ImagineFX

TECHNIQUE

15 NEW TIPS ON INKING

Illustrator Tess Fowler talks about inking with instinct

FREE!
1 HOUR OF PRO VIDEO TUITION
+165 CUSTOM BRUSHES

WORKSHOP

FROM SCRIPT TO FINAL PAGE

Pro skills on taking a panel to completion

CREATE BETTER
COMIC ART

How to paint dynamic and impactful art with advice from the legendary **Tony S Daniel**

PHOTOSHOP

CAPTAIN MARVEL

Jen Bartel shares how she draws and paints cover art

PLUS!

HOW TO LIGHT A PIN-UP CHARACTER
PEEK INSIDE TERRY DODSON'S STUDIO
JORGE JIMENÉZ & CHRISTIAN WARD

Your Imagination. Your Medium.

medium

Welcome to…

ImagineFX
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

Hello there! One thing I loved reading about this issue was how collaboration is key to producing great works of comic art. So many artists within these pages spoke with admiration of their partners in crime; their collaborators and companion on a piece of work.

Most creators in the comics industry are well-versed in working closely with others, whether it be with the writer, penciller, inker or colourist. To successfully do this takes a lot of interpersonal work. Artists have to quickly forge close working relationships with others and trust their partner to help them get to the end result: great art.

Even if you're not in the comics industry, it's worth pausing to mull over how you work with others. Think about ways you can accept critique and insight from others about your work. It will no doubt enrich your work and also improve your relationship with the artistic community.

As ever, thank you for picking up ImagineFX, we greatly appreciate your support. Please write in with your thoughts at the address below.

Claire

Claire Howlett, Editor
claire@imaginefx.com

ImagineFX
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

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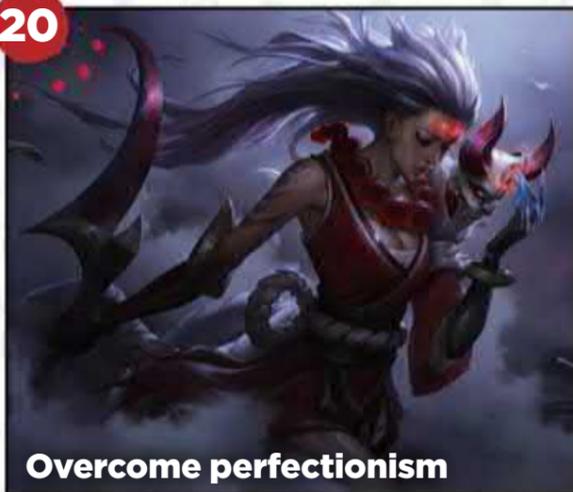
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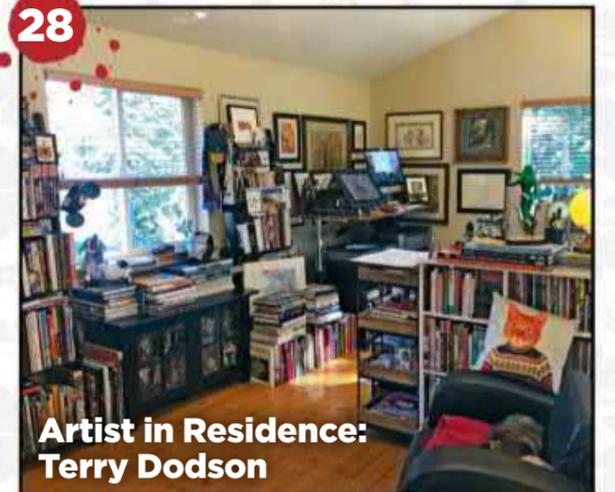
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NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX
Resources

Getting hold of this issue's video resources is quick and easy. Just visit **https://ifxm.ag/comic174art**

WORKSHOP VIDEOS

OVER 1 HOUR of video tutorials from pro artists to watch and learn from!

Take your pin-up art skills to new heights
Watch how Elias Chatzoudis paints and lights a pin-up character, then turn to page 80.

Draw with a sense of story and rhythm
In his video Patrick J Jones explains how to bring a reference photo to life. More on page 86.

PLUS 165 CUSTOM BRUSHES, INCLUDING.

LOLO1
Elias Chatzoudis used this brush to paint background elements on his pin-up character illustration.

LALA1
Elias's custom brush comes in handy for introducing natural textures in a composition.

CUSTOM 1
Once Elias painted the figure's flower in her hair, he used this brush to give it a more natural look.

ipso. For press freedom with responsibility

FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

1

Haimeng Cao

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Photoshop, 3ds Max, Clarisse iFX, V-Ray, Keyshot, ZBrush **WEB:** www.artstation.com/haimengcao

Haimeng specialises in highly detailed sci-fi city landscapes, which he models and renders in 3D, before adjusting the 2D results. He uses the architecture and atmosphere of each environment to establish the story.
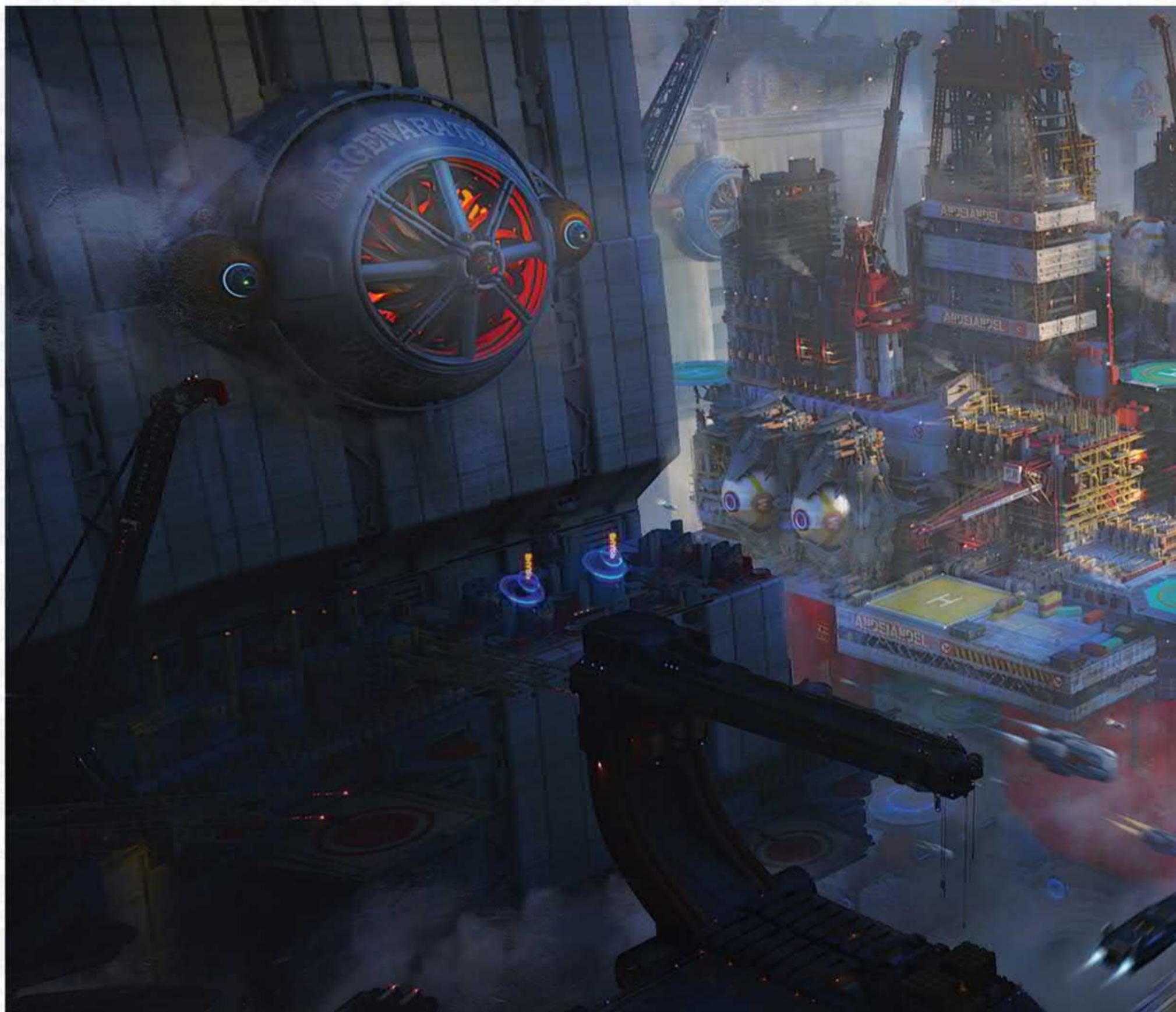
1 CORE

"Architectural elements and ships lead the viewer's eye to the core of the city. The monochromatic colour scheme adds to the mood in this dystopian cityscape."

2 CITY RIG SYSTEM

"The focus here is the rig system. The city's architecture and vehicles surround this central structure, and rely on it to work. Details on the platform emphasise its scale."
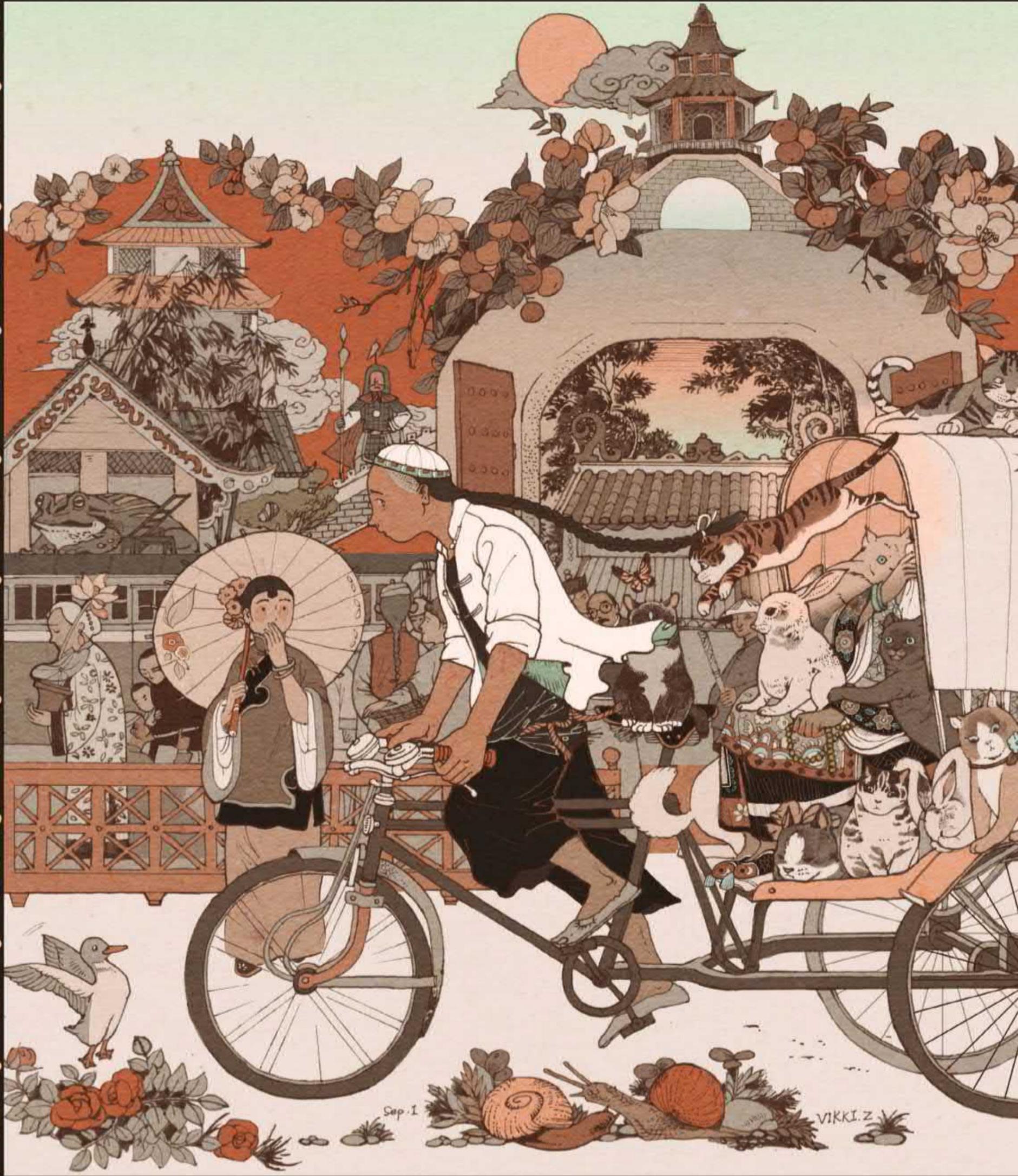
Vikki Zhang

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Sketch, Photoshop, ink **WEB:** www.vikkizhang.com

"Most of the time I'm telling my audience a fairy tale," says illustrator Vikki. "I'm influenced by Arthur Rackham, René Magritte and traditional Chinese painters." These illustrations are taken from Vikki's personal project entitled Botanic Lullaby.

1 RUNNING CAT
"My Botanic Lullaby project is inspired by people's lifestyles in 1920s China; slow and poetic. Here, the princess is taking a tricycle to the teahouse with her many cats keeping her company."

2 SWAN BOAT
"A painting of the family spending time on a swan boat in the pond in their back yard. It was very generous of bear mermaid to share her wonderful matcha green tea latte."

3 HORSE MARKET
"A scene from the regular horse trading market. Nothing is more exciting than getting your own pony – girls from the cities are astonished to see others of the same age riding like experts."

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Bryn G Jones

LOCATION: England **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Procreate **WEB:** www.elevencomics.com/bryn

Once a graphic designer, London-based Bryn is now a board game artist and sci-fi fine artist. He regularly launches Kickstarter projects to support his work as a painter.
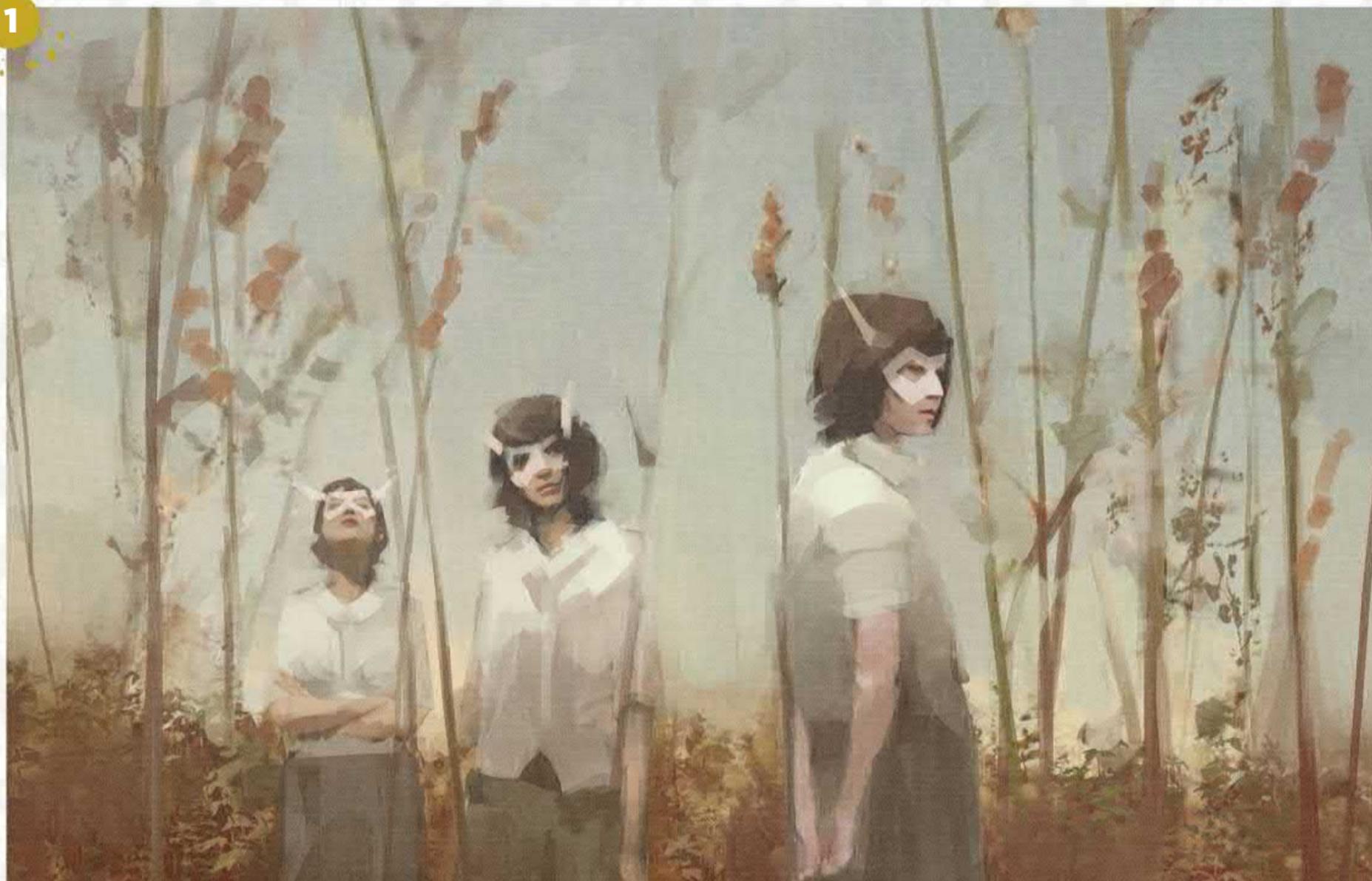
1 THREE FOXES
"I created this setting very quickly, using a set of speed-painting brushes. For the figures, I used a flat brush that fades as less pressure is applied, and the canvas texture is an Overlay layer."

2 SUMMER NIGHT
"The first painting from my Black Rabbit series. The success of this painting drove me to create many similar pieces. The scene is set in a fairground, although the highlights are taken from a restaurant photograph."

3 RECHARGE
"Part of a series where I recreate café scenes as science fiction. I like to swap out mugs for glowing robot bunnies. Painting wires on figures is a quick way to add narrative."

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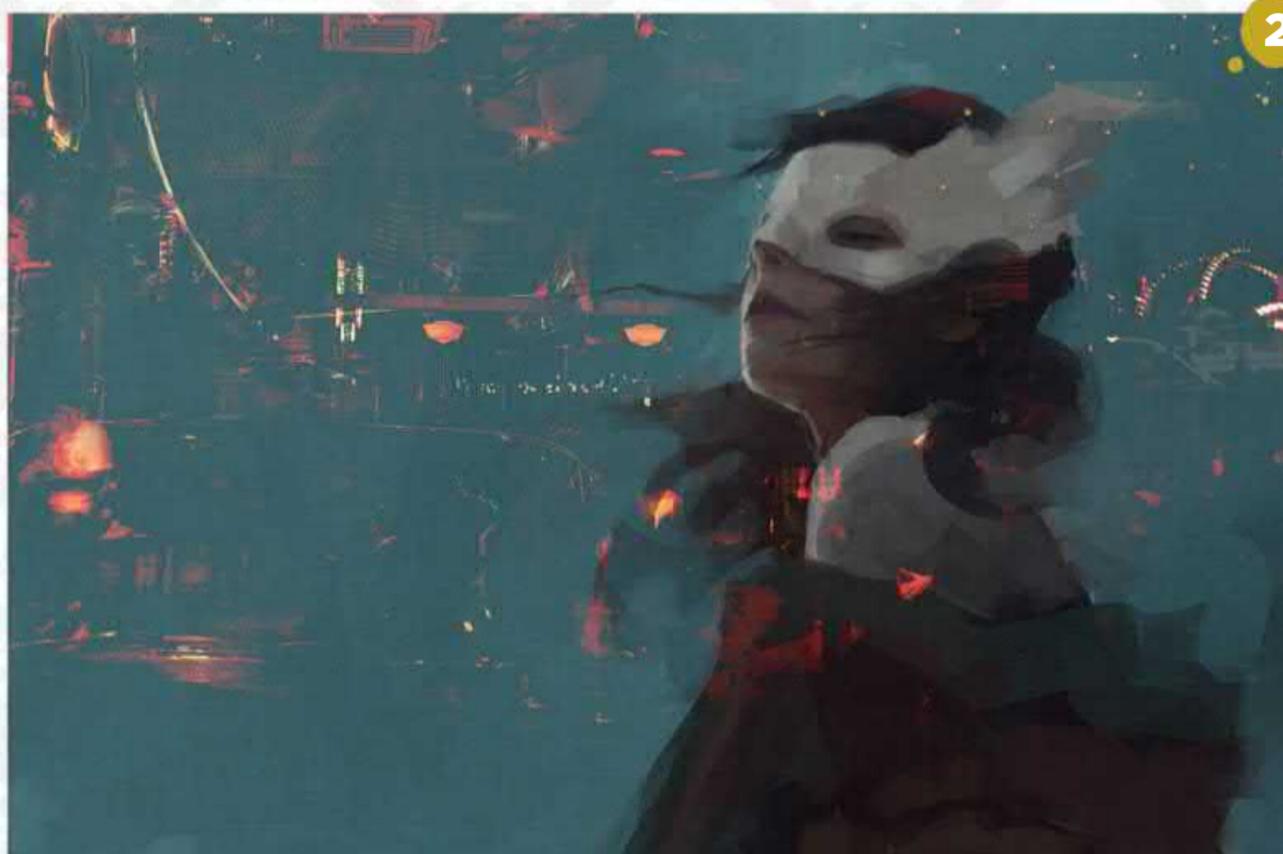
Camilo Castro

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Maya **WEB:** www.camilo-castro.com

Camilo is a visual development artist who has worked with Pixar, Disney Animation Studios, Wild Canary Animation and Passion Pictures. His aim is to create worlds and characters that promote positive and relatable stories.
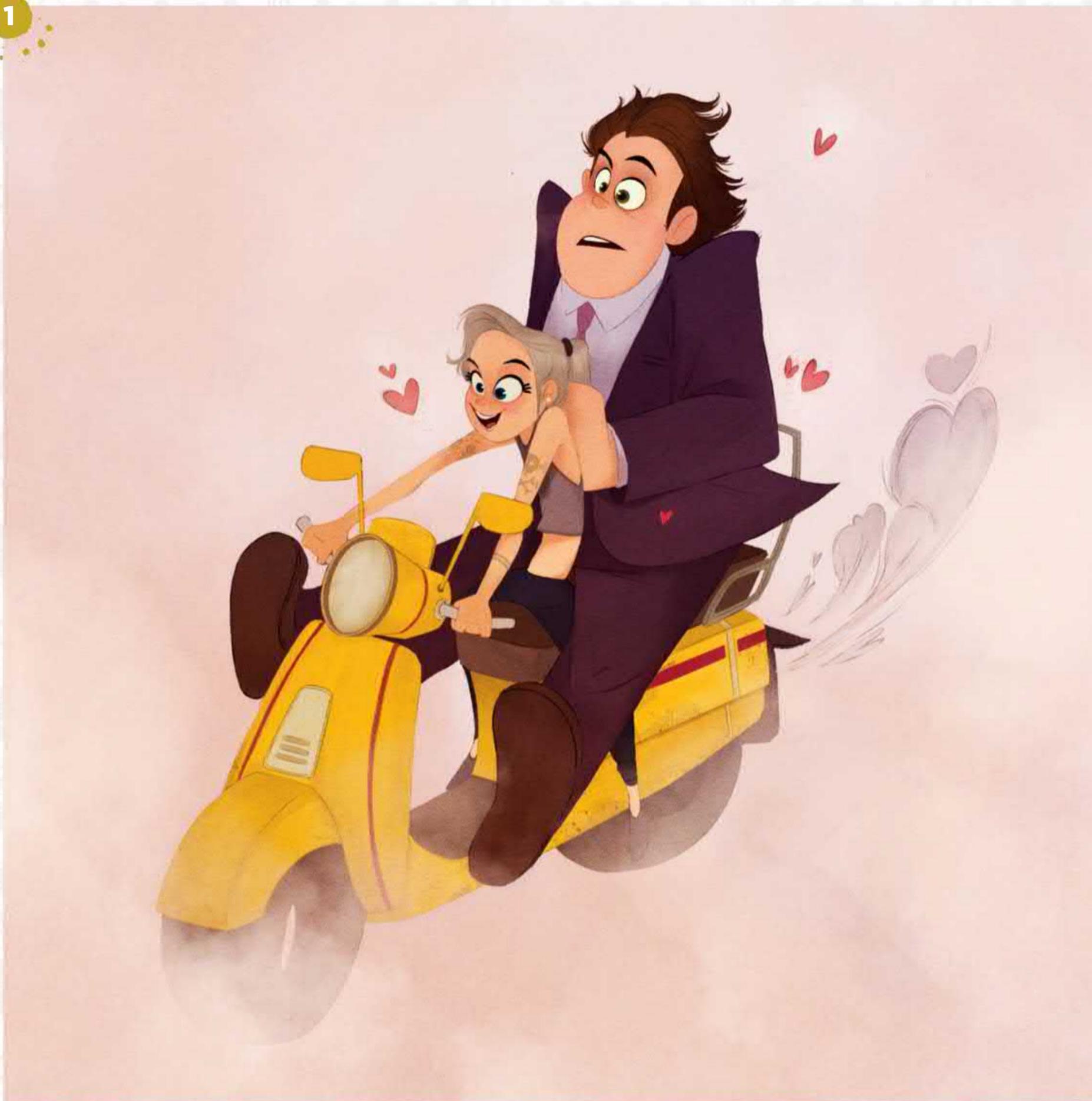
1 LOVE IS IN THE AIR
"I was developing a series of ideas for a short film, and this piece represents one of them. It explores the concept of 'impossible love'."

2 NIGHT HOUSE
"For some time now I've been developing an idea of a dysfunctional family of vampires. This line-up is an exploration of what the characters might look like."

3 GRANDMA'S PIE
"Grandma's Pie is a film I co-directed and art directed. I was keen to capture the charm of a sweet grandma, juxtaposed with the intensity of medieval times."

②

③

FXPosé

Sean Evans

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Procreate, Photoshop, 3ds Max, ZBrush **WEB:** www.evansconcept.com

Sean is a concept artist working in video games and films. Before going freelance, Red Dead Redemption 2 was the last major project that he was involved with.

1 EIRA
"I pulled references from the Viking era and melded them with the Lara Croft feel that I admire so much. Heroines are always the most fun to design."

2 THE GREAT HALL OF TRONDHEIM
"The idea was that this building housed all the jarls (Viking chiefs) of neighbouring towns when raiding season came about. It was declared sacred ground for all Vikings who sought Odin's guidance."

3 JURASSIC
"I painted this after watching Jurassic World 2. The idea of dinosaurs running rampant is as exciting as it is terrifying, and I wanted to play with where the story might go next."
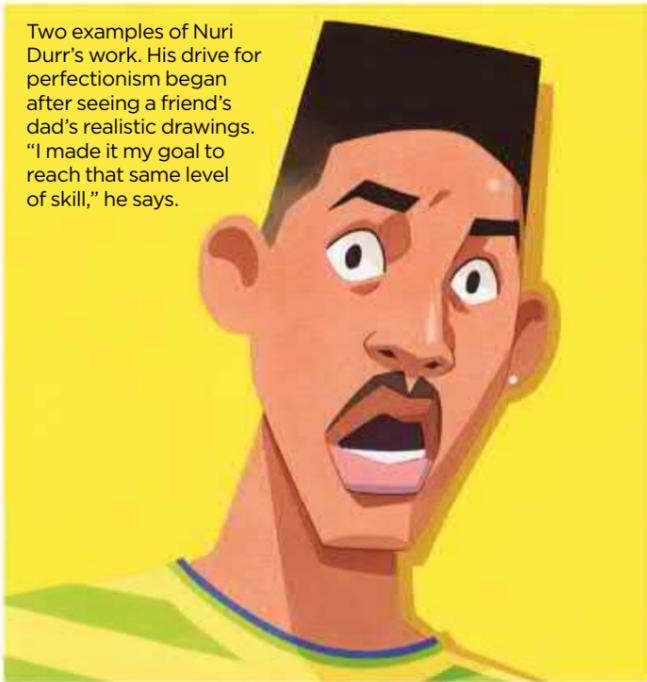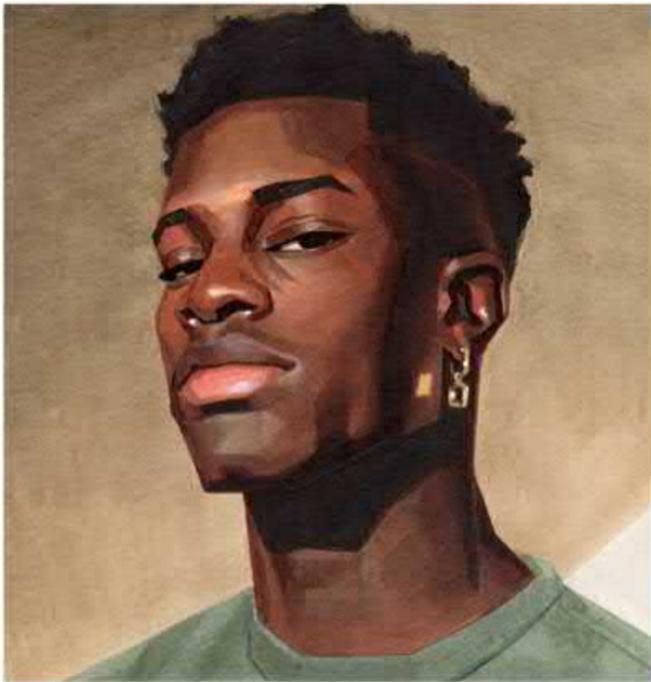
Two examples of Nuri Durr's work. His drive for perfectionism began after seeing a friend's dad's realistic drawings. "I made it my goal to reach that same level of skill," he says.

How to overcome perfectionism

Nobody's perfect Does the pursuit of high standards make artists improve, or does it weigh them down? **Dom Carter** investigates

When it comes to creating art, there's a distinction to be made between a 'perfect' image and one that's 'complete'. A piece of work can be said to be complete for a number of reasons: for example, it fits a role for a client or explores a technique that an artist wanted to experiment with.

Achieving perfection, on the other hand, is invariably more demanding and time-consuming. That's because

Letting go of perfectionism benefited Nuri's art for himself and his audience: "The end result is more honest and fun to look at."

perfect art has to live up to the expectations of perhaps the toughest critic: the creator themselves. For Atlanta-basesd illustrator **Nuri Durr**, the desire for perfectionism became not only an obsession, but a hindrance to his growth as an artist. And it turns out that he wasn't alone.

A DANGEROUS OBSESSION

Taking to Twitter, Nuri recently shared his struggles with perfectionism, and how completing work instead was much more gratifying. His followers agreed, and at the time of writing Nuri's tweet has racked up nearly 5,000 likes and dozens of comments from other artists dealing with the same predicament. But for Nuri, the response didn't come as much of a surprise. "I've always felt that perfectionism was a thing that most people tend to struggle with," he says.

"It's difficult to talk about, because we all want to present the best version

> ❝ Perfectionism is not your best friend while you're learning ❞

of ourselves. There's this feeling that every piece of work has to be better than the last one, or at least match it, which is just not true. I think everyone hits this wall at one point or another. It's not always vocalised though, so it's important that we have these types of conversations."

Unfortunately, the desire to achieve perfectionism can be drilled into artists while they're developing their craft. "Perfectionism is definitely not your best friend while you're learning," says **Chengwei Pan**, a senior illustrator at Riot Games. "In order to improve you must be brave to make mistakes ➤➤

For Chengwei Pan, perfectionism is a double-edged sword. "The advantage is that all artists are chasing a form of perfectionism – even those with a 'messy' style."

