

1 NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX

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MANGA ARTIST

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WORKSHOP

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Advice on shadows and light with **Asia Ladowska**

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FUTURE
ISSUE 202

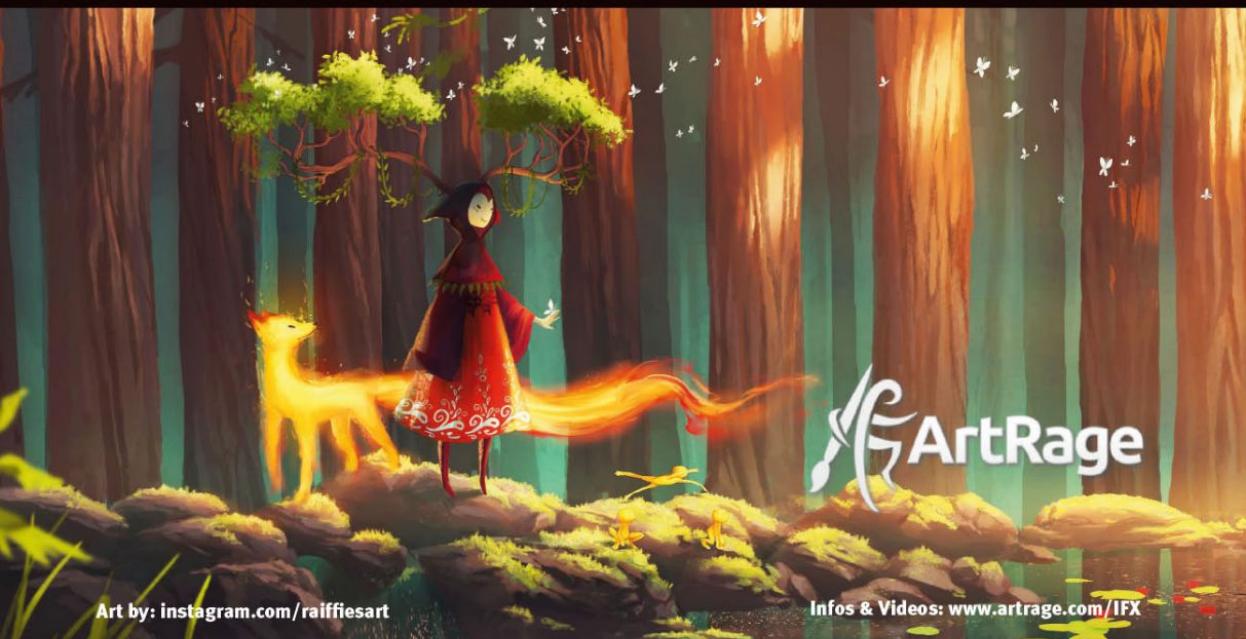
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ZEEN CHIN ON HIS UNIQUE STYLED ART
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• **NETWORKING** FROM DISCORD TO TIKTOK, WE REVEAL WHERE ARTISTS MEET •



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



Staying connected online is vital for the art community to have a place to share ideas, get helpful critiques and to network. Recently, many artists have eschewed the old social media stalwarts, such as Facebook and Instagram, and are joining new online

networks in the hope of finding bespoke groups that are better spaces for artists. Turn to page 18 for our full story.

On another note, it's the end of an era for me because this is my final edition as editor of ImagineFX. What an honour and a privilege it has been to be at the helm of ImagineFX and also a part of this supportive and wonderful art community for so many years. I have travelled the world, met countless numbers of talented artists and have worked with the most amazing people. I'll cherish my time here and have so many incredible memories, but it's time for me to embark on a new adventure. My final request is to ask you to keep on creating and following your passions. Good luck and believe in yourself!

Claire

Editor in chief
claire@imaginefx.com

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Three of my top picks this month...

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Sugar and spice and all things nice

I enjoyed reading about how artist Sugarbones is reclaiming her unapologetic love of sparkles and pink.

46



A colourful deep dive

Immerse yourself in the colourful sub-aquatic creations from Argentinian-based artist Gretel Lusky.

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Inviting illustration

FeiGiap creates environments so detailed that you almost feel like you're stepping into the scene.



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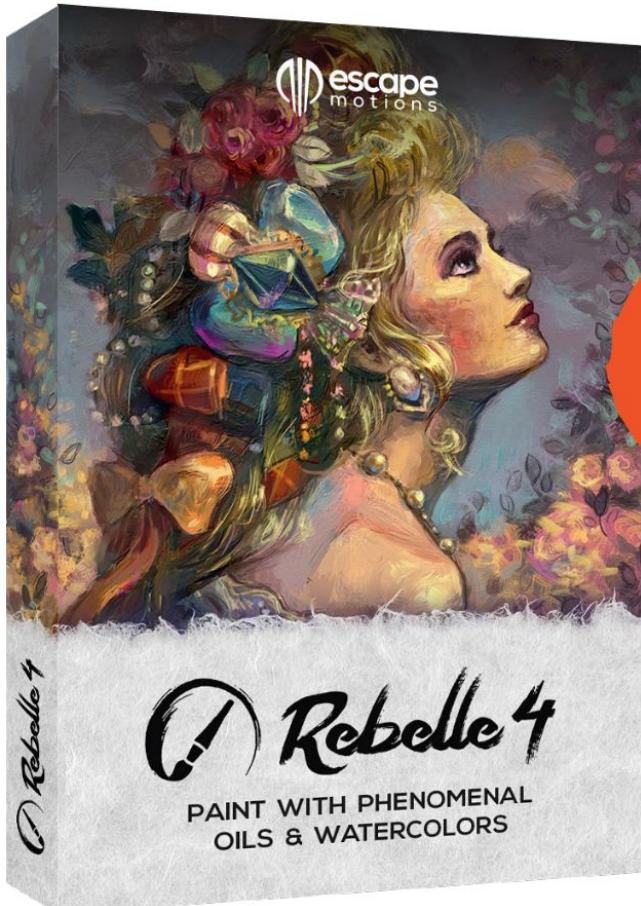
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See page 4 for details.

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Artist Portfolio

**ZEEN
CHIN**



"Go outside, travel and watch films. That's the way I observe"

Zeen reveals how he builds up his visual reference library

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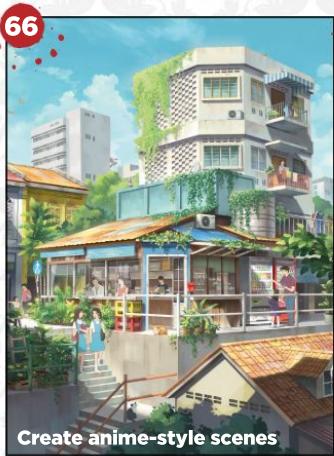


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Artist in Residence:
Sugarbones



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Angela Wang (aka awangi) composes figures from Greek mythology.



Traditional Artist

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

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The German manga artist reveals how she taps into the power of the sea.



Resources

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX

Editorial

Editor in Chief **Claire Howlett**

claire@imaginefx.com

Art Editor **Daniel Vincent**

Operations Editor **Cliff Hope**

Contributors

Ben Brady, Dom Carter, Gary Evans, FeiGiap, Asia Ladowska, Grétel Lusky, Tom May, Anna Sokolova, Sugarbones, Angela Wang, Yooke

Advertising

Media packs are available on request

Chief Revenue Officer **Zack Sullivan**

UK Commercial Sales Director **Clare Dove**

Advertising Sales Manager **Mike Pyatt**

michael.pyatt@futurenet.com, 01225 687538

Account Sales Director **George Lucas**

george.lucas@futurenet.com, 01225 687331

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Head of Print Licensing **Rachel Shaw**

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Online orders www.magazinesdirect.com

Customer service

Email: help@magazinesdirect.com

Telephone +44 (0) 330 333 1113

Group Marketing Director

Magazines & Memberships **Sharon Todd**

Circulation

Head of Newstrade **Tim Mather**

Production

Head of Production **Mark Constance**

Production Project Manager **Clare Scott**

Advertising Production Manager **Joanne Crosby**

Digital Editions Controller **Jason Hudson**

Production Manager **Vivienne Calvert**

Management

Editor in Chief, Creative & Design **Claire Howlett**

Group Art Director **Warren Brown**

Content Director **Chris George**

Brand Director **Matthew Pierce**

Chief Content Officer **Angie O'Farrell**

Commercial Finance Director **Dan Jotcham**

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ImagineFX

Getting hold of this issue's resources is easy.
Just visit <http://ifxm.ag/manga202artist>

WORKSHOP VIDEOS



Learn new art skills using Paint Tool SAI

Watch as Angela Wang paints two figures from Greek mythology using colour to set the tone and lighting to support the story she's telling. Turn to page 74 for her workshop.



Paint over a 3D base

See how FeiGiap builds an anime-inspired scene using SketchUp. More on page 66.



Explore watercolour effects

In her video Anna Sokolova paints a kawaii character from a Netflix show. See page 92.

PLUS 11 CUSTOM BRUSHES, INCLUDING...



TEXTURED BRUSH

Yooke uses this Photoshop brush to soften edges, which helps give her art a painterly feel.



LEAF BRUSH

This custom Photoshop brush enables FeiGiap to paint a range of foliage into his environments.



PEN

Angela Wang uses this custom Paint Tool SAI brush on a low opacity for sketching her ideas.





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

Iwona Gradzka-Kurzaj, artist



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FX Posé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



Mandy Jurgens

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

Mandy is fascinated by how colour and texture can influence our emotions: "I aim to create a little magic through portraits of people both real and imagined."



1 TANYA CHUDNOVSKAIA

"The perfect excuse for yellow and purple. I was taken in by her gorgeous eye(s) in the sunlight, and wanted to make that the focus in this piece."

2 STUDY

"My focus here was studying textures – how to simplify the lace and the shadows it would cast on the face, without rendering out every detail."



IMAGINEFX
ARTIST
MONTH



10

ImagineFX

10

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3 GAZE

"Just having fun with the Mixer brush. I really liked the gold strokes, so I made them a major feature in the form of jewellery."

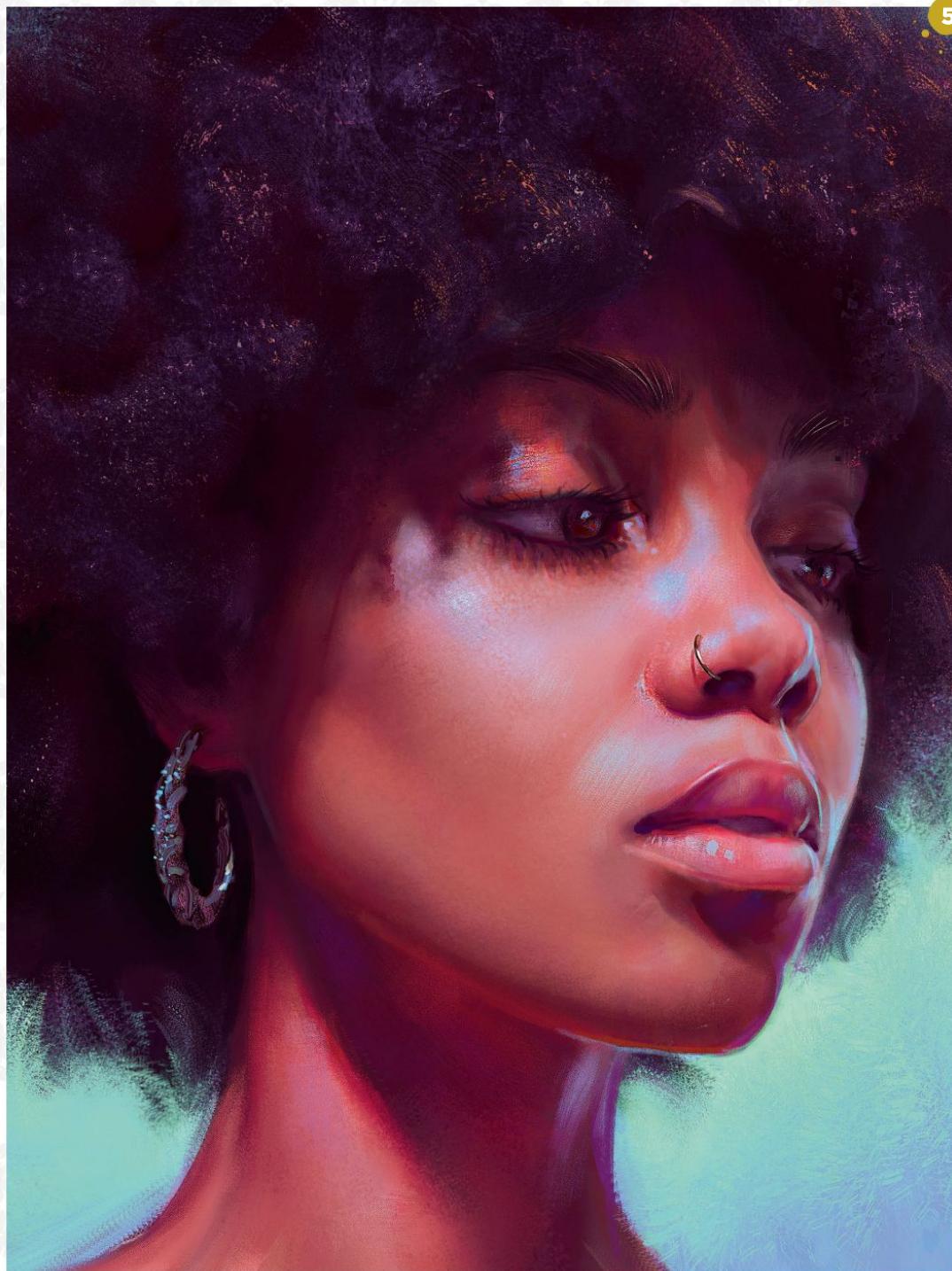
4 PASHA HARULIA

"I chose a high-key value scheme to go with the playful expression. It reminds me of spring, so I tried to capture that vibe."

5 CAMILLE MUNN

"I wanted to do justice to her hair. The goal was to convey the texture without overworking the image."

Want to submit your work? Visit <http://ifxm.ag/getinifx>





Heraldo Ortega

LOCATION: Chile MEDIA: Photoshop, Procreate, Clip Studio Paint WEB: www.artstation.com/heraldoortega

Heraldo is an illustrator, graphic designer and musician. From a young age he has painted using traditional media, but now works digitally, too. "I'm inspired by fantasy and try to create little stories," he says.

1 DARK DRAGON

"A speed paint of a creature that's a mix of bat and dragon. It's ridden by a spectre who's fleeing the fury of the mountain."

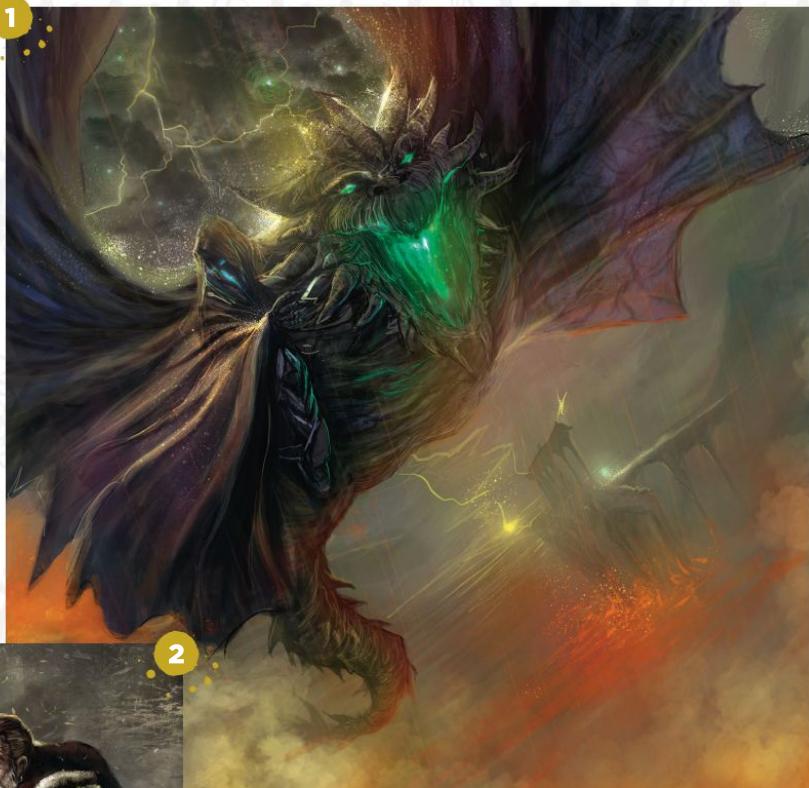
2 VIKING

"An old Viking finds himself alone in his shipwreck. When he's attacked by a Kraken-like beast he flees for his life."

3 LORD OF FIRE

"I created this warrior, who's capable of creating fire with the single movement of his sword, for my personal portfolio."

1



2



3





Tom Cross

LOCATION: England MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: www.instagram.com/tcross.design

Previously an artist for a major Formula One team, Tom decided to hang up his airbrush in pursuit of his real passion; fairies, goblins, swamp monsters and giant alien mechs!

1 WRAITH

"This was based on a Design Cinema tutorial from FZD School of Design."

2 SPRITE

"I like the idea of a being who can blend in with their surroundings. Moments after this painting was completed, he turned green to match the foliage."

3 H'KHAAR THE WISE*

"This piece was the result of a combination of my favourite childhood stories. If you're getting a Jungle Book vibe I'm more than happy!"

4 OKJA

"A piece of fan art based around the Netflix film."



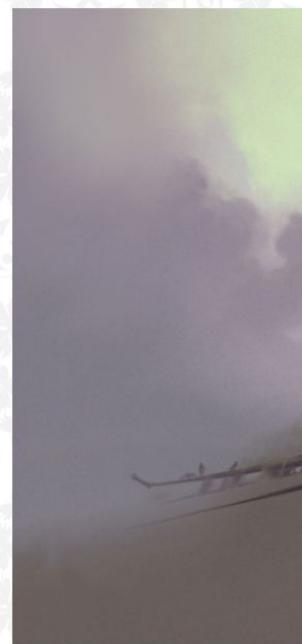


Dan Volbert

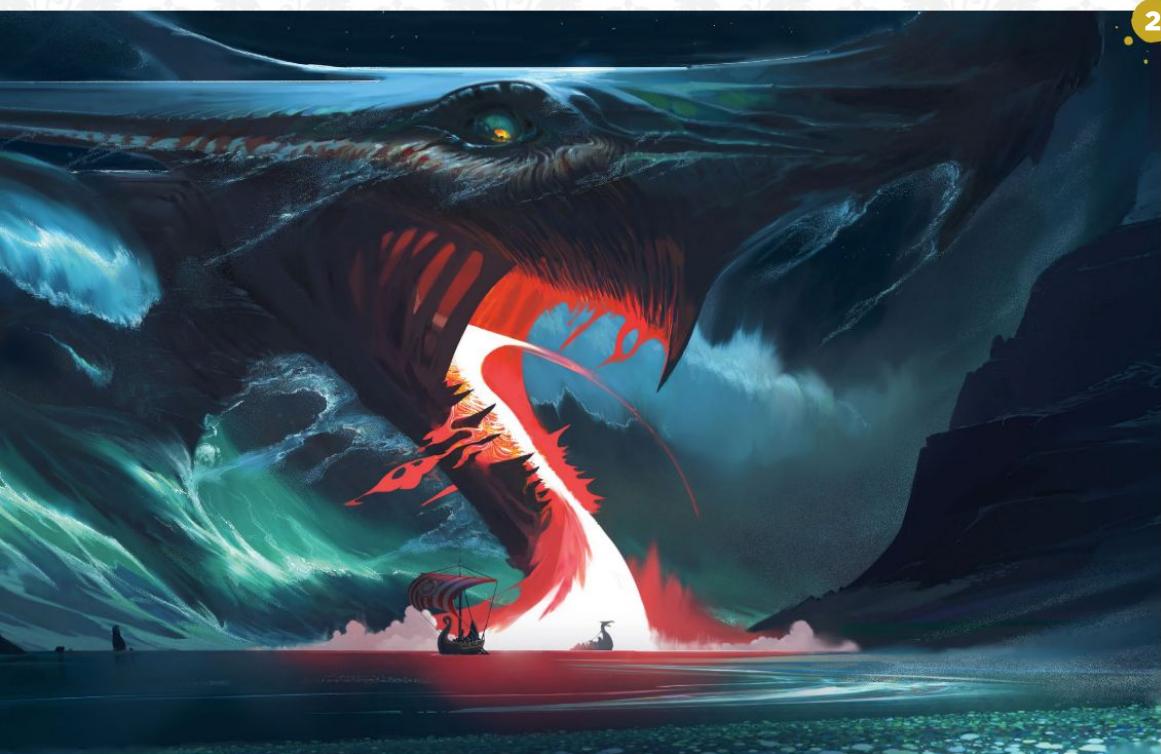
LOCATION: Germany MEDIA: Photoshop, Procreate, Blender WEB: www.cooperativacreativa.com

As a lead artist at Cooperativa Creativa, Dan has been driven to reach a harmony of colours and shapes ever since he entered the industry. "It's a spectacular ride," he exclaims.

