Death Blow

Alon Chou's Transformers fan art 'making of' can be seen right here! (Not in disguise...)

Editorial

Welcome to the 22nd issue of 2DArtist magazine. Please take some time to fill in our survey if you haven't already done so. We are constantly trying to improve the magazine in many different ways, and you can help by telling us how to improve your 'experience' of 2DArtist. You can see the survey HERE, and don't forget that you can also win a free 12-month subscription to 2DArtist by being one of the lucky selected readers who have responded to the survey! We want to make sure that we are providing as much quality content as possible, at the still-great price of only $4 per issue! Let us know what you really think because we take all suggestions very seriously, as let's face it, it's you guys that we're trying to please! Enjoy this issue and hopefully many more in the future, too! Ed.

Editor
Ben Barnes

Assistant Editor
Chris Perrins

Layout
Ben Barnes
Alex Price
Bobby Brown

Marketing
Lynette Clee

Content
Tom Greenway
Lynette Clee
Warin Pismoke
Richard Tilbury
Chris Perrins

Free Stuff!
Wherever you see this symbol, click it to download resources, extras and even movies!

FREE BRUSHES
FREE RESOURCES
FREE DOWNLOAD HERE

Contents
What's In This Month:

Magazine Viewing Tips

For optimum viewing of the magazine it is recommended that you have the latest Acrobat Reader installed. Download it for free here: DOWNLOAD. To view the many double-page spreads featured in 2DArtist magazine, you can set the reader to display 'two-up', which will show double-page spreads as one large landscape image. **1.** Open the magazine in Reader; **2.** Go to the 'View' menu, then 'Page display'; **3.** Select 'Two-up Continuous' making sure that 'Show Cover Page' is also selected.

Contributing Artists

Every month, many creatives and artists around the world contribute to 3DCreative & 2DArtist Magazine. Here you can read all about them. If you would like to be a part of 3DCreative or 2DArtist Magazines, please contact lynette@zoopublishing.com.

Patri Balanovsky

Is a Production/Concept Artist at PitchiPoy Animation Studios, Tel-Aviv, in Israel. He's been drawing & painting since he can remember; creating characters, creatures & fantastic scenes has always been a passion of his. Telling a whole story through a single image can be quite a challenge, but he's always up for it! Keeping his work fresh & versatile, he explores all sorts of genres, styles & attitudes.

Pat2005b@hotmail.com

http://chuckmate.blogspot.com

David Neale

Started using Photoshop whilst doing his Illustration degree in Hull, UK, & has taught himself from there onwards. After graduating in 2005, he has worked as a freelance consultant for EA games, sold prints in galleries, & has completed various freelance projects in the illustration field. Now represented by Advocate Illustration Agency, he hopes to get more work on children's books & would also like to move into concept design for animation at some point in future.

davejneale@hotmail.com

Richard Tilbury

Has had a passion for drawing since being a couple of feet tall. He studied Fine Art & was eventually led into the realm of computers several years ago. His brushes have slowly been dissolving in white spirit since the late nineties & now, alas, his graphics tablet has become their successor. He still sketches regularly & now balances his time between 2D & 3D, although drawing will always be closest to his heart.

ibex80@hotmail.com
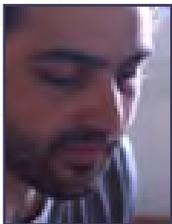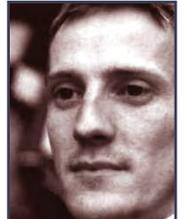
Fred Augis

Is a 2D Independent Artist, in Paris, France. He started out as a Graphic Artist at Quorum, Lyon. He studies Publicity in high school, then went to Emile Cohl, in Lyon, to study traditional art. He dreams of becoming a Concept Designer for a film studio, and currently works as a Graphic Illustrator and a Graphic Designer.

fredaugis@hotmail.com

www.fredaugis.com
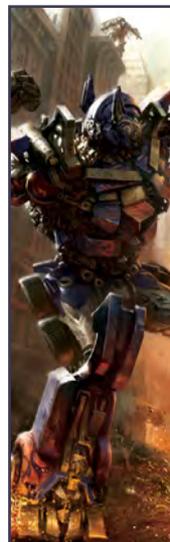
Alon Chou

Is a freelance 2D Artist & Illustrator, in Taiwan. Alon Chou graduated from the National Taiwan University of Art. Drawing, to him, is like a single frame of a movie - it is dramatic. In his mind, a drawing should be a complete presentation of the plot, emotion, atmosphere, and so on. He likes to include all of these elements in his drawings, to make them better.

www.alon.tw

along1120@yahoo.com.tw

John Wallin Liberto

Is a Freelance Artist, in Sweden. He started working with Photoshop in 2001, after discovering all the possibilities with a computer & a Wacom tablet. He worked at several games companies before deciding to go freelance. He moved to London for a year to work on feature films as a digital matte artist, but nowadays he mostly does concept art for computer games, such as *Gears of War, Battlefield, The Club, Highlander, UT 2007* & more. info@johnwallin.net
www.johnwallin.net
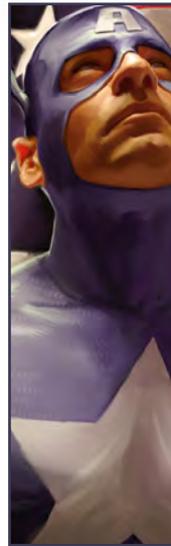
Kieran Yanner

Is a Senior Concept Artist at NCSoft, Austin Texas, in the USA. He has been a self-taught Conceptual Artist in the games & entertainment industry since 1999. He's currently working at NCSoft Austin as a Senior Concept Artist, specialising in creatures & characters. Kieran has produced work, and continues to freelance commercial and conceptual art, for a wide range of leading publishers and production studios.
kieran@kieranyanner.com
www.kieranyanner.com

Bruno Werneck

Was born in Brazil, and has been playing with crayons ever since he can remember. He began pursuing formal artistic training when he was awarded a scholarship to study at the Art Institute of Chicago. Professionally, Bruno has done everything from print design to working on animated TV commercials. Currently, he works for Midway Games as a Concept Artist, freelancing as an illustrator here & there - basically getting paid to play with crayons! contact@brunowerneck.com
www.brunowerneck.com

Francis Vallejo

Is a Freelance Illustrator & Maya Artist, in the USA. He's currently attending Ringling College of Art and Design and is actively pursuing a career in freelance illustration. He has graciously been featured in Spectrum and Creative Quarterly, and is looking to build up his clientele and portfolio.

fvallejo@ringling.edu
www.francisvallejo.blogspot.com

Christophe Vacher

Is an Illustrator, Concept Artist & Background Painter, in the USA. He's been working in animation & movies for over 16 years, mainly for Disney feature animations & Dreamworks. He also does book covers & creates personal work for art galleries. He's currently doing concept artwork for Disney's next live-action/ animation feature movie, "Enchanted", and is Art Directing a CG animated short movie on the side.
christophe.vacher@excite.com
www.vacher.com
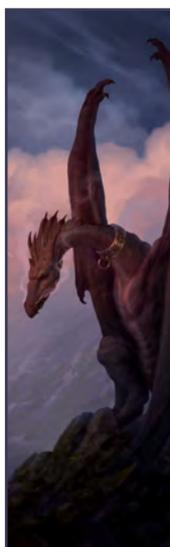
Would You Like To Contribute To 3DCreative Or 2DArtist Magazine?

We are always looking for tutorial artists, gallery submissions, potential interviewees, Making Of writers and more. For more information, send a link to your work here: **lynette@zoopublishing.com**.

ANIMATIONMENTOR.COM

The Online Animation School ™

"Getting to spend my day creating peformances and bringing characters to life is so incredibly awesome, and I can't believe I get to work on such a cool project straight out of school. I'm so glad I had the opportunity to learn character animation in such a challenging and supportive environment."

- Aja Bogdanoff
Animation Mentor Graduate
Blue Sky Studios

"There is no better motivator than knowing that your work can be seen by more than 600 people each week, including some of the best animators in the industry. This, paired with the contagious enthusiasm of my classmates, the mentors and the Animation Mentor staff pushed me to always do my best work!"

- Mike Stern
Animation Mentor Graduate
DreamWorks Feature Animation

AnimationMentor.com is an 18-month online animation school for students who are serious about an animation career. The program is designed and taught by professionals, working at the top animation studios in the industry, focusing 100% on character animation. Our online campus is built with a production studio focus and provides a unique and special community of both students and instructors from all over the world who have one passion in common -- animation!

WINTER TERM STARTS JANUARY 7TH
APPLICATIONS DUE NOVEMBER 16TH

1-877-E-ANIMATE (1-877-326-4628)
1-510-809-1177 (Outside U.S.)
admissions@animationmentor.com
www.AnimationMentor.com

CALLING ALL ANIMATORS & ARTISTS

LIKE SANDS THROUGH THE HOUR GLASS...TIME'S ALMOST UP.

**Don't miss your chance to Bust In & Win!
Upload your animations or artwork to
MyToons.com and you could win amazing
prizes....it's that easy! Enter by 10/26/07.**

mytoons.com
everything animated

BUST IN & WIN!

8gb iPhone   LE-1700 Tablet PC   Cash Cards

John Wallin Liberto

"I think the most important thing about being a freelance concept artist is to understand the client, be able to communicate, probably bite the sour apple once in a while, and not let your pride get in the way."

John Wallin Liberto is a freelance artist and illustrator working from his base in Stockholm, Sweden. His portfolio covers film, television and computer games, and he has recently worked as a concept artist on the acclaimed "Gears of War " for the XBOX 360...

John Wallin Liberto

Could you tell us a little about your background and how you came to be where you are now?
I was born in Palermo, Sicily in 1981 with a Swedish mother and Italian father, however they separated when I was four years old and my mother and I moved back to Sweden. When school started, I was always drawing more than listening to the teacher, and it wasn't until I applied and entered an upper secondary school that specialised in media, like TV, Multimedia, Film and 3D, that I got to use my drawing skills to create and visualise. I was introduced to Adobe Photoshop, and found out that you could paint with it. After leaving school I got a job at a games company, and after several different jobs at different game companies I moved to London to work on films. Longing to go back to Sweden, I eventually returned and tried my hand as a freelancer. It worked pretty well and I'm still doing freelance work now, mostly for games companies.

Concept art for video games seems to feature quite a bit in your galleries. Was this a conscious decision, or was it just that these were the most abundant jobs that came your way?
Concept art for games worked best for me; I think it's mostly thanks to Epic Games and the super-hyped XBOX 360 game, "Gears of War". I don't know why I haven't done much concept art for films, but I guess it's because I started working with computer games from the beginning. The film job opportunities I got required me to work "on site", but I believe I work best here in my little grotto.

Why do you feel you work best in your "grotto"?
The best thing with working from home is that you basically can choose what hours to work. If I get stuck, can't paint, or if I'm lacking inspiration, I can take a walk and come back refreshed and finish the job, although this requires some discipline. The worst part is not having colleagues in the office to talk to.

Could you describe your approach to one of your digital concept paintings and the general procedure you follow?
The first step in painting a concept image is to gather references and material that inspires you. A certain "hunger" is required to do a good job on a painting. After that I either start on a line drawing (if the perspective is challenging), and then I try and get shapes down with different colours. After that I work out the actual form of objects and landscapes from the first rough shapes. Being able to go back and change things is always a must, since the client probably wants a few changes here and there. It's hard but it's important to keep as many things as you can in layers.

Do you ever abandon any paintings mid process and re-think them, or do you just experiment with the structure until they work?

Sometimes I do a much better job if I start over on a new canvas; it's sort of like the second time you bake a pizza - you know what you did wrong when you baked the first one. There have been a few occasions when I've had the luck to save a painting by working on it until the problem was solved.
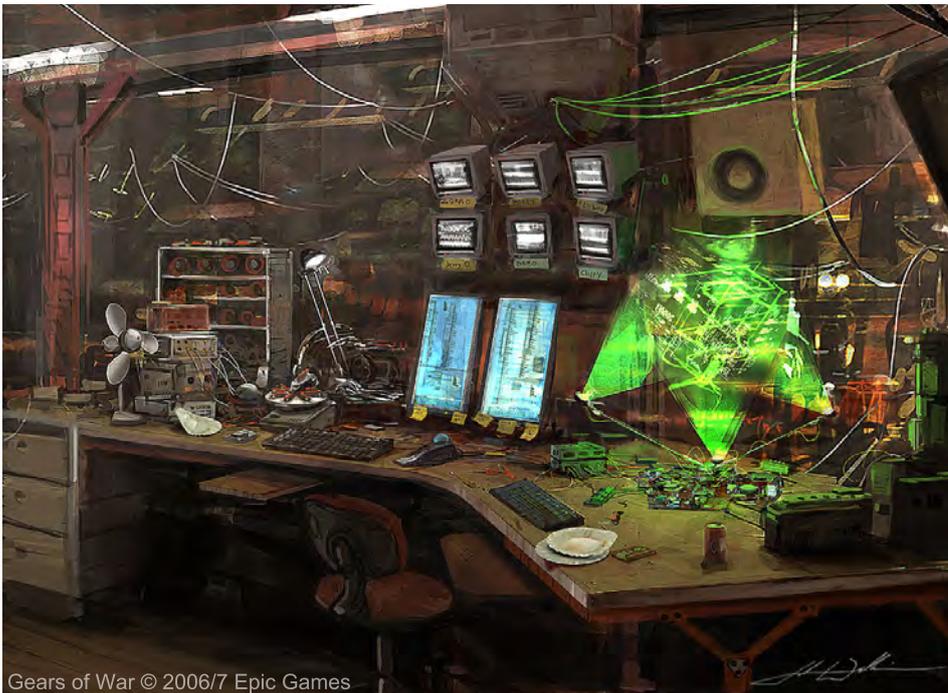
Gears of War was acclaimed for its visuals, but what inspiration did you draw upon for the concept art?

For the Gears of War project I received small descriptions of the actual image I was supposed to paint - sort of a short story of what was there and why it was there. That was enough inspiration for me and luckily my style fitted the project well. Many of the designs are inspired from old Roman architecture and buildings in Stockholm, many of which have green oxidized copper roofs and dark brick walls.

With respect to your Gears of War work, can you tell us which was your favourite piece to

Gears of War © 2006/7 Epic Games

Gears of War © 2006/7 Epic Games

work on and why you liked it, compared to the other examples?

I enjoyed all of my concepts for Gears of War, but the one that I think of the most is "Hideout". A concept of a desk with a home-built hologram, monitors and lots of dirty things on the table. It was a pretty quick and sloppy sketch but I like the feeling of that image. I also liked "Conservatory", with the huge overgrown tree under a glass canopy, which the level designers made an outstanding job of in the game environment (this is where you challenge the berserker). I also got to make propaganda posters that are spread out here and there in the game, which was nice to try, and it was interesting to imitate different propaganda poster styles. The image that probably isn't the most impressive one, but that I remember the most, is "Caves". I listened to a song (I can't remember which one, now) but I suddenly felt that I actually visualised what the song described, for me. When I was finished I listened to the song again, and to me the image and song matched perfectly!
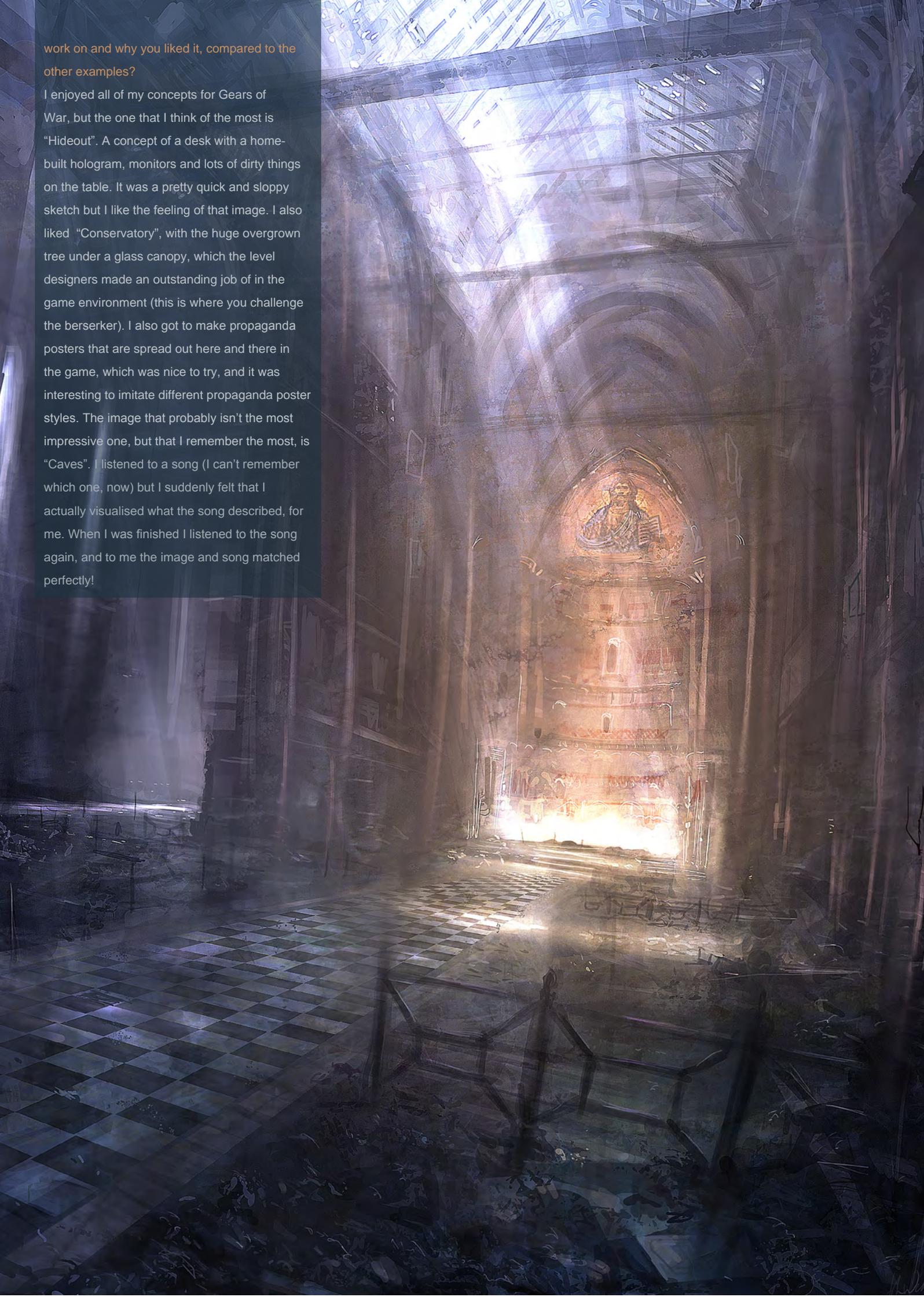
Do you ever start with a basic 3D render or photographic references as a foundation for building up a painting?

Sometimes delivering an image on time to a client is very important, so setting up a simple 3D scene helps a lot with the perspective. It confuses me more than helps if I use any lighting on the scene though. Either a screenshot from the wireframe or a render with the "standard lighting" works best for me. Photos can be good to use too, but they do make me feel less free, just like using a 3D plate. I try to use them only as a texture, for example for a brick wall or some cobblestone.

Environments feature heavily in your commercial work. Do you get asked to design numerous aspects of a game or does it generally encompass specific topics, such as this?

I guess you can call me an "Environment Concept Artist". I can paint characters and vehicles, but it's nothing I feel I want to charge too much money for. I either turn the project

down if it seems too challenging and pass the job to one of my "Character Concept Artist" friends, or I tell the client that I will try but that characters aren't my strongest suit. I'm learning and getting better at character art, but in my free time I love designing cars and creating aviation related paintings.

What is it about environments that particularly fascinates you, from an artistic point of view?
I feel that every time I paint an environment image, it's sort of like opening up a door to whatever I come up with. I like the feeling of being somewhere (who doesn't), and I add details as I "walk inside the image". I don't really know why I don't usually add characters to my paintings; I guess I like the mood when it's completely lonely, or maybe I'm just too chicken to paint characters in them?

What do you think are the secrets to being a successful concept artist, and are there any assets that you believe one really needs in a portfolio in order to secure work in this field?

I think the most important thing about being a freelance concept artist is to understand the client, be able to communicate, probably bite the sour apple once in a while, and not let your pride get in the way. I get paid by a client that wants his or her idea visualised, and must not forget that the client has to be happy with the result. Sometimes you have to stand up for yourself though and not let people use you!

I can imagine this is something that can be difficult in the early stages of a freelance career, because of not having many contacts and not wanting to make a bad name for yourself or burn any bridges, and so on. When it comes to actual painting, I guess it's important to have a certain style so that you can be recognised, but also be able to put your style on the shelf and paint differently, sometimes.

How would you describe your style?

The way I'd describe my style would be: "a close but failed attempt at painting photo realistically", ha ha.

John Wallin Liberto
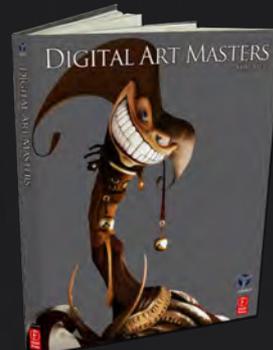
For more work by this artist please visit:
http://www.johnwallin.net/site/main.html
Or contact them at:
info@johnwallin.net
Interviewed by: Rich Tilbury

"Working with David Levy at Spacetime has also taught me a lot about the full capability of brushes in Photoshop and using 3D as an aid to production and concept art…"

Working for the likes of Disney, Wizards of the Coast and DC, to name but a few, Kieran Yanner takes time out to talk about his inspirations, future and his working style...

KIERAN YANNER

Hello Kieran, how would you best describe yourself and your art?

Well, I'm a concept artist and illustrator in the entertainment industry with about seven years' experience. I've worked for some of the top entertainment, hobby game and computer game publishers, including Hasbro, DC Comics, Upperdeck Entertainment, Decipher, Wizards of the Coast, Wizkids, White Wolf, Vivendi Universal Games, Disney and Sony Online Entertainment. I'm a pretty down to earth guy, I suppose. I'm also kind of shy and keep myself to myself, which makes it hard for me to do all the 'networking' things, sometimes. My art? Well, I love dark fantasy/sci-fi - I would say that's my main "shtick". I work in a variety of styles, from ultra cartoonish to high realism; from graphical to loose paint work and photo manipulation. Depending on the client and the subject matter depends on how I work. For Wizkids, I was asked to work in a more direct 'hyper reality' with a dark twist; the project ended up relying heavily upon photography and matte painting techniques. All of my work these days is digital. For the longest time (my stretch in the hobby games industry) pencil and ink wash was my medium, though.

What made you become an artist?

I don't really know how to do anything else. Drawing comes naturally to me. I've been doing

it since I was little because I was always bad at sports. I suppose it was also an escapist thing, for me. I think seeing Jim Lee and While Portacio's work in Uncanny Xmen, and Tony Diterlizzi's work with TSR, really dazzled me and made me think, "that's what I want to do".

So with having this natural ability, did you go to college to enhance your ability, or are you completely self-taught?

I attended the Northern Territory University for a couple of weeks back in Australia, but the classes were orientated towards design and fine art, not commercial illustration. So I quit and learnt nothing in the couple of weeks whilst I was there. I would not say 'completely' self taught, though. I owe a lot to the guys and gals at Ninjamountain.com, especially Mattias Snygg for the help and assistance over the past couple of years.

You have worked for the likes of DC Comics, Disney, White Wolf and Wizards of the Coast, to name but a few, and your list or credits are vast. So my question is, out of all these, which one has been your favourite to work for and which has given you the most experience?

