

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

FUTURE
ISSUE 189



BECOME A DIGITAL ARTIST

How to take inspiration
from the **art community**
to improve your work

**ARTIST OF
THE YEAR**

SUBMIT FOR YOUR
CHANCE TO WIN!

SEE PAGE 10

INSIDE

**SPEED PAINT AN
ENVIRONMENT**

**BRING COLOUR BACK
INTO YOUR PORTRAITS**

**HOW PROS TAUGHT
THEMSELVES ART**



CRASH MCCREERY ON CONCEPTING ICONIC CREATURES FOR THE BIG SCREEN!

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



There are many wonderful art challenges doing the rounds on social media, but one that I always keep an eye on is #drawthisinyourstyle. If you've not seen it, it's where one person posts their own drawing or painting, then invites fellow artists to recreate it – but in their own style. It's a fantastic prompt for artists. This issue's cover is a brilliant example of that challenge. It was painted by Dave Greco after seeing the original image by @cathpun. Take a look at page 62 for the story of its creation. If you're inspired by this, perhaps you can try drawing a recent ImagineFX cover in your style? If you do, please tag us (#imaginefx) or email it in to the address below.

Another challenge I love is our FXPosé gallery section. We get so many submissions, it's difficult to whittle it down to our faves of the month. It's even harder now there's a major prize for the winner! If you've always wanted to submit your work, now's the time to do it! Turn to page 10 for all the details you need on how to apply and also find out how you might be crowned Artist of the Year.

Claire

Editor-in-chief
claire@imaginefx.com

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



A penciller of pirates and more!

Meet Crash McCreery, the legendary artist who's worked on some of the biggest films in the world!



Sketchbook heaven (for me!)

I adore poring over vast amounts of thumbnail sketches, so Halil Ural's sketchbook was a dream to read.



Portrait of a lady

A grand and regal painting from the fantastic Ukrainian artist Maria Poliakova. Go see!

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issue 147 by
Mélanie Delon

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CRASH MCCREERY



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Pencils all the way for Crash

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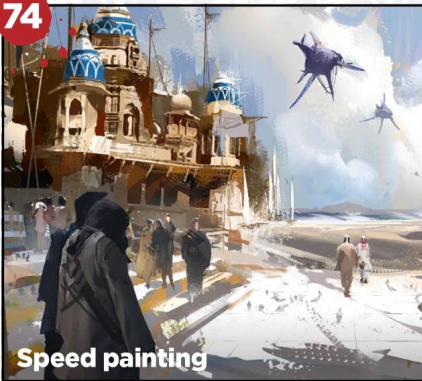
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Resources

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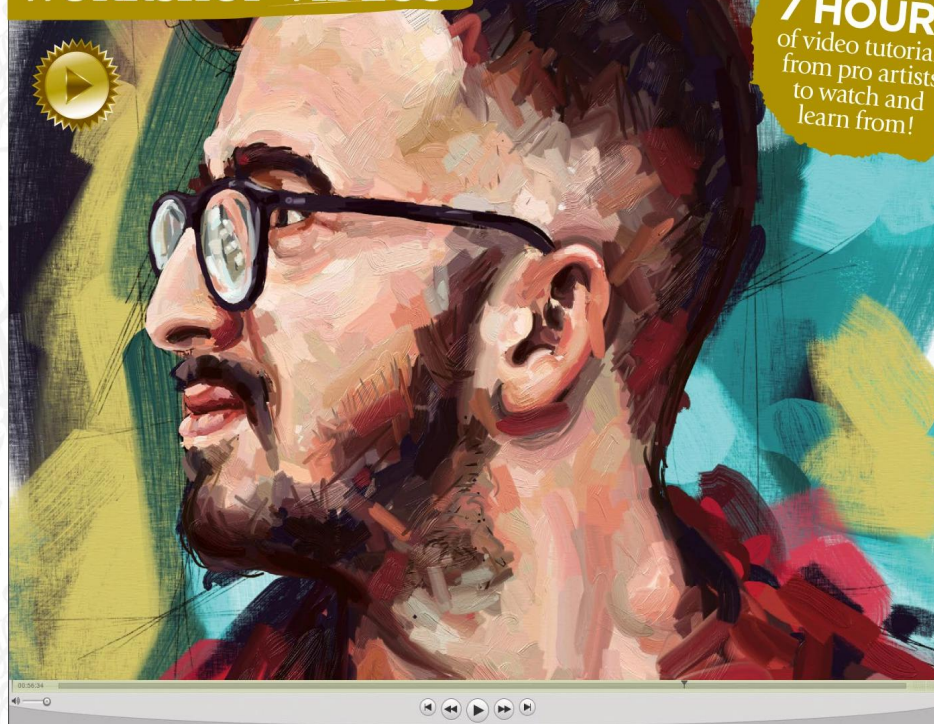
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Getting hold of this issue's resources is easy.
Just visit **<https://ifxm.ag/digital189artist>**

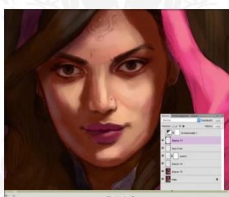
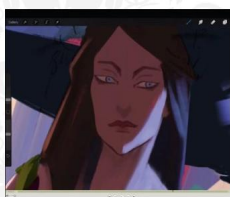
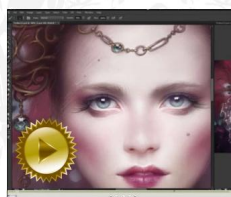
WORKSHOP VIDEOS



OVER 7 HOURS
of video tutorials
from pro artists
to watch and
learn from!

Learn new painting techniques with ArtRage's digital oils

Watch as Phil Galloway creates a loose yet vibrant portrait with plenty of textures and movement using ArtRage's oil-painting tools. Turn to page 66 to read his step-by-step workshop.



ALSO! Four of our best portrait videos

We've rounded up videos from pro artists Mélanie Delon, Tatiana Svistunova, Luisa Preissler and Chrissie Zullo, to show how to create stunning fantasy portraits in a range of styles.

PLUS 13 CUSTOM BRUSHES, INCLUDING...

DG_MAIN

Dave Greco reveals that this brush gives him total control over line drawing and rendering.

SCATTER TEXTURE

This brush enables Dom Lay to recreate the look of paint thrown on to a canvas by a paintbrush.

ONE EDGE

This is Maria Poliakova's favourite brush. It has both hard and soft edges, and she uses it in all her work.



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Diego Fernandez

LOCATION: Argentina **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.instagram.com/diegoidef

Diego balances contrasting approaches in his work. Realism is tempered with surreal elements, while his influences range from Art Nouveau, academic painting, and contemporary fantasy art.

1 468

"I always try to add rhythm to a composition with the use of curve shapes, such as in the hair and clothes."

2 358

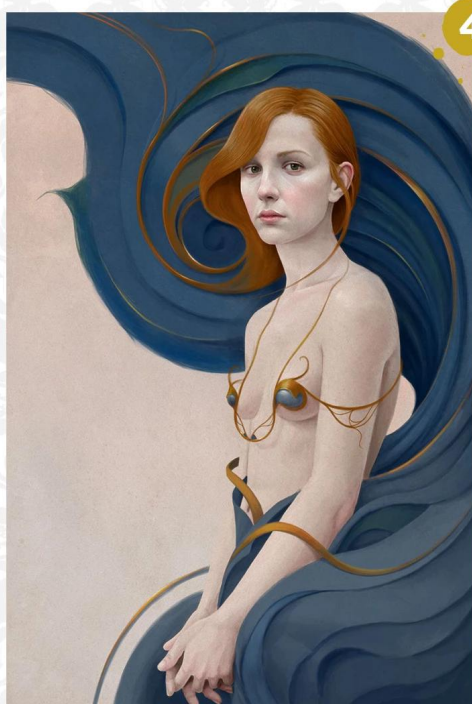
"This piece is part of a larger series of four paintings. I wanted to explore themes of melancholy and memories in the artworks."

3 492

"This portrait is a prime example of abstract elements in action. It also won a Gold Award at Spectrum 27."

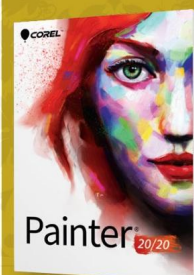
4 459

"In this image I wanted to play with drapery to communicate movement. I was also keen to give this piece an Art Nouveau feel."



3

Congratulations to Diego, our Artist of the Month who receives a copy of **Corel Painter 2020**, together with an **Ultimate Brush Pack** containing over 600 unique brushes, worth over **£1,500**, courtesy of our friends Corel!



4

We'll reveal the **Artist of the Year** at Vertex 2021, chosen from all our Artists of the Month between now and the event. www.vertexconf.com

HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR WORK

Please send us:

- Five high-res (300dpi) images of your work, with a title and a 30-word caption for each.
- Your name, the software you use, location and website.
- 50 words about you.
- A photo of yourself.

Email this info to: fxpose@imaginefx.com

More info and T&Cs: <https://ifxm.ag/artistofthemonth>



Pius Bak

LOCATION: Lithuania **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.instagram.com/piusbak

Pius is a mostly self-taught illustrator and comic book artist. Having started as a concept artist, he transitioned into the comic genre, and has worked on Firefly, The Magicians, and Adventure Time Comics.

1 AVIATRIX

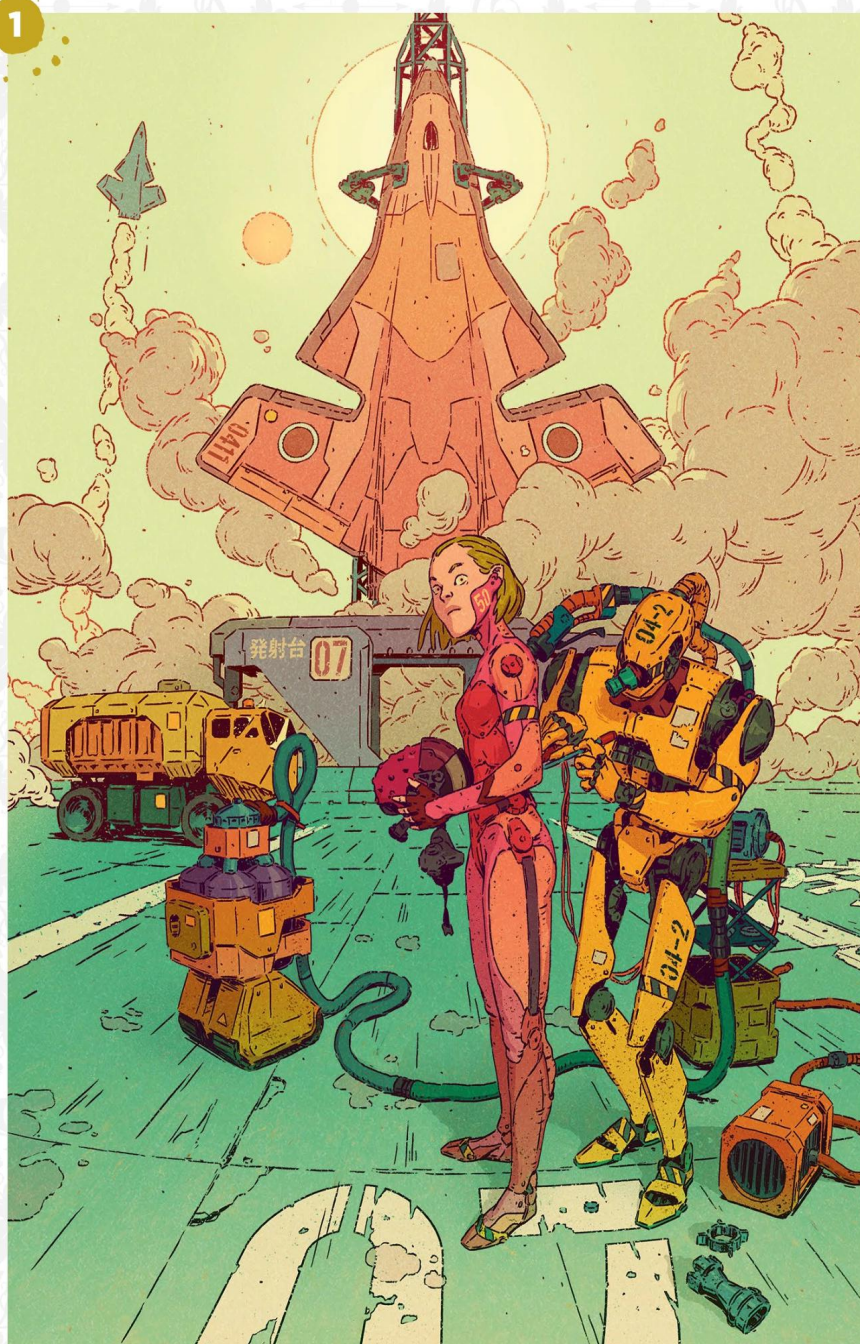
"This was for a character design challenge on Facebook. The topic of the competition was Aviator. I didn't win, but I'm proud of this piece."

2 CHILD OF THE PARISH - RELIC OF THE PAST COVER

"Recently I worked with a band called Child of the Parish. This illustration is a very small piece of the art we created for the project."

3 BEASTLANDS #2 COVER

"I did this for Beastlands, an indie comic. I recommend checking it out. Curtis Clow's writing is wonderful, and wait till you see Jo Mi-Gyeong's interior art!"



2



3



4 STRANGE FICTION COVER

"Strange Fiction is a comic project that I worked on. Sadly the comic was never finished, but I'm proud of the work I did for it."







Yan Kyohara

LOCATION: Brazil **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Procreate **WEB:** www.artstation.com/yankyohara

"Creating art every day makes me and my inner child happy," says Yan, who left a computing engineering career to pursue his dream. "Now I produce fantasy illustrations and concept art for video games."



2

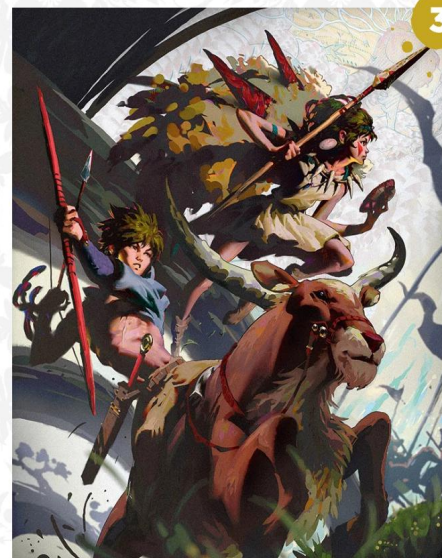
1 HIPNOS

"This is a Secret Santa gift for an inspiring friend called João Bragato. It's a redesign of Hypnos, the god of sleep."

2 TRICKSTER ELF

"Elf was done for the Character Design Challenge group. I used only a very small airbrush to render the whole design."

3



4



3 MONONOKE HIME

"Studio Ghibli fan art where I tried to apply some of Mike Mignola's knowledge about separating and washing shadows."

4 SHATTERED TACTICS

"Character design for a personal project. It was inspired by Final Fantasy Tactics and Rubik's Cube, which is my favourite puzzle."



Carolina Sans Cuende

LOCATION: Spain **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.cuendedreams.com

After working as a graphic designer for several years, Carolina decided to become a freelance illustrator. "I've also exhibited in Fernando Pinós, El Claustre and the famous Art Nouveau 4 Gats building in Barcelona."

1 SNOW WHITE BIRTH

"This illustration tells the moment when the Queen, upon her death, becomes a protective light that will take care of Snow White."



2 LIFE ANGEL

"In the midst of a divine garden nests the angel who cares for life, every night and every day."

3 MOONLIGHT

"Under the watchful eye of the night, the sorceress captures the moonlight to carry out her spells."

4 TEMPTING THE TIME

"Under the balcony's clock the butterflies stopped time with their wings, thus preventing countless dreams meeting their future owners."







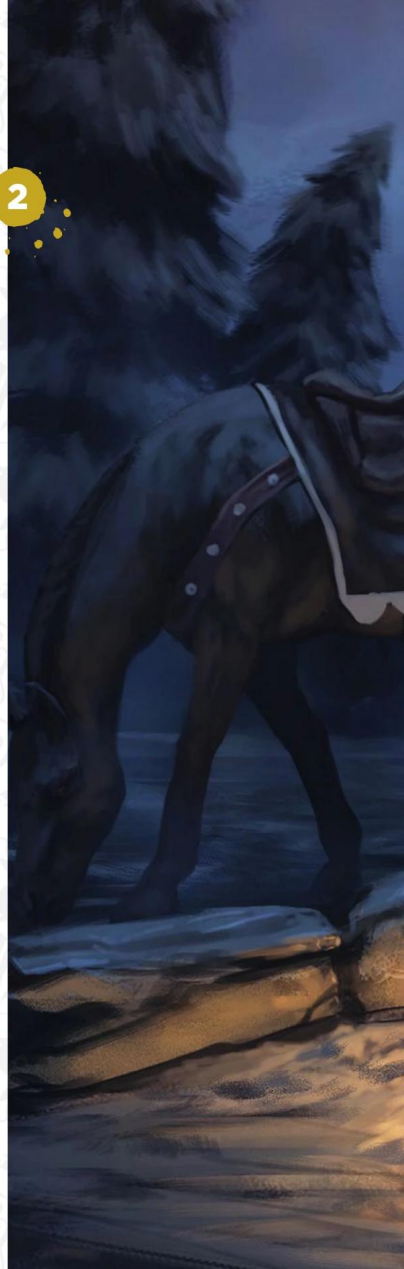
Arb Paninken

LOCATION: England **MEDIA:** Photoshop, ZBrush, graphite pencil **WEB:** www.artstation.com/arb-paninken

After a varied career including journalism and working in a hospital, at the age of 30 Michael changed tack and is now a freelance illustrator and concept artist.



2



1 FIELD REAPER

"I wanted to capture the horror of war. Death will come for the soldiers whether they stay in the trenches or advance on the enemy."

2 LONELY KNIGHT

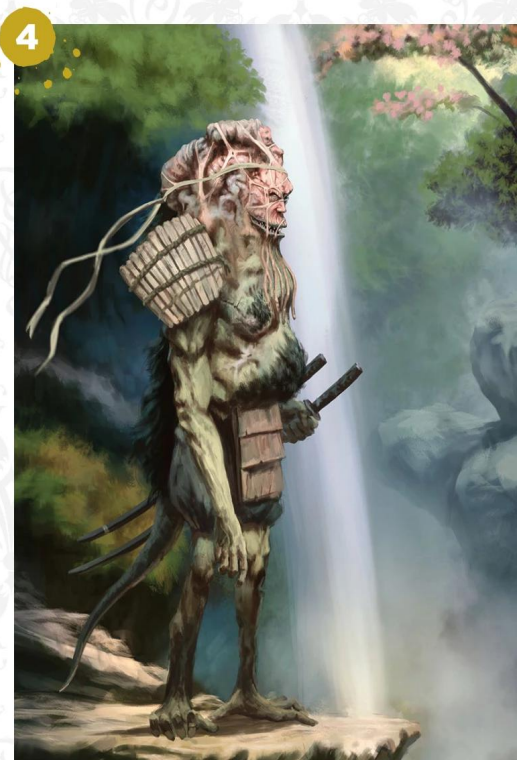
"I tried to capture a painterly effect with this medieval fantasy-inspired piece."

