

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

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★
15 ★

★
**WAYS TO GET
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INTERVIEW

BLUEBIRDY

★ On creativity and
positivity for 2021

★ ★ **ALSO INSIDE**

**MAKE IMAGERY OUT OF
EVERYDAY OBJECTS**

**TRADITIONAL PAINTING
SKILLS IN INK & TEA**

**PRODUCE ART THAT
TELLS A STORY**



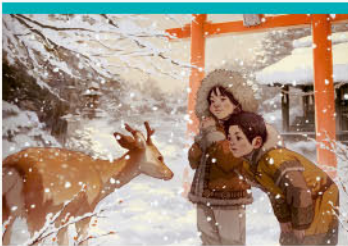
ISSUE 197

VIRTUAL

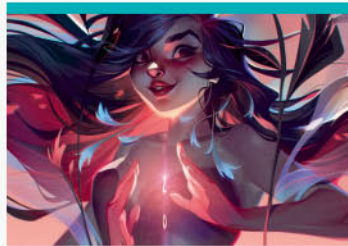
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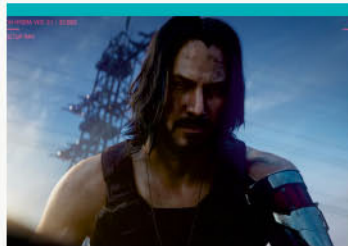
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BAARLE**
CONCEPT ARTIST AND
CHARACTER DESIGNER



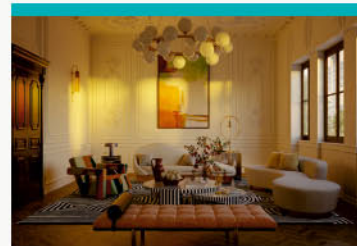
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Welcome to... NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX



Here in the UK we're in the depths of the winter season. The sun sets early, the skies are weak and grey and we're experiencing a bitterly cold spell of weather. However, despite the bleakness of this scene I depict, there are very early signs of spring and

I can spot a few tiny signs of life in my garden. I also remember that despite the cold weather there'll be an additional hour of sunlight every month until the summer solstice. The nights are slowly getting lighter and the biting cold will turn into a gentler climate.

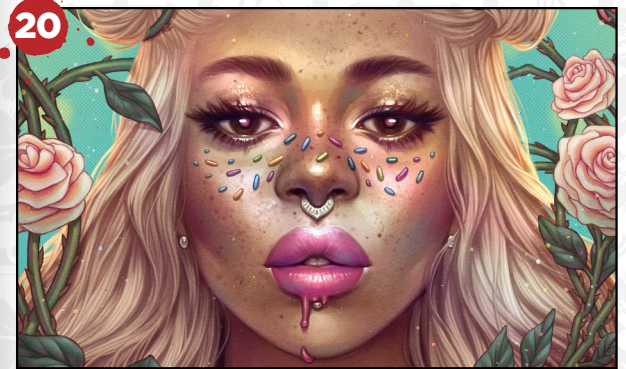
I know that readers on the other side of the world are enjoying summer temperatures and lighter nights. The knowledge of this – the changing and moving on of seasons – keeps me warm and brings me hope. The world is turning. Life is constantly moving forward. Cold turns into warmth. Darkness into light. Wherever you are right now, things will move on. Brighter times will come.

I hope you enjoy our latest edition. Please let me know your thoughts at the email address below.

Claire

Editor in chief
claire@imaginefx.com

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



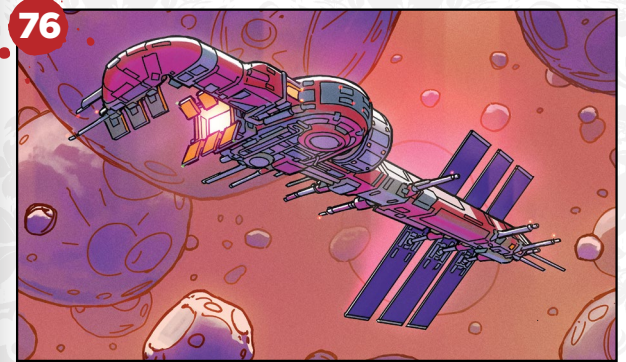
Things can only get better

Brush away the cobwebs of old and focus on setting fresh goals for your bright future ahead.



I heard the bluebird sing

Need an injection of positivity? The art of Fateme Haghnejad (aka BlueBirdy) will make your heart soar.



Lost and found

Artist Eric Geusz (aka space goose – hey what's the bird theme here?!) turns an everyday object into art.

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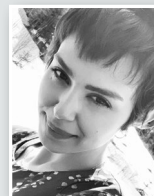
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Artist Portfolio

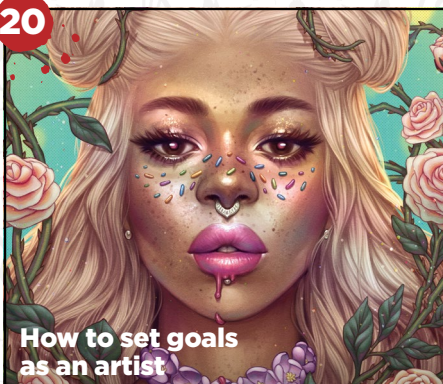
**FATEMEH
HAGHNEJAD**



"Some of the things I make are too fragile to be out in the world"

Fatemeh on her personal art

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How to set goals as an artist

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Artist in Residence:
Colie Wertz



ImagineFX

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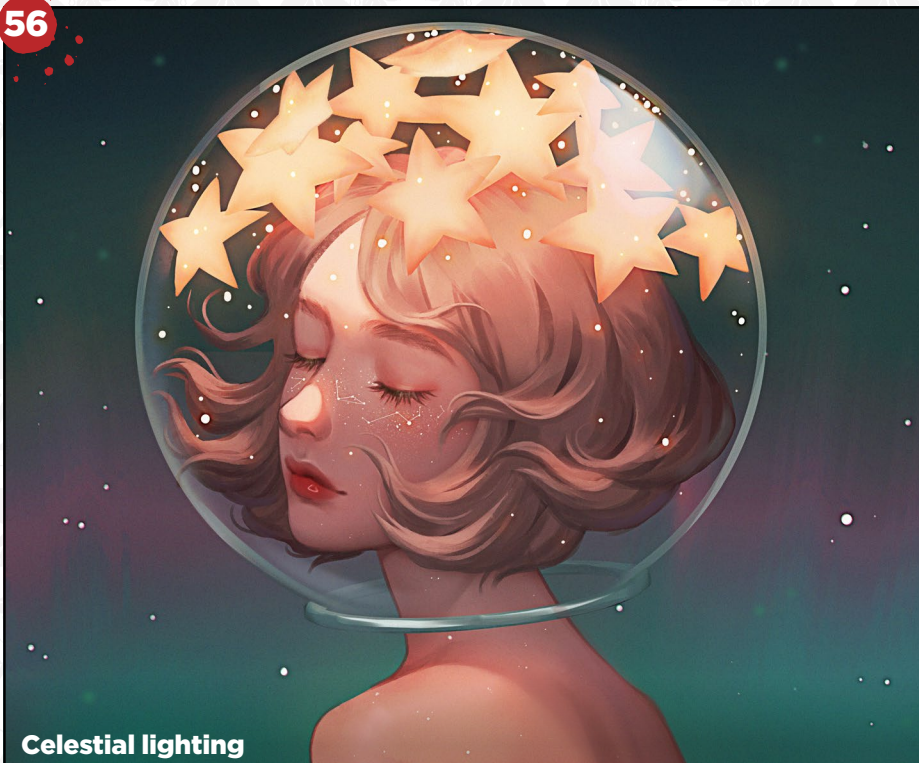
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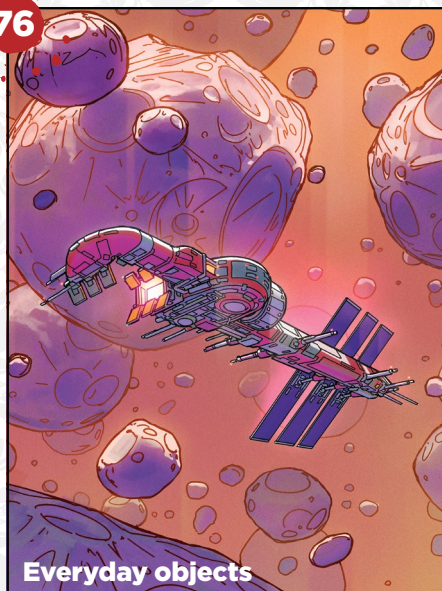
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Resources

Getting hold of this issue's resources is easy.
Just visit <http://ifxm.ag/bright197ideas>

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX

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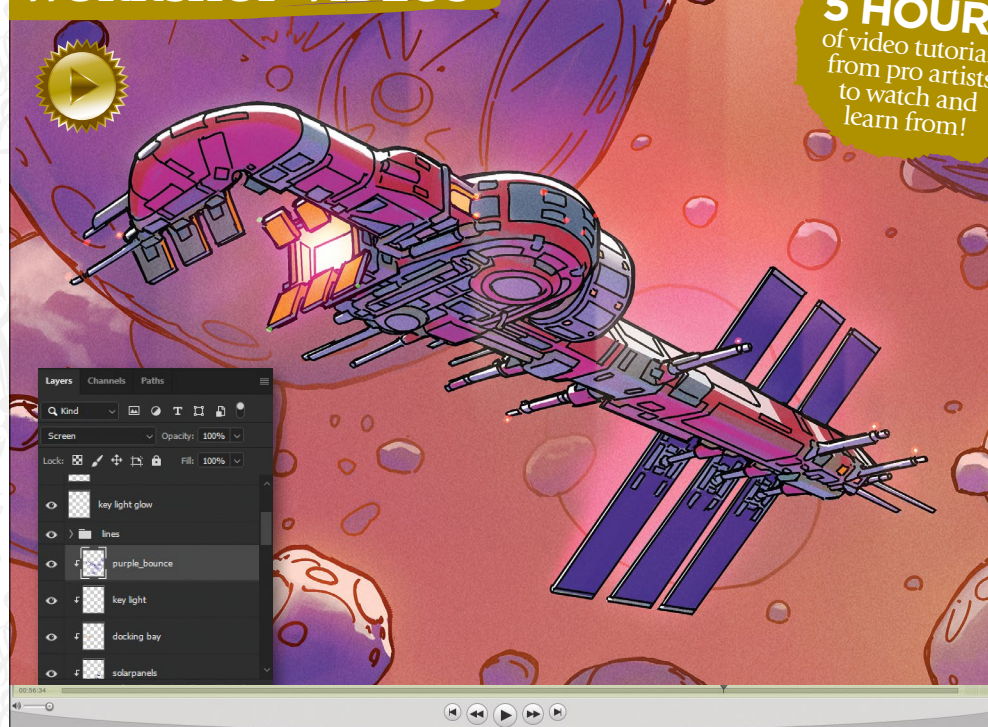
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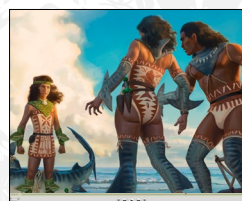
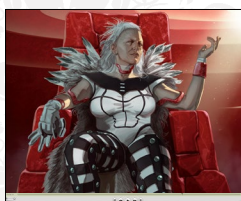
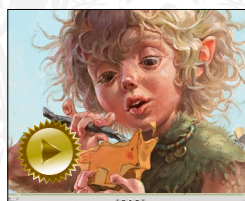
WORKSHOP VIDEOS



OVER 5 HOURS
of video tutorials
from pro artists
to watch and
learn from!

Discover an innovative way to beat creative block

If you think space goose's illustration of a space station looks like an adjustable wrench, you'd be right! Watch the artist turn everyday objects into the fantastical in his video. More on page 76.



ALSO! Pro advice on character design, concept art and more!

Take your art skills to the next level with video workshops from Anthony Macbain, AM Sartor, Jason Rainville and Fatemeh Haghnejad aka BlueBirdy - who we interview on page 38.

PLUS 6 CUSTOM BRUSHES, INCLUDING....

SKETCH & RENDER

Cover artist Karmen Loh makes good use of this custom brush, which has an interesting texture.

SOFT

Artist space goose selects this custom brush to make quick work of any blending tasks in his art.

HAIR

When painting her figure art, Karmen uses this brush to create textures in a character's hair.

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Isabelle Staub

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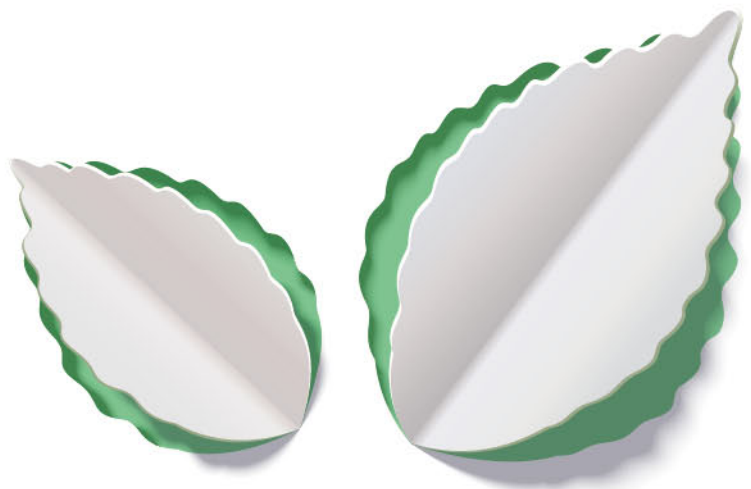
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PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



Jude Smith

LOCATION: Canada **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Blender, KeyShot, Marvelous Designer, 3D Coat, ZBrush **WEB:** www.artstation.com/jude_smith

Jude is a concept artist who works at Blackbird Interactive. "Over the past five years I have also worked for a handful of other studios such as Kabam, Volta and Mighty Canvas."

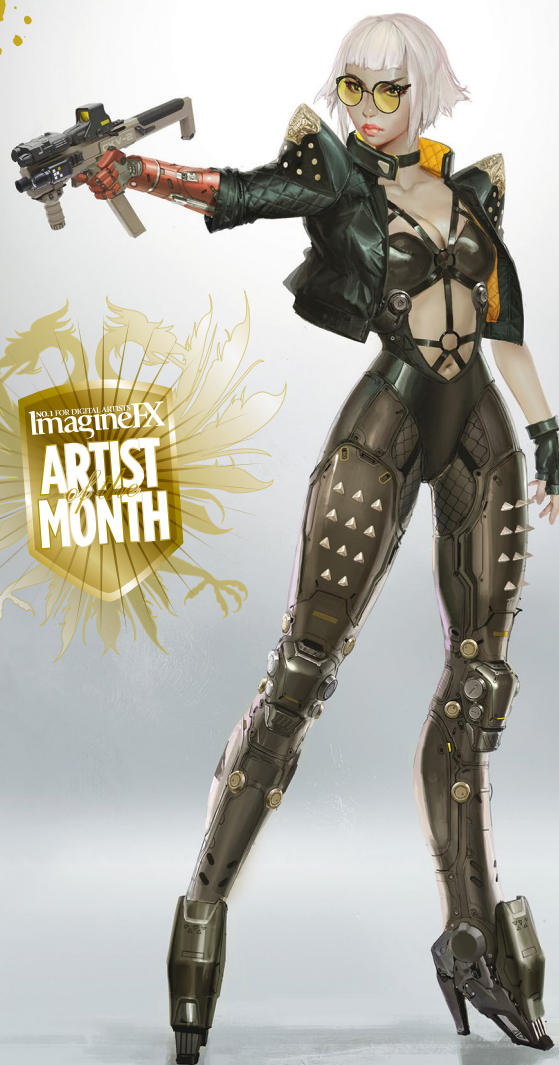
1 SCIFI CHARACTER

"I drew this character as a demo for IFCC, showing a breakdown of my process and how I mix themes."



2 NINA

"This character started as a study, but I liked how strong the silhouette and pose was, so I finished it."



3 KIRA THE CROW

"This post-apocalyptic, future-tech character is heavily inspired by the work of DEGENESIS and the Adam short film created in Unity."

1

2

3

4 YASUKE

"Based on Yasuke, who was an African-born warrior who reached the rank of samurai under the rule of Oda Nobunaga in the 16th century."



ImagineFX ARTIST MONTH

Congratulations to Jude, our Artist of the Month who receives a copy of **Corel Painter 2021**, together with an **Ultimate Brush Pack** containing over 600 unique brushes, worth over **£1,500**, courtesy of our friends Corel!



ImagineFX ARTIST YEAR

Submissions for Artist of the Year are now closed. We'll reveal our **Artist of the Year** at Vertex 2021 – visit **www.vertexconf.com**. You can still submit your work to FXPosé, see below for details.

HOW TO SUBMIT YOUR WORK

Please send us:

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

Email this information to: fxpose@imaginefx.com.



Darko Stojanović

LOCATION: Serbia **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.darkostojanovic.com

"My first drawings were of heroes and villains from the Asterix and Obelix comics, and when I grew up I moved on to fantasy," says Darko. Nowadays he paints book illustrations and board game art.



2



3



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4



1 ROGUE TRADERS

"My friends Marko and Aleksandra from Craftworld Studio are professional miniature painters, so I wanted to paint them as two characters from Warhammer 40,000."

2 TRIUMPH IN CONSTANTINOPLE

"This is a painting for a personal project. It depicts a historical scene that's been practically forgotten."

3 WALL OF STORMS

"Ezren the wizard, for Paizo's Pathfinder RPG."

4 TYRION LANNISTER

"I love painting portraits, so I often create portrait studies of actors, historical people or acquaintances, and I enjoy the acting work of Peter Dinklage."



Hanny Natasha

LOCATION: Indonesia **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.artstation.com/roschea

Hanny juggles illustration with writing and is currently studying graphic design. She discovered her passion for illustration four years ago, “and now I’m learning to tell stories through my artwork.”

1 LYCORIS RADIATA

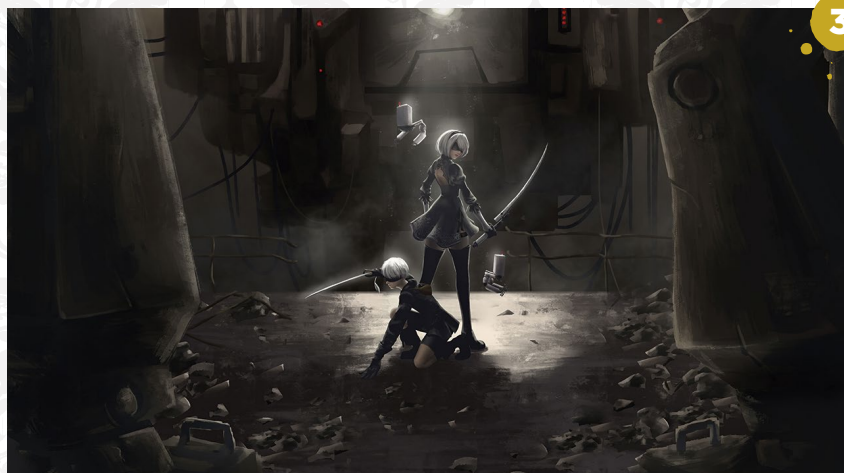
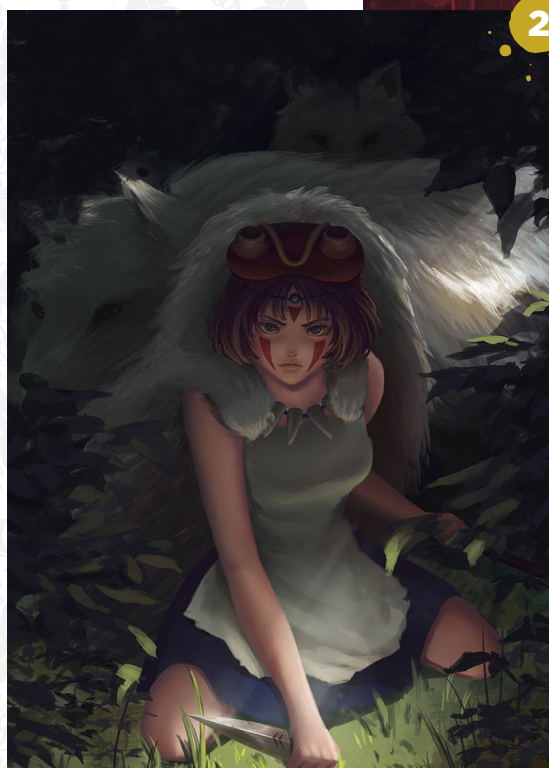
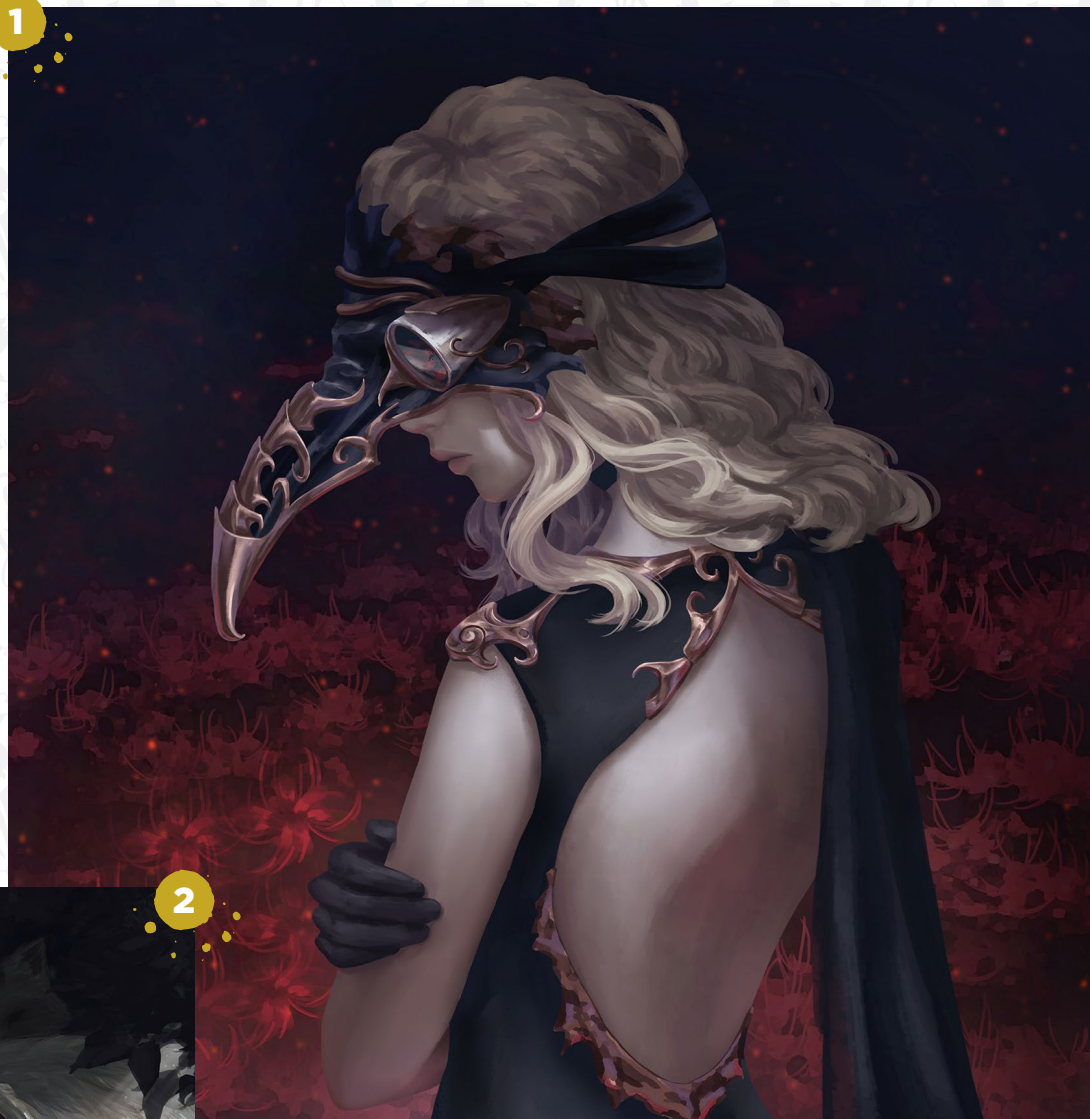
“Red spider lilies are known to symbolise final goodbyes. This served as an outlet to express my feelings about the pandemic.”

2 PRINCESS MONONOKE

“Fan art of Princess Mononoke. The protagonist, San, fights against the people who are threatening the lives of her found family.”

3 WRETCHED WEAPONRY

“A battle between androids 2B and 9S against an army of seemingly endless machines. A fan art of NieR: Automata.”

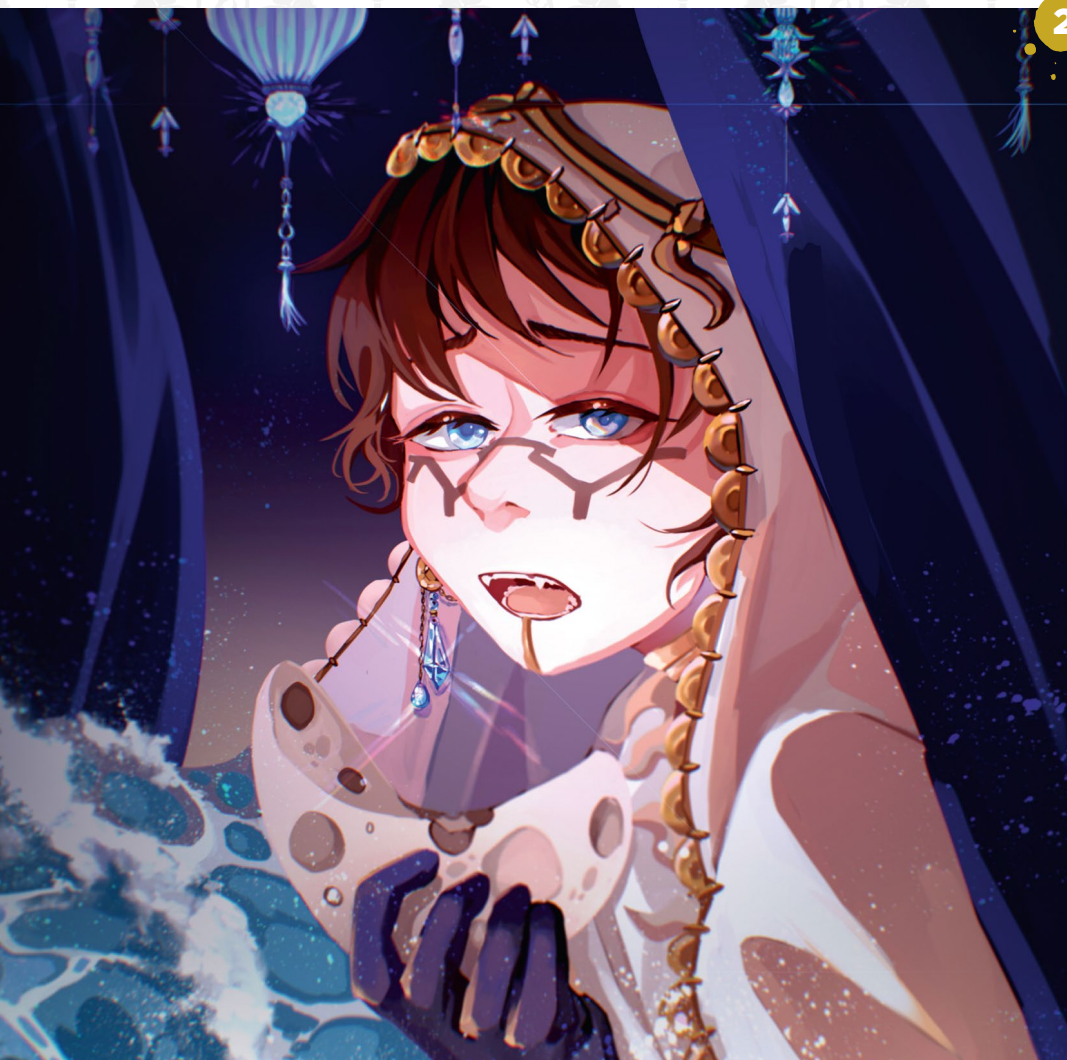




Adeline Chong Yue Qing

LOCATION: Malaysia **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.twitter.com/etsuki_haru

"I love rendering details and drawing mild gore," says Adeline, a self-taught illustrator. "I mainly use cool hues to depict the atmosphere of my art."



1 EVENING IN THE CAFÉ

"An illustration of my characters who work in a coffee shop. I focused on the feeling of warmth and the coffee aroma."

2 BAKUNAWA

"This character is originally from Eli Clark, Lunar Phase skin in the game Identity V. I drew this character based on Bakunawa from Philippine mythology."

3 EVERY WISH COMES WITH A PRICE

"Fan art of Victor Grantz from Identity V. This doll shop is rumoured to grant wishes for the price of a soul."

4 HALLOWEEN BIRTHDAY

"A client commission celebrating a character's Halloween birthday. I focused on the pastries he made for himself for a party that nobody will come to."



