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PRO VIDEO TUITION

NO. 1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

# ImagineFX

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The Gathering®

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DECK INSIDE!

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# FANTASY CARD ART

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Future

PHOTOSHOP

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THE FUTURE

Paint a cyberpunk causing  
chaos on the dancefloor

ART & ADVICE

RODNEY MATTHEWS'  
FANTASY SKETCHBOOK

PRO ARTISTS ANSWER  
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# Welcome... to our house of cards



'Card art' is not a sexy term. The words aren't spoken in breathy tones to invoke visions of invention, creativity and artistic excellence. But that's exactly what it signifies!

Anyone familiar with Magic: The Gathering will know that in the small rectangle sitting above the card stats, compelling characters, wild environments and myriad other weirdly wonderful things reside. The paintings – and there have been flipping thousands of them made in the 20-odd years of Magic alone – are created by artists with different styles and techniques. But with size and shape restrictions, in order to make an impact they all have to be clever, clear and something else that starts with 'c' that backs up my point.

The lovely people at Wizards of the Coast have shared the newest Magic extension pack – Shadows Over Innistrad – and we've spoken to some of the key artists involved, over on page 40. If you want to get stuck into creating your own card art, you've got two options. Head to cover artist Anna Steinbauer's workshop on page 64, or Fantasy Flight Games' artist Matt Zeilinger on page 84, where there's a cyberdude making magic on the dancefloor awaiting you... Never thought I'd get to say that in ImagineFX.

There's loads more of course, but instead of listing the rest, I'm going to focus on one particular favourite of mine: the 2D and 3D workshop on Dune's ornithopter by Alex Jay Brady. Her workshop starts on page 70, and is packed with ideas and inspiration. Enjoy!

*Beren*

**Beren Neale, Acting Editor**  
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*Our special cover for subscribers this issue.*



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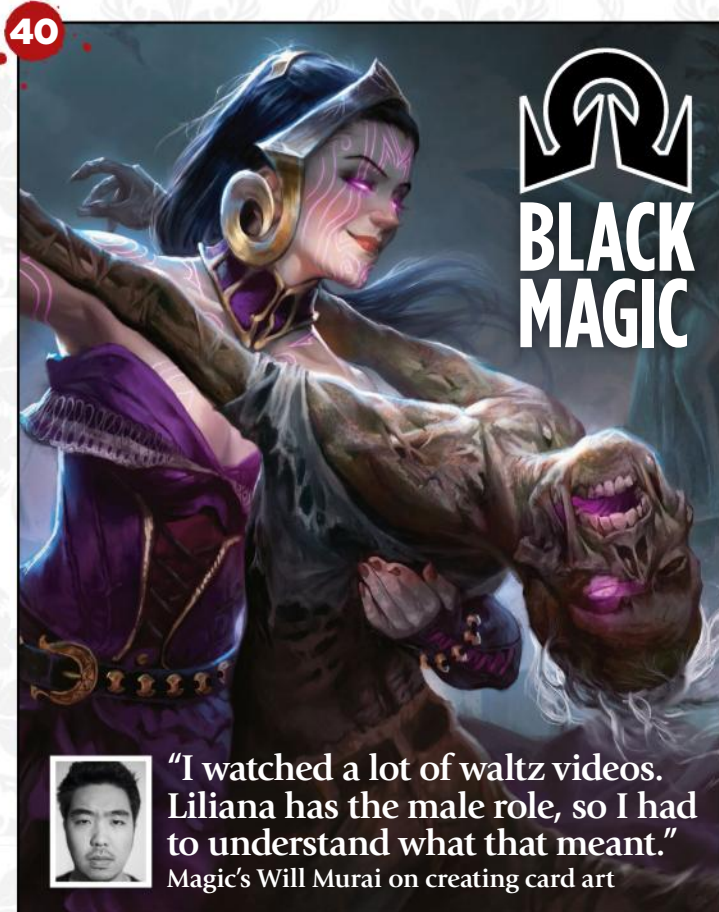
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"I watched a lot of waltz videos. Liliana has the male role, so I had to understand what that meant."  
Magic's Will Murai on creating card art

## Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



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North Front Studio



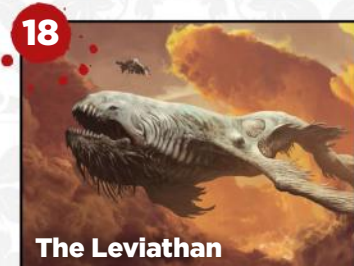
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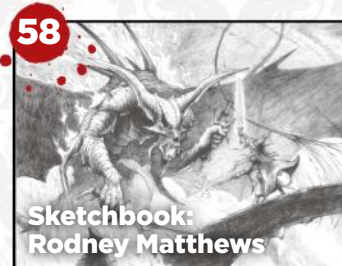
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FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS  
**ImagineFX**  
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Create a card art character

**FANTASY**  
*illustrator*

Inspiration and advice from the best traditional artists

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Matthew Stewart





# ImagineFX NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS Resources

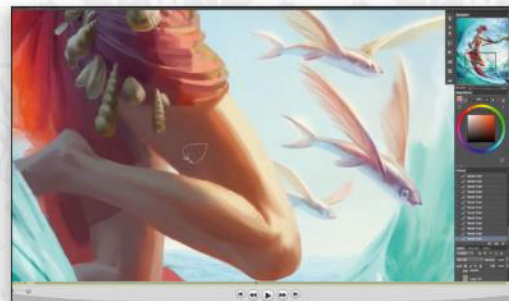
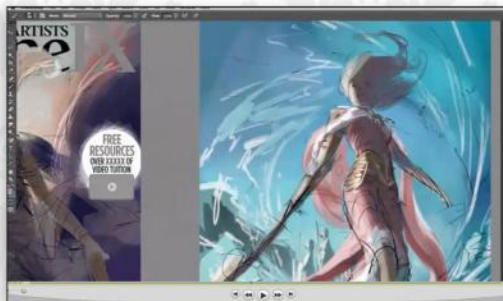
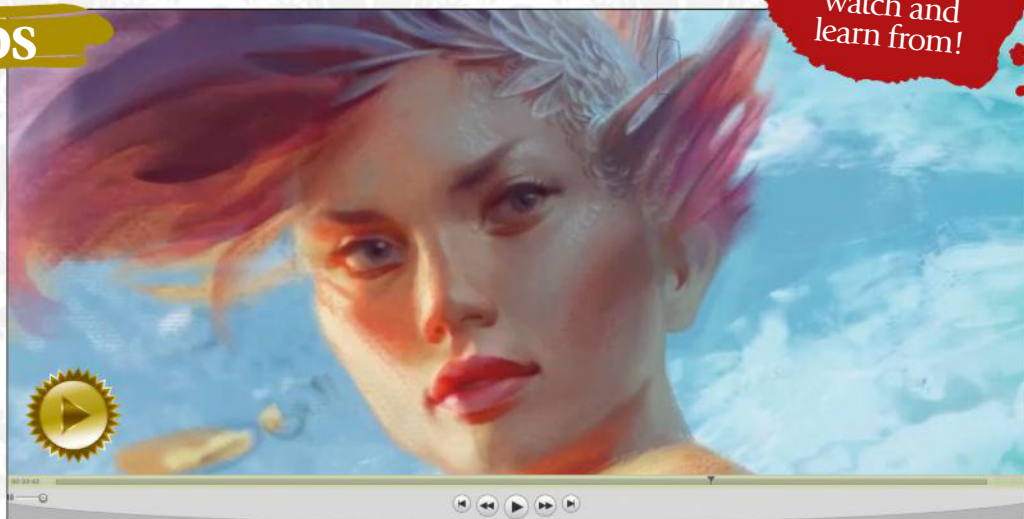
Getting hold of all of this issue's videos, artwork and brushes is quick and easy. Just visit our dedicated web page at <http://ifxm.ag/winning136hand>

**OVER 7 HOURS**  
of workshop and Q&A videos to watch and learn from!

## WORKSHOP VIDEOS

### Create card art that stands out

Follow Anna Steinbauer's approach to ensure your character card art is both colourful and dynamic



### GET YOUR RESOURCES

You're three steps away from this issue's resource files...

- 1 Go to the website**  
Type this into your browser's address bar (not the search bar): <http://ifxm.ag/winning136hand>
- 2 Find the files you want**  
Search through the list of resources to watch or download.
- 3 Download what you need**  
You can download all of the files at once, or individually.

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# EXCLUSIVE VIDEO TUTORIAL!

Watch our videos to gain a unique insight into how our artists create their stunning art



## Matt Zeilinger

Learn the special considerations involved in illustrating for card games, as you follow the artist's process for painting a cyberpunk character for Android: Netrunner. **Plus WIPs, brushes and final image**



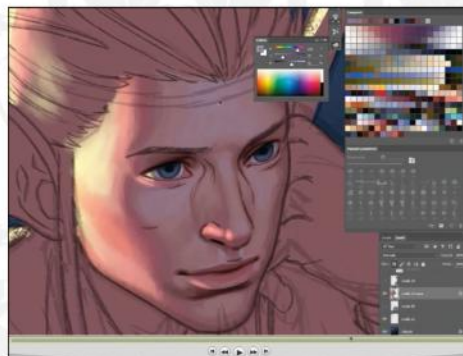
## Rovina Cai

Experiment with mixed media techniques, and use fashion and nature as inspirations. **Plus WIPs and final image**



## Sara Forlenza

Imagine a back-story, think about the point of view, the posture and skin tones, in order to help paint a character who appears to be dripping wet. **Plus WIPs and final image**



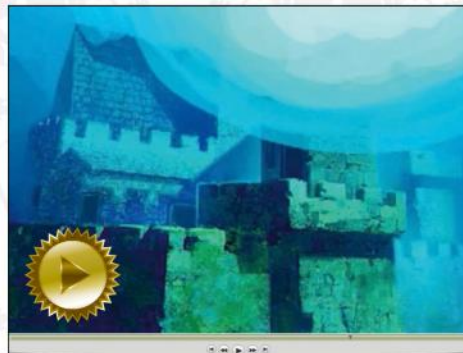
## Paco Rico Torres

Understand shape and light effects to paint waves crashing against rocks realistically. **Plus WIPs and final image**



## Nick Harris

Consider background detail and use custom brushes to portray rust effects. **Plus WIPs and final image**



## Paco Rico Torres

Think about environment and atmosphere to paint a believable underwater castle. **Plus WIPs and final image**

BRUSH PACK										200	200	1
45	150	90	50	30	189	292	50	249	500	106	200	40
35	150	125	400	70	125	50	129	175	1	100	1	100
604	125	173	83	83	125	810	70	40	1	400	1	400
248	105	125	600	339	25	90	151	50	90	11	50	90
9	300	400	300	200	105	1008	108	90	400	1	90	400
134	200	404	151	125	60	300	90	40	100	80	40	100
100	897	222	409	897	786	775	70	150	90	261	150	90

## Houston Sharp

In this issue freelance concept artist Houston Sharp offers a staggering 152 free digital brushes.

**AND ALL THIS!** Van Arno's Figure Fundamentals video sample, plus detailed workshops with advice from pro artists, including Alex Jay Brady, Mike Corriero, Ross Dearsley, Michelle Hoefener, Anand Radhakrishnan, Rob Redman and Artur Sadlos.

## 36 CUSTOM BRUSHES, INCLUDING...



**HARD ROUND TEXTURED**  
With a versatile texture, Anna Steinbauer uses this for waves.



**HARD PIXEL**  
Artur Sadlos likes to juggle between Hard and Soft brushes as he works.



**HARD CHALK**  
With a chalky look, Matt Zeilinger finds this brush works for various surfaces.



# Reader FXPOSE

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

IMAGINEFX  
ARTIST  
MONTH

## Peng Zhou

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MEDIA: Photoshop



Peng was born and raised in a traditional household in Chengdu, China, where comics such as *Slum Dunk* and *Hellboy* had a large influence on him. He now lives in California, working as a 2D concept artist, illustrator and visual development artist for the game, animation and entertainment industries.

The artist has worked on a wide array of game projects, such as *Dungeon Boss*, *Blades of Brim*, *MyVegas Blackjack* and *Order of Champions*. "My preferred art style is stylised, exaggerated and colourful," says Peng.

1



2



### 1 SPLASH ART OF JUMBOM ZOMBIE

"Jumbom Zombie is a personal mobile game project I created in 2013. It's about four animal warriors who come back to save the world, which is dominated by zombies. In this image, you can see the warriors fighting with zombies in small-town America."

### 2 WESTERN TOWN GAMEPLAY

"Here's a concept design for the gameplay in Jumbom Zombie. You can see many cowboy zombies running to the centre of this town. The animal warriors have to protect the church until the end of the level."

### 3 THREE YEAR ANNIVERSARY

"This piece of art is all about love! I did this one to celebrate three years of marriage. The loving couple are seated on a branch in the forest – they're holding a star and making a wonderful wish. Five minions surround them in the background. What a wonderful night!"







## Artist crit

**Mark Molnar likes how Peng captures the essence of his characters and scenes**



"Peng's illustrations and concepts aren't just a reflection of his knowledge of light, colour and composition, but also give us a unique and personal take on the subject."

**Federico Ginabreda**

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**MEDIA:** Photoshop, 3ds Max, ZBrush, MODO, KeyShot



Federico is studying graphic design and architecture, and says, "These two careers have been really helpful in terms of learning and thinking about how to design something."

Having worked as a concept artist and illustrator for the past two years, Federico says he's drawn to fantasy and sci-fi themes in particular. "They're the subjects with the most potential for originality," he says.

"The aim is to always create something new and fresh to the viewer's eye. It can be difficult, but is always fun."

**IMAGINEFX CRIT**



"Federico creates a unique atmosphere in his images, especially in Superman and Dragon Awakening. The latter has a terrifying drama. Totally fantastical yet somehow believable. He uses a limited colour palette to great effect, too."

**Daniel Vincent,**  
Art Editor

**1 SUPERMAN** "This piece was made for a Brainstorm Challenge. The idea was to design a more alien-looking Superman who has the ability to manipulate matter."

**2 TRITON GUARD** "I began with a series of concepts and illustrations about an aquatic race of sirens and tritons. I wanted to create a guardian to protect the lands around the sea of the underwater city. I used references of animals such as horses, different kinds of fish and coral reefs."

**3 NASA VEHICLE** "This vehicle was made for another Brainstorm Challenge. The brief was to design a vehicle for NASA and my creation is inspired by the Hailfire Droids from Attack of the Clones. It would enable the astronauts to explore the lunar surface quickly and safely. I designed it in 3ds Max before I photobashed the space station together."

**4 DRAGON AWAKENING** "My goal was to create an enormous beast coming from beneath the earth destroying the environment with fire. I always use complementaries or analogs to help make the composition work, and to lead the eye - for example cyan/blue and orange."

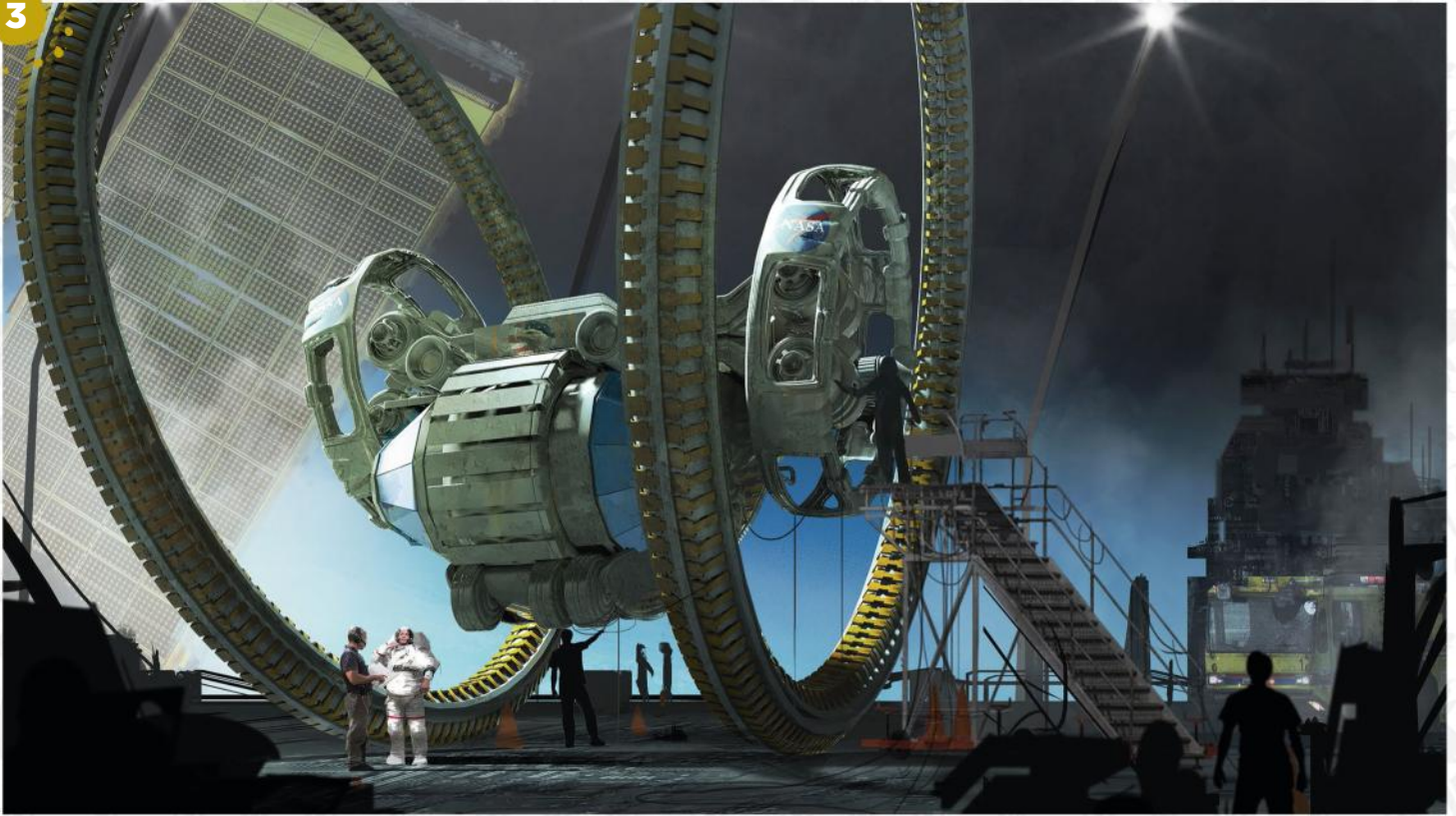
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2



3



4



**Bill Balzer**

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MEDIA: Photoshop



While in high school and college Bill idolised artists like Bernie Wrightson and Sam Kieth. "They had a huge influence on my creative sensibilities and process," he says. After college the artist shifted his focus to a career in video games and concept art, striving to be a part of the game studio environment, where collaboration and teamwork is prioritised over individual achievements.

After a few years of freelancing Bill landed a job at Paragon Studios working on the MMORPG City of Heroes. "It was a rewarding opportunity to learn from other great artists and find my voice creating characters and environments for a core gaming audience. I focused on realistic, detailed rendering, and loved working on sinister characters."

Currently, Bill works as an artist at Storm8, a mobile game studio in Redwood City, California.



**1 SLOW TURN** "A mood piece of my interpretation of Colonel Kurtz from Conrad's Heart of Darkness in his decent into insanity. I wanted to give this piece a painterly feel, so after the sketch and rough colour phase I experimented with some encaustic process images that I overlaid and painted over. I wanted to give the background and impressionist look to bring further focus on to the expression of the character."

**2 COUNTERSPELL** "This piece was created during One Fantastic Workshop. I challenged myself to paint multiple characters in the same shot. I wanted to create a feeling of comradeship with a young sorceress taking up her instructor's staff and defending against the enemy wizards. My goal was to create a cinematic painting through the use of distinct fore-, mid- and background elements."

**3 HIDING** "I painted the Jabberwocky chasing Alice during an art workshop. My goal was to create a sense of pursuit and danger. A key detail to the piece is the Jabberwocky looking away from Alice unaware of her location, but the tail coiled behind her creates a feeling of deception."

**4 CYBER-SAMURAI** "Here, I was experimenting with several effects to emulate camera artefacts such as lens flare and motion blur. I wanted to depict an imposing character by using a low camera angle and having a single light source hitting the legs up. Because the upper body is mostly in silhouette, it gives the character a sense of mystery."





**IMAGINEFX CRIT**



"Bill has struck a balance between the looseness of a concept piece with the detail of a character illustration. His effects give it a cinematic feel, and I can imagine this figure being the anti-hero of a big budget film."

**Cliff Hope,**  
Operations Editor

**Jay Bendt**

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MEDIA: Photoshop, ink



Freelance illustrator and comic artist Jay lives and works in America's Midwest. Her love of colour and line come from her training as a painter and printmaker. She has an obsession with storytelling, whimsical and fantastical art and a flair for the theatrical, rooted in the many mythology and fairy tale books and films of her childhood.

"Being able to create work that doesn't conform to real life is as close to creating magic as a human can get," she says. "While most of my work's process is at least 50 per cent digital, I can't give up the feeling of holding a piece of finished art in my hand. It's amazing."



**1 RED** "I wanted to interpret The Little Red Riding Hood's ending differently. The wolf dies, but always at the hands of someone else. This time, Red stops being the hunted and becomes the hunter, wearing him for a cape, perhaps even becoming like him in the end?"

**2 FLIGHT** "Having been born in the Caribbean and living now in a place that's cold all the time, I found myself missing warmth, birds and the nostalgia of childhood summers. If I couldn't be somewhere warm, I'd at least draw it and bring the cheer into my home."

**3 BLINK** "I wanted a creepy vibe for this piece, which felt a little sci-fi, a little horror fiction, but at the same time I'm a lover of colour, so I chose to go with a vibrant palette to complement the image without taking away from the vibe I was trying to create."

## **1** Vlada Monakhova

**LOCATION:** Canada

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**MEDIA:** Photoshop



Vlada is an illustrator and aspiring visual development artist. She grew up close to the wild Russian woods, which fed her imagination with its strange shadows and eerie silhouettes of trees with roots deep enough to swallow you whole. "Everything is petrifying when you're little, and I strive to capture a combination of dread and wonder in my work," she says.

"I enjoy working with story - everything I do has been somehow inspired by writing," reveals the artist, "and indeed many of my clients are in publishing or RPG games."

**1**



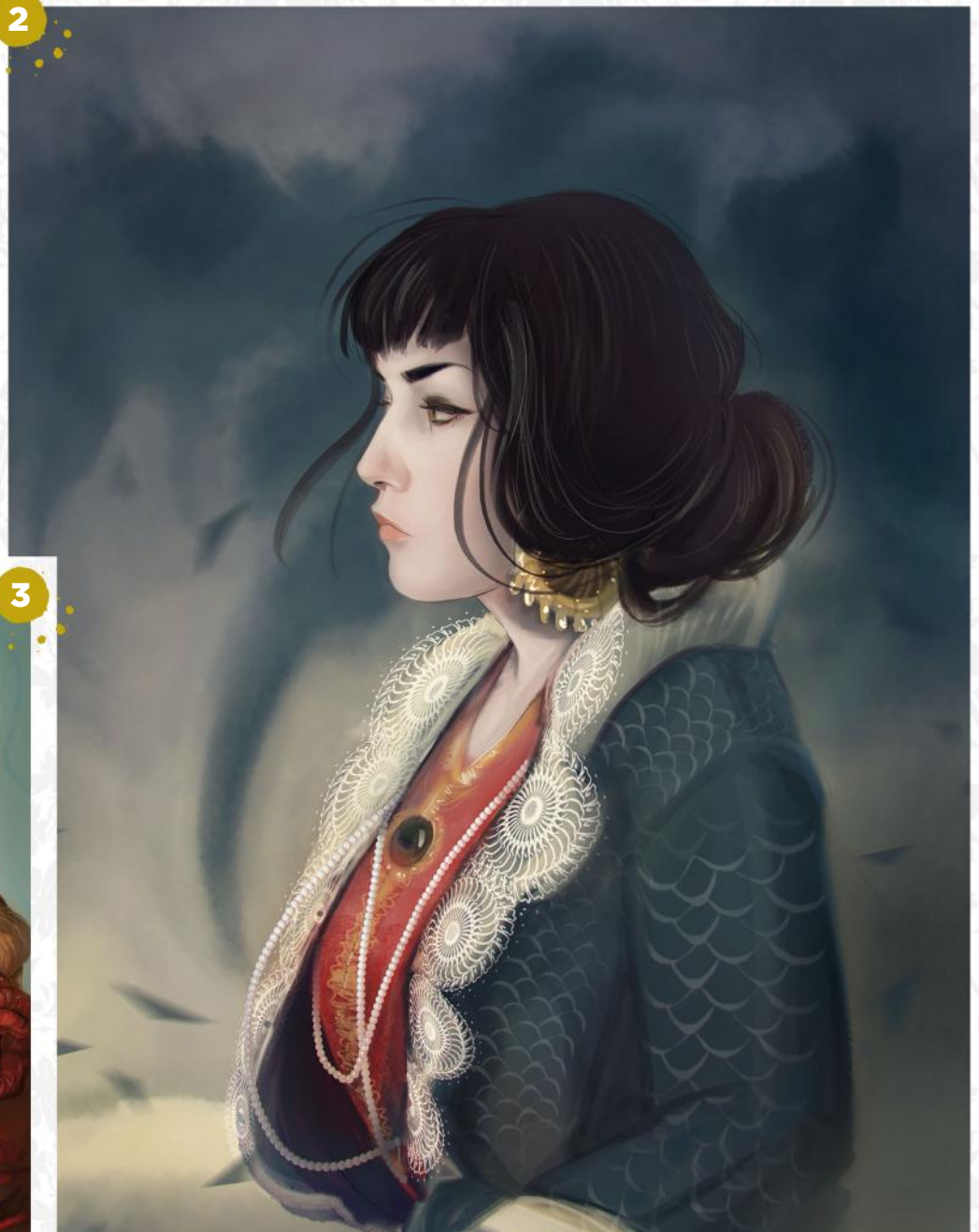
**2**

**1 NECROMANCER** "The client wanted to capture the act of necromancy in a moody, swampy setting - requesting the trope of 'bad magic' to be subverted. She came out like a Disney princess and I had a lot of fun shooting light reference for this piece."

**2 WEATHER WARNING** "This piece was inspired by traditional Flemish portraits and a hint of southern Gothic. I had fun figuring out how to render the lace and the decorations: everything was hand-painted and separate graphic elements were manipulated to appear three-dimensional."

**3 SLEEP-POPPY** "This painting was inspired by opiate dreams. The pain of post-operation viscera is dimmed and smothered with a flowery haze, nothing is certain or stable, and all colours are an assault of chroma and light. I wanted to showcase the grotesque using an unusually bright, golden palette."

**3**



**Fernanders Koak  
Chan Sam**

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**MEDIA:** Photoshop, SketchUp



Fernanders grew up immersed in the world of animation. He would doodle with colour pencils and markers, before moving into digital media and using Photoshop to express his ideas.

"I always try to create great storytelling conceptual illustrations," says Fernanders. "I tend to head towards the graphic shape approach, using colours and light to convey the mood across to the audience. Most of the techniques I use are either blocking out basic shapes, or adding in details, with custom brushes."

**1 THE JOURNEY** "This was an art test I did for Banner Saga. My main influence comes from Eyvind Earle's work. This is the first time I did such a long panoramic shot of an entire environment, which could be used as part of an opening sequence. Unfortunately I didn't pass the art test, hence this became one for my personal portfolio instead."

**2 THE FINAL BATTLE** "This topic was suggested by the Spit Painting Facebook group and I decided to use my Lasso tools and custom brushes approach, to create a battle scene. My backstory is that it's a battle between the shogun and the gnome warlock."

**3 XPEDITION/SHODOTENDO** "These characters are based on my personal film project called Xpedition. It's a sci-fi deep sea expedition inspired by Pacific Rim, The Martian and The Matrix. My intention was to create a realistic design for a production team to be able to construct it, hence there was lots of photobashing and painting over involved. Most of the design inspiration came from the underwater nature as well as product design."

**SUBMIT YOUR  
ART TO FXPOSÉ**

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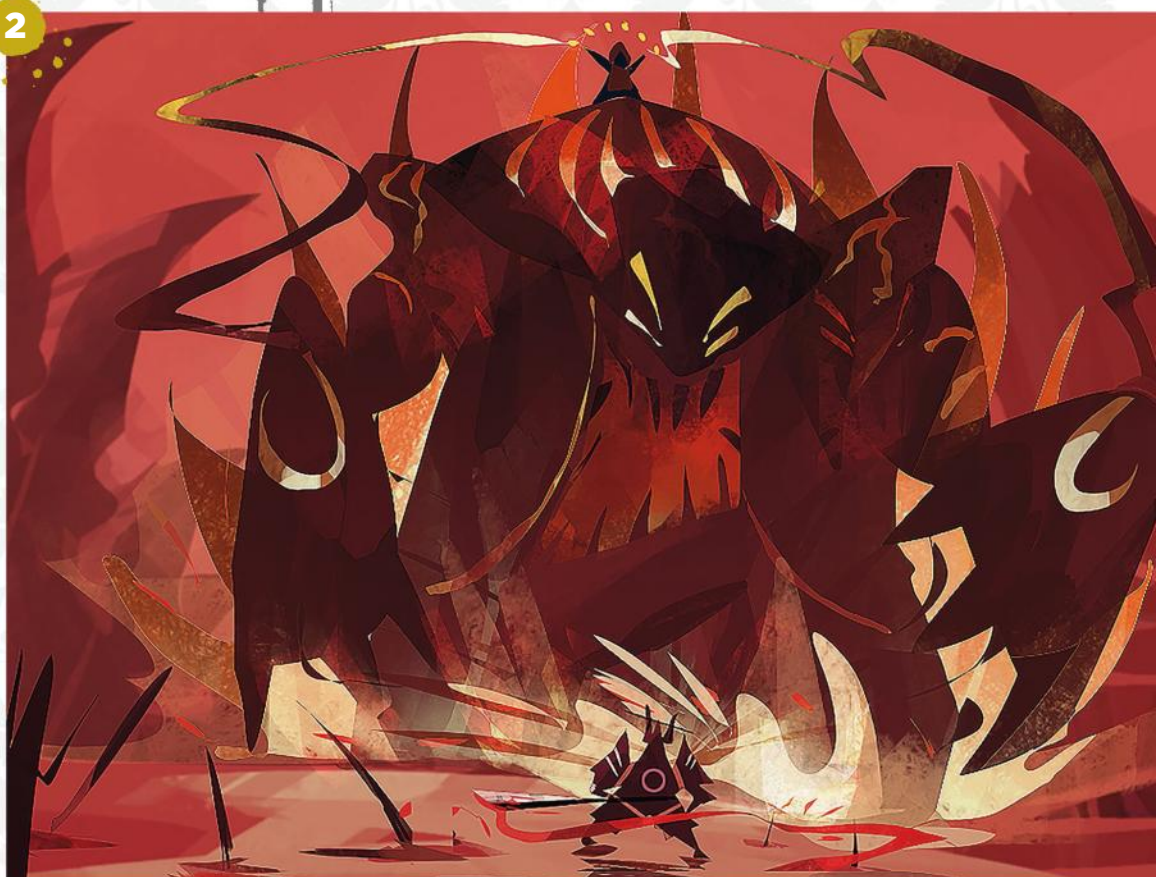
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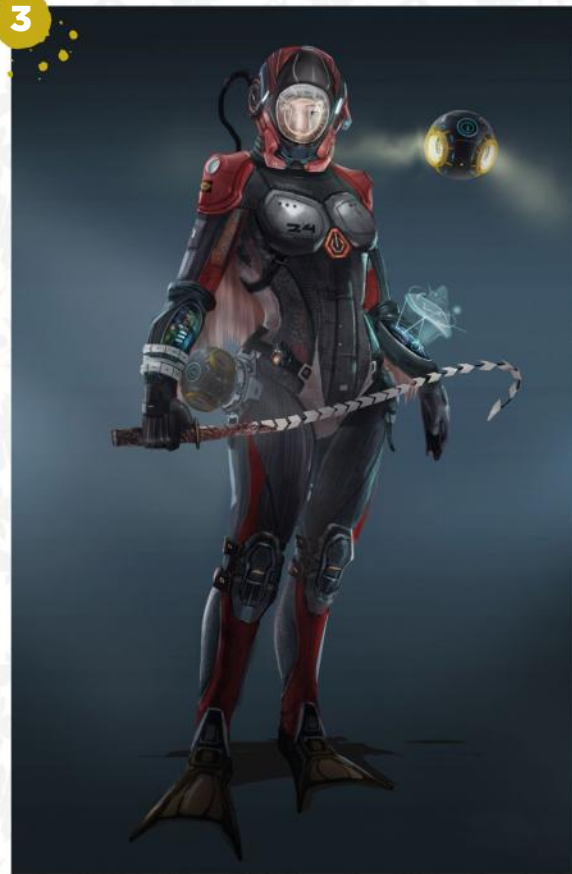
**IMAGINEFX CRIT**

"It's Fernanders' clever use of colour that grabs me first of all. I love the tones and atmosphere in The Journey and The Final Battle – totally different images. Which shows his range of skills, too."

