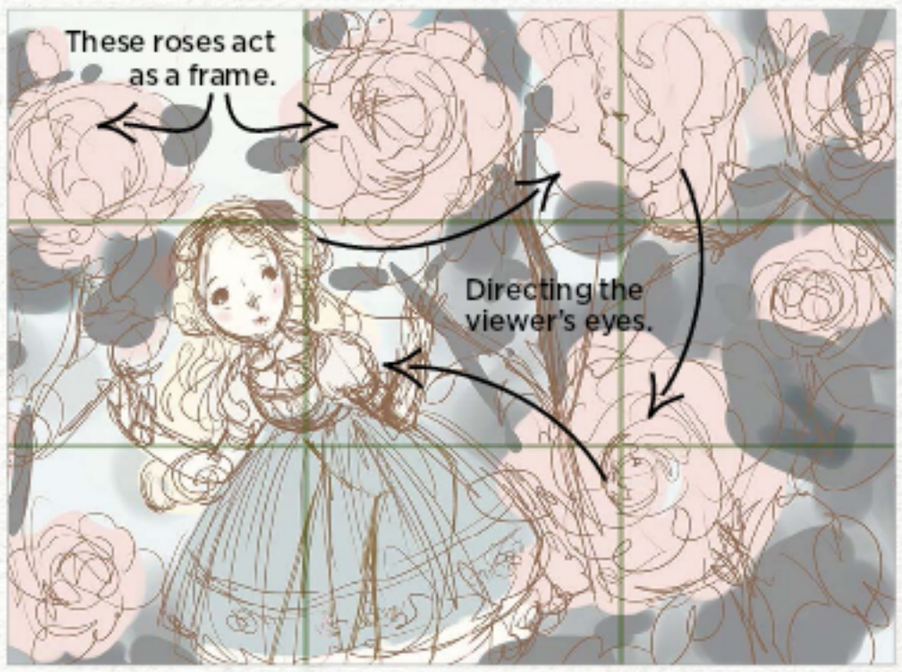
A character standing with nothing else in the background… well, it's just a character design. A close-up of the face is a portrait without anything to say, but a character doing something – I'll always find this interesting.



Karla is a freelancer illustrator. Her favourite media is watercolour and markers, and she likes to draw fairy tale women in ethereal and dreamy compositions. Her artwork appears on the Miss Etoile range of merchandise. You can see her work at www.miss-etoile.com.

1 Thumbnailing character interactions

I start thumbnailing the ideas of Alice in action. Storytelling in illustrations requires composition, character gestures and actions. Adding elements next to the character makes the scene more interesting for the viewer.



2 Composition and body language

I use something similar to the Rule of Thirds to distribute the position of the character, setting aside two-thirds of the space for Alice. Her gaze plays a key part in the composition: you follow it to one of the flowers, then travel to the other flower who's looking at Alice, and then return to her. It's telling something. It's important to leave room in the illustration in the direction the characters are looking at, so the viewer can explore the scene, too.

MATERIALS

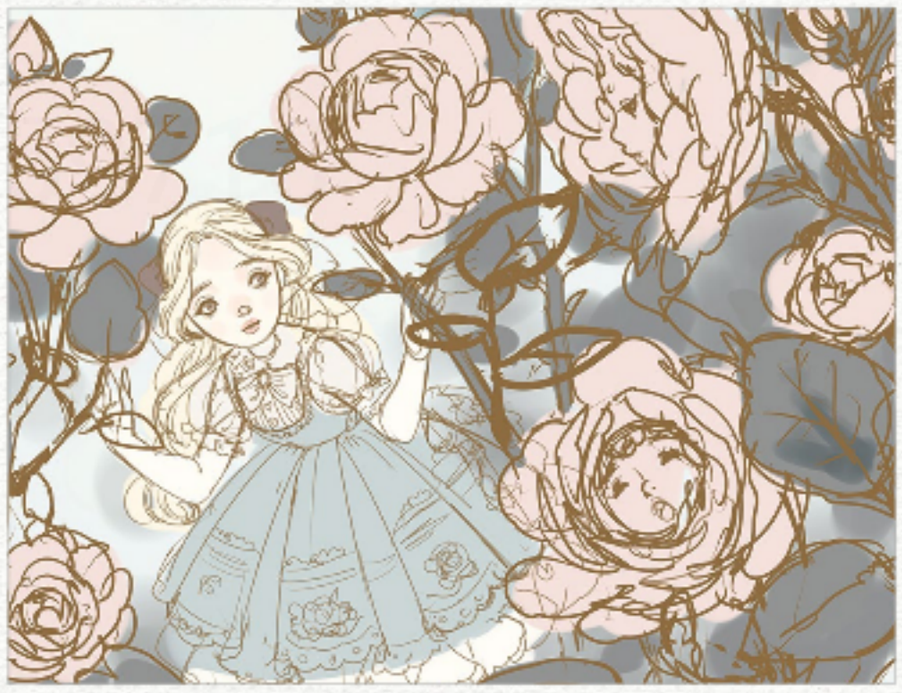
PAPER
- Arches Hot Pressed pad 16 x 20-inches