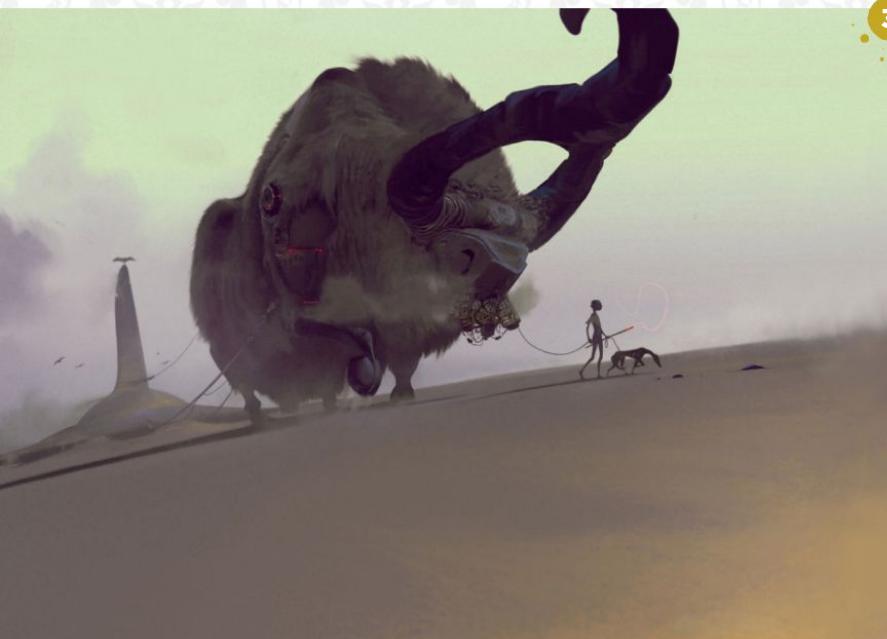
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1 DRAGON ROCK

"This is a piece of unused marketing art for a Viking tabletop game, which was illustrated in Photoshop."

2 DRAGON CHAOS

"Illustration for an upcoming book project set in a Viking universe. It was painted in Photoshop with a bit of help from Blender."

3 THE BEAST

"This is a book illustration of a creature for an upcoming sci-fi project, done in Photoshop. Enjoy the sneak preview!"



Barret Frymire

LOCATION: US MEDIA: Photoshop WEB: www.barretfrymire.myportfolio.com

Barret is a freelance illustrator and concept artist who works on indie video games and fantasy art commissions. He hasn't let growing up on a farm with moonshine-powered internet stop him from creating.

1 KING BALDWIN IV

"A love letter to one of my favourite movies of all time, Kingdom of Heaven."

2 TAID'R

"This character piece is just me trying to do my best emulation of Frazetta's killer shapes and shadows."

3 PIRATA MUERTA

"I drew this to break out of my comfort zone of colours. The awesome character is also inspired by my Mexican wife."

4 ANARCHY

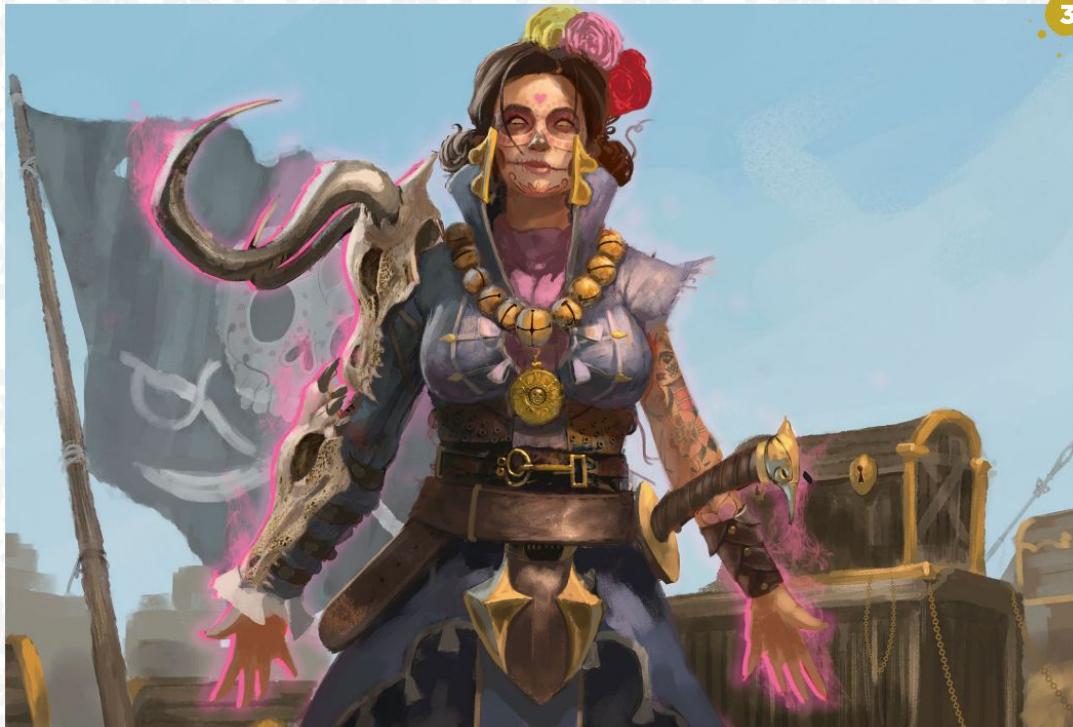
"Continuing the theme that my wife is incredible, I ran with her idea to create something about cats."



1



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3



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

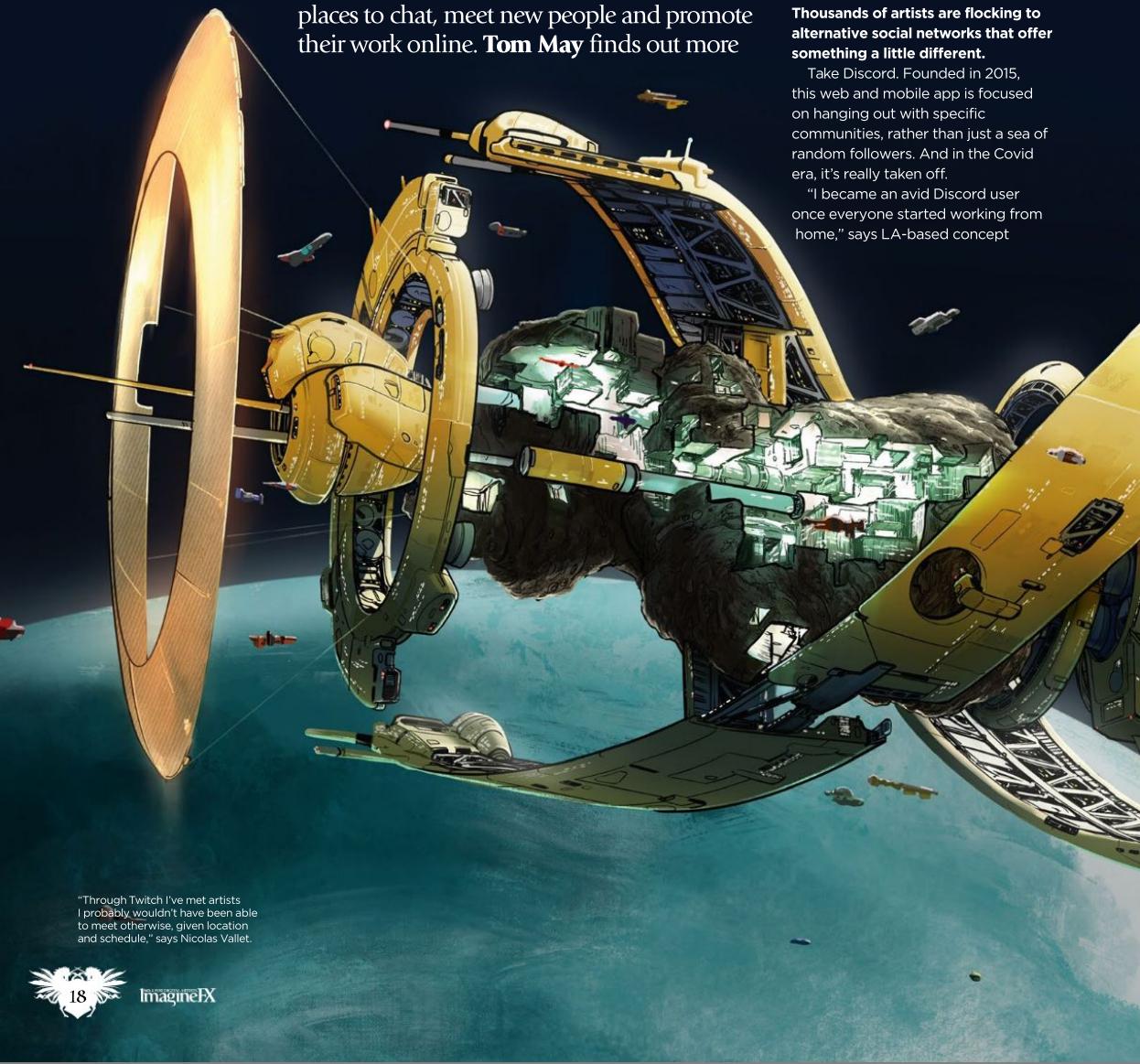
Alternative social networks for artists

Platform game With Facebook, Twitter and Instagram on the wane, artists are finding new places to chat, meet new people and promote their work online. **Tom May** finds out more

Tired of Twitter trolls, vile comments on YouTube and Instagram narcissism? You're not alone. Thousands of artists are flocking to alternative social networks that offer something a little different.

Take Discord. Founded in 2015, this web and mobile app is focused on hanging out with specific communities, rather than just a sea of random followers. And in the Covid era, it's really taken off.

"I became an avid Discord user once everyone started working from home," says LA-based concept



"Through Twitch I've met artists I probably wouldn't have been able to meet otherwise, given location and schedule," says Nicolas Vallet.



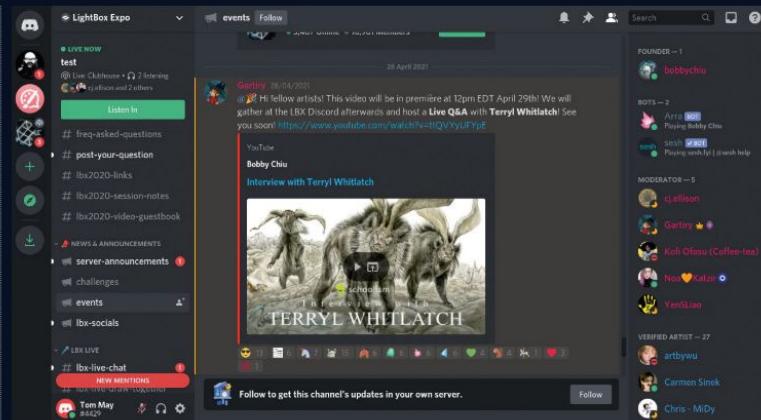
designer and illustrator **Atri Pan**. "It offers voice, text options and streaming options, so it's perfect as a 'virtual hang spot' for friends or coworkers.

"I use it in voice format, to mimic working alongside them, as we hunch over our tablets drawing. It's like a virtual common room! It also acts as a community hub for events such as LightBox Expo, Weekend Warrior Painters, or small groups of artists who are just trying to get better."

LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE

Spiridon Giannakis, a German designer and publisher of art books,

 recently launched a Discord server to chat about his projects, as well as mental health issues (visit Artbook News at <http://ifxm.ag/artbook-news>). "The environment on Discord is really positive," he enthuses. "With the help of moderators, everything can be kept very tidy, and conversations are



A screenshot of a Discord server interface for 'LightBox Expo'. The left sidebar shows a list of channels: 'test', '# freq-asked-questions', '# post-your-question', '# lbx2020-session-notes', '# lbx2020-video-guestbook', '# server-announcements', '# challenges', '# events', '# lbx-socials', '# lbx-live', and '# lbx-live-chat'. A video player in the center shows an interview with Terryl Whitlatch, featuring a large image of a fantastical creature. The right sidebar shows a list of users and moderators, including 'bobbychu', 'bobbychu', 'Gartley', 'Kofi Ofusu (Coffee tea)', 'Nas & solar', 'VenGuan', 'carmen sinck', and 'Chris - MiDy'.

extremely valuable. It's a bit like the feel of a forum, with the addition of newer tech aspects."

He hasn't had a single negative encounter on Discord so far. "Unlike most social media, which just makes me wonder every day if I really need it. It's all been positive," he says. "My

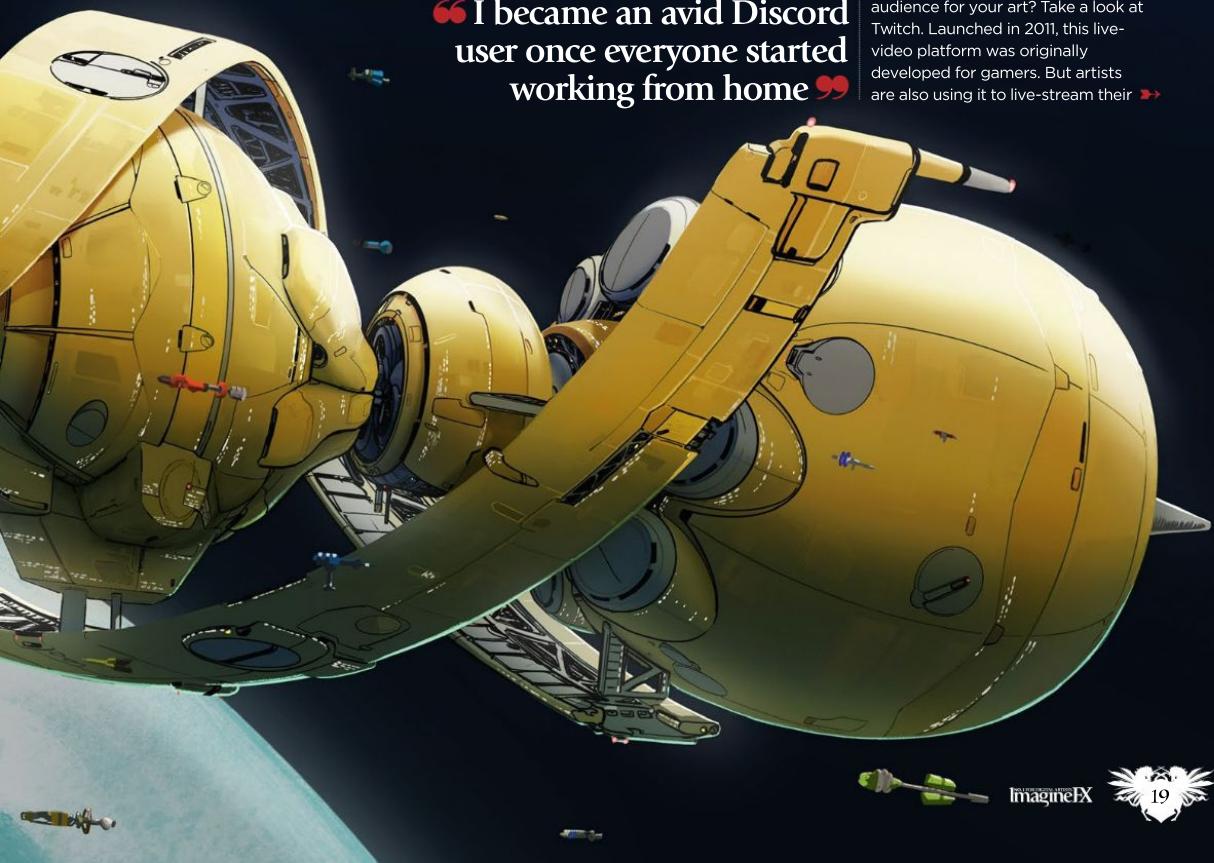
Discord's positive atmosphere appeals to Spiridon Giannakis, a designer and publisher.

server now has over a thousand people! I never expected so many. I always thought art books are very niche, but it's shown me that the interest is there."

STREAM YOUR ART

Discord is great for select groups, but what if you want to build a wider audience for your art? Take a look at Twitch. Launched in 2011, this live-video platform was originally developed for gamers. But artists are also using it to live-stream their

“I became an avid Discord user once everyone started working from home”



ImagineNation News



THEY WERE ATTACKED.

▶ process, make new contacts and grow their personal brand.

Montreal-based art director and lead concept artist **Nicolas Vallet** is among them. "Long story short: I wanted to connect," he explains.

"Living in China at the time, I was very focused on my day-to-day work, but quite bad at publicising myself. Art streams are a nice way to split the difference. I get to draw and talk to people, at the same time as practising my technique."

“My first ‘viral’ video was just a sketch of my Miata, and it received 6,000 likes and 20,000 views in a day or two”



"Twitch is quite hard to navigate sometimes and borderline opaque for casual creators," says Nicolas.



"I try to keep my Twitch stream relaxed and not front-load it with too many expectations," says Nicolas.

Nicolas's Twitch channel (available at www.twitch.tv/utopieselective) stayed small for a while, but the pandemic meant he had more free time. "So I added extra days, and my audience began to grow. I'd ask questions to know people better, and let them share their own experiences. I started to attract regular viewers, and some of them are friends now." He has this advice to anyone live-streaming on Twitch: "People like energy and passion, so share that first and foremost. And be consistent: a regular schedule will help people to find you."

SHORT AND SWEET

Just as Twitch is mainly known for gaming, most people associate TikTok with lip syncing and daft challenges.

Log in to follow creator, like Videos, and view comments.

Miranda says, "Get on TikTok to share your love of your craft, to make cool stuff, to connect with people and interact with your audience."



Yet the short-form video app, which has almost 700 million active users, is attracting artists too.

"I was introduced to TikTok by a friend and saw the potential for high exposure," says Ohio-based animator and illustrator **Miranda Pavelle** (@mirandathehybrid on TikTok). "My first 'viral' video was just a sketch of my Miata, and it received 6,000 likes" ▶

“My first ‘viral’ video was just a sketch of my Miata, and it received 6,000 likes”

Artist news, software & events



"I don't have time for lengthy streams on Twitch, so totally see the appeal of TikTok's clips," says Airi Pan.



Nicolas reveals that, "The goal of my Twitch channel is to vibe out on art, in a chill atmosphere."



"Posting images, gifs, and fun emojis and stickers is so simple in Discord, and so much fun," says Airi.