3 SNIPER

"This futuristic sniper in a Neo-Tokyo-inspired urban landscape was a little out of my comfort zone. The perspective angle was key."

4 RONIN

"I love ancient Japan and I'm drawn to the grotesque, so I combined the two with this portrait of a deformed wandering samurai."







Nichole Balsley

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Photoshop, After Effects, SketchBook **WEB:** www.artstation.com/devious_squirl

After working in the financial sector for 16 years, Nichole became a freelance illustrator and hasn't looked back. "It's never too late to be who you are, do what you love, and climb that mountain to success," she says.

1 GALAXY COFFEE

"I created this based on a helmet concept design I was working on. I really enjoy creating headpieces, and who doesn't love galaxy artwork?"

2 FROSTED ANTIQUITY

"Part of my Lustre personal project. I like to create lighting that reflects a certain season, and this one for winter was tough to figure out."

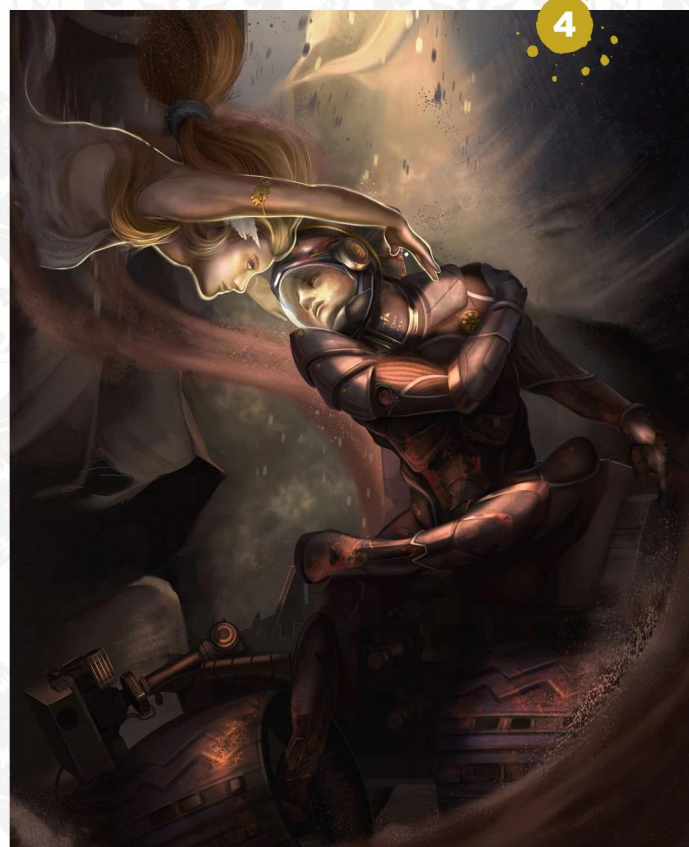


3 ARISE FROM THE ASHES

"I love stained glass. If I can fit it in an image, I will do so. This piece was solely created from that stained glass phoenix concept."

4 HOPE

"After being injured while repairing a Mars rover, Lt. Mars thought all was lost. Then the sands shifted... and she appeared."

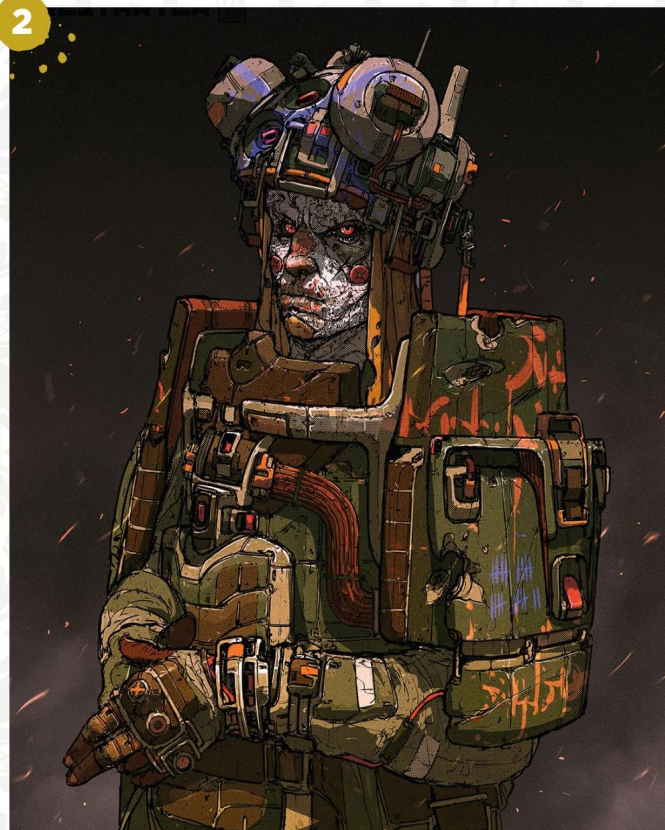




Mauro "Tano" Bonfanti

LOCATION: Argentina **MEDIA:** Photoshop, SketchBook Pro, Clip Studio Paint **WEB:** www.artstation.com/tanobonfanti

"Cyberpunk games and movies have fascinated me since I was a kid," says Tano, who dropped out of architecture studies to make a living from creating these drawings. Now he works in the entertainment industry.



1 ALMOST THERE

"This is a piece from a black and white series of mine. I wanted to show a bleak and deranged cyberpunk world that was a mix of Akira, Ghost in the Shell, The Joker and Clockwork Orange."



2 FIRESTARTER

"In this artwork I was experimenting with colours and the textures of halftones. It's a nice way to add another layer of information that reminds me of working traditionally, and can be lost in our digital world."

3 ADVENTURE SEEKERS

"A teen girl from Adventure Seekers who makes you see whatever she wants with the smoke from her pipe."

4 MORNING SKETCHES

"Here's a quick warm-up sketch before starting work."

5 MEAL

"A rider and his dragon are stranded in a war-zone, and had to survive by eating something unusual."



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ARTIST NEWS, SOFTWARE & EVENTS

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"I didn't know how much time I would be able to dedicate to formal studies while looking after a baby," says Irina French. "So, self-teaching was a more flexible option."



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VERTEX 2021: IT'S COMING!

After this year's sell-out Vertex event back in February, we can't wait for next year's show. Register your interest and stay up to date on who'll be attending. **Page 32**



THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Fantasy illustrator Emily Hare shows us around her compact studio – complete with digital and traditional setup – that she shares with fellow artist Matt Dixon. **Page 34**



INSTANT IMAGINEFX!

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"Eventually you'll need someone to guide you and even teach you," says Sebastien Hue, "but the adventurous path you took as a self-taught artist is probably far more rewarding."



Do you have what it takes to teach yourself art?

School's out Formal art education is not for everyone. Artists who've self-taught talk to **Dom Carter** about the advantages and challenges of learning independently

Art schools provide students with structure and professional feedback, but they're not the only way forward for artists looking to develop their skills. Teaching yourself is more viable than ever thanks to an explosion of easily accessible, affordable online learning materials, and it's an approach that gives artists greater freedom to explore and develop their own unique voice.

Of course, the two routes aren't mutually exclusive. But for artists short on time and money, or those looking to switch into an artistic career, the idea that you can teach yourself is especially appealing.

"It's not easy to do it on your own," stresses **Irina French**, who self-taught out of a desire to save money and look after her baby. "It takes courage and a great deal of hope, a lot of determination, as well as self-discipline."



Craww agrees: "A desire to progress and willingness to fail are all essential!" Having quit graphic design out of frustration to pursue art, he wanted to learn on his own terms. "There are times when I've wished I'd had more of a formal training, when I would have benefitted from a little ➔



"I have to 'do' something, and get it wrong a few times before I learn," says Craww.



"Trying to conform to a strict process left me feeling uninspired," says Lisa Hansen.

➡ more practical tuition, but overall I'm happy with where I'm at."

"I can see where higher education would have been beneficial in learning more quickly," adds **Lisa Hansen**, who



always saw art school as an impossible aspiration. "But on the other hand, experimenting with different mediums guided

by my own needs and whims is what led me to discover what works best in terms of achieving self-expression."

THE RIGHT MINDSET

So how do you know if the self-taught route is right for you? Concept artist

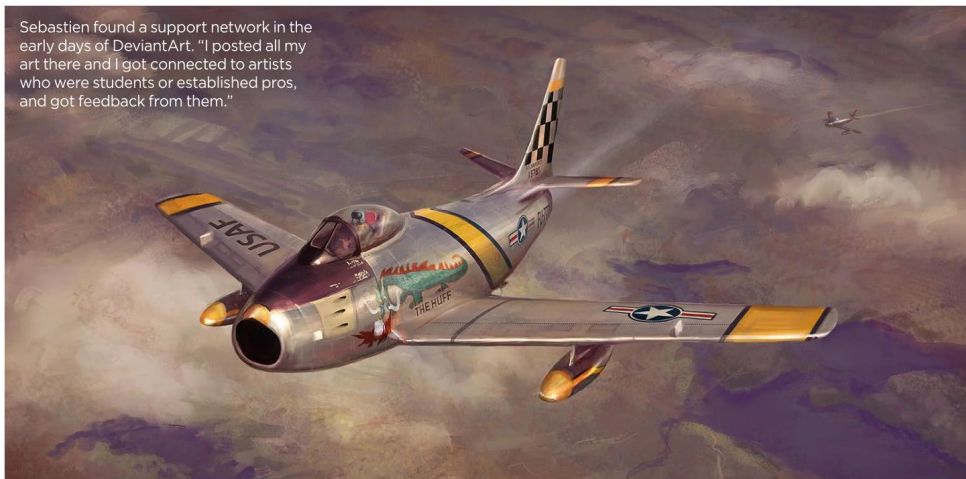


and matte painter **Sebastien Hue**, who switched from a career in logistics when he was 31, thinks it requires a mindset

geared towards growth. "It has to become addictive and something you need almost every day. A strong thirst

“It has to become addictive and something you need almost every day”

Sebastien found a support network in the early days of DeviantArt. "I posted all my art there and I got connected to artists who were students or established pros, and got feedback from them."



"I think it takes longer to learn established techniques and skills on your own," says Craww. "But the flip side is, you're more open to exploring new ways of doing things."

to learn new things and be curious. When you're self-taught you have to be permanently on the look-out to chase new things you missed."

Feedback helps to pick up on these blind spots in art school, but this doesn't mean self-taught artists go without constructive criticism. "I'm rarely happy with my own work so it would be great to have informed, insightful feedback to hand," says Craww. "But social media has helped with the contacts I've made over the years. There are a few artists that I'm in

regular contact with and they can be invaluable with feedback."

"It's best to find genuine support from people who will point you to what doesn't work, rather than just praise you," adds Irina, who often consults her husband's critical eye. "I've also joined a few groups on social media specifically designed for learning, rather than promoting. The members take art very seriously and are happy to give feedback."

As for the idea that art school puts you on the inside track in terms of ➡

"The self-taught method rewards focus and determination, but it definitely penalises ambivalence," cautions Lisa. "You have to be willing to work. Really work."

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

CHALLENGE ACCEPTED

Self-learning is full of obstacles, as two pro artists reveal...

1 Finding resources

"We're lucky to have numerous tutorials online," says Irina French. "The difficulty is in finding those that will teach you core principles, the fundamentals, so you can build from there. There are some real gems out there; a lot are for free, too."

2 Staying motivated

"Motivating yourself and not giving up is a major factor," says Irina. "You just have to believe that you'll get better with more learning and practice. It's not always easy, especially because it's hard to separate yourself from your creations. I'd say from a mental health point of view, there are a lot of ups and downs, but with time you find more confidence in your skill."

3 Mastering new techniques

"A few years ago I really wanted to paint with oils and it took me a long time to get to grips with them," says Craww. "I definitely would have benefited from a little instruction! A lot of simple mistakes like painting on unprimed paper and the paints leaching through could've been avoided if someone had taught me, but then maybe I could've researched things a little better too. Sometimes that trial-and-error process can lead to unexpected and exciting results."

4 Getting into a routine

"Since you're not physically attending a class, you have to bring structure to your day: dedicate consistent hours to learning and practising, vary the topics that you cover and note from critiques what fundamentals you need to revisit in order to improve," Irina advises. "On the other hand, be careful not to burn out. Take regular breaks and remember to have fun when you're painting."





➡ establishing a career, Craww isn't convinced that this is true. "The most important thing is for the work to find a connection with an audience, which I don't think can be taught. It's something that has to come from the heart – a natural, honest process rather than something that's contrived."

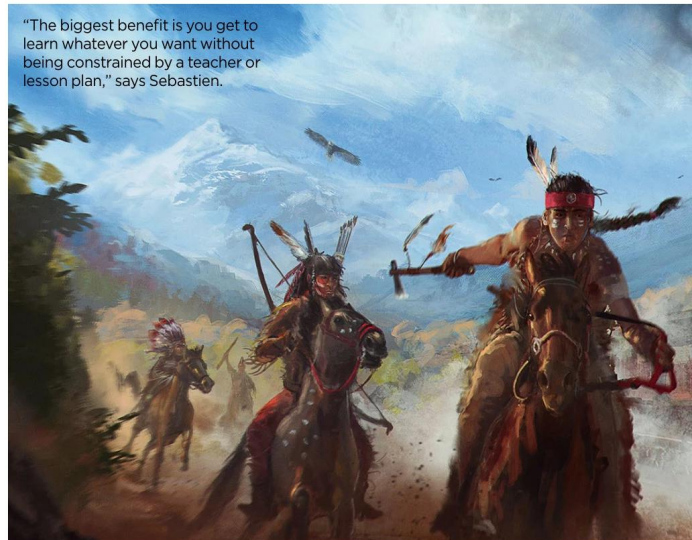
This rings true with Lisa, who was concerned that being self-taught would affect how her pieces were perceived when she started working professionally. "With so many years

now under my belt, I have a better understanding of what I can control and what I can't," she says. "I know how my history has affected my work, but I don't necessarily need everyone else to know that. I'd prefer people to view my work on its own terms, and fortunately, most people have."

IDENTIFY YOUR WEAK SPOTS

The self-taught path isn't without its challenges though. As well as having to judge your own work, Sebastien ➡

"The biggest benefit is you get to learn whatever you want without being constrained by a teacher or lesson plan," says Sebastien.



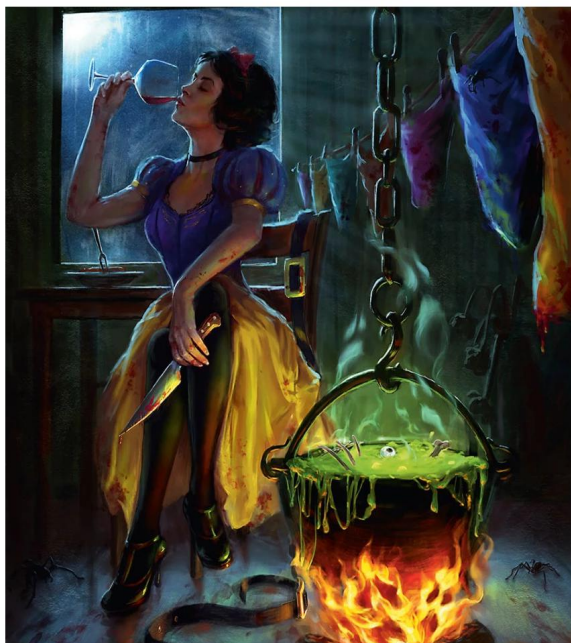
“The most important thing is for the work to find a connection with an audience, which can't be taught”



"I learn quickly, but you never finish learning in this industry," says Sebastien. "This is partly why I love it so much."

"It's paramount to find a community and meet other students of art," Irina advises. "They're on the same journey so they can empathise with your struggles."

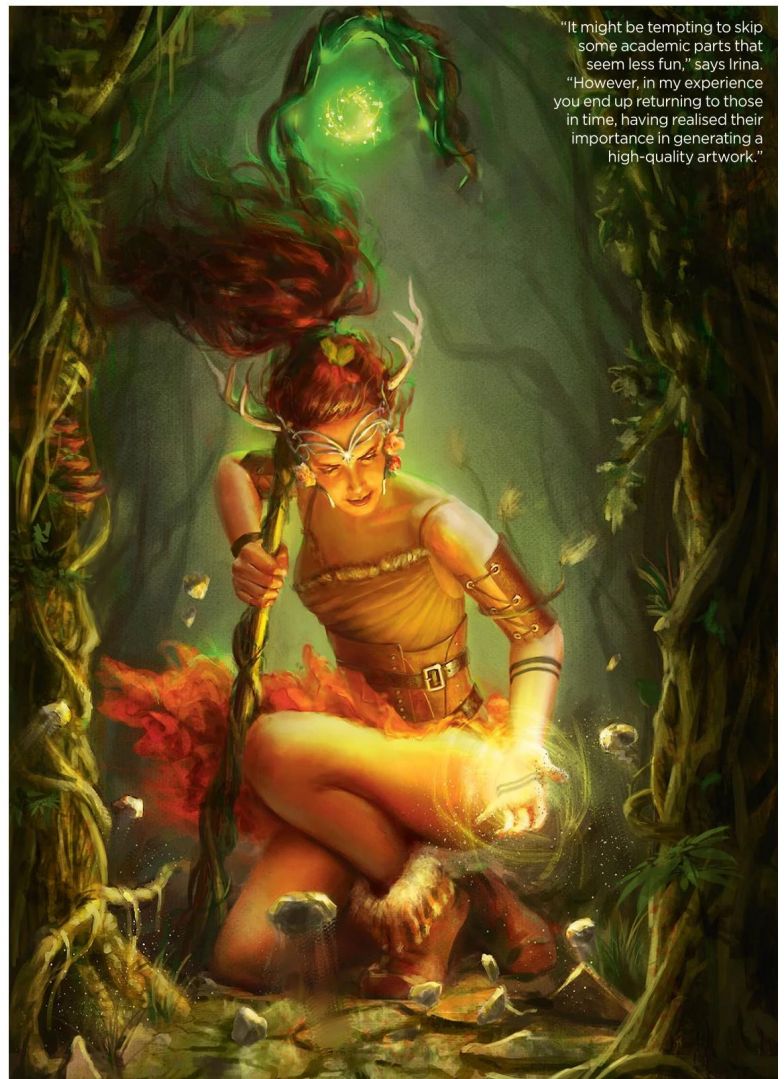
"Be patient with yourself and with others," Lisa recommends. "Above all else, remember that this is a journey and never, ever a race."



