TOMASZ JEDRUSZEK

This month we get to know freelance illustrator, **Tomasz Jedruszek** and discover why he left his study of architecture to pursue a career in illustration!

Editorial

Happy New Year and welcome to **Issue 037 of 2DArtist magazine!**

Being the start of a new year and all, I thought I would give a little insider info as to what you can expect from us this year. We'll soon be kicking off a brand new series, created by **Dwayne Vance** and **Hoi Mun Tham** on rendering vehicles. This is going to be a five-part series that takes us right from the thumbnail concepting stage through to final renders, and the vehicles – well, I'll keep you in suspense on that bit of info as I think you'll like what's in store. Another great series we'd like to start this year is on 2D character creation – not your everyday anatomy practice, but something with a little bit more 'bite'. So if you're looking for a New Year's resolution for 2009, then how about: practice painting (and buy a subscription to 2DArtist magazine)? (Worth a shot, huh?! *winks*) If you buy now then you'll be sorted for the entire year, so have a read through this month's issue and if you like what you see, why not invest in us for 2009?

OK sales speech over; let's get back to the January issue – so what's in store? Well, we have two interviews this month – our first one with freelance artist, **Tomasz Jedruszek**, who has worked for a variety of big names – *Fantasy Flight Games* and *White Wolf Publishing* to name a couple. We caught up with him for this month's issue to find out a little about what caused his career shift from architecture to illustration; check out his stunning portfolio on **page 7.** Our second artist interview is with **Jim Maxwell**, matte painter and concept artist who has worked on some great feature films of late – *Mr & Mrs Smith* and *The Incredible Hulk* being just two. So for a glimpse into the world of matte painting and concept art for high profile projects, check out **page 23.**

Bringing the sketchbook back to you this month we have a great article for you from **Justin Albers**, who kindly gives us a sneak peek at the fantastic sketches that can be found in his "junkyard collection of ideas and designs" **(page 35).** You can also find Justin's work gracing the tutorial pages in his latest speed painting interpretation of the topic, 'The approaching swarm appeared biblical in scale and straight from a nightmare'. Check out **page 75** for Justin's take on the subject, alongside in-house artist, **Richard Tilbury**'s answer to this month's brief.

Our other tutorials have been created by **Chee Ming Wong**, who this month looks at capital ships as part of his in-depth look into space transport design **(page 83).** And because we're tutorial crazy here at 2DArtist, we also asked **Joel Carlo** to create an article for us which takes us back to basics on composition **(page 69)** – what better way to start the year than to get a better understanding of one of the key components of image making? Finally, to wrap up the teaching section of this issue, **Soheil Danesh** has generously provided for you all a look at the creation of his beautiful *Flower Concept*, on **page 97.** Enjoy!

Thanks for reading, enjoy the issue and catch you next month! **Ed.**

Editor	Layout	Content	Proofing
Lynette Clee	Layla Khani	Lynette Clee	Jo Hargreaves
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TOMASZ JEDRUSZEK

We peak into the personal life of Tomasz and find out why he left his study of architecture to pursue a career in illustration.

Interviews
Tomasz Jedruszek & Jim Maxwell

Articles
Sketchbook of Justin Albers

Galleries
Yap Kun Rong, Andreas Rocha and Szymon Biernacki plus more!

Tutorials
Speed Painting with Richard Tilbury & Justin Albers plus more!

Making Of's
Flower Concept by Soheil Danesh Eshraghi

Get the most out of your Magazine!

If you're having problems viewing the double-page spreads that we feature in this magazine, follow this handy little guide on how to set up your PDF reader!
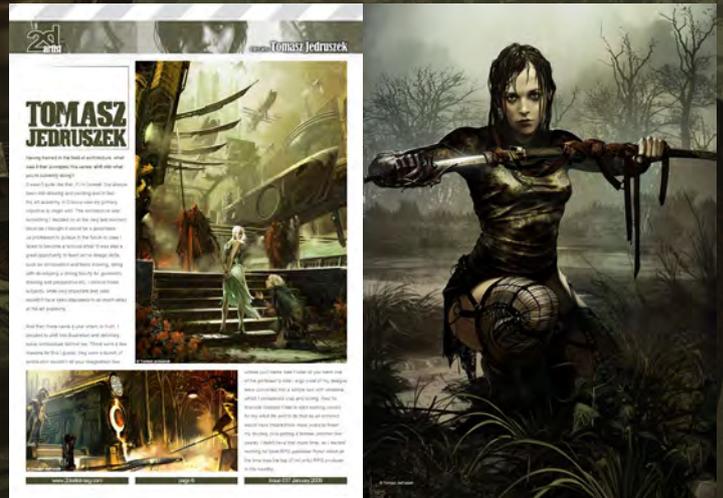
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To view the many double-page spreads featured in 2DArtist magazine, you can set the reader to display 'two-up', which will show double-page spreads as one large landscape image:

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

Each month, many artists from around the world contribute to 3DCreative & 2DArtist magazines. Here you can find out a little about them. If you would like to be a part of 3DCreative or 2DArtist magazines, please contact: lynette@3dtotal.com

Justin Albers

A graduate of the Art Institute of Dallas and currently working as a concept artist at Vigil Games on the Warhammer 40,000 MMO in Austin, Texas. His previous companies include TKO Software and NCsoft.

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Chee Ming Wong

Has over 8 years of creative visualisation and pre-production experience, having worked on various independent game projects, publications and CGI pre-production artwork. He is currently the CEO of his own digital art studio, Opus Artz, based in London. Previous work includes his role as Senior Concept Artist and Visual Lead for *Infinity: The Quest for Earth MMO 2009*, plus numerous commercial publications.
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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 his graphics tablet has become their successor. He still sketches regularly and balances his time between 2D and 3D, although drawing will always be closest to his heart.
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Would You Like To Contribute To 3DCreative Or 2DArtist Magazines?

We are always looking for tutorial artists, gallery submissions, potential interviewees, 'making of' writers, and more. For more information, please send a link to your work to: lynette@3dtotal.com

Joel Carlo

A multimedia developer residing out in Denver, Colorado. His career as an artist has spanned over the last 14 years and includes work in both traditional and digital media, web design, print, and motion graphics for broadcasting. His client list is varied and ranges from commissioned work for small studio projects to larger clients such as Future Publishing, Burrows & Chapin, The Ayzenberg Group, NASCAR, Dodge, Toyota and Fox Television.
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Soheil Danesh Eshraghi

Born in Tehran, 1984, he is known as a comic artist and concept designer in Iran. He started his career when he was 14, designing cartoons and comics for magazines and newspapers. He is now working as an illustrator and character and environment designer for animations, movies and video games.
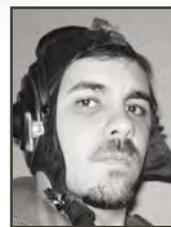
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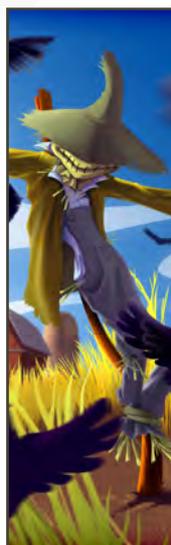
Felipe Fernández Morell

Studied art in Montevideo, Uruguay. He then worked freelance in Barcelona in different media, from publicity to editorial to web. He's currently working as a production and concept artist in the games industry.

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Ruth Martinez

Studied graphic design, but always felt attracted to illustration and animation. She's currently working as a 2D animator in the games industry, and is happy to be working professionally in her hobby. She also pursues her passion for illustration through the likes of the 2DArtist stylised challenges!
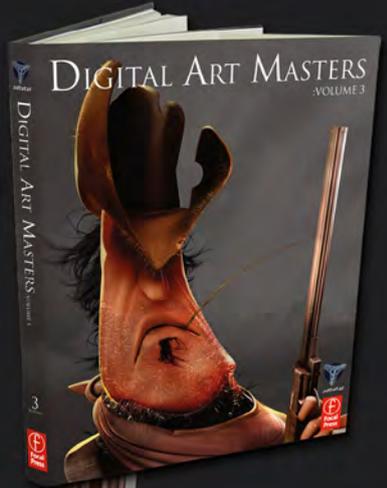
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Robert L. Cron

Attended Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, PA, where he received a BFA in scenic and costume design. For the past 12 years he's been working as a professional costumer for film and television projects, most notably for the last four seasons of NBC's *The West Wing*. He's recently begun working as an illustrator for film, television and commercials, and currently resides in Los Angeles,

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"I'm just tired of 'artists' who paint only fairies or girls - or even worse, those who paint the same person over and over again - is this a kind of obsession or just a lack of any other models?"

TOMASZ JEDRUSZEK

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Tomasz Morano is a freelance artist from Poland who has worked for a variety of companies and publishers over the years. He left his study of architecture to pursue a career in illustration and believes that "digital painting" is supposed to be a new kind of artistic discipline

TOMASZ JEDRUSZEK

Having trained in the field of architecture, what was it that prompted this career shift into what you're currently doing?

It wasn't quite like that, if I'm honest. I've always been into drawing and painting and in fact the art academy in Cracow was my primary objective to begin with. The architecture was something I decided on at the very last moment because I thought it would be a good back-up profession to pursue in the future in case I failed to become a famous artist! It was also a great opportunity to learn some design skills, such as composition and hand drawing, along with developing a strong faculty for geometric drawing and perspective etc. I believe those subjects, while very important and valid, wouldn't have been discussed in so much detail at the art academy.

And then there came a year when, in truth, I decided to shift into illustration and definitely leave architecture behind me. There were a few reasons for this I guess; they were a bunch of snobs who wouldn't let your imagination flow

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unless your name was Foster or you were one of the professor's kids - ergo most of my designs were converted into a simple box with windows, which I considered crap and boring. Also for financial reasons I had to start earning money for my adult life and to do that as an architect would have meant three more years to finish my studies, plus getting a license (another two years). I didn't have that much time, so I started working for local RPG publisher Portal which at the time was the top (if not only) RPG producer in the country.

You have quite a comprehensive client list on your website. How difficult has it been to establish yourself and what have been the main challenges that you have had to overcome in the process?

That list is not even a half of them all, just those regular projects I've been doing. Which is the result of the fact that I love my work and I am very easily persuaded to take on a project, so every time someone calls or emails me I mostly say, "Sure, I'm in." So most of time I'm working on two or three projects simultaneously. I had to cut some of these habits down recently because of my new duties as a husband and father, but I still work almost all the time. So a desperate, constant need of free time is still one of my biggest challenges; sometimes I think about cloning myself! [Laughs]. I haven't had to seek new jobs for a few years; don't ask me to explain why, it just happened. Even now, as I am writing, I already have a new job assignment which is pretty sweet. A few years ago I had to do some test jobs to prove my quality but now my portfolio is big enough to include every kind of subject matter and a style, because I've been doing things like a horror RPG and WB-like cartoon almost at the same time.

Artist often begin to slowly specialise in a particular style or subject matter. Do you feel it is important to remain versatile or do you hope one day to be able to concentrate on a specific genre?

I'm going to use some medical comparisons to answer this one: imagine a doctor, surgeon and a dentist. These guys might be masters in their separate fields, but all have had to finish medical university right? The same can be said about artists. I can be a master at painting knights or naked chicks, while another artist can be a brilliant monster designer, but we both need to have some kind of technical background or basic skills. Imagine what would happen if that surgeon has mastered stitching skin, but had skipped his anatomy lessons and couldn't really tell the difference between a kidney and a liver... sound like a disaster? It is the same in

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our industry; I don't care if an artist concentrates on one particular subject which he likes if I can tell he has some basic skill and knowledge in that matter, otherwise he must paint something different. I'm just tired of "artists" who paint only fairies or girls - or even worse, those who paint the same person over and over again - is this a kind of obsession or just a lack of any other models? In short: if you are a complete artist it should be no problem to jump from subject to subject, your favourite one aside. If you are only concerned with one subject, and worse still, if

you cannot do anything else apart from that, then you have real problem. Anyway, it would be just b-o-r-i-n-g if I had to (or could) paint only one subject, no matter how perfect it was.

What do you feel has been the biggest learning curve during your career as a digital painter?
First would be the way I treat Photoshop. Once it was just a tool, which used to disappoint me or simply broke. But now PS is the biggest friend in my work; we understand each other and I don't need any other tool to finish a job. And

I'm only using CS because I still can't afford CS3, I wonder what surprises await me there? But being serious for a moment, PS has a lot of great aspects that have allowed me to speed up my work, keep clean and ordered layers and brushes, and get my work up to a new level of quality.

Secondly I have discovered the gallery of Craig Mullins, whose work shows in his own perfect way what digital painting is (or should) be all about.

You mention Craig Mullins there, who of course is regarded as somewhat of a pioneer in his field, but what exactly do you mean when you say his work shows," what digital painting is (or should) be all about"?

As you said "digital painting" is supposed to be a new kind of discipline in art, similar to a jump from painting on cave walls to painting on a canvas with oils. Making digital painting look like "real" painting is easy; we have tools now that we can simulate most styles so closely that nobody can tell if it is oil or digital. Now Craig

has pushed these tools beyond that and actually made that jump. His works are so digital that you cannot possibly copy that style with any traditional media. I don't know if he is any sort of pioneer, but I definitely saw that style for the first time in his work and it was like a bright light at the end of a tunnel, pointing me in the right direction – here was the correct definition of what a "digital painting was supposed to be. So it is no longer pretending anymore, like, "We are using oils but in a computer with a digital pen which actually simulates a real brush". It is now

a straight message: "This is a new tool to create art - it is digital and that's how it looks".

Your gallery section is divided into numerous categories, from 3D modelling to matte painting. Which discipline would you like to explore more and why?

Because of my freelance assignments, ninety percent of my work is simple freehand painting. 3D fascinates me, but I am not skillful enough to risk working on a commercial project. I had a few job offers to work as a 3D or texture artist

but I declined them, afraid I would fail the task. Same for matte painting really; while it's a lot less complicated than 3D and I once worked for RedLynx doing that kind of work, I just don't see it as painting anymore. It's just mixing photos, which I simply don't like and that's why there are only a few of those works in my gallery.

Recently some new sculpting tools like Modo and ZBrush appeared which is something worth exploring as it combines my love of freehand painting with my fascination with 3D. In the future I plan to explore this a little bit more.

I do not intend to take on matte painting work ever again; it is simply boring, way too easy, and nothing special.

As an artist I'm sure that many aspects of life interest you, but what subjects are closest to your heart and what provides you with the most inspiration?

VIRGO

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CAPRICORN

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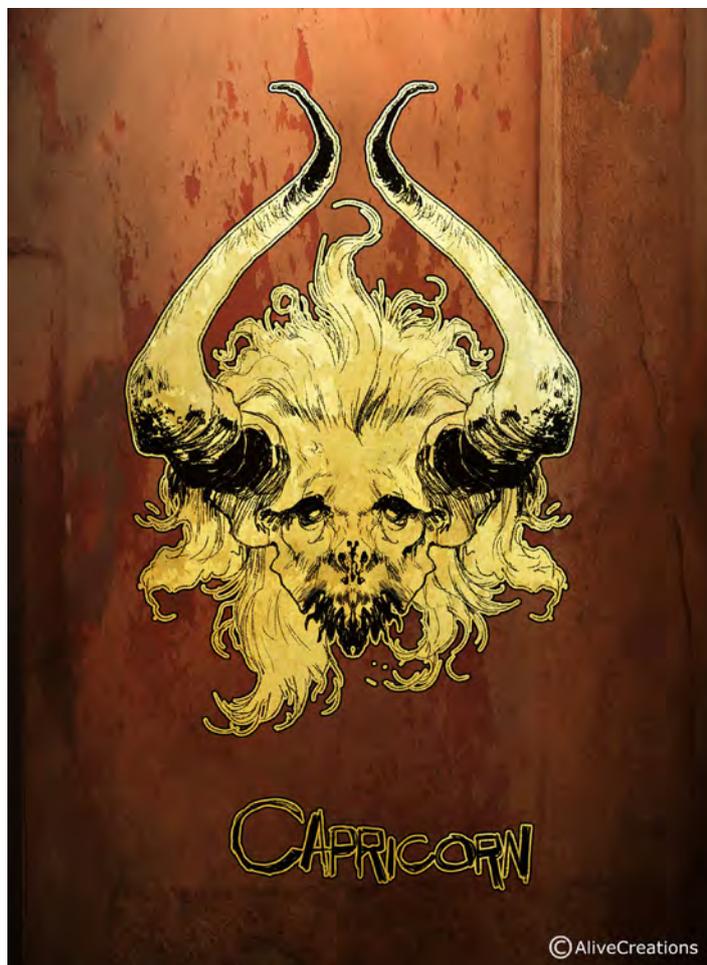
Yes there are at least a few things which draw me into painting. First would be life itself – it is so amazing. I can't even find the words to express the feeling. For example, my son was born a few days ago - I can stare at him for hours and still cannot believe he is alive. He thinks (maybe not too much at this age), feels, breaths, sleeps, cries most of the time [Laughs] ... I mean that's a miracle.

If we found a creature like that on the moon or Mars, our scientists would piss their pants they would be so happy. What scares me most is that people don't see this wonder of life around them. On Earth it is just a boy, but we kill thousands of men, women and children every day so why we should care about just one? But that's the whole point: once you

SAGITTARIUS

understand what is going on around you on the planet you will never be afraid of anything again. All becomes simple, complete.

So I get a lot of inspiration from life in terms of my work. Also music is an absolute need when I start working. I can't remember ever making a piece of artwork without a "soundtrack" and any kind of music will do really. And it is not as though when I paint war it has to be Rammstein (but it suits nicely!) To be honest, I get the best results painting another Cthulhu card whilst listening to Classical music or listening to Limp Bizkit while painting some chick. He are some other regular combinations:
"FFG- A Game of Throne" - Mind Gate, Lao Che (polish bands), also Jana Todorovic (Serbian pop singer).
"**Army of Scorpions 2**" - System of the Down
"**Angel**" - Soundtracks from motion pictures
"**Predator**" - *The **Last of the Mohicans*** and also the game *Aliens vs. Predator.*

You have recently ventured into the games sector by way of the company People Can Fly. Can you tell us a little about this commission and the different demands it requires?
To tell you the truth, People Can Fly didn't pay me for work I did. Unfortunately that is a common "professionalism" here in Poland, not just in the video game industry. That's why I quit working for Polish companies for good. The same issue came up when Red Studio asked me to work on *The Witcher.* I told them that as a fan of the *Witcher* books, I would produce the best art I was capable of, but that it would cost them at least as much as any foreign company would have to pay for the work. They claimed to have the same budget as any foreign game industry company, so I believed that financially there wouldn't be a problem. Well sadly there was, and in the end the game was produced with some Disney-like (with all due respect to Disney) monsters and chicks all around. By the way, the main goal of the game is to score most of the girls in the game, according to what I have read by players who have been writing on the *Witcher* forum. Is that what all *Witcher* fans have been waiting for all these years - an arcade game for scoring girls? Pfff...

But I can answer your question more effectively

by changing the title of the company there for RedLynx in Helsinki. I started to work for them a few years ago and yes it was quite challenging to meet deadlines, the game producer's style guides and also co-operate effectively with the other team members. For the first few days I couldn't get comfortable in the office because it was full of different people speaking multiple languages (from Finnish to Japanese), so the progress of my work was very slow. But once we knew each other better and had found some common way of communicating, the work immediately sped up.

I was very happy to work with the guys there. In contrast to what I said about Polish companies, my experience in Finland was on a completely different level of professionalism. The company comprised of around 50 men, every single one of whom knew his job, and the whole company worked as one perfect organism. On my second job for RedLynx it wasn't as good, mainly because I couldn't stay for that long in Finland and had to work mostly from Poland. There were too many adjustments from the game's producer and I didn't even finish the entire schedule of work assigned to me. But I still found this adventure with the Finnish game studio to be my greatest experience in this industry so far.

Who do you regard as the pioneers in this relatively recent medium of digital painting and why?
Well it all started with a book I had: *Star Wars - Attack of the Clones*. A friend of mine happened to look at it and said, "Whoa, nice drawings, how have they been made?" I wisely answered, "With felt pens" ... A few moments later I read that all the graphics were made with a digital pen and a Wacom tablet - and I was stunned. So Ryan Church and Dermot Power were my first gurus. But those guys, despite their genius, were painting in the "classical" way: simple strokes, clear edges etc - they'd just replaced oils and acrylics with digital paint in Photoshop.

What makes digital painting a completely new discipline is the work of Craig Mullins or Thomas Pringle, who I have recently discovered. The way they are painting is completely different; they use everything that digital tools have to

offer, so patterns, textures, custom brushes, colour management, and they work with the sharpness and brightness of digital colours. Their work looks like they are cutting shapes from abstract structures; they don't care much about details, they are just building all their scenes with realistic palettes and lightness, while all the shapes just "remind" us of those in things in real life - making their work photo-realistic and subjective, or even abstract at the same time. Amazing.

Do you feel then that this use of texture, pattern and customised brushes is more "truthful" to the digital medium in the sense that it does not mimic a traditional approach quite as much? Exactly what I said already; it is a new discipline or is supposed to be at least. Why should we mimic traditional oils or paper granulation? Is it that we can paint better than Michelangelo, only faster? And hey... we can change the colour balance in the blink of an eye? Maybe we can do a photorealistic portrait in a second using a blender technique? Now don't get me wrong, I don't have anything against painting in a "classical" way with digital tools. But if that is the next level in art production, to mimic all that has gone before, my question is why? Wouldn't it be better if we use that digital tool in the way it was "created"?

