

# 2d artist

Concept Art, Digital & Matte Painting  
Magazine | Issue 082 October 2012

## Interview

Jerad Merantz

## Articles

Sketchbook of  
Ivan Kashubo

## The Gallery

Christopher Balaskas,  
Edvige Faini,  
plus more

**David Munoz Valezquez**  
continues our Custom Brushes for  
Characters series by painting this  
stunning Red Indian.

# RED INDIAN

## Designing Weapons

Locked and loaded in this issue are tripod-mounted guns.

**John Park** walks us through the creation of them in this latest chapter.

## Desert Realm

**Tuomas Korpi** is the latest artist to transport us on a journey. He takes us to the barren landscape of the desert realm.

## Arrrr, matey!

In the second part of our cartoon creation series, **Brett Bean** talks us through how to create a stylized pirate.





## Editorial

Hello and welcome to the October issue of *2D Artist* magazine! We brought you three awesome new tutorial series in the last issue; get ready for round two as we deliver the second installments.

Let's begin with the stunning image that graces the cover of this month's issue, created by

**David Munoz Velazquez** who is continuing our custom brushes series. This series sees our artists take an un-textured character they have designed, show us how to make custom brushes and then demonstrate how to use them to detail their character. David shows us how to create the brushes he used to add texture and fine details to this striking Red Indian.

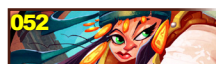
Next up is chapter two in our weapon design series, where our artists will be showing us how to create weapon concepts for different situations and environments, as if they were doing it for the games industry. **John Park** takes on the role of demonstrating how he created his tripod-mounted weapons, from the concept and design stage, through to painting techniques.

We bring you the second installment of new series Cartoon Creation 101, where our artists show us how to design and paint basic cartoon characters. This time around the amazing **Brett Bean** talks us through his exploratory designs and demonstrates how he created this swash-buckling pirate.

**Tuomas Korpi** continues our Six Realms series, as he takes us through his painting process and shows us how he designed his fantasy desert realm.

**Claudio Rodriguez Valdes** takes us back to our childhood in this month's Making Of, with his image Who We Really Are. He explains his painting process from the first designs to the finished piece.

Also in this issue we feature an interview with talented concept artist **Jerad Marantz** and a sketchbook that gives an insight into the creative mind of **Ivan Kashubo**. As if that wasn't enough, we've also got a top-notch gallery feature work by **Ken Barthelmey**, **Christopher Balaskas**, **Aekkarat Sumutchaya** and many more skilled artists.



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Wherever you see this symbol, click it to download resources, extras & even movies!



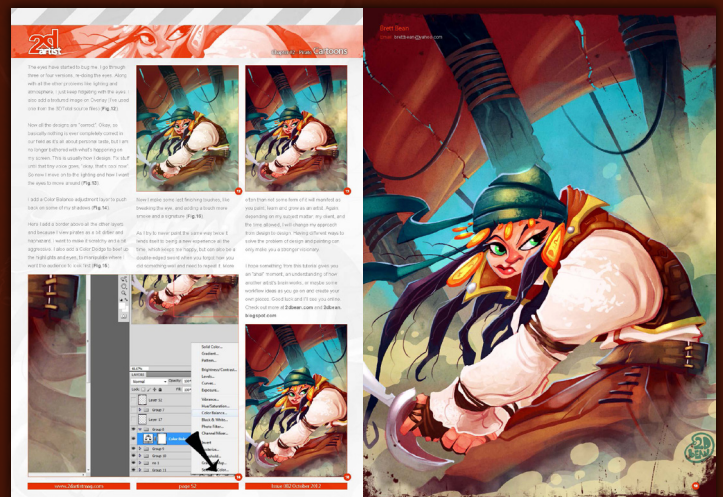
Image by Bela Kotroczo





# Get the most out of your Magazine!

If you're having problems viewing the double-page spreads that we feature in this magazine, follow this handy little guide on how to set up your PDF reader!



## Setting up your PDF reader

For optimum viewing of the magazine it is recommended that you have the latest Acrobat Reader installed.

You can download it for free here: [DOWNLOAD!](#)

To view the many double-page spreads featured in 2D Artist magazine, you can set the reader to display 'two-up', which will show double-page spreads as one large landscape image:

1. Open the magazine in Reader;
2. Go to the **View** menu, then **Page display**;
3. Select **Two-up Continuous**, making sure that **Show Cover Page** is also selected.



## Contributing Artists

Every month many artists from around the world contribute to **3DCreative** and **2DArtist** magazines. Here you can find out a bit more about them! If you would like to be a part of **3DCreative** or **2DArtist** magazine, please contact: [simon@3dtotal.com](mailto:simon@3dtotal.com)



### Jerad Marantz

Jerad Marantz has worked in the Film, Game and Television industry for over 15 years. After graduating from Pasadena Art Center College of Design he started designing for Stan Winston Studio after and in 2005 Jerad worked full time at Ncsooft Santa Monica. His acquired skills in sculpture, painting, illustration, ZBrush, and Photoshop, which all aid in his unique sense of concept design.

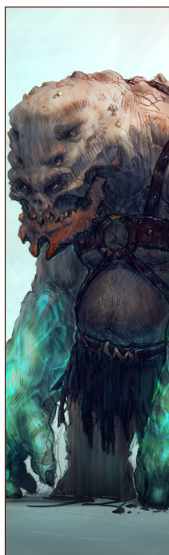
<http://jeradsmarantz.blogspot.co.uk/>  
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### Ivan Kashubo

Ivan Kashubo is a lead artist for an online project in the computer game industry, creating characters, environments, weapons and props. His aim is to improve as an artist through studying the history of art, searching for new ideas and rethinking old ones. He is driven by his passion for creation.

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### John Park

John Park is currently Lead Concept Artist at Adhesive Games and teaches concept art classes in the LA area. John started his career as a concept artist at Design Studio Press, working on the project/book *Alien Race*. John's list of clients includes: SpinMasters, NBC Universal, The Walt Disney Company and many more.

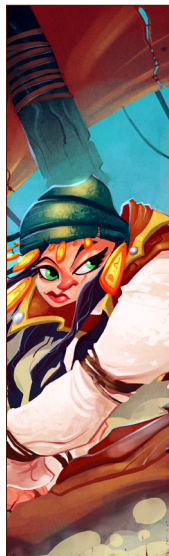
<http://jparked.blogspot.com>  
[jpforjohnpark@aim.com](mailto:jpforjohnpark@aim.com)



### Brett Bean

With the mind of a child and unable to focus on Math, Reading, and even Gym class, Brett drew on everything. Thus began his slow descent into the underbelly of conceptual design and illustration. Since those fateful years he has worked on a variety of projects in storyboarding to illustration for card games, video games, film, and books.

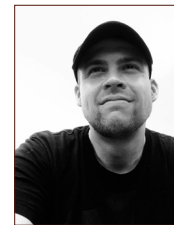
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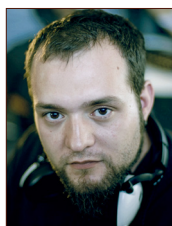
### Tuomas Korpi

Tuomas Korpi is a concept designer, matte painter and illustrator from Finland who currently working at animation studio Piñata. He has been working professionally for about 7 years and is constantly on the lookout for new and inspiring projects to get his hands on! He likes to mix different techniques with interesting themes and styles.

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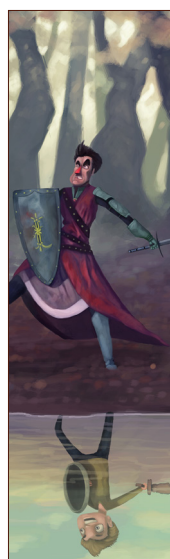
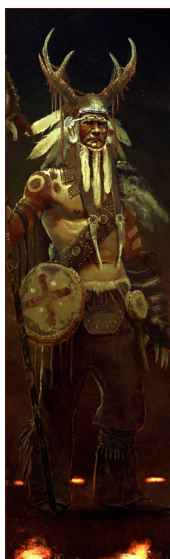




## David Munoz Valezquez

David is a Spanish artist born in Barcelona. He studied Graphic design and specialized in lighting and character design.

He gained experience in the video games industry and then moved into feature animation. He currently works at Kador Graphics, a Spanish studio as a Color/Lighting Art Director and digital sculptor.  
[munozvelazquez@gmail.com](mailto:munozvelazquez@gmail.com)



## Claudio Rodriguez Valdes

Claudio is a freelance illustrator living in Germany with his wife and two amazing and indomitable baby twins. His passion is narrative art and to learn as much as possible from every illustration he makes.

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Image by Tiago da Silva



# Jerad Marantz

This month's interview is with talented concept artist Jerad Marantz, who talks to us about some of the many major titles he has worked on, his design process and lot's more!

"All creature design is a combination of familiar elements."





Hi Jerad, it is great to speak to you. There are so many questions I would like to ask you because of the interesting methods you use in your professional work, but we will get to that shortly. For now can you tell us a little bit about yourself and how you found your way into the CG industry?

As a child I was obsessed with drawing monsters. When I found out I could do that for a living it became my complete focus. The first movie I ever worked on was for a practical effects house company called SOTA FX. The movie was called *Halloween Town* and I was 14. Originally I wanted to be a practical effects artist and put actors in monster suits and sculpt puppets. Through the process of working on these low-budget films, I came to realize that I enjoy designing more than anything else.

After graduating from high school I went straight into Pasadena Art Center College of Design and I studied illustration with a minor in entertainment. At the time entertainment design was only offered as a minor. At the Art Center I did whatever I could to tailor my portfolio towards working for larger special-effects houses. When I graduated I set up an interview with Stan Winston's studio. I was fortunate enough to get hired on the spot. From then on I've worked for several practical and visual effects houses designing monsters and characters for movies. I've also worked in both the video games and television industries.

Wow, that must have been a great experience to work on a project at such a young age! Can you give some advice to the artists reading this who would also like to tailor their portfolio to a larger studio? How do you catch the attention of the big companies?

I teach two classes, one at the Gnomon School of Visual Effects and the other at the Pasadena Concept Design Academy. I always tell my students the same thing about breaking into the industry. While in school students should develop a solid plan. Know which companies you want to work for and tailor your portfolio to get that work. It's never too early to get in contact with these companies and find out what





their portfolio requirements are. It will help to guide your portfolio. The second piece of advice I would give is it's never too early to establish an online presence. The biggest obstacle students have coming out of school is that no one knows who they are. Create a website or a blog and get your name out there.

**I mentioned your interesting methods in my first question. My understanding is that you create creature concepts using simple ZBrush sculpts and Photoshop to paint over them. Can you tell our readers about the benefits of creating concepts in this way?**  
When I started working as a designer professionally I was drawing on paper for years. It was an effective way to design and fast. Designers are expected today to fully realize characters and creatures. Working in ZBrush

and painting in Photoshop helps me accomplish exactly that. Being able to fully realize the concept is beneficial to the entire pipeline. If I can completely convey the design then the visual effects artists or practical effects artists know exactly what to match.

Another benefit to designing in ZBrush is being able to grow those 3D models. I've worked on a couple of upcoming films where the practical effects house will actually take my models and grow them. Those printed models can be used as the practical effects in the film. Visual effects houses have, at times, used my models for reference or have retopologized them for the final effect in the films. One could say that designing in 3D speeds up the process of going from concept to final product.

**I guess it must be great to work with ZBrush and not worry about topology etc. How far do you take your ZBrush model and roughly how much time do you spend creating it? Do you ever texture or paint the model in ZBrush or do you save all of that for Photoshop?**

I rarely spend more than a day in ZBrush when I'm in the concept stage of a project. More recently I've been asked to refine my models and make them water tight for 3D printing. That's always fun when I have the opportunity to take the sculpting further.

As a designer it's not in my best interest to poly paint and texture my models. The job requires me to come up with multiple options in a day for the design, so poly paint would get in the way. It's a lot easier to render the model out and









come up with different color schemes/details in Photoshop. Like a lot of concept artist working today, I'm really only using ZBrush to create a more resolved image.

I have been taking a look at the creature and character concepts on your blog (which are amazing) and I noticed that you have worked on a lot of huge blockbuster movies. I recently watched the new *Spider-Man* movie, which you worked on, and loved the overall visuals. What was it like to work on such an iconic title?

As a comic book fan it was incredible to work on *Spider-Man*. The original *Spider-Man* movies came out when I was in college and I was so disappointed that I missed the opportunity to work on them. When the Mark Webb version came around I was just so excited to get a chance to work on the iconic hero.

*"It's always an issue of updating the famous character, while still holding on to their identity."*

I've been able to work on quite a few comic book movies. They all have the same challenges. It's always an issue of updating the famous character, while still holding on to their identity. Another thing that's important to remember is that there are a lot of designers on all of the shows and I've been very fortunate to work with some incredibly talented artists. Every time I work on one of these films I learn a lot. The final product is always such an incredible team effort.

It always amazes me how many artists have grown up as comic book fans! Do you ever think it would be fun to create your own iconic character and turn it into a graphic novel or film?

Becoming a concept artist was incidental to my main goal. I love to write and create my own properties. Through the process of illustrating them I became a decent concept artist and found a great way to make a living.



I'm currently shopping around an animated series that I created and with fingers crossed I hope to get it off the ground. I'm also working on a children's film that I've been developing. I have a lot of other projects in the works.

I truly believe that having an understanding of story and character development will make one a better designer. You always have to take into

account when doing a design that the creature or character has lived and experienced life. The design must reflect that and an understanding of story and character development will help you illustrate that and breathe life into the designs.

On the subject of the massive titles you have worked on, can you tell us which project has been your favorite to work on?



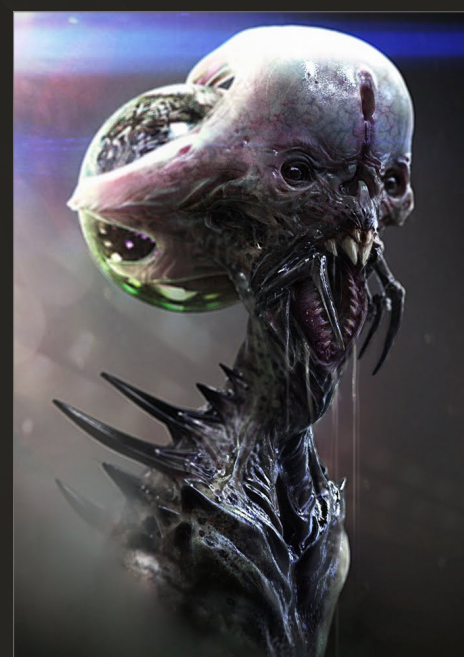


To really find one that stands out as my favorite would be hard to do. I've had so much fun working on these films. I would say that *Clash of the Titans* still stands out for me. I worked on big budget movies before that, but I've never been as involved as I was on *Clash of the Titans* before. I was able to get my first lead artist credit on that film and it was an incredible experience. The majority of the designs I did for *Clash of the Titans* were 2D. I spent a lot of time drawing on that show and the director Louis Letteria was just a joy to work with.

The creatures you designed for *Clash of the Titans* were really cool. How do you go about generating ideas? Do you jump straight into ZBrush or do you spend a lot of time gathering references etc?

Generating ideas is an art within itself. After reading the description of the creatures and talking with the director I'm able to come up with a lot of ideas. I always have two or three right off the bat and I'll start looking for references.

Often there are times the client needs more than a few options. In those cases, I'll actually start to brainstorm by writing out brief descriptions of the designs. All creature design is a combination of familiar elements. For example, if I had to design 10 werewolves, the first thing I would do is write a list. I would think about what combination of animals I hadn't seen in a werewolf design yet. I could write out "werewolf, greyhound hybrid" and instantly I would be able to imagine a version of a werewolf that was lanky and fast. I could write "armadillo werewolf"







and be able to visualize a dog-like creature that had organic plating on his back. Coming up with options isn't the problem; getting a design approved is.

**I believe that you started your professional career by working in practical effects. How did this work help prepare you for the type of work that you are doing now?**

It definitely prepared me for my career. Even though I work completely digitally these days, the same rules of traditional arts (e.g., painting and sculpting) still apply. Every time I sit down and I work in ZBrush I always relate it to sculpting. When I'm working with Photoshop I relate it to traditional painting. I believe that having the experience working with traditional materials makes for a better digital artist.

**I always like to ask artists what they like to do to relax after busy days in front of the computer screen. What do you like to do to unwind?**

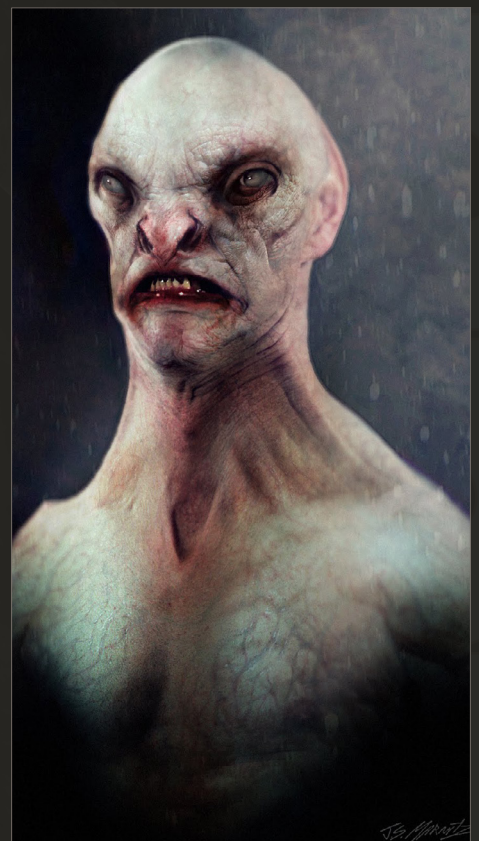
I should get better at unwinding. Fortunately I have a wonderful fiancé and a dog that pulls me away from work when I've been overdoing it.

