

FREE RESOURCES! 9+ HOURS OF PRO VIDEO WORKSHOPS

MANGA

ARTIST

VOLUME 2

ESSENTIALS

13 STEPS TO
PAINT FACES

17

INSPIRING
WORKSHOPS
INSIDE!

DISCOVER NEW

MANGA SKILLS!

Begin creating, from sketches
to finished art in **Photoshop**

START FOR FREE

PAINT TOOL SAI

Six ways to get confident using
the free manga art software



PLUS!

EXPLORE THE RICH
HISTORY OF MANGA

PERFECT YOUR COLOURS
WITH PAUL KWON

MECH MASTER HUGO
MARTIN TELLS ALL

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX
PRESENTS

Future



NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX
PRESENTS

Manga Artist is a special edition of ImagineFX, the only magazine dedicated to fantasy and sci-fi art. Our aim is to help artists to improve both their traditional and digital art skills.

Visit <http://imaginefx.creativebloq.com> today!



ART FOR ALL!

Manga expert Helen McCarthy puts it perfectly in the opening line of her feature on the history of manga (page 16): "Manga inspires artists everywhere." It's that simple... well, nearly! Though a global phenomenon that's spread far and wide from its post-war Japanese roots, manga still divides opinion. Some call it easy art. We politely disagree, and hope that as you read this second edition of *Manga Artist*, you'll see that it's bursting with ideas, visionary art, and expert techniques and tips that prove manga is an art form as diverse as it is popular.

But we don't want to drop you in at the deep end! This book is designed for the maximum number of people to make the most of it. We take the casual artist who's new to digital art through the core skills needed to start making art, using the free software Paint Tool SAI (page 69). We also look at the work studios of some modern manga masters (starting on page 24). You can look through pro artist sketchbooks, then read interviews with up-and-coming talent Ilya Kuvshinov (page 52), and Pacific Rim artist Hugo Martin (page 42).

Now comes the creating part. The 17 workshops in this book cover everything from starting out with line art, building up an environment, working on specifics such as eyes and facial expressions, to using colour effectively.

You can kick things off with Han-Yuan Yu's cover workshop (page 78), or Japanese artist Crowgod's take on Jack and the Beanstalk (page 130). But wherever you begin, we hope you get loads out of it, and start creating your own amazing manga art.

Beren

Beren.neale Editor
beren.neale@futurenet.com

CONTENTS

GALLERY

- 6** **The finest manga artists**
Tincek Marincek, Yogisyah, Bramasta Aji, Yue Wang, Joseph Foo and Jacinta Raphael share their art with us.

FEATURE

- 16** **The rise of manga**
Art expert Helen McCarthy charts the history of the distinctive art form.

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

- 24** **At home with...**
Han-Yuan Yu, Camilla D'Errico, Alvin Lee and Emma Vieceli take us around their creative spaces.

INTERVIEW

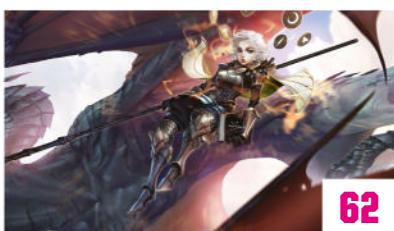
- 32** **Wenjun Lin**
This artist combines Western techniques with Chinese heritage.
- 42** **Hugo Martin**
The Pacific Rim concept artist tells us about his robotic exploits.
- 52** **Ilya Kuvshinov**
Discover what the Russian artist loves about the Japanese art form.

SKETCHBOOK

- 38** **Carlyn Lim**
Strong characters share the canvas with rich environments.
- 48** **Kim Jung Gi**
Complex webs of interwoven drawings, going viral.
- 58** **Mingzhu Yang**
Diverse fantasy characters are given a stylish Oriental touch.

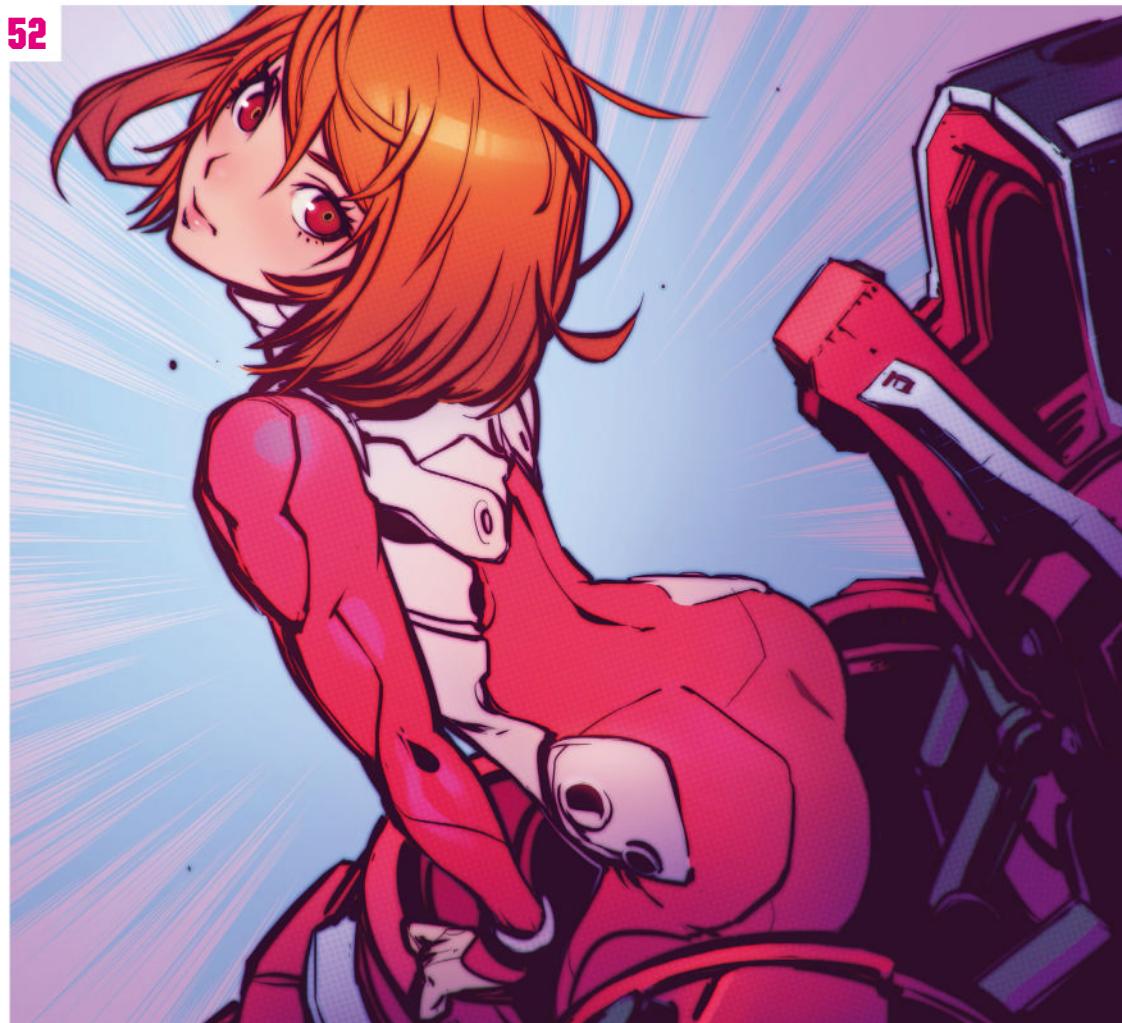
STUDIO PROFILE

- 62** **Caravan Studio**
Check out this art powerhouse that has its own publishing division!



62

52



42



110



CORE SKILLS

- 70** **Paint Tool SAI**
Grasp the essentials of this very capable painting software.
- 71** **Start customising**
Discover why Paint Tool SAI's limited toolset actually works in its favour.
- 72** **Real-world brushes**
Get good results with Paint Tool SAI's Brush, AirBrush and Watercolor tools.
- 73** **Set up the perfect brush**
Learn how to configure the Blending, Dilution and Persistence parameters.
- 74** **Create a new brush**
Paint Tool SAI doesn't have the tool for you? Simply design your own!
- 75** **Sharpen up your art**
Use Paint Tool SAI's vector tools to create clean-looking manga line art.



78

TUTORIALS

- 78 Colourful character**
Han-Yuan Yu paints a bright figure.
- 82 Digital line art**
Lois Van Baarle draws the line...
- 88 Portrait masterclass**
...and then paints a portrait.
- 94 Action scenes**
Arman Akopian depicts motion.
- 96 Environment art**
Feigiap sets a retro-looking scene.
- 102 Rendering a character**
Pramin Phatiphong's key advice.
- 106 Learn to photobash**
Valentina Remenar's warrior art.
- 110 Under the skin**
Saejin Oh's manga characters.
- 116 Character design**
Low Zi Rong creates a hero.
- 120 Use bright colours**
Paul Kwon brings manga to life.
- 122 Digital pastels**
Jade Mosch shares her knowledge.
- 126 Visual details**
Emma Vieceli implies backstory.
- 130 Tell a story**
Crowgod spins a yarn.
- 134 Dragon scene**
Ruan Jia shows you the scales.
- 136 Dynamic cover art**
Create movement with Saejin Oh.
- 138 Character composition**
Hiro Usuda designs a crowd scene.
- 142 Nebulous vision**
Bao Pham creates order from chaos.



116



106



122



102



ON
YOUR
FREE
DISC

VIDEO LESSONS

Watch our artists in action, including...

- HAN-YUAN YU'S colourful character.
- BAO PHAM'S enchanting art.
- FEIGIAP'S retro scene.

FINAL ARTWORK

See the finished image.

CUSTOM BRUSHES

Take your artwork further.

SEE
PAGE
146 FOR
MORE

GALLERY

OUR PICK OF THE FINEST ARTISTS

TINCEK MARINCEK

 LOCATION:
Slovenia

WEB: www.tincek-marincek.com

EMAIL: info@tincek-marincek.com

SOFTWARE: Photoshop, Painter,

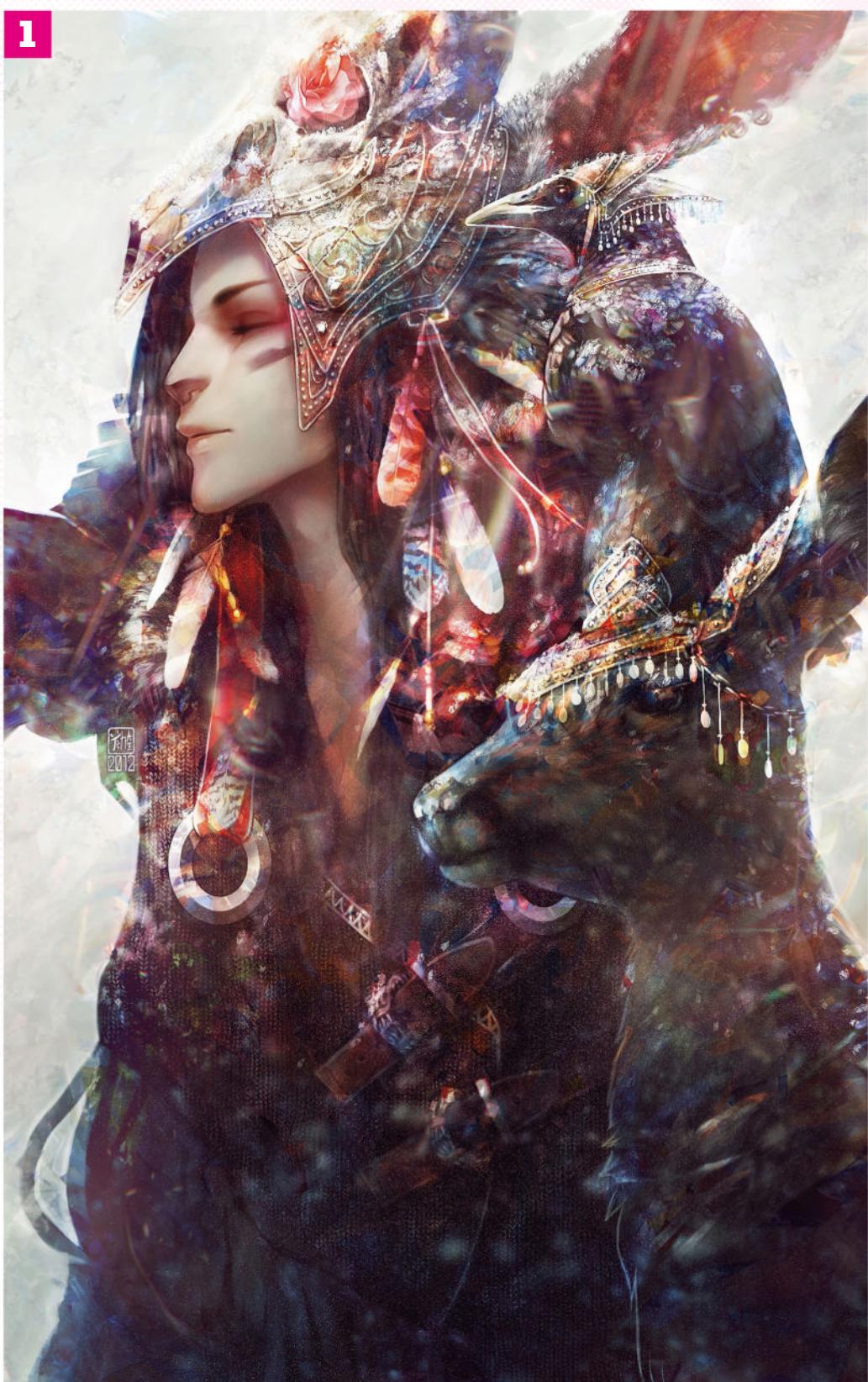
Paint Tool SAI



Twenty-year-old Valentina and his sister Marina are twins, and both are studying at the Academy of Fine Arts within the University of Ljubljana in Slovenia. Valentina has picked up commissioned work alongside his studies, creating game characters and tutorials. He works digitally and traditionally, and his mature style has been nurtured since childhood.

"I started to draw when I was three years old and I have drawn since then," he says. "My parents supported myself and my sister in drawing, and even when I was a kid I liked to sketch things all over the place. I like to create fantasy characters in imaginary worlds so I can escape from ordinary life for a bit."

1



1 FOREST SPIRITS "My character is half human and half animal. Around him, animals have accessories so that they look more spiritual. I painted in black and white first, and then added colours and effects."

2 CARPE DIEM "This was the cover for my art book, and the first time I included more than two characters in one painting. I wanted to achieve a cheerful and fun atmosphere. In the course of painting it, I changed it from landscape to portrait orientation."



GALLERY



YOGISYA

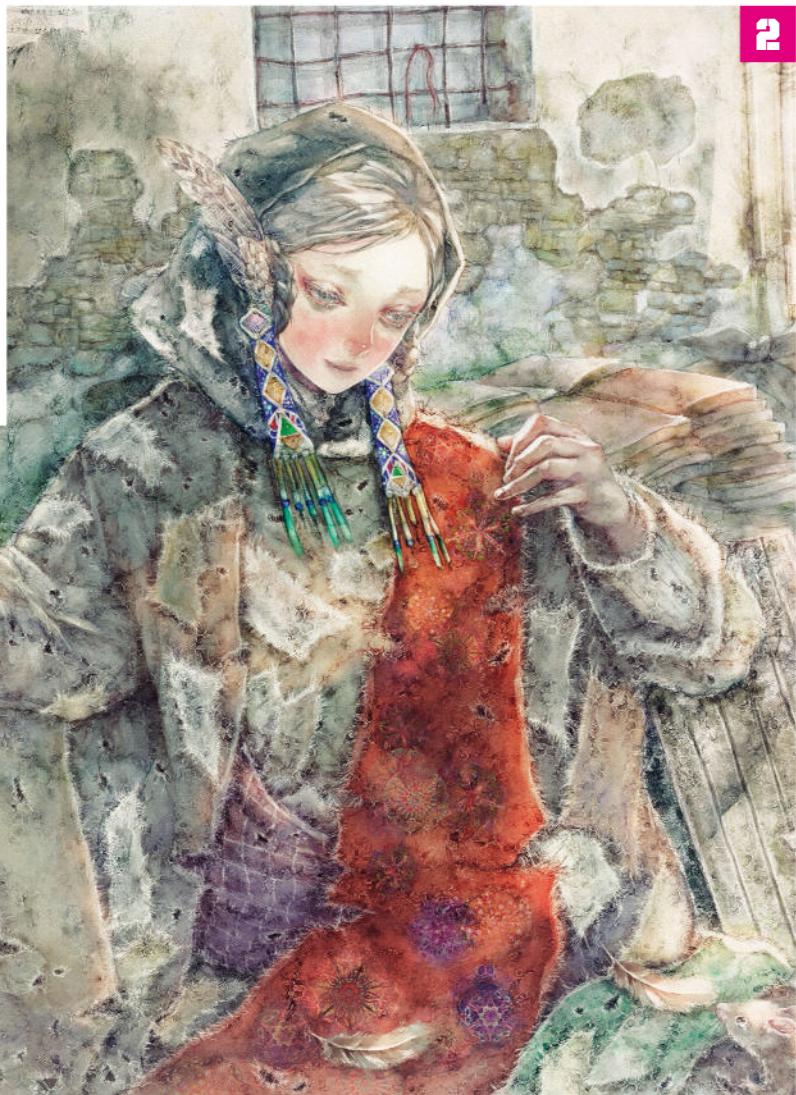
 **LOCATION:**
Japan
WEB: <http://yogisya.noor.jp>
EMAIL: yogisya@uk.noor.jp
SOFTWARE: Painter

 Yogisya is a Japanese illustrator who describes her work simply as "a search for the beautiful". Her deviantART posts - which include everything from sketches and WIPS to complete commissions and competition entries - regularly attract hundreds of comments. And it's not hard to see why.

Her work is a textured kaleidoscope of colour, featuring beautiful but forlorn subjects rendered with indelible line work. Her secret lies in a mix of old techniques and new media.

"I like to use watercolours," Yogisya says, "but mix them with digital. I'm trying to draw illustrations that incorporate both the academic and manga techniques."

Yogisya's work has attracted the attention of TCG, the toy and games company, which has invited her to draw illustrations for card game Last Chronicle. Her art has also appeared in various books and mobile games.



1 PRINCESS "Princess is the artwork that appears on my business card. It's an illustration I created using my preferred mix of media - watercolours and Painter."

2 CONCERTO FOR US "With the musical instruments in your heart, a person can play the sounds of the soul. Again, it was created using watercolours and Painter."

3 QUARTERLY PIXIV 10 "Pixiv is an online artist community for anime and manga illustrations. Quarterly Pixiv is the magazine it produces and this is my contribution to issue 10. The theme was simply Sea."



BRAMASTA AJI

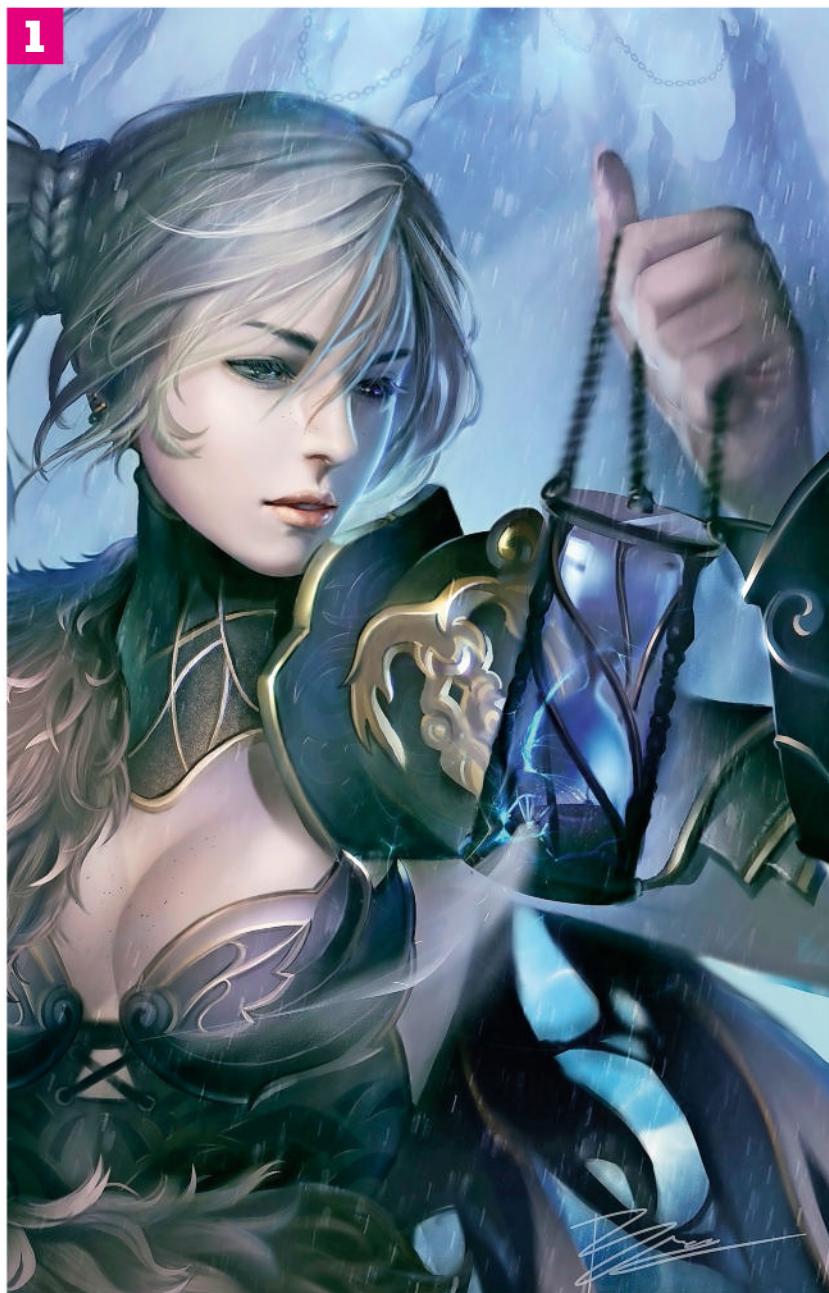
 **LOCATION:**
Indonesia
WEB: <http://ifxm.ag/b-aji>
EMAIL: unrealgraph@yahoo.co.od
SOFTWARE: Photoshop

 Bramasta is a graduate of the Universitas Sebelas Maret in Indonesia, where he studied visual communication design. He now works for Jakarta studio STELLAR Labs in the paintscape imagery division. "I mostly do colouring for comic projects like Bima Satria Garuda - an Indonesian tokusatsu comic - and Dravn," says Bramasta. "I also produce illustrations for games and trading cards." Indeed, it was game imagery that inspired his career in art. Dota 2, World of Warcraft and Street Fighter count as some of his biggest influences.

MANGA ARTIST SAYS

"It's clear Bramasta specialises in colouring. Both Bernadette and Lysah Shadowrun are examples of how to use subtle, understated palettes to set the tone of a scene. Solid stuff from this Indonesian artist."

1



2



1 BERNADETTE "This is a commission I worked on earlier this year. I'm really impressed by Indonesian senior artist Lius Lasahido. The manner in which he picks the colour for skin, creates armour, fur and another details is amazing and inspiring. I wanted to challenge myself to do the same in this project."

2 LYSAH SHADOWRUN - SHADOW STRIKE "A splash art project for the Steam game Rise of the Runesmiths by Nightfall Enterprises. I had so much fun painting this, because Dota has a big influence on my art."

YUE WANG



LOCATION:
Canada
WEB: www.sakimchan.deviantart.com
EMAIL: sakimi.chan@hotmail.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop



Yue 'tumbled' into digital art one evening while chatting to some people in an online traditional art community. She noticed that everyone was doing digital art, so she thought she'd give it a shot too. "So I did, and I loved it," she says.

"I'm currently studying 3D animation, I think it's important for an artist to have a bit of variation. I'm also doing a few contracts on the side for a game company and some commercial illustrations. My goal - like so many artists - is to improve my skills as an artist and as a person."

MANGA ARTIST SAYS

"The lovely colour combination, delicate lighting, and that piercing gaze make for a very attractive portrait."

1 PLAYFUL PANDA SPIRIT "This was a fun painting. It was a character design sheet originally, but then I thought that it'd be fun to add in a background and some pandas to form a composition. The lazy panda at the bottom is the foil of its spirit."

2 LEAF ELF LADY "She is born from nature, and like a flower she blooms. I wanted to see how a green and orange combination worked together."

1



2



JOSEPH FOO

 **LOCATION:**
England

WEB: www.toonikun.deviantart.com
EMAIL: joesalvation@hotmail.com
SOFTWARE: Photoshop

 Being inspired by a high-school friend's manga-style doodles, Joseph joined the world of art at the age of 17. "After high school I entered a local art college in Malaysia and was taught the basics – sketching, composition, light and mood," he says. "I also started attending conventions and selling self-published books (doujinshi), prints, merchandises around Asian countries including Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Taiwan, Japan and Australia. It was a really good experience."

Now studying at the Birmingham Institute of Art and Design, Joseph's finishing off his degree while keeping busy taking commissions when he can.



1 THE MIDNIGHT RITUAL "I've been obsessed with fairy tales ever since I was small, especially the darker ones, and I wanted to create one of my own. This piece is about betrayal, lust for power and consequences."

2 TIGER LILY "I was watching Disney's Peter Pan one day and I really liked the name of the red Indian princess Tiger Lily. Chinese New Year was just around the corner so I decided to draw a girl with a tiger."

3 BALLAD "Another thing that I'm obsessed with is Chinese instruments. I love the detailed patterns and carvings and the melancholic tune that the lute and fiddle makes. It gives me a very nostalgic feeling."

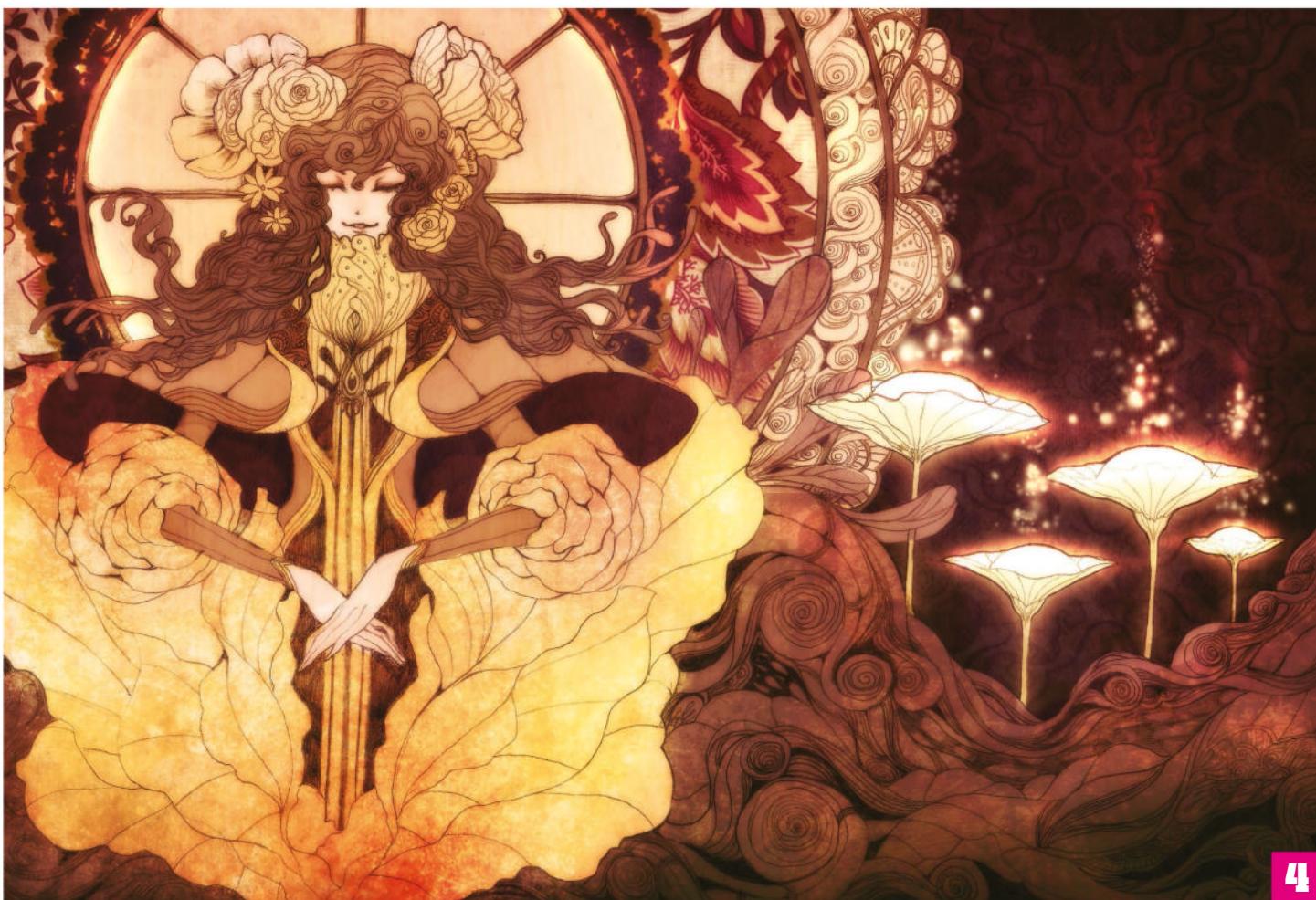
4 SECRET GARDEN "This was the cover for my art book titled Capriccio. It's also one of the drawings from my fairy tale series. I'd just started experimenting with textures when I worked on this piece and was pleased with the results."



3

MANGA ARTIST SAYS

"Inspired by Chinese culture and Western narratives, Joseph's style is his own. There's something satisfying in such finely detailed digital illustration that's unified with both warm and cold colours. It gives an image like Tiger Lily an extra depth."



4

1



2



JACINTA RAPHAEL

LOCATION:
US

WEB: www.centi.deviantart.com

EMAIL: seirvitas@gmail.com

SOFTWARE: Photoshop, Open Canvas, Paint Tool SAI



Jacinta has always seen art as "an opportunity to slip into unknown worlds and realise dreams on a page." In return, she's dedicated to her craft, honing her skills by spending countless hours studying tutorials and practising – sometimes taking years to finish a single piece. Jacinta also believes the best way to develop is by both observing the world around you and by looking within to find your own voice.

"When life seemed ready to crush me, art became my oasis. Art has saved my life, helped me cope and overcome burdens, and become my passion, obsession, a way of life."

MANGA ARTIST SAYS

"It's hard not to be impressed by how Jacinta has subtly blended the stained glass window into the rest of the fantasy scene in My Crystal Throne. It's interesting how a brightly coloured scene can still convey a melancholy mood."

1 MY CRYSTAL THRONE "This image was a gift for someone very near and dear to me. I'd always been fascinated by the ideas of stained glass and fairy tales and often bring the two together in my works. This particular character, Sidhe, has lost their wing, but the memory of them remains in the glass behind them. It was difficult making the tree and background fade into the glass, but it was a fun experiment."

2 DESERT BATTLE "I'd noticed that much of my art lacked a sense of motion. I sketched this in hope of stepping out of my comfort zone and overcoming one of my weaknesses. I tried to use every part of the body – from the exaggerated movement of the waist to the shifting of the hair – to show just how the body was twisting as it rushed its way through the desert."

Learn from pro artists and improve your traditional painting skills

FREE DISC!  **VIDEO LESSONS AND MORE!**

PRACTICAL Painter

HOW TO DRAW & PAINT IN PENCILS, OILS, ACRYLICS & MORE!

20 PAGES OF DRAWING SKILLS
Invaluable lessons in values, anatomy, form and colour



LEARN TO PAINT PERFECT PORTRAITS
Discover new ways to start painting unique faces and stunning compositions!



GET STARTED!

- Pencils** How to approach mark-making in graphite
- Pastels** Tips and tricks to get the best out of these vibrant tools
- Watercolours** Simple steps to help tame this tricky medium

ART RESOURCES TO HELP YOU CREATE
Watch artists in action and study their art in-progress



LEARN NEW TECHNIQUES

- How to draw drapes and folds on figures
- Paint emotive art in watercolours
- Get inspired by the Rococo style
- Explore fantasy art in your paintings
- Creature creation masterclass

146 PAGES OF ART AND ADVICE

DISCOVER THE ART OF NATURE
How the Pre-Raphaelite art movement changed the world



Future 07/2015
9781783891924
9 781783891924
ISBN 9781783891924



ON SALE
IN TESCO,
WHSMITH,
BARNES &
NOBLE AND
MORE!

AVAILABLE TO BUY TODAY!

Order your copy at <http://ifxm.ag/practicalpainter>

WHSmith

Available on the
App Store

 myfavourite
magazines.co.uk

 zinio™

THE
ROSE
AND
ROSE
OF
TIME



MANGA

Eisner Award nominee **Helen McCarthy** traces the development of modern manga, from post-war street entertainment to high art



anga inspires artists everywhere. Western and Japanese artists collaborate regularly: the late Moebius worked with Jiro Taniguchi; Frédéric Boilet with Kan Takahama. Indeed, Moebius once told a Japanese magazine, "Japan is the one country about which I can say, 'I wish I was born there.' Manga is a rich form of Japanese cultural expression." Yet many foreign fans know little of manga's culture and development.

Manga ('whimsical drawings') is rooted in Japanese history, but modern manga was born of defeat, occupation and the atom bomb. It offers ways to process that experience, enabling communication between artist, reader, dream and reality. The world's most diverse graphic narrative industry has something for everyone, including a thriving female comics culture.

Osamu Tezuka and his followers reshaped Japan's manga and animation industry after the war. Twenty years after Tezuka's death, his protégés are still active, passing on his influence.

The manga god

Tezuka's first professional work was published in 1946, five months after Japan's surrender. He died in 1989, after changing the face of popular culture, building links with foreign artists such as Moebius, making it possible for later artists to take street aesthetics into high society. His fans called him the God of Manga.

*Here's the original Tezuka cover art for *Tetsuwan Atom*, showing Atom and his sister Uran.*



► Tezuka is best known here for two TV series: *Tetsuwan Atom* (*Astro Boy*) and *Jungle Taitei* (*Kimba the White Lion*). Both have the huge eyes, rounded lines and simplified graphics of most children's comics of the 1950s. Tezuka merchandised his characters early on, setting up the first US-style licensing department in Japan for *Astro Boy*. He also produced manga and animation in many styles. His subject matter was diverse, setting the pattern for the industry. He hated losing readers, and as his original fans grew up he made adult works for them. Ferociously competitive and interested in anything new, he absorbed every development in comics.

To manage his impossible workload, he recruited editors, room mates and fans as assistants, designed uniform line and colour

Tezuka's subject matter was diverse, setting the pattern for the industry

tones, and graphics, and established working systems that are still used in manga studios. He even wrote the first "How to draw manga" book in 1950. His last words, as he lay dying of stomach cancer, were "I'm begging you, let me work."

Making time for manga

Returning to bombed-out Kobe, 15-year-old Mitsuteru Yokoyama saw Tezuka's 1949 manga *Metropolis*. A manga addict, he quit a banking job after five months because it left him no time to draw. His use of light, shadow and line to convey suspense, his pacing and story development soon caught Tezuka's attention, and Yokoyama became one of his assistants. He also worked across genres, producing a historical action story and a manga for girls before *Tetsujin 28-go* (*Gigantor*) appeared in 1956. With its canny combination of giant robot, clever orphan schoolboy and moral conflict, its success rivalled *Astro Boy*.

Many consider Yokoyama's historical dramas his finest work. He used real and legendary sources from China, Japan and the Western to produce a string of hits about little witches, ninja, kings and heroes. He died in 2004, aged 69.

Cyborgs and monsters

The Guinness Book of Records names Shotaro Ishinomori as creator of 'the most comics by one author', yet his best-known

What is manga style?

The manga rulebook was thrown out long ago - you don't have to be Japanese to draw it



Although the art style might be different, *Cyborg 009* (above) and *Summit of the Gods* (right) both utilise a panel approach.



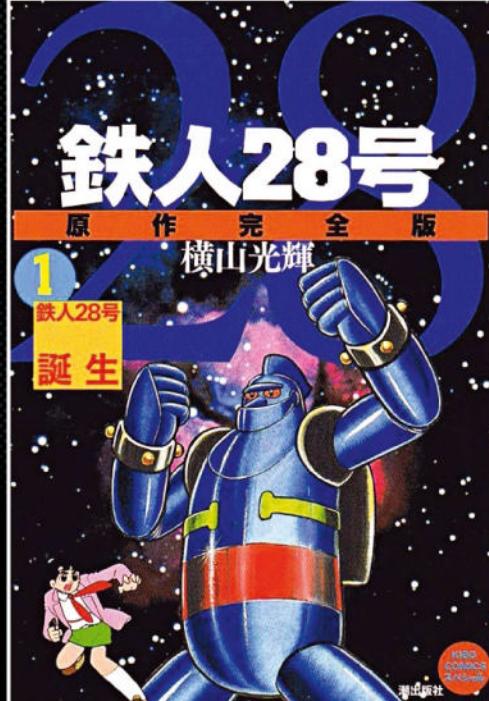
The only absolute truth about manga style is that it doesn't exist. Manga is simply the Japanese word for comics, and any style an artist chooses is acceptable. The key factor is graphic narrative. Manga is storytelling.

Manga began as traditional Japanese art. In the 19th century, early manga artists were strongly influenced by Western art, especially American newspaper cartoons. Later, Japanese newspapers and magazines bought illustrations and strips from American and European publishers.

Today's manga embraces everything from grotesque distortion, deliberately simplistic drawing and highly detailed, neo-realistic work. Much material imported to the West conforms to the 'big eyes, big hair' stereotype because the teenage mass market likes that style, but publishers like Vertical, Fanfare UK/Ponent Mon and Dark Horse offer more diverse books.

There's no single correct manga format, either. In the West we tend to think of manga as long-form episodic narratives, but in Japan short stories, strips and single-frame gags are popular. Early artists made three or four-panel gag strips and single pictures. Machiko Hasegawa's *Sazae-San* started as a four-panel newspaper strip in 1946 and kept its four-panel format until 1974. Longer narrative manga didn't become popular until later on in the 20th century.

Manga's creation and evolution



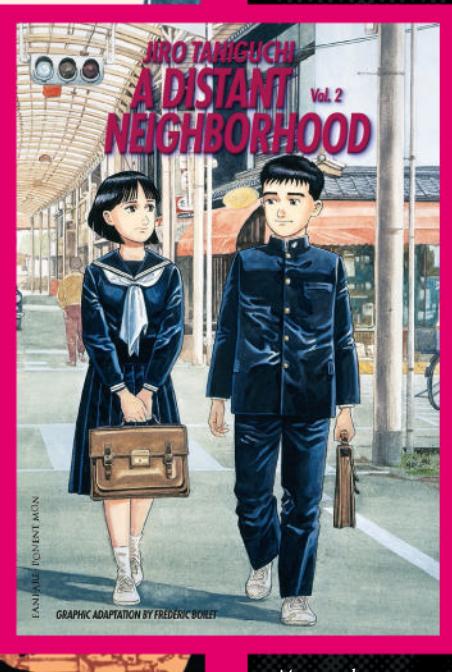
The cover art for Mitsuteru Yokoyama's *Tetsujin 28-go* shows why it was such a hit - boy hero meets really big robot!

670 onwards

Horyuji Temple, destroyed by fire in 670, is rebuilt at Nara. Some of the workmen installing the ceiling in the main hall risk losing their jobs by drawing caricatures (possibly their foremen and clients) on the inside of the ceiling boards. Their secret is safe until the boards are taken down for restoration centuries later.

1500s

Picture scrolls depicting Buddhist legend and classics of Japanese literature like *The Tale of Genji* are made to entertain and educate the upper classes. Sojo Toba, a Buddhist monk, is credited with four satirical scrolls depicting animals mimicking humans, fantasy creatures and people at play.



Manga embraces any style. Give your individuality free rein.

creation outside Japan is a live-action TV show. In 1975 he created *Himitsu Sentai Goranger*, and inspired *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers*. But manga was his passion.

In 1951, aged 13, he started submitting work to magazines and newspapers. His stories often focus on cyborgs and monsters, transformed by fate, fighting for justice in a harsh world. In 1953 Osamu Tezuka offered him work in Tokyo. Bunking off school, Ishinomori did a brief stint on *Astro Boy* around his mid-term exams, and never looked back.

His art style is similar to Tezuka's early work, with rounded lines and clear, dynamic movement. He shared Tezuka's humanistic and egalitarian sentiments. In *Cyborg 009* (1963) a character remarks, "To be of mixed race is not a shameful thing; in fact, you can be proud of it... There will undoubtedly come a time when nationalism and racism disappear."

Entertaining rebellion

After the war the occupying forces censored all Japanese communications. Glorifying

1657

Japan is closed to foreigners. Despite repression, the economy develops and ordinary people have money to spend on luxuries. Over the next 250 years, a vibrant urban culture blossoms. The arts flourish and woodblock printing makes art affordable to the masses. Popular subjects include collectable series of views, pin-ups of actors and beauties, satires, broad comedy, cheap travel souvenirs and shock-horror pictures of monsters, demons and murderers.

1844-1878

Katsushika Hokusai's sketchbooks are printed and published in 14 volumes under the title *Hokusai Manga*.



1853

Commodore Matthew Perry of the United States Navy sails into Tokyo harbour with three heavily armed ships and forces Japan to open its frontiers to foreigners. Japanese art influences Western artists, while Western immigrants influence Japanese artists.

LONE WOLF AND CUB

VOLUME 1
THE ASSASSIN'S ROAD
By KAZUO KOIKE & GOSEKI KOJIMA



In 1970 Goseki Kojima successfully combined tense action-packed stories with traditional Japanese motifs, layouts and colours. Comic artists in the West recognised its many achievements.

the feudal system or Japan's heroic past was absolutely forbidden. Comics and kamishibai storytellers, seen as mere children's entertainment, sometimes escaped censorship. Kamishibai provided employment for several future manga greats until 1954, when the occupation ended.

Goseki Kojima was born on the same day as Tezuka in 1928, surviving him by 11 years. After high school he painted cinema posters. In 1950 he became a kamishibai artist, painting images for street-corner storytellers, and adapted classic novels as rental comics. Rental libraries boomed in post-war Japan – manga could be rented for far less than they cost to buy.

Kojima built up a loyal following, and in 1967 he made his first magazine sale. Three years later, *Manga Action* magazine published *Kozure Okami* (*Lone Wolf and Cub*), which he created with writer Kazuo Koike. His superb layouts showcase fights of gut-churning realism and tender moments of observation. The manga was a huge hit, winning a strong following overseas. Comic artist Frank Miller has ➤



Kiriko Nananan uses space and emptiness to brilliant effect, as shown here in her 1996 manga *Blue*.

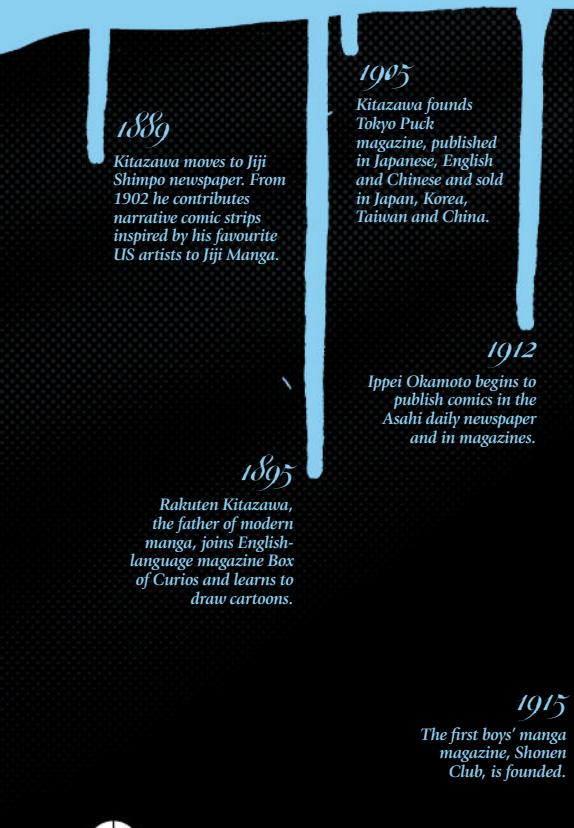
» acknowledged Kojima's influence on *Sin City* and *Ronin*. Novelist Max Allan Collins told a BBC interviewer that his *Road to Perdition* is "an unabashed homage to *Lone Wolf and Cub*".

Class struggle

Sanpei Shirato, born in 1932, is the son of proletarian artist-activist Toki Okamoto. Renowned for his gritty drawing style, powerful characterisations and social criticism, he's also a celebrated essayist. He began as a kamishibai painter at 18, and the need to build tension across 12 to 20 pictures profoundly influenced his style.

His 1957 debut work, *Ninja Bugeicho* (Band of Ninja), was a hit with students and the intelligentsia, but his most important manga is probably *Kamui Den* (The Legend of Kamui). He and Katsuichi Nagai founded the legendary manga anthology *Garo* in 1964 to publish it.

Garo was part of the gekiga movement – a group of young comics creators, led by Tezuka fan Yoshihiro Tatsumi, seeking greater realism in manga and a new



Garō sought greater realism in manga and a new response to its changing society

A sense of art nouveau is present in all of CLAMP's manga, even though the team of four women shares drawing duties.



response to its changing society. *Garo*'s anti-authoritarian stance and alignment with class struggle made it popular with the student movements of the 1960s, but its circulation later declined. It closed in 2002.

Its egalitarian attitudes embraced non-mainstream female creators like Kiriko Nananan, whose debut work appeared there in 1993. Basing her stories and characters on life, Nananan says she is obsessed with "seeing between the lines" and uses spaces and backgrounds "to suggest feelings such as hope or emptiness". Small details often play a vital role in the story and so she refuses to use assistants. She draws her panels as isolated images, like a poster or T-shirt, but so far hasn't followed Junko Mizuno into the world of merchandising.

Women at work

Tezuka and Yokoyama made manga for girls, but female mangaka (a manga artist) were active too, carrying on a pre-war

tradition. As the Japanese women's movement developed, more women became mangaka.

Machiko Hasegawa was born in 1920, and started selling illustrations to *Shojo Club* magazine at the age of 14. In 1946 her newspaper strip *Sazae-San* appeared, continuing daily until she retired in 1974. Its simply drawn, humorous panels that are as brief and controlled as haiku, examine the role of women and the problems of life in a changing Japan. Hasegawa's other series are charming, but *Sazae-san* is seen as her best work. The anime version is the longest-running animated series in the world. Hasegawa died in 1992.

Many young mangaka lodged at Tokyo's Tokiwa apartments. Yet only one of them, Hideko Mizuno, was female. She worked as Tezuka's assistant before making her professional debut in 1956, aged 17. She often used foreign sources as inspiration for her work. *Fire!* (1959) was the first girls' manga with a male protagonist and a sex scene, and her style embraced a new

realism and sensuality. Single motherhood in 1973 slowed her work rate, but she still produces manga and has an active Japanese website.

Modern girls

CLAMP started as 11 school friends making fan manga in the mid-1980s. Their numbers have dropped to four, sharing all the tasks of manga production. Like Tezuka, they make complex stories and frequently re-use characters from earlier works. Their art style packs in images and influences. It changes depending who's drawing, but most CLAMP works have very detailed hair and costume, sweeping lines and curves that invoke an art nouveau feeling.

Junko Mizuno's work mixes cute, almost child-like images with Gothic horror. Pop art meets girls' manga sums up her visual style. Born in 1973, she's shown herself to be a shrewd businesswoman, with merchandise including collectibles, stationery, T-shirts and even condoms. Her work has ➤

The Superflat controversy

How one artist tried to overturn the art establishment refusal to see manga's merits



Pop art meets manga is a good way to sum up the work of Junko Mizuno, including *Princess Mermaid*, as seen here.

To Takashi Murakami, modern-day otaku culture, fixated on transient, ephemeral images, was more representative of Japan's present and future than traditional art. Yet he was frustrated by the refusal of the art establishment to consider pop culture products as art. "I thought, 'Why not just revolutionise the concept of art itself?'"

The result was Superflat, an art movement critiquing what Murakami calls "the shallow emptiness of Japanese consumer culture" by exploiting its iconography. An exhibition and book stormed international art markets in 2001. Murakami used the commercial ethos of anime character merchandising to create products for both aesthetes and otaku.

It caused uproar in both worlds. Japan's art elite didn't believe that otaku culture could inspire anything of value. According to critic Hiroaki Azuma, they saw otaku as "anti-social, perverted and selfish people who stick to computers, comics, and anime imagery without any real communication".

Some otaku considered Murakami a cultural tourist or worse. In 2000, a Fujihiko Hosono manga showed a

successful artist strongly resembling Murakami stealing an otaku's ideas.

Perhaps Hosono was thinking of Murakami's workshop, Hiropon Factory, which he set up in 1996. In 2001, Hiropon became KaiKai Kiki Co., stating its aim of developing and fostering young Japanese artists on the international scene. Superflat has brought artists like Yoshitomo Nara, Chiho Aoshima and Koji Morimoto to international notice. Aoshima's work was exhibited on the London Underground in 2006.



CLAMP's *Chobits* manga has been turned into a anime TV series and a game for major consoles and PC.



Murakami was the only visual artist in Time magazine's 2008 list of 100 most influential people.

embraced Western icons such as My Little Pony and Spider-Man.

Boys' own heroes

While the counterculture and women's movement blossomed, many artists were still Tezuka-inspired. Tezuka fan Katsuhiro Otomo's manga won the master's admiration, and former Tezuka staffer Rintaro gave Otomo his first job in animation. Go Nagai and Leiji Matsumoto recast the previous generation's fantasies of giant robots and heroes fighting impossible odds.

Nagai started his career as assistant to Tezuka's protégé Shotaro Ishinomori: his greatest innovation is the pilable, transforming robot. Go Nagai says, "Several manga writers of the generation before mine, such as master Osamu Tezuka, created robot stories... reading those stories, I always wondered how to make readers identify with these robot characters. I think I achieved this with Mazinger Z, where a man actually gets inside the robot and pilots it."