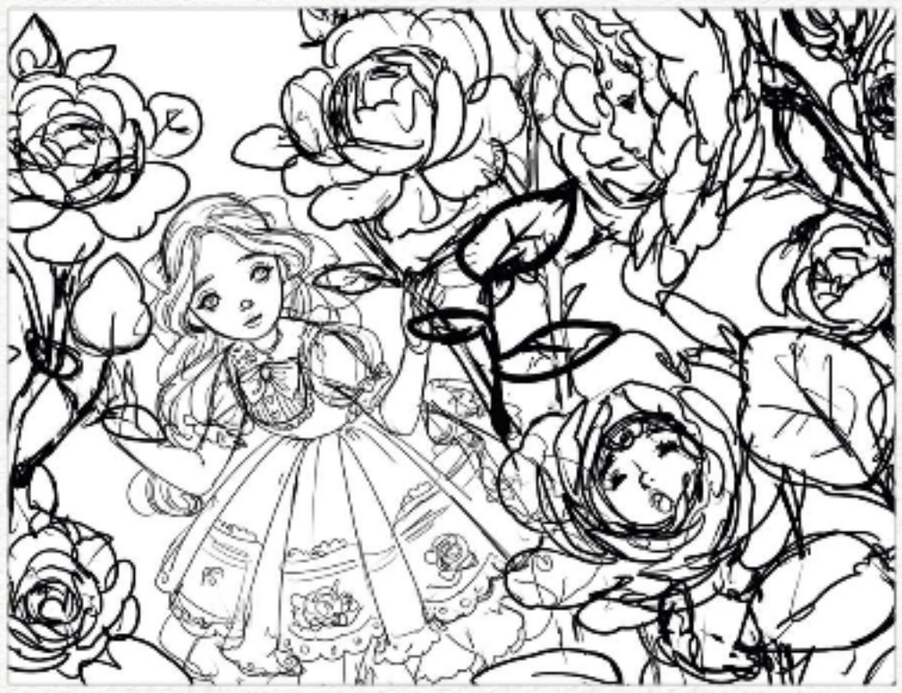
BRUSHES
- Winsor & Newton 2 and 4 Round brush
- Raphaël mop brush 2/0
- Princeton short liner brush 18/0
- Rodin short liner brush 10/0

PAINTS
- Holbein watercolour 18-tube set
- Holbein white gouache

OTHER
- Kraft paper tape (2 inch)
- Blue masking tape
- Cutter
- Cutting mat
- Metal cutting ruler

DIGITAL TOOLS
- Paint Tool SAI
- Clip Studio Paint
- CanoScan LiDE 220
- Intuos Pro tablet
- Huion LED light pad





3 Create a clean digital sketch

I use Paint Tool SAI and my Intuos Pro to create a clean sketch of my idea, before printing it out. I started doing this years ago: previously I used to draw straight on to my paper, when I wasn't confident about the sketch. I ended up damaging the paper as I made corrections.

4 Tracing the sketch on watercolour paper

I use blue masking tape to attach the sketch under the watercolour paper. I like Arches hot press because its smooth surface suits detailing. The texture of cold press is rough, so it's not recommended for paintings with details. I trace slowly and carefully using the LED light pad.