I really love my job and when I'm not being a concept artist I love to write. I prefer doing work over many things like watching television or just being lethargic. I know it's very difficult for creative people to get away. I think my biggest issue is that my work rarely feels like work.

Every now and then I try to go on a big vacation though. The last one we went on was to Maui and it was just beautiful.

**Thanks for speaking to us and sharing so much of your fantastic work. I look forward to seeing all the creatures you design in the future.**

Thank you. I enjoyed doing the interview!





Jerad Marantz

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Interviewed by: Simon Morse





"Every time I draw a new character, I try not to repeat the previous ones."



# SKETCHBOOK

## Of Ivan Kashubo

This month's sketchbook explores the creative thought process of skillful concept artist Ivan Kashubo. His passion for drawing monsters, demons and anything fantasy-based is evident in this collection of sketches.



## Sketchbook of Ivan Kashubo

Hi! My name is Ivan Kashubo, aka Kashivan. I believe each artist has their own sketchbook, where they draw their spontaneous ideas. In some cases these quick sketches become the starting point for a major plot. Whereas sometimes making sketches is just searching for a shape or simply a way of being alone with you thoughts.

I like drawing characters, monsters, demons etc. In this sketchbook I have gathered pictures of this kind. I hope you will like it.



01



02

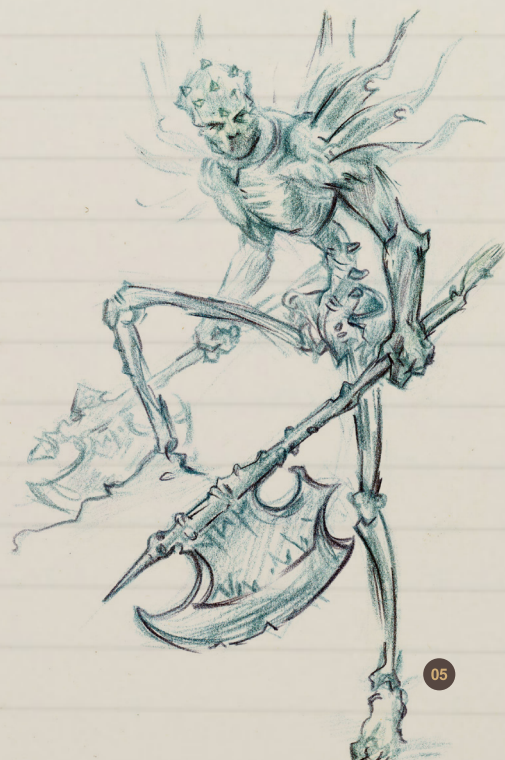
When you have some spare time, why not draw? You start marking the paper with the pencil, different shapes and figures are emerging in your head and eventually your imagination crystallizes on the paper. I developed this pencil sketch in Photoshop, which always gives birth to new ideas and interesting additions (Fig.01 – 02).





I have always been attracted to fantasy creatures. This sketch is a clear illustration of my passion for the topic. The pencil sketch went directly into Photoshop and I certainly could not fail to add magic elements, color contrast and some minor details. Drawing such characters is always a great deal of fun (Fig.03 – 04).

Skeletons! Who doesn't like drawing them? Especially if they are armed with big axes and are ready to attack. Here is one of them. This time I added a slight contrast to the body mass: large body and thin legs (Fig.05).

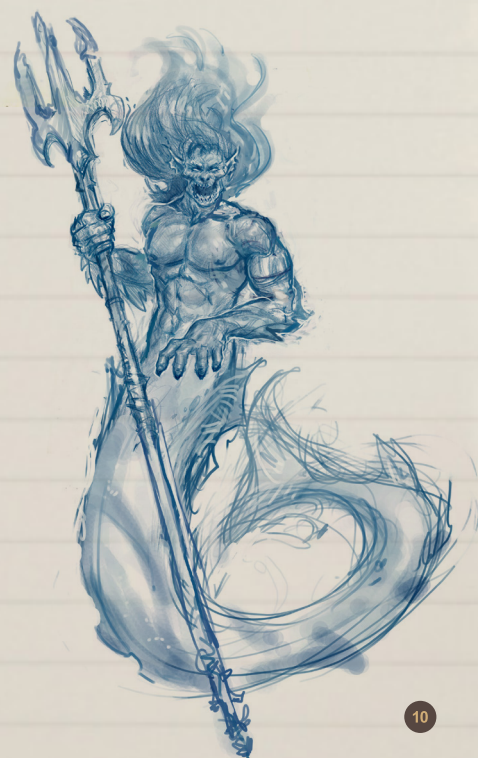
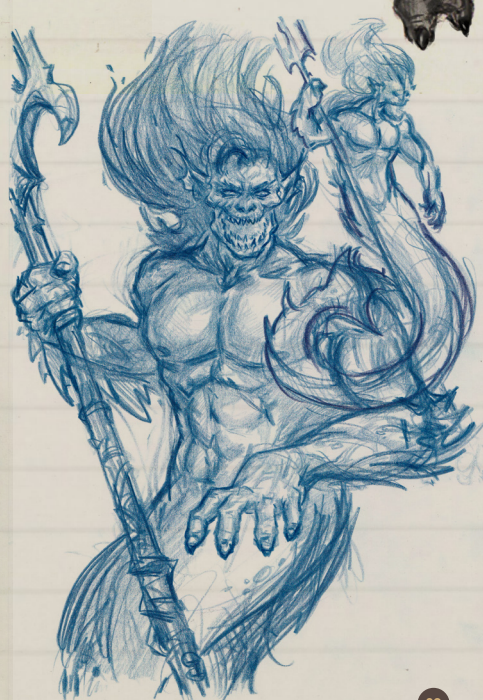






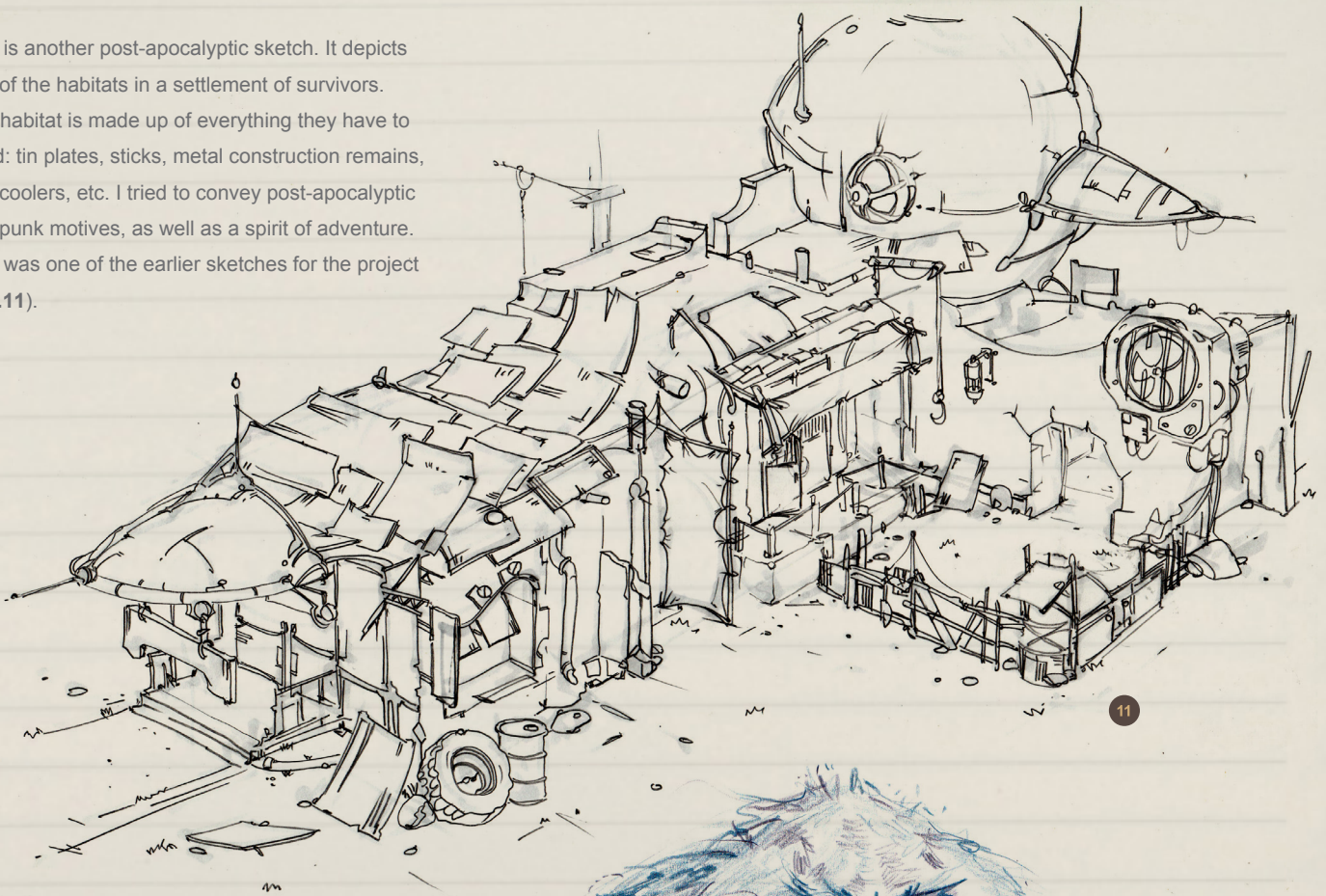
This is a character for one of the projects on a post-apocalyptic topic, where I was engaged as a concept artist. This guy was not a central character in the game, but I still wanted to make him distinguishable by adding details, such as tattoos, ragged clothes, belts and a gas mask (Fig.06). You can also see the black and white version done in Photoshop (Fig.07).

This is a sketch for Paizo's *Pathfinder*. Creating it was an extremely thrilling task! I was asked to combine an evil monster's face, ears that looked like fish fins, a shark's tale and multilayered teeth. In addition, the monster had to hold a trident and have a grin on its face. I made the sketch in blue pencil and then finished it in Photoshop (Fig.08 – 10).





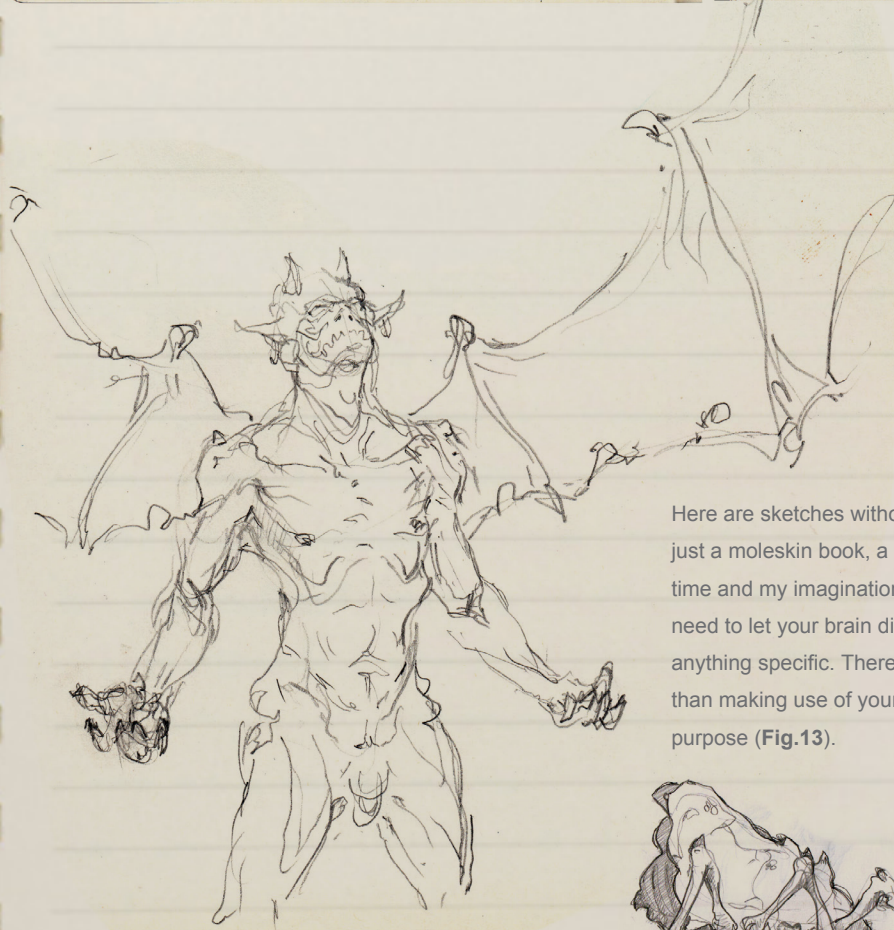
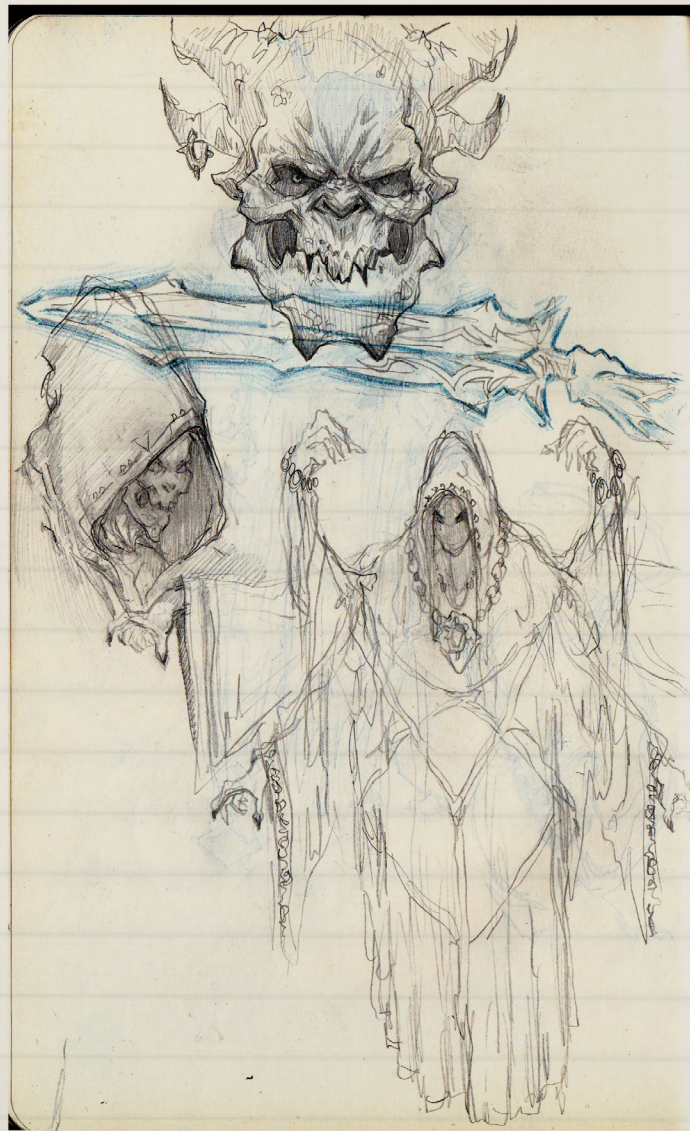
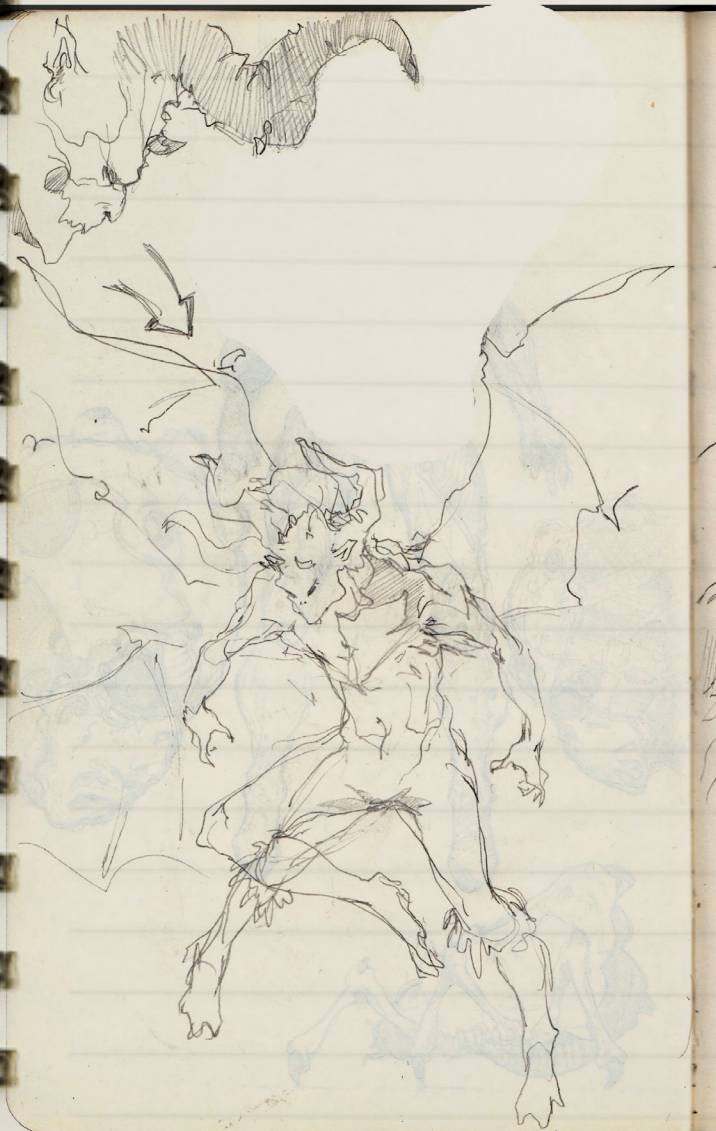
This is another post-apocalyptic sketch. It depicts one of the habitats in a settlement of survivors. The habitat is made up of everything they have to hand: tin plates, sticks, metal construction remains, and coolers, etc. I tried to convey post-apocalyptic and punk motives, as well as a spirit of adventure. This was one of the earlier sketches for the project (Fig.11).



