**PRO ART SKILLS**

# NEXT-LEVEL LIGHTING TIPS

How to add realism to your character studies

**EXCLUSIVE!**

# FREE
## 4 HOURS OF PRO VIDEO TUITION

▶

*Find out how you can best use mixed-media to get great results!*

**ART & ADVICE**

**GET STARTED IN PHOTOSHOP**
SAM WEBER INTERVIEW
**PEEK INSIDE ART STUDIOS**

# GET INTO
# FANTASY BOOK ILLUSTRATION

**Wylie Beckert** shares her step-by-step process for building an image from pencil to Photoshop

# ArtRage 5

*Imagine Painting...*

Win-Mac-iOS-Android

artrage.com/ifx

## Welcome to…

### NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
# ImagineFX

A question that often gets asked to us at ImagineFX is this: how do artists find their style? Readers have emailed in to ask how they can develop one, while professional artists have written workshops on how they discovered theirs. It's as if it's a physical thing that you can look for. Perhaps it might be around the next corner…?

I was thinking about this topic while reading through Simon Stålenhag's interview on page 46. What struck me was how he'd taken mundane objects and events, and turned them into art. He took inspiration from the locale around him while growing up in Sweden – 1970s street lamps that were popular in northern Europe, or the offices he played in front of while he waited for his parents to finish work – and placed them into his reality-meets-fantasy worlds.

That's why I'm drawn to Simon Stålenhag's work. It's personal. It relates to him.

Maybe when you next ask yourself what your style could be, perhaps the answer is closer to home. Look around you and discover what's unique to you, what urban sprawl or flora and fauna can you depict in your art? Only you can tell your story.

*Claire*

**Claire Howlett, Editor**
**claire@imaginefx.com**

## EDITOR'S CHOICE Three of my top picks this month…



**30**

**Want a studio? Just build one!**
Yes! There are two studios to nose around this issue. The one above is where artist Olivia Lomenech Gill creates.



**36**

**The art of Sam Weber**
Did Sam's reticence to explain how he creates his art, end up revealing more than he intended?



**70**

**Inspired by Cormac McCarthy's The Road**
Despite the bleak storyline, Dave Kendall provides a thought-provoking exploration of the book's themes.

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CB imaginefx.creativeblog.com

## Free software!
Find out how you can get ArtRage Lite (worth $30) for FREE!
**See page 44 for more details…**

**FREE SOFTWARE!**

## NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

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*Artist Portfolio* **SAM WEBER**

"It's so cool the way that images can connect with a viewer's experiences"
Sam talks art and emotions

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Illustrate a Lovecraft tale

# Workshops

# Traditional Artist

# ImagineFX Resources

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

Getting hold of all of this issue's videos and custom brushes is quick and easy. Just visit our dedicated web page at **http://ifxm.ag/book159illustration**

**OVER 4 HOURS** of video tutorials from pro artists to watch and learn from!

## COVER WORKSHOP



00:56:34
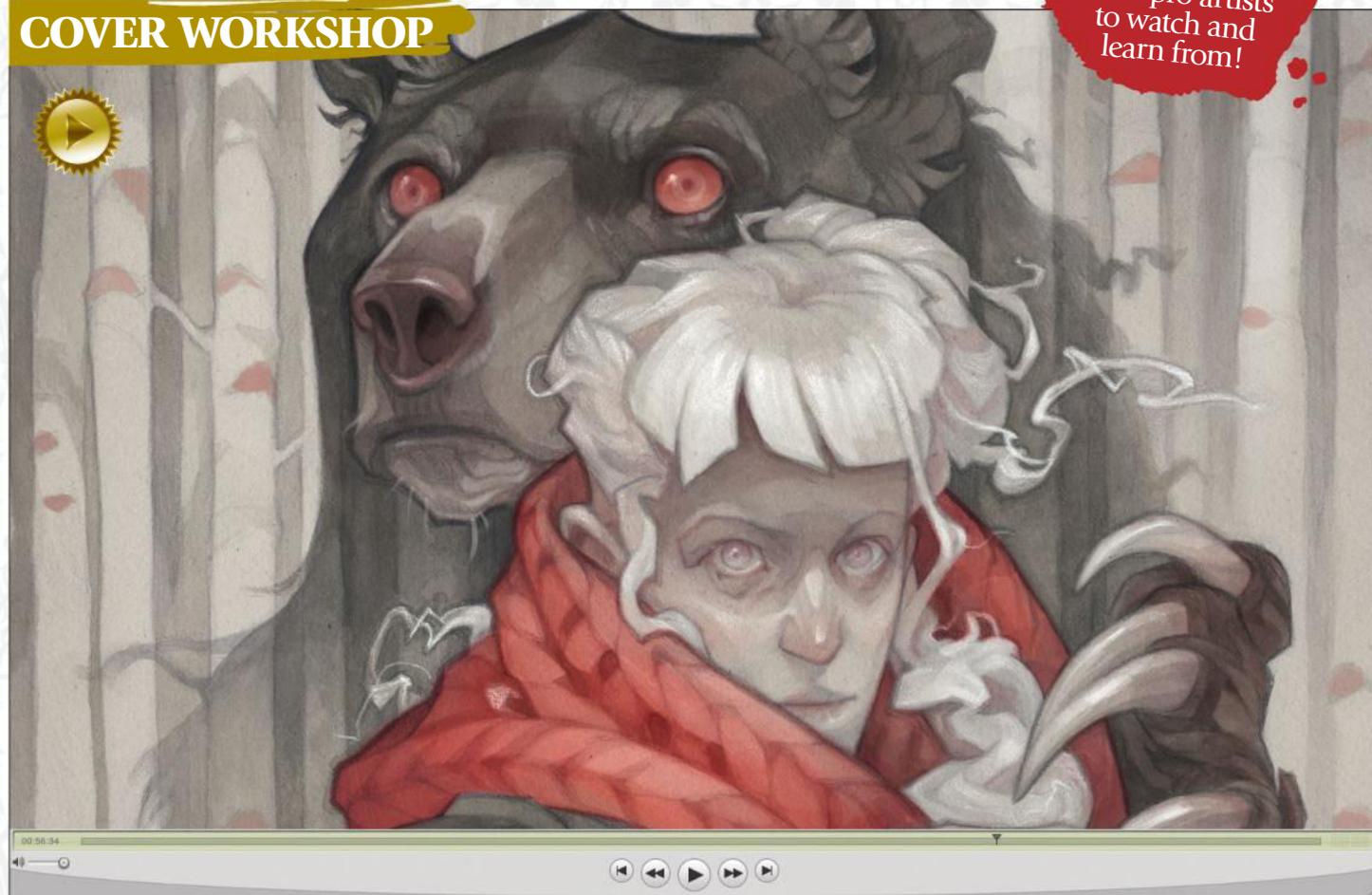
## GET YOUR RESOURCES

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/book159illustration**

**2** **Find the files you want**
Search through the list of resources to watch or download.

**3** **Download what you need**
You can download workshop videos and custom brush files.

## Create a mixed-media portrait piece

Watch how Wylie Beckert works with pencils and inks to create this moody woodland scene, before taking the art into Photoshop for digital tints and touch-ups. There's more on page 62.

# PLUS EVEN MORE PRO VIDEO TUITION!

Watch our videos to gain a unique insight into how our artists create their stunning art, featured in this issue



### Capture life on The Road
Dave Kendall's character workshop is on page 70. See how he captures emotions in his video.



### Make use of photo references
Read Suzanne Helmigh's next-level lighting advice on page 80, and check out her video, too.



## TRAINING

### Epic Fantasy Painting in Oils
Get a taste of Mike Sass's instructional video, and read our review over on page 95.

## PLUS 5 CUSTOM BRUSHES, INCLUDING…

**TREE_ BRUSH**
This is one of Armand Baltazar's core painterly brushes, which he used on his steampunk cyborg.

**HARD ELLIPTICAL**
Dave Kendall used this brush to paint the Father and Son character piece. It's good for details and larger strokes.

**AWESOME BRUSH**
Dave tells us that this hexagonal brush is pretty basic, yet is still up to the job for a multiple of tasks. Hence the name!

# FXPosé

## THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

ImagineFX
**ARTIST of the MONTH**

## Lucas Durham

**LOCATION:** US  **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Illustrator
**WEB:** www.lucasdurham.com

Lucas has been working as a speculative artist for the past five years. His work is heavily influenced by his time studying in Florence, Italy and in the SmArt School workshops.

## 1 BENZAITEN AND THE DRAGON

"I once visited Enoshima, an island off the coast of Japan, where there's a shrine of the goddess Benzaiten. In a Buddhist legend, she tamed a ferocious storm dragon. This is my interpretation of the story."

# FXPosé

## Dane Goulter

**LOCATION:** Australia  **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Painter, Clip Studio Paint  **WEB:** www.walkingartdesigns.com.au

Freelance artist Dane splits his time between graphic design and illustration. One of his ultimate goals is to work on an illustrated publication of the Brothers Grimm's fairy tales.



**1** SLUMS
"The character in the foreground was designed to look a little shady. The steam vent in the path and the mucky water show this area of town gets no real attention from whoever is in charge."

**2** WITCH'S COTTAGE
"This painting was influenced by Hansel and Gretel. Notice the character in a cage hanging from the tree above a boiling cauldron, unsure of his future."

**3** ORC BOY
"An orc boy from the Warhammer universe. This was an experiment in painting anatomy and faces that are vaguely humanoid, but still very deformed."

# FXPosé

## Pernille Jahre Sætre

**LOCATION:** Norway  **MEDIA:** Photoshop  **WEB:** www.pjsaetre.com

Pernille studied graphic design and illustration at university, and is currently illustrating a children's book at a publishing firm. She loves to paint fantasy scenes that retain a degree of realism.



1



2
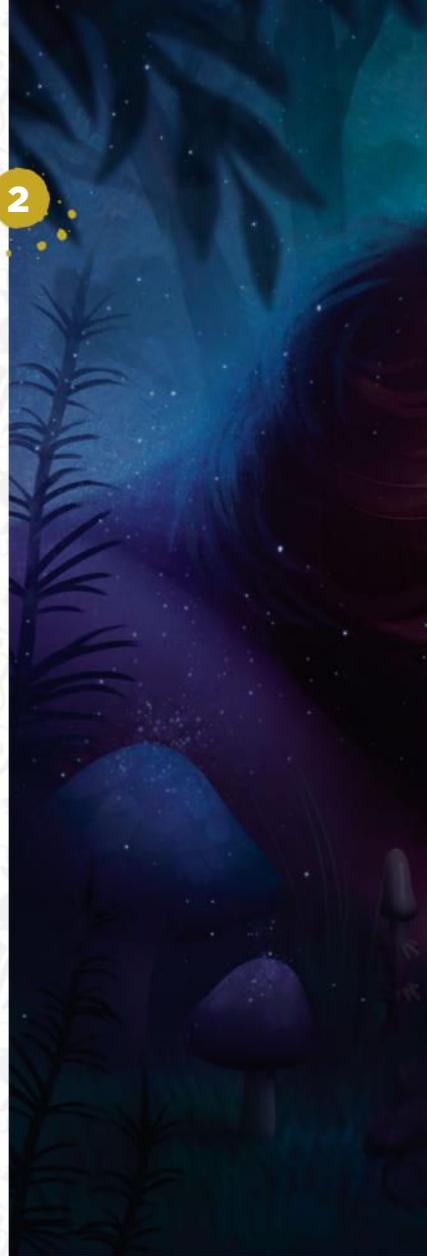
**1 DAYDREAM**
"When we read books it's like being sucked into another world. I wanted to show the book as a tool to see into another reality."

**2 SLEEP SLEEP**
"I imagined someone falling asleep and being transported into a mysterious forest in their dream."

**3 DREAM**
"A little boy has discovered a mystical creature in the lake. Is what he's seeing real or just an illusion?"

**4 VALLEY**
"This painting was inspired by the Norwegian winter. I experimented with clipping masks and textured brushes to give the mountains a graphic feel."
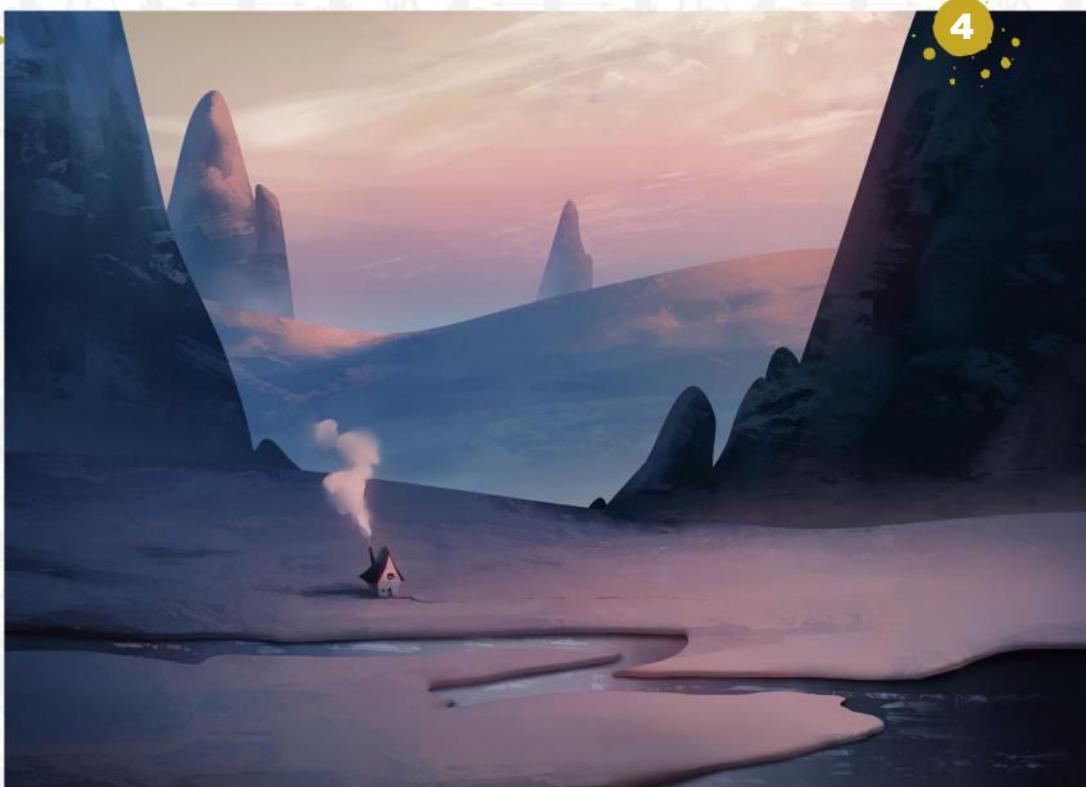
## Davey Baker

**LOCATION:** England  **MEDIA:** Painter  **WEB:** http://sketchbookuniverse.deviantart.com

Davey's fantasy and sci-fi work has earned him a Corel Painter Featured Artist accolade. "Until recently I'd never taken my art interest to the next level," he says.

### 1 LOST

"This artwork represented a change from my usual green terrestrial landscapes. I wanted to give it a strong sci-fi feel though my use of colour, and create scale with the lost figure."

### 2 AVNAS

"I had lots of fun with the textures on this, one of the 72 Goetia spirits I challenged myself to complete. I was inspired by the colour scheme of the wallpaper while sitting in a restaurant."

### 3 BALLERINA MAGNA MECHA

"This was requested by an online community looking to make an animated series. They were really pleased with my final concept."

**Want to submit your work? Visit** http://ifxm.ag/getinifx
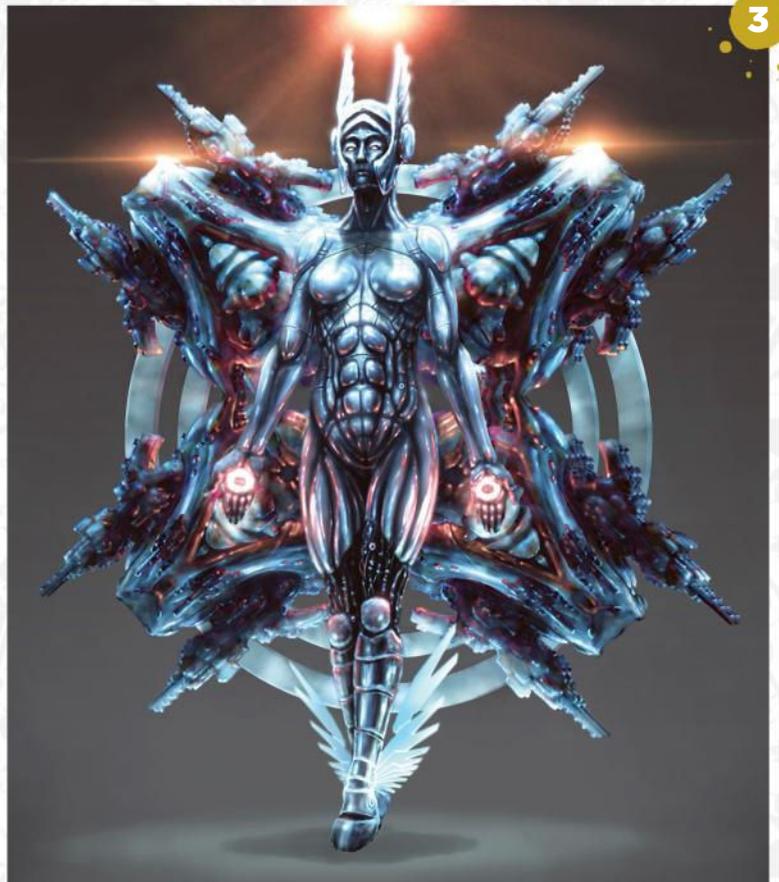
# Amy McCullough

**LOCATION:** Northern Ireland  **MEDIA:** SketchBook Pro  **WEB:** http://cosmoskitty.deviantart.com

Self-taught artist Amy started out in traditional media, before falling in love with digital. "I like that I can use a large canvas to focus on the small details," she explains.





### 1 STARDUST
"I experimented with soft edges to give this portrait a 'hazy' look, and add depth to the stars."

### 2 GOD COMPLEX
"This ethereal being could be either heavenly or demonic; their gaze is unsettling nonetheless."

### 3 HAZE
"This piece was inspired by all the colours of autumn leaves. I wanted to draw a piece that contrasted fiery colours with cool shadows."

### 4 STARGAZER
"An illustration inspired by the Helix nebula. I thought it would be interesting to compare the visual similarities between the human iris and nebulae in a double-exposure design."





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

# FXPosé

## Kirby Leem

**LOCATION:** US   **MEDIA:** Photoshop   **WEB:** www.artofkirby.daportfolio.com

"I love pushing the scale in my artwork because it was that kind of awe-inspiring scenery that captivated me when watching movies as a kid," Kirby tells us.

### 1 ENIGMATIC STRUCTURE
"I played with shapes and form to create a humongous structure in an alien world similar to ours. If you look closely you can see indications of habitation and agriculture."

### 2 JOURNEY
"I wanted to capture the view from an interior looking out. It's some kind of command centre; a journey is about to take place and ships are being repaired."

**Want to submit your work? Visit** http://ifxm.ag/getinifx
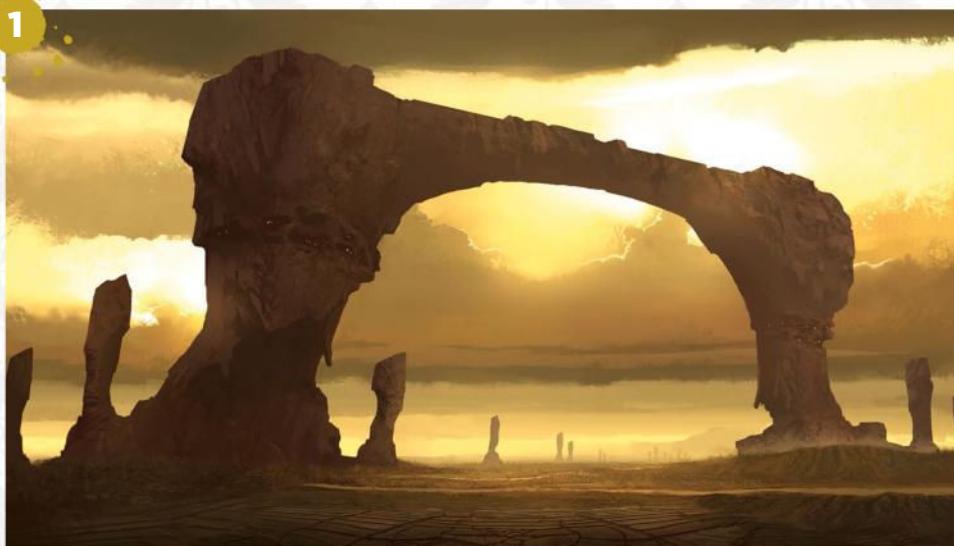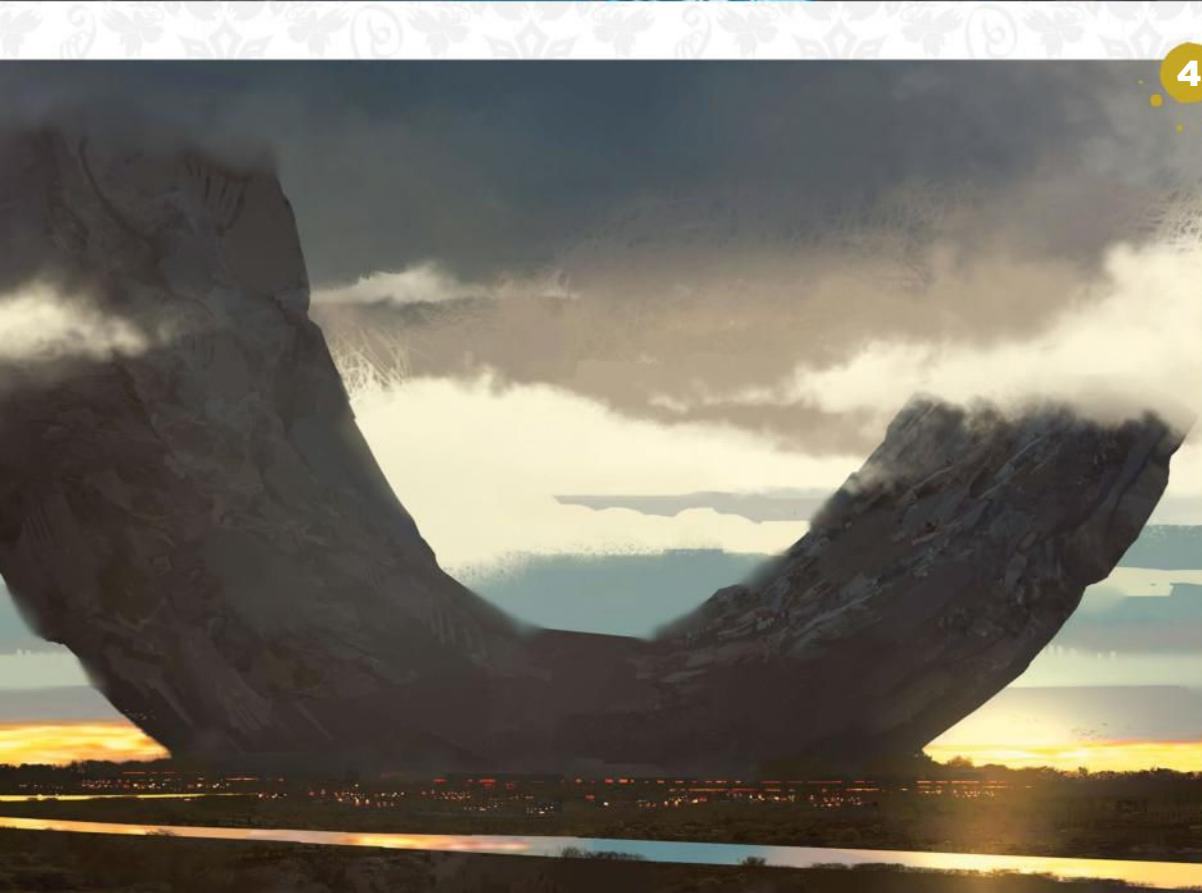
**3** **ENERGY SOURCE**
"In this painting, I wanted to show a character journeying to find an energy source from an ancient organic structure. The structure was inspired by looking at references of fungal growth, which I feel has a unique form language."

**4** **ENIGMATIC STRUCTURE II**
"You can see hints of civilisation here. It's as if a huge rock crash-landed in the world and the people have discovered that it can be used as some form of energy source or shield."

# Ørjan Ruttenborg Svendsen

**LOCATION:** Norway  **MEDIA:** Photoshop  **WEB:** www.svendsenart.com

Ørjan started out in 2010 as a indie game concept artist before becoming a freelance illustrator in 2013. Since then he's worked as a cover artist for Titan Comics' Warhammer series.



© Games Workshop





### 1 CIRI FANART
"I've loved the Witcher series since the first one came out, so I did this fan art of Ciri fighting a gang of foglets. It was a fun piece to do."

### 2 DAWN OF WAR COVER
"A cover for Titan Comics' tie-in comic to the Dawn of War 3 game. Getting all those details right was the toughest part."

### 3 NORDIC SASQUATCH
"My take on a Nordic sasquatch! My aim here was to try and make a winter scene with warm light and cool shadows."

### 4 HULDRA
A painting for my Norwegian Folklore exhibition. Huldra appears as a beautiful woman, but if you take a look closer at the character, you'll notice that she has a cow's tail and a hollowed-out back."

**Do you want to see your art on these pages?** Then email five pieces of your work and a short explanation about each artwork, along with a photo and a few details about yourself, to **fxpose@imaginefx.com**

Kei Zama started to draw Transformers fan art because they look different from robots in Japanese manga and anime.

66 It shows an ability to interpret a character from a text, while being able to bring your own creativity to a project 99

Phantom of the Opera by Celine DaHyeu Kim. This was a graduation project driven by the artist's passion for the musical film and the novel.

# How fan art can lead to paying gigs

**Fan favourites** Art based on popular series can bring in paid work. Illustrators tell **Dom Carter** how they turned fan art into money

**Think back to some of the first artworks you created. Chances are these images were inspired by a story you enjoyed. Indeed, fan art like this is the first step many ImagineFX readers take on their artistic journey.**

There's more to fan art than paying tribute to your favourite characters, though. It's a chance to show off your strengths as an artist and demonstrate what drives you. If you're savvy, it can also help lead to paying gigs.

"I feel it shows an ability to interpret a design or character from a text, while being able to bring your own creativity to a project," says freelance illustrator **Sophie Eves**, whose fan art cover of her favourite book, Watership Down, was a reaction to the edition she had as a child. "It was a simple photo of a rabbit in a field, but I felt the story could be represented in a more creative way. I wanted to express the danger of nature that Watership Down is famous for."

**Kei Zama**, a Japanese comic artist, would also find herself working for a title she loved thanks to the fan art it inspired. ➤➤
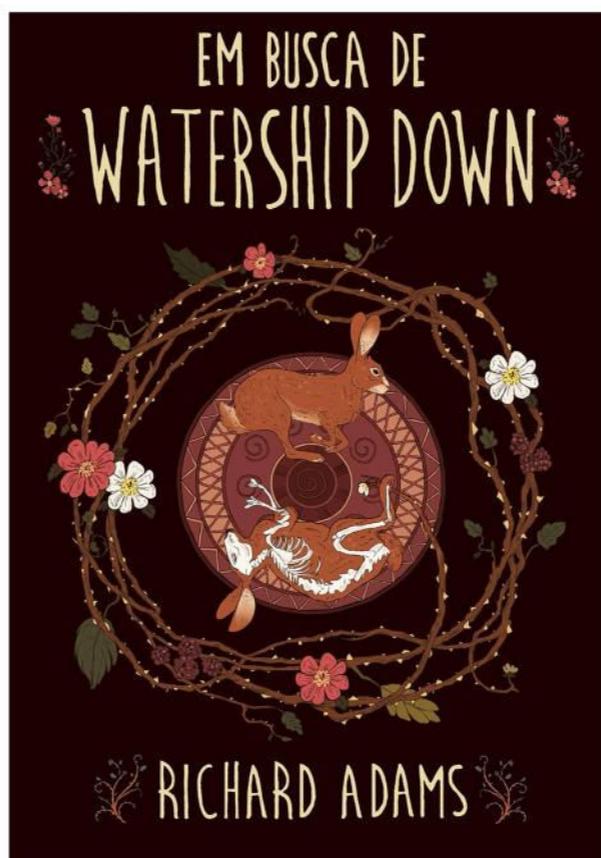

With her Watership Down cover, Sophie Eves wanted to employ a circular motif to communicate a sense of a journey and the life cycle of the novel's rabbits.

