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Illustration: Ross Tran



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



Welcome to our 200th edition of ImagineFX. Two hundred! That's quite a number of pages of jaw-dropping art and inspiration we've racked up.

The reason we're still producing this magazine is because of our shared passion for creating art in all its forms.

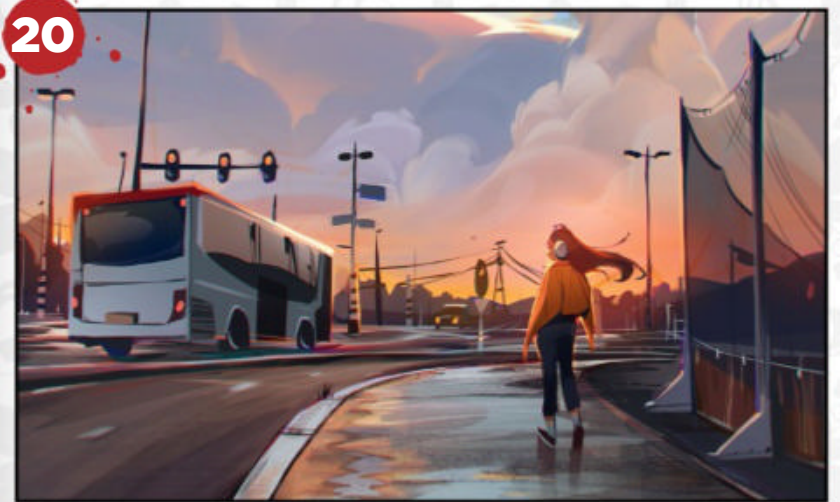
And by creating, I don't just mean to a professional standard. Art isn't about being perfect. It's about doing an activity that you love and being a part of something that makes you feel good. To achieve in art doesn't need to relate to a job role, a perfect painting or social media number. It can be in the joy of losing yourself for an hour, crafting a drawing for a friend that makes them smile, or simply knowing that you're giving time to an activity that gives something back to you.

Like Dibujante Nocturno said in his drawing advice on page 72, "It doesn't matter if you get art right or wrong. The key is maintain movements and keep on drawing." I sincerely hope that we help you on your journey with art, no matter what your destination is and I want to thank you for your support in our journey, too.

Claire

Editor in chief
claire@imaginefx.com

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



Advice you need to hear now

Four pro artists reflect on what they wish they knew when they started their journey in art.



ImagineFX's best moments!

A look back at industry changes and mesmerising artworks over the course of 200 editions of little ol' us.



Scribbles from the gods

Donato Giancola offers up works of total brilliance from the pages of his toned sketchbooks..

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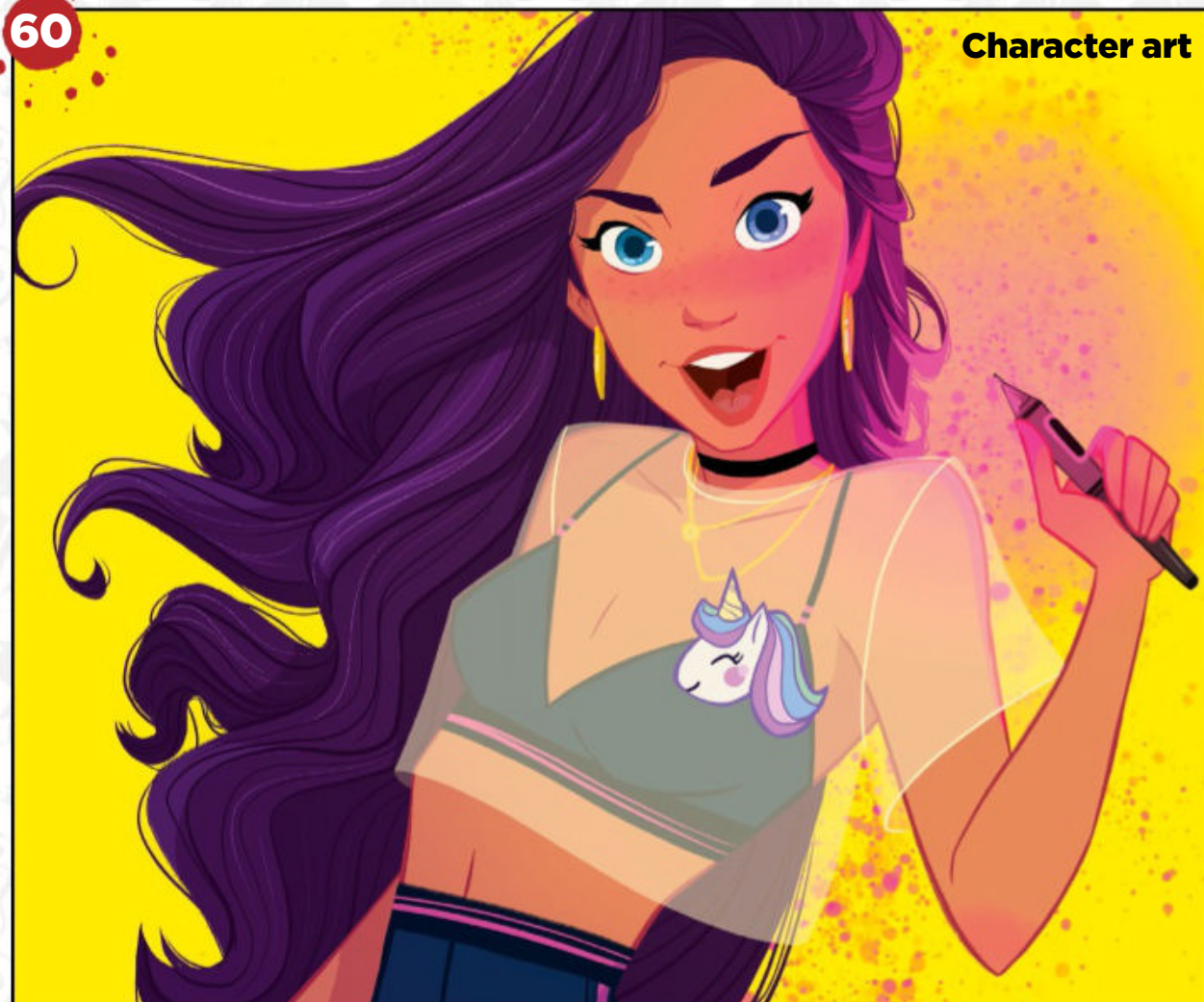
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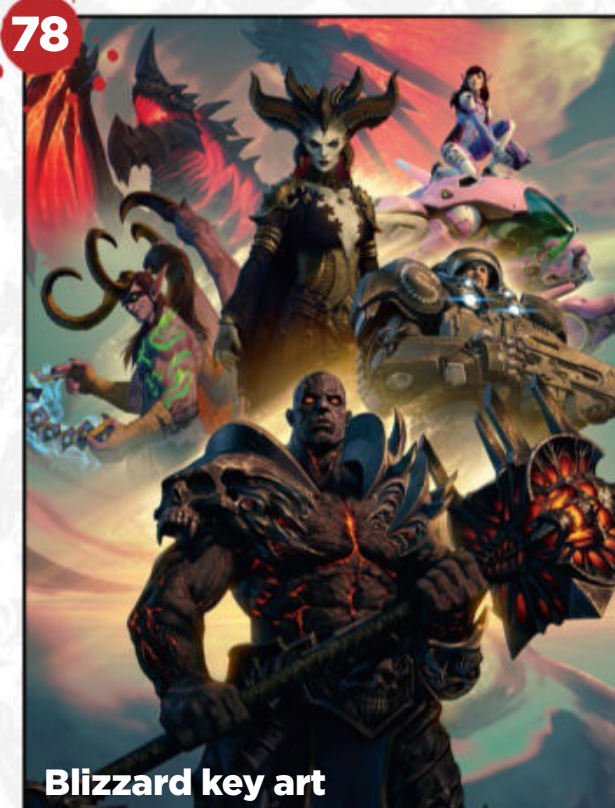
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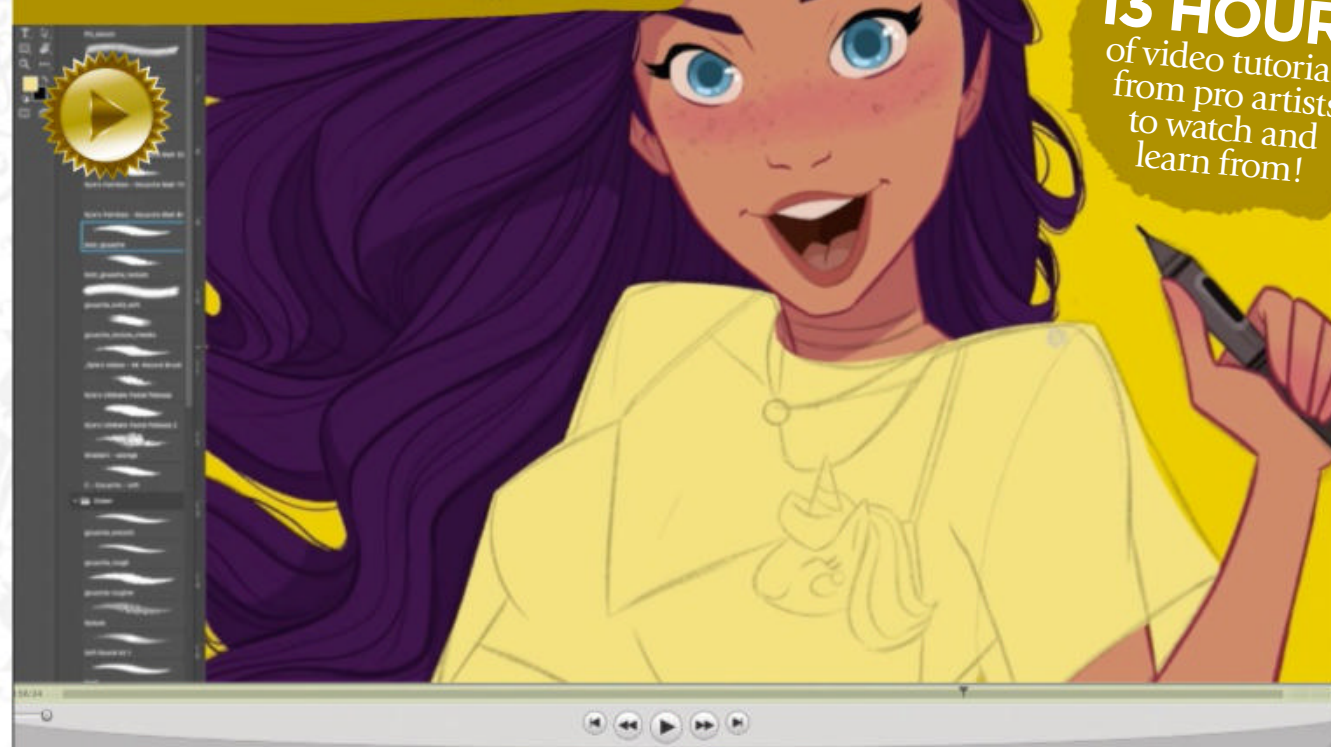


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Resources

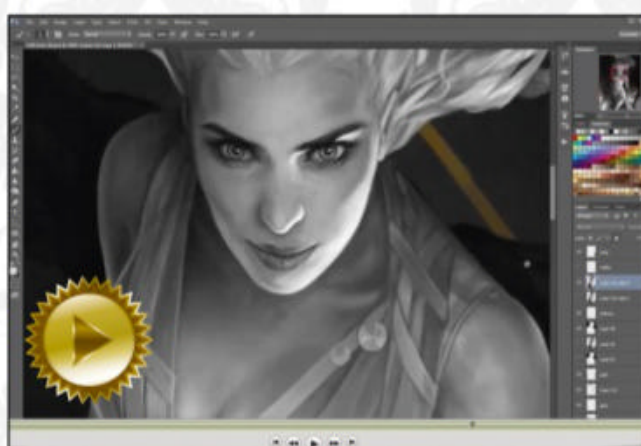
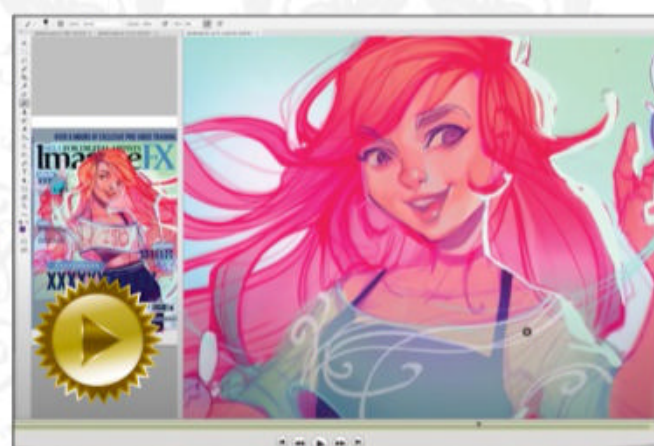
Getting hold of this issue's resources is easy.
Just visit **<http://ifxm.ag/celebrate200ifx>**

WORKSHOP VIDEOS



Use masking techniques to colour your character art

See how Pernille Ørum concepts, draws and paints this month's cover art. Pernille's goal was to paint a fun, eye-catching character. Job done! Turn to page 60 to read her in-depth workshop.



Enjoy our cover workshop videos from the past 200 issues!

From Bobby Chiu's crafty jungle predator to Dave Gibbon's stunning Watchmen artwork, we've collected a great range of ImagineFX cover video workshops for you to learn from.

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX

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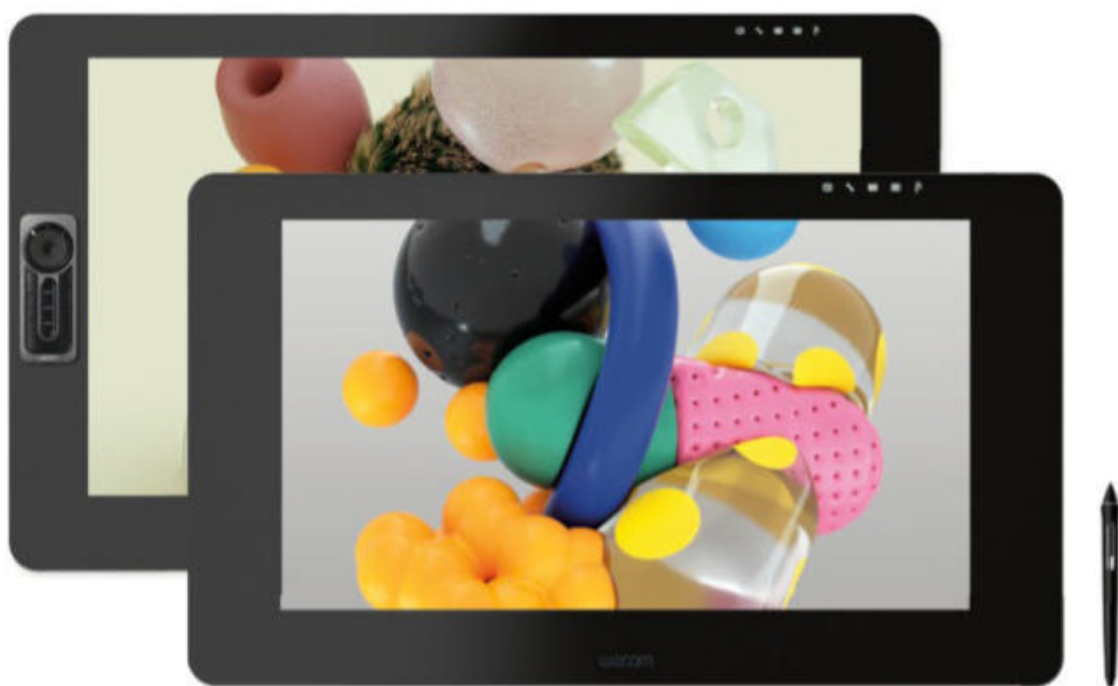
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FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

ImagineFX
ARTIST
MONTH

1



Antonio Fernandez

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Rebelle, Corel Painter, Photoshop **WEB:** www.nomadgraphicarts.com

"I like to create the type of art that inspired me in my youth," says Antonio, who tells us how he grew up reading comics such as Heavy Metal, Vampirella and Eerie, and being blown away by the fantastic art inside.

1 DJINN

"Djinn are interesting creatures in Arabic folktales that are supposedly capable of assuming human form and influencing people."

2 TRANSMOGRIFICATION

"I love ancient mythology, so I wanted to show Medusa before Athena's curse completely transformed her into the figure we know."



2



3



4

3 THE BURDEN OF DOUBT

"I tried to depict what the weight of doubt on our psyche would look like."

4 NIMUE

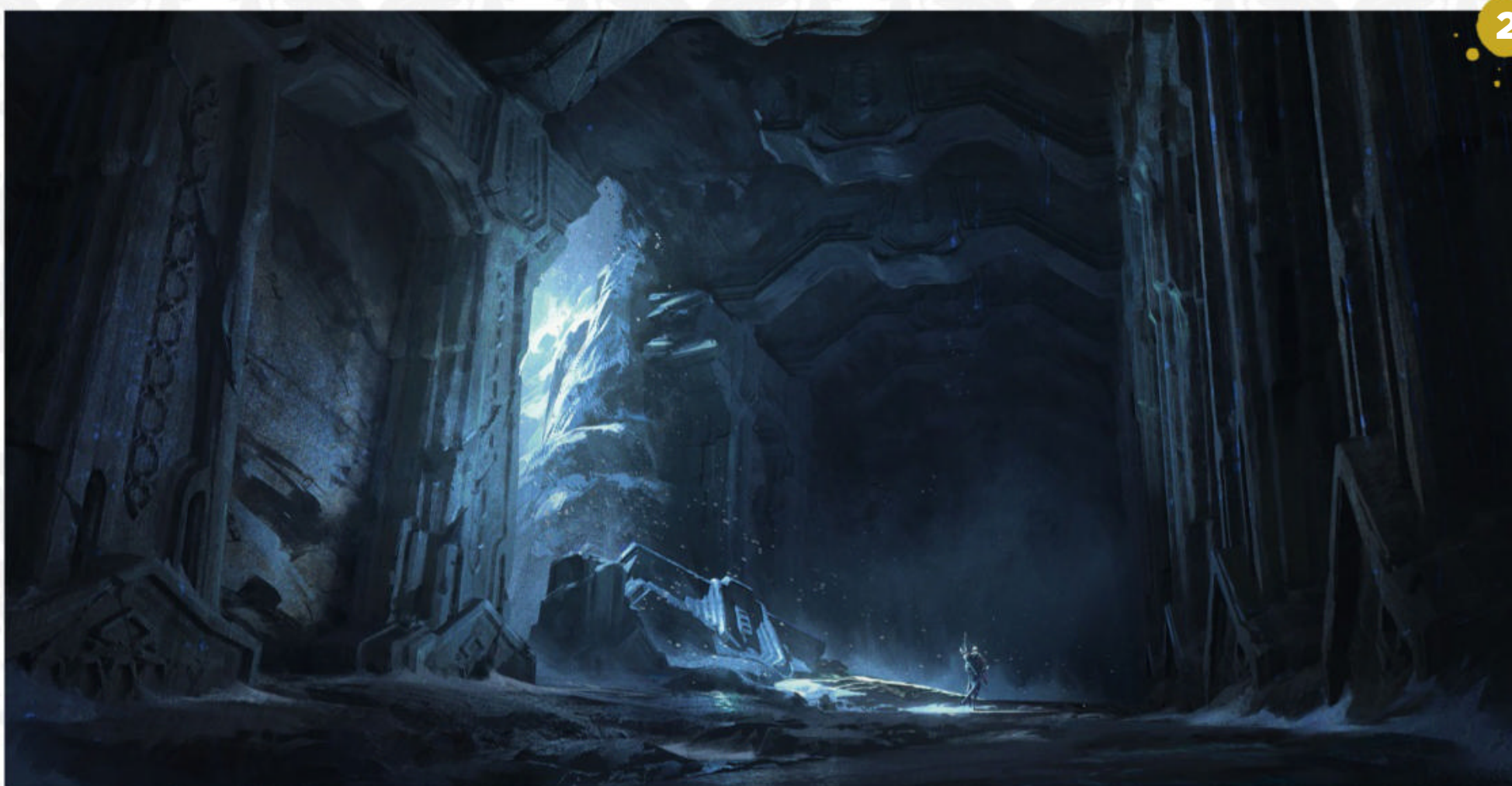
"I moved away from well-worn depictions of the Lady of the Lake and made her more tribal and ancient, to match the King Arthur mythos."



Grady Frederick

LOCATION: Canada **MEDIA:** Photoshop, 3D-Coat, Blender **WEB:** www.artstation.com/gradyart

Grady is a fantasy and sci-fi fan with a passion for detail and storytelling. “I like to approach my art in a stylistic way, but maintain a level of maturity and groundedness.”



1 ISLAND RUIN

“One of my early works with a 3D base. I had fun trying to bring my painterly style back into the render.”

2 CAVERN IN THE FROZEN STEPPE

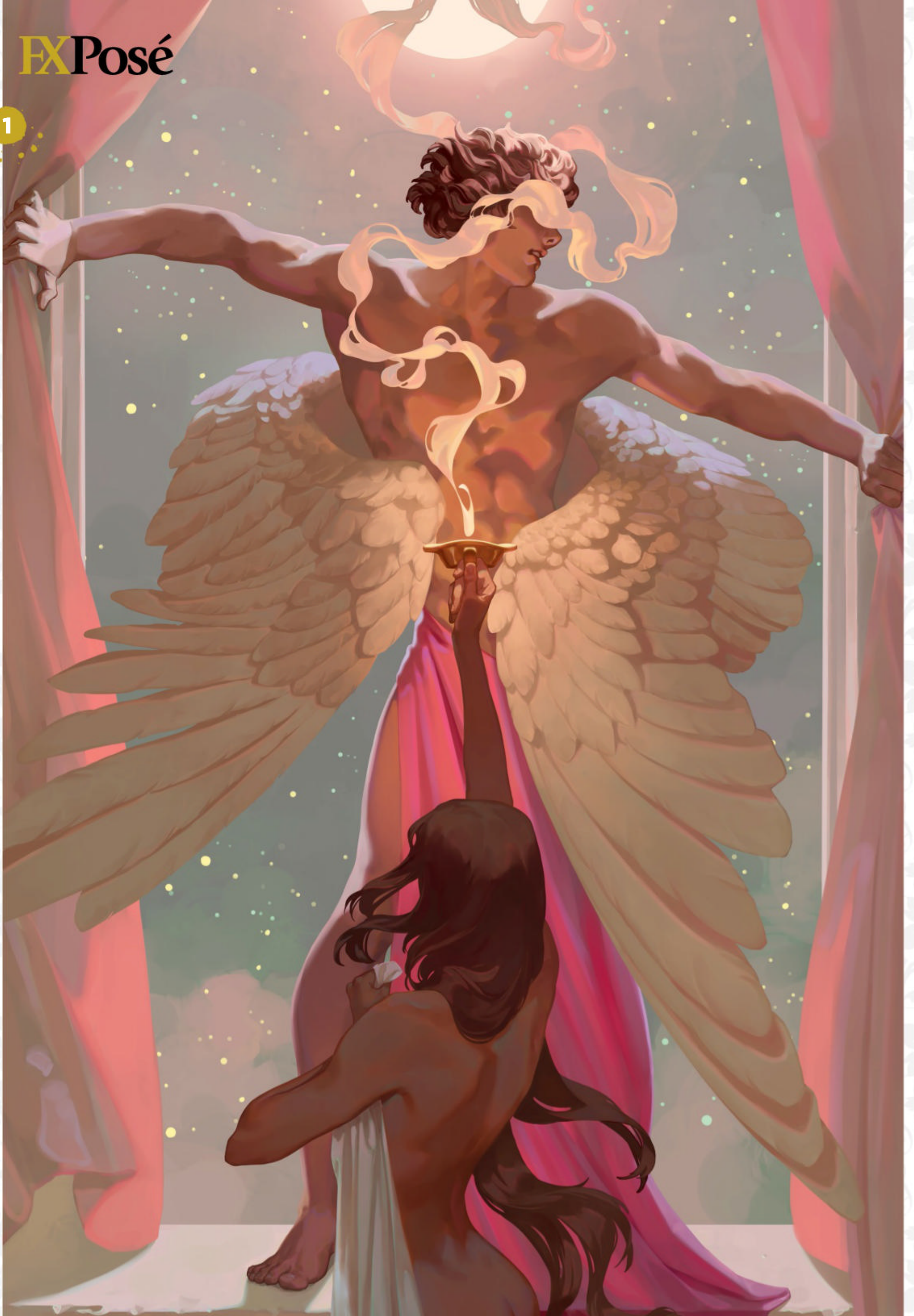
“This was created for my personal project Haven. I wanted to establish the harshness and sense of the unknown.”

3 HAVEN

“I used this illustration from my Haven project as a benchmark, to establish the overall style of my IP.”









Angela Wang

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Paint Tool SAI WEB: www.awanqi.com

Angela cites a range of influences, including Art Nouveau, history, Old Masters and more. "My illustration aims to combine the things I love with the aesthetics that best suit my vision."

1 EROS AND PSYCHE

"Eros and Psyche is one of my favourite Greek myths, and I'd always wanted to make a piece inspired by the story."

2 ARCHANGEL

"I wanted to tell the story of St. Michael trampling Satan, and opted for a dynamic approach."



3 THE DOMINIONS

"Illustrating the Order of Dominions, my approach was to combine a compelling narrative with a highly illustrative format."

4 THE SHROUD OF AGINCOURT

"This Tarot card for Death features the Battle of Agincourt. History has a substantial influence on the art I create."



Gonçalo Marques

LOCATION: Portugal **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.goncalomarquesart.com

Gonçalo is a self described art Batman: working retail by day, painting by night. “I’m inspired by artists like Karla Ortiz and Aleksi Briclot who give traditional themes a very personal touch.”

1 SKY-LINE MASTER

“I noticed that my characters were repeating some safe poses, so I decided to try something more dynamic with a sense of motion.”

2 LILIANA, GRIEVING WANDERER

“I’m a big Liliana Vess fan and one of my dreams is to be able to paint one of her cards.”

3 VIN

“Being a big fan of fantasy books, I found in Brandon Sanderson’s Mistborn series a lot of material to use in my book cover portfolio.”

4 NAHIRI, ZENDIKAR’S HEALER

“I painted Nahiri as an excuse to practise backgrounds. I would say this was a level-up piece.”





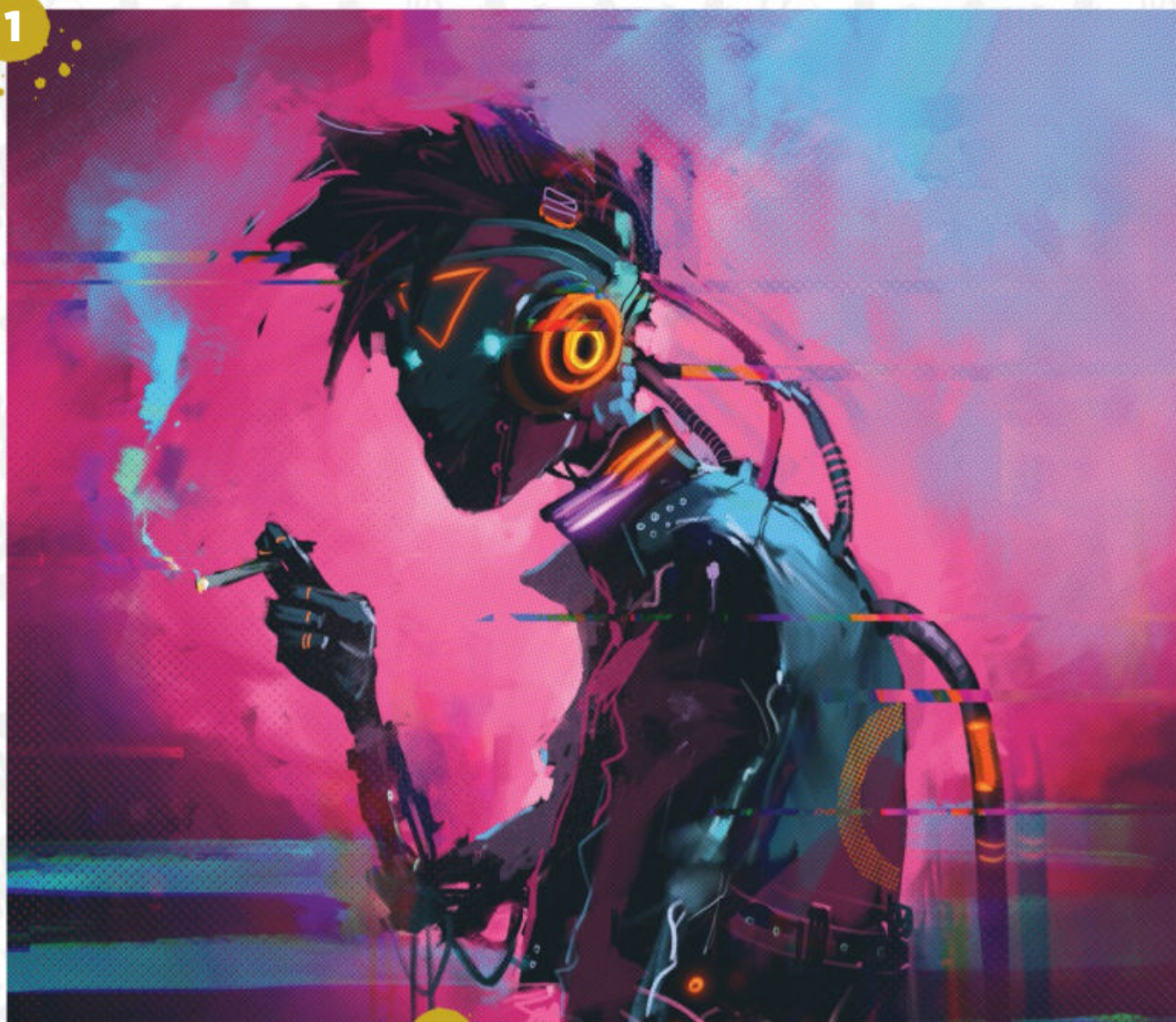


Ninja Jo

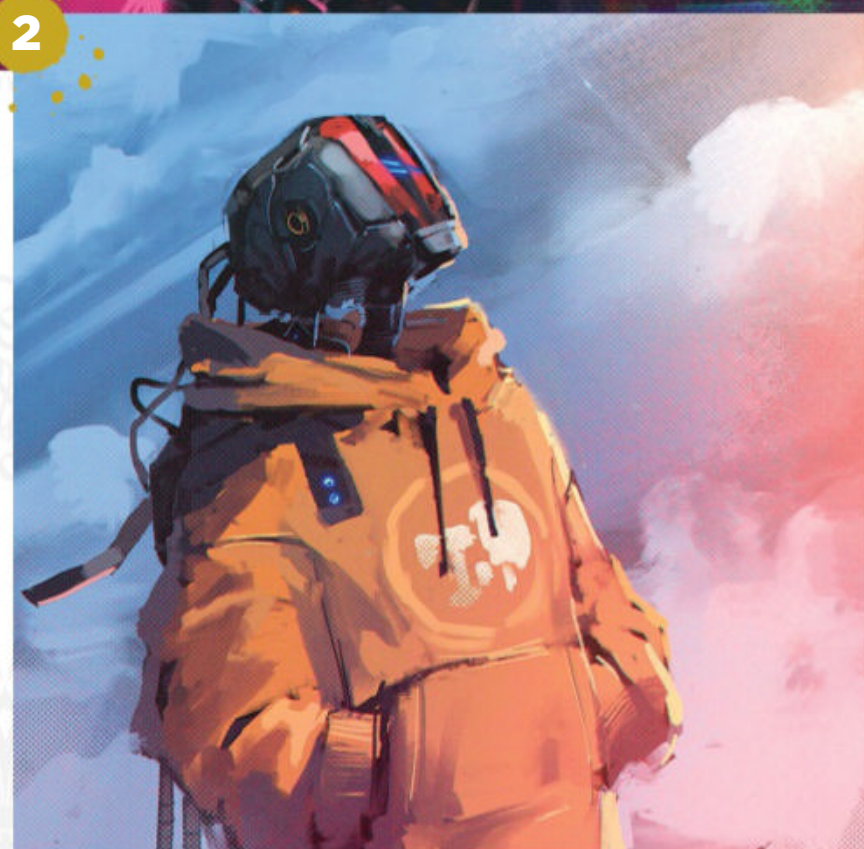
LOCATION: Ukraine **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Procreate **WEB:** www.artstation.com/ninja_jo

Katerina Belikova, aka Ninja Jo, has been painting digitally since 2012 after working traditionally for over 15 years. "Sci-fi has always been my main theme," she says.