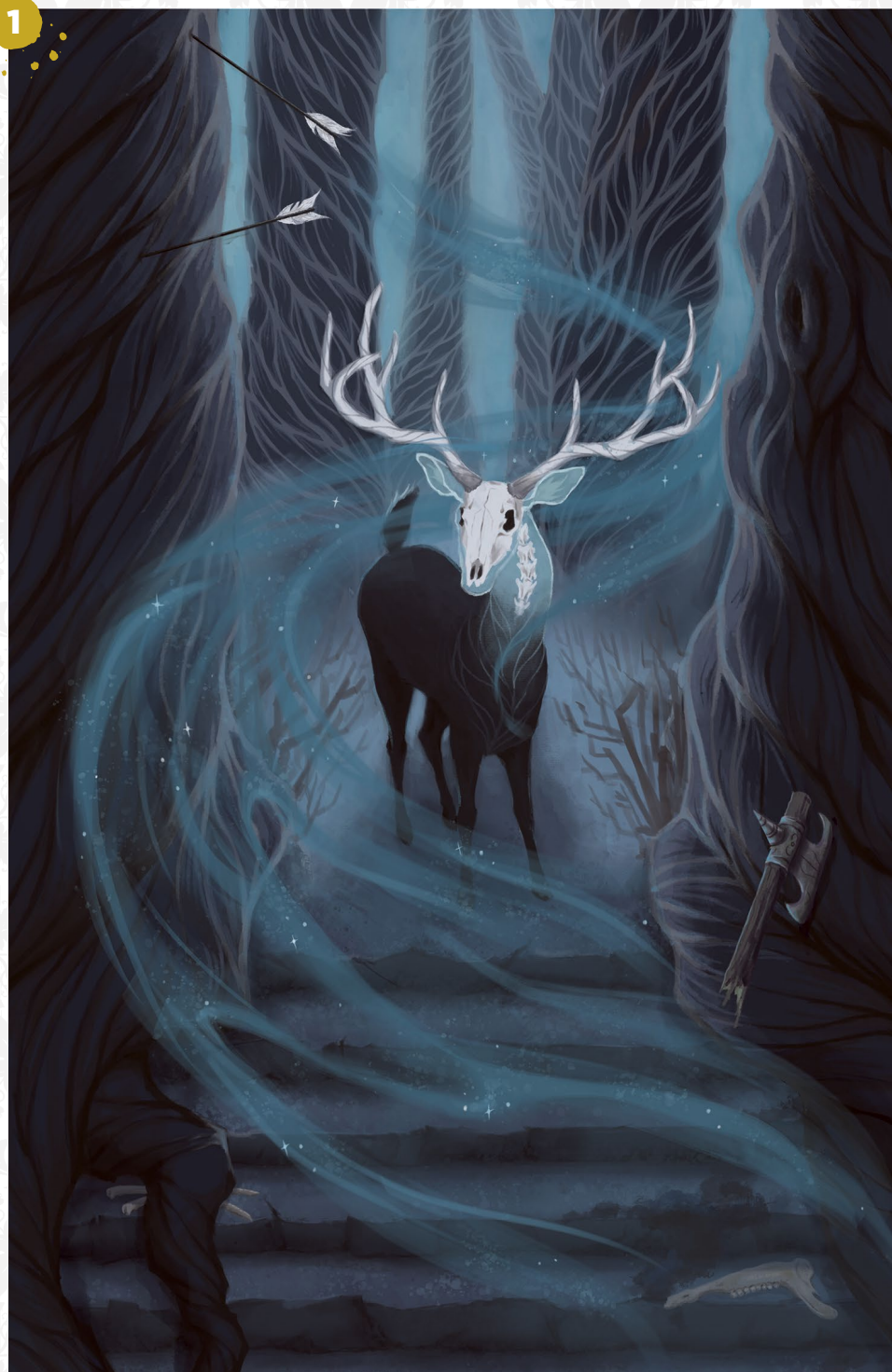
Jennifer Bruce

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Procreate, Photoshop WEB: www.jenniferbruceart.com

"I draw inspiration from nature, beloved works of fiction, and my favourite cinematic and electronic/indie-pop music," says Jennifer, an award-winning artist with a bachelors in illustration from the College for Creative Studies.

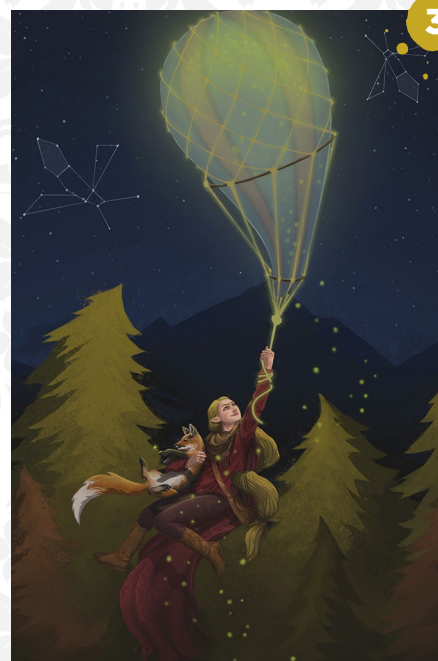
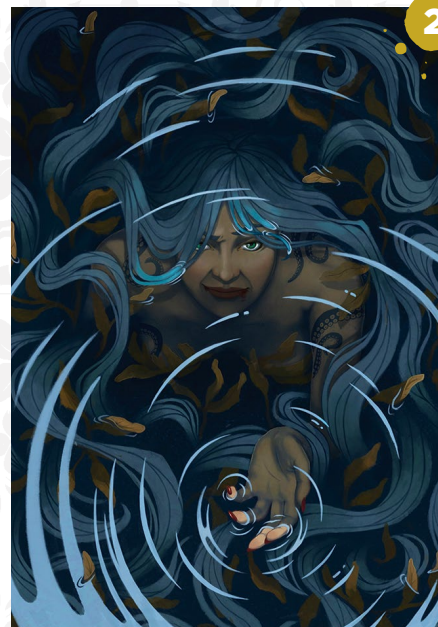
1 DEATH OF THE TREE PATH

"Created for author Timothy Scott Currey's 2020 release of the same name. The magical wind clashes with the dying wildlife."



2 MAERMAYD

"You never know what lurks beneath the surface: friendly fish, buried treasure or beautiful women who want to eat you."



3 LAMPYRIDAE

"An elf maiden sets off on a grand adventure with her faithful (if reluctant) fox friend and some helpful fireflies."

4 RISK

"This illustrates the idea of faith, which is often a leap out into nothing while trusting that you'll be caught."





Ivona Đenović

LOCATION: Croatia **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Procreate, Modo **WEB:** www.artstation.com/ivonadenovic

Ivona is a freelance concept artist and illustrator with five years' experience. "I graduated from the faculty of graphic arts in Zagreb, and worked in-house for two years before moving on to greener pastures."

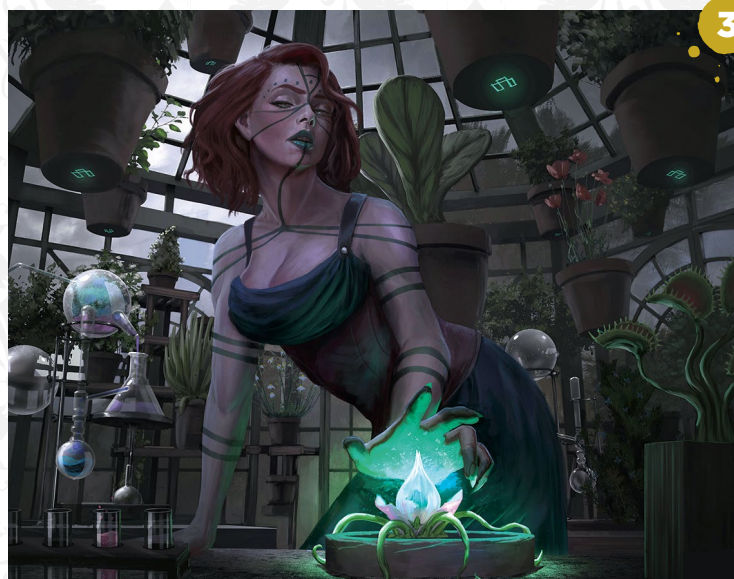


1 ZLATOVEZ

"Traditional folk garb in Slavonija, an eastern region of Croatia. I'm in awe of the craftsmanship behind this type of embroidery."

2 BABAROGA

"Southern Slav folklore speaks of Babaroga, a gnarled old lady who kidnaps misbehaving children who trespass in her boggy lair."



3

GREENHOUSE

"This piece features my Dungeons & Dragons character Isara, who I played with for three years. The game was a constant source of inspiration."

4 COSMOS

"I wanted to challenge how I use colours and make something personal. Usually I use grounded palettes."

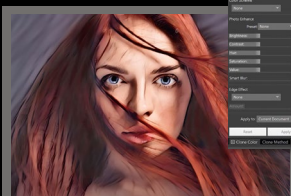
5 WANTED

"This was part personal project, part storytelling practice. I'm a fan of many genres and I love to find inspiration in everything."



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SUPER ART SKILLS

Gina DeDomenico walks us through a typical day as a costume concept artist, working to create eye-catching superhero outfits for TV shows. **Page 29**



A MASTER OF HIS CRAFT

Spacecraft concept artist and modeller Colie Wertz takes us for a flypast through his home studio and garage – he appreciates a change of scene... **Page 30**



WRITE IN TO IMAGINEFX!

One US reader asks what happened to print editions of ImagineFX during the pandemic, while another has a query about subscriber copies. **Page 37**



"I found a better understanding of my goals when I learned to be disciplined," says Maliheh Rahrovan.

How to set goals as an artist

Achievement unlocked Artists from across the globe share their insights with **Tom May** on how they work towards reaching their creative and career goals

Do you dream of working full-time as an artist? Maybe for TV or the movies? As a freelancer working for cool brands? Or just doing your own thing, supported by fans on Patreon? Well, such dreams won't come true by themselves: you have to do something about them. And the first step is to decide where you ultimately want to be.

In doing so, give your imagination free rein, says **Maliheh Rahrovan**, an Iranian character designer and 2D artist who's achieved her post-university ambition of moving to and working in New York. "Don't be afraid of setting ambitious goals," she urges. "Importantly, don't be afraid to say them out loud. If you believe in your goals and talk about them, you'll make them happen."

The next step is to devise a series of smaller goals that will propel you towards the larger one. "For me, the trick was to set goals with a daily time



limit, so I could form habits that I would commit to in the long term," says Maliheh. "For example, posting work regularly on social media, or doing daily figure drawing."

(Opposite) "My focus is driven solely by sheer obsession and love for the subject, rather than discipline as such," says Ejiwa Ebenebe.



"My burnout may be a result of untreated ADHD, which is pretty common in those pursuing a career in art," says Annabelle 'Abelle' Hayford.

limit, so I could form habits that I would commit to in the long term," says Maliheh. "For example, posting work regularly on social media, or doing daily figure drawing."

Sticking to such goals, of course, isn't always an easy thing to do. "One of the biggest challenges is staying focused and not burning out," says

Annabelle 'Abelle' Hayford, a



Ghanaian-American illustrator and character designer, currently working as background painter for Warner

Brothers. "I suffered the worst type of burnout when I was still in school and I'm still recovering from it. There were times when I had to force myself to step away from my art and career, to focus on myself and well-being."

BE PREPARED TO TAKE YOUR TIME

Taking a break can feel like failure. But actually, there's plenty of time to achieve your goals without sacrificing your mental and physical health. Even though it doesn't always seem like it.

"Impatience is something that I see in a lot of artists – and indeed I've ➔

“One of the biggest challenges is staying focussed and not burning out”

"I'm a stubborn person," says Ejiwa. "I want something, so get super-fixated on figuring out how to get there."



➔ struggled with myself – especially when you're just starting out,"



explains **Ejiwa Ebenebe**, a freelance illustrator and artist based in British Columbia, Canada.

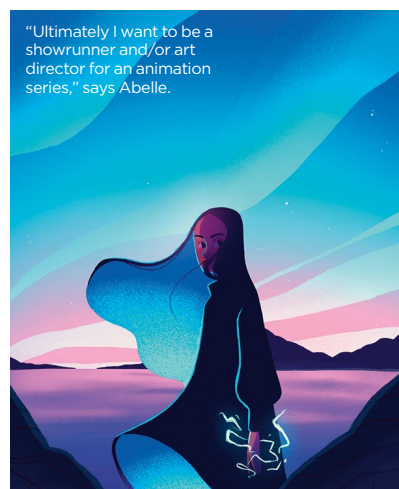
This stems from our tendency to compare ourselves and our work to others, she believes; an issue that's only heightened by social media. "Seeing all these amazing artists around you sharing their

achievements and success, it's so easy to feel like you're a failure or doing something wrong," says Ejiwa. "So I think a critical first step is to accept that sustainable growth takes time, and that you're not a failure for not being where you want to be quickly."



Remko Troost, a senior concept artist and illustrator at Ubisoft Montreal, agrees. "I teach at a private art school

“Accept that sustainable growth takes time... you're not a failure for not being where you want to be quickly”



"Ultimately I want to be a showrunner and/or art director for an animation series," says Abelle.

called Syn Studio and I see a lot of students trying to get the kind of results they see on ArtStation by industry veterans," he says. "Consequently, some of them rely on photobashing way too soon. I think it's really important that you master the basics before using photos."

TAKE SMALL STEPS

Pacing yourself properly means setting small, achievable tasks that are practical and realistic. This can feel frustrating when you want to shoot for the moon, but small goals "are the real heavy lifters of progress," believes Ejiwa. "Not only do they build up over



"Stay curious and open to new possibilities and media, and always be in a learning state of mind," says concept artist Remko Troost.

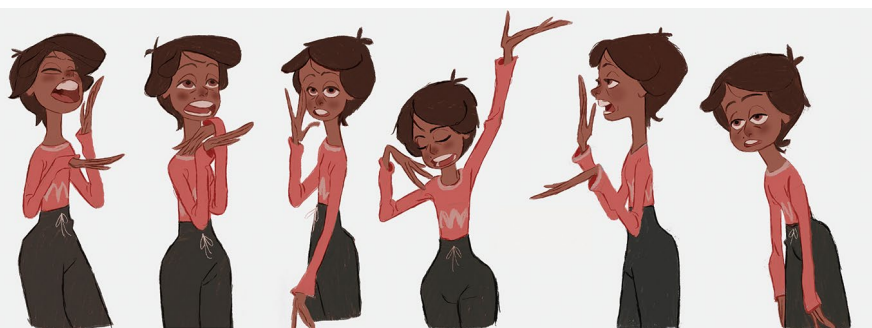
time to create a solid pathway to the large umbrella goal; but the confidence, positive reinforcement and momentum you build up from setting targets you're actually able to reach is invaluable for keeping you going."

That said, not everyone has to set a specific career goal. **Cédric Babouche**



is a French artist whose varied list of achievements – art director, illustrator, comic book artist, watercolour painter, ➔

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"My first big goal was going to art school in Iran, then to study animation in the US," says Maliheh.

"I've had several proposals that I'm considering, but these are not career goals – more curiosity goals," says Cédric Babouche.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

REMKO TROOST

The senior concept artist and illustrator discusses goal-setting

When did you first realise you wanted a career in art?

It actually started as a child. I'm self-taught and began drawing and painting at a very early age. From then on, I always kind of knew I wanted a career in art. And I haven't ever stopped drawing since.

Have you always been disciplined as an artist?

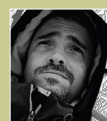
Well yes, pretty much. It isn't really about discipline or practise on purpose for me, though. I just can't stop doing it!

Do you still set yourself learning goals?

Yes, when I have the time, I love to play around with traditional mediums such as charcoal, watercolours and oil paints. I love how you have to think differently in each medium and how this influences using, for example, digital mediums afterwards. Unfortunately, with a family and a full-time career, along with freelance work and teaching, it's difficult to find the time to stay regular with it.

What advice can you offer young artists about how to set goals?

Believe in yourself and try not to compare yourself too much with other artists. Instead, do research and find your own real-life references. Pretty much everything you want to draw is already out there in nature. Set your goals, such as the studio or clients you'd like to work for, and then focus on creating a portfolio that reflects their style. Just never let go. Always keep your inner child alive. Be passionate – even obsessed, maybe. And most of all, have fun!



Remko is a senior concept artist and illustrator at Ubisoft Montreal, who also teaches at the Syn Studio art school.

www.artstation.com/remko



"Take it step by step, don't rush the learning process," says Remko. "It takes time, a lot of time"







"I prepare for the unexpected when I start to paint in watercolour," says Cédric. "There is no failure, only discovery."

Animal Crossing X DORDOGNE



“If you believe in your goals and talk about them, then you’ll make them happen”

➤ short film director, indie game developer and art teacher – bears testament to that.

“Looking back, giving myself project goals and not career goals has been beneficial to me,” says Cédric. “I didn’t tell myself that I wanted a career in animation, in games or in comics. I just had projects and stories to tell, and wanted to find the best medium to achieve them. This has led me to discover many things and to be enriched by passing from one to the other. The more solid your drawing skills are, the more you can apply it to the media you like.”

GO WITH THE FLOW

So while it’s good to set and pursue goals, always remain receptive to other avenues that open up along the way. As a case in point, Cédric is currently developing a video game called Dordogne. “Working in video games was somewhat of an accident,” he admits, “because I hadn’t really planned to switch to this universe. I was in between projects and had

“I just had stories to tell, and wanted the best medium to achieve them”

some spare time. So a friend and I decided to develop a little video game for our daughters. I posted a watercolour/3D mix test on Twitter, and it just blew up.”

Wherever you reach in your career, the most important thing is to never stop learning. “One goal I’m very happy I could achieve this year is learning how to storyboard,” says Abelle. “I always wanted to learn but never had the time before. My next step will be taking what I learn and keep practising, by making my own person sequences, or even making music video animatics to songs that I love, or created myself.”

Whatever your personal goals, though, Abelle’s advice is the same. “Take big vague goals and break them down into smaller, specific objectives. That way your goals will seem more achievable and you have a better idea how to reach them. And take your time! Pace yourself and don’t burn out. Opportunity never runs out, and will be there when you’re ready.”

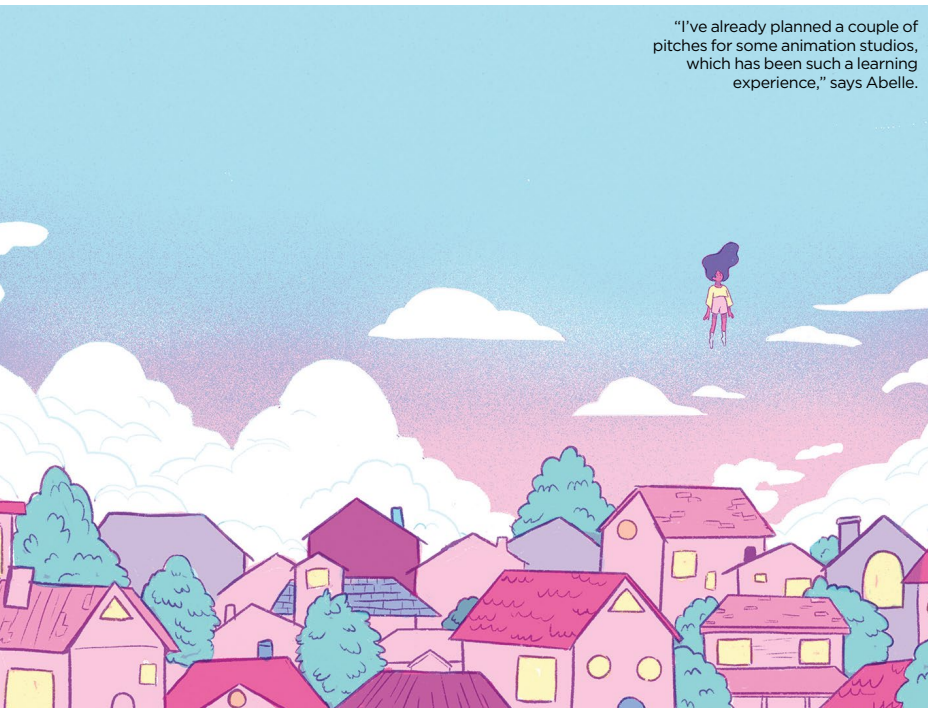


“I’m always trying to keep this child inside of me alive,” says Remko.



“My current career goal is to work on feature animations and find my voice in visual storytelling,” says Maliheh.

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A day in the life of... Gina DeDomenico

Caped crusader A costume concept artist working on TV superhero costumes takes us through her day...

"I get up around 6:30 and the first thing I do is exercise. I start working by 9:30 and everything for the first hour is just answering emails. We get hundreds of emails with LJ Super Suits, because of so many suits being designed at the same time.

We open a Zoom in the morning with all the concept artists that are on a show. Right now there are four of us, but it varies – we keep it open till 7:30 at night so that LJ (costume designer Laura Jean Shannon) or anybody from

art, bye'. She includes us in the fittings and really uses us as a team.

After work, it's family and personal art time. I'm a single mum of a 17-, 19- and 22-year-old. Covid is undeniably a tragedy but for me it's been a blessing because I've been able to be home with my kids while I'm working. I get to interact with them. I get to see them all the time whereas before I was gone at 6:00 and back late at night.

My three things I always tell people are to absolutely learn Photoshop and

“We can all help brainstorm solutions if something isn't working in a different part of the costume pipeline”

the department who's there in-house can come and talk to us. We came up with a system to hopefully make it so it could feel like it would be at the office. We share our screens so at any time she could join the Zoom call and see what we're up to. LJ includes everyone so we can all help brainstorm solutions if something isn't working in a different part of the costume pipeline. We all keep an eye on what's going on; it's not just like 'okay, here is the concept

ZBrush; join a union; and volunteer in some way to be around the industry – whatever you have to do to get your foot in the door.”

Gina has been working as an illustrator in the entertainment industry for nearly 30 years and is busy helping to develop some of television's biggest superhero shows. Her previous work includes The Boys, Django Unchained and Galaxy Quest. You can discover more of Gina's art by visiting www.illustratedbygina.com.



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



Colie Wertz

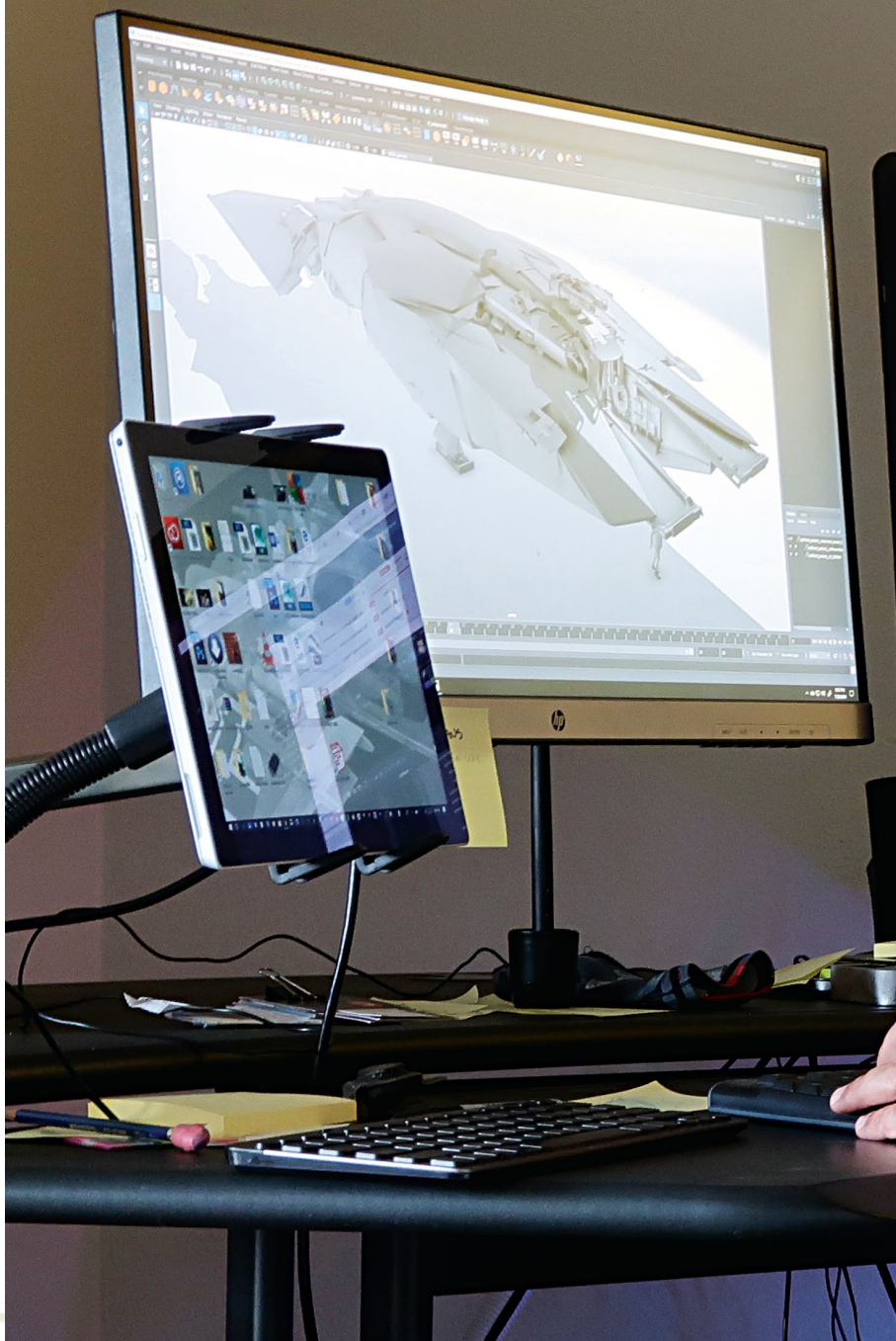
Master crafter The San Francisco-based artist reveals how he relocates around his space to reignite creative flows



I've been working from home as a freelance concept artist for three years now. Before that, I worked for Industrial Light & Magic (ILM) in San Francisco's Bay Area on and off for over a decade and picked up a ton of good and bad habits that I've tried to implement in my home workspace. The Bay Area isn't a cheap place to live, so acres of space for my dream studio have eluded me over my career, but I've made do by understanding what I use and need over a project's duration.

I work digitally, so I've got a few setups for my needs or circumstances. I have a big Threadripper-based tower with three RTX cards running a 22-inch Cintiq and monitor. I also have a thin yet beefy 15-inch MSI Creator laptop that runs a 13-inch Cintiq as a second monitor. I've run three monitors with that thing, and it's impressive. I can run VR from either system, and can go mobile at the drop of a hat. I'm happy to have and use both. I keep a Microsoft Surface Pro around for reference images, internet browsing, Pinterest, and ➡➡

“I worked for ILM in San Francisco's Bay Area on and off for over a decade...”



This ship was modelled on my desktop. When the heavy lifting – the texturing and rendering – was done, I took it into Procreate on my iPad to finish the details.



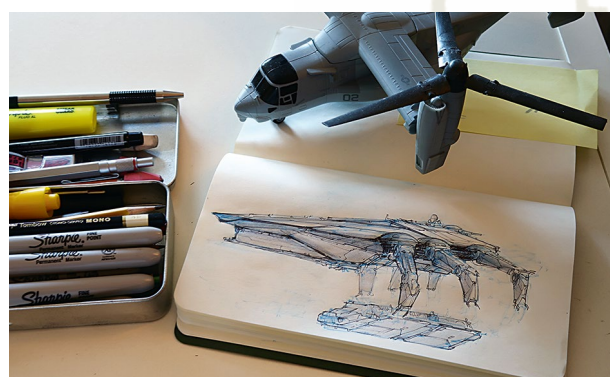


Getting my day started with me in the cockpit of my main workstation. The Wacom Cintiq can fold down onto my desk for Photoshop or sculpting work. The Surface on the far left is great for reference images, email and quick modelling in Mol (Moment of Inspiration).

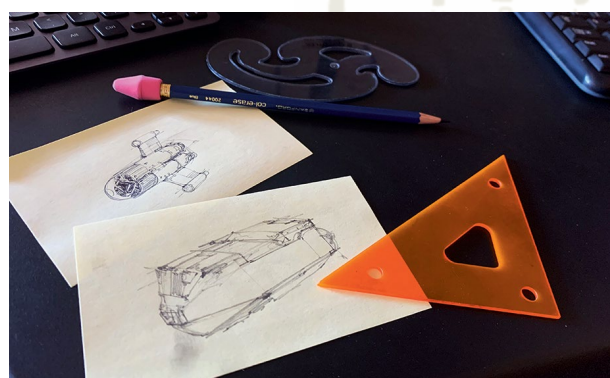
ImagineNation Artist in Residence



Being a hard-surface guy means having lots of references of everyday things. The hundreds of books that I have are all very special to me, as I glean something from each. In this image, I was looking at sketching a vehicle for a queen based in the Star Wars universe. This is the ref stack I made for the task.



I keep a variety of pens near me, along with a sketchbook. If an image is in my sketchbook, it's usually a 'fun' sketch, meaning I'll take it to finish on my own time. It sits as a reminder to go and play!



Sticky Notes are my go-to for ideas, nervous energy release and something to do while a big file opens or renders. Small triangles and French curves are everywhere, too, in case I want lines to pop.



This ship was designed for a collaboration with MSI, on one of the company's gaming laptops.



