NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX

FUTURE

ISSUE **201**

COLOURFUL PORTRAITS
Concept compelling imagery in Photoshop

CREATE AMAZING
CREATURE DESIGNS
Learn to paint engaging and beguiling critters with insights from **Bobby Chiu**

15 TIPS FOR DYNAMIC INKING

HOW TO ADD CHARACTER
Just use exaggeration, emotion and anticipation!

ADD DIGITAL COLOUR TO THE LITTLE MERMAID
BUILD A 3D MOTORBIKE MODEL IN BLENDER
ALEXANDRIA NEONAKIS ON STORYTELLING

IT'S A NO FROM US! HOW REJECTION CAN HELP MAKE YOU A STRONGER ARTIST

Welcome to…

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

In her workshop on her beautiful art for The Little Mermaid, Ashly Lovitt talks about taking on a project that took her out of her comfort zone, which in her case was designing a book from scratch.

Ashly encourages artists to explore their limits and I wholeheartedly agree with her sentiment (she also shares a truly brilliant quote from David Bowie – turn to page 56 to see it!). By pushing ourselves, we'll learn something. Even if the outcome is a negative one, we'll gain something from that experience. This goes for every type of experience, including rejection. Turn to page 18 to hear stories of woes and noes from professional artists that ultimately turned into stories of triumph.

As always, I love to hear from you, so please send in your artwork submissions for our FXPosé gallery section. We accept digital and traditional art submissions. Also, I love to hear your thoughts, either about ImagineFX, or the art world at large. Go on, send me an email at the address below with your musings and art…

Claire

Editor in chief
claire@imaginefx.com

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ALEXANDRIA NEONAKIS

"It takes time to get good at art. And dedication"
Alexandria sums up her tweet that led to a storm.

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Artist in Residence: Amelia Royce Leonards

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Resources

Getting hold of this issue's resources is easy.
Just visit **http://ifxm.ag/creature201design**

WORKSHOP VIDEOS

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

Design and paint an original fantasy creature
See how Bobby Chiu balances fantastical creature design with naturalistic details such as subsurface scattering, textures and iridescence. Read about Bobby's techniques on page 50.
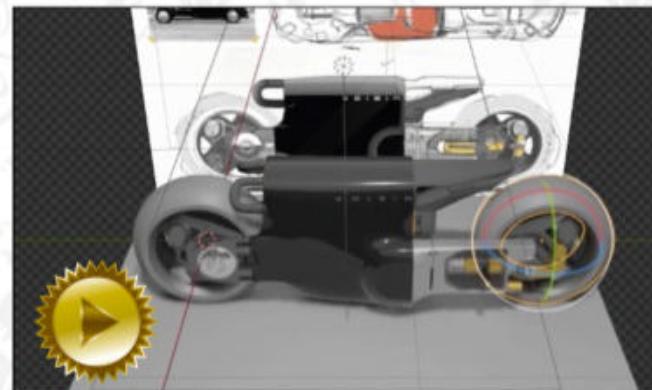
Model a bike in Blender
Watch as Rashid Tagirov turns a 2D sketch into a 3D model. His workshop's on page 74.

Get better at inking
See how Jeff Miracola brings his fantasy art to life using inks. There's more on page 92.
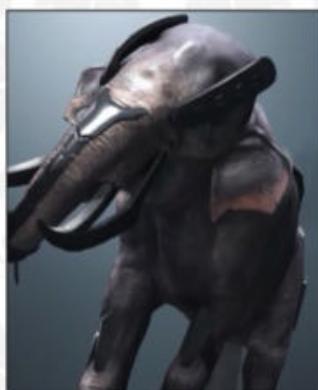
Four workshop videos to sharpen your creature design skills!
Using a mix of 2D and 3D tools, Adam Dewhirst, Aaron Blaise, Rob Brunette and Roberto Padula show you how they create this collection of original fantasy creatures.

ipso. For press freedom with responsibility

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THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

Andy Walsh

LOCATION: Wales **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Blender, ZBrush, 3D-Coat, Daz 3D, Oculus Medium, Cinema 4D **WEB:** www.artstation.com/artist/andywalsh

Andy's portfolio includes work on the film Vivarium and TV series American Gods. "I prefer to work on environments and because I grew up in the 80s, I like to create imagery inspired by works from that era."

1 WIND IN THE WILLOWS – A NEW HOME

"After spending too much time in 3D I often lock up my 3D tools and throw away the key. This was all 2D paint."

2 CTHULHU DIARY – SOUTHAMPTON DOCKS

"A painting from my own IP project. Our hero waits for a ship to take him to a mysterious Cornish village."

4

3 **CTHULHU DIARY –
MOON OVER THE PORT**
"Another piece from the same Cthulhu IP. I blocked in custom shapes then painted in 'oil' over the top."

4 **PIRATE SHIP
CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS**
"Noticing a nautical theme here! This was sculpted in VR using Medium then painted over in Photoshop."

FXPosé

Matt Lindstrom

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Clip Studio Paint **WEB:** https://mattpainting1.artstation.com

Matt works in healthcare marketing by day and draws fantastical characters by night. "Working in marketing is great, but I hope to make the transition to a new career doing what I love."

1 IDUNN, THE EVER YOUNG

"My version of the Norse goddess of youth and rejuvenation. I decided to make her a fiery redhead with some moxie!"

2 THE SUN QUEEN

"A queen or priestess of a sun-worshipping group who have set up their temples at the top of mountains to be closer to the sun."

3 BRUNHILDE AND THE JOTUNN

"Inspired by the story of Sigurd and Brunhild in Norse myth. I wondered what adventures a young valkyrie might have had."

Jim Zaccaria

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Painter, ZBrush, Modo **WEB:** www.jimzaccariaart.com

"My work has won acclaim from Bookbuilders of Boston, The New York Book Show and the Boskone Art Show," says Jim, an award-winning freelance book cover designer and illustrator.

1 THE CHANGELING OF FINNISTUATH

"The character Grey is a 14th century Irish peasant girl who leads an adventurous and unusual life."

2 SUMMONING THE SERPENT

"In this piece a sorcerer summons a dragon from the depiction of the creature that's painted on a wall."

3 THE GUITARS THAT DESTROYED THE WORLD

"A fun and challenging piece that I assigned myself, playing with the concept of killer guitar sounds as B-movie alien starships that destroy Earth."

Margarita Bourkova

LOCATION: Belgium **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Procreate **WEB:** www.margawart.com

"Fairy tales and mythical creatures have always had a very special place in my heart," says Margarita. "I love creating illustrations full of magic and mystery, and telling my own stories through my art."
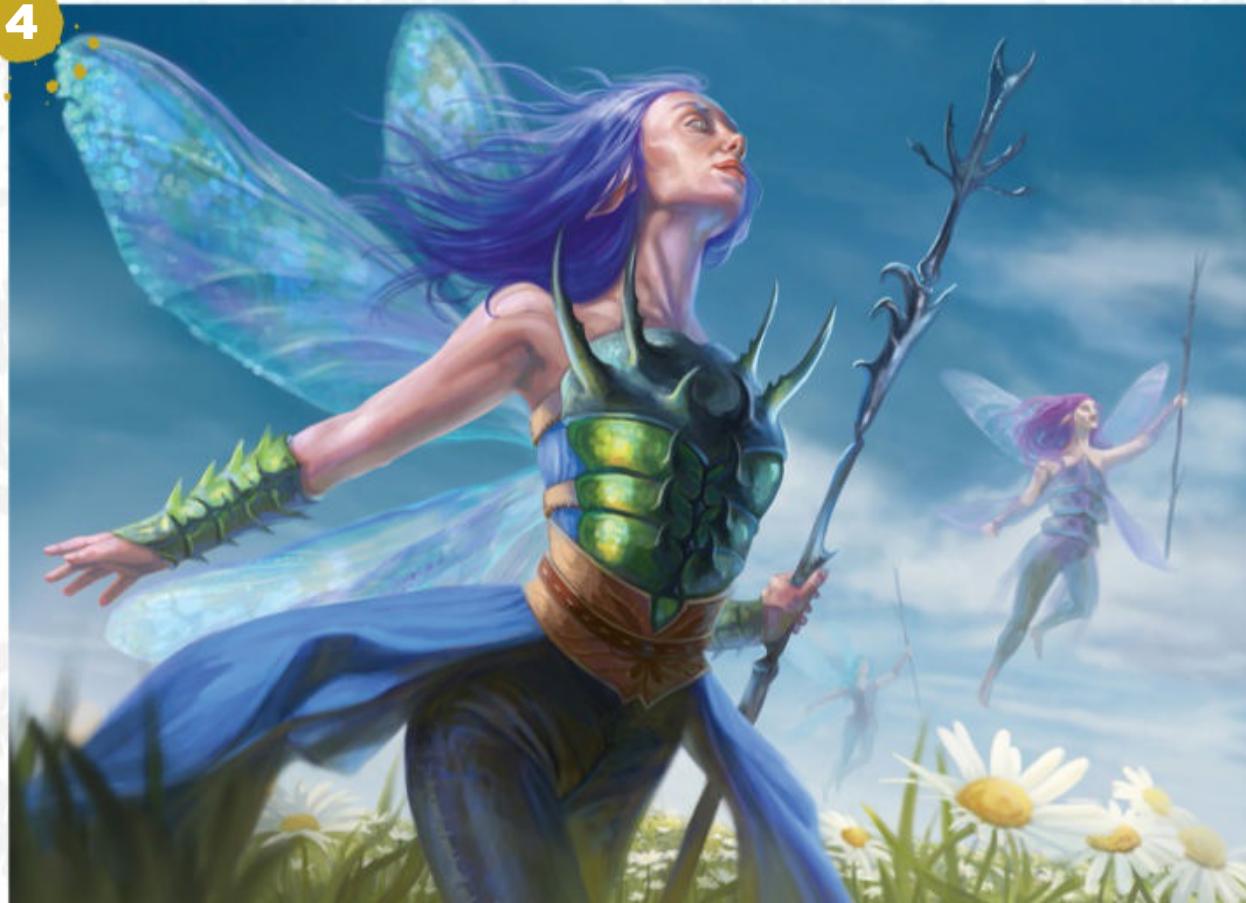
1 SAMODIVA I
"This piece was a turning point for me, and made me realise how much I enjoy illustrating characters and creatures from Slavic folklore and mythology."

2 HALA
"An illustration of a mythical creature from Slavic folklore: a snake or dragon-like elemental bringing hail and violent gales to destroy the crops."

3 SAMODIVA II
"My love for Slavic folklore rears its head again. This time it's a different take on the Slavic woodland nymph."

4 ELATED FLIGHT
"I created this painting to celebrate the coming of spring, and to show my love for fantasy creatures."

FXPosé

Kobe Sek

LOCATION: Singapore **MEDIA:** Infinite Painter **WEB:** www.artstation.com/kobesek

Kobe already has 12 years of game development under his belt, and has been involved with Assassin's Creed, Ghost Recon and Prince of Persia as a concept artist. "I love mech, cyberpunk and colour," he reveals.

1 FISH FOR LUNCH?

"I love how humans and mechs interact. I found a lovely submarine reference for this mech design."

2 SKULL HELMET

"I wasn't sure what to paint, so I thought that a skull and helmet seemed like the default ingredients for sci-fi art."

3 BNP: T1-NA

"Character design I did in Photoshop for my personal project. She's a bounty hunter in a cyberpunk world."
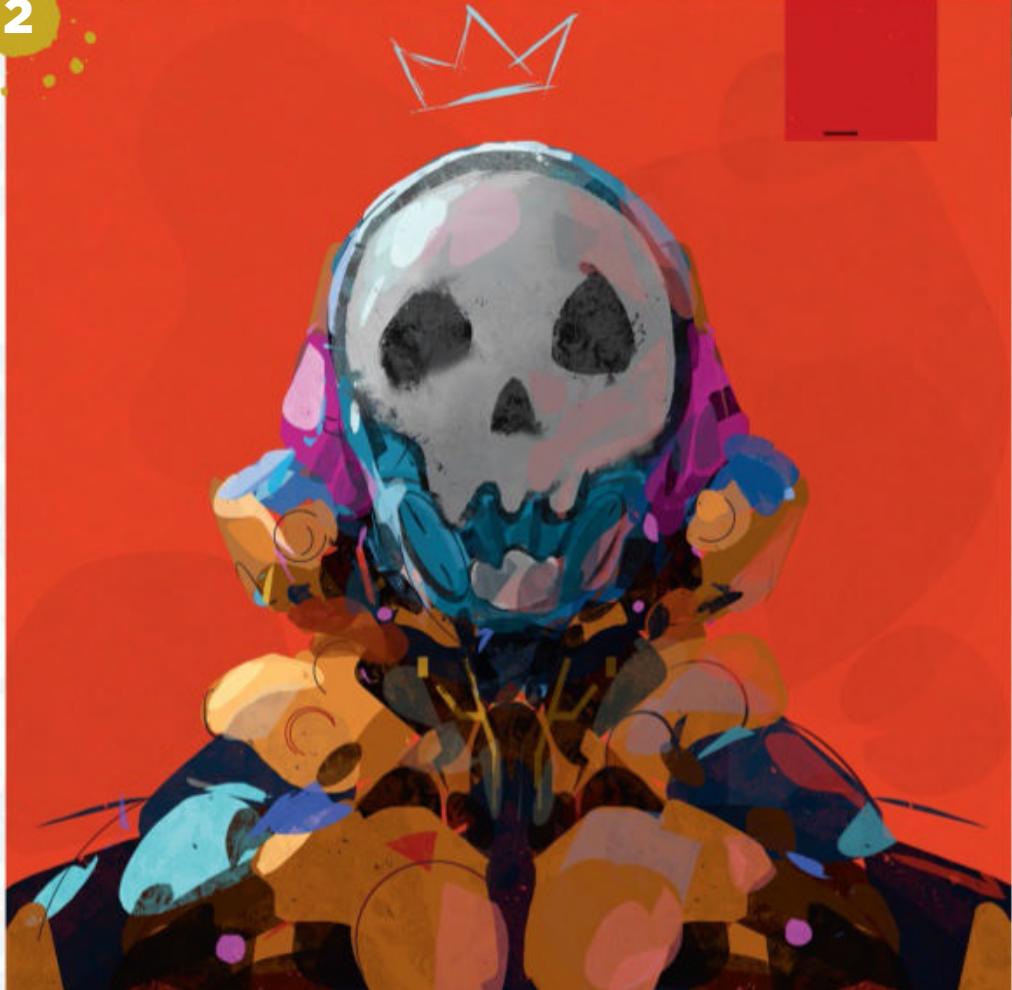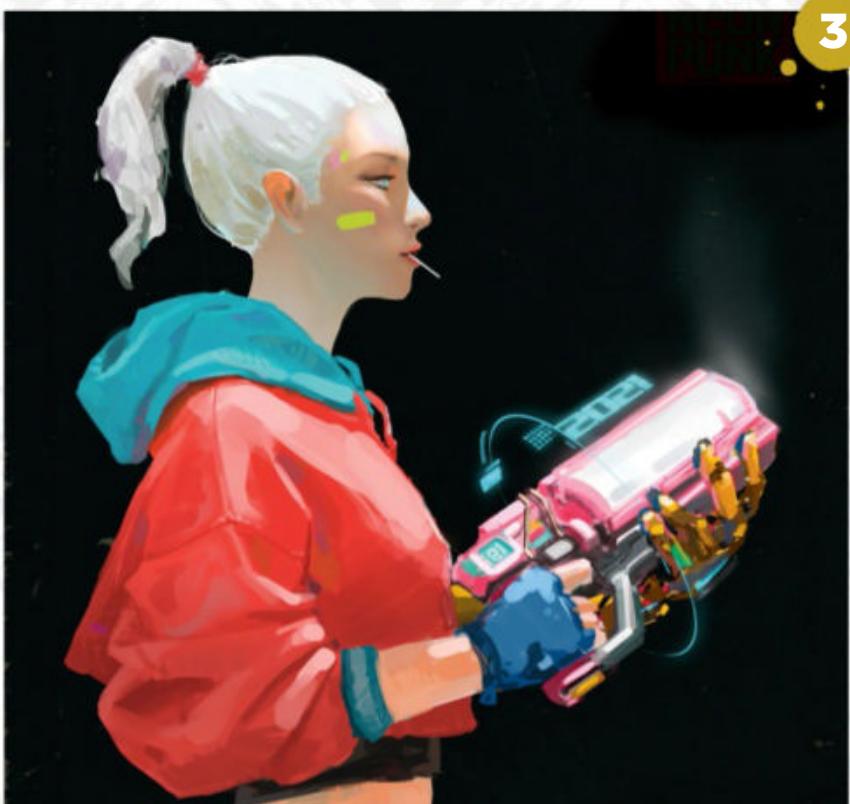
Lara Georgia Carson

LOCATION: Canada **MEDIA:** Procreate, Photoshop **WEB:** www.larageorgiacarson.com

Lara is an illustrator and 2D designer. She sees colour where there isn't any and enjoys the challenge of trying to squish every single one of them into each painting.

1 RGB
"An experiment and exploration of how the colours red, green and blue interact and form the basis of digital art (unless working in CMYK)."

2 SECRET GARDEN
"A mysterious figure peers from behind glowing flowers. Inspired by secret gardens, magical or not!"
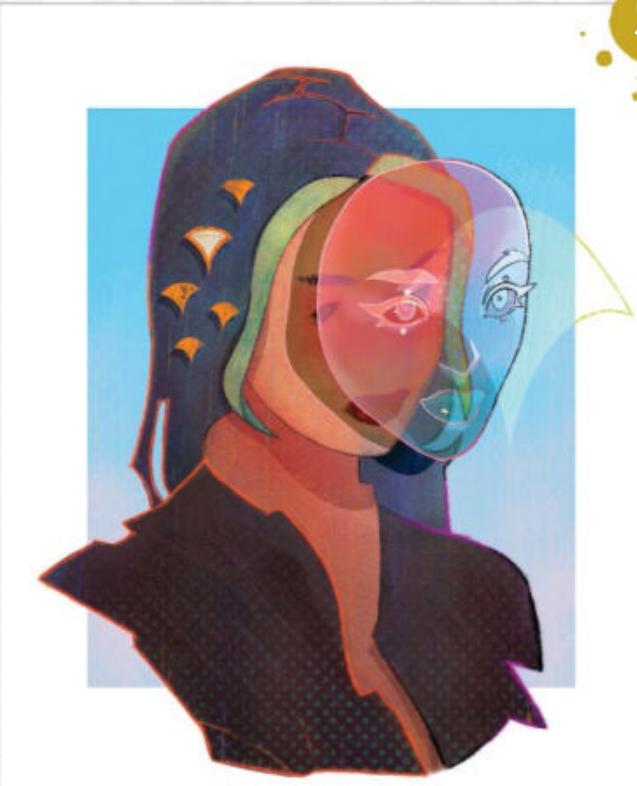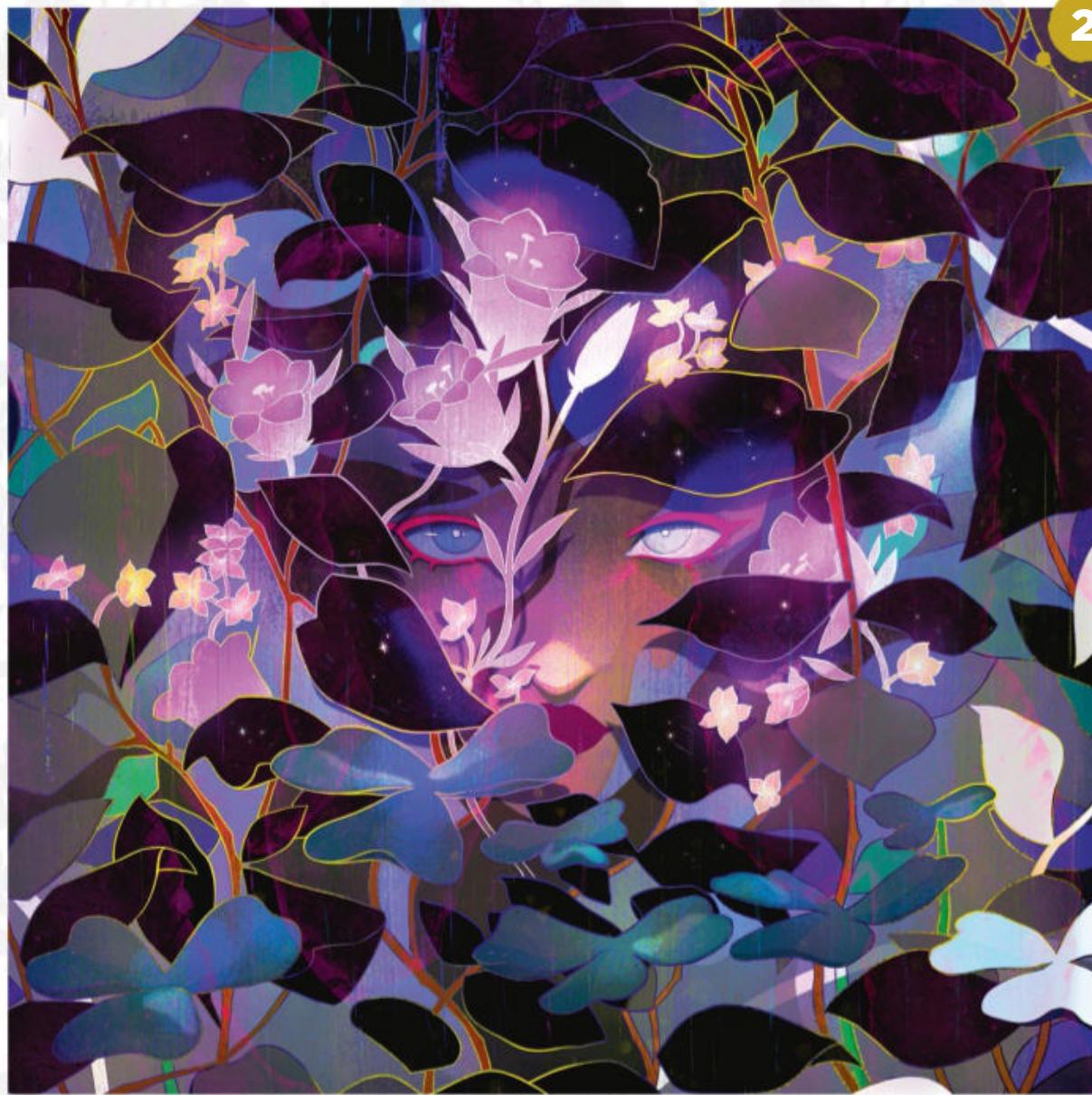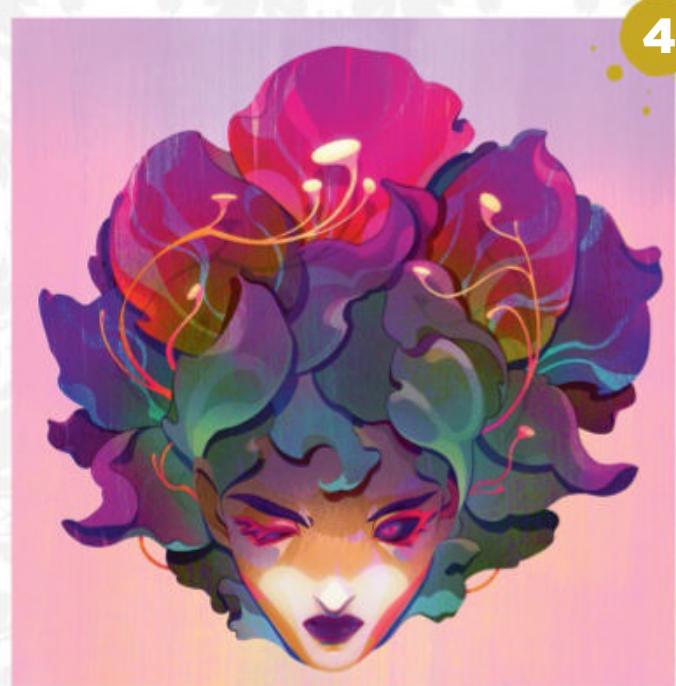
3 AVATAR
"A reflection of how much is digitally projected these days. It feels there are multiple layers that separate us within interactions."

4 CABBAGE FAIRY
"A curious trickster fae; often overlooked for their cabbage-like looks. Their true origin is rather closer to a hibiscus."

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**

How to deal with rejection

Found wanting Four pro artists tell **Ruth Hamilton** about their most toe-curling rejection experiences, and how to turn a 'no' into something positive

"A lot of people take rejection personally. There are a multitude of reasons why someone might not be hired, which aren't to do with their work specifically," says Sam Santala.

Death, taxes and "Sorry, but you've been unsuccessful this time." There's no getting around it – if you want to reach your career peak, you're going to have to clamber past plenty of painful rejections on the way up. Even the most successful and talented artists have had their portfolios mercilessly discarded plenty of times.

We asked four professional artists for their tales of rejection (get ready to break out in a cold sweat). We also wondered what advice they had on how to deal with rejection without letting it dent your confidence, and even get something positive out of the experience, too.

"When I was a student, I got an invite to speak to a huge studio for a potential internship. I was over the

moon! It was the only positive response I had in months. I arrived for the interview 15 minutes early – then had to wait for three hours," recalls **Maeve Broadbin** (known online as DrawMaeve).

WATCHFUL WAITING

The studio, it transpires, was trying a bold new recruitment technique in which all the candidates were invited in at once, to sit in the same room and be interviewed for 10 minutes each while the other prospective candidates watched on.

"By the time I sat down, the recruiter was exhausted. She asked me how many followers I had on Twitter, flipped through my portfolio, and told me I had no sense of colour," Maeve continues. "The interview lasted three minutes. It was my first rejection that had passed the initial email stage." Maeve is now a concept artist at Blizzard Entertainment.

Then there's **Dia Jamandron**, whose graduation 'Industry Night' – in which students showcase their work for recruiters – was a tough introduction to the fickle nature of professional life.

"I networked to a handful of industry people, thinking that was good enough to land a job. Fast forward to a month, and nothing really happened. I had interviews ➤➤

Photo of Dia Jamandron taken by Monoxmano

> ❝ I arrived for the interview 15 minutes early – then had to wait for three hours… The interview lasted three minutes ❞

"Getting a rejection is a great time to figure out where you need to improve," says Maeve.

🇶 I've had my embarrassing slip-ups. I cried once on a 'no thanks' call 🇶🇶

➤ scheduled – most of them showed enthusiasm and at one point a studio lined me up for three different shows. But in the end, all of them said it wasn't going to work out." Dia subsequently went on to work for Netflix and Disney.

Finnish artist **Sam Santala's** worst rejection story happened after he'd started doing the job. He left one role to take another that better fitted with his family situation, but a fortnight after he'd accepted the contract, the project had morphed into something entirely unsuited to his skill-set.

"By the end of the six-month probation period, I was let go, with no job to support my family, knowing I'd left a dream job for that role," he recalls. Painful, yes, but it led to Sam

Dia Jamandron appreciates when companies take time to respond. "I understand it could be busy on their end, but if they do have the time, I show them my gratitude."

Sam's first major rejection caused him to question his decision to study as a concept artist. "Luckily, I picked myself up and it seems to have worked out since," he says.
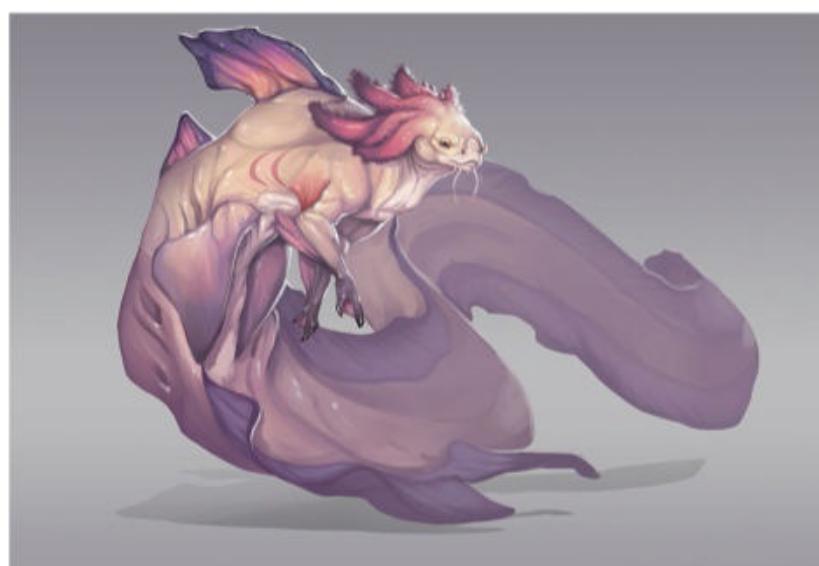
launching creature art outsourcing studio, Songhorn, and becoming his own boss.

A GRACEFUL EXIT

So now you've been reassured that rejection is something that happens to everyone, it's time for some practical tips on how to deal with the experience. Let's say you receive that bad-news email or phone call. What's the best way to react in that moment?

Story artist for animated feature films **Sasha Schotzko-Harris** suggests using it as a chance to demonstrate how you'd react to a negative situation. "Typically, I would recommend keeping your email short and appreciative. The two key points to hit are: 'Thank you for this opportunity to apply' and 'Please keep me in mind for future opportunities'," she says.

"Ending things on a positive note is so important," adds Maeve. "It's a small industry so you'll more than likely run into them again. Applying to a studio multiple times is incredibly common. They will remember if you handled it gracefully."

That said, it's not the end of the world if you do end up losing your composure. "I've had my big embarrassing slip-ups," Maeve admits. "I cried once on a 'no thanks' call! But you have to brush it off and learn."

UPPING YOUR GAME

Just because you've missed out on a job doesn't mean you haven't gained something else from the experience. For one, applying and interviewing for jobs is a great way to make connections in the industry. "I tend to keep in contact with recruiters I've talked to," says Dia. "I usually let them know when I updated my portfolio or any upcoming availability." ➤

INTERVIEW PITFALLS

Sam Santala shares the red flags that spell rejection at interview.

1 Bad-mouthing your previous employers

Hate your old boss? Can't wait to get out of your current job? Keep it to yourself. "We all have bad jobs from time to time, but an interview isn't the place to air those grievances," Sam says. Keep things positive and focus on what you can offer, rather than when external factors might have held you back.

2 Not knowing what the company makes

"We want to hire someone who's passionate about what we make," explains Sam. "We don't want it to be your life, but at least have an interest in what we'd be hiring you for." Do your research before you turn up for interview: read up on the company, the work it does and its ethos. If anything, it's a way to check that you're going to be happy in the role.

3 Not addressing everyone in the room

When you're replying to questions, speak to everyone who's in attendance, says Sam. It might be unintentional, but focusing on the person you deem to be most important in the situation is a big no-no. And if it's skewed by ethnicity or gender, you can forget about it.

4 Not asking questions

An interview shouldn't be an entirely one-way street, so make sure you prepare some questions you want to ask your interviewees. "Asking questions shows you're actively interested in what the company is making, or doing," says Sam. "It shows you're invested in the job."

Rejects aren't always articulated… and that can be even worse. "Rejections in animation mostly come in the form of just being ghosted," says Sasha Schotzko-Harris.

Getting let go from a job after a probationary period prompted Sam to explore what he could achieve on his own.

Sam runs outsourcing studio Songhorn, which creates creature design and palaeoart for the entertainment industry.

www.songhorn.com
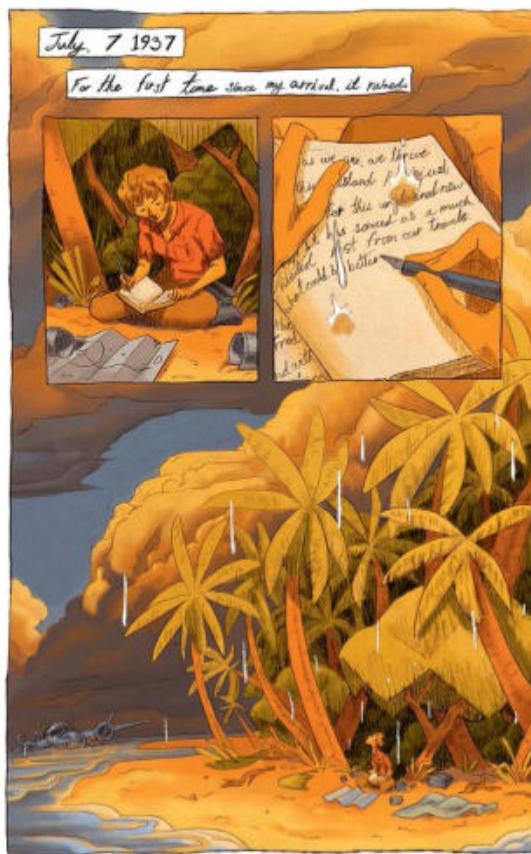
➤ You'll also be learning plenty of skills from the process itself, gruelling though it may be. "Along the way you're making connections, getting experience speaking with recruiters, and often practising your skills in the form of tests or working on your portfolio," says Sasha. "Each attempt make you stronger, and next time you'll be a little more prepared."

If you can steel yourself to ask for feedback from the studio, a rejection can be a good way to highlight your weak spots. Maeve suggests dividing the reasons for rejection into categories: soft skills ("Are you an easy person to work with? Do you take critique well? Those are the kind of soft skills companies look for."), technical skills, and things beyond your control ("Was the other

Sasha recommends viewing each job rejection as part of the process – with each experience you learn a little more.

candidate a 10-year industry vet? Did the company put in a hiring freeze?").

The first two categories you can (and should) work on, but if the reasoning falls into the third category, do your best to just let it go. Of course, "your art style isn't right for this job" often comes in this third category. As Sasha says. "It isn't always about you or the quality of your work. Sometimes, it's just not the right fit."

IT'S NOT YOU, IT'S THEM

Even if you know you've got talent and you know it happens to everyone, dealing with multiple rejections is tough. What words of wisdom do the

> ❝ The rejections and critiques are just the necessary steps along the way to getting that first job ❞

Success rarely comes easy – before landing her first job, Dia "probably applied to around 100 job positions."

"Rejection is incredibly hard. The best way to prepare for it is to keep sending out applications and trying," says Maeve.

professionals have for someone whose confidence has taken a hit?

"The thing that has helped me the most is adding the word 'yet' to the end of critiques," says Sasha. So if someone says to you, 'You can't draw backgrounds', you turn it into, 'I can't draw backgrounds yet.'

"Maybe it's true that your skills are weak in that area currently, but it's important to not view these critiques as permanent qualities about you," she elaborates. "Of course, part two of this mind-set is to then go out in the work to improve on that skill you're lacking in."

Maeve also warns against hanging all your hopes and dreams on one specific studio. "It's great to have goals and tailor your portfolio to a job, but don't let a rejection from Dream Studio X keep you from creating," she says. Sam echoes her sentiments: "My time is better spent doing the kind of work I want to do, and which showcases my talent, rather than try to fit in an existing mould."

And finally, trust in the journey. "It's all a part of the process," says Sasha. "It's like the rule of doing 10,000 bad drawings so you can get to the one good one. The rejections and critiques are just the necessary steps along the way to getting that first job."

If you're experiencing constant rejections, Dia suggests "reaching out, asking for help, and getting better."
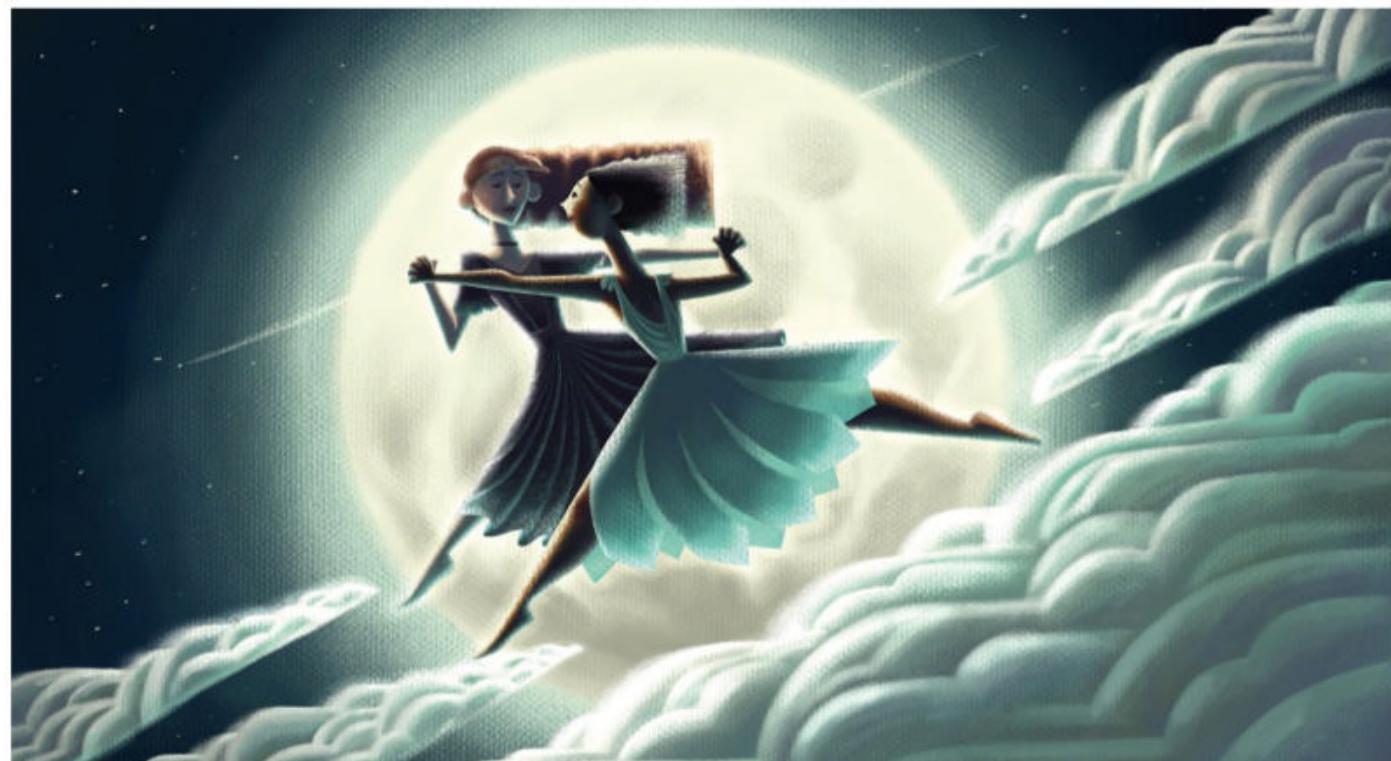
"No matter how amazing an artist is, they won't be right for every project, because we all have different sensibilities," Sasha reminds us.
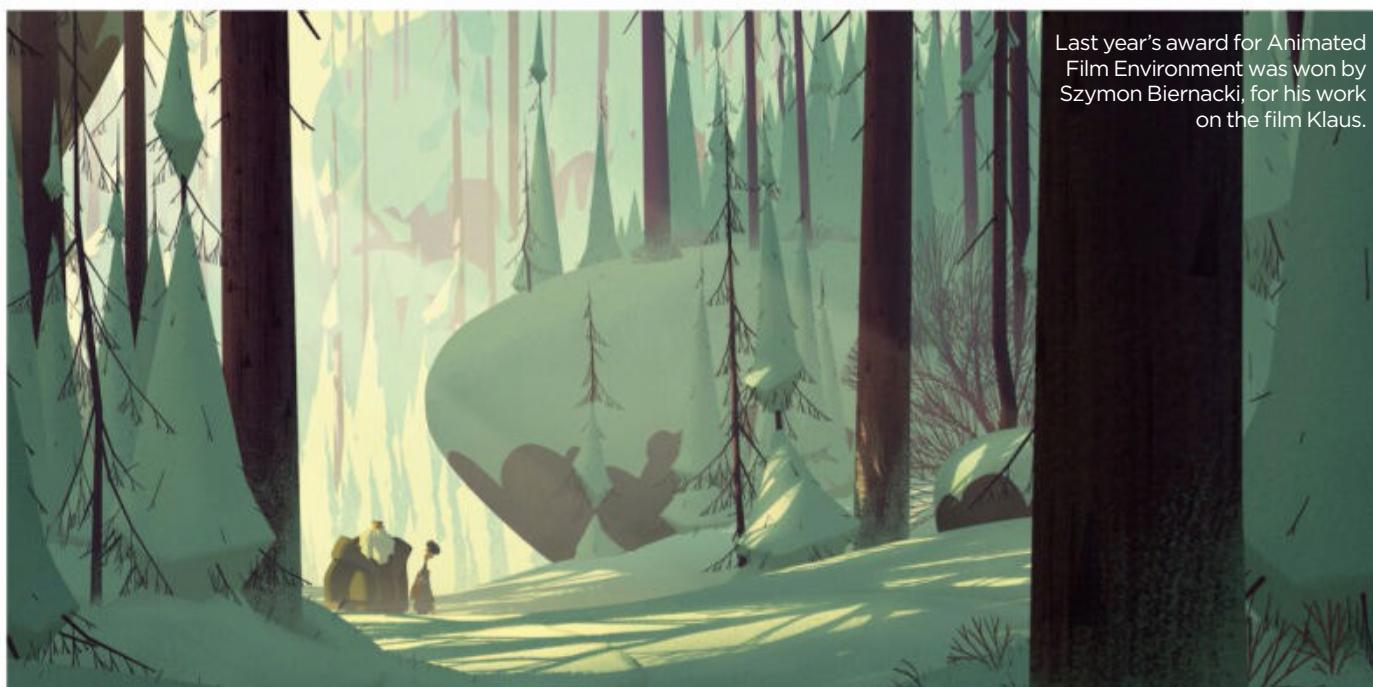
Last year's award for Animated Film Environment was won by Szymon Biernacki, for his work on the film Klaus.