➡ points out that you need to be able to determine your weaknesses, single out where you need to improve, and find the discipline to train yourself.

"It's all about organisation and going through step-by-step the priorities you need to grow and blossom professionally," he says. "It shouldn't be work, but passion. It should not be painful, but totally fun. The internet is huge and people are

Irina doesn't worry that being self-taught will limit your prospects: "It's irrelevant how you acquired your knowledge, as long as you produce quality art to suit clients' requirements."



"It might be tempting to skip some academic parts that seem less fun," says Irina. "However, in my experience you end up returning to those in time, having realised their importance in generating a high-quality artwork."

“It’s all about organisation and going through the priorities you need to grow and blossom professionally”

getting lost in finding good ways to train themselves. So the first obstacle is probably to get rid of the things you dislike doing and focus on learning what's effortless to learn for you."

And while it sounds like this might require a certain baseline of talent, don't let that intimidate you if you're interested in becoming a self-taught artist. "I'd never want to label someone as 'more talented' just because of how they learned something," says Lisa.

"That's actually a stigma I'm fighting against," she continues. "If I wanted to prop up us self-taught artists, though, I'd say we can have an almost fanatical dedication to our craft. It's like we're on a mission. Maybe it's because we feel we have more to prove?"

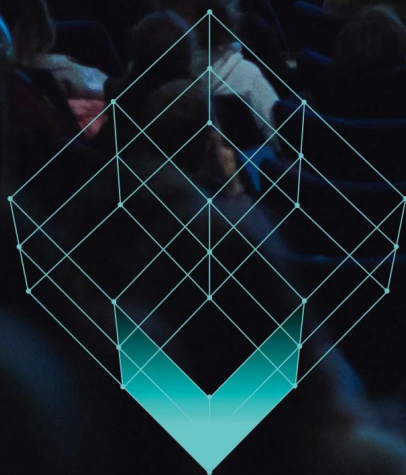
Even if you're blessed with great talent, Irina doesn't think this head start will carry you all the way. "I fully believe that in order to achieve anything in this field, you need to put in a lot of hard work and time to be successful," she says.

"From my perspective, talent does not exist," adds Sebastien. "This is just something you reveal by the amount of work you do, and the amount of training and studies you put in to get to the next level. I think everybody is gifted for something in life – the difficulty is to find out what it is. The talent would be how fast you find your path, listen to yourself and your needs, and how quickly you develop your skills." ●



"If you have a talent, it'll come out whether you have academic knowledge or not," Craww says. "Everyone's journey is different."

Photos from Vertex 2020. The event featured Loish, Karla Ortiz, Izzy Burton, Goro Fujita and so many more! We'll announce speakers for 2021 very soon.



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Emily Hare

Shared space This fantasy illustrator shows us around her un-staged studio and gives us some tips on how to avoid drinking paint water...



I work from home in a small attic room in the city of Nottingham, England, which I share with my partner, Matt Dixon who's also an artist. It's small, but it works!

I have a digital and traditional setup for my painting process. I worked for many years digitally (although I started originally in traditional media and have returned now to watercolour), and so I use my iPad now to sketch up ideas,

experiment with colour comps and work out tricky compositions before transferring over to watercolour. Previously, I used a Wacom, but I just don't need it any more and the iPad works great.

I try to be as structured as possible in my working day because I'm not naturally structured in the way that I work (good influence from the other half!). I start work at nine, stop for lunch at 12, then work again from around one to six in the evening. ➡

“ I worked for many years digitally, and so I now use my iPad to sketch up ideas before transferring over to watercolour ”



Here's a character from my art book *Secrets of Strangehollow*, hanging out during an evening in the forest.



Small space, lots of potential! I like to keep my traditional and digital worlds as separate as possible.

Far too many brushes! The artist's conundrum - do I need a new brush or pencil? Answer: yes.

ImagineNation Artist in Residence

A cheap little travel hair dryer that's ideal for speeding up the drying process.

An anatomy figure is an essential fixture in any artist's studio. I just need to get a female one now!

A Polaroid camera... I love these things. This is a modern take on the old model. I also have a mini one.



This fantastic table from Ikea has become a little damaged where it gets wet, but I think this just adds to its character.

Try this to avoid drinking paint water! I keep my drinking glass at one end of the table (right) and the paint water next to my paints. I have never accidentally drunk my paint water, thankfully.

Under my desk I have a chest of drawers with paper, stock from my shop (prints, magnets, stickers), original paintings and other sundries.

Artist news, software & events

I have four lights to keep things well lit, because the room is very dark most of the time. They're all angle poise daylight lamps of one kind or another that clamp to my desk.

The King Of Thule by Pierre Jan Van der Ouderaa is one of my favourite paintings, mainly for the handling of metal, fabric and hair.

This is a nice little chest that I bought via [online homeware shop] Wayfair and it's filled with watercolours. On top there are calligraphy, acrylic and fountain pen inks.



Best camera clamp ever. It's a Manfrotto single arm two section with camera bracket, and fitted with the Manfrotto super clamp. A brilliant gadget all round!

This is just a old-fashioned style pencil sharpener. I don't know the brand but it isn't the best. It's just a cheapo one that I bought off Amazon.

My copy of my art book Strange Hollow at my side here so I can refer to it as I develop the second book that I'm planning on launching later this year.



Stella Bialek is one of my favourite creature makers and I was lucky to grab one of her little seedlings! I also have some lovely resin skulls from Romain van den Bogaert.

“I don’t feel in the mood to paint first thing in the morning, so admin tasks are ideal for me to get stuck into”

➔ Keeping to a regular schedule is really helpful for me, otherwise I can get distracted very easily.

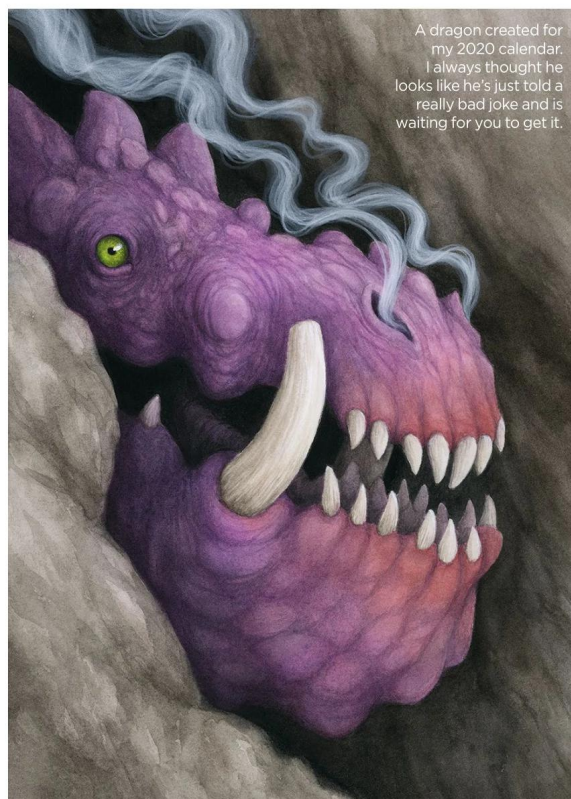
MORNING ROUTINE

I normally spend my mornings with admin type tasks, answering emails, social media posts, Patreon and any shop updates I need to make or packing up orders. I don’t feel in the mood to paint first thing in the morning, so these are ideal tasks for me to get stuck into. If I’m working on a large painting though and it’s already begun then I’ll get straight into that the following day without my usual admin morning. Occasionally, I’ll work after dinner in the evening if I’m in the flow of a painting, but I’ll usually make

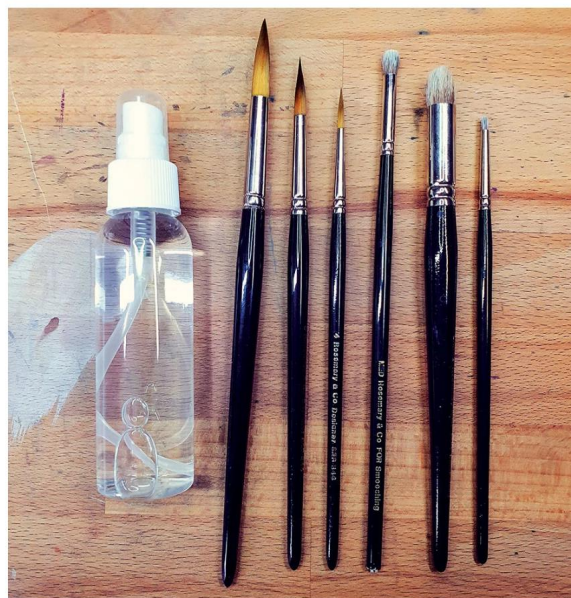
myself have a break before returning to it and will rarely work past 10pm.

When I am working on a painting I work flat on my desk, without any slant and will usually have reference on my iPad in front of me while I work, either that or an audio book or some crappy TV show I don’t have to concentrate on! For some reason I prefer both these things to listening to music. I keep my water glass for drinking far away from my glasses of water for my paints. This way I’ve never accidentally drunk my paint water because I have trained my body to reach to one place to get a drink. Top tip!

Emily is a British illustrator working full time on her own projects. Explore her folklore-inspired art at www.emilyhare.co.uk.



A dragon created for my 2020 calendar. I always thought he looks like he’s just told a really bad joke and is waiting for you to get it.

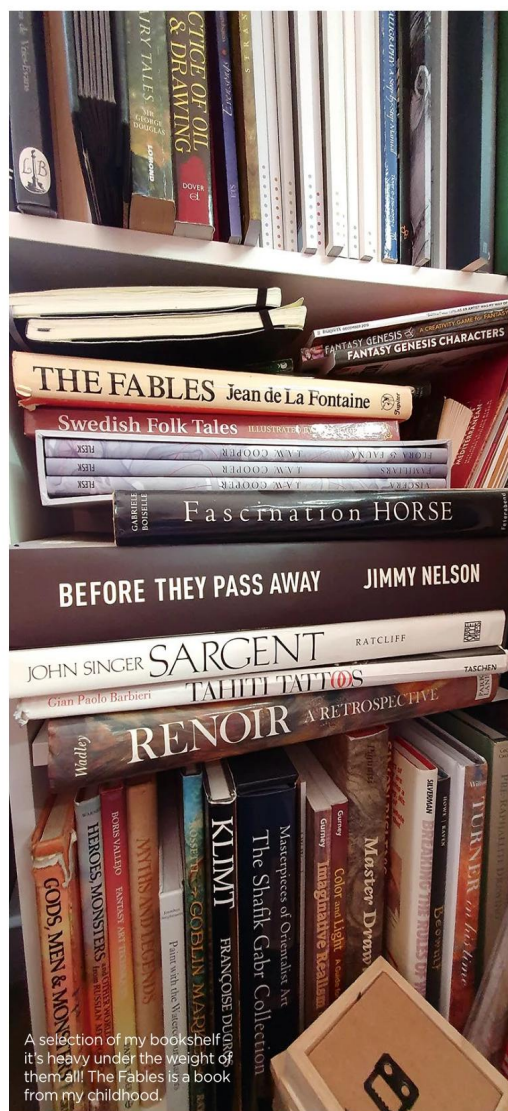


I use Rosemary & Co’s golden synthetic Designer 344 range which is excellent, its Smooshing brushes (the three on the right), and its misting bottle. It’s so useful for rewetting paint and keeping the paper damp if I’m working wet-in-wet.



I keep all my pigments in these little chests I found, separating them by colour.

Artist news, software & events



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Sending in my art

Reading through my most recent ImagineFX [issue 188], I spotted your Artist of the Year contest. The contest looks fantastic and I would love to win the prize, but I have some questions. I have already submitted my work a long time ago, so can I submit again? Also, do I need to submit every month until I get picked? Thanks for the magazine, by the way, it's a great inspiration to me.

Frank, via email

Claire replies Frank, we're very excited about the Artist of the Month contest, too (readers, go back to page 10 if you've missed this news)! This magazine is here to represent the artistic community, providing advice and inspiration for those readers looking to advance in the art industry. Over the years we've proudly featured many readers on our FXPosé pages, who have gone on to bigger and better things. We very much want every artist to submit their work if they feel they're ready. As to your questions, please submit your work again if you submitted a long time ago and no, you don't need to submit every month...



DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE?

Don't worry – you can get hold of it at <https://ifxm.ag/buyissue-188>

Reader Frank is keen to enter our Artist of the Month contest, but had a question or two...



Our Artist Alley article, featuring artists affected by the coronavirus crisis, struck a chord with reader Karolina.

Thumbs up

I felt I should email in a quick note of appreciation for your recent Artist Alley article [issue 187]. Devoting pages of ImagineFX to independent artists, who have lost income in the wake of the coronavirus crisis, was a welcome sight. I know that many people are facing hardship because of this, so kudos to you for making the effort to reach out to artists. When things get back to normal, will you be contacting those people and seeing how their business fared during the time of the coronavirus?

Karolina, via email

Claire replies Karolina, thanks for your kind words about the Artist Alley article. We felt it was the least that we could do: something positive to try and counter the many sad stories that were coming out of the crisis (and still are). When you run your own business and are reliant on the extra income that comes from selling your work at these art events, having that opportunity taken from you must be a hammer blow. That's a great suggestion about a follow-up article, too.

Inside job

Your last issue [188] had a piece on how to get a job at ILM. Could you put together another article about ILM – something along the lines of A Day in the Life of an ILM Artist? It would be nice to see what takes place day-to-day at a company that's had a hand in many great films over the years. Please make it happen, ImagineFX!

Josh, via email

Claire replies Josh, thanks for your email! A Day in the Life is something I've been working on for the magazine. I had hoped that we could get artists from across the industry to tell you what a working day looks like from their perspective and job discipline. It's had to take a bit of a back burner now that most artists are working at home, but it's definitely something I would like to revisit soon.



New works that have grabbed our attention



Matt Lindstrom
[@mattpainting1](https://www.instagram.com/mattpainting1)



Nicholas Iwuc
[@nickiwuc](https://www.instagram.com/nickiwuc)



Sébastien Michel
[@artseb26](https://www.instagram.com/artseb26)



Ahmed Abdelmohsen
[@aabdelmo7sen](https://www.instagram.com/aabdelmo7sen)

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



Legend

STOMP

Crash McCreery's detailed sketch of a *Tyrannosaurus rex* set the tone as Steven Spielberg developed the look and feel of 1993's *Jurassic Park*.



1993 © Universal Pictures



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imagineFX



Crash McCreery

Armed with little more than a pencil and paper, this artist has designed creatures for some of the biggest films ever made, discovers **Garrick Webster**

Every month, a new edition of ImagineFX arrives full of astounding artwork demonstrating a panoply of digital techniques. It makes it easy to forget that sometimes the very simplest drawing tool – a pencil – is all you need for a flourishing career in the world of fantasy art. The astounding portfolio of creature designer and Hollywood legend Mark ‘Crash’ McCreery proves the point.

“I hated crayons because I could never get them sharp enough,” he says. “Colour terrified me because I didn’t understand it. Pencil was always easiest for me – it was all about the purest sense of light, shadow and form.”

Artist PROFILE

Mark ‘Crash’ McCreery

LOCATION: US
FAVOURITE ARTISTS: Frank Frazetta, Ray Harryhausen and Bernie Wrightson
MEDIA: Pencil



From his realistic shading of the liquid metal T-1000 in *Terminator 2* (1991) to the dramatic form of *Jurassic Park*’s stomping T-Rex (1993) and on to the tentaced beard of Davy Jones in *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man’s Chest* (2006), Crash has captured the imaginations of the directors he’s ➔

“Pencil was always easiest for me – it was all about the purest sense of light, shadow and form”



SPECIAL EFFECT

Crash visualised one of the most outstanding effects in *Terminator 2* in pencil.

➤➤ worked with through the simplicity and charm of hand-drawn artwork. With such incredible natural talent, he's never needed a powerful computer or advanced software to visualise his thoughts. Instead, he just... you know... starts drawing.

"Yeah it's funny. I found myself doing a lot of photo bashing and digital painting in the past few years and it felt very hollow, for me. So I

went back to the drawing board with pencil and paper and the reaction has been really unique," Crash explains.

"Directors or producers or whoever happens into the office to look at the work will regard the digital prints with interest, but when I pull out the pencil drawings, their eyes widen and they treat the work as if it were some valuable artefact – they really get blown away. The impact is always so



HEAD SHOT

In *Terminator 2*, the damage to the T-1000's head appears on screen just as Crash sketched it.

1991 © TriStar Pictures
much more satisfying when they feel they're given something that was created by hand. They feel like you really appreciate their idea or story to have spent so much time and attention on a piece of artwork for them. It's great to experience."

METICULOUS DETAIL

It isn't just that Crash's concept pieces are hand drawn, though. The level of detail he achieves is simply astonishing. The scaly textures of a dinosaur's skin, each glistening suction cup on a monster's tentacle, every hair or feather – he gets right down there with a sharpened tip of graphite and meticulously renders what he thinks the director has in mind. Making something that feels 'real' is what Crash loves about his job.

However, the insane level of detail that Crash creates was a double-edged sword for him as his style ➤➤

REBORN

Crash's *Jurassic* concept development put the emphasis on skin patterns and textures.

“I found myself doing a lot of photo bashing and digital painting in the past few years and it felt very hollow, for me”



1993 © Universal Pictures



HUNTERS

Using the latest dinosaur research, Crash emphasised the agility of the velociraptors.

1993 © Universal Pictures



UNIMAGINABLE

Although Rango is strange and abstract, Crash's detailed pencil work makes the chameleon gunslinger seem plausible.

THE OSCAR-WINNING RANGO

Crash McCreery handled creature and production design work on the film

With a pet chameleon who decides to clean up a town ravaged by bandits, Rango is an animated Western and one of the most unusual Academy Award-winning films you're likely to come across. Rango was conceptualised by director Gore Verbinski and James Ward Byrkit, with the character and production design handled by Crash McCreery, who shares the same aesthetic tastes and sense of weirdness as the director.

"Rango is one of my favourite projects," says Crash. "Gore had me production design that movie and what a challenge! Neither one of us had ever done an animated film before, so I was really flying by the seat of my pants. But Gore was so supportive and with a very small crew of very talented artists, we put together a pretty amazing film, I think."

Rango, the chameleon, is so unusual and abstract-looking that at times they weren't sure the film would even get made. But they stuck to the design and audiences loved him.

Crash continues: "ILM was so crucial in the success of the film. They were completely dedicated to it from the start and their work was incredible. We really dragged them through the ringer on that one. But they never complained and only ever showed complete enthusiasm at every turn. Everyone was so terrific. Gore has a great way of getting everyone on board with his vision. Must be the pirate in him."



MEET THE CREW

As production designer on 2011's Rango, Crash handled all the character concept art on the animated film himself.



JAKE THE SNAKE

As a feared assassin, Rattlesnake Jake makes the perfect antagonist in Rango and fits right into the Wild West theme that Gore Verbinski envisioned.

