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# NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS **ImagineFX**

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shares his wisdom



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Archan Nair



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



Looking through the list of artists in this edition, I realised how lucky I am to have met some of them at events around the world (to name a few: Karl Kopinski at Trojan Horse Was a Unicorn in Malta; Iris Compiet at Lightbox Expo in America...).

Of course, there have been no such meetings this year. Realising this, I felt a pang of sadness. We've lost out on a whole season of being able to meet up with artists or forge new working relationships with people in the industry. I miss these face-to-face interactions.

How this bizarre and terrible year will affect us in the coming months is unknown. All I can offer you is my own contribution to keep you connected to the art world, which is here, in these pages. If you're feeling remote, I hope you find some solace in this.

As always, I would love you to submit your work for inclusion in ImagineFX. See page 10 for details of how to show your work on our FXPosé pages. Or if you'd prefer, please email me your artwork and a story of your own artistic progress, or perhaps your thoughts about the art industry at large. Let's stay connected. I want to hear your stories.

*Claire*

Editor-in-chief  
claire@imaginefx.com

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



#### What does an art director want from you?

Want to get inside the mind of an art director? Turn to page 20 for insight from leading ADs.



#### Iris Compiet - creations from the heart

Read on for inspiring art, tales of hard work, and stories of falling into Icelandic bogs...



#### The talented Mr Kopinski

Lots of solid advice in this workshop, including: "You don't have to produce a masterpiece every time."

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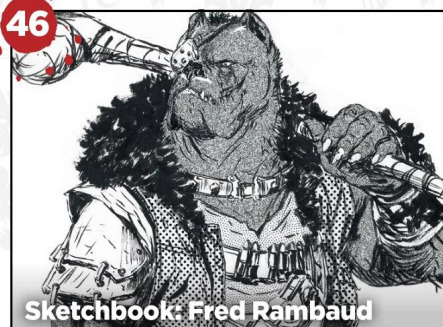
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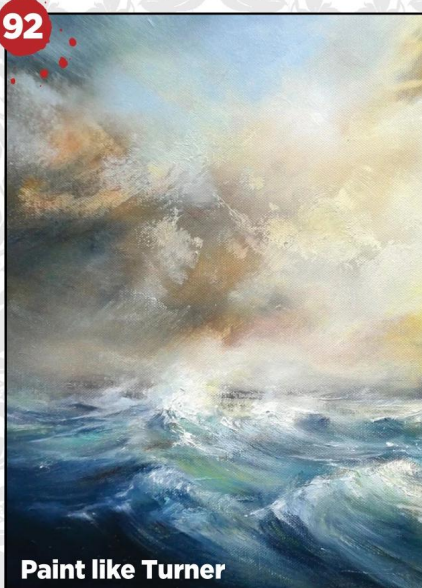
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# Resources

Visit <http://ifxm.ag/howto192draw> to get hold of the Paint & Draw ebook and this issue's custom brushes

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

**Paint & Draw**  
Tips and inspiration for artists everywhere

**How to capture evening light**  
Depict the magic mood of dusk with Abigail McDougall's workshop and video

**100 PAGES!** Fun and inspiring step-by-step workshops to help you create

**PAINT A PORTRAIT**  
Get expert advice on your colour choices

**Dynamic still life**  
Learn how to create a still life that's full of life

**Handy tips**  
Discover a range of handy tips and tricks to help you create

## Paint a landscape scene in watercolours

Watch as Abigail McDougall uses watercolours to paint a harbourside setting at dusk. Abigail's workshop is one of 19 that you'll find inside this 148-page special issue.

**EBOOK**

**Learn how to quickly draw realistic-looking hands**

See how Kate Oleska breaks down her process for drawing hands into four simple steps.

## Learn how to quickly draw realistic-looking hands

See how Kate Oleska breaks down her process for drawing hands into four simple steps.

**EBOOK**

**Use acrylics to illustrate an expressive still life artwork**

Watch Sylvia Paul use acrylics to bring a flower scene to life with a riot of colours!

## Use acrylics to illustrate an expressive still life artwork

Watch Sylvia Paul use acrylics to bring a flower scene to life with a riot of colours!

## PLUS 10 CUSTOM BRUSHES, INCLUDING...

### SMALL TRIANGLE

Donglu Yu's custom brush enables her to make precise marks in her work. Her workshop's on page 70.

### GOUACHE BRUSH

In his workshop on page 64, Jad Saber uses this brush to mask out wispy shapes for smoke elements.

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Donglu paints with this brush if she wants to create a dry, heavy texture that mimics a traditional oil brush.

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**ImagineFX**

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# FXPosé

PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



## Paul Kellam

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Procreate, Photoshop WEB: <https://ifxm.ag/p-kellam>

"A lot of my inspirations spawn from Japanese culture and aesthetics," says Paul. "I strive to create a sense of flow in my work, overlaid with juicy hue vibrations."



### 1 SOLID GOLD III

"My goal was to focus on rendering more realistically within my style. But I also learned a great deal about texture from this as well."

### 2 TROPICO

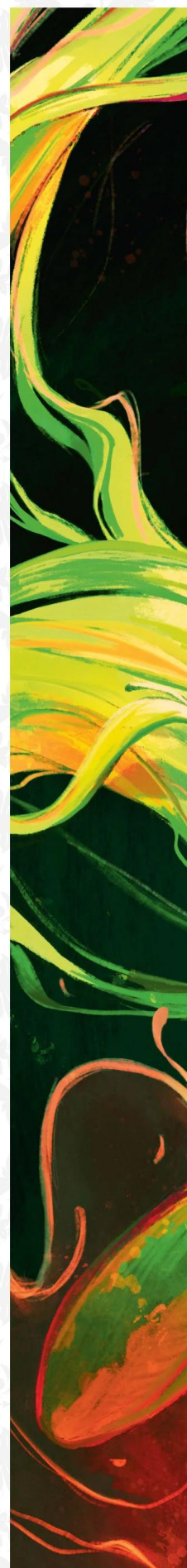
"Aquatic themes enable me to play with vibrant colours. In this piece I challenged myself to draw a masculine figure with more flamboyant features."

### 3 VERDE

"The little mermaid was a huge part of my childhood, so Mermay is incredibly nostalgic for me."

### 4 MELON TEARS

"A fun 'draw this in your style' challenge that a friend hosted on Instagram. It was fun to give her alluring design a bit of my own flair."



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**ARTIST  
YEAR**

We'll reveal the **Artist of the Year** at Vertex 2021, chosen from all our Artists of the Month between now and the event.  
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Please send us:

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





## Maria Ivanova

**LOCATION:** Russia **MEDIA:** Photoshop, After Effects. **WEB:** [www.mariaivart.com](http://www.mariaivart.com)

Besides her digital art, Maria makes animated films. "When I create characters or tell their stories I feel that they're alive," she says.

"I love to 'watch' them and depict what I see."

### 1 MY DARLING, I DON'T NEED YOUR HAND TO KNOW YOUR FUTURE

"What I love about this story is that it fits into one sentence: the title. It's about tenderness and ruthlessness."

### 2 CROWN MAKER

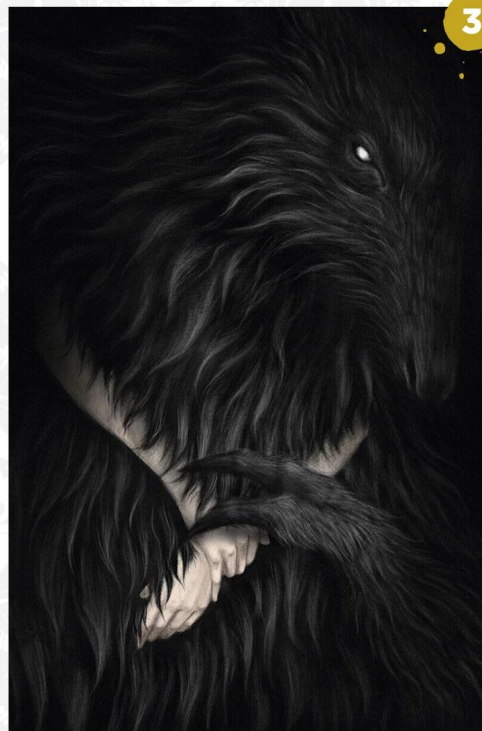
"He creates crowns for monarchs, for kings and queens. Each crown comes with its own power, glory and price."

### 3 FASCINATED

"This word has an interesting etymology: bewitch, bind by magic, bring under a spell. Here it's unclear which one of them is under a spell."

### 4 FOR WHAT IT'S WORTH

"I saw the title on a shield in the State Hermitage Museum, Saint Petersburg. I wrote it under her hand. Not very visible, but it's there."











## Kristina Kister

**LOCATION:** Germany **MEDIA:** Procreate **WEB:** [www.kristinakister.de](http://www.kristinakister.de)

Kristina is an illustrator and character designer. After majoring in communication design she worked as a junior art director for an ad agency, before becoming a freelance illustrator for German TV, picture books and more.



### 1 RUSSIAN SMOKE

"This is based on a Russian folktale where night and day are transformed into knights and horsemen."



## 2 I BELIEVE... (IN GROWTH)

"Part of the China Shanghai International Children's book Fair exhibition, this illustration is one of a three-piece series."



## 3 THE SORCERER

"Being a sucker for everything Victorian and odd-looking animals, this was an inevitable addition to my personal portfolio."



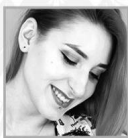
## 4 THE OMEN

"This is an illustration for the Dream Week Challenge. I remember having nightmares as a child, which I interpreted as a bad omen."

## 5 TOXIC SAINT

"This was a submission for the Beautifully Bizarre award. I have a special place on my heart for everything with an occult aesthetic."





## Silvia Gorchakova Barga

**LOCATION:** Spain **MEDIA:** Procreate, Photoshop **WEB:** [www.instagram.com/gorchart](https://www.instagram.com/gorchart)

Silvia is an illustrator and tattoo artist who describes her work as a mix of sensuality and creepiness with an unsettling atmosphere. She's very inspired by fetish fashion and Baroque still life.

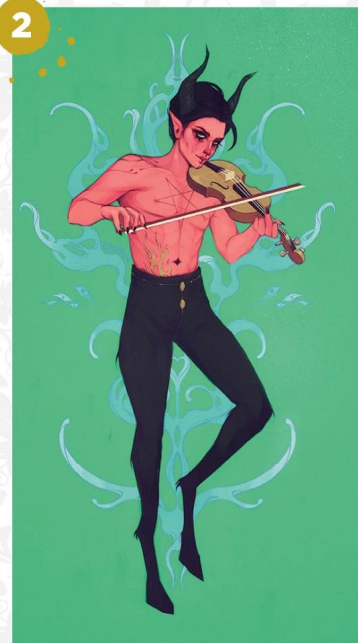
### 1 MANTIS

"An illustration of a character's encounter with her alter-ego - a purple mantis. The aesthetic is inspired by the combination of a pastoral, innocent style and a Japanese cyberpunk feel."



### 2 TRINO

"An illustration inspired by the Devil's Trill Sonata legend. In the story, Giuseppe Tartini composed the sonata after the Devil showed up in his dream."



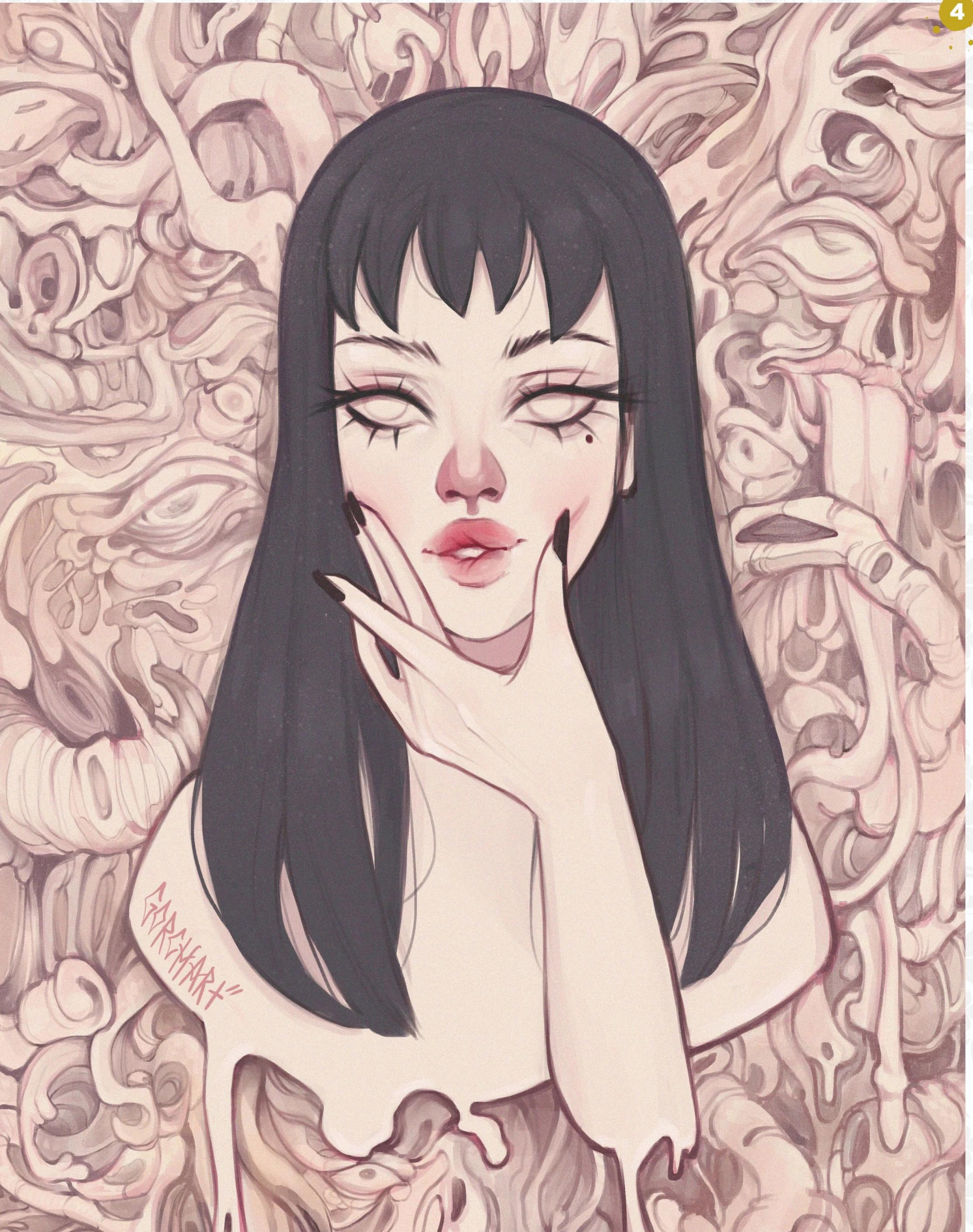
### 3 HUNGRY BUG

"A fan art of Nikaido, one of the characters from the Japanese manga Dorohedoro surrounded by mushrooms."

### 4 TOMIE

"Fan art of Junji Ito's Tomie, a character who is not only impossibly beautiful, but also extremely evil."









## Kaye Kang

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: [www.kayekang.com](http://www.kayekang.com)

San Francisco-based Kaye likes to sketch outside and spend most of her day playing with her cat Gigi. She specialises in character design and visual development for the animation industry.

### 1 GAZE

"From my bio you'll know that I like cats, but you have to be careful. You never know when and where cats are watching you."

### 2 A CONNECTION

"After the rain, I often feel strange when my reflection in the water connects with me standing on it. It feels bizarrely magical."







### 3 WARMTH

"As the name suggests, in this piece I wanted to capture a feeling of the warmth that I experience while walking under the sun."

### 4 ANXIETY

"Unlike the sunny weather, there are times when sudden vague fears and anxiety rush into my head."

4



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# ARTIST NEWS, SOFTWARE & EVENTS ImagineNation

AT THE CORE OF THE DIGITAL ART COMMUNITY

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Concept art by Indonesia-based artist Wisnu Tan for Creative Assembly's The Warden & The Paunch, a DLC pack for Total War: Warhammer II.

## What do art directors want?

**Wish list** Art directors at leading studios reveal to **Tom May** what they're looking for in new recruits

If you want to get hired as an artist, you need to know what art directors are looking for. In this article, we chat to five leading art directors to see how you can get onto their radar.

The first thing, unsurprisingly, is software skills. However, which software you need depends on the studio and the specific role. For example, at British games studio Creative Assembly, "a concept artist may use Photoshop, while asset



production artists would use software such as 3ds Max, ZBrush and Substance," says project art director **Baj Singh**.

In contrast, Jonathan Opgenhaffen, art director at Framestore's London



office, requires his artists to have 2D and 3D skills. "Photoshop is a must, but we also need our concept artists to be 3D savvy to a strong degree," **Jonathan** says.

Conversely for **Yohann Schepacz**, art director at Tokyo's Oxan Studio, specific software doesn't matter. "Only the result is important," he says. "I'm happy to adapt to every artist's workflow as long as the thought process is easy to follow and communicated, and as long as it produces the desired final asset."

Also note that, even when art directors ask for specific software, there can be some room for ➤



Jama Jurabaev painted this Framestore concept art for the 2018 film Ready Player One.

© Framestore/Vamer Bros./Amblin Entertainment





## A GORGON CONCLUSION

We cast a stony gaze around the studio of Medusa Dollmaker, deep in the Spanish countryside. We didn't spot any lifelike 'statues' though...  
**Page 26**



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**Page 32**



## LET'S HEAR YOUR VIEWS!

One reader is inspired by the 'draw art in your own style' challenge, while another wonders if the art community has taken a bit of a back seat recently.  
**Page 33**

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Tony Sart of Creative Assembly developed this costume concept for Eltharion the Grim, a character from Total War: Warhammer II.



Art director Yohann Schepacz of Oxan Studio painted this piece for his ongoing Cat Empire project.

© Oxan

Schepacz 19

OXAN  
oxanstudio.com







Concept art for the 2017 film Kong: Skull Island, painted by Framestore's Martin Macrae.

© Framestore/legendary Pictures/Tencent Pictures

➡ manoeuvre. "I'd emphasise that software knowledge takes a back seat when compared to pure artistic ability," says Baj. "Most art software is fairly easy to use with enough practice, so it's those core art and technical mindsets that we seek first."

What do those look like in practice? Yohann is typical when he says: "We're after technical skills in traditional painting and drawing theory; consistency and discipline across time and a range of themes; and unique ideas applied with great accuracy."

## TAILOR YOUR PORTFOLIO

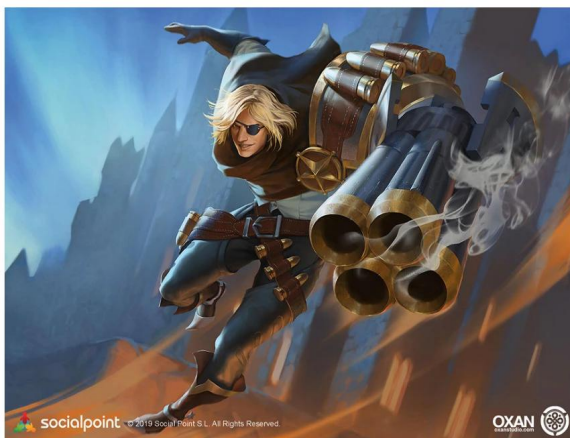
Assuming you can offer all that, how do you get an art director on your side? The most important thing is to

River Troll Hag concept by Creative Assembly's Tony Sart for Total Warhammer II.



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Champion's Destiny by Oxan Studio for Spanish video game developer Socialpoint.



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put together a portfolio that matches the employer's requirements and the position at hand. "The biggest mistake applicants often make is not sending a portfolio tailored for the quality and skills the studio is known for," states Yohann.

For Jonathan, that means appreciating the diversity of projects Framestore works on. "Consequently, we want to see variation in portfolios, so we know a new artist can take whatever brief comes their way," he explains. "I've been doing this for over 15 years and I've not really ever had the

same brief twice, so adaptability is very important to me."

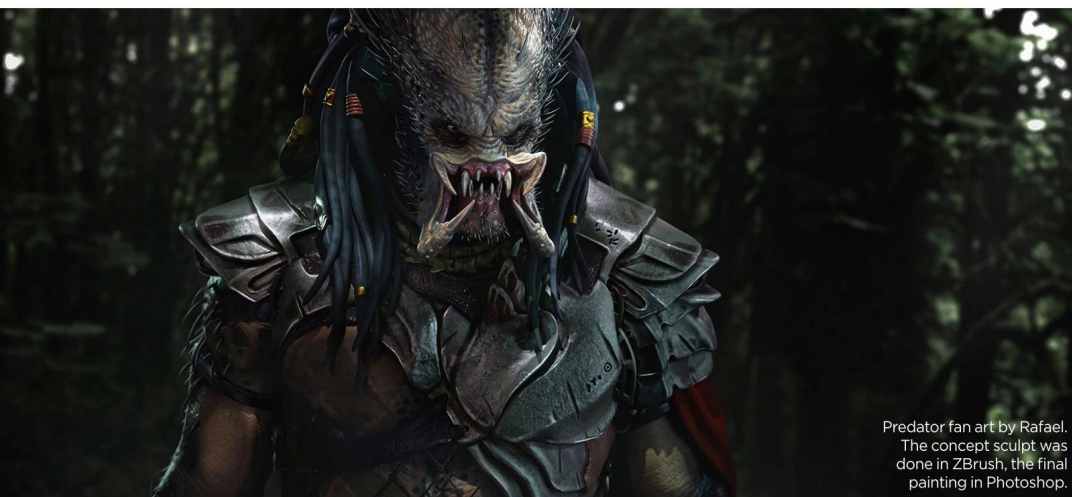
He also wants to see "originality and storytelling" in the work featured in your portfolio. "It isn't about making an image look sexy; it's got to communicate something and have a sense of design," he explains. "There's an 'ArtStation look' which can be a gift and a curse. It might have the polish and finesse of the typical work out there, but it might also feel the same as the rest of the work. We look for art that stands out and has a voice and a tone of personality." ➡

**“We want to see variation in portfolios, so we know a new artist can take whatever brief comes their way”**





In between his art director duties at Sony Santa Monica, Rafael Grasseti made time to create this Street Fighter fan art.



Predator fan art by Rafael. The concept sculpt was done in ZBrush, the final painting in Photoshop.

## INDUSTRY INSIGHT

### RAFAEL GRASSETTI

*The AD at Sony Santa Monica reveals his tips for getting hired*

#### How often do you recruit artists at Sony Santa Monica?

We're always hiring. The kinds of jobs available include character artists, environment artists, lighters and FX artists.

#### What software skills do candidates typically need?

Advanced Maya skills, Substance Painter for texturing, and ZBrush. That's for most of the art roles, but it varies for each position. Advanced sculpting and texturing skills are the must-haves.

#### What's missing from most portfolios you see?

Experience is hard to get when you're just starting out in the industry, but most people I see lack a high proficiency in sculpting. There are lots of studies but only a few high-quality sculpts or finished projects. I like to see a good balance of quality versus quantity.

#### Where do you typically find new recruits?

Conventions, portfolio reviews, email submissions and ArtStation. The latter is the primary source at the moment. LinkedIn also helps for more senior artists.

#### How important is it for an artist to have a strong social media following?

None. It's important, though, to use social media to reach out to leads, or artists in the teams you're applying for. If your work isn't at the level that the studio is looking for, recruiters will most likely filter every portfolio before the leads or directors see them. But you can still reach out to ask for advice and plan for the future.



Rafael started his career in advertising, and has since worked for Hasbro, Marvel and Ubisoft, as well as Sony.

[www.artstation.com/grassetti](http://www.artstation.com/grassetti)





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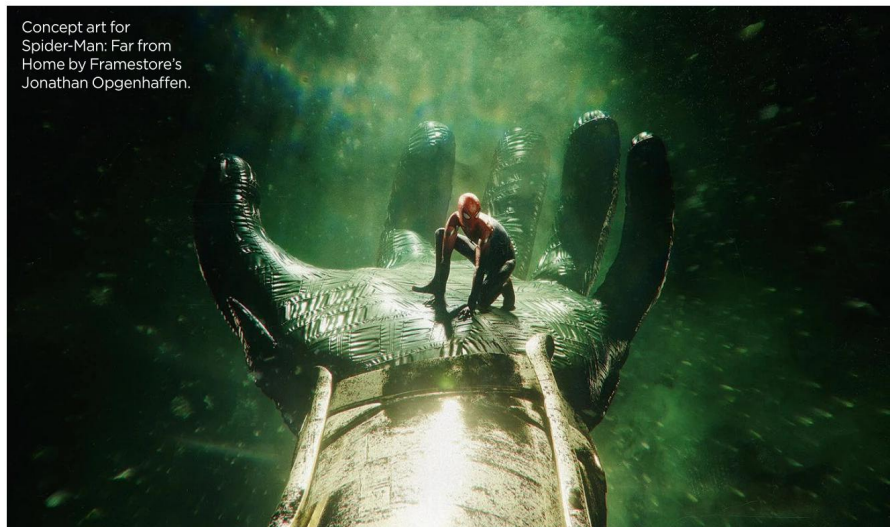
Leaf fairy concept art for Disney's 2019 film Maleficent 2, created by Oxan Studio.

Land of the Fishermen: concept art for the tabletop RPG Degeneration, created by Valentin Gloaguen, Monika Palosz and Chris Kintner of Berlin's SIXMOREVODKA.

➡➡ Just as important as the final work is showing how you created it, says Baj. "I look at a lot of concept and character art portfolios, and a commonality between them is the lack of breakdowns," he explains. "So for a concept piece, show how your thought process leads up to your final piece; thumbnails, sketches and so on."

"Your portfolio should contain enough breakdowns that a game production artist can accurately construct your concept as a game asset. That's the point of concept art

Concept art for Spider-Man: Far from Home by Framestore's Jonathan Opgenhaffen.



© Framestore/Marvel/CTMG

for game production: it's not just a pretty piece of art, it's a design that needs to be passed off to another artist, and should answer more questions than it asks."