OBLISKURA

Alex Konstad's art book *Obliskura* was published by Spiridon via Kickstarter.

INDUSTRY INSIGHT

MIRANDA THE HYBRID

The artist has harnessed TikTok to build her personal brand...

Who should watch your TikTok channel and why?

Anyone with a knack for silliness and art learning should watch my channel, especially people who need to learn art tricks and the basics.

Has anything surprised you about using TikTok?

The sheer potential for going viral. I have never, ever seen anything like it on any other platform. Also, the sheer unpredictability of whether a video will go viral or not. There are a few things I've found to be steady view-getters, but for the most part the algorithm is still a bit of a mystery. I have 550,000 followers, and for the most part, my videos don't get above five to 15,000 views. The view count is not based on your follower count, but on your exposure in the algorithm, which makes it unpredictable.

What do you like most about the platform?

The potential for exposure and helping others, spreading knowledge, and how it's made previously invisible people successful for their creativity.

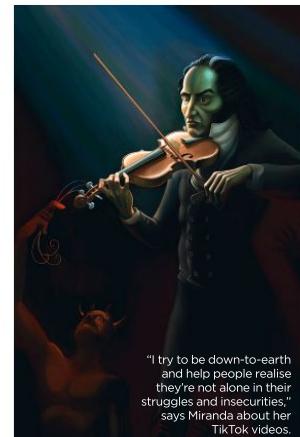
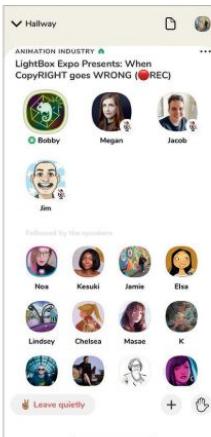
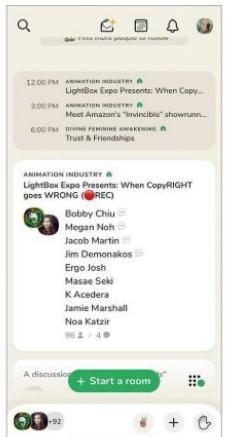
And the least?

The addictiveness of it all. In the beginning, I was emotionally dependent on my view count because you think, at first, that a ton of people love you. Then, suddenly, the views go away and you disappear again; if you're not used to seeing those numbers/patterns, then it can take a toll on your self worth. This is especially something I'm worried about for younger artists and kids.



Miranda is an illustrator and animator who shares tutorials and art critiques on her YouTube and TikTok channels.
<http://ifcsm.ag/tt-miranda>

"I first heard about Clubhouse through the art community – Bobby Chiu was the one to invite me on-board," says Airi.



» and 20,000 views in a day or two, which is more attention than I'd ever gotten on other social channels."

Miranda now has more than half a million followers, and likes how the brevity of TikTok videos forces you to be snappy and to the point. "I love teaching and sharing my knowledge in bite-sized, light-hearted form," she says. "My art videos are miniature versions of full tutorials, so if you see something useful, you can go to my YouTube and get the full lesson."

Her advice for launching a TikTok channel is simple. "Be yourself," she stresses. "Trends rack in views, but they eventually die and make way for

Artists from LightBox Expo discuss industry topics on Clubhouse, but you'll need an invite to listen in.

something else. What never dies is people connecting to you as a person: your quirks, your process, you getting bubbly over what you're passionate about. Gen Z and millennials are pretty darned tired of being advertised to; so don't jump on the app with the intention of starting a business or getting views, because people will be able to tell."

JOIN THE CLUB

Finally, there's Clubhouse. The app was launched in 2020 and is a voice-based social platform that hosts virtual rooms for live discussions. It's an iOS and Android app that at time of writing was invite only.

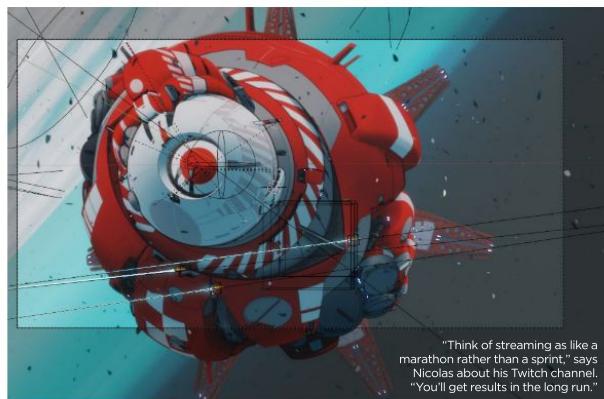
Being audio only, you might not think visual artists would be interested in Clubhouse, but in fact there's quite a bit going on. For instance, LightBox Expo hosts a regular discussion there

“ Depending on the talk, it can feel like people conversing right next to you... ”

Artist news, software & events



"Clubhouse feels like a livestream version of podcasts, which the art community doesn't have many of anyway," says Airi.



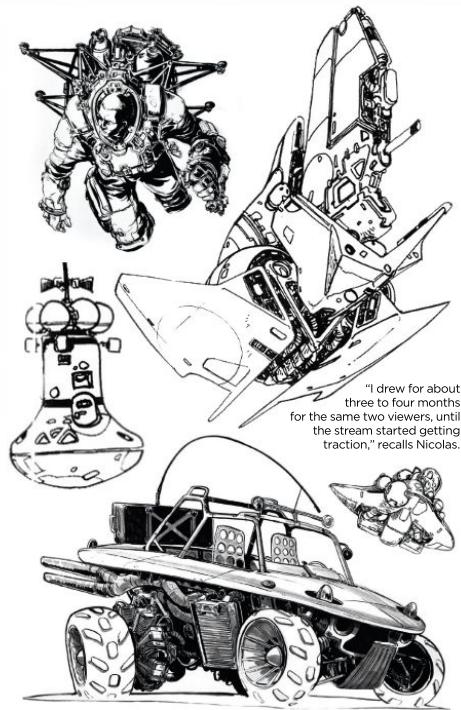
"Think of streaming as like a marathon rather than a sprint," says Nicolas about his Twitch channel. "You'll get results in the long run."

every Tuesday at 9am PST, with big-name creatives such as Karla Ortiz, Brynn Metheney, Lorne Lanning and Elsa Chang taking part. If you're not on Clubhouse, you can listen in at <http://ifxm.ag/lb-discord>.

Airi, who's called [@pix_bun](#) on Clubhouse, recently participated in a LightBox session called 'Fake it till you make it, but keep it genuine.' "It was delightful!" she recalls. "The discussion was well-paced thanks to the

moderators such as Bobby Chiu." Normally though, she uses Clubhouse as more of a podcast app, as something to listen to while she works.

"You can hear veteran industry professionals speak, and hear great tips you won't get from a scripted interview," Airi says. "Depending on the talk, it can feel like people conversing right next to you, which makes working from home a little less lonely." ■



"I drew for about three to four months for the same two viewers, until the stream started getting traction," recalls Nicolas.

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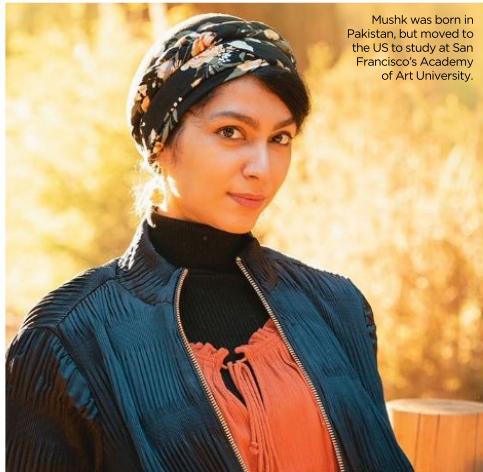
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Mushk was born in Pakistan, but moved to the US to study at San Francisco's Academy of Art University.



Fan art of Terra Branford from Final Fantasy VI, which Mushk created as her entry for a Character Design Challenge.

A day in the life of... Mushk Rizvi

Further learning The Marvel Studios' vis-dev artist tells how sketching exercises help to improve her skills...

"I wake up at 9am and find a workout online to keep my upper body moving. Working out is very important because I can suffer from carpal tunnel syndrome in my arm, as well as tinnitus, so I try to structure my day around what's best for my body as well as the amount of work and art that needs doing. I'm always looking for ways to become more efficient.

At 9:45am I sit down at my computer and dive into whatever I need to work on. If it's something I have a lot of experience with, I can quickly get into the flow. If not, then I have to spend some time gathering reference. I work until noon, then stop and I take a quick walk in our neighbourhood. Then I settle back in until 6:30pm unless there's a deadline to be met – then it's overtime.

“I structure my day around what's best for my body as well as the amount of work and art that needs doing”



Mushk works digitally, but also maintains her traditional skills by sketching daily.

My husband and I eat dinner and then go for a long walk together. Afterwards I do my physical therapy exercises and unwind with some personal sketching before bed. I try to focus my sketching on areas that I want to improve in.

My main advice for students is that I know we all want to get a job and work in the industry as soon as possible, but it's probably better to focus on your skills first. Because I was hired while I was still a student, I feel



© Tencent Games



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

that I wasn't able to get the most out of my classes. Sometimes when I struggle with my work, I kind of regret that I started working too early and didn't spend more time focusing on my fundamentals. Take the time to learn."

Mushk is from Karachi, Pakistan and currently lives in Los Angeles, US, where she's worked on projects such as Ms. Marvel, She-Hulk, and Heroes of Might and Magic. You can see more of Mushk's work at www.artstation.com/noirmutaon.

ImagineNation Artist in Residence



My cosy setup where I spend most of my days, dreaming up new artwork and designs!



British
u London



Sugarbones

Everything's rosy The Canada-based artist discusses her love of illustration and product design, and why she didn't always have such a passion for pink



It's always been such a vital part of my process to be surrounded by the aesthetic and energy that I want to siphon into my own creations. I want to feel joy no matter where I look in my studio, and bright and colourful spaces energise me.

I spend a lot of time in this spot, so some of my favourite items reside here. I love plushies and figurines, especially of the mascot Rilakkuma. There aren't many places in my home where you won't find his face somewhere! My walls feature some of my favourite art, as well as illustrations from my friends and fellow artists. Some are gifts, some are notes of encouragement – they all uplift me in my own creative practice. ➤



I love creating artwork based in nostalgia, and the joyful feeling of unlocking memories that you may have once forgotten.



I've always loved drawing bad girls with pink weapons. I love pink in unexpected places – it creates a fun juxtaposition not usually associated with the colour.

ImagineNation Artist in Residence



My little son, Peachy, loves to shred and destroy paper. His bad behaviour has earned him a lifetime ban from the studio.



I've saved a lot of plants from certain death by swapping to fake ones! No green thumb for me, just a pink one.



“Growing up I actively distanced myself from anything that could be considered girly or feminine...”

I share the space with my boyfriend, who has his own desk opposite to mine. He works as an electrical engineer, and his setup is very technical and full of schematics, so we like to joke that the room is like the left and right side of the brain.

I'm a very social creature and working from home can get lonely sometimes without any coworkers, so it's nice to have my boyfriend around to liven things up! He's also a valuable asset when it comes to feedback for my designs, especially when it comes to decision making or noticing things I may have missed with fresh eyes.

REASSESSING MY IDEA OF PINK

I didn't always love pink as much as I do now. In fact, growing up I actively distanced myself from anything that could be considered girly or feminine in the slightest. As a 2000s teen, the dawn of teen vampire dramas and the era of Mean Girls made it crystal clear



I use a bar cart while I'm painting for my brushes and supplies. It has wheels, which makes it easy to roll around while I work. Super convenient!

how society viewed girly girls. Often written to be materialistic, vapid and cruel, my inner Barbie was abandoned in favour of the cool, tomboyish counterpart. As I grew, I began to question my flawed understanding and confront my internalised misogyny face on. Why would I need to shed the feminine aesthetic, hobbies and community that I felt ➤

For a lot of my digital illustrations I use this Wacom Cintiq 22. Stickers always make things cuter.

I used to use a digital calendar, but seeing it physically helps me grasp what the heck is going on.

Artist news, software & events



I love collecting anything Rilakkuma, and have a collection of miscellaneous products he's been featured on. His face can make anything cute! This box of condoms is no exception.



I love figurines and hope to make my own one day. I won this one at an arcade while I was visiting Tokyo.



Sailor Moon has been a huge inspiration to me since I was very young. I love taking the themes, colours and elements that influenced me from that series and putting them into my work.



I found this bow shelf at a thrift store and was able to breathe some life into it with some sanding and a fresh coat of paint. It has the honour of holding up an illustration I made of Medusa, and a little pink Godzilla sculpture.



Some of my favourite vinyl figures! They sit on top of my framed How To Be Bad bunny design, who's become sort of a mascot of my shop! He shows up in a bunch of my products, and people seem to love him!



I use the Microsoft Surface Studio as my desktop PC. It's got pen and touch, and it's easy to switch between the two if I don't want to boot up my drawing tablet.

I love listening to music while I work, especially anything fun and upbeat to keep me energised!

My Copic market collection! I haven't used them in a while, which can be seen by how neatly they're sorted and not in total chaos.

When I was visiting Japan for Design Festa, I got this commission from a girl who drew you as a hamster. It's now a family heirloom.

ImagineNation Artist in Residence

Over the years I've collected a ton of art and reference books. My favourites are the ILLUSTRATION series, featuring artwork from artists all over Japan. It's released annually.



👉 I'm good with routine, so being able to bounce between different artforms like this keeps me from getting bored 💖

👉 connected to in order to appear smart, strong, when both can coexist. There was never a problem with pink.

Realising the potential behind my own agency, I reclaimed my unapologetic love of sparkles, pastels and heart-shaped things. Being able to incorporate them into my artwork was life changing, and I haven't looked back.

A TRIO OF DIGITAL TOOLS

Typically, I bounce between three computers throughout a work day. My main computer is a Surface Studio Pro, which I use for the bulk of my website design, product drafting, tending to my shop or connecting with customers. It only made sense to

make this computer the centerpiece of my desk, tucked away in the corner in a comfortable spot. For illustrating, I shift between an iPad Pro and my Wacom tablet.

While I'm often primarily creating digitally when designing for my shop, I still love exploring traditional arts and crafts and making things with my hands. I'm good with routine, so being able to bounce between different artforms like this keeps me from getting bored and keeps things fun.

Over the past year I've gotten into making punch needle rugs, and recently made my own mirror for the studio. That turned out pretty cute!

I make a lot of enamel pins for my web shop, and have a pin board that

Whenever I make pins, I print them out so I can really see what it'll look like. It's so important to take things off the screen when designing products so you can better understand them.



I drew this little bear when I was feeling down. Every time I look at his little face, I know he gets it.



displays them all close by as I design new ones. I use it to compare sizing, shapes, and also to remind me what worked in the past and what didn't. It's always a learning experience!

Sugarbones is an artist and product designer who lives in Ontario, Canada. She transforms her illustrations into fun products for her web shop, as well as run a monthly enamel pin subscription club. Her inspirations included bad girls, pop culture and deceptively cute animals. See more of her work at www.sugarbones.net.

Artist news, software & events



Over the past year I've gotten into making punch needle rugs, like this one. It's time-consuming, but really relaxing and the results are so fun.



I spent more money than I wish to disclose on a realistic Gizmo doll, but I'm not ashamed of it.



Although my walls are pretty busy, I try to keep my desk space as organised as possible. When I work it can get cluttered pretty quickly, so I try keeping on top of things so it doesn't become overwhelming.

GET IMAGINEFX DELIVERED DIGITALLY!

The digital edition of ImagineFX magazine is displayed on a tablet screen. The cover features a vibrant illustration of a fantasy character with long orange hair and a sword. Text on the cover includes: 'NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS', 'ImagineFX', 'BECOME A MANGA ARTIST', 'How to draw and paint your best-ever fantasy manga art today!', 'WORKSHOP GET BETTER AT PAINT TOOL SAI', 'Follow our simple steps to create ethereal portraits', 'CLIP STUDIO PAINT COLOURING TECHNIQUES', 'Advice on shadows and light with Asia Ladowska', 'PAINT THIS COVER IMAGE!', 'ALSO INSIDE ZEEN CHIN ON HIS UNIQUE STYLISED ART', 'CREATE ANIME-STYLE SCENES IN SKETCHUP', 'PAINT AGGRETSUKO IN WATERCOLOURS', and '• NETWORKING FROM DISCORD TO TIKTOK, WE REVEAL WHERE ARTISTS MEET •'. A yellow circular badge on the right side of the cover says 'FREE 5 HOURS OF PRO VIDEO TUITION + CUSTOM BRUSHES'. A white speech bubble on the right side contains the text 'GO DIGITAL! Our digital editions come with the same resources included in the print edition!'. The tablet is set against a purple background.

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Letters

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Easy access to the mag

Great mag! I'm not even an artist, in fact I work in telecoms, I just enjoy the magazine because it gives me a fascinating insight into the world of digital art.

I was wondering, in the Book Reviews section of your magazine, is there any way I can access this without buying a ton of back issues?

Will, via email

Claire replies Nice to hear from you Will. Our book reviews are great aren't they? They sometimes appear on our website over at www.creativebloq.com, so check there for other book reviews you may have missed. As for them being available elsewhere, I'm afraid that's a no, but we are available as digital editions, which are very cheap (see page 32 for more), or you can get hold of us via a print subscription from www.magazinesdirect.com or via a Readly subscription.

Anne Stokes please!

I've just discovered your fabulous magazine and having an interest in fantasy art. I was wondering if you've ever featured Anne Stokes, as she is my favourite artist. Her artwork of Dragons and Unicorn is unique. Lastly, do you know whether the British Fantasy Society Ltd is still in existence?

Barry Twomlow, Portsmouth



DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE?

Don't worry – you can get hold of issue 201 at <http://ifxm.ag/single-ifx>.

Reader Barry is a big fan of Anne Stokes' fantasy and Gothic art, which we've featured in ImagineFX in past issues.



Appearing in our EXPosé section helped encourage reader Darren to develop a full-time art career.

Claire replies Hello Barry and welcome to ImagineFX. I'm so pleased that you found us. We did feature Anne Stokes quite a while back (issues 50, 57 and 101, fact fans!). She is an incredible artist and it's high time we featured her again so thanks for the reminder of her glorious work.

As for The British Fantasy Society, they seem very much alive and can be visited at www.britishfantasysociety.org.

Mind-blowing moment

My name's Darren and you can see my art at www.darren goldman.com. I'm a long-time reader and was once highlighted in your magazine at the beginning of my digital career (July 2018). I went from record store manager/freelance artist to obsessed Procreate artist and now art director.

It's been a life-changing experience for me, and honestly being in ImagineFX was a huge inspiration! To appear in the pages of a magazine that inspired me daily was mind blowing. Now I use Procreate daily and design four to six wearable designs a week for myself or freelancers to finish. See www.zox.la to see examples of what I mean. It's been a wonderful journey and now I get to search out other artists, giving them opportunities to freelance and hopefully inspire them to follow their dreams! Thanks so much!

Darren Goldman

Claire replies Well, isn't this a lovely letter, Darren! Thanks for writing in and I'm so pleased that you're experiencing such success. I hope this letter spurs other readers on to follow their dreams. If anyone reading this wants to feature in ImagineFX, see <http://ifxm.ag/getinifx> for what's required.



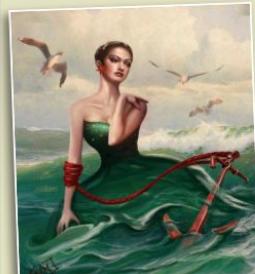
New works that have grabbed our attention



David Hoffrichter
[@davidhoffrichter](http://davidhoffrichter.com)



Giulio D'Amico
[@giulio_ocimad](http://giulio_ocimad.com)



Kait Matthews
[@kaitmatthewsart](http://kaitmatthewsart.com)

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



ARTIST PORTFOLIO

ZEEN CHIN

The Malaysian illustrator and concept artist mixes familiar styles and themes to make art that's unusual, unsettling and uniquely his own, learns **Gary Evans**



Zeen Chin was brought up by his grandparents in a small town in the south of Peninsular Malaysia. Behind their house in Kulai was a lake where Zeen and his friends went fishing and built dens. Opposite the lake was a temple where they played. During festivals, the temple staff would set up a projector and a makeshift outdoor screen, and

Zeen would sit down on a stool brought from home to watch old Hong Kong horror films.