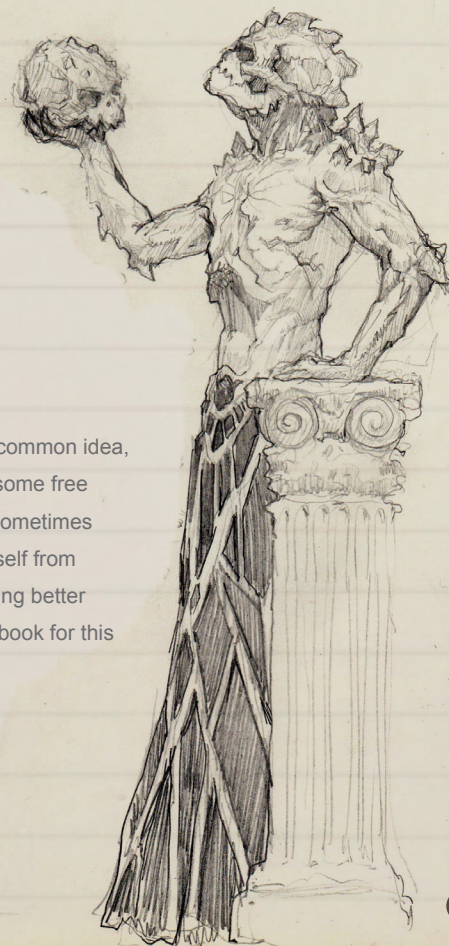
This character was created with influences from the book *The Wizard of Oz*. Meet the Scarecrow, one of the most charismatic characters. I added some strength, fur and courage to its temper. I certainly wanted to make it in a fantastical and attractive style. I hope you like my interpretation of the famous hero (Fig.12).







Here are sketches without any common idea, just a moleskin book, a pencil, some free time and my imagination. You sometimes need to let your brain distract itself from anything specific. There is nothing better than making use of your sketchbook for this purpose (Fig.13).





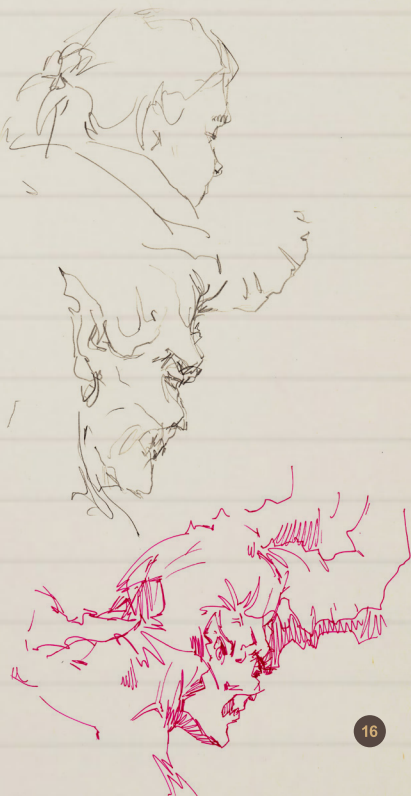
Here is yet another demon. I often travel by train and its monotonous rhythm fits perfectly with drawing. On the train, unusual and attractive characters do not hesitate to appear (not only in the carriage, but on the paper as well!). The sketches that look good to me are subject to further processing in a digital format (Fig.14 – 15).



14



15

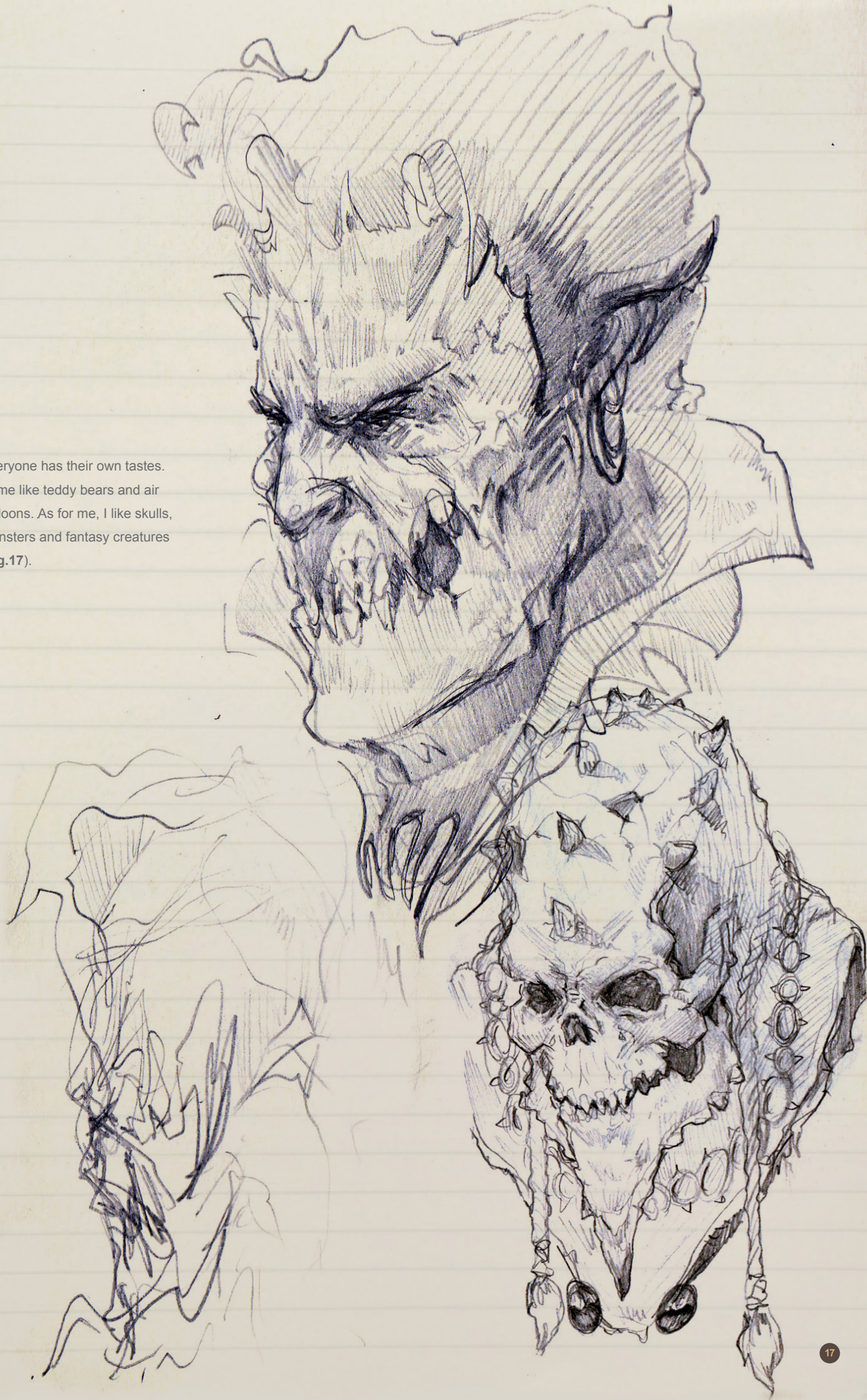


16

The subway is not only good as a means of fast transport around the city, but also as a perfect place for speed sketching. Watching people you can study the anatomy and at the same time derive new ideas and shapes for the characters. Extremely useful practice (Fig.16)!



Everyone has their own tastes.  
Some like teddy bears and air  
balloons. As for me, I like skulls,  
monsters and fantasy creatures  
(Fig.17).





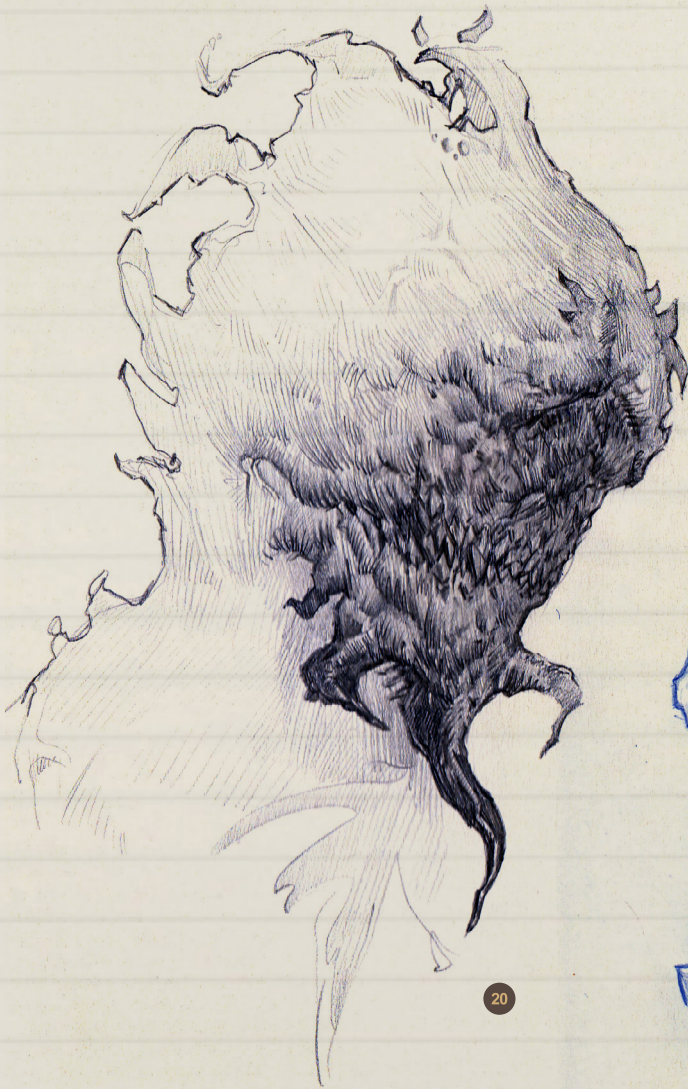


Steampunk and cyberpunk are two styles that I believe leave no one indifferent; especially if the subject is a beautiful, sexy girl. This is another sketch from my collection (Fig.18 – 19).









Have you ever happened to pick up a pencil without even knowing what the outcome will be? You start drawing lines and joining them into vague forms. At some stage you see something interesting is emerging right in front of your eyes. You add some light and shadows to find that the vague form has evolved into clear shapes (Fig.20).

Every time I draw a new character, I try not to repeat the previous ones. Therefore by drawing speed sketches I search for new forms, shapes and combinations of details, so that I can further use them in the final composition (Fig.21).

Ivan Kashubo

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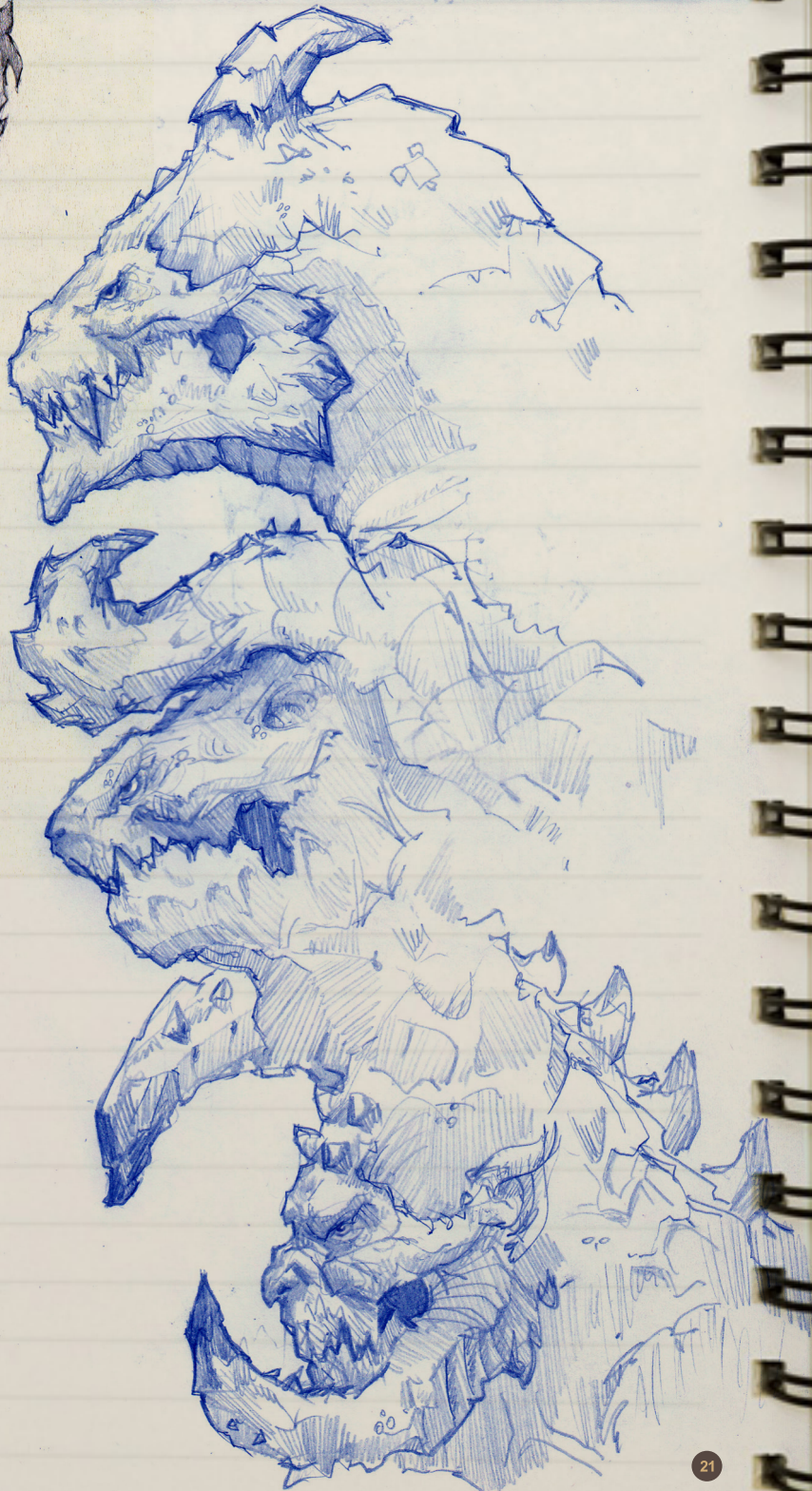


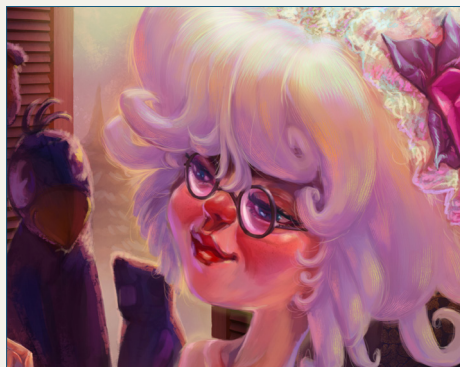
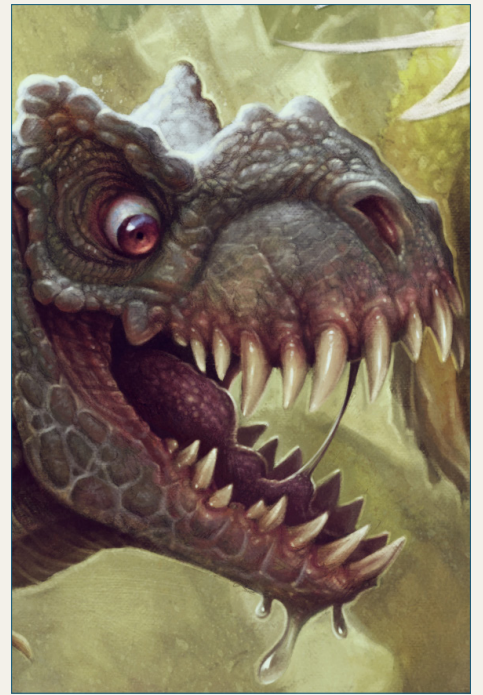


