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FUTURE
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PETER POPKEN! INSIGHTS FROM THE BLADE RUNNER 2049 & DUNE CONCEPT ARTIST



Image by Nick Harris - Tutorial IFX 187

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 **ArtRage 6**

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



Most of you will receive this edition as we nudge a little further into 2021. All I can say is – and I know you'll agree – thank goodness for that! It was the strangest year and there has been so much to deal with. I started 2020 with high aims and aspirations, but ended the year

with simple, but humble thanks and gratitude for things I took for granted: family, friends, my health and a roof over my head. I'm truly thankful for what I have.

I've been astounded at the resilience and strength of not only my colleagues here at ImagineFX, but also with artists whom I know and have worked with over the past 12 difficult months. Many have persevered through tough times. Therefore, every day I take time out to appreciate the little things in life, which has really helped me focus on what's important.

A new year always brings a new hope and I'm very much looking forward to what it brings. Take care and thank you for your support of what we do. Here's to 2021!

Claire

Editor in chief
claire@imaginefx.com

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

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The art of Peter Popken

Feast your eyes on the film art painting from this incredible German concept artist.

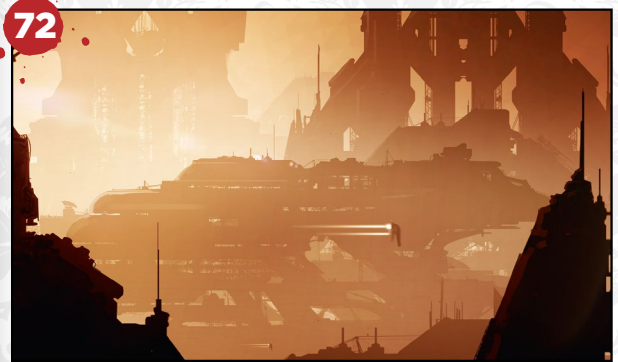
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Grease lightning

See the informative step-by-step Blender workshop and video from James Lewis-Vines.

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Matte painting masterclass

Saby Menyhei is a world-renowned matte painter, so make quick tracks to page 72 for his insight.



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Vertex 2021 is the ultimate event for 2D and 3D artists. If you want to break into the concept art industry, improve your drawing skills, learn how film and video game studios work, or network with fellow artists, then Vertex 2021 is the place to be. There'll be a host of big names in attendance, including Loish and Aaron Blaise.

ImagineFX is behind the event, and new subscribers will receive a free Vertex 2021 pass worth £26.25. The event is being held virtually on 25 February 2021, so you can be part of Vertex from the comfort of your own home or studio! You can find out what's happening on the day by visiting www.vertexconf.com.



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TURN TO **PAGE 28** FOR DIGITAL SUBSCRIPTIONS

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Artist Portfolio

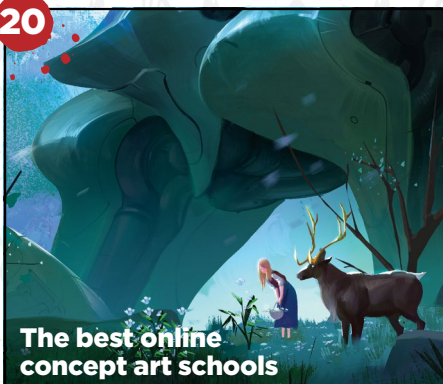
PETER POPKEN



"Inspiration usually comes unexpectedly. Most likely when you don't need it"

Peter on dealing with his muse

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The best online concept art schools

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Artist in Residence: Colleen Doran



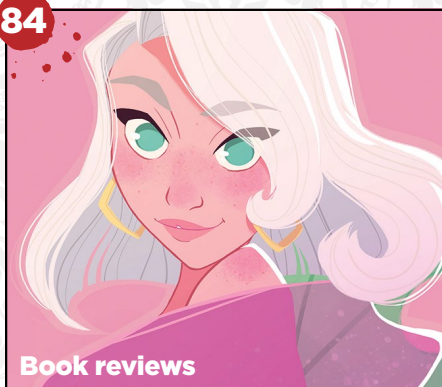
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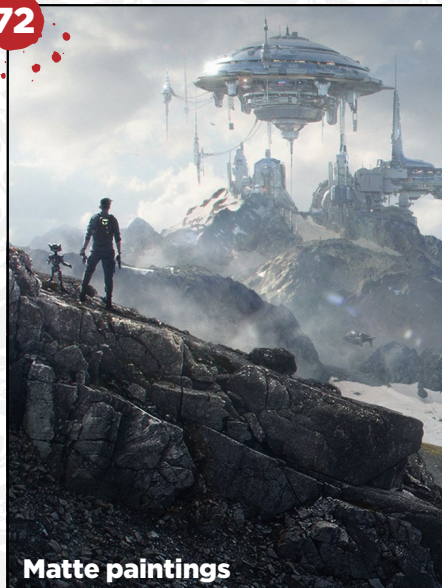
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58 Use contrast in your concept art

Lane Brown composes two characters with an interesting balance of contrast and harmony to achieve greater impact.

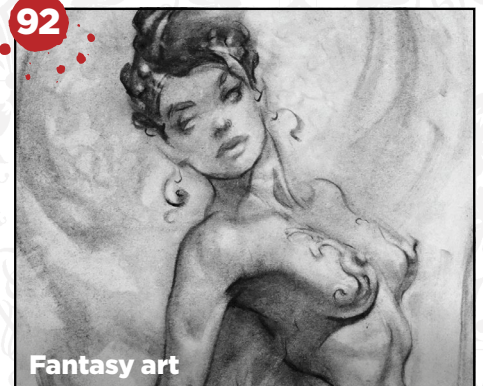
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James Lewis-Vines quickly visualises an immersive underwater environment.

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Traditional Artist

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

92 Workshop: Draw fantasy art from reference

Patrick J Jones draws a character using his anatomy knowledge to go beyond what was originally captured in-camera.

98 First Impressions: Craww

Exploring art on his own terms is important to this English artist.



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Resources

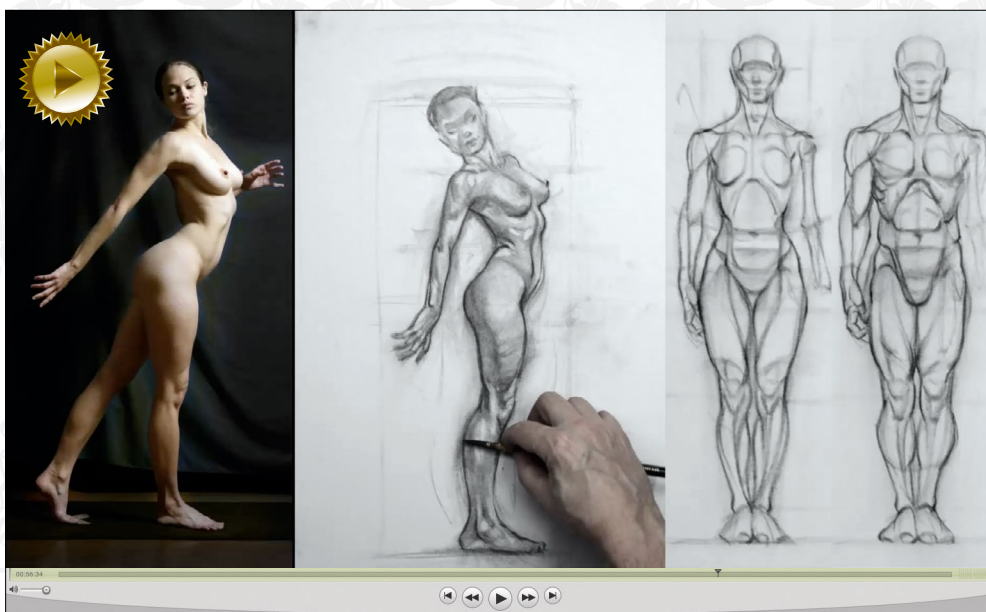
Visit <http://ifxm.ag/concept196art> to download this issue's workshop videos and custom brushes

WORKSHOP VIDEOS



Turn a Grease Pencil sketch into dynamic artwork

See how James Lewis-Vines uses Blender's Grease Pencil to create elements of an underwater scene, before adjusting the camera for the strongest composition. His workshop's on page 62.



Use references as a basis for your character art

Watch Patrick J Jones as he draws a fantasy figure using charcoal, based on reference photos. Patrick applies his anatomy knowledge to modify the source material – read how on page 92.

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX

Editorial
Editor in Chief **Claire Howlett**
claire@imaginefx.com

Art Editor **Daniel Vincent**
Operations Editor **Cliff Hope**

Contributors
Lane Brown, Dom Carter, Thomas Chamberlain-Keen, Colleen Doran, Gary Evans, Matt Hanson, Patrick J Jones, James Lewis-Vines, Tom May, Saby Menyhei, Gary Stuckey

Advertising
Media packs are available on request
Chief Revenue Officer **Zack Sullivan**
UK Commercial Sales Director **Clare Dove**
Advertising Sales Manager **Mike Pyatt**
michael.pyatt@futurenet.com, 01225 687538
Account Sales Director **George Lucas**
george.lucas@futurenet.com, 01225 687331

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Customer service
Email: help@magazinesdirect.com
Telephone **+44 (0) 330 333 1113**
Group Marketing Director
Magazines & Memberships **Sharon Todd**

Circulation
Head of Newstrade **Tim Mathers**

Production
Head of Production **Mark Constance**
Production Project Manager **Clare Scott**
Advertising Production Manager **Joanne Crosby**
Digital Editions Controller **Jason Hudson**
Production Manager **Vivienne Calver**

Management
Editor in Chief, Creative & Design **Claire Howlett**
Group Art Director **Warren Brown**
Content Director **Chris George**
Brand Director **Matthew Pierce**
Managing Director – Future Passions **Andrea Davies**
Commercial Finance Director **Dan Jotcham**

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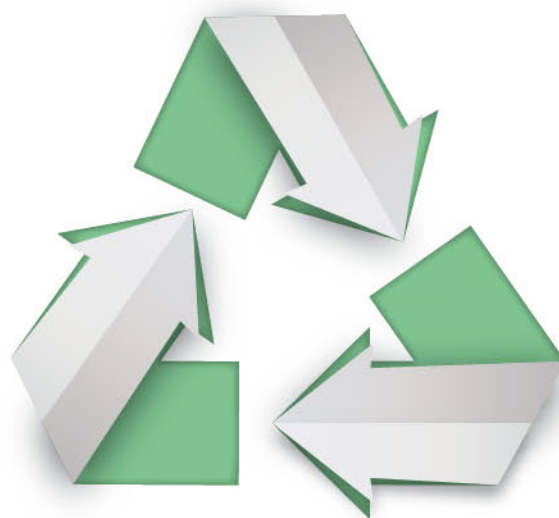
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FXPosé

PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



Qistina Khalidah

LOCATION: Malaysia MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: www.artstation.com/qissus

"I'm inspired by the gold textures in Gustav Klimt's paintings," says Qistina. "My core value is to always effectively tell a story in just one painting."



1 TEARS

"I wanted to portray the sadness of women who have lost their loved ones in battle for the sake of glory."

2 BEAUTY

"This is an elf prodigy whose senses were robbed by envy due to his status and beauty."



3 BLEAK WALKER PALADIN

"A fan art of my character in Pillars Of Eternity video game where I get to roleplay as an intimidating Bleak Walker paladin."

4 WAX QUEEN

"I envisioned this unmoving monarch made of wax and gold for months and it took me several attempts to realise it."



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the Month who
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YEAR

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You can still submit
your work to FXPosé,
see below for details.

HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR WORK

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- 50 words about you.
- A photo of yourself.

Email this information to: fxpose@imaginefx.com.

1





Ron Sanders

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

Ron is a fine artist whose paintings hang in private and public collections. He's created historical illustrations for limited edition prints, textbooks, and the US Mint. Currently he's pursuing the book cover and game markets.

1 TREASURE ISLAND

"In Robert Louis Stevenson's classic tale, Will Hawkins must outwit Long John Silver and his band of pirates to stay alive and find the treasure."

2 TORCHFIRE AND LIGHTNING

"A young vampire warrior marches across the castle wall, his blades prepared for battle in a night lit by torches and the flash of lightning."

3 LITTLE RED - WOLF HUNTER

"Little Red Riding Hood is all grown up and taking her vengeance on the wolves that stalk the forests near her grandmother's home."





Alexandra Curte

LOCATION: England **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.artstation.com/alexandracurte

"I've been painting my whole life and the fantasy genre is my favourite," says Alexandra. "I've always loved fairy tales and all things magic and folklore, which can be found in a lot of my paintings."

1 CRYSTAL MAGE

"This was inspired by my love of crystals, particularly amethysts and the beautiful way crystals reflect the light."

2 DOE

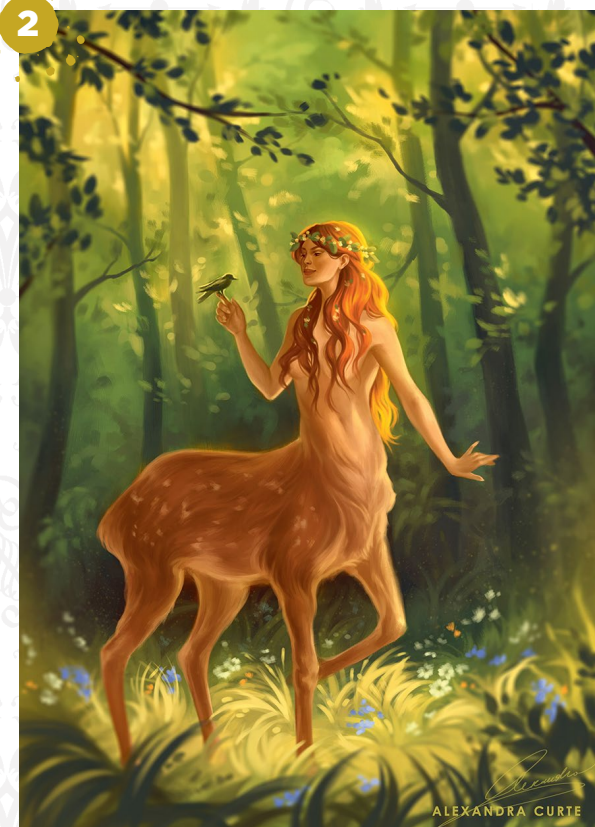
"My doe painting was inspired by the arrival of spring after a long and dreary winter."

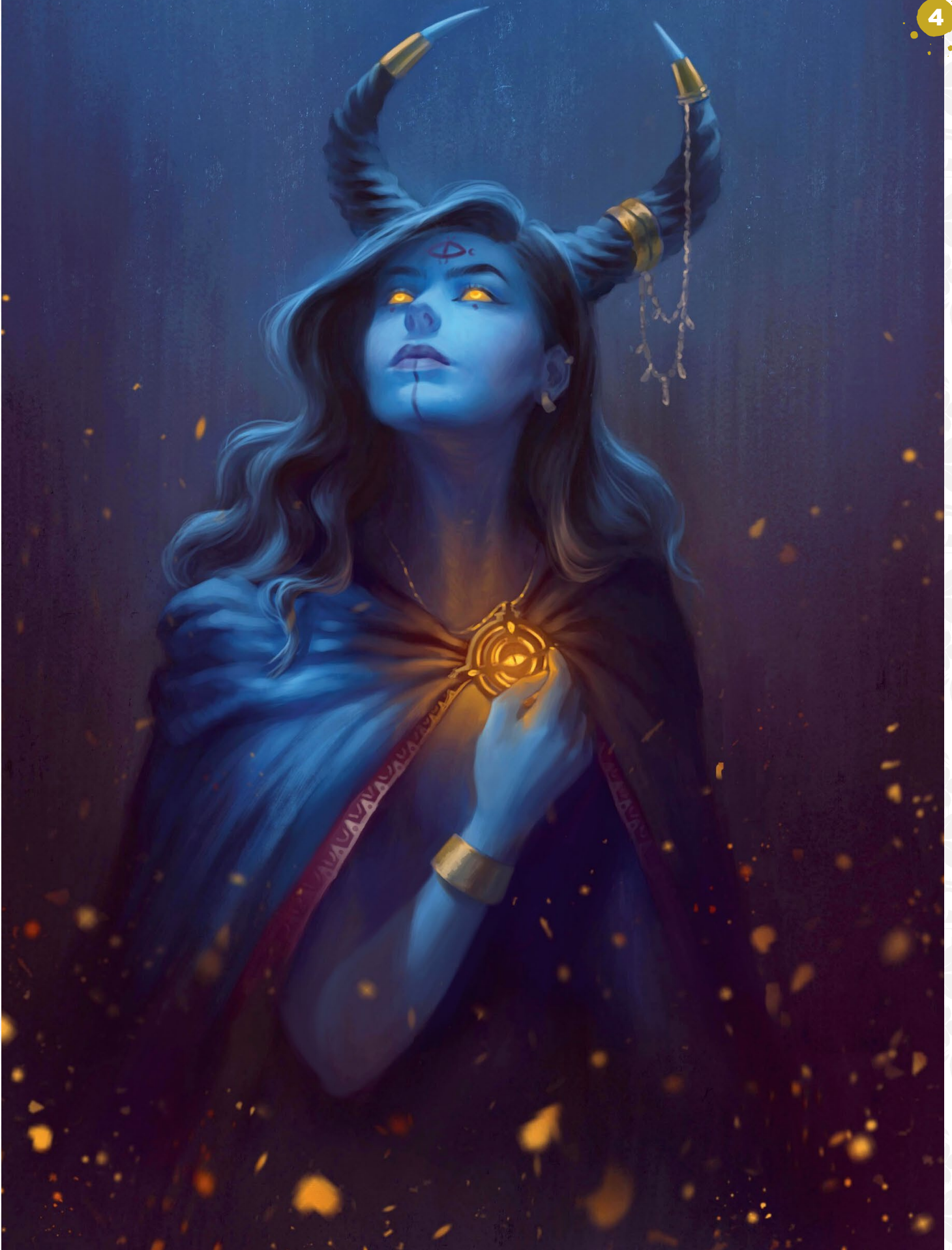
3 KIDA

"Kida was always my favourite Disney princess. I wanted to depict her protecting that which is most important to her: the legendary Atlantis."

4 DEMONESS

"This is a self portrait exercise that took on a life of its own and ended up as a tiefling/demoness portrait."





1





Ariadne Concha

LOCATION: Australia **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.instagram.com/arimaniia

Ariadne is a self-taught artist who draws her inspiration from video games and films. In her work she wants to replicate the same dynamic visuals and storytelling found in these mediums.

1 NO FURTHER

"This piece is a representation of vengeance being the ultimate payment for disrespect. So make sure you tread lightly!"

2 WHATEVER IT TAKES

"This concept reflects on the age-old saying 'Never give up'. Whatever the battle, do whatever it takes to win."

3 WITH MY LIFE

"I wanted to explore the lengths that a person would go to in order to protect the ones they love."

4 CONQUER HELL TOGETHER

"This is my take on close relationships and friendships. I chose to picture them fighting side by side, facing life and death together."



1





Anna Orlova (SpaceLaika)

LOCATION: Russia **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Daz Studio **WEB:** www.artstation.com/spacelaika

Anna is a freelance concept artist and illustrator who previously worked in the game development industry. "I enjoy painting fantasy characters, playing D&D and reading fantasy and sci-fi."

3 WHISPERER

"I love to paint characters with their animal companions. These two understand each other without saying a word."

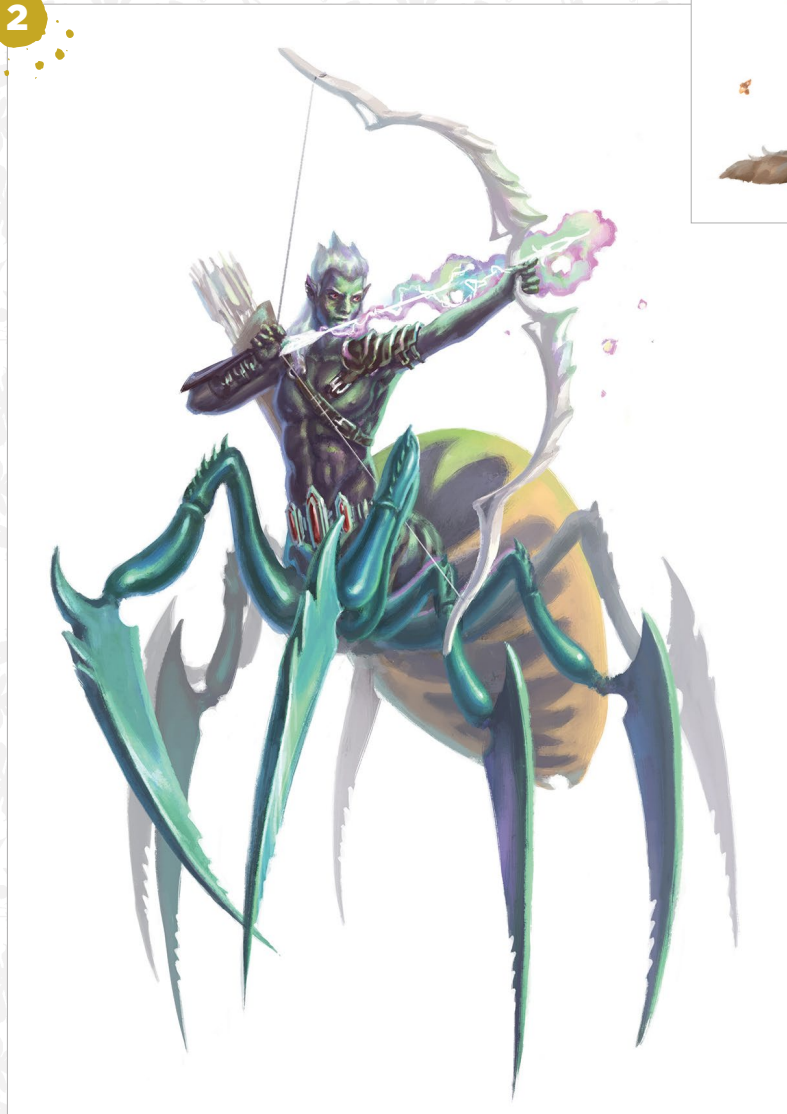


1 FA-DEYK

"This piece was inspired by the book An Orange Portrait With Dots, written by Russian children's literature author Vladislav Krapivin."

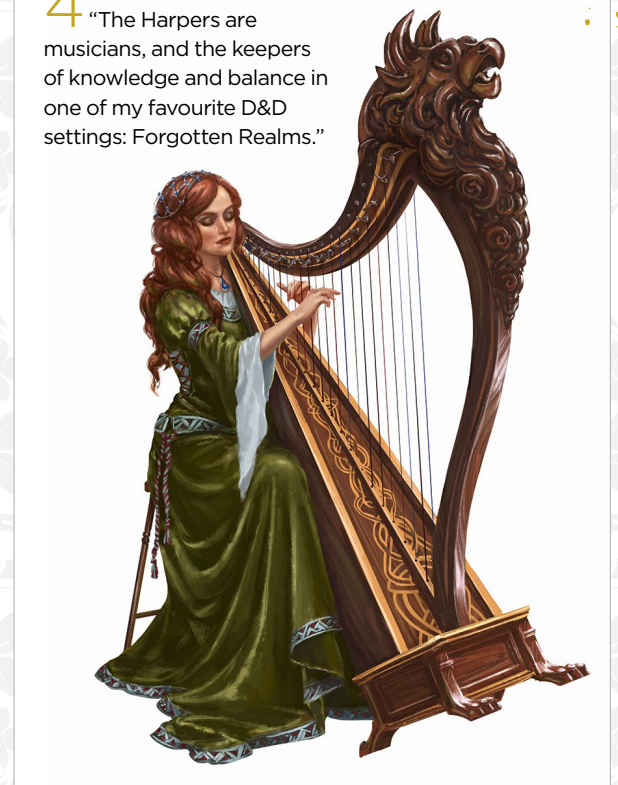
2 DRIDER

"My tribute to a drider, a D&D creature. He's a dark elf who turned away from his goddess and was punished by a hideous transformation."



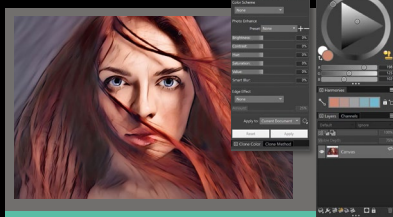
4 GRIFFIN'S SONG

"The Harpers are musicians, and the keepers of knowledge and balance in one of my favourite D&D settings: Forgotten Realms."



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The best online concept art schools

Class acts Lockdown needn't stop you learning concept art or extending your skill-set. **Tom May** presents eight great places to study online

Online courses in concept art have been growing in influence and importance for the past few years now. And in 2020, for obvious reasons, they've come into their own. But choosing between them can be tricky. Different concept art schools don't just specialise in different areas, but also offer very different approaches to learning in general.

Some are similar to YouTube channels, offering prerecorded videos that contain exercises for you to complete after the lesson. This type of course tends to be cheaper and easier to fit into your schedule, but offers less in the way of feedback, and you'll need to be more disciplined to complete it. Other schools feature live classes that are more like traditional education, with greater interactivity and opportunities to ask questions. These, in turn, tend to be more expensive, and you'll need to keep to a rigid schedule.

In this article, we've selected our eight favourite online schools for concept artists. We'll explain what each one offers and how they differ, to help you choose the right one for your needs.



INSTRUCTOR: IRIS COMPIET



INSTRUCTOR: IRIS COMPIET

“You're sent a video of the instructor painting over the top of your work”



Esther Wu is part of Schoolism's alumni, and will also be an instructor in 2021, teaching Mech Design.



INSTRUCTOR: BOBBY PONTILLAS



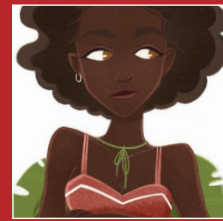
DAILY ART JOURNEY

Art director Carolina Tello Zeleski reveals her typical working day at Sanzaru Games, while working from home and looking after her young son.
Page 29



CLUTTER COLLECTOR

Illustrator and writer Colleen Doran shows us around her rural studio. Visiting bears and deer are certainly interested in the artist's eclectic memorabilia collection.
Page 30



YOUR VIEWS, YOUR ART

Readers write in with their art news and opinions on what we've covered in ImagineFX. Plus we feature art that's caught our eye on social media.
Page 37

INSTRUCTOR: BOBBY PONTILLAS



INSTRUCTOR: IRIS COMPIET



INSTRUCTOR: ESTHER WU

Schoolism

www.schoolism.com

Schoolism was set up by concept artist Bobby Chiu, and tutors include well-known artists such as Craig Mullins, Iris Compriet, Ian McCaig and Nathan Fowkes. It offers two ways of taking its courses in drawing, illustration, sculpting and painting.

The cheaper option is to follow pre-recorded videos, which you can watch whenever you like. Alternatively, you can pay more for Critiqued Sessions. These have set start dates, and run from nine to 14 weeks.

One lecture is activated every one to two weeks, and includes an assignment that you have to complete within a week. After you've submitted it, you're sent a video of the instructor painting and drawing over the top of your work, while discussing what you did well, what you can work on, and how they might have handled certain elements of the assignment differently. You can also view your fellow students' feedback videos.

A subscription to Schoolism will get you a year's access to all prerecorded videos for \$299.40 (or \$198 before 18 January 2021), while the Critiqued Sessions cost \$998. ➡➡

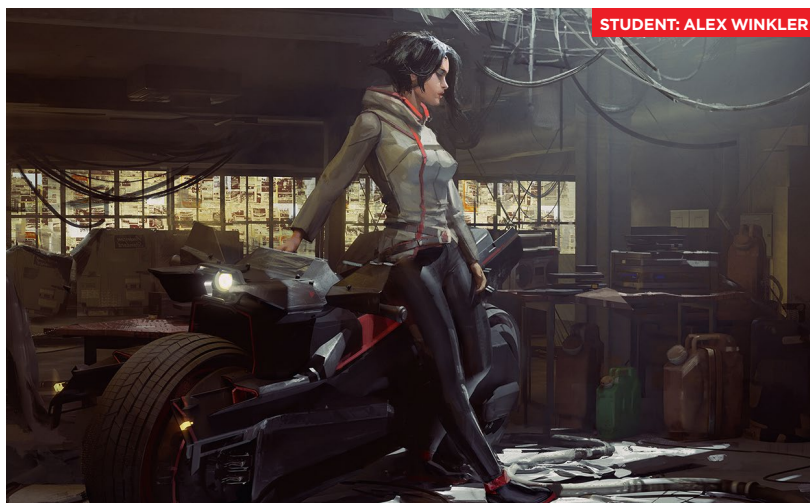
STUDENT: THEO NARDI



INSTRUCTOR: PABLO DOMINGUEZ



STUDENT: ALEX WINKLER



Brad's Nielsen created this artwork under the tutelage of Patrick O'Keefe for Learn Squared's 2D Sequence Illustration mentorship.