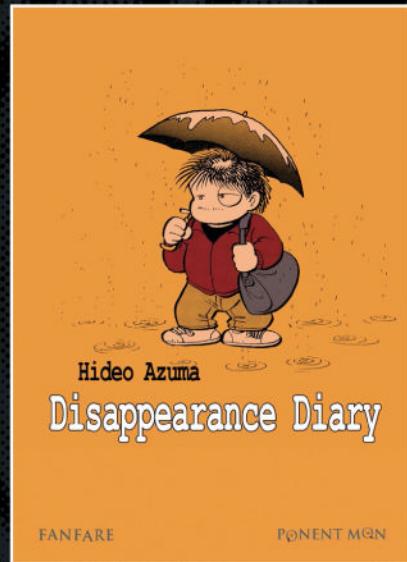
Matsumoto's sweeping, heroic sagas were inspired by Tezuka, and by the mythology and reality of the war. He treasures the memory of an early link: "People are connected by strange fates. I watched an animated movie in Akashi called The Spider and the Tulip. It influenced my debut manga, *The Adventures of a Honeybee*. Mr Tezuka saw my work and asked me how it was inspired. When I told him I'd seen The Spider and the Tulip at a young age in Akashi, he choked. He saw it in the same theatre, where it had played for only one week! I remember seeing it on a Sunday – he might have been in my neighbourhood and watched it at the same time. At least, our eyes were glued to the same movie screen. I was five years old then, and Mr Tezuka was 15."

True-life stories

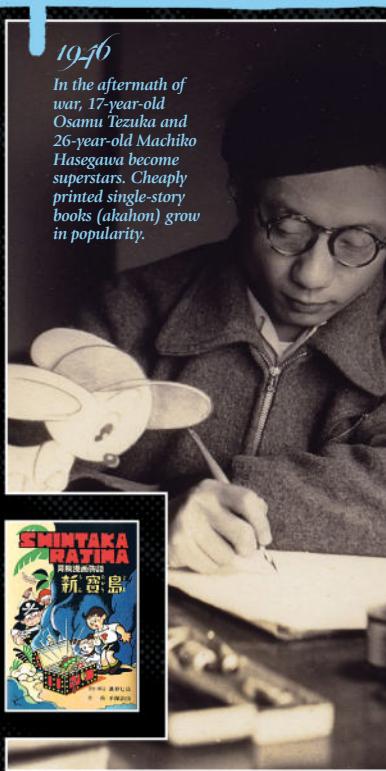
As time passed, mangaka began to examine the aftermath of the atomic bomb through semi-autobiographical stories. Keiji Nakazawa's *Barefoot Gen*, published in 1972, is based on surviving Hiroshima's



Homeless and alone in modern Japan, a burnt-out artist faces life outside society in *Disappearance Diary*.



The contrast between Azuma's rounded, almost childlike art and searing story is very powerful.



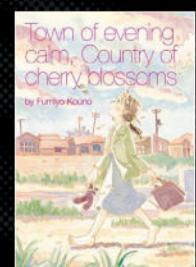
1946

In the aftermath of war, 17-year-old Osamu Tezuka and 26-year-old Machiko Hasegawa become superstars. Cheaply printed single-story books (*akahon*) grow in popularity.



1950s

Manga Shonen magazine for boys, *Nakayoshi* manga magazine for girls and many others begin publication. With multiple stories or episodes in every issue, they usher in the modern era of manga publishing.



Town of Evening Calm, published in 2003, carries a strong anti-war message.

1975

The first comic market is held in Tokyo. Affectionately known as Comiket, it's a gathering of fans selling home-made manga. It runs twice a year, attracts over half a million attendees and is talent-scouted by major manga and games publishers.

1970s

Japanese arcade and console games spread worldwide, preparing the ground for the spread of personal computer games. Game animation, artwork and character design becomes increasingly elaborate and influential. By the next millennium, games will use more art and animation than most TV or movie anime.

1980s

Commercially translated manga begin to appear in the US and Europe, often in response to the local popularity of Japanese animation. The English-language market develops slowly over two decades and only becomes well established after 2000.



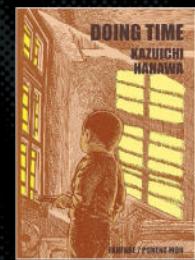
Action flows through this cinematic page from *Botchan*, highlighting Jiro Taniguchi's versatility and skills as a storyteller.



Subtle and delicate – the quiet suburban charm of Taniguchi's series *The Walking Man*.

bombing as a child. Half a century later, women like Fumiyo Kono and Yuka Nishioka revisited wartime themes with manga about survivors of the atom bomb.

Meanwhile, Yoichiro Tatsumi and the gekiga movement had inspired a wave of gritty, realistic manga in a wide range of styles. Hideo Azuma's 2005 *Disappearance Diary* presents the sometimes harrowing story of a burnt-out, alcoholic manga artist and failed suicide who decides to become a tramp in a cute, almost childlike style. Kazuichi Hanawa's *Doing Time*, the story of his stay in a Japanese prison, uses darker, uglier, more intense art. A live-action movie appeared in 2002.



Doing Time highlights the banality and ugliness of Japanese prison life.

Terms of the trade

Manga is widely translated, but it helps to know about a few of its technical terms

ANIME Japanese for animation.

MANGA Japanese for comic. The kanji for 'man' implies random or involuntary action. Mangaka Shotaro Ishinomori felt this no longer fits modern manga, which has developed beyond gags and grotesques, so he suggested changing it for the 'man' kanji meaning 'ten thousand' to indicate manga's scope and diversity.

MANGAKA Usually translated as manga artist, but implies original authorship. Used for those who create both the art and story, and for artists. Someone who creates the story but not the art is called a gensakusha.

GEKIGA Literally 'drama pictures', a term coined in or before 1957 by Yoshihiro Tatsumi to indicate a more serious, realistic form of manga. It's been adopted by many young artists.

KAMISHIBAI This translates as 'paper theatre' and is street-corner storytelling using sequential painted images for illustration. It was popular in the first half of the 20th century but was largely killed off by TV. A number of popular mangaka started out as kamishibai painters.

1985
Ben Dunn founds Antarctic Press to publish 'American Manga' – manga-inspired works created by non-Japanese writers and artists.

1990-91
Katsuhiro Otomo's film of his manga *Akira* is screened in the UK, US and Europe, and creates an adult audience for Japanese animation.

2001
Manga's influence on art is acknowledged in Takashi Murakami's international art exhibition *Superflat*.

1992
Buichi Terasawa publishes *Takeru*, the first manga series that was created entirely in the computer, after more than a decade spent experimenting with digital art.

2009
Shuho Sato launches a website to publish his manga online. In 2010 he opens MangaOnWeb to submissions from other creators.

Jiro Taniguchi started out creating conventional comics, but over time he's developed a subtle, delicate personal style. His art uses clear, simple lines and realistic proportions, and his stories focus on contemporary suburban Japan, taking a wry yet gentle view of society and culture. Many of his pages are pure graphic narrative, entirely wordless.

Modern manga

Today's manga are as rich and diverse as ever, although we see little of that diversity in the West. Some of Japan's top mangaka are almost unknown here – few have achieved international fame, like Katsuhiro Otomo and Masamune Shirow. Many English-speaking fans are unaware of giants like Moto Hagio and Fujio Akatsuka. But with increasing demand, and feature films based on the work of Naoki Urasawa, Ai Yazawa, Moyoco Anno and others getting Western release, things are changing.

Manga have moved out of their homeland and into world culture. It's world domination, but in a good way. ■

ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE

MANGA HEROES AT HOME

I love toys and figures, but I didn't bring any of them to America except this one. She's my favourite, and when I'm tired I can look at her and regain my energy.

Although the details of this sculpture's hair aren't perfect, it's excellent as a reference piece for shadow and light across the face.



COVER
ARTIST

HAN-YUAN YU

LATE-NIGHT TALES THE TAIWANESE ILLUSTRATOR - BETTER KNOWN AS B.C.N.Y. - ON WHY A FREELANCER'S GREATEST PRIVILEGE IS WORKING UNTIL 6AM



My studio is just a few steps from my bed. I have a three-piece corner desk for my computer equipment. I use a HP desktop and Intuos4 tablet. My double-screen system - 24 and 27-inch screens - enables me to draw and review references at the same time.

I recently moved the desk from the corner to the centre of the room, because I felt miserable facing the walls and squeezing myself into such a small space. I love being

surrounded by art books and references, which I use as sources of inspiration.

The space next to my desk is my inking station. I won this gigantic draft board for coming first in a Dare2Draw competition. I don't use it often, but I like to have it around - it looks very professional. Behind the desk is my oil-painting station. I learned to paint with oils studying on the MFA program at the Fashion Institute of Technology in New York.

It's hard to recreate in oils the same colours that I can paint digitally. However, I

Sometimes I stream my drawing process online. I bought this high-tech microphone for chatting and singing while I'm drawing. But there seems to be a connection issue with it. I found that the microphone on my webcam is easier to use. But I will get this microphone working one day!

enjoy how paint looks on canvas - all those individual strokes and textures. Using oils always teaches me something new, which then helps with rendering colours and creating strokes digitally.

When I wake up, the first thing I do is check emails, commissions, Facebook and other social network sites. I like to brew a cup of fresh ground coffee; it's like my on-switch for the day. I usually start working around 3pm. The routine of my daily life is irregular. I'm used to going to

One of my favourite accessories is a piece of Chinese traditional decoration. Because of its high price, I could only buy a small one. I want to get the whole set of these decorations some day.



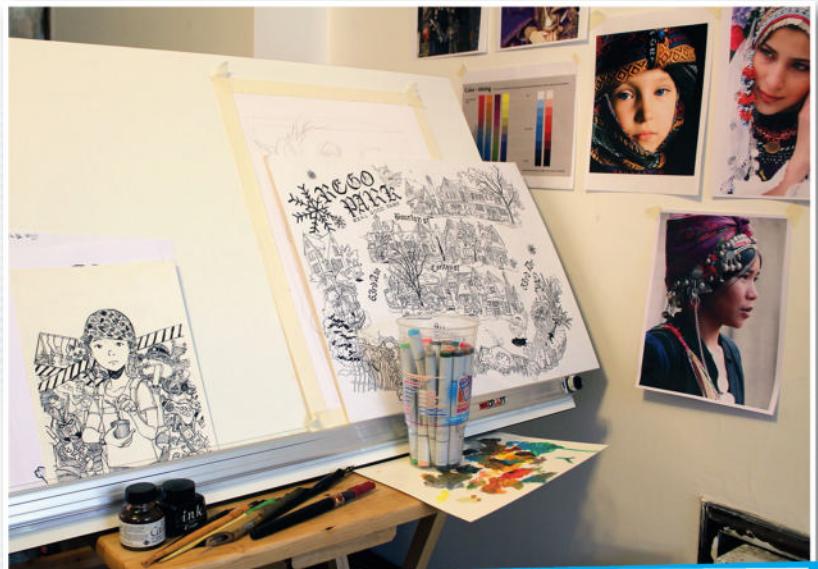
It's hard to resist buying art books. I collect books related to Taiwan's aboriginal culture, accessories and everything else I'm interested in. Although the internet is a convenient source of information, seeing real pictures on the page is a totally different experience. You can observe every detail with greater clarity.

bed late – between 4 and 6am – when I don't need to wake up early the next day. This is one of the great privileges of being a freelance illustrator.

I do love being outside, sketching streets and pedestrians. But I'm most happy in front of my lovely computer – drawing every day, from morning till night.

Han-Yuan is a freelance illustrator from Taiwan. He lives in New York City and studies at the Fashion Institute of Technology. You can see his art at <http://ifxm.ag/b-c-n-y>.

Painting with oils enables me to explore different ways of rendering colours. However, it's frustrating having to wait for those paints to dry on canvas. In the end, my entire painting process is me roughly putting every paint on my palette on to the canvas.



The reason I love this place is that I can stick the references I need on the draft board and the walls around the room. I complete the line work here, scan it into my computer and finish them digitally. I'm happy with the results. Sometimes I use watercolours or acrylics here, too.



ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE



I get caught up in my paintings and don't realise an entire day has passed. My husband's texts and phonecalls are really the only thing that snaps me out of my trance.

Other artists, nature and photography inspire me, but I'm very careful not to copy any of these images. This is just a beautiful collage I like to look at.

CAMILLA D'ERRICO

HAPPY PLACE WE DROP IN ON D'ERRICO STUDIOS, IN GASTOWN, VANCOUVER, TO SEE WHAT MAKES THE CANADIAN ARTIST TICK



My studio is my sanctuary. I have an incredible corner space that has water and mountain views. I look out onto North Vancouver and watch the cruise ships sail by and dogs playing in the park across the street.

When inspiration hits, I'm a slave to it. I'd be the hardest person to stalk, because I keep such strange hours. Some days I arrive before most people have woken up, often leaving long after they're asleep.

Summer or winter, I'm always sipping tea when I work. It's part of my routine. I go

through emails and organise my projects and appearance schedule with my assistant. I love speaking to fans online. It's inspirational to read people's comments and see what other artists are posting. The rest of my day is spent working: drawing or painting, based on how I'm feeling that day.

I never force creativity, unless I'm on deadline. Some weeks all I want to do is paint. Then I'll be in a mad rush to complete a drawing project, pulling a few all-nighters to make my deadline. If I could focus my mind to be creative when I wanted it to, I'd be a lot less chaotic.

I have filing cabinets to keep my drawings organised. In each of the drawers I have pages and illustrations of various old and current projects. There's also an entire drawer full of imagery that I've collected from magazines or prints.

Speaking of chaotic, my work space is usually quite messy. I often have books everywhere, drawings and reference scattered on my desk. It's both unnerving and energising. Images pop into my head when I'm jogging or having a coffee with friends and I immediately sketch them out when I get back. A lot of my ideas are rubbish, so I don't always follow through. The story appears to me as I create it. It's a very mysterious process. Even to me.

Camilla is a Canadian comic book illustrator, painter and visual artist. To see more visit www.camilladerrico.com.

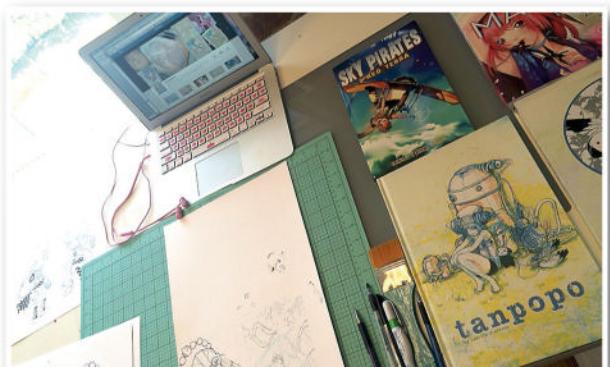
I paint on birch plywood panels, purchased from my local art supply store. I sand them down for a smoother surface then sketch with watercolour pencils and start my painting.



Holbein DUO are amazing oil paints that blend with water, so I can create washes and impastos at the same time. I can also blend them with acrylics, for painting solid colours that have to dry quickly.

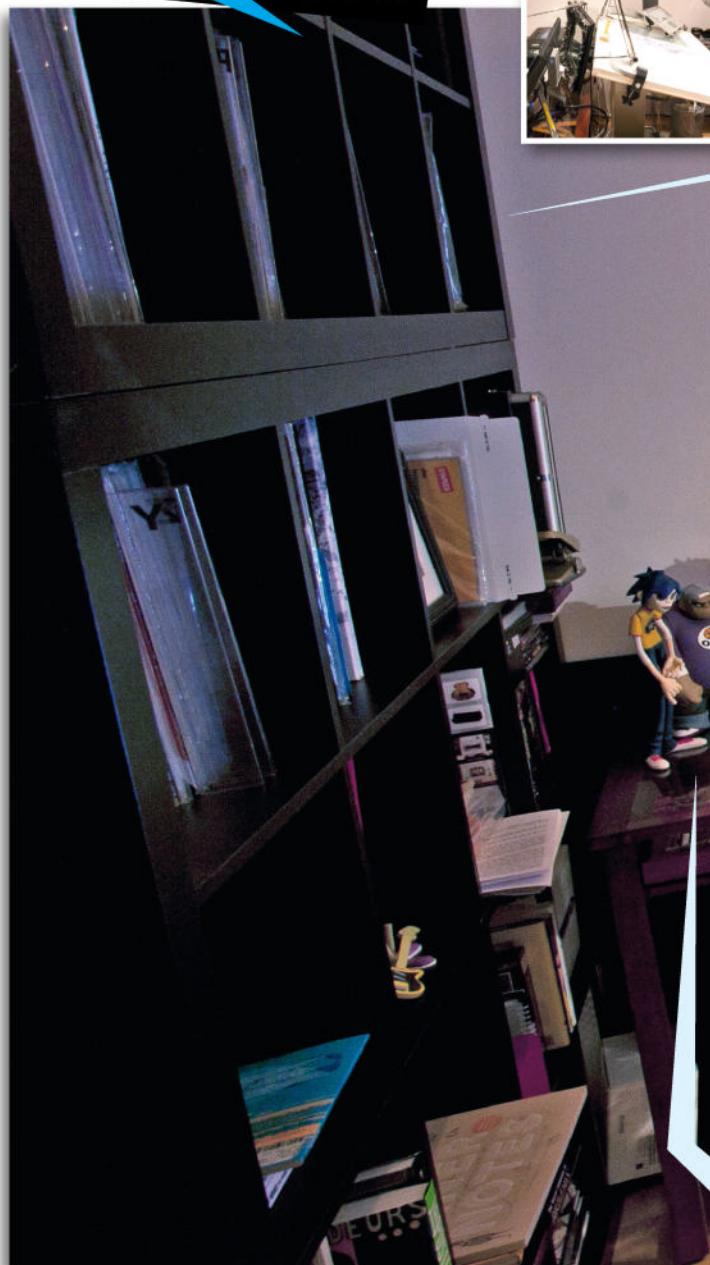


I love art books and manga. I keep a small part of my collection at my studio and I switch out the books as I buy more or when I revisit certain ones for inspiration.



The best part of my work space is my studio mate, my little French bulldog Loki. He's my companion and source of endless entertainment. Without him I'm sure that my workplace would feel much less alive.

ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE



I prefer drawing most of my work traditionally on a drafting table before adding colour digitally.



The bookcases I've installed are great for defining the workspace while also maintaining privacy in an open concept living area.



Over on my digital side, I've got a full set of Gorillaz action figures for whenever I'm feeling a bit lonely.

ALVIN LEE

KEEPING CALM ALVIN'S STUDIO IS A CLEVER FENG SHUI-FRIENDLY WORKSPACE OPTIMISED FOR PRODUCTIVITY, CREATIVITY AND NINJA DEFENCE...



My studio setup is my dining room converted into a dual-desk configuration. This should explain the funky lights hanging over what's supposed to be a large dining table space.

I prefer having my studio in my home, because I like my workspace to be easily accessible whenever I'm feeling inspired. My routine usually consists of several hours of

couch and web surfing before I'm ready to get into any kind of groove, so having these things easily accessible is always nice. As an added bonus, I never have to deal with people in the mornings, thankfully, because I'm a horrible morning person.

I start out drafting everything out on my drawing board before adding colour digitally. On the traditional side, all of my drafting tools such as Copic markers, blue

pencils and built-in light table are all within arm's reach. I do a lot of Google image referencing while occasionally keeping in contact with the rest of the world via social networking, so I decided to mount my laptop to my drafting table using an Ergotron dual-arm. The digital art setup has all of the toys you would expect. A Wacom Cintiq21UX, Brother A3 all-in-one scanner and a Mac mini maxed out with RAM.

My Buddha is supposed to promote happiness, but I do question his effectiveness every time I'm neck-deep in a deadline crunch.



The second arm of my Ergotron dual-arm has been rigged with a camera mount to a Rebel XTi, which enables me to capture process videos or time-lapse photos while I work.



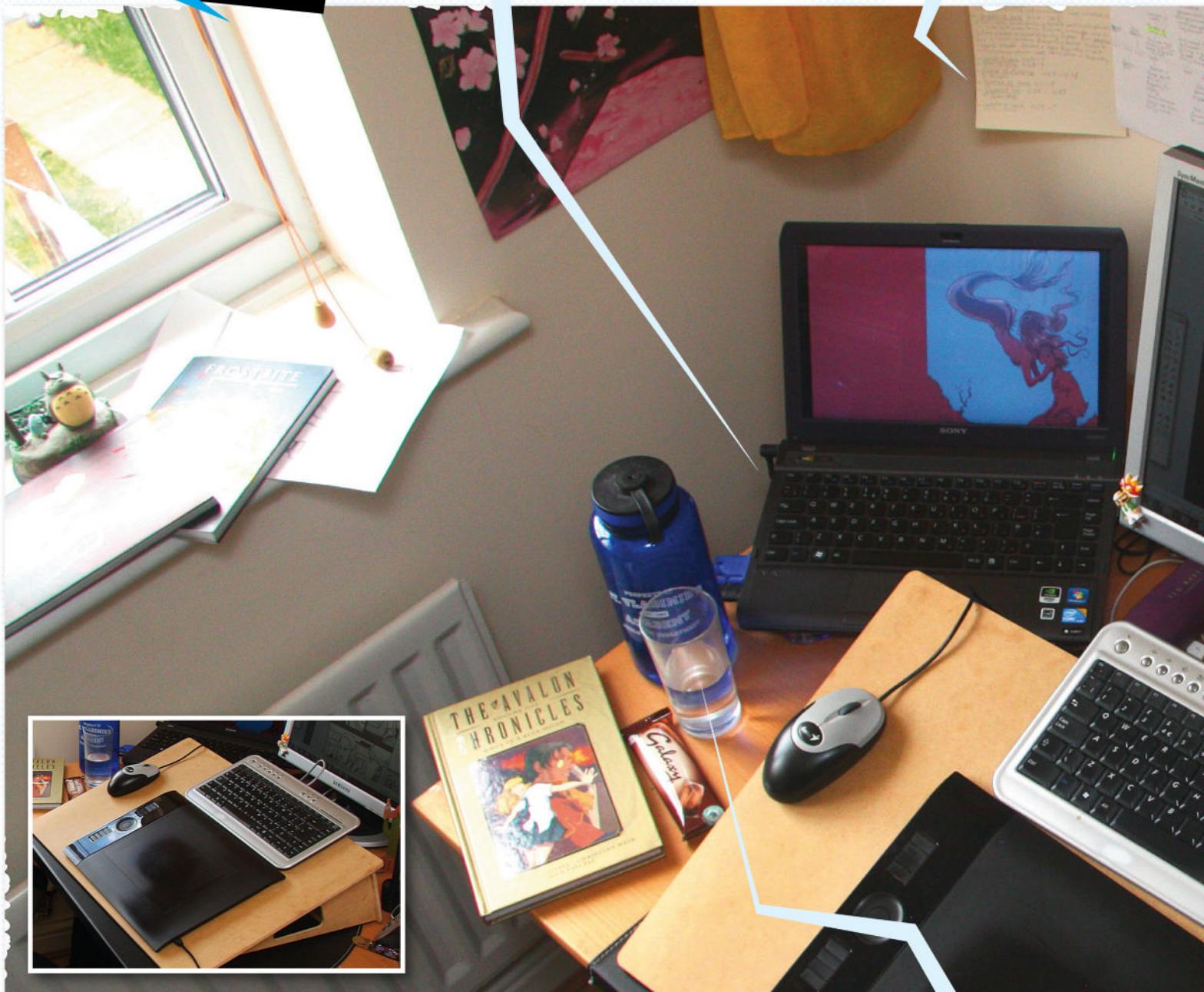
I also have a fairly large mirror strapped to my desk lamp – not only because I'm vain, you understand, but because I find it's really great for studying expressions or lighting while painting faces.



I'm also quite superstitious when it comes to feng shui. Both of my desks face my preferred Kua positions and don't face any walls or windows. This has been suggested to easily view my surroundings while not having my back exposed to any lurking entities, such as ninjas. Logical or not, I'm willing to try anything to encourage a peaceful and auspicious work environment – including the placement of a Buddha in my bookcase to promote happiness.

Alvin has worked with major global comic publishers and media groups. Visit www.alvinleeart.com to see his art.

ARTISTS IN RESIDENCE



EMMA VIECELI

NOTE PERFECT EMMA'S WORKSPACE OFFERS A CALM SPACE TO CREATE COMIC PANELS ON HER WACOM TABLET, AS WELL AS PUMP OUT MUSICAL NUMBERS!



My 'studio' is a converted spare bedroom in my house. Pencilling can be a little more transportable for me, as you'll see from the sketchbook shown, but once I'm into the digital aspects of my projects, this is where I hide myself away.

I'll generally surface from the bedroom, between 9:30 and 10:00, head straight for

the kettle and then stumble into the nest with a coffee in hand, ready to face the working day; which generally lasts until about 7:00/8:00pm for me. My company often includes my 'virtual studio mates' on Skype, Twitter, or music my friends chose for me via www.thisismyjam.com.

What you can't see in the photo is a wall of books and comics that sits behind me, along with a scattering of action figures and

trinkets and a pile of sketchbooks containing past projects. There's also an electric piano, just in case the urge takes me to stop drawing and have a sing-song. The room's small enough that all I have to do is spin my chair around to be seated at the piano!

I run my setup off of a wonderful, hardworking Sony Vaio laptop, and my weapons of choice are my much-adored Intuos 4 and Manga Studio for my inks. The

My water flask says 'Property of St. Vladimir's Academy' and is a piece of Vampire Academy merchandise from Arcane Vault.

The image on screen is a page from *Avalon Chronicles*, Book 2, published by Oni press. It's written by Nunzio DeFilippis and Christina Weir, with tones from Nana Li for Book 2.



Wacom make bloody brilliant graphics tablets. I have my personalised shortcuts set to things like 'Boom' and 'The Red Button', just to jazz up functions like Clear selection or Delete.

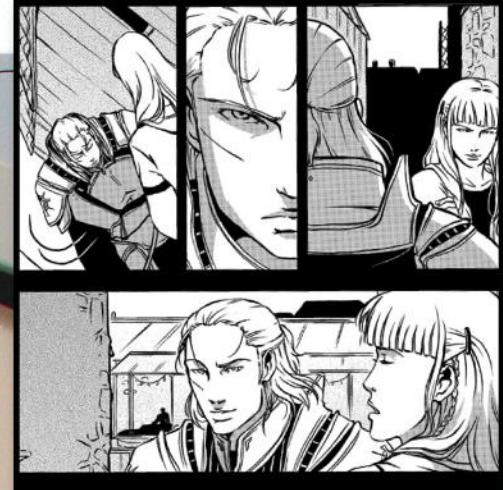
drawing surface, which normally only comes out when I'm pencilling, is an upside-down Games Workshop paint station. A stroke of genius from my MacGyver of a husband, when we realised one day that the angle was perfect for me, and it could sit over my Wacom tablet for the times when I'm pencilling at my desk.

Convention season has been manic this year, so scattered around on the desk you

The Breakfast Battle postcard is from my friend Richard Stevens of Diesel Sweeties. It makes me smile every morning. My husband gave me the monkey, thanks to the Baby Monkey YouTube video.

may spy throat lozenges and paracetamol among the more usual tat. The cardboard cactus was a freebie in one of my Graze food boxes. Graze is amazing and keeps me alive! And there you have it: my nest!

Emma is an illustrator, writer and comic artist based in Cambridge, England. Her clients include Penguin Books, Oni Press, SelfMadeHero and Marvel. You can see her art at www.emmaviecelli.com.



Manga studio is the single best tool I have found for digital inking. As has been shown by creators such as Dave Gibbons right here in *ImagineFX*, it's a brilliant tool for any digital artist.

The character lineups on my board are from *Vampire Academy* (Penguin books). If you saw *ImagineFX* issue 85, you'll have seen me discussing how helpful height charts are.



The art of WENJUN LIN

This painter wants to create art that combines Western techniques with his Chinese heritage



here are so many talented young fantasy artists coming out of China at the moment that it's hard at first to believe what

Shanghai-based Wenjun Lin says when we ask him what things are like out there. "Being a fantasy artist in China is a very difficult thing. CG and fantasy art are still not very well known in China," he says.

"The market is still immature, and often artists with good ideas and

talent are denied opportunities, while work of a lower quality gets seen."

There are no concerns about quality when it comes to Wenjun's work, however. The 33-year-old artist does concept work in China's growing gaming industry and has received recognition at home and abroad. His images have appeared in *Expose 8* and *9*, as well as *Exotique 6*, and he's won awards at CGHub and CGTalk. He's also appeared in a series of China's digital art, fantasy and computer games magazines.

You could argue that it's artists like Wenjun – who goes by >



BROTHERHOOD

A winter scene depicting the leader Menxin calling on his men for loyalty, this image was also inspired by a Chinese poem about water and geese.



ARTIST TIP

REEL IN THE VIEWER

"Whether you're creating a simple portrait or a large piece with multiple characters and multiple objects in it, you need to give your painting a story. This will make your art interesting to the viewer, and make it special."

Wenjun Lin

VITAL STATISTICS

"I want my artwork to tell a story"

Date of birth

20 May 1982

Place of birth

YanJi, Jilin Province.

Current location

Shanghai, China.

avourite artists

Frank Frazetta,

Craig Mullins,

Jaime Jones.

What's the last book that you read?

Game Of Thrones.

What are your favourite movies?

Inception and Kung Fu Panda - both films are



fantastic pieces of entertainment and contain nice CG work.

Who is your favourite mythological character, and why?

The Monkey King and Achilles – both are flawed gods of war.

If you could go anywhere for your next holiday, where would you go?

London and Paris.

Contact

junc0520@sina.com

THE BANQUET

Here Wenjun was keen to create a narrative piece, and to picture something with fewer brushstrokes than some of his other images, as well as overlapping colours.



THE EAST WAR

In this tumultuous piece from 2010, Wenjun wanted to generate a sense of randomness – a lot of action, a lot of figures, magic and the impression of detail.

the online moniker JUNC – that are giving China its huge reputation overseas, even though it's a tough scene at home. And as he points out, there are all kinds of things that give him and his fellow Chinese artists a creative boost. China's 5,000 years of history might impose certain traditional expectations that limit young artist domestically, but for Wenjun the culture is a wonderful source of ideas and inspiration.

"There are many talented artists and there's a wealth of artistic tradition, so fantasy art will develop and improve here," he says. "I think young Chinese artists are inheriting great traditions, and should

communicate more with foreign artists and try to be part of the global culture."

This philosophy is very much reflected in Wenjun's own creations, in which he strives to bring Eastern themes and techniques together with Western styles of composition. His recent work has focused on medieval battle scenes with strong contrast in the lighting and plenty of action. While some of his earlier works had a light, colourful, manga-esque feel to them, today the artist's work is becoming gritty and dark. Ominous, even.

"I want my artwork to tell a story and, especially recently, that story has been about tension and war. If you imagine that you're on the battlefield, what can you see? Maybe it isn't beautiful shapes or sweet colours, but just black and white. Perhaps you can't make out the specific appearance of things, or see details on all the equipment, but you can feel a strong sense of movement and atmosphere," he says.

EXAGGERATION PLAYS A ROLE

For Wenjun, it's about creating an impression, and exaggeration is often the tool that will give a piece its impact. He continues: "I want my work to be alive and breathing. All of the composition, lighting and forms should create a balance. What I want to say is that the most important thing is the accuracy of the feeling, rather than the accuracy of the modelling. Art needs

“I firmly believe that art has a life and soul. I'm focusing on catching the point at which the art starts to breathe”





THE DARK LORD
Painted in 2010, this
demonic image was
published in the *Expose 9*
book, and also won a Gold
Award at CGHub.

exaggeration – there's no such thing as a 100 per cent accurate image."

Growing up in a small town in northern China, Wenjun spent eight years learning the country's traditional creative media: sketching, watercolour, oil painting and sculpture. He still loves nature and the countryside, and even since moving to Shanghai he'll still lose himself in a forest whenever he gets the chance, painting or filling up his sketchbook. "I'll even forget to eat or drink," he adds.

It's from this traditional Chinese background that he feels his artistic style has grown. "I firmly believe that art has a life and soul. I'm focusing on catching the point at which the art starts to breathe, and that feeling. Picasso said, 'Chinese painting is the most advanced form of painting.' But the essence of Chinese painting is impressionistic. I always have that Chinese impressionism at the core of my work, but I combine that with Western styles and techniques."

It's not a position he's always held. Earlier in his career, he pushed himself hard to make his images as accurate as he



THE WIND TOWER

Two months' hard work produced this personal image that's received praise from around the world



One of Wenjun's favourite pieces came not as part of his day-to-day work, but as a response to it. He was working on concept art for computer games when the desire to take on a personal project hit him. The Wind Tower is also an image that's gained him plenty of attention online.

"Many people know me through this work, which has won a CG Talk Award as well as many others," he says. "I was working on a game as a concept artist and illustrator. One day I decided to create one special image for myself. The character, background, colour – all of them would be done in my personal style. I wanted the composition to be bold but pleasant, with a wide-angle aspect to it. The main characters occupy most of the area, but I wanted to add a lot of detail to the background so that it wouldn't look too narrow. I also tried to put as much distance between the foreground and background as possible, to keep it bold. I'd never spent more than two months working on one image before. It was a big challenge for me, and was done by hand. Yet The Wind Tower seems a really good work even now, even if the style is a little colourful and naïve."

ARTIST TIP

TRUST YOUR INSTINCTS

"Always believe in and follow those flashes of inspiration you get. Take a note down at the time you get one – it may be a form, a colour or a texture that gives you an idea. Inspiration can come from anywhere."

SPARTACUS

The gore-laden 2010 retread of the famed gladiator inspired Wenjun's dynamic battle scene



Wenjun's more recent pieces have been largely inspired by fantasy and historical battle scenes. "I was fascinated by 2010's TV series Spartacus: Blood And Sand. Although Spartacus is a Western character, he's not a stranger to me. I see him as a very human hero. I read more about his history and collected a lot of information about him. To begin with I sketched a lot of ideas and I decided to put the character in a central position. He's the hero, so it was a good choice. The composition is based on the letter 'X' for impact. I played a lot with the brush textures, and the red brings dynamism and cruelty to the image. I had the confidence to paint this in a Western style, moving outside of the Eastern techniques I know. The image is full of passion and energy – it's also joyful and refreshing."



could, trying to compete with photo-realism. Gradually, he shifted his goals and began working on images with a powerful impact, not worrying about trivial details but to concentrate on the brushes and textures. With this giving his work more depth, he then took the further step of concentrating on themes and feelings. He likens it to free painting.

The way he talks about the fusion of Eastern and Western styles, it's no surprise to learn that he loves artists from both traditions. He refers to Frank Frazetta as "a god of art" and also admires Craig Mullins and Jaime Jones for how they observe things. They've inspired his concept art. "But the most important man is the great

FIRE

One of Wenjun's more colourful paintings. Fire's composition is enhanced by colours that transition from warm to cold tones.

GREEN MAN

Inspired by myths about the Green Man, Wenjun did a lot of sketching before planning out this mystical painting that mixes Eastern style and Western folklore.

Chinese oil painting master Wang Kewei. All of his artworks depict wars in Chinese history. They're atmospheric and epic. Under his influence, I've found a lot of energy and pride in being Chinese. This nation's culture is one of the world's great cultures. I hope I can create artwork that has cultural meaning and value, like him."

USING THE RIGHT TOOLS

As a games artist in modern Shanghai, Photoshop has replaced palettes of oils and watercolours, and the brushes that go with

worked on comics, books and cards. But he found the experience disheartening and after a year working 14-hour days on a low salary, he lost his passion for it. "So I tried to find other work," he says. "Now I'm a game concept artist and illustrator. I like my work, but games aren't my only interest. Someday maybe I will go back to comics – it will be amazing."

He started as a games concept artist in 2005 working for Webzen, a joint Chinese-Korean company, where he created imagery for a game called The Kingdom. In 2008, he

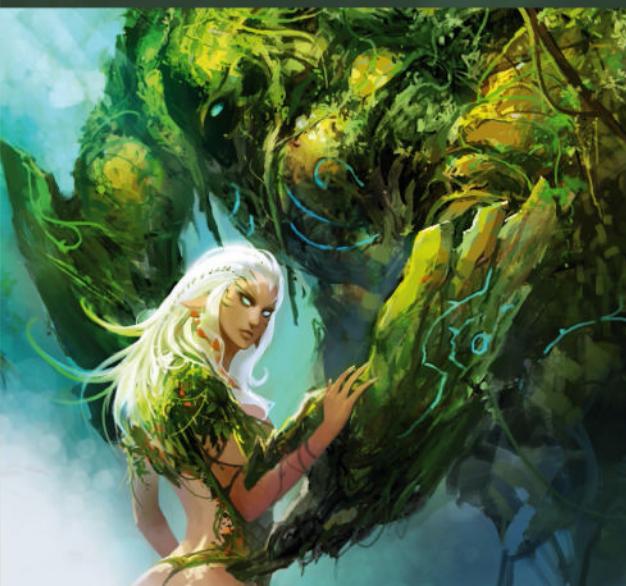
“I hope I can create artwork that has cultural meaning and value”

them. But the digital brushes within Photoshop are something Wenjun values. "Choosing the right tools will improve the quality of work," he says. "I still like sketching on paper with pencil – a lot of great concepts and inspirations are from my sketchbooks. Making some of my favourite brushes is also important, though. I play a lot with touch and texture in my works; most feelings come from real things like oil paints, watercolour pen, pencil and more."

Wenjun has worked as a professional artist for the past 10 years. He began his career in the world of comics, and went to a small Beijing studio in 2004 where he

joined Perfect World, where he's worked on Dragon Sword, an online game involving humans, spirits and demons. He's also working on their next project as art director. In addition to the day job, he also creates self-initiated artwork that he uploads to his CGSociety and CGHub portfolios, impressing fans around the world.

His current project is still under wraps, but he's overseeing concepts for a big online game. "It's got a very strong Eastern fantasy style mixed with a punk style of art. This is a great challenge for me – I'm devoting all my energy and passion to it. Soon we'll announce the project to the world!" ■



Sketchbook

Carlyn Lim

strong characters share the canvas with rich environments in this artist's fantasy art



THE POLARITY

Artist PROFILE

Carlyn Lim
COUNTRY: US



Contrasting physical elements, different subjects and various emotions inspire Carlyn to create art. That, fused with her love for animals, plants and all whimsical things transports her into another dimension where she can express her feelings and thoughts. She's currently working at NCsoft's ArenaNet in Washington. www.inkedradius.com/carlyn

THE POLARITY

"This artwork is about the different sides in a person. The two figures by the sides show the two extreme halves of one's personality, while the middle is the harmonious balance between the two. The different shapes and imagery surrounding the figures are arranged to emphasise the polarity between the halves."

THE PRIESTESS

"Aside from conducting sacred rituals in the temples of The Sound, the Priestesses of the Bird clan play their instruments to bring repose to the people. These beautiful beings are small in numbers, and are sought after by different clans."



OLEANDER

"Oleander are beautiful but formidable creatures. They are loyal pets and mounts of the Fire clan of my personal project, The Sound."

THE FISHBOAT

"This is one of the means of long-distance transportation in The Sound. They are controlled by the men-machines of the Land of Air, and are tough to gain access to."



THE PILL

"About life decisions that shape a person, of freedom and conflicting kinds of happiness. Sometimes, you find yourself trapped in the watchful eyes of all the people who care for you, becoming what they want you to be."

"Sometimes, you find yourself trapped in the watchful eyes of all the people who care for you..."

DEAFENING LIGHTS

"This was drawn in relation to the subject of the modernisation of society, of the city lights and sounds that never sleep. The young girl, wrapped in her own dreams of a fairy tale fantasy, represents how society is becoming more and more removed from reality."



CARLYN LIM

sketchbook

SCENES FROM THE SOUND

"Various scenes from The Sound. From the top, as the player's character Crease journeys out from his little town, the elder peawillows give him advice. The second frame shows Crease in the hidden chamber of the Bookkeeper, and the third is Crease's first encounter with a fire clan."



THE POLONG

"Polong is a folklore creature created with the blood of a murderer. The blood is put into a bottle and dark incantations are canted by black magic practitioners to bring forth its existence, and when crying is heard the Polong is born."

BUREAIRNE

"The creature of judgement, which travels in packs. They're easily heard through the clanking of the blades as they slither through the night skies."



"Polong is a folklore creature created with the blood of a murderer"

"BUREAIRNE"



OLIVE

"The cycle of life and death, the real and the mystic. A boy mourns the death of a loved one, while the trees of mother nature comfort and protect him, whispering that he's not alone."



**GYPSY DANGER**

"The red, white and blue markings, the classic blue steel WW2 paint job: Gypsy Danger is patriotic but not overstated. He needed to feel like an iconic piece of American military history brought back to life."

CRIMSON TYPHOON

"I used boxer Floyd Mayweather and his shoulder roll style of defence as inspiration. Then it was stamped 'approved' as the Chinese Jaeger."



THE ART OF HUGO MARTIN

How drawing skills learned as a child helped this concept artist bring mech designs to the multiplex in 2013's Pacific Rim



iant robots? Check. Awesome, futuristic cityscapes? Check. Formidable sea monsters causing wanton destruction? Check and check!

The works of Hugo Martin have all the ingredients you need if you love sci-fi art. Take a closer look, though, and you'll soon see that beyond the action, he's a master of creating mood and atmosphere. It's no surprise that he was chosen as one of the concept artists for one of the biggest blockbusters of 2013: Pacific Rim. He's also worked on The Avengers and Wolverine, and a slew of computer games including Warhammer Online, Star Wars: The Force Unleashed and Halo Wars.

His latest role is at id Software in Dallas, the company behind Doom, Quake and Rage. "I'm at my dream job," says Hugo. "I'm the studio art director, and we have a very exciting project we're in production on. I can't tell you what it is, though! I'm working with the amazing team of artists and designers here at id to help bring it to life. Like any studio, the team functions

better when we're all working together, keeping each other informed. From game designers, to programmers, animators, concept artists and modellers, we all need some insight into what each department is doing, so I help maintain that sense of collaboration as much as possible."

Trust us, Hugo's project isn't only exciting. Like Pacific Rim, it's huge.

"I got a Draw 50 Cartoon Characters book as a kid and spent hours on it"

Although he's in the midst of a flourishing career in concept art, Hugo has never forgotten how he developed his earliest drawing skills. When you ask most artists how they got started, they usually mention a project that put them on the map, a book cover or a creature that made it into a game or film. Instead, he recalls a "learn to draw" book he had as a child.

"I remember getting a Draw 50 Cartoon Characters book as a kid and spending hours following the simple instructions laid out on the pages. Starting from a sphere and adding basic primitive geometric shapes on top, you'd build up the forms >



HALO WARS

"This is for a cinematic sequence in the Halo Wars game. The more depth an image has, the more appealing to the viewer, so I stress that in my concepts."

© Microsoft Studios

ARTIST TIP

EAT CAKE

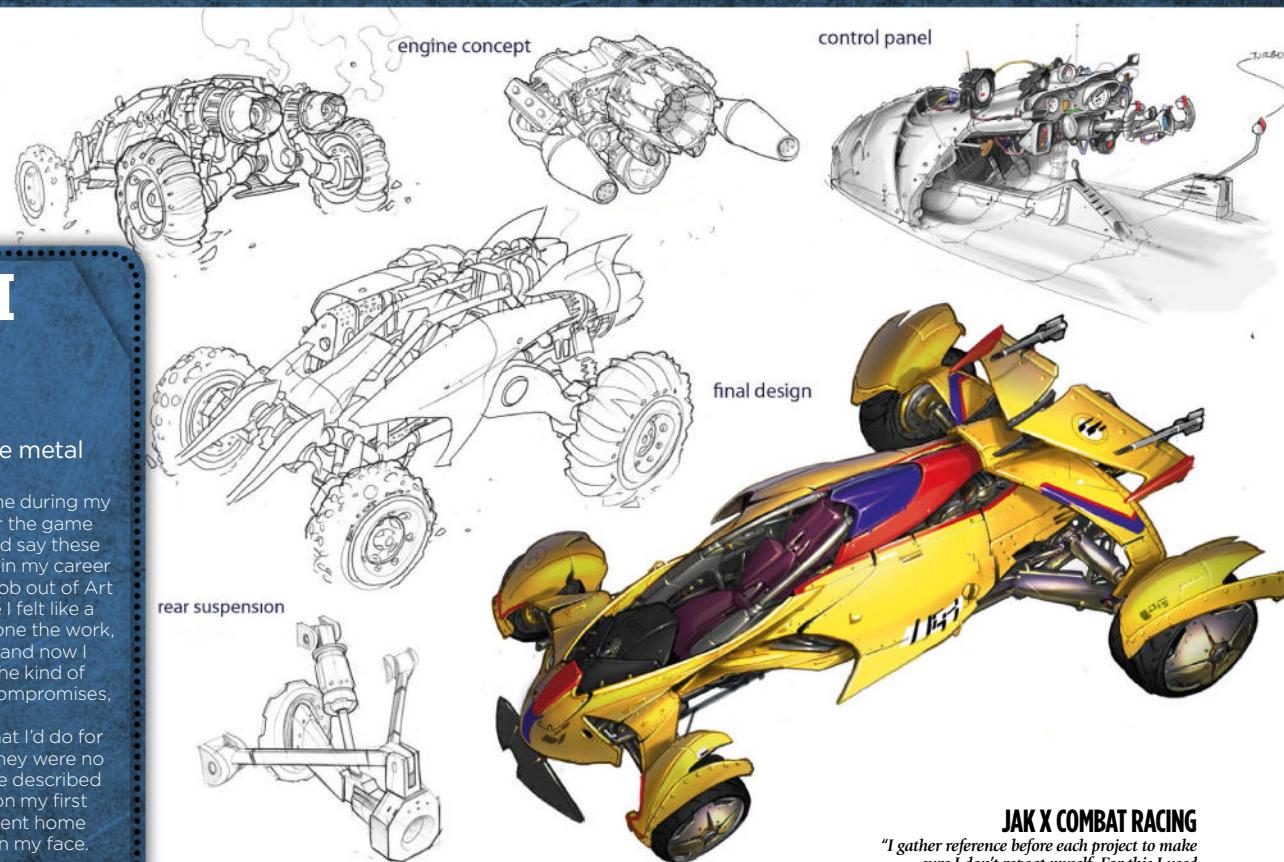
"You have to love the cake more than the icing to make it as a pro artist. The cake is the daily grind – the hours at your desk. The icing is the reward of a finished piece. Becoming a pro takes thousands of hours, but if you love the act of making art you'll put in the time. Ninety eight per cent of being an artist is about the cake."



DANGER CONN POD

"del Toro loves colour so I tried to emphasise that here. Smoke and atmosphere is a concept artist's best friend when it comes to sci-fi."

© Naughty Dog



DREAM TRACK DEBUT

Putting pedal to the metal for Naughty Dog

"These images were done during my time at Naughty Dog for the game Jak X: Combat Racing. I'd say these were a key piece for me in my career because it was my first job out of Art Center and the first time I felt like a real concept artist. I'd done the work, put in my time studying and now I was getting paid to do the kind of work I loved – without compromises, creatively speaking."

"If you'd asked me what I'd do for free out of school, if money were no object, then I would have described what I was asked to do on my first day at Naughty Dog. I went home every day with a smile on my face. I was in heaven."

JAK X COMBAT RACING

"I gather reference before each project to make sure I don't repeat myself. For this I used Formula One cars and Mad Max reference."

and then add in the details at the end. In an hour I'd have a finished the character on the page and I was hooked," he says.

Even when working on *Pacific Rim*, Hugo used the techniques he developed at an early age. "I sat there with Guillermo del Toro doing basically the same thing on that film that I had been doing when I was eight years old," he says.

FINDING FRAZETTA

Later, his mother found him an art tutor – none other than the then-retired illustrator Rafael DeSoto, who had been a master of pulp in the 1950s, and who painted covers for *The Spider*, *The Black Mask* and more. Rafael introduced the young Hugo to the work of other inspiring illustrators from NC Wyeth to Norman Rockwell and on to Frank Frazetta. Frazetta's paintings, he says, are burned on his memory.

The idea of becoming a concept artist grabbed Hugo's attention years later, when he was studying for a bachelor's degree in illustration at the Pratt Institute in New York. One day a group from the art department at ILM gave a presentation at

"I sat there with Guillermo del Toro doing basically the same thing I had been doing when I was eight"

the Institute, and this really opened Hugo's eyes to the possibilities. "I knew half-way through their talk that that's what I wanted to do with my life – become a concept artist," he says. "The idea that I could make a living designing spaceships and robots seemed too good to be true. That realisation gave me focus and a goal to work towards."

However, Hugo didn't apply for jobs after finishing his degree at Pratt. Instead, his aim was to tune up his industrial design skills. The ability to render complex machinery, he reasoned, would boost his chances of drawing sci-fi imagery for a



THE FORCE UNLEASHED

"I like to cast shadow patterns onto the characters in my images when I can to add variety to the lighting."

living. So he went to the Art Center in Pasadena, California, and enrolled in the transportation design course.

"Making it through the first few semesters in the trans dept at ACCD was one of the most challenging things I'd ever



SCI-FI INTERIOR

"This is an environment design done during the production of the video game Lost Planet 3."

done up to that point in my life," says Hugo. "All-nighters, giant renderings, clay models – hard work but exhilarating at the same time. I learned more there than I ever thought I would."

NAUGHTY BUT NICE

Leaving the Art Center, he landed a job at Naughty Dog, where the *Crash Bandicoot* franchise began. Doing concept art is the job he considers to have been the most fun role of his career so far. Hugo was working on the title *Jak X: Combat Racing* (see left for his first designs) – although when he

accepted the job he didn't know what project they'd put him on.

"When I found out I was like a little kid in my seat freaking out, excited to start," he says. "I had to design over 60 combat racing elements and vehicles for the game in a short period, and I was in heaven. I'd say it was the best because as anyone will tell you, you learn so much in your first few months at work."

BIT OF A BLUR

A year later he moved to Blur Studios, where he worked on a whole range of other projects, including *Star Wars: The Force Unleashed*. Like just about everyone,



STRIKER EUREKA

"A concept design for the character done during pre-production of the film Pacific Rim."