1



2



1 **NO**

"This piece is about how we all feel sometimes, and perhaps surprisingly even robots can suffer from feelings of apathy."

2 **HOPE**

"This is about dreams and hopes, and about remembering that after dark times there's always light."

3 **ON PAUSE**

"This was a very quick digital painting. I wanted to experiment with colours and see how they work together."



Do you want to see your art on these pages? Then email five pieces of your work and a short explanation about each artwork, along with a photo and a few details about yourself, to fxpose@imaginefx.com



Life lessons If we could go back in time and pass on career advice to our younger selves, what would we say? **Ruth Hamilton** asked four leading artists this very question – and their replies might help you right now

“I wish I could tell my younger self that...”

1 Everybody wings it sometimes (and that's absolutely fine)

When she first started out, digital artist and character designer **Loish** struggled with Impostor Syndrome; feeling like everyone else knew exactly what they were doing and



had fully mastered their skills. But she eventually realised that learning as you go along is no bad thing.

“A lot of people are just doing the best they can and adapting to different situations in life and in their career,” she says. “What helped me was to just jump in and wing it, and always do the best I could – and accept that this was enough. I usually had more skills than I thought I did, and also an ability to adapt and learn new skills based on the situation.”

“You can't go in fully prepared, so just get started and go for it!” says Loish.

THE PANEL OF ARTISTS...

Lois van Baarle



Known online as Loish, the Dutch character design artist has built up a huge following on social media.

www.loish.net

Finnian MacManus



Creative director Finnian has extensive experience working in the film and video games industries.

www.fmacmanus.com

Clayton Henry



Clayton's been part of the comics industry for over 20 years. His clients include Marvel and DC Comics.

www.artstation.com/superb16

Peter Brockhammer



Peter is a Berlin-based character designer and concept artist working full-time as a freelancer.

www.pietmaen.com



IN A HAPPY PLACE

Freelance concept artist and writer Sean Murray reveals that taking on another job actually helped him achieve balance in his working life.

Page 29



BONE COLLECTOR

The studio may be a little higgledy-piggledy, but this is where Allen Williams creates his striking fantasy art – with plenty of real-life reference materials.

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YOUR VIEWS, YOUR ART

Find out what your fellow readers think of recent articles in ImagineFX, and what they'd like to see. Plus, art that's caught our eye on social media.

Page 37

2 Life experiences will feed into your creative output



“Building upon your knowledge of unrelated subjects contributes a ton to your growth, both as an artist and as a person,” says creative director and concept artist **Finnian MacManus**, whose time spent travelling helped define his artistic style and continues to shape his work today. “The more you can absorb from the world that you’re passionate about and then bring back into you art, the better.”

Finnian MacManus really values his year spent living abroad in several countries.

“Building upon your knowledge of unrelated subjects contributes a ton to your growth...”



Clayton Henry has grown to appreciate the importance of teamwork.

3 It's not all about you, you, you

It's one thing having talent, but working well with others can also have a big impact on your professional trajectory. “Be considerate to the rest of the creative team. Include them in



emails. Address their concerns,” says comic book artist **Clayton Henry**. “This is one I had to learn the hard way. At times, I thought my creative instincts outweighed the others’ opinions. That was stupid. It probably cost me gigs early on in my career.”

4 Don't branch out too quickly

When you're first starting out, it can seem like there's a million things to learn and a million cool techniques to try, but **Finnian** suggests keeping your focus narrow to begin with. "Dedicate yourself relentlessly to mastering a few key skills, rather than branching out in the beginning."



"Make work that you love, and don't try to mimic others," recommends Finnian.

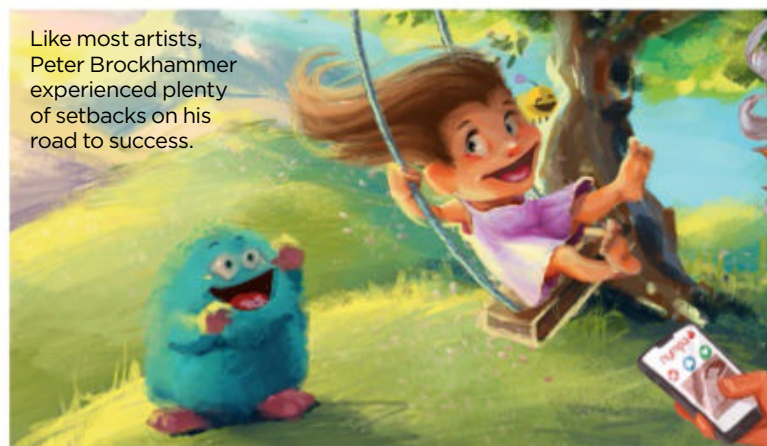


5 You have to give people a reason to notice you



"I got too comfortable at the beginning of my career," says **Clayton**. "I thought the entire comic book industry was going to take notice of me and I wouldn't have to search for new opportunities." That didn't happen, and within a few years he was bumped right back to the start line, working in a retail job he hated. "It took several months, but I used that time to work on my portfolio and get back into the comics industry." The lesson? Don't get complacent.

Like most artists, Peter Brockhammer experienced plenty of setbacks on his road to success.



6 Professional setbacks don't equal lack of talent



At the start of his career, **Peter Brockhammer**, an illustrator, concept artist and character designer, applied for countless 2D concept artist roles, and received one rejection after another. He ended up doubting his abilities. "People around me always said, 'How did you not get the job? You're so talented.' That always confused me, because the industry showed me the opposite," he recalls. Getting knocked back is part of even the most talented artists' stories. Being able to maintain confidence and enthusiasm despite that is the real skill.



Commissions have unexpectedly come Loish's way thanks to people seeing her personal work.

“Always make some time – however much you can spare – for your personal creative endeavours”

7 Personal art can open doors



At art school, **Loish's** teachers weren't enamoured with her personal style, so she ended up relegating that to her own free time. Nowadays, her personal art is a fruitful sideline, leading to two books and a popular Patreon page.

“Maintaining a habit of drawing personal art has opened up unexpected opportunities for me,” she explains. “I’m a huge believer in not putting all your eggs in one basket, so my tip to freelance artists is to always make some time – however much you can spare – for your personal creative endeavours outside of your work, if only for the fact that you get to make something that’s uniquely yours.” ➡

8 Career success requires planning

Just because you have natural artistic talents doesn't mean that a creative career will land in your lap from out of nowhere. For that to happen you need a plan.



"Sit down and write down what your strengths and weaknesses are," says

Peter. "For every point you'll have further thoughts. Step by step you'll create a complex overview of yourself with many branches. This will help you come up with a plan to improve strengths and eliminate weaknesses."

More goes into career success than just skill at drawing.



Push your art strengths while working to eliminate your creative weak spots.



Loish's creative routine is designed to help her overcome the roadblocks that make it hard for artists to learn and grow consistently over time.

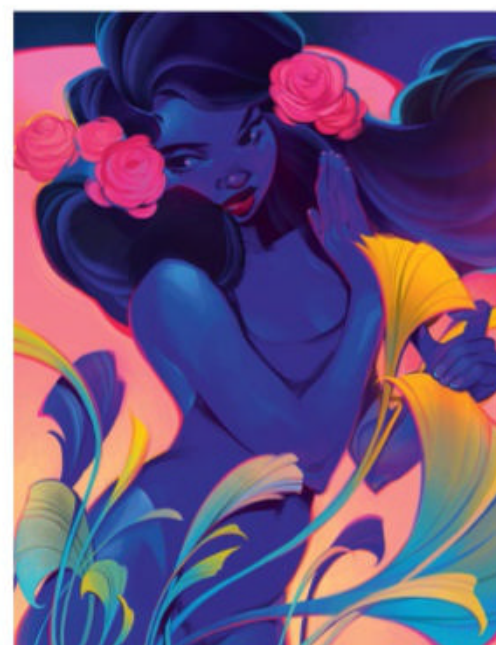
9 A creative routine will help to keep you sane

Getting fired up and inspired is one thing, but maintaining that enthusiasm over long periods is quite another. "It's



normal to feel super-creative and motivated for a short while, but that fizzles out sometimes, or you end up working so hard that you burn yourself out," says **Loish.** "The most important thing is to have a regular and consistent

drawing routine that consists of a mix of finished works, and sketching and exploration. That will keep your art improving and growing, and keep your creativity going for the long run. Routine and consistency works better than always trying to ride a wave of intense creative energy."





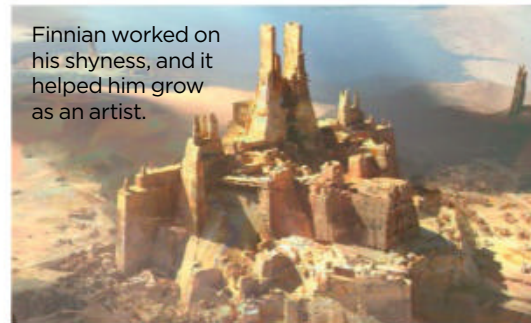
© DC Comics

10 Be your own competition



"I recommend trying to outdo yourself as often as you can," says **Clayton**. He challenges himself by tackling difficult perspectives or expressive body language and faces. "This job is supposed to be hard," he adds. "Meeting a challenge you set for yourself can only help you improve."

Tackling things you know you can't do is a great way to advance your skills, believes Clayton.



Finnian worked on his shyness, and it helped him grow as an artist.

11 Step out from your own shadow

"I used to be an extremely shy person when I first got into college. I would hesitate to make new friends, I was not good at presentations, or being confident about my work or experience. It absolutely held me back



in school," remembers **Finnian**. "I realised that I needed to fix how I approached life, and how I represented myself. It

was a change that took many years and a lot of concentration and hard work, but I can say that I enjoy life much more now."

Don't let your workload stray beyond sensible limits, says Loish.



12 Learn to say no

"Maintain boundaries as a freelancer. As I took on more work, I felt compelled to constantly say 'Yes' to my clients – to prove I was up to the task. But I forgot about boundaries, and became consumed by that work, until I was unable to work because I had exhausted myself on a job," recalls



Loish. "Learn to say no, learn what the limits are of what you can do, and learn to balance work and art with other things in life that are just as important." ➔

"Be brave and seek other contact with the industry," urges Peter, who benefited from seeking out pro artists at events.

13 Industry events are packed with potential



"Having contacts in the games industry is the most important thing," says **Peter**. For him, attending gaming events large and small, and making an effort to really maximise the potential of those, has been key. "Have your portfolio checked by companies on site and get feedback. Talk to your idols on site, take part in workshops and then meet for a drink with those you have met," he suggests.

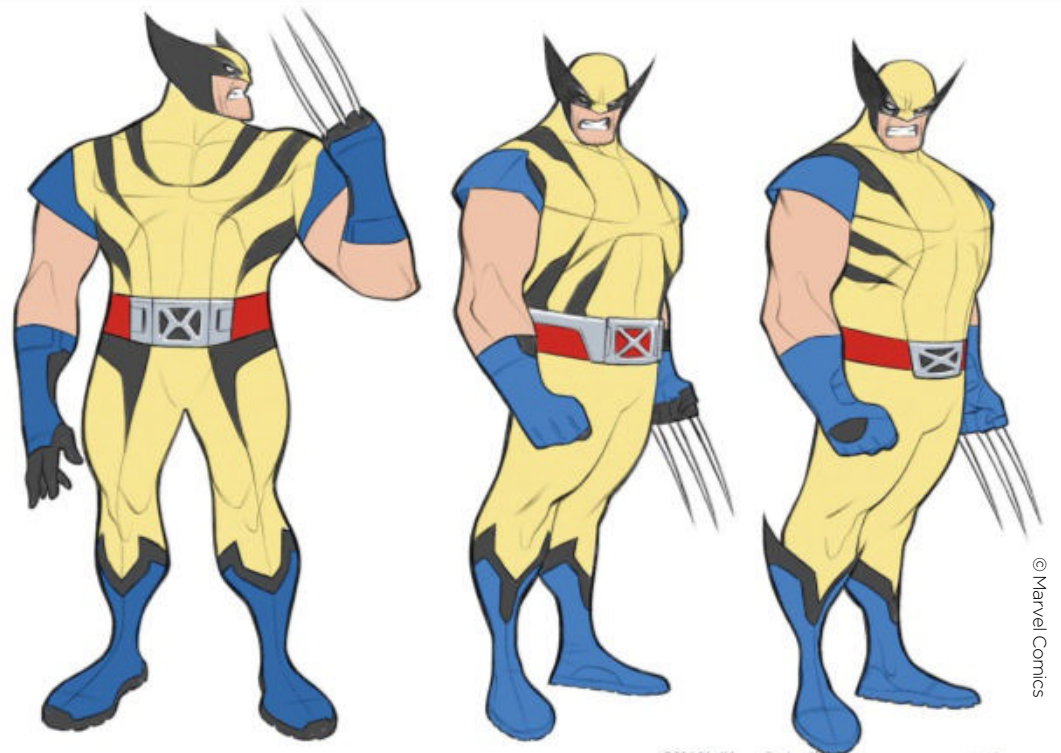
“Talk to your idols on site, take part in workshops and then meet for a drink with those you have met”

14 Art all the time is a recipe for disaster

"I tend to get lost in my work and since art was my passion and hobby before pursuing it as a career, I don't have a whole lot of hobbies left now," says **Loish**. The temptation to spend all your time working can quickly lead to physical issues (sitting in one position all day isn't good for anyone) as well as taking a toll on your mental well-being. "In reality, downtime from work is almost as important as the work itself, especially if you want to keep doing it in the long run. So over time, I started to take my downtime more seriously and prioritise exercise and mental health even more, because it's integral to being able to do my job well."



"It's a bit of a cliché, but finding a good work/life balance has been a huge challenge," admits Loish.



© Marvel Comics

15 Be aware of creative trends

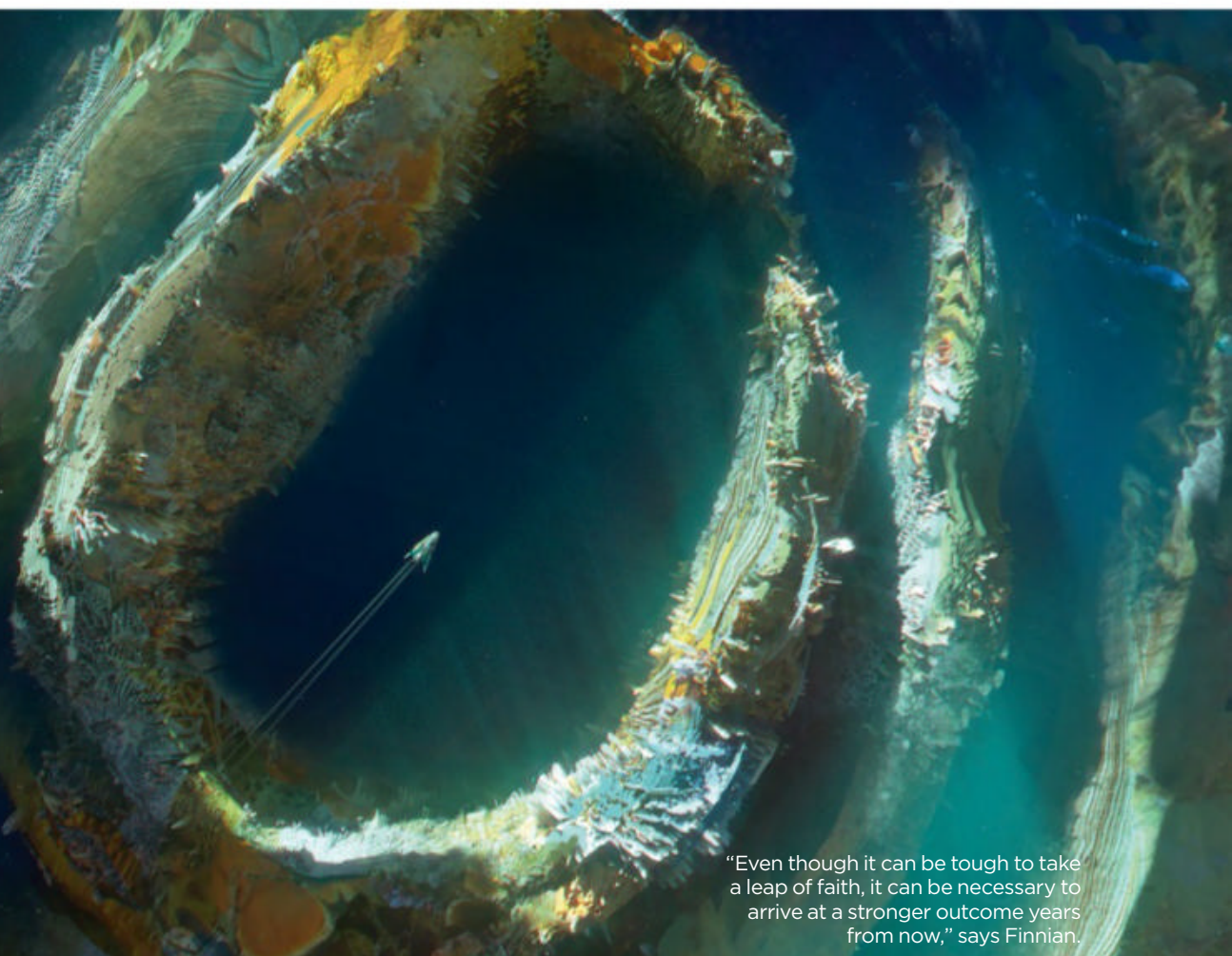
"Back in the mid-90s, a lot of art students started focusing on digital art. I think Jurassic Park gave them a push in that direction," recalls **Clayton**. "I thought Photoshop and computer art were for people who didn't know how to draw or paint traditionally. Damn, I was stupid. Now, 25 years later I'm drawing my comic pages entirely on my iPad. If I had given digital art an honest try way back when I was 18 or 19, I'd be much further along now."



© DC Comics

16 Sometimes you need to move on to new challenges

Being able to recognise when you've learned as much as you're going to in a particular job, and at that point moving on, is vital if you're going to continue growing as an artist. "Over time, if people stay in the same role, stagnation can happen and development slows," says **Finnian**. Starting a new role or taking on an unfamiliar job, scary though it may be, can be a great catalyst for growth. "The most growth happens when we're forced to do things we aren't used to, and have to learn on the spot," he adds. ●



"Even though it can be tough to take a leap of faith, it can be necessary to arrive at a stronger outcome years from now," says Finnian.



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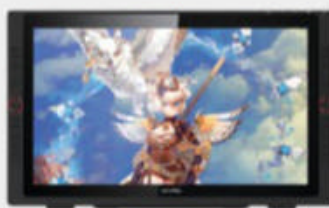
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Innovator 16



Artist 22R Pro



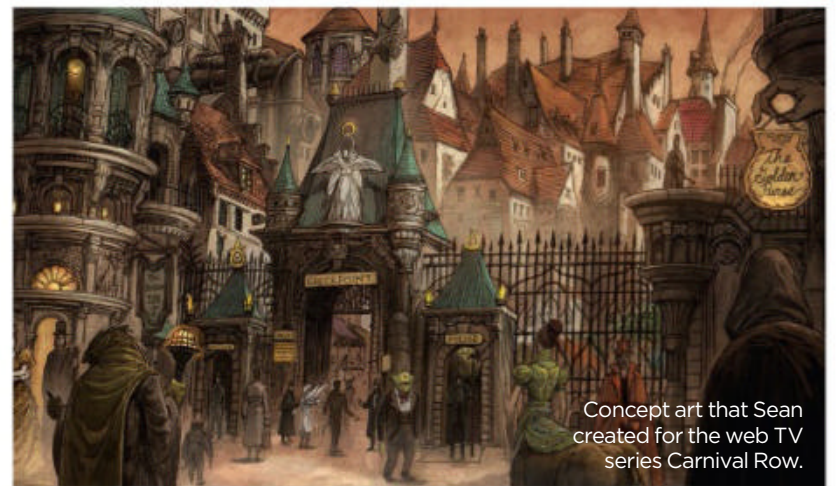
Artist 22 2nd Gen



Artist 24 Pro



Sean Murray's home studio is set up for working both traditionally and digitally.



Concept art that Sean created for the web TV series Carnival Row.



A clockwork paladin escapes through the alleyways of Garou.

A day in the life of... Sean Murray

Balanced life Discover how the freelance artist and teacher has achieved equilibrium in his working day

"I wake up at 7:30am and make coffee while I'm packing my son's lunch and getting him ready for school. The weather in Florida is really nice, so I'll sit on my back porch with my iced coffee and draw in my sketchbook."

At 9.30am I'll go inside and move to the computer. In normal times I'd be sketching at a coffee shop. Drawing in my sketchbook warms me up creatively for the day.

From 10am to 12:30pm I have my most productive time and generally work on freelance projects when I'm not teaching. I teach three classes a week, mostly juniors and seniors, so a lot of my afternoon is having one-on-one mentorship sessions on their thesis projects and holding office hours. My productivity crashes around 3pm, so I try to go for a walk, bike ride

or do fulfilment orders from my online store. Shortly after that, my son arrives home from school and we do dinner and play a board game together as a family. After my wife and son go to sleep, I have my second most productive time period, from 9:30pm till 1-2am, and then start all over the next day.

When I was freelancing full-time, I would balance five or six clients at a time and there wasn't a lot of time for my own projects or my family. Teaching has enabled me to have a more balanced life, where I can equally focus on family, art, teaching and my freelance work."

Sean is from New York but lives in Florida. He's worked on projects like Carnival Row, Trollhunters, The Rise of the Titans and Dungeons & Dragons Online. See more of Sean's art at www.seanandrewmurray.com.



Concept Art Association is an organisation committed to elevating and raising the profile of concept artists, their art and their involvement in the entertainment industries. Its annual Concept Art Awards Show showcases and recognises behind-the-scenes individuals working in entertainment concept art.
www.conceptartassociation.com



Morgana's Castle is concept art created for Tales of Arcadia, an animated Netflix series.

ImagineNation Artist in Residence



Artist photo © Danin Drahos (www.danindrahos.com)





The Moon Thief: "You have taken what does not belong to you. Five days hence I will take the moon."



Allen Williams

Art alchemy This artist's studio has a presence in his own house, complete with its own rituals...



There really isn't any glitz or (non-magical) glamour in my studio. It has, over the years, sorted itself into a functionality that's specific to me. It is, and will continue to be, a messy place and you're most likely to end up with graphite on you somewhere if you're ever in for a visit. I do, to be sure, periodically clean it, or rather sort the materials into their functioning piles.

Sometimes I reorganise the studio just to reacquaint myself with the odds and ends that I've collected over the years. I have a degree of object impermanence that I'm told is associated with ADHD and I prefer to subscribe it to that rather than just... ahem, age. I tend to want to see the papers, pencils and paints so that I don't forget them. I can't tell you how often I've re-ordered a particular tool or supply, only to find it a day later.

My studio is organised in relative stations with much crossover. ➡➡

I keep quite a few bones and animal specimens in my studio mostly for texture reference. I believe this bone is from a bison. I also have an emu leg and a large part of a horse spine.

ImagineNation Artist in Residence

Various iPad mounts around the room, on my desk, easel and one holding a platter of oil paints on that metal pipe.

My metal shelves have dozens of small and large magnets (lodestones) arranged in arcane ways, used to keep my palette brushes at arm's length.

I always have one or two book holders available to hold inspirational artbooks in view.



This is my 3D printer, a Form 2, which is used for small maquettes. Next to it is a bag of bird wings (and some feet) sent to me by an unknown admirer.

Over time I've acquired many of these palette knives. As I work it's convenient to just reach out and grab one from this magnetic array.



Artist news, software & events

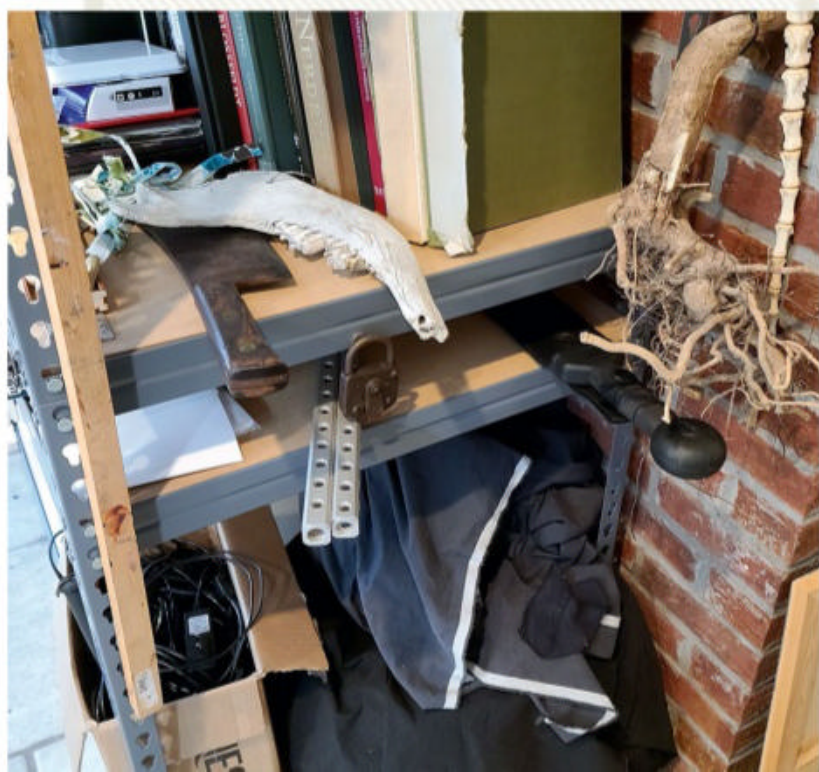
Yes, I have seven lights on my desk, all 150W equivalent

The black apparatus over my drawing desk is a Glide Gear camera mount for photographing art and recording my process.

My boutonniere (from our wedding 25 years ago) and to the left a light in my studio that occasionally bleeds.



“I tend to want to see the papers, pencils and paints so that I don't forget them”



My Aeron chair, purchased about 10 years ago and still the most comfortable desk chair I've ever owned.

Some accumulated reference materials: a meat cleaver, a jawbone, aeroplane-grade aluminium nunchaku, a haunted lock and a gladius-style machete.



Precariously balanced over my backdoor is a sickle. It is sometimes necessary.



Wormwood Saint: "It is often in desolate spaces that the spirit may find stillness. Amidst sadness and decay therein is healing. Your pain is not a sin."

➡ Sometimes I paint where I normally draw; sometimes I prefer to draw standing at my easel. Luckily, the digital area is always self-contained but to be honest I have a second monitor on my drawing table and drawing supplies on and around my Cintiq desk. I also have the capacity to sketch on my iPad, although I usually prefer to sketch on paper.

THREE-DIMENSIONAL WORK

On a side note, I have two types of 3D printers: a Form 2 Resin printer I use for making small maquettes for myself, and an Ender 3 PLA printer for making and adapting tools. Recently, I've been using the Form to print 3D scans of animal skulls and bones.

As befitting the nature of my work my studio is occupied by many bones, stones, bits of tree roots and of course a few creatures. I've recently added a living plant. It's happy, I'm sure of it.

I've recently moved most of my sculpting tools into the front room of the house. It's to be a second studio space and yes, I will likely keep a small drawing table and supplies in that room as well.