In recent years the Malaysian has illustrated card art for Applibot's Legend of the Cryptids and Galaxy Saga, and contributed illustrations and concept art to the board game Kingdom Death. He's got a big following online. He's pretty famous – at least, in the world of fantasy art

LOST
"Some of us are like a lost soul in the world," says Malaysian illustrator Zeen Chin.

– but he's not in it for that. Zeen just wants to draw.

His little story about the temple and the horror films contains all the themes you'll find in Zeen's art: nostalgia for childhood; Southeast Asian folklore and religion; the contrast of humour and horror, light and dark, good and evil. His work is weird, often unsettling, but never boring. Zeen's pictures reward ➤

Interview



WITCH STORE

"I tried to draw the place I lived when I was a kid based on memory. I combined the home with the temple that was opposite my house. It was also a playground for the kids who lived in the village."

» careful study. A cursory glance is never enough. There's always something more to see, something unusual, unsettling or unexpected hiding beneath the surface of the everyday – much like seeing a horror film in a temple.

TERADA AND NINJA TURTLES

Growing up, Zeen's parents worked and lived faraway in the city, which wasn't uncommon back then, but he got into art with the help of his mother. She wasn't a professional artist, but she knew enough to teach him the basics. He always enjoyed getting compliments from family and teachers about his drawings, so art quickly became something more than a pastime.

His first big artistic influence was the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles. He loved drawing them. Then he got into

“In the beginning it's hard to avoid imitating other artists' work”

Artist PROFILE

Zeen Chin

LOCATION: Malaysia

FAVOURITE ARTISTS: Phil Hale, Taiyō Matsumoto, Katsuya Terada, Kent Williams and Ashley Wood

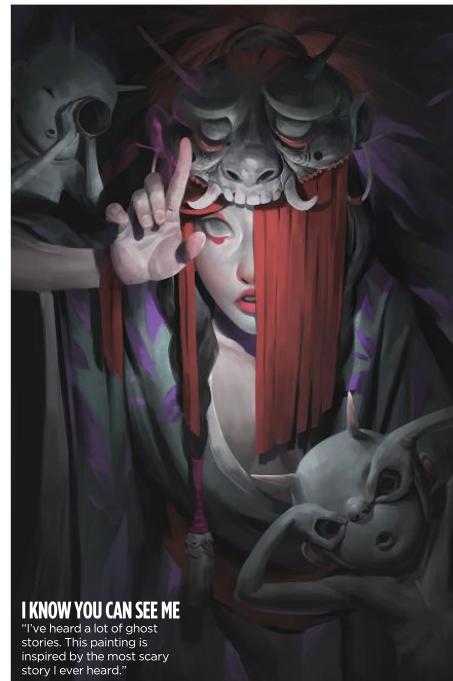
MEDIA: Photoshop

WEB: www.artstation.com/zeen

Hong Kong horror films and Japanese manga – influences you can still see in his work today. The artist who most influenced him was Katsuya Terada. If Zeen could meet one person, living or dead, then it would be Terada – the Japanese illustrator who works in comics, games and films. "I like the creativity in his character designs and how he uses certain elements, how imaginative he is," says Zeen.

"In the beginning, when you first start creating your own art, it's hard to avoid imitating other artists' work. What I did was study and analyse and break down Katsuya Terada's artwork. I tried to work out which elements really caught my eye."

Zeen particularly liked how Katsuya drew women, and how he avoided clichés or stereotypes by adding »

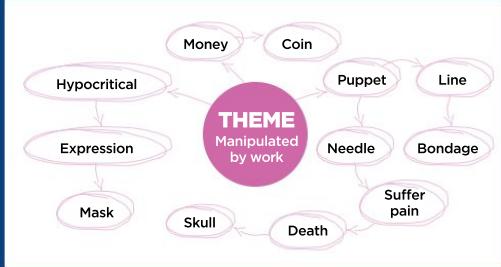


I KNOW YOU CAN SEE ME

"I've heard a lot of ghost stories. This painting is inspired by the most scary story I ever heard."

THE PUPPET MASTER

Zeen explains how he strings together a piece based around a specific idea



1 MIND MAPPING

"I begin by coming up with a strong idea. I need to know what story I want to tell. I felt like a puppet once I'd grown up, controlled by work. I wished I could go back to being a kid. That's my idea. I create a mind map and think of all the elements I could use."



2 CREATE LINE-ART

"Once I've identified my elements that make up my idea, I start with line-art to get down the correct design and composition."

3 BUILD UP ATMOSPHERE

"During this step I use design, lighting and colour techniques to create a strong atmosphere and effective visuals."



4 POLISH AND TWEAK THE CHARACTER

"Then I start to polish the character until I'm happy with the proportions and shape, and also tweak the values of the image."

5 DETAILING AND FINAL TOUCHES

"The last thing I do is enrich the details and generally improve the overall atmosphere of the illustration."

Interview



INCANTATION

"This one talks about how why I love drawing, how it's almost incantatory. The girl in the drawing represents my mum, who taught me how to draw (the head the girl is holding is not my dad's!)."

» "super crazy elements". Zeen has tried to do this in his own figurative work, which is why a lot of his female characters contain an element of the fantastic. It's the same with all of Zeen's paintings. He tries to mix familiar art styles and underpinning themes in a combination that creates something the viewer hasn't seen before, something that could only have been drawn by Zeen.

"I believe that each artist has their very own preferences and life experiences, which slowly gather and build up in their mind inside their own 'image storage'. Creativity comes from daily life. For example, in my artwork you'll notice a lot of Southeast Asian folk beliefs and Taoism elements. Those elements are the elements I grew up with, so eventually they were always going

“In my opinion, every artist creates things that are relatable to them”

THEURGY

"If I were a witch, I would create a spell to make people return to childhood. I want to cast that spell on myself."



find their way into my art. In my opinion, every artist creates things that are relatable to them."

FROM ANIMATION TO ART

Zeen briefly studied graphic design and 3D animation, but never graduated. His first job in art, as an assistant to an advertising illustrator, was drawing storyboards for TV commercials. That lasted three months. He spent the next five years as an animator in an animation studio.

Throughout this time, Zeen wanted to be an illustrator – to do the sort of work he's doing now – but he didn't have a good-enough portfolio. Animation was what he did to survive. The work was okay. He liked some of his colleagues. But it wasn't what he really wanted to be doing. So every night he came home from the animation studio and worked on his illustrations. He practised ("I practised a lot") and slowly built up a portfolio that was good enough to get him illustration commissions.

Zeen used to regret spending so much time in animation. He thought it was time wasted. Now he realises ➤

REDEMPTION

"My process starts with line-art, and I check the composition, character design and environment are strong. Next, I apply lighting and colour to make sure the atmosphere is correct. Then I polish form and shape, and do a final touch-up to enrich the entire image."



Interview

DISGUISE

"In this piece I wanted to show something that I couldn't express in real life. Grown-ups have to hide their emotions once they're older – unlike children, who are free to express their emotions."



“You can just Google to look for references, but go outside, travel and watch films – that’s the way I observe”

► he wouldn’t be the artist he is today without his apprenticeship in animation. It helped him hone the attention to detail that’s so important to his work. It was where he learned how to give characters the right expression, the right body language – all the little things that make pictures tell stories. It was the same thing with his boss in advertising: Zeen learned so many tricks and techniques that he still uses today. He wishes he could go back and thank him.

Zeen’s main job is teaching art classes online. He still takes on the occasional commercial illustration commission. But when he can afford it, he takes time off teaching and commissions to work on his own art. A perfect day is a day with no

teaching, when he can concentrate solely on personal work.

He works from home in Kuala Lumpur. His setup is simple: a MacBook Pro, a Wacom Cintiq, two dogs and a baby. The best thing about being a freelancer is he’s free to manage his time however he wants. Of course, the worst thing about being a freelancer is he’s free to manage his time however he wants. So he can easily become lazy or completely consumed by his personal work. Being a freelancer, for Zeen, is an exercise in self-discipline.

UNIQUE IDEAS

Zeen is busy developing his latest art book, titled 21, which he hopes to release next year. He’s also working on



SECRET HIDEOUT

"I think every child has a secret hideout – or maybe it's a boy thing? I did have a secret hideout with my friends, where we'd gather and play after school."



WHO'S THE KILLER?

"I'm inspired a lot by Hong Kong horror films and folk beliefs and so I try to create a creepy atmosphere by using similar lighting in some of my work."

making his SKEEN series into a clothing range. Zeen says to be a good illustrator – besides being proficient at drawing – you need to think creatively. You need to bring something to your art that’s uniquely yours. The artist believes the best way to do this is by observing the world around you: “Of course, you can just Google to look for references too – it’s very convenient” ►

**DESIRE**

"We have so much desire in our lives. It's like bondage, tying us up. I'm influenced a lot by Japanese culture. I fused elements including everything from the art movement Ukiyo-e to the Japanese bondage style known as Kinbaku."

BLOODY MINDED

Zeen on his love for Hong Kong horror and how it influences his work...

Zeen has always watched Hong Kong horror films. It was that, or a blank screen. "Growing up, the reason why I watched a lot Hong Kong horror was because, back to the old days, the only thing I could watch was Hong Kong horror. There were no other choices!"

The artist has always received a lot of compliments about the lighting in his work. He typically uses top-down lighting, which gives his imagery a moody, creepy, cinematic look. This is one of the many ways Hong Kong horror films have influenced his work: "I want to create dramatic lighting with a creepy atmosphere, which is most suited to my themes."

It's not just the aesthetics Zeen has incorporated into his work. He says Hong Kong horror tends to be quite funny – both intentionally and unintentionally. This is something else you'll often find in his work; darker elements counterpointed with a touch of humour: "As you can see, I draw a lot of spooky characters. At the same time, I also like to include some cute and happy elements, so I choose to use vibrant colours."

But the biggest influence Hong Kong horror has had on Zeen's work is in the way he tries to build a piece around an idea. Hiding beneath the surface of his favourite old horrors movies – under all that blood and guts – there are occasionally some pretty interesting themes. Similarly, Zeen tries to mix striking visuals with more subtle ideas: "Although those old movies look funny and low-budget when you watch them back, they influenced me a lot."

For anyone looking to get into the Hong Kong horror film genre, Zeen recommends *Out of Dark* (1995) and the TV series *Vampire Expert* (1995).

**CHILD HEART**

"The idea behind this drawing is that I want to keep my child's heart. I wish I could have kept that innocence."

**LANTERN**

"When I was a kid, I would carry lanterns with my friends and play on the streets."

Interview



» nowadays. But go outside, travel, and watch films – that's the way I observe. Travel is one of the best way to collect references."

The temple beside Zeen's grandparents house is rundown now, but he goes back to it again and again in his work. A trademark of Zeen's art is the lighting. He uses cinematic lighting to create atmosphere and highlight themes. His imagery, in his own words, is "spooky" and "creepy," but beneath the surface you'll usually find "cute and happy elements," or vice versa. It's the same way that Hong Kong horror films often contain as much comedy as they do horror.

VIBRANT COLOURS

Another contrast to the dark, disturbing side of his art is the bright, vibrant colour palette he uses to paint them. SKEEN mixes contemporary streetwear with ancient Asian folklore. For example, Disguise shows an adult concealing their emotions and children overcome by them. Kill Monday, Long Live Sunday was inspired by both his love of the weekend and the creeping dread he feels on a Sunday night as Monday morning looms. Zeen's art often shows one thing that's also another, like a temple that's both a playground and a cinema screening scary movies.

"Creativity comes from our daily life and experiences. The way I create my artwork is by combining ideas and elements. The ideas could be my

“Artwork that combine skill and ideas will get people's attention”



SKEEN

"I created this series because I like streetwear and 80s and 90s fashion, so I wanted to create my own fashion by using Southeast Asian folk-belief elements."

emotions, life experiences, or the circumstance I've lived through. As for the elements, these come from personal preferences, a lot of reference from Southeast Asian religions.

"For me, of course drawing skill is very important. It makes the illustration come out nice visually. But at the same time, I hope my artworks also contain interesting ideas. I think artwork that combines skill and ideas will get people's attention." ■

KILL MONDAY,
LONG LIVE SUNDAY

"I've always hated Monday – as a kid and an adult. I used the elements of the Chinese lunar calendar; it will be red on weekends and public holidays, and green on weekdays."

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PRINT AND DIGITAL BACK ISSUES



Issue 201

July 2021

Explore cover artist Bobby Chiu's colouring and lighting methods, create engaging characters with David Melling, and get better at inking with Jeff Miracola. We also look at rejection, and how to turn a 'no' into something positive.



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!

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Issue 193
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November 2020



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Gretel Lusky

We take a deep dive into the gorgeous marine-themed artworks and character studies created by the Argentine illustrator

Artist PROFILE

Gretel Lusky

LOCATION: Argentina



Gretel is an illustrator who worked in animation for several years before moving into the comic book industry. Her clients include DC Comics, Marvel, IDW Publishing, 3dtotal Publishing and Netflix. Between freelancing, she loves to create her own stories and illustrations inspired in nature, marine imagery and fantasy characters.

www.gretellusky.com



"This is a small whale design with a tiny cosmos inside that I created for a marine themed sticker sheet."



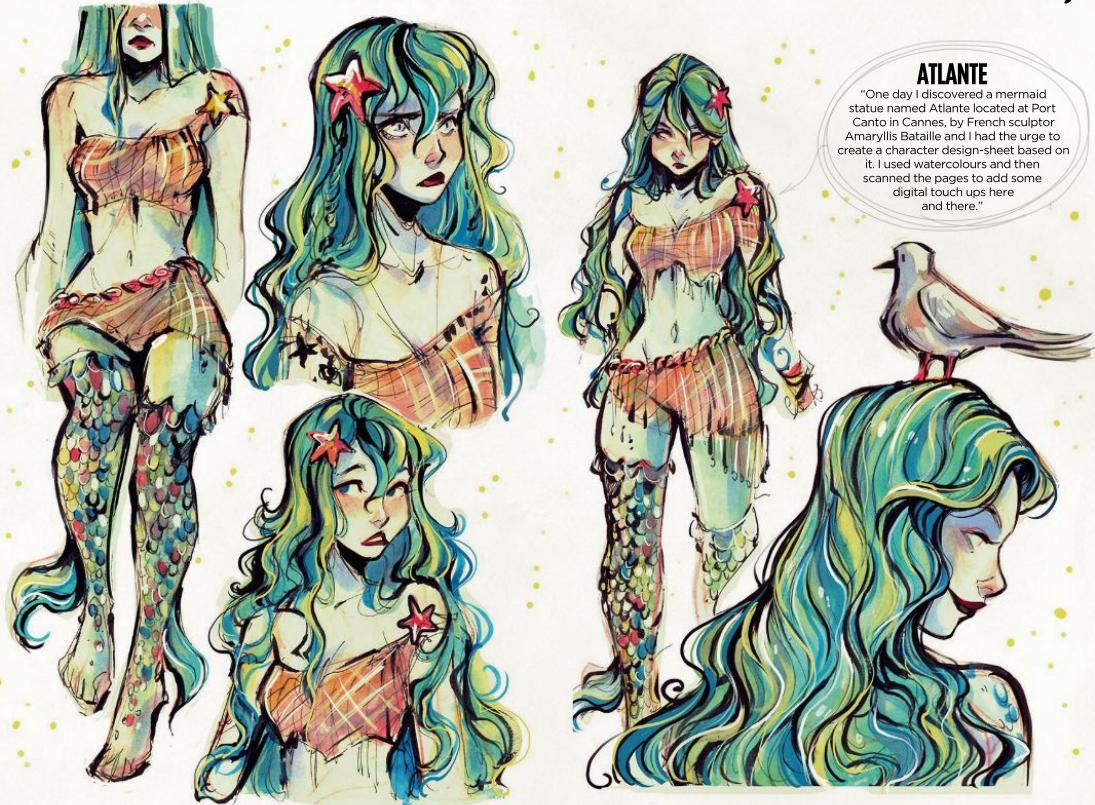
OVERGROWN

"An idea based on the word 'overgrown'. My process usually starts with a word or a short phrase that I like to translate into a drawing. There's a lot of symbolism and elements that I repeat throughout my work."

BLOOM

"Mermaids and sea-related stuff are some of the subjects I enjoy drawing the most. I created this one for the Mermay 2020 challenge and I had fun using pinks, yellows and greens – one of my all-time favourite colour palettes."

Sketchbook Gretel Lusky



ATLANTE

"One day I discovered a mermaid statue named Atlante located at Port Canto in Cannes, by French sculptor Amaryllis Bataille and I had the urge to create a character design-sheet based on it. I used watercolours and then scanned the pages to add some digital touch ups here and there."



UNIVERSE

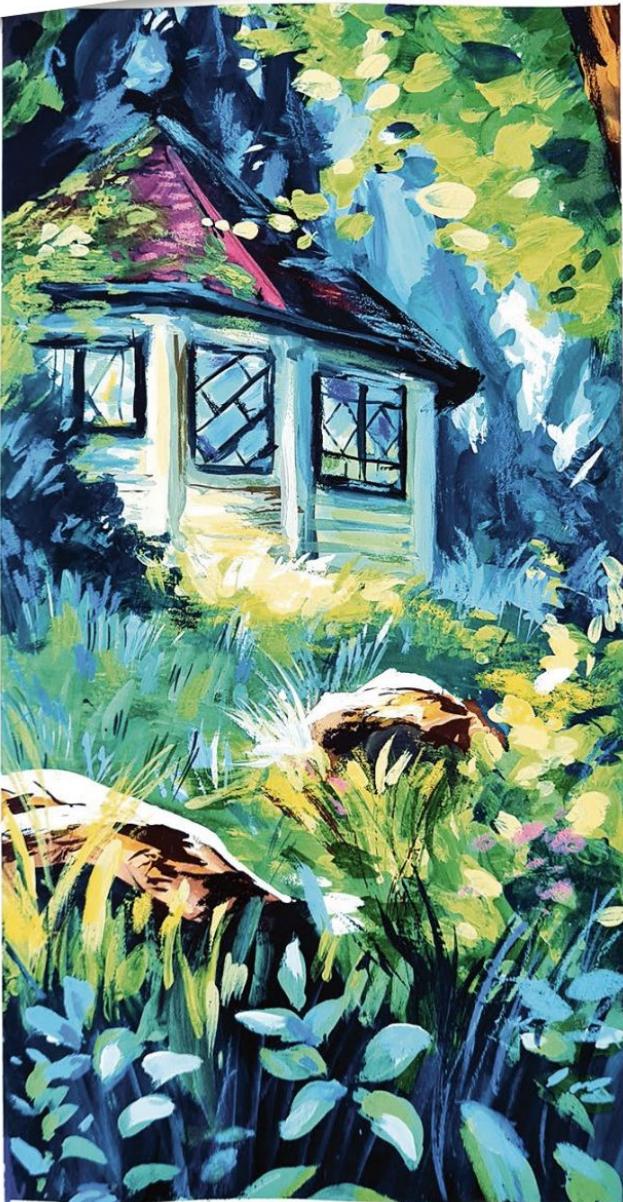
"I love experimenting with different media in my sketchbook. Here I was playing around with black ink and a blue acrylic marker to create all the tiny stars and galaxies."