HUGO MARTIN VITAL STATISTICS

"I was like a little kid in my seat freaking out"

Age: 39.

Current location: Dallas, Texas.

Place of birth: New York.

Years as a professional: 12.

Favourite thing in life: My wife and kids.

Your introduction to art: Comics.

Your influences:

Rafael DeSoto, Frank Frazetta, Norman Rockwell, NC Wyeth, Syd Mead, Nilos Rodernos, Andrew Loomis,



transportation design, product design, comics, anime, sci-fi.

Who you've influenced:

Hopefully the people who've taken my class at Gnomon,

where I taught for four years.

Next project:

Can't say just yet.

Books or games?

Books.

Jaeger vs AT-AT?

Jaeger.

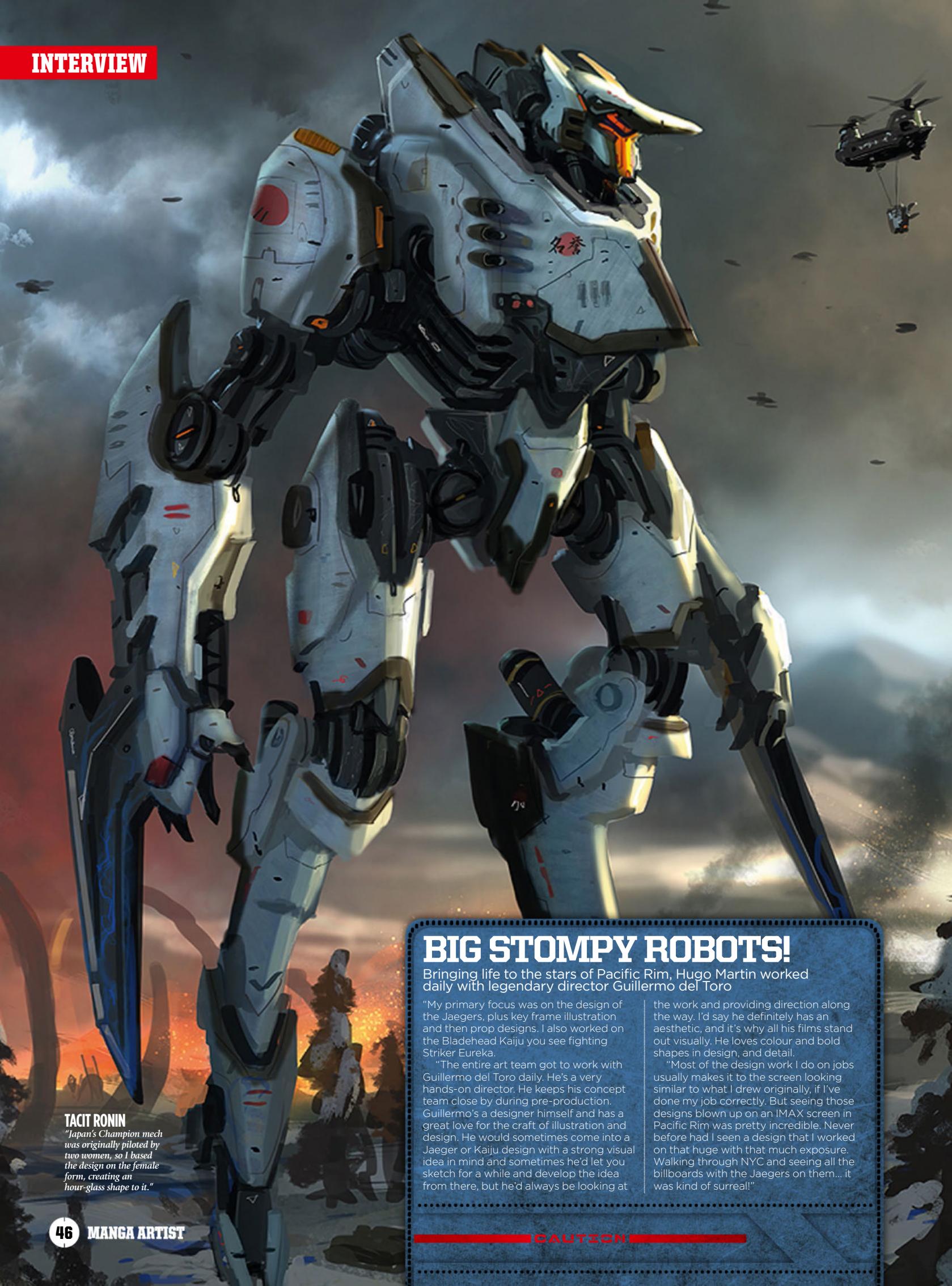
Website:

www.hugomartin.net



GYPSY DANGER HEAD DESIGN

"I used human anatomy as inspiration for the design of the Jaeger's mechanics."

**TACIT RONIN**

"Japan's Champion mech was originally piloted by two women, so I based the design on the female form, creating an hour-glass shape to it."

BIG STOMPY ROBOTS!

Bringing life to the stars of *Pacific Rim*, Hugo Martin worked daily with legendary director Guillermo del Toro

"My primary focus was on the design of the Jaegers, plus key frame illustration and then prop designs. I also worked on the Bladehead Kaiju you see fighting Striker Eureka."

"The entire art team got to work with Guillermo del Toro daily. He's a very hands-on director. He keeps his concept team close by during pre-production. Guillermo's a designer himself and has a great love for the craft of illustration and design. He would sometimes come into a Jaeger or Kaiju design with a strong visual idea in mind and sometimes he'd let you sketch for a while and develop the idea from there, but he'd always be looking at

the work and providing direction along the way. I'd say he definitely has an aesthetic, and it's why all his films stand out visually. He loves colour and bold shapes in design, and detail."

"Most of the design work I do on jobs usually makes it to the screen looking similar to what I drew originally, if I've done my job correctly. But seeing those designs blown up on an IMAX screen in *Pacific Rim* was pretty incredible. Never before had I seen a design that I worked on that huge with that much exposure. Walking through NYC and seeing all the billboards with the Jaegers on them... it was kind of surreal!"



THUMBNAILING

"This is key. You have to develop a shorthand as a concept artist. This will enable you to develop an idea quickly. You're usually severally terrible sketches away from the start of a good design, and thumbnailing will get you there faster. Plus you can also show off more ideas in front of the director."



HALO WARS: SPIRIT OF FIRE

"It was a blast getting to design this ship – I used aircraft carriers and naval ships as inspiration."

Hugo was a huge Star Wars fan and so doing concept work for the cinematic sequences in the game was another exciting moment in his career. "That job was less about design and more about lighting, mood and story," he explains. "The designs were already completed by the great artists at LucasArts and so my main focus was on doing production illustrations for the cinematics, which are made to help establish the look and feel of the scenes.

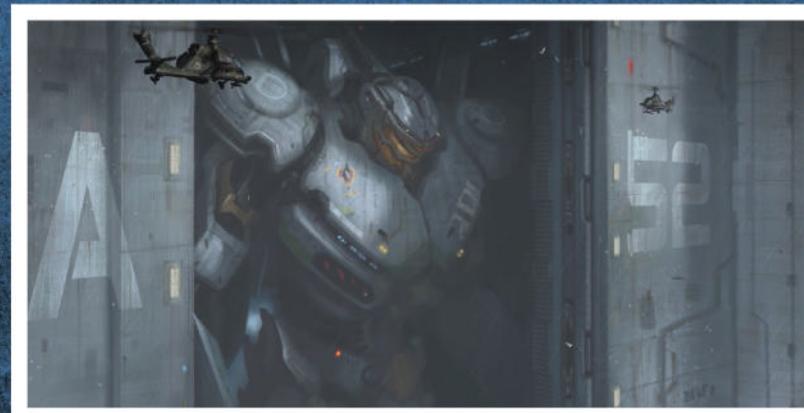
"The pressure was on. You had to make it look great. It had to feel like Star Wars"

"The pressure was certainly on. You had to make it all look great. It needed to feel like Star Wars, but also provide the audience with a fresh take on things through the use of lighting and atmosphere. There's a huge legacy to follow, and so everything had to match the story they had in place, which can be challenging. Occasionally, you might do something that would break a rule in the Star Wars universe, so LucasArts kept a close watch on that."

Hugo mainly creates his art in Photoshop, occasionally turning to 3ds Max just to get some basic forms in

STRIKER EUREKA

"I wanted to capture the right sense of scale here. It was pre-production, and important to take the designs into the proper context as they might be seen on-screen."



BLADE HEAD

"I used the helicopters as a compositional device, like arrows pointing the viewer to where the action is. The fuzzy focus debris in the foreground puts you in the scene."

there to help him plan out the perspective of a scene. However, the design of his images always begins with quick thumbnails scribbled on Post-it notes, which he keeps in front of him as he fleshes them out using his Cintiq.

In computer games, the role of the concept artist has never been more important than it is today. With graphics capabilities so good, and gamers so discerning about where they spend their

cash, it's never been more challenging, either. "The graphics are getting so good, the user's expectations are sky high, and they want to see improvements with each new game that comes out of a studio," says Hugo. "They want things to feel like they're from a movie or real life and, yes, they're less tolerant of bad lighting and atmosphere. People know good lighting when they see it, so we have to be able to give it to them." ■



Sketchbook

Kim Jung Gi

Kim has a string of viral videos to his name, each showing him spinning a complex web of interwoven drawings...



Artist PROFILE

Kim Jung Gi

COUNTRY: South Korea



Kim's virtuoso drawing skills have made him a YouTube sensation. His time-lapse videos show the art and design graduate covering vast canvases in intricate freehand sketches. His work has appeared in numerous short stories and comic books, including the six-volume *Tiger the Long Tail*, as well as his own exhibitions.
www.kimjunggi.net

MY WORLD

"I was born in Goyang-Si, in the South Korean province of Kyongki-Do. This is part of a comic series about my neighbourhood. This is what it's really like. I saw it with my own eyes!"





SPEED DRAWING

"I have a lot of fun sketching at speed. This drawing, for example, took me just 40 minutes to complete."

"I have a lot of fun sketching at speed..."

MY NEW BOOK

"This drawing shows me receiving delivery of my 2013 sketchbook collection. It's the third one I've released. I hope it sells well..."



Sketchbook

UNSEEN FORCES

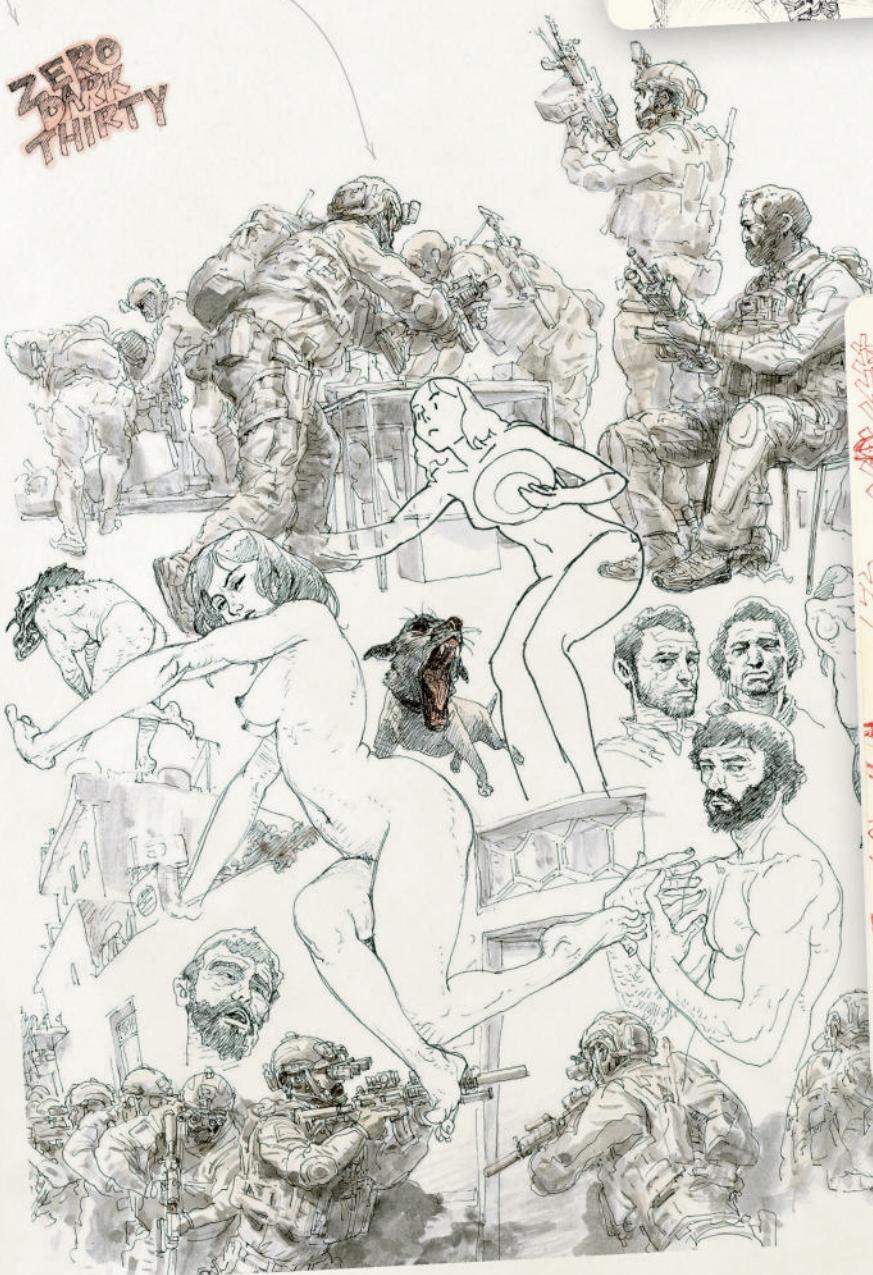
"Like all men in South Korea, I had to do national service. I was in the Special Forces section, where I memorised an amazing number of vehicles and weapons. I've always enjoyed drawing mechanical parts. This is more of a military dream – I'd love to be part of a history-making operation."

FAN ART

"I really love the film Zero Dark Thirty, and I created this piece after watching it. The DEVGRU did not disappoint me!"



ZERO
DARK
THIRTY



"My advice: have fun while you're drawing. Don't force it"



PEN

"I often draw using a ballpoint pen, which I really like. But I also use felt pens. It depends on the sketch. My advice: have fun while you're drawing. Don't force it."



THOUGHTS FROM ABROAD

"This drawing is also based on real-life events. It shows me shopping for souvenirs in Malaysia, where I recently visited. It's a really nice country."

CAREER PATH

"I'm the oldest son of the family, so my parents didn't allow me to choose art as an occupation. It's kind of a Korean tradition that the oldest son tends to be the bread winner. But I was always doodling with my pencil, and eventually they realised that I was never meant to be a scholar."





KILL RITA VRATASKI

"This is Rita from the manga version of *All You Need Is Kill* (*Edge of Tomorrow*), getting out of her robot armour. I think Rita is cool." [Close](#)

“‘You will never do something like this,’ she said. I drew every day like crazy. By the end, I was awarded a gold medal”

ILYA KUVSHINOV

Russian trained with a love for Japanese culture, Ilya is making his name with his 'eidolon' images

All artists have to deal with criticism now and again, whether you're sharing your art with fellow forum users or getting feedback in class. In Russia, as Ilya Kuvshinov knows all too well, criticism can be somewhat brutal.

Aged 11, Ilya joined the Moscow State Academy Art Lyceum in the second year, so his classmates had a year's head start in voicing their brash opinions. "Before Lyceum I just drew. And everyone said, 'Wow, your drawings are cool!', he says. "But when I got to the Lyceum, instead classmates were laughing at my work and my drawing habits."

For the first two months, Ilya kept his head down in the weekly sketch reviews, where the class got their teacher's feedback. After one too many D grades, Ilya's teacher called him into her office.

"She showed me a tiny drawing of a pumpkin, hanging on the wall over her desk. That drawing was awesome, so detailed and realistic. The teacher said

to me: 'Look at this drawing. You will never do something like this. Never'."

BIT HARSH

This was an art crit, Russian Art Academy style, and though many would have given human resources a call, Ilya decided it was time to get serious. "Later that evening I decided that, no matter what, I'd draw a better pumpkin! I started to draw every day like crazy, remembering that word 'never'. To be honest, it was mostly rage at first. I decided to show her what I could do. By the end of the year I was one of the best in class. At the end of the Lyceum I was awarded a gold medal."

Though young, Ilya handled the situation with a maturity beyond his years. "Criticism is very useful, but you must always understand who's giving it out, and why," he says. "I guess [my teacher] was just disappointed in my progress, but after that she was proud of how I turned out."

It was around this time that Japanese character artist Renji 'Range' Murata >

ARTIST PROFILE

Ilya Kuvshinov

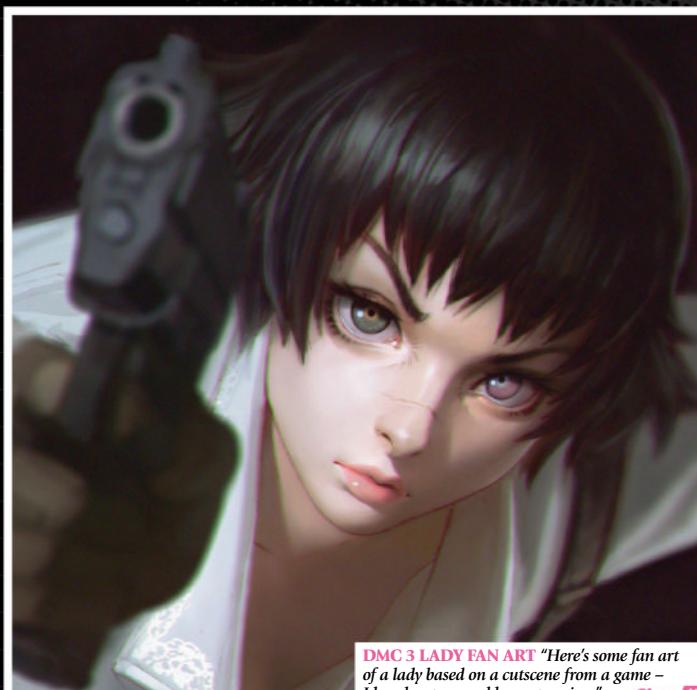
COUNTRY: Japan

FAVOURITE ARTISTS:
Renji Murata, Shigenori
Soejima, Alphonse
Mucha, Bernie Fuchs,

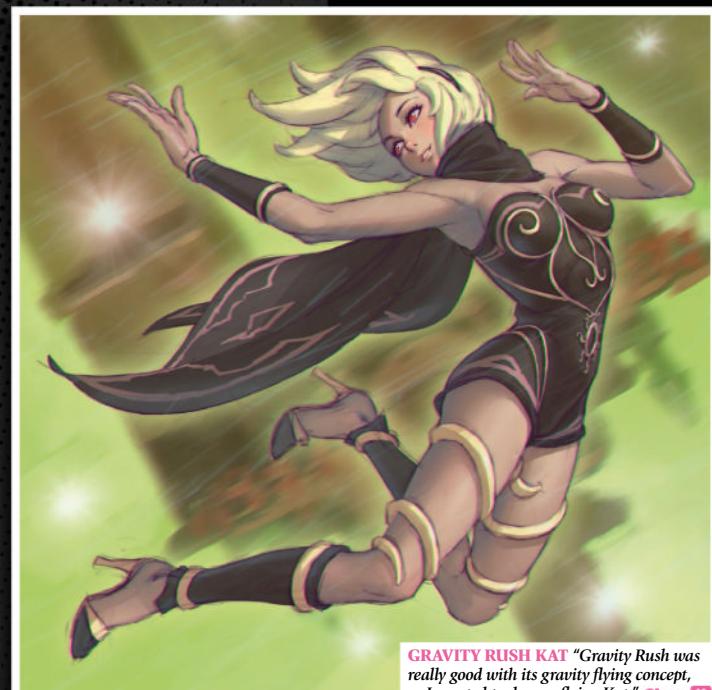
Pablo Uchida

SOFTWARE USED:
Photoshop, Clip Studio Paint

WEB: <http://ifxm.ag/ilyak>



DMC 3 LADY FAN ART "Here's some fan art of a lady based on a cutscene from a game – I love her pose and her expression." [Close](#)

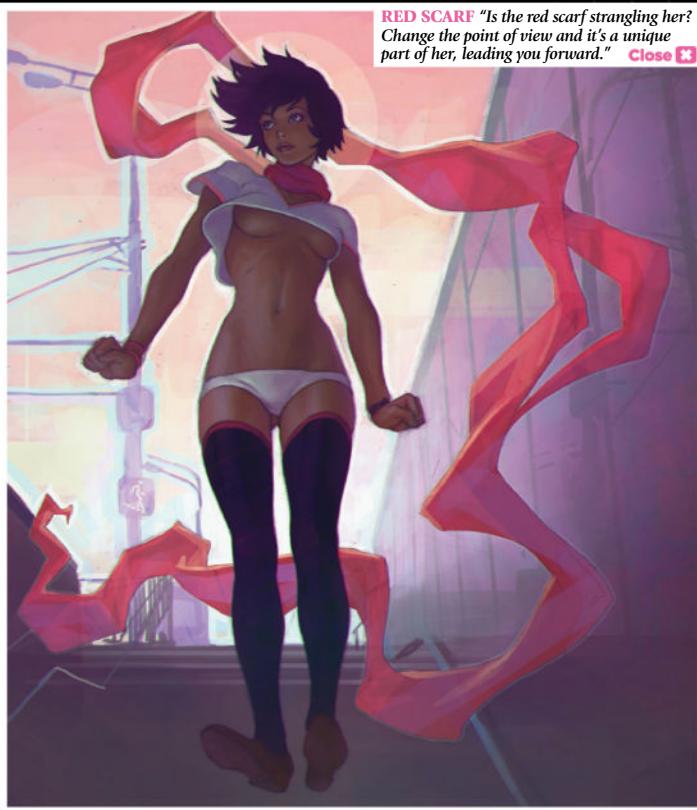


GRAVITY RUSH KAT "Gravity Rush was really good with its gravity flying concept, so I wanted to draw a flying Kat." [Close](#)

BIG ROBOT "This is something I did for composition and shapes training. Well, the background seems nice, maybe." [Close](#)

“I go out for a cup of ramen and when I get to the streets it's a big kick. I'm living my own dream”





came to talk at the Russian comic festival KomMissia. The art of Range, a manga and anime artist with art deco influences, was a revelation to Ilya.

Having already been blown away by Ghost in the Shell, Ilya was settling on an art path. But as his studies came to a close, he had to take any jobs he could find. "I've been working jobs since I was 15 years old. I've been a courier, I've collected data – asking people on the streets what shaving gel they use – and I've done some boutique window dressing."

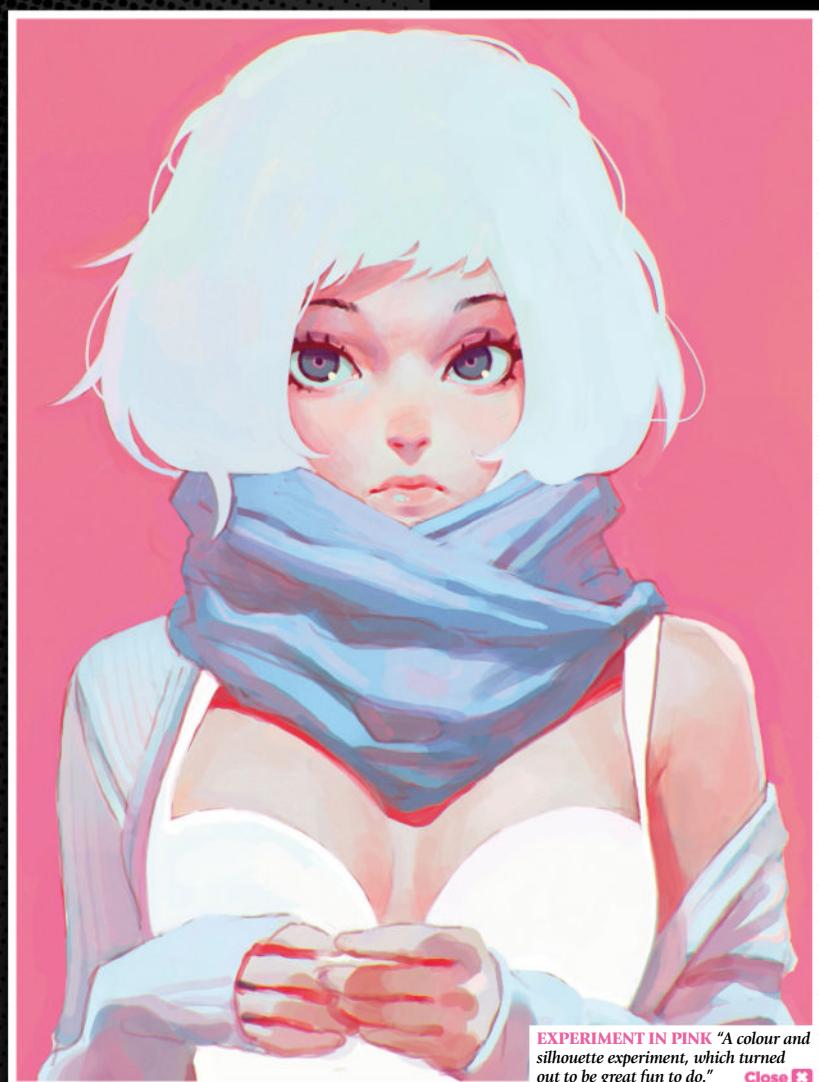
YOKOHAMA STREETS

It all paid off when Ilya secured his first concept art job in 2011, working in games. Today, he's based in his dream location. "I'm living in Yokohama, Japan, and, well, everything here looks exactly like in animes, but in HD," says the artist.

He's the first to admit his work ethic, forged by his training, can lead to solitary spells. Working in his room, hours can turn into days, "forgetting why I'm doing it or where am I. Then I decide to go out for a cup of ramen and when I get to the streets, it's a big kick that I'm living my own dream. It cannot be overemphasised."

Since moving to Japan, Ilya has worked on characters for Tetsuya Mizuguchi's mobile game 18, and Epic Games Japan, but due to nondisclosure agreements it's his personal art that Ilya shows off on these pages. With their attention to light and loose stylus strokes, this is the art many online fans will know and love.

Ilya is the first to admit that his art is heavily focused on one subject: >





FFXV NOCTIS "New trailers of FFXV were so cool, so Noctis in the rain was in my mind for a long time." [Close](#)



HP HERMIONE "I've been listening to Harry Potter audio books recently, and just couldn't let myself not do a little Hermione!" [Close](#)

HACHIKO'S NOSE

Dreaming of Japan as a child, Ilya finally moved there a few years ago

"There is a game – my favourite one – called The World Ends With You. All of its action takes place in the Shibuya district of Tokyo, where there's a statue of the faithful dog Hachiko. It was a symbol for me and I decided that when I moved to Japan the first thing I'd do was touch the nose of Hachiko. I wanted to do it so badly that I found photographs of Hachiko on the internet and painted this picture to become closer to my dream. Now I live in Japan and I can touch Hachiko's nose as much as I want."



THE RIGHT REFERENCE Google Maps was among Ilya's references for this painting of a specific place in his beloved Tokyo. [Close](#)



SHIBUYA GIRL "This digital painting is almost entirely based on photo references I used to make Shibuya and Hachiko look and feel more real – for myself, I suppose." [Close](#)

LEOŠ JANÁČEK'S SINFONIETTA "I was walking and suddenly saw her, sat on the tower playing Leoš Janáček's sinfonietta." [Close](#)



women. This is hardly new for manga artists, but his reasons seem to be. "The appeal of the female form in my art? That's a huge topic for me. First of all, I'm personifying a female image, or eidolon, as a life itself," he says, describing his subjects as ancient Greek spirit images. "Because, well, women can give birth, every woman is a source of life, so every female form is a potential mother to me. When I'm drawing a woman in a story-driven personal illustration, it's not just

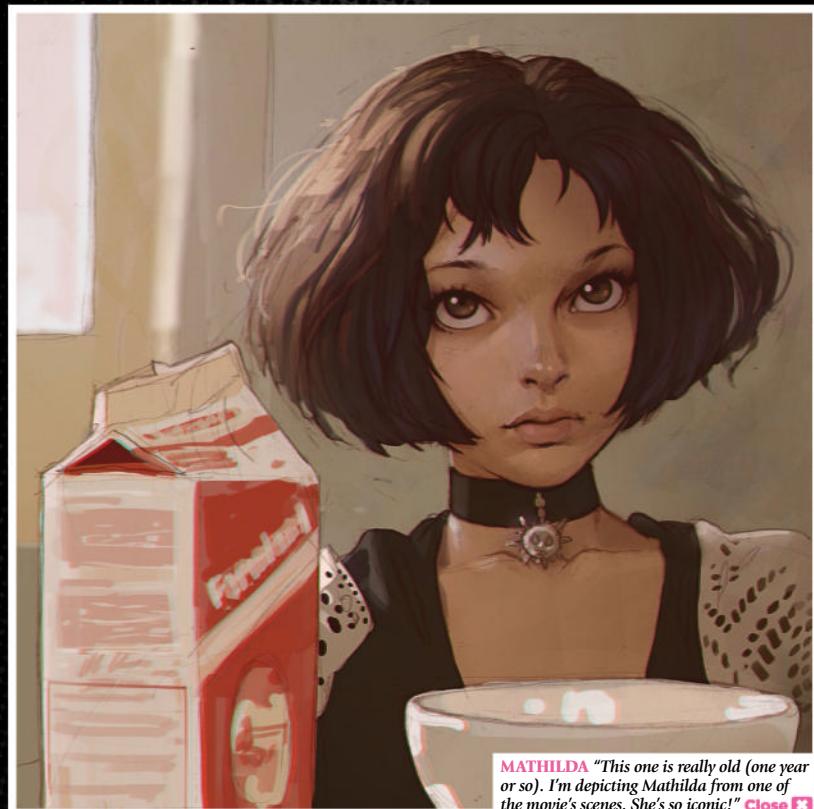
“Every female is a potential mother to me. When I draw a woman, it has great potential for changing the world”

some random girl, but in fact a great potential for changing the world into a better place. I think there's nothing more important than this."

FIGHT FOR HAPPINESS

Having outgrown the desire to paint detailed still-lifes, Ilya says he wants to infuse his portraits with life itself. "I want to make stories that will help people fight for their own happiness, become aware of their own happiness and to help them grow as a person," he says.

Choosing subjects is a lot easier than creating life-affirming portraits. On his many trips to the streets of Yokohama, Ilya always carries his smartphone, snapping any backgrounds that catch his eye. He then asks his friends from his Japanese language class to pose for paintings, taking an array of photos of his hands for any



MATHILDA "This one is really old (one year or so). I'm depicting Mathilda from one of the movie's scenes. She's so iconic!" [Close](#)

complex gestures. But, he tells us, "When I'm working for commissions like character design, storyboards or covers, I try to create poses and anatomy straight from my head."

STYLE FINDING

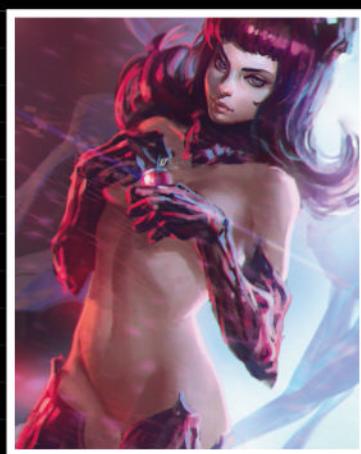
Ilya insists he's still in search of his own style. But even if that is true, with a strong online presence that includes a self-perpetuating art site, we're sure he'll find it soon enough. "I'm drawing personal

illustrations and studies every day for free, and on my site people can support me in doing this," he says of his popular Patreon online art shop, which can be found at <http://ifxm.ag/ilyapatreon>.

To say the site's a success is something of an understatement, with one month's stats boasting 532 patrons pledging \$2,695 a week. For a \$10 pledge, you would receive all Ilya's weekly images with "undersketches", the full size PSDs, brushes, and his process video tutorials.

"The money I get [from the website] is used to finance my personal independent projects, which are free," says Ilya. "Right now I'm making my one-shot comic, and script for motion-comic too."

Two things are guaranteed: if you're a fan of Ilya's portraits, his site won't disappoint. And there definitely won't be any paintings of pumpkins. ■

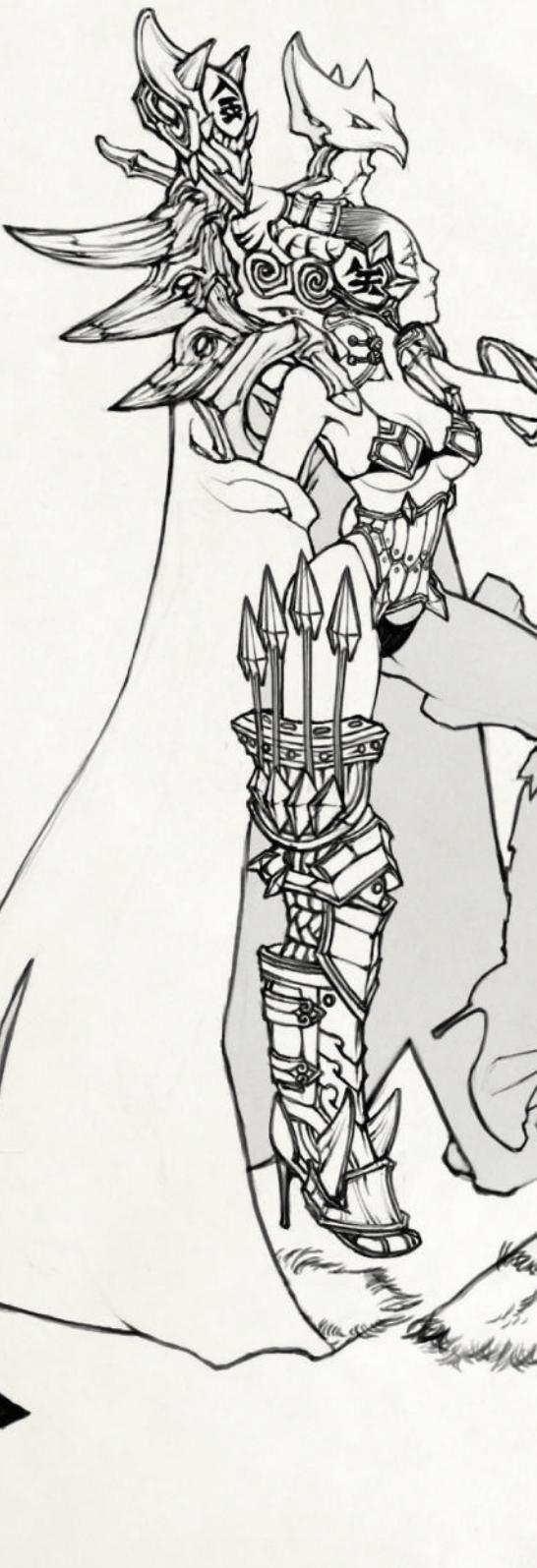


COLA "I wanted some cola, but I sat and drew. It turned out the girl was holding a can in her hands. I was too lazy to redraw." [Close](#)

Sketchbook

Mingzhu Yang

Diverse fantasy characters are given a stylish oriental touch in the hands of this Chinese artist



Artist PROFILE

Mingzhu Yang



Born and brought up in Wuhan province, China, Mingzhu studied illustration at Southwest University, Chongqing. She first worked for Tencent, a well-known Chinese IT company. Moving to its Shanghai studios, Mingzhu spent three years as a character artist. She then worked for Applibot in Japan and is now based in Gainesville, US. <http://ifxm.ag/mingzhu>



"The patterns on their armour are based on those seen in traditional Chinese architecture"

CHARACTER DESIGNS

"Here's some concept art for a project that we worked on with an international group. The client wanted to see a unique style that had never been explored in past works, yet they also wanted everything full of Chinese-influenced decorative and stylish details. These artworks are divided into three groups: hunters, priests and warriors. One of them is pictured with a mount, a mythological creature inspired by dogs and houses. The patterns on their armour are based on those seen in traditional Chinese architecture."



Sketchbook

BEAST AND GHOST

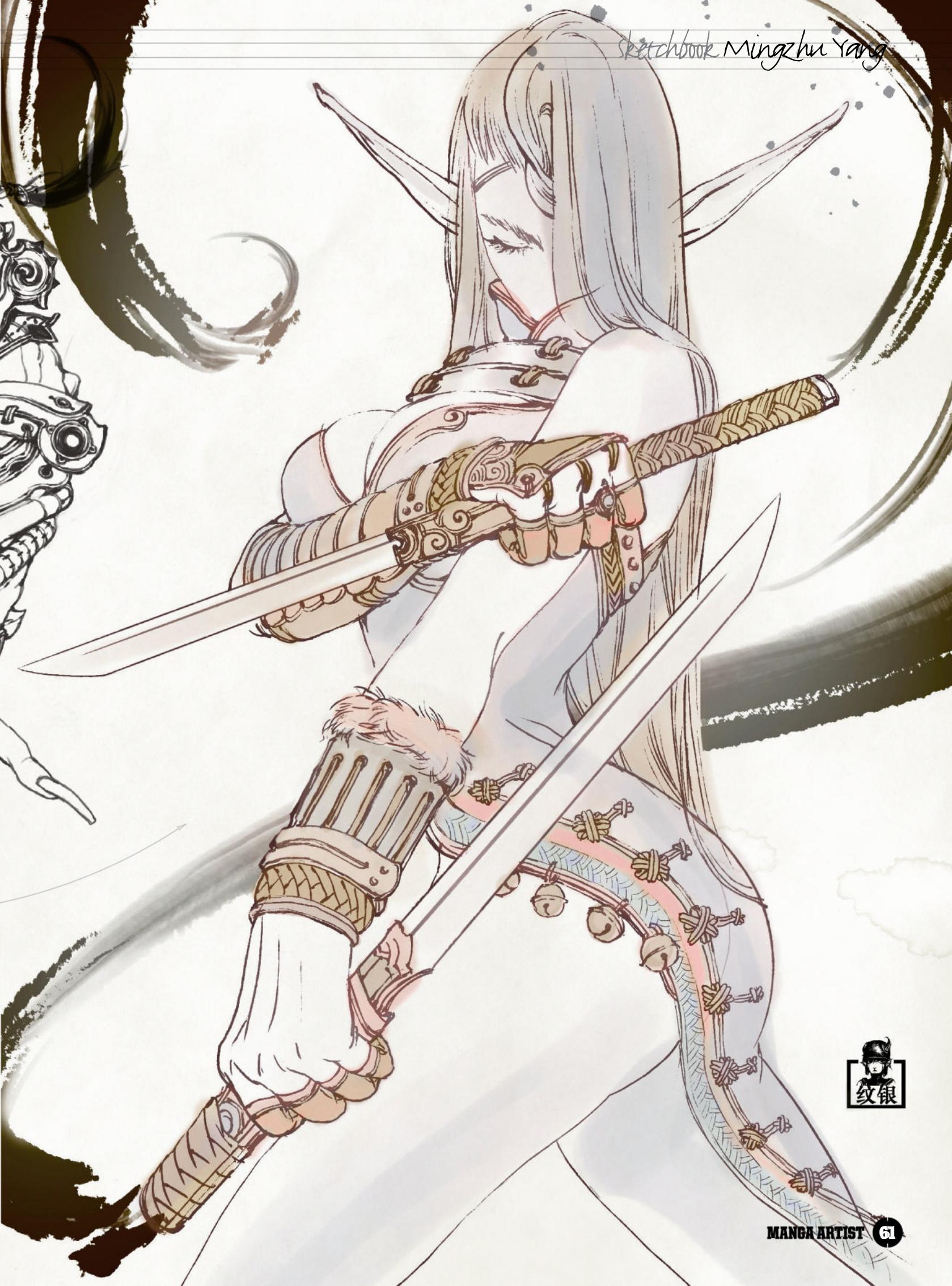
"This is a poster created for one of my ongoing projects. The client wanted me to create a floating character that resembled a ghost or elf. I chose to focus less on the lower part in favour of placing the emphasis on the upper half of the body. I painted African-style accessories around its ear and some industrial-looking patterns along the arms. It'll be fun to bring various design elements together on this character during the creative process."

"I tried to use a calligraphic style in these works, while keeping realism in mind"



DOUBLE BLADE

"This is a personal project I finished a little while ago. The world for these characters is full of humans and elves that follow a classic design. I tried to use a calligraphic style in these works, while keeping realism in mind. For me, it's fun to mix various styles within one character."



STUDIO PROFILE

LOCATION: Indonesia
PROJECTS: Forgotten Realms, Hellfire, Yu-Gi-Oh, Legend
OTHER PROJECTS: Ultimate Alliance 2, GI Joe: Sigma 6, Amazing Spider-Man
WEB: www.caravanstudio.com



Dragon Knight by Crut.
This artwork was created as a portfolio piece for a Japanese game company.

STUDIO PROFILE

CARAVAN STUDIO

With an abundance of talented in-house artists and its own publishing division, Caravan Studio is a true art powerhouse...

Caravan Studio – now with 33 full-time artists on the books – started with just a handful. They shared, according to co-founder Chris Lie, one vision: “A comic studio, where talented Indonesian artists can get opportunities to work on international projects”.

“Afif Numbo was an excellent comic artist with energetic stylistic style,” Chris says, introducing his team. “And Crut was one of the



These mech designs are parts of *Colony*, an original graphic novel by Afif Numbo.

country’s best fantasy art digital painters. Hendry Iwanaga was an expert in merging western and eastern influences in his artworks. We started with only four artists and a 30 metre-square office back then, but now we’ve expanded almost tenfold!”

Hendry expands the origin story: “I first met Chris when he gave a seminar at my college in 1998 and I was exhibiting my final project at the same time,” he says. “From there I knew about Caravan Studio and decided to intern

there. I started to work full-time after I finished my internship in January 2009.” Today Hendry’s job is studio manager – and he plays a big part in bringing new talent to the studio, just as Chris recruited him.

Chris himself is a renowned and talented artist, with an MFA in sequential art at the Savannah College of Arts and Design in Georgia, US, providing a fantastic foundation for Caravan. “I was working on various international comics, games and toy design projects,” he says, reeling off such IP as GI Joe: Sigma 6, ➤



“We started with only four artists, but now we’ve expanded almost ten-fold!”



The Expedition by Crut, created during a Caravan demonstration workshop at @america.

A regular day at the studio. Everybody is busy working and listening to their own music. “It’s always pretty quiet, except when there’s free food,” says Chris Lie.

INDAR GUNAWAN

The digital artist discusses his role at the studio and his favourite projects...

What do you do at Caravan Studio?
As a digital artist I mainly illustrate game assets, card games, and sometimes I colour comics.

What have been your favourite projects since starting at Caravan?

That’s a very tough question to answer, as there’s been a huge amount of exciting projects so far. One of my favourites has been doing card illustrations for Konami’s Yu-Gi-Oh! games, which is very popular here. I’ve also enjoyed some of the artworks I’ve done for the Dungeons & Dragons Dungeon Master Guide.

How did you get the job? And what’s it like to be working for Caravan Studio?

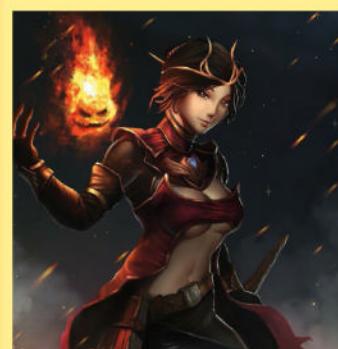
I started as an intern at the studio before applying for a full-time artist position and it’s been nothing but an awesome experience. We work on many different types of projects – and some of them are for famous companies. The studio’s working atmosphere is a lot of fun, with workmates who are always playful and cheerful, and senior artists and staff are also very helpful.

Do you receive any formal or informal training?

Being an intern to begin with meant I got a lot of on-the-job training. And I still get a lot now, too! The studio conducts internal workshops every two weeks, where senior artists share their secret techniques with the juniors at the company.

What do you hope to achieve at Caravan?

I want to keep improving my art skills and techniques – all so that I can be involved in some even more challenging projects.



Odese is one of Indar’s personal works – a practice piece for depicting magical effects.



Indar made the most of his internship period at Caravan Studio and is now employed by the company as a full-time digital artist.

www.caravanstudio.com



▶ Transformers vs GI Joe, Dungeons & Dragons: Eberron, Marvel: Ultimate Alliance 2 and The Return to Labyrinth series (the latter being published by TOKYOPOP and making it on to The New York Times' Manga Best Sellers list).

PACKED PORTFOLIO

In its seven years in business, Caravan has gone from strength to strength, with a vast array of clients and top-name brands on its books. You can include character design for Marvel's Ultimate Alliance 2 videogame; toy designs for GI Joe: Sigma 6, Iron Man, Amazing Spider-Man and Transformers; Forgotten Realms World Bible for Wizards of the Coast; illustrations for Star Wars, Hellfire and League of Legends games; and various comics and graphic novels in its repertoire. It's a portfolio to die for.

Wrathless Girl by M Faizal Fikri, created as a portfolio piece to study horse anatomy.

“We had the chance to illustrate the whole deck, packaging, promotional materials – but in only six weeks”

“Our favourite recent manga projects were Legend and The Chronicle of Vladimir Tod,” says Hendry. “Both are graphic novel adaptations from best-seller novels. Legend is based on novels by Marie Lu, illustrated by a team of all-female artists at the studio and led by Kaari. While The Chronicle of Vladimir Tod is written by Heather Brewer, illustrated by a team under Julia Laud.”

A standout project in Caravan's history would have to be the Iron Man Special for Marvel Comics, pencilled by its very own Rahmat Handoko. “It took Rahmat nearly two years to finally break into Marvel



Gypsy Woman by Rio Sabda. This image is part of the Ottoman project – a series of artworks set during the Ottoman Empire.



STAR cover by Nicholas Filbert and Rio Sabda. The book consists of art that has a western flavour.

Comics,” explains Chris. “But he did it in style.” Rahmat's pencil art for the special can be seen on the opposite page.

Another high-profile project in the lifetime of the studio is the Juara Nusantara card game, which combines software and printed cards bearing QR codes. “With this project, we finally had the chance to illustrate the whole deck, packaging, promotional materials, and basically everything – but in only six weeks!” says Chris. “We completed hundreds of great-quality cards, just in time for the game to be released at



Covers from re:ON Comics, volumes one to 11. The magazine showcases art from Indonesia's best manga artists.

RE:ON COMICS

Chris Lie reveals the scale of the studio's successful move into publishing comics



In July 2013 Caravan Studio expanded into publishing, founding a comic company called re:ON Comics. "Re:ON Comics caters for a pool of aspiring talented comic artists and illustrators under a professionally managed label. Its flagship product is six-weekly comic compilation magazine," says Chris Lie of the venture. "In less than two years, re:ON Comics has become one of the largest comic compilation publishers in Indonesia, in terms of print run, distribution channels and best sellers." Chris continues: "There are more than 50 comic artists from all over Indonesia collaborating with re:ON Comics. We're also in the final stages of our pilot animations and games, based on our managed IP."



SUN cover image by Nicholas Filbert and Depinz. The SUN artbook consists of projects that are inspired by manga and anime.

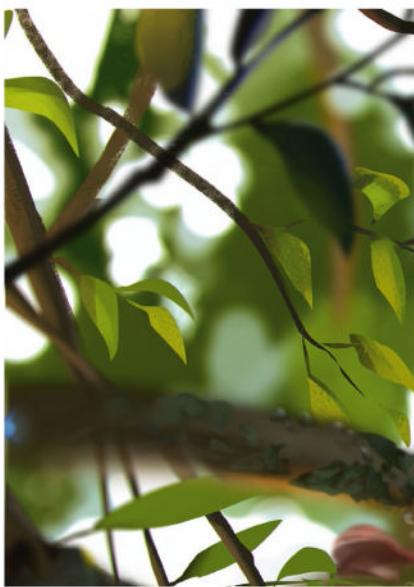


Goddess of War by Nicholas Filbert is part of the Exotic Illustration series. Nicholas is hugely inspired by Katsuya Terada's work.



Pencil page from Iron-Man Special by Rahmat Handoko, published by Marvel Comics. This issue is Rahmat's first work for Marvel Comics.

© Marvel



ReTunes by Angie at Caravan is a visual novel musical game, telling a rivalry story of two musical groups: deVa and Sacred.

→ Tokyo Game Show 2014. The project really pushed us to the limit in terms of speed, skill and team management."

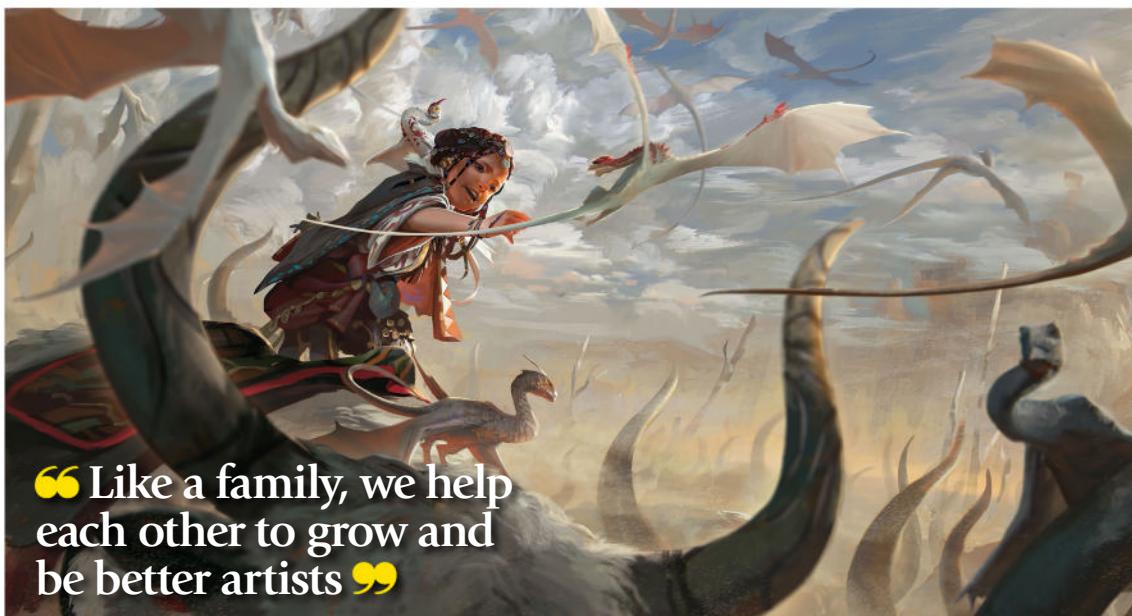
MANAGING THE TEAM

Chris gives us an insight into how a project works at Caravan – clearly, managing 33 artists across many different projects is no easy feat. "When a project comes in," he begins, "the project manager will map out the client's requirements and expectations, devise a timeline plan, pass it to the head of production, and then keep the project in check.