Portable exercise bike aimed right at my TV. I can take a good break and watch a race, football game or tutorial I've been eyeing.

Artist news, software & events

A sketch printed on metal makes for a great place to throw Sticky Notes and new sketches as I work.

'Gunner's seat', or the second station. A mirror of my cockpit in case I need to go mobile. The Surface on the left bounces around the studio space.

'The big cockpit' has my Biomorph desk, desktop Threadripper, monitor and Cintiq.

The 'sacred shelf' of current project-relevant reference from my library.



Sitting on an exercise ball is good for my core and I can bust out other exercises when I want.

The aeroplane model is for reference – maybe for my sketch, maybe for my paying job. I have a lot of models!

This is my layout space for VR equipment, books, drawings or model kits.

The 'pile' starting on the floor. These are the super-hot reference books that I'll be using on a project.



I enjoy my garage. I keep a drawing table, chairs and stretch area clear for when I need a change of scenery, but don't want to leave the house. I keep the tasks limited to short modelling or photo tasks.

➡ some MoI (Moment of Inspiration) modelling wherever I go. My desk is a split-level Biomorph and my chair is a cheap office chair from OfficeMax with a lumbar pad. I use Contour Design mice when I can and a basic keyboard.

INSPIRATION IMMERSION

The mass of my space no doubt looks like a complete mess to the untrained eye. I've made my living room the 'office', which means that anyone visiting will have to embrace the hardware aesthetics of a hard-surface visual artist.

I have a few hundred reference books... you know, the ones that are tall and thin and just can't be made to look beautiful on a shelf no matter how hard you try, but contain all of the magic pictures you'll use as inspiration on your next great project. I have them



organised on about eight shelf units, and I know where every book is categorically and in order. When I'm on a project, I pick my 'must-haves' and keep them behind my workstation on the 'sacred shelf', and from there the most useful ones for the task-at-hand are moved to the floor at my feet. So books may look as though they're in the way!

I sketched this in my garage, then finished it on my iPad sitting outside a coffee shop. For personal projects like this one, I find that if I vary where I work, I'm more creative than if I sit still for hours on end.

Now add to that some model kits for shape inspiration. Not built ones, just the sprues. I can see all the shapes out of context and be inspired. Despite all of these creative resources strewn all over the floor, I haven't broken a bone in a fall yet!

I keep my TV on while I work, running movies I term "background movies". I know them by heart, and don't really hear them. What I do hear is the loop of the main screen when each flick is done, meaning I've worked about two hours and I need to take a break. I keep a stationary bike in the space due to COVID and ride that in

“ I feel like iPhones and Procreate exist so I can snap a pic of a sketch and finish it up away from my workspace ”



Keeping unbuilt model kits around is a natural by-product of having worked next to the Model Shop at ILM. I studied how they searched for shapes and details in the kits without any context of where a part actually goes on the model.



My small drawing/work area in my garage is a happy place!



my breaks. I have windows but like working in low light. Thanks, ILM (!).

A STREAM OF SKETCHES

I draw constantly, so I keep Sticky Notes and small drawing utensils all over my desk. Opening a file? Do a sketch. Rendering? Do a sketch. So my walls around my desk space become a bit... yellow. I drew on Sticky Notes a lot at ILM because we had limited space to design and they've followed me home. Lucky for me.

A view from my exercise bike. From here I can watch TV, relax, see a chunk of my library and think about what I can do once I get back to work.

I feel like iPhones and Procreate exist so I can snap a pic of a sketch and finish it up away from my workspace. I can drop my kid off at volleyball practice and finish a sketch I started while waiting for a render I launched. It's a great time to be an artist!

When I need to 'get away,' I hit my garage. I take my MSI laptop or Surface Pro out there and take in the greasy smells or leave the door open and hear birds. I decided on my apartment because I needed a space

for my bikes and some storage. I use them when I need a reset on projects. I can stretch on a big mat or do pullups to clear my head, too. It's a helpful getaway. And then I just go for a ride after work!

Colie is a concept artist in the Bay Area of San Francisco. His recent projects include Dune, The Batman, Bullet Train and The Mandalorian to name a few. He enjoys football, climbing, rugby and motorsports. You can explore more of Colie's model work at www.coliewertzdesign.com.

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ImagineFX

Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



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Are you still printing?

The purpose of my email is to ask about the continuity of ImagineFX magazine. I'm a self-proclaimed magazine-aholic when it comes to art-related magazines. Yours is no exception. Prior to Covid-19 I was quite the regular at Barnes & Noble. That drastically changed in March 2020.

B & N finally allowed customers back in last September, but many publications weren't on the shelves. I know subscriptions eliminate that problem; however, I enjoyed the 'in-store' visits as me-time. There was a certain amount of daily life stress relief in it for me.

Unfortunately, the February 2020 issue 183 of ImagineFX is the last in my collection, which started with issue 118. Has IFX continued publishing since February 2020? Are all the issues from then until now still available? These are questions B & N can't answer. I'm considering taking out a digital subscription and if the back issues I'm missing are available, I'd like to get them as digital copies. Any help you can provide would be greatly appreciated.

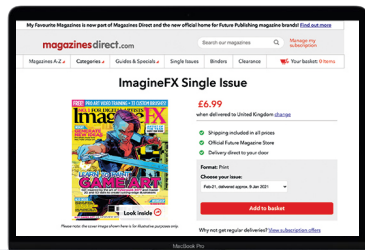
I love your magazine and it's helped immensely with my understanding of the digital world. I'm still a die-hard traditional artist, but decided to 'dip my feet in the water' of digital art when I found your magazine. Thank you for



DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE?

Don't worry – you can get hold of issue 196 at <http://ifxm.ag/single-ixf>.

If you have missed out on getting ImagineFX in the shops, check out our online store at www.magazinesdirect.com.



Subscribers get a text-free cover, but aside from that, the magazine is the same as the edition sold in shops.

your time and I look forward to hearing from you very soon.

Dan, California, US

Claire replies Thank you for your email, Dan. To your questions: ImagineFX has continued to publish editions throughout the year, but because of store closures across the globe, for a time they were only available via our online store and for subscribers. We began sending editions to the newsstand from issue 190 (September), but I cannot say if your store restocked these. Also, there were many delays with air freight options at an all-time low, so some still might be on their way. We resumed air freight from issue 196.

In terms of what is still available for your collection, our online store delivers to over 140 countries, including the US. You'll see from the link that we only keep the previous six editions: <http://ifxm.ag/single-ixf>.

Digital edition subscriptions are available from our online store, but if you wanted to buy single issues, you would need to access Pocketmags or Apple's App store. I'm sorry I can't help with the fulfilment of your collection, but at least you should be able to purchase some of them from our store. Normal service has returned so you'll still be able to get magazines in your bookstore.

Different editions

I've been subscribing to the magazine since issue one, so have never really paid much attention to the differences (if any) between the subscribers' edition and the regular edition that appears in stores. I recently had to request a replacement copy of issue 195 because my copy never arrived, and got a regular edition instead. Am I losing out on any additional content (like I would, with say, Total Film), or is the text-free cover the only difference? Keep up the great work!

Andrew

Claire replies Thanks for subscribing to our magazine for so long, your support means a lot. The newsstand and subscriber editions have only one difference – the word-free cover art. Hope this helps, Andrew!



New works that have grabbed our attention



Sofia Ellis
[@summers.artwork](https://www.instagram.com/summers.artwork)



C Beatrix
[@cbeatrixart](https://www.instagram.com/cbeatrixart)



Amanda Blatch
[@amandablatch](https://www.instagram.com/amandablatch)

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

STRAIGHT FROM THE HEART

"I love all Studio Ghibli movies, and Kiki and Jiji have a very special place in my heart."

ARTIST PORTFOLIO



FATEMEH HAGHNEJAD

The Iranian artist tells **Beren Neale** about her creative process, lockdown positivity and why 2021 will be the best year ever

Blue Birdy
2020

Fatemeh Haghnejad, better known online as BlueBirdy, is an Iranian traditional and digital artist with a sublime touch. She's a character artist obsessed with storytelling, able to depict moments where a character – be it an elf or a commuter riding the subway – is caught in a moment of self-reflection or contemplation. Her art is intimate, with characters wearing their thoughts on their faces, so it's easy for the viewer to buy in to the scene wholeheartedly. It's a skill borne of hundreds of hours of drawing, and 2020 unsurprisingly brought even more time for Fatemeh to hone her craft.

You could say it was always going to be this way for BlueBirdy (a name that came from an old woman in a dream).

Born in Iran to a family of artists, it was her grandfather who was the first big influence on her desire for creativity. He inspired Fatemeh's mother and aunts to pick up paint brushes, and as a kid, "seeing them all painting and talking about art and art supplies was so exciting," she remembers. "Most of the memories I have from childhood are art-related, as doing art was always something that made sparks in my heart."

What made the love for art and depicting stories stick was the precious moments it allowed with her mother. She recalls "the afternoons that I spent with my mum, when my little baby sister was sleeping, and we made illustrations of the stories we were reading, or just drew fairies". And she also saw the dedication it takes to



TESTING

"I usually do a quick colour test for my paintings and this one is made with watercolours."

create art at this point. "I remember my mother would sometimes stay up until morning to paint. Watching her was really inspiring and since then I always had paper and pencils in my hand."

SOLACE IN DRAWING

Dog-eared her mum's latest Andrew Loomis art books which had been translated into Persian, Fatemeh delved into art theory. Being a third of the size of the original American books enabled them to pass Iran's strict censor, but breaking the rules was the furthest thing from BlueBirdy's mind. "I was just enjoying copying all the drawings and using them to depict my ideas," she says. In fact, drawing quickly became essential to the artist: "Drawing became my best friend when I was about 10, as my family kept changing homes so I was meeting new kids almost every year. It was difficult to make friends, so just knowing that I could draw gave me a sense of security... I was the kid who was ➤➤

Artist PROFILE

**Fatemeh Haghnejad
(aka BlueBirdy)**

LOCATION: Norway

FAVOURITE ARTISTS: JC Leyendecker, Arthur Rackham, Chris Riddell, Norman Rockwell and Charles Vess

MEDIA: Procreate, coloured inks

WEB: www.bluebirdy.net

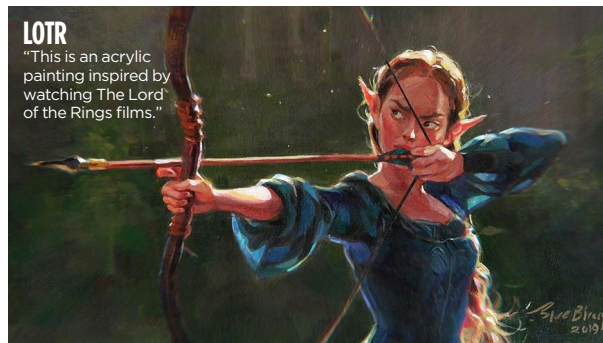
MONONOKE

"I joined a challenge called #sixfanarts in 2020 and painted some of the characters I like in animation movies."



LOTR

"This is an acrylic painting inspired by watching The Lord of the Rings films."



SKETCHES

"This is a page of my daily doodle sketches - nothing much more to say about this one."

➡ never alone and busy the whole time, although I'm sure now that the other kids were looking at me as though I was a weirdo."

ANOTHER DAY IN PARADISE

Today, Fatemeh lives and works in Oslo, Norway. She moved there over two years ago, having married fellow artist (and fellow ImagineFX cover star) Even Amundsen. "The journey of moving here started in 2016 when Even and I decided we wanted to be together for the rest of our lives," she says. The couple first met through mutual friend and fellow artist, Jesper Ejning. Fatemeh later went to a Schoolism workshop in Dubai and saw Even speak. A three-day walkabout turned into both of them travelling the world, and finally settling down in Oslo. But does being married to

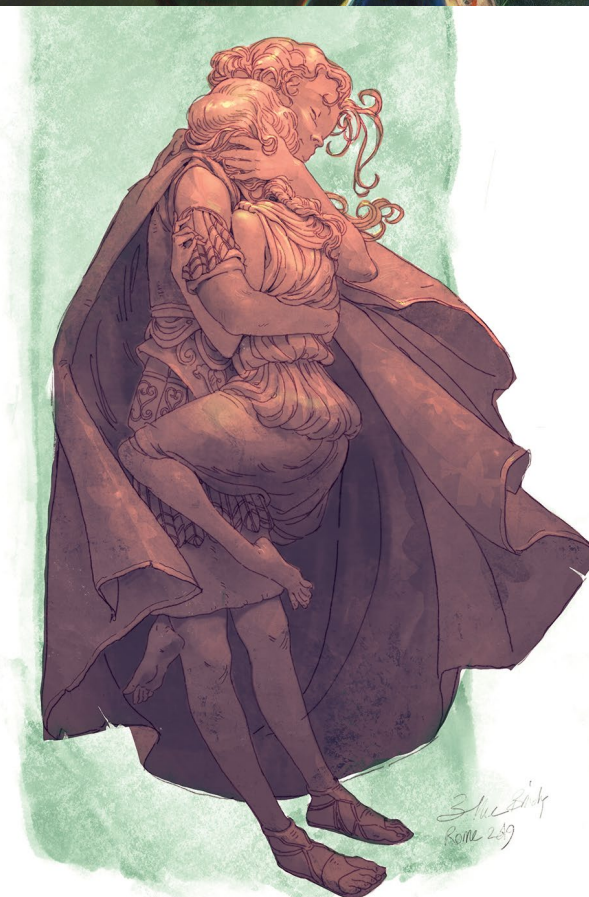
another artist help or hinder creativity? "I admire Even's comments on my work, though it wasn't so easy in the beginning of our relationship," she admits. "It's very encouraging when he gives me compliments, when I hear him saying 'wow', or showing me thumbs up when he doesn't want to distract me from work. I also enjoy listening to him talking to his students or while streaming."

Delving into Fatemeh's Instagram page, you get a sense of how important the Norway surroundings are for the artist. And things have only intensified in the last year of lockdowns and social

“Being in the library and surrounding myself with the books I love is inspiring”

TRAINING

"I drew this on the train journey from Frascati to Rome, after seeing many Roman sculptures and feeling so much love for my husband Even."



restrictions. "My daily routine has changed a lot due to the coronavirus," she says. "I used to go to libraries and cafés almost every day. Just being in the library and surrounding myself with the books I love is inspiring to me."

What's perhaps worse is the loss of creative energy that the artist got from being around other people – something that many readers will relate to. "I love to work where people are, [even though] they don't pay attention to me. I haven't had that for about seven months now," she says. One upside of this is that her home work space is the cosiest it's ever been.

Instead of picking the right café or library to haunt, the artist has buried her head in books over 2020, reading all the Harry Potter books again, plus Good Omens and Sandman by Neil Gaiman, Heroes by Stephen Fry, Rose



CHIHIRO AND HAKU

"Like my previous Mononoke painting, I created this one to join in with the #sixfanarts challenge."

Madder by Stephen King, "and I'm reading 1Q84 by Murakami, though I'm struggling with it," she admits.

There's also been a spot of DIY. "I've added a few shelves and baskets to organise the space I have at home, and to be honest this new situation now makes me feel more settled. It's definitely easier to do traditional work." And the restrictions haven't affected her ability to create art – Fatemeh is just as comfortable picking up watercolours (coloured inks are the latest discovery) as she is sketching on her iPad in Procreate. What's more, such is her ability to draw lines full of character, it's sometimes impossible to tell them apart.

THE CREATIVE CONSTANT

Whether it's a digital commission or a traditional piece, one thing that stays the same for Fatemeh is the process around the art making. "For my digital pieces, I usually start with traditional thumbnail drawings as the lines come more freely and easily on the paper," she says. "Then I take my drawing ➡



SEEING THE LIGHT

Fatemeh on how she uses light in her painting Chihiro and Haku

"Light is the heart of a piece for me. It's what defines characters and their moods. In my work I write about what I'd like to see in the piece, everything about the characters and the environment they're in. This helps me to study any areas that I'm not sure how to draw, or learn more about specific lighting that I'm not comfortable tackling.

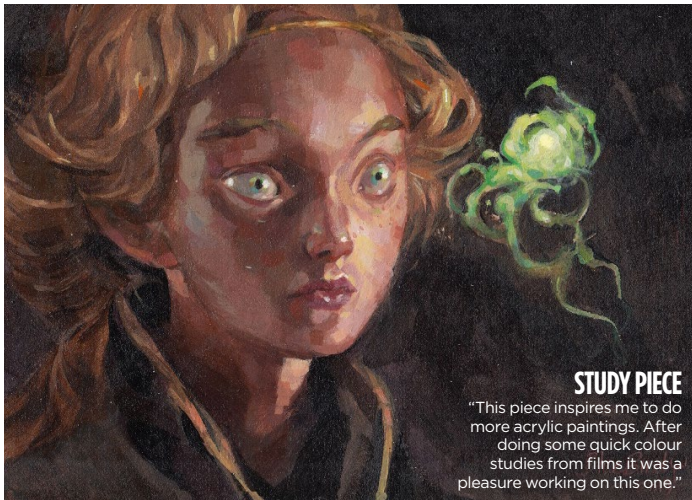
For this painting, I knew I wanted them to fly in the early morning sky. I started the piece with some studies of clouds. I decided to capture the blue/purple light of the early morning sky, and the rim light from the sun rising on my characters and the clouds. I made some small colour tests, which helped me stay consistent in the following days while I worked on the painting. I started with flat colours before using separate layers to paint my overlapping shadows and cast shadows."

Interview

BIG PIECE

"This is a commissioned artwork that I made for my favourite digital drawing app, Procreate."





STUDY PIECE

"This piece inspires me to do more acrylic paintings. After doing some quick colour studies from films it was a pleasure working on this one."



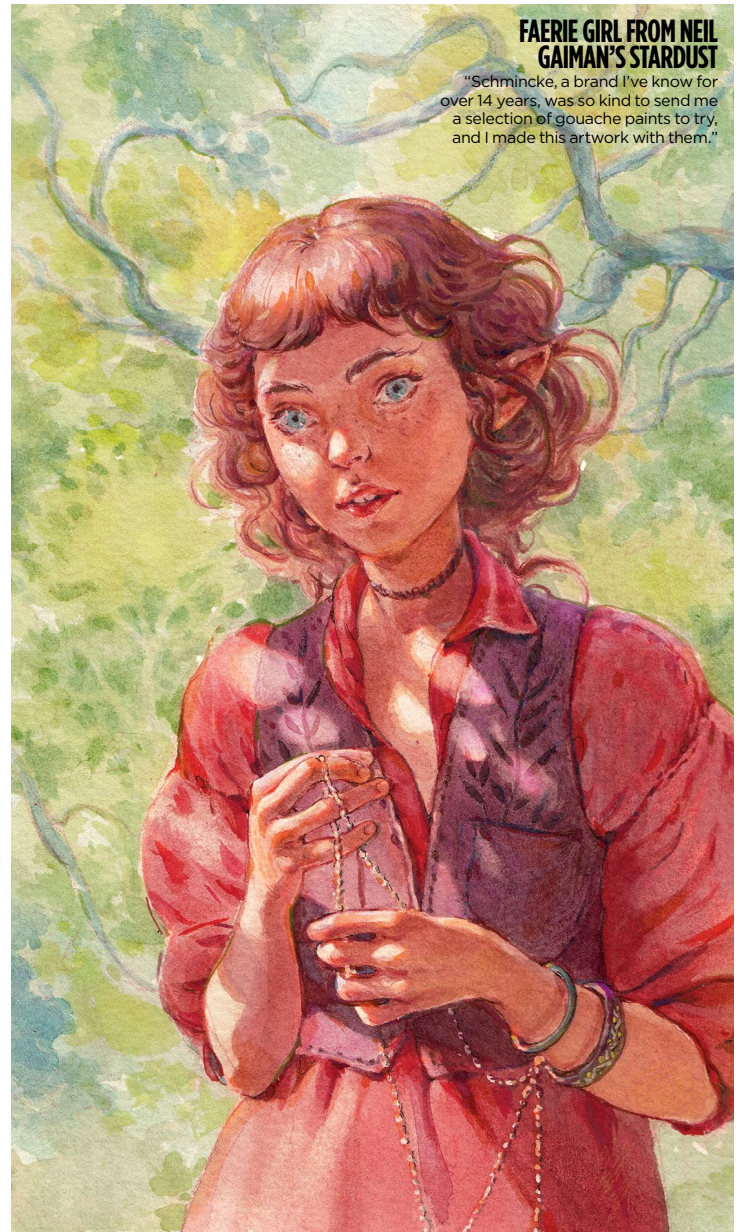
NYMPH

"This ink drawing was my contribution to 2020's #doodlitober."



MERMAID

"Like so many other artists, I took part in 2020's #mermay challenge. This was my first and last entry."



FAERIE GIRL FROM NEIL GAIMAN'S STARDUST

"Schmincke, a brand I've known for over 14 years, was so kind to send me a selection of gouache paints to try, and I made this artwork with them."

➡ into Procreate and move things around to my liking and also perform the value and colour tests of the piece, and create the clean line art in a new layer above the thumbnail sketch. For traditional painting, I print out my thumbnail sketch in the size I want to have my illustration and with my light box and the help of the thumbnail drawing, I make the clean line-art."

A HEALTHY MIND

Like most commercial artists, gone are the old-fashioned notions of the starving artist feeding off the chaos of the darker side of the psyche. Creating art for Fatemeh seems to be directly linked to self-care, to building a healthy environment that flows into her art. "On a good day, the first thing I do in the morning is drink water and make coffee. I then do my yoga, or

another workout, before checking my social media." This measured pace shines through so much of her art.

When she's in the flow, audiobooks and interviews are often on her headphones. "The last audiobook that I listened to was The View from the Cheap Seats," she says, "which is the introductions and essays Neil Gaiman wrote for other writers like Douglas Adams and Terry Pratchett. And the last interview I had on was Neil Gaiman talking with Carlo Rovelli. I really enjoy listening to him as he has a beautiful storytelling mind and voice, and I really hope I get the chance to

work with him one day." You heard it here first, Neil.

ONLINE PROFILES

When an artist has their entire work online, it's easy to see changes in style and the gradual (sometimes sudden) improvement in skill. So is BlueBirdy ever tempted to curate her online profiles to show only her best work, deleting anything that she's not completely happy with?

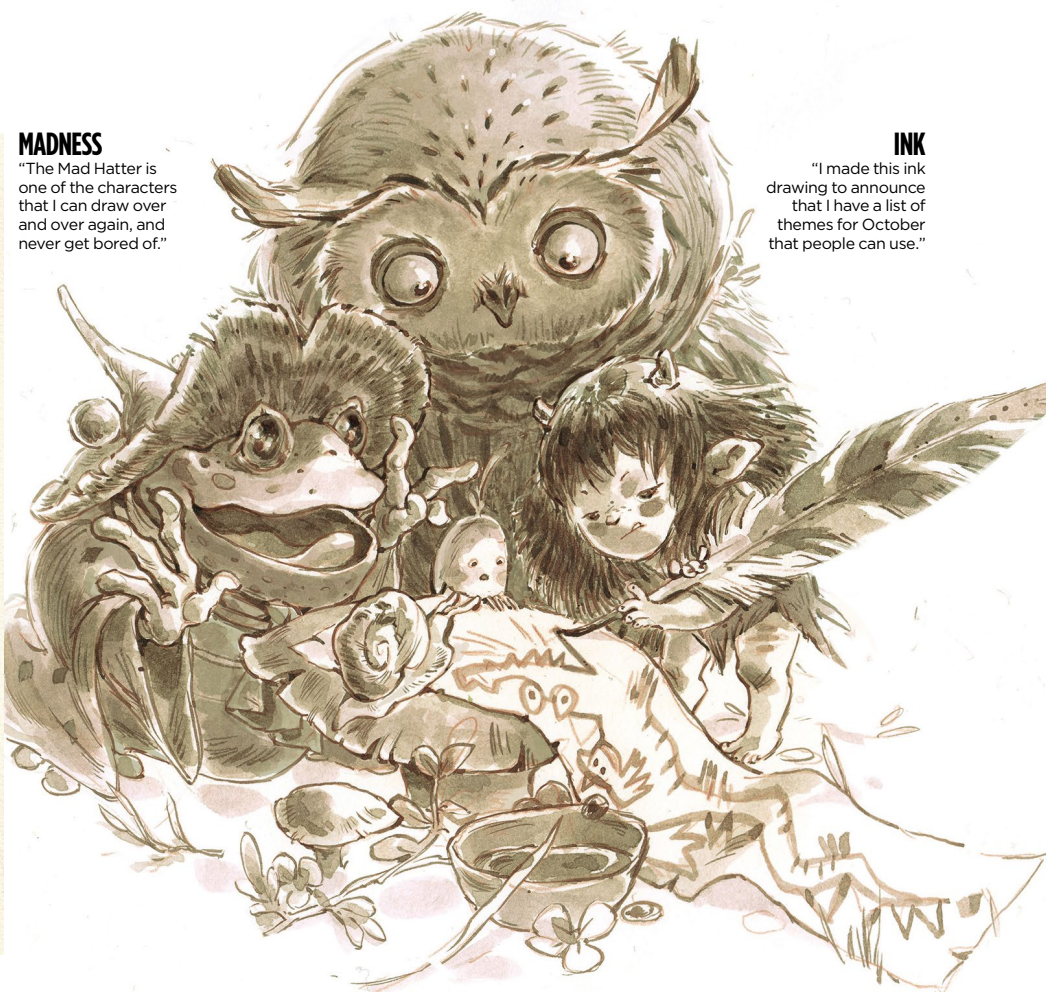
"Well, sometimes people write and tell me they appreciate seeing my progress when they go through my Instagram page," she says. "I also have paintings and studies that I don't share online... but your question makes me think, 'why I am not sharing them?!' Maybe in my unconscious mind the answer is that they might not be very popular on social media, or maybe ➡

“ I enjoy listening to Neil Gaiman as he has a beautiful storytelling mind and voice ”



MADNESS

"The Mad Hatter is one of the characters that I can draw over and over again, and never get bored of."



INK

"I made this ink drawing to announce that I have a list of themes for October that people can use."

➤ some of the things I make are too fragile to be out in the world."

As far as what art inspires Fatemeh, what she appreciates the most is, "the ability of storytelling and showing emotions in a piece – when I see sensitive, caring touches of a brush and when an artwork introduces me to unusual, unknown worlds". You can't help but think these are rules that the artist lives by when making art. In fact, reading her comments on her site about this year's Inktober, it's clear storytelling is something she's been working on in her art. Looking at the

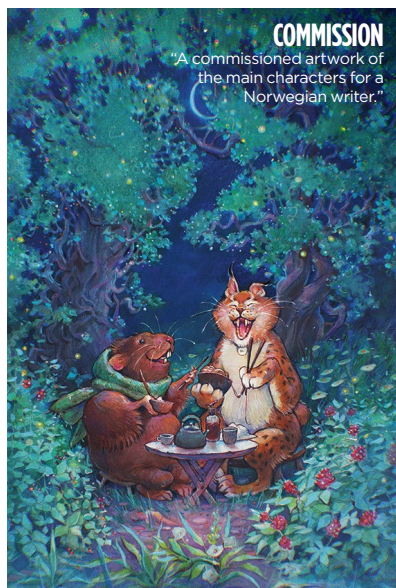
day-to-day schedule that she marks out for the annual sketching event, Fatemeh also relies heavily on structure when creating – something that's both been lost and found over the past year.

FINDING THE JOY

Although usually a great traveller, the pandemic meant plans had to change for the creative couple, with any travel limited to short trips to cabins outside of Oslo. Fatemeh explains how "we're mostly home and trying to make it cozy for the winter," adding, "and to be honest I'm not sad about these changes. I feel more relaxed to work."

Though attending art events, such as the Bologna Children's Book Fair, would usually bring intense moments of inspiration, "not travelling has removed pressure and stress," she says, "it's given me time to feel grounded. I read more and think about the excitement I had years ago." And what artist can't relate to this: making the most of the situation you're in, always making creativity the priority, and nourishing your imagination.

It's also something that Fatemeh is taking through to 2021, long after the



© Clip Studio

“I’m most excited about focusing on the emotions in the lives of my characters”

current Groundhog Day of Covid-19 restrictions. "What I'm most excited about is focusing on the emotions in the lives of my characters," she says, "exploring more children's and young adult literature and the pleasure of storytelling. The plan is to work with the publishing houses that I admire, so I'm working to build a body of work that will attract them." Words of inspiration for us all. ●

HOWL AND SOPHIE

"This is a personal digital painting of the two characters that I adore."



KEY LIFE LESSON

Why writing helps Fatemeh visualise her next painting...

"The last major thing I learned is that the stress and pressure to capture my ideas is okay. I just need to calm down and take the steps slowly. These days, my work begins with lots of words rather than pictures, writing down everything about the piece and studying. This way of starting can be hard, but I enjoy the process more than before and my main reason for liking or disliking a piece is the experience I have with it, rather than how it turns out. I would often struggle to finish work, but these days I have a good time figuring things out."

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Issue 196

February 2021

Boost your concept art skills with Lane Brown's cover workshop. There's also pro insights on matte painting and Blender's Grease Pencil. Plus we reveal the best concept art schools and talk to film art veteran Peter Popken.



Issue 195

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.