Image Courtesy of Ali Zafati



Available at your local reseller  
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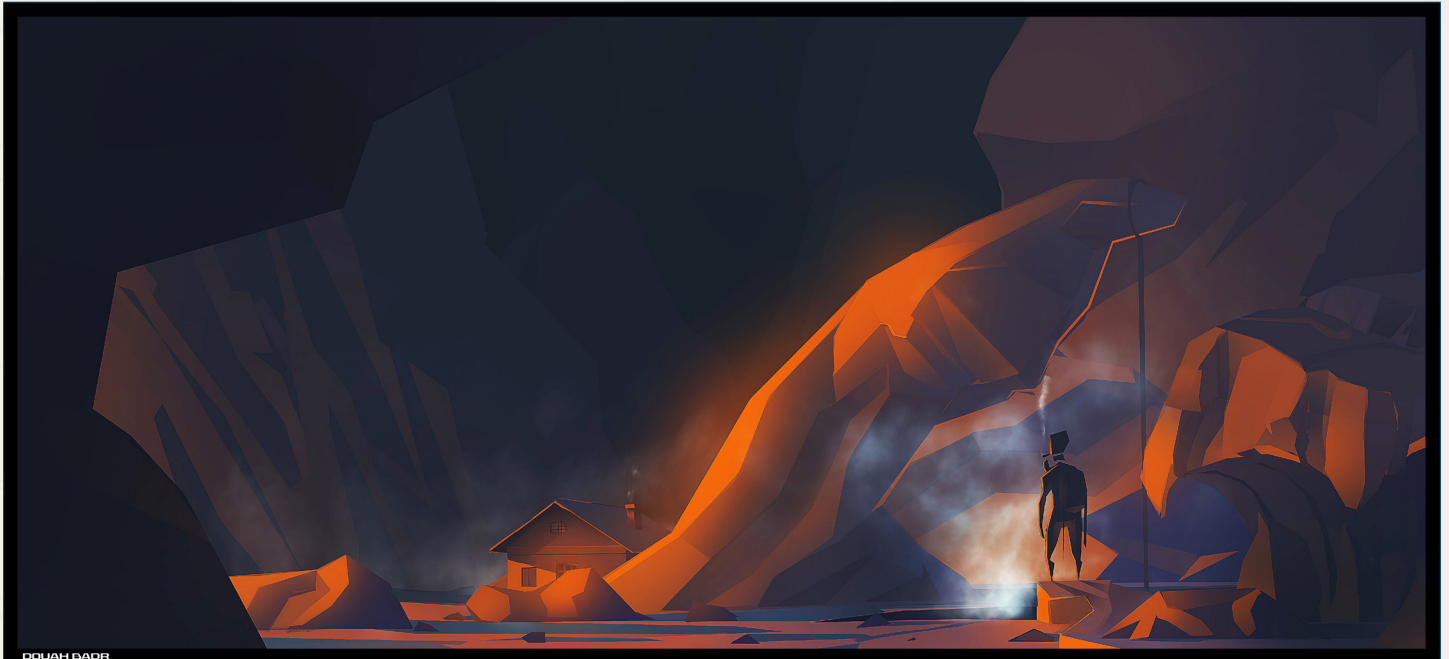




# THE GALLERY

**This month we feature:** Aekkarat Sumutchaya | Paolo Puggioni | Ken Barthelmey | DangMyLinh | Ali Kiani Amin  
Christopher Balaskas | Edvige Faini | Douah Badr | Tiago da Silva | Bela Kotroczo





## Voyage

Douah Badr

<http://douahbadr.blogspot.com/>

[badr\\_douah@yahoo.fr](mailto:badr_douah@yahoo.fr)

(Above)

## Vasco da Gama

Tiago da Silva

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(Below)





Magic Mom

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Where is the Yum Yum???

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WHERE IS THE  
YUM YUM ???



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Edvige Faini

The Destroyer

Edvige Faini

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### Light Cargo Ship

Bela Kotroczo

<http://belakotroczo.blogspot.hu/>

(Above)

### The Wizard and the Hare

Christopher Balaskas

<http://balaskas.deviantart.com>

[cbalaskas@gmail.com](mailto:cbalaskas@gmail.com)

(Below)







## One Piece of the Slum

DangMyLinh

<http://www.facebook.com/dangmylinhART>

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(Left)

## Cerberus

Paolo Puggioni

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(Below)







Putrefaction of King Ajidahak

Ali Kiani Amin

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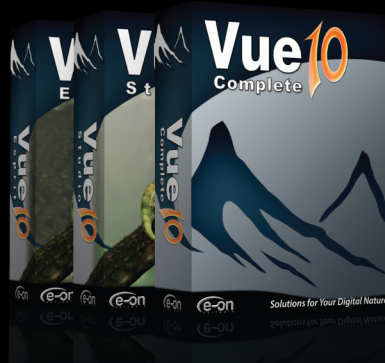
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# WEAPON DESIGN



02

There are many industries that hold a place for digital art, but none of these rely on it as much as the games industry! Lots of different elements go into making a game, but in many, weaponry is an exciting and integral part of game play. In this tutorial series our artists will be showing us how to create weapon concepts for different situations and environments, as if they were doing it within the games industry. This will involve them coming up with a concept and design, then demonstrating their techniques.



## Chapter 02 – Tripod Mounted Weapons

Software Used: Photoshop

### Thumbnails

When starting any design, I try to think about the possibilities and variety of designs I can generate based on the theme. Before I begin executing any final design, I always start with a series of thumbnails, thinking about shape, proportion and size. These three basic factors will usually help guide me through a successful shape design.

With this image, the next step I take is to think about the functionality of this type of gun. Because of the nature of the tripod gun, I begin thinking about the structure where the gun would be posted. The tripod stand is a huge part of the design that I want to examine further. Usually anywhere from 8-15 thumbnails is the range I shoot for when I try to sketch out some quick ideas (**Fig.01**).

### Process

After I've explored some thumbnail sketches, I then pick one or two designs that I want to take to a polished state in Photoshop.

In this example you can see I've focused on creating or finding a proper color palette to work off of. Generally, most artists come up with their own color scheme, but in this case I decided to go with something that was very military and familiar (**Fig.02**).

After solidifying a color palette, I then block in the colors into my sketch. In Photoshop, I usually import my sketches into the proper file size. Then, when I start to block in the colors, I create a new layer (set to Overlay or Soft Light) on top of my sketch to do my color block-ins (**Fig.03**).

I then compress the color layer with my sketch layer. The reason I decide to compress the layers is due to simplifying my process as I



continue to paint on top of my sketch. I try to minimize the amount of layers I have to manage; that way I can just focus on the painting and design (**Fig.04**).

After continuing to block out the colors and refining my outer silhouette, I pull up my old sketch to refer back to what I drew earlier. I want to make sure I don't stray from the original design (**Fig.05**).

At a certain stage, I start to pull in some photo textures of really cool surface materials to

implement into my design. I try to set them into the gun design and test out the textures to see if they work with my design. Again, I always keep in mind the original sketch!

At this stage, I've come to a pretty good spot where I am able to start focusing on the lighting of the gun prop. The first thing I do is set the tone of the background. For a singular object like this, I always default to a studio lighting or setting. This will then help me to arrange my lighting values more accurately to create the setting I am going for (**Fig.06**). Thanks!









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# The Six Realms

Chapter 04 – Desert



One of the appeals of many modern computer games is the ability to explore vast worlds created by talented teams of artists and designers. You can wander around, venturing from one realm to another, absorbing impressive landscapes while tackling challenges and enemies of every description. One of the challenges faced by the concept artists working on a game like this is creating a variety of environments that still look consistent design wise. Within this series of tutorials our artists will be showing us how to design six diverse, fantasy realms from the same world while also describing their own painting process.



## Chapter 04 – Desert

Software Used: Photoshop

### Introduction

Hi, I'm Tuomas Korpi, a 26 year old production designer, matte painter and illustrator from Finland. I currently work in an animation and illustration studio called Piñata, doing production design and concept art for varying projects. The work we do is mostly in the field of advertising, but we also work with a number of games companies, directors, and animation and production studios.

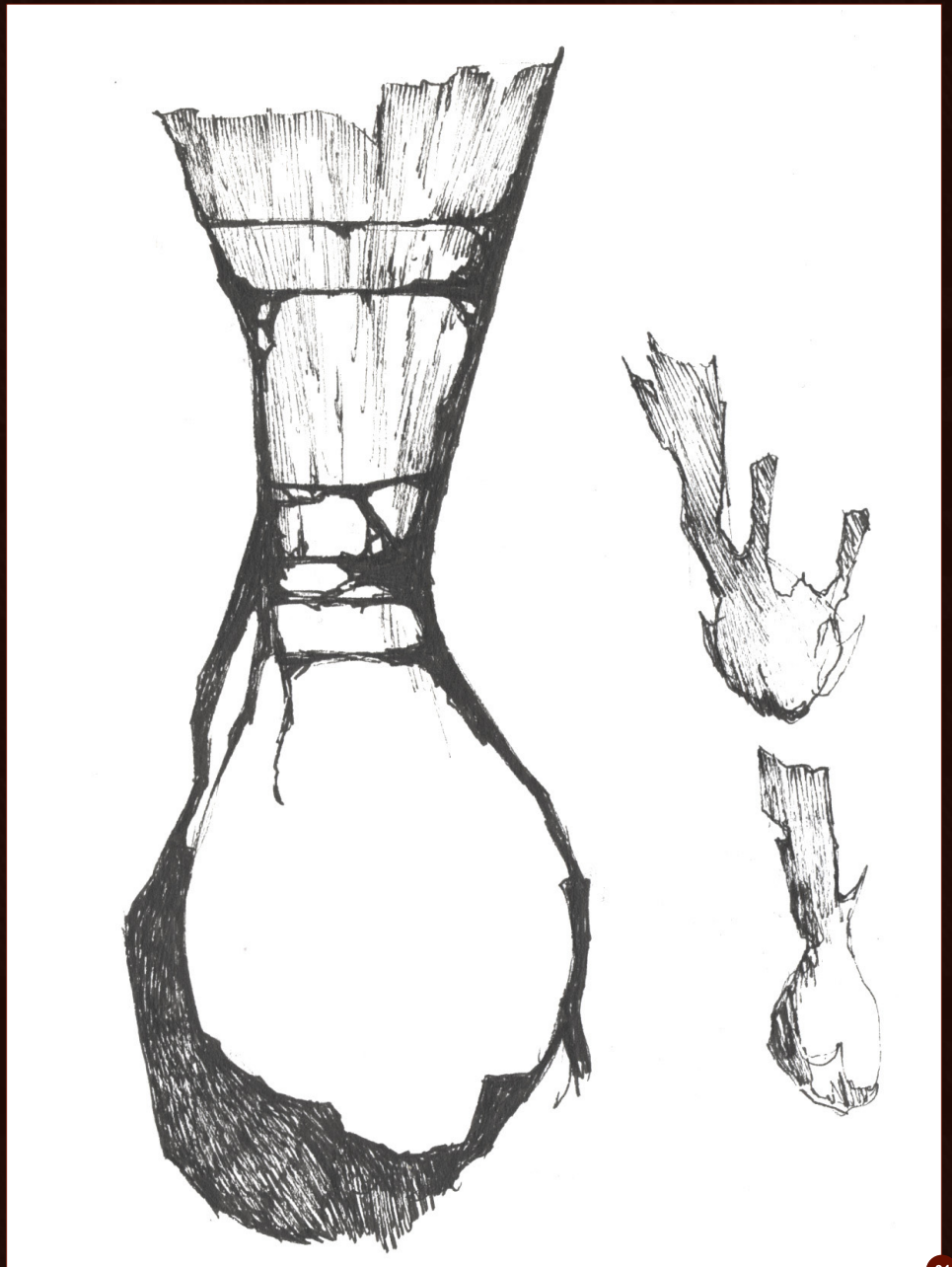
When I read tutorials or go to art lectures, I find the ones where the artist talks you through the thinking process behind the painting the most interesting. Being able to see the process in a step-by-step manner can also be educational, but what I find most interesting is reading why an artist made a certain visual choice or design decision. Why an artist adds one thing and leaves something else out is always interesting to know and helps you to make your own decisions.

In this tutorial I will try to describe the thought process I employ when working on an environment painting, and will also tell you a little bit about my workflow as well. I try to focus on the design and conceptual aspects of the painting first, and then describe my painting process.

### The Design

Of course, every new painting starts with some general overall idea or a concept. In this case the rough guidelines and framework were already provided. The image should be a desert environment that was based in a medieval/fantasy period. It should also include a settlement reflecting the habitat, and a citadel with a burning beacon at the top. The brief was quite simple, yet very broad, so right from the beginning there were a lot of ideas going through my mind.

I usually begin by breaking the environment down into core visual elements and then trying to find logical answers to any questions there



01

might be. What kind of color palette reflects the nature of the environment? What are the living conditions like – harsh or mild? Is the culture limited by their surroundings or do they control their habitat? To me this part is like solving a simple puzzle. The key is to find the visual solution that emphasizes the design, mood or impression you want to communicate.

### Wandering in the Desert

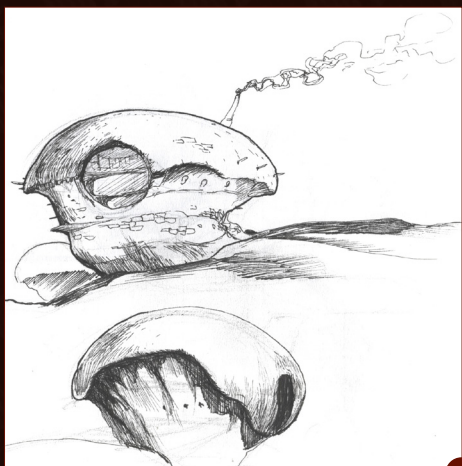
From the start I knew there were going to be some challenges with the design and composition, since the desert is pretty much defined as an open, vast, horizontal space. Grand open spaces tend not to make for the

most interesting compositions! I also wanted to avoid clichés like a Tatooine-style *Star Wars* city, as well as keep away from the all-too-familiar nomadic huts and tents.

I wanted to give the desert a surreal and alien feel, but at the same time keep it relatively natural-looking. While sketching the first ideas down, I came up with huge rock formations that defied the laws of gravity (**Fig.01**).

I was quite free-handed with the formations, but decided to keep the feel and texture close to what you would see on the walls of rocks found in the Arizona desert. It's always important to



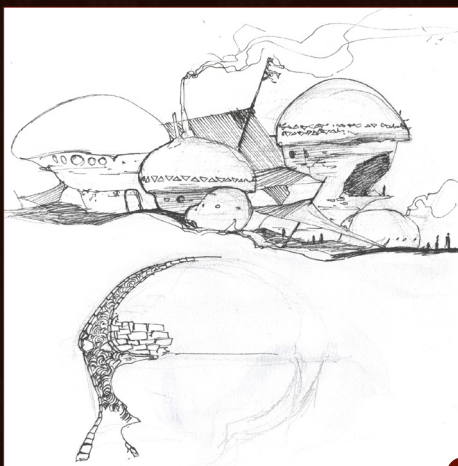


02

borrow elements from the real world to make the design and environment feel natural, and give the viewer something familiar to relate to. The same applies to everything from the cultural detail to the creatures and habitat of our imaginary desert world.

There is an evolutionary process behind each civilization and culture on Earth, and by studying their architecture, traditions and history you can get a great sense of reality in your painting, even if it's an imaginary world you're painting. Viewers immediately recognize certain visual concepts and link them to certain cultures.

The strategy I employ is to simply find a familiar cultural basis, and then modify and revise it to the point where the viewer's imagination starts to subconsciously create reason for the

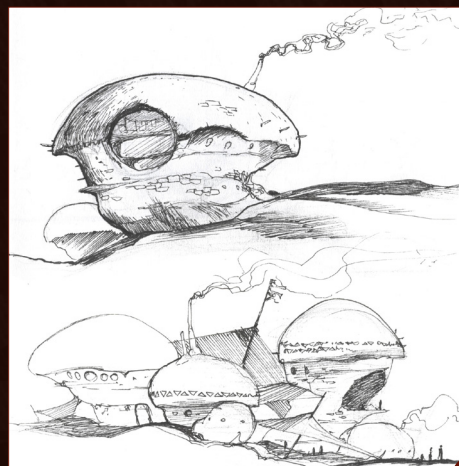


03

elements in the picture. You are telling small stories and showing hundreds of years of history without actually having to paint it!

If you think about Middle Eastern, African and nomadic cultures; they always seem to live in harmony with their habitat. I think this is because the resources in the desert are limited, but also because they have to travel long distances for resources and really respect their hostile environment to make a living there. To keep the painting natural and believable I wouldn't want to paint a huge amount of human-built structures in the middle of a desert for no apparent reason, because they wouldn't have the resources or materials to do that.