**Beren Neale,  
Acting Editor**







ARTIST NEWS, SOFTWARE & EVENTS

# ImagineNation

AT THE CORE OF THE DIGITAL ART COMMUNITY

Filmmaker Ruairi Robinson collaborated with Jordu Schell on the creature's design.



## Bringing the **Leviathan** to life



**Big fish** Irish filmmaker Ruairi Robinson tells **Sammy Maine** how his proof-of-concept film of "Moby Dick In Space" got made...



Last year, Irish filmmaker Ruairi Robinson released the teaser for *The Leviathan*. Racking up over two million views online, the teaser's

success resulted in 20th Century Fox wanting to turn it into a film. Not bad for something that started as a joke.

"I was talking to a friend about a trope in franchises, where they set a sequel in space when they run out of good ideas," says Ruairi. "So I thought it would be funny to ruin classic literature by setting it in space. I hit on *Moby Dick* and a light bulb went off. This doesn't sound stupid. It could be great. And why hasn't it been done already?"

The project began in 2009 and Ruairi was fortunate enough to receive a £45,000 grant from The Irish Film Board. "In





### THE BARE ART NECESSITIES

Renowned concept artist Michael Kutsche reveals the approach he took for exaggerating the animals from Disney's live-action film *The Jungle Book*.

Page 23



### MAKE MINE A PINT

A studio that's also a bedroom and does a very good impression of a bar... Spanish artist Pablo Carpio shows us around his very cosy creative setup.

Page 24



### THE UNSOCIAL NETWORK

We find out how Vertigo Comic's Unfollow, charting a story wrapped around the more unsavoury aspects of social media, will make it on to TV.

Page 27



“I thought it'd be funny to ruin classic literature by setting it in space”

America, unless you have rich parents, it can be tough to crack an industry that doesn't want to pay you until you're making them a lot of money.”

The money meant Ruairi was able to tackle aspects of *The Leviathan* that weren't in his areas of expertise. One of the first people on board was veteran concept artist Jordu Schell (*Starship Troopers*, *300*, *Avatar*), who Ruairi hired to design the creature: “Jordu is amazing – he sketches in clay as fast as other people can draw.”

Jordu has worked with Ruairi on many occasions and describes him as one of the most creative and easy-going collaborators. “On his *Leviathan* teaser, Ruairi did a very rough sketch of the kind of creature he was looking for,



The team wanted to keep some elements of real-world machinery in their designs.

<b>LEVIATHAN</b>
Subject: <i>DRY BONE</i>
Artist: ADAM ANDERSON
Drawing #: 041



Concept artist Ben Muaro dictated the look of the heavy-duty workwear.



A pivotal moment in the short film, of the leviathan rising out of the clouds, was storyboarded early on in the creative process.

but after that gave me free reign to do what I wanted,” he explains. “I had no idea just how amazing the final project would be, but when I saw it I was blown away.”

### REALISTIC WORKWEAR

Ruairi also brought in concept artist Ben Muaro, who was working with Weta at the time. Taking care of the costume design, Ben explains that the overall look was very utilitarian: “I did quite a bit of research into heavy-duty



## PROOF OF CONCEPTS

Four examples of short self-funded films that are on the verge of going big...



### SUNDAYS

Set in Mexico City, *SUNDAYS* is a sci-fi imagining of a nightmarish future, in which its protagonist realises the love of his life is missing. Directed by Dutch filmmaker Mischa Rozema, it was widely supported by the international film and creative community, securing over \$50,000 through Kickstarter. Warner Bros won the bidding war and is planning to release the full-length feature.

<http://ifxm.ag/sundays-film>



### THE FLYING MAN

*The Flying Man* seems like a simple super hero story, but once you delve a little deeper, his intentions become unclear. Is he a super hero or a dangerous vigilante? Picked up by producer Scott Glassgold and working together with *The Wire* writer Chris Collins, *The Flying Man* was eventually sold to Sony/Columbia Pictures.

<http://ifxm.ag/flying-man>



### REALM

A woman who is able to enter the body's of the possessed to battle their inner demon and save their innocent souls – that's the crux of *Realm*, a concept which quickly caught the attention of Relativity Media. Originally developed by John Swetnam and Scott Speer, the final short film script was written by *The Vampire Diaries* producer Rebecca Sonnenshine.

<http://ifxm.ag/realm-film>



### RISE

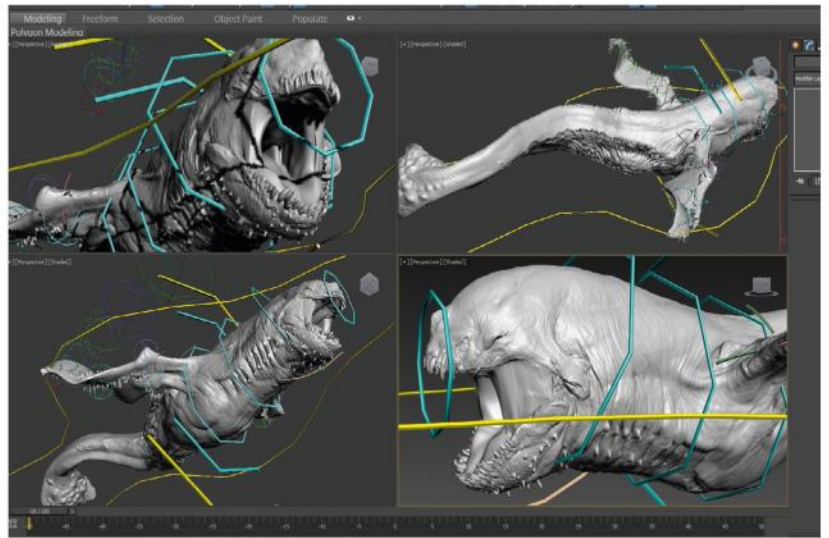
Able to make their five-minute short through \$36,000 funded on Kickstarter, *RISE* is a robot uprising unlike any other. Directed by David Kalark and written by Saw franchise writers Marcus Dunstan and Patrick Melton, the short stars *Star Trek*'s Anton Yelchin. It's only a matter of time before *RISE* is picked up for a full-length big-screen feature.

<http://ifxm.ag/rise-film>

Jordu Schell says he was given creative reign when finishing the creature design.



Ruairi's gem of an idea was to tackle Moby Dick for the space age.



➔ firefighter gear, NASA spacesuits and things of that nature for inspiration," he says. "After that, I took all the elements I thought were interesting in the real-world gear and pushed them into something more sci-fi.

"For the helmet design, I think I might have started by looking at some real-world gas masks and things like that, but I mainly just had fun exploring some interesting designs. Ruairi then picked the ones he liked and I combined everything for the final design that went forward in the short film."

The teaser was mostly produced working with one powerful gaming PC at home, but when it came to actually rendering it, Ruairi had to call in some favours. "Blur Studios

was kind enough to let me use its render farm in downtime," he explains. "It's all in 3ds Max, rendered in V-Ray and then composited in After Effects."

## FALLING FUNDS

Even with all the favours and a host of artists working on the teaser, the project didn't come without its bumps. "I basically started it with a chunk of money in the bank and watched it wither away throughout production. So that was the biggest primary motivator for me to deliver as soon as possible," Ruairi says. "What they don't tell you, is if you sell a movie, it's gonna take months for the paperwork to be done to

For a lot of the project, Ruairi worked using just one powerful gaming PC at home.

With over two million views, *The Leviathan* is one of the most popular proof-of-concept films out there.

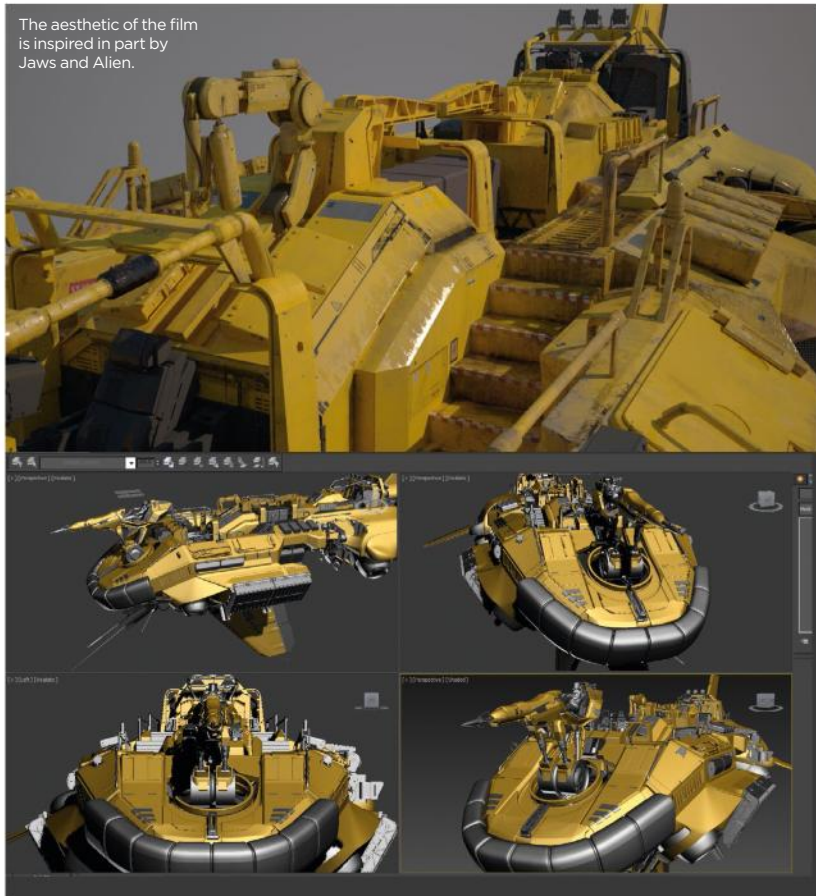
even get started on the movie. Literally months. Sometimes well over a year."

Thankfully for Ruairi, there have been some highs along the way. "I love storyboarding, I love doing the camera work and I'm pretty good at lighting and compositing. Compositing is my favourite part of this part of the process because you get to finally see a finished image after a load of processes, many of which are more technical than creative," he explains.

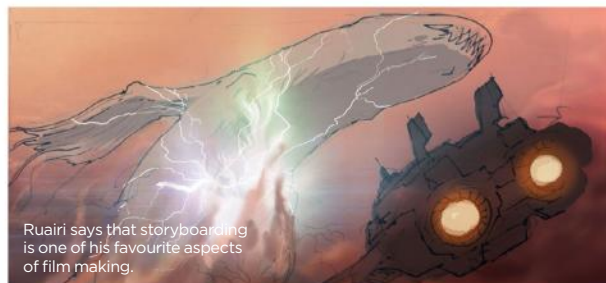
Ruairi says that a lot of time is spent solving software bugs, or playing with parameters that have no real-world relationship, so sometimes "you feel like you're pulling the lever on a slot machine



The aesthetic of the film is inspired in part by Jaws and Alien.



Ben Muaro says he wanted the costumes to have a utilitarian look.



Ruairi says that storyboarding is one of his favourite aspects of film making.

## “It’s Wages of Fear plus Jaws and then multiplied by Alien... I’m literally making my favourite movie of all time”

and hoping for the best. So that’s not for me,” he continues. “But the finishing is where I’m most happy. Especially because in comp you can move fast. For the most part.”

### MUSICAL BLISS

However, his absolute favourite part of the process is working with a composer, which he describes as “pure creativity – unencumbered by politics or any other concerns.” “I worked with Max Richter on a film, and seeing him take a vague, abstract idea and turn it into a concise, stunning, emotional composition that brings that concept to life, then seeing that played by a full orchestra... well, that’s pretty special.”

Ruairi and his team’s hard work paid off: The Leviathan’s online success resulted in it being picked up by 20th Century Fox. However, with no specific date set for the film release, Ruairi says that he’s working on the script with one other person, along with the producers. “If we get that into the right place, we move forward,” he explains. In anticipation of its release, Ruairi does, however, offer some insight into its aesthetic. “It’s basically Wages of Fear plus Jaws and then multiplied by Alien, which should hopefully give an idea of the tone of the movie and some of the obvious influences,” he says. “I’m literally making my favourite movie of all time.”



Space-age Moby Dick comes through the clouds to destroy its enemy.



20th Century Fox has financed the forthcoming full-length film.





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The giant python Kaa urges Mowgli to place his trust in her.



# Animal magic

**Book of life** Discover the creativity that went into the remake of *The Jungle Book*, in Titan's latest Art of...

She may be outside her usual jungle home, but Kaa is no less of a threat to Bagheera and Baloo.



All images © Disney/Titan Books

**With the remake of Disney's *Jungle Book* wowing audiences, Titan Books has released a book that takes you behind the scenes and reveals some of the film's incredible concept art.**

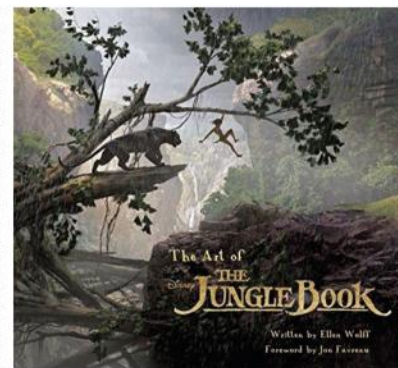
The Art of the *Jungle Book* looks at how a range of animal characters were brought to life. It covers the recreation of the jungle itself, and how blue screen scenes were shot live with Mowgli actor Neel Sethi and composited with VFX on the fly. But what you're likely to drool over most is the concept imagery by the likes of Justin Sweet, Vance Kovacs and Michael Kutsche.

"It was clear from the beginning that it would be a film that would rely heavily on visual effects," says Michael. "We were going for a photoreal look but at the same time tried to give the animals a lot of personality, so they wouldn't just look like generic animals."



Director Jon Favreau wanted to create a film that looked at the jungle through the eyes of a child, and this idea gave the concept artists their cue. Everything had to look a little bit bigger, and more mystical and dangerous. The artists took inspiration from everything from the original book by Rudyard Kipling and its illustrations, through to etchings of animals by Gustave Doré.

"There's a sense of awe mixed with a certain anxiety towards nature when looking



The 156-page book is packed with lush concepts, behind-the-scenes photos and stills from the film.

at these old illustrations," says Michael. "They appear to come from a time before nature was tamed, when embarking on a safari was the single most exciting experience people could think of."

Michael started his animal concepts in pencil, then worked them up in Painter and Photoshop. Later on, he helped tweak some of the 3D model versions alongside production designer Christopher Glass.

"I had fun working on the images where Mowgli is riding on Baloo and where he's standing in front of Shere Khan, because they feel like a finished illustration with some storytelling going on," adds Michael.

The Art of the *Jungle Book* by Ellen Wolff is out now at £30. See [www.titanbooks.com](http://www.titanbooks.com).

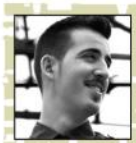
Mowgli, accompanied by his friend Bagheera, searches for a village where he'll be safe from Shere Khan.





## Pablo Carpio

**Watering hole** Pull up a stool in the room of this Spanish artist, who creates art in his bedroom-cum-bar



**This is the place where I spend almost all the hours of the day. It's a warm room that doubles up as a cozy bar, in a flat that's close to the centre of Madrid.**

When I say almost all, I'm not kidding, because my bed is also in the room, just out of shot. Furthermore, I work from home and so that means I spend even more time within these four walls. That being said, I try to set some time aside to go out into the real world, to get some exercise and remind myself that there's something big and yellow called the Sun. I'm totally against the idea of the digital artist as a nerdy kid who's always at home. I love to hang out with friends at parties and enjoy good company just as much as being alone, with just the light of the computer to illuminate the room.

**“My life's dream is to work on a Star Wars film – there, I actually said it!”**

I can't imagine my life without Star Wars. I saw *The Phantom Menace* at the cinema when I was the same age as Anakin in the film. George Lucas' universe immediately clicked with me, and the saga has accompanied me during my whole life. My life's dream is to work on a Star Wars film – there, I actually said it! And all the Star Wars stuff in my room reminds me of where I come from, and where I want to go.

I'm not going to lie: I spent some time tidying the room for this article. Normally, the table is loaded with bits and bobs. This room has grown with me over the years, so it's not only the place where I work, but also a reflection of myself. Everything I love is here, as are many great memories.

Visit [www.artstation.com/artist/pablocarpio](http://www.artstation.com/artist/pablocarpio) to see more of Pablo's art.



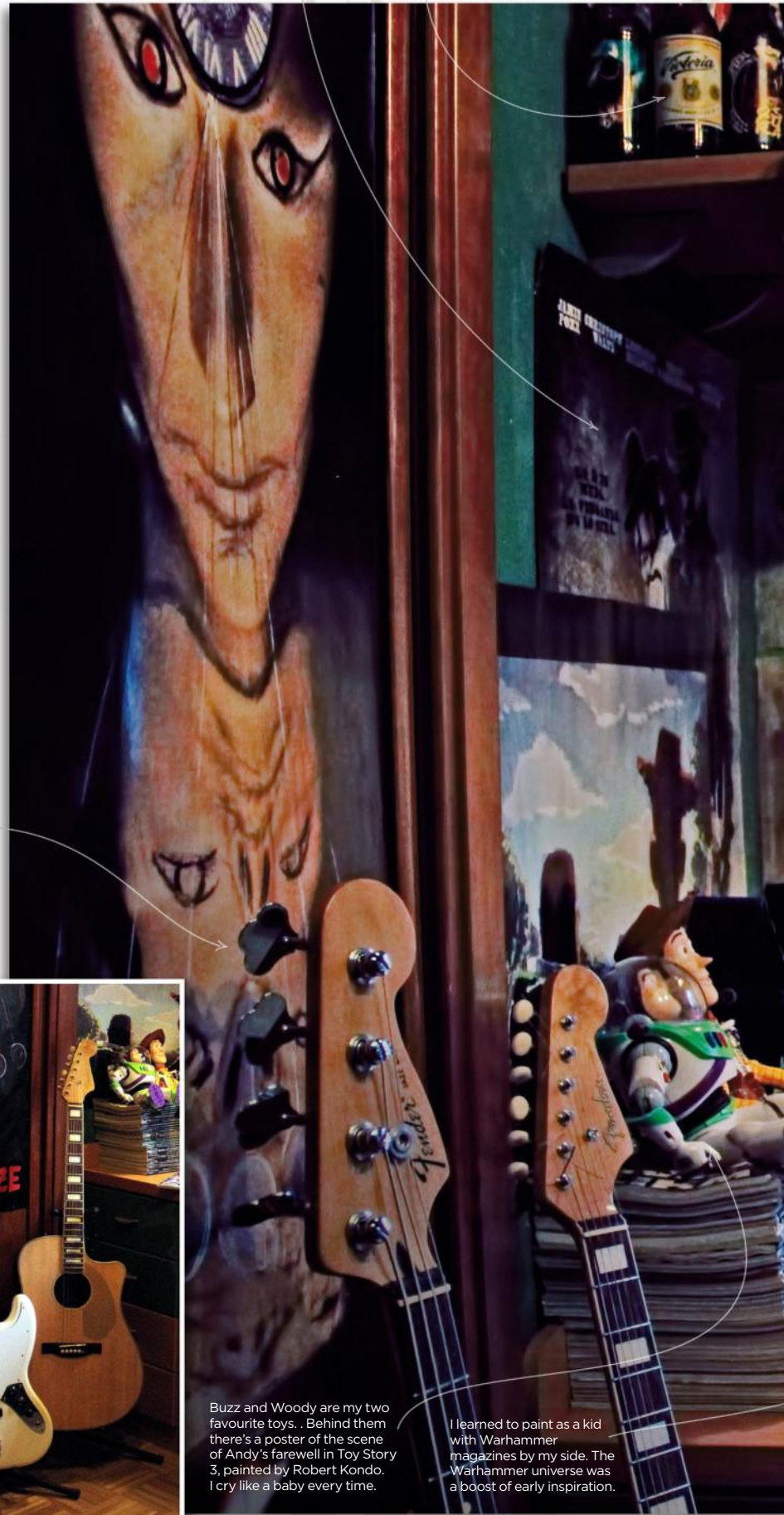
Just like many kids, I was raised on LEGO and I learned how to walk over them, not on them. If you're an artist and you haven't played with LEGO during your childhood, you're not a trustworthy person.

While I'm waiting for a render to finish, I spend my time playing my acoustic and bass guitars. I spent about seven years playing in different bands, from indie pop to grunge and metalcore. I love every type of music!



This poster of Tarantino's *Django Unchained* was given to me by a friend who works in a cinema. I'm fast running out of wall space.

One of my hobbies is to collect beer bottles from around the world, from a tavern that brings in new imported beers every week.



Buzz and Woody are my two favourite toys. Behind them there's a poster of the scene of Andy's farewell in *Toy Story 3*, painted by Robert Kondo. I cry like a baby every time.

I learned to paint as a kid with *Warhammer* magazines by my side. The *Warhammer* universe was a boost of early inspiration.



# Artist news, software & events

I love football! A lot of friends tell me that it's weird for an artist, but I can't help it. I'm a Atlético de Madrid supporter and I try to watch them any time I can.

Here are some books that I regularly dive into, looking for references, ideas and inspiration. They cover film concept art, famous artists, and classic art theory.



A collection of Leonardo di Vinci's sketches, one of history's best artists. I have them in front of me for fast references and to remind me that he was a human being, who needed to go to the bathroom and eat like anyone else. He was good because he loved what he was doing and dedicated his life to it.

I found this Post-it at my university, stuck to one of my oil paintings one day. It says "Cheer up! It's turning out awesome. I love it." I never found out who put it there, but I keep it for the days when I feeling low.

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# Crowd-sourcing comrades

**Artistic alliance** Graeme McCormack reveals how real-life friendships held the key to his recent Kickstarter victory



**Canadian artist Graeme McCormack is the latest illustrator in the fantasy community to successfully fund his sketchbook through Kickstarter. It began, Graeme says, "like most things: a slow percolation of people asking about whether I was planning on making a book of my work."**

After signing up for a local convention, Graeme decided it was the right time to



Eighty five backers raised 230 per cent more than Graeme needed to fund his sketchbook.

create something he could share. The artist used social media and the power of supportive friends to get the word out. "It felt really awkward at first to ask your friends to share it out and help spread the word," he explains. "And then entirely humbling when so many did and more so of their own accord."

Thanks to his mates, with four days left to spare he'd already earned double his initial pledge goal. Yet the success of the campaign behind him doesn't mean the hardship is over: "Now the pressure is on to produce something I would really want to have myself and something I'd want on my coffee table." So far, he's planned a 48-page, full-colour volume of all his favourite digital and traditional drawings. "I picked a lot of material that bled into other sketches and am trying to present as many full sketchbook pages as I can, instead of smaller snippets, so you get the full picture."

The book, entitled Draw Cool Sh\*t, will be available to buy from Graeme's online store: <http://shop.wizardsandunicorns.com>.



Social media and the power of friendship were the key to Graeme's success.

Graeme advises others to "make your project as captivating as possible and do your research," if you want to fund through Kickstarter.

© 2015 Rob Williams and Michael Dowling



Unfollow's Rubinstein is one of the comic's random factors as the main characters participate in a new kind of food chain.

# Don't Unfollow this

**Social experiment** Find out about the cult comic that could become a new hit on the small screen

**Four British creatives have put together a new comic series called Unfollow, which has gained quite a following. Indeed, just seven issues in and the concept has been sold to the American broadcaster ABC to develop for television.**

Drawn by Michael Dowling and written by Rob Williams, Unfollow was inspired by the ins and outs of social media. A dying media mogul leaves his fortune to be divided between 140 random people, but there are forces out there that are standing in the way of the winners.

Despite the very digital concept behind it,  Michael Dowling's gone for a traditional feel for the artwork. "It's mostly ink on paper - I use sable brushes and Japanese dip pens. I love the feel of a good pen on good paper."

The character he enjoys most is Rubinstein, a masked lunatic seemingly there to protect the 140. "He's got that crazy mask and he's always on the cusp of doing something unexpected - usually something awful," says Michael.



Matt Taylor's covers have been designed to mimic an iPad screen, to chime with the social media theme.

With covers by Matt Taylor and colouring by illustrator Quinton Winter, Unfollow has brought a fresh new look to the shelf, but how it translates to TV is the question. "As for how true it can be to the comic and whether the designs would be true should it make it to our TV screens, that's really out of our hands," says writer Rob Williams. "All we can and should concentrate on is telling the best story we can."

Unfollow is published by Vertigo Comics. Find out more about the developing story at [www.vertigocomics.com](http://www.vertigocomics.com).

# Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



Contact Acting Editor, **Beren Neale**, on [beren@imaginefx.com](mailto:beren@imaginefx.com) or write to ImagineFX, Future Plc, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA, UK



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## A practical question

Is there a way to get a subscription for Practical Painter, for those of us living in Canada?

*Brooke Simpson, via email*

**Beren replies** Thanks for your email Brooke. At the moment Practical Painter is a one-off, special edition, so you can't subscribe as such. But if it's popular – and it seems to be so far – there's every chance we'd produce a follow-up issue on the same subject.

The other good news is that we post issues to Canada, too. For you or anyone else wanting to order a copy, simply visit [www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk](http://www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk) and type "Practical Painter" into the search box at the top. That should take you straight to it.

## Comic behaviour

I was just wondering, what with Captain America: Civil War being so dog-damn awesome, whether you'd be doing another comics issue any time soon?

I've long been a fan of comic art without ever really having the courage to have a serious try at recreating it. But now the film has refreshed my appetite for painting my own comic art and I'm eager to learn how.

*Marc Rogers, via email*

**Beren replies** Hello Marc. This is a moment of what you might call 'coincidence', because, luckily for you, we have a comic art issue coming up very soon. Fans of DC Comics' Ken Lashley, and the character Black Panther, will enjoy it.

## A great concept?

I noticed an advert for something called Concept Artist. Is this a regular publication, and, either way, when and where can I get it?

*Sarah Phelps, via email*

**Beren replies** Thanks for getting in touch Sarah. Concept Artist is a special edition that's full of work from artists behind big-name films and games, such as Star Wars:



Readers in Canada – and elsewhere in the world – can still get their hands on Practical Painter.



**DID YOU MISS ISSUE 135, ON ANATOMY?** Turn to page 52 to see how you can get hold of it, and other recent editions, too.



Concept Artist is a special issue dedicated to highlighting the work that helped shape the latest films and games.

The Force Awakens, Rise of the Tomb Raider and Horizon Zero Dawn. At the moment it's a one-off, but like with Practical Painter, if it's popular it'll probably happen again. Go to [www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk](http://www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk) to order a copy – we're sure you won't regret it.

## Did we boob?

Has anyone ever accused you of creating a soft porn magazine? Or at least a publication that peddles other people's sexual fantasies? Before you get angry, that isn't my view. I love the magazine and hadn't considered this angle. But a friend picked up issue 135 and made these suggestions. I could see his point. It was an anatomy special, so perhaps it's an unfair example, but some might interpret the image on page 55 as an underage lesbian scene. There are plenty of mammary glands on display elsewhere and even some male genitalia. But that's defensible because it's an anatomy issue.

However, the image on page 11 looks to me like a porn star pose. Huge bosoms, pushed towards the viewer. Is it not playing on our desires in a manipulative way? I'm just curious about your take on this issue.

*Katy Skelton, via email*

**Beren replies** I'm not angry, Katy! But you raise some interesting points. I guess firstly, as we're a magazine about fantasy art, we wouldn't want to limit anyone's imagination. Not every single person will like when someone else's mind has gone when they're being creative, but if it's helped to produce valid, high-quality and compelling art, then it's usually a good thing. If art was truly disturbing, but high quality, would he carry it? Well, no. So there is a line somewhere, but I don't think either of the images in question have crossed it.

The image on page 11 is painted by a female artist, who's created some powerful – and yes, sexualised – women. To me they celebrate the female form, while the other image has to be seen in the context of its genre, anime. To me art should challenge established ideas at times and you could say both the cases you highlight do that. What do other readers think? I don't think topic should ever be ignored or considered finished with, so I'm really interested in getting as many points of view as possible...



Your art news that's grabbed our attention



**SimonWrightArt**  
**@SimonWrightArt**



"Alien Encounter Painting"



**Michael 'Mykol' Ward**  
**@MikeWardDraws**



"It's not really fantasy but I used to draw on a whiteboard for hours when the pain was too much to sleep"



**Anna Rolyak**  
**@roanna**



"Rey from the Star Wars"



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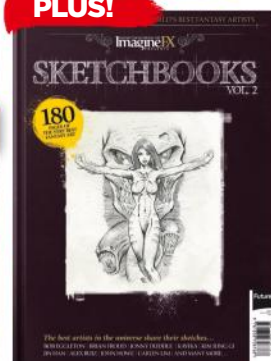
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# Artist Q&A

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Michelle's an illustrator and concept artist who works in the entertainment and gaming industry. More of her work and techniques can be found at her Patreon page.  
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**Nick Harris**  
English artist Nick switched to a digital canvas in 2000, after 18 years of using traditional media. Most of his work involves creating artwork for children's books.  
[www.nickillus.com](http://www.nickillus.com)

**Sara Forlenza**  
Sara is a full-time freelance illustrator living in Italy. Most of her work assignments comprise book covers, and artwork for digital card games and RPGs.  
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**Paco Rico Torres**  
Freelance illustrator Paco lives in Spain, and has produced sci-fi and fantasy art for several card games, magazines, books and role-playing games.  
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**Mike Corriero**  
Mike lives in New Jersey, and has years of experience as a freelance concept artist and illustrator for the entertainment industries. Creature design is his forte.  
[www.mikecorriero.com](http://www.mikecorriero.com)



Behold, Alicia the Smasher Bunny wielding her oversized hammer and smashing it forcefully into the ground.

## Question

I want to paint a character in an dynamic action scene – what advice do you have please?

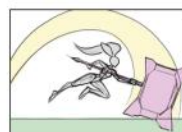
*Hayley Singh, England*

## Answer

**Michelle replies**

If there's a lot going in an action scene, such as a warrior wielding a large hammer in battle, then I find it helpful to break the composition into standalone elements and solve them one at a time.

First, I decide how I'd like the character to be holding the hammer and what I want them to be doing with it: swinging it, smashing something or someone with it, and so on. During this early stage I draw out the pose from the side to better understand it, before drawing it in



Painting a perspective-heavy composition can be tricky, if you haven't got a grasp on where all the elements are located. I draw it out from the side first, so I fully understand the character's pose first.

perspective. Next, I decide what kind of character is wielding the hammer, and the type of armour they're wearing.

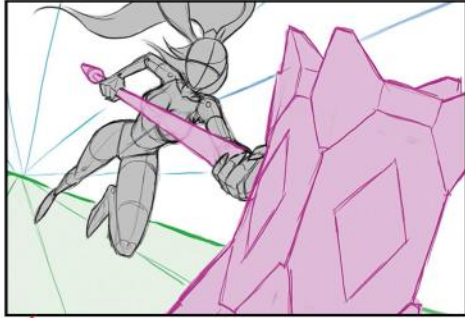
Once I have the pose, type of character, and their armour design finalised, I sketch out the pose and character in perspective and decide what angle I'd like to view the character from as I'm sketching it out. I then build up the individual armour elements on to the character, and add motion effects, and flying rocks and dirt to show the hammer smashing with great force into the ground.

## Artist Q&A Need our advice?

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## Step-by-step: Illustrating a dynamic aggressive pose



**1** After drawing the basic side-on view, I sketch the character's basic pose at a dynamic angle. I also draw in the basic perspective lines for the scene and the horizon line, so that I have a good idea of the camera angle, composition, and where the character is located in the type of scene that I want to illustrate.