© Riot Games

© DC Comics

On occasion, J Scott Campbell has felt perfectionism pressure from companies: "I've had to push back against those pressures to preserve my artistic voice."
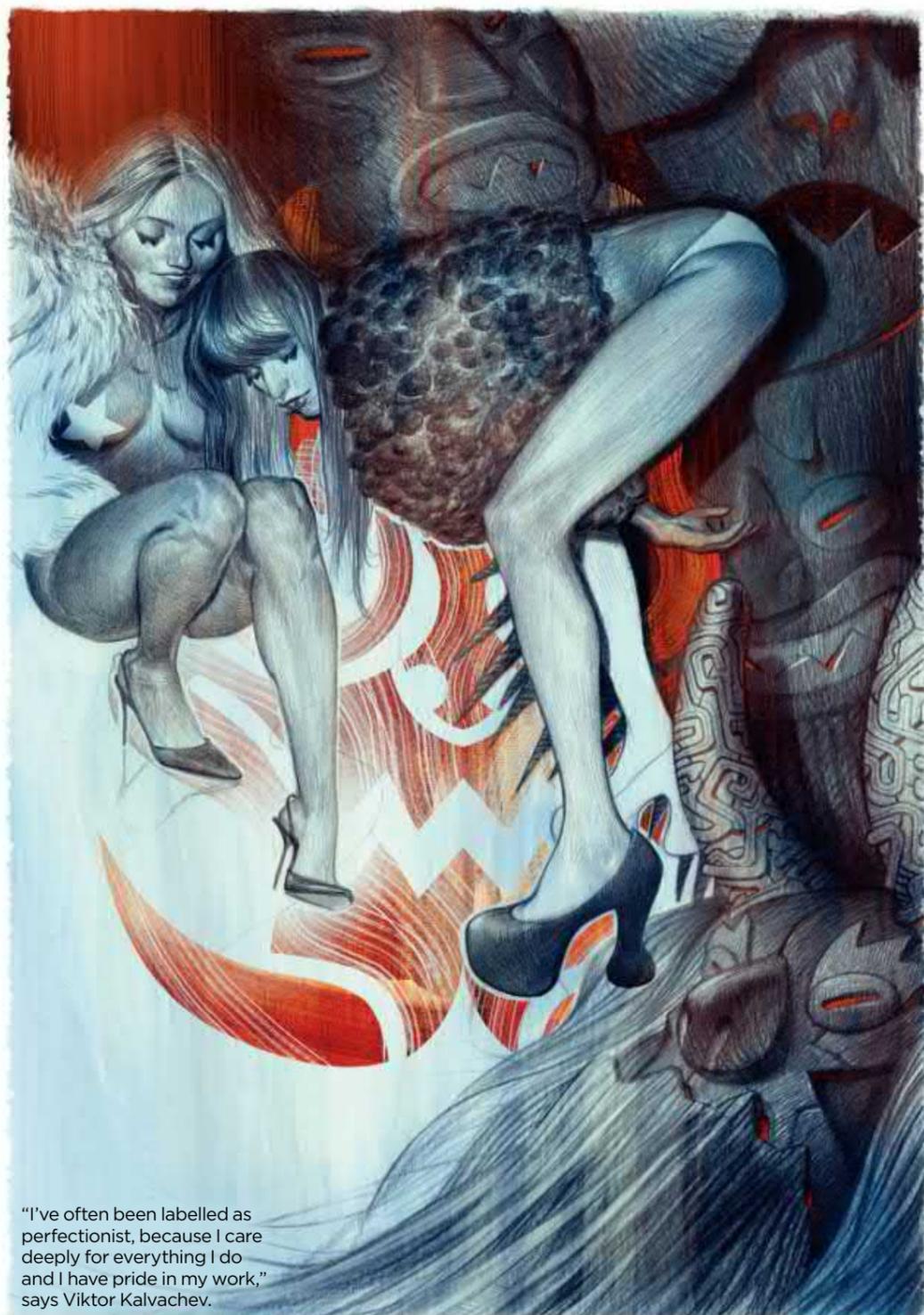
"I've often been labelled as perfectionist, because I care deeply for everything I do and I have pride in my work," says Viktor Kalvachev.

J Scott Campbell says that the confidence to argue against publisher expectations "doesn't come about right away in a career, but instead is built up and earned over time, and after many successes."

I was just a junior artist, our art director showed us an example of Jason Chan's art, which immediately inspired me," he says. "I built up my foundational skills over the following years and the process became cleaner, enabling me to work more efficiently and deliver higher-quality art as a result."

> ## 66 Perfectionism is a desire for the object to be perfect, not that it is perfect 99

↪ in your art. I've seen artists take brave chances and therefore improve much faster than me."

Chengwei continues: "I started to question why this was happening, then I realised that they were making bold decisions that enabled them to overcome their weaknesses. There is no single 'perfect' artist – it simply comes down to style."

HOUSE STYLE

Speaking of style, different studios and publishers have their own unique looks. These house styles can set a high bar for artists, but for visual storyteller **Viktor Kalvachev**, they help to relieve some of the expectation of perfection.

"Knowing how to understand a style and being able to recreate it is probably the biggest

advantage in my career," says Viktor, who has worked with the likes of Disney, Pixar and DC Comics. "I usually adjust my style to what the client wants and try not to force my personal view on the project, unless I'm asked to."

Similarly, Chengwei found the pressure of living up to the perfectionism of the Riot Studios house style a useful incentive. "When

Wei Weng's stylish art for World of Warcraft was a big influence on Chengwei, who says, "It feels similar to a traditional oil painting."

Meanwhile, for comic book artist **J Scott Campbell**, chasing the perfection of his artistic heroes helped to build his own unique visual language. "By settling on to a combination of four or five of my top artistic influences, and a mix of my own personal observations, I was able to get over my frivolous pursuit of unattainable artistic cloning and move forward on this more rewarding, artistically exciting and freeing path," he reveals.

PERFECTIONISM MYTH

These different types of perfectionism, either from studio expectations or personal standards, beg the question: does absolute perfectionism exist?

"Perfectionism is a desire for the object to be perfect, not that it is perfect," says Chengwei. ↪

"Don't be shy if you're chasing perfectionism," says Chengwei, "but just be mindful that when you are learning it can potentially slow you down and limit your mistakes and artistic growth."

Looking at the big picture helps Viktor to move on from perfectionism. "Whenever I get too focused on a detail, I step back and rethink how important is it in the scheme of things."

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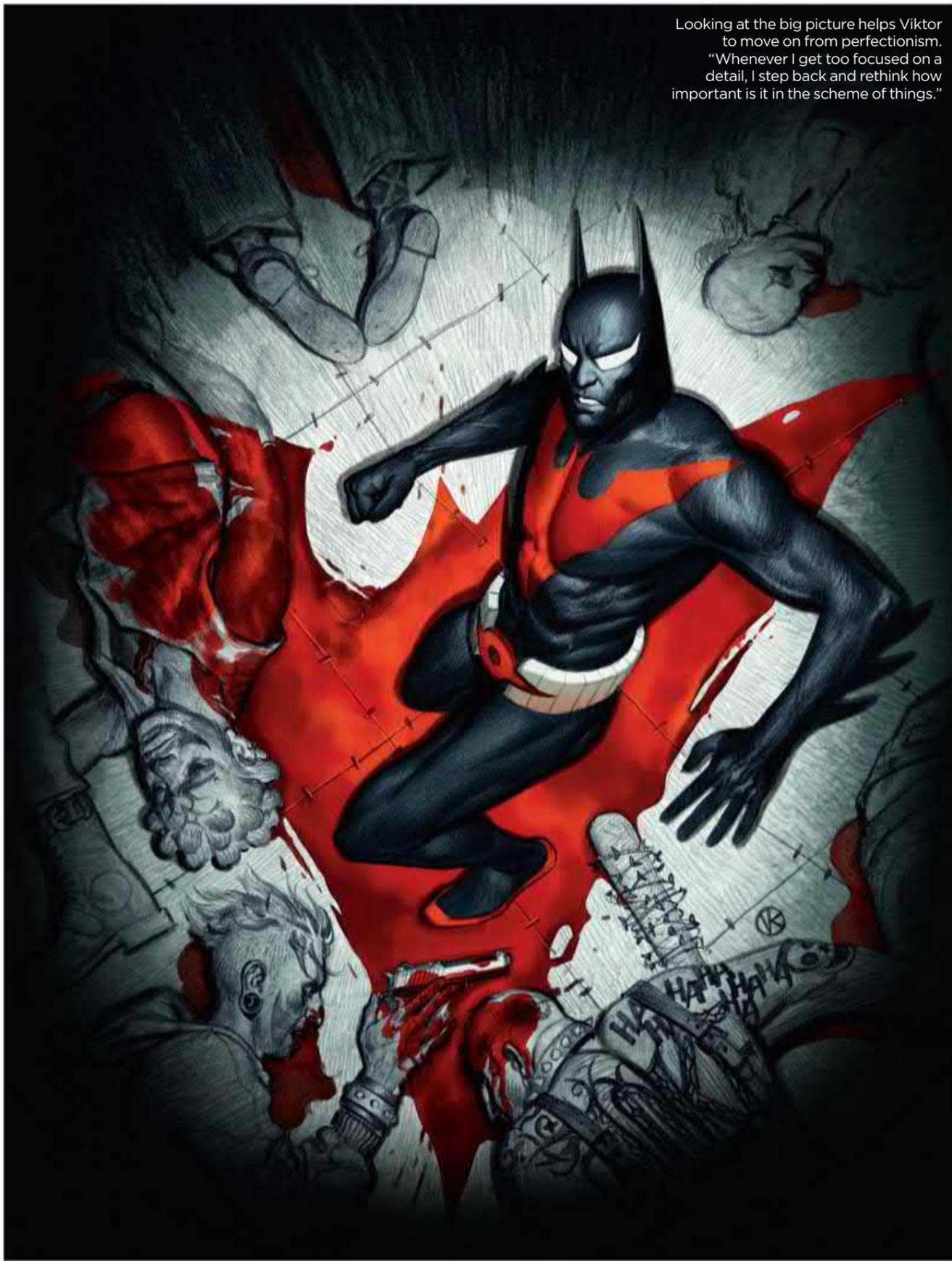
J SCOTT CAMPBELL

Feeling the pressure to be perfect? Don't worry, it happens to us all…

Did you chase perfectionism as you developed as an artist?
Like most new artists, I felt inadequate and that I was never going to be as good as the mentors I looked up to. But it was when I started taking risks that I began to turn the heads of these very same elder artists.

Rather than boring them with my imitation of their work, I began intriguing them with my unexpected choices. I felt encouraged by this new-found interest in my experimentation and that, by its very nature, freed me from any expectations of what my work should look like in anyone else's eyes.

What should artists focus on instead of perfectionism?
I've found the pursuit of perfectionism to be full of traps. Artistic growth comes from completing lots of different projects and studies in a timely manner, not by painstakingly working on one piece until it's perceived to be "perfect".

And work can often result in looking stiff when perfectionism is the goal. Perfectionism is the death of flow and looseness, and these are often the essence of inspired art. Chasing perfectionism can add hours, days, even weeks to a project, ultimately robbing you of your time, efficiency, and yes, money!

What would you say to artists feeling this type of pressure?
I can't think of any artists who chased perfectionism and achieved it. Art by its very nature is imperfect, and it's often in its imperfections that we find art interesting. So set out to produce good, inspired art – and lots of it.

J Scott Campbell has worked on a range of Marvel titles that include Spider-Man, Captain Marvel and X-Men.

www.jscottcampbell.com

"When I originally broke into the comics industry, my style was really just my crude and exaggerated copycat-ing of my artistic heroes," J Scott Campbell explains.

© DC Comics

"It's not until we get older and more self-aware about our art that we start to think about how good we are and how we compare to others," says Nuri.

Chengwei now looks for a clear way to convey messages with his images. "I'm now in a position where I have my own style – one that blends hyper-realism and stylised fantasy."
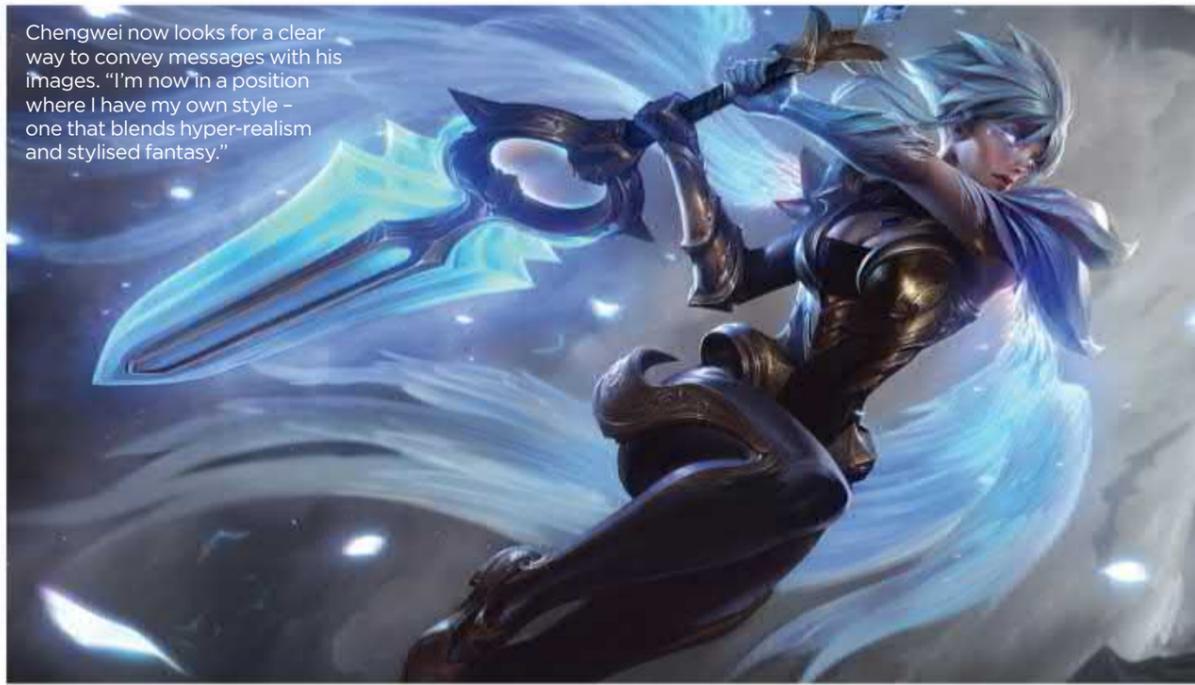
© Riot Games

➔ "Perfection is simply something that lives within the artist. It's an idea that they want to become the best version of themselves."

For Viktor, perfectionism is much more concrete than an idea: "From my point of view, perfectionism does exist and can be damaging to the creator."

"A friend of mine would redraw a comic book page over and over again until he thought it was semi-decent, only to move to the next one and repeat the self-torture. All his pages were masterpieces to the rest of us, but to him they were awful and disgraceful. One day he discovered how to let go and move on, and he's been really happy ever since."

POWERING THROUGH
Finding a balance between productivity and abandonment seems to be the cure for creativity that's been blocked by perfectionism.

"It's also important to understand that you're not alone in the creative

Perfectionism didn't trouble Viktor until high school art classes. "Technique became an issue and made me feel light years away from the gods Rembrandt, Durer and Goya, who I was trying to copy."

❝ Be confident in yourself and know that we're all going through the same process ❞

process," says Chengwei. "There are thousands of artists and their style is based on perfectionism, including myself. Sometimes I spend over six months on a single image.

"Be confident in yourself and what you like and know that we're all going through the same process," he adds. "There were many teachers and fellow artists who told me to not be perfect,

but to be rough and loose with my art. I know they wanted to encourage me to be brave and make mistakes, but the desire to make perfect art has led to my current style and ability."

For Nuri, getting over perfectionism is all about remembering what inspired you to create in the first place and recapturing that feeling. "Also, embrace healthier working habits and try not to be so hard on yourself.

"Focus on enjoying the creative process and learning as you go, even if it doesn't turn out exactly as you wanted. It's better to have finished something than nothing at all." ●

Record numbers attend Vertex 2019

CG celebration The highlight of the CG calendar didn't disappoint as it brought together creators and demystified the industry

Boasting names from the biggest studios in the industry, including ILM, Framestore and Atomhawk, Vertex 2019 certainly lived up to its promise as the ultimate event for 2D and 3D artists. This year's conference attracted more attendees than ever, with artists travelling from far and wide to hear from the experts.

"The event was amazing," says artist and host of The Student Art Podcast series, **Ross Baxter**, who flew down from Scotland to make it to the London-based event. "Vertex enabled me to get in touch with a lot of people in the industry and provided me with a stronger understanding of how things worked." As well as meeting one of his idols, VFX supervisor Christian Manz, Ross was also given invaluable feedback at a portfolio review session. "I would recommend Vertex, because it is a life-changing event if you utilise everything that it provides."

On top of speakers and reviews, this year's event also saw demos from our

Freelance character artist Eugenia Peruzzo gave creators feedback at the portfolio review sessions, while the giant doodle wall gave attendees a chance to express themselves.

sponsors, including the Oculus Medium team. "Our demonstration space gave us the chance to show people what Medium is capable of, and give them the opportunity to experiment with the tool in a low-pressure environment," says **Kelli Townley**, executive producer and product manager at Oculus Medium.

Amazed audiences got to see how the tool would work with architecture visualisation. "Glen Southern proved the effectiveness of VR during his talk on the main stage," adds Kelli. "He showed how artists can rapidly build environments and creatures in Medium, and iterate on their designs."

Roll on Vertex 2020. We're looking forward to seeing you there!

> ❝ I would recommend Vertex, because it is a life-changing event if you utilise everything that it provides ❞

The Games Workshop team, including miniature designer Ben Jefferson, revealed how 3D skills can be used to make gaming models that are played with around the world.

Claire Howlett (ImagineFX) and Rob Redman (3D World) presented the CG Awards.

Ron Ashtiani, founder of concept art studio Atomhawk, gave an inspiring talk on how artists can succeed in the video games industry.

The Oculus Medium demo revealed its potential as an architecture visualisation tool.

Attendees got creative as they sketched Andrew Crayford at Kan Muftic's life-drawing session.

Kilograph's Keely Colcleugh demonstrated how the rise of AR and VR has given artists more freedom than they have had in decades.

Artist and teacher Scott Eaton had plenty to say on the constant challenge of staying creative in a creative industry.

Splash Damage's Chris Harper was on hand to pass on his tips and tricks during an Ask the Artist session.

Virtual reality maestro Glen Southern covered how VR is being embedded into film and game production pipelines.

And relax… after the day's exciting events, attendees mixed with speakers to network at the venue's rooftop bar. And drink free beer!

Terry Dodson

Light room The US comic book artist and penciller takes us around his rural studio, which he shares with his wife Rachel Dodson, who often colours his art
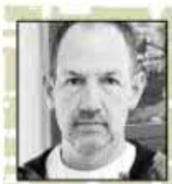
This is my full-time studio that I share with my wife and co-worker Rachel Dodson. I've worked in this rural location for well over a decade, although I also have a studio in the city of Florence, Oregon, that I use for the occasional human contact and tech advice. It's always helpful to have an answer to a tech problem...

The studio is in my home, which is convenient for commuting and for the cats. It's over 300 square feet in size, has a high ceiling, and has north- and east-facing windows, which enables me to watch birds nesting in the springtime. The space itself is open and roomy with lots of natural light. It's a space I enjoy being in.

The studio is on the top floor of my house. I like it being upstairs

Art Adams' Mojoverse stories and Jim Lee's X-Men run were two of my favourite works growing up, so it was a treat to draw them together for a series.

© Marvel Comics

Our studio is located in a rainforest region of Oregon, so we have plenty of natural scenery – right out of our windows!

> **The north- and east-facing windows means I can watch birds nesting**

I had initially used my Wacom Cintiq like my Wacom Intuos tablet for 13 years – looking at the computer monitor as I worked. But one day the monitor failed and I had to quickly learn how to colour directly on the Cintiq. I also had to learn how to work at a standing desk, which I had set up just after the holidays and then had an assignment due.

The scarf came from a football match in London; the green Australian Secret Service hat was a gift.

Prelims from Dean Cornwall for a mural, Black Cauldron character designs by Mike Ploog and a Maleficent line drawing from Sleeping Beauty.

I used this Sideshow Rogue statue to help with the Mr. and Mrs. X covers I did for Marvel.

Iron Man's helmet is an actual cast of the film version that I received as a gift from someone working on the film's production.

A trolley holding works in progress, my outdoor sketchbooks, a watercolour travel kit, and recent issues of Love and Rockets.

This is Chubs reclining in the leather chair. Cats are a big part of our life – they are such beautiful animals to study and draw.

This is a pillow my brother picked up for me in Croatia, because it reminded him of Pinky, my recently deceased cat.
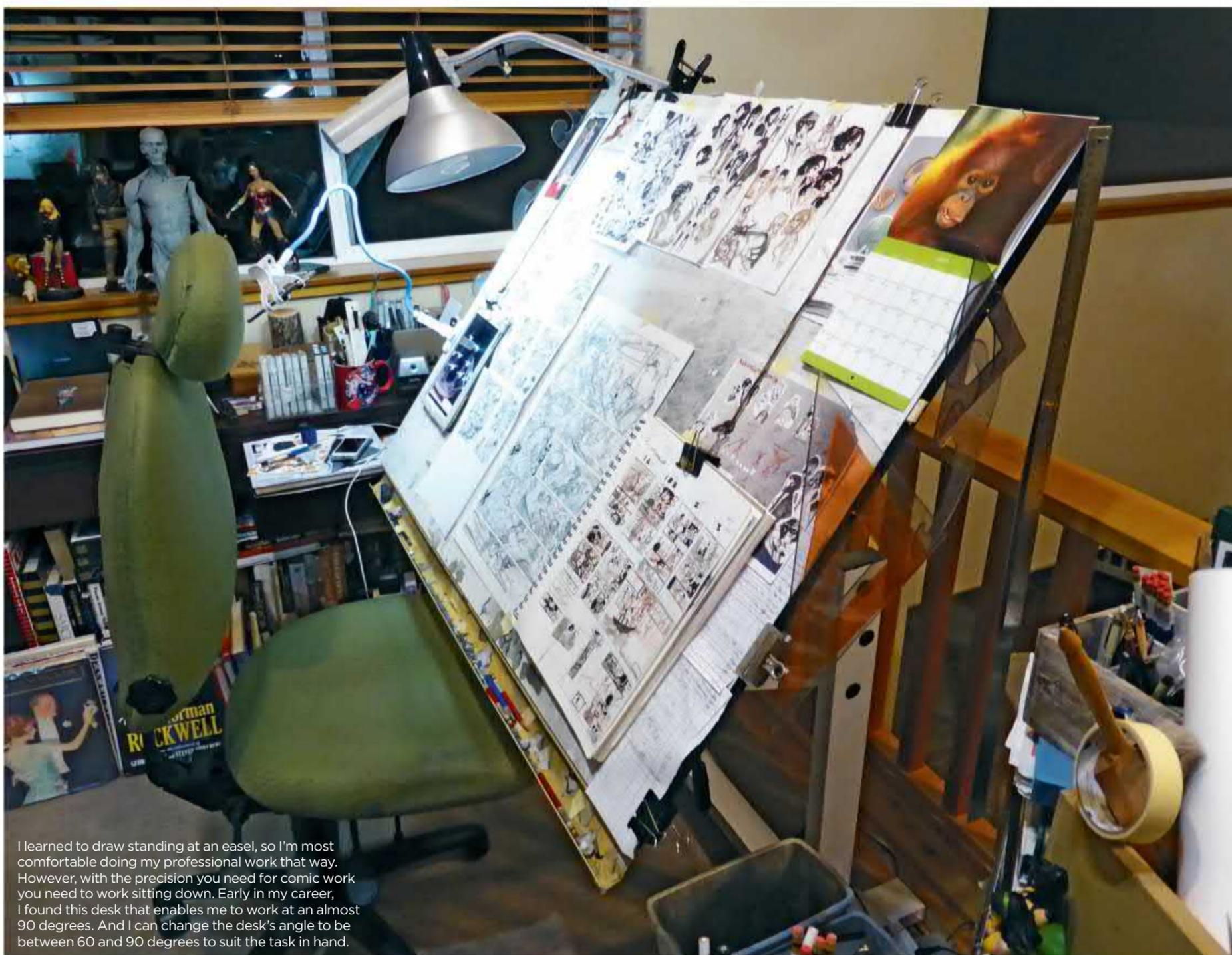
I learned to draw standing at an easel, so I'm most comfortable doing my professional work that way. However, with the precision you need for comic work you need to work sitting down. Early in my career, I found this desk that enables me to work at an almost 90 degrees. And I can change the desk's angle to be between 60 and 90 degrees to suit the task in hand.

Having a real object to look at helps me solve problems while drawing comics, which are produced out of my head. See the dichotomy? I also get hired to design toys and statues, which is great – and a little weird – because my reference is based on my own drawings.

I love Bernie Fuchs's work, especially his landscapes. There's a lot of stuff in his work that I recognise in how I was taught to paint – the burnt umber underpainting, the impressionistic use of colour – so it's a real pleasure to be able to study from an original work.

Initially, I used this small mirror for looking at myself for expressions and reference. Then came the digital camera and now the phone. But I still use it for reference that's facing the wrong direction: a left-facing face when I'm drawing a right-facing face, say.

I still use a light box – specifically this light and bright Huion LB3 LED Light Pad. I don't use it to trace, but rather to look at my work backwards and correct it. I learned this from the comic artist Chris Sprouse at the beginning of my career and have done this ever since. I do this all the time in Photoshop as well.

Buckaroo Girl by Olivier Vatine. Olivier is an amazing and influential artist and his footprint in bandes dessinées is still felt today. We worked together in the 90s on a Star Wars project for Dark Horse and I learned so much by looking at his work.

Oooh, the thing in the basement. I knew this cover was all about the light of the flame – and it works for the most part – but I'm still not happy with the shadows.
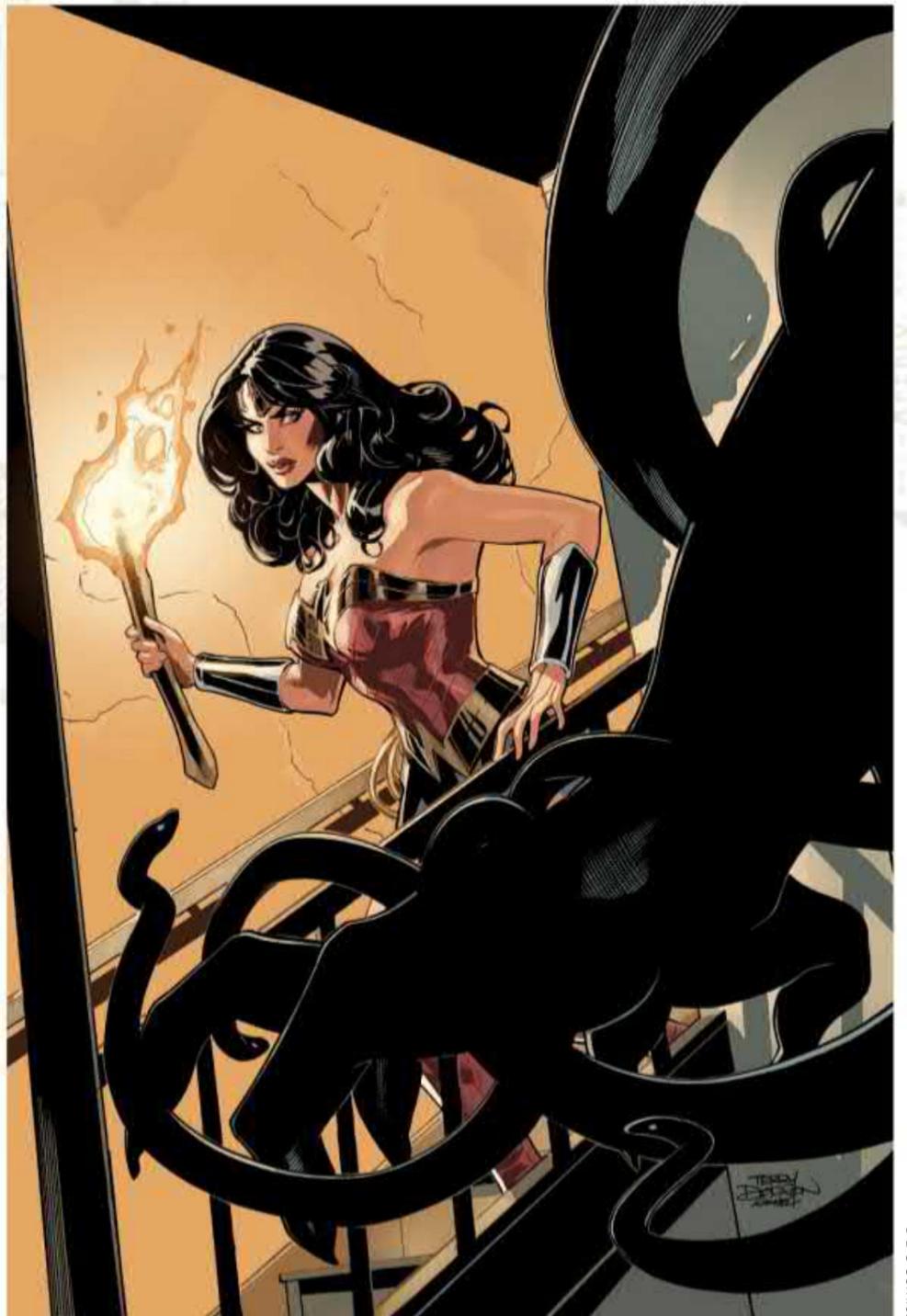
Here, I had to figure out Wonder Woman's costume and really work to make it a piece of art that I was happy with.

These are the same basic drawing instruments I've used my entire career, give or take the odd update from the manufacturer.

I developed some repetitive stress problems early in my career and one of the best ways to avoid it is by taking regular breaks. A timer reminds me when to go for a walk. Take a break – your body will thank you!
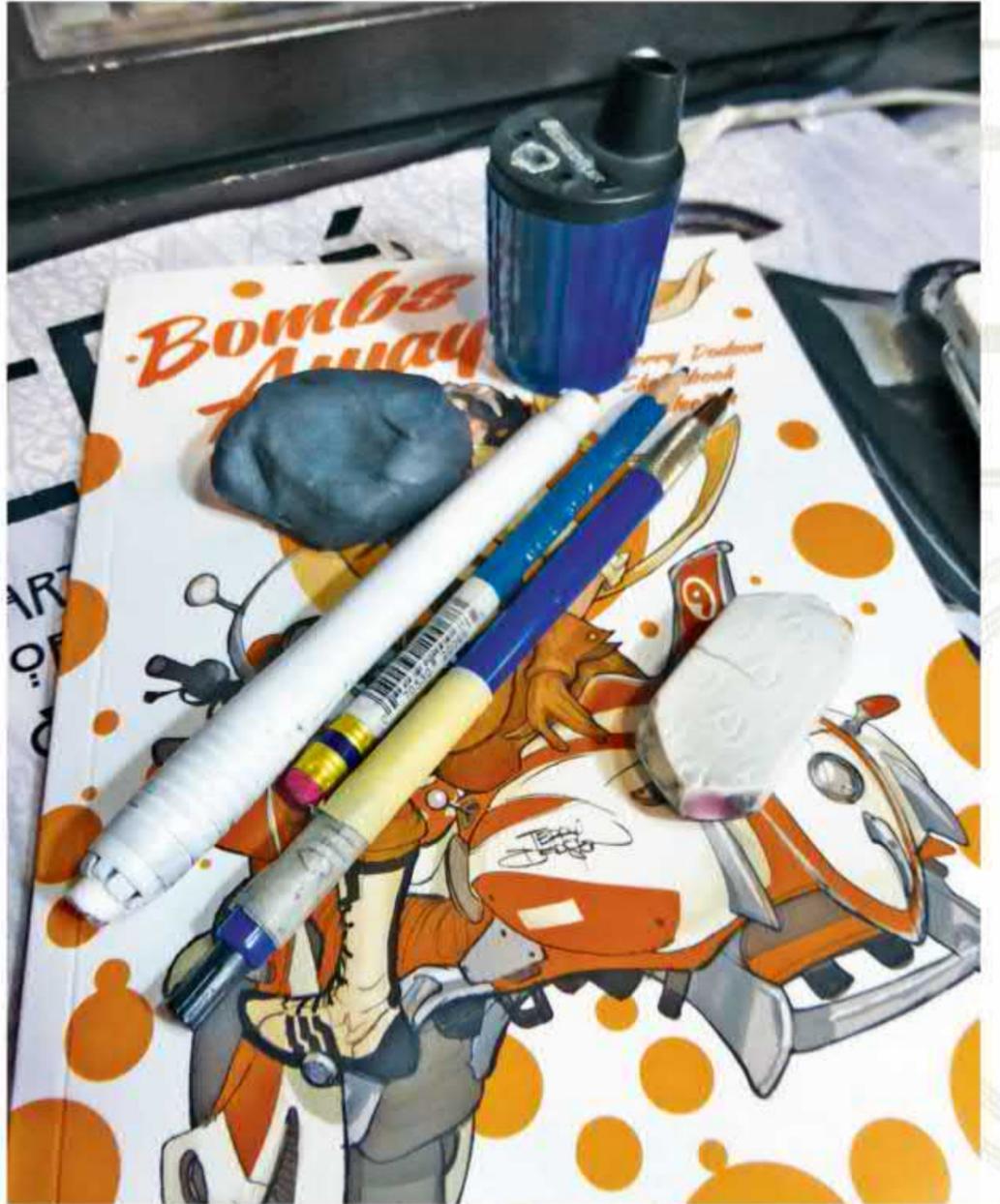
because I get extra exercise every time I want to take a break: I need to go down a minimum of two flights of stairs to go anywhere! I have a second studio in the basement, which I use for painting and storage.