I felt inspired by the ancient rock houses and temples of Jordan and Tunis, and took this idea



04

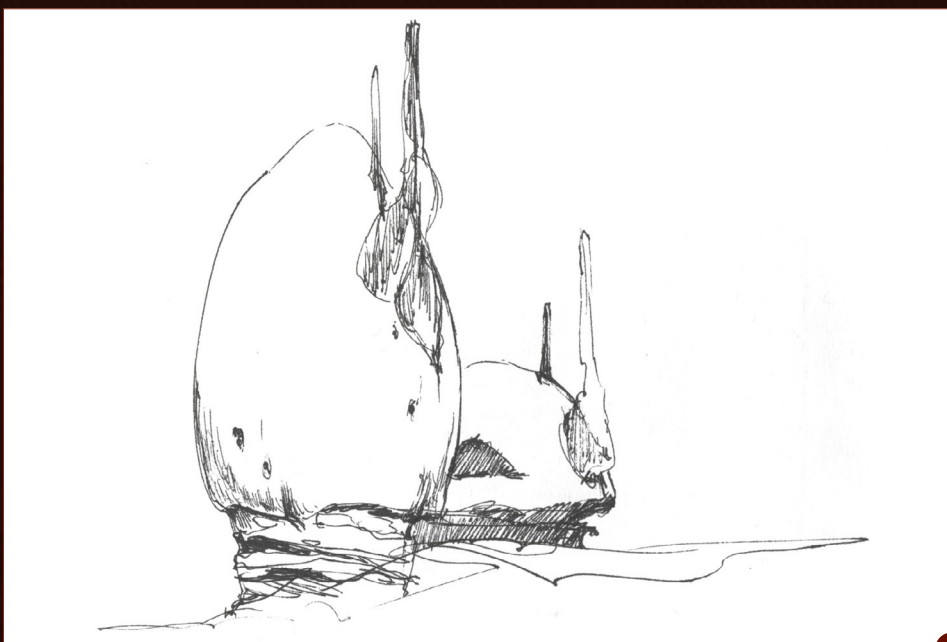
a bit further to create huge citadels and cities carved from solid rock. I wanted some variation to the houses to imply some sort of social hierarchy and decided to add smaller houses in the open desert.

Even though there is some variation in the architecture, I didn't want to use precise geometrical forms but keep the feeling of the architecture really primitive and handmade – organic even (**Fig.02 – 05**). This would further emphasize the time period and create a feeling that people are really living in harmony with their desert habitat.

### Exploring the Composition

When I have the rough framework for my painting and environment figured out, I start exploring the composition through thumbnail-sized ink sketches. I try to keep them very quick and rough, and usually spend only a minute on each one. If I already have one strong concept for the image in my head I might want to explore to see if I can take it a bit further. What I'm looking for is a composition, a view or a camera angle that maximizes the information I want to communicate, and nails the feeling I want the viewer to have.

My main principle when working on the composition, and actually for the whole painting process, is to keep true to your original sketch and concept. If it's not working at thumbnail size, it's definitely not going to work when bigger! With this painting I explored aerial views and different rock structures, but felt the buildings and cultural elements of the image were left



05



too small. I also wanted it to feel as if you were arriving into a city complex and discovering it for the first time. The main challenge here was finding a nice balance for the rock formations and avoiding making the composition too crowded by having too many elements in the image (Fig.06 – 07).

An amazing book full of great advice about composition is called *Framed Ink: Drawing and Composition for Visual Storytellers* and it's by Marcos Mateu-Mestre. Another great read is *Dream Worlds: Production Design for Animation* by the amazingly talented Disney production designer Hans Bacher. His blog is also worth visiting to learn more about composition.

Of course, there are a ton of things that make a strong environment or landscape painting, but for me it relies very much on the simplicity of the form, the depth and the flow – three little, and quite abstract, words.

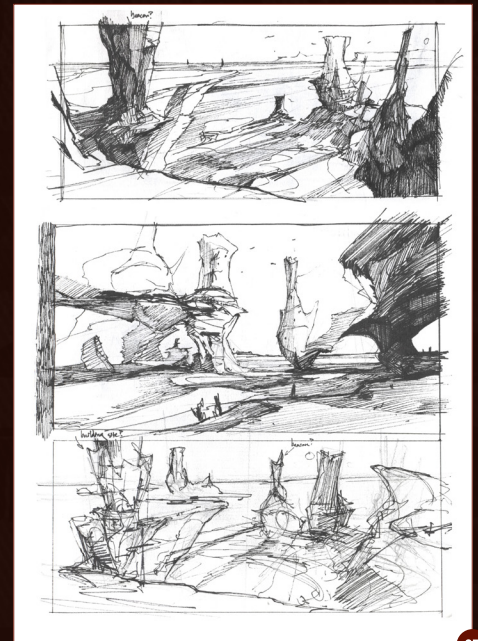
By form I mean that the silhouette of each element in your image should be simple enough to read without the values or color.

Depth is built through logical transition, variation or repetition of elements from the nearest point in the image frame to the furthest point in the distance. This can be, for example, a color shift from warm colors to colder tones, a change in the contrast, or a repetition of objects of the same scale that get smaller as they disappear into the distance.



The flow is what brings the form and depth together in a way that's interesting and easy to look at! Balanced composition is important, but especially with landscapes and environments as you want to build an interesting path in the image for the eye to follow. The eye shouldn't escape straight to the horizon or go directly out of the corner of the image. In my opinion there should be an easy starting point where the eye can start wandering around the image, like a sharp contrast, a vivid color or an odd form – something that catches your attention first.

From there you can build different paths that intersect key focal points of the image. It's easy to experiment with different possibilities if you start your painting process very lightly with



rough sketches. You can see the thumbnail I choose to develop in Fig.08.

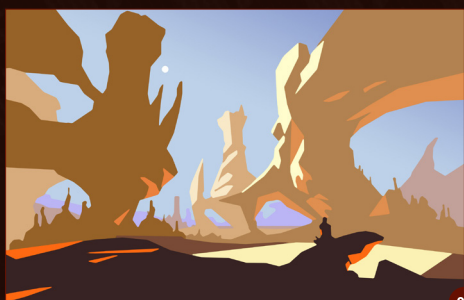
Even though I personally like to explore the composition quickly with inks, I also try to imagine the colors and values in my head while I draw! With this desert painting I thought for a while about whether I wanted the lighting and color palette to be based on an evening or daytime lighting scenario, but I chose to go with the latter. I felt it would emphasize the living conditions in the desert environment much better, and give me a nice shift from the warm tones to the cooler and more desaturated colors towards the horizon.

I also wanted a nice balance between the bright, well-lit areas of the image and the shadows to emphasize the feeling of a burning hot desert sun. The sun was placed so that it fits the composition nicely, but also so the light follows the form of each shape nice and clearly. I also introduced some reflected light from the ground to give the shadow areas more visual information, and to get some hot, red tones in my image.

The dunes, buildings, small flags and sunshades are a great way to tell the viewer about the distance and scale of objects, and how they relate to each other. Repetition of elements improves the sense of depth and also







09

gives the image a nice flow. You can see how I would apply the depth in the color in **Fig.09**. You can also see how I designed the silhouette and shape of everything in **Fig.10**, and the flow of the image in **Fig.11**.

### Painting

When I'm painting digitally I usually follow the same workflow, more or less. The basis of my workflow is, as I said earlier, staying true to my original concept and trying to improve the painting in each step I take.

I like to think there's a certain hierarchy of elements in every image, and you can't really change the order of how a viewer is going to read your image. In order they will look at the shape or silhouette, the perspective, the values and the colors. This is quite a practical way of viewing things because you won't be able to fix major flaws in the values in the image with colors. Or if you haven't focused on creating a strong sense of depth and perspective first, the values probably won't fix the problems.

Of course, there are exceptions to this, like if I was doing a speedpainting or a sketch etc. I don't paint these kinds of images quite as



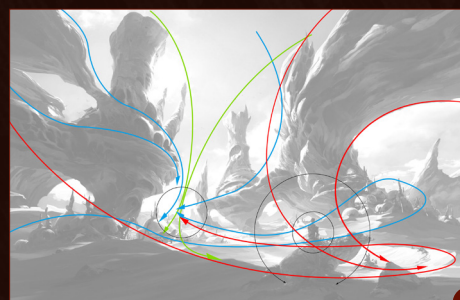
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methodically, but I do still try to think of the image in layers of hierarchies where each element dominates and controls the other. My tip for a beginner artist is to keep doing small practices every once in a while, employing these basic elements in order. Explore how you can build depth in your image with values, how you can keep your silhouettes readable etc. Do small experiments with complete paintings and don't get stuck doing one thing for too long!

### Refining the Sketch

After I feel I have a strong thumbnail sketch for my image, I scan it into my computer, scale it up and start doing a more refined line art version of it (**Fig.12**). Sometimes I like to do this step traditionally and size up the sketch and print it on A4 paper. I would then grab some extremely thin animation paper and start refining the sketch with inks.

At this point I would refine the perspective in the image. I also design any buildings, creatures etc., that I might want to add. I don't have to be too precise with everything, but good line art helps to speed up the painting process. When the line art is ready I scan it to my computer, open it in Photoshop and use it as the top



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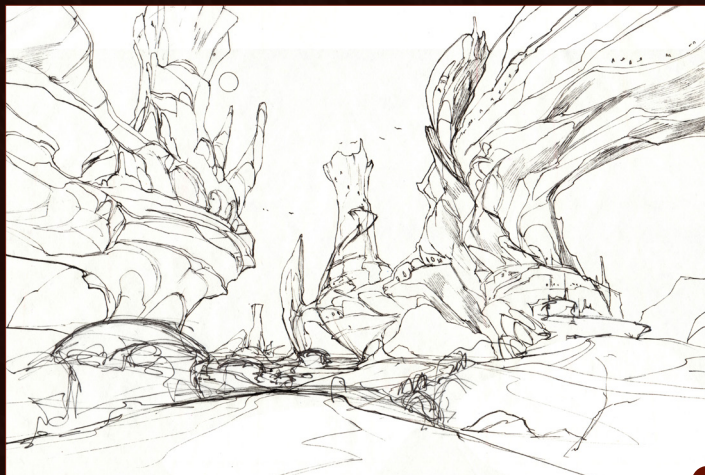
layer in Multiply blending mode. This way it's easy to paint on the layers underneath and just click the line art on and off.

### Value and Lighting Studies

With the line art created it's easy to just start painting the image, almost like a coloring book. With the more complex images where there are a lot of things happening, it's good to explore the lighting and values a bit before starting with the colors. I try to keep this value study more as reference for later, but it also works nicely as a basis for your color palette in the next step (**Fig.13**).

The reason I paint the values separately is that it's easy to get carried away with things like reflected light, bright colors etc., while you paint. This way you always have a reference as to how you would like the image to look. It's much easier to start with a simple grayscale painting and then move on to colors later.

I make sure I carefully study the direction of the light and silhouettes, to ensure that the contrast between the light and shadow areas is correct and that there is good contrast between the foreground and background elements.



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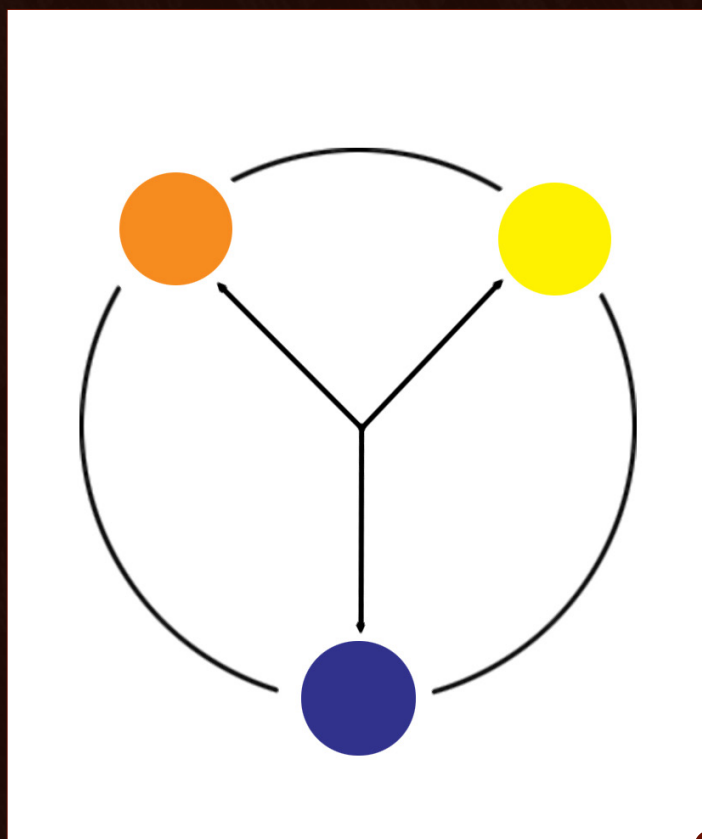
The values you add at this point shouldn't feel too tying as it's a reference for you to follow. If you want to change it later you can do. When working on this stage of an image I try to work on the painting zoomed out, in a thumbnail size. Again, the overall impression is the most important thing and all the little details come later.

### Color Palette

The black and white values are ready now so it's time to move on to colors. Basically I should

have a pretty clear idea at this stage where I'm heading with my colors. I know the time of day, direction of light and I have a clear line art for the objects in my image. I still continue working zoomed out and with really big brushes, trying to find the overall balance for my color palette.

I usually start with a simple color contrast, complementary colors, or a simple color harmony and start to build my palette from there. Here I've chosen the complementary colors of blue and warm yellow, and continue



15

to add to my cold and warm contrast. I add in tones of purple and yellow, which are also complementary colors (**Fig.14 – 15**). I've also added a hint of red and green here and there to disrupt the balance a bit, so the palette doesn't look too uniform.

It helps me to keep the small color palette of my Photoshop set to HSV (Hue/Saturation/Brightness) so I can keep track of the brightness and hue separately (and in later stages, watch my saturation) during the whole painting process.

I use adjustment layers and tools like Color Balance, Channel Mixer, Selective Color and different blending modes as much as I can. Using this approach truly justifies creating the image digitally rather than traditionally!

I check my value study regularly to make sure there's a clear distinction between light and shadow, and the lighting setup is natural. I try to improve the sense of depth with logical transformations in color areas (**Fig.16**). I use the Gradient tool a lot to make a lot of big, overall changes. Sometimes I bring back my value



16





17

study and mix it in with blending modes like Soft Light or Overlay to get some definition back (Fig.17).

It's all quite fast and chaotic, but there's always a clear goal. There are just so many ways to get to the desired result. I usually already know how the image should look at this point, but it doesn't hurt to explore a bit, check if you can improve the image even further. I don't worry about spending too much time here because this is the stage that pretty much defines what the final painting is going to look like. If all goes well I should have a small, thumbnail-sized version of the painting that looks almost exactly like the final painting.

This process is extremely convenient when working for clients, because you can give them a very clear idea of the direction you are heading in, without putting too much effort into painting and detailing everything. You also have the line art ready, so the client can comment on the design and content of your painting, and you

can do the necessary changes without having to take backwards steps.

### Painting and Refining

At this point I have the base of my painting created, but I still have about 80% of the actual painting to do! Now I can focus on the detailing,

rendering everything out nicely and basically just continuing to define each element further. I keep the buttons of my Wacom pen set to Alt (shortcut for the Color Picker in Photoshop) and X (changes between foreground and background colors), which speeds up my painting process quite a bit. I can pick colors



18





19

straight from my color sketch and keep two different colors active at the same time!

I try to follow my rough color palette while I paint, but also try to establish each of the different materials. I also like to mix photographs and textures into my painting to get a sense of detail quickly, but I usually always filter them with Median (Filter > Noise > Median) and paint over them to get rid of the overly sharp feel. This part is also about creating and building little stories into your image, and that's the most fun part of the process for me (Fig.18 – 20).

This kind of painting workflow would work quite well in a professional studio, where other artists will start using parts of your painting as a backdrop or reference for lighting or color palettes before your image is finished. If I need to complete a certain part of the painting first, to be used as a matte element in an animation for instance, I can paint that part of the image

first and it doesn't hurt the rest of the painting because the palette and composition isn't going to change much.

Thank you for your time and I hope you found something useful here!