It's similar story for game production artists, Baj adds. "Don't just show the final asset," he stresses. "Show your texture maps, wireframe breakdowns, multiple views and technical breakdowns. We want to see how efficiently you constructed your piece and the considerations you made on the technical side."

Even if you have a knockout portfolio, though, don't get too cocky, because you'll be equally judged on your personality. "Working in games is highly collaborative," points out Baj.

"So being an effective communicator and team player is just as important as your artistic ability. Coming across as an extremely positive individual will help sell you."

Jonathan agrees. "Personality is so important," he stresses. "A positive, can-do attitude is something we try to keep present in our department."

## STRIKE THE RIGHT TONE

With that in mind, one mistake artists often make is striking the wrong tone in an application or initial email, says



**Jelena Kevic Djurdjevic**, art director at Berlin studio SIXMOREVODKA. "Our industry is not uptight and people are very friendly

“Being an effective communicator and team player is just as important as your artistic ability”



© SIXMOREVODKA





Claudiu-Antoni Magherusan, a senior artist at SIXMOREVODKA, painted this concept for the book Artifacts from Degeneration.

© SIXMOREVODKA

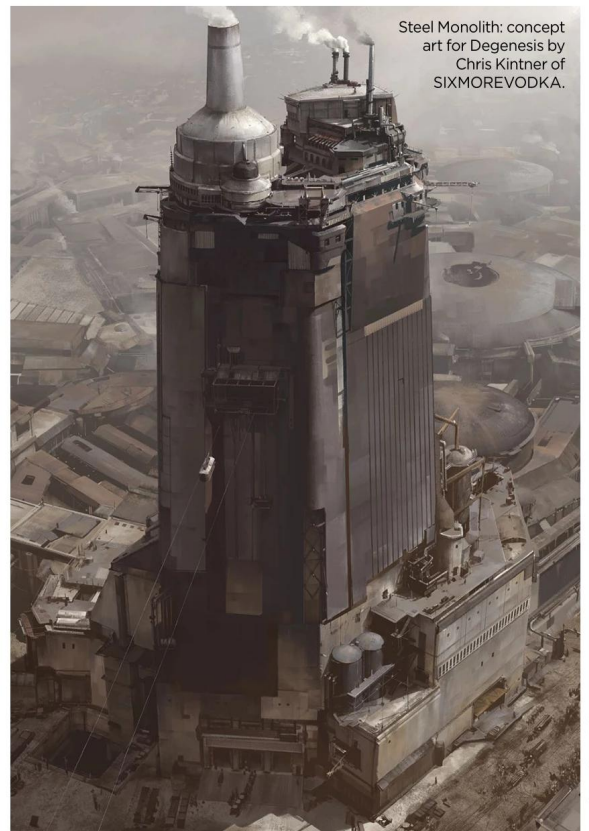
and casual with each other," she says. "But that doesn't mean that you should start your email with 'Heeeey SMV, whatsupppppp dudes?!'. Professional attitude and respect should be at the forefront of any interaction you have with a possible employer or a client. Or anybody else in the industry, for that matter."

Finally, some good news: two things you don't have to worry about are formal qualifications and the number of social media followers you have. Art directors don't care about either.

"In my opinion, qualifications are not important at all," says Jelena. "A strong

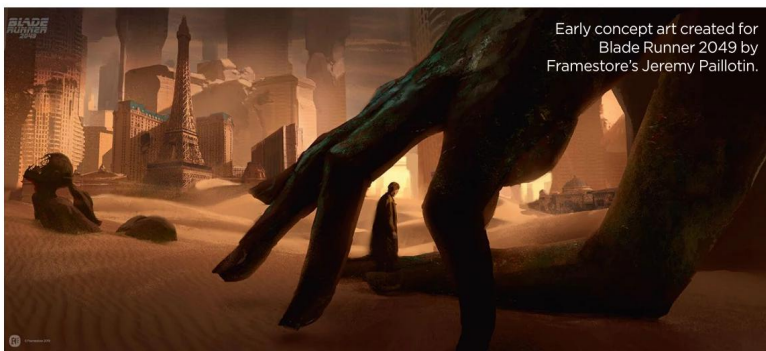
portfolio and a strong skill set are the only things that count. Having a degree is wonderful and essential if you're a doctor. But in our industry they cannot replace the skills needed for a job, which typically include anatomy, perspective, composition and storytelling.

"And as for social followers, this has no importance at all. This is one of the biggest misconceptions in the industry. Your social media following doesn't equate to the capability to deliver quality work, or to meet the deadline, or to be a nice person to work with!" 🍷



Steel Monolith: concept art for Degeneration by Chris Kintner of SIXMOREVODKA.

© SIXMOREVODKA



Early concept art created for Blade Runner 2049 by Framestore's Jeremy Pailotin.

© Framestore/Warner Bros./Sony





# Medusa Dollmaker

**Making room** This artist works from her home in the Spanish countryside while dealing with inquisitive cats



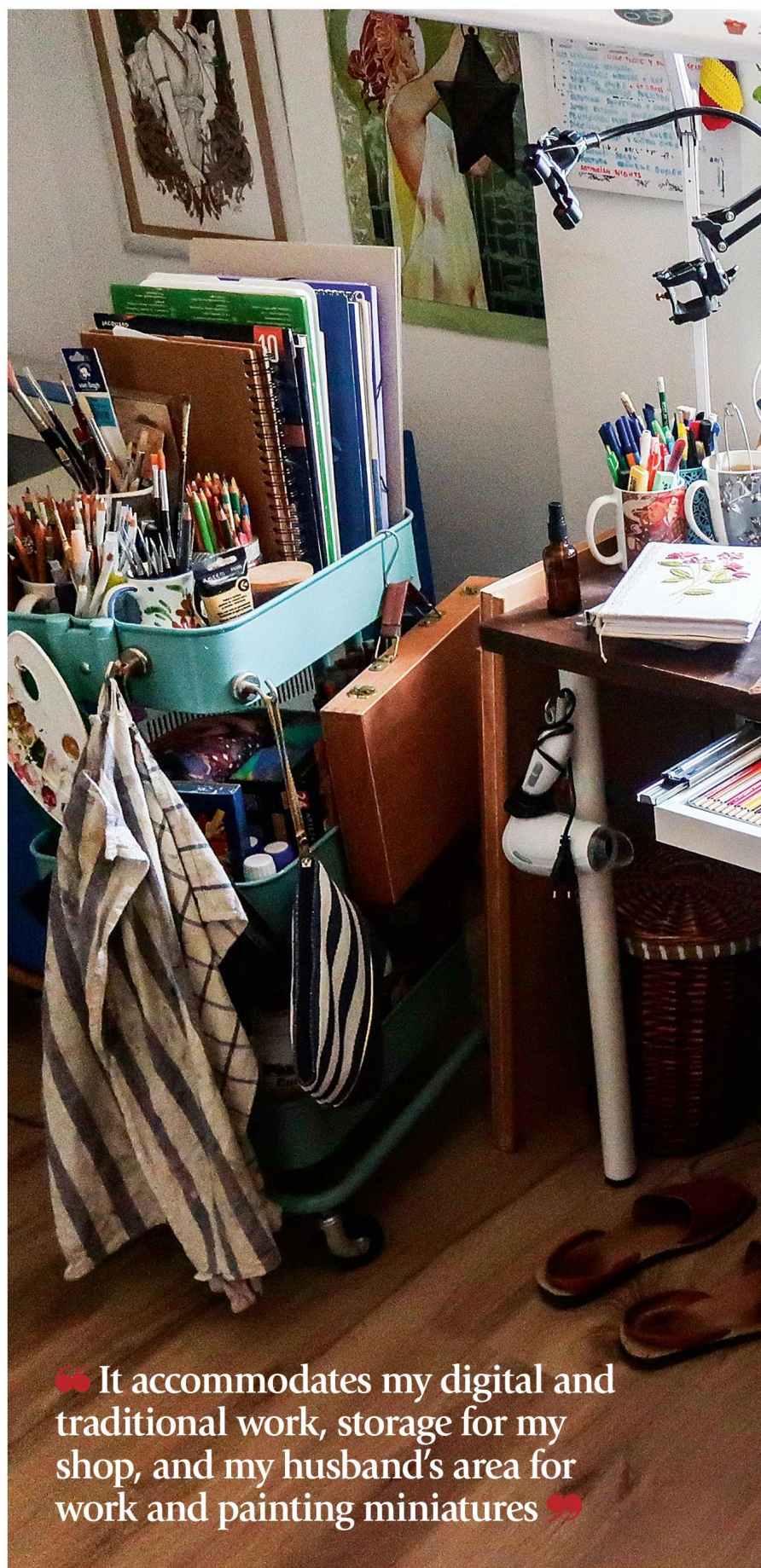
**The first thing my husband and I did after moving to our new home was to tear down the wall that divided two tiny rooms, to create our studio.**

At a stroke, we established a space that suits multitasking and co-working. It accommodates my digital and traditional work, storage for my shop (a friend helps to manage my online store), and my husband's area for work and painting miniatures. The latter looks much more like an artist's area than mine! There's enough room for at least three people, and cats of course.

We've been living here since 2018, and our studio is still a work-in- ➤➤

Being one of the artists asked to create an album cover for my favourite singer, Mónica Naranjo was a dream come true. I took inspiration from Mucha's Four Seasons.

I need a versatile setting to create my traditional and digital work. I use some storage tricks to make it work.



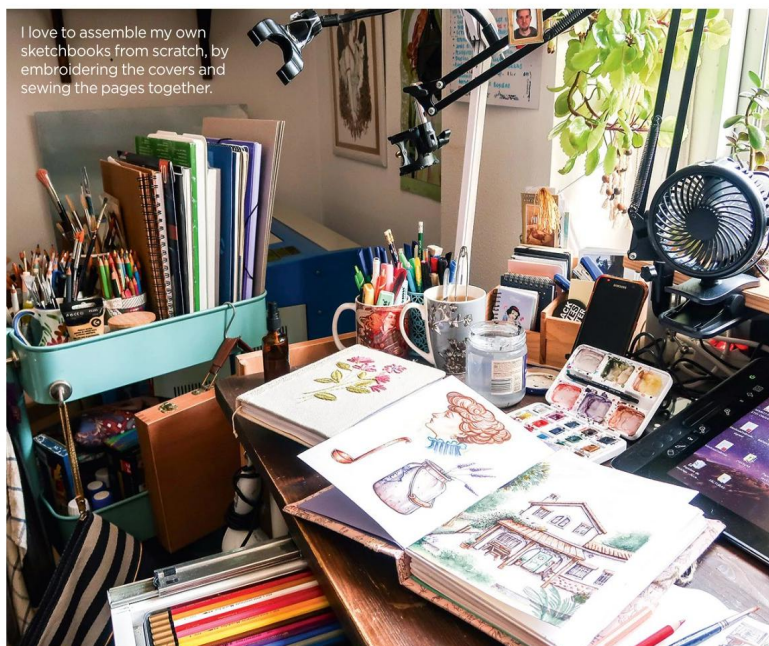
“It accommodates my digital and traditional work, storage for my shop, and my husband's area for work and painting miniatures”



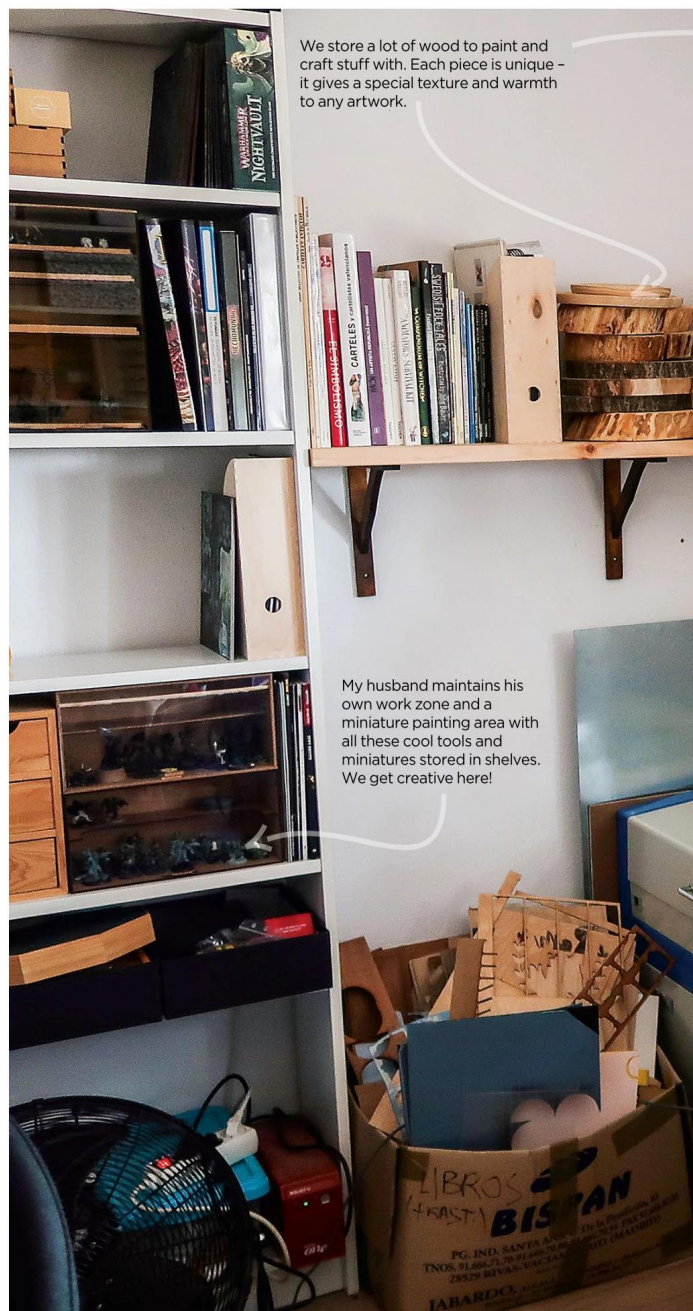




# ImagineNation Artist in Residence



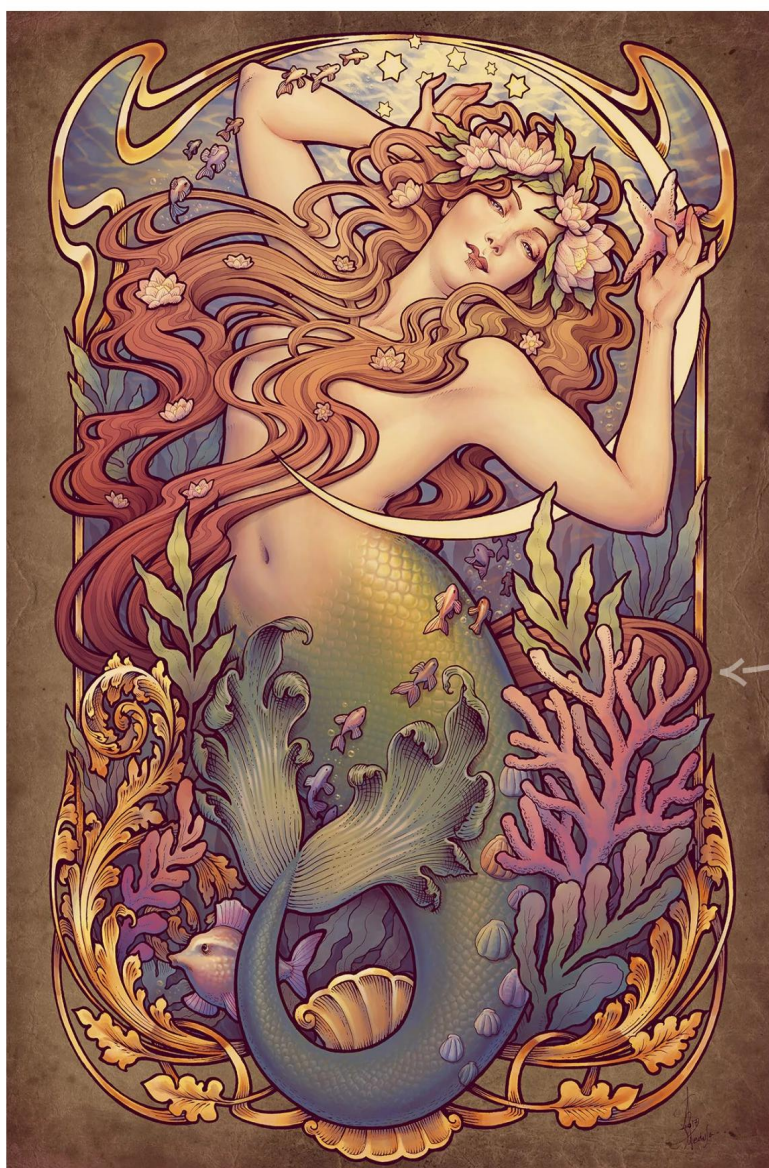
I love to assemble my own sketchbooks from scratch, by embroidering the covers and sewing the pages together.



We store a lot of wood to paint and craft stuff with. Each piece is unique – it gives a special texture and warmth to any artwork.



My husband maintains his own work zone and a miniature painting area with all these cool tools and miniatures stored in shelves. We get creative here!



Hans Christian Andersen's The Little Mermaid is one of my all-time favourite folk tales.



I'm so fond of this plush. It was a gift from my mum. I'm a Leo, I love unicorns and I'm a weird ass – and she knows it. The perfect mix.



# Artist news, software & events



Shout out to one of my favourite art prints: Absinthe Robette by Art Nouveau artist Henri Privat-Livemont.

This is a repurposed bathroom shelf that I use to store my small sketchbooks (there's no such thing as too many sketchbooks!), tools and things that I want to keep within easy reach.

I take photos and videos of my creative process, so I use this adjustable arm attached to the laptop shelf. It also helps me to take phone calls while I'm working.

This beast cuts and engraves wood and other stuff like magic. I love our CO2 laser machine, but to be honest this corner is just asking for a "thinking sofa" for tired artists...

A favourite combination of mine: my iPad Pro running Procreate. I've never been a fan of the Apple brand, but this kit is awesome and gives me a lot of flexibility for work.

Part of my digital setup: a 14-inch MSI Prestige laptop with a wireless keyboard. It's attached to a Huion Kamvas Pro 16 pen display and a cheap USB fan, so I don't melt in the summer.



I can spend hours overanalysing art books with a passion. Paintings, illustrations and old engravings help me to bring a vintage vibe into my work.

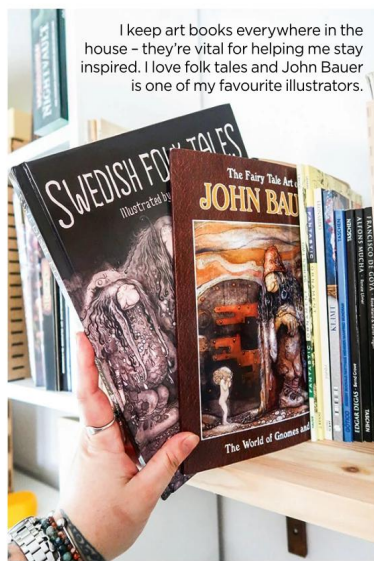


# ImagineNation Artist in Residence

Carts are a cool way to organise art tools, ready to move around the house to work anywhere. Magnetic hooks are handy, too.



I keep art books everywhere in the house – they're vital for helping me stay inspired. I love folk tales and John Bauer is one of my favourite illustrators.



➔ progress. At first I struggled to make it a cosy space. White walls make the most of the natural light, while being surrounded by natural materials such as wood and plants help to make this workplace feel more like home.

However, it's also a place that can easily become cluttered and so I try my best to keep the space organised. This helps with my anxiety, so I don't end up thumping my keyboard and throwing eggs at people when I become stressed. That's why I only keep a few ornaments in the studio,

and those that are on show are either small or practical.

Because we had to set aside space in the studio to store all my materials and tools, including a huge CO2 laser engraving machine, we've invested in a lot of storage solutions. It's one of the first things you learn when you live in a small space.

## AN ADAPTABLE TABLE

I had to get rid of my beautiful jointed drawing table as soon as we moved in. I replaced it with a foldable desktop drawing table that works wonders. I



Our workspace has a specific area to prepare orders from my online shops. It's also the place where I create artisan stuff because multitasking is my thing.

just have to store it folded up. My art table is used to create both digital and traditional art. I have a wooden shelf to put my laptop on, so I can store my Huion monitor tablet and my iPad underneath while I work on my traditional art. Other storage solutions we use include a chest of drawers, shelves and a couple of utility carts – all from Ikea. The carts enable me to move the workplace around the house. This makes any room suitable for work – even the kitchen.

The storage item we're most proud of is the custom drawer under the tables. My husband had the idea of using two drawer runners and an Ikea pull-out drawer to keep our tools organised. It comes in handy for storing watercolour palettes, pencils and more. I had to make space for a LED lamp (it's 56cm wide!) that I use for work, while lots of old mugs and jars store pencils, brushes and so on.

I'm proud of what we've achieved in our studio. A lack of space shouldn't stop you from being creative.

*Medusa is an artist and artisan, mercenary, business owner, part-time gorgon and folk witch who loves slow living. You can explore her work at [www.medusathedollmaker.com](http://www.medusathedollmaker.com).*

“We've invested in a lot of storage solutions. It's one of the first things you learn when you live in a small space”



My morning routine includes meditation, a warm herbal drink and an organised desktop. It's too easy to drop a pencil into my tea mug!



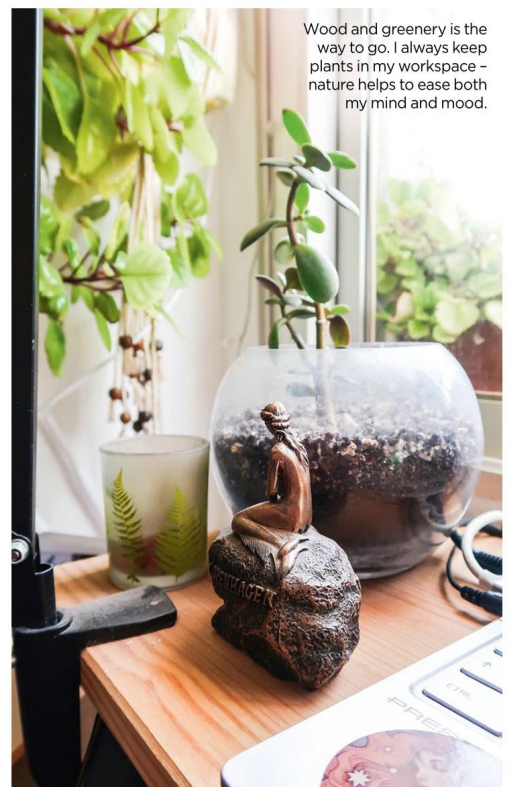
# Artist news, software & events



I love to paint on wood and this is my area for traditional work. This folding drawing table is perfect for small spaces. There's also a custom tool drawer hidden under the table!



These are just some of my favourite tools. I usually mix techniques in my work. Fun fact: some of the brushes I use are meant for miniature painting.



Wood and greenery is the way to go. I always keep plants in my workspace - nature helps to ease both my mind and mood.



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# Letters

## YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



Contact the editor, Claire Howlett, on [claire@imaginefx.com](mailto:claire@imaginefx.com) or write to ImagineFX, Future Publishing, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA, England



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### Draw in my style

I just wanted to email you my submission to your challenge "in my style" of recent ImagineFX covers. I decided on Tran Nyugen's amazing cover, and created it in Procreate. Thank you for continuing to produce ImagineFX. I've been reading it for 16 years! I've learned so much from the tutorials and workshops. It's helped me progress my digital art skills.

**Rachel Usmani**



After seeing Tran Nyugen's recent cover art, reader Rachel was inspired to recreate the piece in her own style.

**Claire replies** Rachel, you've made my day! Thanks so much for emailing this in. It's a fantastic version of our beautiful cover art from issue 188. Perhaps other readers can have a go with a recent cover? Also, thanks to you for your support of ImagineFX. We're very grateful to you and all our readers.

### No more community

I'm a long-time reader of ImagineFX. I appreciate the work you do in bringing together veteran industry artists as well as lesser-known talents (or at least lesser-known to me). As someone living in a small town in Germany it's a way to feel involved in the art community, even if I'm far away from larger towns and cities.

Community is something that's emphasised by many artists around the globe and I feel like it's a hard thing to find nowadays. I've noticed that while education resources of a high quality are increasingly available, such as Schoolism, what seems to be lacking are more peer-driven platforms.

I remember the days when online art communities such as DeviantArt and Conceptart.org were quite populated. I myself was still too young to really



**DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE?** Don't worry – you can get hold of it at <https://ifxm.ag/buy-191>.



Our in-depth article on having a positive, happy outlook as an artist (issue 190) resonated with reader Evelin.

participate, and by now these old sites seemed to have lost most of their users to other websites and social media platforms, which don't encourage an exchange of views and a formation of strong communities.

As someone who lives without any noteworthy art schools or other art establishments nearby, learning to do art is a little bit isolating. Art school is unfortunately not an option, either.

What's your opinion? Has there really been such a shift or am I under the wrong impression? Do you know of active and thriving online art forums and communities focused on learning and supporting each other? It would be an interesting undertaking to review these past two decades in online art: how the internet has changed and how artists were influenced by or had to adapt to these changes. I know I'd be very interested in reading such an article.

On a different topic, I would like to express my appreciation and thanks for your recent articles about health, especially mental health in artists. I just wanted to thank you for tackling such topics, and I hope to see more articles and discussions about topics that one might perhaps deem a little controversial. To boldly go.

**Evelin Róka**

**Claire replies** Evelin, you may remember that we used to have a forum and it's something I still miss. I agree that some of the older forums were more communal than what we get with social media today. With social media, the focus is more on talking to people, not with them. It's not a conversation. I'd love to bring back more forums, but I know that ours and others were unable to fund themselves enough to stay afloat.

What do other readers think? Are we more social and connected with social media, or would you bring back forums? Social media has democratised how we can communicate and has brought power to individuals, but has this been at a cost of true community? Please let me know your thoughts.