“As befitting the nature of my work my studio is occupied by bones, stones, bits of tree roots and a few creatures”

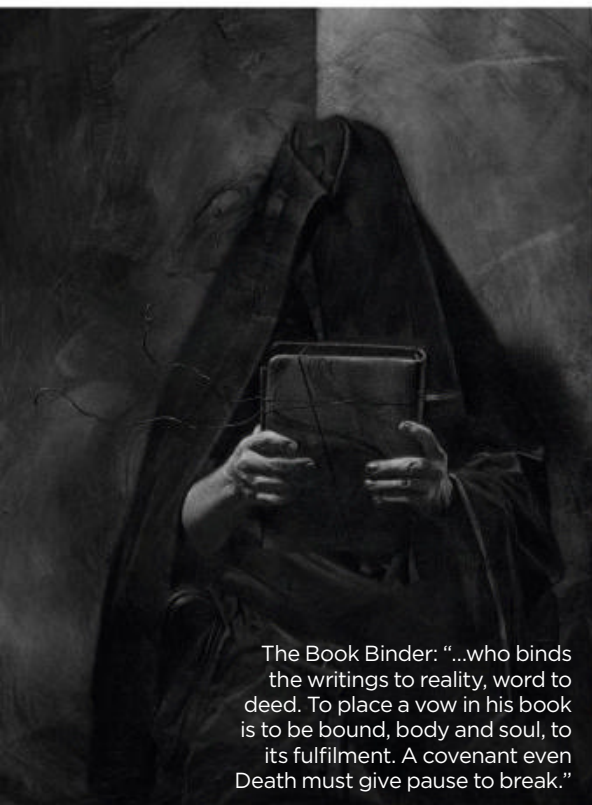


You should know my studio is a collection of things that I've been building for years and would likely have more of a cabinet of curiosities feel to it if I were concerned at all for presentation. As it is, it's more like the lair of a scatterbrained biologist or alchemist with an unrestrained artist wrapping it up. My studio is very much

I've purchased and mounted a piece of thin metal on my easel, which is covered in paper. I use magnets to hold various things in place as I work. The heavy magnets are for positioning artwork.

a combination of traditional and current methodology, although for my own work I usually execute the finished pieces traditionally. I use digital means for much of my contract work because it is the easiest format for rapid changes – for me, at least.

Allen is an award-winning illustrator, concept designer and fine artist. His personal work has a strong basis in reality but always flows into otherworldly aspects. He primarily works in graphite, gouache and oils. See more of his art, and details of his latest book Covenant: The Art of Allen Williams, at www.allenwilliamsstudio.com.



The Book Binder: "...who binds the writings to reality, word to deed. To place a vow in his book is to be bound, body and soul, to its fulfilment. A covenant even Death must give pause to break."



One of my relief sculptures on a tarnished silver tray.



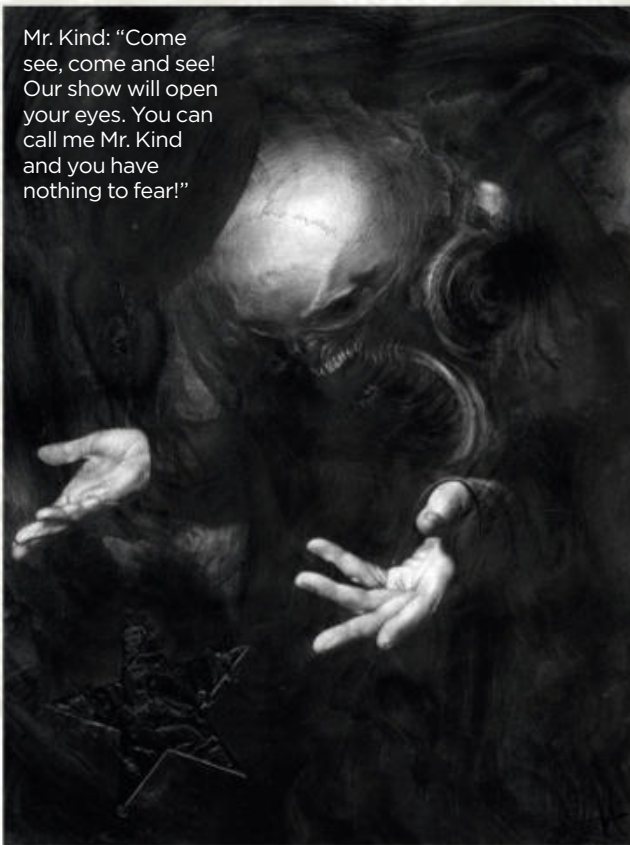
My mummified rat, found in the walls of an old house. Note: all biological reference that I acquire is ethically sourced, usually found, and if it's sent to me I ask that it be so as well.



This staff was a gift from a friend. We have great thunderstorms here and when I walk in a storm I like to take this staff. I think it's because the neighbours believe I can control the weather with it. I don't know where they get ideas like that.



Here's a close-up of my monkey.



Mr. Kind: "Come see, come and see! Our show will open your eyes. You can call me Mr. Kind and you have nothing to fear!"

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ImagineFX

Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



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



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LGBT artists

I've been a digital subscriber for much of last year, after getting physical copies. For much of that time I haven't seen a lot in terms of cartooning as a mainstream genre as well as other art from more established artists. I'd like to see at least one issue dedicated to cartoon character art, which could further inspire me.

Second, as a transgender artist, it would be good if you could feature more LGBT artists and/or LGBT and transgender character art, as the CGI art industry is becoming more diverse.

Davina

Claire replies Hello Davina, nice to hear from you. I'm pleased to say that in my time as editor I've definitely seen an improvement in acknowledging our responsibility to be more diverse in this industry. It's absolutely something we consider at ImagineFX. We've featured trans and LGBT artists in the past and will continue to represent these artists and their stories in the future. Thank you for your views on this subject and making me continue to think about my part to play in making this happen.

As for cartoon art, I'm not sure if you had a particular style in mind because it's a relatively broad subject, but I'll look into whether we can feature different styles of cartoon art.



DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE?
Don't worry – you can get hold of issue 199 at <http://ifxm.ag/single-ifx>.

Many readers have switched from print to digital editions. For more info on iPad or Android options turn to page 36.



We rounded up eight of the best online concept art schools in issue 196 of ImagineFX.

Where to start?

As a beginner who drew growing up and throughout grade school but ultimately stopped, where would you recommend learning, possibly online? Are there courses/ websites you'd suggest for building an art foundation from the ground up? Thank you in advance for taking the time to answer my questions.

Christopher

Claire replies Christopher, I'm so pleased to hear that you've decided to get back into art. As to your question, the answer would depend on what you wanted to do and what your skill-set is right now. I would (of course) suggest you keep taking a look at ImagineFX magazine and either our YouTube channel (<http://youtube.com/imaginefx>), or Stan Prokopenko's Proko YouTube channel for guidance and help. You'll get a good idea of where you can take your art next. Good luck on your journey.

No politics please

I purchase ImagineFX every month and appreciate the forum it provides for art and artists. One thing I most appreciate about it is that it's one of the few periodicals today where politics does not enter, which is a welcome respite in a world obsessed by politics. This is why I was so disappointed to see a letter to the editor published in the magazine that referred to "the orange-faced clown leaving the White House" and the need to "heal." Please, please, please leave politics out of my favourite magazine.

Garrett

Claire replies Hello Garrett, thank you for your email and for honestly expressing your opinion. First to clarify to everyone that the words referred to above came from a reader's letter and is their opinion. This page is not to be seen as the opinion of the magazine. But while our letters page is for readers to share their thoughts and opinions, in the case you mention I think you're right, it was an oversight on our part to include this in our magazine and we should have edited it out.



New works that have grabbed our attention



Danielle
[@danyenyka](https://www.instagram.com/danyenyka)



Kait Matthews
[@kaitmatthewsart](https://www.instagram.com/kaitmatthewsart)



Sarah
[@pendragonist](https://www.instagram.com/pendragonist)

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

CELEBRATING OUR

200TH ISSUE!

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX

Turn to **page 8**
to get hold of
workshop videos
created by our
featured artists!

As we mark 200 issues and 15 years of **ImagineFX**, we look back at some of the milestone moments that have helped shape the magazine and the wonderful art community that it serves



Two hundred issues over 15 years – that’s how long **ImagineFX** has been bringing you the best fantasy and sci-fi digital art. That’s not to mention discovering, championing and working with the world’s most inspiring artists to put stylus to tablet, or brush to canvas. And there’s been no shortage of highlights, either!

From the time our first issue was published in 2006, Team **ImagineFX** has scoured the globe to bring you the best technical tools to tackle your own work, and also that more elusive element that artists constantly require: inspiration. As a rule of thumb, if it’s inspired us, then we’ve been confident it’ll inspire you.

We wanted to share with you some of our favourite memories: from having front-row

seats as the digital art event industry boomed, to seeing our art heroes open up their studios. There’s been ground-breaking tech and sad losses along the way. But one constant for us has been you, our passionate readers – and we certainly hope we’ve returned the favour.

We’ve had a lot of fun putting together **ImagineFX**’s milestone moments, so grab a fresh brew, sit back and enjoy!



Issue one of ImagineFX

In January 2006 digital art was in its infancy. Launching a related magazine seemed a bold move, but it was a hit! Issue one featured cover artist **Kyoung-Min Cho** together with **George Hull**, **Jonny Duddle**, **Don Seegmiller**, **Henning Ludvigsen**, **Frazer Irving** and **Robert Chang**. And in FXPosé? **Only Sparth** and **Jamie Jones**!



Artist in Residence

Debuted in issue 43 with **Lee Carter**, and still one of our most popular features, Artist in Residence goes behind the scenes of an artist's studio. These range from the tidy to the chaotic; like **Magic: The Gathering** artist **Steve Argyle's**, which he dubbed "a decadent little corner crockpot of clutter, slow roasting Heaven and Hell".



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Mining Middle-earth's riches

Fantasy art and fantasy literature has always been entwined, and though there have been many classic combinations since the popularisation of the genres in the 19th century, it was the 29 July 1954 release of *The Lord of the Rings* that set generations of artistic imaginations alight. ImagineFX has had the pleasure of collaborating with artists synonymous with JRR Tolkien's world. We've worked closely with **John Howe** and **Alan Lee** - whether talking about their original LotR book illustrations, or their concept work on *The Hobbit* films in issue 91. And, as the films began to dominate everything from 2001, we've also worked closely with the army of creatives over at Weta. So many highlights from one of our favourite fantasy worlds!



Wacom launches the first Cintiq

Released in 2007, three years before the iPad, Wacom's Cintiq enabled artists to draw directly onto a screen without having to look up at a second monitor. With continued updates, such as the Cintiq 22 (pictured), Wacom built on this early advantage to remain the champion of drawing tablets today. ➡

ImagineFX's Best Moments



ImagineFX launches its digital edition

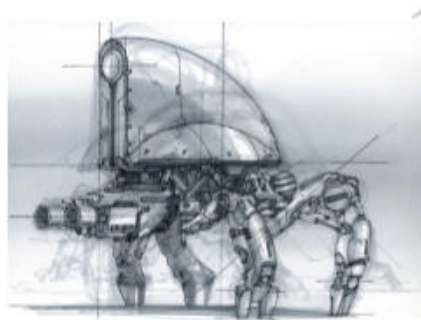
In October 2011, ImagineFX became one of the world's first magazines to launch a digital edition on Apple's Newsstand platform. Today, wherever you are in the world, you can enjoy a new issue the instant it's published: on **iOS**, **Android**, **Windows**, **Mac** or **ebook**. See page 36 to get your digital subscription.

© Netflix



Procreate released

The launch of digital painting app Procreate in 2011 blew everyone's minds by turning the iPad from a novelty into a serious art tool. It's since been used for everything from **Kyle Lambert's** iconic Stranger Things poster to **Doug Chiang's** concepts and artwork for Star Wars.



The Force is strong with this one

There's no underestimating the impact that Star Wars had on, well, everyone! So it was a massive day when the team sent issue 74 to the printers – an issue designed with an oversized backing card to make the **Brothers Hildebrandt's** poster art look like it was part of the original action figure packaging. And as Star Wars changed and grew for the next generation, we were able to speak to the artistic movers and shakers then too. Whether it was the sequels' art director **Aaron McBride** or Star Wars concept art stalwart **Ian McCaig**, it's been a thrill to see the world-building art before we saw the films! Issue 129's **Kylo Ren vs Rey** covers was also a stand-out moment, as was working with **Christian Alzmann** (legendary creator of Baby Yoda) and visiting ILM's London office for a Studio Profile.



200 issues of ImagineFX

Winning hand

Can you remember the Applibot explosion? In the early 2010s a team of 20-something Japanese art lovers started hiring the cream of digital artists – **Dave Rapoza**, **Clint Cearley**, **Simon Goinard** and **Laura Sava** to name a few – to create work for their new online card game, Legend of the Cryptids. It was a wonderfully insane throw of the dice on an online take on what has been close to ImagineFX's heart from the beginning: trading game card art. From the work of **Brad Rigney** to **Cynthia Shepherd**, for TCGs such as Magic: The Gathering or Android: Netrunner, there's something particular about card art that has always fascinated and compelled ImagineFX readers. Perhaps it's because of the confines of space, of telling story and conveying character in such a small space, but it's undoubtedly been a mainstay in the magazine over the years.



Manga goes mainstream

Die-hard fans of the genre might raise an eyebrow at our use of the term 'manga'. Try as you might, you're not going to find many Japanese comics on the cover or in the pages of ImagineFX. That's because over the years we've moved to our own elastic, broader definition of the term.

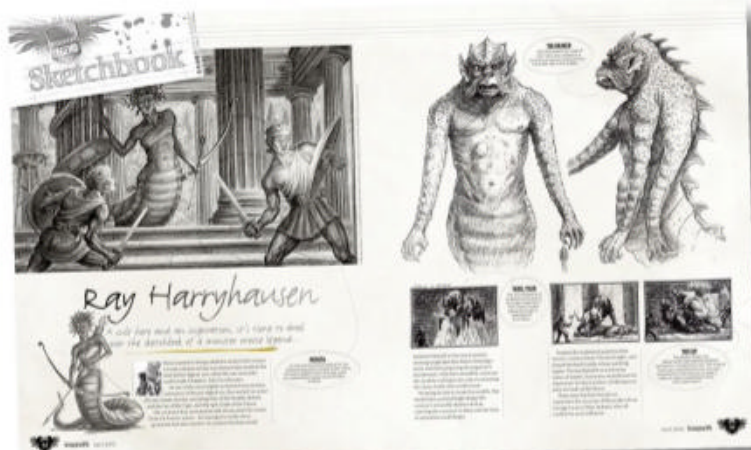
Following the likes of online hits such as **Stanley Lau's** Pepper (turn the page for more), **Chester Ocampo**, **Genzoman** and **Ilya Kuvshinov**, ImagineFX manga occupies the exciting world of highly rendered and wildly coloured portraits – many of which have adorned our covers. It's remained one of the most popular genres for the magazine. ➡➡



Past masters

ImagineFX has been honoured to feature the best artists in the world, and it's also had the bitter-sweet honour of featuring ground-breaking artists who set out the blueprint for modern digital sci-fi and fantasy art, only to pass the torch to the next generation. Artists like **Syd Mead**, **Frank Frazetta**, **Ralph McQuarrie**, **Ray Harryhausen**, **Moebius** – we've featured so many of the true art innovators in our pages over the years, and sadly said goodbye to them, too.

In many ways digital art is at the forefront of technological innovation, but every great artist who creates mind-blowing art in ImagineFX is standing on the shoulders of giants.





Stanley Lau on Pepper

Find out how a piece of personal art born out of boredom struck a chord with artists around the world

Back in 2004, Stanley Lau created a character that became a sensation on the artist forums of the day. Here, he shares the story behind a fan art phenomenon.

Why did you create Pepper?

I was bored working for advertising and branding clients, and wanted to create something for myself. A character that I'd love to draw, and which would take me out of my comfort zone.

How did Pepper become an icon?

There was no social media then, so digital artists would meet and

share work on DeviantArt. I posted about 20 pieces of Pepper art, and very quickly people started making fan art of her.

Because of this overwhelming response, I decided to create a contest on DeviantArt to

encourage people to draw their own version of Pepper. Over a month, I received about a thousand entries. I selected 100 of the submissions and printed my first Pepper book.

Why do you think Pepper was so popular with artists?

Partly because the character is so flexible. Pepper had no back story,

and people saw so many versions of her online, they could imagine doing their own version. There were no boundaries in how to interpret the character.

How have things changed since Pepper was launched?

Today, artists face a lot of pressure from social media. Communities like DeviantArt were friendly and supportive. But today, everyone is fighting for attention, and many artists aren't very comfortable interacting in that way. Instead of motivating you, it sometimes cripples you.



In 2014, you worked with ImagineFX on an exclusive Pepper cover and workshop (issue 117). What are your memories of this time?

It was really exciting to be on the cover of ImagineFX magazine. Especially as I was told my cover was one of the best-selling of the previous 50 issues! In general, I was very grateful such a magazine for artists existed. It was great that new digital artists had something physical to hold and read, and that they could aim to be a part of it themselves. ➡➡





PEPPER
Stanley Lau painted his famous character for the cover of issue 43 while laid up in bed feeling poorly. What a trooper!

ImagineFX's Best Moments

The days of forums

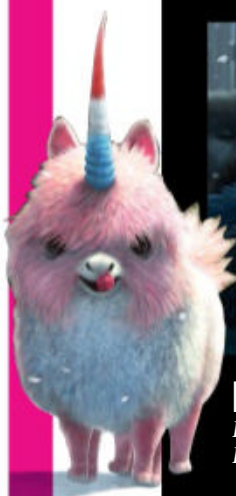
A lot has changed in 15 years, but for those around at the beginning of ImagineFX – and the burgeoning world of digital art itself – one of the biggest changes has been the decline of online art forums.

Many of you will have fond memories of the online comps, the 'crits' and the camaraderie. **ConceptArt.org**, **DeviantArt** and our own ImagineFX forum were the home to honest feedback for anyone who wanted to share their art to the community. Although social media offered an 'upgrade' into the realms of self-promotion, coupled with many more ways to communicate in the realms of digital art, for many the genuine sense of helping fellow artists was lost when the forums fell out of favour.



Traditional skills

ImagineFX was always a magazine that revelled in the cutting edge of digital art, but also one that cherished the teachers and techniques of 'traditional' art. So in issue 102 we brought in a whole new section to the mag, dedicated to the world of acrylics, oils and primed canvases! With art from **Ron Lemen**, **Michael Whelan**, **Jim Pavelec** and **Chris Legaspi** our trad section was a hit, going to show that no matter the medium, the inspiration and incentive to create fantastical art is always the common denominator.



The secret of art success according to Bobby Chiu

We catch up with the long-time friend of ImagineFX, and talk breaking into the industry, art goals and LightBox Expo

Bobby Chiu's been contributing to ImagineFX since the beginning, and is now leading the charge on making digital art globally renowned with his LightBox Expo. We speak to the stalwart artist about subway lessons and the state of art today.

What was your first art job?

I started working when I was 17, designing for Thinkway Toys. It was 1995, and I got the job because I was working in the warehouse, but on my time off I'd learn this new software called Illustrator. One day, I was bringing these bunch of toys to be fixed (that was one of the jobs) and everybody looked so busy, so I said, "Can I do something?" And I guess I did good, so they moved me out of the warehouse to the art department.

When did you discover ImagineFX?

My earliest memory of ImagineFX was just being excited to see the magazine! I had a tutorial in there – this was either issue three or six, the Big Bad Bunny Eater image (still one of my most memorable pieces). And then just seeing all the other



artists in there. It was this really wonderful, overwhelming feeling of... acceptance isn't the word, but I found my home, I found my people. And I remember thinking, "I hope we keep going in this direction."

Is the secret to your success being nice to people, working hard and luck?

I was talking to a friend about this very topic the other day. Take hard work, for example:



LIGHTBOX

Bobby painted this piece to celebrate the opening day of LightBox Expo, the event that he co-launched in 2019.



A LITTLE LOVE FOR A TIGER

"Love can be found when you know where to look," says Bobby.

we've all known people who have worked hard, but who haven't succeeded in their line of work. Or how about being friendly? Now, I like being friendly, but there are a lot of jerks that do very well.

So what's the secret sauce here? The biggest thing, for me, seems to be empathy. I don't think effort or art skills totally, totally need to be there. There are plenty of technically really not-so-hot art that's very successful, because of the idea of creating something that the audience can relate to. So I'd rather boil it down to empathy, the skill of tapping into, "How does this other person feel?"

That's how I generally look at art. How is the viewer going to feel? What are they going to be thinking about, where are they going to be looking at, and how do I want them to feel? If you align that, you can hopefully give this emotional impact that will be memorable.

Was it always the goal to teach?

No, I couldn't get a job at first, so I thought, "People respect teaching, so I guess I'll start there." And I couldn't get a teaching job, because I didn't have experience.

So I started teaching in the subways of Toronto. I put it out there on CGTalk.com [the forum arm of CGSociety]. I'd post, "The Bobby Chiu Subway Sketch Group met up today, and here's the sketches!" I did that for literally about a year, for every week, before people started to come!

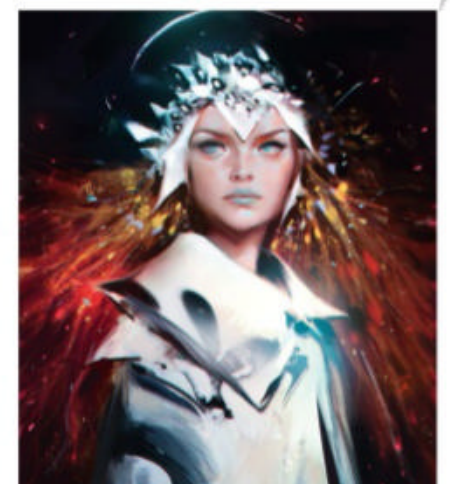
Fast forward, and all of a sudden we're in the newspaper, on Canadian television, and people have made Bobby Chiu subway sketch groups all over the world, like in 30-plus countries, everywhere. So that's what really helped me get my name out there. You got to think, whatever your limit is, maybe times that by three or four. But be ready to times it by 10!



Superstars artists come to the fore

Patreon was founded in 2013, and with it came a slew of newly empowered young artists. The likes of **WLOP** and **Loish** (holders of the first and second most popular Patreons at the time of writing) have since been able to sell their skills and tips, straight to their fans, getting popular through word of mouth and promotion on social media.

Elsewhere, artists such as **Charlie Bowater** and **Ross Tran** used platforms like Pinterest and YouTube to show off their creativity and expand their audience. With the reach and unique nature of social media come cons as well as pros, but there are many artists making a sizeable side hustle – if not primary income – from them. ➡



What's different in digital art today compared to when you?

Everybody on average has got a lot better. Things like Schoolism, things like ImagineFX, really played a big role in this, as well as all the forums back then. All those forums gave all this wonderful advice, all these critiques. Then came social media, which changed the landscape again. It's so binary now – do you like it or not? There's no, "Well, I kinda like it." You've gotta choose, which is... horrible! It's not healthy for our community. What's healthy for our community is the real nice discussions about things.

LightBox Expo Online will be held virtually in 2021 on 10-12 September, and will return to the physical event in 2022. You can discover more of Bobby's art at www.artstation.com/bobbychiu.

EARLY BLOOM

Bobby's cover art set the scene for issue 72's creature design special, featuring an animal with a fine sense of camouflage.



GOING VIRTUAL

When the pandemic closed down live events, Bobby and his team turned LightBox Expo into a online event.

ImagineFX's Best Moments

RORSCHACH

Dave Gibbon's exclusive art of Rorschach, one of the Watchmen, appeared on the cover of issue 42.



The Watchmen issue

2009 saw ImagineFX collaborate with legendary Watchmen artist **Dave Gibbons** on a world-exclusive cover painting, plus an in-depth workshop on how to paint Rorschach. As editor **Claire Howlett** recalls, "This was an iconic moment, not only because we got to meet Dave, but this era signalled that fantasy and comic art was no longer niche, but had gone mainstream. Avatar was the biggest film of that year and recent franchises like Harry Potter, Twilight and LOTR were all set in fantastical universes. It was a pivotal time that made people understand the importance and brilliance of the creatives we feature each and every month." ➡➡

200 issues of ImagineFX



ImagineFX's Best Moments

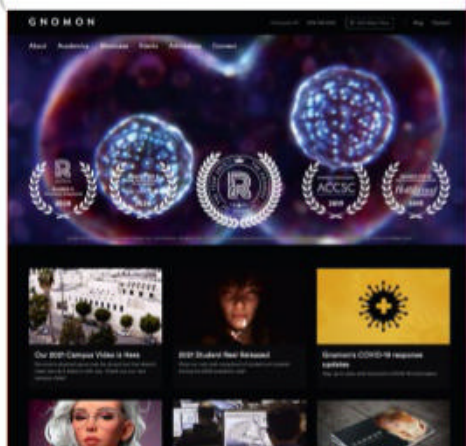


Marvel and DC

In the past 15 years, Marvel and DC have become global behemoths. But their top artists have continued to work with ImagineFX; on exclusive workshops and interviews, not to mention cover art by the likes of **Ken Lashley** (Black Panther), **Bilquis Evelyn** (Wonder Woman), **Jorge Jiménez** (Superman) and **Tony S Daniel** (Batman).

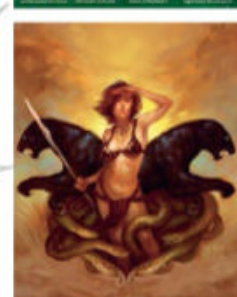
Real-world schools vs online courses

Just as the cooler side of social media was replacing the warmth of community-led online forums, around the same time (the 2010s) there seemed an influx of young art students looking for fresh ways to develop their art smarts. Many shunned bricks and mortar schools (which are prohibitively expensive in places like the US) and turned to online courses that were more narrower in scope to suit their needs. You can go for classes with single tutors like **Aaron Blaise**, **Marshall Vandruff** or **Proko**, or opt for bespoke online schooling from the likes of **Gnomon**, **Schoolism** or **CGMA**.



All those covers!

If you think of 200 issue of ImagineFX, you're sure to remember a lot of striking covers. Each ImagineFX cover image needs to make a statement. At the heart of all of our covers - this special issue's one included - is a piece of stunning cover art. We've worked with some of the world's best artists on our bespoke covers, including the Copic marker art of pin-up king **Adam Hughes** (issue 67), the chaotic line-art genius of **Kim Jung Gi** (issue 178), the ground-breaking sci-fi art of **Sparth** (issue 179), and the multi-talented **Karla Ortiz** (issue 28). And the art giant **Loish** brought colour to our celebratory 150th issue.





The rise and rise of digital art events

In the early 2000s art events were best summed up by the moveable city that is **San Diego Comic-Con**, but there was an indie revolution in the wings. Massive Black brought its rock 'n' roll personality to its annual global art events, and soon a rash of similar festival-inspired events caught on. **Trojan Horse was a Unicorn** introduced its Portugal-tinged strand of creative madness in 2013. The following year **Industry Workshops** opened up the side streets of London, and more recently **LightBox Expo** brought the full weight of the industry to Pasadena, California. We've also had huge success with our very own **Vertex**. Because of the Covid pandemic 2021's event was a virtual affair, but we expect ImagineFX's digital art event to return to London next year.



Always a pleasure, never a chore

The old saying, 'never meet your heroes,' just hasn't rung true for ImagineFX. From in-depth interviews in a Portugal canteen with 'godfather of digital art' **Craig Mullins**, to psychedelic mind journeys via email with **Ian Miller**, we've had the pleasure to ask the best in the business how they do what they do, and dig into why. And the real surprise? They've all been such lovely people to work with. No matter what corner of the fantasy art world you come from, we've managed to brain-pick the artists that have inspired the most. From The Dark Crystal's **Brian Froud** to Dynotopia's **James Gurney**, it's been our pleasure to work with these legends.

The best is yet to come...

So that's it - our roundup of the biggest art names, trends and personal highlights that it's been our privilege to enjoy over the past 200 issues. But of course, we wouldn't have made it without your help, so a big thank you from the ImagineFX team to all our readers. And here's to another 200 issues!



ImagineFX - here to help

There are many privileges that come with producing the best digital art magazine in the world, and chief among them is playing even the smallest of parts in the growth of a passionate artist. There have been many wonderful moments when an artist, such as **Miles Johnston**, appears our radar on our FXPosé pages before going on to paint the cover, as he did in issue 118. It's also been great to see friend of the mag **Cynthia Sheppard** provide so much insight in the old Q&A section of the mag, and then produce brilliant

workshops and covers - when she's not building worlds as senior art director at Wizards of the Coast.

There have been numerous examples of seeing artists reach the giddy heights in the industry, but equally as rewarding has been the constant inspiration and dialogue between us and you - our fantastic readers! If you've learned anything from one of the 200 issues you've picked up over the past 15 years, you've made it all worthwhile!



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PRINT AND DIGITAL BACK ISSUES



Issue 199

May 2021

Get started in animation! Learn from artists at Sony Pictures, Disney, Netflix and more! We also have 15 tips on how to break into the animation art industry. Plus, get better at keyframes, colour sketching and watercolours.



Issue 198

April 2021

Artist and author Tony DiTerlizzi provides this month's cover art, plus gives advice on how to become a book illustrator. Angela Sung reveals her colour techniques, we reveal how to get your dream job in art, and more!



Issue 197

March 2021

Learn new art skills and be inspired, with advice on lighting, storytelling, getting more from your doodles and more! We talk to acclaimed artist BlueBirdy, while pros tell us how they reach their creative and career goals.



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.

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Issue 195
January 2021



Issue 194
Christmas 2020



Issue 193
December 2020



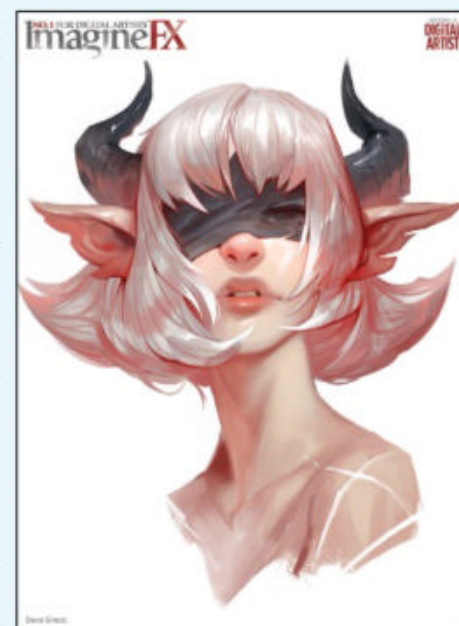
Issue 192
November 2020



Issue 191
October 2020



Issue 190
September 2020



Issue 189
August 2020



Issue 188
July 2020



Issue 187
June 2020



Issue 186
May 2020



Issue 185
April 2020



Issue 184
March 2020

GET YOUR DIGITAL EDITION
THROUGH THESE OUTLETS:



*Resource files are available from issue 85 onwards.