STUDENT: BRAD NIELSEN

Learn Squared

www.learnsquared.com

Founded by industry-leading artists in 2015, Learn Squared offers dozens of courses totalling more than 300 hours of training materials. These cover concept art, environments, character design, matte painting and animation. Tutors include well-known industry names such as Tran Nguyen, Jan Urschel, Ash Thorp, Maciej Kuciara and Patrick O'Keefe.

Learn Squared's courses are based on pre-recorded videos, which you can watch whenever's convenient. You also receive downloadable project files that enable you to work alongside the video lessons. Courses cost between \$99 and \$249, and consist of between four and 12 hours of training. If you open a

free account, you can access the entire first lesson of each course, which is over 60 hours of content in total.

Learn Squared has recently launched an option where, like at Schoolism, you can pay more for professional feedback on demand. The difference here is that you pay only for the lessons you want feedback on. It's early days, though, with this option only available with Pablo Dominguez's course on Vehicle Concept Art.

More mentors are promised for the second quarter of 2021, as well as new courses from some notable industry names. Many existing courses also include bonus recordings of past mentorship meetings.



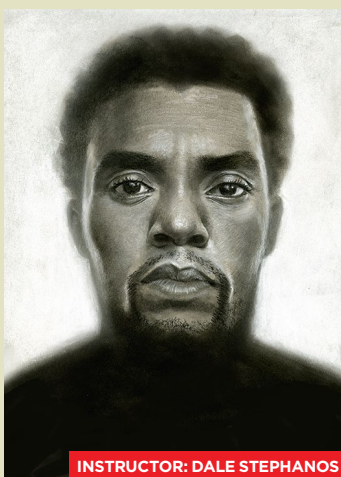
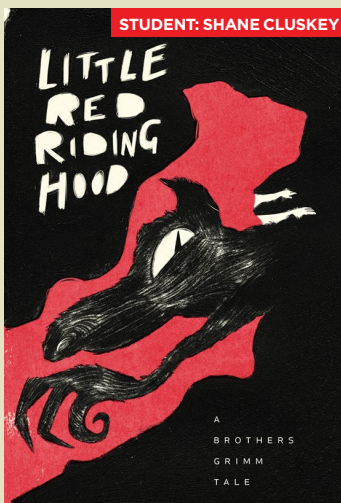
INSTRUCTOR: TRAN NGUYEN

Award-winning artist Audrey Benjaminsen instructs Process: Skill & Craft at Visual Arts Passage.



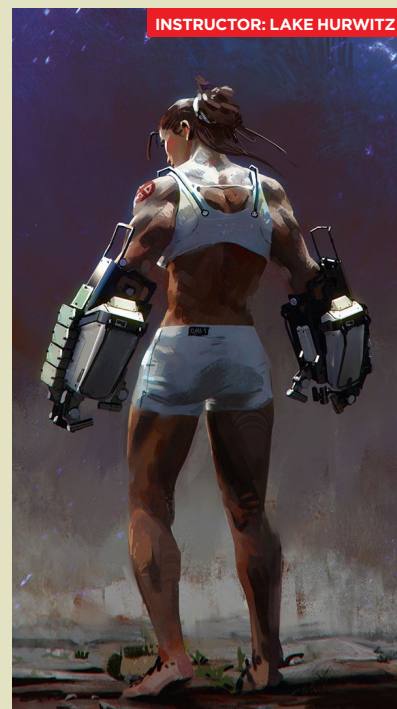
INSTRUCTOR: AUDREY BENJAMINSEN

STUDENT: SHANE CLUSKEY



INSTRUCTOR: DALE STEPHANOS

INSTRUCTOR: LAKE HURWITZ



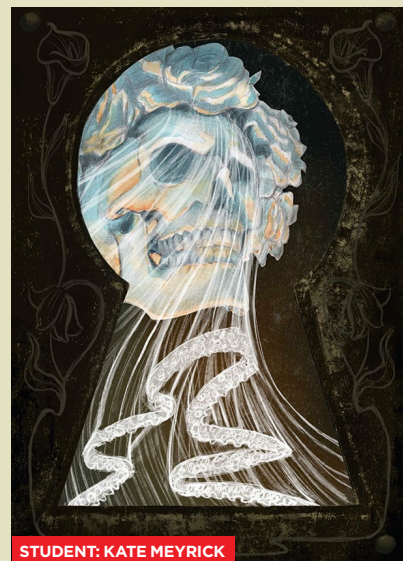
Visual Arts Passage

www.visualartspassage.com

Not keen on recorded lessons? At Visual Arts Passage, students are mentored by industry pros and have a live, fully interactive class every week that lasts three hours. There are also mid-week meetups online. They're a chance to share progress, receive extra guidance from other instructors in the programme, and stay on course. Students are also encouraged to connect with instructors and classmates via Slack between classes.

Each class is recorded and available on-demand, so even if you miss attending a live lesson you can catch up later, and your submitted work will still be critiqued. As well as illustration courses, there are four concept art courses on offer, each lasting 10 weeks and costing \$999: Intro to Concept Design, Advanced Concept Design, World Building, and Career Development.

Visual Arts Passage is also launching a new subscription platform this January, for \$29/month, called Studio Bridge. Running parallel to its mentorship programme, Studio Bridge involves virtual visits to the studios of new artists every week, along with weekly digital drawing meet-ups and challenges. ➡➡



STUDENT: KATE MEYRICK

“Students are mentored by pros and have a live, fully interactive class every week”



Raymond Bonilla is a nationally recognised illustrator and fine artist who instructs Painting the Head at Visual Arts Passage.

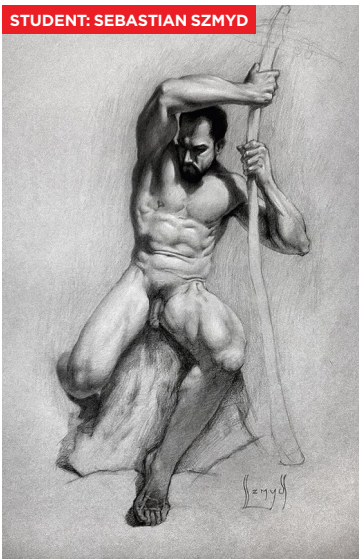
INSTRUCTOR: RAYMOND BONILLA

STUDENT: CRAIG RICHARDSON



Students of all skill levels have been using Stan's courses to improve their figure drawings.

STUDENT: SEBASTIAN SZMYD



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www.proko.com

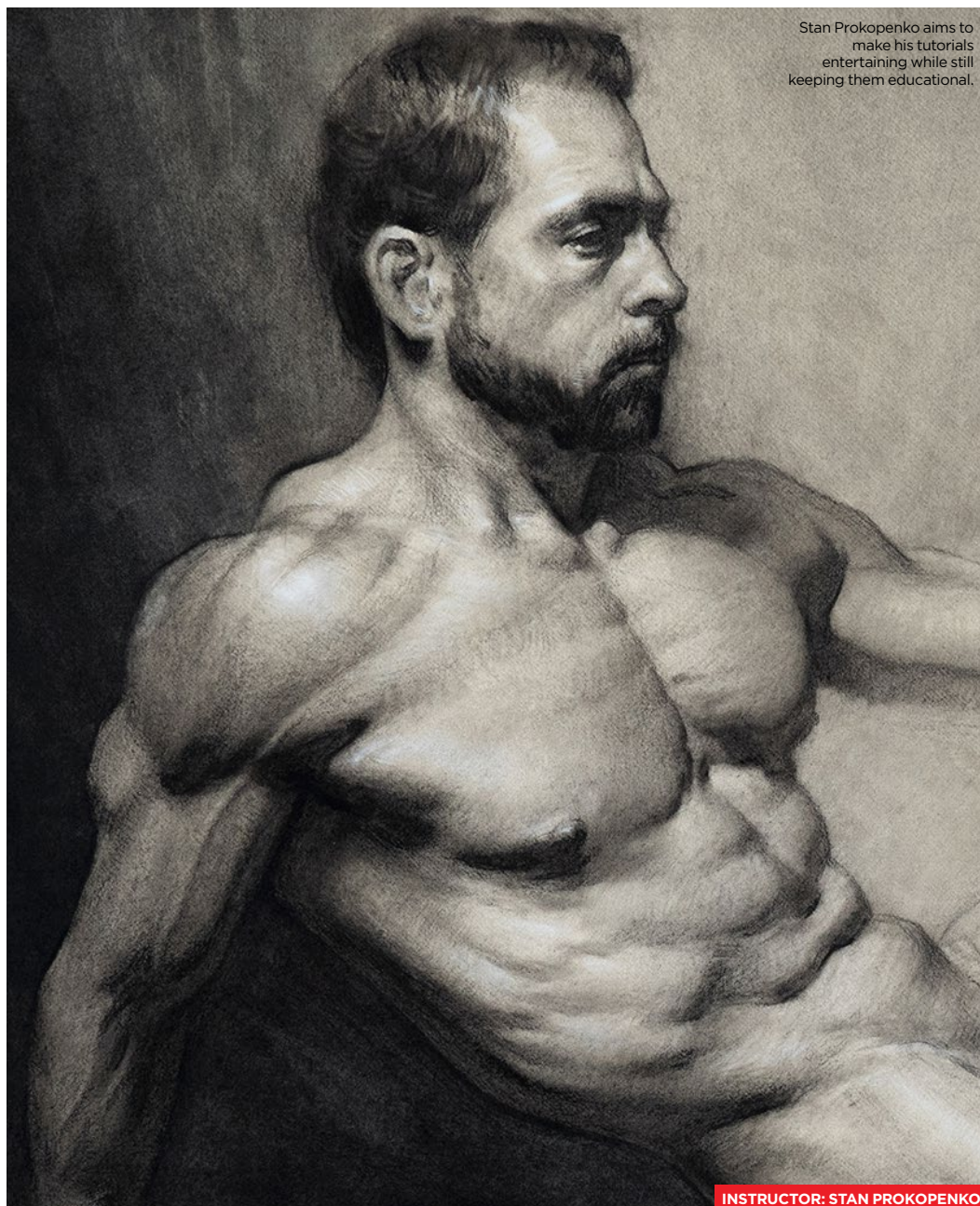
All the schools we've featured so far have been focused on specific concept art skills. But maybe you're a concept artist who needs to refresh or build on your fundamentals, such as anatomy or figure drawing. In that case, you should check out Proko, the online school of Stan Prokopenko.

To get a taster, there are plenty of free videos on Stan's site. Then, if you want additional instruction, you can upgrade to his paid Premium videos. Premium content can include extended lessons, additional demonstrations, 3D models, eBooks, critique videos and premium-specific videos. Whenever diagrams or photos

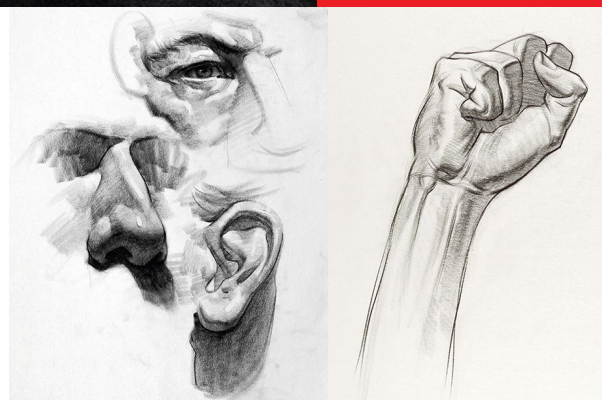
are provided, as a premium student you receive high-resolution versions that you can download and print for your reference. For those who like to work offline all the videos are downloadable, so you can watch them later at your leisure.

Along with the educational content that Stan's been adding to Proko.com, he's also been inviting other pro artists to create lessons and courses for the site. There's already a caricature course and high-quality demos from professional artists that you can learn from. Finally, there's now a monthly art challenge that anyone can participate in with prizes awarded to the winners.

Stan Prokopenko aims to make his tutorials entertaining while still keeping them educational.



INSTRUCTOR: STAN PROKOPENKO



“ Stan's been inviting other pro artists to create lessons and courses for the site ”



Gnomon

www.gnomon.edu

Looking for a course with real academic rigour? Then meet Gnomon School of Visual Effects, Games and Animation. A Hollywood institution established in 1997, its online courses closely parallel the learning environment of its on-campus, physical ones.

All of Gnomon's classes are delivered live, putting you in a virtual classroom with pros and your peers. They range from specific topics like compositing and digital matte painting to core art skills such as figure drawing and perspective. Every class has a message board that enables students and the instructor to communicate with one another, share ideas, and ask and answer questions. Courses are led by some of the best-known names in the industry, including Maddie Scott Spencer and Kevin Hudson.

Note that even though they're online, Gnomon's courses are only available to students physically located in California, or outside of the US. In other words, if you're a US resident who doesn't live in California, your luck's out. Courses last for 10 weeks and tuition costs range from \$699 to \$2,133.



Alice Yang's environment concept from the WB3 (advanced world-building) course.

STUDENT: ALICE YANG



STUDENT: AIRI PAN



STUDENT: CORNELIUS COCKROFT



STUDENT: KEVIN KRUSE

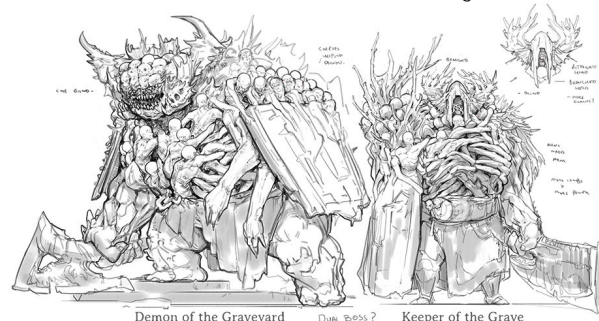
Brainstorm School

www.brainstormschool.com

Based in California, Brainstorm School specialises in foundation, digital painting and design courses, focused around character design, environment design and prop design, and led by working professionals in the entertainment industry.

Different courses are suitable for beginner-, intermediate- and advanced-level artists. All classes are

Character design development by Tuncer Eren for an IP project in the Entertainment Design course.



STUDENT: TUNCER EREN

DIEBACK

delivered live, and to a schedule based on Pacific Standard Time (European artists, be warned!). These sessions variously include demos, guest lecturers, reviews, critiques, paintovers, and solo and group activities.

There are four types of courses on offer, which take place during three terms per year. In the Mentorship programme, you'll be guided along a personalised intensive programme. You'll meet with your mentor weekly to have private learning time specific to you. Mentorships cost from \$4,500 and are led by Jonathan Kuo, Joon Ahn, Saiful Haque and Brainstorm School co-founder John Park.

Meanwhile, Bootcamps usually run for five to eight weeks, and cost from \$400 to \$685. There are also Storm courses, which run for five weeks, and cost \$259, and 10-week courses, costing from \$700. ➡➡

CGSociety

www.cgsociety.org

CGSociety is a venerable global organisation for creative digital artists. Focusing on landing you a career in the art, games and VFX industries, its CGWorkshops arm offers expert training for industry professionals in subjects including character design, matte painting, drawing foundation and environmental design.

Courses last between six and 10 weeks, and range from \$599 to \$998, with discounts for those who buy two or more classes at one time. The lessons are based on pre-recorded videos, but you do need to keep to a schedule, with weekly homework deadlines. You also receive individually recorded feedback on your work, as well as regular live Q&As with your instructors.

Recently it was announced that CGWorkshops was merging with CG Master Academy. Eventually, students of both schools will be able to socially interact via CGMA's virtual classroom. However, the two websites remain separate for now and we've been assured that will continue to be the case until at least mid-2021.

“You'll receive individually recorded feedback on your work”



STUDENT: JD GARDNER



STUDENT: JESS O'NEILL

This piece by alumnus Justyna Gil depicts a lonely girl trying to protect herself from seven demons using a magical artifact.



STUDENT: JUSTYNA GIL



STUDENT: EDMUND CHAN

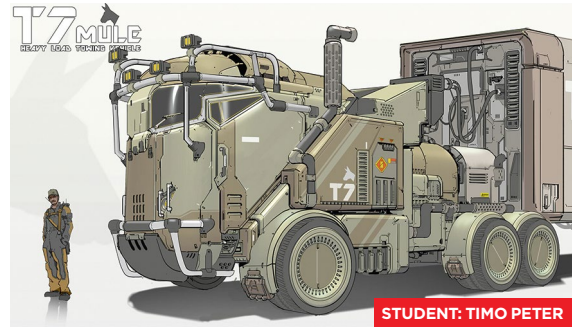
Neo Tokyo by CG Workshops student Edward Chan, created by painting over 3D kit-bashed elements.



STUDENT: GUE YANG



STUDENT: BRANKO DANIC



STUDENT: TIMO PETER



An evocative piece by CGMA alumnus Martin Fargasso entitled Street Corner.

STUDENT: MARTIN FARGASSO

CG Master Academy (CGMA)

www.cgmasteracademy.com

Founded in 2010 and based in Los Angeles, CG Master Academy (CGMA) offers online courses in 2D, 3D, VFX, games, software and storytelling, to help you develop the skill-set you need to launch a career in the entertainment industry. It's continually adding new courses, the most recent of which include Acting for Visual Storytellers

Hero vs Harpies, a keyframe illustration by CGMA alumnus Andrew Collins.

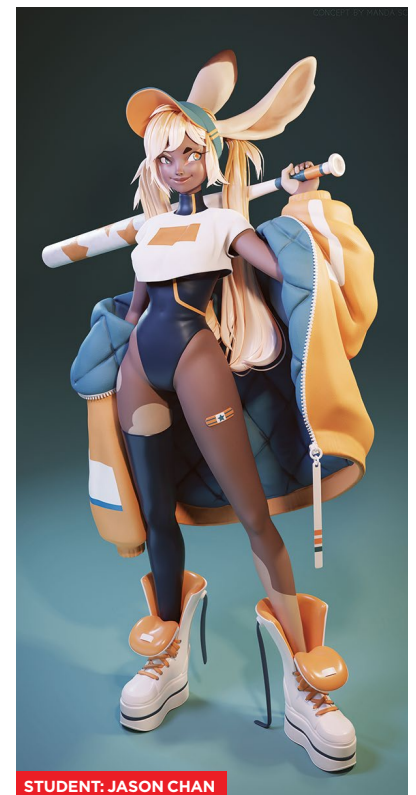


STUDENT: ANDREW COLLINS

and 3D for 2D Artists, and their tutors have worked for most major studios, including Disney, Blizzard and Pixar.

Like CGWorkshops, with which CGMA is currently merging, courses run for six to 10 weeks, and cost from \$599 to \$998, with discounts on two classes or more. And like CGWorkshops, they're based on pre-recorded videos that include weekly assignments, individually recorded feedback on your work, and live Q&As with your tutors. You'll enjoy over 365 days of access to the full course, including feedback and live Q&A recordings, and a Certificate of Completion on finishing the course.

It's worth noting that CGMA offers complimentary portfolio reviews for prospective and current students. This provides guidance to help you enroll in courses that are appropriate for your skill level. 🍷



STUDENT: JASON CHAN

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ImagineFX

Carolina helped to shape the look of the VR game Asgard's Wrath, which is based on Nordic folklore.



Carolina's character concept for Ingrid, a shieldmaiden in Asgard's Wrath that was published by Oculus Studios in 2019.

A day in the life of a concept artist

Creative talk **Carolina Tello Zeleski**, an art director at California-based studio Sanzaru Games, takes us through her typical day...



"I believe in video games as an art form. I love to create experiences for people. But these past nine months, my day has looked a lot different than normal. Not only am I juggling being a full-time art director, but my young son is being schooled remotely, too."

Things get going at 7am when I get my son ready for the day – his first class begins at 8am. Next, I'll check emails while multi-tasking

classes and responding to questions from my producers and artists. Then it's time for lunch and a chance to get outside for a bike ride, walk or a lightsaber battle in the park.

The afternoon is back-to-back Zoom meetings with my team until dinner time. I split my week between the character art, environment art and the concept art teams, and give tailored feedback to each artist.

I'd say 70 per cent of my feedback is in the form of some sort of either

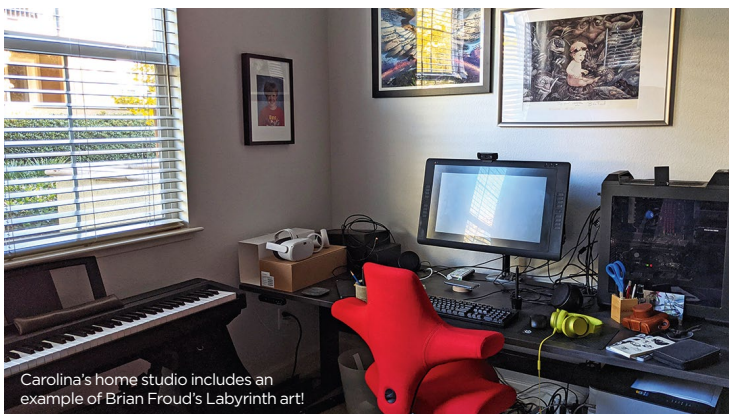
Carolina's early concept design for Thor, from Asgard's Wrath.

photo-bash or paint-over, and then 30 per cent is verbal. I've turned a lot of my team meetings into a creative, morale-boosting time to counterbalance the emotional toll of the pandemic. After dinner, it's back to work until 10pm when I end the night with something mindless playing on the television.

Whenever somebody complains or tells me that they've had a bad day, I'm like, 'I don't know, you're still making awesome artwork, and getting paid for it. That's amazing.' Just growing up in a country where there is no industry, I never dreamed that I could do this. Just keeping the perspective that art making is a really cool thing. We're trying to delight people and that's such a privilege."

Carolina is an art director for Sanzaru Games, an AR/VR Studio @ Facebook. Visit www.artstation.com/carotello to see more of Carolina's concept artworks.

Concept Art Association is committed to raising the profile of concept artists and their involvement in the entertainment industries. See www.conceptartassociation.com.



Carolina's home studio includes an example of Brian Froud's Labyrinth art!





Colleen Doran

Collector's items The award-winning US artist-writer wants her studio to be as comfortable as possible. She tells us that it's not work to her, it's oxygen!



I'd declutter, but my clutter is all fun, and I'm keeping it.

My setup has three stations that I access by swivelling my chair. Since I work on multiple pieces at a time, I have portable boards I swap out and place on the main board, or place on my computer desk where I can work flat or get natural light. There are flat files behind the drawing board, more in the next room, and files in the closet. My studio is spread over two rooms, with more storage in an outbuilding. There's space to work in many

mediums and to try different things, but it's easy to lose track of it all, so I stay organised.

Some of my art supplies are over 100 years old, inherited from the studios of Frank Kelly Freas, Nick Cardy and Marie Severin. I have Marie's office name stamp and Nick's casein paints. I drew the art for Amazing, Fantastic, Incredible Stan Lee with Marie's pens. John Romita Sr also kindly gave me brushes, stacks of vellum, old Marvel paper – even his mini-transparency lightbox. It belongs in a museum!

I have to stay disciplined or else I'll just wander off into a fog. I use apps ➡➡



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Artist news, software & events

I not only have a Harry Potter wand, I'm a Hufflepuff and own a Hogwarts uniform.

Signed photo of my first big crush, Walter Koenig, aka Mr Chekov from Star Trek.

My Epson Expression 10000 XL Photo Edition scanner scans slides and negatives, too. It's beautiful, man.

This film poster is signed by the director and producer.



So many supplies crammed in here: oils, Genesis oils, pastels, watercolours, many bottles of ink... so many brands.

These narrow black paper files measure about 10x14 inches. Modular and stackable, with eight drawers each, they're great for organising scripts and reference, right next to my board. Even though I have all this on computer, I like to have hard copies at my work space.

Kitchen utensil trays make great art supply organisers. I may be the last cartoonist in North America who still uses drafting dots.

A matching flat files/map chest combo. One's next to the drawing board, the other behind it. Great for organising art supplies, and the smaller map chest next to the drawing board is exactly the right size for 11x17-inch comic book art, too.



My laptop is perched on a rack, which keeps it from slipping. It's for reference, and for streaming videos or Netflix. I also watch a lot of tutorials on this. Even if I know the material, I like to watch other artists working. Playing on the TV in the background is my fireplace DVD.

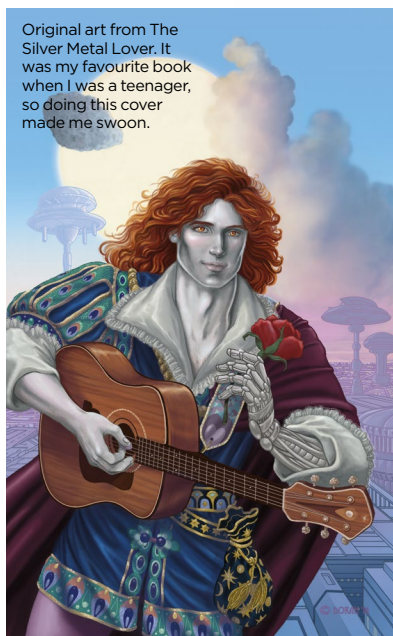
Another tray balanced on my drawing board and secured with double-sided tape. Also here is my favourite electric eraser, which is the greatest invention known to artkind.

I have multiple portable boards, as well as this Alvin board I swap out to use on top of my main drawing board. I keep about five pages of art going at once.

ImagineNation **Artist in Residence**



Original art from Neil Gaiman's Snow Glass Apples graphic novel. I based the style for this on the work of Irish Arts and Crafts master Harry Clarke.



Original art from The Silver Metal Lover. It was my favourite book when I was a teenager, so doing this cover made me swoon.



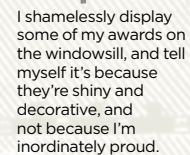
My heroes Aragorn and Chuck Yeager. Also, a The Lord of the Rings poster signed by the cast and crew. Some of the notes are hilariously naughty.

“There’s space to work in many mediums and to try different things, but it’s easy to lose track of it all...”



My computer work space. That’s a Kinuko Y Craft print from a favourite book on the wall, and at the far right, a poster from my residency at the Smithsonian Institute.

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NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX

ImagineNation Artist in Residence

Behind my computer is a book on day trading, which I don't actually do, but until I read it I found the stock market confounding. All freelancers need to understand investing since we don't receive employee benefits.



“I live in the country. It's very peaceful and many animals wander by. Sometimes they try to break in”

➡ such as RescueTime, Todoist and Freedom. I either overwork or underwork. I don't know what that says about me, but 'happy medium' is not in my skill set.

PUTTING ART FIRST

It's easy to let admin tasks become a procrastination ritual, so I try to delay admin so art gets made first. However, if I exercise first then I feel more relaxed and able to get art done. My day ranges from 10am to about 1am, with breaks in between.

Whatever I'm doing at this time might be thrown out in a year. I'm constantly searching for Plato's perfect form for Colleen's work habits.

I have an old Mac Pro Tower and a MacBook Pro laptop, an Epson Expression 10000 XL, a Cintiq and a back-up XP-Pen for travel or working in bed when I'm sick. I've done the better part of entire projects while sick in bed. I do some digital painting and computer colour, but most of my art – especially the drawing – is by hand. My next graphic novel is going to be all watercolour.

I live in the country. It's very peaceful and many animals wander by. Sometimes they try to break in. You have to be careful about leaving the window open, especially if you're eating. Raccoons try to steal my food off my desk.



All of nature wanders by my window. We have a friendly herd of deer here. Bambi and friends have decimated my gardens. I no longer fight with them and now do most of my gardening in pots on the second floor deck. This mama bear could probably smell the pistachio nuts I was eating, so followed her nose to take a peek.



The only drawback to living in the country is the lousy internet. When I first moved out here, it took an entire day to upload a painting to a client. We're still on satellite broadband. Woe unto the cartoonist.

This year comic illustrator Colleen won the Eisner, Bram Stoker Award and the Ringo Award for her graphic novel adaptation of Neil Gaiman's Snow Glass Apples. See more of her art at www.colleendoran.com.



My library and storage area. All my exercise kit is in here so I don't make excuses for not keeping fit. There are also flat files, stackable modular plastic storage cases and old metal files for photos.



There's stuff from The Lord of the Rings all over the place, in part because an old client couldn't cover their debt. So I got paid in Sideshow Weta Collectibles. There are worse things to get paid in.

© Edward Kinsella III, Instructor



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Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



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Encourage and support

I just wanted to say thank you so much for what you're doing at ImagineFX to encourage and support artists during this difficult year. Always love getting my issue in the mail. It makes me smile amidst all the chaos.

Hannah

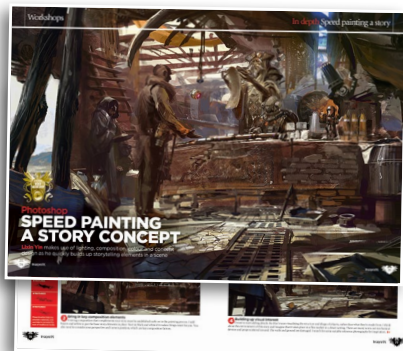
Claire replies *That's very good to hear, Hannah. Our aim is entirely to encourage and support not only in art skills but also in wellbeing and practical matters that aren't taught in art school. 2020 was quite a year and I'm delighted to hear that we may have helped you through this. Stay safe and I'm sure we'll be back to normal very soon.*

Fun and games

Thanks for featuring Lixin Yin (issue 195) as he's one of my favourite artists. His YouTube channel is very informative and I often log on to watch him paint when I'm stuck on my own work.