New works that have grabbed our attention



**andireanna**  
[@andireanna](https://www.instagram.com/andireanna)



**Debbi Elizabeth**  
[@xmiss\\_debbix](https://www.instagram.com/xmiss_debbix)



**Oki Honda**  
[@okipokie](https://www.instagram.com/okipokie)

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



# Interview

## THE NYKR

"A water hag, one of the many inhabitants of the Faultlines, the world I created for my first book, *Faeries of the Faultlines*."







## ARTIST PORTFOLIO

## IRIS COMPIET

Aged seven, Iris read a “forbidden” book and dreamt of becoming an artist. Making that dream a reality took 30 years, discovers **Gary Evans**

**S**even-year-old Iris Compiet is in the local library, and she’s going to do something she’s never dared do before. She going to wander into the “forbidden section.”

Iris lives in a one-street town called Zandstraat in the south of the Netherlands. There’s a lot of nature, a lot of playing outdoors. Iris’s two brother are much older, so there’s also a lot of time spent by herself. She paints, she draws, she reads. She likes fantasy. She likes history, but history with an element of mystery to it.

The forbidden section is how seven-year-old Iris sees the local library’s grown-up books. She wanders into this

section and pulls from the bookshelves a beautifully illustrated book about faeries and faerie folklore. Now Iris now knows exactly what she wants to do when she grows up: “Somebody does this for a job? That’s what I want to do!”

## ART SCHOOL DOUBTS

Iris is speaking from her home studio in Terneuzen, in the south-west of the Netherlands, where she’s just finished work on a dream job: illustrating *The Dark Crystal Bestiary*. It’s been a tough old slog to get that dream job. In the 1990s, in the Netherlands, art schools believed fantasy art wasn’t proper art. Iris had similar feelings about art schools (“I didn’t want to put one dot on a canvas and call it art”) so she went to the St. Joost School of Fine Art & Design and studied graphic design. Art would have to be her own thing. She’d get a day ➤

Artist  
PROFILE

## Iris Compiet

**LOCATION:** The Netherlands

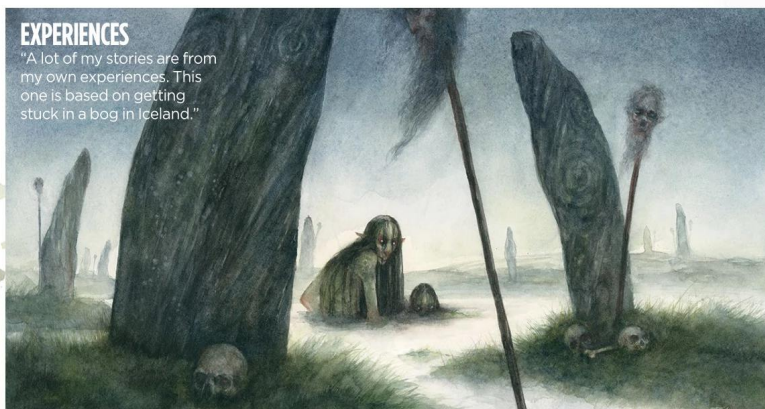
**FAVOURITE ARTISTS:** Chris Berens, Brian Froud, Alan Lee, Arthur Rackham, Rembrandt

**MEDIA:** Watercolours, oils, clay

**WEB:** [www.iriscompiet.art](http://www.iriscompiet.art)

## EXPERIENCES

“A lot of my stories are from my own experiences. This one is based on getting stuck in a bog in Iceland.”



## SAKURA FAERIES

“These delicate faeries remind us of the fleeting beauty of life.”



## INSPIRED BY NATURE

"Inspiration can be found everywhere you look. This faerie happened to grow on the side of the road a block from my home."

Scotland 615  
Priest Donan



*Onopordum acanthium* Asteraceae  
Cotton or Scottish Thistle

Island Egg - river Allt Eas Chathain



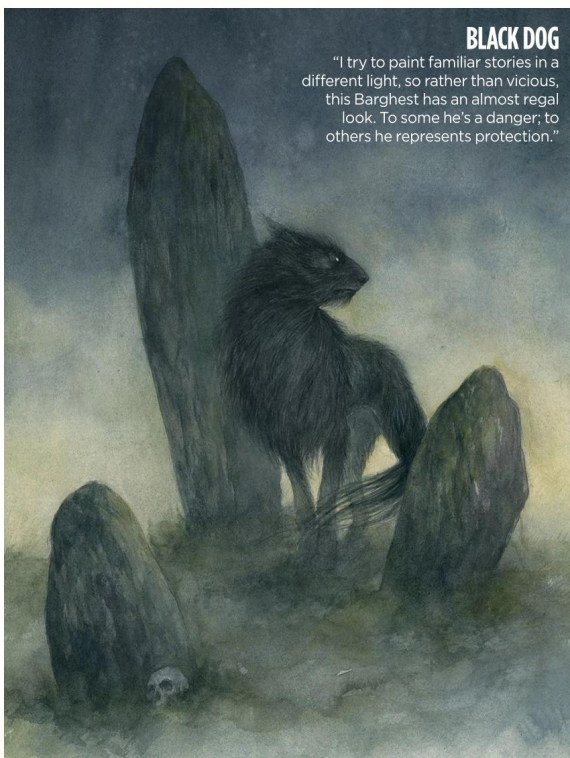
## KEEP GROWING

"For some Patreon tiers, I create a piece of art almost every month. It's a perfect way to experiment with techniques and push myself and give patrons something special."



## BLACK DOG

"I try to paint familiar stories in a different light, so rather than vicious, this Barghest has an almost regal look. To some he's a danger; to others he represents protection."



“Would you paint dragons if you weren't paid to paint dragons? If the answer's no, don't do it”

➤ job, make her money, and go home at night and paint and draw. And that's what she did: Iris graduated from university in 2001 and worked as a graphic designer for the next 16 years.

In 2011, Iris went to a convention in the US where she was surrounded by the greats in fantasy art. She decided it was time to do art full time. She was in a good position financially. Graphic design paid relatively well, which meant she could be selective about the art commissions she accepted. They had to be fun. They had to fit.

Iris reveals that she recently turned down high-profile jobs because they weren't right for her. She wouldn't have been able to give the clients what they wanted, and she would have been talking jobs away from artists who

could. Iris always asks herself: "Would I want to do this if I didn't get paid? Would you paint dragons if you weren't paid to paint dragons? If the answer's no, don't do it."

## WORKING DAY AND NIGHT

By 2016, Iris still wasn't where she wanted to be. Back then, she didn't have the luxury of being selective about commissions. She wasn't getting hired at all. Her day job sucked the life out of her, physically and mentally. She had developed carpal tunnel syndrome – pain in her hands and fingers – and it became difficult to do a day's work in design and then go home and spend all night working on her art. Iris was now in her 30s. She didn't do digital – still doesn't – and digital ➤





## TAKE A CLOSER LOOK

"Look at the smallest of things and you'll notice they often are not what they seem: flowers become faeries."

➡ seemed to be the thing you had to do to win clients. Social media was becoming increasingly important to working artists, and this exacerbated feelings of being an outsider. She thought about quitting art altogether.

"I wasn't part of the cool kids gang. I was always on the fringes of things. I completely lost the enjoyment of art, and that's the worst thing that can happen. I said to myself: what was that feeling I had when I was seven that made me really want to be an artist? I wanted that feeling back."

## ART CHALLENGE ACCEPTED

Social media was part of the problem, but it was also part of the solution. Iris noticed Instagram's #MerMay. She started sketching a mermaid every day, just one, and it didn't have to be perfect. She didn't draw the beautiful half-woman-half-fish. She drew mermaids with an edge.

#JuneFae was next. But Iris was wasn't into 'traditional' faeries

anymore. Faeries came with a stigma: "In the Netherlands, as soon as you say you draw fantasy, they go: 'Oh, so you draw faeries!' People think fantasy and they think faeries."

Iris doesn't really have "a process." She just draws. She draws every day, all the time, non-stop. She even draws when she's watching a movie ("or, I should say, listing to a movie"). She

## COMFORT ZONE

"I never felt very comfortable doing full scenes like this, but being an artist is about stepping out of your comfort zone."



## SKETCHES

"Faeries of the Faultlines is filled with sketches. Rather than finished pieces, I prefer the loose sketch style – a good fit for the faeries."

“I wasn't part of the cool kids gang. I was always on the fringes of things”

sees an image and it makes her want to draw. She's not copying. It's more that the image informs her drawing, then that drawing informs the next. She gets a flow going. "The pencil meets the paper and things happen. My sketchbooks are my playground."

Iris has used this playground to come up with a different story of faerie. She started writing little stories to elaborate on these differences. It made her happy, and it made other people happy, and her Instagram followers started going up. She started receiving lots of positive comments: one person said Iris's drawings felt like getting their childhood back.

## FAERIES OF THE FAULTLINES

Iris saw in her #JuneFae sketches the possibility of something bigger – what would eventually become her debut book, *Faeries of the Faultlines*. The problem was not the making of the book itself, but printing it. As a graphic designer, she knew what a quality ➡



# AWAY WITH THE FAERIE

Iris Compiet talks you through this traditional painting of her Greenman faerie



## 1 NARRATIVE AND COMPOSITION

"It's important for the narrative of the piece to get the pose of the character and the overall composition right."



## 2 ROUGH OUTLINES

"I take a sheet of baking paper, sketch the rough outlines and then gently rub that onto the stretched paper."



## 3 REFINING

"I refine the final art using a Col-Erase Tuscan red pencil, and it's now ready for the first layers of paint."



## 4 FIRST LAYERS

"I lay down the first layers of watercolour, working on every segment of the piece to keep it consistent in colour and feel."



## 5 REFERENCES AND INSPIRATION

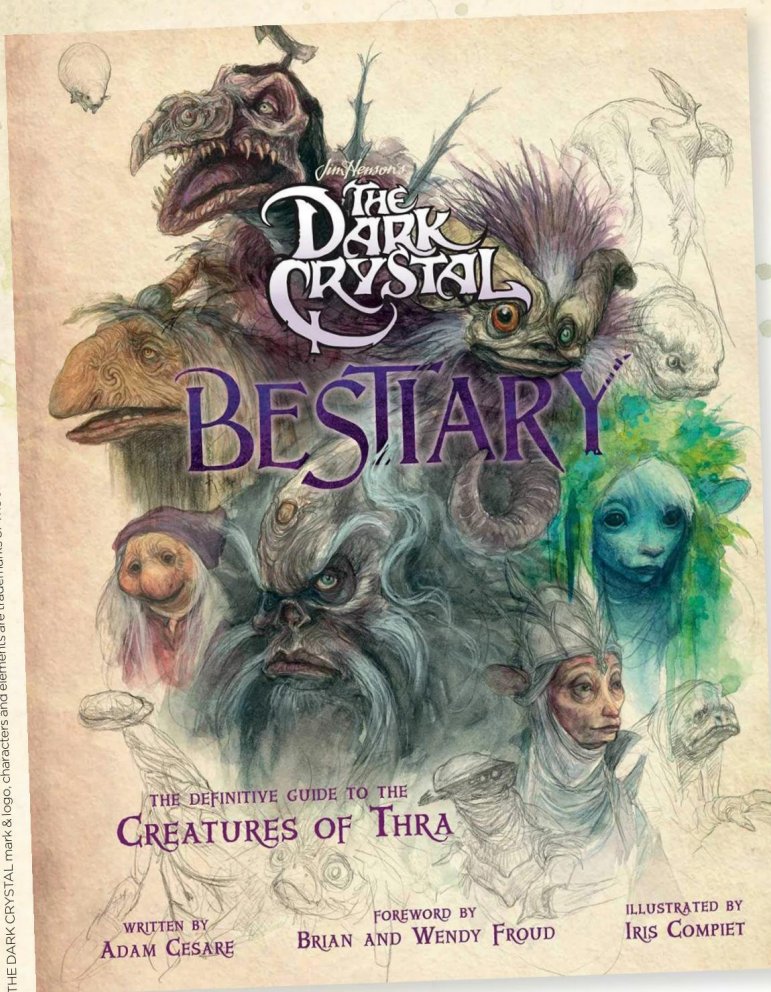
"I build up those layers, using references of standing stones and stone carvings as inspiration for certain parts of the piece."



## 6 HIGHLIGHTING

"I'm on to the finishing touches now. I highlight certain areas with coloured pencil and Acryla Gouache."





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➡ book looked like. She'd seen other artists put quality art in cheap-looking booklets. Iris wanted high-end paper, a clothbound hardcover with gold foil. Publishers wouldn't touch such an expensive book. In 2017, she started a Kickstarter, hoping to print 500 books. She asked for 15,000 Euros, and reached her target in just 48 minutes. The book quickly sold out, all 2,500

“My career started when I was 38. I’m considered old by industry. Who cares? I’m doing what I want to do”

copies, leading to a deal with Eye of Newt Books, the publisher that’s going to print the next edition, to Iris’s original specifications. Best of all, the book’s introduction was written by Brian Froud: “If I could go back in time and tell that seven-year-old kid with the book of faeries in her hand that this would happen, she be like, ‘Shut up! That doesn’t happen!’” A big part of the book’s success was the “necessary evil” of social media. With over 100,000 followers on

## COVER DESIGN (ABOVE)

“The Bestiary was a once-in-a-lifetime project to work on. My graphic design background came in handy when designing the cover.”

Instagram alone, Iris is now part of the group from which she previously felt excluded. She’s seen things from both sides. She talks to 25 year olds who fear missing out, artists think they’ve failed because they haven’t yet got their

“dream job.” She says you’ve got to remember social media often shows only the best of the best. That piece somebody just posted, which is so much better than your WIP, probably took them six months to complete. A big following and lots of Likes doesn’t necessarily mean the art is good. This is the problem at the heart of the “cool kids gang”: people follow the following, not the work.

“If you’re missing something, you miss something. My Instagram ➡

## COUNTLESS SKETCHES

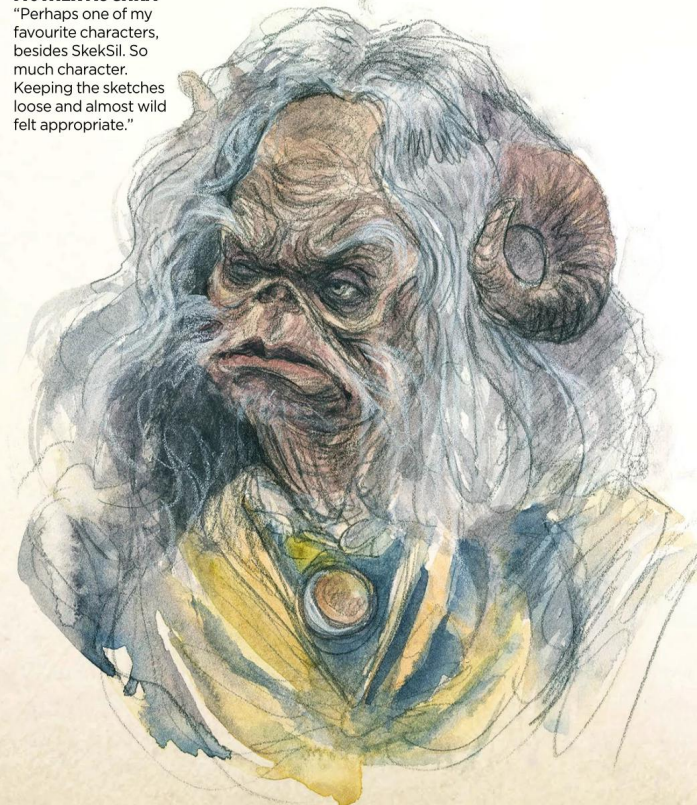
“I think I’ve done over 1,000 sketches. I filled about six sketchbooks and stacks of paper just to get a feel for the creatures of Thra.”

## A NEVER-BEFORE-SEEN MYSTIC

“An exclusive for ImagineFX – never before has UrSen the Monk been seen! Brian Froud gave me his original design to base my sketch on. An honour!”

## MOTHER AUGHRA

“Perhaps one of my favourite characters, besides SkekSil. So much character. Keeping the sketches loose and almost wild felt appropriate.”





### COMING TO LIFE

"For The Bestiary, I had to keep in mind the original movie, what Brian had done, and the Netflix show. Daunting. But I once I found my voice, it was so much fun."

### GETTING IT RIGHT

"Creatures of Thra are about details. Every element has meaning. They had to look right, but not be stiff copies. I kept the life of the sketches, adding colour on top."

### DIDN'T MAKE THE CUT

"I approached the book as if it were a guide to Thra, with sketches acting like notes on how the creatures moved or interacted. To get the feel, I created a lot of art that never made the book."

started growing when I was 37.

My career started when I was 38. I'm considered old by the industry. Who cares? I'm doing what I want to do. You're never too old."

### MEETING A HERO

Iris Compiet is now 41 years old. She's driving through England's Devonshire countryside with a stack of sketches for The Dark Crystal Bestiary. She's going to do something that she never thought she'd ever do. She's going to

sit down with Brian Froud and show him her art.

The Dark Crystal Bestiary: The Definitive Guide to the Creatures of Thra is the book tie-in to the cult 1982 film by Jim Henson. Iris got the job because Brian, conceptual designer on the film, recommended her. Iris's reaction? "Oh my god! Oh my god! Oh my god! Pinch me!"

The Dark Crystal has many very passionate fans – Iris included. There are over 100 different types of ➡

### DARK CRYSTAL EXCLUSIVE!

Iris shares these never-before-seen images, created for but never published in The Dark Crystal Bestiary.



## THE FAERIES GODMOTHER

Iris Compiet's art book *Faeries of the Faultlines* invited you to find magic in everyday places...

Iris's debut book started with Instagram's #JuneFae challenge. She drew a new faerie every day for a month, and this formed the beginnings of a book. She started to picture the faeries's world, *The Faultlines*.

The book would introduce this place, who lives there and what's possible. Everything had to fit. But Iris wanted to leave enough space between the lines for the reader to add something of their own.

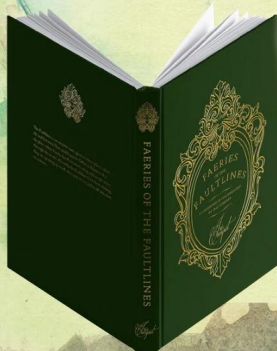
"The book is almost more of a guide," she says. "It's not a novel. It's very short stories, accompanied by sketches and full-colour artwork. It's meant to be taken with you when you go to the forest, for example. As a kid you might have come across a stone and seen it as a dragon egg: wonder was everywhere. Artists still do that, but a lot of people don't. The book is kindling to relight that flame of imagination."

The idea is *The Faultlines* are right on your doorstep. They're the woods where you walk the dog. They're the park where you played when you were little. The book is like opening a door to another world. Iris says good art invites the viewer to participate in this way, to elaborate on the story within it. It's boring when the artist makes every decision, when all questions are answered, no matter how technically brilliant the piece is.

Iris continues: "*Faeries of the Faultlines* is not a traditional world-building thing, because I'm not telling you how to think, or exactly how things are. I'm just giving you a nudge and then it's up to you to see what comes from that.

"I don't do perfect; perfect is boring to me. I think most of my stuff has that edge. It's neither good nor evil. It's everything. It depends on who's looking at it. That's my style – if that's a style. I invite people to pull their own stories into it, to see their own stories in it. That's what makes art come alive."

Iris's art book *Faeries of the Faultlines* will be available to buy on 2021's summer solstice (21st June). Visit [www.eyeofnewtpress.com](http://www.eyeofnewtpress.com) for more info.



### CHILDHOOD

Another piece that has roots in my past. I used to play around trees, and imagine seeing faces in the bark and gnarly, twisted shapes of these pollard willows. The seed of a story was planted many years ago.



## FOLKLORE STORIES

"I love putting my own twist on folklore and local legends. These are the wisps who dance in the moonlight above the bogs and swamps in the Faultlines."

## IMAGINE

"I wanted my book to help you look at the ordinary world with extraordinary vision, to give people just enough to spark their imagination, so they look at mushrooms and see faeries."



## “What do artists do to become better artists? They make art. Posting on social media doesn’t make you a better artist”

➤➤ inhabitants in the mythical world of Thra. Iris had to respect the late Jim Henson’s vision, but she didn’t want to rehash what had gone before.

## PUT IN THE WORK

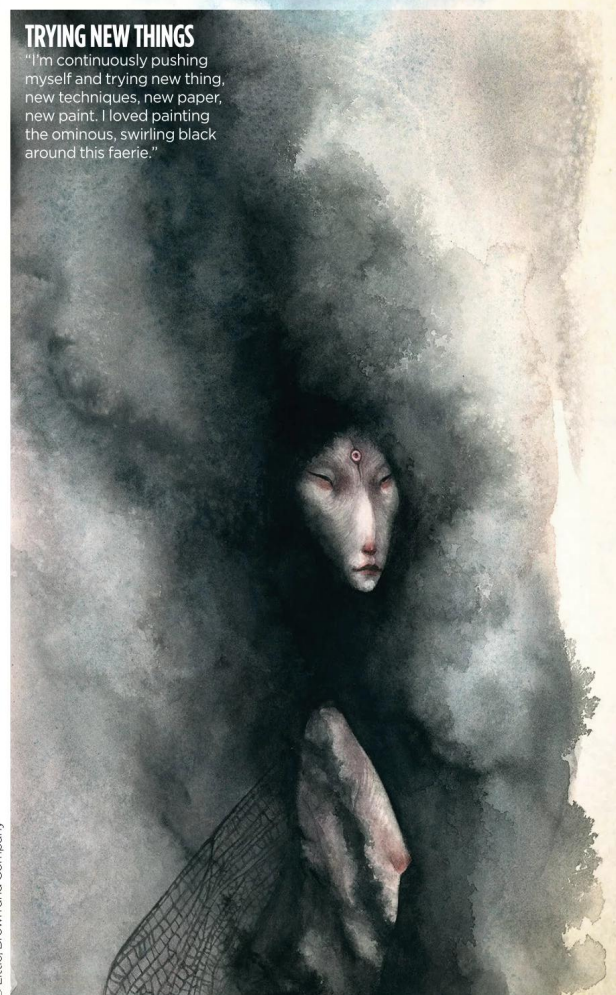
It was like going back to 2016: a little voice in her head kept telling her she wasn’t good enough. The answer now, as it was then, was to put in the work and enjoy doing it. She sketched every inhabitant in countless poses, immersed herself in Thra. Iris just started drawing. The pencil met the paper and things happened. Slowly, steadily, sketches mounted up, until, three months later, she had over a thousand, enough to show Brian Froud. Better still, Brian showed Iris his work. She had the surreal

experience of holding in her hand the original drawings of Brian’s faeries.

"I get asked all the time how I got to where I am. Well, you work. You sketch every day. That’s it. We’re artists. What do artists do to become better artists? They make art. Posting on social media doesn’t make you a better artist. What makes you a better artist is putting in the hours and learning and understanding you’re never done learning, that every day you become a better artist by taking up that pencil and drawing, doing something you’re uncomfortable doing, or something you don’t yet know how to do, putting yourself in that position to learn new things. As soon as you accept you’re never done learning, that’s when everything is so much better."

## TRYING NEW THINGS

"I’m continuously pushing myself and trying new things, new techniques, new paper, new paint. I loved painting the ominous, swirling black around this faerie."



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## PRINT AND DIGITAL BACK ISSUES



### Issue 191

October 2020

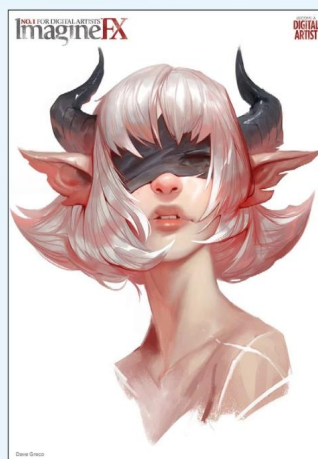
Bring your characters to life with the help of cover artist's Pietmaen's workshop, learn how to paint over a 3D environment, and create a surreal portrait. We talk to Pascal Blanché, and show how to get work via social media.



### Issue 190

September 2020

Ejiwa 'Edge' Ebenebe's cover art ties nicely with our feature on how to be happy as an artist. We focus on the art of The Last of Us Part II, present tips for a better Blender workflow, help you improve your character design, and more!



### Issue 189

August 2020

Cover artist Dave Greco takes another artist's idea and puts a fantastic spin on it, Phil Galloway shows off ArtRage's digital oils and Maria Poliakova uses colour to add atmosphere. Plus we talk to film art legend Crash McCreery.



### 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.

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**Issue 187**  
June 2020



**Issue 186**  
May 2020



**Issue 185**  
April 2020



**Issue 184**  
March 2020



**Issue 183**  
February 2020



**Issue 182**  
January 2020



**Issue 181**  
Christmas 2019



**Issue 180**  
December 2019



**Issue 179**  
November 2019



**Issue 178**  
October 2019



**Issue 177**  
September 2019



**Issue 176**  
August 2019

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\*Resource files are available from issue 85 onwards.



# Sketchbook

## Fred Rambaud

Present-day Japan and figures from the country's culture feature prominently in the sketches of this Canadian illustrator

### Artist PROFILE

**Fred Rambaud**  
LOCATION: Canada



Fred is a freelance concept artist, illustrator and art director for the entertainment industry. With 15 years of experience under his belt, he's worked for many games studios and franchises. When not doing client work, he enjoys spending time with his family, filling in sketchbooks and studying to improve his artistic skills.

[www.instagram.com/fredrambaudart](http://www.instagram.com/fredrambaudart)



### SCI-FI RONINS

"As you can see I'm not precious with my sketchbooks. The goal here is to explore without restraint, and not worry about trends or pretty pictures. Just raw design ideas."

### BLACK BLADE

"I love weird villain characters in movies like Kurosawa and Ninja Scroll. You can't go wrong with them - they're so much fun to do."