© The SPA Studios/Netflix

Star Wars: The High Republic's Krystina Arielle Tigner co-hosts the Third Annual Concept Art Awards.

Sharing presenting duties at the Concept Art Awards 2021 event is actor Aldis Hodge, who's also part of the concept art studio 9B Collective.

Concept Art Awards 2021 now open for entries!

Best in class Concept Art Association's **Rachel Meinerding** has news of its award event, which takes place during this year's LightBox Expo

"Concept Art Association is excited to be back working on the Third Annual Concept Art Awards, which is returning virtually on Saturday, 11 September.

Last year, we saw the addition of the professional awards. It was our honour to recognise some of the most talented individuals working in live action, animation and gaming, including Christian Alzmann, Torsten Schrank and Sean Murray to name a few. Hayao Miyazaki and Brian Froud were recipients of our Lifetime Achievement awards. Over 4,000 people watched the show live, and we're incredibly grateful to the wonderful panel of judges and presenters from the concept art community who helped make the show a success.

This year we're thrilled to announce our hosts, Aldis Hodge (Black Adam, 9B Collective) and Krystina Arielle Tigner (Star Wars: The High Republic) as well as our extended and specialised judging panel.

The Concept Art Awards recognises excellence in the categories of Fan Art, Student Character and Environment, Independent Character and Environment as well as professional artwork from the worlds of Live Action feature and series, Animation features and series, Video and Mobile gaming and XR. Submissions across all categories for The 2021 Concept Art Awards open on Monday 17 May."

Head to www.conceptartassociation.com for full details on how to submit your work, eligibility, rules and prizes.

© Lucasfilm/Disney

Christian Alzmann's The Child artwork won in the Live Action Series Character category at the 2020 awards.

CONCEPT ART ASSOCIATION

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.conceptart association.com.
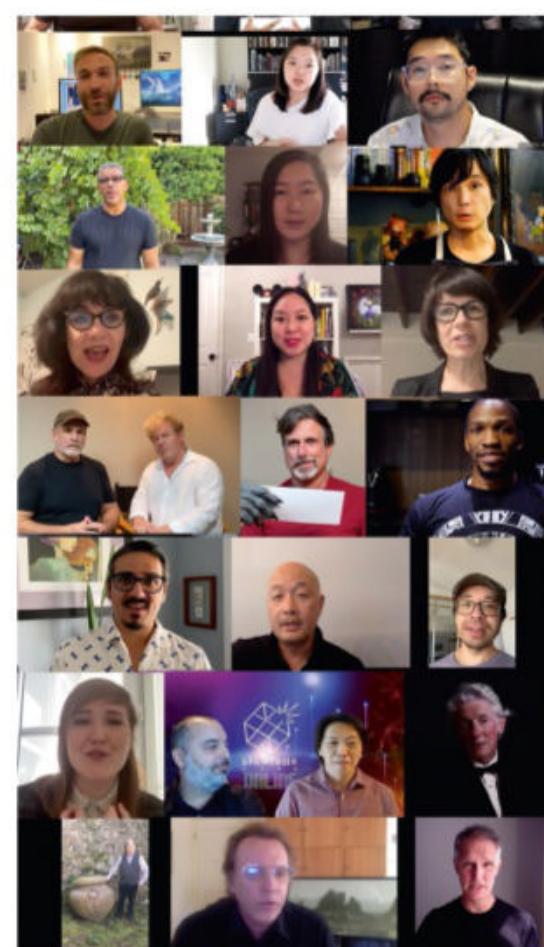
The 2020 awards presenters included Iain McCaig, Terryl Whitlatch, Raphael Lacoste and Gem Lim.

© Naughty Dog

Santa Monica Studio's Matteo Marjoram, working on The Last of Us Part II, won in the Excellence in Video Game Environment category at the 2020 awards.

I wish this view wasn't of suburban Gloucester.
That's why my desk is at the other window.

Marvin the dragon is a mystery. He was here when
I arrived and he has a kind face, so here he remains.

Amelia Royce Leonards

Animal house The fantasy artist on why her studio looks like a taxidermy shop imploded…

When a new person comes to my studio, I beam, open the door, and then watch their increasingly flabbergasted gaze travel around the room. If they look hostile, I leap in front of them and wave my arms frantically while declaiming: "I didn't murder anything – the bones were found in the woods, the pelts are old and were salvaged from antique stores, even that coral is from the 70s... please put it down, THANKS!"

Usually they're stunned into acceptance, probably more from my flashing arms and lack of grammar than anything approaching a well-reasoned argument. ➤➤

I've slowly developed an owl fixation over the years, and Penelope seems to embody my fascination with ferns and feathers.

Sid has been with me for a long time – he might have even been my first skull. A classmate in college was experimenting with handmade pigments and had a spare skull, and so... Sid happened.

A friend spent an afternoon trying to cut glass bottles to make lights, for a failed get-rich-quick scheme.

I hang recent pieces near my desk for a few months so I can glare at them and find every single mistake I made. Clearly I need to loosen up.

I was (very briefly) a chalk pastel artist. It only lasted a few months, but I still think it's fun to switch between mediums.

I found her in an antique store in the backwoods of New Hampshire, languishing under a pile of equally old boots and belts. Deer have always been important to me and I'm happy to give her a safe, respectful home. She sheds a ton, though.

I'm fuelled by dark chocolate chips. They're the only thing that keeps me going while at work. The bag itself may change, but the spirit of chocolate is a constant presence.

I'm serious about my garden. I whisper encouragement to seedlings and wage a war against squirrels and rabbits.

> 66 I beam, open the door, and then watch their flabbergasted gaze travel around the room… 99

S 4016 Subatomic particle tracks. CERN

I have no idea who this is, but I love her dress and "really?" expression. I find old cartes de visite fascinating and collect them here and there.

I don't think anything else has influenced my art as much as this tiny photo of subatomic particle tracks. The organic motion of the swirls is my everything.

I hang bark on the walls like other people hang paintings, and my collection grows with each foray into the woods. I like to think my bark collection is highly curated.

As previously stated, deer are very much my thing and I've spent years looking for a shed antler. I finally found one completely by chance, while wandering an endless, empty plain in South Dakota. I'm honestly still in a state of complete shock.

I can't pick one skull – they're all special (and all ethically sourced). The coyotes and foxes are my favourites. They smile at me while I work.

When I was just starting out, a client offered two of his 48 typewriters for a painting of his house. I agreed, but quickly determined that a) I hate painting houses, and b) the painting was worth way more than the typewriters. I got increasingly bitter and angry, and finally painted Darth Vader's helmet in one of the window panes. He never noticed.

Somehow – don't ask me how, I'm still astounded – my 15-year-old self successfully pestered my father to buy a 100-plus year-old carved book cover for me when we saw it in an antique store. I think that sentence says a lot about me at 15. Normal teenagers were asking for gift certificates to Abercrombie & Fitch, or TVs for their rooms.

I collect and hoard feathers more than any other natural object. If you stare at any given spot in the studio, you'll probably slowly realise that the feathers are legion.

I've followed Bast since I was a tiny person, and I think I finally made a painting that does her justice. Or, I'll think that for the next two months then decide everything is terrible.

Unfortunately, I can't wave my arms and jump up and down for this feature, so I'll focus on explaining myself (hopefully coherently) instead.

When I was in college, the head of our department appropriated a room and turned it into a pseudo-wunderkammer [German for a cabinet of curiosities]. Lost among bird wings, insect shells and other natural ephemera, I vowed that I'd try to create one of my own. Google's Images search tool wasn't great in the early 2000s, and I usually didn't have access to a colour printer.

My work has always featured animals, whether real-life or fae, and I found that it's much easier to work with pieces I can touch and hold, such as skulls, nautilus shells and crystals. And so I scoured the woodlands and seashores, scrounged in antique stores, and finally amassed what I considered a brilliant collection. It all fit snugly into my large, seaside studio.

JOSTLING FOR SPACE

And then, of course, I moved. Now I occupy an unused bedroom, and have spent just over a year trying to wiggle

"The universe will bring us a cat," my housemate said. Did the universe mention that he would spend his time infiltrating my workspace and trying to ruin my art? No. No it didn't.

> ## ❝ A lively battalion of sparrows and chickadees bickers on the oak tree ❞

my wunderkammer into it. About 60 per cent fits, but the art supplies and books jostle for space, and ultimately it is a studio, not a cabinet of natural curiosities. My boyfriend plans to take over a section, but I don't know where. Maybe the ceiling?

Initially, I felt like a Jane Austen heroine, reduced to genteel poverty through cruel circumstance (insert dramatic hand to forehead gesture here) but despite the downsize, I quickly came to prefer this space to my old one. I can see water in the winter – the river that divides our island from the mainland is only a street away – and an incredibly lively battalion of sparrows and chickadees bickers on the oak tree that brushes the window above my desk. This, of course, drives the cat completely insane, which upsets the dog snoozing

If you can count email and badly attempted Photoshop as a digital setup, then that's what I've got. The cat sits there, and when he's not peering out the window, I think he powers the computer with sheer malice.

I lived in New Jersey for 14 years (don't judge me) and I adventure to Wyoming every summer.

By now I think it's clear that I'm obsessed with natural objects and antiques, so a book from the 1850s on the folklore of British trees and forests... yes. The engravings are stunning, and it smells like it belongs in a library owned by someone in tweed. I should invest in some tweed.

The rug is around 150 years old and was foisted upon my parents by a friend. It was banished to the attic and it became the base of every fort I made when I was little. My parents are still flabbergasted by how excited I am to have it in my studio, though they admit that it brings the room together.

on the rug, which leads to a bizarre, unending orchestra of chirps, screeches, yowls and anxious barks. Who needs music?

Avian orchestra aside, there's golden light in the morning and afternoon, room for a bag of chocolate chips on my desk, and what feels like just enough space for me and the animals, living and dead.

Amelia is a fantasy artist who's inspired by the beauty of ancient myths, folklore and the natural world. Discover more of her art by visiting www.amelialeonards.com.

These are a section of a wall in the parking area of the private girls school that I went to. I knocked them out in a car accident and I kept them as paper weights.

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PRINT AND DIGITAL BACK ISSUES

Issue 200
June 2021
Cover artist Pernille Ørum helps us to celebrate our 200th issue, in which we look back at our many highlights. There are workshops from Kekai Kotaki, Will Murai and Paul Bonner, plus we delve into Donato Giancola's sketchbook!

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.

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Please showcase my art

Hello, my name is Okorie David Emeka, I'm a self-trained pencil artist from Nigeria and I'm 17 years old. I'm sending you this email to request your help in showcasing my artwork. I'll be happy if you reply to me.
Okorie David Emeka, Nigeria

Claire replies *Hello there, nice to hear from you. We welcome submissions from everyone! Please send us five high-resolution (300dpi) images of your work, with a title and a 30-word caption for each. We also need your name, the software you use, location and website plus 50 words about you and a photo of yourself.*

We accept submissions from traditional and digital artists, so please choose one of these disciplines when submitting because these are in separate sections in the magazine. Email your info to fxpose@imaginefx.com. There's no deadline for this, Okorie – it's an ongoing process!

Incredible drawings

Some time ago I sent in some prints/ copies of the sci-fi line drawings that I produce to see what you think. I didn't hear back, which is understandable considering the large volume of submissions you must receive.

So the time flew by and in a recent issue you had another sci-fi art feature, which encouraged me to write in again,
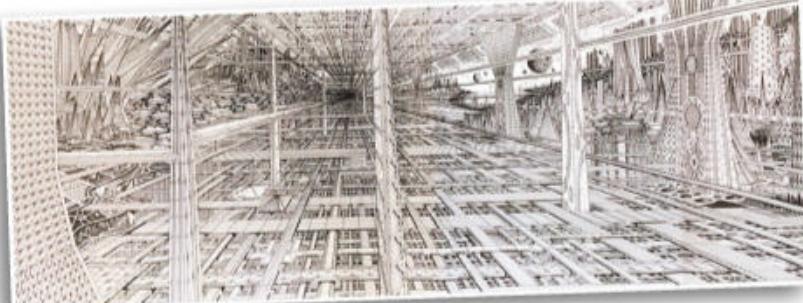
even with all the Covid restrictions and lockdowns lately. These scans are from the hand-drawn originals, which I usually draw on A1, A2 and A3 paper using Rotring ink pens.

I don't use computers or Photoshop, or anything like that – I'm still in the Stone Age! I start with a full-size sketch, then create an overlay with a first line layout, then lay down fine detailing on tracing film or paper, which usually takes a couple of weeks (depending on how busy I am work-wise).

I hadn't done many drawings lately, because I have some planned for future projects. There's quite a lot of this futuristic art doing the rounds, so I try to make mine a bit more unusual, having created my own technique.
Paul Beard, England

Claire replies *Thanks for sending in your beautiful artwork, Paul. I can't imagine how long these drawings took to do. You clearly have an eye for detail and intricate work. I'm sure our readers will also enjoy your art. Apologies for not responding to your previous submission. It's true that we do get many submissions, but less by post these days and so receiving yours was a real treat. Thanks again.*

More beginner stuff

I'm a subscriber to ImagineFX and I look forward to it every month, but I'm a beginner artist and it's just a hobby for me, so I'm far behind any of your featured artists.

Something that I would really enjoy is for the artists included in the magazine to give an "artist hack" or "tips and tricks" that are personal to their style and something they often rely on. For example, brush techniques, line-art, textures or glowing effects.

I think it would be very useful for beginner artists to learn a little from the experience of others. And it's something you could practise yourself and incorporate into your own style.
Nicola

Claire replies *Thanks for subscribing, Nicola – your support means so much. It's tough for beginners because it can sometimes feel as though there's so much to learn. I would suggest focusing on one thing at a time so that you can measure how far you've come. If you try to master too many techniques at once, it can seem overwhelming. I also find the artist's videos very helpful because I can see what they're talking about as they work. Thanks for your suggestions, too. I will see what I can do.*

DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE?
Don't worry – you can get hold of issue 200 at **http://ifxm.ag/single-ifx**.

Reader Paul's intricate sci-fi art, created traditionally using ink pens, are well worth a closer look.
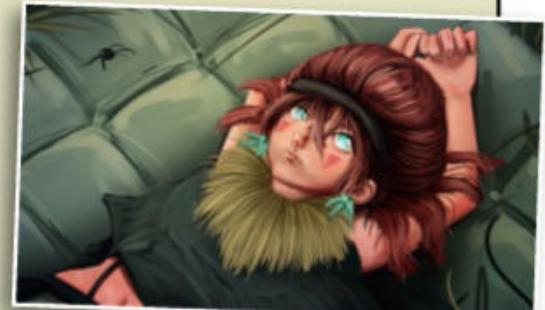
ALEXANDRIA NEONAKIS

The Canadian AAA-games concept artist tells **Gary Evans** about the importance of storytelling, and how details make all the difference...

Alexandria Neonakis posted a picture on Twitter last summer of the top half of a female character wearing a red-checked flannel shirt. It looked perfect, but notes beside the image explained how it could be better: extra fading where the shirt would be regularly touched; small, subtle bleach stains; grime on the stitching.

She tweeted how this – more than "painting nice concepts" – is the kind of work she does on an average day. These precise details say something important about the character, the way she behaves, the kind of life she lives. But it's also two-way thing: you have to want to hear what's being said.

"You obviously need to learn to draw and paint," the Canadian says. "There's really no way around that, but it's not the end goal. That's not where any of this stops. Ideation and strong storytelling are by far the harder-to-teach skills and the most sought-after in narrative AAA game studios, particularly in character concept."

It's good advice. Alexandria is best known for her work at Californian video games developer Naughty Dog on some of the past decade's most

DINA AND JJ
"Costume exploration for Dina and her baby from The Last of Us Part II."

successful games: The Last of Us, Left Behind, Uncharted 4: A Thief's End, and Uncharted: Lost Legacy. Last summer, after tweeting equally good, equally solid advice, Alexandria found herself in the middle of what you could call a Twitter "storm."

THE FOGGY PROVINCE

Alexandria grew up in Nova Scotia, the "moody, blue-green, foggy province." Summertime, she was always outdoors. She learnt to ride horses. She camped out. Winters, when the province got a bit too moody and foggy, Alexandria and her sisters and her brother would play a lot of PlayStation and N64. She tells a lovely little story about getting so obsessed with the Final Fantasy 7 handbook that it eventually fell to pieces.

She printed dragons off the internet, kept them in a big binder, and copied them with Prismacolor pencils. She got into digital art early on – her stepmother got "a free trial copy of some ancient Adobe Photoshop Elements" – scanning in ink drawings and colouring them with the ➧

All The Last of Us Part II artwork © Naughty Dog, LLC

OWEN AND ABBY
"Costume exploration for young Owen and Abby. I would paint these into story moments instead of standard poses, to help sell them in the costume in the moment."

CALIFORNIA NATIVES
"Native flora and fauna from California – watercolour and coloured pencil."

THE SIRENS AND THE FOOL
"This is a piece of personal work, made back in 2019."

66 Ideation and storytelling are the harder-to-teach skills and the most sought-after in AAA-game studios 99

FIRST FLIGHT

"I've always loved that scene in Fantasia with the pegasus family, so I did my take on a family of baby pegasi taking their first flight."

SCAR KIDS

"Early exploration of Scar kids – the earliest work I did for what would become Yara and Lev in The Last of Us Part II."
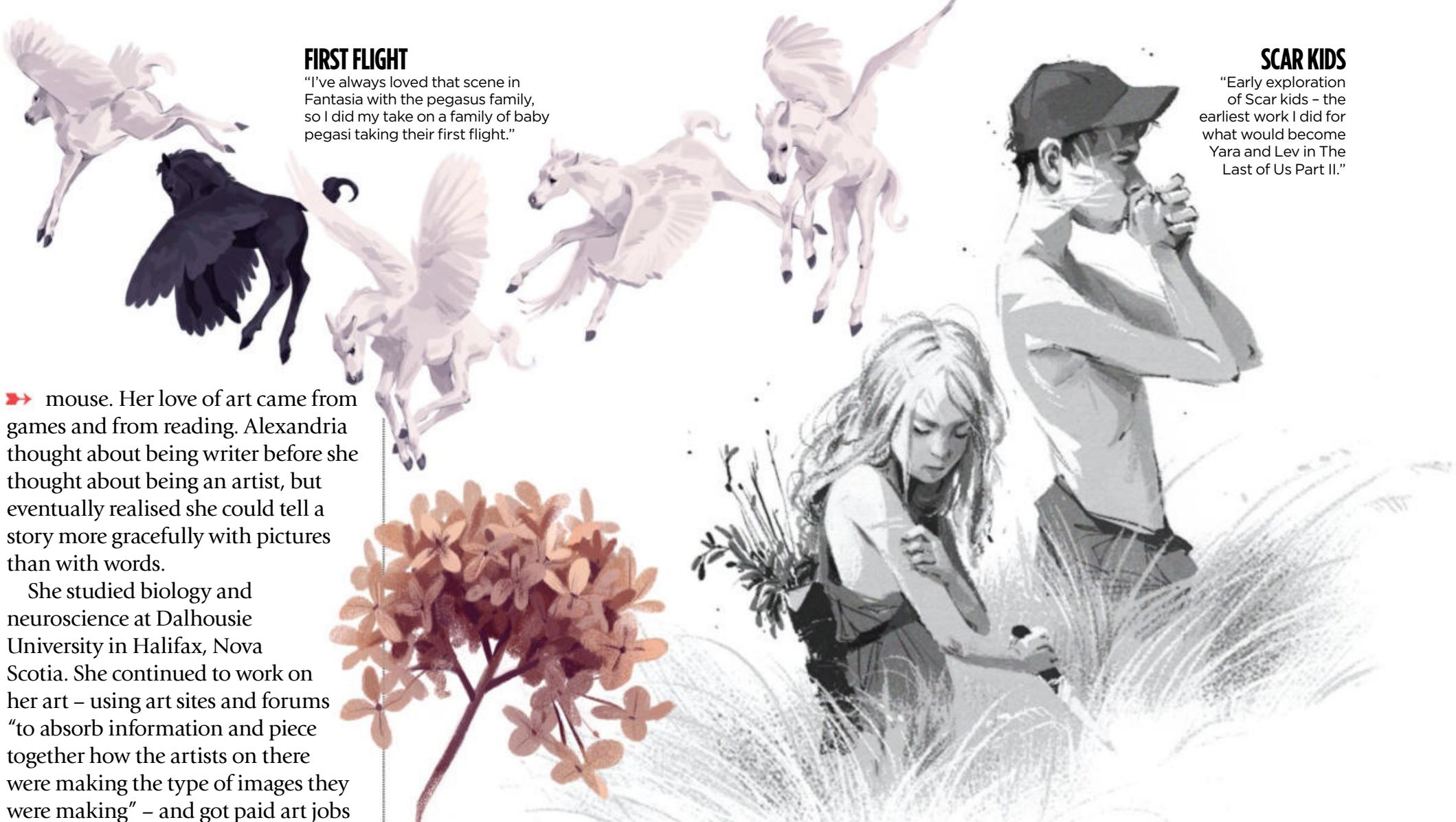
mouse. Her love of art came from games and from reading. Alexandria thought about being writer before she thought about being an artist, but eventually realised she could tell a story more gracefully with pictures than with words.

She studied biology and neuroscience at Dalhousie University in Halifax, Nova Scotia. She continued to work on her art – using art sites and forums "to absorb information and piece together how the artists on there were making the type of images they were making" – and got paid art jobs doing "local Halifax things." She considered medical school, but realised by her fourth year of university that she didn't want to do science. In 2004, in her second year, World of Warcraft had been released and it became another obsession.

A game studio in Halifax called HB Studios was hiring. Alexandria put together a little portfolio and applied for the position of graphic artist: "And

66 It gave me a good foundation to kick-start my career as a UI designer… 99

DRIED HYDRANGEA

"I love dead plants – I find them really beautiful. I pulled this off a bush in my dad's garden in Nova Scotia in the winter."

they gave me a shot! It was an incredible learning experience – I was there for a year. That place and the people in it gave me a good foundation to kick-start my career as a UI designer in games."

NAUGHTY DOG

Alexandria started at Naughty Dog as its first dedicated UI designer and later switched to character concept art, with direction from character art director Ashley Swidowski. Working on AAA-games, the first stage – pre-production – was typically about coming up with ideas. Alexandria read the game's story

as it was pitched and decided how best to translate words to pictures. She helped set mood and tone. She painted "story beats." These were loose paintings of people in spaces, something she could show the director and the rest of the team to get everybody to see the story the same way. Later, during mid-production, she worked on more polished costume pieces. She imagined specific costumes characters might wear and what those costumes said about them and the story. Towards the end, she received and gave notes on what to tweak or change. She also did paintovers,

CASSIE DRAKE'S ROOM

"Concept of what Cassie's room could look like at the end of Uncharted 4. I wanted it to feel lived-in and worry-free, in contrast to Nathan's orphanage room.

MIST GOD
Alexandria's trip to Iceland inspired this "massive dragon-like sea bird"

"Mist God started as an idea on a trip to Iceland, which is where most of my ideas seem to come from lately. There's this area in the northwest called Hornstrandir, which is a national park that can only be reached by boat. During the entire boat ride, there are these massive, beautiful moody cliffs covered in sea birds and clinging mist. I thought how cool it would be to see an illustration of a massive dragon-like sea bird dragging the mist behind it, blanketing the whole area."

1 REFERENCES OF BIRDS IN FLIGHT

"I started with some really rough black and white sketches, just to figure out my value groupings and general composition. From there I did a tighter sketch. I used a lot of references at this stage. For this one, I looked at herons in flight for the body, then a gannet for the head, as they already feel a little dragon-y."

2 PAINTING WHILE CHECKING THE VALUE KEY

"After that, I moved to full paint. I used my value key as a guide and kept a black and white layer on top of everything, which I flicked on and off to make sure my values were still working the way I intended. This stage was basically just rendering."
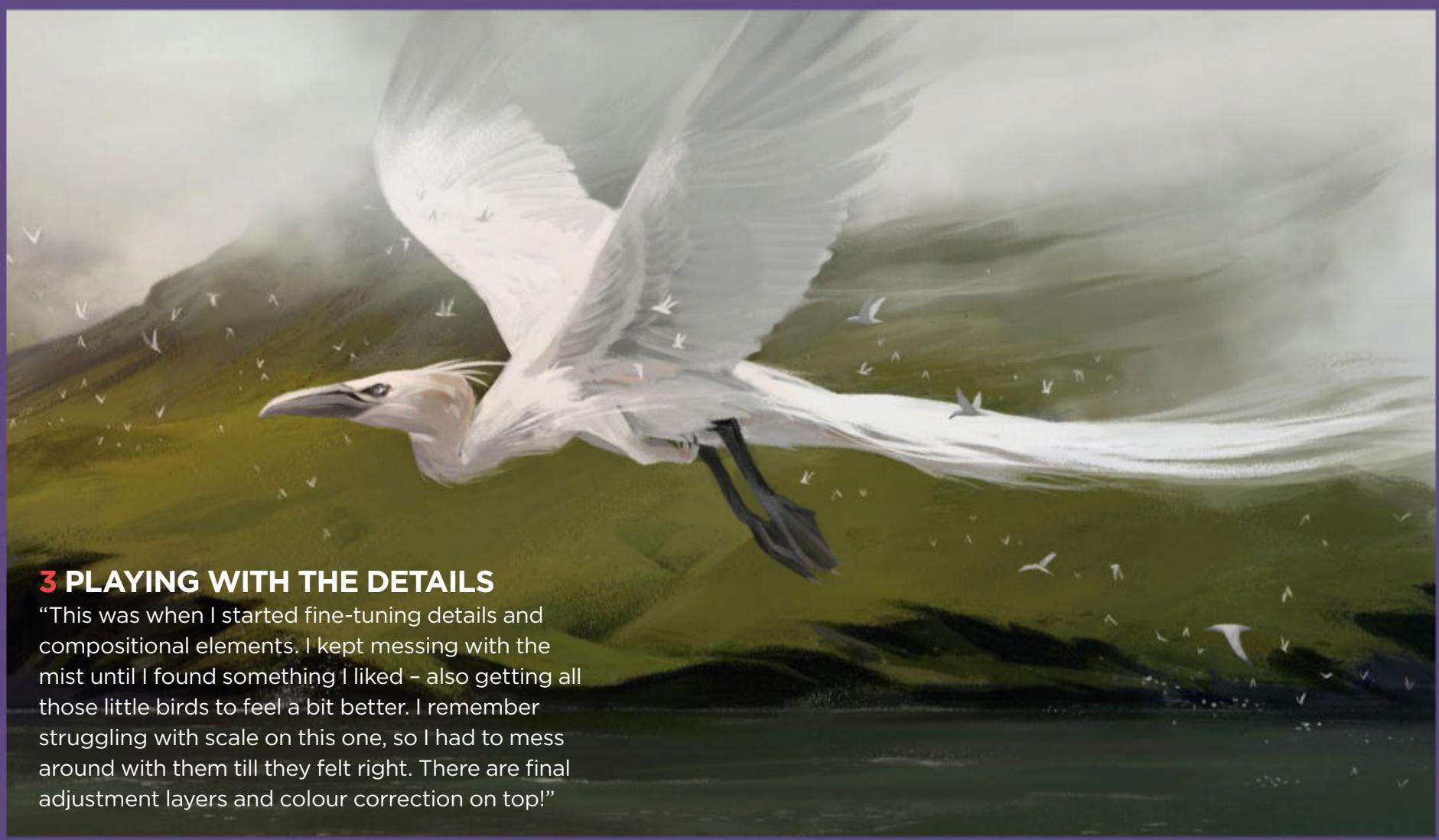
3 PLAYING WITH THE DETAILS

"This was when I started fine-tuning details and compositional elements. I kept messing with the mist until I found something I liked – also getting all those little birds to feel a bit better. I remember struggling with scale on this one, so I had to mess around with them till they felt right. There are final adjustment layers and colour correction on top!"

➤ and put the finishing touches to characters and costumes. These designs often ended up being quite different to the characters in the game.

"The biggest misconception people seem to have is that the job is all about technical, highly polished final paintings. It's not even a little bit about technical painting. It's about understanding costuming – in the case of Naughty Dog, contemporary costuming – and using that knowledge to ensure the characters all feel believable, and the clothing and the hair and the choices around them are grounded and fit the story."

A HINT OF FAIRY TALES

At Naughty Dog, Alexandria worked on games with a tough, realistic style. Her personal style is very different, more illustrative, with a bit of the fairy tale about it. She's often asked by beginning artists about finding their own personal style. It comes, she says, from all your influences, all your sensibilities, every reference you collect and every photo you take. It's "both something in you and something that you develop."

Her influences change all the time. One constant is John Singer Sargent's watercolours. Of traditional artists working today, she's into the Sargent-influenced realist Jeremy Lipking, the brilliant figurative and landscape artist Dean Mitchell, and Glenn Dean, who specialises in landscapes of the American west and shares Alexandria's love of horses and open spaces.

In her industry, she follows the work of illustrators Joy Ang and Nico Delort ("forever inspirations"). Beginning artists shouldn't be scared to imitate. This is how you learn, how

THEIA MARIA'S HOUSE
"My aunt Maria's front porch in Crete – it's one of those comfort places that I dream about going to when things are getting stressful."

you find your own personal styles. It doesn't matter if you're imitating Sargent's watercolours, or dragons printed off the internet.

"Honestly, at first, it's hard to steer away from just reproducing what you're seeing. That's how you learn. It's how I learned anyway. But over time, you find patterns or ways of working, processes and flows that sort of start to wear away the edges to reveal who you actually are. At some point I stopped looking to others for answers and trusted more in my own sensibilities.

"My sensibilities are coming from a lot of places. Nostalgia is a big one. I'm drawn to moody blue-green foggy landscapes. It's not hard to figure out why: I'm drawn to horses. That makes sense – I ride them in my free time. My sense of composition was honed over time, learning to cut out unimportant things and focus on the core of what appeals to me about an image. This is a thing that just took time and practice."

WATCHING ME BURN

Last summer, Alexandria tweeted: "some of you aren't being commissioned or noticed because your skills aren't where they need to

> ❝ At some point I stopped looking to others for answers and trusted more in my own sensibilities ❞

be. And that's normal and fine..." She added how some people on social media believe artists with a big following have a duty to help those with fewer followers, but she often replied to requests for advice only to see that advice completely ignored. Her point was simple: "It takes time to get good at art. And dedication." It was good, solid advice: it'd taken Alexandria 15 years of dedication.

A few months later, Alexandria started another thread of tweets – posted on World Mental Health Day 2020 – explaining what had happened after she'd offered the advice above. In short: it kicked off. She said to her partner after things started to settle down how it had been a rough two

ESCAPE TO HAPPILY EVER AFTER
"Personal work from 2019: two women making a getaway."

DINA COSTUME EXPLORATION

"Styling and design work while we were working out Dina's winter look."

ABBY FINDS HER DAD

"More costume exploration. Again, I tend to put these into the story beat, because it's hard to tell what a costume will feel like in an emotional moment when the character is just standing there."
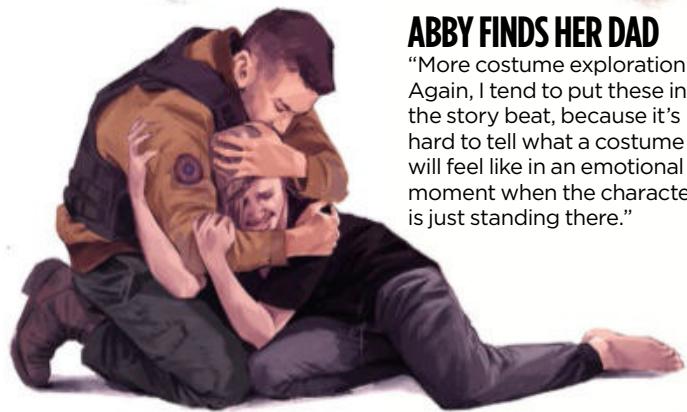
ABBY AND ELLIE IN THE GROWHOUSE

"Costume and story exploration for The Last of Us Part II."

THE HARPY QUEEN

"I like coming up with one-off narrative moments and illustrating them. This one was about a man who needs a feather from the tail of the queen of harpies to continue his quest."

days. Her partner told her five days had passed. She'd gone into "a form of shock." She couldn't get off the sofa, couldn't even remember if she'd eaten.

Alexandria kept name-searching herself and reading and rereading tweets about how she wasn't a good artist, how she only got her job at Naughty Dog because her partner worked there, and worse. Months later, she was still crying about the incident, still waking up in the night sweating over it. "Most of these people," she tweeted, "were relishing in watching me burn."

Alexandria believes our brains aren't made to handle so much anger from so many people. Part of the problem is that on Twitter "negativity gets traction" and "people are quick to anger and that anger gets extremely volatile and out of control." The other problem was who she was talking to: "Honestly, Twitter is just a really bad place to have discussions like that. If I walked into a room of art students and said that, they'd be like, 'Yeah, we've heard similar stuff before.' But that's not Twitter."

The "room" that Alexandria was talking to on Twitter was a mix of ➤➤

malibu Beach

sky over the west Valley

TURNING A STORY BEAT INTO ARTWORK

Alexandria discusses the importance of personal work and where she goes for inspiration

"For a very long time, I thought I wanted to become a writer. But I'm clumsy with words, and can do a much better job telling a story with a picture. Personal illustration work always starts with an idea or a narrative beat. I'll think 'this scene would be cool' and then start formulating a little story around that in my head. Who are the characters? What are they like? How can I sell their personality? What's happening in this image in a single moment?

At this point, I'll sometimes write in a sketchbook. I don't often use sketchbooks for sketching. I use them a lot for writing stuff down and doing really rough, almost illegible thumbnails. Inspiration comes from all sorts of random places. Sometimes I'll see something that sparks a little idea that I'll pick away at. Sometimes I'm in the shower and it just pops fully formed into my head.

The landscape studies are a different thing for me, because it's not so much about narrative as it is a mood. I'm constantly taking photos wherever I go – generally on my phone. If I see something that appeals to me – a nice-shaped tree, or a really good sky – I'll snap a ton of photos then dig through them later when I have more time and see if I can get a good moody painting out of them. I'm always shooting reference.