"The head of production will also set up a team of artists to work on the project. In addition, there's also an art director who closely oversees the quality of the artworks. The project manager is the only one who corresponds with clients directly. That way, the artists are able to concentrate fully on the art."



The Shipper by Crut is part of The Protector illustration series, set in a world where humans and creatures live in harmony, co-existing and protecting each other.



“Like a family, we help each other to grow and be better artists”

As well as working for some of the world's biggest manga clients, Caravan is ambitious with its own IP. In addition to its own comic, the studio publishes annual art books – with the first, *Cirque*, being exclusively distributed by Wacom in five south-east Asian countries, which is bundled with the Intuos 4.

The subsequent three art books – *Klown*, *Sun and Star* – were independently distributed in Indonesia, Singapore, Malaysia and The Philippines. Chris is

The Keeper by Crut is another piece from The Protector illustration series. Crut's mastery in drawing animals has been perfected by his regular trips to the zoo.

justifiably proud of them: "Not only do these books showcase our artists' versatility, but also give them tremendous international exposure.

"Speed and style diversity are our forte," he concludes of Caravan's overarching appeal. And studio manager Hendry agrees by emphasising that even though it has a rising number of enthusiastic, talented employees, Caravan still works as one: "Like a family, we help each other to grow and be better artists." ■



PAINTING THE FEMALE KNIGHT

Caravan Studio's Margaretta Devi reveals her approach for illustrating beautiful manga faces



"Focus on the facial areas you want to stand out, such as the eyes and lips. Painting eyebrows and eyelids with thick lines that fade towards the end gives a more natural look. Add highlights, using the Color Dodge tool in Photoshop, on small areas like the pupil and lower part of the eye. Finally, some skin-tone colour on the lips will make the character look more natural."



1 Base colours

"I apply a base colour to the background and character, then highlights and shadows, reflecting colours on the metal. I detail the face and hair, and a transparent fabric to show a wind effect."



2 Tweaking details

"I notice that the hair isn't proportional with the body, so I simplify it to give her face more prominence. I make the background hill clearer, add floating islands, and colour the sky."



3 Lighting effects

"I enhance the staff's lighting effect by darkening the background with a Levels adjustment. I create the glow effect by using a Normal layer blending mode with an Outer Glow effect."



4 Colour tweaks

"To emphasise the mood, I add highlight details to the illuminated part of the staff, and flying leaves. After finishing the details, it's time for final colour adjustments, and I play around with Levels, Contrast and Saturation."

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX

If you love to draw
and paint, then
ImagineFX is the
magazine for you!

ON SALE
IN TESCO,
WHSMITH,
BARNES &
NOBLE AND
MORE!

IN EVERY ISSUE



GALLERIES The most imaginative
digital and traditional fantasy art.



INTERVIEWS Be inspired by top
artists that you know and admire.



WORKSHOPS Discover new digital
art techniques and drawing skills.

Visit us: <http://imaginefx.creativebloq.com>

CORE SKILLS

Grasp the basics of Paint Tool SAI, with Paco Rico Torres!

70 Starting a new program

In the first of our guides to using Paint Tool SAI, we cover all the basics for you to help you get stuck in.



70 Stabilizer S-1

71 Using all the tools

Here's a handy blow-by-blow account of everything Paint Tool SAI can do to make you a manga savant.

72 Brushes

Paint Tool SAI's brushes have their own specific tricks. Here we guide you through what we've learned.

73 Brush parameters

Three specific tips on making the most of brush parameters, to ensure the best result possible.

74 Customising brushes

Not only customising, but creating your own brushes from scratch – read on to make your own...

75 Vector tools

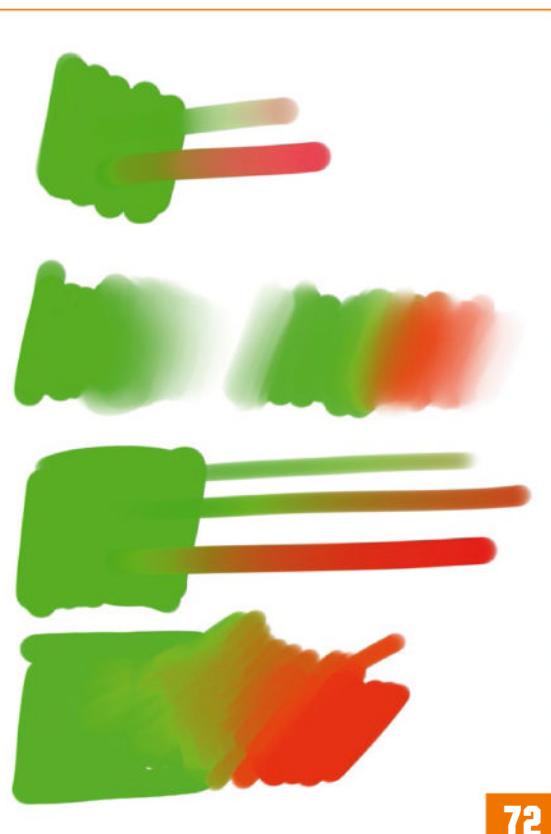
The secret of securing sharp, precise lines in Paint Tool SAI, using its unique vector tools.

Paco Rico Torres



Freelance illustrator Paco lives in Spain and has produced sci-fi and fantasy art for several card games, magazines, books and role-playing games.

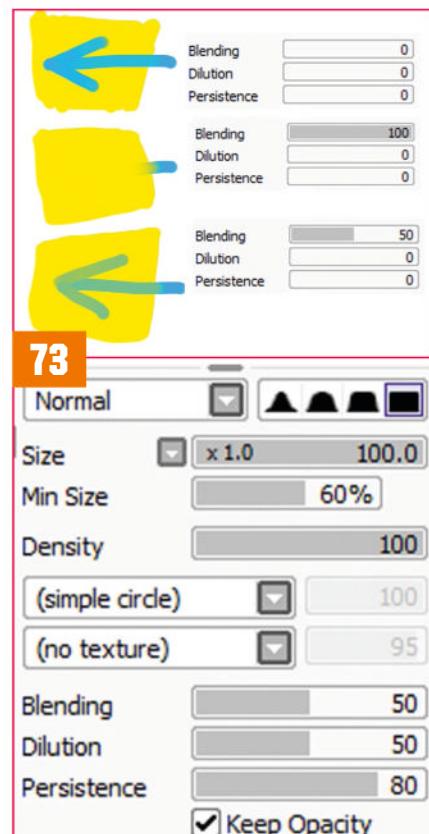
www.pacorico.blogspot.co.uk



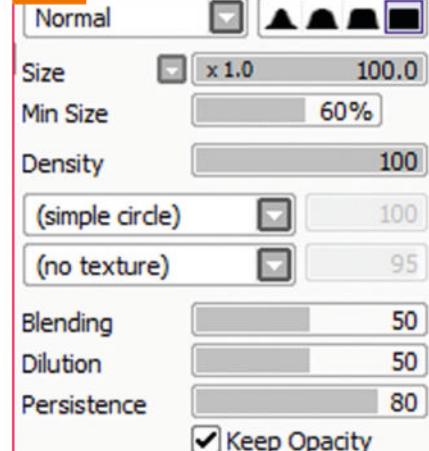
71



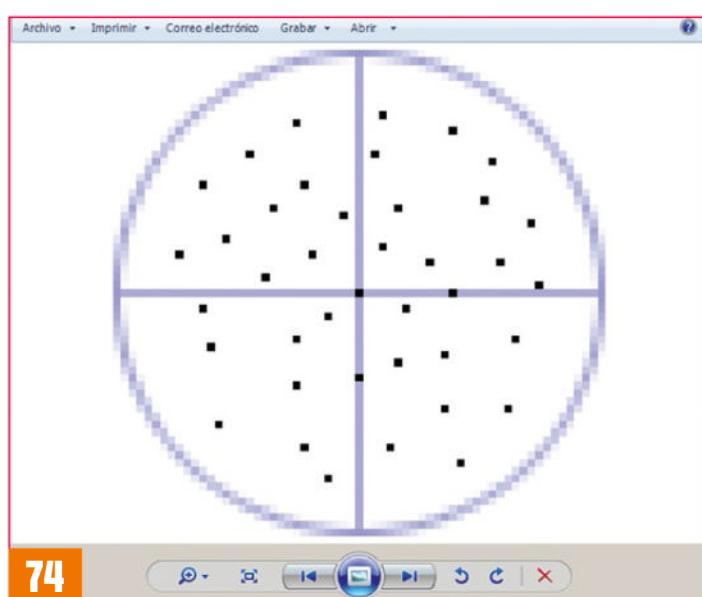
71



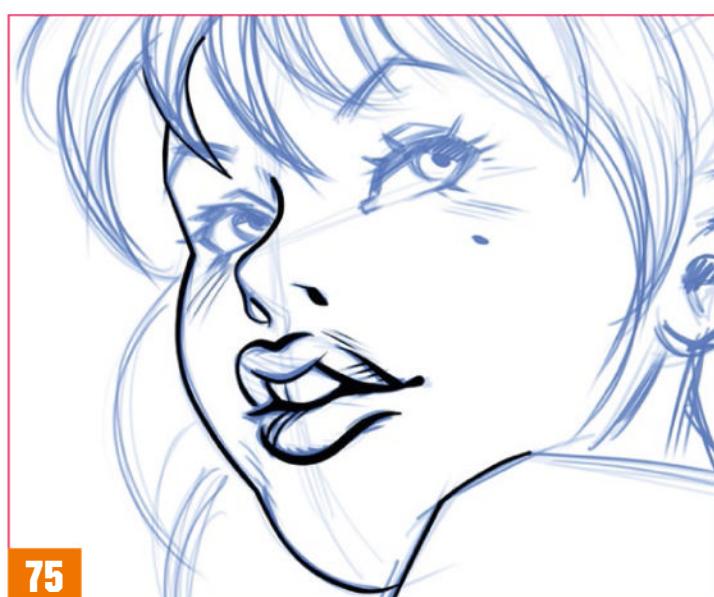
73



72



74



75

START USING A NEW ART PROGRAM

PAINT TOOL SAI is a simple, relatively inexpensive yet versatile bit of kit.

To begin, we'll highlight the essentials of this painting software

Paint Tool SAI is a relatively light program. It doesn't have too many options, but you can achieve a lot with what it does offer. You can download the program from www.systemax.jp/en/sai and use it as a fully-functioning 30-day trial free of charge, after which it costs around £43 (depending on the prevailing exchange rate between your currency and Japanese Yen) for the full program.

If you're accustomed to working with Photoshop and then open Paint Tool SAI

for the first time, it might even look a bit confusing. In fact, using SAI is easy, and we'll begin our comprehensive guide a basic introduction that will enable you to start working with the software.

SAI isn't a photo-manipulation program. It's designed specifically for painting and drawing, which means that many options available in programs such as Photoshop aren't included in SAI. That makes the program perhaps less versatile, but more efficient. It's many professionals' tool of choice for creating manga!

“Paint Tool SAI is designed for painting and drawing”

MANAGE PAINT EFFECTS IN SAI

A. Maintain opacity

Preserves opacity of the paint. If this is on a layer, then whatever you paint on that layer will have the same opacity of the surface over which you're painting.

B. Apply clipping

If the Clipping group is on a layer, whatever you paint on that layer will have the same opacity of the layer below.

C. Activate Selection

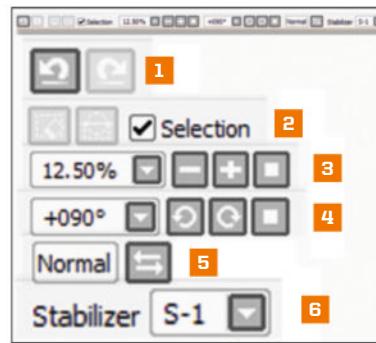
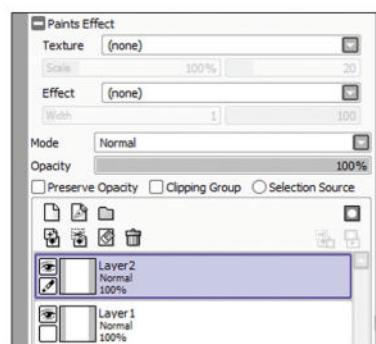
If a layer has the Selection Source on, the Color Bucket and the Magic Wand will work according to whatever is on that layer, no matter which layer you're using them in.

D. Layer options

Here you can create a new layer, delete it, clear it, merge it down, transfer it down or group it with other layers.

E. Create a mask

Use this to create a layer mask.



1 The Color panel

This has six elements, which you can show or hide by clicking the small icons on top of the panel. With these six elements you can select colours to paint with using the colour wheel, change their RGB or HSV (Hue/Saturation/Luminosity) levels, mix two colours to produce a middle point, save your favourite colours, or mix them like traditional paint before applying them to the canvas.

2 The Layer panel

From this panel you can add texture to a layer, apply a watercolour-like fringe to the edges of all the brushstrokes in the layer, change the colour mode of the layer, alter the opacity of the layer, create or delete layers, and introduce Layer Masks – although note that this last one works only with the Pencil tool. All and all it's pretty intuitive, especially if you've used layers in other painting programs.

3 The Quick bar

The Quick bar, located just below the menu bar, has some useful shortcuts, such as Undo and Redo (1), Deselect, Inverse Selection, and Hide Selection, which hides the dotted line around a selected area (2). From here you can also Zoom (3), Rotate the canvas (4) and flip it horizontally to check for composition errors (5). Finally, the Stabilizer (6) is great if you have shaky hands. Check it out!

GET THE MOST FROM YOUR TOOLS

Instead of having to master a range of tools, **PAINT TOOL SAI'S** limited toolset actually works to its advantage: you simply customise tools to do what you need

There are a range of basic tools in Paint Tool SAI, and some of them can be modified using the brush parameters. Altering characteristics such as Edge Hardness and Density can have a significant effect on the marks a tool produces and how you work with it. Each default brush has its own purpose, but you can tweak them to use them in a totally different way.

The brush parameters are the most complex aspect of the program, so we'll first take a look at some of the basic tools

before going further. We'll explain just half of the most basic tools here, then go on to focus on the more complex ones over the page.

Most SAI tools try to emulate real-world paint media, so using them may require you to change your way of working, particularly if you're used to Photoshop. However, if you come to SAI from real-world media, you may find it more natural to use. Either way, with a little practice you can achieve really interesting effects.

“Most SAI tools try to emulate real-world paint media”

TOOL ROUND-UP

A. Select and move

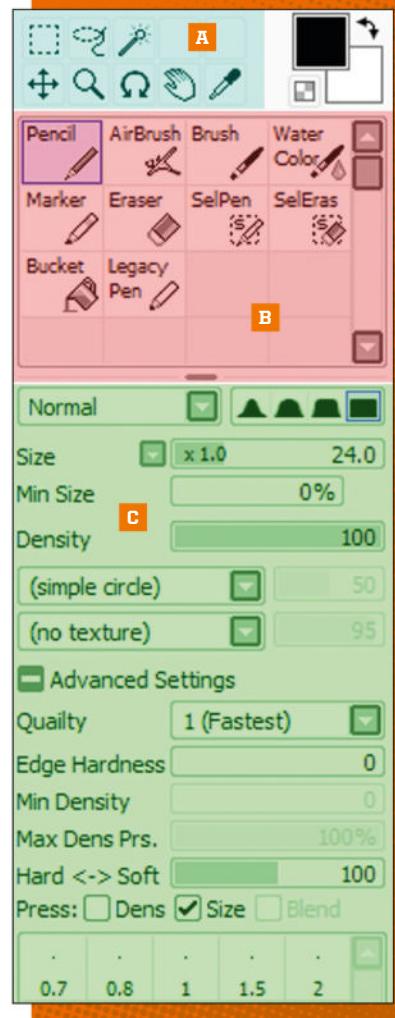
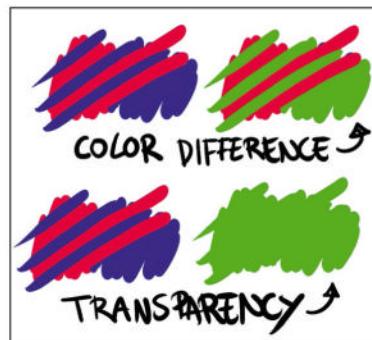
The Selection, Lasso and Magic Wand tools enable you to make selections. In the second row are the Move, Zoom, Rotate, Hand and Color Picker tools.

B. Making marks

These are the main painting tools. The tools above, except maybe the Marker, are more ‘technical’ than the ones below. The Pencil is good for precise line work and the Legacy pen is good for pixel art. The brushes are less precise and more ‘arty’ in nature.

C. Brush parameters

These enable you to choose the size, the hardness and many other options to modify the main tools.



1 Markers, Pencils and Pens

The Marker tool in Paint Tool SAI is only a rough recreation of a real-life marker pen. The pressure you apply controls the opacity and the size, and also how much you can blend colours (the more you press down, the less it blends). The Pencil tool produces simple, solid lines, while the Legacy Pen (or Binary Pen) uses just 1-bit colour, which is why it looks pixelated.

2 The Selection Pen and Eraser

Using the Selection Pen, whatever you paint is coloured pale blue. Once you choose any other tool, those blue areas turn into a selection, ready to be transformed or altered. If there's any active selection on the canvas then picking the Selection Pen will display it in that same blue colour. The Selection Eraser works in much the same way, except that using it removes the blue.

3 The Bucket tool

The Bucket tool fills a chosen area with colour, just like its Photoshop equivalent. However, there's more to it than simple block filling. You can set it to detect transparency, so that the tool will fill a pixel and all the surrounding pixels with the same transparency, no matter which colour they have. You can choose to detect pixels in the current layer, in a selected layer or in all layers present in the image.

TIPS FOR USING SAI'S BRUSHES

PAINT TOOL SAI'S three key brushes work more like their real-world counterparts than the brushes in other paint programs. Here's how to achieve good results with them

1 We've looked briefly at what Paint Tool SAI's basic Pencil tool, Marker tool and Bucket tool can accomplish. Now it's time to talk about the Brush, AirBrush and Watercolor options.

Using the Brush and Watercolor tools can be a little frustrating if you've never used blending brushes before. They're tricky to control if you don't know exactly what they do and how their use differs from Photoshop's brushes. Their main abilities are to blend and to dilute the

colour on your canvas. You can modify the way in which they do that using the Brush parameters, and we cover this on the opposite page. But to begin with, let's focus on how to use the Brush itself and the kinds of marks you can produce with these brush-based tools.

The first thing to note is that the Brush, AirBrush and Watercolor tools can create really artsy effects, but they aren't very precise. It's difficult to do perfectly clean or highly detailed stuff with them, so be patient and spend some time

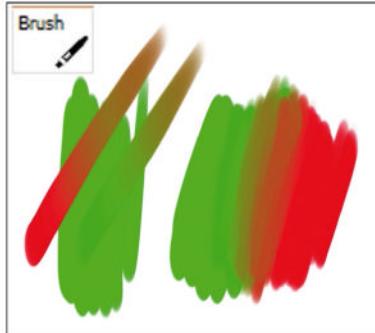
“The Brush tool is not designed for precise, clean work”

familiarising yourself with the controls before attempting to paint with them.

What's more, it's important to use the right tool for the right task. If you were using real-world media, you wouldn't try to use a large-scale tool such as a palette knife to produce a very closely detailed drawing. In the same way, the Brush and Watercolor tools are not really designed for detail work but more for colouring, and can quickly create traditional-looking paintings through colour blending and brush stroke effects.

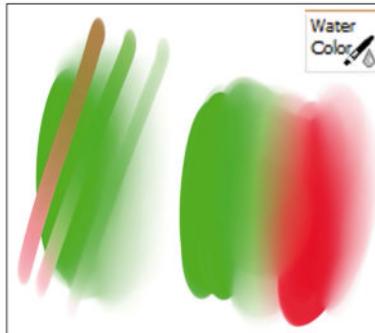
1 Brush tool

SAI's Brush tool works a lot like oils. If you paint on a clear layer, it'll be like an ordinary brush. But if you paint over a painted surface, the colour you're painting with and the colour on the layer below will blend together, not only on the canvas but also on the brush itself. Depending on how you move and use the brush, you'll produce different results. This is a great tool if you want to experiment!



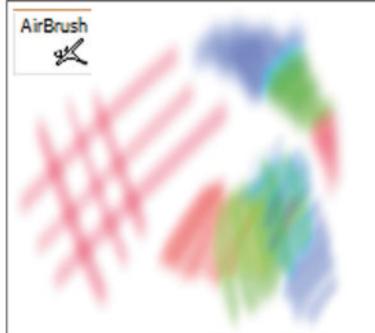
2 Watercolor tool

The Watercolor tool works a lot like the Brush tool, with the added functionality of being able to dilute the colour on the layer. In other words, you can blend your colour in until it's transparent – this is like adding water to a wet watercolour painting. The more you press, the less you dilute. Remember that with these tools, as in traditional painting, how you move the brush is very important.



3 AirBrush tool

The AirBrush is the easiest of all the tools in SAI to use. Although it doesn't blend or dilute, it's a great soft brush that works pretty much like an actual airbrush. The more you press, the more opaque the results. This can be especially useful if you want to add some subtle colour hues over a detailed painting. And since SAI doesn't have blur filters, this is a pretty important brush to be familiar with.



DIFFERENT BRUSH MOVEMENTS AND THEIR OUTCOMES

A. Pressure points

Using the Watercolor tool, starting over the green spot, paint with a left-to-right, red brush stroke. The first is made by pressing the pen just a little; the second pressing a lot.

B. Zig and Zag

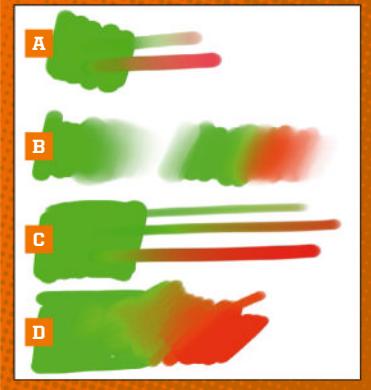
Select the Watercolor tool and over a green spot, make zig-zag brush strokes with the same green colour, pressing just a little. On the right, it's the same but using red colour over the green spot, first with low pressure, then with high pressure.

C. Pure blend

With the Brush tool, start over the green spot and make a left-to-right, red brush stroke, with low, medium and high pressure.

D. All mixed up

With the Brush tool, over a green spot next to a red spot, make several red zig-zag brush strokes in different directions with different degrees of pressure to mix them. If you paint from the red to the green, you'll extend the red paint, and vice-versa.



SET SAI'S BRUSH PARAMETERS

The brush parameters determine what the tools in **PAINT TOOL SAI** can and can't do. We introduce the three critical ones to know about

Paint Tool SAI's brushes can look a little confusing initially, but they're pretty easy to use once you know what they do. The first thing you'll notice is that not all the tools have the same kind, or the same number, of parameters. That's because not all the tools are intended to perform the same task. There are some brush parameters that are pretty intuitive, such as Brush size, but others are more difficult to understand. In this section of our guide to SAI we'll focus on the three most

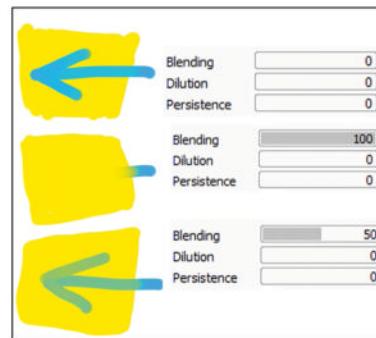
complex parameters: Blending, Dilution and Persistence.

Previously we've explained how the brushes blend and/or dilute colours as you paint with them. So let's talk about how to choose the right amount of Blending and Dilution. The parameters work best if combined, so spend some time experimenting with them. With these three parameters you can create the perfect brush for every situation. Many other parameters are controlled using pen pressure, preconfigured in the settings.

“**You can set the ideal amount of Blending and Dilution**”

1 Blending

The Blending parameter controls how much a brush will blend on the digital canvas. Blending in Paint Tool SAI is similar to blending with oils or acrylics. If you start with a yellow surface on a layer and you then paint with blue, you can easily mix the two until you produce green. A brush with Blending set to 0 will just paint. In contrast, with the Blending set to 100 it'll blend the colours on the canvas.



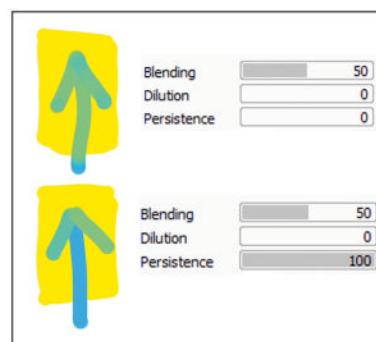
2 Dilution

The Dilution setting is similar to adding Dutch varnish to oils. It makes the paint more transparent, and at the same time blends the already painted colours on the canvas. So a brush with Blending and Dilution set to 50 paints with a semi-transparent blue colour and blends, and a brush with Blending and Dilution set to 100 acts like water-painting: it blends the colours until they're transparent (similar to a stump).



3 Persistence

This setting determines how much the colour you're using is affected by the Blending parameter. If you have a high Persistence value, the colour you're using can be blended with the colour on the canvas, but the colour in the brush predominates over the one on the canvas. Keep in mind that this setting is useful only in combination with the Blending parameter.



COMMON BRUSH PARAMETERS

A. Edge shape

With this you can choose between a Soft, a Hard and two Medium brushes.

B. Size and Density

Enables you to control the opacity of the brush, and maximum and minimum sizes.

C. Brush variables

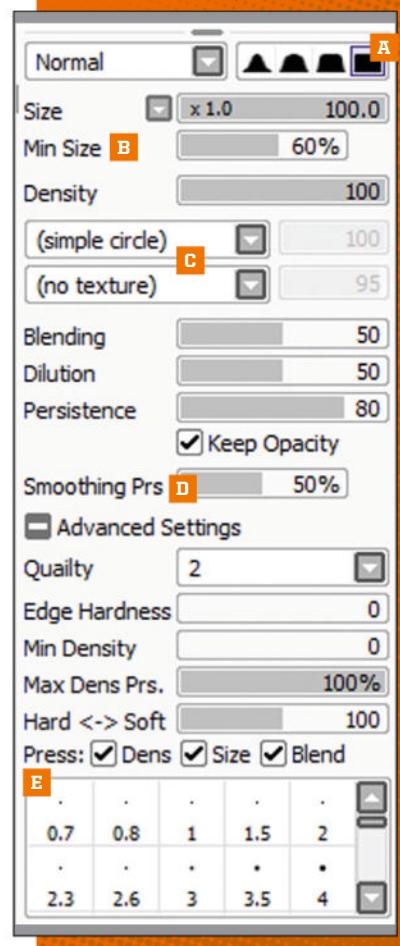
Select shapes and textures. Sliders on right change intensity of shape and texture.

D. Smoothing pressure

Set a minimum pressure value. Press with your pen below this value and it'll blend.

E. Density, size and blending settings

Alter density, size and blending of a brush by pressing harder or softer with your pen.



CUSTOMISE AND CREATE BRUSHES

Why make do with just the standard tools? In **PAINT TOOL SAI** you can tweak your favourite brushes and set up new ones, as we explain...

1 We've already mentioned that Paint Tool SAI is a pretty basic program and doesn't feature too many tools when compared with sprawling multi-purpose software like Photoshop. But as we've already seen, with the few tools it does have you can still achieve a lot.

Should you find you do need a tool that SAI doesn't offer, the program has a hugely useful trick up its digital sleeve: you can simply create a new tool by right-clicking one of the empty squares on the

Tool tray, set the parameters to your liking, and then save it as a new tool. For example, you can create a new Pen tool: set it to emulate a charcoal using the brush parameters, change its name to 'Charcoal', and that's it – your own custom charcoal tool ready to use.

But sometimes you need more than that – more textures, perhaps, or more brush tips. In this case, you'll need to create them from scratch. This is a little more involved, but it's not too tricky. So here's how you do it...

“Simply create a new tool, set the parameters and save it”

HOW TO CREATE CUSTOM BRUSHES IN PAINT TOOL SAI

A. Duplicate files

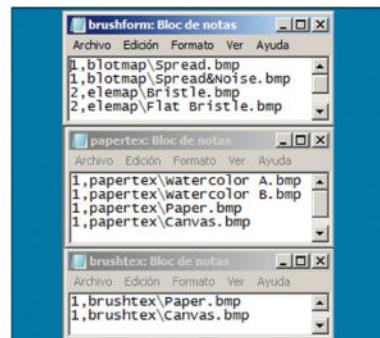
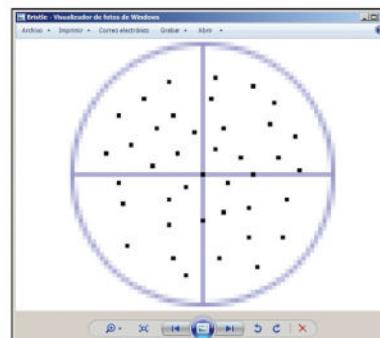
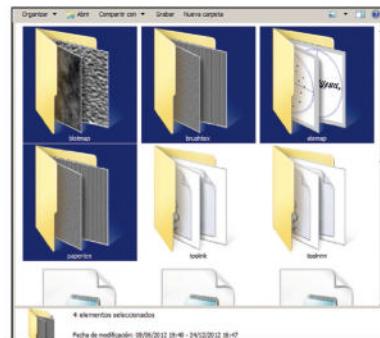
First I duplicate one of the files in the 'elemap' folder, delete all the black dots using Photoshop (preserving the blue crosshair) and paint new ones according to my liking. Then I rename it and save my new file as 'custombrush'. I do the same with one of the files on the blotmap folder and I save it as 'custombrush2'.

B. Brush shapes

I want to create new brush shapes, so I open 'BRUSHFORM.COMF' using the notepad, because it's the .COMF file used for brush shapes, and here I add the following lines: **2,elemap\custombrush.bmp** **1,blotmap\custombrush2.bmp** And then I save it and close it.

C. Ready for use

Finally, if I have done everything right, the next time I open SAI, my new custom brush shapes should be there, ready to use.



1 Get to know your folders

Take a look in your SAI folder and there you'll see some more folders, with names such as 'elemap', 'blotmap', 'brushtext', 'papertext' and so on. Inside these folders are some files, and these are the brushes and textures that you can use in SAI: 'elemap' and 'blotmap' are for brush shapes, while 'brushtext' and 'papertext' are for textures (brushes and layers).

2 Create some custom files

Now you have to create some new files and put them in the right folders. You need to create a very specific file for each thing. For example, all the files in the elemap folder need to be 63x63 RGB. When they're saved as a BMP file, you'll see a blue crosshair in the middle. So the best thing to do is to copy the default files and use them as templates for your custom ones.

3 Find and name the .COMF files

Finally, you have to look for the .COMF files in the SAI root folder. There should be three in there: 'brushform', 'brushtext' and 'papertext' (for shapes, texture and layer texture, respectively). You have to open the appropriate one using the notepad and write '2' if it's an elemap or '1' if it's anything else, and then the name of the folder and the name of the file.

START USING VECTOR TOOLS

When you need sharp, precise linework, **PAINT TOOL SAI** enables you to create vectors as well as brush marks. Here's how to make the most of these handy tools

Sometimes you need to produce clean and precise shapes in your artwork. Perhaps you need to paint a perfectly curved katana, or you want to ink with precise, clean strokes. In such situations as these, vector graphics are helpful.

As you'll know if you've used vector software such as Illustrator or the vector tools in Photoshop, vectors have some distinct advantages. If you draw a vector line, you can then modify it as much as you like until it has exactly the shape

you want. Importantly, you can also resize it without losing any quality. That's why they are so interesting when it comes to creating perfectly clean shapes.

In Paint Tool SAI, vector tools are called Linework tools and can only be used on Linework layers: create these by pressing the button with a little pen on it next to the New Layer button. Vector tools aren't difficult to use once you spend a bit of time with them. However, working with them can be slower than simply painting with brushes, so you need patience.

“Vectors are helpful when you need precise, clean lines **”**

LINWORK TOOLS

A. Pen tool

You use the Pen tool to draw linework. It works much like the SAI brush tools.

B. Eraser

The Eraser removes control points.

C. Weight

This parameter changes the size of the line proportionally. So if there are thicker or thinner parts on the line, you won't lose them, Weight will just change the scale.

D. Color

Color changes the colour of the line.

E. Edit

Edit modifies the line. It has many functions that can be selected on the Tool tray.

F. Pressure

Pressure makes parts of the line (control points) either thicker or thinner.

G. Selection Pen

The Selection Pen can be used to draw a shape or draw around an area, and when you choose any other tool, that drawing will automatically become a selection.

H. Selection Eraser

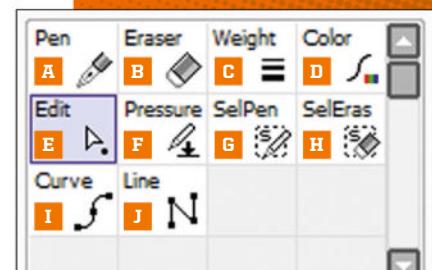
The Selection Eraser can be used to erase what you draw with the Selection Pen.

I. Curve

The Curve tool creates curved lines. Click, then drag, then click again, and it will create a smooth curve between the two points.

J. Line

Line does the same as the Curve tool, except that it creates straight angular lines.

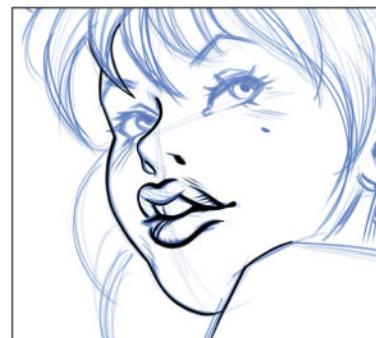
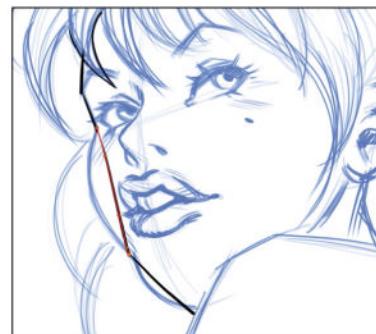


Edit each strokes

Select / Deselect

E (Click CP / Curve)
(Right Click - Deselect All)

Translate CP
(Ctrl+Drag CP - Translate)
(Ctrl+Drag Curve - Add/Translate)



1 Learning to make the first strokes

Imagine that you have a rough pencil drawing, like this one of mine here, and you want to ink it in a very clean way. Simply create a new Linework layer in SAI, then choose the Pen tool and create some straight lines over the top of your sketch. Then press Ctrl or choose the Modify tool. As a result, you'll see a lot of small dots inside the line – these are control points.

2 Modifying the control strokes

Next up, choose the Modify tool and you'll see a lot of options on the Tool tray – and you should find all of them to be pretty much self-explanatory. Choose the second option and then click and drag on one of the control points on your drawing. You can then modify the line to your taste. You can bend it to perfectly match the pencil lines of your sketch if you so wish.

3 Experiment stroke by stroke

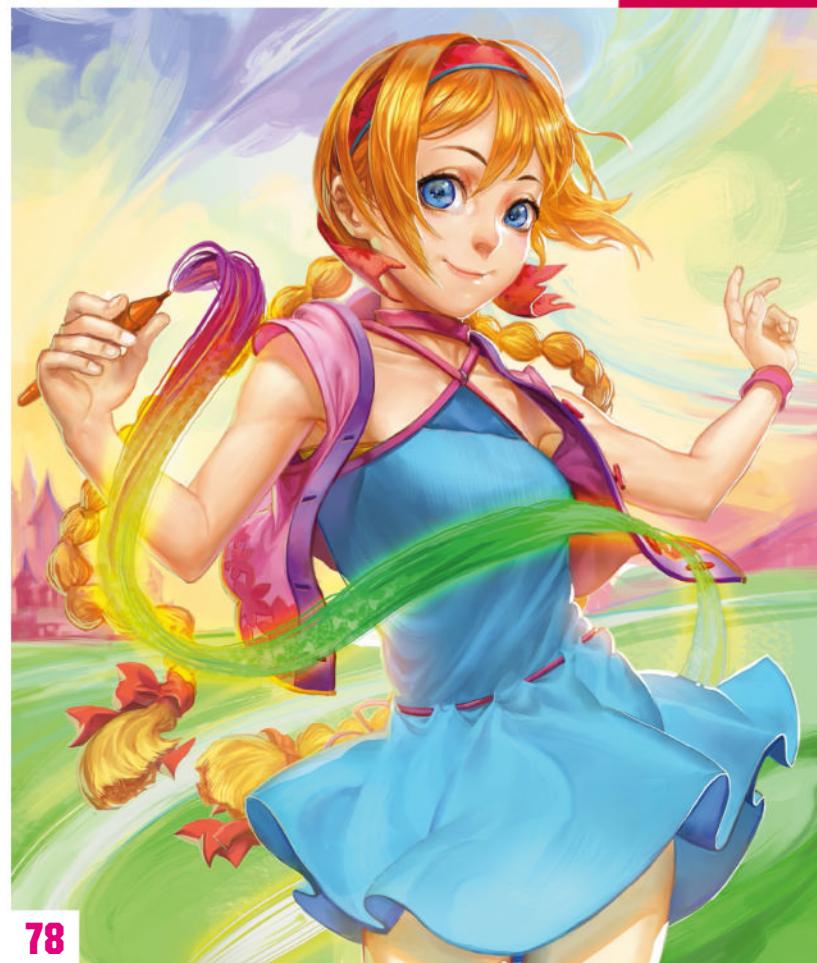
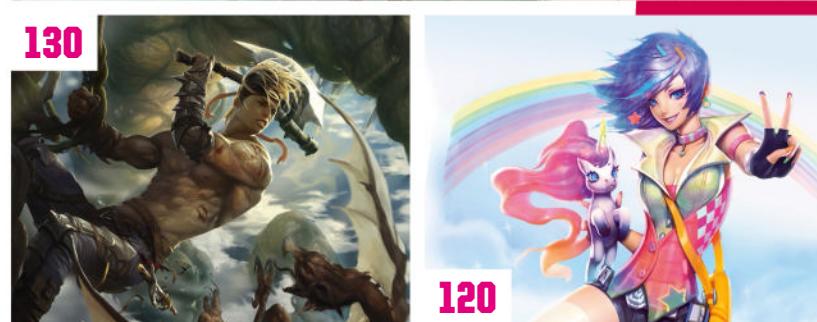
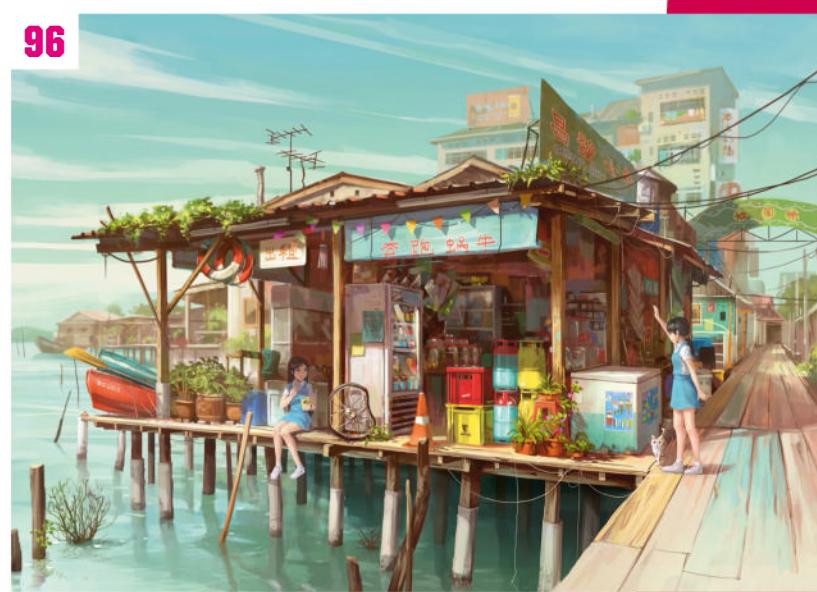
The process is basically the same for all the lines. As you become more experienced with the program you'll start using some of the other Linework tools, such as the Eraser, which erases control points, and the Pressure tool, which modifies the pressure of the line, making each point thicker or thinner. Spend time experimenting to see the different results you can achieve. ■

WORKSHOPS



142

- 78 Colourful character**
Han-Yuan Yu draws and paints a bright manga figure.
- 82 Digital line art**
Lois Van Baarle draws the line...
- 88 Portrait masterclass**
...and then paints a portrait.
- 94 Action scenes**
See how Arman Akopian gives his art a strong sense of motion.
- 96 Environment art**
Feigip sets a retro-looking scene.
- 102 Rendering a character**
Pramin Phatiphong's advice on creating a memorable figure.
- 106 Learn to photobash**
Valentina Remenar's warrior art.
- 110 Under the skin**
Saejin Oh's reveals how to depict manga characters properly.
- 116 Character design**
Low Zi Rong explains his thought process when creating a character.
- 120 Use colours**
Paul Kwon brings manga to life.
- 122 Digital pastels**
Jade Mosch shares her knowledge.
- 126 Visual details**
Emma Vieceli implies backstory.
- 130 Tell a story**
Crowgod spins a yarn.
- 134 Depict a dragon**
Ruan Jia paints a dramatic scene.
- 138 Character composition**
Hiro Usuda plots a crowd scene.
- 142 Nebulous vision**
Bao Pham on creating order from chaos, resulting in beautiful art.



PAINT A COLOURFUL MANGA CHARACTER

From sketch to finished image, **HAN-YUAN YU** takes you through his painting process, revealing how he creates a charming manga figure who's handy with a brush...

ARTIST PROFILE

HAN-YUAN YU

COUNTRY: US



Han-Yuan Yu, aka B.c.N.y., was born in Taiwan. He is a freelance illustrator, working with major gaming companies and publications. As well as New York and San Francisco, he has been invited to exhibit his art in Morocco, France, Japan and Taiwan. <http://ifxm.ag/b-c-n-y>

GET YOUR
RESOURCES
SEE PAGE 146

VIDEO
AVAILABLE

ARTIST INSIGHT

CLEAN EDGES

Almost every object has a sharp edge in the real world, so keeping edges clean makes your illustrations look more realistic. Besides drawing carefully, there's a quick way to create clean edges for objects: use the Lasso tool to select the silhouette of the object, and then you can paint inside it without your strokes spilling over.

M

anga as an art form has been evolving almost since it came into being. The typical manga style that developed in Japan has been taken up by people around the world who love it and take it further in their own works.

As a result, various artistic influences such as comics, cartoons, film and academic art have been mixed into manga in some ways, so that nowadays

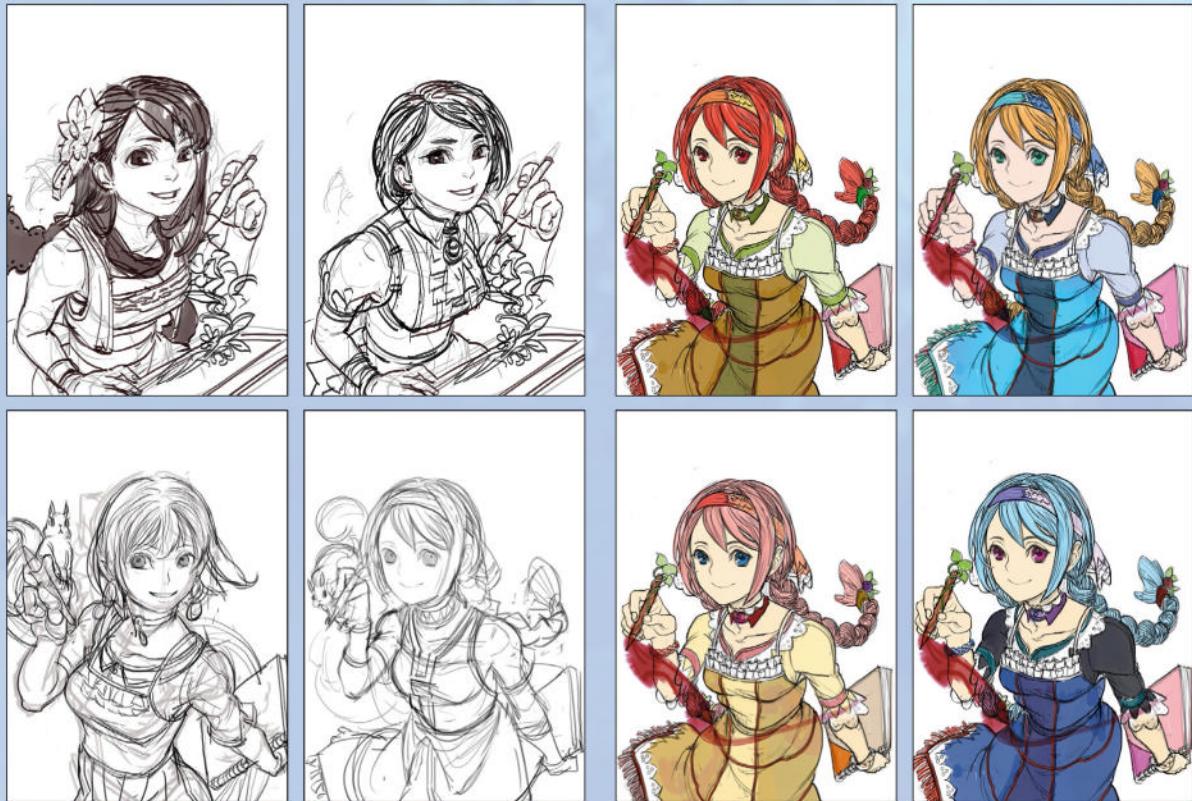
it's hard to define exactly what makes a character a manga character. However, a beautiful, attractive character is the most important goal for me to achieve – especially because I know it'll be going on the cover of this special issue.

In this workshop, I'm going to show you how I create a finished illustration of a manga-style girl step-by-step from the beginning. The steps include sketches, colour schemes, rendering and polishing. In each step, I'll describe not only what

I'm doing, but also what I'm thinking while working.

I don't mind saying that it took many attempts to get the best result for this illustration. Sometimes you need to keep trying, not just resign yourself to a sketch that you don't really feel totally satisfied with. It's not easy to do – especially with deadlines pressing – but it'll be worth it if you're going to challenge yourself.

So follow my workshop and learn how to create your own manga characters!



1 Rough sketches

I start by drawing rough sketches, and do some online research based on the directions I receive from the editor. It's interesting to see the differences between the first sketch and the fourth. I also try variations for her clothing. Taking the time at the beginning not only warms you up but also helps you refine your approach to the subject.

2 Colour schemes

Finding the perfect colour scheme is a big challenge. I add colours on separate layers for the different objects so I can change their colours easily using Hue/Saturation. I try to find a bright, vibrant colour scheme for the character. I also place the character into her environment to see how things are working.





3 Second round of changes

After all this work on sketches and colour schemes, the editor and I decide that we need the character to be in a more dynamic pose. What I've done so far becomes a starting point for more exciting sketches: I imagine that she's dancing and rotating as I draw these new sketches. I decide that using blue and purple colours in her clothing will make her stand out better from the green background.

SHORTCUTS

HUE/SATURATION

Ctrl+U (PC)

Cmd+U (Mac)

Enables you to change objects' colours quickly in three tonal ranges using sliders.



5 Continually develop colours

Maintaining good colour contrast is important. When I'm happy with the middle-value colours, I start adding shadow colours. Using colours with higher saturation and lower lightness avoids colours looking 'dirty'. I develop shadow colours on each object, keeping the same light source in mind.

4 Middle-value colours

I think it's easier to control how the colours are going by rendering middle-value colours first. If I add darker values directly when I start to render, sometimes it becomes too dark and I have to spend more time to balance them afterwards. I create graduated colours using the Smudge Tool with 50-70 per cent strength. For a manga-style character, I need to keep the colours simple.



6 Refining the edges of objects

It's important for objects to have a clean, sharp edge, especially for manga characters. Refining edges will enhance the quality of your drawing because it'll make them more realistic. I also change the size of her head and skirt to make her less youthful, and I boost the shadow colour of her arms to fit the other objects' shadow colours.



7 Rendering the whole character

I have three principles in mind while rendering: keep colours pure; maintain clear edges; and avoid focusing on just one area. I think making the character have consistent details is a good way to make the illustration cohesive. Once I feel that the middle colours, shadow colours and objects' edges are working, I can move on to the next step.



8 Final check of objects' values

This step is like a final check before polishing the illustration. I find that the skin colour of her arms is too bright, which the skin shouldn't be under this light source. If I don't fix this, the highlight that I'll add on her arms later will end up far too bright. It'll save a lot of time if you correct unbalanced colours like this before moving on.

RESOURCES

CUSTOM BRUSHES

BCNY HAIR BRUSH



I use this for adding texture on the character's hair – and for the brush stroke that she's making.

BCNY SKIN BRUSH



Skin shouldn't be too smooth, even in manga – use this to add a convincing skin texture.



9 Adding a brush stroke

I use my custom hair brush to draw the brush strokes coming out from the pointed end of her pen. I use a Layer Effect tool to add an Outer Glow to the stroke, which separates it from the character. For colouring the stroke, I create a layer group and apply a mask to it based on the shape of the stroke. This means I don't have to worry about the various effects on the stroke overflowing into other areas.