## INDUSTRY INSIGHT
# EVA ESKELINEN
*The prolific fan artist on why it's useful to draw what you love…*

**Why is fan art a good thing for artists to indulge in?**
Fan art can be a motivation to improve the craft. There are lots of areas in art where you have to put the hours in, but with fan art, coming up with your own characters and worlds is less of a priority. Fan art can also help you find friends and peers who enjoy the same things, and community is often an important part of artistic growth.

**Is fan art suitable for inclusion in a portfolio?**
I think so, if it demonstrates the skills that are needed for the position. It's important to clarify that it's fan art and not official work for a client. If the applicant has made fan art of the IP owned by the company they're applying to, it can send a positive message. Unless it comes off as a tactic to suck up to someone!

**Should artists rely on fan art to get themselves seen?**
My advice is, just be genuine. Making fan art of something you love and sharing it with other people is great. Chances are, like-minded people will be interested in your work and share in your passion. Personally I don't find it very sincere if someone is only posting fan art of popular things. Trying to please everyone without showing some vulnerability and personal taste isn't attractive. Better things will come from trusting that there are people out there who like that unique twist that you have in your art.


*Currently a 2D painter and designer, Eva has also worked as a production artist for Rovio Entertainment.*
*www.evelmiina.tumblr.com*

IDW ISSUE 9 $3.99

This poster was the piece of fan art that got Eva invited to the Ice and Fire tribute show.

➡ "I started drawing seriously when I read IDW Transformers: Last Stand Of The Wreckers in 2012," she says. "I hadn't tried to draw robots before that, and I didn't know how to draw, I just learned by imitation. I didn't think about being a professional illustrator – I just wanted to draw well."

As a long-time Transformers fan, getting the chance to work on an official cover was a dream come true for Kei.

For **Celine DaHyeu Kim**, a visual development artist at DreamWorks Animation, creating fan art was therapeutic. "I was especially having fun drawing Spider-Man because his costume enabled me to study figures and stylise them," she says. "I had to reference so many movie screenshots and other Marvel artists to get it right."

Celine's drawing of Spider-Man impressed a director and secured her work on an animated project.

## GETTING NOTICED

Having a batch of fan art is all well and good, but how do you get it in front of the right people? The familiar online platforms are just as useful for fan art as they are original creations. "A director saw my Spider-Man art on my Instagram page and contacted me for a job on an animated show on Spider-Man," says Celine.

"I never really put any fan art in my job portfolio but this was a special case, so I quickly put together my best Spider-Man artworks for the interview. The director could see how I was interpreting the character in my own style, but he interviewed me because he could see draftsmanship and design skills behind the fan art."

A similar approach worked for Sophie. "I regularly posted my work (including a fair amount of fan art) online, particularly on Tumblr – which helped me grow an audience," she says. "Through this I gained an illustration agent in 2016, which gave me the confidence to pursue freelancing full time. Since then I've been able to work on a wide range of different projects, including children's books, comics, board games and product design."



Eva's fan art, such as this Hyrule Road Warrior inspired by the DLC release of Mario Kart 8, led to commissioned work after she shared it online.
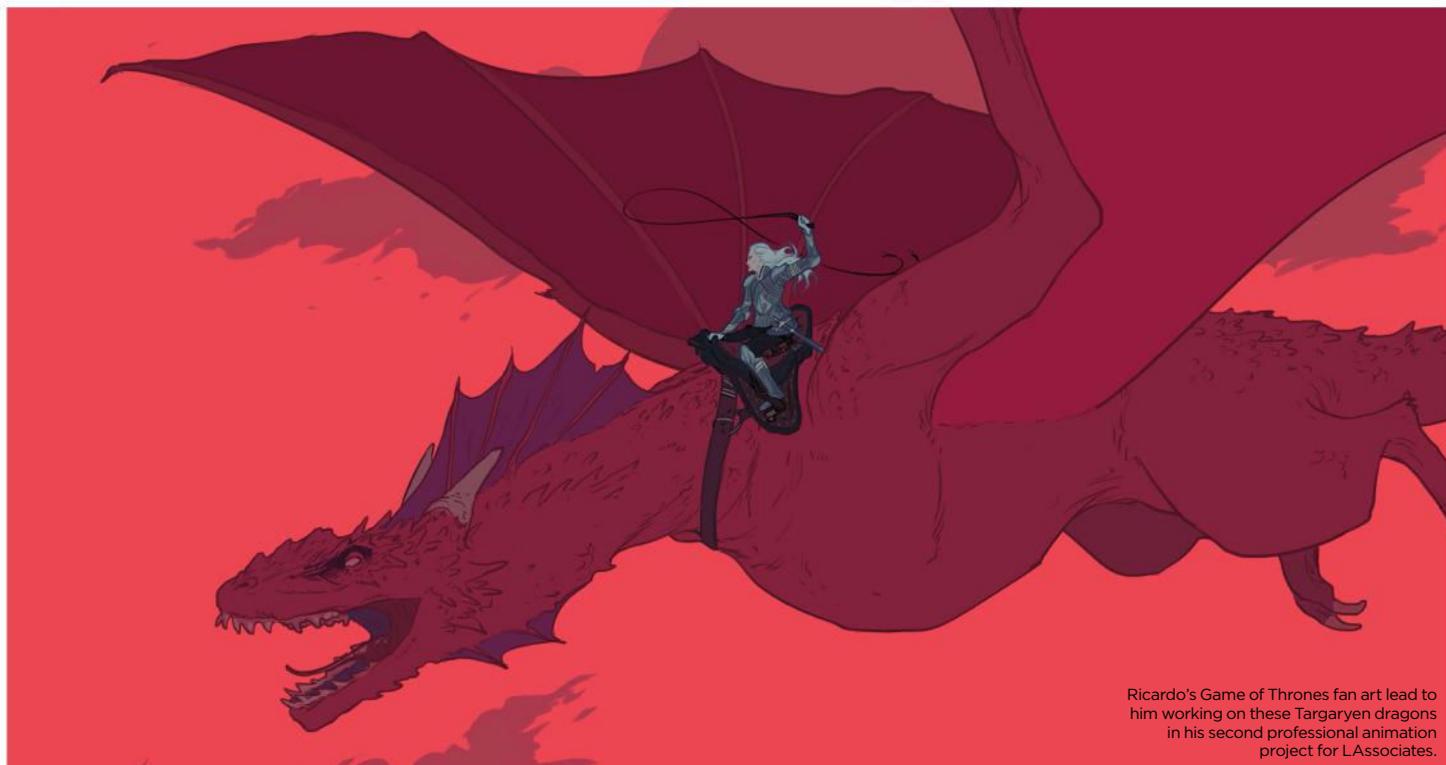
Ricardo's Game of Thrones fan art lead to him working on these Targaryen dragons in his second professional animation project for LAssociates.

Kei decided to be more upfront when she went to Seattle's Emerald City Comic Con. "I brought my sketchbooks and handed them to editors and artists I met. Among them was the creative team behind the comic book series Atomic Robo. After I returned to Japan I got an email from Carlos Guzman, who was the editor of Atomic Robo and Transformers. He offered me the opportunity to work on covers for Atomic Robo and the new Transformers series, Optimus Prime."

## WAITING GAME

The journey from creating fan art to getting paid work isn't instantaneous. For freelance artist **Ricardo Bessa** there was a two-year gap between his Game of Thrones art appearing in the Ice and Fire tribute show in Paris and a LAssociates producer contacting him.

"They were looking for people already familiar with the world and characters, which is why he'd been looking through DeviantArt for GoT fan art. He liked the way I designed the Lannister lion and trusted me to make the Targaryen dragons look good."

Finnish artist **Eva Eskelinen** had Game of Thrones fan art exhibited at the same show, having been invited to participate

> **66** Any art director who has an anti-fan art stance is imposing a weird limitation **99**

The Kill List, by Ricardo, showed off how he could take an established world and make it his own.



thanks to the work she shared on her Tumblr. "Based on my social media profile back then, I gave off a vibe that I was an artist who's interested in games and animation, and makes related fan art.

"I was pretty consistent with posting my art. Not too long after the Ice and Fire exhibition I was contacted by BOOM! Studios to make a variant cover for Adventure Time comic. This was a big step-up for me because it was my first gig for a company in the US. Since I'd been making Adventure Time fan art, it was really fun work and I knew the characters well."

## CHANGING ATTITUDES

Despite these unique opportunities it opens up, Ricardo points out that fan art has always been a point of contention for some people.

"I don't know whether it's something that's sought out per se, but any art director who has an anti-fan art stance on portfolios is imposing a weird limitation for reasons that I can't comprehend," he explains.

However, Eva is more optimistic about fan art's position. "Being a fan is not really geeky anymore, it's mainstream. There is a lot of demand for specialist content, so it's inspired businesses to create fan-focused products. Audiences definitely endorse fan art."
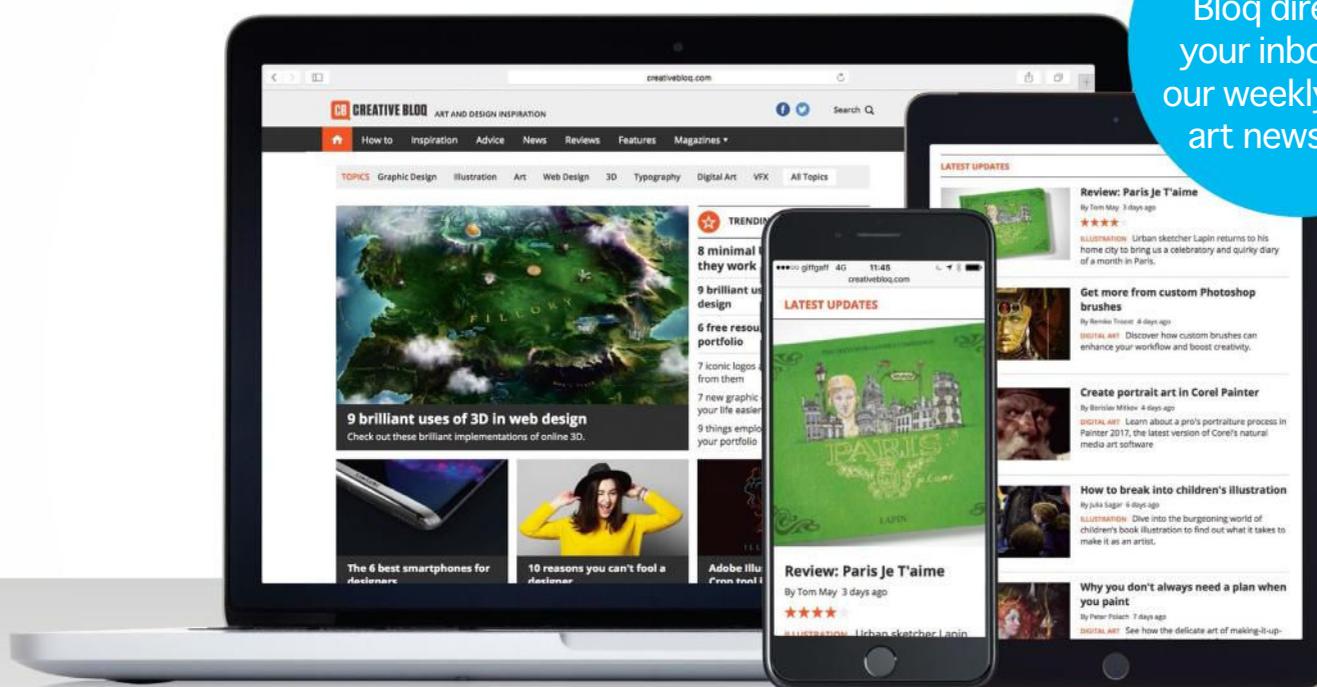
# Hellboy concept artist confirmed for Vertex

**Fantasy figure** Paul Gerrard is the latest industry name who'll be appearing at this year's Vertex conference, for 2D and 3D artists

Recently, Paul has returned to personal projects, such as this creature for his graphic novel Cranial Alpha.

**There's not long to go now until our sister titles 3D World and 3D Artist host Vertex, a brand new event taking place on 13 March at London's Olympia. And as we draw nearer to the day itself, we can announce that Paul Gerrard has joined the line-up of professional speakers.**

Paul specialises in creating photo-realistic 2D concept art alongside sculpting 3D models. His recent projects include designing characters for The Shannara Chronicles, and personal projects such as a retrospective collection of early works of surrealism and dark art. He's now returned to his roots and is working on the production of Hellboy: Rise of the Blood Queen.

"My talk will comprise a complete breakdown of the movie-making process from the perspective of a conceptual designer," **Paul** explains. The artist adds that his talk will explore everything from an initial movie pitch through to the final renderings. "I'll also be looking at this process in relation to working hand in hand with the 3D asset, design and VFX pipeline," he tells us.

The event itself promises to be a treat for 2D and 3D artists, with specialists in CG, VFX and VR from the biggest studios sharing their advice through talks, workshops and portfolio review sessions. Adding Paul to a list of speakers that includes the likes of Christopher Nichols, Glen Southern and Scott Ross makes Vertex an event digital artists won't want to miss.

To book your ticket to Vertex, go to **www.vertexconf.com/tickets**. Tickets to the exhibition area are free, while access-all-areas passes are priced at £49, or £25 for students.

Characters such as this spiky character appear in Paul's upcoming anthology,

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

# Jeff Miracola

**Accessible inspiration** This artist keeps inspiration just as handy as the tools and supplies that he uses…

**I see my art studio as the command and control centre for every aspect of my creative life.**

Located in the basement of my home, there's no natural outside light. I lamented not having a studio with giant windows looking out on the world, until I installed daylight bulbs in every fixture within the space. Now I have a bright studio environment with consistent lighting no matter what time of day I choose to work. I've come to really appreciate the colour consistency that comes from working under predictable lighting.

I'm a firm believer in having my art supplies, reference materials, and inspirational books and art easily accessible. So not only do I surround myself with my own artwork, but also that of my peers and art heroes. Likewise, I try to have as much of ➤➤

> ❝ **I lamented not having a studio with giant windows, until I installed daylight bulbs in every fixture within the space** ❞

Every wall of my studio is covered with art, toys or other ornaments. I've found that the best way to protect my art is to frame it and put it up. Otherwise, it's at risk of being thrown into a box to be lost forever.
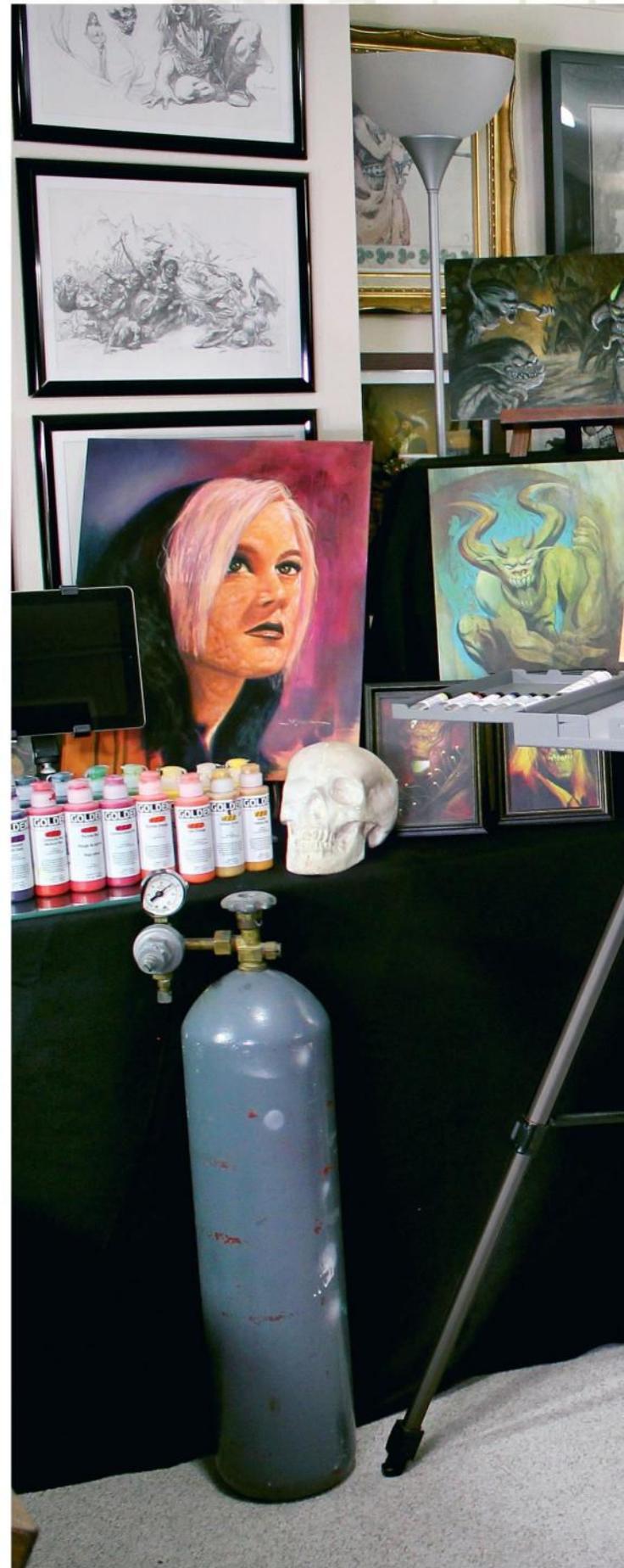
Because I spend the majority of my time in the studio, I've tried to create a space that balances comfort and inspiration with the functionality that I need.

I surround myself with the work of my heroes, particularly Frank Frazetta, whose art led me to become a fantasy artist.

My Strada easel is portable and lightweight, but sturdy enough to take it outdoors or on location.

My monster Sienna Counterweight Easel enables me to work on both small and gigantic pieces of art, yet is still mobile enough to move around my studio.

Video plays a huge role in my artistic life. There is always a camera or two set up in the studio to record what I'm working on.



I keep most of my art supplies organised to make it easy and encouraging to work with. If I don't see the supplies, I'm likely to forget I have them.

When working with my airbrush, I use a compressed air tank to power my airbrush rather than a compressor, because the tank makes no noise.

I use multiple coloured paint rags when working on an oil painting: one for wiping paint off my brush, one for drying the brush after it's been immersed in solvent for a while, and one for drying the brush after final cleaning.

➡ my art supplies visible rather than tucked away in cabinets. I'm more likely to use my supplies if they're staring at me every day, challenging me to use them.

My studio features multiple workstations, which is important because I'm always working on more than one painting at a time. While one painting is drying and awaiting the next stage, I move to another easel or table to tackle another painting.

Working this way keeps the painting process fresh for me. I rarely work on one painting from beginning to end without having also worked on another painting during that time. This has as much to do with juggling multiple projects as it does keeping me from losing interest in a particular piece.

It takes a lot of discipline to be a full-time illustrator working from home. One of the benefits of having a basement studio is that I'm that much



Just for fun, and when time allows, I paint on scrap pieces of wood. This is very relaxing and only for myself.

further away from the refrigerator and couch – two things that can easily sabotage my workday if I surrender to them! When I head to my studio, I try to keep myself in work mode by dressing as if I were going to a day job. I rarely paint while in my pyjamas. That's probably why most of my nice clothes have paint on them somewhere. I'm also always filming my painting and drawing processes for my YouTube channel, so I doubt my subscribers want to see me meandering about in PJs.

*Jeff has been creating art over 23 years for Magic: the Gathering, Dungeons & Dragons, World of Warcraft, and more. Visit him and explore his art at www.jeffmiracola.com.*

## ❝ When I head to my studio, I try to keep myself in work mode by dressing as if I were going to a day job ❞

I really enjoyed painting the iridescent scales on this majestic dragon. You can see how it was created in my Oil Painting Techniques DVD.



The list of artists that influence me seems endless. I make sure to surround myself with their art and books, because I never know when I'll need a little boost of inspiration.



My inking supplies are laid out just like my collection of paints. That way, I know when my supplies are running low and it's time to re-order.



The primal image for this oil painting came from a recurring dream. This piece is special to me because my wife helped paint some of the flowers.



In keeping with my need to have art supplies on show, I created a wooden rack to display my tubes of oil paint.

ARTIST IN RESIDENCE

This is the long wall of my studio, covered in proof drawings and etchings for War Horse. Grooved racks support large sliding panels for painting.

I work a lot at night, so lighting is important. Having said that, I've never had really good lighting! This is my father's old Anglepoise, which I've used all my life.

I tend to mostly work upright, and I was lent this amazing mobile easel a few years ago. I'm hoping the owner has forgotten about it, because I use it all the time!

# Olivia Lomenech Gill

**Wooden wonder** The Fantastic Beasts artist takes us into her biggest creation – the studio she built by hand – where much of her work comes to life…

This trolley holds all my painting stuff. I bought it from a charity shop years ago. My friend, who's a brilliant painter, has an old hospital trolley in stainless steel. I'd love a similar one, but have to make do with my hostess trolley!

**Necessity is the mother of invention, and the guiding spirit of most artists who are used to functioning on a pretty small budget.**

When I moved to north Northumberland in 2001 – the only place I could call home – I turned a tiny downstairs room in the cottage where I live into a studio. It would have been fine if I were a miniaturist, but I wanted to do bigger works.

Initially, I devised ways of making big works out of little metal plates, an idea derived from my work as a print maker. Helen of Troy & 1000 Ships was one of a series of the big pieces that I had to assemble in the gallery in London where I was showing.

I dreamt of having a proper studio, (and a printing press!), but I was caught between my financial limitations and my concerns for environmental sustainability. Eco-building is always expensive unless you do it yourself.

When I got married, I made a wedding list of the building materials I would need to make a studio. Lots of local larch, a whole lot more boxes of screws, and so on. And that's how Vincent, a Breton paper conservator, and I started married life: building (and arguing about metric versus imperial!). It took us two winters, and a son born half-way through.

My husband was actually still living away, so progress was pretty sporadic. But since its completion 12 years

I had nowhere to work, so I built this studio by hand, with help from friends and family. It's made from local larch, and is insulated and very solid. This is important because we get a lot of weather where we live! Along the side wall are 10 fruit trees, steadily growing. And there's lots of wildlife living in the building, too, including bats and swallows.



I started making sculptures a few years ago, while I was working on the War Horse artwork. I use wire and wax (I love doing this). Then they're cast in bronze in an Edinburgh foundry. This is Austin, the army horse that was my model for War Horse.



This is one of my copper plates in the process of being etched with ferric chloride. I regularly take them out to see how they're doing. It's like a chemistry experiment, but in my case a very rudimentary one!

At the workshop, where I do my printing, I have a big old clerks desk. This once belonged to my mother. I do lots of my working out here, including these proofs and plates for the chimaera in JK Rowling's Fantastic Beasts.

I love using text in my work, such as these old encyclopedias. I do collage in both my printing and drawing, so it's good to have a stock of paper to use. Older books are best because they have nice type and uncoated woodpulp paper that goes yellow. I never use intact books, only damaged ones.

These two old friends prop each other up, unless they've had a falling out, when they sit apart like this. They're Kathputli puppets from Rajasthan. I trained in theatre and worked in India, both of which I miss, so this wooden couple are like old friends from my past.





My Imperial Good Companion. I have a small collection of typewriters that I like to use in my illustration work, along with handwriting. I used a lot of this in the Michael Morpurgo book.

This is a box of my great aunt's etching plates, given to me a few years ago. Each copper plate is wrapped in a proof print of that plate. She worked all her life as an artist in the first half of the 20th century. This collection of plates is a like a sort of artists' legacy for me.

➤ ago I've worked in here pretty much every day since. The neighbours call it The Shanty Town (there are no other wooden buildings in this part of the country, so it's a bit alternative, perhaps), but it's the most functional and environmentally sound workspace for miles around!

### WORSE THINGS HAPPEN AT SEA
Right now it's pretty stormy and it feels and sounds a bit like being at sea. Although very solid, an all-timber building shudders and creaks in the high winds we often have here. I used to worry that my whole world (that's my studio!) would be flipped over one night in a gale, but luckily it's stayed the right way up.

## 66 Although very solid, an all-timber building shudders and creaks in the high winds we often have here 99

It's probably the table that's holding the studio down. It was my mother's and is about 14 foot long, with a solid elm top that takes four people to lift. But like all working surfaces it's never big enough, strangely!

At the moment it has a half-finished wax horse sculpture on it, some WWI puttees, sketchbooks and work in progress for a book I'm working on. There's also a sheet of aluminium with some mostly dried oil paint, left from when I started a painting in a fit of enthusiasm, after Christmas, but failed to finish.

That happens a lot. I'm a full-time artist – it's how I've lived and worked for nearly 20 years – but still I seem to experience a lot of interruptions. Household admin, cleaning and three young boys make life pretty non-stop. I do joke that I'm actually a professional cleaner who does a bit of painting in my spare time. And that's why I need deadlines and ridiculous ideas, to keep going.

I have a stash of Montecristo cigar boxes, given to me by our friend who's the butler for the local landowner. Wine boxes, too. All useful storage!

I have a four-foot row of sketchbooks. This was my art school really. An art teacher encouraged me to always carry a sketchbook and draw. A6 Daler Rowney, pocket size. I still always keep one with me. I'd draw on the bus, anywhere and everywhere. That is how I learnt to draw. I think these are what I would save if my studio was on fire, not because the drawings are great but they're the closest thing I have to a diary!

I made the red dragon when I was about nine. My father read me The Hobbit, and then the whole of The Lord of the Rings, and I set about illustrating all the characters and making models. This is Smaug, and Boromir's next to him, after he's been shot by the orcs. The other dragon is a wax model I made last year to draw from when I illustrated Fantastic Beasts by JK Rowling.

This is my three-ton assistant, a Rochat etching press. It's brilliant to have your own press... until it comes to moving, when you need a low loader with a crane and a skilful operator! This is when we moved to a new premises a few years ago, a lovely old shop front in the village of Belford, north-east England.

I also have another studio. It's a workshop I share with Vincent's paper conservation and framing business, which we rent in a nearby village. And this is where I keep my three-ton Rochat etching press.

## SELF-TAUGHT VIA SKETCHING

Printmaking is the only thing I have any training in, having done an MA at Camberwell in 2000. Apart from that I'm self-taught. My art school was the A6 sketchbooks that sit on my shelf – there are about 40 now. I just used to draw, everywhere and anywhere.

I'm a completely literal artist, but I love storytelling, so I suppose I work with a combination of fact and fiction. Working on Fantastic Beasts was a challenge, because I only ever work from life, and most of the contents of that book don't exist, so that was interesting! However, quite a few of them were, for me, clearly based on real creatures, so wherever possible I went to hunt them out.

I would loved to have gone to the Serengeti, or Arizona, to draw the 'Tebo' (a warthog) or the Thunderbird, but instead I did a lot of virtual, (carbon-free!) travelling from my studio. And anyway, the view out of the window here isn't too bad. We have our own share of fantastic beasts here in Northumberland, albeit minus the elephants!

*You can view Olivia's prints, artworks and sculptures at www.oliviagill.com.*
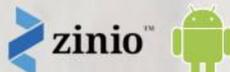
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# Letters

## YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS

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### Less traditional, more digital art coverage

Recently, a reader wrote in to request more traditional art in ImagineFX. In your reply you invited us to give an opinion. Well, here's mine: yes, I love traditional media, but there are many magazines that are full of traditional art content.

ImagineFX is the best digital painting magazine by far and that's why I subscribe to it. I'm a professional digital artist and want to develop my skills, and look at what the others in my trade are doing.
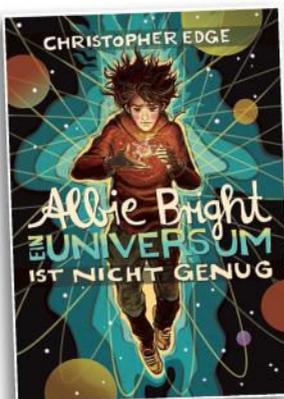
The traditional art section is inspiring, but it's taking up too much room. I really want those pages to help me become a better digital artist. So please feel free to recommend other magazines that focus on traditional art, but don't enlarge the section in ImagineFX, because at its heart, the magazine is all about digital painting.
*Nina Dulleck, via email*

*Nina's a digital artist, and would like less traditional media coverage in ImagineFX. You can see more of her children's book work at www.ninadulleck.de.*

**Claire replies** It's always refreshing to hear a definite point of view from a reader. I will absolutely take heed of your comments, Nina. I hear loud and clear that you buy us for the digital art techniques. Thanks also for sending in your work – a timely image for our book illustration issue! Readers, any more thoughts on this? Let me know.

### Shout out the negative!

Just picked up the new issue of the magazine. As usual I'm on fire with inspiration and need to paint after flicking through it. But to the point of this email is a response to your Editor's

*Nina Dulleck image © Thienemann Verlag*

*Do you think our traditional media section is too big, too small or just the right size. Let us know!*

Letter [issue 158] in regards "turning down the volume of negative feelings and cranking up the positive."