Donato Giancola

The celebrated fantasy illustrator provides a rare glimpse into his sketchbooks, where his striking imagery begins to take shape...

Artist PROFILE

Donato Giancola

LOCATION: US



Donato's influences encompass art from the museums of the world to the local games store. The artist is busy with series works on the themes of empathetic robots, astronauts and continued explorations within Middle-earth, as well as maintaining his stream of commercial commissions for book publishers and Wizards of the Coast. www.donatoarts.com

Photo by Greg Preston

FLEETING LIGHT

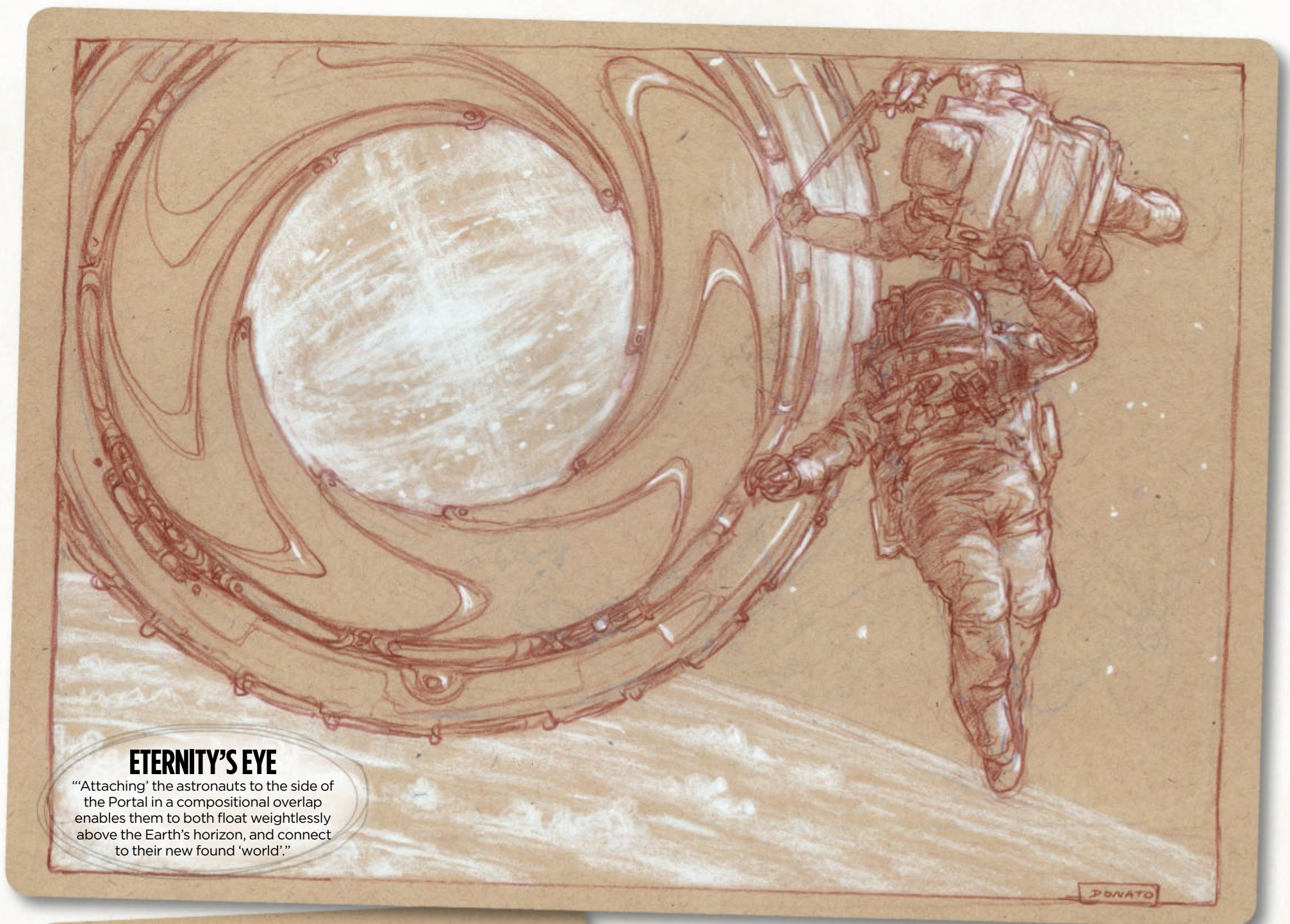
"Some drawings come harder than others. I can see this moment in my mind, but damned if the pencils, chalk and paper didn't communicate what I felt for the Death of Arthur. What I can 'see' is another round of sketching in the future!"

AND... ACTION!

"Concepts executed for the 2015 A Song of Ice and Fire calendar for George RR Martin. The ink lines reinforced shape and dynamic movement within these two sketches."



“The ink lines reinforced shape and dynamic movement within these sketches”



ETERNITY'S EYE

"'Attaching' the astronauts to the side of the Portal in a compositional overlap enables them to both float weightlessly above the Earth's horizon, and connect to their new found 'world'."

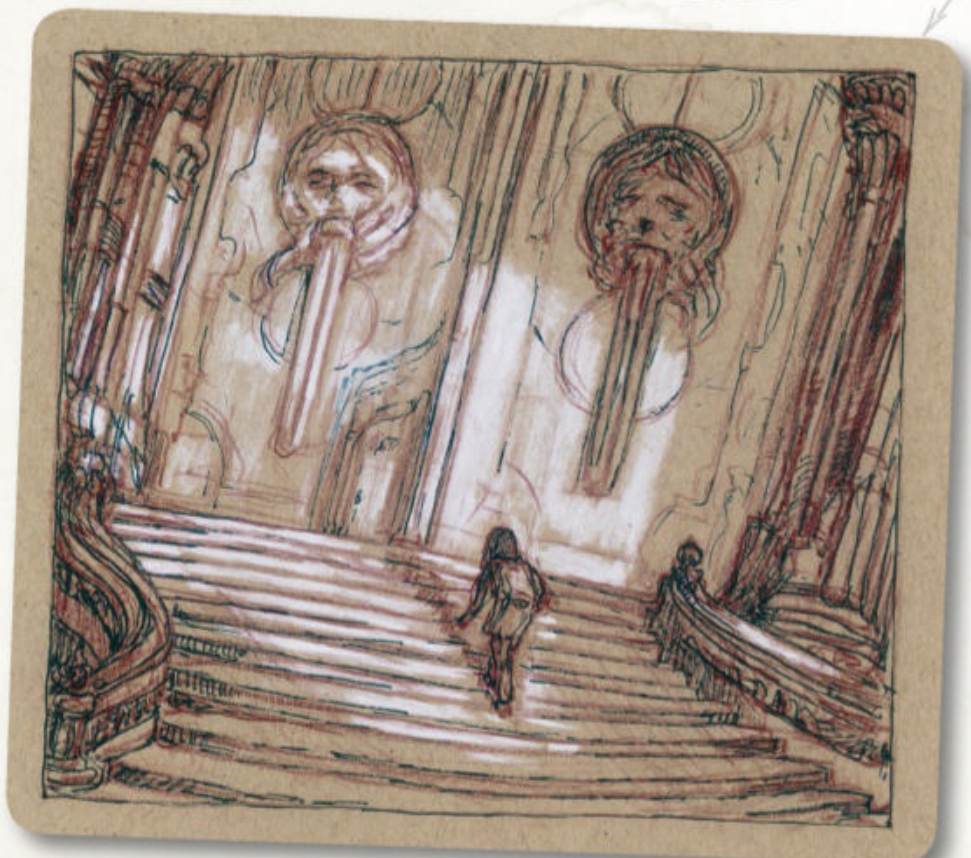


INSPIRATION AT 10,000M

"Sometimes the best ideas come when you're no longer on Earth. Created during a cross-country flight to the San Diego Comic-Con, this sketch opened up a new series of paintings around Red Sonya!"

FEELING INSIGNIFICANT?

"Scale is an effective tool to push a feeling or concept. Here we find Arya Stark unsure of what future resides for her behind the massive and imposing doors of the House of Black and White."



NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX

Sketchbook

CHALK UP ANOTHER!

"As you have likely noticed I'm in love with my toned sketchbooks. The ability to draw in white and suggest light-mass with a quick flick of a pencil enables concepts to evolve with a wonderful layered complexity."

“As you have likely noticed I’m in love with my toned sketchbooks”





BOLD JET AIRLINER

"Sitting near the end of an airport runway, you never forget the power and immensity of a jet passing close overhead. I cannot imagine the fear a dragon would instill when that energy is directed at you as a foe!"

FORBIDDEN FRUIT

"Coming off a commission involving an 18th century warship, my head was swimming with the knowledge of rigging and ship architecture, fuelling another visit with the mermaids."



AGAIN! AGAIN!

"My early sketchbooks are utterly filled with life-drawing. Consistent observation and practice with familiar tools developed my mastery in draftsmanship and design over the years."



Sketchbook



THE ROOKERY

"I always love domestic events as a frame to narrative. Here we have a building used for messenger birds, the fantasy/medieval version of email. 'Send a bird, and tell the headmistress we will arrive after the full moon.'"

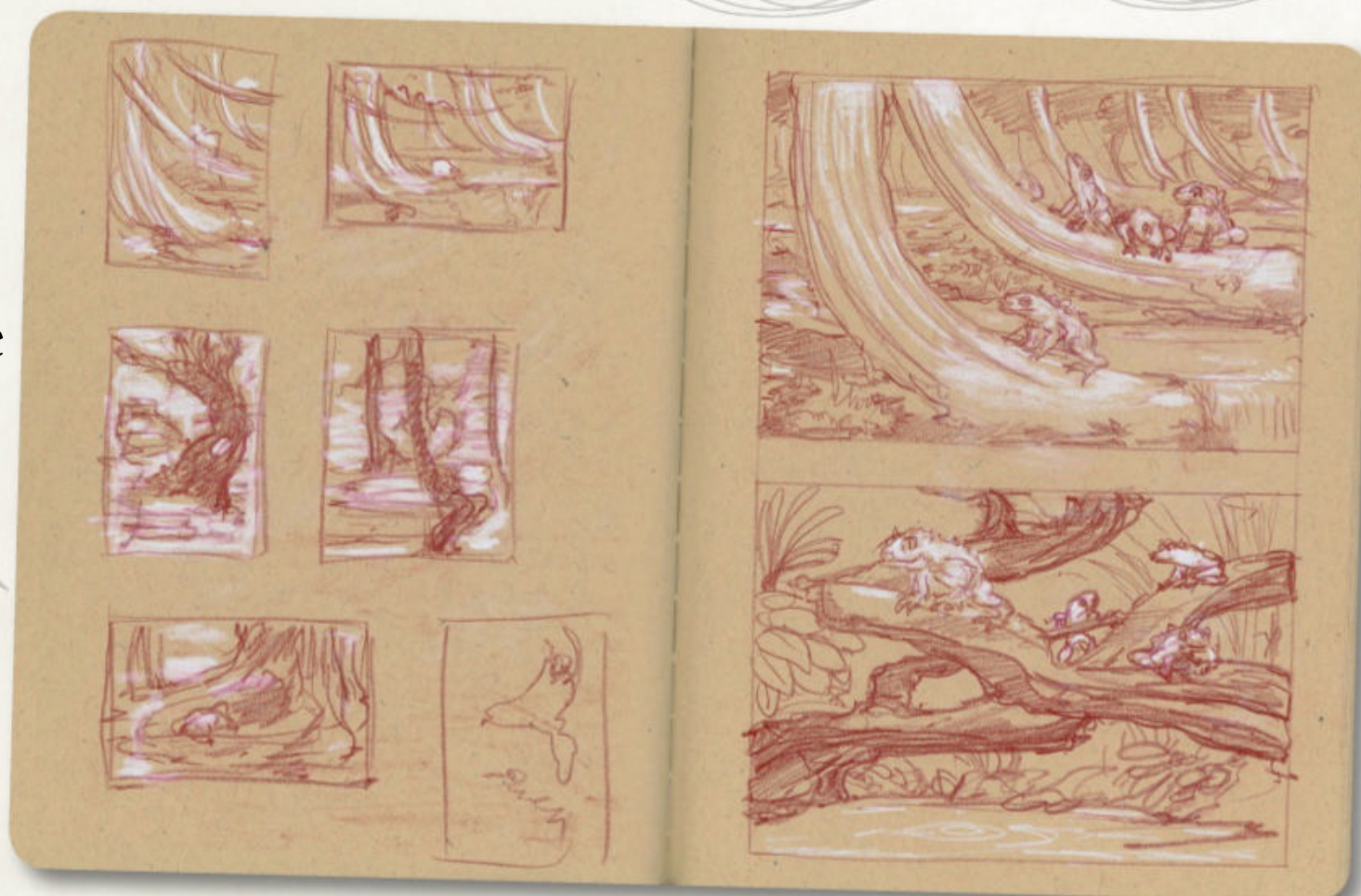
FRactal CIRCLES

"Concepting for a perpetual motion machine found inspiration in 16th century brass armillary spheres. Ratchet up the scale and you need a maintenance worker to keep those things running smoothly!"

“The larger mass of the branches provide graphic shapes of design to hold the image together”

FROG FAMILY

"A private commission based off a popular Magic: The Gathering card artwork. Since frogs are fairly small, I turned to the larger mass of the branches to provide graphic shapes of design to hold the image together."





INVINCIBLE

"The sinuous curve to the dragon arrives at a wonderful termination in the belly of the horse. Not worrying about the details needed to pursue this as a final oil painting opens up takes on bold camera angles."

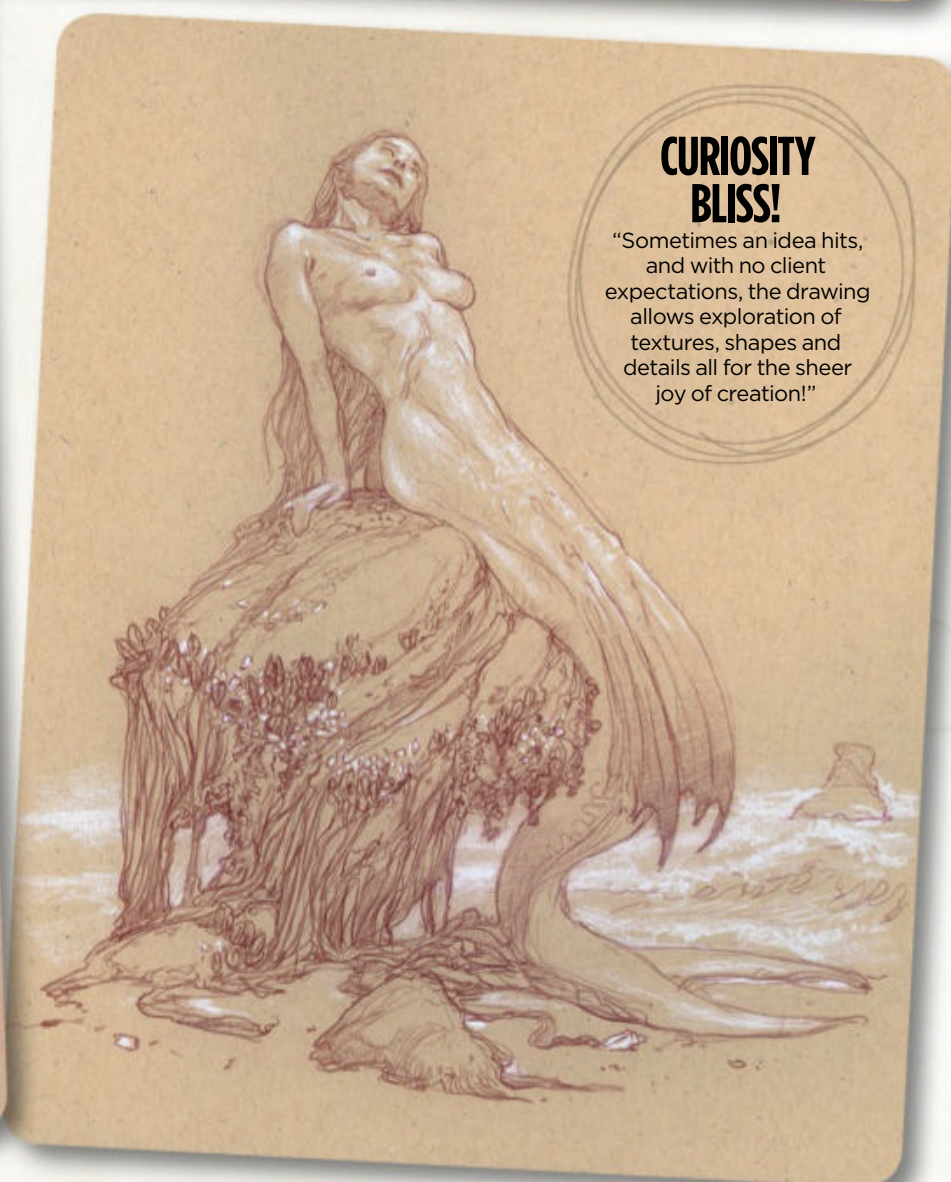
WATCH YOUR STEP!

"These thumbnails and final rough drawing showcase perfectly how most of my book cover commissions evolve, from loose explorations in abstraction to a rendering up of details in a larger drawing to communicate intent to clients."



CURIOSITY BLISS!

"Sometimes an idea hits, and with no client expectations, the drawing allows exploration of textures, shapes and details all for the sheer joy of creation!"

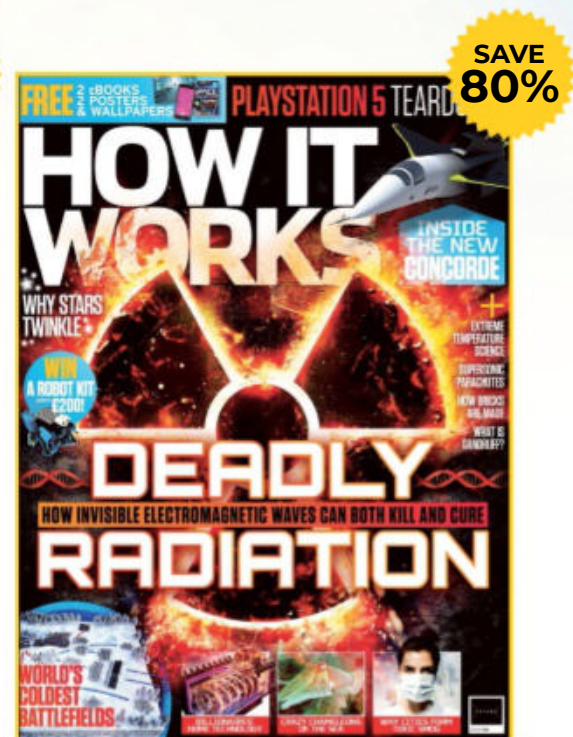


Do you want to share your sketches with your fellow ImagineFX readers? Send us an email with a selection of your art, captions for each piece and a photo and bio of yourself to sketchbook@imaginefx.com

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Workshops

**Workshops assets
are available...**

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



Advice from the world's best artists

60



66



72



78



This issue:

60 Eye-catching character art

Pernille Ørum uses flat shapes and a lot of bright colours!

66 Create fantasy art with a twist

Kekai Kotaki's personal piece features an unusual pairing.

72 15 tips to improve your sketches

Dibujante Nocturno reveals his fantasy drawing techniques.

78 Paint iconic key art for Blizzard

Blizzard's most beloved heroes assemble in Will Murai's art.

Photoshop EYE-CATCHING CHARACTER ART



See how **Pernille Ørum** creates this energetic illustration using flat shapes, simple painting techniques and a lot of bright colours!

Artist PROFILE

Pernille Ørum
LOCATION: Kenya

Pernille works as a freelance character designer, visual developer and illustrator for studios including Disney and Warner Bros., and has almost one million followers on Instagram where she shows her personal art. www.pernilleoe.dk



I love drawing happy, engaging characters that capture the audience's attention.

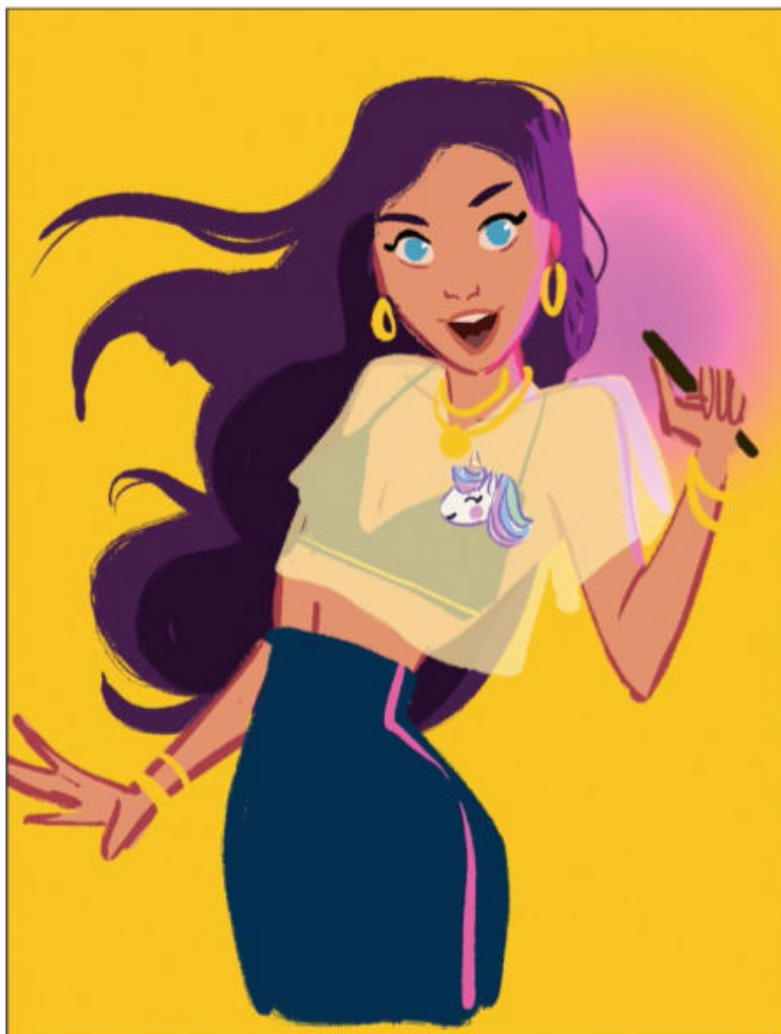
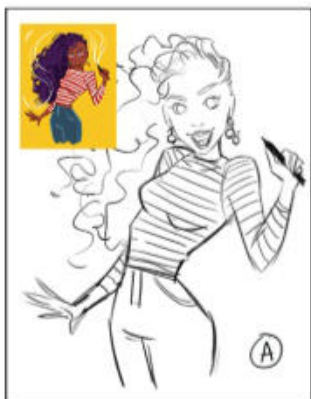
It's the character's attitude that should convey their personality, rather than their clothes or the things they're doing. I want to paint a scene with movement, and avoid creating a static image.

For ImagineFX's cover I want to portray a fun, eye-catching character. The colours, together with the character, are the driving force and

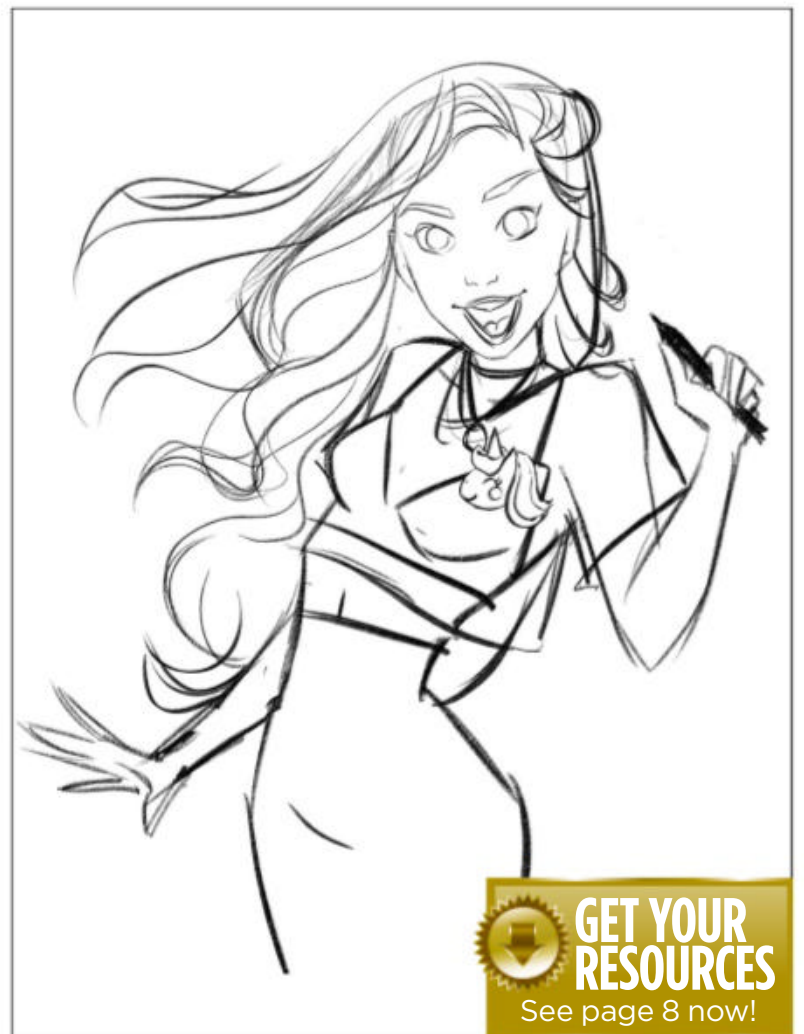
deciding how to put them together is a crucial step when you're being bold in your art. I know the background is going to be bright yellow and so I apply basic colour theory and take things from there. I focus on pinkish and purplish colours to create the tension of complementary colours and gradually build up the piece. Similar to the process I use to build up an image, choosing the right colours can be made easier if you step back and think of the big shapes first, and add the details later.

Here I'll share my colouring process for this piece and show you how easily it can be done. The majority of the art is done with one brush, which shows that it's not about having fancy tools. Rather, it's understanding how to apply interesting shapes and colours.

I'll take you through my ideas process and how to choose the colours early on. I'll also show you how I build up an image using flat local colours, before bringing it all together at the end. ➡➡



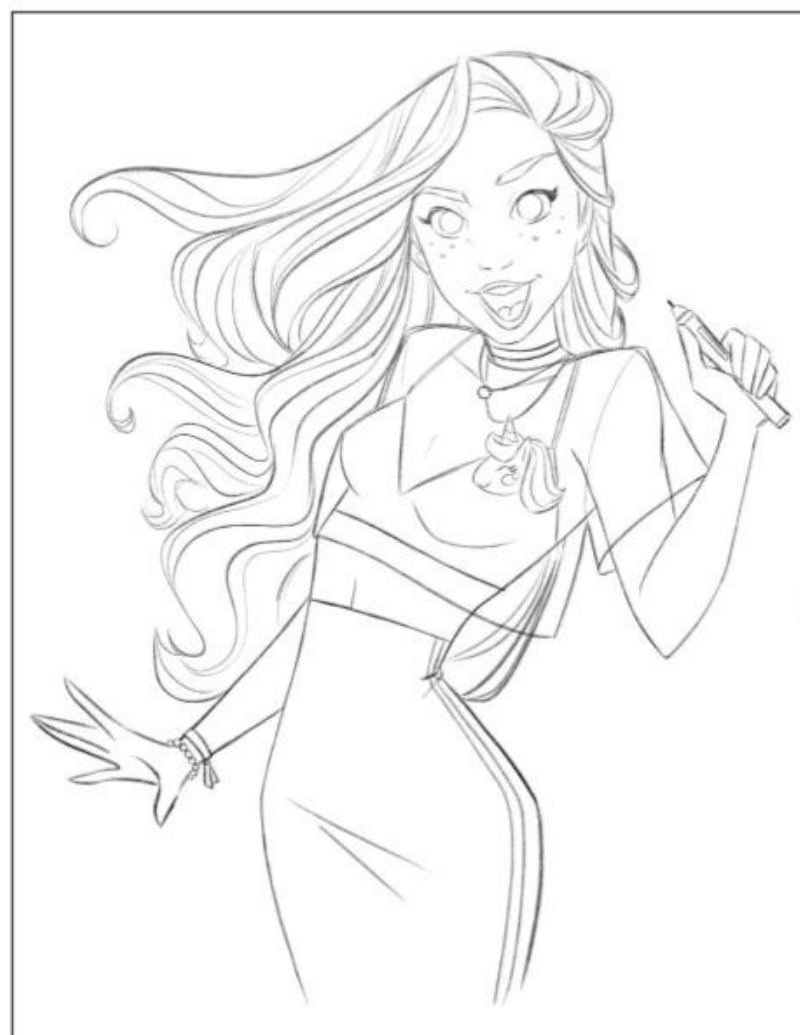
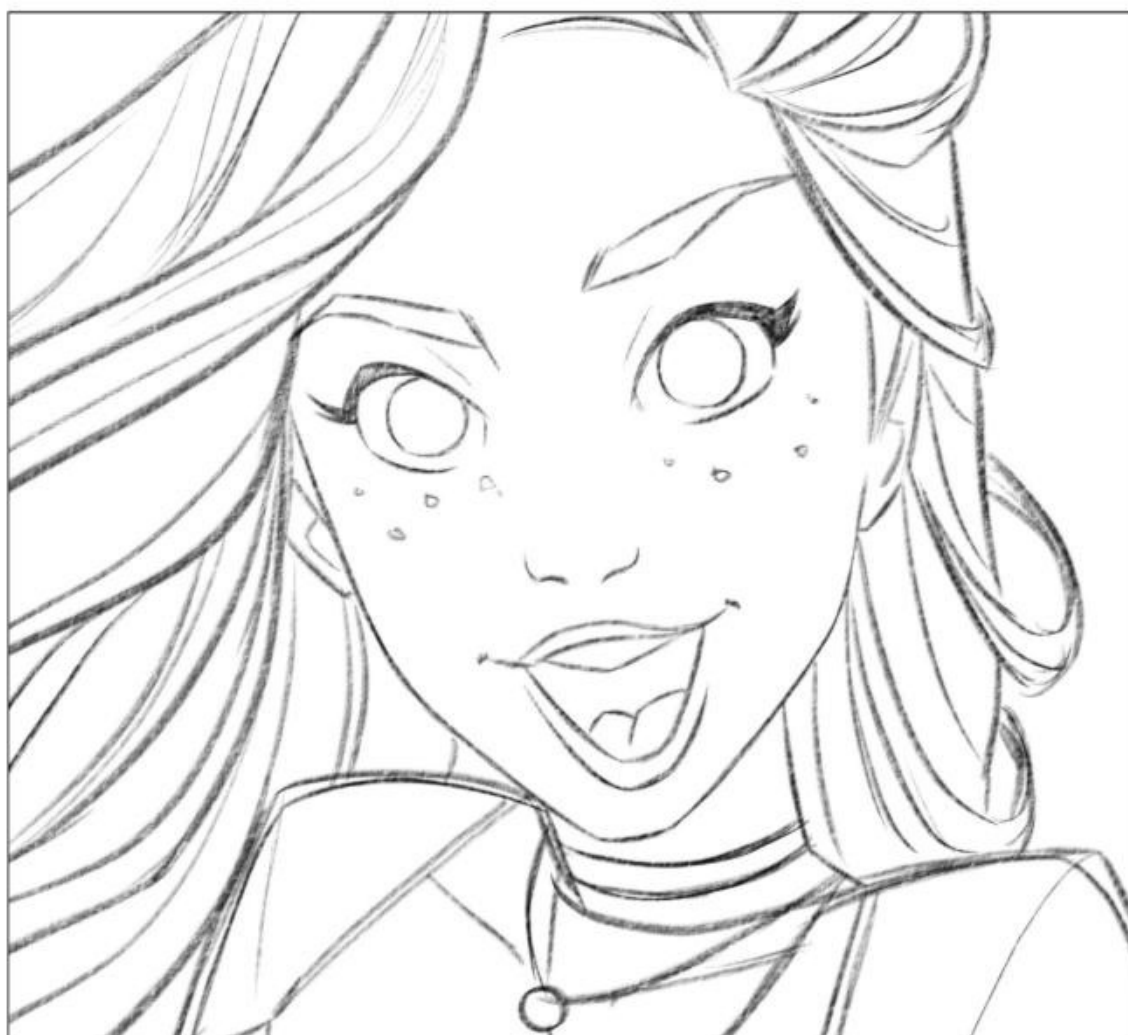
1 Thumbnails/colour thumbnails
I always start loose when I'm coming up with an idea, both when it comes to the drawing itself and the colours. I know that it's going to be a happy, celebratory drawing with an eye-catching yellow background.