STUCK

"An idea that came out of the words 'snow' and 'happiness'. I love creating conceptual illustrations that usually carry hidden messages or stories that the audience can reinterpret and read however they want. There's always something very special about that!"

Sketchbook



GOUACHE STUDY

"Practising painting nature and scenery with gouache is always so much fun. Here's a study based on the film *The Secret World of Arrietty* from Studio Ghibli."



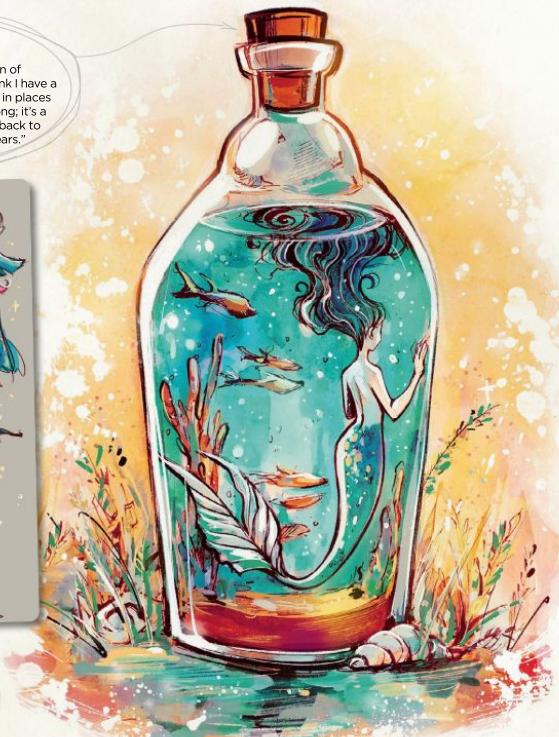
COLIVIA LOOMBA

"This is one of my most beloved characters: a witch named Colivia with her little pigeon companions. The part I enjoy the most about designing characters is doing a bunch of different expressions and poses that help the character become truly alive."



MISPLACED

"This was a combination of traditional and digital art. I think I have a thing for drawing characters in places where they don't really belong; it's a concept I've been coming back to for the past couple of years."



MOODY

"Another mermaid – this was just an excuse to paint a sketchbook page using only alcohol markers."



OCTOPUS

"Octopuses are so majestic. They can be a little bit scary, too. I love to incorporate them into my work whenever I can – there's a lot of beauty in their flowing shapes."



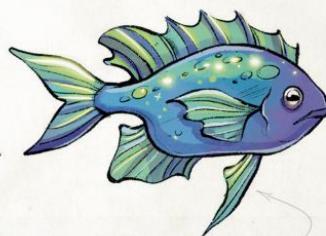
“Octopuses are so majestic. They can be a little bit scary, too”

Sketchbook



SWING

"Here I was experimenting with black ink and contrasts. I wanted to create a piece that could be very happy and innocent at first glance, but once you start looking more closely you'll find something very dark and creepy lurking behind."



FISH FRIENDS

"These little ones were also intended for a marine-themed sticker sheet!"



WARRIOR

"Antique diving helmets are another element that's always present in my work. This mermaid came out of the idea of a warrior creature and it was incredibly fun to mix different mediums such as watercolours and gouache."



STYLES

"I love mixing fashion and colours. I always find myself searching for different styles and gathering a bunch of references to create huge sketchbook spreads of cool, fashionable-looking characters."

EMERALD

"I'm, of course, a huge fan of using a lot of colour, but sometimes I also like to challenge myself to create sketchbook pages that have a more limited colour palette. Here I was trying a monochromatic approach with alcohol markers."



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Workshops

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are available...**

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Advice from the world's best artists



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Paint Tool SAI**

Angela Wang paints figures from mythology.

Photoshop

DRAW AND PAINT FANTASY MANGA

Yueko shares her process for painting a female knight in an anime-inspired art style, paying particular attention to the hair and face



This artwork was commissioned by the ImagineFX team for their cover! I was given a reference for the pose they wanted, based on a sketch I had previously drawn and some ideas for the character.

The idea of beauty and strength being non-exclusive is something

I like a lot, which is why I often turn to the theme of female knights for my original character designs. In the past, I found armour quite difficult to draw, but I've always tried to push myself through challenges instead of avoiding them.

Crystal horns from a past artwork of mine caught the team's eye, so I incorporated them into this design.

I added similar embellishments on her sword and armour because I thought the crystal would look a little out of place if it were only on her horns, especially as this character's hair is warm and bright. Because it's a close-up of a character and the team wanted the focus to be on her face, I spent extra time painting the details and softening her features. ➤

How I create...

A STYLISED MANGA HAIR LOOK



1 Create an interesting base

I start the hair by laying down a base gradient, then applying some shading using a Linear Burn layer. By locking that layer, airbrushing lighter tones within it and then adding a soft Overlay layer to brighten it up, the base becomes more interesting.



2 Build up texture

For the next stage, I flesh out the overall shape of the hair and add more strands around the edges to hint at the texture. I blend the shading of the hair down, because hair doesn't often cast harsh shadows on to itself.



3 Refine the hair's shape

In the final stage I focus on cleaning up the smaller details and flesh out the strands around the face. I decide to break apart the large strand in front of the ear to soften the hair and make it appear less thick and solid.

In depth Fantasy manga



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BRING A KNIGHT TO LIFE

Focus on the face

Faces tend to draw a lot of attention and can hold the key to whether someone finds an image appealing or not. Thus I like to spend extra time refining the details here, to make sure that it looks the way I want it to. For anime-inspired art, I keep the features subtle and soft.

Make it pop!

I decide to use brighter colours than usual for this artwork. This ensures the image 'pops' and is eye-catching on the cover!

Shaping the hair

One of my favourite things to draw is hair. Hair is especially useful in guiding to and complementing a character's face. I like to think of hair as a compositional tool sometimes, as opposed to real hair. This removes the consideration for how hair works in reality and can result in interesting shapes.

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: TEXTURED BRUSH



I use Photoshop's textured brushes to soften edges and give my art a messy, painterly feeling. Any textured brush will do for this.

HARD ROUND BRUSH



The main brush I use for everything. I turn on Opacity with Pressure and blend with the help of the Color Picker tool.

AIRBRUSH



My second most-used brush. I use this to apply lighting effects with layer modes such as Overlay and Soft Light.

Soften edges

I use textured brushes at the bottom of the artwork along the edges of the character to lessen the amount of detail at those locations. Softening the edges also gives a traditional, painterly feel to the artwork.

Basic tools

For most of the artwork I use Photoshop's basic hard round brush with Pressure with Opacity turned on. Occasionally I'll use an airbrush to apply lighting with layer modes. In the final stages I use painterly brushes to apply texture and soften edges.

Clip Studio Paint

COLOUR MANGA IN

CLIP STUDIO PAINT

Asia Ladowska reveals her process for creating a manga portrait, while passing on essential advice on sketching, shadows and lighting

Artist PROFILE

Asia Ladowska
LOCATION: Japan

The Polish artist, who is currently residing in Japan, is the author of the best-selling book *Sketch with Asia*.
www.ladowska.com



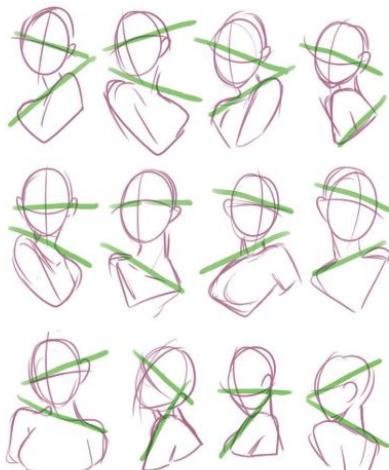
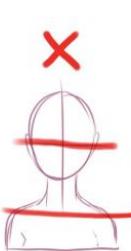
Painting digitally isn't an easy thing to do, especially when you're staring at a blank canvas and the possibilities are endless. I always feel excited about creating a new illustration, but with this joy comes many fears and a lot of self-doubt.

Apart from being unsure where to start, I used to ask myself questions. Is my illustration looking good? What else can I add? Did I add too

much? What if I change this? I'm sure many of you feel the same at the beginning of your art journey, so to help you out I've prepared some tips that you can refer to 'find yourself' if you ever feel lost when painting.

For this workshop I created a character: Mai. This simple name comes from the name of the month I painted her in. I started this illustration in May 2020 and didn't open the file until May 2021 when I finally finished it.

Art is a journey, not a destination. If you check the number of my Instagram posts, it's above 900. If you take away 10 per cent to be on the safe side, that's at least 800 portraits, and I keep making new ones! Sometimes instead of asking yourself too many questions about your own drawing, all you need to do is finish it and then start another. Painting is incredibly enjoyable, so as a final word I want to say keep creating, have fun and don't give up.



1 Choose an interesting angle

The most difficult angle to work with when drawing a portrait is the frontal view. It needs careful symmetry, balance and well-measured proportions, and when you put all of this together it looks a little... boring. I always struggle to make frontal poses look interesting, and end up trying to second-guess myself. Even if I push through the process, the result doesn't look very attractive. However, if you choose a slightly more dynamic angle then you'll be off to a good start!

2 Sketch quickly

I always try to draft a sketch in under 15 minutes. Let's face it – it's just a sketch. I need to visualise my idea before I forget it! My favourite tool to use in Clip Studio Paint is the Darker Pencil. It's good for sketches, line-art and even shading. I mainly use the software's default brushes, but adjust their settings slightly. For the Darker Pencil I always untick the Adjust by Speed option and change Stabilization to around 15. ➤

In depth Clip Studio Paint

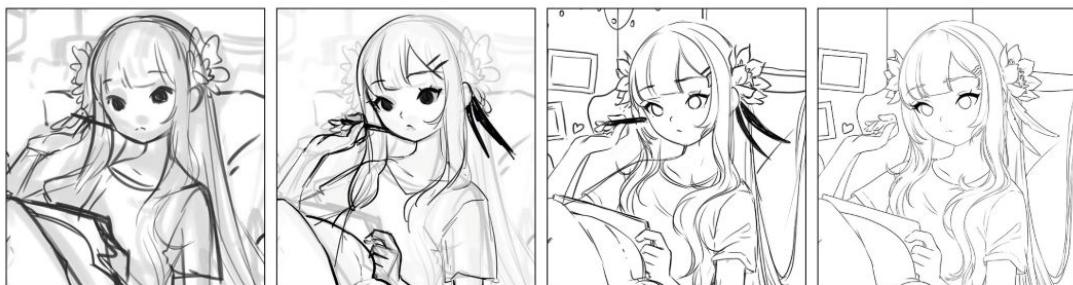


Workshops



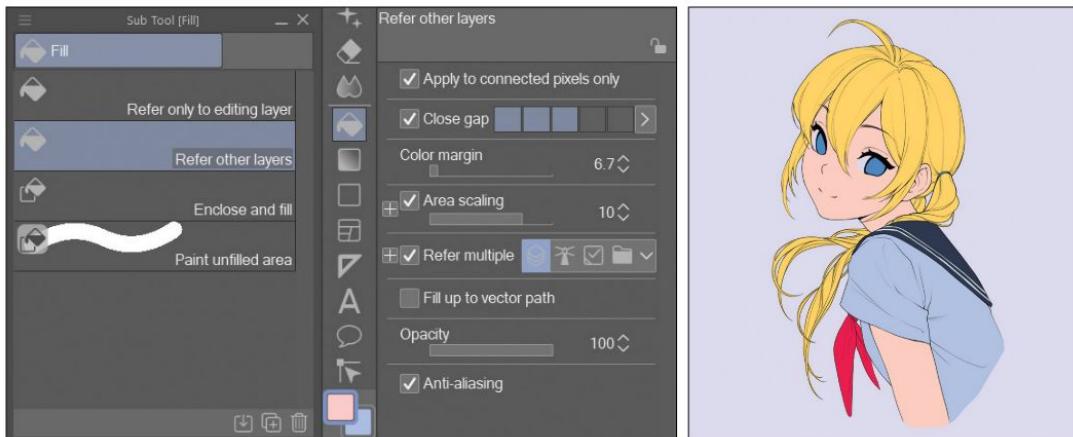
3 Colour your sketches to bring out the character

I usually add a splash of colour to my sketches at this stage. Some mistakes can't be spotted when there are just lines in place (and on top of that, many messy lines!). It helps to see the illustration as a shape, and colours help to shape sketches. When you squint you can already see the character. For the lines of this sketch I used a dark navy colour rather than black, and when I changed the layer mode to Color Burn it resulted in beautiful hues that I can use later for shading my character.



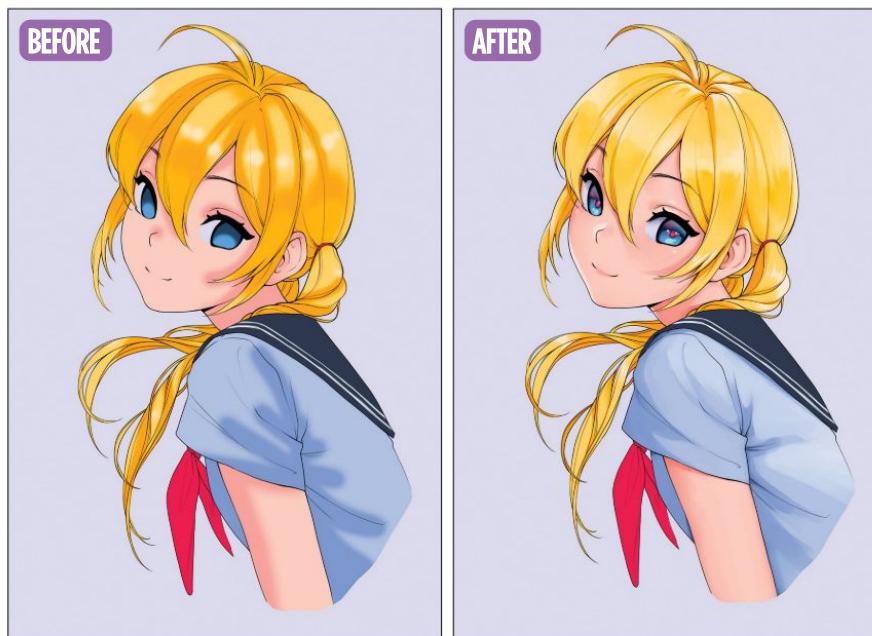
4 Don't rush the line-art

I can break down my process into sketch, line-art, colours and post-processing. Yet each of these steps can become complicated. By saying "don't rush the line-art" I don't mean draw slowly, but rather refine the sketch as many times as it takes for the line-art to become easier to draw.



5 Save time using Clip Studio Paint's Smart Bucket tool

Before I knew Clip Studio Paint, I used to waste countless hours drawing flat layers manually. Luckily, you don't have to make that mistake! The software's Smart Bucket tool is very good at recognising line-art and with one click I can fill in most of the areas. If you play with its settings it can identify lines that have gaps in them, or even textured lines. To make sure all the pixels in my character are selected, I colour the background first on a separate layer. Then I switch off the line-art and colour the reverse on another layer.



6 Use a hard brush rather than a soft airbrush

Good drawings have both soft and hard shadows in place, but if you're not sure what and where they should go, choose the hard edge. Drawings look much better with flat cell shading (just look at all the anime ever made!) rather than mellow soft airbrush shading for

everything. I always use a hard brush first and then blend selected edges into soft ones if necessary.

In this step I've added some shading to all of the colour layers. Much like artists who use ambient occlusion, this shading doesn't define any light source. Rather, it adds some depth to the character and makes her look more interesting. Let me show you how I do it in the next step.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

CLIP STUDIO PAINT
DEFAULT BRUSHES: DARKER PENCIL

This is the brush that I use for almost everything: sketching, line-art and painting. All I have to do is change the size and colour.

COOL BRUSH

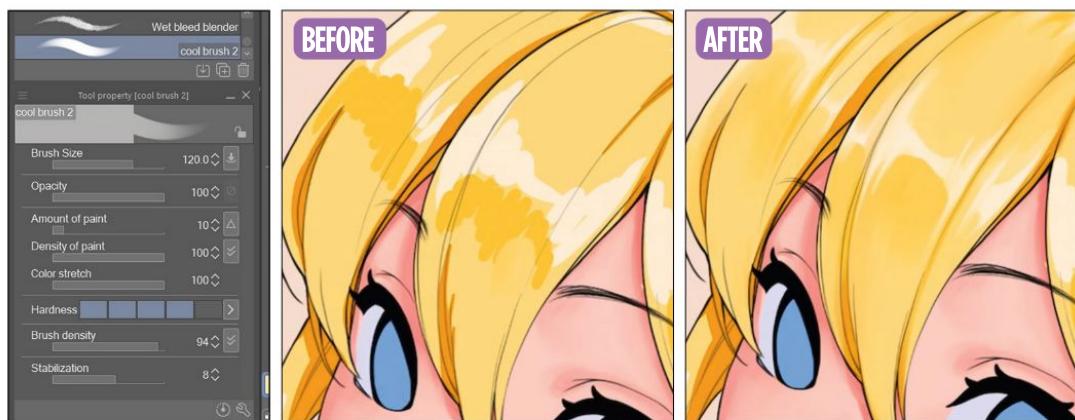
This is a tweaked transparent Watercolor Brush. Ideal for painting and blending colours.

SPARKLE

This brush is good for creating magical and sparkling effects.

AIRBRUSH

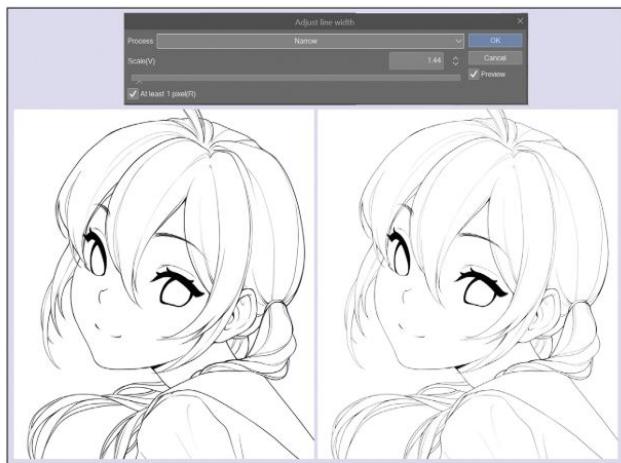
It's rather difficult to add brush with all the other brushes, so this one comes in handy.



7 You can use the Transparent Watercolor brush as a blender

For me, a much more powerful tool than the Blending brush or any other paint brush is the Transparent Watercolor default brush in Clip Studio Paint. You can see the settings I use in the screenshot, but I change them as I paint. If you set Amount of Paint to a low value, it blends the colours together, depending on the direction of your strokes and the pressure you put on your pen, and it doesn't matter what colour you've chosen for your brush. If you set that value to a high number, it'll blend the colour of your brush with the existing colours. This tool has so much versatility, and surprisingly the results doesn't even look like watercolours... ➤

Workshops



8 Did you know you can adjust your line widths?

Clip Studio Paint is made for painters, illustrators, animators and manga artists, and is packed with functions to help us work faster and more effectively. One of those functions that I can't live without is being able to adjust line width. You can access it under Filters>Correct line>Adjust line width, and it enables you to thicken or narrow the line-art. On the left you can see the lines I drew originally, and on the right are my corrected lines. Thanks to this function my illustration became even more delicate. However, if your art now looks rough and pixelated, I'd recommend duplicating the layer of edited line-art, blurring it a little with Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur and setting the layer mode to Multiply.

9 Experiment with colours

I can never decide what colours to use! I love playing with colours and changing them to see "what if...". There are multiple ways you can do it yourself. You can either select the coloured area in question (or apply it to a whole layer) and use Edit>Tonal Correction>Hue/Saturation/Brightness filter and adjust the sliders, or clip a layer to the one you're editing and set it to Color mode, then add colour with the Bucket tool. You can also add new colours using functions such as Multiply, Color Dodge, Divide... you name it! You can also mix colours and use gradients, too.