I think it's a matter of doing exactly that. If the negativity creeps in, spot it right away and shout it down. Whenever I feel negative about my work or choices, I make a point to do something that gets my mind away from it. My life is full of creative outlets for this very reason. I draw, paint, write, play music, act and teach. I keep my mind active by creating. Sometimes it can feel like I'm trying to outrun my own doubts, but at same time it's what's led to my successes so far.

If that little negative voice starts chirping up, I go and draw something – anything. Just making a line on a page/screen and letting my mind see where it'll lead me is enough to shout down the doubt. That shout is strengthened by the knowledge that soon I'll be able to stand back and feel the euphoria of completing something where once there was nothing.

Yet I recognise that little voice has a value, too. It can highlight flaws. You can use the negative to fuel a positive reaction, and to fix those flaws.

Your magazine has been influential in making me be able to shout. So thank you to you and all the team for your hard work and overcoming all the stresses that occur en route to getting the magazine into your readers' hands.
*Wayne, via email*

**Claire replies** Thank you for your personal take on this important subject, Wayne. It really is hard to combat those negative thoughts, but the more we talk about it the more we'll recognise that it's something that we can openly try to deal with. Ultimately, we can only be ourselves – some of us are naturally sunnier than others, for instance – but we can strive to be the best versions of us. Next issue, we'll go into some detail about how we can tackle this issue as artists. Stay tuned!

### DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE?

Don't worry – you can still get hold of it. Visit **http://ifxm.ag/158-ifx** for details.

New works that have grabbed our attention

Dimitri Müller @rellluem

Johanna Tarkela @lhuin

Tomek Larek @tomek_larek

*If you have created art that you want us to shout about simply tag us on Twitter or Instagram, or find us on Facebook!*

**AVALANCHE**
*"A personal painting from a few years ago. I was thinking a lot about Leonard Cohen's song Avalanche at the time."*

*Artist Portfolio*

# SAM WEBER

Magic, mystery and trying not to sound like a moron: **Gary Evans** meets the artist who avoids painting in a fixed style

S am Weber remembers being young and visiting a small art gallery with his mum. He watched her linger over one particular painting – it appeared to move her in some way. It made her sad. For Sam, it wasn't the painting that had an effect on him; it was the effect the painting had on his mum.

In past interviews, the illustrator has avoided describing his own style. Sam has previously said he wants his work to maintain a bit of magic, some illusion, and worried that by giving a thorough description of his art he would come across as a "total moron." So instead he tells intriguing little stories like the one above.

"I felt like an alchemist's apprentice," the US illustrator says, "learning the secrets hidden inside all those brightly coloured tubes and bottles." We're onto a different story now. Ten years old, Sam flew from Canada to Austria to visit his grandmother. Next door to his grandmother lived a family friend, a "real artist."

This man liked to hear Sam's ideas and talked to him like he was a grown-up. So Sam woke up early every morning. He left his parents and sister at their nearby hotel and walked alone to the artist's house. It was a mission: "Art still felt a little like magic then, ➤➤



**THE NAME OF THE WIND**
*"I loved this book from the moment I started reading it. What a thrill and honour to create an image for this anniversary edition."*

❝ I felt like an alchemist's apprentice learning about hidden secrets… ❞

**HONEY**
*"My painting of John The Baptist for the cover of American Illustration 29. I've always consider it one of the nicest annual collections of contemporary illustration."*

**DUNE**
*"I created this image for The Folio Society's collector's edition of Frank Herbert's epic novel, to celebrate its 50th publication anniversary."*



**MEDUSA UPLOADED**
*"I created this for a fantastic science fiction novel by Emily Devenport, but really it's my homage to HR Giger."*

➤➤ in a way that it probably doesn't so much any more, and I remember how desperately I wanted to know everything I could about it."

## FROM DEEP RIVER TO NEW YORK

Sam was born in Alaska and grew up Ontario. His hometown in Canada is called Deep River. As well as a river, there were mountains and beaches and forests nearby. There was always exploring to do, trails to ski, some adventures to be had in canoes and on sailboats. To make his storybook childhood complete, he took art lessons "from an old woman with a huge dog who lived down the street."

But Deep River also has a big nuclear laboratory. Sam remembers how some

> ❝ **Moving to New York was terrifying. Everything seemed to be so expensive…** ❞

trails crisscrossed the woods around the hospital, all those sick people inside. And when he thinks about the beaches close to home they are always "cast in perpetual evening."

Sam got into art through comic books. He went on to study graphic design and illustration at the Alberta College of Art and Design in Calgary, then moved to New York and the School of Visual Arts.

"Moving to New York was terrifying. I was pretty young and very naïve. The thing I remember most of all was just how expensive everything was."

Sam lived in a one-bedroom apartment on the Upper East Side,

which he shared with a friend from Canada. He slept in the living room on a "strip of foam." But school, that was "an oasis," the studios "beautiful," his classmates "talented," and his teachers "weird, mysterious and brilliant."

## SPREADING THE WORD

Sam worked hard. He also realised the importance of self-promotion early on. He sent out postcards and took lots of meetings with art directors. His first proper commission came from the New York Times – exciting and frightening – but he did it well enough to eventually be offered a part-time job as an art director's assistant. By then ➤➤

# MAGIC BY OMISSION

## Sam explains how collaboration can be an illustrator's best friend and worst enemy

"I painted this for the Criterion Collection release of the classic horror film The Uninvited. It's always such an honour to work with Criterion. The art direction is always open and supportive, and the content never fails to inspire.

Like pretty well every project, I started this off with small black and white drawings. I'm not much for word lists or staring at clouds for inspiration, and typically don't come up with anything useful unless I've got pencil to paper.

There's something about the act of drawing, usually from my imagination – or in this case a collection of stills and scenes from the film – that enables me to properly think through an image.

There was some conversation with the art director, Eric Skillman, and he suggested we have the figure floating in space as opposed to held up like the original sketch suggested, which I thought was a fantastic idea. One of the best (and, admittedly, in some rare instances, the worst) things about being an illustrator is collaboration, and the potential for an image to be better than something I could come up with on my own.

I love how mysterious the image became – suddenly turning surreal and magical through the omission of detail. Once a direction is decided upon, I gather reference, in this instance hiring a model and getting some costuming together. I then redrew the image on gessoed board and painted it in oil."
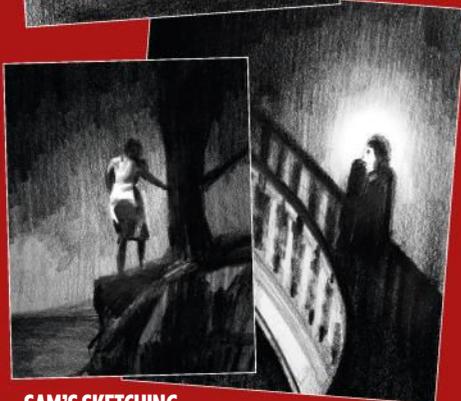
### SAM'S SKETCHING

*"Sketching is about surprising myself – a process that when it's working properly, yields fresh ideas explored through drawing."*

### THE UNINVITED

*"This piece accompanies The Criterion Collection release of the classic 1944 horror film The Uninvited."*

**ABSINTHE DRINKER**
*"There's a printing company in upstate New York that commissions a calendar every year on the theme of frogs. This was my contribution."*

© Dallas Graphics

**THE RIVER**
*"This is the final image in a series of paintings I made for The Folio Society edition of Ray Bradbury's novel Fahrenheit 451."*

© The Folio Society

© The Folio Society

➤ he was getting regular illustration work from newspapers and magazines. After two and a half years at the Times, he left to focus on his own work.

## DAYDREAMS AND NIGHTMARES

Sam tends to use muted colours. Even when his work looks simple, it's full of detail. There are often images within images, some symbol or clue that points to a story outside the picture. It mixes real-life and fantasy, daydreams and nightmares. It can be beautiful and sinister at the same time.

There's always tension too, like the tension in his story about learning from an alchemistic art teacher but walking alone to meet him, or the idyllic woods in the shadow of the nuclear laboratory, or studying in the pristine art school and sleeping in the dingy apartment. Are we getting any closer to understanding Sam's style?

"I've always had trouble with this sort of question," he says. "I hope that

the work speaks for itself, to be perfectly honest."

Sam finds art a hard thing to do. And so some days are always going to be more productive than others. But if the work hasn't gone well, he feels less anxious knowing he'll be back at it same time the next day.

> ❝ I've always had trouble with this sort of question. I hope that the work speaks for itself, to be perfectly honest ❞

He bikes four and half miles to work and starts at 9.30am. He works till noon, takes 45 minutes for lunch, then leaves around 6pm. He shares a workspace – an old pencil factory – with friends on the waterfront in Brooklyn. It's always a "complete mess" but has high ceilings and large south-facing windows that look out over Manhattan. They keep distractions to a

minimum, "more to do with inertia than discipline," which means after 12 years in the building they still haven't bought a couch between them.

He prefers to paint and draw rather than use Photoshop. He's always believed in the value of print and saw books and magazines as the best place

to show his work. He's since done covers for books by everyone from Stephen King and Neil Gaiman to William Golding and Vladimir Nabokov. His clients include The Criterion Collection, Little, Brown & Co, and National Geographic.

Sam says it's important to let the process guide him. It's more fun this way, more surprising. "Every image ➤

**SANDWORM**
*"I reimagined the huge worm-like monsters that live on desert planet Arrakis in the best-selling sci-fi book of all time, Frank Herbert's Dune."*

© Tor.com

**EROS, PHILIA, AGAPE**
*"This is a wonderful short story written by Nebula award-winning author Rachel Swirsky and published by Tor.com. It's a tale of personhood, born and earned."*
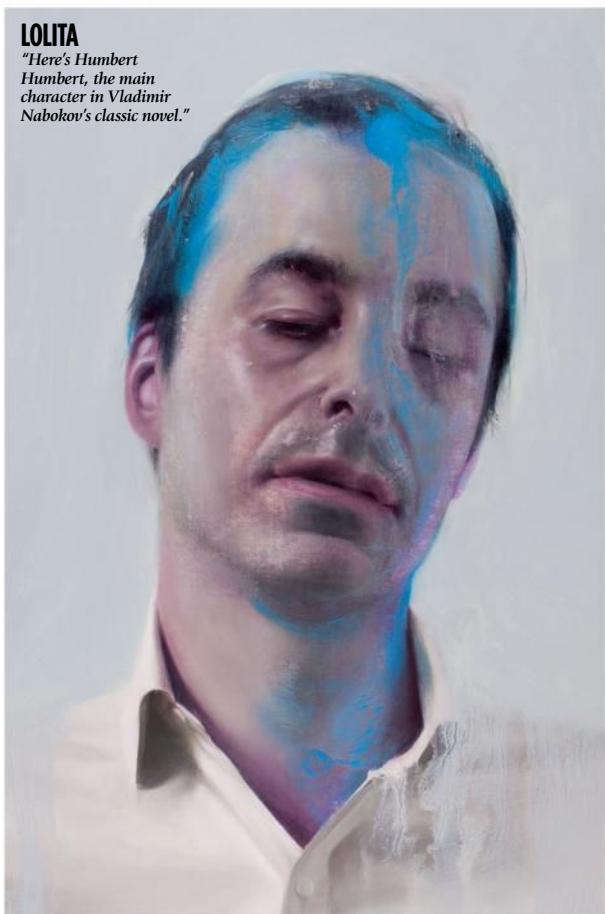
© Saga Press

**THE WALL OF STORMS**
*"Cover art for the second book in Ken Liu's Dandelion Dynasty fantasy series. I was thinking a lot about Dutch Renaissance still life painting at the time."*

**LOLITA**
*"Here's Humbert Humbert, the main character in Vladimir Nabokov's classic novel."*

© Print Books



**THE LANGUAGE OF KNIVES**
*"This painting was for a very weird and wonderful short story of the same name, which needs to be read."*

© Tor.com



**CROSS MY HEART**
*"Part of an ongoing personal series of paintings which I'm hoping to have time to come back to soon."*

# TRY AND KEEP AN OPEN MIND

**Sam tells how a fellow artist pointed him towards a surprising career path**

"The best advice I've probably ever received was from US illustrator John Hendrix while I was still in grad school. I was lamenting about how I felt conflicted about the direction of my work, wishing I could try something new but too afraid to do it.

John was – and continues to be – much wiser than I, and said: "Just because you're good at something, doesn't mean you have to do it." Which is so true, and perhaps quite obvious, yet is something I see a lot of artists struggle with, especially young ones.

I think there's this tendency to view one's career as a slow, progressive march towards some inevitable plutonic ideal, which is entirely false and, in the case of art, I believe, actively harmful. Keeping an open mind and being receptive to what's actually happening in one's work is essential. If I was making now what I thought I should be making 10 years ago, I'd be deeply unhappy with my life. I love the surprises and strange paths my work has taken me along, and I'm excited to see where it goes next.

Sometimes abandoning something, even if just for a short while, is necessary to make room for something new and exciting!"

**THESE DEATHLESS BONES**
*"This piece was for a fantastic, visceral short story, originally published on Tor.com."*

starts the same way," Sam says, "with small scribbly drawings." For a book cover, he reads the manuscript or synopsis, then jumps straight in. Even if a job requires a "specific solution," he looks for the answer on the page. "The trick more often than not is to keep from repeating myself or falling back on old ideas or solutions."

The piece takes shape, he'll get the okay from the client, then looks at references, stuff online, or perhaps hires a model, builds props, makes costumes, maybe even a maquette, and begins to refine the image.

It differs from job to job. Some clients leave him to get on with it. Others come up with a clear idea, sometimes even a specific visual

**AND I DARKEN**
*"I was picking peony petals of my studio floor for weeks after shooting the reference for this one."*

> ❝ I don't think I'd make paintings if I knew no one would ever see them ❞

reference. Sam doesn't necessarily prefer being left to do his own thing. He's messed up when he's had total control, and he's done good work by following an art director's detailed instructions. He'll say no to a commission if he feels he's doing too much work of a similar kind, if he's in danger of repeating himself. Instead, he'll go away and work on personal art.

## ALWAYS ANOTHER CHANCE

"As an illustrator I really try to give the client what they're looking for," he says. "The wonderful thing about picture-making is that there's always another picture to make, so I try not to get too attached to specific things in any one project."

It comes back to the painting in the small gallery that moved his mum, and how he was moved by how she was moved: "It's so cool," he says, "the way images can connect with a viewer's own experiences. I've often said that I don't think I'd make paintings if I knew no one would ever see them."

But if he had to – if he absolutely had to – how would Sam describe his own style? This is much as we're getting: "I think I'm most happy when it's able to stir some effect in the viewer – discomfort, surprise, attraction or uncertainty."

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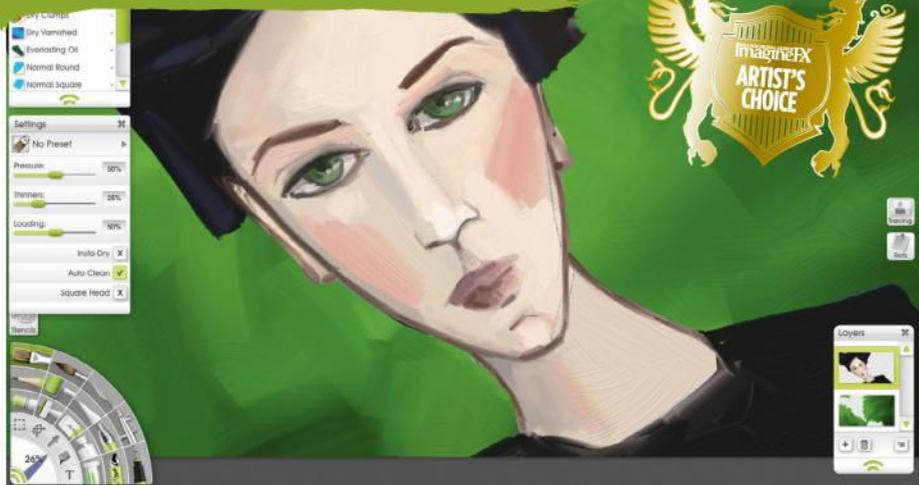
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# SIMON STÅLENHAG

## Artist Portfolio

Using his native Swedish landscape as a starting point, this artist has found the perfect balance between reality and fantasy, discovers **Nick Carson**

When Simon Stålenhag began painting, he drew on his passion for bird watching, and an affinity with the countryside of his native Sweden. He now lives in central Stockholm, but inspiration comes much more readily in his tranquil rural cabin on the remote island of Färingsö, Lake Mälaren.

Simon has always been fascinated by local flora and fauna, and two early influences were Swedish wildlife painters Lars Jonsson and Gunnar Brusewitz. Futuristic elements only entered his work fairly recently. "I've always enjoyed science fiction films – Jurassic Park, Alien, Terminator, the films of my era – but I wasn't artistically inspired by them until my early 20s," he reflects.

> ❝ **I've always enjoyed sci-fi films, but I wasn't inspired by them until my early 20s** ❞

Concept artists such as Syd Mead and Ralph McQuarrie have since influenced him hugely, but he discovered them long after he first watched the films their visions helped shape. "The retro style appealed to me," he says. "Making something photorealistic is easy: it's much harder to make it look like a painting."

### WATCHING A WORLD-CLASS ATHLETE
Simon found the imaginative work of Syd Mead awe-inspiring, but also intimidating. "He's a master of industrial design," he says. "Every time

I tried to do a car, I'd crack." The real connection was with Ralph McQuarrie: "It's like a watching a world-class athlete, the way he rendered light. The characters may be a bit off… but it feels accessible, somehow – charming," he says.

After much practice, he found a sweet spot between the painterly charm of Ralph, the conceptual vehicles of Syd and his own passion for his homeland. "I wanted to use ➽

**MISSING PERSON**
*"This one never ended up in any book, and I like it being a standalone thing," reveals Stålenhag. "The vehicles are based on a classic 70s street light design popular in northern Europe."*

**Artist**
## PROFILE
**Simon Stålenhag**
**LOCATION:** Sweden
**FAVOURITE ARTISTS:** Lars Jonsson, Gunnar Brusewitz, Ralph McQuarrie and Syd Mead
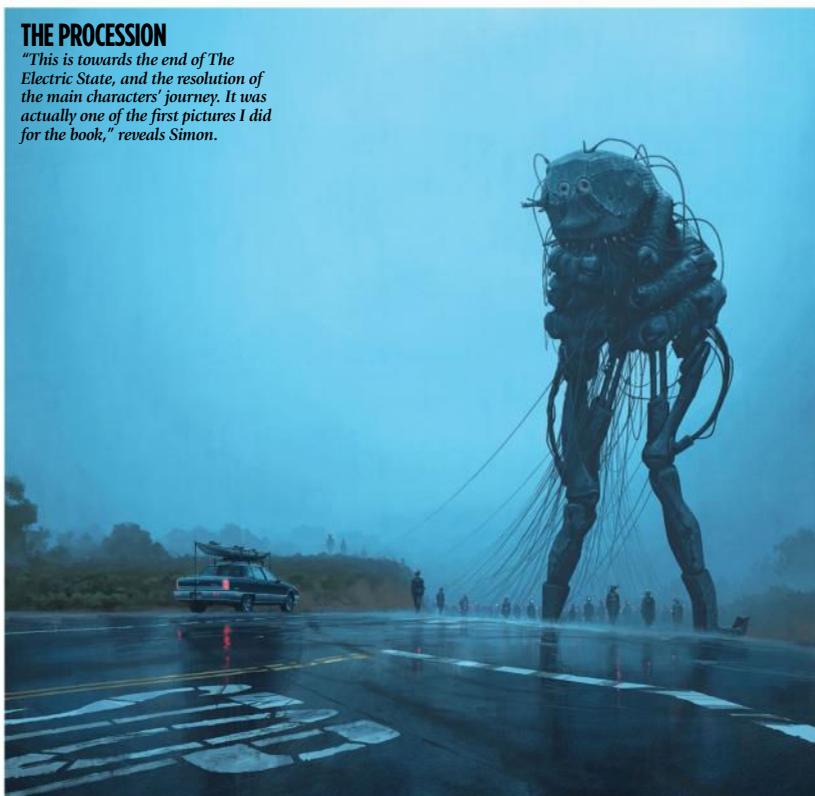**SOFTWARE USED:** Photoshop
**WEB:** www.simonstalenhag.se

**THE PROCESSION**
*"This is towards the end of The Electric State, and the resolution of the main characters' journey. It was actually one of the first pictures I did for the book," reveals Simon.*





science fiction to say something about Sweden's cultural landscape," he explains. "My robots look like the agricultural machines that you'd find in the Swedish countryside in the 50s, 60s and 70s."

Simon's fascination with wildlife provided an unexpected springboard, too. "Robots are very animal-like," he observes. "You can capture many animal poses using robots. When I first started to learn, I looked at birds, ostriches and so on – gawky birds."

Following this intriguing comparison, it's no surprise that robots are his favourite sci-fi subjects. "When painting robots, I try to get into the mindset of an animal," he says. "There's a kinetic energy. They should be pictured slightly off-balance, never resting."

While he feels that Syd Mead's total mastery of industrial design is unattainable, vehicle design is a close

**KLOTGRÄND**
*This piece from Things From The Flood was inspired by the housing projects in Husby, north of Stockholm.*

> ❝ My robots look like the machines that you'd find in the Swedish countryside… ❞

second to crafting characterful robots – so long as they're not too fanciful. "I like to make them look functional, and grounded," explains Simon.

"I'm not particularly fond of spacecraft, because I've never been to space. You have no idea what scale things are – it could almost be a miniature in someone's garage. With no familiar details, it's almost like abstract art, and I find that harder to connect with."

## STRANGE FIGURES IN OUR WORLD

Space scenes clearly make up a large proportion of Ralph McQuarrie's body of work, but while Simon finds his visualisations of Death Stars, TIE fighters and X-wings incredible, it's the planetary scenes that really strike a chord with the artist.

"I prefer Hoth, and particularly Tatooine. I love the Sand People in particular," he says. "The matte paintings of Jabba The Hutt's palace are brilliant. But my favourite piece is a promo piece where all the characters from the film are moving in a parade down a street in Hollywood. They're suddenly in our universe."

That integration of reality with fantasy lies at the core of Simon's work. Summer scenes are the hardest to work with, he reflects: "They're too green, yellow and strong," he says.

# MEMORIES AND POP MEET ON THE SNOW

**Featuring two teenagers sneaking away over the ice, this piece was inspired by a song by The Shins**

Part of his second book, Things From The Flood, Med En Allmän Känsla För Stil is one of Simon Stålenhag's all-time favourite pieces of work, completed while staying with his brother in 2015.

"I did it very quickly, pretty much from memory, based on a lake that me and my mother went past as we were driving through northern Sweden to visit my older brother," Simon explains.

"The concept of the two teenage boys sneaking away over the dark ice was heavily inspired by The Shins song Phantom Limb, which is about a young lesbian couple dealing with life in their rubbish small town," he continues.

"From a technical point of view the painting was straightforward, since it's pretty much just ambient diffused dusk light – basically different shades of dark blue – and an off-screen sodium light, which gives the whole scene a nice gradient from blue to a pinkish red," the artist adds.

Simon's biggest challenge was getting the poses of the two boys exactly right. "I didn't use any reference at all, but I think that worked to my advantage in the end," he admits.

"The rose on the leather jacket was just a little detail that I put there so I had a surface that could play against the off-screen light."

**MED EN ALLMÄN KÄNSL A FÖR STIL**
*Featured in Things From The Flood, this dark, brooding piece shows two teenagers crossing a snow-covered landscape, towards strange red lights in the distance.*

**INNERGÅRD**
*"When I was 11 I didn't have any after-school activities, and spent a lot of time shuffling around in the snow outside my mom or dad's work," recalls Simon of his inspiration for this artwork featured in Things From The Flood*

**CARSON PASS**
*Another artwork from The Electric State, based on a real location in the US, this time up in California's Sierra Nevada region.*

"Representing foliage is difficult. It's a lovely feeling being outside at midday in summer, but the highlights are too bright. It's tricky to simplify."

Winter is Simon's season of choice. "There are so few colours, they could be rendered perfectly on an old Nintendo," he continues. "Snow, sky, cloud cover… you can communicate all of it with a few shades of grey. For me, the biggest challenge is not to just do another winter scene, because it's so much easier."

Paring scenes back to a simpler, more stylised form requires a ➤

# KRAFTA HEADQUARTERS

**The artist's rural Swedish upbringing is a regular source of inspiration, and this snowy scene is no exception**

Another portfolio highlight for Simon Stålenhag is Krafta Headquarters, also featured in Things From The Flood. Like much of his work, the piece draws on his childhood memories living in rural Sweden in the mid-90s.

"I'm really happy with how much it reminds me of my own life experience, being 11 years old in 1995 – even if it depicts a totally fictional setting," Simon explains. "I'm pleased with the corporate sculpture as well; I think it captures a type of 'home handicraft' aesthetic that was very popular in Sweden during that era."

One aspect of the piece that Simon is particularly happy with is the main headquarters building in the background. "I did a simple shape in 3D, which looks like a plus sign viewed from the top, with the bars slightly offset, giving it a weird, eerie swastika resemblance. It's a semi-evil corporation in the book," he reveals.

"I also like how the sloping walls and overall tapering shape of the building turned out, slightly mirroring the hierarchical pyramid shape of private corporations," continues Simon, who adds that his biggest challenge was combining the many different elements successfully within the same image.

"I think the foggy, bleak atmosphere helps to organise the elements by depth, so it doesn't become too cluttered," he concludes.

**❝ I'm really happy with how much it reminds me of my own life experience… ❞**

**KRAFTA HEADQUARTERS**
*Here, Simon juxtaposes a 'home handicraft' sculpture in the foreground with the towering, swastika-inspired corporate headquarters behind.*

# Artist Portfolio

**WAR MACHINES NO. 3**
Many of the scenes in The Electric State were based on real places. "It's supposed to look like the Sierra Nevadas, but the strip mall was actually based off of a real location in Austin, Texas," says Simon.

> 66 Nobody understands how a particle accelerator works. Time holes, dinosaurs, robots… you can get everything from it 99

➤➤ painterly technique that Simon has honed over years of trial and error. His advice for achieving a similar style using digital tools is simple: think more like a traditional painter.

## THINK STROKES, NOT PIXELS

"Don't consider pixels as an indivisible entity. Instead consider brush strokes," he says. "That's why I work in such high resolution. As soon as you start rotating stuff, it won't hold up when you go into detail." Using a carefully chosen palette of no more than 20 colours, he builds a new piece up in layers, as if working with paint on the canvas.

**COSTAL SERVERS**
"This is based on a real section of Highway One outside Monterey, California," explains Simon of this piece, also from The Electric State.

While at first he only displayed his work digitally online, Simon then moved into prints and finally books with Tales from the Loop (2015) and Things From The Flood (2016). Both were inspired by stories about underground military facilities that he remembers from the schoolyard. The particle accelerator at the core of the plot he describes as a useful sci-fi trope: "Nobody understands how it works," he says. "Time holes, dinosaurs, robots… you can get everything from it."

His third book, The Electric State, expanded his horizons from Sweden to America. "It's such a huge part of pop culture – it's like you've been there even if you haven't," Simon says. "I stayed in a motel near Las Vegas, and it was like a film set. You recognise all the small, mundane details because you've seen them so many times on TV and in the cinema."

Fittingly, the experience has now come full circle: The Electric State is destined to grace screens of its own, because Simon has sold the film rights. "It's such a far-fetched idea that someone would make a movie out of your fantasy," he chuckles. "The book for me was always intended to be the final product."

### SCENES FROM A FILM

Nevertheless, Simon believes the work will lend itself well to adaption – not least because he thinks in those terms anyway. "My paintings are like keyframes; scenes that if I saw them in a teaser, I'd go and see the movie," he explains. He even compiles soundtracks to accompany his projects, and he even had aspirations to become a composer.

Unsurprisingly, he has specific ideas about how The Electric State movie should sound – "scary, but with a romantic tone to it" – although he's realistic about how much control he'll have. "Maybe my involvement will be letting go of certain things," he concludes. "I don't want to become a pain in the ass." ◑

**CABLE MACHINES**
"The yellow checkered pattern is in homage to the classic designs of Chris Foss," explains Simon of this painting from The Electric State.

**BELLTOWERS**
Three giant advertising-plastered structures rise up from the suburbs, in another atmospheric piece from The Electric State.

# Konstantin Vavilov

This artist tells us about his approach to sketching, as he shows off a range of fantasy characters – and the odd flying head!