2 Rough sketch
Sometime my initial sketches are really rough, and other times they're tight from the get-go. This time there isn't much difference from the rough to the final sketch because I feel I capture the best pose very early on. ➡➡

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






3 Clean up the sketch before painting

This is a crucial step because my painting process is relatively straightforward. It doesn't take a lot for an illustration to lose either its appeal or shape when there's not a lot of rendering to hide behind. After this step it's harder to change things, so it's better to get it right here.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES


PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: KYLE'S GOUACHE




This is my most-used brush. It has 100 per cent Opacity and a rough edge, which is what I prefer for my colouring method.

KYLE'S ULTIMATE PASTEL PALOOZA

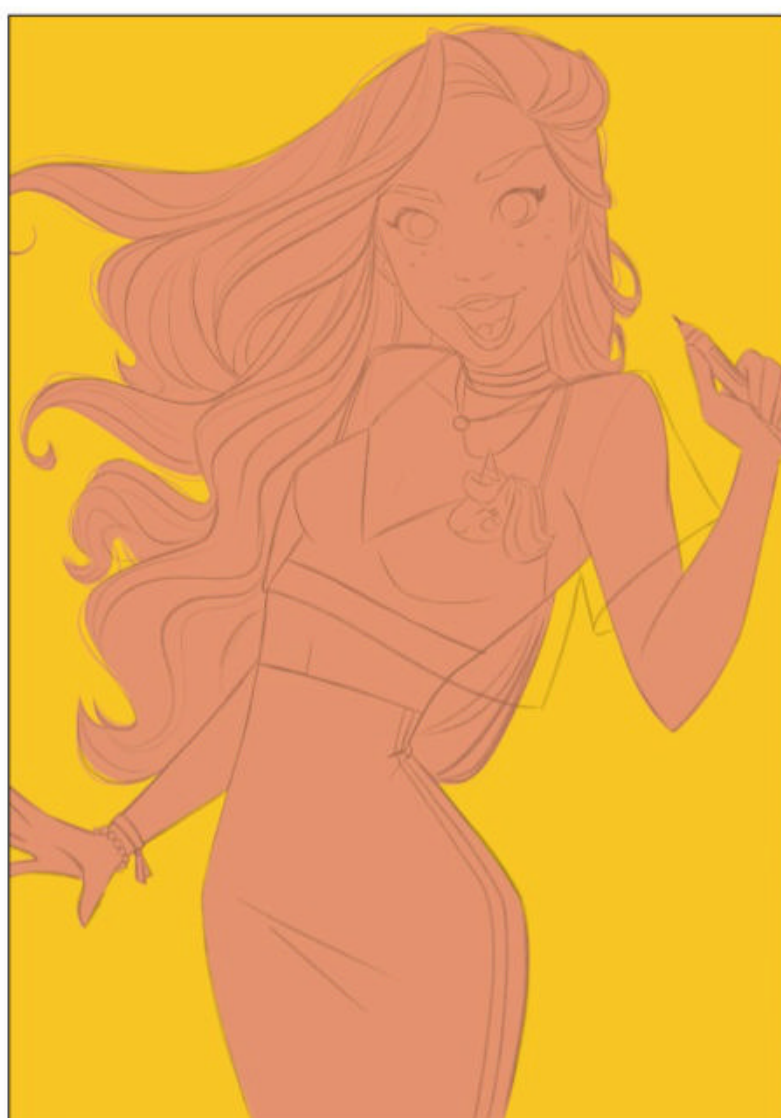


I used this brush to add facial details like a blush and if the illustration requires more texture.

LOISH_SPLATTER

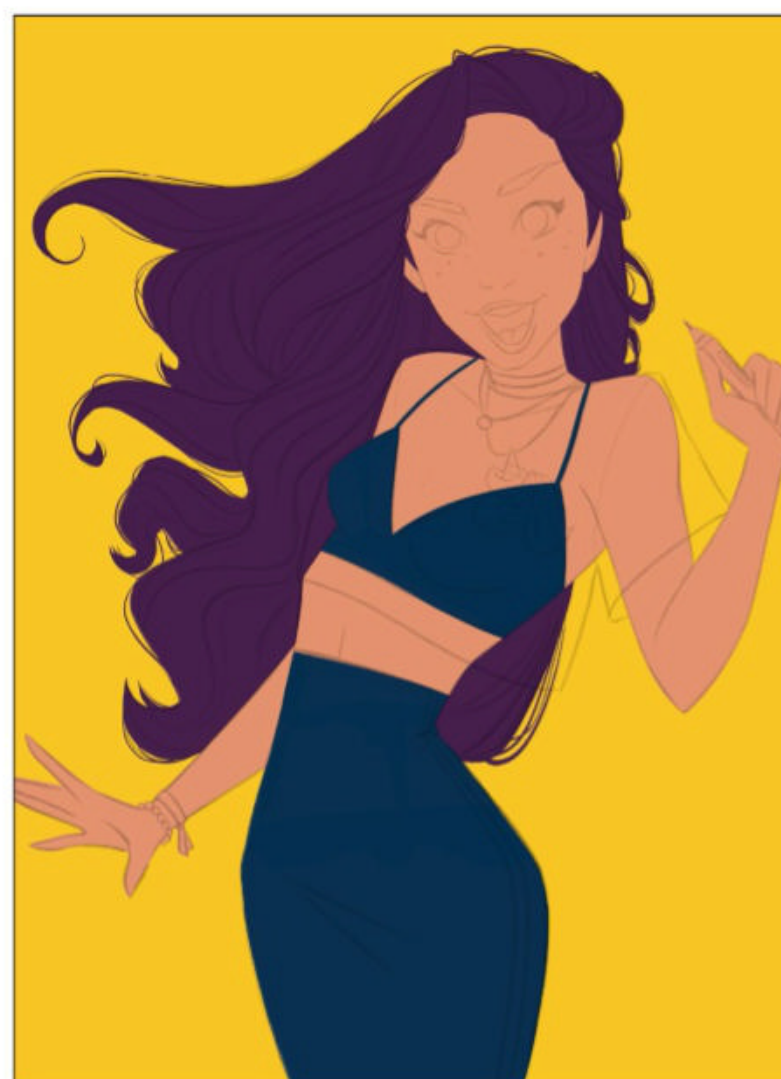


A fun brush created by Loish that I use to create the splatter effect.



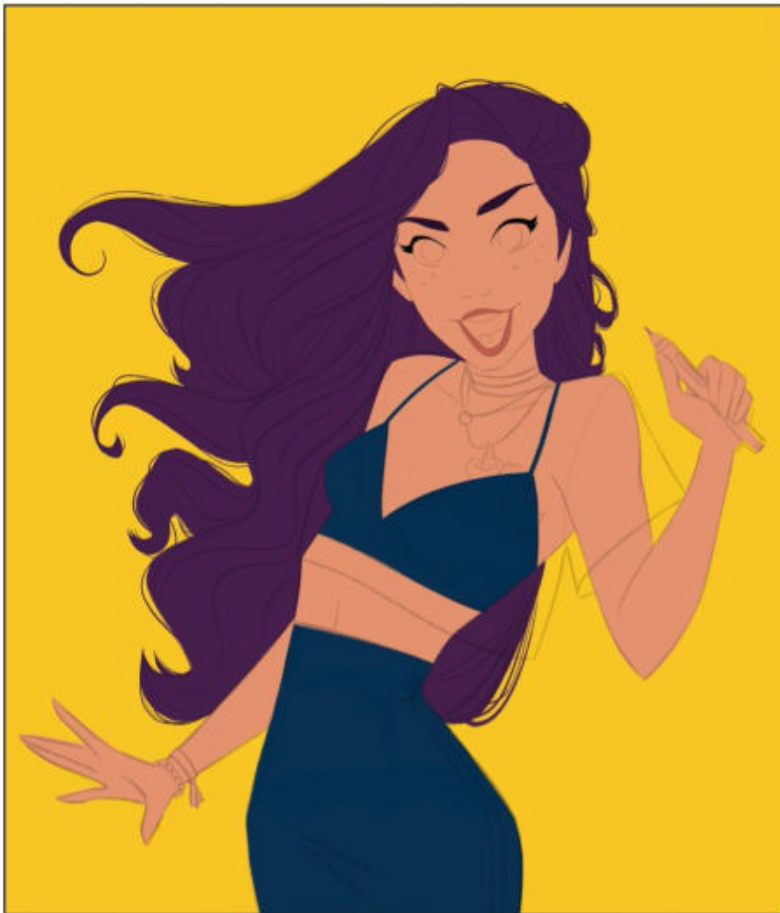
4 Shape blocking

I start out by blocking out the shape that I'll work within. It's a tedious part of the process, but the pay-off is that it saves a lot of time moving forward.



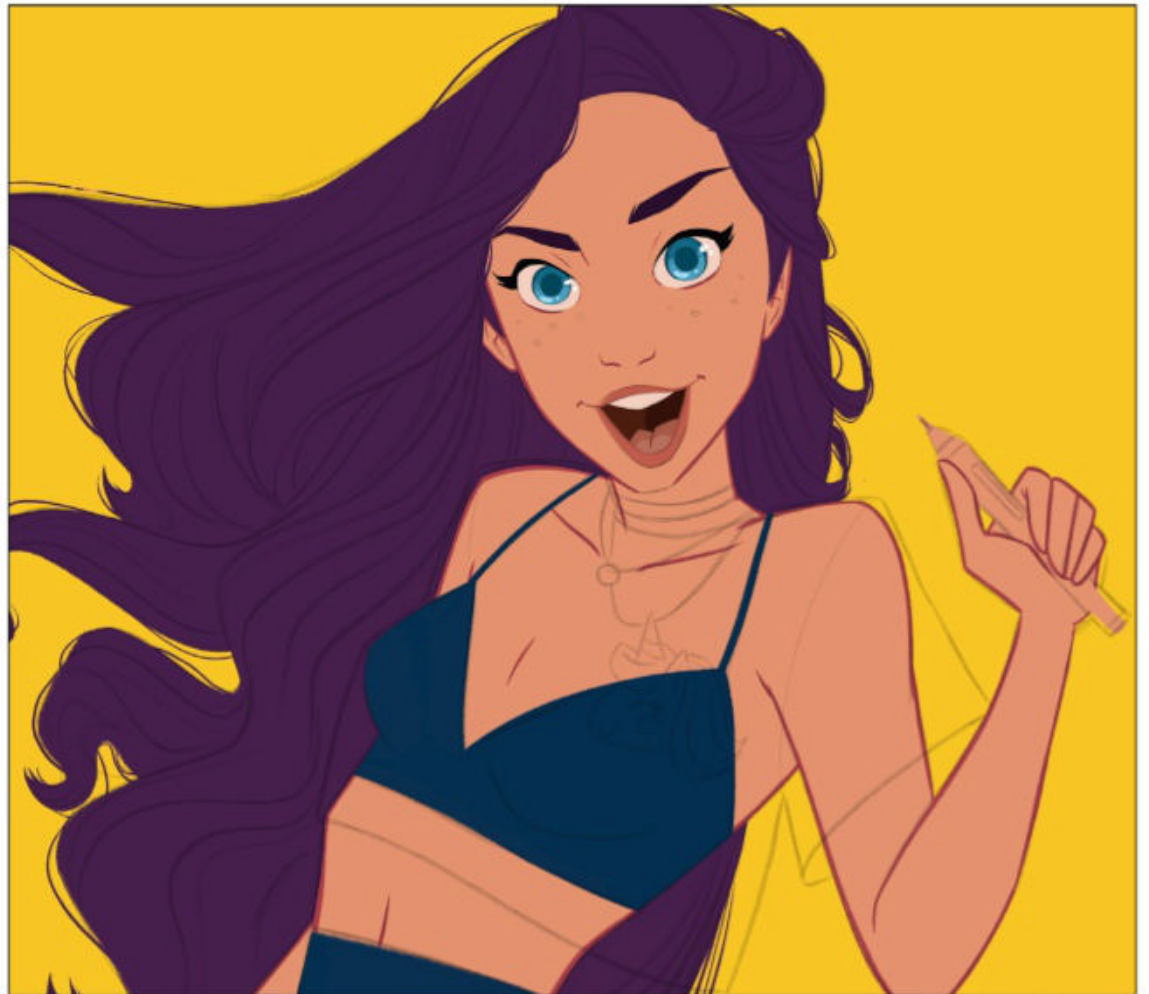
5 Colour blocking

Using the blocked-out shape as a clipping mask now makes it easy to block in larger areas on new layers for each colour and within the shape. I tend to work in flat colours, and add effects and details later on.



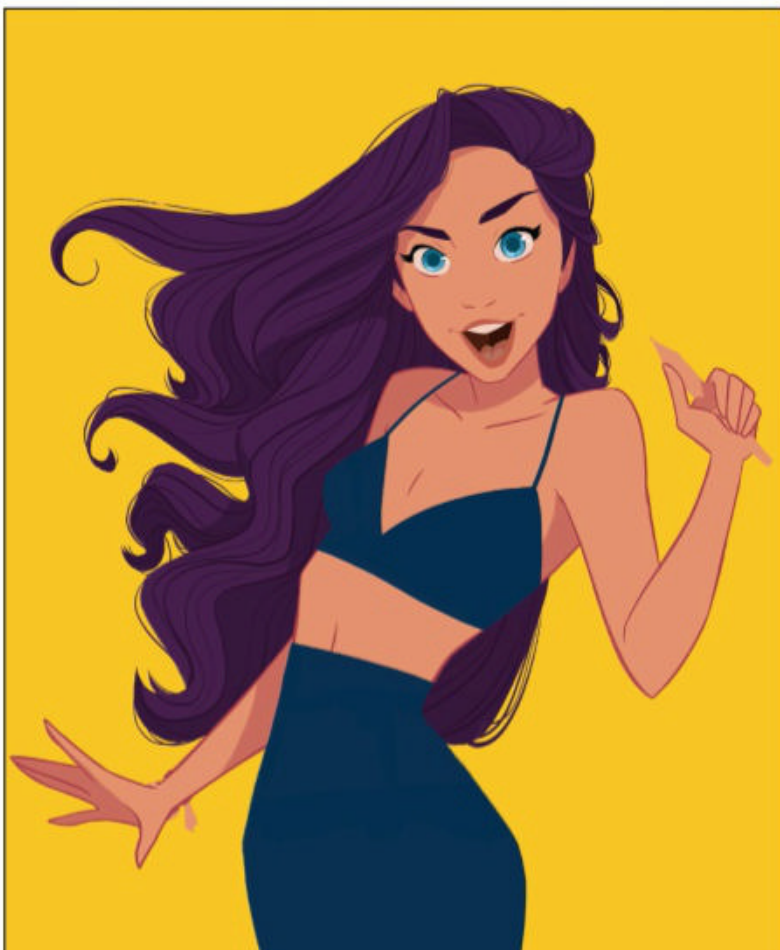
6 Start adding details

Using the same technique I then add smaller details to the face – again on a new layer and only using flat colours. It's important to be careful about having the right shapes because these define the expression and is where we grab the audience's attention.



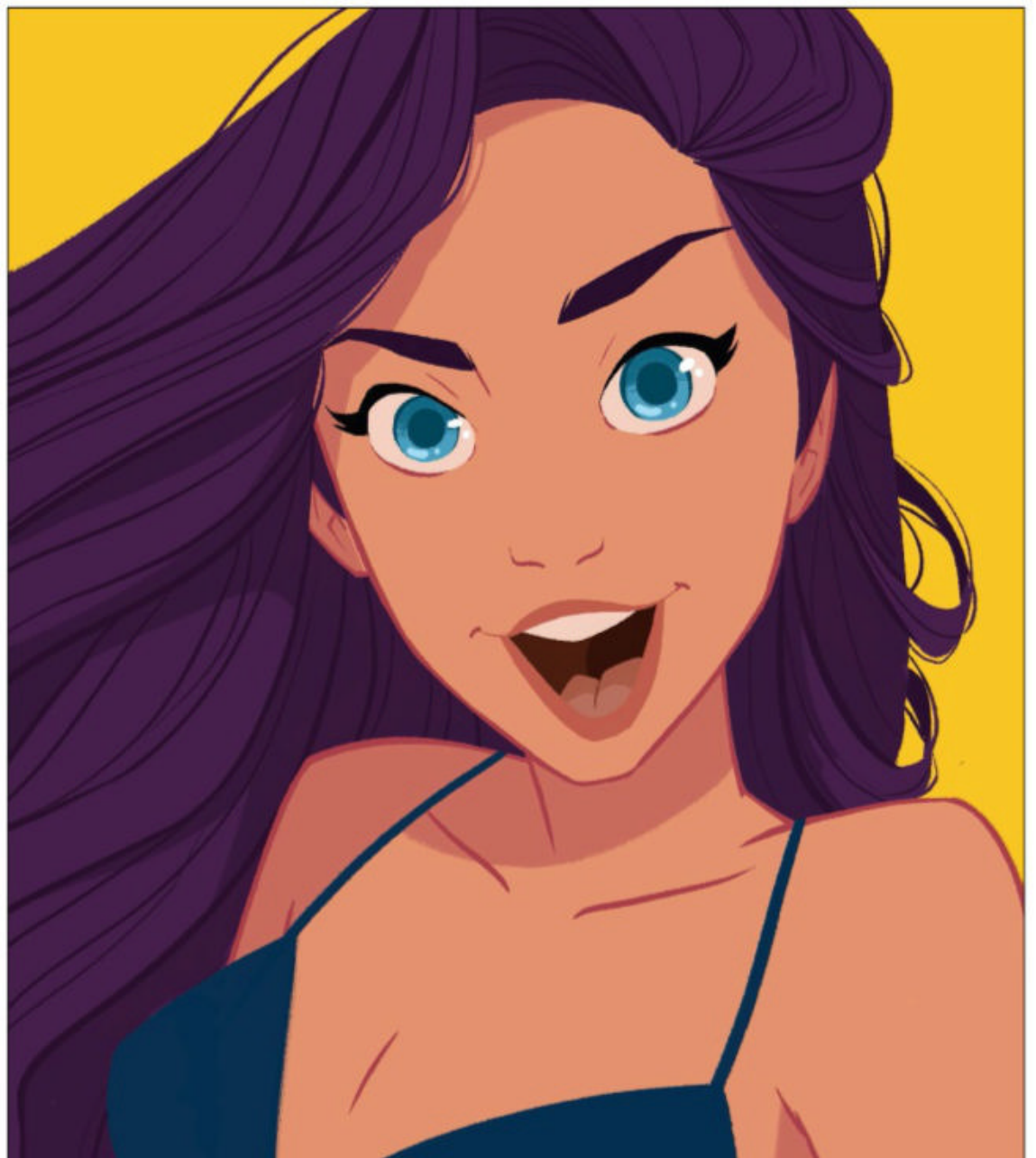
7 Detailing the face and defining the skin

I'm now starting to add more details to my painting. I finish up the eyes and mouth, although I'm still using flat colours and simple shapes. I also draw the line-work for her skin in a darker tone.



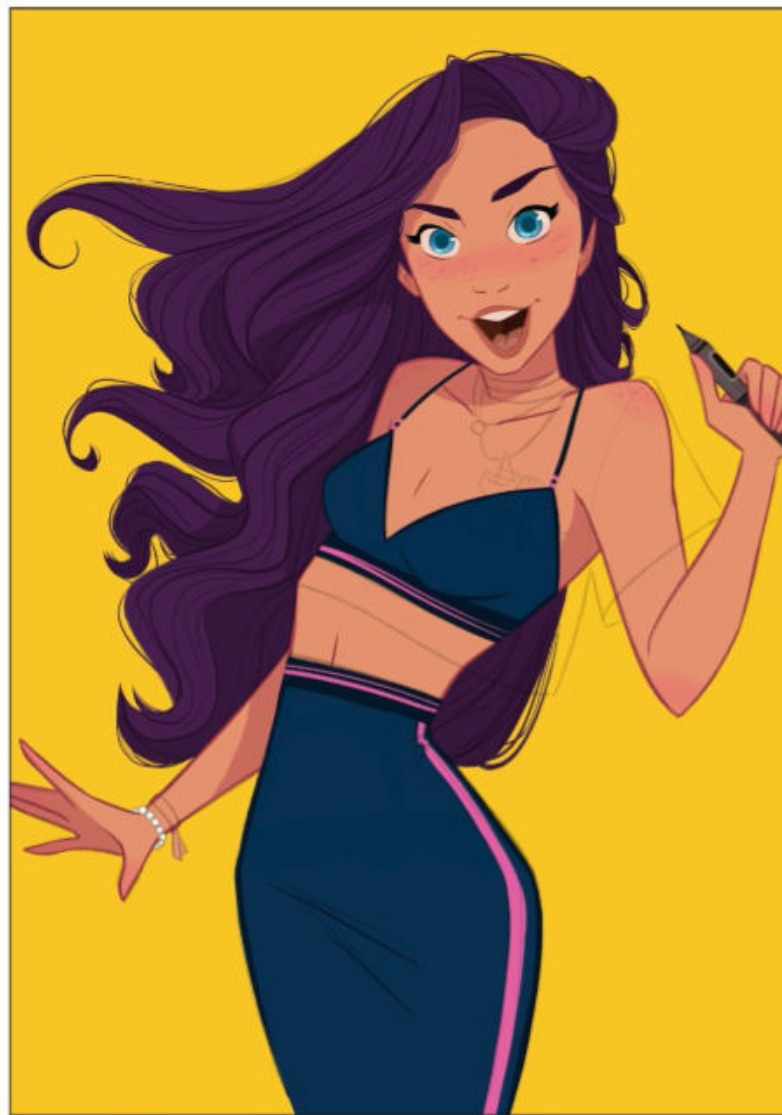
8 Shadows on the skin

I select the dark colour from the skin's outline. Then I create a new layer, set it to 50 per cent Opacity and paint shadows on the skin. This ensures that the two colours of the skin work together. It's the same technique I use for the hair and other parts of the drawing that need shadows. These are still local shadows – I'll paint the overall shadows and effects when I'm finishing up. ➡➡





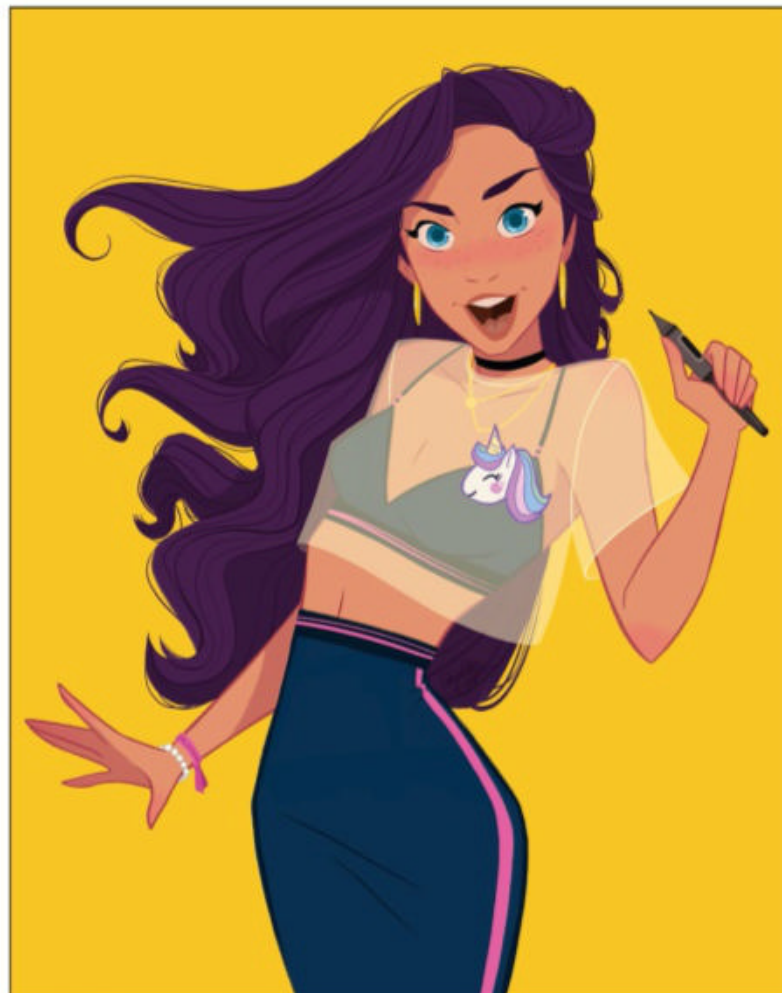
9 Apply a blush to the face and parts of the body
I reduce the Opacity on Kyle's Ultimate Pastel Palooza brush to about 15 per cent (I might also use a brush with more texture) and add a blush to the cheeks and other extremities such as the fingers, elbows and shoulders.



10 Enhance the flat shapes
I go into the flat shapes and start adding details, which makes them appear more three-dimensional. I still keep everything simple and don't render yet.



11 Create a transparent shirt by reducing the Opacity
Now I add the transparent shirt. I do this by creating a new layer that's on top of the layer stack and outside the boundaries of the clipping mask that I've used to paint everything else. I paint the shirt and then reduce the layer's Opacity.



12 Personalise the character
Now it's on to the final details that add to the character's personality: jewellery, patches and so on. I like to work on all of these elements on one layer.



13 Background colour splash

I want to give this drawing a little more colour, and use more light and effects to better integrate the character into the drawing. So I decide on a new pink light source that's shining from the tip of the pen in her hand. I start by painting the background to establish the pink splash using a splatter brush and a gradient.



14 Additional effects

Next, I add the effects on to the character and make sure she's affected by the pink splash in the background. I do this by painting within the established shape on a top-most layer. I use gradients and change the layer settings to Overlay and Lighting. I also go in with a darker purple gradient from the bottom and set that layer to Multiply. This helps to give the illustration more depth.



15 Final adjustments

Because the image needs to be eye-catching on the cover I work with the ImagineFX team to make some last-minute colour and detail changes. We alter the yellow to true yellow, give the whole image a little more saturation and add more details to the hair and skirt. ●





Photoshop & traditional tools

CREATE FANTASY ART WITH A TWIST

Kekai Kotaki paints two unlikely partners for a personal piece, starting with ballpoint pen and paper before moving to Photoshop

Artist PROFILE

Kekai Kotaki
LOCATION: US

Kekai is a concept artist and illustrator based in Seattle. He's been in the industry for 17 years, and has worked on best-selling video games such as Guild Wars 2, Destiny, and Mordor: Shadow of War. He's also created art for Wizards of the Coast, Tor Books and DC Comics.

www.kekaiart.com



This painting is part of a collection of fantasy staples that I've been playing around with over the years. It

includes knights, dragons, wizards and everything else that comes to mind when you mention 'fantasy'. There are even creatures such as winged dogs and unicorn cats to tie different pieces together. It's a loose collection of ideas and concepts that's ever-evolving as I grow older.

Having these different visual ideas and then bringing them together was one of the purposes of this image. I wanted to show a dragon and knight walking through the

woods. They're partners rather than enemies, and united under the house they serve in.