10 Put a whole world into the eyes

I do believe that eyes are the window to the soul and I paint them with this in mind. I love painting eyes! It might actually be the eyes that made me fall in love with the manga style art. I endlessly experiment with how I paint them, using a variety of styles, shapes and colours. I often take inspiration from other artists as well, and mix their styles with mine. I wonder if you can see my inspirations in my drawings.

11 DEFINE THE LIGHT SOURCE AND ADD SHADOWS

Learn how to quickly paint shadows to enhance your manga characters



B Paint flat shadows

I imagine my light source, then add a layer set to Multiply above the Color layers. Next, I paint a shadow with just one colour on this new layer. It's usually greyish purple, but depending on what effect you want to achieve, you can use any colour.

C Make your shadows glow

To breathe some life into the flat shadow, I add another layer above my earlier Multiply one and set it to Color Dodge. Now with a soft brush I paint the areas that I want to glow, using a colour that's low on value and high on saturation. ➔

Workshops



12 Ignore the rules and just paint!

Everything you've just read? Sometimes I don't want to do any of it! To be honest, it's a lot to remember and think about when painting. When I just want to relax while creating art I get my illustrations as far as I can with a coloured sketch, and then add a layer on top of it (or sometimes not even that) and just paint. My favourite tools here are the Darker Pencil and the multifunctional Transparent Watercolor Brush.



13 Use coloured reflections in your art

Here's a cool technique to bring your illustrations to life: add reflected colours in the shadow areas or on the edges where different colours meet. Colours often reflect each other in nature. If the character is placed in an environment with strong red elements for example, red is likely to reflect in some darker colours. The same goes for the blue of the sky or green from the grass. In illustration it can be exaggerated; manga artists often use skin hue around the face on clothes and hair to make the character's skin look soft, almost appearing to glow.



14 You don't have to be amazing at everything!

I'm really bad at drawing backgrounds. I know that I'll get good at this when I start practising, but I haven't found the drive to do so just yet. That doesn't mean I can't create illustrations with backgrounds. I just need to be a little more creative about the fact that I can't paint them! For this illustration I'm using photos I took myself and adjusting them using my photo-editing skills. I crop them, blur, brighten, overpaint and add effects to the point where it's not easy to tell that these are photos in the background.



15 Know when to walk away from the drawing

Often I'll blast through the entire illustration process, then sit in front of the canvas adding and deleting layers for hours, only to end up exactly where I started. Am I finished? Should I add more? Does it look good? Can it look better?

What helps me to walk away from the drawing (when I'm unable to grasp that I don't need to create a masterpiece every time I draw) is my

list of things I can do to help close the chapter. These steps are: adding a little more Color or Glow Dodge (like the bokeh lights you can see in the picture); adding a Color Balance Layer; and adding a signature. And unless I upload the drawing online it's likely that I'll come back to it and waste more time. Posting online gives me closure. My social media platforms are a journal of my artistic journey. A trip full of learning, discovering, creating and of course, mistakes as well. ■

SketchUp & Photoshop CREATE ANIME- STYLE SCENES



FeiGiap combines SketchUp's 3D modelling tools with Photoshop colouring techniques to create an anime-style background illustration

Artist PROFILE

FeiGiap
LOCATION: Malaysia

FeiGiap's the co-founder of Running Snail Studio and creative brand Loka Made. He's best known for his detailed anime-style illustration of Asian cityscapes.
<http://ifxm.ag/feigiap-da>



A small, cosy café in the middle of the town, surrounded by plants and trees – like a scene from a Studio Ghibli or Makoto Shinkai film. This is my initial idea as I plan an environment workshop. Here, I'll share how I use SketchUp's 3D modelling tools to help me create an interesting background illustration. I always like to see buildings at a range of heights, with people having to use stairs to reach different levels. This

makes the city looks slightly different from our daily environment, which helps to make it feel more interesting.

After gathering some related photo references, I'll start by sketching out the composition in Photoshop until I'm happy with the design of the scene. Then I'll move on to modelling in SketchUp. The program comes in handy when I want to draw slightly more complex buildings. It enables me to explore different camera angles and cast shadows

accurately. I think it's easier to use compared to other 3D modelling software. I build the main building structure in SketchUp and then output it as a clean line-art image.

My colouring technique is influenced by Japan 2D animation film backgrounds, like those seen in Studio Ghibli, Makoto Shinkai and Hosoda Mamoru films. I love to study how they use colour and capture light and a certain mood. In this workshop, I'll share some of my own colouring techniques and tips.



1 Composition sketch

Before I start sketching I gather photo references of buildings and streets to make sure I understand the designs. I'm using my Sketch pen in Photoshop for my composition sketch. I usually keep the paper size small to avoid drawing too many details. The sketch helps me to finalise the composition, and plan my light and shadows.



2 Modelling in SketchUp

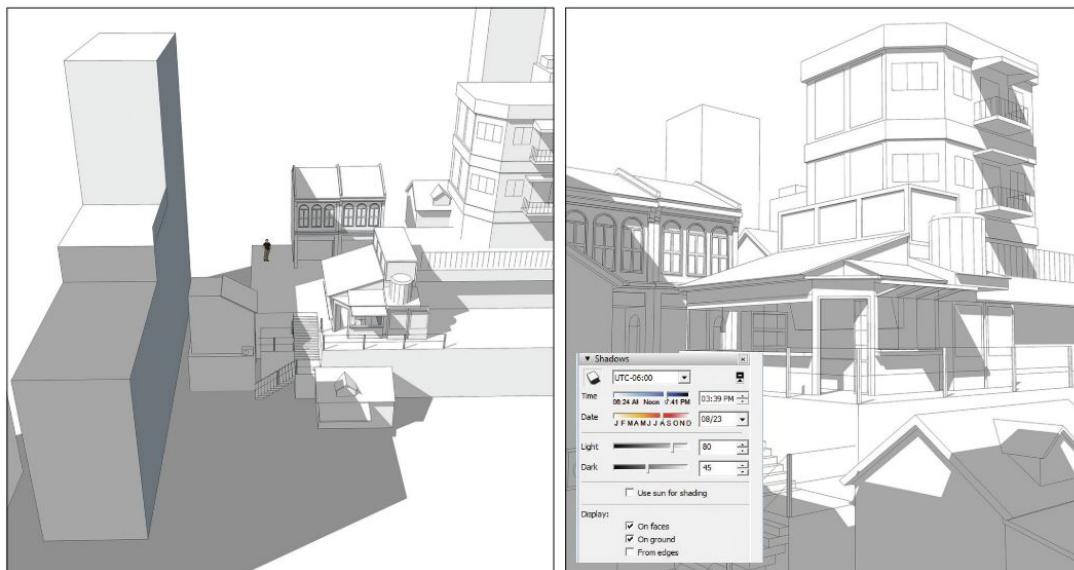
Instead of drawing the outlines in Photoshop, I'm using SketchUp to build the basic structure based on my composition sketch. Using 3D modelling can help me skip on the perspective construction process. The models I'm building here are basic, but clear enough to suggest the underlying forms of the buildings. Details such as textures and plants will be added later, during the colouring stage. ➤

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

In depth Anime-style scenes



Workshops



3 Casting shadows in SketchUp

Another useful tool in SketchUp is the Shadow setting. It enables me to set different angles of light source, based on a particular timezone and time of day. To create a larger area of cast shadow, I build a high structure outside the camera and use this to cast my shadow. After this, I export the models as two different JPEGs: one with the shadow and another without.

 **RESOURCES**

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: PAINT BRUSH

I use the Paint brush for most of the plain surfaces. It can blend colours easily.

SKETCH PEN

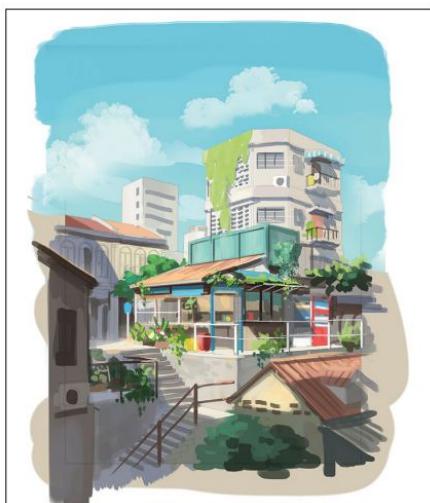
The ideal tool for sketching and outlining. It can create natural-looking line-art.

LEAF BRUSH

I use this brush to paint bushes and plants. It enables me to recreate realistic plant silhouettes.

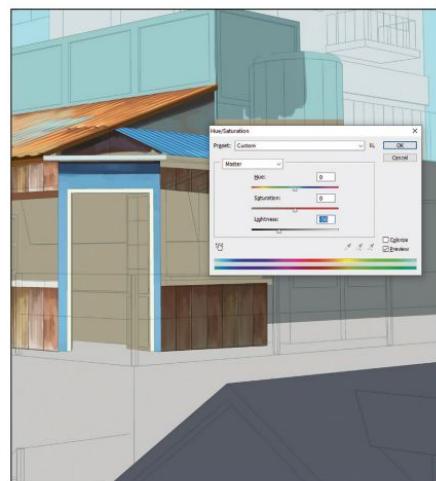
DRY TEXTURE BRUSH

This brush can create rust and stain effects on surfaces, to enhance the level of realism.



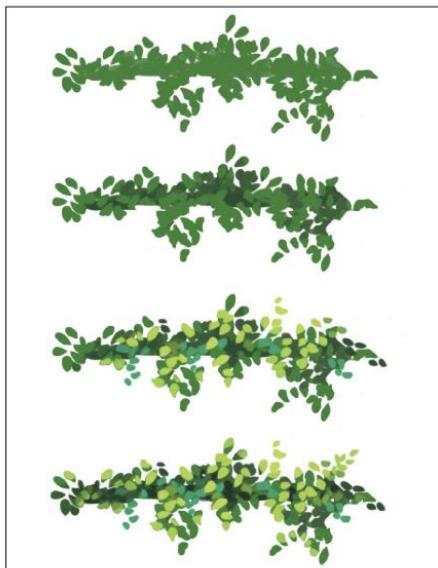
4 Colour planning

I open the modelling JPEG in Photoshop and start my colour planning. Here I'll use an opaque paint-over method and again I'll work at a small size to avoid over-detailing. This stage is mainly about capturing the key colours of the background. I'll use warmer colours on light areas and cool colours on shadow areas. Tonal value is important if I'm to create an effective depth of field.



5 Generate surface textures

I normally start my colouring on the focal point. I create plain surface textures such as wood or zinc that I can duplicate and mask on the target surface. Keep the original plain copy so that you can use it in the future. For the shadow area I simply select the area and use Image>Adjustment>Hue/Saturation>Lightness to darken the tone. I then touch up them with a brush to make them look more natural.



6 Painting overhanging foliage

I want to depict the café surrounded by various plants, and my custom leaf brush tool comes in very handy for this step. I start to paint the silhouette of the foliage, then on a second layer I add a slightly darker tone and follow this with a lighter tone. Once I've achieved the basic form I blend some parts to make it look less stiff, then paint some cast shadow between leaves so that they look more natural.



7 Populate the café's shelves with objects

The café's interior needs to contain lots of different objects, so I create a few stock items such as mugs, drinks and containers. Then I edit some of their colours to add variety. I place those objects on different cabinets and darken objects at the back of the café to create depth. ➤

Workshops



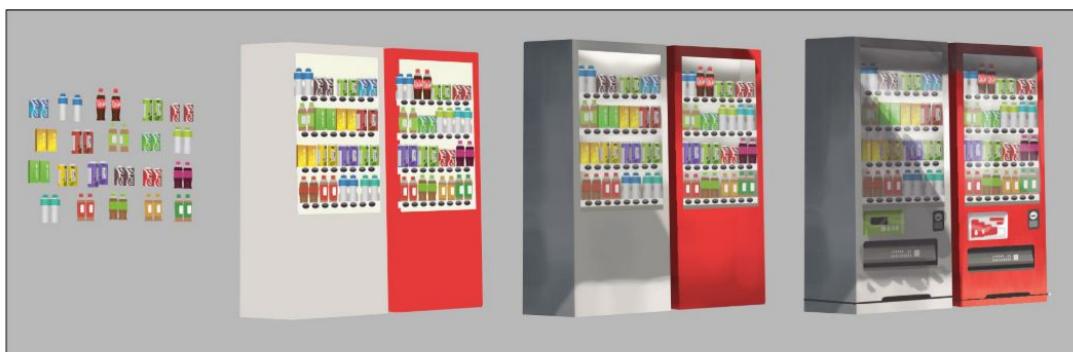
8 Detailing the focal area

I continue colouring the focal area, because the 3D outline is just the basic form (A). During this stage I refer to some photo references of café interiors so that I know what objects to add (B). I also need to take care with the depth of the building. The light and shadow play an important role here, and I want to avoid the entrance and exit looking the same (C). Once I'm happy with my progress here, I can continue with the rest of the background.



9 Varying the foliage

The plants in front of the café are one of the most important elements in this drawing. I want them to make the building visually interesting and grab the viewer's attention, so their design needs to be more varied. I use different brushes for each of the plants to alter their leaf shapes, and adjust their colour and tone slightly to highlight their differences.



10 Fill up the vending machines and blend them into their surroundings

One of the most challenging parts of this scene is painting the vending machines. I start by creating various can and bottle designs, and colour them differently to suggest a range of drink flavours. Then I place them inside the vending machines. To create depth, I lighten the tone of the drinks and add a light effect inside the cabinet. The cast shadow on the two vending machines helps to blend them with the background.

In depth Anime-style scenes



11 Introduce an apartment block to evoke feelings of nostalgia

In Malaysia, there are some old three- and four-storey apartments that I feel nostalgic about, so I want to put one into the background. I use the base colour to define the 3D structure (A). Because the building is a slight distance away from the viewer, the tonal value can be less of a contrast (B). Then I add cast shadows and more details on the windows and balcony to capture that feeling of nostalgia I'm after (C). ➡

Workshops



12 Painting distant buildings in the composition

When come to painting background buildings, I'll blend them with the colour of the sky and using less contrast tonal values without compromising the clarity of their design. Here I keep their designs simple compared to the apartment and café so that the viewer's attention remains on the focal areas. Applying a little Gaussian blur (Filter>Blur>Gaussian blur) on the background buildings will create depth of field.



13 Generate mist between buildings and objects

The overall colouring process is almost finished. I group my layers based on their depth distance, which helps me to quickly adjust their tone by using Image>Adjustment>Levels. To enhance the depth between buildings and objects, I create a Screen layer between the group and use a soft brush to paint a mist effect. This is a common painting technique used to create anime-style backgrounds.



14 Adding characters and final touches

Once the background is finished, I carry out some general colour and tone adjustments. To make the scenery looks more lively, I get a little help from Running Snail Studio's character artist Jia Yee, who draws some characters into my artwork. I'm quite happy with the final outcome and Jia Yee's manga-style characters make this artwork looks like a screenshot from a Japanese animation. I hope you've enjoyed this workshop! ☺



Next month

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

Illustration skills

Take inspiration from world-leading professionals to help sharpen up your artistic tool kit

Bryn Jones reveals his Blender art techniques

All this... and more!

40-minute sketch studies
Learn how to quickly build a scene with artist Gillian Galang.

Fluffy little clouds...

Justin Donaldson's masterclass on painting different types of clouds.

Len Nicholas's sketchbook

Prepare for a riot of inked-up bots, mechs and character doodles.

Interview: Maruti Bitamin

Dive into the sublime artworks of this Toronto-based illustrator.

ISSUE 203 ON SALE IN PRINT & DIGITAL 9 JULY 2021

Paint Tool SAI

GET BETTER AT PAINT TOOL SAI

Artist **Angela Wang** (aka awanqi) shows how to compose figures from mythology using symbology coupled with a sense of refinement



Artist PROFILE

Angela Wang
LOCATION: US

Also known online as awanqi, Angela is a freelance illustrator who has a penchant for history and fantasy, and has worked for clients in publishing and comics. www.awanqi.com



Illustration is driven by storytelling, and stories are built up with certain artistic "building blocks" such as motifs, symbolism, gestures, poses and so on. In this workshop I want to express the characteristics of the Greek gods Hypnos and Thanatos, using colour to set the tone, lighting to direct the focus of the story and more, all while retaining their personalities. As with

many of the gods from antiquity, certain symbols are associated with each one. They're specific enough to identify them using a single icon.

I'll be explaining the processes I use to create an illustration, as well as giving tips and techniques that I find useful to my artistic practice. Since many of the symbols have already been established throughout history, as an artist I'm able to use my preferences and abilities to piece

together a new story from these older structures.

In my effort to create a memorable piece of art that's also recognisable to those familiar with the mythological figures, simplicity is the key to understanding what's taking place in the piece. Therefore, I've chosen to illustrate universal symbols for what each god represents. This makes my job as an artist easier, and also enables the viewer to quickly grasp the theme of my artwork.

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PAINT TOOL SAI

CUSTOM BRUSHES: PEN

I use the Pen tool just for sketching. I set it to a slightly lowered Opacity to so it appears softer.

AIRBRUSH

I use the Airbrush tool for painting soft edges, and usually for creating subtle layer effects.

BRUSH

One of my main two painting tools, I use Brush for harder edges and details, such as hair.

WATERCOLOR

Watercolor is the softer of my two key tools. I use it for blending colours and general painting.

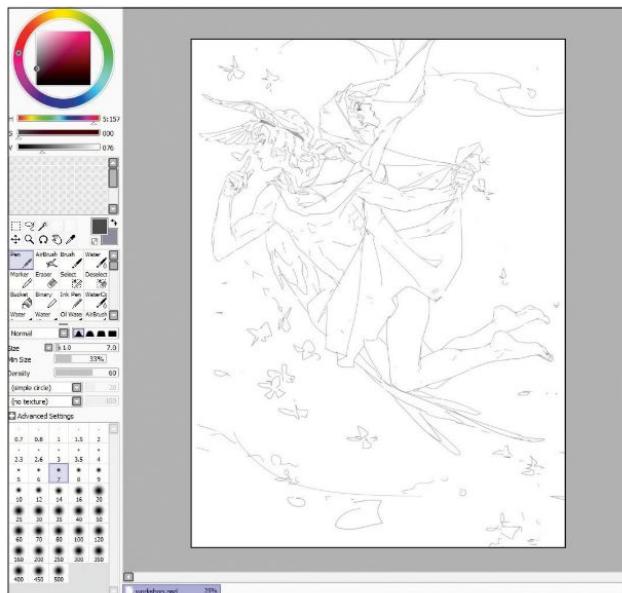


1 Testing out my ideas

When coming up with a sketch, I'm less concerned with the aesthetics of neat lines. I usually start with straighter and more rigid lines that are borne out of quick movements, because I've found that this helps me to decide if I'm on the right track. I don't want to waste time guessing what I've just drawn. ►►

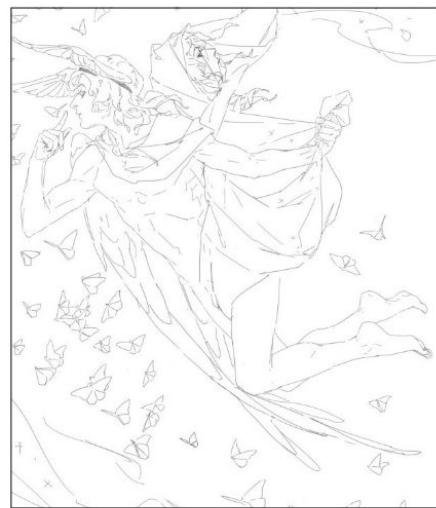


Workshops



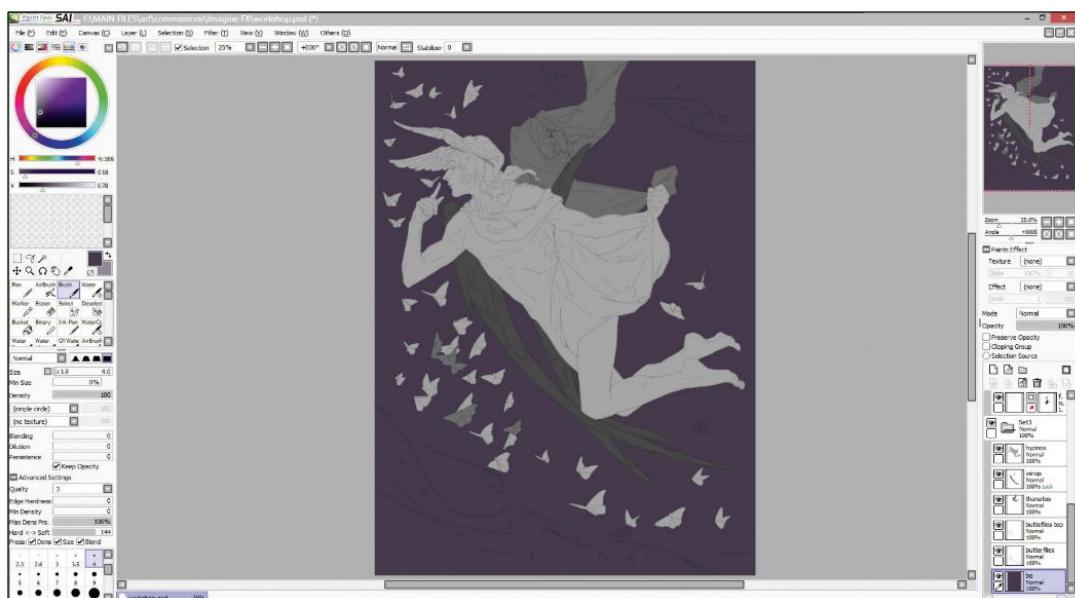
2 Refining parts of the sketch

I'm starting to settle on the decisions I've made, which enables me to refine the more ambiguous parts of the sketch. What really gets the ball rolling is when I start detailing faces – this usually tells me that things are working out so far.