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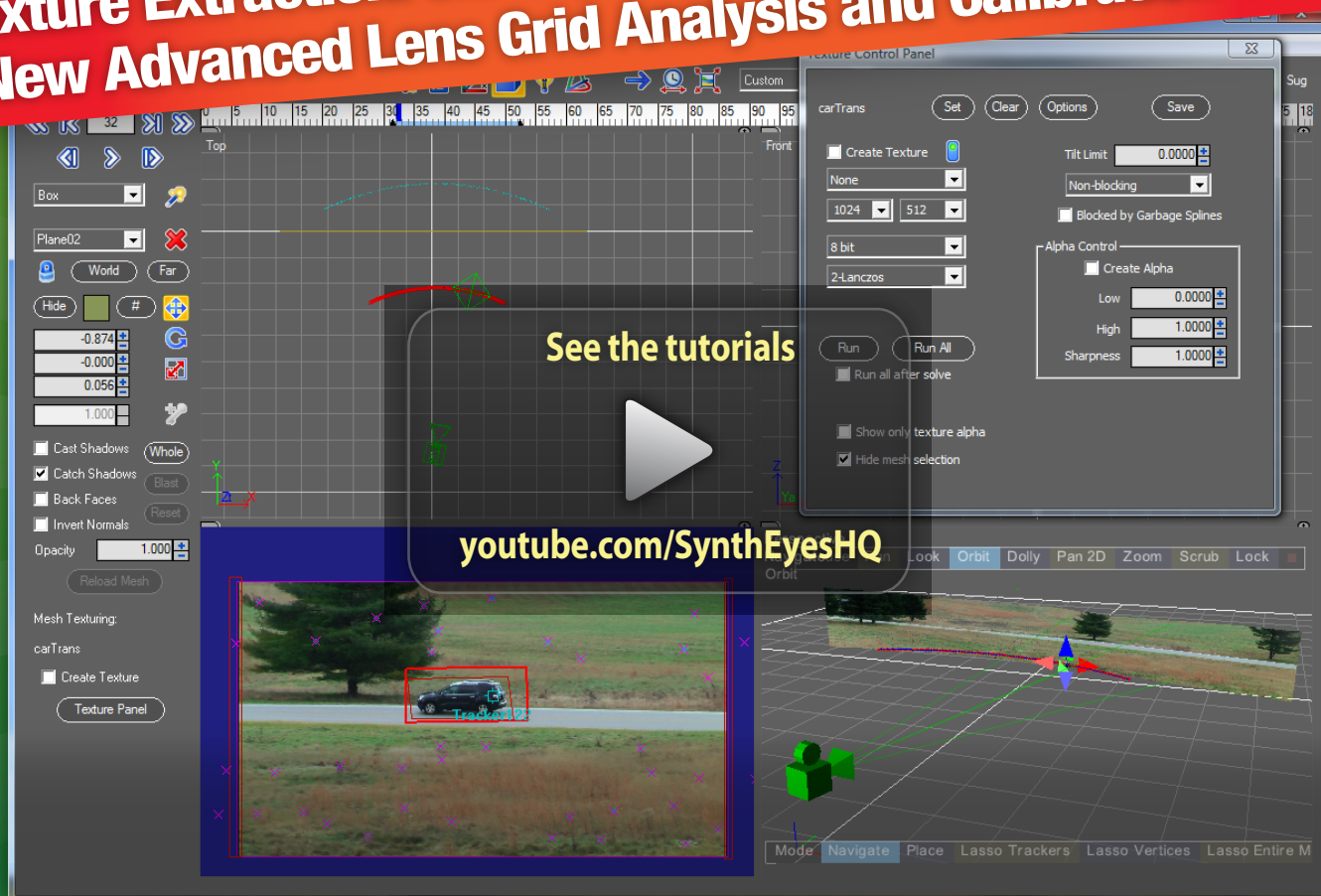




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# CARTOON CREATION 101



Everybody loves cartoon characters, at one point or another we've all appreciated them. Whether they were in childhood shows or films, cartoons allow us to experience stories that are beyond limits. In this tutorial series our artists will show us how to design and paint basic cartoon characters. This will involve them producing numerous exploratory designs and showing you how to capture and reflect the personality of the character through expressions, costume and design.



## Chapter 02 – Pirate

Software Used: Photoshop

First, before I do anything else, I warm up. I just begin drawing random shapes and ideas on paper and I tell my brain I'm allowed to play. I don't get stuck in a "finish it quick" mode. This is usually how I approach the start of any design. I will sip my coffee and just doodle until my brain wakes up and starts thinking about the "problem", which today is a pirate.

Next, depending on time constraints, I decide whether to use real materials or go straight to digital. Since I rarely have the time, I opt to do all my sketching in the real world. That's how we all started in school or as kids, and that's always the most intuitive and fun process for me.

It's way too easy to erase, go over, change, and manipulate on the computer at the start of the design phase. Having the ability to do both is imperative as a character designer. Computer freezes and deadlines? Draw it out. Only have a white board and the executive has given you five minutes to wow him with the next big idea for the company? Block it out. Stuck with the pencil? Go straight to Photoshop and just make shapes and carve things away.

Having more tools and ways to use them will make you a greater asset to any team or project, and the more you use them, the more comfortable it becomes and that's what leads to making your work look effortless. But it's not just about practicing; it's also about understanding and utilizing the strengths and weaknesses of all the mediums you can.

After sketching for a bit, and not exactly being sure of what I want, I start to just mess around with shapes and faces. What personality do I want to get at? How much realism vs. stylization do I want to have? I think about all this as I just explore shapes (**Fig.01**).

After a bit I start creating a story. Maybe he just shot his parrot after it pooped on him, or maybe it's a child who's acting like a pirate with a cardboard cutout leg and a beard and mustache



01



02

made from crayon markings. Since I don't have a boss for the illustration I'm allowed to just play. This can cause panic at times when you're confronted with a blank page and too many possibilities, so attitude is the key (**Fig.02**).

Moving on to the females, I go for strong but not overly sexualized. Too many artists and too much art is devoted to scantily clad, fetish

women, so I hope to explore a strong female, while doing the real women out there some justice.

Here I am playing with styles; big to little shapes playing off each other. The middle image is probably the closest to my natural sensibilities and style. I specifically know I will not choose this one for the tutorial, as it's too comfortable

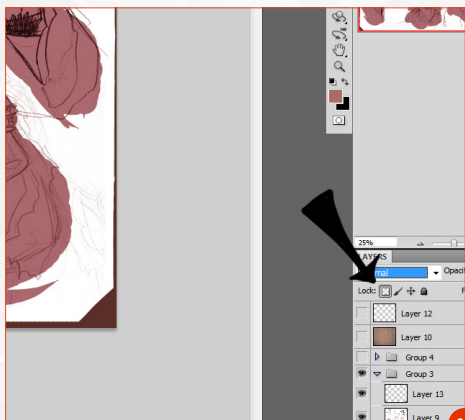




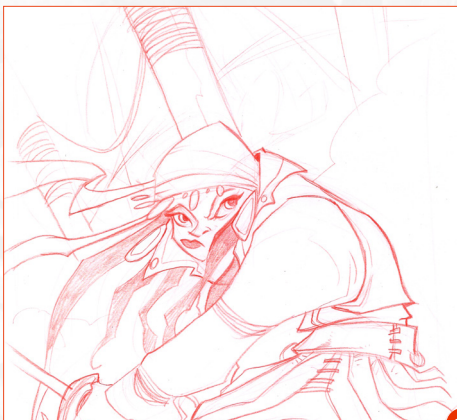
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07

a fit and I will not learn anything in the process. This was a key idea when I agreed to do this tutorial – that I would try to make something different from my usual style (**Fig.03**).

These are more shapes, postures and extreme silhouettes. I like the last image too, but she is very static and I don't feel like I want to take her any further (**Fig.04**).

I scan in the images I put them on a Multiply layer, create a Normal layer under that one and use a hard brush with 2-3 tones to create a basic value study. After I use a mid-color brush (I never use grayscale; so boring to my eyes) and lock the layer. This way I can use a lighter color and a darker color, and play with the tones without having to worry about going outside of my silhouettes. I find it easier to play and explore if I have less to worry about (**Fig.05**).

Most of this is a nice transitional phase for me, as I decide what image will be the one I use,

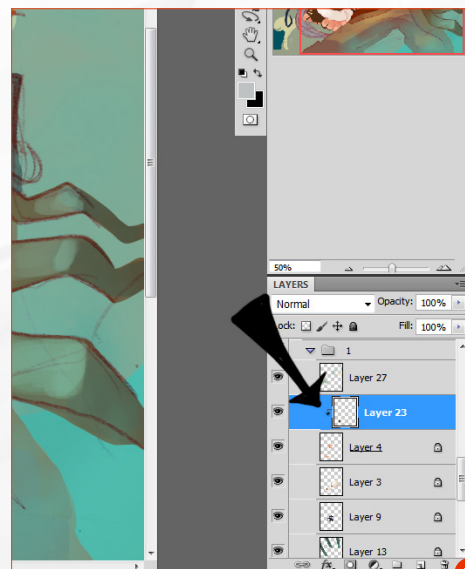
and it gets me thinking about the costume and other information I will use in the coming stages.

I've chosen my design. It's got some action and isn't static like many of the other images. She's tough, but not overly dolled up and so I make this a Multiply layer in Photoshop as my top layer. I will eventually draw on top of the line work, but keep all my basic colors and tone underneath it (**Fig.06**).

I start blocking in all my shapes into large color chunks. I have a few different approaches and I decided on this one for the reason that most of my information was planned out ahead of time. If I just start to paint without any under drawing, then my approach would be vastly different (**Fig.07**).

I break up most of the colors and components into separate layers. Whenever I work for clients I do this as it is very easy to change a color if they don't like it, rather than having to repaint a

big portion of the image. After all my layers are separated I create layers for textures. When you hold the Alt button and put your cursor in between two layers it masks itself to that layer. Again, this saves me from going outside the lines and I no longer have to concern myself with that problem (**Fig.08**).



08





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So now I just grab some weird texture brushes and go with it. This is controlled chaos. I absolutely don't believe in letting brushes (that are usually not even my brushes) change and manipulate my designs. In my opinion, good designs are thought out, not willy-nilly. I do understand that others don't share my belief though, but because those brushes are working inside my decisions, then I can play with those brushes and they will work for me and not against the choices I have established.

This is when all the basic colors have been decided. I start creating some atmosphere to show myself what I am hoping to accomplish. I work on lighting and where to draw the eye. So I make two layers, one on Overlay where I push and pull colors (never grays) and another above my line art on Normal.

After I establish some lighting that works for me, I go to that top layer and I start to just paint over the line art I don't want to see. In the end I will leave markings in, as that's the style I want for this painting compared to others. It's all a choice; I could be wrong, but I made it (Fig.09 – 11).



11



The eyes have started to bug me. I go through three or four versions, re-doing the eyes. Along with all the other problems like lighting and atmosphere, I just keep fidgeting with the eyes. I also add a textured image on Overlay (I've used one from the 3DTotal source files) (Fig.12).

Now all the designs are "correct". Okay, so basically nothing is ever completely correct in our field as it's all about personal taste, but I am no longer bothered with what's happening on my screen. This is usually how I design. Fix stuff until that tiny voice goes, "okay, that's cool now". So now I move on to the lighting and how I want the eyes to move around (Fig.13).

I add a Color Balance adjustment layer to push back on some of my shadows (Fig.14).

Here I add a border above all the other layers and because I view pirates as a bit dirtier and haphazard, I want to make it scratchy and a bit aggressive. I also add a Color Dodge to beef up the highlights and eyes, to manipulate where I want the audience to look first (Fig.15).



12

Now I make some last finishing touches, like tweaking the eye, and adding a touch more smoke and a signature (Fig.16).

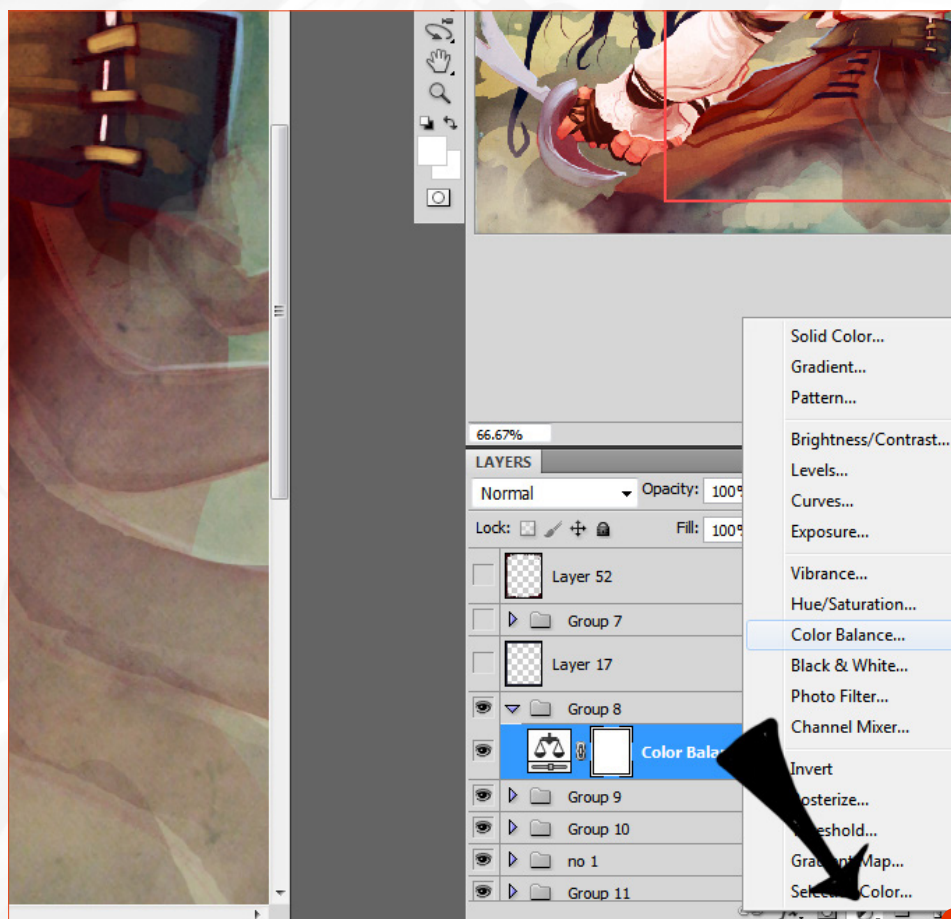
As I try to never paint the same way twice it lends itself to being a new experience all the time, which keeps me happy, but can also be a double-edged sword when you forgot how you did something well and need to repeat it. More



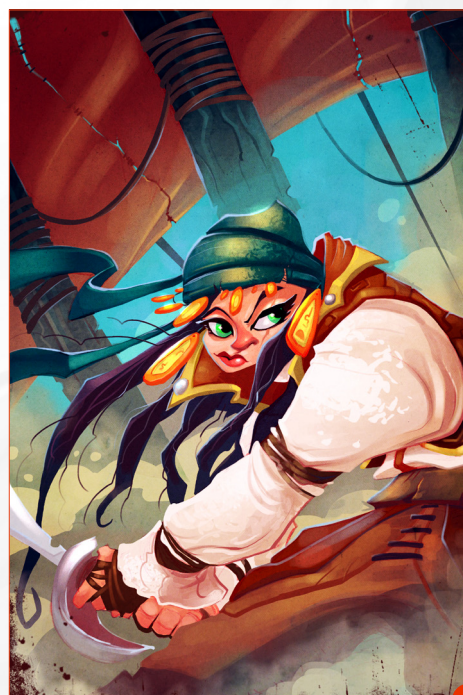
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often than not some form of it will manifest as you paint, learn and grow as an artist. Again, depending on my subject matter, my client, and the time allowed, I will change my approach from design to design. Having different ways to solve the problem of design and painting can only make you a stronger visionary.