## LICH
"I adore experimenting with new tools. When I discovered the watercolour brushes in Photoshop I immediately tried to create something for my personal project Buried City."

## VAMPIRE LORD
"A little bit of magic happens whenever I draw traditionally. When I was creating this sketch, I felt it was important for me to show the character's changeable nature and a sense of pathos."

66 My favourite fantasy race is the dwarves – I can paint them all day long… 99

### RANDOM THOUGHTS

"As I sketch I try to recall my initial concept – what I saw with my mind's eye. While doing this I try to fix ideas, feelings, technique and rhythms. Sometimes I don't even know what I'm fixing, but I know that it's necessary to do this."

### BIG NECROMATON

"This is a basic sketch for one of the works from my project The Buried City. The composition of the masses, the rhythms, the general feeling of the piece... when all this is in place, I no longer worry about having to do further work."

### MASTER OF RUNES

"My favourite fantasy race is the dwarves – I can paint them all day long. I enjoy experimenting with the look of established visuals, seeing what direction I can take a design in."

> ❝ **Sometimes you feel that all the lines are in the right places…** ❞

## SATYR

"I explored colour and light in this sketch. I came up with a story about the origin of the race of satyrs in a world I invented, and it's my attempt to capture the feeling of them. I believe we must convey sensations through design, and not vice versa."

## DISCIPLE OF THE GODDESS OF WISDOM

"I always question how much colour affects the image. Therefore, when I'm confident that I've captured a particular design, I quickly try to find an approximate colour solution for it. This helps me see if it works or not."

### RING BREAKER

"Here's a priest-necromancer for my project. Sometimes there's magic in that first sketch. You manage to catch the sensation and then you just look at how the work itself develops and comes to a logical conclusion."

### NECROMANCER NOVICE

"Sometimes I really like my sketches. Not often, but sometimes you feel that all the lines are in the right places. And it's no longer important whether others like this particular piece or not – you feel that you've taken a step forward in your own development as an artist."

### KNIGHT

"Often students try to come up with unimaginable, ultra-complex characters. These days I'm more passionate about developing clean and accurate designs in every detail, such as in this knight."

# Sketchbook

## DIVIDE:

"This is one of my Inktober 2017 pieces. The idea came quickly: the magician and warrior, light on dark, dark on light. I focused on maintaining the contrasts throughout. Because the story, images and contrast were key, I also tried to replicate the engraving work of Renaissance artist Albrecht Dürer."

## BLACKSMITH'S HEAD

"Everyone likes to draw flying heads! Sometimes when I see an image on the street or in a film, I try to quickly get it down on paper. Many of these sketches find life in future projects."

> ❝ It's important for me to work quickly, so I try to fit in all my ideas and experiments into an hour ❞

## VAMPIRE

"It's important for me to work quickly, so often I try to fit in all my ideas and experiments into an hour of work. This is part of an ideation session for a vampire race for my Buried City project. They had to look unusual, because – spoiler alert! – they're actually aliens."

## TWO FRIENDS

"This is a sketch on the adventures of two figures. I do like it when a simple drawing manages to catch the characteristics and fate of future heroes. Once you capture a figure's design it's relatively simple to equip them with items that suit them."

**Do you want to share your sketches with your fellow ImagineFX readers?** Send us an email with a selection of your art, captions for each piece and a photo and bio of yourself to **sketchbook@imaginefx.com**

THE EVENT FOR THE CG COMMUNITY
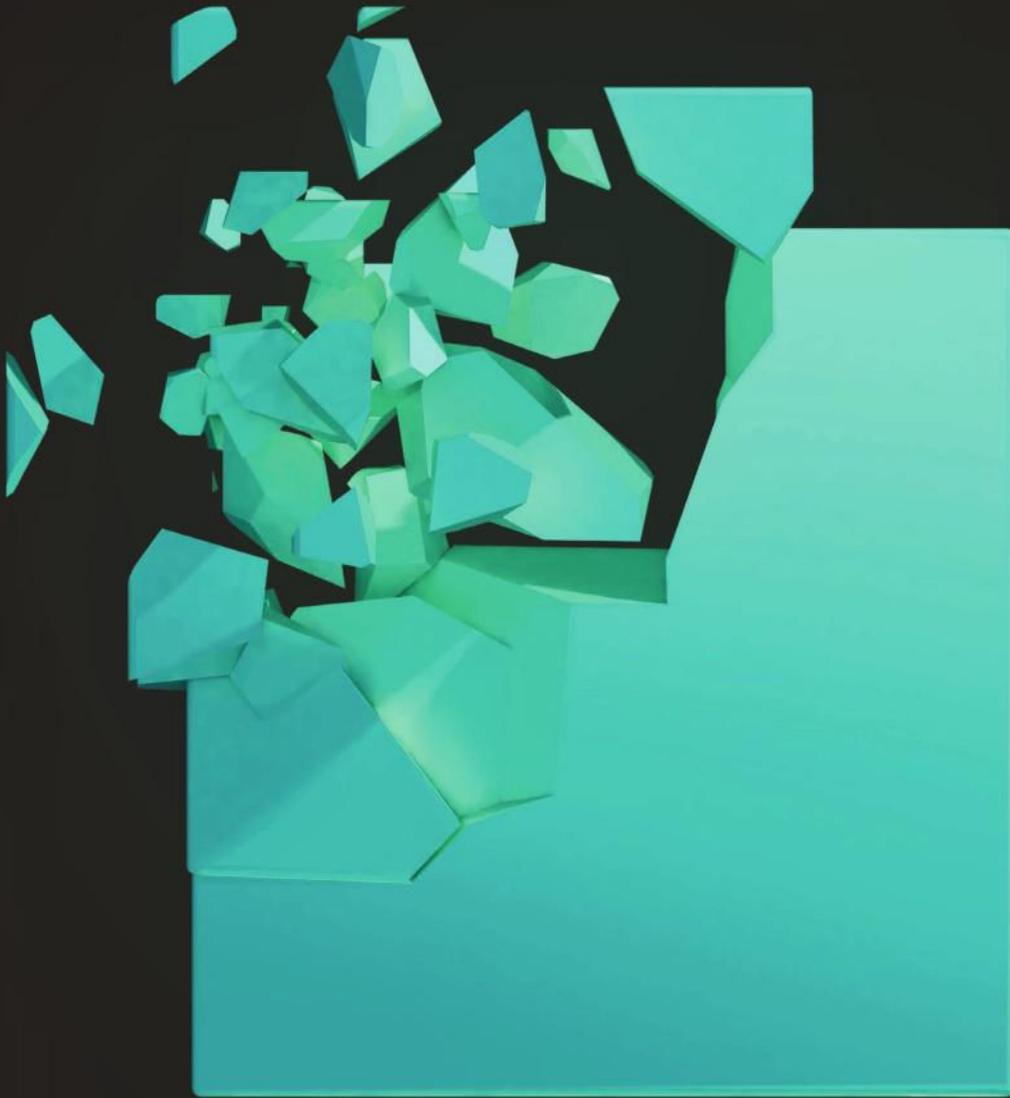
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## This issue:

## Traditional Skills & Photoshop
# CREATE A MIXED-MEDIA PORTRAIT

**Wylie Beckert** combines monochrome ink and pencil art with digital colours to create a haunting woodland scene

### Artist PROFILE

**Wylie Beckert**
LOCATION: US

Wylie's best known for her illustration work on Wicked Kingdom, a fantasy-themed poker deck. She's now carrying the dark fantasy aesthetic even further with her newest playing card series, Reign of Sin and Rule of Virtue.
www.wyliebeckert.com

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

I'm a big fan of traditional media. There's no substitute for creating a tangible object that can be experienced in person, not just via the divide of a computer screen.

Still, it's hard to beat the convenience, versatility and speed of working digitally. No waiting for paint to dry, worrying about compatibility issues between media, or labouring to mix just the right hue. Then there's the freedom of being able to trial several colour schemes before committing to one (and the godsend that is Ctrl+Z) does away with the timidity that comes from knowing that an ill-chosen brush stroke will ruin all my hard work.

Over the years I've come to rely on a hybrid process that combines all the things I love about traditional tools – the joy of working with them and the characteristic randomness and texture they bring to a piece – with the eye-popping impact and quick finish of digital media. It's a great combination of techniques for artists who are at home with traditional tools, but looking to branch out into digital media or gain a little bit of extra control over the look of their finished pieces.

In this workshop, I'll be walking you through the creation of my painting The Bear Wife, showing how I build up an image, starting with a detailed pencil sketch and working my way up to a monochromatic

traditional-media underpainting on toned paper, before switching over to Photoshop for a bold digital finale. I'll also be sharing a few pointers on building an effective image, with some thoughts on planning, value structure, and photo referencing.

These techniques are infinitely adaptable. Choosing a different paper, a different pencil, or switching to digital media at a different point in the process can yield different (and often exciting!) results. I'd encourage you to use this workshop as a jumping-off point, integrating the tools with which you're the most comfortable to tailor a process that's uniquely your own. My methods are always changing and adapting, and yours should, too!
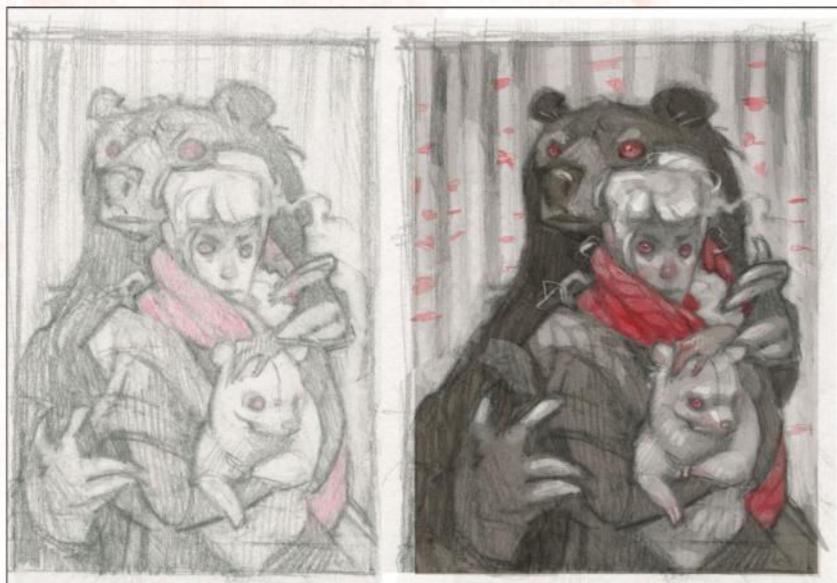


**1 Thumbnail sketch**
A successful image starts with an informative thumbnail sketch. To avoid bland images, think before you draw. Who are your characters, and what is their story? Let the answers inform your choices! I then polish the chosen sketch in Photoshop, establishing the values and colours I'll be aiming for in my final image.



**2 Take reference photos**
Drawing from real life (or photos) helps ground an imaginary scene in reality. I'd avoid relying on found images or stock photos. Composing your own reference photographs will ensure that the resulting images fit your vision. Sometimes you have to get creative to gather the correct reference; I don't have a bear cub handy, so my dog Tiki will have to do! ➔

### 3 Produce a tight sketch

I trace an enlarged version of my thumbnail on to a sheet of Bristol paper, then start to flesh out the drawing, incorporating visual information gathered from my reference photos. I like to use grey Col-Erase instead of graphite: it's a little softer and more forgiving, making it ideal for the sketch stage.



### 4 Transfer the print

I like to draw and paint on different kinds of paper. (And I hate painting directly over an original drawing – the fear of ruining it always hinders my creativity.) So rather than working directly over my pencil drawing, I print a low-opacity copy of my sketch onto tinted pastel paper, and wet-stretch it. This is an essential step when using water media on paper!



### 5 Two-tone underdrawing

The underdrawing is a slightly more polished version of my original sketch. I refer back to my thumbnail value study, noting which areas are light and which are dark. For dark areas (the bear and coat) I use a black Col-Erase pencil; for light areas (the hair, skin, trees and bear cub), grey Col-Erase gives a subtler effect.



### 6 Apply ink flats

This is another step that relies on the clear value structure I established early on. I apply a diluted wash of a brown and black acrylic ink mixture to only the dark areas of the piece. This develops a strong base value for the darks that will help keep my darks and lights separate as I begin to render the piece.

## WORKSHOP MATERIALS

**PAPER**
Canson Mi-Teintes pastel paper (Pearl Gray)
Strathmore 300 Bristol

**BRUSHES**
1/2-inch wash brush
Small and medium
Round brushes
(Brands: Trekell, Simply Simmons and Princeton Art Brush Co)

**INKS**
FW Acrylic Ink (Sepia)
Liquitex Acrylic Ink (Black)

**PENCILS**
Col-Erase (grey, black)
Prismacolor Premier (90 per cent Cool Gray, Black)
General's White Charcoal

**DIGITAL MEDIA**
Photoshop

**7** ### Rendering the ink
Using a small Round brush, I start rendering within the newly established base tone. I'm ignoring the light areas completely at this stage, and instead focusing on building up the darker values with carefully applied ink washes. The base value ensures that the value of dark area highlights will never get too close to light areas of the piece.



**8** ### Bringing in details with the Col-Erase pencil
Once I have a nice range of values within my dark areas, I switch to black Col-Erase. Then I add fine details and textures, and re-emphasise the line art from my underdrawing. Light shading can even be used to push the values even darker at this stage.
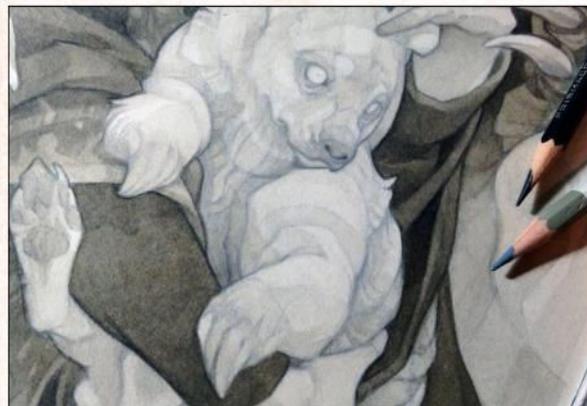
**9** ### Rendering the light areas
With the dark areas completely rendered, I finally switch over to the light areas. Happily, very little additional work is required here. I block in the large areas of shadow on the face and bear cub with an extremely diluted wash of ink, then switch back to the grey Col-Erase to perfect the line drawing and add subtle shading. ➤➤

### 10 White charcoal and coloured pencil

To add an extra layer of depth, I pick out the brightest highlights in white charcoal pencil. I stick to the light areas of the piece for a more naturalistic look. For the rest of the piece, retracing key outlines in bolder Prismacolor pencil (dark grey for the mid-tones, black for the dark areas) creates emphasis without disrupting the value structure. Avoid overdoing your highlights, though. Remember that only shiny surfaces will have hard-edged highlights, and that highlights will almost never appear in shadowy areas.
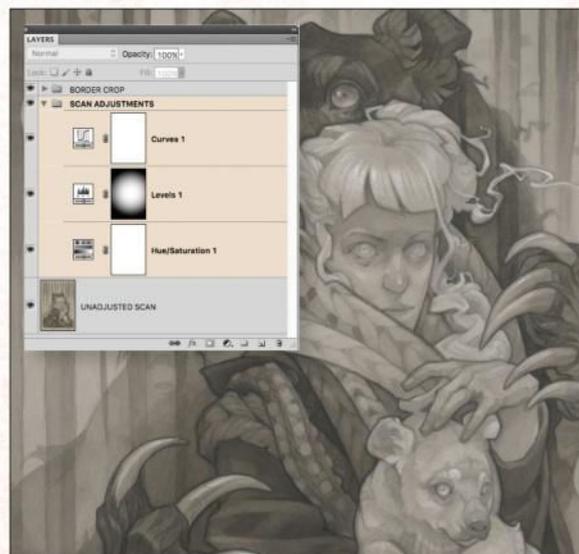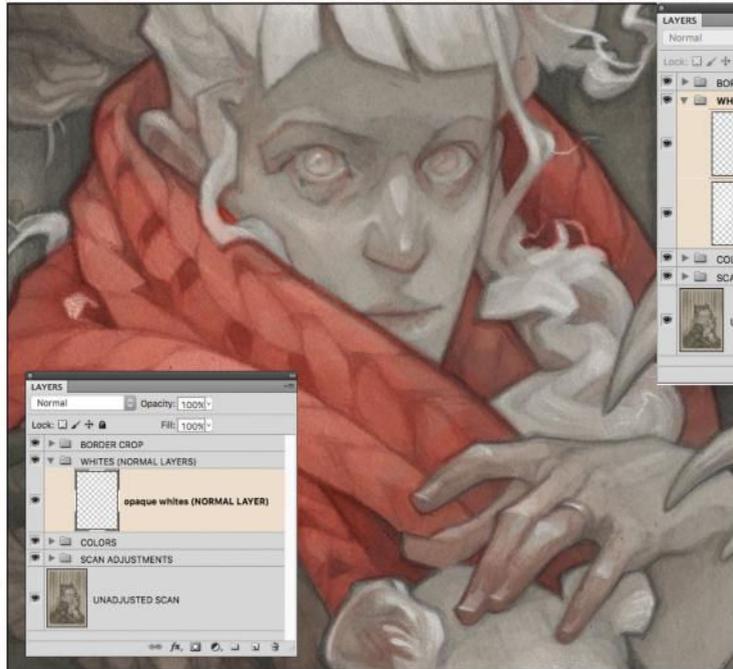


### 11 Scanning and adjustments

I now have a pretty sophisticated starting point for my digital painting. Almost all of the rendering is finished, but I'll be able to add colour and polish in Photoshop. I scan my painting, then match the on-screen image to the real-life painting using Curves and Levels adjustments to increase the contrast, and a Hue/Saturation layer to correct the colour.
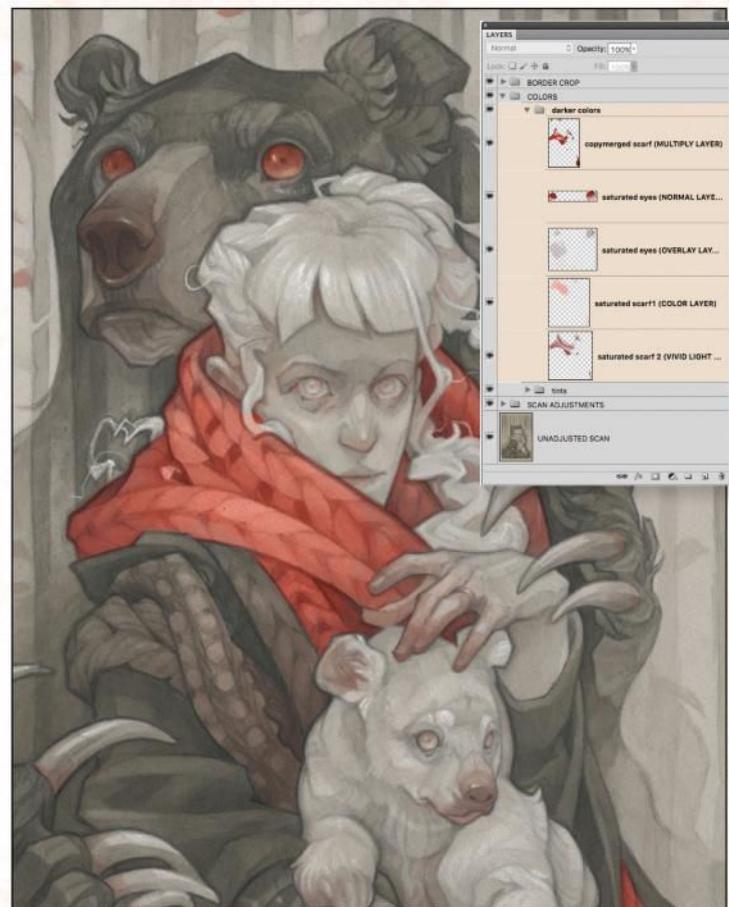


### 12 Introducing digital tints to the traditional artwork

I start slow with my colour; first, I outline the big areas of the scarf using the Pen tool, then convert the outline to a selection. Next, I fill the area with a bright red colour (Alt+Del), switch the layer mode to Overlay, and then reduce the Opacity for a subtler effect.

### 13 Add brighter whites where necessary

The intensity of white charcoal never quite comes through in a scan, so to counteract the dulling effect I retrace my white charcoal highlights from the traditional phase of the painting to bring some drama back to the hair and skin. I'm using a textured, angled brush set to white on a new layer, painting around 40 per cent Opacity with a very light hand.

**PRO SECRETS**

**Adjustment layers usage**

Using adjustment layers (Layer>New Adjustment Layer) enables me to tweak the image without permanently changing the original scan. It's also helpful for adjusting the overall values or colours of a piece, rather than having to focus on a single layer at a time.



### 14 Darker darks

Since a scanner blasts such bright light at an image, there's a similar loss of intensity in the darker areas. On a new layer set to Multiply, I use the same brush to deepen the values in the darkest areas of the piece: the bear's face and paws, and the folds of the jacket. I use desaturated reds and blues rather than pure black.
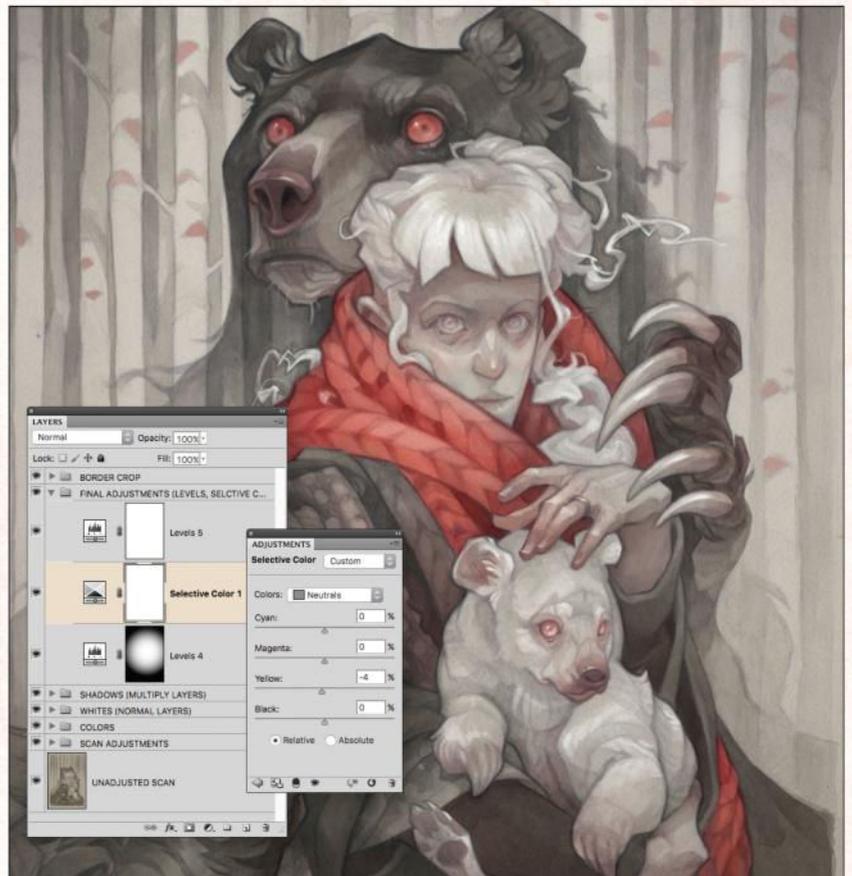


### 15 Final adjustments

I finish the image with one final set of adjustment layers. I use levels to brighten the image, and Selective Color to reduce the yellow tones in the piece – skewing the colour scheme a little cooler to give the finished piece a wintery feel.
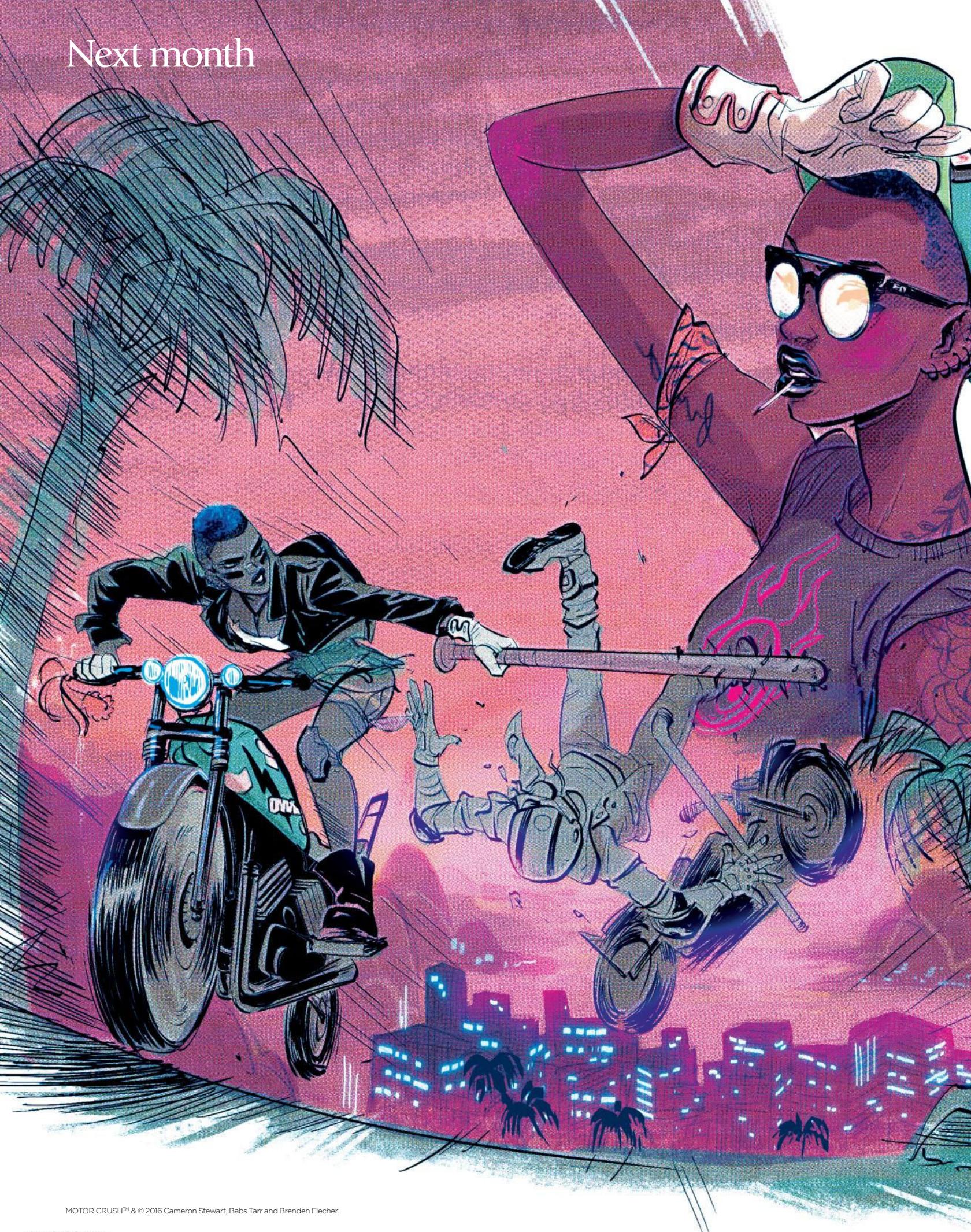
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# ImagineFX

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**Babs Tarr workshop!**
This Babs Tarr image is taken from Motor Crush, which is out now!

## Clip Studio Paint & Photoshop
# CAPTURE THE FEEL OF THE ROAD

**Dave Kendall** steps onto Cormac McCarthy's Road to illustrate a moment of trepidation and paranoia from this dark, dystopian novel

### Artist PROFILE
**Dave Kendall**
LOCATION: England

Dave's a fantasy and horror illustrator, and created the art for 2000 AD's Fall of Deadworld.
http://ifxm.ag/d-kendall

I was drawn to Cormac McCarthy's work via the incredible, horrific and surreal western, Blood Meridian. It's a book I'd love to illustrate but its savagery would probably be too much for the newsstand. I instead, plumped for his brighter, more cheerful novella, The Road.

Joking aside, this is another book full of formidable imagery and situations. I started rereading the first couple of pages in preparation and was drawn to the description of father and son, a motorcycle mirror attached to the shopping trolley, containing all their worldly goods. It was a means to keep an eye out for strangers and dangers on the road behind. I want to use this workshop to capture the feelings and emotions the characters are facing during day-to-day survival. A general image, with an emphasis on character, rather than a specific scene.

I'll first be taking you through the important sketchbook process where I spend time trying to capture the feel of the characters before starting the final image. For me, the sketching process is the most important and entertaining aspect of an illustration. Its rough edges and half-formed imagery are the inner visuals I usually get when reading a book.