Professional work is someone else's ideas that I'm helping bring to light. Personal work is my own ideas. For that reason it's very important to me. I don't care much about techniques or how I made a piece. I care about the story it tells and getting that out there."
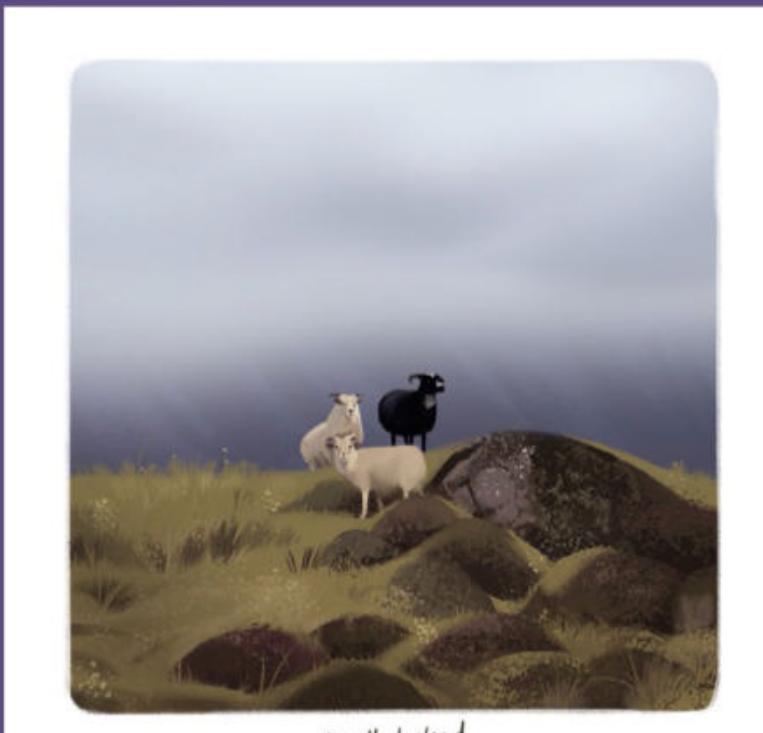
South Iceland

LANDSCAPE STUDIES

"My comfort zone. I tend to be drawn to moody, soft lighting, cloudy days and simple shapes. These have all turned into exercises in seeing how simplified I can make an image while still having it read. They're incredibly therapeutic, because it's just studies of photos I've taken in my day-to-day and travel. These sort of studies are also great for art block."
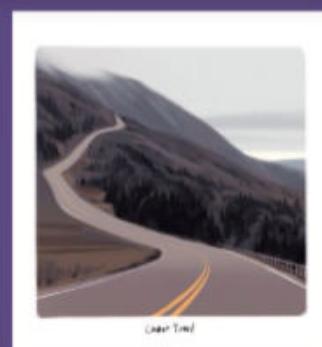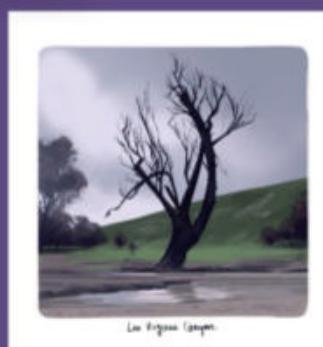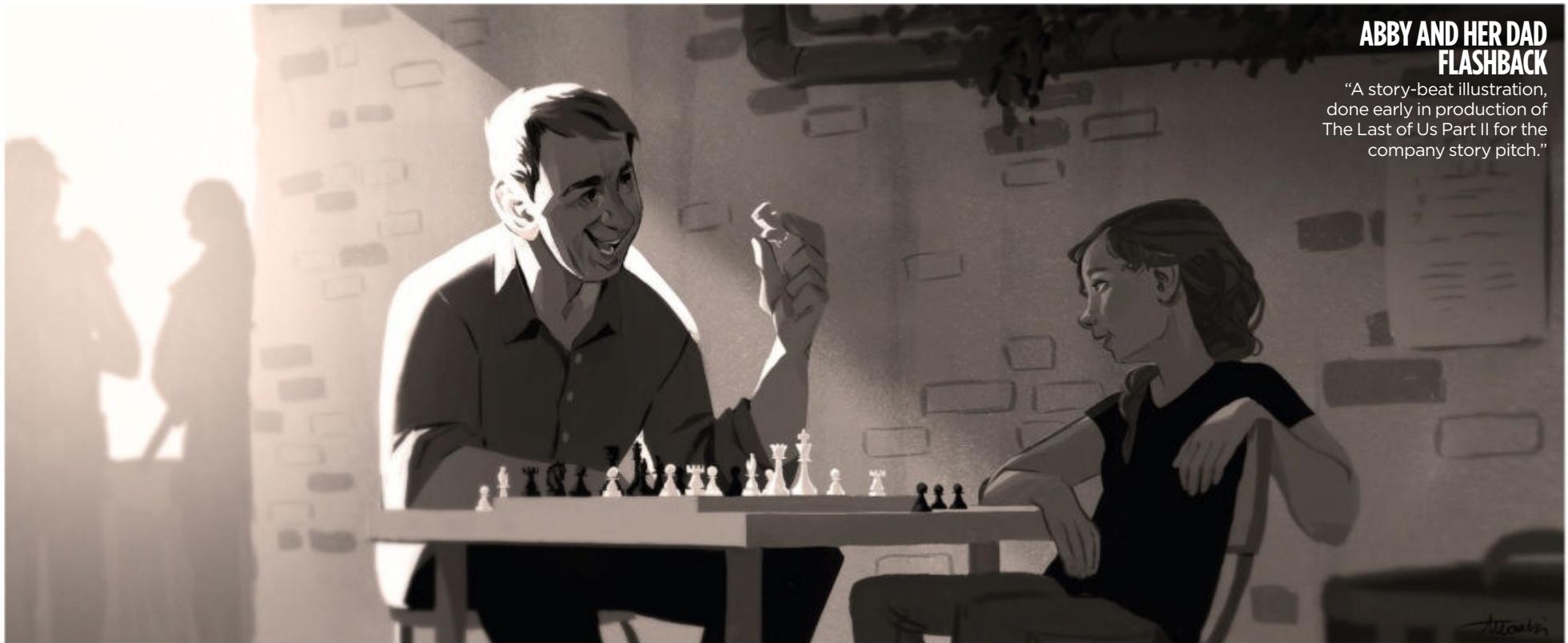
ABBY AND HER DAD FLASHBACK
"A story-beat illustration, done early in production of The Last of Us Part II for the company story pitch."

> ❝ **People are going to take [advice] however they want to, based on where they're at and their past experiences** ❞

➡ professionals, hobbyists, students and those who aren't artists themselves but follow her because they like her work.

"People are going to take [advice] however they want to, based on where they're at and their past experiences. People always assume that you're talking directly to them, but advice I would give a student is not applicable to a new professional, which in turn is not applicable to an established professional.

"But every tweet tends to be taken as if it's being said directly to the reader.

When you've got thousands of people reading them, this obviously gets very out of hand."

A TWO-WAY THING

Alexandria left Naughty Dog after almost a decade and is now art director at AdHoc, a new indie games studio in Los Angeles. She plans to start a Patreon because, like many of her peers, she believes Patreon compared to Twitter is a much better place to post lessons and offer advice.

The thing most often missing from the work of beginning artists who want improve, Alexandria says, is an understanding of storytelling. To improve storytelling, ask yourself:
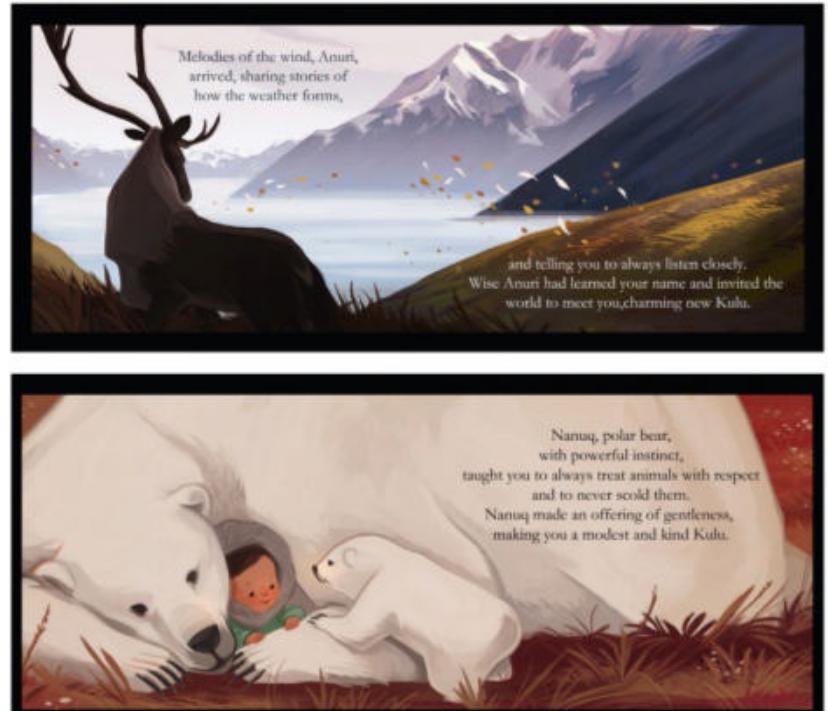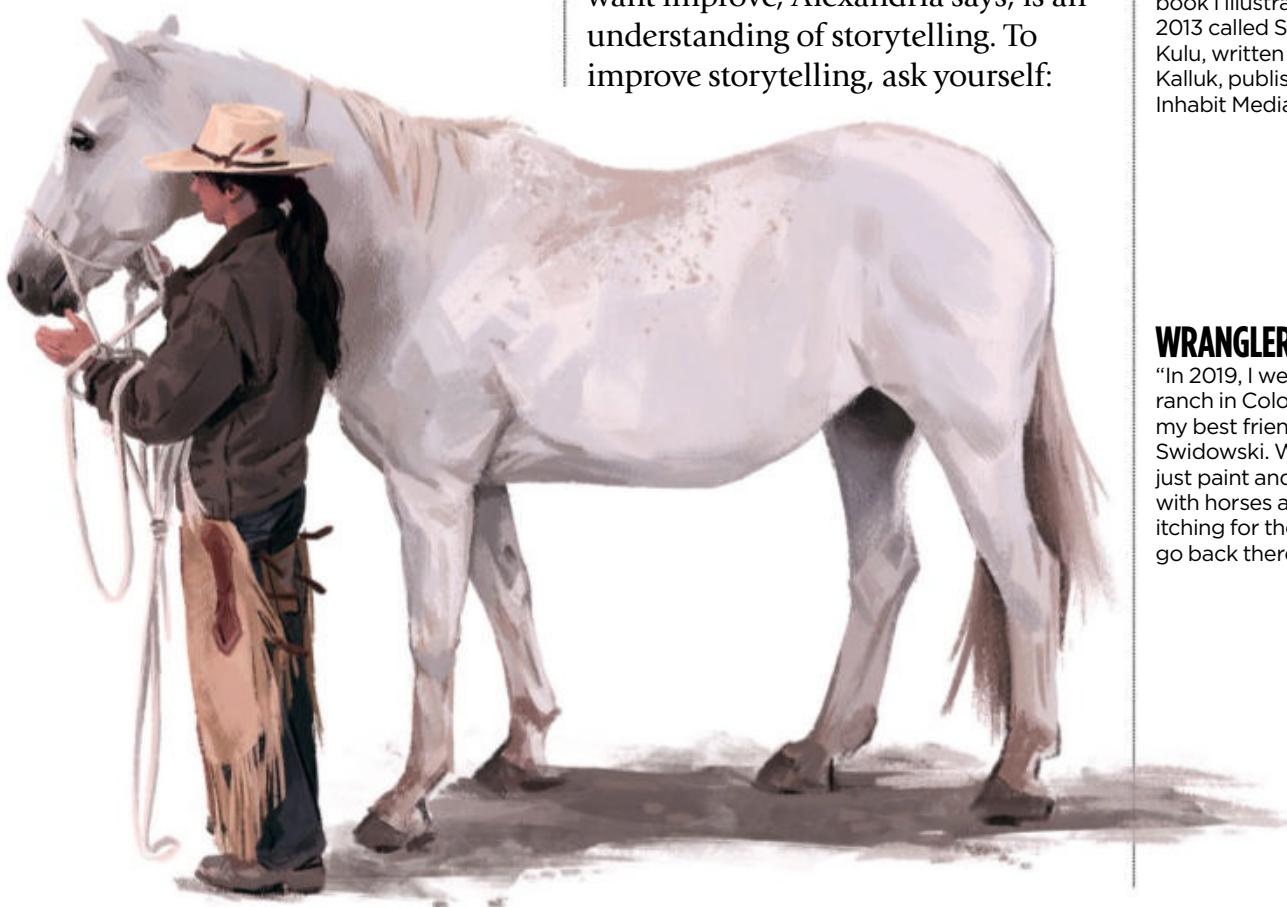
© Inhabit Media

SWEETEST KULU
"Pages (text setting not final) from a children's book I illustrated in 2013 called Sweetest Kulu, written by Celina Kalluk, published by Inhabit Media."

WRANGLER
"In 2019, I went to a ranch in Colorado with my best friend, Ashley Swidowski. We got to just paint and hang out with horses and I'm itching for the day I can go back there again."

what is the "narrative beat" I'm trying to illustrate? The narrative beat is an event, a moment. It's the decision decided, the revelation revealed. Beats can be big or small, loud or quiet. It could be a chess move. It could be the two women making their getaway on the horse. It could be a teenage girl holding a copy of the Final Fantasy 7 handbook that's fallen to pieces.

Alexandria believes you have to think about "the feeling you're trying to evoke, what do you want the viewer to feel when they're looking at it." This feeling acts as the base for all the choices you make: character pose, costume and hair, lighting…

It's solid advice. But it's also a two-way thing: you have to want to hear what's being said: "If you can start thinking more actively about this stuff, and incorporating it into your work, I swear it's all going to feel so much more cohesive, and frankly so much more like it's your own voice." ●

Sketchbook

Andrea Femerstrand

This Swedish children's book illustrator loves drawing animals that are playful, sleepy or just plain confused…

Artist PROFILE

Andrea Femerstrand
LOCATION: Sweden

Andrea has been freelancing since 2010, working with pretty much anything that includes character development or some sort of storytelling. Her clients include HarperCollins, Wacom, 3Dtotal and Goodbye Kansas Studios. Nowadays she's mainly occupied as a children's book illustrator working on several Swedish book series.
www.noukah.com

CUDDLY LYNXES

"I love exploring ways to draw expressive animals, and felt the urge to draw cuddly lynxes. Sometimes it can be hard to find reference of wild animals and their expressions, but since lynxes are large wild forest-kitties, I could easily study domesticated cats and then mimic their behaviour."

LUNA

"I made some rough sketches for a Swedish book series that I'm illustrating, and these were the first rough character sketches of Luna, the main protagonist."

IS THERE A SPY AMONG US?

"Here's one of my personal favourites, done back in 2013. Did somebody say imposter syndrome?"

RANDOM FOX
"Just a random fox to play around with Kyle T Webster's Photoshop brushes. The brush is called Carbonara Raw 2, I think."

LIVING ON THE EDGE
"Another old personal favourite. This one started out as some random tiger reaching for something and I wanted to add some funny contrast to it, hence the worried balloon!"

PLEASE HELP, THIS IS AWKWARD
"Oh, I love to keep the sketch really rough in the beginning, sculpting appealing shapes and nailing the structure of everything. Also, cuddly bunnies and confused doggos are so entertaining to draw!"

> **Cuddly bunnies and confused doggos are so entertaining to draw!**

JAVA
"These sketches are a bit emotional for me. I drew my long-lost sphynx cat Java who passed away too early, only five years old. After I processed the loss for a few years, I managed to honour him with these sketches without tearing up."

INK TREE
"I drew this for Inktober a few years back. I didn't really have any plan, other than just making some random doodles. Done mainly with a brush pen."

COFFEE FOXES
"I saw this awesome unknown quote outside a coffee shop: 'A yawn is a silent scream for coffee.' Being a coffee addict myself, I instantly felt that I had to draw something based on that quote."

I LOVE YOU BRO
"That feeling when you love someone so much that you almost want to squeeze the life out of them."

PENTAGOON
"There was this pony at my riding school during my teenage years, that I was absolutely obsessed with. He was my world and the love of my life back then. That love wasn't really answered, as he hated me with passion, ha ha. One day I'm going to tell our story."

> He was my world and the love of my life back then. That love wasn't really answered…

Sketchbook

JULY

"I got to illustrate a monthly calendar for a Swedish kid's magazine, and this was the sketch for July. Swedish summers can be amazing, especially if you've got access to a lake, so I tried to portray the joy that every kid should feel during the summer breaks."

SPHYNX KITTEN

"I saw this adorable photo of a sphynx kitten, and just had to make a loose study of it. It became this little fella!"
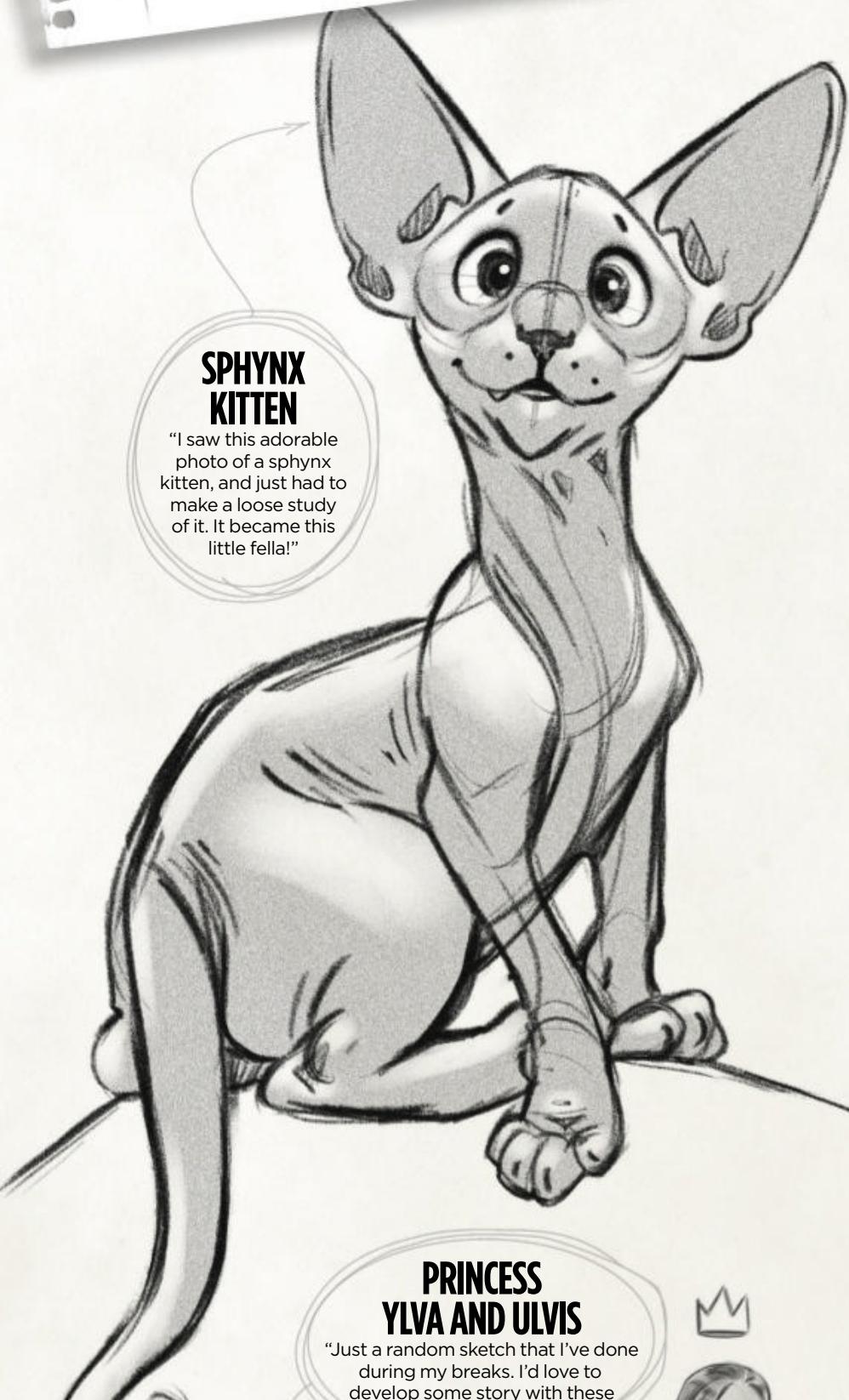
PRINCESS YLVA AND ULVIS

"Just a random sketch that I've done during my breaks. I'd love to develop some story with these two someday!"

SNOW LEOPARD

"Did you know that snow leopards like to carry their own tails? It's the most adorable thing in the world, so I had to draw one doing just that."
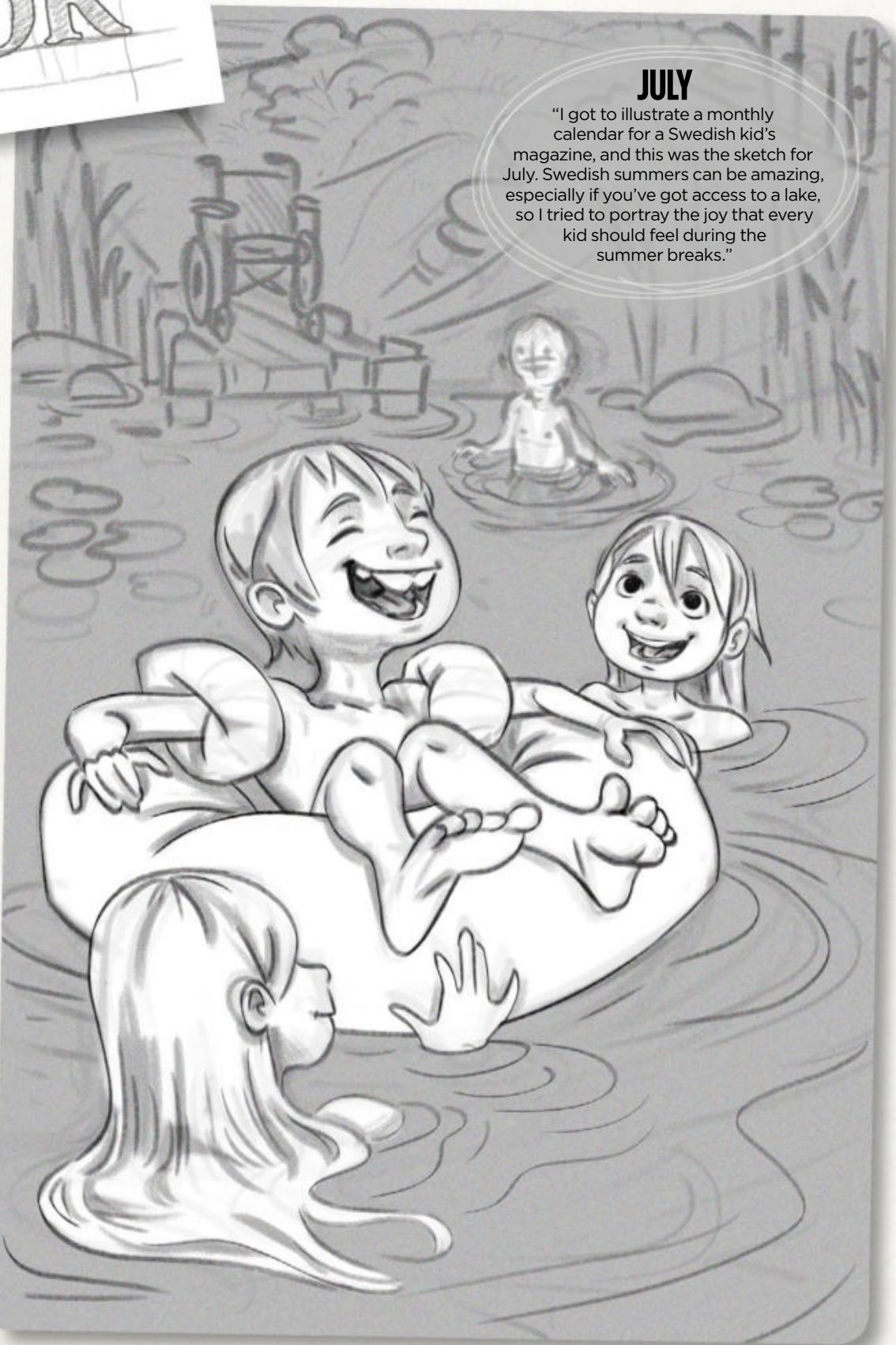
LYNX AND HORSE

"This one started out with some random horse sketch. He looked so chill so I added a sleepy lynx on his back to make this sketch twice as chill!"

> 66 He looked so chill so I added a sleepy lynx on his back to make this sketch twice as chill! 99

COMFORT ZONE

"I've noticed that most of the time, when I draw just for fun, I gravitate towards red foxes against greenish backgrounds. I just love drawing them, and find that colour combo so appealing! So here's one of those typical comfort zoners of mine."

TINY UNICORN

"I drew this one just for fun. I imagine this unicorn to be so tiny that it can fit in your palm."
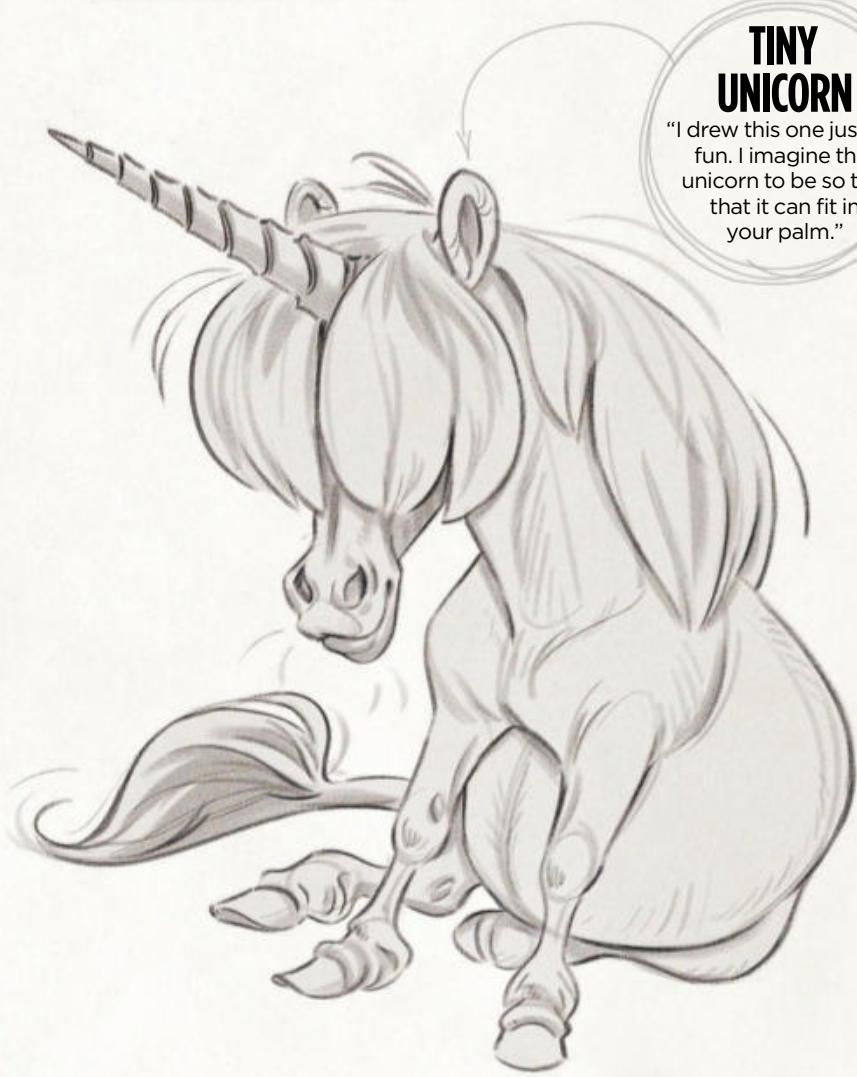
SKVADER

"This one started out as a wolf doodle, just to practise shape language and find some interesting designs. He looked surprised, so I decided to add a skvader. It's a Swedish mythological creature that looks like a winged hare."

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**

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX
Workshops

VIDEO WORKSHOP

Advice from the world's best artists
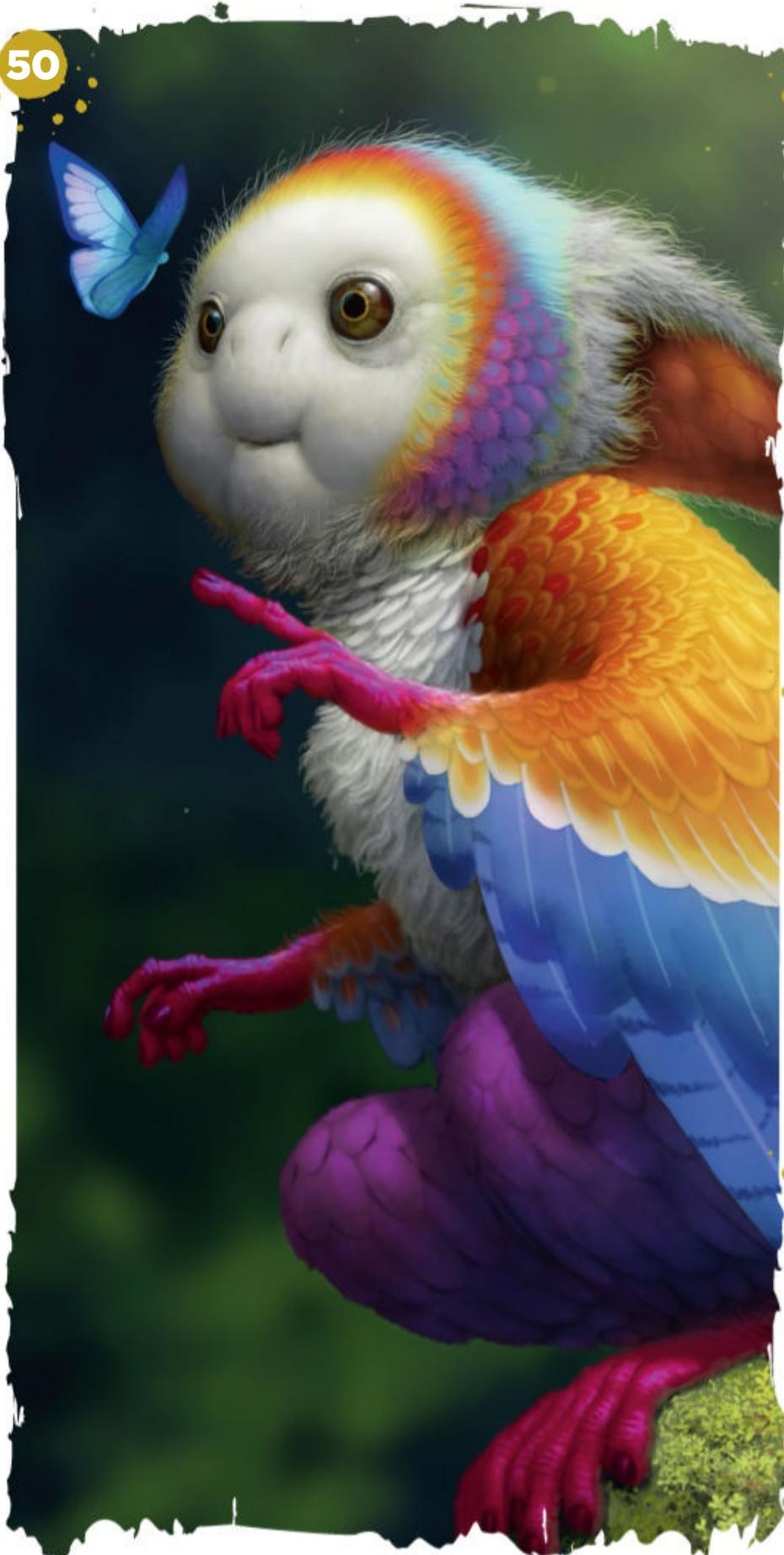
This issue:

Photoshop
PAINT AMAZING CREATURE DESIGNS

Creature designer **Bobby Chiu** explains how he develops a pen drawing into a fully painted fantasy creature that has its roots in reality

Artist **PROFILE**

Bobby Chiu
LOCATION: Canada

Bobby works in films, games and illustration, specialising in creature design. He's the co-founder of Schoolism, Imaginism Studios and LightBox Expo.
http://ifxm.ag/b-chiu

The word 'fictional' brings to mind something imaginative that doesn't exist in real life. In contrast, 'non-fiction' suggests something that's based in reality, whether it's factual, historical and so on. However, to paint a realistic yet fictional character, I need elements from both camps. I must think about how to make something feel factual when it's clearly not.

As a student, my favourite challenge was creating realistic but fictional feathered or furry creatures. My fascination with these types of creatures continued over my 15-plus years of designing creatures for films, television and games. This is a subject that I love, so it's what I've chosen to cover in this workshop.

As with storytelling, believability depends on the details. If all the details add up and are consistent throughout, then that makes the story more believable. The same applies to painting fictional objects: believability is in the details, especially the subtle ones. If you get the details right then your efforts will be recognised by the viewer.

In this workshop, I'll start off with inspiration and coming up with the initial idea. Next, I'll do a step-by-step of my painting process, inspiration, structure and texture, with some helpful tips in between about painting in general.
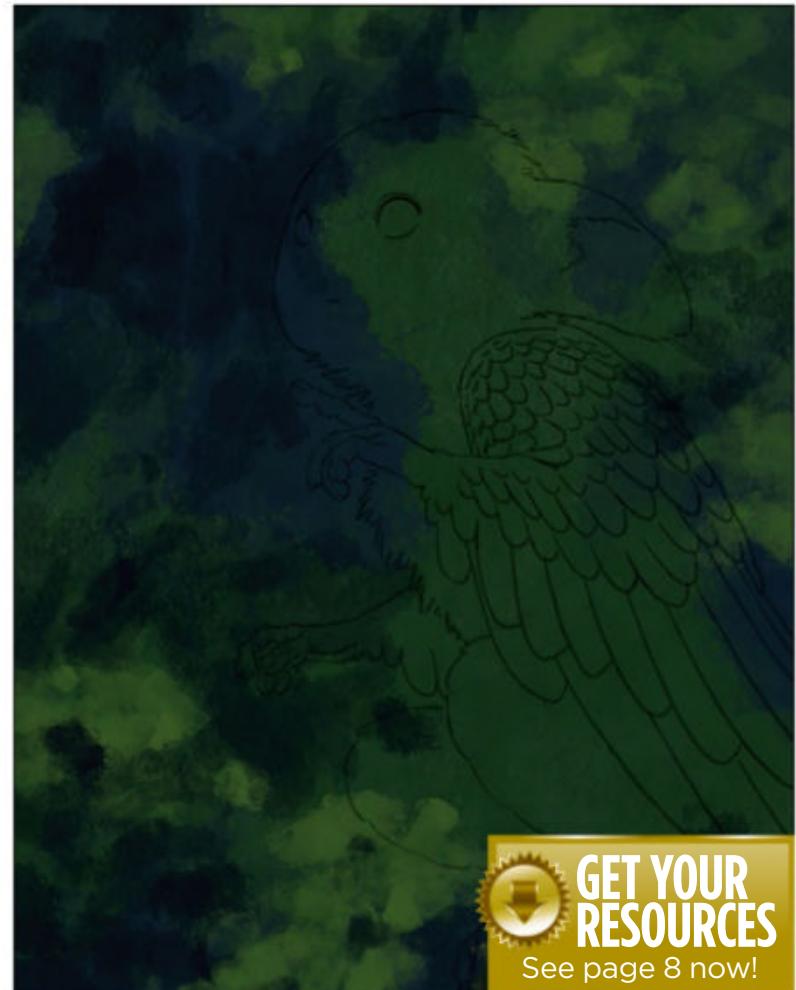
WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: KYLE'S IMPRESSIONIST BLENDER 1

I used one of Kyle T Webster's brushes for background, to hint at the jungle setting.

SOFT ROUND

Apart from Kyle's Impressionist brush, this was the only other default Photoshop brush I used for the painting.

VIDEO WORKSHOP

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 8 now!

1 Create a pen drawing
This drawing is about curiosity. It tells of a butterfly and a winged creature as they focus on their similarities instead of their differences. I do the initial drawing with a regular ballpoint pen. I love drawing with pens but they can leave ink blots, so I have to remember to roll my pen every once in a while to remove any excess ink.

2 Paint the jungle background
I apply hue shifts into blue for the darker tones in the background. I plan on using blue in my shadows, so this will help tie it all together. After placing the big main shapes and colours, I add detail and texture. I also keep my line drawing visible so my background can help to support the creature compositionally.

3 Ensure you get the most from sketch painting

When you paint something multiple times, subsequent versions of that object should – in theory at least – improve with each new attempt. The purpose of sketch paintings is to take you through the process of painting something over and over again, but not be precious with any of the outcomes. Paint quick and rough just to get your ideas out and see if you like them.

4 Adjust the colours

I only start to think about colours once I've finished smoothing out the feathered areas. In addition to conventional colour theory and the types of emotion that I want to invoke in the viewer with my colour choices, I also want to take into consideration realistic colour combinations. I want to reflect the range of colours that are often seen in the natural world.
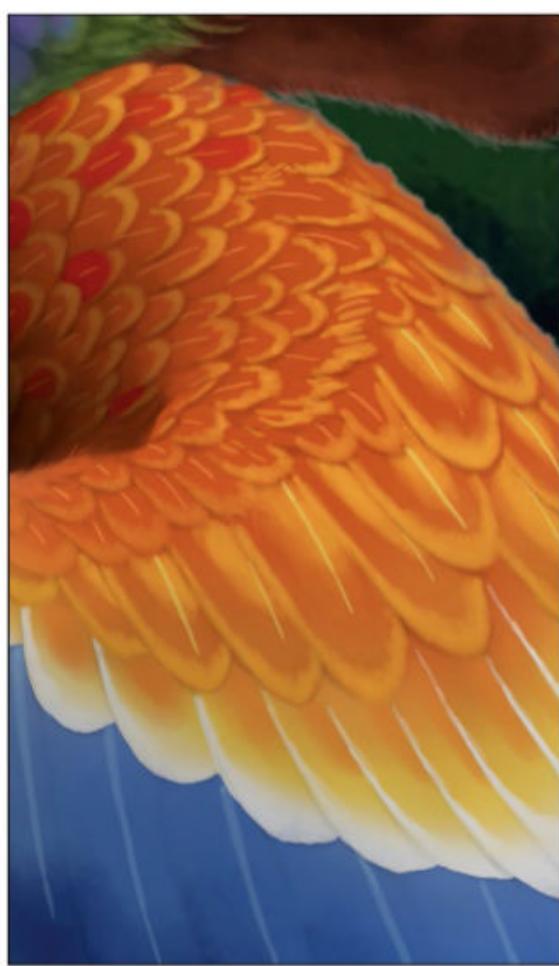
5 Take a deep dive into feathers

If you research feathers, you'll soon find out how fascinating they can be! In addition to colouration – from the drab to the colourful – feathers also come in many shapes and sizes because they serve different purposes. Study the combinations of groups of feathers and how different feathers combine to create patterns. All of these factual details will help to create more believable feathers.