I hope something from this tutorial gives you an "aha!" moment, an understanding of how another artist's brain works, or maybe some workflow ideas as you go on and create your own pieces. Good luck and I'll see you online. Check out more at [2dbean.com](http://2dbean.com) and [2dbean.blogspot.com](http://2dbean.blogspot.com)



14



15



Brett Bean

Email: [brettbean@yahoo.com](mailto:brettbean@yahoo.com)





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**PETR BALATKA**

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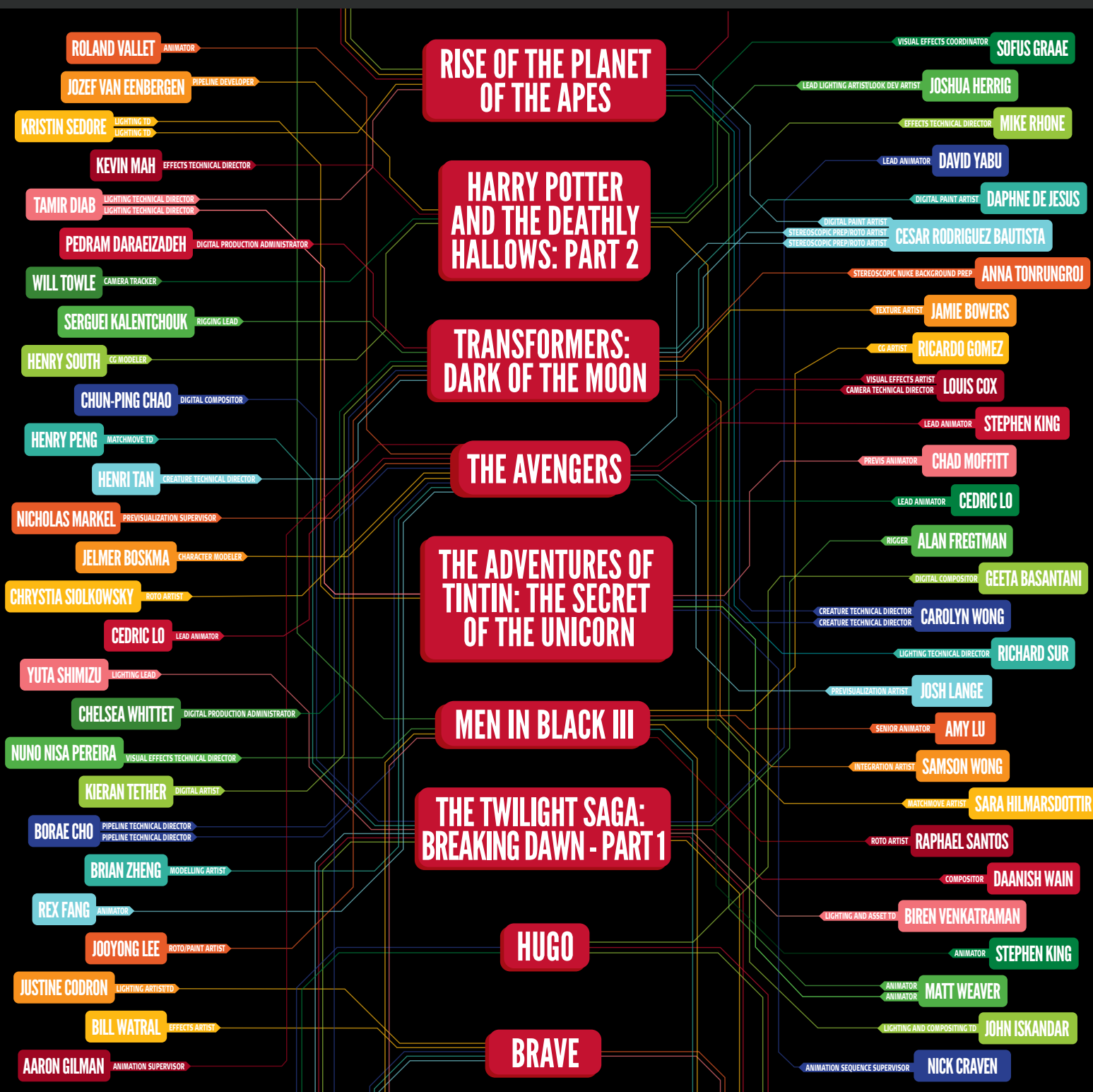
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# Custom Brushes for Characters

## Chapter 02



**DOWNLOAD  
RESOURCES**



- Free Brushes

A custom brush can add that special texture or help speed up your workflow. You can use a combination of custom brushes to quickly add cracks, dirt and scratches to textures or images, or use them to paint an underlying texture such as skin, cloth, leather and metal to a section of a painting. In this tutorial series our artists will show us how to create different custom brushes to texture a character. This will involve them starting with a basic un-textured character that they have designed, and then demonstrating how to create brushes to add areas of texture and detail.



## Chapter 02 – Red Indian

Software Used: Photoshop

### Introduction

In this tutorial the goal is to create and paint using custom brushes, to build details and to enrich a character. I have made three types of brushes – shape, stamp and painting – which we're going to use in lots of different ways. I have also given an explanation and included images of how to create each type and how to use them, followed by images of the painting where they are used.

### Creating the Brushes

The first of our brushes – the shape brush – can be seen in **Fig.01**. Here's how it was created:

Use a photo or painting to get a black and white shape. It can have grays in it; it's not necessary to use strictly black and white. In fact, grays can be useful sometimes. It's important to know that the black is going to be the part that will become the active painting area.

Select the Rectangular Marquee tool. While dragging the selection, make sure you keep the



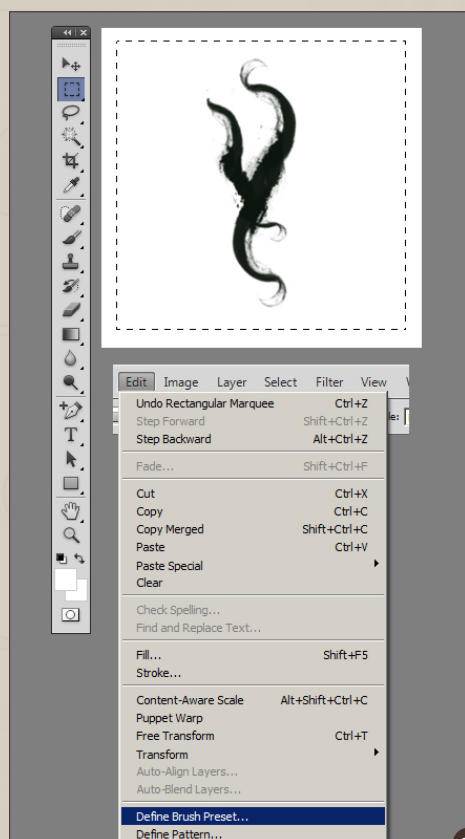
01

Shift key held down. In order to get the correct final shape, the marquee selection has to be perfectly square.

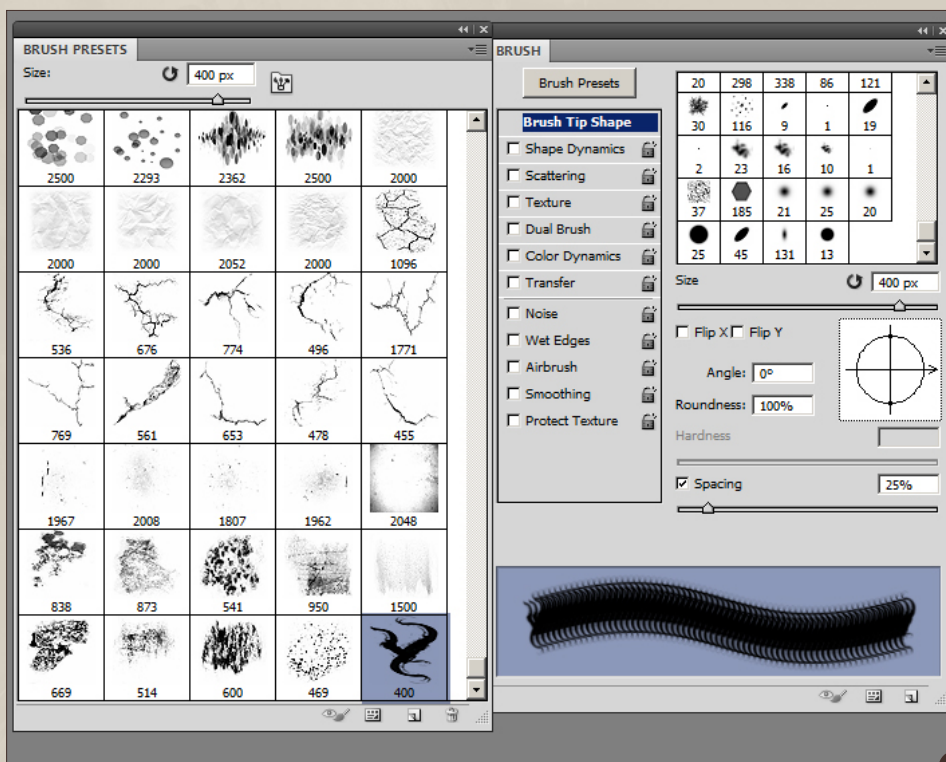
Once it's selected, go to Edit on the top row of the main options and press Define Brush Preset. It will create a brush that is instantly saved in your Brush Preset window, with the same resolution as the originally selected image (**Fig.02 – 03**).

In the Brush window, select the Shape Dynamics. There are plenty of options to choose from. The blue sections of **Fig.04** show the settings I have used to create the result, which is painted on the side to demonstrate how it looks.

The options are not very complicated, but it's still necessary to investigate them in order to understand them and achieve the result you

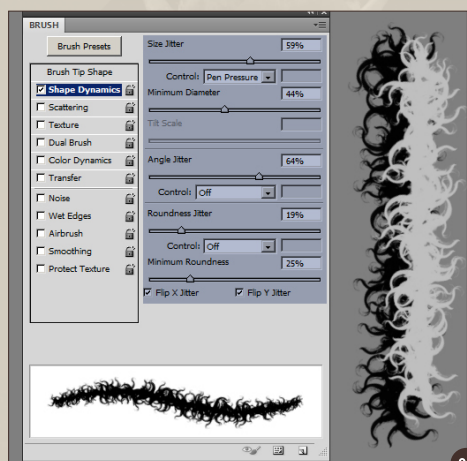


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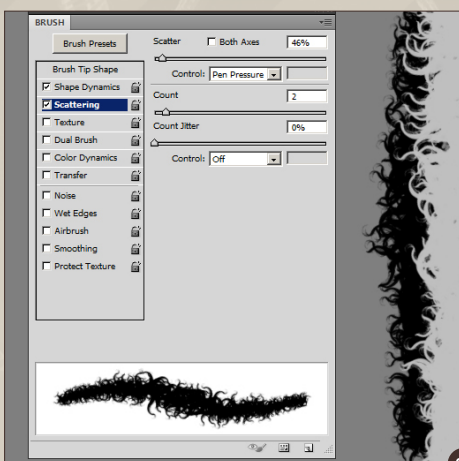


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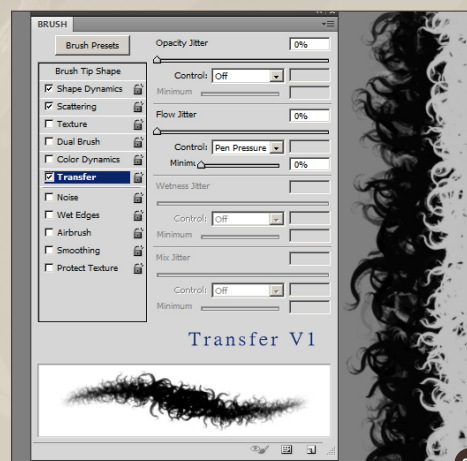




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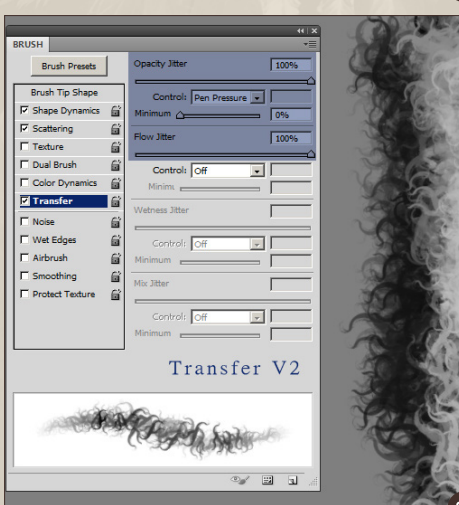
06

need. It's good to set some values and do a little painting to see if your brush is going in the right direction.

Next we have to consider rotations controlled by the attributes of your pen or the percentage of the values. Basically when we drag the brush it makes random variations, showing an accumulation of shapes created there by an effect of specific material and texture (Fig.04).

Adding Scattering will control the scatter by a percentage value, whether using the pen attributes or numeric values. Scattering is a very useful way of achieving a random look and easily covering more surface. This option can also be tweaked once the brush is finished, to polish the result or achieve the look that is required (Fig.05).

Finally we activate Transfer. A simple explanation of this setting would be that it allows the pen to change the size of the shapes and the opacity by using varying amounts of pressure. Of course, you can always set numerical values to be used instead of using the pen pressure.



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I separate the transfer into two types that I mostly use: V1 and V2.

Transfer V1, as you can see in Fig.06, is thick and works by enhancing contours; it can be used to enforce silhouettes or sometimes to fill surfaces.

Transfer V2 works by just changing the settings that are on the image. It creates a feeling of depth and is very good way to achieve textured surfaces with depth and more detail. When I use them I combine both types (Fig.07 – 08).

I applied the shape brush to the character's staff to create the animal fur, as well as is in other parts such as on the arm, the chest, the belt and the bonnet (Fig.09 – 11).

Shape brushes are still repeating shapes, but in this case they aren't accumulative; they have to keep a distance between themselves. It's a brush to draw detail that's as specific as we want, like a sort of pattern that will repeat as we paint. In this case I've used a simple stitch shape. You can use details from a photo if necessary, but I've painted my shape.



09

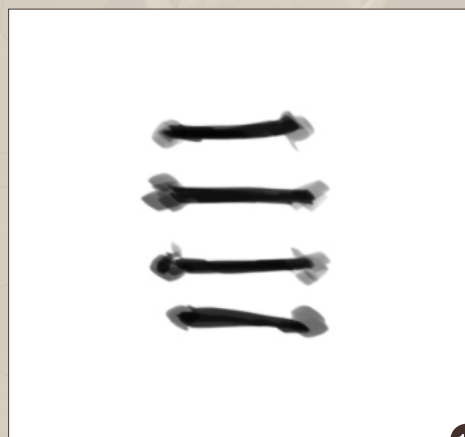


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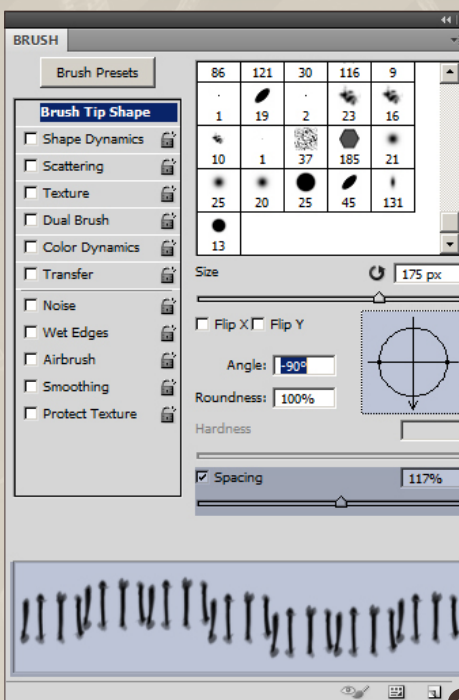
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Once you've created your shape brush and it's in the Brush window, it's time to take care of the Brush Tip Shape. There is an option to change the angle, so the shapes go in a horizontal direction (Fig.12).

This can change if we captured the initial shape horizontally, but it has to end up like the one on the lower part of the window in Fig.13; this is a sample of how the stroke will look. Then we tweak Spacing until there is no overlapping of the shapes; the repeated shapes have to remain more or less the same distance apart. It's very easy to see by just moving the slider.

The settings shown in Shape Dynamics in Fig.14 will make the brush work well. Control: Pen Pressure, under Size Jitter, is controlled by the pressure of the pen, so if I paint more softly then the stitches will become smaller.

The second option is the key one. Angle Jitter has to be on Control: Direction. This option will make sure that shapes are drawn in the direction of your stroke and will continue changing direction whilst you paint.



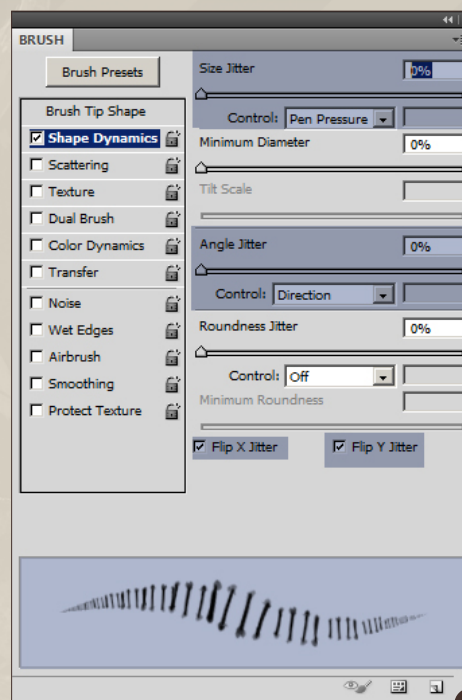
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You can keep building on your own brushes and create more detailed ones, by painting a little and applying what you've done to the one that is already created. Use the same process to save it and you have a different brush (Fig.15 – 16).

You can see the areas of the image where I have used this technique in Fig.17 – 18.



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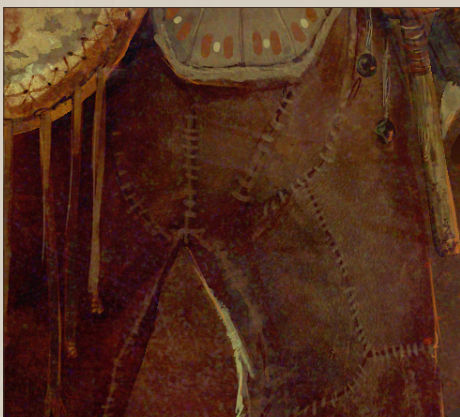
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Our next brush is the stamp brush. In Fig.19 you can see examples of some effects you can achieve with this brush.