**2** I draw the basic shapes of the figure's armour, and the hammer's motion arc. I separate off the main parts of the warrior, weapon and background into masked layers by creating new layers for each, selecting the areas and filling them in with the Paint Bucket tool. Then I block in the lighting and rendering on each layer.



**3** I then add motion effects, such as blur to the hammer, character's arms, legs, and hair to show the character jumping and swinging the hammer. I select the flying rocks that I want to blur with the Polygon Lasso tool and go to Filter>Blur>Motion Blur. Then I choose the angle and amount, and click OK.

## Question

Help me design and paint a creature that's suitable for the younger viewer

Francesca Pinkley, England



## Answer Nick replies



Aliens and monsters are always fun to do because you can let your imagination fly. However, certain markets demand that you pull your wings in a bit. Children's publishing can be like that, in my experience.

While many 12-year-olds and above may not be easily shocked, younger minds aren't usually ready for images such as slaving, fanged terrors. Most publishing houses I've worked with impose guidelines to protect children from such things. Presentation and approach are key. Look at the characters from multi-million blockbusters such as *Monsters Inc.* Their cartoon styling and humour transforms them to child-friendly fare – despite the presence of fangs, claws, tentacles or anything else.

Making a character look funny is a tried-and-tested method, but even with this you need to moderate content to avoid anything that's too adult in nature. Accepted practice is that the younger the audience, the less threatening content needs to be.

This makes it a fun challenge, though. Your alien can still have claws, fangs and tentacles. You must present them in a way that's unlikely to traumatise. Look at real-life creatures. Consider textures. Would a snake be less frightening, if instead of scales it was furry and soft? More like a draft excluder with teeth. Consider colour. Is a pink crocodile less scary than a dark green one? While slimy isn't necessarily scary – just look at B.O.B., the sentient jelly from *Monsters vs Aliens*.



A creature loosely based on something between a slug and an anemone is my starting point. Version two is more threatening, and three more threatening still. Colours matter.



## Artist's secret

### WORK WITHOUT MASKS

If your software doesn't have masks, the Lock Layer Transparency options enable you to paint freely with pattern and texture, once you've blocked the shape in. I duplicate and lock layers set to Multiply to paint shadows.

## Question

### Help me apply manga styling to an everyday motor vehicle

Jason Holifield, US

## Answer

Michelle replies



Applying manga styling to a vehicle such as a car or a motorbike can easily be achieved with good reference and creative problem-solving. I first collect references of the vehicle I want to depict from stock websites like shutterstock.com, and manga versions of that vehicle and any other manga references that will inspire the design. At this stage I also think about what types of themes I want to use for the manga vehicle design.

Then I start sketching out different black and white ideas for the manga vehicle, thinking about value, silhouette and unique iconic shapes. Once I have the first round of ideas sketched, I pick one and sketch it out more, working in black and white and with silhouette and value. I then do different colour explorations for the chosen design, thinking about the types of colours and colour schemes that would fit for the type of design I'm going for and the type of character that will ride this vehicle.

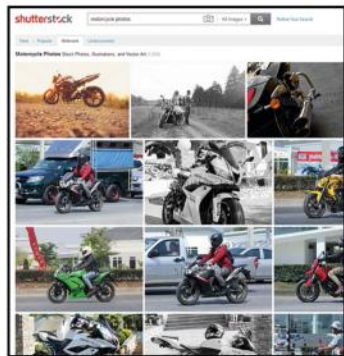
Once I've decided on the final design and colours for the vehicle, I refine and light the final design, focusing on final polish and materials.



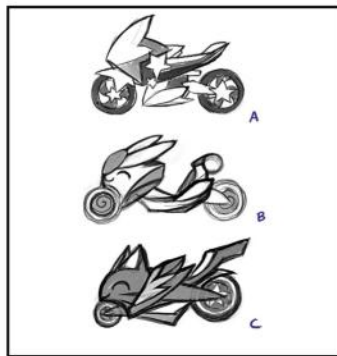
Here's the final refined and lit shoujo manga-style bunny motorcycle.



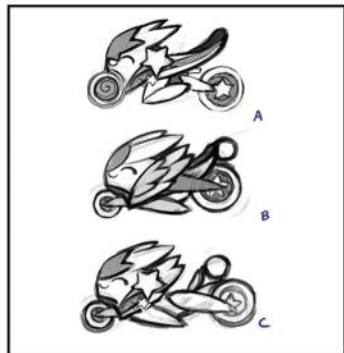
## Step-by-step: Concept a vehicle that's manga through and through



**1** I collect references for the vehicle I want to design from stock photo websites such as shutterstock.com. I also collect any other manga references for inspiration. I think about what direction I want to take the design of the manga vehicle in, and consider who the driver or rider will be of this type of shoujo manga vehicle, which should appeal to a teenage girl audience.



**2** Next, I sketch out the first set of different ideas for the manga vehicle. I think about many different kinds of ideas during this first phase of iteration. I also work in black and white and only think about value, shape, and iconic silhouette at this stage. Once I have sketched out the different ideas that I want, I choose the final idea that I want to explore further.



**3** Next, I do more black and white value concept iterations of the chosen idea. I put together elements that I like from some of the other concept sketches and unify them into new variations for the chosen idea: the manga bunny motorcycle. I select some of the elements to use from the star motorcycle and cat motorcycle to create more versions of the bunny bike.



**4** Once I've finalised the bunny motorcycle design, I produce different colour schemes for the design using bright shoujo colours. I then settle on a final colour scheme and render, light and refine the final concept. I create a new black layer, set it to Color Dodge mode and start painting on that layer with a light colour to add in quick lighting and metallic highlights.



## Question

Do you have any tips for portraying rust effects?

Aidan Lefroy, New Zealand

For any painting to work there needs to be a consistent level of finish. Painting textures on various surfaces can help in this respect. Keep their scale in mind.

## Answer

Nick replies



Painting grotty surfaces is fun. Grime, scratches, dents, mould and, of course, rust. I'm using ArtRage for its stencils and paper textures, and I want to tackle a long-forgotten gardener drone, on a neglected rooftop garden. I'm after a dated robot design, so I Google images of old lawnmowers and paste reference images on the work space.

For the scene to work the background needs to have a similar level of finish, at least in places. Another ArtRage advantage for me is the fact that I've taken time to build a few custom sticker brushes (like an image hose). They enable me to quickly block in foliage and such.

Once a general level of finish is built up, and a light pattern established, it informs how detailed

you need to paint your rust. First I paint the robot loosely, as though it's grimy but only hinting at dark rust colours. Then I duplicate his paint layer and lock its transparency. I go to the drop down menu on the layer marker and open Edit Layer Texture. By picking a coarse paper and adjusting the grain, you can paint with that texture freely with a suitable chalk setting.

## Step-by-step: Design and paint a rusting robot



**1** I block in base colours under the sketch and lay rough shadow areas out on a Multiply layer over those. I find it useful to separate colour blocks, such as the planters on their own layers over the base colour layer. It makes it easier to apply textures to them later on, by just locking their transparency when needed.



**2** I work up the background and robot together to help ensure the scene works as a whole once it's finished. Because I'm basing the robot design on old lawnmowers, I use the Chalk tool to lay down a green-brown base on his casing, and build form and early highlights using a shadow layer for the robot.



**3** I lay down a basic rust pattern on him using the Lock Transparency process described on page 33. When the scene and lighting are established, I add another layer to pick out highlights and boost rust textures where the light catches it. I remember to keep colours suited to the scene as a whole.

## Question

### My crashing waves look odd – please help

Gabriel Mann, Australia

## Answer

Paco replies



The key to painting waves is to understand their shape and how the light affects them. First let's consider their shape. The ocean is just one big mass of water, so all the waves are connected. I tend to think of a wavy sea as a mountain range: there are mountains and there are valleys, and all of them are connected to each other. A wavy mass of water has a similar shape

When painting the light in the scene, you should bear in mind that the water will reflect the light much like a mirror, but also enables the light to pass through it. The



water will also reflect – at least partially – any surrounding colour (normally the sky's colour). Because light passes through water, the highlights aren't always on the surface. If sunlight is passing through the wave, you should paint a light inside the wave, with an intense colour such as blue or green, depending on the water's colour. This will be different to the colours of the reflections of the sunlight or the sky.

If a wave is crashing, then you should paint sea foam and a big splash. Avoid soft and blurry brushes: instead, paint the main body of the foam with a hard, irregular brush. Be sure to paint highlights and shadows, and don't paint it all white just because it's supposed to be white. Then add the splash using a "splasy" brush: either create one or download a free one (search online for 'water splash brushes'). Paint all over the sea foam.

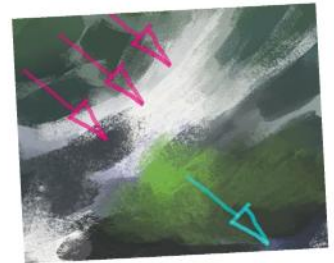
Start with solid, basic shapes and observe how light affects surfaces. Just because water and foam aren't hard elements doesn't mean that you can skip that part.

To paint a wave crashing you should paint a big splash and a lot of foam. A little foam on the surrounding waves can look good, but be subtle.



## Artist's secret

**DON'T FORGET THE LIGHT**  
Paint reflections of the sky on the parts of the waves that are facing upwards. Add some light on the parts without reflection, because the light can pass through the water and create some highlights on places where technically there should be shadows.



I paint water dripping off my merman using a Scattered brush and a light colour.

## Question

### Can you help me paint a dripping wet character?

Mai Tobray, Canada

## Answer

Sara replies



When I approach a drawing, I like to imagine its back-story. For this article I choose to represent a merman who's climbed out of the water to listen a girl while she's reading a book.

I choose a point of view slightly from above, which enables me to show the merman's watery environment, his relaxed posture that he adopts while listening, his tail, part of the boat and the girl. I place her on the side of the image, so that the merman remains the focus of the scene.

Next I sketch the background, so I can choose where to place the primary light source. Its position is crucial because of the reflective surface of the sea water. Then I add the waves and the background rocks.

Now I can start to paint the merman. I choose a slightly cool shade for the skin because most of the character will be in the key light shadow and there'll be a cool blue colour for the ambient light. I don't introduce too many highlights because later on I'll define the body with a shining colour to simulate wet skin.



## Question

### How should I paint an underwater castle?

Rachel Day, England



## Answer

Paco replies



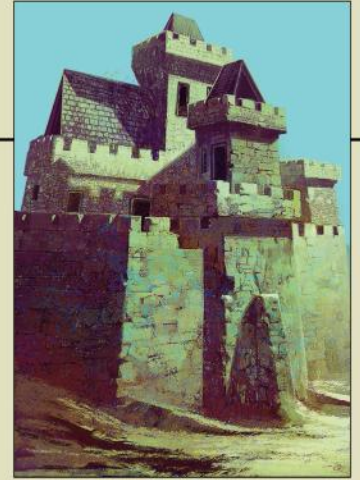
A castle that's underwater is much like a castle on land. The main difference will be in the depiction of the environment and atmosphere, because the structure is submerged.

Normally, if you're underwater you'll notice that the water absorbs a good amount of daylight. There'll also be floating particles, such as sand or mud, that creates a colour cast on the immediate surroundings, and objects that are all but obscured and blend into the background because of the reduced clarity of the water and lower light levels. With a few tweaks, a painting of a murky, foggy afternoon can resemble an underwater setting. However, bear in mind that everything depends on the type of water you want to depict.

My approach for this article is to first paint a castle with an appropriate light source, possibly from the sun above the water, but perhaps from somewhere underwater. Next, I add the desired amount of weathering to the castle, caused by erosion, seaweed growing on the walls, and so on. Then I apply a unifying colour to the image: this could be blue, but I also consider green or brown. Finally, I paint over the distant parts of the castle to blend them into the background. I'm happy to lose detail, or make some parts of the castle almost exactly like the background.



Don't let the underwater setting distract you from tackling the usual composition factors, such as shape, perspective, illumination and texture. The watery environment is essentially a matter of colour and contrast.



Paint the stone castle as usual, then add your unifying water colour. If you paint the castle with blue hues from the start, it may end up looking monochromatic.

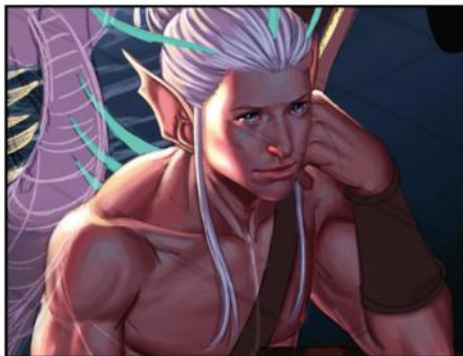
## Artist's secret

### DON'T USE JUST ONE LAYER

The easiest way to unify the underwater scene is to combine color layers, and layers of different blend modes. Using Lighten layers or correcting with adjustment layers is useful for blending the distant castle areas with the background.



## Step-by-step: Depict a watery character



**1** After laying down the background I paint the merman's skin. I don't worry about depicting its wetness. Instead, I only sketch the primary light source (which in this case is also a very warm rim light), the shadows and the cold ambient light that's reflected from the sky.



**2** Create an Overlay layer, choose a light blue and paint the scales one by one following neat rows. You could also use a texture for this stage. I ensure the direction of the scales follow the merman's body and tail. Some scales on the arms and torso enhance the amphibious look.



**3** To depict wet, shiny skin I select a light colour that's close to the shade of the light source, then apply brushstrokes to all the volumes of the body. I choose a brush with a rough texture. In areas like the elbows, chest and chin I add the highlights of reflected light from the water.

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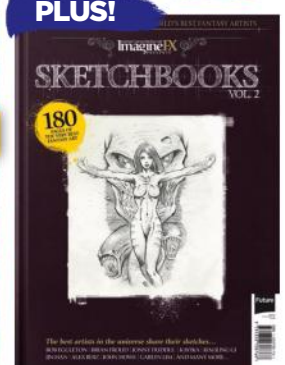
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## Question

# Any advice for making a fantasy creature look plausible?

Simon Kaminska, US

## Answer

Mike replies



Tackling anatomy that doesn't exist isn't as difficult as it may seem if you take a look at animals that closely relate to what you're trying to design. It's just a matter of applying the reference and combining what exists in the real world with what you've envisioned in your mind.

Regardless of how alien or crazy the anatomy may appear, it all functions the same way as Earth's own animals' joints and muscles. I'm simply modifying the amount of bones, joints and how that structure is designed using what I've learned from varied species in all the different classes and families of our own taxonomic ranks.

Something that I tell myself and others, which I believe helps a lot, is to think of your creature as a real animal and not some mythical monster. If you take the view that it's an actual species, it's easier to relate your fictional creature to how a real world animal walks, runs, jumps and how



This beast has a forelimb that consists of an additional joint not usually seen in nature, but it's something you can recreate by studying bones.

its anatomy reacts in a vast array of different actions. It's best to consider the purpose behind the anatomy as well, instead of just drawing something that looks interesting.

This comes down to the guiding principle that form follows function. Which simply means that it's more important to make sure a design functions properly before you worry too much about the aesthetic details. So I always try to keep things simple early on until I've solved the way the anatomy is broken up and how this creature fits within my own fictional world.



The bone structure of the limbs in canines and felines are very similar. I've used their limbs as a starting point to create my own multi-jointed limb.

## Artist's secret

PLAY WITH MUSCLE MOVEMENT IN YOUR CREATURE DESIGNS



It's important to focus on the breakup of the surface so that you can better understand what's happening beneath those forms. Look in a mirror and study how your own muscles react to the movement of your elbow, wrist and shoulder.

## Step-by-step: Constructing original anatomy

**1** I start with a sketch that focuses on line work, conveying the key elements of the design. This comes down to where joints bend and how the stance is poised based on the motion of those limbs. I'll make sense of the anatomy as I move forward, building up layers in Photoshop.



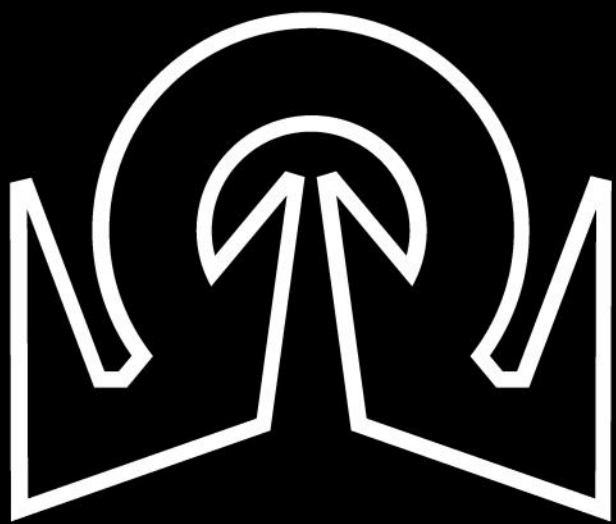
**2** What I've done with this front leg is combine fore- and hind-limb elements so it consists of a knee and an elbow. Study the skeletal anatomy of real-world animals and it comes down to figuring out which joint is which and how best to combine those bones in a believable fashion.



**3** Using different layer modes helps when figuring out how the musculature and bones work beneath the surface. Once you lower the Opacity of a layer, it's easy to draw on top of the silhouette where the muscle groups are located. This helps you line everything up.



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# BLACK MAGIC

We speak to some of the artists behind *Shadows Over Innistrad*, the latest card set from **Magic: The Gathering**



Populated with werewolves, vampires and the shambling dead, the new *Shadows Over Innistrad* cards from *Magic: The Gathering* are on the dark side. Armed with a description from the art director and the *Innistrad* style guide, it was up to *Magic's* team of artists to bring the plane's horde of nightmares to life.

Despite each illustration having to achieve specific storytelling goals, there was always room for creative interpretation. "It's the illustrator's job to expand on the prompt, to find new, exciting ways to portray the scene without contradicting the art description," says Ryan Pancoast, the artist behind several cards in the new series.

"Something frightening or unsettling doesn't need to be unequivocally evil. It's more how the viewer is unsure if it is or isn't," says Seb McKinnon, the creator of notably uncanny cards. As a master of terror, Seb knows how to get under the player's skin. "That in-between state, both intriguing and terrifying, is the kind of creepiness I respond to," he says. "Subtlety is everything."

"Overall, I think fans and art directors react more to clever and appropriate usage of that freedom," adds artist Ryan Alexander Lee. "The choices made have to be in service to the success of the game." Here are some of the most striking pieces of the new set...

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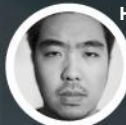




Will Murai

# MACABRE WALTZ

WWW.WILLMURAI.COM



## How did you settle on the colour scheme for this particular image?

When I first read the art description, I started visualising the scene. I began solving storytelling and visual problems in my mind, such as the colour scheme. Lilliana's colour palette comprises many hues of purples and gold, with a dark hair and pale skin. I wanted her to pop in the scene, so I imagined a strong focused spotlight making her porcelain-like skin contrast with the bluish/greenish hues in the cemetery. All of that would also go with the classic look and feel for the Black mana, which is at the core of Magic's visual identity.

## What research did you undertake?

Lilliana's design was already defined, so I focused on trying to convey the right action in the scene. I watched lots of waltz videos featuring famous dancers and also the basics, showing the essence of the dance. One of the main features in this image is that Lilliana is taking the male role in the waltz, so I needed to understand what that means and looks like in the context of the storytelling.

## Are you free to make your images as macabre as possible?

Working for Magic is very satisfying, because I've always had creative freedom to suggest and push the limits of the storytelling. I've yet to be in a situation where I felt creatively constrained while working with this team. I believe that, as professionals, we need to understand the product we're working on, and know the audience that it's aimed at. But we can still toy with ideas of where to take an illustration.

*"Will can draw and paint like a pro, but he can also find the fun. He intuitively finds what the fantastical heart of an art description is and conveys it to the viewer. He never says, 'Oh well, it's what they asked for, so I'll just paint it'. He blows us away over and over again."*

*Jeremy Jarvis, Principal Designer at Wizards of the Coast*



Ryan Pancoast  
**KINDLY STRANGER**

WWW.RYANPANCOAST.COM



**Can you explain how you developed this piece in terms of colour, composition and costume?**

Like most illustration jobs, Kindly Stranger started as a series of thumbnail sketches. I played with compositions that had the main figure standing, some where she was close to the foreground and some where she had her back turned to the viewer. The composition I felt was the strongest involved her sitting, which created a path through the illustration mirroring a potential character from Innistrad navigating the swamp.

Starting with the foreground branch, the path snakes past the rocky protrusions

and into the misty distant trees. The elderly woman is the focus of the piece, but I wanted to invite the viewer to walk around her and down the path.

**What did you research to get the look of the character and environment just right?**

Every piece for Magic stems from the art description sent by the art director. In the case of Kindly Stranger, the basics were all laid out: a sweet old woman with a dark secret alone in a smoky swamp, perhaps beckoning to the viewer. The art description, along with the Shadows Over Innistrad style guide, provides some very specific things that must be achieved in the illustration. However, it's also the illustrator's

job to expand on the prompt, to find new and exciting ways to portray the scene without contradicting anything in the art description. Small details like the demon horns on her dress came directly from the art description, while details such as the lamp, the animal bones in her hair and necklace, and the demonic shadow were additions that I made to the concept.

I like to gather photo reference after the composition and concept have been determined. I often have a good grasp on the anatomy, light and composition, but finding good reference adds believability and sometimes even improves the concept. The environment was largely invented, but I did gather a few photos of misty landscapes just to make sure I had something from the real world to draw upon. I asked my mom to pose for the main figure wearing a medieval-style dress. I had to age her significantly and alter the dress to fit the assignment, but the photos were an excellent resource for the lighting.

# DEMON-POSSESSED WITCH

## What tools did you use to create this image?

Demon-Possessed Witch was painted on The Artist Panel - Smooth Finish by Ampersand. I put down three layers of Jerry's Artarama Gesso and sanded each one to create a smooth, paper-like surface. I transferred the sketch to the final surface using Saral Transfer paper, then used a mechanical pencil for drawing directly on the board. I used Spray Fixative to protect the drawing, then moved on to oil paints.

I used a combination of Rosemary & Co long flats and long filbert brushes, plus synthetic flats and filberts from Silver White and Silver Briston. My palette was Ultramarine Blue Deep (Old Holland), Cobalt Blue (Gamblin), Transparent Oxide Red (Old Holland), Scarlet Lake (Michael Harding), Nickel Titanate Yellow (Gamblin) and Titanium White (Williamsburg).

## What references did you draw on to achieve the demonic look?

Demon-Possessed Witch is scary and demonic in ways that are very specific to



the story of Shadows Over Innistrad, including the sunken, mutated face which also appears in illustrations by other artists. Other features were taken right from the art description: the black eyes, the long fingernails, wild hair and small horns. I tried to take those features and make them more horrifying through composition.

I wanted to tell a story with these two paintings. The Kindly Stranger was set back in the frame and I wanted the Demon-Possessed Witch to be right in the viewer's face. The idea of claustrophobia and sudden surprises is key to the aesthetic of Innistrad, so her face and mouth are enlarged and her hands intersect the border of the painting. Her whole body is tilted to take up most of the frame. There's only room for a few background elements: her discarded walking stick and the flames roaring unnaturally from her smashed lantern, which cast the classic monster lighting on her face. I took some photo reference for this piece, but largely the elements are invented purely to create something scary.

*"This really is a great example of what Ryan is referring to as 'expanding the prompt'. He delivered on all of the things we cared about and then brought so much of his own sense of fun and personality to the painting. We love seeing that. It's good for the painting, fun for the artist, and is ultimately good for the card."*

*Jeremy Jarvis*





Anastasia Ovchinnikova

## CULT OF THE WAXING MOON

WWW.OVCHINNIKOVA.DAPORTFOLIO.COM



**Did you spend time researching different cults to help create the look of these characters?**

Yes, I did some research on different cults, but I found

the main style direction in the Magic: The Gathering world guide. With helpful guidance from Jeremy Jarvis I was able to create the look of these characters and the whole scene.

**Are there any rules the artists have to stick to, in order to stay consistent with the look of other Magic: The Gathering cards?**

There are some strict rules about the

overall look of illustrations and the style – the quality, level of finish, no ridiculous exaggerations. But luckily I'm working in the same style and I have the same rules for my personal works.

**What software and tools did you use to create this image and the sparks in the air?**

For this one I worked in Photoshop and used a Wacom Cintiq tablet, like I normally would. Usually I use one or two basic brushes to create an illustration and at the end of the painting process I'll also use some different custom brushes, effects and filters to try and add some vibrancy and texture to the piece.

*"We love the intersection of beautiful imagery and ominous tone. Anastasia masterfully captured that intersection here. This is a great example of what we love about Innistrad."*

*Jeremy Jarvis*



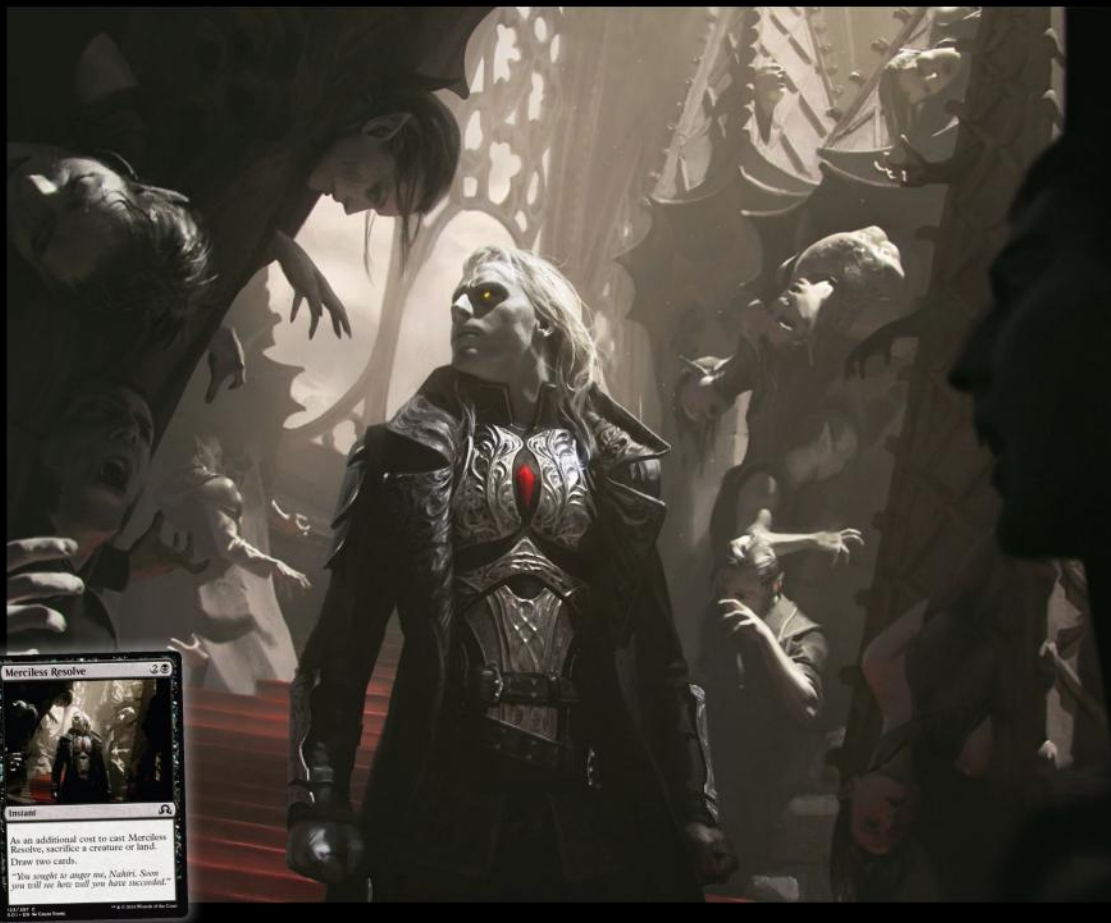
Chase Stone

# MERCILESS RESOLVE

WWW.CHASESTONE.DEVIANTART.COM

*"Chase is one of our go-to artists when we really need believability. When we want players and fans to believe something or someone that doesn't exist, could. His visual salesmanship and cinematic sensibilities work together to create really great art."*

*Jeremy Jarvis*



*"It's easy for the viewer to look at an image and simply accept it as great. And this piece is great. But I want to point out what an incredibly small target the intersection of beautiful, elegant and brutal is, and how deftly Magali hits that bulls-eye."*

*Jeremy Jarvis*

Magali Villeneuve

# REAPER OF FLIGHT

WWW.MAGALI-VILLENEUVE.COM



**What research did you do to develop the look of the armour and wings?**

I started from the mood terms that were given to me: gothic, melancholy, dark. Gothic was the main word here. For armour design, I looked for ideas in architecture and found inspiration in religious monuments' facades. For wings, I looked into crows first, for colour and texture. Then extrapolated the shape to give them a more aggressive, long, pointy look.

**What tools did you use?**

I painted in Photoshop on a Wacom Intuos 5 Touch and a pretty limited variety of brushes. The first layers of colour was painted with a round Hard brush. Once all main colours, lights and shades were defined, I placed textures to keep the image from looking too soft and clean. Then I painted the whole image all over again, using both a Hard brush with softer edges, and square, Hard, textured brushes.

**How did you create a sense of lightness?**

One of the challenges was not to lose the idea that she's an angel. So I looked for a balance between her breast plate, shoulder pads, helmet, the rest of the clothes and composition. I avoided too many background details, while the pieces of white fabric gave more life to the piece, but also helped lighten the whole costume.





## Ryan Alexander Lee **VAMPIRE NOBLE**

WWW.RYANLEEART.COM



### How did you achieve the oil painting look?

To achieve this particular look, I sought out and gathered the highest resolution images of oil paintings by Old Masters that I could find for reference, specifically Zorn and Sargent. I spent a lot of time studying their brushwork and how they layered the paint and moved from shadow into light. I did my best to recreate or mimic this process, while resisting the urge to use shortcuts afforded by working digitally.

### What references did you use to perfect the look of clothes and weaponry?

I relied on traditional paintings as source material, to try and avoid a digital look as much as possible. I often rely on line work for thumbnails, but felt the need to challenge myself and try to work more with shape and form as a starting point. Occasionally, if I have a real-world prop or material on hand that can also serve useful, I'll include that among my resources as well.

### Did your brief specify how far you could take the gore?

There's often a detailed brief for M:TG cards, but artists are given a lot of flexibility to come up with something that lends itself to enriching the card's overall flavour. As for the gore, with *Shadows Over Innistrad*, artists were given a bit more wiggle room with the violence. But overall, I think fans - and art directors - react more to clever and appropriate usage of that freedom. You don't want to be offensive or over the top, and your choices have to be in service to the success of the game. Implying with less can often amount to so much more.



*"We consider every illustrator we work with to be a partner, someone we trust with our game and our IP. For anyone trying to break into the industry, Ryan's answer to the gore question [above], is a top-tier, professional answer. The answer of a great partner clients will rally to work with. Furthermore, his work is incredible. Clients look for that, too."*

*Jeremy Jarvis*



Anna Steinbauer  
**INDULGENT ARISTOCRAT**

WWW.ANNASTEINBAUER.COM



**What tools did you use to create this image, particularly the glass and chandeliers?**

In my sketch, I simply scribbled around with various brushes to indicate the chandeliers, but I quite liked the effect it made. I struggled a bit to replicate this in the final painting and I ended up overlaying brushstrokes and even some old paintings of mine to achieve some randomness and an illusion of detail in the background. The chandeliers could have required a ton of time to render, but I painted only a few differently shaped crystal pieces and then arranged them with copy and paste. For the glass tower I tried to come up with something equally as time-saving, but couldn't. Due to the perspective, each layer of glasses had to be quite different from the other ones,

so copying and pasting didn't get me very far. So that was pretty much just a lot of painting.

**How do you go about creating your illustrations? Do you have to stick to a brief or are you free to interpret it in different ways?**

There are short descriptions for each illustration, but they mainly focus on the most important storytelling elements to include. They give you just enough information to get the ideas coming, while leaving plenty of room for interpretation.

**Is there anything special or unique about working on Magic: The Gathering cards?**

I think the best thing is seeing all the incredible work other artists have done when a set is released. It inevitably pushes you to try harder.