SHORTCUTS

NEW LAYER

Ctrl+Shift+N (PC)

Cmd+Shift+N (Mac)

Use this shortcut to keep drawing without breaking your rhythm.

10 Highlights and textures

Adding highlights to characters makes them stand out more, but you have to control the amount of highlights: they should just be like some dots when compared to the overall size. I use my custom hair and skin brushes to add texture on the character. I work carefully here because I don't want the texture to be too strong – otherwise it'll make the viewer focus on the wrong area.



11 Rendering the background

The idea of the background is that everything is painted by the girl. I keep this area loose and abstract, because the top area will have text over it. However, I still want the illustration to look good even without the text, so I design the brush stroke as if it's going around the girl's head to create an interesting rhythm for the composition.



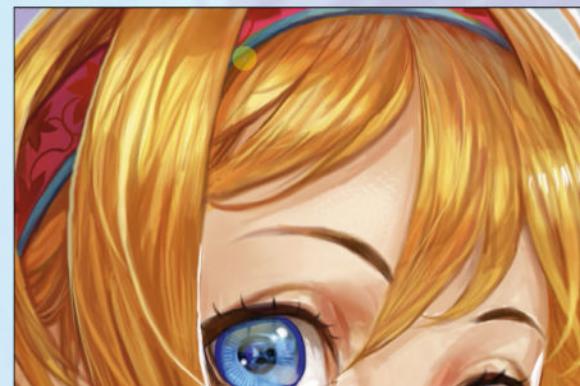
12 Creating ambience

Adding elements such as lights or fog in front of objects can make them look more distant. It also feels more natural if objects reflect light from diverse sources in the environment. For her waist and the space behind her neck, I use a Screen layer. To add a sense of depth to her left arm and braids, I use a solid colour on a lower Opacity.



13 Sharpen those highlights

Giving highlights a sharp edge is a good way to increase colour contrast. It's especially effective adding this to the focal point or the places you want the viewer's eyes to be drawn to. These sharp edges shouldn't be too big, though, unless you're pursuing an intense emotion. Usually, just a little touch is perfect.



14 Final touches

I check the image, to see what I can make better or need to fix. For example, the colour of the brush stroke near the character's shoulder is too similar, so I make it darker and then add a rim light on the shoulder. Sometimes it's hard to notice what could be better while drawing – I usually spend a few days reviewing a painting before delivering.

ARTIST INSIGHT

REFLECTIONS IN EYEBALLS

It's important for manga characters to have reflections in their eyes. Basically these could be three types: highlight, upper part reflection and middle part reflection. The highlight should be just two or three dots. The upper part reflection is between the eyelashes and pupil, so it'll usually be covered to some extent by the eyelashes. The middle part reflection is located in the middle of the eye, making the eyeballs look more three-dimensional.

ARTIST INSIGHT

ENHANCE YOUR DIGITAL LINE ART

LOIS VAN BAARLE shares her favourite tips for creating a variety of digital line work, from chunky and sketchy to smooth and elegant

ARTIST PROFILE

LOIS VAN BAARLE

COUNTRY: Netherlands



Lois has been drawing since the day she could hold a pencil, and started working digitally in 2003. Upon finishing high school, she studied animation and is currently a freelance illustrator and animator. www.loish.net

GET YOUR RESOURCES
SEE PAGE 146

I've been drawing digital line art for almost 10 years now but still think it remains one of the most difficult parts of the drawing process. Although some people believe that using digital tools such as Photoshop and a tablet makes the process easier, it's hard to translate a steady, smooth movement of the hand into a digital brush stroke, regardless of which

tablet you're using. Choosing from countless brush settings and drawing tools is a challenge in itself, not to mention the problems that zooming in and out can present. Line art can look beautiful up close but bland when zoomed out, and vice versa.

Still, making good line work is an important skill and a crucial starting point for any digital drawing. Line art can

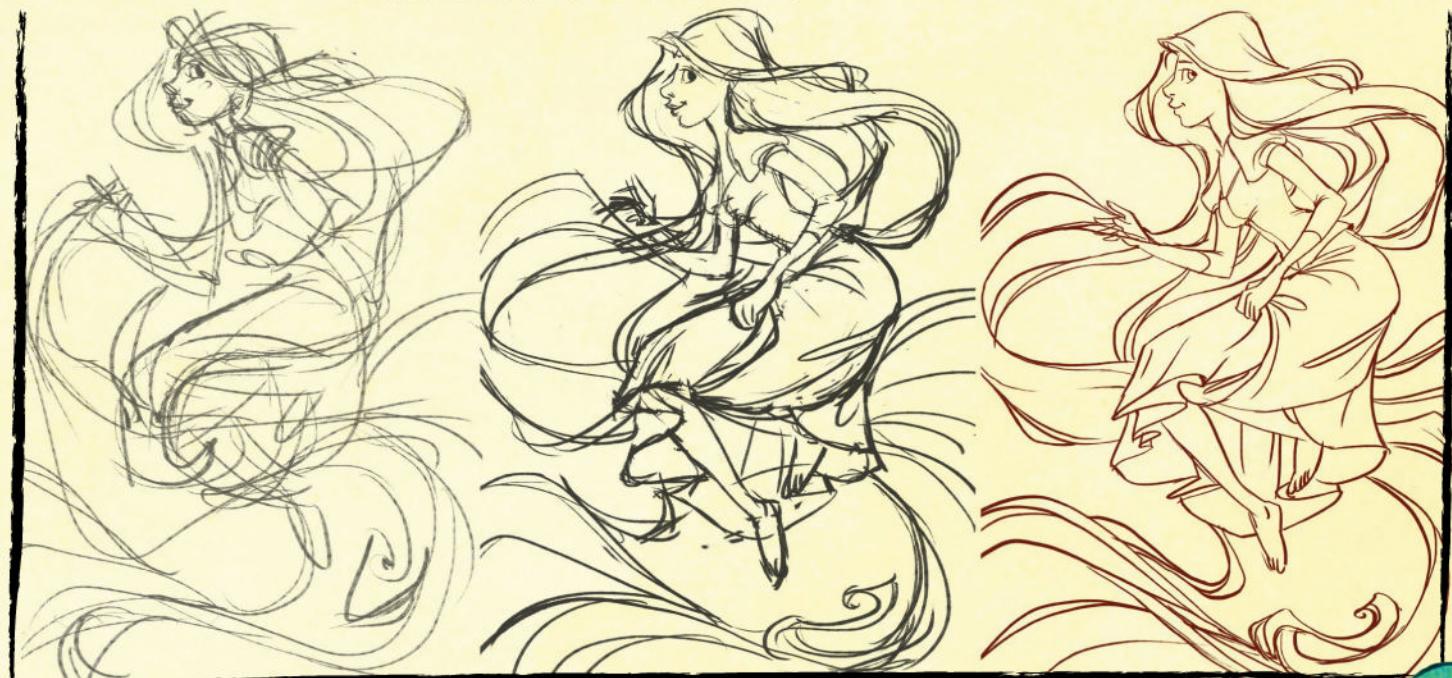
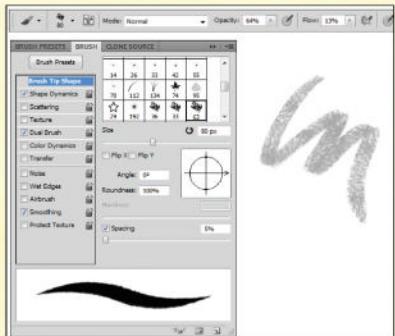
be chunky and textured, or smooth and detailed. It can be scanned from a sheet of paper or drawn completely in Photoshop. It can be supplemented with simple flat colours and cel shading, or painted to the last detail. The possibilities are endless.

In this workshop, I'll show the different methods, tools and approaches I use to create digital line work, from sketching to a polished, fully coloured end result.

1 CREATE A DIGITAL SKETCH

I begin every digital illustration the same way: with a rough digital sketch. Here I focus on the shapes, forms and flow of the image. As you can see, my first sketch is pretty basic and doesn't contain a lot of detail for the clothing, hands or feet. I prefer to sketch with a large, textured brush set to light grey, usually with one of the standard Photoshop brushes.

Lowering the opacity and flow of the brush gives it a rough look and keeps the lines from being too sharp and precise, which I find can be distracting if you're focusing on movement and form. I also find that rough sketching is especially important for hair, because drawing freely creates a lot of pleasing shapes that I can emphasise later in the drawing process. >







2 PAINT OVER YOUR LINE ART

Create depth and softness



A Coloured lines

My drawing begins as line work with flat colours underneath. I lock the transparency of the black lines and colour them to match the flat colours; I also blur the lines slightly. The line work is now significantly softer and more gentle, creating a more colourful and less harsh effect.



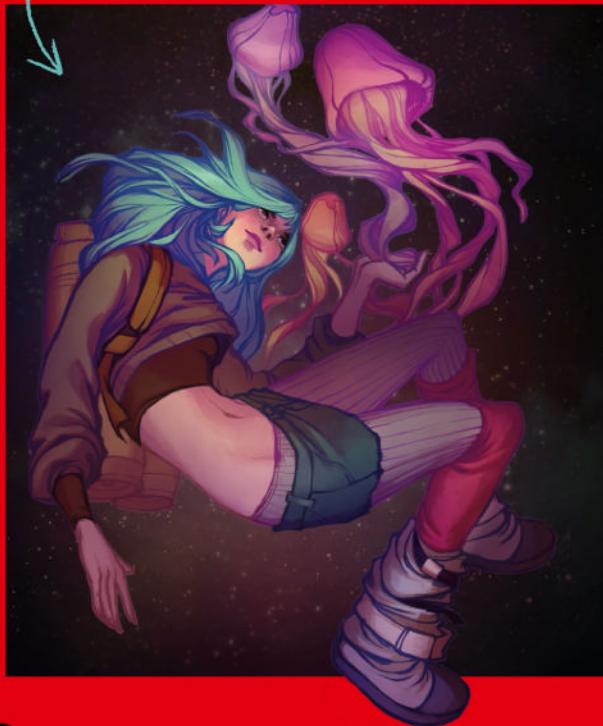
B Painting in the shading

I add shading on a separate layer, using a desaturated pink and setting it to Multiply so that it interacts nicely with the flat base colours. Although the image now has more depth and softness, I still want the lines to be more unified with the rest of the drawing.



C Painting over the line work

I merge the line art with the colouring and start painting over the entire thing. I can paint over the line work, rather than be limited by it, enabling me to modify and smooth it. It also softens the face, creates smoother, more gentle lines and adds depth to the image.



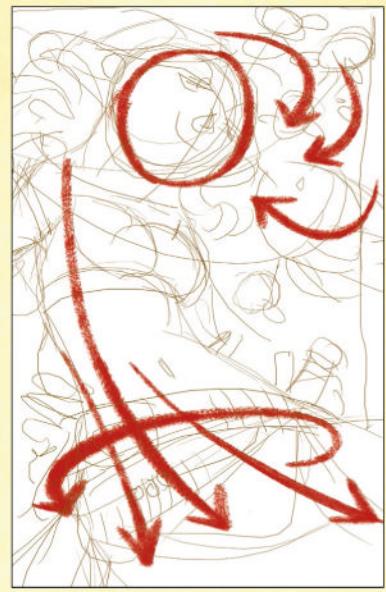
2 PAINT OVER YOUR LINE ART

Create depth and softness



3 ADD DETAIL TO A ROUGH SKETCH

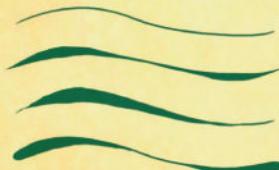
Sketches are usually dynamic but messy and lacking in detail. Drawing finished line art over a rough sketch can be a huge leap, so I create a rough version of the line art before starting on the final version. This enables me to preserve the flow of the original sketch while moving closer towards a level of detail that's suitable for line art. Assessing the sketch is important: here the focus is on the face, and the eye is led down the drawing. I try to preserve this by adding perspective to the fish and belt. The result is shaky and messy, but still refined enough to serve as a base for the final, significantly neater line work.



4 VARY LINE WEIGHT

Having lines vary in thickness can create a sense of movement, add elegance to the lines and lead the eye around your image. You can create this effect by using pen pressure settings – pressing harder will thicken the line. You can also draw in the thickness by hand. I tend to draw a thin line first, and then go back and thicken parts of it, based on where I feel it'll look good. I also add a thicker outline to the entire figure to make her stand out from the decorative flowers.

DIFFERENT WAYS TO ADD "FLOW" TO A LINE USING VARIED THICKNESS





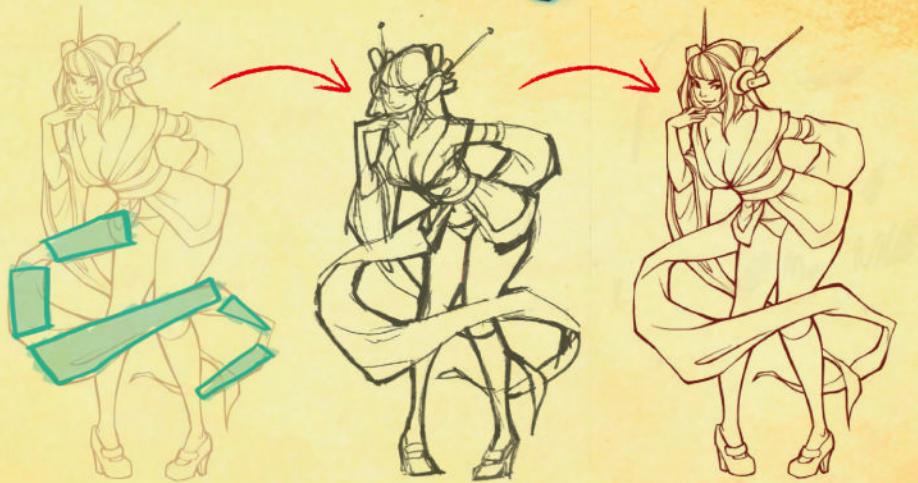
5 MAKE CHUNKY AND TEXTURED LINES

Usually the goal is to have lines look as smooth and clean as possible. However, for certain drawings, chunky and textured lines can work just as well. In this case I want a thick and chalky effect, so I use a textured brush with maximum Opacity and the Flow set to 60 per cent. I don't zoom in too much while drawing because I want to ensure the texture shows in the final downscaled version. Zooming in can make the line art look interesting up close but extremely smooth when lowered to a normal size.



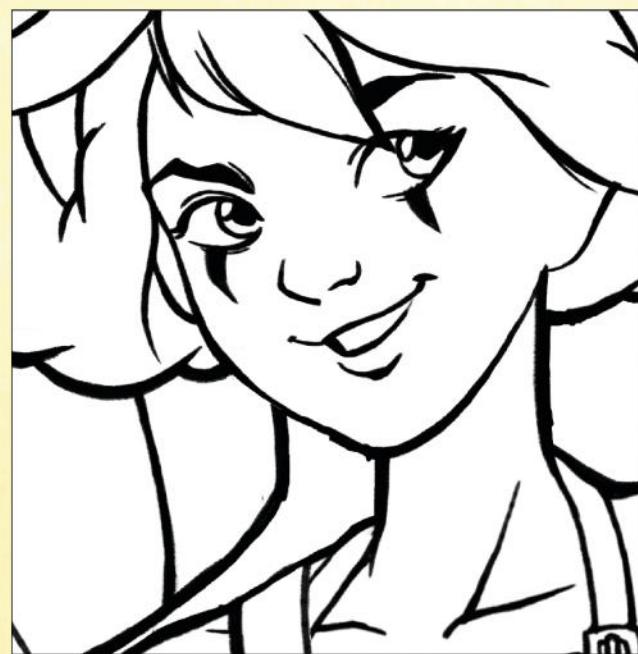
6 EXAGGERATE SHAPES IN YOUR LINE WORK

For certain types of drawings, especially character pin-ups like these ones, I like to add rough edges and chunky shapes. This exaggeration can give personality and style to the image, and keeps it from looking too boring and predictable. Although the way the fabric flows across this figure's legs is completely unrealistic, the chunky lines and thick folds give the fabric volume and movement. I go on to emphasise this by thickening the lines in certain parts and envisioning the fabric as blocks rather than smooth forms.



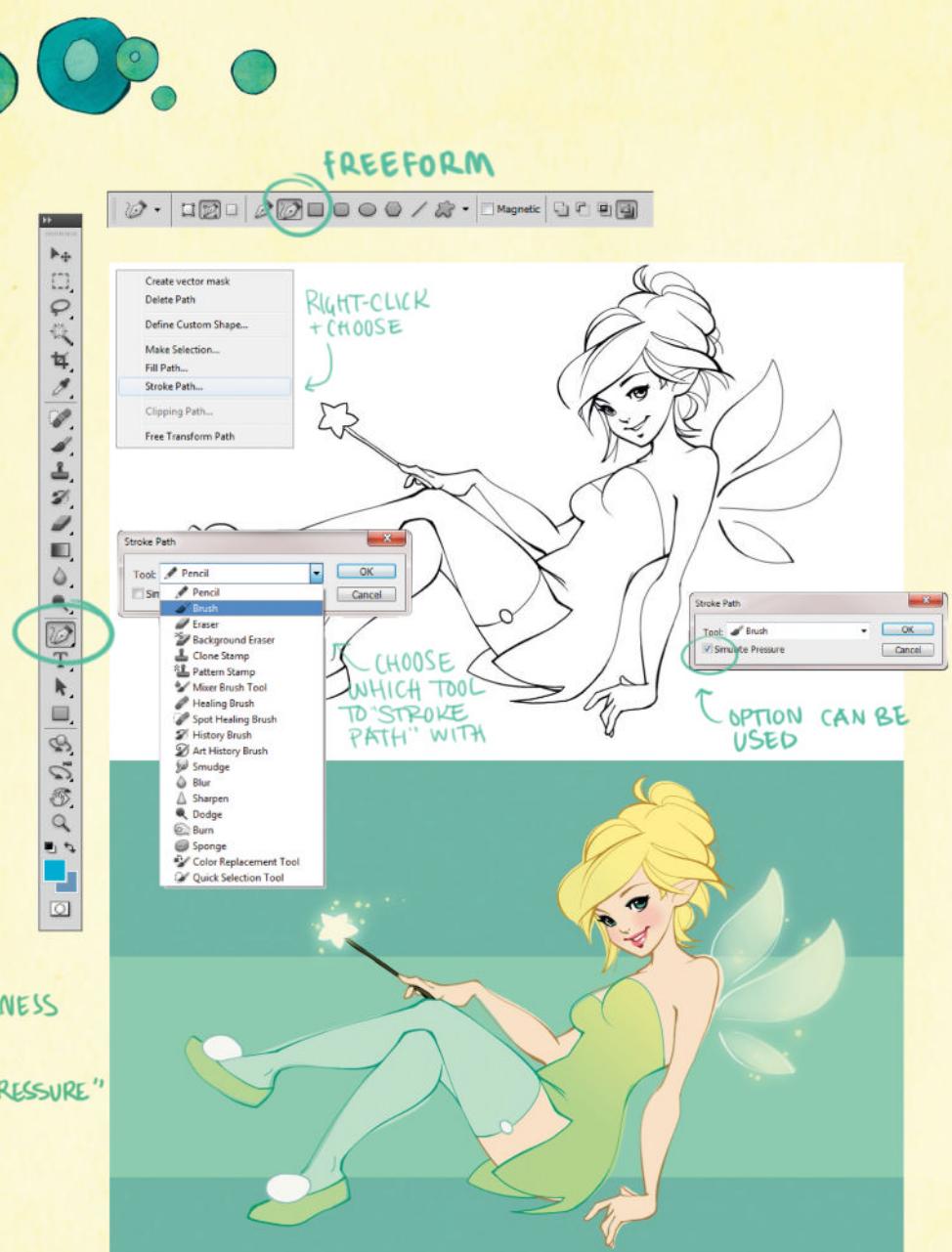
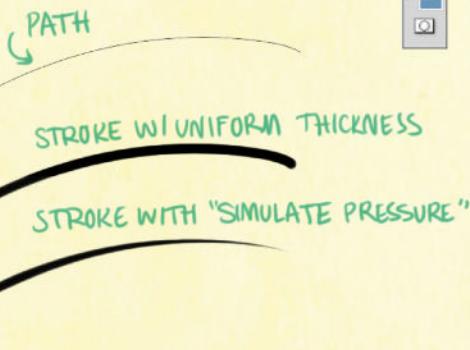
7 WORK AT A HIGHER RESOLUTION FOR SMOOTHER RESULTS

Many artists complain that their digital lines appear messy, pixelated or shaky. Working at a high resolution can be the solution. This image is drawn on a digital canvas of about 7,500 pixels in height. When scaled down, the lines will look smooth and straight. The more pixels you have to work with, the easier it is to create a smooth look while still keeping a hand-drawn feel. When this image is zoomed in at 100 per cent, you can see some rough edges on the face that aren't noticeable on the image when it's downscaled or printed.



8 SELECT THE FREEFORM PEN TOOL FOR LONG LINES

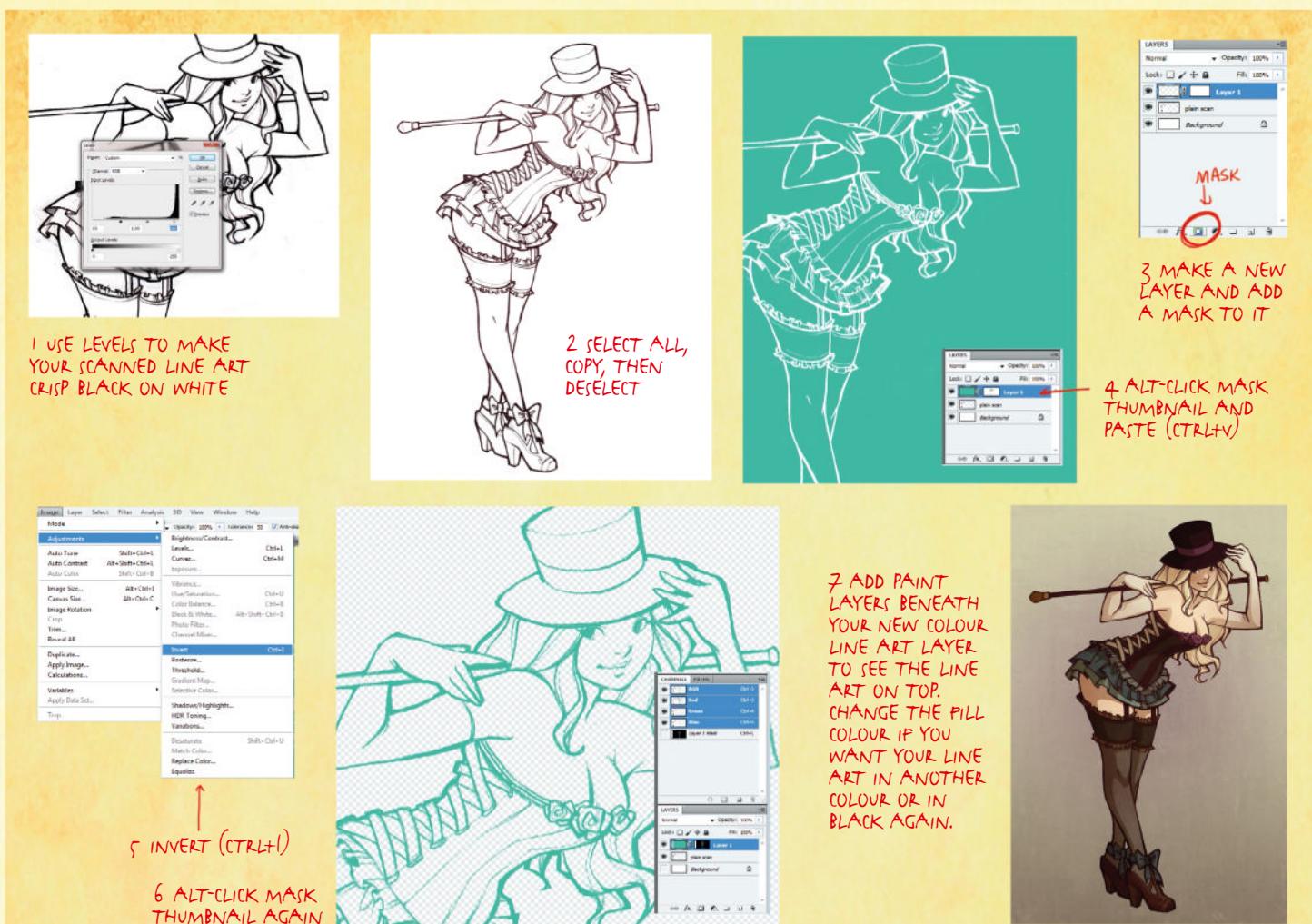
One of the biggest challenges of creating digital line art is drawing long, straight lines, especially if you insist on drawing everything by hand like I do. A great tool for this is the Freeform Pen tool. You can zoom out, draw a line and a smooth path will be created, correcting any shakiness in your line. Right-click and select Stroke Path, and choose a brush to translate the path into a solid line. Simulate Pressure is an interesting option for creating a calligraphic effect. It's definitely worthwhile to experiment with the different effects that this tool can create. For this drawing I draw some of the thinner, longer lines with the Freeform Pen tool and the rest with the Brush tool. I prefer not to use the Simulate Pressure option, instead opting to draw in the different line thicknesses later by hand.



9 USE LOCK LAYER TRANSPARENCY TO ADD COLOUR TO LINES

Changing the colour of different parts of the line work can be a good choice if it appears too harsh. In this case I chose a lighter colour for the line work of the hair and face to soften these features and bring the line work and colouring together. I click the Lock Transparent Pixels button of the line art layer, after which I can simply paint over the lines using a soft, low-opacity brush. This way I introduce subtle, gradual colour transitions to the lines, but using a Hard-edged brush is fine too.





10 TURN SCANNED LINE ART INTO A TRANSPARENT LAYER

I often scan line art and then colour it digitally. A simple way to do this is to set the layer to Multiply. However, sometimes it can be much more useful to have the line art on a layer with transparency. To do this, I scan the line art and adjust the levels until the

art is crisp and black against a white background. Now Select All, Copy, then deselect (Ctrl+D). Create a new layer, flood fill it with a colour (Edit > Fill) and add a mask. Alt-click the mask thumbnail, Paste the copied line art, then invert its colours (Ctrl+I). Alt-click the mask thumbnail again to view the result: crisp line work in colour on a transparent layer.



11 HAVE FUN WITH LAYER MODES

Once you think you have your line art and colouring sorted, you can play around with the layer mode to create interesting effects. Simple things like lowering the opacity or

changing the colour of the lines can yield interesting results. Lightening the colour of your line art and setting it to Multiply mode enables the line art to interact with different hues in the colouring. One trick I occasionally like to use is to duplicate the

line art layer, then blur it slightly using Gaussian Blur, and then change the colour using Hue/Saturation. I think the combination of the thin brown lines and blurred blue lines in Pet Fish creates a neat effect here. ■

BRUSH UP ON YOUR PORTRAIT SKILLS

To paint a strong, fashionable female, you need a bright, warm colour palette and a few decorative elements, says **LOIS VAN BAARLE**

Female portraits have been around forever, showing that, at the very least, women are fun to paint. In this tutorial, I'll try to create a picture that brings out the ladylike qualities of the subject, using elements like fashion sense, colour palettes and supplementary figures to make the image more than just a forward-facing depiction of a girl.

One aspect of making such a piece is to consider how you'll approach the project concept-wise. Personality plays a crucial role, and the image should have flair and attitude. Adding decorative items can give the piece more interest and the character something to interact with, giving you a chance to play with expression and pose.

The most important technique in this tutorial will be the painting process. I'll



1 Make a rough sketch

When starting the piece, work loosely and don't get hung up on details. Keep in mind that you don't have to adhere to every detail in your original sketch; see it more as a starting point. Focus mainly on the composition, proportions and pose. I've chosen to include jellyfish to give the subject something to interact with and add a surreal touch. I've also added thick, loose hair and a number of bracelets to give her a youthful, playful style.



2 Add colours

On a separate layer, add your first colours to the sketch. Fill the layer with a dark, deep hue and paint some lighter shades on top with a chunky brush set to about 60 per cent opacity. Starting with a dark layer adds volume and a painted feel. Colours can be changed many times during the process, so just throw some on there and play around. It helps to decide on one aspect, such as making the jellyfish blue or green, and get other hues to work with it.

ARTIST PROFILE

LOIS VAN BAARLE
COUNTRY: Netherlands

 Lois has been drawing ever since she could first hold a pencil, but has only developed a preference for digital art and animation in the last few years.
www.loish.net

GET YOUR
RESOURCES
SEE PAGE 146

VIDEO
AVAILABLE

RESOURCES

CUSTOM BRUSHES

CHALKY BRUSH



This brush has excellent texture and it can be used for painting as well as sketching.

SMOOTH BRUSH



This custom brush can be used to smooth out any rough textures and brush strokes when you get to the later stages of the painting process.

work with a rough, chunky brush and use prominent, solid brush strokes. Textures will also be used, helping create a traditional feel. Intuition will play a key role; I'll start with a basic concept and see where it takes me. The final result will be a portrait that, after having undergone numerous changes and modifications, will convey the personality and feminine touch I'm aiming for.



3 Create texture

While you're playing around with the colours, add a layer of texture. Colourful concrete ones are ideal because they have an organic, grainy quality and can have a unifying effect on the shades in your piece. Add the texture on a separate layer and play around with the opacity, hue and mode to see how they affect the image; I've chosen Soft Light. The texture is important because later you'll be picking colours off the canvas with the Eyedropper tool.

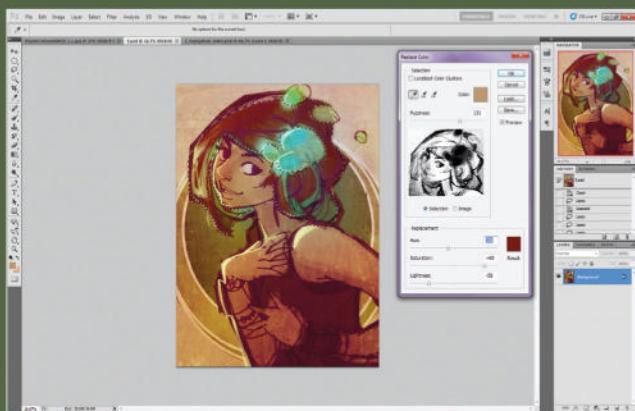
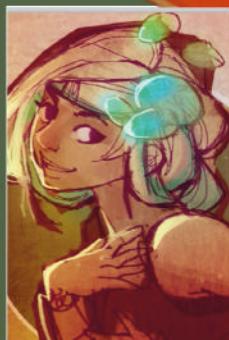


WORKSHOPS

4 Modify the palette

A huge advantage of working digitally is the array of colour-editing tools you can use to get a palette you feel good about. In Image > Adjustments, you can choose from Hue/Saturation, Color Balance, Selective Color and Replace Color to tweak all or part of your drawing. I like to use Color Balance to give an image more warmth by adding red and yellow. Selective Color also makes certain tones pop.

Remember the personality you want to convey, and try to work towards a pleasing colour combination that achieves this.



5 Change the hair colour

At this point, I feel the blonde hair isn't working. Using the Lasso tool with a feather of 20 pixels, I make a rough selection of the hair and use Replace Color to make the subject brunette. If you feel that you must change the shade of one part of the image drastically, it's ideal to do it early on in the drawing process: at this stage you haven't put in too much detail, giving you more room to experiment.

6 Merge the layers

I prefer to do everything on one layer. When I feel ready to start painting, I merge all the layers, and then I add layers only to make adjustments or add textures, merging these when alterations are complete. Now I'll begin painting over the line art, rather than under it.

7 Use the Eyedropper tool to select colours to paint with

When you start feeling good about where the image is going, begin painting in some detail. Before doing this, make sure you choose the right colours by using the Eyedropper to select the base shade from the canvas. Then manually select a lighter or darker version of it from the Color window. This keeps the colours unified and helps you choose hues that enhance your palette, rather than flat ones that don't match what you've already created.



SHORTCUTS

ACCESS THE EYEDROPPER TOOL

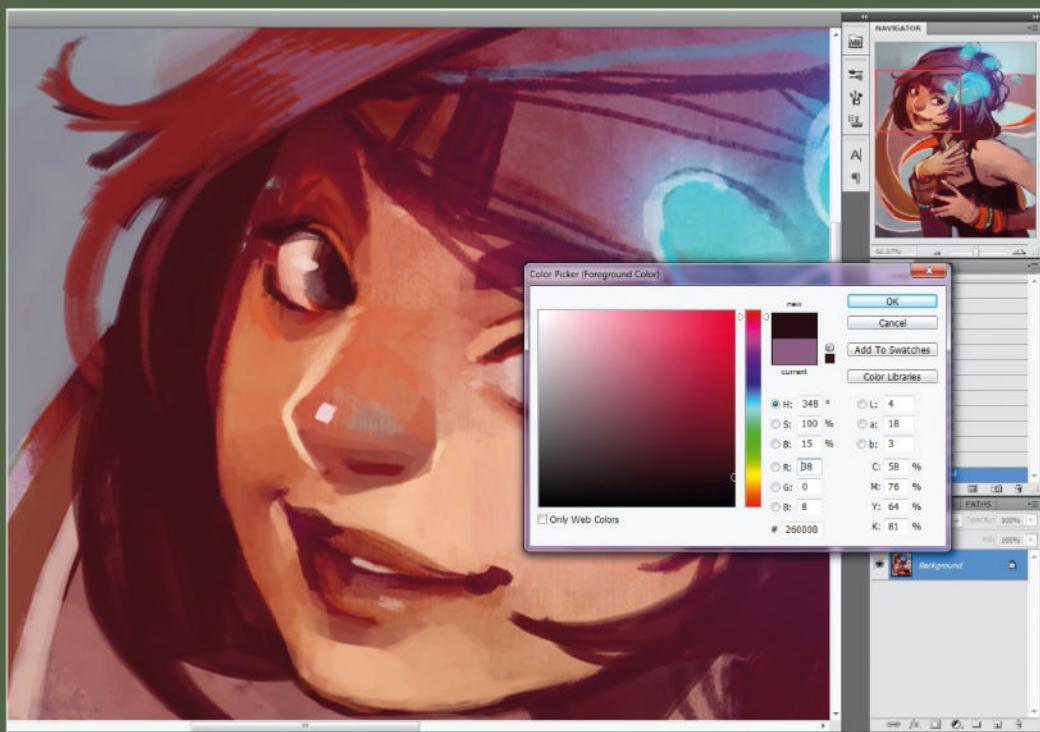
Alt+Click (PC & Mac)
This temporarily activates the Eyedropper tool, so you can quickly pick a colour.

8 Paint rough details

Start to add some detail with the same chunky brush you were using earlier. Change the size, opacity and flow based on what works for you. I like to use anything between 40 and 70 per cent opacity, and vary the flow based on the effect I want to achieve. At this stage, try to sculpt with your brush by adding volume and shape. Don't put in too many details, and avoid zooming in too far so you can focus on the big picture and have an overview of the image.

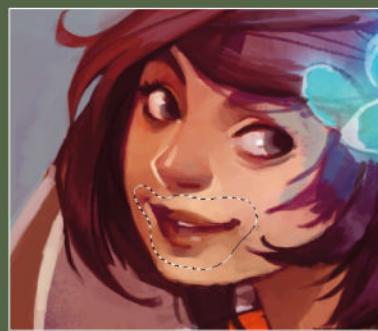
9 Change the palette

Getting the right palette is a gradual process. You may have to change it numerous times until you're happy with the colours you've picked. Intuition plays a crucial role: you have to feel good about the hues and get them to suit the aim you had from the outset – to create something fun, feminine and vibrant. Don't be afraid to use the colour-editing tools or lay down new shades during the process. In this case, after painting in some details, I switch to warmer, more earthy options.



10 Distribute colours

The colour combination isn't the only important thing; the way you distribute it also matters. One way to approach this is to have a calm base colour with bright accents. I changed the palette to consist of cool browns and purples, desaturated blues and accents of orange and electric blue. To accentuate the fashionable and girly personality of this character, assign the bright accents to the subject's accessories and use the darker hues for her hair and clothing.

**11 Use background elements**

What began as a few circular shapes can inspire new decorative elements in the background. I feel the circles are doing little for the composition and change them into flowing forms that lead the eye across the canvas. I also change the canvas size to give these elements more space. They add a playful and colourful aspect to the piece.

**SHORTCUTS**

ALTER YOUR VIEW
Ctrl+R (PC) Cmd+R (Mac)
This tool is relatively new to Photoshop. It enables you to tilt your canvas to different angles while you paint.

12 Tweak facial features

As I add more detail with the paintbrush, I may feel the need to make structural changes to the facial features. Here, I think the mouth is no longer properly aligned to the rest of her face. Change these things as soon as you notice them – it will be harder to do it later on. You can use Filter > Liquify, or just make a selection and transform it. Paint over any misaligned edges or other inconsistencies after you're done. Try not to use these methods excessively, because it will show.

13 Paint the hair

Something to keep in mind when adding more detail to the hair is to draw it in chunks rather than individual strands. This is how it acts in real life, and remembering that helps you create more mass, volume and expression. Try to work out how the different sections overlap, vary in length and move in different directions. You'll add more detail later, so focus on the basic form for now.

**ARTIST INSIGHT****USE A HIGH RESOLUTION**

Painting at a high resolution is crucial to being a professional digital artist. First of all, it increases the possibility for detail enormously. You can work roughly when zoomed in and still maintain a detailed and smooth look once you pan out. Also, having high-resolution versions of your artwork is absolutely essential when creating prints, so the bigger the better.

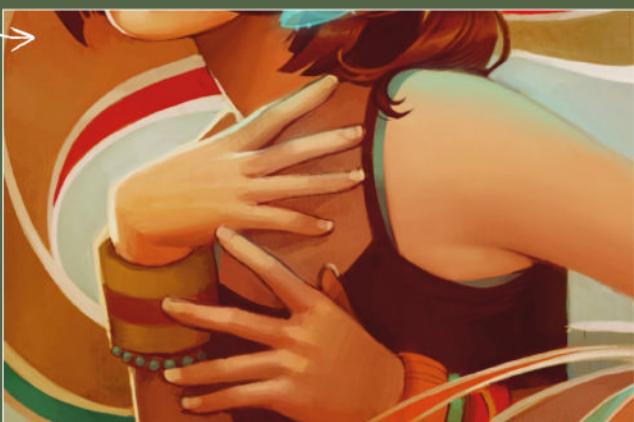
14 Get ready for painting

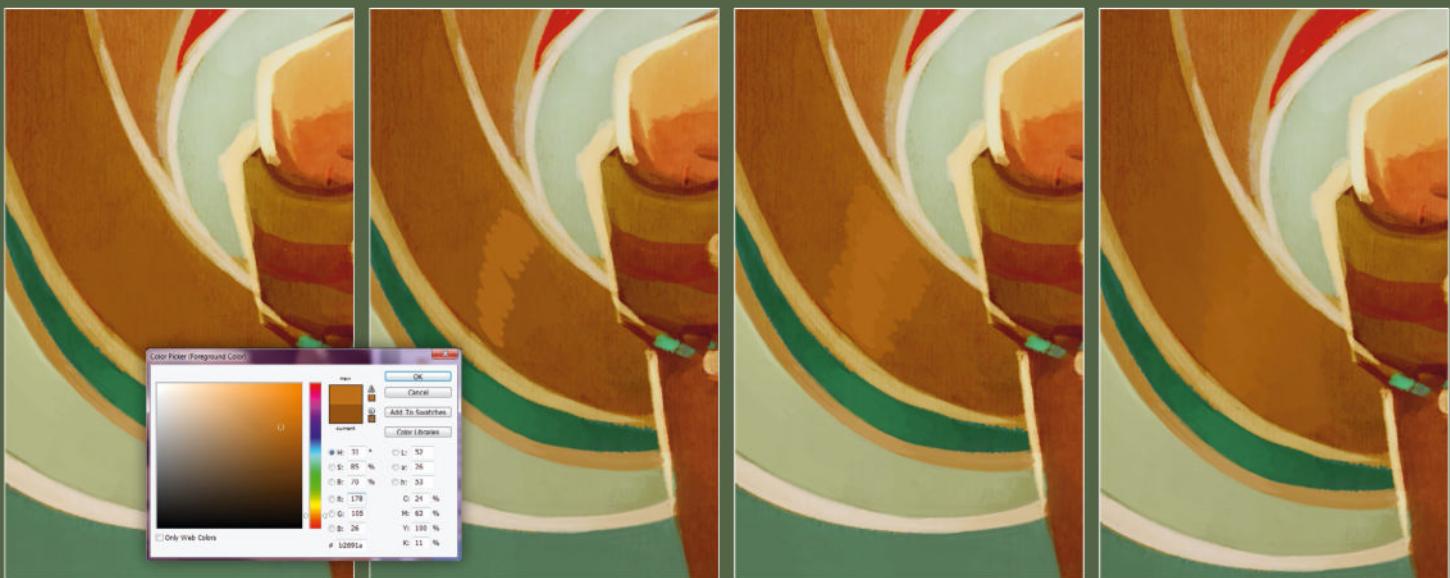
At a certain point, you should decide that the piece is ready for refined painting and details. The canvas and composition should be set, so if you feel you must make changes to these things, do so. In my case, I finally settle on a warm colour palette with lots of browns and desaturated greens, as well as bright orange, blue and red accents.

**15 Smooth the skin**

Until now, we've been using chunky and rough brush strokes. Although this effect is desirable and important for the final work, we can strategically smooth out certain aspects of the image, such as the girl's skin, to enhance her femininity and youth. Change to a smooth, large brush with a low flow (between 1 and 10 per cent), and use the Eyedropper tool to pick shades. Paint gradually over the textured brushwork with smoother colouring. I prefer not to use the Smudge tool because it rarely creates a painted effect.

>



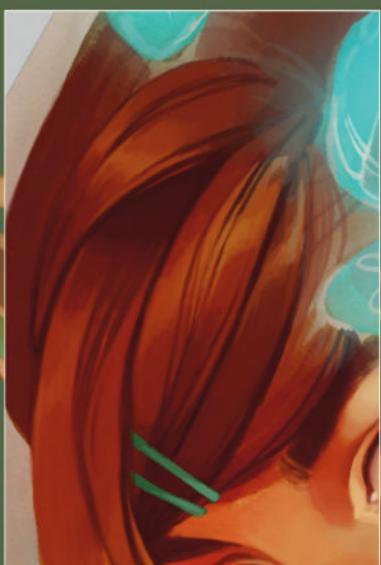


16 Add contrast and shine

Your colour palette is already set, so you can give the work more contrast and shine by painting in some highlights and dark areas. Adding some deep, dark lines to the pupils and eyelashes or the tips of the hair can make these shapes stand out. Putting highlights on the skin, jellyfish and decorative forms can also make them shine. Use the Eyedropper to pick the base colour, then manually choose a lighter or darker shade. As opposed to what you did in the rough painting phase, zoom in a lot and work in a detailed fashion.

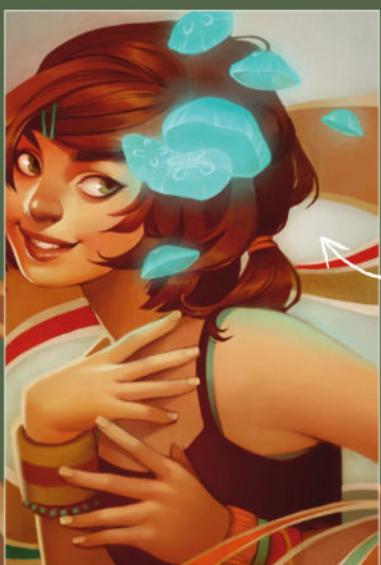
17 Work on fine details in the hair

Because the different chunks of hair have already been painted in, you can add some strands and shine to the hair, as well as smoothing out the chunks. It pays to have detailed and realistic hair in your final piece, so this part of the process deserves some extra time and effort. Zoom in and add a bright shine to each individual chunk. Draw some strands that pass over the different chunks for added detail. Turning the canvas using the Rotate View tool can help you draw the brush strokes in the same direction as the hair.



18 Add emphasis to the jellyfish

Throughout the painting process, I've been gradually adding more detail to the jellyfish. Because they're quite central to the composition, I'll now give them some special attention. After adding details, you can make them glow. Select the jellyfish using the Magic Wand or Lasso and, on a new layer, fill the selection with a bright blue colour. Blur the layer using Filter > Blur > Gaussian Blur. Then change the Layer mode to Hard Light, and adjust the opacity to brighten the colour and give the creatures a vivid glow.



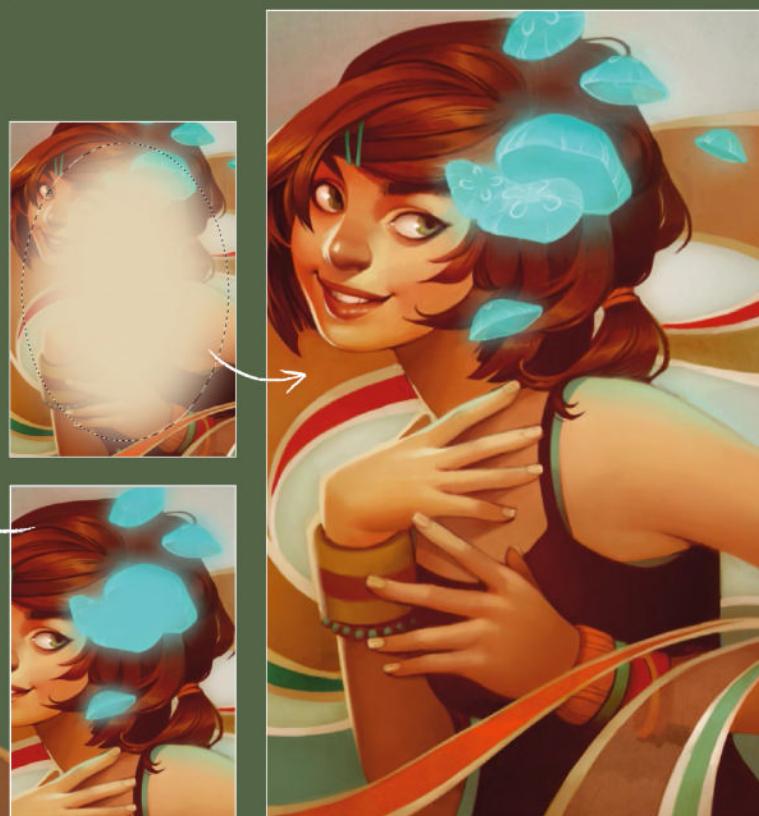
ARTIST INSIGHT

UNSHARP MASK

Your original artwork exists at a really high resolution, so you'll eventually have to create a small version for posting on the web. When shrinking the piece down to a more compact size, you might notice that some of the detail from the large work becomes less sharp and defined. Applying the Unsharp Mask filter can sharpen the image and bring back some of the detail. Keep the radius small to avoid an overly sharpened look.

19 Finishing touches

At some point, when enough details have been added and you feel good about the colours, you're done painting. However, some finishing touches can be applied to bring the piece together. On separate layers, you can add gradients or soft highlights to the picture. Adjust the Layer mode and opacity of each of these layers to make them blend in to the final picture. In this case, I've placed an oval shape with blurred edges on a separate layer and set it to Soft Light at 25 per cent opacity, creating a gentle highlight in the centre of the image. ■





iPad is a trademark of Apple Inc. registered in the U.S. and other countries. App Store is a service mark of Apple Inc.

Get a digital subscription to
ImagineFX and save money!



SHOW A DYNAMIC ACTION SCENE

ARMAN AKOPIAN was inspired to paint a sexy manga character, but then decided to add some realistic elements into the mix...

ARTIST PROFILE

ARMAN AKOPIAN

COUNTRY: Canada

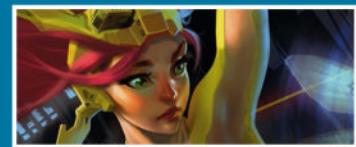


Arman was born in Armenia, and moved to Canada in his late teens. He's now working as a concept artist at the Square/Eidos studio in Montreal. <http://ifxm.ag/aakopian>

The Honey Thief didn't even start as a real project. The initial drive behind this image was a desire to sketch something anime-like.

I was watching Appleseed Ex Machina and the thought of painting a curvy, big-breasted cyber vixen with eyes the size of a platter seemed like the right thing to do. Not my usual choice of style, but Masamune Shiro was a big influence for me, so I thought this can be fun. And there are few things in this world that are as inspiring as a female body.

So with that mindset I grabbed the Wacom pen and started grinding. The main challenge for me was to make her as dynamic as possible. Initially, I thought of having her jump over an obstacle using her arm as a point of leverage. It's very important in an exercise like this to set up effective action lines for the body. But as I worked further and flipped the image around a few times looking for bugs to clean, her pose seemed to be more coherent to me in the context of running and dodging something at the same time. ■



Enhance manga style

I want the thief to have an anime-like face and features. Cue big eyes, bright hair and exaggerated body curves. However, I decide to deviate a little from the canonical flat colour rendering and add some semi-realistic details. Some colour temperature on the face and specular sweat highlights on the skin help to give her a livelier look.



GET YOUR RESOURCES SEE PAGE 146



CUSTOM BRUSHES

BLENDER

DECAL1

DECAL2

PAINT1

PAINT2

Having a proper set of brushes is key to my work. Here I need a simple fading Hard Round brush, some mechanical decal brushes and a colour blender brush that I use with the Smudge tool. It also may serve as a hair creator with the Simple Brush tool.

How I create...

A CYBERNETIC THIEF



1 Lines of action

Setting up a dynamic pose is the first thing that I need to nail. A great way of doing this is to use something animators refer to as the line of action. It's an imaginary line (or not in this case) that goes through the character, strengthening the dramatic effect of the pose and focusing the purpose of the motion in the viewer's mind's eye.



2 Shapes and hues

Using large strokes with a Hard Round brush, I lay in the girl's main shapes. This is where the relationship between light and dark areas is established. Now I start thinking about colour. The idea is to make her look fast, so a bright yellow with some purple stripes or markings seemed right. It makes her feel like a racing car of sorts.