6 Capture reflections on the eyes

Because I want the focus to be on the two creatures looking at each other, it's appropriate to pay extra attention to the eyes. The more reflective the material, the clearer the reflection will be. So if something is shiny but not as reflective like, say, a stainless steel skillet, the reflections wouldn't be as clear when compared to the reflections on shiny eyeballs. ➤➤
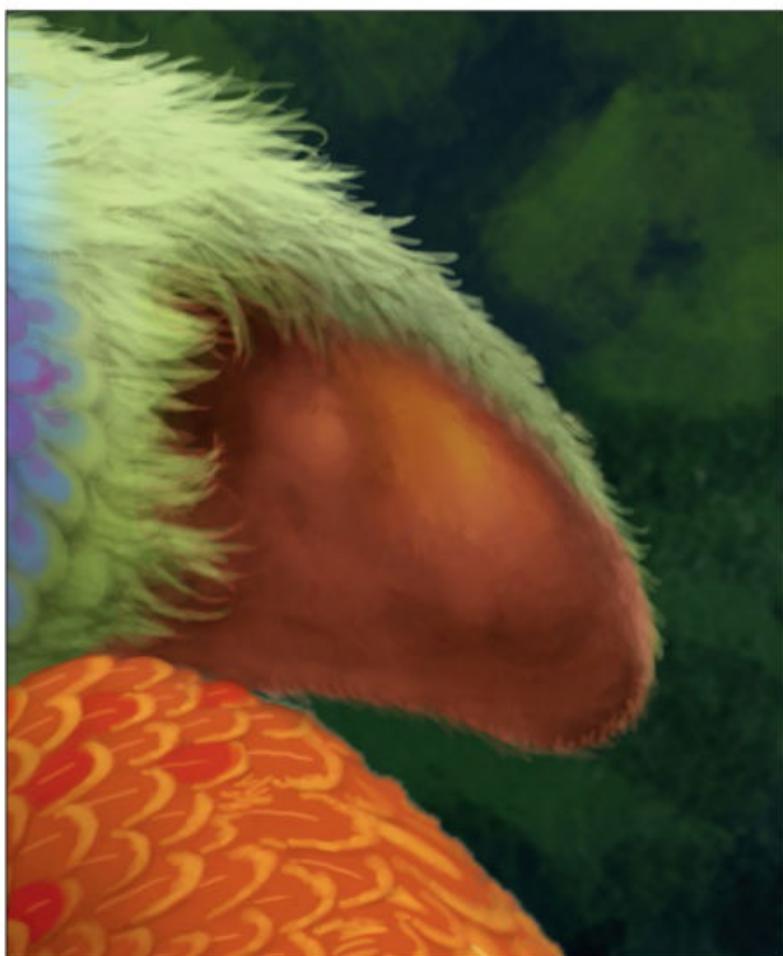
7 Subsurface scattering

The inner ear of my creature is in shadow, but it's receiving a lot of light. It's a good opportunity to create some subsurface scattering. This means that the light is strong enough to penetrate the ear's surface and bounce around within the material of the ear, causing it to show the light coming through.
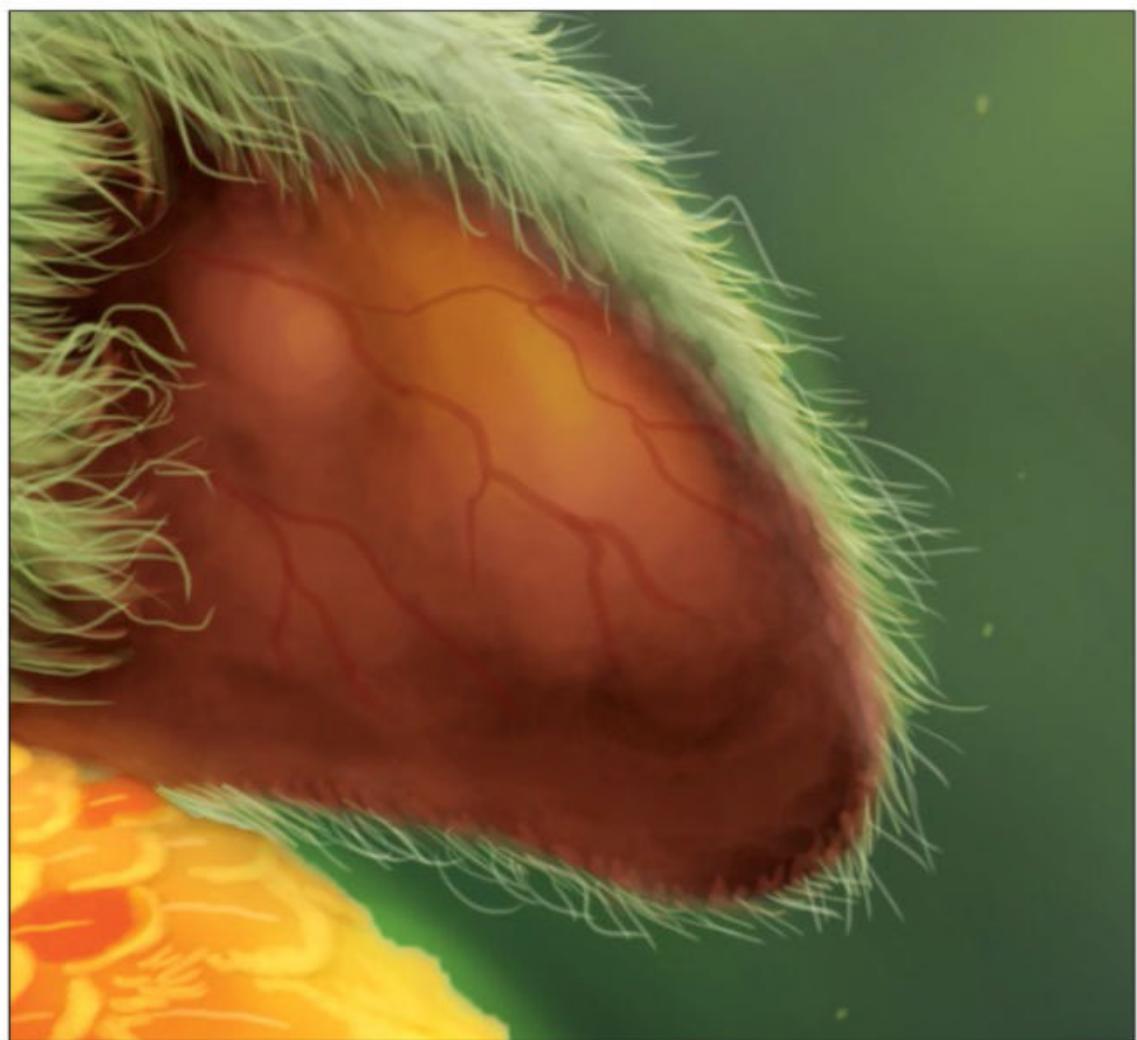
8 Illustrate veins within the ear

When light penetrates a material, the rays are deflected in many directions at once. This diffuses the light and creates a soft-edged glow. Subsurface scattering is also influenced by areas where the material changes, such as the veins inside the ear. Such subtle details all help to boost levels of believability within the artwork.

9 Drawing different levels of hair

When I begin, I think about hair in large masses so I use a bigger brush. As I start to detail, I'll start using smaller brushes. Then, even when I think the hair looks good, I'll still zoom in to see if I'd like to add more details to really enhance the feeling of fine hair or fur.

10 Observing material transitions

Looking at the hair and feathers on the creature's head, I think about the transition from one to the other. This is always something to consider when you have different materials on the same object. Should it be a gradual transition, or a more immediate one? Where would such a transition be and how would it work?

11 Apply blur to the background

I love looking at how cameras focus in on certain objects and blur others to control focus and create depth. In this step, I blur the background by selecting Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur. There are a few different blur options, but I like to use Gaussian Blur for the background because I can easily adjust how much I want to blur elements out.
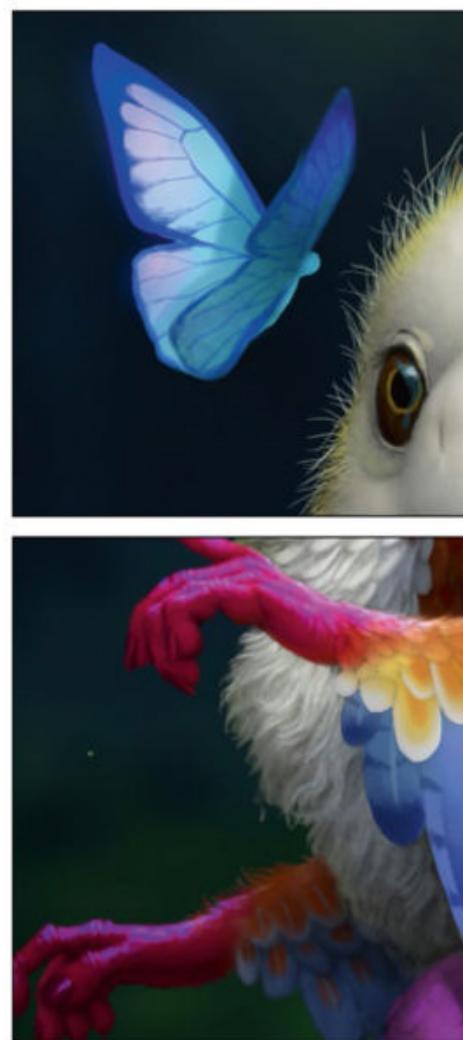
12 Add iridescence to both creatures

One of the most beautiful effects found in nature is iridescence, which is when the colour of something changes hue depending on the angle of light hitting it. You can see this in certain types of bubbles, shells, butterflies and bird feathers. I thought it'd be nice for my two creatures to have iridescence in common.
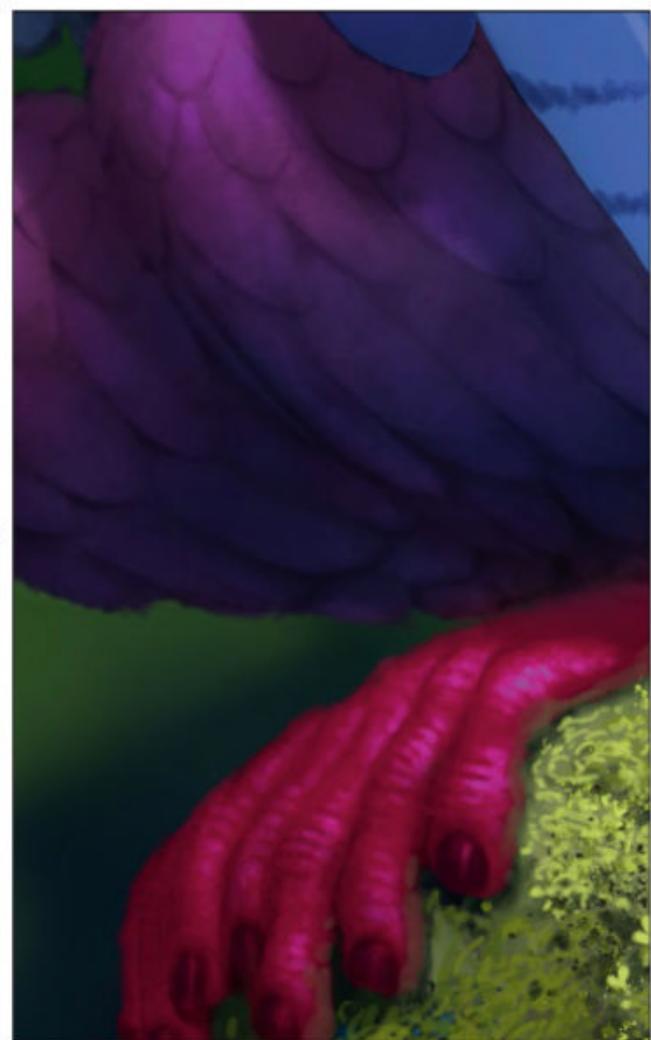
13 A sense of atmosphere

When painting something believable, we often forget about atmosphere. We tend not to think about the atmosphere on a clear day – but it's there, and the more of the world there is in our view, the more we'll notice it. All things being equal, atmosphere tends to reduce contrast as we look into the distance. In this case, I add tiny particles in the air, which could be pollen or dust.
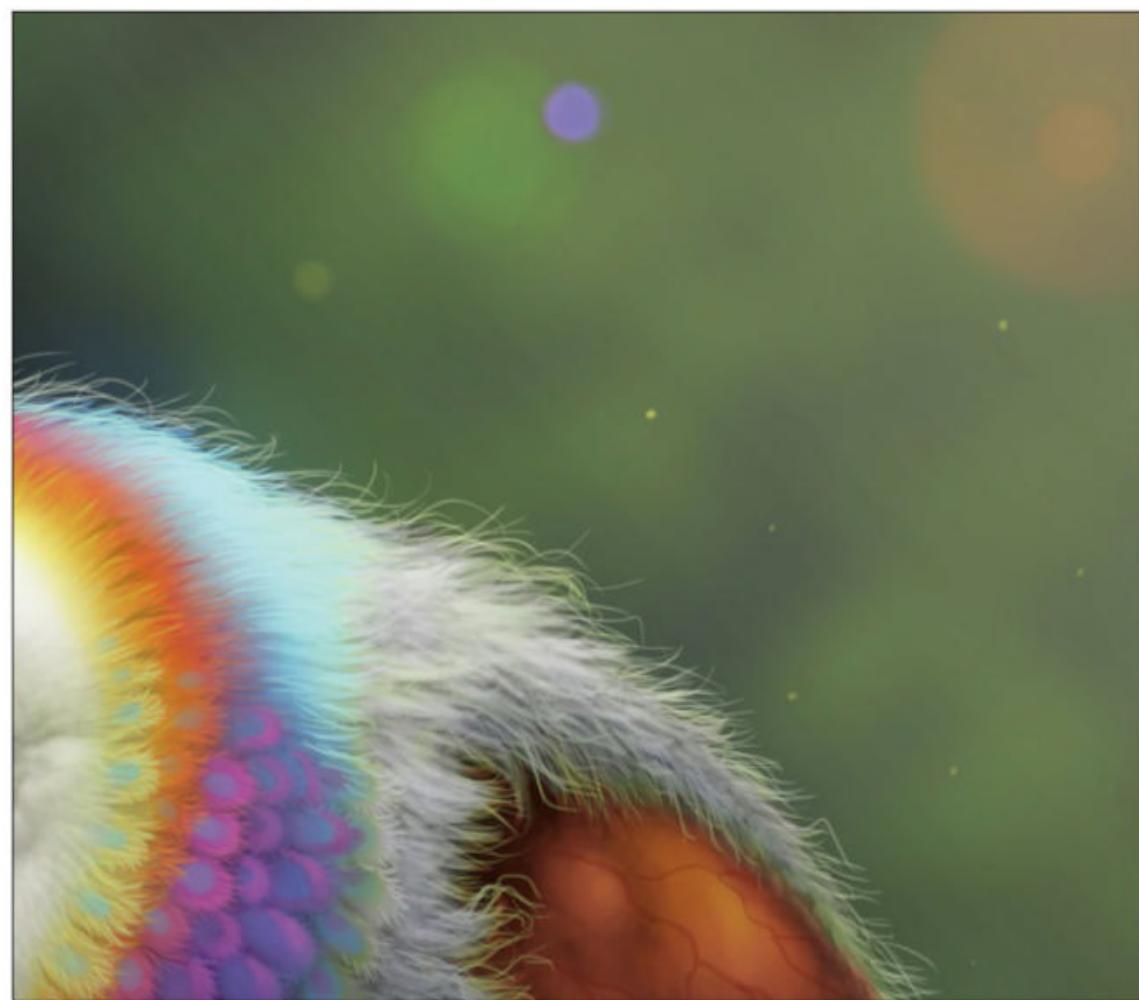
14 Recreating the effects of a camera lens

The second thing that can often be overlooked is the influence of the lens through which we see the world. I become much more aware of the lens when I'm using a camera. You'll notice when light sometimes bleeds in or creates a lens flare in photos, so I finish this illustration by adding some of those subtle details.

Traditional art skills & Photoshop
DIGITALLY COLOUR TRADITIONAL ART

Ashly Lovett shares her process of digitally colouring her traditional black and white chalk pastel illustrations in Photoshop

Artist **PROFILE**

Ashly Lovett
LOCATION: US

Ashly is a freelance illustrator, writer and gallery artist based in Louisiana, US. She's best known for her ethereal artwork created using chalk pastel.
www.ashlylovett.com

This illustration, Ambition, is featured in my latest book: The Little Mermaid. It's a dark adaptation of the original 1830's story by Hans Christian Andersen. We follow the mermaid's wearisome journey of becoming a human seeking love and an eternal soul. At this moment she's celebrated her 18th birthday, donned her royal garments of woven pearls, and is given permission to explore the surface above.

I used an S-shape composition to highlight her body and glowing white hair. Bioluminescent hair was one of several unique features in my story. All the art was created in black and white chalk pastel and then coloured digitally in Photoshop.

The book began as an exercise to push me out of my comfort zone. Never had I created sequential artwork, wrote or designed a book from scratch. The experience was rewarding, and I encourage all artists to explore their limits. As David Bowie once said, "Always go a little bit out of your depth, and when you feel your feet aren't quite touching the bottom, you're in the right place to do something exciting."

The Little Mermaid is now available from Eye of Newt Books (**www.eyeofnewtpress.com**). ➤➤

How I bring...
COLOUR INTO A GREYSCALE ILLUSTRATION

1 Values first
A solid value structure is necessary for creating an illustration that's pleasing to the eye. With my value structure established, I only need to worry about my colour harmony. This piece was drawn traditionally with chalk pastel on paper. I scan it and import it into Photoshop.

2 Flat colour
I apply flat colours using a Color layer and a regular soft Round brush, but avoid detailing for now. I want her body to be a warm gold tone against a cool, murky background with purplish-blue shadows. This helps the character pop. Her glowing hair is a cool blue light for contrast.

3 Luminous details
I give her body more form by remembering my light source and playing up the highlights. To provide a sense of depth, I bring forward the fish, seaweed and bubbles. I define hard edges like her scales, jewellery, wisps of hair and details within the face with a textured brush.

CONTRAST AND COLOURS

Always the face

Viewers are always naturally drawn to a face in an illustration. With a portrait, I nearly always use warm tones where we naturally have more blood flow. These areas are the cheeks, lips and nose. I also use warm tones where skin folds or creases, like the nostrils here.

Photoshop Adjustment layers

I use Adjustment layers to manipulate the illustration and my colour harmony gradually. I love these types of layers because it gives me the freedom to make changes without permanently altering the original. Some of my favourites to play with are Vibrance, Hue and Saturation, and Levels layers.

Details can strengthen a story

I research deep-sea creatures when building an environment for my mermaids. I give her bioluminescent hair to help guide her through the dark depths. I also add remoras – sometimes called suckerfish – to her tail. These smaller fishes are often present on larger sea mammals and act as little companion cleaners.

Building with contrast

With contrast you can strengthen your composition and lead the viewers' eyes. You can have contrast in colours by using complementary colours or warm versus cool colours. Use contrast in values with darks versus lights. Or have contrast with hard edges versus soft edges. All are tools in your artist toolkit.

Reference is key

All great illustrators use reference. It's the best way to achieve believable forms and strengthen your muscle memory. For the hand, I had my friend pose for me. For the glowing underwater effect, I Googled street lights in fog. For the gills, I researched sharks' gills to understand their patterns.

WORKSHOP MATERIALS

SOFT CHALK PASTELS
Prismacolor Nupastels, Koh-I-Noor, Sennelier

PAPER
Arches BFK Rives paper

PROGRAMS/TOOLS
Photoshop, Wacom Tablet

Suggested forms

I knew the background would be less important with this piece, and the real focus is the little mermaid. I drew suggested forms of seaweed, sea life and her tail fin, leaving more to the imagination for the viewer. It's a way to work smarter and not harder.

Find your narrative

You don't want a static illustration. Find opportunities to add narrative and make the viewer ask questions. Who is this character, and what are they doing? Push the narrative with the landscape, jewellery, garments and so on, to add depth to the story. Always make design choices with a purpose.

15 TIPS FOR BETTER CHARACTER DESIGN

Illustrator and author **David Melling** reveals how he brings his book characters to life, using exaggeration, silent narrative, props and more

Artist
PROFILE

David Melling
LOCATION: England

Author and illustrator David has published around 150 books in over 30 languages, including the Hugless Douglas series.
www.davidmelling.co.uk
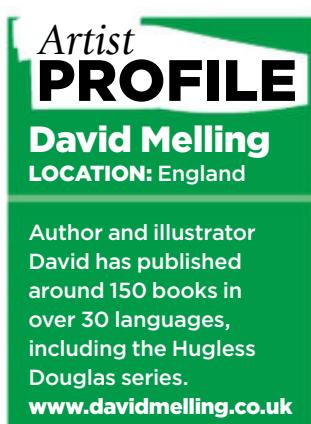
I was once asked to name three important skills required to be a successful book illustrator. I said, in no particular order, draughtsmanship, character and pathos. No doubt others will have their own top three, but I stand by these for the kind of book illustration that appeals to me.

In my opinion, character is right up there. But what is character? And how do you go about finding it, creating it? And when you have it, how can you use it most effectively in your work?

When I started out, I acquired some by looking at the books and art that appealed to me and asking myself why I liked them. Character

seemed to be the answer time and time again. We all hope our art will appeal to a wide audience, but character appeal is subjective. In that respect, there's no golden ticket to character design. Yet I've learned there are things you can do that can be effective in bringing your characters to life which, with a bit of luck, resonate with others.
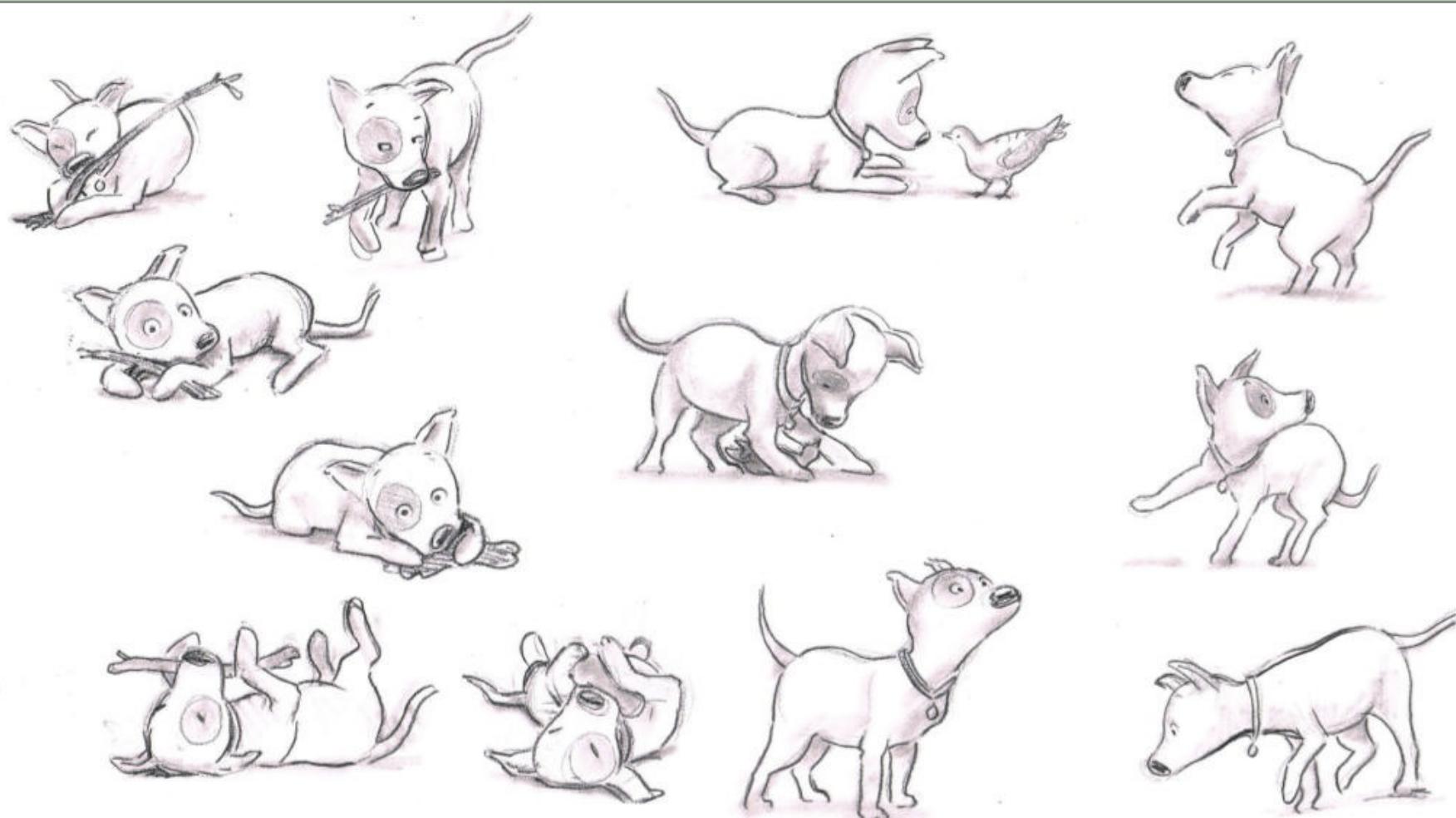
1 CHARACTER SHEETS

Once I'm happy with a particular design I create character sheets. Here, Ruffles is being very doggy as he runs around on the page – reacting, responding and so on. He's a puppy, but also a toddler and I'm trying to get that across here in his playfulness. At the same time I want to avoid

him being too anthropomorphic (so, not sitting with hind legs forward, for example).

As I'm drawing, I'm asking myself questions. What's he like? Is he shy, bold, moody? How does he walk? Is it bouncy, elegant, bumbling? All the answers feed into the drawing and, hopefully, help evolve character.
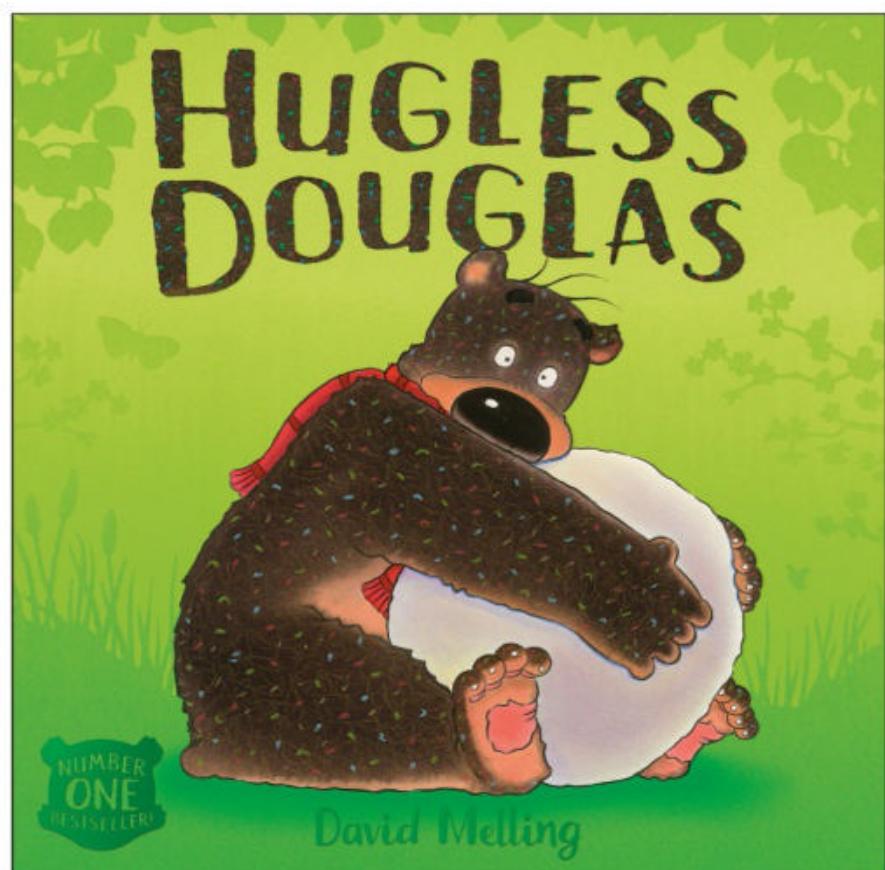
2 IT TAKES TIME TO DESIGN A CHARACTER THAT FEELS RIGHT

Designing a character is never simple and rarely happens quickly. The more I draw, the more the design (proportions, shape and so on) settles on the page. These two versions of Hugless Douglas show how much he changed from early concept to final design. In hindsight, I'm surprised I hadn't noticed the tiny head and long arms… and those hamster cheeks! Eventually, I settled on the right proportions. He's still quite jowly but, with the mouth hidden I needed to rely on other features; the way his cheek rests on the boulder helps with that 'I need a hug' expression.

3 DRAW LIVING, BREATHING ANIMALS

I was once asked to draw a hungry cat sitting on a mat in front of a bowl of delicious food. Part of the brief included words like ravenous, excited and anticipation. Well, I drew the cat almost symmetrical including its ears and paws. The result was stiff and uninteresting. In silhouette, it didn't read as a cat (more on this later). No matter how much expression I tried to put into the face it failed… and so did the job! Whenever I draw a character I think of them as living, breathing creatures. A tail is curling, thoughtful. This tiger is standing still, but he's definitely alive.

> ❝ The more I draw, the more the design (proportions, shape and so on) settles on the page ❞
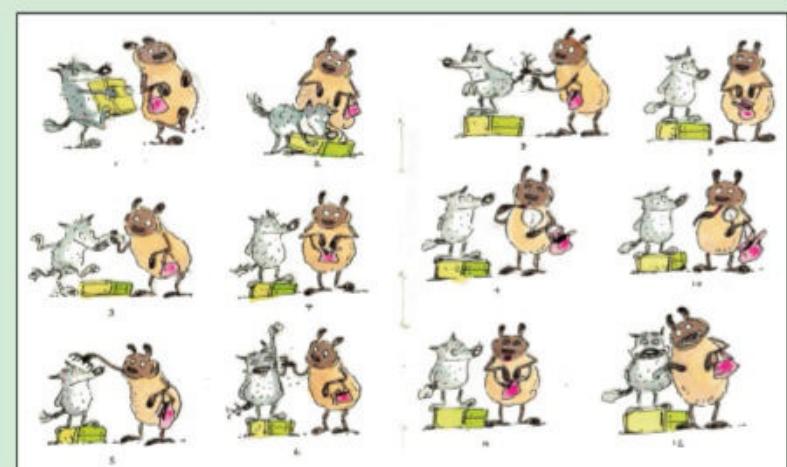
4 SEQUENTIAL DRAWING

As part of my character/story development process I've adopted an exercise created by author and illustrator Maurice Sendak. He called them Fantasy Sketches. On A4 paper, starting top left, finishing bottom right, I draw quickly to a fixed time of 10 minutes. Starting with a random character(s), I try following a sequence and see what happens. I try not to pause or think too much. More often than not, the result isn't a complete or logical narrative but I nearly always come away with something useful. ➡

> **Animals can prove a more convenient currency when tackling sensitive subjects**
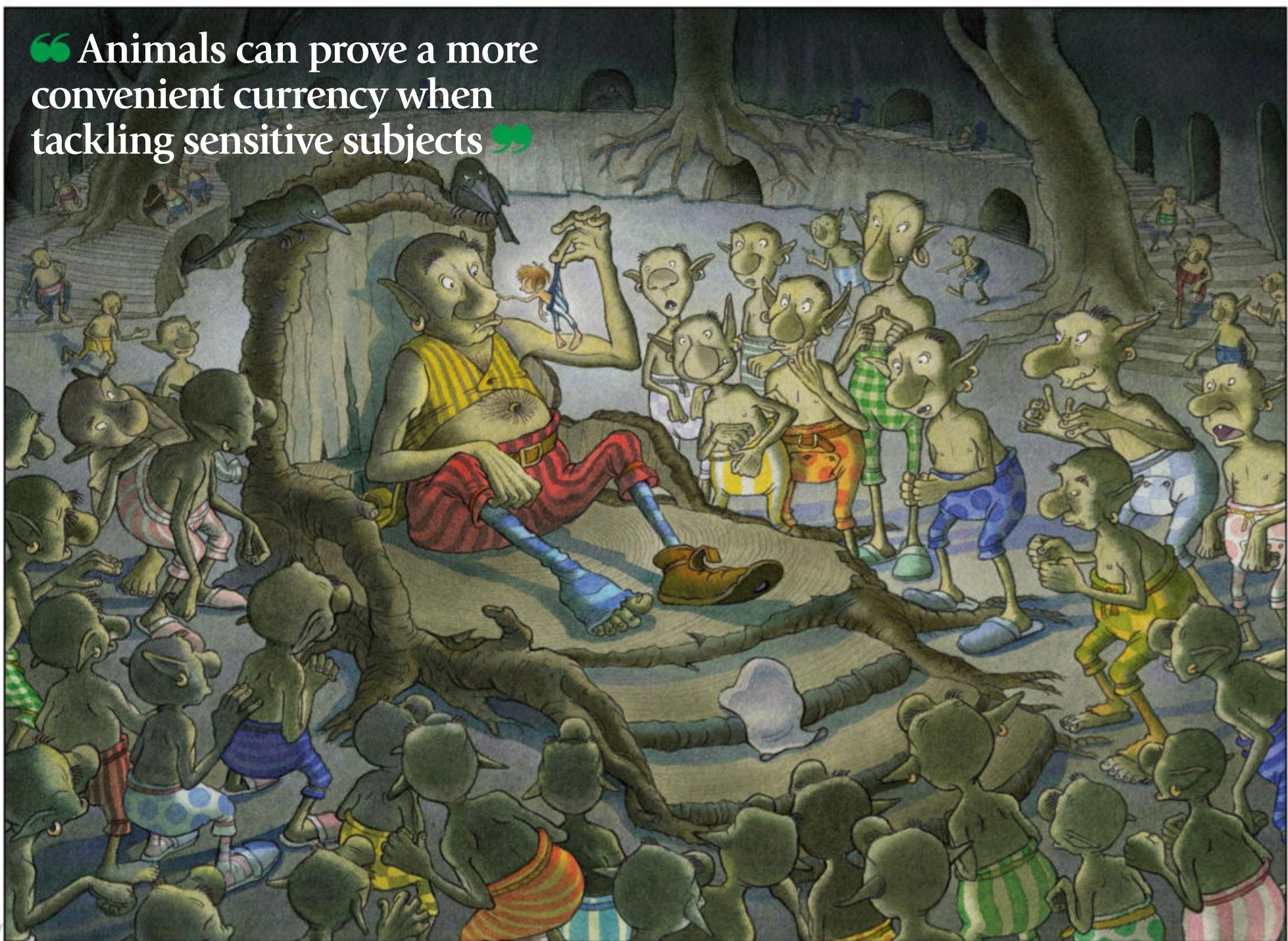
5 A BLEND OF ANIMAL AND FANTASY

I prefer to draw animals and fantasy figures. In children's books, animals can often prove a more convenient currency when tackling sensitive subjects. On occasion, the risk of causing offence or dealing with challenging issues can be eased within the metaphoric realm of animals and fantasy. I'm generalising of course, but in my picture book The Tale of Jack Frost, I had the chance to explore fantasy a little deeper and although these goblins are essentially human in appearance, I treated them like wild animals. For me, there's something about fantasy that makes it possible for you to push a character that little bit further.

6 EXAGGERATION (WHEN SOMETIMES LESS IS MORE)

Exaggeration can be an effective tool from extreme, almost 'cartoony,' to a more subtle blend. Both are valid in the right context. Here, I deliberately set out to paint a realistic-looking rooster with the intention of seeing how little I could alter its features to achieve just a touch more character. The blue line shows the original proportions. You can see that I extended the beak, dropped the line at the corner of his mouth, narrowed the shape of his eye (which added an unexpected human tone), and exaggerated the wattles. It's interesting the impact these small changes can have; now it's a distinctly anthropomorphic rooster.

7 EMOTION THROUGH SYMMETRY

Now I know I've already suggested symmetry is best avoided, or risk a figure looking stiff and lifeless, but there are exceptions. Indeed, on occasion the opposite can be just as powerful. I had this in mind when I drew this whippet. By cropping in tight, I wanted to avoid any distractions: no asymmetrical ears or any animated eyebrow action (although I did soften the brow generally to fit the mood). I wanted the viewer to have nowhere else to go but into those big, soulful eyes. I think this is more effective because there's no movement.

8 EXPRESSIVE SILHOUETTES

I worked for a spell in several London-based animation studios as a background artist and cel-renderer (mid-1980s before digital animation). During that time, I read about character design and became aware of the power of silhouette and how expressive they can be (just take a look at shadow puppetry). Mickey Mouse's ears sit in 2D on his head so that they can be read clearly in silhouette. I had this on mind when I drew this duck. The expressive nature of this pose can be seen by dropping him into silhouette.

9 COLOURING HUGLESS DOUGLAS

A **Capture the pose in pencil**
I always like to work out the pose, expressions and so on at the pencil stage. For me, it's the most important stage, a time to experiment and really nail what I'm trying to say. I then carefully trace with Indian ink and fountain pen (as a dip pen to avoid clogging the works).

B **Wet-in-wet watercolours**
I use the wet-in-wet technique with Dr Ph Martin's concentrated watercolour inks. First, I paint a selected area with plain water. Then, while still wet, I add the light colour, then the darker brown. I have to work quickly – this whole process needs to be done in one go.

C **Embrace happy accidents**
I finish the details with coloured pencils. The fur flecks were a happy accident. I dropped a bright blue pencil on the surface of an early Douglas painting, leaving a 'chipped' blue mark which I quite liked. It gave me the idea of adding coloured flecks that helped him stand out from other bear books! ➤➤

10 BUILD UP ANTICIPATION

I often like to add a sequence of three or four images in a row... an influence no doubt, from my animation days. There's a reason for this. As well as slowing down a moment to (hopefully) be enjoyed in a little more detail by the reader, it also taps into something I do when I draw a character almost every time. That is, I anticipate how the character is moving, behaving, thinking as I sketch them. What I'm doing is looking to settle on a key moment in that imagined sequence: before, during... and after.

> **❝ I anticipate how the character is moving, behaving, thinking as I sketch them ❞**

11 BODY LANGUAGE

Body language has so much potential in terms of adding to a character's silent narrative. Using gestures, weight distribution and posture, the results can be obvious and extreme, or quiet and subtle. These goblins are still, unmoving, yet there's movement. I tilted the line of the shoulders of the goblin with the green waistcoat; one dropped, the other hunched, touching the earlobe. I drew the other goblin's feet turned inward and joined together, more like hands than feet. Even the nature of the flower is telling its own narrative, reacting to the tightly clasped hand.