The second part will detail the process of shaping those images into a more refined final image.

### 1 Exploring the sketchbook
For me, everything starts in the sketch book. I let the pencil wander, and don't worry about the finish or whether I'm drawing accurately. I sometimes find that the rougher little doodles will provide me with an angle that more refined sketches miss. I think it's down to their slightly more abstract and chaotic nature.

### 2 Warming up
I've taken to drawing straight in with ink and brush pens. I find that not being able to erase is a great focusing exercise. However, for this stage I just use the brush pens for the initial concept idea. I had the idea that we see the father and son looking back at an unseen threat, which is only visible in the shopping cart mirror. No real details – just a hint of shapes and composition. ➡➡

### 3 Focusing in on a father and his son

From the initial pen brush sketch I decide to focus right in on the two characters. Making it a portrait shot. I also make sure the mirror and its hint of threat is more obvious and part of the composition and the story I'm trying to tell. I block these concepts in with solid graphite lead pencils. I can be very direct and suggestive without breaking the lead.





## PRO SECRETS

**Bring layers together**

In Photoshop, if you want to create a flattened image from numerous layers while keeping these layers intact, separate then by using Cmd/Ctrl+Alt+Shift+E. This will flatten visible layers into a new single layer without removing them. It could be that you're ready to work on one layer, but wish to keep your layers intact in case you want to return to them.

### 4 The characters who we meet

I finally focus in on the faces of father and son. After all, they're going to be the most important part of the image. I did a sketch of a guy waiting by a bus stop with a cap and hood combination, and decided to give that to the boy. I felt the father would have had his hearing and sightline as free as possible in this dangerous world. It's what I do when I take my boys to school.

### 5 Jump into Clip Studio Paint

Using Clip Studio Paint I convert my sketches into a rough approximation and composition. I redraw much of these images but at this point they're place holders for the next stage. I draw out the final image with a simple textured pencil. I find the program very intuitive to use.

### 6 Taking a sepia view

I go into Photoshop. I like my pencils to have a warm sepia feel, so I create an Overlay layer and fill it with a colour close to Burnt sienna. I think this works well with fleshtones, however dirty and grimy they're going to be. I also keep the looseness and roughness of the initial pencils. I don't really want them to be too clean where this image is concerned.
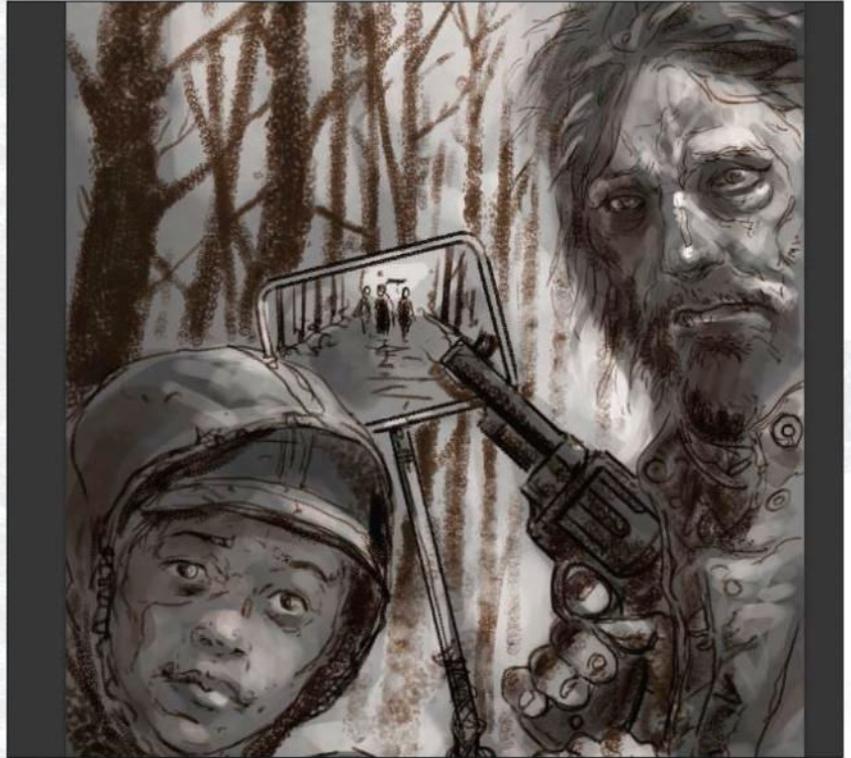
### 7 Establishing values

I apply a gradient of black to white on a Multiply layer underneath the locked pencil layer. I do this a couple of times in order to create a rough focal point of light and dark. I then paint, using a basic brush, the mid-tones highlights and shadows. The gradient will have done much of the work, but I'm refining it at this stage.
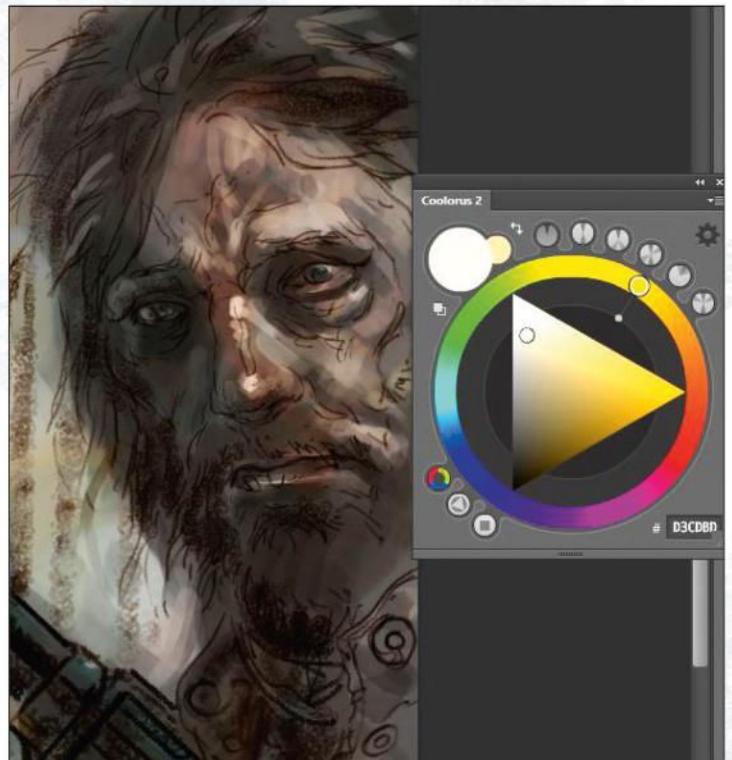
### 8 Adding some colour and experimenting with layer modes

Working underneath the pencil layer, I create a new layer and set it to Color Blend. Then I apply colour using a wide Soft brush. I keep in mind the washed-out feel described in the book, and keep the colour subtle and understated. I experiment with different layers. I find Color Burn can be very effective on low Transparency. It's a case of gently tweaking it until I have the desired mood. ➤➤

### 9 It's in the trees

After flattening the pencils, value and colour layers I start working on the background. The trees in the novel are devoid of leaves, and are blackened and drained of life. I don't need to be too detailed and they would work better with hints of their condition. Overall, I want to create the atmosphere. It's what McCarthy does so well. I use simple Rounds and shaped brushes to depict them.



### 10 Getting into Father's mindset

I start building up the father with blocky brush marks. I continue to refine and model the drawing as I paint, trying to read what the father would be feeling. Because I mainly draw comics, I'm continually thinking about my characters as I work. It's as much about emotional content as technique.
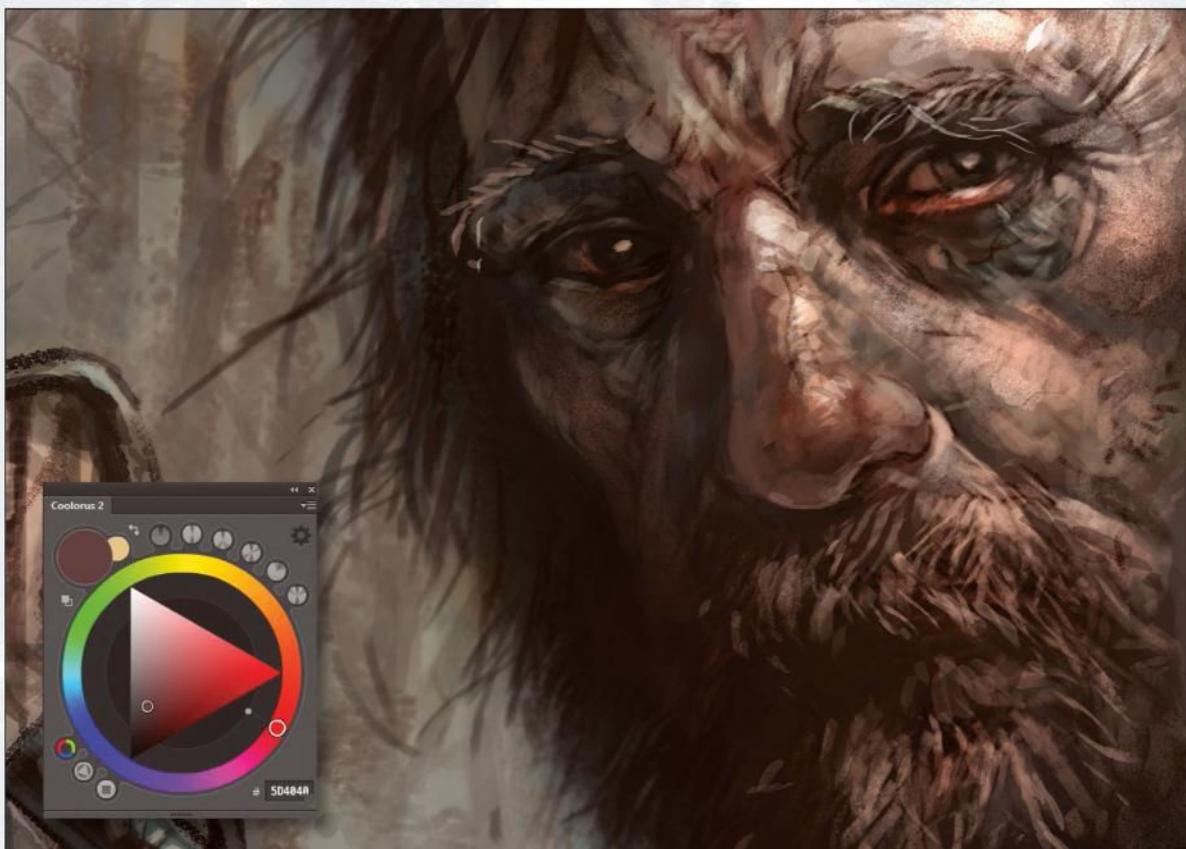
### 11 Dirt and grime, inspired by real-life references

I'm a huge fan of documentary photographers. I have a collection of photographs of homeless people, and refer to some of these as I paint. In the details I try to capture the texture of skin that's been exposed to the elements. The father is also slowly dying so I want to capture that deterioration. I define winkles and blemishes with my fine Ellipse brush.
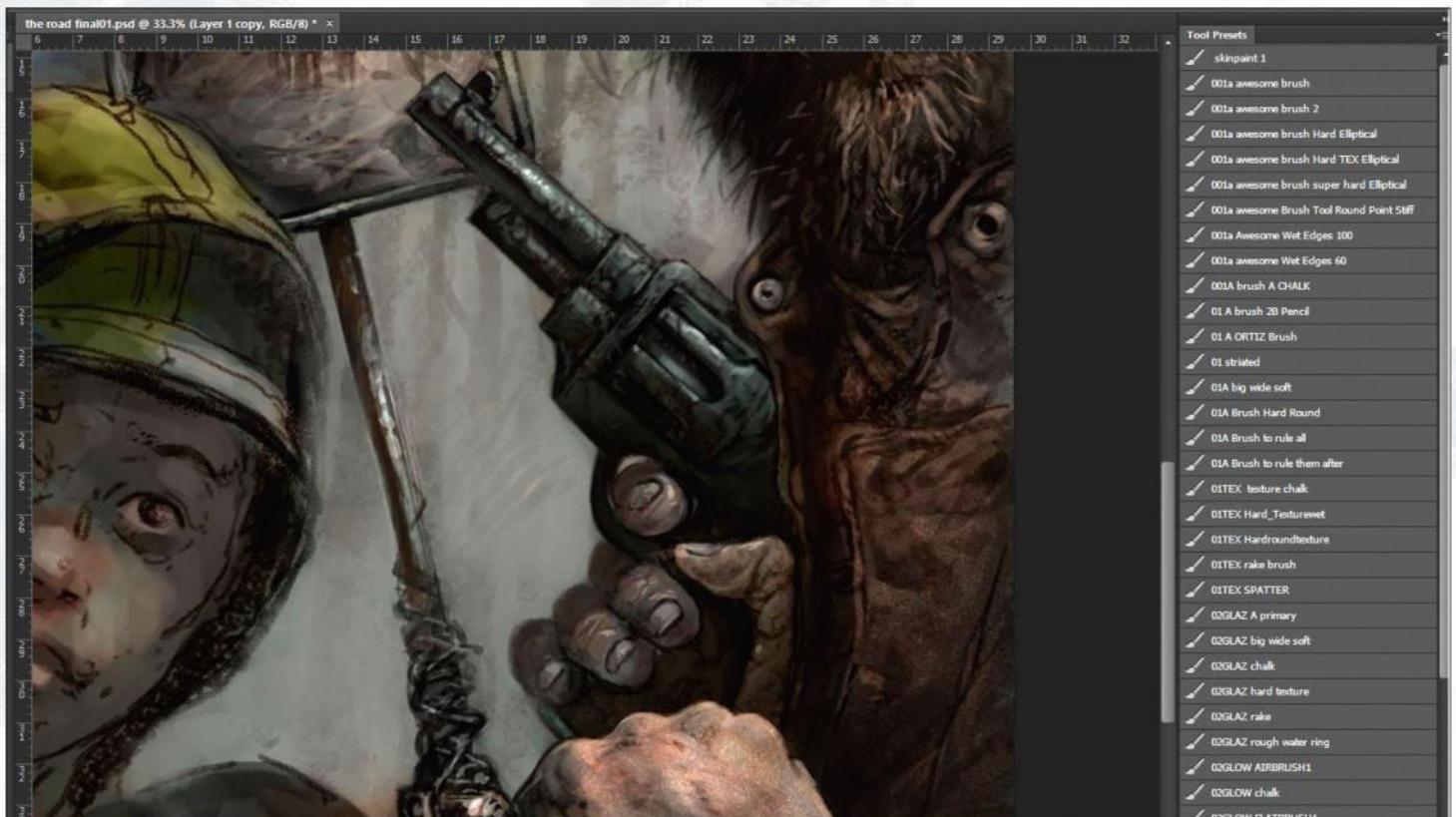
## 12 Gun in hand, but it's not the focal point

I make my way down the image, rendering the clothing, hands and gun. I work in the same way of building up the larger elements and then refining with details and highlights. I use a spatter texture to add noise and texture to the hands, leaving the highlights till last. The hand holding the gun is a little less defined because I want the hand holding the trolley to draw the viewer's eye along the handle to the boy.



## 13 Picturing the boy

I approach the boy in a similar way to his father. However, I don't need him to be as detailed. The more lines and texture you give, the older a face tends to look. I try to ensure that the theme of grime is carried forward, and make his eyes stand out from the shadow cast from his cap. He's a little more scared than his father.



## 14 Final push with last-minute experimentations

The image is nearing completion. I tend to play with colour balances at this stage. I never permanently change the final image and instead use adjustment layers or separate colour overlays. I experiment with blend modes and Opacity to refine the colour. There are many tools that can refine your overlays. Layer masks are useful because you can use the painting brushes to cleanly modify your artwork.

## Core skills: Part 1
# PHOTOSHOP PEN AND BRUSH TOOLS

**Mark White** begins a new series on Photoshop by getting to grips with the program's illustration tools and revealing what they're capable of

### Artist PROFILE

**Mark White**
LOCATION: England

Mark is the techniques editor at Photoshop Creative magazine. He uses Photoshop almost exclusively, and has been using the software for over a decade.
www.be.net/mrkjhnwht

For the majority of artists, Photoshop is their creative weapon of choice. Naturally, photo-editing tools can play a part in digital art, but many actually choose Photoshop for the ease of operation of its brushes, the idiosyncrasies of the Pen tool, and the somewhat seamless harmony between the two – when you've mastered both painting options, of course.

The Pen and Brush are some of the most user-friendly aspects of the program; drawing's meant to be fun after all. The brushes are responsive and simpler than ever to control thanks to CC 2017's smoothing addition to the software. They're located in folders too, and you can load your own for even more customisation. The Pen tool, on the other hand, is a simple selection feature that enables you to fill, stroke or make selections from whatever you draw. You can even apply brushes along the edges of selections.

These are two tools that are powerful, easy to apply and great for beginners and experts a-like. Photoshop is more than capable of creating wonderful illustrations.

## BRUSH TIPS

Use the crosshairs icon to change the direction in which the brush drags across the image; this is particularly good for custom brushes.

Check through your recent brushes if you're working on a project that requires a small set of brushes for a range of requirements.

Each of your brushes are sorted into folders for ease of use. You can change these though, to suit your workflow,

**1 Basic outlining with brushes**
The Brush tool is great for laying down outlines, no matter what the nature of project. Begin by creating a new layer in the Layer palette, press B to select a brush and then begin drawing whatever you wish to create. Create a guide layer if necessary on a new layer, and set to a lower Opacity level, so that you can see over it.

The Blend mode dictates how the brush stroke reacts to the pixels below it. Use Overlay mode to mix in the light and dark strokes, or Multiply to make the strokes get darker, for example.

The Airbrush Style Effects icon is great for creating more realistic brush strokes, with better edges and flicks on the end of them.

The Smoothing feature can help you to create less-jagged lines, giving you the ability to slowly drag your brush around the page instead of pulling it in short, sharp motions.
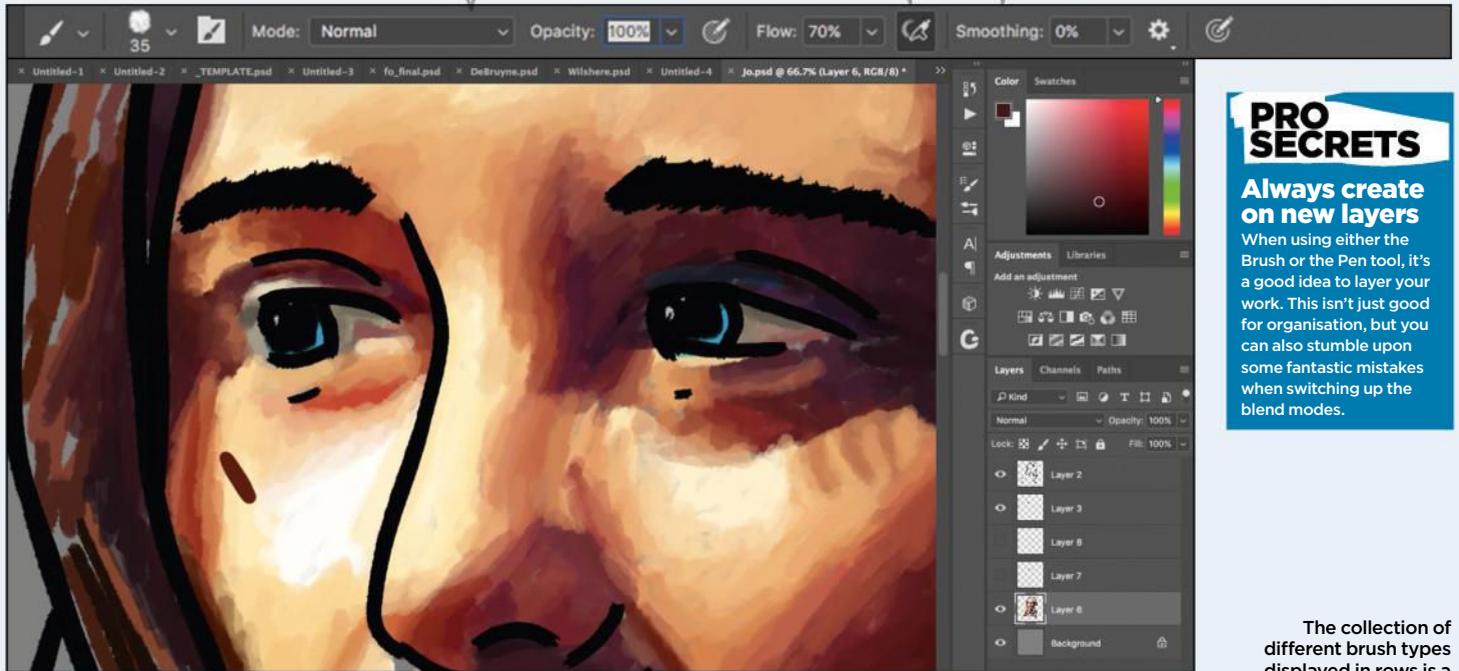


**PRO SECRETS**

### Always create on new layers

When using either the Brush or the Pen tool, it's a good idea to layer your work. This isn't just good for organisation, but you can also stumble upon some fantastic mistakes when switching up the blend modes.

## 2 Blending brushstrokes

The Mixer Brush, which is activated when you Ctrl/right-click the Brush tool icon, can help to blend the shades that you apply to your piece. Altering the Opacity and Flow settings of your brush is also an option, because this can help to build up a more detailed picture of clear, confident brushstrokes.

The collection of different brush types displayed in rows is a throwback to older versions of Photoshop, but can help to show you whether your brushes are big enough for the project, and what shape they'll appear in
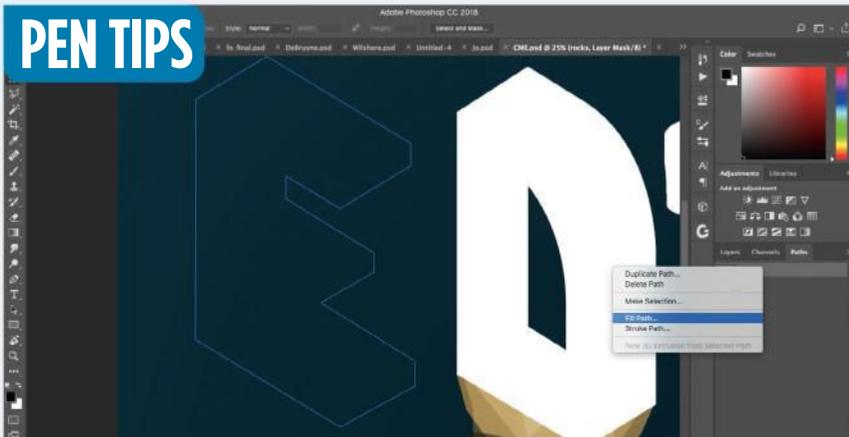


The Brush settings tab can help to alter everything about your chosen brush, from the smoothness of its edges to its amount of Scattering.

The Brush preview at the bottom is the best way to get a feel for how the stroke will look like when you apply it to your image, and it changes as you tweak the settings.

## 3 Using brushes to mask

Some of the most limitless possibilities of Photoshop come with masking, and the brush can certainly combine for stunning effects. Click the Mask icon, and use brushes to show or hide areas of your layer. This can become particularly fun to experiment with when it comes to adjustments. ➜➜
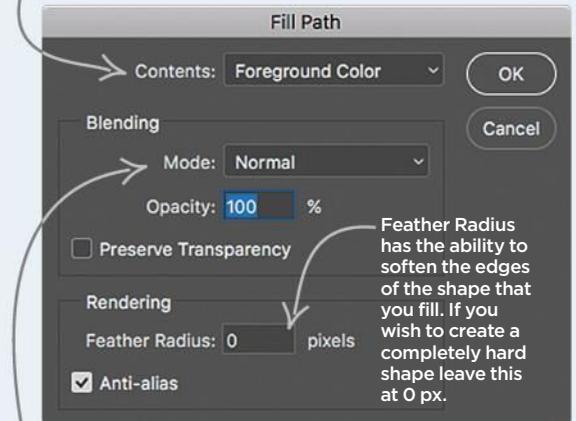
## PEN TIPS



Change the Contents to either Foreground or Background depending on the colour swatch you wish to use. Use Content Aware if you wish to fill with pixels from the rest of the image.



Feather Radius has the ability to soften the edges of the shape that you fill. If you wish to create a completely hard shape leave this at 0 px.

### 1 Fill a path

Make a selection with the Pen tool (P) by clicking the points to create lines between them. Drag a point if you wish to create a curved line. Use Alt/Opt-drag your lines to change them. Ctrl/right-click your path in the Paths tab on the right, and then choose Fill Path to create a shape from it.

The Blend mode and Opacity of the fill will determine how the pixels react with other pixels below. Fifty per cent Opacity, Screen, for example, will give a subtle lightening to your shape.
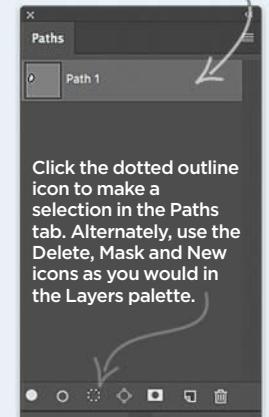
### 2 Make a selection

As well as being a proficient drawing instrument, the Pen is a useful selection tool too, and you can select shapes to brush into. Cmd/Ctrl+click a path to select it once you've made a shape, or Ctrl/right-click a path and pick Make Selection.
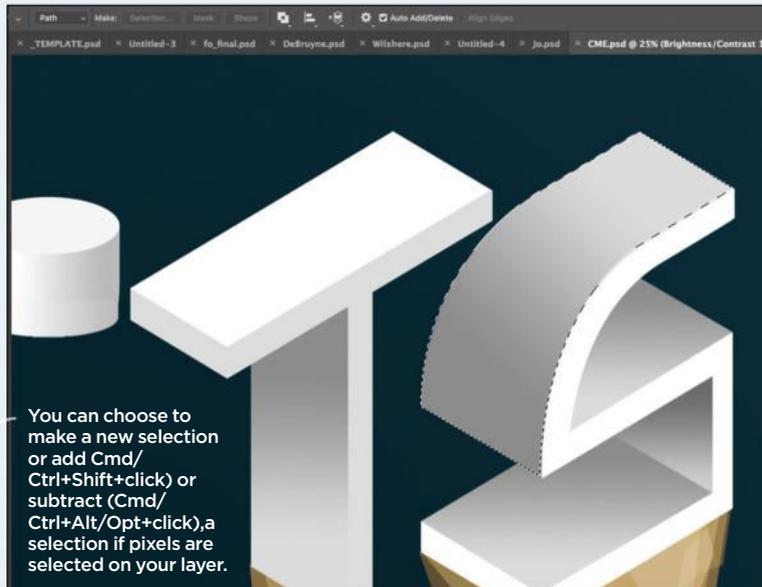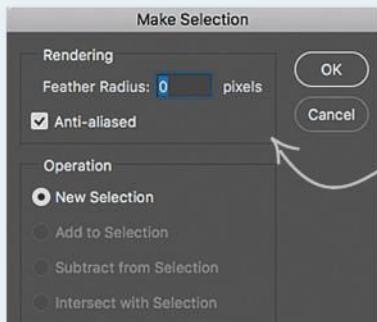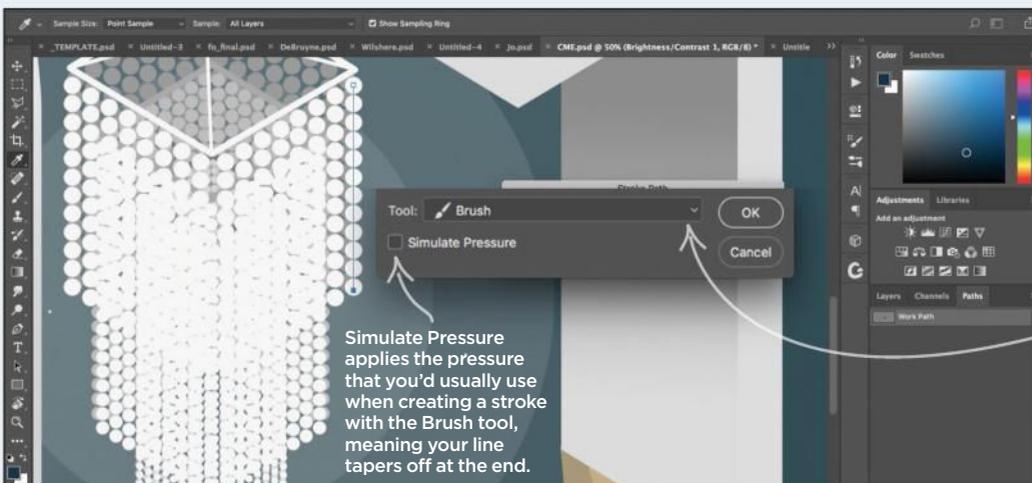


You can choose to make a new selection or add Cmd/Ctrl+Shift+click) or subtract (Cmd/Ctrl+Alt/Opt+click),a selection if pixels are selected on your layer.