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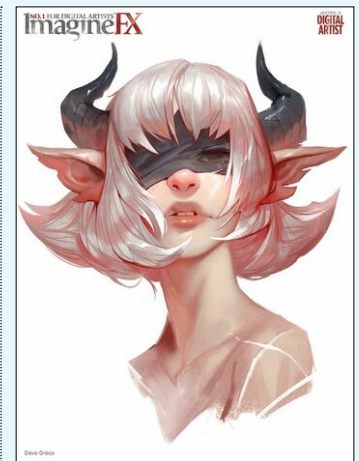
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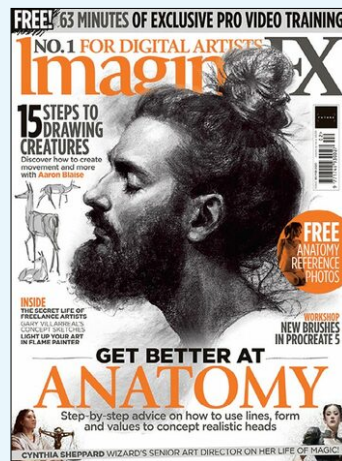
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Sketchbook

João David Fernandes

Discover how this concept artist and illustrator uses his sketches to delve into character relationships and his own values

Artist PROFILE

João David Fernandes

LOCATION: Germany



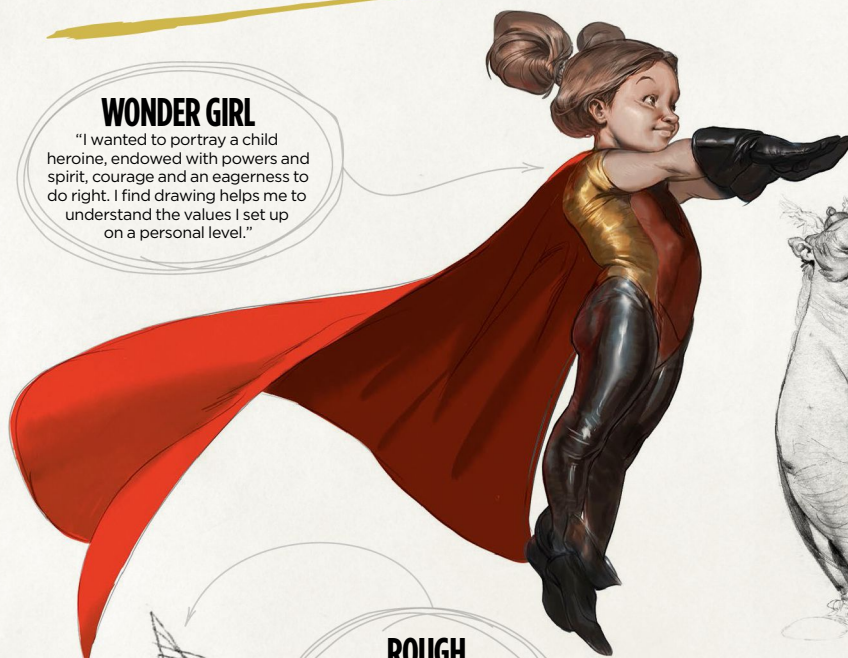
João works as a concept artist and illustrator, pursuing draftsmanship and visual ideation, in a variety of styles and

projects. He has worked freelance for clients such as Axis Studios, Nuare Studio and Volta, and has had in-house experience at SIXMOREVODKA and Karakter Design Studio. Since 2017, he has been a member of the artist collective, Superani.

www.artstation.com/javidfernandes

WONDER GIRL

"I wanted to portray a child heroine, endowed with powers and spirit, courage and an eagerness to do right. I find drawing helps me to understand the values I set up on a personal level."



CLASSICS

"I'm a fan of visual distortion, bordering on laughable impression, usually combining shapes and rendering to convey otherwise proud characters as somewhat clumsier and demystified. An example of this is my take on Asterix and Obelix."



ROUGH BUNNY CONCEPTS

"While trying to play up the cuteness of these creatures, I also wanted to introduce a rough, contrasting element via the gritty dystopian scavenger design, as well as in their tough demeanours."



FATHER AND SON

"The bond portrayed in God of War 4 between Kratos and his son Atreus was a big inspiration for me and hit the mark in terms of a complex, meaningful relationship. Here I took that inspiration and decided to set it in a more jovial, exaggerated mood, which is reflected throughout the drawing."



“ I’m a fan of visual distortion, to convey otherwise proud characters as clumsier ”

Sketchbook

AN UNLIKELY PAIR

"In my visuals of a developing world filled with grotesque, ghastly aliens and young battle-worn hunters, these two stood out for me as an unlikely, but nevertheless interesting pair."



STILL OF BATTLE

"Depicting a still moment in an otherwise tense and weighty clash is, for me, a good way to challenge myself on dynamic interactions."

INNOCENCE

"I always enjoy setting a comedic tone between characters, at any time, and contrasting a light-hearted, entertaining romp with some creepy creatures was how I expressed it here."



ANIMATED SCENES

"In these sketches, I wanted to explore the interplay between characters, using the theme of street-smart youthful thieves on the run from the worn-out adults' scolding ire."



“ I always enjoy setting a comedic tone between characters, at any time ”

MARIO MAFIA

"Some characters just carry a weight and emotional response that can be hard to reimagine any other way. Here I cast the iconic Mario Brothers in a serious tone, albeit with a few light-hearted touches."

Sketchbook



NOSTALGIC THROWBACK

"Cartoons and animation were and still are a big influence in my art and my desire to push style with purpose. Here, I wanted to portray Ed from the series Ed, Edd n Eddy in a different light."

COTTONTAIL CONJURER

"Being something of a recurring theme, I keep envisioning these adorable bunnies in several contexts. Here I decided to create a scholarly sorcerer."

STYLE EXPLORATION

"Here, my aim was to further push the boundaries of my own personal taste when it comes to stylisation, leaning on the familiar, already gruelling visage of Hellboy, for that purpose."





SUPERHERO CLASH

"Other big influences in my artistic growth are superheroes and comic books in general. I felt this was where I always saw some of the highest technical quality of drawing, coupled with a great sense of design."

SUCCESSFUL CAPTURE

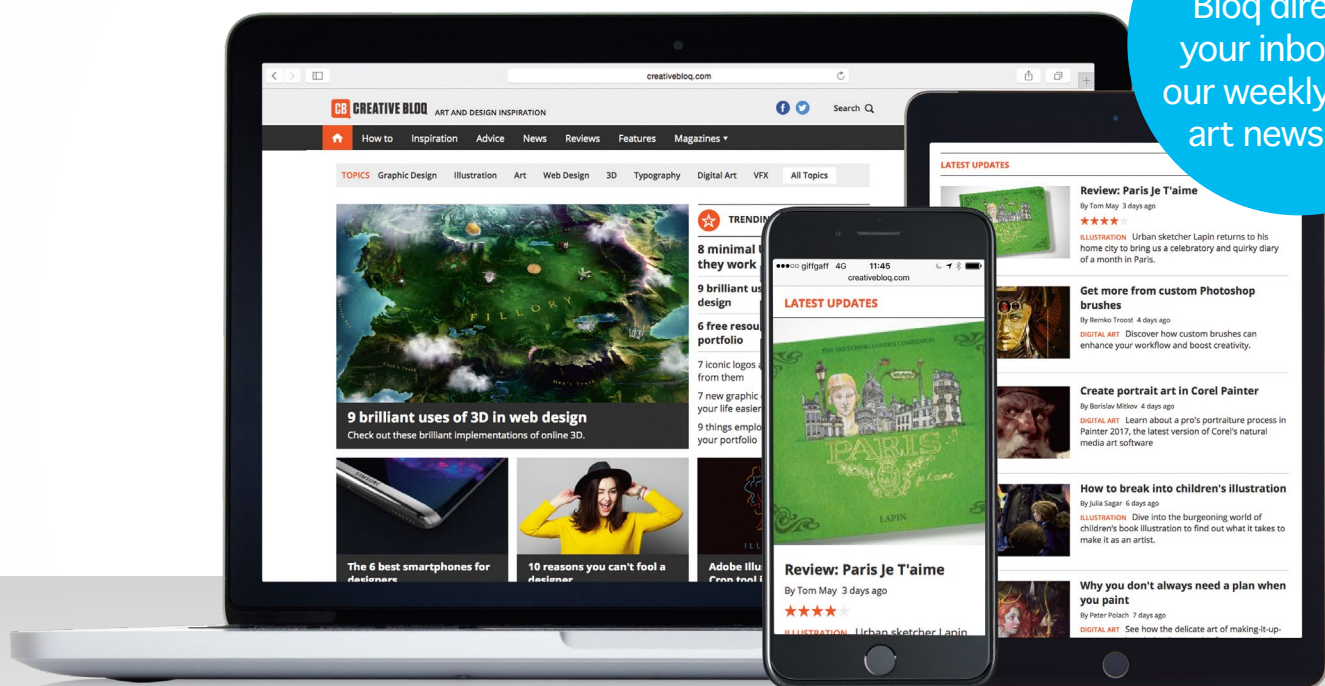
"This is an example of a theme that I often draw, trying to establish a deeper relationship between characters though time and a developed story. I centred hunters as children and gruesome monsters as prey."

“Cartoons and animation, in general, were and still are a big influence in my art...”

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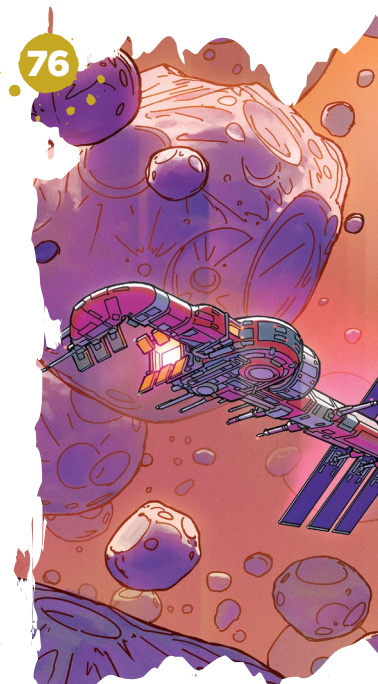
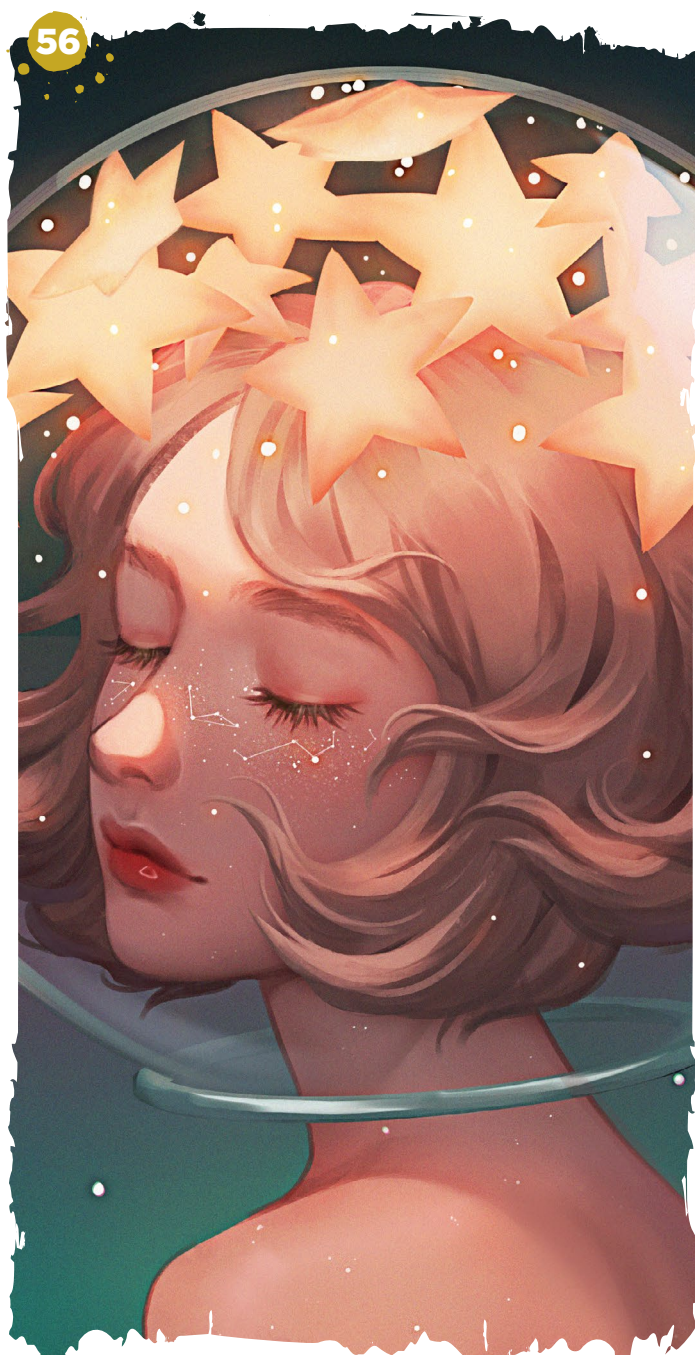
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Advice from the world's best artists



This issue:

56 Celestial lighting in your portraits

Karmen Loh paints a female portrait illuminated by starlight.

60 15 tips to improve your doodles

Get the most out of your loose drawings, with Gareth Davies.

70 Create art that tells a story

Chrystin Garland makes use of colour, composition and detail.

76 Paint art using everyday objects

Artist space goose reveals a novel way to beat creative block.

Photoshop CELESTIAL LIGHTING IN YOUR PORTRAITS

Karmen Loh shares the creative process of how she captures the essence of a female portrait illuminated by starlight

Artist PROFILE

Karmen Loh
LOCATION: Malaysia

Karmen is a freelance illustrator specialising in portraits. Her portraits have often been described as feminine, with fantasy and dreamy vibes. She's currently a teacher on Domestika. <https://ifxm.ag/k-loh>



This painting is an exclusive commission for the YouTube channel MrSuicideSheep.

I was very lucky to be given full freedom for the concept and draw anything that came to mind.

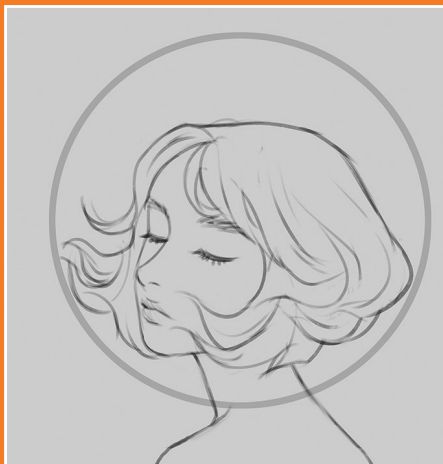
I decided to create a portrait inspired by one of my favourite animated films, *The Little Prince*. The story follows a little prince who travels to different planets, and includes themes of love, friendship and loss. The stars in the movie play an important role and symbolise the hopes and dreams of different people. There's a

scene in the movie where all the stars are trapped inside a big glass jar, which inspired this painting.

I knew I wanted the stars to be the main light source and light up the character from above. The character has a dreamy facial expression and her eyes are closed. I wanted her to look like she was dreaming, waiting for someone to break the glass, free the stars and wake her up. To enhance the concept, I applied a night sky background and floating hair to make it feel like she's in space, and the glass jar became a spacesuit helmet. ➔

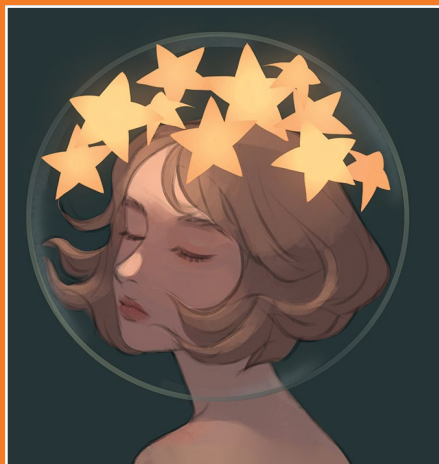
How I create...

STARLIGHT EFFECTS IN A PORTRAIT



1 Rough sketch

I start exploring quick ideas by doing some rough line sketches, focusing on getting the overall composition of the painting right. Because this is a portrait and the main focus is the face, it's important to capture an expression that manages to communicate the mood and feeling that I want to deliver.



2 Colours and lighting

Once I'm satisfied with the rough sketch, I start applying the colours and lighting. I add some stars on top to serve as the main light source and apply top-down lighting to the character. I also add some rough reflections on the glass jar, and apply a dark cool background to contrast with the bright and warm stars.



3 Render and polish

I proceed to render and polish my painting by refining details and smoothing the brush strokes. I add glow to the stars, refine the light and shadow of the character, and add some reddish tones around the eyes, cheeks and lips. For the background, I decide to apply some aurora colours to define the night sky and space.



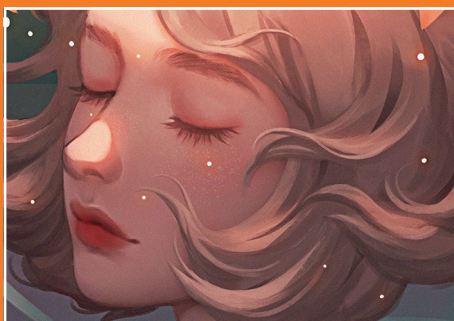
How I add...

DETAILS TO THE FACE



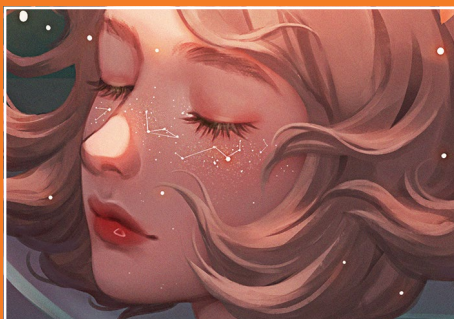
1 The final details

This is a portrait and the audience will focus on the face a lot, so I know I need to spend more time on that area. After rendering and polishing the rest of the artwork, it's time to work on the facial details.



2 Eyelashes and subsurface scattering

I paint in the eyelashes and focus on achieving a very soft and delicate look. The aim is to go for something natural and avoid heavy makeup. I also add some subsurface scattering around the lit skin areas.



3 Highlights and face pattern

Finally, I add some highlights on the eyelashes and lower lip, to give the portrait a 'juicy' look and make it more attractive to the viewer. To enhance the space/celestial concept, I decide to also add a small constellation pattern on the face.

LIGHTING INSIGHTS

Subsurface scattering

Subsurface scattering creates a bright and saturated colour transition between the light and shadow areas. I add some saturated orange and reddish colour around the lit parts of the nose, forehead and shoulder. I like to use a soft Round brush with an Overlay or Soft Light blend mode to create this effect.

Trapped stars


The stars are trapped inside of the glass jar and floating upwards, eager to be freed. To show that the stars are all floating towards the surface of the round glass jar, I paint them using different perspectives and directions. I also use different sizes to convey a sense of randomness.

Dust particles and small stars

To enhance the night sky and space feeling, I add some tiny white dots to act as floating dust particles and small stars. I place these randomly around the background and character, and apply blur to some of them to give a feeling of depth to the painting.

Floating hair


To make the character look as though she's in space, I make the hair look like it's floating, almost as if it were flowing underneath water. I add some thinner hair strands around the edges to make it look more hair-like. I use my custom Hair brush to create some of the hair texture.

 **RESOURCES**

**WORKSHOP
BRUSHES**


PHOTOSHOP

**CUSTOM BRUSHES:
SKETCH & RENDER**




A great brush with a nice texture, good for sketching and rendering.

HAIR



I like to use this brush to create hair textures.

CHALK



This brush is good for creating some rough and uneven textures.

Artist insight

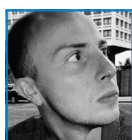
15 TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR DOODLES

Artist PROFILE

Gareth Davies
LOCATION: England

Gareth, also known as Spudonkey, is a senior concept artist working in-house for Coatsink. Other notable clients and projects include Into the Breach, Disney, Bad Robot, Bithell Games and Otherside Entertainment.

Creating doodles is the lifeblood of art, **Gareth Davies** reveals his top tips for getting the most from them



Growing up, I can't remember not having a pen or pencil in my hand and I was always encouraged to draw by my family. I would constantly doodle through school and moving into university, I learnt to solve problems through drawing, embracing the art principles that would help me to

develop these ideas further so others could understand them.

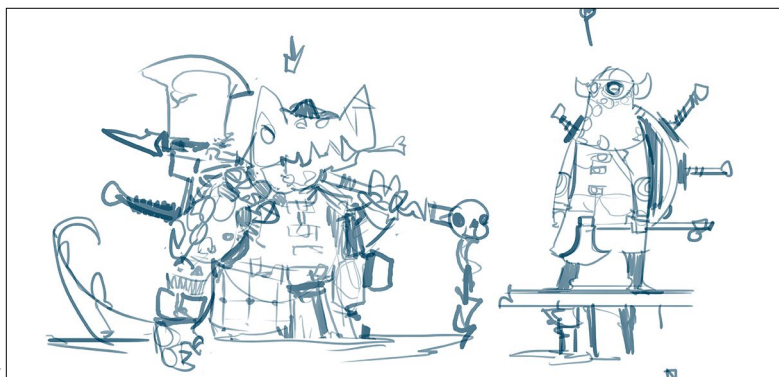
Now I have turned these little thumbnail ideas into big ones and fulfilled my dream of working as a concept artist for the video game and entertainment industry. I started as a 3D artist and kept pushing myself and experimenting until I was most useful as a concept artist.

I believe there's a certain meditative quality to doodling and you can get lost within finding that new idea – I think we could all do with a way to unwind after this year. Hopefully these tips and tricks will help you make the most from your own doodling, avoid the dreaded burnout and maybe you can achieve your own dreams, too.



1 ALWAYS CARRY A SKETCHBOOK

I have a ridiculous amount of sketchbooks – a different size and shape for any occasion. You never know when inspiration or time to sketch may present itself, so always be prepared! They don't have to be expensive, they just need to do the job of being able to take notes or marks. Experimenting with different pens and materials can also generate ideas, from happy accidents caused by a rogue mark, to having to work in a new way to adapt to a material.



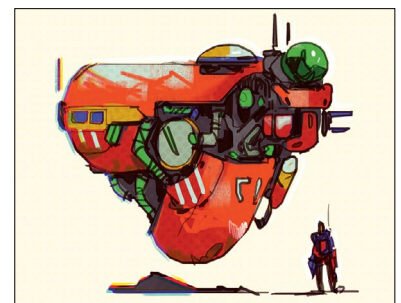
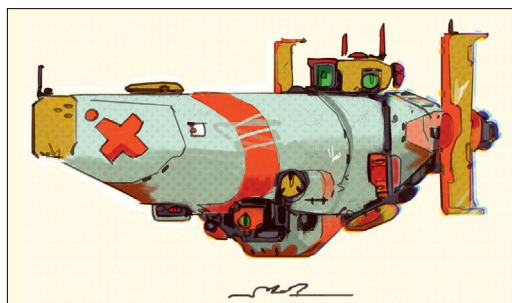
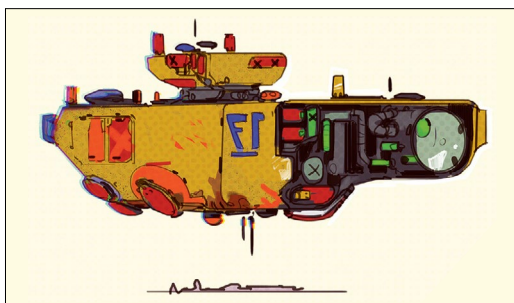
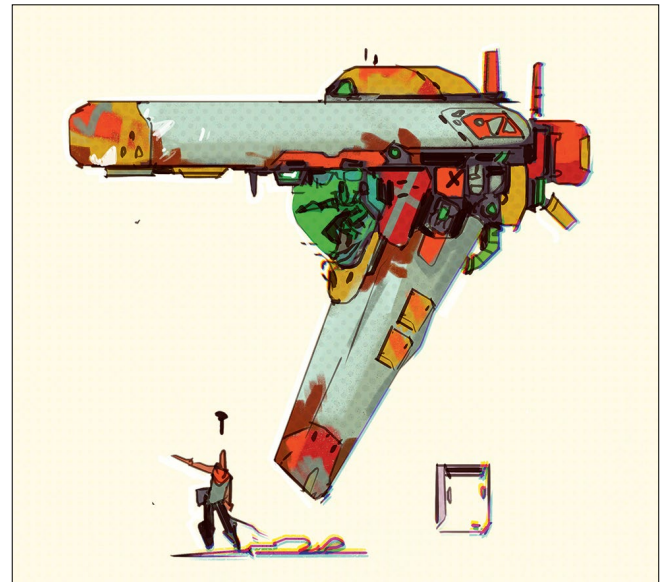
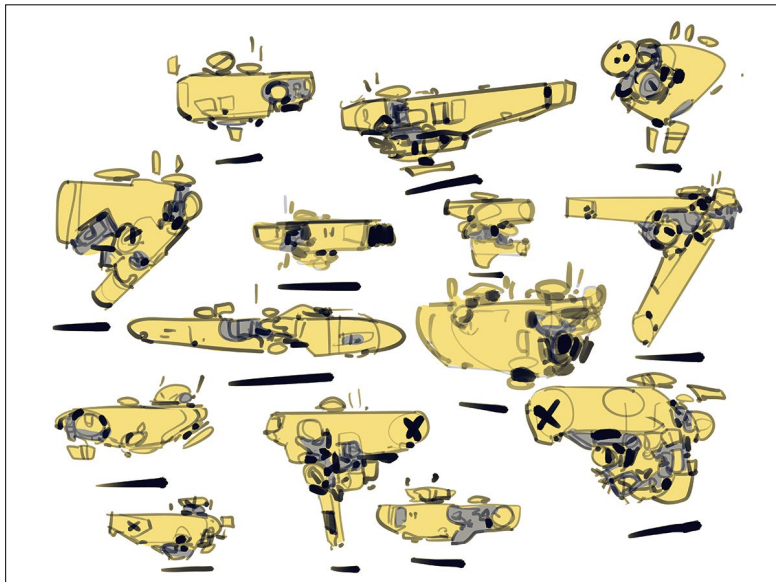
2 LOOSEN UP

Sketches are meant for you and not necessarily for others to see, so don't worry about if they're 'presentable'. As long as they serve you, that's the main purpose. If I go into a drawing thinking about how they'll be received then I instantly tighten up. You're trying to capture the broader idea of something as a whole. Draw from your shoulder using big, confident movements, and think about the larger shapes and flow of the sketch and idea.



3 DRAW IT AGAIN

Sometimes you strike gold and hit the best idea first time, but usually this isn't the case. I often draw the same thing over and over, playing with proportions and shape language to test ideas. This process helps build the knowledge of what you're drawing into your visual library and also helps you understand the mechanics of your subject.