I also enjoyed Jennifer Wuestling's interview. She came across really well and her work is something I aspire to. I love anything related to game art. Cheers!

Kevin Li



Reader Kevin keenly follows Lixin Yin's work on YouTube, so was glad to see him in the magazine.



DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE?

Don't worry – you can get hold of issue 195 at <http://ifxm.ag/single-ifx>.



Jennifer Wuestling of Riot Games is another of Kevin's favourite artists. We interviewed her in issue 195.

Claire replies *I really enjoyed our recent video game issue as well! (Is it wrong for me to say that?!) I found Lixin via his YouTube channel, too. He was fantastic to collaborate with on the workshop because he's very engaged with what he creates. Jennifer is an artist who I've admired for a while, so I was overjoyed to put her art and insight in the magazine. Thank you!*

Finally!

At last! I've received my copy of ImagineFX in a paper envelope! Honestly, I still think you were a little late in making the change from plastic wrapping to a more environmental paper version, but I'm glad that you finally decided to do this. I considered stopping my subscription because of the plastic waste. Thank goodness you have made the switch.

Jon, Edinburgh

Claire replies *Hello Jon and thank you for your email. I remember you emailing me about this a while back. I forwarded your complaint – along with many others – to the relevant department. As you know it's taken a while for this more environmentally friendly change to take effect, but I'm very happy that it has. The environmental benefits are clear and obvious.*

The company I work for is the largest UK magazine publisher so it absolutely needs to take a stand about the waste that it produces. This change is currently for UK subscribers, but we expect to make the swap for our overseas subscribers very soon.

I've got an idea...

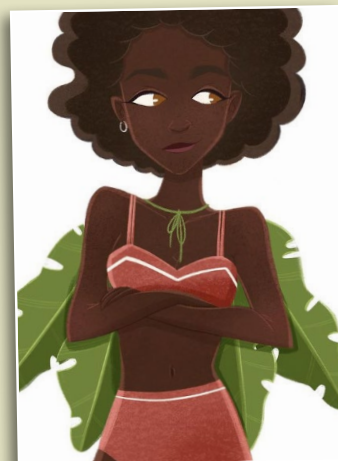
I liked your article on how artists generate ideas (issue 195), particularly Kofi Ofosu's approach of revisiting old sketches. I have already gone through my all of my sketch books – I keep everything! – and started coming up with new ideas, so thanks to Kofi.

Alan, England

Claire replies *Being inspired by past work makes sense to me, Alan. Please share your new work and ideas with us!*



New works that have grabbed our attention



Danitapintamonos
[@dansmendoart](https://www.instagram.com/dansmendoart)



Will-Helm Arts
[@will.helm.arts](https://www.instagram.com/will.helm.arts)



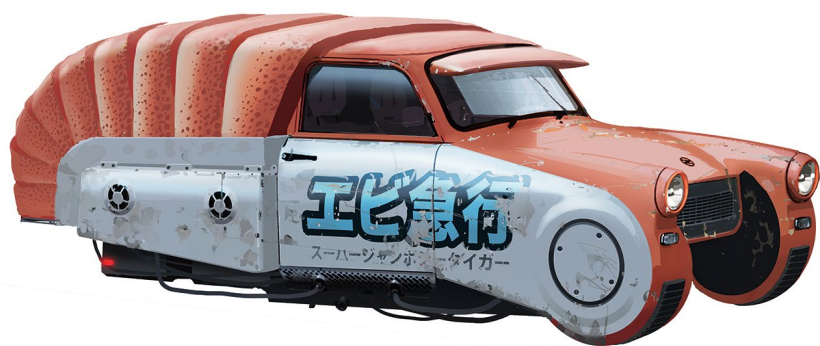
Madalyn McLeod
[@madalynmcleod](https://www.instagram.com/madalynmcleod)

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

MOUNTAIN PASS

"This was a personal piece that I put together back in 2010."



SUSHI DELIVERY SERVICE

"I created this vehicle design in 2016 for Blade Runner 2049. I based it on a Trabant 601."



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ARTIST PORTFOLIO

PETER POPKEN

The concept artists tells **Gary Evans** how a long and varied apprenticeship led to success in the film business

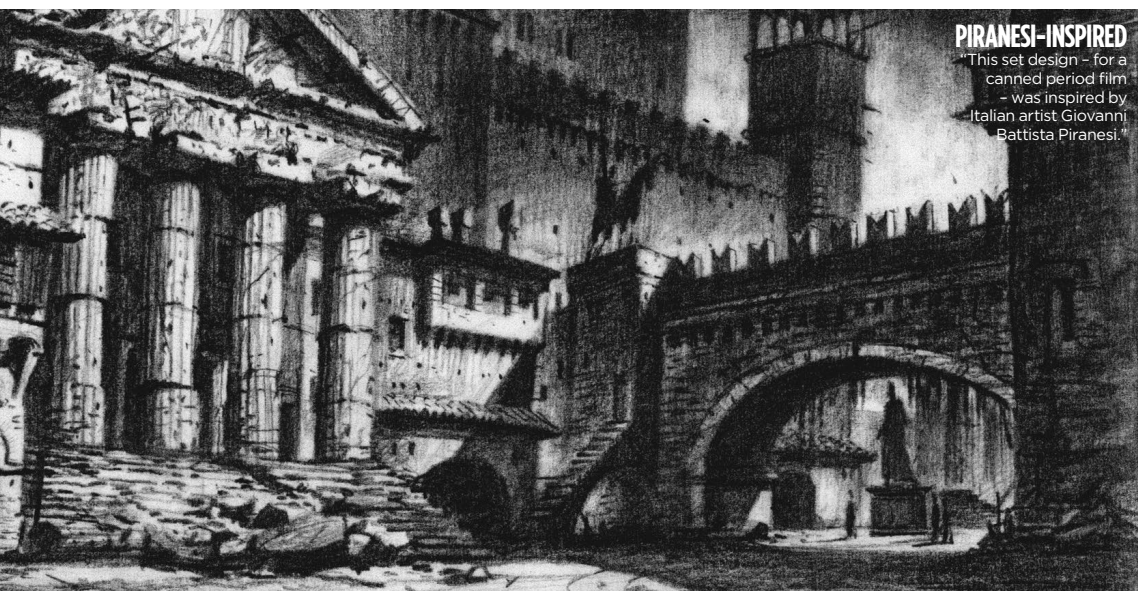
Concept artists typically work with two types of client, Peter Popken explains. First, there's the client who knows exactly what they want. They've done a lot of preparation, they've got the concept in their head and they just need the concept artist to put it on the page. Then you've got the second type of client...

Peter has over two decades of experience working on big-budget films such as the Marvel and Star Wars series of movies, and Blade Runner 2049 and Fantastic Beasts: The Crimes

of Grindelwald. Veteran concept artists like him secretly call this second type "shoppers." These are the clients who prefer to wait and see where the process leads them; shoppers go with the flow. Both of types of client have their downsides.

With the first client, the concept on the page will never live up to the idea in their head. In contrast, the shopper has no idea, and will usually put off making a decision for as long as possible. Perhaps unsurprisingly, both clients expect things done quickly, so Peter usually gets half a day for a rough sketch, then a day to finish it. "This," the German artist says, "is accompanied by extensive changes and adjustments. Very often we don't get the time to do a proper illustration, just enough time to deliver the message."

Peter once described film concept art as translating the script into visuals, as if each visual were a still from the finished film. Essentially, the concept artist has to adapt words to pictures without losing the message, and ➔



PIRANESI-INSPIRED
"This set design - for a canned period film - was inspired by Italian artist Giovanni Battista Piranesi."

© Myriad Pictures

Artist PROFILE

Peter Popken

LOCATION: Germany

FAVOURITE ARTISTS: Ron Cobb, HR Giger, Syd Mead and Ralph McQuarrie

MEDIA: Photoshop, Blender, SketchUp and KeyShot

WEB: www.peterpopken.com



© Warner Bros.

they have to deal with clients who either have too fixed an idea or no idea at all, and they have to all this quickly and efficiently. How is it achieved?

APPRENTICESHIP YEARS

One day, back in the 1990s, Peter had to deliver storyboards to an advertising agency. The agency happened to be on the same floor as an animation studio. Peter bumped – literally – into a film director. The director saw Peter's storyboards and asked him to come for an interview. A few days later, Peter got his first job in film. This sounds like he lucked his way into movies. But it came at the end of a kind of modern version of the apprenticeships served by the Old Masters like Leonardo da Vinci.

“Enlightenment came finally when I discovered the work of Syd Mead”

WALLACE TOWER

"From Blade Runner 2049, the view from Wallace Tower in Los Angeles."

GOLEM

"This is a personal piece that I completed earlier this year."



Peter grew up in the Black Forest region of Germany ("a beautiful childhood"), but his dad's job meant they relocated several times, finally settling in Munich. His parents and brothers and sisters encouraged his creative side. Growing up, he took drawing courses and got into Renaissance art. He studied the drawing and painting techniques of the Old Masters. A big favourite was da Vinci. Peter would copy his drawings, and even had a crack at replicating the Mona Lisa: "After that I guess, I respected him even more."

He studied communication design at university in Munich. This was 1990, before computers: "Or at least what we call a computer today. Bulky monitors and cryptic code is what I remember." Peter preferred the illustration side of the course, life drawing and anatomy lessons – he even considered becoming a medical illustrator. Illustration was by now an obsession.

THE APPEAL OF THE ABSTRACT

Peter experimented with traditional painting techniques – oils, gouache, markers, even airbrush – then something changed: "I found out that academic art can be rather static, and discovered the expressionist force of abstract painting." The painters who really interested him then – and continue to engage him now – had elements of both, and most are in some ways related to film-making: HR Giger (Alien), Ralph McQuarrie (Star Wars), Ron Cobb (Alien and Star Wars)... "But enlightenment came finally when I discovered the work of Syd Mead. Each picture of his is a great lesson in design, and I recommend his books to anyone who strives for a career in concept art."

Da Vinci's seven-year apprenticeship would have exposed him to all sorts of disciplines – drafting, plaster ➔



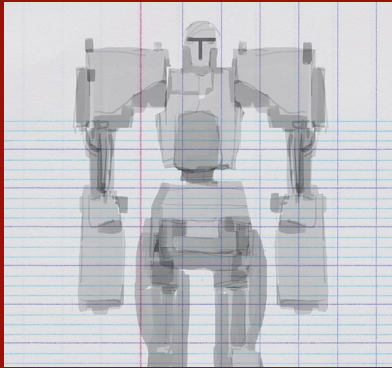
HOVER TRUCK

"This vehicle design is from the 2011 film Cloud Atlas."

© Warner Bros.

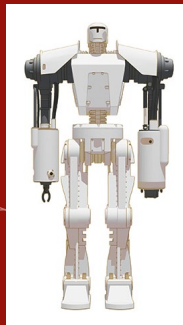
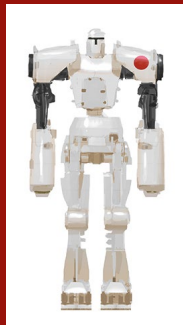
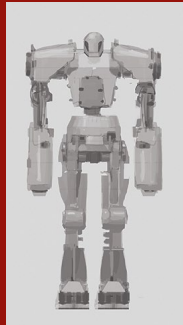
VARIETY IN SHAPES AND VOLUMES

Peter explains how he put together this piece, a masterclass in the fine art of contrasts



1 Start sketching

"When developing my own paintings I always start with a thumbnail sketch. Working in a small size gives me more control over each element of my image. At the same time I'm avoiding getting into detail too early, and focus on the greater picture first. It doesn't matter if the sketch is rough and only suggestive in areas. What's important are the big shapes – building the megastructure of my image. While developing my silhouettes, I keep an eye on the negative spaces as well. Together they form the rhythm and dynamic of the composition."



ROBOT DESIGNS

"These various robot designs are personal pieces that I've been working on this year."

idea unless I find a better solution (2D drawings don't always translate well into the real world). Instead of drawing a perspective I use a 3D model as a basis for my paintings. This provides solid volumes and the perfect foreshortening for my painting."

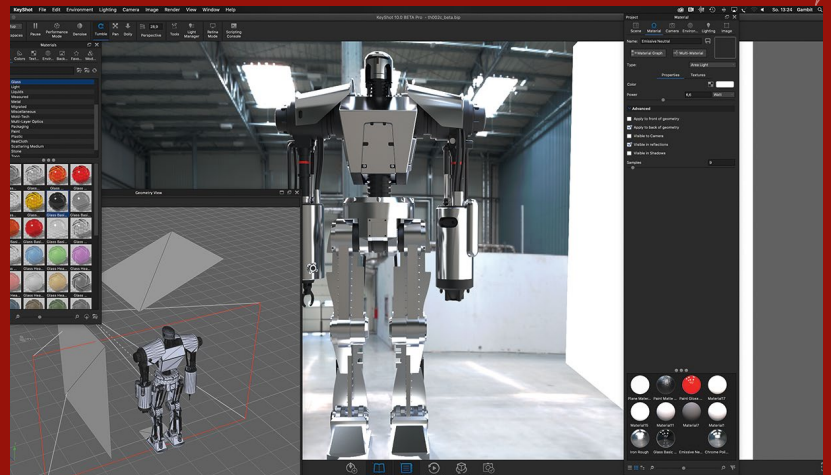
3 Generate contrasts

"I'm striving for a variety in shapes and volumes. Everything that can cast shadows improves on the depth effect. But light and shadow aren't the only contrasts. Big versus small is a great way to bring scale and dimensions to an image. Cold versus warm is often used as a so-called 'colour perspective'. Blue tones seem to fall back into the distance while reds push into the foreground. Cold light from the outside against warm light bouncing back from the interior adds great three-dimensionality and plasticity to a painting. Neutral, cooler

colours versus bright colours: the trick is to use only one bright colour as an accent among many grey tones. A neutral colour would be a pale mix of a warm and cold tone. Busy versus empty space: a pattern works best next to an empty space; heavy texture can draw a lot of attention to a designated area."

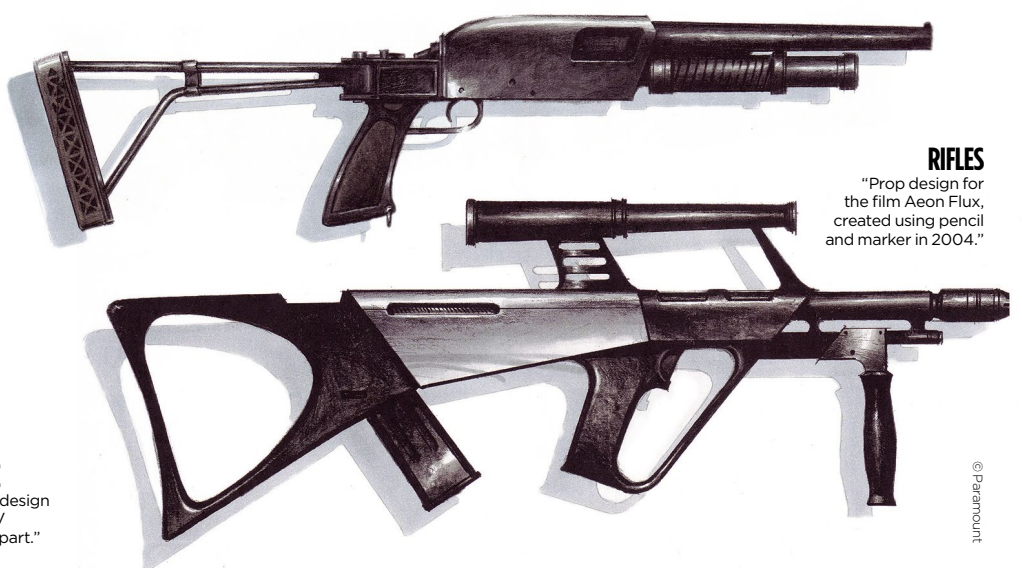
4 Finishing in Photoshop

"Usually I'd render a few different passes of my 3D model in KeyShot and later combine them in Photoshop. Parts that don't work can be adjusted and painted over easily. To master lighting and mood, you need a lot of experience. Alternatively, a good reference image can help to achieve the perfect outcome. That's why some illustrators pick their colour key even before they start sketching. This allows for faster rendering and easier handling of values and tones."



VIRUS CRATE

"This is a prop design for the sci-fi TV series Counterpart."



RIFLES

"Prop design for the film Aeon Flux, created using pencil and marker in 2004."



K'S SPINNER

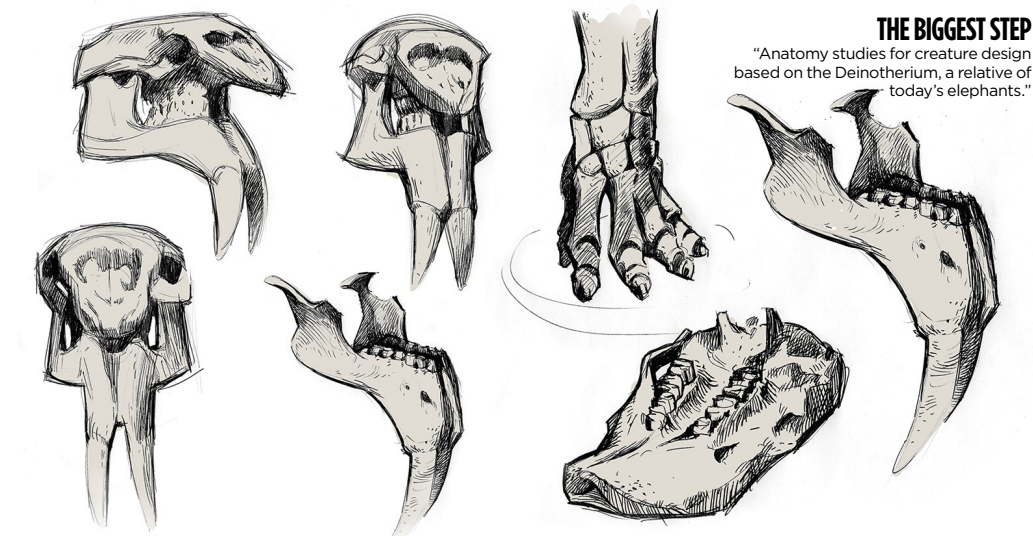
"Another vehicle design from Blade Runner 2049, this time showing the police car that Ryan Gosling's character K drives – or flies."

© Warner Bros.

➔ casting, leather working – alongside drawing, painting, and sculpting. Still at university, Peter started picking up freelance work. First, it was favours for friends, or helping out professors in their personal studios. Then he found commissions in comics and book illustration, and pretty soon he was doing everything from renderings for high-speed trains to pet-food designs. Peter graduated in 1994, but continued his self-initiated apprenticeship, learning the principles of numerous art-related fields, including advertising, architecture and theme-park design.

During this time, Peter became aware of 'art of' books about films such as Alien and the original Star Wars trilogy. Before then, he hadn't even realised there were jobs for artists in the film industry. But he didn't want to apply for a job in movies before he was ready, and this seems to be a big part of the idea behind his long and varied apprenticeship.

"I basically took on any job that would involve drawing, such as storyboarding for commercials, layout for animation, and drawing comic



THE BIGGEST STEP

"Anatomy studies for creature design based on the Deinotherium, a relative of today's elephants."

© Fox Television

pages. I wanted to learn the skill set before applying for a film position.

"Only concept art combines so many disciplines. You get to design space ships, and paint landscapes, characters and costumes. Concept art is the most creative profession I can think of."

Peter continues: "In order to create the perfect illusion, concepts need to be grounded in reality – something familiar the audience can relate to." He goes on to explain that concepts have

“To create the perfect illusion, concepts need to be grounded in reality”

SHIELDS

"These prop designs are from the 2004 film King Arthur, directed by Antoine Fuqua."

to have a certain level of credibility before you start adding fantastical elements. You learn this grounding in reality by drawing from life. On the job, Peter uses reference ("And I mean a lot!"). He keeps collections of references – specific things like skies, clouds, explosions – but also images that have a "perfect colour palette."

INSPIRATION COMES UNEXPECTEDLY

Peter got into the habit of writing down his ideas ("Inspiration usually comes unexpectedly. Most likely when you don't need it."). He goes back to his notes and translates words to pictures. He starts with a little pencil sketch, roughing out dimensions, ➔



© Touchstone Pictures

PETER POPKEN



© Constantin

TARZAN

"Development art for the animated
feature film Tarzan from 2013."

IMAGINEFX



TRASH MESA

"Another from Blade Runner 2049
- this is a concept illustration for the
Trash Mesa sequence."



© Warner Bros.

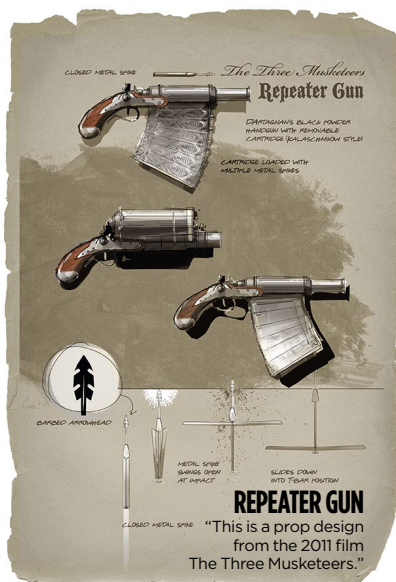
➡ the basic shapes of an idea: "I think a good composition makes half of the image." Thumbnails help him find "a cinematic frame" – the visual that looks like a still from the finished film. But sometimes he starts off in 3D. It's not uncommon for him to get stuck, or for an image to fail. He keeps trying, keeps making adjustments until the artwork clicks.

Concept artists are often asked to produce something that's similar to

existing artwork, or even copy it – to the point that permission is needed from copyright holders. This is where you need skills in diplomacy. Sometime's it's impossible to make the image match the idea in his head, or the idea in his client's head. Often it's about "finding the middle ground" – doing the best he can in the time that he has.

Peter is capable of working quickly. He has to be. But he finds that the

“It's an advantage to work fast and use the spontaneous energy, the sensation of the moment...”



© Summit Entertainment

"deeper I dig into something, the slower I become." A painting can take up to two weeks – although he usually doesn't have that luxury when creating concept art for films.

"There used to be a rule: one a day. But even that doesn't apply to every image or task. It's an advantage to work fast and use the spontaneous energy, the sensation of the moment, especially in the beginning of a project when you're enthusiastic about it. I think I make the best stuff in that early phase of production.

"We have a variety of techniques at our disposal, which can deepen or enhance the experience of an audience, including composition, lighting, mood, colour and dynamic shape language. Perspective is essential ➡



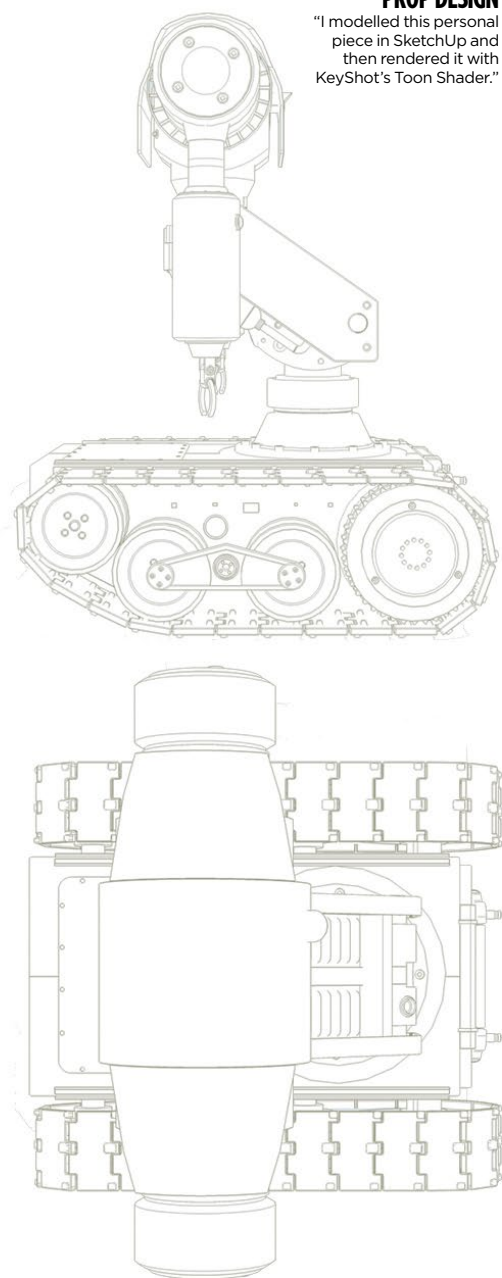
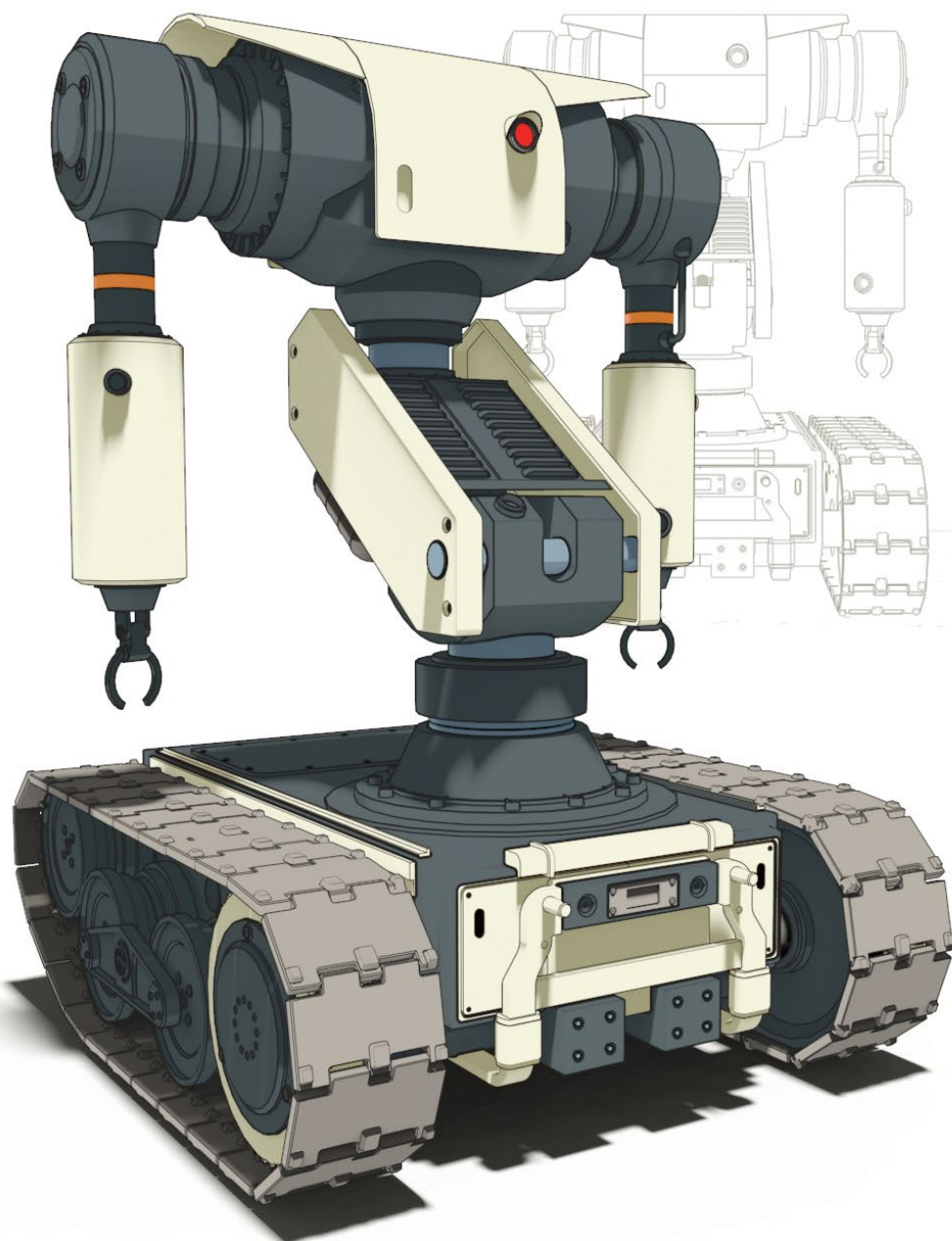
KING ARTHUR

"Costume development art from the King Arthur film."

© Touchstone Pictures

PROP DESIGN

"I modelled this personal piece in SketchUp and then rendered it with KeyShot's Toon Shader."



FIXING AN IMAGE THAT'S NOT WORKING

Peter often finishes a piece, only to find he doesn't like it. Here he reveals his next steps...