You can also double-click a path and give it a name to save it as a future selection that you can use again. These will just appear as a list down the Paths tab when you create them.

Click the dotted outline icon to make a selection in the Paths tab. Alternately, use the Delete, Mask and New icons as you would in the Layers palette.

### 3 Stroke a path

Ctrl/right-click a path and choose Stroke to apply a line across the selection in whatever brush you have selected. For this particular line of the chandelier, we used a scatter brush to evenly space the dots.



Simulate Pressure applies the pressure that you'd usually use when creating a stroke with the Brush tool, meaning your line tapers off at the end.

You can change the tool from Brush to something, if you wish to stroke the line with a Pencil for example, instead of whatever brush file you've chosen.

The toolbar at the top of the interface enables you to quickly decide on the Stroke and Fill colour of whatever you create with the Pen tool, instead of having to choose it manually.

GET YOUR
RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

## Photoshop
# NEXT-LEVEL LIGHTING ADVICE

VIDEO
WORKSHOP

Want to give your artwork that extra level of realism by improving your lighting? **Suzanne Helmigh** suggests using home-made photo references

*Artist*
**PROFILE**
**Suzanne
Helmigh**
**LOCATION:**
The Netherlands

A freelance artist who's worked on Horizon Zero dawn and Magic: the Gathering, Suzanne is about to kickstart her first illustrated novel, entitled Caldyra.
**www.caldyra.com**

Lighting is one of those things that can make or break an illustration. It can set the mood, tell a story and even guide the viewer towards certain areas in your work. To fully understand how light works, you have to study it in detail, and a great way of doing this is by creating your own lighting reference.

Because I tend to paint a lot of warriors, both for clients and personal work, I always end up having my fellow HEMA (historical European martial arts) friends pose for me. The references you see here come from those photo sessions.

You can do this yourself with pretty much any camera – in most lighting situations even your smartphone camera will do. Find the perfect lighting conditions for your reference folder and start snapping those photos with your friends. Once at home you can use the Eyedropper tool to sample a colour palette. While doing so, try to capture every angle possible. Parts of the body that are exposed to the sky can have wildly different shadow colours than those areas facing down. Even in the tiny curves and wrinkles of the face you'll find that light scatters, reflects and bounces around.

I'll be showing you my process and point you towards the right direction. Work with it or adapt it to your own process – the choice is entirely yours!
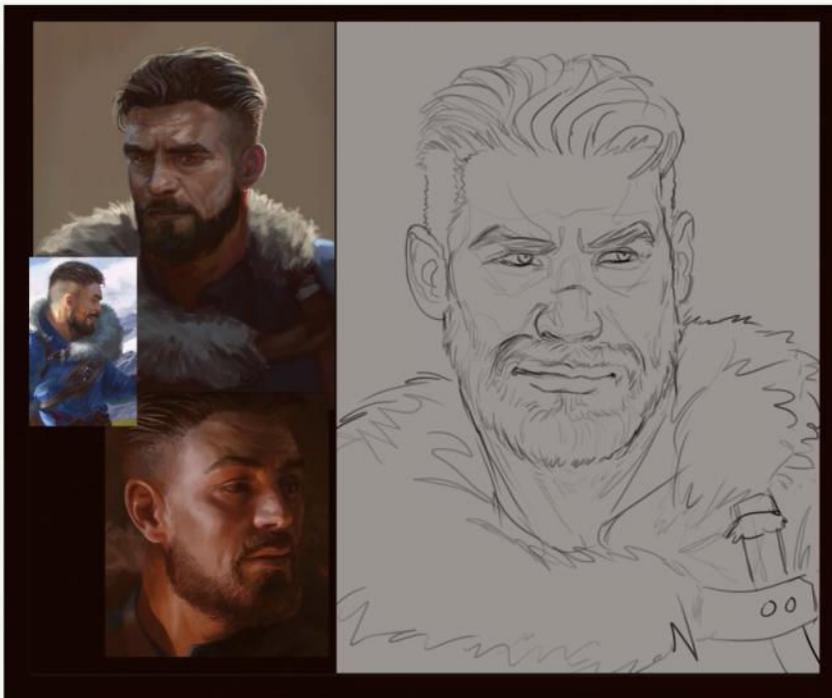
### 1 Prepare your lines

Create a line art sketch in a style that works best for you. I like outlining areas that indicate which parts will come forward or get pushed back. This helps me determine how to shade the character later on. None of this line art will be seen in the finished image, so there's no need to make it pretty or clean.
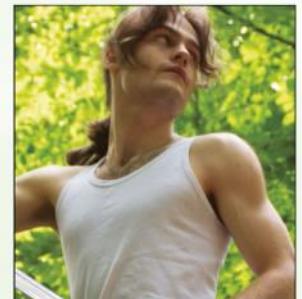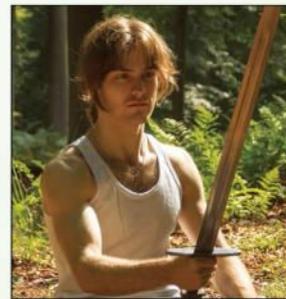
### 2 Create your own reference

Have one of your friends pose for you. I'm lucky to have a group of very photogenic friends who enjoy posing for me. I often go out and do photoshoots with them for my Gumroad reference packs. When taking these photos it's good to have a plan about what you'd like to paint. If your character is in a forest, go on a trip to the forest for the correct lighting conditions. ➤➤
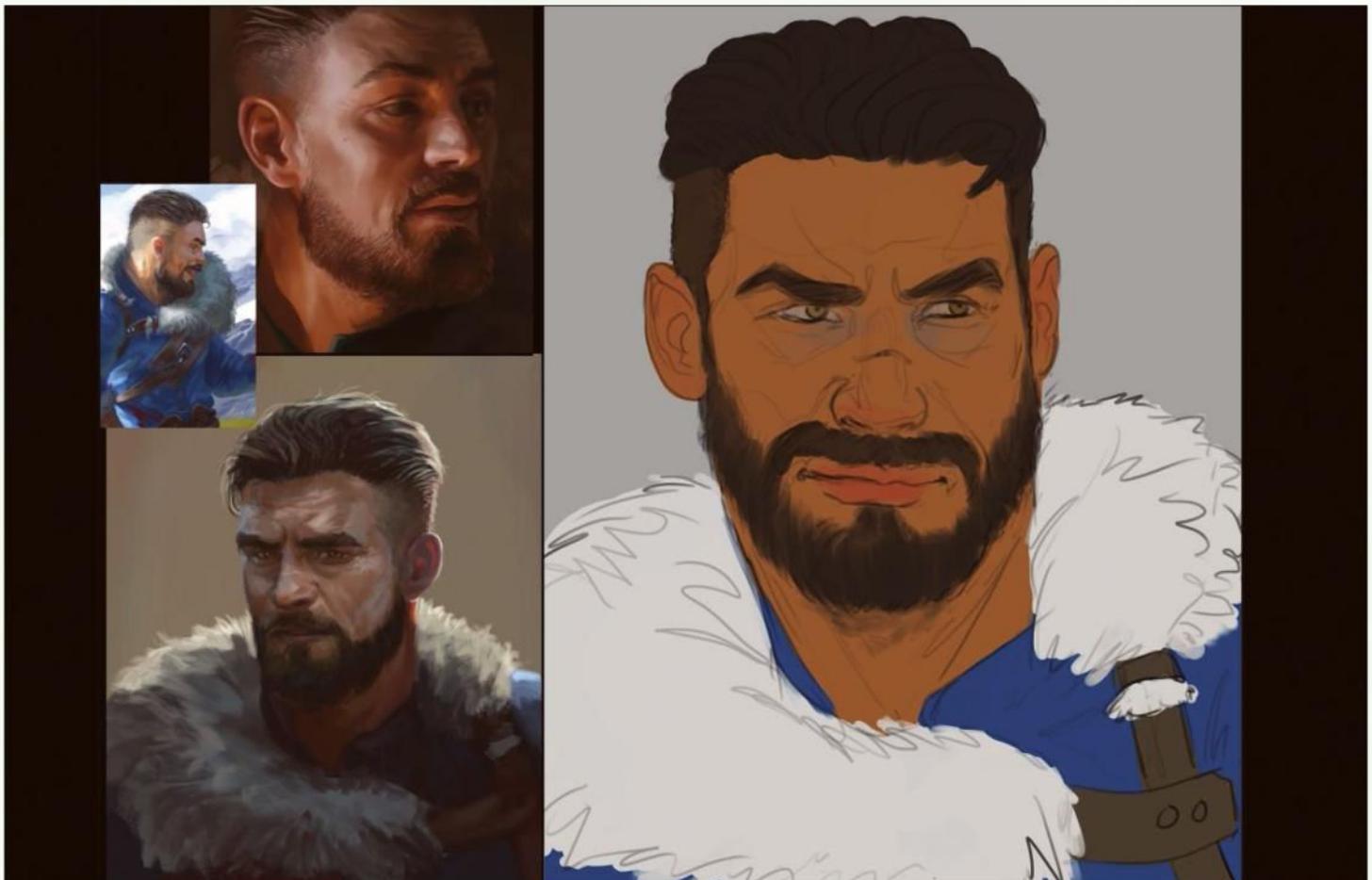
# Workshops
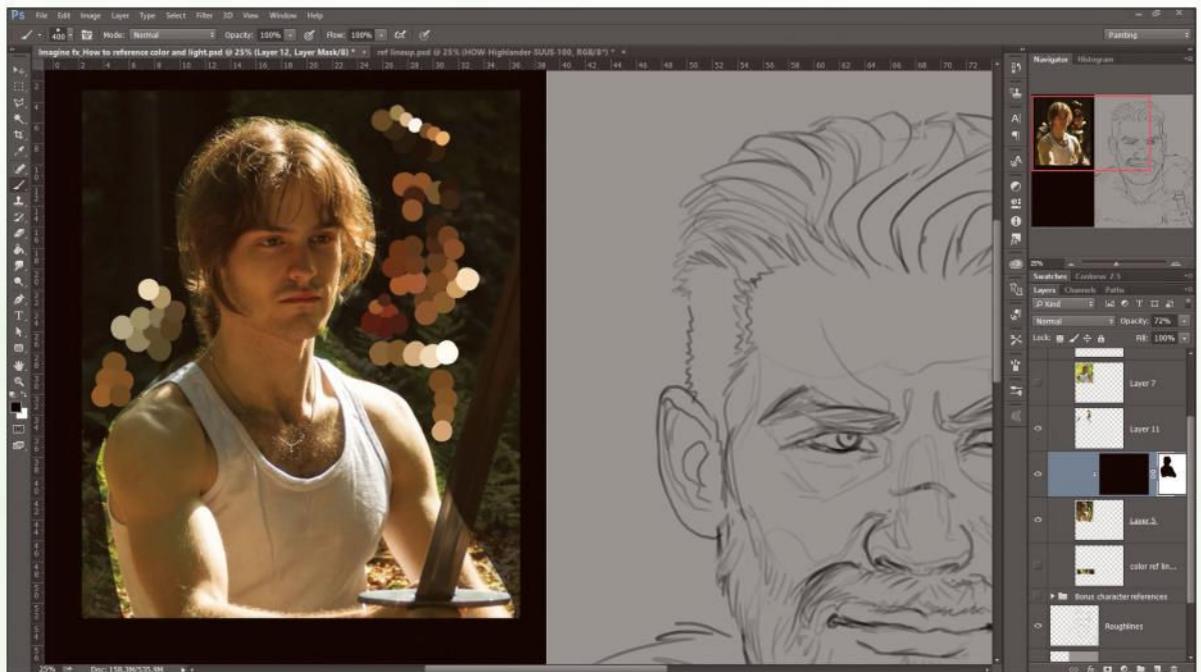
### 3 Understand your reference

I study my reference and create a colour palette based upon the colours and lighting. Consider the bounce light in the shadows. A shadow under the chin will have a different colour than one on the forehead or cheekbone.



### 4 Using flat colours as a guide to painting

As an intermediate stage, I usually create a flat colour version of my work before applying the lighting. This means that I simply give everything its neutral object colour. This might come in handy later on, when you might have to blend colours together.

### 5 Tackling the most prominent shapes

I begin by using a big brush to roughly paint the most important shadows and lights. Don't get stuck on the small details like tiny hairs, eyelids or wrinkles just yet. Keep it simple. In addition, make sure to paint while zoomed out. Have your whole illustration visible on screen at all times during this early stage.



### 6 Check the likeness

Keep an eye on your character reference (if you're using one), to ensure the likeness is on track. Sometimes while applying light and colour to a line sketch, the essence of your character can become lost. This is why I begin by working underneath the line art. For this stage you can start working on a new layer, above your line art.



### 7 Check your values

Go to Image>Adjustments>Black & White. Make sure this effects layer is above all the layers. This black and white or greyscale view enables you to compare the values in your painting with that of your reference photo. If there's a big difference in a particular area where it shouldn't be, you should be able to spot it.
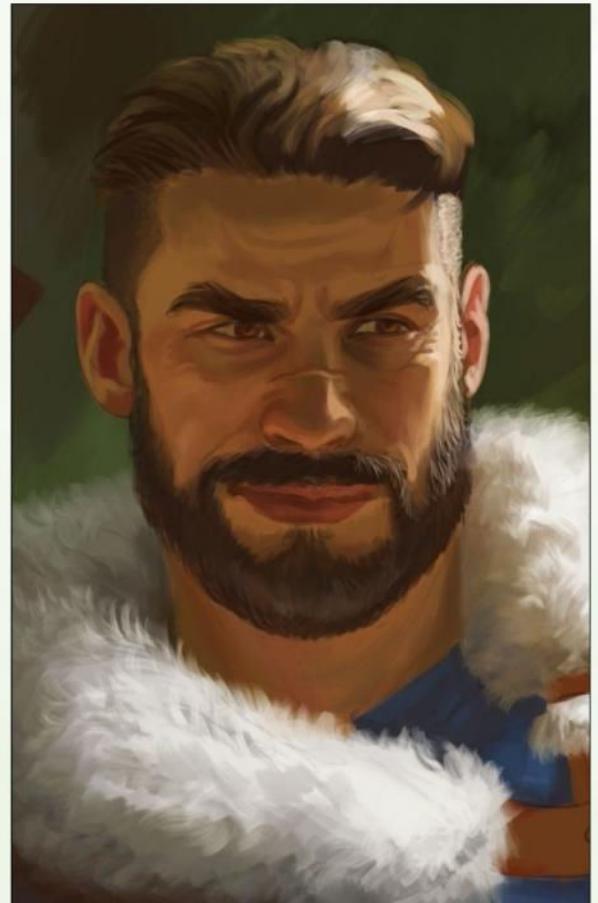


### 8 Bounce light on white

White, and other light colours, react differently to a light source compared with dark colours. In the highlights they usually maintain the original object's colour. ➤

### 9 Bear in mind the qualities of hair

Hair is always interesting to paint. Whether it be dark or light, healthy hair is shiny and also has a translucent quality to it. The darker the hair, the more pigment it possesses and this usually means it's less translucent, too. Yet when light hits someone's hair, it'll scatter through it. So whenever you paint hair, think about its translucency, shine and possible bounce light.

### 10 Realistic eyes

Unless make-up's involved, the eyes will lack defining dark lines. Even dark lashes will more likely be painted with some interrupted brushstrokes. Look at your photo reference and take note of the gradients that shape the curves and wrinkles of the eyelids. The eyeball itself has a glossy texture to it, so it won't be made up of just a singular colour. Light-coloured eyes can even appear quite dark under certain lighting conditions.
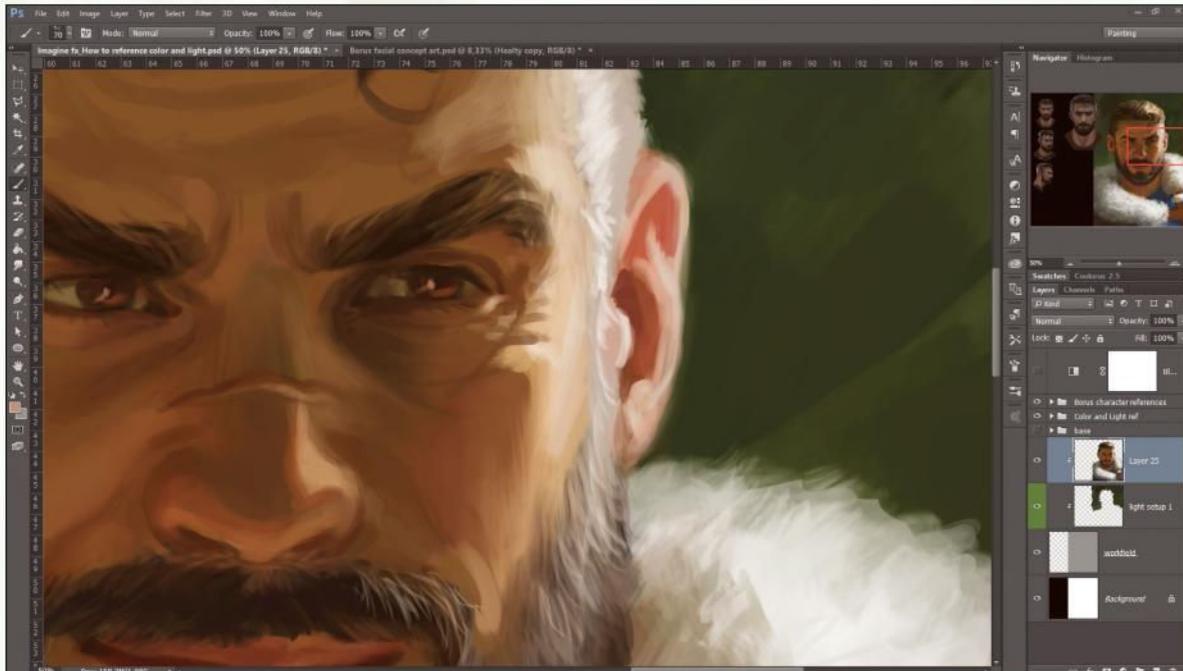
**PRO SECRETS**

**Be inspired by the movies**

If you don't have such great models for friends then another good option is to experiment with film stills. You can create the most phenomenal colour palettes by analysing the cinematography created by an entire crew of professionals. It's also makes for a great warming-up exercise – give yourself one hour to study the image before starting to paint.

### 11 Balancing the look of the lips

Depicting lips can be tricky, especially when painting ones with a natural skin tone. They can easily end up looking like the person is wearing lipstick! That's why gradients play a vital role. With either the bottom, or top lip, or even both, blend the edges with the skin tone. Start from the corner of the mouth and paint towards the centre.

### 12 Applying a mix of approaches to edge-work

I always make a conscious effort to place sharp edges and soft edges correctly in my paintings. My usual strategy is that strong, brightly lit edges receive a soft bloom, whereas very dark edges are gently blended in with the background colour. Anything between dark or light can either be soft or hard, depending on the mood that I'm in.
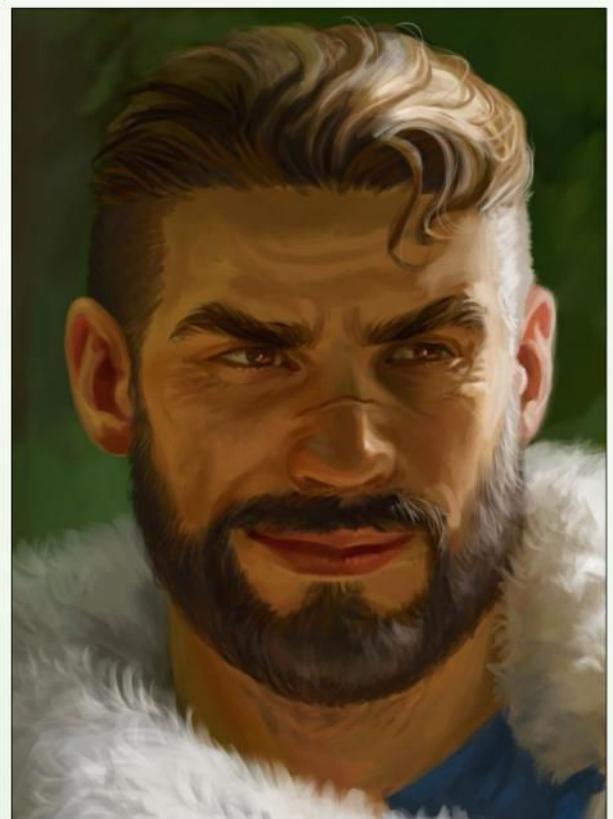






### 13 The finer details

This is where I commit to painting the textures of the skin, the eyeballs, the clothing and any other material that may be included in the image. I keep in mind that a smart painter keeps the highest detail ratio and the tiniest brushstrokes in the area of the most importance (the focal area) and leaves the more unimportant parts loose and free from causing a distraction.

### 14 Carrying out one final check

Before calling a painting finished, go through all these steps. Is the likeness correct? The contrast? The bounce light coming from the environment? The colour gradients? The material expression? The detail ratio? These days we're often too eager to share our newest piece with the world. Keep it to yourself for a week and trust me, you'll find some elements to improve before you're ready to show it off.

## Painter & Photoshop
# PAINT A CHILDREN'S BOOK CHARACTER

Learn how **Armand Baltazar** concepts and paints Ajax, a figure from his children's novel Timeless: Diego and the Rangers of the Vastlantic

*Artist*
**PROFILE**

**Armand Baltazar**
**LOCATION:** US

Armand is a former visual development artist and art director for Disney, DreamWorks and Pixar. He's the author and illustrator of the adventure novels Timeless, published by HarperCollins.
**http://ifxm.ag/armandb**

Ajax was a runaway slave-turned-soldier, and fought for the North during the American Civil War. In my Timeless story, the character is mysteriously transported to a future where time is fractured, and he's retrofitted with a steam-powered mechanical arm to replace the one lost during the conflict.

Ajax's design began as a series of character sketches that evolved over 20-30 traditional pencil sketches and technical drawings that ranged from whimsical to realistic. The final design fell somewhere between the two styles and was realised with a digital concept painting that emulated the look of an oil painting.

The final Ajax illustration in the book was inspired by the Golden Age Illustrations of NC Wyeth and Dean Cornwell, but created through traditional drawing and digital painting to capture the classic look of adventure story illustration. ➤

## How I create...
# A STEAMPUNK CYBORG





### 1 Layout drawing
After finalising the Ajax design and working out the engine room, I sketch in the character and environment using a custom pencil texture brush in Photoshop. I'm trying to work out the composition for storytelling and clarity, while paying attention to Ajax's structural details and gesture. I also want to establish a simple lighting plan.

### 2 Colour key
I do much of the heavy lifting for the final painting using this colour key. Here, I block in the final value, lighting and colour design in a direct, painterly manner. Painting the key in this way enables me to design the colour transitions and make stronger colour choices without getting hung up on the small details.

### 3 The final illustration
I paint most of the image in Photoshop with a little Painter for soft edges. I use my colour key as the background layer and a warm-to-cool, colourised version of my line art as a top layer. I work from back to front, refining shapes, colour, textures and edges. I use paint to model the form, reinforce perspective and boost the story.

# A FEAT OF ENGINEERING

## Directional lighting

I design the placement, intensity, colour and direction of light for maximum dramatic and emotional effect. Here I'm using a directional light to strike the iron shoulder plate and partially spill across Ajax's face, creating the most dramatic focus and tension between man and machine.

## Atmospheric effects

I use atmospheric effects, such as haze, dust or in this case steam, to frame the main character, edit out visual details that might distract, and direct the viewer's eye to the main focus of the piece.

## Balancing the density of detail

When designing and painting complex mechanical objects it's helpful to balance the density of detail. Active areas work best when you balance that against areas with less detail and places to give the eye a place to rest. In this case, all the pipes and tubes create a complicated shape that become less complex as we move both up and down Ajax's mechanical arm.

## Texture reinforces perspective

Wherever possible I like to use textures, graphics and surface design to reinforce the perspective of ground planes, especially where characters make contact with them. This helps to ground things in the environment.

## Layered brushwork

I like to layer brush work in ways that describes form, moves the eye and creates a variety of interesting surfaces.

## Convey history

Whether designing a person, place or thing, you should design and paint your subject with authenticity and a sense of its history or story. Ajax's mechanical arm was made of separate bits of different machines that don't match in: material, age, weathering and colour. Designing and painting in such details adds character.

## Use the Line tool for patterns

This tool enables me to create details like the floor drain and the grill between the stairs. It's useful for creating grids and patterns that reinforce perspective. I'll create patterns like this in flat perspective, then use Free Transform to match into the correct perspective.

# NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
# ImagineFX
# Reviews

## The latest art resources are put to the test by the ImagineFX team…
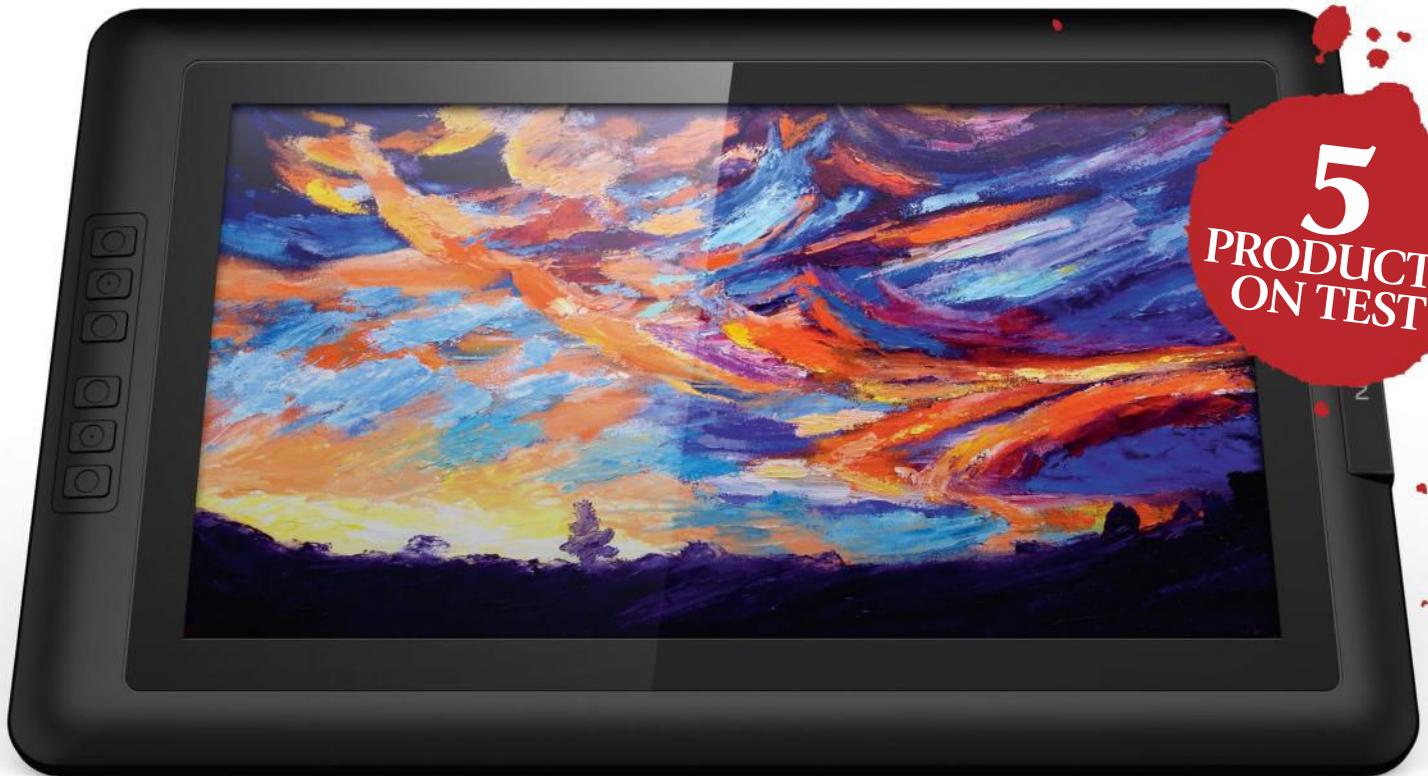
**5 PRODUCTS ON TEST**

### HARDWARE

**92 Artist 15.6 graphics tablet**
We discover if XP-Pen's mid-price tablet provides worthy competition to more expensive devices from the likes of Wacom.