I've been working for myself for over 25 years now and so my working day is structured and organised. I paint pretty religiously between the hours of

remainder of the time, only tackling emails and social media as necessary. I try to limit my next session on social media until after lunch and then before I work in the evening.

I mute my phone and computer so I can't hear messages and emails coming through. However, I generally have some kind of sound in the background – mostly music, but it can

"I get extra exercise every time I want to take a break: I go down a minimum of two flights of stairs to go anywhere!"

9am and 12pm. I'll take an hour for lunch and try to get some fresh air if the weather is decent. It's back to work from 1pm to 4pm, then I'll exercise outside if possible and at the gym if not. Then we prepare dinner. I'm back in the studio from 7pm to 9pm Monday through Friday, and 9am to 12pm most Saturdays.

I generally begin the day by responding to emails and social media until 9am, and then illustrate for the

be the radio, a podcast, a sporting event that I'm interested in, a film or TV show. I also like having commentaries from films or other media playing in the background.

Up on the walls are some original artworks from my favourite artists, which is inspiring to look at when I need a mental break. I have a number of books, comic books, toys, statues dotted around the room, files for storing art and a leather chair to sit

and relax at. I draw at a seated table and I do all my digital work (scanning, colouring and design), emailing and web surfing at my standing desk.

Terry is known for his work on Harley Quinn, Spider-Man, Star Wars, Captain Marvel, Wonder Woman and X-Men. His wife Rachel inks his artwork. Terry's creating his own graphic novel series Red One with writer Xavier Dorison and the upcoming Adventureman! with writer Matt Fraction. See his art at www.terrydodsonart.com.

I chose this space in my house to work for its light and openness. Indeed, I have to close those blinds if I'm doing computer work during the first half of the day, so I really try to colour early and late.

This turned out exactly how I saw it in my head which is always a treat. I drew the first story of Captain Marvel so I always enjoy getting another chance to illustrate the character.

I love books. I grew up with them all over in my house. I started working before everything was available online and so I had to buy books that featured the reference I needed or the artist who I was into.
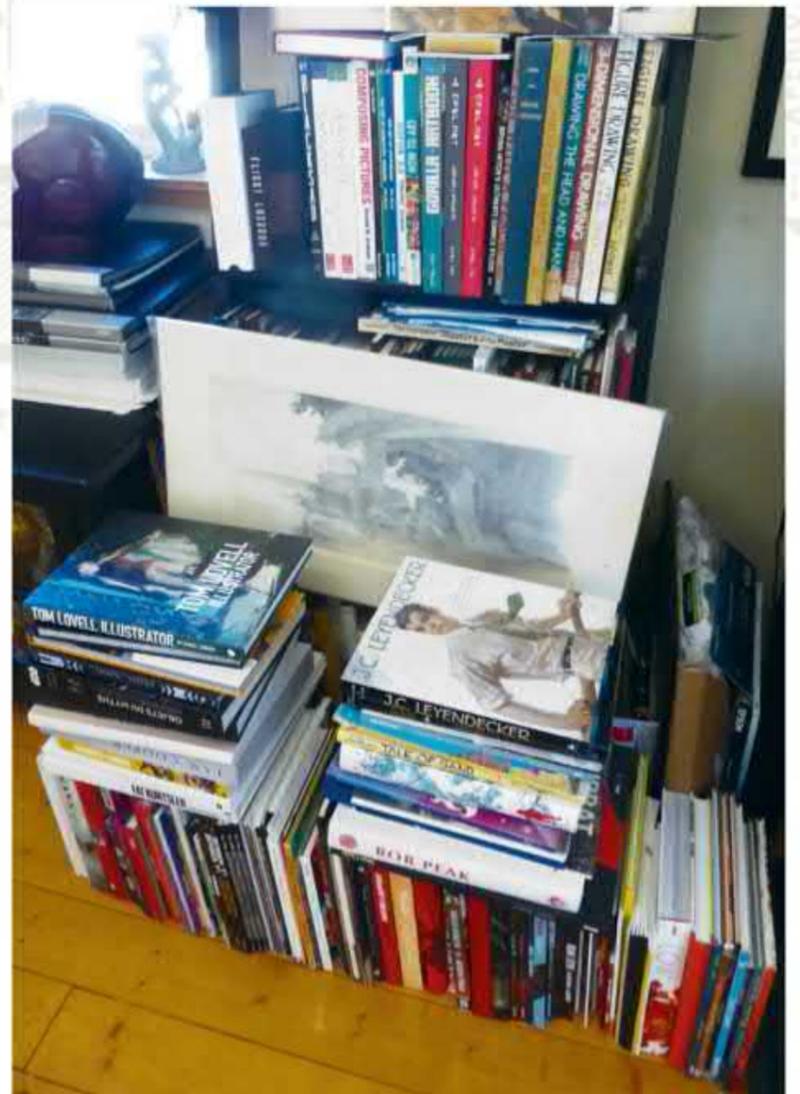
© Marvel Comics

Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS

Contact the editor, Claire Howlett, on claire@imaginefx.com or write to ImagineFX, Future Publishing, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA, England

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Post your art or photos on Instagram:
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Character design, colour keys and cover art by Pernille Ørum – all things to look out for in next month's exciting animation issue.

Reading up on animation

I'm a painter from Iraq and a fan of your wonderful magazine. I'm writing a Ph.D. thesis on animation and wondered if you could send me some books on animation in the form of PDFs, to help me with my studies. If so, I'd be very grateful.
Wasfi Falih, via email

Claire replies *Wasfi, thank you for your email. Unfortunately we don't have any books on animation that we can send you. We do have an animation edition of our magazine coming up next issue (see page 74 for more details). I hope this helps and good luck with your Ph.D.*

ImagineFX's ensuring success, and a request

I've been a long-term subscriber to ImagineFX for many years and still look forward to its arrival every month. I've followed a variety of art-related magazines over the years and many have come and gone, so it's a testament to your team's hard work and the artistic contributors that the magazine has endured where others have failed.

I also think the format for the magazine really works. The variety of sections and the layout definitely contribute to its success. I'm also

DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE?
Don't worry – you can still get hold of it. Visit **https://ifxm.ag/ifx-173**.

Patrick Brown's artwork appeared in issue 130, and made a strong impression on reader David.

pleased that despite one size change, the magazine has remained the same uniform design and shape. I used to get very annoyed by magazines that kept messing about with sizes and formats so the magazines/books didn't sit uniformly on a shelf (that's the meticulous graphic designer in me talking, but I know that it bothers a few people, too).

I discovered the Australian illustrator Patrick Brown through your magazine and absolutely love his work. His attention to detail, textures and understanding of light is exceptional. I know he's briefly featured in ImagineFX before, but if you could ever prise a video tutorial from him sharing his techniques I would be most grateful.

I'm also impressed with the work of Anna Podedworna who has done some exceptional artwork for the Witcher game. Again, her understanding of light and use of texture is unsurpassed. I found her on ArtStation. If you find her image of a character called Ida Emean in a yellow dress, walking past a cat you'll see exactly what I mean. If you want me to send you the link or image for convenience please let me know.

A tutorial from either or both of these talented artists would be most welcome. Please feel free to use bribery, blackmail, whatever it takes. If they appear in the same issue I'll frame it and get it insured.

That's all from me (finally). Thank you so much for producing a great and inspiring magazine.
David, via email

Claire replies *David, thanks so much for your email. I had to cut it back quite considerably to fit it in our Letters page, but rest assured we did take all of your points on board. I love Anna Podedworna's work. You're absolutely right – her use of light is exceptional. Patrick Brown is fantastic, too. I'm so lucky to be able to find and feature artists of such high calibre in ImagineFX. It really is a dream of a job.*

JUSTICE LEAGUE
Jorge helped relaunch Justice League in 2018 with writer Scott Snyder and artist Jim Cheung.

Artist Portfolio
JORGE JIMÉNEZ

The DC artist tells **Gary Evans** how his career began with an epiphany during a physical education exam

J orge Jiménez was in the third year of his physical education degree, and it was exam time. The Spaniard studied hard. He felt ready. Then something weird happened. He looked around and saw how his classmates seemed really motivated by what they were doing. He didn't have that. Sitting there in the classroom that day, Jorge had a bit of epiphany, a quiet little moment of revelation.

"I felt a bit out of place," Jorge says, "and, suddenly, it was as if my eyes were opened, and I thought: 'I am not this. Here, I'm just making up the numbers. I'm a cartoonist, and I've

❝ I am not this. I'm just making up the numbers. I'm a cartoonist ❞

always been a cartoonist!'" There was just one problem. Jorge hadn't drawn anything for years…

He grew up on the outskirts of Cádiar, a small mountainous village in the Granada region of southern Spain. His brothers were much older, so Jorge spent a lot of time alone. The one thing he always had was his drawing. His mother encouraged him. She made sure he had plenty of paper, oils, pencils and watercolours. But she challenged him, too. Jorge liked to sketch the cartoons he was waiting ➤➤

NO JOKE
Jorge's cover for DC Nation #0 features a particularly demonic-looking Joker.

Artist PROFILE

Jorge Jiménez
LOCATION: Spain
FAVOURITE ARTISTS: Greg Capullo, Olivier Coipel, Sean Gordon Murphy, Adam Hughes, Stuart Immonen, Jock, Masashi Kishimoto, Jim Lee, JC Leyendecker, Ralph Meyers, Moebius, Takeshi Obata, Sara Pichelli and Akira Toriyama
SOFTWARE: Photoshop, Clip Studio Paint
WEB: www.instagram.com/jorge_jimenez_art

VARIANT COVER
Jorge's limited edition variant cover for DC Nation #0, featuring Wonder Woman, Zatanna and Starfire.

© IDW Publishing

JURASSIC PARK
A fast-paced page from Jorge's work on IDW's Jurassic Park, the comic that led to his big break at DC.

NIGHTWING
This image was used on the cover of Nightwing Vol. 4 #37 written by Sam Humphries.

on TV. But his mother told him: watch first, draw later. This forced him to work from memory.

When he got a bit older, his parents signed him up for painting classes at a local art school. Because Jorge had always drawn freely, he found it frustrating when, during a still life class, a "bad art teacher" tried to force him to learn the measuring technique, where the artist holds out a pencil and squints at his subject.

"All the magic of drawing disappeared doing this and so, after a few days, I stopped attending class,

❝ If this was the price of living to draw, then I didn't want that ❞

and I promised that I wouldn't dedicate myself to drawing. If this was the price of living to draw, I didn't want that."

Jorge stopped drawing altogether. He focused on sport, his other great passion. He got into downhill mountain biking and went to university to study physical education. Then he had his quiet moment of revelation in his third year of study. Jorge rededicated himself to art. It cost him a lot – he dropped out of university, broke up with his girlfriend – but he was determined to make it as a professional comic book artist.

BIG BREAK

Jorge's big break, he believes, came about because of dinosaurs. He spent a lot of time going to comic cons in Spain, showing his work and trying to meet the right people. He eventually signed with an agent, Eduardo Alpuente, who secured him work illustrating a Spanish children's book. His next commission was with the US comic book publisher IDW, working on Transformers and Jurassic Park. This led to a job on Fringe, his breakthrough assignment at DC Comics. ➤➤

STYLING SUPERBOY
Jorge on how a meme inspired this cover for Young Justice...

"This Superboy piece is quite recent. It marked the reappearance of this classic character in the new series Young Justice, and belongs to the collection of variant covers of issue #1. For me, the story was very funny and I wanted to take the opportunity to make the fans laugh too, basing the drawing on the famous meme of the couple in which the boyfriend stares at a passing young woman while his girlfriend looks at him with a mixture of anger and disbelief.

This piece is made entirely by me, including the colouring process. I wanted the composition to be similar to the meme, while reversing the roles of the characters so that Superboy becomes the protagonist. I made a very loose initial pencil drawing **(1)** to show my idea to the editors.

I polished it a little more **(2)**, then laid down the digital ink **(3)**, taking advantage of an effect that I've been using lately. This dry brush effect gives a slightly more realistic point to the volumes. On the ink version, I also included a separation with flat grey tones **(4)** to highlight the silhouettes of the characters.

Finally, in the colour phase **(5)**, I wanted to work with relatively desaturated colours. This enabled me to highlight specific points of the image, such as the red tones.

At an aesthetic level, one of the things that I enjoy most is looking at current fashions and how people dress. So I put the couple in clothing that's similar to the models in the catalogue of a well-known clothing store. Whenever I can, I look for elements that help connect an image with reality and with the people who see it."

SUPERBOY
Jorge's art was one of six variant covers produced for Young Justice Vol. 3 #1, which was published by DC late last year.

STAR SCRIPTWRITER
A page from Justice League #2. Jorge admitted that working a "star scriptwriter like Scott Snyder" increased the pressure he felt.

TRANSFORMERS
Jorge's cover for Transformers: Dark of the Moon Vol. 3, written by IDW Publishing editor-in-chief John Barber.

❝ The truth is, I'm the one who puts pressure on myself because I want to prove I can be better every time ❞

➤➤ "I continuously sent sample pages to DC, and I showed the pages of dinosaurs from Jurassic Park. The protagonist of Fringe travelled to the past where there were dinosaurs. Maybe it was coincidence, but I'm convinced that was the reason why I got in at DC Comics," the artist says.

Jorge went on to work on Batman, Superman, Justice League and, in 2017, the new version of Super Sons. There's a lot of pressure working on such prestigious titles. He sits down in front of the blank page knowing exactly how many eyes are going to see whatever he comes up with. On top of that, he's working with big-name writers such as Scott Snyder, his collaborator on Justice League.

"You know Scott Snyder comes from working with Greg Capullo, who's like an artistic god to me, and now the readers will move from that great artist to me. But the truth is, I'm the one who puts pressure on myself because I want to prove I can be better every time, tell stories better, and enjoy drawing. The pressure is hard, but it's also very ➤➤
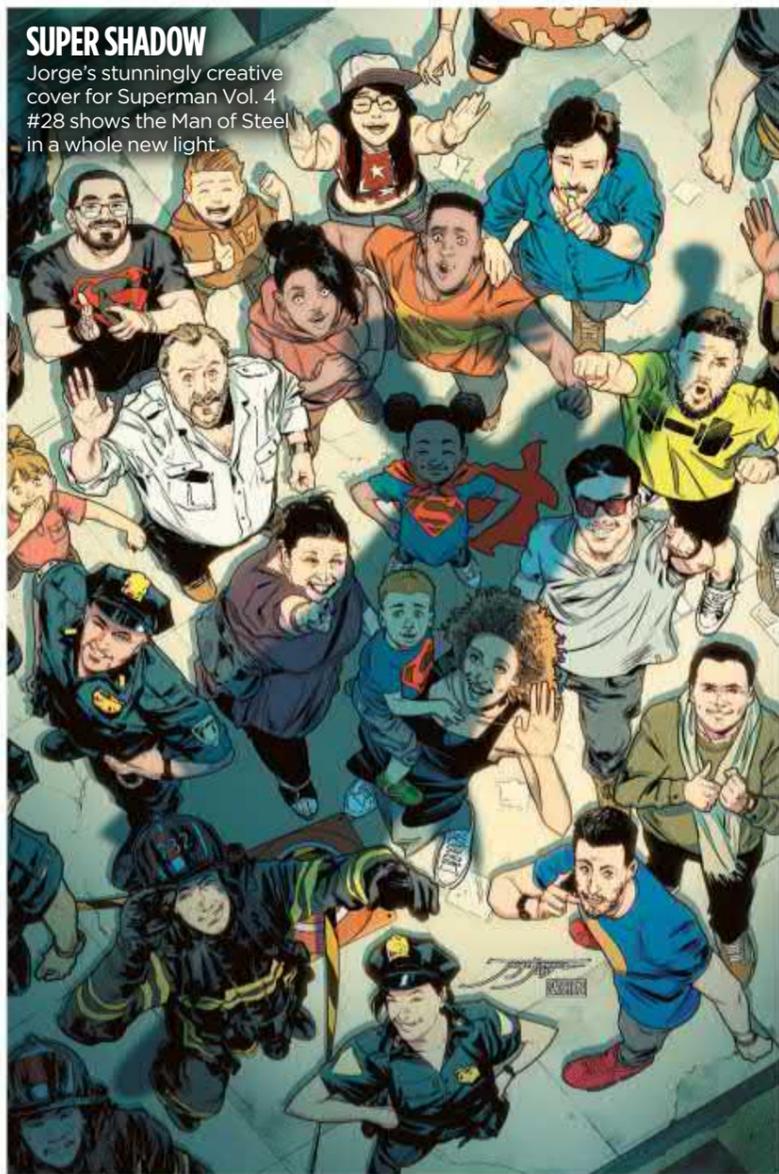
SUPER SHADOW
Jorge's stunningly creative cover for Superman Vol. 4 #28 shows the Man of Steel in a whole new light.

COMIC CROSSOVER
In this scene from Fringe, Jorge shows the talent for drawing prehistoric monster that he honed working on Jurassic Park.

MOVIE ADAPTATION
This cover for IDW's Transformers was used for the comic adaptation of the Transformers: Dark of the Moon film.

beautiful and special, and when you give your maximum effort you remain at peace with yourself."

He isn't one for giving advice. What works for him won't necessarily work for you. But he says, for those looking make a career in comics, the key is to keep the passion. If you start drawing mechanically or, worse, if art becomes a chore, then you've got problems. You also need to keep learning and improving, and do it for yourself before doing it for anybody else.

"Lately, I see that people are more aware of the acceptance of others. Before finishing a drawing – and without being up to a professional standard – they're already uploading it to social networks to get 'likes'. Obviously, we all have egos. It's always nice to receive positive feedback. But I think it's much better for those starting out to forget all that and focus on drawing, to enjoy this process that's wonderful, like when you were a child and there was nobody watching."

Starting a new project, Jorge first reads the script. He's reading and images begin to appear in his head – some detailed, some abstract. He does a quick pencil sketches, which he sends off for approval from the editor. Once he gets the nod, he adds more detail, then moves on to the digital ink. Finally, he'll either colour the image himself or send it off to his long-term collaborator, colourist Alejandro Sanchez. Even though he's drawing superheroes, he likes the work to be subtly anchored to real life – often through the clothes characters wear.

GOOD DAYS AND BAD

There are days when things go well and days when they don't. He's learned how to "self-identify" what sort of day it's going be so he can adjust his schedule accordingly. On good days, he feels excited about his current project, can't wait to start drawing, and so he focuses on the page that's most important in the chapter he's working on. This page will naturally draw the reader's attention to the illustration,

> **Focus on drawing, to enjoy this process that's wonderful, like when you were a child**

NEED FOR SPEED
Jorge's variant cover Superman Vol.4 #25 captures a whole scene in a single frame.

FINAL SUPERSON
Jorge's cover for Superson #16, which was the final issue – causing much outcry among DC fans.
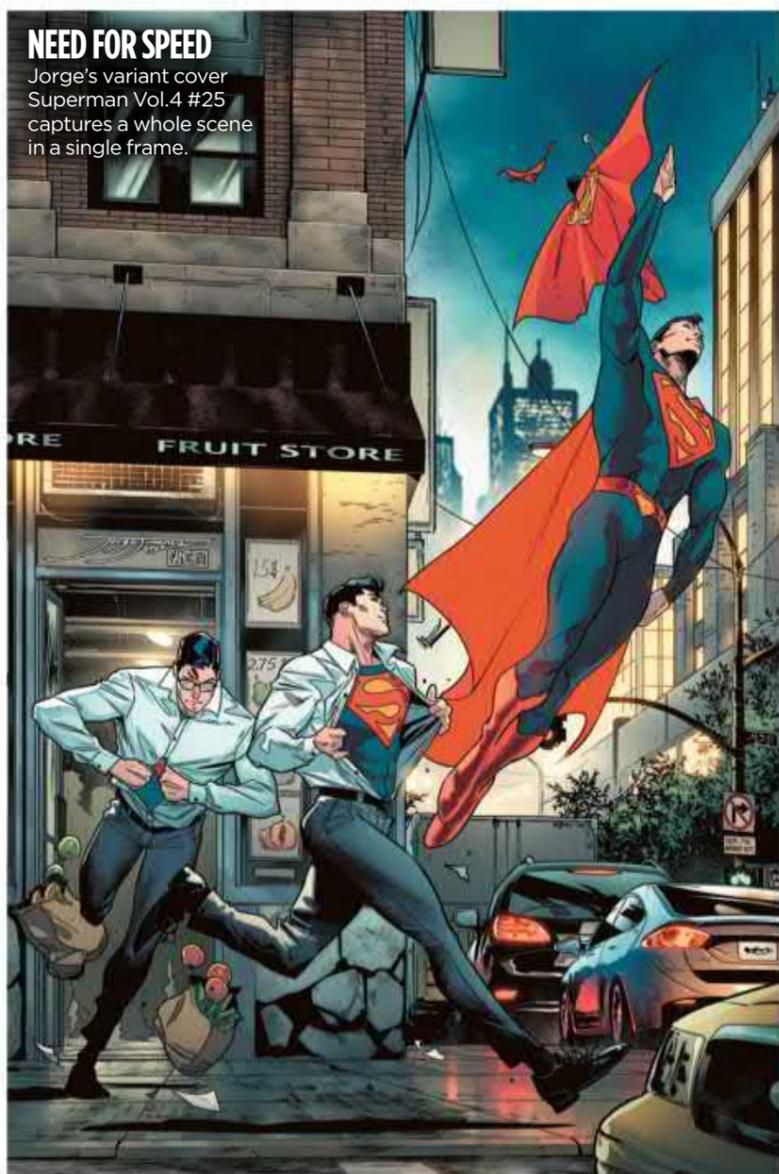
TIME TRAVELLING
Jorge's first job at DC saw him working on a time-travelling Fringe story.

TRUE COLOURS

Jorge talks about his professional and personal relationship with colourist Alejandro Sanchez

"Alejandro is not only my co-worker, but also a good friend. It's been about three years since we started working together. We sent joint samples of our work to DC and, after many attempts, the company finally gave us a chance, and now it's very happy with our work. I insisted on being allowed to work with him, because of the importance of the connection between the artist and the colourist.

I send pages to him directly, and I tell him what my intention is in a particular scene, or how I imagined the light, or the ambience. He does the work based on those notes. We talk continuously, every day, many times. Often what he sends back is much better than my initial vision.

If I have any more notes I let him know, and if he wants to contribute something else, he also lets me know. Finally, when we both see that the art's perfect, we send it to the publisher. We have been working together for years, and obviously we've not always agreed – sometimes he wants to kill me!

But, honestly, we have a good relationship. Because we're more than colleagues. We're friends. He really makes my work shine, and I think the figure of the colourist is undervalued. We should all be aware that they are as important as anyone in comics."

SUPERMAN PINUP
Jorge created a pin-up in Action Comics 1000: "It was an honour to be part in this very special comic!"

a point in the story where they'll linger over the art. He thinks about every last detail because he wants to make sure the finished piece is "as bright as possible." At this stage, reference is crucial.

WORK HARDER, GET BETTER

Jorge loves to look at projects by artists he admires. He knows how to enjoy the art of others without letting it make him feel inferior. This is important. Instead, he tries to get into their heads, work out what they would do in a particular situation. It makes him want to work harder, get better.

"When it comes to returning to your own style, you can filter everything you've learned from other people and you'll be better. It's dangerous when you obsess over the style of a certain artist, to the point that you lose your own identity. You're deceiving yourself thinking that it's better for your art to look like theirs. But to be them? Their work is already there. You just have to be yourself."

Bad days – the times Jorge feels like he's completely forgotten how to draw, and he focuses on panel-to-panel transition pages. Readers pass over these sequences quite quickly. They

> 66 **It's dangerous when you obsess over the style of a certain artist** 99

SUPERSONS
A dynamic page from Supersons #1 that Jorge created with Batman & Robin and Superman writer Peter J Tomasi.

FRINGE
Fringe has a special place in Jorge's heart – it was his first project with comics giant DC.

ATMOSPHERE
A scene from Superman Vol. 4 #7 which is atmospheric in more ways than one and shows Jorge's talent for dynamic drawing.
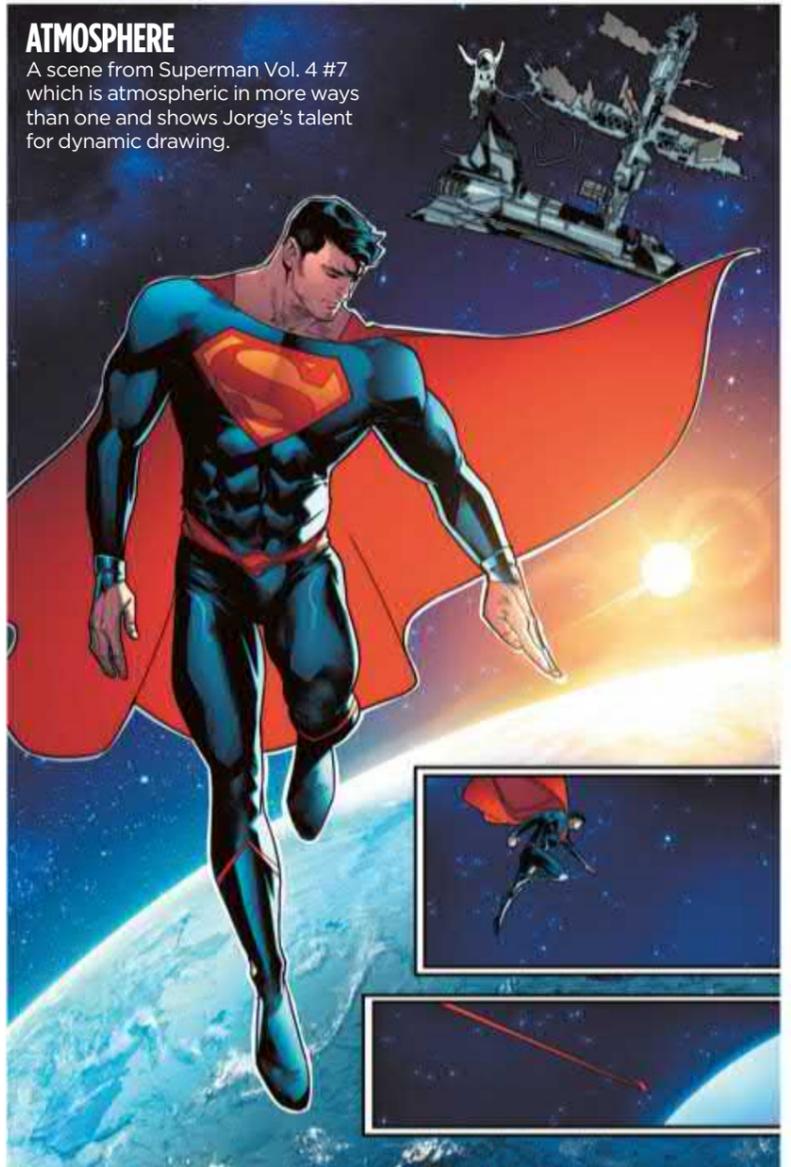
need less impact. But good day or bad, he has to make sure he gets work done. Comic book deadlines are notoriously tight. If the drawings aren't coming easily, he has no choice but to double his hours. The reader can never know he's having a bad day.

ENJOYING THE DAILY RESET

Sport and comic books are in many ways strange bedfellows. But, a decade after Jorge quit one to focus on the other, they both play an important role in his life. He now lives in Granada (the city), not far from Cádiar. He tries his best not to neglect family and friends, but admits he works too much.

That's where sport comes in. It's his "escape," his "daily reset." Whatever's going on with work, he makes sure he

runs, goes to the gym, and eats well. Even so, working in comics – the tight deadlines, the long hours, the pressure – it affects his quality of life. And he knows this isn't sustainable in the long run: "In a few years," Jorge says, a little bit cryptically, "I want to do other things." But for now, he's happy to enjoy this stage of his career. He once let a bad art teacher take the magic out of drawing. He'll never let a busy schedule do the same.

"When I was kid, before I knew how to speak, I already knew how to draw. It's what I have always been. So I decided to dedicate my life to exploring my ability to draw, see how far I can go. Whatever happens, I can assure you that for the rest of my life I will keep drawing."

Sketchbook

Daniel Warren Johnson

Sketching film stills and animals with human bodies all help furnish this US comic artist with ideas for his own stories

Artist PROFILE

Daniel Warren Johnson
LOCATION: US

Daniel is a Chicago-based comic book writer and artist. His creator-owned title, EXTREMITY, was met with popular and critical acclaim, netting him an Eisner Award nomination for Best Limited Series. He first came to the public's attention with his own web-based comic, SPACE-MULLET. This led to work with publishers including Marvel, DC, BOOM! and Image Comics.
www.danielwarrenart.com

EXTREMITY
VOL 2 PROOF OF CONCEPT

"Sometimes before I write anything for my comics, I need to see if my ideas will work visually. This was a set-piece that I knew I wanted to highlight in EXTREMITY without bringing it up in the dialogue. I was also experimenting with how I could represent ancient tile art."
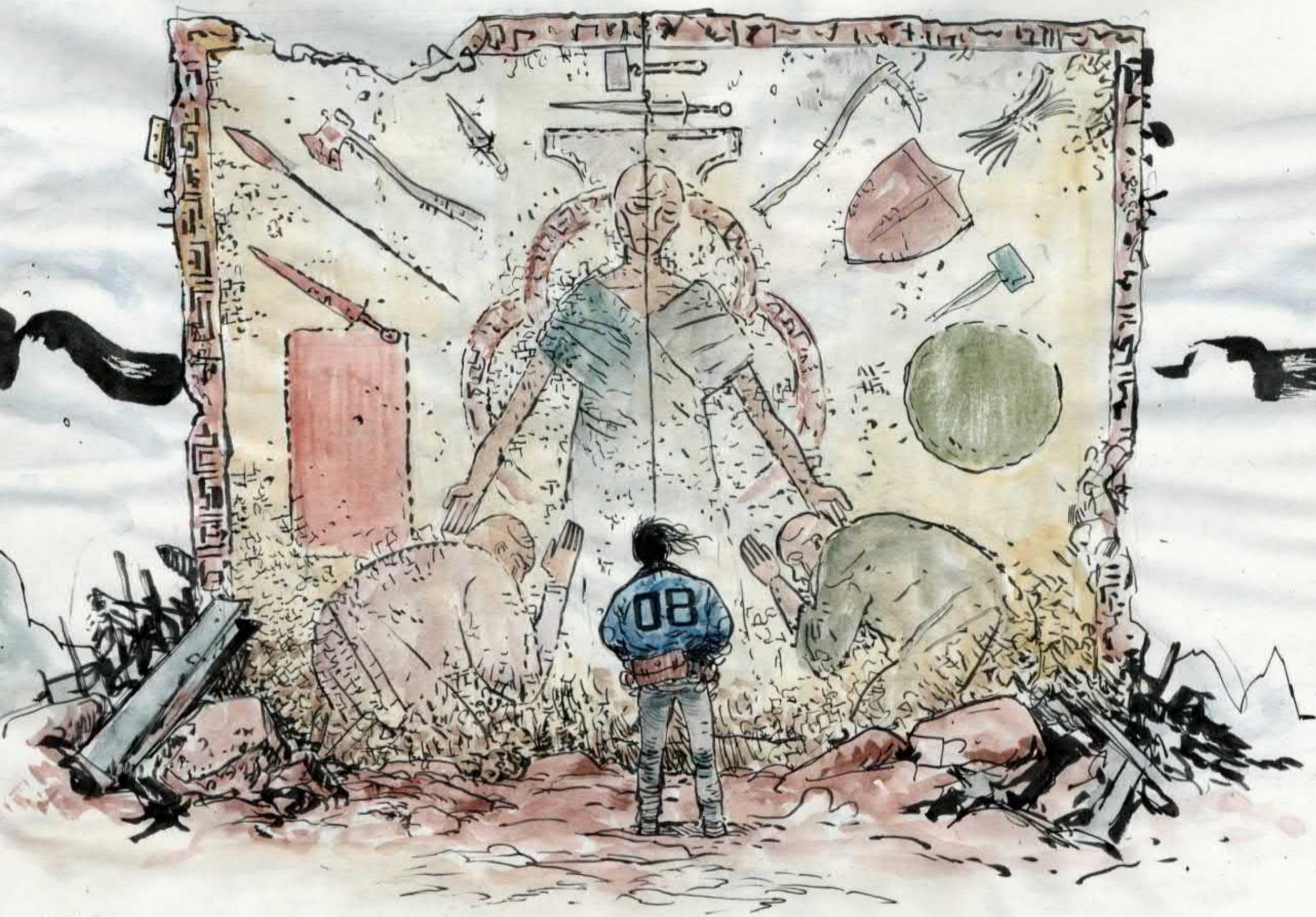
> ❝ I pause films so I can sketch the compositions as I watch the movie ❞

MURDER FALCON CONCEPT ART
"When first laying out a new story, I let my mind wander through my sketchbook. This was my attempt at figuring out what a final scene from my series MURDER FALCON would look like. I usually cram a bunch of unrelated things in my sketchbooks as well."