Favourite one so far? That would have to be DC Comics and Sony. They've both been awesome to work with. I haven't had an issue with either of them and the projects have been a blast. As for the most experience? I would have to say my full-time stint at Decipher garnered the most experience. I did everything from music production to graphic design there; I learnt a tonne about colour correction. Working with David Levy at Spacetime has also taught me a lot about the full capability of brushes in Photoshop and using 3D as an aid to production and concept art. He has immense talent, a lot of experience in the field, and I feel privileged to be able to drain his mind of all his know-how, "Muwahahahahahah....ahh". He's also fostered a terrific work environment, which is a rare and a hard thing to do. I'm typically happier working at home and by myself, but the environment there is awesome.

So we know which has been your favourite company to work for, but out of the ones that you have left to choose from which one would you like to most work with in the future, and why?

To be honest, I haven't really thought about that. I've recently started working with Hasbro, so I'd like to see where that leads to. They have a lot of nostalgic toy lines that I would love to work on. I'd really love to develop a graphic novel or narrative world or setting with someone. But time isn't something I have much of these days, it seems.

The way you have captured each character in your Trading Card art is amazing. Could you tell us how you go about creating these results?

That's a combination of getting the model to pose exactly how you want them to, by 'over acting' an emotion or pose. That in itself can be

the basis of a great piece of art. Some pieces, I've found it easier (and most importantly, quicker) utilising matte painting techniques and working directly with the photography to produce the artwork. Other times, like when the shot didn't turn out or the pose or shot or action you need is more extreme, or I just have more time to work on the project, I'll work from the photography as reference. Taking the time to costume the actor/model (also finding the costumes and props) and then having to go through the photo shoot can be slower than just starting from scratch. You've just gotta learn how to tell which will be the faster method. I've also found the more sense of 'movement' I've brought about in a piece, the more positive reaction I get from viewers or clients. Sometimes it's better to loosen than refine too... Okay, now I'm just going off on random thoughts...

So how did this style come about?

I'm guessing you mean the matte painting technique? Or the look of my work? Well the matte painting or over-painting/photo montage technique I learnt from Christopher Shy, originally. I was associated with his studio (Studio Ronin) for a couple of years as an illustrator and web designer. His technique relies more on photo overlay, where I generally use the model as a basis of form and lighting and go from there - not that I haven't used photo overlay techniques, just that it's typically not the way I work. I also push the pieces towards having more of an oil painting feel to them, as brush stroke and texture can blend the amalgam of painting and photography in a more natural looking way. I've taken the style different directions over the years to see what fits me best, and I'm still experimenting somewhat.

What are you working on now, and what are your plans for the future?

I just wrapped up a project for Sony and DC Comics, and am currently working with Spacetime Studios and Hasbro. Besides continued work with Spacetime, I'll be pursuing personal projects. I have a gallery exhibition planned for later this year in Austin. This is something I'm still working on though - whether it will be entirely new work or a mix of new and older work both published and unpublished.

So has putting on a gallery exhibition always been something that you have wanted to do, or did someone approach you?

I've wanted to do it only in the sense that I've always wanted to create an immersive experience. I'd love to put on an exhibition that incorporates imagery, movement and sound.

I've also wanted to put on an exhibition that has a strong personal statement. Not for recognition or attention either, but for the creative factor behind it. No, I've never been approached. Why, do you know someone?

Could you tell us what are your main sources of inspiration when creating your artwork?
My main sources or inspiration? Well, besides poking about on some forums or looking at other artists' online galleries, or talking to colleagues about ideas and experiments, I suppose my inspiration derives from my love
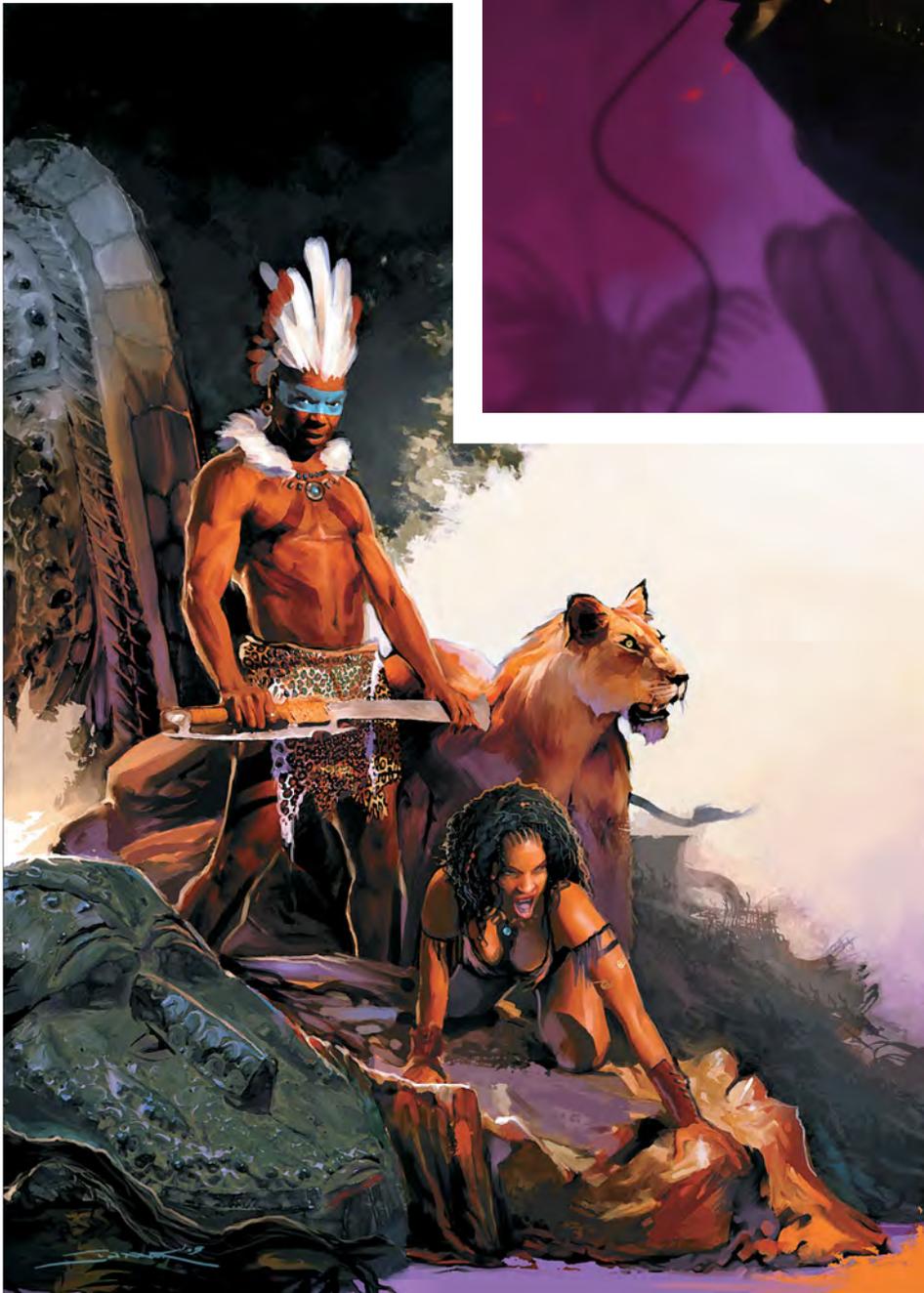
of sci-fi and fantasy. I'm not a big reader, so watching movies or old games of Dungeons & Dragons and campaign worlds that we ran or created is more my thing. I've learnt about pulling inspiration from technique and brush stroke itself, from Mattias Snygg and David Levy. Drawing from abstraction. I think having a wondering and curious eye also helps. I find the weirdest things fascinating and tend to stand and observe something for a longer period of time than most people. I'm great with visual memory.

Well it has been a pleasure chatting with you and I wish you all the best for the future. I have one last question before we finish, though. If I was to hang around with you for a whole day, what would I learn about you that not many people already know?
It's been a pleasure chatting with you, also. Hmmm... Honestly, I'm not that interesting! Probably that I'm very hard on myself about

what I'm doing creatively and don't like to
be complemented; if I don't like something,
I honestly don't care what the other person
thinks. The best response to give me is "that
will work". Praise makes me feel uncomfortable
and I'll typically change the conversation
to something else. Which also makes it
uncomfortable for me to praise others; I'm of
the mind set of - you - should be happy with
your work, not me. I will tell you if something is
working... But if I say that, of course the person
will think "why, what's wrong with it?" So I'll just
change my vocabulary to, "awesome!". I hope
that doesn't make me sound like a prude. I
suppose I just have a strong belief in believing
in oneself.

I think the way I treat what I do would surprise people. It seems to have done so in the past. I'm very business orientated, so I treat what I do as a business. It's my career and my lively hood... it's how I survive... the 'starving woe is me tortured artist' mentality has never been me. I'm a commercial illustrator, not Van Gogh, and I'm very happy being one. If a client is paying me to do something, I'll do it, if I can do it. If I can't? Well then I'll learn how! I'm not worried about being seen as a fine artist or a traditional illustrator, or being seen as one of those new digital artists; I'm worried about if the client is happy or not, and if you want to make a good living at this then that should be the biggest thing you're concerned about.

"One aspect that I find both challenging and exciting is the fact that we have to be chameleons. A concept artist needs to be able to adapt to a project's visual style, regardless of personal tastes..."

Bruno Werneck is a concept artist working for Midway Games, whose portfolio includes work on two prominent next-gen titles: "Stranglehold" and "Area 51". In his spare time he also works as a freelance artist; his clients range from the film and advertising industries, to the comic book and role-playing card game industries...

BRUNO WERNECK

Bruno Werneck

You mention in your Bio that you have worked in animation and have studied graphic design. How does being a concept artist compare to this, and what prompted the shift?

I have always been open to experimentation and curious about other disciplines within art. I know for a fact that I began thinking about environment/set design when I was already working in animation, where I was exposed to cell painted backgrounds and influenced by layout artists coming from feature animations. All fields are related, and learning about one builds knowledge that can be used in another. For example, I'm sure studying graphic design helped me with composition and colour choices, but it's hard to pinpoint the exact time and place that I decided to move to concept art.

What do you think is the most challenging aspect of your job?

One aspect that I find both challenging and exciting is the fact that we have to be chameleons. A concept artist needs to be able to adapt to a project's visual style, regardless of personal tastes, to follow specific guidelines and sometimes work within set constraints and with different art directors.

'Nightingale Emperor'
2005, character design, personal work, based on chinese folk tale 'nightingale'

How easy is it to work full-time at a games company as well as freelance as an illustrator, and do you find that you have to turn down many jobs due to time constraints?

It can be challenging at times. I wouldn't want either side to suffer so I make sure to devote an equal amount of attention to both. I spend most of my weekends working on freelance assignments, while devoting my full attention to games during the week. Sometimes the projects may be similar in style, and I have to find a way to make each project unique, without being more biased towards either of them. Having a full-time job gives me enough financial security and the luxury of being more selective when it comes to accepting freelance work. It's a bit of a turn-off when a potential client comes to me only a few days before the project is due, but I haven't turned very many down because of time constraints. Mostly I turn down work when I feel it's deviating from what I like or want to do.

What sort of commissions do you generally get in your freelance work, and do you favour any particular type of job/client?

I've done all sorts of stuff, including concept art for film pitches, advertising, comic book covers, illustrations for magazine articles, and most recently illustrations for role-playing card games. All of them are a lot of fun.

'The Aviator', 2007, illustration, personal work

'The Ridge', 2004, concept for film pitch

How do you regard game art compared to, say, traditional painting, and do you see the digital medium slowly being recognised as a branch of Fine Art in itself?

Although the techniques used in digital painting are quite different than those in traditional mediums, in the end the key elements that make up an appealing image are the same. I would say there's a greater difference between concept art, illustration and fine art. Whilst fine art touches a multitude of topics and illustrations which are usually more story driven, I see game concept art used in a different manner. Unlike in illustration or fine arts, a concept may not stand alone as a decorative piece, because its original intent is problem solving. It's part of our job to work with art directors and designers, take their visions into consideration, try to make sense of it all, expand on these ideas and push the limits. I could see digital artwork slowly being recognised as a branch of fine art. In a show like E3's "Into the Pixel" for example, concept pieces are displayed in a gallery just like more traditional mediums.

'Spartan 6', 2007, personal work, environment concept for 2dartist magazine

So you have been selected for "Into The Pixel". Tell us a little about the show and what it means to you to be part of it.

"Into the Pixel" is part of E3; it is an actual gallery space that showcases artwork related to video games. I didn't get a chance to go this year, but I believe it's still accessible to everyone, even now that E3 is no longer open to the public. It was nice having one of my pieces selected; concept artists sometimes work for so many years on a project, and some of the concepts don't ever see the light of the day. It's rewarding to see your work printed, framed and displayed on a wall, for everyone to enjoy.

Can you talk a little about your working process and how you constructed some of the concept pieces for Stranglehold and Area 51, for example?

Stranglehold and Area 51 are both realistic games. They're both super-detail oriented, utilising top of the line, next-gen technology. My process changes from concept to concept, really. Lately, in order to get a more realistic

look, I model basic shapes in 3ds Max, sometimes play with the lights a little, and turn on Global Illumination. Then I take the render and paint over it in Photoshop. Once I'm finished laying down the basic shapes and values, I bring in lots of photographs and textures. Contrary to what most people think, these photos are not used for their subject matter, but rather they are used to create noise and the impression of detail, similar to techniques applied in Impressionist paintings. Once all textures are in place, I paint over it some more to bring the concept together. I go back and forth between the two steps, until I get a result I'm happy with.

Do you find Global Illumination and the general use of lights in 3D software is helpful in solving the lighting issues in your concept work?
It helps in the beginning stages. Playing with lights in 3D helps me decide on the direction of my main light source, while Global Illumination creates more realistic bounce lights. In the end however, most of my lighting is done in Photoshop. This is because I'm more comfortable with this application; it's simpler, faster and there are no technical limitations to it.

What do you feel are the best aspects of working in the games industry?

The gaming industry is full of talented and passionate people. The medium is constantly evolving, which pushes artists to learn new tools that help bridge art and technology. With the improvements made in games, it has become very rewarding to see a finished product that looks so close to the concept created for it.

Do you, as a concept artist, feel the effects
of advancing technology, or is this type
of job exempt from the evolution of game
development?

We don't feel the effects as much as other
departments do, since we're more directly
involved in pre-production. On the other hand,
given the tools and technology that are now
available to us, we are expected to create more
detailed and complex artwork in less time.

What particular subjects do you favour as an
artist, and why?

There isn't one specific subject... I am inspired
by all kinds of themes and topics and I switch
around quite often. If I had to choose, I
would say I enjoy creating fantasy and sci-fi
environments, but even these are based more
on reality, and include at least a few elements
the viewer can relate to.

'Nightingale Garden'
2005, illustration, personal work, based on chinese
folk tale 'nightingale'

Bruno Werneck

For more work by this artist plea

www.brunowerneck.com

Or contact them at:

contact@brunowerneck.com

Interviewed by: Richard Tilbury

'Area 51 Blacksite - Iraq Overview'
2006, environment concept for next gen game Area 51 Blacksite
! copyright / property of Midway Amusement Games

2005, environment concept for next gen game John Woo Presents Stranglehold
! copyright / property of Midway Amusement Games

Ice Plane image supplied by Saddington & Baynes CGI. Photography by Darran Rees.

EVEN **BETTER** THAN YOU IMAGINED.

Whether you need faster rendering with mental ray or picture perfect raytracing direct to the desktop, **ART**VPS rendering solutions are even better than you imagined.

Dedicated hardware solutions from the rendering experts.
Find out more about RenderServer and RayBox at **www.artvps.com** or call **+44 (0)1223 424466** for more information.

ARTVPS

> *"I wouldn't have considered myself a fantasy artist, but I have a lot of fun working up their concepts. They are usually very specific about the elements to include in each piece; character type, action, location, colour and so on..."*
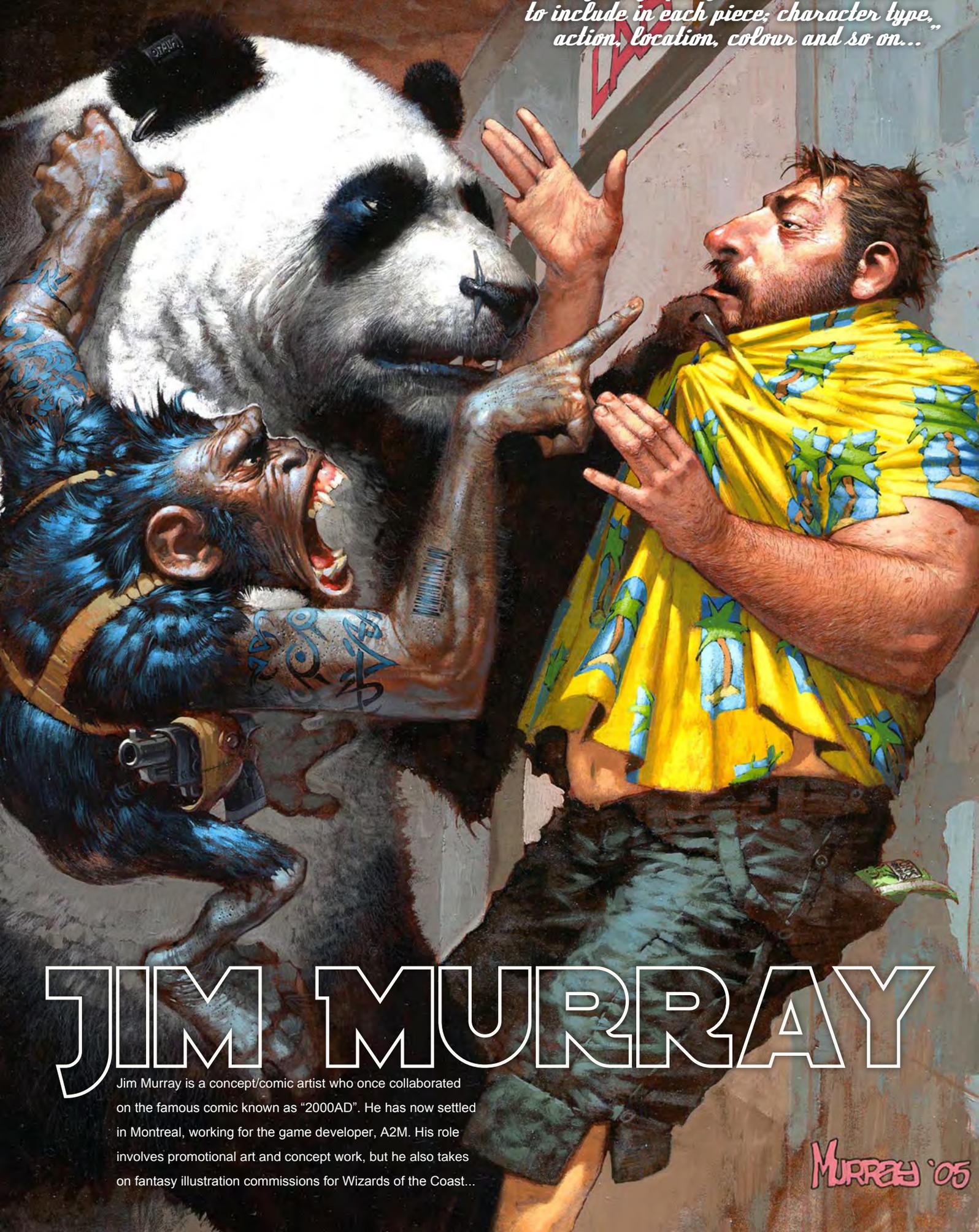
JIM MURRAY

Jim Murray is a concept/comic artist who once collaborated on the famous comic known as "2000AD". He has now settled in Montreal, working for the game developer, A2M. His role involves promotional art and concept work, but he also takes on fantasy illustration commissions for Wizards of the Coast...

MURRAY '05

JIM MURRAY

You have worked as a comic artist on the prestigious 2000AD, but what skillsets did this provide in preparation for a role as a concept artist?

Time management, i.e. learn to draw as fast as possible or you don't eat. It's amazing how steep the learning curve rises when you're living hand to mouth like that. My drawing improved a whole lot and I learnt to use acrylics pretty efficiently, but above all the experience opened up my imagination. To be honest, I think the

roles - comic and concept - are pretty similar. I'm sure most comic artists will agree they're actually concepting stuff all the time - the difference being that there's no art director staring over your shoulder, constantly. For example, when I was illustrating the Batman/Demon book, it was commissioned way before I had submitted any designs for it. I remember doing some preliminary sketches before I plunged into the actual illustration but I was generally concepting the thing as I went along. In that particular job I had to imagine Gotham City as a kind of fantasy, high-rise, medieval equivalent, so in virtually every panel I had to come up with a new environment. I guess most comics are set in imaginary worlds, which is why comic artists generally make excellent concept artists.

From looking at some of the example pages from your Batman/Demon book, it looks to be very violent and gory. What is it about this aspect to comics that you find interesting from an artistic viewpoint?

I guess I have a pretty eclectic taste when it comes to story-telling. I think the most important thing for me is to be honest with the subject matter and to push it as far as I can - that's the thing that excites me. If I'm drawing a speeding vehicle, I want to make it look as fast as possible. I want to exaggerate gestures and body language to get my point across. In the same way, if a script has some element of violence in it, I don't want to water that down; I want to give as much intensity to the art in these moments as anywhere else. I'm well aware it's not to everyone's taste, but it's a genuine way

of eliciting an emotional response from the reader, and that's part of my job, right? Do I get off on this stuff? I like watching horror movies, but I wouldn't call myself a "major fan". I guess I must enjoy painting violent images on some deep level; I think we all have it in us - ask anyone who's just been driving in heavy traffic! Just because I can draw this stuff doesn't make me more maladjusted... does it?

Many artists would relish the opportunity to contribute towards the Dredd history, but what challenges did the commission present, and which of the numerous artists rank amongst your favourites, and why?

This was a pretty exciting commission at the time; I'd only been drawing comics professionally for a couple of years so I was nervous about taking it on. The first Batman/Judge Dredd book came out when I was about 15, and was partly responsible for getting me into drawing comics in the first place. So for that reason, I would have to say Simon Bisley had the most influence on me personally at that time. The violent dynamics, anarchic approach and dark humour, combined with amazing technique, is something that 2000AD can claim as its legacy in nurturing so many

amazing artists. Others would include Dermot Power, who is one of my favourite concept artists these days; Carl Critchlow, now a top fantasy artist; and Glen Fabry, who continues to paint amazing cover art. I didn't have the rep at the time, so there were some big boots to fill! There were several of us who were working for 2000AD at that time who became good friends; Jason Brashill, Trevor Hairsine, Frank Quitely, Greg Staples and Steve Sampson, amongst others. These are the guys I learnt the most from. Maybe that colours my judgement, but I still find them all unique and incredible in everything they produce.

Drawing one page alone would seem like a tall order to many artists with numerous characters and dynamic perspective. How long are you generally given for a project of this nature, and typically what are the most difficult tasks you face?