"I often don't like my own paintings, when I realise that the result is nothing like I intended in the first place. But what to do about it? I begin editing out all the things that are unnecessary, not significant enough, or are just distracting from the narrative. At times, this process is frustrating and time-consuming, but it's very rewarding afterwards. What I'm basically trying to say is: for one good image I throw away nine. There's no easy way to develop a style of your own - it takes time and dedication.

I think it's crucial for students to look at other people's work and learn from it. But, later, you want to develop your own marks, a style to express your ideas. I remember a point in my life when I stopped buying art books because I wanted to find out what I could come up with. I had no clue my own paintings would be published in some of those books one day...

When I get stuck, I force myself to observe my environment, convinced that the solution is out there right now. Try it - you'll be surprised what you

can see. For inspiration, I also used to watch silent movies by Murnau, Lang, Wegener and Eisenstein. I learned so much from these films about cinematography and the play of light and shadow. Without music and colour they had to rely on the impact of the images alone. But I find the other arts very inspiring too, especially theatre and opera - they're mental karaoke for the brain. And, rule #1, something that always applies: never start a painting without the perfect soundtrack on your earphones!"

Interview

➔ for depth and our experience of space and motion; foreshortening and repetitive elements create the rhythm and suggest a sense of dynamic and motion. Colour sets the tone for the mood and emotions. Composition and framing give weight to each element of the picture. Characters want to be staged clearly with expressive silhouettes.

"Finding the right atmosphere and lighting effects can cause the loss of unnecessary detail and provide more space for the viewer's imagination. Also, patterns and textures will help bringing special areas to our attention.

“You’ll be asked to illustrate other people’s ideas a lot, and changing tasks will often challenge your flexibility”

This is like a checklist. I can work through this to find out how much thought went into my painting!”

TWO TYPES OF CLIENT

Peter’s IMDb page is an impressive read: since 1997 – when he bumped into that film director – he’s averaged two or three movies a year, including Thor: The Dark World, Avengers: Age of Ultron, Blade Runner 2049, Star Wars: The Rise of Skywalker, and the eagerly anticipated Dune.

Concept artists normally work in pre-production, before shooting starts. An average job can take anywhere from six weeks to 11 months. Peter could be one of a dozen concept artists working on a movie, like he was on Speed Racer, or the only concept artist,



DEV ART

"I drew this collection of personal pieces in 2019. I was working through the development art for prop design on a project."

which he was on The Bourne Supremacy. He might be asked to do 20 illustrations, or 200. He often has to relocate to another state or country. That means new colleagues and a new working environment, but Peter isn't complaining when he relocates to places like Morocco, Hungary or Italy, as on previous films.

Regardless of the aforementioned client type, Peter's work generally comes down to two main challenges: he has to constantly come up with ideas, and he has to communicate these ideas visually.

"Solid skills like drawing, painting and 3D modelling are important, as is a knowledge in a variety of fields such as fashion, architecture, science, engineering and anatomy. Graphic



KHARON

"A character design for a comic project of mine."

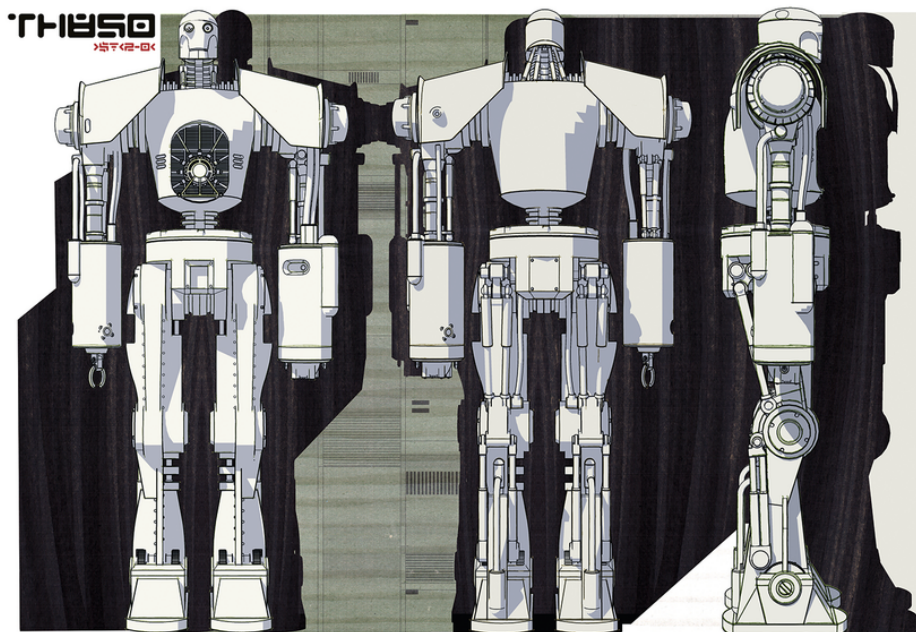
ROBO DESIGN

"A recent 3D robot design, modelled in SketchUp with a dash of retro rendering, marker style!"

design and typography can help to develop a sensitivity for style and form. Many concept artists have a background in industrial and transport design, where these disciplines are part of the education. As mentioned before, I would recommend life drawing, and plein-air painting. It also helps if you like to work in a team and you're open to different views. You'll be asked to illustrate other people's ideas a lot, and changing tasks will often challenge your flexibility.

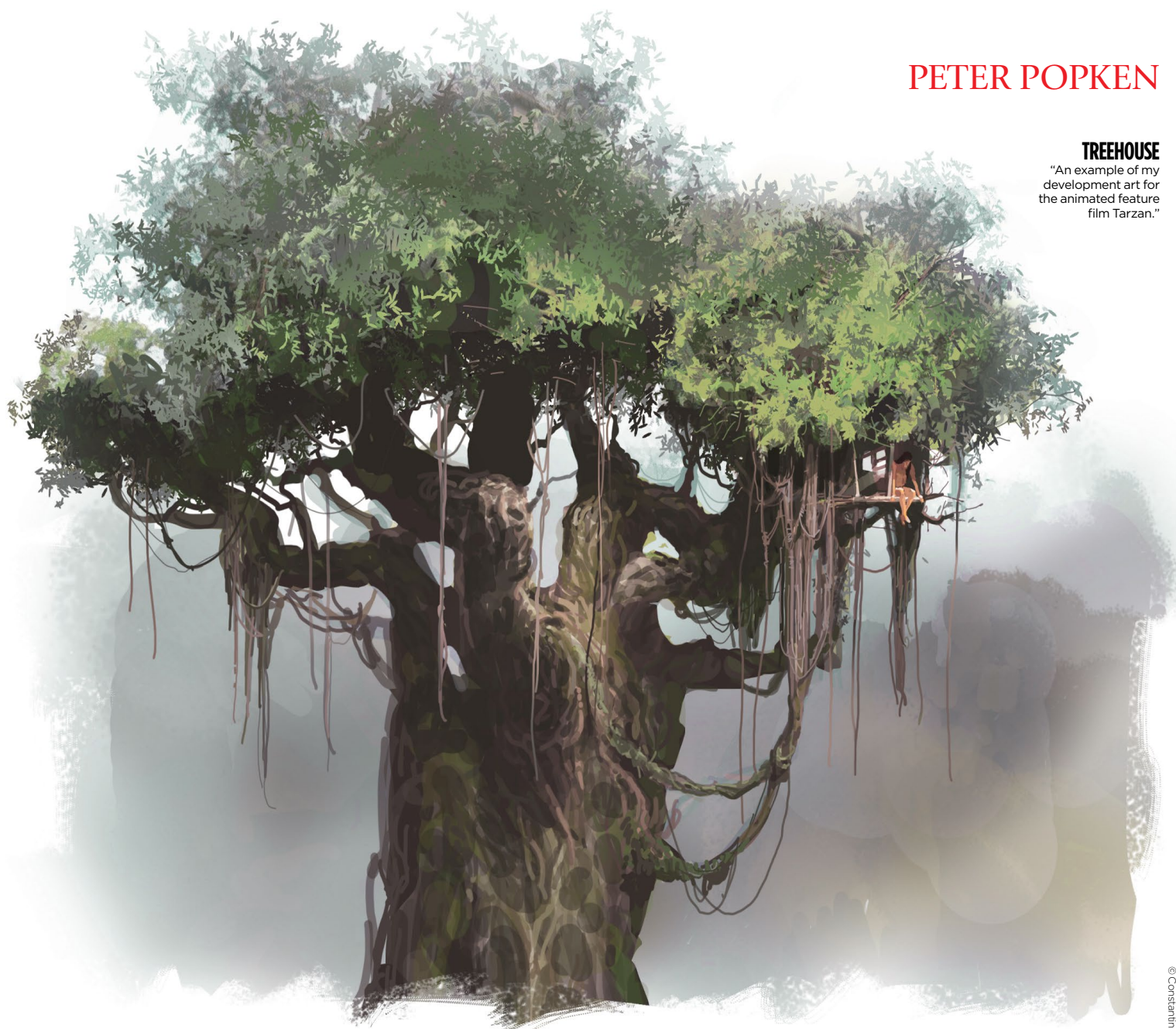
"Good concept art is what works for your client and for the project. Ideally you're happy with the outcome, too. Then again, everybody follows their own standards, which is a good thing. After all, artists are hired because of what they do. Film artists in particular need to be team players and be receptive to different opinions. The job requires a maximum of flexibility and versatility.

"Great films are achieved because of the diversity and ideas of the people working on them. As designers, we create worlds that don't yet exist... it's not everyone's cup of tea." ●



TREEHOUSE

"An example of my development art for the animated feature film Tarzan."



© Constantin



CRASHED SPINNER

"Work-in-progress piece for a Blade Runner 2049 production painting, created for the Trash Mesa sequence."

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January 2021

Our video game art issue features an exclusive Cyberpunk 2077 workshop from CD PROJEKT RED, an interview with Riot Games' Jennifer Wuestling, advice on storytelling, creating game concept art and lots more!



Issue 194

Christmas 2020

Cover artist Mel Milton thinks like a sculptor when tackling values, Mike Corriero applies dynamic perspective in his art and Oona Holtrane adds storytelling to her character designs. We also talk to animation artist Sam Nassour.



Issue 193

December 2020

Embrace spontaneity in your art with Audra Auclair, boost drama levels with Klaus Scherwinski while Phillip Boutté Jr. presents tips on film costume design. Plus we talk to Justin Gerard and look back at LightBox Expo 2020.



Issue 192

November 2020

Karl Kopinski provides plenty of drawing advice, Iris Compiet tells us about working on Dark Crystal art and meeting Brian Froud, art directors reveal what they look for in applicants, Donglu Yu talks colour studies, and plenty more!

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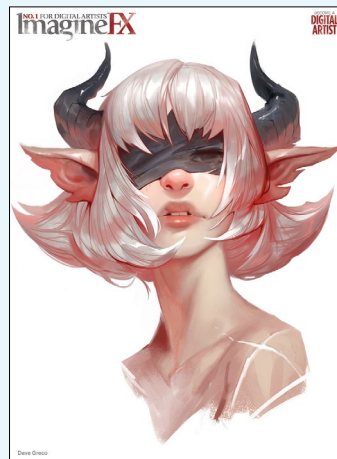
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October 2020



Issue 190
September 2020



Issue 189
August 2020



Issue 188
July 2020



Issue 187
June 2020



Issue 186
May 2020



Issue 185
April 2020



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March 2020



Issue 183
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Issue 182
January 2020



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Christmas 2019



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*Resource files are available from issue 85 onwards.

Sketchbook

Thomas Chamberlain-Keen

Discover how this artist embraces community design challenges as a way to hone his skills and unfurl his imagination

Artist PROFILE

Thomas Chamberlain-Keen

LOCATION: England



Thomas is a concept artist and illustrator, currently working on Fable at Playground Games in England. After neglecting

sketchbooks and paper in favour of digital, he started to discover how special traditional sketching was again after starting his first job. Thomas continues to find the traditional route rewarding, because it enables him to tackle design problems.

www.artstation.com/tck

TESLA CHAN

"The final design for my entry to the fourth ART WAR challenge: a war of the elements. She controls huge arcs of electricity with her suit."

MYSTERY BOX – MISCHIEVOUS 'THE SUMMONER'

"I built his design around 'conjuring up an idea'. He's a compulsive, chaotic trickster."

INKTOBER 2019 – 'PATTERN'

"Lizards are wonderful things and never stop being enjoyable to draw, especially if they are 100 times their ordinary size."

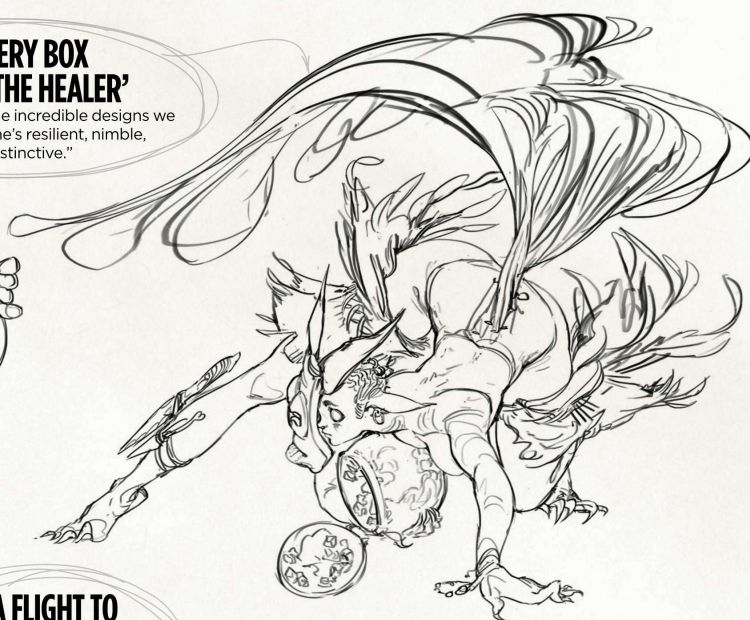
BOK

"A devilish critter inspired by the shapes of the pak choi cabbage."

Sketchbook Thomas Chamberlain-Keen

MYSTERY BOX – WILD ‘THE HEALER’

“Wild is based on the incredible designs we see in nature. She’s resilient, nimble, and instinctive.”



MYSTERY BOX – JOYFUL ‘THE CHEF’

“The glue that holds the mystery box team together with cheer and food. A well-intentioned manipulator of the emotions.”



A FLIGHT TO BILLUND

“These pages come from a mini pocket sketchbook that was given out as a freebie at IAMAG 2019. I drew these while waiting for my flight, so some of the faces are based on people in the airport.”

“Lizards are wonderful things and never stop being enjoyable to draw”

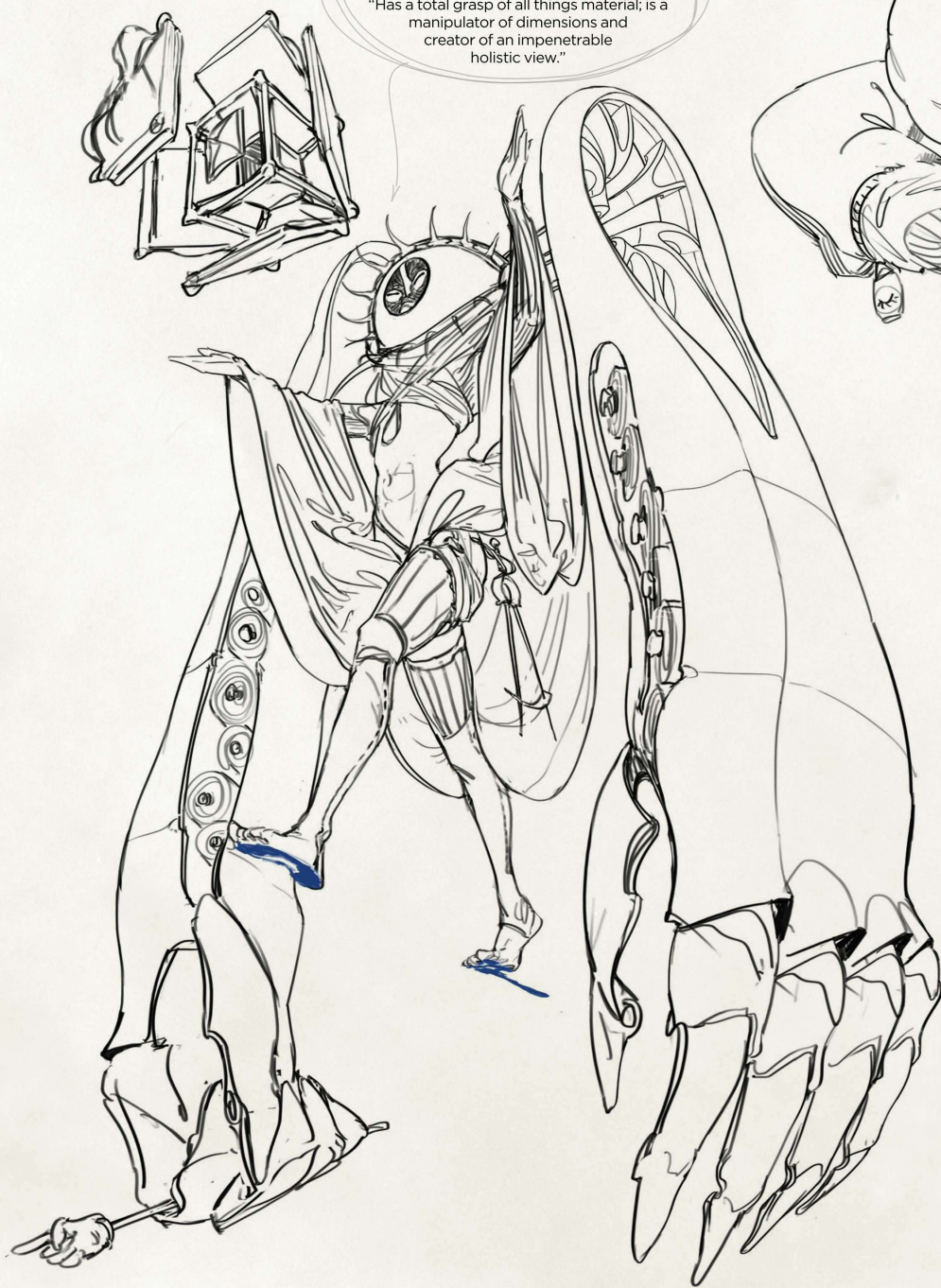


Sketchbook

“I started to play with the idea of mental stability; a strength outside the body”

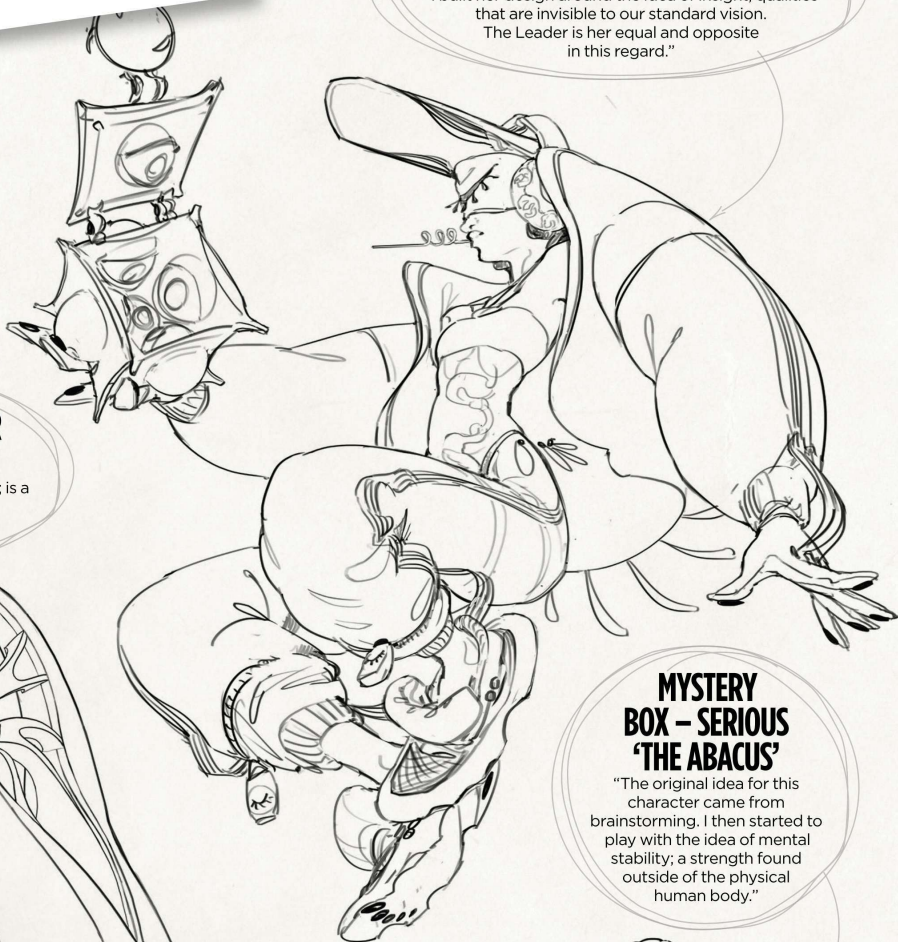
MYSTERY BOX – LEADER ‘THE ARCHITECT’

“Has a total grasp of all things material; is a manipulator of dimensions and creator of an impenetrable holistic view.”



MYSTERY BOX – BRAVE ‘THE TELLER’

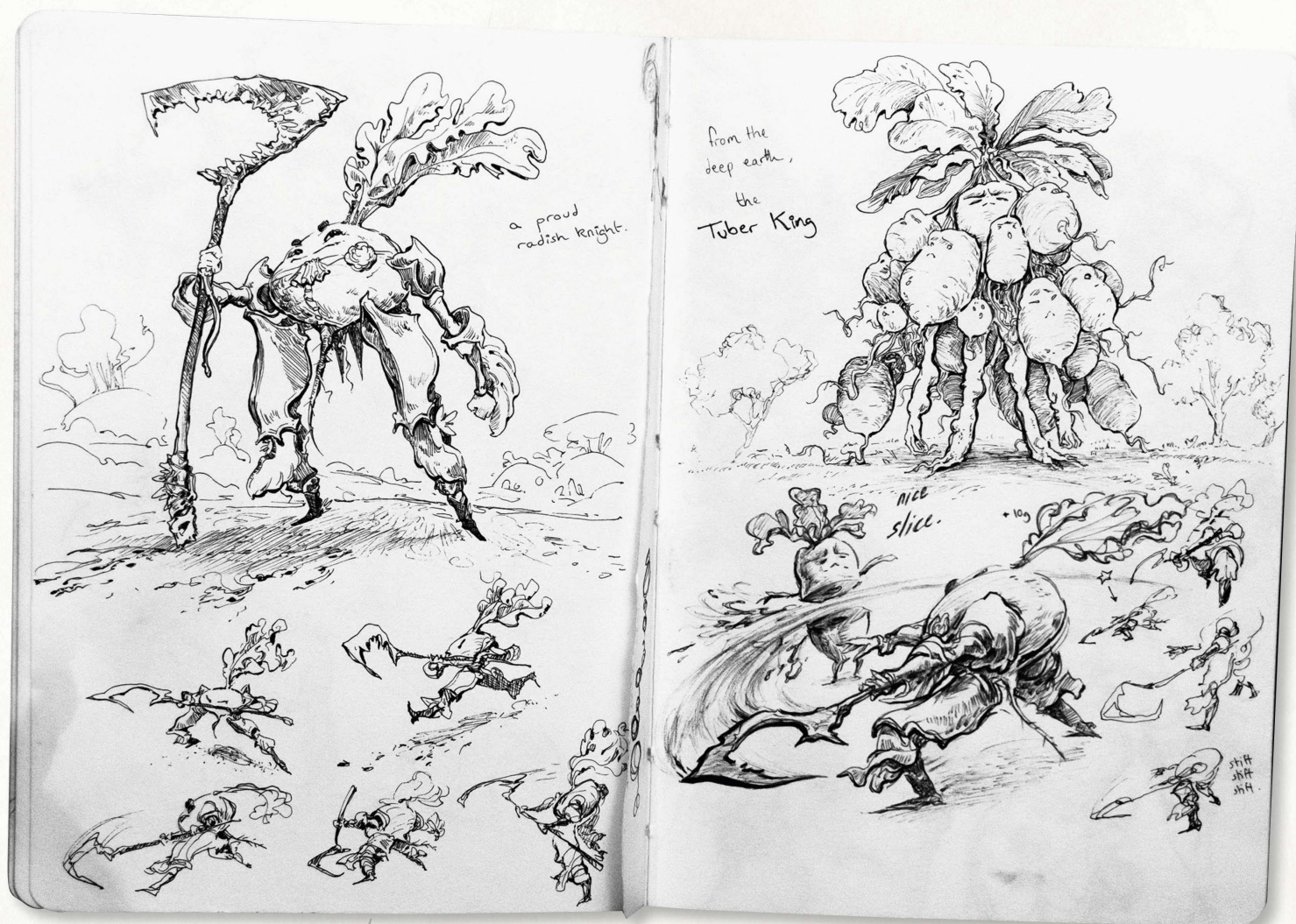
“I built her design around the idea of insight; qualities that are invisible to our standard vision. The Leader is her equal and opposite in this regard.”



MYSTERY BOX – SERIOUS ‘THE ABACUS’

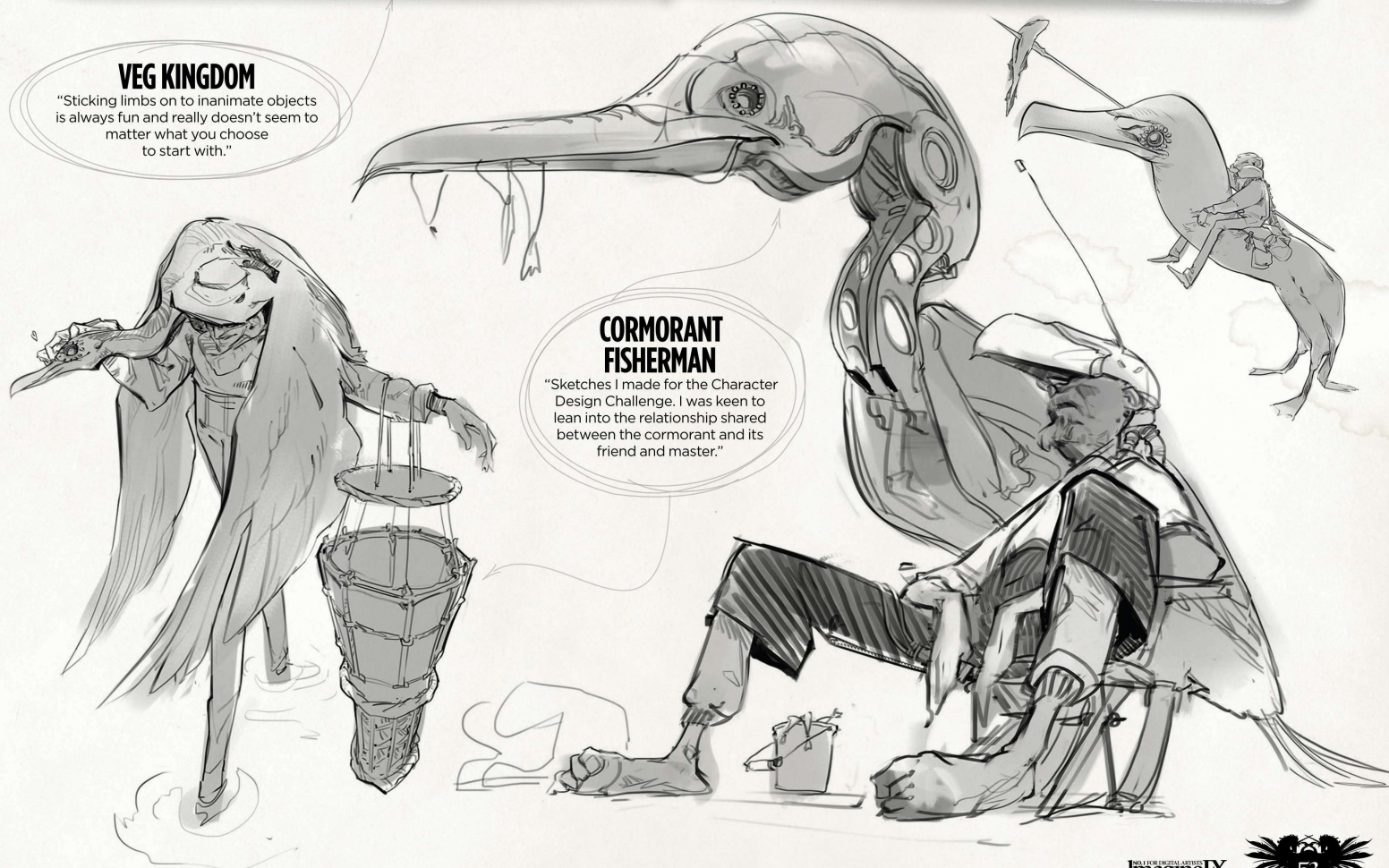
“The original idea for this character came from brainstorming. I then started to play with the idea of mental stability; a strength found outside of the physical human body.”