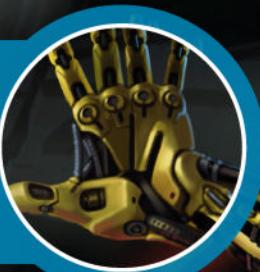


3 The polishing

Here is where I start polishing the details and tweaking out the bugs. Adding detailed decals on the mechanical parts, little scratches on the metal and a little skin texture on the face is part of the process. I also do some final colour tweaking. It's that last 20 per cent of the work that usually takes up 80 per cent of the whole time spent on the image.

Draw from real life

The design of the robotic parts has to be elegant, but it also has to be credible. Think of all the mechanics and electrical equipment that surrounds us. Painting in all the little instructions or warning signs, connection seams, and bolts and rivets adds to the credibility and breaks the uniformity of your shapes, making them interesting to look at.

**Storytelling elements**

I need something to justify her dodging a danger and that's where the idea of having bees chasing her comes to me. At that point it stops being only about the girl and becomes more about telling a story. I paint the first bee and then replicate more around the tunnel, as if they're after her because she's stolen their honey.

**Lighting**

For this image I use a three-point light setup. The main source is a warm light that hits the character slightly from behind, allowing the creation of self-shadows that add to the volume of the girl's shape. The other two are the cold blue light from the wall panels and the neutral fill light from the back of the tunnel. They both serve to outline the silhouette of the girl and the bees, helping the viewer read them better against the complex background detail.

**A little 3D help**

Using 3ds Max I create the initial hexagon shape and by extruding it in various manners, make the first section of the corridor. Later I use a modifier called 'greeble' to add extra random detail to the walls. The can of stolen honey is also done with 3ds Max. Finally I add the light panels on the wall, making them the light source for the rim light on the girl and the bees.

PAINT A MANGA ENVIRONMENT

Malaysian illustrator **FEIGIAP** shows you how to get inspiration from elements around you to paint a nostalgic manga scene

 GET YOUR
RESOURCES
SEE PAGE 146

 VIDEO
AVAILABLE





ARTIST PROFILE

FEIGIAP

COUNTRY: Malaysia



FeiGiap is co-founder and creative director of Running Snail Studio. He's best known for his detailed and fantasy illustration of Asian cityscapes.

<http://ifxm.ag/feiglap>

13

Before we start any kind of painting we always need an idea or inspiration. Wherever I go, I'm always thinking about whether I can turn the surrounding street or even the whole city into a fantasy scene – a city in the sky, a tower formed of different houses... something very cool.

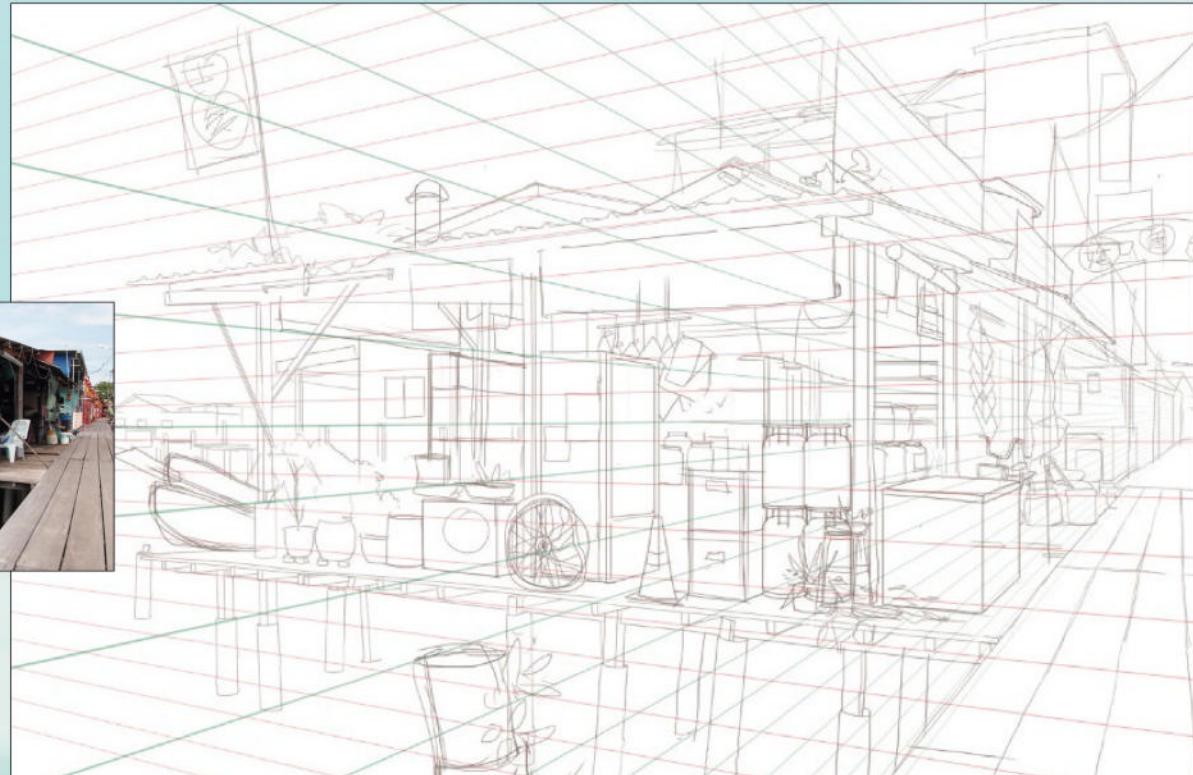
Here I've decided to paint a scene of a seaside stall, based on a photo I took a few years ago at Chew Jetty, Penang, Malaysia.

I like the composition and subject of the photo, but instead of simply copying it I want to add some imaginative elements. I want to create a scene that has a very nostalgic look and captures the freshness and calmness of the seaside jetty.

Normally before I start painting I'll gather some photo references that have similar subjects to what I'm painting. Although I already have a photo as my starting point, for this painting I'll need more photo references of a little shop and

a jetty and so forth, so that I can have more ideas for the objects and designs that I need to include to make the scene look interesting. I also have some art works for reference and I'll study the way they use colour, the way they paint different objects and so on.

In this workshop, I'll show you my painting steps, from sketch to colour rough and detailing, and explain some of the things you need to be careful about in painting a scene like this.



SHORTCUTS
BRUSH ADJUSTMENT
F5 (PC & Mac)
Tap the F5 key on
your keyboard to
open the Brush
adjustment panel.

1 The idea and sketch

I start all my art from an initial rough sketch. After that I refine the lines again in a new layer. At this early stage my final line art won't be fine or detailed, because I don't want to limit my options. As long as it's good enough to guide the structure and design, then this will do for now.



2 Light and colour planning

Once I've locked down the composition and design, I render a quick rough to plan the tones and colours. If you do more than one colour rough, you can compare to decide which works best. The idea of a rough is to quickly get the overall look, so never zoom in and paint details; instead, zoom out to view the entire image and establish the key colours. I never start with a white background, but fill in a dominant colour and paint other colours on top of this base until I'm satisfied with the colour palette.



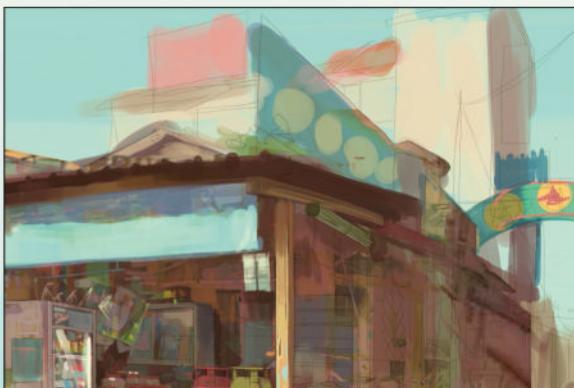
3 Darken shadow tones

The lighting here is direct sunlight, so shadow and light should be high contrast. So next, I darken the shadows in the focal area – the shop – to give the tone values more contrast. To do this I add a new layer and use Darken mode. I apply a darker tone in the interior and use the dark value to define the structure of objects and depth of the shop.



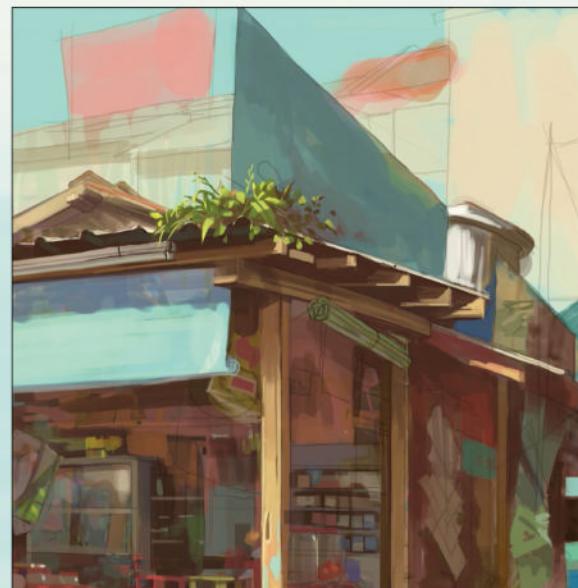
4 Painting detail

When painting an environment it's good practice to separate the image into primary (focal), secondary and background planes, so that the image has a better feeling of depth. I usually start detailing in the focal area, and here that's the shop. So after darkening the shadow on the shop I paint in object detail, enhancing the light surfaces and making some colour changes based on my photo references.



5 Refining edges and structure

The colour rough has used only general blocks of colour, so we now need to refine the edges of objects and define structures. To do this I lighten sunlit surfaces to enhance the light and make the wooden structure clearer. At the same time I use bright tones to separate the foreground buildings from the ones in the background.



 **RESOURCES**
CUSTOM BRUSHES
PAINT BRUSH

Most of the time I use this brush to paint. It's in between a round and a square shape, with a slightly soft stroke.

SQUARE BRUSH

A square-shaped brush with a little texture, like a marker. I use this with big strokes for squarish structures and objects.

LEAF BRUSH

I use this brush to paint bushes and plants, and to create initial plant silhouettes as well.

LEAF BRUSH 2

I use this brush to paint light areas on leaves and to help create a sense of depth in the plants.

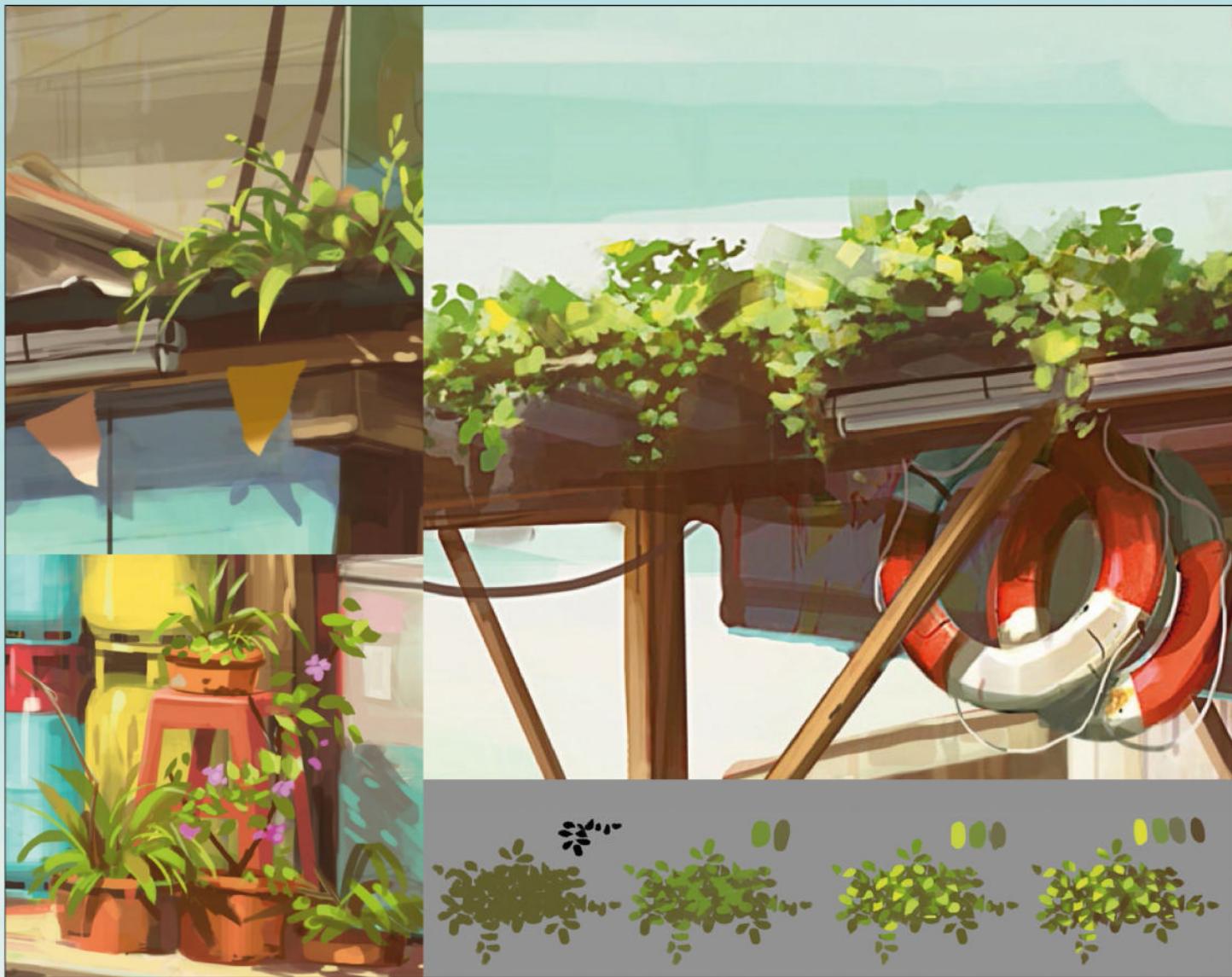


6 Painting the water surface

Reflections are the key to realistic water effects, and here certainly won't be mirror-like: shapes and angles will be distorted. Objects closest to the surface appear clearer and the tone of reflections has less contrast. Tones are darkest in the shadows. The surfaces that reflect the sky contain more sky colour and their overall tone will be much brighter.

7 Casting shadows

Light and shadow play an important role in bringing out a sense of space and depth. I always like to cast shadows on objects, to give them stronger contrast and bring out their form. Particularly where different objects overlap in the image, adding a shadow (based, of course, on the light source in the image) helps to separate them. >



8 Painting plants and leaves

A custom leaf pattern brush is very useful, but for natural-looking plants, light and colour is critical. I always start plants with a silhouette shape, which needs to look random and natural. Next add a light mid-tone based on the light source and plant form. Finally, I apply highlights – here I use a warmer yellowish green to brighten the lighting. Adjust the tones if you need more focus and contrast.

ARTIST INSIGHT

SAVE YOUR STEPS

Normally I save up to 10 PSD files in the course of one painting. These backups mean that even if one of my latest files corrupts I won't lose everything. Also, if I need to re-use a layer I had flattened, I can go back to the previous PSD to get it back. You can also see the whole process of the painting, if you need to retrace any steps.



9 Experimentation and decisions

Sometimes when painting you need to make different decisions, and I'll do some fast experiments so I can compare ideas and decide which one I should go for. Here, while painting the sky, I try some different-shaped clouds and only after I've compared them can I choose the most natural or suitable one.



10 Touching-up details

I spend some time touching up the overall detailing. But I don't apply detail to all areas. For areas in shadow, areas far away from the camera or areas out of the focal area, I make things slightly more simple with less colour changes. If the focal area doesn't really stand out, I'll add detail and colour to help it do so.



11 Paint figures

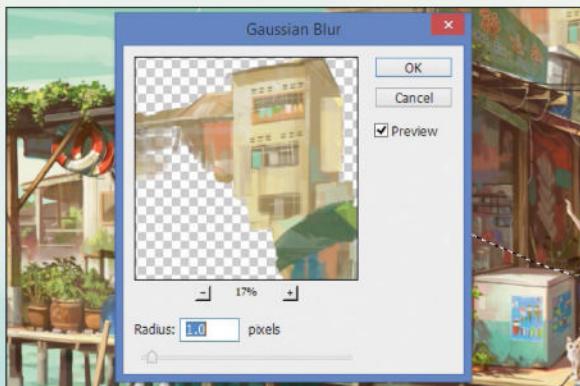
At this point I feel that my painting needs some characters and animals added to it, to make the scene look more lively and life-like. This time, I use stock manga characters generated from Clip Studio Paint. I just get the pose and angle I want, export the image, then import it into Photoshop and paint over it.



ARTIST INSIGHT

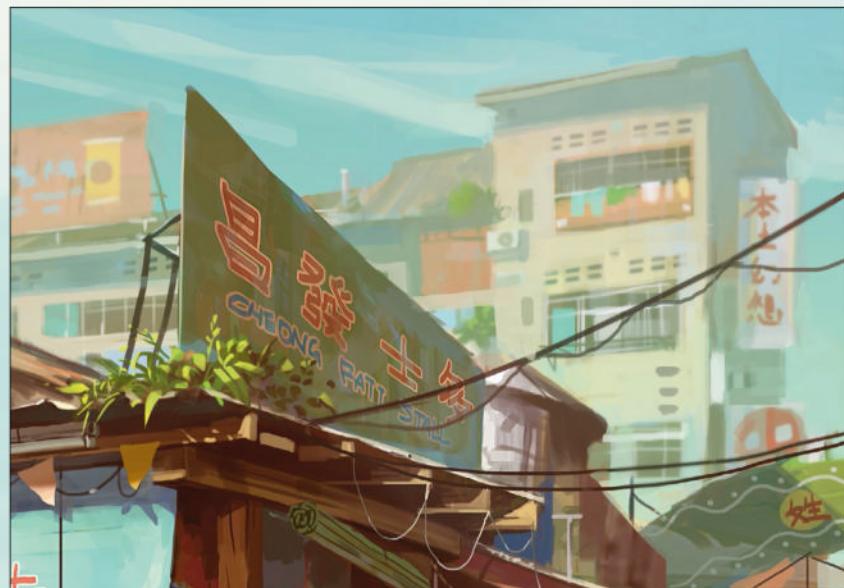
IMPROVE YOUR ART WORKS

After finishing a painting, I put some master works with a similar subject side by side with mine. Then I compare the two and check if there's any area I can improve. This is also a good way to identify your weaknesses and improve them.



12 Painting distant objects

Now I concentrate on the background and the objects in it. Painting distant objects isn't always easy, even though they need to be relatively simple, with less detail and less contrast. Sometimes I'll add a slight Gaussian blur (Filter > Blur > Gaussian Blur) to create an impression of depth of field.



13 Adding more objects

At this late stage I'll check the overall composition again. I add in some more branches and bushes at the bottom left, to balance the compositional weight of the image. I touch things up a bit here and there, and add more cables, as well as highlights on the surface of the water.



14 Colour adjustments and tweaks

Once everything is done and I am happy with the results, I do some final colour adjustments. I'll check how the colours look on different displays, such as an iMac and a PC, then make my adjustments. I tend to use Color Balance for this because you can choose the tonal range you want (shadows, midtones or highlights) and make vibrant colours really pop.

SHORTCUTS

ADJUST COLOUR WITH COLOR BALANCE

Ctrl+B (PC)
Cmd+B (Mac)
Target colour tweaks in shadows, midtones or highlights.

PHOTOSHOP

HOW TO RENDER CHARACTERS

Discover how you can make your 2D character designs look like 3D models.

PRAMIN PHATIPHONG is your guide

ARTIST PROFILE

PRAMIN PHATIPHONG

COUNTRY: US



Pramin is a Los Angeles based art director and concept artist working in animation, advertising, print and mobile. He's an all-round ethical chap with good table manners.

<http://ifxm.ag/praminp>

GET YOUR
RESOURCES
SEE PAGE 146

SHORTCUTS

RESIZING THE BRUSH

Cmd+Alt (Mac)
Ctrl+Alt (PC)

Hold these keys down
while dragging your
stylus left or right.

Fixing colours, size, character poses, format and rendering styles will be some or all of the things you'll be asked to do during the visual development process. This can be time-consuming and creatively draining, even for the best of us. So in this workshop, I'll introduce an approach to rendering that I've used over the years to help me through many demanding production requirements. Essentially, my process covers the

rendering of a 3D look in 2D. This is a time-saving method that helps the development team to clarify and define concepts before the character or asset is submitted to modelling, which is a lengthier and more costly process, and more difficult to correct at a later date.

The approach adopts a relatively non-destructive method of rendering, which makes use of many layers along with the Pen tool. It requires some time to set up properly and this might seem counter-

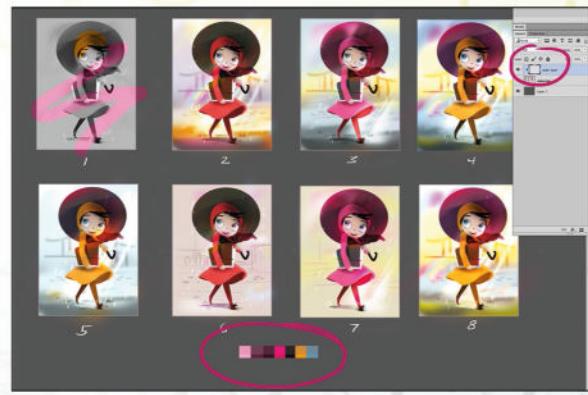
intuitive, but spending the extra time in establishing your graphics up-front will give you the flexibility to deal with most production demands that raise their heads during the latter part of the process.

Staying organised, naming layers and creating context folders will give you back more time for higher levels of creative thinking and execution. Finally, knowing the basics of 3D lighting or just plain cinematic lighting will always come in handy, whatever the assignment.



1 Conceptualising the composition

The brief calls for a young, hip urban girl with artistic dreams, so I draft up black-and-white thumbnails to work out composition ideas as well as story and mood. I create between six and 10 thumbnails, using no more than three to five basic value planes with a simple Hard brush, and a Soft brush to create various lighting schemes.



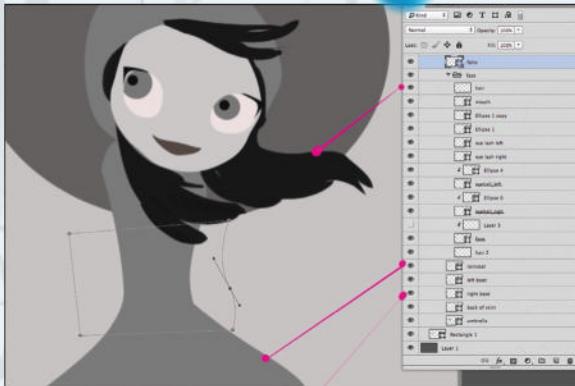
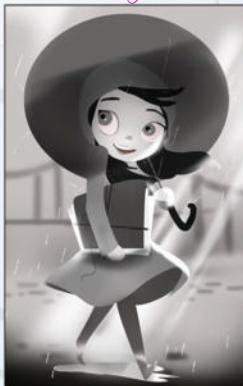
2 Colour test

I take a single thumbnail and make eight copies on a single layer. To colour it, I create a separate layer in Overlay mode. I use as many modes (Color, Multiply and Screen) as necessary to achieve the right effect. It's always better to paint in the effects, but having a command of layer modes will help you stay flexible for production demands.



WORKSHOPS

Thumbnail image



ARTIST INSIGHT

GET TO GRIPS WITH THE PEN

This Photoshop tool might be one that most concept artists avoid, because the drawing feedback doesn't feel as spontaneous and it's also fairly cumbersome to use. But with a day's dedicated practice, a working knowledge of the Pen tool can add greater precision and the speed you need to your creative arsenal.

RESOURCES

CUSTOM BRUSHES

SOFT ROUND

This brush is great for painting planes that require gradients, and for blending edges or colour transitions.

MED ROUND

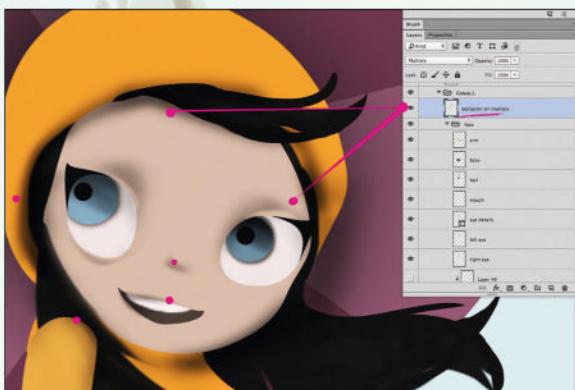
Ideal for laying down colours and broad strokes. It's usually the first brush I use for the bulk of illustrations.

HARD ROUND

This brush gets the least amount of use, but it's extremely helpful when I need to create a vector-like stroke quickly.

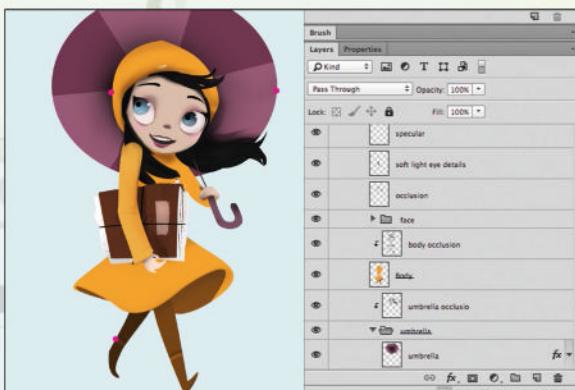
3 Blocking out shapes

Once I'm satisfied with the colour scheme, I take the small black-and-white thumbnail and enlarge it with the Transform command to the desired size. Just as if using tracing paper, I use the Pen tool to create shapes for each character part – face, eyeball, hair, legs, mouth and so on – over the enlarged thumbnail. As I do this, I make sure the values match the original.



5 Ambient occlusion

This is a 3D term. Put simply, it's the innermost area of the painted object where it's darkened by shadow. I use Clipping layer in Multiply mode to start painting in shadows (not cast shadows) in areas where there's a recess, such as the fold of the eye, the mouth or clothing. I use black and set the layer's Opacity to between 60 and 70 per cent.



7 The big picture

At this point, I back up and assess the overall picture. Then I apply Soft Light or Overlay layer effects to the entire body to balance the composition, making sure the colour accents serve the focal point. I darken the back leg, bring up the occlusion behind the head to create more depth and add some graphic and textural elements to the umbrella.

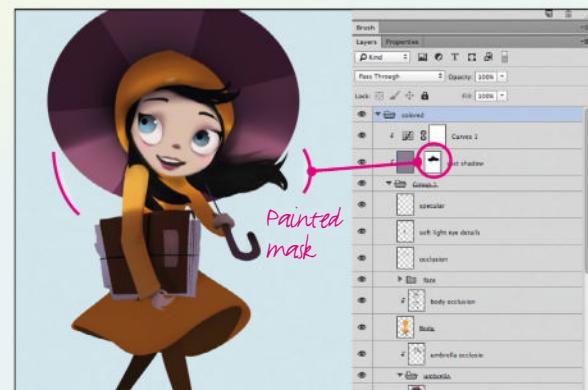
4 Colour fill

Next, I colour each part by sampling the colour test thumbnail. Double-clicking the shape layer brings up a Color Picker window, and I use the Eyedropper tool to find the target colour. I pick a half-tone from each plane. Whether creating shapes or colour, I prefer to use a non-destructive method when possible. This gives me options during my painting phase.



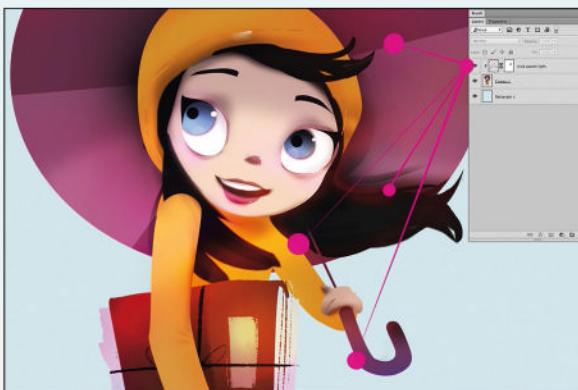
6 On to the face

After applying ambient occlusion, I create a Soft Light layer and apply several colour accents to bring out the iris, cheeks and lips. Soft Light is one way to make the image pop with subtlety but enough to create a strong focal interest. Of course, applying specular shine to eyes at either the 10 or 2 o'clock position of the iris is a safe bet.



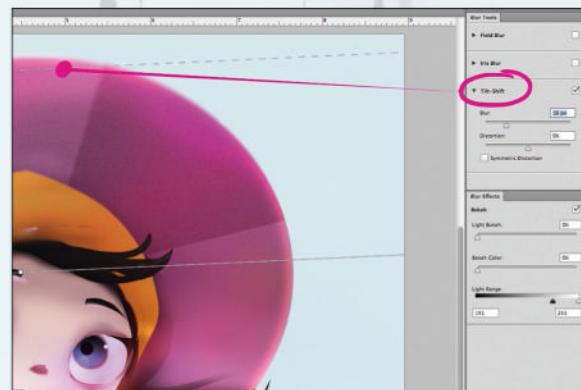
8 Adding a cast shadow

Now that all the pieces are prepped, I introduce a dramatic cast shadow on a Clipping layer. Using a purple colour fill, I set the layer to Multiply. I then create a mask to erase the part that represents light dawning on the face. A Soft Round brush gives me flexibility in handling the cast shadow edges, because they vary in softness.



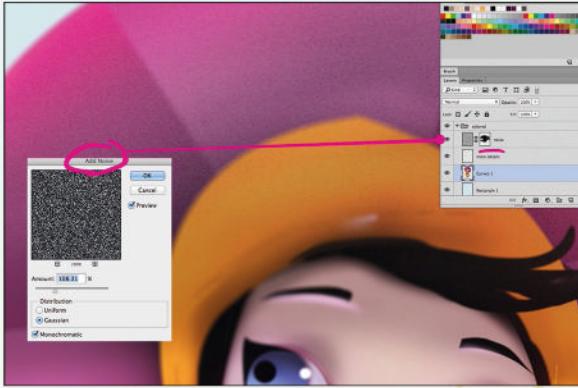
9 Lighting accents

After some degree of adjustment, I merge all the layers and save the result as another file to declutter my workspace. I create another Clipping layer and set it to Vivid Light mode, sampling the base colour to paint lights in. Vivid Light mode works rather well for a high-key composition such as this one.



10 Adding blur

Next, I add a tilt-shift effect, using a blur to mimic the look of shallow photographic focal length and add intimacy to the character. In essence, the blurred edges force the viewer to look at the in-focus area. The degree, position and size of blurring is a matter of preference. Whether hand-painted or created by effects, blurring helps to add a little mystery to the piece.



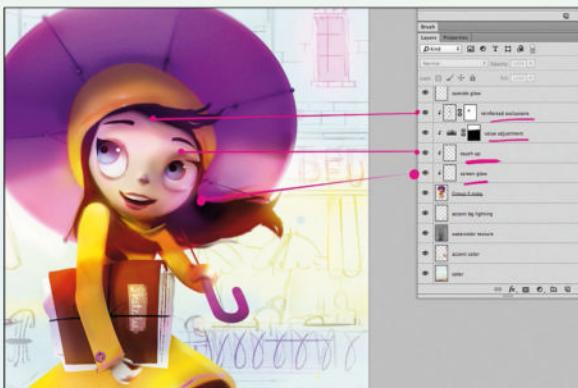
11 Apply some noise

Next I use the Add Noise filter to mimic film grain, as well as distress the image further. This is done by applying a colour fill on another layer, usually black. I use Add Noise on this black-filled layer and set it to Overlay. I adjust the Opacity to create a subtle effect, and mask off unwanted areas with a Soft brush until the desired effect is achieved.



12 Background elements

The brief requires the background to be simple, sketchy and sparse, so that text can be added when the image goes on the cover. On a separate layer set to Multiply, I apply a light-blue fill, then scrawl a few architectural details that suggest a Parisian setting. I also paint some lighting overlays to the background to further frame the character.



13 Adjust values

All the heavy lifting has been achieved by playing with shadow and colour. I use Adjustment layers to tweak the levels and saturation for optimal readability, and create details to fill in the compositional gaps, such as reinforced occlusions, paint splashes and colour droplets. I warm the image by adding a watercolour texture to the background.



14 Conclusion

A lot of the initial work was done to anticipate iterations of the image. Creating all the assets using a non-destructive process means it's straightforward to readjust lighting, saturation, even pose or expression. This technique adds speed and control to my workflow. You can, of course, use Illustrator instead, but that's another workshop... ■

SHORTCUTS

LAYER SELECTING FROM THE CANVAS

Cmd-click (Mac)
Ctrl-click (PC)

Helpful when navigating to paint on different layers.

ARTIST INSIGHT

PURGE THE CLICHÉS

Be bold and crank out as many thumbnails as the schedule allows. Don't pause to criticise. No one has to see your less-favourable creations. This is an exercise to purge any clichés that are inside you. Your creative muscle has a warm-up point and needs to be stretched to improve, if you're to see decent results.

PHOTOBASH YOUR MANGA ARTWORK

VALENTINA REMENAR shares her process for designing a sci-fi warrior by combining different painting styles

ARTIST PROFILE

VALENTINA REMENAR

COUNTRY: Slovenia



Valentina is a freelance illustrator for games, cards, posters and books. She paints beside her twin sister Marina. <http://ifxm.ag/val-rem>

This painting was created as a poster for a Japanese event held in Slovenia, but even though it was a commissioned piece I got the freedom to paint anything I wanted. Because there was a Japanese theme, I decided to paint a manga character and also include some elements that represented Japanese culture, such as a katana sword. I also wanted to create a sci-fi environment and combine several different art methods, such as photobashing and 3D modelling.

When I start planning a concept I usually try to include elements that will help viewers to recognise what the painting will be used for, and place these at the focal point, which in this piece is the character and his katana.

I also decided to paint the character in a semi-realistic manga style, in order to give the piece a sense of solidity and make it look more believable. This will nicely balance the fact that the overall idea is straight out of my imagination: a sci-fi warrior combined with traditional Japanese elements. ■

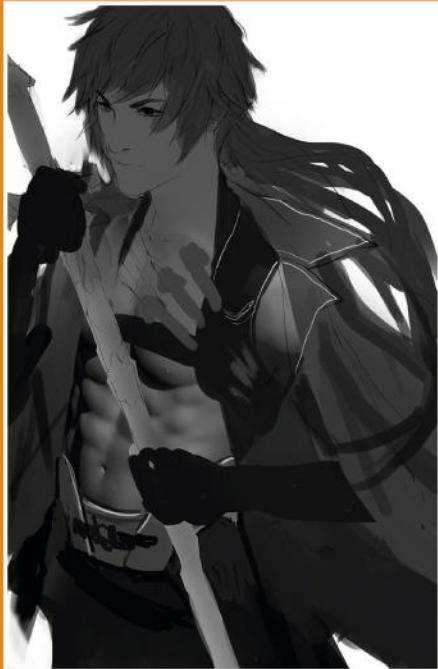
Picking colours for highlighting

I set my light source at the top right of the image and add brighter, more vivid colours on the character's shoulders, arm and headpiece, so that the character catches the viewer's eye. For shadows I used less vivid colours and colder tones. This tone difference is also visible on the character's face, where I use a soft pink line between lighter areas and shadow sections to achieve a nice contrast between the colder shadows and warmer highlights.



How I create...

A SCI-FI WARRIOR ON THE BATTLEFIELD



1 Making a rough sketch

I usually begin in black-and-white. I create a rough composition and sketch for the character, using large black surfaces so I can quickly define the pose, the outfit and the composition. I also use 3D elements on the character's torso. I model and render this in ZBrush, then place it on the sketch.



2 Start photobashing

Now I combine my manga painting style with photobashing. I use cropped photos of various motor parts and place them around the character so it looks like he has a mechanical suit and arm. I start detailing the character and add colours using Overlay and Soft Light layer modes.



3 Setting the background

Now that my character is looking more finished, I decide that I need to change the composition slightly. I move the figure to the centre, which will enable the viewer to see more of the environment. I want it to look like he's standing in an abandoned ruined building, so I place various elements around him randomly.



GET YOUR
RESOURCES
SEE PAGE 146



Creating depth

I make a point of placing different elements in the fore-, mid- and background. To create a sense of depth I place elements (the caution tape and cable) in the foreground, then blur them and make them darker so they don't distract the viewer's eye from the character in the mid-ground. For the background I use less-saturated colours and lighter tones, so the character will be more contrasted and stand out more.



Painting the portrait

For the character's face, clothes and hair I use a default Hard Round Pressure Opacity brush and change its Hardness, using 0-40 per cent for softer blending and higher values for detailing. I use a vivid pink line to split the highlights and shadows, then paint the highlights with warm tones and the shadows with colder, pink-purple tones.



Give the armour a 3D look

For some of the painting's details I use the Bevel & Emboss option, such as for the damaged parts of the armour on his shoulder and some metal details. I paint damaged parts or metallic parts with flat colour first, then apply the Bevel & Emboss effect for a more realistic 3D look.



RESOURCES

CUSTOM BRUSHES

ROUGH ROUND BRISTLE



I use this brush for drawing war-paint on the skin and rough detailing.

SNOWSTORM

This brush enables me to quickly draw snowflakes in the scene.

SUBSCRIBE

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

Subscribe to our print edition, digital edition or get the best value with our complete print and digital bundle!

Print edition



Save up to
38%

Every issue delivered direct to your door with an exclusive text-free cover!

FROM ONLY £26.99

Save up to 38 per cent!

Pricing based on a six-month subscription.

Digital edition



Save up to
45%

Get instant digital access and read ImagineFX on your tablet or phone via iOS or Android.

FROM ONLY £19.99

Save up to 45 per cent!

Pricing based on a six-month subscription.

Print & digital bundle

- Save up to 60 per cent!
- Every new issue in print and on your tablet or phone.
- Never miss an issue, with delivery direct to your door and your device.
- Huge savings, the best value for money and a money-back guarantee.
- Instant digital access when you subscribe to ImagineFX today!

**FROM ONLY
£32.49**

Your subscription will then continue at £32.49 every six months. That's a saving of 31 per cent on the shop price, and an 83 per cent discount on a digital subscription.



Two easy ways to subscribe today...

VISIT WWW.MYFAVOURITEMAGAZINES.CO.UK/IFXSUBS

**OR TELEPHONE 0844 848 2852 (UK)
+44 (0) 1604 251 045 (INTERNATIONAL)**

(PLEASE QUOTE PRINT15, DIGITAL15 OR BUNDLE15)

Terms & conditions Prices and savings quoted are compared to buying full-priced UK print and digital issues. You'll receive 13 issues in a year. If you're dissatisfied in any way you can write to us or call us to cancel your subscription at any time and we will refund you for all unmailed issues. Prices correct at point of print and subject to change. For full terms and conditions please visit <http://myfamv.ag/magterms>. Offer ends 15 August 2015.

ARTIST INSIGHT

GET UNDER THE SKIN OF MANGA

SAEJIN OH has some invaluable advice that will help you draw bona fide manga characters

ARTIST PROFILE

SAEJIN OH
COUNTRY: Canada

A freelance illustrator who works for Udon, Saejin loves creating concept art, character designs and YouTube vids about doing so.
<http://ifxm.ag/saejinoh>

13 big eyes, small mouth and fancy hair – this unique style originating from Japan boasts immense popularity among its most loyal fans. People love manga for its fantastic imagination, lovable characters and the quality that can only be defined by the Japanese word "moe". Manga has captivated audiences around the world.

There's just something about manga. It could be the big puppy-dog eyes or the puffy red cheeks, but it's a visual style that makes an instant connection with its viewers. You don't need to know who the character is or where they're from to know you like them. Such emotional connection is difficult to achieve with other styles.

The effect that manga has on people is easy to experience. It's almost impossible to go to a convention without seeing someone cosplaying as Yoko or Cloud, while the artists at their tables hand out posters of their own big-eyed characters. The style is undeniably popular, but how can you draw it effectively?

GET YOUR
RESOURCES
SEE PAGE 146



1 THE EYES HAVE IT

Large, shiny eyes are the defining characteristic of a manga character. They go beyond the anatomical capacity of a human skull. The eyeball, if it were real, would be non-spherical and would crush the brain. Yet reality has no place in manga. It's an aesthetic style – an exercise in simplification of the human physique to accentuate what's considered beautiful. Manga characters aren't meant to be real. They're symbols, like an emoticon or smiley. But what does it mean to draw one?

2 NOT ALL EYES ARE MADE THE SAME

Few people realise that there are two distinctive styles of manga eye, and the results they achieve are staggeringly different. One is called continuous style, the other non-continuous style. The first style attempts to exaggerate the eye while obeying the rules of human anatomy; in contrast, non-continuous style completely disregards reality. Non-continuous style eyes are easily recognisable because the character's upper and lower eyelids are detached from one another. The line that runs around the outside of the eye is therefore disconnected. Both styles have advantages and disadvantages, and recognising these will enable you to draw more effective manga-style characters.

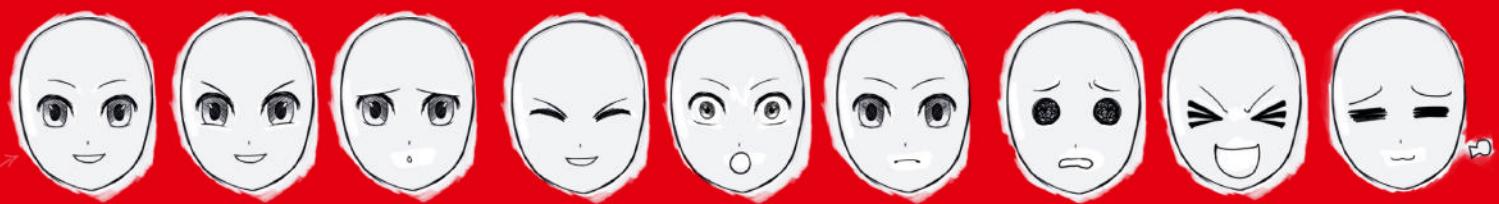
CONTINUOUS

NON-CONTINUOUS



3 PROS AND CONS OF THE STYLES

Continuous style looks relatively realistic, but is still aesthetically pleasing. However, you need to know the structure of the eye before you can draw this way. And because you're using relatively realistic proportions, you can't make the eyes too large. Size isn't an issue for non-continuous style because such eyes don't have a fixed dimension. However, non-continuous style is limited to larger eyes and simple facial rendering – it doesn't fare too well with complex painting and shading.



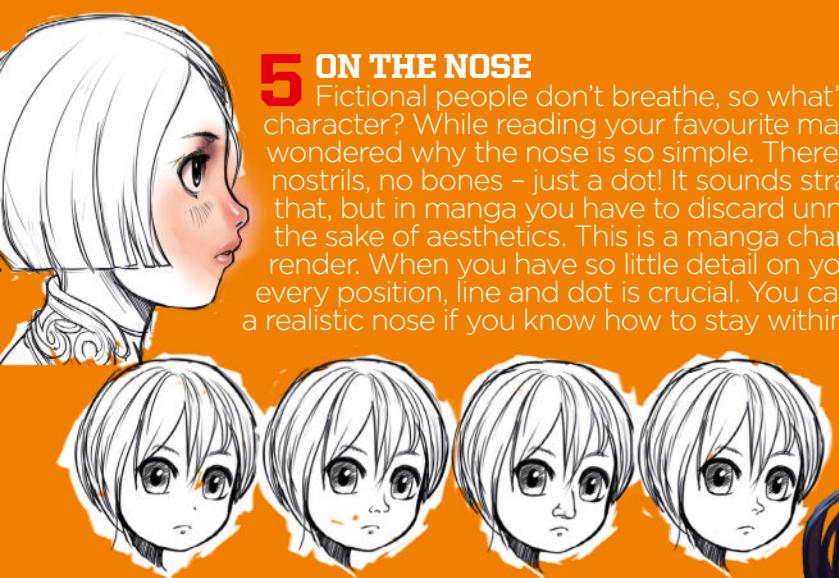
4 FACIAL EXPRESSIONS

Manga characters have simplified facial features, but even subtle changes in eyebrow height, eye size and mouth shape will affect the entire mood of a piece. As we've noted, manga eyes often don't have much anatomical detail,

so artists use shape and size to show expressions. You can change the shape only so much without a muscular structure to support it. These expressions are so widely used, it's hard to define manga without them.

5 ON THE NOSE

Fictional people don't breathe, so what's a nose to a manga character? While reading your favourite manga, you've probably wondered why the nose is so simple. There's no nasal bridge, no nostrils, no bones – just a dot! It sounds strange if you put it like that, but in manga you have to discard unnecessary details for the sake of aesthetics. This is a manga character, not a ZBrush render. When you have so little detail on your character, every position, line and dot is crucial. You can, however, add a realistic nose if you know how to stay within the style.



6 CONTINUOUS VS NON-CONTINUOUS

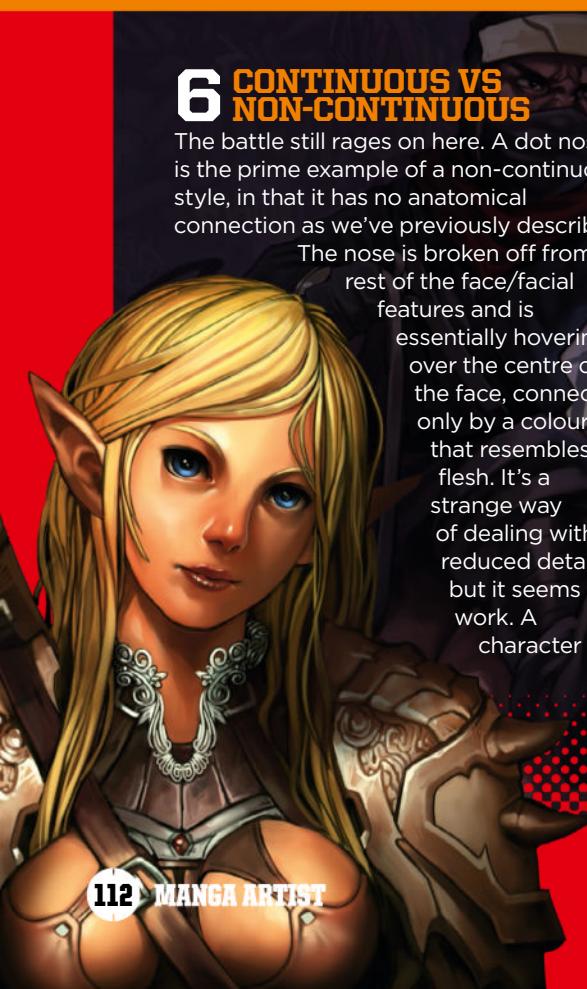
The battle still rages on here. A dot nose is the prime example of a non-continuous style, in that it has no anatomical connection as we've previously described.

The nose is broken off from the rest of the face/facial features and is essentially hovering over the centre of the face, connected only by a colour that resembles flesh. It's a strange way of dealing with reduced details, but it seems to work. A character

looks great with a dot nose and it's difficult to argue with that.

The continuous style, however, adopts a more subtle approach of discarding only the worst-offending details. This style attempts to use nasal bridges and other elements as much as possible without becoming overly complicated. This style also works brilliantly, but again it requires a better understanding of anatomy.

It's important to avoid mixing elements, such as continuous style eyes with a non-continuous style nose, and vice versa. You can try it, but you must remind yourself that you're mixing flat 2D style with a full 3D style. They may work in the end, but you might find that you've sacrificed one of the styles without even noticing it.



7 LIP SERVICE

When it comes to lips, all that's required to draw an older character is a single line by the mouth. Depending on how they're drawn, lips can turn an innocent character into a mature onnee-san.

Realistic lips are the bane of manga characters' existence. They're simply not made for each other. Manga deals with the problem by treating the whole mouth area as a flat surface. Interestingly, both art styles treat the area in a rather simplistic manner and even a small detail will stick out like a sore thumb. The lips are usually eliminated to harmonise the facial features, but if the character has more dynamic face contours, then bulging lips won't be a problem.

**8 MAKING MOUTHS**

Manga has little to say about the mouth, although it's one of the core details of a manga style face, along with the eyes and nose. A manga mouth is usually nothing more than a single line without any indication of lips, tongue or teeth. It works brilliantly, of course, thanks to the simplified style that goes along with it.

**9 I AM WOMAN**

The manga style is used almost exclusively for androgynous male characters, female characters and children. A man drawn in manga style is just a man. There may be a degree of androgyny in the male character, but you wouldn't notice if someone ported Kratos over to Bleach and gave him some cell-shaded colours. At its heart, manga is an art style for female characters or any character that resembles a female. The males are left with relatively realistic style that's indistinguishable from reality, apart from cell-shaded colours.

“Even subtle changes in eyebrow height, eye size and mouth shape will affect the entire mood of the piece”

10 MODEL SOLUTION

The manga style is easy to break – you must know precisely where your character's eyes, nose and mouth are. However, maintaining consistency becomes difficult as you progress with your characters. No doubt you'll soon need to present a range of emotions as you depict them reacting to a certain situation.

There is a straightforward solution, however. You can have a replacement model – a different version of the same character for expressing extreme facial expressions. This frees you from the responsibilities of keeping your character consistent, and also allows for a greater range and depth of behaviours.

There are often different versions of manga characters for certain situations. A serious character, for example, may have a non-continuous style version for comedic scenes. That way, the character can express different emotions while staying within the established style.

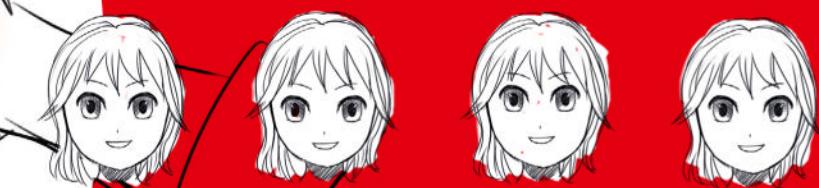




11 LET'S FACE FACTS

Manga characters are fragile and tend to change with the slightest modification. Here, you can see just how drastically a slight change can influence the way a character is perceived.