I've been pretty lucky with editors giving me generally as much time as I need to complete projects (within reason). The downside of this is the longer you take, the less you are paid, of course. So I think I generally worked as fast as I could whilst trying to keep the art looking reasonable.
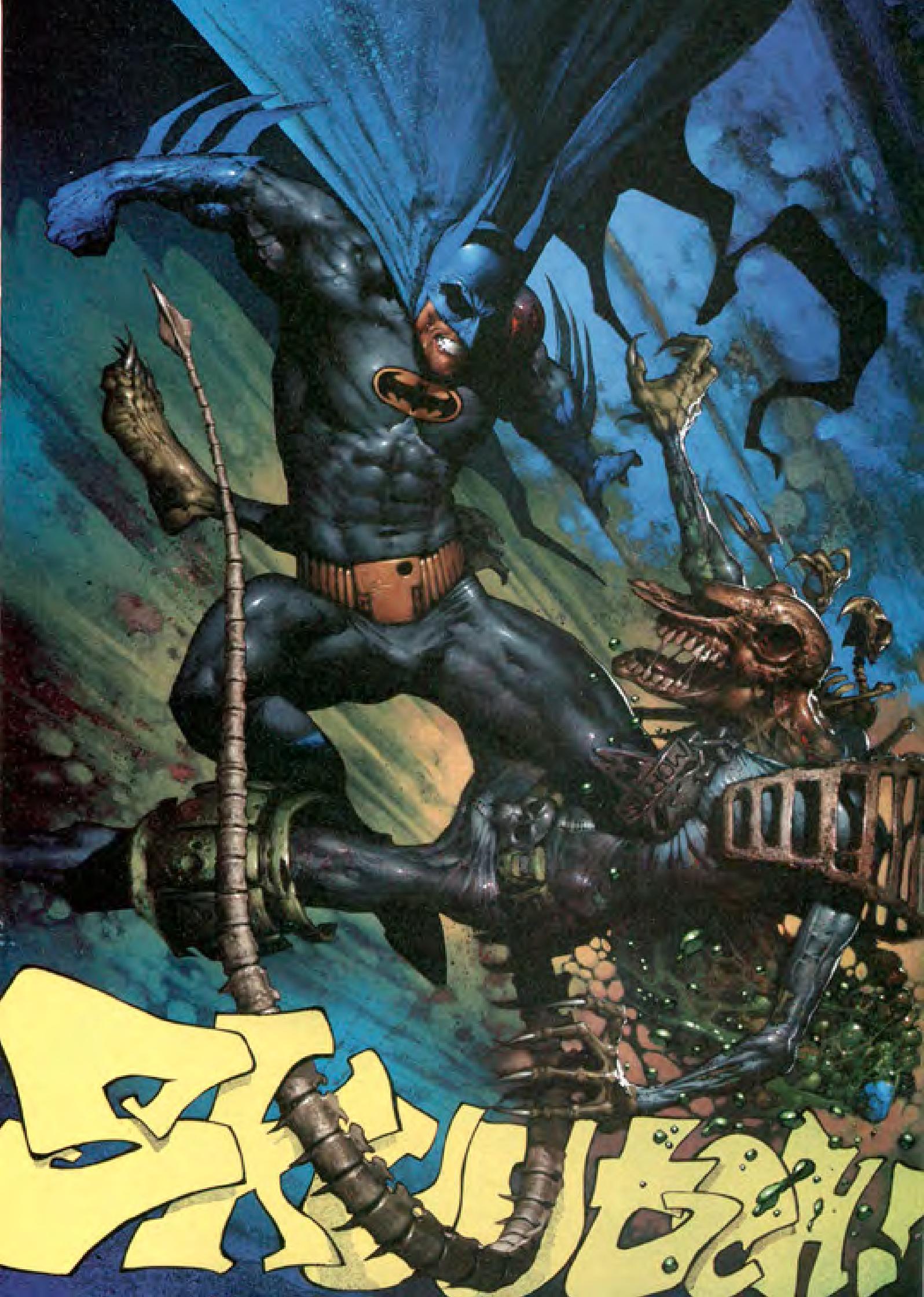
The main problem I find is keeping some kind of consistency of style and design throughout the project. The books I've done before would take roughly ten months to finish, and I'm generally a slightly different artist by the end, having evolved and learnt different things in that time. I'm facing a much tougher challenge right now with my current book. It's an idea I came up with in about 2001 (I think) with Robbie Morrison, and we've been trying to write/illustrate it piecemeal in our spare time over the last few years. As it evolves, I keep finding myself pulling away from the original conception and wanting to add new ideas. So much so in fact that I've given up trying to keep it one hundred percent consistent and conceded that it is what it is - an evolving piece of work. For sure, it's going to be different to anything I've done before.

There is a great level of detail in most of your work, with a meticulous attention to anatomy. How do you prepare your compositions, ensuring a believable level of physical accuracy to your characters, and do you draw each one cafefully before the colouring phase?

I usually draw everything out to a reasonable level of detail before I start inking. In fact, all the trading card work requires a sketch approval before you can go to the final art. I'll start each piece with a bunch of thumbnails, usually trying to work as fast as possible. When I get something cool I'll scan it in, maybe mess with it quickly in Photoshop a little, just to fine tune the composition. Then I'll print it out so that it fills most of an A4 page, slip it under some layout paper, and work up a more detailed sketch.

What do you most enjoy about working on Magic cards for Wizards of the Coast?

I wouldn't have considered myself a fantasy artist, but I have a lot of fun working up their concepts. They are usually very specific about the elements to include in each piece; character type, action, location, colour and so on. But at the same time they'll give a lot of freedom to the artist with the design, style and composition - certainly more freedom than working on cover

art, for example. I think their approach works in getting some pretty imaginative stuff from the artists. I'm slightly amazed at some of the weird stuff they'll let me paint! Another plus point is that the AD at Wizards is also an excellent fantasy illustrator, which helps a huge amount in working out difficult comps and in navigating the highly specific approval process. I don't play the game, so I sometimes need a bit of guidance in what I'm actually drawing.

Why do you favour acrylics, and do you do much digital work?

It's tough to explain why I prefer acrylics. Real paint is more difficult to use and more limited than digital paint, but I don't think that limitations are altogether a bad thing - it often forces more creativity, rather than reducing it. Digital

media seemingly has almost limitless options, resolution, colours, effects, brushes and so on. It's a skill in itself to slice all that down to the essentials and get a solid image. I actually do a lot of digital work. Most of my concept art is finished in Photoshop, and despite my archaic personal preferences it's still probably the best artistic tool since the invention of the pencil. Unfortunately, ninety percent of the concept images that I do are destined to rot on an archive server, never to be seen.

When you say ninety percent, I assume you are referring to your job at A2M. After the concepts are finalised and game development starts, how does you role change within the project?

Well, my role at A2M has been as much promotional artist as concept artist. I've been

involved in selling projects to publishers before there are any game assets. As and when we are greenlit, I'll continue on and design characters and environments, and when the concepts are finalised my role generally comes to an end and I'll go onto another project. A few times I've been involved in creating 3D assets, working with Maya and ZBrush, which I find really stimulating, but to be honest my passion lies with 2D work. I would love to be able to animate, but it's increasingly clear that I'll never get a chance to practice.

Having worked in comics and the games industry, do you ever see yourself moving into the film sector at all?
Definitely. I'm always up for new challenges!

"I would put something down until I liked it. If it bugged me I would paint over it. In some areas there was probably four layers of paint, or more."

the Sketchbook
of Francis Vallejo

Francis Vallejo, an illustrator, caricaturist and animator from the USA, talks us through, step-by-step, how he handles his sketchbook...

An illustrator lives and dies in his sketchbook. In my case, the majority of my final illustrations begin as a doodle in my sketchbook. I let it all out onto the pages. Half of the fun is experimenting with different media. If you are going to use paints though, I would suggest using a sketchbook with a thick paper, such as a moleskine or watercolour book. Over the following pages I have used pencil, regular ballpoint pen, brush pen, acrylic, watercolour, India ink, coloured pencil, newspaper, matte medium, and pretty much anything else that would make a mark! Whatever gets the job done! ...

Hands

On this first page, I thought that I would do a piece with a lot of hands, as I believe I always have a hard time drawing them. So I started inking a bunch of hands, which then led to the idea that a neat contrast would be male on one side and female on the other. I knew that hands simply by themselves wouldn't be too exciting, so I drew a circle in order to put something inside of it later on. I finished the hands off with a ballpoint pen, and filled in the negative spaces with green and purple brush pens. I decided that I wanted, yet again, another contrast to the realistic hands, so a cartoony character in the circle would do just the job! I masked off the surrounding area so that I would not ruin the hands, and I went to town texturing the area with ink, watercolour and acrylic until an interesting pattern emerged. I threw down some white where the character would be, inked it, and scanned it in so I could do some digital work. After tweaking the Levels I used the Marquee tool and the Gradient tool to individually colour each hand. I created a new layer each time so that I would have complete control, which helped give depth to the image. I used a Multiply and then a Normal layer to complete the central character, and then flattened the seventy or so layers! I played with the unity of the colour, the saturation, and the Levels, until I was pleased, and I then deemed the image complete.

Pig

For this next image, I decided I wanted to throw caution to the wind and go crazy with the paints, and really focus on making some fun and abstract textures and patterns. I cut out a barbeque advertisement from the Sunday newspaper and transferred it to the sketchbook. Next, I threw a combination of watercolour and acrylic on the page, until I was satisfied with the result. What followed was much of the same: I would put something down until I liked it. If it bugged me I would paint over it. In some areas there was probably four layers of paint, or more. Once I was satisfied with the page, I scanned it in and played with the Levels and Color Balance. Since the page focused on texture, I used halftone dots to colour chunks of the image. I tried to use Photoshop subtly, so as not to disrupt the texture with smooth, digital marks. When I did make marks I messed with the layer style and the opacity.

Dots

I decided for the next page that I would really focus on line and composition. I also wanted to play around with the integration of stylised characters alongside realistic characters, in a single piece. I sketched a very quick layout and began inking with a 1 Micron. I then filled in the chunks of black with a brush pen. I will admit that this piece caused me many problems when I began the colouring stage. I originally began to render the characters, but that looked too cheesy with the graphicness that I had established. I was also having problems with a focal point, so I kicked back the background and the table's intensity with a normal white layer at 20% opacity. I had remembered some interesting art that I had seen with large shapes of colour, so I thought, "Why not?" I made five different coloured dots on individual layers and used Hue/Saturation, then Colorize, to change the colours until I was happy. I messed around with their location and opacity until I was satisfied, before I wrapped up the image.
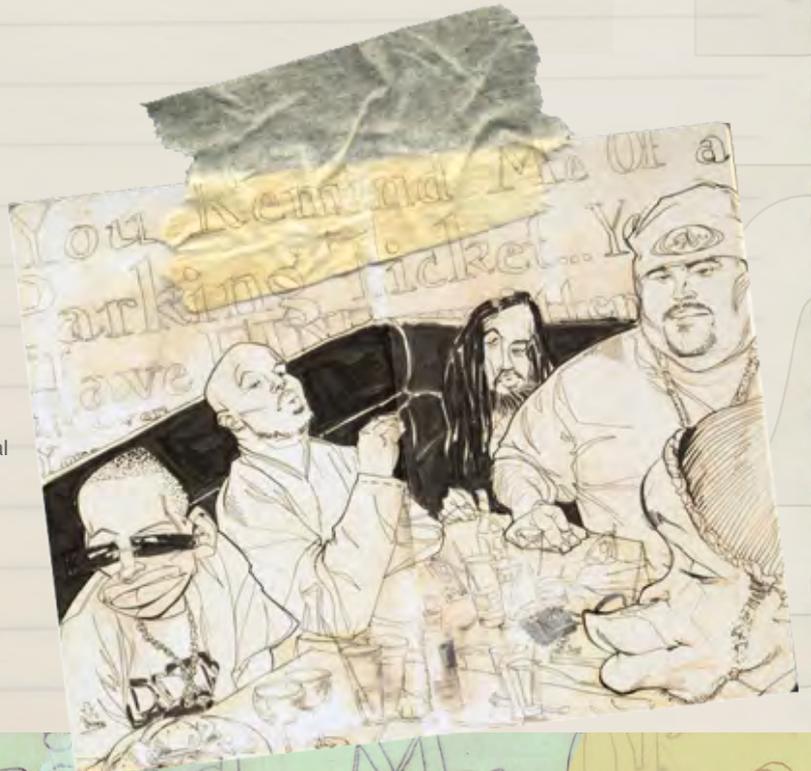
Saxophone

For the last image I actually had no idea what I wanted to do. I was listening to some jazz music, so I Google Image-searched the word, "jazz." I found this great image of a gentleman playing the saxophone, so I thought that would be the perfect image to begin with. From there, I sketched out the character in pencil and started to form an idea of how I could make the image interesting. I inked the saxophonist and made a graphic balloon emit from the instrument. To form an interesting pattern, I filled up the negative space with barbershop quartet-style cartoon characters. I used a brush pen to fill in the larger blacks. The main reason I have the subject matter on the opposite side of the page, was simply so that I could experiment with stylised water. I used various watered down versions of a mixed sea-green watercolour, to create the effect I sought after. I inked the character and filled in the negative space with some India ink. After taking the image into Photoshop, I created some simple Multiply layers, and then I had the final image! To achieve the offset look of the orange character, I just blocked in the colour and nudged the layer over and to the side - neat effect! I hope that these samples provide some insight into how I "attack" my sketchbook. The best advice I can give is to sketch in your sketchbook everyday. Anything will do (not necessarily that complicated), as long as some thought is put into it. I guarantee that the larger your pile of finished sketchbooks is, the greater your skill and confidence will be. Happy sketching!

Francis Vallejo

For more information please visit:
www.francisvallejo.blogspot.com
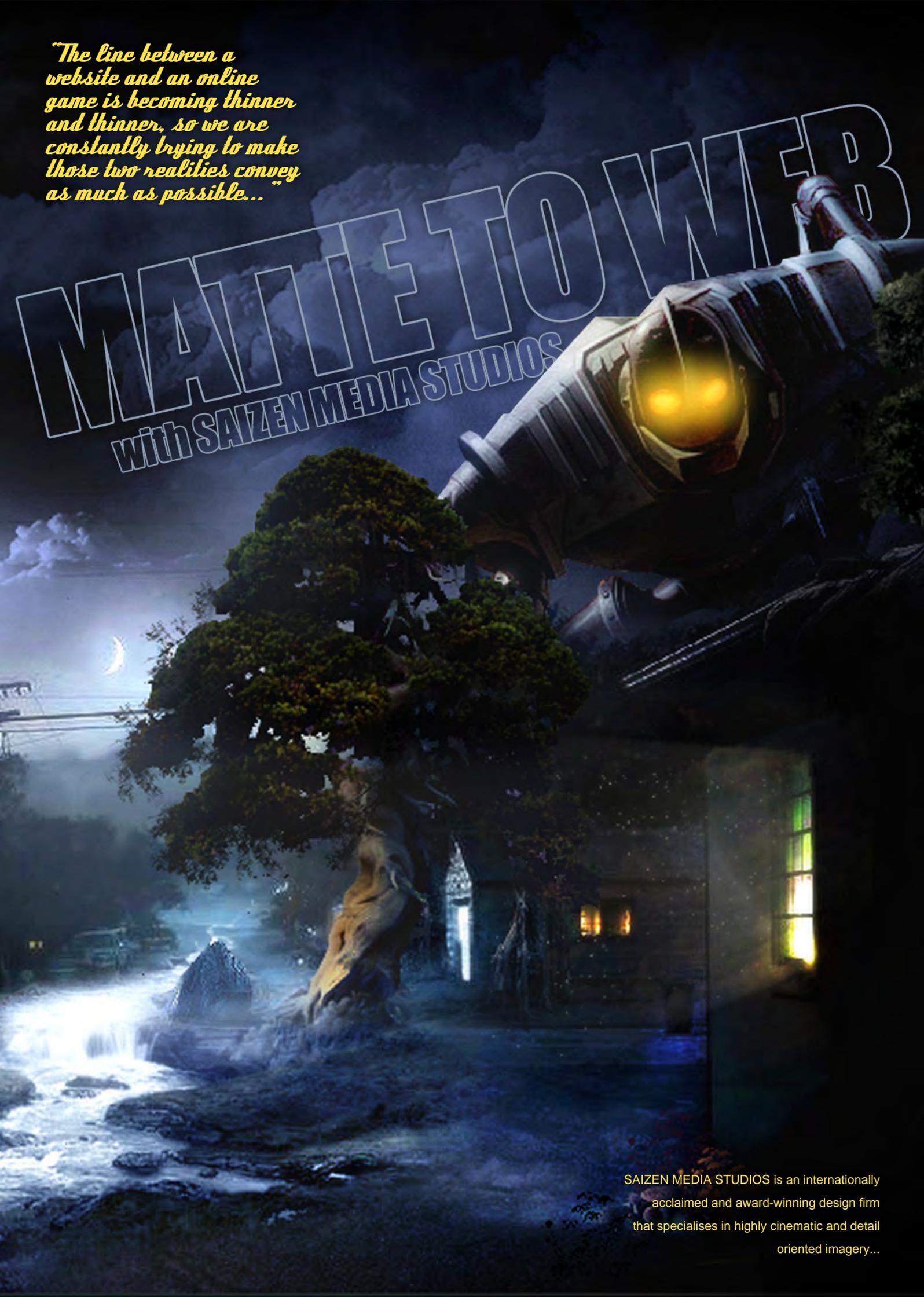Or contact:
fvallejo@ringling.edu

"The line between a website and an online game is becoming thinner and thinner, so we are constantly trying to make those two realities convey as much as possible..."

MATTE TO WEB

with SAIZEN MEDIA STUDIOS

SAIZEN MEDIA STUDIOS is an internationally acclaimed and award-winning design firm that specialises in highly cinematic and detail oriented imagery...

SAIZEN
MEDIA STUDIOS

Saizen Media Studios was established in early 2007 and is the result of a joint venture between Hentsix Design Studios (Italy) and Fubon Design (Russia). Known for its meticulous approach to layout creation and attention to detail, Saizen Media Studios now has offices in both Italy and Russia, providing services in the fields of web design, graphic design, motion graphics, packaging and music production. Saizen is revolutionising the whole approach to graphics and web development in general, creating unique interactive experiences that stimulate the senses and entertain the viewers, whilst actively delivering information in a whole new way. Visit SAIZEN MEDIA STUDIOS at **www.saizenmedia.com** to view a list of selected works.
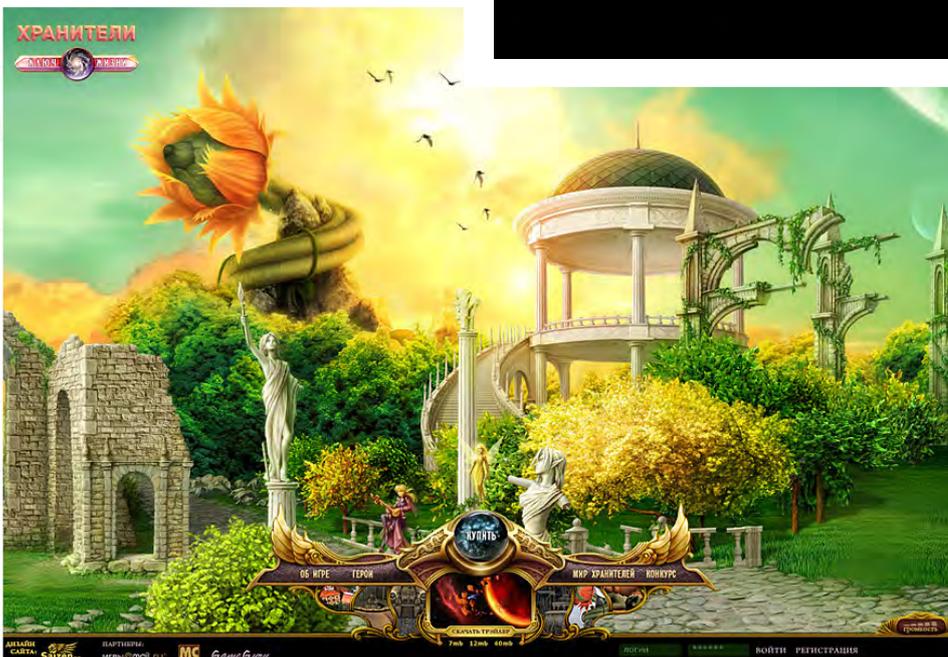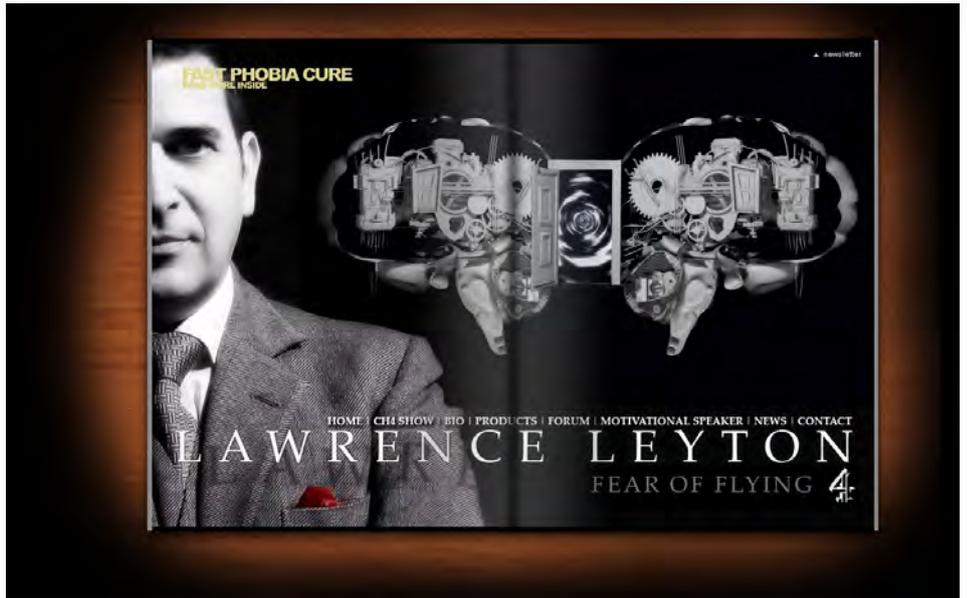
Hello and thanks for talking to us. How did Saizen Media get started, and what is the ultimate purpose of Saizen?

In early 2007 me (Davide Bianca, CEO of Hentsix Design Studios, Italy) and Constantine (CEO of Fubon Design, Russia) started discussing the idea of joining forces to create something much bigger and more powerful than what we already had. The idea of creating a powerhouse, resulting from the junction of our two teams and studios, felt like the most appropriate choice at the time, since we both loved each other's styles and portfolio pieces. Ultimately, we felt like we both lacked what the other could offer, and that the result of

QUENTIN TARANTINO'S
"DEATH PROOF"

TARANTINO GRIND HOUSE RODRIGUEZ
THE SLEAZE-FILLED SAGA OF AN EXPLOITATION DOUBLE FEATURE

BURNET RD. DRIVE-IN
AUSTIN, TEXAS — Shows start at DUSK
FRIDAY ★★★ APRIL 6

A WHITE-HOT JUGGERNAUT AT 200 MILES PER HOUR!

QUENTIN TARANTINO'S
"DEATH PROOF"

APRIL 6, 2007

"DEATH PROOF"

"DEATH PROOF"

SELECT THEATHER

- ● R. RODRIGUEZ
- ○ Q. TARANTINO
- ○ J. CARPENTER

VIEW EXCLUSIVE TRAILER

WATCH DIRECTORS' INTERVIEW

DOWNLOAD WALLPAPERS

A SPECIAL NOTE FROM THE DIRECTORS

PLANET TERROR

PLANET TERROR

PROJECT REVIEW

GRIND HOUSE

COMING MARCH 2007...

GRINDHOUSE: THE SLEAZE-FILLED SAGA OF AN EXPLOITATION DOUBLE FEATURE

by Quentin Tarantino and Robert Rodriguez

DIRECTORS' PICKS OF THE MONTH!

Buy and watch the movies that made a genre! Quentin Tarantino and Robert Rodriguez suggest you each month a set of 10 cult "B-movies" that inspired them to become directors.

Titles include all-movie-time directors of the caliber of John Carpenter, Lucio Fulci, Ed Wood, Mario bava, Sergio Stivaletti and George Romero just to name few.