Lots of people can't believe how I can produce my art so fast. Even I know few people who
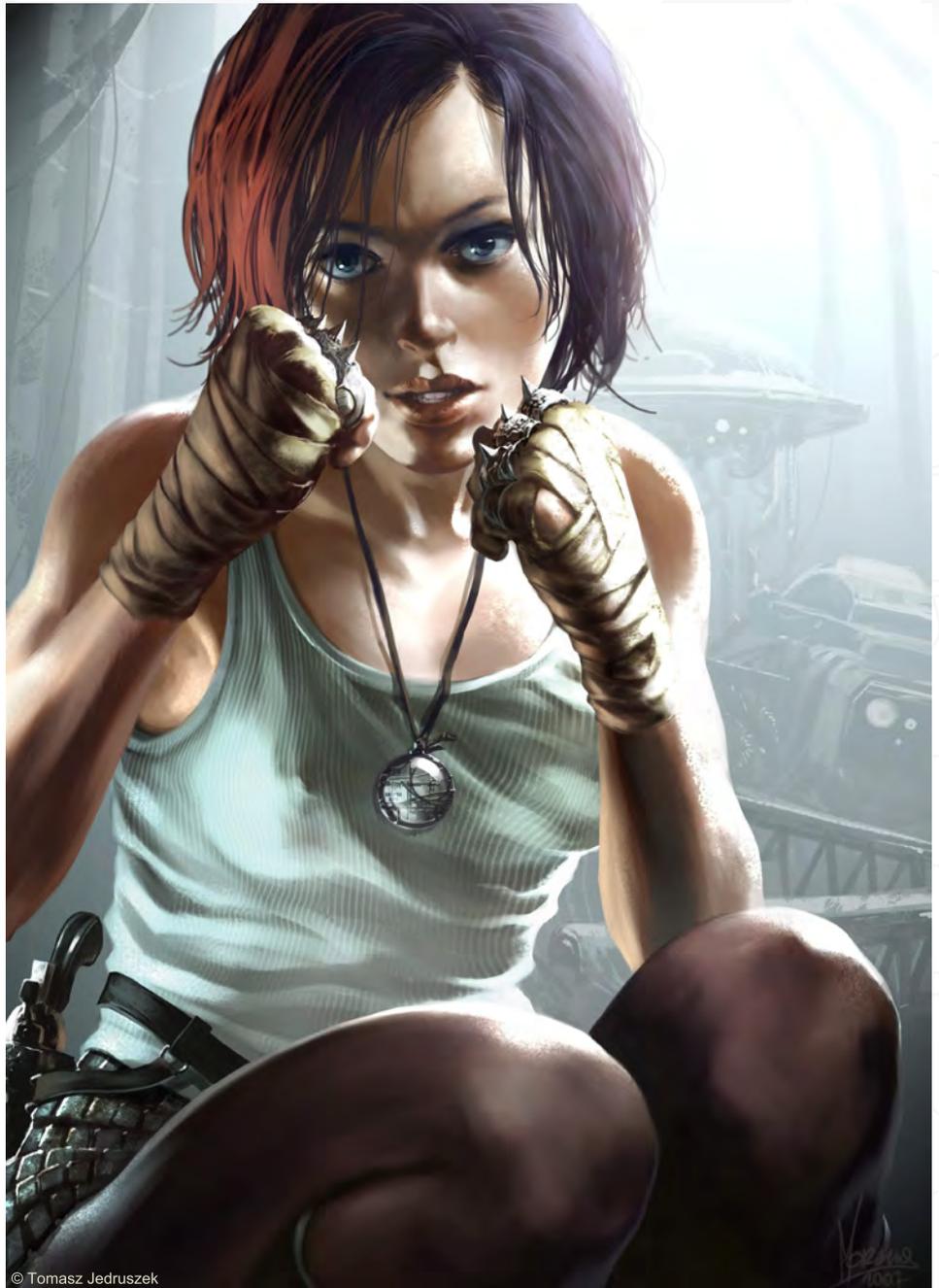
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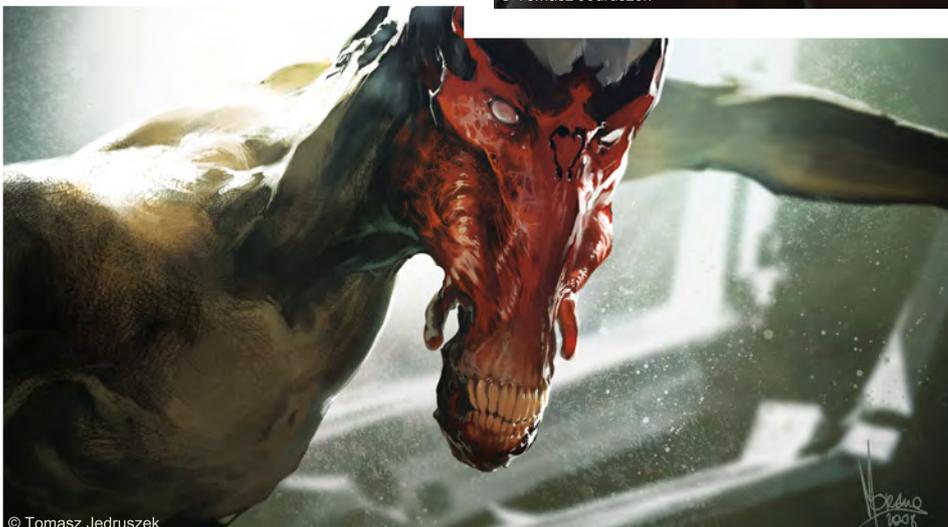
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actually work faster or better, especially as I paint in a rather classical way, mainly due to the style guides of my clients. I'm sure Mullins would treat those illustrations much more "loosely" than I do. Now my speed is all about using digital techniques the way they are supposed to be used, so if I have to paint clouds I paint them with a custom brush, I paint skin with texture and dual brushes and if I am mastering the final lighting I use lots of layer-based spotlights and overlays. That cuts my total time by around 10:1 compared to traditional oil painting. I don't have to squeeze out all the paint, clean brushes,

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stretch canvas etc. I just take my digital tool and work on the subject, focusing to the maximum and then moving on to the next thing.

If you like to spend weeks in your studio with the smell of oil paint, staring at some naked woman posing there, fine! You like that? I'm not surprised - I personally wish to have some time in future to work in the "old way". However if you are a freelancer, work a lot and need to meet deadlines then you should cut all that "artistic" bullshit and start working fast and efficiently with digital tools.

Tomasz Jedruszek

For more work by this artist please visit:

http://www.morano.pl/

Or contact them at:

info@morano.pl

Interviewed by: Richard Tilbury

Vancouver Film School alumni credits include **Across the Universe** Geeta Basantani, Digital Compositor **Alias** Scott Dewis, Visual Effects Artist **Ant Bully** Ben Sanders, Character Animator | Rani Naamani, Animator | Ernesto Bottger, Character Animator **AVP: Alien Vs. Predator** Shawn Walsh, Color & Lighting Technical Director **Babel** Luis Blackaller, Storyboard Artist | Lon Molnar, Visual Effects Supervisor **Battlestar Galactica** Daniel Osaki, Lead Modeler | Megan Majewski, 3D Animator | Alec McClymont, 3D Artist **Blizzard Entertainment** Alvaro Buendia, Cinematic Artist **Bolt** Lino Di Salvo, Supervising Animator/Voice of Vinnie **Charlotte's Web** Aruna Inversin, Digital Compositor | Adam Yaniv, Character Animator | Tony Etienne, Lead Lighter Kristin Sedore, Lighter **Chicago** Lon Molnar, Animation Supervisor **The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe** Kristin Sedore, Lighter | Shawn Walsh, Lighter | Adam Yaniv, Character Animator **The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian** Andreas Hikel, Pre-Visualization Artist | Christoph Schinko, Character Animator | Jami Gigot, Senior Layout Artist **Cloverfield** Nicholas Markel, Pre-Visualization Supervisor **Constantine** Aruna Inversin, Digital Compositor **The Dark Knight** Pietro Ponti, Lead CG Lighting Artist **Dead Like Me** Daniel Osaki, Visual Effects Artist | Alec McClymont, 3D Artist **Diablo III** Alvaro Buendia, Cinematic Artist | Steven Chen, Cinematic Artist **Family Guy** Michael Loya, Storyboard Artist **Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer** Arun Ram-Mohan, Lighting Technical Director | Shawn Walsh, Visual Effects Executive Producer | Jessica Alcorn, Compositor **Flags of our Fathers** Aruna Inversin, Digital Compositor **Gears of War (VG)** Scott Dossett, Animator **The Godfather (VG)** Kirk Chantraine, Motion Capture Specialist **The Golden Compass** Adam Yaniv, Animator | Chad Moffitt, Animator | Thom Roberts, Animator | Ben Sanders, Animator Andrew Lawson, Animator | Matthias Lowry, Visual Effects | Tony Etienne, Look Development Justin Hammond, Lighter Technical Director | Aruna Compositor | Fion Mok,

Pearl Hsu, Effects Inversin, Digital Matchmove Artist

Your name here.

Hairspray Lon Molnar, Visual Effects Production Executive **Halo 3** Bartek Kujbida, Character Animator **Happy Feet** Ben Sanders, Character Animator | Thom Roberts, Character Animator **Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban** Shawn Walsh, Color & Lighting Technical Director **Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix** Pietro Ponti, Technical Director **Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince** Harry Mukhopadhyay, Lead Effects Technical Director **Hellboy** Aruna Inversin, Digital Compositor **Hellboy II: The Golden Army** Christoph Ammann, 3D Sequence Supervisor **Horton Hears a Who** Arun Ram-Mohan, Lighting Technical Director | Brent Wong, Modeler **Hulk** Geoff Richardson, Visual Effects Editor **I, Robot** Daniel Osaki, CGI Modeler | Megan Majewski, Pre-Visualization **Ice Age: The Meltdown** Ben Sanders, Character Animator | Arun Ram-Mohan, Lighting Technical Director **The Incredible Hulk** Shawn Walsh, Visual Effects Executive Producer Tony Etienne, Look Development Lead **Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull** Henri Tan, Creature Technical Director **Iron Man** Adam Marisett, Visual Effects Artist **King Kong** Chad Moffitt, Senior Animator **King of the Hill** Michael Loya, Director **Kingdom Hospital** Daniel Osaki, Visual Effects Artist | Megan Majewski, 3D Animator | Alec McClymont, 3D Artist **Kingdom of Heaven** Shawn Walsh, Digital Compositor **Letters from Iwo Jima** Aruna Inversin, Digital Compositor **Live Free or Die Hard** Jessica Alcorn, Compositor **Lord of the Rings Trilogy** Chad Moffitt, Senior Animator **Lost** Scott Dewis, Visual Effects Artist **Lucasfilm Animation Singapore** Sandro Di Segni, Senior Effects Technical Director/Lead Digital Artist | Ming Chang, Lighting Technical Director | Adrian Ng Chee Wei, Character AnimatorSeema Gopalakrishnan, CG Software Developer **Mass Effect (VG)** Sung-Hun (Ryan) Lim, 3D Modeler **Matrix: Revolutions** Aruna Inversin, Digital Compositor | Shawn Walsh, Color & Lighting Technical Director **Master & Commander: The Far Side of the World** Robert Bourgeault, CG Artist **Metal Gear Solid 4 (VG)** Josh Herrig, Artist | Yuta Shimizu, Artist **The Mummy: Tomb of the Dragon Emperor** Aruna Inversin, Digital Compositor **Night at the Museum** Allen Holbrook, Animator | Adam Yaniv, Character Animator | Chad Moffitt, Animator | Kristin Sedore, Lighter **Persepolis** Marianne Lebel, Animator **Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End** Ben Sanders, Character Animator Allen Holbrook, Animator | Aruna Inversin, Digital Compositor **The Pirates Who Don't Do Anything: A VeggieTales Movie** Mike Dharney, Animation Supervisor **Reign of Fire** Lino DiSalvo, Animator **Resident Evil: Extinction** Joshua Herrig, Visual Effects Artist **Robots** Arun Ram-Mohan, Additional Lighting **Rome** Teh-Wei Yeh, Matchmove Artist **The Santa Clause 2** Aruna Inversin, Digital Compositor Daniel Osaki, Visual Effects Artist **Scarface (VG)** Maya Zuckerman, Mocap 3D Generalist **Shrek the Third** Rani Naamani, Animator **Shrek the Third (VG)** Samuel Tung, Technical Artist **Sin City** Michael Cozens, Lead Animator **Smallville** Geeta Basantani, Lead Compositor **Speed Racer** Aruna Inversin, Digital Compositor **Star Wars Episode III: Revenge of the Sith** Andrew Doucette, Character Animator | Nicholas Markel, Pre-Visualization **Star Wars: Knights of the Old Republic (VG)** Arun Ram-Mohan, 3D Artist | Jessica Mih, Level Artist **Stargate SG-1** Aruna Inversin, Digital Compositing Artist | Daniel Osaki, Visual Effects Artist | Shawn Walsh, Digital Effects Supervisor **Stargate: Atlantis** Daniel Osaki, 3D Animator | Megan Majewski, 3D Animator | Alec McClymont, 3D Artist **Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street** Jami Gigot, Concept Artist **Transformers** Allen Holbrook, Animator | Henri Tan, Creature Technical Director

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VFS student work by Jeff Plamondon

"The determination and long-time desire to be a matte painter, and not necessarily classes or diplomas, is what has allowed me to do what I do"

Jim Maxwell is a matte painter and concept artist who has worked on a number of feature films including *Mr. and Mrs. Smith, Lust Caution* and the recent blockbuster, *The Incredible Hulk*. He has loved painting and film since childhood and in this interview he talks to us about why he thinks, "Matte painting is all about painting light, shadow, and colour".

JIM
MAXWELL

JIM MAXWELL

I see from your resume that you have a few year's experience as a matte artist / painter. How did you come to be involved in this area of CG and where did you learn your skills?

Well I've loved painting and drawing and watching movies since I was really young, so I think it was a natural conclusion to eventually bridge these together. As soon as I'd learned you could have a career painting and having those paintings appear in film, I immediately wanted to be a matte painter, I was probably about 13 or 14. Sitting watching movies, I'd try to find where the matte paintings were; to pinpoint exactly where the matte painting met the real footage. I'd also wait until the very end of the film to see who the matte artists were in the credits - those guys were, and still are, my heroes. I went to art college for a while, and took some night classes here and there in Adobe Photoshop, After Effects, and Lightwave. But there are obviously other software packages more or less applicable depending on job requirements, and if you're good at what you do, you learn to use additional software on the job along the way.

The determination and long-time desire I had to be a matte painter, and not necessarily classes or diplomas, is what has allowed me to do what I do. Ultimately what's important is how you put the knowledge you gain to use, how much experience you gather as you go, and to not

JIM MAXWELL (C)

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JIM MAXWELL (C)

loose faith in yourself, as everyone operates and learns differently. That said - education and training are important, but you inevitably are the one responsible for the quality and success of your work.

Working towards your goal in your spare time is extremely important too - it gives you an edge over people who just "want" to do something. I think with matte painting or anything creative it's being active, producing work, and spending time improving your skills that will be your best advantage and serve you well in the future.

In my first studio job as a matte painter I was hired for two days a week. It was a "trial by fire" experience because I had to get used to the software in a production environment, but I ploughed through and ended up being part of a team that was nominated for a Canadian Gemini Award.

From your early interest in film who do you regard as being pioneers in the field of matte painting and whose work do you admire the most?

A lot of people might say Albert Whitlock - and he is phenomenal - but I didn't learn about him until later on. He wasn't just an extraordinary matte painter, he would composite elements together in an old-fashioned way, such as manually dragging a painted-on photographed image of the Hindenburg across a glass matte painting of the New York skyline (which would be done these days with compositing software and a 3D model of the Hindenburg). But his stuff is amazing and I think the guys whose matte paintings I grew up looking at are somewhat indebted to him.

The matte painters that really inspired me though, were guys like Michael Pangrazio, Harrison Ellenshaw, Frank Ordaz, Chris Evans, Caroleen Green, Yusei Uesugi - their early work was so impressive, and it was all done with a brush! I would try to contact them at their respective workplaces (years before most kids knew what matte painting was) and would be lucky enough to have conversations over the phone with them, asking them techniques and advice on how to break into the business.

As I wanted to be a matte painter so much, I'd sit and watch old movies with my parents, and call out "hey that's a matte painting", and they'd tell me to shush, and for the most part they didn't understand what I was talking about. I recognised that images in *The Wizard of OZ*, and *Gone with the Wind* weren't just painted backdrops, there was something different with them... where they were situated in the frame, their composition etc.

With the digital age too there are some great guys; Yannick Dusseault's work on *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy, and the *Star Wars* films is amazing.

He's so talented and I think he works very quickly and in a very smart way, which makes him successful. Other guys like Dylan Cole, Richard Bluff, and Chris Stoski are all really talented people working in the digital era of matte painting and they're the guys to watch right now.

People say a lot of romance is lost between the old ways of painting on glass and now painting through the glass on a computer screen, but for the past decade or so there has been astounding work on the screen that no one would ever recognise as a matte painting.

On your demo reel there is a sequence from the recent *Hulk* film showing a wireframe overlay across a building façade. Can you talk us through this shot and how the matte was created?

The first thing was to find specifically what production was asking for. The building represented a laboratory, so they requested that the building be extended. So you ask questions: one extra storey or two? Should it resemble the previous floor and is there any extra architectural ornamentation? In the end they wanted one more floor, same architecture - though certain windows may have lights off and there would be two large holes in the brickwork.

The shot was initially 2000 frames long, and the camera actually follows right around to another side of the building. So I had to create two facades.

Sometimes you can get away with simple geometry planes textured and tracked in 3D. But it was necessary to add a bit of depth and detail of the inset windows, as well as creating the holes in the wall. Luckily, the scene was tracked already. I have great respect for people who nail down a good track in a shot. There were basic 3D planes laid out to match the footage, and that generally makes your job that much easier (though it doesn't always happen

that way!) Anyway, I had some photo reference of the actual building in the daytime, with a somewhat orthographic, straight-on view. I colour-corrected the photo to match the plate, and transformed the image so it was perfectly orthographic - which is important when you're applying texture to geometry. I painted up some areas, and cloned others in Photoshop. Then I took that file, brought it into Maya, put it on an image plane and spent a few days creating the needed geometry.

When I was happy with the windows etc, I rendered out the UV's and saved them out for Photoshop - then I painted on the UV's,

brought it back into Maya and mapped it onto my building geometry. I had to do a few lighting passes; the character "Abomination" throws objects through the wall so I created one texture pass with lights on and one with lights off to simulate flickering lights and damage... then I rendered everything out for the compositor.

Can you explain what you mean by: "The scene was tracked already"?

Basically when the plates (film footage that's been digitally scanned) arrive in a VFX studio, and there are set extensions or 3D elements that need to be added to the scene, someone will have to create a virtual, digital camera that

will have the exact same movement and motion as the physical, practical camera that was on set when they shot the scene. Usually roughed out geometry will be created to match buildings, landscapes, or features of the scene. For the lab shot in *Hulk*, rough geometry planes were created for the ground, for a building on the left and right, and for a distant building. The tracker then animated the camera movement while watching the footage playing within the software to make sure his "track" was as bang on as possible. So when I started working on the scene, it was already tracked for me - so I created the facades of the building and placed them where the rough geometry was, deleted

that geometry and then focused on the details of the texture I had to project onto the building. There were some tweaks here and there where I had to reposition some elements as they would fall off the track and move independently of the camera move... so there was a bit of back and forth before everything stayed put. But in the end, I thought it looked pretty bang on.

Do you do much hand painted work on matte paintings these days or is everything pretty much composed of photographic elements?

I think any good matte painter combines as many techniques as possible. It would be a hard job for me to do if I limited myself to basic photo collage - it would get old really fast. I try to hand paint (digitally in Photoshop) as much as possible, I create basic models in 3D that I eventually paint over when I don't always have good references and there's a lot of photo-cloning as well. Photo references are important. As good as your eye can be in what you know of the world (lighting, shadow, perspective etc), photo references can be vital depending on the shot. But I really think painting skills are the number one necessity - they're the glue that pulls everything else together. Just recently I had the opportunity to create a cityscape matte painting that served as the background in the last scene of a feature film. The timeframe was really short, and I could have used some photo references which I was lacking... so I painted in the majority of the rooftops of the city using colour, light, and shadow, suggestions of antennas and satellite dishes, and it ended up looking believable. When I get the chance to paint in details, or paint full skies, clouds, or landscapes, it's very rewarding and I try to do it as much as possible.

It's interesting that you mention painting in the rooftops "using colour, light and shadow", as you often hear people describe matte work as the art of "painting light". Do you think this is a good definition?

Absolutely. Matte painting is all about painting light, shadow, and colour - but light is the most significant of these in bringing the form and shape of an image to life. Apart from sunlight creating obvious contrasting shadows and form, if you look outside, regardless of the day, you have atmospheric perspective, and layer after

layer of haze. These are all different aspects of light and when added to matte paintings these elements give you more depth and a sense of reality. In some VFX shops - in their pipeline - "light" can be handled differently: instead of objects being painted up in a scene, 3D geometry may be used, and then textured, and then lit, and finally colour-corrected and comped etc. I see the modern matte painter as someone who attempts to blend certain stages of the pipeline with a traditional sense of painting techniques. I think artists like Vermeer and Caravaggio were recognized as great artists because of the way they handled light. They didn't necessarily paint "photographically" (photographs weren't invented in their day!), but they captured a "lifelike" version of reality, which as matte painter, I try to do every day.

What sort of challenges does creating concept work present compared to matte painting and what are the best aspects about doing both?
Concept work is terrific stuff to get a chance to work on. Sometimes, depending on the client and project, you can have great design freedom; you decide the mood, the atmosphere, and really put a personal touch on it. Sometimes matte painting can be limiting in that regard because everything can be pre-laid-out for you. That said, with creating concepts... not all days are great idea days - I guess it's akin to writer's block. You can sometimes work several hours and not have great results - and sometimes you can nail something down in 30 minutes. I think it's partially because you're pooling from your imagination, which isn't always 100% cooperative. Concept work is very abstract; you're presenting an idea of something rather than the reality and the hope is that the client or receiver of your work is receptive and that you're able to communicate your ideas back and forth. There is a blurring though sometimes between concept and matte work.

Some matte paintings that I've created were begun as concept images, and were eventually massaged into something more photo-real. As challenging and wildly creative as concept work can be, some matte painting requests can be very imaginative in their scope, especially when you're dealing with alternate realities - an alien landscape, or futuristic city for example.

To make those matte paintings look real can be difficult, but also exciting! In those cases you have years of film history ideas to tap into, but I like trying to be as original as possible. Being derivative can be frowned upon by an audience when they see the same ideas recycled over and over, and you want to try to be innovative, which makes the job more challenging, but ultimately more enjoyable.

I think that because I love film so much, and the enjoyment of going to the theatre, I mostly prefer matte painting over concept work. With concepts you can see your ideas translated into reality - whereas with matte paintings, (sometimes with slight adjustments from the film labs) it's as if they're transferred from your computer screen straight to the movie screen - and that's amazing!

I think seeing your hard work on the big screen, and knowing you were responsible for an establishing shot is so satisfying.

What types of shots in general prove to be the most difficult facing a matte painter and are there any subjects that are more problematic than others?
Since matte paintings are in motion these days, they're more technical, and so there are more variables to problem-solve. When it comes to 3D projection matte paintings there are new rules that have to be obeyed to garner a realistic outcome. Working with your first frame of geometry and your last frame of geometry, and then having to project your matte painting onto

that geometry sequence and making sure your matte painting is lining up and not stretching can be a difficult but satisfying process.