“I’m not precious with my sketchbooks. The goal here is to explore without restraint”



## SPACEDOGS 1

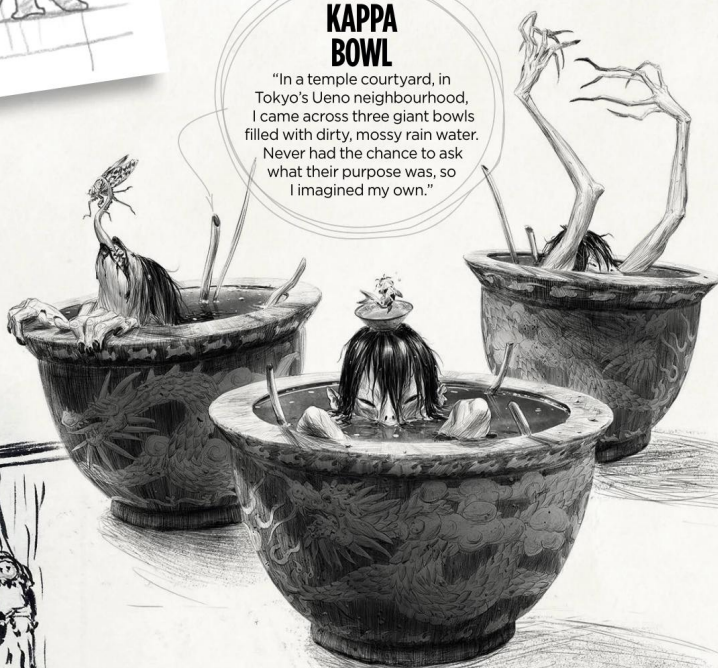
“I’m a big dog person. I grew up with dogs because my parents always had dogs. I haven’t been able to get one for a while because I tend to relocate often, so instead I draw them!”



# Sketchbook

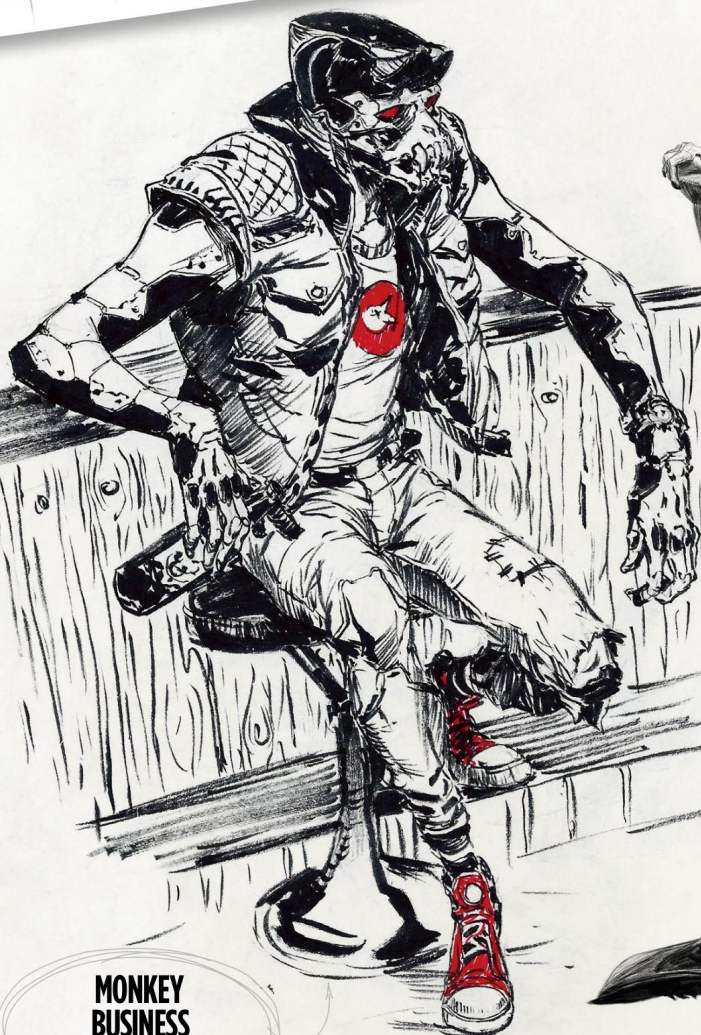
## KAPPA BOWL

"In a temple courtyard, in Tokyo's Ueno neighbourhood, I came across three giant bowls filled with dirty, mossy rain water. Never had the chance to ask what their purpose was, so I imagined my own."



## MONKEY BUSINESS

"Cyborg Monkey feeling lonely during this pandemic."



## TEMPLE GIRLS

"One quiet morning in Tokyo, during the Sakura blossoms season, I managed to capture the moment when two young girls stepped out of a temple, dressed with their traditional outfit and chatting casually while they went their way."



## ELECTRIC POLES

"While exploring Tokyo, I came across some crazy electric wiring that inspired this piece."







### DOG VENDOR

"I think this was around Asakusa, north of Tokyo. A very small street shop, with an old lady had a perfectly round statue of a dog. I found it funny. The old lady was really unfriendly, too. That's why I switched her head with the dogs and made her smile."



“You can see some colourful characters during the early hours”



### HUNGOVER

"Drinking in Japan can be intense. You can see some colourful characters while walking around in the early hours."



# Sketchbook

“I love comics, especially those from the 80s”

## STORM

“I love comics, especially those from the 80s. Here’s my take on Storm.”



## CURSED OGRE

“This guy was a struggle. His face just refused to be drawn. So he got a cool bandage as punishment!”

## CREEPERS

“I love horror themes, but I find I’m always toning it down by adding some funny or grotesque touches that lessen the oppressive vibe of a subject, which could otherwise be perceived as too dark.”







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](mailto:sketchbook@imaginefx.com)



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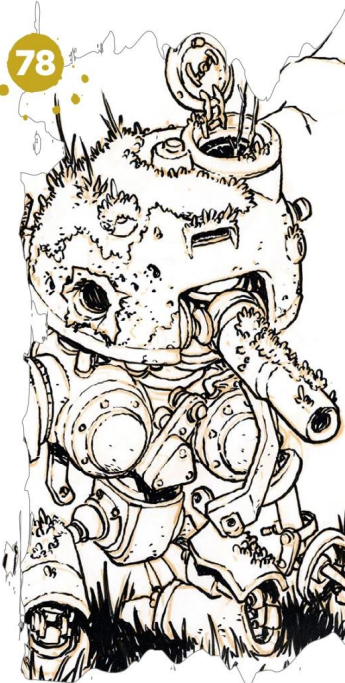
# NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX Workshops

**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:

### 54 10 tips to improve your drawings

Karl Kopinski shares his sketching and drawing advice.

### 64 3D techniques for concept art

Jad Saber uses 3D and 2D software to create vis-dev art.

### 70 Get more from colour studies

Boost your colour, light and volume skills, with Donglu Yu.

### 78 14 ways to create better sketches

Jake Parker reveals how to make great art using traditional tools.



## Artist insight

# 10 TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR DRAWINGS

Acclaimed artist **Karl Kopinski** shares his sketching and drawing advice, based on his personal experiences and career in the illustration industry

### Artist PROFILE

**Karl Kopinski**  
LOCATION: England

Karl has been producing fantastical art since 1997, and has worked for a range of companies including Wizards of the Coast, Games Workshop, Ubisoft, MPC and SIXMOREVODKA.  
[www.karlkopinski.com](http://www.karlkopinski.com)



I grew up loving Asterix and comic books, and also the stories of Dickens and Sherlock Holmes. I

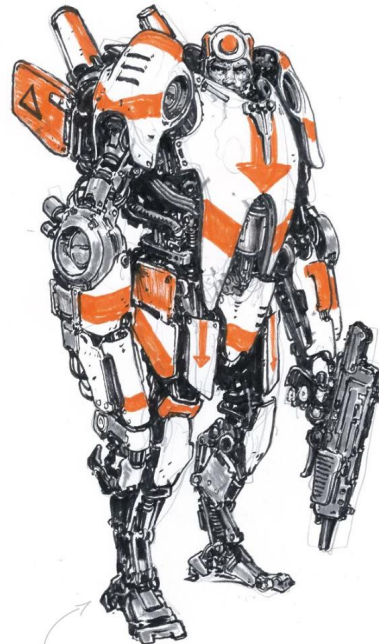
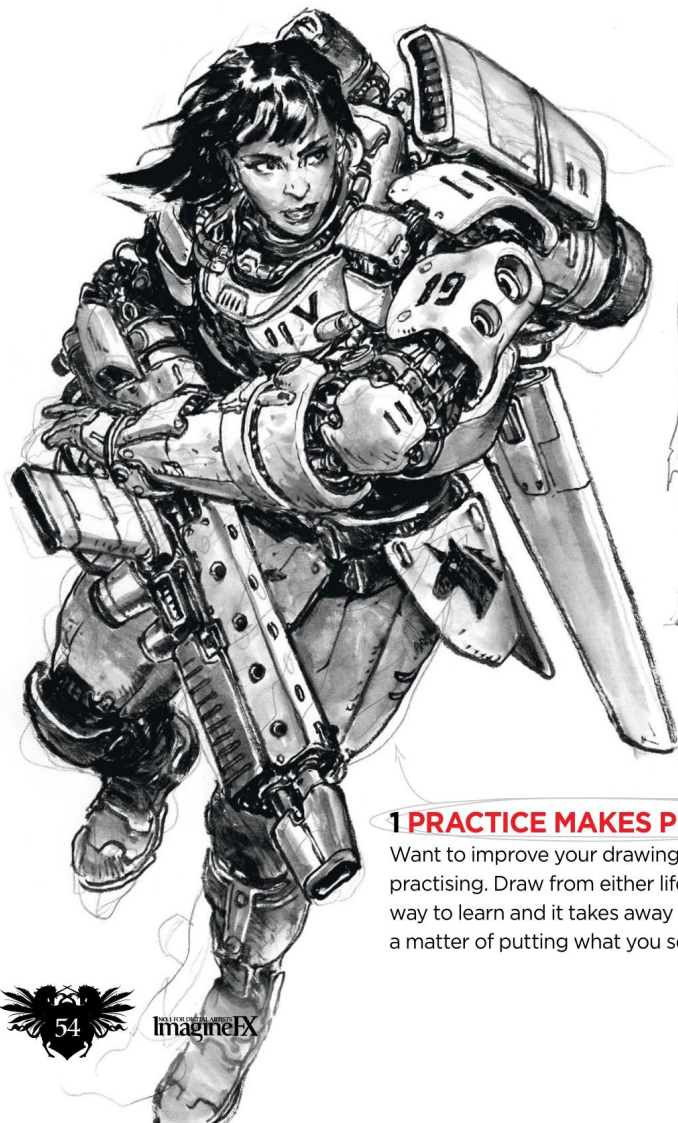
always loved portraiture, and artists such as Diego Velázquez, John Singer Sargent, Anders Zorn, Norman Rockwell, Frederic Remington and Phil Hale were huge influences on my oil painting style. I also love Katsuya Terada who I met in Los Angeles two years ago with Kim Jung Gi.

I think my style is a real mix of all these artists and life experiences. I always loved sketching and have been lucky enough to build an interest in this and actually publish my own books.

I don't know if I ever realised I wanted to be an artist. I think it was the only thing I was good at! I couldn't imagine myself doing anything else, to be honest. I was lucky enough to be supported by my family, and my wife Tara has been

amazing at really pushing me. This is important because I think that by its nature this career will always have its ups and downs, and struggles. I'm not the most confident of people and so having some moral support and people to say, "Yes, you are good enough" can make all the difference!

I think that, like most artists, my personal style is a mix of all the amazing influences. There are so many artists whose work I love and have tried to emulate.



### 1 PRACTICE MAKES PERFECT

Want to improve your drawing skills? Then you just need to keep practising. Draw from either life or photo reference. It's such a great way to learn and it takes away a lot of the stress of design. It's simply a matter of putting what you see in front of you down onto paper.

### 2 LEARN HOW THINGS WORK

Whatever you're drawing, break it down into its mechanical elements. This applies to both anatomy and engineering. The better you can understand things, the better you can draw them. ➔





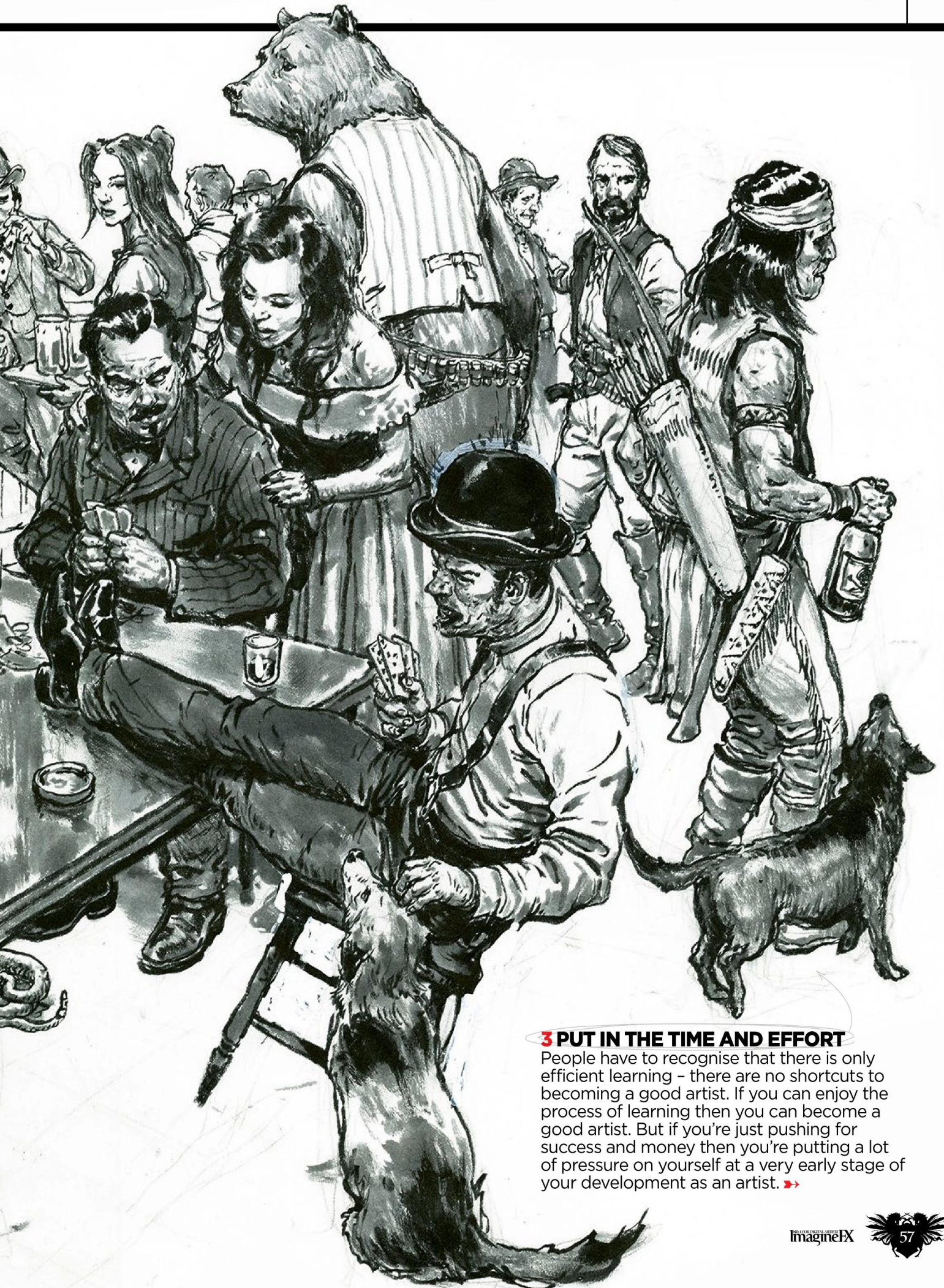
“Want to improve your drawing skills? Then you just need to keep practising...”



“If you can enjoy the process of learning then you can become a good artist”







### 3 PUT IN THE TIME AND EFFORT

People have to recognise that there is only efficient learning – there are no shortcuts to becoming a good artist. If you can enjoy the process of learning then you can become a good artist. But if you're just pushing for success and money then you're putting a lot of pressure on yourself at a very early stage of your development as an artist. ➤



## **4 EXPLORE THE UNKNOWN**

Have confidence in your art and experiment - try something new! You don't have to produce a masterpiece every time, and you actually learn a lot from your mistakes. Don't beat yourself up if things go wrong. Just look at how to fix them next time!





## 5 BE CONSISTENT WITH YOUR PRACTICE PIECES

It's far better to do one hour of practice exercises a day for seven days, than draw for seven hours in the space of one day. Drawing becomes far more instinctive and natural with regular practice. Try to

focus on initial, simple principles such as breaking down your drawing into its most basic form, before applying perspective to those elements. These are the foundations of your drawing, and like everything a good foundation makes for a stronger drawing.

“You don't have to produce a masterpiece every time, and you learn a lot from your mistakes”



## 6 USE A RANGE OF DRAWING TOOLS

I'm not super-precious about what I use, but I do have a few tools that I use more regularly than others. These are a Faber-Castell Pitt graphite 3B pencil, a Pentel Colour brush pen (FL2F), a Pentel Brush Sign pen (SESF30C), a Faber-Castell Polychromos black pencil, and POSCA Black & White Fine pens.



## 7 START YOUR DRAWING PROCESS LOOSELY

Usually I'll have a vague idea of the subject in my mind, but not very specific as far as details go. I then start with some very loose, scribbly lines, trying to find some interesting shapes and to start to get some idea of perspective and how the subject is placed within its space. I find this helps me often make some interesting design choices, too: instead of falling back on a library of costumes/details I can push larger shapes before refining and rendering them later. ➡





## 8 SHAKE UP YOUR CREATIVE ROUTINE

I do have a good mix of projects on the go at any one time. If I'm struggling with motivation or creativity then I'll often switch to something quite different – for example, going from a piece of concept art/drawing to one of my more expressive cyclist

paintings. I think it's a good idea to experiment and work with different media to stop yourself from feeling stagnant.

I also ride my bike a lot, so every day I'll fit in a one- to two-hour trip. This gives me time to process and think about projects away from my easel, or just empty my head a bit. I think

exercise is important in balancing things out.

I often spend mornings or evenings sketching and trying to come up with new ideas, whereas during the day I'll be doing more project-based stuff. I recommend having some kind of routine, but it's so personal that you have to find your own system.

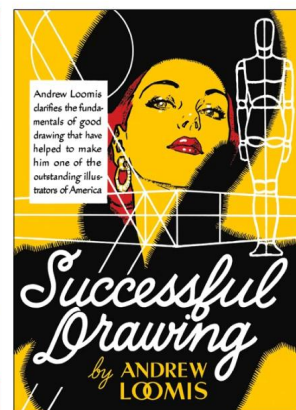
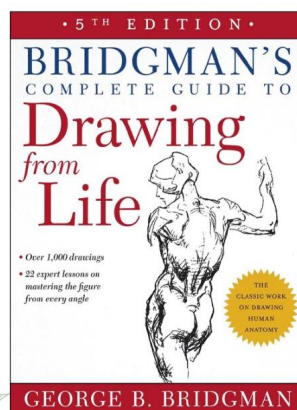


## 9 AVOID COPYING ANOTHER ARTIST'S STYLE

I see a lot of artists making similar and very understandable mistakes. They're often trying hard to emulate artists who they admire, without looking at how that artist began their journey and what their fundamental skills are. As I said earlier, you need to work hard at understanding how things work. This applies to other artists, too. Most of the people you admire have a strong foundation in drawing/painting and observation. If you focus too much on trying to emulate the end result, you neglect learning those basics yourself.



“I think the key for me is to draw information from a broad spectrum, not just one artist”



## 10 VARY YOUR LEARNING SOURCES

I studied a lot of anatomy books – the Bridgman book [Bridgman's Complete Guide to Drawing from Life, by George B. Bridgman] is great, as are the Andrew Loomis books. Eadweard Muybridge's *Animals in Motion* is also useful, but there's so much information for artists out there now. I've done tutorial videos with Kazone Art and I know they have some SuperAni artists on there. Schoolism is a fantastic resource and obviously the YouTube channel of Stan Prokopenko is amazing. I think the key for me is to draw information from a broad spectrum and not just one artist. By doing so, you'll hopefully develop a much more individual approach and outlook. That's the key – to stand out from the crowd. ●



Next month

Next month in...  
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# Fantasy illustration

Audra Auclair paints our cover and details the techniques to her sublime, surreal works of art...



*All this... and more!*

## **Justin Gerard interview**

The illustrator of glorious fantastical creatures talks us through his career.

## **How not to be a d\*\*k**

We discuss how the industry can move forward after recent shock allegations.

## **Phillip Boutte workshop**

The Hollywood costume illustrator extraordinaire shares his process.

## **A new artist in residence**

German artist Looona Lou takes us around her bright art space.

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Next month

We're honoured  
to have Audra  
Auclair create  
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Blender & Photoshop

# 3D TECHNIQUES FOR CONCEPT ART

Concept artist and tutor **Jad Saber** discusses how he uses 3D and 2D software alongside references to create realistic vis-dev artworks





## Artist PROFILE

**Jad Saber**

LOCATION: France

Concept artist Jad works in the entertainment industry and teaches at New3dge School in Paris. He's created art for games such as The Last of Us and Uncharted. <https://ifxm.ag/j-saber>



When working professionally for a client, you're usually bound by a brief and have to work within a number of constraints. You have to depict the client's vision in your image. Even your creative process might have to be adapted to meet the commission's requirements.

However, when you've made time to produce personal work, it's a whole different ballgame. There are an

infinite amount of possibilities available, and the creative process is a lot more flexible. I'm always looking for inspiration in different things: books, films, comics, photographs from my travels or experiences. There's really no limit to the number of sources that can provide that magical spark of inspiration!

Once I have an idea of what I'll be making, I might do a small scribble so I can better visualise it, or just get started with a quick 3D mockup. I

think experimenting with different processes helps in producing a range of ideas that I can explore further.

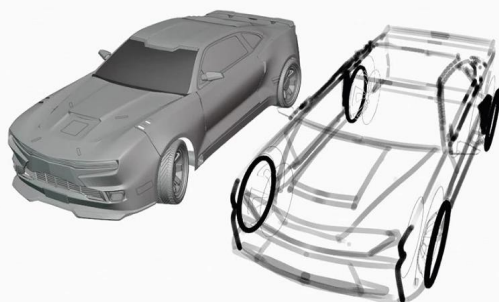
For this particular image I wanted to create a grungy, cyberpunk piece, inspired by the worlds of Blade Runner and Akira. The idea of having a rundown façade with a shop and a car in front came from a drawing by Katsuhiro Otomo that caught my eye as I was flipping through one of my Akira books. That single reference was enough to light the spark! ➡➡



## ADD REALISM TO A CONCEPT

### Creating the façade

The façade of the buildings in the background, as well as most of the props, are made using projection mapping. It's a 3D modelling technique that consists of mapping a photo on a simple mesh and using that photo as a guide to place edges and vertices, which help to flesh out a decent, finished-looking model.



### Make use of the Grease Pencil

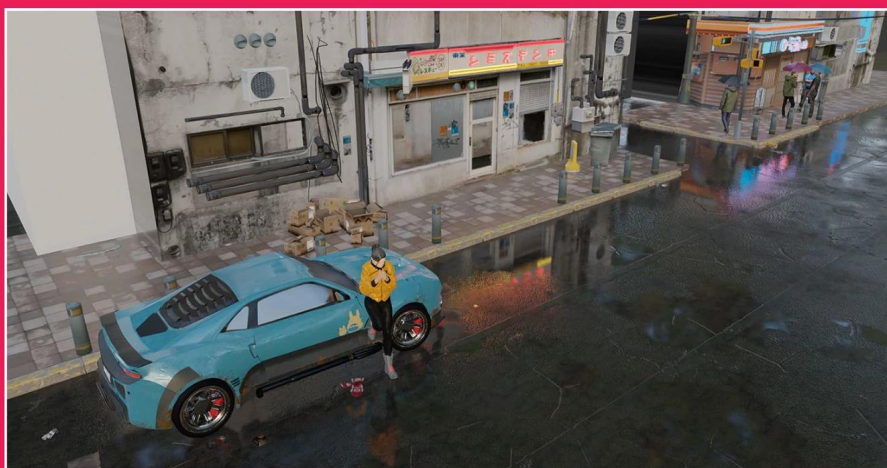
I use Blender's Grease Pencil tool to design the car, and then model the body while using the Grease Pencil sketch as a guide. If this were a professional job with a time constraint I would have obtained a car model from the internet and built on top of it, but here I decide that I could use the practice.

How I use...

## 3D TOOLS IN MY CONCEPT ART PROCESS

### 1 Building the scene in 3D

After I've figured out what I'll be making and the story that I'll be telling, I start gathering a range of reference materials that will help me model props in Blender, pose models using Daz 3D or Mixamo, and design whatever's going to be appearing in the scene.





# In depth 3D concept techniques

## Bouncing raindrops

I believe small details like raindrops bouncing off the back of the car add a nice touch to the image. I go online and find a reference even for the smallest of details. I want to be as accurate as possible with how these will look and how the light will affect them.

## The character

When exporting a posed character, the head from the basic DAZ model often looks a bit stiff and lacking expression. This is why I'll usually swap it either with a better head model I found online that I'll alter a bit, or just with a photo of a head/face that better fits my character.

## Atmospheric fogging

The fogging is very important for layering the image and making everything readable. Here I use a combination of atmospheric lights and smoke behind my character to strengthen the silhouette and clearly establish my focal point. I use a volume scatter material within Blender to create a more accurate fog from within the 3D software.

## Smoke adds life

Smoke being carried on the wind brings a sense of movement to the image and helps to make it look more realistic. This notion is often used in cinematography to enhance shots and add dynamism. It also helps with layering. I use a smoke brush to paint and mask the smoke, until I achieve a shape that I'm satisfied with.

## RESOURCES

### WORKSHOP BRUSHES

#### PHOTOSHOP

##### CUSTOM BRUSHES: RAIN



You can make your own version by painting a rain drop, and using Scatter.