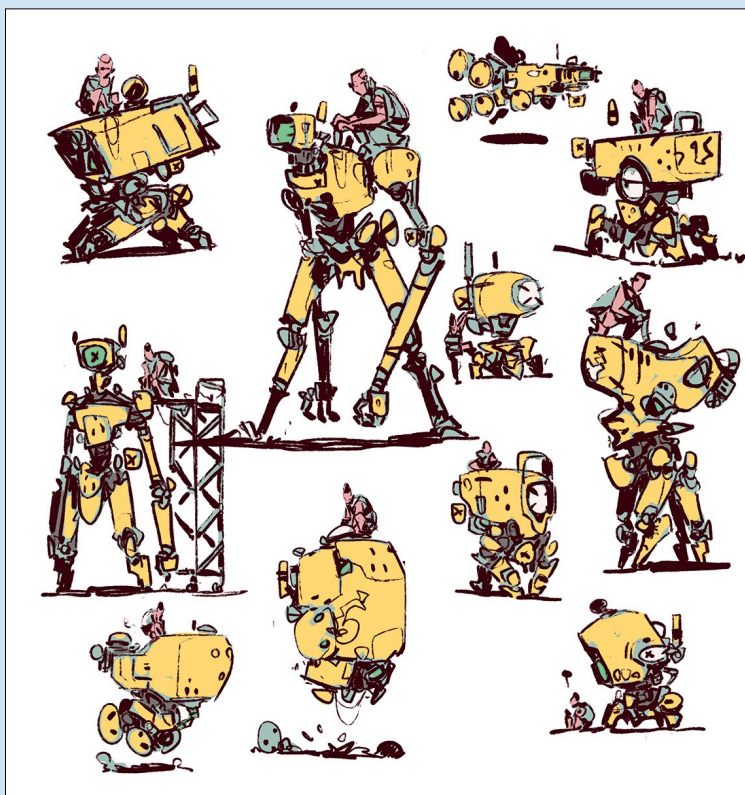
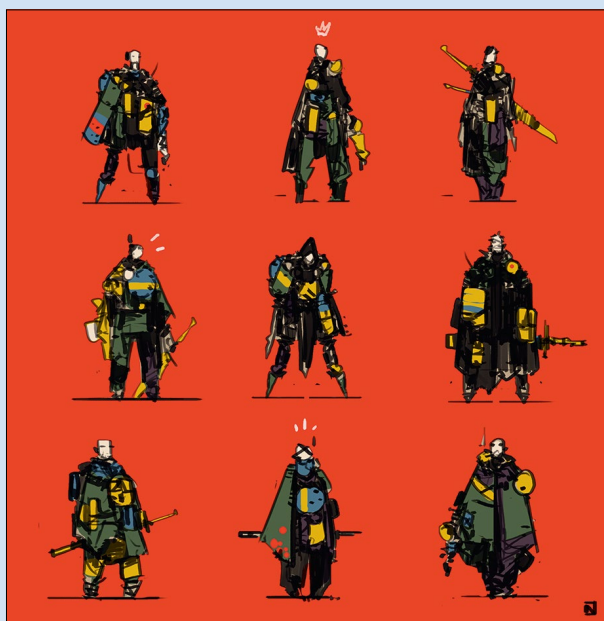


4 LOSE THE DETAIL AND STRENGTHEN SHAPE DESIGN

Always think about the bigger idea first. What's the principle behind what you're trying to achieve with your design? Detail can wait until the end. I love adding detail, especially graphic design to my spaceships and robots, but if the overall read is wrong then I'm wasting my time on fancy graphics. Make sure the silhouette and larger shape design is solid: you'll then have the foundation to build a final piece from. ➡

5 START WITH A SIMPLE PALETTE

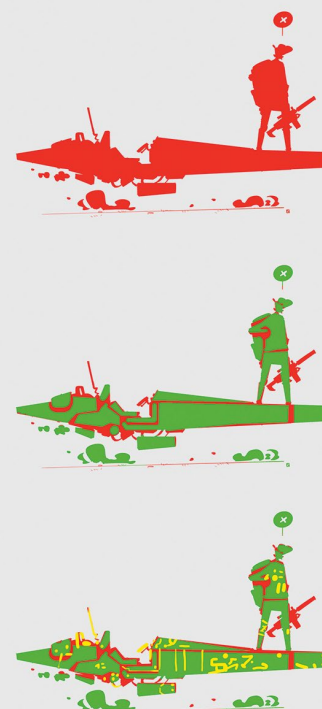
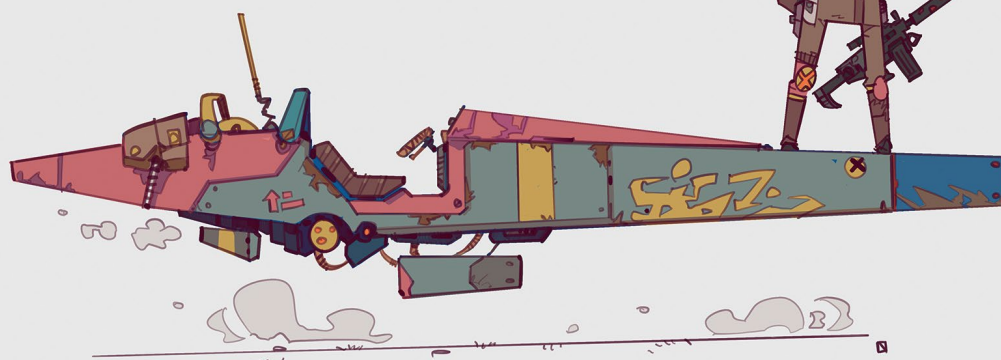
Shape, form and value should always come first. Colour is a deep pit to get lost in, so initially keep things simple. I generally work with three or four complementary colours to show the basic design. I also add pops of colour to highlight certain elements or create pattern. When working up a full piece, it's always a better plan to keep saturation low at the start, rather than having the whole piece shout at you.



“It's always a better plan to keep saturation low at the start, rather than having the whole piece shout at you”

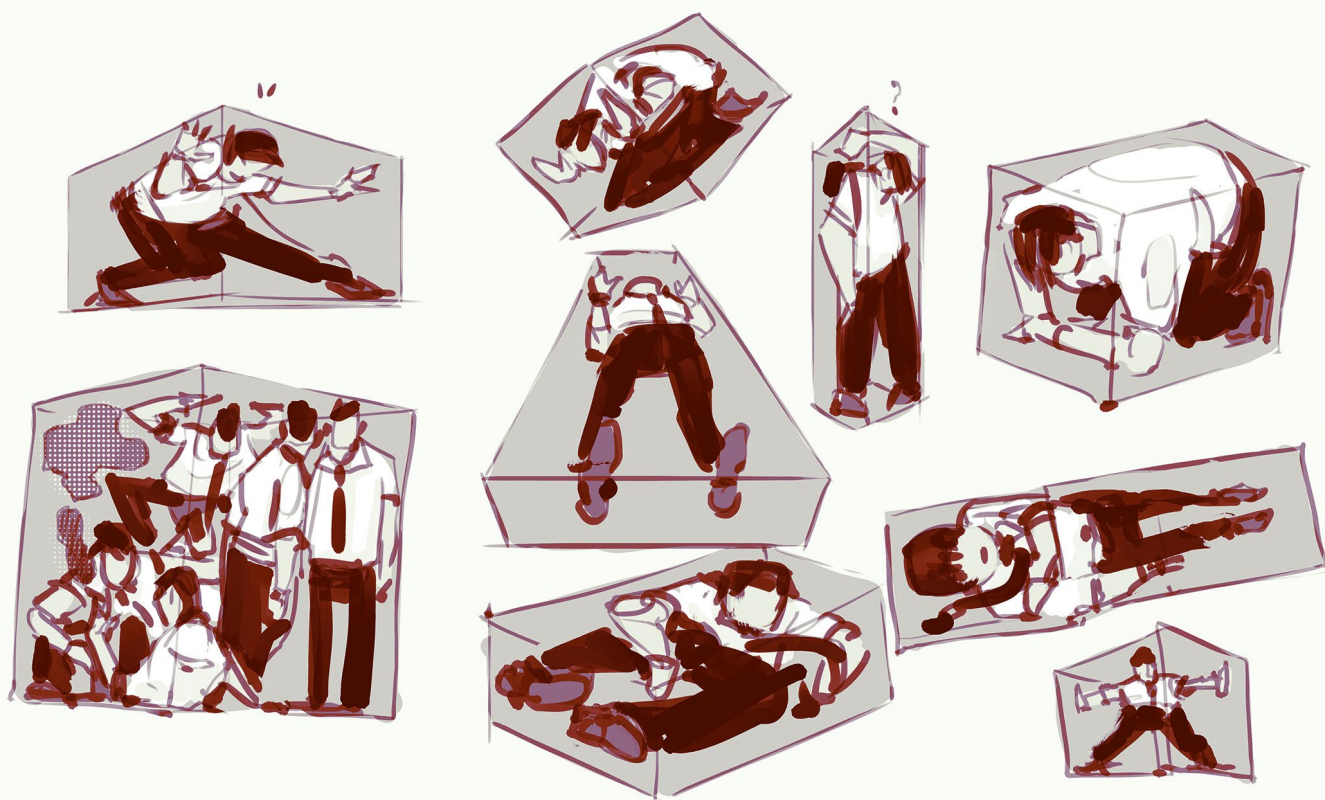
6 PRIMARY, SECONDARY, TERTIARY

One of the best tips I've ever been given is to have periods of rest and breathing space in your art. If everything is detail then there's no contrast and so the design becomes flat. The primary shapes are the pure expression of the form and are the first read. The secondary shapes should be distributed to break the silhouette up. Tertiary shapes come last and generally live within the silhouette of the shape. They should be clustered together in little pockets of interest for the eye and then bleed back into breathing space, before coming across the next patch.



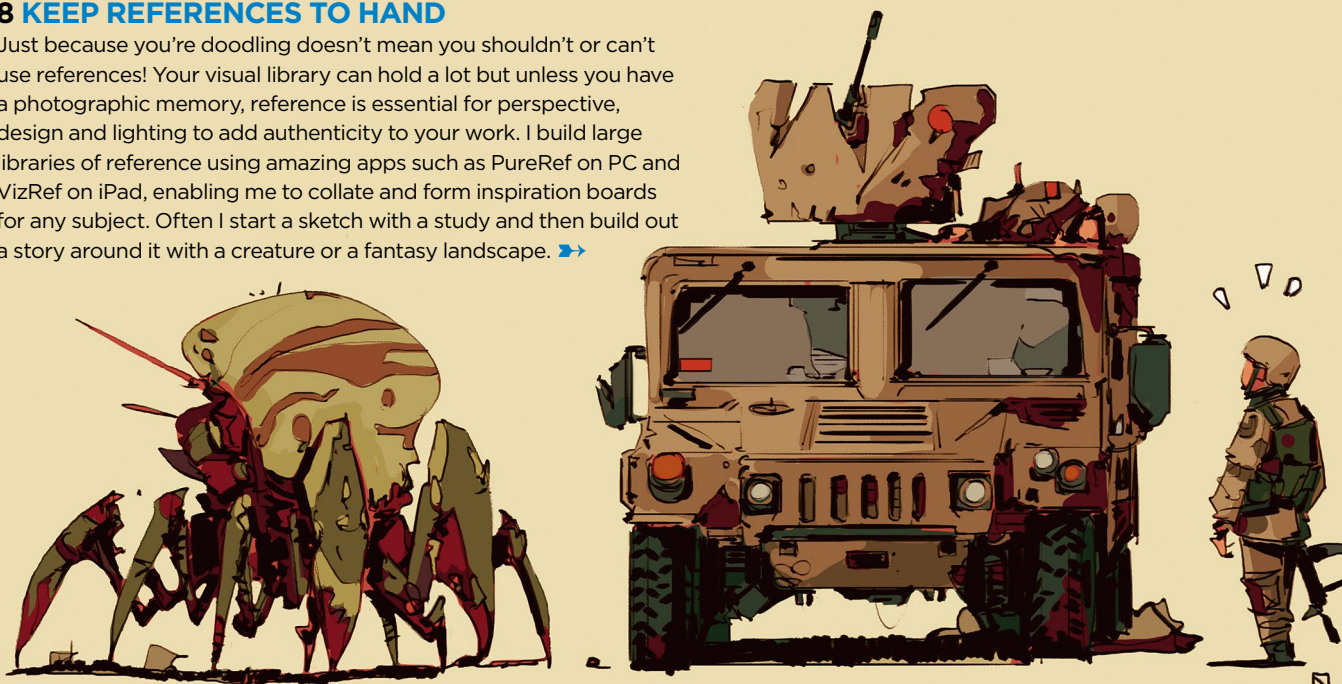
7 DON'T FORGET YOUR ART PRINCIPLES

Although sketches are meant to be rough and quick, please don't forget the foundations of art when designing. I always try to picture my drawing within boxes to help clarify the perspective for myself. I also imagine a single-point light and try to simplify the sketch by blocking in and designing the shadow shapes. If you're relatively new to drawing, take the time to draw a rough perspective grid. This is something I always used to do; however, over time I've had to use them less and less.



8 KEEP REFERENCES TO HAND

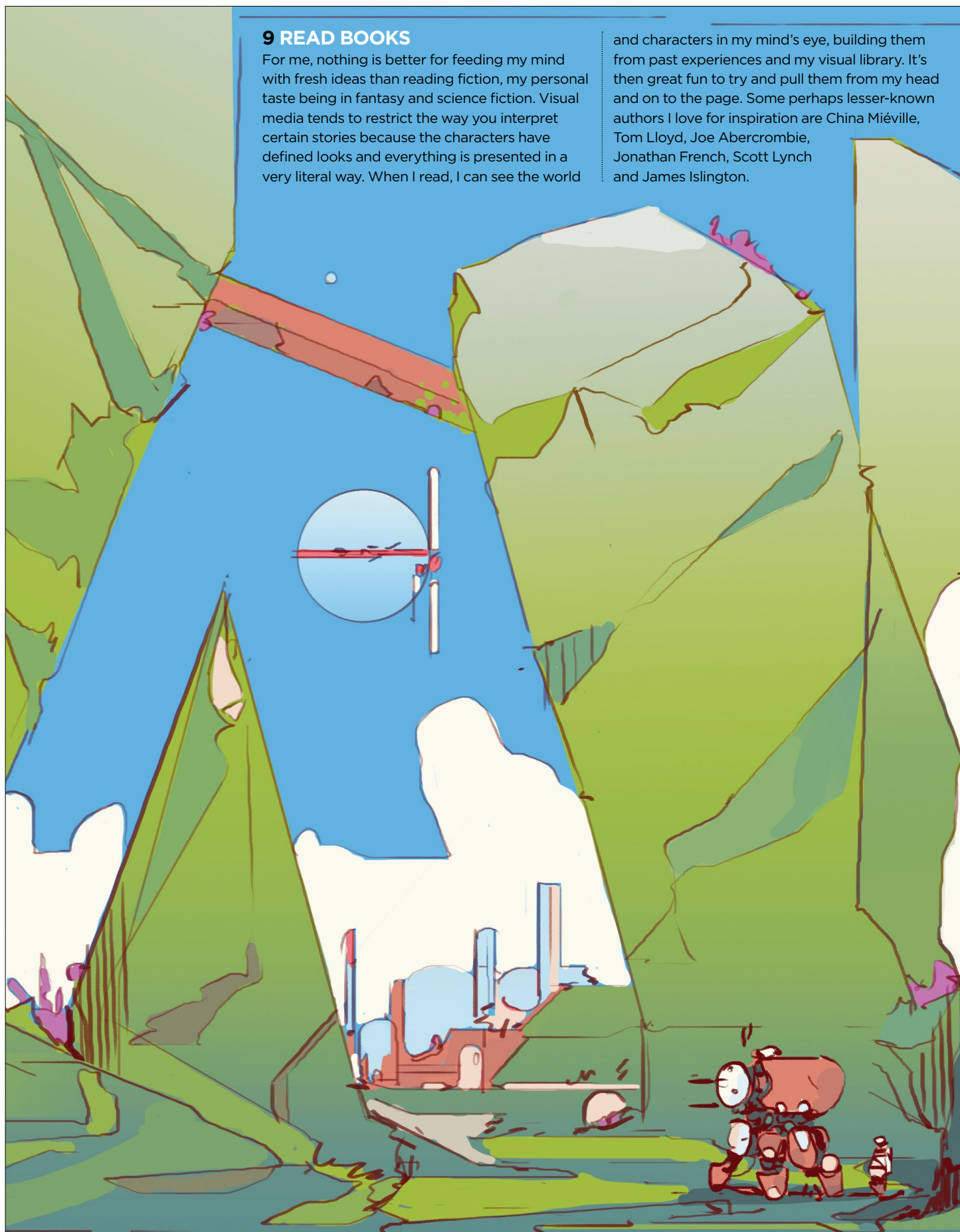
Just because you're doodling doesn't mean you shouldn't or can't use references! Your visual library can hold a lot but unless you have a photographic memory, reference is essential for perspective, design and lighting to add authenticity to your work. I build large libraries of reference using amazing apps such as PureRef on PC and VizRef on iPad, enabling me to collate and form inspiration boards for any subject. Often I start a sketch with a study and then build out a story around it with a creature or a fantasy landscape. ➡➡



9 READ BOOKS

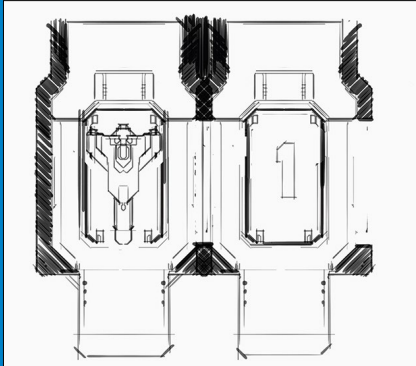
For me, nothing is better for feeding my mind with fresh ideas than reading fiction, my personal taste being in fantasy and science fiction. Visual media tends to restrict the way you interpret certain stories because the characters have defined looks and everything is presented in a very literal way. When I read, I can see the world

and characters in my mind's eye, building them from past experiences and my visual library. It's then great fun to try and pull them from my head and on to the page. Some perhaps lesser-known authors I love for inspiration are China Miéville, Tom Lloyd, Joe Abercrombie, Jonathan French, Scott Lynch and James Islington.



10 USE 3D TO FLESH OUT A DESIGN

Take a sketch from a simple 2D idea to a fully realised 3D concept



A Begin with a plan

I start by planning what I want to design. I draw out rough sketches of the 'final' scene and iterate upon it with different ideas. I then use my architectural background to create rough plans of the space and a blueprint to work from in 3D.



B Rough 3D

I move to Blender and build a basic blockout of the space, often recycling elements from different projects to save time. I then do a quick lighting pass to set up the tone that I was trying to achieve in my initial sketching phase.



C Apply the final touches

I now move to Photoshop and add hand-drawn line-work. I like to do this because it adds looseness and a more organic feel that sometimes becomes lost in 3D. Finally, I work into the basic colour pass, adding local colour and material detail to the scene, in addition to wear and tear and graphic detail until I feel the scene is where I want it to be. ➤➤



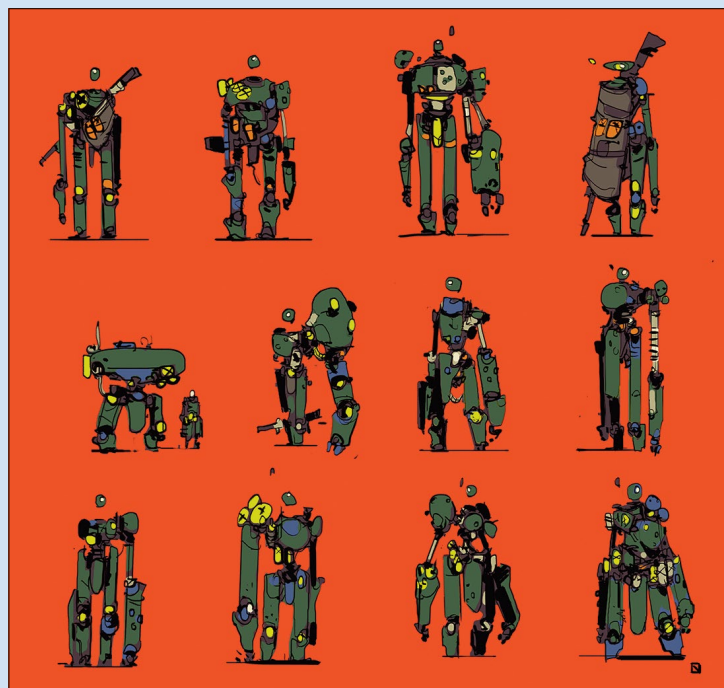
11 TURN OFF THE MUSIC

Sometimes I need to switch everything off and get lost in the drawing. I must admit, I'm often guilty of drawing with music on or in front of the TV, and not really engaging. I then find that most times I go back to topics I'm comfortable with and rarely come up with something new. When taking on a new subject, I make the effort to turn everything off and talk myself through what I'm doing. What am I drawing, how does it work, why does it look like this? It's all about making conscious decisions and convincing yourself that you 'invented' your solution. Thus your brain is more likely to hang on to the information and you get to add a new tool to your drawing arsenal.



12 FAN ART

If you're stuck in an art funk, fan art and playing with existing IPs is a great way to revitalise yourself. An exercise I love to do is take an existing character, reinterpret their design and then use gestural reference to put them into fun poses and explore how their design works. This takes the pressure off myself as the key design decisions have been made and I can just relax and have fun.



13 RECYCLE SHAPES

When creating thumbnails digitally, I save a lot of time by recycling shape language that I think works or sparks an interest in me. When I find a combination I like, I'll duplicate it and see how I can reinterpret and use this to spawn new shapes and designs. This often gives a consistency to the ideas, because they start from the same building blocks and so form and share a similar shape language.

“A great way to challenge yourself on the understanding of a design is by taking it into a new medium”



14 FIND THE STORY

When drawing for myself, I don't start with a story in mind, but one is often born within the process. I may start to design something that then sparks a daisy chain of ideas and thus a narrative is born. It might be as simple as a robot missing an arm and then trying to explain how that came to be, either with other battle wounds or rust if it has been neglected. It's a challenge to express something so complex in just one illustration, but a fun one.

15 CHALLENGE YOURSELF BY WORKING WITH NEW MEDIUMS

A great way to challenge yourself on the understanding of a design is by taking it into a new medium. I love to experiment with new tools and always love the challenge of 3D. With 2D, there's quite a bit of room to hide but in 3D, designs have to work in real space, even if you can cheat things a little for fixed camera angles. Blender has great free modelling and sculpting tools and I love challenging myself to try and reinterpret one of my designs in 3D. I certainly appreciate what I put the 3D artists through when I design a character! ●

Next month

Kick-start your
children's book
illustration skills
with help from
Tony DiTerlizzi!



Next month

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

It's our book illustration issue!

Break into this competitive industry with
winning tips and advice from professional artists



All this... and more!

Tony DiTerlizzi's top art advice

The world-famous
artist gives 15 key
tips on children's
book illustration.

Greg Ruth on book cover art

The illustrator
explains his wild
experiments for a
book commission.

Get into book illustration!

Leading lights in
illustration share
how to turn your
passion into pay.

A masterclass in colour

Vis-dev artist
Angela Sung
reveals her colour
theory advice.

ISSUE 198 ON SALE FRIDAY 19 FEB IN PRINT & DIGITAL



Photoshop

CREATE ART THAT TELLS A STORY

Chrystin Garland explains how to use colour, composition and detail when you want to develop a narrative within your artwork



The initial concept for this painting was to recreate a scene from the Seven Swans or Seven Ravens Grimm's fairy tale. The basic story is about a young maiden who goes on a quest to free her seven brothers from their cursed bird forms.

At first, I planned to paint a scene of the brothers swooping in to save their younger sister from being burned at the stake. However, as I began thumbnailing, it became clear that the painting was going in a different direction. So, I switched the birds out for winged humans, and thought it would strike a more caring tone if the brothers were helping their sister to fly for the first time. I began to think of my own family, and how supportive they are for little or big accomplishments in my own life.

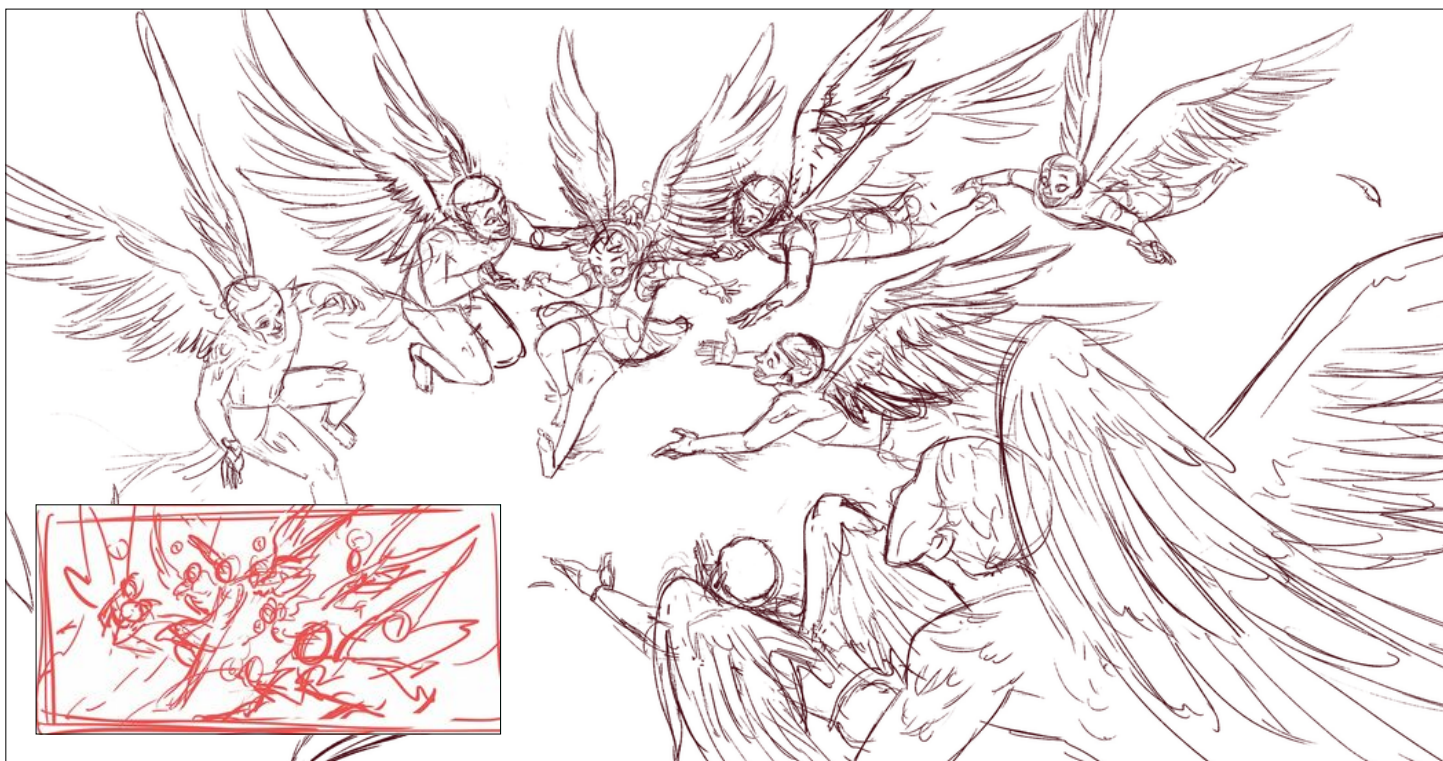
Whenever I paint, I try to make up stories like this, because it helps inform a specific emotion that I'd like to capture. It's my goal to convey as much as possible with a single image, and I hope that comes across. ➔

Artist PROFILE

**Chrystin
Garland**

LOCATION: US

Chrystin is a visual development artist from Los Angeles, California. In the past, she's worked on animated television series such as *The Midnight Gospel*, *She-Ra* and the *Princesses of Power*, in addition to the Emmy award-winning *Niko and the Sword of Light*.
www.ladygarland.com



1 Thumbnailing and sketching

With an idea in mind, I create a series of thumbnails to nail down the initial composition. I work fairly small and loose at this stage, the goal being to experiment and try ideas that might otherwise feel intimidating. Once I have a thumbnail that I like, I scale the image to the proper canvas size and begin creating a more detailed sketch. I usually paint over my line drawings, so I keep this line-art fairly loose.



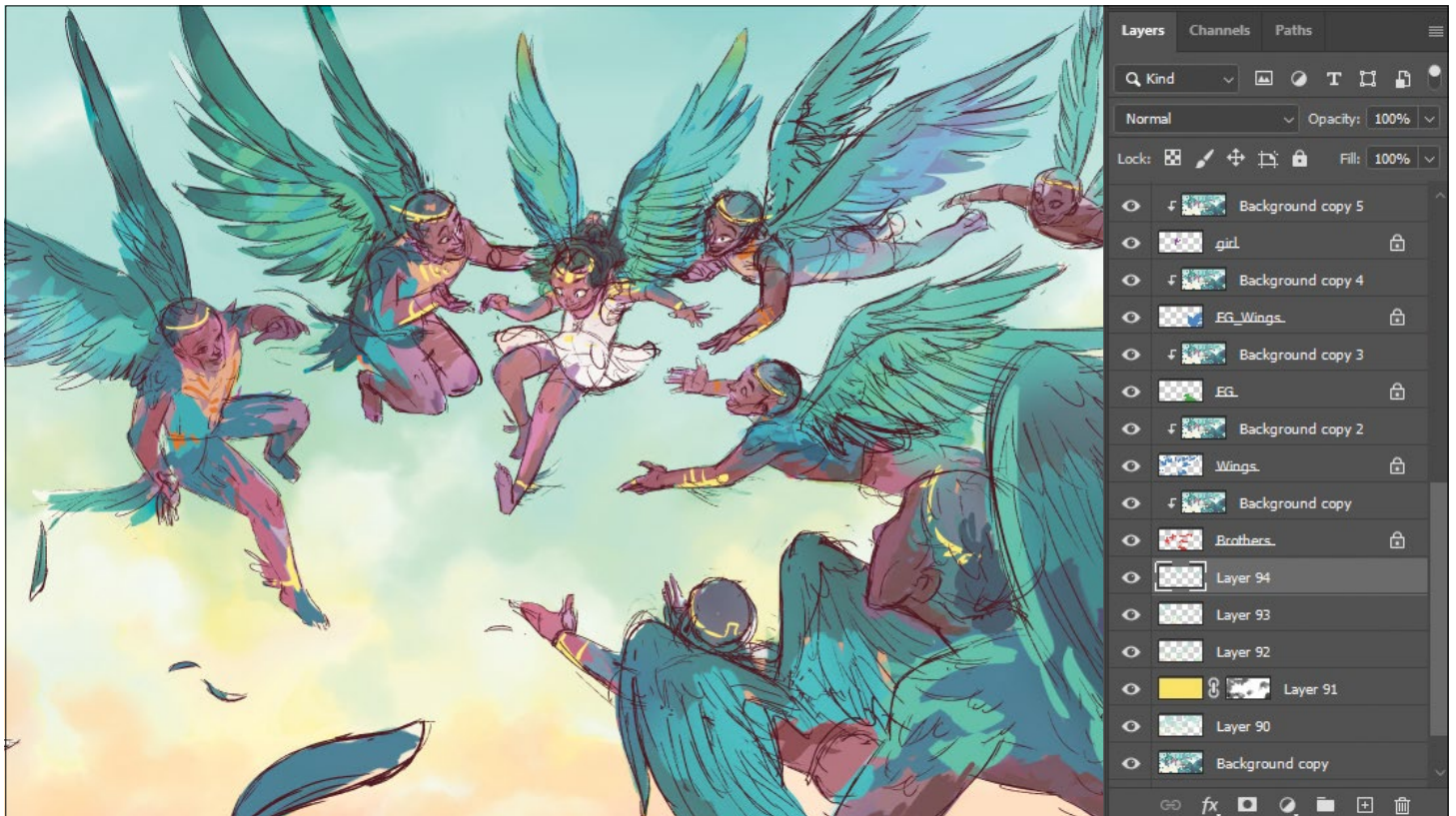
2 Experiment with different lighting and colour passes

I'm a bit impatient when it comes to painting, wanting to jump in to rendering as quickly as possible. To combat this, I create quick colour passes underneath the line art. This enables me to experiment with different colour schemes or lighting while staying loose so that changes can be made quickly. I hope to achieve an overall feel for what the final painting could be, yet still leave room for edits later in the process.