Although there are still matte paintings that are sky replacements, and basic backgrounds, matte painters should be prepared to have knowledge of 3D software and be able to create a matte painting that moves like a regular scene would with a camera trucking past.

Major perspective or parallel changes can get tricky depending on the complexity of the shot. Anything that's not grounded in modern day reality will be difficult because it can be interpreted and designed in so many different ways, not to mention that it doesn't presently exist!!

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Sci-fi/fantasy films, period pieces, war epics all have their own sets of problems. On Ang Lee's *Lust, Caution*, I got to work on matte paintings of Shanghai in the 1930's - there was a lot of research and reference gathering to maintain the authenticity and consistency of that time period, and that can be very difficult when you're working with grainy photos from the 30's and you can't determine whether something is a mailbox or a telephone booth. But the film looks quite believable when you've seen the footage beforehand and afterwards. The bar is set very high these days in terms of realistic digital matte paintings. There are films where

alien landscapes and futuristic environments are absolutely believable (even though they don't exist), so you can't make excuses! [Laughs].

When being presented with a brief for a matte painting, what are the typical stages that you go through from start to finish in order to complete the piece and are you ever provided with location photography or high res reference material?

Depending on the timeframe, sometimes you may have a week to acquire all your resources - this would include gathering image references; doing research on the specifics of the location

shoot (camera lens, lighting info); setting up a 3D camera and blocking in rough geometry that will match the practical shot (if you've received scans of the footage); reading the script; and, on occasion, travelling to the film location shoot to take reference photos either during or after filming has wrapped. Sometimes the production company will ask for a style frame after a film shoot is completed.

The style frame is like a concept painting that combines a frame of the footage, and is used as a key guide for lighting, palette, and placement. For instance, if you have a scene with actors in

front of a practical castle drawbridge set that's built 10 feet high, the matte painter (usually in a day or so) could paint a quick style frame concept showing the castle extension, turrets and sky. If the shot is not locked-off, and has a camera move, two or more style frames may be required. This gives production an idea of where you want to go with the matte painting, and starts the communication.

It's always a lot of fun when you get to go scouting locations. You get out of the studio and into the real world and usually come back with great references.

From what I've experienced, VFX supervisors, and various VFX leads will shoot a lot of location references during filming, so they'll usually provide you with high res images. If the matte painter has the majority of the responsibility for a shot, they will occasionally go to the film shoot as well.

Sometimes when a change is made, or a new visual effect is introduced, the matte painter may have to go back to the original location with a still camera and lenses and shoot references.

If there are any readers out there who are interested in becoming matte painters, what advice would you offer them in terms of learning the trade and creating a suitable portfolio?
I think a solid background in painting, drawing, and photography is important, plus a love of films and movies - and not necessarily heavy visual effects movies.

As a matte painter, or any visual effects artist, you'll be working on films of all kinds. Art and design colleges that teach traditional art as well as courses in visual effects are great places to hone your skills as an artist. In most cases you'll be dealing with instructors who have, at one time or another, experienced working in the visual effects industry. Learn a popular 3D software package, and a popular compositing

package, and above all learn Adobe Photoshop. There are others, but Photoshop is the most widely recognised digital painting application in film and design.

I think some people expect that right out of school they'll immediately get work, which isn't always the case. In the studios I've worked I've seen crates and bookshelves full of demo reels - most of them from students. It's a very competitive industry and I think producing unique, original work, and working hard, is the key to success and will single you out from the rest. In terms of your portfolio, well, working at nights when your friends want you to go out is a sacrifice, but it's pretty important. You want to build up as much work as possible outside of school. There are plenty of sites out there that take submissions of artwork for inclusion in art books and web sites - the reward is recognition as an artist - and major VFX studios look at these sites from time to time which is a good motivator. Sometimes the studio you're hired by may be working on television programmes or commercials that you feel won't be useful or "exciting" enough on your demo reel - in that case, create something spectacular on your reel to get attention from some of the bigger VFX studios. There are matte painters I know whose personal work is more interesting than their professional studio work. On a demo reel, combining your own work and studio experience shows major studios that you're willing to go that extra mile. Sometimes if you want to work on feature films or blockbusters, you'll have to move to a major city - so be prepared to relocate. I've always believed that if you're determined to live your dream, then you'll do it!

Jim Maxwell

For more work by this artist please visit:
http://www.reviresco.info/
Or contact them at:
jimcmax@gmail.com

Interviewed by: Richard Tilbury

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SKETCHBOOK
OF JUSTIN ALBERS

In this article, Justin Albers talks about what inspires him and shares his ideas and

sketches, from his random drawings, to his last Dominance War character

For me, a sketchbook is a junkyard collection of ideas and designs, thoughts and shapes, inspirations and mindless scribbles. Most are not so good and do not end up going anywhere, but occasionally I'll put something down that's worth further investment. I try to keep some sort of sketchbook around wherever I happen to be. Sometimes I'll just get random images pop into my head when I'm walking or driving or working, or sometimes I'll see interesting images or patterns in water stains or oil spills that I might be able to use later in some way.

I frequently sketch with just a regular black ballpoint pen; it's less messy than pencil and doesn't smudge, and since I can't erase anything it makes me conscious of choosing my lines carefully - but at the same time it isn't as permanent and unforgiving as a Sakura Micron pen.

Sketch.01 © Justin Albers

Sketch.02 © Justin Albers

Robots and mechanical things are some of my favourite subjects to draw, and have been ever since I was a kid when I was drawing trains and cars all day. I find myself drawing that type of stuff a lot ... I'm told it's because I can get away with just combining random shapes together that look cool – which actually sounds about right! **Sketch.01** – **Sketch.03** were from sessions at the Austin Sketch Group. They are nothing in particular, just me mindlessly trying to come up with some cool shapes and forms and emptying whatever's in my brain onto the page.

Sketch.03 © Justin Albers

Sketch.04 is one of the ideas I had for my last Dominance War character entry that I might one day turn into something else – he's some kind of peaceful forest guardian with hanging charms and tokens denoting his age and importance. For some reason I like drawing trees and foliage, too.

Sketch.04 © Justin Albers

© Justin Albers

Sketch.06 © Justin Albers

While home for Christmas, I made a few studies of the backyards of Smithville, Texas. Working on these studies made me realise that I should be doing this type of stuff a lot more (**Sketch.06**)

For environment ideas, I tend to switch back to pencil so I can lay in values and quickly and easily add highlights, shadows and atmosphere. **Sketch.07** is just a few random ramblings of a futuristic cityscape.

For **Sketch.08**, I wanted to create a boggy swamp feel to the setting of the top image, with a single lantern on the dock illuminating the path to a rickety old dwelling where maybe some old voodoo guy lives. It might make a cool painting one day! The bottom one is another future city idea
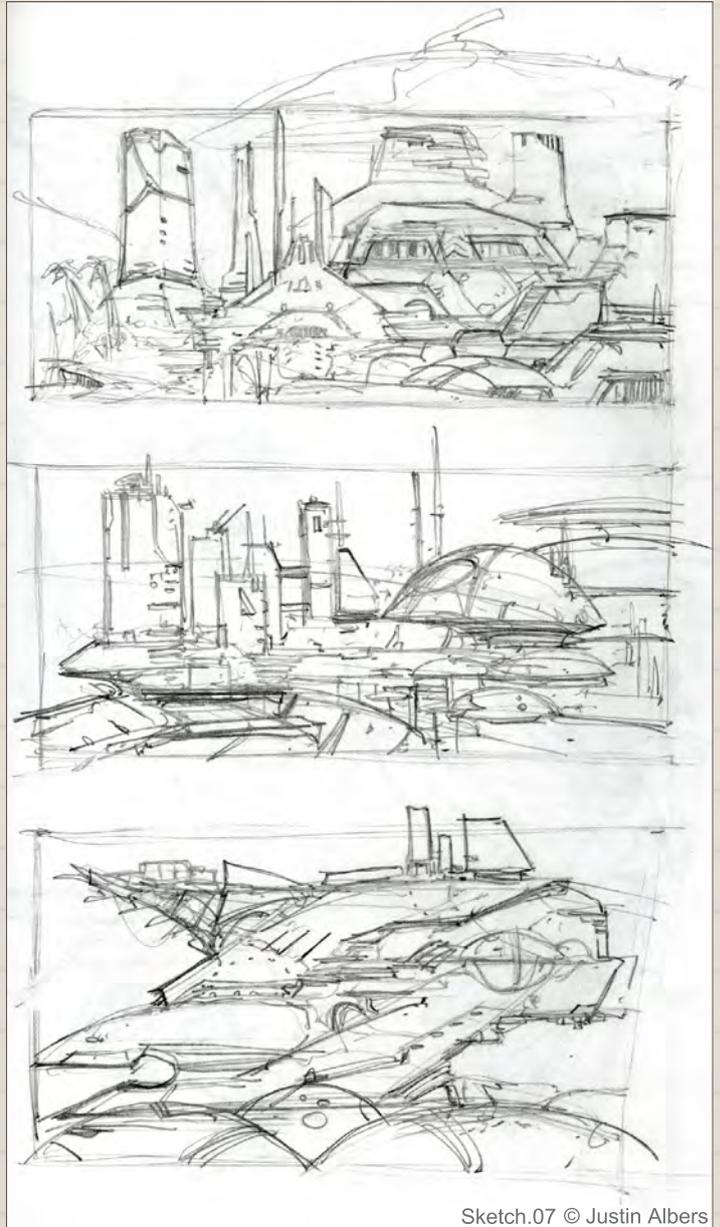
Sketch.07 © Justin Albers

in which the living quarters of the citizens are modular and act as a huge transportation vehicle, taking its residents to the central technology core of the city where everyone works, making cars and roads obsolete. It sounds ridiculous but it was fun to draw.
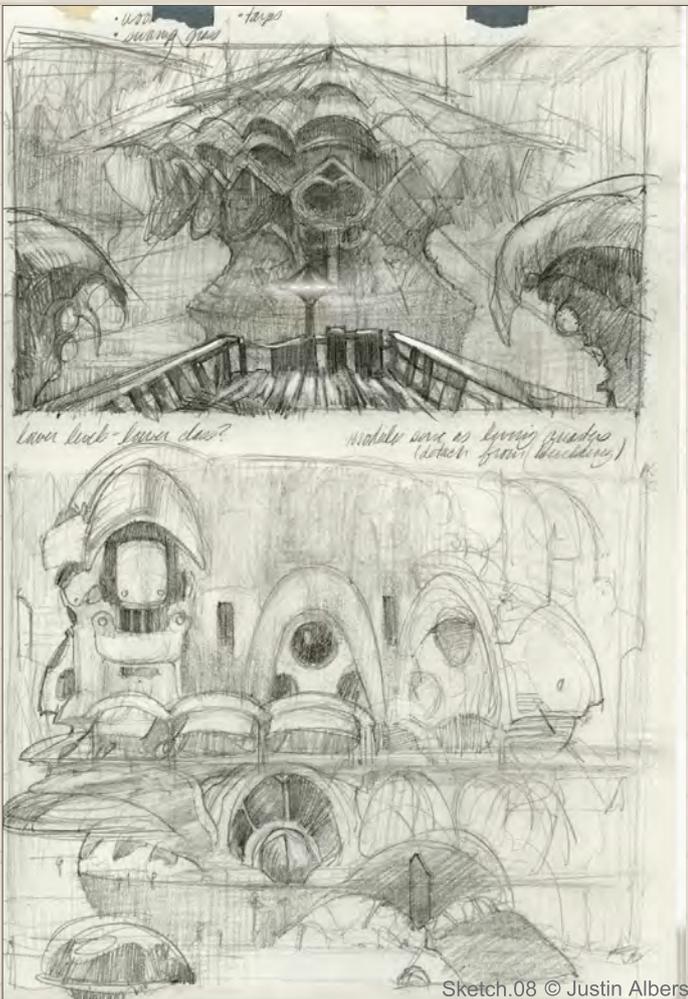
Sketch.08 © Justin Albers
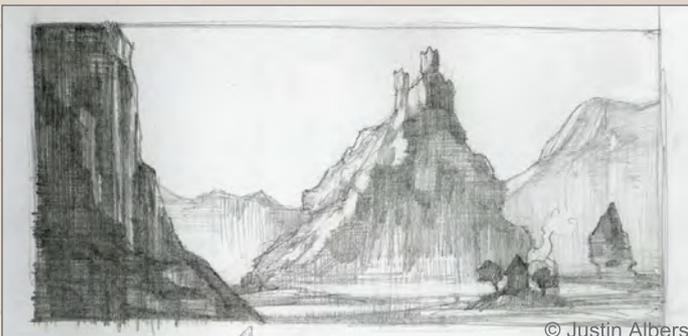
© Justin Albers

Sketch.10 is a page of just more random musings – a space captain, some sort of samurai hovercraft device, a spaceship ... I think I did this one while in meetings at work.

And now back to robots. I really enjoy the contrast between detail and no detail, positive and negative space, large shapes and small shapes, etc, so **Sketch.11** is me just sort of experimenting and practicing with those ideas in mind … which turned into more robots.
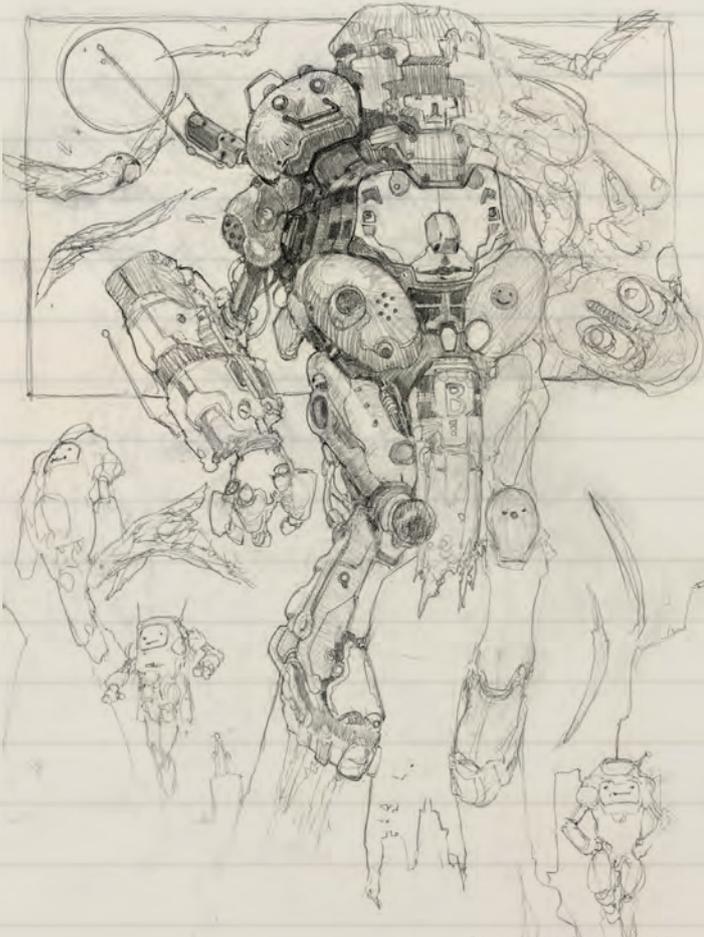
Sketch.11 © Justin Albers

Sketch.10 © Justin Albers

Sketch.12 was the beginning of a little personal project I have been thinking about. I just recently saw the second and third *Mad Max* movies and felt a little inspired. I ran with the post-apocalyptic idea and created a story based on a National Geographic article I read about storing nuclear waste in Nevada. What if the waste was improperly stored and somehow ignited, creating a huge explosion of decayed nuclear material? I figured it might unfortunately turn the people in the surrounding towns and counties into radioactive mutant zombies. The main character of the story would be a girl who builds a robot from used car pieces, scattered mechanics and electronics for protection against the radiation and to fight off the hordes of mutants so that she can get back to her home in a neighbouring town in the mountains and save her family holed up in a fallout shelter. Not exactly a literary masterwork, but it allows me to draw the kind of stuff I like to draw. **Sketch.12** is a page of thumbnails for the robot guy.

Sketch.13 is further development on the robot and a few sketches of the girl – I was thinking on either side are pieces of old car hubs (with working lights!), the cab could be the top of a safe or airlock, the legs from a construction loader, and in the back would be housing for the engine and mechanics. I figure she would also need a few weapons for mowing down zombies. She's hung a flag on the front as a sign to the inevitable occupation of the military that she's not a mindless mutant!

Sketch.12 © Justin Albers

Sketch.13 © Justin Albers
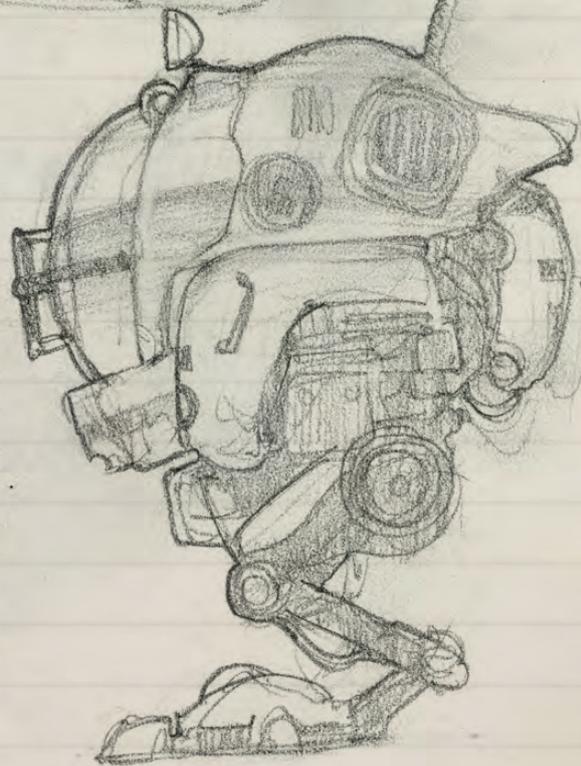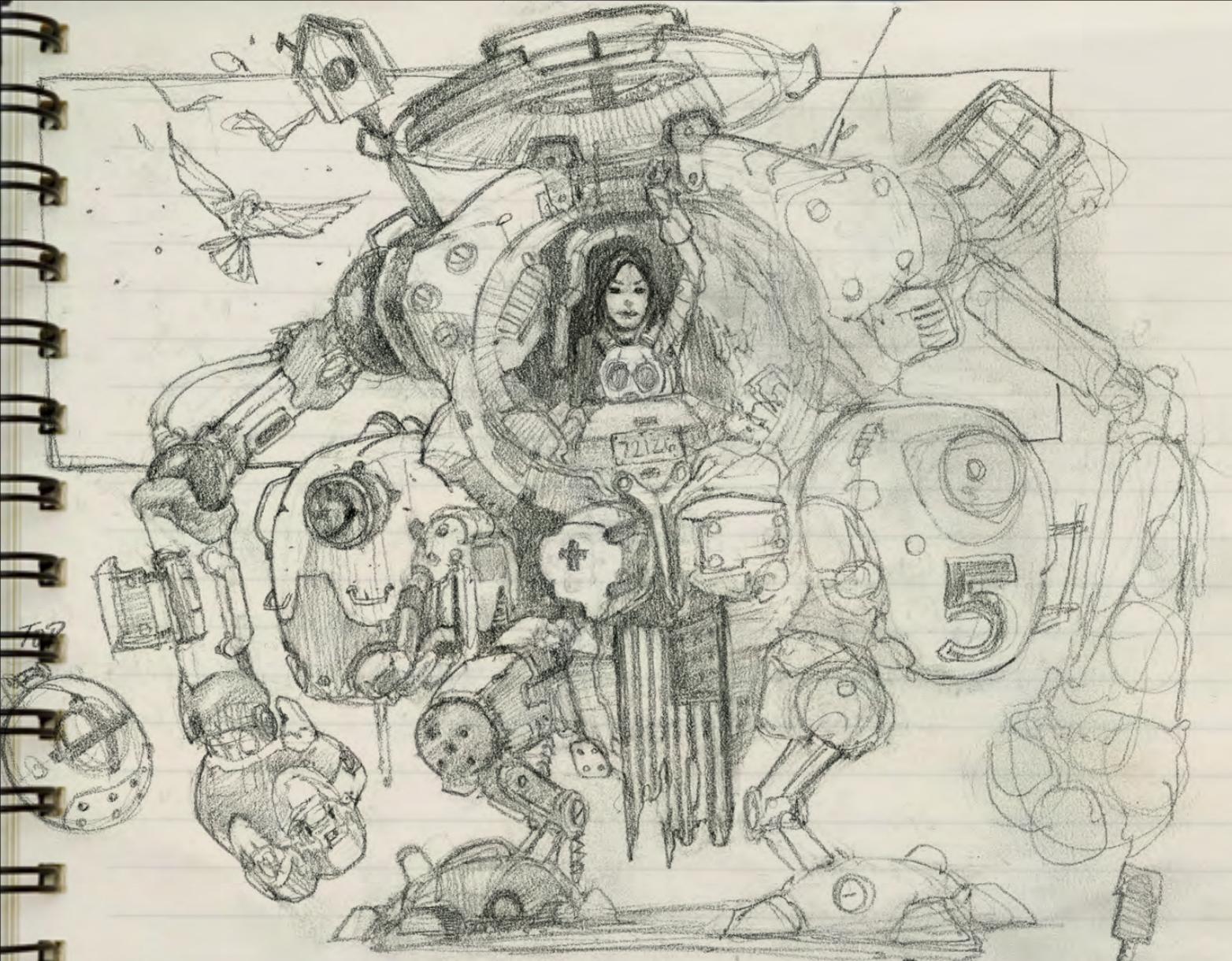
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I hope to finalise some of these ideas and maybe paint some of these up once I'm satisfied with a few of them. One of the most important benefits to keeping a sketchbook for me is that I can refine and combine any of these raw ideas into whatever I want in the end.

Happy sketching!

Justin Albers

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This month we feature:
Sara Justesen
Daniel Iulian Vijoi
Andreas Rocha
Loïc e338 Zimmermann
Ioan Dumitrescu
Dmitry Grebenkov
Robin Olausson
Szymon Biernacki
Yang Xueguo
Yap Kun Rong

THE GALLERY

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The Journey Ends

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Sailing Through

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Banana Split

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Stranded

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Snake Fight

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Black

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What a Shame

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Fantasy

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Speed painting

digital painting tutorial series: volume 2

Introduction

Our brand new 91-page eBook is a collection of "Speed Painting" tutorials which have been created by some of the top digital painters around today. The idea behind this tutorial series was for the artist to interpret a one-line descriptive brief (provided by us!), create a speed painting from it and then produce a tutorial showing and explaining each stage of production of the artwork. This downloadable PDF eBook can be followed in most 2D software packages that support paintbrushes and layers.