##### SMOKE



I use this to mask out smoke shapes when I create a smoke element.

##### MIXER



I use this with the Mixer brush tool, set on Wet, for softening edges.



## 2 Lighting and framing

Once my scene's set up in 3D, I'll work on the lighting and start experimenting with different framing ideas, trying to find the shot (or shots) that will best tell my story. Most of the time, the key to locking a good composition is having great reference. I look at film stills from my favourite directors and cinematographers.

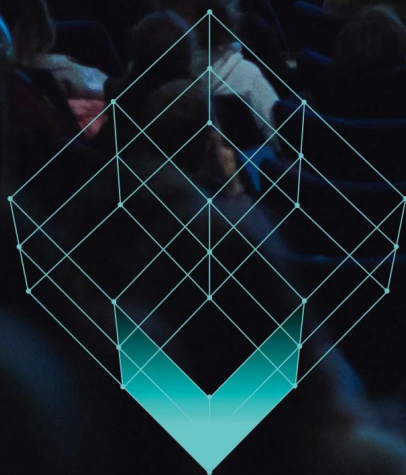


## 3 Finishing up the image

After I've locked the shot, it's time to go for that final push in Photoshop. This is the phase where you try to take the image from 'good' to 'great', by enhancing the light effects, replacing rigid 3D-looking parts with photographic elements (especially in the foreground) and adding the small details that will push the realism.



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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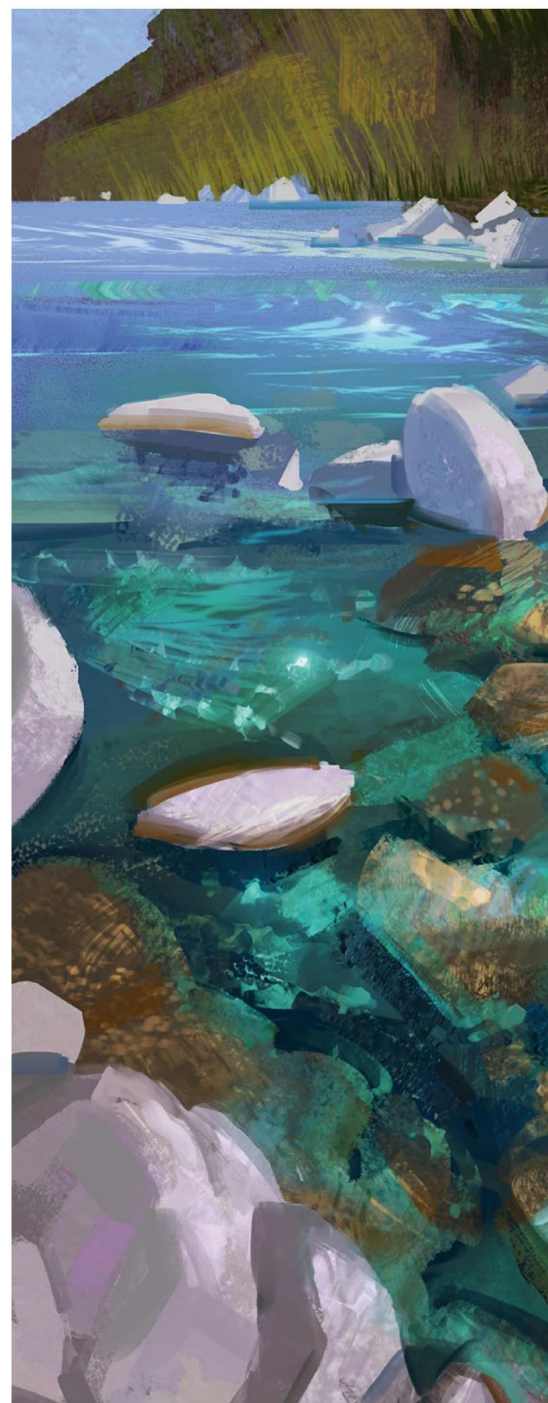
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## Photoshop

# GET MORE FROM COLOUR STUDIES

**Donglu Yu** reveals that by painting different types of rock formations in nature, you can boost your knowledge of colour, light and volume





## Artist PROFILE

**Donglu Yu**

LOCATION: Canada

Donglu's a senior concept artist in the video games industry. Recently she's been working at Ubisoft on the upcoming Assassin's Creed: Valhalla.  
<https://ifxm.ag/dyu>



I want to share my advice on producing colour studies of different rocks. The goal is to take a logical

approach when painting the image, thus streamlining the creative process. I usually spend between 90 minutes and two hours for each colour study, so I need to plan and then use my time efficiently.

I'll talk about three real-life landscape that feature different types

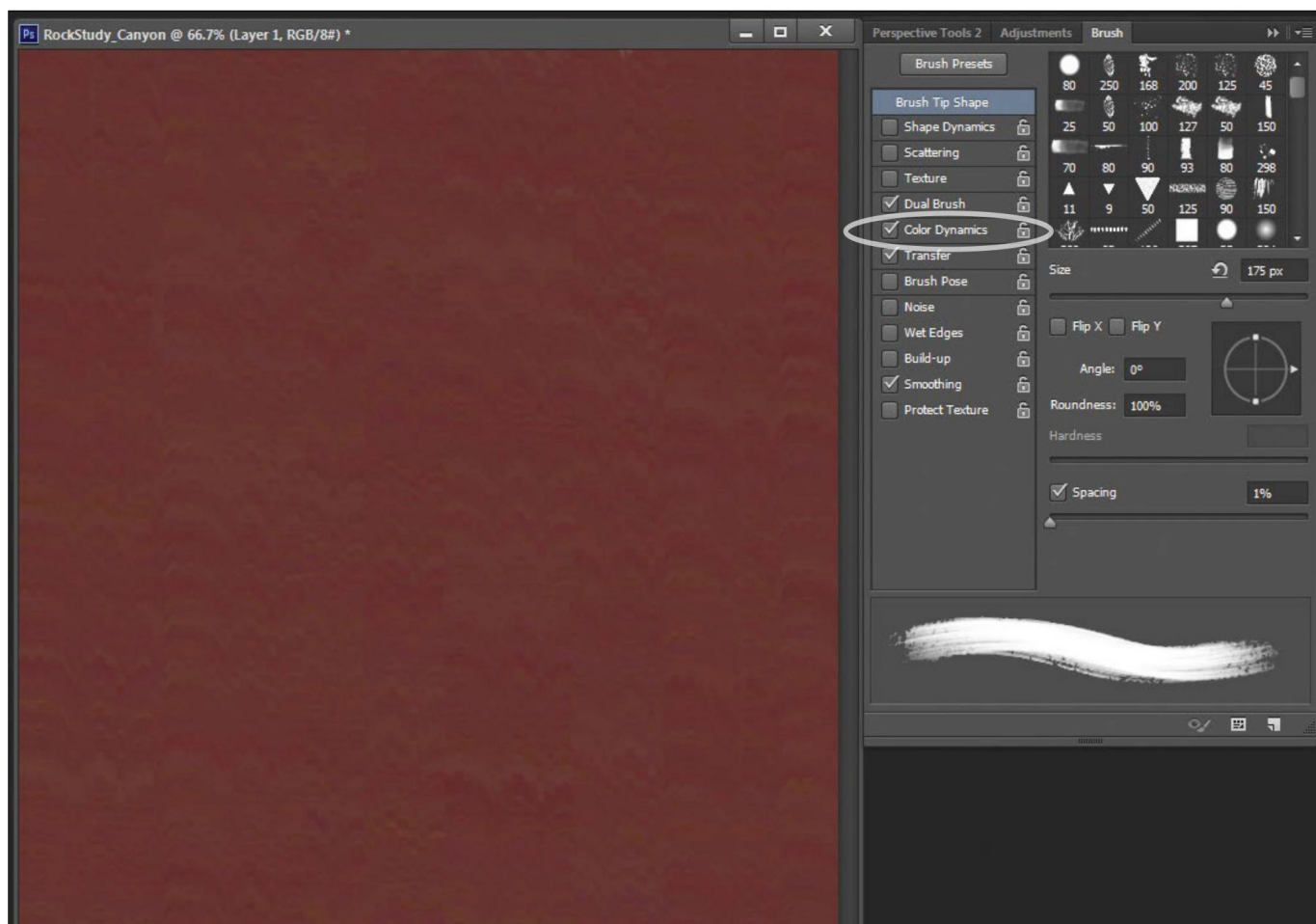
of rocks: canyon rock; shore/beach rock; and river rock. Because of their geographic locations they each have a distinctive visual appearance. For example, canyon rock has the hardest edge transition, while the river rock has the smoothest appearance. This is the key point to remember when depicting their volume, colour and light.

Because I always start my painting process the same way, I'll talk first about the initial creative steps for

tackling those three types of rocks. During the later stages I'll discuss each natural element that I've pictured in my studies.

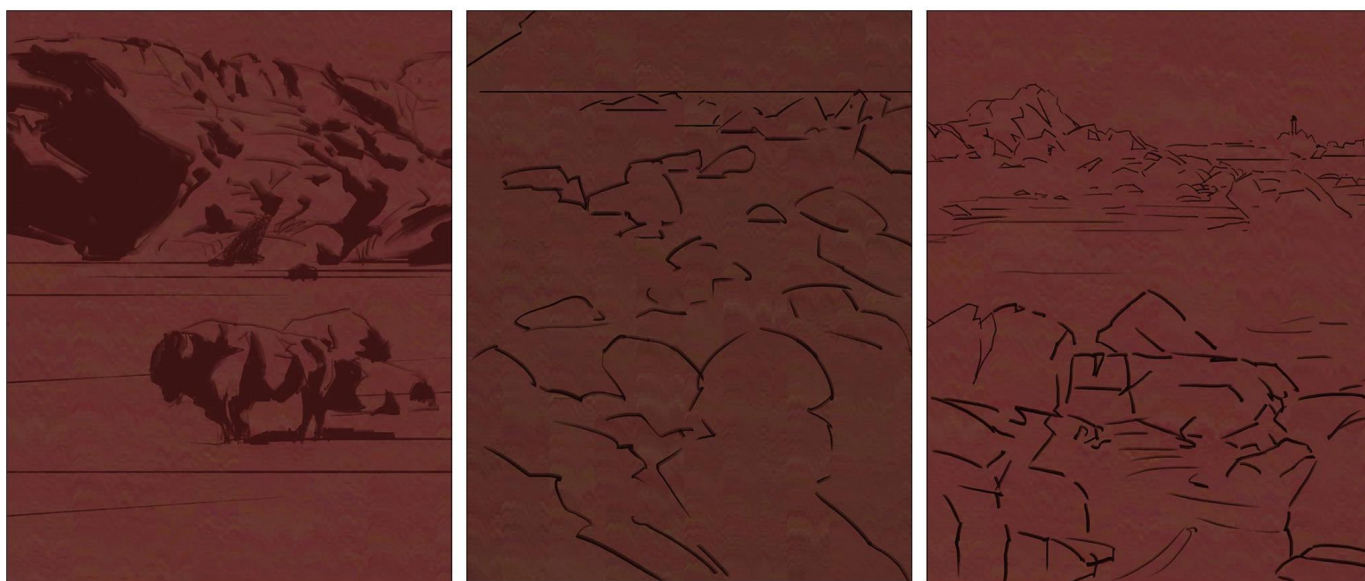
I'll also talk about how I use brushes. I'll paint with different brushes depending where I am in the painting process, and so I'll explain my choices. Because it's fun to experiment with the brushes, I hope you can take my brushes as a basic tool and play with their settings to achieve more visual variations. ➡





## 1 Preparing the canvas

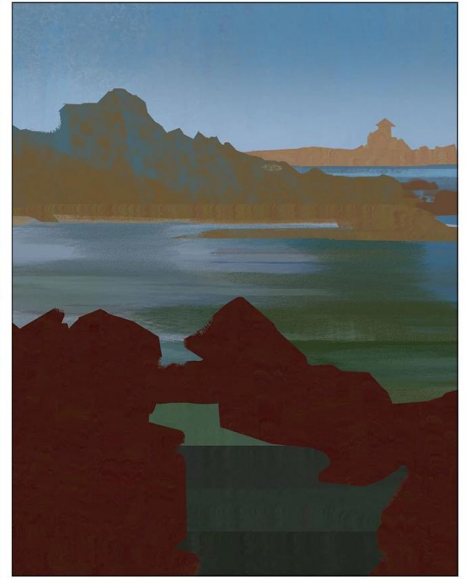
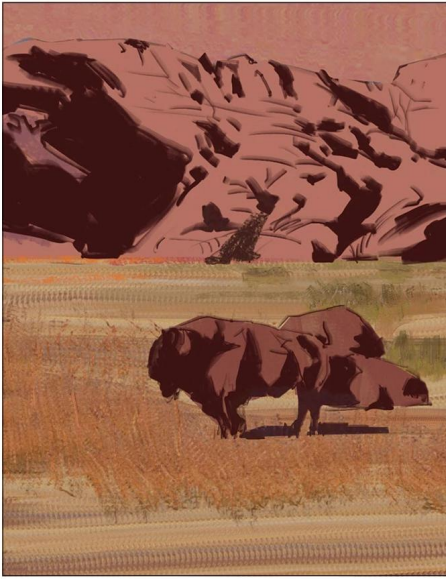
I start by layering a dark brown/orange paint onto my base layer. It mimics the approach taken when painting traditionally. I usually select a brush with a bold stroke, enabling me to fill in the colour quickly. The key point to remember here is to add some Color Dynamic in the brush's settings, so each stroke I apply has some nuances instead of a flat colour. I usually use my Oil Foundation brush to carry out this step.



## 2 Organise your image into large shapes

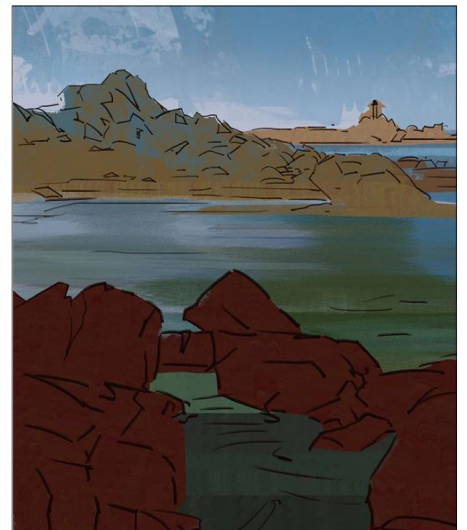
It's easy to become focused on the intricate textures and colour variations during the early stages of the painting process. To avoid ending up with a messy-looking and confused image, I usually take few minutes to organise my images using simple, large shapes while bearing the perspective in mind, before starting any detailing. It forces me to look at the general visual rhythm and the composition of the image.





### 3 Establish the basic colour scheme

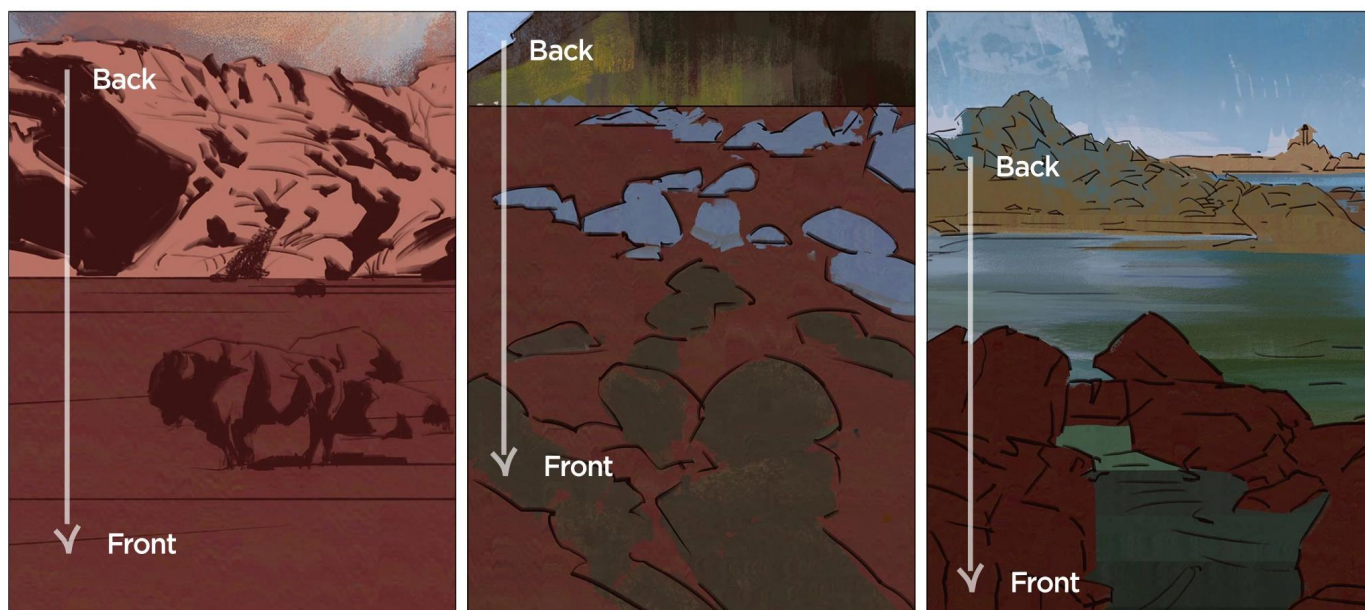
I use the same Oil Foundation brush mentioned in step one, remembering to adjust its Color Dynamic setting. I still focus on large shapes as I lay down the colour foundation, and avoid being distracted by trying to render details. At this stage it's important for objects to have clean silhouettes. I use the Lasso tool to create selections and a less-textured brush to refine the silhouettes, such as a small triangle brush or line brush.



### 4 Start with the sky

The sky is the key element that determines the lighting condition of the landscape. Whether it's cloudy, clear, showing early morning light, foggy or at sunset, the sky dictates the rest of the palette and luminosity. However, it doesn't mean that the sky has to be complex – sometimes it can be just a clear blue, painted with the oil texture brush. ➤





## 5 Move from the back to the front

When painting, you can move from the background to the foreground or vice versa. I like to move from the back to the front because it's similar to painting traditionally. I find that adding shapes on top of other elements is a more straightforward approach than subtracting shapes. But of course painting digitally means that both approaches are possible.

**RESOURCES**

**WORKSHOP BRUSHES**

**PHOTOSHOP**

**CUSTOM BRUSHES:**  
**OIL FOUNDATION**

This brush makes use of Color Dynamics when I prepare my canvas.

**LINE BRUSH**

This brush has one hard side, one soft side – ideal for creating line-art.

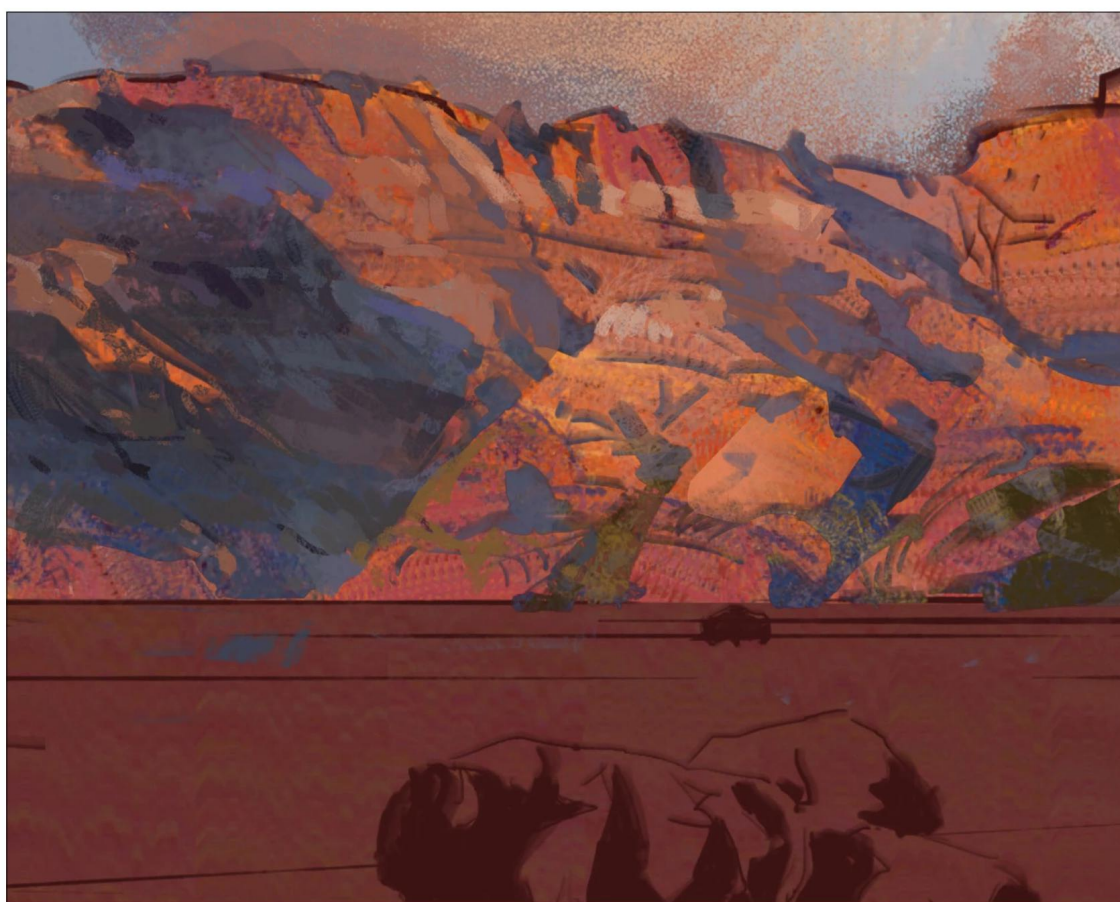
**SMALL TRIANGLE**

I use this for any element that requires precise marks, or for line-work.

**OIL TEXTURE**

This brush gives a dry, heavy texture, mimicking a traditional oil brush.

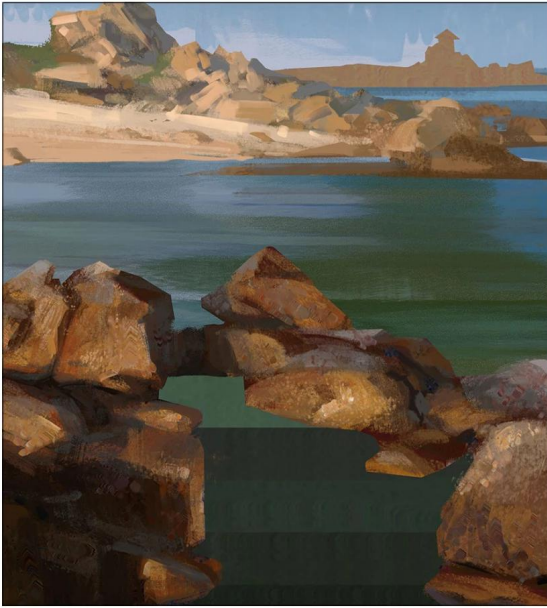
**GET YOUR RESOURCES**  
 See page 8 now!



## 6 Painting the canyon rock

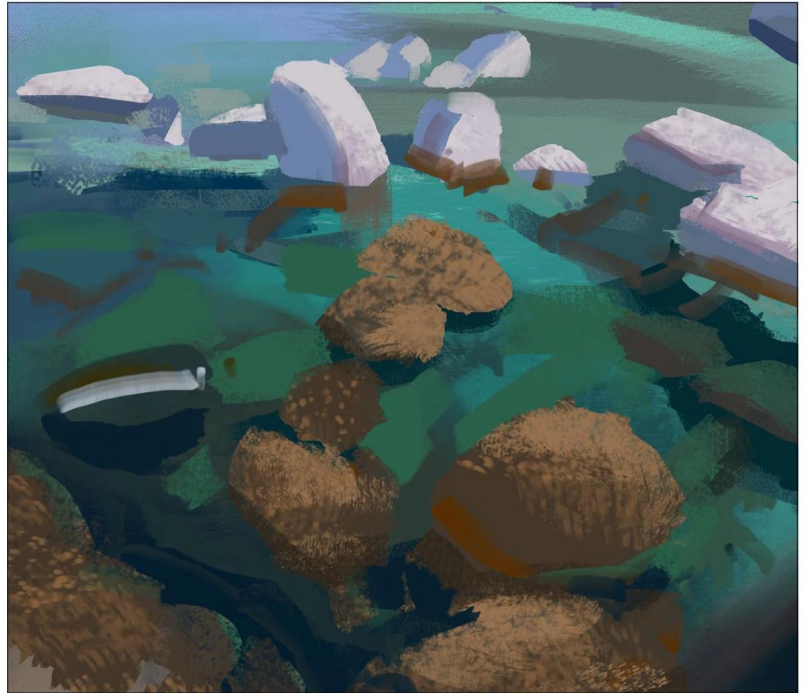
Canyon rock has a harsh, sharply defined visual appearance. It's often found in a dry, desert environment, which suits the rough appearance of the rocks. The light and shadow sides are clearly defined; the edge treatment of the rocks is bold and clean. I choose brushes that will help me depict these aspects of the rocks. All of my chosen brushes have at least one sharp side to carve into the volumes of the rocks, such as my custom Line Brush.





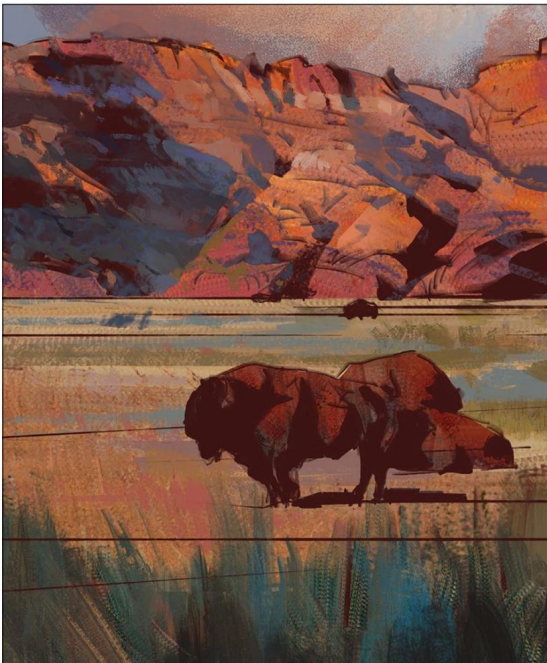
## 7 Illustrating rocks on the shore

The shore rock is less harsh in appearance than the canyon rock because of its proximity to water. This means I have to pay more attention to the transition areas, which are located between the light and the shade: I give them more colour variations to produce a smoother look. It also helps to group the rocks into small clusters and treat them as a single, larger rock, because it simplifies the overall geometric shapes and contributes to its smooth surface.