2011 © Paramount Pictures

Legend

GODZILLA

One of several sketches Crash created for a Godzilla project that was never finished.





THE LONE RANGER

Crash believes this is his most underrated project.

2013 © Walt Disney Studios

EDWARD SCISSORHANDS

Crash has worked on several films with the director Tim Burton.



1990 © 20th Century Fox

SOARING

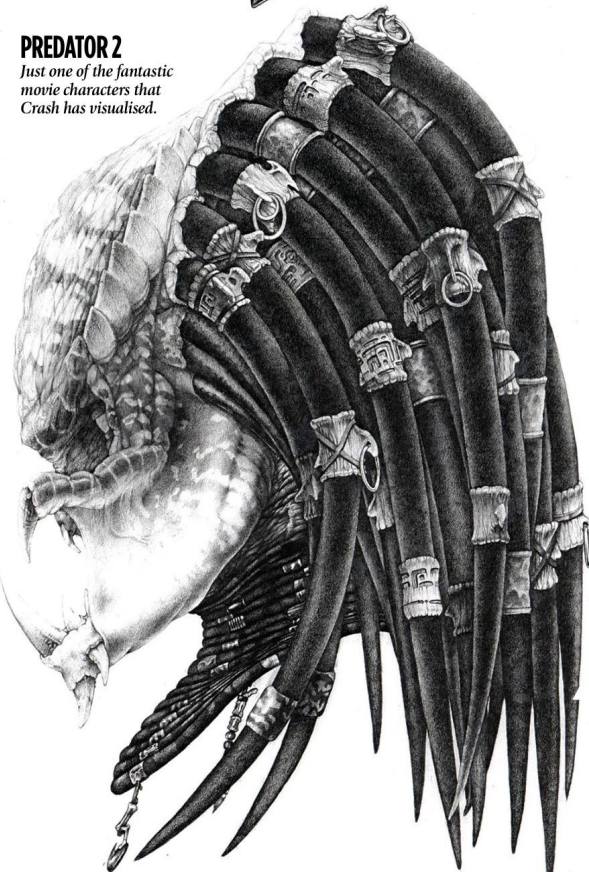
Cloud formation and veins in the wings of the pteranodons – nothing escapes Crash's eye for detail.



1993 © Universal Pictures

PREDATOR 2

Just one of the fantastic movie characters that Crash has visualised.



© 20th Century Studios

➤➤ developed. Whether he was drawing King Kong or dinosaurs as a child, or even when he was sketching advertising boards during his studies at the Art Center in Pasadena, California, detail and texture were what attracted him. It wasn't until he landed his first job in the industry, working at Stan Winston Studio in Los Angeles, that he began to appreciate form. By learning from the sculptors he collaborated with there, he was able to take his artwork to the next level.

SCIENTIFIC BASIS

Attention to detail isn't limited to the finish. It's there throughout Crash's creative approach. At the time Jurassic Park was being made, writer Michael Crichton was inspired by the discoveries made by palaeontologists and their theories. The new thinking

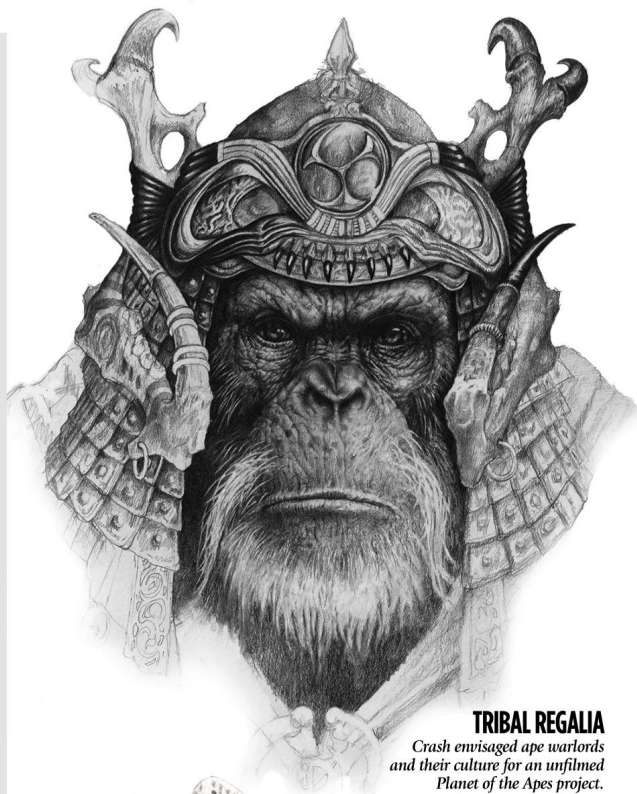
about dinosaur physiology and behaviour played an equally important role in Crash's artwork for the film.

"I incorporated a lot of fresh palaeontological ideas into the designs. We didn't want to go too crazy with it, Steven didn't want any feathers, so we stayed away from that idea," says Crash. "One of the first drawings I produced was that of a T-Rex in a forest raising its leg in an aggressive manner. This piece really set the tone for the project. These animals were going to be fast, aggressive and intelligent."

With Steven Spielberg wanting the animals to look as real as possible, and Stan Winston pushing for them to have 'character', Crash put himself on the map in the effects industry by meeting both objectives. He also appeared in the film, inside one of the velociraptor suits during the dramatic kitchen ➤➤

DAVY JONES

The iconic pirate came to Crash in a moment of inspiration when working with director Gore Verbinski.

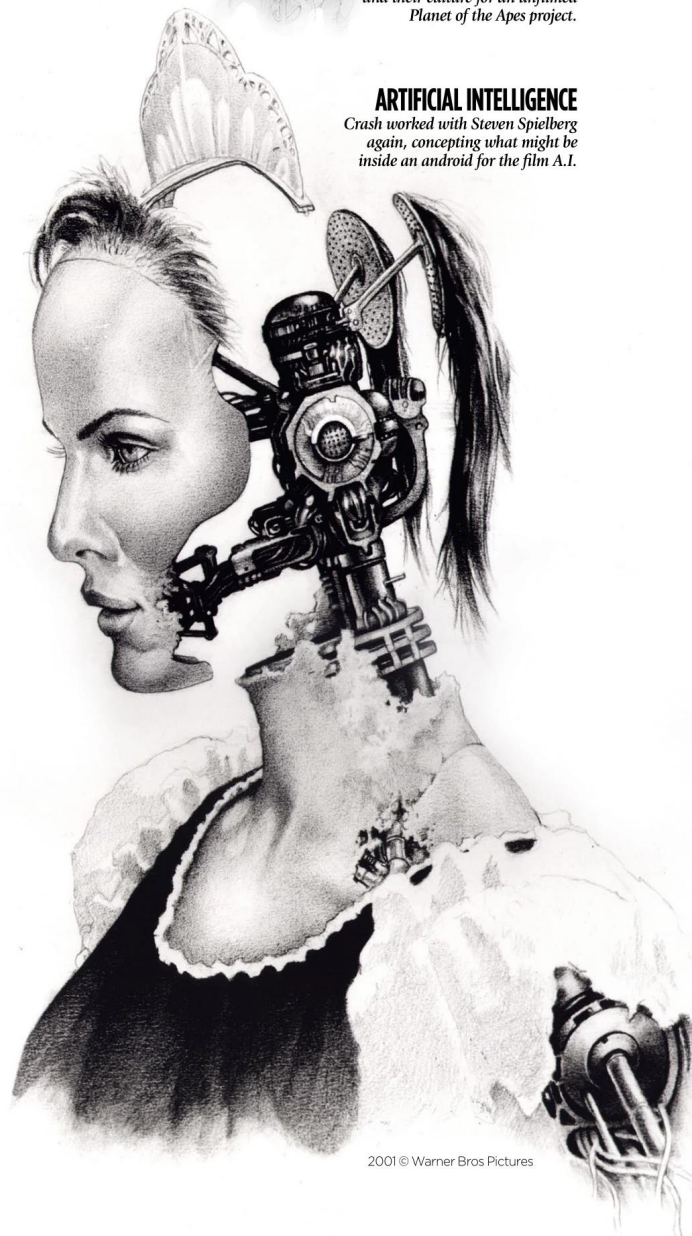


TRIBAL REGALIA

Crash envisaged ape warlords and their culture for an unfilmed Planet of the Apes project.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Crash worked with Steven Spielberg again, conceptualizing what might be inside an android for the film A.I.



➤ sequence. After Jurassic Park came out in the cinemas, Crash's artwork appeared on the toy packaging and was sold as limited-edition prints, and he began to receive fan mail.

AN ARTIST IN DEMAND

Since Jurassic Park, Crash has worked on dozens of films, helping directors realise their visions of human characters, animals and a wide array of creatures. He has anthropomorphised primates for a Planet of the Apes project, amalgamated humans with beasts on The Island of Dr. Moreau and with robots on A.I., and designed abstract animated characters for Rango. However, his most iconic creation has to be Davy Jones, the cursed captain in the Pirates of the

Caribbean films Dead Man's Chest and At World's End. Davy was also one of the most challenging.

The designs began with a mishmash of elements found in the ocean: fish, coral, shells, seaweed and so forth. Characters based on a hammerhead shark and puffer fish-based were sketched, with Crash then adding watercolours to his concepts. This gave them an antiquated feel that was fitting for the project. However, after six months none of the concepts for the pirate captain, Davy Jones, were quite hitting the mark. Then came the inspiration.

"I showed up for a meeting one day with some background character ideas and there was one in particular that caught the director Gore Verbinski's ➤

2006 © Disney Pictures



BOOTSTRAP BILL

The character was created for *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* and played by Stellan Skarsgård.

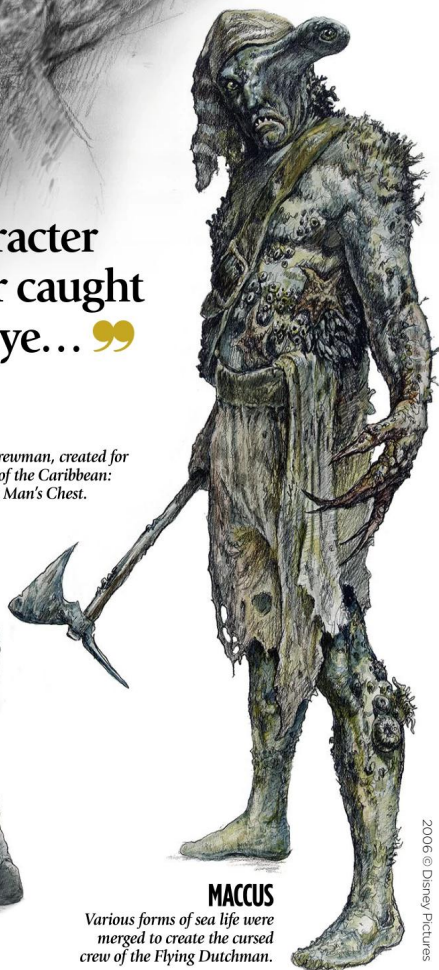
“One of my character ideas in particular caught Gore Verbinski’s eye...”

PENROD

A crusty crewman, created for *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest*.



2006 © Disney Pictures



MACCUS

Various forms of sea life were merged to create the cursed crew of the Flying Dutchman.

2006 © Disney Pictures

HELLUVA MOVIE

Ghost Rider was a rare project where Crash worked in colour.



2007 © Sony Pictures

WORK IN PENCIL OR WITH PIXELS?

Crash McCreery shares his drawing tips and why he's always used a pencil

"I always recommend taking a pencil to paper, absolutely, because it's a good way to gauge your knowledge and progress as an artist, and it might expose some of your weaknesses. I think the computer is a huge asset as a tool, so long as it's used as a tool and not as a means of circumventing good design. It enables you to work quickly and produce a lot of variations very quickly. These days, time is a precious commodity because there seems to be so little of it now.

"I was really fortunate when I worked with Stan Winston because he understood the value of hand-drawn art and made it possible for me to complete some very large and involved pencil renderings that took a lot of time. I don't really have that luxury any more. I think the appreciation for hand-drawn pieces gets you further than glitzy digital eye candy if you can find the time to get the work done. There are a lot of really talented digital artists out there that do amazing work. I'm always blown away at what's being produced. But my forte has always been drawing with a pencil - so that's what I concentrate on.

"I think you should follow your strengths and use the tools you're comfortable with, but also try stepping out of your comfort zone every now and then. You never know what you might produce."



2006 © Disney Pictures

UNDEAD

The cursed form of Captain Hector Barbossa, destined to sail the seas and never die.



MA-GOG

A benevolent orangutan, as designed by Crash for a project overseen by Stan Winston Studios.

CAPTAIN TEAGUE

Captain Edward Teague, played by Keith Richards, as seen in the third *Pirates of the Caribbean* film.



BABY REX

Crash's sketch of the young T-Rex chained up in *Jurassic Park: The Lost World*.

1997 © Universal Pictures



ON THE RANGE

One of the strengths of Crash's character design work is that he adds atmosphere to nearly every sketch through detailed backdrops.

2011 © Paramount Pictures

➔ eye. It was a pretty rough digital sketch of a pirate with tentacles around his face – very crude and not well developed. Gore looked at it and said, "That's cool, the tentacles look kind of like a beard." BAM! It hit me," exclaims Crash.

"The most famous pirate captain in the world – Black Beard – would be my inspiration. As soon as Gore had said that, literally the final image of Davy Jones popped into my head. I ran home and within a day had designed what would be the final look of Davy Jones. It was an incredibly inspiring moment for me, one that never

happens, and it's probably the design I'm most proud of to date."

The three *Pirates* films he worked on were the bedrock of a \$4.5 billion franchise for Disney, but more valuable to Crash has been his friendship with Gore. They went on to make *Rango* together, winning the Academy Award for Best Animated Picture in 2012.

THE IDEAL COLLABORATOR

Crash has worked on so many great pictures that you can talk to him for a week and never run out of questions to ask. Even so, it only takes a few minutes to realise that his greatest

quality is his modesty. He doesn't like being a legend, and that shy young artist whose family moved around a lot and who turned to drawing to escape isn't far below the surface. The natural talent, the stellar career – neither has rubbed away that little bit of insecurity all great artists feel. So, when Crash receives feedback during production, he listens and improves. He has the ideal temperament for the collaborative process of film making.

That's why, for the past two-and-a-half years he's been working on a project for Universal Studios, reimagining the company's library of classic monster movies for modern audiences. "Working for Universal, being the originators of these great films, has been an honour and a dream come true," says Crash, in his self-effacing way. ●

“BAM! It hit me... I ran home and within a day had designed what would be the final look of Davy Jones”

2006 © Disney Pictures

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PRINT AND DIGITAL BACK ISSUES



Issue 188 July 2020

The super-talented Tran Nguyen heads up this month's issue with her cover art and workshop, and interview. There's also advice on lighting in Procreate, speedy figure drawing, and tips on how to stay healthy as an artist.



Issue 187 June 2020

A roster of superhero artists appears in our comic art-themed issue, including cover star Jen Bartel, Viktor Kalvachev, Toni Infante and Steve Ellis. Plus Tank Girl comic artist Brett Parson takes us around his studio!



Issue 186 May 2020

Animation artists pass on their character and vis-dev skills, including cover artist Amanda MacFarlane, Mark Lim and Prem Sai GS. Plus we talk to Cécile Carre and Ty Carter about life in the animation industry.



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.

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Christmas 2019



Issue 180
December 2019



Issue 179
November 2019



Issue 178
October 2019



Issue 177
September 2019



Issue 176
July 2019



Issue 175
July 2019



Issue 174
June 2019



Issue 173
May 2019

GET YOUR DIGITAL EDITION THROUGH THESE OUTLETS:



*Resource files are available from issue 85 onwards.

Sketchbook

Halil Ural

Explorations of lighting, composition and figure design sit within pages of loose doodles, all created by the Turkish video games artist

Artist PROFILE

Halil Ural

LOCATION: Finland



Halil was born in Turkey and studied graphic design in Istanbul. He worked as an illustrator and a designer in many different creative fields before entering the game industry. He now lives in Finland and works as a 2D game artist. In his personal work, Halil likes using rough brush strokes and harmonious, bold colours.

www.artstation.com/mrdream

SILHOUETTE AND LIGHT

"I sometimes study shapes by observing how they're lit, rather than simply relying on their construction lines. It forces you to observe shapes more keenly and reveals where they can be simplified."



“ I sometimes study shapes by observing how they're lit... ”

THE DOODLES

"I don't usually do elaborate sketches in my sketchbook, since they aren't meant to be seen by anyone. So I usually refer to my sketchbook as the doodle book. These tiny doodles are really just figurative brainstorming pieces based on random thoughts - and there are so many of them! These are example pages of what my sketchbook tends to look like."





FIGURE SKETCH COMPILATION

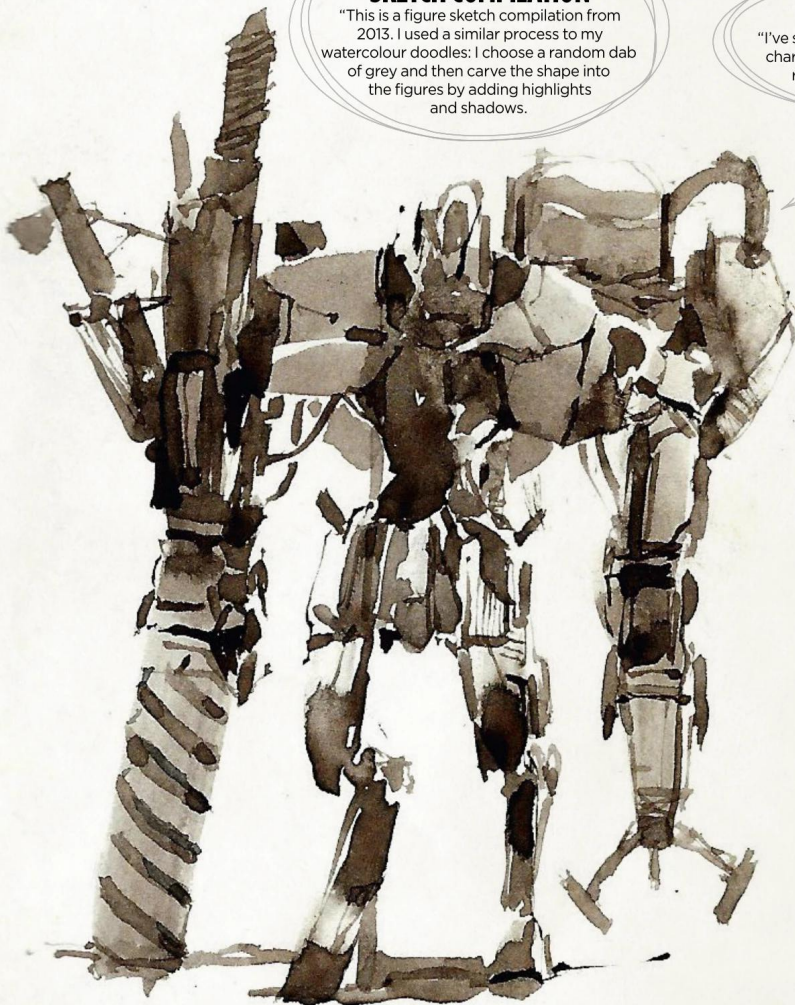
"This is a figure sketch compilation from 2013. I used a similar process to my watercolour doodles: I choose a random dab of grey and then carve the shape into the figures by adding highlights and shadows."