5 *Defining parts of the sketch*

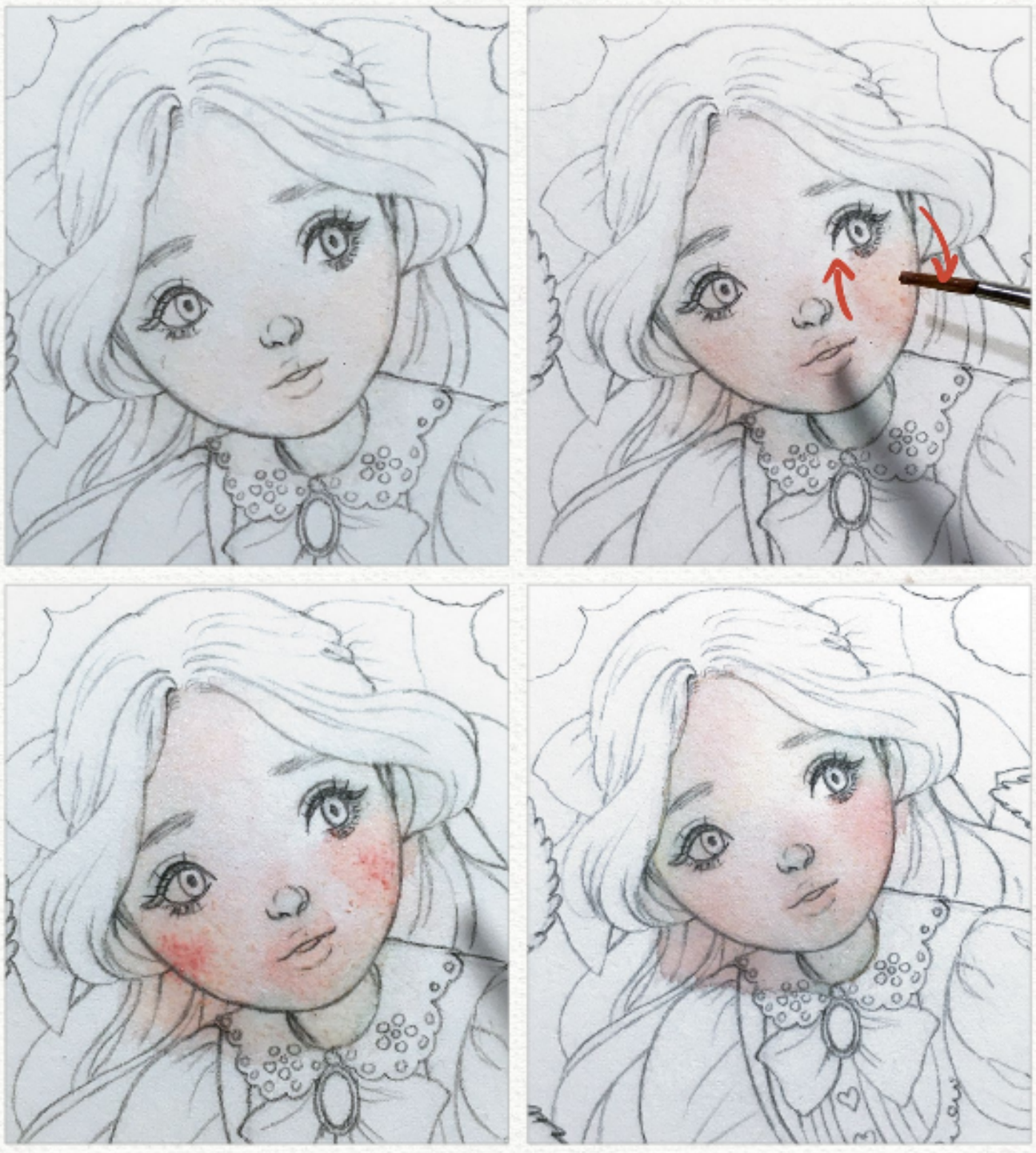
Some parts of the drawing might look odd when traced, so I clean and define my art, including Alice's face. I'm careful not to use the eraser a lot because this can damage the paper. This would then cause my watercolours to bleed into other areas of the painting.

6 *Using tape to hold the paper on a wood panel*

I use brown craft tape and activate it with water to attach the sketch to half-inch thick wood panel. After this is dry I leave a half-inch white border on my illustration and protect it from stray watercolour strokes using blue masking tape.