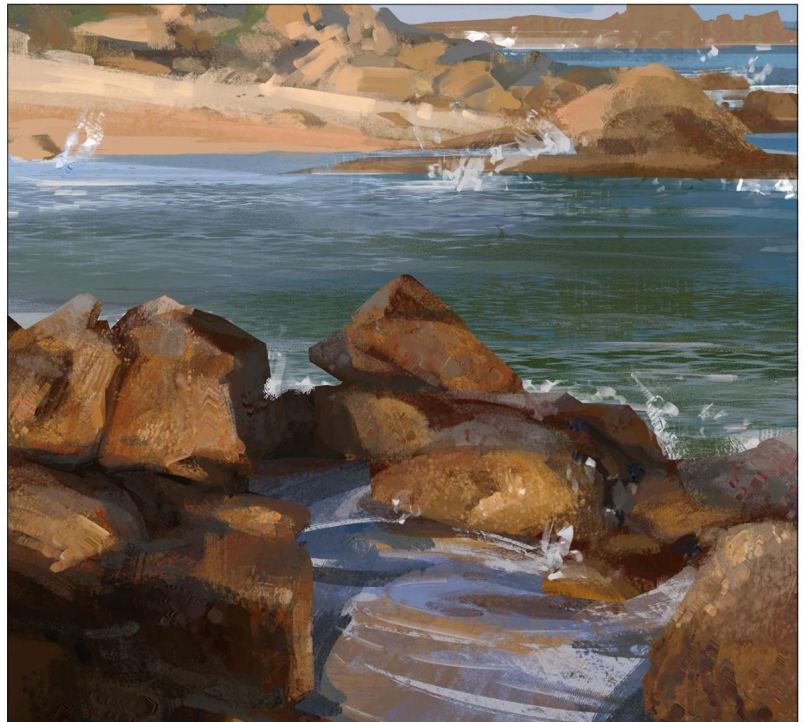
## 8 How to treat rocks in the river

River rock is the smoothest of the three types of rocks. They are either partially or completely submerged in the water. The moving water is constantly flowing across their surface, resulting in a rock's smooth surface. I treat them as large, volumetric oval shapes and make the light-to-shade transitional areas as smooth as possible by making use of coloured shading.



## 9 Bear perspective in mind

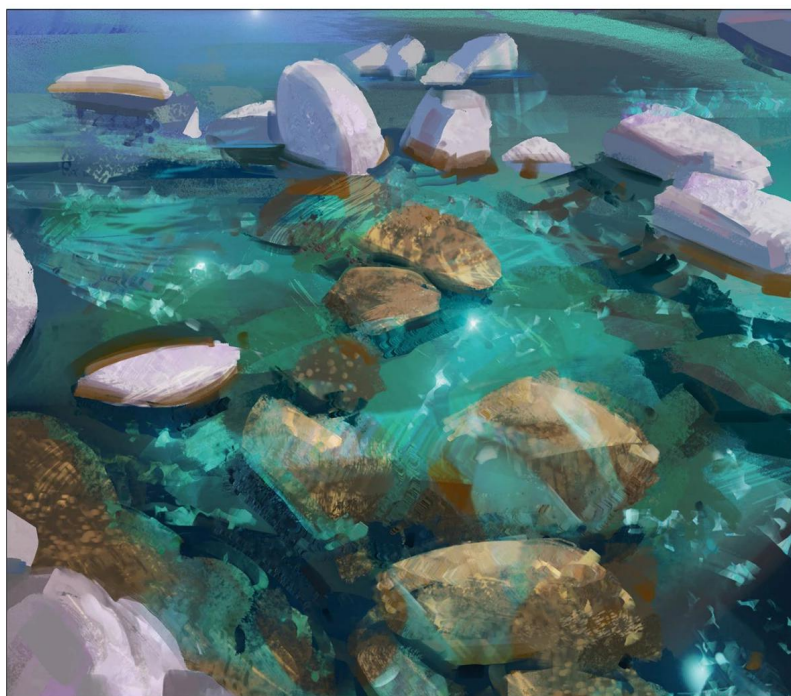
To reflect the texture of the desert ground, I like to use heavily textured brushes such as my Oil Texture brush. Try to picture the ground as large, rectangular sections. Ensure they follow the scene's perspective and become smaller as they near the horizon line. Use larger brushes for the foreground and reduce the size of your brush gradually as you move towards the background.



## 10 Capture the movement of waves

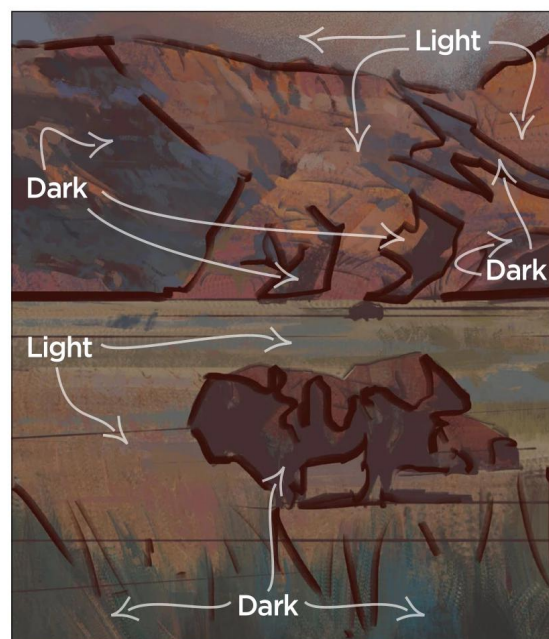
Water waves are fun to do, although I need to experiment a lot until I'm happy with their appearance. First, I use the Selection tool to select the large shape of the water, then I use an abstract brush to paint freely within the selected area, such as my Shape Dynamic brush. You may need few trials to get the right brushstrokes. Then I use the same brush to mimic the splashing water. ➡





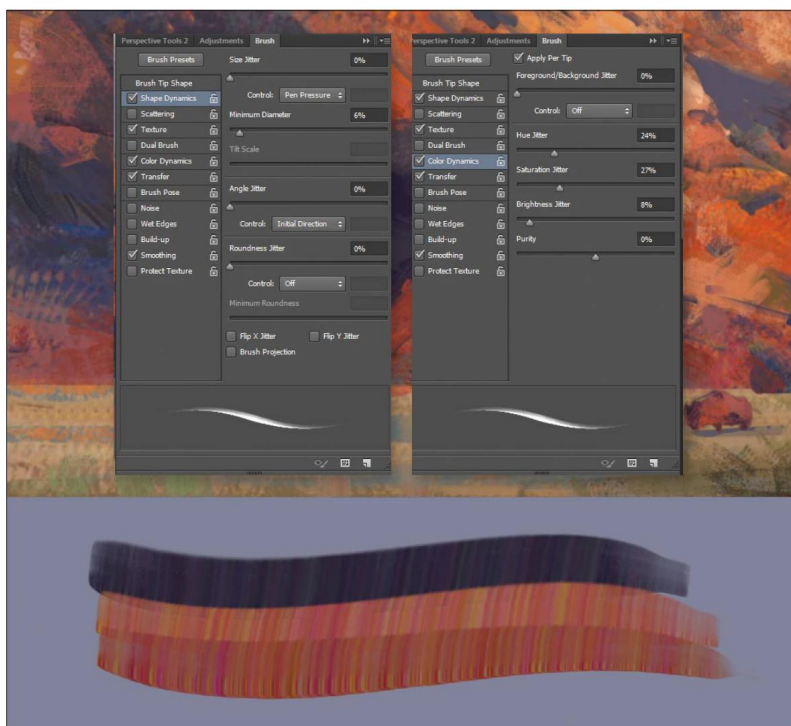
## 11 Create water's translucency effect

I've come to realise the more abstract you go with this one, the better it looks. That's why I loosen my arm movements when painting this effect. I use the Oval Selection tool to randomly select large oval shapes that overlap each other, then use the Shape Dynamic brush to gently apply brushstrokes in a few areas of the selection. Then I set the layer to Color Dodge mode to generate the translucency effect.



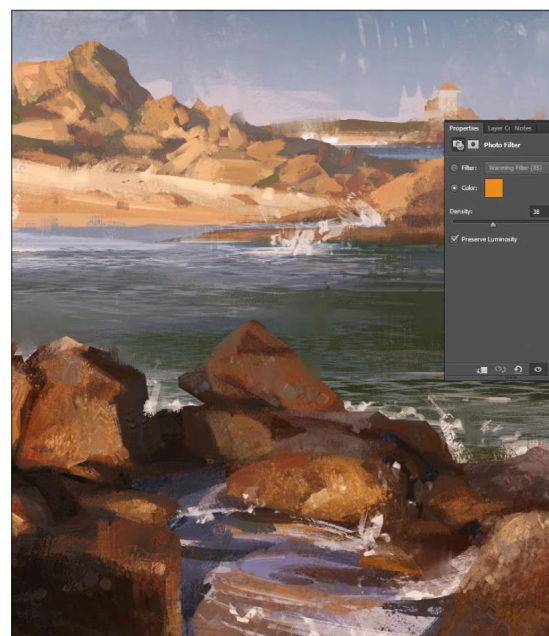
## 12 Work in terms of volume or light

To paint efficiently it's important to treat all of your composition elements in terms of volumes or light. In simple terms, with every single brushstroke you apply, ask yourself if that stroke gives the viewer more information about the volume of the rocks and/or the lighting behaviour on the rocks. If yes, then it means that there was a good reason to apply that stroke.



## 13 Finishing with a brush that uses Color Dynamics

As I near the final stage, I like to use the Color Jitter brush to add few strokes here and there. It adds some random colour variations to the image, creating a natural and casual feeling. However don't overdo it because it can quickly cloud your image with a lot of colour noise. You can play around with the Color Dynamics setting to control the intensity of the jitter.



## 14 Apply final adjustments

Adding a few layers of adjustments can enhance the final look of your image, enabling you to tweak the colours to suit your personal tastes. I do this stage simply for experimenting and to have some fun. The options that I use the most are Brightness/Contrast and Color. The first one makes it possible to shift or accentuate the greyscale, while the Color tool enables me to shift the colours towards warmer or cooler tones.



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## Artist insight

# 14 WAYS TO CREATE BETTER SKETCHES

**Jake Parker** wants you to embrace your sketchbook as a drawing platform. Here's his tips on making great art using traditional tools

### Artist PROFILE

**Jake Parker**  
LOCATION: US

Perhaps best known as the creator of Inktober, Jake has worked in animation, video games, comic books and children's books. When not drawing he's helping to run the popular online art tutorial site SVSlearn.com. [www.mrjakeparker.com](http://www.mrjakeparker.com)



In this age of accessible digital art tools it's easy to be enveloped in the world of pixels, sliders, and Undo. I use these tools all the time, especially under deadline. However, I worry that artists' work might lose a bit of their human touch the more digital art they create. That's why I love keeping a sketchbook and drawing in the least forgivable of mediums: ink.

Here's why artists should be keeping a sketchbook, and what they

should work on to improve their drawings. First, your sketchbook is like a nursery. It should be a place where you can grow and learn as an artist without judgment. Sure, you can share art you're proud of, but don't get caught up in making art just to post on Instagram. Instead, use the sketchbook to document your progress. Compare your latest sketchbooks to your oldest ones, just to see how far you've come.

Second, your sketchbook is a place where you can practise techniques. It

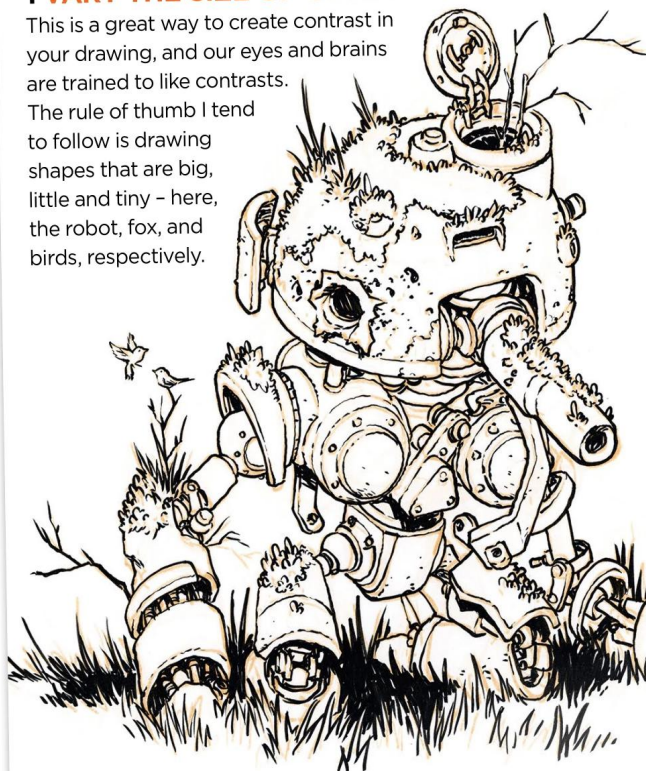
might be hard to keep in mind all the things you need to remember when drawing. However, by focusing on one principle or technique for each drawing you'll find that as you draw more you'll be able to combine these skills to make the art that you always hoped would come from your hand.

Finally, your sketchbook is a place where you draw what you like. If it amuses, interests, or is just fun for you, embrace it. Doing this will not only improve your craft, it'll help you find your voice.

### 1 VARY THE SIZE OF OBJECTS

This is a great way to create contrast in your drawing, and our eyes and brains are trained to like contrasts.

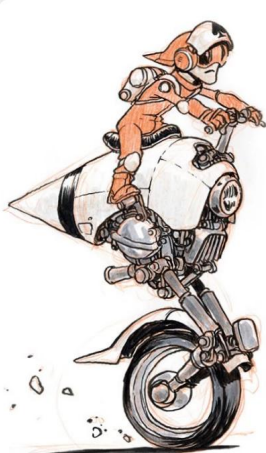
The rule of thumb I tend to follow is drawing shapes that are big, little and tiny - here, the robot, fox, and birds, respectively.



### 2 HAVE A FOCAL POINT

There should be one spot in your drawing that forces the eye to want to rest there. In this drawing it's the fox pointing its head at the canon. The dead space between them creates tension that traps your eye.

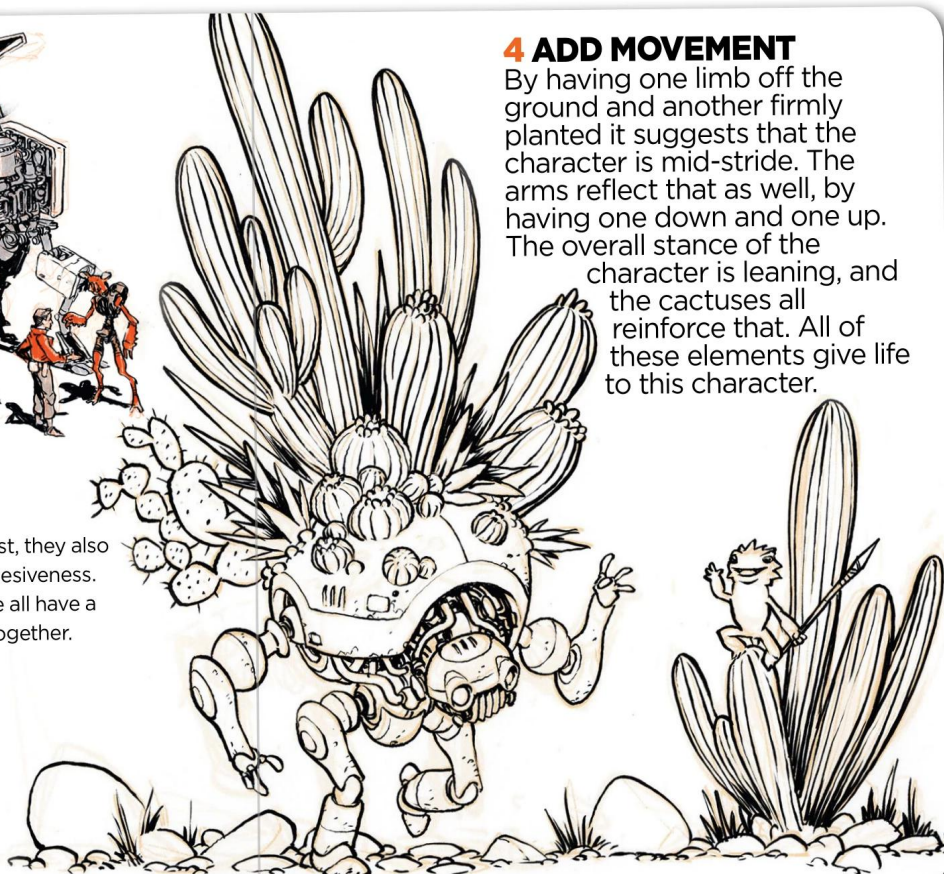
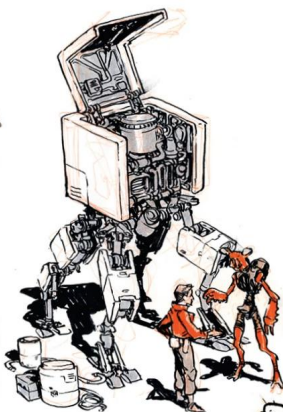




### 3 USE REPEATING SHAPES

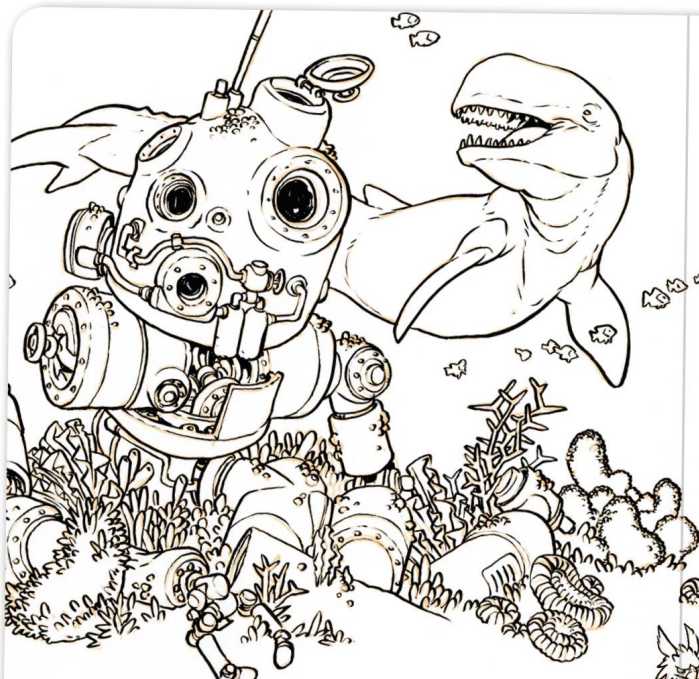
As much as the eye and brain like contrast, they also love repetition. It gives your drawing cohesiveness. Here the wheel well, helmet and fuselage all have a tapered design that tie these elements together.

“As much as the eye and brain like contrast, they also love repetition...”



### 4 ADD MOVEMENT

By having one limb off the ground and another firmly planted it suggests that the character is mid-stride. The arms reflect that as well, by having one down and one up. The overall stance of the character is leaning, and the cactuses all reinforce that. All of these elements give life to this character.

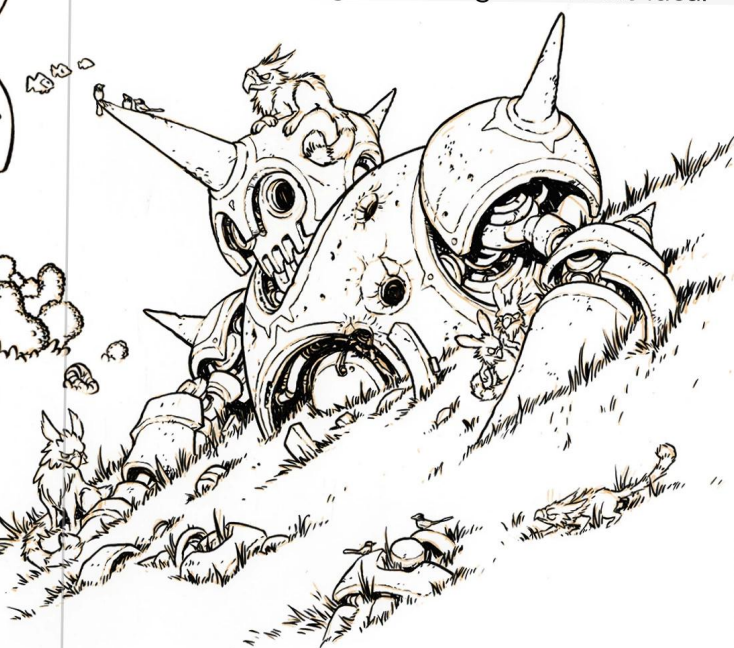


### 5 ADD TEXTURE

By adding scratches, pockmarks, rusty edges and holes you give the piece a sense of lived-in reality. Don't go overboard on texture, though. I follow the 80/20 rule in that 80 per cent of the space is smooth, and 20 per cent is textured.

### 6 LEAVE OUT DETAIL

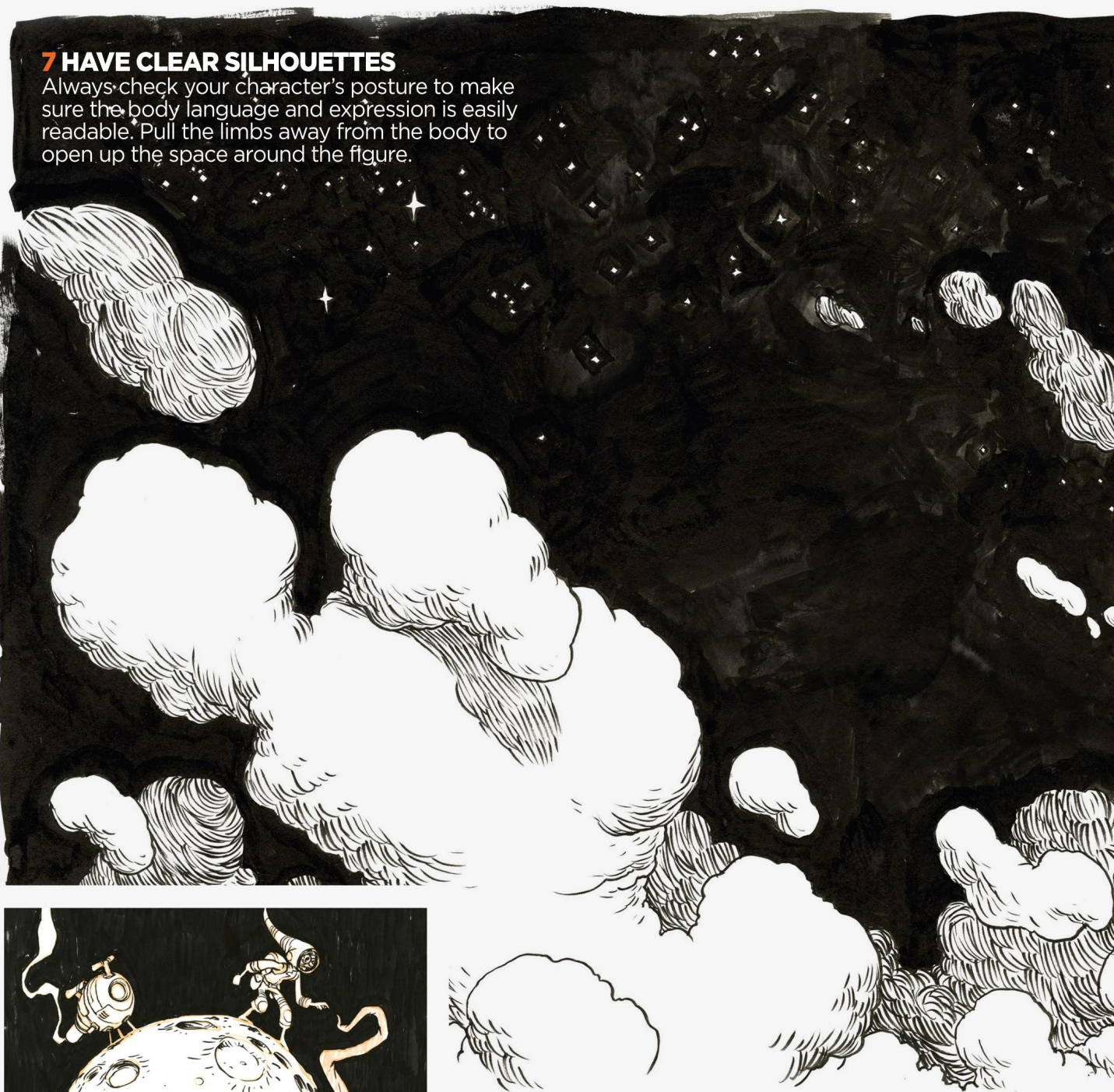
You don't have to draw every blade of grass, or every leaf on the tree. Too much detail can overcomplicate your drawing, and it's time-consuming. Sometimes just suggesting those shapes on the fringes is enough to sell the idea.