INKTOBER 2017
"I love drawing animals, especially with human bodies. This was a little story I put together to just have fun and explore visuals that I don't usually create."

YOJIMBO GESTURAL SKETCH
"One of my favourite artist disciplines is to put on films with strong compositional elements, then pause them so I can sketch the compositions as I watch the movie. This is from Kurasawa's film Yojimbo."

EXTREMITY LOCATION DESIGN

"Before I thumbnail and plan out an issue, I try to get a sense of the tone and feel of all the locations that my characters will visit. This was for issue one of EXTREMITY, where Thea attacks an enemy outpost. It's a good exercise for me to mentally prep myself for the new shapes and textures for each scene."

❝ I try to get a sense of the tone and feel of all the locations that my characters will visit ❞
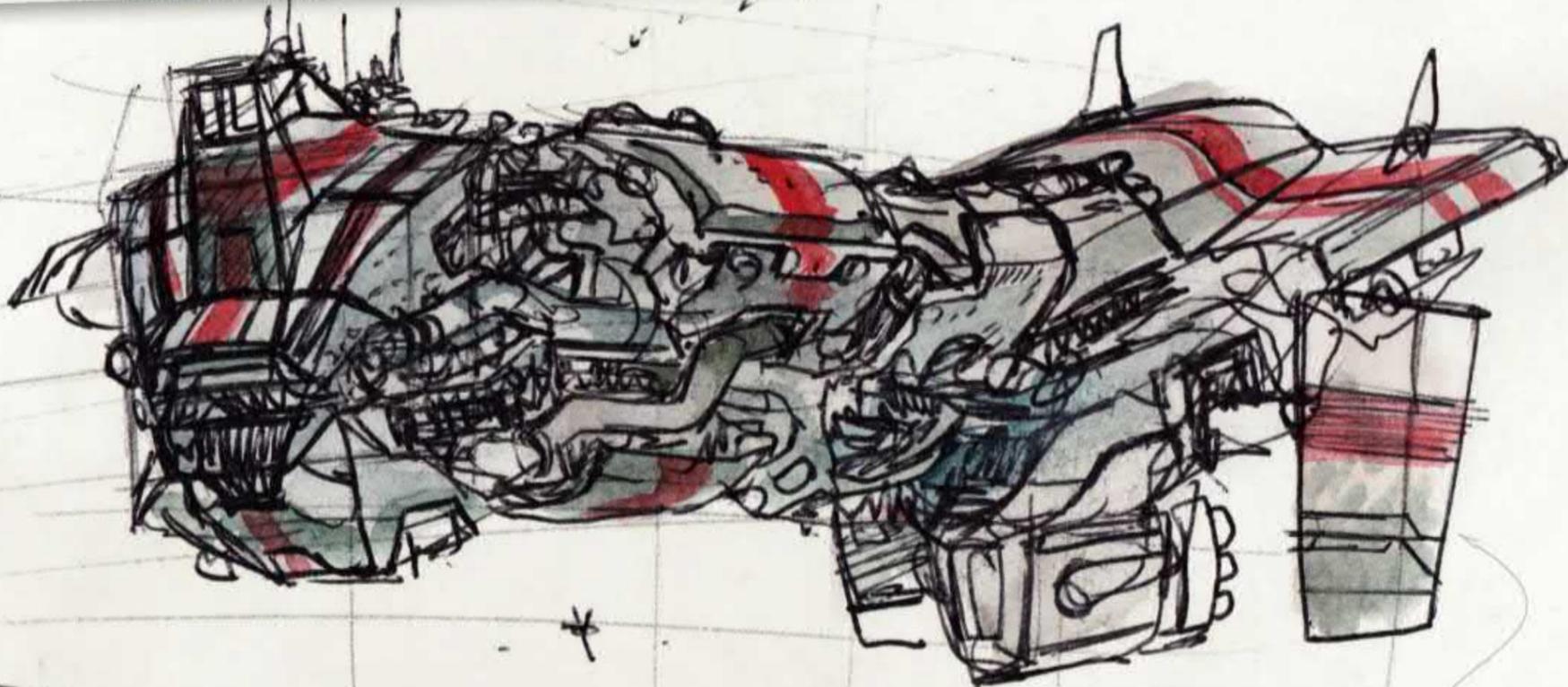
MEDICAL SHIP CONCEPT

"Sometimes I just like to sketch whatever! This was me trying to come up with new ship ideas, and possibly use for a future sci-fi comic, but mostly I just like drawing spaceships."

HOBBIE FROM EXTREMITY CONCEPT

"I work on my character designs a lot before they reach their final stage, but sometimes I'll draw a character once and I know it's the right look. This was the case for a side character in EXTREMITY – he barely changed from this sketch onward."
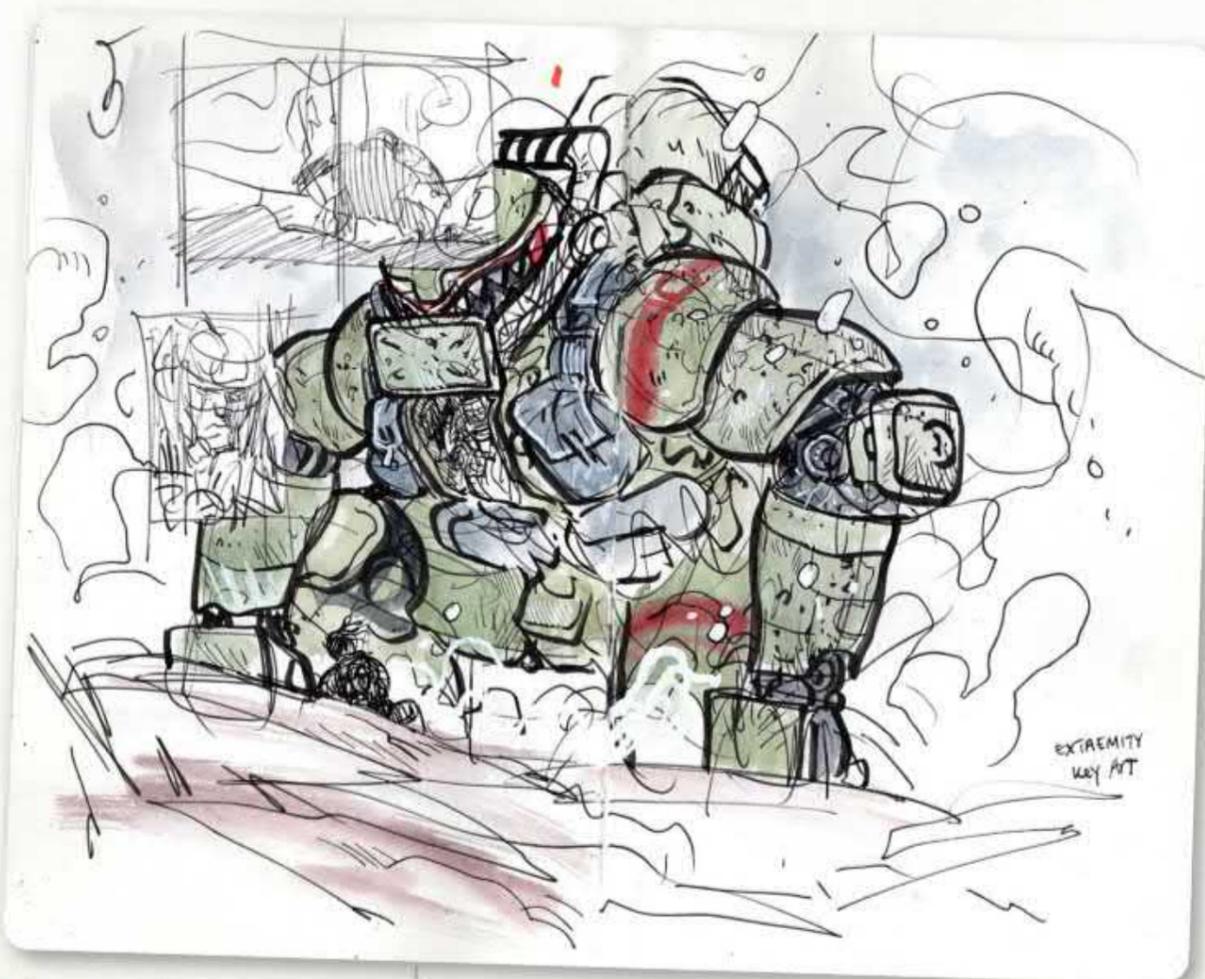
EXTREMITY ISSUE 11 KEY FRAME SKETCH

"When writing my stories, I need to draw parts of the issue to make sure I'm hitting the dramatic scenes correctly, and map out where the issue's visual climax is. Here, Thea sees her brother in a mech suit, and I needed to problem-solve the best way: not only to show it clearly, but dynamically as well."

ART EXPERIMENT

"This was an earlier, unsuccessful attempt to draw tile art for EXTREMITY. I hadn't figured out how to show the texture of the art within the line art without saturating the image with excess detail. That's what sketchbooks are for, though!"

JUST FOR FUN

"Letting my mind wander again! Sometimes the coolest ideas come from doing this."
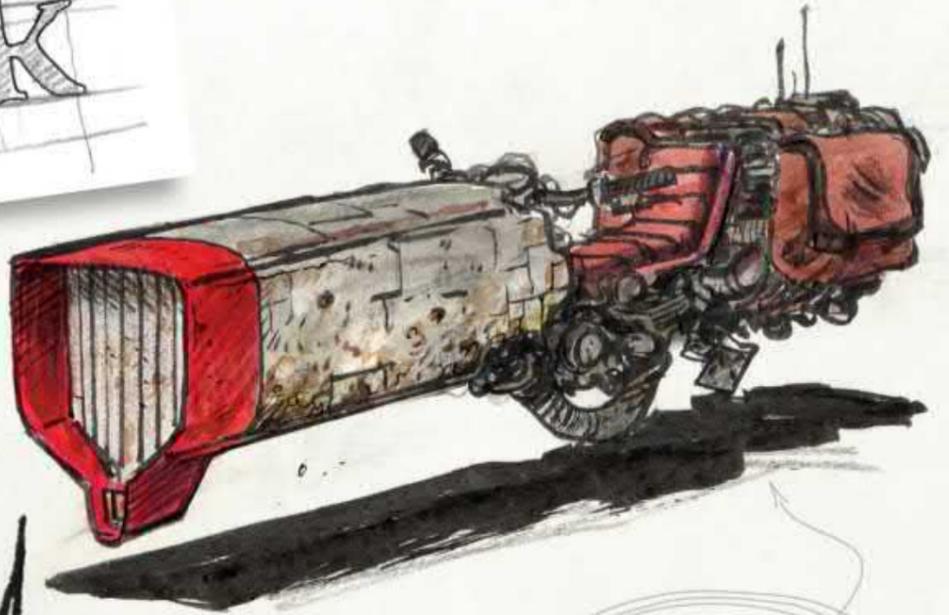
THEA'S BIKE

"When a specific piece of tech always shows up in my books, I like to have an 'official' image of it so I can always refer back to it. That's what this was for. It's way too 'put together' to look like a sketch, but it did the job!"

PUNY! ALL OF YOU!

ROBOT TECH

"Again, just letting my hand go wherever it wants to. Pretty sure I did this on a notepad during a meeting and I was bored. I took it home and taped it into my sketchbook. I keep everything!"
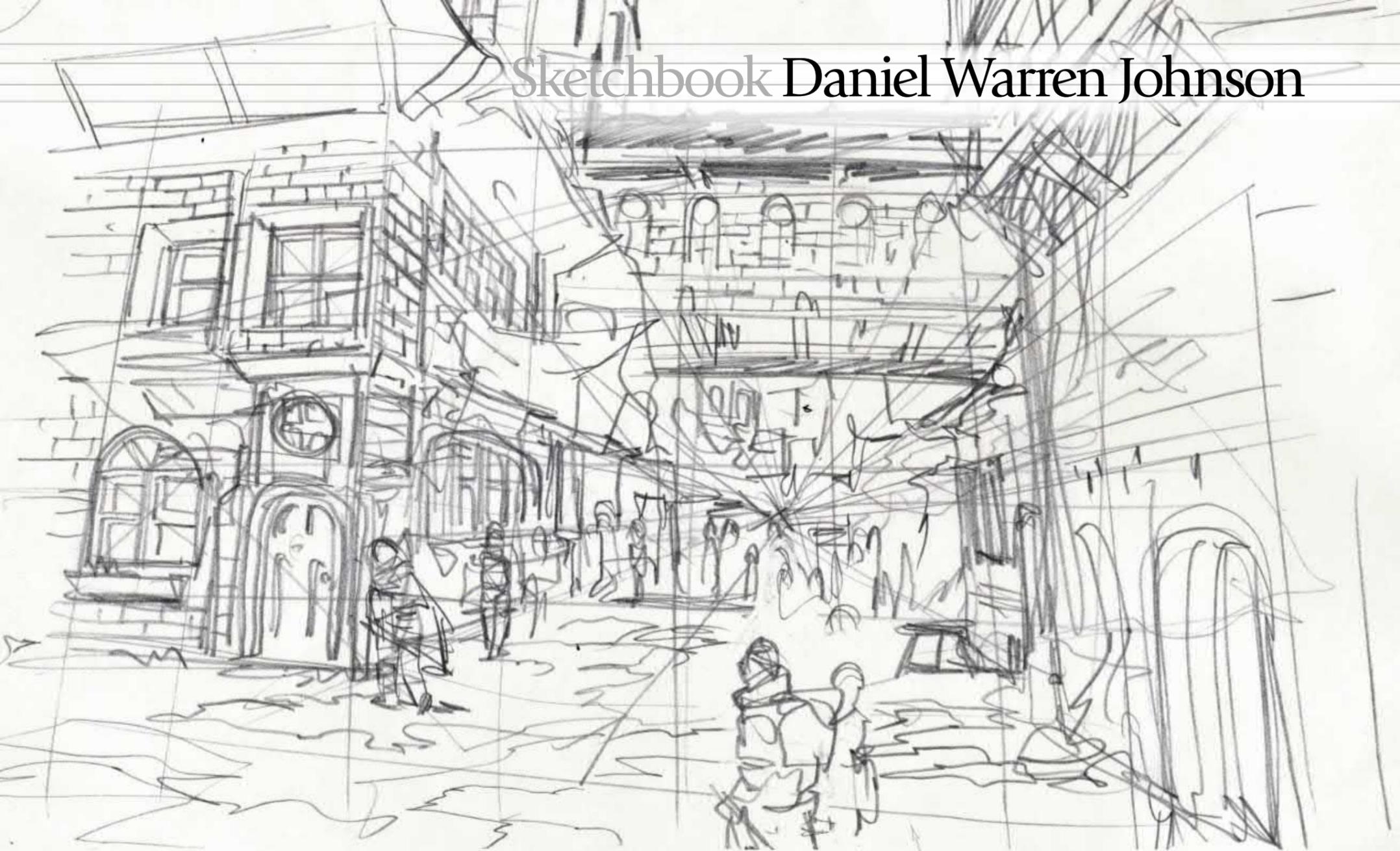
> **I love perspective grids but they're a chore if you don't put the time in**

PERSPECTIVE PRACTICE
"I love perspective grids and I love drawing backgrounds, but they're a chore if you don't put the time and research in. This was me trying to figure out how to make a street look dynamic without anything 'cool' happening."

PAZNINA SCOUT SHIP
"Just like I sometimes get a character design on the first try, here's an example of getting a ship concept right the first time."
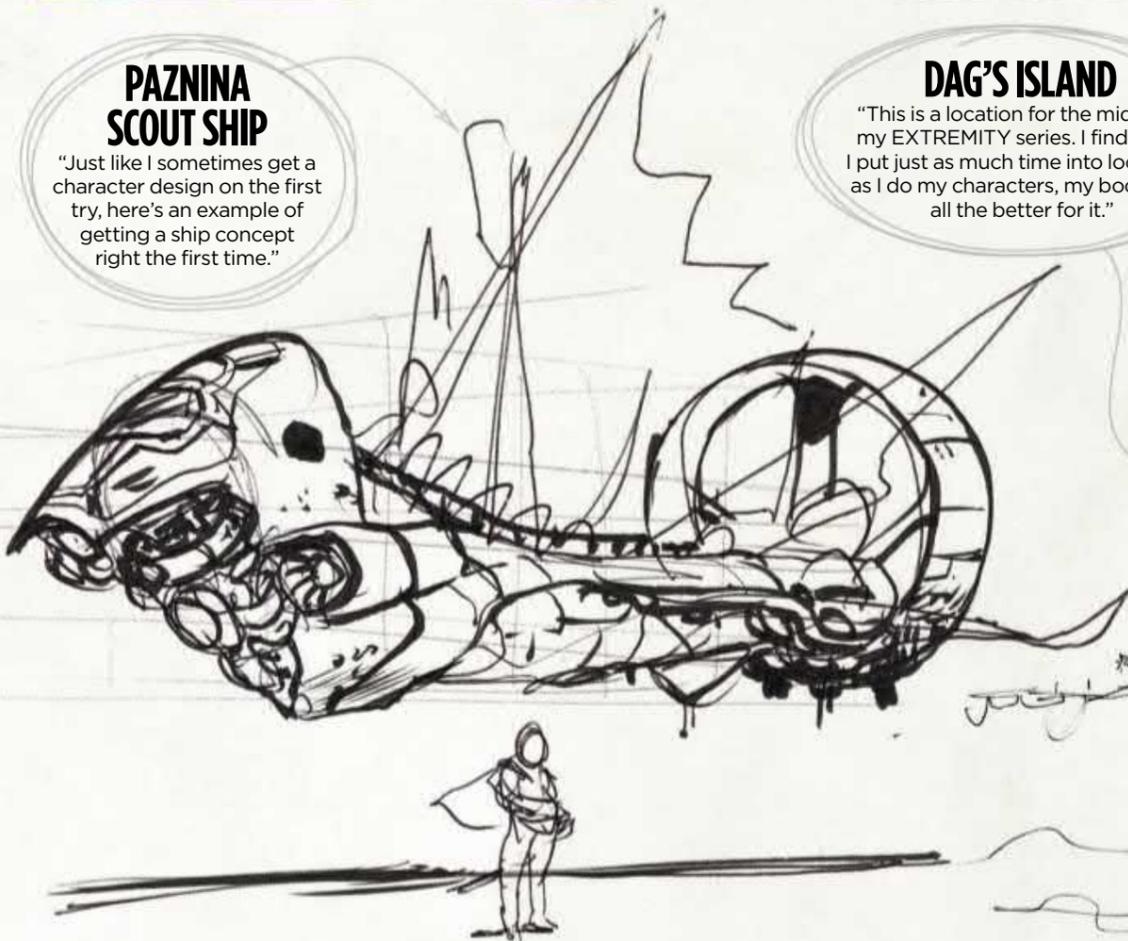
DAG'S ISLAND
"This is a location for the middle of my EXTREMITY series. I find that if I put just as much time into locations as I do my characters, my books are all the better for it."

DAG BENAR'S ISLAND

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**

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PRINT AND DIGITAL BACK ISSUES

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May 2019
In space no one can hear you whoop at our film art issue, with its Alien-themed cover by Kevin McGivern, interviews with Blade Runner 2049 concept artist Mike Hill, Marvel Studios' Anthony Francisco and much more!

Issue 172
April 2019
Our manga issue has gorgeous cover art by Asia Ladowska, an interview with US illustrator Sachin Teng, 15 tips for improving your creature designs, and a reimagination of Asuka from Neon Genesis Evangelion.

Issue 171
March 2019
Audra Auclair creates our compelling cover art in Procreate. You'll also get composition and anatomy advice, plus we explore ways to avoid a creative crash, talk to VR guru Goro Fujita, and pore over Loish's sketchbook.

Issue 170
February 2019
Get better at telling stories with your art, with pro advice from cover artist Jon Foster and Abigail Larson. We explain how to make your time on Patreon a success, and interview illustrators Scott M Fischer and Phil Hale.

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May 2018

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Issue 158
March 2018

*Resource files are available from issue 85 onwards.

MIGHTY ART
His 2018 run on Thor with Jason Aaron put Christian Ward at the centre of the Marvel Universe.

Artist Portfolio

CHRISTIAN WARD

Britain's hottest comic book artist talks to **Garrick Webster** about his Eisner-winning Black Bolt series, creating surreal worlds and his artistic inspirations…

"Thor!" shouts Christian Ward down the phone line. It's a blustery morning and he's out walking in a London park. Clearly, this is not the ideal time for an interview with ImagineFX. "I've got a dog called Thor, by the way," Christian says. "I'm not shouting at a Norse god."

There will be no prizes for guessing who the artist's favourite superhero is. However, this rising star in the world of comic art should probably reappraise that choice. Although he's done a short run on Thor with Jason Aaron, it's his work on Black Bolt that is winning all the plaudits. In June last year, Christian and writer Saladin Ahmed won the Best New Series Eisner at San Diego Comic-Con, and the achievement has given his career a tremendous boost.

EXTRA EXPOSURE

"They send you this globe when you win and it's weirdly heavy," Christian says, excitedly. "But it's a thing – a real thing! And I've really noticed a bit of an up-kick in my exposure and the amount of projects that I'm doing since winning. I don't know whether it's just because more people have seen my work because of Black Bolt, or whether the award does carry more kudos."

The book itself offers something truly different for readers. Black ➤➤

Artist PROFILE

Christian Ward
LOCATION: England
FAVOURITE ARTISTS: Gustav Klimt, Alphonse Mucha, Reggie Pedro, Frank Quitely and Bill Sienkiewicz
MEDIA: Watercolour, Photoshop
WEB: www.cjwardart.com

Photo by Pswecreate

FIGHTING THE BAD FIGHT
Supervillain Titania gains the upper hand against heroes of the Marvel Universe, in Christian's celebrated take on Black Bolt.

BLACK BOLT
The stunning Eisner winning Black Bolt – something different for comic book readers.

SPACE SHARK
Thor's battles in ethereal realms gave Christian Ward the scope to do his thing.
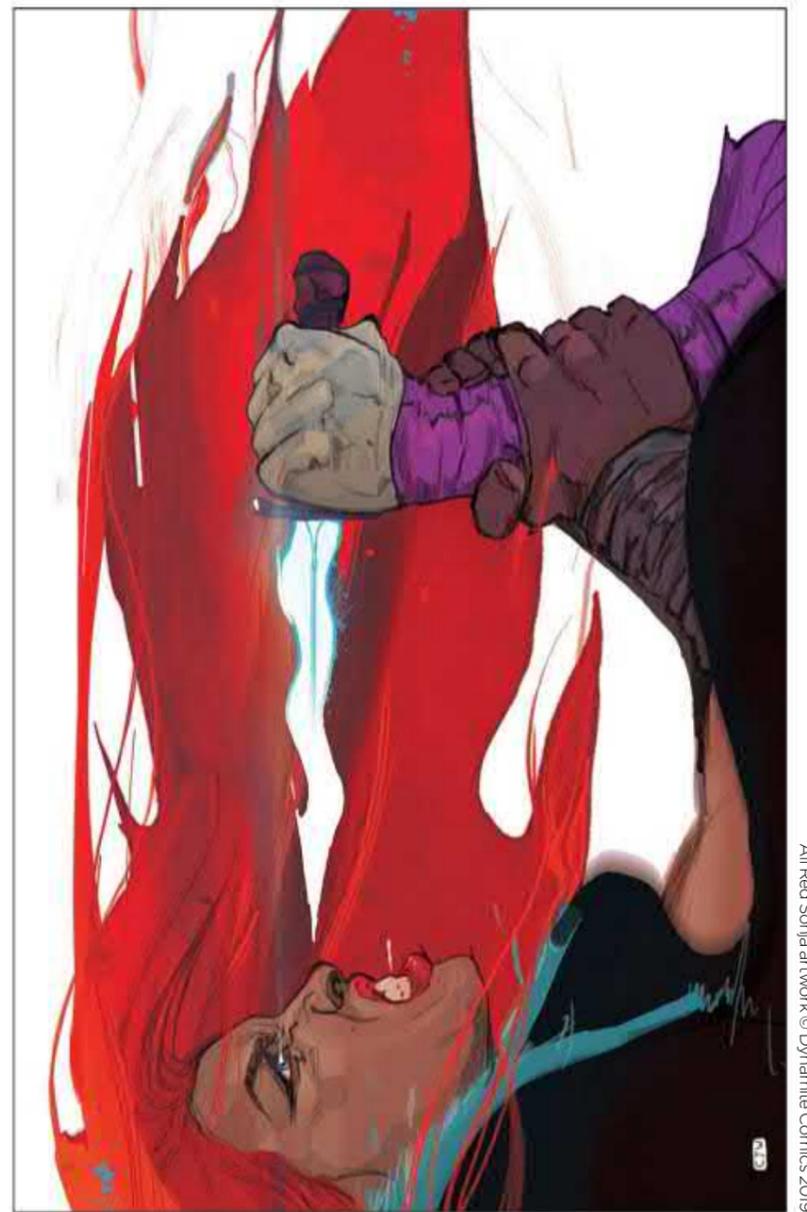
RED SONJA
In addition to his series, Christian continues to create covers and variants for books like Dynamite's Red Sonja.

Bolt introduces readers to a cast of strange outsiders who are all stuck in a surreal, intergalactic prison. The blues and greys make it a cold, hard place, with a streak of hot pink running through the panels to hint at a hope of freedom. The surreal structures of the setting round off the book's other-worldly feel very effectively.

▶▶ Bolt, a member of the Inhumans, was a marginal character in the Marvel Universe… until Christian turned him into a mysterious and enigmatic hero. "One of the reasons I wanted to draw Black Bolt is because he can't talk. Well, he can talk, but his power is in his voice, so even a whisper can destroy cities," says Christian.

The fact that nearly all his main character's communication would have to come through body language and facial expressions was part of the challenge, and the artist found regularly himself pulling a range of faces in the mirror, asking himself, "What would my face be like if I felt this anger or felt this sadness?"

It's not just that aspect that makes the comic Eisner-worthy, though. Black

ICONIC
The simple and striking front cover for the first issue of Black Bolt.

66 **We wanted this place to feel tangible. It couldn't look too dreamlike or wispy** 99

"We wanted this place to feel tangible," says Christian. "It couldn't feel too dreamlike or wispy – it needed to look really solid. The work of MC Escher was the perfect inspiration to do that and I thought, 'How cool would that be? The MC Escher prison in space? What a perfect aesthetic.'"

TAKE THE READER ON A JOURNEY
Surreal, unreal, ethereal – they're all words used to describe Christian's work. As an artist, what he loves to do is take comic book readers to places ▶▶

GOING ON A COMIC BOOK ODY-C

How Christian Ward and writer Matt Fraction turned Homer's epic tale on its head...

Before winning the Eisner for Black Bolt, Christian Ward was best known for his work with writer Matt Fraction on Ody-C, a retelling of Homer's Odyssey. This epic poem, written in eighth century Greece, tells of the adventures of Odysseus and his 10-year journey to return home after the Trojan War.

Here, the artist set out to depict a story taking place in a strange and intangible place, but one that would still have rules and conventions to ground the narrative and visuals. As Odyssia travels back from fighting in an intergalactic war, she encounters various challenges along the way. All the while, she's watched over by the gods, who exist outside of her realm and look down on her. It's the gods who narrate the story, while the characters in Odyssia's world don't talk. Like Grant Morrison, the creators create a different perspective for the narrative to flow through.

Visually, it thrives on Christian's painterly style. "We knew we wanted it to be psychedelic and trippy," he says. "I was looking at Alexander McQueen – the really bizarre creations he put on the catwalk – and the fetish art and HR Giger."

In the beginning, the idea was to change the gender of all the characters, but in the end they decided to include a full range of gender identities. "I loved the idea that there would be a full spectrum of colour, visually, and then in a way the gender aspects also reflect a full spectrum. So regardless of the reader's gender, there was something in it for them. No one would be excluded."

ARE YOU EXPERIENCED?
Shaking up gender roles in the Greek pantheon, in a psychedelic sea of sex and transforming sexuality.