The featured artists are:

Nathaniel West
Daniel Ljunggren
Emrah Elmasli
Mike Corriero
Rich Tilbury
Robin Olausson
Ignacio Bazan Lazcano
Marc Brunet
Nick Oroc
Serg S
Joel Carlo

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Downloadable Tutorial EBook

the

Welcome to the "Challenge" section of
2DArtist. Every month we run a challenge
in the conceptart.org forums, which is
avaliable for anyone to enter. The winning
entries not only receive prizes from the
www.3dtotal.com shop, but also get
featured in this very magazine! And as well
as displaying the winners from the previous
month's competition, we also showcase the
"Making Of's" from the month before that,
so you can see how these winning
pieces of artwork

Butcher

Stylised Challenge

Stylised Challenge
Butcher

The Challenge

Welcome to the Super Stylised Monthly Challenge. Each month we will select an theme and post some images in the **Forum Thread** as reference. All you have to do is to create a 2D image in line with this theme in a stylised / abstract / cartoon style, whilst keeping your image instantly recognisable. We wanted to publish some content in 2DArtist Magazine on how to create stylised images, such as you see in the many feature films and cartoon galleries. We thought this regular competition might bring

10th

Richard G.D. Baker - The Antarctican
cirqus@cirqus.com
http://www.cirqus.com

10th

Liran Szeiman - Liranz
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http://liransz.deviantart.com/

9th

Adrian Zhang - Gnahz
adrian.zhangzhiwei@gmail.com
http://gnahz.deviantart.com

9th

Tom Svoboda - Smot
smot@smot.cz
http://www.smot.cz

8th

Rosatron

8th

Pakomiko

8th

Alex Heath - Ghostbrush
heath.himself@gmail.com
http://web.mac.com/alexheathart

in just the images / Making Of's that we need, whilst giving away great prizes and exposure. This month's theme was **"Butcher"**. Here you can see the top placed entries, as voted for by the public.

What are we looking for?

Funny and humorous entries which break the theme 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 3D render (minor post work is OK); its up to you if you want to have a background; include some graphical elements or text on your image. Renders of the

8th

Rafa Vargas-Machuca - Machuca
tigrepeluche@gmail.com
http://www.machuca.biz

7th

Giuseppe Lacapra - Pepps
soulsmaster@hotmail.com

6th

Loris

5th

Marcuswelbey

4th

Tom van Wanrooy - Tommoy
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http://www.thecartoonfactory.nl

5th

Joseph Paice - J
joe_90@paradise.net.nz

5th

Equality72521

800 pixel dimension sound about right, but the winners will be featured in 2DArtist Magazine, so if you can create some higher res images too then 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 three 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 WIP's, give feedback and generally laugh at the crazy ideas that are emerging each month...

Challenge Thread

The entire **Butcher** competition can be viewed Here

The current challenge at the voting stage is:
Troll

The current challenge taking place is:
Bigfoot (Sasquatch)

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

Or contact: Lynette@zoopublishing.com

3rd

Oriol Muñoz Anguera - Urih_pta2
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2nd

Ruth Martinez - Ruth2m
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1st

János Kiss - 28thWing
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Making Of's

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

3rd Bstsk

Hi everyone, again! It was, as always, a pleasure to participate in the stylised challenge.

Step 01

The creation process was the same for this piece as for my last: I always try to follow a sketch, adding volume and colour, all mixed up with composition and the intention of keeping it an interesting image. I started with the sketch, searching for the best character I could get. Since I didn't have much time on the scarecrow, I had to go for the skinny version, which was one of my first ideas – but I guess it turned out well enough (**Fig.01**).
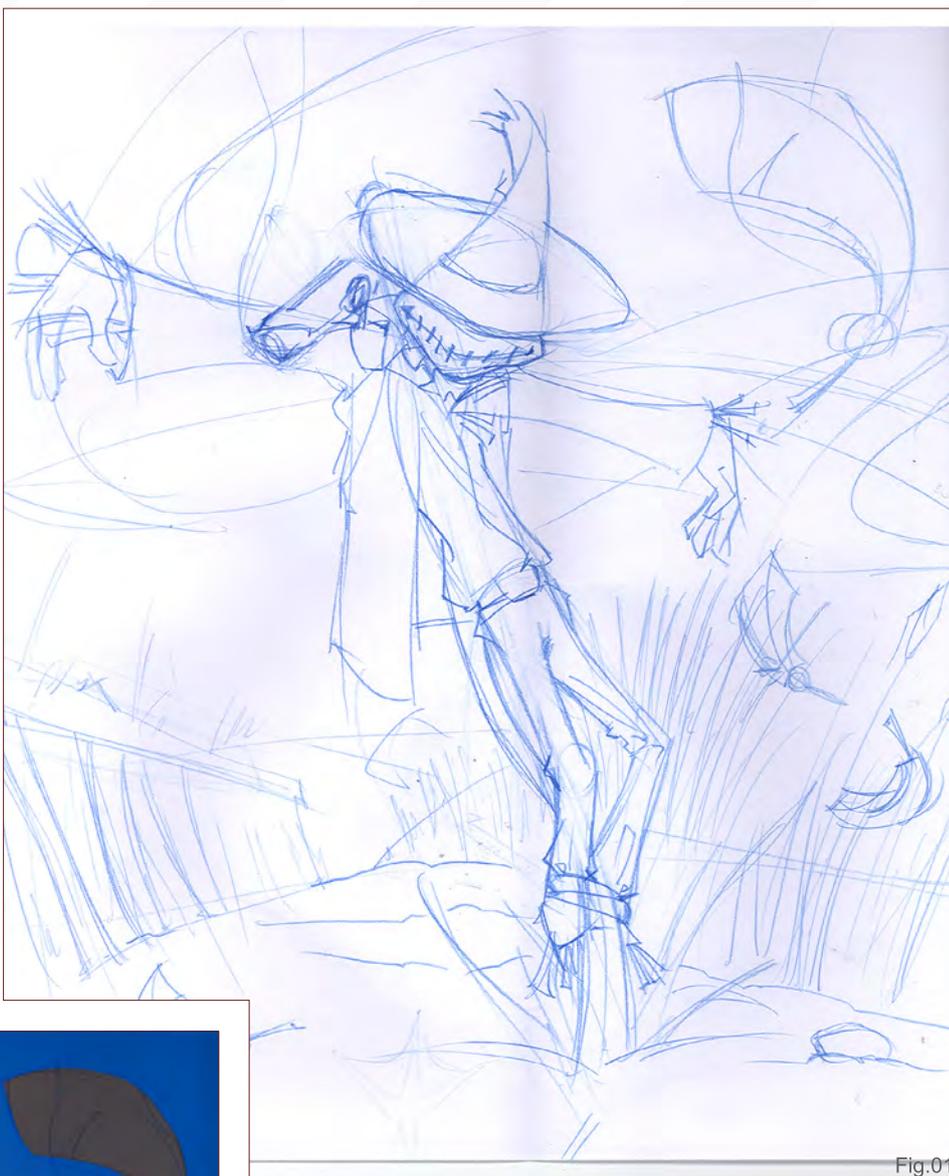
Fig.01

Step 02

So I started colouring, trying to get a simple look and paying attention to the weight of the colour and composition in the image (**Fig.02**).

The first step I usually take when colouring is to block out the sky and ground; for the sky I tend to use a simple gradient, since it's much better for a cartoon – fast and clean. The ground I paint with different brushes, depending on the style; this one was simple so I kept it that way.

Since most of the scarecrow was silhouetted against the sky, I painted it with contrasting, warm colours and planned the shadows afterwards.

Step 03

With most of the main colours defined, I started refining and polishing to increase the contrast and enrich the image. I positioned the sun to the left, allowing the shadows I needed to add some dark tones in the scene. For

Fig.02

the shadows I chose a violet tone and set it to multiply, and then continued detailing. I also started adding some elements, like the cloud line or the barn at the background (**Fig.03**).

The most important part at this stage was making his smile smug enough – since the character has no movement, except for the action line of the pole, his expression had to do the trick!

Step 04

Being able to guess the final results of the character, I still wasn't happy enough with the image as a whole ... I imagined right from the beginning that the viewer would be able to guess what had happened if I simply showed some feathers (**see Fig.03**). However, I realised it was lacking something, and so I decided to add the crows themselves – placing them here and there, making the image a little more dynamic.

Fig.03

I painted in the foreground plants and changed the clouds to balance the new elements in the image ... and there it was, almost ready. I ended the work on the image by refining all the characters using the smudge tool, and I used a little blur on the crows to simulate movement. The final step was to balance the colour; I made the shadows a little more subtle and made the tone of the trousers a little less saturated – and with that, it was done.

And onto the next challenge!

Felipe Fernández Morell

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2nd Madhatter106

The subject of this challenge on the forum caught my eye since I like to draw "character" clothing – I'd much rather draw rags and shreds and tatters than satin or velvet or silk (as I like to say, "draw gritty, not pretty!"). I initially wanted to do something different, and inspiration hit me at the grocery store – I caught sight of all the men's body and fitness magazines. I've always laughed at the cover articles mentioned and all the crazy/intense wording they use – ripped, rock hard, gridiron, and all that. Being ectomorphic (tall and thin) myself, I figured all those Ichabod Crane scarecrows might want to bulk up and get buff, so why not do a bodybuilder scarecrow? Why stop at a pumpkin head, when he could have a whole body made of squash and gourds, since their organic shapes could lend themselves to some sort of approximation of muscles?

After a web search for bodybuilder poses, I finally settled on a pose from which to work and sketched out a few roughs until I had something that I liked in pencil. That image was scanned into Photoshop, where levels were adjusted and contrast/brightness was tweaked (**Fig.01**).

I created a quick gradient background and pasted the original scan on a separate layer

Fig.01

Fig.02

Fig.03

with linear burn, which gave me a good dark brownish earthy line to work up. (**Fig.02**) In some cases I like to retain the line art, and will work in colour layers underneath the lines, but here I wanted to minimize my layer management hassle and do decided to paint the bulk of the figure onto the line art layer. Thinking I would be happy with the background as it was, I flattened the two together so I could start working with a single layer and an uncluttered file.

When I do costume sketches, I usually start with the face/head and skin tones, as it makes painting the rest of the clothing and accessories much less dull and depressing (**Fig.03**). (It gives

a little bit of life to the figure, and when I do digital figures I tend to work from the body and subsequent clothing layers outward – body to shirt to vest to suit coat.) I didn't want too strong a lighting source at this stage - just a general directional wash – because I intended to play a little with the lighting when I was pushing and pulling darks and lights later. With the head area done, I did a quick "mapping out" of colour for the rest of the gourds, squash, rope, and twigs that make up the body (**Fig.04**).

With the basics down, I started working up lights and darks, as well as some details (such as the stitching) and ideas for textures (the burlap cloth for the face). I didn't want to get too detailed

Fig.04

Fig.05

Fig.07

Fig.06

too soon, I just wanted to elaborate on what I already had (**Fig.05**). Deciding I wanted to play with some of the gourd textures, I made another layer above the painting, and started messing around with some ideas based off of a ton of gourd and squash photos I'd downloaded (**Fig.06** & **Fig.07**). This is the fun part, doing all the bumps and stripes and mottled patterns – it's a personal tug of war to not get too detailed, as I sometimes have a tendency to want to paint the eyelashes before I've drawn the legs. I also kept working the lights up and pushing the darks down, continuing to model the volumes as well as including a vague indication of the twigs and sticks that make up the torso underneath the squash and gourd muscles (**Fig.08**).

By this time, I'd reached the point for which I'd been salivating since the beginning – the straw and the hay! Really, what's a good scarecrow, from stick figure pencil-neck to my wannabe Ahhhnuld-clone, without all that stuffing? Thinking I would probably go overboard, I made another layer with a bevel and emboss modifier, which helped to create some shadow and modelling for each straw (**Fig.09**). The majority of the straw was done this way, but for added background details, I went back into the original painting layer and pencilled extra dark lines in the same general direction, so that it didn't look like every piece of straw was getting the same amount of light and shadow.

While I was working on the straw, I decided that he needed additional twine and rope details, to show how he's lashed the gourds together to create his body, so another layer was created between the straw layer and the body layer, and the twine was added.
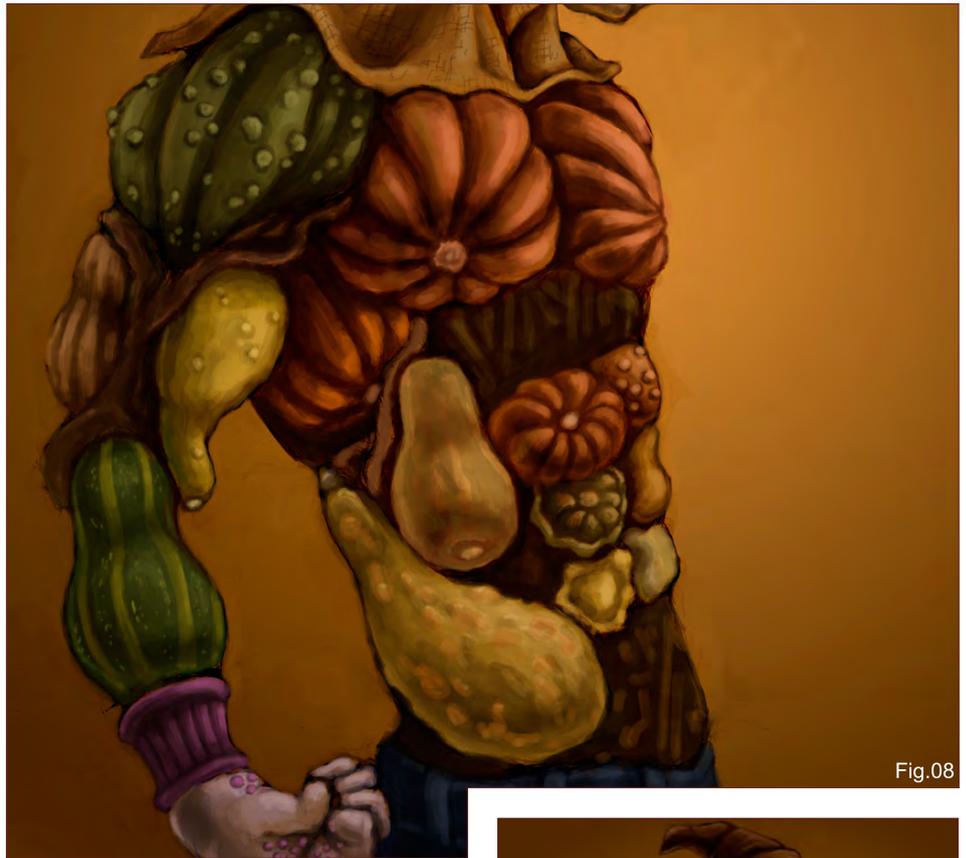
Fig.08

Fig.09

Fig.10

At this point, looking at the file I realised everything was getting a little muddy and dark, so I tweaked the levels and contrast, and played around with the colours. Part of the problem was the too-dark initial background gradient, so I made a copy of the painted layer (which I had been working the figure in all along), erased out the background of this copy, and filled the original background with a better and lighter gradient (**Fig.10**). Now I had the main

figure painting on its own layer, as well as the additional straw layer, gourd detail layer, and twine layer. So much for a single-layered, uncluttered file!

I did one long, final pass throughout the whole figure, adding more texture shadows/highlights to the burlap, as well as more twine and some curly green gourd vines. Details were also added to the denim jeans. Then I zoomed out and did some dodging and burning for further modelling (**Fig.11**). This is where the intervention was needed, as I could have kept adding straw and vines and wrinkles and fun little details, but the deadline was looming…

Fig.11

All throughout this process, I had been turning over ideas in my head as to what the cover content of my scarecrow bodybuilding magazine would be. "Gourd-iron" for gridiron came to mind early on, but a lot of the caption ideas came once I started dropping in text layers and playing around with the type and layout.

In many of the magazines on news stands, the figures always obscure part of the title text, and there's always a special poster or pullout or extra that they advertise with a diagonal corner banner, so I wanted to include them in the final design. My brother brainstormed the phrase "roll in the hay," which was perfect because there's always some cover mention of an article dealing with bedroom stamina or sexual health (**Fig.12**).

Well that's about it! Ironically, a week later, gourds went on sale at my local supermarket, so I did all that visual research the hard way – if only they had been in when I was working on this, I could have had the real deal to work from … ah well.

Robert L. Cron

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Fig.12

1st Ruth2m

Hi everybody!

I've been following this monthly contest for a long time, but I haven't managed to make up my mind to participate in one so far, although there have been some interesting topics. Finally, the scarecrow topic encouraged me enough and here I am with my first "making of". I hope it helps somebody, somehow.

Step 1

When thinking about this topic, the first idea that I had was to provide it with dynamism, because scarecrows themselves are very static. I wanted to draw a very frightening scarecrow, but one that wasn't frightening due to its look, but to the circumstances at that moment.

What usually happens to me is that when I'm drawing a scene, I imagine a situation and I like to think of it as a photograph that captures the characters at that precise moment. With this in mind, I chose to draw a gnawed, worn-out, scarecrow on a somewhat broken piece of wood, pushed into that position due to a gusty wind and scaring the crows that happened to

Fig.02b
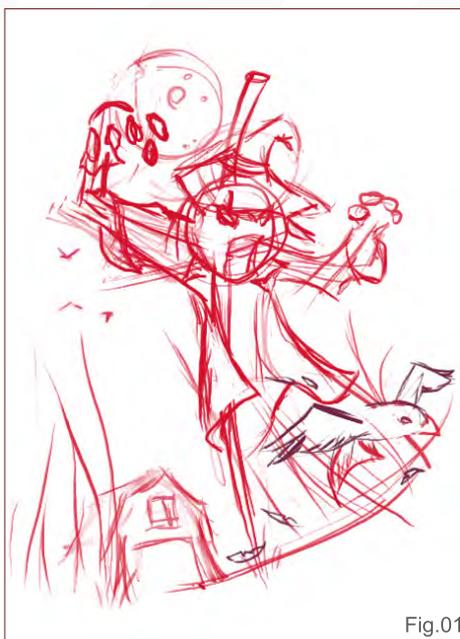
Fig.01

be at it's feet at that particular moment. I also decided to used a low angle - the point of view of the crows - because this way, the figure of scarecrow came across as much more daunting (**Fig.01**).

Step 2

Once I had my idea, I intended to draw it with a pencil, because I like the texture of pencil on paper very much and I wanted to take advantage of the pencil line, and later, colouring it with Photoshop (**Fig.02a**). Afterwards, I realised that it seemed dirty and that is why I change to a line made with Flash (**Fig.02b**), which is clearer. I kept the pencil drawing to use later to give texture.

Step 3

The next stage was to paint the background. My first intention was to show a nocturnal scene,
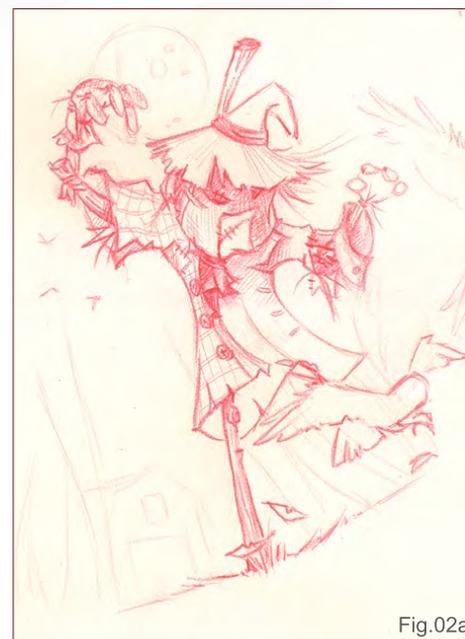
Fig.02a

with the scarecrow as a fierce aspect against the moonlight. But then I realised that crows don't go out at night, and so I tried the same lighting with a sunset instead. I think it was the better choice because this way the darkness of the scarecrow stands out in the calm and light of the sunset (**Fig.03**).

What has had the most profound impact on the people who have seen this drawing has been the background because it seems to be a watercolour. To achieve this, I chose a granulated brush with 30% opacity, and wet edges to provide different textures, and then, with the smudge tool, I blurred the areas I liked. Overlapping several layers I got a great variety of colours and a gentle shift of shades from the sky to the clouds. I always use soft brushes for large, blurred surfaces, and keep the hard ones to polish up final details and more definite areas.
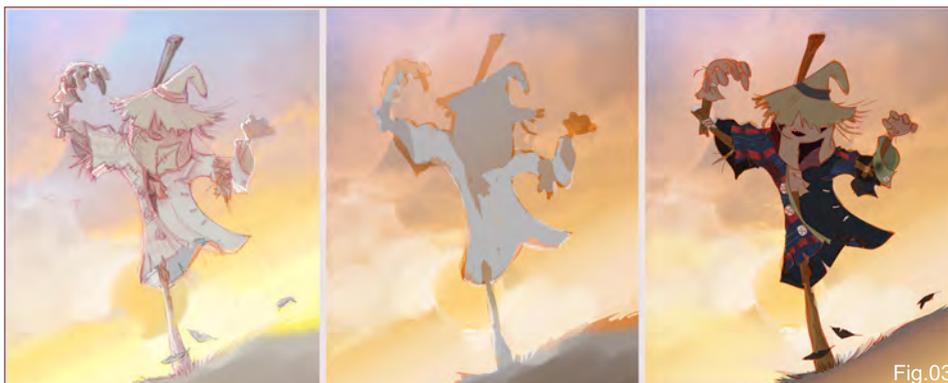
Fig.03

It can be noticed in the picture that at the beginning the colour was paler, and to boost it I added a gradient from orange to a purplish shade and applied a focus light layer superposition (this layer mode provides very nice colours for the backgrounds).

Step 4

For the figure of the scarecrow I took advantage of the gaps created by the Flash line to paint by areas. I first applied a background colour and later added details to define volumes (the check shirt, lighting, the various planes of the character). What seemed most important to me was to give the drawing good lighting, so once the colours had been selected, I took up defining light and shadows areas (**Fig.04**).

Step 5

Once all the details of the drawing were finished, I realised that closest and farthest planes had yet to be marked out. I wanted to take advantage of the lighting of the sky coming up

Fig.04

from the horizon, to create a beam and give the arm a different, less saturated, shade and thus detaching it from the body (**Fig.05**).