VEG KINGDOM

"Sticking limbs on to inanimate objects is always fun and really doesn't seem to matter what you choose to start with."



Sketchbook

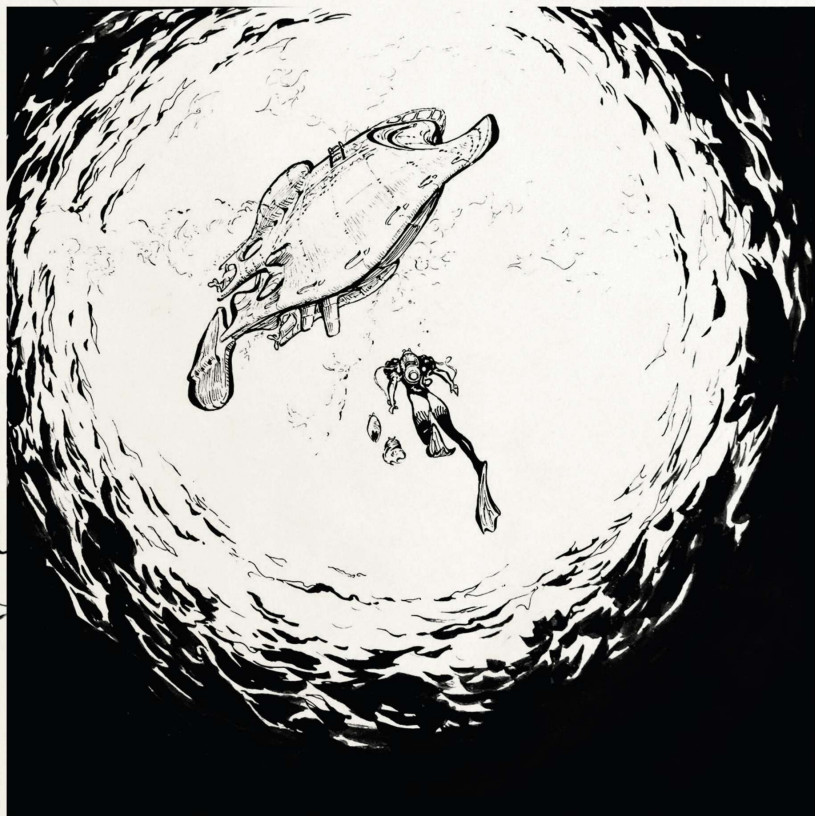


INKTOBER 2020

"This was a huge undertaking since I was trying to complete one of these drawings every day throughout October. I was also trying to improve my storytelling, so the full set of 31 drawings are sequential."



“I was trying to improve my storytelling, so the full set of 31 drawings are sequential”





NINJA CAT

"Another Character Design Challenge entry. This time I focused on designing clothing and accessories that the character would choose for themselves. It might seem odd if a cat were wearing clothing covered in cat designs, but you can totally see them going for the fish theme."



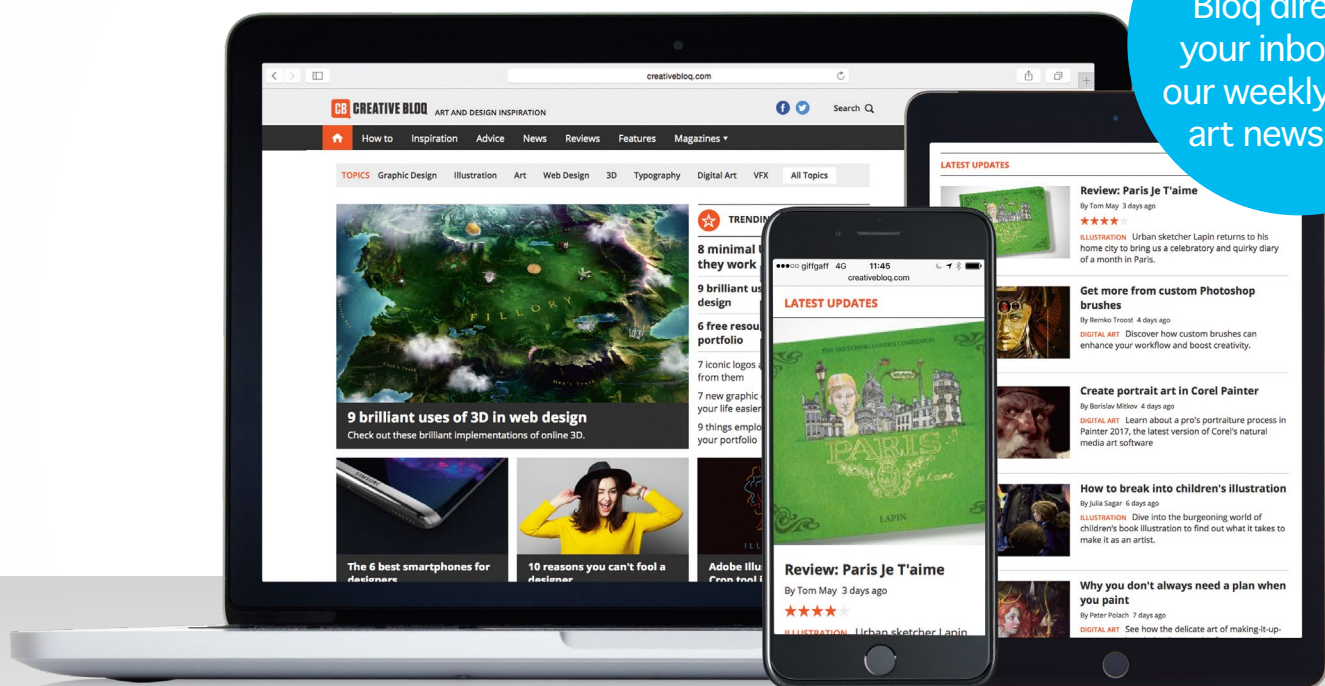
BLIND DRAWINGS

"I love to draw portraits without looking at the page and then touch them up afterwards. You find proportions and expressions that you simply could never invent were you to deliberately try."

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Advice from the world's best artists

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This issue:

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Lane Brown balances contrast and harmony for visual impact.

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Develop an underwater scene with James Lewis-Vines.

72 15 tips for better matte paintings

Saby Menyhei shares his key advice to improve your skills.

Photoshop

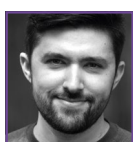
USE CONTRAST IN YOUR CONCEPT ART

Lane Brown shares his process for composing two characters with an interesting balance of contrast and harmony to achieve greater impact

Artist PROFILE

Lane Brown
LOCATION: US

Lane is a professional illustrator and concept artist. He has a deep love of digital painting and charcoal drawing.
www.lanedraws.com



I'm fascinated by contrast. This hasn't always been the case, but over time I've realised that one effective method to create interesting compositions is to focus largely on the abstract design beneath surface details. What's abstract design? Well, there's a lot to be said about that, but for me, it's the thoughtful interplay of

contrasting and harmonising shape language that often generates appealing relationships, regardless of the subject matter.

This concept illustration began by composing big simple shapes, the aim of which was to find an appealing relationship between them. As is the case with most of my personal work, I didn't have a clear vision or direction at the onset.

Rather, I allowed my imagination to run free with any ideas that the initial marks suggested. The specifics of the subject weren't important to me at the beginning, because I was more focused on creating a strong composition of shapes from an abstract perspective. It's that exploration and focus on abstract design and contrast that I want to emphasise for you here. ➡

How I make use of... BIG SHAPES TO ESTABLISH COMPOSITION



1 A rough sketch

I begin with a rough sketch, practically a doodle, in order to explore the contrast of a tall character next to a shorter one. The scale of their shapes needs to be a pleasing, unequal ratio such as 70:30. I overlap their shapes to make them feel closely associated.



2 A notan study

At every stage, I simplify and merge similar values into large shapes. This method of composing an image with light and dark shapes is called 'notan'. Even though I enjoy painting details, I'm always mindful of the underlying notan so I don't inadvertently weaken its design.



3 A strong profile

I transition quickly from loose drawing into painting because it's easier to push and pull large shapes with broad strokes. Once tones and colours are blocked in, I move to the heads and faces because expressions set the tone for every following detail. A strong portrait creates a solid focal point.



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TICKETS NOW ON SALE

USE CONTRAST

Strange outfits

I use the bulky enveloping cloaks and odd ornamentation to hint at a harsh environment and peculiar culture. Perhaps they exist in a climate that rapidly cycles from one extreme to another.

Acknowledge the viewer

The action of the kid lowering his hood pulls the viewer into the scene to connect with the subject.

Contrast of scale

I place the shorter kid next to the woman, in order to make her feel taller by comparison. I use variation in scale to add interest.

Value grouping

I merge similar values across both characters to create large graphic shapes. The two feel more connected because their cloaks and shadows group together.

Dense atmosphere

Particles of sand fill the air, reducing visibility of the environment. This makes it easier to focus on the two subjects and enables the viewer's imagination to generate the world.

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: SARGENT MASTER STROKE



Inspired by the brushwork of John Singer Sargent, this brush provides bold strokes and texture.

MORWENNA



This is a smooth brush that's great for both fine edge control and detail.

GET YOUR RESOURCES

See page 8 now!

Big strokes

Many strokes of the same size and texture become monotonous, so I vary them often. An intermingling of large and small strokes creates an appealing contrast. I've included two of my favourite brushes with this workshop, to help you with this!

Create with contrapposto

I vary the articulation of limbs. For added contrast, I make the straight leg jut out into the light, while the bent leg recedes into shadow.



Blender SKETCH WITH THE GREASE PENCIL

James Lewis-Vines uses Blender's acclaimed Grease Pencil tool to help him quickly visualise an immersive underwater environment



Artist PROFILE

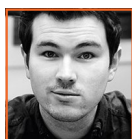
James Lewis-Vines

LOCATION: England

James is a concept artist at Electronic Arts who loves to explore new techniques and tools to apply them in his work. <https://ifxm.ag/jameslv>

GET YOUR RESOURCES

See page 8 now!



Drawing has always been one of the most useful communication skills for creative minds. Henri Matisse once said: "Drawing is putting a line around an idea." Every master painting starts out as a doodle, a way to bridge the gap from the imagination to something real.

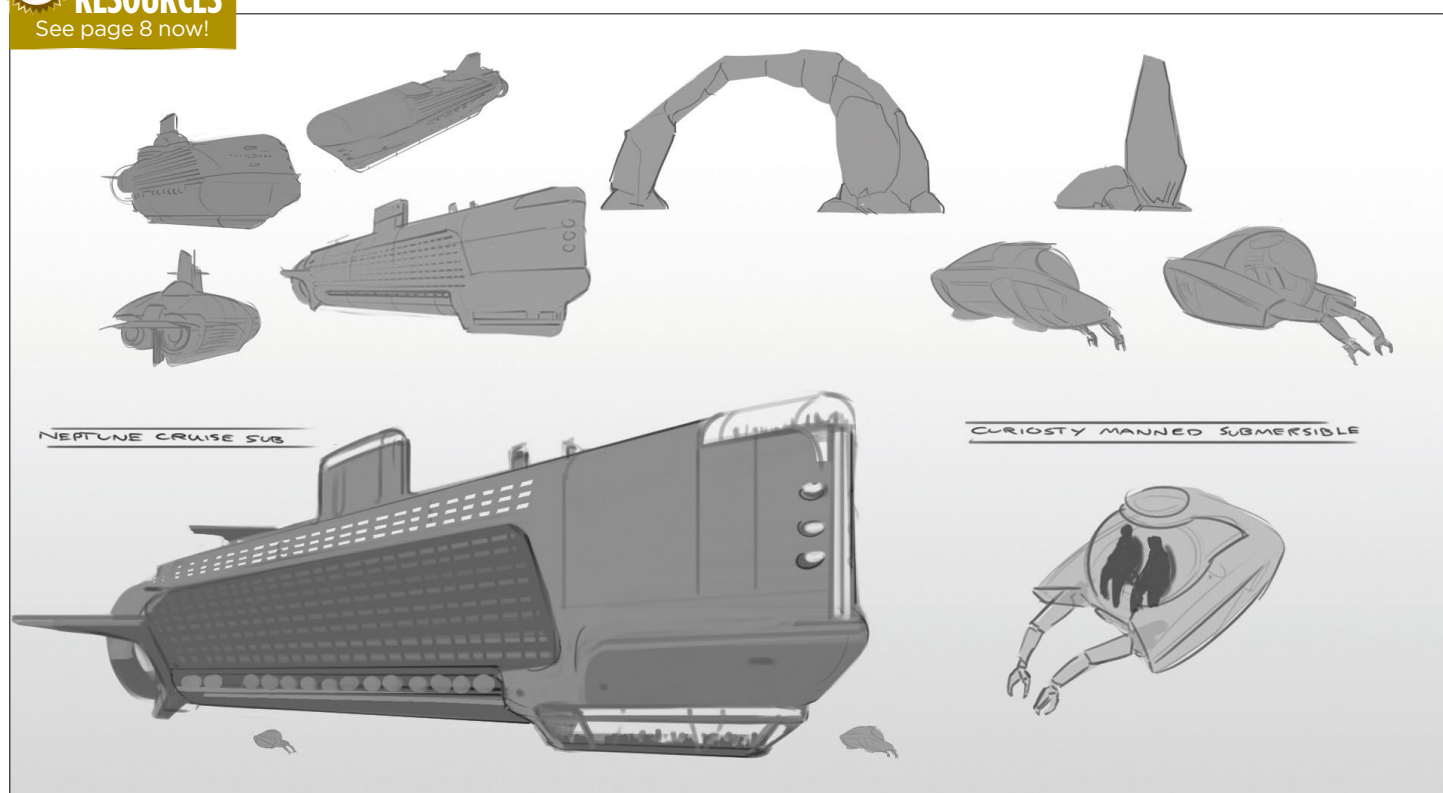
With technological leaps in digital drawing tablets, innovative software

and virtual reality, drawing has transcended pen and paper and can now exist as a digital creative outlet. I'll show how I've started to use the free software Blender, specifically its Grease Pencil tool, along with other basic modelling tools to sketch out environments and then explore them in 3D.

In this workshop, I'll sketch out an idea I have for a future deep-sea cruise ship with multiple tiny tourist

submersibles scouring a surrounding coral canyon. After creating the environment I'll then explore it, like a photographer, and snap some interesting compositions and angles of the digital world.

This workshop assumes basic knowledge of traditional drawing fundamentals such as contour line work, as well as an understanding of basic 3D terminology and familiarity with Blender's native tools.

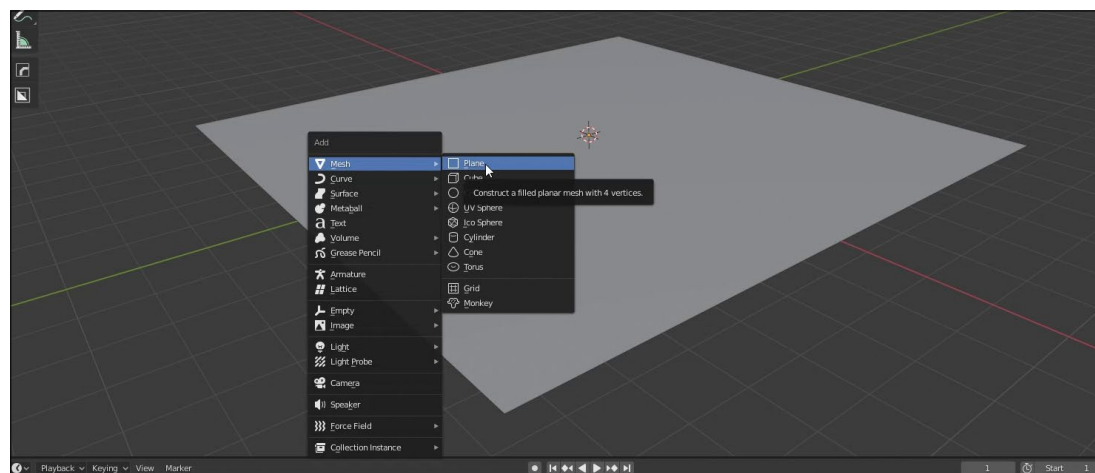


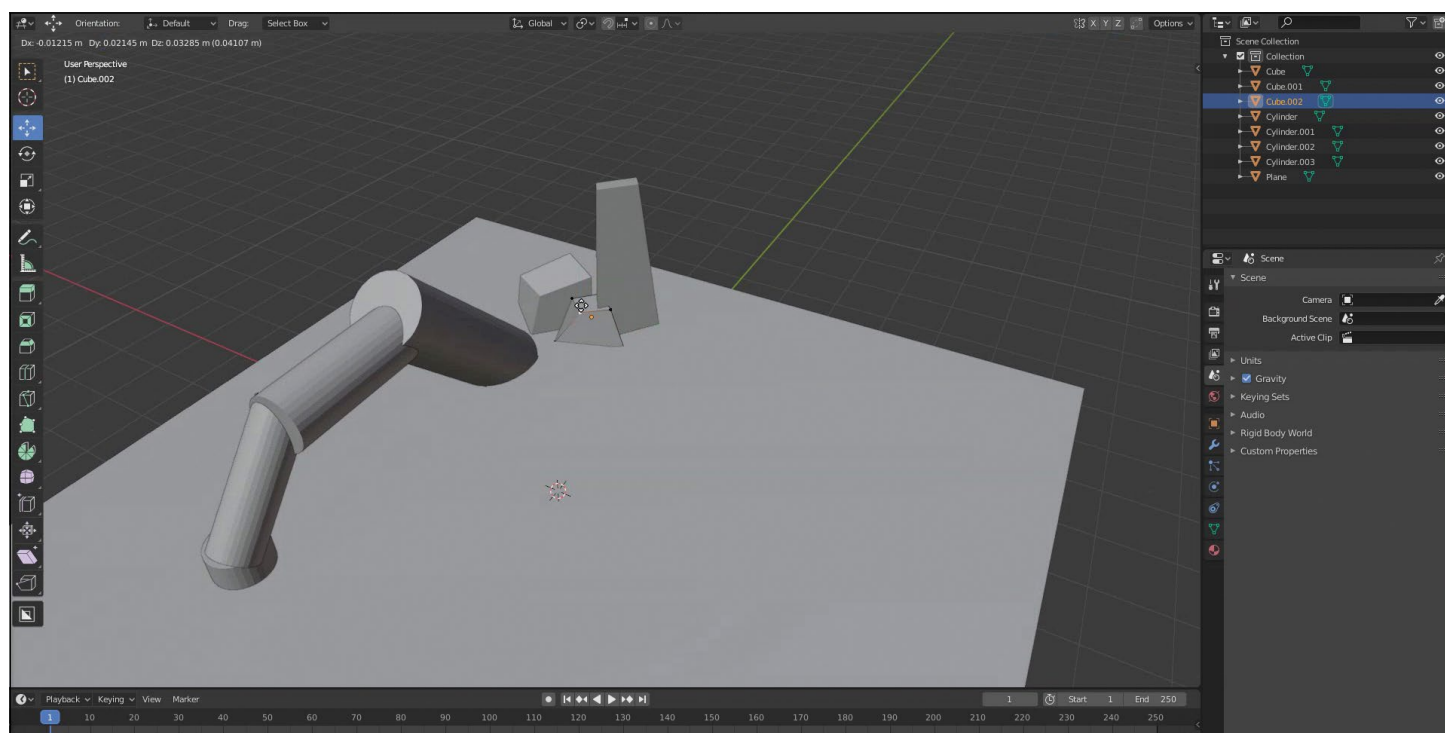
1 Visualise my ideas in an initial sketch

I always like to start any project with a 2D sketch, on paper or digitally in Photoshop or Procreate. This serves as a basic blueprint of what I want to achieve in 3D. By creating a quick planning sketch I decide on the large and medium shapes that I want to use, which means I can then block in quickly when I get into the 3D space.

2 Set up the scene in Blender

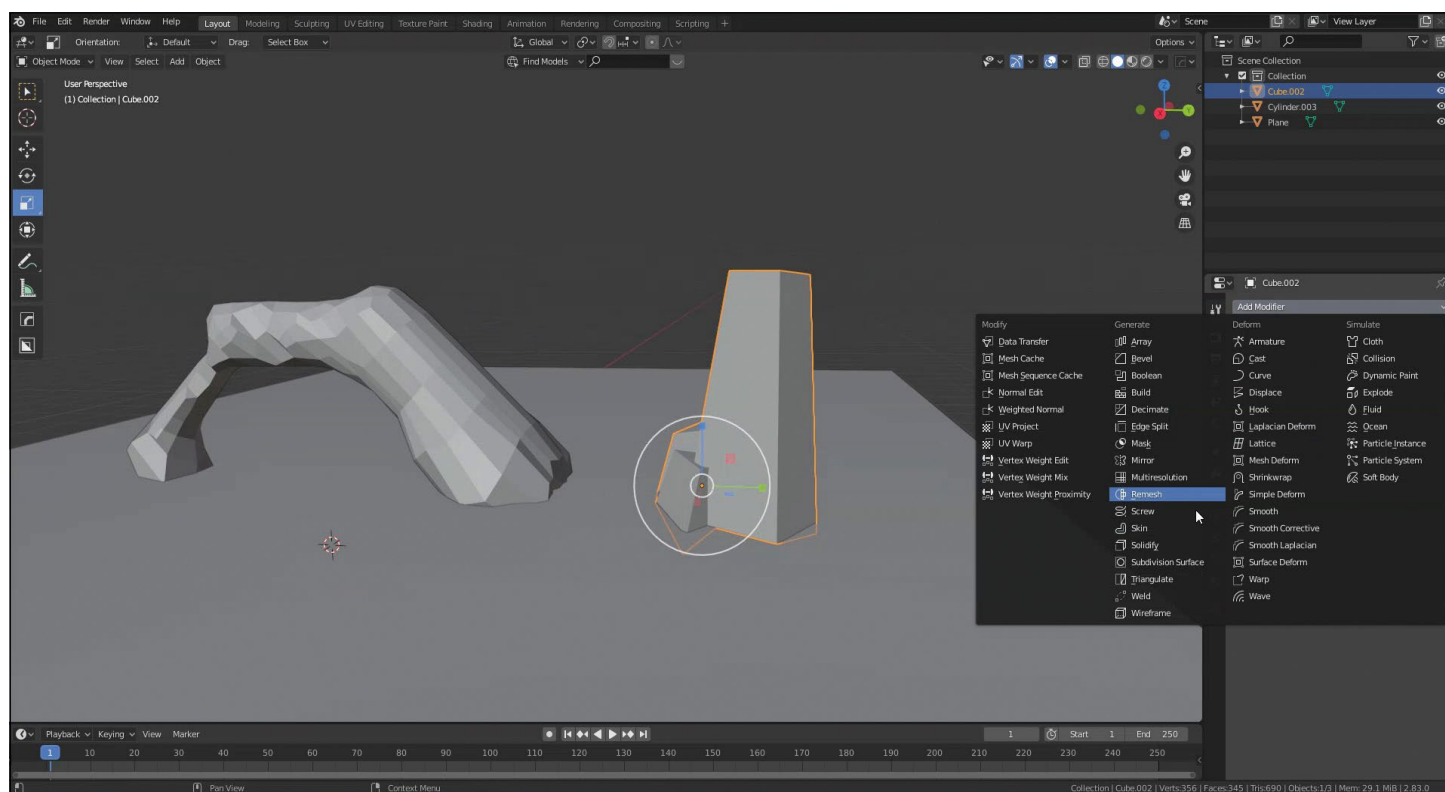
I jump into Blender and start by pressing A on the keyboard to select the default cube scene, and then hit Delete. Now that I have a blank slate, I press Shift+A and select Menu>Mesh>Plane. This creates a ground plane in the scene that can be scaled by pressing S and then dragging the mouse.





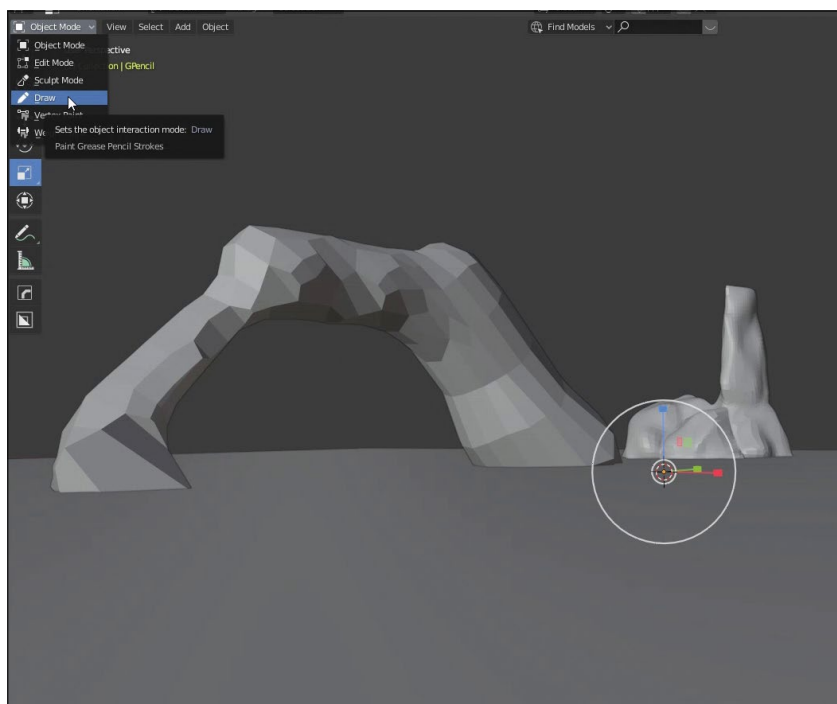
3 Basic poly modelling techniques

I create basic forms with the same Shift+A command I used for the plane and then experiment with the other mesh types. Because I'm building a sketch, the topology isn't that important in these models. When modelling, most forms can be broken up into simple shapes, such as cuboids or spheres placed alongside each other that I'll then scale or rotate. It's also possible to move individual vertices or groups of edges by selecting the Edit mode from the tabs on the top left of the screen, or press Alt.



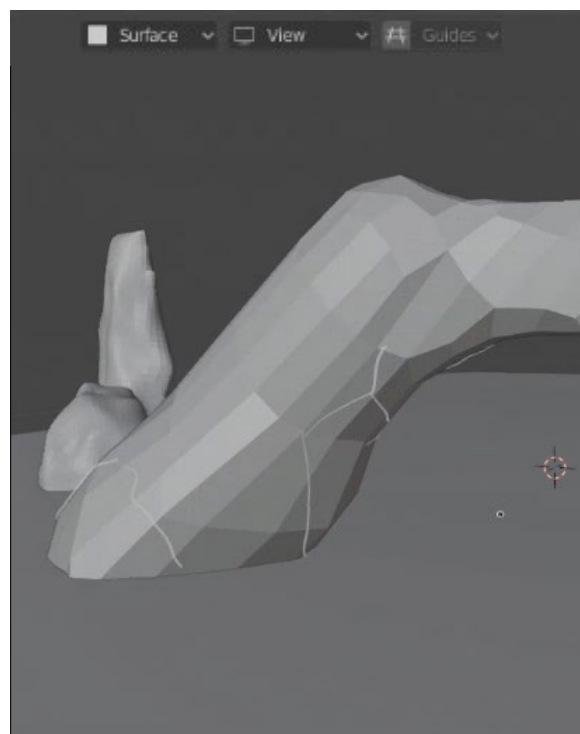
4 Refine my shapes and start sculpting

Once I'm happy with the structure of the shapes, I select them, right-mouse click and pick Join from the menu to merge the selection into one object. For an additional sculptural or handcrafted look, I apply a Remesh modifier using the spanner tab on the right. I can then sculpt on to the shape with a variety of brushes by selecting Sculpt Mode from the drop-down list found at the top left of the screen. ➡➡



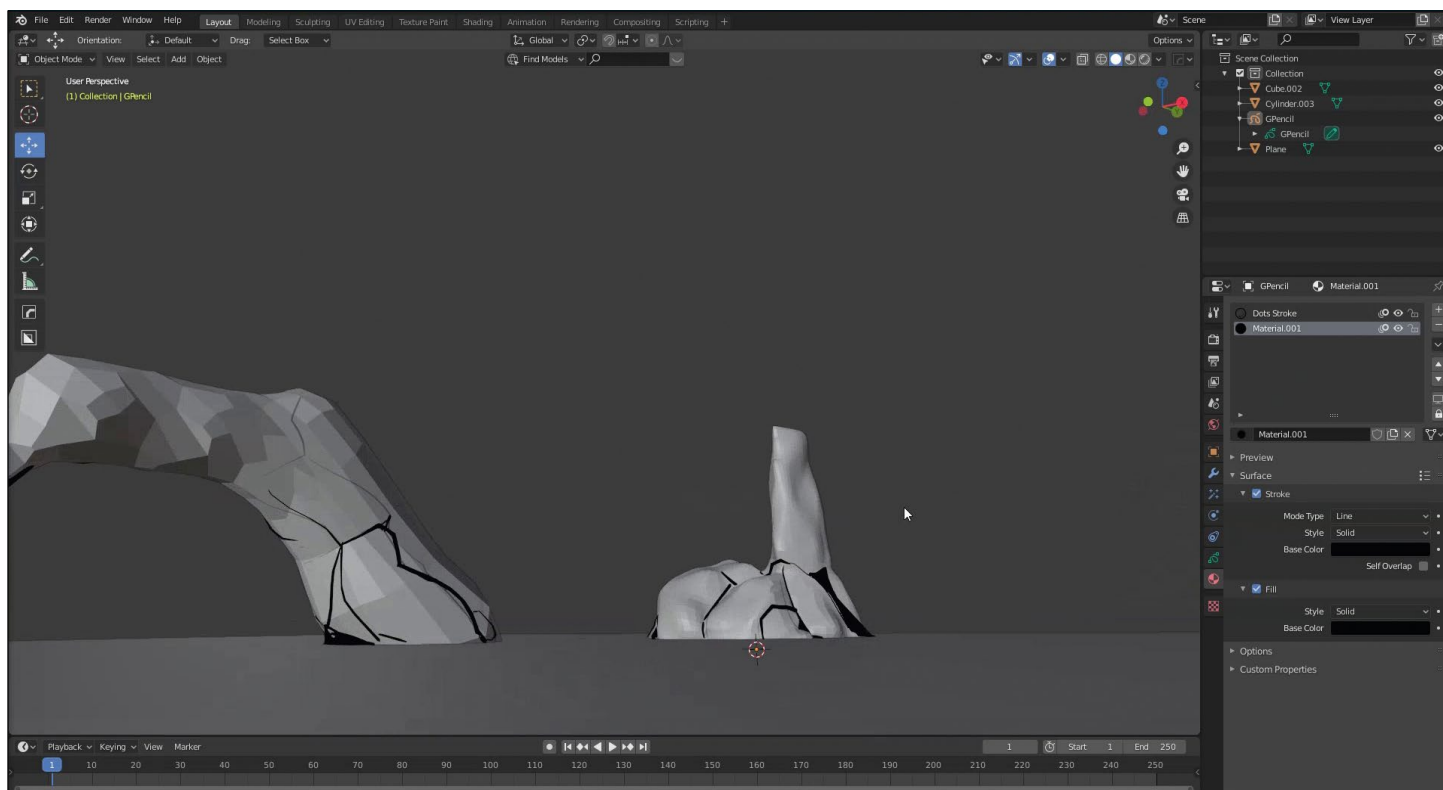
5 Create a Grease Pencil object

Now I start adding some drawing. I begin by hitting Shift+A, then select Grease Pencil>Blank. This creates a blank Grease Pencil object. Then I go to the Object Data Properties tab on the right side of the screen and hit New Layer. I go to the top left of the screen, click the Object Mode drop-down menu and select Draw. Now I'm ready to draw.