12 SILENT NARRATIVES

Clothes and props can also contribute and add value to personality and character. I enjoyed adding props around this dragon, so neatly wedged into his bath – an action in itself that tells you something more about him outside the text. These props – the use of a hair net, the placement of a potty close by and a crown stand (none of which are mentioned in the text, either) – give insights into this dragon's persona. And I wanted to emphasise this giant's stiff, stilt-like walk by giving him tight, short, ill-fitting trousers. I enjoy adding these quiet additions when I can.
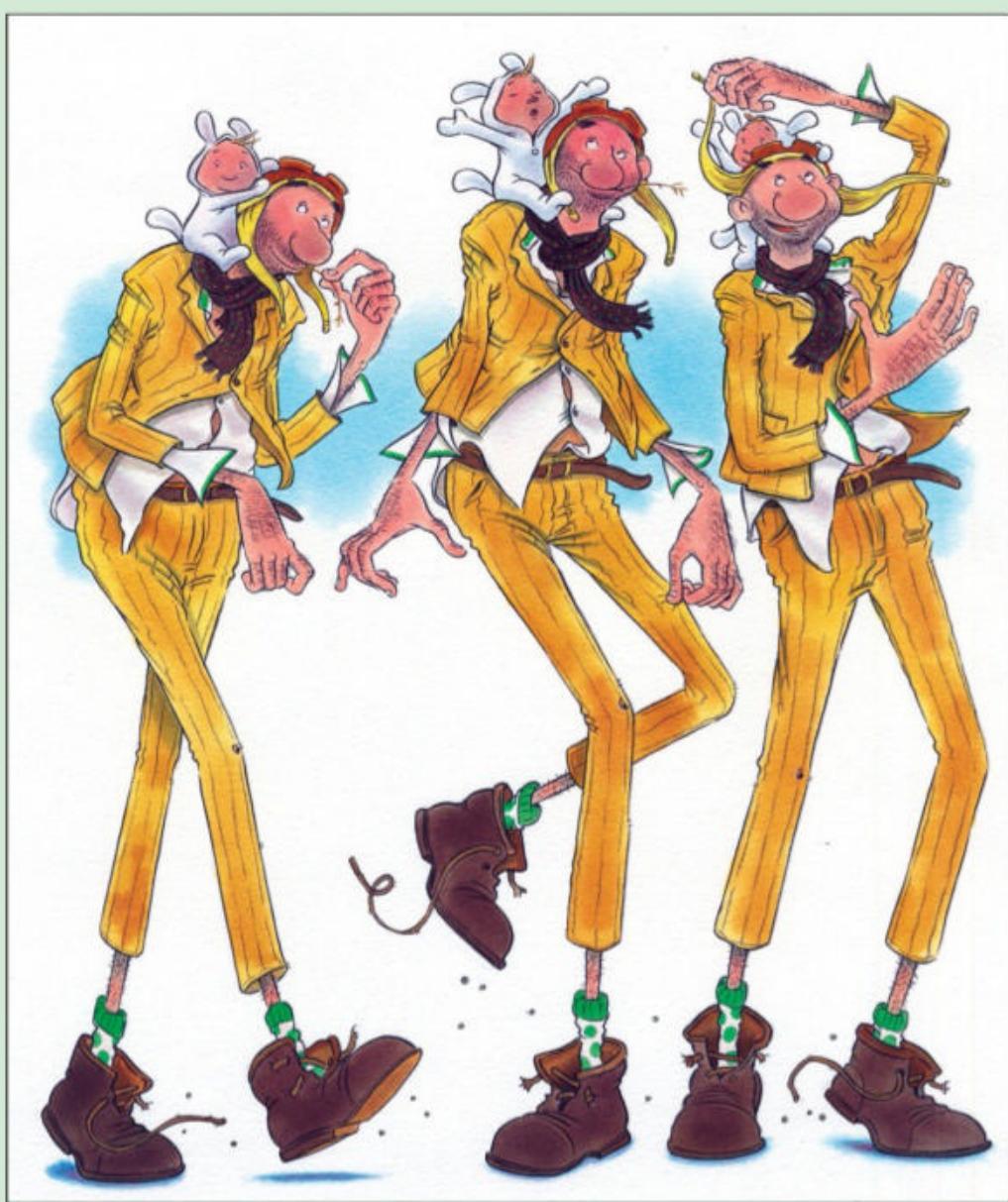
13 PLAYFUL SKETCHBOOK

Once I'm happy with a character, it's important not to stop exploring additional character traits as the drawing continues. My father was a sculptor and watching him draw, I remember him saying the pencil was his thinking stick. This happens in my sketchbook. I like to have characters interacting with each other. It's a playful part of character development and one of my favourite parts of the process.
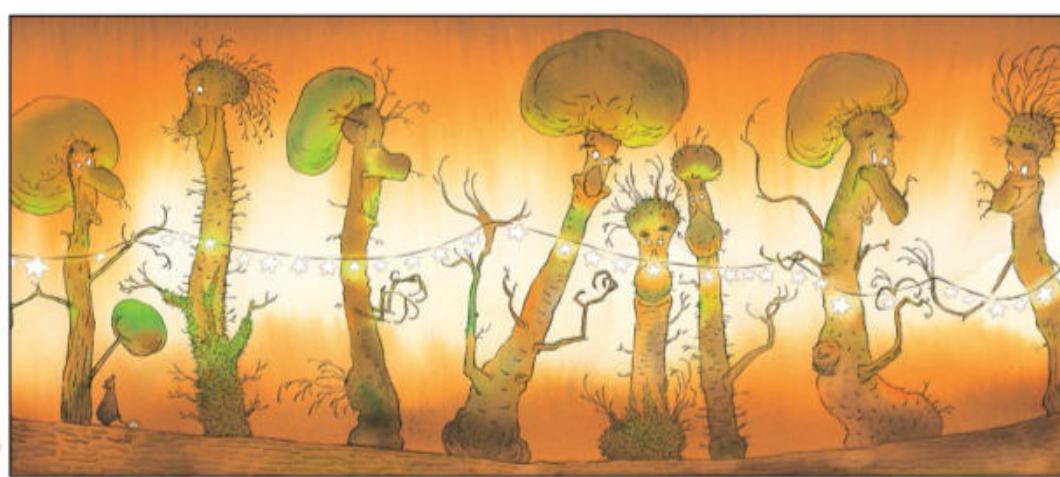
14 BACKGROUND CHARACTERS

I understood early on that the job of a book illustrator is to add something new to the text. To enhance, and not just repeat. Which is why I like to add background characters when I can, who aren't mentioned in the text. As well as hopefully entertaining the reader, it's a chance to introduce unexpected characters who might wake up on a page or two and contribute to the characterisation of the main cast through interaction and even conversation. I love drawing trees for their anthropomorphic potential. This group found their way into the story. Everything you draw has character potential!

15 TEN FOR THE PRICE OF ONE!

When I created the flock of sheep in my Hugless Douglas book series, I realised I'd touched on something special. Very early on, I made the conscious decision not to create individual characters but to think of them and treat them as one. For smoothness of narrative, some titles do have individual sheep that appear as themselves, so to speak, but essentially the flock of sheep are one character. This enabled me to have more fun with silent narrative (that phrase again!), whereby they get up to all sorts 'off camera.' My hope is for readers to find new things during repeated readings.

Next month in...

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX

Beautiful manga mayhem!

Discover new drawing and painting skills in Clip Studio Paint, Paint Tool SAI and more!

All this… and more!

Colouring expertise
Ever get stuck with colouring? Asia Ladowska is here to help you out.

Paint Tool SAI masterclass
Angela Wang creates beautiful imagery with this incredible affordable software.

New ways to network
From Clubhouse to Tik Tok… how to get your work to a wider audience.

Gretel Lusky sketchbook
The acclaimed illustrator and comic artist shows us her line-work.

ISSUE 202 ON SALE IN PRINT & DIGITAL *11 JUNE 2021*

Photoshop
PAINT A COLOURFUL FANTASY PORTRAIT

Grace Zhu, a full-time artist and instructor at Syn Studio Concept Art School, paints a regal portrait scene full of light, colours and flowers

Artist PROFILE

Grace Zhu
LOCATION: Canada

Grace is a freelance artist who's worked on various indie games, book covers, short films and more for clients including Battlehouse Games. Grace is also an instructor at Syn Studio Concept Art School. Find out more about the school's courses at:
http://ifxm.ag/syn-studio

Fantasy illustrations are the perfect opportunity for artists to explore the magical, otherworldly and delightful. Despite the genre's many clichés, there remain innumerable ways to have fun with your fantasy art. In this workshop I'll describe my process for generating a colourful fantasy portrait from scratch.

During my career I've painted many fantasy and sci-fi portraits for various indie games, book covers, short films and more for a variety of clients such as Clip Studio Paint and FairyLoot. I've even appeared in previous editions of ImagineFX!

The workshop will feature the key steps of my fantasy portrait creation process including the ideation phase, research and reference gathering, and colour and theme selection, among others. Taken together, they will help you create portraits that convey the classic feeling of fantasy and strikes an immediate chord with the viewer.

In addition, I'll also describe the Photoshop tools and painting techniques that will help you generate high-quality fantasy portraits that accurately convey the magical vibe that's typically seen in the subject area.

I hope that this month's tutorial will provide you with the creative spark to produce your own fantasy portraits, full of life and colour.

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 8 now!

1 Visualise the Queen of the Fields
I start with just getting an idea down on paper, starting with just a pose for the character, and adding in a few sketchy lines to indicate hair, clothing and the bouquet. I make a mood playlist for this and get cosy – painting a lush, verdant image isn't easy in the dead of winter in Canada!
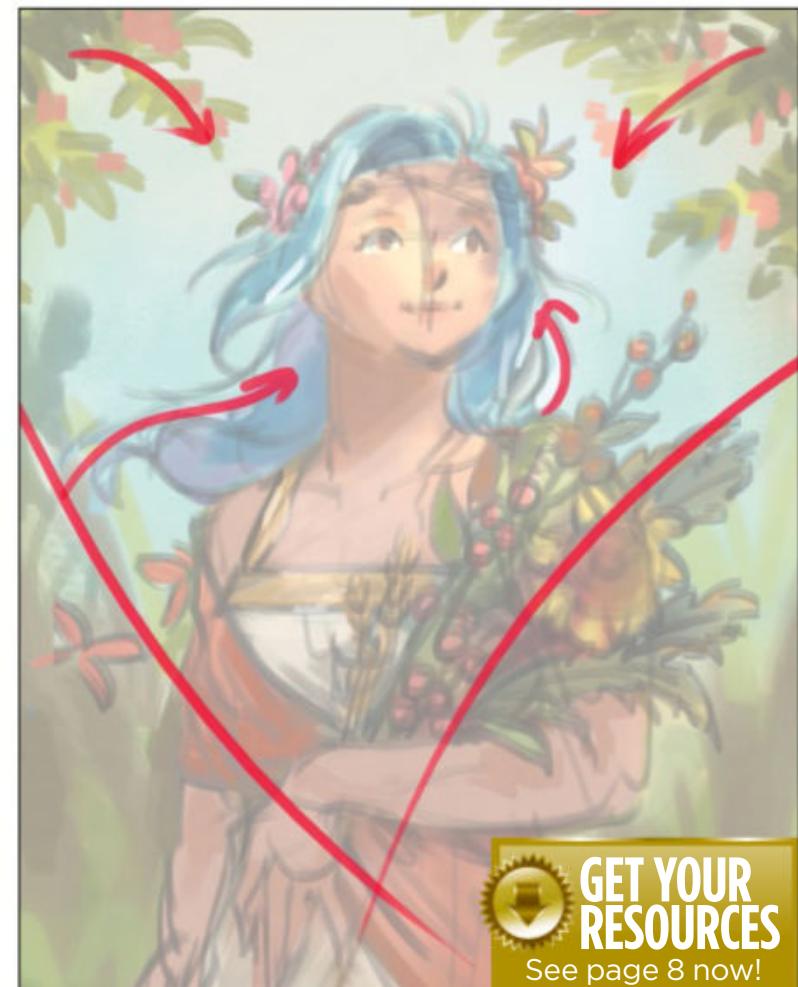
2 Refine the composition
After the first few lines, I fiddle with the composition, keeping in mind the character placement and focal point. I want every element to either frame the character or lead the eye towards it. I also consider if and how I want to add depth with foreground and background in front of and behind the character.

3 Explore colour variations

Once I'm happy with the composition, I experiment with alternative colour palettes, adjusting the background colour/value for each one to make sure the character stands out. As part of the process, I find references I really like and combine them to form a colour scheme, keeping in mind if I want a particular lighting setup such as sunset, daylight or a particular colour palette. Because the nature of digital art, it's easy to make non-destructive experiments. If I have an urge to explore a different direction, I'll make a few variations of this even while I'm starting to go to the next level of detail. For this piece I try different hair variations after deciding on a colour scheme.
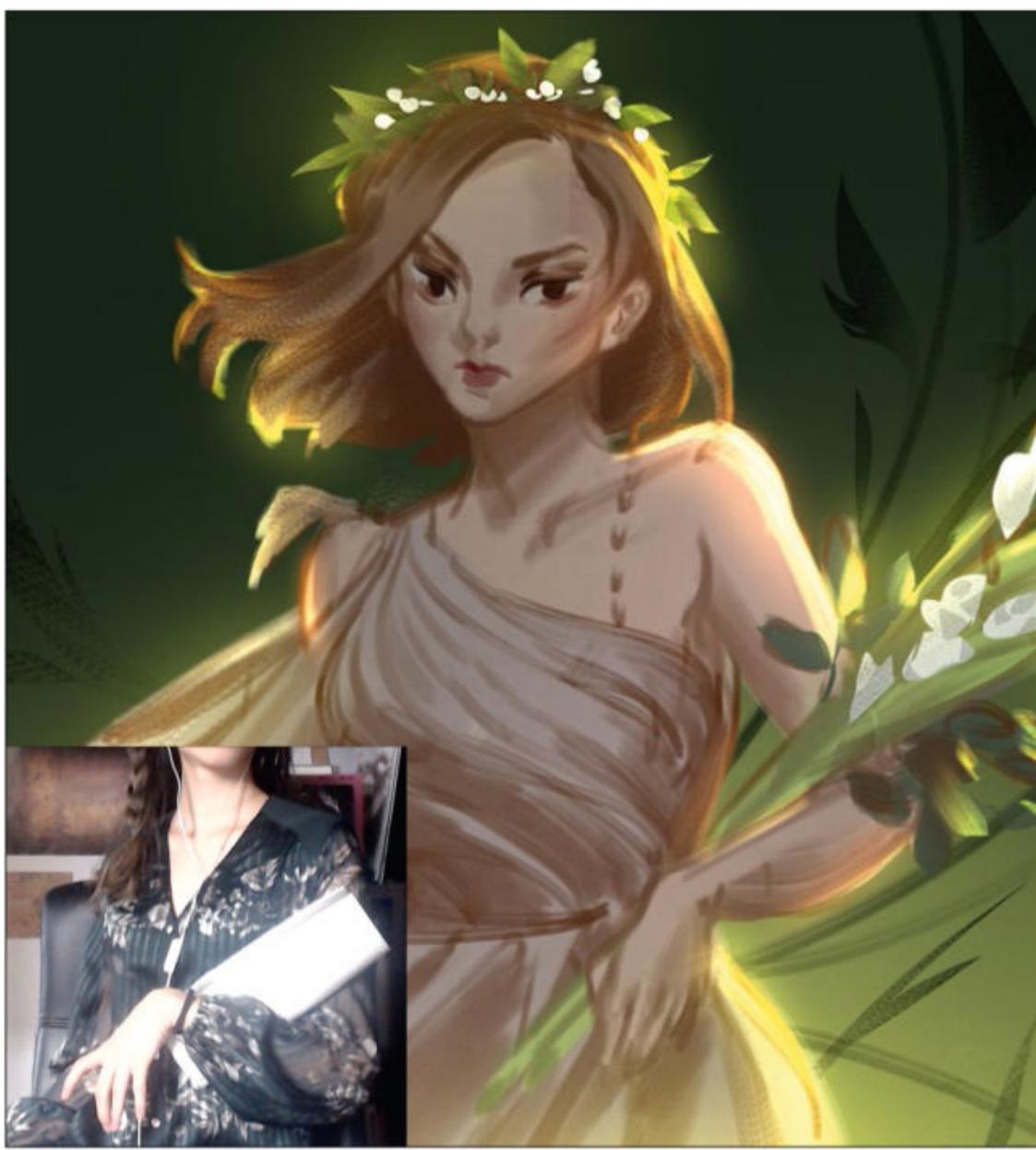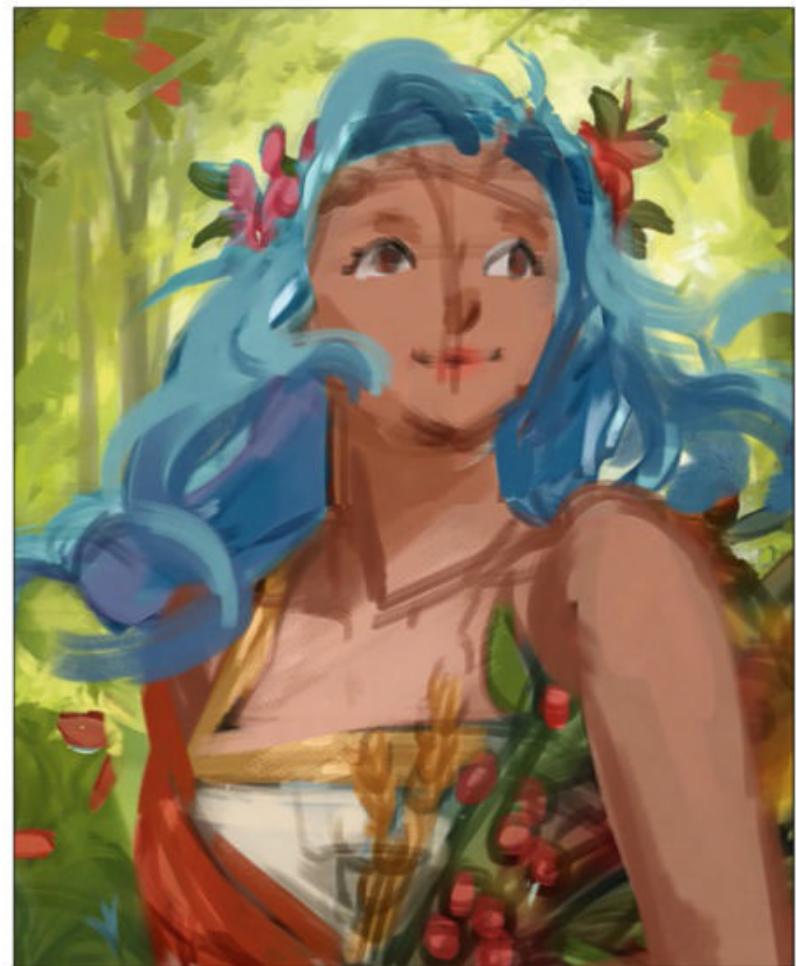

4 Prepare references and studies

These days, before I dive into a piece I like to be as well-prepared as possible. This includes starting out with plenty of references: different ones for each major element of the piece (plants, face, hair and so on.) and taking my own reference photos or making 3D references. I also practise with a similar face angle, lighting, colour or theme to warm up and build confidence to set myself up for success.
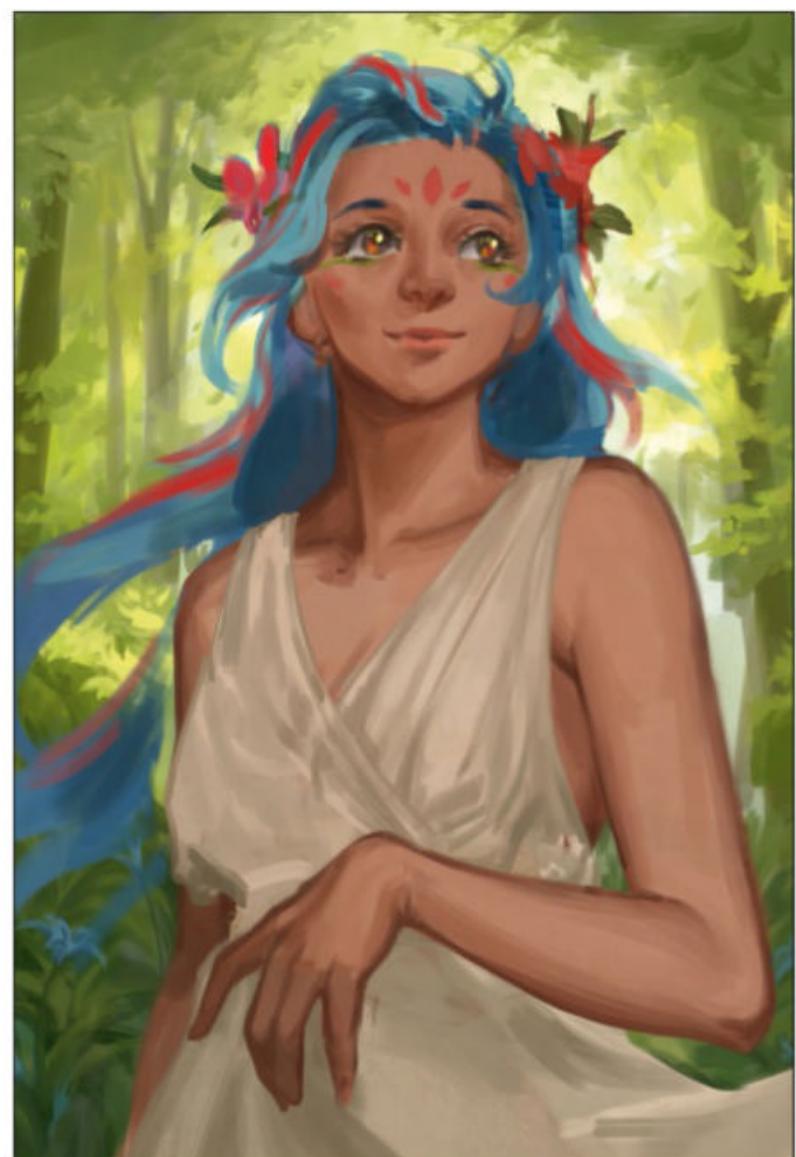
5 Organise layers and fix the anatomy

Continuing to lay out a solid foundation for the painting, I take some time here to fix the anatomy, work out the lighting and organise my layers. After the technical fixes, smaller design elements may need to be changed to unify the painting and support the composition. Organising layers makes it easy to iterate on different parts of the image.
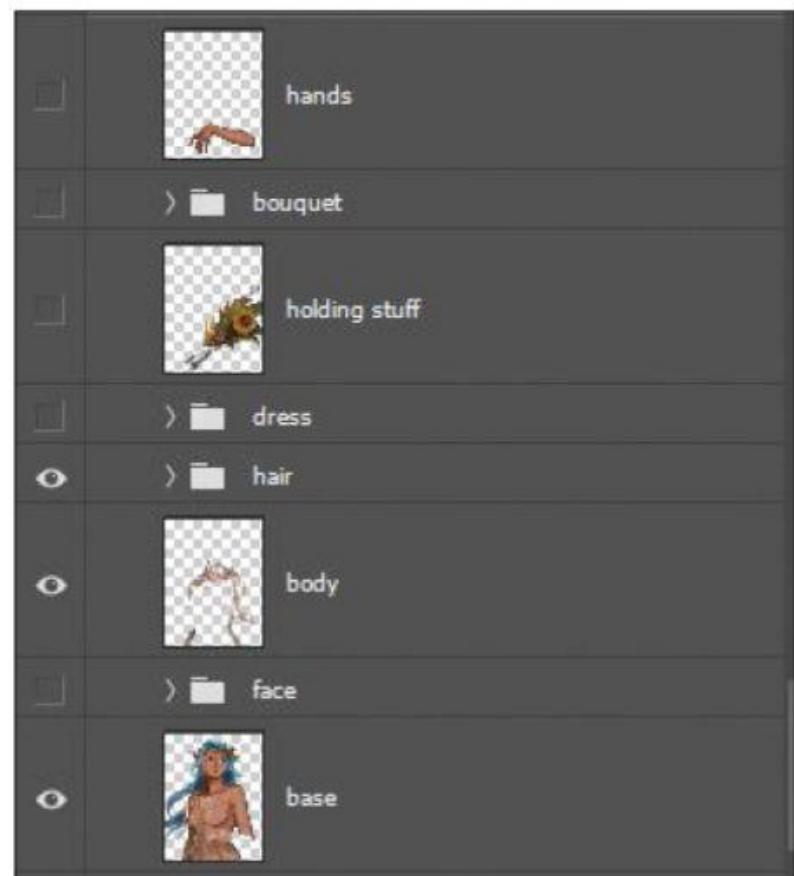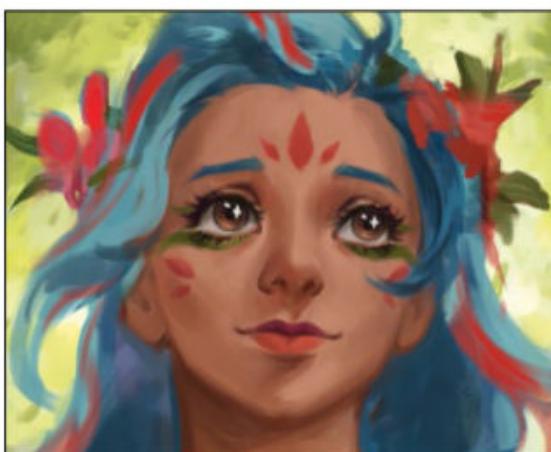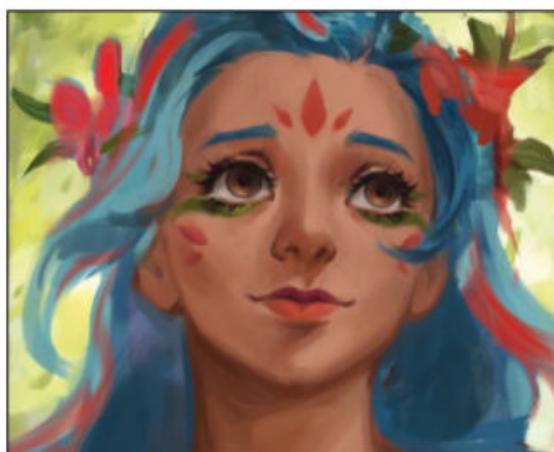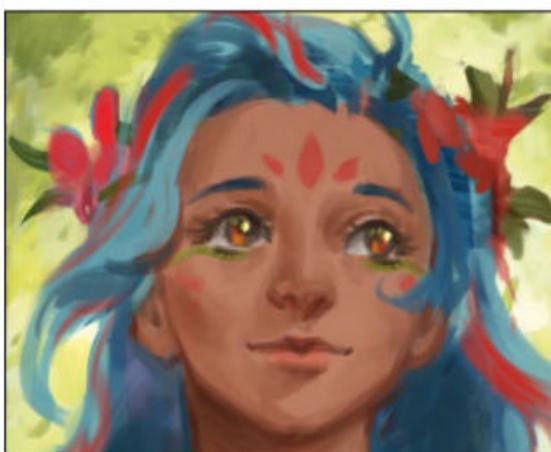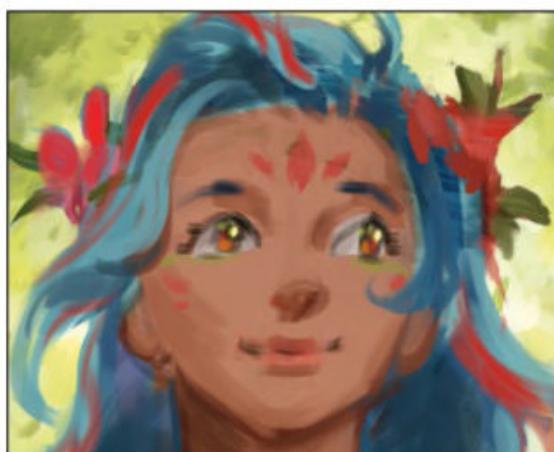
6 Get the face right first

The most important part of a portrait is the face, which sets the tone for the rest of the painting. I like to take the face to around 80 per cent polish, and then paint the rest of the painting to match, before finishing up with tiny details like eyelashes and skin textures. I thought face markings would be a great way to add more personality. The eyes will look weird for a while, because they're highly detailed and I want to finalise them after the lighting stage at the very end. In the meantime, I add a bit of a sparkle just so they look roughly what I have in mind.

7 Working back to front

I aim for half-dozen to a dozen layers maximum (for single character pieces) to keep the file size and navigation manageable. It's helpful to separate hands especially if they're holding something or reaching towards the viewer, but I might keep the clothing all on one layer if possible. Most of the background will be covered up, so I leave everything painterly and slightly abstract so as to not waste time rendering unnecessarily.
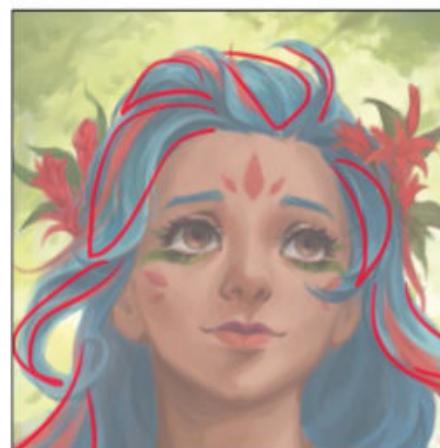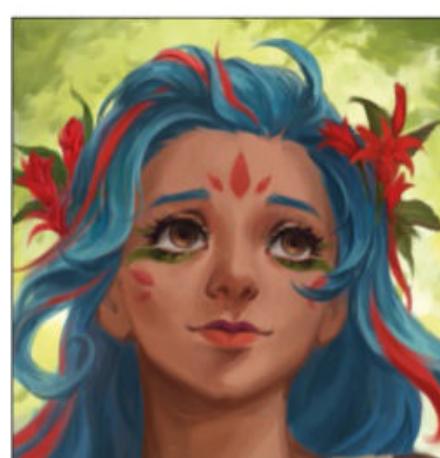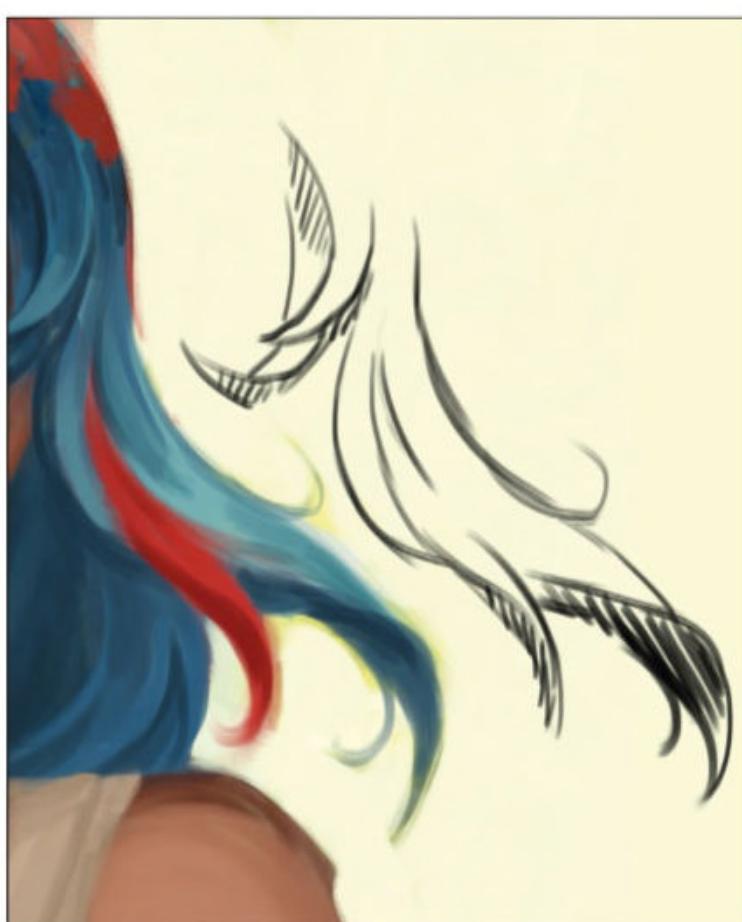

8 Break hair down into sections

Hair is a great way to add flow and direction to a painting. After I establish the main shapes, I break it down into large sections that are lit correctly and cast shadows. An easy mistake to make is over-detailing every strand for the hair. Stick to grouped strands of hair as much as possible, only adding individual strands sparingly at the end. Keep the higher detail at the edge of the hair or close to the face.

I make sure to zoom out periodically, especially for long hair, to check that the value relationships and lighting make sense. I like to use the Luminosity layer mode for some of these fixes, since I already have the colour, silhouette and structure figured out – it's just the relative values that are a bit off! If you want to do this in greyscale, make sure to set it up under View>Proof Setup>Custom. Choose Device to Simulate to Dot Gain 10 per cent, and press Ctrl+Y. ➡➡
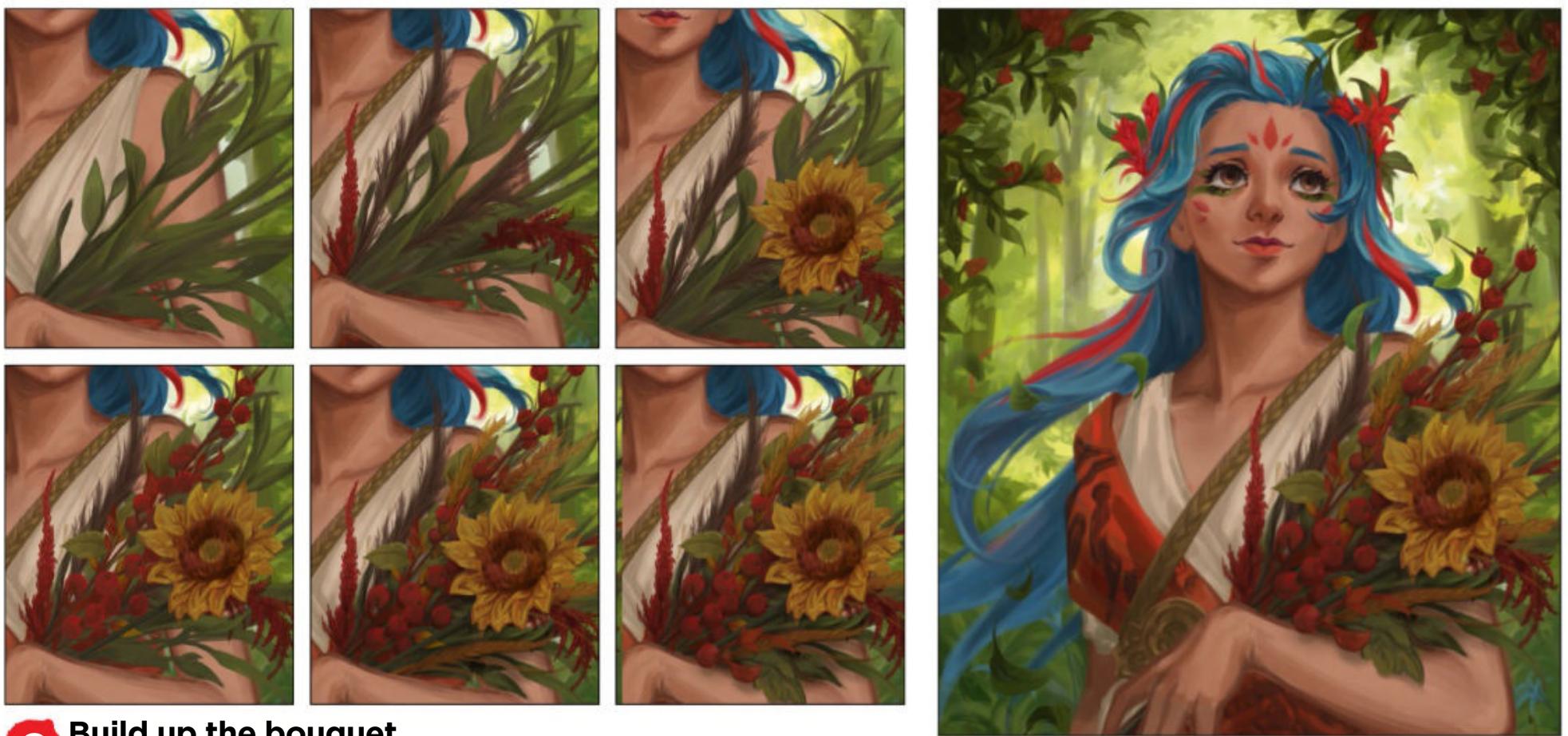
9 Build up the bouquet

I establish the bouquet's basic shape (a triangle that frames the face, opposite to how the hair does on the left) then build up the different elements layer by layer. To add depth and fullness, I vary the layers – for example, I start with a green base, then add some orange/red colours, then more green, the big sunflower, and in front of that more orange/red/green. I want there to be leaves over the arm as well so it looks like it's spilling out. I continue to build up the bouquet, making sure it covers what's behind it in an aesthetically pleasing way and avoiding tangents. I add shadow and use a Multiply layer to enhance the bouquet's depth and fullness.