Step 6

To finish the drawing, I polished some light and shining details, defined dark areas to give it more contrast, added some blades of grass to obtain more dynamism and added some parts such as the barn and the straw, which helped to give me the sense of depth I wanted to reach (**Fig.06**).

Finally, I would like to thank everyone who voted for me in this contest and I hope to be able to go on taking part and learning from everyone else out there. See you!

Ruth Martinez

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Fig.05

Fig.06

"Composition can be thought of as the "glue" that effectively holds a piece of artwork together"

UNDERSTANDING COMPOSITION

In this article, Joel Carlo discusses the elements and principles of art composition

UNDERSTANDING COMPOSITION

What Is Composition?

One of the most intriguing aspects in the realm of visual arts would have to be the subject of composition. Composition can be thought of as the "glue" that effectively holds a piece of artwork together. It is the manner in which an artist chooses to combine elements of art that inevitably create the very structure behind the artwork as a whole.

When it comes to art, there is an existing set of elements and principles that directly affect how an artwork is composed. Elements are different from principles in that they are tools used to describe and create art. Principles on the other hand, are general rules of action by which these elements are used.

Elements of Art in Composition

When the word "composition" comes to mind in relation to visual art, many people generally think of it in terms of layout, or how shapes are placed and relate to each other within space. It's important to understand that although space and shape are essential parts in a composition, there are other elements of art which although often overlooked, are equally as important.

Composition is essentially created when one or more of the seven art elements are combined. These elements (line, shape, form, space, texture, colour and value) and their placement within an image can be used to influence how an image is perceived. Executed properly, these elements can help accentuate portions
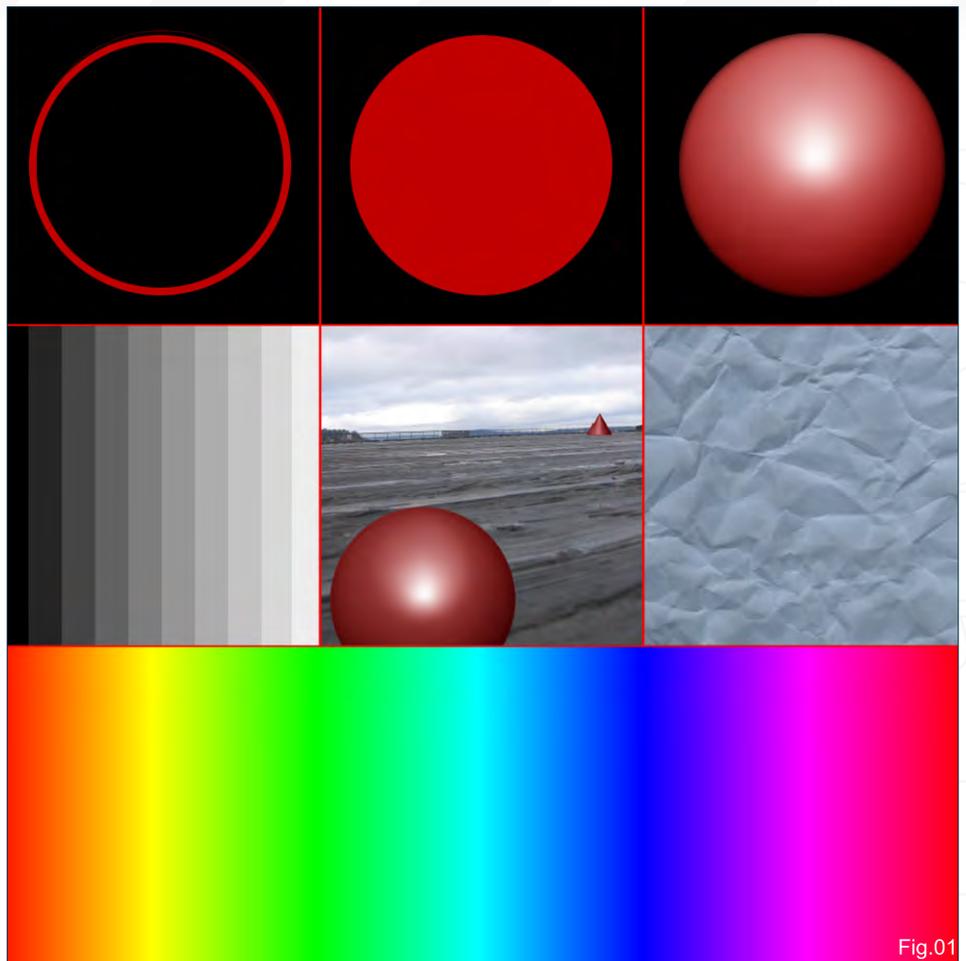
Fig.01

of an image, build contrast, create balance and harmony, as well as evoke both mood and feeling.

The following is a complete list of definitions for each art element, examples of which can be seen in **Fig.01**:

Line is defined as a continuous extent of length, straight or curved, and often defines the edges of a form. It can be implied indirectly when the dark and light areas of a form meet. This is known as a shadow edge and can be seen as either a form shadow, composed of soft edges, or a cast shadow which contains hard edges.

Shapes are made when lines meet to create self contained areas. These areas can be defined as both organic and geometric and are seen as both positive (the area defined by shadow shapes) and negative (the area defined between the shadow shapes).

Form is the enclosed area of gradient values that define an object's volume through the presence of light and shadow. An easier way to understand this is to think of form as shape with tonal value.

Value is the lightness or darkness of a surface. When we refer to value in the context of art, it can be used to explain the degree of lightness or darkness in a colour, as well as the relationship of light and shade within an image.

Space is the element that is directly related to how a viewer perceives depth. It can be used to direct attention to certain elements in a composition and can also create balance or imbalance within an image.

Texture refers to the surface quality of an artwork. It can be expressed in both a physical or visual sense and can be implied in a way where it is rendered with realism or abstractly.

Colour is the light reflected by an object and is determined by measurements of hue, brightness and saturation.

Principles of Art in Composition

As with almost any art form, a set of principles exist which directly influence the overall effect it has on its viewer. In art, there are eight essential principles: movement, balance, harmony, unity, rhythm, emphasis, variety and proportion. These principles can be considered as a set of rules or guidelines that govern the manner by which every artist expresses their concepts or ideas, as well as the type of impression that is left through their work.

The following provides a brief explanation for each of the art principles:

Movement is the way by which a viewer's eyes are directed throughout a particular area of an image or in its entirety.

Balance determines the distribution of every element within an image as well as its overall sense of evenness.

Harmony is the principle by which all parts of an image are arranged in a consistent and orderly fashion to create a pleasing or harmonious effect.

Unity is how each of the combined parts correlate with one another in order to create a sense of unification as a whole.

Rhythm in an image is a perceived sense of movement that occurs due to repeating patterns, shapes or elements.

Emphasis is the intensity or importance that is forced on a particular part of an image.

Variety relates to degrees of diversity and differences within an artwork.

Proportion is linked to the comparative relationships of dimension and size between existing parts of an artwork.

Fig.02 shows several of these principles of art in effect. The octopus provides emphasis and

Fig.02

movement in the image, while the remaining elements help emphasise both balance, proportion and variety.

Point of View

The point of view in an image relates to the perceived position the viewer is left with, depending on the perspective an image is framed in. Creative use of this can directly influence the effect and impression an image has on the viewer. For example, if you're familiar with the terms "worm's eye" or "bird's eye" views, this can help better illustrate the idea. When we refer to "worm's eye" view, the idea is to place the point of view in a position where the viewer is left in a perceived point that is lower than the elements surrounding them.

An example of this can be seen in **Fig.03** where I've taken advantage of using a worm's eye view in order to accentuate the scale of the demon to create a foreboding and ominous feeling. The effect caused by this point of view can sometimes leave a viewer feeling overwhelmed or restricted, as well as giving elements in an image a sense of immensity.

On the opposite spectrum, a "bird's eye" view can sometimes have an effect where the viewer is left feeling larger or more dominant than the elements in an image, as well as leaving then with a sense of freedom or a lack of restraint.

Fig.03
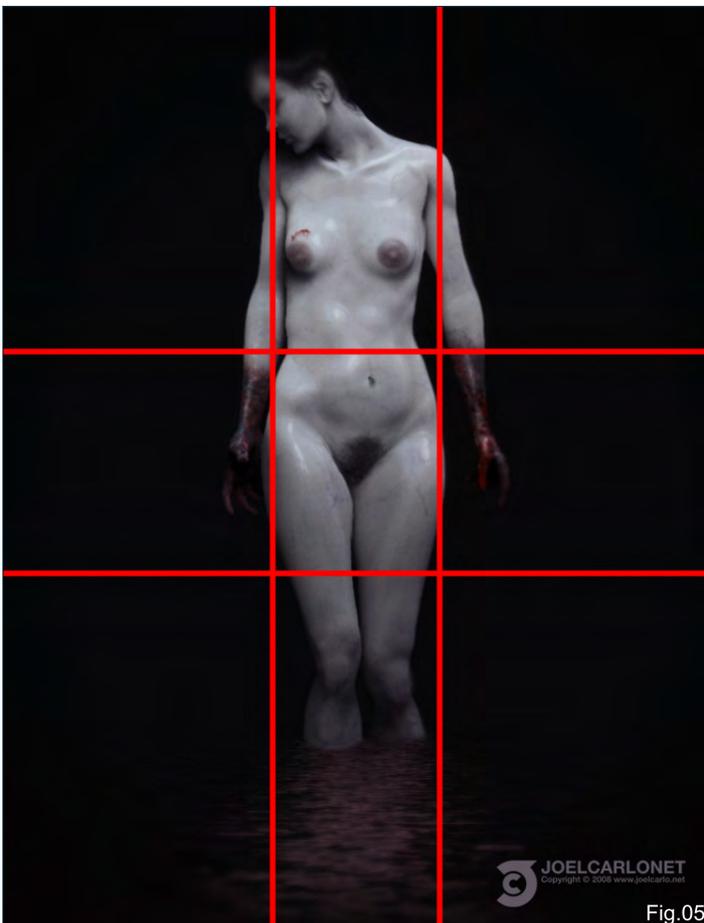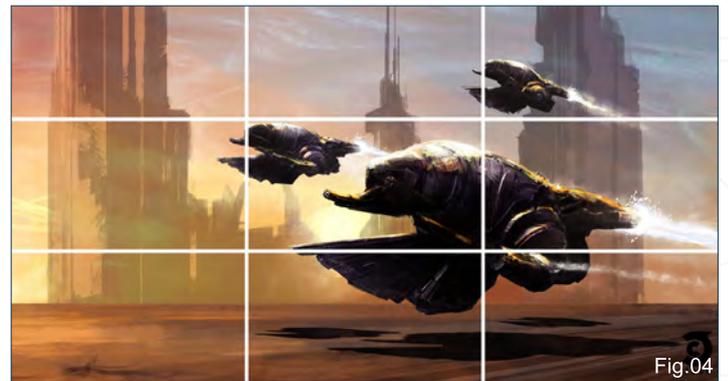
Fig.04

Rules of Composition

As with any art form, rules generally exist as a way to help an individual learn to properly execute principles in order to achieve a certain aesthetic in their work. In terms of composition, there are several rules that exist which can help you do exactly that.

The first rule is the Rule of Thirds. This rule is probably the most well known of all compositional rules and its objective is to either frame or draw attention to certain aspects of an image by creating an imaginary grid that divides an image into nine equal parts. This is done using two equally spaced horizontal lines and two equally spaced vertical lines that create intersecting points, which in turn can be used as guides to place elements

Fig.05

within an image. Elements in an image can be placed along these imaginary lines or their intersecting points in order to draw focus.

Fig.04 shows an example of this. You can see that the main points of interest are the ships which sit on or close to the intersecting lines. The foreground ship falls directly on an intersecting point, helping to draw in more focus to it. The background ships, although still focal points, fall just outside the intersecting lines drawing less emphasis.

The next rule of composition is the Rule of Golden Means. This rule is similar to the Rule of Thirds where an image is split into nine parts by using four lines; however, each of those parts does not have to be equal. The points in each which the lines cross are referred to as the "Golden Sections" and typically are used to draw focus to a point of interest in an image.

While the Rule of Golden Means typically uses its converging points to focus interest on a specific element, as you can see in **Fig.05,** I've used the space within these points to frame the figure into three separate points of interest.

Next on our list is the Rule of Diagonals. This rule consists of splitting an image into two parts using a diagonally placed line, and then placing elements on or around the line itself. If you've ever drawn or taken a photograph of elements
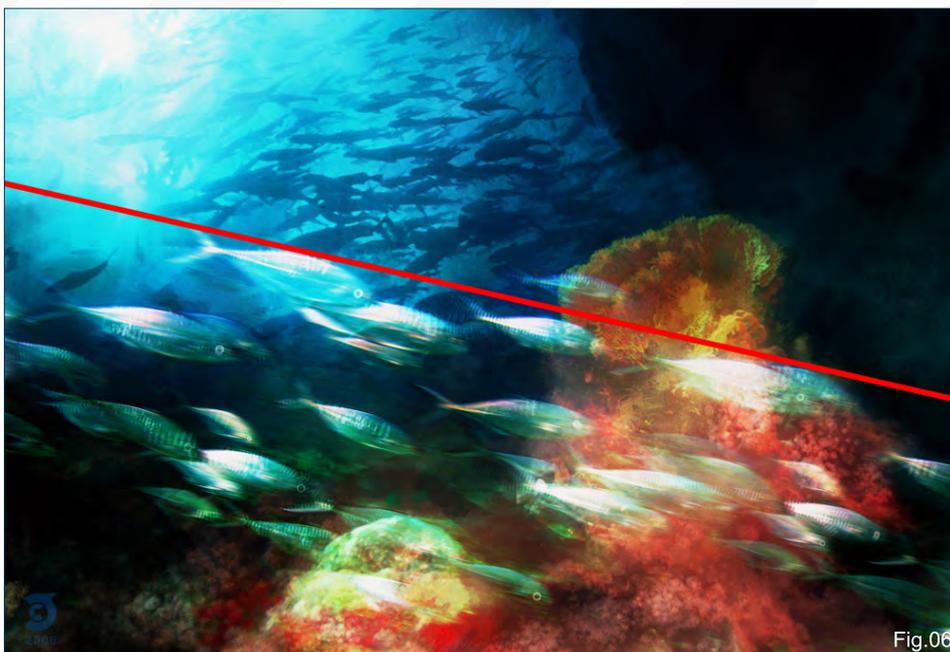
Fig.06

in perspective, such as a road or landscapes that fade towards a horizon line, this should give you a better idea of what the rule of diagonals is all about. The key here is to draw focus and interest through the use of dynamic layout.

In **Fig.06** you can see this rule in action. Here I've used the angle in which the school of fish are positioned to split the image into two parts.

Our last rule is the Rule of Odds. As the name implies, this rule suggests that having an odd number of elements in an image creates a natural framing effect around a centre element in an image. Keep in mind that this centre element doesn't necessarily need to be placed

directly in the centre of an image, it just has to be framed between and even number of elements. This helps draw focus to the centre and also achieves a natural sense of balance that is pleasing to the viewer.

Fig.07 shows an example of using the Rule of Odds to frame a centre element within an image.

Conclusion

When it comes to the subject of composition, there are those who believe that its principles and rules are imperative to create artwork that is both balanced and pleasing to the eye, and there are those who believe if any rules do exist, they are meant to be broken. It's important to understand that although composition can be approached both in an objective or subjective manner, one thing is definitely certain: Understanding what composition is and how it works will inevitably help you articulate your ideas in a more concise and effective manner.

Joel Carlo

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Fig.07

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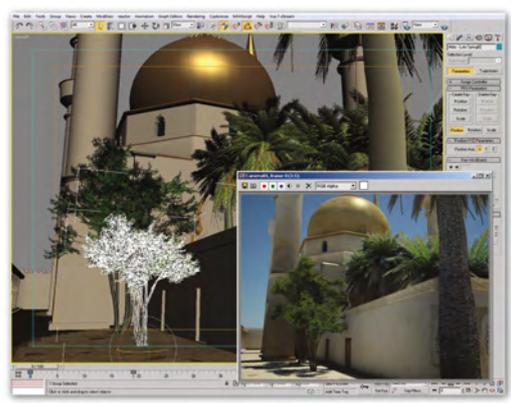
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SPEED PAINTING

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

This month our talented artists, Justin Albers and Richard Tilbury, tackle the topic:

The approaching swarm

appeared biblical in scale and straight from a nightmare

Justin Albers

Created In:

Adobe Photoshop

Introduction

This was a very doom and gloom sounding piece, but had the potential to be epic. When I first read the caption I had two ideas – one was an Amazonian jungle setting populated by huge wasps or mosquitoes; the other was of a burning, orange Egyptian desert swarming with locusts or scarabs. I decided to go with the second, just because I like painting deserts!

Step 1

I've opened up a portrait-style canvas because I'm thinking I'll want to have a lot of sky in there to show off the magnitude of the swarm. This

Fig.02
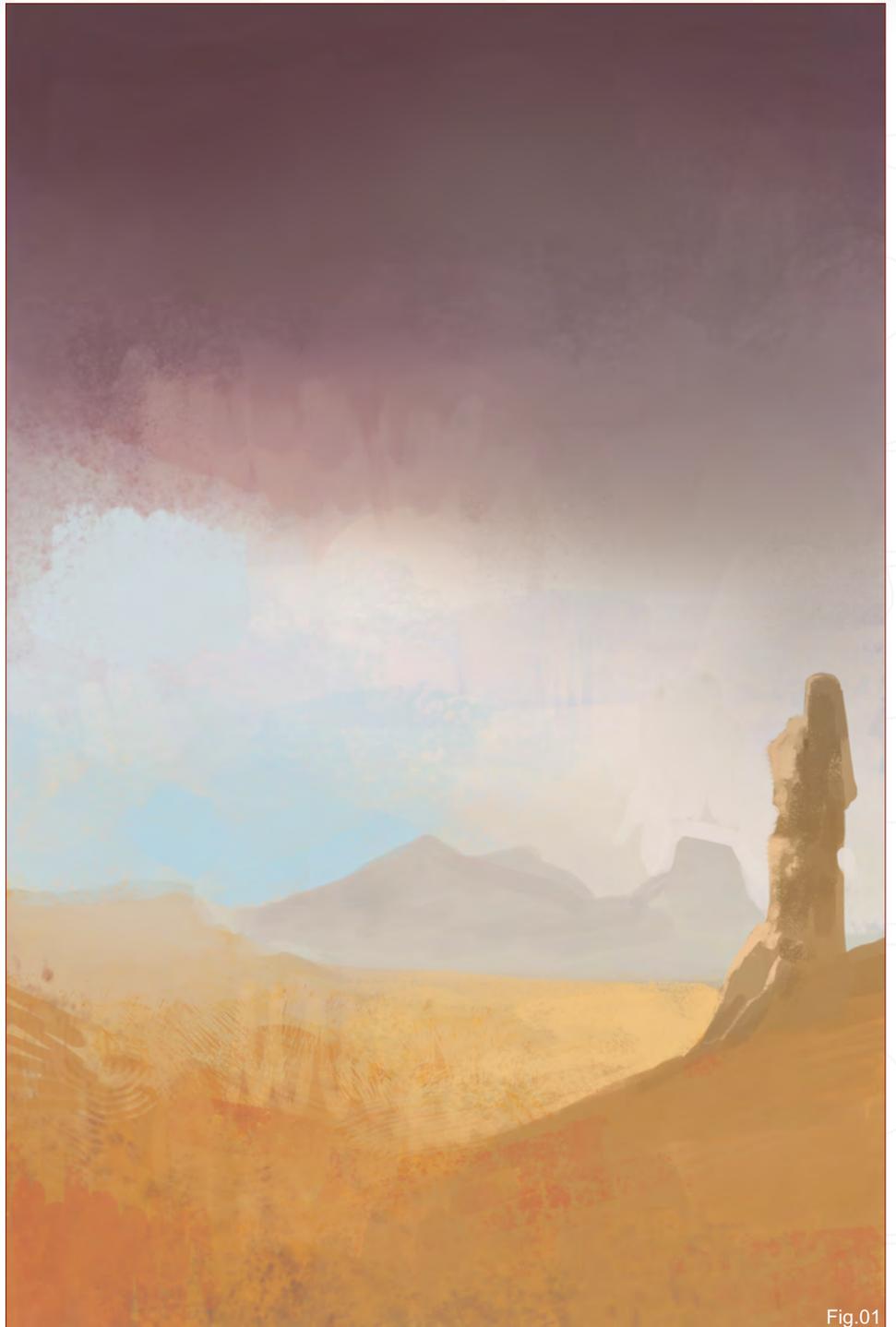
Fig.01

is the part where I just experiment with colours and texture brushes until I find something I like. The palette here is pretty tame, and at this point I think I need to go much warmer (**Fig.01**).

Step 2

I'm starting to scribble in some shapes and defining my composition. I know I'm going to want something in the foreground to denote scale. I'm also going to want some sort of

ancient ruins or a sacred-looking building way in the back that's being threatened by this insect invasion, and then in the middle ground I want to show lots of sand. I'm toying around with the idea of having a huge Egyptian monolithic structure in the background with sand pouring out of it, but while this seems pretty cool at first, it quickly starts to appear too busy. In addition, I'm beginning to finalise the shape of the rocks in the foreground (**Fig.02**).

Step 3

I decide to substitute the huge Egyptian structure for a smaller, more rectangular building that has some Middle Eastern influences in the architecture. I still want to maintain a bit of a fantasy element to it, so I'm making stuff up as I go and reinforcing it with referenced details. I'm also defining the rock and sand in the middle ground (**Fig.03**).

Step 4

I'm starting to refine the composition, often checking in the navigator window to be sure the piece is reading properly. I'm happy with the colour palette; I like the blues with the oranges, browns and yellows. Now that I have these main elements in, it's time to add in the nightmarish swarm of insects (**Fig.04**).

Step 5

Here I've painted in what I imagine one of these insects to look like, making a point to keep it fairly clean around the edges. I decide to make it a blue colour to contrast with the surrounding oranges. I'm thinking these are about the size of a hawk… which is grossly big for an insect (**Fig.05**).