3 Use transparency layers to separate the elements

Now that I have a pretty clear direction of where the painting is headed, it's time to flat! I usually try to break up the major elements in my paintings into foreground, middle ground, and background layers. By keeping each shape on its own locked transparency layer, I can lay down colours quickly without worrying about the initial shape becoming lost.



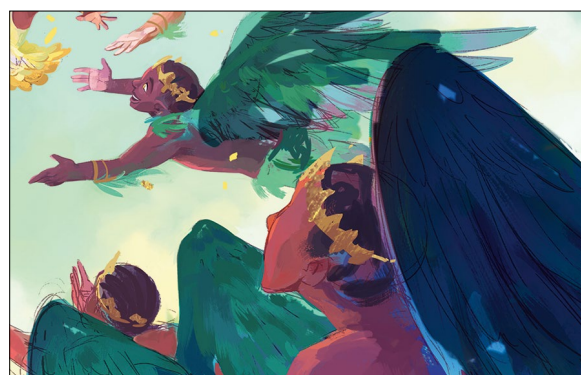
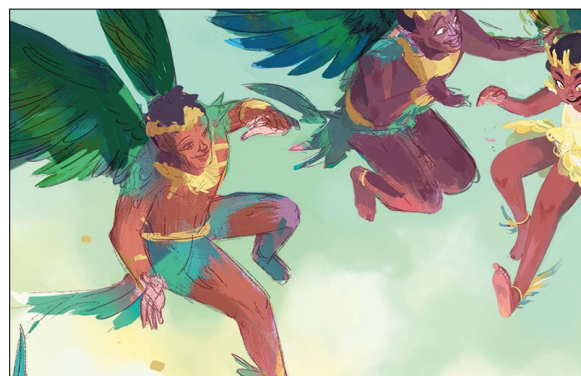
4 Preserve the spontaneity of my earlier colour roughs

Once the flats are completed, I add my colour pass directly to the flattened layers. This is accomplished quickly by utilising clipping masks for each individual layer. This way, I can preserve the spontaneity of my colour roughs as well as maintain clean shapes for each key element. ➡➡



5 Refine the palette

Where the first colour pass was a basic idea, here I'm focusing on tying down the main colours and making sure there's enough contrast between the foreground, middle ground and background. It's important to me that the characters have a little more individuality, so I make sure to add more variation to the skin, hairstyles and jewellery. The teal wings feel a little light to me, so I use a blue layer set to the Multiply blend mode to make them seem more lush. Finally, I bump up the saturation of each character, because the previous colour pass was looking too washed-out for my taste.



6 Render the details

Now we're getting to the fun part! In earlier stages, I work at 25 or 50 per cent zoom to keep things fast and loose. Once the major elements are in a good place, I feel confident zooming in a bit more to really flesh out each character. During this stage, I'll render on top of my line-art, adding or removing elements as I see fit. For example, here I rough out some golden crowns as well as golden coins falling from the sky, because I want to drive home the fact that this is a royal family.

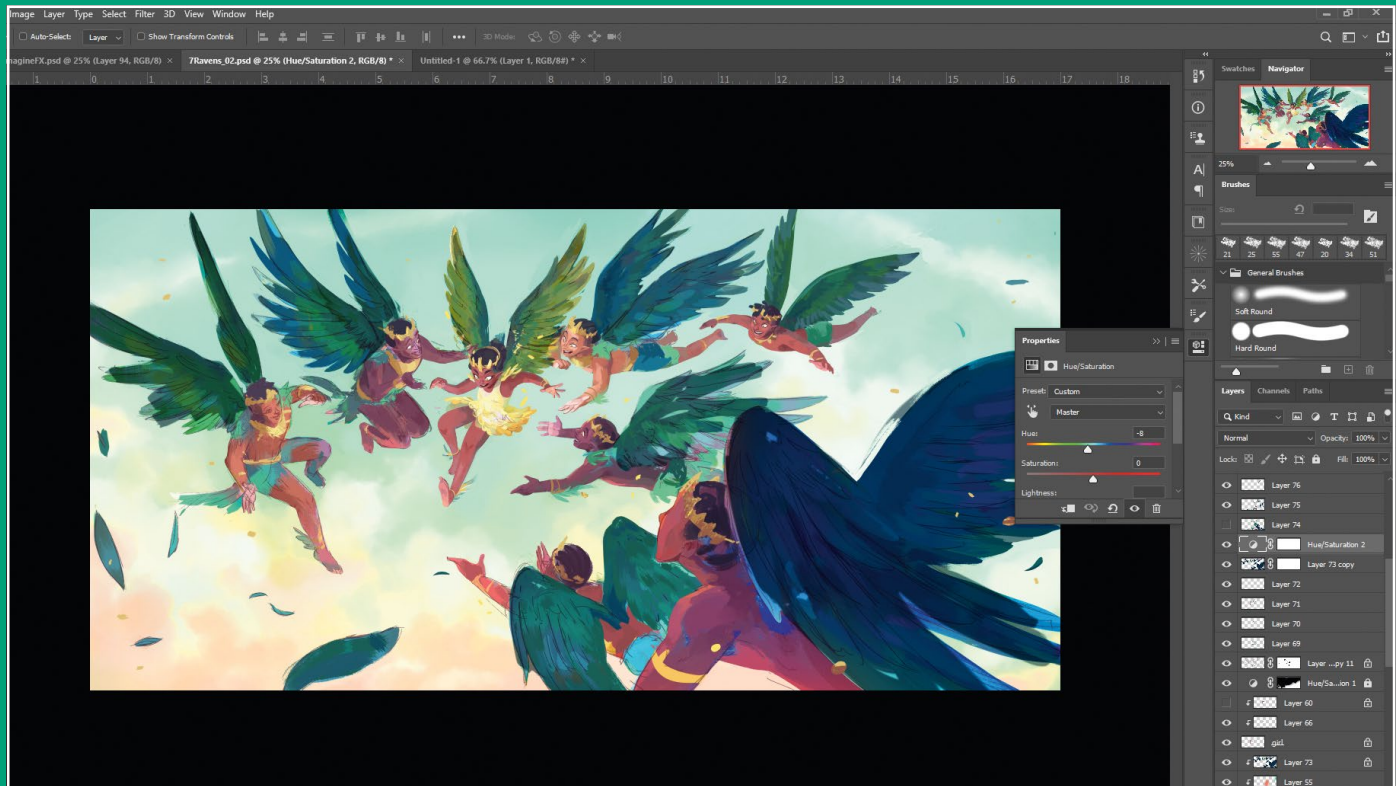


7 Applying my finishing touches

With the majority of the painting rendered, I go in and add some details that I think will improve the piece. I knock back some of the wings with a soft, Round brush which helps to add more depth to the scene. I also use a speckled brush to make the air feel more magical. At this point, I'm thinking that the young girl's first flight out is something akin to a rite of passage, an incredibly festive event! Adding more gold flecks to the composition makes the entire piece feel more celebratory.

How I convey...

A STORY USING PAINTING TECHNIQUES



A Paint with intention

While not every piece needs to be an elaborate epic, I find it helpful to imagine some sort of backstory when I'm painting. What are the characters feeling in this particular moment? Are they motivated by anything that can be seen on canvas? If a landscape, what's the history behind that particular field or building? Asking and answering these questions can really inform the tone of a particular piece.



B Communicate with composition

Don't be afraid to utilise space to inform a story. Because the princess is the main focal point, I make all of the other elements in this piece point her way, while also leading the eye throughout the painting in a semi-circle. The space below her is notably blank, giving our heroine somewhere to 'travel' on the page.



C Colour schemes in storytelling

Colour is just as important as any other element when it comes to storytelling. I want this piece to feel more fantastical than angelic, so I opt for jewel tones over shades of white and creams. I also feel that the teals and jade pair nicely with the gold, emphasising the 'royal' backstory. Varying hues can help a piece appear more lush and vibrant. Once I drop my rough colour pass, I use the Color Picker tool, shifting the hues on my brush to add more interest to a particular surface.



Photoshop PAINT ART USING EVERYDAY OBJECTS

Artist **space gooose** reveals how to banish creative block by using an item from his tool box as the foundation for some intergalactic art

Artist PROFILE

space gooose
LOCATION: US

Eric Geusz, who's known online as space gooose, is an artist, software engineer and science-fiction nerd from New Mexico, now living in California's Bay Area. www.ericgeusz.com



It's easy to get stuck in an artistic rut. It happens to me all the time! The blank page can be intimidating, and even scary. You can get lost out there in the void, just like the emptiness of space. Sometimes all you need is something to grab on to, something familiar yet unexpected, to help get you orientated and moving in the right direction.

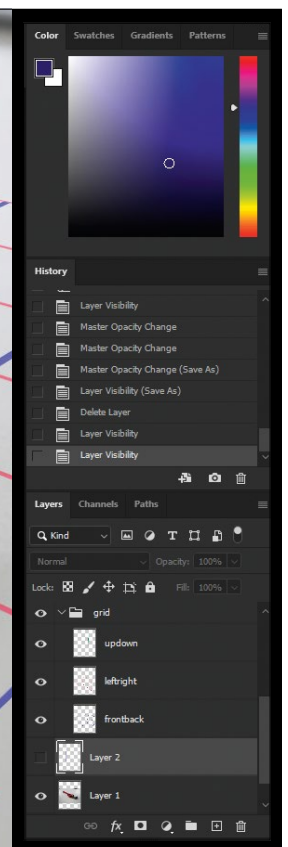
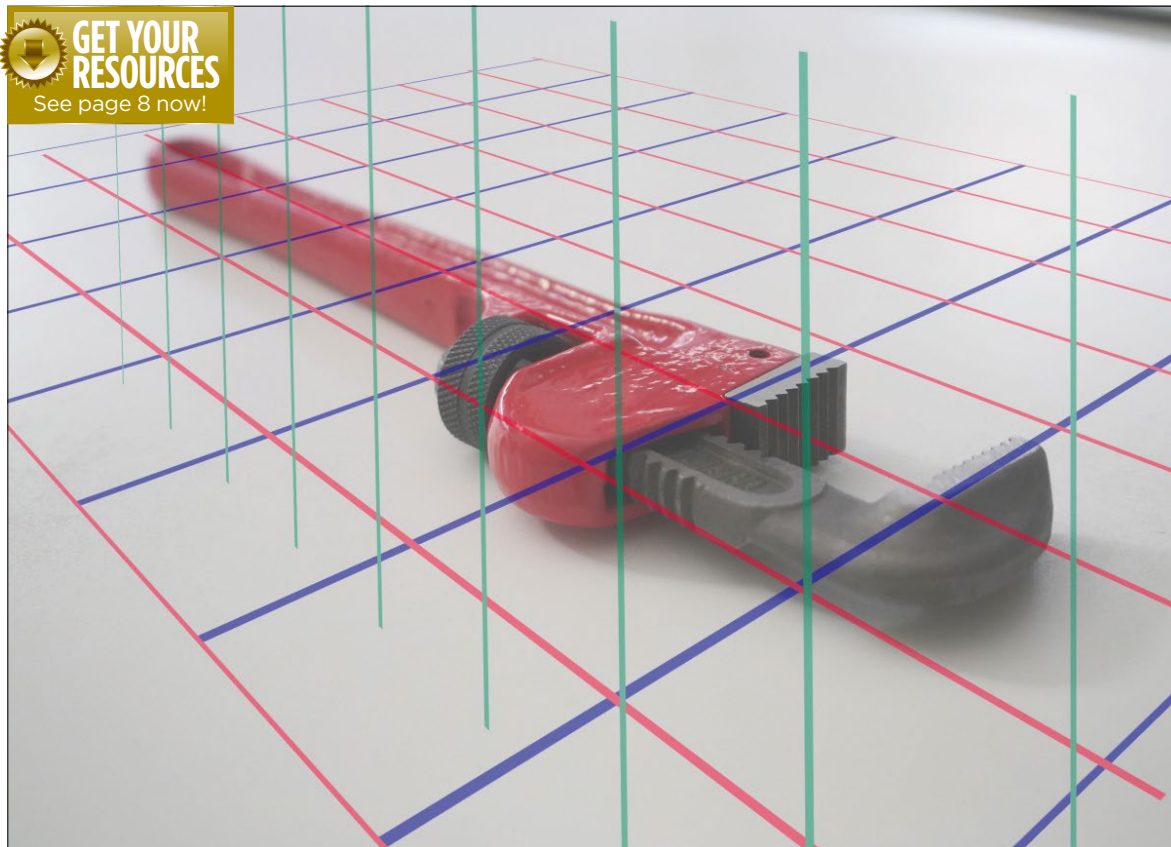
In this workshop I'll show you how to banish creative block by making something cool out of something ordinary. I'm going to take a boring object and transform it into an epic spaceship fit for a space opera. The great thing about spaceships is that they can look like anything: a stapler, a bag clip, a pencil... even one of your shoes!

For this project I'm starting with a sturdy pipe wrench. When designing

space craft, I ask myself questions like, "How big is it? Where is the bridge? How is it powered? Does it have engines and/or thrusters?"

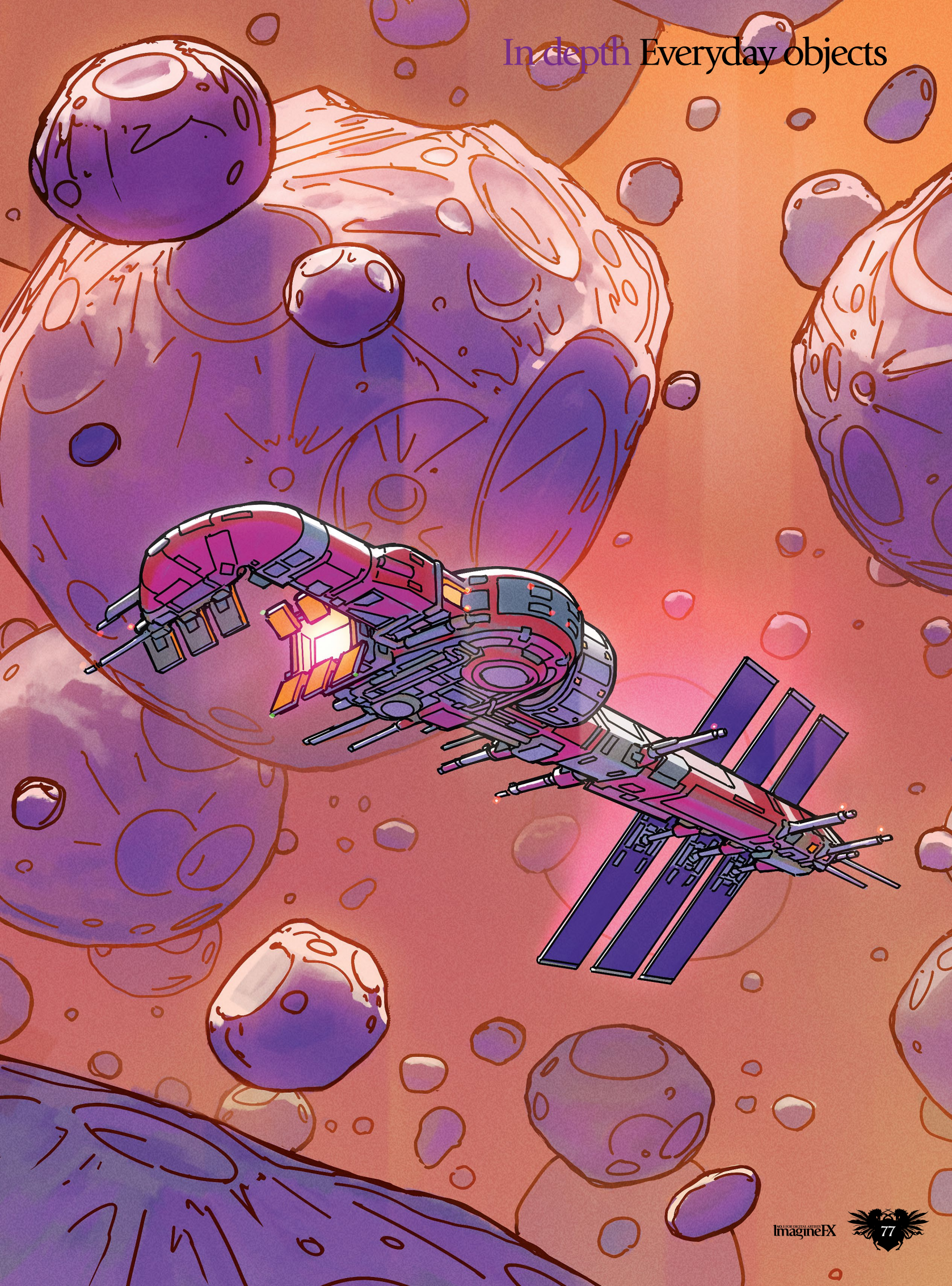
Once I've found an object, I take pictures of it from all angles, trying to find an interesting viewpoint that also shows off its silhouette. In terms of this pipe wrench, I like the way its jaws open to look like a docking port, inspiring me to transform it into a space station. Here's how I do it.

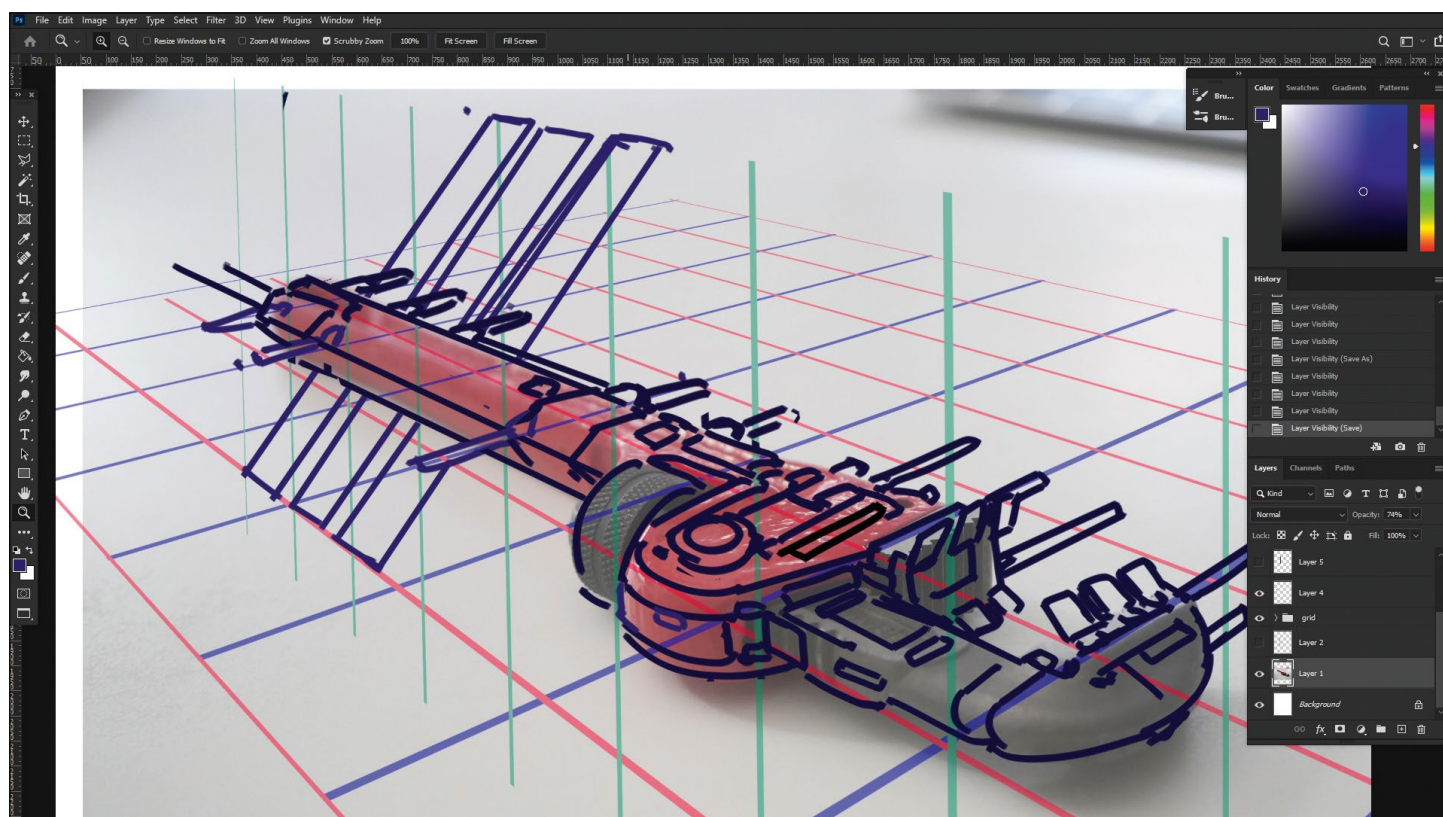
**GET YOUR
RESOURCES**
See page 8 now!



1 Set up a perspective grid

Before starting to sketch, I create a perspective grid to help lay everything out. First I create a selection of vertical lines that are spaced evenly, using the Rectangle Selection tool and Stroke (Edit>Stroke) Then, using the Free Transform tool – keyboard shortcut Cmd+T (Mac) or Ctrl+T (PC) – I skew the layer so the lines match the object's perspective in the photo. I do this for each of the three directions. ➡





2 Lay down a rough sketch

On a new layer, I rough out what the spaceship will look like. I let the perspective grid guide my strokes so they stay accurate to the perspective of the object. It's good to break up the silhouette by adding details such as solar panels, antennas, sensor array systems, docking clamps and radio dishes. This process is very loose and I might do it several times until I'm happy with the result.

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES:
LINE

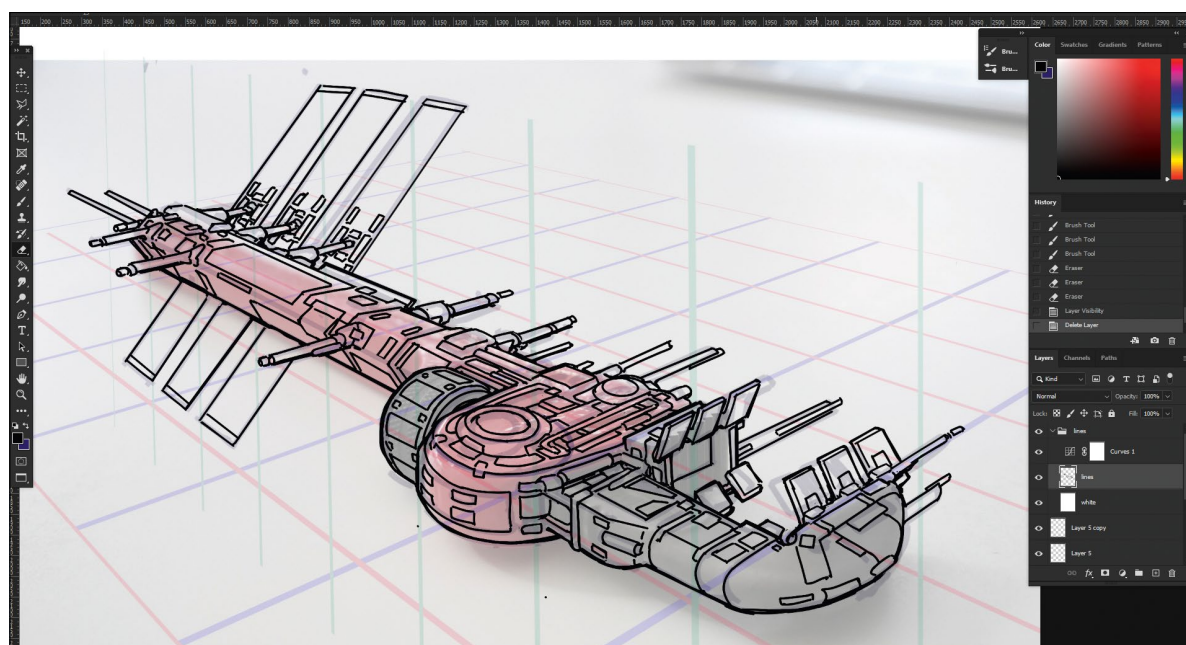
A simple brush for drawing lines, whether for sketch or detail.

PAINT

A textured brush that makes light work of filling in colour.

SOFT

A soft Round brush to take care of any blending you need to do.

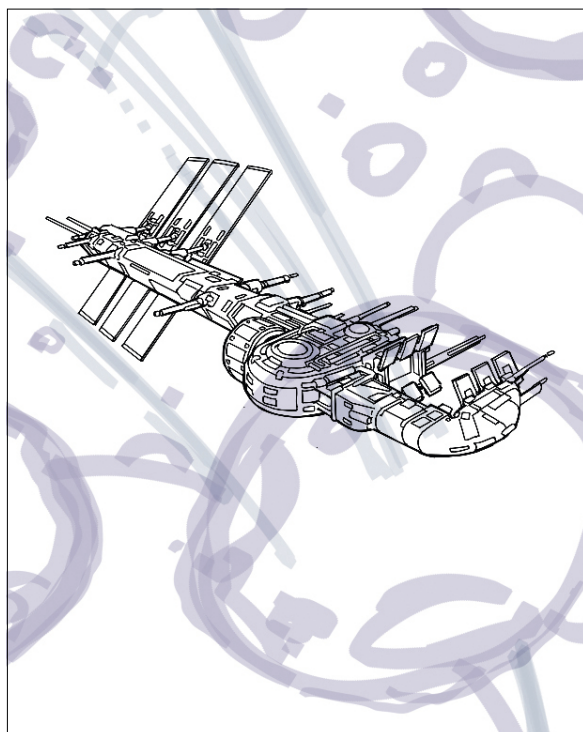


3 Tidy the sketch

I create a new layer group above the sketch, with the blend mode set to Multiply. In the group I add two new layers: a solid white base layer and a new layer for the lines, with a Curves adjustment layer above. This enables me to control the relative contrast and darkness of the lines. Using a fine brush, I draw in the lines, adding small

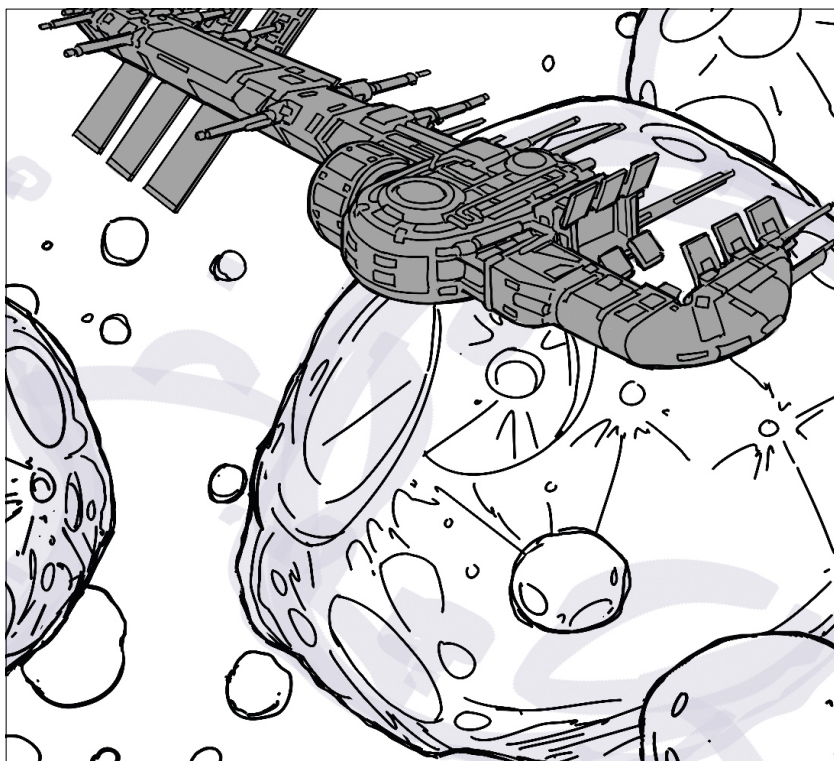
details and cleaning up the sketch as I go, still using the perspective grid to make sure my lines are correct.

I like to vary the detail across the ship, creating areas with high-density gadgets and pipes, and other areas with just smooth panels. It's also crucial to vary line thickness, using thicker lines to indicate depth, such as the edge of the ship or places of self-occlusion (overlapping areas).