10 Foreground considerations

I add leaves in the foreground that frame the portrait at the top, and floating leaves that leads the viewer into the image and towards the face. My two main concerns are scale and value. The leaves are too small – they need to look like they're in front of the character. The values have to stand out to look like part of the foreground, but not too much compared to the character.
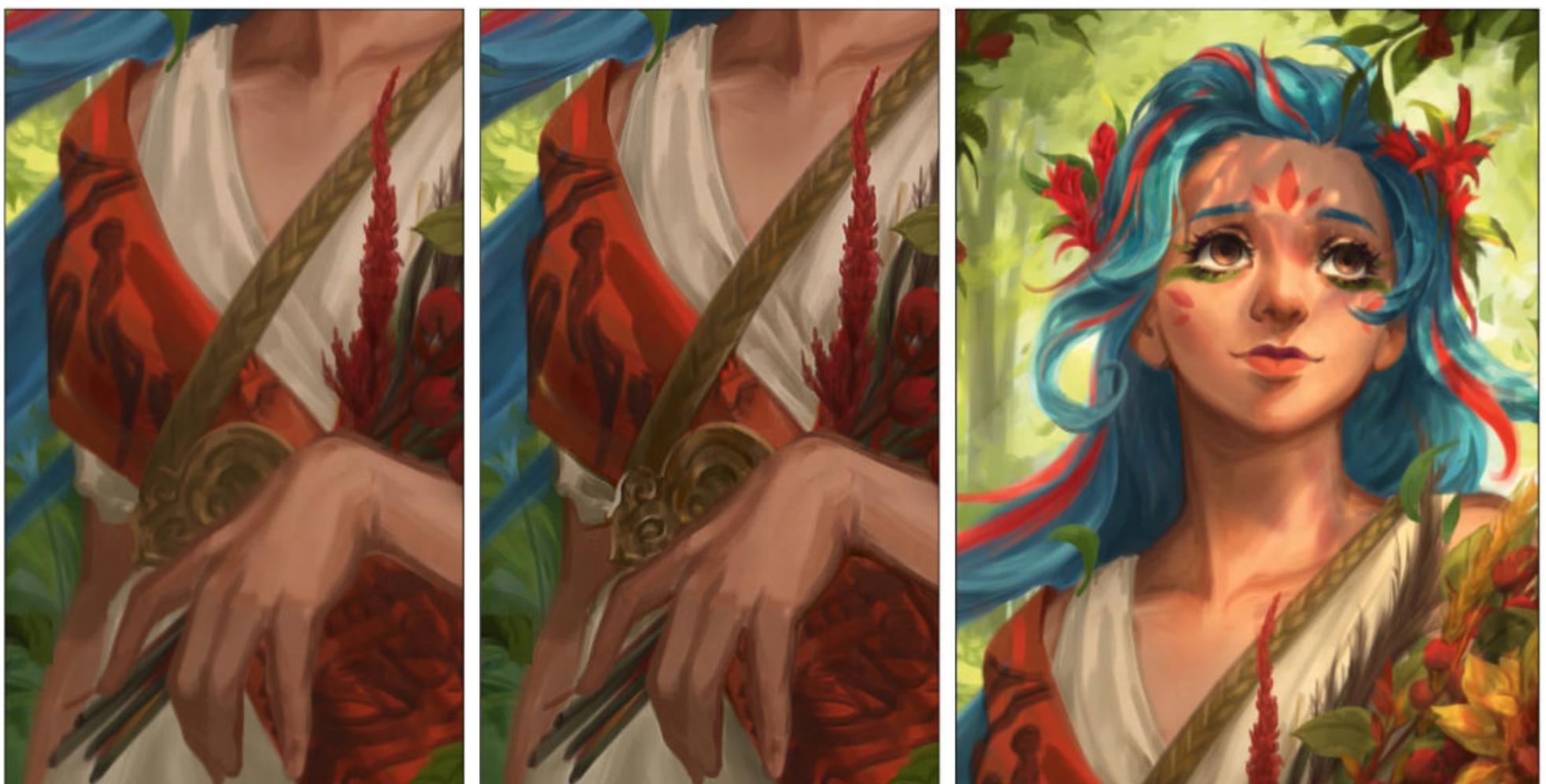
11 Make a lighting pass to bring the painting together

At this point, I'm still missing a lot of contact shadows because I've painted all the different zones separately and on different layers. Before I add the final lighting, I build up these shadows from the ambient environment light. Then, finally, I add back in the main lighting with a Color Dodge layer to give the effect of light filtering through the trees. Because this light is quite strong, I add a strong subsurface scattering effect on the skin, with a soft brush and bright red colour on Lighten layer mode.
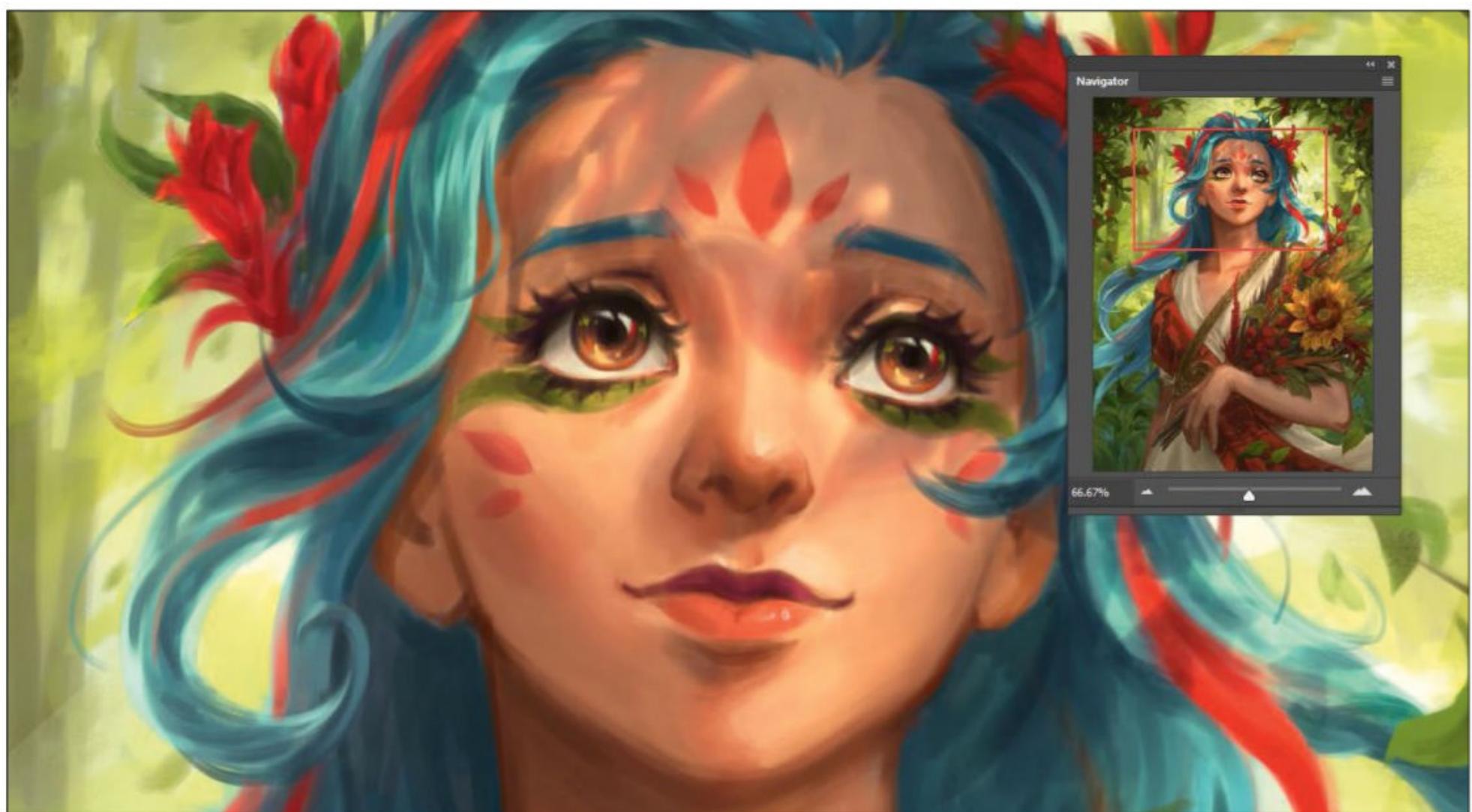
12 Apply the final details to the illustration

The most fun part of every portrait is the eye reflections, which is why I save it for (almost) last! The important thing here is to look at the painting from as many different scales as possible – whether with a second window pulled up, or the Navigator window. I do this with the face as well, and render up other parts of the image such as the character's hand.
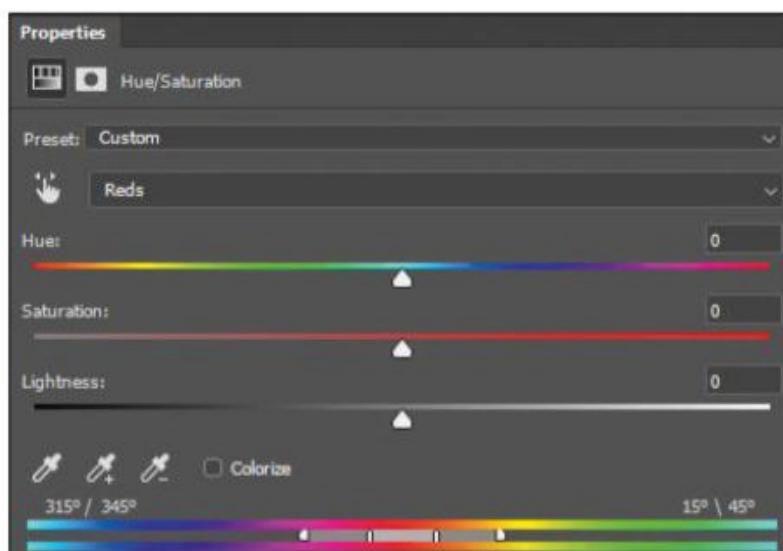
13 Stack the Layer Adjustments

The skin's overall saturation is too high, making the subsurface red scattering less interesting. I re-tune the saturation of the face/hair highlights (in the Red channel of the Hue/Saturation adjustment layer) so it's more balanced and in line with the rest of the image. I bring back more of the red scattering after lowering the saturation and gently increase the hair's blue saturation.

At this point I put it away for the day. Colours never look the same at night, so I want to see if I still feel the same about the final colours in daylight. The next day, as I expected, the colours are a bit too warm. I use the Auto Tone and Auto Color options to subtly correct the colours on a lower Opacity. I also adjust the contrast with a mix of Levels adjustment layer and simply painting in a Overlay/Color Dodge layer with a soft brush.
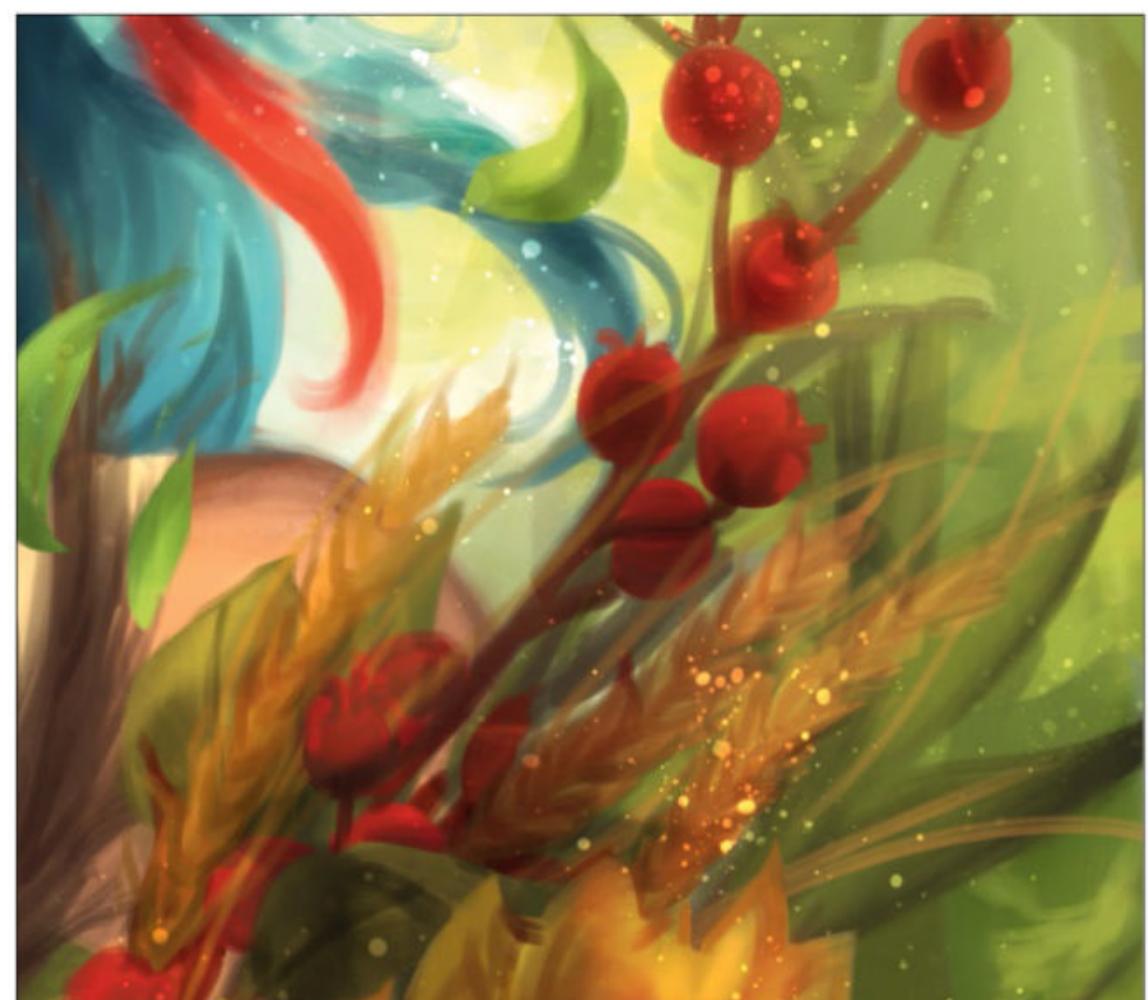
14 Finishing up with sparkles and texture

Using a mixer brush, I go over some areas that I feel could use a bit of texture to clean up visible brushstrokes and either enhance or hide edges depending on what's appropriate. As a final touch, I add some sparkles on a Color Dodge layer and adjust the contrast, painting over it until it feels natural. And that's it!
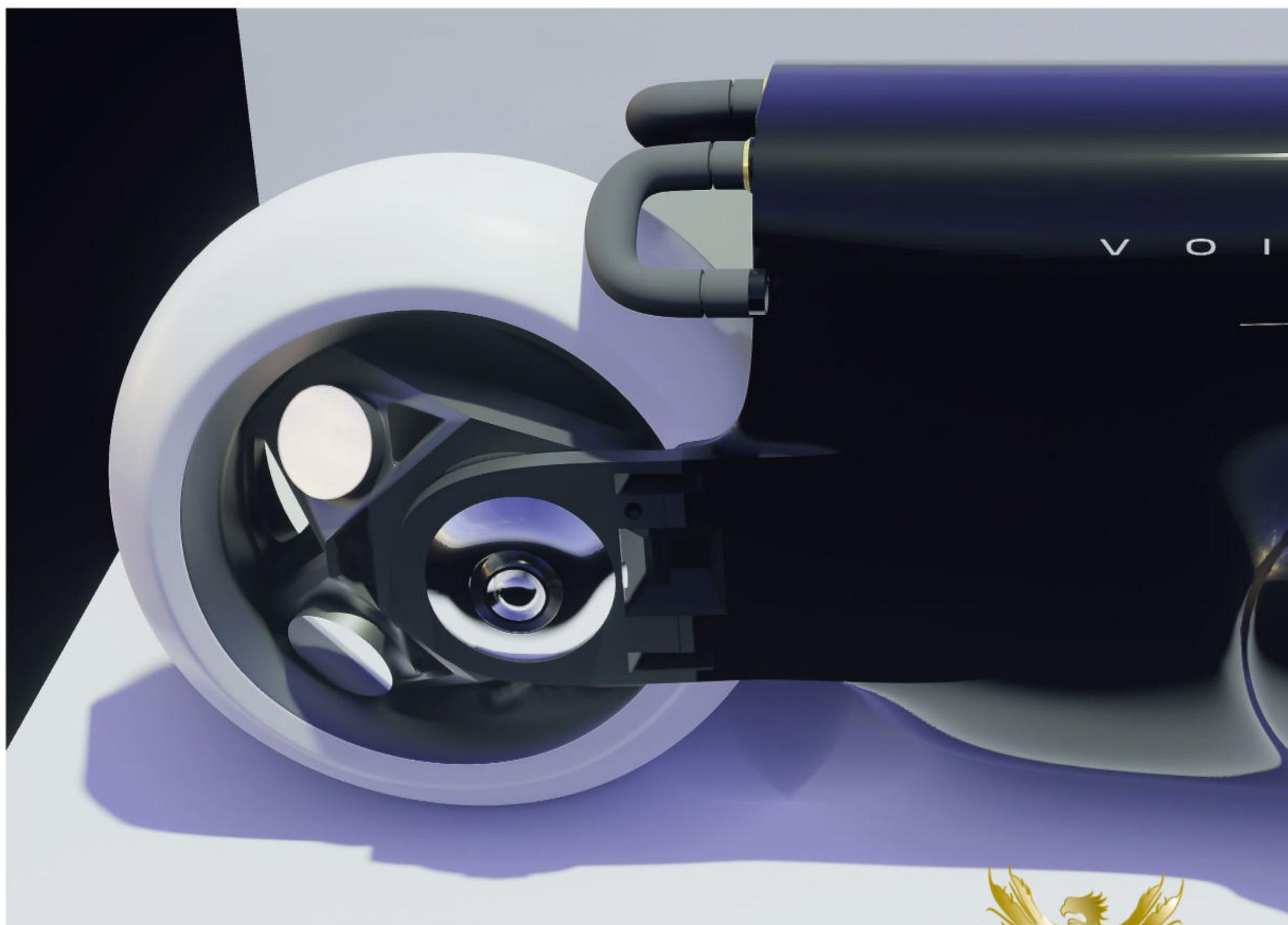
Blender

MODEL A BIKE DESIGN IN BLENDER

Rashid Tagirov draws on his vehicle design experience to turn a 2D sketch of a motorcycle into a 3D concept model

Artist
PROFILE

Rashid Tagirov
LOCATION: France

Rashid is a Russian car designer who's based in Paris, working for Peugeot. Previously he was at Volvo Cars, Renault and the design studio Art Lebedev.
http://ifxm.ag/rashid-t

In this workshop I'll guide you through some of Blender's basic tools, which can help you to work in a 3D space and take your creativity to the next level. Before getting started, make sure you already have a 2D sketch of your motorcycle, or any other vehicle. Ideally, you'll have a main side-view and a view from several angles, including front and rear three-quarters views. Drawings taken from a bird's-eye view are also handy when you start adjusting the proportions in 3D.

I have only two views: a front three-quarters and a side-sketch. It's more than enough for a motorcycle. The main idea is to capture the main proportions and dimensions. I'd also recommend finding reference images for surfaces and technical parts, to ensure your design looks realistic.
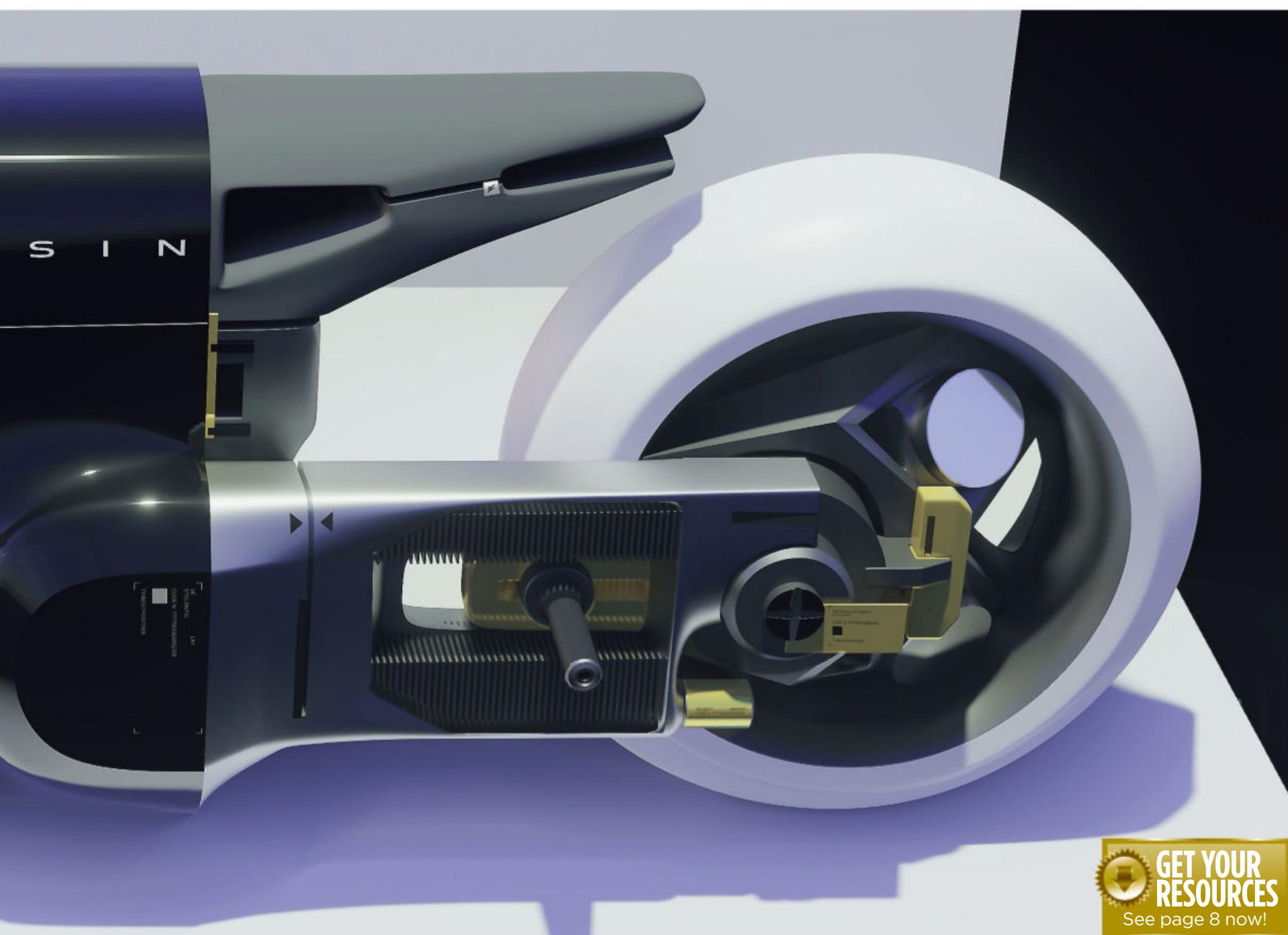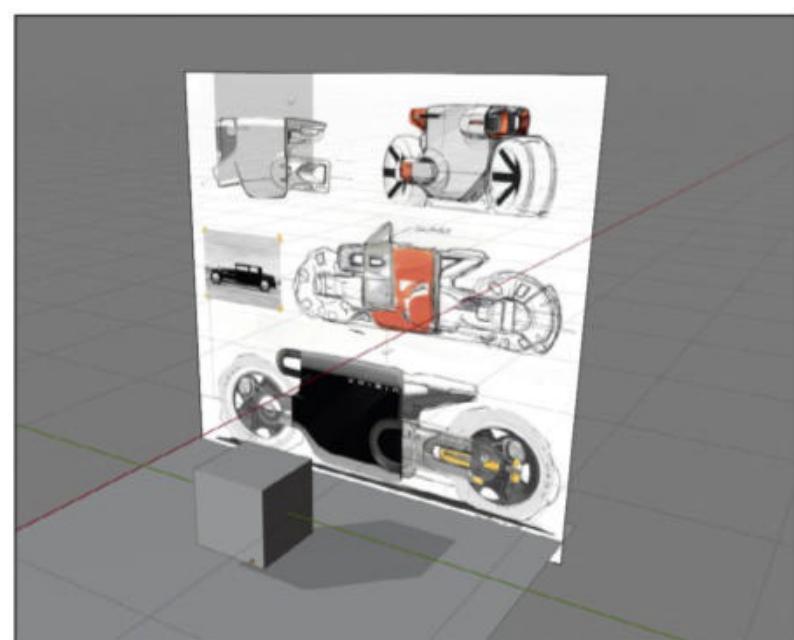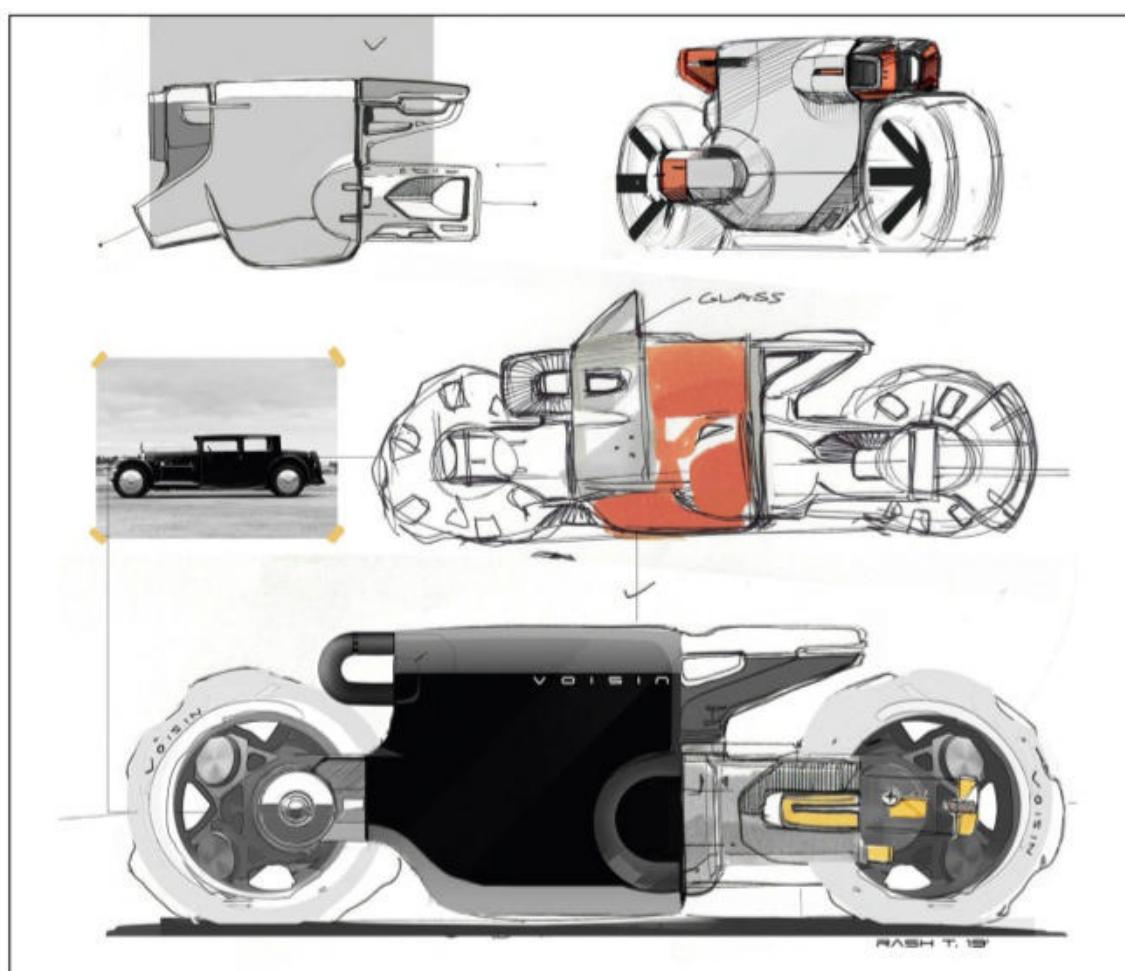
1 Placing the sketch

I set up the scene in Blender, using the default Layout workspace settings. I press 3 on the Numpad to set up a side-view. Then I use drag and drop to move my JPG image of the sketch to a Blender 3D space. (If it doesn't work, select the collection in the Outliner list.) I suggest placing your side-view sketch to Align 0 of the 3D scene, using the front wheel axis of the bike. ➤➤
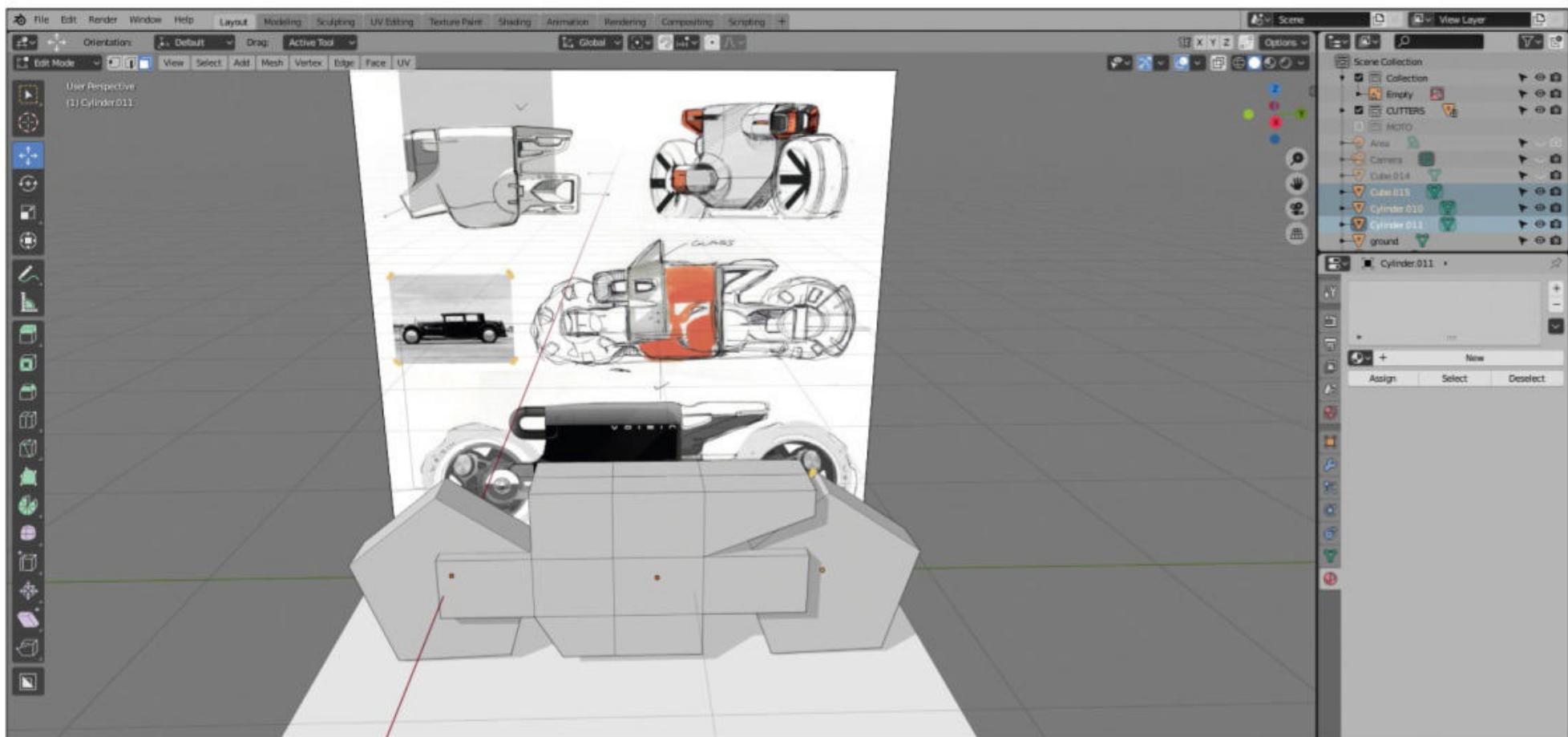
2 Create a model of geometric shapes

I recommend imagining your object as a combination of simple shapes. Because I'm using polygonal modelling, this approach will help me to keep all the main shapes flexible. I press Shift+A to open the Add panel and click Cube. Then I press S to scale down and G to move the object to fit it to the rear swing arm. Next I create a Cylinder, change the number of vertices to five and place it where the front wheel will be. I duplicate it and move to the rear wheel position, then adjust the width and high of the wheel to match the sketch.

Next, I press Ctrl+5 to subdivide the mesh; it'll create a squashed sphere. I press Tab to switch from Object mode to Edit mode – now I can create a crease along the edges. I select the edges and press Shift+E to control the crease with mouse movements. It's also possible to adjust it in a window that appears at the bottom-left of the screen.
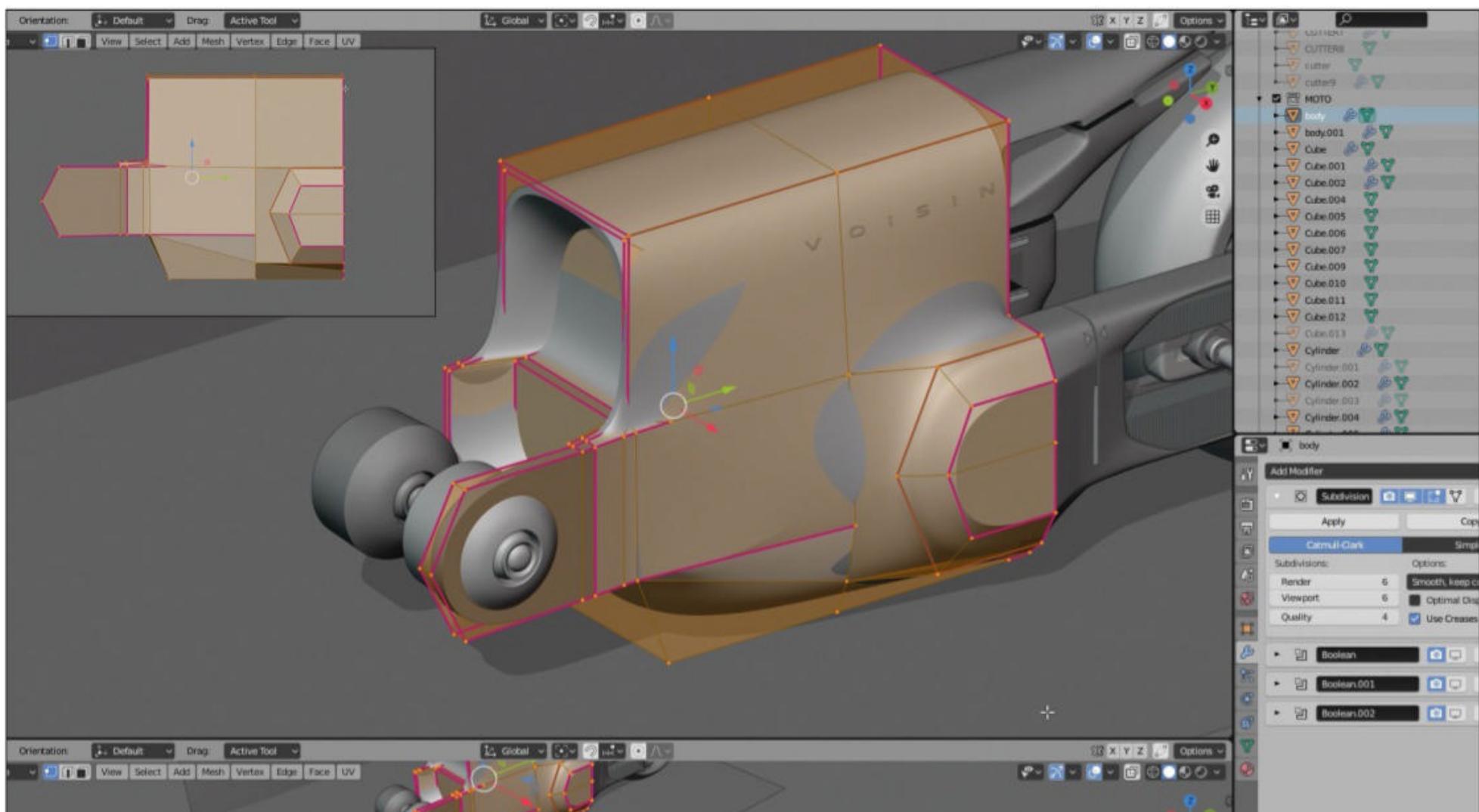
3 Build up the body of the motorcycle

I select the box and press Tab to activate Edit mode. Next, I select the faces to extrude them (press E) until they match the proportions of the body. I then apply a Subdivision modifier with Ctrl+5 (or any number from one to six depending on how much you want to subdivide the object) and use the same method to create a seat. I repeat this technique to extrude and define the shape of the rear fork and the rear swing arm.
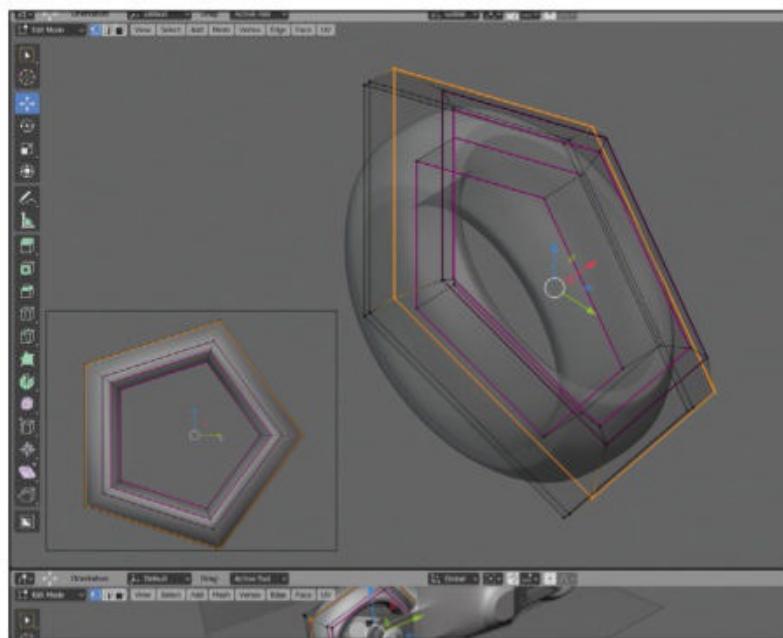
4 Inflate a tyre

Now I focus on the front part of the bike, which will involve using the Inset Faces tool. I select the front wheel, enter the Edit mode (press Tab) then press Space>I to activate the tool. You also can find the Inset Faces tool on the left tool panel. Next, I left-click and move the mouse – you'll see newly created edges on the surface. I place them as necessary, move along the X-axis (G+middle mouse button) and then use the Crease tool (Shift+E) to create the rubber tyre. Now you can build the rims, fork and wheel axis by using tools that we've already covered. You also could be more experimental and try other Blender tools. I've only used simple ones to explain one of the hundred ways of building a model!
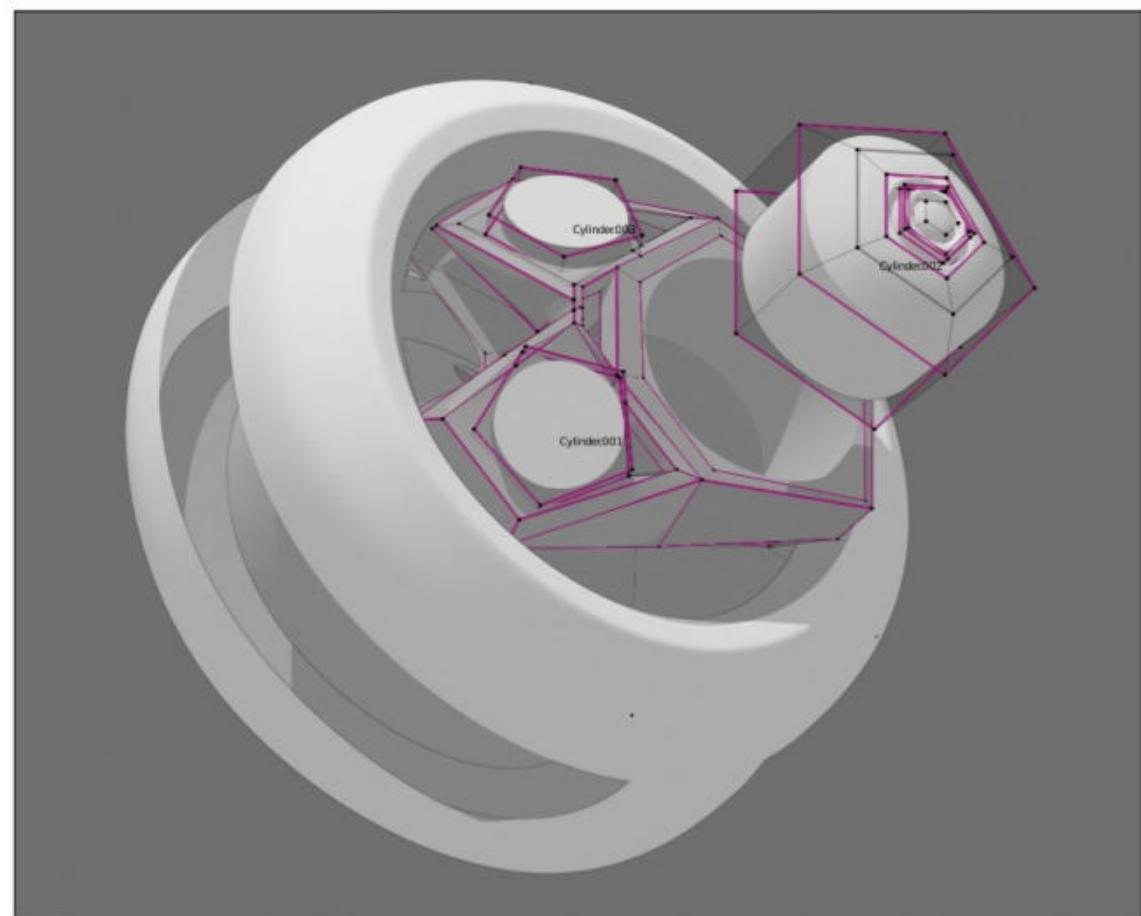
5 Define the wheel rims