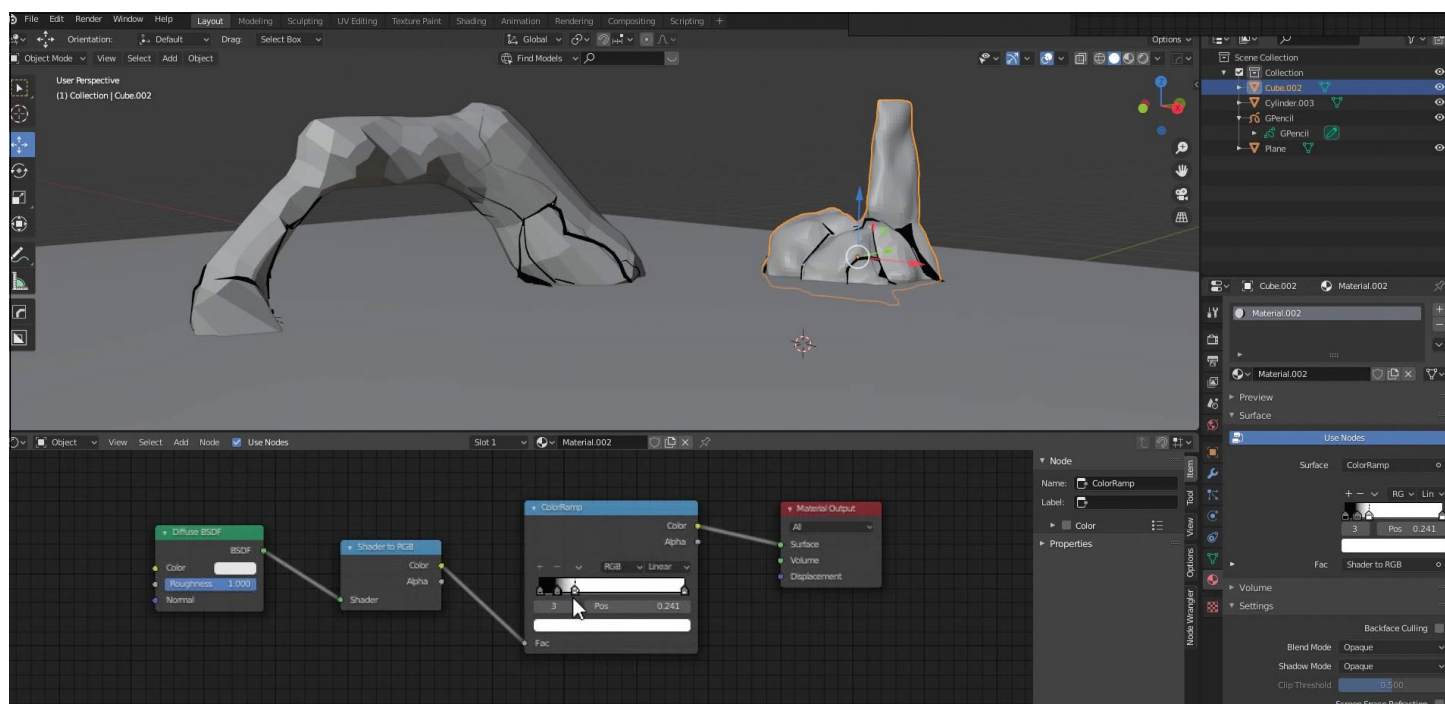
6 Add ink line-work and shading

I can draw on the object surface by first selecting the Origin drop-down tab in the top middle of the screen and then picking Surface instead. Now when I draw on the surface I'll see some white lines.



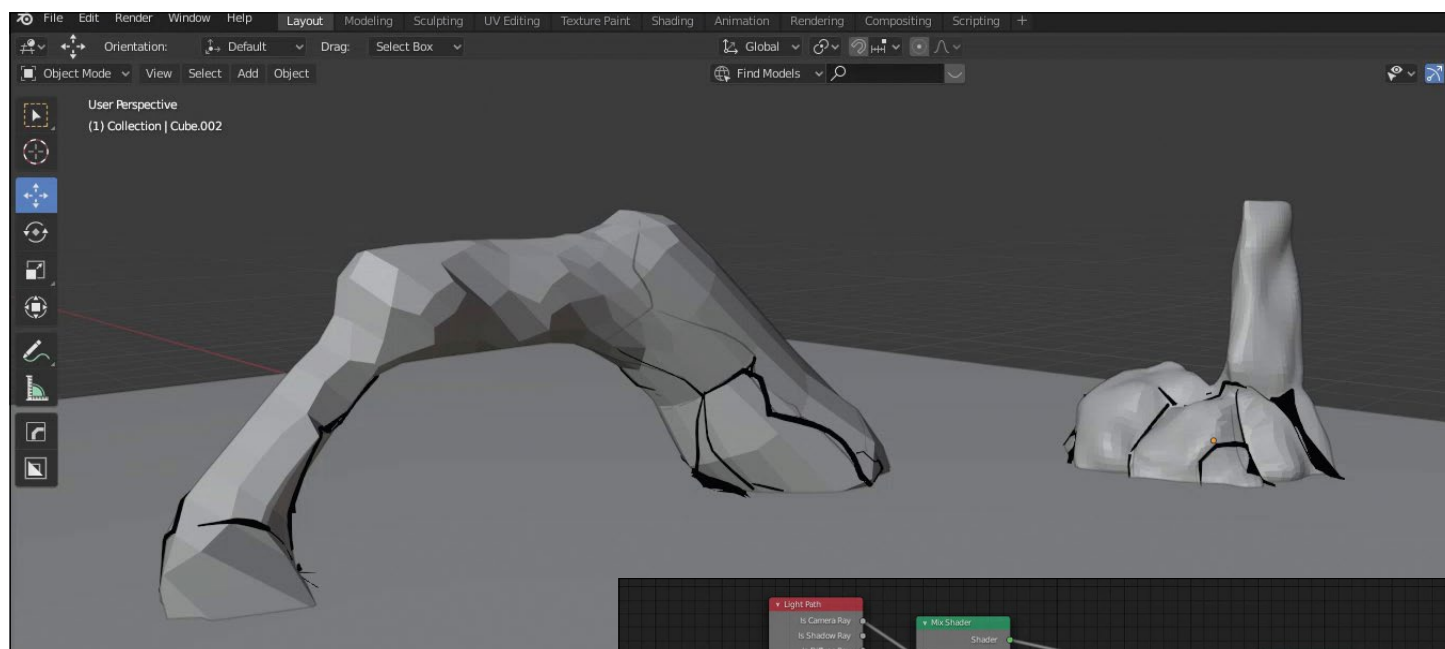
7 Choose my Grease Pencil materials

The drawing is white at the moment because there isn't a material attached to the object. To fix this, I find the tab with the checkerboard circle on the right of the screen, then I go into its menu and hit + New. This creates a standard black material. For an interesting block shape effect, I check the Fill box in the menu, which can be great for blocking in graphic details.



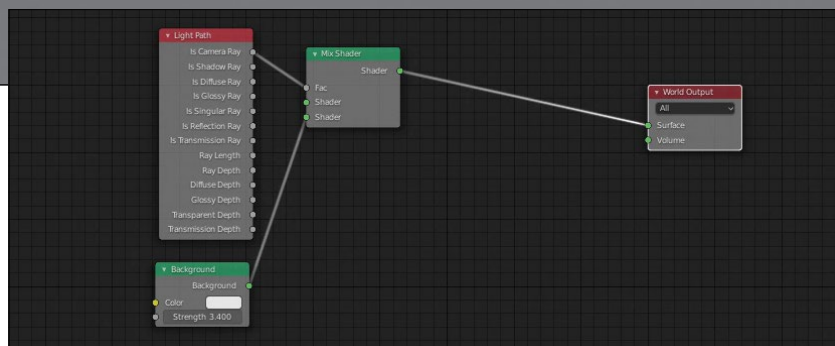
8 Set up some graphic shaders for the model

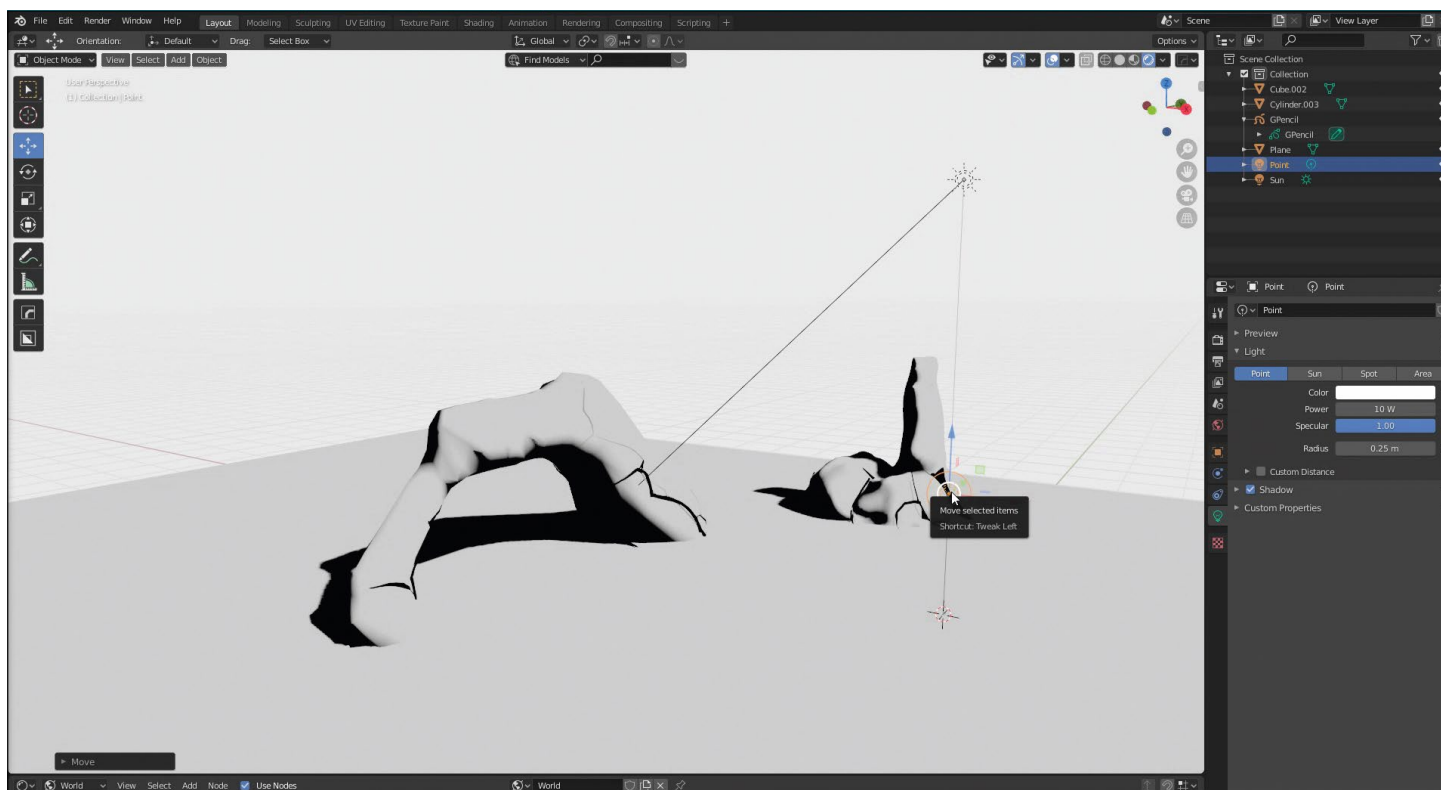
Once I have some interesting sketched line-work on the object, it's time to make my underlying model look more sketchy. First, I create a material for the object by selecting the surface object, then going to the checkerboard circle tab on the right again and hitting + New. Now I have a shader that can be edited using the Shader Editor, found by clicking the drop-down menu in the bottom left of the screen and selecting Shader Editor. Once in the Editor, copy the nodes shown in my example image by pressing Shift+A and typing the names in Search until they appear. This will create a graphic ramp shader and helps to give a high-contrast inked look to an object.



9 Use the World Shader to develop the environment

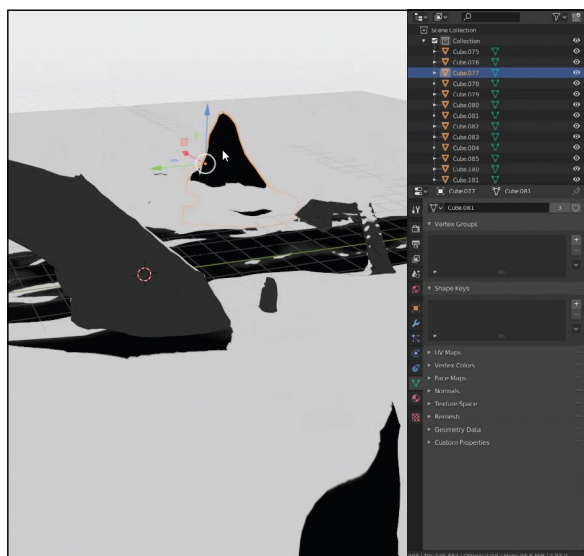
My next task is to develop a graphic backdrop to the scene. I open the Shader Editor and change the drop-down menu from Object to World. You can copy the nodes shown in my example image by pressing Shift+A and typing the names in Search until they appear. Then simply add them, connect them correctly and enter the same information. ➡➡





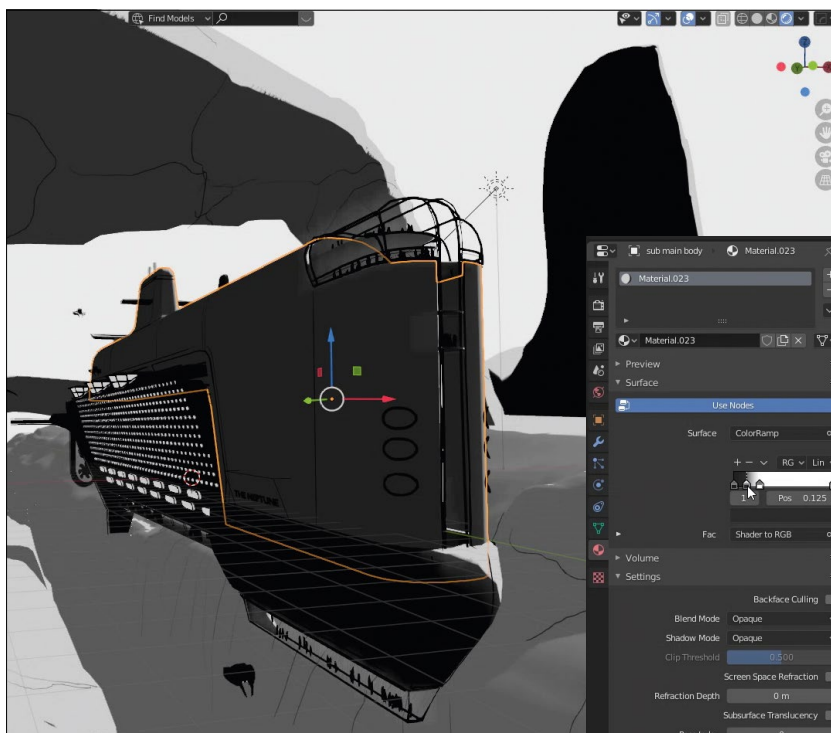
10 Light the scene by establishing the sun's position

Lighting the scene is based on personal preference. By pressing Shift+A and selecting from the Light drop-down menu, I can access several options. However, the simplest method is to create a sun. This now positions a sun emitter in the scene that I can use to change the direction of the light by selecting and moving the small dot on the line running below it.



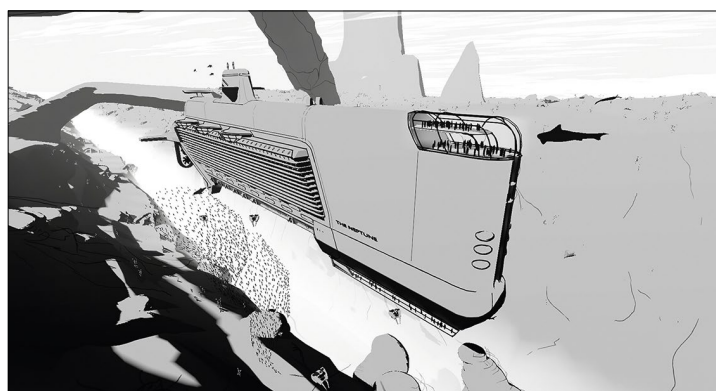
11 Duplicate elements

I want to add to my scene and a good solution is to duplicate existing elements. I do this by Shift-selecting elements and then pressing Shift+D to create duplicates to drag somewhere else in my scene. Another cool option is to redo all previous steps in a new Blender scene and when I have a new element sketched up, I simply press A to select everything in that scene, then Ctrl+C to copy. I open the older scene and press Ctrl+V to paste into it. Blender can handle multiple instances, which makes exchanging elements quick and easy.



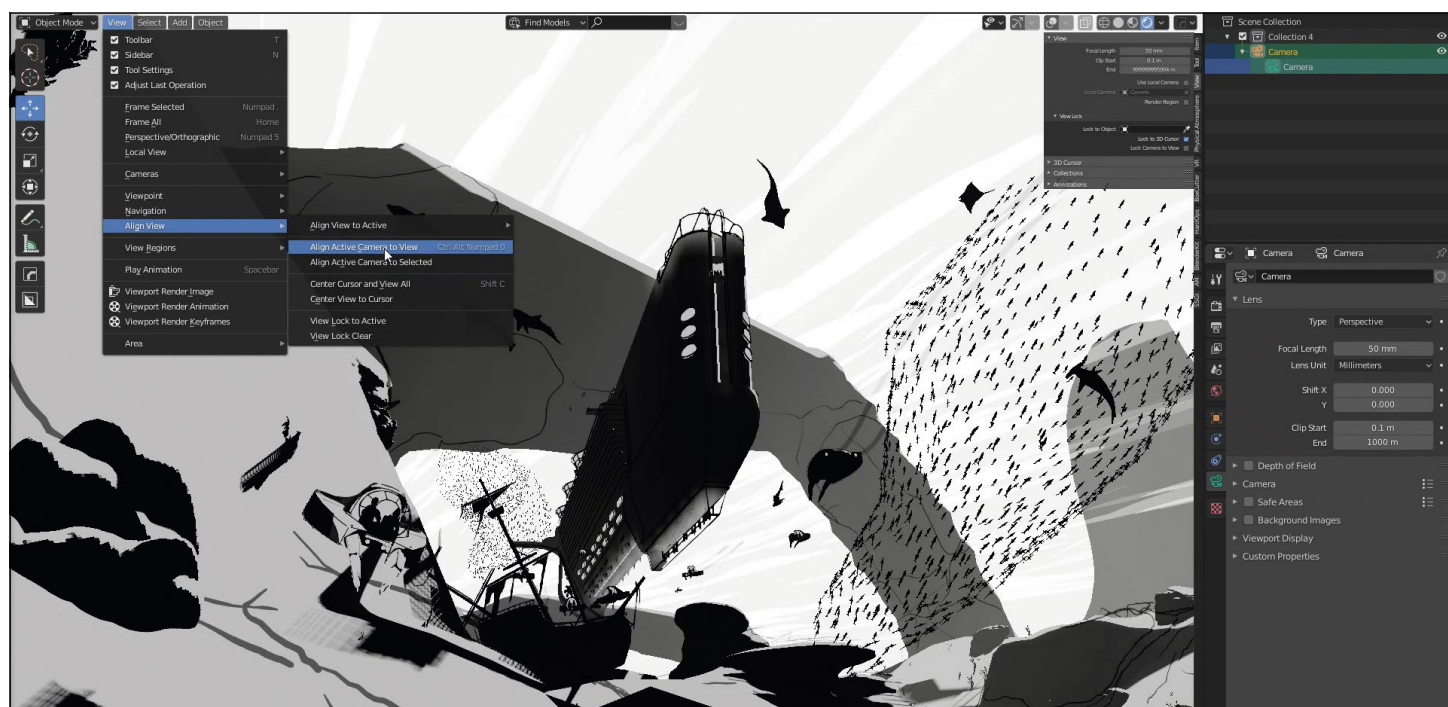
12 Adjust my shaders

To get everything looking right, I find it's always a good idea to tweak the numbers for light intensity and the colours of the ramp swatches in the Shader Editor. This can yield interesting results and enables me to either increase or decrease contrast in different areas of the scene.



13 Explore the scene to achieve the strongest composition

I now move around the scene to search for interesting angles and reposition elements to get everything looking just right. I find a good way to explore a scene is by selecting View>Navigation>Fly/walk from the top-left menu. I then use the W, A, S and D keys to traverse my environment as I would in a first-person shooter, which helps me feel immersed.



14 Introduce a camera to capture a scene

I move my camera to the angle that works best and from that place, I hit Shift+A and pick Camera. I select the camera in my scene and then go to View>Align View>Align Active Camera to View, which is accessed from the drop-down menu in the top left of the scene. I repeat this if I want multiple scene cameras.

I often use the Windows Snipping tool to screen capture from the scene to ensure the image I see in my viewport is identical to the one that I export. However, for higher resolution exports I use Output Properties. From here I can specify the image resolution, then go to the top-left menu and press Render>Render Image. This sets my image to render and once it's finished, I use Image>Save As to export.

Next month



Artist Karmen
Loh (aka
Bearbrickja)
showcases her
dreamy art

Next month

Next month in...
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ImagineFX

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Animation artist Drew Hartel on how to concept painterly finishes.

How to set and achieve goals

We speak to artists about how to plan your next steps to artistic success.

Fatemeh Haghnejad

An inspiring conversation with the artist known as BlueBirdy.

ISSUE 197 ON SALE 22 JANUARY IN PRINT & DIGITAL

Artist insight

15 TIPS FOR BETTER MATTE PAINTINGS

Saby Menyhei is a renowned digital matte painter and concept artist in the film industry. Here he shares key techniques to improve your skills

Artist PROFILE

Saby Menyhei
LOCATION: England

Saby is a traditionally trained fine artist and has been part of the film industry since 2011. He's worked on many blockbusters such as Star Wars, The Avengers and Tenet. Today he's a lead artist at DNEG's Feature Animation division. www.menyhei.com



Ever since I was a child, I've been attracted to distant lands; places I might never get to visit or that don't even exist. I feel so lucky that making art is my profession. It's such a competitive and challenging industry to be part of. Also, it's perhaps the closest thing to childhood for me. I'm like a kid playing with his favourite toy whenever I'm working on a new piece. Even if those places don't exist,

I can be immersed in them. I can spend hours mapping out locations and being part of the adventure.

Although I studied fine art for many years, I've acquired digital art skills from my wonderful colleagues working in the film industry. I'll share some of these techniques to help make you a better matte painter, but these tips are also useful if you're a concept artist.

Today, as a digital matte painter, you need CG generalist skills such as 3D modelling, texturing, lighting, as

well as a strong understanding of compositing and experience in 2D painting. Digital matte painting involves working with live action footage, digital still photography, rendered CG elements and digital painting in order to create believable environments that can be seamlessly integrated into the film. As a matte painter, you have to be proficient in Photoshop, Nuke and Maya. Knowledge of ZBrush and Mari or Painter is also required, as is experience with 2.5D projection.



1 LEARN THE BASICS

To quote Michelangelo: "The science of design, or of line-drawing, if you like to use this term, is the source and very essence of painting, sculpture, architecture." I believe traditional art training is vital, even if you're a digital artist. It's certainly an advantage if you're a matte painter! Perspective, anatomy, colour theory – these are the skills you'll have to master to be successful. If there's no art school near where you live, look online. Once you have a solid foundation you'll have the confidence to tackle any task.

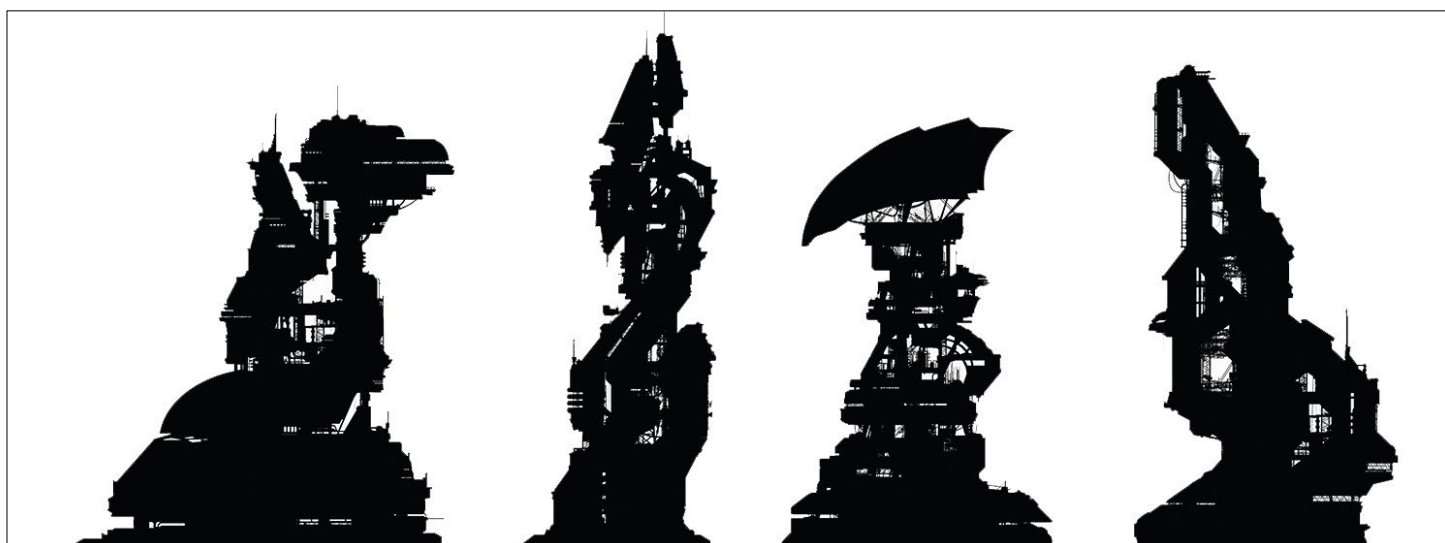
2 PAINT PLEIN AIR

The best way to learn about colours is to paint frequently. Painting outdoors (plein air) is a great way to build skills. You have to be quick: lighting conditions change rapidly. Use pastel, watercolour or acrylics because they dry quicker than oil. Don't get bogged down by small details. Capture light and shadow as quickly as possible. You'll learn you can often suggest detail; you don't have to paint everything!