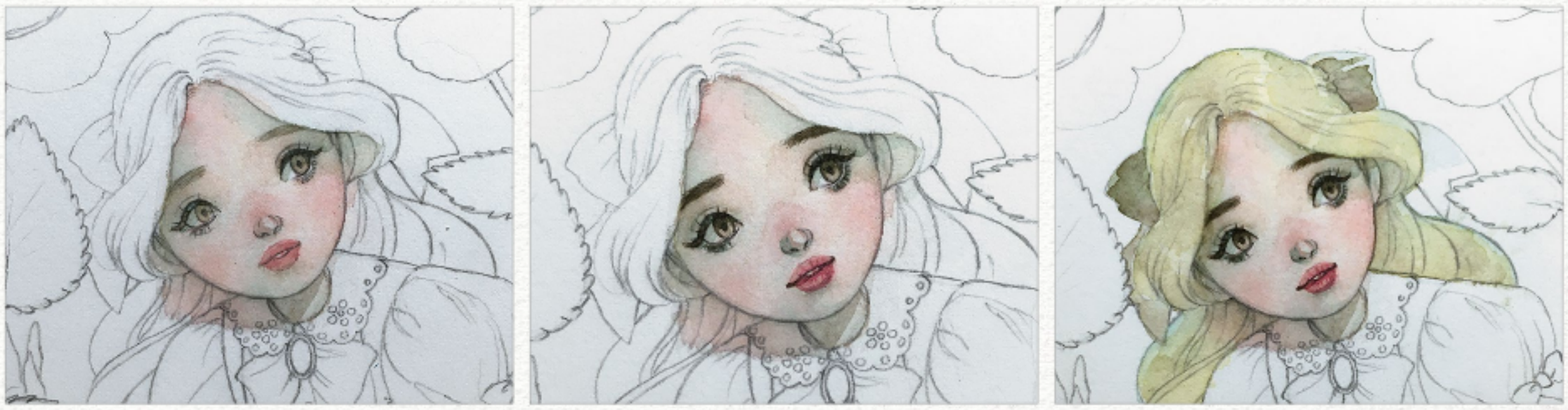
7 *Create a colour guide*

I start to mix colours, referring to the digital sketch from earlier as a guide. Using small proofs to try out colour schemes will save you time and effort later on.



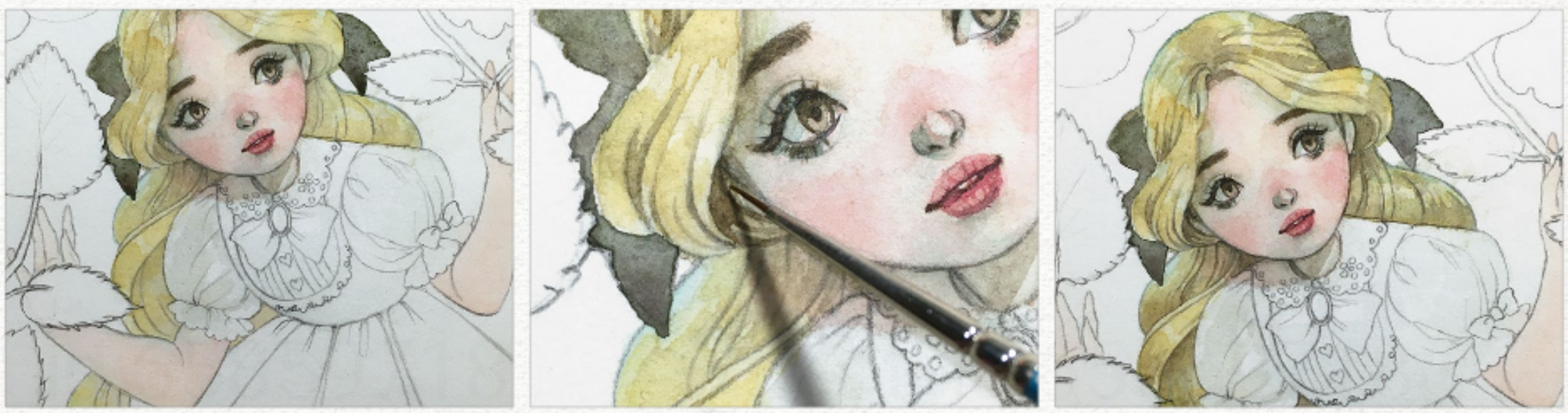
8 *Start painting the face first*

I start wetting the face and start building up the colours, blending my colours using slow and soft circular motions with the tip of the brush. To create Alice's blush I wet the face and add paint with the tip of the brush on the checks. The paint then expands while the paper is wet. ➳



9 *Adding details to Alice's face*

The painting's main colours are greens and mints, so I blend greens on her face. I paint more green and diluted brown shadows and add the hair's base colour. For details I use a fine brush with less water and more pigment, and work while the paper is dry, which keeps the line sharp.