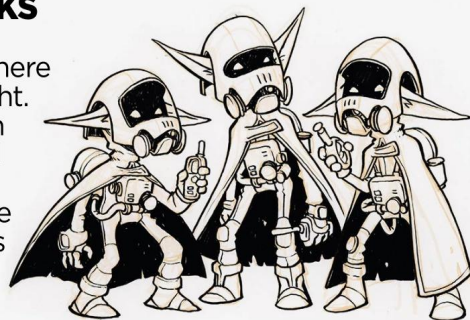
## 7 HAVE CLEAR SILHOUETTES

Always check your character's posture to make sure the body language and expression is easily readable. Pull the limbs away from the body to open up the space around the figure.



## 8 SPOTTING BLACKS

Don't be afraid to add black in areas where there would be very little light. When light can't reach nooks and crevices, fill them with black and suggest what's in there with silhouette or hints of objects receiving a little bit of light.





“Don't be afraid to add black in areas where there would be very little light”

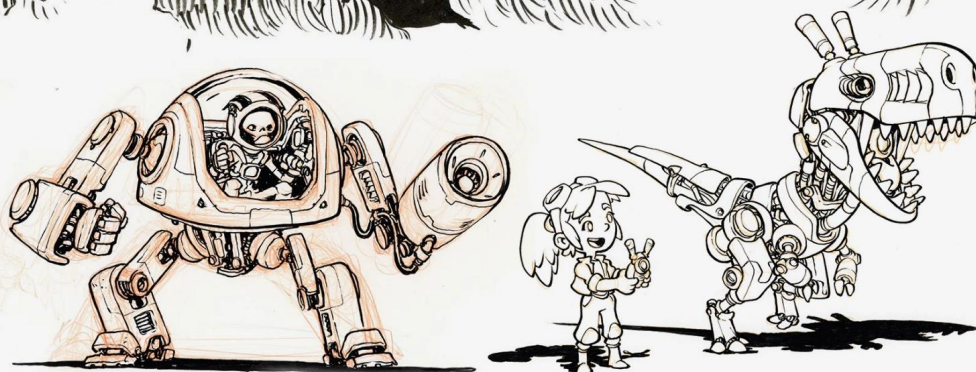


**INKTOBER ALL YEAR LONG**

Jake's book on inking techniques is released on 15 September.

**9 CAST SHADOWS**

When you can, add shadow underneath objects. This gives them a sense of dimension, locks them to a ground plane and suggests that there's actual light hitting the subject matter.





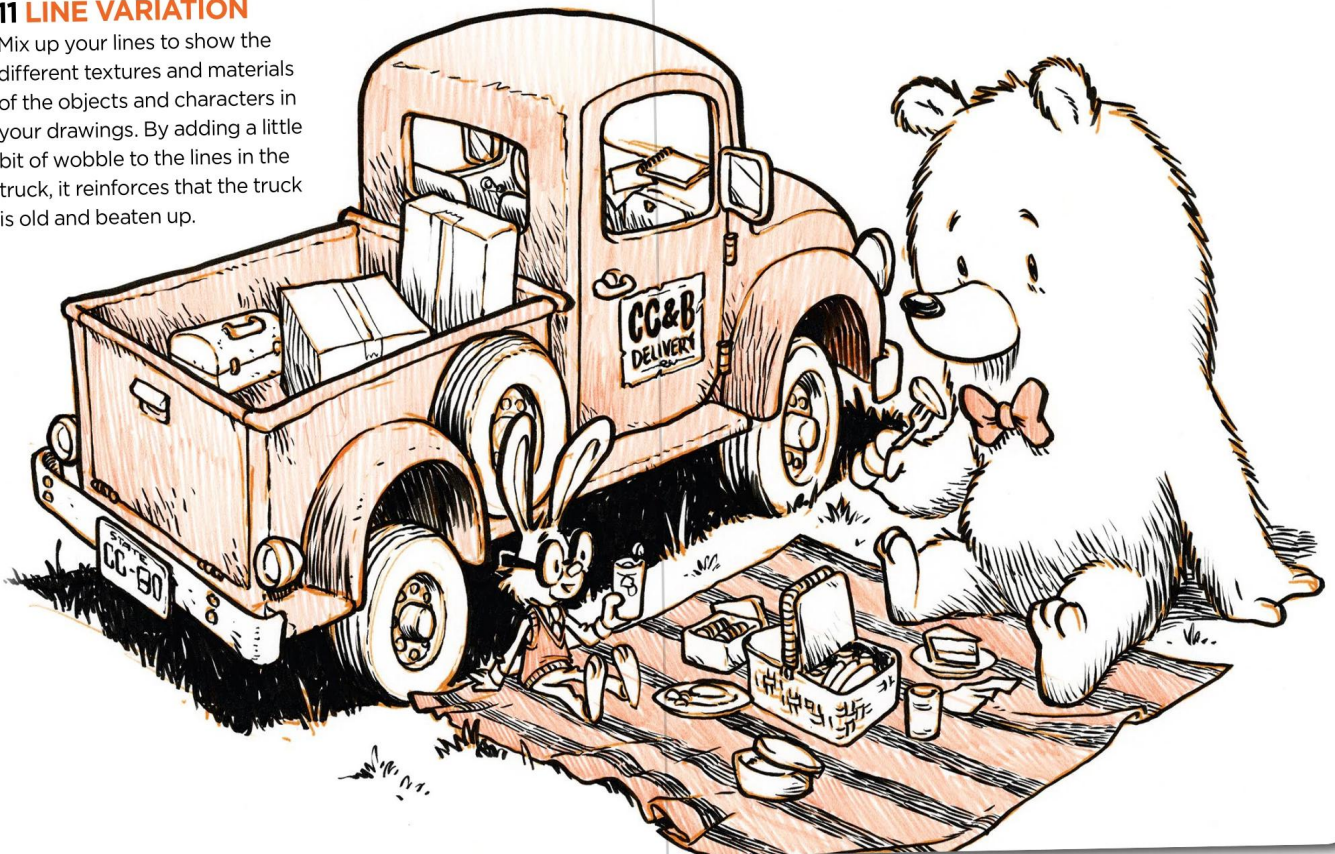
## 10 ADD POPS OF ONE COLOUR

I like to add pops of a single colour to areas of the drawing to make design elements stand out. It helps connect similar parts of the drawing, which makes it easier to read.



## 11 LINE VARIATION

Mix up your lines to show the different textures and materials of the objects and characters in your drawings. By adding a little bit of wobble to the lines in the truck, it reinforces that the truck is old and beaten up.

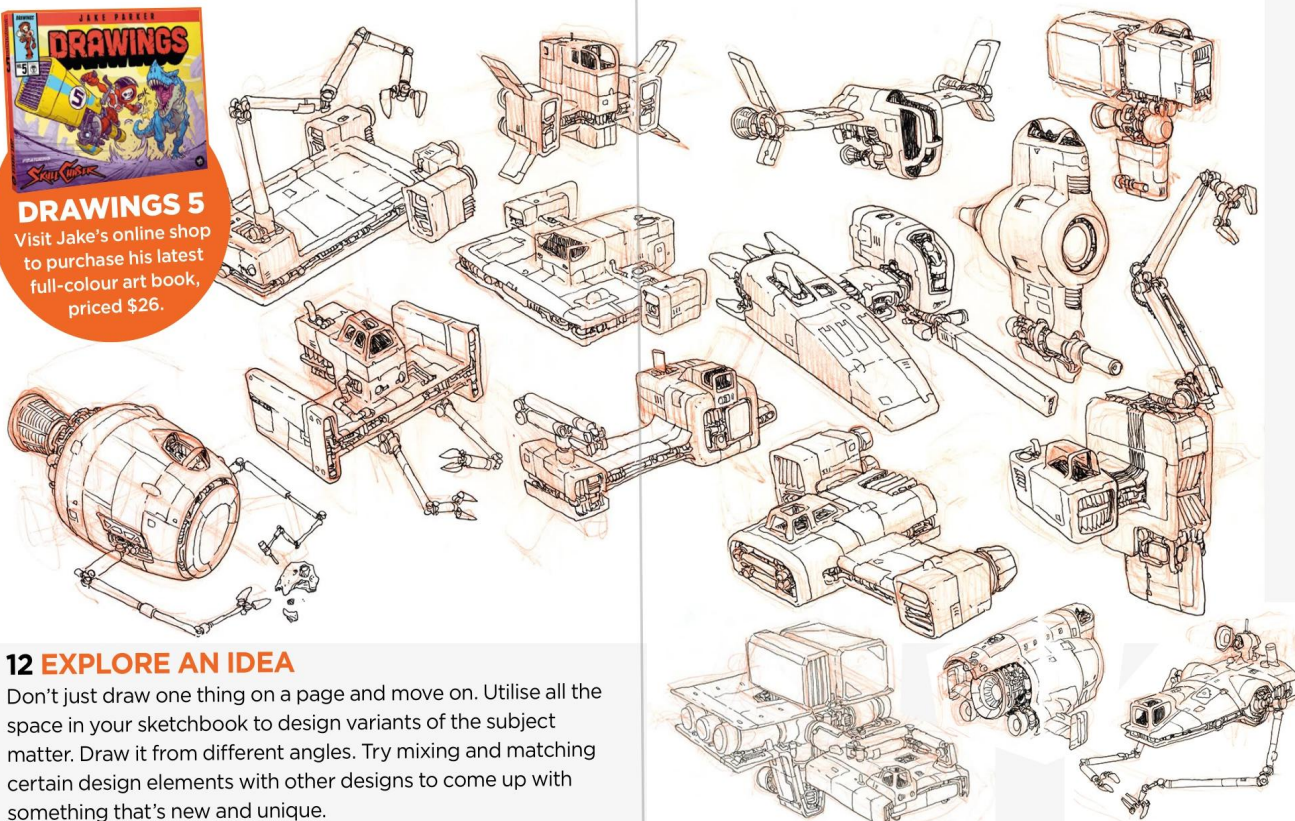






## DRAWINGS 5

Visit Jake's online shop to purchase his latest full-colour art book, priced \$26.



### 12 EXPLORE AN IDEA

Don't just draw one thing on a page and move on. Utilise all the space in your sketchbook to design variants of the subject matter. Draw it from different angles. Try mixing and matching certain design elements with other designs to come up with something that's new and unique.



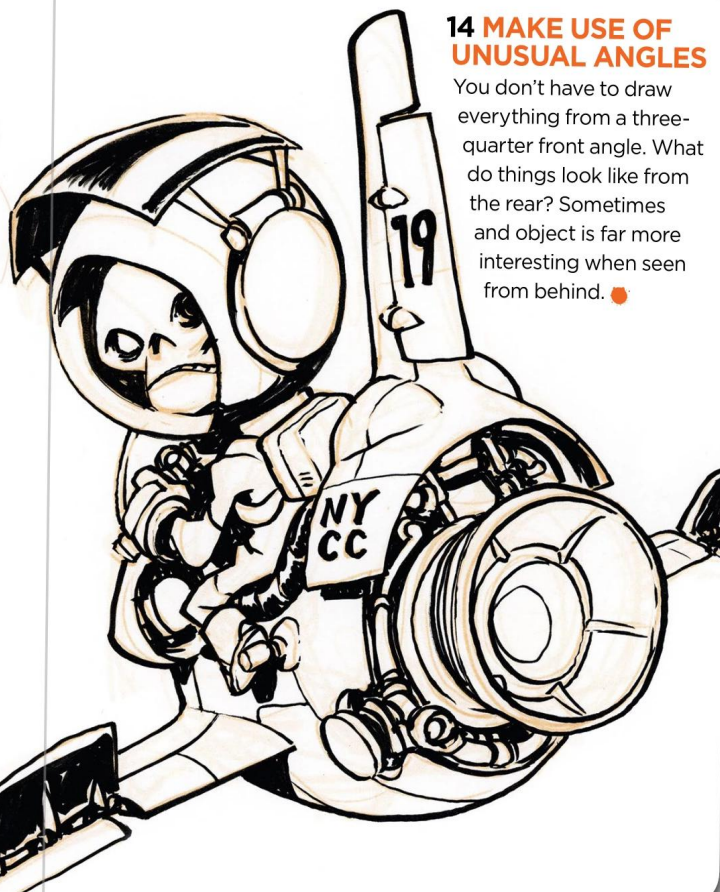
### 13 TRY A DIFFERENT PEN

Feel bored or stuck with a certain drawing style? Sometimes just switching up the pen you're using can unblock your creativity. Experiment with it, and see what strengths and weaknesses the tool has, then exploit them to make more interesting designs.

“ Sometimes just switching up the pen you're using can unblock your creativity ”

### 14 MAKE USE OF UNUSUAL ANGLES

You don't have to draw everything from a three-quarter front angle. What do things look like from the rear? Sometimes and object is far more interesting when seen from behind. ●





Images courtesy of NVIDIA



## Top laptops for digital creatives

**PORTABLE POWER** Choose the best laptops for your creative work, using our handy guide to the best options for graphic-intensive tasks

**D**igital creatives have high demands for their equipment. Making the decision on where to invest your money can be confusing with so many options available, all screaming for your attention.

NVIDIA has a technology platform for creatives called NVIDIA RTX Studio, which in essence is a badge tied to specific laptops and PCs that have been put through their paces in a series of rigorous tests. They have to meet a set of carefully selected hardware and software specifications to make sure they operate with sufficient speed and consistency to be certified for various applications and workflows.

NVIDIA works with developers, via software development kits (SDKs), to build robust tools. These ensure that each machine runs at optimum levels using drivers written to assist designers, with power delivered when it's needed.

Many users trust the NVIDIA name, with the latest RTX graphics cards offering plentiful performance for modern usage, like real-time ray tracing in 3D applications such as Unreal Engine. If you want to be

confident that your cash is being placed where it'll reward you with performance, reliability and longevity then take a look at this roundup, where we assess various systems, certified as RTX Studio laptops, to make an informed decision. We'll look at the physical device, its ergonomics, display characteristics and similar, but also see if these machines deliver on performance, with benchmark results to showcase each laptop's performance.

### DELL XPS 17

**Price £2,899**

Although Dell is well known for its standard office PCs, it's also gained a reputation for building solid laptops. The XPS range has been around for a while, but this incarnation takes things a step beyond earlier models.

The chassis is slimline, and the body is a smooth silver with a shiny finish. Opening the lid reveals a dark grey interior, coated in a soft-touch, rubber-feeling material, which is very pleasant underhand. The XPS comes with a GeForce RTX 2060 GPU, eight cores of 10th-generation i7 chip and 16GB RAM – a solid foundation for

a creative workhorse. Physically, it is attractive but not at the expense of comfort, as both the trackpad and keyboard are comfortable for extended periods of use. The display is a UHD touch-sensitive display with a brightness of 500 nits. It has good accuracy, but its real selling point is the edge-to-edge screen that does away with any intrusive bezels.

Dell clearly has the buying power and that's demonstrated by the solid build quality, which is obvious when you have the device in hand. It feels like you could hit the road with confidence and you'll gain confidence in your ability to create, too. For example, Illustrator runs smoothly, even with files that include thousands of paths, gradients and effects – something you'll be hard pushed to find in competing laptops.

The implementation of the RTX Studio drivers works like a charm here. Manipulating handles of vectors never misses a beat and navigating a large artboard with multiple items on it is slick, with none of the shearing and lag apparent on other systems. The XPS is an excellent tool for the digital artist and compares favourably to the MacBook Pro, making it a sure-fire addition to your shortlist.

### RAZER BLADE 15 ADVANCED

**Price £3,199**

The Razer looks the part, with a sleek chassis finished in a smooth black metal and a catchless lid that opens to reveal a beautiful display. This is both touch-sensitive and 4k, offering excellent contrast and clarity. If colour accuracy is critical to your work then this is the obvious choice, as the OLED display covers 100 per cent of the DCI-P3 colour gamut.

This particular GeForce RTX Studio machine is powered by

The solid Dell XPS 17 features an NVIDIA GeForce RTX 2060 GPU, eight cores in its 10th-gen i7 chip, 16GB RAM and has a UHD touch-sensitive display.





the GeForce RTX 2080 Super, an eight-core i7 chip at 2.3GHz and 16GB RAM. In terms of measurable performance the Razer tops the chart against the MacBook Pro. Running the Blender benchmarking files highlights the power of the GPU with the RTX studio drivers. The mean average of the various scenes when completed by the Razer is 25.9. This doesn't say much alone, but when compared to a 2019 MacBook Pro, which scores 41.3, it becomes a much clearer story. The NVIDIA RTX GPUs optimise rendering performance, meaning you can spend more time animating or modelling and less time waiting for the next image to clear.

It's clear that the Razer is a fantastic combination of hardware and software. The NVIDIA drivers do the job well, making this a true laptop for creatives. It's hard to know what part NVIDIA's SDK has played in the development process, but it provides excellent results that surpass that of the MacBook Pro, making it a great choice for the 3D artist looking to stay efficient and creative.

## GIGABYTE AERO 15

Price £2,499

The Aero is a stunning machine. It's as simple as that. It has a 4k, HDR

screen that has colour accuracy so good it's Pantone certified! Colour rendition is excellent, clarity is top-notch and the blacks are the most detailed in this group.

None of that matters if you have to stare at it, waiting for a file to open or for a render to complete, but the Gigabyte doesn't disappoint here either. It, too, has the RTX Studio badge, so its GeForce RTX 2070 Super GPU should be just right for editing in Premiere Pro.

Like others in the group it has the 10th-generation eight-core i9 chip with 16GB RAM, making this a great fit for designers, animators and video editors working in 4k. With that in mind let's consider benchmark results from Premiere Pro, compared to the MacBook Pro. The Aero can play back a multilayered sequence with effects without dropping a frame, in 4k and real time (24fps). Pushing the performance beyond the project frame rate shows it can render the sequence, with multiple 4k source files at nearly three times real time (61.32fps). This is nearly double that of the MacBook Pro, proving that the Mercury graphics engine, combined with the RTX 2070 Super (alongside the associated Studio drivers) means that a video



The Gigabyte Aero 15 comes with the NVIDIA GeForce RTX 2070 Super GPU (10th-gen eight-core i9 chip with 16GB RAM), and a 4k, HDR screen with excellent colour accuracy.

editor will save precious time. The performance makes it possible for media to be encoded while enabling editing to continue – a real-world benefit that can't be ignored.

## CONCLUSION

It's clear from the testing that NVIDIA has done a fine job running these laptops through the mill, with results showing that the RTX Studio certification makes for a top-quality design machine, perfect for 3D sculpting, 2D painting, film editing and grading, and music. The MacBook Pro is a bit of an outsider in this group, but deserves to be considered and compared, due to its familiarity in the design field. It's a worthy contender but does fall short in the performance area, as it's near-impossible to spec with cards that perform as well in the critical areas needed for content creators. The RTX Studio drivers and hardware clearly form the all-round package for the digital content creator.

Which laptop is best? If we were spending our hard-earned cash we'd go for the Razer. It's powerful, sleek and ensures you can work with as little interruption as possible.

In conclusion, if you're a dyed-in-the-wool Mac user, that's okay. There are options for you, but you're missing out on the best performance available for the work you do. It might be time to reassess those views and look to the PC market for GPU performance where it counts, and any of these RTX Studio laptops are more than worthy of making your shortlist.

You can find these laptops, as well as NVIDIA Studio certified laptops and PCs, at Scan Computers (<http://ifxm.ag/scan-nvidia>), which is one of the UK's leading suppliers of computer hardware and is well-versed with professional video and graphics workstations. ●

The powerful Razer Blade 15 Advanced has a touch-sensitive, 4k display and comes with the NVIDIA GeForce RTX 2080 Super GPU, an eight-core i7 chip at 2.3GHz and 16GB RAM.

“The RTX Studio drivers and hardware clearly form the all-round package for the digital content creator”

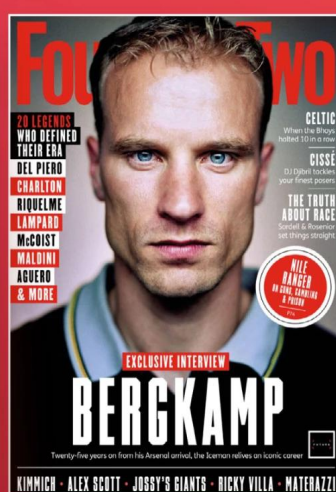




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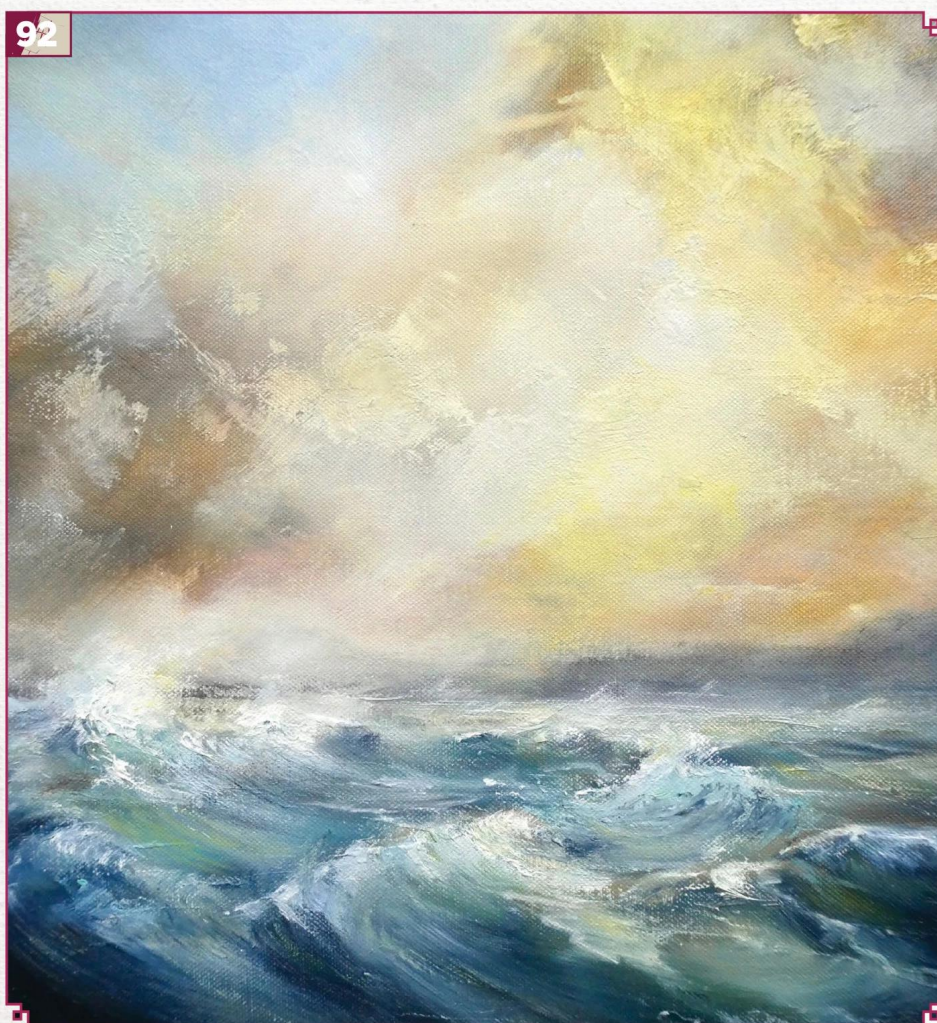
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**ImagineFX**

# Traditional Artist

Inspiration and advice from the best pro artists

**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

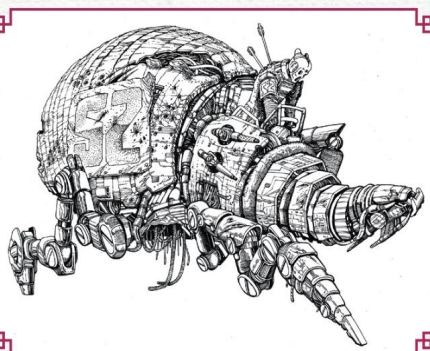
Discover this month's selection of the finest traditional art, which has been sent in by you!

### 92 Workshop: Paint like Turner

Want to achieve a Turner-esque seascape, full of movement, with a glowing, dramatic sky? Sarah Jane Brown shows you how.

### 98 First Impressions: Sam Guay

Learn why this New England artist is keen to slow down her painting process.





# FXPosé

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS



## Madalyn McLeod

**LOCATION:** US **MEDIA:** Watercolour, gouache, coloured pencil, ink  
**WEB:** [www.madalynmcLeod.com](http://www.madalynmcLeod.com)

Madalyn is a fantasy artist who takes inspiration from nature, folklore and fairy tales to create ethereal paintings. Her work features flowing line-art, femininity and a moody atmosphere.



### 1 SYLPH

"Strange and beautiful, she moves through the winds as a part of the sky itself. She knows the divine and ancient wisdom of the heavens."

### 2 UNSEELIE MUSHROOM FAE

"Beware of mushroom patches in woods. These faeries defend their patches of mushrooms by striking humans with madness!"

### 3 QUAN YIN AND THE DRAGON.

"The revered characters from Chinese mythology. Quan Yin is the goddess of compassion, mercy and kindness, and is often shown with a dragon."









## Atmaja Septa Miyosa

**LOCATION:** Indonesia **MEDIA:** Gel-pen (0.28mm) **WEB:** [www.septamiyosa.blogspot.com](http://www.septamiyosa.blogspot.com)

For freelance illustrator Atmaja, drawing appears to be a necessity. "Lots of creatures live in my head," he says, "so they must be born into the world before they breed and fill up my brain."

1



### 1 **INSTIGATORORNC**

"The instigator has possessed this character because of their inter-dimensional language skills. Angry communities attacked him and broke his horn."

### 2 **SCOOPERK**

"This inter-galactic mine tracker has a strong sense of smell in its tendrils. He can detect explosive aromas from a distance."

### 3 **TRACKEEROOM**

"An old creature who has the ability to track objects between dimensions. Many communities ask for his help."

### 4 **INTRUDERWEAR**

"This prison guard officer can be relied upon to disperse prisoners who often fight over the results of minerals that are mined through their forced labour."

### 5 **THE TRAVOO**

"An electric supply vehicle caught by the enemy and shot with arrows. The Travoo returns to their headquarters with an injured driver but its fighting spirit intact."