*"This piece in particular is another wonderful example of pretty dark subject matter presented in a beautiful way. There's a visual romanticism that pushes 'horror' into 'gothic horror', which Anna has really captured here."*

*Jeremy Jarvis*





Jaime Jones

## ANCIENT OF THE EQUINOX

WWW.ARTPAD.ORG

*"I like this painting. I like the little story it tells. I like the central pop of colour that draws the eye away from the hatchet so it feels like a wonderful surprise when you notice it. I like that this painting yet again reminds us that Jaime is the reigning champion of atmosphere and scale."*

Jeremy Jarvis



*"The character design is strong and appealing, the tone is definitively representative of the particular setting, the lighting is cinematic, the big shapes read clearly and there is additional detail to reward closer inspection. This painting is amazing."*

Jeremy Jarvis

## Craig Spearing SOLITARY HUNTER

WWW.CRAIGSPEARING.COM



**Did you draw on any historical references in order to help perfect the look of this character, his clothing and his weapons?**

The description called for a woodsman, so his attire is reminiscent of an 18th century French trapper in North America (with some fantasy creative licence - it's not particularly historically accurate). His weapons are wood and basic steel, no filigree, purely utilitarian for daily use.

**How did you settle on the composition of this image?**

I wanted to focus on the costume details and his stern expression, instead of a full body shot, so I zoomed into the upper half of the figure. Compositions for Magic always need to read clearly at small size, so the figure silhouette is big and bold. This was for a double-sided card; the forest environment, palette, and lighting are the same as One of the Pack, the image on the flip side. The scar across his eye and white streak in his hair are also mirrored in his werewolf form.

**What tools did you use to create this image?**

I worked on both a Cintiq 21UX and a MacBook Pro using Photoshop, while consuming chocolate protein bars and vaporised nicotine.

Seb McKinnon

## PALE RIDER OF TROSTAD

WWW.SEB-M.DEVIANTART.COM



**What materials did you use to create your images?**

This one was done entirely digital, all in Photoshop.

**Are there any artists or images in particular that inspire you?**

Yes, Alan Lee's work was the reason I became an illustrator in the first place. He'll always be number one for me. These days, I'm very much inspired by artists James Jean, Ivan Solyaev and John Bauer. And moody, mysterious or eerie images in general.

**How did you achieve the smoky effect for the rider?**

With photo-manipulation of black ink dropped in water, on Multiply mode in Photoshop. The Smudge tool was then used to make everything flow together.

**What's the secret to a creepy image?**

It's not about a disturbing or gory subject matter, but rather an attempt to portray the unknown, the middle point between innocence, pure beauty and darkness. There's a difference between creepy and full-out horror.



*"Seb is an example of an illustrator owning a space in the industry. It's not just aesthetics. It's how he internalises art descriptions, conceives imagery and problem solves."*

Jeremy Jarvis



*"Vince approaches a challenge in a smart, narrative way. Sometimes that's dark, and yes, guts might be involved, but the way he thinks excites us. Vince was part of visually defining not only Innistrad, but Zendikar as well."*

Jeremy Jarvis

## Vincent Proce DIREGRAF COLOSSUS

WWW.VINCENTPROCE.COM



**What materials did you use to create the image?**

Like with most M:TG cards I do, I start with a bunch of preliminary sketches in pencil. Then I scan into Photoshop and finish.

**What influences did you draw upon for this piece?**

I did an earlier image for the first Innistrad set called Maw of Mire. It was a bunch of corpses emerging from a flooded, swamp cemetery in the form of gigantic hands, grabbing on to an Avacyn church and pulling it into the muck. I really like doing masses of twisted bodies and every opportunity I get to do them I take my time and savour it. There was a piece of concept art done for Diregraf Colossus also, by the incredible Wayne Reynolds, while we were on the push for this set in Seattle. I think I did a pretty good job in preserving Wayne's iron gates, binding the creature together, while adding my twisted and bloody bodies of Maw of Mire.

**How far can you push the gruesome details when you are working on art for M:TG cards?**

I think Magic expects me to push the gruesome factor to the limits when they get me to do a card for them. I have a lot of gruesome cards! There is only one time that I've been asked to remove a disgusting element in a sketch, and that was when I had the most prominent character in my Bile Blight card vomiting blood and guts.



James Ryman

# AVACYN THE PURIFIER, ARCHANGEL AVACYN

[WWW.JAMESRYMAN.BLOGSPOT.CO.UK](http://WWW.JAMESRYMAN.BLOGSPOT.CO.UK)

*"Being the person asked to paint Avacyn herself is as high pressure an assignment as any contained in this set. Not only did James deliver big-time, but he also did most of the heavy lifting in creating her incredible new look."*

Jeremy Jarvis



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June 2016

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### Issue 134

May 2016

In this month's issue, learn how to manage values by following Karla Ortiz's cover workshop, improve your portrait skills, build a library of custom Photoshop brushes, get the most from your life model, and more. We also talk to Lois van Baarle and the ILM art department.



### Issue 133

April 2016

Level up your video game art skills! We talk to Riot Games and Laurel D Austin, reveal how Gnomon's tailor-made course for video game artists is shaping up, and explore map-making tips for League of Legends. Plus there's exclusive art advice for Total War: Warhammer!



### Issue 132

March 2016

We explore the fantasy film genre's golden age - Andreas Benwick's cover homage kicks things off in style. Elsewhere, Min Yum takes on a Brothers Grimm fairy tale, Simon Dubuc fills an RPG with unique characters, and James Gurney paints a rogue construction mech.

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games, theme parks (all  
currently under embargo)  
**WEB:** <http://ifxm.ag/northfs>



## STUDIO PROFILE

# NORTH FRONT STUDIO

Eschewing big-studio politics and the isolation of freelancing, this boutique studio's carved out a new way to work in concept art, discovers **Tom May**



The studio is located in an area of Toronto called The Junction, home to a number of creative companies, and some excellent lunch options.

One plus one will only ever equal two. But in life, when two people join forces, they can become more than the sum of their parts. And that's been the case with the Toronto-based studio, North Front.

When Tim Warnock and Ryan Dening teamed up in 2014, they combined two very different types of experience. Tim had been working as a concept artist and matte painter at VFX companies, on films such as *Pacific Rim*, *Avengers Assemble* and *Harry Potter: The Deathly Hallows I and II*. Ryan, meanwhile, had been working as a concept artist in the video game and architecture fields, with a specialism in theme parks.

By joining forces they offered an all-round service to clients unavailable from individual freelancers. "My background has been more on that keyframe, image-crafting side," says Tim. "Where you're dealing with



Home Land is an internal project, created using a combination of MODO, Photoshop and DAZ 3D.



Engineering Room was created for Syfy's ongoing series *The Expanse*.



light and composition and all those sorts of things. While Ryan has a strong design background, more used to dealing with a lot of tech design and working out the details of how things work."

In their first year, each pretty much focused on his own area of expertise. But nowadays they're meeting in the middle a lot more. "For example, we haven't done anything like matte painting in a while, but we do concept art for VFX," says Ryan. "It's really blurred, and we've



learned an enormous amount from each other.

"Before I worked with Tim, I didn't do any 3D work: it was all 2D. I mapped out my

*Circus Transformation* is North Front's pitch work for an undisclosed project.

perspective and did all that hard work. But Tim gave me the idea of working in 3D, while I explained how to think about doing concept art and those kinds of things."

### WORKING IN SPACE

Ryan's newly acquired 3D skills have been put to good use on the studio's first TV project. *The Expanse* is a US space opera series for Syfy, and its makers tasked North Front with creating concept art for new worlds, spaceships, armour, weapons, guns, helmets, spacesuits and more.

"The production designer at Pinewood would work closely with us and give us a pretty good start," says Ryan. "So for a spaceship, for instance, we'd read the script and he'd talk to us about what he wanted. He'd give us these quick pencil sketches, and we'd go away and do what he needed. So, to take one example, there was a ship called *The Knight* in the first episode: I did five rough sketches for him and he ➡

“He brought the idea of working in 3D. I brought how to think about concept art”

## LEE FITZGERALD

The ex-mechanical engineer talks about his lucky break

### How did you go from mechanical engineer to concept artist?

I'd been drawing all my life. But I never really thought I'd get good enough, so I didn't work at it professionally. I studied engineering at college, and persevered with that for a couple of years. But I realised I wasn't really happy, and felt like I could give the art thing at least a good try. When my girlfriend and I planned to move to Canada on a working holiday, I thought I may as well go for it. So after we moved here, I spent two months working on my portfolio, trying to get it up to concept art quality. I had no job, so I spent eight hours painting, every day. It was a bit of a grind.

### And then you got in touch with North Front Studios?

Yeah, and I asked if they were thinking of hiring anybody in a junior position. I spoke with the guys, we got on really well, and they made me an offer to come here on a three-month contract, just to see how we got on. And it's been absolutely brilliant. I've been really lucky.

### What work have you been doing?

When I was building my portfolio I thought I was more inclined to character design and character art. But since I've come here, I've had the chance to do more keyframe illustration as well as technology design, vehicle design... things like that. And I've grown to love it. I've been using MODO, Photoshop and little bit of DAZ Studio. It's been a great chance to combine all those programs and learn all about that kind of workflow.

### How have you found life in Canada?

I know it's a bit of a stereotype, but everyone here's so polite. People on the street will just come up and start talking to you. It's very different from back home in Ireland. And the infrastructure is a lot better: the transport system makes it so easy to get to and from work.

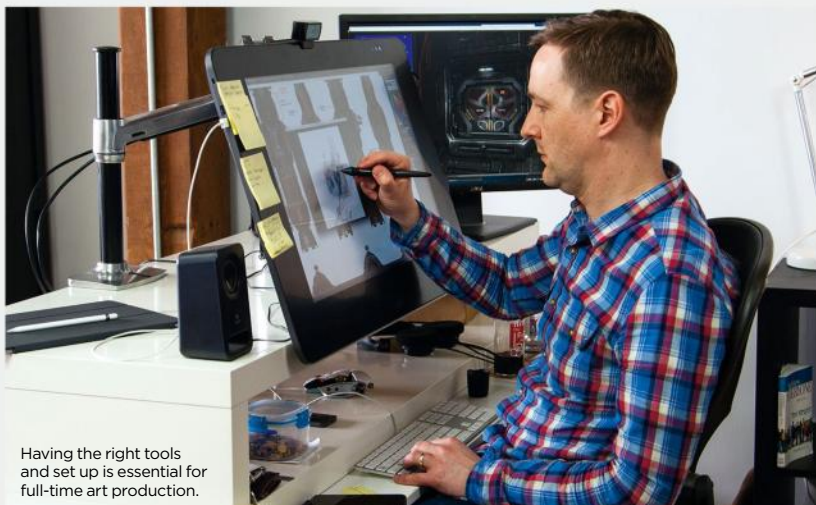
### Who inspires you?

Over the past five or six years I've been following the work of a lot of concept artists online. I never really thought I would come into this full-time, but I guess I must have always thought at the back of my mind, "One day I'm actually going to give this a go". So I followed people like Anthony Jones, who are really open about what they do and how they're developing their techniques. Since working here at North Front, of course, I've felt incredibly inspired by Tim and Ryan, and started producing my best art.



North Front Studio's most recent recruit, concept artist Lee Fitzgerald is a keen gamer and film fan, and is also trained in Shotokan karate.

[www.lee Fitzgerald.artstation.com](http://www.lee Fitzgerald.artstation.com)



➔ picked the one he liked. And then I went through and built a model of it, rendered it, then painted it, and we went back and forth on that."

It's the first time Ryan has integrated 3D fully into his workflow, and it's an experience he recommends. "For a long time I only wanted to do 2D art, but once I started using 3D I found it was more freeing than I thought it would be," he says. "You can really look around the model and solve some of the design a bit more, early on."

In January, the pair added a third member to their talent pool, taking on junior artist Lee Fitzgerald (see Q&A, previous page). In his first ever art-related job, he's been learning as much as he can

from his experienced mentors. "The quality of the art I've been producing has massively increased since I've been here," enthuses



Lee. "When you're just starting out, it's easy to miss the kind of things you're doing wrong. You don't really know how bad you are. I've been getting a lot of feedback from the two guys and a lot of help in making art as good as it can be."

### TOOLS OF THE TRADE

In the studio, the team all work on Macs, as well as using Cintiqs for sketching. "Recently, we've also picked up a couple of iPad Pros, too, and used them with

More pitch work for a project that's currently under wraps. This one's called Beast.

Procreate, mainly for sketching on site," says Tim. "Software-wise, it's Photoshop for 2D, on the 3D side of things we're using MODO, ZBrush, DAZ and SpeedTree."

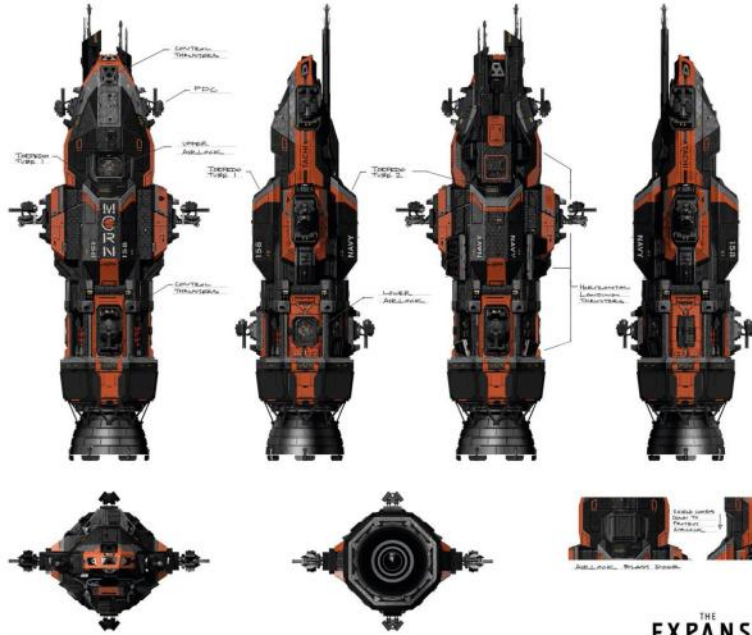
With just three people to its name (there are no extra administration staff), North Front is certainly a small company. But Tim sees that as an advantage. "It's a lot easier to change course, if you have to," he reasons. "If you've got 30 mouths to feed and work doesn't come in, even for a month, then that's pretty dicey. So we prefer to keep things lean."

Furthermore, it enables them to focus on what the team loves the most: the art itself. "Once you exceed five people, then all of a sudden you're no longer working as an artist, you're managing people, all day long," Tim adds. "At least at this point in our careers, neither Ryan or I have the desire to stop being involved in the creative end. We really both enjoy creating art, and want to keep it that way." ●

**“Once you exceed five people, all of a sudden you're no longer working as an artist, you're managing people”**



# NORTH FRONT STUDIO



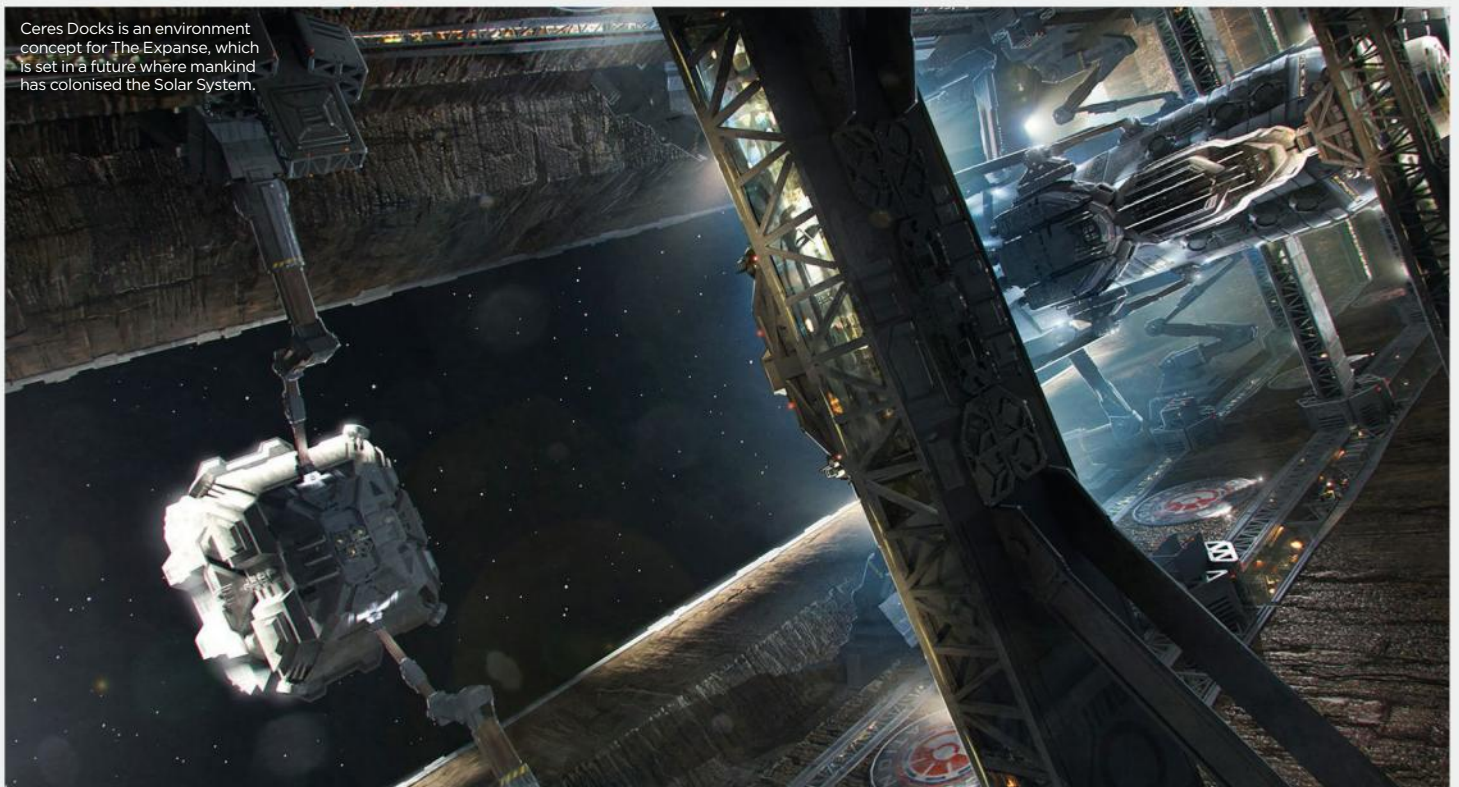
Rocinante is spaceship design work for The Expanse, based on a concept by Jeff Zugale.

THE EXPANSE

Collaboration is key to growth individually and as a studio.



Another example of Tim's personal work, entitled The Fugitive.



Ceres Docks is an environment concept for The Expanse, which is set in a future where mankind has colonised the Solar System.

## Rodney Matthews

From Wonderland to the Mines of Moria, this artist has made his mark in a multitude of fantasy lands

### Artist PROFILE

**Rodney Matthews**

LOCATION: England



Rodney worked in the advertising industry, before leaving to become a full-time freelance artist. He built up a distinctive catalogue of 'spiky' sci-fi and fantasy work in the 1970s and 80s, creating album and book covers, and poster and calendar art. Rodney's still busy painting, and is also a keen drummer. [www.rodneymatthews.com](http://www.rodneymatthews.com)

#### MIRADOR

"The preliminary drawing of the focal point of my 1981 illustration Mirador. The finished colour work was licensed for use as an album cover by Magnum."

#### WARRIOR AND LIZARD

"This is an old one. A preliminary sketch for the TSR Hobbies brochure 1983. Whack it with an axe and ask questions later!"



"Interpreting JRR Tolkien is a serious business. You can't please everyone..."

**YOU SHALL NOT PASS**

"Interpreting the writing of JRR Tolkien is a serious business. You can't please everyone: 'a Balrog doesn't look like that!' and so on. I've gone beyond caring. This is my take, like it or not. The Lord of the Rings has become a well-plundered book for illustrators."



**CLAWD**

"An extract from one of my many intellectual properties awaiting finance - it would be easier to jump over the moon! Clawd the giant fantasy cat features in my story The Fantastic Intergalactic Adventures of Stanley and Livingston, written with Marco Palmer."

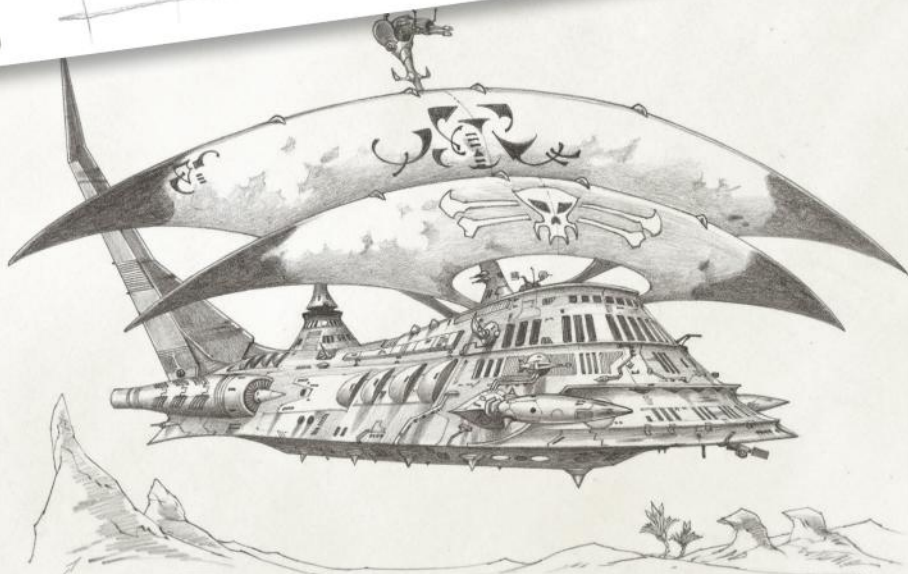


**RIGHT ON THE NOSE**

"Amusement at the random misfortune of others (slapstick) seems to be a universal fodder. I knocked this one out in a moment of boredom, along with a few similar pieces."



# Sketchbook



## LEVITATING PIRATE SHIP

"One from a number of concept drawings from the computer game Haven - Call of the King. The game was developed by Traveller's Tales and published by Midway."



## A LONG TALE

"Alice again, with her bedraggled accomplices as they contemplate having a caucus race in an attempt to dry themselves. I really enjoy penciling this kind of subject."

## THE MOUSE - THE POOL OF TEARS

"From my 2008 illustrated book Alice in Wonderland, published by Templar. I'm sure a mouse uses a different stroke than this crawl - most likely a sort of dog-paddle - but hey, this is fantasy!"





**NOTHING BUT A PACK OF CARDS**

"My interpretation of the grand finale of Lewis Carroll's Alice masterpiece. I've been a huge Alice fan since watching Walt Disney's 1951 animated film, in a little Somerset cinema, accompanied by my elder sister - I was around six years old at the time."

*"I've been a huge Alice fan since watching Walt Disney's 1951 animated film"*

**THE HAG**

"From a series of concept drawings commissioned by an animation house in Los Angeles. I had previously done a sketch from the Brother Grimm story Hansel and Gretel and just recycled it."



Want to share your sketches? Email us with a selection of your artwork, to [sketchbook@imaginefx.com](mailto:sketchbook@imaginefx.com)  
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Photoshop

# MAKE A SPLASH WITH CARD ART



Ensure that your character card art is both colourful and dynamic, by following **Anna Steinbauer's** design approach and painting process

**Artist PROFILE**

**Anna Steinbauer**  
LOCATION: Austria



Anna is a freelance illustrator who works mostly on creating book covers and art for card games such as Magic: The Gathering.  
<http://ifxm.ag/steinbauer>

**GET YOUR RESOURCES**  
See page 6 now!

**W**hen developing illustrations for card games, you have to bear in mind that your painting will mostly be viewed at a very small size. It's important to make sure that the viewer will have no trouble understanding what's going on in your image. The best way to do this is by keeping a tiny second window showing your painting in view at all times. Maintaining strong values and clearly defined silhouettes will also help.

However, with digital card games or online art galleries, people can usually see your painting at a much larger scale as well, so you'll probably want to at least indicate some detail to keep it interesting. Stay true to your previously established values when doing this though, or the overall readability will suffer.

This may sound like a lot to keep in mind, but really, making sure that your image reads well at all sizes is something that should apply to any kind of

illustration, not just art created for card games. Well-controlled values make for good paintings, no matter the size.

When working on card games, you'll usually receive a concise description of what your illustration needs to include. The only requirement for this painting is to make it colourful. I'm in the mood for painting with rich blues, so we narrow the character description down to someone who's either in the water or in the sky. Okay, let's get started!

**Shortcuts**  
Create/Release Clipping Mask  
Cmd+Opt+G (Mac)  
Ctrl+Alt+G (PC)  
Turns the layer into a clipping mask of the one below.

**PRO SECRETS**

**Crop with confidence**  
We often see the borders of the canvases as a box to contain the subject. Letting less-important things slip off the canvas and create a greater sense of movement. Had I painted the tip of the character's staff within the canvas, it would have been an unnecessary focal point. Make sure that you don't lead the viewer's eye out of the composition, though.

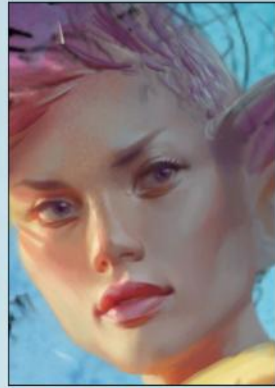
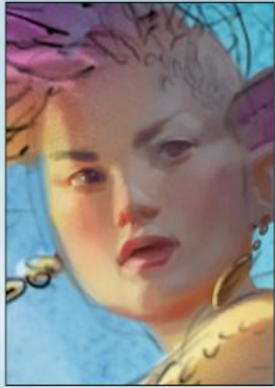


**1 Sketch my ideas and compositions**  
I start out by doodling the various concepts and compositions I have in mind. These are all very rough and ugly, but they are only meant to get my ideas down on the canvas. I can already tell which ones I like and which ones I don't, but I try not to judge them at this point and focus on keeping the ideas flowing. Once I feel that I have enough sketches, I pick my four favourites to take further.

**2 Add colour to the sketches**  
Normally, I'd only focus on the values at this stage. However, since the one requirement is for the painting to be colourful, these sketches need to reflect that. All of them have a similar colour scheme of blues and pinks, because that's what I really feel like painting at the moment. I want to make sure that each one of these is something I would enjoy painting, because I don't know which one the client will choose. ➡







## 3 Start with the focal point

I begin by painting the face, trying to stay true to what I see in my rough sketch. Faces are usually the starting point in all my paintings. They're my favourite thing to paint, which gets me into the right mindset quickly. Having a somewhat finished face also improves the look of the entire painting, which makes it more fun to work on.



## 4 Colours and values

Now that the face looks about halfway finished, the rest of the image needs some attention. I gradually erase the drawing on top as I paint all around, mainly focusing on the body. I adjust my values, strengthening the overall contrast to ensure the painting reads well at thumbnail size. I also increase the saturation of the colours to make for a more striking cover image.

### PRO SECRETS

#### Learn from references

Don't fall into the trap of copying a reference image. I have no direct reference for this painting. Instead, I study lots of different photos (ocean waves, sea shells, fish and so on). I then close all the references and return to my painting, trying to recall the things I just saw. Working from memory like this engages your brain a lot more and actually makes you retain what you learned.



## 5 Paint the waves and water

I begin painting the water with big strokes. The way the water moves around the image keeps the viewer's eye within the scene, so I take care not to disrupt this flow. I indicate foam and water droplets using textured brushes. Be careful with your values when doing this and reserve near-white or pure white for a few very bright spots only.



## 6 Give the water some texture

Using a textured brush, I lay down a few strokes and transform them to follow the waves using Free Transform>Warp. I also make sure that the shapes become larger the closer they are to the viewer, to indicate perspective. I lock the transparency of that layer and paint over the shapes to add a slight gradient. Then I reduce the Opacity of the layer.



## 7 Behold, flying fish

I haven't worked on the fish at all since the sketch, so they're only shapeless blobs at this point. I work out their basic shapes and colours while taking care to maintain their direction, because it's important to the composition. I'm leaving the brushstrokes fairly rough and simple. There's no need to render them too much, because a couple of scales drawn on top are enough to make the fish look finished.



## 8 Fins are the new hair

After painting all those fish, I'm still in the mood for painting fins, so I work up the character's hair: actually, a sort of mohawk made of many layered fins. The shape of her hairstyle mirrors the curve of the wave behind, which helps increase the feeling of movement. I also add a fin running down her spine, to create a bit of a connection between the head and the body.



**9 Toughening up my character**  
The bright and saturated pinks are making the image look a bit too sugary-sweet for my taste, so I toughened the character up with some darker lips and a Maori-inspired chin tattoo. I also work on the face a bit more, using a textured brush to imply the pores of the skin. On top of that, I draw a couple of scales, softening the transition from the skin to the fins on her head.



**10 Illustrate some accessories**  
The character's accessories are only doodles, so it's time to give them some attention. I paint a variety of shells and teeth: these are items she might have picked up on her travels. I don't get too hung up on detailing these, because that would distract from the focal points. To achieve this, the brush strokes on the shells should generally be larger than those used on the face.

*Shortcuts*  
**Merge Layers**  
Cmd+E (Mac)  
Ctrl+E (PC)  
Select several layers to merge them or select only one to merge it with the one below.



**11 Erasing the last few lines**  
I fix a few errors in the pose and anatomy, which weren't noticeable until things were rendered a bit more. If I had made a clean sketch to begin with, this wouldn't have been an issue. However, I enjoy starting the painting process from a rough base, because I'm able to develop the image more naturally, rather than having everything strictly laid out from the get-go.



**12 Rendering body elements**  
There are still a few areas I haven't touched much since the sketch stage. I finish up the last few fins on her head, keeping the ones farther away from the face more simple and soft. The cloth and legs need a few finishing touches. I feel like the arm guards were a bit distracting, so I tone them down and render them properly, taking inspiration from corals and sea urchin shells.



**13 Last-minute lighting effects**  
I love the effect that happens when light becomes refracted by waves in the water. I meant to add it in this painting, but knowing that it was best to wait until everything else is rendered completely, I almost forgot about it until now. Luckily, I had it written down on a to-do list. I also add some specular highlights on the skin and cloth, to make them appear wet.



**14 Some finishing touches**  
I paint some water drops all around, tying the figure into the background and adding a bit more movement. I gently blur some areas in the background that appear too sharp using the Smudge tool. After this, I take a break and don't look at the painting for a while. When I return, I have an easier time spotting anything that still needs work before calling it finished.

**RESOURCES**  
**WORKSHOP BRUSHES**  
**PHOTOSHOP**  
**CUSTOM BRUSHES:**  
**INK PEN**  
A simple brush with nice line weight for rough doodles, as well as clean and detailed drawings.  
**FADED STROKE**  
A painterly all-rounder. I used this one for most of the image, mainly the scales, fins, water and refracted light.  
**HARD ROUND TEXTURED**  
Creates a nice and versatile texture. I used it for detailing the water and waves in step six.  
**SAMPLED BRUSH 3**  
Creates a very rough texture, used for the water spray and foam.

ZBrush

# ADD NOISE FOR REALISTIC RESULTS



**Rob Redman** introduces ZBrush's Procedural Noise tools and shows you how to achieve more lifelike results with a few simple settings

**Artist PROFILE**

**Rob Redman**  
LOCATION: England



Rob Redman is creative director at a boutique VFX and animation studio. He is also a guitarist and dog companion.  
<http://ifxm.ag/rob-r>

**C**omputer generated imagery, especially in its 3D form, can sometimes suffer from a look that can be described as cold and clinical. Of course, there are instances when this can be a huge benefit, but a lot of the time CG artists strive to add imperfections that, perhaps ironically, photographers can spend huge amounts of time and money attempting

to remove. A little grunge or wear and tear can help sell the idea that a CG render is a real object or scene rather than a mathematical solution and, for most of us, that's the Holy Grail of our work.