3 STUDY THE OLD MASTERS

While you can learn the most from observing nature, there's a lot to be gained from studying other artists. Learn art history and closely examine how the artists of the past used to work. Creating master copies will not only help you notice details you haven't seen before, but you'll also find solutions to some of your problems – solutions you won't have thought of before! While making a copy, you're also talking to an artist who lived centuries ago; you're not just a passive observer. Check to see if your local museum allows artists to draw or paint in the building (usually drawing is permitted, but you need permission to paint).



4 USE SILHOUETTES TO DESIGN ENVIRONMENTS

When you start designing your own environments, keep it simple. Silhouettes always come first. Bigger shapes and compositions have to be solid. It's a good exercise to experiment with simple, 2D buildings blocks. Create shapes that are interesting to you and make sure the edges are clean. Once you have a few buildings, try to create quick compositions using those shapes. Use the Free Transform tool to move and scale your elements. It's very easy to create backlit scenarios and you can come up with new compositions in minutes! ➡



5 PHOTOMANIPULATION TEST

Give your skills a workout by trying these standard matte-painting exercises. Take a photo that was shot in the summer and turn it into a winter scene. Or how about transforming a daytime shot into one that looks as though it was

taken at night? You can also try taking a photo in your town and imagine how it looked 200 years ago. Even if you don't paint something from scratch, you'll learn a lot about colours, tones and detail. Remember that whatever you replace on the original image has to look photorealistic.

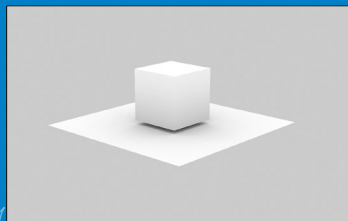


6 DEAL WITH IMAGES FROM DIFFERENT SOURCES

When you work with images from different sources, ensure the sharpness is consistent. Ideally, you want to keep your image as sharp as possible and defocus and blur the matte painting when you're compositing elements together. In addition to sharpness, you also have to make sure that black levels and colours are consistent. If you start with images taken on the same day at the same location, you'll have an easier job. You'll still have to tweak your photos, but the process will be a lot easier.

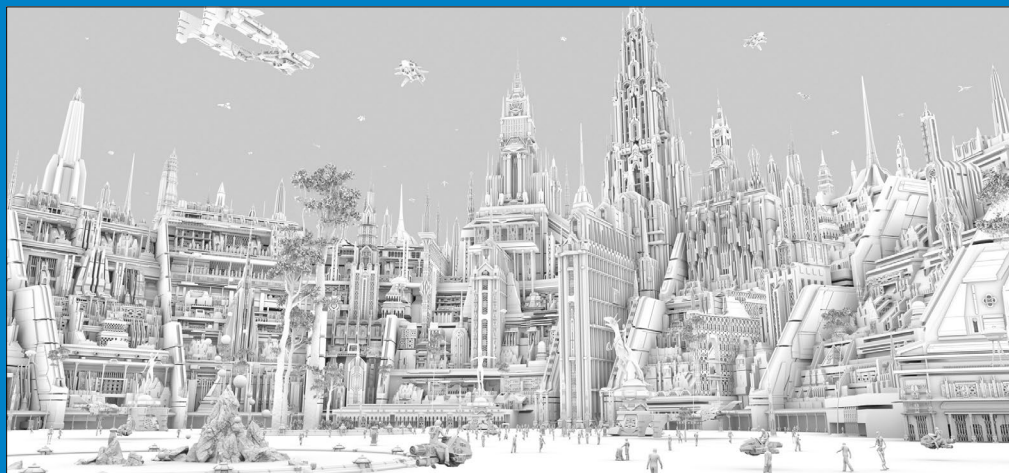
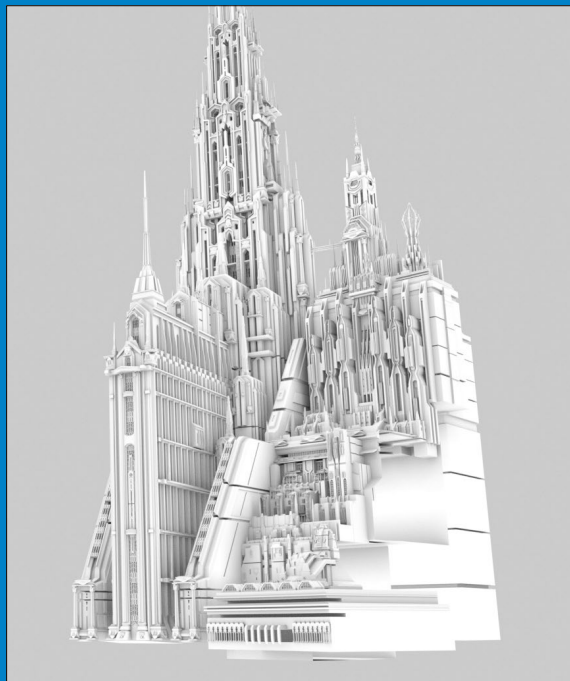
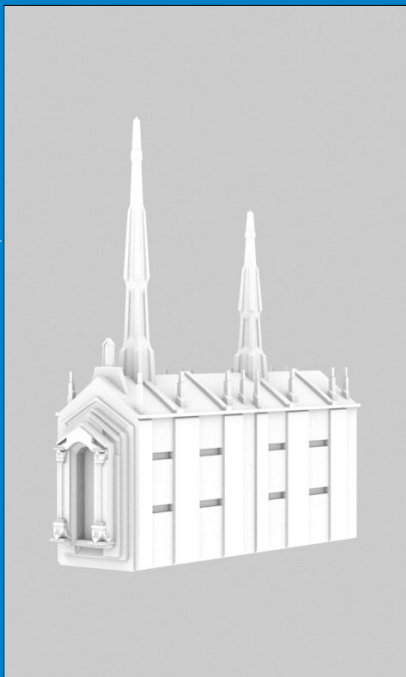
7 BUILD ELEMENTS IN 3D

Establish new worlds quickly by constructing simple 3D elements



A Start simple

After practising 2D matte painting and photomanipulation, try building a scene in 3D. A good exercise is to create all the elements yourself. Start with building something simple. I assure you that it's possible to make something very complex very quickly! While modelling, I pay attention to the UVs so I can quickly apply textures later on. If you're confident in your skills then you can try to recreate something that exists in real life.



B Stay simple

I can create a complex scene from scratch. I start with a cube that I then turn into a little temple-like building. I keep the polycount low. If you create something complex to start with, you'll experience problems managing your scene later on.

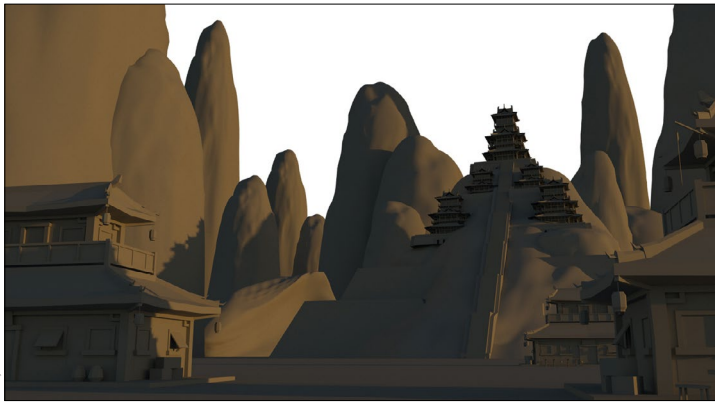
C Build the scene

I extend the building and turn it into a building block. I try to keep the number of polygons down, but I also want to create unique shapes. The aim is to make the place feel a little alien. Ralph McQuarrie has had a huge influence on me.

D Make things easier

I export the building blocks as stand-ins, so in the final scene I don't have any live models. This makes lighting and rendering a lot easier. I render several arbitrary output variables (AOVs) to create a final composite - specular, z-depth, albedo and so on.





8 EXPERIMENT WITH STYLISED MATTE PAINTING

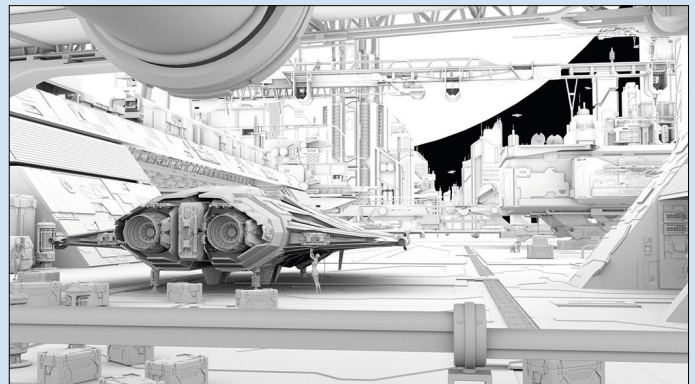
If you've been creating photorealistic images for a while, spice things up and try something a little different. How about a matte painting for an animated film? You can find a lot of good examples online. Search for matte paintings or inspiring still shots from a great animated movie you like. Study the style of the backgrounds and analyse what makes them unique to a particular project. I used Kung Fu Panda as an example here. Learning the language of a stylised world is trickier than it seems, making this a great exercise in expanding your imagination.

“The beauty of kitbashing is that you don't start from scratch and you can add tons of detail”



9 GET CONFIDENT IN KITBASHING

When you're confident in your 3D modelling skills, try reusing existing 3D models to create new environments. But don't forget, you can change everything – be brave and experiment! The goal is to create something completely new. The beauty of kitbashing is that you don't start from scratch and you can quickly add tons of detail. It's a lot of fun to kitbash, but try to find the balance: sometimes you have to design something from scratch, such as a hero building. You can use kitbash techniques for detailing or less-important assets.

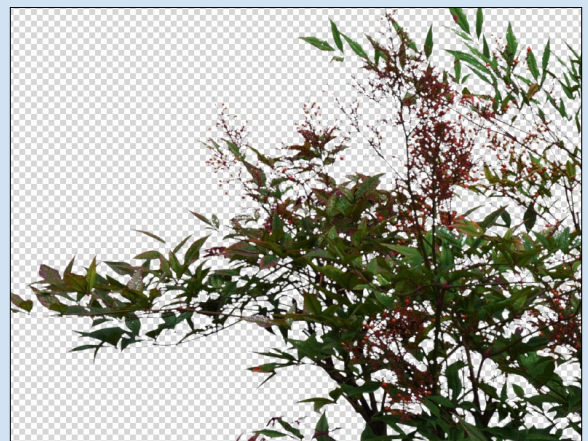




10 LEARN TO EXTEND SETS

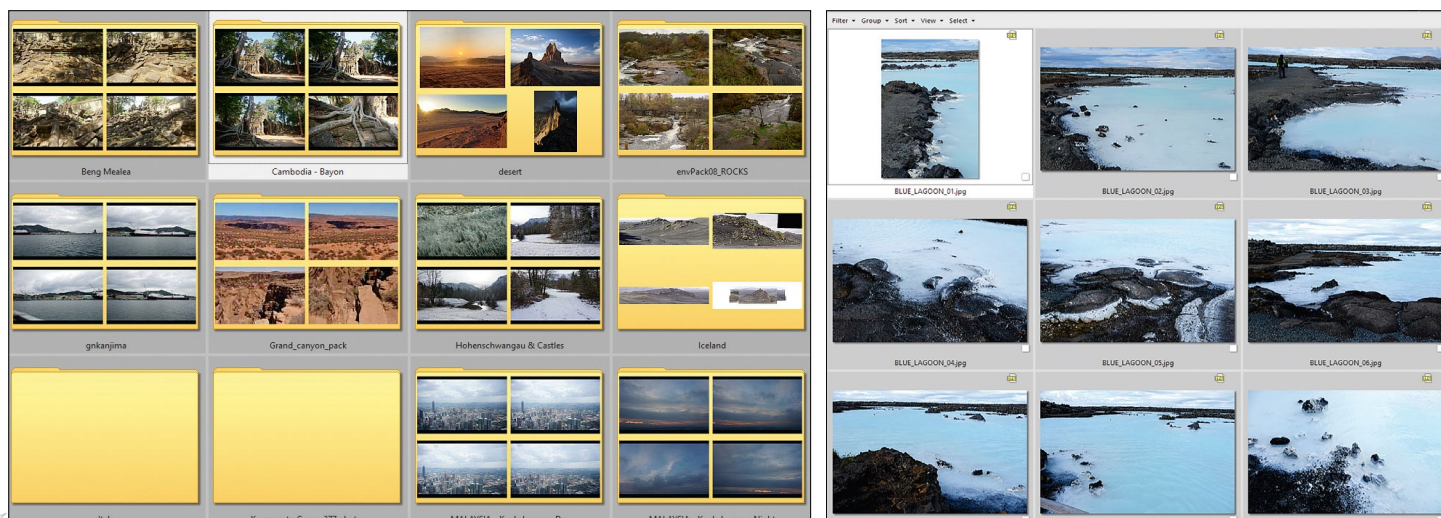
Creating a set extension based on an existing plate is an everyday part of a matte painter's job. The aim is to make a set extension that's seamless and as photorealistic as possible. Find a photo of a building and imagine the filmmakers didn't have the budget to build more sets. It's now your job to make the scene bigger. You can set up the perspective yourself manually, or you can use the Vanishing Point tool in Photoshop. The perspective lines will be your guide to sketch in the new buildings. Once you have a solid concept, you can switch to 3D. I bring in the plate/concept as an image plane into Maya and then reconstruct the camera in 3D space.

“You can set up the perspective yourself, or you can use the Vanishing Point tool in Photoshop”



11 KNOW HOW TO EXTRACT

Extracting photographic elements speeds up the matte painting process. You can use pretty much anything – CG, photos, painting – what matters is the end result. To extract an element, you'll have to simplify the image and increase the contrast, so you end up with a solid black-and-white image. Then in Photoshop's Channels panel, click the Load Channel as Selection icon so you have a mask. Save your image with transparency or an alpha channel, as an EXR, PNG or TIF. Buildings, trees, bushes, clouds and mountains are all elements you'll need often! ➡



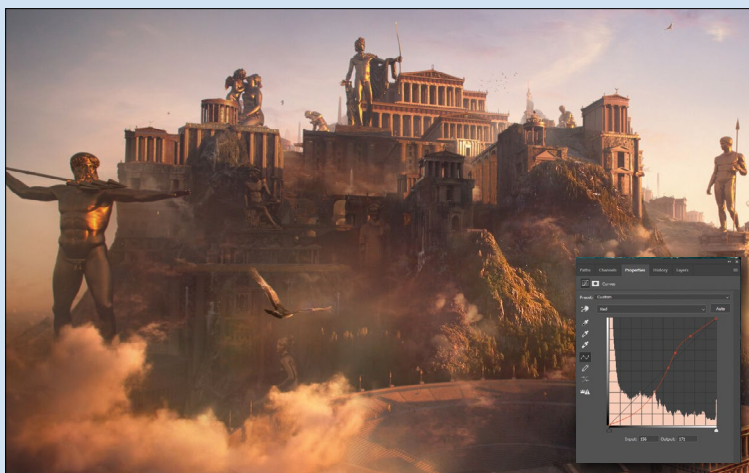
12 POPULATE AND ORGANISE YOUR IMAGE LIBRARY

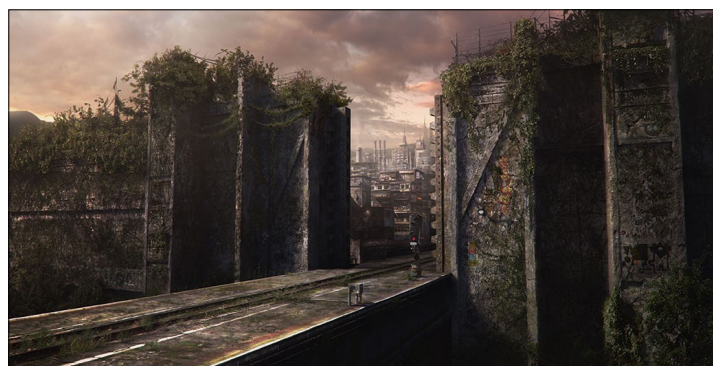
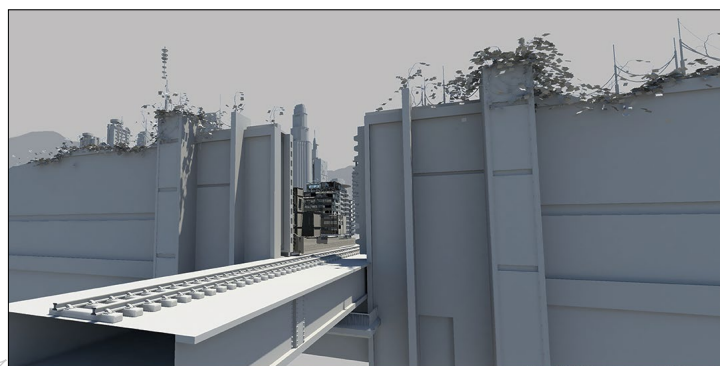
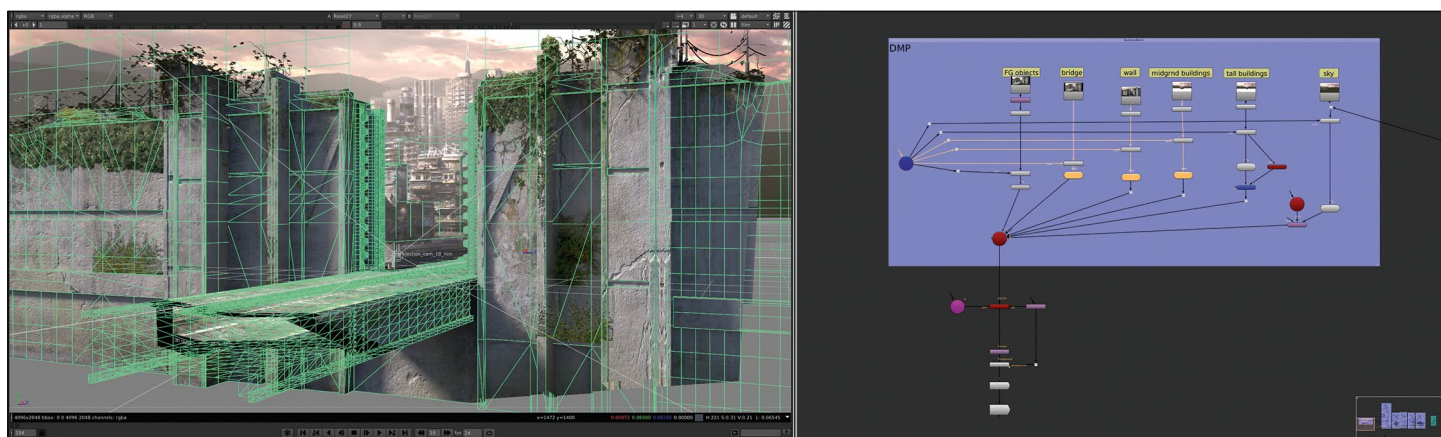
It's important to create your own library, for both 2D elements and 3D assets. Organise the photos you've taken, the elements you've extracted and all your 3D models. I categorise my photos and the packs I've purchased by putting them in separate folders. I also have a database that enables me to search for images. When it comes to 3D assets, my main categories are environment, creature, props and vehicles. I also differentiate between real, fantasy or sci-fi.



13 CHECK COLOUR AND TONE

Common mistakes in matte paintings are incorrect black levels, mismatching colours and inconsistency in tones. There are some simple tricks to check mistakes. Keep a few adjustment layers in a QC (quality check) set that you can quickly turn on and off. Boosting the saturation enables you to judge your colours better. Desaturating an image displays the tonal values. Moving the exposure/gamma up and down reveals if you have issues with your black levels or highlights. For colour correction, I use the Curves tool. You can easily adjust the black point, white point and grey point and also tweak the colour channels separately.





14 CREATE PROJECTIONS OF YOUR PAINTINGS

Static shots are rare these days. Even a small camera move can breathe life into a shot, so it's important you know how to project your matte painting on to 3D geometry. You can establish projections in the 3D package of your choice, but it's important to know how to create projections in Nuke, because this is the software that most VFX companies use for compositing. You'll need to save out the layers of your matte painting (keep it simple), a projector in your scene, 3D geometry and a shot camera. Don't forget to turn motion blur on at the end.



15 BECOME FAMILIAR WITH COMPOSITING TOOLS

As a matte painter, you have to be able to take images from different sources and create a new, believable picture. You might be working with photos, CG renders or hand-painted elements. Spend time studying what makes an image look photorealistic. Lens distortion, chromatic aberration, vignette, noise and camera shake are all 'imperfections' that make your work look like an actual photo. Learn how to recreate these effects in different software such as Photoshop or Nuke. In Photoshop, you'll find suitable tools in the Lens Correction filter. ●

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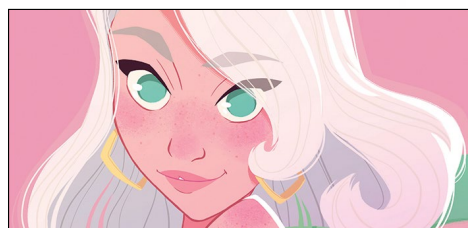


Artist's Choice Award

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

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

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PRODUCTS
ON TEST



HARDWARE

82 MacBook Pro 13-inch

Discover why designers and video editors should be glad that Apple's latest MacBook has given Intel's chip tech a miss this time.

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After being kickstarted into life in less than a day, expectations are high for Pernille Ørum's latest book...

85 Sketching from the Imagination: Anime & Manga

Artists from around the world provide manga sketches, line-art and colour studies.



85 The World of the Dark Crystal

Rediscover Brian Froud's concept art from The Dark Crystal, which helped to fill the 1982 film with its distinctive characters.

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



MacBook Pro 13-inch (M1, 2020)

NEW LEAF Discover why designers and video editors should be glad that Apple's latest MacBook has given Intel's chip tech the cold shoulder

Price From £1,299 **Company** Apple **Web** www.apple.com

The new MacBook Pro 13-inch (M1, 2020) is one of the most exciting laptops Apple has ever made for designers. For the first time ever, the company is using its own chips for a MacBook – the M1 chip.

By having control over the hardware and software of the MacBook Pro 13-inch (it runs the new macOS Big Sur, which has been built to take full advantage of the M1 chip), Apple is promising big things, including increased performance, faster boot times and longer battery life.

It also promises that the new MacBook Pro can run all of your favourite creative applications, either with new versions made for the M1 architecture (Apple's Final Cut Pro, GarageBand and other creative programs all have M1 versions, while Photoshop has been updated with an M1 version), or via Apple's Rosetta 2 tool, which effectively enables almost

any existing Mac application to run on the M1 MacBook Pro.

Perhaps most exciting of all, though, macOS Big Sur can also run iOS apps. This gives you access to thousands of apps and games, including many of the best iPhone apps for creatives.

BANG FOR NO MORE BUCKS

One thing we've liked seeing Apple do recently is launch new versions of products for the same price the previous model launched for, and it's done it again. This MacBook's starting price of £1,299 is the same the earlier MacBook Pro 13-inch launched for. So for the same money, you're getting new and improved hardware. The base model of the MacBook Pro 13-inch (M1, 2020) has the M1 chip, which comprises an eight-core CPU and eight-core GPU, along with a 256GB SSD and 8GB of unified memory.

You can also get this model with 512GB storage for £1,499, as well as a



The Touch Bar enables you to quickly access shortcuts in creative programs such as Photoshop, and is intuitive once you get used to it.



© Apple



version with the same M1 chip, but a 2TB SSD and 16GB of RAM for £2,299.

NEW CHIP, NEW PROBLEMS?

When Apple first announced it was moving away from Intel and developing its own chip, many people were concerned about how this might affect performance. The good news is that the MacBook Pro 13-inch (M1, 2020) is a brilliant performer. In day-to-day use, macOS Big Sur feels fast and responsive, and we were able to quickly open and run several intensive applications at once.

When it came to putting it to work in Final Cut Pro X, we were mightily impressed. We used an 8K video project and could quickly and easily scroll through the footage, with the thumbnail preview showing what we were editing. Chopping, changing and adding effects was a smooth process. The fact we were able to edit 8K footage using a laptop running

integrated graphics, rather than using a more powerful – and expensive – dedicated graphics card, is incredible.

When it comes to new M1 versions of programs and older versions made for Intel-based Macs, the performance is equally impressive. Our synthetic benchmark tests showed that the M1 chip can easily rival 11th generation Intel CPUs, and we were seeing performance that at times compared with the 16-inch MacBook Pro – a much more expensive device.

The laptop did get a little warm towards the back, and we'd sometimes hear the fans kick in, but this was after sustained high-intensity use. For most of the work we did on the new MacBook Pro 13-inch, the fans weren't needed, so the laptop was silent.

BELTING BATTERY

Not only was the day-to-day performance of the MacBook Pro 13-inch (M1, 2020) impressive, but the

battery life blew us away. We ran a looped 1080p video with the screen at 50 per cent brightness until the battery died, and it lasted just over 13 hours. This is a huge five-hour increase over the previous model in the same test. Of course, using this laptop for more intensive tasks will deplete the battery faster, but you're still likely to see two workdays of battery life.

Some things have been left unchanged, however, the display being one of them. You're still getting a 13-inch Retina display with a resolution of 2,560x1,600, with True Tone technology (which changes the colour temperature of the display depending on the ambient light), and P3 wide colour gamut support. This last bit is incredibly important for projects that require accurate colours.

As with previous models, the MacBook Pro 13-inch (M1, 2020) comes with the Touch Bar. This is used by various applications to show

The Retina display offers LED backlighting, P3 wide colour and True Tone technology, all of which deliver high colour accuracy.

The Magic Keyboard is a joy to use – especially the Touch ID button, which enables you to make swift payments and log in securely.

“ Benchmark tests showed the M1 chip can easily rival 11th generation Intel CPUs ”

The two Thunderbolt/USB 4 ports are impressive in what they do, but does mean that an adapter is needed for devices using the older USB inputs.

context-sensitive buttons and tools, and several creative tools, such as Photoshop, use it.

Speaking of the keyboard, Apple includes the new and improved Magic Keyboard, which is reliable and comfortable to use. A Touch ID button is included next to the Touch Bar, enabling you to log in to macOS Big Sur and pay for things using Apple Pay via a quick scan of your fingerprint. It's fast and reliable, and we love it.

There are only two Thunderbolt 3 ports, so if you have devices that use the older USB ports, such as drawing tablets or memory sticks, you'll need an adaptor. For a laptop aimed at professionals who often need to plug in hardware, this is a shame.

However, there's no doubt that the MacBook Pro 13-inch (M1, 2020) is a fantastic laptop for creatives. The M1 chip is particularly impressive – the fact that we were able to easily edit complex 8K projects still astounds us. It's also competitively priced, and with support for new and legacy Mac programs, as well as the huge iOS app store, this is a versatile laptop. In fact, Apple has produced one of the best creative laptops ever made. 🍏

DETAILS

Features

- 13-inch Retina display with True Tone
- Apple M1 chip
- 8GB unified memory
- Up to 16GB memory
- Up to 2TB storage
- Up to 20 hours battery life
- Touch Bar and Touch ID
- Force Touch trackpad
- Two Thunderbolt/USB 4 ports

Rating





Pernille painted this character using gouache, revealing that the way she works digitally is based on her knowledge of traditional media.

The Art of Pernille Ørum

CHARACTER BUILDING After being kickstarted into life in less than a day, expectations are high for Pernille Ørum's latest book...

Author Pernille Ørum **Publisher** 3dtotal Publishing **Price** £24 **Web** www.3dtotalpublishing.com **Available Now**

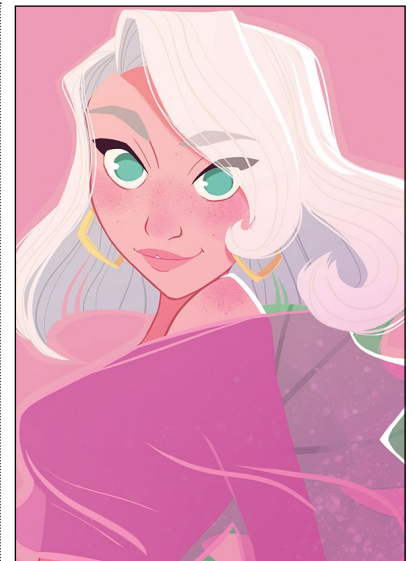
With Pernille Ørum's Instagram followers edging towards the one million mark, there's clearly an appetite for the work of the Danish character designer and illustrator. But rather than publish another collection of her art from the past few years, Pernille's third book takes a more ambitious approach.