Step 6

Once I have the scarab designed I make a brush out of it. To do this, I copy the layer with

Fig.03
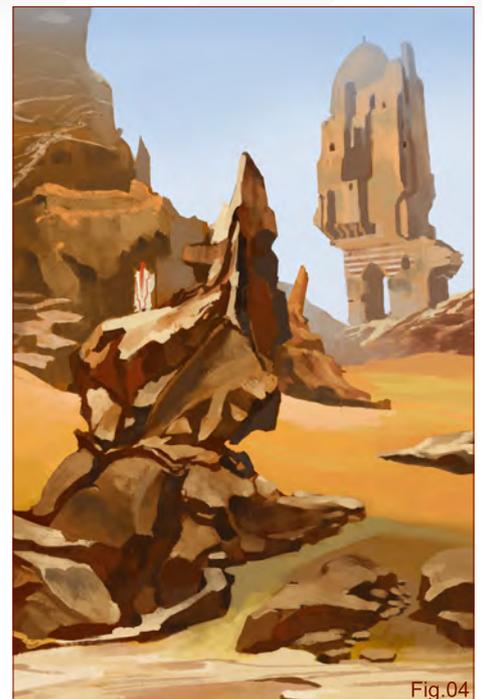
Fig.04

Fig.05
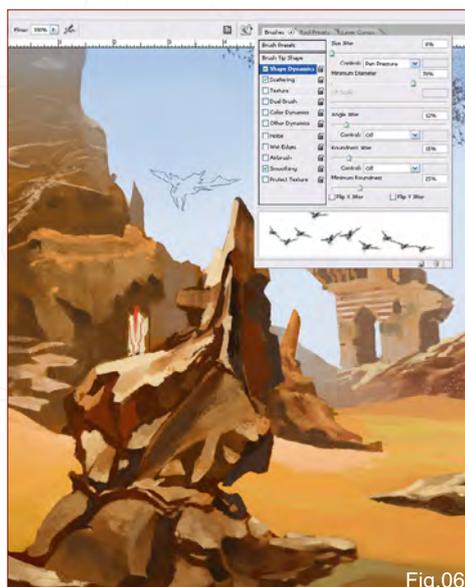
Fig.06

the bug on it and paste it into a new canvas so that it's by itself on a white background. Then I go to Edit > Define Brush Preset and name it "scarab". I go into the brushes tab and modify it; I check the Shape Dynamics and the Scattering tabs and adjust the sliders until it looks somewhat like a natural swarm. I also alter the Spacing in the Brush Tip Shape tab (**Fig.06**).

Step 7

I'm trying out the new brush I made. It works great and makes an easy bug swarm. I make

myself a few bug swarm layers and set the opacities at different percentages to make some appear further away. I combine these layers with the original bug that I painted and copy them a few times to create the swarm (**Fig.07**).

Step 8

I'm happy with the swarm but it doesn't feel nightmarish or biblical enough! It feels like a bright sunny day in the desert with a couple of annoying flies. To make this more exciting, I add more insects in the background so that

the swarm starts to blot out the sky. I also add a scarab or two into the foreground and blur them out so that they appear close enough to be out of focus. I add an approaching sand/thunderstorm to the fray to help add to the chaos of the scene. My thinking is that this tower has been cursed and is being subjected to a plague of carnivorous scarabs, sand and lightning storms that will eventually destroy the tower and its inhabitants. Also, the figure in the foreground, who is a scout or lookout, looks like he's just chillin' on the rocks with not a care in the world. So, I add in some scarabs attacking him, forcing him to defend himself. I also add in the lightning, because lightning looks cool. I darken the foreground to really put emphasis on the swarm flying past and also lighten the area on the rocks by the scout to add focus to that little interest spot as well (**Fig.08**).

Step 9 – Final

I made a few more adjustments to the piece after receiving some friendly critique. I made the foreground rock formation smaller and added
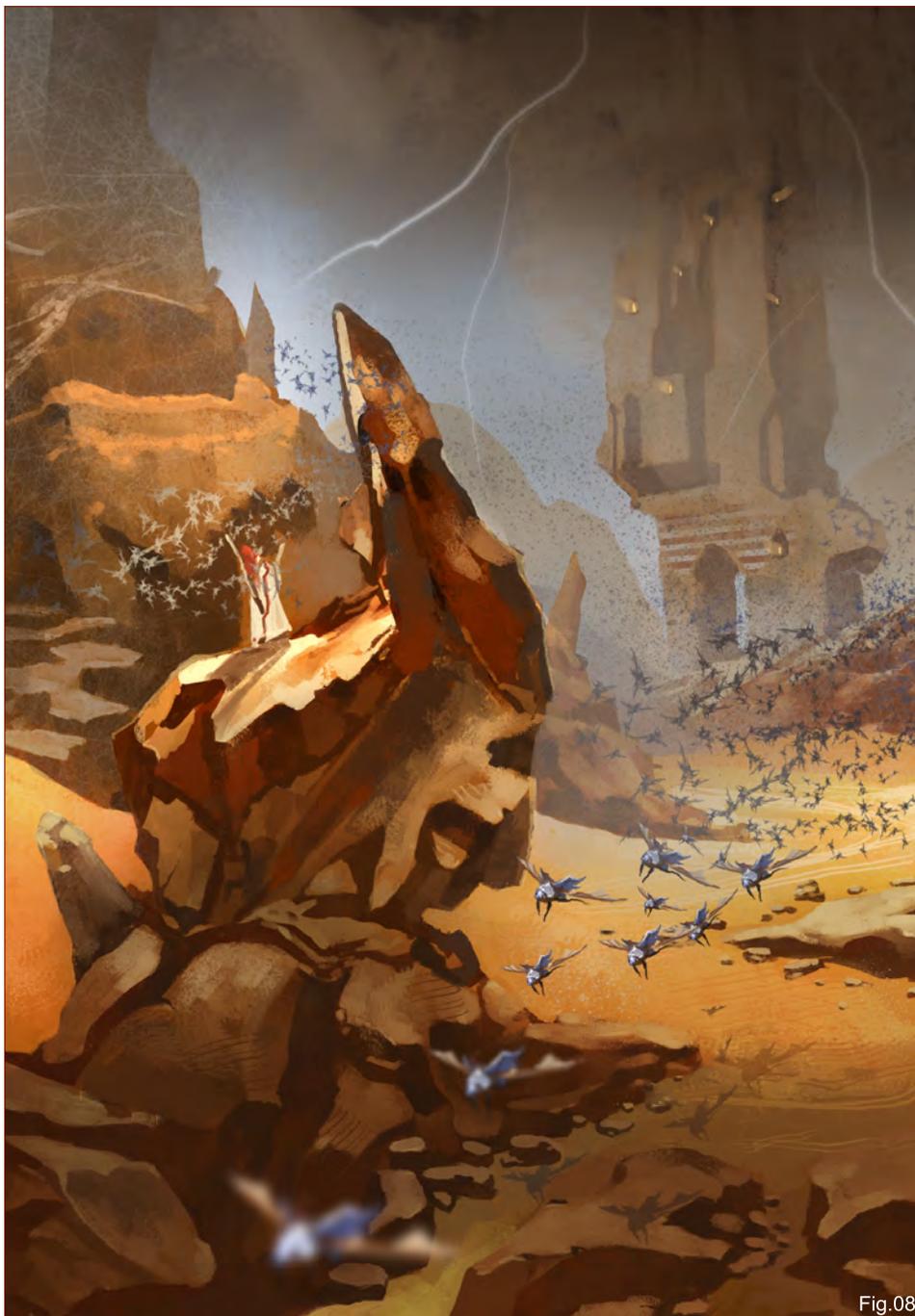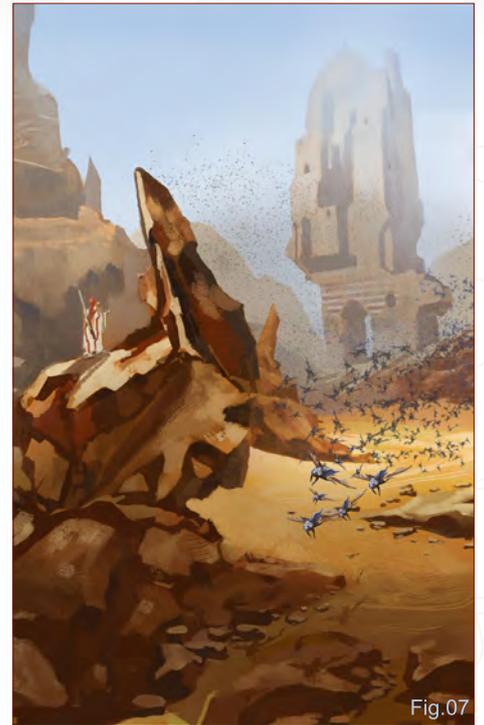
Fig.07

in some ground details to open up the piece a little bit and make it feel less cluttered. Also, I ditched the building and added a huge insect hive; I felt it read better fictionally to have the swarm pouring out from this thing and I turned the figure into some kind of warlock dude. I think adding in the giant, disgusting insect hive makes it feel more dangerous and nightmarish as the topic implies. I also added some grey to the middle and background to push those elements back into the painting (**Fig.09**).

As a speed painting this guy is pretty much done. I will probably go back and tighten up my edges by making a selection of each piece and painting inside it to make them precise. I will also tighten up the storm clouds and possibly add a few more scarabs.

And that's enough talk of man-eating bugs for one day!

Justin Albers

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Fig.08

Fig.09

Richard Tilbury

The first stage was to establish the composition, which in this case would be a panoramic view of a landscape from which would emerge an oncoming swarm over the distant horizon. I decided to tilt the angle of the view to add some drama and also create a dynamic between the horizon and the direction of the swarm.

I used a standard hard round airbrush to rough in the landscape and a spatter brush with the dual brush function enabled to create some texture in the initial swarm (**Fig.01**).

I duplicated the swarm layer and applied some motion blur to suggest a writhing mass of moving insects (**Fig.02**).

The pattern across the landscape does something to suggest the scale of the swarm but I felt the image needed another component. I decided to add the uppermost part of some kind of fortress or structure in the foreground with a sentry overlooking the valley (**Fig.03**). This character would provide the scale.
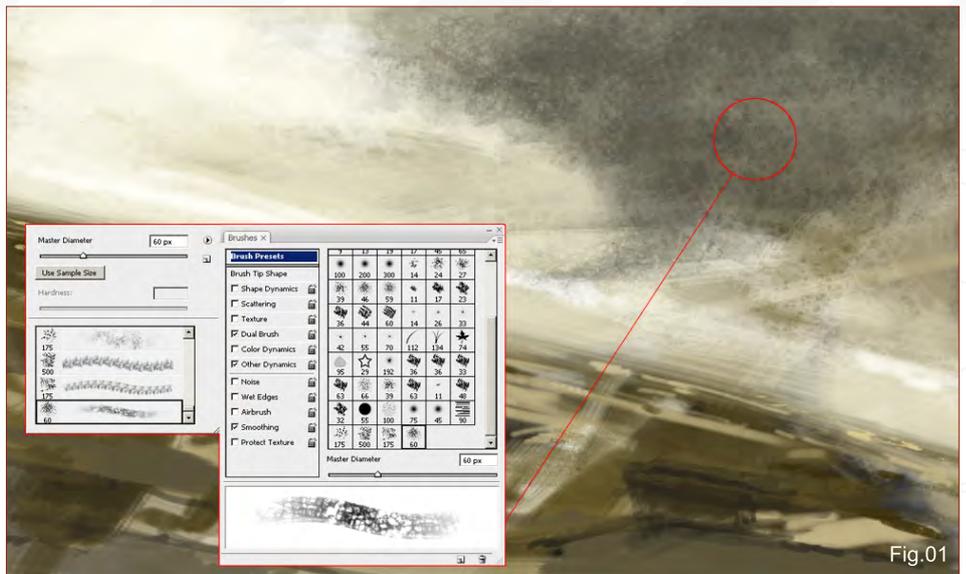
Fig.01

Fig.02

Fig.03
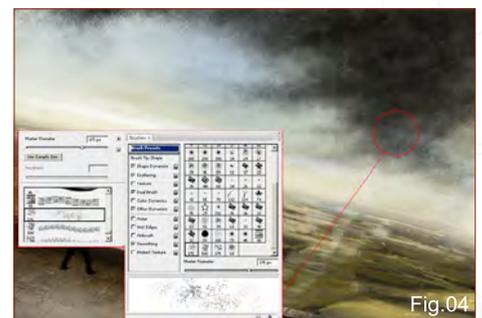
Fig.04

Fig.05

Due to the initial brush used, the scale of the swarm looked too small, so using a custom brush I painted over the area to create a better impression of more insects (**Fig.04**).

The swarm was now looking much better, but the foreground figure and landscape needed refining. Using the hard round airbrush again, I added in evidence of trees and fields across the valley as well as a distant mountain range. The sentry was also given some armour and a helmet (**Fig.05**).

To help the fields look less like a desert, I altered the colour of the landscape (Image-Adjustments-Colour Balance). This created a cooler hue leaning towards blue and green and also made the landscape look far more like lush, arable land (**Fig.06**).

Fig.06

Fig.07

To help make the swarm more ominous I added a shadow across the landscape and foreground to convey its size and density. To enhance this and suggest it is big enough to block out part of the sun, I extended it across the top of the picture and created a blanket effect. Swapping the blue values for browns also helped (**Fig.07**). Using the same hard round airbrush I then painted in some extra trees and detail across the fields to add more definition and tilted the sentry slightly to match the perspective. Here is the final image (**Fig.08**).

Richard Tilbury
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Fig.08

"In space, all forms of orientation of up, down, left or right are nonexistent. There is no magnetic north or south, only the way forward or stationary."

SPACE
PAINTING

SPACE PAINTING
PART 7: CAPITAL SHIPS

Created In:

Photoshop

Welcome back to the seventh instalment of this space painting series. In this segment, we continue our discussion of spaceships with the consideration of the larger and sometimes impossibly grand capital ships that can span up to a few miles in length in popular culture and media. Sometimes these ships are so large they are deemed battle stations in their own respective rights!

Overview

Continuing on our theme of futuristic space transport, I have grouped together the large collection of ships that are able to carry groups and large numbers of inhabitants under the heading of "Capital Ships". Current naval equivalents of these are termed (from small to large) as frigates, destroyers, deep space sensor arrays, mass troop transports, battleships, massed array destroyers, multi-assault super destroyers, battleships, carrier, fleet carriers and leviathan classed battleships. These terms roughly describe the range of militaristic space capital ships. The more mercantile and non-militaristic class of space vessels will be covered in the third instalment of the transport arm of this series.

I: Grand Design:
Construction of a Superstructure

To start the construction of something that is relatively quite large, we have to scale it down significantly in size. Large or small objects, when they are all scaled to the size of a
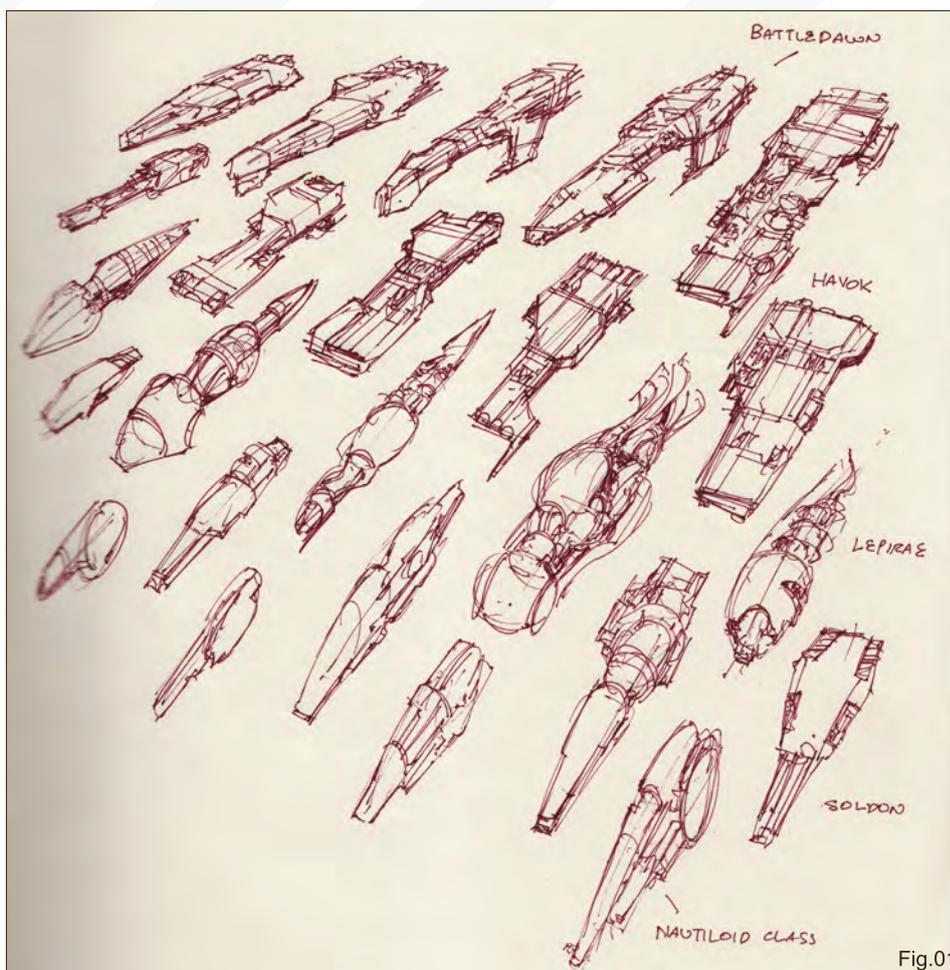
Fig.01

thumbprint, leave very few discerning details. The main thing to therefore observe is their overall form and shape. It is with this issue in mind that I often want to label the design of spaceships as "sexy bricks" (**Fig.01**).

Design – Sexy Bricks

When you consider the look, feel and design of a very large spaceship there are a few useful everyday considerations that can help translate and convey a sense of relativistic realism and aesthetic beauty. You could in essence look at capital ships as a hybrid of U-boat, yacht, battle tank, naval warship and bullet train, all mixed to different extents and styles (e.g. industrialised versus sleek organic Luigi Colani-esque). The thing about space is: there is no real need to consider atmospheric aerodynamics - in general.

One could string together a cluster of turnips on a piece of string and race them against a group

of pancake and waffle-shaped crafts (**Fig.02**). Chances are, if they all had the same engine output, acceleration profile and manoeuvring – it would be a close photo finish if you had an imaginary drag race in space!

The purist and scientist, however, may argue that waffle and pancake-shaped ships make for a large frontal profile, and thus may meet greater incidental damage from micro meteorites, space debris, and so on ... which means the turnips have a slim marginal advantage (not to mention they are kind of more aerodynamic, almost resembling a super food torpedo!).

However!

We are not in the business of designing sexy hot potatoes or flying toasters, no ... what we really want are designer sushi rolls armed with slender slithers of avocado and deep fried tempura!

Fig.02

Alright, bad food analogy, but the real point is about a compromise that sees a fusion of real world industrial design functionality and sufficient external packaging to appeal towards the aesthetic sensibilities.

Capital Ships: How To

In general, you could take any cylindrical or relatively rectangular object and these would serve as a very good base to make a spaceship. The way I would like to approach the construction and design of a capital ship is to assume that I could produce the same functional design given the right technological level, to perfectly build a spaceship.

The closest production method would be to take a leaf from both naval ship construction and the car manufacturing process. With this methodology, a combination of semi-schematics and loose sketches allows both the designer and viewer (modeller/architect/director) to appreciate how the forms cross from one side to the next, and also presents the designer (and their subconscious) with additional data on how to refine, and improve on, the design process.

Fig.03 shows a five step approach towards this aim:

1. DRAFT – In the draft form, keep the lines loose and ensure they cross from one side to another

2. PANELLING – Start to divide and construct separate sections for your spaceship, e.g. forward bulkhead, engine section, living

quarters, observation deck – all of these get considered here

3. BULKING – Additional plating and armature are added to the overall exoskeleton

4. SOLIDIFACTION – This represents the pre-prototype before you complete your initial design. The whole ship should look solid, well-built and capable of performing its intended role
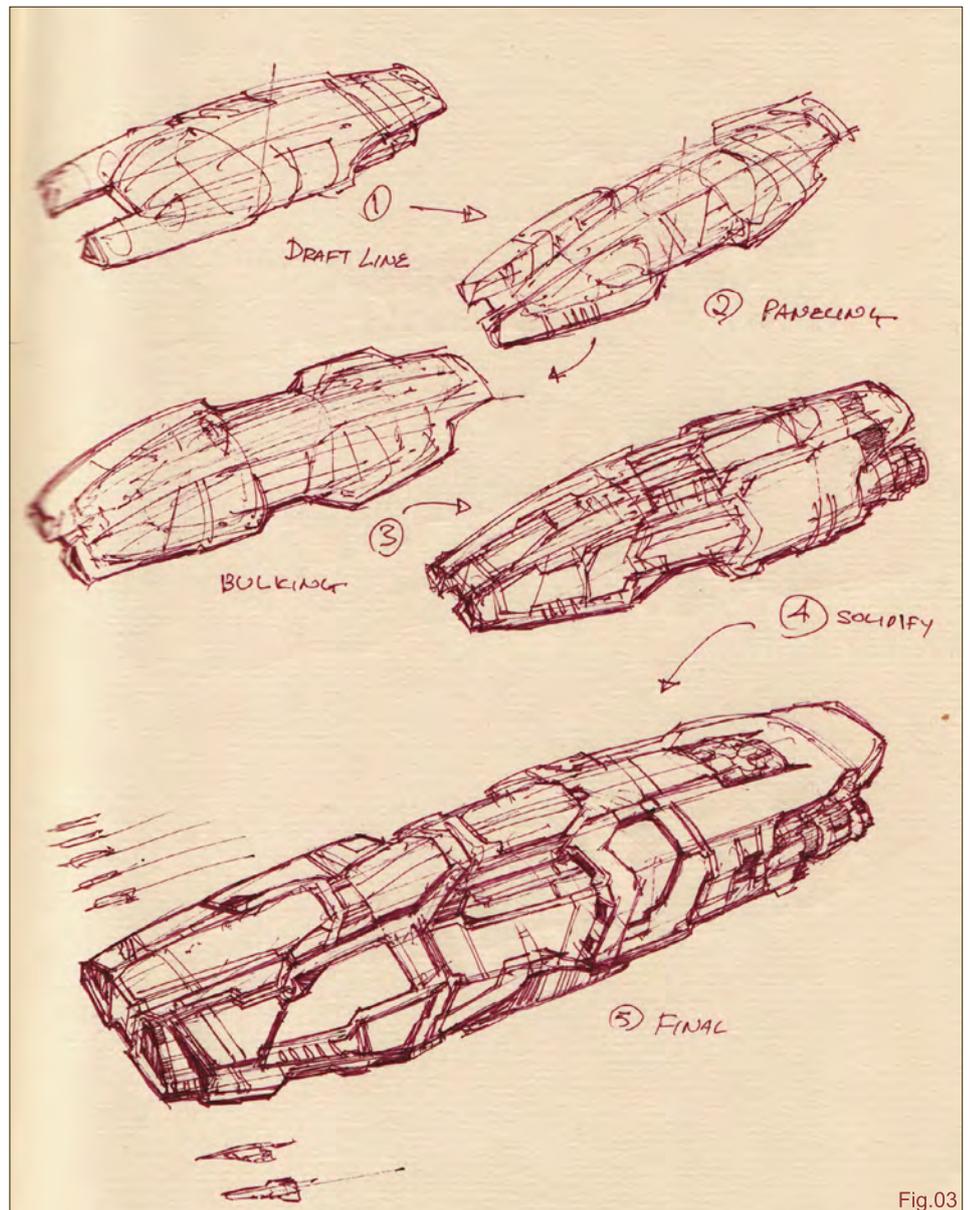
Fig.03

5. FINAL – The design is considered finalised when all the additional details such as markings, panels, piping, engines, hangars and such are drafted into and considered in the final plans.