If you are, or are thinking of becoming, a ZBrush artist then you'll have countless tools and methods to add fine surface detail to break up your model's perfect uniformity, but many of these can take a

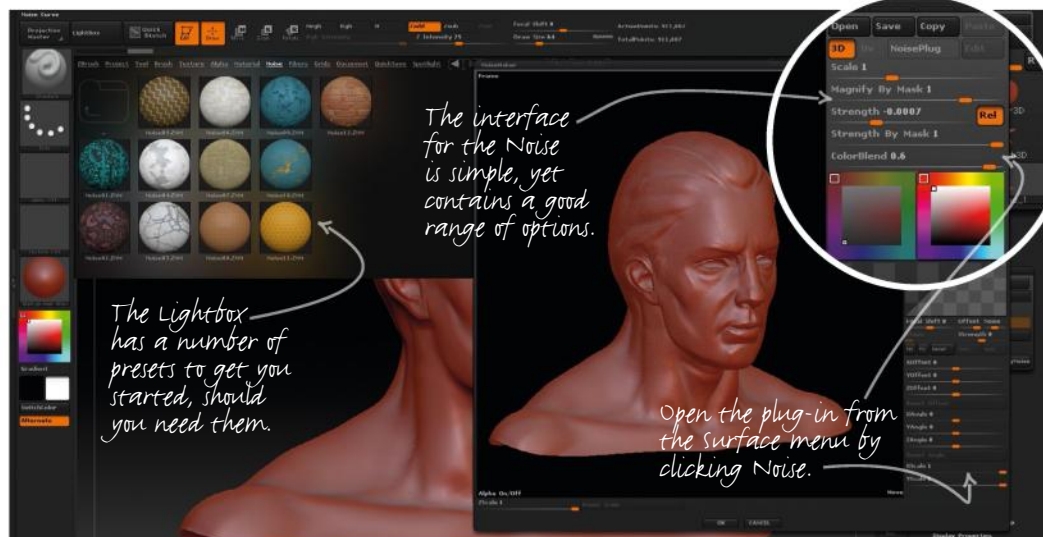
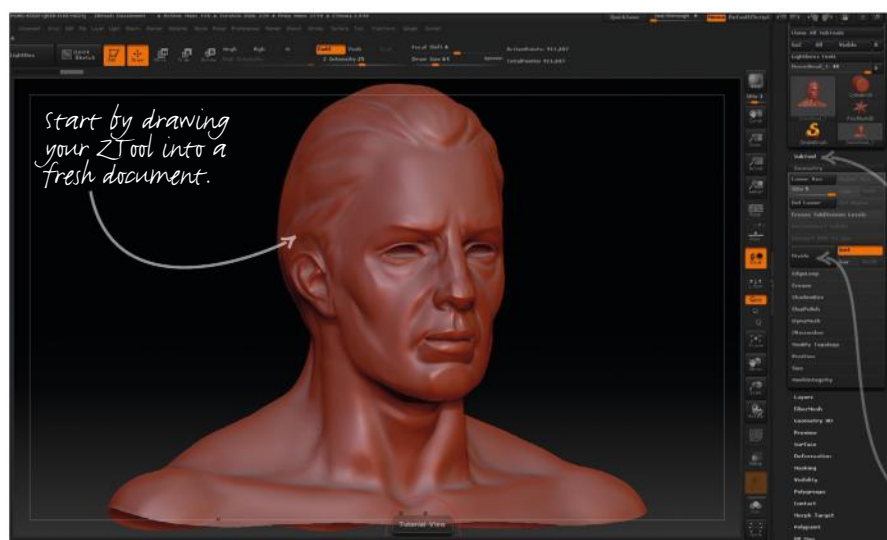
lot of set-up time, and have steeper learning curves than you might wish. However, the Surface Noise tool is a simple and effective way of procedurally adding some very high-quality random detail to your projects.

For this example I'm using one of the default ZTools that ships with ZBrush so you can easily follow along, but the same techniques apply to any mesh.

**PRO SECRETS**

**Texture files as noise**

Although I've only covered the basics of the Noise tool here, it's capable of some complex results. Try clicking the Alpha On/Off button to load in a texture, which you can use as your noise.



**1 Prepare your mesh**  
First things first: you'll need a model and preferably one with enough subdivisions to give a smooth surface. If yours still looks low resolution then head to the Geometry tab and divide until you're happy. I find that a level of 5 works best for me, enabling me to clearly see what's happening.

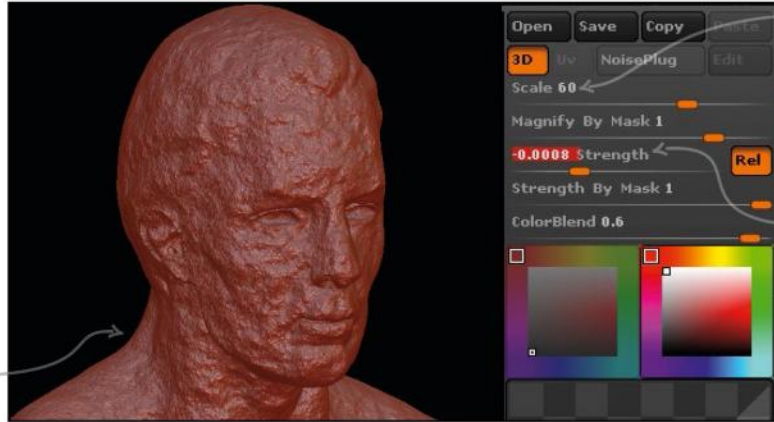
**2 Make some noise**  
Now unfold the Surface section and click the Noise button to open up the interface. We'll deal with this in a minute, but for a quick start and shortcuts you can click the Lightbox button and choose a preset from the Noise section to get an idea of what we're working with.

# Quick technique Noise in ZBrush

## 3 Noise settings

There's a significant relationship between the settings, but we'll take them one at a time. First, there's a basic Noise preset by default. Adjust the Scale slider to discover what works for you. I'm aiming for a rough stone effect and a setting of 60 is about right.

The scale will depend partly on the size of your ZTool, as well as the slider setting.



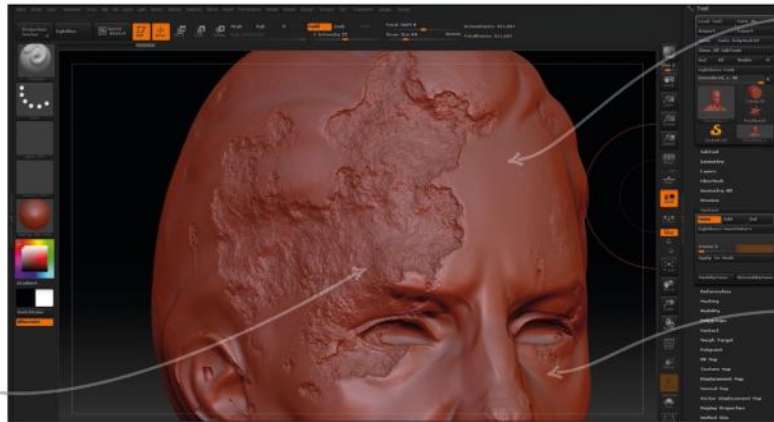
The scale slider sets the 'zoom' level of the Noise.

You can use the plus and minus settings to achieve different looks.

## 4 Create pools of Noise

The Noise Curve has a few uses, but a powerful one is to procedurally define where the Noise should be, not just how it should appear. Click to add knots on the curve and then create flattened areas to smooth the Noise.

Increasing the scale enables you to depict large chunks of wear.



Creating flat spots on the curve helps define Noise placement.

Swapping to a positive strength setting removes material - ideal for a weathered look.

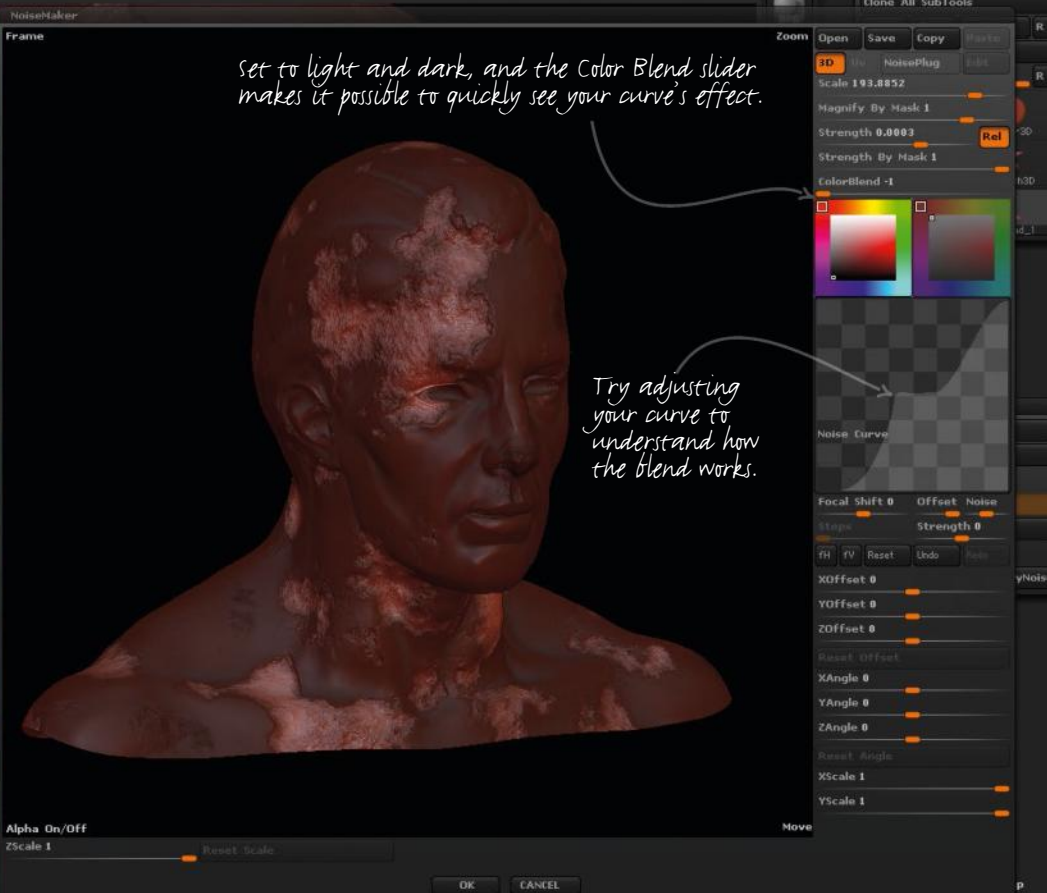
You can clearly see the fall-off between areas.

set to light and dark, and the Color Blend slider makes it possible to quickly see your curve's effect.

Try adjusting your curve to understand how the blend works.

## 5 Colour blending

Although it has other functions, such as for masking, the Color Blend control is useful for enabling you to better visualise how your Noise will be placed. This is ideal when working with small-scale Noise, which can be harder to see in the Noise preview window.





3ds Max & Photoshop

# POSE AND PAINT A FLYING VEHICLE

**Alex Jay Brady** combines simple 3D and 2D techniques to concept an ornithopter with flapping wings, inspired by Frank Herbert's Dune

## Artist PROFILE

**Alex Jay Brady**  
LOCATION: England



Alex studied car design at university, before spending four years working in a studio environment. She's now a full-time freelance concept artist for the games, film and product design industries.

<http://ifxm.ag/ajbrady>



**GET YOUR RESOURCES**

See page 6 now!

**D**une's complex Godfather-style mob politics is one of the things I love about the book. But that's not easy to draw.

So I'm going to concept an ornithopter.

One of the most recognisable vehicles in the Dune universe, this is a machine that serves in the roll of a helicopter, but in order to make it seem cool and futuristic, author Frank Herbert described a plane-sized device that could

emulate the flight performance of a bird of prey. In David Lynch's film adaptation the ornithopter wings didn't move, presumably for budget reasons. The finest rendition of a ornithopter I've seen was painted by ArtofThera and that will be my primary reference here.

Creating a working ornithopter that flaps its wings is a substantial task, so the first thing to do is build very simple maquette models. These will enable me to

try out ideas, make some sketches, and figure out the direction for the full model. Making them as quickly and simply as possible is the focus of this workshop.

Birds wings are beautiful and in order to catch some of that in the finished model without doing any complex modelling, I'll be painting them in Photoshop. You might be surprised how good a simple model can look after a bit of Photoshop love.



## PRO SECRETS

### Manipulate the timeline

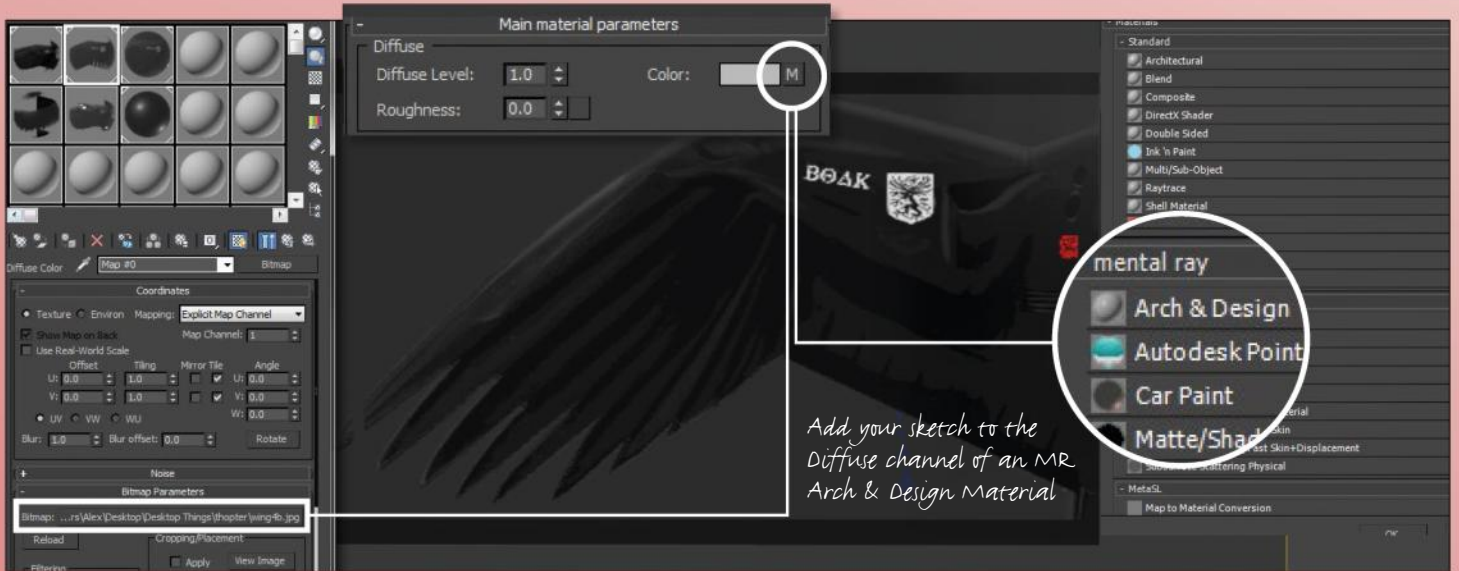
I keyed the strength of the Bend Modifier to the timeline so I could watch the bird flap. But this principle can be used in any scene with multiple configurations. For example, you can have a fighter jet in attack mode with wings tucked, or with wings spread for cruising, or landed on the ground wheels down, and flip between them instantly. Great for getting lots of cool shots of your model with minimal fuss.

### 1 Let's do some birdwatching

I look at my reference images and sketch a basic wing out in Photoshop. There's a huge variety in the shape of bird, insect and bat wings, and how they appear in flight, so you can raid Google for ideas. The wings of herons and crows are close to the look I'm after for this project. Crows are tough and able flyers, while a heron's wings have beautiful colouring and proportions.

### 2 Watch the paint job

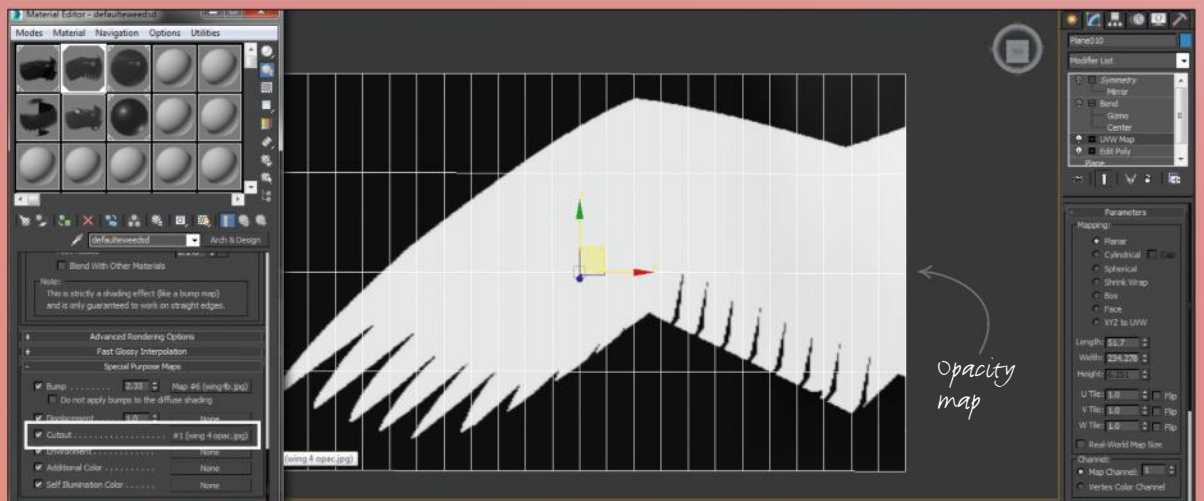
I run through a few iterations of wing sketches, trying to figure out what's working and what isn't. Then I paint a new version, adding some decals and details as I go along. It's very easy to introduce details and patches of colour here to see if they work, and to apply gritty details, such as evidence of exhaust marks on the paintwork. ➔



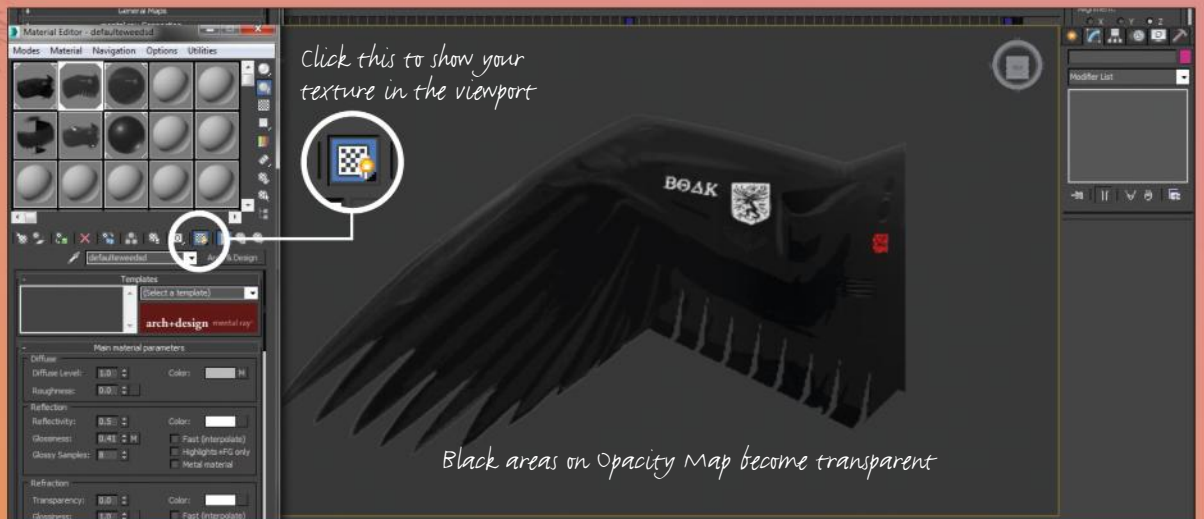
### 3 Select the wing material and make adjustments

I add my sketch to the diffuse channel of a Mental Ray Arch & Design Material and apply it to a flat plane object of the same aspect ratio, using a planar UVW Map Modifier fitted to the object. I can look at my wing from different angles and see how changes look. Painting the wings in this way is extremely fast and I can make changes to both shape and colour very easily.

*Shortcuts*  
**Merge Copy**  
**Ctrl+Shift+Copy (PC)**  
**Cmd+Shift+Copy (Mac)**  
 In Photoshop, edit elements on the new layer and compare them to the old image.



**PRO SECRETS**  
**Don't sweat the small stuff**  
 Using flat planar UVW maps and symmetry modifiers on textures means there are small errors in the renders. I usually find at this stage that it's much easier to paint them out with a couple of brush strokes on the renders rather than obsess over them in 3D. Always ask yourself, for this stage of the project, would I save time doing this in 2D or 3D? That's part of the dark art of being fast.

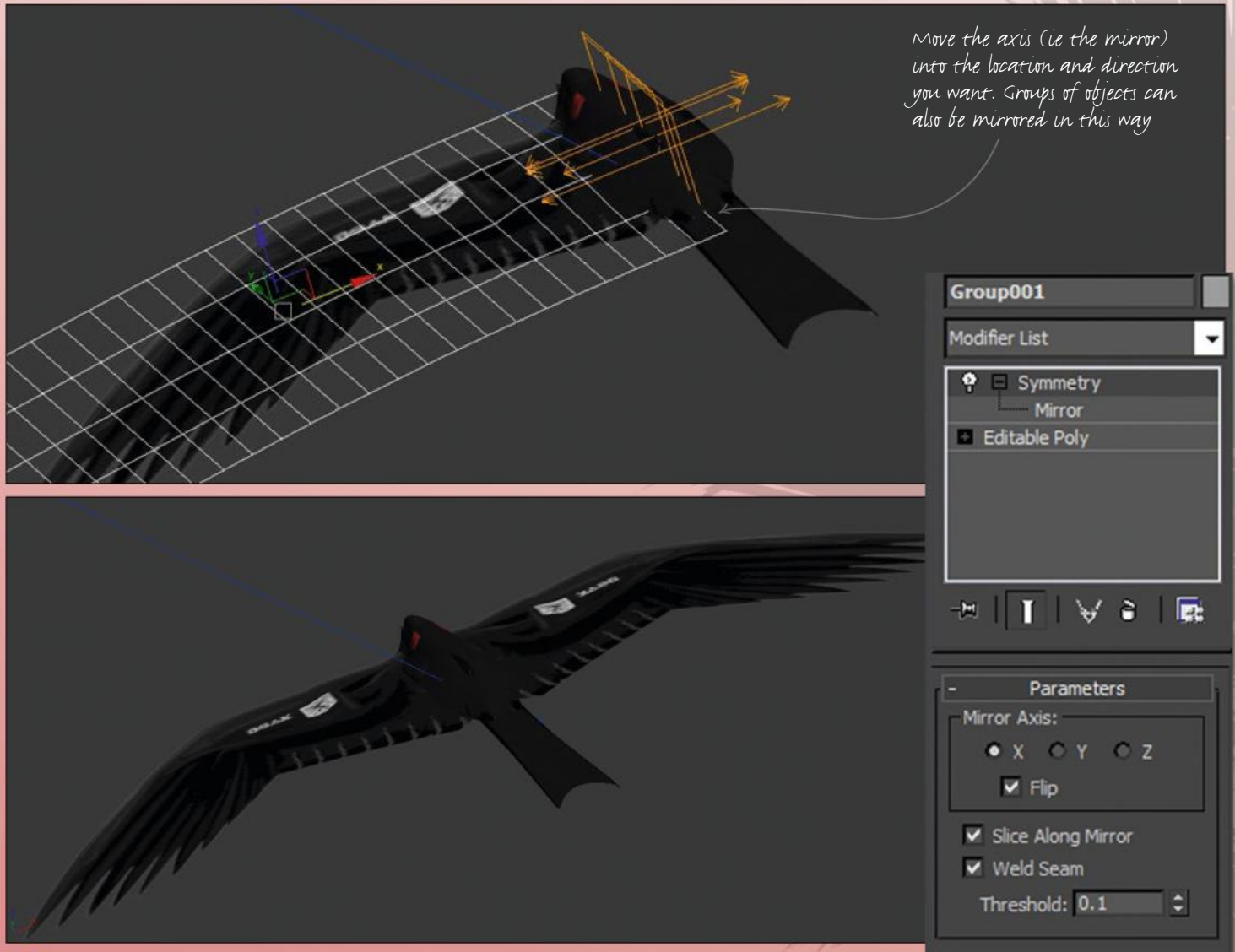


### 4 Make the mechanical feathers stand out

By cutting around my wing image and making the negative space black and wing area white, I've made an Opacity Map for my wing. Now only areas of colour within the white area will show up. By putting this in the Cutout slot of my material, I can reshape the outline iteratively, sketching and rubbing out areas. Cutting black triangles into the trailing edge makes some mechanical feathers.

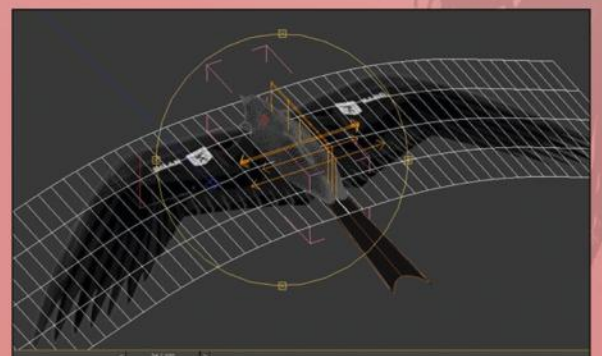
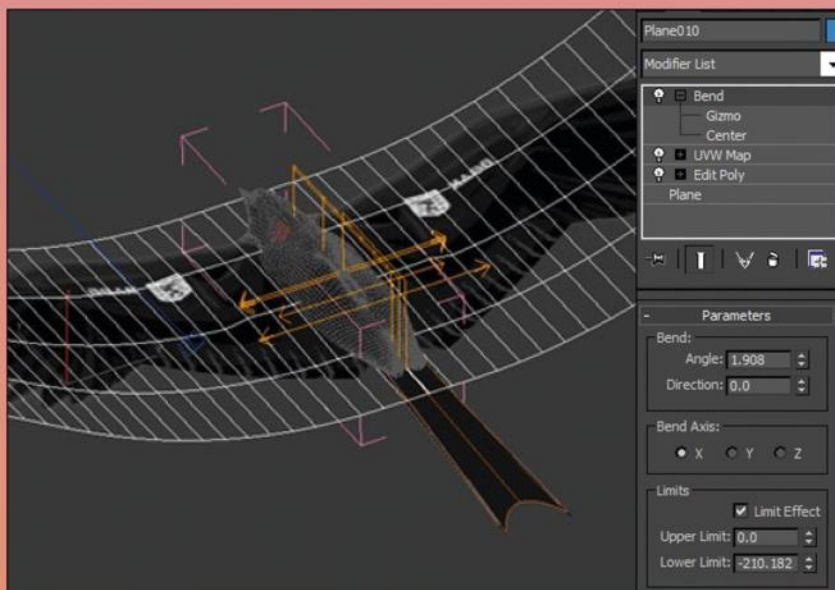






## 5 Save time by using symmetry to model the wings

By using Symmetry Modifier and locating the mirror plane along the centre line of my plane, I copy the wing over to the other side. Now for the first time I can see the bird shape coming together. Mirroring the image will result in the graphics being backwards on one side. I can fix this with a couple of brush strokes in the sketch renders later, so it'll do for now.



## 6 Bend the wing to simulate flight

I want to make the wings flap, but even a steady wing beat is a complex motion. I don't want to spend the time emulating it in 3D for this simple model, so I'm just going to bend the flat plane like a piece of card using a Bend Modifier. By changing the strength of the modifier the wing crudely flaps up and down. It's normal to have to fiddle with the settings to get the Modifier's direction and strength right. ➡



## 7 Timing is everything when animating

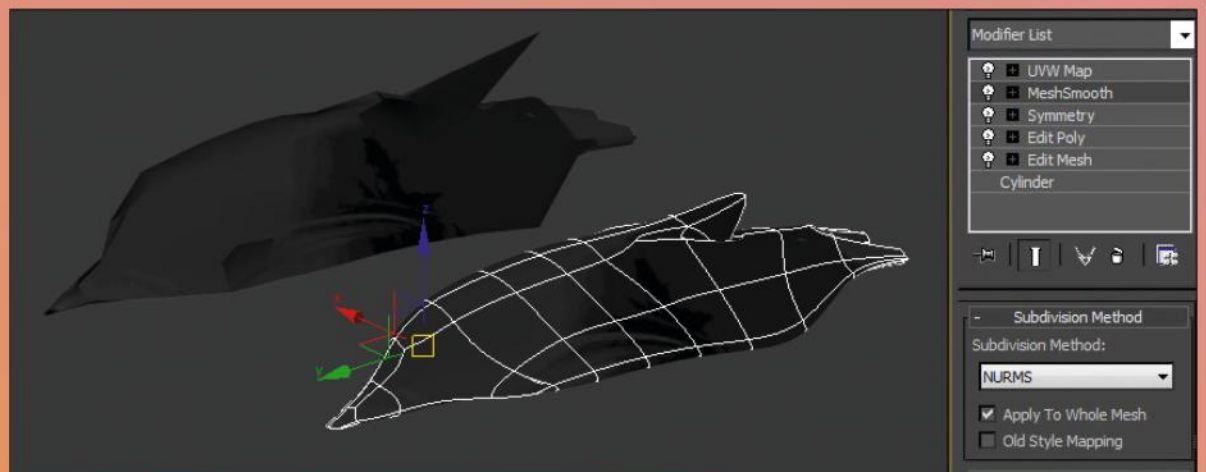
A neat trick is keying the strength of the Modifier to the scene's timeline. First I put the time slider at 0, and locate and click the Autokey button. Then I move the time slider to 33 and make changes to the scene, for example the strength of the Bend Modifier. That change now becomes animated into the scene. Moving the slider back and forth flaps the wing. (Remember to turn off Autokey when you've finished making changes that you want animated.)

**Shortcuts**  
**Mimic Photoshop**  
**H, V, P (PC & Mac)**  
 Tweak 3ds Max hotkeys to be like Photoshop's.



## 8 For the fuselage, it's best to start simply

The body begins as a low poly five-sided cylinder. I locate the Edit Poly Modifier and move the points into a rough fish shape. With some trial and error I end up with something that has a birdlike nose cone and a fin like a porpoise, but it's very blocky - not to mention asymmetric. Time to apply a Symmetry Modifier, just like I did earlier with the wings.



## 9 Generating a smooth surface with the Mesh Smooth Modifier

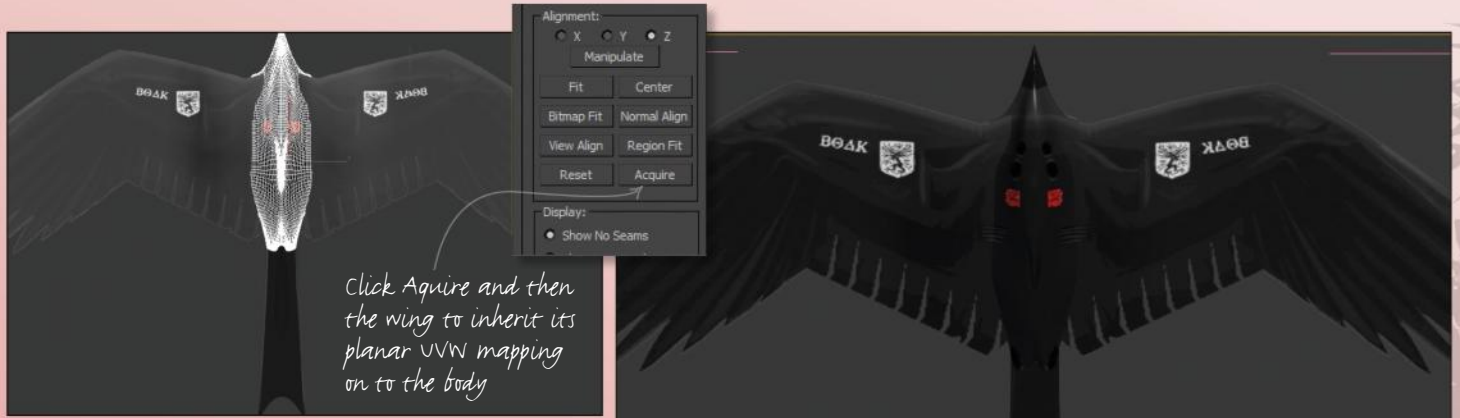
By using the Mesh Smooth Modifier on my simple hull shape, I can develop a nice, organic shape. I like to turn Mesh Smooth off, move some polys, turn it back on again and see what's changed. It sometimes comes up with really weird, cool shapes that I wouldn't have thought of. It's possible to retain sharp edges by Chamfering them several times so the vertexes are very dense.