The opening chapter has the artist discussing her childhood inspirations, education and early career. Her enjoyment of films from Disney's Silver era (1950-59) and Renaissance era



(1989-99) led Pernille to study animation at college. Yet the craft didn't quite gel with her aspirations, so the artist shifted her focus to visual development and character design. She hasn't looked back since.

Accompanying this first chapter are older examples of Pernille's art. Some of the pieces feel far removed from her current work, but it's still possible to see depth and story in her characters. As she takes the reader through the early days of her career, Pernille passes on advice that's come from her experiences of breaking into the



An example of Pernille's clean character design, which makes up another of the book's walkthroughs.

“The artist takes the reader on a journey through the creation of her art”



This illustration is the basis of a step-by-step workshop on creating dramatic lighting.

industry. Her writing style is clear and direct, and it's easy to pull out salient points for future reference.

The majority of the book focuses on the painting techniques that are at the heart of Pernille's distinctive designs. Colour, gesture and more are covered in standalone chapters, and in some cases the artist takes the reader on a step-by-step journey through the creation of her art. This is gold dust for aspiring character artists keen to follow in Pernille's footsteps. The WIPs are printed large on the page, enabling

close examination as she takes the piece to completion.

There are also galleries of finished character designs, arranged into chapters that complement the artist's technical advice. Therefore the book works on two levels: as a lovingly designed showcase of Pernille's captivating artwork, and an intermediate 'how to' title that provides the reader with insight and advice. It's a win-win.

RATING ★★★★★☆

Sketching from the Imagination: Anime & Manga

CREATIVE COLLECTION Illustrators from around the world provide loose sketches, tight line-art and colour studies of manga art

Editor Marisa Lewis **Publisher** 3dtotal Publishing **Price** £22 **Web** www.3dtotalpublishing.com **Available** Now

Manga is a popular activity for hobbyist artists looking to develop their skills. The latest entry in the *Sketching from the Imagination* series aims to provide inspiration and insights to help on that journey.

The work of 50 diverse illustrators fills the 320-page book. Each artist's section follows the same format,



South Korean artist NESSI reveals she enjoys sketching because it's "exciting to let your imagination run through the different possibilities."

starting with a self-penned bio and their career path. Readers will likely be more interested in the advice given in each entry under three headings: Inspiration and Ideas, Materials, and Techniques. It's interesting to analyse what's being said by the artist and connect it with their work.

Yet it's the artwork that's the book's stumbling block. There's a lot of scope in anime, so it's disappointing that the majority of sketches feature teenage girls and young women. Not all are of the classic big-eyed, pointed chin variety, and there's certainly a range of drawing styles on show, but a greater mix of figures and settings would have earned this book an extra star.

RATING ★★★★★



Japan-based artist Wataboku was keen to maintain a degree of realism for this particular character.

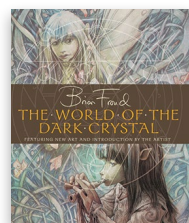
The World of the Dark Crystal

GLOBAL TOUR A welcome opportunity to rediscover Brian Froud's concept art from *The Dark Crystal*, which helped to fill the 1982 film with its distinctive characters

Author JJ Llewellyn **Publisher** Titan Books **Price** £35 **Web** www.titanbooks.com **Available** Now

Renewed interest in Jim Henson's fantasy saga has led to this reprint of *The World of the Dark Crystal*, which first came out in 2003. So while it's not a new release, any chance to examine the artwork of Brian Froud is always welcome.

The book goes well beyond the standard 'art of' format. Author JJ Llewellyn takes on the guise of an academic, analysing the writings of



Brian Froud captures Aughra's intimidating appearance in this detailed artwork.

Aughra, a key character from the 1982 film. This two-handed approach becomes an exploration of the *Dark Crystal* universe. Woven throughout JJ's writings is Brian's artwork. His timeless visions were key to shaping the film's look. There are drawings and paintings in equal measure, all created with a confident hand working in subdued colours. Brian's art was used by the film's costumers and puppeteers as reference, which explains its high degree of finish.

A facsimile of the 20-page booklet of Brian's art, presented to the film's early financial backers, rounds off a handsome publication that will please *Dark Crystal* aficionados, and serve as an inspiration to artists seeking to populate their own fantasy world.

RATING ★★★★★



The large-format hardback book means Brian's gorgeous illustrations can be studied in detail.

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PROJECT LIGHTING

RIGIFY TO ENHANCE
YOUR EXPRESSIONS

STYLIZED CHARACTER
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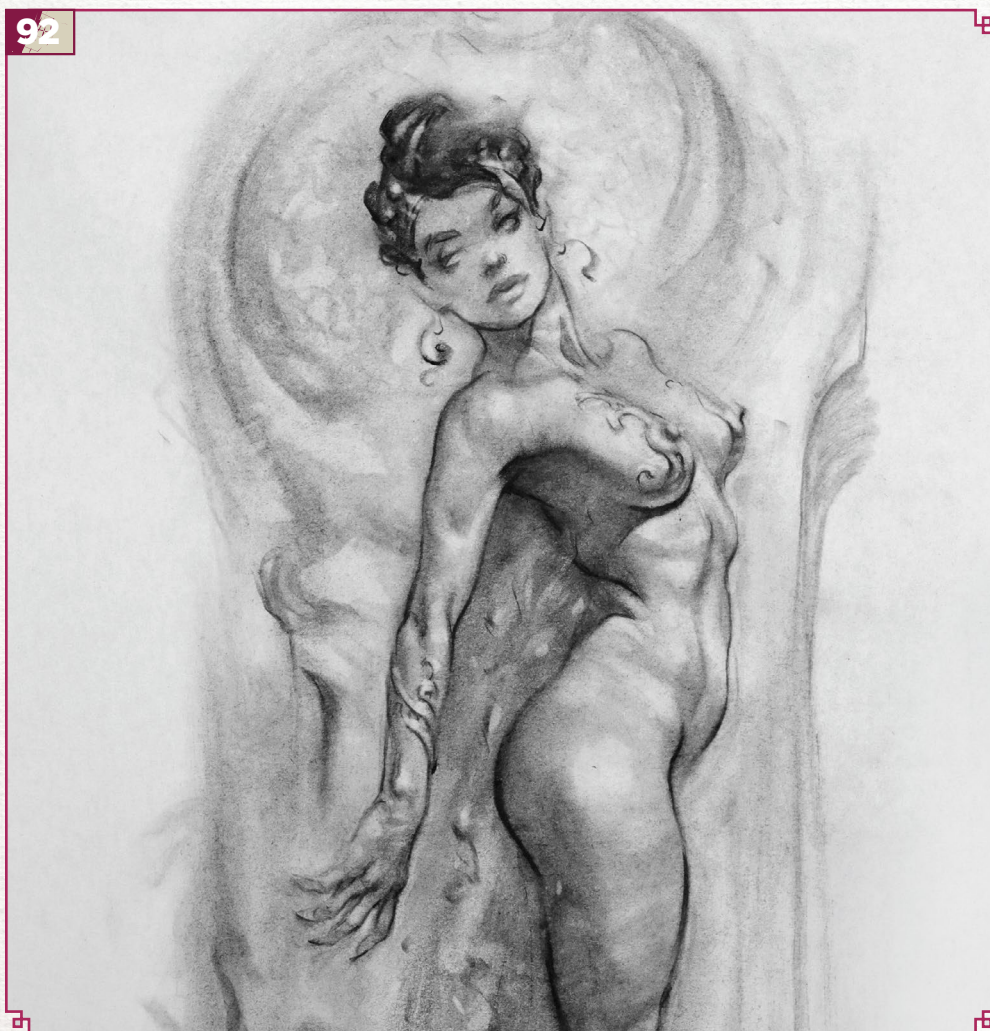
Traditional Artist

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.

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

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Exploring art on his own terms is important to this English artist.

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FXPosé

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS

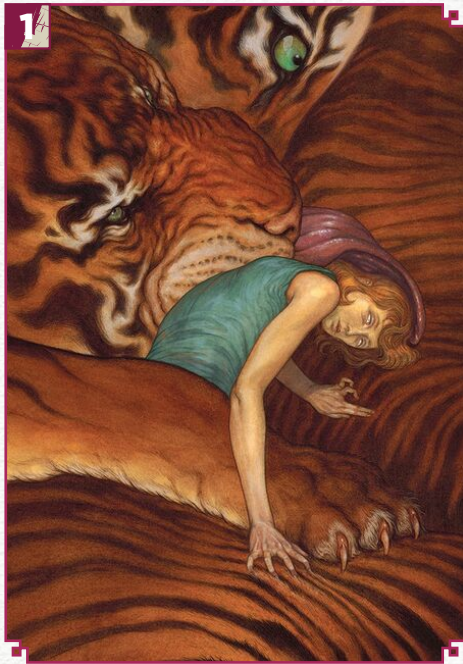


Jason Mowry

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Graphite, watercolour, gouache, colour pencils, Sumi Ink

WEB: www.jasonmowryart.com

Jason cites folktales and cinema as his influences. Alongside his illustration work he also teaches the importance of observational drawing.



1 REBA

"Reba's character in Thomas Harris's Red Dragon is blind, and strokes a sedated tiger."

2 THE PRINCESS AND THE TROLLS

"Inspired by Nordic folklore and the art of Swedish painter John Bauer."

3 FAR AWAY TENDED IN DARKNESS

"Here I wanted to convey the dream sensation, which Joseph Conrad says is the notion of being captured by the incredible."

4 THE NUDGE, THE TOUCH, AND A WHISPER

"Narrative imagery grounded in rich symbolism is at the core of my fine art."







Antonio Sandoval

LOCATION: France **MEDIA:** Inks, pencil, colour pencils, watercolours **WEB:** www.artstation.com/tonysandoval

As a kid, Antonio loved listening to scary folk stories. And it's these tales that taught him to make his own dark work. Having worked for design agencies, Antonio has progressed into comics and children's books.

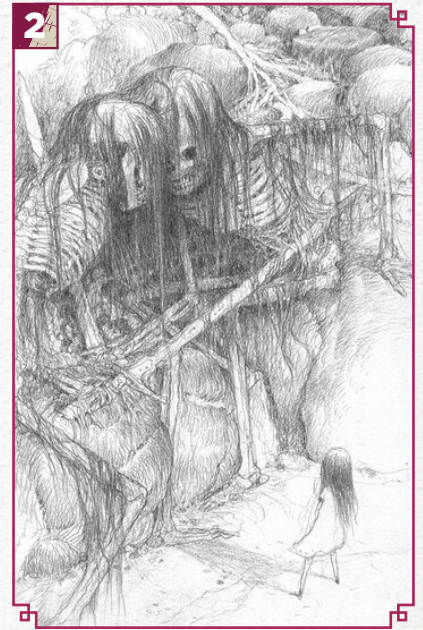
1 WHITE DREAM

"There's a special place in my stories: the secret garden after death. This character has been put there by accident."



2 SECRET GARDEN AFTER DEATH

"I did these pencil sketches while sat on a plane – random ideas that led to the idea of my aforementioned secret garden."



3 ORGANICA 15

"One from my series exploring these charming ladies. I might continue the series, but I mainly want to improve my watercolour skills."







Charcoal

DRAW FANTASY ART FROM REFERENCE

PATRICK J JONES draws a fantasy character based on a photoshoot, using his anatomy knowledge to go beyond what was originally captured in-camera

My painting Princess of Mars is the result of a live demo... of sorts. A year before this demo I booked a hotel and booth for my biannual visit to the US for my beloved IX symposium (previously IlluXCon). By early 2020 the coronavirus was declared a pandemic and the show was duly cancelled. Pat and Jeannie Wilshire the co-founders of the event, as always, found an answer with an online event featuring demos and live booth interactions. The show was, virtually, back on.

I was already teaching virtual classes via Zoom with CGMA in Los Angeles and also Syn Studio in Montreal, Canada, so I wasn't unprepared. With empty schools and offices worldwide we had all retreated to our home trenches, determined to find a way forward, virtually.



So what are the pros and cons of a virtual show? There were substantial savings on travel costs and accommodation, and the gruelling 24-hour flight from Australia was avoided. The big loss for me was another year of not seeing old friends, and also the experience of walking on stage and interacting with a live audience.

The final problem was navigating the lockdown and making a living from home. It was a time to get creative. I spent the first quarter of the pandemic writing a book on drawing from and interpreting photo reference entitled *The Lying Eye: Drawing from Photos*, and released a digital version on my web store. So, although I couldn't hire live models I still had a catalogue of poses from previous photoshoots to draw and paint from. Before the event I discussed some photo choices with

my artistic collaborator and life model, Alana Brekelmans, and we were all set for the virtual workshop.

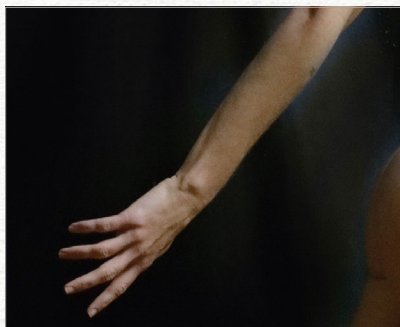
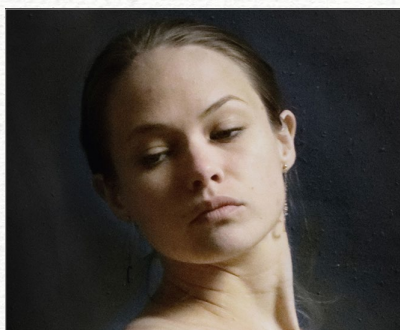
On the day everything felt familiar. I met Pat and Jeannie Wilshire before the event on Zoom, then drew and talked as Pat hosted questions. It all went surprisingly well.

That brings us to our Princess of Mars workshop, now presented in written form, with advice on finding free photo references, interpreting and making changes based on those photos, and how anatomy skills can set us free to create fantasy art without leaving home.



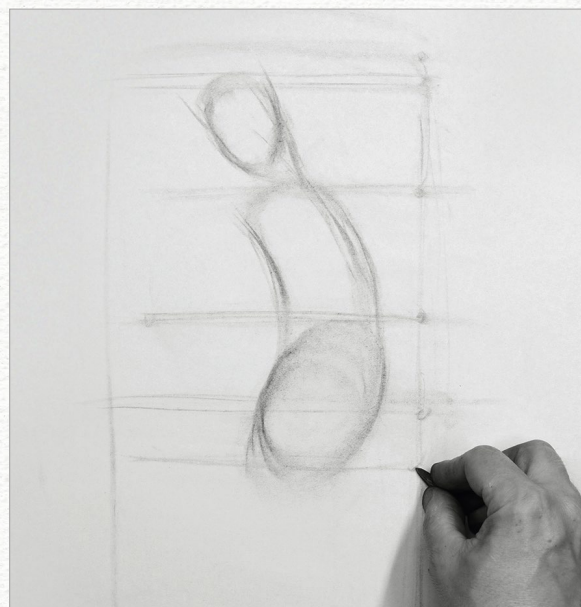
Patrick is an artist and teacher. His books are award-winning best sellers, and his latest title, *Oil Painting*

***Masterclass*, is available worldwide. Patrick teaches online at CGMA and Syn Studio. You can see more of his work by visiting www.pjartworks.com.**



1 Select suitable reference photos

Here's a pose befitting a princess. I couldn't always afford a model and by necessity cobbled photos to 'Frankenstein' the pose I needed. It's easier with a hired model, but my salad days taught me something invaluable: how to use anatomy skills to change poses. I study the pose and consider the changes ahead.



2 Capture basic shapes in charcoal

The good news is we now have great figure-drawing reference resources on the internet provided via the generous nature of such luminaries as the New Masters Academy, Croquis Café and Proko. With my photo reference next to me on my iPad I draw in basic shapes with a small sharpened piece of willow charcoal.

MATERIALS

PENCILS

- General's Soft Charcoal pencil
- Faber-Castell Pitt Charcoal Soft pencil

CHARCOALS

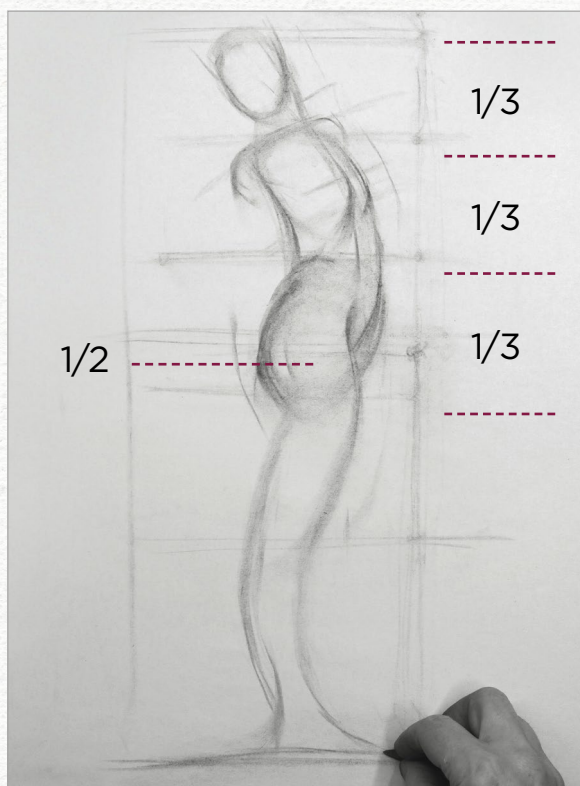
- General's Compressed Charcoal sticks

ERASERS

- Kneadable eraser
- Mono eraser
- Grip eraser
- Electric eraser
- Pencil eraser

MISCELLANEOUS

- Paper stumps
- Tissue
- Washed and dried shammy leather cloth
- Newsprint



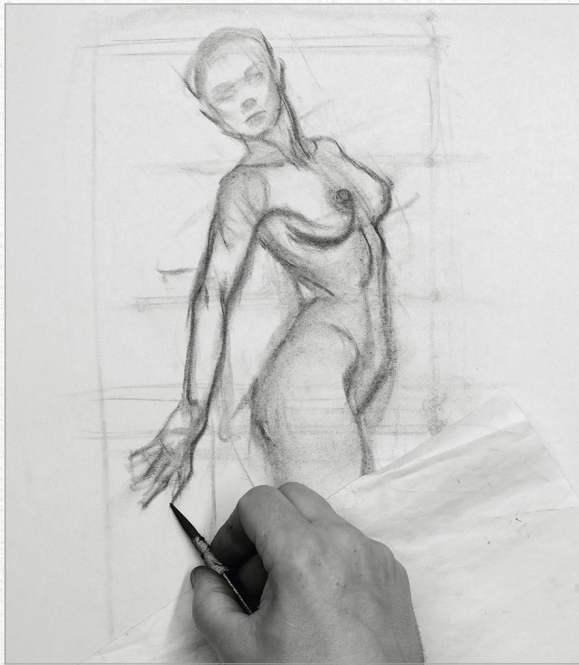
3 Take big measurements

I block-in a rough eight-heads high figure, but I only refer to heads as the drawing progresses. I prefer big measurements such as half to the hip bone, and then equal thirds from the head to the pit of the neck, then the navel, then to the bottom of the gluteus.



4 Introduce variation

I make my princess shorter, which adds gesture to her figure. It also sets her apart from the average eight-head high fantasy figure. I reduce the leg length – this is the body part that varies the most. I also draw the head bigger because it's distorted in size by the camera lens.



5 *Avoid symmetry in the pose*

I lose a leg to remove the symmetrical scissor structure, and bend the straight arm at the wrist and elbow to find more fluidity. When we learn anatomy we can change what we see, and draw with confident lines.



6 *Drawing on a dirty surface*

With my willow charcoal I lay down a mid-grey as a basis for the dark-to-light values ahead. I don't spray-fix the charcoal because I like to keep the drawing 'live'. To prevent smudging I'll use some paper under my hand, but mostly I don't worry because I like the organic nature of a dirty surface.



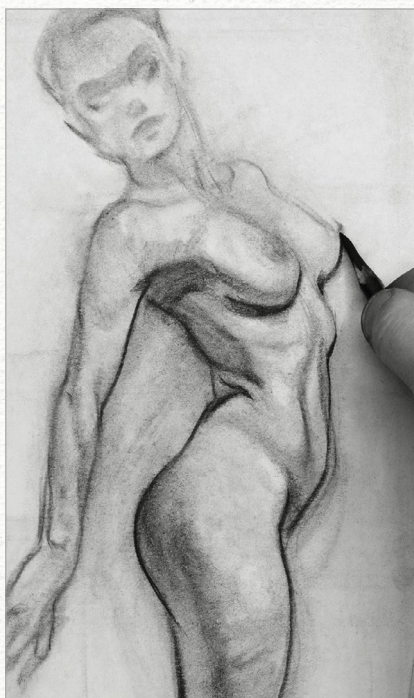
7 *Thinking like a painter*

Using a paper stump and kneadable eraser I work 'painterly'. The stump acts like a blending brush and the eraser like a rag for pulling paint off. I remove the hand coming out of the chest because of the strange tangent it creates. People might forgive some strangeness in a photo, but never in a drawing.



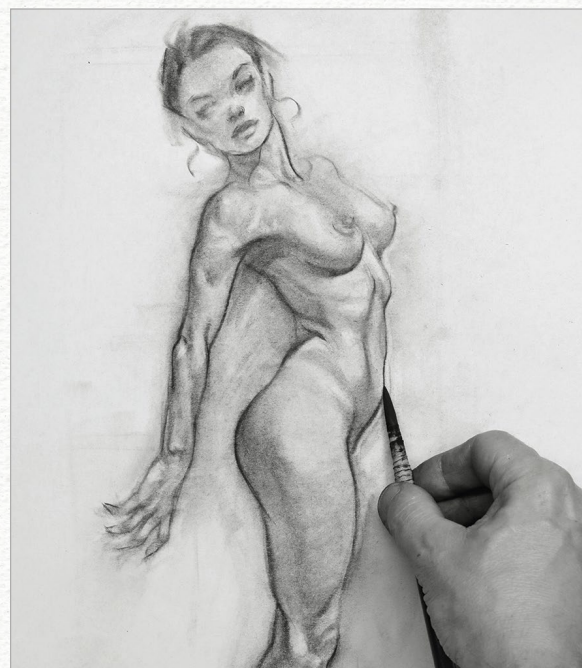
8 *Eliminate the machinery to focus on gesture*

Here I'm using a soft shammy leather to 'ghost back' the image. I'm also wiping away the construction lines. By doing this we eliminate the machinery and become more focused on the gesture, which leads us to create more fluid lines. Construction and structure are important, but they shouldn't rule the drawing. ➔



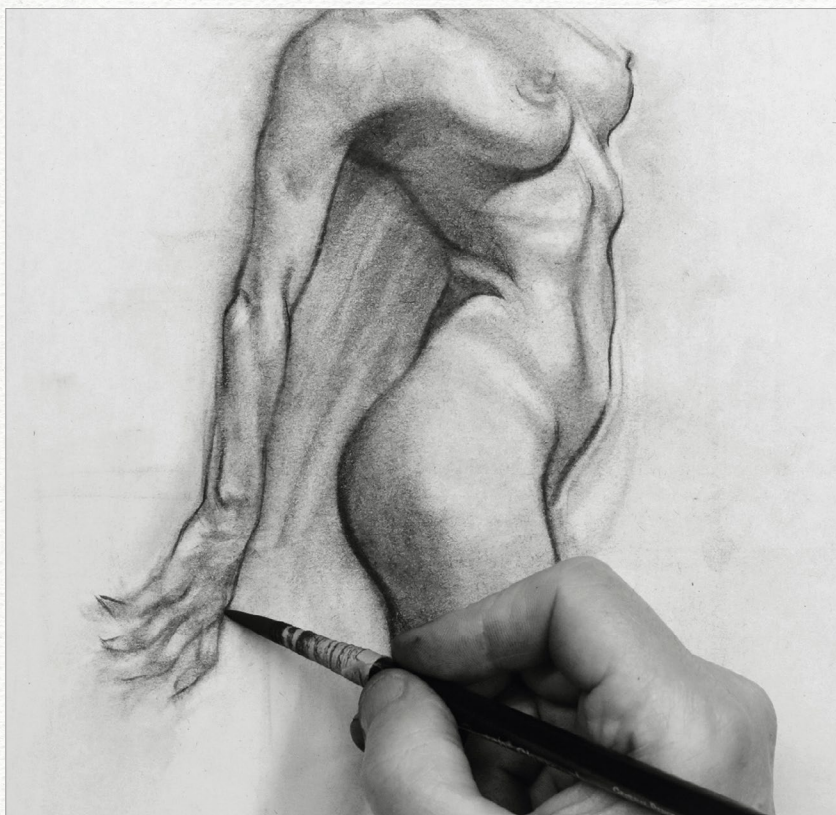
9 *Making changes has consequences*

During the live demo I was asked, "Why did you make the arch of the back less arched?" Having removed the tip-toe leg, which in part created the over-arch, meant I had to, otherwise she would have looked strange standing that way. One change affects another, which we must be aware of when changing the reference.



10 *Staying humble*

I fade the drawing slightly with tissue. With all the mechanics of the figure's structure behind me I don't want to show off my rendering skills and risk losing the joy of the drawing among too many values. Staying humble works its magic, but ego steals it away.



11 *Being aware of the body's light and dark side*

I use the point of my pencil for details and the broad side for tone. I'm aware of the contrast of the dark and light side of the body. I keep the light side fresh by reducing the values down to three and limit the shadow side to two.



12 *Tackling the forearm and hand*

With the 'big picture' idea in the bag I attend to details. The photo-reference has little detail in the forearm so I add rhythms to the muscle groups. I'm in double trouble here as the pronating forearm (thumb turned toward the body) and the hand are the two most difficult pieces of human anatomy, but it's also fun.



13 Draw rhythmic shadows to continue the gestural movement

I continue the rhythms of the breasts and arms by echoing their shapes with jewellery. I use a mono eraser for fine highlights. Rhythmic shadows help to accentuate the curve of the rib cage. This kills the sudden stop of the breast by continuing the gestural movement downward.



14 Apply blacks during the final pass

I draw in the darkest darks. My Pitt charcoal pencil lays down blacks as smooth as ink and I reserve it for the final pass. I also redefine and sculpt the overall light areas rhythmically with a kneadable eraser. The main thing I'm mindful of is improving the drawing's gesture and life.



15 Finishing with a dramatic line

For the palace background I use my sharpened charcoal stick with all the gesture I can muster. I use its broad side for big swathes, and its edge for sharp lines, drawing from my shoulder down to the pivot of my wrist. As a finale I draw one last dramatic line to huge virtual applause. ●

First Impressions

✧ Craww ✧

Exploring art on his own terms is important to this English illustrator



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

I grew up in Leicester, which I have to say

had no influence at all on my art! We moved to just outside of Sheffield about 25 years ago, and living on the edge of the Peak District has been much more influential. My work reflects an ongoing fascination with the natural world, so being surrounded by hills, woods and open moorland provides the perfect environment to draw inspiration.

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

I'm a keen mountain biker and being out in the hills, exploring trails and just playing in the woods really helps me feel connected. It gives me a buzz that translates very well to my art. Nature plays a large part in my work and when I'm out on the bike I'm always stopping and taking reference photos for future use.



“I’ve worked on wood panels and weathered them with old leaf mould and mud”

RECKONING

"This is a 100x80cm oil on canvas piece for my show Woven, at New York's Haven Gallery."



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

It's a long time ago, so I'm not sure I can remember! I'm not really a working illustrator – most of my work is for gallery shows. I do take on commissions, but mostly they reflect a very personal approach.

I'm not great at working to a brief, so with most commissions if we can agree a general approach, I'm much happier exploring ideas on my own terms. I guess from that perspective all of my work is a true representation of my talent, because there's no one else to blame!

What's the last piece you finished, and how does it compare to your earlier work?

The piece I've most recently finished is Reckoning for my show at Haven Gallery in January. It's one of a series of oil paintings that are the largest and most detailed pieces I've worked

on. I only started working in oils six or seven years ago, and I'm only now finding the confidence to work with them on some of the more complicated ideas I have. In some ways I think these new paintings are very different to the work that I was doing 10 years ago, but more as a development. There's a link – you can still see a connection with my earlier work.

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

All of them! I feel very connected to the characters in my works. The narratives come from a very personal space, but in ways that are hard to define.

Is your art evolving? What's your most recent experiment?

I do like to experiment with new mediums and surfaces. I love to draw and recently I've been using a dip pen and working on clapboard. In the past I've worked on wood panels and weathered them by hand with old leaf mould and mud. I'm very analogue in my approach.

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

It's the best, and the worst. There's a lot of enjoyment and satisfaction in being able to express myself artistically and on my own terms. But it's also the old cliché: lots of soul-searching and agonising over the validity of what I'm doing. There can be some very dark moments. But I wouldn't change it for the world. I'm pretty much unemployable now!

What does the future hold for you?

I have a couple of shows lined up for 2021. One I've just completed the work for, the other I've yet to start on, so that will keep me busy for the first six months or so.

Craww's work, which has been exhibited around the globe, reflects an ongoing fascination with the natural world and the relationships we have with it. Discover more of Craww's art at www.craww.com.



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