### TRAINING

**95 Epic Fantasy Painting in Oils**
Mike Sass shares his in-depth knowledge of picture-making in a video that'll have you thinking big about your next project.

### BOOKS

**96 The Art of Star Wars: The Last Jedi**
Iconic designs get questioned and reinterpreted in this frank study of the concepts from the latest Star Wars film.

**97 The Art of Coco**
Discover how Pixar brought the Land of the Dead to life with this behind-the-scenes look at its vibrant new film, Coco.

**97 The Art of Mondo**
Highlights from Mondo's first nine years of creating movie posters are brought together in this striking volume.

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**RATINGS EXPLAINED**　★★★★★ Magnificent　★★★★ Great　★★★ Good　★★ Poor　★ Atrocious

Your long-cherished dream of owning a decent-sized tablet display is closer than ever with the Artist 15.6.

# Artist 15.6 graphics tablet

**SWEET SPOT** Discover a display that you can draw on in Photoshop and your other art programs, without having to trash your bank balance first

MAC & PC

**Price** £400  **Company** XP-Pen  **Web** www.xp-pen.com

**O**nly a few years ago, the idea that every digital artist could afford technology that enabled them to draw directly on to their screen was fanciful. Today, we not only have iPads and Android devices that provide this facility, but the options for artists on desktop and laptop computers has greatly increased.

XP-Pen's newest drawing tablet is a case in point. It's a generously sized

15.6-inch screen that costs just under £400. The days when you had to sell your car to afford a Cintiq are over.

Nor are there any apparent compromises that make the Artist 15.6's competitive price possible. Open the classy packaging and you're greeted with a slim but solid flat panel, with six shortcut keys down one side. Pleasingly, you can rotate the display orientation to position the keys to suit right- or left-handed use.

Setting up the Artist 15.6 is a little involved, but you only need to do it once. The cable connecting your computer and the tablet uses a single USB-C port to plug into the tablet. At the other end, though, is a multi-headed hydra of leads: one HDMI to feed the video (an adaptor for Mini DisplayPort is provided); one USB to relay the pen information; and a second red USB to provide power. If you own one of the small but growing

Power, pen movement and display information all go through the single USB-C port that's over on the right.

The slim-line design of the Artist 15.6 means there's no adjustable stand to prop up the display, so you'll have buy a stand or improvise with a paperback.

The stylus doesn't need a battery to operate. The rocker switch enables you to switch between pen and eraser easily.

number of laptops that use USB-C, you'll need an adaptor to plug in the Artist 15.6. Note: if you use a USB-C MacBook Pro, then the Digital AV Adaptor you need is a hefty £69.

You also need to install drivers, either from the provided CD or via the XP-Pen website. This includes a tool for calibrating the stylus and configuring features. It's worth noting that the Windows tool offers more options than the Mac OS equivalent.

The screen itself has a matte surface. The picture isn't as bright or colourful as you'd get from a glossy screen, but its surface is better for drawing on: it has more 'bite'. And drawing and painting on this tablet is a pleasure. The screen size frees you up to make expressive brush strokes, and the pen pressure sensitivity is responsive enough to keep your lines flowing.

## 66 The screen size frees you up to make expressive brush strokes 99

The Artist 15.6 isn't perfect. There's no stand included for people who prefer to draw at a slight angle; and there's a little too much visual offset between the point of the stylus and where the cursor appears on-screen. You get used to it when painting, but it makes precise work trickier.

Yet these are really quibbles within the context of having an expansive drawing surface on a decent-quality screen, for relatively little outlay. The Artist 15.6 can transform your digital art experience for the better.

## DETAILS

### Features
■ 44.3x28x1.3cm overall unit size
■ 34.4x19.3cm active area (15.6-inch screen)
■ 1,920x1,080 pixels screen resolution
■ 178-degree viewing angle
■ 8,192 levels of pen pressure
■ No battery required for stylus
■ Six shortcut keys
■ Pen stand and eight replacement nibs
■ Drawing glove and cleaning cloth

### System Requirements
**PC:** USB and HDMI ports or adaptors; Windows 7, 8 and 10
**Mac:** USB and HDMI ports or adaptors; OS X 10.8 or later

### Rating
★★★★☆

# ImagineFX Back issues

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# PRINT AND DIGITAL BACK ISSUES

## Issue 158
### March 2018
Boost your anatomy drawing skills with Stan Prokopenko's tips. We talk to fantasy figure artist Julie Bell and soil scientist turned sculptor Romain Van den Bogaert. Plus, what it takes to launch a successful Kickstarter!

## Issue 157
### February 2018
Pro artists from the video games industry pass on their advice on character design, weapon concepting and environment art. We also talk to Assassin's Creed visionary Raphel Lacoste, and Bungie's AD Jesse van Dijk.

## Issue 156
### January 2018
Maria Poliakova reveals how she infuses her art with vibrant colours, Alex Stone presents his dragon design tips, we discuss the best ways to give critiques, talk to Magic: The Gathering artist Jason Rainville, and more!

## Issue 155
### Christmas 2017
Take your skills with a pen or pencil to the next level with the help of pro artists, including cover artist Andrew Mar, creature designer Bobby Rebholz and traditional artist Chris Casciano. Plus: how to receive art critiques.

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myfavourite magazines.co.uk

If you've always wanted to take on a big scene like this, but didn't know where to start, Mike Sass's video is what you need.



The underpainting layer is where Mike makes all his major colour and shading choices, before rendering detail later.



Detailed planning for this Lord Of The Rings scene includes trying out different poses for the main characters.

# Epic Fantasy Painting in Oils

**OIL SHOW YOU** Artist and illustrator Mike Sass shares his in-depth knowledge of picture-making in a video that'll have you thinking big about your next project

**Publisher** Mike Sass **Price** £23 **Format** DVD/Download **Web** www.sassart.com

**O**riginally funded by a Kickstarter campaign, Mike Sass's DVD is truly epic. There's over five-and-a-half hours of material to chomp through, and the flagship project is a grand tableau depicting a scene from The Lord Of The Rings.

Before Mike embarks on this challenging subject, though, he warms up and introduces some key concepts with a straightforward study of an ogre and a furry steed. His process sees him trying out a variety of poses, taking care with the building of forms even at this early stage, before working up his preferred option. As is typical with oil painting, an underpainting layer precedes a more finished top layer. Mike offers detailed analysis as he paints, showing how he varies colour saturation to suggest depth and form, and how treating the edges between forms can yield different effects.

By the time the artwork is complete, you'll have a strong impression of how

Mike marries deep knowledge with careful craft – an approach whose value becomes crucial as he takes on the second project, a long-standing ambition to portray Eowyn facing the Witch King at Minas Tirith.

He starts with a pre-existing drawing he made, but spends a lot of time explaining the principles that led to this particular composition. You'll see how he takes control of leading lines and negative space to direct the viewer around the scene, and how his construction of forms flows into shooting the photo reference he needs to paint the level of detail required in a work of this scale.

If you're inexperienced with oils, you'll pick up some useful techniques, and Mike also offers an overview of the tools and materials he uses. The real value of this meticulous tutorial, though, is the knowledge Mike gives you so you can undertake that large-scale project you've always dreamed of completing without fear. ●

## DETAILS

**Topics covered**
■ Concept drawing
■ Figure construction
■ Colour studies
■ Underpainting
■ Rendering
■ Planning a large composition
■ Brushwork techniques
■ Tools and materials

**Length**
340 minutes

**Rating**
★★★★★

## ARTIST PROFILE
# MIKE SASS

Mike had a lengthy career as BioWare's first artist, and for 12 years illustrated for some of the top RPG video games of all time. Mike's experience at BioWare creating box art, magazine covers, concept art and marketing illustrations enabled him in 2009 to pursue his true passion of fantasy illustration and oil painting. Since then, Mike has illustrated role-playing games and card art for some of the gaming industry's top franchises, including Magic: the Gathering, World of Warcraft, Star Wars, D&D and Pathfinder.

*www.sassart.com*

# The Art of Star Wars: The Last Jedi

**NOTHING'S SACRED** Iconic designs get questioned and reinterpreted in this frank study of the concepts from the Star Wars' latest instalment

**Author** Phil Szostak  **Publisher** Abrams  **Price** £30  **Web** www.abramsbooks.com



Concept artist Justin Sweet's painting of Rey meditating on Ahch-To, where Luke is in exile.

**W**hat makes Star Wars look like Star Wars? That's the question Rian Johnson, the writer and director of the saga's latest instalment, The Last Jedi, poses in his foreword to this art book. And for such a visually distinctive property as Star Wars, it's surprising to learn in these pages that there isn't a definitive answer.

Perhaps The Last Jedi is the best Star Wars film to tackle this artistic ambiguity. Following in the wake of The Force Awakens, which was seen by many as a play-it-safe outing, The Last Jedi takes a more radical approach both in terms of story and design. This wasn't a conscious reaction though, as the film was in design preproduction while The Force Awakens was still shooting.



Instead, Rian reveals that the team of artists behind The Last Jedi allowed themselves to be led by instinct. And over the course of more than 250 pages we get to see how they played with Star Wars style conventions to produce a film that doesn't cling slavishly to the past while still retaining the essence of a galaxy far, far away.

## 66 We get a surprisingly candid account of how certain elements made it to screen 99

First Order forces converge on the Resistance base on Crait, in this piece by Kevin Jenkins.

After an introduction from the book's author, Phil Szostak, The Art of Star Wars: The Last Jedi is broken down into 16 chapters that look into the creative thinking behind everything from spaceships to planets, costumes to droids. The bulk of the artworks are digital paintings, which sometimes means it's difficult to gauge how many iterations they've been worked through before being presented here. Occasionally, we get to see a hand-scribbled concept that gives you an idea of where designs like the new stormtrooper helmets started life, but it's the wealth of annotations from the creative team that give you
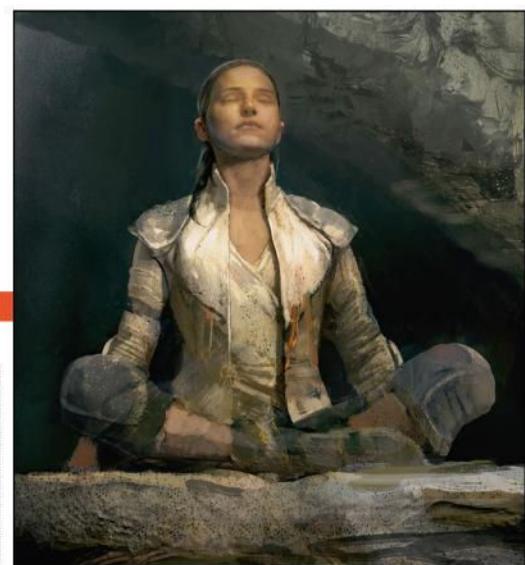
the best idea of how far certain concepts have progressed.

With high-profile properties like Star Wars, perhaps it's unrealistic to expect to see every step of how the magic is produced. Yet through the captions we get a surprisingly candid and revealing account of how certain elements made it to screen. Take the chrome-plated Captain Phasma, a design that was originally intended to be worn by Kylo Ren before evolving into her own character.

Credit, then, must go to Rian and the art team – dozens of which are credited early on – for not only being brave enough to shake up what must have been a temptingly safe design formula, but for also sharing their creative thought processes as openly as they have.

**RATING** ★★★★★

# The Art of Coco

**DROP DEAD GORGEOUS** Discover how Pixar brought the Land of the Dead to life with this behind-the-scenes look at its vibrant new film, Coco

**Authors** John Lasseter, Lee Unkrich and Adrian Molina  **Publisher** Chronicle Books  **Price** £30  **Web** www.chroniclebooks.com



**W**hen it comes honouring the lives of friends and family members who have passed away, the Mexican holiday of Día de los Muertos (Day of the Dead) remembers them with exuberant and colourful traditions instead of sombreness. These vivid celebrations are at the centre of Coco, Pixar's latest cinematic release.

In a brief foreword to the film's art book, John Lasseter explains that the
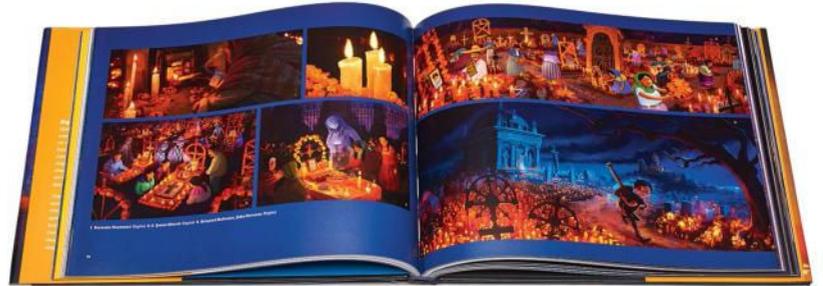


Shelly Wan captures the moment when the young Miguel realises he's cursed to remain in the Land of the Dead.

filmmaking team went to great efforts to ensure that they got the look of the film right while respecting Mexican traditions. And in this book, we see how the team's research paid off.

The bulk of the book takes us on a tour of the characters and locations in Coco. This includes concept art sketches, environment illustrations of the Land of the Dead, and even clay sculpts of the film's skeletal cast.

But there's more to enjoy here than high-quality visuals. Thanks to regular insights from story artists and production designers we also get an understanding of Mexico's fascinating folklore, and we learn how it's cleverly and tastefully used to inform the artistic direction of the film. Coco looks like one to remember.

**RATING** ★★★★☆

# The Art of Mondo

**POSTER PORTFOLIO** Highlights from Mondo's first nine years of creating movie posters are brought together in this striking volume

**Authors** Brad Bird and Tim League  **Publisher** Titan  **Price** £50  **Web** www.titanbooks.com



**B**rad Bird, in his foreword to this Mondo retrospective, explains that, " A movie poster is a motionless, silent image tasked with distilling a movie experience into a single frame – no easy feat."

As we see, though, the team at Austin Texas-based company Mondo is more than up to the challenge. This collection presents the best of its screen-printed movie posters from the
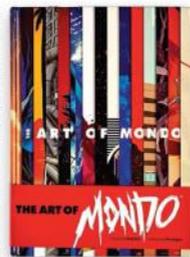


Detail from Kevin Tong's take on Rocket Racoon, which he painted for Mondo's official Guardians of the Galaxy Series in 2014.

past nine years, all of which showcase the company's intense love for the best stories told on the big screen.

While filled with creative spins on old favourites like Star Wars and Jaws, the collection also finds the time to feature plenty of under-appreciated gems. All of the posters are given a full page to let their designs breathe, and it's staggering to see that each one is

connected by an artistic appreciation that demonstrates just how far the medium can be pushed.

Mondo team members introduce different eras of the companies print run, and it's fascinating to read how they worked around the clock to turn out these sought-after posters.

**RATING** ★★★★☆

**Workshops assets are available…**
If you see the video workshop badge then you can watch the artist in action. Turn to page 6 to see how you can get hold of the video.

**NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS**
# ImagineFX
# Traditional Artist
## Inspiration and advice from the best pro artists






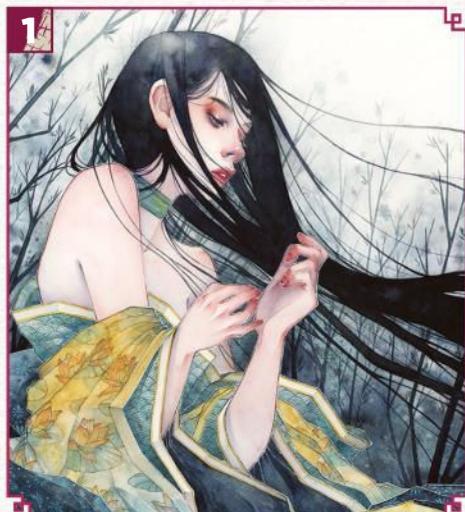


## This issue:

# FXPosé

## SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS



## Hieu Nguyen

**LOCATION:** Australia **MEDIA:** Watercolour, gouache, acrylic, oil, ink, graphite, coloured pencil, digital **WEB:** www.kelogsloops.com

Hieu's work blends realist, abstract and surreal art styles, and includes references to his childhood love of anime and manga.





### 1 ABSENCE
"Absence is inspired by the bittersweet emotions that come with the loss of a loved one. In their absence, we learn to heal and come to terms with our pain."

### 2 FRAGMENTATION
"Fragmentation is one of my earliest works. It began to define my artistic style: a layered incorporation of different art styles, techniques and mediums."

### 3 THIS THING CALLED LOVE
"Inspired by Oscar Wilde's The Nightingale and the Rose, this piece was driven by the price of pain that comes with love: heartbreak."

### 4 DROWNED THOUGHTS
"A revisit to an older watercolour and digital style, in order to incorporate my current techniques and processes."
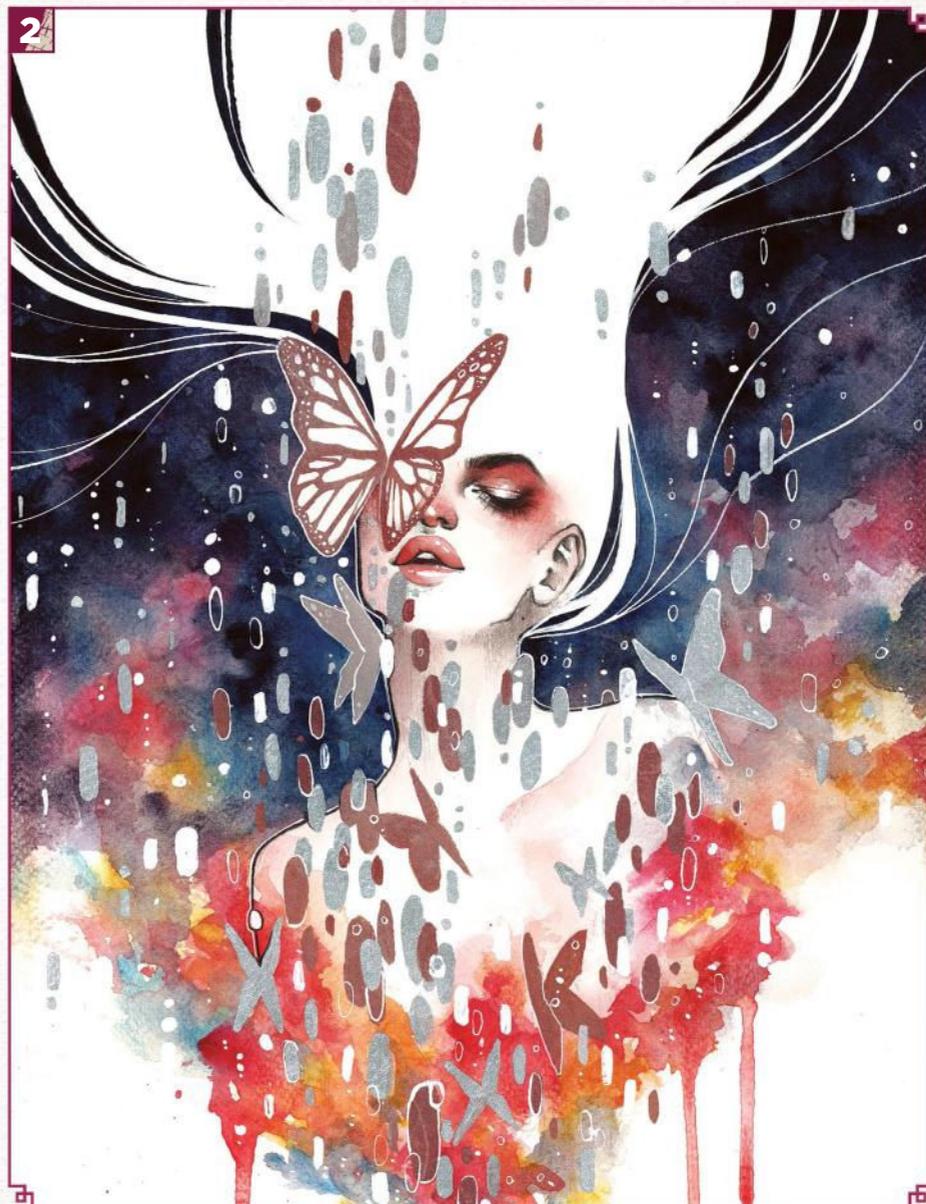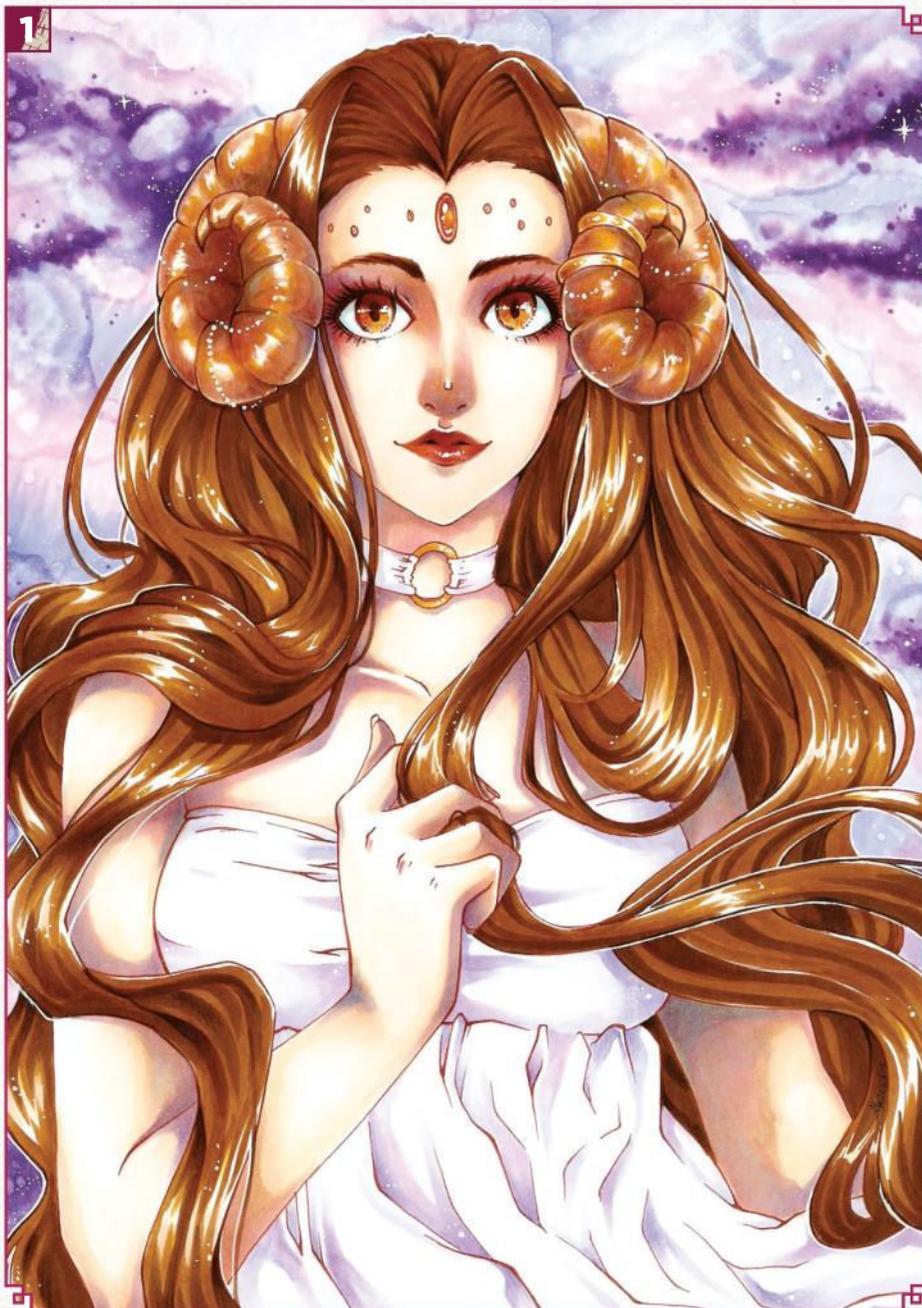
# Ana Salvador

**LOCATION:** Portugal  **MEDIA:** Markers, coloured pencils  **WEB:** kyara17.deviantart.com

Ana has experimented with a number of mediums, but her favourites are markers and coloured pencils. "I love drawing fantasy characters," she says.







### 1 ARIES
"Aries, the first sign, would be the one taking care of the world. To capture this I added a magical background reminiscent of a galaxy, with the figure's hair flowing everywhere."
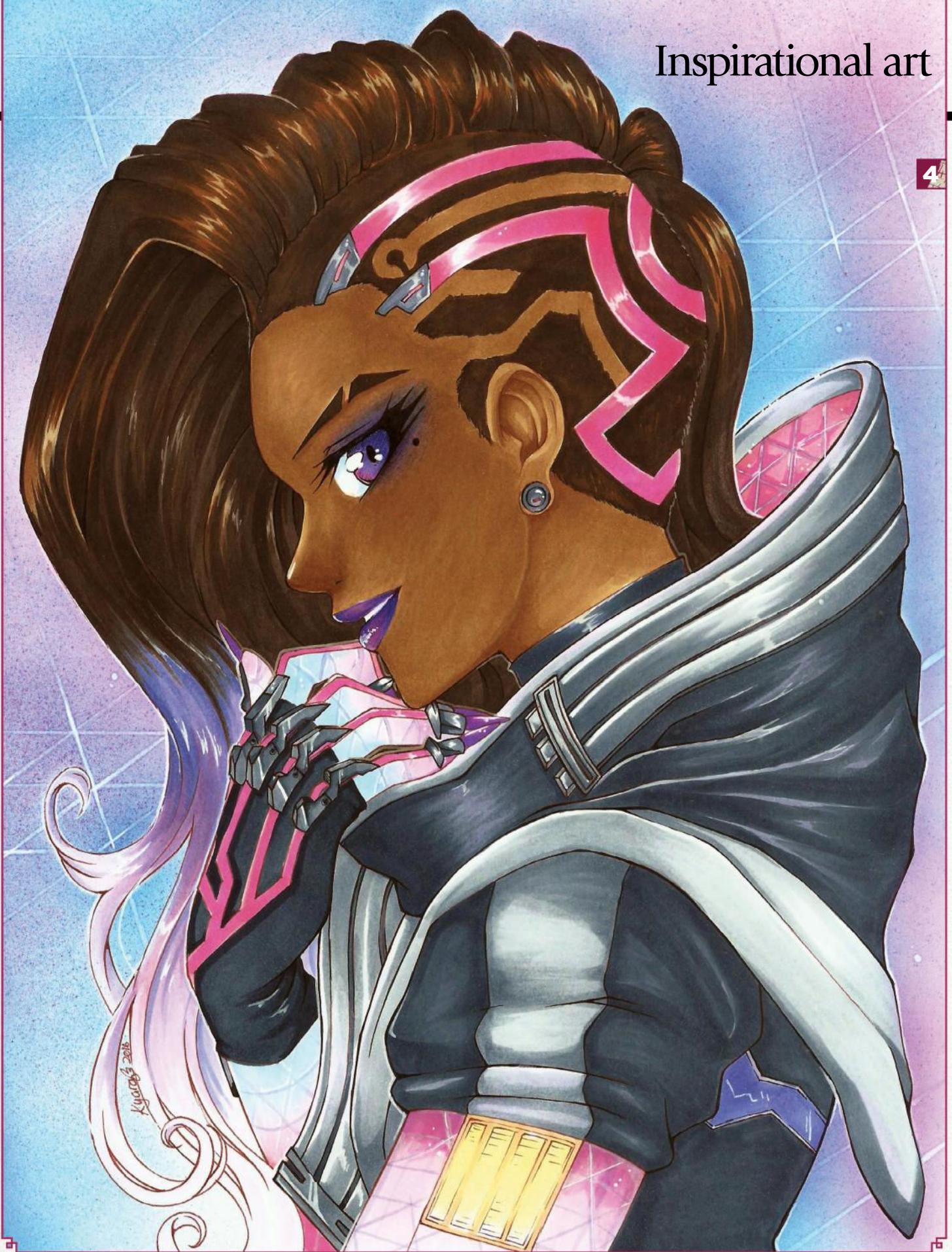
### 2 AUTUMN
"I was inspired to draw this goddess character by the beautiful colours of autumn and the season itself. Did I mention that I love drawing female figures with long, flowing hair?"

### 3 CAPRICORN
"Capricorn is my favourite sign (and my own), and the first one I did from this collection. She's half-mermaid with horn details. I used mainly Copic markers, with pencil for the details."

### 4 SOMBRA
"Blizzard is a huge inspiration to me and when Sombra was announced I wanted to draw her right away. I used Copic markers and airbrushing to capture her vibrant colours."