### PRO SECRETS

#### Seconds count

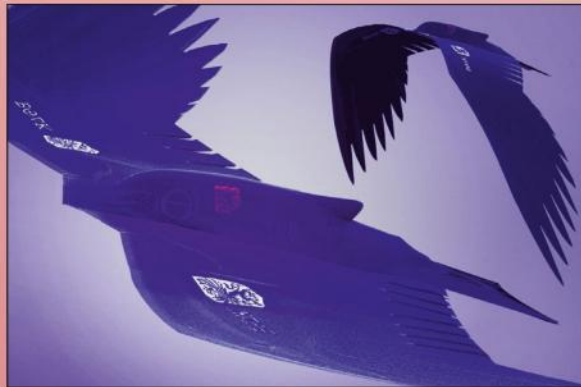
3ds Max can use PSDs as textures, which means you can save a layered PSD by pushing Ctrl-S and it'll update in the 3ds Max viewport immediately. This time-saving trick makes a surprising difference to the smoothness of the design work experience, especially when working on two screens. But remember to flatten final textures to JPGs later on. The big textures can lead to heavy scenes and slow renders.





## 10 Map the texture on to the wings

UVW-unwrapping a complex object is torment, so let's skip that. I add a top view of the hull's paintwork to the wing texture and acquire the UVW mapping from the wing. Using a planar UVW means you get some defects where the surface rolls over away from the image plane, but they're easy to correct. It's enjoyable deciding what details to add and where to locate them.

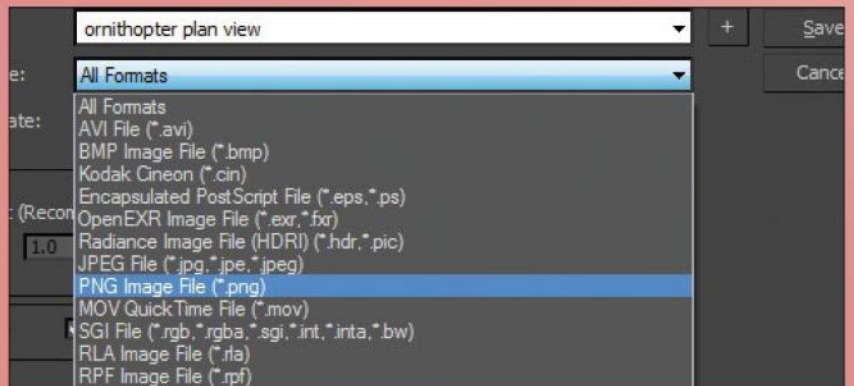
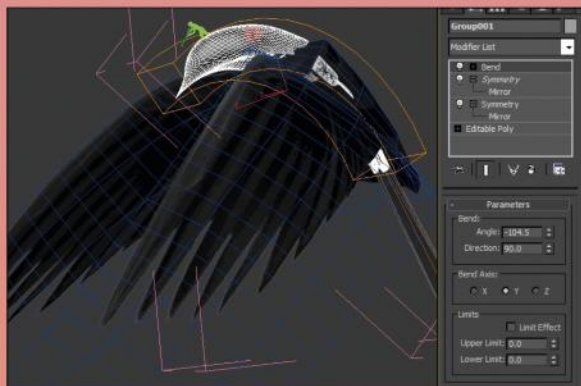


## 11 Tweaking to perfection

All steps require a bit of tweaking to get them right, but I make an effort to step back and review the work. Pondering proportions, nudging parts, altering textures in Photoshop. I apply the warmer-cooler principle: did my last change move me closer or further away from what I want? Many small nudges in the right direction ensure the design is developing nicely.

## 12 Producing some beauty shots

Once the design is looking reasonable, I spin it around, trying out different Camera Lenses and angles of light, and moving the time slider to flap the wings. I find looking for cool angles is a lot of fun. I usually cover the illustrative angles first: front three-quarter, rear three-quarter, some interesting detail compositions showing parts of the design and then some action shots showing the ornithopter in different scenes with its own special modifications (see the next step).



## 13 Stacks of modifiers

You can add more Modifiers on to your model at any time. I add another Bend Modifier, this time operating along the long axis to make the thopter look like it's hovering so the soldier inside can fire a weapon from the hatch. Now that the design work is mostly done it's fun to think up scenes to put the asset into. What about a battle? Or a landing? Or a repair bay?

## 14 Save the day

I now save render outputs in the PNG format, as this preserves transparency in the image file. This means rendered objects are on their own layer, so I can automatically isolate scene assets and can drop them straight onto a background plate and paint over it immediately if needs be. I actually only learned this recently, having spent years painstakingly cutting things out. D'oh!

Photoshop

# EXPAND YOUR CHARACTERS' UNIVERSE

**Artur Sadlos** turns a minor detail from an older illustration into a brand-new piece of art

## Artist PROFILE

**Artur Sadlos**  
LOCATION: Poland



Artur is a concept designer, illustrator and art director

who's worked for over a decade both as a freelancer and in-house, with clients including Framestore, Platige Image and Techland.  
[www.artursadlos.com](http://www.artursadlos.com)

**GET YOUR RESOURCES**  
See page 6 now!

**T**his painting, entitled Refuel, is part of the Conceptverse – my personal project that I've been working on for several years. The genesis of this image has its roots in an old illustration from this IP.

When I was painting details from another aspect of the Conceptverse story, a minor detail of a figure standing next to his vehicle caught my attention. I wanted to explore the character and his story further, and so I created a new illustration based around that snippet from the scene. It was okay, but something was missing, so I decided to refine the image.

My second attempt was richer in details, but lacked the mood that I was originally after. To give me some focus and direction, I wrote out a few notes on what I wanted to see in the image. They helped me stay on track and narrowed my area of exploration, saving me time in the process.

One of my notes stated that I should maintain an exotic, Far-Eastern feel in the illustration. Paintings from this part of the world are a great source of inspiration and I spend a lot of time studying such artworks. This is reflected in the corner of the scene where a merchant is seated, surrounded by piles of lavish goods.

Another important component is the story. I put a lot of effort into giving every painting I do a sense of story. This manifests itself in the details, character poses, design and composition.

### Leading the eye

It's important to place elements in an image so that they support the narrative. Use the environment and character's shapes to direct viewers in a certain direction. Don't be obvious – instead, be subtle and creative. It must look natural and not disturb the overall atmosphere.



### Recycling an idea

The initial spark for this illustration came from an older piece. There was potential in this figure with his vehicle that was worth exploring. Based on the close-up, I began painting a new image, trying to enrich the character and the story around it. It was a bumpy road, but I'm happy with the final result.

## RESOURCES

### WORKSHOP BRUSHES

#### PHOTOSHOP

**CUSTOM BRUSH:**  
HARD PIXEL

I like to juggle between hard and soft brushes to develop various effects, and this brush helps me achieve this.





## Framing

Using natural ways to frame a picture within a picture can add depth to your image and enrich the larger story. I've set up my camera inside the building to reveal more about the owner of this fuel station, without losing the focus on the main character.

## Tribal inspiration

One of the strongest sources of inspiration for my Conceptverse project is African tribal culture. I love the designs of ritual costumes, the mystical masks and wonderful weapons with strange designs. This rich world of unusual designs helps me to create alien technology with a mystical and organic twist.

How I create...

## A TRADING POST IN THE DESERT



### 1 Start with a sketch

A loose sketch helps me to quickly visualise my ideas. This is the most important phase of the process, because I can establish a lot of the composition now, and avoid having to change too much later on.



### 2 Value, light and colour

I go from the sketch to a loose painting. There's no need for detailing at this stage. My focus is on value, light and colour. I can experiment and quickly change the mood of the image to suit, by adjusting my colours.



### 3 Refining and details

Once I'm happy with the progress I've made, I start detailing and add minor elements to the scene. It makes sense to put the most detail into the key parts of an image, because it'll help to pull in the viewer.

*Artist insight*

# ADOPT A CONCEPT ART APPROACH

**Artist PROFILE**  
**Ross Dearsley**  
 LOCATION: England



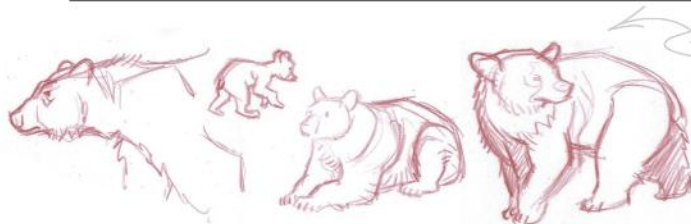
Ross is a freelance conceptual designer and illustrator with 25 years' experience in the entertainment media industries, including print, video games, film and television.  
<http://ifxm.ag/ross-d>

**Ross Dearsley** explains how concept art techniques can be applied to a standalone illustration, for great-looking artwork

**M**y formal training was in illustration, but I'd already spent a decade as a kid scouring books like the Art of Star Wars series and various other 'movie magic' publications, which became my informal introduction to concept art. For me, the two skills have always been integrated and equally appealing. After many years of working with companies like EA, Sony and Microsoft,

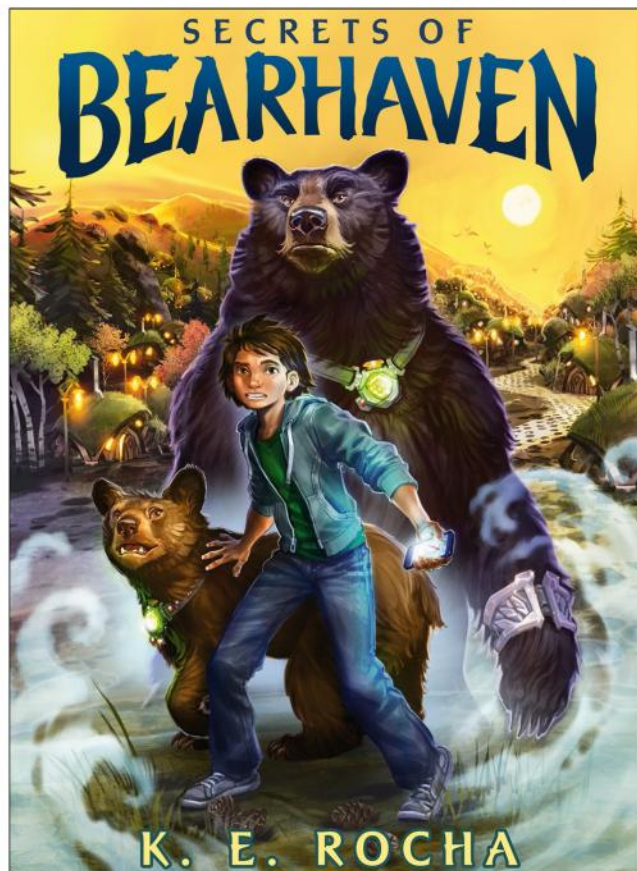
concept art and visual development techniques have become part of my instinctive way to think about and tackle any design task. For me, the process is the best way to become immersed into the world of the project. It's how I find it easiest to get my head around all of its complexities and details. It's also the beginning of idea formulation and imagery that will eventually follow through to the finished product.

I'm currently illustrating a series of books called Secrets of Bearhaven, for Scholastic Press, where I've used a concept art approach to visualise the world and characters of the story in order to create covers and interior art. Scholastic's response to my skills as a concept artist has been refreshingly encouraging and a wholly collaborative experience, which spotlights the growing transferable skills between these two domains.



## 1 SKETCH STUDIES TO BUILD CONFIDENCE

Often projects are under tough time constraints. It's tempting to dive straight in and make stuff up as you go, but if possible, do preparatory sketches first. You'll be amazed how much useful information becomes apparent through observation and sketching. For Bearhaven I became familiar with bear anatomy, and the architecture and gadgets of the world.



## 2 USE ISOLATED LAYERS FOR COMPOSITION

To help make sense of complex composition tasks, create a mini-library of characters and poses on transparent layers based on your initial ideas for the piece of artwork. You can then use these like cut-outs and rearrange them into

various alternate compositions. This enables you to quickly try a variety of ideas and combinations, which you can then work up into a more resolved sketch. You can create these character elements as Smart Objects in Photoshop, which retains the original resolution even if you enlarge and reduce multiple times.

### 3 BEGIN BROAD, THEN REFINE

Use initial rough shape sketches to try a variety of different directions, rather than variations on the same direction. For the Fable Legends Celeste character shown here, I explored a variety of ideas to see what the team would respond to, including Valkyrie-styled characters, body type variations, staff variations, slightly more magical influence and eastern influences.

Essentially, you're raising questions visually. Team feedback from sketches like these will hopefully create debate, and you'll soon get a strong idea of the direction required for your next design stage. Remember that people don't always know what they want until they see it, so it's good to have a lot of scope in your visualisations.

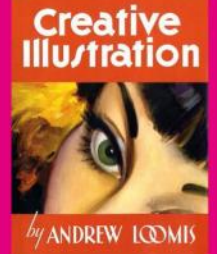


“ People don't always know what they want until they see it... ”

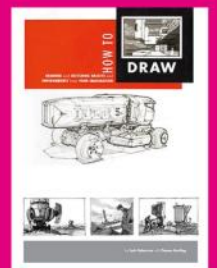
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### FURTHER READING

These useful books might just fill some gaps in your reference library



**Creative Illustration**  
by Andrew Loomis  
Some amazing all-round information, particularly on composition and value studies.



**How to Draw**  
by Scott Robertson with Thomas Bertling  
Don't be fooled by the deceptively simple title - this is an extremely detailed in-depth look at how to construct solid perspective in your designs, and how to sketch objects and environments purely from your imagination.

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**Action Cartooning and Fantasy Cartooning**  
by Ben Caldwell  
These are great as a fun alternative to the classic How to Draw Comics the Marvel Way, which is aimed at slightly younger artists. I really like Ben Caldwell's humorous and stylised approach to character design.



### 4 GENERATE COSTUME VARIANTS AND ACCESSORIES

You could look at using different costume elements on individual layers as a way to develop an armour design. In Fable Legends we worked on multiple variant costume designs for each character, and the simplest form of this was a base costume, which would evolve into a 'cool' version. Simply turning your file layers on and off could generate some interesting combinations.

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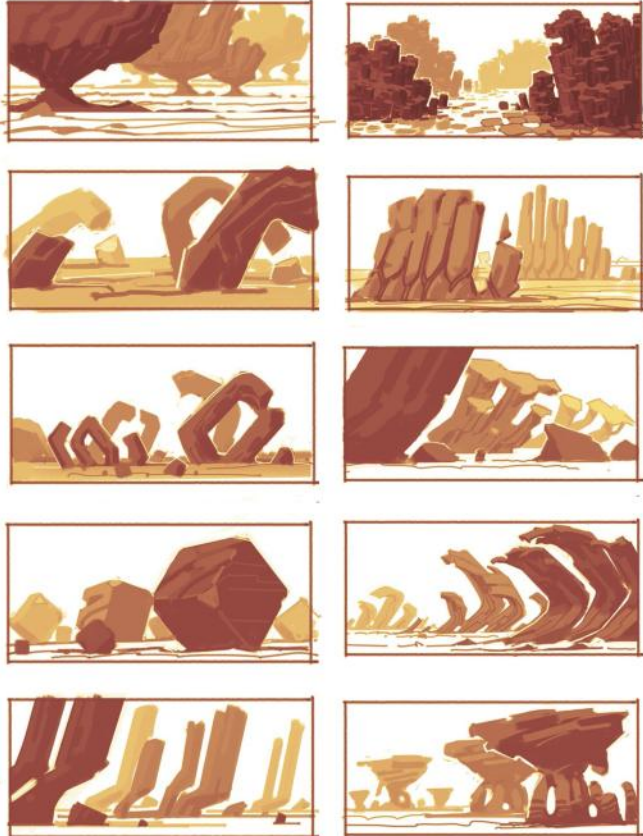
### 5 STICKY NOTES: THE NEW THUMBNAIL?

Thumbnails are well established as a quick method to work out composition and the broader elements of your design, the idea being that the drawing is so small that it's physically impossible to get hung-up on details. Sticky Notes are a great way to physically constrain your planning sketches. They also have the added advantage that if you make a mistake, you can use the sticky edge of a clean note to add a new section for your amendments, and just tear off the excess. I often scan my Sticky Note sketches, and use them as the basis for a final digital image. ➡➡

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## 6 REDUCED VALUE RANGE SKETCHES

Whereas thumbnails and Sticky Note sketches constrain the size of your drawing, you can also create reduced value range sketches. These force you to visualise forms in a more simplistic way, but they also give you the ability to create tonal depth and basic lighting. These are various ideas for Martian landscape formations.



© 2010 Space Age Films/Hibbert Ralph Animation



© 2010 Space Age Films/Hibbert Ralph Animation

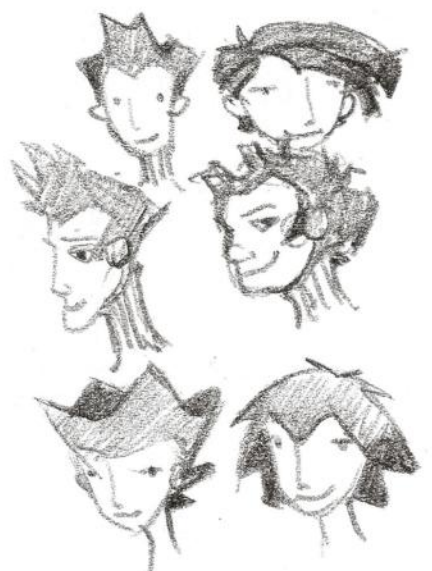
## 7 RECOGNISE EMERGING IDEAS

As you sketch you may have a strong idea in your head how the image should evolve. But it's important to also be aware of ideas which might be revealed unexpectedly while sketching. This is part of the visual development design process that's often used in the animation industry.

As I worked on the rough sketches for this surface structure I was aware that Mars only has about 38 per cent surface gravity compared to Earth, so this opens up the possibility of designing some unusual architectural ideas. I ended up with the balloon/tent idea which looked reminiscent of an Edison screw light-bulb shape, and it was this final detail that inspired the spiral access ramps at the base of the structure.

“ Be aware of ideas which might be revealed while sketching ”

© 2010 Space Age Films/Hibbert Ralph Animation



## 8 CONTRAST YOUR CAST OF CHARACTERS

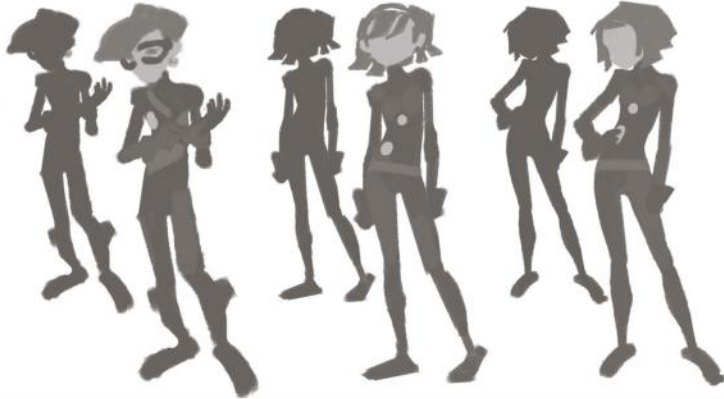
It's easy to get lost in the enjoyment of designing and painting a particular character, but remember to mentally step back from your project once in a while, and consider the bigger picture: how does this character compare with

the others in the 'cast' of your project? Just like casting actors in a movie, multiple similar visual character designs will tend to dilute their impact, whereas contrasting character designs tend to enhance each other. Height, volume, pose, attitude, costume and colour are all useful tools to create contrast between characters.



## 9 FROM SILHOUETTE TO TONAL DETAILS

When working on character silhouettes, orthographic views are relatively straightforward, but when it comes to a three-quarter angle or a more complex pose where limbs cross each other, it can be tempting to revert to a linear approach. However, it's good practice in the early stages to force yourself to stay with the single silhouette colour and try hard to visualise the pose in your mind as you're drawing. You'll find that with practice you achieve a much greater understanding of these tricky poses.



© 2010 Space Age Films/Hibbert Ralph Animation



© DC Comics

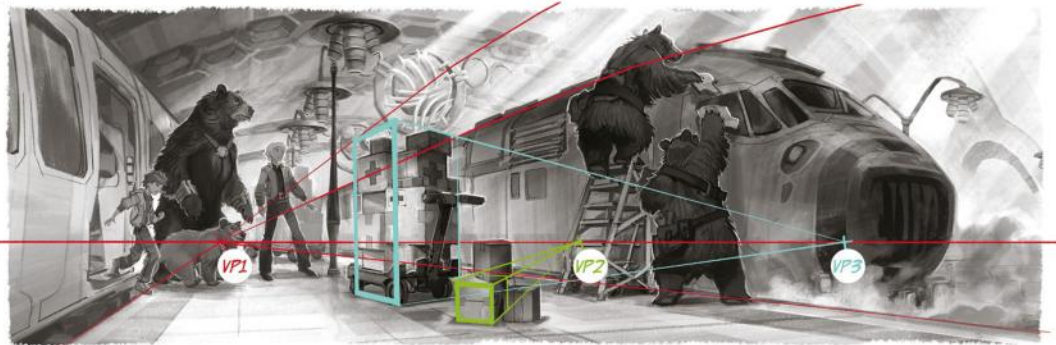
## 10 GUIDED COMPOSITION

It's your job to lead the viewer's eye, and take them on a journey through your image. Rather than concentrating on details within the image, you should look for an overall visual impression of the movement and balance of the artwork.

Just like framing a scene using a camera, a useful technique is to create a frame – either digitally, or from card – and experiment moving it around your image. You can often be surprised by the varying effectiveness of the image depending on framing. In this example, the red area shows the primary area of dramatic focus, but you can see how the surrounding details are composed to lead the eye around the image and reinforce the primary area.

## 11 PERSPECTIVE VARIATION

In your environment designs, having everything set to a single vanishing point can produce a flat, uninteresting image, so it's a good idea to vary your vanishing points for some elements to add visual interest and help bring the image to life.



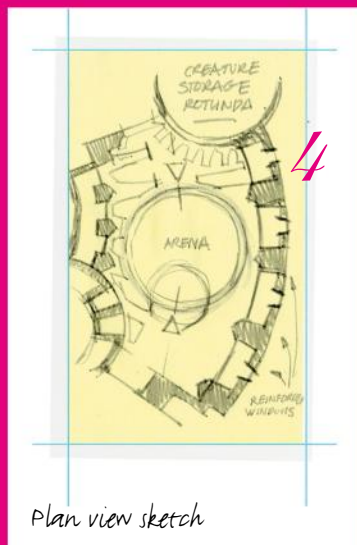
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## APPLY THE PERSPECTIVE PLAN TO A SETTING

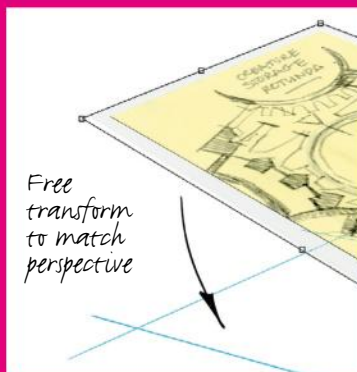
This is a simple technique that you can try without having to use 3D software. It helped me while working on the Harry Potter games, where we had to design Hogwarts.

### A The plan

Rather than trying to tackle all elements of an environment at the same time in a perspective view, it's easier to break it into simpler stages. The first of these is the plan view. I've roughly sketched out this classroom shape on a sticky note. You can now scan or photograph this.

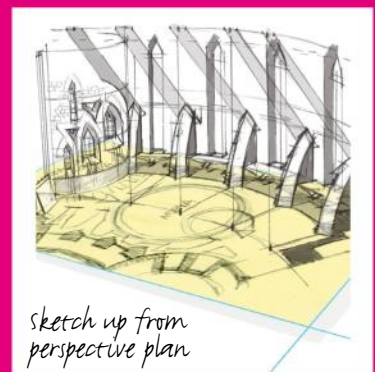


Plan view sketch



### B Set your angle

Now that you have your plan drawing, it's time to think about which viewpoint you want your final image to be from. Then you can transform this plan drawing to match: I select Photoshop's Edit/Free Transform tool, and hold Ctrl to adjust the corner points.



Sketch up from perspective plan

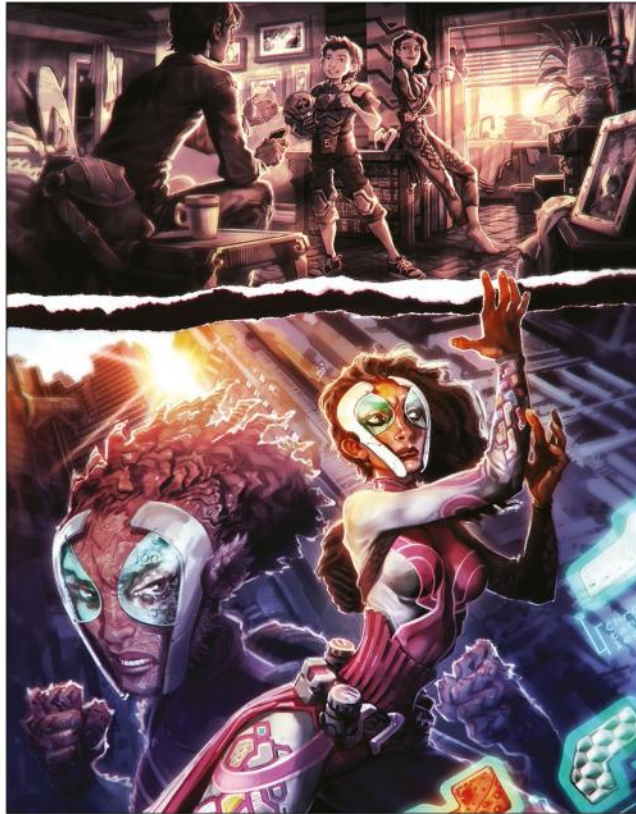
### C Build upwards

With the floor plan now correctly transformed to your desired perspective angle, it's time to get the bricks and mortar out and start building up from the plan, confident that all those tricky curves are in the right place on the ground plane.

© Warner Bros. & Electronic Arts Ltd

## 12 MIX YOUR MEDIA

Even though the real-world style brushes that software can simulate are so advanced now, there's still no reason why you shouldn't incorporate real-world elements. Here, the scanned paper rip across the image is a compositional device that represents this character's conflict between home and career. This is a simple example, but my point is that it was quicker to use physical paper and scan it than to try and hand-paint the effect. Digital art software is just another tool, so why not mix it with other real-world media?



© DC Comics

## 13 TACKLE COMPLICATED ARCHITECTURE

Architectural structures can be fairly easily blocked-out using 3D software, which you can then use to create a variety of camera viewpoints that would form the basis of your 2D image. However, it's a great idea to develop your knowledge of sketching structures in perspective, because it's a much quicker way of conveying your initial ideas in sketch form. I do value the freedom of 3D imagery, though – especially when you've spent days painting an environment and an art director says, "Can we see that from a slightly different view?"

“ Sketching structures in perspective is a quick way of conveying your initial ideas in sketch form ”



## 14 ENVIRONMENTAL WEATHER

Weather can become an addition character in your design and illustration work, influencing mood and perception. You can use to compositional advantage, such as ground-level atmospheric like rain or fog that can isolate depth planes within your images and creating focal areas.

It's good to be aware of weather clichés that you might want to avoid though, such as the 'rainy funeral scene'. In this Jayne Eyre image, the snowy setting creates a stark and oppressive atmosphere, which is offset by the warm lantern glow of the approaching horse-drawn carriage.

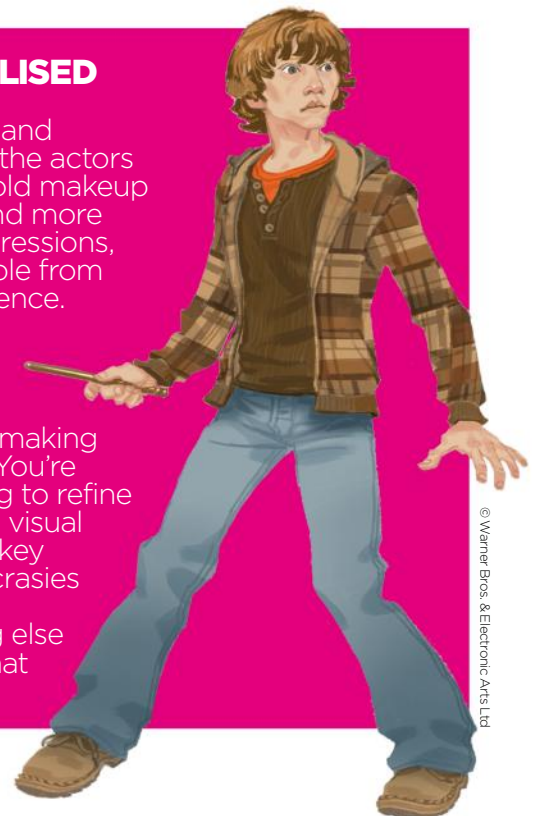


© 2008 Steel Mill Pictures

## 15 DEVELOP STYLISED CHARACTERS

Traditionally in stage and theatre productions, the actors would often apply bold makeup so that their faces, and more importantly their expressions, were clearly discernible from way back in the audience.

Taking a simplified, slightly caricatured approach to your characters' faces will have a similar effect, making them easier to read. You're effectively attempting to refine down to the simplest visual form, identifying the key features and idiosyncrasies that make up this character. Everything else is redundant detail that can be discarded.



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# COMIC ART

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We all know the barbarian through books and art – now explore the comics!

### **Chris Visions**

With his explosive style and traditional media skills, Chris' tutorial will inspire.

### **Iain McCaig**

The film art legend tells us all about his colourful and creative career to date.

**ISSUE 137 ON SALE IN THE UK FRIDAY 17 JUNE**

# Photoshop CREATE CARD ART FULL OF PERSONALITY

**Matt Zeilinger** shows you his process of painting a cyberpunk character for Android: Netrunner



## Artist PROFILE

**Matt Zeilinger**  
LOCATION: US



Matt is a full-time concept artist by day, and illustrator by night. He's painted for a variety of products, with his largest body of work being featured in the Android: Netrunner universe.

[www.mattzeilinger.com](http://www.mattzeilinger.com)

**GET YOUR RESOURCES**  
See page 6 now!

**F**or this workshop, I'll take you through the stages for creating artwork for card games – in this case, the character Noise for Android: Netrunner, produced by Fantasy Flight Games.

Illustrating images for card games has some special considerations to keep in mind that make it unique from other types of creative work. Readability is always a concern, because card game images are often printed very small and should be recognisable at a glance.

This isn't to say that they can't be detailed, but complexity often comes at a price. Particularly in the Android game world, avoiding over-elaborate imagery

can be tricky, because the setting naturally combines futuristic tech, intricate interfaces, and complex characters with the backdrop of a gritty, dystopian world. Striking a balance between creating a compelling scene and what needs to be communicated becomes an art form in itself.

While there are many approaches that will enable you to accomplish this, doing so in a way which achieves that balance is the key. Composing an effective card illustration takes practice, and while I'm still in the process of learning myself, I hope to share some techniques I've learned along the way, which will help you to bypass some of the usual pitfalls.

## PRO SECRETS

### Inspiration boards

When working on any illustration, I find it helps to create at least one inspiration board. This is a collage of material that helps me to visualise and inspire during the creation of the image. It can be style, texture or anatomical reference as well as more inspirational images, such as artwork you admire. I've found that if I'm struggling to get through an image, having an inspiration board handy can help push me creatively, or ease my way through challenging aspects of the assignment.

© Fantasy Flight Games



### 1 Assessing the brief and supporting materials

The brief comes from the art director, and contains the title of the image, what kind of card it will be, a description of what's happening in the scene, and some reference. For this image, the brief involves the character Noise taking control of a nightclub's systems. I've painted Noise before: he's a smug, self-serving, anti-hero type character, and his personality is going to be front and centre.



© iStock.com/nico\_blue/nueda

### Shortcuts

**Copy Merge**  
Shift+Cmd+C (Mac)  
Shift+Ctrl+C (PC)

Handy if you want to copy multiple layers, but you want to keep those layers separate.



## 2 Consider the frame template

Knowing what type of card it is, I can take a look at the framing element I'll be working with. From a game design standpoint, the frame assist in separating the cards in play on the table, helping players to tell at a glance what kind of card it is. For the artist, however, this framing element is important for determining how to set up the composition of your image.



## 3 Produce sketches

I begin creating sketches that satisfy the brief, as well as work within the borders of the frame. I concentrate on a simple composition that showcases the character's personality. I know that I won't have much background to play with, and I need to convey the nightclub environment, so I decide to depict the character as if he's in the middle of a dance floor. ➤

### PRO SECRETS

#### Zoom out regularly

When working on an image for a card game, I always zoom out nearly to the size of the printed image, to check whether or not my image is legible at a small size. Doing this check many times over the course of the painting ensures that you're always mindful of that legibility as you work towards the completed image, by enabling you to fix problems as they arise.