10 *Painting shadows and highlights in the hair*

I add shadows and lights following the shape of the hair. Where Alice's hair curls towards her face I add shadows, while further up I add the highlights. I add the darkest details where different parts of her hair intertwine with each other.

11 *Colouring Alice's distinctive dress*

Alice's dress is usually sky blue. But I want to make it greyish blue with a bit of green, to give my art the feeling of a vintage fairy tale illustration. To create volume on the skirt folds I work on wet sections after I apply the first wash of colour. While the paper is wet I add colour to the sides, but leave the middle part without colour. The paint expands and leaves a gradient effect in the middle, giving a highlight to the cloth.

12 Detailing the background

To create an even colour I wet the area I want to paint and add a wash of colour quickly. I let it dry and repeat. While dry I add branch details in the foreground. I work on the flowers separately, applying details and a darker colour to the background to generate contrast.

13 Applying the final watercolour details

Alice's dress is looking a little too plain, so I add lace details following a pattern with a fine tip brush. Some careful detailing on clothes make them prettier.

14 Finishing with gouache

As a finishing touch I add gouache highlights on the flowers, Alice's eyes and the leaves. After the painting is completely dry I remove the blue masking tape. The illustration is complete and I'm happy with my work.

15 Removing the tape and digitising the artwork

I carefully remove the drawing with part of the brown masking tape still attached to it. Then I use my cutting mat, cutter and ruler to remove the excess. Next, I use my Canon LiDE 220 scanner to scan the artwork in sections, before recombining them in a painting program.

First Impressions

Sasha Ira

This US artist reveals she has a strong affinity with nature...

Where did you grow up and how has this influenced your art?
I grew up in various places; my family moved around quite a bit. And as a child I spent all my time playing outside, doing what I wanted. I even remember spray-painting a wall in our old house with my siblings. So just having that freedom aided in my being able to pursue art.

What, outside of art, has most influenced your artwork?
I would say nature – just being outdoors and appreciating the beauty. Feeling the wind run up against my skin, or the smell of the wet earth after the rain. These simple things bring such a sense of peace over me. My emotions and the things I go through have been a large influence over my work as well.

Does one person stand out as being helpful during your early years?
I haven't ever had any direct help relating to art. However, being able to rely on my family financially when I've really needed to is something I'm thankful for.

A PARTICULAR FEELING
"An oil painting on wood panel that was created for my show Undercurrents at LA's Corey Helford Gallery."

TOWARDS TOMORROW
"At 20x24-inches this was the largest piece in my show at Corey Helford Gallery."

What was your first paid commission, and does it stand as a representation of your talent?
I don't remember my first paid commission, which is unfortunate since I don't take them on very often. One of the early ones was for an accessories brand – a simple figure drawing that took me far too long to finish. And I received one of the brand's pieces in exchange.

What's the last piece you finished, and how do the two differ?
The last pieces I worked on were for my small solo show that was held at Corey Helford Gallery in Los Angeles last December. I was more confident going into new paintings compared to the commissioned drawing.

> "As a child I spent all my time outside, doing what I wanted"

Tell us about your regular painting rituals...
I start off with small rough drawings in my sketchbook or on loose sheets of paper. I'll play around with ideas and draw different variations. Then I'll search for images that I could use for reference, or take a few images of my own if I'm not able to find what I need.

A draft might be drawn up next, or I'll just go into the final drawing. The piece will be scanned and edited, and sometimes a colour study will be done. Then it'll be printed and with some powdered graphite and tape, it'll be transferred to a primed surface ready for painting.

How would you say that your art is evolving?
I've only been working with galleries since around 2016 or late 2015 and before then I wasn't even really taking it very seriously, so I don't feel that it's changed all too much. There's a lot more painting going on compared to before when I was more focused on drawing,and these days the pieces have gotten a bit larger. They've become more refined, detailed, with many more layers, and overall more complex even if they might appear quite simple.