As I was working on this image I was also getting back into the habit of drawing in a sketchbook again. Something that came out of this sketching step was incorporating a sketch page asset into my digital workflow. I was keen to see the different ways the digital paint interacted with the sketch lines, and wondered if I could manipulate the drawing to fix any inaccuracies. Using creative experiences like this and applying them to what I've learned over the years helps me when I'm doing my next piece. ➡➡

DEVELOP A NARRATIVE

Having fun

The subject matter of my pieces can be rather serious so I always try to alleviate things by adding little quirks here and there. One of my favourites is painting little flying dogs or unicorn cats to my knight pieces. It helps add scale and ties the world together. They also become another form of engagement because the audience expects to find one and is excited when they spot them in the scene.

Interesting shapes

I want to make the scales on the back of the dragon stand out from the strong lighting and the foliage treatment behind the characters. Creating the flame-like flow of scales feels right because they're a natural continuation of the horns on the head. They're also completely different to the shapes of the leaves.

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

BRUSH SOFTWARE

CUSTOM BRUSHES: BARK 1

I created this texture brush that's based on tree bark. It's a general-purpose brush that can be used to apply texture to metal, for example.

TREE FOLIAGE 1

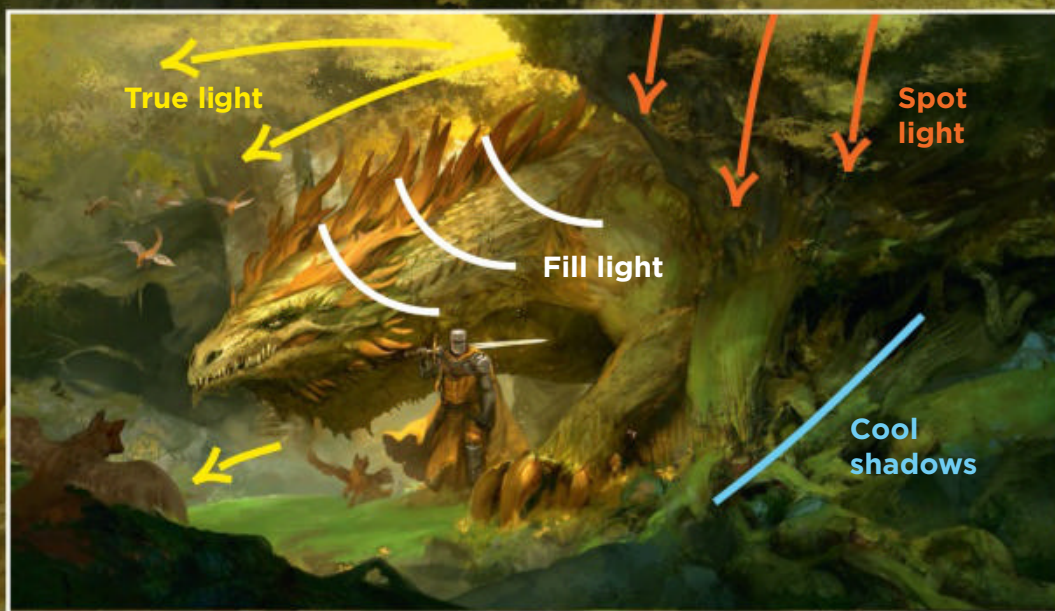
When blocking out leaves on trees I like to start out with this brush to capture the foliage's general shape and flow.

FOLIAGE LEAVES 1

I often use this brush for laying down details and indicating lighting, after moving on from the rough sketch.

Context and contrast

A sense of grandness comes from depicting subjects at a larger scale. I'm fond of trying this in my work. One of the ways I like to do this is with context: putting something next to something else to make it look bigger. Next, I'll surround that object with more elements to ground the entire piece. The relationship between the dragon, knight and flying dog is one example. Having the flying dogs appear throughout the piece in the fore-, mid- and background is another.



Lighting a scene

I often think about lighting and how it changes the mood or atmosphere. Lighting also affects the emotional narrative that I'm trying to convey. With this piece, it was 'partnership' followed closely by the sense of travelling together. This led me to convey the feeling of 'turning the corner'.

I start by having a bright, true light to highlight the background, followed by a softer fill light to illuminate the characters. I make sure to add hotspots such as on the knight's sword to draw the viewer's eye. Applying the spotlight on the foreground tree helps to introduce more details and lighting to the root system. Finally, I bring in some cooler elements such as the rocks to the foreground to help add colour variations, because this is mostly a warm composition.

Don't cover everything up

I try not to paint over everything from the original drawing. By incorporating the spontaneous marks that come from sketching traditionally into the piece, I hope to add that energy to the final render. While often a subtle step, it can sometimes help to avoid the predictability of working digitally. Making and using custom brushes was something else that I explored during the painting process.

How I create...

ARTWORK BASED ON A SKETCH



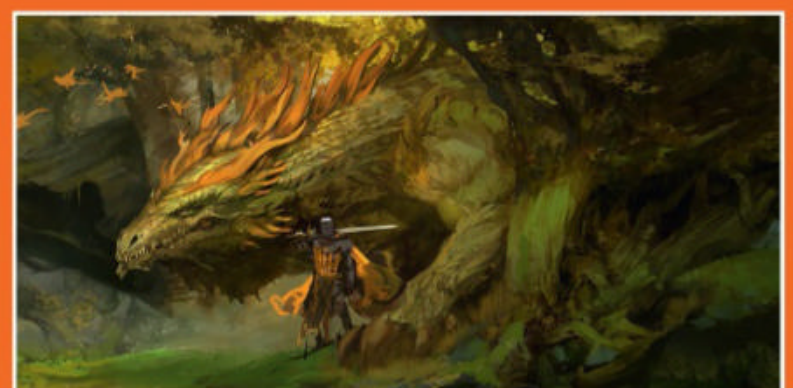
1 Prepping the sketch

I need to prep the sketch so that it'll be easier for me to work with in Photoshop. This mostly involves placing key areas on different layers. Eventually I separate the foreground, dragon and background so that I can work on each area as required.



2 Blocking in major areas

After the major areas are blocked out, I can use clipping masks to work on each area as needed. I start by roughing out the general textures and colours. I can play around with lighting setups here, too. Because I'm working with a drawing, I pay attention to see how much of it I cover up with brush strokes.



3 Manipulating elements

While working it's common for me to notice things that aren't working. Because I've separated out my major elements, I can use selections to transform areas with the Warp tool. I alter the shape of dragon's head so that it matches the narrative in my head. I also rearrange the composition slightly to show more of the dragon's arm and move the knight closer. This was to highlight more of the narrative of their partnership.

Next month

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

Creature Design

Step up your critter creations with expert advice
on adding character to your designs

Artist and teacher
Bobby Chiu
exclusively
creates our next
issue's cover art!

All this... and more!

Inking masterclass

Gain fresh insight into inking your pages like a pro with Jeff Miracola.

Vehicle skills in Blender

Rashid Tagirov creates a sci-fi design in Blender from a 2D sketch.

How to deal with rejection

Advice on turning a negative decision into a good thing for your career.

Alexandria Neonakis

We catch up with the ex-Naughty Dog artist who's going her own way.



**ISSUE 201
ON SALE
14 MAY IN
PRINT &
DIGITAL**

Artist insight

15 TIPS TO IMPROVE YOUR SKETCHES

Dibujante Nocturno reveals his drawing techniques, why the best sketchbook isn't the most expensive and how to beat creative block

Artist PROFILE

Dibujante Nocturno

LOCATION: Spain

Fran Garcés, aka Dibujante Nocturno, creates fantastical ink-based artworks. His new book titled Dibujante Nocturno: The art of Fran Garcés is available via 3dtotal. <http://ifxm.ag/dibujante>



Draw anywhere and everywhere. Always carry a sketchbook and take it with you no matter where you

are – whether you're standing in a queue, on the train, having coffee with friends or at a family lunch. These are the mantras that I live by every day. It doesn't matter if you get the art right or wrong – the key is to maintain momentum and enjoy

drawing so you can practise with passion! This helped me to fall in love with the creative process.

Drawing is my way of living in the moment. I'll draw while having a coffee in a bar, and my mind will be focused on the present. Having a gentle conversation while drawing gives me a sense of peace.

It's important to practise drawing in a sketchbook on a daily basis. It's a good habit to get into, because this

perseverance helps us to improve as artists and achieve our objectives.

This regular practice enabled me to create a range of quality art, which led to the publication of my own artbook – available via 3dtotal.

It doesn't matter whether you're practising for a commission, developing a personal project or just drawing for fun – the important thing is to pick up that pencil or pen and start making marks on paper.



1 TRY DRAWING WITH A BALLPOINT PEN

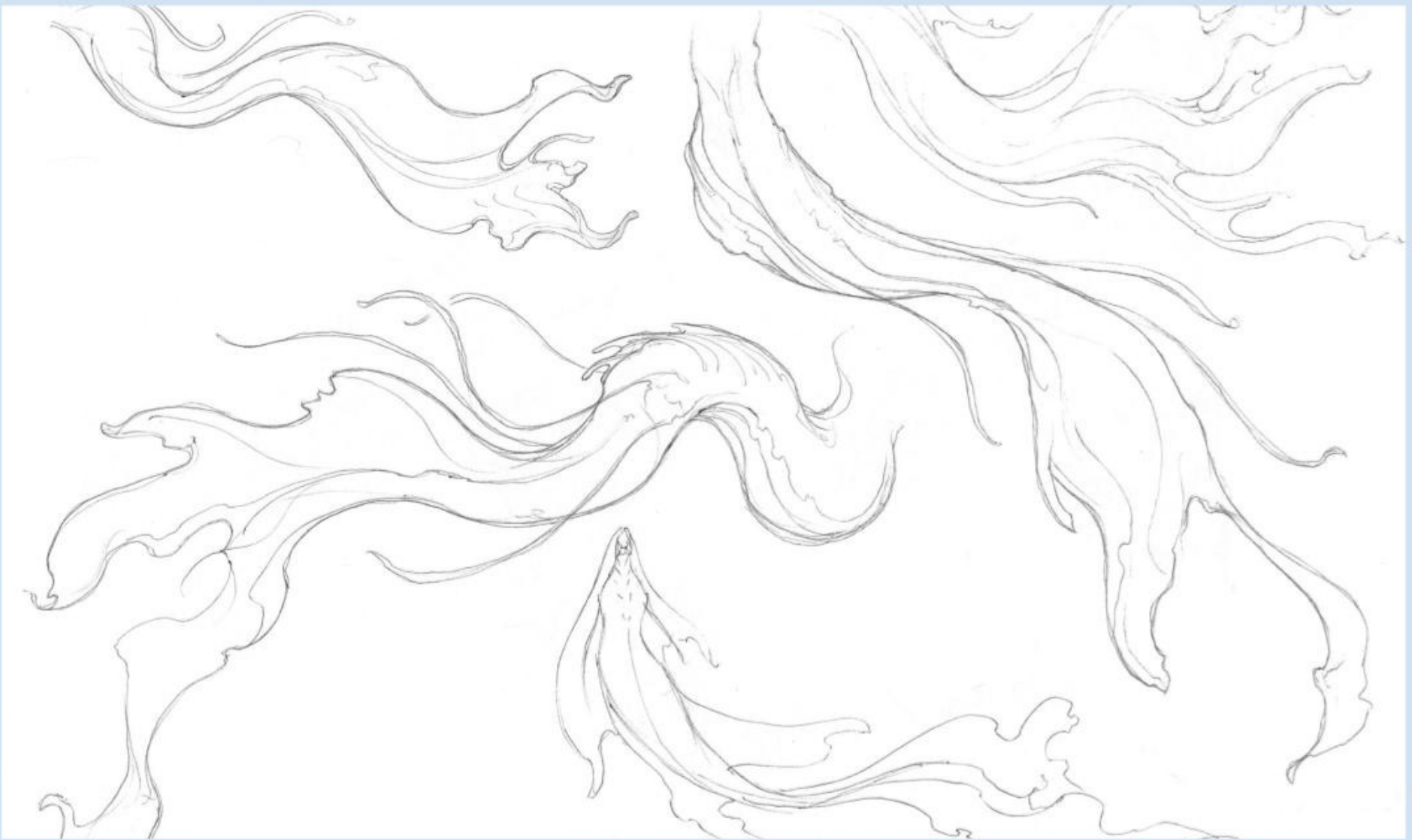
I have a lot of fun drawing with a BIC pen, because it enables me to sketch softly, at a low opacity – just as if it were a pencil. I love being able to start drawings in a carefree way, with very soft lines that make it possible to 'flow' and be creative on paper. There's definitely something about the ink in this pen that fascinates me. I've tried drawing with all kinds of pens, ink markers and stylographs, but I always come back to my favourite ballpoint pen. Perhaps it's because I'm able to draw so smoothly with it that captivates me.



2 COMBINE DIFFERENT DRAWING MEDIUMS

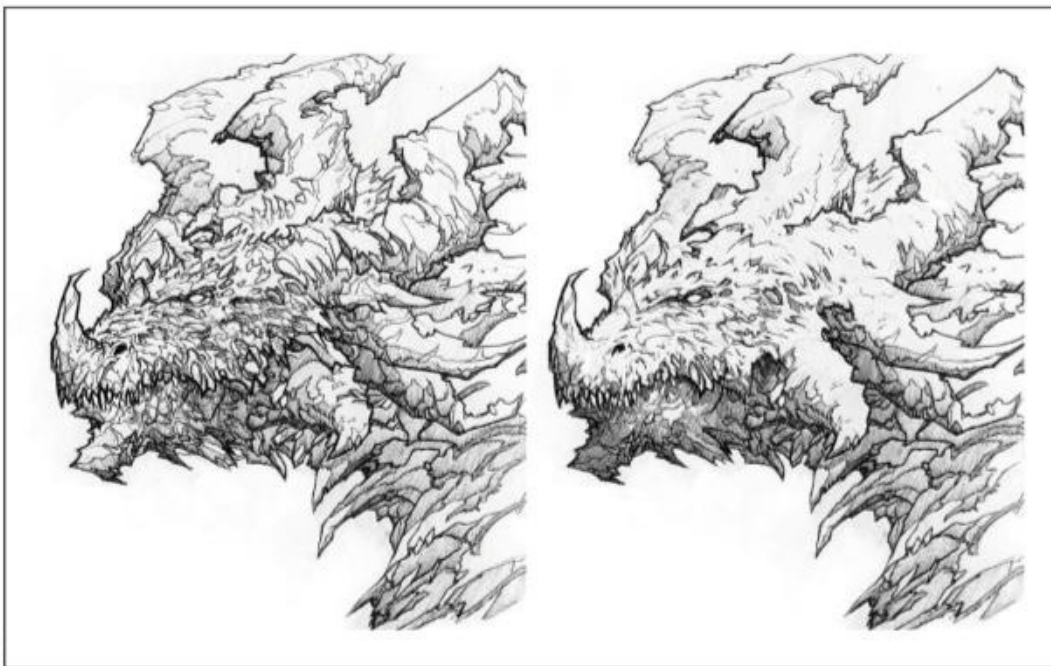
As well as using a ballpoint pen, I love to paint with black ink. I use markers with rigid tips and brush tips, but the key thing is that they must be alcohol-free markers. Alcohol spoils the ink of the pen and I can't work using both mediums. I use Tombow, Sakura Koi and Pentel markers. It's amazing to draw with them, combining the line-art with ink spots. They help to strengthen the sketch and if we add texture with the pen then the finish is impressive, too.





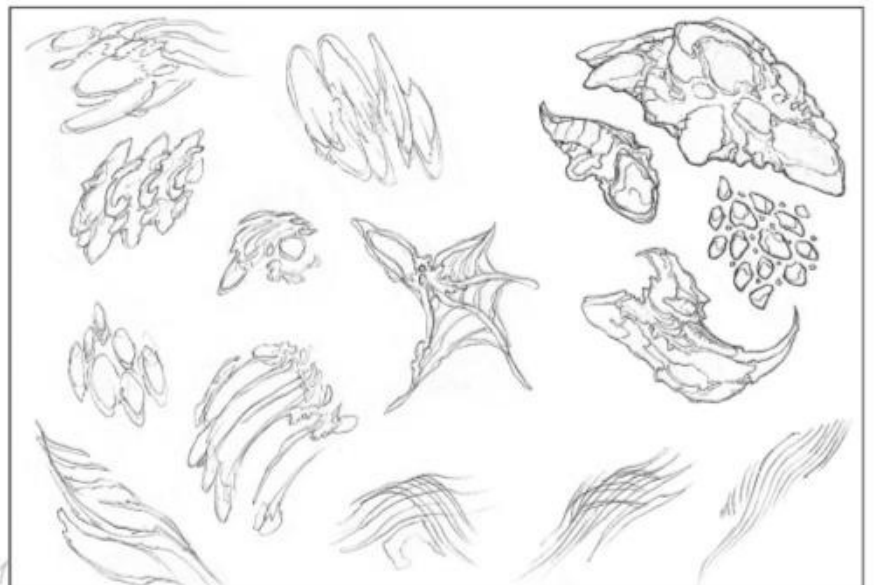
3 CREATE A DYNAMIC AND ELEGANT LINE

When I sketch I try to let my hand flow freely. The line has to be dynamic, curved and elegant. I never force it; rather, I try to make the line smooth and fluid. This helps it look natural and alive, and it's a wonderful, organic way of drawing. However, it takes time to learn how to 'draw with flow', so I recommend practising with elements that by their very nature are dynamic and in motion: the tails of fish and mermaids, fabrics or hair, for example. Be aware of what you're drawing as you practise.



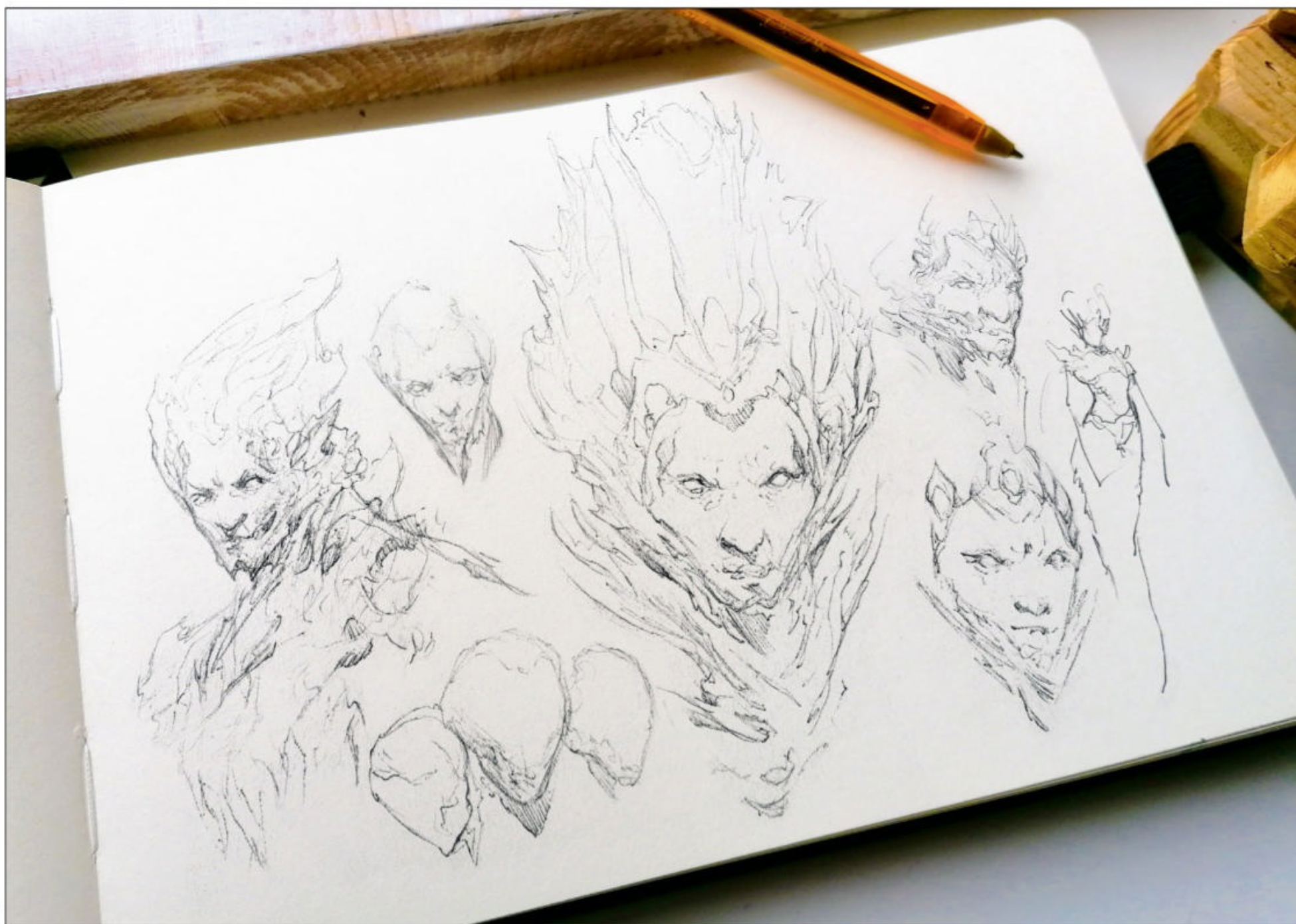
4 MAINTAIN BALANCE IN YOUR DRAWING

By maintaining balance I mean that it's important to respect the areas where the drawing needs to breathe. In this particular example I ensure there's balance between the flat parts and the textured areas of the dragon (the right-hand sketch). Avoid overfilling your design with details (the left-hand sketch), because this can lead to the viewer suffering from visual fatigue. It's good practice to step back from your drawing and look at it as a whole, before going in and adding more details where you think they're necessary.



5 TEXTURE CAN ENHANCE A SKETCH

Texture has always been a key feature in my drawings. I'm passionate about it! I love to use lines that go over and under objects, shapes that repeat and combine, lines that form paths, scales and more. I use them to create different surfaces in my characters and compositions. They can be part of the material of a shield, the skin of a creature or the ornaments on a suit of armour. Adding texture makes everything more visually interesting to me. It helps to strengthen the impact of the artwork and gives it a beautiful finish, too. ➡



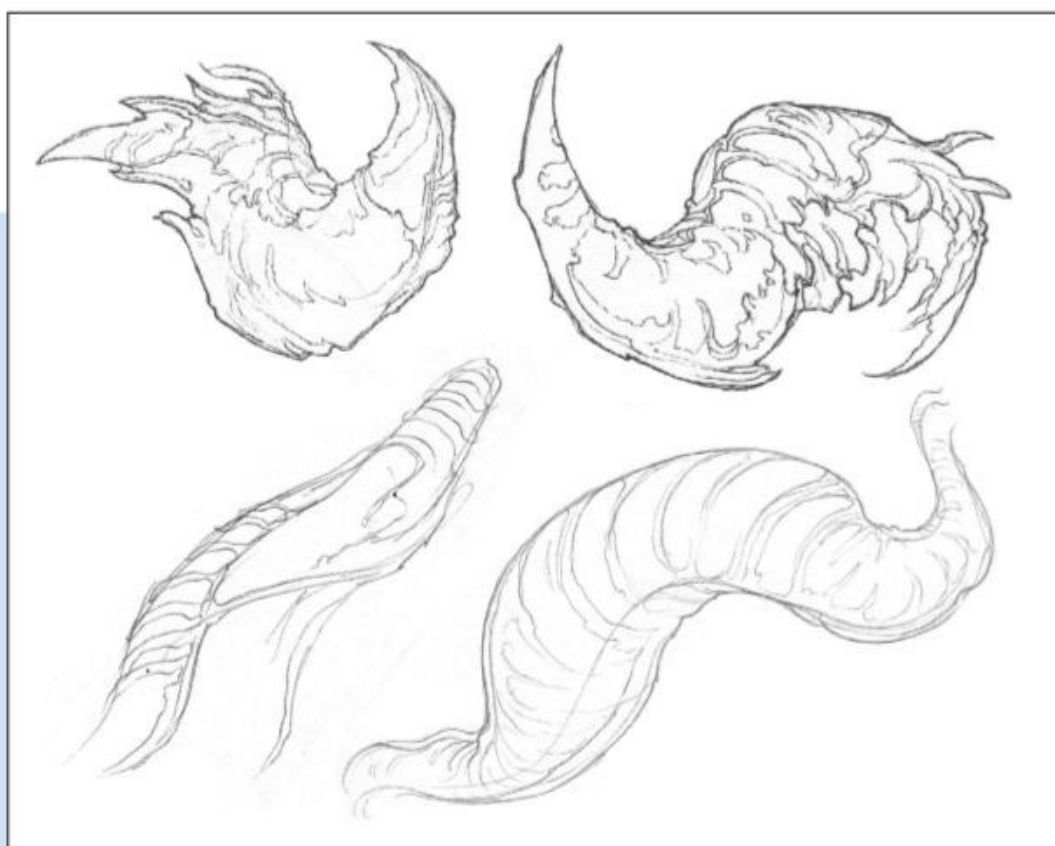
6 EXPLORING SHAPES

Improvisation is a key way of working for me. My approach is to begin by exploring. I sketch basic shapes such as something circular, keeping the line smooth without tightening the pen. I want the line to be dynamic. From this more or less spherical shape I try to depict something interesting like a skull, perhaps a human face or a humanoid creature. It's the sketch that's guiding me. I don't become frustrated with the results. It's not about making a polished work of art, but rather exploring and letting your creativity flow.

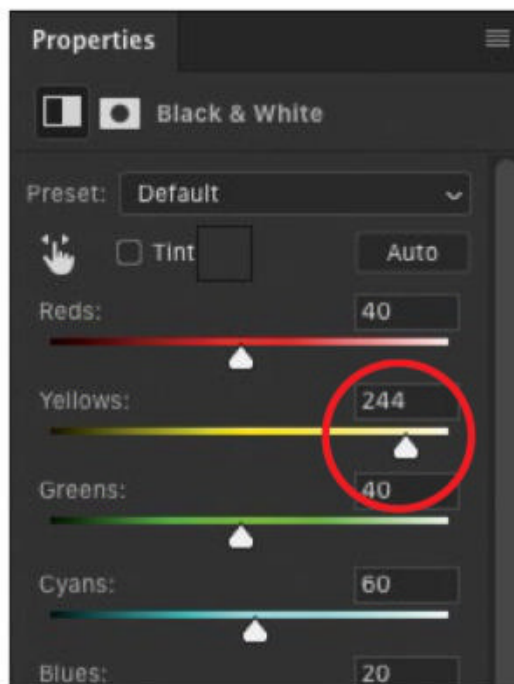
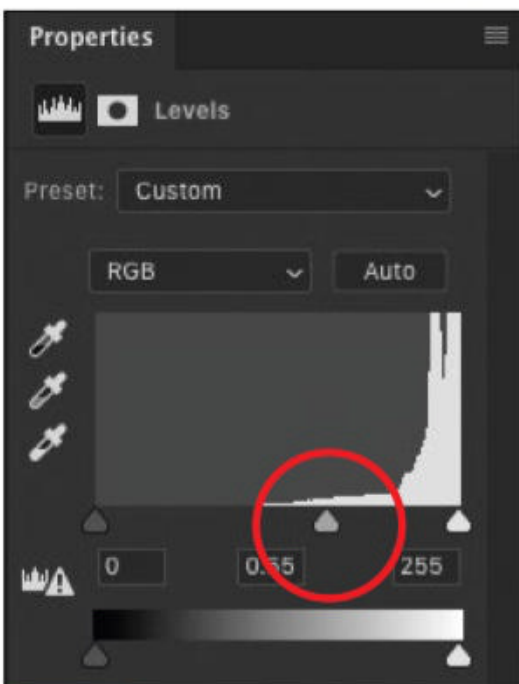
“It's not about making a polished work of art, but rather exploring and letting your creativity flow”

7 DEFINE YOUR VOLUMES THROUGH THE LINE

I really like to use this type of hatching. With just a few simple lines you can create volumes. It's a basic drawing principle, but knowing how to direct your line correctly generates dynamism that helps to improve the quality of a drawing. For this reason I recommend that when you start a sketch, be aware how all objects in your composition have a natural line that defines their own volumes. Next, think about the direction of the line and then apply it consistently throughout the sketch.



BEFORE



AFTER



8 DIGITISE YOUR SKETCHES CORRECTLY

I like to scan in my sketches at high resolution – between 720 and 1,200dpi. My sketchbooks have coloured paper that's neither white nor yellow (most sketchbooks have this type of creamy paper). After scanning the sketch I open it in Photoshop and in the Layers dialog I select Black and White. I drag the yellow bar slightly to the right until I'm happy with the whiteness of the background. Be careful not to burn the image, though. The important thing is to keep the line-work as clear as possible.

9 BRING COLOUR INTO A SKETCH



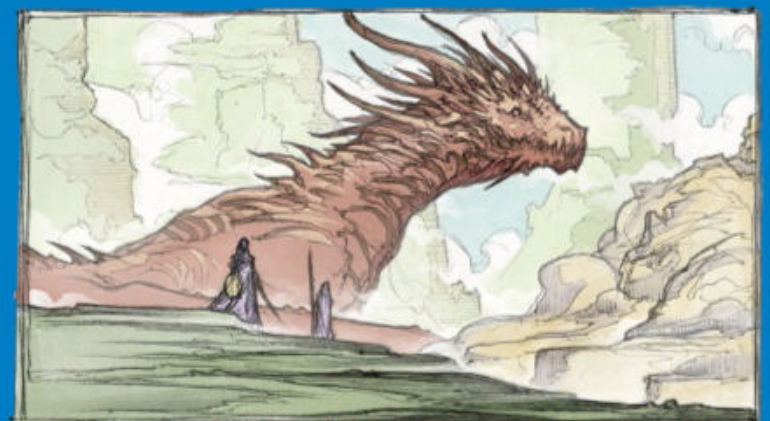
A Background colour

First I'll give the sketch a soft, flat colour base that serves as a background to start working on. I like to use low-saturation colours for this step. I think the line-art looks beautiful with the addition of colour and I really enjoy taking my sketchwork to another level.



B Create contrast

Next, I apply a flat colour to the different elements, dividing the image into blocks. I colour the foreground dark green, set the background sky blue and use red for the dragon in the mid-ground. This creates contrast between the warm and cold colours.