Capital Ship Types

The next few steps to consider are the individualistic styles your design may have. Often, the style of the ship design may be considered initially, or alternatively you can consider how it may look once a suitable selection of ship shapes and designs have been drafted.

Determining how a ship should look is akin to determining the type of fabric, weave and pattern that goes into a finely embroidered rug. In gaming terms, it could be representative of which guild or faction a particular make belongs to; in terms of functionally, the type of look can lend credence to how your current ship line has been built.

Fig.04 shows a range of three representative styles:
1. Retro-Industrial
2. Fused
3. Organic

Retro-Industrial

This represents a more industrialised feel, where many elements such as tubing, pipes, engines and overall superstructure is exposed. The term "retro" represents 50-60s futuristic design, which is shockingly more futuristic than our current day design aesthetic. If you desire to look at truly futuristic design, look to the past; it's probably one of the few reasons why ships of old look so good. Another genre to look into is streamline moderne. Together, retro and streamline moderne represent a collection of functional and very handsome ship designs.

Fused

This represents a fusion of industrial and angular shapes, combined with slight elements of a smoother and more organic shape. Our
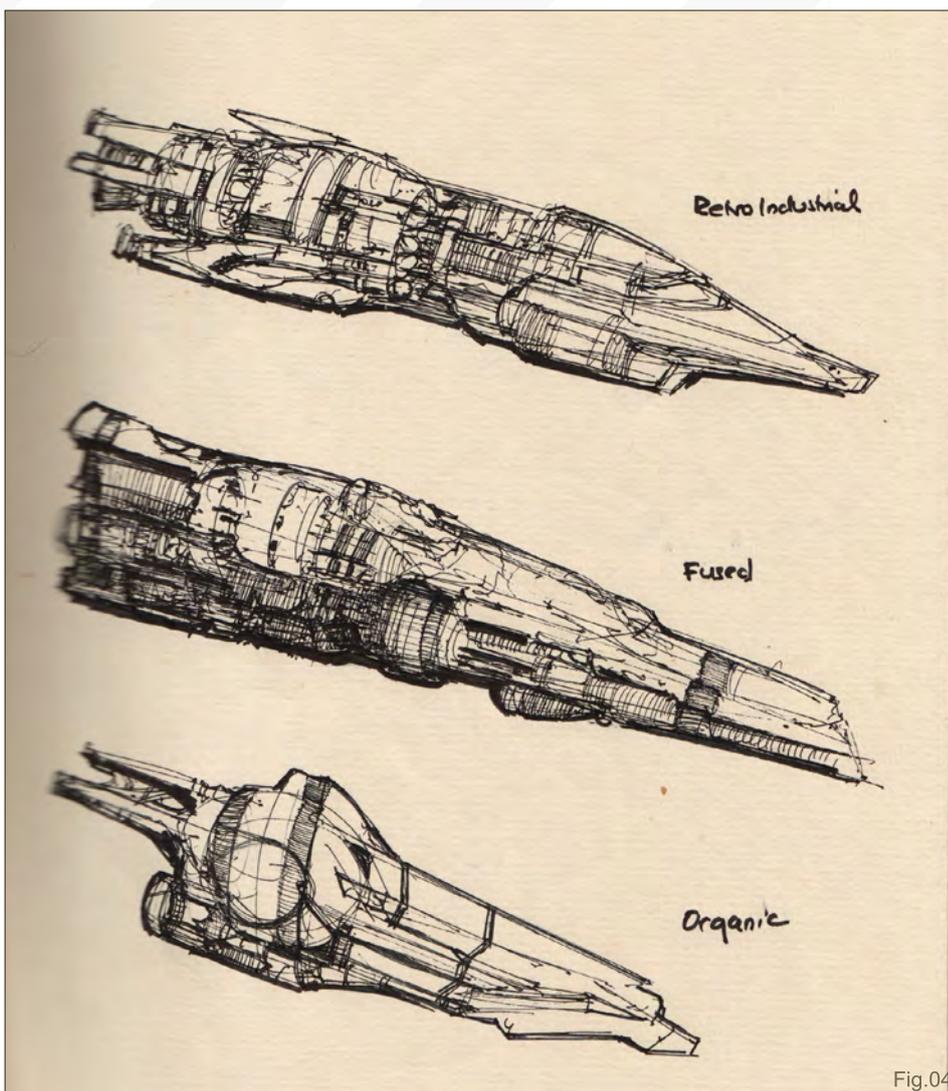
Fig.04

current modern day design aesthetic is roughly within this sphere of design sensibility.

Organic

The more exotic or alien-esque shapes of various spaceships can be termed "organic". Smooth flowing lines, hidden pin-point engines and seamless joints all suggest a more exotic origin of space design language (for reference, look up Luigi Colani).

Capital Ship: Superstructure

Lastly, let's put all these various elements together. In the previous space painting tutorial part on spaceships, (Part 6), we looked at various methods of illustrating and designing space vessels. Therefore, it is with this general assumption that we move onto the meat of actually designing.

As a general workflow, I tend to:

1. **Start the design** – With pen and paper, on any paper/sketchbook available and explore various shapes, forms and aesthetics
2. **Refine the design** – Utilise the design language and reference to establish a ship line, and narrow the selection process into two or three designs that show promise
3. **Finalise the design** – Using markers and pens to depict 3/4th perspective views of the space vessel's front-to-rear and rear-to-front views

To refine our design, I also tend to consider a space vessel in terms of structural composition. Similar to the way biological entities are constructed from skeletal frames to retain organs, with muscles and thick fascia to enclose it all, and the external skin representing the armour and plating of space vessels.
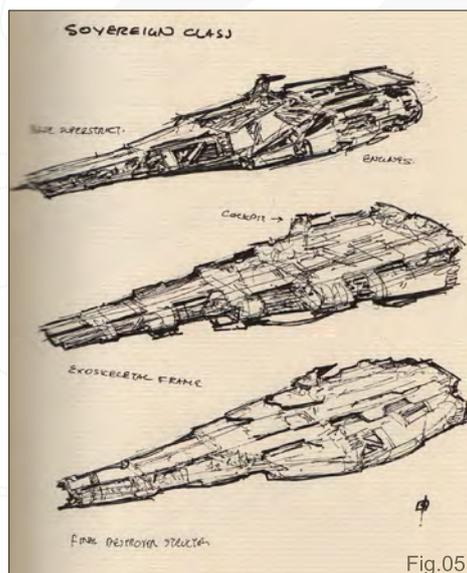
Fig.05

In **Fig.05** the Sovereign ship destroyer design is split into the three aspects:

1. Basic Superstructure
2. Exoskeleton
3. Completed structure

This represents a warm-up sketch, to explore both positive and negative shapes. As such, it was produced free hand with a quill pen and Indian ink, which allowed for thick and thin flowing lines. For a pen equivalent I tend to use a Pentel Stylo liquid fountain JL30. The overall size is relatively modest: rendered simply on a 5"x6" (inches) area on a slightly textured classic Fabriano paper.

In **Fig.06** this design process is taken further, and a larger carrier/battleship equivalent is explored. Using the same process, more care and deliberation is used and the overall draft is produced on a A4 moleskin paper. The finer lines are produced using a brown Pilot 0.4 G-TEC-C4 pen.

Years of admiring cut-out illustrations and popup books have lent towards a style that appreciates showing the ship super structure in its various states of construction. Now this can come in extremely useful, if one were asked to produce a scene showcasing a space vessel being constructed e.g. a trailer for the new *Star Trek* movie by JJ Abrams.
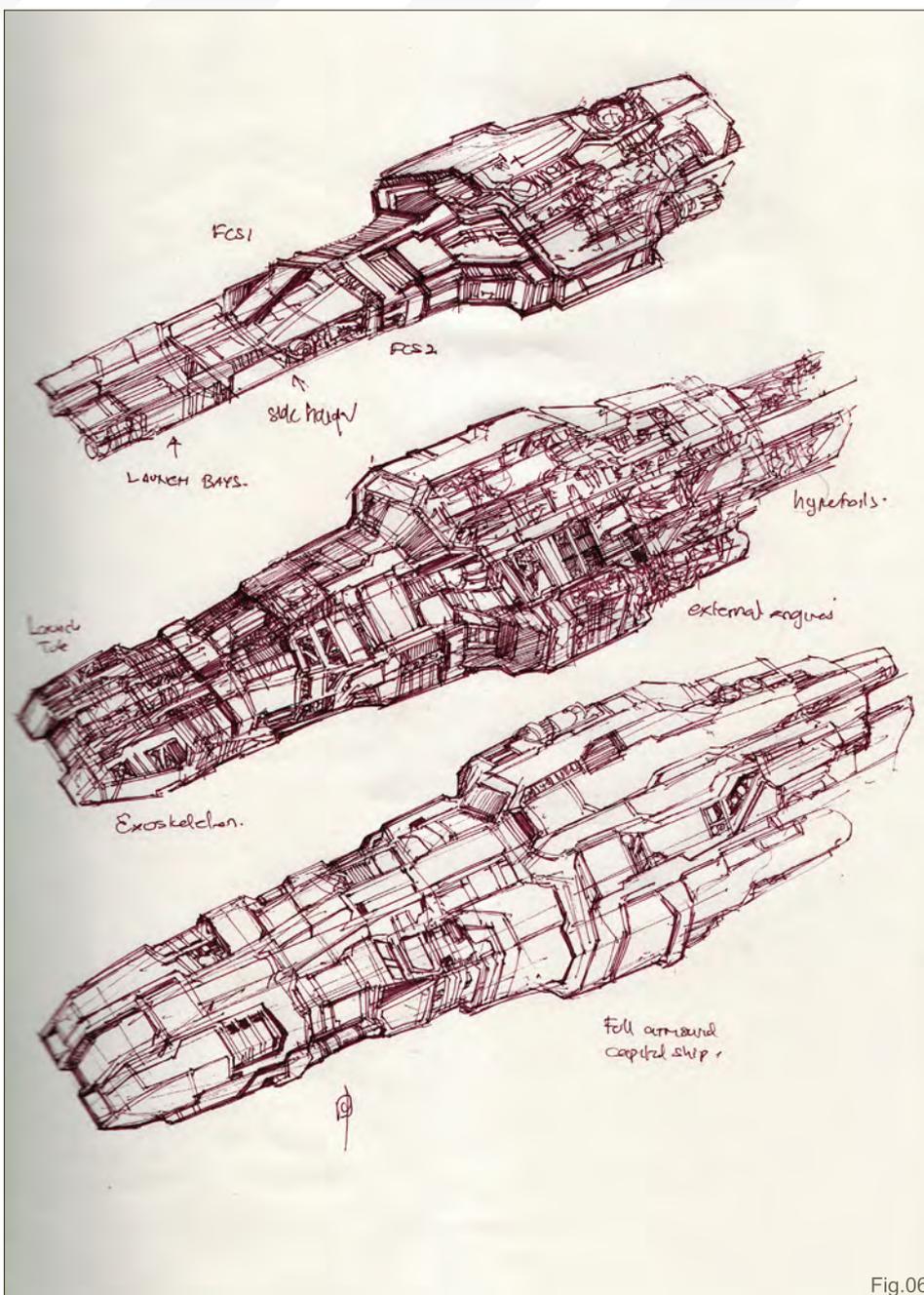
Fig.06

Next time you are in an industrialised area or near a construction facility, keep a vigilant eye out for transports being constructed, or keep your eye glued to *The Discovery Channel*. All knowledge is good trivia to fulfil your inner industrial designer!

II: Space Fleet Scene

In part two of this workshop, let's take you through some basics of how to produce a space fleet scene. Often, in popular culture, you may notice gratuitous flyby shots of masses of capital ships in fleet formation. This can bring up a slight contentious issue of realism vs. artistic license. The thing is, trying to showcase your latest hot-of-the-press designs with all of your ships in formation can often be a large undertaking that falls flat for one primary reason: reality.

In reality, these ships in serene and majestic flight in deep space will no more reflect light than appear as a multitude of blobs. Or a single blob. Because light from the nearest stars appears as faint twinkles at best (and appears as nothing on film and tiny points of white light

on high resolution video). As for the flotilla of ships: nothing, just dark outlines of nothing … against a sea of dark.

So imagine a blob against the darkness of space. Perhaps a small smattering of local lights may help define its form better against the backlight of ... nothing?

And there we have the appeal of artistic license! The proponents of realism will find shots of:
1. Ships running past a nearby star
2. Very close-up shots of ships lit by local lights, and the ship material being a very desaturated grey (for there is insufficient nearby lighting to show off colour)
3. Ships running past planetary rings

Problems arise in depicting relative scale and atmosphere. There are no visibility issues in reality (unless there is a rare chance of navigating through space debris/cloud of space dust). You either see a ship or your do not, and the scale of a large ship vs. a small ship is impossible to discern by the naked eye.

The proponents of artistic license will happily use:
1. A backdrop of ships going through a nebulous region (often the density of nebulas are so

Fig.07

heavy that all forms of organic, structural and latest state-of-the-art ships crumple into nothing, or are fried into space dust from the intense radiation)
2. A group of ships running through space gas and clouds (runs again into the nebulae issue)

Nevertheless, artistic license allows for gratuitous use of atmospheric perspective to suggest depth. For example, painting brightly coloured clouds in space and throwing caution to the wind (galactic hiccups, burps and leftovers gasses notwithstanding).

Fleet Shot – The Drawing Bit
We really must get back to the drawing and painting bit now, so with the mini science/rant bit

over, let's look at how to showcase your latest designs in action!

1. Grey Layout
In **Fig.07** a bunch of capital ships are depicted in greyscale. On the far left, rough outlines of the basic geometry have been employed. And on the far right, the ships are depicted using rough and large paint strokes.

The argument for depicting a deep space scene in greyscale is that it allows you to concentrate on design and composition. The difficulty that arises is the transition to colour.

Let me correct that last statement: The transition from greyscale to monochromic colour is not difficult, but looks very unimpressive. In fact, it looks very grey. The transition to happy, impressionistic, artistic license Technicolor is a whole new kettle of starfish altogether. Colour will imply saturated colours. And desaturated highlights ... well, you will see it is challenging to just look normal, much less make it decent.

2. Orientation & Composition
With reference to **Fig.08** and **Fig.09**, the canvas appears cramped and requires further expansion. This may involve readjusting the canvas to keep all the ships in relative perspective.

For in space, all forms of orientation of up, down, left or right are nonexistent. There is

Fig.08
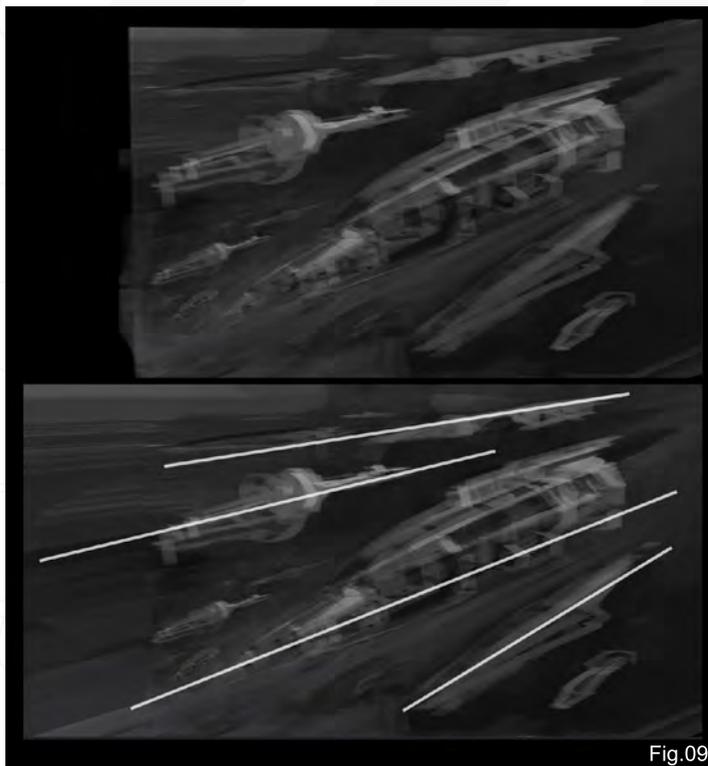
Fig.09
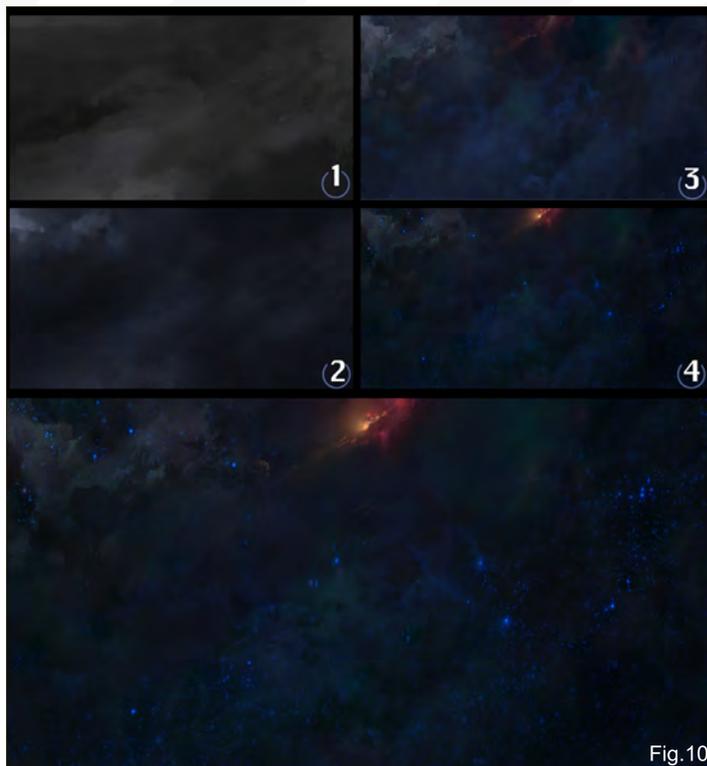
Fig.10

no magnetic north or south, only the way forward or stationary. For artistic purposes, it would be convenient to use a one or two point perspective. All notions of including a horizon are often nonexistent, and a string of stars to form a false horizon may often look more disconcerting than clever.

3. Background

With reference to **Fig.10**, we now make the transition to colour. In this instance, it is just as

if you are painting desaturated clouds in space. This process can be both satisfying and very time consuming. This stage actually took around four hours of laying out the values, painting in faint glows and accentuating a few stars and depicting a nearby galaxy cluster.

And here is the crux: Sometimes it does not pay to zoom on in and detail every nut and bolt. Often there will be a trade off between readability, fit for purpose and details. Focal

detail is the mark of a quality illustrator, and it is towards this goal that every artist strives by spending a lifetime polishing and refining.

4. Capital Ship Design

Paradoxically, I stop the painting process to take time out to design the capital ships. What I liked about the rough forms of the initial greyscale is translated in essence onto markers and pens (**Fig.11**).

I use this opportunity to take the design as far as I dare. And it is at this juncture I would like to briefly talk about scale and panels:
Scale – In space, the size of a space vessel may be hard to gauge. And thus, care should be taken to block out segments. Generally, a large vessel has more segmented shapes than a solid, singular, small space transport. However, when an object is large, its multiple segments can often blur into panels.

Panels – The size and variety of panels can be both a stylistic and relative scale that can be used to compare a large ship to a small one. Panels with windows, vents and lighting are therefore very useful for this purpose of
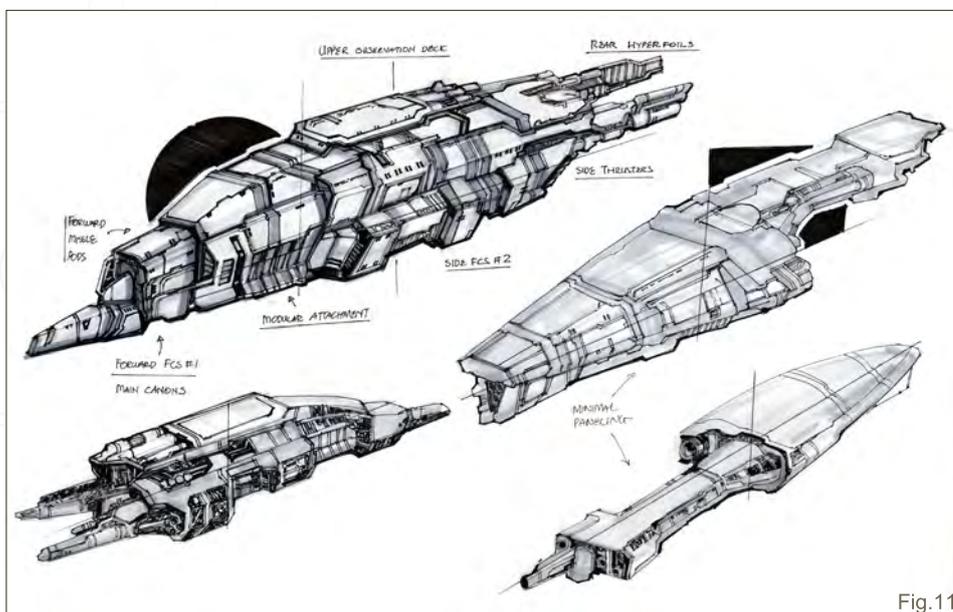
Fig.11

comparative relativity. In **Fig.11**, the warship on the left is depicted with multiple panels and detail. In comparison, the warship on the far right is minimally detailed and panelled. Yet, the object on the far right can be perceived to be bigger, even though the warship on the left is intended to be the larger and more powerful warship.

In summary, it can be generally said that the object with large panels and lesser details can be seen to be bigger than a similarly sized object with details and panels throughout.