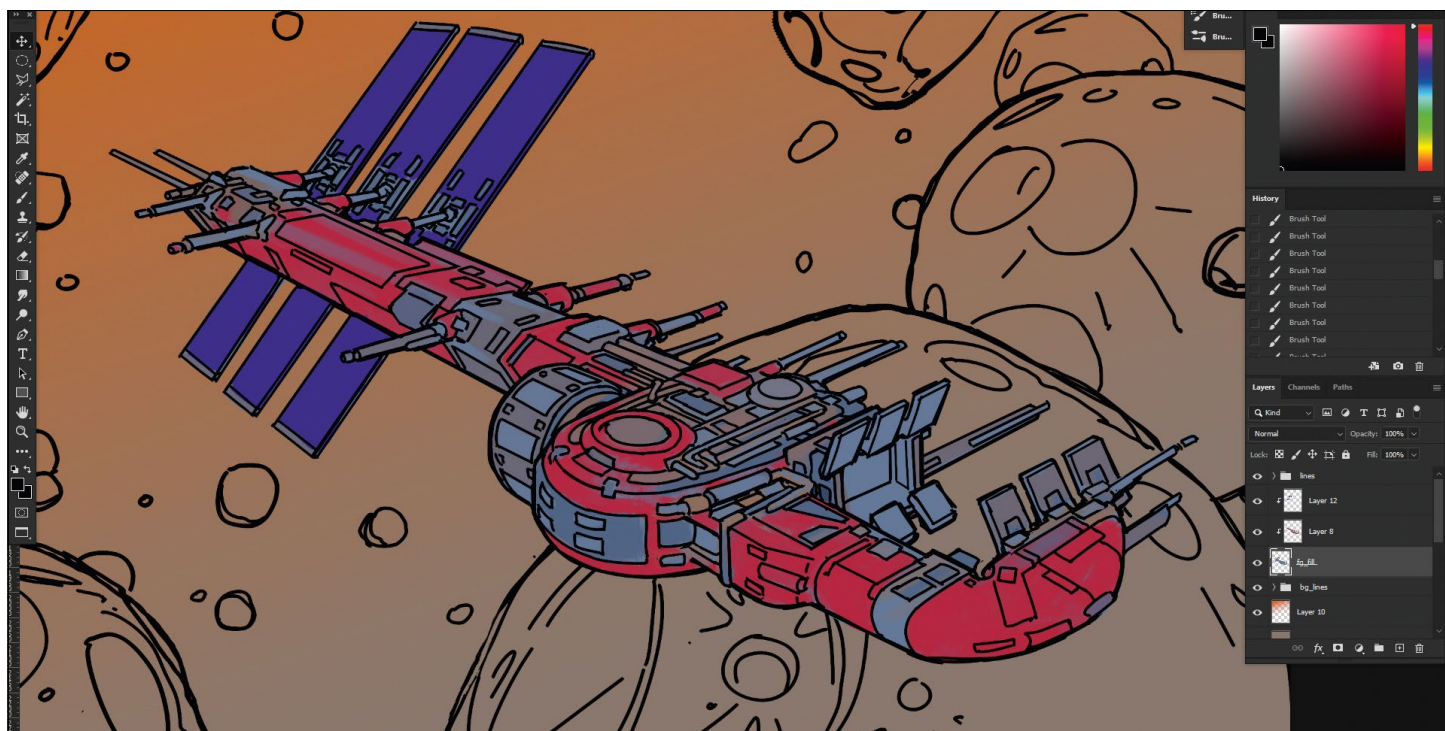
4 Sketch in the background

It's now time for me to decide what kind of environment the spaceship should be in. Planets, nebulae and star fields are all good options. I'm going for a dense asteroid field – maybe this is a space station mining outpost. I sketch asteroids using a medium brush set to a low Opacity on a new layer below the foreground lines.



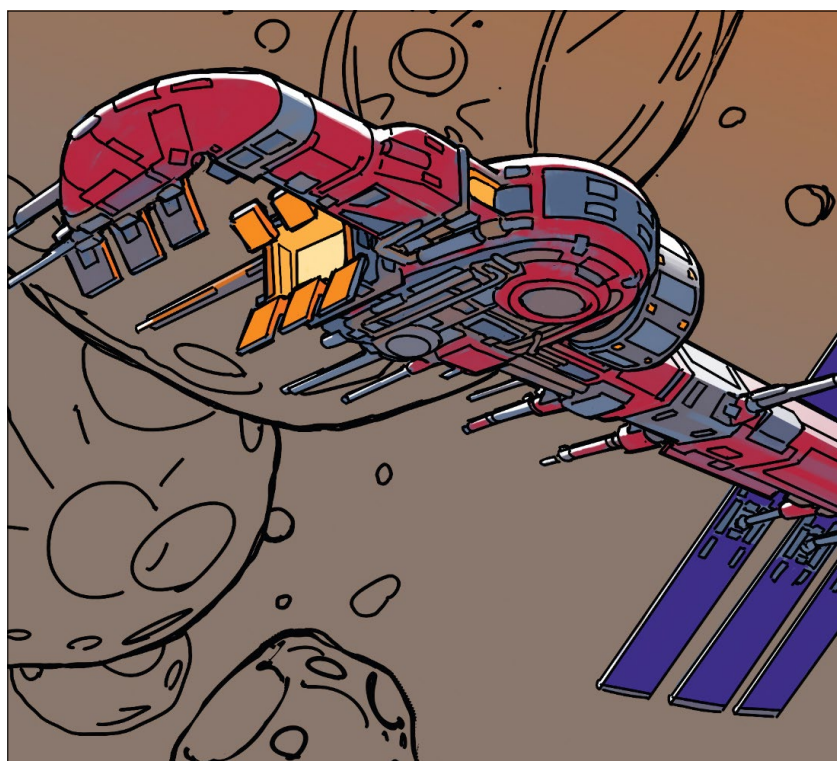
5 Tighten the background lines

In the same way as the foreground lines, I draw in the asteroids over the sketch, keeping in mind that the closer asteroids should have more detail and the distant ones can be just outlined silhouettes. Edge lines and overlapping lines are darker to help indicate separation. In addition, I'll refine the composition more here, and move things around if I need to.



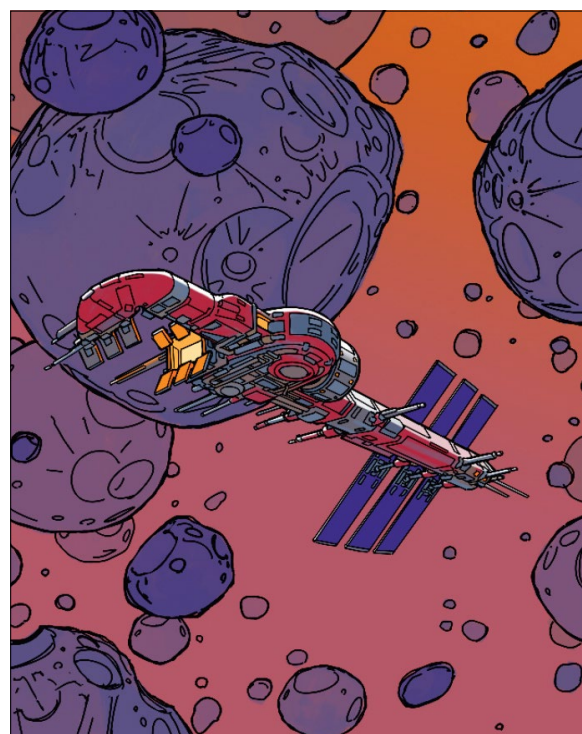
6 Introduce foreground colours

I create a new layer for the base colour of the spaceship, and with a medium brush fill in the lines using a desaturated blue/grey. I add new layers above the base colour for paint, metals and rust colours. I set these layers as Clipping Masks of the base layer. I do this by Alt+clicking the base colour layer to set a Clipping Mask. This keeps the colour layers clipped to the silhouette of the ship. ➡



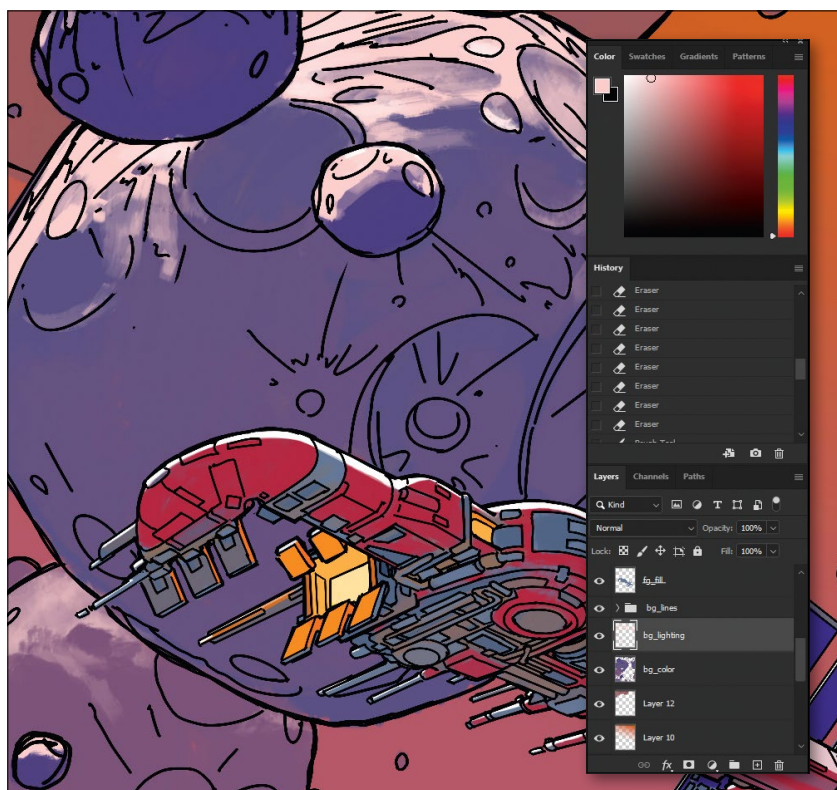
7 Indicate a light source

I decide to rotate the canvas 180 degrees, to make the view more dramatic as seen from below. On a new layer I add a white rim light along the top edge of the ship to indicate a light shining directly down.



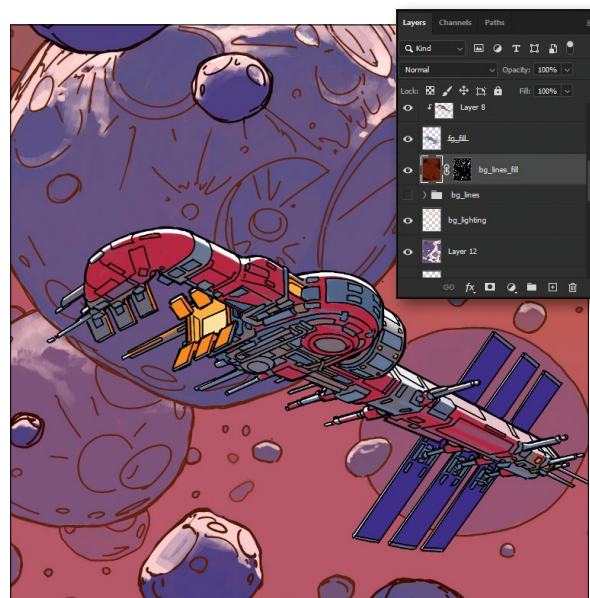
8 Apply background colours

I colour the background asteroids in a similar way to the foreground. I also blend in some of the hue of the background gradient into the distant asteroids to add more visual depth.



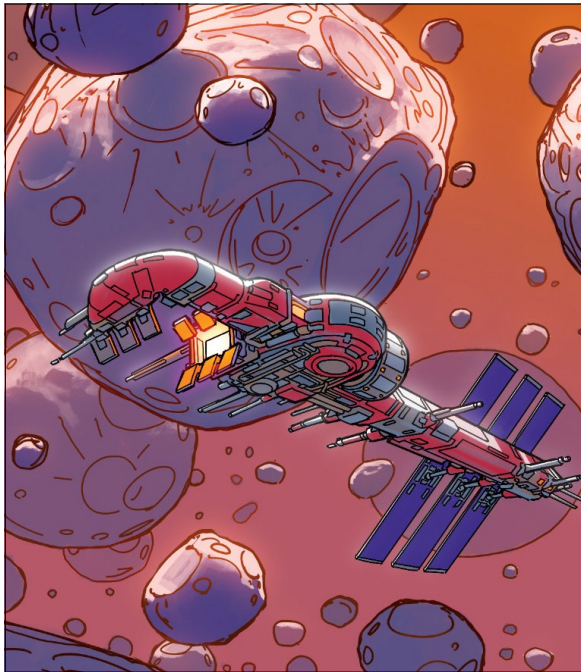
9 Paint highlights for the background

The light on the asteroids is similar to the foreground, except I use a light pink instead of white to help separate it from the foreground. It's fun to create visual depth by placing some of them in shadow and others not.



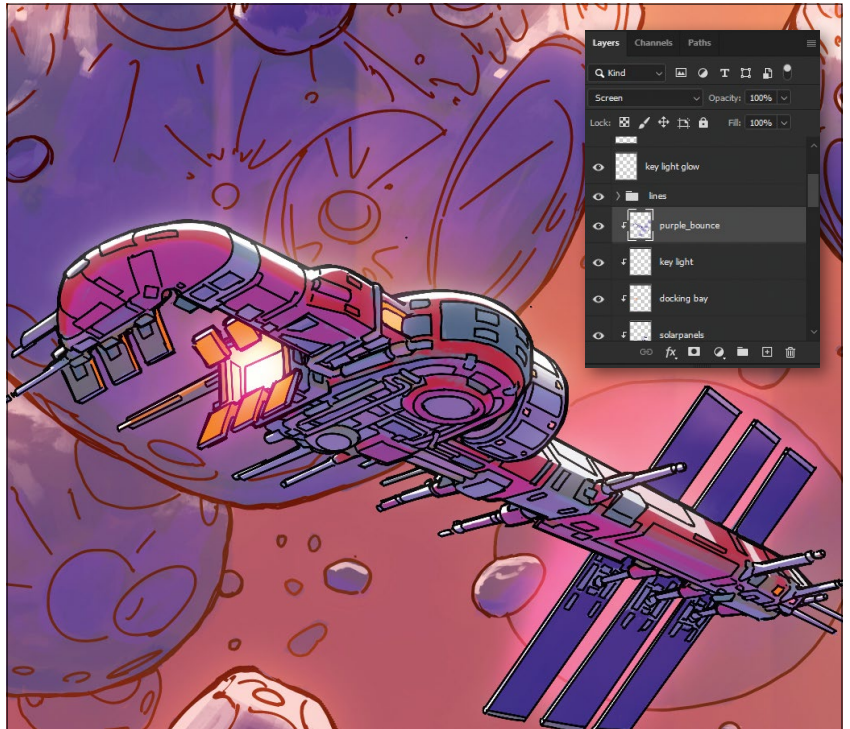
10 Colour the background lines

To separate and add depth to the background lines, I use colour. To do this I copy the lines into a Layer Mask on a new layer filled with a solid saturated colour. I create a Layer Mask (Layer>Layer Mask>Reveal All), then copy the background lines (Select>All, Edit>Copy Merged), before Alt+clicking the Layer Mask and pasting in the lines. I invert the mask to make white lines on a black background (Image>Adjustments>Invert). I can now paint new colours onto the lines easily without accidentally changing their shape.



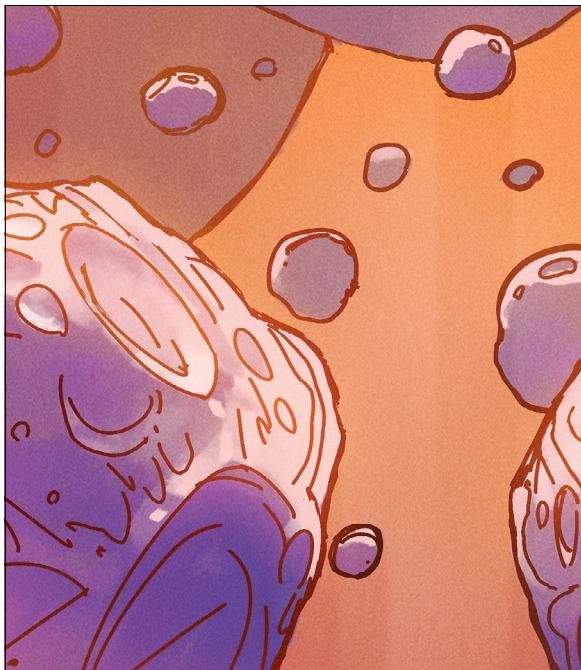
11 Make the light glow

To make the light pop, I apply a soft glow effect to the bright parts of the image so they look blown out and overexposed. I duplicate the lighting layers, move them above the line art and apply the Gaussian Blur filter (Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur). Then I set the layer blend mode to Screen. This works for the docking bays as well.



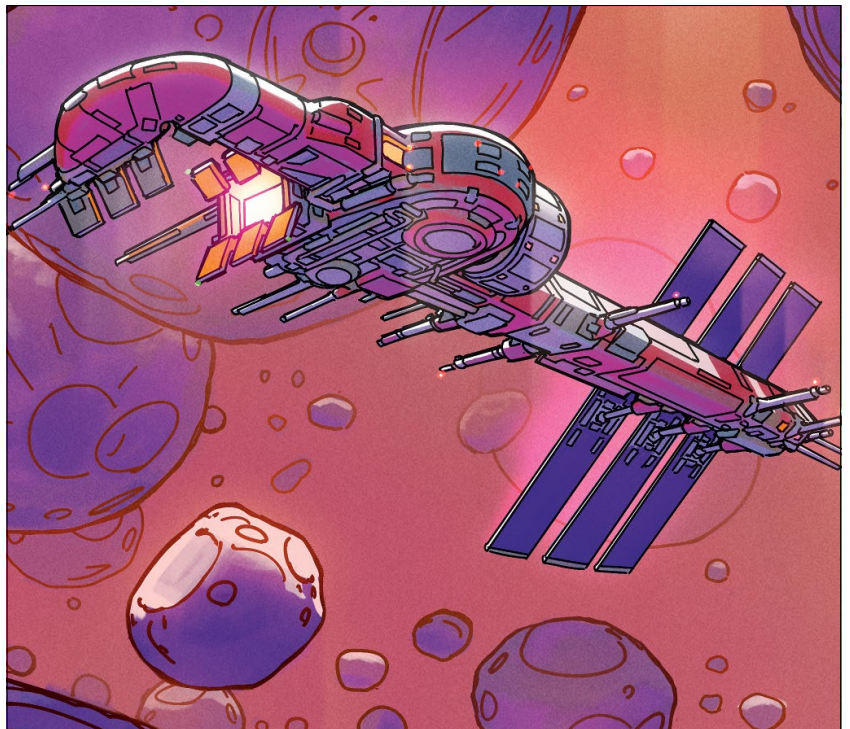
12 Create a bounce light

I often use a bounce light, usually in the opposite direction of the main light, to add more form. It's good to use a complementary colour to the scene, in this case a nice saturated purple to balance the orange of the background and the red of the ship. I paint in the bounce light on a new layer, with the blend mode set to Screen.



13 Dust and light rays

I softly paint some of the scene's orange over the background to create dust and further separate the foreground and add depth. I erase vertical gaps in the haze to create shadows from the asteroids cutting down through the haze. Similarly with the foreground, I create vertical fuzzy slices to hint at light beams created by the shape of the station.



14 A final clean and colour correction

The final step is to just clean everything up, make sure the painting's all sharp and add little details like navigation lights to the station. I add adjustment layers over the background, usually Curves and Vibrance to brighten up and saturate the background. Who would have thought a boring wrench would become a cool mining station hiding deep in a dusty asteroid field?! 🍷

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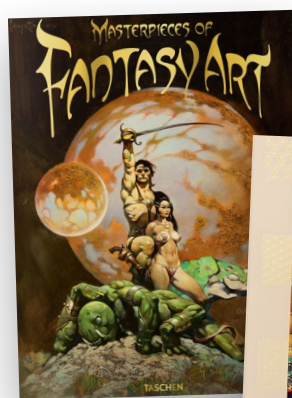
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX Reviews



Artist's Choice Award

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

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



5
PRODUCTS
ON TEST



HARDWARE

84 MateBook X Pro 2020

Huawei's latest MateBook ticks all the boxes, but there's a price to pay.

85 Mac mini (M1, 2020)

The Mac mini now packs Apple's brand new M1 chip to woo creatives on a budget.



BOOKS

86 Masterpieces of Fantasy Art

Taschen's lavish book examines the fantasy art genre and its standout illustrators.

87 Tarot

A detailed look at the many ways Tarot cards have been interpreted by artists.



87 The Art of Soul

Discover how Pixar's artists visualised New York and the Soul World for its latest film.

RATINGS EXPLAINED



Magnificent



Great



Good



Poor



Atrocious

MateBook X Pro 2020

EXPENSIVE TASTES Another top-class laptop, the latest MateBook X Pro ticks all the boxes – except when it comes to price

Price From £1,200 **Company** Huawei **Web** <http://consumer.huawei.com>

Huawei is now well into the groove when it comes to pushing out yearly updates for the Huawei MateBook X Pro, and as you would expect, this year's is the best edition yet. It's a serious contender at the top-end of the market.

There's no doubt that the Huawei MateBook X Pro is a fine-looking laptop. The 13.9-inch, 3000x2000 pixel LTPS LCD screen looks great, with very little in the way of bezels – although it sadly isn't 4K. Colours on the screen are bright, details are sharp, and it's a fantastic laptop for watching movies on. The 3:2 aspect ratio isn't ideal for widescreen content of course,

but we'd rather have it for the extra vertical space it gives to documents.

It's a touchscreen too, should you need it, and overall is a light and compact device. We're pleased to see a fingerprint sensor built into the power button, which makes logging in a breeze, but we're less happy about the webcam built into the top row of keys – not an ideal position.

Speaking of the keys, typing is a pleasure, and the trackpad is sharp and responsive. Even though the laptop is a compact size, the keys feel well spaced and well proportioned.

Our review unit came with a quad-core Intel Core i7-10510U 1.8GHz CPU, 16GB of RAM and 1TB of SSD storage,



Laptops need a responsive trackpad for usability and the MateBook X Pro boasts one that will respond to your commands.

plus an entry-level NVIDIA GeForce MX250 GPU. The only other option has an i5 processor and 512GB of storage, and sticks with the integrated Intel HD Graphics 620, if you want to save yourself some cash and don't mind the resulting performance hit. We can definitely say the configuration we used offered plenty of power for creative tasks, especially painting.

Huawei has put out another hugely impressive laptop with the MateBook X Pro for 2020. What might put most people off, however, is the rather high price – starting at around £1,200 for the cheapest configuration. It's not a question of whether the laptop is worth the price (we think it is), it's a question of whether you can get a perfectly fine and functional Windows laptop for a lot less (you almost certainly can).

Having said that, if you find that you do want the very best 13-to-14-inch Windows laptop in the business, and you're willing to pay for it, then the MateBook X Pro should definitely be on your shortlist.

The 3:2 screen ratio may not please movie creatives needing to work in widescreen, but everyone else will enjoy the extra vertical space.

DETAILS

Features

- NVIDIA GeForce MX250
- Intel UHD Graphics
- 16GB LPDDR3 2133MHz
- 512GB/1TB NVMe PCIe SSD
- Full-size backlit chiclet keyboard
- Fingerprint power button
- Touchpad with multi-touch
- Available in either Space Grey or Emerald Green
- Lithium polymer chassis
- Up to 13 hours local video playback
- 2 x USB-C (support data, charging and DisplayPort)
- 1 x USB-A3.0
- 3.5mm headset and microphone jack

Rating



You get two USB-C ports, one USB-A3.0 and a 3.5mm headset and microphone jack.

“Colours on the screen are bright, details are sharp, and it's a fantastic laptop for watching movies on”



While you could easily hide the diminutive Mac mini away, its beauty cries out to be seen.



The Mac mini (M1, 2020) is so incredibly small yet manages to be so incredibly powerful.

Mac mini (M1, 2020)

COMPACT COMPUTING The Mac mini is back, and now packing Apple's latest M1 chip to woo even more creatives into its fold

Price From £699 **Company** Apple **Web** www.apple.com

The new Mac mini (M1, 2020) is easily one of the best compact machines creatives can buy. Thanks to Apple's new M1 chip, it's an incredibly competent machine that will handle complex creative workloads with ease.

Apart from its design and performance, the price of this Mac mini is its most impressive aspect. Starting at just £699 for 8GB of RAM and 256GB of storage, this is by far the cheapest entry point into the Mac ecosystem. It comes with the brand new macOS Big Sur operating system, and the same Apple M1 chip that powers the far more expensive MacBook Pro 13-inch (M1, 2020), so you're not compromising at all.

If you need more, you can also get a pre-configured model with 8GB of

RAM and 512GB storage (and the same M1 chip) for £899, or configure the Mac mini to offer up to 16GB of RAM and 2TB of storage. Because of the new M1 chip, RAM is limited to 16GB, and there's no way to open up the device to add either a larger hard drive or more RAM.

The M1 chip features an eight-core CPU and eight-core GPU, which is the same as in the new MacBook Pro 13-inch, and so we saw very similar performance in both machines, backed up by synthetic benchmarks. The fact you're getting the same level of performance in the Mac mini is a real testament to Apple's engineering.

One thing we should point out, though, is that while the new Mac mini comes with the same range of ports as previous models, you cannot use an external GPU.



Lots of lovely ports to plug in your favourite displays.

DETAILS

Features

- Eight-core CPU with four performance cores and four efficiency cores
- Eight-core GPU
- Sixteen-core Neural Engine
- 8GB memory
- 256GB SSD
- Built-in speaker
- 3.5mm headphone jack
- HDMI 2.0 port
- Thunderbolt 3 (up to 40GB/s)
- USB 3.1 Gen 2 (up to 10GB/s)
- Thunderbolt 2, HDMI, DVI and VGA support using adapters (sold separately)
- Two USB-A ports
- HDMI 2.0 port
- Gigabit Ethernet port
- Bluetooth 5.0 wireless technology

Rating



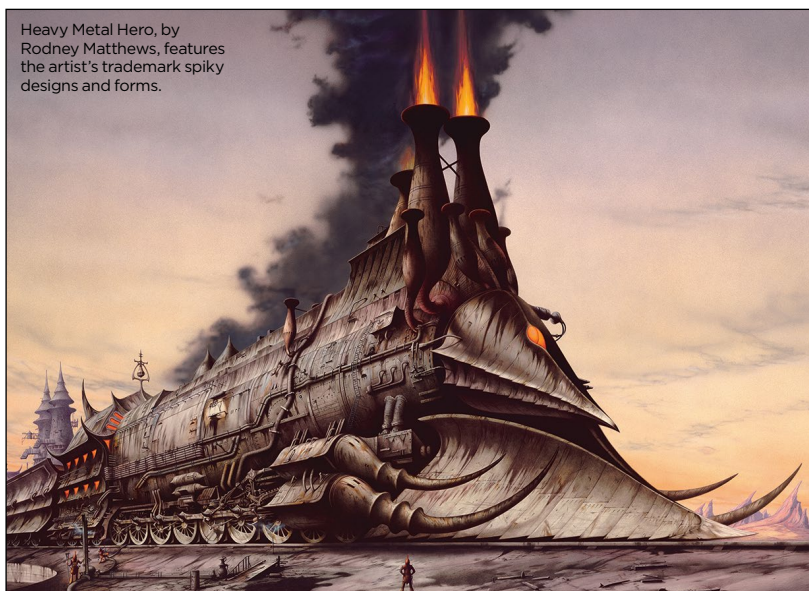
As mentioned, the new Mac mini comes with macOS Big Sur installed, which can run pretty much any Mac program, either natively for those made for the M1 chip, or via Apple's Rosetta 2 tool, which makes programs made for Intel-based Macs compatible.

Even better, you can run iOS apps for iPhones and iPads on the new Mac mini thanks to the M1 chip being similar to the chip in Apple's smartphones and tablets. Great news for users of creative apps such as Procreate.

In our view, the biggest selling point of the Mac mini is how small it is. At 36x19.7x19.7cm, it really is a stunningly compact bit of kit. As you'd expect from Apple, it looks lovely (and comes in a new silver colour).

When you need visual clarity, the new Mac mini now supports up to two ultra high-definition displays. You can plug in a monitor with up to 6K resolution and a refresh rate of 60Hz via Thunderbolt, as well as use the HDMI port to connect to a 4K screen.

If you need a small, easy-to-store computer that offers fantastic value, buy the Mac mini (M1, 2020).



Heavy Metal Hero, by Rodney Matthews, features the artist's trademark spiky designs and forms.



Painting Victory Flight helped Julie Bell to refine her stylised, colourful take on dragons.

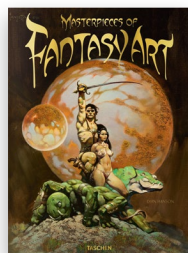
Masterpieces of Fantasy Art

JUST IMAGINE Taschen's official 'Sexy Book Editor' puts her spin on the fantasy art genre and its standout artists in this lavish book

Author Dian Hanson **Publisher** Taschen **Price** £150 **Web** www.taschen.com **Available** Now

Taschen's **Masterpieces of Fantasy Art** showcases imaginative art primarily from the 20th century, in a mammoth, highly produced hardback. Yet this mouth-watering prospect becomes, at times, an uncomfortable experience for today's fantasy fans.