Own the ultimate cult movie collection!

this month's movies in no partifular order are:

THE DAY THE EARTH STOOD STILL

LES YEUX SANS VISAGE

GORGO

MENTAL MANIACS

WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE

THEY LIVE

THE CRAZIES

Black Gestapo

TROUBLEMAKER

such a combination would bring great results. So we decided to go with it and SAIZEN was born. Both studios had a great experience in the gaming, movie and music industries, only now our arsenal was double, and so was the exposure, capabilities and potential. We now have offices in both Moscow and Milan, and are surrounded by great layout artists, animators and programmers. Our ultimate goal is to completely redefine the website paradigm and the entire net-surfing experience, by creating unique interactive products that are visually stunning and entertaining, whilst being at the same time fully functional, direct and intuitive.
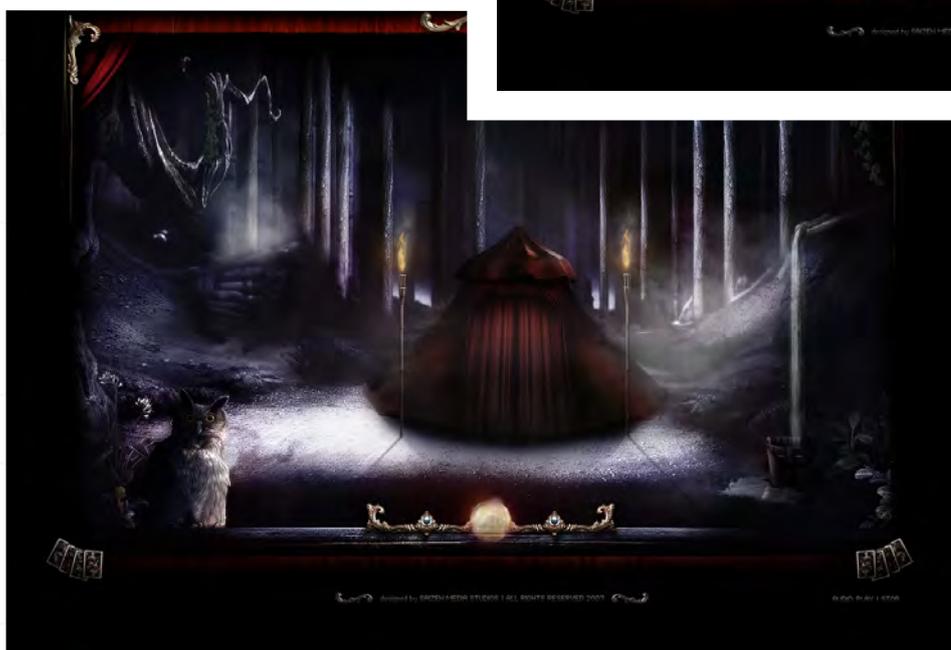
Unlike a lot of the artists we feature in 2DArtist magazine, you use matte paintings for websites, rather than game or film. What got you into the website work from matte painting?

Our whole concept of a website can be summarised as a hybrid product that stands between a short film and a video game; we are trying to constantly push the quality of online productions to the extreme, and with movies and video games being our primary source of inspiration, it was almost natural for us to go in that direction. Using the same techniques, approaches and methods used in the movie and gaming industries allows us to create even more

visually pleasing and detailed products that appeal to the general public just as much as a game or movie would. At the same time we are trying to prove that a website can be as intricate and complex as a short feature film or game, and just as entertaining.

Do your matte paintings get used anywhere else?

We have received some interesting proposals for short independent features, but to date our projects have been mainly geared towards web design and online productions. The line between a website and an online game is becoming thinner and thinner, so we are constantly trying to make those two realities convey as much as possible. We have just finished working on a really cool project for an online browser game,

called "OTHERWORLDS", which is one of our favourite projects to date, along with all the Lineage server-sites and other RPG productions that we've been involved in. A full scale, big budget production for console games could actually arise soon, but at the moment we are developing mainly online applications.

How do you start a painting?

Usually we start from a concept or overall feel. We have a really detailed image in our heads of how the final painting should look, so we try to go in that direction. Inevitably, due to the nature of matte painting itself, a lot of supposed mistakes or accidental artifacts create shapes and forms that lead you to more interesting decisions, altering the direction you were originally going in. The totally unexpected is
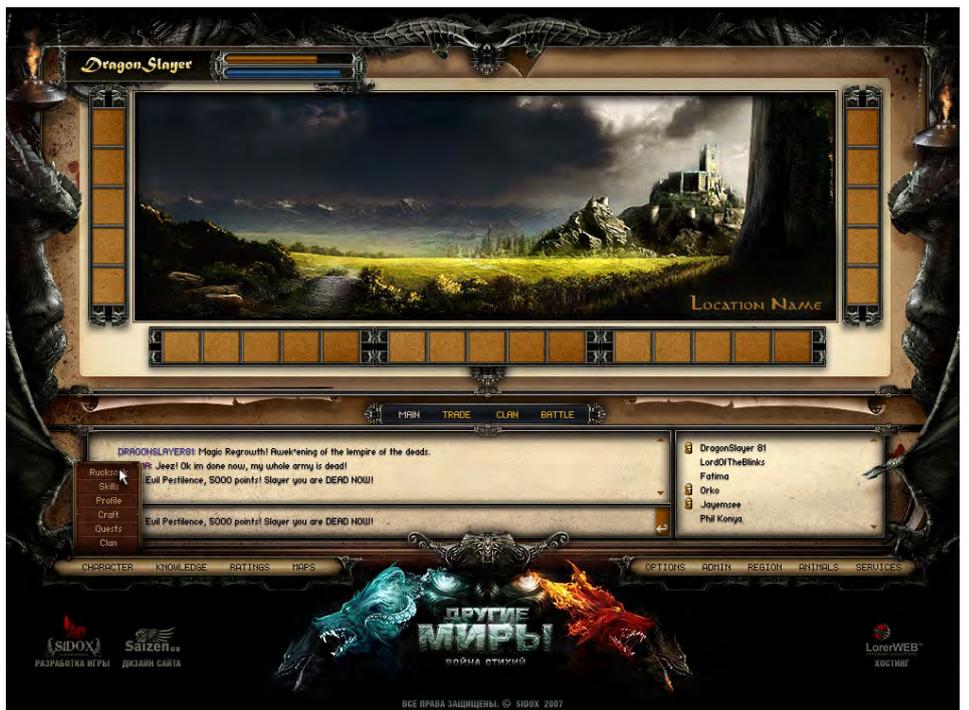
TIMESHIFT

AVAILABLE FOR
XBOX360
PS3
AND PC

DOWNLOAD
HD VERSION

LOGIN   REGISTER

TIMESHIFT ™

EVENTS

LATEST NEWS

10.20.2007
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, con
ectetur adipisici elit, sed eiusmod
tempor incidunt ut labore et dolore
magna aliqua.

10.20.2007
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, con
ectetur adipisici elit, sed eiusmod
tempor incidunt ut labore et dolore
magna aliqua.

10.20.2007
Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, con
ectetur adipisici elit, sed eiusmod
tempor incidunt ut labore et dolore
magna aliqua.

CONTEST

WIN A LIMITED EDITION
COPY OF THE GAME!

TIME SHIFTERS

IN DEPTH INTERVIEW WITH
VIVENDI STUDIOS

MASTER TIME TO BECOME THE ULTIMATE WEAPON

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetuer adipiscing elit. Suspendisse condimentum tincidunt
sapien. Fusce urna erat, uolutpat accumsan, mattis vel, imperdiet in, nisi. Aenean vel diam ut
tellus bibendum dapibus. Suspendisse potenti. Aenean mi. Duis vel purus uitae urna ultricies
conuallis. Sed sed purus. Sed blandit eros id augue. Sed vitae metus. Vestibulum posuere. Donec
porta nibh in purus. Pellentesque purus.

Duis quis neque scelerisque ligula pretium mollis. Curabitur dolor orci, cursus ut, cursus in,
accumsan ac, sem. Morbi uitae lacus non nisi faucibus lobortis. Donec feugiat est uitae felis.
Vestibulum malesuada placerat ligula. Sed vestibulum. Duis puluinar. Nam mi. Donec dictum,
odio a euismod tincidunt, ipsum turpis uolutpat nisl, et vestibulum massa massa ut ante.
Pellentesque lectus tortor, bibendum eget, venenatis pretium, commodo vitae, dolor.

Lorem ipsum dolor sit amet, consectetuer adipiscing elit. Suspendisse condimentum tincidunt
sapien. Fusce urna erat, uolutpat accumsan, mattis vel, imperdiet in, nisi. Aenean vel diam ut
tellus bibendum dapibus. Suspendisse potenti. Aenean mi. Duis vel purus uitae urna ultricies
conuallis. Sed sed purus. Sed blandit eros id augue. Sed vitae metus. Vestibulum posuere. Donec
porta nibh in purus. Pellentesque purus.

Duis quis neque scelerisque ligula pretium mollis. Curabitur dolor orci, cursus ut, cursus in,
accumsan ac, sem. Morbi uitae lacus non nisi faucibus lobortis. Donec feugiat est uitae felis.
Vestibulum malesuada placerat ligula. Sed vestibulum. Duis puluinar. Nam mi. Donec dictum,
odio a euismod tincidunt, ipsum turpis uolutpat nisl, et vestibulum massa massa ut ante.
Pellentesque lectus tortor, bibendum eget, venenatis pretium, commodo vitae, dolor.

XBOX 360   PLAYSTATION.3   PC

TIMESHIFT   TIMESHIFT   TIMESHIFT

sometimes more interesting than the planned aspects! Inspiration is the initial idea that allows you to have even more ideas, so flexibility and adaptability go hand in hand with good planning.

How does using 3D help in the creation of your work?

The use of 3D is something that can have entirely different purposes and functions. Most of the time we create 3D objects to complement the matte painting and add character to the pieces. For example, in the HELLBEAST project done for FWA.com, the characters were modelled in Maya, detailed in ZBrush, and all post production done in Photoshop, in order to keep a consistent feel and look with the rest of the painting. The characters were, however, added in last to populate the scene and played as main characters. However, depending on the nature of the scene we are producing, we may use 3D to generate three-dimensional environments that work as guidelines and then proceed with hand illustration on top. The process varies from project to project - simply depends on what end result we are aiming for.

One of my favourite websites you created was the 'Keepers: Key of Life' game site. It features
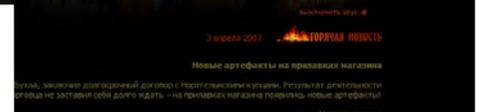
some great artwork and some nice interactive parts. How cool is it to get briefs like this?

The Keepers game site was a really cool and fun project - the guys at Saizen Media Russia did a great job on preparing all the mattes and illustrations for it. Most people may think that a good part of the looks and feel of the site comes form high resolution renders from the actual game, but the truth is that the images and assets we were provided with were so poor in quality and had such a flat feel that we basically used them as references to recreate the entire world in Photoshop. The most difficult part of the whole process was the use of the parallax, which mimics the 3D feel by distributing

objects in separate layers and moving them according to distance. Therefore, objects further away will move more slowly than objects in the foreground. This creates the illusion of depth of field. The key to a successful parallax is light distribution; seamlessly blending the separate layers between themselves so that the separation lines are not obvious or noticeable, and distributing the colours and shadows strategically so that you will never have lit areas against dark areas.

How much creativity do you put into each project? Do you present ideas to the client or do they have a strict idea of what they want?
We always try to work with clients that have a good idea of what they want, but at the same time will give us a good amount of creative freedom and decision-making power in order to create award-winning websites. Having too strict guidelines often limits the process and creativity in general, but having good and clear guidelines is fundamental. Generally, we provide either storyboards or detailed briefs in which we describe the flow of actions and interactions, along with a series of reference sites and images that can provide an overall idea of the style and perspective of the scene. Often we also provide mock-ups, which are compositions that serve as sketches and represent a simplified version of the final product.

What were your inspirations before starting Saizen?
Movies, video games, comic books, action figures, toys, book illustrations and great art in general.

Have your inspirations changed in that time?
To be honest with you, we are still the same ol' die hard fans we once were. Some things never change, especially in this business. It has actually got way worse; the other day I almost purchased a real size Bioshock Big Daddy sculpture for my living room!

Thanks very much for talking to us.
Thank you so much for the support and interest in our works and projects; we have big surprises coming up so please make sure to visit our website at **www.saizenmedia.com**.

Davide Bianca

For more information please visit:
www.saizenmedia.com
Or contact:
davide@saizenmedia.com

"...I was trying to draw before I knew how to write. I think this is a good indication of a predetermined destiny..."

Inspiration

This month, we've asked 2D artists from a variety of backgrounds and locations around the world:

What inspired you to become an artist?

Here's what they said...

Inspiration

Andrew Hou

Senior Concept Artist, Webzen

Seoul, South Korea

"Comics and games."

Artie

Freelance Concept Artist & Illustrator

Prague, Czech Republic

"The works of Frank Frazetta, in some sci-fi/ fantasy magazine, when I was young."

Christophe Vacher

Concept Artist, Painter & Art Director

Luxembourg & Los Angeles, USA

"Well, it's hard to tell. It's like one of these things that you know without a doubt, even as a child. As I mentioned before, I was trying to draw before I knew how to write. I think this is a good indication of a predetermined destiny. Along the way, of course, different currents and styles shape your own artistic personality. But the original impulse was there from birth, I think."

Daniela Uhlig

Graphic Designer & Illustrator, Mobil Entertainment Company, Berlin, Germany

"He he, nothing! I don't think that I'm really an artist. (The word art depends on the definition.) I'm inspired to paint or draw just because I have fun with it. Hmmm, or perhaps it's more that I can't be without it."

Daniele Bigi

Lead Lighter & Compositor, Aardman Animation, Bristol, UK

"Mainly comics, animated TV series, and the never-ending conversations with my brother and friends about the movies that we watched when we were kids."

image by Christophe Vacher

Don Seegmiller

Freelance Concept Artist, Illustrator & Artist
Utah, USA

"It was really the only talent I was blessed with. Well, it's also the only thing I have ever wanted to do, although I never really thought about making a living from it."

Egil Paulsen

"Well, it was at a point when I discovered that there are so many meaningless things to do, that I found something which I believed in myself. And of course, it's a nice accomplishment to create something out of nothing!"

Erich Schreiner

Freelance Artist, Germany

"Looking at art books; watching Star Wars, and other shaping movies (Blade Runner, Conan, Dark Crystal, etc.); playing games (Bards Tale, Ultima, etc.) and RPG's (Shadow Run, Cyberpunk, Warhammer 40, etc.). Then, at some point, grew the desire to create something, and that's it!"

Justin Kellis

Graphic Artist, KICK Design, New York City

"I can't say that there was ever a specific thing that motivated me. I've always been a visual person, and have always felt an almost zealous need to create things… even as a child. So when I realised that people actually get paid and make a living drawing pictures, I knew right away that that is what I had to do."

Kerem Beyit

Concept Artist & Illustrator, Aranim Media Factory, Turkey

"It was not a conscious choice; as far back as I can remember, I've always loved drawing. Reading comics and their cover arts did the job, mostly."

Mike Corriero

Freelance Concept Artist & Illustrator, Colonia, NJ, USA

"The major inspiration is just the will to create, and to produce something that I enjoy looking at and that makes others become inspired. There is a small bit of fame that comes into play, but the ability to see your work published in a book or magazine - as an interior or as a cover - is a great accomplishment and very rewarding. Thinking back to what really inspires me, it is to see that the initial pre-production concept art makes it to the big screen for films, and lead character and creature designs in games. I've watched some of my creations come to life through CG models and animations; it's simply awe inspiring, and so much fun."

image by Daniela Uhlig

Mikko Kinnunen

Environment Artist, Recoil Games

Helsinki, Finland

"Having little interest to do anything else."

Misty Coats

UI & Concept Artist, High Voltage Software

Hoffman Estates, IL, USA

"My father, when I was little. He was an artist as well for a while, selling off his works to local paint stores and such for a bit of extra cash, and I always wanted to follow suit. He gave up on it though, since he wasn't making enough money to support the family… but I never stopped my pursuit to be an artist, just like him."

Paul Wright

"It's something I've always wanted to do for as long as I care to remember; something of a vocation. Seeing what my grandfather produced had something to do with it, too."

Raluca Iosifescu

"Actually I became a doctor, and I also do freelance work in digital painting. I always enjoyed drawing - it was a hobby and it became more."

Robert Chang

"I've been drawing all my life, but Japanese animation was the main catalyst when I was

image by Egil Paulsen

around 13. That's when I decided I wanted to be a writer/director/artist/composer. Of course, American/European fantasy/sci-fi novels, comics, and films, were also influential as well. Once I grew beyond teenage influences, 19th Century art and contemporary fine art also inspired me greatly."

Robin Chyo

Concept Artist, Cryptic Studios

Los Gatos, California, USA

"I think it went: Superman, Ghost Busters, Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, and then Mega Man."

Rolando Cyril

"I don't consider myself as an artist; I am a psychologist; I draw for pleasure. If someone wants to pay me, then that's the best way to lose my inspiration. I'd rather hear that I am a dreamer - the biggest, for sure. I'll leave the artist status for the real artists. I will be the psychologist, walking alone in the golden world of Art."

Roy Stein

"I always painted and drew, but seeing a painting by René Magritte as a child gave me the urge to become the artist I am today, I think."

Ryohei Hase

Illustrator & Designer, Bandai Namco Games, Tokyo, Japan

"I was inspired by a video game, and the movies I watched in my childhood."

Sam Lamont

2D Animation Student, Glamorgan University, Trefforest, Wales, UK

"When I was very young, I was obsessed with the Alien/Aliens/Alien 3 movies. I would write scripts for a new sequel and draw concept art for all the new species of aliens I was going to put in it. I think it was around then that I realised I would love to do artwork for a living."

image by Justin Kellis

I do now. I left college 12 years ago, and it was only in the past five years that I found what I love to do. It was Craig Mullins' work that finally turned on the lights for me."

Tuna Ferit

"Aesthetic and beautiful faces, always giving me inspiration. I think what made me an artist is the beauty and harmony of nature. Everything has an order and harmony in nature. We can see it everywhere; animals, planets, and so on. A little bug has unbelievable detail. It is impossible not to receive inspiration from these things."

Vinegar

Freelance Artist, Warsaw, Poland

"Frankly, it would be discovering CG in general, a few years back. Before that I was terribly discouraged by traditional paints - never having enough patience for them nor the opportunity to experiment with them in the way that computers allow me to, now."

Vitaly S. Alexius

Freelance Illustrator, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

"There are tonnes and tonnes of events that make up the life of an artist, and no single inspiration can be accounted for becoming an artist. An artist is born and made; born with the talent and influenced by countless events throughout life. Development of my style was inspired by works of other artists, living in Siberian Russia, witnessing a UFO landing, and my parents."

Y. Soner Yurtseven

"If you look around for something which could be an artwork, or anything else: if you just like it then you're just a "tracer"; if everything that you look at excites you, and encourages you to create and to design, then if you can activate these feelings then I guess you're an artist. The elements that affect your artistic side are your brainwaves."

Sasha Podogrny

Designer, http://tiro.by, Belorus, Minsk

"In my childhood, when I was around four, I was presented with some interesting markers. They had a fantastically nice, uninterrupted line, and I became interested in graphic work. It seemed that I drew on all of the pieces of paper in the city…"

Simon Legrand

"Animation was listed just before Aviation in my school's careers guide. I wanted to be a fighter pilot, but failed the health tests (asthma). I always liked to draw and always wanted to eventually get into animation. Failing to get in the air force simply fast-tracked me."

Tiberius Viris

Lead Matte Painter, King of Houston
Singapore

"When I was little, I just wanted to find a way to share with others the worlds that I imagined, or the stories that I thought of. Art seemed to be the perfect way..."

Tim Warnock

Senior Matte Painter, Intelligent Creatures
Toronto Ontario, Canada

"Limited skills in any other area. Seriously, it was really the only thing I ever thought about doing from as far back as I can remember. The challenge was to figure out what kind of artist. It took me a little while to narrow it down to what

www.vue6.com

e-on
software

**Solutions for
Natural 3D Environments**

Crocodile
Stylised Animal challenge

In Association with CONCEPTART.ORG   THREEDY FORUMS

Stylised Animal Challenge
Crocodile

The Challenge

Welcome to the Stylised Animal Monthly Challenge. Each month, we will select an animal and post some images in the Forum Thread as reference. All you have to do is to create a 2D image of this creature in a stylised/abstract/cartoon style, whilst keeping your creature instantly recognisable. We wanted to publish some content in 2DArtist Magazine on how to create stylised animals, such as you see in the many feature films and cartoon galleries. We thought this regular competition might bring in just the images and Making Ofs that we need, whilst giving away great prizes and exposure. If it continues in success, we will try to boost the prizes as much as possible! This month's animal was the Crocodile. Here you can see the top six entries, as voted for by the public...

What are we looking for?

Funny and humorous entries which break the animal down to its most recognisable components; emphasise these in whichever ways you think best, and render your stylised/abstract/cartoon masterpiece. The rules are pretty laid back: please submit 1 x 2D render (minor post work is OK); it's up to you if you want to have a background or include graphical elements or text on your image. Renders of the 800 pixel dimension sound about right, but the winners will be featured in 2DArtist Magazine, so if you can create some higher resolution images, too - all the better! There will be one competition per month, with the deadline being the end of the month (GMT). For a valid entry, just make sure your final image is posted in the main competition thread before the deadline. We require the top 3 winners to submit Making Of overview articles that will be shown on either 3DTotal or in 2DArtist magazine. These need to show the stages of your creation, different elements, and some brief explanation text of why, and how, you did what you did. We will format this into some nice-looking pages to give you some great exposure, and us some quality content! Each competition will have one main thread which starts with the brief at the top. All entrants should post all WIPs, give feedback, and generally laugh at the crazy ideas that are emerging each month...

Challenge Thread

The entire *Crocodile* competition can be viewed here.