5. The ships

The ships are brought back into the coloured background and a few issues are immediately apparent (**Fig.12**).

Fig.12

Firstly, the values and lighting are different from the original greyscale background. To remedy this, you can use the following approaches (relative to **Fig.12**):

1. The ships are on a separate layer, and set to luminosity

2. A duplicate copy is set onto multiply above

3. The overall forms are masked out and save to alpha channels

4. With the forms selected, I utilise the lasso tools to cut out various panels and selections relative to each plane (for example, the top surface of the main warship is selected, and faint washes of coloured grey are applied in perspective)

6. Final Details

To bring it all together, the overall image is flattened and each respective ship has the following applied to **Fig.13**:

1. Panels cut-out relative to nearby bright objects

2. Upper edge reflecting the red-orange highlights of the nearby galaxy

3. Bounced light applied to its lower edge or across a flat surface.

4. Overall colour determined by the local colour of its ambient surroundings

5. Engine washes applied faintly towards the rear of each ship

6. Atmospheric perspective – I judiciously added a faint hint of dust and pushed objects into the distance. In reality, this effect would not be evident, and the nearby and far objects would be equally lit and provide comparable luminosity.

7. Final image

In the final image, the vibrancy of the greens and blues are more saturated. The far right warship is edited out of the final image, as its overall shape is poor and distracting (**Fig.14**).

Fig.13

Fig.14

III: Impressionistic Burning Ship

To conclude the third and final section of this tutorial, we will tackle a more colourful and impressionistic approach towards painting space capital ships - and give a small nod towards John Berkey, famed granddaddy of sci-fi and space art who unfortunately passed beyond into the stars earlier this year, April 29th 2008. He was one of the truly great greats who was so versatile that he was trained to paint in any media, theme and style throughout his early formative years.

It was later in his prime and twilight years that his arts formed the crux of our cornerstone of sci-fi and space art illustrations. In turn, his approach to painting art has made a daily impression on the way I perceive space art. For who else would consider painting space in hyper saturated blues, with vessels painted in cream, shaded in sky blues and reflected in reds?

Although this scheme exists realistically in atmospheric conditions (but not in space), by deciding to take space art into an impressionistic manner, it has a vibrancy all of its own.
So let us do a Berkey!

Painting Inspired-by Berkey

The key to one of Berkey's image is being loose and impressionistic, but grounded in relative realism, coupled with big fat strokes to suggest form, colour and lighting (**Fig.15**).

1. Form and Pallete

In **Fig.15** a basic colour palette is determined beforehand and adhered

FG Pallette

BG Pallette

Fig.15

Lighting The Scene

Fig.16

Fig.17

FLIP CHECK

LEVELS CHECK

VALUES CHECK

Fig.18

to. In this instance, I desired to use a greenish yellow background (namely because Sparth is predominately reds, and Berkey is blues with reds). For the vehicle itself, I stuck to:

1. Primary – typical cream white for the ship's main colour

2. Cool – reflected ambient colour, greens and blues

3. Warm – Reds and purples

Notice the visibly improved aesthetic compared to the greys of painting more realistically in deep space. In addition, I have masochistically painted everything on one singular layer. The

idea behind this is to ensure the background and foreground elements reflect one another. The brushstrokes are bigger and fatter than the norm - although one could argue this is how one should paint! Big to small, that is. Instantly, this helps achieve a sense of volume and form. Amazingly effective!

2. Directional Lighting

Subsequently, the canvas is expanded to incorporate a more traditional portrait view (**Fig.16**). On the far left are some small thumbnail cutaways:

1. Top left – small thumbnail to assess overall form and composition

2. The bottom and mid left thumb – to depict the lighting issues; ideally, the space yacht would have a sharper rim light as depicted by the small thumbnail, but it is at this juncture that I am still undecided as to how close/far the light source should be

3. Colour & Mood

The next thing to really consider is the colour and mood. The original green colour is very interesting, although I really prefer the warmer orange-based palette (**Fig.17**).

My main idea is to depict a burning space vessel as it re-enters atmosphere (**Fig.18**). This can be due to a variety of reasons, and it might be best to leave it vague as such, to lend to a stronger composition. The finer details and colours are picked out, and added accordingly in this instance, but only hinted at rather than spending too much time selecting and laying it all out. In addition, the clouds and background are given more volume. This means determining that the clouds have:

1. A hard edge
2. A soft edge
3. A bunch of volumetric forms
4. Do Not Pass Without Checking!

This stage is all about checking (**Fig.19**)
Ensuring that:

1. The values allow the forms to read well
2. There is appropriate use of colour as a compositional tool
3. The comparison with levels adjustment to ensure the image is relatively balanced
4. Painting in bounced light, ambient light and allowing the form to have soft edges and suggesting how light turns around the forms

5. Pyromaniacs:

The last aspect of the illustration is to add fire and destruction, debris and explosions. On the far left, we explore briefly the possibility of a swarm of fighters shooting the vessel down (overkill surely for a vessel that appears doomed to fall) (**Fig.20**).

On the far right is the final composition as it stands, burning with wreckage being strewn everywhere. Note the moderate the amount of glows and fires. Careful study of explosions and fires would show that there is far more smoke and glowing deep embers for any burnt up object travelling at velocity. As such, the image depicts it accordingly (**Fig.21**).

Conclusion

So, there you have it folks. We have taken you though a relatively wide ranging topic, choosing

DONT GO FULL BURN
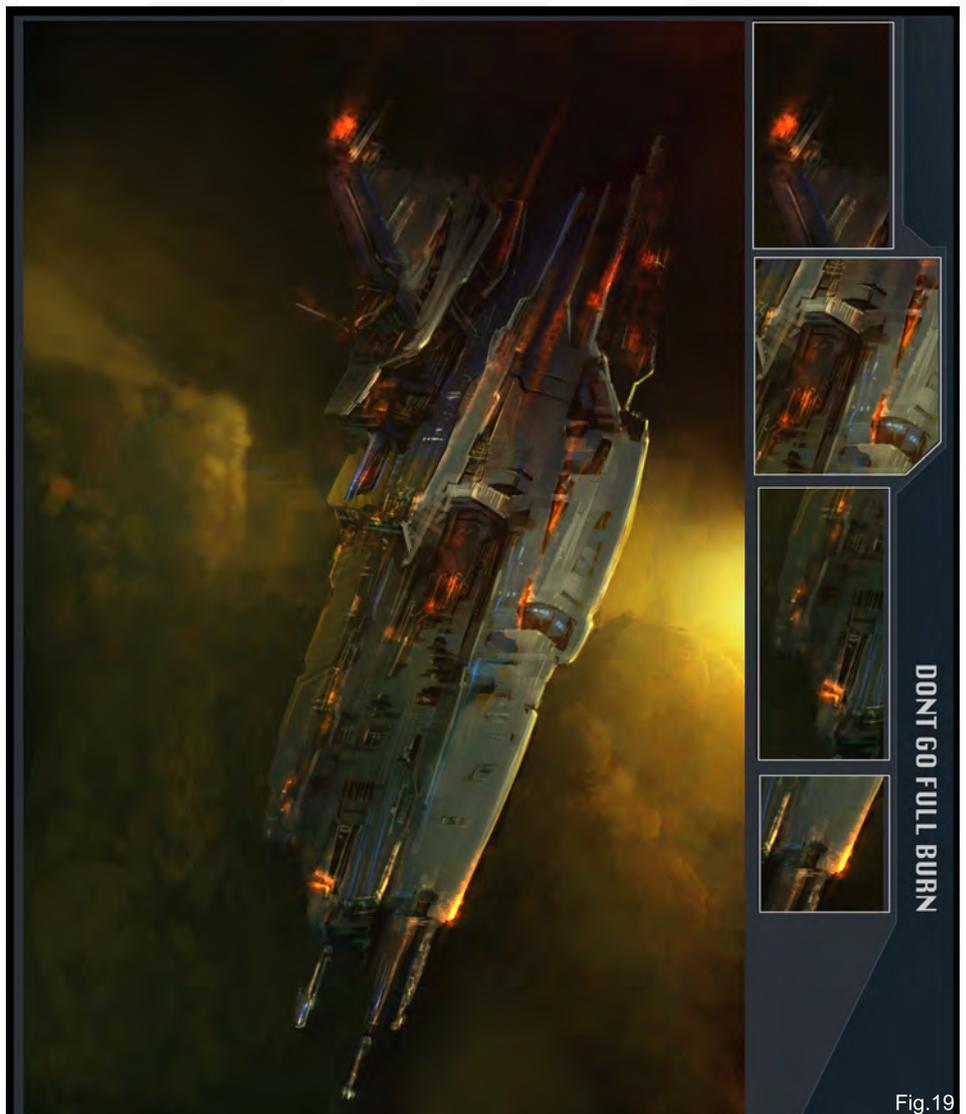
Fig.19
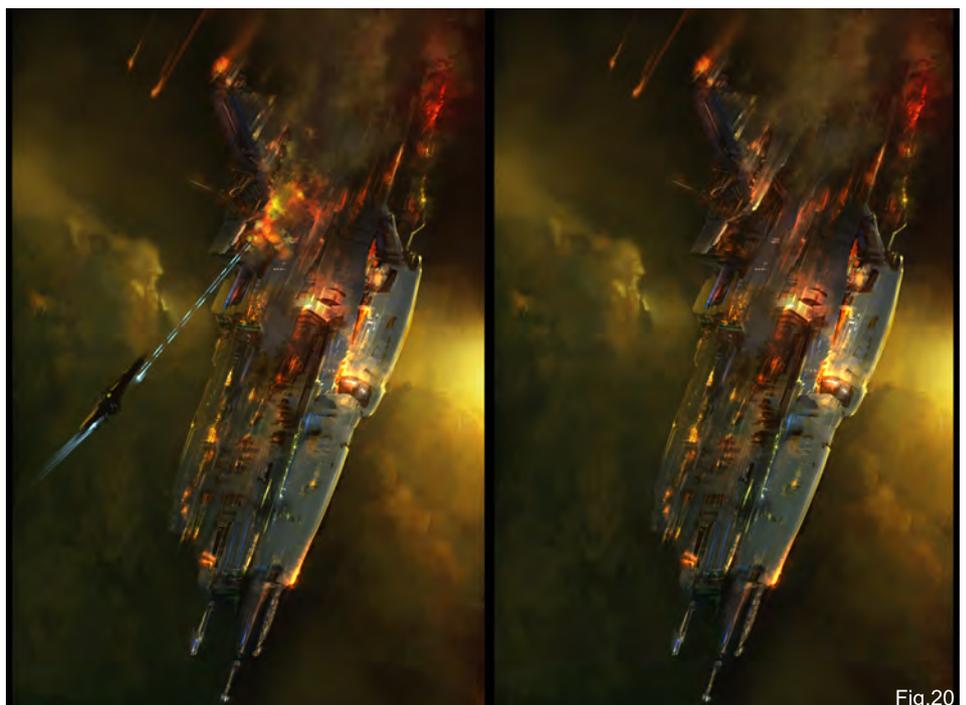
Fig.20

a few select object and illustrative methods from which to use and discussed how to briefly design your objects of desire as sexy bricks.

In the third instalment of the space painting transport segment, we will look at the granddaddy and grandmommas of the space world – the space stations, refurbished asteroid mines and space colonies. Until then, may your painting arm be strong and swift, your ideas uniquely your own and bountiful, and to everyone, a positive outlook in the New Year and beyond.

Dr Chee Ming Wong

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Fig.20

"As a concept artist, I make the scenes based on the script, in a way that a 3D artist can easily recognise the lighting, materials, and colours and so on"

MAKING OF BY SOHEIL DANESH ESHRAGHI

FLOWER CONCEPT

Soheil Danesh has been working as an illustrator, concept designer and storyboard artist in animation and movie projects. In this article he shares how he made his character "Baran".

MAKING OF
FLOWER CONCEPT

Created In:

Photoshop and Painter

Introduction

I created this illustration as a concept design for "Baran", a short 3D animation. The story is about a girl that lives in a flower, and the theme was slightly different from my previous work and style, so it was a real challenge for me to experience some new stuff.

As a concept artist, I make the scenes based on the script, in a way that a 3D artist can easily recognise the lighting, materials, and colours and so on. In this tutorial, I am going to talk you through the steps I took to reach the final image for this particular concept.

Sketching & Basic Colours

I usually make sketches and doodles in the search for an idea for my illustrations and

Fig.01

Fig.02

the best way to tell the story. With this piece I made a sketch and then redrew it, added some additional details and then made some changes in Photoshop (**Fig.01**).

I always set the blending mode of the line art layer to multiply, and on the lower layer I quickly applied some basic colours. I use dark colours for the first step because I find it easier to control the tones one by one; from darkest to lightest (I learned this style from Frank Frazetta's works). Using a brush with 100% opacity I find very exciting – it helps you to build confidence in your painting abilities (**Fig.02**).

Adding Details

I preferred using a very simple round brush to make this illustration. Details were added little by little and the rough colour blocks were smoothed. This stage is really fun for me, but at the same time very important. I find that every little detail taken care of at this stage can have a huge impact on the overall feeling of the final image. As an example, the positions of the mouth or the lines that form the eyes hugely define the inner feelings of the little girl, who in this case is full of curiosity and suspense. Any tiny deviations in her facial components could have ruined the feeling I was after, at this crucial stage of the image's development (**Fig.03**).
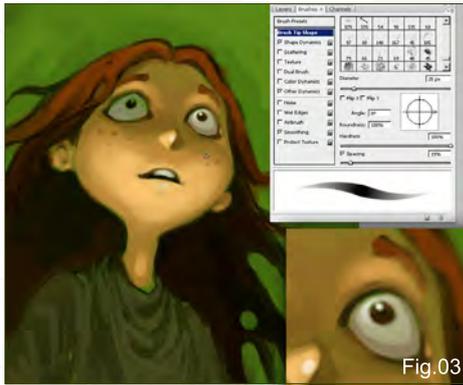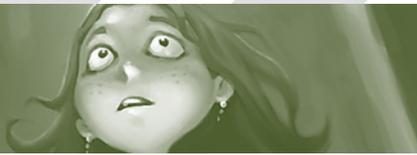
Fig.03

Lighting

I considered two types of lighting for this illustration. The ambient light inside the stem was created using green tones, and the candle light was achieved with a warm yellow palette. Using a few complimentary colours enriches your painting and can bring it away from a
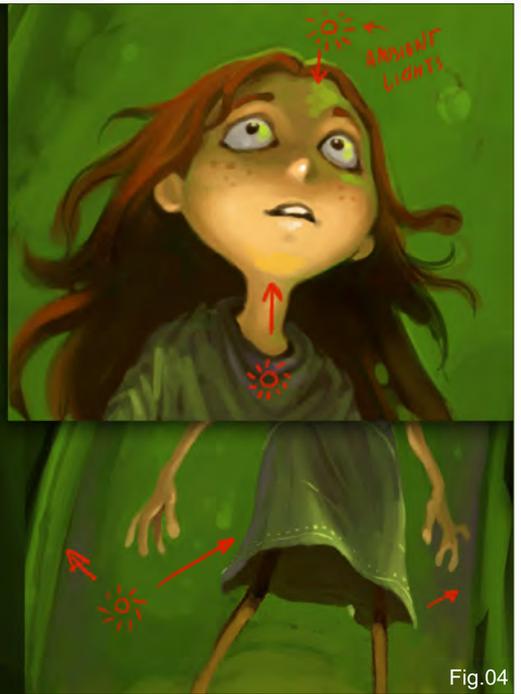
Fig.04

monotone impression, and much closer to the lighting effects seen in reality. I used a warm purple in some areas as the complimentary colour for green (**Fig.04**).

At this stage, the main painting in Photoshop was complete. I transferred the image to Painter, provided direction for the brushes and smoothed the edges whilst trying to approach a traditional painting style (**Fig.05**).

Refining the Image & Final Renderings

I used the Oil Palette Knife brush in Painter, to smooth my rough brushwork done in Photoshop, and tried to form the volumes. Reducing the opacity in some parts helped to protect the details and the main forms, but other areas,

Fig.05

Fig.06

such as the stairs under the candle, were painted with very rough and wild brushing. The tools available in Painter helped to provide a more natural brush style for the painting (**Fig.06**).

At this point I took the painting back into Photoshop. Using the Burn Tool, I darkened the parts that I felt needed it. For the parts which I needed to show high intensity light effects, such as the candle light or the small light reflections

Fig.08
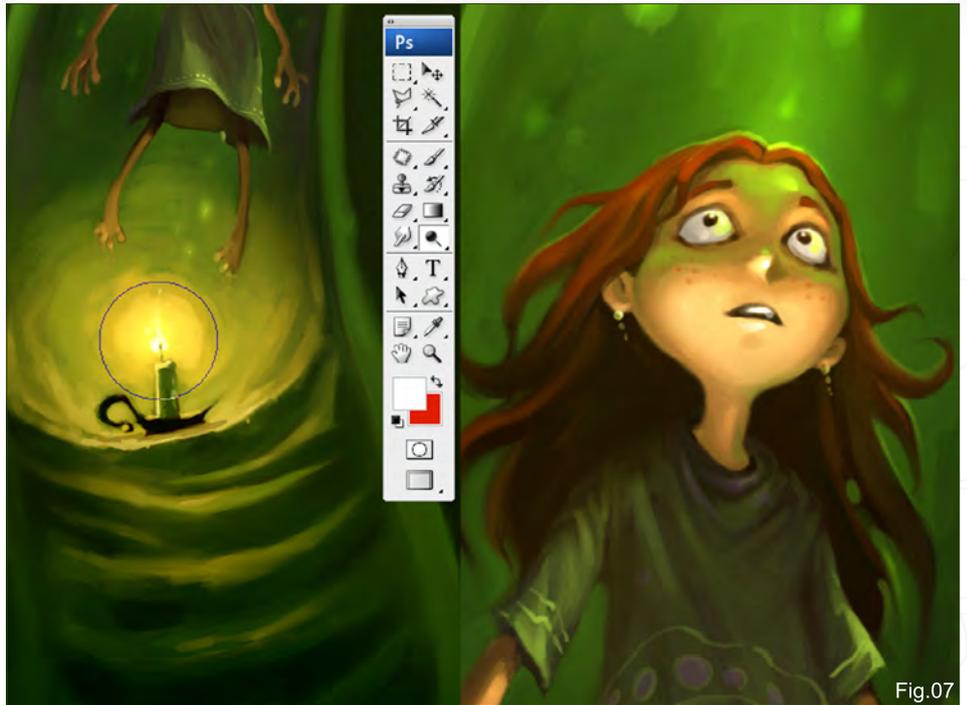
Fig.07

on the girl's forehead, or even the tiny light particles in the air, I used the Dodge Tool (I did this with extra care and very low opacity) (**Fig.07**).

For the final colour touches and grading of an image, I use the different image adjustment functions which Photoshop provides, such

as Colour Balance, Hue and Saturation. In this image, I used the Image > Adjustments > Variation option. I also added a little red and magenta (**Fig.08**).

I tried to place the different variations next to one another, and then selected the one which I felt was most appropriate (**Fig.09**). As the final

Fig.09

touch, I used the Unsharp Mask filter over the final illustration (**Fig.10**).

Well, these were the steps I took and the tools which I used to create this painting. If you are interested in viewing some other concepts and previews from the "Baran" animation, simply visit: http://www.vishka.biz

Finally, I would like to thank 3DTotal and 2DArtist magazine. Thanks for reading.

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Fig.10

DIGITAL ART MASTERS
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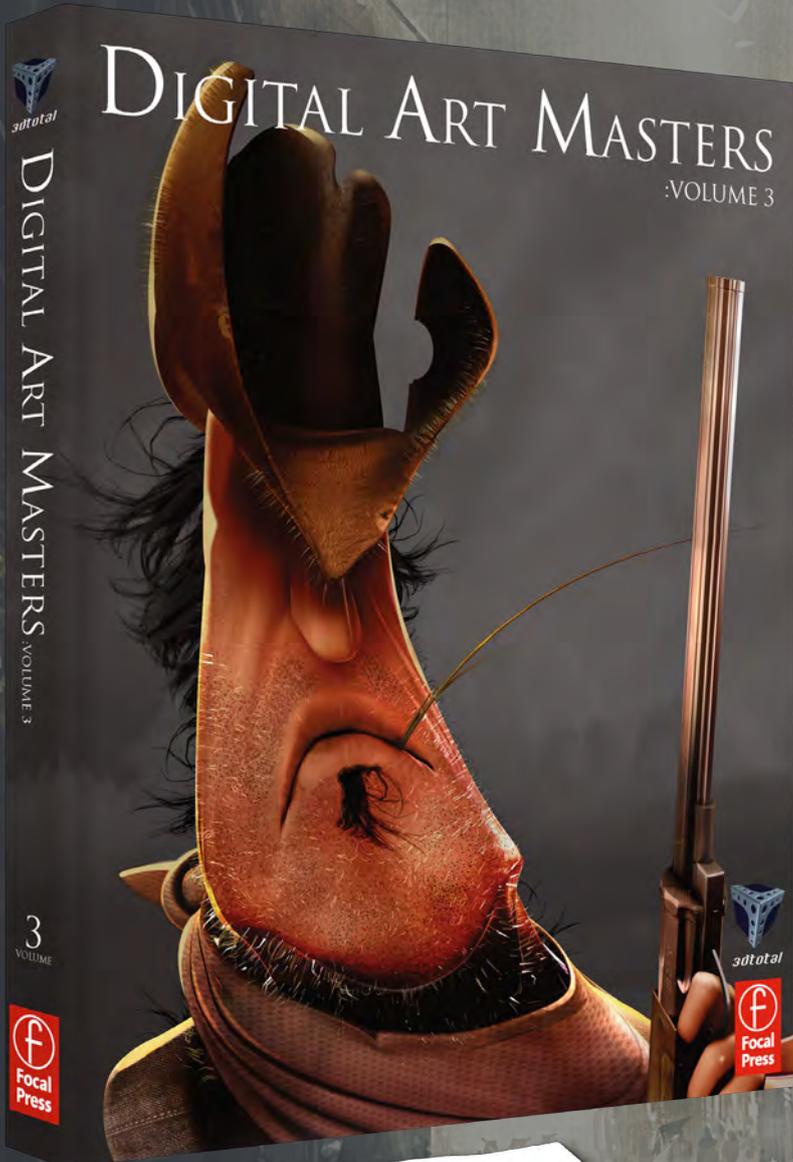
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This month we feature:

"Chinatown"
by Gerhard Mozsi

The following shots of the "Chinatown" book pages are featured here in full-resolution and can be read by zooming in...

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