3 Final sketch, ready for painting

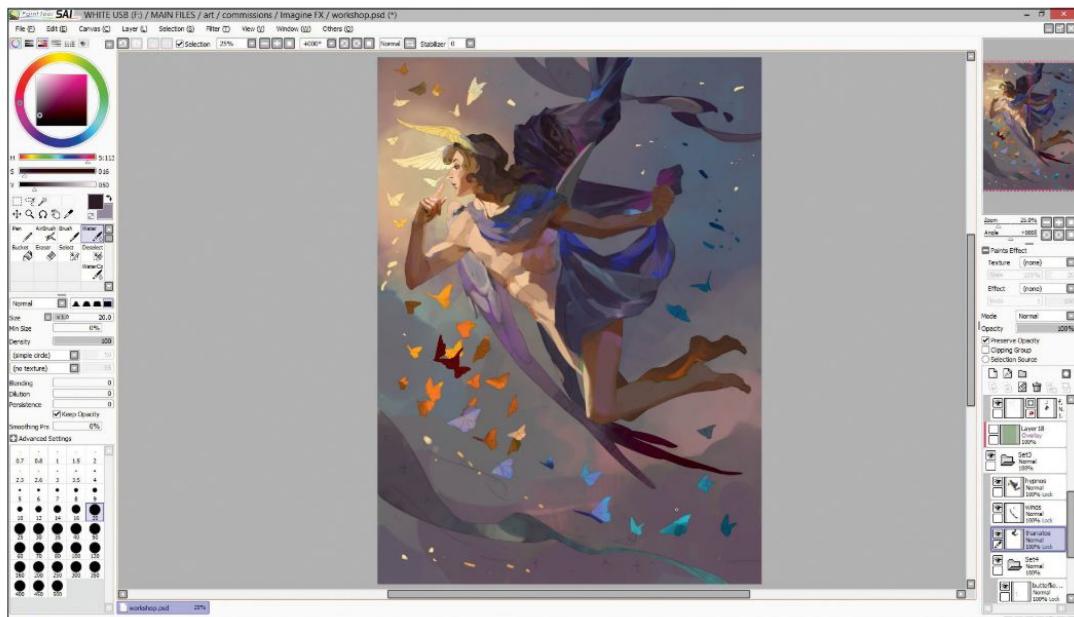
I like to be neat with the sketch in the end; it makes the painting process less confusing. Once I'm happy with the results, it's time for me to fill in the base layers. Before that happens, though, my next step is to change the sketch layer to Multiply and reduce the Opacity until I can still see my sketch, but it's not overpowering the composition.



4 Filling in the base of the illustration

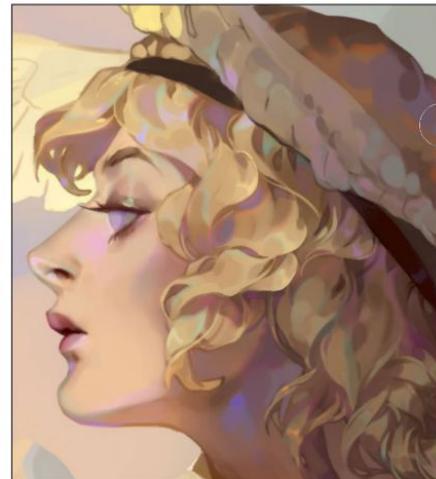
Before starting the painting stage, I fill in each section with a neutral colour (often shades of grey, nothing too saturated) and lock the Opacity. This enables me to paint freely, albeit roughly, without worrying about losing the shapes.

In depth Paint Tool SAI



5 Establishing light and colour

I'm not detailing anytime soon, which means I can go wild with colours. I usually try out different variations of value and colour until I find something I like. I want the piece to have a dreamy feel, so I have blues and purples in mind as I lay down my colours.



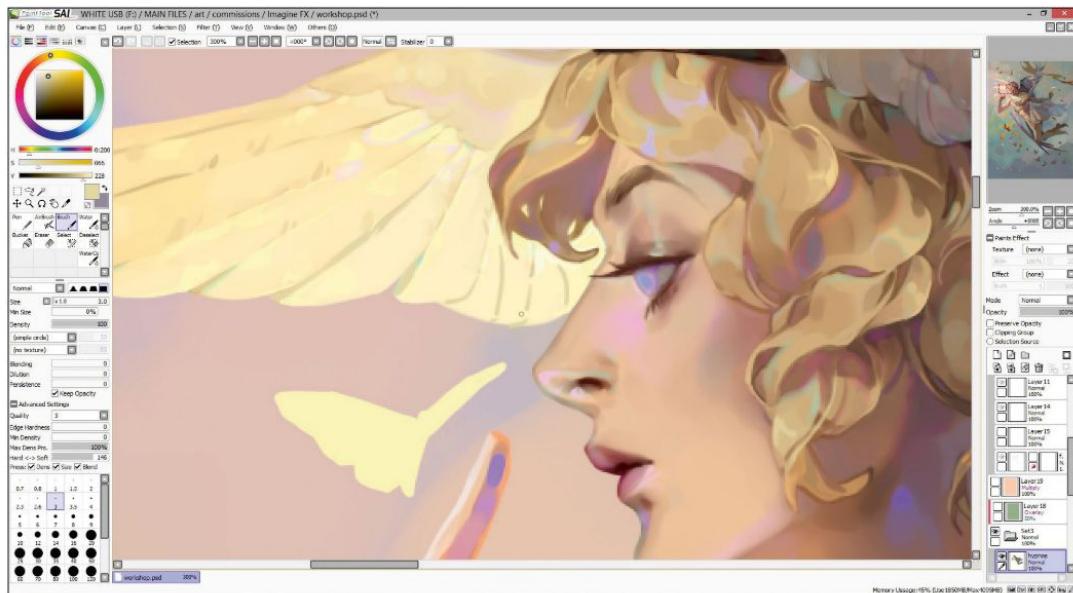
6 Starting the painting process

As I begin painting more of the details, I further reduce the sketch layer's Opacity so it's barely visible. This means I can focus on the values rather than the lines in order to establish forms. The sketch becomes more of a distraction rather than an aid as the rendering goes on, so it's always freeing to finally turn it off.

7 Going in headfirst

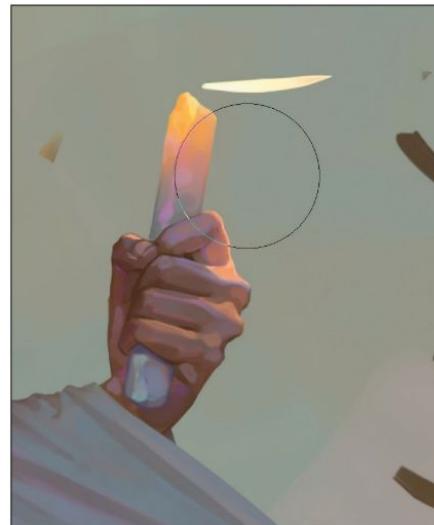
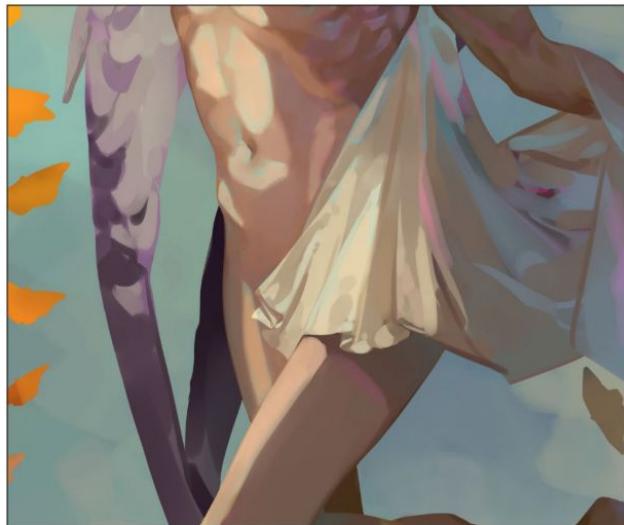
I enjoy painting faces, so I always start here. This also helps me to build up momentum during the creative process. Whenever I start to lose steam, I can look at the face that I've just visualised to remind myself that yes, I can actually paint. I paint with the Brush tool for harder edges and details, as well as the Watercolor tool for softening the edges where necessary. ►

Workshops



8 Working section by section

Once one section (for example, the head) is finished, I can move on to the next. Doing so basically generates a checklist in my head on what comes next. My usual order is head, followed by the shoulders, torso, legs and so on. I also work from the inside out, such as from the face to the hair, or from a bare arm to the fabric on top of it.

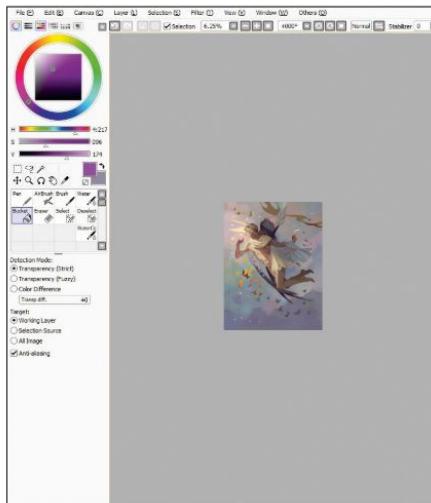


9 Rendering clothing and fabric

I start loosely with the rendering before tightening it up later. This especially applies to fabric because I find it difficult to form the shapes, ruffles and folds at first, so I spend a lot of time establishing what comes next. Because I'm working from loose to detailed, my brush usage follows in a similar manner: from Brush (hard, simple edges and messy) to Watercolor (soft and blendable).

10 Make use of layer effects

I like to use Overlay layers for glowing objects, such as the candle here. When doing so, an even and gradual spread is necessary, so I use the Airbrush tool for a super-soft placement of colour. It's a small detail, but minor effects can sometimes add so much!



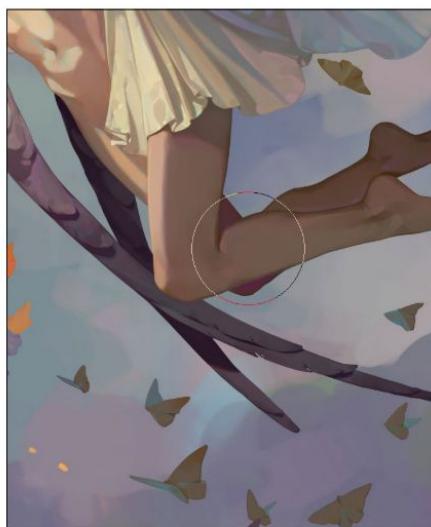
11 Extreme zoom-outs

Remember in art class when your teacher told you to step back from your artwork to see how it looks from a distance? It's the same concept here. I zoom out so the image is tiny and I can gauge the overall feel. I don't care much for the original greener background colour, so I test out new colours with an Overlay layer over the background layer. It helps to see the results from afar.



12 Painting the wings

I find that light and shadow help to shape objects that are flat, such as feathers. Using the sharper Brush tool for detailed edges and the Watercolor brush for blending and softening shadows or edges, I shape the wings with shadows first, followed by light and then details. I enjoy creating subtle colour variations, so I make sure to include those at the edges where different colours or values meet.



13 Finishing details

As I paint the butterflies, I make sure that they either stand out against or fade out from the background. The general lighting should affect them in the same way, too, so the further they are from the light source, the darker and less colourful they become.

14 Refining the background

Now I move on to the background. Because the two gods are flying, or at least floating in the air, I decide that an environment of clouds and stars is appropriate. I set the Watercolor tool at a large size and make soft marks, gradually building up the clouds to convey a sleepy, relaxing atmosphere. ♪

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Reviews



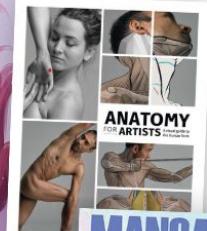
Artist's Choice Award

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

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



4
PRODUCTS
ON TEST



HARDWARE

82 Innovator 16

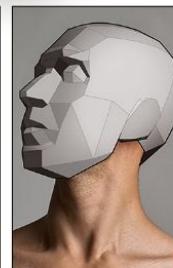
The performance of XP-PEN's mid-range display tablet matches its high-end looks and solid build quality.



BOOKS

84 The Art of Star Wars: The Mandalorian

While the hit show might be about an intergalactic loner, this art-of book reveals how The Mandalorian was a team effort.



85 Manga Watercolor

Want to master watercolours? Keen to apply that knowledge to creating manga? Then this book might be for you.

85 Anatomy for Artists

Successful character art depends on the anatomy being present and correct. This book has a fresh take on the topic.

RATINGS EXPLAINED

★★★★★ Magnificent

★★★★★ Great

★★★★ Good

★★ Poor

★ Atrocious



With its 15.6-inch HD screen the Innovator 16 is large enough to act as a second monitor.

Innovator 16



SLIMLINE STYLE The performance of XP-PEN's display tablet matches its high-end looks and solid build quality

Price £450 Company XP-PEN Web www.xp-pen.com

The XP-PEN Innovator 16 is a great example of a mid-range pen display that, at £450, sits between the Wacom's Cintiq 16 (£530) and Huion's Kamvas Pro 16 (£418). It's slimmer and more compact than either of these rival tablets, has marginally better colour reproduction, and is equal if not slightly brighter, too. If you're planning to upgrade from a smaller tablet then the XP-PEN Innovator 16 is well worth a look.

First off, the 15.6-inch display is something to be excited about. Yes, there are bigger displays out there, priced accordingly, but this is what we'd call a (more than) happy medium, and certainly not a compromise. Full HD is about right for this too. There were no signs of pixelation, and for the majority of artists the 92 per cent Adobe RGB colour gamut should be more than

enough in terms of colour accuracy. Our only qualm with the XP-PEN Innovator 16's display is that it could be a touch brighter. However, this may be a result of the laminated matt screen - a small price you pay for its 'tooth', which emulates the feel of paper when you draw on it.

MINIMAL SCREEN GAP

Overall, drawing with the XP-PEN Innovator 16 is a pleasing experience. The screen is close to the glass, much like a high-end phone or iPad Pro, and so reduces a gap that sometimes makes the whole experience of using (a not much older) pen display somewhat 'clunky' in nature. It's very



Artwork by Karmen Loh

Eight programmable buttons and a dual control dial enable you to customise your creative process when using the display tablet.

When not in use, the battery-free stylus is stored in a robust protective holder.

slick and responsive, too, and once calibrated it's about as accurate in terms of hand/eye coordination as you'd hope - there's no discernible lag. Note that the Innovator 16's screen doesn't have touch capabilities and only works with the stylus.

The eight programmable shortcut buttons on the left of the device come in handy, but the dual virtual (the black centre) and moveable (the silver surround) dial is the standout configurable control. It's perfect for zooming, scrolling or changing your brush sizes.

XP-PEN's range of styluses are pretty standard. They're a little on the lightweight side, especially if you're accustomed to Wacom's





Depending on the age of your computer you may need to purchase extra cables to connect everything up.



“If your budget is under £500, you’re not going to find another device as good in terms of size and technology”

styluses, but feel comfortable in the hand. Furthermore, they’re battery-free, which is becoming an industry-standard feature. Perhaps a weighty stylus would help convince you that you’re using something of quality, but if you’re new to drawing digitally then just remember that ink pens or pencils aren’t heavy!

Nevertheless, it’s a good-quality pen/stylus, with two sensitive programmable buttons. These are useful for, say, switching to an eraser or activating an undo/redo combo. It also boasts a 60-degree angle of tilt, which enables you to make a wide variety of marks. XP-PEN has made a real effort in build quality and packaging here. The pen comes in a

chic holder that holds plenty of spare nibs and bears more than a passing resemblance to a lightsaber.

LUXURY APPEARANCE

This is a good-looking pen display. It’s extremely slim at just 9mm thick and looks as stylish as anything else in its price range, if not more so. There’s also a nice weight to it, and couple this with its metal and glass exterior, it looks and feels like a luxury device.

XP-PEN has done a great job with the Innovator 16’s build quality, especially considering the price. However, although it’s touted as portable, the tablet’s 15.6-inch screen (one of the best things about it) means that it’s a little too large to just slide

into a rucksack and hit the road. On the ‘pack up and go’ scale, it’s not up there with an iPad, for example.

We did have to buy an extra HDMI-to-Thunderbolt cable in order to link it up to a late-2013 iMac. Along with the HDMI there’s a USB-A so even if you have a newer Mac you’ll still need an adaptor for both connections to go into a USB-C. However, if you’re a PC user, you’re probably good to go.

The Innovator 16 also has another USB-A that connects to an AC power adaptor. All in all, it’s not a huge amount of wires. Yet it is puzzling why XP-PEN doesn’t supply a standard USB-C-to-USB-C cable, which it does for its 24 Artists Pro (see our XP-PEN Artist 24 Pro review in issue 201), and have it as standard across the board. If you wanted to take it outside to work with your laptop, then of course you don’t need the AC adaptor. However, the trade-off is a further reduction in screen brightness.

BEST IN CLASS

If your pen display budget is under £500, you’re not going to find another device as good in terms of size and technology as the Innovator 16. Its main competitor, Wacom’s Cintiq 16, isn’t much more expensive at £530, but XP-PEN’s display is lighter, boasts better colour accuracy and has a superior body build. It’s also a worthy alternative to an iPad Pro, but of course Apple’s device costs at least twice the price, doesn’t come near to the Innovator 16’s screen size and there’s no battery-free stylus included.

If you’re looking to upgrade your drawing tablet to a display model, then both the price and quality of the XP-PEN Innovator 16 should convince you of its suitability. It’s compact in design, portable (after a fashion), and serves very well as a second monitor, too. The included stand may be too low for some people, though.