DRILLER ARM

"I've sketched plenty of asymmetrical character designs where arms were replaced by different tools."

TENTACLE GUY

"Another one of my many doodles."



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Sketchbook



THUMBNAIL SKETCHES

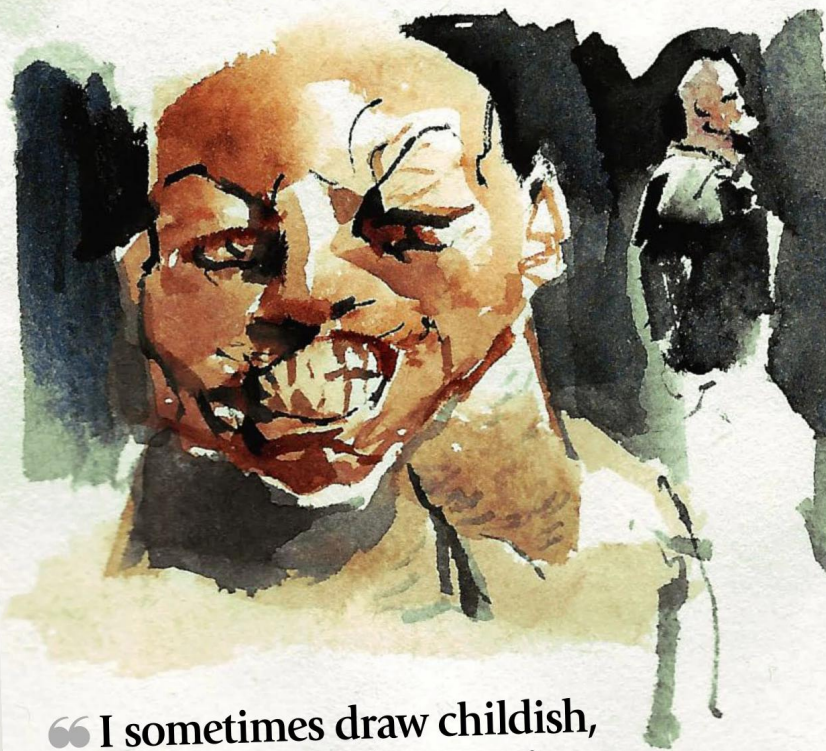
"This is a fun exercise to help me generate compositions. I fill a random amount of empty rectangles with abstract shapes and values in greyscale. At some point, they start to connect with your imagination and resemble images. I work on those that show potential and by the end of the day, I'll have hundreds of composition ideas."



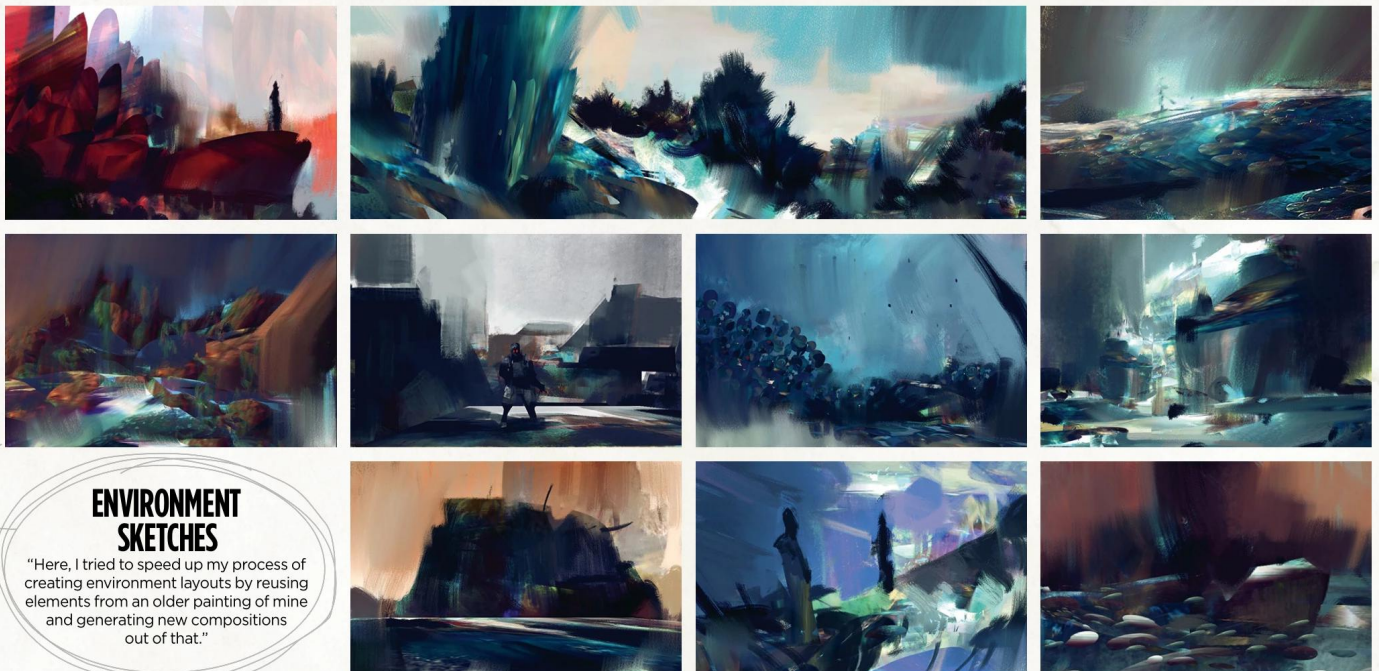
Sketchbook

FACES

"I sometimes draw childish, exaggerated facial expressions to loosen up a little bit and explore new ideas for my brushwork and edges."



“I sometimes draw childish, exaggerated facial expressions to loosen up a little bit...”



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

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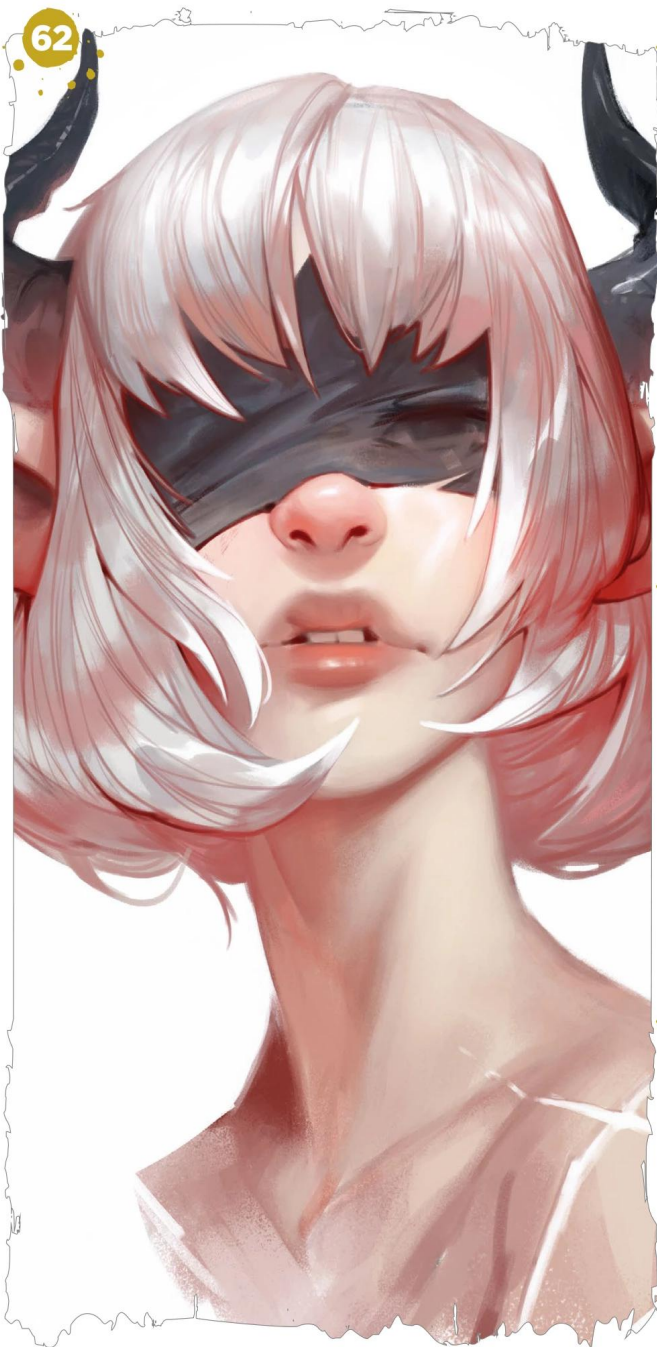
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX Workshops

**Workshops assets
are available...**

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.



Advice from the world's best artists



This issue:

62 Reimagine art in your own style

Dave Greco takes one artist's ideas and paints something new with his own spin.

66 Paint a portrait in digital oils

Discover how Phil Galloway uses ArtRage to create a loose, vibrant and painterly portrait.

74 Speed painting an environment

Dom Lay uses speed-painting techniques to quickly develop a rich, narrative-driven scene.

78 Using colour to add atmosphere

Maria Poliakova reveals how she applies colour in a portrait piece, to enhance the artwork's mood.

Photoshop REIMAGINE ART IN YOUR OWN STYLE

Dave Greco shows how to take ideas laid out from one artist, and bend those foundations to create something entirely new with your own spin

Artist PROFILE

Dave Greco
LOCATION: US

Dave has 16 years' experience working as a lead concept artist in the video game industry. He also spends time creating content for Twitch and YouTube.
<https://fxm.ag/d-greco>

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 8 now!



We see a lot of "draw this in your own style" challenges online these days. It's a great way to share your work, as well as drive some creative juice into your own art community.

For me, it's something that I like to fit in between other freelance commission work. It gives me a chance to let loose and expand my own rendering. Starting with a pre-existing design takes a lot of pressure off me to create something from scratch all the time. I can focus on a great pose and then spend more time

on some new ways to apply lighting and colour.

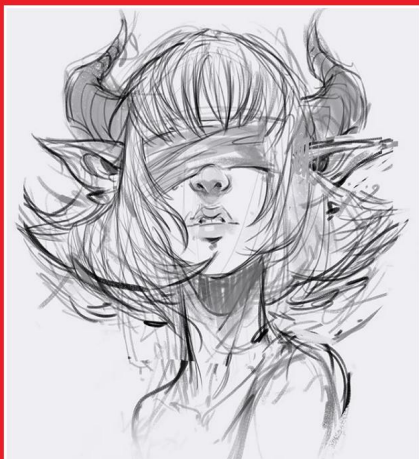
Some pieces of artwork out there just simply inspire, making you want to sit down at your desk and start creating from it. This was one of those challenges that instantly lit a fire in my brain: to take an amazing sketch by Cathpun and create something for myself out of it. The red and pink hues in the initial sketch is what jolted an image inside my head of where to begin... ➔

(right) Artist Sabrina Ehrles (@cathpun) posted this character on her Instagram page, encouraging her followers to "Draw this in your style".



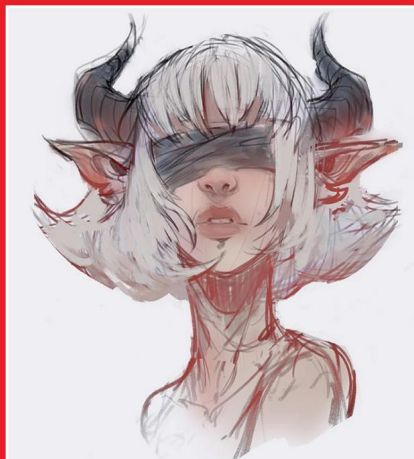
How I create...

WARM SHADOWS AND SKIN TONES



1 Starting the initial sketch

The first step was to create a very loose sketch of the entire pose to begin with. After some deliberation I decided to go with a slightly angled-up pose on the character's face, and wanted to give it some type of angelic direction.



2 Adding the warmth

One of the biggest inspirations for me with this piece was to make the super-warm shadows and skin tone work effectively with a very light hair and background. Here I start using a Lighten layer to saturate some of the initial sketch.



3 Full-on render

Once I have the base warm colours down, I can begin to go in by hand and paint in each section of the piece. I also bring back a lot of line work into the piece on top of rendered areas, to add a bit of my own style into the piece.



RESOURCES

**WORKSHOP
BRUSHES**

PHOTOSHOP

**CUSTOM BRUSH:
DG_MAIN**

I use this brush for most of my art. It handles line drawing and rendering with total control.

**TAKE YOUR SKILLS
TO INFINITY AND BEYOND.**



SPECIAL ISSUE
JUNE 16

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ADD YOUR TWIST

Demon ears

Ears with strange shapes can be mostly made up. Having a few folds on the interior that mimic human ears, such as the antihelix, is a great way to bring in believability to your painting. Reference is always your friend!

Simple horns

I felt I could have added more details to the horns, but while rendering I realised that something simple at the top would be a nice way to not bring the viewer's eye away from her face.

Faded eye

Initially, I painted the image without the eye being visible through the blindfold. While rendering, I realised that showing the eye would connect us more to the character behind it. An eye peaking through the cloth helps to balance the design.

Two front teeth

I love how a character looks with her lips parted slowly, showing the top two front teeth. It's something that I carry through in a lot of my character work.

Hair shape design

I love painting hair. It's one of my favourite things in the world to paint on a female character. One thing I try to do is create interesting line shapes on top of the hair, to create a nice sense of flow and energy.

Use reference

As far as the neck and below is concerned, I always look at reference when I need to. A quick peek through some photos on Pinterest is a great way to make sure you aren't making some simple anatomy errors.



ArtRage

PAIN A PORTRAIT IN DIGITAL OILS

Phil Galloway guides you through his painting process, using ArtRage to create a loose, vibrant and painterly portrait



Artist PROFILE

Phil Galloway
LOCATION: England

Phil is a fine and digital artist specialising in expressive portraiture. His MA in The History of Art has helped shape his artistic style.
<https://ifxm.ag/philg>



In this workshop I'll create a believable digital portrait using ArtRage, an affordable painting program that excels at recreating traditional media. I'll take you through each step of my work process, from creating a new file and loading up a reference image, to sketching out ideas and

thumbnails, making initial pencil drawings right through to blocking in and adding thick textured paint. I'll also show you how to add some final digital flourishes before explaining how to save your finished work, ready for printing.

I paint digitally in pretty much the same way as I paint with real oils and acrylics, so hopefully the process

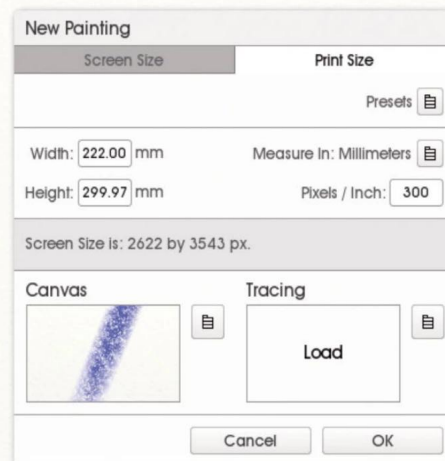
won't feel too alien if you come from a fine art background. The tutorial helps to show how the screen really does become a canvas before you.

The portrait is of a young man in a modern setting. I'll keep my paint loose and choppy to create movement and interest while maintaining a vibrant feel, using real-world painting techniques.



1 Start by picking your subject matter

It can sometimes be a bit of a struggle to source royalty-free images that you're allowed to draw. No need to worry, as with a bit of searching you can find a plethora of websites that have stock images ready for you to use. I like to use either Pixabay or Flickr Commons, which provide a vast array of great reference images.