To create holes in the rim surface I enter the Edit mode and select the Knife tool (press Space>K). Using the sketch as a guide I create the closed figures on the surface and then press Enter to create a new custom face. Then I select this face and press Delete and F to delete it. Next, I select the edges and press E to extrude them into the interior space of the rim. Finally, I select the edges again and create creases where necessary to match the 2D sketch.
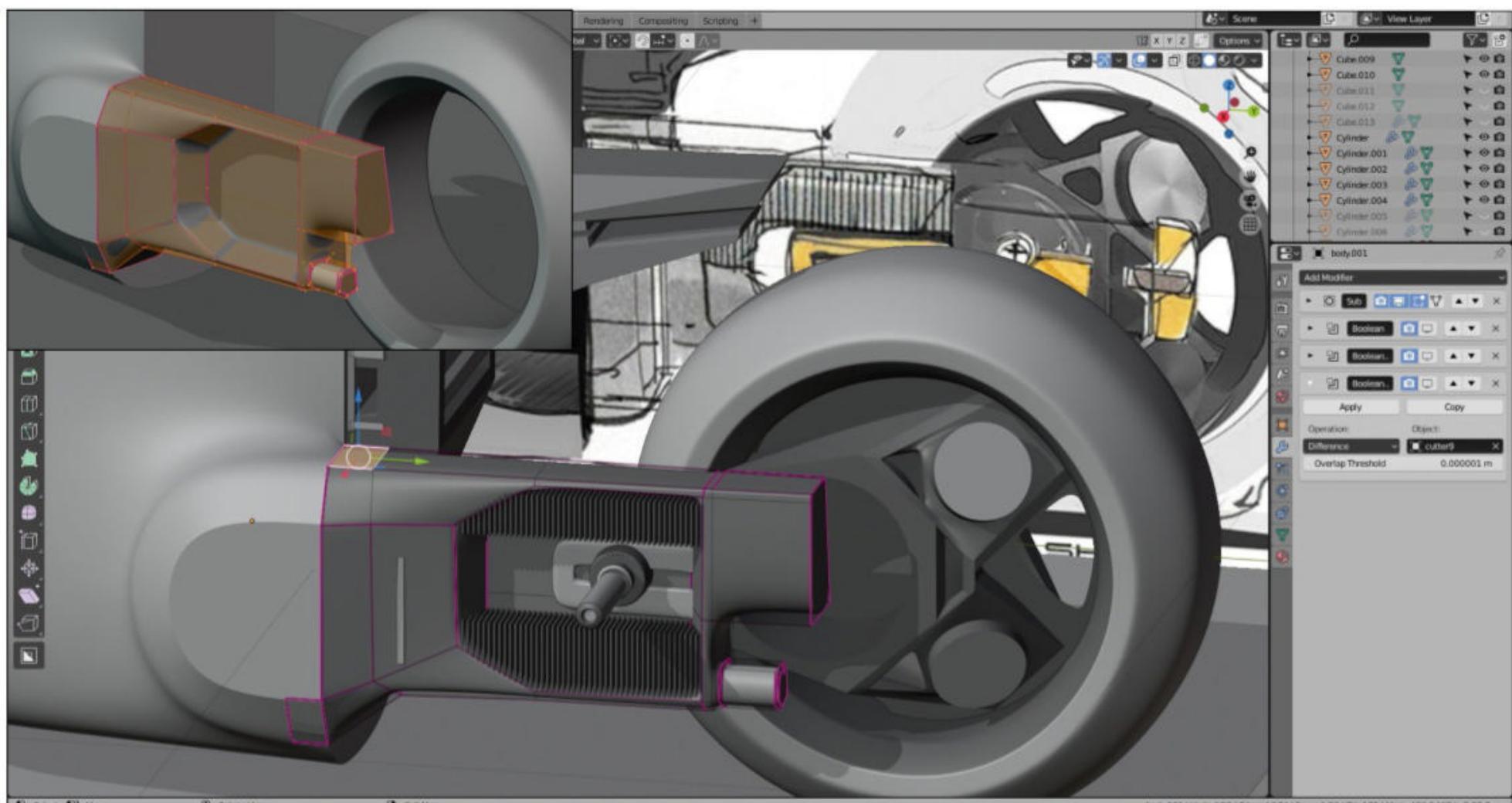
6 Add detailing to the swing arm

Let's focus on the rear part of the bike – the rear swing arm. A new tool that I use during this stage is the Array. It's a modifier that you can apply to any object to create multiple copies of it. You can find it on the Properties panel on the right. Look for a blue wrench icon (the Modifier properties panel). Then click Add modifier and select the Array tool. It's used to create offset copies of the original base object. The settings are pretty straightforward so I won't go into too much detail. I use this tool to create a cooling grill on the swing arm. ➢➢
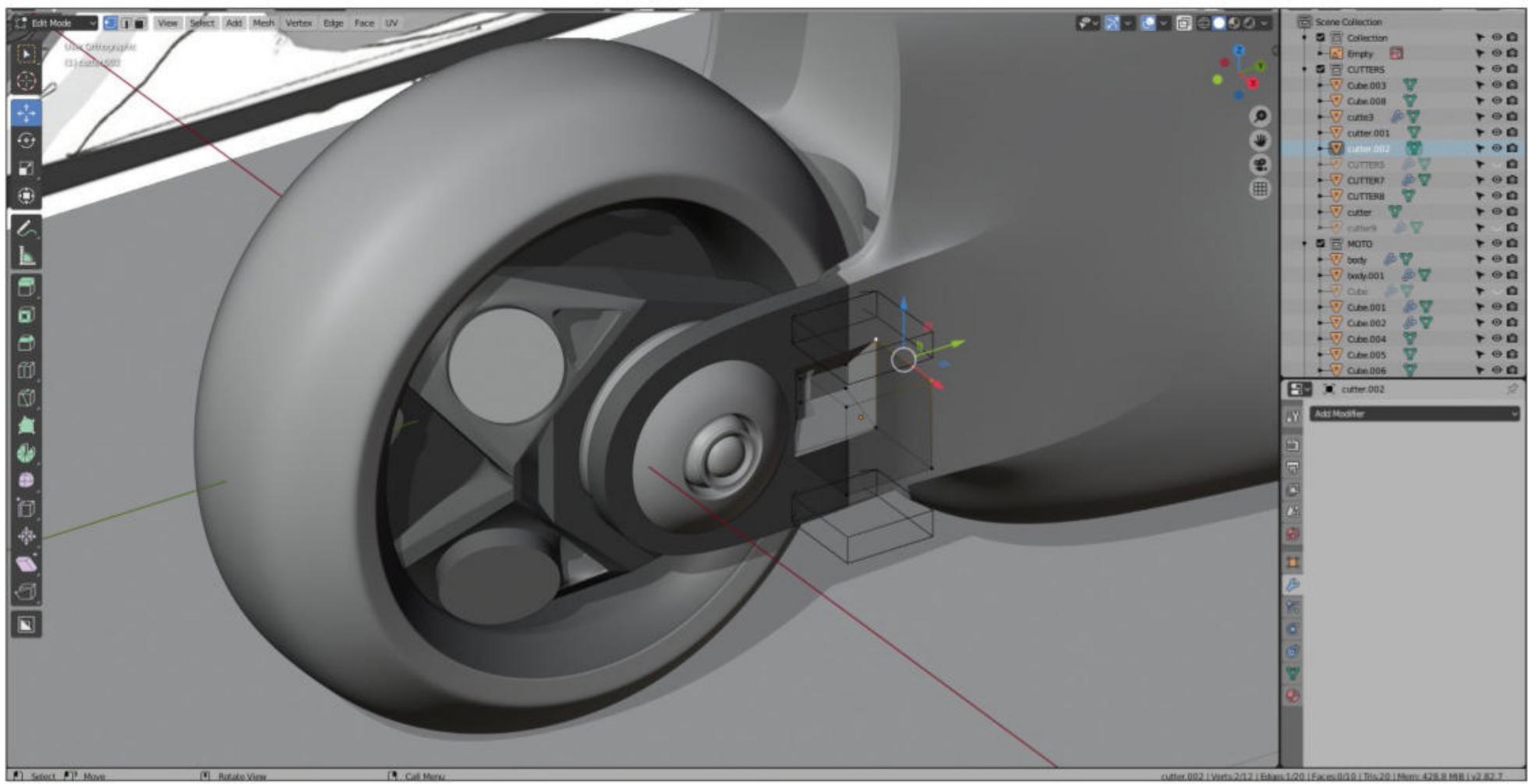
7 Use cutouts made from cubes

This is the fun part of the modelling process. I'm going to show you how to create a sharp cutout of an object. I take the front fork and create a separate cube object nearby. Then I modify the cube in Edit mode and intersect it with the fork. This cube is supposed to be a cutter – the object that will create a Boolean on the fork's surface.

I select the fork object and go to the Modifier panel to add a new modifier called Boolean. Then I select the Eyedropper tool below the Object section and click the cutter cube I made earlier. Then I click the cube again and press H to hide it. We now have a perfect cutout on the fork surface. You also can modify the cutter object in Edit mode or even duplicate it and create several cutters in the "one object" group.
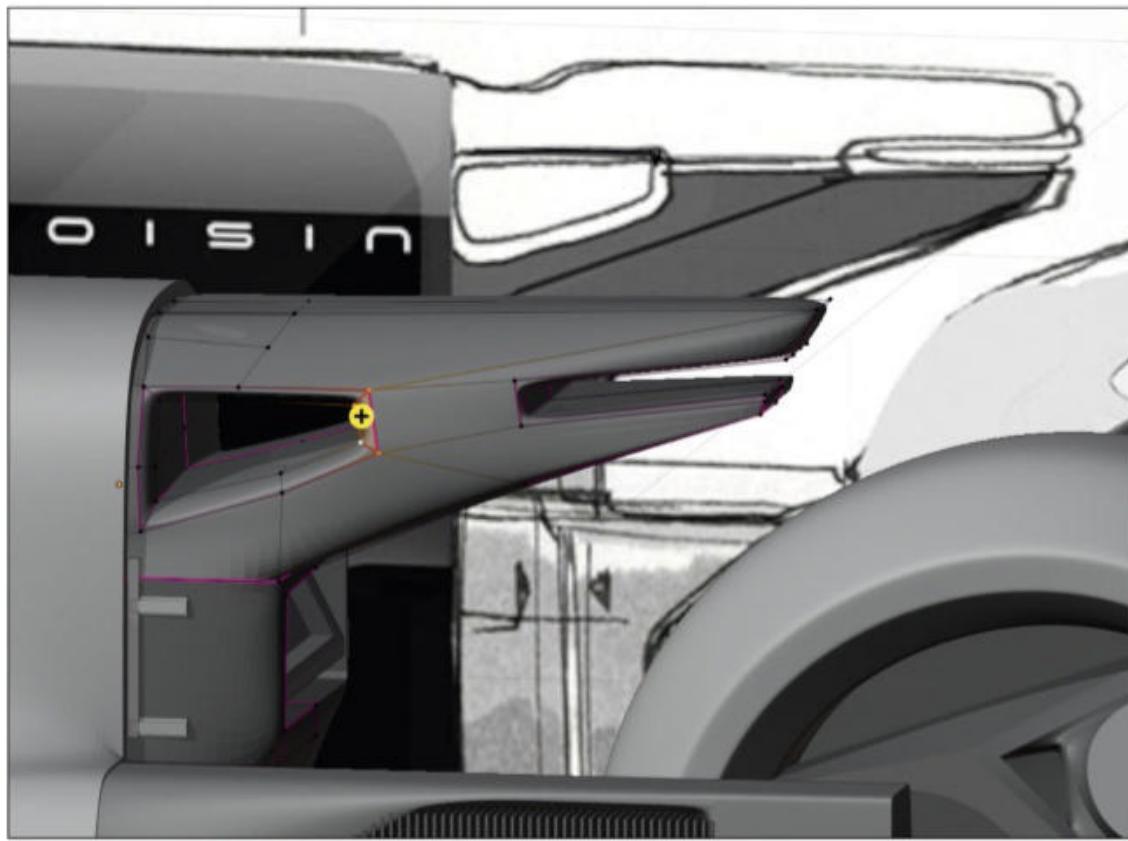
8 Make sure the seat can be sat on!

Occasionally I'll go beyond my initial sketch to make the bike more realistic. To check that the bike could be used in real life I need to create a dummy mannequin and place it on the seat. I press Shift+A then A, B and B to add a basic human skeleton. Then I switch the interaction mode from Object Mode to Pose Mode. The latter enables me to place the skeleton in a typical bike rider position. Then I use Blender's rotation tool to move limbs. If the skeleton bothers you during the modelling process you can switch the display mode from Textured to Wireframe and then turn off the Selectable setting in the Outliner panel.
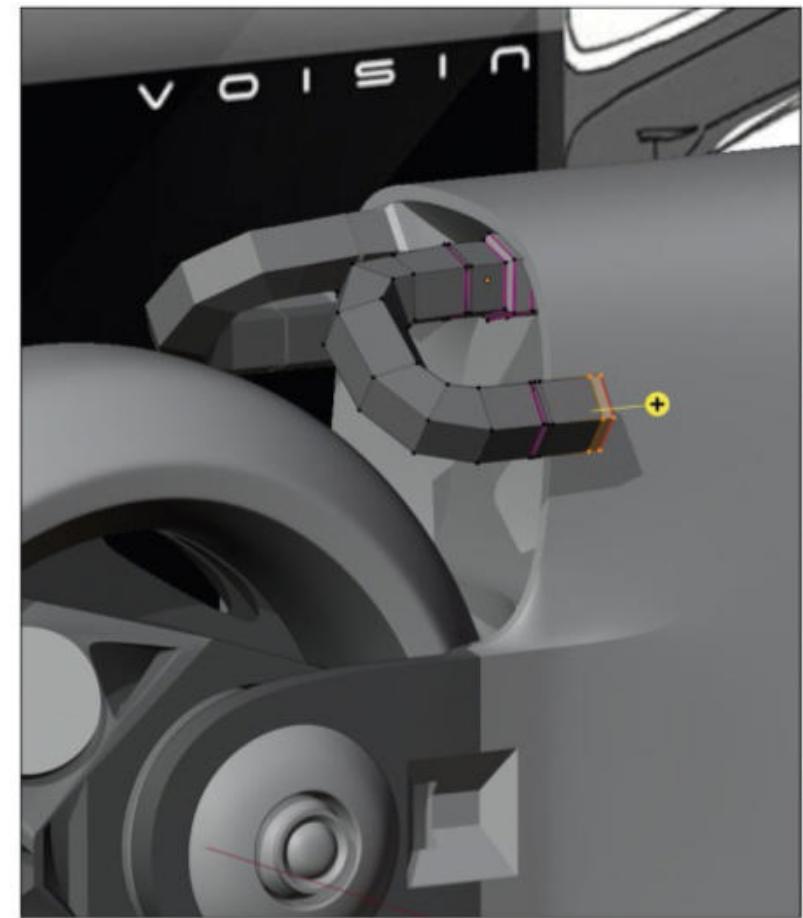
9 Place the steering device

I create a five-edge cylinder and subdivide it. I place it following my sketch and extrude to create a tube, then continue to extrude and rotate the face to achieve the U-shape. Once I'm happy with the shape I can add more details such as sections, shut lines (gaps between metal panels) or buttons. The simplicity of geometry is the key.
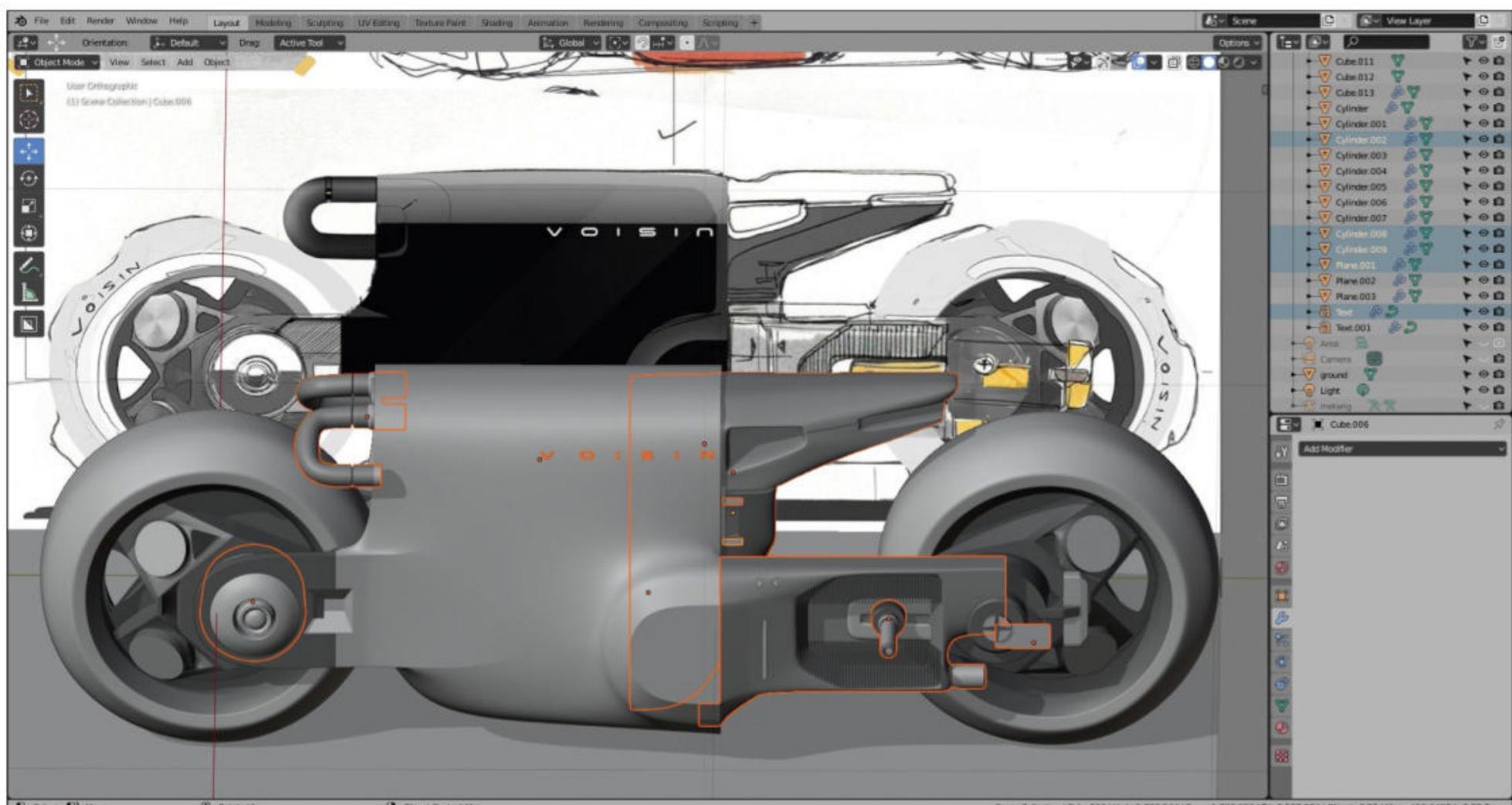
10 Use the Shrinkwrap tool to enhance objects

I mainly use Boolean modifiers and geometric cuts, but there's another tool I'd like to share with you. The modifier is called the Shrinkwrap tool. I use it to place text or any other geometry to the surface of another object. I call the sticker object O1 and the main object O2. I select the O1 object, then go to the Modifier preferences menu and click Add. I locate the Shrinkwrap modifier and then identify the O2 object within the Target section. I use the Offset tool to adjust the correct distance between O1 and O2.
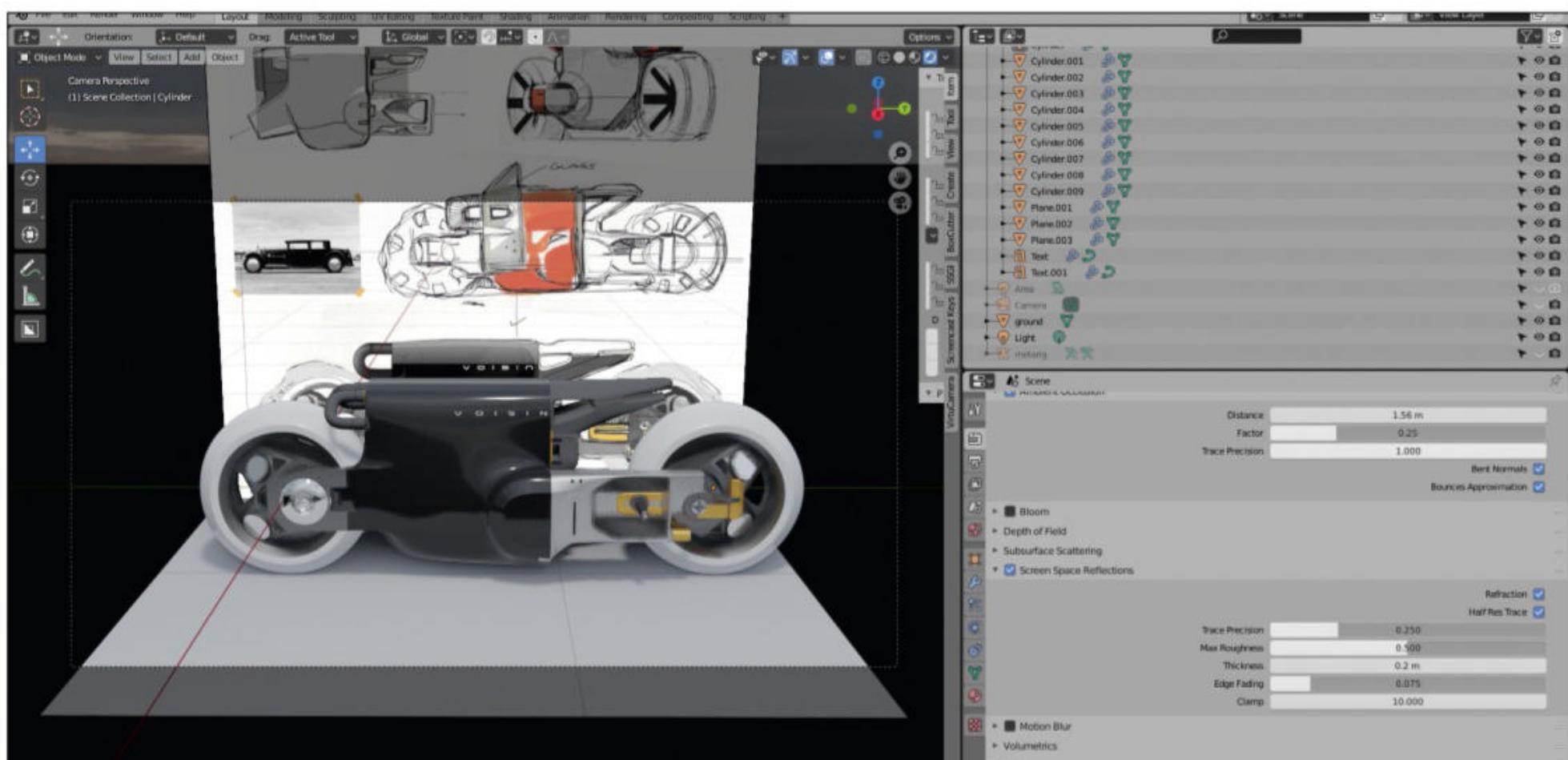
11 Render the motorcycle

The last step involves configuring the rendering output settings. If you use Blender's default layout you can find render settings on the right (a small icon that looks like a camera or a microwave). These are the settings I use to produce acceptable renderings quickly: Render, 256; V, Ambient occlusion; V, Screen space Reflections. Here, I then click the small arrow to open an additional menu and activate Refraction (if there are glass objects in the scene). Then I scroll down to the Film and click the arrow to check the Transparent option (this enables you to render with an alpha background). Finally, I go to the Output settings and set the resolution for the render. It's also possible to change the output file format in the Output tab.
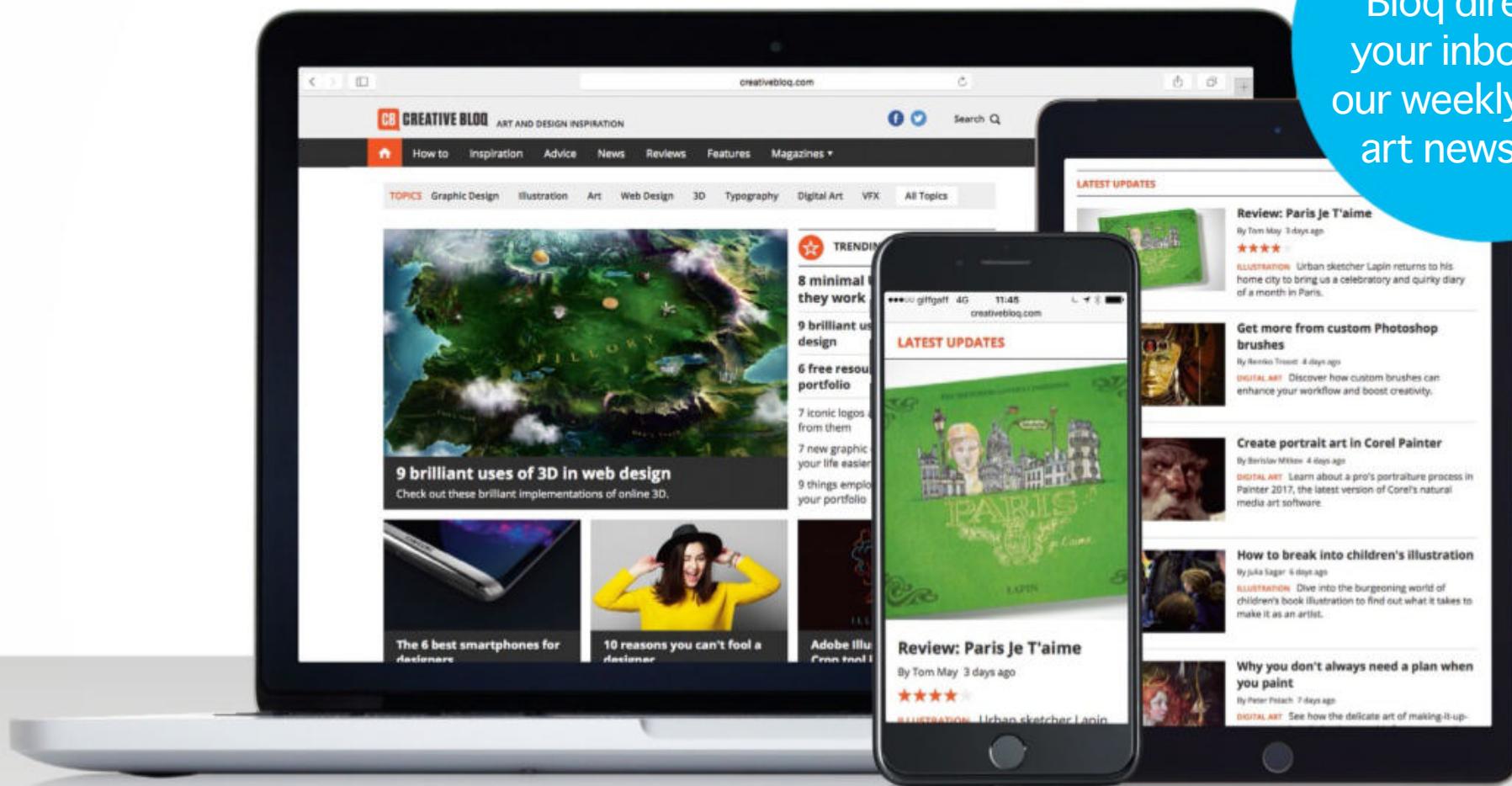
ImagineFX
Reviews

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

4 PRODUCTS ON TEST

XP-PEN

FLASH GORDON
THE OFFICIAL STORY OF THE FILM
JOHN WALSH

eleeza
THE ART OF ELIZA IVANOVA

THE ART OF Disney
RAYA
THE LAST DRAGON
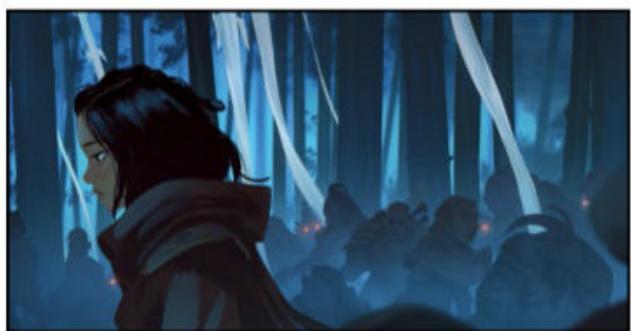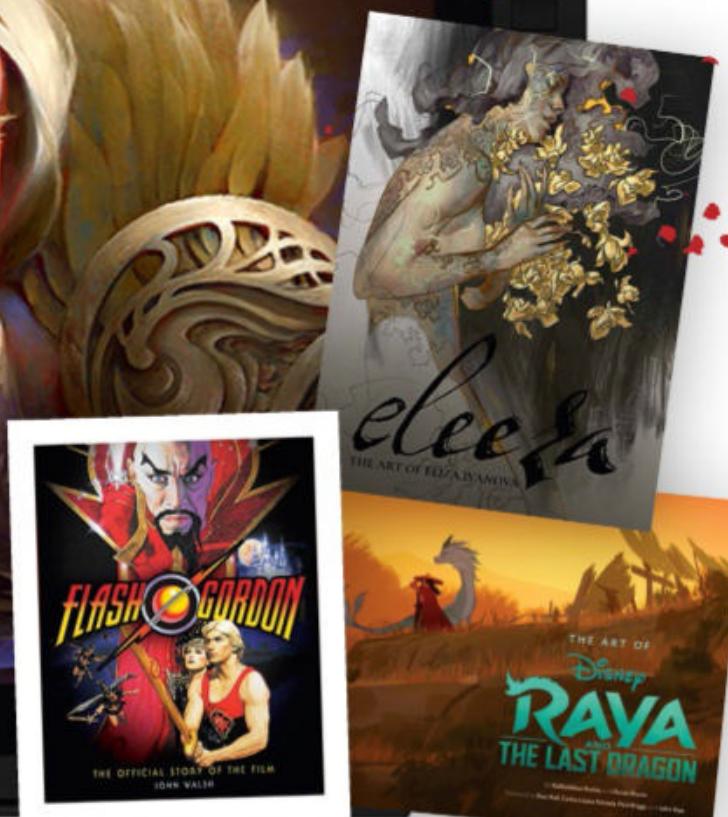
HARDWARE

82 Artist 24 Pro
We see if XP-PEN's contender in the professional pen display market can compete with the likes of Wacom.

BOOKS

84 The Art of Raya and the Last Dragon
Disney's film may be set in the fantastical world of Kumandra, but for inspiration its filmmakers looked closer to home…

85 Flash Gordon: The Official Story of the Film
Go behind the scenes of the 1980 cult classic film, based on the sci-fi comic strip.
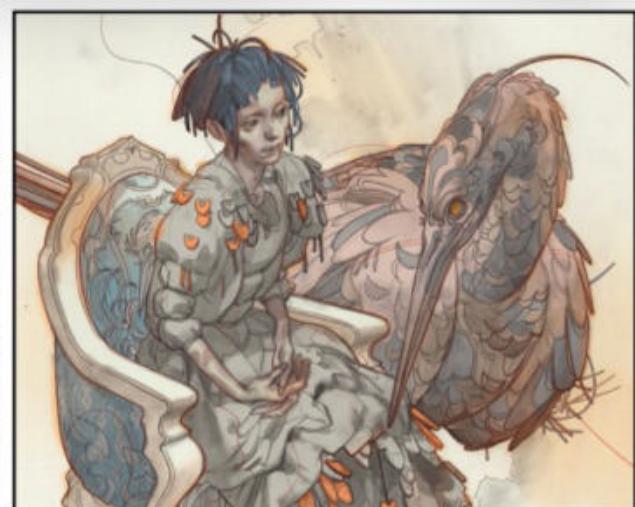
85 Eleeza: The Art of Eliza Ivanova
The Bulgarian animator-turned-illustrator discusses her career path and methods.

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

Artwork by Dao Trong Le

Artist 24 Pro

MAC & PC

HEAVY HITTER We see if XP-PEN's contender in the professional pen display market can compete with the likes of Wacom

The Artist 24 Pro measures 63x37cm, so you'll need plenty of spare desk space.

Price £900 **Company** XP-PEN **Web** www.xp-pen.com

With a whopping display measuring 23.8 inches diagonally and a screen resolution of 2,560x1,440 (2K QHD), the Artist 24 Pro is a first of its kind by XP-PEN. The 2K resolution is needed for this 'canvas'-sized pen display. It may not be the 4K resolution of Wacom's 24-inch Touch Pro, yet considering XP-PEN is relatively new to the market compared to Wacom, it's doing a fair job of cornering the market for the more budget end of high-quality professional pen displays.

But how does this display tally up when compared to the best drawing tablets around? We put the Artist 24

Pro through its paces to discover whether it's worth investing in. Initially, we tried to run a resolution of 1,080p (FHD) through the Artist 24 Pro, the result being, of course, unwanted pixelation. Once paired appropriately though, the 2K resolution is nice and sharp, which is matched with an impressive 90 per cent Adobe RGB colour reproduction. It offers an exciting display space for drawing, in more than enough detail.

A PLEASING DRAWING SURFACE

The anti-glare, textured film overlay provides a satisfying drawing experience, too, replicating a certain amount of that 'pen-on-paper' quality.

All photos © XP-PEN

Two dials either side of the screen can be configured for zooming in and out quickly, altering brush sizes, and more.

Once calibrated, the drawing action is pretty accurate and as responsive as you'd hope. It did seem to slow a little when we tried some rapid pen strokes, but unless you draw at furious speeds this shouldn't be a problem.

The tablet stand, attached to the back, is a nice touch. It has enough 'heft' to support this substantial tablet (nearly 7kg in weight) from 16 to 90 degrees, enabling you to work at an angle that suits.

❝ The 2K resolution is nice and sharp, which is matched with 90 per cent Adobe RGB colour reproduction ❞

The PA2 stylus can be attached to the side of the Artist 24 Pro when not in use.

The 2K QHD display resolution results in a sharp image, although the screen could be brighter.

The built-in stand enables the device to be angled between 16 and 90 degrees.

pen display, the Artist 24 Pro uses an amazingly simple USB 2 to USB 2 connection. If you don't have a USB 2, then it's also pretty straightforward to connect via a USB and HDMI cable. The pen display also has two extra USB ports should you want to charge your phone or attach a keyboard.

Installing the OS X driver was a little more hard work than we would have liked. We had to restart at least four times, while following the unhelpful instructions provided both in the driver folder and company website. However, once the XP-PEN Artist 24 Pro is installed and you've spent some time calibrating the stylus and setting your shortcut buttons, the drawing experience outweighs any initial technical frustrations.

A RELIABLE RUNNER

This drawing tablet is a budget tool for professionals. £900 seems a reasonable investment for what is a more-than-capable tool. The price is really the only budget element.

Main competitor Wacom's Cintiq comes in at a cool £2,000. It seems reasonable to say that the XP-PEN Artist 24 Pro might not be the Ferrari you dream of handling, but it is a reliable 'runner' nonetheless.

If you've tried various graphics tablets, have decided that you prefer the pen display's 'pen-on paper' feel, and you're looking to invest in your first digital art tool aimed for creative professionals without breaking the bank, then the XP-PEN Artist 24 Pro is well worth considering.

Indeed, XP-PEN's device is a good alternative to the market's biggest and highest-spec pen displays, for a lot less money. Note that this is a big tablet, and is ideal for those who want lots of room to play with. However, there are smaller pen displays of arguably better quality that are cheaper, too. The XP-PEN's Innovator 16 or Wacom Cintiq 16 might be better options if you're after something smaller and less cumbersome.

There are no touch capabilities on the XP-PEN 24 Pro, but it's big enough and sharp enough to double as a second monitor, for when you're not creating your next masterpiece. If there is one niggle, it's that perhaps it could be a little brighter.

CAPABLE STYLUS

The XP-PEN Artist 24 Pro's stylus, in this case the PA2, is battery free, lightweight and the best XP-PEN has to offer. It boasts 8,192 levels of pressure sensitivity – an impressive range enabling you to adjust to how light or heavy handed you are when working. It also has 60 degrees of tilt recognition, allowing for relatively good variance with mark marking and calligraphy style line work.

You're provided with two styluses and a fancy case with spare nibs. The only downside with the stylus is the extreme sensitivity of the two buttons,

forcing us to become more light-handed than usual and slowing down the creative workflow as a result.

The Artist 24 Pro is a solid-looking tablet, with a weight to match. It's definitely a desktop pen display, so having a large-enough workspace is important. It dwarfed our 21.5-inch monitor, and is big enough to become your main screen, as well as your digital work space.

There are 20 programmable shortcut buttons and two dial wheels on either side of the screen. The spinning dials either side are best for zooming and scrolling, or for changing brush sizes. Having buttons either side of the screen means it's good for both left- and right-handed people. Overall, it's well built and stylish and doesn't look or feel as though it's a budget choice at all.

If you have a modern-enough setup, apart from DC power outlet for the

DETAILS

Features
- 2,560x1,440 display resolution
- 90 per cent Adobe RGB colour gamut
- 178 degree viewing angle
- 250cd/m2 brightness
- 16:9 aspect ratio
- Two dial wheels
- 20 shortcut keys
- Battery-free stylus with 60 degrees of tilt and 8,192 levels of pressure sensitivity
- One USB-C port, two USB Hubs, one HDMI port and one DC port

System Requirements
PC: Windows 10, 8 or 7
Mac: OS X 10.10 and higher

Rating
★★★★☆

Raya explores the snowy bamboo forests of Spine, in this artwork by Mingjue Helen Chen.