C Colouring the details

Now I colour some of the dragon's details. I focus on the lines and shapes that imply texture and paint them with a yellow on a low saturation. I apply very soft violet brushstrokes on the rocks on the right and the shield of one of the characters. To finish I paint the clouds and aspects of the environment white, and this is what gives us an interesting look. I create a white glaze on a low opacity between elements – for example, to separate the dragon from the two characters. ➡➡

Workshops

10 CHOOSE YOUR IDEAL SKETCHBOOK

For me the right sketchbook is one that's reasonably priced, and contains paper which is good enough to draw on. It's only natural to want to use the best-quality paper for sketching, but on the occasions when I have drawn in a luxury sketchbook I usually end up feeling restricted by it. I get into the mindset that it needs to be kept in perfect condition and should only contain polished sketches. Invariably, it ends up on a book shelf, out of harm's way. The ideal sketchbook is one that doesn't limit me in any way. I want to be able to destroy the pages, stain them and tear them out if necessary! The sketchbook is my best weapon in my efforts to produce great art, and I like to enjoy creating in it freely.



11 DRAW IN A SMALL FORMAT

I call them minisketches and you'll find in all of my sketchbooks. I draw into small rectangles that are arranged in a grid, and this enables me to quickly imagine a scene. I usually do several on the same page, which is a good way of quickly exploring ideas and practising complex compositions. I often start a new illustration using this technique. Distilling a concept into just a few centimetres of paper can help you to unblock your mind and is a great tool to help you practise and improve your drawing skills.



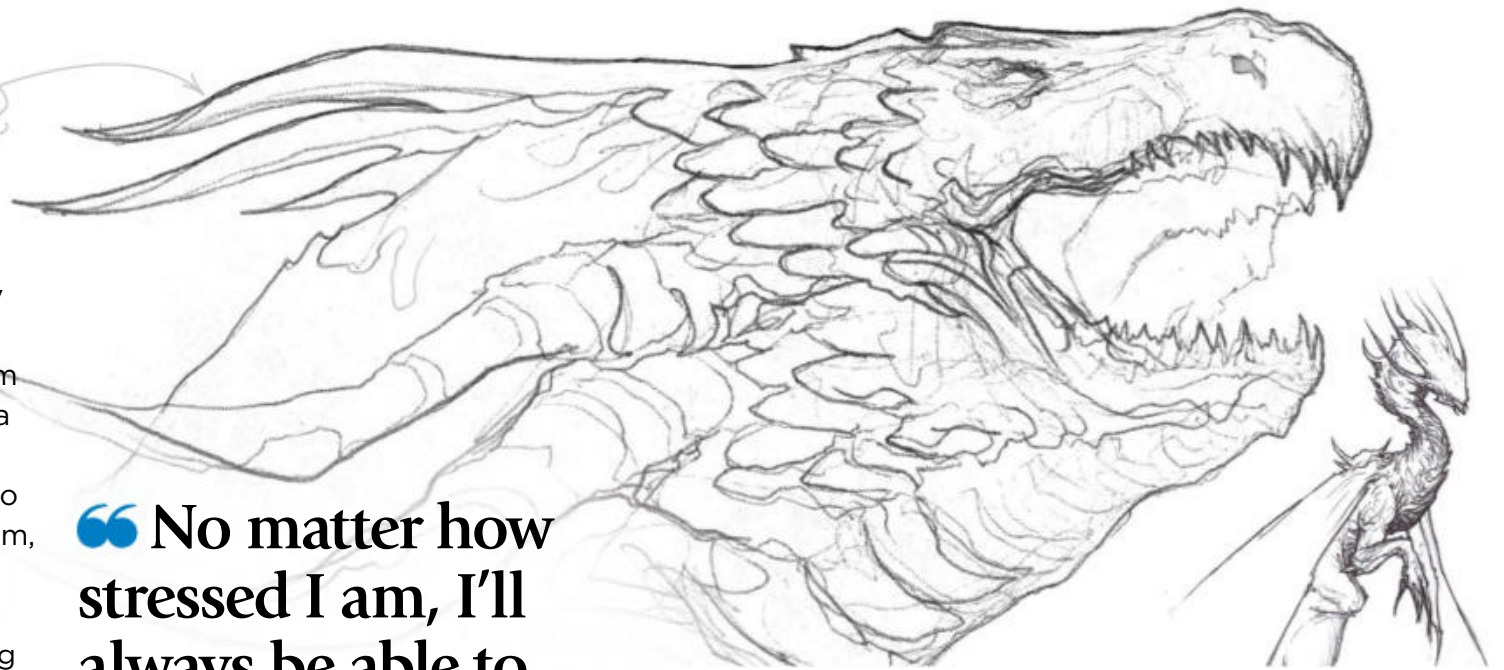
12 LET YOUR NOTEBOOK BE AN ESCAPE FROM WORK WHERE YOU CAN ENJOY SKETCHING

In my job I spend many hours painting, creating illustrations in which I follow guidelines and descriptions supplied by my clients. I'm constantly facing challenges and solving problems. In my breaks, when I stop to eat and watch TV or in the evening when I finish work, I often relax by drawing a little in my sketchbook. I've been painting all day, but in the sketchbook it's different. I can relax my mind and improvise by drawing, sketching freely and letting myself go without any pretence other than to relax by living in the moment.

13 A TRICK TO AVOID CREATIVE BLOCK

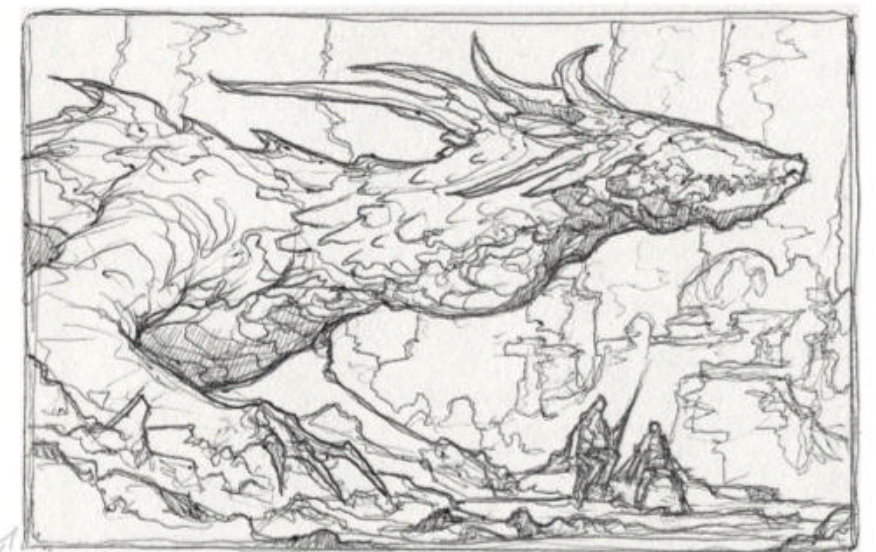
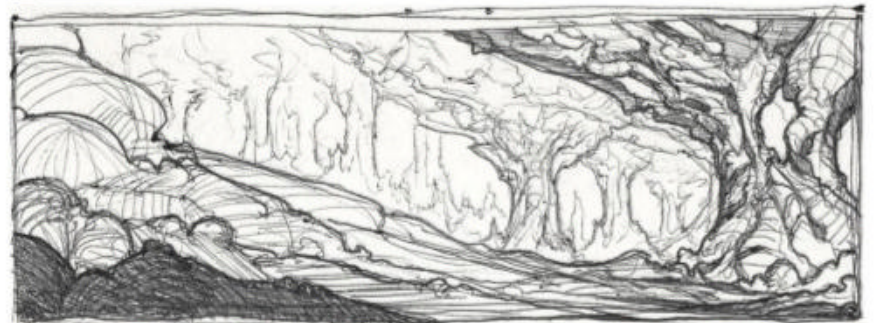
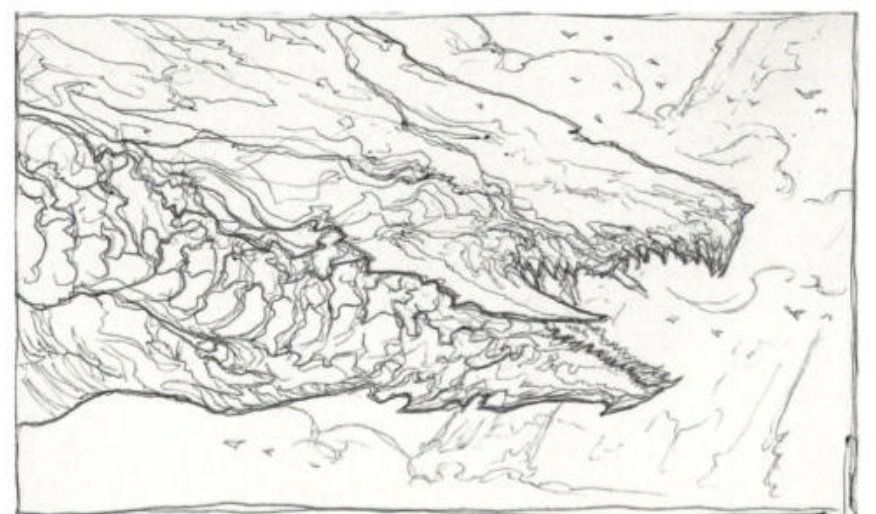
Sometimes I'm unable to draw because of creative block, or feel frustrated with the work that I'm doing. When this happens I usually stop what I'm doing, take my notebook and draw objects that I'm proficient at depicting. It's usually a skull or a dragon's head in profile, and I keep these drawings small. No matter how stressed or blocked I am, I'll always be able to draw these objects relatively well, and almost always after a few minutes' drawing my frustration decreases and even disappears. We all have something we know how to draw especially well, so take advantage of it!

“No matter how stressed I am, I'll always be able to draw these objects relatively well”



14 CHOOSE THE RIGHT COLOUR PALETTE

I love to use soft, pretty colours with low saturation in my sketches. I try to respect the line and textures of the pen when colouring and these colours fit very well with that sketch aesthetic. Over time I realised that I always select colours in the same area of the Photoshop palette! The colours I like to apply in my sketches are usually right in this area. Once I apply these colours I can apply darker tones for shading or lighter tones to create ambience.



15 BRINGING DEPTH TO THE DRAWING

Sketching without pressing the pen down too hard enables me to go over some parts of the drawing again. This helps to create different planes that give an impression of depth. I think about which parts I want to emphasise and which ones should be left on a low opacity. The foregrounds are closest to the viewer and should therefore be darker, while the background is farther away and so I barely go over those lines. It's important to pay attention to these details, because they can greatly improve a composition, especially when there are several elements in a single scene.

Photoshop

PAINT ICONIC KEY ART FOR BLIZZARD

Senior vis-dev artist **Will Murai** talks about the process and challenges of assembling Blizzard's most beloved heroes into an epic illustration

Artist PROFILE

Will Murai
LOCATION: US

Will is a Japanese-Brazilian artist living in California. He's a senior vis-dev artist at Blizzard Entertainment, working on animation, illustration and concept art.
www.willmurai.com



BlizzCon celebrates all of Blizzard Entertainment's games. Every year, thousands of people tune in to hear about Blizzard's game announcements, expansions, upcoming storylines and more. One of the central aspects of Blizzard games is the characters. Their story arc, drama and challenges are the bonds that help

connect the player to the games' universes. The goal of the key art is to portray characters from Blizzard's games. Each one had to have their own sentiment and personality, combined with the expression of the event's energy and excitement.

These characters are lovingly developed by their respective game teams and my job is to paint them in their best light, respecting and honouring their creative essence.

That includes having regular communications with the art director and the teams' leaders to ensure the characters' souls are represented in the key art.

Due to health concerns, this year's event was unique: the first Blizzcon held in any online format. With that in mind, I needed to make sure the composition looked good in multiple formats: from small magnets to gigantic LED panels. ➡➡

How I create...

A MASTERFUL COMPOSITION



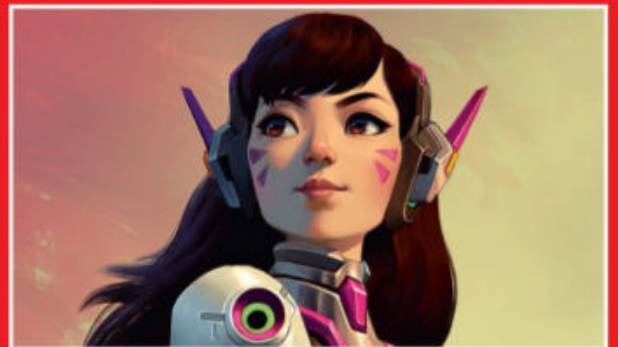
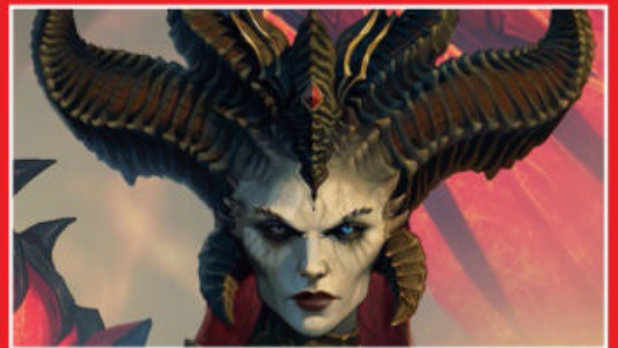
1 Layout sketches

Pre-production is important for this type of illustration. I design multiple layout compositions to make sure that all of the characters are expressing their personality through their pose. I also make sure that the composition is harmonious as a whole and that each character has an equal amount of space on the canvas.



2 Colour keys

Next I start working on colour keys. I want all the figures to be lit by the same light. It doesn't have to be super-polished, but I try to make a decision about the light sources (colour and intensity of key light, ambient light, rim light and so on. It's similar to emulating the principles of a 3D shader, but using only Photoshop.



3 Rendering the artwork

Now that the core artistic decisions have been made, I can dedicate myself to painting. There are no secrets here other than having the patience to render even the smallest detail of the piece. I want to do these characters justice because they're going to be seen by thousands of people around the world.



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STRONG FIGURES



Characters in full-body view

I render each character individually at full-body and on separate layers. This gives me extra flexibility when applying the key art on to different media and products. Sometimes they even show up on consumer products, such as posters or playmats.



Shapes can strengthen a composition

I always try to find the main shapes within a complex composition. This helps for a quick read, even when the piece contains multiple overlapping elements. Having the characters' faces composed in a way that intersects with this imaginary shape will make for a more harmonious and structured composition.



Neutral background

I create a background that justifies the light sources and that looks neutral enough to help the characters pop. I want a bit of texture and shape to support the composition and guide the eye back to the main action, so I decide to use the clouds as compositional objects.

Study surfaces and materials

One of the elements I pay close attention to when rendering a painting are the materials' properties. I'm mindful about specularity and how it affects levels and hues. In the case of Overwatch's D.Va, we have glass, metal and rubber, and each material will have different reflective properties.

Avoid tangents

There are many overlapping elements in this piece, so it's crucial that I look out for tangents. These are touching areas that prove a distraction. I make sure that no important elements are covered up, and that the iconic silhouettes of the characters are on show.

High resolution

Some of the key art applications are gigantic LED panels, so I have to clearly define every detail in the composition. I really get into the smaller parts of the scene and render them with tiny brushes. Call it obsession if you want, but I must confess that I enjoy this part of the process!

Lighting considerations

I try to establish the lighting setup in the beginning, mainly using ambient light and key light. I'm also very aware of each character's materials and textures. This way, I can ensure that they'll all be lit by the same light source and the piece will look consistent overall.

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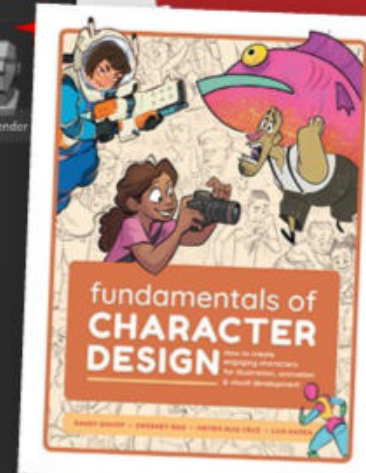
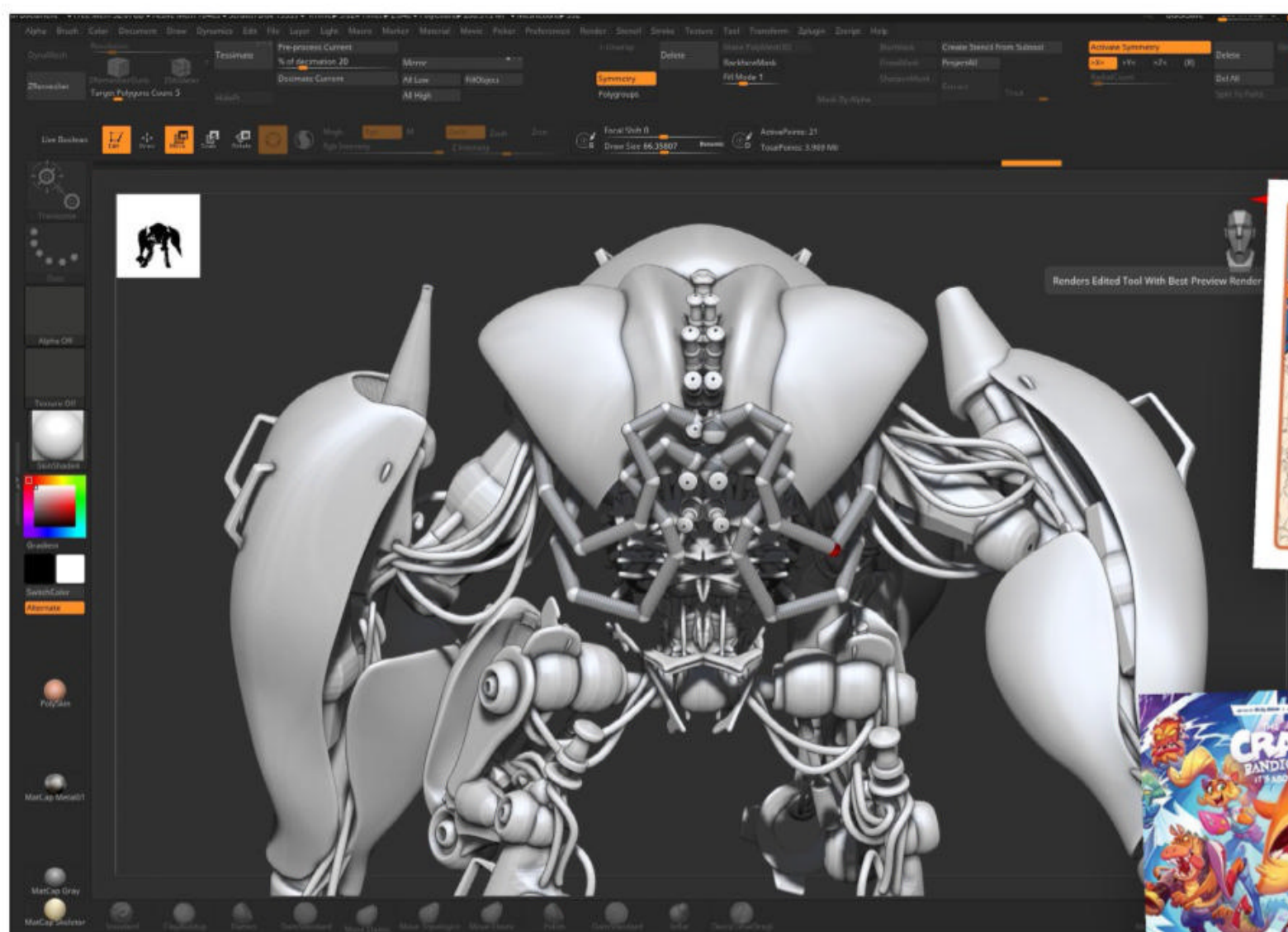
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX Reviews



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...

4
PRODUCTS
ON TEST



SOFTWARE

84 ZBrush 2021.5

Pixologic adds a raft of extra features to the veteran 3D sculpting tool, to streamline your 3D process even further.

BOOKS

86 Fundamentals of Character Design

Artists who aspire to work in the entertainment industries will be keen to learn what this book has to offer.

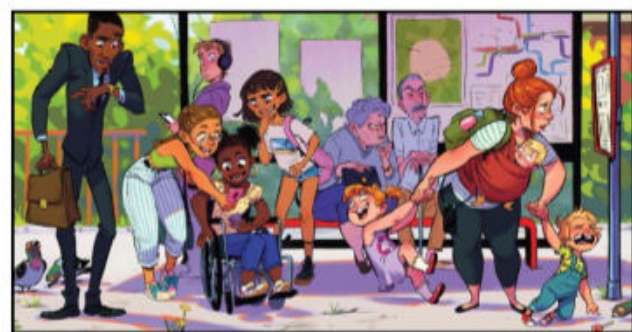
87 The Art of Crash Bandicoot 4: It's About Time

Discover the concept art that helped bring Crash Bandicoot's latest escapades to life.

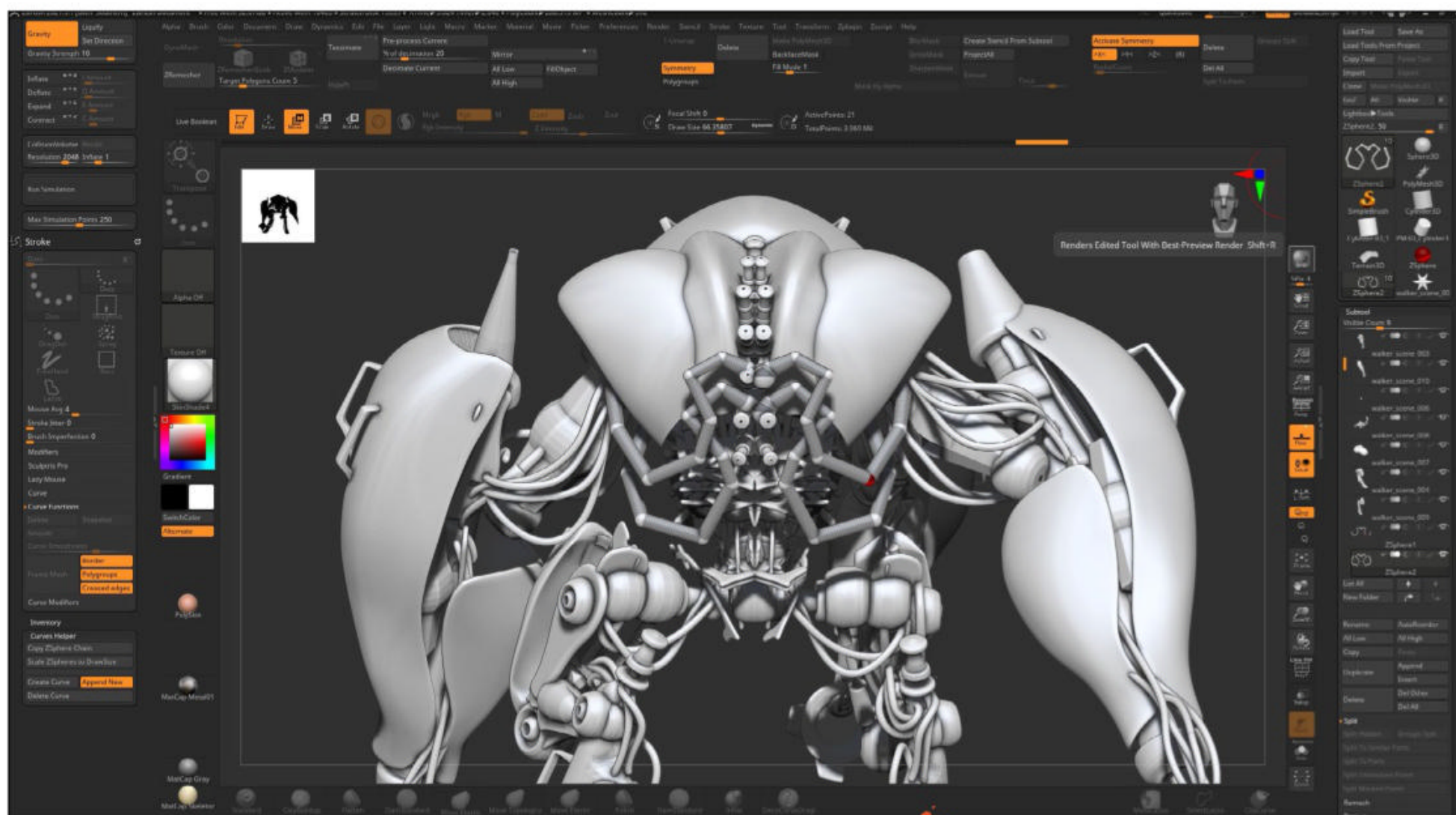


87 Komorebi: The Art of Djamila Knopf

The illustrator brings her influences and art together in a compelling new book.



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



ZBrush 2021.5



The Curves Helper tool transforms a chain of objects into an editable curve that enables any surface to be applied along that curve.

HALF TIME Pixologic adds a raft of extra features to the veteran 3D sculpting tool, to streamline your 3D process even further

Price Perpetual licence £653, Subscription £29/month or £131 for six months. Free update for existing users
Company Pixologic **Web** www.pixologic.com

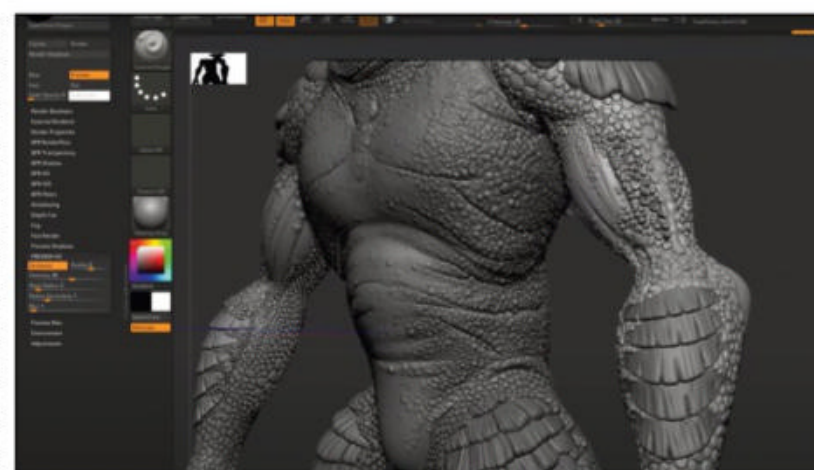
For over 20 years now Pixologic has released its annual ZBrush upgrade. This time around the company has followed up the 2021 version with an additional point release. Although this release may offer nothing in the way of a revamp or interface redesign, it does add more power into already established areas of the program.

The most noticeable new feature in version 2021 was the Dynamics panel, which added cloth functionality. This was a key step because competing programs like Blender already have strong dynamic cloth tools. Specific cloth brushes are now available in ZBrush's sculpting featureset.

2021 also brought MicroPoly, which adds tiling of meshes from the Dynamic Subdivision panel, giving you more options to make highly detailed cloth and weave elements such as baskets. ZModeler also received Edge Extrude to help with retopology and single-sided polygon options.

SCULPTING WITH CLAY

What didn't make it into the ZBrush 2021 release was provided in the .5 update, and there are some pretty creative additions. Thick Skin, available from the Tool palette, gives a way to add clay with any brush, but restrict its height or depth. At first it feels as though you're using a Layer brush that only lifts the surface of a sculpt to a



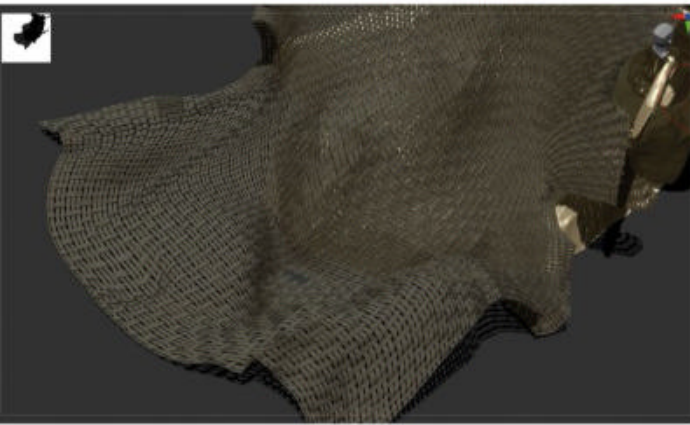
© Pixologic

The new Thick Skin tool makes it possible to add clay while working within limits – great for enhancing the look of this creature's scales.

specific height, but as you learn how to combine brushes and alphas you see where the strength in this new feature lies. It can give you a sculptural look as if you're actually using real clay. You can utilise the feature on low-polygon sculpts that are using Dynamic Subdivision, or more often on high-poly sculpts.