THE KISS
Christian Ward's homage to his hero Gustav Klimt, as seen in the comic Infinite Vacation, which the artists co-created with writer Nick Spencer.
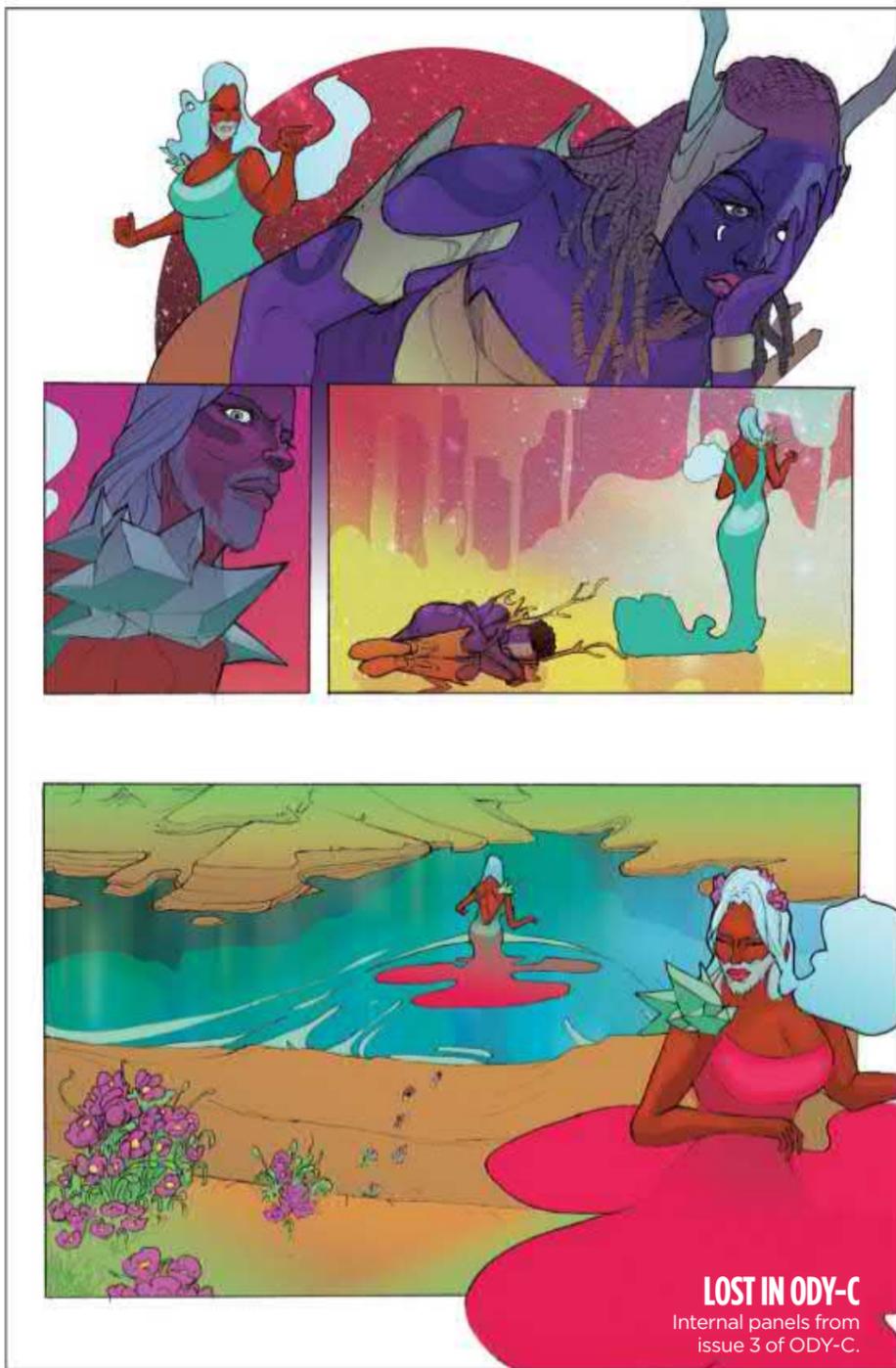
LOST IN ODY-C
Internal panels from issue 3 of ODY-C.
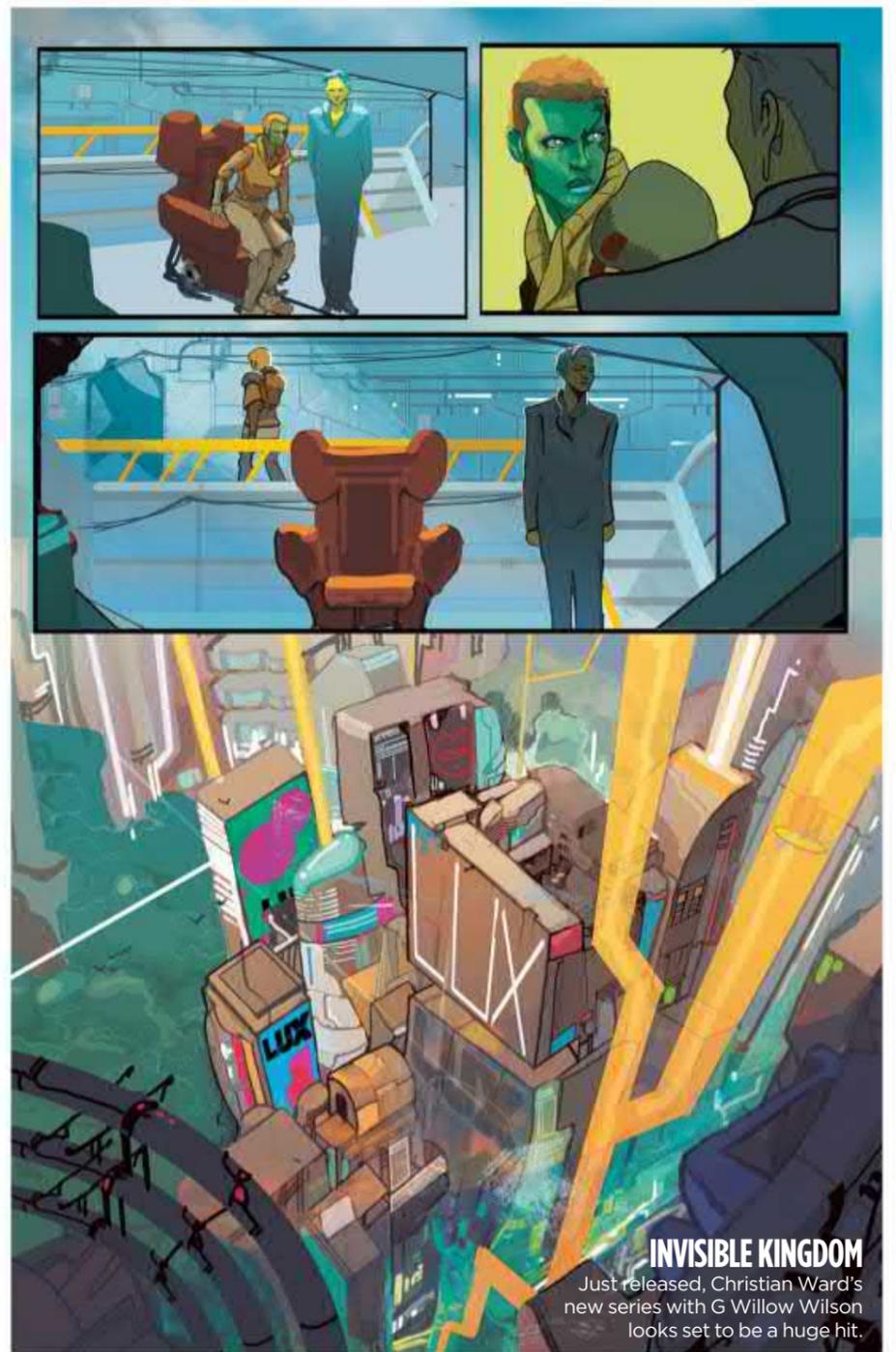
INVISIBLE KINGDOM
Just released, Christian Ward's new series with G Willow Wilson looks set to be a huge hit.

they've never been before. From 2014 to 2016, he worked on ODY-C with the writer Matt Fraction, reinterpreting Homer's Odyssey in a futuristic universe that was full of psychedelic patterns and equally colourful characters.

In his current project, Invisible Kingdom, Christian is working with G Willow Wilson to create another brightly coloured piece, but this time the vibe is somewhere in between The Fifth Element, Dune, Cowboy Bebop and Star Wars.

"I think that you play to your strengths," the artist explains. "My rendering isn't about something that could be real. The thing I would struggle with most would be a New York scene. I could do it, but there wouldn't be a lot of joy in me doing it."

Christian began developing his style while at university. He studied to be an illustrator and loved to paint. Main figures would be realistically rendered, but spiralling away from them would be geometric shapes, patterns and washes of colour. The look was influenced by Reggie Pedro, who illustrated album covers for Gomez.

EVERYTHING AT ONCE

Although he works on a Cintiq and uses Photoshop, Christian doesn't draw, ink and colour in sequence like other comic artists. He tends to do everything at once, building his panels up like a fine artist and blocking

GIDEON FALLS
A variant cover that Christian created for the series Gideon Falls by Image Comics.

> ❝ I think that you play to your strengths. My rendering isn't about something that could be real ❞

ESCHER INSPIRED
What would an intergalactic prison look like? Christian made Black Bolt feel surreal and solid at the same time.

VISUALISING THE INVISIBLE KINGDOM

The spiritual and secular collide in a new galaxy rendered by Christian Ward for a brand new comic

Despite its title, this comic book won't be filled with blank pages. Christian Ward's art will depict G Willow Wilson's story, which takes place in another solar system with a slightly retro sense of sci-fi futurism to it – if that's possible.

The story balances the secular and the spiritual with cargo and bounty hunters whizzing around and getting into conflicts on the one hand, while a young woman travels to join a monastery that floats above the surface of one of the planets. Only the pure can join, but there's a conspiracy going on behind the scenes and that's the source of the tension in the storyline.

"It deals with themes of belonging, and what you search for in life to make yourself happy – whether that be spiritual belief or just keeping your family fed and safe," says Christian.

For inspiration, he turned to the classic sci-fi and fantasy illustrators of the 1960s and 70s to develop a look and feel for Invisible Kingdom – Chris Foss, Roger Dean and Philippe Bouchet, for example. "I wanted to create that aesthetic, playing with nostalgia. The planets, the horizon line, huge monolithic space ships flying through the air, lots of strange vegetation, strange birds… all the things we saw on our parents' bookshelves when we were kids," says Christian.

The early buzz on this book is good, so grab it if you can.

ENVIRONMENTS
For his latest comic Christian has a whole new solar system to create, with bizarre locations and alien species filling the pages.

FLOATING SANCTUARY
The promotional cover for the launch issue of Invisible Kingdom.

IT'S JUST BUSINESS
Traders and bounty hunters represent the secular side of Invisible Kingdom.

FIRE AND FURY
Thor is Christian Ward's favourite Marvel character.

RED SONJA
A Red Sonja variant cover that Christian painted for Dynamite Entertainment, published in late 2018.

▸▸ out areas of light and shade, areas of detail and negative space. He uses painted textures not just to splash the colour, but to ground the work and give it a physical presence.

"I have big sheets of paper that I splatter watercolour paint on, let it bubble up. Sometimes I throw some salt on to it to create some texture and then I'll scan those paintings in," he says. "I think a piece of art or a comic page is a combination of 1,000 happy

X-O MANOWAR
A variant front cover that Christian produced for the series published by Valiant Comics.

> ❝ I think a piece of art or a comic page is a combination of 1,000 happy accidents ❞

accidents and it's just a case of allowing those accidents to happen."

It's a way of working that reflects his artistic influences. As well as Reggie Pedro, Christian references Gustav Klimt and his dense use of pattern, Alphonse Mucha's flowing line work and Art Nouveau style, and the comic artists Jamie Hewlett and James Jean.

STORIES IN TIME AND SPACE

"In comics, my favourite artist is a guy called Frank Quitely," he says. "His storytelling is amazing and he uses things like time and space. Panels will almost be represented in 3D white space rather than a flat plane, and that's a big influence on what I do."

Christian also feels like he has stories to tell and soon his first work as a writer will be released. Finnish artist Sami Kivelä will be drawing the book, which features gangsters and magic elixir in 1920s Chicago, and a big challenge for Christian has been taking a step back and letting another artist thrive. "He knows what he's doing. The cars and setting are so perfectly rendered and I still get to have some fun with it because I'm colouring it. I don't want to overpower it, though," he says.

An official announcement about Christian's debut as a writer is expected imminently. In the meantime, watch out for Invisible Kingdom – the first issue is available to buy now. ●
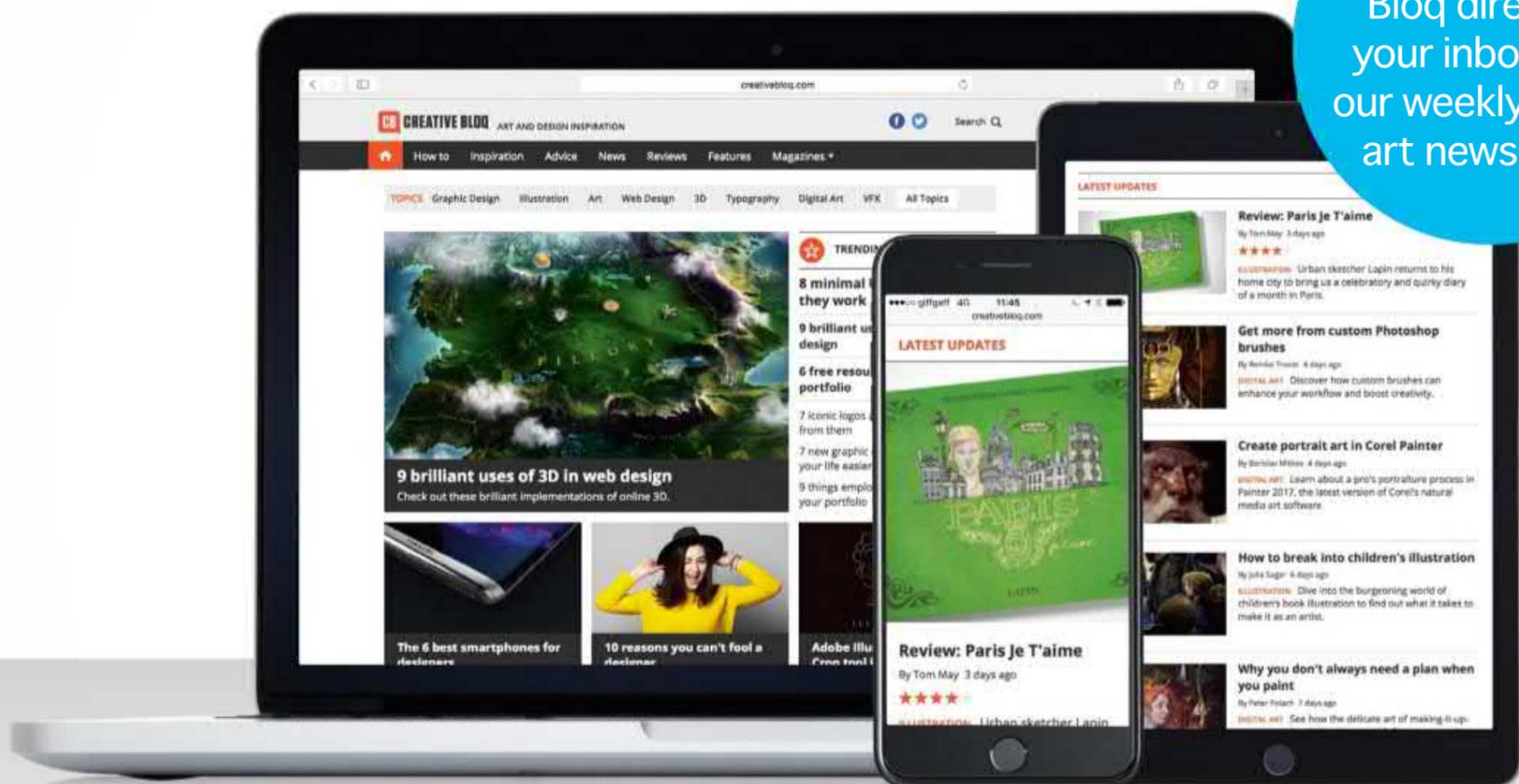
VIDEO WORKSHOP

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
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This issue:

Pencils & inks

DRAW DYNAMIC BATMAN COVER ART

Commissioned to depict Gotham's famous vigilante for an unwritten story, **Tony S Daniel** chooses to show Batman in all-out action mode

Artist
PROFILE

Tony S Daniel
LOCATION: US

Tony has worked with leading publishers such as DC Comics, Marvel and Image Comics. He's collaborated with the most of the top writers in the industry, including Grant Morrison, Alan Moore and Geoff Johns.
https://ifxm.ag/tony-d

I was given the task of creating a Batman cover for an issue that had yet to be written, which is always the toughest kind of assignment. Usually, this means the art director is going to ask for an iconic Batman image, which can be quite challenging, especially for an artist who's drawn Batman for several years.

I chose to go with something powerful and in your face.

Something with Batman coming right at you, mid-strike. I concentrate on balance, and making sure the eye goes where I want it to go. In this case, it's front and centre right on Batman, who could be jumping through a window.

Being non-story specific, the image has to work with whatever tale is being told, so I have to be careful not to mislead the reader. (I can't turn in a Batman vs Joker image, say, if there's no Joker in the story, although

such as idea can be used for variant covers.) I start by sending the art director a sketch or two, and I only turn in ideas that I feel confident I'll be happy with if they're selected.

Hopefully, there's enough time in the schedule for me to be relaxed, which always produces my better work. But being able to work to a deadline is part of being a pro artist. In this case, I had three days to finish this image and turn it over to my amazing colourist, Tomeu Morey. ➥

How I create...
THE DARK KNIGHT, READY FOR COLOURING

1 Tight pencil details
I use my pencil lines as a loose guide for where I ink in the finishing details. When it comes to faces or small details I try to pencil as tightly as possible, then I'm careful to not mess up what I'm hoping to convey in ink. I'm particular about my faces, which is one of the main reasons why I started to ink myself over the past couple of years instead of outsourcing it to an inker.

2 Tools of the comic trade
I use all sorts of tools. Sometimes it's what the image calls for and sometimes it's what I feel most comfortable using at the time. I'll draw using mostly brush pens and multi-liners, but other times I go old school and use mainly pen nibs and brushes. In this case, I went fully nib and brush for the ink lines, using Deleter and Tachikawa Comic Pen G nibs along with Hunt 104.

3 Adding extra punch
Here, I went one step further and busted out the Copic Markers. In this case, I used W3, a warm grey tone to give the art the dimension and punch I wanted. This is truly unnecessary because my colourist adds this when he colours, but for this image, I just was having fun. Tomeu can alter or change the tones I used and use his own if he chooses a better lighting source.

SMASHED IT!

Go big or go home
Usually I rough in my cover sketch on a 5x7-inch sheet. In this case, I started the sketch directly on the full-size 11x17-inch DC Comics Strathmore board. If it's working at this size, I get right to work as soon as I receive the art director's approval. I begin light with a 2H pencil and then switch to a softer, darker 2B lead. I use 0.5mm mechanical pencils to draw all of my details. My Pink Pearl erasers are my best friends at this stage.

Make way for nibs
Although I can work with a range of tools on a single image, using a bit of multi-liners or Micron Pens along with nibs and brush, I've become more comfortable with nibs. I find I'm using those tools much more and liking the results as I improve by repetition.

Brushing over Batman
Next I break out the brushes. I use watercolour brushes of various sizes and fill in the large black areas. In this image I diluted the ink with water and used grey tones for an ink wash. I usually don't do washes with my work because my colourist is so damned good. God, I love what Tomeu Morey delivers. In this case, I just felt like adding some extra dimension for fun.

A heroic team effort
Now the image is scanned from my home office using a Epson Expression 10000XL Graphic Arts Scanner and uploaded to the DC Comics servers, where colouring genius Tomeu Morey grabs it and gets to work using Photoshop. Tomeu really brings my work to life and gives the image a great sense of power and atmosphere.

Making comics is truly a team effort and finding the right collaborators is half the battle. Tomeu and I have been working with each other for around nine years and together have formed a special creative bond and friendship that you can only find when creating comics together.
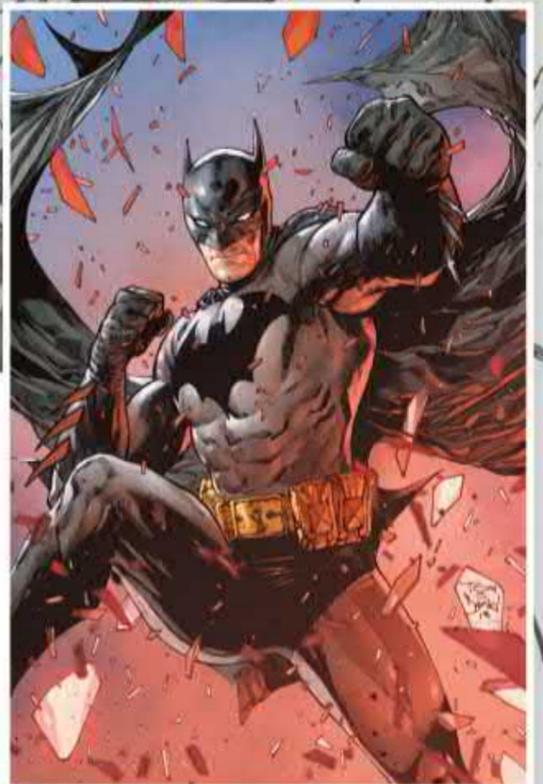
Photoshop, Clip Studio Paint & Illustrator
FROM SCRIPT TO FINAL PAGE

From visualising the script to pencilling panels and colouring the final artwork, **Steve Ellis** reveals how he adds drama to a comics page

Artist
PROFILE
Steve Ellis
LOCATION: US

The Harvey award-winning creator/artist of The Only Living Girl, The Only Living Boy, High Moon and Monsterwood graphic novels, Steve also illustrates for tabletop games and draws monster card decks.
www.steveellisart.com

One of the main differences between visual storytelling and illustration is the sequence of images. Some of these images are less about beauty and more about function in the story. Often it's a juggle to decide whether or not an image is more important as a storytelling moment to build character, build tension, or show a sequence of small events; or as a big scene which draws the eye and creates a sense of excitement.

Functional panels tend to be smaller, maintain the story flow and can serve to establish the setting or new characters. They can also show a momentary action alone or in sequence. Splash panels tend to be bigger and show an exciting action or a dramatic scene that encourages the reader to stop the flow of the story and just admire the image.

In this workshop I'll take you through the process of building a page from script to a final page of one of my comics. I'll talk about the decisions I make regarding design, drawing and panels when handed a script. I frequently start in natural media (pencil, pen and ink), which I'll scan in to ink or colour digitally using Clip Studio Paint on my iPad Pro. I think better in natural media, but finish cleaner and faster digitally.
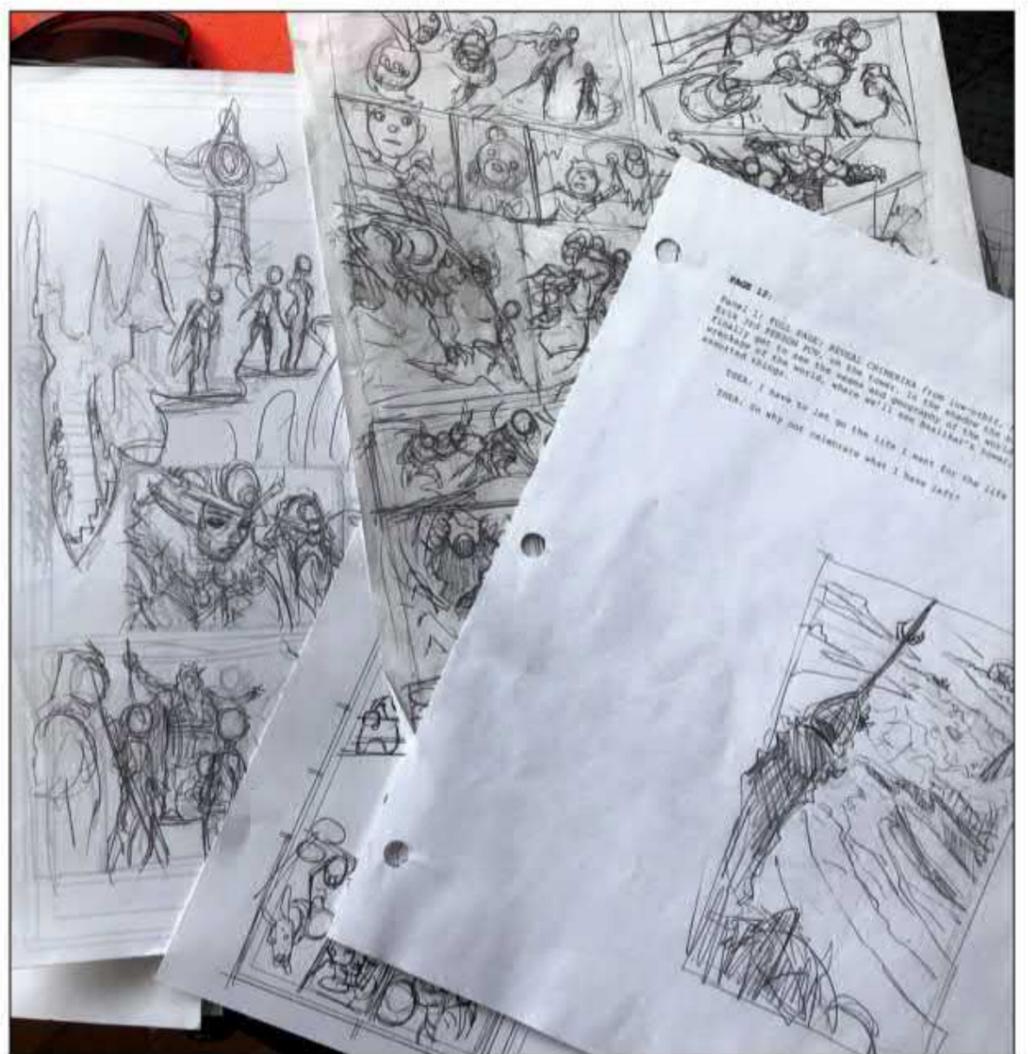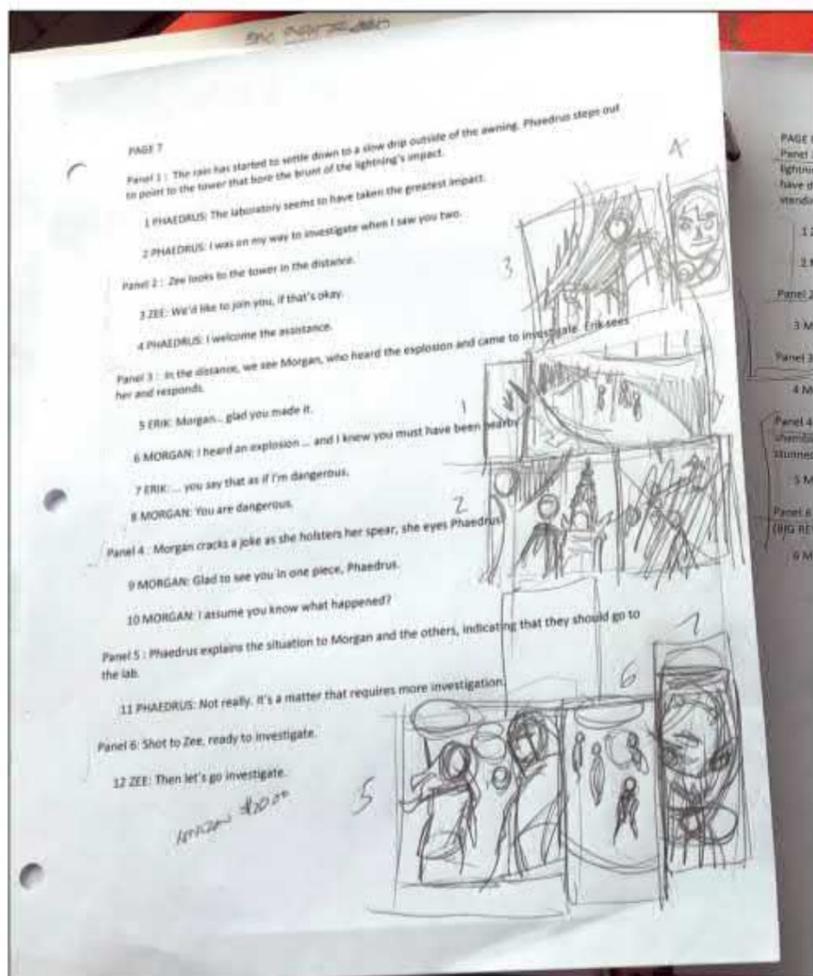
1 Analyse the script
I take the script, which can be as detailed as a panel-by-panel description or as loose as a scene-by-scene outline, and so a lot of rough sketches usually end up on the actual script. I find it helps me to work out the ideas with the text right there and I don't have to commit too early to any one idea. When co-authoring, I break the story down into scenes first.

2 Planning out the book
I take the script and lay out a whole scene into pages. I like to keep a scene between one and five pages. This way the story doesn't drag on too long. I lay out each page as a complete idea that has a beginning and an end that leads into the next page. I always try to end a page and a scene with a question. ➤➤

3 Breaking down into panels

A panel should be a moment in time. Panels should propel the story forward, be lovely, and lead the eye directly to the next panel, all in service of the greater idea of the page. I balance panels that are small and describe a tiny moment or sequence with others that open up and describe a whole scene or action.

Each panel is like a sentence in the paragraph of the page, so I rough out how many panels and what the action in each panel is. The characters fly in on their bikes, dismount, check a device on one of the character's arms, run into a cave and find a robot. I need a layout with five panels and choose the last one for a big reveal.
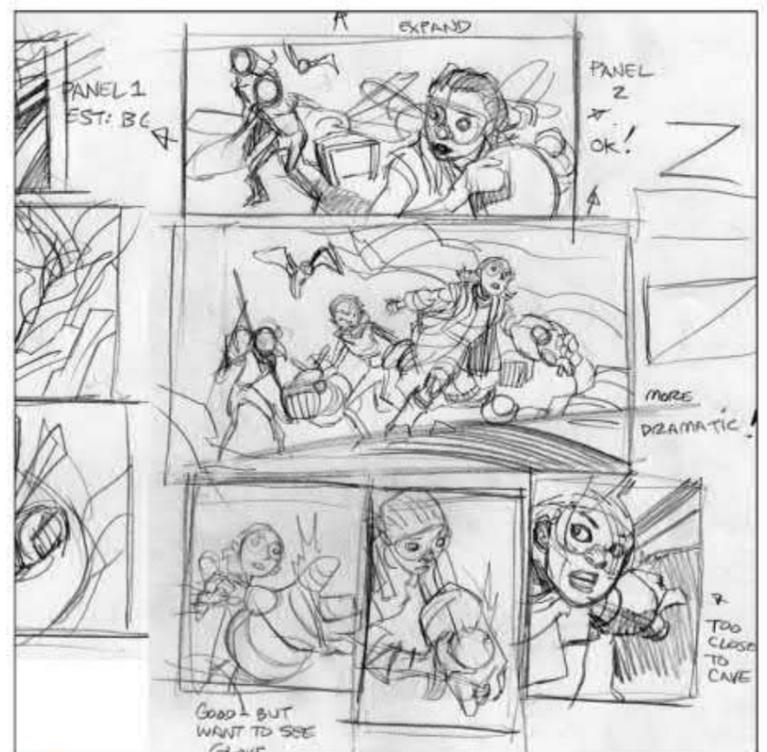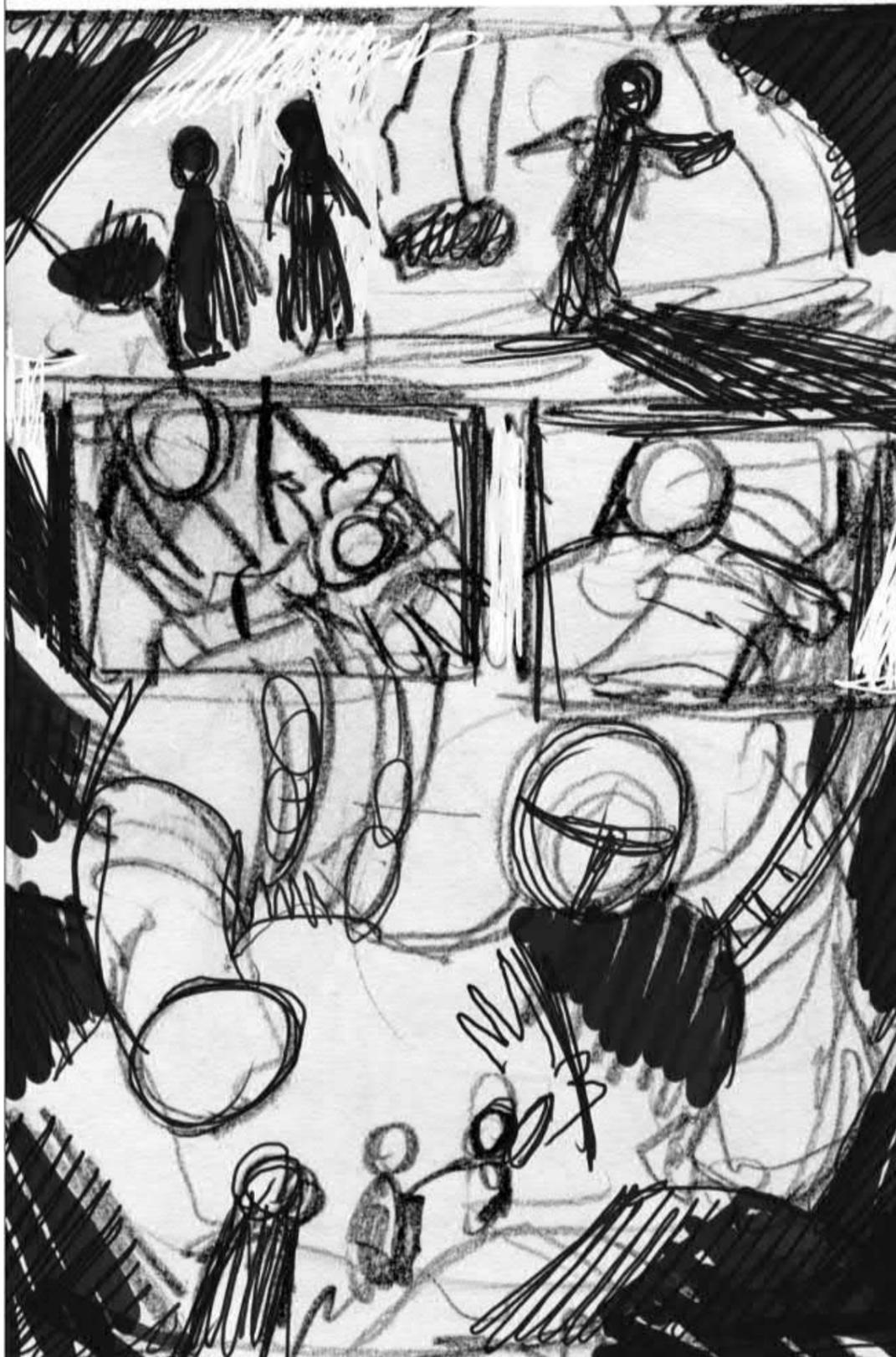
4 Choosing the dramatic panel

I sketch out a few different angles and shots before deciding on the best one for a sequence. Like a film's director of cinematography, I place the eye (camera) where the image can have the most impact, describe the action I need to convey, and continue the flow of the story from panel to panel without slowing the reader down.
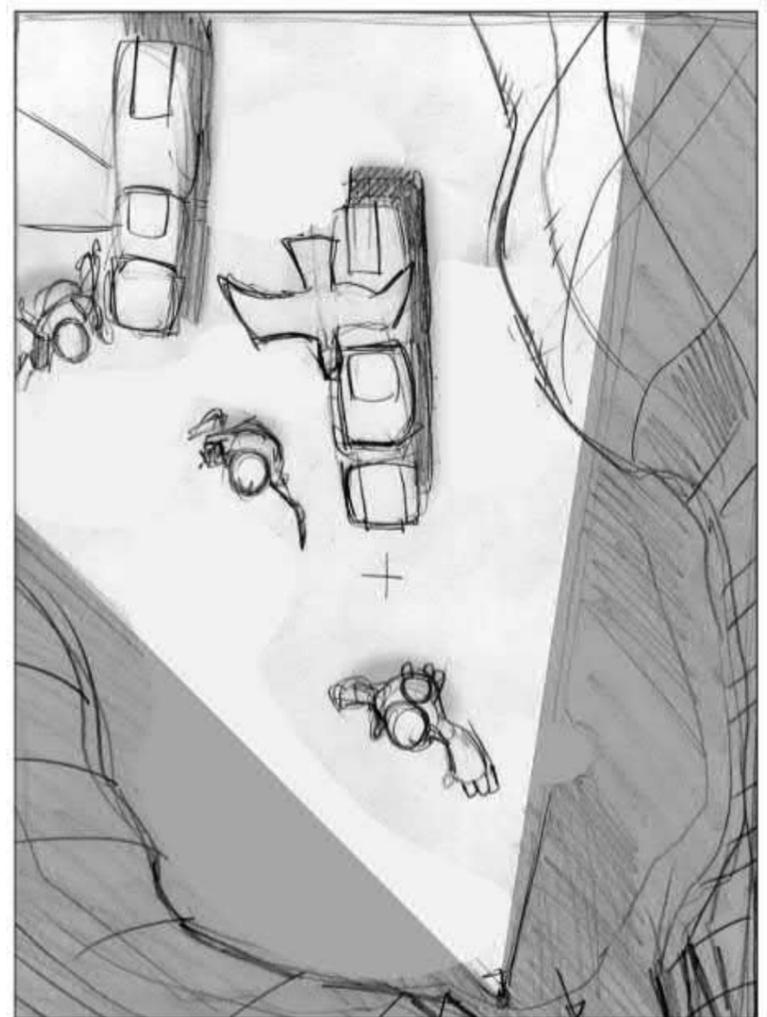
5 Spatial relationships

When dealing with either a fight scene or two or more characters interacting in a scene, it helps knowing where everything is. I sketch a bird's-eye view of the scene so I can see where everything relates in the space. This helps me make sure that objects stay in the same relation from panel to panel, which makes the scene easier to read.