To join in with the next challenge, or to view previous and/or current entries, please visit: www.conceptart.org

Or, for the 3D Challenge, please visit: www.threedy.com
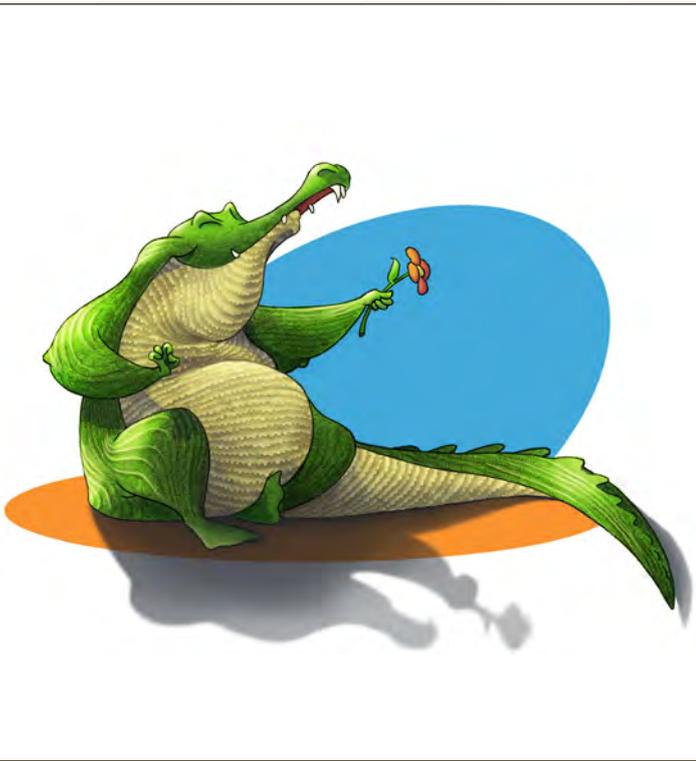
Or contact: lynette@zoopublishing.com

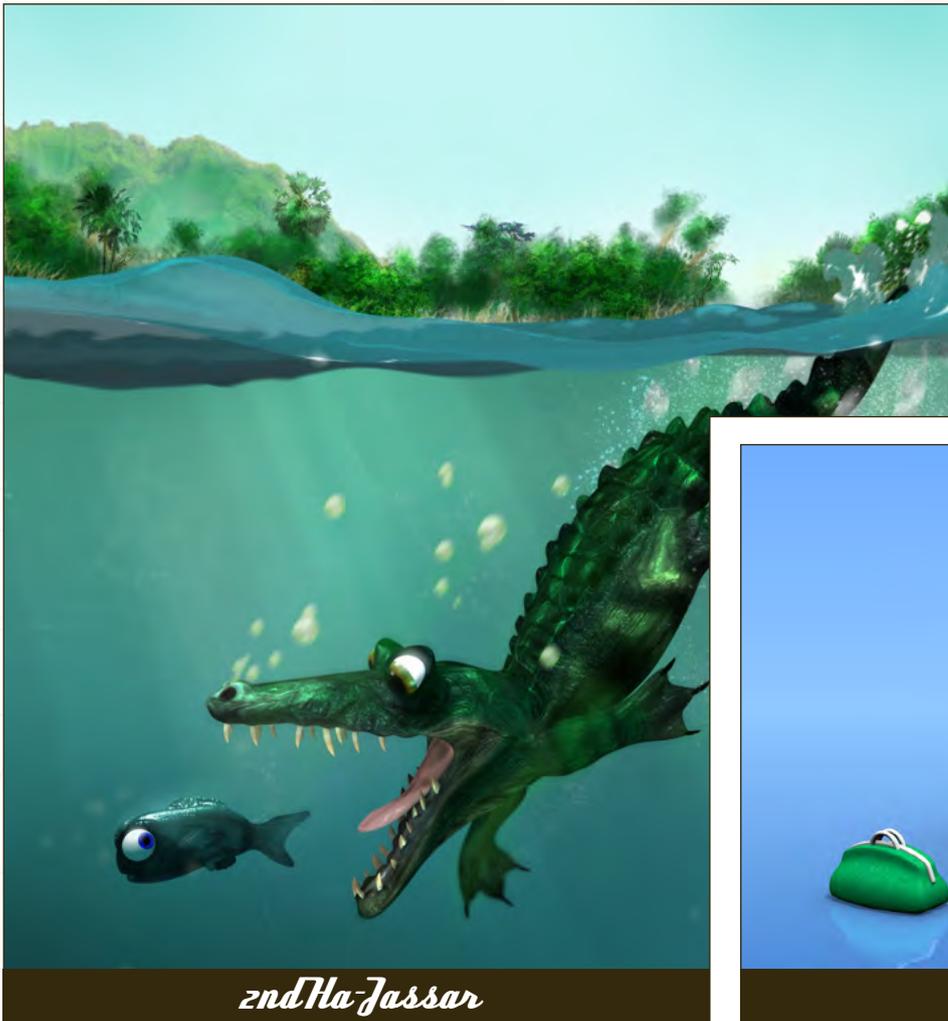6th Glen Ostrander

6th Hopsy

5th Paulo Ítalo

4th Ryan Slater

3rd Juan Caruso

2nd David Neale

1st Patri Balanovsky

3D Challenge

Here are this month's top entries from the 3D

Competition...

2nd Ha-Jassar

Stylized Animal Challenge · Crocodile
Shahin_Fj · Final Image

3rd Shahin Fj

1st Zinkete

Making Of's

Here are the Making Ofs from last month's top three winning entries...

3rd - Cakeypigdog

I began my design process by gathering reference materials together and analysing the creature in question. The main aim here was for me to establish what the main aspects of the character were, and to decide what features I wished to stylise. In the case of the Aye-Aye, this part of the work was easy as it has so many distinctive features: the eyes, hands and general expression of the animal are all perfect for stylisation. I then put the reference material to one side and started "thumbnailing" some preliminary designs. At such an early stage, I was mostly concerned with the general shape of the creature. I use this same technique for anything that I am designing, be it a vehicle, character or a building. Thumbnailing can be approached in many different ways: the method I use most often is silhouetting. The silhouette is great for thumbnailing because it allows you to define the overall shape of a character without investing a great deal of time drawing things out or getting bogged down with details (Fig01).

Fig01

Fig02

Fig03

Lines

Once I had a shape that I liked, I then fleshed out the design further. At such an early stage it is often economical to play with different designs on the same silhouette. In Photoshop, I just cut out the chosen silhouette and pasted duplicates next to it. This saved me drawing the same thing over and over again, and also helped me to make bolder choices, as you are less precious with something that you have not spent a lot of effort on. I played around at this stage until I had a design I was happy with, and then it was time to move on to the main drawing. The first thing I did was make some very fast lines that

helped me form the composition. I made a new document in Photoshop and started a new layer. The simple, hard round brush was fine for this preliminary drawing stage. I was generally thinking about curves and lines of action that would give the piece an overall sense of shape and movement. The main lines in this piece are the diagonal horizon and the curves that start with the branches and incorporate the Aye-Aye's tail (Fig02). I then started blocking in the various components of the piece. In this case it was a relatively simple affair for the Aye-Aye: the branch and a rather basic background. I did this second drawing pass on a new layer and set the previous line art layer to a low opacity. This way, it acted as a guide but did not get in my way. I didn't intend to leave any line art visible in the final stages of the painting, and so I simply made a sketch that blocked out the various forms, positions and shapes. I didn't worry about my line quality as I knew it would be painted over (Fig03).

Blocking In

Once I was happy with the drawing I then deleted the first layer (the basic composition lines) and started another new layer under the line art. At this stage there were 3 layers: the background, the main painting layer (currently blank) and the line art layer. I filled in the background layer with a flat colour first, which in this case was a sky colour. Then I used a big brush
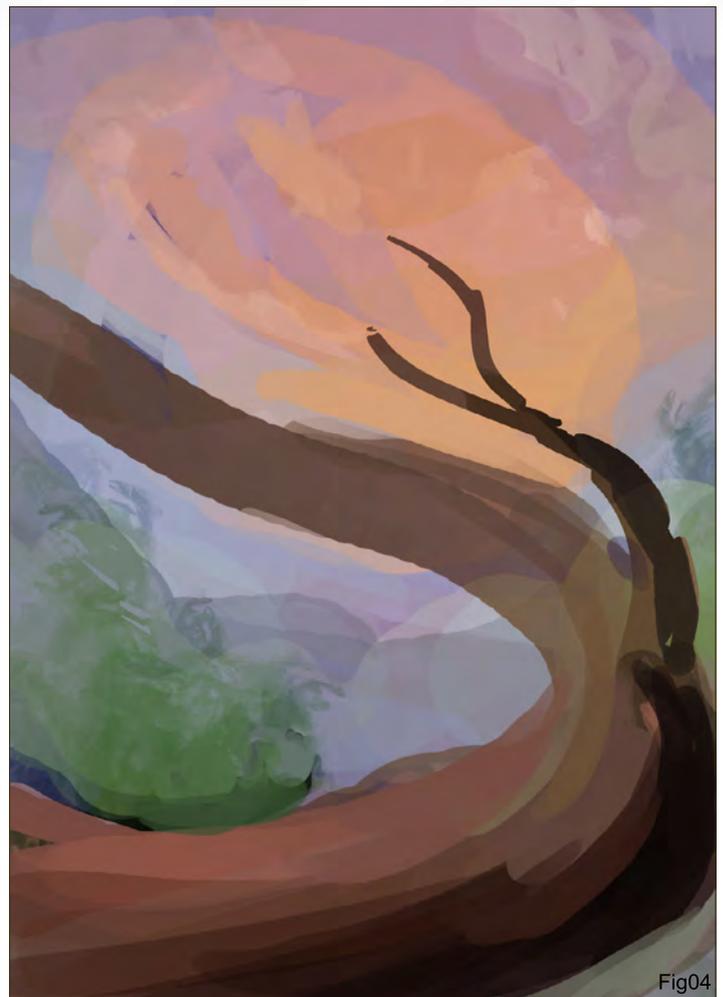
Fig04

and blocked in the general background elements (trees, clouds, sunset and sky) (Fig04). When the background block in was over, I switched to the middle layer (still blank) and painted in the Aye-Aye, branch and worm. I just used one colour per object initially, until everything was blocked in. The colour used for each object was its base colour: a blue-grey for the Aye-Aye, a purplish brown for the branch, and a pink for the little worm. At this stage I had everything blocked in and it was time to start painting in the form and light.

Foreground

(Fig05) First of all, I set the line art layer's opacity to about 50%, so that I did not become a slave to it. I then kept painting the Aye-Aye on the layer that I blocked it in on. I first had to decide on my light sources: the setting sun in the background and a more ambient light coming from predominantly from the top left. I also used a little bounce light from the bottom right. With this in mind, I started painting in the general form of the branch and the Aye-Aye. The sunset light was left until last and was painted in with a fairly bright, saturated orange - trying to capture a halo effect around the edge of the fur. Once I had most of the painting done and was happy with the way the piece was going, I deleted the line art layer so that I could concentrate on

Fig05

Fig06

the actual painted shapes. At this stage I tried to refine the edges of the character to make everything nice and solid and crisp. Once I had refined the character I then flattened the layers and played around with Photoshop's powerful image adjustment tools. The two I use most are Levels and Variations - have a play around with them, they are all very powerful! They all live in the Image > Adjustments menu. Levels are a bit like using Brightness and Contrast, but it gives you much more control. Variations is great - it can completely change the mood of a piece. When I use these tools I often duplicate the flattened image on to a new layer and run the adjustments on the duplicated version. This allows you to erase sections of the altered layer to allow the original to show through. It also means you can reduce the opacity of the top layer if you want a less intense version of the adjustment. My final stages were to use the Sharpen tool to 'crisp up' certain sections. You can lead the viewer's eye with hard edges, just as well as with line, tone and saturation. Use the Sharpen tool on a low opacity and just look at what it can do for your paintwork. Finally, I added a photographic overlay - just to break up the surface a little. I find, as do many, that digital painting can look too clean. Simply grab a photo of something grimy and paste it in as a new layer, then set it to Overlay in the layer types drop-down menu. If you have a digital camera then always be on the lookout for good texture sources - they can be very useful in digital painting! Well, that's it from me. I hope some of you have found this helpful (Fig06).

Cakeypigdog

For more info on this artist please contact:
jakegumbleton@hotmail.com

2nd - Daveneale

This is my third stylised animal challenge entry, and my first second place! I love these challenges - they're fun little doodles to be doing every month! As ever, reference was the first place I started. Even if you know what your subject looks like, it's always good to refer back to photographs/books/Internet images to be sure of the details and to reign in anything going crazily off-mark.

Fig01

The first thing to do was to quickly sketch out the Aye-Aye in Photoshop. They're really weird looking things, and I wanted it to look cute but with a certain "scrawniness". I chose an extreme landscape canvas, just because I'm a sucker for them. I think this comes partly from my love of the old Art Nouveau posters, as well as Chinese paintings that use long, portrait formats.

Fig 02

I used a colour scheme in the background that goes from super dark green to light yellow. I've been trying to push my colour knowledge recently, and I wanted to do something here that had a nice contrast. I think the colours are my favourite part of this image.

Fig03

I then blocked out the main shape of the Aye-Aye (using my initial sketch as a guide, again). I sometimes use different ways to paint in details, but with this one I used a method which is probably my favourite… Once the main shape was blocked in, I locked the layer (with the button at the top of the layers window) and could then paint inside the block without going over the edges of the shape I was colouring.

Fig01

Fig02

Fig03

Fig04

Fig04

I started adding details at this point, keeping the eyes on a separate layer. Eyes for me are one of the most important details. I simply cycled around different parts of the image, choosing an area I wanted to work on and building textures/shadows, always keeping my light source in mind.

Fig 05

Here I added the fur with a custom brush I made. Using a custom brush, rather than painting individual hairs, saves literally hours!

Fig 06

I decided that, even though this was a caricature of an Aye-Aye, the closest ear was a little too stylised, so I scaled it down using the Lasso tool - scaling it and then painting over the incision (sometimes when I do this, and there is texture to match up, the Clone Stamp tool is invaluable for healing a cut). I also tweaked the eye at this stage. Little things often bother me, and the danger, as always, is to tweak and tweak and tweak and… well you get the idea. But more recently I've been restraining myself from this, as 'over tweaking' can kill an image!

Fig 07

Finally I added some highlights; these really helped make the picture 'pop'… Aaaand, we're done! Another fun stylised animal done for the month. As I said before, I really like how the colours turned out, but I think my favourite detail is the light on the hands.

Fig05

Fig06

Daveneale

For more work by this artist please visit

http://www.daveneale.co.uk

Or contact them at

davejneale@hotmail.com

Fig07

1st - Chuckmate

Step 01

I began with a very loose and rough sketch, keeping in mind what it was that I wanted the little fella to convey to me (and the onlooker). Looking at the given references, I noticed the huge, bulging eyes, and the long, awkward fingers. To me, this creature seemed to be constantly neurotic in its overall appearance, so I went with that direction throughout this piece (Fig01).

Step 02

On a new Multiply layer, I put down some greens and reds roughly using a custom brush,

Fig01

Fig02

Fig03

just so I could have a sense of colour direction and something to work on (Fig02).

Step 03

A dark brown/grey colour was then applied on top of this for the creature, along with some solid black. I used a soft-edged brush and a custom made "hair" brush for some extra fur texture, which performed for the basic, overall shape. The hands were worked out a little, and I also painted in a darker green for the branch that the little guy is sitting on (Fig03).

Fig04

Step 04

I worked out the facial features, extenuating the eyes especially using a good, solid ochre colour. I introduced reds lightly for the nose and mouth areas, for interest and variety. More fur was added on top of the silhouette using a custom brush again, and the branch was given more detail and form (Fig04).

Step 05

To finish this piece off, the face was detailed some more, working out the shapes, light and shade. I worked on more of the details for the fingers and added more fur detail all over the creature. I coloured the tree's branch a light brown colour, and on a new Overlay layer I warmed my whole piece using a red-orange colour for the whole canvas, lowering its opacity to about 30%. I then worked on the background around my Aye-Aye, just to help frame it a little more and make it 'pop'. On a new Multiply layer I darkened the frame's edges a little to make the viewer's eyes focus on my main character. I then increased the contrast of my image, and as a final touch I added a comic word balloon, making my little guy say his name. And that, in a nutshell, is all folks!

Chuckmate

For more work by this artist please visit:

http://chuckmate.blogspot.com

Or contact them at:

Pat2005b@hotmail.com

galleries

Untitled

Tom Arthur Opasinski

www.tom-arthur-opasinski.com

www@tom-arthur-opasinski.com

Raiders of Thenn

Kerem Beyit

www.kerembeyit.deviantart.com/

kerembeyit@hotmail.com

© Fantasy Flight Games

Farrow Brigands

Kieran Yanner

www.kieranyanner.com

Kieran@KieranYanner.com

Silent Threat

Lorin Wood

www.lorinwood.com

lorin.wood@gmail.com

Untitled

Daniel Gies

dan@everyonediesfilms.com

Sailing Ship
Olga Antonenko
www.cgpolis.com
olga@cgpolis.com

2dArtist

Too Late

Shilin Huang

dmunkeh@gmail.com

Dreaming Night of Childhood

Teng Lin

www.tianruidm.com

linteng1981@hotmail.com

Give 'em War

Andreas Rocha

www.andreasrocha.com

rocha.andreas@gmail.com

the shorts drawer

Introduction:

A Collection of the finest independent animated movies and commercial trailers. The DVD includes work from a whole number or different sources, such as students, independents animators and commercial studios. We want people to be able to view this wealth of elite animation in one convenient high resolution package whilst generating much exposure for these talented artists at the same time.

the shorts drawer 2004

- Running Time: 3hrs 8 mins
- 27 Shorts movies
- 6 Clips & Trailers
- Region Free, NTSC & PAL versions
- Shorts & trailers from artist and studio like:
  Blur Studios
  Brian Taylor
  Marco Spitoni
  Patrick Beaulieu
  & Alex Mateo

the shorts drawer 2005

- Running Time: 3hrs 8 mins
- 27 Shorts movies
- 3 Trailiers
- Region Free, NTSC & PAL versions
- Shorts & trailers from studios such as:
  Blur Studios
  Keytoon Animations Studios
  Redrover Studios
  & Platige Image

- Loads of extra including images and storyboards
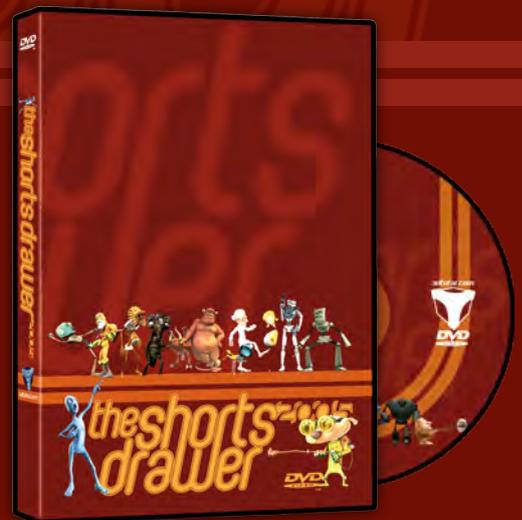
3dtotal.com

for more products in our range visit http://www.3dtotal.com/shop

Custom Brushes

"I've created custom brushes from just about anything I can find, including pictures, textures, doodles and digital scribbles..."

Follow this step-by-step tutorial to find out how Brian Recktenwald created his piece, "Old Woman" using custom brushes that he created in Photshop...

Custom Brushes

Created In:

Photoshop

Introduction

Like a lot of other digital artists out there, creating custom brushes is not only a key step in creating the art, but a heck of a lot of fun in itself! The default Photoshop brushes are quite awesome and I use them frequently, especially in the blocking phase, but I always end up integrating one or two custom brushes for control and a personal touch. I've created
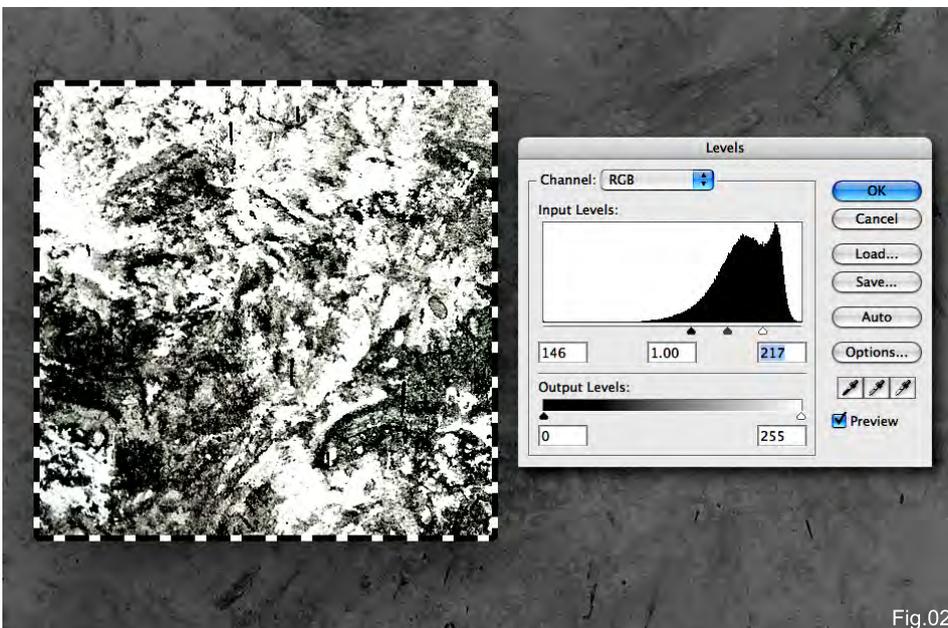

Fig:01

custom brushes from just about anything I can find, including pictures, textures, doodles and digital scribbles. But my preference is to add an organic feel to my brushes, so 90 percent of my custom brushes come from a high-resolution scan I made of crazy experiments with ink, water and salt on drawing paper (Fig01).

Step 01

I'll pull different selections from this image and mess with them using Levels, Filters and other brushes until I get the base image for our brush (Fig02).

Fig.02

Step 02

In this example, I'm going to create a brush for use with the Smudge tool. I wanted a more stippled pattern, like a dry brush would give, to help add texture as I blend. After bringing contrast into the image by clamping the Levels, I begin experimenting with some filters to further pronounce the shapes (Fig03).

Step 03

Then I duplicate the original texture a few times and place them on top of the filtered version. Finally, I play with different blending modes until there's a good texture/shape balance (Fig04).

Step 04

Once I have my base brush, I'll flatten my layers and possibly resize the image. It's better to save your brush at the highest native resolution possible. However, the higher you go, the slower the drawing performance. To save this image off as a brush, go to Edit > Define Brush Preset, and hit OK after giving it an appropriate
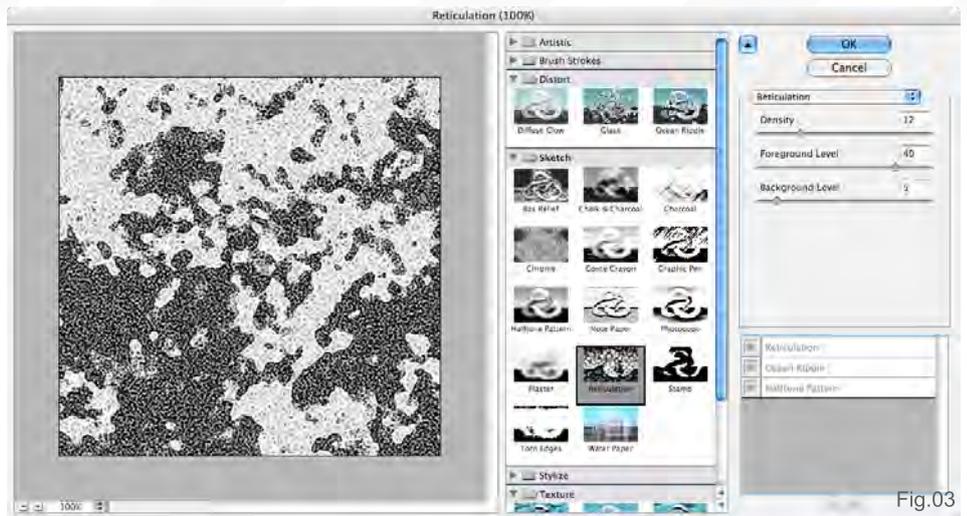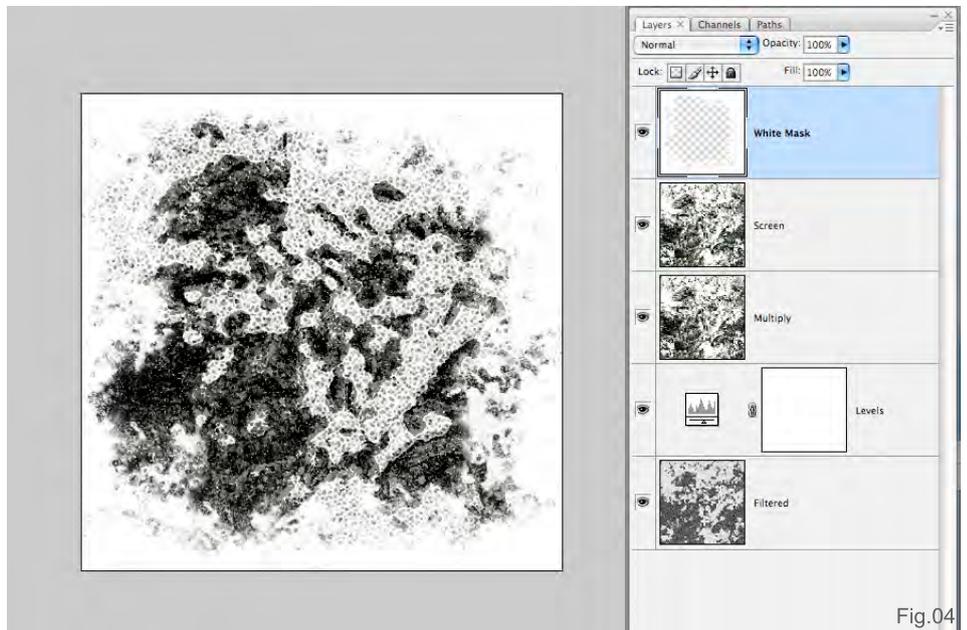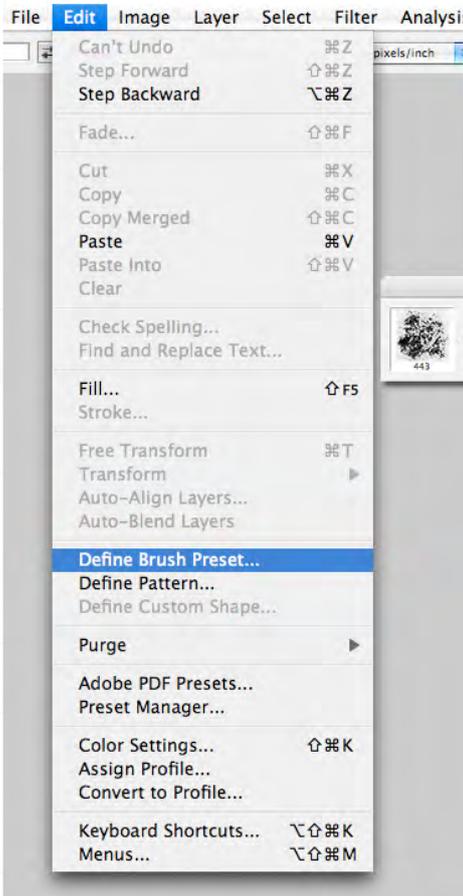

Fig.03

Fig.04

name (Fig05). Now you can access this brush any time in the Brushes window.