What advice would you give to your younger self to aid you on the way?
Just to keep creating, take up painting, draw a lot, connect and make friends with others who are also interested in making art, and most importantly to try and have as much fun as I can along the way.

Sasha is a self-taught artist who lives and works around the Chicago area, displaying artwork in galleries with a focus in oil painting and graphite drawings. You can see more of Sasha's work at www.instagram.com/_sashaira.

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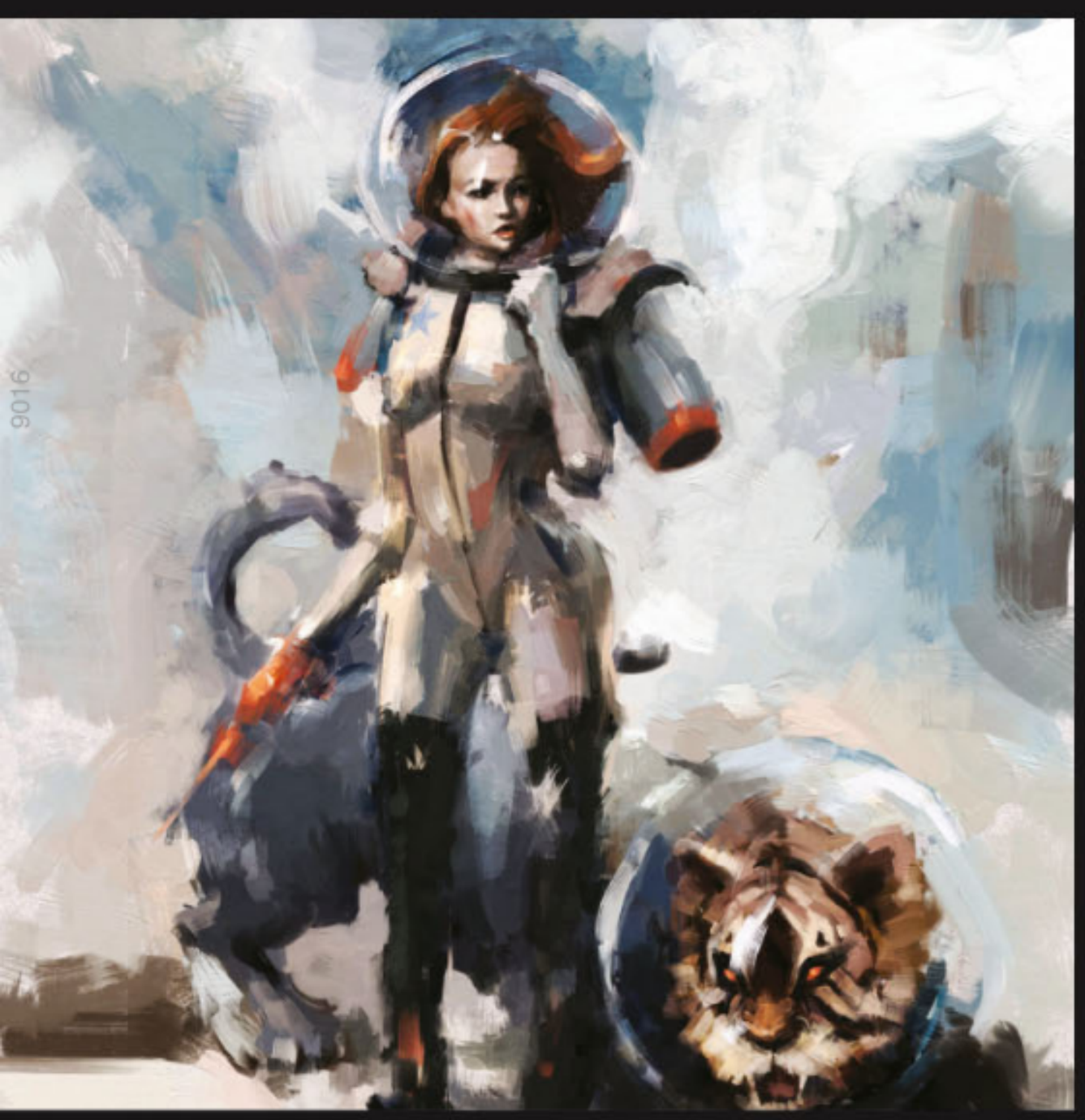

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