6 Maintaining flow in the page layout
The traditional comic is usually read in a Z-formation, like reading a book. I keep this in mind in my layout, but in the interest of creating something visually interesting I try to mix it up. It's important to keep that flow in mind, even when you move the panels around.

7 Designing the characters
I need to have designs for each character in the story. Just like in animation, I need to make sure that if the character has a backpack, a glove or an eye patch, these items are all in the right place and are visible depending on the angle. I like to draw character turnarounds and expression sheets to maintain accuracy.

8 Scan those layouts
Once I have the entire scene laid out, I scan my layouts, crop, resize and then put them in a template. I have unique templates for projects because each publisher has different requirements. I make sure the important art is within the live area, and the trim and bleed area are empty unless I'm doing a full bleed.

9 Blue-lining the pages
Next, I drop a blue line filter over the page. It's a little handy filter that I use which changes all the pencil lines to a soft blue. It's not non-repro, so I'll delete it using colour adjustments after I scan in the line-work. I'll print this out on Bristol board, and pencil and ink directly on to the surface. ➡➡
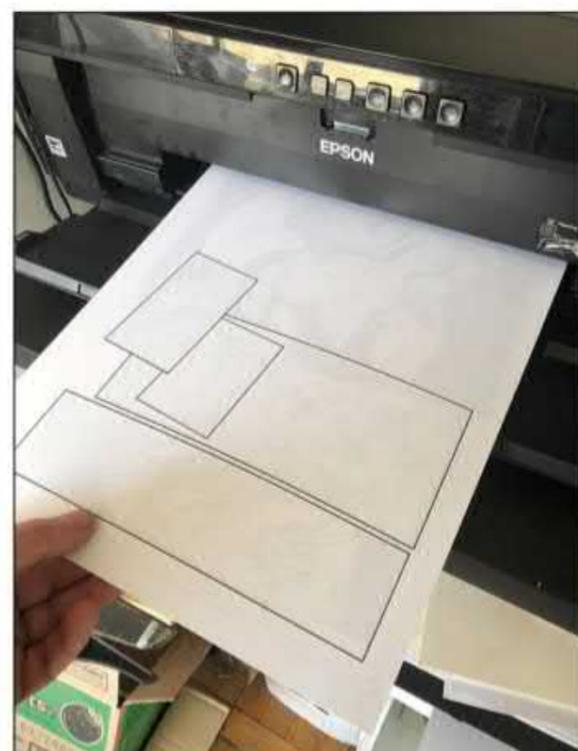
10 Pencilling the panels
Since I ink my own work I don't go crazy with super-tight pencilling. I refine the drawings, choosing the best lines and line weights, develop the character personalities, and put in perspective and detail. The pencils act as a roadmap for the placement of black areas, textures and line weights. Since I'm inking digitally, I scan the art at 600 dpi and open the file in Clip Studio Paint.

11 Inking rather than tracing
I create a second layer over my pencils and call it Inklines. I then redraw the lines using a single lineweight pen. This will give me the option later on in the process of either adding thinner or thicker lines after the black areas are filled in. Next, I use the Paintbucket tool in the black areas. Then I go back in with thicker lines for depth and adding texture with my G Pen nib.

12 Adding colour flats

Once the inks are done, I select the Inklines layer and change its mode to Multiply. By selecting the icon in the Layers palette that looks like a lighthouse, I make Inklines a reference layer. In Tool Properties I set the Paint Bucket to Multiple referring and Reference layer (the lighthouse icon.) I can now fill in colours on a lower layer that I call Flats, which follows the shapes of the black lines above without affecting the ink lines.

13 Rendering layers

I add a Colours layer above the Flats layer and below the Inklines one. Next, I select areas of flat colour and render in the Colour layer using soft-edged and textured brushes to create depth. Once I've established all the darker shades, I create highlights on a separate layer above the Colours layer so they remain editable.

14 Making the final touches to the page

Lastly, I create a Screen layer above all the layers and fill it in black with the Paint Bucket. I select areas for special effects and airbrush brighter colours over those areas. The screen layer causes the lines below it to be "knocked out"(meaning the black lines become lighten) and the colour creates a glowing effect. And I'm done. Now it's time to send this page to the designer…

Next month

Next month in...

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Sony Pictures Animation's Drew Hartel delves into light and colour.

Character line-up advice
Vis dev artist Mitch Leeuwe helps you develop a personal portfolio project.

Art school vs self-taught
The debate about which approach is better rages on. We find out more.

Aaron Blaise interview
The artist behind Disney's Lion King and Aladdin on life at the top.

ISSUE 175 ON SALE IN THE UK *Friday 17 May!*

Photoshop
PAINT A COVER FOR CAPTAIN MARVEL

Jen Bartel reveals how she illustrates a variant cover for Marvel that works as a standalone image, but also hints at the character's story

Artist
PROFILE

Jen Bartel
LOCATION: US

Jen works for clients such as Marvel, Disney and Chronicle Books. She is the co-creator and artist of BLACKBIRD, from Image Comics.
www.jenbartel.com

This cover was created for the miniseries Life of Captain Marvel, which was published by Marvel ahead of the film release. The series was intended to give a little more backstory and context to Carol Danvers (Captain Marvel) and this variant cover was for issue #4 – where Carol discovers some shocking things about her past.

When Marvel editor Sarah Brunstad reached out to me, she was looking for an image that played with iconography of home and childhood, as the series is about Carol returning to her hometown. My initial thought was to do an iconic image of Carol flying over her hometown with a sort of "Americana" feel, but the comps I sent in were a bit too similar to a lot of existing Captain Marvel covers.

On my second pass, Sarah suggested something with "Carol looking out over the ocean, with her reflection staring up at her from the water. Maybe the reflection is even distorted or odd in some way, a hint that there's a secret brewing." I ran with that idea and tried to incorporate it into an image that still felt iconic, but also included a hint at the story's narrative. ➤➤

How I created...
A COVER THAT APPEALS TO COLLECTORS

1 Initial concepts
I start every cover assignment by drawing out a few very rough thumbnails. These sketches are intended only to show concept and overall composition so they are always loose and very general.

2 Pencils and inks
Once a thumbnail is approved, I produce a refined sketch in pencils, which I then ink on top of. Typically, because of how quickly projects need to get done in comics, I use digital inks in Photoshop.
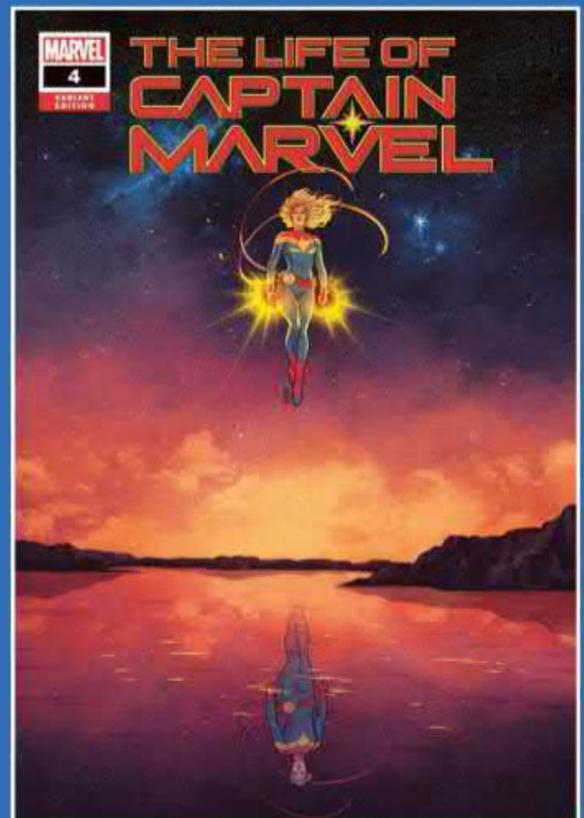
3 Colours and effects
Finally, once an image is fully inked, I go into colours. With this particular cover, the real bulk of the work happened in this stage, so it was the most time and labour intensive part of the entire process.

COMIC ART THAT SOARS

Contrast for focus

The focal point of this cover is the current Captain Marvel, with her glowing fists, levitating over the water. Even though the cover as a whole is quite saturated and colourful, I ensured that the viewer would be instantly drawn to her by making her fists the highest point of contrast.

Standing out on the shelf

Comic shops are full of shelves with amazing covers that feature superheroes, so creating something eye-catching and unique can present a unique set of challenges. With this particular cover, by having the environment play an important visual role, I was able to differentiate this piece from a lot of the other covers that it would appear next to.

Creating the reflection

It was important that the reflection matched up with the above figure, but I wanted to make it clear that it was a representation of her past. So I adjusted a few elements such as her hair, to be accurate to the canonical 2016 version of her design.

Visual symbolism for narrative

I wanted the viewer to get the sense that Carol was growing beyond her past self, that she was finding her inner light and persevering, but that her memories were also an important part of her. Making her reflection dull and more faded helped to visually convey that it's a version of her from the past.

Finalising the cover

Most of the time when working on covers for comic publishers, the trade dress/title type isn't created yet, and sometimes publishers want to be able to offer additional versions that don't have any text on them (for collectors), so the image really has to work with or without type. Leaving room for additional elements is hugely important, but challenging because I don't always know what it's going to look like.

Photoshop
HOW TO LIGHT YOUR PIN-UP ART

Discover how **Elias Chatzoudis** uses Photoshop's painting tools and layer modes to colour and light a pin-up character with expert precision

Artist
PROFILE

Elias Chatzoudis
LOCATION: US

Elias is a professional illustrator and pin-up artist with over 10 years' experience. He's worked with US comic publishers such as Zenescope, Dynamite and IDW.
https://ifxm.ag/eliasc

You can trace the origins of pin-up art back to the late 19th century. It later flourished and became more widespread in the 1940s and 1950s, often appearing on posters and calendars. The art style's characteristics were the figures' cheerful faces, mixed with a sense of humour and sexiness, but without becoming provocative in most cases.

Over the years we've seen changes in the characters' portrayal, not only in terms of their haircuts, clothing and so on, but also in how the artist has rendered them to appeal to audiences of the time. And yet modern-day pin-up art often includes many references to its past.

I enjoy colouring my drawings – not in greyscale as many of my colleagues do, but working directly with colour. I must just say that I'm

all for technology and the digital tools we have available, mainly because they enable me to save time. Yet I still use traditional media such as pencils, inks or markers, both for my initial drawings and laying down the final lines.

Here I'll create my lines on paper, but the process that you'll use for colouring will be the same as if the lines were digital. So you can ignore my scanning clean-up stage.

1 Creating the initial concept
It's a good idea to get down a few early drafts, either on paper or digitally – whatever suits your creative approach. This will help you choose a design to take forward. For this workshop, the theme is a pin-up girl, so I want the character to channel the two distinct features for this type of artwork, which is to be sweet and sexy. This is a reference to its 1950s origins.

2 Cleaning my sketch lines
I transfer my scanned drawing into Photoshop and go to Brightness/Contrast. I choose 18 and 55, respectively, to create a clear contrast between the lines. Then I open a new layer, go to Channels and choose Cyan, then click Select>Inverse. Next, I create a new layer and go to Edit>Fill, selecting black with 100 per cent Opacity, which creates clean line-art for me to use. ➤

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 8 now!
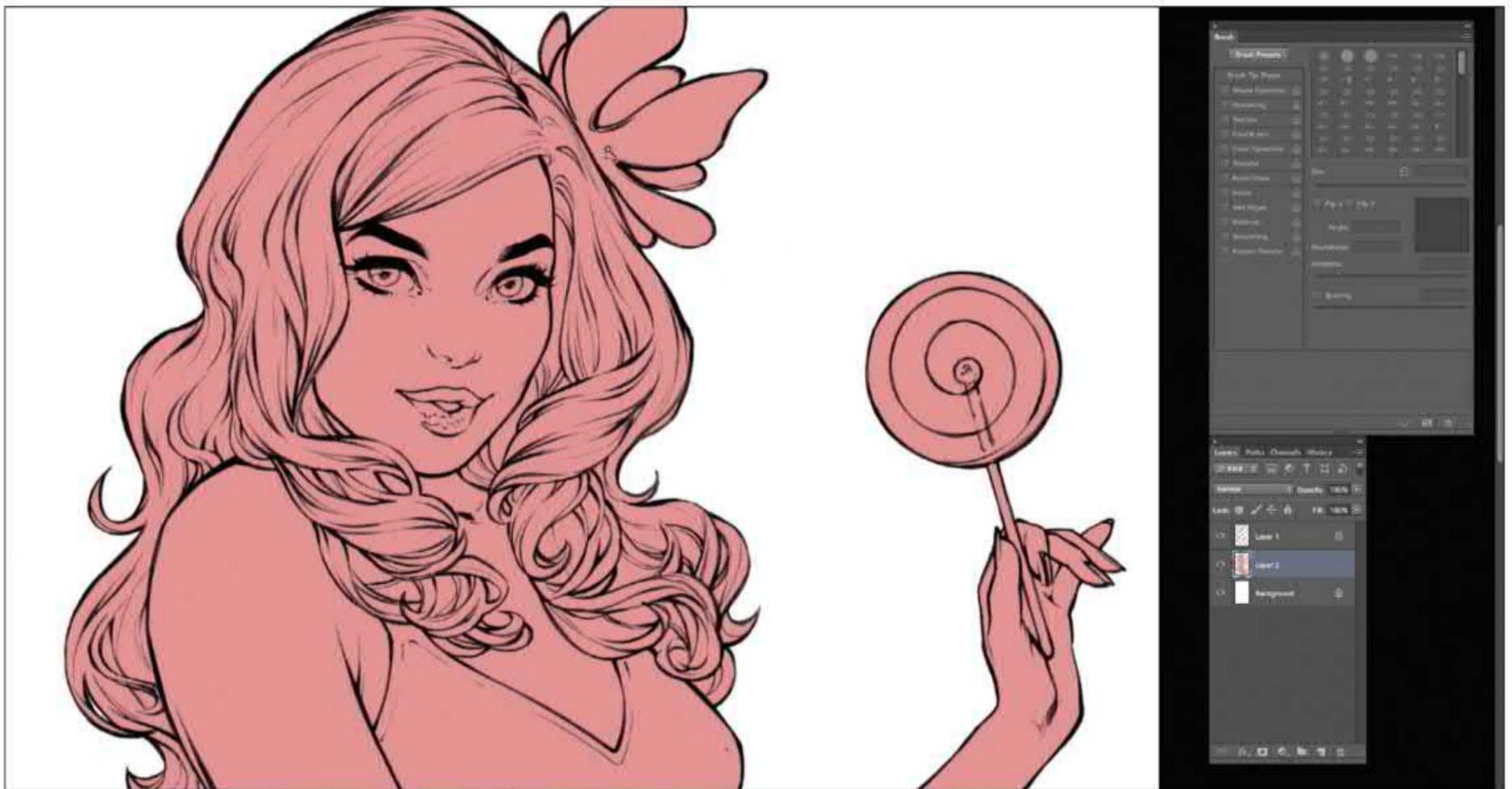
3 Filling the drawing with flat colour

Staying on the layer of my lines, I remove the old layer and create a new one under my lines. I select the Magic Wand tool and click the outer part of my drawing. Then I go to Select>Inverse and then Select>Modify>Contract Selection by 3 pixels. Staying on the layer that I've created, I fill in with any colour. Finally, I check that the whole drawing is filled with colour on the inside.

4 Distinguishing areas of the body

After I've created my colour layer, I duplicate it and fill it with a different colour. Next, I switch to the Pen tool and use this to select the areas that I want to reveal, for example just the character's skin, and then mask off surrounding areas. Now I select the Lock Transparent Pixels option, which enables me to accurately paint in specific areas. I follow the same process for the hair, clothing and other key elements of the artwork.
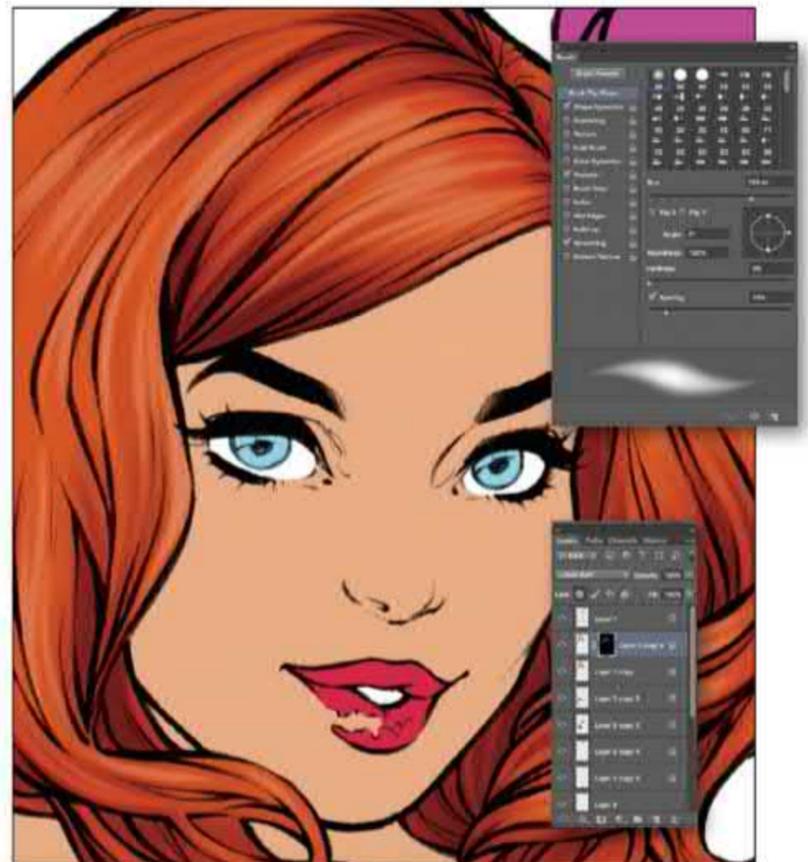
5 Generating hair volumes

I select the hair layer with the Lock Transparent Pixels option checked. Next, with a default brush set to 0 per cent Hardness, I colour the shaded parts of the hair, choosing which parts will be dark. I follow the same process, alternating between a darker colour and then a lighter one. The variety of colours help to give the character's hair a sense of volume.

6 Adding details to the hair

I create another layer over my coloured hair layer and I draw some details with a default Photoshop brush, increasing the Hardness to 85 per cent, which introduces a sense of lustre on the hair without going over the top. I also decide that there will be lighting on the back of her hair, so on another layer, and again with an increased Hardness setting, I create lighting that follows the direction I want the hair to have.
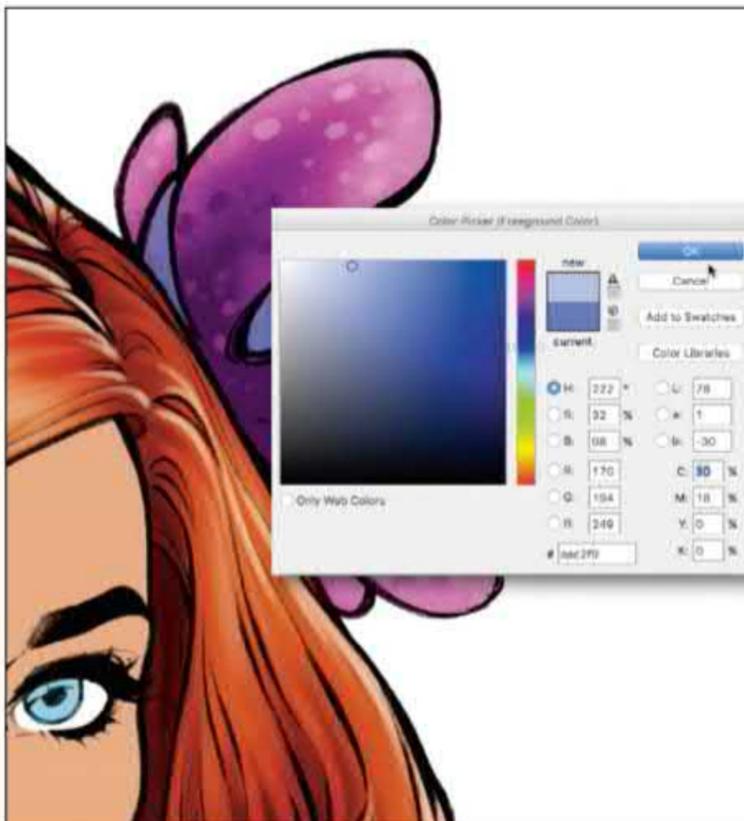
7 Making the flower look natural

On a new layer, and always with the Lock Transparent Pixels checked, I apply a flat lilac colour to the flower and I paint the bottom part with a simple blue brush. Next, I select one of my custom brushes called marker 1 and play around with the colours – just enough to give the flower a more natural look. Then with a default Photoshop brush set to 100 per cent Hardness, I draw small circles on the petals, also randomly.
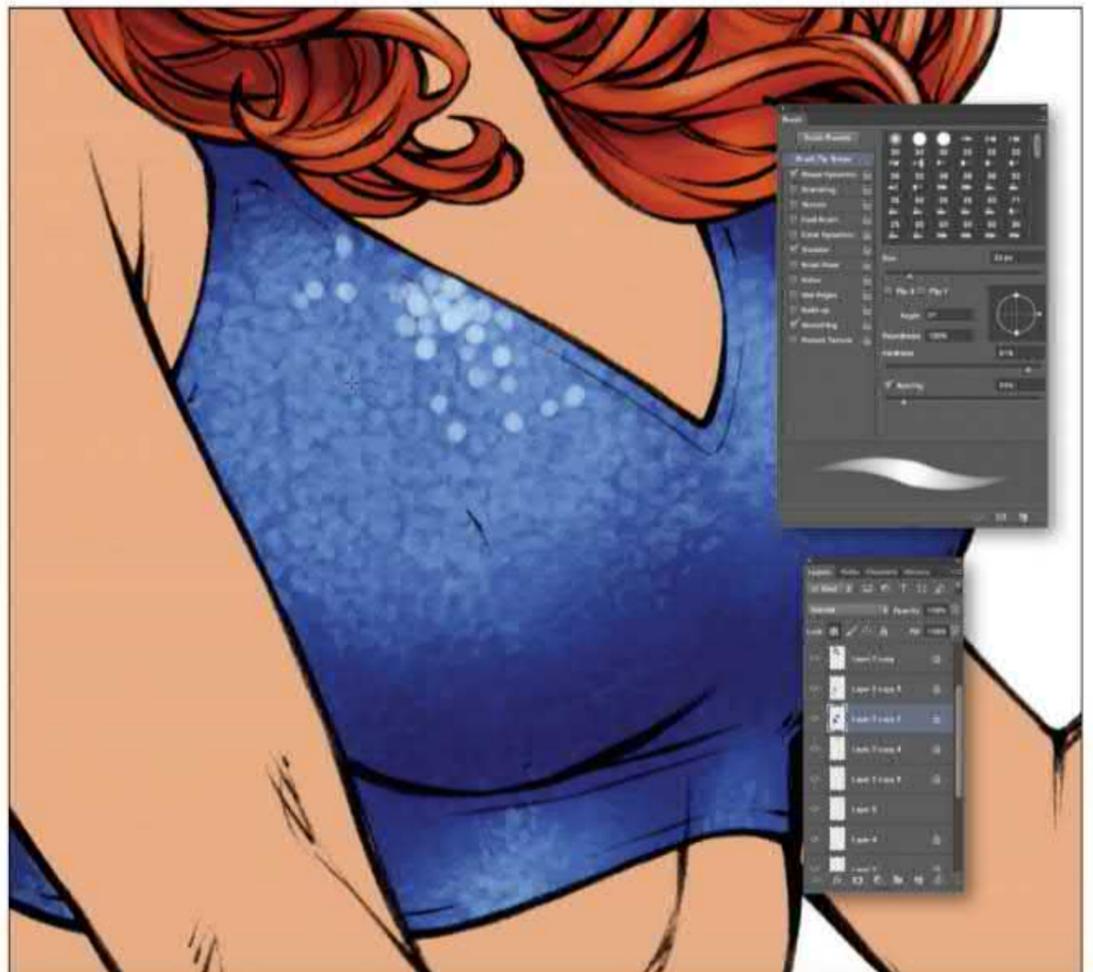
8 Colouring the clothes

I choose to make the character's clothing blue. Still with the Lock Transparent Pixels option checked, I select a default brush with 0 per cent Hardness and paint the some areas of her clothes a dark blue. Then I paint the lighter parts of the clothes with a blue that's a couple of shades lighter. ➡

9 Giving the clothing an interesting texture

After completing the dark and light parts of the clothes, I select my custom lolo1 brush, set its size between 30 and 60px, and Hardness to 90 per cent. Then with the Other Dynamics>Opacity Jitter option checked, I start to paint using the same colours. The result is that the clothing now looks as though it's covered with sequins. Then, using a simple brush, I draw more distinct small circles in white, to highlight areas almost randomly.

10 Refining the main facial features

Once I'm happy with the character's clothes, I turn my attention to the face and create a new layer for the eyes, lips and teeth, so that they stand out from the base colours in each particular area. Then, after painting them, I unite them on a single layer. I select a basic medium tint for the skin that's neither too dark nor too light.