Step 05

It's now time to set up the Smudge tool brush settings for use with our new brush. We'll be able to pull a lot of mileage from this brush simply by adjusting the Shape Dynamics, Scattering, and Other Dynamics settings, without having to swap out a new brush image. Another important value to adjust and tinker with as you go, is the Strength setting. An example of this brush in action starts with a canvas of broad-brush strokes (a default round brush with strength and hardness of 100) and then a Cutout filter applied (Fig06).

Fig.05

Step 06

I'll then select the Smudge tool and load our new brush image (Fig07). For rapid, first pass blending I want speed and spread ability, so at this stage I'll use a smaller brush size with just the Shape Dynamics and Other Dynamics settings adjusted (Fig08).

Step 07

At this stage I'll constantly be changing the strength and sometimes turning off the Other Dynamics setting. After some cross-hatching to bring out some tonal gradation, I'll change my brush settings to bring a softer, yet textural, quality to the strokes by turning on Scattering (Fig09). The rule of thumb here is that the higher the scatter, the softer the blending. Also, the
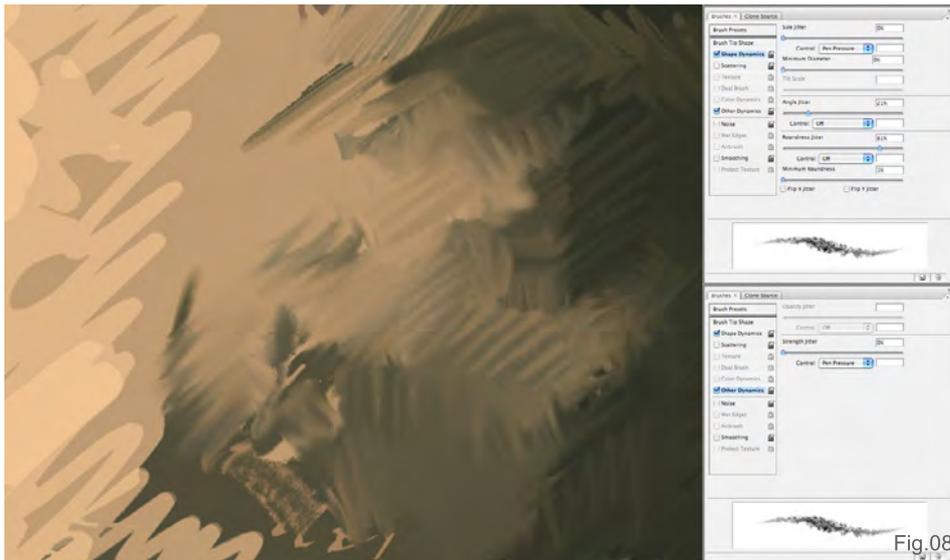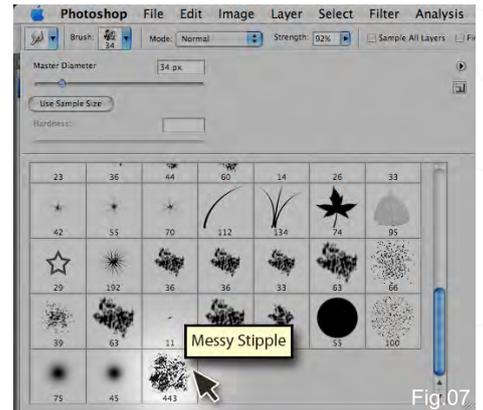

Fig.06

Fig.08

Fig.07

higher the strength, the more the texture will come through. Adjusting the brush accordingly is also important at this stage. This brush, and the variations mentioned, were used exclusively in creating this painting of an old woman (Fig10).

Fig.09

Fig.10

Welcome to the Speed Painting section of the magazine. We've asked two artists to produce a speed painting based on a simple, one-line brief. Here we will feature the final paintings and the overview of the creation processes. This month, **Augis Fred** and **Richard Tilbury** tackle:

THE PARTY ENTERTAINERS REAL TWISTED IDENTITIES WERE VERY FAR FROM THEIR BRIGHT, COLOURFUL DISGUISES

AUGIS FRED

To evoke this subject I chose to settle my work in the middle of a Baroque scene, where we discover guests who are fascinated by the dexterity of the juggling acts carried out by an entertainer. In spite of the good mood evoked by this aristocrat clown, he acts on a tormented heart which carries the blood of his victims on his hands...

Picture 01 Using Photoshop, the first stage in the construction of this speed painting was to establish the composition of the scene; to pose the masses of each element in order to obtain their silhouettes and to benefit from them in order to deposit smaller subjects at the bottom. To detach the elements from one another, I contrasted many levels of grey, in particular for the main subject.

Picture 02 I then had to integrate the light from the candles, as this was to be my principal source of light. I was therefore able to pose 'volumes' for each silhouette. Whilst placing the three characters in the lower part of the lit scene, very close to the source of light, I was obliged to hide certain zones of their body, adding mystery to their characters.

Fig02

Fig01

Fig02

Fig03

Fig04

Fig04

Picture 03 I continued this work by detailing the characters - always in black and white - until achieving a satisfactory quality. I concentrated on the masked man and added elements such as the cigarette smoke in the foreground. I then started to add colour to my composition...

Picture 04 I selected a sepia colour which I applied to the whole of the painting in order to evoke an environment reminiscent of the past. I then gilded the masks in gold to slightly detach them from the other elements. I then integrated the most conspicuous colour: red – the blood that the three men around the subject have on their hands. I benefited from posing a halo of light around each of the burning lights.

Picture 05 - 06 For the final phase I contrasted certain zones using the Overlay filter, by concentrating the light on top of the image and adding some textures at the same time. Using the Smudge tool, I sought to apply movement to the three tormented men. To finish off, I refined the proportions using the Fluidity tool.

Fig06

Fig05

Fig05

Fig06

RICHARD TILBURY

Introduction

For this month's exercise I decided to situate my scene in a traditional theatre setting and imagine it was set at some point during the Victorian era. I chose to use somewhat traditional costumes as a result, such as a court jester and man wearing a variation of a Napoleonic hat, which I believe is known as a Tricorne. Anyway, the idea was that it gave the picture a historical feel and hopefully established it in at some point in the past. The idea behind the image is that a man is seated on a stage and is about to take part in some form of illusion or trickery, but what is in fact going to happen is that he is about to have his throat cut!

Fig01

Fig02

Blocking In

As is usual for me during these speed painting exercises, I start on paper with a quick sketch as I find it easier to draw on paper than I do using a Wacom. Fig01 shows my initial starting point, which shows a portly gentleman sitting with his head tilted back and a masked entertainer behind him. I like to begin with some form of template even if it does not fully describe the final composition. Once the drawing was scanned into the computer I started by laying down a brown/grey background and set the drawing to Multiply above this layer so I could see the line work over the blocking in. I chose a warm grey because the scene is set in a theatre under bright light and will help add warm undertones to the final image. I then added a new layer on top of this, on which I will begin establishing the highlights and shadows. Fig02 shows the drawing above the tonal layer which was done in black and white, with the brown background showing through underneath.

Fig03

Adding Colour.

The next stage involves adding colour, which I will do on a separate layer to begin with. It is not necessary to keep adding new layers each time you add more detail, but when you have to break the process down into a step-by-step tutorial it is very useful! The first colour layer is set to Overlay, which means that it can be painted over the tonal layer but still adhere to the black and white values. This is a technique I have begun using lately but sometimes only as a starting point. It does have a tendency to subdue colour somewhat even though it is an effective approach, and I often flatten the image after experimenting with a colour scheme and then paint entirely on one layer to refine things. Fig03 shows the early stages of a colour layer being added, which was done in two ways in this case. The green arm of the left entertainer was done on an Overlay layer, and you can see how the green has remained faithful to the tones underneath when compared

Fig04

to the previous illustration. The jester character on the right has been painted on a separate layer set to Normal mode, and so the colour is opaque by comparison. I find it helpful to always experiment and mix things up a bit as you never know what you may learn from exploring different avenues. The tonal range has established the light source in the top left and with the colour layers added I now have a clearer idea about how the painting is going. It is now a question of tidying up what we have so far and then putting in the final details. Fig04 shows the picture at a further stage with some additional colour and modulation, particularly across the seated man and jester. Perhaps more importantly the razor which helps to unlock the sinister aspect behind the image has been hinted at in the lower left.

Fig05

Finishing the Picture

The picture is coming together now but there are a still a few problems with the overall feel of the image. The characters are satisfyingly colourful and contrast nicely with the hapless victim, and the red curtains add a theatrical and symbolic streak of red in the background. However, one thing that looks wrong is the light, which does not seem very intense seeing that the scene is set under a bright spotlight. To counter this I add a new layer set to Soft Light, and add a gradient blending from a pale orange through to transparent, from the top down. In Fig05 you can see, compared to the last stage, how this adds a warmer value to the colour scheme, particularly the red curtain which now looks far more vibrant. To mirror the brighter light, the floor also needs some highlights cast across the wooden boards, so I put in some reflections. Perhaps, more importantly, I add a glint of light across the razor to emphasise the sharp blade and to make it stand out against the dark background. The last thing to do is make the final refinements and changes that will help improve the image.

Fig06

Fig06 shows the final picture with all the cumulative tweaks, which includes a Curves adjustment layer. This helped add just a bit more intensity to the spotlight, which I felt was still a little weak. I toned down the floor highlights to hide the chair and also to emphasise the characters, as well as warming up the backdrop with a grey/brown showing some evidence of stage scaffolding. One small aspect I added was a blindfold, which I felt made the man feel even more vulnerable and unaware of his impending doom!

Conclusion

The image is complete and, as usual, has been an interesting challenge. I could have made the faces of the two entertainers look more twisted and evil perhaps, but I actually quite liked the fact that their intent is hidden. I thought in the end that the blindfold and razor injected the picture with an unnerving aspect which did not necessarily need to be portrayed by the faces themselves. I may however do another version with more stylised and darker characters, in the future. I decided that the jester should be holding a shallow bowl in a rather ambiguous manner to help keep the viewer guessing. Maybe I could have blindfolded the guy with the razor? ...

Richard Tilbury

For more from this artist contact:
ibex80@hotmail.com

ELEMENTS

DIGITAL PAINTING TUTORIAL SERIES : WEATHER

The 'elements' series is a guide to basic 2D Digital painting and can be followed in most software packages supporting paintbrushes and layers. Each month, professional artists will cover a specific theme or 'element', resulting in different styles and techniques. This month we will be creating Twisters!

SUBJECTS:

Fig00

ELEMENTS TWISTER

Created In:

Adobe Photoshop 7

Twister

Are you prepared to transform a calm landscape base image into a scene featuring a dramatic twister? Okay, well let's start! ...

If you don't have too much of an idea about what a particular scene looks like, then I always recommend you use the Internet to find some photographs that can help you in your work. Years ago, artists needed to have hundreds of books in their studios to help them find good reference images for their works, but now, with the Internet, we have the opportunity to instantly find the images that we are looking for. So, find some good reference images of what we need, and study the colours and atmosphere of them.
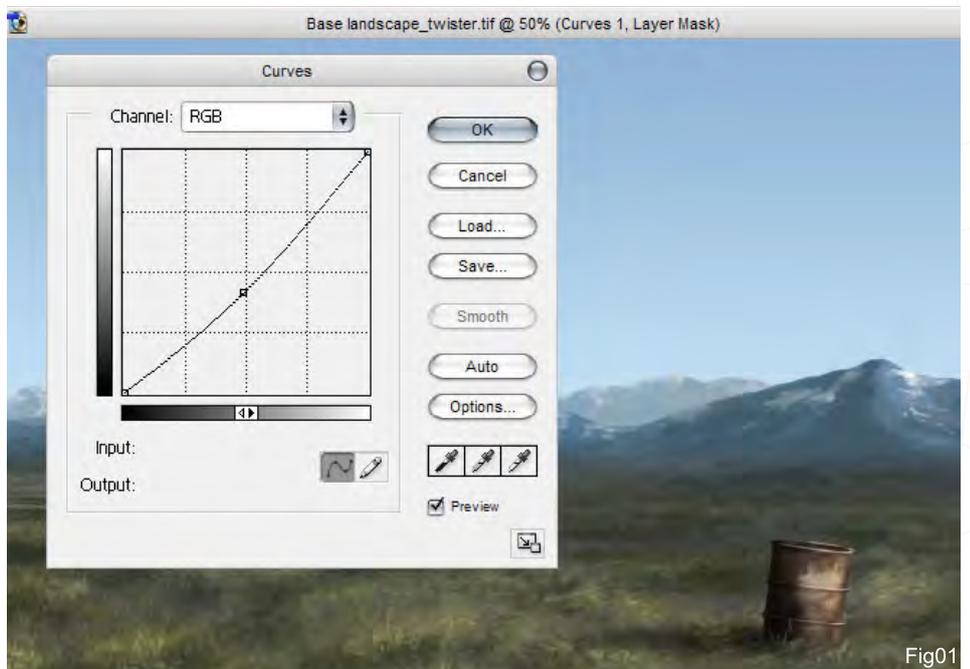

Fig01

You can learn a lot if you look at and study any images, not just artists' works. You can learn lots of things from photographs, too. Fig00 shows the base image that I will use for this demonstration. So, let's see the first step in transforming the scene and adding a twister. First of all, we need to change the light of this

image a little. Go to Image > Adjustments > Curves and make a similar curve, as you can see in Fig01.

It's not a huge change of colour, but this is just the first step. Now we have to work hard on the clouds. This may be both the hardest and

funniest part of the painting, as we have to create a cool twister mixed in with the clouds. For the dark colour of the twister pick a dark blue colour (RGB: 93, 117, 130), and for the brighter area of the twister select a sky blue colour (RGB: 137, 163, 179). With these two colours we are going to create a cool twister...

To create the effect of the clouds and twister, I used a custom brush which you can download with this tutorial. First, I will show you how you can
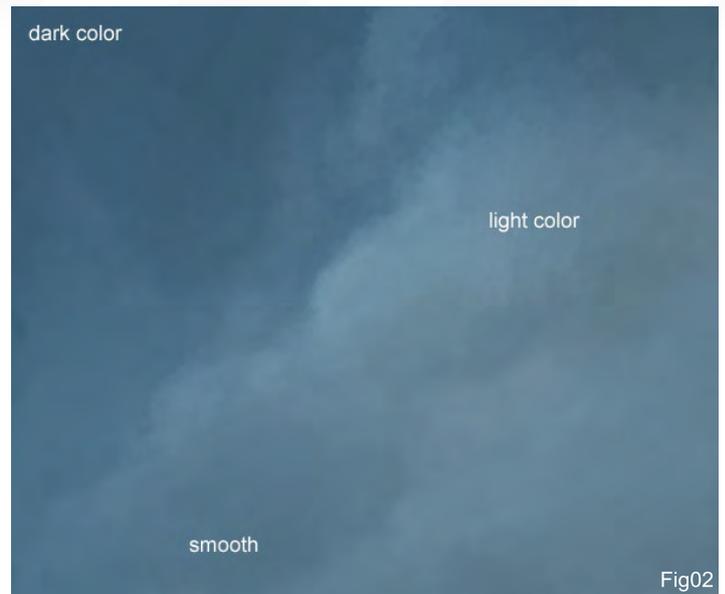

dark color

light color

smooth

Fig02

paint clouds easily using this brush (download can be found at the end of this tutorial). The first thing we need is a base colour, so let's use the dark blue colour that we picked before, and paint an irregular cloud shape. This brush has the pressure opacity turned on, so you can create some nice and interesting effects with it. The next step is adding light to this cloud shape, so pick the light colour and paint on the area of the cloud where the light hits. Use the pressure of your pen to smooth between the dark and bright area of the cloud (Fig02). A simple way to smooth two colours is using a brush with a low opacity, so let's try using 30% or 40% for this image. Pick the brighter colour and paint over the darker colour with a low opacity. Then select the Eyedropper tool (Press the Alt key) and pick this freshly mixed colour. Continue doing this a couple of times and you'll see how the edges of your cloud begin to smooth, without the help of the Smudge tool.

Fig.03 shows the path of my brush strokes when creating these cloud formations. It's easy, don't you think? Try doing a couple of extra clouds in a new document, before you continue with the twister.

Ready? Okay, so now let's paint the twister... With the dark colour (RGB: 93, 117, 130), paint the twister's body and mix it in with the clouds.

Fig03

light color

earth color

Fig04

Spend some time painting and smoothing the clouds as this is the most important part of this illustration, so do your best here!

Now, with the light colour (RGB: 137, 163, 179), paint the edge of the twister's body. With this last step you are going to separate the twister from the background. Pick an earth colour and paint the base of the twister with this colour. Try to paint something like what you can see in Fig04.

We now have to darken the sky, so pick a green colour (RGB: 121, 166, 151) and paint on a

Fig05

new layer using the Gradient tool (Foreground to Transparent) from top to bottom. Change the properties of the layer to Multiply and change the opacity to 91%. This will change the sky to a green/grey colour (Fig05), although it's still too bright at this stage!

Now create another layer and change the properties to Color Burn. We need the opacity to be lowered here too, so change it to around 80%. Again, select the Gradient tool and paint over the clouds with this green/grey colour


Fig06

Fig07

(RGB: 164, 178, 170). Now it is dark! You can see just how dramatically the image has changed (Fig06).

It's now time to destroy the farm. Create a new layer and paint, using a hard brush, the trash, earth and wood that will be flying around the base of the twister. This is a fun part, so spend some time putting the details in here (Fig07). You can paint cows flying around the tornado too if you like, or maybe even a farmer!

The farm is ready and the tornado looks scary now, but we still need to add the wind effect to the entire scene. Create another layer and paint some random dots on it - any place is okay. We will transform these dots into a foreground of flying trash! Pick any bright colour from the image to paint these dots, and when you've finished go to Filters > Motion Blur and apply these settings: Angle = 8; Distance = 40px (Fig08).

We are almost finished with this image at this stage. Let's now create the last layer. This layer is very important, so take your time on it. I'm going to show you what I did, but it's not a technique as such, just a final tweak of the image. You can continue modifying the image until you personally feel that the illustration is

Fig08

Fig09

Fig10
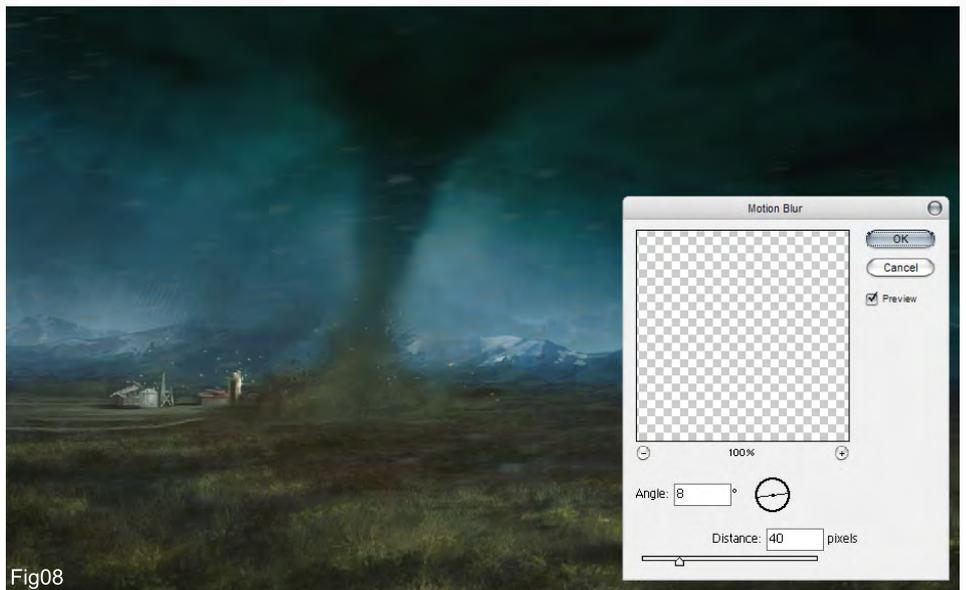
finished. Remember that only you know when a painting is finished! Some artists flip the entire image to see errors; others zoom in and out of the image to see and feel what is wrong. Try to find your own way.

So in this last layer we'll change the properties to Overlay (opacity 52%) and paint with browns, greens and yellows over the image, in order to enhance the different areas. In the following image you can see the layer without the Overlay properties (Fig09). Compare that with the final image (Fig10). And this is the end of the tutorial. Try to apply these steps to any image you create, and learn to feel comfortable with what you do. See you in the next tutorial: Rainstorm!

SUPER MODEL.

Diet and exercise?
At Vancouver Film School we believe that one intense year of
education and hard work is what it takes to create super models.

THE PROGRAMS
The focus of all our Animation & Visual Effects programs is
on telling a story through movement: knowing how to animate
life where there is none. Choose from 3D Animation & Visual
Effects, Classical Animation, Digital Character Animation, and
Houdini™ Certification.

THE LEADER
VFS's Animation & Visual Effects programs are led by
industry veteran Larry Bafia, who was Animation
Supervisor at PDI/Dreamworks and worked on hits
like Antz and Mission Impossible II.

THE PROCESS
Under the guidance of instructors who are industry
pioneers, you will work and learn in a studio setting
and create a demo reel or film of your own, so when
you graduate, you're ready to hit the ground running
and immediately start working with a production team.

THE RESULTS
VFS animation is all around you. Every year our graduates
start careers at the world's best production studios.
You've seen our graduates work in Transformers, Lost,
Harry Potter: Order of the Phoenix, Battlestar Galactica,
Narnia, Ice Age: The Meltdown, and Family Guy.

Vancouver Film School is now accepting applications
for our January 2008 start date.

VFS Student work by Julianna Kolakis

VFS ™

ANIMATION
& VISUAL EFFECTS

vfs.com/animationvfx

Pixologic®
makers of **ZBrush**

ZBrush 3.1
THE NEXT STEP

ZBRUSH 3.1 PUTS THE ARTIST IN AN IMMERSIVE DIGITAL SCULPTING ENVIRONMENT

Boosted Speed, Real-time Shadows,
Material Capture and Render (MatCap),
Full 3D Sculpting and Texturing with Alphas and Textures,
Advanced 'Digital Clay' with up to One Billion Polygons with HD Geometry,
Real-time Posing, Perspective Camera, Retopologizing,
One-click Turntable Recording with Quicktime Export,
Support for 32 and 64 bit systems,
Muti-threaded Support,
And Much More.