One of the most important factors determining personality in manga is the relative location of the eyes, nose and mouth on the face. The effect is subtle, but the changes are significant. Unlike western styles, where the characters' features are constantly changed by stretch-and-squash methods, manga has very little tolerance for dynamics. This factor is also key in keeping your characters consistent.



When you have so little detail on your character, every position, line and dot becomes crucial

12 LISTEN UP

The neck is important because it connects two different worlds: the face, which is in the realm of manga, and the body, which falls into the realm of reality. It's up to the neck to create harmony between two ways of thinking. As such, it must never be too simple or too real, too thick or too



thin. It needs to strike a balance.

You have more freedom with the character's ears. These can often be neglected in favour of more important details, but you can also draw them realistically without affecting your manga character in a significant way, provided you paint or shade them in the same way as the rest of the piece.

13 A FATAL FLAW

Manga is a style of specific viewpoints. Front, side, three-quarter and the intermediate angles all work, but there are a few perspectives that the style can't handle on its own. The prime example here is the bottom-up view, where the face disappears and jaw bone determines the facial contours. Manga was never designed with jaw bones or jaw lines in mind and has no answer for this shortcoming, so the artist is forced to bring the character back into the realm of reality. There is, however, a western approach that treats the entire head as a solid shape. This works better for non-continuous style manga.

RESOURCES

CUSTOM BRUSHES

PENCILLERLARGE

This brush mimics the flow of a 4B pencil, so it's perfect for manga line art. My full set of brushes is included for you.

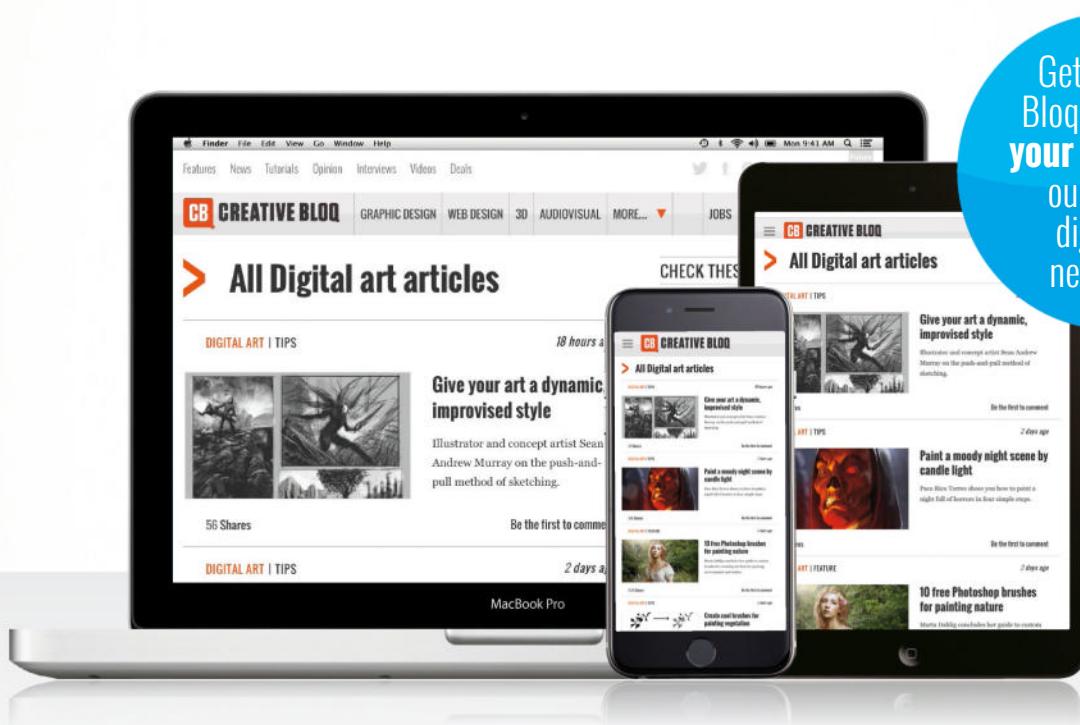
THE END RESULT

So this little excursion into the world of manga comes to an end. We've learned so much here – not only how to draw spheres here and there to recreate something that resembles a manga character, but why those manga characters are the way they are fundamentally.

Manga style is very simple to draw. There are thousands of aspiring manga artists who start their drawings with big eyes and a small nose – but as we've learned in this workshop, there's more to it than that. The style is easy to pick up, but hard to master.

You need to be able to draw something in detail before you can condense it. Manga may be tempting as a quick way into the world of art, but you'll still need to understand human anatomy before you can simplify it. How else will you know if you're doing it right? ■

The number one destination for **digital art** news, views and how-tos.



Graphic design

Web design

3D

Digital art

www.creativebloq.com

DESIGN A MANGA CHARACTER

Thinking of working up your own character concept into an illustration?

LOW ZI RONG shares his step-by-step process for doing just that...

ARTIST PROFILE

LOW ZI RONG

COUNTRY: Singapore



Low is a character designer at Collateral Damage Studios. He came up with the look of Inori Aizawa for Internet Explorer, who has over 120,000 fans on Facebook. www.collateralds.com

Coming from a hobbyist background, I started out by drawing fan art of my favourite cartoon and game characters, just for fun. Like other artists who I spoke to, I thought it would be good practice to include new characters from my own imagination into my illustrations. That was when I learnt that painting an appealing character design based on a concept wasn't as straightforward as simply imagining it.

A cool character design that exists only in your head might not look as good once

you've put it down on paper. There might be some features that either just seem 'off' or uncharacteristic of the figure you had in mind. But until you try to visualise your creation on the canvas, how are you going to know?

Over the years I've picked up useful steps and pointers to help build up a character who has plenty of personality, but who's also visually interesting. Given how important character design is for anime- or manga-related illustrations, grasping these concepts will be useful for any aspiring character illustrator.

In this workshop I'll be sharing my design process for creating an appealing character with personality. I'll start by coming up with a simple story and premise, then explore the various potential aspects of the character, introduce additional details to get her to stand out and, finally, apply the finishing colouring touches to bring her to life.

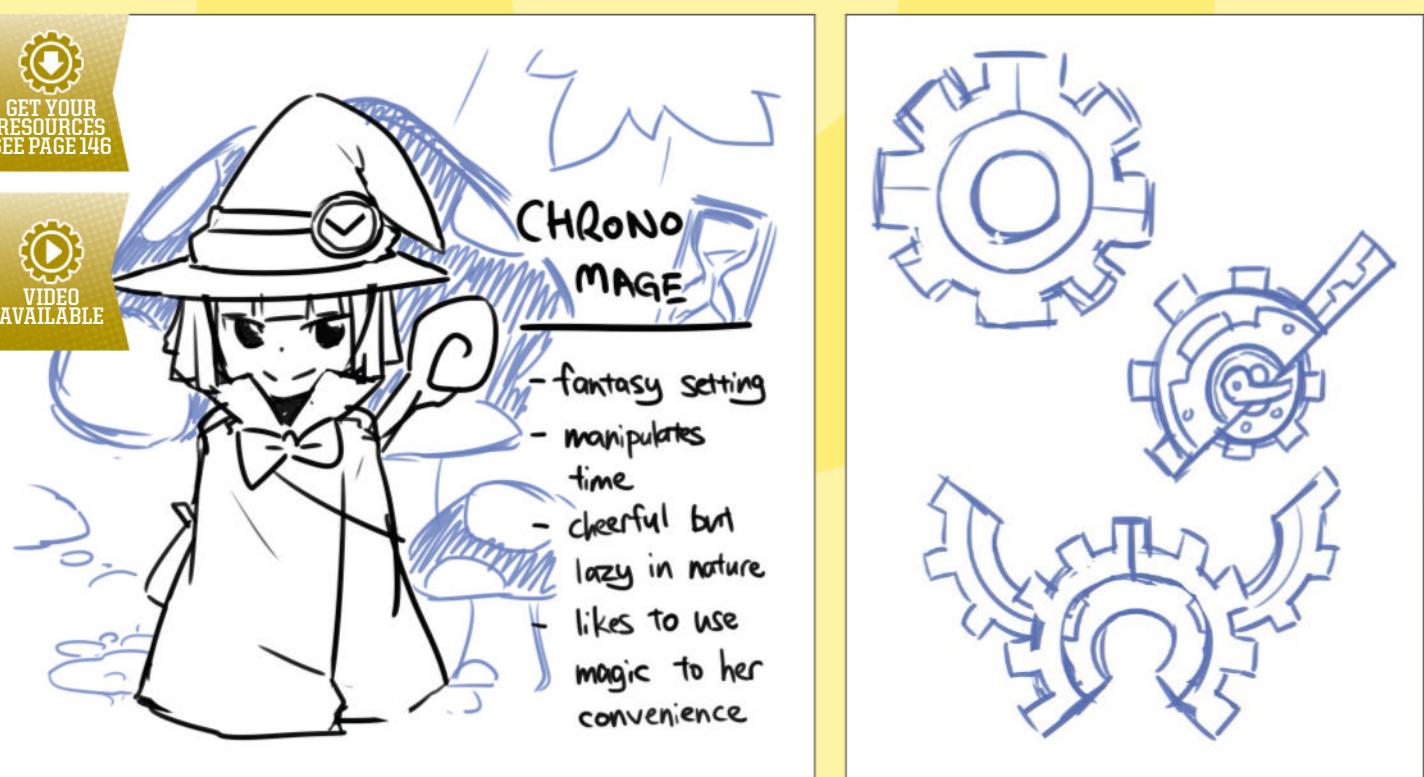
Do note, however, that while the art direction in this workshop veers towards an anime or manga style, the methods I'm sharing can still be applied to most forms of character design.



GET YOUR
RESOURCES
SEE PAGE 146



VIDEO
AVAILABLE



1 Create a story

Before jumping into the design sketches, I'll usually examine the character's background and setting. If there is no setting provided, I'll create one myself and make notes about it. That might come in useful later in the design process. Personally, I like to create cute characters in interesting fantasy game settings, and so for this workshop I'll design a mage girl who can manipulate time.

2 Pick a design motif

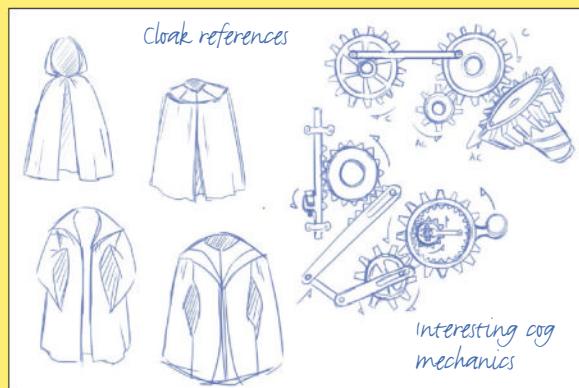
I usually choose a motif or two based on the theme, which can be applied to my character. As well as a good point to start the visual conceptualisation process, it also provides consistency for the character design. In this case I choose cogs - a key component of clocks - as the motif. >



ARTIST INSIGHT

SEE THE BIG PICTURE

Sometimes when you're absorbed in getting a particular portion of the drawing correct, such as a character's hand, you zoom in to fix and clean up the error. Then, when you're done and zoomed out, you realise that the hand is now far too small in proportion to the rest of the body. Always remember to check that your proportions and perspectives are correct in relation to the rest of the body.



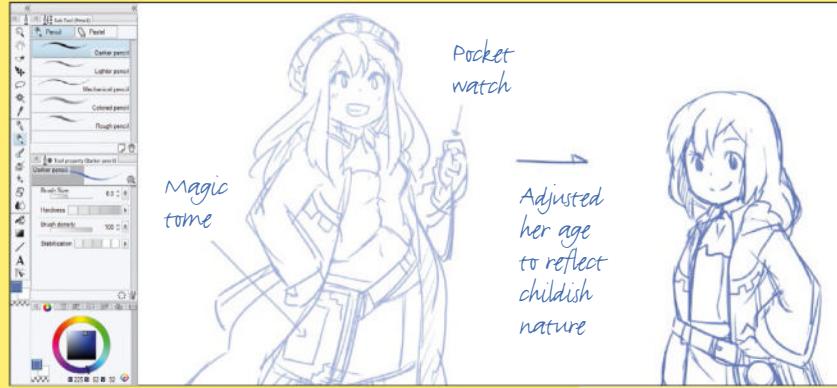
3 Research and references

Next, I look up references for the character. These can range from fashion, suitable gadgets and equipment, to the world the character resides in. They don't have to be used in the final design, but I find it useful to have a library of images to take inspiration from. If I want to include realistic workable gadgets or objects, this is when I'll research how they work.



4 Design roughs

I now draw some quick sketches of the character, including a few variations that might work. At this point the designs doesn't have to be super detailed. I take it as a challenge to push my imagination and draw several designs based on the theme. Invariably, this helps me think of some new ideas that can be applied to the character.



5 Narrowing down selections

After a few iterations, I pick the base design I'm most satisfied with and incorporate aspects of the other designs I like, too. At this stage, I add a little more detail to the design. You may notice that here I also apply the design motifs I've picked, to parts of the design that I think will best support them.



6 Applying character traits

Now I consider the characteristics I want to depict in the character design. For example, I imagine that if she can manipulate time, she'll be a cheerful but lazy person. I can reflect this laziness in the way she dresses, in her unkempt hair for example. She wears a hooded cloak over a simple garment, demonstrating her unfussy clothing choices.



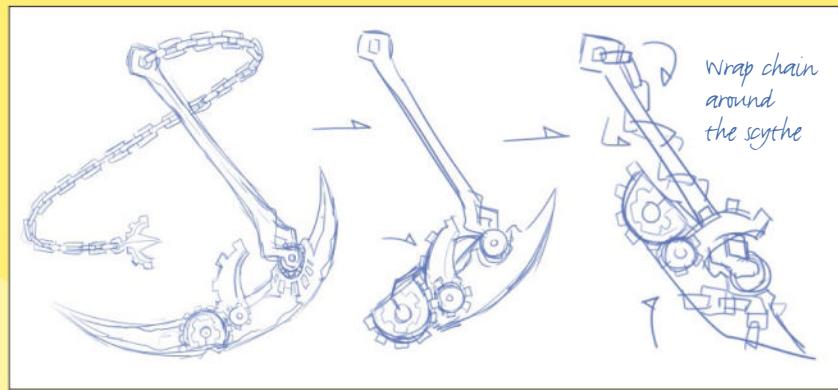
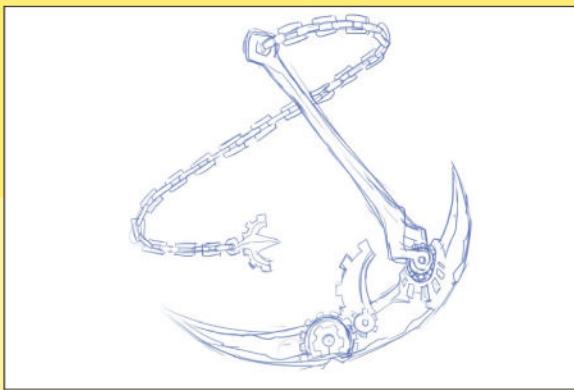
7 Fashion form and function

The story setting is also a great way of shaping the general direction of the character's fashion and its function. For example, a knight in medieval times should be wearing medieval armour, not armour made of cloth. I imagine the girl is something of a prankster, able to manipulate time to suit her ends. She wouldn't want to stand out in situations, so the hooded cloak helps to disguise her and her assortment of gadgets.



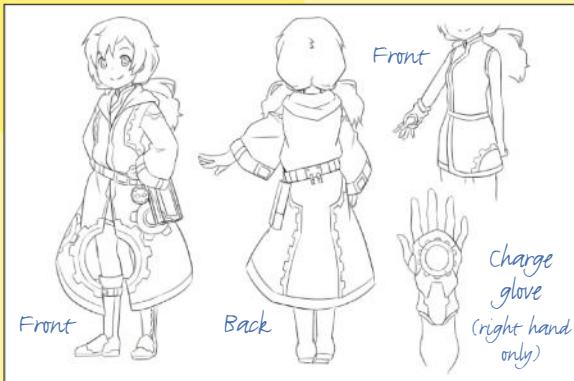
8 Adding gadgets and equipment

It's time to flesh out the designs for additional gadgets and a weapon for her. Although not always necessary, gadgets and equipment are another good way for your character to stand out from the crowd in stories. A futuristic glove gadget that glows when she's using her spells helps to add more visual interest to the concept.



9 Challenging stereotypes

Instead of the staff you might expect a mage to wield, I choose a chained scythe as her choice of weapon. There's nothing wrong in keeping with tradition, but whenever the chance presents itself I like to challenge the norms. Apart from just looking cool, the pendulum end of the chained scythe symbolises time, which neatly matches her defining theme.



11 Make a reference sheet

Reference sheets are widely used in professional media productions, such as games or animation. The aim is to standardise the look and key features of characters for all involved. Usually I'll draw a proper reference sheet of the front, back, side and a 45-degree view of a character. For personal use, it's up to you how detailed you make a sheet.

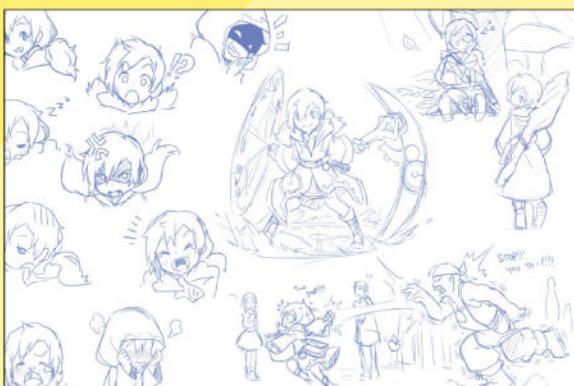
10 Fiction and reality

Another consideration in designing characters is that the figure should look believable, given the constraints of the story and the setting it's built around. This is especially important if you're designing something based on someone else's story. On that note, exaggerating features and traits will help to make the character stand out, but overdoing it will reduce the believability and lower their appeal. In this case I want to make sure the gadgets and weapons are concealable and her design can blend in with the other characters in that world.



12 Establish a colour palette

Apart from setting the basic colours for the character sheet, sometimes multiple colour schemes for different light settings are required. Although we won't be going into that for this workshop, I want to show the difference in the colours when her gadget is activated compared to when it's turned off. The point of the reference sheet is, after all, to be a guide to the details of the character for any future uses.



13 Expressions and action poses

On a character sheet, as well as a basic pose, it's good to sketch a few varieties of expression to convey a character's nature and mannerisms. I draw some common expressions, then some unique to her. I like to add some action poses with different expressions, as if out of scenes in the story. This is when you breathe life into the character.



14 Illustrate your new character

I finish off with an illustration to showcase the newly designed character. Choose a pose that best depicts the character, such as a model on the cover of a magazine. Here, I pick a dynamic pose that pops out at the audience and showcases the cheerful nature of the girl. Now go out and show the world the new character you've designed! ■

ARTIST INSIGHT
IDENTIFY ERRORS IN YOUR ART
Search for a mirrored image of Abraham Lincoln online and you'll be surprised to see how different he looks from the original image. The same can be said for your art, which is down to your drawing habits. Flip your canvas from time to time to identify and correct more obvious mistakes.



GET YOUR
RESOURCES
SEE PAGE 146

PHOTOSHOP

USE COLOURS TO MAKE YOUR MANGA ART POP!

Bright colours that work well together help to bring **PAUL KWON**'s confident punk duo to shimmering life

ARTIST PROFILE

PAUL KWON

COUNTRY: US



Paul, a games industry concept artist, makes art and TCG imagery for Blizzard and others. <http://ifxm.ag/p-kwon>

My goal in this project is to produce a cool image of a chromatic punk duo in manga style. To achieve this, I want to challenge myself to use a range of colours cohesively to create these characters, then give them a confident outlook and a positive attitude to life. I've always been a fan of anime and manga and the unique art styles on display, so this illustration assignment should be a ton of fun!

I'm keen to make the most of my colours, and I'm prepared to spend time experimenting with them to get it right. I imagine that the two characters are partners, who share some visual characteristics. This will be my first time painting an adorable rainbow unicorn, so go easy on me!

It usually takes me a bit of time and preparation to really get in the mood to create a particular piece, before diving into the painting process. For this piece

my research comprises looking through anatomy images and references of materials, and watching some anime. I want my human character's dress sense to reflect her personality, and a good example of this will be her collars, which will be exaggerated and very pointy! I'll also be furnishing my characters with stylish accessories that act as interesting story elements.

Okay, that's enough preamble from me – let's get painting! ■

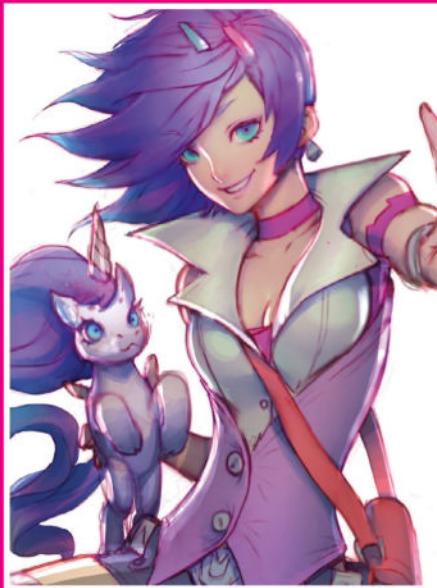
How I create...

AN ORIGINAL DYNAMIC DUO



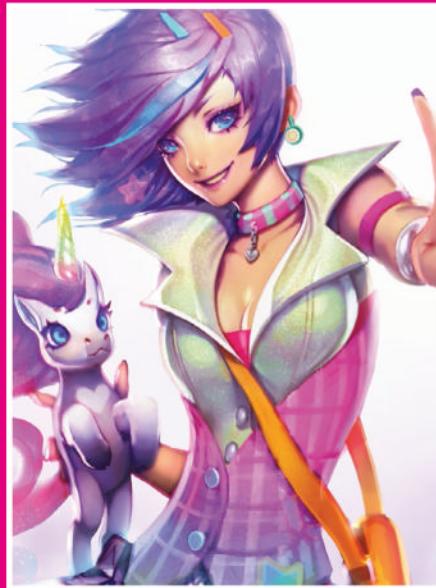
1 Warm up by sketching

I spend time doing some research to get a good feel for the subject, then produce some rough thumbnails. This also acts as a warm-up exercise. Once I've picked a good thumbnail sketch, I do another pass to clean up the shapes, compositions and design. I keep the drawing rough at this stage, which will give me room for experimentation later on.



2 Stick to the line work

I set the line work to Multiply and paint underneath the line, so I don't go off-piste too early. I start with a mid-range value because it's easier and faster to push and pull the volume. I try to retain the feeling and emotion by playing with the colour temperature. Rather than focusing on one area, I develop the image as a whole.



3 Progressive painting

Once I'm happy with the base colour, I merge the characters' layers and begin painting on top. I use the soft Airbrush to keep everything organic and smooth looking, and gradually switch to finer and harder brushes. I experiment with filters and colours, keeping an eye out for happy accidents that might produce awesome results.



DIGITAL PASTEL TECHNIQUES

JADE MOSCH uses her traditional pastel skills to produce a stunning piece of illustrative art inspired by Asian themes

ARTIST PROFILE

JADE MOSCH

COUNTRY: Switzerland

 Freelance artist Jade has a degree in multimedia design and also studied illustration at art school. She loves to paint animals and fantasy scenes.
<http://ifxm.ag/jmosch>

 GET YOUR RESOURCES SEE PAGE 146

 VIDEO AVAILABLE

ARTIST INSIGHT

USING A LIMITED COLOUR SCHEME

You don't need to have a lot of colours to make a picture seem colourful. Instead, use a global colour that can be desaturated, and pick a part of the picture to highlight using a very contrasting colour from another range (such as blue and orange, or red and blue). Then for any other colour you add, use a variation of the main colours.

The big differences between digital and traditional painting are that in digital we have the possibility of taking our art back in time, the use of layers, and an amazing palette of post-production tools at our disposal.

Unfortunately, having all these digital tools can also make our working process chaotic and disorganised. We can easily get lost in numerous layers and effects. My way of working is much simpler. It's

inspired by pastel techniques, but adapted to the digital way of doing things.

Pastel is a traditional painting method using dry media – little sticks of pigment powder that you squeeze over the paper. Unlike oil or acrylic, it's volatile and very easy to drag over your picture. Basically, it's a cyclical approach where you blur a bunch of colours together, then go back to define the subject. The result is a richly coloured picture. Here I'll be using this process – only digitally, of course.

I'll also reveal some tricks for not getting lost in your canvas – even if you're a disorganised person like me! Actually, when you work digitally there's always a way to save your picture. I'll work over a traditional line, and show you how powerful layer effects can be. For this workshop, it'll help if you're familiar with the Channels and Layers panels, which are the main tools I'll be using. And I'll paint with only a few basic Photoshop brushes – let's keep things simple!



1 Sketch and values

I sketch out an idea and then add details, paying attention to composition, anatomy and design. Now I create a duplicate of my file (Image>Duplicate) and merge the layers (Cmd+Shift+E). I decrease the image's size, making it no bigger than 800px wide, so neither my computer nor Photoshop will lag. I paint the main shapes in greyscale.



2 Develop a colour scheme

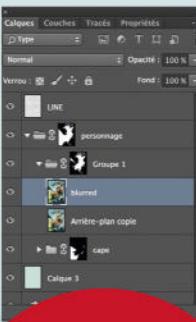
When I think the balance between black and white is correct, I add colour to my sketch. My aim is not to have anything precise, but to get the harmony right. I limit myself to three main colours, then play with Saturation. To avoid being distracted by details, I blur everything using Gaussian Blur. This way I stay focused on colour and composition. >





3 Scan in the sketch and create a rough

I return to my original detailed sketch, scan it in at 300DPI and then adjust the levels to achieve pure white and black. I have to clean my drawing of the dirt that inevitably came with the scan. Then I create an empty layer. I go to the Channels panel and Cmd-click the RGB channel thumbnail to select the picture content, then invert the selection (Cmd+Shift+I). Next I go back to my new layer and, with the selection active, fill it with the Paint Bucket Tool. This gives me an editable sketch layer.



5 Initial colours and blurring

I go back to my first, blurred, colour sketch (step 2) and put it at the top of the layer stack. I use my personalised finger brush to smooth and build better forms. This will be the foundation for my colouring. Now I just work over my sketch, sampling colours from it with the Eyedropper. I keep the linework layer at the top of the stack in Overlay mode.

4 Preparation and grouping layers

To help with organisation (and I need all the help I can get!) I prepare layer groups and a mask for each part of the image – the character, clothing, background, etc. I'll combine layers later as required, but preserving the masks means I won't lose my selections. I use the Magic Wand to select the main shapes, create a new layer group and add a mask to it. Then I Alt-click the mask to clean it up as needed.



6 Building the first volume

I like to paint and make a first render test on what I think is the most important part of the picture. This will serve as a reminder of how much I need to work on the rest of the painting. In this case I worked on the face first. Then I paint over the rest of the body, to develop the basic volume and introduce more colours.



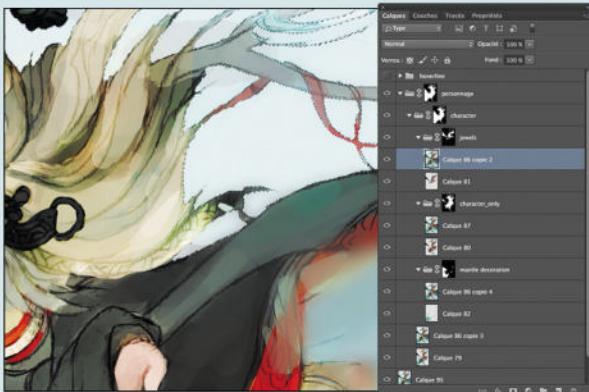
7 Muscle and fur

I use a slightly more textured brush to paint the animal parts of my hybrid, but using mostly existing colours. When I paint, I try not to make all my strokes go in the same direction – some perpendicular strokes will make my painting look less flat and give objects some volume. I also add complementary colours or grey in the shadows.



8 Correcting colours

Unfortunately, I think the image is now too colourful and not subtle enough. I want it more wintry and cold. In greyscale I sketch in a forest background, and use Color Balance, Saturation and Curves to get something I like. This is an experimental phase. I focus on enhancing the blue mood and use Curves to boost the contrast where I want.



9 Merge main layers

Next I select each main part of my image and use the amazing Edit > Copy Merged command (Cmd+Shift+C). This makes a flattened copy of the selection, so again I can get all the different parts of my image on their own layers, without losing my earlier work. I take care to do all the merging on a duplicate of the image, which will also function as a back-up copy... just in case.



10 Working on the background

The character isn't finished yet, but I choose to take a step back and work on the background. I paint with my custom finger brush, and keep adding little strokes of colour to make the forest emerge from the abstract forms of the background. I use some different colours to give it more life, but when you don't zoom in you have the feeling that it's the same colour, just with subtle variations.

ARTIST INSIGHT

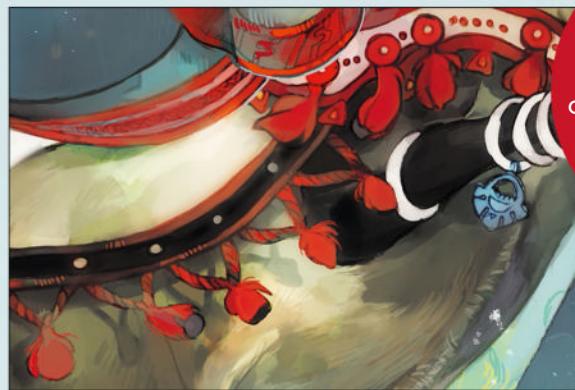
SKETCHING SMALL

By doing a first sketch and colour research on a small canvas (72DPI), you avoid focusing too quickly on details. You can look at the whole picture and can easily add textures and colours without increasing the file size and slowing things down. You can also test effects that you'll later use on your finished painting.



11 Adding clothing details

I paint the character's cloak in the same way as the background. I want to give it an illustrative feel, and here I use pastel colours. When it's finished, I decide to add a texture to give it more depth. I paint with a slightly darker colour in areas where I want the line work to be more visible.



SHORTCUTS

COPY MERGED

Cmd+Shift+C (Mac)
Ctrl+Shift+C (PC)

Copy what's visible on-screen to a single layer, regardless of the number of layers present.



13 Colour adjustments

Now that everything is rendered, I go in and tackle the final details. Where necessary I enhance the contrast of some areas by making them either darker or lighter. Again I'm experimenting here. I feel that if I didn't test everything, then maybe my picture is not the best it can be, but it's hard to know what needs adjusting until it's almost done.



14 Focus and final touches

I can't add these details and effects very well if the picture isn't fully flattened. So this is my third and last duplicate, where I merge my picture into one layer. Now I duplicate this layer and give the copy a slight blur. I add a mask and selectively mask areas so that only some parts are blurred. Then I apply the last stroke of snow to add a bit more movement, and voilà! I hope you enjoyed my workshop. ■



REVEAL CHARACTER IN VISUAL DETAILS

EMMA VIECELI explains how to convey tribal characteristics using visual motifs and imply a rich backstory in the details of your character designs

Iives and dwarves are long-established elements of the fantasy canon. In the Oni Press published series *The Avalon Chronicles*, which I co-created with Nunzio DeFilippis and Christina Weir, several tropes of fantasy storytelling are turned around and challenged – and these established races definitely don't escape that treatment.

In this workshop, I'll be explaining my design process using the characters Kolinarr and Jourdain from the series as examples, and I'll give an insight into

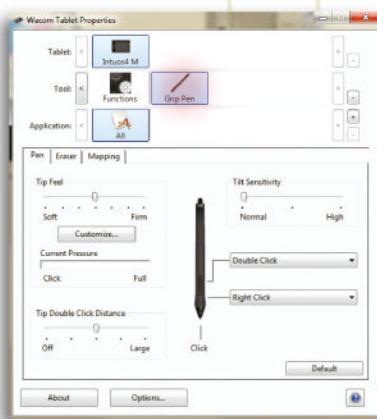
our Avalonian elves and dwarves. We'll think about the key points of character creation, visual motif, societal impact and how wider world-building is vital to creating a believable character.

When you're adding details to figures, it's all too easy to go down the road of just using 'noodling' – random elements you pick just because they look good. But as well as looking good, details need to be consistent and meaningful. All the details you add will convey information about a character, and even if it's not all instantly significant to the reader, it makes the

1 Set up your tools

Using the Express keys option in the tablet's properties (in the Start menu in the Wacom folder) you can customise the function of the keys.

Your shortcuts appear as LED titles next to each key on the tablet. Setting your pen's pressure sensitivity is important for health as well as art, as if you find your wrist aching after using the tablet, you may be pressing too hard. Try shaking up your nib settings, too.



2 Roughing it out

I generally pencil my comics on paper and then scan in for inks. But for this workshop I'm working entirely digitally. If I were to flow-chart my digital work process, it might look something like this: Make a mess > Draw over that mess with a less messy mess > Refine mess, and so forth. Working digitally is liberating. My digital process is all about speed and having fun. I draw roughs, then I draw over them, refining as I go.



ARTIST PROFILE

EMMA VIECELI
COUNTRY: England

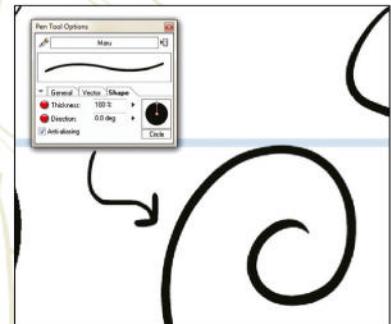
 Emma loves telling stories with pictures. She's now working on the *Alex Rider* series for Walker Books. www.emmavieceli.com



character more rounded and the world you're depicting more involving.

If you're interested in seeing in detail how these characters got to the ink stage, check out the video showing my process, from rough shapes using Manga Studio's Pencil tool, up to the finished inks. Be warned: I'm not a tech-wizz, so it's warts-and-all with no mistakes edited out. You'll see how many redraws and edits I work through to reach my final inks.

To further explore these characters and plenty more, check out *Avalon Chronicles* Volumes 1 & 2, available from Oni Press.



3 Preparing inks and colour models

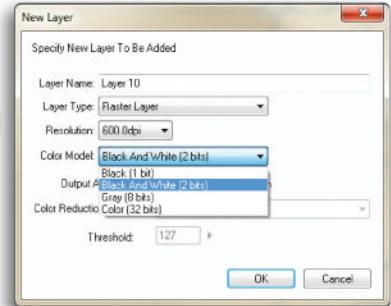
I generally work in pure black-and-white when I'm inking for print, but if you prefer your lines to be anti-aliased, change your layer's colour model from pure black-and-white to grey or colour. In these modes, you'll see a small anti-aliasing tick-box available in your Pen tool options.

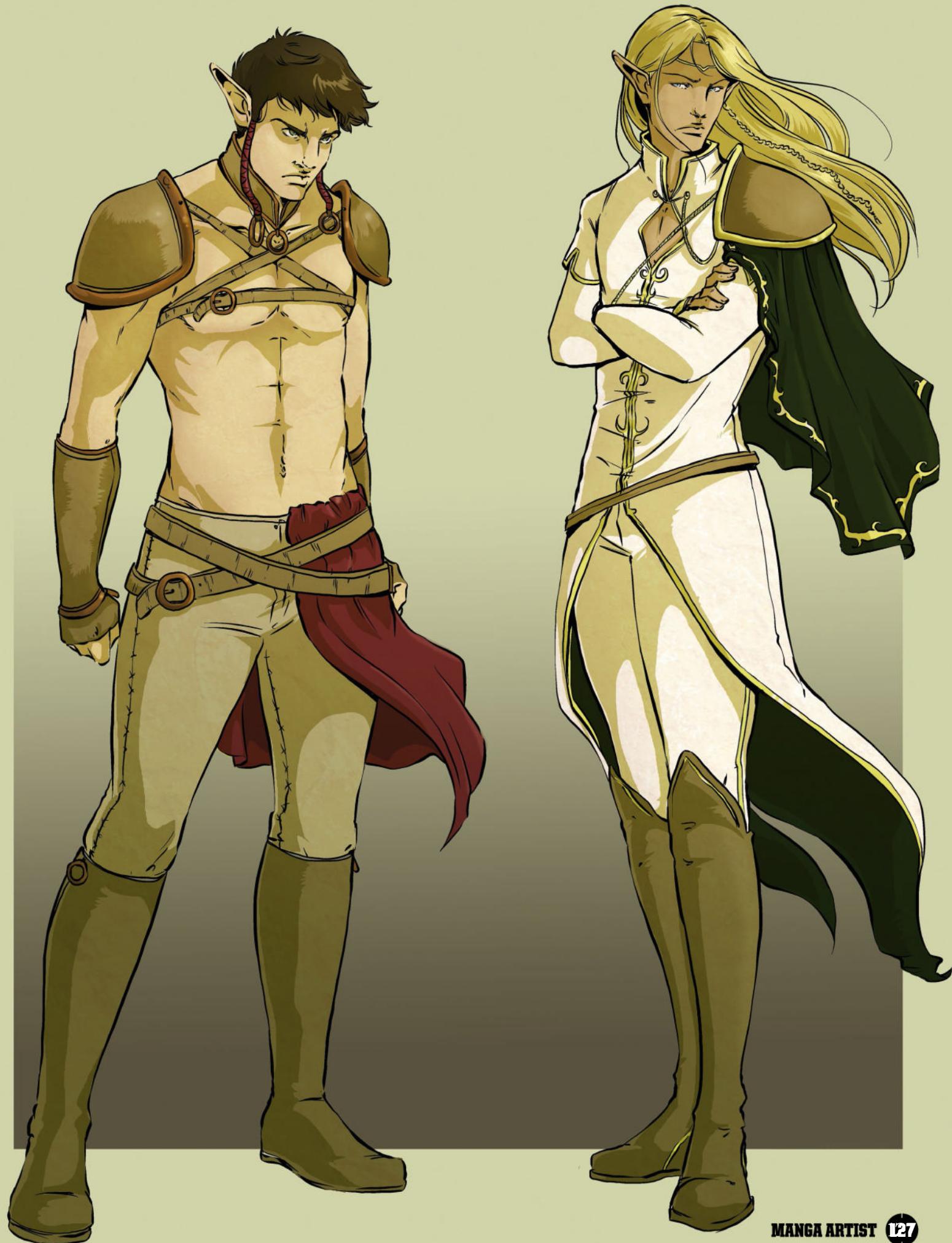
RESOURCES

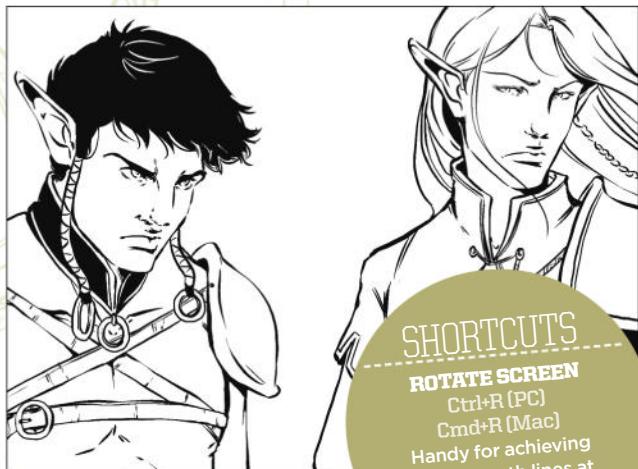
CUSTOM BRUSHES

INK NIBS

I pencilled this image using the Manga Studio Mechanical Pencil, set to 0.3mm, and then I inked it with the Maru nib, set to 0.6mm.







4 Evoking a feeling

The characters I'm drawing here are Kolinarr (left), a dwarf, and Jourdain (right), an elf. You'll note that their heights aren't that different and their ears are similar. In Avalonian lore, the elves and the dwarves are actually the same race, divided centuries ago through dispute. The elves took to the high ground, and the dwarves to the low. A lot of our understanding of the races comes from the jibes they've slung at each other for generations. No wonder these guys don't seem to be getting on...

SHORTCUTS

ROTATE SCREEN

Ctrl+R (PC)

Cmd+R (Mac)

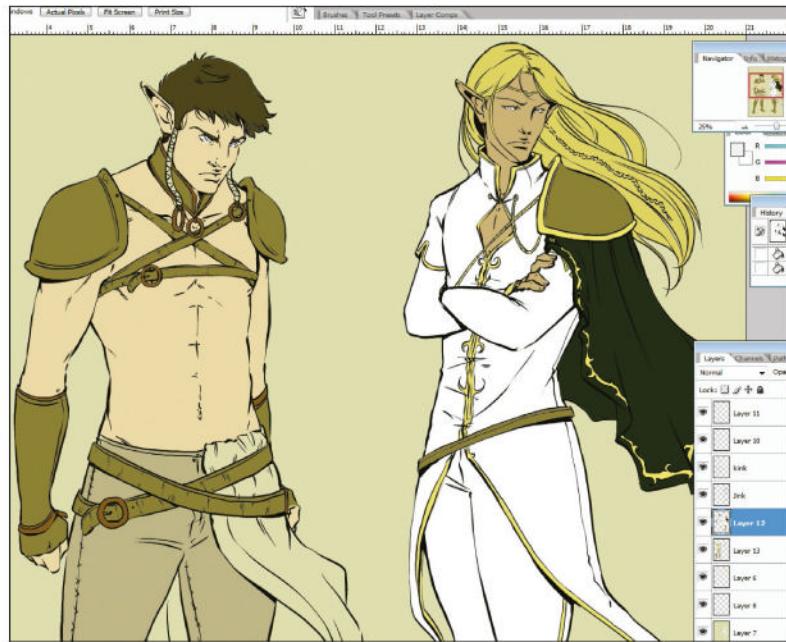
Handy for achieving long, smooth lines at awkward angles for your drawing arm.

ARTIST INSIGHT

LAYER USAGE

The Layer Select tool enables you to select a few different layers at once. Once they're highlighted blue, you can manipulate them at the same time, or merge them into one layer.

Handy if you tend to work over several layers.



6 Racial differences

Inks done, it's time to add my flat colours in Photoshop. Although the dwarves' jibes would have us believe the elves to be pale and ghostly looking creatures, Avalonian elves are in fact fairly dark. They live closer to the sun, after all. Their dwarven counterparts, on the other hand, spend a lot of time working close to the ground and tend to be the paler of the two. By the same token, dwarves grow only an inch or so shorter on average than the elves – not that this has stopped elven jokes about their 'short' cousins being passed through to our world and vastly misunderstood.



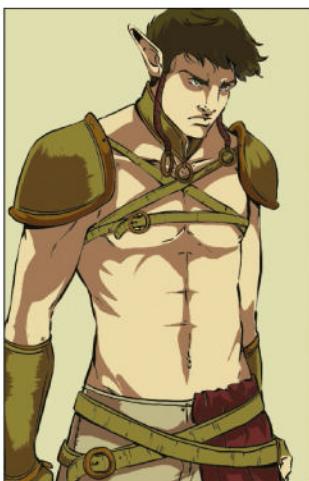
5 Strike a pose

Facial expression goes a long way to telling a story in a single picture, but body language will amplify it massively. Kolinarr's expression is fierce, but his head is bowed. His stance is strong, so he's not cowering, but he's also not raising his chin to tip an outward fight. Jourdain meanwhile is turning his head and closing his posture. He's an elven stop sign right now, but his eyes aren't looking away.



7 Create a shade layer

I hide base colours to work in a single shade layer across the image, taking into account the light source and the different edging to the shadows for different surfaces. The elves are a proud lot, but not whimsical or airy-fairy in any way. In fact, quite surprisingly, they're a very military-minded people. They're strict, disciplined and adhere to the rules. As such, there are military elements to their design, merged with what we recognise. Younger elves will sport a cutout at their chest in open mockery of a certain dwarven tradition.



8 Customise the shade

Now I've created a shade layer, I bring back my base colours and set my shade layer to Multiply. This has the effect of picking up on the colours beneath. The individual dwarf clans are denoted by the colour of the ribbon worn in their hair. The hair is grown long in front of the ears, and supports metal rings. These rings are repeated throughout the design. Dwarves leave much of their upper body uncovered, because they wear their achievements on their skin. As a dwarf grows and learns, they earn markings on their torso for life goals, their arms for work goals, and their back for the past. So you only need to glance at a dwarf to learn where they've been and where they intend to end up in the future.



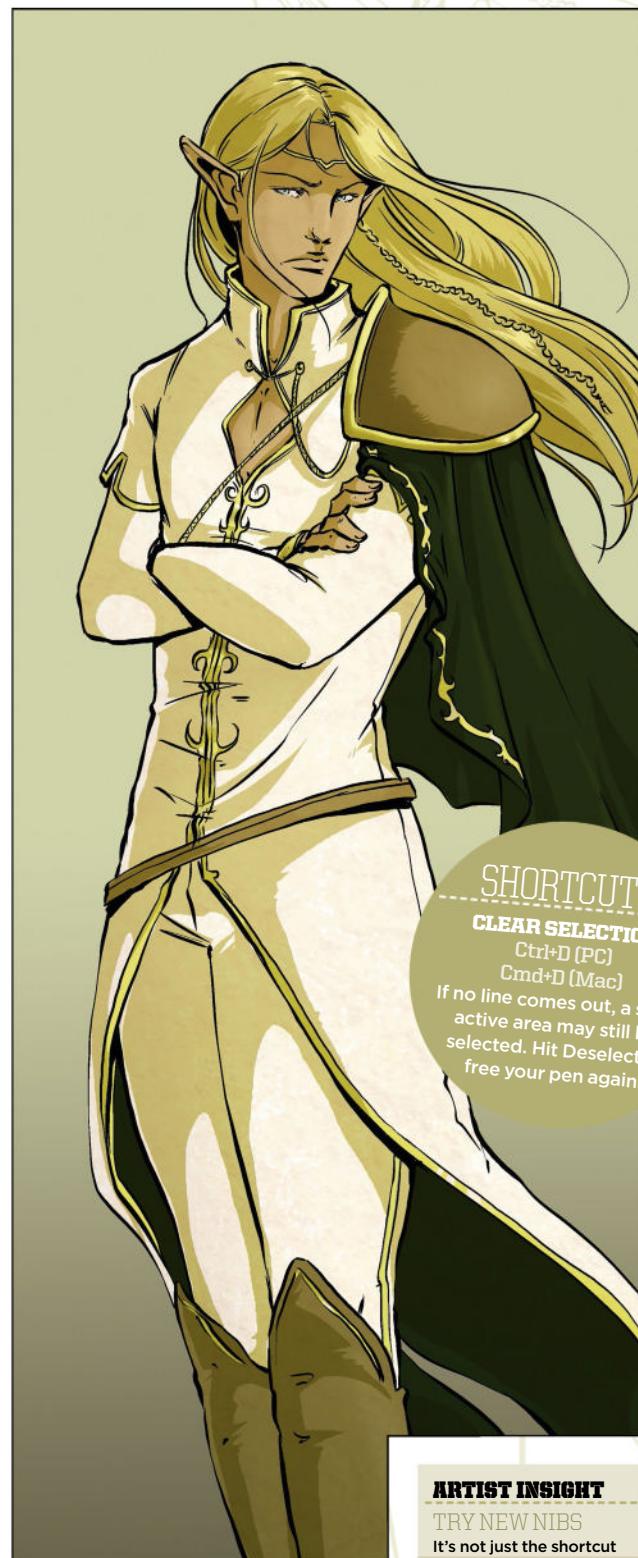
9 Colourising the figures

Now I can tweak the Hue/Saturation levels on my shade layer while still picking out the base colours beneath. This can produce some great effects. Try playing about with it and see how different the mood of your piece can become! The elves, of course, find this practice of marking a little tacky and dirty. Their skin will remain unblemished throughout their life, but a high-performing elf may well receive medals, ranks or trinkets to mark their achievements instead.



10 Mixing shade styles

I hide my shade layer and start laying down simple shadows with the Brush tool. Mixing this softer style with the sharper cel-shaded layer on top adds more depth to the colours. Elves attach a lot of value to their hair, perhaps tied with their link to the unicorns. A braid or a hairstyle may well signify an aspect of their character. The dwarves, however, tend to wear theirs short and practical, and the parts of their hair that they keep long are wrapped up in their clan colour.



11 Overlay and texture

To add a final level of depth to the colour, I create a gradient layer over the characters and set it to Overlay mode. I then tweak this in the same way as I did the shade layer. Finally, I import a texture in a new layer, set the layer to Multiply, and lower its Opacity – it only needs to add depth rather than be seen. It seems that the elves and the dwarves can't even agree on when to cover up. ■

SHORTCUTS

CLEAR SELECTION
Ctrl+D (PC)
Cmd+D (Mac)

If no line comes out, a small active area may still be selected. Hit Deselect to free your pen again.

ARTIST INSIGHT

TRY NEW NIBS
It's not just the shortcut keys and dial that you can tweak to your tastes. Once you're comfortable with working on a graphics tablet, why not try customising the experience a bit more? Wacom provides several different nib types inside the pen holder. Just twist the top off and try mixing and matching some different levels of flexibility, texture and hardness. See what works for you.

WORKSHOPS





PHOTOSHOP

TELL A STORY WITH AN IMAGE

Applibot illustrator **CROWGOD** lays out the process he uses to create artwork for the online card game Legend of the Cryptids

One of the things I've learnt from working on Applibot's Legend of the Cryptids line is the importance of being able to tell a story through an illustration. With Applibot's appetite for success, the art has to appeal to a wide audience who may be unfamiliar with the Cryptids brand, which in turn might be the push they need to try out the game.

Therefore, before drawing even a rough sketch, I read the description of the scene carefully and imagine what's happening to the character. The premise of the scene

ARTIST PROFILE

CROWGOD

COUNTRY: Japan



Crowgod, aka Xu Cheng, graduated from Central Academy of Fine Arts in Printmaking in Beijing. He is now an in-house illustrator at Applibot.
<http://ifxm.ag/crowgod>

is that a young warrior is desperately seeking out a miracle cure that's somewhere at the top of a giant tree, in order to heal his sick mother.