11 Adding colour, light and shadows to the skin

Now I paint the shaded parts of the face and body, using a colour that's slightly darker than the one I have selected for the skin. I repeat the process until I'm happy with the results. Next, I again select the skin's main colour and lighten it slightly, before painting the lighter parts of the body. This gives the face and body a 3D appearance. I take care not to overdo the lighting and shading during this stage.
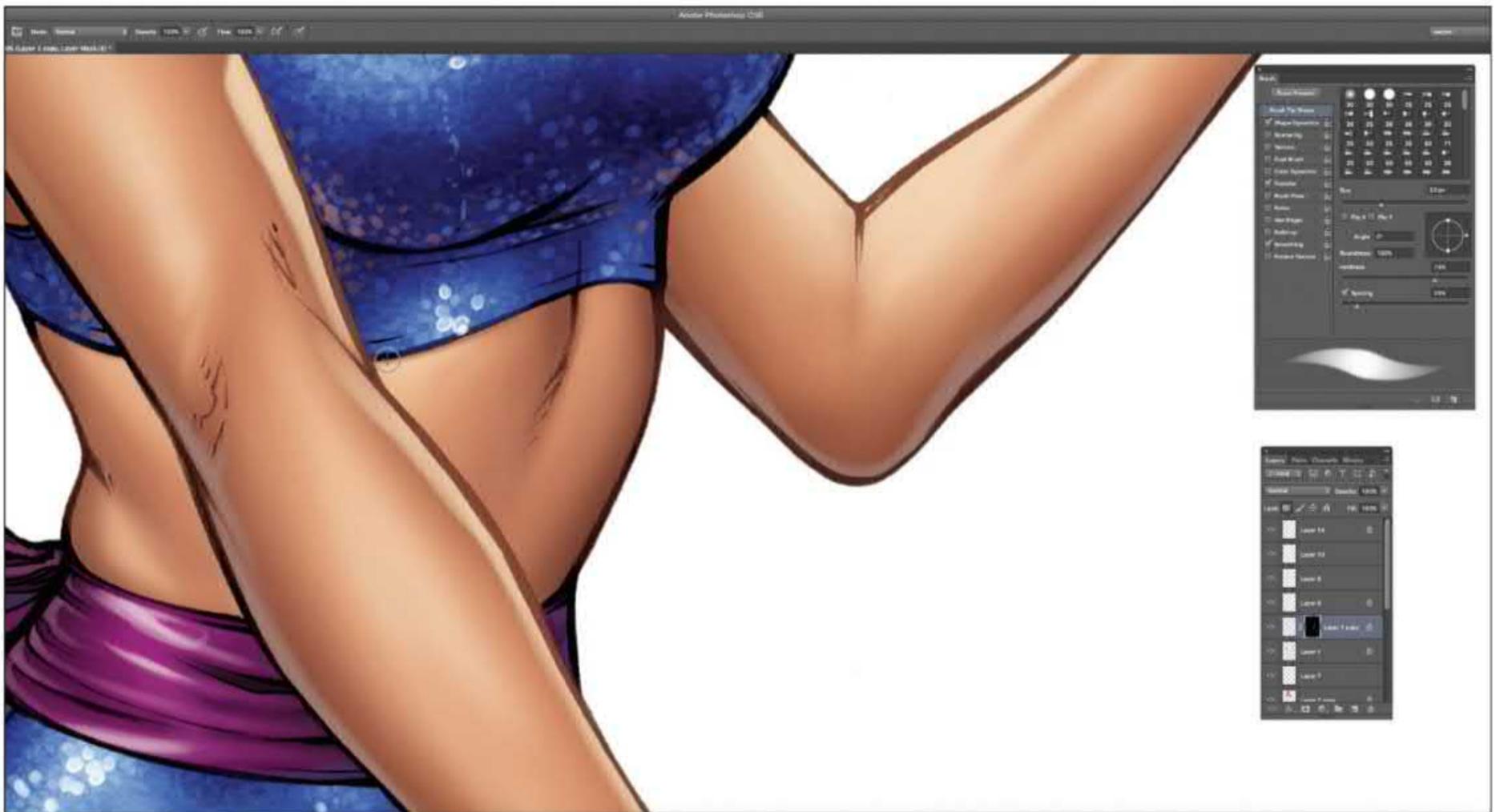
12 Giving the lines a smoother appearance

I select to the layer with the lines, which is the uppermost layer and in Multiply mode. With Lock Transparent Pixels checked I paint them with a simple brush, using a dark brown colour for the body lines or a dark blue colour for the clothing lines. I want to make the lines smoother.
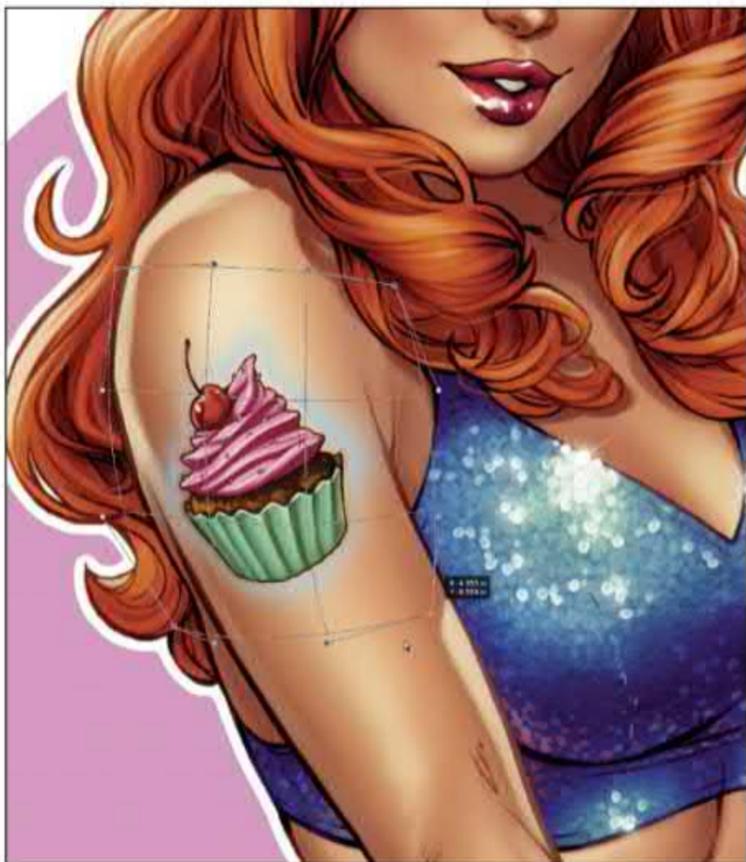
13 Applying a tattoo

I draw the tattoo in another file, before bringing it in my main file, on a layer over the skin. I turn the tattoo layer to Multiply mode. I also add a 1px blur by selecting Filter>Gaussian Blur. Next I go to Edit>Transform>Warp, and adjust the tattoo so it matches the shape of the arm. I then create a layer mask and fade the tattoo slightly where the light hits it.

14 Making final touches to the artwork

The final details usually are added on the layer that should be over the line-art. On this layer, I usually paint some lustre for the hair, lips and eyes. I also add some lighting on the skin and the clothes in general, as well as some wavy lines to create the impression of separate hairs standing out.

Figure drawing: part 8
DEVELOP YOUR ARTISTIC VOICE

Patrick J Jones explores the anatomy of style and reveals the steps he takes to bring a story to a pose

Artist
PROFILE

Patrick J Jones
LOCATION: Australia

Patrick is a figurative artist author and teacher. His art technique books, The Anatomy of Style and The Sci-fi & Fantasy Techniques of Patrick J. Jones were both award-winning best sellers. His latest book on drawing the figure, Figures from Life, is now on sale.
www.pjartworks.com

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 8 now!

WORKSHOP MATERIALS

PENCIL
General's soft charcoal pencil, Pitt charcoal pencil

CHARCOAL
General's compressed charcoal sticks

ERASERS
Kneadable eraser, mono eraser, electric eraser, pencil eraser, grip eraser

MISCELLANEOUS
Paper stumps, tissue paper, washed and dried shammy leather cloth, newsprint

Welcome to the final part of my eight-part series on drawing the figure. Today we'll be drawing Katy while discussing the emotional disciplines that exist within art.

As a young artist I was driven by my love of art. I believed love and devotion were the only disciplines needed to scale each new wall and reach each new plateau, but one day, many years into my career, I realised my taste in art had changed. I faced a colossal wall carved with the words: "Why are you unhappy?"

"I want to draw with more style and freedom," I replied.

"What's stopping you?" the wall asked me.

"I'm a photo-realist, my work makes people gasp with admiration,"

Patrick J Jones gets the best results from working with Katy when she takes the lead in developing poses.

I said. 'If I change now then I won't be so impressive."

"Then surrender your ego," the wall demanded. And in my silent surrender a giant wall toppled and I ascended to a new plateau.

Later I wrote three words that would anchor me in future moments of doubt – love, devotion and surrender – and writing them down changed everything.

REACHING NEW ART PLATEAUS

Good fortune had gifted me the first two disciplines of love and devotion, yet the act of surrender proved difficult. In my quest for artistic freedom I was all over the place, painting and drawing, obsessed with high ambitions, but l left little time to practise each new skill. With this headless chicken approach my art seemed to get worse. I needed to slow down. I surrendered to the fact that true progression takes time and was able to hone my skills until I reached each new plateau. I learned once more that surrender could be a discipline. Art, I discovered, was not like anything else.

Shown here are some poses from my photoshoot with Katy. In the past I art-directed my models like they were mannequins to my sketches. I adjusted every finger and tilt to echo the sketch, and invariably ended up with stiff poses. I needed to surrender my ego once more and allow the model interpretive freedom. The fact that Katy's poses are so fluid is the result of her own artistic disciplines. The fact that I managed to harness this force of nature in pictures is the result of my discipline to surrender.

For my final article, let's explore further the artistic disciplines of love, devotion and surrender…

Katy is a trained dancer and creative artist, and her skills clearly feed into her model work.

1 **Who killed the rhythm?**
Let's study the problems with this photo. First, Katy's left hand looks odd and kills the rhythmic flow. Second, the stretch side of the body is almost a straight line. These are just the obvious problems so I need stay on high alert as I draw.
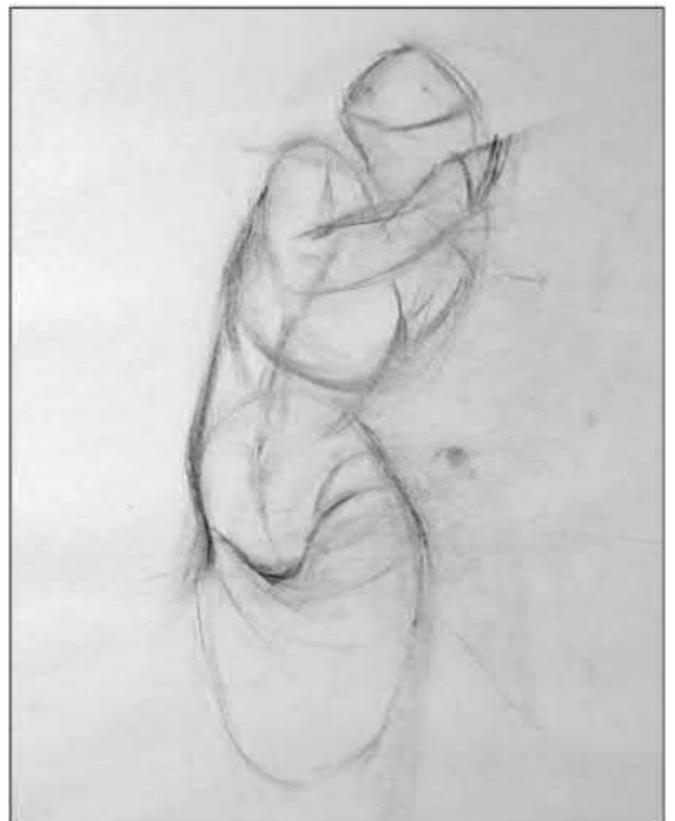
2 **Sweet surrender**
I start with the rhythmic flow of the figure, back and forth from one side to the other. I used to measure proportions with great importance, but ended up with dull drawings. Once I surrendered to rhythm more for my proportional guide my drawings were no longer so 'correct', but they were more interesting, gestural and filled with life. ➤➤

MISSED AN ISSUE?
Turn to **page 52** to complete your collection of Patrick's figure-drawing workshops. They're essential reading for all artists!

3 Overlaps and undulations

Here I've interpreted the reference toward the dynamic. The stretch side has more gesture, overlaps and undulations. I've also dropped Katy's left arm for the deleted hand to appear as if it's behind her back. Many studious hours committed to the love and devotion of craft has made this balance of gesture and structure possible.
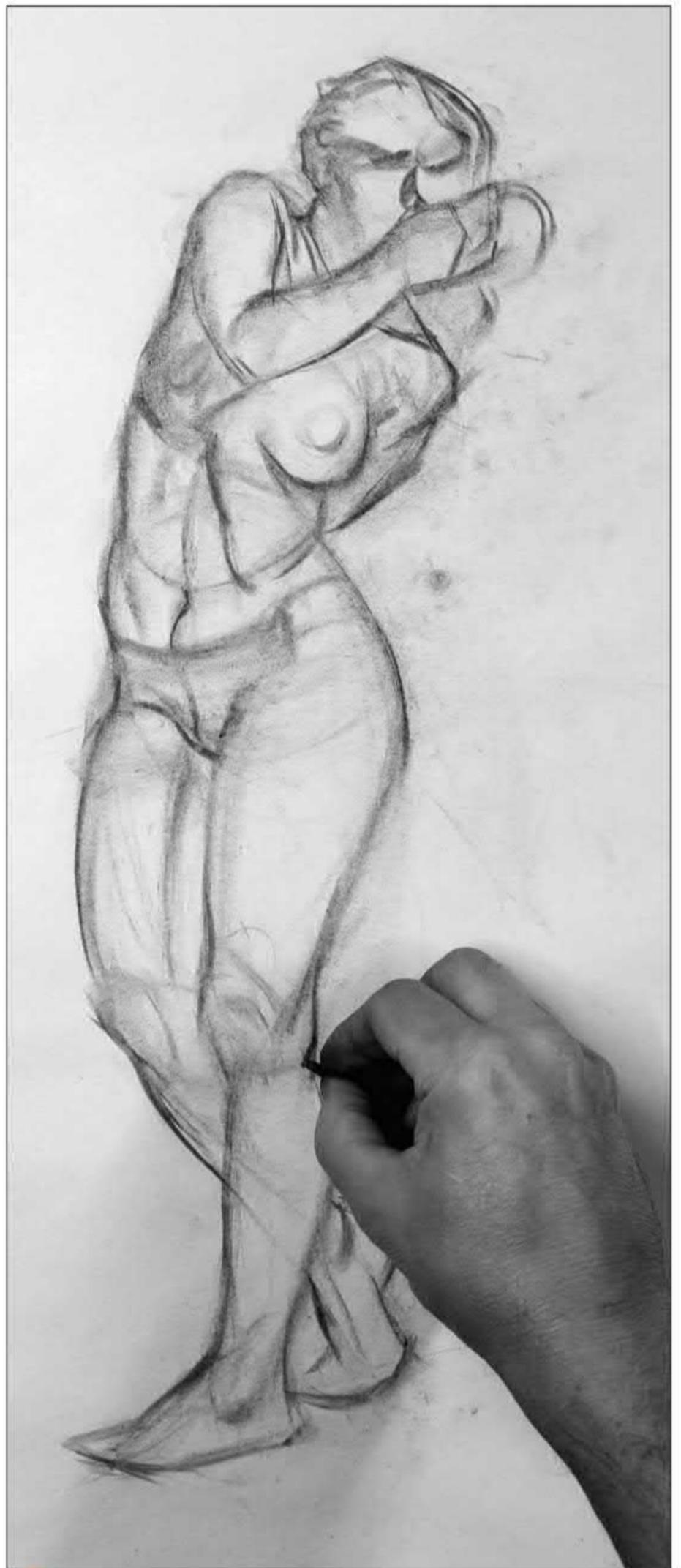
4 Play the accordion

With the extra bend of the torso I make sure the pinch side is counterpoised with wider distances on the stretch side, like an accordion. Follow the faint lines under the breasts, across the navel and the hips to see what I mean. At this stage I title the drawing The Storm Bringer, which sets the mood to come.
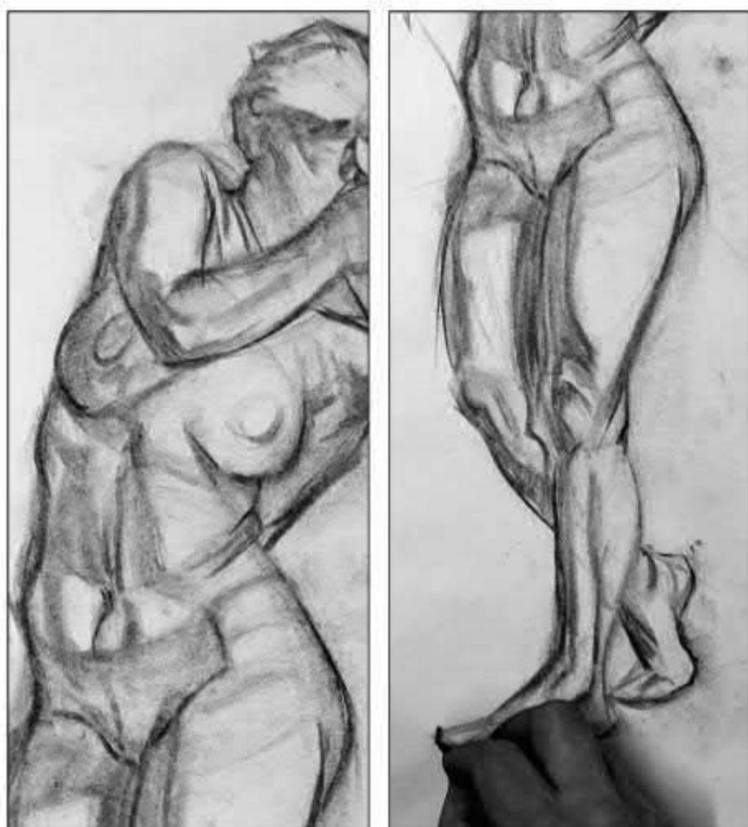
5 **The lost depth**

I block in the core shadows. The stretch side of the photo-reference was visually flat because of tangent lines (converging lines that destroy the illusion of depth). If your photo-reference lacks depth, think of ways that will enable you to see create overlapping forms. Here I overlap Katy's ribcage with her right breast and push the hip and tenth rib forward to regain the lost depth.

6 **Generating natural rhythm**

My figure is shorter in proportion, but the natural rhythm I've gained is more important. If I were to go in now and make the legs longer it would kill the organic rhythm and the drawing would become horribly stiff. I feel that surrendering to the rhythm was the right choice and I lay-in gestural lines on top of the structures.

7 **Adding anatomy details and correcting errors**

I bring out Katy's right shoulder and tricep and overlap the ribcage across the obliques. As I smudge tone I'm aware that the head has grown bigger and note to myself to trim it down. I also observe that the cast shadow of Katy's left leg has created a bow-legged look to her right leg. ➽

8 If it looks right, it's right!
I step back for a minute and decide that the cast shadow of the arm should drop over the ribcage instead of half-way across the breast. It's now more clearly described and has more gestural appeal. In class I tell my students that if it looks right, it's right, even if it's wrong! This conundrum is always guaranteed to raise eyebrows.

9 Energy and purpose
I work on the edges, softening core shadows and fading Katy's left arm into a sfumato mist (a technique for blurring colours). I slant Katy's head to make it more dynamic and smaller. The head needs to be smaller still and I think on it as I highlight the upper torso. Thinking ahead as I work adds energy and purpose to my hand.
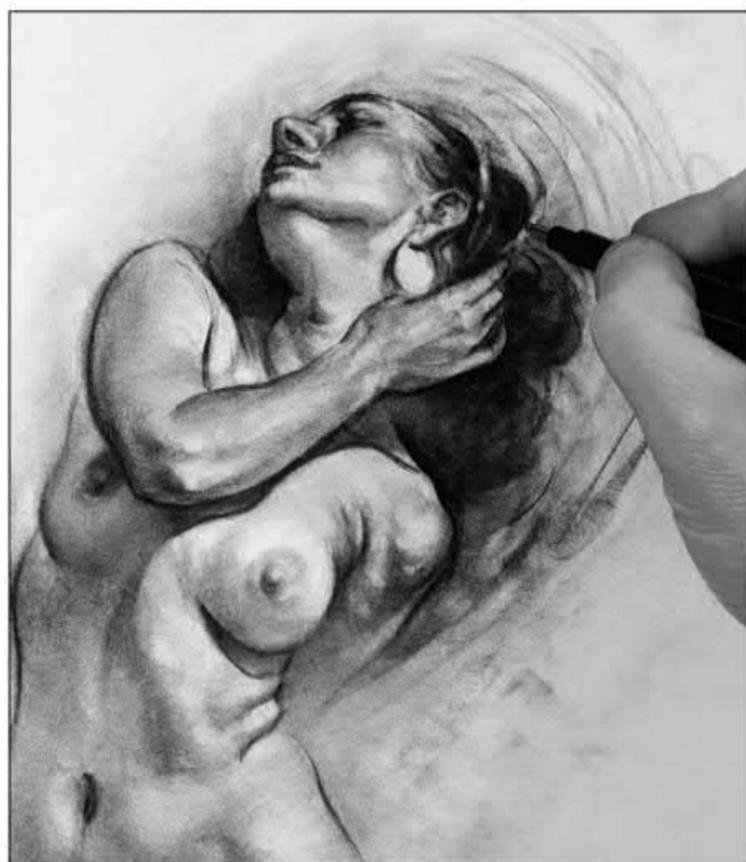
10 Introducing the stormbringer

By varying my drawing tools I'm able to reduce the head and fade the right leg into shadow, which kills the bow-legged look. With this new shadow shape I'm considering both story and style, and plan to run a line of action through the body in the shape of a metaphorical storm. If you're struggling with your figure pose, squint your eyes until you see a basic shape. This will reveal the main action of the pose.

11 Subliminal rhythm

Katy's hand may seem big here next to her foreshortened forearm, but I believe hands and feet look better bigger rather than smaller. If I were to make it smaller it would feel like an insecure decision. Here I add subliminal rhythm with gold head bands that echo the shape of the skull. The mono eraser is great for this.

12 Generating maximum fluidity

Time for the metaphorical storm. With a block of compressed charcoal I engage the gestural hand with fluidity set at maximum. Compressed charcoal is dark and may hinder your confidence with its stark nature. To draw with assurance, try practising on some scrap newsprint before drawing on your art. I recommend laying down light strokes building to dark strokes.

13 Creating something new

Reshaping the gestural lines to represent a storm has killed some gestural flow. There are trade-offs as we draw; however, keeping our disciplines in place while also taking chances enables us to learn something new. Next time I use this rhythmic charcoal technique I'll surrender more to the natural rhythm and not fight it as much.
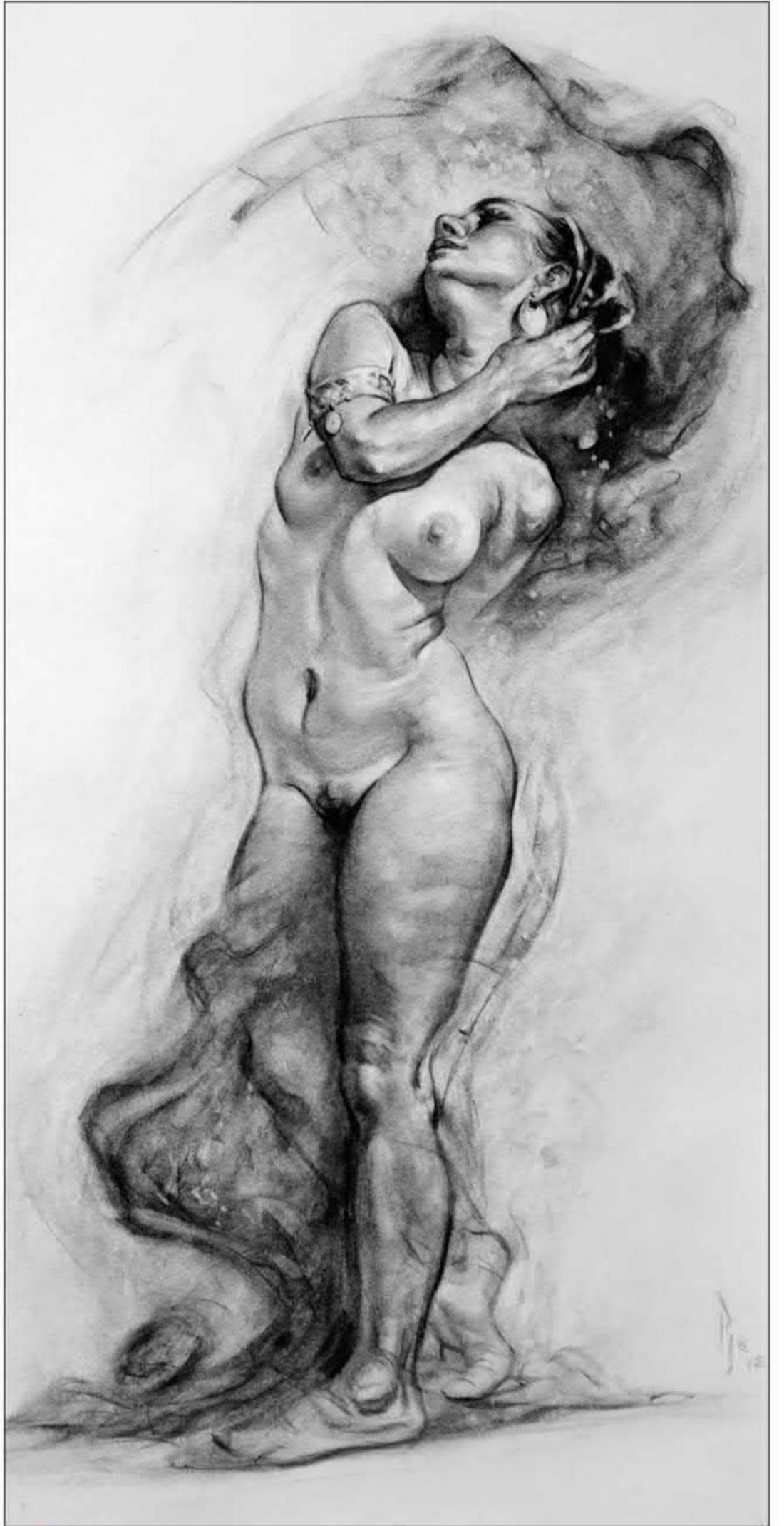
14 A sense of love, devotion and surrender

We're a world away from the reference photo now and the micro changes to structure and gesture have created a style that's uniquely mine, and if you have drawn along you'll have a drawing that's uniquely yours. Embracing the disciplines of love, devotion and surrender won't limit our art unlike strict rules. Instead, they embolden us with a freedom of expression.

THE ANATOMY OF STYLE
STUDY SHEET

Sfumato is the art of fading areas into mist. It creates a dream-like quality when used sparingly, but can create a sickly, over-sentimental quality if overused.

Lost edges soften the form and give the eye some rest before moving on to detail. They also enable the viewer to fill in what's missing.

Variation in line thickness is a stylish way to express weight and light.

Try pushing gesture to its limit over the top of strong structure. It will give your drawing energy and life beyond the photo reference.

Limiting values lends a drawing clarity and style.

Omission of detail adds mystery and can be used to compose a drawing by directing the eye toward areas of greater contrast. This is because contrast naturally grabs our attention.

Straight lines on curved forms add solidity and interest to shapes. If every line is too curved then our drawings will look cartoon-like.

Illustrating rough, less-finished passages adds energy and gives an insight into the artist's creative process.

15 Breaking down the anatomy of style

And so we end our series with a study sheet containing some notes on drawing the figure with style. See how many more notes you could add to this drawing based on the workshops we've shared together. Until next time, I wish you the best in your own art adventures. Good luck!

ImagineFX
Reviews

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

5 PRODUCTS ON TEST

HARDWARE

96 ColorEdge CG319X
Your eyes may water when you see the price, but will you be shedding tears of joy when you use this high-end display?

TRAINING

99 Concept Masters Vol 1
A mine operated by elves is the inspiration behind concept artist Connor Sheehan's epic modelling and painting tutorial.

BOOKS

100 Leonardo da Vinci: The Complete Paintings in Detail
Take a closer look at the polymath's masterpieces and uncover the secrets behind the paintings.

101 Alita: Battle Angel – The Art and Making of the Movie
See how James Cameron's long-planned project broke new ground for visual effects.

101 The Cinematic Art of StarCraft
Learn the process behind the cutscenes created for Blizzard's iconic RTS games.

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

The Eizo CG319X delivers the most accurate image quality of any display currently on the market.

ColorEdge CG319X

POWER TOOL Your eyes may water when you see the price, but you'll soon be shedding tears of joy when you use this high-end display from EIZO…

Price £3,999 **Company** EIZO **Web** www.ezoglobal.com

The EIZO ColorEdge CG319X is one of the most high-end and highly priced computer displays on the market, aimed at professional art and photography studios that need to edit HDR content. It combines extremely accurate image quality with advanced internal technology and features, which places it in a league well beyond even other similarly specced displays.

The prices of consumer-grade display hardware hover around the £200-300 mark, while the average cost of a "colour accurate" display is always far higher: you usually don't get much change from £1,000. And for

that money you get clearly superior image quality with more vivid colours, evident to even an untrained eye from a simple side-by-side comparison. But the EIZO CG319X goes even further.

The CG319X is a 31.1-inch IPS display with a 10-bit HDR panel that has an impressive 1,500:1 non-enhanced contrast ratio, and a native DCI-4K resolution of 4,096x2,168, which is slightly wider than standard 4K. It's chock-full of features that enable you

> ❝ The CG319X has a 24-bit LUT, which helps to explain the high price tag ❞

to fine-tune the image. The display is capable of self-calibration, has an ambient brightness sensor and presents a well thought-out menu accessed from touch-sensitive buttons at the front. Its 350cd/m2 brightness and 9ms response time may not be an industry-leading figure, nor is the solid, chunky look and thick bezels. Rather, it's image fidelity where the CG319X excels first and foremost.

Display image quality is expressed in terms of coverage of various colour space. One hundred per cent sRGB coverage is now available on even reasonably priced displays, but it's the more advanced colour spaces that matter to professional users. By

The built-in ambience sensor combined with a monitor hood further improves colour accuracy.

Colour spaces are listed in SDR and HDR, with built-in hardware calibration, too.

The CG319X has a highly intuitive on-screen display that allows for precise colour tuning.

default, the CG319X is configured to use the REC .2020 video format, and supports 99 per cent AdobeRGB and 98 per cent DCI-P3. But not even this truly sets the CG319X apart from other high-end monitors.

ACCURATE COLOURS

Colour accuracy also depends on the capacity of the look-up table (LUT), which determines the final colour of pixels on a screen from any input source. The more bits, the more accurate the final colour calculation will be. Any decent monitor will feature 10-bits, while the average high-quality, colour-accurate screen offers 14-bits.

The CG319X has a 24-bit LUT, which is considerably higher than any other desktop computer monitor on the market and goes a long way to explaining that high price tag.

Likewise its colour uniformity – the variation in brightness and gamut across a screen – can vary wildly on consumer-grade displays. You may not

notice it, but a pixel in the top left of a consumer display could be as much as 15 per cent brighter or darker than a pixel elsewhere, and that becomes an issue when your illustration is going to be reprinted multiple times, on a variety of mediums. In our testing, we found that the maximum brightness variance across the CG319X was well below one per cent, aided by EIZO's digital uniformity equalizer (DUE) technology.

Yet despite the brilliant image quality and fantastic features that will delight any illustrator, the CG319X is just too expensive to become our first recommendation for a colour-accurate monitor. The competition from other high-end colour accurate displays is extremely fierce now, and although EIZO's CG319X is an amazing device, its ultimate fidelity could easily go to waste when high-end alternatives with more down-to-earth pricing are still extremely capable for 99 per cent of artists.

DETAILS

Features
- 31.1-inch IPS display
- 10-bit HDR panel
- 1,500:1 non-enhanced contrast ratio
- 4,096x2,168 resolution
- 350 cd/m2 brightness
- 9ms response time
- 99 per cent AdobeRGB and 98 per cent DCI-P3 colour spaces
- 24-bit LUT
- Weight: 12.4kg (13.3kg with hood)
- Height, tilt and swivel adjustable

System Requirements
PC/Mac: DisplayPort or HDMI output

Rating
★★★★☆

The free 3D programs Blender and Daz Studio give Connor all the tools he needs to construct a gamer-friendly environment complete with statues.

This grandiose elven mine is the result of hours of 3D modelling and 2D painting – Connor Sheehan explains how he did it.

A basic render output using Octane Render gives Connor raw light and shadow information as a starting point for painting over.
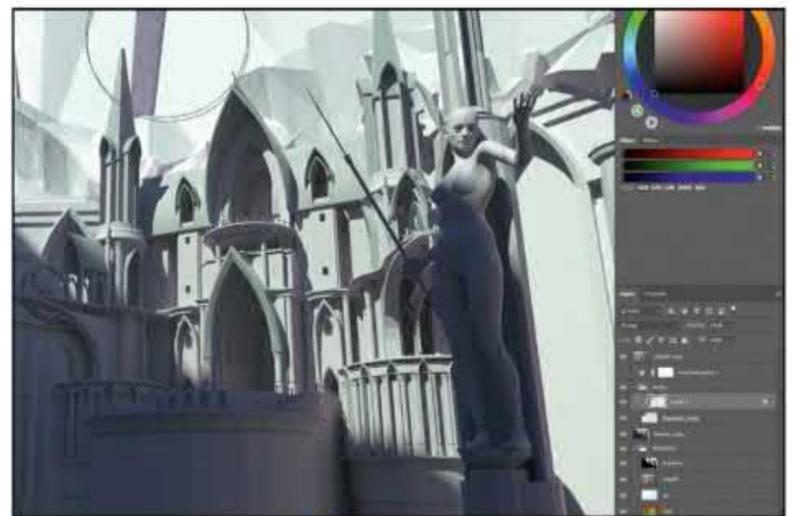
Concept Masters Vol 1

ELVISH ROCKS A mine operated by elves is the inspiration behind concept artist Connor Sheehan's epic modelling and painting tutorial

Publisher JRO Tools **Price** $8 **Format** Download **Web** www.jrotools.com

Playing with traditional fantasy tropes, Connor Sheehan's project explores what a mine might look like if it were operated by elves rather than the dwarves we'd normally expect. His epic yet elegant rendition has a tutorial of equally ambitious scale to show how he made it.

The process is a familiar one to anyone studying concept art principles. Starting with a sketch in Photoshop, Connor models his environment in Blender (with some help from Daz Studio for the statues). As he mentions, 3D software knowledge is becoming essential for concept artists, and Blender is one of the most accessible tools you can use. He then outputs a selection of render layers in Octane Render, giving himself a base to begin the final painting in Photoshop. Nearly nine hours of narrated video walk you through every step, alongside separate introductions to the four key pieces of software.

Note, however, that this isn't a blow-by-blow tutorial where every single action is examined. Connor is content to let the video play and interject at key moments, explaining what he was thinking or highlighting an important technique. Make sure that you've got a notepad handy while you watch, because there's an awful lot you'll want to follow up on, from Connor's discussions around using a consistent design language throughout the scene, to more prosaic methods such as how selecting colours with RGB sliders can help you build a harmonious colour palette.