PIXOLOGIC.COM   PIXOLOGIC.COM/ZBC   PIXOLOGIC.COM/DOCS
Corporate   Community   Documentation

"The best approach for me is to let the shapes flow from my hand to the screen without much interference..."

HOWLING

HOWLING

Created In:

Photoshop

This Photoshop and Wacom tablet tutorial was originally published in the **Digital Fantasy Painting Workshop** book, by Ilex Press (www.ilex-press.com). The tutorial explains how I created the 'Howling' digital painting illustration. The image features an angry demon ripping the heart out of his victim's chest (**beware:** nudity). The tutorial provides detailed instructions on the Photoshop brush settings that I used to paint the image.

This tutorial explains, in particular, how to quickly achieve flesh tones using Adjustment layers.

Step 1 - The Sketch

The sketch was done at low resolution (72 dpi), for quickness. It's important to stress that the quicker the sketch is completed, the better it will be (which is usually true for me, at least).

The best approach for me is to let the shapes flow from my hand to the screen without much interference. If I were to stop every few strokes I would lose the spontaneity that is key to a successful sketch.

I made several sketches in succession - all slightly different and all drawn on a new, blank layer. I try to keep a constant brush size to avoid wasting time on sketching any details, which at this initial stage can be a distraction and could get in the way during the next phase.

Once I had a few interesting sketches separated on different layers, I compared them and picked
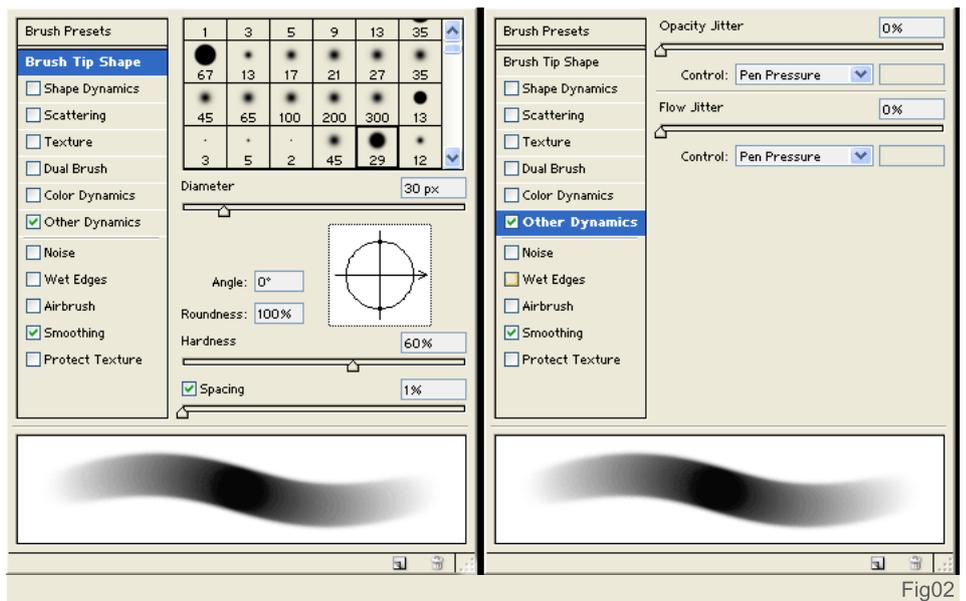

Fig01

www.robertocampus.co

Fig02

the one I thought best conveyed the idea I had set out to illustrate. (Fig01)

Tool Settings and Notes:

When sketching in Photoshop, I use a medium

hardness, pressure sensitive, round brush with a grey colour. I prefer using this brush setting because it allows me to define shapes with clear edges, with just a few quick strokes. The Brush tool settings can be seen in Fig02.

Step 2 - Blocking

The blocking phase is where I concentrate on defining the volume of the figure; the way in which the light source (in this case a single spotlight positioned above) illuminates the subjects. To achieve a high level of realism, I decided to take a few reference snapshots with a digital camera. Lacking a model at the time, I posed for the pictures myself. I then imported the photos into Photoshop, desaturated them, and added a high level of contrast to maximise the highlights and shadows that I needed to refer to.

I resized the reference pictures to a small size and put them to the left of my main canvas
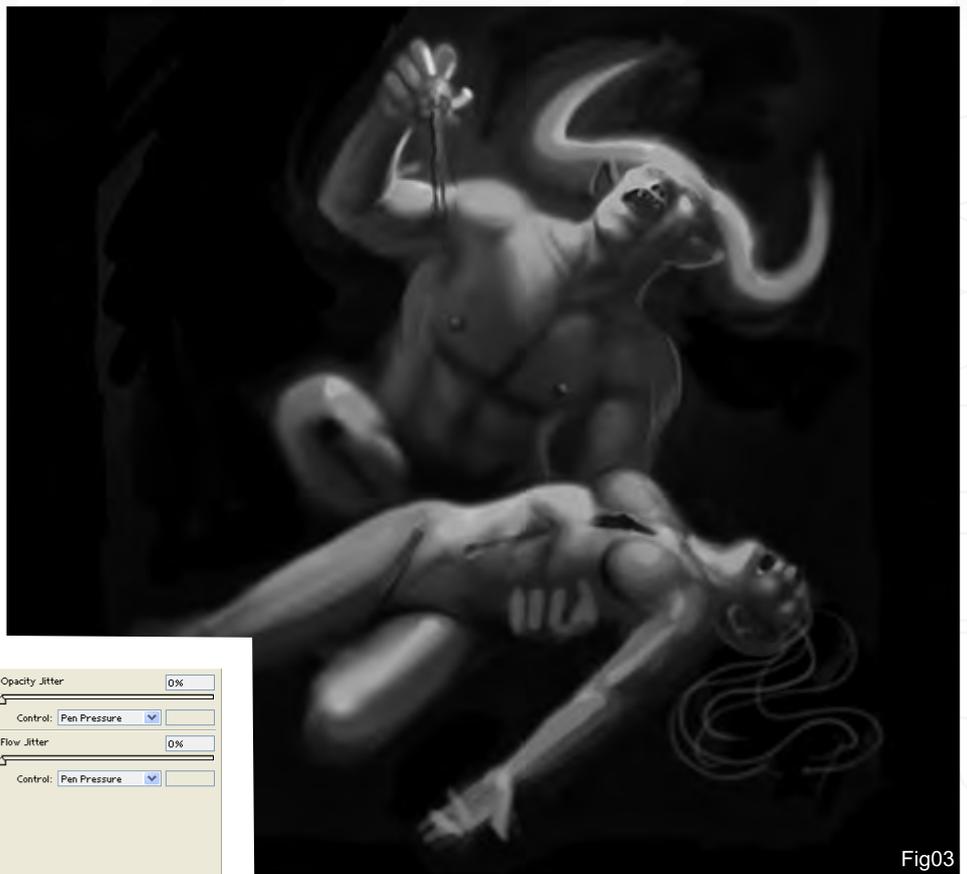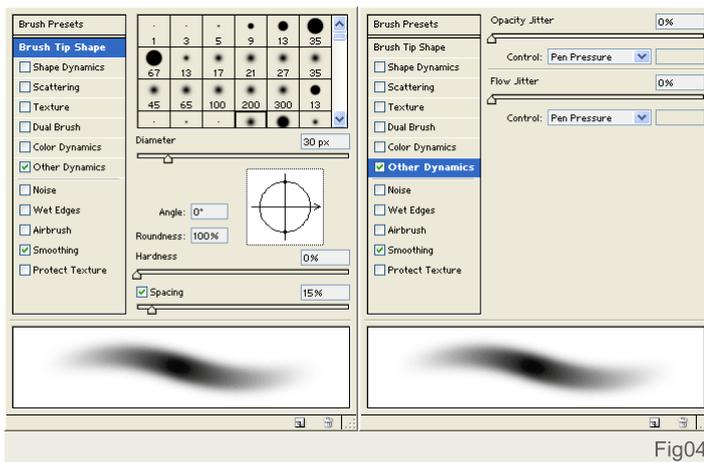

Fig03

Fig04

window. I moved back to the sketch window and resized it to 300 dpi. I set the sketch layer in Multiply mode and added an empty layer below it, which I filled with a black colour. In this new layer, I then painted a flat shape, following the edges of the sketch using a 50% flat grey brush tip.

After the "flat" was done (this is a term borrowed from the comic industry), I proceeded to loosely build up the shadows in the darker areas, using several light strokes for each shadow. At this point, I deleted the sketch layer (but I kept a copy on a separate file). I saved all the highlights for the next step. Whilst working on the blocking, I never zoomed in closer than 50%, to avoid falling in the trap of getting lost in time-consuming details. (Fig03)

Tool Settings and Notes:

For this stage of the process, I rely on a 0% hardness (smooth-edged), pressure sensitive brush at 80% opacity. Having a pressure sensitive stylus and tablet is very useful when painting an image such as this, where smooth flesh tones are prominent. Once again, I kept the brush size constant through this step, until the very end where I hinted at some of the smaller details. The Brush tool settings can be seen in Fig04.

Step 3 - Main Painting

For this stage, I zoomed in at 100% and started reshaping the anatomy to bring each muscle and visible bone structure to more exact and

Fig05

www.robertocampus.com

convincing shape and proportions. I did not spend much time blending the strokes, as the focus here was to add in highlights and lighter tones.

For the actual painting, I used a combination of short and light brush strokes, whilst alternating between black and white brush tip colours using the X key (in order for this to work, I set up the brush foreground colour as white and the background colour as black).

I accentuated some shapes with darker lines, and also made the lightest spots more prominent with a few touches of pure white. Often, I zoomed out to get a feel on the overall look of the image. I use keyboard shortcuts constantly to switch between colours, to undo, to zoom in and out, and so on. To do this, I keep my left hand on the keyboard at all times whilst painting. (Fig05)
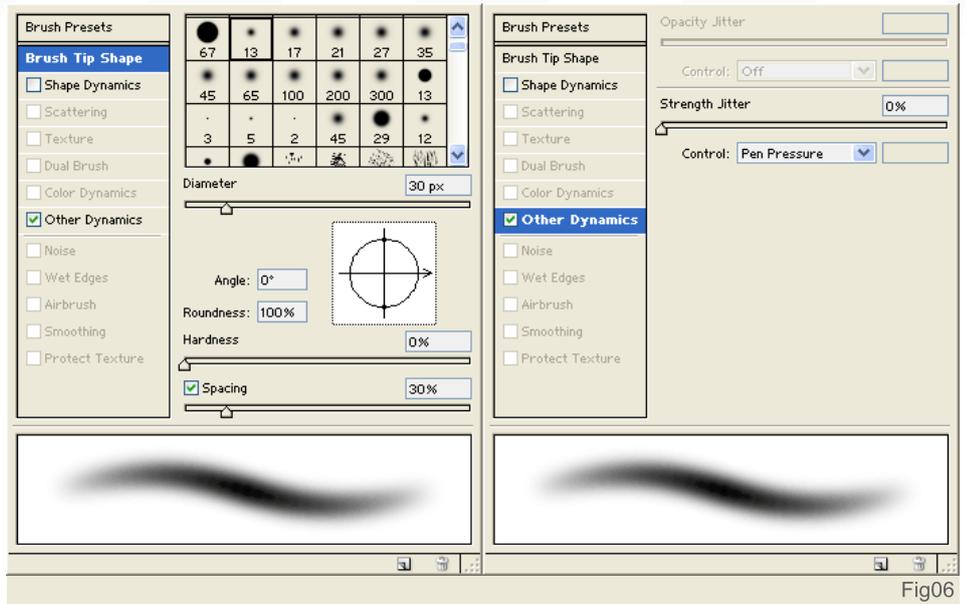

Fig06

Tool Settings and Notes:

The brush settings I used for this stage are just about the same as the ones I employed for the blocking phase, but with slightly increased spacing and opacity, varying from 50% to 100%.

In addition, I continuously adjusted the brush size, depending on the amount of detail that each area required. The Brush tool settings can be seen in Fig06.

Step 4 - Blending/Refining

Working on the foundation set in the previous step, I now used a technique borrowed from traditional oil painting. All the rough dabs of colour that I had set before, especially for the highlights, are now blended using the Smudge tool. This simulates the way I paint in oils, where I would build the highlights by putting a small amount of white (or another colour lighter than the base one) on the area I want to lighten, and then blend it and shape it accordingly using a soft bristle brush.

Applying the same method to digital painting is a breeze - especially using the Smudge tool. Here I spent the largest amount of time refining, in detail, every part of the image. The hardest sections to blend convincingly were the large muscle groups, such as legs and abdominal area. Here I relied on my knowledge of anatomy, and that is a must-have requirement if you set out to paint bodies, especially muscular ones.

Whilst blending, I switched to the Paintbrush tool once in a while, whenever I needed an

Fig07

additional touch of white or black. I also zoomed in, up to 300%, to work closely on the small details - especially on the faces. Overall, I still wanted to maintain a somewhat painterly feel with some visible brush strokes, so I avoided blending too heavily. After the blending was complete, I used the Dodge tool, set to Highlights, in order to punch up some of the highlights which I felt needed to be stronger. I used this tool sparingly however, as too much of it can make the image look over-exposed. (Fig07)

Tool Settings and Notes:

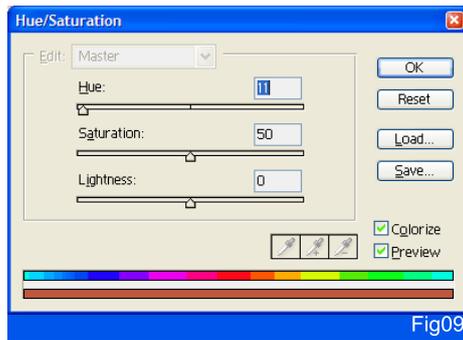The Smudge tool is the tool of choice for this step. I selected a small, medium to high opacity,
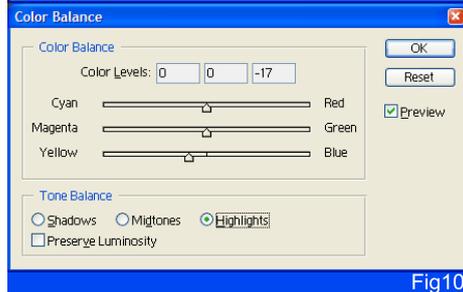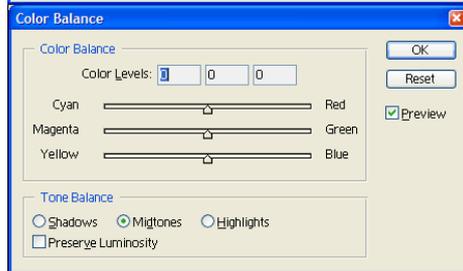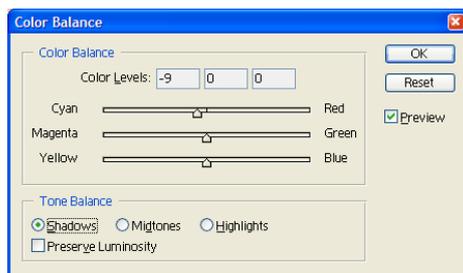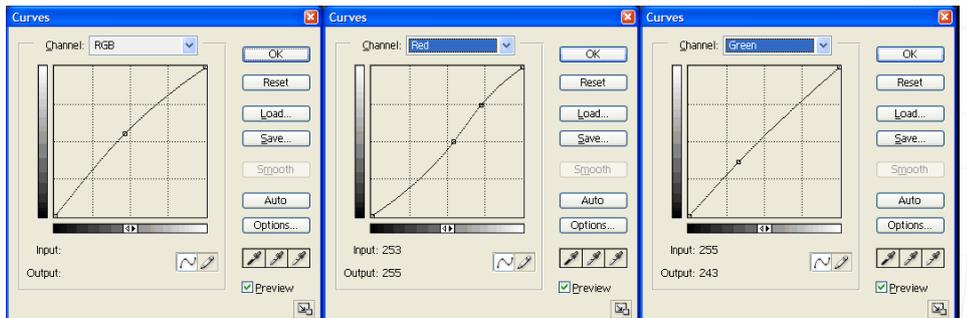

Fig09

Fig10

Fig08

Fig11

pressure sensitive, 0% hardness, round brush for the blending process. It is important to notice that I set the Spacing at 30%. A lower spacing would cause the Brush tool to perform really slowly, and it would move too much "paint".

Step 5 - Colouring

At this point, I added colour to the black and white painting. Using one of the most powerful features of Photoshop - Adjustment layers - I was able to experiment with different colour schemes until I found the one I was looking for.

An advantage of using this method is that I can change the colours at any time, without having to repaint any parts of the illustration.

Here I wanted to give the image a strong, dramatic feel, and opted for a palette based on fleshy red tones for a Caravaggio feel. (Fig08)

First, I added an Adjustment Layer: Layers > New Adjustment Layer > Hue/Saturation, to colourise the figures. I put this above the painting layer, checked the Colorize button, set the Hue to 11, the Saturation to 50, and

the Lightness to 0. The black and white figure is now coloured. The colours need further manipulation though, because the flesh tones are still too uniform. (Fig09)

Secondly, above this I added a Color balance Adjustment Layer Layers > New Adjustment Layer > Color Balance. In the Shadows tone balance settings, I moved the Color level to -9 on the Cyan slider. I left the Mid-tones sliders untouched. In the Highlights tone balance settings, I set the Yellow slider to -17. This

introduced a variation between the darker and lighter colours. It was still not enough, though. (Fig10)

A third modifier was added: Layers > New Adjustment Layer > Curves. I used this to add a hint of green to the darker tones, to vary the way the red tones played with the highlights and also to make the picture a bit lighter, overall. (Fig11)

Additionally, in order to add more realism to the figure, I used the Paintbrush tool to add further

red tones to the girl's cheek, bleeding heart, chest wound, legs and hands. Flesh tones are hard to obtain, but this method usually allows for a quick shortcut toward achieving them.

Roberto Campus

For more from this artist visit:

www.robertocampus.com

Or contact:

bob@robertocampus.com

"The last look over your painting is about being as critical as you can be on your work. If an area has been really nicely worked, but in the end comes in the way of readability or clarity of the whole image - simplify it."

The Taming Of Naas

Follow this Making Of by Christophe Vacher to find out how he created "The Taming Of Naas". This painting was created for a book about dragons, which is soon to be released in Europe. He explains, step-by-step, the processes he went through and the techniques he used...

The Taming Of Naas

Created In:

Photoshop 7

Painting process

Since my personal work has been known to the public mostly through traditional mediums (such as oils and acrylics), people are often surprised when I tell them I also work digitally, and that most of my book covers are now done in Photoshop. The digital media is not new to me; in fact, I started to use it when I was doing concept artwork on "Dinosaur", in 1996. It took me a while to like it, but when you realise how much control you have on all your parameters, it can become addictive. In any case, I would never replace a classical training in traditional mediums with an exclusive digital training. Of course, Photoshop or any other digital package makes things easier on a practical level, but the artistic principles to follow are still exactly the same, and mixing real paint teaches you in depth how colour works in nature.
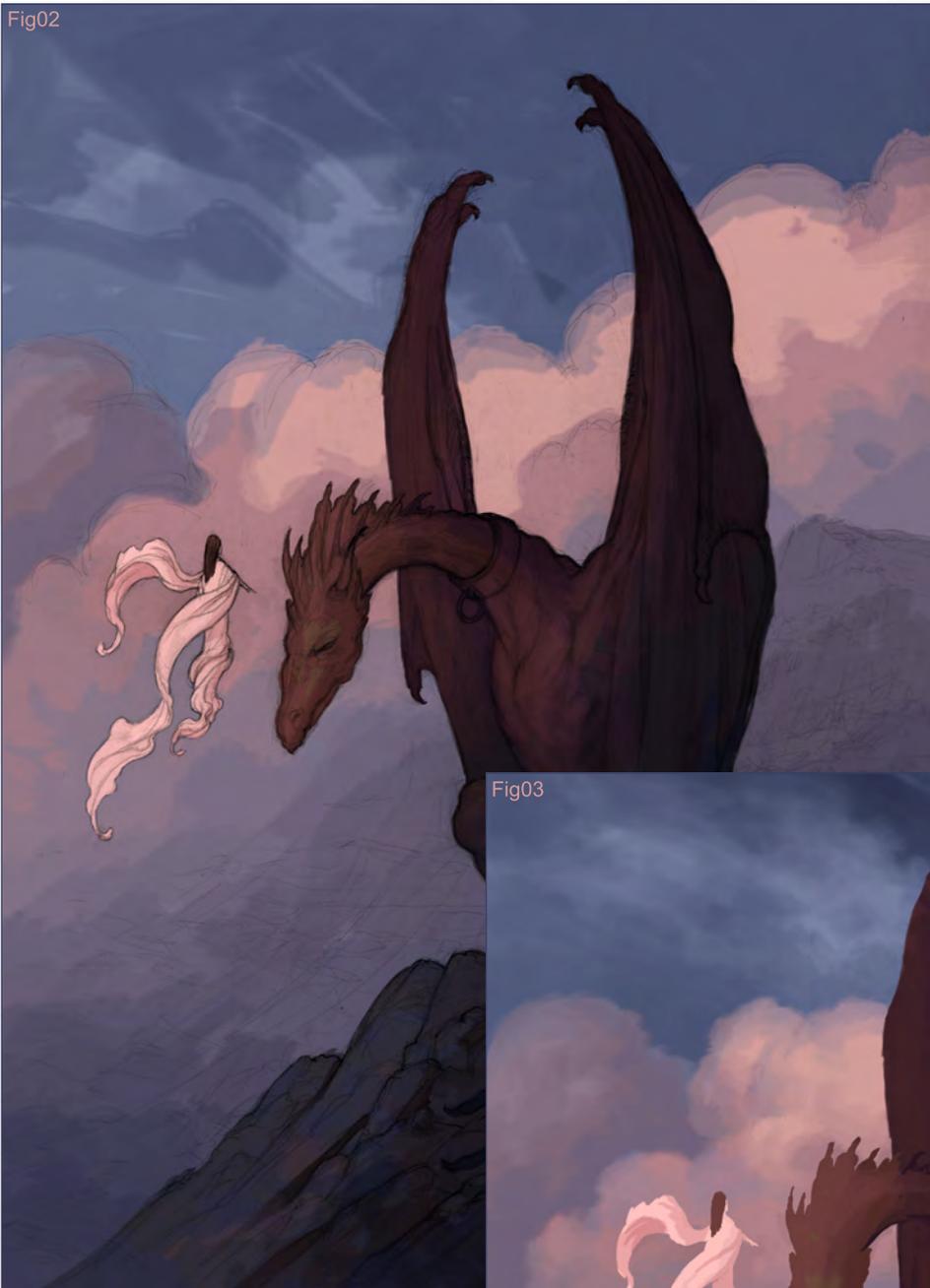

Fig01

Step 01 - Preliminary Sketch

This is the concept stage where I use a mix of imagination and observation of nature to build the structure of my illustration. I create a more refined sketch of the original concept along the way. At this stage lighting isn't emphasised - just lines that will define the elements and objects of the scene. Sometimes I also put black and white lighting in at this stage, but in this case I already have in mind a pretty good idea of what the lighting will be, so I go directly to colour (Fig01).