**4 Organising elements in the scene**  
I separate the back-, mid- and foreground elements on to individual layers using the Lasso tool and copy/pasting the selection. This not only streamlines the work for me, but if the art director decides to move or scale any of these elements, then it's easy to do so without disrupting the others or needing a lot of repaint to fill in gaps. Because of the small amount of mid- and background in this image, I decide to group those two elements together and only separate out the foreground character.




**5 Colouring the background**  
I wash some neon colours on the background on a Color layer. Darken layers help to tone down some of the brighter areas and produce more saturation, while Color Dodge layers amp up the light sources. I want to give the impression of a busy dance floor, as well as supporting the shape of the main character. I also avoid design elements that will give Noise a strange silhouette.

**RESOURCES**

**WORKSHOP BRUSHES**

**PHOTOSHOP**

**CUSTOM BRUSHES: SQUARE BRUSH**




I use this for nearly every aspect of the painting process. It has nice buildup, and it enables me to develop edges.

**SOFT ROUND TEXTURE**



This soft brush has a subtle granularity that gives it texture. I use it similarly to an Airbrush, but also as an Eraser.

**HARD CHALK**



I primarily use this brush as a texture pass. It has a chalky look to it that works well for a variety of surfaces.

**SKIN BRUSH**



This is another texture pass brush. I used it on Noise's skin in the lighter areas to give the impression of skin pores.



**6 Dramatic lighting**  
As I work on the background, I realise that I haven't quite accomplished my goal of establishing an interesting pattern to the background and it's become slightly muddled. To fix this, I add a hard red lighting to the characters that helps to draw them out, and gives the background a more dramatic lighting setup.



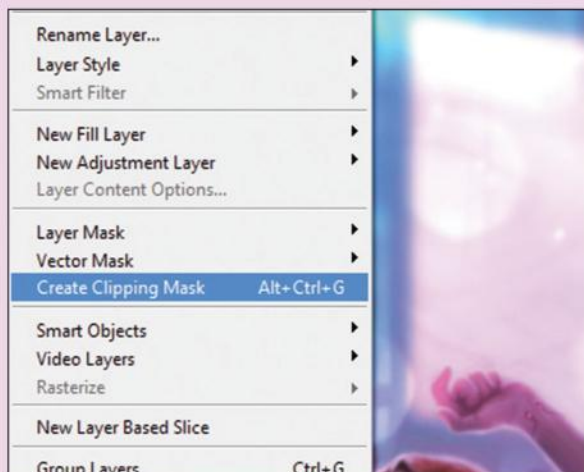
**7 Directing the focus**  
I don't spend too much energy on polishing the background. Not only won't it be visible at the final card size, but I also want to avoid visual confusion with levels of detail. I instead focus more on how the background appears at a small size, thinking of it as a pattern of colour and shapes, similar to how things look when you squint your eyes.



**8 Use field blur techniques**  
I want to further reduce the importance of the background figures, so I'll add a subtle blur. First, I duplicate the background and collapse it to a single layer. I don't want to lose a sense of depth so I use a Field Blur, which enables me to place pins on the layer and control the level of blur for each pin. Now I can blur the background to a greater degree than the midground dancers.



**9 The main event**  
With the background finished, I move on to the main character. I begin by using Color and Darken layers to wash in colours and shadows, giving myself a good base to work from. Again, this is an existing character in the Android world, so his colour palette has already been established.



## 10 Establish clipping masks

When I work on characters, I don't paint directly on my sketch layer in case I need to go back to it. Having separated it out at the start, I work on layers that have been attached to it as a clipping mask. I achieve this by creating a new layer above the base layer, right-clicking it and selecting Create Clipping Mask or Layer>Create Clipping Mask.



## 11 Details, details, details

As I render the character, it's important to pay attention to the little details: his smirk, his buttons and patches, the holes in his T-shirt, his tattoo, and so on. All of these help tell the story of the character beyond what's happening in the scene, and set him apart as a character who lives beyond just fulfilling the purpose of this one piece of art.

## 12 Making things cohesive

The last stage of painting the character is to make sure I light him appropriately so he looks like he's a part of the scene, in addition to being the focal point. He's lit with the same hard red light that's affecting the other characters, but he retains much of his natural colouring, which helps him stand out. I make sure to blend into the scene any elements that seem out of place on him or are drawing too much attention.



## 13 Creating the interface

For Noise's hacking interface, I use Photoshop to assemble a separate sheet featuring various techy designs I could combine to create a series of digital projections. I use Color Dodge layers, which gives it a nice holographic glow. I also give it a magenta colour to tie it in with the overall colour scheme and make it a supporting element, instead of making it a contrasting colour.

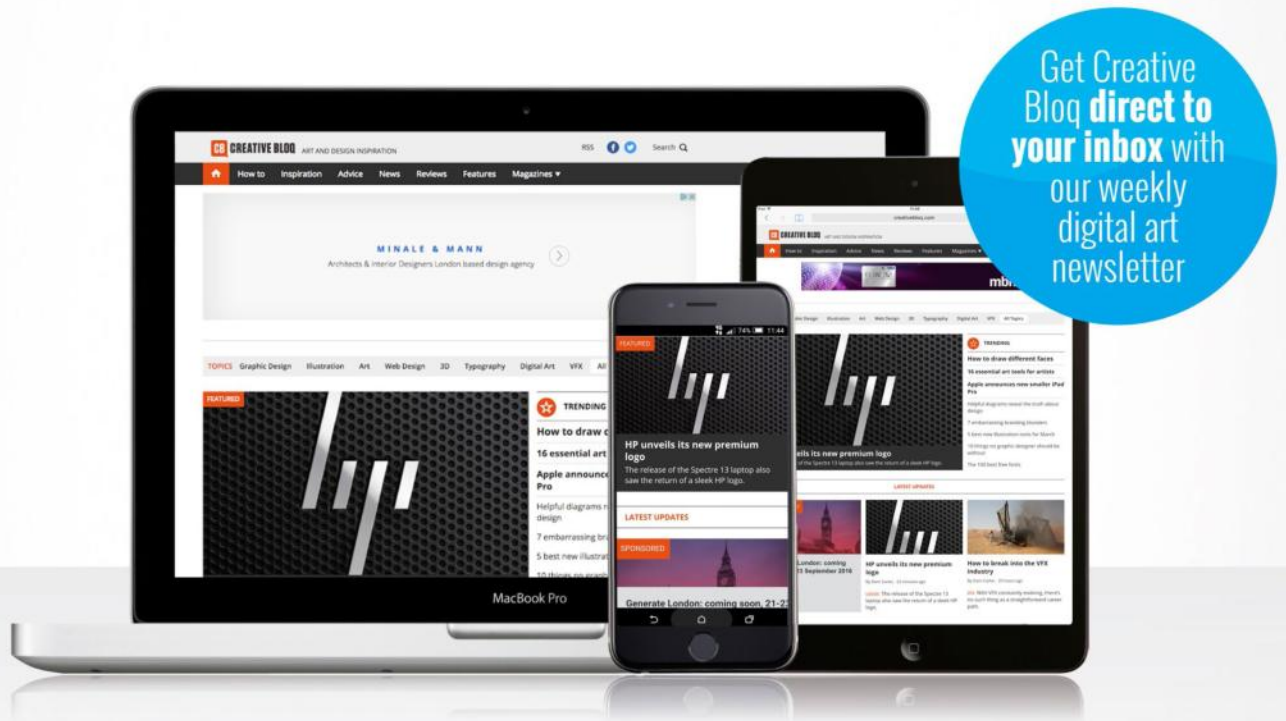
## 14 Apply a colour aberration effect

I click Select All>Copy Merged, pasting a copy of the finished image into a new layer. I double-click this layer and in the dialog under Channels, I untick the Green and Blue channel boxes, then click OK. I then Transform the image, scaling it slightly overall. This offsets the layer, giving the image a slightly glitched video appearance to really sell the cyberpunk theme.

**PRO SECRETS**

**Correct errors by mirroring**  
 Mirroring your image (Image>Image Rotation>Flip Canvas Horizontal) is one of the most useful tricks to check for visual errors in your image. The image should look right when flipped, and if something is off it's usually blatantly obvious. Especially when working with characters and dynamic poses, use this method often to check your character's anatomy, especially the face. Flip the image, correct the problems, then flip back and repeat as needed until it's right.

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# NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX Reviews



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

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



#### SOFTWARE

##### 90 Tayasui Sketches II Pro

This drawing and painting app comes with some new tools, but do they upset the balance?

#### HARDWARE

##### 91 Intuos Comic medium

Wacom's entry-level tablet gets a size upgrade, but the core features remain the same. We find out if it's worth making the step up to.

##### 93 Cintiq 13HD Touch

This pint-sized Cintiq tablet offers a sublime digital drawing experience, at a price that won't make you swear.



#### TRAINING

##### 95 Figure Fundamentals Volume 4

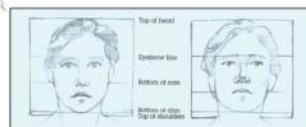
Get stuck in Lowbrow artist Van Arno invites you into a life-drawing session where you'll have use your own head, not just the models'.



#### BOOKS

##### 96 Further reading

The Art of Atomhawk Volume 2; Draw Faces in 15 Minutes; Animated Performance.



RATINGS EXPLAINED Magnificent Great Good Poor Atrocious



Sketches II Pro tools range from essentials such as pencils and inks to new flourishes like scalable patterns, numbers and symbols.

## Tayasui Sketches II Pro

**SKETCH APPEAL** This update comes with some new tricks, but do they upset the balance of the painting app?

iOS

**Price** £3.99 **Company** Tayasui **Web** [www.tayasui.com](http://www.tayasui.com)

**T**ayasui Sketches II Pro has double the number of tools available in the previous version, offering 20 at your disposal. There's now the ability to employ up to four layers to any document, and apply patterns to your art. But do these added features take away from Sketches once-simplistic appeal?

We have to say, they do detract a bit. Sketches, much like Paper, was lauded for its similarity to grabbing a pen and paper. The lack of options meant you didn't waste time fussing over which layer you were working on, or adjusting



Layers enables you to separate sketch roughs on one layer, lines on another and paint in between.

the Opacity of your tools. The more features you add, the more potential there is for complaints. For example, having layers is great, but suddenly you'll find yourself frustrated there are only four available, or that the Opacity and Size sliders are easy to accidentally trigger while making a brush stroke, forcing you to swipe Undo frequently.

This isn't to say that the tools aren't good. They do behave nicely for the most part, although some are a little less precise than others. Yet the overwhelming simplicity is gone, which makes you long for more options to bolster the 20 tools you have. Customising the tools feels a little clunky too; in an effort to keep the workspace uncluttered you have to press for a second to make the Size and Opacity options appear; likewise with the Color Eyedropper. It's a small niggle, but one that will occur frequently.

The Pattern tools are a pleasing addition, and give some interesting effects, and the Text and Shape tools are well-realised. So overall, we'd say that Sketches 2 lends itself to more quirky illustrations than complex paintings. It's a decent app, but the balance is just a little off.

### DETAILS

#### Features

- 64-bit OpenGL enhanced brushes
- Redesigned user interface for iPhone and iPad
- New Smudge brush
- New Cutter tool for cutting, pasting and duplicating
- New Smart Ruler tool simplifies horizontal and vertical line drawings
- New India Ink pen
- Twenty tools to choose from
- Four layers available
- Pattern tools add a number of looks
- Export layers to .png files

#### System Requirements

**Mac:** Compatible with iPhone and iPad. Requires iOS 8.1 or later, optimised for iPad Pro and Apple Pencil. 86.6MB install size

#### Rating



## A TRIO OF ALTERNATIVES

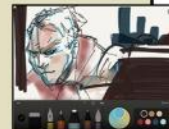
*Drawing apps to suit you, no matter what you prefer*

### Paper

**Web** [www.fiftythree.com](http://www.fiftythree.com)

**Price** Free

Paper is an app people love because it's so uncluttered and straightforward. Offering no options for customisation, the purpose of Paper is to get straight to sketching with no fuss. However, this limits Paper because, like drawing on paper with a pen, there are no layers or even opacity to sketch with. As such, Paper has less versatility than Sketches 2, which can be both a blessing and a curse.



### Photoshop Sketch

**Web** [www.adobe.com](http://www.adobe.com)

**Price** Free

Adobe's app offers a variety of drawing tools that all do what you'd expect them to, but also features built-in perspective guides, the ability to import custom brushes and work from files and palettes available from your personal Creative Cloud, and most impressively, the chance to infinitely scrub through history states so that you can undo and redo brush strokes.



### Pixelmator 2.2.1 for iOS

**Web** [www.pixelmator.com](http://www.pixelmator.com)

**Price** £3.99

When we reviewed Pixelmator 2.2 in issue 132, we called it "a triumph in user interface design" with so many options and brushes available and yet all hidden away until you need them. Pixelmator is both a photo-editing tool for mobiles and tablets (it includes level and curves adjustments, colour corrections, blurs and more) and a fantastic painting app in its own right, possessing plenty of intuitive, responsive options.





# Intuos Comic medium

MAC & PC

Everything you need to start making your own comics or manga: a tablet and the excellent Clip Studio Pro software.

**TASTER TABLET** Wacom's entry-level tablet gets a size upgrade, but the core features remain the same. Is it worth making the step up to?

**Price** £150 **Company** Wacom **Web** [www.wacom.com](http://www.wacom.com)

**T**he Intuos Comic medium is a reasonably priced entry-level tablet from the gold standard of graphics tablet makers, Wacom. The main difference between this Intuos Comic and its smaller 2015 predecessor is that the upgrade in size simply offers more space to draw, which is beneficial on higher resolution screens. It remains a lightweight yet sturdy piece of kit.

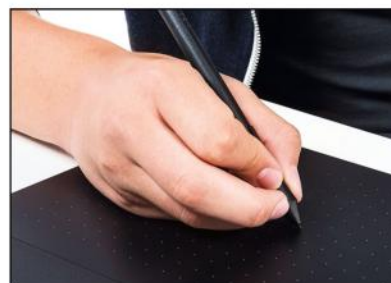
The answer to whether you want this tablet or not depends on if you're a hobbyist or if you're a professional - or an aspiring one! The Intuos Comic lacks a few of the useful features of its big brother, the Intuos Pro, such as an eraser tip on the stylus, or a well to stand your stylus in.

The Comic offers 1,024 levels of pressure sensitivity. While this is half the sensitivity levels boasted by the Pro and lacking tilt sensitivity, it still feels highly responsive and is a joy to use.

The Comic also has multi-touch, which enables you to use common gestures to zoom, rotate and pan your artwork. Sadly, it only features four programmable ExpressKeys, which are by default set as your modifier keys, and although these are useful, if you've used other Wacom tablets before then you'll miss additional shortcut keys and touch strips to modify your brush size quickly. It's not a problem if you have your keyboard nearby, but between this and the inability to flip your pen and use it as an eraser, you'll notice your workflow productivity being hampered.

The Intuos Comic supports the Wacom Wireless Kit, but it doesn't come included as it does with the Intuos Pro. The cable feels long enough that this shouldn't be an issue, though.

To get you started, Intuos Comic comes with Clip Studio Paint Pro (formerly known as Manga Studio) and Anime Studio Debut 10. However, it



The increased space on the Intuos Comic medium is useful for painting with broad strokes.

should be noted that Clip Studio Paint Pro is a two-year limited software use license, with the option to upgrade to an unlimited version at a discounted rate or to continue to use it as Clip Studio Paint Debut Version after expiration of the two-year period.

If you've never used a tablet before, or are just after a cheap and reliable model, this is a good way to get a feel for how they work. However, you might be better served with the cheaper and smaller Intuos Comic. More experienced artists won't want to be hamstrung by the lack of an eraser, ExpressKeys and tilt sensitivity, and are best suited opting for one of the more expensive models like the Intuos Pro.

## DETAILS

### Features

- Multi-touch enabled, includes common gestures to zoom, rotate and pan
- Compact and portable
- Bundled with Clip Studio Pro (for two years) and Anime Studio Debut
- 216x135mm active area (medium) vs 152x95 mm (small)
- Lightweight
- Four customisable ExpressKeys
- Available in either black or blue
- Support for Wacom Wireless Kit (sold separately)
- Designed for both right- and left-handed artists

### System Requirements

- PC:** Windows 7, 8 or 10, USB port, Internet connection, CD/DVD-ROM drive
- Mac:** OS X 10.8.5 or later, USB port, Internet connection, CD/DVD-ROM drive

### Rating



The stylus for the Intuos Comic is able to make use of the tablet's 1,024 levels of sensitivity and it comes with replacement nibs, but sadly no eraser.

INSPIRING  
CG ARTISTS

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July 2016  
#209

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Draw direct on to your screen with the Cintiq 13HD Touch - it's the ultimate affordable graphics tablet.



# Cintiq 13HD Touch

**CAN YOU FEEL IT?** This pint-sized Cintiq tablet offers a sublime digital drawing experience, at a price that won't make you swear



**Price** £720 **Company** Wacom **Web** [www.wacom.eu](http://www.wacom.eu)

**T**here are few people who would use the words 'Cintiq' and 'affordable' in the same sentence, but you might be surprised to learn that the smallest model in Wacom's desirable screen-based tablet range actually qualifies for that label. The aim of the Cintiq 13HD Touch is to deliver the first-rate drawing experience of its bigger siblings for a price that most active artists could justify.

A Cintiq is essentially a monitor you can draw on: plug it into your Windows



Customise the functions of the Touch's ExpressKeys to avoid switching back to your keyboard.

or Mac computer and you've got a second screen that recognises the nib of the supplied pen and, to a limited extent, the touch of your fingers as well. This 13-inch display gives you a drawing area of roughly an A4 sheet: plenty for everyday sketching and painting, although anyone in the habit of creating large-scale digital paintings may find the size a constraint.

The build quality of the screen unit is very good, although the cable connection feels a little delicate. The cable itself is a handful: at one end, it splits into three to accommodate the power connection, USB 2.0 for the pen feedback and HDMI for the video link. (If your computer isn't new enough to offer a built-in HDMI port, HDMI adaptors for your connection type are readily available.)

The stylus is Wacom's Pro Pen design, and it feels solid and balanced. Nine replacement tips and a pen holder are included. Wacom's standard driver and software enable you to calibrate the pen and adjust its feel: you can also customise the handful of buttons to one side of the display to



The pen provided with the 13HD Touch is nicely weighted, making it a pleasure to draw with.

trigger favourite commands in each art program that you use.

Although this Cintiq costs far more than a similarly sized Intuos tablet, the difference in your experience is like night and day. Screen-less tablets like the Intuos always require you to relearn how to draw: looking ahead at a screen while your hand is below never feels entirely natural. Drawing on a Cintiq is as carefree as using a sheet of paper. You can purchase a Cintiq 13HD without touch-sensitivity for about £140 less, but the first time you use two fingers to zoom into or rotate your digital canvas, you'll know the extra expense was worth it.

## DETAILS

### Features

- 13.3in (33.8cm) display
- Full HD 1,920x1,080 resolution
- 2,048 levels of pressure sensitivity
- HDMI video input
- USB 2.0 connection for pen feedback
- Four ExpressKeys
- Rocker Ring and Home button
- Pro Pen with nine replacement nibs
- Pen case and holder
- Adjustable stand with three angles

### System Requirements

- PC: Windows 7 SP1 or later
- Mac: Mac OS X 10.8 or later

### Rating



Render the Possibilities

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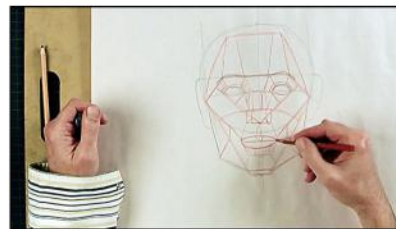
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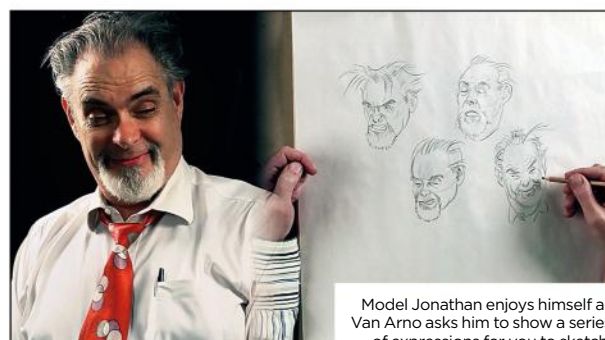


Sponsored by ACM SIGGRAPH



Two theory sessions guide you through basic proportions and how to think of a head construction in three-dimensional planes.

A longer sequence of poses gives Van Arno and you the chance to use your knowledge of head planes to build up light and shade.



Model Jonathan enjoys himself as Van Arno asks him to show a series of expressions for you to sketch.

## Figure Fundamentals Volume 4

**GET STUCK IN** Lowbrow artist Van Arno invites you into a life-drawing session where you'll have use your own head, not just the models'

**Publisher** The Gnomon Workshop **Price** £41 **Format** Download **Web** [www.thegnomonworkshop.com](http://www.thegnomonworkshop.com)

**T**he fourth in Van Arno's **Figure Fundamentals series (we reviewed Volume 1 on the female body in issue 127)** sees the artist **focus on the male head, following on from the female head covered in the previous instalment.**

On paper, the three-and-a-half-hour running time looks impressive, but closer inspection reveals that the video only offers a mere 15 minutes of theory, where Van shows you how to work out basic proportions and make a head drawing feel more three-dimensional with planes. The artist is clearly reluctant to bog you down with formulas and rules – some of which, he says, are “kind of iffy”.

The rest is as practical as it gets. Van works with a couple of life models, asking them to pose and showing you both the pose and his drawing as he makes it. The idea is that you get out your own drawing pad and sketch along with Van. It's like attending a



### DETAILS

#### Topics covered

- Basic head proportions
- Male and female facial proportions
- Simple head construction
- Planes of the head
- Depicting planes with light and shade

#### Length

212 minutes

#### Rating



group life-drawing session where you get to look over a master artist's shoulder while you draw, with the added bonus of being able to press the pause and replay buttons.

Model sessions include five-minute sketches from various angles, an entertaining series of expressions in which Van encourages you to stay loose with your line, and a more in-depth exploration of relating head planes to light, rendering both highlights and shadows with coloured paper representing the mid-tone.

The participatory nature of the format means that Figure Fundamentals Volume 4 isn't as dense with information as some training videos you'll have watched. Essentially, what you get out of it depends in large part on what you're prepared to put in. One casualty of this practical emphasis is that you don't come out with much sense of what makes a male head 'male', other than some brief discussion of jawlines and broad proportions. ●

### ARTIST PROFILE VAN ARNO

Van Arno is a figurative painter whose work has been displayed in the US and internationally for 20 years. Van's background includes illustration, amusement park design, game art in 2D and 3D, animation and character design. His paintings have frequently been featured in Juxtapoz magazine and included in a national survey of Lowbrow painters. His ongoing fascination with the imagery of propaganda and its use of the heroic figure has attracted many admirers, with Van's focus ultimately remaining on the figure and its power to engage the viewer.



[www.vanarno.com](http://www.vanarno.com)



## The Art of Atomhawk, Vol 2

**ATOMIC ENERGY** The celebrated art and design agency is more than the sum of its client work, as this second volume of projects proves

**Authors** Cumron Ashitani, et al **Publisher** Atomhawk **Price** £25 **Web** [www.atomhawk.com](http://www.atomhawk.com) **Available Now**

**W**e're long-time fans of Atomhawk, the digital art and design agency based in Gateshead, north-east England, that rose from the ashes of Midway Games UK in 2009.

Fast-forward to 2016, and the company has 40 released projects to its name across games, films and digital media, including Mortal Kombat, Project Spark, Injustice: Gods Among Us and JK Rowling's Pottermore. So this Kickstarter-funded volume of its concept art work is well overdue.

However, the book is at pains to convey that Atomhawk is far more than just the sum of its client work. To hammer the point home, it opens with a 'Meet the Team' section, featuring shots of employees at work in the studio and letting their hair down on group days out. These pages might have come across as self-involved, but instead reveals that Atomhawk isn't just a pay cheque for its employees, but a real community of artists.



Environment art by Pete Thompson, created for the PS Vita first-person shooter Killzone: Mercenary.

Continuing the theme comes a chapter on an internal Atomhawk project, The Realm. This game was developed to hone the team's creative wits and act as a portfolio piece. Although the crowdfunding campaign to make The Realm was unsuccessful, the concept art is proudly reproduced here; a sign that aesthetic achievements are at least as important as commercial ones for Atomhawk. We're particularly enamoured by the creature work in this section, from Charlie Bowater's strange stone monster Toru to Robert F Castro's tall and terrifying Lampheads.

Next comes the client work, which is varied as it is breathtakingly inspiring. From new versions of Wonder Woman and The Joker for Injustice: Gods Among Us to building and boat designs for Killzone: Mercenary, the art is complemented by insights into the thinking and influences behind it, along with some handy digital painting tips.

And that's not all. There are also five in-depth tutorials sharing the



The challenge for Charlie Bowater was to portray the lead character from The Realm at the right age.

techniques, workflow and inspiration that Atomhawk's artists use when creating concept art. Furthermore, eight of these artists have included selections of their personal creations, along with advice on how they develop their skills through their own work.

We're generally a little wary of Kickstarter-funded books, which can be hit and miss. But in our eyes, this one is very much a hit.

**RATING**





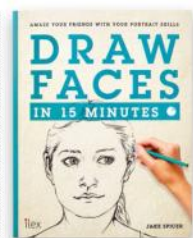
# Draw Faces in 15 Minutes

**FACE FACTS** From eyes and ears to jaw and neck, this guide to drawing faces is a nose ahead of the competition

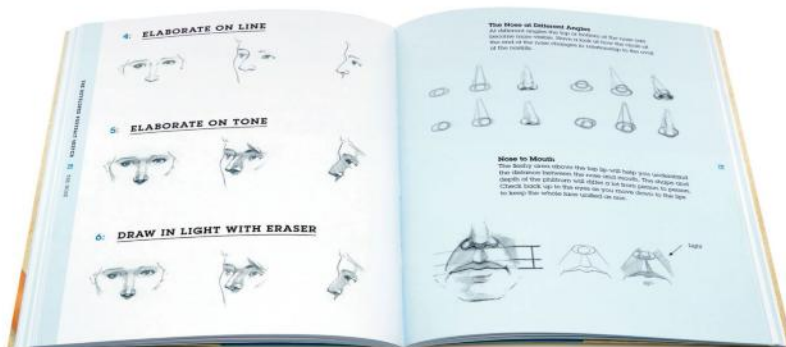
**Author** Jake Spicer **Publisher** Ilex **Price** £10 **Web** www.illex-press.com **Available** Now

**T**his book's slightly gimmicky '15 Minutes' tag might put you off, but don't be fooled: this is not a guide for total novices. Instead, this is the latest in a long-running series from life-drawing expert Jake Spicer. Inside are instruction, advice and tutorials on pencil portraiture aimed at artists of all skill levels.

What Jake's books do best is to break down their subjects into comprehensible stages. And so this 130-page guide takes you through



Jake keeps things simple: his instructional text gets straight to the point, as do his visuals.



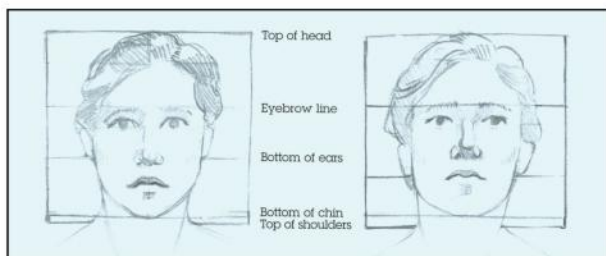
everything you need to know, including which materials to use; how to find a model; methods of observation, structure and tone; and how to make effective marks.

You'll learn how to construct a basic portrait sketch, then go on to discover how to develop your drawings and make them more lifelike. Each part of the face's anatomy is addressed in turn, as well as other considerations such as

blemishes and freckles, age and racial differences, and individual expressions.

For the beginner, this book is an invaluable masterclass. While for the intermediate to advanced artist it serves as a handy manual, full of tips, tutorials and explanatory examples, to dip in and out of and refer back to, time and time again.

**RATING**



# Animated Performance

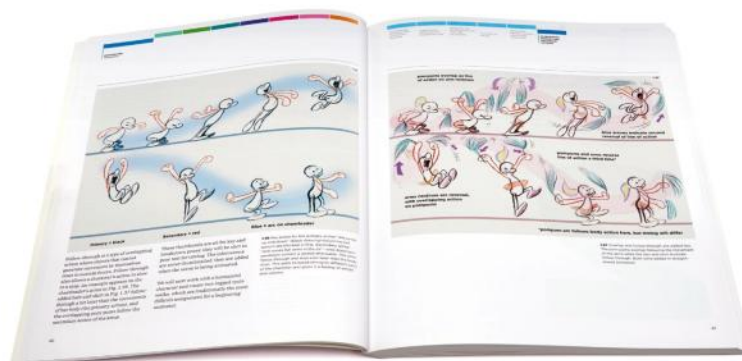
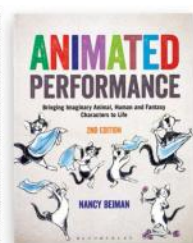


**CLASSIC REBORN** Nancy Beiman's iconic study benefits from an update, but its basic principles remain thankfully intact...

**Author** Nancy Beiman **Publisher** Fairchild/Bloomsbury **Price** £30 **Web** www.fairchildbooks.com **Available** Now

**N**ancy Beiman has an impressive animation pedigree, having worked at six major studios. She's also a professor at Sheridan College in Oakville, Canada. And it's this combination of experience, insider knowledge and teaching ability that made *Animated Performance* - her 1998 instructional manual - a must-read for animation students.

This second edition is newly revised, updated and extended, but the central

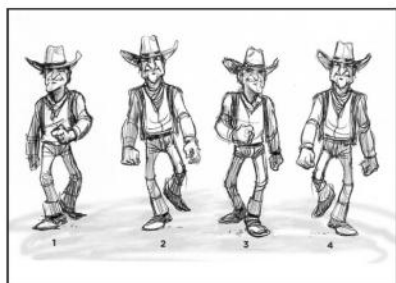


premise remains. Nancy asks you to consider how to 'get a performance' out of your characters, seeing the skill of the animator as 'an actor with a pencil'. Your aim should not be to replicate live action, but to enable your characters to creatively transcend the confines of the physical world to enhance the audience's enjoyment.

It's the starting gun for a series of lessons in character movement,

beginning with the classic bouncing ball and pendulum exercises, before moving through the concepts of line of action, silhouettes, anticipation, squash and stretch. Sprinkled with a lifetime's worth of tips from Hollywood mentors, and including 38 drawing exercises, this 240-page book feels like the teacher you wish you'd had at animation school.

**RATING**



Nancy gives her cowboy an exaggerated 'masculine' walk, where the body weight shifts on to the leading foot.

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# FANTASY

*illustrator*

## HEROES, COLOUR & TOLKIEN

Matthew Stewart looks back over his long and successful career in fantasy art **Page 114**



### This issue:



**100 FXPosé Traditional**  
The best traditional art revealed.



**104 Creative Space**  
We visit Bristol's Ink Soup.



**106 Painting fairy tales**  
Rovina Cai adds a dark twist.



**112 Watercolours**  
Anand Radhakrishnan's tips.

# FXPosé *Traditional*

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL FANTASY ARTISTS

**Kelley Hensing**

LOCATION: US  
WEB: [www.kelleyhensing.com](http://www.kelleyhensing.com)  
EMAIL: [kelley@wickiearts.com](mailto:kelley@wickiearts.com)  
MEDIA: Oil



"Our family lived in a red house in the woods," says Kelley. "It had secret passages in the walls, and we were surrounded by animals." The artist has always loved stories about folklore and archetypal figures, and this evolved into a fascination with mysteries and how religious beliefs influence perception.

Currently, Kelley works in Brooklyn, NY, and describes her work as figurative symbolism. "I earned my MFA from the School of Visual Arts, and had the honor of being mentored by Donato Giancola."

**IMAGINEFX CRIT**



"Kelley's artworks are packed with storytelling cues that encourage the viewer to explore them at length. I especially like her choices of colours, and the vintage frames are a lovely finishing touch."