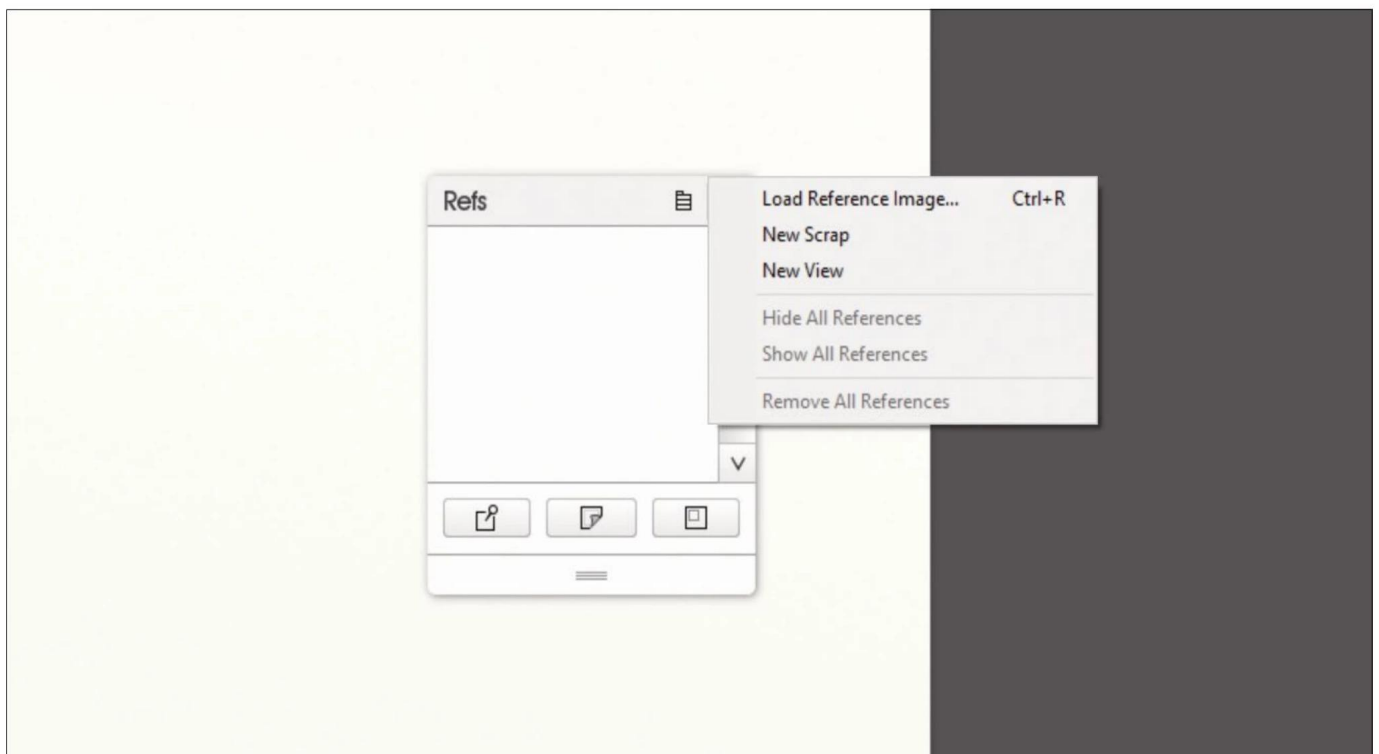


**GET YOUR
RESOURCES**
See page 8 now!

2 Create a new file for your painting

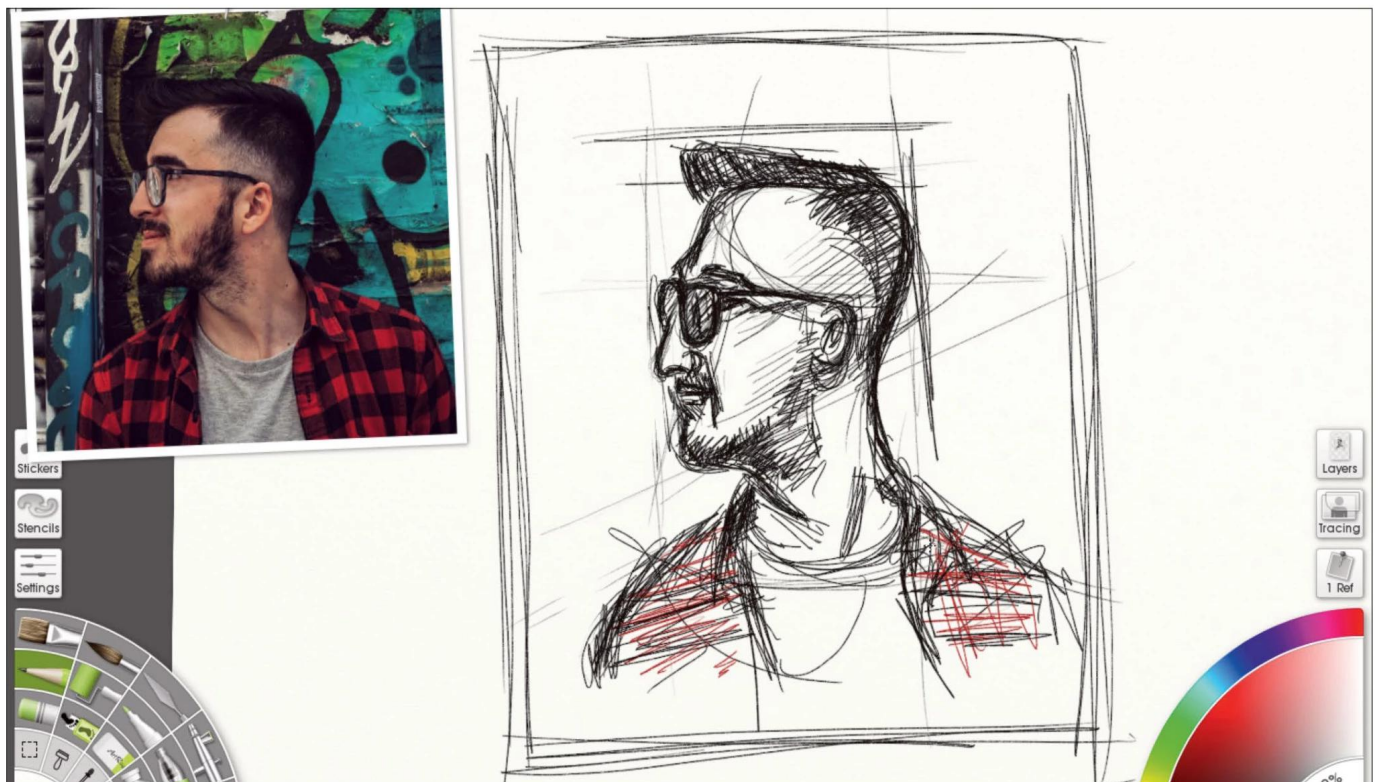
Open ArtRage and click File in the top-left corner. In the drop-down box, select New Painting and then in the Print Size tab, set the dimensions for the painting (in this case, 222x300mm, but these could be any size). I make sure to change the default 72 pixels/inch setting to 300 for a high-resolution painting. ➡





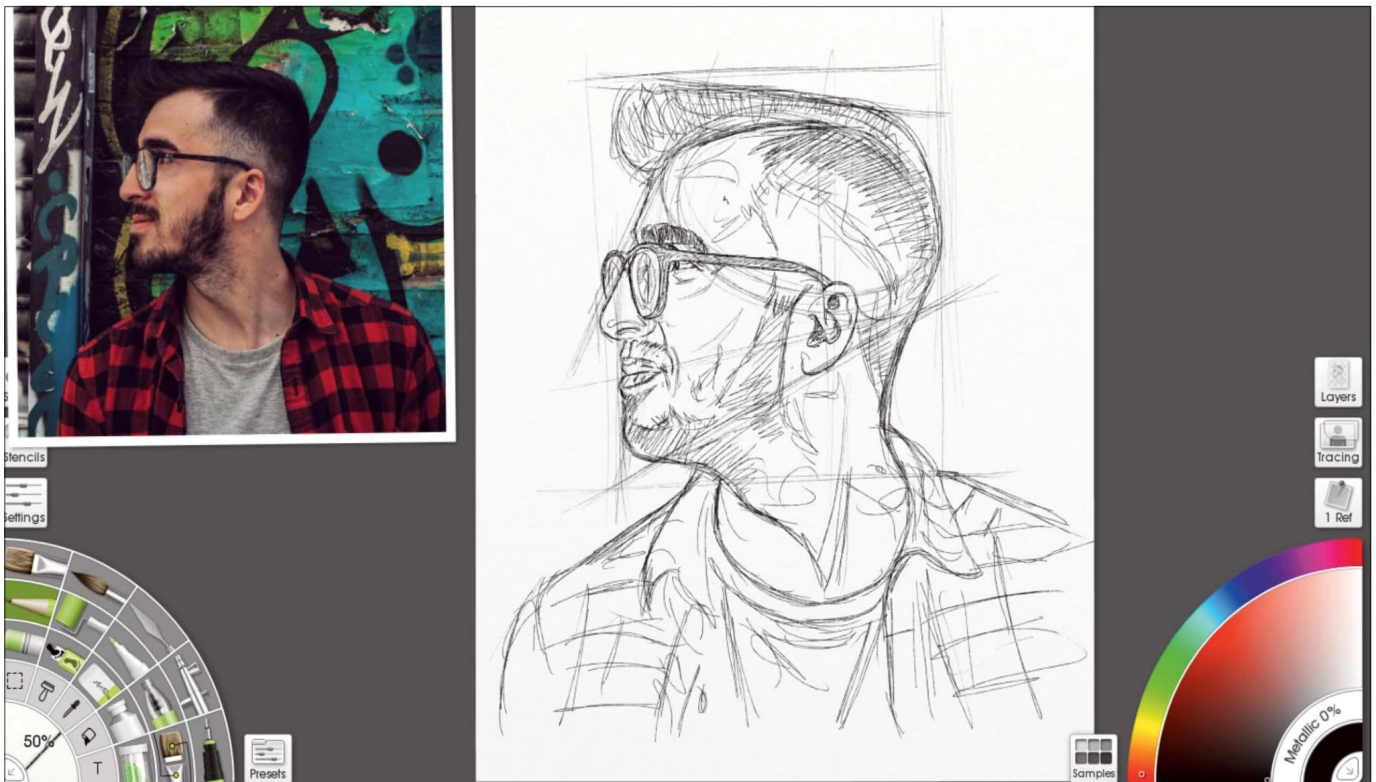
3 Import the reference photo into ArtRage

To import my chosen reference image, I simply select Refs on the right-hand side of the screen and in the new box that opens, either click the file image or the Post It note with a pin in it. A new window will open that enables you to search your computer for your chosen picture. Double-click the image for it to open, ready to copy.



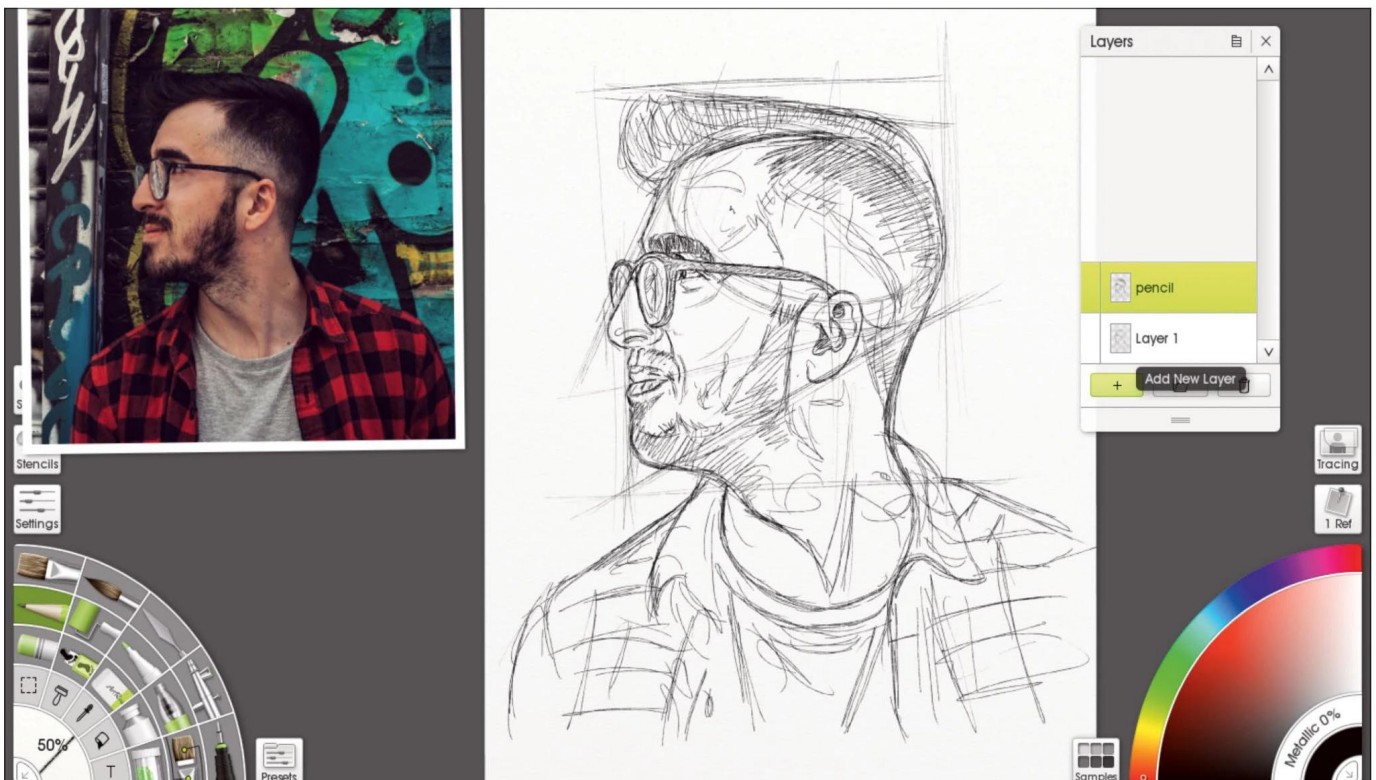
4 Create thumbnail sketches

I begin by doodling thumbnail sketches for most of my work, because I find this helps me to understand the space better and where I'll place the drawing on the canvas. I draw a rough rectangle to mimic the canvas dimensions and loosely sketch the head. This doesn't have to be a masterpiece, but it helps me to warm up and now I'm ready to begin.



5 Develop the initial pencil sketch

I select the IF Pencil tool from the Tool selection panel. I start by drawing in guidelines for where the top and sides of the figure's head will be, along with the neckline and shoulders. I begin drawing in the eye and work outwards, roughly at first then adding more detail as I go.



6 Add layers to separate the line art from the paint

If I were using real paint, I would paint directly over my sketch on the canvas. However, in digital art you can keep these lines on a separate layer in case they need tweaking at a later stage. I select the Layers box on the right-hand side of the screen and click the '+' button. My new layer is now created and selected for me, ready to paint on.



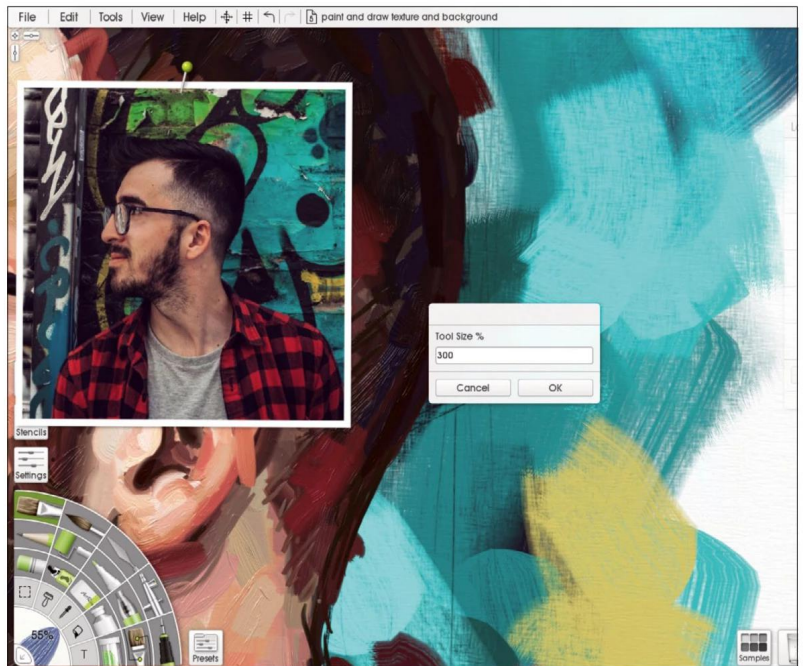
7 Block in the basic colour

I select the Oil Brush tool, but I don't want to add too much paint just yet. This is to stop the painting becoming muddy and hard to manage. Once selected, I click the Settings box and pull the slider labelled Loading right down to between four and nine per cent. This now gives me a dry brush with which to paint in the tones, highlights and shaded areas.



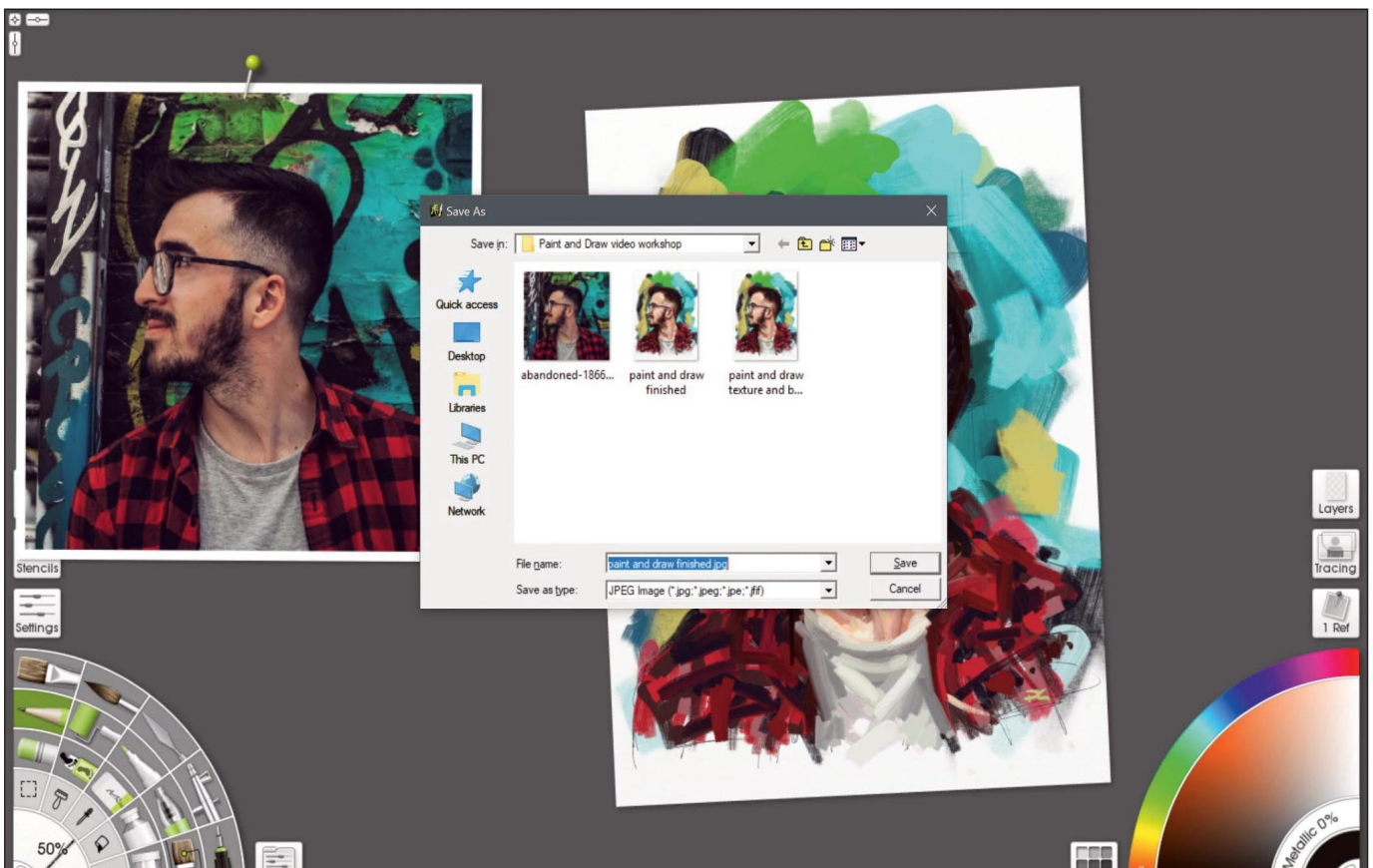
8 Apply thicker paint

I select a new layer and in the Settings box of the Oil Paint brush, slide the Loading setting up to between 16 and 30 per cent. Now the paint flows far more freely and I can begin to load it on to the canvas heavily with chunky strokes. The paint now mixes believably on the surface and enables me to form the shapes, shading and contours better, while bringing the painting to life.



9 Final touches and background

I create a new layer and drag it to sit below all the other layers. Any thick paint or texture I put on this layer will add depth and chunkiness to the brushstrokes above. For the background, I decrease the Loading on the brush to 3 and click in the Brush Size box and select 300. I can now fill in the abstract background easily.



10 Save and export the painting

I'd recommend saving your artwork throughout the painting process. Click the File button and select Save Painting As and name the file. Once named, only click the Save button as you progress. When finished, click Export Image File and save as a JPEG from the drop-down box.