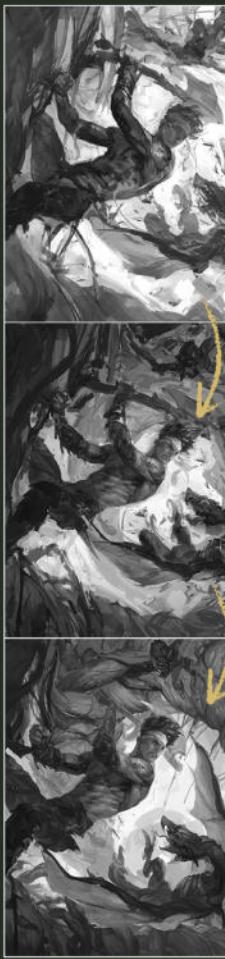
I want to make the figure as heroic-looking as possible – hopefully he'll become an iconic card character. To tie in with the tree theme, he'll wield an axe rather than a sword. Picturing him midway up the giant tree, high above the clouds, will increase the feeling of peril and drama in the scene, which should further engage the viewer.

Okay, enough talk – let's get to work!



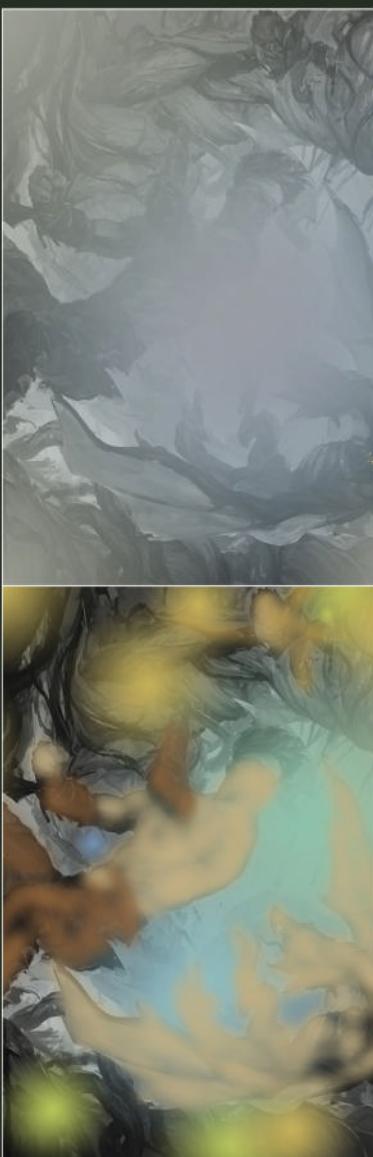
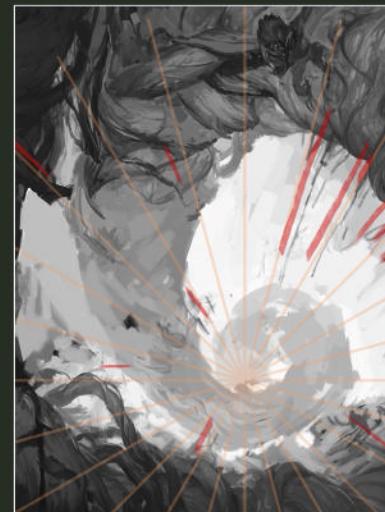
1 Quick sketch

I draw a sketch of a giant tree reaching up into the sky. I consider the diameter of the tree, how it grows and how it looks. It should be a solid structure that can be climbed without using ropes. My character is a young warrior, and I decide to depict him bare-chested after seeing reference photos of rock climbers. He's not just dangerously high up the tree; drama is added by a small dragon attacking him. The scene will be well lit because it takes place high above the clouds.



2 Mono sketch

I draw the character, monster and background objects all in black and white. Darker colours on the edges of the image and lighter colours towards the centre help to create the focal point, which is where the struggle is taking place. I use greyish colours on the background to soften the contrast between black and white and make this grey area the most eye-catching area in this illustration. I use the strong backlight to help make the atmosphere perspective pop off the page.



3 Colour process

I create a Multiply layer and choose a base colour by using the Gradient tool. Then I apply this using the Paint Bucket tool. Next, I create an Overlay layer and use a light colour to highlight the differences between the objects.

>

4 Boost the contrast

I now create an Overlay layer, then add colours to the dark side of objects and bright side of the background to accentuate the contrast between them. Then on another Overlay layer I add reflected light on the dark side of objects. I repeat this, but this time reduce the Opacity to 36 per cent, to achieve the right contrast between the duelling characters and the background.



SHORTCUTS

LEVELS

Cmd+L (Mac)

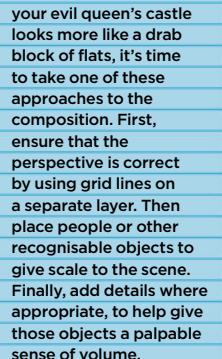
Ctrl+L (PC)

This tool is useful for tweaking the proportion of black, white and grey.

ARTIST INSIGHT

GRAND VISION

Building structures in fantasy art are often grand affairs. But when your evil queen's castle looks more like a drab block of flats, it's time to take one of these approaches to the composition. First, ensure that the perspective is correct by using grid lines on a separate layer. Then place people or other recognisable objects to give scale to the scene. Finally, add details where appropriate, to help give those objects a palpable sense of volume.



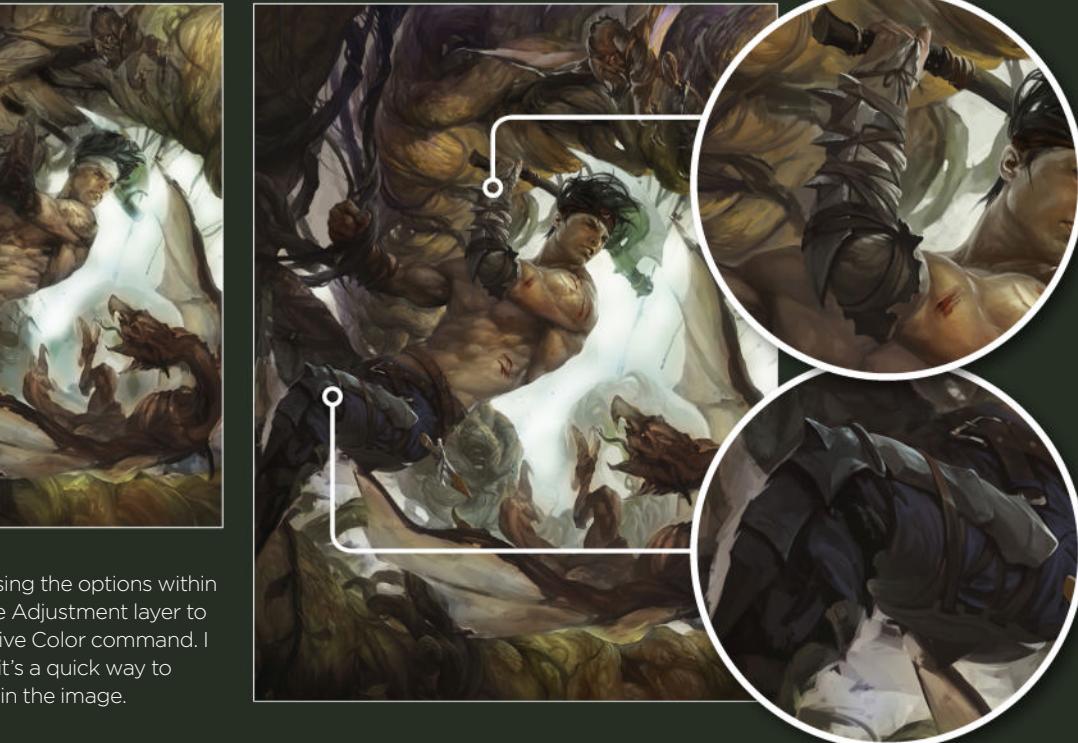
5 Colour sketch

I create a new Multiply layer and choose the Gradient tool and Paint Bucket tool to paint the base colour. Then I create an Overlay and Color Dodge layer to highlight the basic colour of the character and background. Using these layers boosts the base colour, so to control the brightness of this colour I adjust the Opacity using a soft brush.



6 Colour tweaks

You could also adjust the colour using the options within a Fill or Adjustment layer. I add a Vibrance Adjustment layer to tweak the saturation. I also use the Selective Color command. I set up my colour palette as HSB sliders – it's a quick way to adjust the purity of colour and saturation in the image.



7 Take your time with colours

It's not easy to create an image with lots of elements and keep them in balance. I advise being patient and thinking before making your next brush stroke. I always search for reference images for the texture of objects, then use different light spots to unify all the various elements.

8 Accessories

At this point I need to think more about the character's clothing. I decide to give him some protective gear – the sharpened metal plates around his legs and lower arms – but I'm mindful that he still needs the freedom and flexibility to be able to climb the tree. This is why I choose to give him fabric trousers, with leather belts for visual interest. Elsewhere, I pay attention to the gradation of colours on different layers.



9 Adjust the atmosphere

I Lasso the character and dragon, and copy them onto the new layer. After that I create a new layer based on the original one. This enables me to use the Paint Bucket tool to paint, as well as adjust the overall Opacity. The result is that I enhance the depth of the tree that's in the mid-ground.

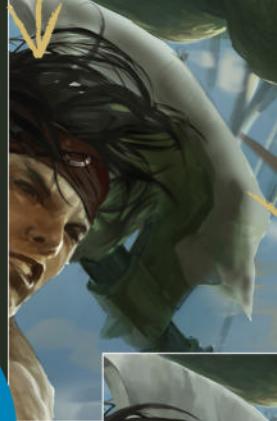


12 Depth and volume

I add gnarly details to the tree trunk in the mid-ground to show its almost menacing bulk. Then I create more layers and paint a range of elements such as clouds and land far below, enhancing the depth between the background and foreground.

13 More elements

I add more details and a pattern to the axe. I adjust the edge line of character and foreground to accentuate the volumes and depth in the image. Highlighting the edges and painting reflected light also helps to bring out the volume of objects.



10 Detailed design

I always think that a well-thought-out design aids the storytelling in the scene. Here I've indicated the interaction between the young warrior and the dragon, which enhances the feeling of movement. The figure's pose is off-balance and his muscles are tensed, which shows he's ready to strike the dragon. The direction he's facing also adds to the sense of threat in the situation.



11 Reading the scene

People are used to reading from left to right, top to bottom and near to far. So, the viewer should be able to see a strong, powerful anti-clockwise curve produced by the twisted giant tree, which matches the movement of the axe. The dragon's facial expression clearly shows that it knows it's about to get a lot shorter...



14 Finishing up

I decide I want to make my warrior look even younger, so I adjust his face accordingly. Finally I add a beam of light that picks out his body, and tweak highlights in the scene.

Painting hair

I spend a lot of time painting the knight's hair. I use the Eraser tool between the character and background. To enhance the hair I chose to paint the armour blue, to add contrast and give the character more colour.



PHOTOSHOP

CREATE AN EPIC DRAGON SCENE

RUAN JIA applies his subtle colouring techniques to a classic fantasy composition, applying details only where necessary

ARTIST PROFILE

RUAN JIA
COUNTRY: Canada



Ruan spent eight years as concept artist at NetDragon, then moved to concept art studio Volta. www.ruanjia.com

This is a painting I produced for Volta's homepage. The client provided a concept – a dragon rider leading his army towards the viewer – and I took it on, first changing the male rider to a female.

I designed four thumbnails and sent them to the client for feedback. The preferred idea ended up being a combination of two of my thumbnails. I then began painting the image properly,

establishing lighting and composition. I chose the direction of the light and then determined what would be the focal point of the painting for the viewer – this was especially important because I knew there'd be a lot of elements in the scene. The solution was to make the dragon's mouth the centre of the painting.

To ensure that I made the action look as realistic as possible I collected photos of animals roaring – these helped me draw the lead dragon properly. ■

CUSTOM BRUSHES

SCALE BRUSH



I'm obsessed with little details, so I use this texture brush to draw in the scale patterns on the dragon's skin.

How I create... AN ARMY OF FLYING DRAGONS



1 Draw thumbnails

These are the black-and-white sketches I created to show to the client. I tried a different quantity of heads to experiment with the creature design; I also adjusted the composition depending on the number of heads in each case. The client chose the upper right and lower left thumbnails, so I decided to combine the two into one painting.



2 Careful detailing

I'm obsessed with little details and always bear in mind whether they're appropriate for the subject. I use a custom texture brush to draw in the scale patterns on the dragon's head, focusing on the eye, cheek and jaw. This is the painting's focal point and needs to have a strong impact on the viewer, so in the next stage I need to enhance these details using colour.



3 Adding highlights

I like the shadowing around the eye, but the colours feel wrong. I feel the main colouring should be more realistic, so I add more details to the head to highlight the eye. Next I enhance the yellow colour of the eye and make the red of the mouth brighter. The highlights now have more contrast – it feels brighter and enhances the dragon's face.

Horn detailing

When I begin to detail the main image, I take great care over this edge of the horn. This part is near the centre of the image, so it'll anchor the image. I enhance the contrast of the wing and its angle to make it more obvious, then overlay a Color layer to strengthen the yellow and lift the horn off the wing.



Background approach

I paint the background in advance, before I start on the creature. I'm deliberately vague with my brushstrokes here, so that it looks like details have been captured while travelling at speed, to introduce a sense of movement.



PAINT A DYNAMIC MANGA COVER ILLUSTRATION

Cover art must work on its own merits but also with coverlines and other elements on it. **CHESTER OCAMPO** shares his tips for creating a balanced composition

ARTIST PROFILE

CHESTER OCAMPO

COUNTRY: Philippines

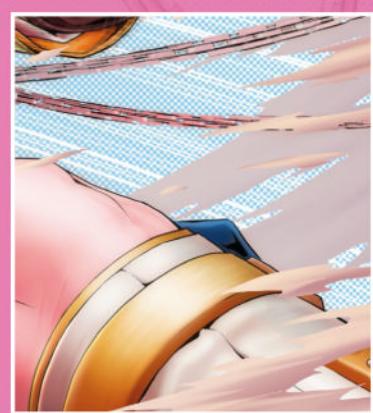


Chester is a freelance illustrator. He loves Haruki Murakami novels and conspiracy theories, and is on a continuing quest to find the best salmon sashimi in Manila.
<http://ifxm.ag/cocampo>

GET YOUR
RESOURCES
SEE PAGE 146

The client for this painting asked for either an action-oriented or a wholesome character in a manga style. As you can see, I chose the more dynamic option. I was originally asked to paint a double-sized image with the aim of forming a wraparound cover, and although the extra area wasn't needed in the end, I stuck to the original brief.

A cover image needs enough negative space to take into account the magazine logo and all of the coverlines. There are also the colours of these cover elements to consider. Because it's an action shot on the front of a manga issue, colourful cover elements are par for the course. The trick is not to let the illustration get lost in the background when placed against these elements. Bearing all this in mind, I set out to create the illustration you see here. It was a challenge, but fun, too!



Indicators of motion

In a manga action shot, motion must be conveyed convincingly for visual impact and energy, and several indicators of motion are seen here. There are high-speed objects such as the chain-whip; wind-affected objects such as the ribbon and the girl's ponytail; objects reacting to motion - notice the jacket's edges, which are fluttering; the particle effects of the dust that's been disturbed by the girl; and the speed lines in the background. All these elements are painted to suggest that they're moving at different speeds.

How I create...

A MANGA COVER



1 Generating thumbnails

Focusing on composition, I sketch a thumbnail of the wraparound cover. The placement of the character is set to be on the right-hand side of the image, because this is the front cover on Western magazines. I draw the thumbnail at low resolution for speed; the high-res version will come later as the illustration develops.

2 Rough sketch

I refine the sketch from the approved thumbnail. Details such as the blades of the chain-whip, the path of the chains and the placement of the character are finalised. The character is moved further to the right so that her head lies on the vertical centre of the front cover for better eye flow, in anticipation of the cover elements.

3 Line art and colour flats

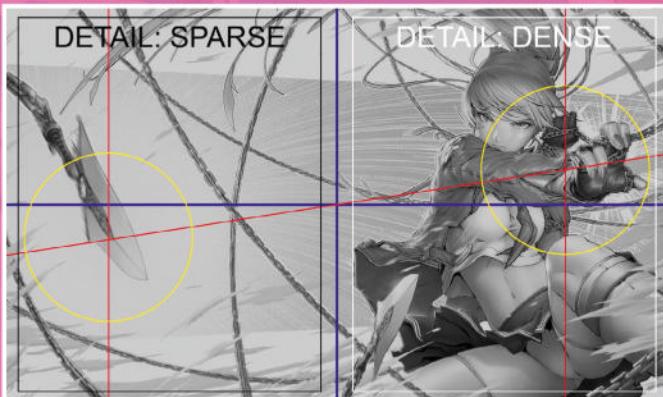
Scaling up the image to high resolution, I then digitally ink the lines. I check the thinness or thickness of each line, as well as how lines converge on overlapping objects. Colour flats are then applied on the image. I keep an eye on their relationship with each other, and their relationship with the cover elements.

Check the lighting

To achieve consistent lighting, I create shadow layers set to Multiply mode and highlight layers set to Linear Dodge, placed under the line art layer but above the object layers. The shadows and highlights may look a little rough at the moment, but more detail can be applied once the object layers and lighting layers are merged together.

**Compositional balance**

Composition is a great challenge when it comes to wraparound illustrations. For this image, I used a Yin-Yang balance, where the main point of interest on one side has an equivalent point of interest on the opposite side. And where one side is sparsely detailed, the other side should be dense, to create a more interesting visual flow.



A sense of depth
Although the final image will be in colour, it helps to convey depth through the line art. Varying line weights creates interesting forms and provide hints on an object's depth. In addition, when objects that are spatially far apart overlap in your view, a gap between converging lines creates depth.

COMPOSE YOUR CHARACTERS

HIRO USUDA demonstrates how to draw an enchanting small crowd scene in the manga style, using Paint Tool SAI with a little help from Poser

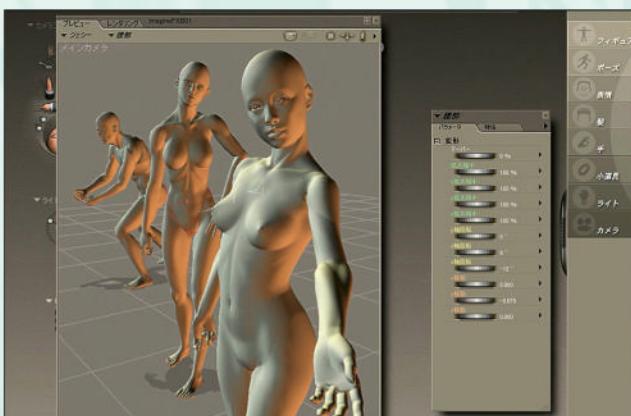
ARTIST PROFILE

HIRO USUDA

COUNTRY: Japan

 Former Konami artist turned freelancer, Hiro has lent her skills to the Perfect World MMORPG and various art books, card games and novels.
<http://ifxm.ag/h-usada>

 GET YOUR RESOURCES SEE PAGE 146



1 Simple sketch

First, blocking. Based on the quite rough composition with simple circles and lines, I make character poses. In Poser 6 3D software you can make sample figure poses in 3D graphic space and render images through the viewport with your customised camera and lighting configurations. I used to draw figures without any references, but I find that the more specific the reference I use, the more believable description I come up with.

This workshop will explain how I compose a group of manga characters. When I draw pictures in the manga style, I always take care over a character's features. A Japanese audience will appreciate the attractiveness of any character. Furthermore, when painting a person's face you'll need to quickly convey their personality or unique skills.

My usual strategy is for female characters to have slightly oversized eyes and a small nose. In contrast, I draw a male character as realistically as I can. The background is drawn realistically too, although I use exaggerated perspective to give the painting extra impact. Because it's a manga scene it's not necessary to use a realistic colour palette, which might prove restrictive. This is fine by me because colouring is one of the best parts of the process.

After churning out many thumbnails, I decided to make it a bright, interesting environment featuring just three figures.

2 Rough composition

In Poser, I lay out the sample figure for the main character. I place a wand in her right hand and consider the light effect of her magic in her left. I aim her eyes towards the camera and set the other two characters following the rough layout. I render the image in Preview Mode without textures so I can see the clear gradations. Now I'm ready to start drawing.



3 Decide colour tones

Moving on to SAI, the digital painting software, I start with thin lines using the Airbrush Tool. I create a layer for each character, which will make editing easier later. I draw nude figures first, then decide on the costumes. When the draft image is done, I set it to the Template layer and lower the Opacity. Then I add a new layer, to draw clear and specific lines over the template. Blocking is also good for adding colour. I lay down rough colours on another new layer over the finished outlines of the main character and over the Line layer too, in order to check the overall tones.

4 Add colour

I repeat the process for the other figures. With my outline done, I add solid colours inside the lines. First select Outside with the Magic Wand tool, then Invert the selection to Inside. I use the Bucket tool for colouring – selecting Mask Non-Transparent Area in the Layer settings keeps the outlines away from colours. Now for specific parts of the main character. I copy the Line layer and merge it to the Colour layer, leaving the copy for backup. I'm ready to paint and I think of it as acrylic painting, stroking brushes over and over again for deeper quality.



IN DEPTH | COMPOSE YOUR CHARACTERS



5 Brushing up

I continue to paint the two background characters. The outline will be buried in the colours painted over it, so it doesn't have to be correct, just enough to know its position and size. If I need to design decoration or textures, I use the Brush tool. I also use Horizontal Flip regularly to check the overall image from the opposite viewpoint.



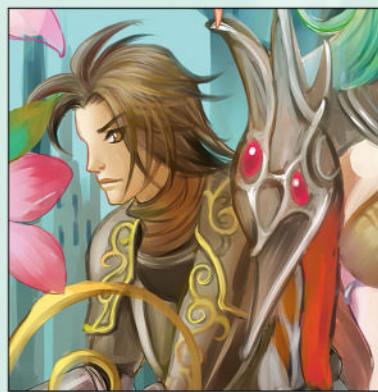
ARTIST INSIGHT

IMAGINE NATION

Collect material, but don't rely on it too much. Imagination is based on knowledge, but you have to take off and dream, too. Manga art is above reality. There is no easy road to drawing.

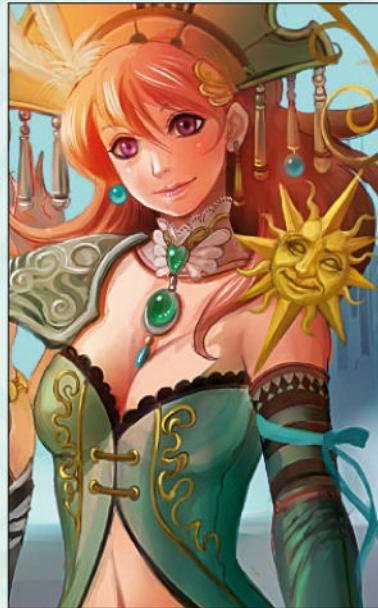
6 Shadow play

When I finish the entire painting process, I check the Clipping on the layer and place a new layer over it in Multiply mode. Now I begin painting the shadows. Clipping keeps the area you're painting shadows inside the characters. Starting shadows with light colours might be better than blocking. Back to the painting again and I create a Multiply layer for the shadows and repeat until I'm happy with the results.



7 Background check

When I start a painting, I always try to capture the atmosphere first by starting with a main subject. Now I find the background characters aren't quite right. I add some gold Arabesque patterns to the male character's armour, using the Brush tool. I like to use the process of thick painting techniques, which means the outlines don't have to be the final decision. You can just specify and modify the shape and size by painting later. What's more, I like the style of full gradation and multicoloured patterning. I decide to add symbolised characters with framed decoration of Arabesque patterns and antique objects. To add contrast between these beautiful characters, I add the sun and the moon, with mysterious, if a little bit creepy, expressions on their faces.



8 Recycling old work

Sometimes I use my own artworks for reference. I tried painting a sun once before, so I go back and follow my old work. I add gold patterns on the main character's clothes, too. I've not done the background yet, so I take the earlier process of outline and painting, along with layers for this too.

9 Tuning up

I have the basic elements now, so I tune up the colour with Hue/Saturation and Brightness. On top of all the layers, I create a new layer in Overlay mode. I use the Bucket tool to colour it, then change the Opacity and other settings to build the atmosphere. After that, I copy the Overlay layer to add on each part of the image (the characters, background, decorations, objects, etc). Merge layers to add each of them. At merging, I check Clip on the layer underneath. Then I delete the first Overlay layer. The flying fairy above the male character is not painted yet, so I work on it here.



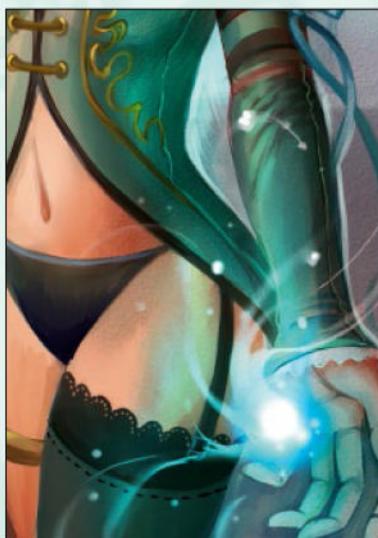
10 Polishing process

Finally I start polishing. The details still need work, like the main character's wand, the lace fabric etc. Also, the light of the magic effect on the main character's left hand. I paint the magic's core and ray of light one by one, following the outline.



11 Making it glow

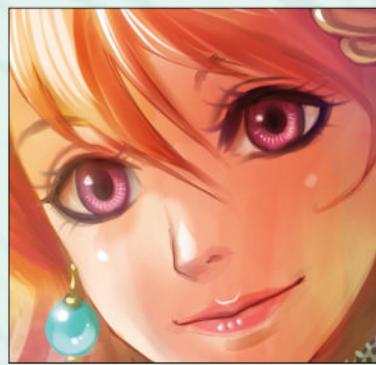
I prepare some Overlay layers and Multiply layers for the Light and Shadow effects. Also try Glow Layer, which is great for effects with the magic lights here. I want to tune it up – sometimes I add paints to blend them all into the image.

**12 Adding texture**

The depth of an image has a lot to do with colour, so here I lighten the background with Hue/Saturation. To apply textures to the main character's clothes, I prepare them and add them to a layer above. Check Clip on the layer underneath to mask it where not needed on the character. I change the Layer mode to Overlay and refine the colour with Hue/Saturation. Use the Eraser to remove unnecessary parts of the texture and edit with airbrush and brush. I need to fix the male character, so I select his arm with the Lasso, cut, paste, then edit his body and sword.

**13 Filter effects**

Nearly done, but I need more textures for a deeper quality, like an analog painting. The main character wears a hat, so we need texture for this. I repeat this for several textures. I came up with a big change to the atmosphere, applying more effect filters. When I work with light colours, I try not to use darker colours much, so I add some hints of colour on those parts and for this I choose purple.

**14 Watercolour effect**

I feel like adding more textures, so I paste them onto the texture layer, in Lighten/Darken mode, then erase unnecessary parts. Another idea is to add some watercolour-style texture for an analog feel. To do this I prepare a new layer and paint colours with the Brush tool, among others. Then I set Tool Effect>Canvas Material to Watercolor2. Also, I try Tool Effect >Watercolor Edge (change the parameters for the result you want). Using this setting, paint more and you'll get watercolour effects.

**ARTIST INSIGHT****LOVE WHAT YOU DO**

We Japanese say, "Suki koso mono no jozu nare". This means: "What one likes, one will do best". Love what you do and don't give up a picture until it's finished.

15 Adding light

On the internet I found a Light Leak effect. Mainly used in photography, this adds some extra light and colour, like a lens flare effect. I found this makes the image more interesting. To simulate it, I create a new layer in Screen mode and some solid colours. I use the Brush tool and change the layer parameters to tune it up. I add a bit more texture here, too.

**16 Finishing touches**

The more you fine-tune, up to a point, the better your painting will look, so tweak it again and again for as long as you want. It might have been fun to come up with more effects, or secondary objects like the sun and the moon. But it's also important to decide where to stop, either for a deadline or for the sake of the artwork. You should care about this point especially. This painting took me 15 hours. Good luck!



TURN A NEBULOUS VISION INTO ART

BAO PHAM starts out with chaos and then carefully sifts through the debris of ideas to create something beautiful, strange and enchanting

ARTIST PROFILE

BAO PHAM

COUNTRY: US



Bao is a painter working with traditional and digital media. His digital work stays within the fantasy genre and features the occasional gore. When working with traditional media, he likes to paint from life and record it as accurately as possible. www.baophamart.com



GET YOUR
RESOURCES
SEE PAGE 146



VIDEO
AVAILABLE

RESOURCES

CUSTOM BRUSHES

CHALK



This was my primary brush for this workshop - I used it for everything, from sketching, to painting and blending. It suits my way of working well.

13

Before starting a piece it's usually a good idea to have... well, a good idea. Sometimes, though, I like jumping into a painting head-first: no sketches, no value studies, no colour studies, no plan of attack, just a vague and distant vision of the finished painting. The process can be difficult and frustrating, and more often than not I end up abandoning it and moving on to something else. Yet the ideas that

maintain my interest become that special something I was searching for all along.

It's certainly not for everyone, but for a while now this has been my painting process - at least in the digital realm. The difficulties and frustration tend to multiply when I work traditionally. But that's the beauty of digital painting: it enables me to make my mistakes and then fix them with a flick of a Wacom stylus.

This workshop will show how I put this approach into practice and the problems

I encounter along the way. I'll share the various techniques I use with layers and effects to make the necessary changes when I need to, and how I employ them as safety nets when I don't want to stray too far from my idea. I hope to demonstrate the advantages this way of working can bring, and convey how much more fun it is, compared to painting when you know what you're doing. At the very least, I hope you take something away that you can use in your creative process.

1 Sourcing my idea

It all has to start somewhere, and to help come up with some ideas I leaf through my old sketchbooks. I eventually come across a small sketch of a young girl with a tree growing out of her head. It's not a sketch of anything in particular and I like how it just lingers there, waiting to be taken on a fun ride. I take a quick photo of the sketch and explore the idea further in Photoshop.

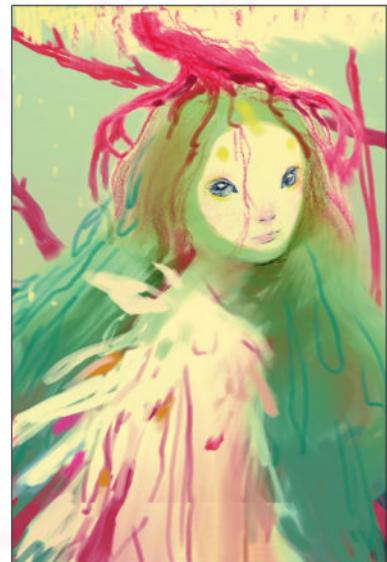
2 Deciding on a direction

I set the photo layer to Multiply and add a body with some flat colours. I then surround the neutral flesh tones with two complementary colours: green and pink. The idea of her becoming part of nature comes from the tree and so the direction is established. In turn, a body that's covered in leaves or wings is suggested. The bright, mask-like face highlights her eyes.

ARTIST INSIGHT

FLEXIBILITY WITH LAYERS

Keep your image adjustments on separate layers by going to Layer > New Adjustment Layer and choosing the desired adjustments. Keeping them separate will give you greater flexibility when layering your effects; you won't have to commit to anything until everything works. The same goes for New Fill Layer, which is handy for adding tints or changing colours. Play with your layer options until you're satisfied.







3 Expand your palette

Starting with a limited colour palette helps me focus on the shapes and how they work as a composition. Once I'm comfortable with the overall composition I start varying the colour temperature within the larger shapes, such as shifting the greens to a cooler turquoise or adding some deep warm reds to the magenta. This is the next step towards creating my palette for the entire painting, which I can do using the Eyedropper tool as I work on the rest of the painting.

4 Defining the shapes

I start cleaning up some of the clutter and clarify the shape of the tree on her head. I paint over the pencil lines to remove the unwanted paper texture. I Lasso her eyes and move them into the correct perspective. I work my way through the painting to find anything that I can build on; I add her hand to help balance out the composition.



5 Create the setting

Once the main character starts becoming clear, I build on the branches and add a few more to create an interesting setting for her. I'm keeping them pink to connect them with the tree on her head. There are also some hints of falling petals from the white foliage of the tree. This adds to the movement and the painting's overall atmosphere. They're smaller details, so I'll finish them off later.

6 Managing layers

I play it safe by creating a separate layer for each large element. This enables me to edit each more easily. However, I do restrict the number of layers because I like how colours move into each other when I paint. I add a new layer for any new idea I want to try out in case it doesn't work out or I need to make changes.

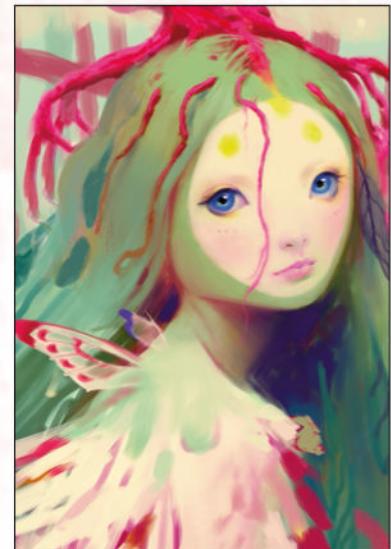
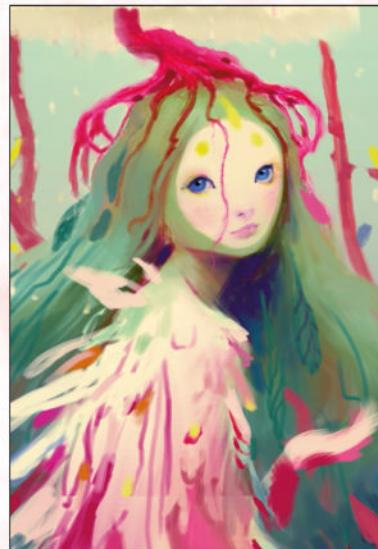
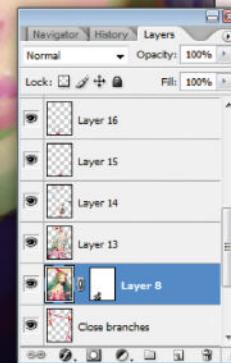
SHORTCUTS

INVERT
Ctrl+I [PC] Cmd+I [Mac]
Inverts a colour and gives you its complement. You may have to shift the values or hues to get the right effect.



7 Refining the face

Most of the facial features were established in the pencil sketch. I only have to refine it and readjust the features. The decision for the mask-like colouring of the face is from the initial rough; I keep it because it adds to the whimsical aspect of the image. Her bright face also contrasts well with her dark eyes.



8 Mix it up

Taking cues from her doll-like face, I want the overall setting to be surreal rather than, say, your average enchanted forest. I want to create a world that's hers and hers alone, a mix between the strange and innocent, alien yet fairy-like, like the juxtaposition of the parasitic, tree-like shape on her head and her butterfly-covered body.

9 Background tweak

I reshape the tree trunk on her head to make it more dynamic, and I suggest that the hair connects to it like roots. The background trees also get a quick rendering pass. I keep the values relatively close to each other to hint at

distance; because the light is cool, the colours of the branches in the mid-ground are also dialled back.



RESOURCES

CUSTOM BRUSHES

SPONGE



I used this brush sparingly to add a bit of texture in the wings and tree branches. It's great for adding subtle textures to an image.

SOFT ROUND

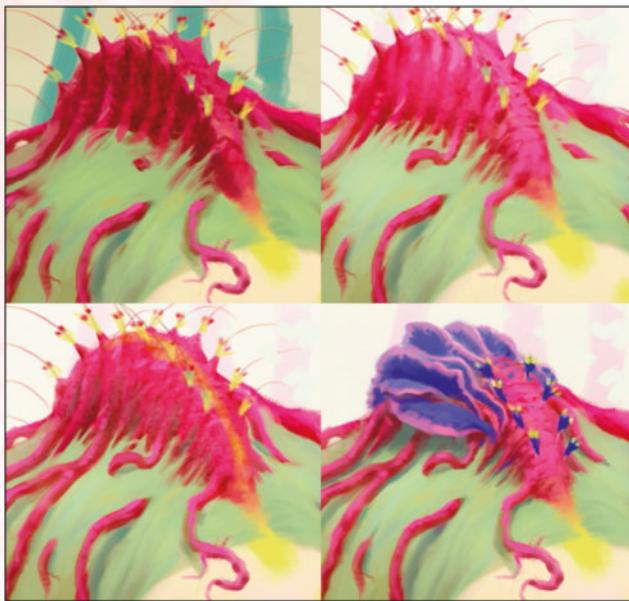


Used mostly to blend colours and to apply soft gradients.



10 A myriad of wings

The wings that cover her body are suggested by broad brushstrokes. I start refining them one by one, making decisions about their shapes and colours as I go along. I start out with a large mass, then separate the shapes using shadows. A base colour is laid down first, then the veining of the wing, and finally the patterns.



11 Colour grouping

To manage the various patterns, I keep groupings of colours together to preserve their readability. Then, within that grouping, I introduce touches of colours from the other groups, creating visual cohesion. I also adjust the patterns for each wing.

12 Big changes

The client asks me to edit the tree on her head to avoid distracting from the magazine logo. Removing the trunk means deleting the foliage as well, and so I extend the trees to fill in the resulting gap. Furthermore, the branches in the background conflict with the magazine coverlines, so I decide to make them green to unify them with the background. These changes are made quickly because each element is on a different layer.

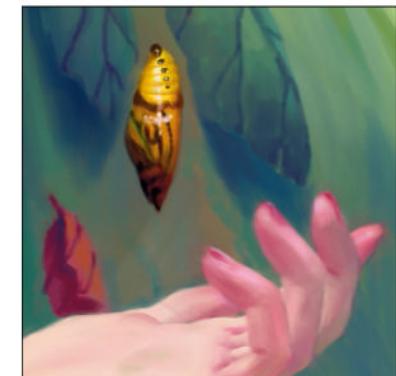


13 More changes

We decide to keep the colour of the trees but make them brighter to work with the cover text. The maimed tree trunk still needs to be resolved, though. I play with its shape, making it like a skeletal headdress, then soften it into a caterpillar form, and finally add petal-like ridges on its back. I like the mix of different forms in it and it works with the rest of the image. It looks very parasitic.

14 Brighten things up

To lighten the background and give it an almost foggy, washed-out effect, I create a new layer, set it to Soft Light and choose a pale green to brighten and cool down the background colours. The same is done with the branches and, because they're on their own layers, I make sure to activate Create Clipping Mask to keep the effect isolated to just the branches. Once I'm satisfied with the results, I merge the layers.



15 Loose ends

For her hand, I reference my own. It's the most convenient source I have and all I need is a mirror. As with all forms, I start with large block-like masses, and slowly smooth them down to represent the fingers and palm, keeping in mind the light source. To play off the idea of butterfly wings, I paint a chrysalis floating in her hand. This adds a small but much-needed narrative element to the image.



SHORTCUTS

ALTER YOUR VIEW
Ctrl+Space (PC)
Cmd+Space (Mac)
Use these keys to quickly zoom in and out of your image while in Free Transform mode.

16 Falling petals and other details

The detailing of the wings never stops, but I need to get on to the rest of the image. I add some leaves to fill in the empty space, paint petals on the trees and flesh out the falling petals. I introduce some markings to the tip of her fingers to reference the subtle markings on her face as well as the patterns of the wings.



ARTIST INSIGHT

PRACTISE YOUR SIGHT
Let your mind run free with the shapes and patterns by blurring your vision. A patch of colour can be a start of a new shape, while the smallest mark can become a new pattern. Your eyes can be tricked into seeing something that's not there yet. Shapes merge to become other shapes. It's a great way to generate ideas and to keep track of your forms, colours and composition, especially during the sketching stage.

17 Finishing up

Finally, I flatten everything and duplicate the layer twice. On one copy I add Gaussian Blur at 2 pixels. Then I erase the parts I want to keep sharp. On the other layer, I apply 20 pixel Gaussian Blur and set it to Overlay at 20 per cent. This adds a glow to the image and deepens the colours, as well as helping to unify the image.

RESOURCES

VIDEO
TUTORIALS,
IMAGES &
BRUSHES

Watch videos, examine Photoshop files and install custom brushes – download them from <http://ifxm.ag/mangaartist2>



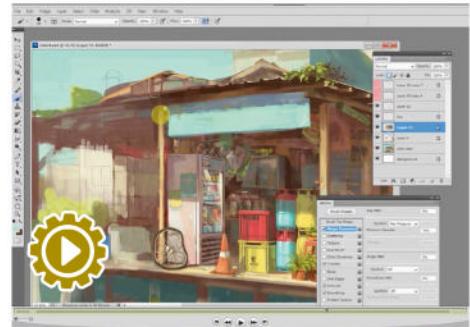
Paint a manga character

From sketch to finished image, Han-Yuan Yu reveals how he creates a colourful manga figure



Brush up on your portrait skills

Lois Van Baarle helps you to paint a strong, fashionable female with decorative pieces



Paint a manga environment

FeiGiap shows you how to get inspiration from elements around you to paint a nostalgic scene



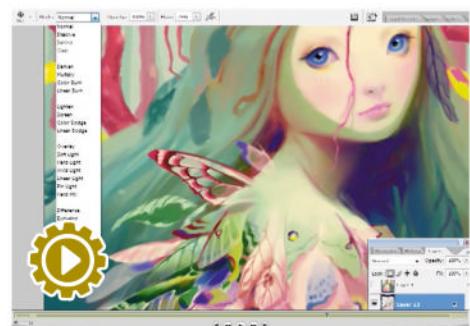
Design a manga character

Work up your own character concept into an illustration, with Low Zi Rong's expert advice



Digital pastel techniques

Jade Mosch uses her traditional pastel skills to produce a stunning piece of illustrative art



Turn a nebulous vision into art

Bao Pham sifts through the debris of ideas to create something beautiful and enchanting



EDITORIAL
BEREN NEALE EDITOR
beren.neale@futurenet.com

DANIEL VINCENT ART EDITOR
daniel.vincent@futurenet.com

CLIFF HOPE OPERATIONS EDITOR
clifford.hope@futurenet.com

FOR IMAGINEFX
CLAIRE HOWLETT EDITOR
claire.howlett@futurenet.com

CONTRIBUTIONS
Arman Akopian, Lois Van Baarle, Sarah Clark, Andrew Cottle, Crowley, FeiGiap, Ruan Jia, Paul Kwon, Jade Mosch, Saejin Oh, Bao Pham, Pramini Phatiphong, Valentina Remenar, Jem Roberts, Low Zi Rong, Alex Summersby, Paco Rico Torres, Hiro Usuda, Emma Vieceli, Han-Yuan Yu

ADVERTISING
SASHA MCGREGOR advertising manager
sasha.mcgregor@futurenet.com
+44 (0) 1225 687675

CHRIS MITCHELL account executive
chris.mitchell@futurenet.com
+44 (0) 1225 687832

PRINT & PRODUCTION

VIVIENNE CALVERT production controller
MARK CONSTANCE production manager
NOLA COKEYE ad production manager
NATHAN DREWETT ad production co-ordinator
MICHELLE ROGERS operational purchasing manager

LICENSING

REGINA ERAK licensing and syndication director
MATT ELLIS senior licensing manager

FUTURE PUBLISHING LIMITED

DAN OLIVER group editor-in-chief
RODNEY DIVE group art director
MATTHEW PIERCE head of content & marketing, photography, creative & design
NIAL FERGUSON director of content & marketing
ZILLAH BYNG-MADDICK chief executive

Printed in the UK by William Gibbons & Sons Ltd
Distributed by Seymour Distribution Ltd +44 (0) 207 429 4000
ImagineFX is the registered trademark of Future Publishing Ltd. All Rights Reserved.

CONTACT US

PHONE +44 (0) 1225 442244
EMAIL mail@imaginefx.com
ART SUBMISSIONS fxpose@imaginefx.com
WEBSITE <http://imaginefx.creativebloq.com>
TWITTER @imaginefx
FACEBOOK www.facebook.com/imaginefx
POST ImagineFX Magazine,
Future Publishing Ltd, Quay House,
The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA, UK

{ Want to work for Future? }
Visit www.futurenet.com/jobs



Future is an award-winning international media group and leading digital business. We reach more than 58 million international consumers a month and create world-class content and advertising solutions for passionate consumers online, on tablet & smartphone and in print.

Future pic is a public company quoted on the London Stock Exchange (symbol: FUTR). www.futurepic.com

Chief executive Zillah Byng-Maddick
Non-executive chairman Peter Allen
Chief financial officer Richard Haley
Tel +44 (0)207 042 4000 (London)
Tel +44 (0)1225 442 244 (Bath)

© 2015 Future Publishing Limited. All rights reserved. No part of this magazine may be used or reproduced without the written permission of the publisher. Future Publishing Limited (company number 2008885) is registered in England and Wales. The registered office of Future Publishing Limited is at Quay House, The Ambury, Bath BA1 1UA. All information contained in this magazine is for information only and, as far as we are aware, correct at the time of going to press. Future Publishing Limited cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies in such information. Readers are advised to contact manufacturers and retailers directly with regard to the price of products/services referred to in this magazine. If you submit unsolicited material to us, you automatically grant Future a licence to publish your submission in whole or in part in all editions of the magazine, including licensed editions worldwide and in any physical or digital format throughout the world. Any material you submit is sent at your risk and, although every care is taken, neither Future nor its employees, agents or subcontractors shall be liable for loss or damage.

PLUS

Final artwork and custom brushes



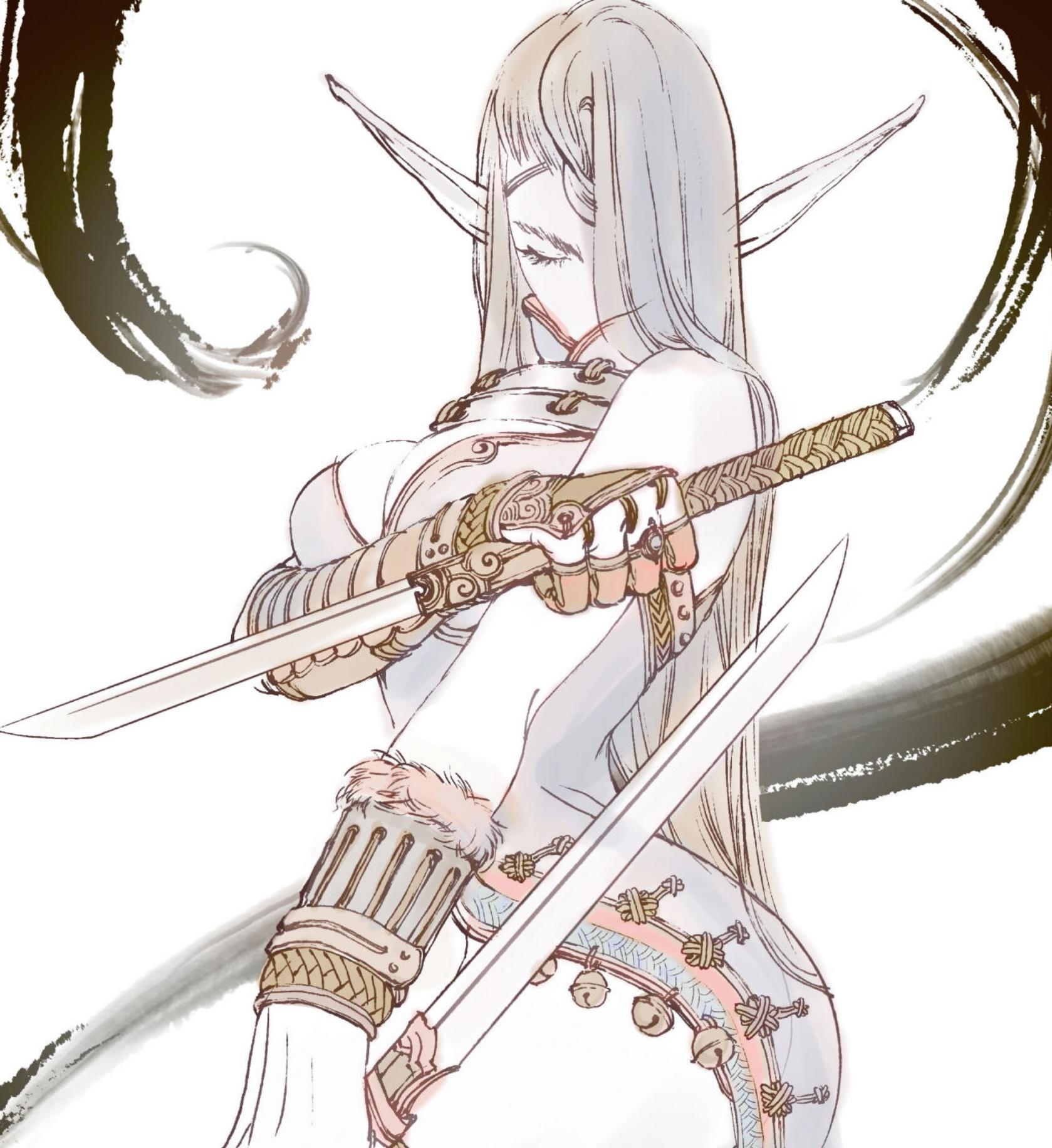
GET YOUR
RESOURCES

You're three steps away from your workshop files...

1 Type this into your browser's address bar (not the search bar):
<http://ifxm.ag/mangaartist2>

2 Workshop resources from this special issue are divided into image files and brushes, and videos.

3 Download what you need, and learn from our workshop artists!



"I tried to use a calligraphic style in these works, while keeping realism in mind"

MINGZHU YANG

MANGA ARTIST

VOLUME 2

WORKSHOP

CREATE ACTION

Low Zi Rong shares tips on dynamic art



"Facial expressions go a long way to telling a story"

EMMA VIECLEI



INTERVIEW

A WORLD OF MANGA

East meets West in Chinese artist's Wenjun Lin's work

ILYA KUVSHINOV

Find out how this Russian artist took manga back to Japan

CHARACTER COMPOSITION

Follow Hiro Usuda's classically composed crowd scene

COMPELLING CARD ART

Applibot's resident artist Crowgod displays his skills