2





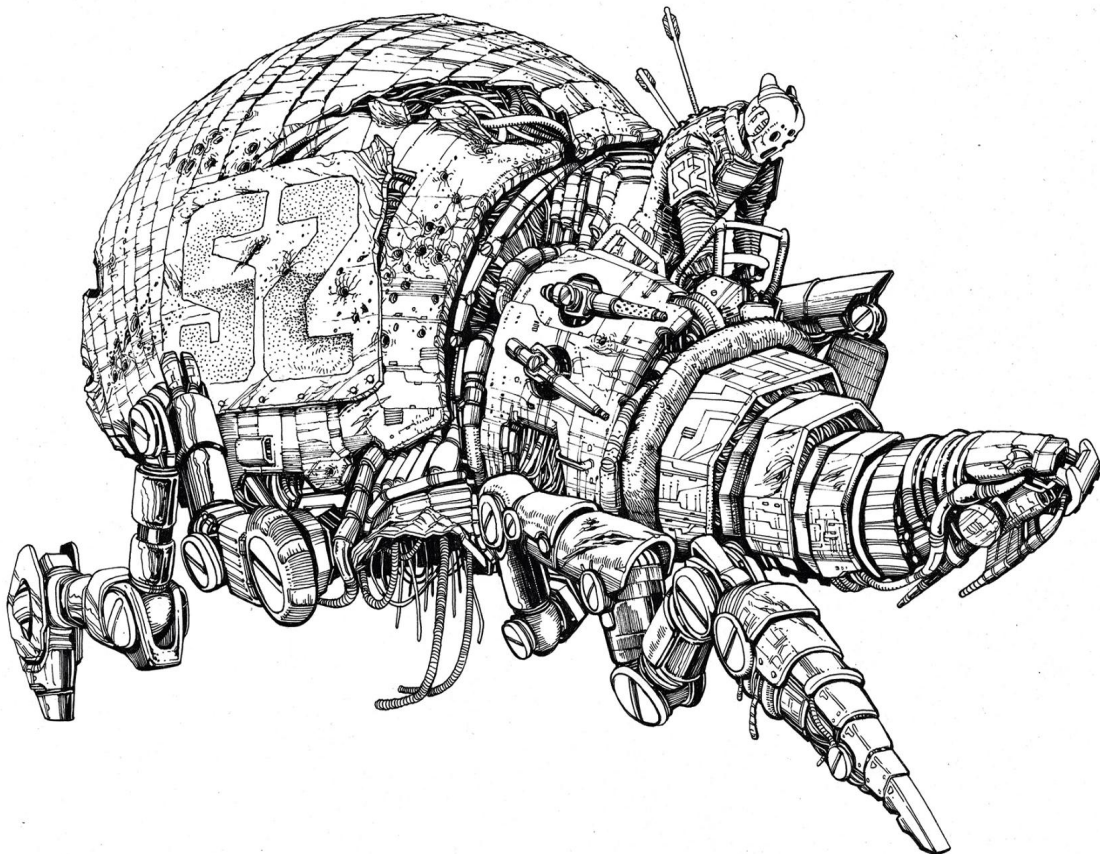
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Oils

# PAINT LIKE TURNER

Want to achieve a Turner-esque seascape, full of movement, with a glowing, dramatic sky?

SARAH JANE BROWN shows you how

Joseph Mallord William Turner is revered as the master of light and atmosphere. His sublime, luminous skies, swirling seas and dramatic storm clouds can suck the viewer in and transport them through a vortex of paint to some otherworldly experience.

For me, a Turner painting can project far more than the sum of its material parts. More than any other artist of his time, he managed to communicate something 'sensory'. Personally, this is the reason that I paint. It's a way of expressing something emotional that I can't adequately describe with mere words. Turner's vast repertoire of techniques was in itself a visual vocabulary; an emotive language full of hope and fear, light and shade, complexity and subtlety.

Like Turner, I tend to make loose preliminary sketches outdoors, taking in not just the sights, but all

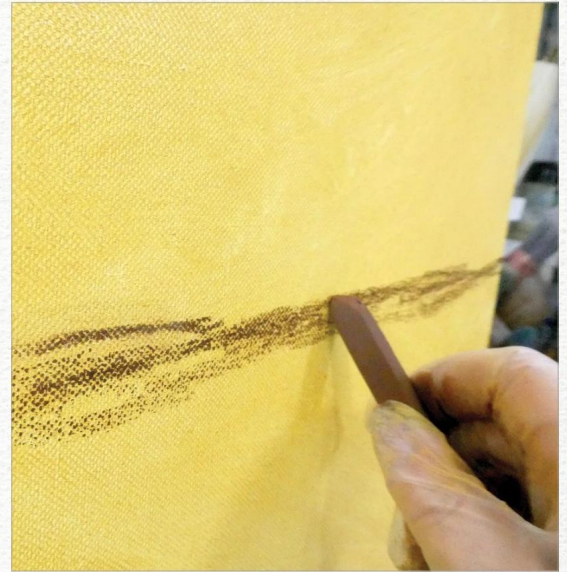
the sensations of the experience and committing them to memory. Back in the studio I can transfer these experiences onto canvas in a more controlled environment.

As you'll soon discover, Turner's method of layering glazes with areas of thicker paint requires a great deal of patience. Each layer must be dry before adding the next. This is why I'm always working on several paintings simultaneously. All around my studio there are paintings at various stages, propped or hanging up to dry, waiting for the next layer. Fortunately, thanks to the properties of modern materials, we don't have to wait quite as long as Turner did!



Sarah developed a deep understanding of the sea during her previous maritime career. Now she creates atmospheric and emotive paintings that capture the sensations of the coastal experience. You can see more of her seascape art at [www.sjbfineart.com](http://www.sjbfineart.com). ➔





## MATERIALS

### OILS

■ Limited palette of oil colours: Lemon yellow or similar, Yellow ochre, Ultramarine blue, Cerulean blue, Magenta or Alizarin crimson, Cadmium red, Burnt umber, Titanium white (I use Alkyd for speed of drying)

### BRUSHES

■ A large two- or three-inch flat brush, one-inch natural hair brushes Round, one-inch natural hair brushes Flat, size 14 Brights, size 8 Filberts, size 5 Brights, and a selection of palette painting knives

### OTHER MEDIA

■ Yellow ochre (raw powdered pigment or acrylic)  
■ Acrylic matte medium  
■ Whiting (chalk dust) available from good art suppliers  
■ A natural-coloured soft pastel (Sienna or Umber)

### MISCELLANEOUS

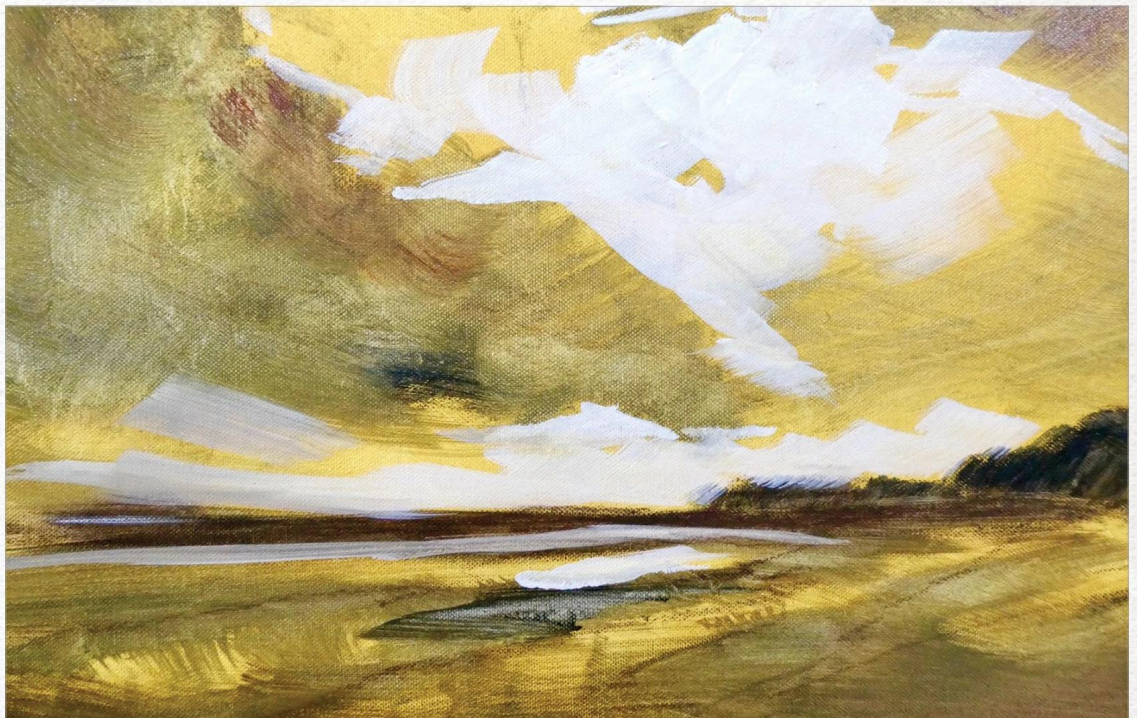
■ 40x50cm cotton primed canvas  
■ Rags/paper towel  
■ Fast-drying flow medium such as Liquin  
■ Fast-drying painting butter or impasto medium (optional)

## 1 *Make a Flemish Bole*

Turner usually began his paintings by covering the primed canvas with a mid-toned ground, often favouring a 'Flemish Bole' made from ground Yellow ochre, whiting (chalk dust) and a binder such as egg white. Fortunately, these days we have more convenient solutions and a suitable alternative can be made by mixing a little acrylic paint with matte medium. It's important to still add some whiting, though, because this makes the surface more absorbent. It helps with the drying time of subsequent layers and provides a 'tooth' for the paint to adhere to.

## 2 *Lay the groundwork*

Using a large brush or rag, I apply the Flemish Bole mixture with diagonal strokes until the canvas is covered. Next, I roughly sketch in the composition using a soft pastel, making sure that the key elements are in the right place. I place my horizon approximately along the bottom third and decide that I wanted the viewer's eye to meander around the painting on an S-shaped journey. Mapping out the main focal point and areas of interest at this stage ensures a strong composition, creating a good structure from which to build your painting.



## 3 *Block in your tones*

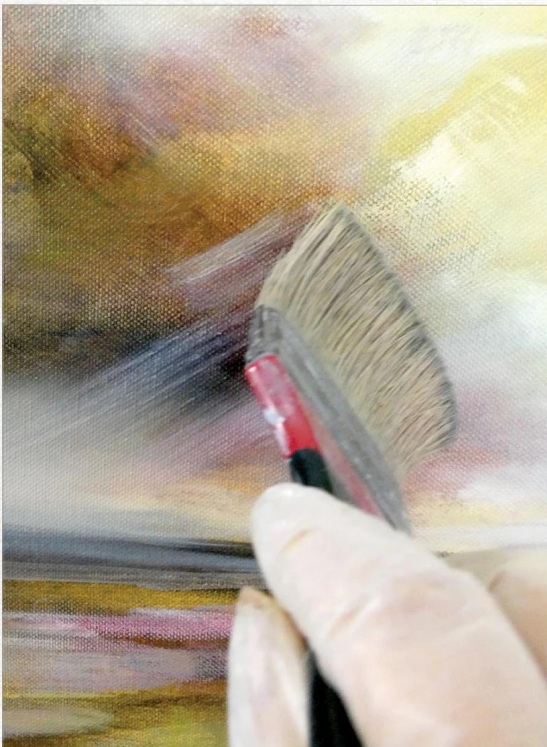
I mix up a nice, neutral dark using some Ultramarine with a little Burnt umber. Then I wet the brush, pick up some of the paint and thinly block in the darkest areas. Next, I use Pure white to block in the lightest areas. I try not get carried away here. The areas should remain fairly separate and clean, leaving the yellow ground to show through in the mid-toned areas. Then I let this layer dry completely before moving on, but for speed you can do this stage in acrylic.





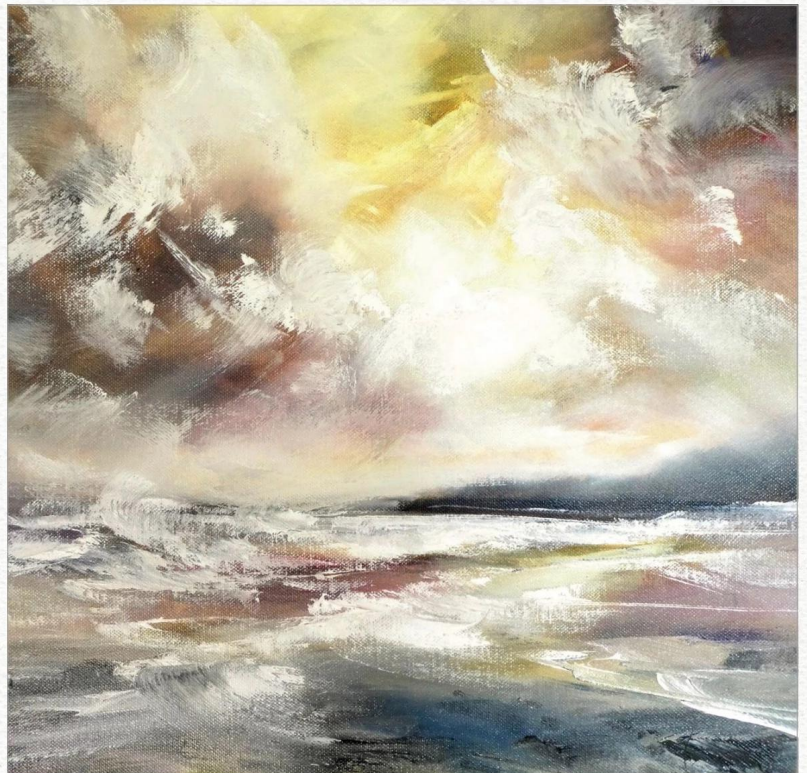
## 4 *Apply the first glaze*

I pour out a little puddle of glaze medium and, picking up a small amount of paint with the tip of a clean brush, mix a transparent 'wash'. I make sure there's no white or other opaque colour in this mix, or it will go cloudy. Then I apply the glaze over the areas I want to tint; the transparency will create an optical depth of colour that's otherwise impossible to achieve. It's like treating a piece of wood with rich layers of coloured varnish, rather than coating it with flat, brown paint! I apply a mix of Burnt umber and Ultramarine in the dark areas, then add some warmer reds towards the light source, and yellow over the lightest areas for that golden 'Turner-esque' glow.



## 5 *Add some softness*

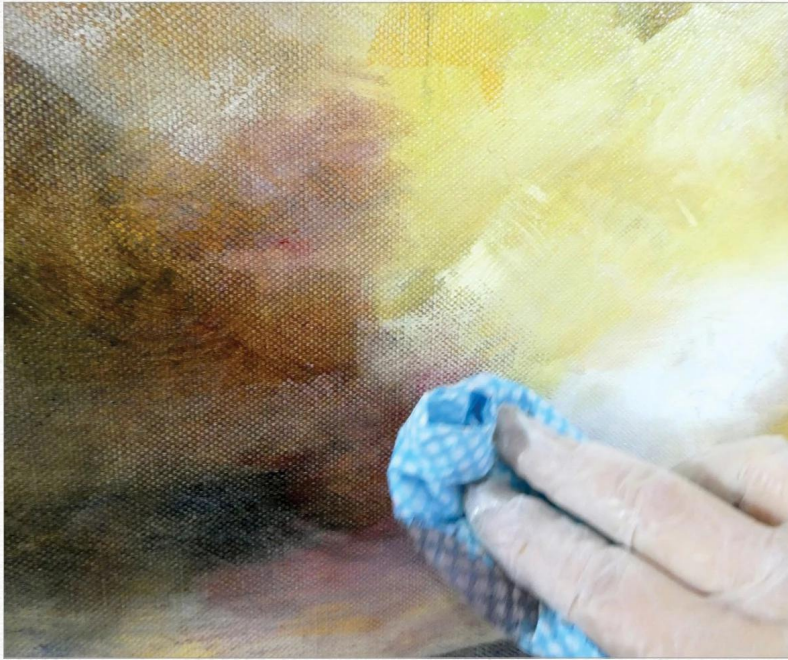
When the glaze is tacky to touch, I add in a little white into some areas, gently blending it with a circular motion into the coloured glaze to create a misty, atmospheric effect along the horizon. I can add the illusion of light beams using a big, three-inch flat brush and a quick, sweeping gesture. Note that this is very easy to overdo, so I'm careful to use a very small amount of paint and then soften it with a clean, dry brush.



## 6 *May the force be with you!*

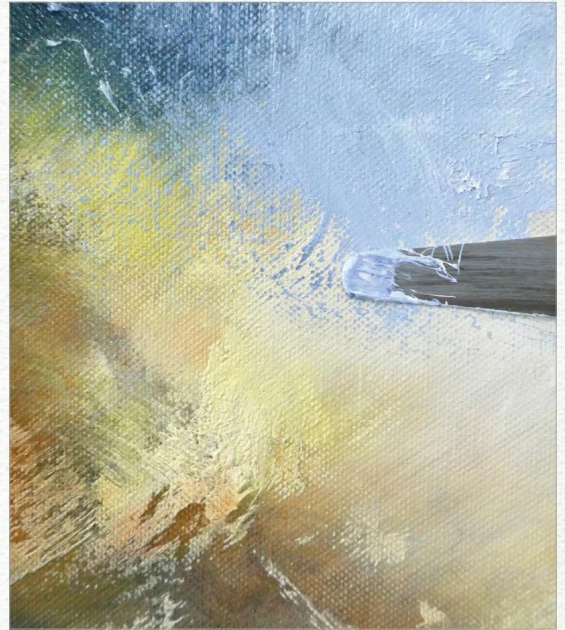
A white area under a glaze is called a force. Light passes through the glaze and is reflected, or 'forced' back to the eye, creating the illusion that light is being emitted from within the painting. With each layer of glaze, less light bounces back from the original force, so I now need to reintroduce some thicker white areas, ready to repeat the glazing process. In this way layers are built up, giving a real sense of depth and complexity. Bear in mind that this will look a bit like a snow storm until the next glazes go on. It's important to let it dry first. ➤





## 7 *Repeat the glazes*

When the second force is completely dry I can add more glazes. I want to glaze the sea area with some of the sky colours to give both the impression of some reflection and a cohesive feel to the entire painting. I like to use a rag to develop a pleasing texture, a smudged effect or even to lift off areas that seem too thick. I also use my fingers for smaller areas, to push the paint into the canvas or scratch back to the previous layer. Turner also used rags in this way and famously had long, paint-stained fingernails.



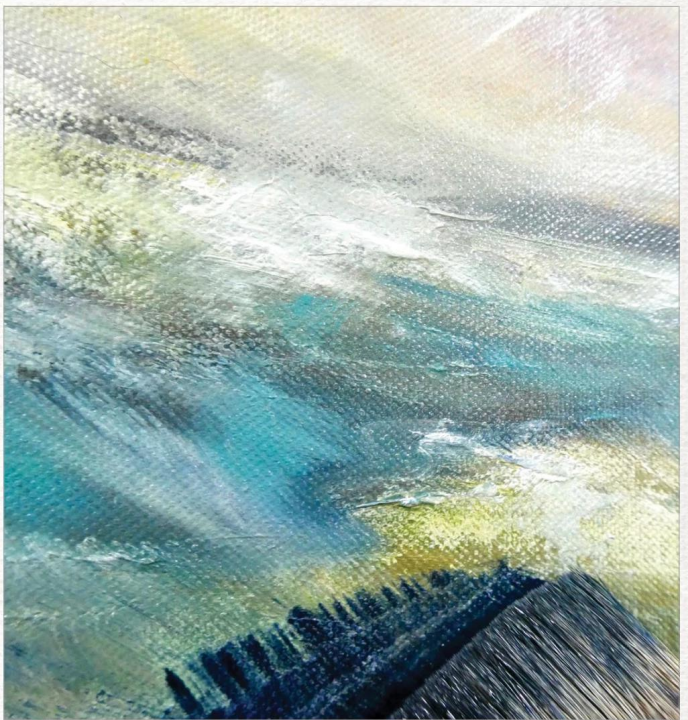
## 8 *A touch of blue sky*

One of the reasons that Turner's paintings have enduring popularity is that however dark, stormy or dramatic his scenes were, they always contained an area that held a sense of hope. There was always a chink of blue sky, a glimpse of sunlight through clouds, the promise of something brighter. Here, by adding a small area of blue sky above the storm clouds, I'm able to lift the mood of the entire painting.



## 9 *Introduce the colours of the sea*

I create a dark, greenish glaze by adding some yellow to the cloud mix (Ultramarine and Burnt umber). Then with a large brush I add this to the bottom corner of the canvas and any areas that would be in shadow. Using the two blues and the yellow, I then mix a range of sea greens and, with a smaller brush, make short, overlapping strokes (like intersecting smiles). To keep the effect dynamic, I leave areas where the underlayers peek through. Finally, I add a little white to the green to make a few lighter areas, such as where the waves are facing the light.







## 10 *Make waves using a palette knife*

Now I take a tiny amount of the light green mix and add more white to it. I turn a palette knife onto its side and pick up a thin roll of the mixture along its edge. Next, I touch the knife edge to the canvas and 'slice' it sideways, working directly into the wet glazes, before flattening it slightly to the canvas and dragging it downwards in a curving diagonal. As I do this I jiggle the knife sideways in a zig-zagging motion. This does take a bit of practice, so it's worth trying out a few times on some scrap canvas or paper beforehand.



## 11 *Creating spray*

I take a small, stiff brush and some thick, almost-white paint, and add a few small highlights on the crests of the main wave shapes by flicking the brush upwards lightly so that it appears as though the wind is whipping up foam and blowing it from the tops into a spray. Again, it's wise to practise this first! I reserve this treatment for the waves that form a focal point. It's best to avoid doing this everywhere; less is more! Below the crests, I also add a few strokes of yellow glaze where the waves face the glow in the sky. This gives the appearance of a reflection and helps tie the sea and sky areas together.



## 12 *Making final tweaks*

I hold a small, long-handled brush at arm's length and tease out any foamy areas, add any small shadows or reflections for implied detail and dot in some thicker highlights if needed. If the paint consistency is a little too soft, I'll squeeze some out onto a scrap of cardboard. This will draw out the excess oil and stiffen the paint. Then I stand back to assess and stop, before I make any further tweaks! ●



# First Impressions

✧ Sam Guay ✧

Learn why this New England artist is keen to slow down her painting process



Where did you grow up and how has this influenced your art? The woods of New England have a certain

haunted character to them. I've lived most of my life here, and spent many of my childhood days playing out in the forest on my own. That moodiness has seeped into a lot of my personal art and seems to have grown stronger over time.

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

My influences are all over the place. I love psychedelic and atmospheric horror movies, anything that indulges in the senses, weird medieval manuscripts, explorations of dreams and unusual phenomena, and a whole spectrum of music.

What character or scene that you've painted do you most identify with?

Oh wow, this is a difficult question. Most of the characters in my art symbolise ideas more than being fleshed-out characters, but my piece Greentongue has a lot of personal meaning for me. All the plants and insects in that piece can be found within walking distance of where I grew up and it holds a lot of my emotions about the



## GREENTONGUE

"A watercolour painting created for Copro Gallery's show *Personal Gods*, which was curated by Allen Williams."

“I’m trying to keep myself from rendering every inch of my paintings with detail...”

woods there – especially the death of my favourite tree, a wild apple growing where the yard ends and the forest begins.

What was your first paid commission, and does it stand as a representation of your talent?

Professionally, I believe that my first commission was for Nightmare

Magazine in late 2014. At the time I was just beginning to explore my current style and hadn't begun to find my voice yet. However, there are traces of my hand in that painting, namely in the swirling line-work.

What's the last piece you finished, and how do the two differ?

I recently completed a movie poster and I doubt you'd guess the two pieces were painted by the same artist. They're different in every way save for a love of colour.

Please describe to us how your art is evolving?

Recently I've had a great need to slow down and spend extra time in any part of my process that frustrates me. I'm trying to keep myself from rendering every inch of my paintings with detail so that I can find a balance between letting watercolour do its thing and being my very meticulous self.

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

I don't glorify the idea of making a living solely off of art any more. It has its perks, but there are times I'd rather be making art without the burden of it needing to pay my bills. I'm very supportive of artists making their income from things that aren't art and not putting pressure on them to make their creative work their main source of income.

What does the future hold for you?

I'm looking forward to focusing on my next big personal project. But that's a secret for now.

Sam's art explores inner worlds that are woven with magic and tell stories of empowerment through connection to nature, transformation, and owning your darkness. See more at [www.samguay.com](http://www.samguay.com).

## THE CULLING

"This was painted for Haven Gallery's show *Musicbox*, and inspired by the song *The Culling* by Chelsea Wolfe."







Image by Nick Harris - Tutorial IFX 187

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 **ArtRage 6**



*Follow me, I will take you through the veil  
between our world and the Other...*

Edited, expanded edition of Iris Compiet's *Faeries of the Faultlines*, available on the summer solstice, when the veil between our world and the Other is thinnest, June 21st, 2021. \$39.95

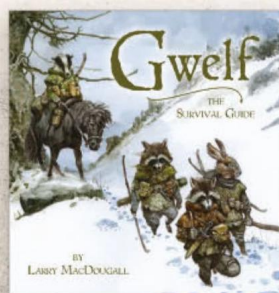


*Faeries of the Faultlines* is an artist's journal detailing the journey through the Faultlines, a world filled with faeries, dragons, witches, giants, and many more fantastical creatures. The creatures are pulled from mythology and imagination and create a fully-realized, fantastical world full of nature and life that lies just beyond our own. Details on the creatures are intricately woven between gorgeous watercolours and sketches by Iris herself making this book a unique experience. A must-have for art lovers, faerie followers, and fantasy aficionados.



We are delighted to share  
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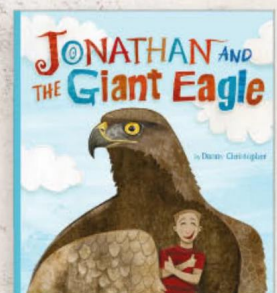
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