Fig02

Fig03

Step 03

I refine the original block in and start to work on the sky and the distant mountainous landscape. The balance between cool and warm colours is very important to give a slightly translucent effect to the clouds. Another important aspect to watch is that the clouds need to acquire volume and three-dimensionality, without losing their softness. You also have to remember all the reflection issues; the more a cloud is in the shade, the more it's going to be reflecting a cooler light from the sky, instead of the sun. Mountains here must show the depth of the background. The furthest ones need to be closer in value to the sky and clouds, whilst the middle range and closer ones must give a sense of solidity with darker values, without losing their depth and values in relation to the foreground and character (Fig03).
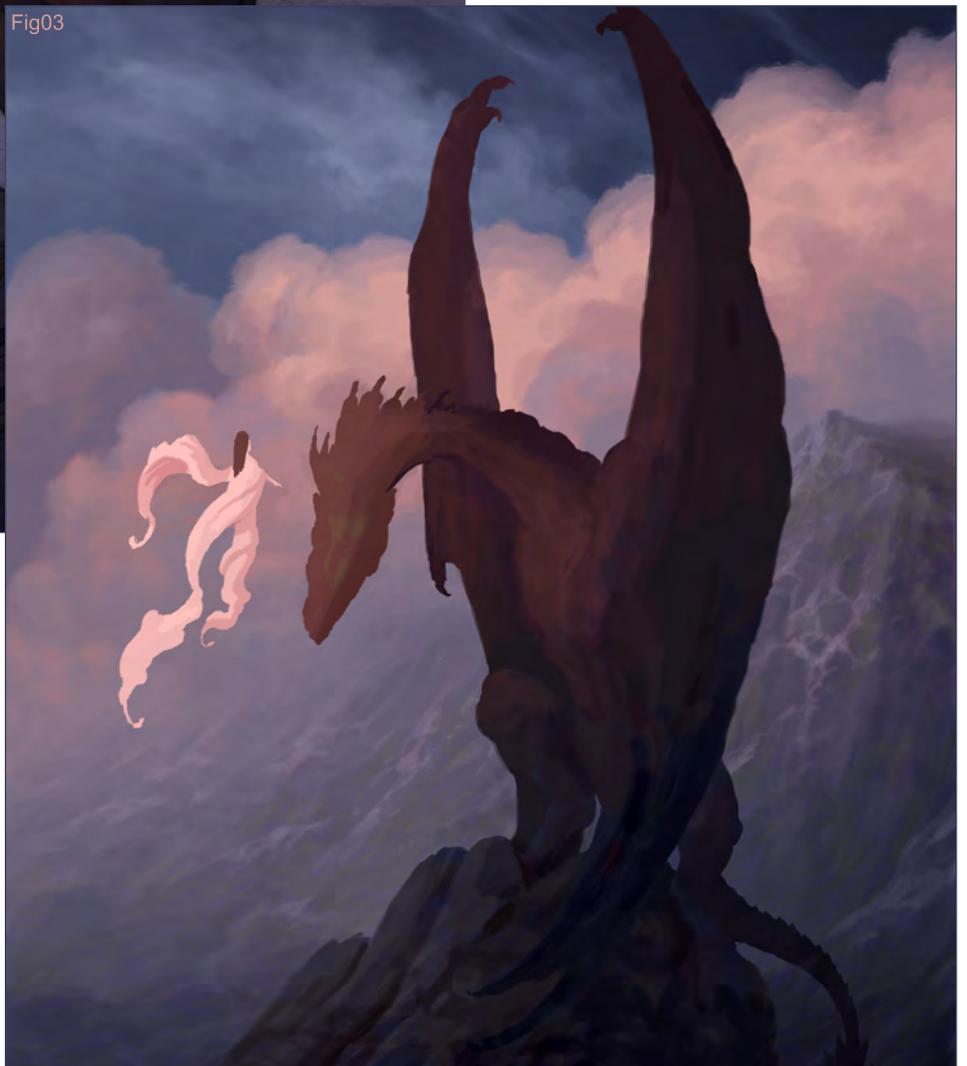
Step 02

This phase is the most critical one of all: I need to determine the exact balance of values and colours that will be the foundation of the painting. This is a block-in, so catching the general mood of the final image is more important than thinking of details, here. It has to be as accurate as possible to be believable. In some cases it will need adjustments later on, but these adjustments shouldn't be too far off this original block-in. I usually turn the sketch layer to Multiply in order to keep the sketch visible on top of the painting (Fig02).
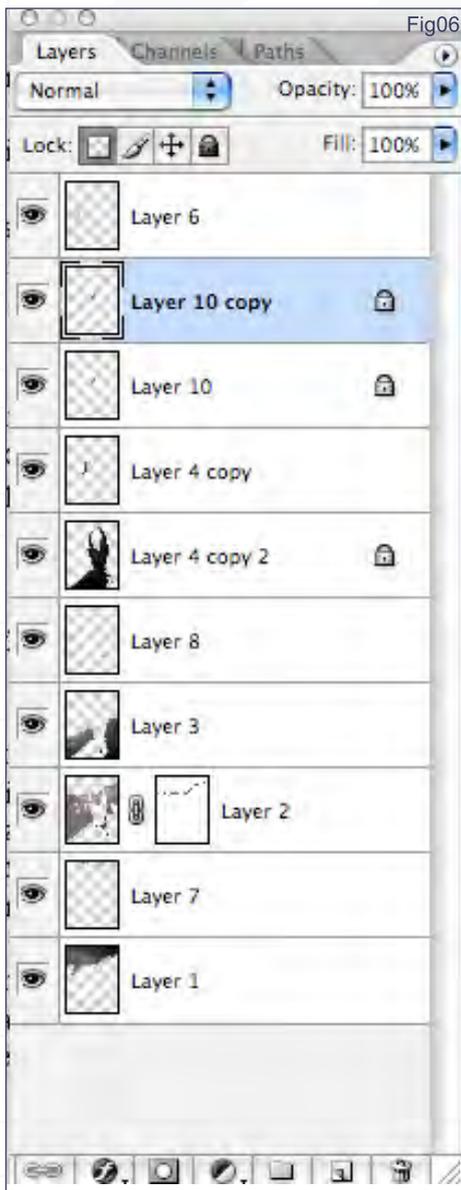
Step 04

In this phase, I work on the rock on which the dragon is standing, and I start adding details onto the dragon itself - particularly the head. At this point, it is the proper balance of darks and lights placed on the foreground elements, along with a good balance of warm and cool colours, that is going to build the right volumes against the distant background. A lot of different things can affect the depth of elements in an image; fog, smoke, rain, snow and so on. As a general rule, the closer the elements are, the more saturated their colours will be and the greater the contrast between light and shadow will be (Fig04).

Fig04

Fig06

Fig05

Step 05

Now I finish detailing the dragon, trying to push realism in the skin, scales, and so on (Fig05).

Step 06

I separate all elements in the image now as individual layers, to allow the maximum flexibility (Fig06).

Final Image

In the final image, I complete the woman floating before the dragon. It is a delicate part, as her dress has to feel soft and slightly transparent. I add the last touches of realism (like the smoke still coming out of the dragon's nose) and I make sure that everything is in balance between the landscape and the characters. At this point, you want to review the whole painting and make sure that all the colours and values are working together harmoniously. If you see some values too dark or colours too saturated in the background that fight with the readability of the character, it's time to knock them down! The same thing applies with the values or edges that may be too tame or not descriptive enough. The last look over your painting is about being as critical as you can be on your work. If an area has been really nicely worked, but in the end comes in the way of readability or clarity of the whole image - simplify it. Your final image is always about composition, stylisation, clarity and balance. Whether you paint digitally or traditionally, these principles apply in exactly the same way. The quality of a painting doesn't depend on what tools you use, but on how you use them.

TRANSFORMERS
DEATH BLOW

"If Optimus Prime is placed closer to the camera when defending the attack, it would create the feeling of "being protected..."

This summer, when Transformers hit the big screen, it quickly increased the heat in theatres all over the world! I even went to see the film again, particularly for the artwork, in order to get a more vivid feel of the scene as well as searching for ideas...

TRANSFORMERS DEATH BLOW

Introduction

It's very crucial for a creator to foresee the image in his own mind and be able to know if it will make a good artwork, or not. I wanted to create a scene filled with tension and drama, just like a still from the film itself.

Designing the Movement

Planning the work, I wanted to bring out the tension and conflict as a priority, which led me to an explosive duel scene that would draw audiences into the work. What troubled me was deciding whether the duel should take place during the day or night. In the end I picked daytime, meaning that my background would have a strong contrast and variation of lights. First of all, I started with a sketch, designing actions (Fig01). Because the first character pose designs were not very good, I decided to re-design the composition and drafted the sketch of the surrounding buildings. It was at this moment when I began to think of where the source of light was coming from (Fig02).

Fig.01

Fig.02

Fig.03

Architecture

I re-designed the poses and polished up the buildings. Even though Transformers is based on science-fiction and they come from outer space, the story is set on Earth. So I wanted to bring in architecture that has a traditional feeling, something like a museum, in order to emphasise the contrast between high tech. machines and classical images (Fig03).

Dramatic Element

In the film, Megatron is pictured as the destroyer, and Optimus Prime as the protector.
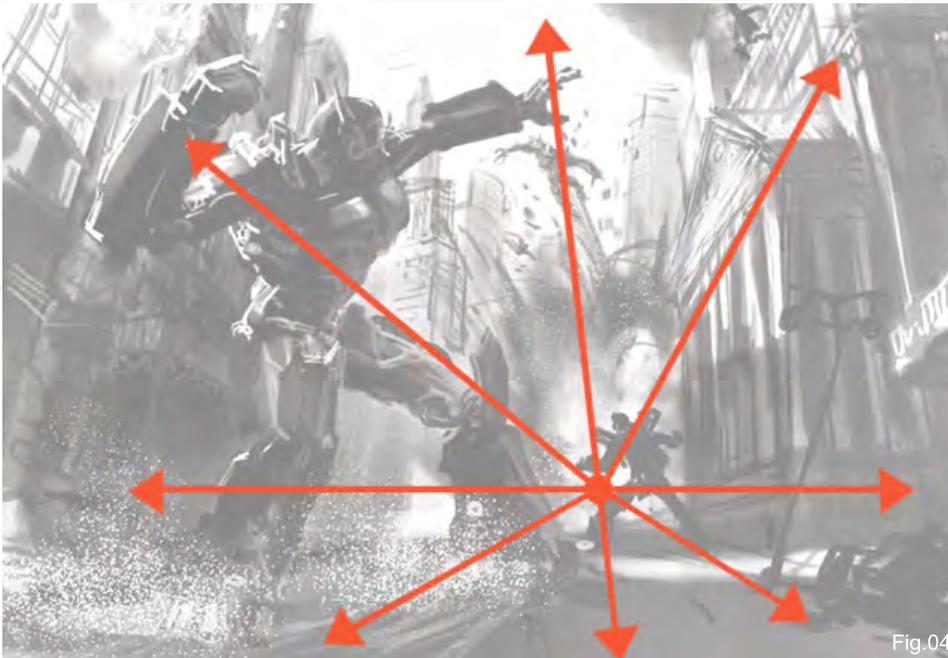
Fig.04

Fig.05

Fig.06

Fig.07

Therefore, if Optimus Prime is placed closer to the camera when defending the attack, it would create the feeling of "being protected" for the audience. I was imagining Megatron dashing out from the explosion, lunging at Optimus Prime with a "crackdown". Optimus Prime is prepared for the attack; he raises his fist and slides forwards - causing sparks on the ground - ready to give Megatron a death blow. The aim of this composition was to create a complete frame filled with drama and action.

Composition

To enhance the tension of the scene, I chose a radial composition that was similar to the basic perspective. The whole composition would therefore look like an explosion itself, or an extending radiation (Fig04).

Painting & Progression

Colour-wise, it took me a long time to consider the colour of the sky, and it also went through a lot of changes. Originally, it was sky blue. However, after many adjustments, the colour of the sky became much closer to yellow, which makes the whole tone of the picture more unified.

Colouring

First of all, I polished up the sketch a little and highered the position of Megatron on the canvas, in order to strengthen the feeling of him about to "crackdown" on Optimus Prime (Fig05). I then painted the base colour using a brush, under the Color brush mode. This was done in order to create the basic tone of the colour (Fig06); by detailing Optimus Prime first of all, paying attention to the reflections of the sparks, it was strengthened (Fig07).

Altering the Arms

Since the pose was designed by myself, it was difficult making sure that Prime's parts were true to his original design. I did a lot of research on the Internet; some were public still photographs from the film, and others were character designs for marketing purposes. But these sources

were all done in various stages, so there were a lot of differences. For instance, Prime's head and arms already had many different versions; I had to pick the most suitable one that would look good from the angle I had designed, and of course added some of my imagination, too. So Prime's arm went through many adjustments before it was complete (Fig08).

The Flame Paintwork

I created the mask of the fire pattern first by selecting it and drawing within the selection - this way I was able to keep within the lines (Fig09 - 10).

Adding the Sparks

I painted in the details of building on the right-hand side, added the columns and decorations to the museum, and increased the brightness and contrast of the whole building in order to enhance the overall lightness (Fig11). I then worked on the sparks under Prime's feet, being sure to pay attention to the reflections on his feet and making them spray outwards, as if he's skidding at a high-speed (Fig12).

Explosion

After all the other building work was basically done (Fig13 - 14), I hand-painted the explosion

Fig.08

Fig.09

Fig.10

Fig.11

Fig.13

Fig.12

Fig.14

Fig.15

Fig.16

Fig.17

Fig.18

Fig.19

and added the reflections of the flames to the car in the lower right corner. The buildings in the far background and the sky were also tinged with the colour of the flames (Fig15).

Adding Texture

To add more texture to the picture, I added many brush strokes - more like a foggy or dusty kind of stroke. This thickened the feeling of a battle field and also made the perspective more distant (Fig16 - 17).

Composition adjustment

The centre of attention should be more in the middle of the picture, so I moved Prime and Megatron a little to the right (Fig18).

Problem Solving for Optimus Prime

The biggest problem I came across with Optimus Prime was handling his appearance and comparing my design to the originals. I
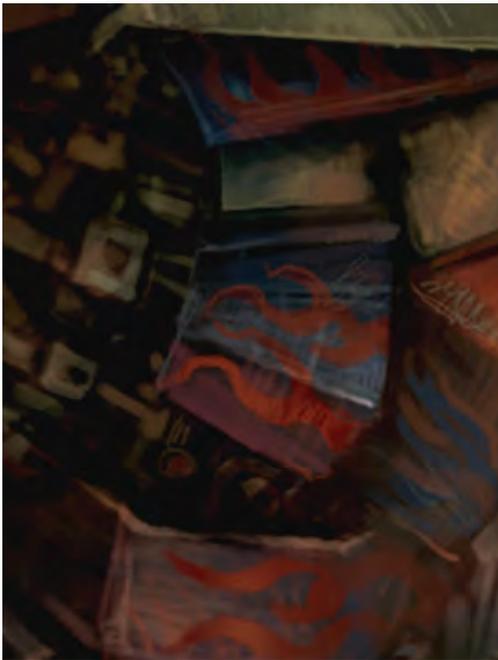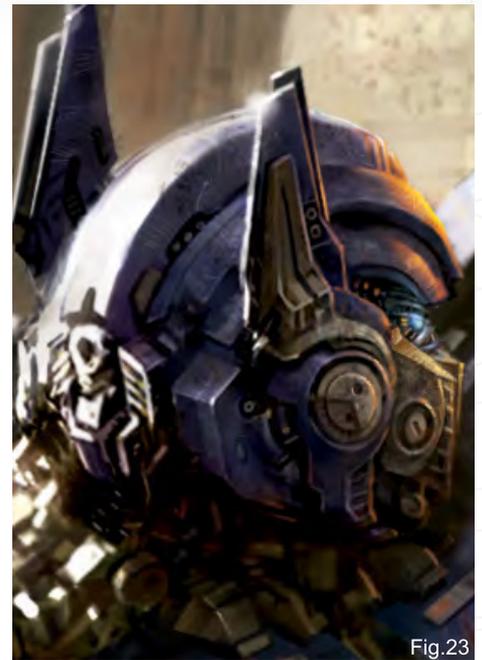
Fig.20

Fig.23

Fig.21

Fig.22

Fig.24

Fig.25

took two pictures for comparison (Fig19); the left one was before and the right one was after. Originally, Prime was not as eye-catching as I wanted him to be, and that really bothered me. Moving him closer to the middle, there were many more problems that then needed to be solved...

The Look

The first problem was 'the look'. Prime's outline was definitely the key point; it determined whether he looked like Prime, or not. His waist and thigh on the left side were thicker. His broad shoulders, thin waist and the curves of his thigh also need to be indicated. His ears seemed a little short, so in the right picture I made some adjustments, making it closer to the original design.

The Lighting

The second problem was the design of light and shade; the shadows had to effectively push the main character out from the background. I purposely painted a white highlight on Prime's left side, not only giving him a more 3-dimensional look but also adding the metal tone to it. I also had to pay attention to the reflection under his feet, which was another key point. The head was too dark before, so I increased the

Fig.26

brightness and also brought in the light of the flame from the explosion to add more contrast, making his head much more noticeable. The glass on Prime's chest should have had a brighter reflection, too, so I emphasised the contrast more on the chest by giving it a better perspective.

The Flame Paintwork

For the flame paintwork, the character designs for marketing use were different from the public still photographs of the film, and even the designs of the paintwork itself were not always the same. In the film, Prime has the paintwork on his arm, but on the poster he doesn't. Some flame paintwork has white outlines, and some don't. I therefore picked the one with a white outline in order to make my picture much more interesting (Fig20).

Polishing up the Details

When working on the details, I used a very small brush for the scratches on the metals.

Fig.28

Fig.27

Adding stains also made objects much more realistic. By filling objects with brush strokes it enriched the picture, and also helped play a part in catching the audience's attention. Usually, default brushes are enough for me (Fig21 - 25).

For the sparks, apart from using a small brush for the leaping sparks, I used brushes that had many tiny dots in order to give it a spraying feeling, in motion (Fig26).

Final Adjustments

In order to make the scene more tense and stressful, in the end I changed the shape of the explosion, as well as Megatron's pose. He is now looking more like he's jetting out of the flames, making him and the explosion more related (Fig27). I also moved the character on the right side a little further to the right, and changed his pose so that he would not interrupt the audience's focus (Fig28). On the lit and shadowed parts, I strengthened the reflections from the flame on the left building to make them both carry the colour of the environment. This ensured that the whole tone became more consistent. Comparing this final image to earlier, the saturation was also increased, overall.

Now it is complete. Thank you all for following this Making Of (Fig29).

Alon Chou

For more from this artist visit:
www.alon.tw
Or contact:
along.a1120@msa.hinet.net
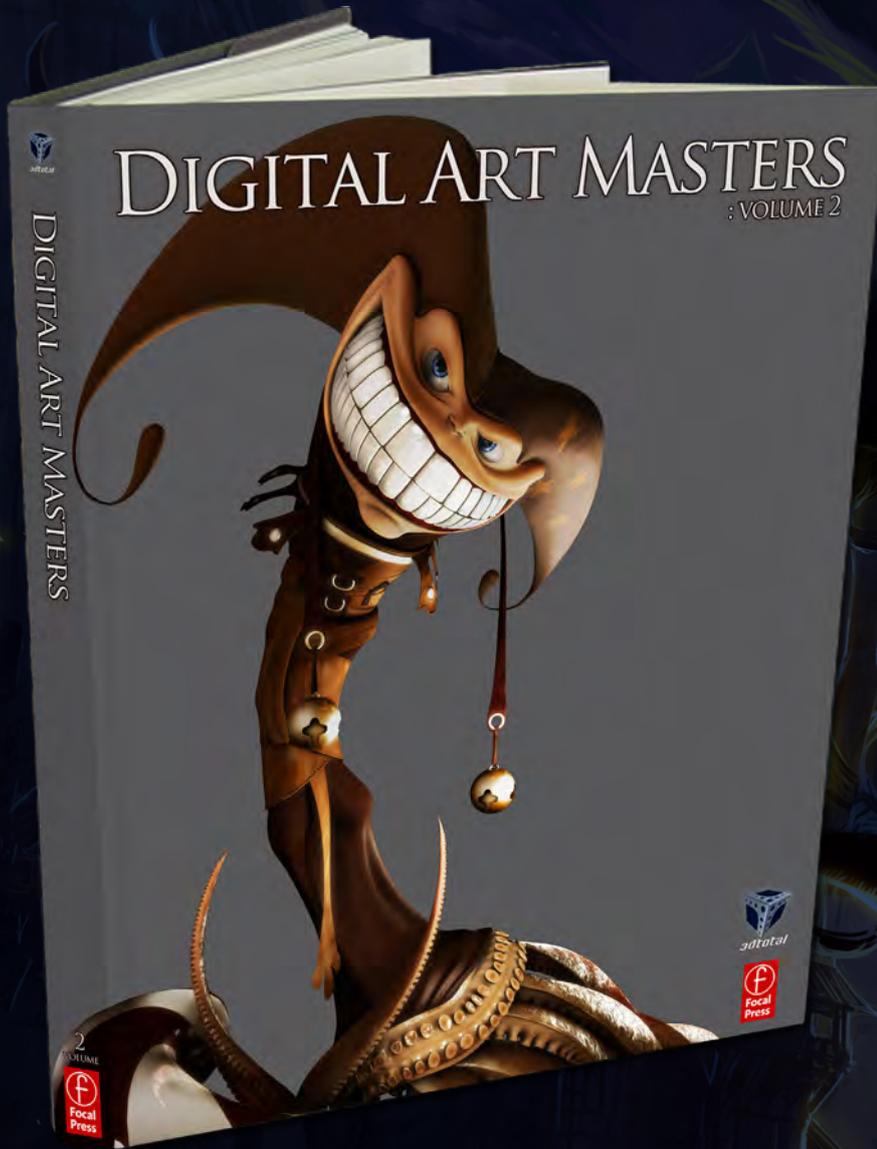
Digital Art Masters

Volume 2

With the release of 3DTotal's new book, 'Digital Art Masters: Volume 2', we have some exclusive chapters for you...

The book is more than just an artwork book, as not only does it feature full-colour, full-page images, but each artist has described - in detail - the creation process behind each published artwork in their own words, especially for this book.

This month we feature:

'Sky of Kaloulo'

by Jian Guo

15%

2DArtist readers can purchase DIGITAL ART MASTERS: VOLUME 2
with a special **15% Discount**

30%

Or, get both DIGITAL ART MASTERS: VOLUME 1 & 2
with a special **30% Discount**

To claim your discount simply purchase the book(s) through this link:

http://www.3dtotal.com/services/shop/discount_book.asp

(**Note:** If a security dialogue box appears, tick 'Remember', then click 'Allow'.)

2d

artist

Interviews

Elena Sedova

Dr CM Wong

Nathaniel West

Dwayne Vance

Articles

How do you take time out from
the world of CG / Art?

Tutorials

Custom Brushes
Speed Painting
Elements Weather Series
Part 2 : Rain Storm!

Galleries

10 of the Best images featuring

Kerem Beyit

Kieran Yanner

Tom Arthur Opasinski

Tiberius Viris

Teng lin

Bruno Werneck

Benita Winckler

Lorin Wood

Denis Zilber

David Munoz Velazquez

Plus Loads More!

All for only $4 !

go to www.2dartistmag.com for full
details and to purchase current, back
issues and 6 & 12 month subscriptions

next month

Image by Brian Recktenwald

ZOO PUBLISHING

Is a Company publishing downloadable online magazines. It is based in the West Midlands in the UK. Zoo currently produces two online downloadable magazines, 3dcreative and 2dartist. Zoo's intention is to make each issue as full of great articles, images, interviews, images and tutorials as possible. If you would like more information on Zoo Publishing or It's magazines, or you have a question for our staff, please use the links below.

Contact Information

www.zoopublishing.com
www.3dcreativemag.com
www.2dartistmag.com
Editor > Ben Barnes
ben@zoopublishing.com
Assistant Editor > Chris Perrins
chris@zoopublishing.com
Content Manager > Warin Pismoke
warin@zoopublishing.com
Marketing > Lynette Clee
lynette@zoopublishing.com

Partners

If you have a CG Community website, and would be interested in reselling 3DCreative or 2DArtist magazine please contact Lynette Clee on the eMail address above.