*Oils*

# BRING LOVECRAFT'S COLOURS TO LIFE

BOB EGGLETON tackles HP Lovecraft as he shares insight into his ever-evolving painting process, and reveals how he's happy to let the magic happen on the canvas

Being asked to describe my painting process is odd for me, and frankly it's hard to do. I'm an intuitive painter, with no real process, I usually invent things as I go along – every painting becomes one big experiment. When I do it, I tend to learn a bit about myself, too.

My painting for this workshop is based on the HP Lovecraft story The Colour Out of Space, in which a meteor falls to Earth and lands on a family farm. The meteor emits strange radiation and gives off powers that alter life forms that come into contact with them. In the story the alien radiation drains life from its surroundings. Then fungus takes over and because of the unearthly radiation, is mutated in indescribable ways. The 'colour' in the title is an unseen spectrum of alien colours.

The challenge here, then, is to depict something that's apparently undetectable. First I took a sketch out of my sketchbook from some years ago. It was simply a quick jot-down of ideas but as usual, I don't spend a lot of time on the drawing – I tend to see how things go and rely on magic moments and accidents and hope for the best. I can already see the image.
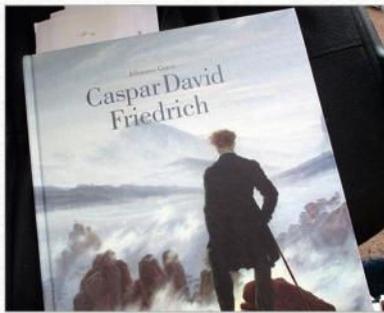
I liked the sketch composition from the get-go anyway, so it makes for a decent jumping-off point…

# Traditional Artist Workshop



## 1 Put your head in a book

Here's my sketch. I took this out of my sketchbook and photocopied it to roughly 16x12 inches. My inspiration of mood comes from looking at the works of Caspar David Friedrich, who had a special look to his sublime works. I get a lot of mileage working from these books of classical painting. I recommend that every artist looks at classical works to help develop their own style.

## 2 No fuss, no bother

I take the photocopy of my old sketch and then blacken the back with graphite powder. I tape this to the top of the canvas board and then with a pencil, trace off major lines and objects, all very loosely. Once it's down I work elements back in with a pencil, drawing back into the canvas more or less what things will look like. Again, I don't fuss much because all this will be covered in paint. I spray the pencil drawing with fixative so that it stays visible when I'm painting over it.

### MATERIALS

**SURFACE**
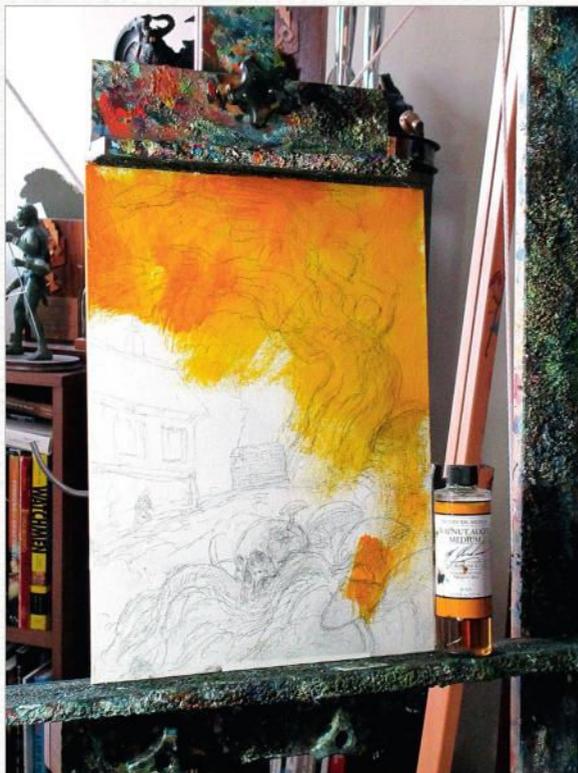■ Archival 16x12-inch canvas board (gessoed and sanded slightly)

**BRUSHES**
■ Basic bristle paint brushes
■ Old, splayed brushes for texturing
■ #5 filbert
■ #2 rounds

**OILS**
■ Williamsburg Handmade Oil Colors paints

**MISCELLANEOUS**
■ Weber Walnut Alkyd oil
■ Palette knives (various shapes)
■ Graphite powder

## 3 Start up the fun machine

I put the canvas on my easel. This is where the fun begins. I mix up some Alizarin yellow oil paint (it's my favourite colour) with Walnut oil. A note on Walnut Oil, it's actually non-toxic, but I wouldn't drink it. I tend to avoid turpentine and thinners.
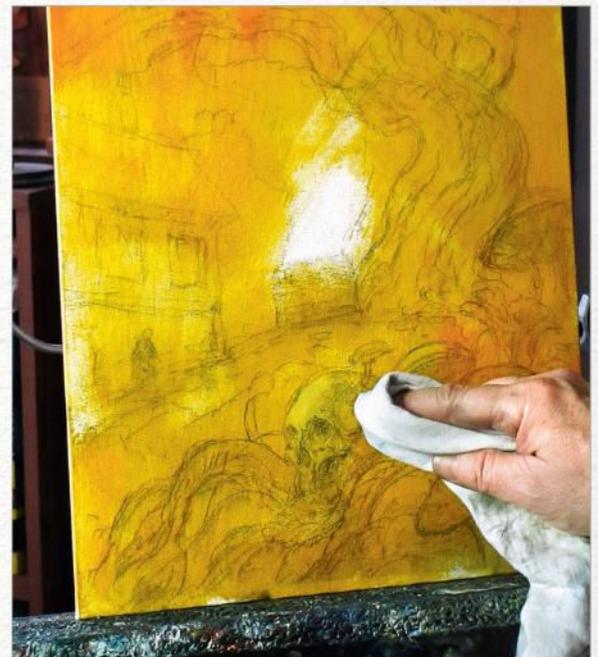
## 4 Remove your fear

I coat the canvas board completely. Picasso once said that the biggest fear in the universe is of a blank canvas. Well, we take care of that at the start. I see the underpainting as something to build everything on top of. Many of the classical artists did this. My underpainting will hopefully make the finished work glow. I take a rag and start removing paint, carving out the basic image based on the drawing and how the lighting will go (which I all see in my head).
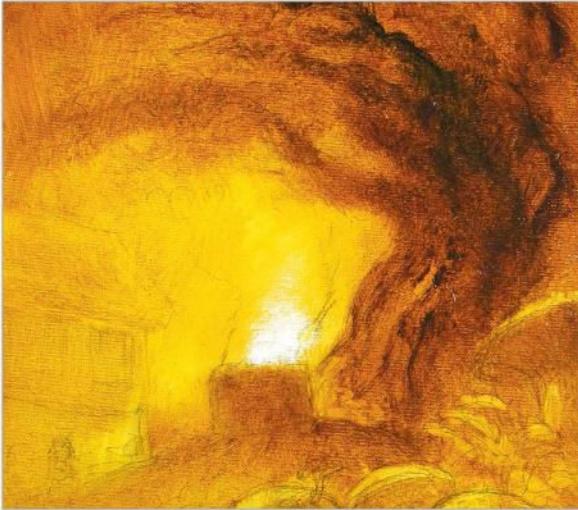
## 5 Push and pull

I start working Burnt umber into the painting, to generate some darker areas and also to define the overall composition. This is just a question of pushing and pulling the paint around the canvas. I add, subtract, dab more in, pull more out and start looking for the appearance of magic areas as the paint creates areas of interest. Then I set the work aside for the night and let it tack up, as we say, so that I can preserve what I've got going on. Hopefully, it'll still look good in the morning!
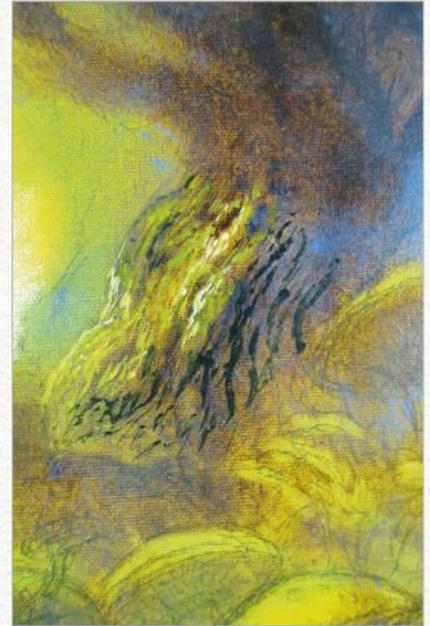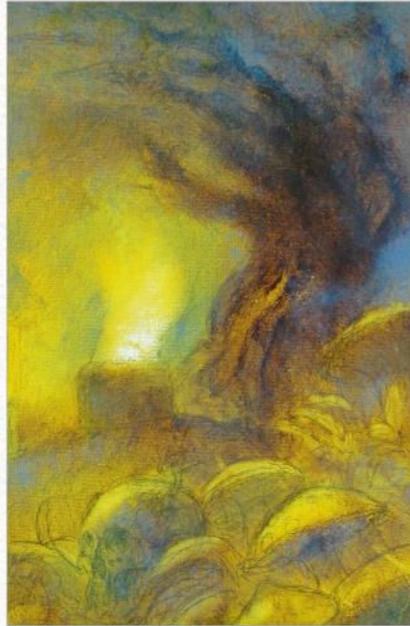
## 6 Cooling the painting with blues

Now it gets really interesting! The painting is set up nicely; it's a little sticky, but I can work with it. I take a cheap bargain store bristle brush and start working in some blues, which helps to take down the warmth I've already created. I leave in little areas of light and shadow, and start to see more interesting areas. I begin with the tree and get some details going in the bark.





## 7 Making it happen

Out comes my oval-shaped palette knife and I start trowelling in colour into the area of interest of the "colour". I'm just kind of seeing what will happen. Palette knives are a lot of fun because if you have a textured board, the surprises can be pretty fun to watch happen.
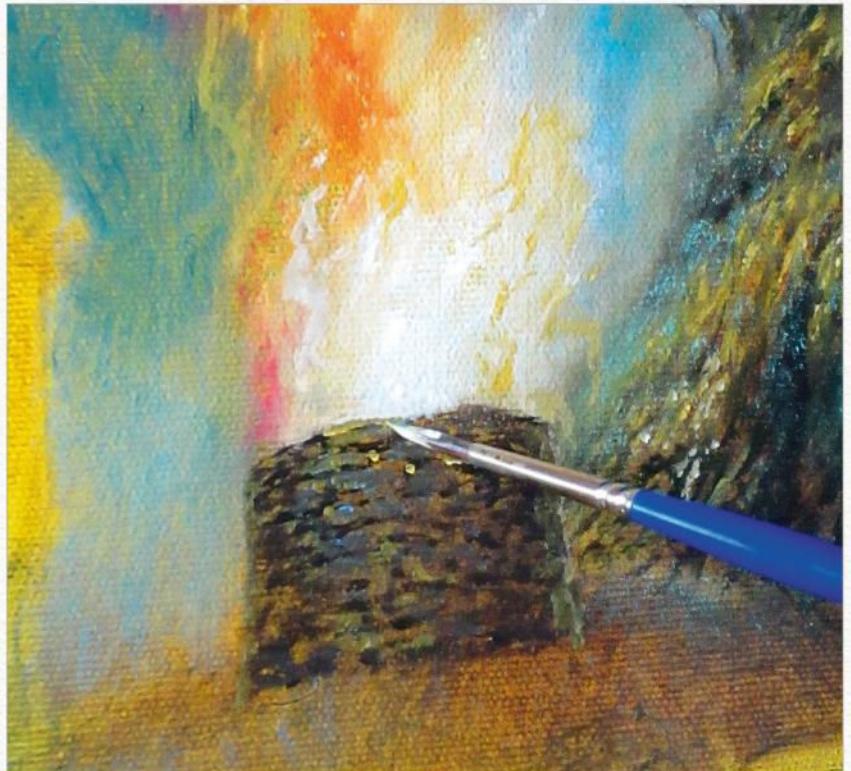
## 8 Introducing small details

I start working in some details on the well, using a smaller brush. The strange alien force is at the bottom of a well, which I originally sketched while visiting a friend's farm house some time ago. I start on the middle ground area and rely heavily on the texture of the canvas board to help me establish a rocky area. The underpainting helps me tremendously here. ➤➤

### 9 Opposites attract
I continue detailing the tree branches. I decide that the shape of the "colour" will be in contrast to the shape of the tree, which is twisted and dead.



### 10 Shaping it up
At this point I start detailing the foreground and the skull. This is all a matter of impressionistic details. The roots of the trees and fungus are taking shape.



### 11 Giving my hand a rest
I use a snooker cue to rest my hand on, much as you would with a mahl stick. It's relatively cheap and does the job without getting too fancy. It's good practice to rest your hand when bringing in details to a composition.

### 12 Use reference and memory

I turn my attention to the mushrooms and fungus. I use some reference books on mushrooms, but I tend also to work from memory, too. I'm not done with them and will come back to them in a bit. They need to tack up because my intention is to glaze some colour over them.
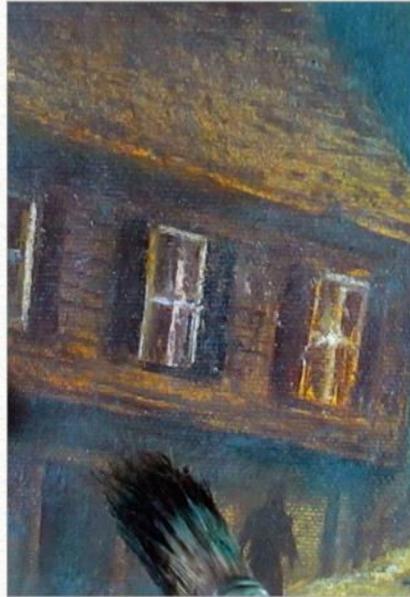


### 13 Do you see him yet?

Now I put in the farmhouse that's in the background. Again, it's not too detailed because it's less important and, in this nighttime scene you wouldn't see too much of it anyway. There's also a figure there, and I like the fact that it takes a second look to see him. At this point the painting is near completion, but I still have things that I'll tweak and come back to once I leave it to set overnight.
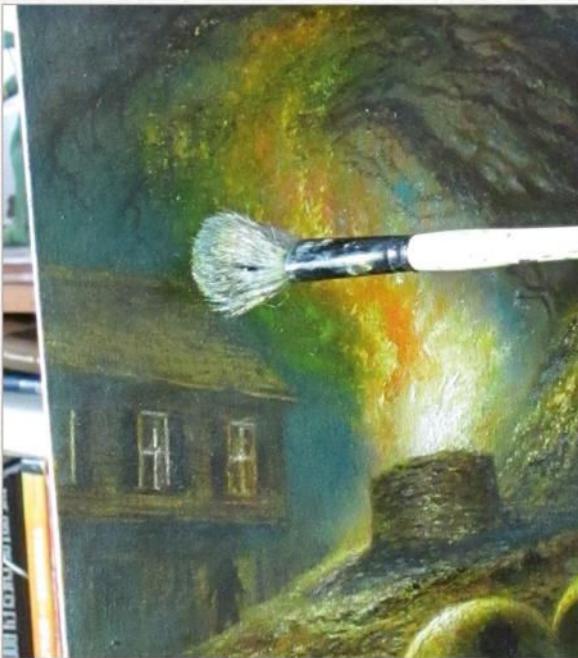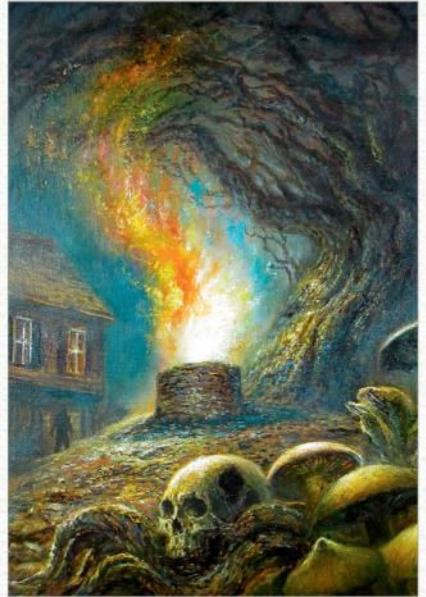


### 14 Foreground and background

I use a big wash brush – I think it's meant for watercolours – to dab in a glaze of light blue over much of the background and the upper part of the tree. This helps to take things back a bit and get more into "lost edges", which really make the 3D aspect of a painting work. The more diffuse your background looks, the more the foreground will pop out. This is my palette. It looks like a total mess, but there's order in my chaos. My colours aren't arranged in any particular order – I just squeeze out paint and hope for the best. It works for me.



### 15 Work in the evil

I work some green into the fungus to give it an unsettling, evil look. I work on the alien colour flare coming out of the well to make it looking a bit like a living thing. Subtly, it looks a bit like a DNA strand, which was probably my thought when I saw the shape I was creating and the fact that the alien light mutates and drains the life out of terrestrial organisms. Lovecraft's fiction is indescribably hard to illustrate because he writes of things that would drive mortal man mad. But I like how it all worked out. I'll coat the dry painting in spray-on retouch varnish. Oil paintings should wait a year to dry fully, before applying a final layer of varnish.

## *Core skills: Part 4*
# MAKE THE RIGHT PAINTING CHOICES

Feeling overwhelmed by the Great Outdoors? CHRISTOPHER MOELLER reveals some of the techniques he uses that help him focus on a plein air subject

You've got your paint box, your brushes, your comfy hiking boots and your wide-brimmed hat. Now what? You'll find plein-air painting demands a different mindset than painting in the comfort of your studio.

For example, the simple question of what to paint can be paralysing. You're setting up in front of the world's biggest pile of reference photos. Relax. It's human nature to want to control things, but plein air painting is about letting go. Things will move and change, the wind will blow your easel over. Try to roll with it all.

When you're outside, your assignment is to concentrate on first principles: observe, record, make thoughtful choices. My advice is to forget about painting a masterpiece. Take this opportunity to strengthen your painting muscles and your powers of observation. Have fun!

*Christopher's a writer and painter who specialises in producing fully painted graphic novels. See more of his art at www.moellerillustrations.com.*

**ARTIST INSIGHT**
**TRY TO STAY CALM**
It's easy to feel out of control when you're outside painting. So try to relax and enjoy the experience, while making thoughtful choices about your art.

## 1 *Choosing your subject*

So how do you choose what to paint? At first, nothing will grab you. Every direction you look will feel unsatisfying in some way. You'll hold your fingers up like a frame, squint, wrinkle up your nose. Nothing. Eventually, after working yourself into a state of total frustration, you'll become what I call "unthinkingly decisive." You'll plonk your chair down wherever's easiest and paint whatever's in front of you. From personal experience, neither of these is a satisfying way to choose a subject. So I've developed a few ways to help me get through to a more "thinkingly decisive" mental state…

Don't let the limitless complexity of the world confuse you. Very simple subjects can become powerful paintings. Try to edit the scene down in your mind. Spend a little time finding a simple shape or group of shapes that interests you. These can be as broad as a busy harbour or as intimate as a cluster of bushes.
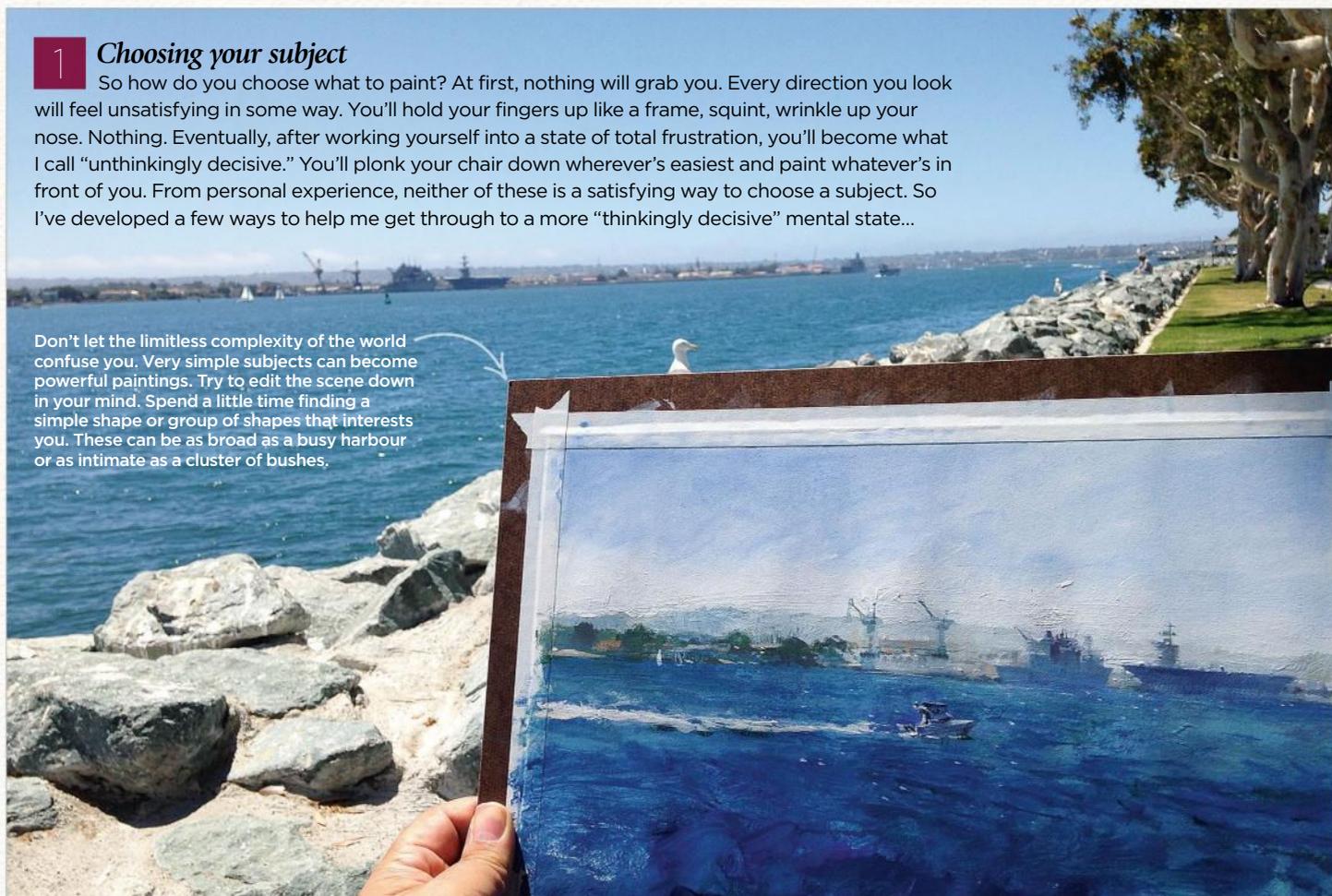
In this battlefield painting, the small rise behind the house becomes a more ominous form.



### 2 Composition choices

Composing a picture outdoors is no different than composing one in your studio. First, don't be too wedded to your reference (in this case, the world around you). You're not a photocopier, you're an artist. If a tree needs to be a different size or shape, then you have permission to alter it to make a better picture. Second, find a story about the day: the way the sun feels, the wind, the temperature, the time of day, your mood, the way a falling-down barn in the distance reminds you of your childhood. It can be about colour ("I'll paint this all in warm tones") or value ("I'm going to keep my values to a narrow range"). ➤

This was painted on a snowy December day in southwest Pennsylvania. I felt very small in the face of powerful natural forces. That was the story for me of that moment, and that place.

### 3 Value and colour

There are two main tools for reproducing what you see when painting. These are value and colour. When you're outside, looking at the world, compare everything in terms of these two things. Value (how dark is that shadow compared to that bush) and colour (is the bush's colour warmer or cooler than the shadow). Painting is all about getting those relationships right.



Value (the darkness or lightness of things) is your friend. If you're able to capture accurate values then your painting will work, even if every colour you choose is wrong. On the other hand, if your values are wrong then colour can't save you.



To help understand the relationship of colour and value, try using just four pigments: white, red, blue and yellow. Most of the colours you see in nature are a combination of all four. Choosing the correct proportions is what separates the master from the novice.

Colour is almost always less intense than you think it is. Pure colour is for accents. When I'm not thinking clearly, my colour always becomes purer and stronger than it should. In this piece, The Road to Crampton's Gap, I managed to restrain myself.

**OBSERVATION TIP**

**LOOK DEEP**
Painting outdoors is your opportunity to observe in a profound way.

## 4 More thinking, less painting

One day, a friend of mine was out painting en plein air with the late, great artist Jeffrey Catherine Jones. My friend was attacking his canvas with wild, bravura strokes, and Jeffrey, looking over his shoulder, said gently "More thinking, less painting." I recall this story all the time. It reminds me to slow down. To think about what the next right stroke might be. To think about what I need to do to mix the right colour and put it in the right place.

Jeffrey also told me: "When making a choice, try to avoid the violent one." Part of me likes to make the violent choice. If two forms aren't separating from one another, my instinct is to make one dark and the other light. That's what a violent choice is: an unthinking, inaccurate, extreme, ultimately wrong choice.







## 5 Seeing what's there

The beauty of painting from life is that we have perfect information, so we should take advantage of it. Most of the time we don't see what we're looking at. We tend to think in terms of symbols: house, tree, person. When we see one of those things, we mentally tag it and move on. Actually seeing a house, in all of its particulars, is something we rarely do. It becomes obvious when we try to paint a house and it looks nothing like the one in front of us. Most of our issues with painting aren't painting problems, they're seeing problems.



If you're not used to close observation, start by squinting. One of the problems with painting from life is, paradoxically, all that perfect information. It can become a distraction. Squinting helps us to simplify what we're seeing. Look for the largest masses first.

Reproducing what's truly there, instead of what we believe is there, is one of the foundations of representational art. Working from life is your chance to forget about what you know, and paint what's in front of you. You can never do enough of it. Embrace the challenge.

# First Impressions

## ✳ Stephanie Law ✳

### Seeing trees in a different light helped this artist's career...

**Where did you grow up and how has this influenced your art?**
I've spent most of my life circling the California Bay Area, with its golden hills, dark, tangled oak trees, and the ocean on the margins. I've always been surrounded by these and they work their way into my art in the natural elements, the shapes and colours, and the forms of growth and decay.

**What, outside art, has influenced your art throughout the years?**
Dancing. The way my body moves and flows when I'm in the middle of a choreography. I feel like I'm constantly chasing after that sense of motion when I'm painting and deciding my compositions.

**You're a child, you see a painting that changes everything. Where are you and what are you looking at and what effect did it have?**
I was taking some summer camp art class the Japanese Friendship Garden in San Jose. We were painting trees. I painted what I thought was a perfectly good



**ENTERTAINING THE DAYDREAM**
*"This piece is art of my recent solo show at Haven Gallery, Where the Sea Meets the Sky."*

landscape of trees. The instructor took a look at my finished piece and then said, "Try using some other colours." The resulting piece was a technicolour landscape of everything except brown and green. That painting opened my eyes to being able to see and paint the world

> ❝ I feel like I'm constantly chasing after that sense of motion when I'm painting ❞

with more than just the colours my brain told me existed.

**Tell us about your first paid commission and does it stand as a representation of your talent**
I did pieces for the parents of my friends through high school, but my first professional commission was a card for Magic: the Gathering, called Sunscape Apprentice. I'd been painting with watercolours for about a year at that point, and so I was still caught up in using the medium the way I did with acrylics.



**WHEN FLOWERS DREAM III**
*"This is part of a series of pieces that explore the unnoticed and the ephemeral."*

**What's the last piece you finished and how do the two differ?**
When Flowers Dream III is motivated by my own stories and inspiration. My art has changed a lot from those first Magic cards, and I've gained confidence with my medium and learned all its quirks and qualities, which gives a freedom to how I paint.

**Is making a living as an artist all you thought it would be?**
In some ways it's incredibly different, but in others – in the absolute joy of it – it's exactly what I thought it would be. In some of my earliest memories, I remember people asking me what I wanted to be when I grew up. I recall three answers that I gave. Two of the answers I spoke without knowing what they actually meant as an adult: "A Ph.D." or "a mommy." These answers were what I saw when I looked at my father (an engineer), and my mother.

The third answer, however, was myself: "An artist." Maybe as a four year old I didn't understand what that third one meant as an adult either, but I already was drawn to that idea and wanted it, and as I grew up that desire only became stronger and more directed.

**What advice would you give to your younger self?**
I'd tell myself to have confidence in my own vision, and that painting what I love (not what I think the world wants to see) only leads to making better art.

**What character of scene that you've painted to you most identify with?**
One of my most recent paintings this past year is called Entertaining the Daydream. It's about seeing what you want, and then seizing the power to make it happen.
*Stephanie created The Shadowscapes Tarot, and wrote the Dreamscapes watercolour painting books. Explore her art at www.shadowscapes.com.*

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