Next month



Next month

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

Let's celebrate making art!

Join us, as we honour the artists who inspire, inform and bring joy to our world!



All this... and more!

Pascal Blanche *interview*

Art director, world builder and man of many talents talks to us about his art.

How to be a happy creative

We asked artists for their creative ways to stay cheerful in these trying times.

Blender tips and techniques

We've got 23 ways to get the most out of Blender, the free 3D tool!

The art of futuristic cities

Jacek Pilarski takes you through his process of creating complex structures.

ISSUE 190 ON SALE IN THE UK 10 July 2020



Photoshop

SPEED PAINTING AN ENVIRONMENT

Artist PROFILE

Dom Lay
LOCATION: US

Dom is an illustrator and concept artist working on his own art book, *Journey to the East*.
<https://ifxm.ag/d-lay>



**GET YOUR
RESOURCES**

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This illustration is an exploration of a scene in my book, *Journey to the East*. It portrays Esauria Harbor, a fishing market where people come to trade goods and items. It's based on and inspired by the architecture found at the Varanasi Ghats in India.

Instead of a river flowing through the city, dunes have covered the vast landscape from years of heavy sandstorms. The people of the harbour have had to adapt to their environment to find fresh food.

I wanted to focus on abstract lighting, mood and storytelling. The bright lighting invokes a strong sense

of illumination without over-rendering. Watercolour painters use this technique by treating the canvas as the light source. Keeping the painting loose also enables the viewer to explore ideas within the broad paint strokes. It provides an interesting challenge for them, rather than figuring out every detail. ➡

ADDING IN DETAILS

The misty haze

The hazy effect used on this group of people creates a slight fogging effect, and helps to separate out the fore- and mid-ground elements. This is also a good way to indicate value separation between the people who are in the foreground.

Building elements

Much of the architecture is made up of photobashed elements that I paint directly on top of using the Dry Brush filter effect. Typically, I increase the scale of the buildings and play around with their colours and design to make them look unique.

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: CHALK BRUSH

This brush's texture enables me to block out large shapes in a scene.

TRACK BRUSH

This brush's strokes have a traditional, impressionistic feel.

SCATTER TEXTURE

This mimics paint being thrown on to a canvas by a traditional paintbrush.

SOFT AIRBRUSH

Use this blending tool with the Mixer brush to paint rivers or lakes.

Create crowd scenes

I like to quickly populate my scene with people from crowded market areas. I'll typically find photo references of people in market bazaars and villages, and place them in my scene. I select the Dry Brush filter and paint them in an abstract way, especially if they're further away in the foreground.

Foreground brush marks

I use a tread-like brush to achieve this effect. Replicating the style of watercolour artists, they tend to keep their strokes impressionistic. The shadows are painted graphically here to contrast with the painterly feel present in the rest of the image.



The distant landscape

Atmospheric perspective is important to indicate the scale and distance of objects in the scene. I paint small floating ships near the structures, to indicate how citizens travel between cities. The dunes are compressed in the background to convey how vast this landscape is.

Flying ships

I block in the overall shape and then use a clipping mask to paint within the shape, while bearing in mind the correct direction of the sunlight. I want the ships to have a simple animal design, such as a dolphin, and then imagine how they could fly.

How I create...

A SAND-FILLED LANDSCAPE



1 Starting the image

I begin with a rough greyscale painting and make sure to establish my lighting in the value stage before moving on to anything else. This ensures that the colours will retain their correct values in the next painting stage.



2 Refining the scene

I quickly lay in some colours using Photoshop's Color and Overlay blending modes. To keep things manageable, I'll often collapse the image in the Layer dialog and then paint on top of the merged images.



3 Finalising the image

As I paint on top of my merged layers, I keep in mind the culture of the landscape. I introduce visual storytelling elements such as the hazy atmosphere, the people and the ships to breathe more life into the scene.

Photoshop

USING COLOUR TO ADD ATMOSPHERE

Colour is a powerful tool for enhancing the mood of an illustration.

Maria Poliakova reveals how she applies colour in a portrait piece

Artist PROFILE

Maria Poliakova

LOCATION: Ukraine

Maria is a freelance illustrator who has worked with companies that include Wizards of the Coast, Wacom and Fantasy Flight Games. <http://ifxm.ag/maria-p>



Digital painting gives artists a unique opportunity to draw freely. There's no need to worry about

damaging the canvas through excessive erasing of unwanted pencil lines, or mixing too many colours so that the end results are an unsalvageable, muddy mess.

When I was studying I only painted with traditional materials.

Watercolour soon became my favourite medium because it enabled me to produce the vibrant, light and delicate colours that I was looking for. But then I discovered digital painting and everything changed.

Photoshop enables me to quickly adjust my colours, tone or shapes. And when I start drawing my personal works, I try to make quick decisions and not to concentrate on the details. I just follow my mood

and keep in mind what I want to tell with art. Often it's just a desire to study people's faces again and again. I find them beautiful and far-ranging, and there are so many nuances through colour choices and line art that can convey a character's mood.

I often start with a simple portrait, and then ideas steadily come to me. I like to make my art a little bit decorative and dreamy, focusing on colour combinations and tones. ➤

How I create...

LOST EDGES IN A COLOURFUL PORTRAIT



1 Searching for an idea

I was going to paint a bright portrait with vivid colours (top), but then decide to make the colours deeper and softer so that I can place more emphasis on her face (above). I want to give the portrait a calm atmosphere, but still make it colourful. The blue background, yellow dress and black hair help to keep the other colours bright.



2 Adding details and story

I change the canvas orientation to vertical, and then add hands, clothing details and white to the background. For story ideas, I imagine the girl finding an unusual creature in her garden. I make her hair edges smooth and soft so rather than being a distracting detail, they frame her face and direct the viewer to her hands.



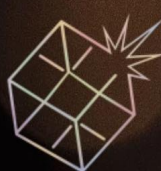
3 Making final tweaks

While thinking about her dress I'm inspired by Korean national costumes that have wide, beautiful shapes. So I add some dress details while trying to keep my colours clean. I work with Soft Light and Hard Light modes because I usually paint on a single layer. I create hard or lost edges and softly integrate one colour into another.



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CONTRAST & HUES

Creating volume and decorative elements

I find it interesting to combine volume and decorative elements in an artwork. Here, I make the clothes and plants look a bit flat by not adding much contrast in the light and shadows. To contrast with this approach, I create volume in the face and hands. This is another way to direct the viewer to certain areas in the composition.

Colour revisions

I began this painting with a combination of dark blue and yellow, and it was fine. However, I felt that something was missing because I wanted to make a bright and calm illustration and so my colour choices need to be revised. Adding white helps to bring a fresh feeling to the illustration.

Contrast matters

I want areas of strongest contrasts to capture the viewer's attention. Tone and colour accents help me to assign visual priorities in an illustration. Here, the main contrast is on the face and immediately around it. Next it's the hands, then the flowers and finally the clothes and background.

The face and hands

The head and hands are the main thing that gives the viewer a lasting impression of your art. This is something I learned after analysing the work of the Old Masters. So it's important to study how to draw hands. For this piece I took photos of my hands in the right position and then drew them mostly with a Soft brush.

Varying your edge work

If you take a look at an Old Master's works you'll see that they have a perfect sense of hard and lost edges, which helps to create accents and contrasts. There's no need to draw similar edges everywhere. If you make a hard edge on the one side of an object, then on the other you could make a lost edge. Try it for yourself!

Colour saturation

I like playing around with cold and warm colours, and appreciate it when artists paint cold light, discreet shadows and saturated colours between light and shadow areas. I usually use Hard Light mode to lighten those areas. I also try to pick colours from the Color Palette rather than the developing artwork. This is because the colours mix as you paint and they're not as clean as they are on the palette.

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: SOFT ROUND

I use this brush for painting body parts such as the face or arms.

OIL 2

A brush which helps me create a smooth texture that looks a little like oils.

ONE EDGE

It's my favourite brush that has both soft and hard edges. I use it in all my paintings.

BIG SOFTIE

This brush works well when you need to create texture while blending at the same time.

GET YOUR RESOURCES

See page 8 now!



ConceptD 7



WHITE KNIGHT Acer's laptop has been put together with 2D and 3D artists in mind. We find out if it's an affordable creative solution

Price £2,799 **Company** Acer **Web** www.acer.com

The ConceptD 7 is part of Acer's series of laptops and desktop aimed at designers and creatives. It's a 15.6-inch laptop with a 4K screen that has lovely thin bezels. But how good is it, considering that many similarly targeted devices such as Microsoft's Surface Book 2 or Lenovo's ThinkPad P1 are available?

Inside it's fitted with an Intel Core i7-9750H, Nvidia's GeForce RTX 2080 Max-Q with 32GB of memory and a 1TB PCIe solid-state drive (SSD). It's a great laptop specification in anyone's books. The Intel Core i7-9750H is a six-core processor, running at 2.6GHz with a 4.5GHz Turbo Frequency.

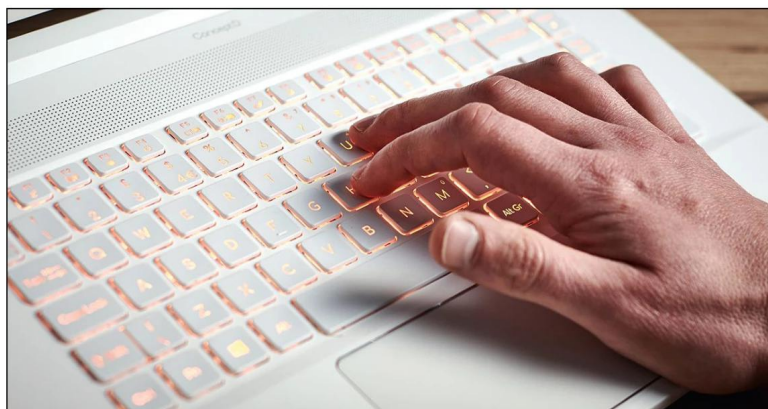
The RTX 2080 Max-Q graphics card in the ConceptD 7 has 8GB of GDDR6

VRAM and a 735MHz clock speed. This is a big step down from the 1,515MHz clock of a desktop PC's RTX 2080, even though it still has the same 2,944 shaders, 46 ray tracing cores and 368 Tensor Cores.

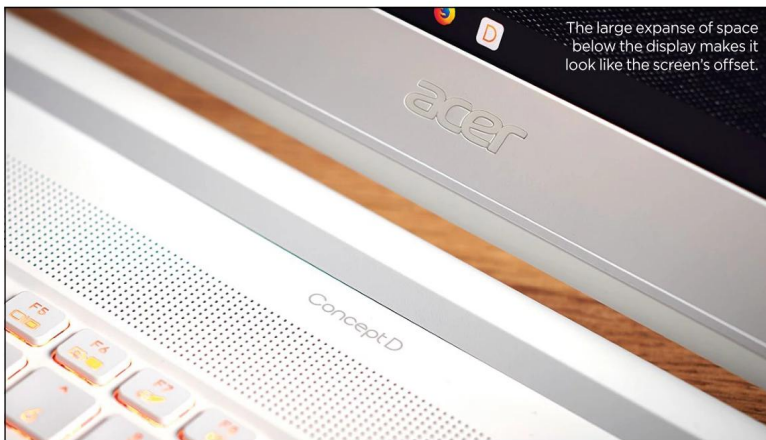
The ConceptD 7 is also well equipped with ports. Unlike a certain fruity company, Acer has sensibly stuck with three traditional USB-A ports, squeezed in a proper Ethernet port, and still offers Thunderbolt connectivity over its USB-C port. HDMI and DisplayPort outputs give you display output options, too.

DIVISIVE APPEARANCE

The looks might divide opinion though. While the ConceptD 7 is encased in a solid metal chassis, which feels good to use with a comfortably sized trackpad and keyboard, we found it a tad on the ugly side. Acer has contrasted the white chassis with a bright yellow/orange backlit keyboard,



While travel isn't that deep, the ConceptD 7's keyboard still feels responsive and comfortable to use.



There are ports a-plenty on the Acer ConceptD 7, including USB-A and USB-C, and an Ethernet port. Note: the series of oddly shaped holes are just vents!

“The Acer ConceptD 7 has a colour-accurate screen that looks a lot better than most desktop displays...”

but aside from the angled corners there are few other interesting design features of note.

More noticeable is the large space under the display, which makes the screen look as if it's been squashed upwards. Even though other laptops have the same area under their display, it looks worse on the ConceptD 7 because of the white casing.

The ConceptD 7 has a colour-accurate screen that looks a lot better

than most desktop displays, presenting 100 per cent AdobeRGB colour coverage that looks fantastic. A colour-accurate display is an oft-overlooked component of a design rig, so its inclusion on Acer's device is a worthy addition.

This isn't the only option from Acer, of course. The ConceptD range also includes a (black) ConceptD 9 Pro. This is a higher spec 17-inch RTX Studio laptop that swaps the GeForce

DETAILS

Features

- 15-inch 4K colour-accurate display
- Intel Core i7-9750H (six cores)
- Nvidia GeForce RTX2080 Max-Q
- 32GB RAM
- 1TB SSD

Rating



for a Quadro RTX 5000, the Core i7 for a Core i9 and raises the maximum SSD storage to 2TB, but this is nudging £5,000. And at the other end of the scale there's a ConceptD 7 with an RTX 2060, smaller 512GB SSD and just 16GB of memory for £2,299.

While the ConceptD 7 is still a pricey investment, it's one of the best laptops for 2D and 3D work – in particular, retaining high performance without stepping over the £3,000 line.

Kylo Ren looks out over the wreckage of the second Death Star, in ILM art director Chris Voy's mood-laden painting.



The Art of Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker

MORE PLEASE We discover that the concepts produced for the final film in the Star Wars sequel trilogy don't tell the whole story...

Author Phil Szostak **Publisher** Abrams **Price** £30 **Web** www.chroniclebooks.com **Available** Now

After 42 years of a hugely influential film saga, you'd almost expect there to be a Photoshop Action that creates production-ready Star Wars concept art. Not so, although such a tool would have helped with the visualisation of *The Rise of Skywalker's* story ideas, which constantly evolved in the lead-up to filming.

In the end, Lucasfilm's art department produced over 20,000 sketches and concepts, of which author Phil Szostak has whittled down to 684 for inclusion in this handsome 256-page book. And those artworks



aren't just presented without comment, either. At the bare minimum, each artist receives a credit for their work. But often there's a paragraph or two on the thinking behind an image, explaining how it took the script in a new direction, or helped to highlight why something in the story wasn't quite working.

Examples include the red armour of the Sith troopers having their genesis in the unsettling musculature of anatomy models, or diminutive droid mechanic Babu Frik initially being an insectoid character in director's JJ Abrams' mind, before artist Ivan Manzella's mammalian take led to a

course correction. ZBrush is mentioned throughout the book – a reminder for any would-be concept artists that having 3D as well as 2D art skills is a must in this industry.

ON A PRODUCTION ART JOURNEY

The range of art includes characters, costumes, props, environments and vehicles, presented in an order that approximately mirrors both the film's pre-production progress, and events from the film. Helping to avoid 'museum fatigue', the book is interspersed with detailed summaries of events behind the scenes, as story beats are thrashed out while the art

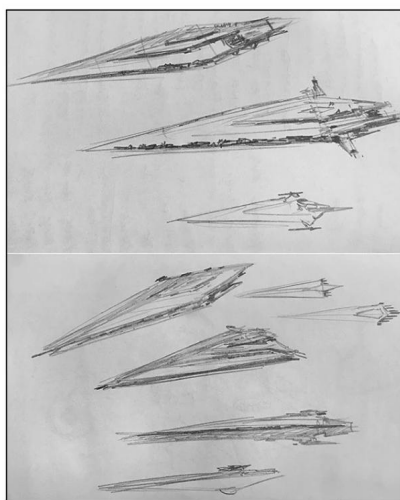


“Often there’s a paragraph or two on the thinking behind an image”

department deals with an ever-increasing workload. It’s a fascinating insight into the film’s anything-but-straightforward development.

Having said this, it’s disappointing that the book lacks any significant coverage of the climatic scenes set on the Sith planet Exegol. The author’s explanation involves the book going to print six months before the film’s release; revealing concepts from this key part of the story would have been entering spoiler territory. Yet with the book going on sale months after TROs’s theatrical run, this logic feels shonky. Much like the presence of the reborn Emperor Palatine in the film, it casts a dark shadow across what should have been a flawless showcase of Lucasfilm’s visionary artists working at the top of their game.

RATING ★★★★★☆



Lucasfilm design supervisor James Clyne sketched a range of possible designs for Kylo Ren’s flagship.



Luke Fisher followed JJ Abrams’ direction to add more of the Vader aesthetic to Kylo Ren’s helmet.



Glyn Dillon worked on the design of Jannah. Note the Imperial officers’ rank badges, scavenged from the wreck of the second Death Star.



Our heroes explore a mysterious cave on the desert planet Pasaana, in concept artist Adam Brockbank’s painting.

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Traditional Artist

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Workshops assets are available...

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



This issue:

88 Traditional FXPosé

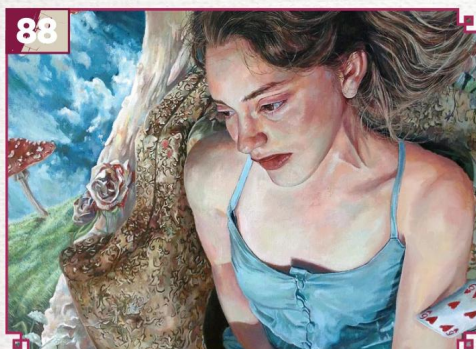
Explore this month's selection of the finest traditional art, which has been sent in by you!

92 Workshop: Best ways to clean your paintbrushes

Rob Lunn reveals how to maintain your paintbrushes and extend their life span.

98 First Impressions: Sidharth Chaturvedi

The Indian-born, Germany-based artist on how one comic artist helped him change his style.



FXPosé

THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS



Brianna Angelakis

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Oil, graphite, pen, ink WEB: www.briannaangelakis.com

"I've always been inspired by fairy tales," says Brianna. "Through whimsical compositions and movement, I create magic in my oil paintings and drawings."



1 ESCAPE FROM TEMPTATION

"My goal was to create an almost movie-still effect, while simultaneously suggesting constant movement through pattern and line."

2 THE PILGRIMAGE

"My self-portrait carries the weight of my failed drawings and paintings, which I destroyed. Through my failures, I create something beautiful."

3 LIL BUB TAKES FLIGHT

"Hair is my favourite thing to paint, and painting furry animals is a guilty pleasure of mine. Painting each individual hair is both calming and satisfying."

4 A PORTRAIT OF ALICE IN WONDERLAND

"I find Alice's nonsensical story fascinating. The awkward angle of Alice's figure was inspired by the moment she falls down the rabbit hole."