The Art of Raya and the Last Dragon

TWO'S COMPANY Disney's 59th film may be set in the fantastical world of Kumandra, but for inspiration its filmmakers looked closer to home, as this book reveals…

Authors Kalikolehua Hurley and Osnat Shurer **Publisher** Abrams & Chronicle Books **Price** £30 **Web** http://ifxm.ag/aandc **Available** Now

Trust lies at the heart of Raya and the Last Dragon: a warrior princess unable to trust anyone attempts to save everyone in her world. But the film's production was also built on trust, as this art-of book reveals.

The film's directors and co-directors explain that pre-production began with the creative teams visiting seven countries in Southeast Asia. This research, coupled with advice from Disney's Southeast Asia Story Trust, helped shape the five distinct lands that make up the world of Kumandra. The filmmakers were being trusted to respect the real-life cultures and landscapes for their fantasy tale, and their efforts to achieve this goal come across well throughout the book.

The visuals of Kumandra's varied regions are described in detail. Each territory has its distinct identity, which is reflected in the settings' designs.

Markets in Vietnam, Thailand and Laos provided the inspiration for Talon's floating city.
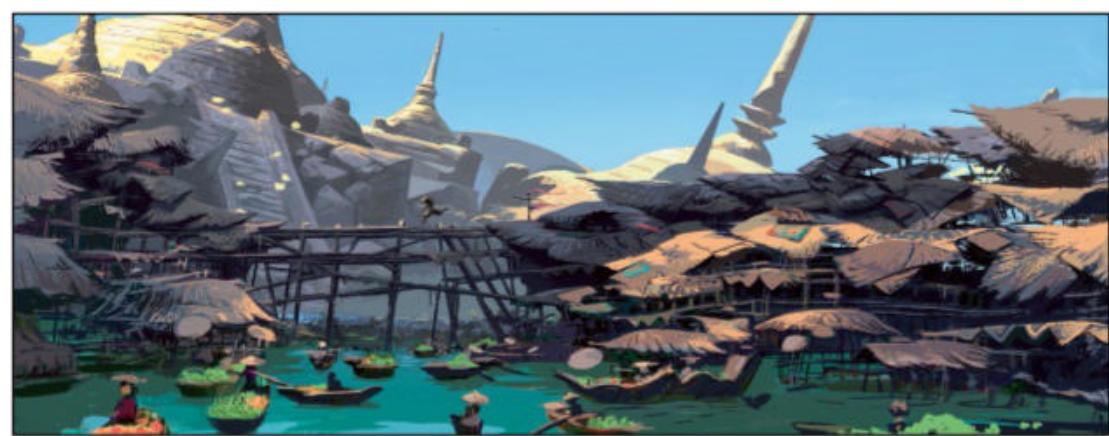
> 66 **The filmmakers were being trusted to respect the real-life cultures and landscapes** 99

For example, the islands of Heart – the spiritual centre of the world – have a water-based design language, while the bamboo-covered mountains of Spine fed into motifs that are full of natural forms and textures. Colours, fabrics and more remain consistent within each setting, with the artwork showing off landscapes, buildings, clothing and vehicles. Explanations from the concept artists help give valuable background on their design choices. As production designer Mingjue Helen Chen notes, "Sometimes it felt like we were making five movies instead of one."

The coverage of the film's characters feels a little more straightforward in execution, although this isn't to take anything away from the quality of design craft on show. The artists talk about their approach to costumes, expressions, poses and accessories, with occasional discarded designs on show, too. The variety of drawing and painting styles helps to break up the sections; loose digital sketches appear alongside orthographics and colour studies.

This 170-page book, with its many artistic insights, is a polished showcase for the talents of the creative team who worked on Disney's 59th film. Yet its key takeaway can be conveyed in just eight words: any amount of research is time well spent.

Griselda Sastrawinata created different looks for Raya's clothing and armour.

RATING ★★★★☆

Flash Gordon: The Official Story of the Film

GORDON'S ALIVE! Discover how the film of an American football player bringing down an intergalactic tyrant was brought to life

Author John Walsh **Publisher** Titan Books **Price** £35 **Web** www.titanbooks.com **Available** Now

Although it failed to do big business on release in 1980, Flash Gordon has gone on to enjoy cult status. John Walsh's book, put together with the help of fans, industry insiders and even auction houses, explores the making of the science-fiction extravaganza.
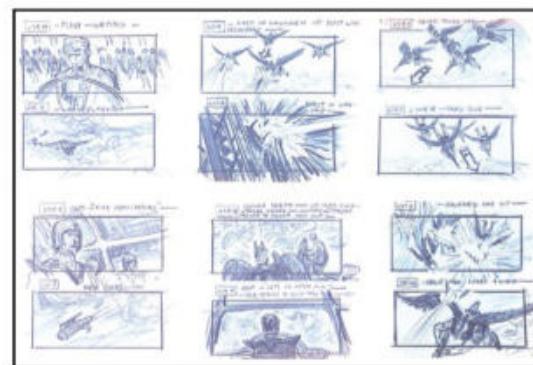
Storyboards of a key set piece from the film: the hawkmen's assault on war rocket Ajax.

John's interviews with the lead actors, director Mike Hodges and the creative team feel honest. They paint a picture of a somewhat unconventional production, in part down to its charismatic producer Dino De Laurentiis. The book's packed with photographs of sets, props and costume designs, together with matte paintings, concept art (including some baroque imagery created when Nicolas Roeg was the planned director) and rarely seen storyboards. Legendary sci-fi artist Chris Foss talks about his concept for the hawkman rocket cycle, while comic illustrator Alex Ross appraises promotional artwork created for the film. It's a visual treat that's only marred
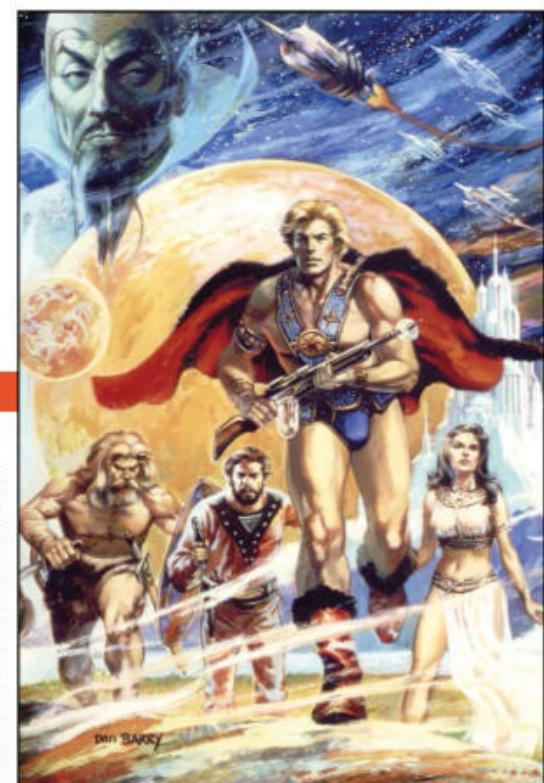
Comic artist Dan Barry helped visualise Dino De Laurentiis's initial ideas and tone for Flash Gordon.

occasionally by the stills of the film, which appear a little blurry in print.

Flash Gordon: The Official Story of the Film is an engaging study of a fun comic book film. Crank up Queen's bombastic soundtrack and enjoy.

RATING ★★★★☆

Eleeza: The Art of Eliza Ivanova

STORY LINES The animator-turned-illustrator discusses her career path and methods in this handsome hardback that showcases her distinctive drawing style

Author Eliza Ivanova **Publisher** 3dtotal Publishing **Price** £28 **Web** www.3dtotalpublishing.com **Available** Now

Eliza Ivanova's art often writhes with life. This is partly because she spent 10 years working at Pixar as a character animator. It's also a result of the artist embracing the "doodly characteristics" of her work.

In this beautifully designed hardback the Bulgarian illustrator discusses her artistic development, which started at age 12 learning classical drawing skills, before further

art education in Bulgaria led to CalArts in the US and through Pixar's gates.

The majority of the book covers Eliza's creative process, which she says was born out of a need to draw quickly with expressive marks while avoiding excessive cross-hatching. Sections explore her tools, workflow, visual language and more. Next are five tutorials in which the artist reveals her traditional and digital processes, followed by guidance on life-drawing and a collection of Procreate insights.

Eliza's writing style is candid and informative. She often draws on past experiences to explain a technique, which helps ground her advice. And when her words are surrounded by such fantastic art, it makes the learning journey all the more inspirational.

Once Eliza became a parent, she reveals her mantra became, "I'm never going to have free time again, so I'm going to make free time."

RATING ★★★★☆

Eliza creates a line drawing using either a pencil or digital tools, before colouring it in Procreate.

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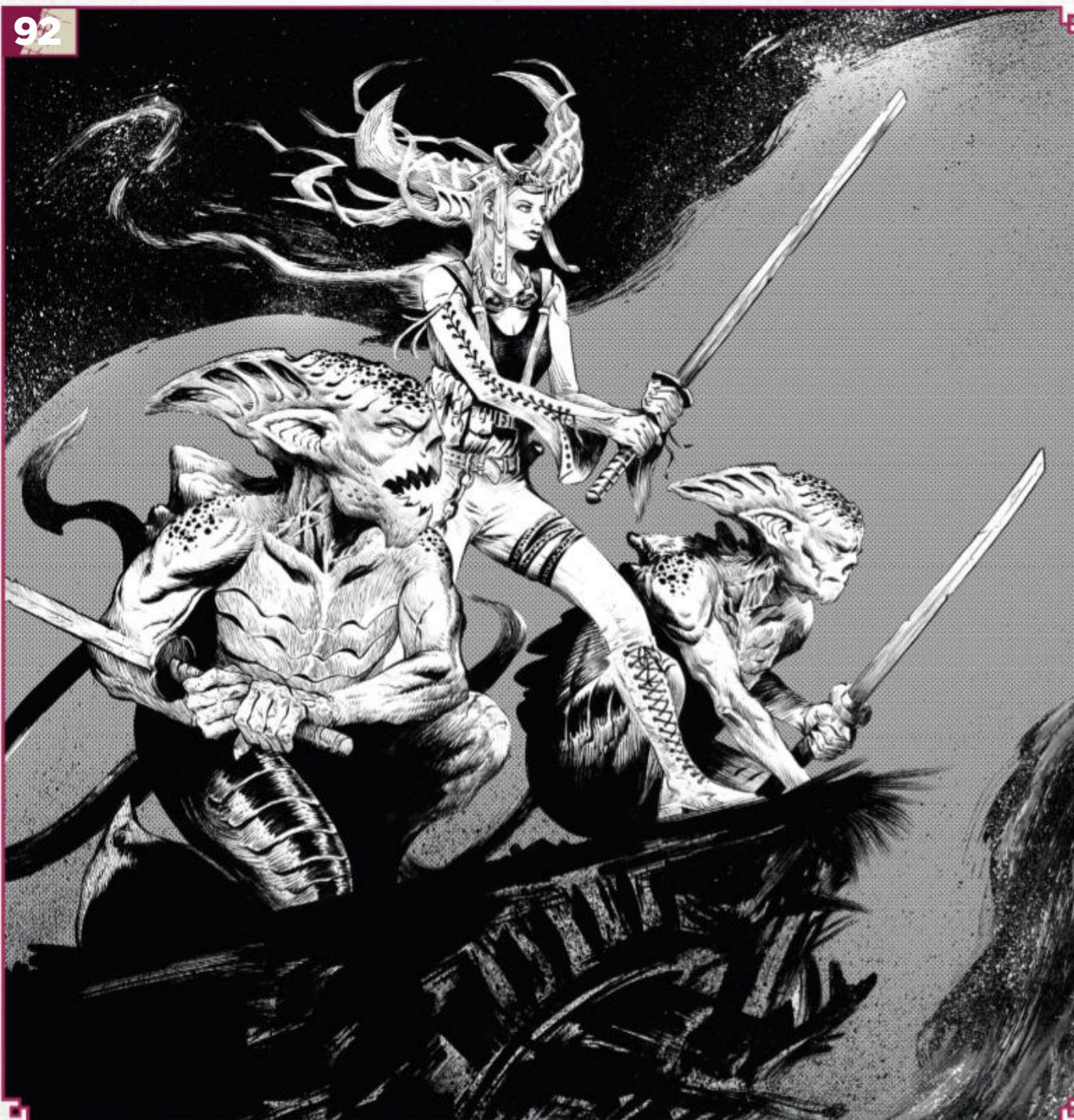
This issue:

FXPosé

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS

Joanna Barnum

LOCATION: US   **MEDIA:** Watercolour   **WEB:** www.joannabarnum.com

Joanna paints dark fantasy, with a special interest in emotional portraits and the juxtaposition of realism with expressive watercolour techniques.
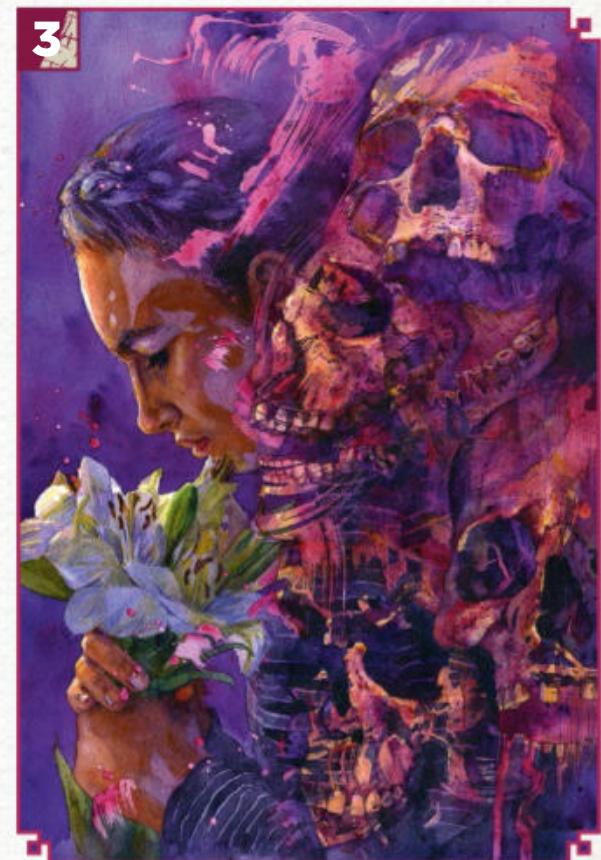
© Space Between Entertainment

1 WITHIN/WITHOUT
"This is a reflection on the practice of mindfulness meditation. The original art is in the collection of Ten Percent Happier."

2 TWO FURIES
"I often depict women expressing strong, loud emotions in my work as a response to the pervasiveness of women treated as pleasing decorative objects in art."

3 WHISPERS
"The cover for Cherry Gilbert: Necromancer from Space Between Entertainment, a comic about a young necromancer surrounded by death."

4 TOO LATE
"My take on a dangerous mermaid. I used masking fluid to 'splice' together different views of the figure to convey chaotic movement."

Yuriko Shirou

LOCATION: Mexico **MEDIA:** Watercolour, gouache, markers, ink, pastels, graphite, coloured pencils **WEB:** www.instagram.com/yurikoshirou

Yuriko searches the dark worlds of fairy tales to combine beauty and innocence with darkness. "I almost always tackle melancholic and sinister themes – a taste that's come from horror novels and movies."

1 **METAMORPHOSIS OF A DOLL**
"My old self has died, but from that dark pain and crying that has made me perish, I have only to be reborn."

2 **MANIA**
"Over and over again lines of pain are drawn. Prepare a needle and thread to repair what was lost."

3 **TWISTED INNOCENCE**
"My most frail and battered version waiting in her dark playroom. A nocturnal butterfly that seeks the light still awaits us."

4 **INSIDE ME II**
"From the deep darkness, stealthy but constant, the flutter of this feeling consumes me from within. Spread your wings and fly far from me."

Ink

15 TIPS FOR DYNAMIC INKING

Award-winning fantasy artist JEFF MIRACOLA shows how to take your ink drawings to an impressive and exciting new level!

L ike many young art students, the first tools I created art with were pencils and pens. However, as a teenager, I was so enamoured with the work of legendary artists Bernie Wrightson and Jeffrey Catherine Jones that I decided to create ink drawings using a brush, like they did.

The results were disastrous. It wasn't long before I went running back to the comfort of my pencils

and pens. As I moved beyond my college years and into professional illustration, my focus was primarily on creating paintings for my clients.

After more than a decade of painting, I gave inking with a brush another try. To my amazement I could now control my brushstrokes and create the ink drawings that I was seeing in my mind's eye. A healthy dose of time and brush control developed from my years of painting had resulted in a new ability

for, and enjoyment of, inking. To share my love of inking with you and walk you through my process, I created this piece featuring three sword-wielding warriors ready to strike some unseen foe.

Jeff is a world-renowned artist for Magic: the Gathering, D&D, World of Warcraft and more. He also co-owns Fantasy Art Workshop that produces tutorial videos and workshops. Learn more at www.jeffmiracola.com.

MATERIALS

INKING TOOLS
- Watercolour brush
- Menso brush
- Nib and holder dip pen
- Toothbrush
- Fountain pen
- Brush pen

PAPER
- Heavyweight Bristol paper

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 8 now!

1 Use good reference

Being a fantasy artist, I draw a lot from my imagination. But that doesn't mean I have to, or want to, make everything up. Using reference imagery can save a lot of time and help you work out problems with composition, proportions, lighting and posing – things that are sometimes very difficult to create without a visual aid. Whenever possible, I prefer to take my own reference photos because I can obtain exactly what I want. Thankfully, my wife is always a willing participant and surprisingly eager to be turned into some sword-wielding monster if need be!

2 Take out the guesswork

One the scariest things about inking is its permanence. Once you put down a mark, it's not easy to correct, if at all. For that reason it's best to create as detailed of a blueprint, or in this case pencil drawing, as you feel you need. I don't always create a detailed pencil drawing because sometimes I want to leave room for spontaneity and happy accidents. I also often find it to be mentally challenging to ink without creating a pencil drawing. But that's not the case here. ▶▶

Bad
Thin copy paper

Good
Heavyweight Bristol paper

3 Choose the right paper

It's very easy to try saving a little money by purchasing cheap paper, especially if you're an art student and funds are tight. But of all the tools you'll need to create ink drawings, paper is the most important item where quality really matters. Look for heavyweight Bristol paper, which is used by comic artists. But also buy other kinds of paper. Using your brushes or pens, create test marks to see if the ink bleeds through your paper or if the ink line feathers. This is when the line becomes fuzzy instead of staying crisp.

4 Spot your blacks

This simply means filling in large areas of black in your composition. I like to fill in those larger black areas first because it helps me to start visualising how my final art may look, but it also enables me to make sure I'll have enough variation in my drawing.

I believe the viewer's eye should have some areas to rest in an ink drawing. That means having some large sections of black and white. Creating those solid, black areas gives my art weight. Leaving large areas of white gives my drawings some "breathing room."

5 My most versatile tool

I inked with brushes for years before a friend introduced me to the brush pen. Now, although I do still use brushes, I rarely do an ink drawing without using a brush pen. It's the most versatile inking tool I have in my arsenal. With just one tool I'm able to create fine lines for detail and thick lines for larger coverage. I can also flood my surface with ink or limit the flow of ink for dry-brush effects.

6 Use a variety of marks

I strive to make ink drawings that are fun to look at. Not just for the subject matter, but for the variety of mark making. I create thin lines, thick lines, lines with varied line weight, hatching, cross-hatching, dry-brushing, patterns and splatters, all in a single piece of art because it's what gets me excited to work on the art.

Knowing when to use and when not to overuse this kind of variety is tricky, and takes time and experimentation. But your ink drawings will be much more exciting if you vary your mark making.

Hatching

Cross-hatching

7 Create implied lines

You don't need to outline your entire drawing like you might see in a cartoon or colouring book. Implying a line is another device for adding variation and intrigue to your work. For instance, the tops of the birch trees in this ink drawing aren't outlined, but your brain finds the edges of the trees because the black bark forms an implied line. Likewise, the edges of the base of the trees are formed by the shape behind it, in this case a creature.
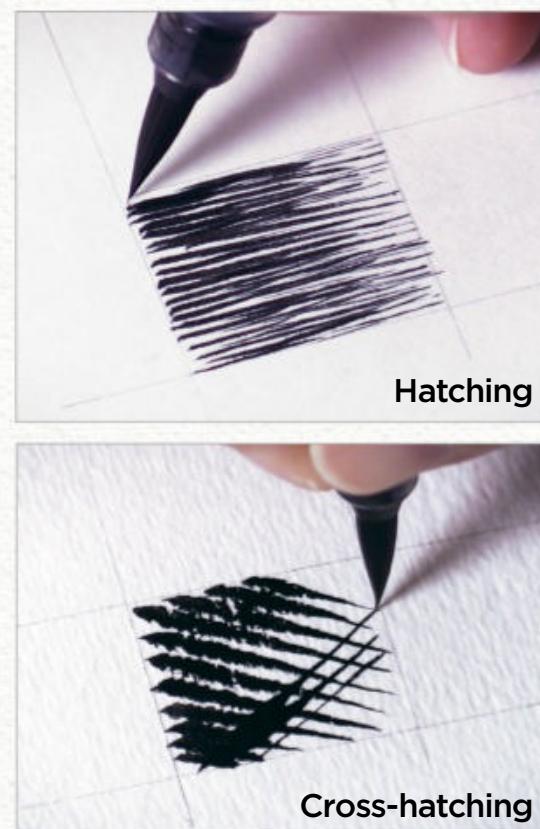
8 Try hatching and cross-hatching

One of the most common ways to give your ink drawings a sense of tonal value is to achieve it through illusion, using hatched techniques. Hatching is when all of your strokes are travelling in the same direction. Cross-hatching is when you first lay down a series of strokes going one direction and then lay down more strokes over those going in either the opposite or another direction. You can create varying levels of "shading" by how thick your strokes are or how close or far apart they are.

> 66 Don't feel like you need to use the same tool for your entire piece of art 99

| Watercolour brush | Menso brush | Nib and holder dip pen | Toothbrush | Fountain pen | Brush pen |
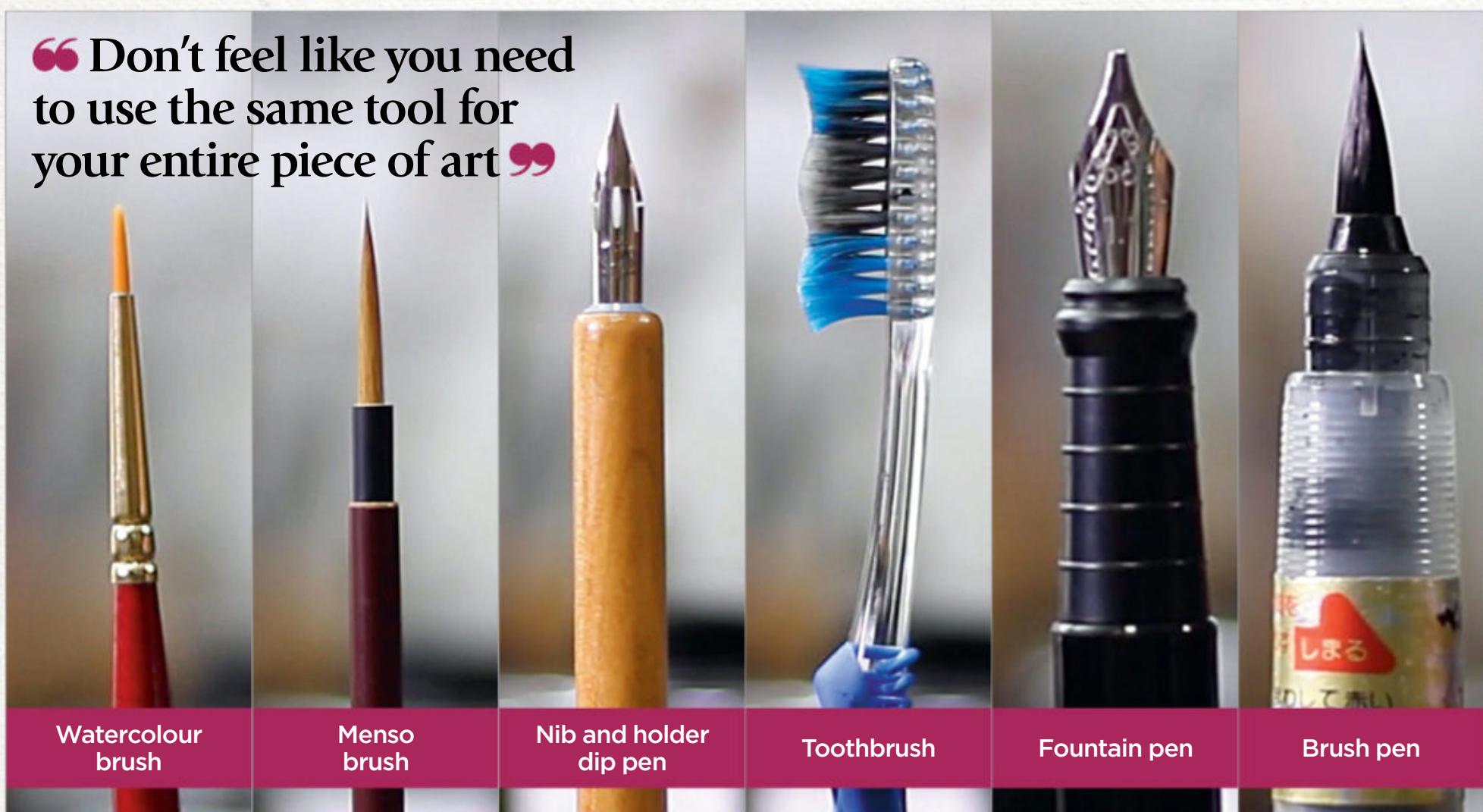
9 Use the right tool to create the right mark

Don't feel like you need to use the same tool for your entire piece of art. A brush, a pen and a toothbrush all make different marks. Remember, variety adds interest. Use a brush or brush pen when you want to create marks with varied line weight. Use a pen or pen nib and holder when you want even, detailed lines. And use a toothbrush when you want more texture and unpredictable marks. Experiment! ➤➤
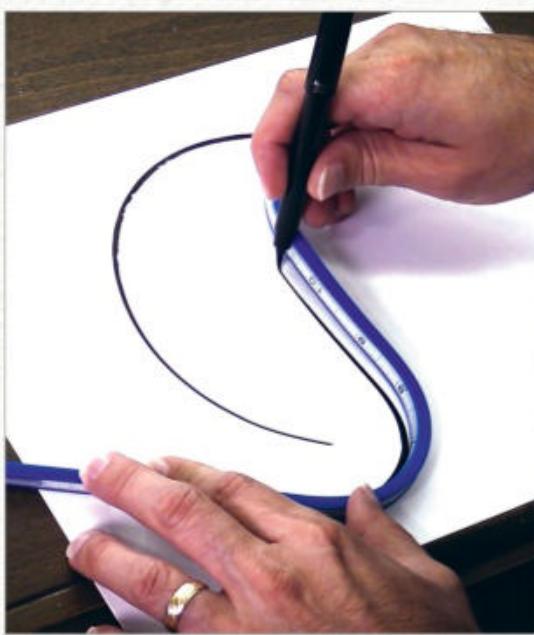
10 Get help from rulers

When you need help inking straight lines, reach for a ruler to use as a guide. Inking straight lines with a brush while using a ruler takes practice. But if you want to create a straight line that also goes from thick to thin, then using a brush is the way to go. Flexible rulers can be useful, too. You'll need to train yourself to find the correct finger placement and apply the proper amount of pressure while you're dragging your hand along a curved ruler.

11 Practice makes perfect

Practise drawing lines and making marks, but not on a piece of art. It's a great way for you to learn better brush and wrist control, as well as try out new brushes, pens, inks or paper. Attempting to practise making marks while working on art can be distracting. So get out that blank paper and start doing your reps like a bodybuilder lifting weights, and you'll be stronger for it.
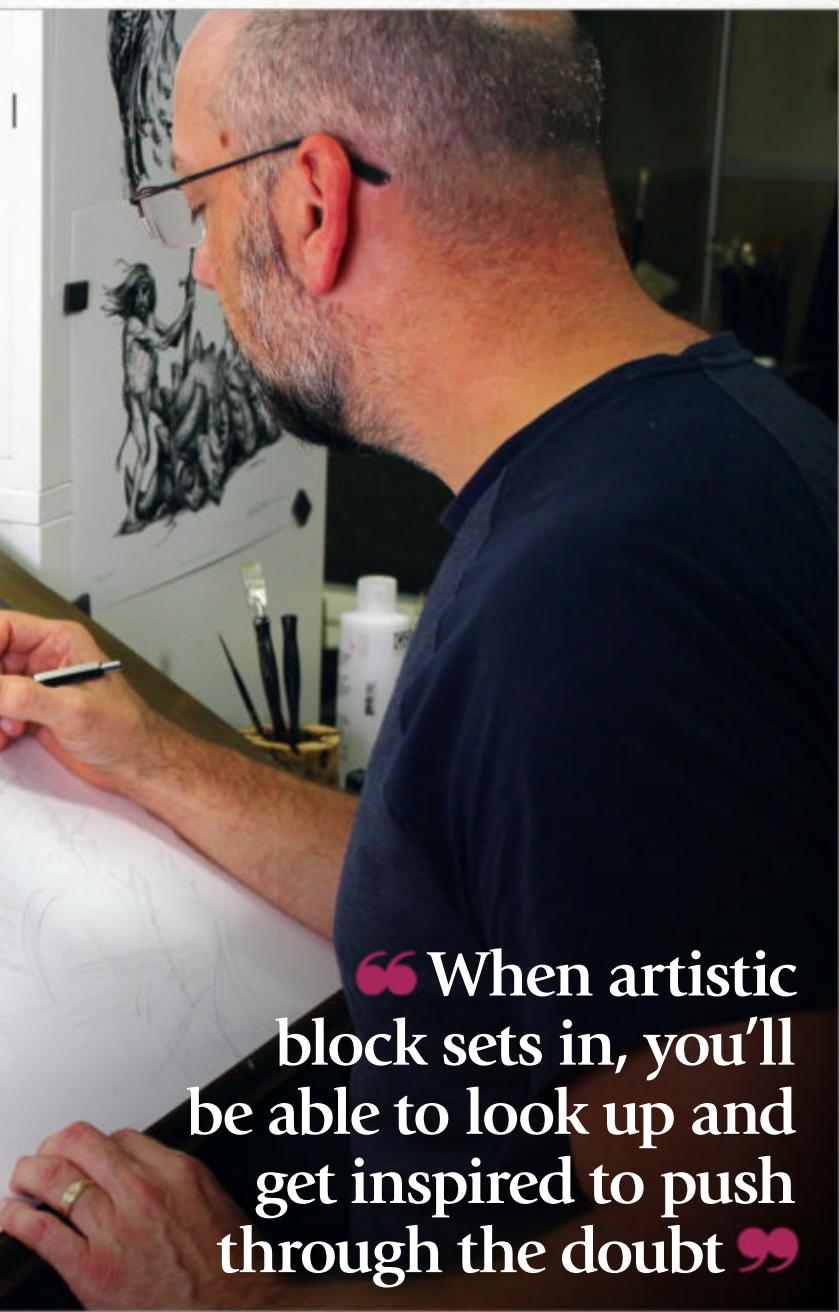
> 66 When artistic block sets in, you'll be able to look up and get inspired to push through the doubt 99

12 Surround yourself with inspiration

In addition to keeping your reference images nearby for guidance and direction, you should have inspirational work within your line of sight. This could be the work on your artistic heroes or even your own work in which you were successful inking. That way, when the inevitable artistic block sets in, which we all get, you'll be able to look up and get inspired to push through the doubt and finish your drawing.

13 Create a helpful style guide
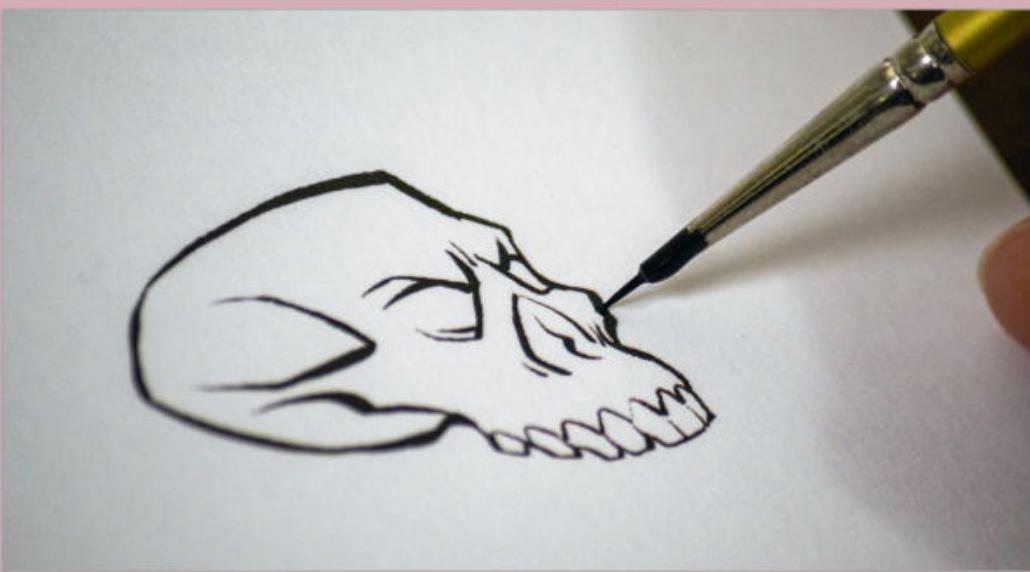
A DRAW A SIMPLIFIED OBJECT
Make a drawing that has simple outlining and is free of any details, shading, shadows, and so on. Imagine you're creating a colouring book drawing. This drawing could even be a primitive shape like a circle or square, but I chose to draw a skull.

B PRINT OUT DUPLICATES OF YOUR DRAWING
Scan the drawing and duplicate it across a sheet of paper. Next, either reduce the opacity of your duplicated drawings to about 15 per cent or change the colour to light blue. Then print this onto the paper of your choice. I prefer heavyweight paper.

C PRACTISE YOUR INKING TECHNIQUES
Work your way across your "template" by drawing onto each object, using a different inking technique and even a variety of tools. Try hatching, cross-hatching, stippling, washes and more. When done, label each drawing with the tools you used. Now you have reference for when you need to create a particular style.

14 Don't fear mistakes
Mistakes are inevitable, especially when working with inks – I always seem to brush my finger across wet ink! Often it's best to let the affected area dry before trying to remove it or paint over it. When you need to go back and correct a mistake, decide if you can scratch off the ink with a utility knife, cover with more ink, or cover it with either white ink or paint.
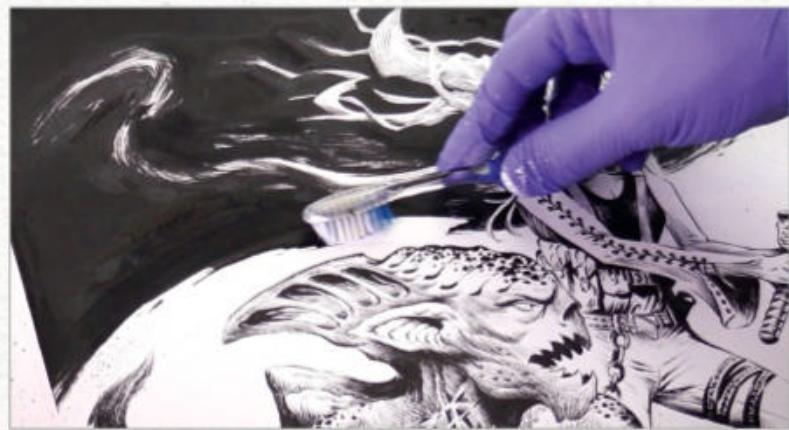
15 Use white ink to stand out
White ink, in addition to covering mistakes, can also be used to create interesting effects or to draw in fine details such as fur, grass or highlights. In this piece I used white ink sparingly, choosing it only for splatter effects as final touches. The result is a piece of art that has interesting multi-toned textures and personality.

First Impressions

✳ Kristin Kwan ✳

The US artist on noticing the beautiful and the bizarre in life

Where did you grow up and how has this influenced your art?
I was born in Eastern Washington state and spent the first part of my childhood in the Pacific Northwest. After that my family moved around quite a bit while I was growing up: we lived in Washington, Oregon, Utah, Nebraska and Wyoming.

I was home-schooled until my last year in high school and I had the freedom to draw and paint when I pleased. We often lived in rural areas and I loved to roam around, bird-watching and exploring the countryside and those wide open spaces carved a deep groove in my imagination.

What, outside of art, has most influenced your artwork?
Definitely an interest in natural history. When I was a kid I used to collect dead birds to preserve, and while I don't do that so much these days it's often the specific details of a plant or animal, or some strange geological formation that will get

CAT'S CRADLE
"I love morning glories, and wish I could actually play cat's cradle with one!"

HEADWATERS
"I wanted this to be a portrait and for the subject to become a literal part of the landscape."

stuck in my mind. Then I feel compelled to paint it, like singing a tune to get it out of your head.

What was your first paid commission, and does it stand as a representation of your talent?
When I was about 10 a co-worker of my dad's commissioned me to paint a portrait of his llamas. As a kid it was incredibly encouraging to have someone take an interest in my art and pay for it. My painting had two llamas – one facing forward and one facing to the side – and it definitely resembled a llama mugshot.

What's the last piece you finished, and how do the two pieces differ?
I'm just finishing up a small painting of a jackalope in a desert fantasy-type landscape that will be

> 66 **I'm trying to push out of my comfort zone when it comes to scale or complexity…** 99

in a group show at Beinart Gallery in Melbourne, Australia. I'm still painting animals!

What character or scene that you've painted do you most identify with?
I painted a small portrait of Alice Liddell back in 2016, which I feel is a bit of an alter ego. She doesn't look like me other than having brown hair, but I believe being an artist is to choose to walk around with your eyes open to not only the beautiful, but also the confusing, unsettling and bizarre, and to keep a freshness to how you see the world.

Is your art evolving? What's the most recent experiment that you've made?
I think it probably is, although slowly. I tend to settle into working methods I enjoy and to not do a lot of experimentation with materials and techniques. Right now I'm trying to push out of my comfort zone when it comes to scale or complexity in a painting. I've tended to work small for a while, but I'd like to make some bigger pieces and I'm trying to develop the discipline it takes to finish those.

How has the industry of art changed for good since you've been working in it?
It's changed so much since I graduated from college in 2005. Social media has enabled artists to build a following and share their work directly with fans, but it can also be a double-edged sword and negatively affect artistic growth because of the instant feedback loop you can get stuck in.

What does the future hold for you?
More painting! I'll be having a two-person show in September at Nucleus Portland and participating in group shows throughout the year.
Kristin uses elements of fantasy and allegory to explore themes of life, death, and rebirth. You can discover more of her art at www.kristinkwan.com.

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