Because it's restricting the height that the surface can raise, you can make use of features like the Drag

“Preview AO is a real-time ambient occlusion setting that improves the look of the sculpt as you work on it”

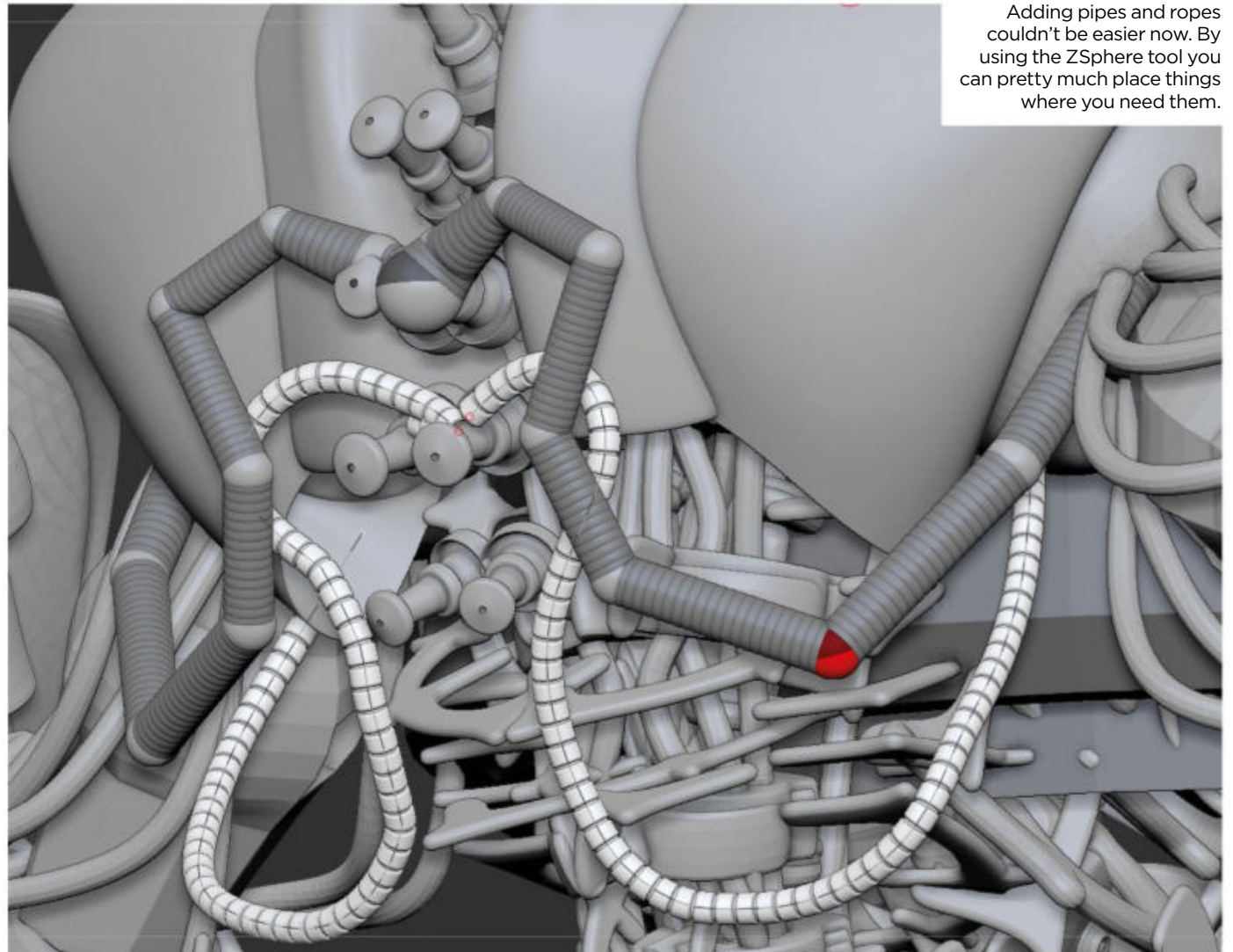


Features like Micropoly make life easier for tasks like creating textured materials such as chainmail.

© Pixologic



It's now easier to switch between smoothing techniques in the 3D Sculpting Brushes palette.



Adding pipes and ropes couldn't be easier now. By using the ZSphere tool you can pretty much place things where you need them.



Realtime Ambient Occlusion is now available in the Viewport. You activate it from the Render menu and it has the usual range of settings.

you can now draw out a full chain of ZSpheres and use Move, Scale and Rotate to accurately place your item.

WORK WITH EDGES AND FACES

ZModeler is the ZBrush polygon modelling toolset and it's already packed with tools to enable you to manipulate points, edges and faces rather than sculpt on a surface. This update sees the addition of Slice Mesh, enabling you to slice up your topology along an Edge Crease. You can crease multiple edges and keep the hard edge. There's also a PolyGroup Fill that makes it possible to spot where to add details, and many more little updates to this underrated toolset.

This version finally sees support for 3DConnexion devices, a must-have request from those working in CAD where the use of SpaceMouse products is the norm. It enables you to add a certain freedom to your viewport navigation that you would only otherwise get in VR or similar.

ZBrush 2021.5 is a solid release, and you can't pass over the fact that Pixologic has given free upgrades for over 20 years now, which is almost unheard of these days. Users are beginning to wonder when an interface redesign is due, but until then we're confident we'll continue to see feature-rich releases like 2021.5.

Rectangle stroke and add predictable patterns or animal scales with your own Alphas. This version also gives the Deformation panel a further boost with the Contrast slider, enabling you to enhance those details by simply increasing the amount.

Sculptris Pro received some improvements in this release. Remember that Sculptris Pro is the feature in ZBrush where you can add localised detail using dynamic tessellation. Essentially, this means you get geometry where you need it, and not all over the mesh as you do when you run DynaMesh. Sculptris Pro meshes can now be partially hidden as

you work, giving you the ability to work on high-resolution sculpts.

Preview AO is a real-time ambient occlusion setting that improves the look of the sculpt as you work on it. You can access it from the Render palette and there are options for quality, intensity, radius and even blur. It improves the look of the mesh without having to use a BPR render, helping to speed up the process.

Curve Helper gives you much more control over using Insert Multi Meshes, meaning it's now a breeze to create elements like pipes, chains, laces, ropes and cables. Instead of just dragging out a curve on to an object

DETAILS

Features

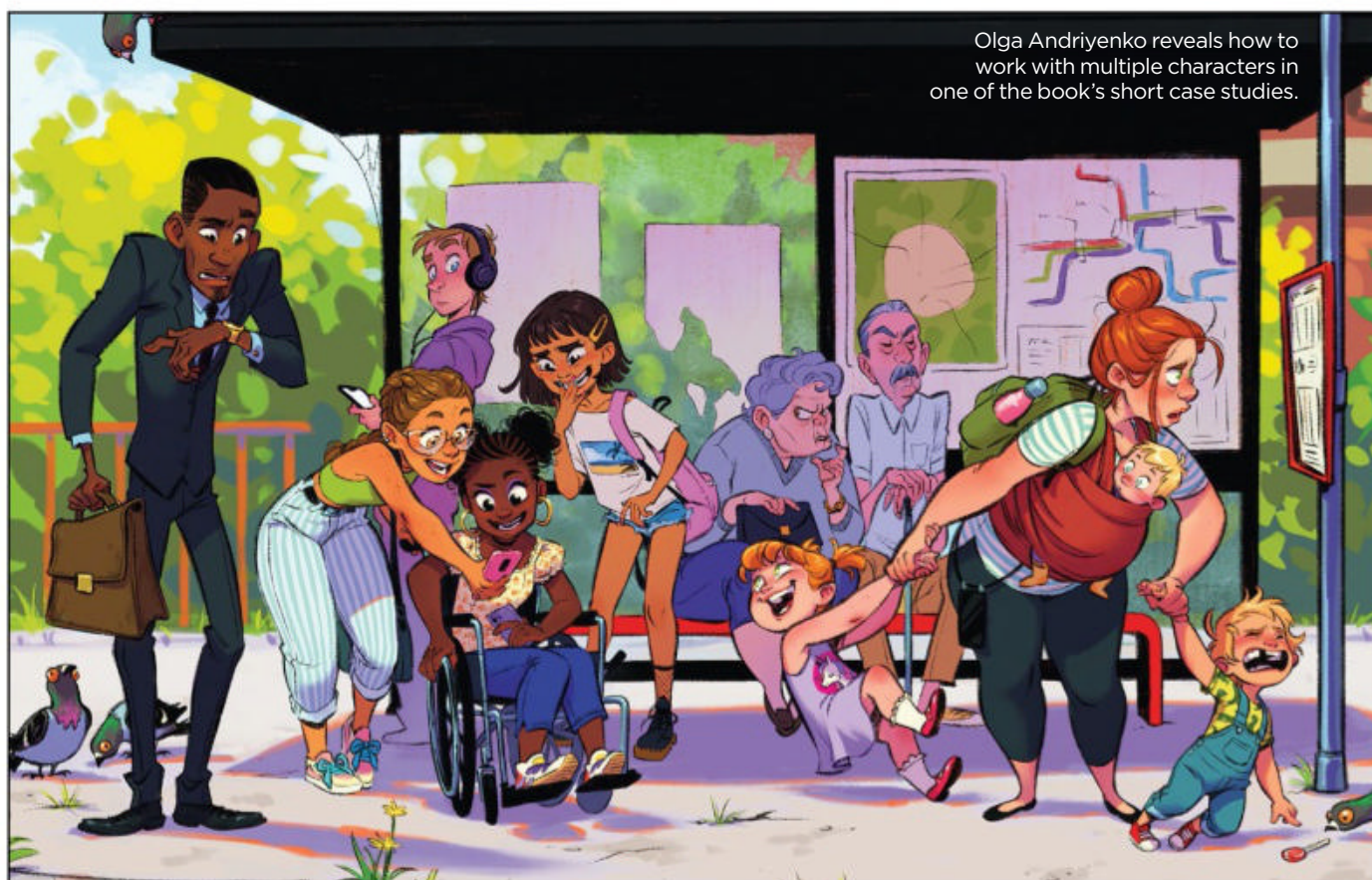
- Thick Skin for improved control when sculpting
- Sculptris Pro that dynamically add and reduces polygons
- Contrast tools highlight details in your sculpting work
- Curves Helper for working with objects on an editable curve
- Preview AO (Ambient Occlusion) for real-time previews

System Requirements

PC: Windows Vista or newer (64-bit only), Core 2 Duo processor or AMD equivalent, 4GB RAM, 8GB hard disk space
Mac: OSX 10.11 or above, Core 2 Duo processor, 4GB RAM, 8GB hard disk space

Rating





Olga Andriyenko reveals how to work with multiple characters in one of the book's short case studies.



This dragon's small horns and wings add humour to the design, explains Stephanie Garcia Rizo.

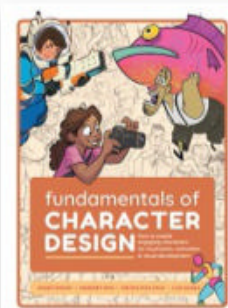
Fundamentals of Character Design

PEOPLE'S CHOICE Artists who aspire to work in the entertainment industries will be keen to learn what this book has to offer

Editor Marisa Lewis **Publisher** 3dtotal Publishing **Price** £32 **Web** www.3dtotalpublishing.com **Available Now**

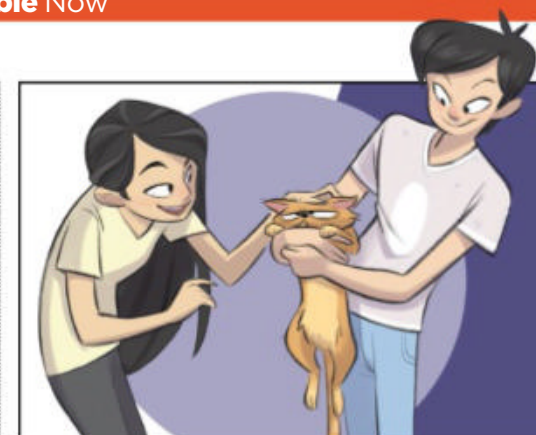
Following on from 3dtotal Publishing's excellent **Fundamentals of Creature Design** (reviewed in issue 193), the company's latest textbook promises to pass on the skills needed to make your figure designs stand out from the crowd.

With this in mind the publisher has enlisted the help of 15 pro artists. Character designer and animator Dom 'Scruffy' Murphy kicks things off with his chapter on 'What is character design?'. His 22-page answer covers

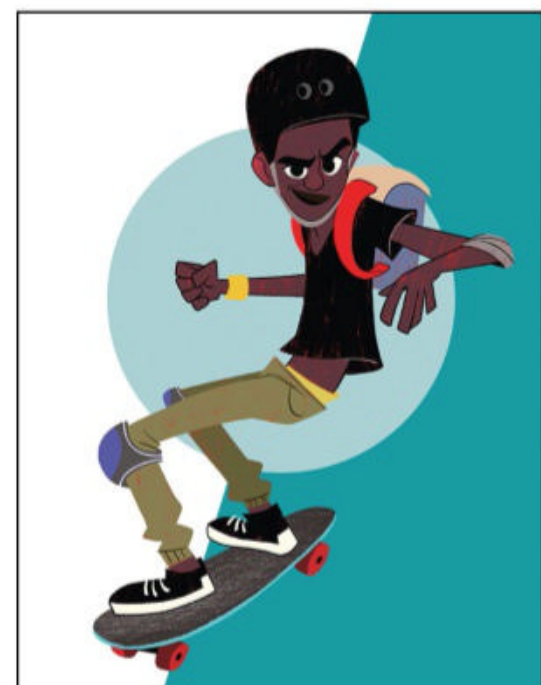


topics such as exaggeration, telling the story and simplification, and is accompanied by personal art, annotations and bullet lists. Dom packs a lot on to the page – perhaps too much. The text ends up fighting with the artwork for space and there are occasions when the book's design comes across as busy. This is also the case elsewhere in the book.

Subsequent chapters discuss key principles of good (and bad) character design. Illustrator Vanessa Morales reveals her research methods before



Kenneth Anderson contributes to a chapter that covers working with multiple characters.



“Compelling characters are the key to capturing the audience's attention”

Luis Gadea explains that the helmet follows the same shape as an afro, which could help with visual consistency when it's taken off.

moving onto ideation. Animation industry veteran Stephanie Garcia Rizo covers shape language, colour and lighting. Animation artist Ida Helm discusses pushing facial expressions to their extremes, before her fellow contributors supply paintings of characters pulling every expression you could possibly imagine.

There's a dizzying amount of art on show both in Ida's chapter and

throughout the book. If the aim was to visually entertain the reader as well as inform them, then it's possible to have too much of a good thing. It might have been better to reduce the book's talent pool to maintain a more cohesive feel. But then again, would the amount of information on offer be as in-depth with fewer industry artists involved? It's fair to say that 3dtotal Publishing chose to go big rather than go home.

Despite occasional concerns over presentation and the sometimes overwhelming artwork, the book remains a solid source of information for artists looking to specialise in commercial character work.

RATING ★★★★★☆

The Art of Crash Bandicoot 4: It's About Time

LEVEL UP Discover the concept art – and the thinking behind it – that helped bring Crash Bandicoot's latest escapades to life

Author Micky Neilson **Publisher** Titan Books **Price** £35 **Web** www.titanbooks.com **Available** Now

The mutant marsupial with the attention-grabbing name has been a fixture of video gaming since 1996. Micky Neilson's book reveals a good chunk of the concept art behind last year's eighth instalment in the series, *It's About Time*.

Josh Nadelberg, art director at games developer Toys For Bob, discusses how he wanted the look of *It's About Time* to be wild and



Oleg Yurkov helped to develop Crash's poses and emotional range for the game.

chaotic. In his words, Crash needed to "whoa!" and "wow!". Across the book's 300-plus pages it's clear that the concept art team followed his direction to the letter.

Micky provides plenty of insights and honest comments from the 2D artists who worked on *It's About Time*. Character poses, expressions and accessory ideations are presented alongside the text, giving the reader valuable snapshots of the many creative decisions made during the game's development.

The book's trump card is a level-by-level breakdown of the entire game that reveals how the environments, enemies and boss designs came together. The amount of creativity and



Marketing art for the game, with line-art by Nicola Savori and colours by Florian Coudray.

imagination on show is astonishing, and serves as a reminder – if one were needed – of just how much talent goes into creating a video game.

RATING ★★★★★

Komorebi: The Art of Djamila Knopf

LIGHT READING The self-taught German illustrator brings her insight, influences and artwork together in a compelling new book

Author Djamila Knopf **Publisher** 3dtotal Publishing **Price** £28 **Web** www.3dtotal.com **Available** Now

Komorebi is Japanese for 'sunlight filtering through trees'. It's an apt choice: lighting is a distinctive feature of Djamila Knopf's work, and one that's caught the eye of many people on social media.

Indeed, Djamila cites Japanese anime as one of her early influences in her book, which is part memoir, part portfolio and part instructional guide. The artist takes the reader through



Djamila enrolled in Japanese studies at university, but then changed direction and studied art education.


key moments of her upbringing, including her difficult family life that she hinted at in our recent interview with her (see issue 182). Each mini-chapter is accompanied by a range of illustrations. They complement her experiences while also underlining the artist's skill at depicting both the ordinary and fantastical. It's a lovely approach that brings the reader deeper into Djamila's world.

Komorebi's final third sees the artist discussing her painting methods. A 16-page workshop reveals how she created the book's cover art, while colour, composition and foliage are also discussed. Whether you're learning from the artist or just enjoying her art, there's plenty of pleasure to be had from Djamila's book.

RATING ★★★★★



Art based on the Four of Wands Tarot card, which represents freedom, celebration and excitement.



"I have never used more advanced software for real-media mimicking. So many times people were convinced that my graphics were painted with standard tools. And they were surprised to find out my paints were digital."

Iwona Gradzka-Kurzaj, artist

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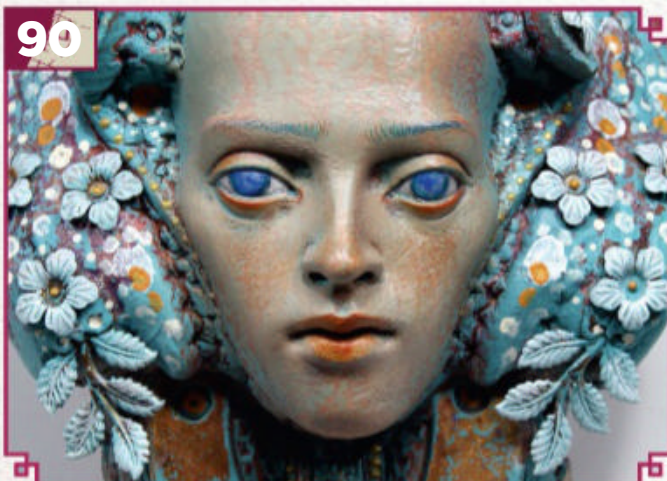


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98 First Impressions: Brom
Travel helped to broaden the mind of this US fantasy artist.



FXPosé

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS



Tomas Barcelo Castela

LOCATION: Spain **MEDIA:** Clay, plaster, resin, found objects

WEB: www.instagram.com/tomasbarcelocastela

Tomas is a former sculpting teacher. In 2014 he decided to pursue his passion for sculpting full-time, and now has several movie-related projects lined up.



1 KRONEN QUIMBATTI
“It might look like an ancient forest spirit, but on closer inspection it’s actually a cleverly disguised robot.”

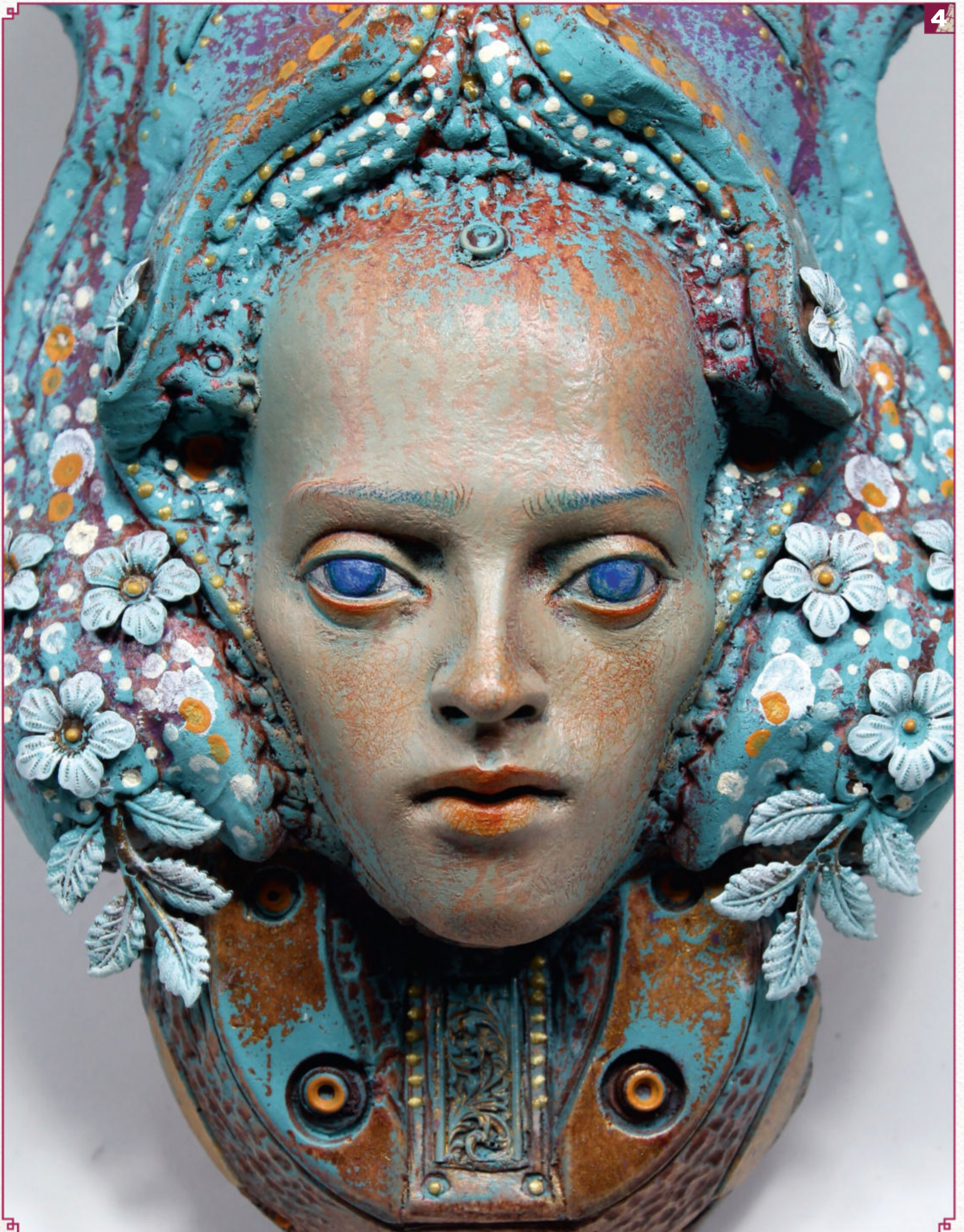


2 HIPPIY BETSOEBE
“This sculpture depicts what I think happens when a robot finds itself isolated in the children’s zone of a spaceship.”



3 SETNA TEC
“Even robots have an expression for when they feel confused. They say that their heads are full of fish.”

4 LOUDIA GALIX
“The technological future we’re heading towards could learn from the Renaissance. I hope it rediscovers our past.”







Andi Soto

LOCATION: Croatia **MEDIA:** Ink, graphite, colour pencils, watercolours, acrylics **WEB:** www.andisoto.com

Born in the tropics, Andi is heavily influenced by the jungle and her own relationship with darkness. Constantly exploring the human condition, the artist looks to have a connection and conversation with the viewer.



1 SAUDADE

"This piece was inspired by the Portuguese word Saudade. It's a beautiful word that evokes feelings of melancholia and longing for something or someone."

2 HIDDEN PEOPLE

"Away from the world, alone with myself, hidden in the jungle with my many thoughts and emotions."

3 HOME IS WHERE THE HEARTACHE IS

"Drawing all my feelings as flowers and embracing them as part of me, loving every single one because of the lessons that they carry."

4 RITUAL II

"As an exercise, Ritual II was a medium to let painful emotions go."



5 COLORES SANTOS

"Inspired in a musical piece by Cerati-Melero. I felt the need to explore a dark theme combined with cheerful music."

Pencil

Watercolour

DEVELOP A STORY FOR YOUR ART

Fantasy illustrator **PAUL BONNER** documents his travels in the Wilds of Trudvang, and records his encounters with some of the inhabitants...

As usual, lucky old me was given a pretty free hand with this painting. The only brief mentioned including dwarven adventurers facing some kind of hardship in the wilderness. It was just the kind of brief I like. Anything with dwarves and nature seems to induce the appropriate creative responses in me.

I seem to remember snow being mentioned as well.

When I embark upon my own treks into the artistic wilderness, I first need a story to build a painting around and give the characters a reason for being there. It helps propel the believability of things if there's something going on. For me, because it's fantasy I need to ground it in reality. Otherwise it's just a pretty

picture with no reason to commit to anything in it. There's nothing wrong with "pretty", but a believable narrative and characters can provide a punch that over-the-top figures and eye-catching colours just can't.



Paul is an Englishman living in Denmark who's inspired by all things Northern, and all things in nature. See more of his art at www.theartofpaulbonner.com.

Step-by-step: Establish the key characters



1 DEVELOPING STORY BEATS

My initial idea is a bunch of dwarves being pursued by goblin wolf riders. I talk Theo (my boss) out of doing a big punch-up, and opt for the more restrained option that poses questions like, "What on earth will they do now?" A few sketches help the idea take shape. I leave the backgrounds open so I can have more freedom when it comes to the painting.



2 POPULATE THE SCENE

Now I need to establish some actors. Random scribbles help me try to find some characters. It could be some heavy brows or the curve of a nose. I know when I hit upon someone real. Someone with a history – and hopefully some attitude. I want this dwarf to be alert and tense having just noticed the trailing goblins, like an animal picking up a threatening scent.



3 SUPPORTING ACTORS

I need to have all the characters nailed down, so I do more sketching of the supporting cast. I knew there would be some tiny goblins in the background, but I want one goblin in the foreground along with his wolf. This implies that part of the story has already happened. It's always good to have an excuse to paint animals – even dead ones.



Points of interest: Storytelling techniques



A silent, snowy scene

Here you can see the toothbrush snow. I hadn't planned this, but thought that some kind of movement was necessary. I feel it emphasises the blanketing silence that deep snow gives. First I try it with tiny little dots to carpet the whole background, then I try to get another splatter with fewer, slightly bigger snow flakes to give it a more three-dimensional effect. I roughly mask off the dwarves with some bits of paper first. It could have ruined things, but luckily I feel that it worked.

MATERIALS

PAPER

- Layout paper
- Canson Montval Watercolour Paper 300gr (stretched on plywood board with gumstrip paper tape)

PAINT

- Winsor & Newton Cotman, and Horadam watercolours in tubes
- White gouache

BRUSHES

- A mixed bag of different brand brushes, both natural and acrylic

TOOLS

- HB pencil
- Kneadable rubber
- Old toothbrush



Indicating imminent threat

I want to have this excitable fellow pointing wildly stage right. This suggests that something ominous has presented itself in the wings, which helps again to enlarge the narrative and prompt possibilities and questions. The arrows help with the storytelling as well.



New arrivals

Originally, I had thought to put a long, winding line of goblins coming all the way down the valley, but it was far too distracting. The idea of them as an advance party that's just broken cover from the forest is much more interesting.

Eye-catching detail

To contrast my grey and cold palette, which in my defence helps give a claustrophobic and cold feel to things, I add a reckless splash of colour to attract your eye to the main character and contrast to the general bleakness of things. Even so, I couldn't help using a cold red.

Narrative signposting

I painted this eagle-eyed dwarf facing into the painting, shamelessly manipulating you into wondering what it is that he's looking at in the distance. It's a great way of strengthening a narrative and drawing attention to different aspects of an image.

Distracting anatomy

I wish I had done the wolf with his legs flat on the snow towards the main dwarf. They dominate the painting, even with the spear that I add later in an attempt to break them up a bit. Should have spent more time planning!

Rocky outcrop

In hindsight, these rocks should never have been growing directly behind this dwarf's head. They would have been much better as distant trees instead. Coupled with the wolf's legs, I'm thinking that I might just have to travel back there and do something about it.

First Impressions

✧ Brom ✧

Travel helped to broaden the mind of this US fantasy artist



Where did you grow up and how has this influenced your art?
I'm an army brat, so grew up all over:

Japan, Alabama, Hawaii, Germany, to name a few. This influenced my art in many ways. Primarily just being exposed to so many different cultures expanded my interests, such as anime in Japan and the Gothic history of Germany with its brooding castles and such.

Art was also the friend that I could always turn to when moving around. It not only gave me an outlet, but also as a way to be accepted into a new school. There always seemed to be a group of artistic kids who spoke the same language as me.

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

Literature. From a very early age, every time I read a good book I would draw the characters and creatures. In my teen years this resulted in hundreds of drawings of The Lord of the Rings and Elric. Now, it's mostly my own novels that I enjoy illustrating.



LORD BEELBETH

"This is a painting from my book *Lost Gods*, which was publishing in 2016."



KRAMPUS

"A painting from my 2012 novel *Krampus, the Yule Lord*."

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

I live in the shadow of a mountain near Seattle. I have a creek on one side, a mountain on the other. It's wet and gloomy – perfect weather to create creepy art and stories.

Do you have an art tool or ritual that you simply can't live without?

I'm still 100 per cent traditional, so obviously my paint and brushes. And not just any brushes, but my old, worn-out ones. I have nearly a hundred brushes at any given time. They're all in various states of decay, and each one has its own personality. They're great for scrubbing paint around and achieving good textures.



ABITHA

"Here's the cover to my upcoming novel, *Slewfoot, a Tale of Bewitchery*."

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

I wrote a novel entitled *Krampus, the Yule Lord*. As many know, Krampus is a Christmas counterpart of Santa who's known for putting naughty kids in sacks and beating the naughty out of them. If they're really naughty he'll then throw them into the river. And if they're really, really naughty he'll cook them and eat them. I like Krampus.

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

When I was young I didn't have a clear thought on how it would be. I guess I imagined all working artists made a good living and had full control over all the art they did, so I was surprised at how tough the business side of art can be, especially if you're freelance. And in illustration, you're usually trying to please the client first, not yourself. So that part of it was surprising and it took a while before I finally had control of my own work.

How has your style evolved?

I guess in finding my voice. As with most beginning artists I was trying to paint like other artists I admired. This is good – it's how we learn – but it's crucial to move beyond that, for all your influences to merge and hopefully end up with something unique. This is one reason why it's important to follow many artists and have many influences so as not to look like a knock-off of someone else. Now the goal is not to stagnate, to keep trying new techniques and approaches, to try and bring something fresh to each piece.

What does the future hold for you?

I love pictures and words. So I hope to continue writing and illustrating my horror novels as long as my hands and eyes will let me.

Brom has painted art for novels, games, comics and film. He's also an award-winning horror writer. You can see more of his art at www.bromart.com.

“The goal is not to stagnate, to keep trying new techniques and approaches...”



Image by Nick Harris - Tutorial IFX 187

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