Alice Pattillo,  
Staff Writer

**1 REVENGE OF THE WILD**

Oil on panel, 26x41in  
"With the loss and destruction of the natural environment, Mother Nature has returned with a vengeance, resurrecting the lost creatures from the earth to rise and defend the damaged land. I wanted this to feel like an alter piece from a matriarchal religion. It's in a repurposed vintage frame."

**2 PARADOX**

Oil on panel, 26x38in  
"This is one of my favourite images and I like the ambiguous nature of the shrouded figure. Without overexplaining the meaning, elements revolve around, seeking something we cannot understand. The frame is an old cracked mirror - a lucky find from an antique shop."



24



**1** **Larry MacDougall**

**LOCATION:** Canada  
**WEB:** [www.mythwood.blogspot.co.uk](http://www.mythwood.blogspot.co.uk)  
**EMAIL:** [underhillstudio@cogeco.ca](mailto:underhillstudio@cogeco.ca)  
**MEDIA:** Watercolour, gouache, coloured pencil



"Exploring the Canadian countryside gave me a deep respect for the natural world", Larry says about his upbringing. He later discovered Brian Froud and Alan Lee's book *Faeries*: "They became my favourite artists and through them I learned how to look for the magic in a landscape," he says.

Larry found other artists through them, too, including Arthur Rackham, John Bauer and Edmund Dulac. "At about the same time I also discovered Tolkien. I've been painting this kind of nature-based fantasy ever since."

**IMAGINEFX CRIT**



"While Larry's art has its roots in the work of Rackham and co, the imagery on show here reveals that he's able to mix the whimsical with the threatening, which is the sign of a confident, talented artist."

**Daniel Vincent,**  
Art Editor



**1 HILL GIANT**

Gouache, 15x20in  
"For this painting I decided to work a bit larger than I normally do and take a bit more time, too. The witch in the cottage has enlisted the aid of an easy-going giant to help her move her house deeper into the mountains."

**2 NO QUARTER**

Watercolours, coloured pencil, 9x12in  
"These guys are in big trouble. If I were going to paint the next picture in this series of events it would probably have something to do with scattered and broken shields at the bottom of a cliff."

**3 THE PUMPKIN DEALER**

Watercolour, 9x12in  
"This is an image done years ago, when I was interested in Arthur Rackham. I tried to simulate his technique of line and colour wash, but I used sepia watercolour for the underdrawing rather than the black ink he used."

**4 RAINY RIVER**

Watercolour, 9x12  
"Rainy River is the name of a town in Northern Ontario. I've never been there, but I have always liked the name: it sounds remote and mystical-sounding. This image won a silver award a few years back in *Spectrum 15*."





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Bath BA1 1UA, England

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# Creative Space



**HEY YOU!**  
Are you a part of a regular art class or group? Email us at [mail@imaginefx.com](mailto:mail@imaginefx.com) if you want to feature here!

## INK SOUP: BRISTOL

South West England's soup-er collective Ink Soup is seeking to connect and inspire comic creators with its laid-back hangouts, says co-organiser **PETE HAYES**

Collaborative events are essential for comic book artists, and that's why thoughtful Bristol arts collective Ink Soup has started organising its very own.

Ink Soup is a team of artists and writers who produce a comics and art anthology, make live art and do commissions in the south west of England. "We all felt there was a lack of events in Bristol for comic creators," says co-host Pete Hayes. "We thought it would be great to set up a regular night where people can meet up to discuss ideas, compare work, draw together and chat about the comics we're



Ink Soup is a magazine and collective, with a love for comics and visual arts.

reading and making. It's hard to make art in a vacuum."

In co-operation with writer Matt Gibbs, they ran their first meet-up last month and it received more support than they ever anticipated. "It was a huge success – so many people came and participated," says Pete. The event has inspired the group to do more meets like this one. "We're going to host one every month from now on, and we have plans for getting in guest speakers, running zine swaps, doing workshops and more."

Pete wants to keep these meets free and relaxed, so that anyone can come and draw or hang out and chat. "On the first

night we had writers, editors, publishers, games designers, concept artists as well as loads of illustrators, so I can see it growing into a great network of creative people," he says. "Surrounding yourself with other artists is the best way to come up with new ideas and feel inspired."

Pete also reveals there's a selfish reasoning for the team events, for both Ink Soup and attendees: "It helps us find new collaborators and people to submit to our various zines and anthologies!"



For further information about Pete's group and its meets visit [www.inksoupp.tumblr.com](http://www.inksoupp.tumblr.com) or head to its Facebook page.





Comic artists used the first Ink Soup event to draw with like-minded individuals.



Artists of all levels are welcome to come and draw at Ink Soup's friendly Comic Creative Jam.



Ink Soup co-conspirator Lisa Rose Harper talks with some of Bristol's local creatives.



At its inaugural event Ink Soup started various drawing games to get juices flowing, including an ongoing comic in which everyone draws a page to continue the story.



"Events like this are really useful for artists, especially comic artists. So many people making comics and animations are just super reclusive," says Pete.

## GRAPHIC CONTENT

Bristol's Ink Soup like to concoct an atmosphere of comic inspiration



This fawn-like creature is by Portuguese fantasy concept artist Maria Duarte.

Illustrator, and animator, Aidan Barnard, immortalises his bike passion in comic form.



A banshee monster conceived by Jordan Collver, a comic artist and masters student.



Part of a project by illustration students Leo Vaughan and Eoin O'Sullivan.



Art from the Ink Soup ongoing comic by Italian-born illustrator and co-head honcho of Ink Soup, Lisa Rose Harper.

# Workshops



**GET YOUR RESOURCES**  
See page 6 now!

Pencil

Watercolour

Acrylics

## BRING A DARK FAIRY TALE TO LIFE

ROVINA CAI illustrates a fairy tale with a dark twist, experimenting with mixed media techniques, while using fashion and nature as her inspirations

For this workshop I'm creating an illustration based on the Brothers Grimm fairy tale *Thousandfurs*. One of the key elements in the story is a cloak made of different kinds of fur and feathers. When I first read the story, I knew right away that I wanted to draw the cloak. There's a lot of potential here for creating something just a little creepy and unusual with all those different animals.

I want the figure to be surrounded by an almost abstract mass made up of animals and textures. My aim is to create a strong silhouette shape, filled with smaller details when you look closer. Although the fairy tale describes the cloak as being made of different kinds of fur, I want to take it a step further and include subtle hints of recognisable animal parts as well, such as an eye or ear poking out here and there. I love adding these details for viewers to find; they're like secrets hidden in plain sight.

For inspiration, I'm looking at fashion designers like Alexander McQueen and



### ARTIST INSIGHT

#### PHOTOMERGE

I have an A4 scanner but I almost always work larger. So I scan my work in separate parts, and then use the Photomerge function in Photoshop (File>Automate>Photomerge) to stitch everything together.

Iris van Herpen. These designers create work with unique silhouettes, and often use textures inspired by nature. Their work is also slightly dark and creepy, which is just the kind of tone I'm looking to achieve in my own illustration. I'm not copying specific designs, but rather taking note of the silhouettes and materials they use. For actual reference, I'm using a collection of photos I've taken at various museums, giving me a wide range of animal patterns to refer to as I draw.

I'll be using a combination of watercolour and pencil to create a monochromatic image, with highlights using gouache. The watercolour textures establish the mood and tone of the illustration, while the drawn lines create movement and details. My focus is on being experimental and letting the process inform my creative decisions.

This experimental approach means that the results can be unpredictable, and I never know exactly what textures or shapes I'll produce when laying down the watercolour. Because this is a personal



piece and not for a client or commission, it enables me to improvise and play with media without worrying about what the final will look like. Though I love working with the constraints of an illustration assignment, it's fun to 'let loose' on these personal pieces. I often stumble across new techniques along the way that I can then take into commissioned work.



Rovina is a freelance illustrator based in Melbourne, Australia. She has a penchant for reading very old stories and drawing

very swishy lines. Learn more about the artist and her art at [www.rovinacai.com](http://www.rovinacai.com).



**MATERIALS**

**PAPER**

■ Fabriano Artistic, Hot Press, 300gsm

**DRAWING**

■ Prismacolor Verithin, black

■ Prismacolor Col-Erase, black

■ Faber-Castell Pitt pastel pencil, white

■ Tombow Mono 2mm eraser

■ Kneadable eraser

■ Longpoint sharpener

■ Filbert brush, size 8 (for blending)

**PAINTING**

■ Daniel Smith watercolour, shadow violet

■ Cotman watercolour, black

■ Holbein acryla gouache, white

■ Holbein acryla gouache, ultramarine blue

■ Synthetic watercolour brush, oval wash, one inch

■ Synthetic watercolour brush, round, size 0

■ Synthetic watercolour brush, round, size 2

■ Synthetic watercolour brush, round, size 2

**MISCELLANEOUS**

■ Foam brush, three inch

■ Small mirror

■ Palette

■ Matte spray fixative

■ Scrap paper



**1 Produce a range of thumbnails**

I start by creating some thumbnails digitally in Photoshop. At this early stage I'm focusing on simply finding interesting shapes and silhouettes, and not thinking too much about the details. They come later.



**2 Work up a sketch**

Still in Photoshop, I work up a more detailed sketch. I'm figuring out the overall composition and the value structure of the piece, working very loosely by blocking in shapes, and still not going into too much detail.



**3 Pull together some reference photos**

I also gather all the references I need. I've built up my own collection of photos, taken at various natural history museums over many years. They're perfect for referencing different textures and fur patterns.



**4 Create a line drawing**

I trace around my digital sketch to create a line drawing. I then print this directly on to my drawing paper. Before printing, I blur and lighten the lines so that the print is subtle and will eventually be covered by the watercolours.



**5 Apply a watercolour wash**

I begin laying down the watercolour wash. I start with the darkest part and block in the shapes guided by my printed lines. I add a lot of water to the pigment to create interesting textures and granulation effects.

**6 Push a sense of depth**

Once the first layer is dry, I add some paint splatters, making sure to cover the area around the head and hand with scrap paper. I also apply a second layer of wash to darken some areas of the composition.

## PENCIL TIP

### VALUE CONTROL

I like to use black colour pencils instead of graphite pencils. The waxy texture gives me more control of lights and darks as I'm shading.



## 7 Sketch animal shapes

It's time to begin drawing. I start by loosely sketching in the animals. I find shapes and edges within the watercolour texture to fit animals into, and look back at my photos for reference. ➔

ARTIST INSIGHT

**TO STRETCH OR NOT TO STRETCH?**

I'm always too keen to start painting, to worry about stretching watercolour paper beforehand. Because I only use a light wash, I can get away with flattening the paper afterwards. However, I would recommend stretching when working with thinner paper, or using more watercolour layers.



**8 Introduce patterns and textures**

I turn my attention to the fur patterns. I make sure there's a good variety of animals represented, and that similar patterns are spread out evenly. In addition to my collection of fur photographs, I'm also referencing elements such as coral patterns and fabric folds.

PAINT TIP

**WATERCOLOUR PIGMENTS**

Some watercolours have properties like granulation and colour separations, creating interesting textures.



**9 Refine the head and hand**

I start to add details to the character's head and hand. I want her features to look quite delicate, so I'm using a very sharp pencil, and working lightly to gradually build up the shading on her skin.



**10 Boost complexity and visual interest**

Now that I have a solid foundation down, I can finally focus on all the small details in the composition. I render out different textures, make certain shapes more complex, and darken the shadow areas.

**11 Develop a sense of contrast**

After building up my shading, I now want to pull out some highlights to create more contrast. I use a white pastel pencil to sparingly lighten some areas, and then use a clean dry brush to blend it in.



## 12 *Paint gouache highlights*

With the drawing mostly complete, I add in some decorative blue highlights using gouache. I then realise that my white highlights could be stronger, so I go back in and add another layer with white pastel pencil as well.



## 13 *Enhance the hair and lines*

I had intended to leave the hair unshaded for a glowing look, but notice that it looks unfinished, so I add in some subtle shading. I also add small expressive lines all over the piece to loosen up the drawing and create movement throughout.



## 14 *Flattening the paper*

To remove warping from my paper, I cover the back with water using a foam brush, and sandwich it between two boards with a pile of heavy books on top. I then leave this to dry overnight.



## 15 *Finishing touches*

The following day, I give the composition one last detail pass: pulling out highlights, darkening shadows and making sure that everything is just right. I then spray it with fixative, and the piece is all done. ●

### ARTIST INSIGHT

#### MIRROR, MIRROR

To make sure everything looks cohesive, I periodically use a mirror to check the image in reverse as I'm working. I also take photos to see what the piece looks like at a smaller size.

*Watercolour*

# INSPIRATION FOR WATERCOLOURS

**ANAND RADHAKRISHNAN** observes the work of early 20th century master William Russell Flint and attempts to use a similar colour scheme in his own watercolour art

**W**atercolour has always been a challenging medium to work in, especially because of its transparent application and its irreversible nature. When painting with transparent media, most design choices need to be predetermined because of the inability to layer the paint opaquely.

On the upside, watercolours are a lot of fun to use, and it's exciting to see the creation of effects through the mixing of

pigments and water. It's a medium with bright pigments that dries very quickly, and this is why many artists use it for plein air painting studies.

Here, I'll be briefly studying the watercolour technique and colour schemes of Scottish artist Sir William Russell Flint. William was known for his beautiful watercolour paintings of women and had a distinct Far Eastern feeling to his work. His body of work is immense and includes everything from conté drawings and plein air

**MATERIALS**

- Watercolour
- Paper

**GET YOUR RESOURCES**  
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watercolour paintings to illustrations for famous operas.

Williams's sensitive approach to the human figure and the way he used various watercolour textures and edges is something that I'd like to incorporate in my own work. Here, I try to understand his painting technique and colour palette and apply it to a personal fantasy piece.



*Anand is a freelance illustrator who lives and works in Mumbai. See more of his art at [www.behance.net/anandrkr](http://www.behance.net/anandrkr)*

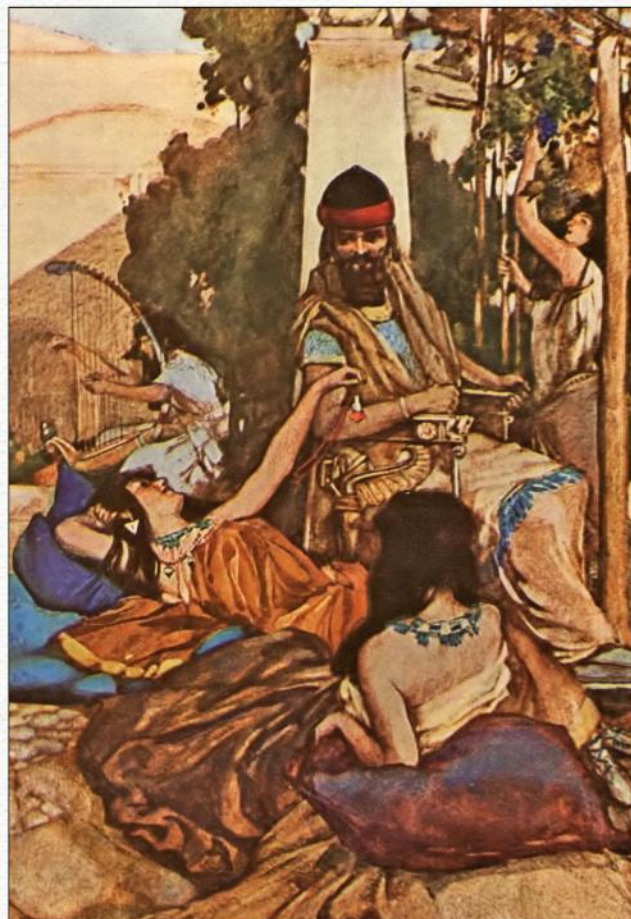


© Lebrecht Music & Arts

*For his complementary colour scheme, orange and blue are on the opposite sides of the colour wheel and create most contrast when used together.*

## 1 Understanding the artist's palette

While trying to understand Williams's colours I realised how meticulously thought-out his colours were. In both of these paintings, even though they're muted, he employed colour to direct the viewer's eyes and linger at the focal point.



© Lebrecht Music & Arts

*Here William has used blue to navigate the viewer's eyes around the painting in an overall warm painting.*

*I draw this grid to reproduce this drawing accurately from a much smaller rough.*



## 2 Line drawing

Since mistakes are difficult to cover up or layer upon when using watercolour, I start with a detailed, planned line drawing. This will cut back on speculation and wasted time while painting because the pencil lines will show through faintly, underneath the transparent layers of watercolour.







For the colour I refer to William's work, keeping in mind the local colour and value of objects.



### 3 **Thumbnailing**

Now that I have a clean drawing I go back and figure out my values, and colour plan with quick thumbnails. This is a key stage because planning will help reduce mistakes or reworking at later stages. This also helps to give me a rough idea of what the finished painting would look like.



*I used masking fluid on this area to leave it paper white.*

### 4 **Making progress**

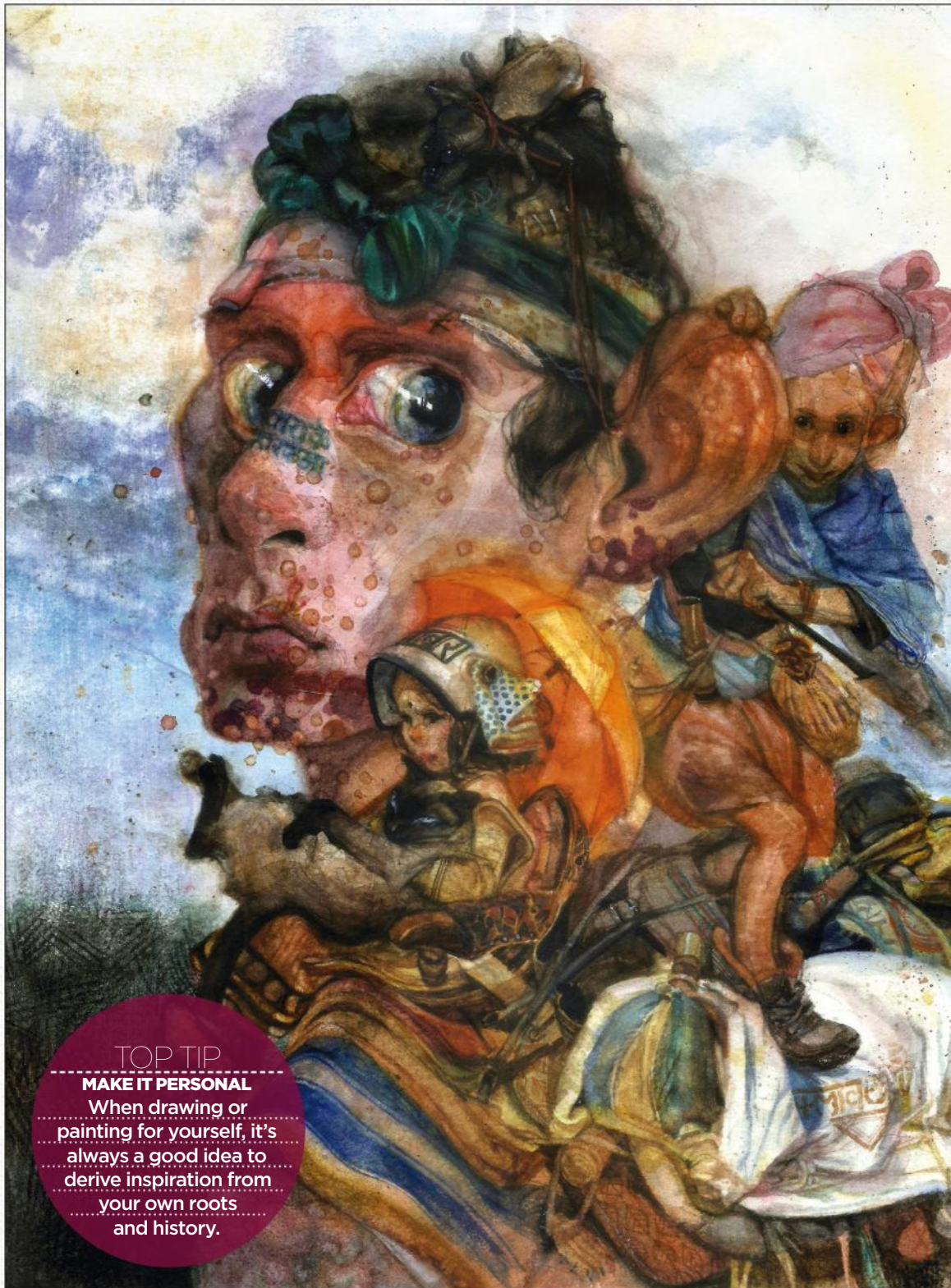
After applying the first wash with the colours in the thumbnail, I continue painting in layers over smaller areas. Wherever I need the paper to show through, I cover with masking fluid. The fluid hardens and it can be painted over without staining the paper. The mask can then be lifted off, leaving the area on the paper white.



This is called sub-surface scattering and happens when light passes through thin membranes of skin.



The blue and green areas help the viewer's eyes to navigate through the mostly warm painting.



**TOP TIP**  
**MAKE IT PERSONAL**  
 When drawing or painting for yourself, it's always a good idea to derive inspiration from your own roots and history.

### 5 **Background and edges**

Although I had added the first few layers of the background at the beginning of the process, I paint in a major part of it at this stage. I add the darkest dark on the lower left in the end to frame the figure. I also work on the edges and soften some of the edges that are facing away.

#### ARTIST INSIGHT

##### SUBSURFACE SCATTERING

This is when light passes through a translucent object. An ideal technique for showing how thin a material is.

# First Impressions

✧ Matthew Stewart ✧

Tolkien's stories spoke deeply to this US artist, who was subsequently inspired to paint fantasy art



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

I grew up (and live now) in New Jersey. Summer vacations as a kid meant trips to museums like the Smithsonian in Washington DC, and to battlefields like Gettysburg, Lexington and Concord. There's a wealth of history in this area of the country that heightened an interest and a love for history, and which informs my art today. Later, studying art in NYC at Parsons School of Design meant regular pilgrimages to The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Society of Illustrators. Seeing great art in person is what has probably influenced me the most as an illustrator and an oil painter.

**You're a child, you see a painting or drawing that changes everything. Where are you and what are you looking at, and what effect did it have?**  
It's tough to pick one, but I'd have to say The Unexpected Party by the Brothers Hildebrandt. It's from the beginning of The Hobbit, where the dwarves sing of their lost kingdom. The painting not only captured the scene perfectly, but it heightened my experience of the text. The Hildebrandts' depiction epitomises what I love about a good painting: atmosphere, mystery and mood.

**What was your next step in art? Did other interests vie for your attention?**  
Reading Tolkien, and playing Dungeons & Dragons inspired me to create fantasy images. Before ever thinking about making a living in art, I was striving to get better, comparing my work to (and falling far short of) that of my artist heroes, like the aforementioned Hildebrandt Brothers, Keith Parkinson, Jeff Easley and many others. As I worked at it more, art became more of my life, and knowing I was terrible at math and



**GANDALF: A LIGHT IN THE DARK**  
*"Here I've depicted a weary Gandalf, troubled with physical and mental burdens."*

**“I'm much more interested in colour and lighting rather than just storytelling now”**

would never fly for the Air Force, I devoted my life to becoming an artist.

**What was your first paid commission?**  
Before becoming a full-time professional, I was always doing little commissions here and there. Things like portraits of kids and pets, and character portraits. My first commission for a commercial client, however, was the cover for the novel The Swords of Evening Star, by Ed

**WIZARDS OF URTH**  
*"A half-portrait, half-landscape composition. Some friends of mine modelled for the wizards who are sitting around the dragon circle."*



Greenwood, published by Wizards of the Coast. Though it would look different if I painted it now, I think it still holds up.

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

The last piece I finished was a large commission called The Wizards of Urth. I'm much more interested in colour and lighting rather than just storytelling now. With this most recent piece, I wanted to capture strong summer daylight, with atmospheric perspective creating depth.

**Can you describe the place where you usually create your art?**

The second floor of the small house my wife and I share is our studio. It's usually a flotsam and jetsam of sketches, piles of books, reference materials and projects in various states of completion. I really need to clean up around here.

**Is your art evolving?**

Yes, over time my painting style I think has become more colourful and less rendered. I'm always trying to get looser with my application of paint. I haven't had much time for experimentation, but there's always adapting to the limits of how much I can reference something. Information from photos, models and props, and just straight winging it sometimes is always an experiment.

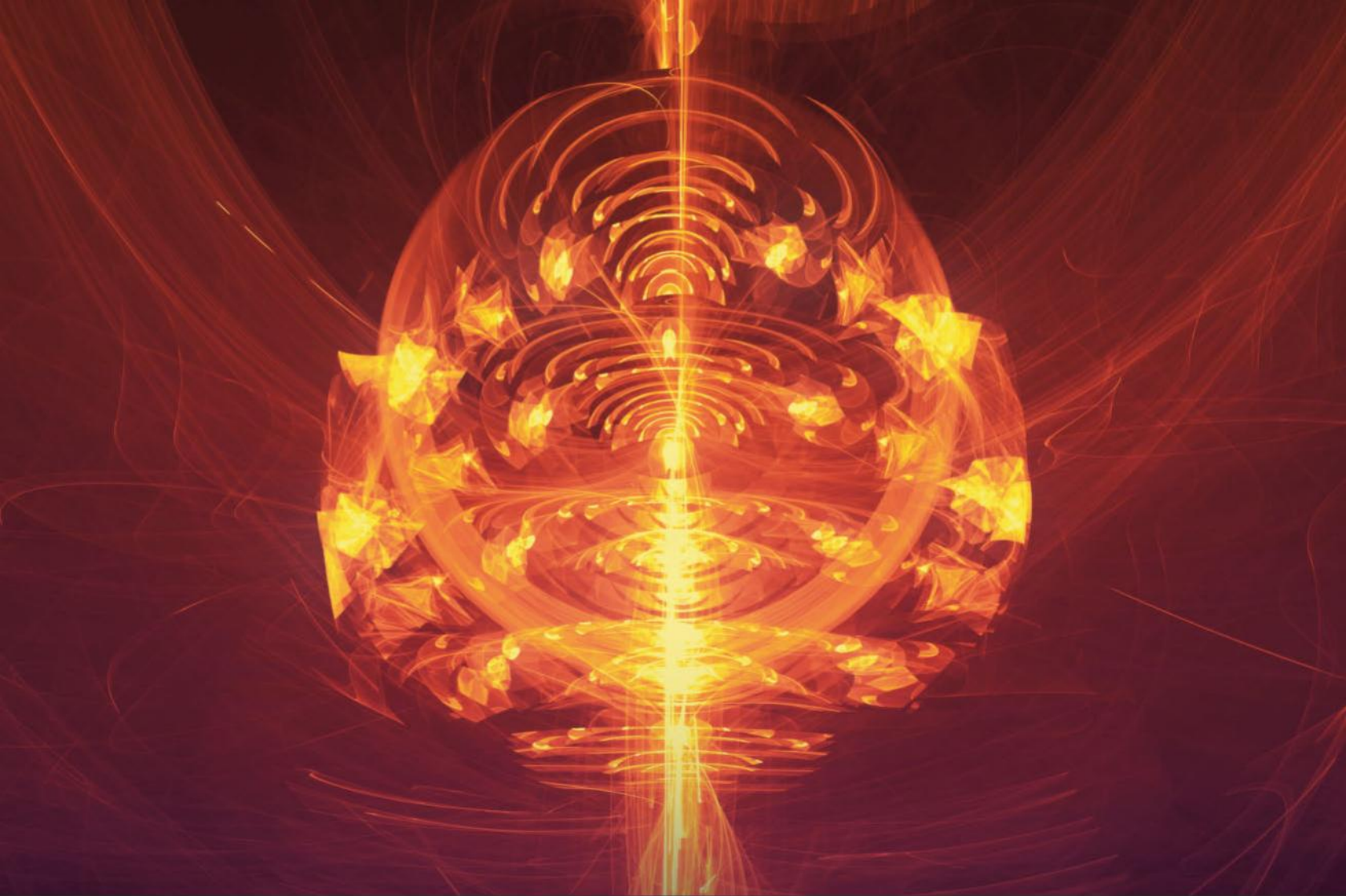
**Is painting card art a particular challenge that you relish?**

Yes. The various types of subject matter that you're asked to tackle, like spells, action scenes, creatures of all types and a diversity of people always keep it fresh. And of course, images have to pop at card size. This demand has made me more conscious of foreground-background relationships, colour and lighting.

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

Probably Gandalf. Wandering Middle-earth, unheralded for his efforts until the final victory. I take from him that life requires delayed gratification, and lots of hard work that's unrecognised at the time. Art, like many things in life, is hard work.

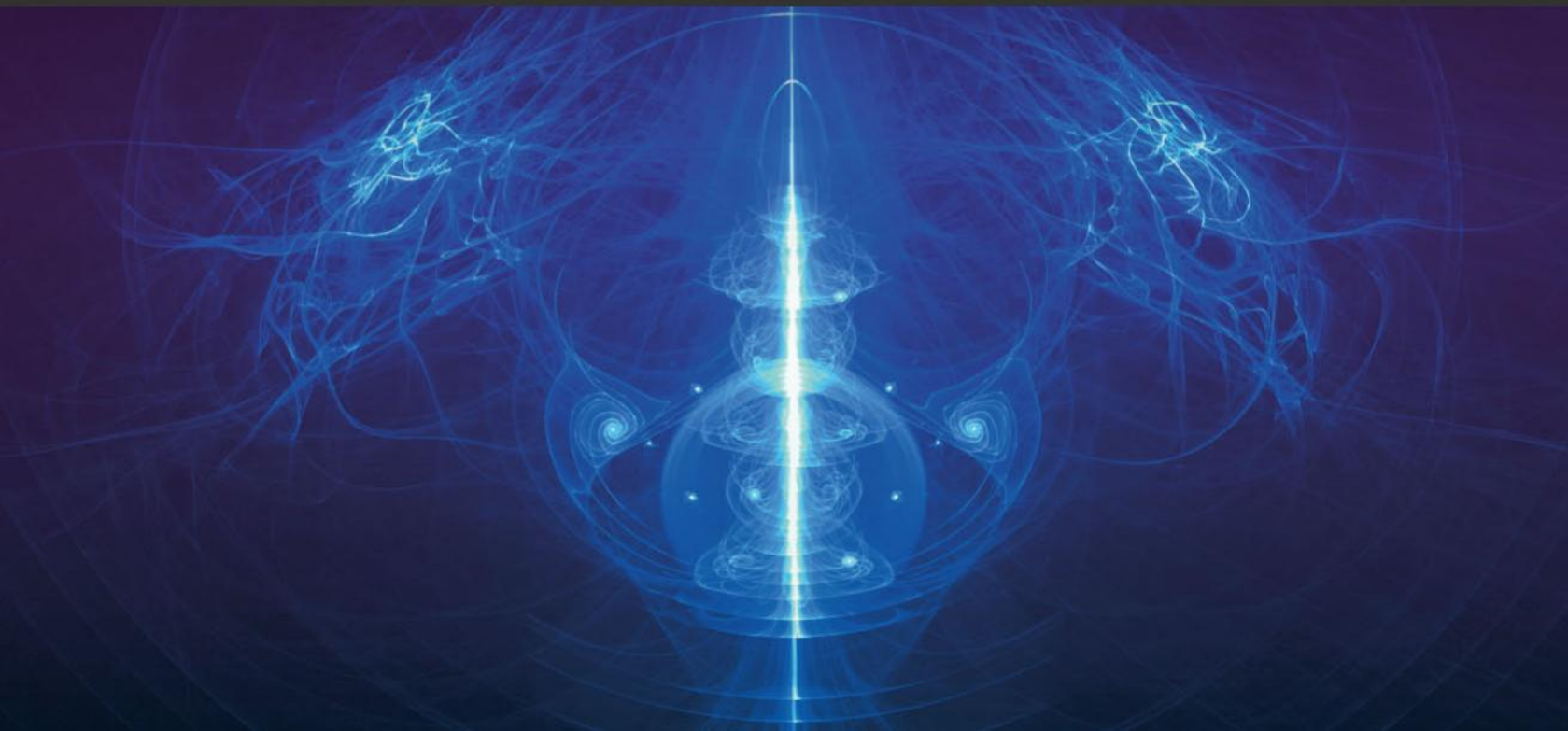
**Matthew is a freelance illustrator and painter. He's been creating fantasy images professionally for 10 years, and has illustrated over 100 cards for Magic: The Gathering. See more of his art at [www.matthew-stewart.com](http://www.matthew-stewart.com).**



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