On top of the narrated chapters come a further 19 hours of raw screen-capture video, repeating the process videos in real time and showing the painting of a different composition that Connor felt didn't evoke the grandeur he sought. Packed with ideas throughout, this is a tutorial that will make an impact on your own art for months to come.

DETAILS

Topics covered
- Software overviews
- Research and reference
- Concept sketches
- Modelling in Blender
- Design language
- Blending modes
- Establishing values
- Adding texture
- Colour palettes

Length
550 minutes

Rating
★★★★★

ARTIST PROFILE
CONNOR SHEEHAN

Graduating in 3D games art at the University of Hertfordshire, Connor worked on the team developing the film noir-inspired stealth game Calvino Noir. After a period spent freelancing, he's now working as a concept artist at Cambridge-based Automation Games, which is developing the massively multiplayer online shooting game Mavericks and an as-yet unannounced fantasy game. On his website and ArtStation page, he also shares artwork from his long-time personal sci-fi project Blackwoods.

www.connorsheehan.co.uk

Leonardo da Vinci: The Complete Paintings in Detail

RENAISSANCE SCAN Take a closer look at the polymath's masterpieces and uncover the secrets behind the paintings


Leonardo da Vinci's pen and ink perspective study for his 1482 painting Adoration of the Magi.

Author Alessandro Vezzosi **Publisher** Prestel **Price** £65 **Web** https://prestelpublishing.randomhouse.de **Available** Now

What is there left to say about Leonardo da Vinci? The Renaissance polymath has been meticulously examined by scholars and critics over the years, but as this book points out there's a lot of misinformation out there, so it pays to look a little closer.

Taking an in-depth look at the life and works of the most famous artist to have ever lived, Leonardo da Vinci: The Complete Paintings in Detail pools together findings from the latest technological examinations of his masterpieces. Together with intense close-ups of sections from his most recognisable pieces, including the Mona Lisa and Lady with an Ermine, readers are treated to a dissecting study of iconic paintings.

This isn't a conventional biography by way of his paintings though, and nor is it a dry plod through the meanings of his work. Both of these angles can be more thoroughly and
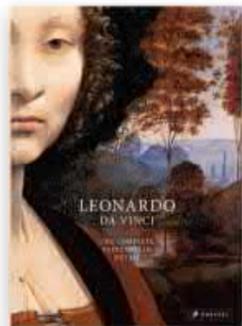
Scientific analysis detailed in the book suggests that the model for da Vinci's Mona Lisa was Italian noblewoman Lisa Gherardini (shown left).

readily pursued elsewhere. Instead, this book explores da Vinci's techniques, status and influences, and contextualises them with what this meant for him as an artist at the time, as well as how his paintings have shaped the art world since.

It's an approach that makes for an almost timeless read. Duchamp's

> ❝ The book pools findings from the latest technological examinations of his work ❞

mustachioed Mona Lisa sits alongside other contemporary anecdotes, including a story about how a charcoal cartoon was blasted with a sawn-off shotgun, to give an impression of how audiences have come to process da Vinci over time. Even the importance of Dan Brown's 2003 best-selling novel The Da Vinci Code gets a mention.

In addition to studying each of the 15 paintings that are commonly attributed to da Vinci, the collection also takes a look at his work as a theoretician. The tools that he used, his manuscripts, and questions surrounding attribution are investigated as well, in an effort to provide an account that puts the record as straight as possible. Rumours and urban myths surrounding his works are debunked with the help of well-researched evidence and reasoned arguments.

Despite delving into so much detail, both in terms of visuals and his life's meaning, Leonardo da Vinci: The Complete Paintings in Detail remains accessible to both experts and newcomers to his world. And with the help of UV scans and infrared imagery, get ready to see da Vinci's art like you've never seen it before.

RATING ★★★★☆

The artist's Portrait of a Girl is believed to be his prep work for the angel seen in The Virgin of the Rocks.

Alita: Battle Angel – The Art and Making of the Movie

SERAPHIC CYBORG See how James Cameron's long-planned project came to fruition, breaking new ground for visual effects in the process

Author Abbie Bernstein **Publisher** Titan Books **Price** £30 **Web** www.titanbooks.com **Available** Now

According to James Cameron, the decision to make one cinematic blockbuster instead of another came down to a coin toss. The two films in question were Alita: Battle Angel and Avatar. Had the penny landed the other way, we could have got 2019's manga-inspired spectacular nearly two decades earlier.

Concept art of Alita in her Motorball body, from a key sequence in the film.

As it turned out though, the Robert Rodriguez-directed film had to wait. This might have worked to its advantage though, as its characters got to benefit from the advances in motion capture technology that were pioneered and perfected by Avatar.

Alita: Battle Angel – the Art and Making of the Movie tracks the long development of the film, which was first set in motion back in 1999 when Guillermo del Toro brought Yukito Kishiro's manga to the attention of the film industry. With a wealth of concept art and source material to draw on, this book is also a record of how far believable visual effects have come in the intervening years.

Given that this book is limited to the film, it's unfortunate that we don't get

The inspiration for the Motorball repair pits came from the layouts of modern-day NASCAR garages.

to see how the manga itself influenced the final design. However, there are plenty of digital sketches and concept paintings from all stages of development to satisfy even long-term fans of the character.

RATING ★★★★☆

The Cinematic Art of StarCraft

CHOICE CUTS Take a trip to the Koprulu Sector and see how Blizzard upped the ante for the cutscenes created for these landmark RTS games

Author Robert Brooks **Publisher** Titan Books **Price** £35 **Web** www.titanbooks.com **Available** Now

Blizzard released StarCraft in 1997, and it's fair to say that the real-time sci-fi strategy franchise helped to redefine competitive gaming.

This collection goes back to the beginning and traces the StarCraft story via its cinematic art, both as a craft and a storytelling device. Kicking off with the original release, readers are taken through to the 21st century

Close-up on Kerrigan, the mutated human who leads the Zerg forces into battle.

sequels and expansions to get a complete picture of how the game's universe developed.

The array of art ranges from rough sketches of characters, vehicles and locations, to finished digital pieces. Unfortunately, the creators behind these illustrations go uncredited, and the text only occasionally features insights from the artists, preferring instead to take a more in-game approach to the narrative.

While these drawbacks might be a let down for readers hoping to chase up their favourite pieces, this book makes up for these shortcomings by presenting assets and materials that would be difficult to study so closely while watching the many cutscenes.

Concept art of Artanis, a leading figure from the Protoss race of aliens.

RATING ★★★☆☆
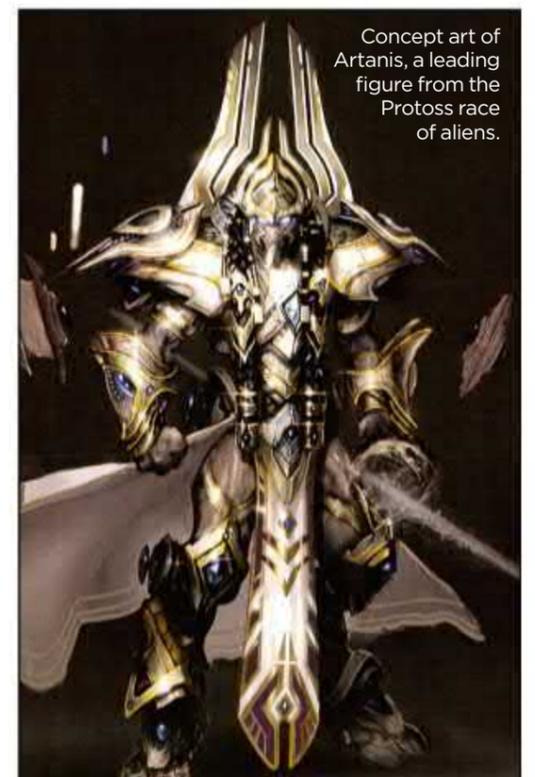
A MAGAZINE OF BIBLICAL PROPORTIONS

SFX
PRESENTS
GOOD OMENS
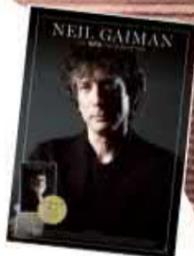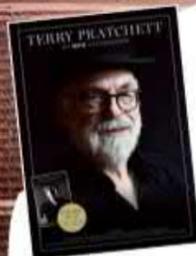
INCLUDES

TERRY PRATCHETT & NEIL GAIMAN 2-IN-1 COLLECTOR'S MAGAZINE

+ SANDMAN/ GOOD OMENS POSTER

THE EPIC GOOD OMENS ISSUE
ON SALE 24 APRIL

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

Dan Quintana

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Oil, graphite, charcoal **WEB:** www.danquintana.com

Dan started out creating graphic street art, but now paints hazy, ethereal portraits, dream-like environments and captivating compositions.

1 NOVA
"In 2014 I began playing with outlines such as shadowed hands and patterns. I used them as overlays that acted like X-rays or dual imagery, exposing an alternative colour underneath."

2 POLYPS
"After I had worked on numerous illustrations that required patterns and textiles – and visited Japan – I wanted to introduce these influences into the fabrics of my figurative work."

3 AMIE
"Oil paints on a wooden base, painted in 2014. I was going heavy on the brushstrokes at this time, layering them to mimic muscle ligaments and tendons, in combination with a softly rendered face."

4 PLUME
"This is an oil painting from last year, done on Moleskine paper. I was watching a lot of anime at the time – particularly Wicked City."

Dimitris Pantazis

LOCATION: Greece **MEDIA:** Marker, watercolour, acrylic **WEB:** www.dimitrispantazisart.com

Dimitris is a self-taught artist with a love for folklore, mythology and comics. "I want my pieces to have a retro feel, like an illustration in an old book," he says.

1 CYCLOPS

"Being Greek, I love mythology. I used negative space to create contrast and make the piece more dynamic. The red draws the viewer to the focus of this violent scene."

2 ANGULAR

"Based on the rhyme about the Crooked Man – I emphasised his 'crookedness' by making almost everything angular. This piece features ink wash and copper metallic paint."

3 DEATH

"Here, Death resembles an old-fashioned accountant; he just has a job to do. To make the connection, I painted the shadow of a typical Reaper. Colour is subdued to give it a feel of decomposition."

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4 HERCULES-HYDRA
"Another piece inspired by Greek mythology. Hercules is an archetypal figure, and I captured him holding a scythe, as is shown in earlier representations of the demigod."

Inks

15 TIPS FOR INKING YOUR FANTASY ART

Comic artist and illustrator TESS FOWLER talks about bringing fantasy friends and places to life with not only ink, but also instinct and love

Greetings and salutations artist friends! Do you enjoy tabletop RPGs? Do you find yourself doodling mythical beasts and lovely elven warriors, but you want to breathe more life and detail into them? Well, today you're in luck, because I'm going to tell you about the magical mystery that's inking the fantastical.

Have no fear, I used to shake in my boots at the thought of inking my pencil work as well. But you already possess the skills required to venture down this road. If you're a seasoned inker, perhaps something here might help you in your questing.

While working on the comic Dungeons & Dragons: A Darkened Wish with B Dave Walters I've been inking full time and enjoying the heck out of it. You'll see some shots of my comic work here. I've also included some art inspired by the Twitch show Critical Role.

Professionally, I have to leave my inks open for a digital colourist. But when I do my own stuff, like Critical Role fan art, I ink differently because I colour it traditionally. But both come from the same place. My heart.

Tess has been working in comics and illustration professionally for over 12 years. Look for her newest comic Dungeons & Dragons: A Darkened Wish, on sale now. And to see more of her work, visit www.tessfowler.com.

1 Tools of the trade

I've experimented for years to find what inking tools work best for me. Your mileage may vary. I recommend exploring everything you can get your hands on, from fountain pens to Japanese calligraphy brushes. You want to look for a tool that enables you to produce the effect you want, be it feathering, splatter or clean fluid lines. Shown here is a Pentel pocket brush pen which is refillable, a Faber-Castell S size pen, a micron size 01 and a Winsor & Newton sable brush size 2.

2 Designing lively, lived-in faces

Fantasy characters can have features that are off-the-wall bizarre, but they still should feel like vital, real beings. Try to think of them less like make-believe and more like your friends. This is Mighty Nein and Vox Machina, two groups of adventurers from Critical Role. I've used clean lines in the faces so that the emotion is clear. Varying your line weights brings energy to an inked expression. Beards, scars, tattoos and wrinkles are also fun ways to show where they've been in life. Connect with your character and they'll connect with the viewer.

3 Hair dancing

Hair is what seems to trip people up the most. When inking hair, remember to "clump". Section it into pieces. Hair doesn't stick together in one glued-up mass. It's a free-flowing, living thing. Keep your wrist loose. Your lines playful. Curls have spring! You don't have to pick out every single hair; that tends to confuse the eye. Have you ever seen someone outside on a breezy day? You see the hair lift and move and dance. That's what you're trying to capture. Joyful hair. Action. Energy. A Darkened Wish's Helene has my favourite hair design ever.

> ❝ Hair doesn't stick together in one glued-up mass. It's a free-flowing, living thing ❞

4 Texture adds a sense of storytelling

What is a lonely inn on the side of the adventurer's road without contrasting textures? Boring, I tell you! Enrich your environments with differing textures: stones, wood, thatch and so forth. Inking these different bumps, nicks and wood grain tells a story to your eyes that then tell your fingers, "Ooh, that would be so neat to touch!" Have you ever felt tree bark? Cold, unyielding stone? Fuel your work with that mental library of sensations. Buildings have lives all their own. Different tools can help. Dip your finger in ink and smoosh it on to the walls of your building. Boom! New texture.
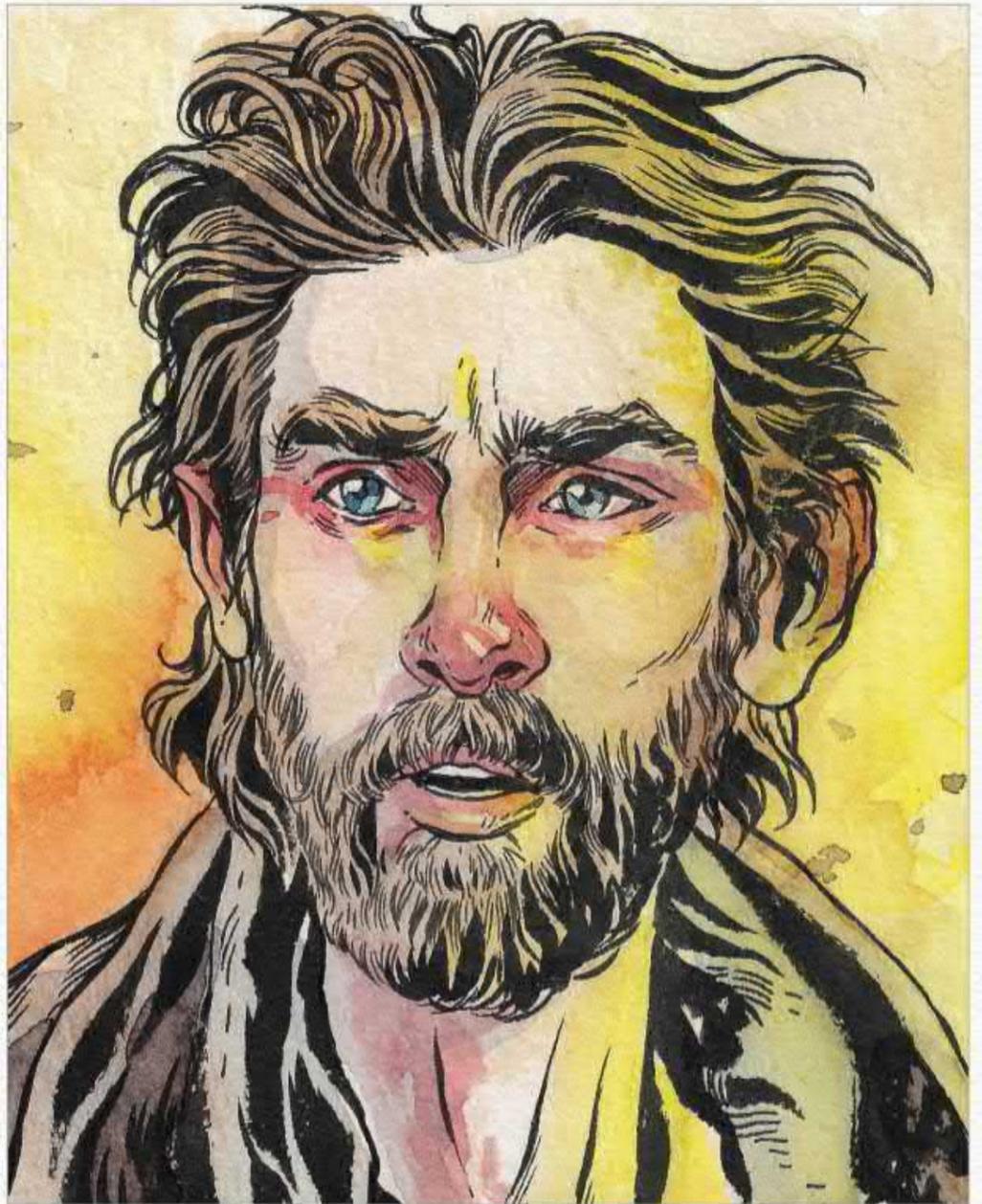
5 The eyes have it

Your eyes are the windows to your soul. Same goes for any goblin, troll or even Critical Role's resident trash wizard Caleb here. Inking can often make lively pencil work fall flat. Why? Because you're streamlining your first instincts, overwriting the pencil work you created in a flurry of inspiration. Inking is more than tracing. Nowhere is this more important to remember than when inking eyes. Is the flesh below the eyes puckered from crying? Are the eyebrows furrowed in frustration? Are the eyes glassy and shiny? Add some gel pen highlights in there. Some heavy black eyelashes. Some emotion! ➤➤

6 Furry bits are fun

I like inking fur because I can use a brush to make playful shapes. You can clump and section the fur just like hair. Does your clever highwayman wear a cloak lined with fox fur to keep warm? Search for some photos of different animals. How does their hair spring up out of their skin? What direction does it flow? Has the cloak been wet before? Does the fur droop now? Grog and Pike are my favourite Critical Role characters to add fur to.

7 Accessories make noise

My character design always involves heavily laden belts full of stuff that jingle jangles. Coins are a favourite. Bottles of potions with their smooth roundness tied up with heavy twine. Again, contrasting textures are visually interesting! I like tying jewels and pennies into hair. Hanging them off a belt or boot. It's easy to get bored when inking. Noisy details break up the monotony of a piece as well as giving your character a visual history up-front. Why does he need a spatula tied up in bows and crystals on his belt? I don't know, but now I'm invested.

8 Junk is your friend

What's in your house that makes it look lived in? For me it's piles of books, art supplies, mugs of cold tea and so much more. Inking such details in an environment can communicate more about your character than even their own attire. My image reference files on my phone include a lot of medieval books and bottles. Lanterns, too. The shapes and textures of these items are soothing to ink, but also create intriguing visuals. Young wizard Helene is an avid reader, clearly.

9 Natural inspiration

Look out in the garden under your window. What shapes do the flowers and leaves take? Triangles? Wavy ovals? Diamonds? Just as when you were a little kid first learning to draw shapes, so too now can you allow the natural world to inspire you to make shapes again. I enjoy drawing Critical Role's Keyleth because her flowery wreaths give me the opportunity to draw piles of flowers and leaves. Just bunches of distorted shapes all clinging to each other. Springing up and dangling down. Shapely sunbursts.

10 Noble steeds

Researching horse tack helped me learn to make up my own fantasy versions of the same. I can put a saddle on anything and work out how to attach the reins and bridles. I can fudge reality with steel rings and textures because I've read enough about the subject to do so.

Beneath a horse's shiny hide, its muscles ripple and flex differently depending on how they're moving. I can apply that information to centaurs and other hybrid fantasy creatures. ➤➤

11 *Weapon design*

Is there a difference between a dagger and a dirk? How long is a longsword? This is fun knowledge that I've gained through years of library hunting and internet deep diving. I've seen so many knife sheaths it makes my head spin. I can't recommend it highly enough. Pretty soon your brain develops a mental reference file that you can dip into whenever you want. Then you can break all the rules! It's fantasy after all. What story does your weaponry tell? Does the hilt fit the warrior's hand? Maybe it was a gift from his mother on her death bed. That's why it's too small for him.

12 Step by Step: Think about colour when inking your art

1 WHO'S DOING THE COLOURING?
I keep my pencils loose when I'm not making comics because I know I'll be colouring myself instead of a digital colourist handling it. I leave the heavy lifting for the inking stage. Notice how I've shown myself where the hair clumps exist? I haven't picked them apart yet.

2 DON'T OVERCOMPLICATE
My inks here are simple so as not to overpower the colour that's to come. Vex and Vax of Critical Role are twins. I want to show the delicacy of their youthful features while also making sure you see who they are in their clothing details and pet friend.

3 FRAMING THE COLOURS
I'm careful not to smear or overpower my inks. The ink holds the colour like a frame holds a picture. The delicacy of the children's features still shines through. I used the leaf silhouettes to pop out the leaves in front to create depth. The bright green helps sell that illusion.

13 *Organic matter matters*
Nature gives us beautiful reference, but it also gives us room to make up our own organic designs. Much of my armour design is derived from rock and wood surfaces. Huge standing rocks from the beaches of southern California gave me an instinctive flow when drawing armour pieces. You can touch that which is made by the earth and allow that energy to fuel your fantasy work. I often use a brush for this, laying down black ink. Then I switch to a tech pen for the texturing. Vex from Critical Role is a favourite for this.

> ❝ **Much of my armour design comes from rocks and wood** ❞

14 *No shirt, no shoes, no treasure*
Naked adventuring is unwise. As much as I love drawing skin, a hero sometimes needs layers to keep them warm while questing. Where do they come from? If it's a tropical climate then they might wear less. Or if they're impervious to the elements they might like to show off their scaly hides. But if they're puny humans they'll need things like chain mail, jerkins, cloaks, gowns and robes. These involve textures, and often reference. My inspiration comes largely from history. See how Percy's clothes differ from Vex and Kiki? What do the textures tell you?

15 *The power of silhouette*
Don't discount the usefulness of simplicity. Black ink shaped into recognisable figures and objects can tell a story just as easily as the densely detailed stuff. Grab a brush and a bottle of ink. Tell a story with nothing but shapes, and you'll see what I mean. It's also a wonderful way to test whether or not your storytelling is clear in comics. If your figures' body language holds up in silhouette you're on the right path. Helene and her grandpa are deep in conversation here.

First Impressions

✳ Staz Johnson ✳

A hotchpotch of 70s pop culture left a lasting impression on this comic artist

What was your childhood like?
I had a pretty normal childhood. I was a British kid growing up in the 70s, so in addition to playing lots of sports and making about a thousand Airfix kits, I was exposed to some of the best comics, telly, movies and music ever made (Star Wars, Jaws, Rollerball, Clint Eastwood spaghetti westerns, 2000 AD, Action Comics, Starsky & Hutch, The Professionals, Led Zeppelin, Sex Pistols, to name but a few).

What, outside of art, has most influenced your artwork?
When it comes to drawing comics, the largest influence is films and TV. I've lost count of the number of storytelling techniques and tricks that I've lifted from cinema.

You're a child, you see a painting or drawing that changes everything… what are you looking at?
I can't think of anything that had that kind of effect on me as a child. It wasn't until I was in my mid- to
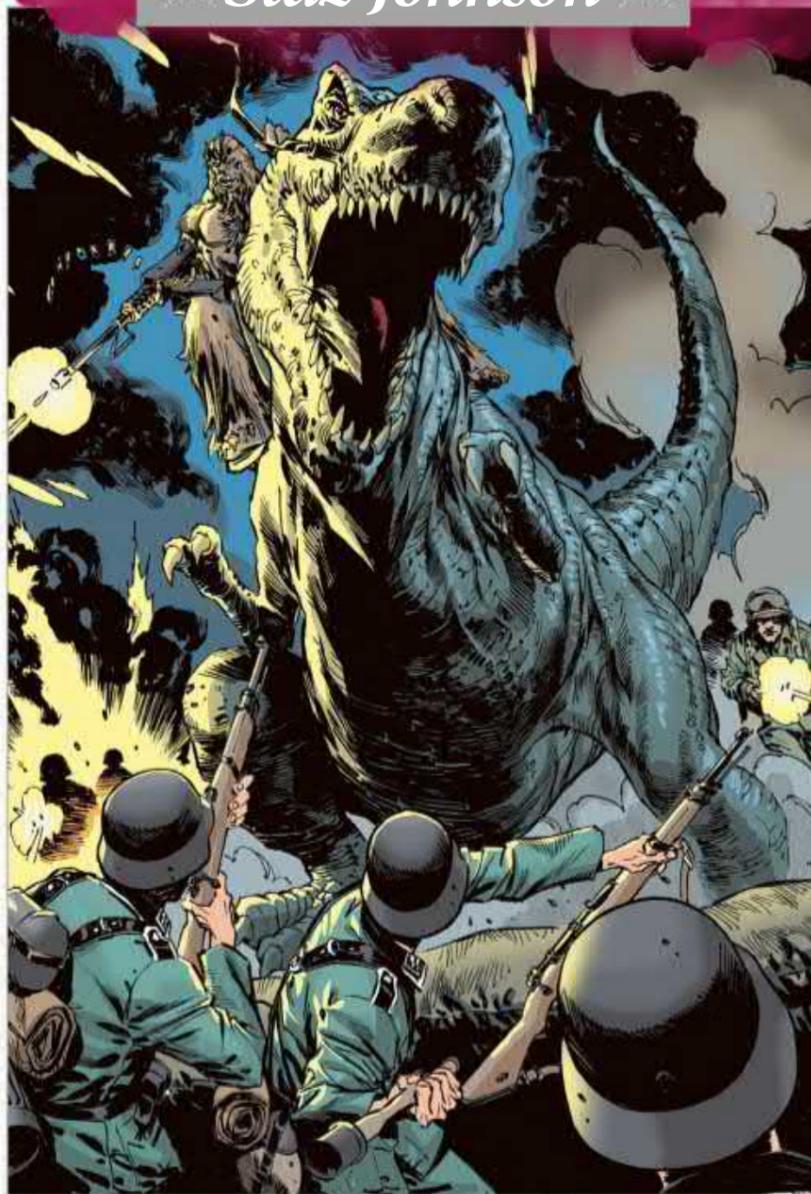
BIGFOOT AND T-REX VS THE NAZIS!
"A promo piece for my Weird War II comic project that I'm hoping to launch later this year."

WEREWOLF NAZIS ON WHEELS!
Staz inked this 'hairy biker' on paper, before adding colours in Photoshop.

late teens when I saw the work of people like Roger Dean and Frazetta on record sleeves. It was then that I realised fantasy stuff didn't have to be 'just for kids'.

What was your next step in art?
Although I enjoyed art, it wasn't a driving force in my life. I preferred doing other stuff, but it was just that I was better at drawing than those other things, so I just stumbled from

> ❝ **I've lost count of the number of storytelling tricks that I've lifted from cinema** ❞

school on to a foundation art course at sixth form college, more because of a lack of a better idea than any design or plan.

How much does graphic design play a part in your comic art?
It plays a minor role, mostly on a composition level, but everything comes secondary to the storytelling. If the best way of telling the story means some dreadful graphic design, then so be it.

What comic character that you've painted do you most identify with?
Well, since they're all fantasy characters, I don't identify with any them. I think if I were to identify with a character like Judge Dredd or Batman I'd have some serious psychological issues.

**What positive changes have you seen in the comic industry?**
I think the trend in recent years for creator-owned material – whether that be via a recognised publisher or self-publishing using a crowd-funding facility – is a good thing.

What does the future hold for you?
My immediate future holds the next episode of the Judge Dredd story I'm drawing (I try not to plan too far ahead – it fends off disappointment).

I'm also working on a personal project that I'm hoping to launch through Kickstarter this year. The basic idea behind it is to make the ultimate high-concept genre mash-up comic book. I want to do it in an old school "the way comics used to be" style. It's an alternative take on World War II in which werewolves, Sasquatch and dinosaurs fight the Nazis. Along the way there's a super-powered WRAF officer who flies with the aid of a jetpack, and (for some reason) Nazi werewolves on motorbikes. Watch this space!

Staz has been working for over 30 years as a comic book artist. His clients include DC Comics, Marvel and 2000 AD. See more of his art at www.deviantart.com/stazjohnson.

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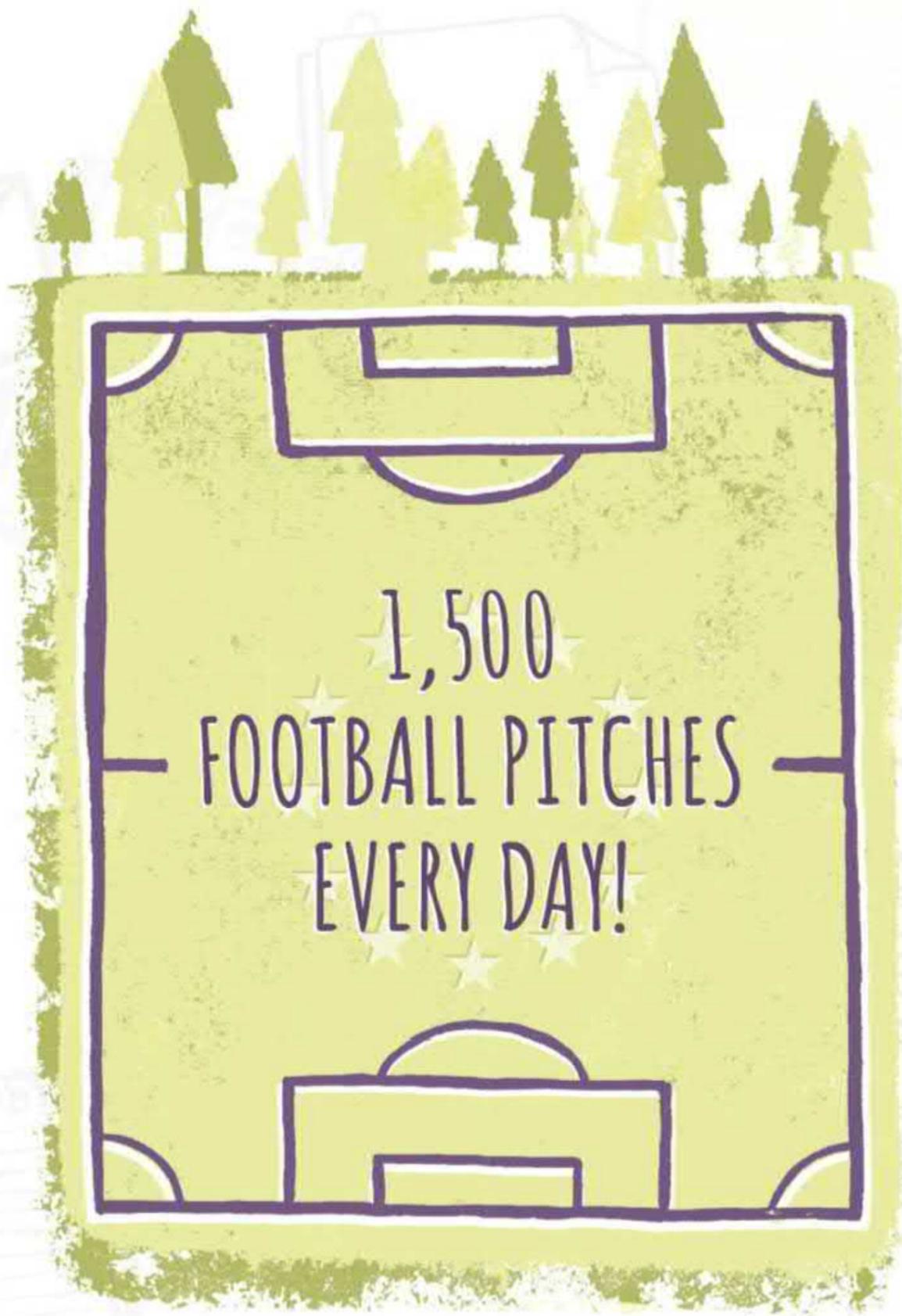
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