This pen display offers remarkable quality for a more-than-reasonable price. While those artists new to digital art may want to hold off before spending a sizable amount on a display tablet, we’ve no hesitation in recommending it for more experienced hobbyist artists. It’s more than suitable for professionals, too. XP-PEN’s main draw is it gives those artists on smaller budgets access to good-quality creative tools. The Innovator 16 is no exception. ●

DETAILS

Features

- 15.6-inch screen size
- 1920x1,080 resolution (full HD)
- Colour gamut: 92 per cent Adobe RGB, 88 per cent NTSC, 125 per cent sRGB
- 250cd/m² brightness
- 1,200:1 contrast
- Battery-free stylus
- 8,192 pressure levels
- 178 degrees viewing angle
- 432x56x9mm
- Weight: 1.4kg
- HDMI and USB ports

System Requirements

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

Rating





All imagery from The Mandalorian © 2020 Lucasfilm Ltd.

The Art of Star Wars: The Mandalorian



ART BOUNTY While the hit show might be about an intergalactic loner, this art-of book reveals how The Mandalorian was a team effort

Author Phil Szostak **Publisher** Abrams Books **Price** £30 **Web** www.abramsandchronicle.co.uk **Available Now**

By now most people with even a passing interest in events from a galaxy far, far away will be familiar with The Mandalorian. This art-of book reveals the ideas and visuals that enabled the series to make such a big impact on the small screen.

Veteran Lucasfilm collaborator Phil Szostak structures his book around the eight episodes that make up the show's first season. But he also takes care to provide some background to the series and its development at ILM, so as not to drop the reader straight into the familiar setting filled with unfamiliar characters.

The art is a mix of keyframes, character orthographics, and vehicle



and accessory designs. There's also the occasional set design. The latter relates to The Mandalorian's groundbreaking use of The Volume: a huge LED wall that can display CGI backgrounds, enabling actors to be filmed against it in real time. The book touches on The Volume, but understandably holds back on giving too much technical information – it's all about the art, after all.

And when that art is being created by the likes of Doug Chiang, Ryan

“Executive producer Dave Filoni’s scratchy sketches often stand out on the page...”



Concept artist Brian Matyas captures an early version of the Mandalorian in an action pose.

six or so pages that detail his development. Here, Christian Alzmann cites JC Leyendecker's illustrations of children with big cheeks, as well as characters from Warner Bros. cartoons, as part of his inspiration for the alien child. Indeed, most of the art on show is captioned with insights from ILM's creatives. This ensures The Art of Star Wars: The Mandalorian is not just a collection of gorgeous visuals, but also an invaluable source of advice for budding concept artists hungry to learn from some of the best in the business.

RATING ★★★★★



The Mandalorian meets Greef Karga, before Carl Weathers was cast in the role.

Church, Jama Jurabaev and Colie Wertz, the quality bar is set high. Yet it's executive producer Dave Filoni's scratchy sketches that often stand out on the page – not necessarily because of their technical merit, but of the ideas they so efficiently convey. It's concept art in its purest form.

Given his impact in popular culture, it's a little surprising that Baby Yoda isn't given more coverage, beyond the

Manga Watercolor

MIXED PALETTE Want to master watercolours? Keen to apply that knowledge to creating manga? Then this book might be for you

Author Lisa Santrau **Publisher** David & Charles **Price** £15 **Web** www.davidandcharles.com **Available Now**

As manga and comic book artist Lisa Santrau says in her foreword, watercolour is all about capturing a feeling. Combining this medium with manga and its many tropes is a tantalising prospect.

It's therefore disappointing to discover that the first 70 or so pages – half of the book – cover the basics of watercolours, much of which isn't related to manga. There's nothing



For this tutorial Lisa Santrau explains her painting approach that ensures the eyes are an effective focal point.

wrong with taking beginners through core tools and techniques. However, those illustrators who already have a handle on the medium will see this as a useful recap at best; at worst, a missed opportunity to fill those pages with manga-specific advice.

Things get back on track with Lisa's 12 tutorials. With titles such as 'Chibi sorcerer's apprentice in a flying teacup', these exercises will appeal to younger fans of the genre. Lisa explains her painting process in each project, although some drawing knowledge is assumed.

If you're a manga enthusiast who's new to watercolours, this book is worth considering. More experienced traditional artists keen to tackle manga should look elsewhere.

RATING ★★★★☆



Lisa uses watercolour's wet-on-wet technique to paint this figure posed against an evening sunset.

Anatomy for Artists

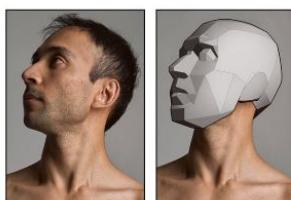
SHAPE SHIFTER Successful character art depends on the anatomy being present and correct. This reference book has a fresh take on the topic



Author Jahirul Amin **Publisher** 3dtotal Publishing **Price** £35 **Web** www.3dtotal.com **Available Now**

Human anatomy can be daunting for artists, whatever their ability. Where do you start? Not with the hands, some might say.

Anatomy for Artists goes some way towards making the subject easier to understand. It achieves this by combining high-quality photographs and clear line-art with overlaid graphics. The latter are either in the form of coloured 2D shapes that



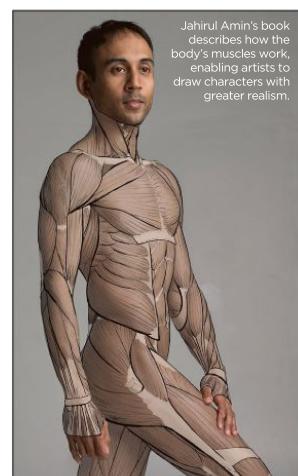
Simplified 3D graphics overlaid on the reference photography help artists understand the shapes of the body.

accurately portray the underlying musculature, tendons and bones, or simplified 3D shapes.

It's the application of those 3D shapes that help make the book stand out from the crowd. This approach enables the reader to quickly grasp the overall forms of the body, before referring to the source reference photos and traditional anatomy overlays, which are printed alongside. No-nonsense face and body studies across 126 pages make up the majority of the book. There are also 40 pages of more dynamic poses.

The exceptional visuals, coupled with clear explanations of the underlying human physiology, make this a worthy investment for artists keen to develop their anatomy skills.

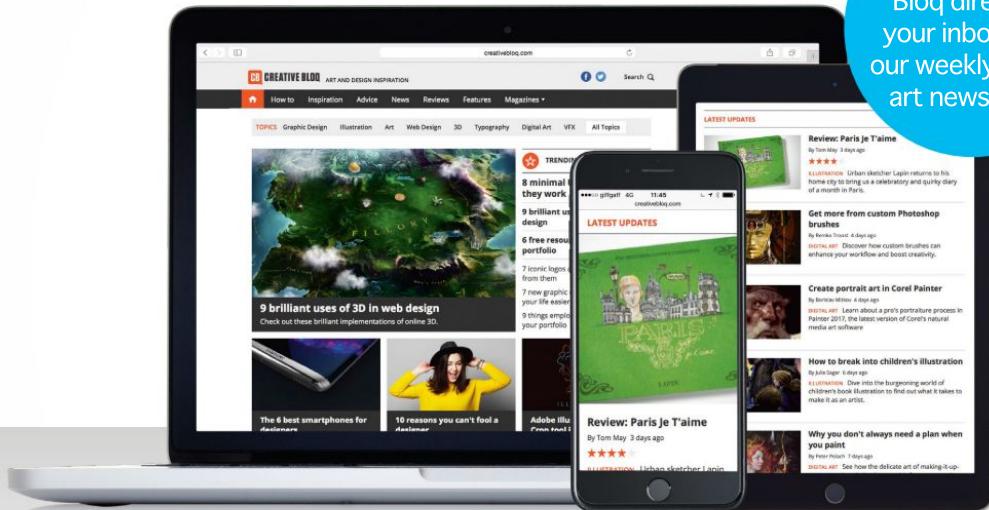
RATING ★★★★★



Jahirul Amin's book describes how the body's muscles work, enabling artists to draw characters with greater realism.

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Traditional Artist

Inspiration and advice from the best pro artists

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Anna Sokolova paints a character from the Netflix anime series using watercolour effects.

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The German manga artist on tapping into the power of the sea.

FXPosé

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS



Zack Rock

LOCATION: Germany MEDIA: Watercolour WEB: www.zackrock.com

Zack is the writer and illustrator of two children's picture books. His surreal watercolours often feature animal characters in detailed environments.



1 THE WILD RIDE

"I always keep a sketchbook on me. Sometimes the drawings lead to larger stories, sometimes they're just squirrels on Vespas."

2 A GOOD STORY

"Picture books are all about giving space to the readers to inject their own imaginations into the story."

3 CURIOSITY MUSEUM

"Part of the fun of my first book was designing over 100 artefacts for Homer Henry Hudson's museum."





4 THE BARKING BUSKERS

"Nostalgia for bygone eras is an essential element of my work. My illustration style even harks back to Arthur Rackham and Gustaf Tenggren."

5 THE TRASH ARTIST

"Art has a capacity to elevate even the most mundane aspects of life. Even literal garbage can be transformed into something miraculous."



Abraham Matias

LOCATION: US MEDIA: paper WEB: www.abrahammatias.com

Abraham creates 3D scenes by designing and building sets and puppets from paper. Miniature sets are lit and creatively shot to create atmospheric, graphic and hand-drawn scenes.



1 LASCAUX

"This piece was inspired by two French boys who discovered thousands of cave paintings while looking for their dog in 1940."

2 LOS MUSICOS

"As its name suggests, this piece depicts musical rooftop cats playing their tunes downtown at night."

3 PROMETHEUS

"Disobeying Zeus, Prometheus climbed Mount Olympus to steal fire and gave it to humans."

4 THE MINOTAUR

"In the labyrinth deep below Crete, Theseus confronts the terrible, merciless Minotaur."





Traditional Artist Workshop





Watercolour Gouache

ILLUSTRATE AGGRETSUKO IN WATERCOLOURS

Discover how **ANNA SOKOLOVA** paints a kawaii character from the Netflix anime series Aggretsuko using a range of watercolour effects

The first time I met Retsuko, a 25-year-old anthropomorphic red panda, was when I worked on my dream project for Netflix. I created a series of murals featuring original films and series in the hand-painted Delft Blue style.

Aggretsuko, aka Aggressive Retsuko, is an animation based on the character created by Yeti for the mascot company Sanrio. Frustrated with her job, Retsu lets out her emotions by going to a karaoke club and singing death metal.

No matter the subject or brief, I always try to experiment as much as possible. Japanese art has a particular appeal to European artists, and I was amazed by coloured woodblocks the first time I saw originals in the

museum in St Petersburg. Naturally, I turned to my biggest inspiration – a tiny home library that I've built up over the years.

For this project, I browsed through an arrangement of Japanese woodblocks and an anthology of patterns from the English artist Aubrey Beardsley. I inspected the treatment of drawing fire and magical effects by Danish illustrator Kay Nielsen. I even read a few La Fontaine tales searching for cues about how various animals are perceived in fables.

In this workshop, I'll be using various watercolour effects to add a unique look while keeping the musical comedy vibe of the original. I'll be leaving the simplicity of design and compositional aspects inspired by the term ukiyo ("floating world")

that originated in Edo-period Japan) and adding intricate patterns and bold strokes for contrast.

When working on the background, I'll consider it not just a space to be filled, but as an essential element of the composition. I experiment with textures by adding salt or citric acid (especially with pigments such as ultramarine). Working with a wax pencil to preserve the paper's white enables it to hold a few wash layers. Granulation can add a grainy effect either naturally or by using a special granulation spray. I'll also use the Old Masters technique that involves transparent paper and masking.

Anna is an artist and illustrator who's inspired by merging the traditional and innovative approach in arts.

See her art at www.annasokolova.eu.



Traditional Artist Workshop



MATERIALS

PAPER

■ Expression

Hahnemühle 100 per cent cotton paper (matt), cold pressed, 300 gsm

■ Doreé transparent

A3 drawing paper, 60 gsm

BRUSHES

■ Mop ("French")

brushes nos. 1 and 2

■ Rounded synthetic

watercolour brushes nos. 2, 3 and 6

WATERCOLOUR

PAINT

■ St Petersburg

White Nights

■ Schmincke Horadam

GOAUCHE PAINT

■ Linel Extra Fine

PENCILS

■ Tombow MONO

Graph HB

■ Tombow MONO

Graph, mechanical

■ Stockmar wax pencil no. 16, white

ERASERS

■ Faber Castell

kneaded eraser

MARKERS

■ Molotow One4All

acrylic

MISCELLANEOUS

■ Olfa cutting knife

■ Schmincke Aqua

granulation spray

■ Dr. Oetker citric acid

1 Inspiration and ideas

This preparatory step is one of the most crucial for creating unique artwork with an individual vision. I gather various sources including traditional pottery motifs with imagery by Aubrey Beardsley and the magic treatment of subjects in fairy tales.



3 Sketching and exploring

I try various compositions and create some simple tonal drawings. Working at a small scale enables me to see if the image works and has a dramatic impact, quickly drawing the viewer in to take a closer look.



2 Preparing the materials

Choosing the right materials makes a huge difference. Over the years, I've discovered my favourites, which also helps to save some time and effort when going to the art supply store – naturally, you want to buy everything that's on the shelves! I love working with a real pencil; however, for larger pieces I use a mechanical pencil with an automatic "shaking mechanism," which advances the lead.



4 Apply granulation spray and citric acid

I experiment with various effects and decide what to use for the background. Granulation spray applied to wet paint creates an interesting texture. Adding citric acid disperses the pigment and reveals the white of the paper (salt has a similar effect when creating the intricate shape of ornaments).



5 Wax, masking and spatter effects

A wax pencil is ideal for preserving the paper's white. It also holds a few layers of washes. Another way to protect part of the painting is to use a sheet of transparent paper that's cut into the required shape. I splatter the slightly watered-down paint by knocking the brush against my fingers to achieve a spontaneous visual effect. I love how it looks, so this is what I'll use for creating a starry sky effect.



6 Refining the sketch idea

I create a detailed sketch on a large sheet of watercolour paper and secure it to the polymer panel using light paper tape. Knowing that the composition is taken care of means that I can concentrate on the painting process. I lighten the sketch using the kneaded eraser, to ensure my lines are subtle.



7 Painting the sketch outlines

I use the synthetic Rounded brush to apply paint and begin with the first ornamental parts of the artwork, just to get comfortable. After my confidence grows, I reinforce the focal areas of the painting by paying special attention to the lines and shapes on the face.



8 Adding a wax pencil reserve

I make some chaotic marks with a wax pencil in the background's magical areas. I add stars and lightning flashes, keeping in mind the variety of the pattern. The wax is barely visible, but it shines if you hold the canvas at certain angles. ➤

Traditional Artist Workshop



9 Laying down the sky wash

I use a French brush to cover the whole sky area with the main colour. Then, while the paint is still wet, I add some bigger dots of almost neat paint here and there. This creates an irregular field of stars.



10 Applying subtle layers

I wait until the background is dry before covering the whole area with a subtle wash of highly diluted paint. I repeat this process two more times, focusing on certain areas which makes them darker. The variety of a few washes helps to add depth and interest.



11 Making a transparent paper mask

I place a large sheet of transparent paper over the painting and plan the area that I want to cut out afterward. It's almost like working in Photoshop, but far more satisfying. I take an HB pencil and outline the area of the sky with subtle lines.



12 Cutting out the shape

I take a cutting knife and cut out the shape of the sky, leaving the rest of the artwork protected from the spatter technique, which I'm planning to use in the next step. There's no need to be extra precise for this particular background.



13 Create a splatter effect with gouache

I carefully put the transparent paper back into place. The magic is happening with white gouache over a much darker background. I knock the synthetic brush loaded with paint over my fingers to create a starry sky effect.



14 Adding the final touches with white

I love adding hard lights and always try to test which materials work best on the current surface. I'm using an acrylic marker and white gouache to add the brightest whites over the paint. It's tempting to add white sparkles all over the place, but it can make an image look flat. It's important to remember that every brush stroke is intentional and is contributing to the main idea.



15 Wrapping things up

I check everything once again, ensuring all the nuances, shadows, highlights and patterns are fulfilling my initial vision. I then wait until the paint is dry and then scan the artwork at 600dpi for future production. The painting will be transferred to the special tiles by experts, so I enhance brightness and contrast in Photoshop slightly and then send the hi-resolution file to the atelier. ♪



First Impressions

★ Nashimanga ★

The German manga artist on tapping into the power of the sea



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

I grew up in the picturesque region of Mecklenburg in northern Germany. Every year many tourists come to visit our coastal towns and castles. This scenery influenced my art and my drawing style. The city of Schwerin and its fairytale castle inspired me to write my manga Sometimes She's the Light, which also takes place in Schwerin.

What, outside of art, has influenced your artwork?

Activities like travelling and hiking have inspired my work. But on top of that the biggest influence is the sea, which is just around the corner. When I walk on the beach and listen to the waves, it fills me with energy and ideas.

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

I did my first paid commission for someone from my school, who



LEINIE AND THE ORANGES

"Here's my original character Leinie from my latest adventure manga story."

ANGEL

"I wanted to draw this artwork, even if it turned out kitschy. It was a great experience to work in all the light with an airbrush."

wanted me to create a strong, muscular fighter. I drew him roughly and it looked a bit clumsy, but I remember that it was a lot of fun. I realised that I could empathise with new ideas and topics, which helps me nowadays when working with companies.

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

My latest artwork is a portrait of an angel in a cathedral with rays of light shining down on to her, with the character surrounded by roses. The angel picture is spiritual in its presentation. The muscular fighter was drawn in a straightforward and rough way, which represented the physical manifestation of the

“When I walk on the beach and listen to the waves, it fills me with energy and ideas”

character's body and strength. The two pictures are indeed very different from each other.

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

I love my watercolour illustration Leinie and the Oranges. It always gives me a warm, summery feeling. The picture embodies my favourite season and I really want to visit an orange grove one day.

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

I'm working with stronger lights and shadows like the Old Masters. I want to paint an emotion in the form of colour and light so I've started exploring that approach. And I've integrated more tools in my traditional workflow, such as using an airbrush and oils in certain areas to create effects and more depth.

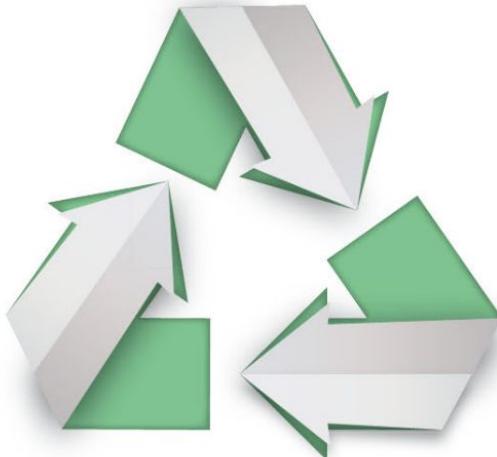
How has the industry changed for good since you've been a part of it?

Since becoming a freelance artist, I've noticed that there are more opportunities to work with companies in the industry. It's easier to get commissions in my preferred field of art (manga). There are also new ways to reach far more people through the internet and my social media platforms. Conventions have also improved. There are now special areas for artists to showcase and sell products.

What does the future hold for you?

I plan to finish volume three of my manga series Sometimes She's The Light. My other project, Leinie, will be an online manga and I'm working on the first volume. Alongside my projects I still have a lot to learn a lot and will be focusing on the art basics over the coming year.

Nashimanga is a traditional manga illustrator, and official Bob Ross and Gary Jenkins Art instructor. She's published six books, and has created art and mascots for international companies. See more of her work at <https://beacons.ai/nashimanga>



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