Alba Ballesta González

LOCATION: Spain **MEDIA:** Ink, watercolour markers, watercolours, alcohol markers, coloured pencils **WEB:** www.instagram.com/albabggg

"All my work is inspired by a mystical, magical mood," says Alba, a 2D artist and art director for animation and video games. "I've worked for the likes of Magic: The Gathering, and I'm developing my own tarot deck, too."

1 CHICKPEA KID

"A mixed media illustration that combines traditional lines and digital colour."



2 KING OF WANDS

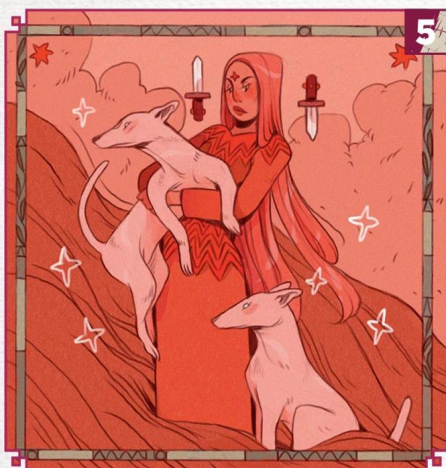
"This is a finished card from my upcoming tarot deck. It's a representation of the King of Wands card."



3 MOONCHILD

"This was a design created for a clothing brand and stickers."





4 THE GOLDEN HOUR
 "This was a mixed media experiment on panel. It shows two sisters about to embark on a journey."

5 RED SUNSET
 "In this painting I wanted to create my own reinterpretation of the classic goddess surrounded by animals archetypes."

6 THE STAR
 "One of the first concepts of the Major Arcana within my tarot deck, which is going to be published in November this year."



Photo by Sonny Flanagan

Oils

Acrylics

Watercolour

BEST WAYS TO CLEAN YOUR PAINTBRUSHES

Whether you're using oils, acrylics or watercolours, **ROB LUNN** reveals how to effectively maintain your paintbrushes and extend their life span

Learning how to clean paintbrushes properly is an important skill that all traditional artists need to learn sooner rather than later. As the saying goes, if you look after your tools, your tools will look after you. When you start painting, a good set of brushes is one of the most important investments you'll make – and they can set you back a fair amount of money too. So it makes sense to give them a bit of TLC.

The golden rule when it comes to paintbrushes is keep them wet while in use and give them a good clean when they're not. This approach will help keep your brushes in good nick for a long time. But cleaning paintbrushes is easier said than done, and there are some techniques that you need to know if you're going to get the paint out effectively.

How to clean your paintbrushes properly depends on the kind of paint that you're using. In this article,

we'll run through the main cleaning process and then explain the different brush care variations for different painting mediums. Let's start with the medium with the most options: oil paint...



Based in Bath, England, self-taught Rob tackles portraits, still-life pieces and landscapes in his work. He also enjoys teaching art and runs a series of workshops. You can explore Rob's collection of paintings at www.roblunn.co.uk.

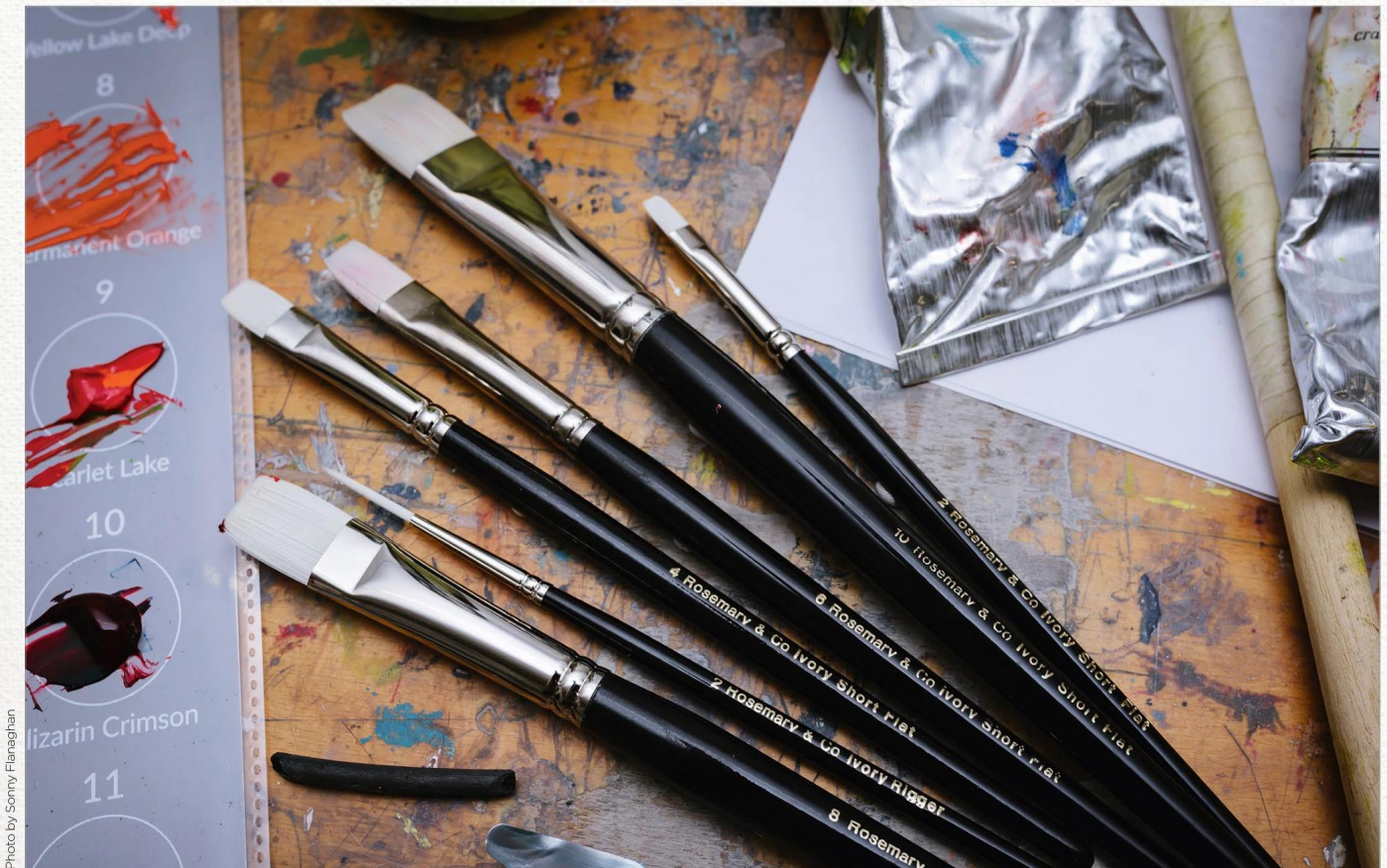


Photo by Sonny Flanagan

CLEAN OIL PAINTBRUSHES

There may be more steps involved to cleaning oil from paintbrushes than there are with other types of paint, but it's still a fairly simple process

1 Remove paint from the bristles

First, remove as much paint from the bristles as possible by folding a clean cloth or paper towel around the ferrule of the brush (the bit just below the bristles) and wipe upwards. Always move the cloth from the ferrule to the end of the bristles. You don't want to get paint down the ferrule because this will ruin the brush. Continue until very little paint is left showing on your cloth.



2 Ditch the white spirit

For some artists the go-to cleaning solution for oil paint is white spirit, but there are much better and safer alternatives, both for the user and the environment.

The next best alternatives to white spirits are 'clean' spirits such as the water-based Bartoline Clean Spirit. Use this just as you would traditional white spirit, but don't pour it down the drain afterwards, despite it's 'greener than white spirit' credentials. Take it to your local recycling centre, or even better, recycle it yourself. Decant the dirty 'wash' spirit into an empty clean spirit container and over time the pigment sinks to the bottom, leaving reusable clean spirit above.

The best solution for cleaning oil paint off brushes is pure oil, but it does take a bit more work. Linseed oil dries quicker than other oils and so a better alternative is walnut oil or safflower oil. ➡➡

Traditional Artist **Workshop**

3 *Place brush in pot*

Next you'll need to use your spirit or oil. For this, you'll probably want to kit yourself out with a metal brush washer, which are available in a variety of sizes. These make light work of brush-cleaning and while the majority of models start at around £15, are a great investment. Fill the washer up with Bartoline Clean Spirit and then holding your brush almost vertically, gently run the bristles back and forth across the perforated metal insert submerged in your spirit or oil.

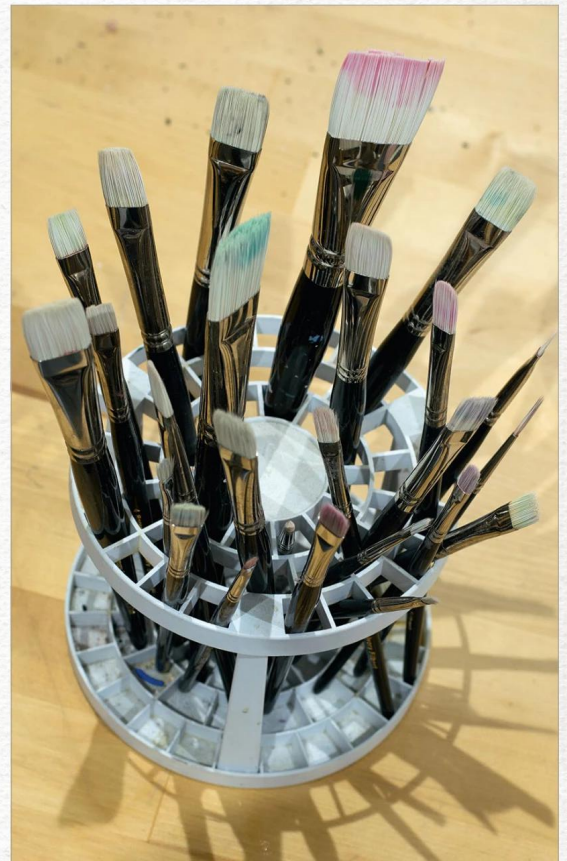
This knocks off pigment from the bristles without swilling up the sediment at the bottom of the pot. The sediment can be periodically dredged and disposed of responsibly. If you're using oil instead of clean spirit you may need to repeat this step, wiping as described in step one with a clean cloth each time.

“A metal brush washer makes light work of brush-cleaning”



4 *Use a brush preserver*

For a final clean, consider using a paintbrush cleaning soap. We recommend The Masters Brush Cleaner and Preserver. Using a little water, work up a lather with your brush in the centre of the soap. Work the lather through the bristles with your thumb and forefingers, always working from the ferrule out towards the ends of the bristles. Continue until no pigment can be seen in the lather. Note that some pigments will stain bristles permanently.



5 *Prepare to store*

Finally, you can rinse in clean water, reshape with your fingers and allow to dry in a holder or pot. If you're storing for a little while you can add a final dose of clean soap lather and reshape with your fingers. Leave your brush suspended to dry. Once dry, the soap will hold the shape of the bristles hard until the brush is needed again.

CLEAN ACRYLIC PAINTBRUSHES

Acrylic paint can be used thick like oils or diluted with water for watercolour-like effects. For the former, use the following process, for diluted acrylics, see the cleaning method for watercolours



1 Use a cloth to wipe clean

First clean off as much paint as you can using a clean cloth or paper towel. Wrap the cloth around the ferrule of the brush and, squeezing the cloth with your thumb and forefinger, work up towards the end of the bristles. Repeat as many times as necessary.



2 Clean paintbrushes in water

Using water in a jar or brush-washer, clean as much paint as you can from your bristles. Use a clean cloth to remove the dirty water. Repeat if necessary.



3 Final clean and store

For a thorough clean, use The Masters Brush Cleaner and Preserver as instructed in the Oil Paint section in step four. ➡➡

CLEAN WATERCOLOUR PAINTBRUSHES

Watercolour brushes are more delicate than paintbrushes that are designed for use with acrylics and oils, and should be treated accordingly

1 *Clean with water as you go*

Because a lot of watercolour paint is used in highly diluted 'washes', it should take less work to remove the pigment from the bristles. Instead of cleaning with a cloth, keep a vessel of water close to hand at all times, and swill the brushes between washes. One tip is to use a brush washer with a holder so you can suspend the bristles in water when not in use.



2 *Dry with a cloth and store*

Dry with a clean cloth or paper towel, as with acrylics, and then air-dry in a pot or holder.

3 *Reshape the bristles*

As with oils and acrylics, use The Masters Brush Cleaner and Preserver and reshape the bristles as described in the previous sections. Dirty 'wash' water should be collected and disposed off responsibly. It's also possible to allow dirty wash water from watercolour and acrylic paint to settle naturally in larger containers as you can with oil paint in clean spirit. The golden rule is: never chuck it down the sink!



HOW TO CLEAN OTHER PAINTBRUSHES

Larger-scale projects may involve different painting media than the ones we've talked about here. The golden rule is, whatever the medium, remember to clean your brushes before calling it a day!



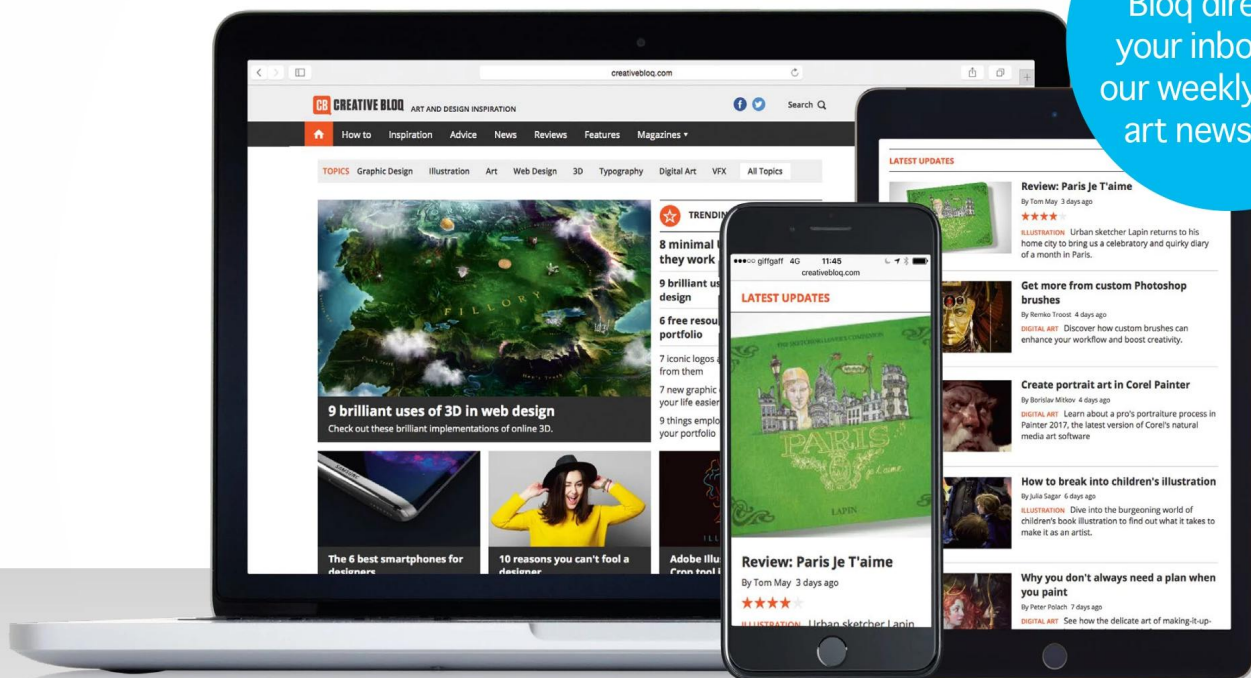
When it comes to using other type of paints for large-scale murals or other creative projects, all paints will fall into two basic categories: water-based and oil-based. The only exceptions are some specialised paints that are thinned beforehand using methylated spirits, but these tend to be more for trade use. The best approach is always read the side of the tin and follow the manufacturer's cleaning instructions.

It's best to clean brushes as soon as you've finished for the day. However, if you're short of time for whatever reason, a clean plastic bag can make a temporary brush-saver. Just put your brushes in the bag until you can clean them properly.

Finally, soak rollers used with water-based paints in a sink and wring with your hands to loosen off most of the paint, or you'll be there forever! ●

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First Impressions

✧ *Sidharth Chaturvedi* ✧

The video game art director on how he changes his style



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

I grew up in India, and spent a lot of my childhood surrounded by Hindu stories and images. I imagine that the groundwork for some of my love of fantasy came from there. It didn't have a direct effect on my art – those influences are firmly in the Western tradition – but I've recently started to make more pictures based on those Hindu stories, so it's come around after a long time.

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

Games and books. Most of what I do is in fantasy and sci-fi, and those are how I got into both genres. Baldur's Gate, Homeworld, Deus Ex, the usual with Dune, The Lord of the Rings, Heinlein, Asimov and Clarke in books...

Does one person stand out as being helpful during your early years? I'm fortunate enough to have had a



DEMON

Oil painting on a 16x20-inch canvas, created for a Magic: The Gathering Token Creature card.

number of invaluable teachers, but the one that stands out the most is a comic artist named Kev Ferrara. Not from my early years, but he's been the biggest influence on what I've done with my art by far. Talking with him over the years has absolutely transformed my work and creative process.

“The skill level has been skyrocketing – it certainly lights a fire under you”

What was your first commission?

My first proper illustration gig was for a game called Mob Wars. I painted a sleazy mob boss, holding a drink in one hand and a gun in the other, with three scantily clad women hanging off him. It was fun.

What's the last piece that you finished and how do the two differ? I just finished an elf for Magic: The Gathering. The biggest difference?

The first one was digital and this one is in oil paint, which is what I'd wanted to use since my first semester of art school, after seeing Greg Manchess' work in person. My use of colour is worlds apart, and the subject matter is more tasteful. And it took me much longer to paint, which is how it goes nowadays.

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

I do all of my freelance work in my tiny Munich apartment. My painting space is a small part of the living room, at an easel for small paintings, or at a canvas taped to the wall for bigger ones, with a small rolling island to keep my palette and brushes on. I have a big softbox for lighting, which my fiancé is infinitely patient with. The biggest challenge about this setup is that the couch and television are right behind me, beckoning.

How has the art industry changed since you've been a part of it?

It seems like the skill level has been skyrocketing – it certainly lights a fire under you! When I started, it seemed that heavily rendered digital work was the way of the world, but a more individual and traditional look came back into vogue at some point, which is fantastic. There's a much broader range of art styles visible online and in what kind of work is commissioned.

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

Yes and no. I wasn't prepared for how much time doing paid work would take away from painting for myself, or how it could make me resent the work sometimes. Which is silly, because this is an amazing job. I have to make an effort to say no to some work for that reason.

Sidharth is an assistant art director at Deep Silver in Munich by day, and spends his evenings and weekends painting for clients or, occasionally, himself. See his work at www.sidharthchaturvedi.com.



MOB WARS

Sidharth's first illustration job was for the popular Facebook game Mob Wars, done in 2012.



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