Author Dian Hanson begins by tracing fantasy art's popularity in mainstream media. In a lengthy essay she attributes the US pulp magazines of the 1930s and 40s for whetting people's appetite for fantastical imagery outside of textbooks and the classical art world. Cover art from *Weird Tales*, *Startling Stories* and more accompanies the text, often featuring semi-naked women who find themselves in over-the-top, perilous situations. These magazines fell out of public favour, to be replaced by fantasy novels, films and adult comics. However, the idea that 'sex sells' prevailed, with Dian providing more lurid depictions of women alongside conventional fantasy tropes: dragons, barbarians and so on.

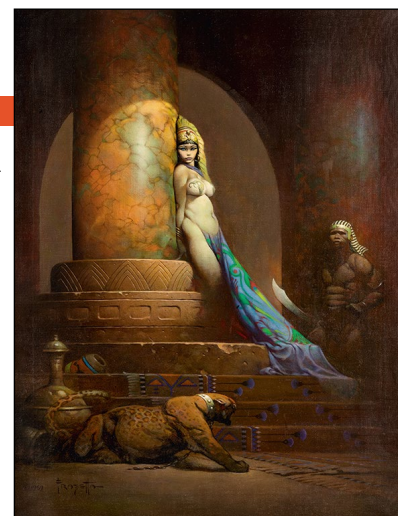


Dian's choice of master artists – 12 in total – forms the heart of the book. Consummate figure artists such as Frank Frazetta, Boris Vallejo and Julie Bell rub bare shoulders with more esoteric choices such as Rodney Matthews, HR Giger and Moebius. Dian delves into her subjects' careers, interviewing them where possible, and her years of editorial experience certainly shines through. Her engaging

“Each painter's work can be appreciated as fantasy art in its purest form”

write-ups provide plenty of anecdotes and insights.

Taken in isolation, each painter's work can be appreciated as fantasy art in its purest form, even if some of the storytelling might be considered hackneyed. Yet the majority of Dian's chosen artists made their name by depicting scantily clad young women, resulting in page after page of similar-looking female figures. It's a missed



Frank Frazetta's original Egyptian Queen oil painting sold at auction for \$5.4 million in 2019.

opportunity to show a wider range of fantasy art from the era, and the lack of character diversity is tiresome by modern standards.

The book concludes with one-paragraph entries on 99 noteworthy fantasy artists. This section feels more balanced in terms of the art themes on show. Readers who make the effort to explore the work of those 99 artists will soon realise there's much more to the genre than Dian suggests.

RATING ★★★★★

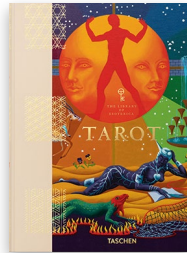
Tarot

DECK HAND The first book in Taschen's Library of Esoterica series places a spotlight on Tarot cards, revealing their many interpretations

Author Jessica Hundley **Publisher** Taschen Books **Price** £30 **Web** www.taschen.com **Available** Now

Starting life in the 14th century as a card game, Tarot cards have transcended their humble roots to become associated with divination and fortune telling. Taschen's book provides an in-depth analysis of how the 78 cards have been conceived by artists.

Author Jessica Hundley begins with a relatively brief overview of the Tarot's history, before tackling the



In 1970 Bea Nettles began work on her Tarot deck, with friends and family dressed to represent the classic arcana archetypes. This is a detail from the Temperance card.

deck in detail. She describes each card's symbolism and their meaning, and provides examples of eclectic artwork. The cards are printed large on the page and accompanied by captions that give information on the artist, their painting materials, influences and more.

Given how long Tarot cards have been around, it's no surprise that the art varies enormously. Yet this is one of the book's strengths: there's plenty of fun to be had in seeing artistic interpretations of classic cards, and how far each illustrator has extrapolated basic Tarot concepts in the name of creativity. Jennifer's unspoken challenge – "You've seen what others have done, now it's over to you" – is all but irresistible.

RATING ★★★★★☆



US artist Cathy McClelland drew on her fascination with astrology and astronomy for her 2017 take on the Tarot card Wheel of Fortune.

The Art of Soul

SPIRIT GUIDE Take a visual trip to New York and the Soul World: two unique environments brought together by Pixar in its latest film

Author N/A **Publisher** Abrams & Chronicle Books **Price** £30 **Web** www.abramsandchronicle.co.uk **Available** Now

One picture is worth a thousand words. Yet when describing the creative process behind *Soul*, this book could have done with more written insights.

The *Art of Soul* begins promisingly, with lengthy introductions from actor Tina Fey, director Pete Docter, and writer and co-director Kemp Powers, who praise the talent of Pixar's artists. A stylised New York is proof enough of this: characters, street scenes and interiors are full of life. Indeed, visits to jazz clubs result in sketches that feed into the film's tone and feel.



Artist Jason Deamer's digital explorations on capturing the essence of a person in a single image.

Things take a turn for the ethereal as the artists tackle the film's abstract settings and characters. There's plenty of vis-dev work as the look of souls are polished, and wire sculptures help capture the bizarre appearance of key inhabitants of the Soul World.

Yet too often art is presented without comment, leaving the reader to guess why certain designs were taken forward. When half of the book is devoted to the otherworldly, it becomes harder to excuse the absence of real-world explanations.

RATING ★★★★★☆



Tom Gately



Hyen Park



From *The Art of Soul*, Foreword by Tina Fey, Introductions by Pete Docter and Kemp Powers, published by Chronicle Books

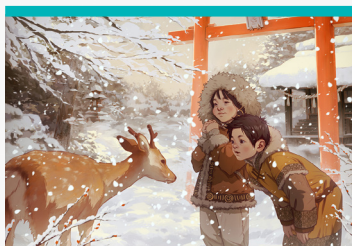
VIRTUAL

vertex

THE EVENT FOR 2D & 3D ARTISTS

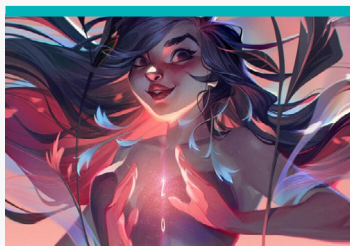
25 FEBRUARY 2021

Speaking at this year's event:



DJAMILA KNOPF

INDEPENDENT ARTIST AND
SCHOOLISM INSTRUCTOR



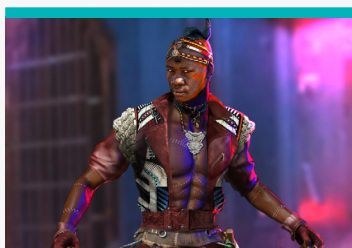
**LOIS VAN
BAARLE**

CONCEPT ARTIST AND
CHARACTER DESIGNER



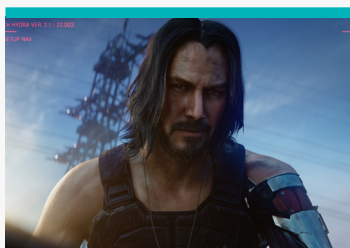
MAX ULICHNEY

ANIMATION ART DIRECTOR
AND ANIMATOR



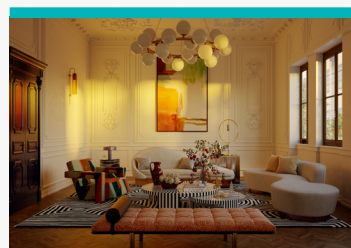
**PHILLIP
BOUTTE JR.**

FREELANCE COSTUME
CONCEPT ARTIST



**FREDRIK
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Traditional Artist

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Workshops assets are available...

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

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

94 Workshop: Portrait painting using ink and tea

Carne Griffiths uses calligraphy inks and a fountain pen to create detail and tone in a portrait piece.

98 First Impressions: Amelia Leonards

Learn why antlers are a common theme in this US artist's work.

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FXPosé

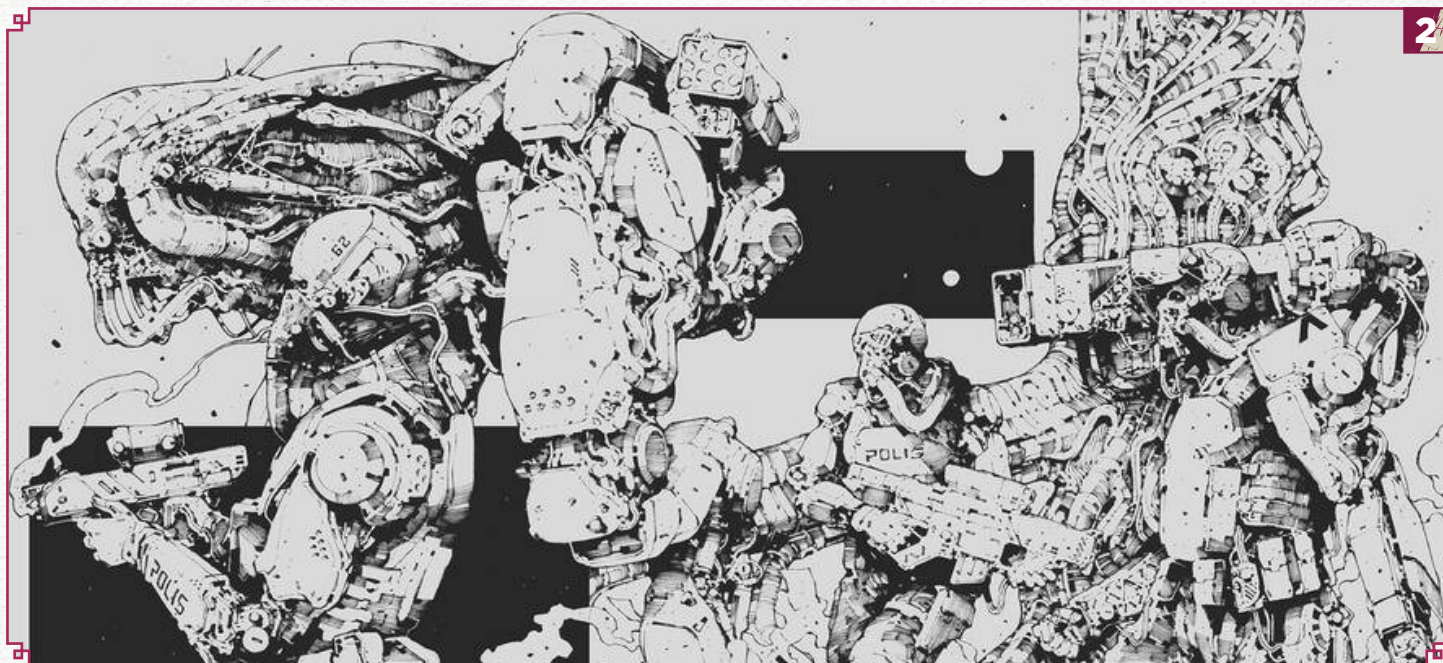
SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS



Romi Adzan Ramli

LOCATION: Malaysia **MEDIA:** Pentel XFP5F brush pen, Pentel Pocket Brush pen, Copic Grey Tones markers **WEB:** www.instagram.com/rome_adzan

"I'm into drawing cyberpunk and biomechanical art, giant robots and mechs," says Romi, who's inspired by manga, and western and European artists.



1 THE SPACEMAN

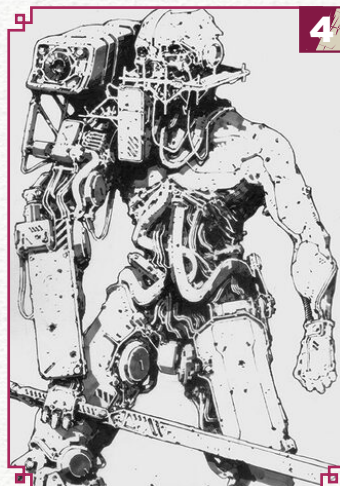
"After reading Lovecraftian cosmic horror I came up with this guy - some sort of space exploration gone wrong."

2 TENTACORP

"A concept of a near-future special mechanized infantry that's made out of resurrected corpses to run a global police state."

3 BIOMECHA PILOT

"This is hugely inspired by HR Giger and late-80s NES Ninja Gaiden games."



4 MORTUS EST MESIN

"Mutilated dead bodies recycled by Tekromanxers to fight on the front lines of a never-ending war."

5 METALSKIRT

"An original character concept hugely inspired by Yukito Kishiro's Battle Angel Alita, otherwise known as Gunnm in Japan."





Peter Diamond

LOCATION: Austria **MEDIA:** Acrylic inks, coloured pencils, pastel **WEB:** www.peterdiamond.ca

Peter is a Canadian illustrator based in Vienna who studied fine arts at NSCAD University. "These new paintings step away from the commercial and pop-cultural concerns of my professional commissions," he reveals.

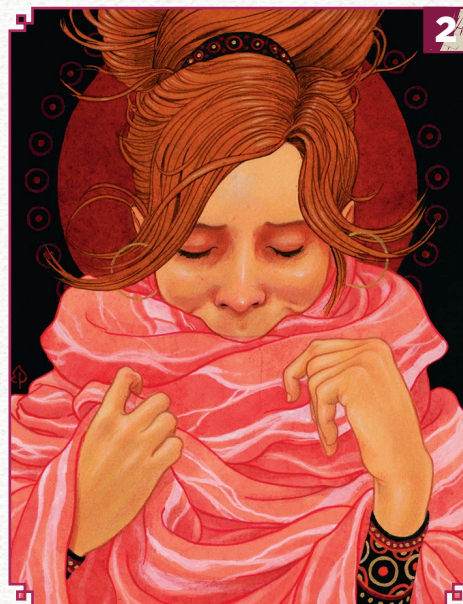
1 5 SENSES, #1

"The first in a series exploring the five senses, made for the 2019 Power In Numbers show at Gallery Nucleus Portland."



2 5 SENSES, #3

"The third piece in the five senses series. The poses were inspired by luxury fashion photography."



3 5 SENSES, #4

"Probably the most literal of the five senses series because this sense seems to me the most estranged from visual media."

4 Z

"This is a character I return to when fear, shame and anxiety are at hand. He's a past version of myself who never quite existed."



Graphite

Ink

Tea

PORTRAIT PAINTING USING INK AND TEA

CARNE GRIFFITHS reveals how he paints a portrait with ink and tea on watercolour paper, using calligraphy inks and a fountain pen to create detail and tone

The piece I'm discussing here – Solace – was created as the final work to accompany my solo exhibition, Nature's Riches. The series is based around taking images from fashion and advertising and replacing parts of the original shoot with motifs and elements from the natural world, in particular floral motifs. The common thread is humankind's connection to the natural world and how we are part of it and yet consider ourselves to be separate or superior.

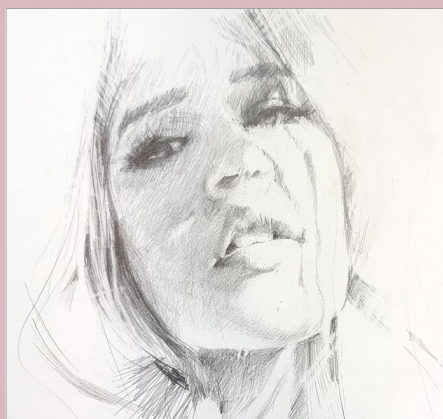
The painting explores techniques that rely on chaos and chance, often blending together seemingly random mark making with detailed and deliberate fountain pen lines. These two different approaches are often applied layer after layer and the process is one of both destroying and manipulating the underlying layers during each pass.



Carne paints with inks, teas and alcohol, embracing chaos and chance to steer the direction of work. See more of his art at www.carnegriffiths.com ➤➤

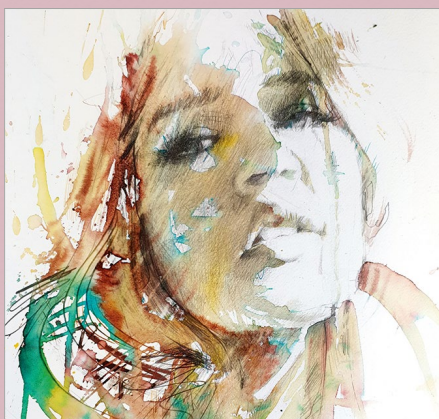


Step-by-step: Create a portrait that's full of energy



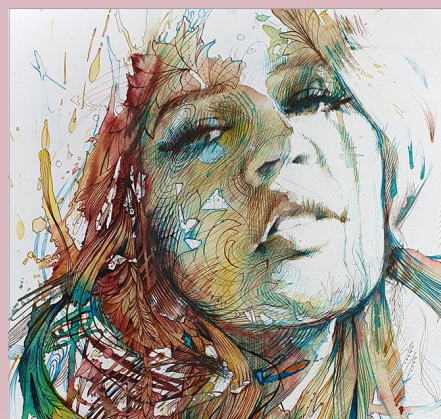
1 SKETCH OUT THE PORTRAIT

I begin with a tonal drawing in graphite to give structure to the work, while at the same time keeping detail fairly low. This provides a framework for the following layers and serves as a guide to where the liquids will be applied. I often work with an eraser, drawing in vigorous erased lines to give a sense of direction to the sketch.



2 THROW DOWN LIQUIDS

With the structure of the piece created, I begin adding lines using fountain pen ink. These non-permanent lines are quickly followed by loosely applied liquids such as hot water and tea, disturbing the pen lines underneath and creating random swirls of ink. I try to maintain as much energy as possible at this stage.



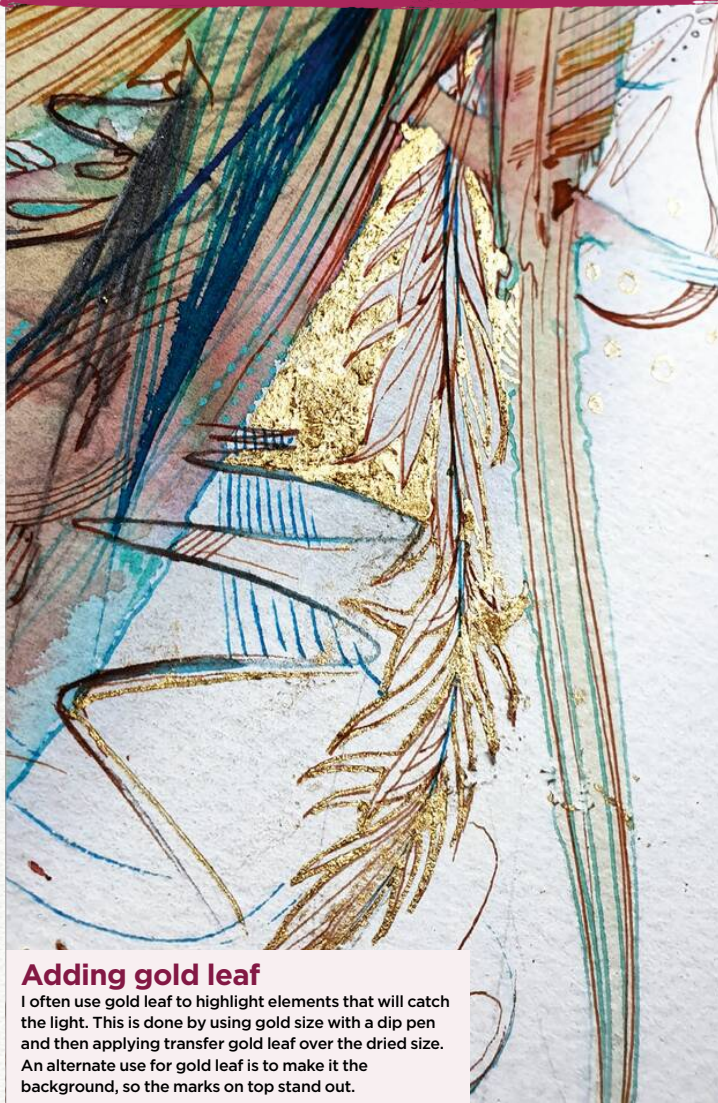
3 ADD DETAILS WITH A PEN

After letting the loosely applied tea dry, I begin to work over the entire piece, moving from one area to another to maintain balance in the work. Where the disturbed ink is successful I use very little detail, whereas in other areas I use a fountain pen to generate floral detail, tone and texture.



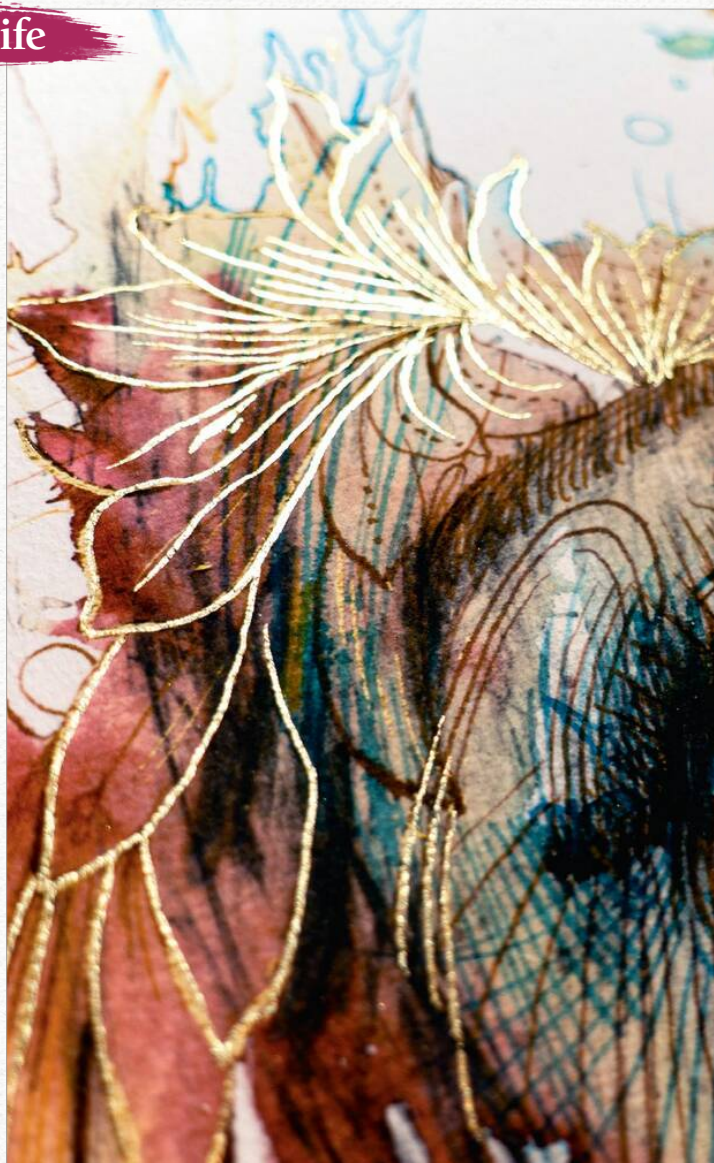
Traditional Artist Workshops

Points of interest: Bring a portrait to life



Adding gold leaf

I often use gold leaf to highlight elements that will catch the light. This is done by using gold size with a dip pen and then applying transfer gold leaf over the dried size. An alternate use for gold leaf is to make it the background, so the marks on top stand out.



MATERIALS

PAPER

■ Bockingford watercolour paper 540gsm stretched on an aluminium open-back frame

INK

■ Pelikan
■ Waterman and Herbin calligraphy inks

TEA

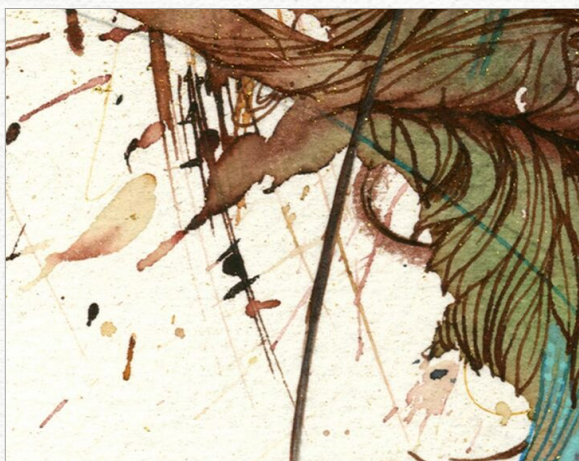
■ Earl Grey
■ Chai
■ Tetley

ALCOHOL

■ Vodka
■ Brandy

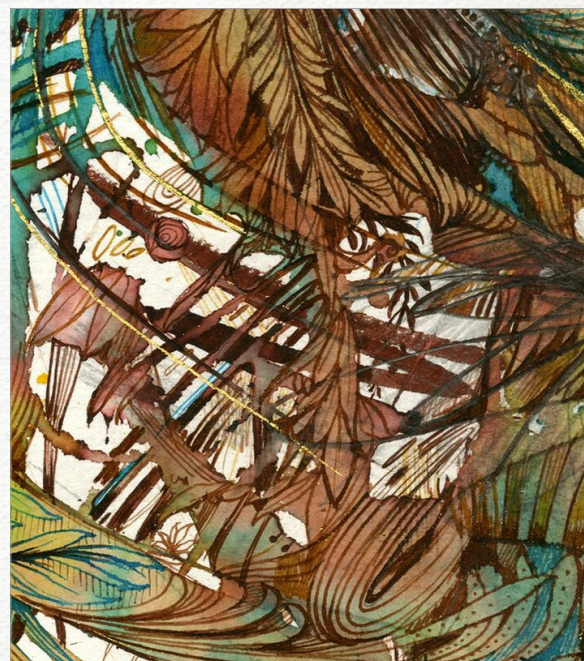
DRAWING TOOLS

■ Graphite
■ Pigment pen – Derwent Line Makers



Working with layers

My process involves creating many layers. Some layers will build up inks over other inks, whereas some layers involve liquids disturbing or sometimes completely erasing the underlying elements. I work with all non-permanent materials, so that if I throw water over the piece towards the end, it'll erase or change the look of the artwork. Sometimes an entire kettle of water will be thrown over detailed sections just to see the effect it leaves behind.



Create balance

My process is one of chaos and I rarely have a system in place for what I'm going to paint - there is no planning and each subsequent mark or element is spontaneously added as a result of the last. This means I move quickly around the piece, building up the image evenly until I achieve a sense of balance.

Negative space

To achieve the look of reflective light, I use the white of the watercolour paper. Rather than masking areas, I'm careful when applying the initial liquids to leave these loose shapes of negative white space to create the illusion of overexposed light. I then use the fountain pen to pick out finer details within the image.

Celebrate chance

I try to preserve the energy of the piece by highlighting areas that have happened by chance. In this instance, outlining the droplets of flicked paint or tea from the underlying areas draws attention to the rhythm and movement of this 'brush stroke'.

First Impressions

✧ Amelia Leonards ✧

Learn why antlers are a common theme in this US artist's work...



Where did you grow up and how has this influenced your art?
Summit, New Jersey.

I was tragically the only Goth kid in a very yuppie town during the 90s with no internet. Art, reading and hiding behind trees were the only escapes available.

I spent all of my time reading mythology and folklore and telling myself stories about strange creatures and fantastical places, so of course I had to draw them. Needless to say, people thought I was odd.

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

My father read Greek myths to me at bedtime when I was a much tinier person, and they shaped how I saw the world. I was also always outside playing with bugs, digging for dinosaur bones, and looking for doorways into other worlds. I'm unsure that any of that has changed.

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

A giant, hand-painted banner for a dress shop. It was eight feet long



QUEEN OF CUPS

"The Queen of Cups embodies love, compassion, in addition to concern for ourselves and our fellow creatures."

BEAR OF THE NORTH

"In Druidic belief, the North is represented by the Great Bear of the Starry Heavens, of the green and fruitful Earth."

(ridiculous to a watercolourist), a nightmarish explosion of acrylic (definitely not my medium), and I think I was paid \$50 (ouch). The shop isn't in business anymore, and I can only hope that the painting has been burned to keep someone warm.

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

A commission of a friend turning into a bear to celebrate her connection to earth energy – clearly I've finally found others like me. The two pieces couldn't be more different

– the only thing in common is the presence of a woman.

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

I have a thing for painting fae women with antlers, probably because I hope I'll transform into one and take to the trees. I sense the influence of New Jersey escapism...

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

At the moment I'm playing with contrast, pushing the medium around to see how extreme I can be while still retaining the look and feel of watercolour. I'm also working on minimalism, because my instinct is to fill every available centimetre with detail and I know it's wrong.

How has the art industry changed since you've been working in it?

It's changed so much – I graduated college right before the explosion of art sharing and self-marketing on social media. The only art career I could see was book illustration – dealing directly with clients seemed unthinkable. While there's nothing wrong with that path, I love being able to self-promote and build my own business.

What does the future hold for you?

Chocolate chips, I hope. I'm also working on an astrological-themed Oracle deck, as well as a Tarot and an Oracle deck for a French company, Wild Editions, which produces gorgeous products. I'm very excited about that, and for the millions of personal projects I'm chipping away at. Right now my biggest ambition for the future, both personally and as an artist, is to survive Covid and be free to travel around the country and participate in shows.

Amelia is a fantasy artist inspired by the beauty of ancient myth, folklore and the natural world. She mostly paints fantastical things for herself and occasionally commissioned work. See more of her art at www.amelialeonards.com.

“ My instinct is to fill every available centimetre with detail and I know it's wrong ”



Image by Nick Harris - Tutorial IFX 187

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