The stamp brush is pretty self-explanatory; one single click and the brush draws what you've created. As shown in Fig.20, select a texture, make it black and white, use the contrast to



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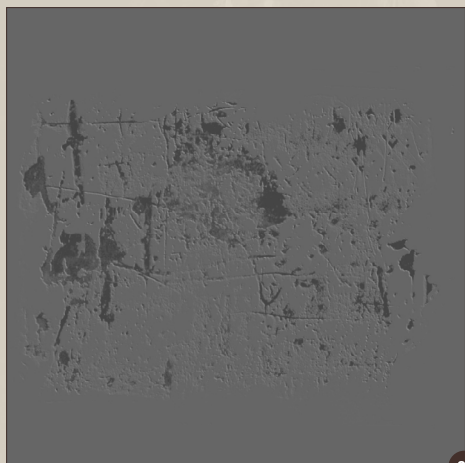


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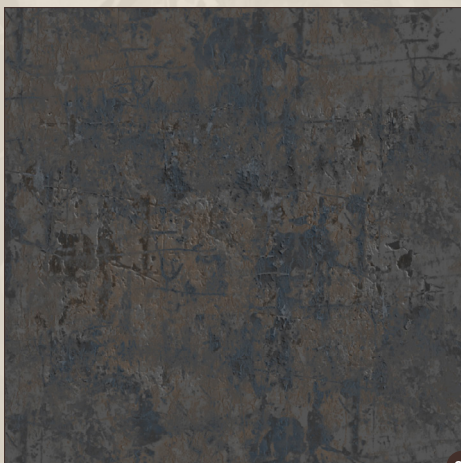




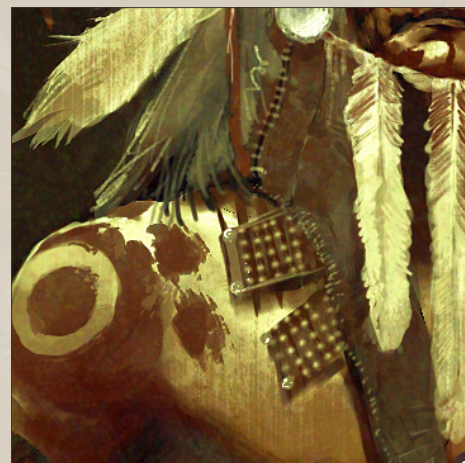
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get rid of some of the unnecessary grays, then clean the borders or they will show on the brush.

Make sure it's on a square selection, so it keeps the same proportions when you stamp it. I like to add another texture on Overlay mode, in order to have more variation on the areas that have turned too black; it gives variation just on the places where you want it. Then use the same process that we used earlier on the shape brush to create your stamp brush and that's it!

One example of how useful it can be to have just the single stamp texture, with a light color painted and a darker one over it, is in the

production of a kind of volume effect. Based on that information, if you just keep stamping bigger sizes or rotating color variations and using some layer blending modes, the result is a quick but interesting texture made with one single brush (Fig.21 – 22).

I've used this brush all over my canvas. In some areas it is very subtle and in others it has been used harder in order to create texture and surface variations (Fig.23 – 24).

The final brush I'm going to cover is the painting brush. In Fig.25 you can see examples of the effects that can be achieved with this brush.

The goal of this brush is to have noise and variations, but not necessarily a recognizable shape so that the feeling can be that of a real brush stroke. It can still be very useful to add details; I will now explain the creation and some of the ways to use it.

First select any shape you want (in my case I went for a non-circular one), then in the Brush Tip Shape set the Spacing low enough to look like a single stroke (Fig.26).

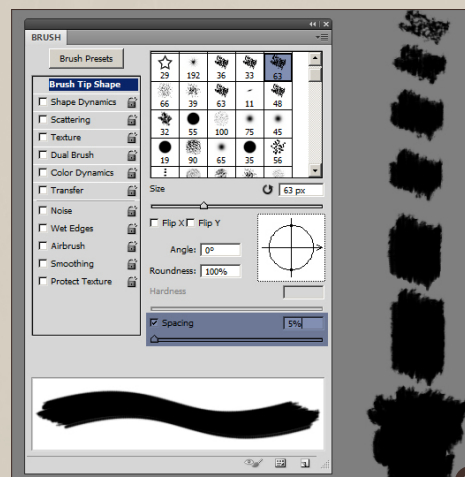
With Shape Dynamics selected, follow the settings shown in Fig.27; these are based more on an automatic variation than in the



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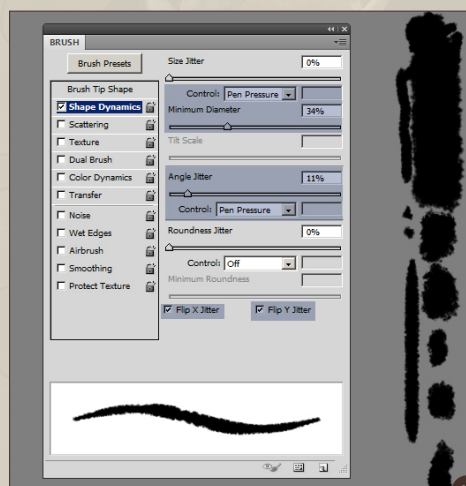


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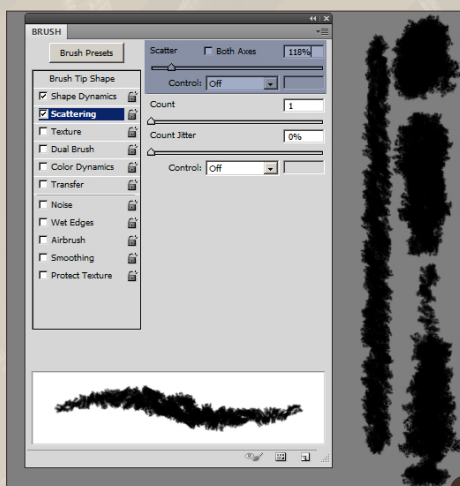


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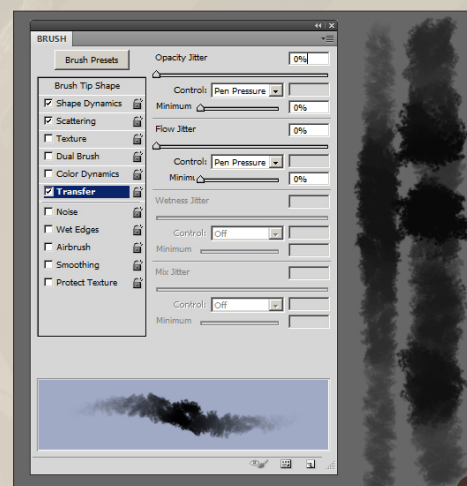




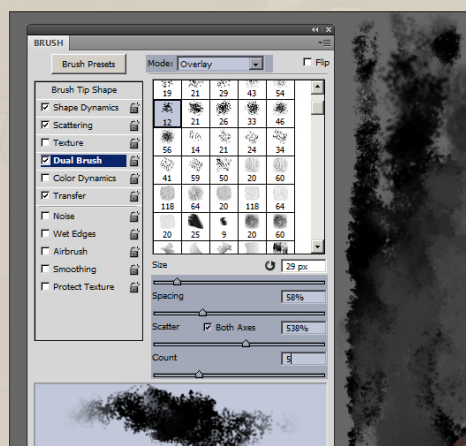
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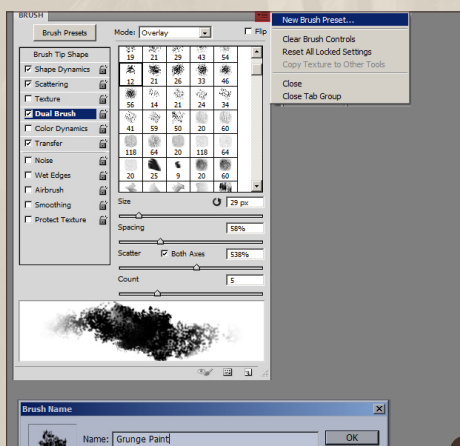
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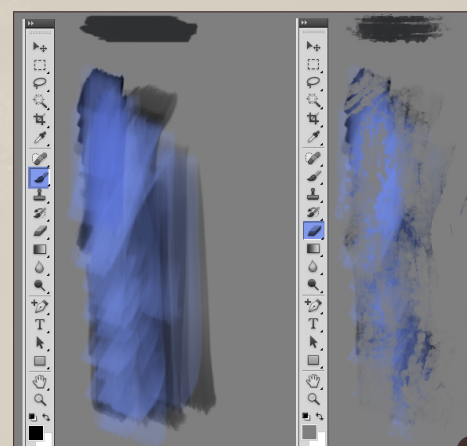
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pen options. These options are very easy to understand by just playing around a little bit. The Scattering here gives the effect of a more organic brush stroke (Fig.28).

For this particular brush, we have to arrange the Transfer settings first. It can be done in different orders, but this way is the best because it allows us to see the results in real time when we activate the most important option straight after (Fig.29).

The most interesting option for this brush is Dual Brush (Fig.30). Here it's about playing with the options. Normally the secondary shape you add has to be almost the same size or bigger than the principal shape; by using the Size slider it's very easy to see it. Scatter is the same as the main scatter, but applied just to the secondary shape.

It is better to have the percentage or thickness of Count low, otherwise the textures and the variations will disappear in a solid stroke.

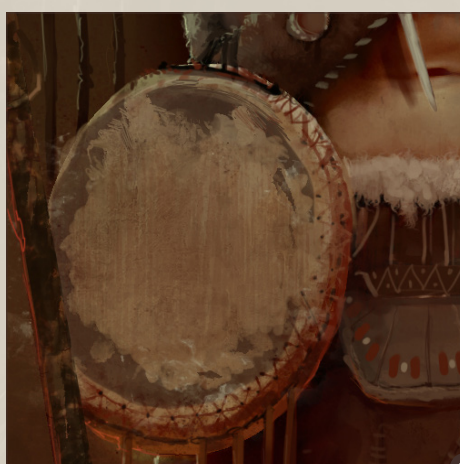
In order to use these brushes I recommend selecting shapes that are quite different from each other, otherwise, if we are not careful, it will sometimes create a random noise without an interesting look.

Once you are happy with how the brush looks, go to the top right corner of the window (as is marked in red in Fig.31). The option New Brush Preset will appear. Click it to show a pop-up window with the basic shape and then enter a

name for it – it's always good to label them. The brush will then stay in your brush palette.

Fig.32 is an example of how this brush can be used to achieve very interesting results if used along with the Eraser tool. It can be painted with a normal brush and then some strokes can be removed, creating irregularities and interesting textures. I use this technique a lot.

You can see examples of where I have used this brush and the effect it gives in Fig.33 – 34.



33



34





35

I have illustrated the base mesh of my character and my starting point in **Fig.35**.

**Fig.36 – 40** demonstrate how the image grew in detail, by using the different types of brushes I have explained in the tutorial.



36

I hope this tutorial has helped you to understand custom brushes and motivated you to use them a bit more. Thanks to 3DTotal for the chance to participate and all of you that have read these words.

**David Munoz Velazquez**

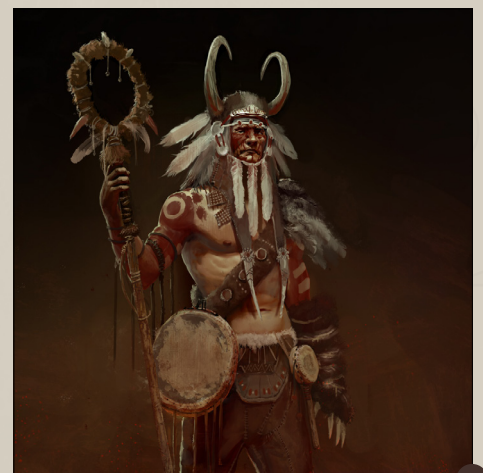
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# WHO WE REALLY ARE

"This image is trying to  
portray our childhood  
and how incredible our  
imagination used to be."



## MAKING OF BY CLAUDIO RODRIGUEZ VALDES

Claudio Rodriguez Valdes takes us back to our childhood with his image *Who We Really Are*. He explains his painting process from the first designs to the finished piece in this month's Making Of.



## Who We Really Are

Software Used: Photoshop

### Intro

Here I am going to try to explain my painting process from the first designs to the finished piece.

This image was a commissioned piece, which usually means that it took me a little longer, as decisions were not only mine to make.

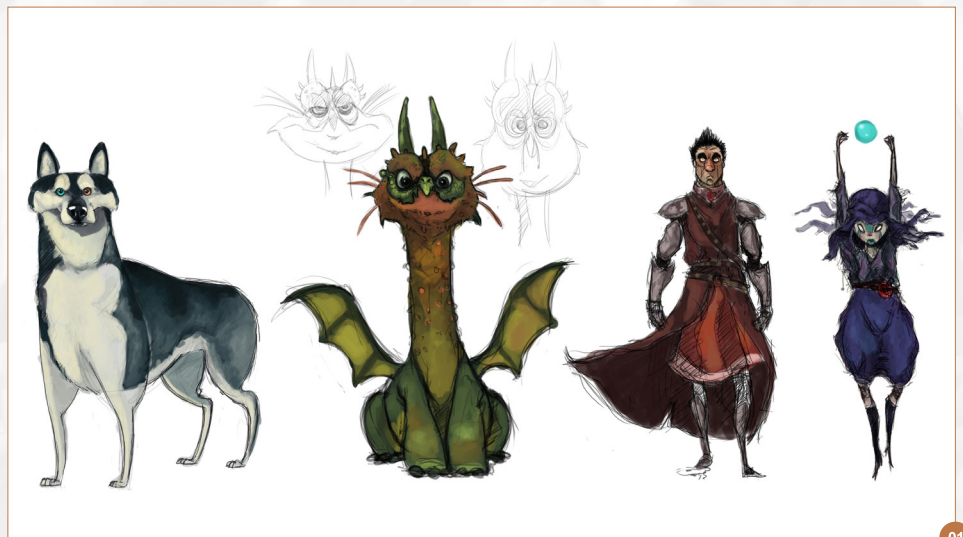
### Concept

This image is trying to portray our childhood and how incredible our imagination used to be. In a way it's a reminder to hold on to the inner-child that's in us all.

### Character Design

Before I begin an illustration and start to draw my characters, I normally like to get to know them a bit by writing or thinking a bit about their background and what they are like. This is a great way to make the characters believable and help my creative process.

My initial sketches can be seen in **Fig.01**. Characters rarely stay the same throughout the illustration, as I normally modify them while painting. I think it is really important to have a basic character concept before you start painting.



I give little thought to the color palette at this point; I just want to have something to come back to in order to review my shapes and ideas.

### Concept Art

Once I have decided on the characters, I start thinking about layout and composition. Fortunately most art directors know a lot more than I do and can point out compositional mistakes. Unfortunately there are times when I don't agree with them, but I still have to do what they say.

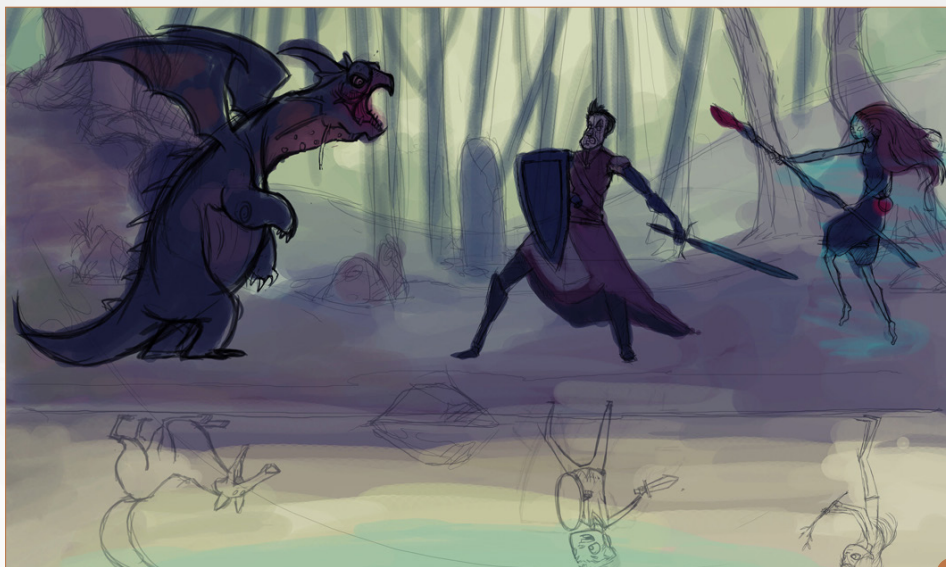
As you can see in my first concept (**Fig.02**), I was trying to focus much more on the imaginary part of the illustration and the dragon was the center of attention, as in my opinion he was the best designed character.



After making some corrections I completely changed the layout (**Fig.03**).

My second concept focused more on the story and showed all my characters to be of equal importance, which ultimately is what my art director wanted.

At this stage I also started thinking about color and lighting. I decided where my light was coming from and what type of mood I wanted the illustration to have. I was much happier now as I started to paint, which is really what I enjoy the most.







04

Before actually blocking in some of the colors, I made another layer under the sketch and start blocking in my character using a regular round brush, with a really dark color. I painted the background in with one or two colors that helped to guide my color palette throughout the illustration.

### Painting

I have the terrible habit of avoiding the image as a whole in my first stages of the painting. I like to have at least one part almost finished before I even start considering all the other aspects of the illustration.



05

Having a character that is almost finished helps me feel as if progress is being made and also allows me to see how light is behaving. However, it can also cause many problems later in the painting, as I might need to change or repaint that whole character, which can sometimes take me a couple of hours.



06





07

I tend to detail my characters whilst the background is just blocked in with a few colors; this is illustrated in **Fig.04 – 05**.

I believe details are an important element in an illustration, especially when they can be appreciated after only looking at the image for a few moments.

When I had almost completed my three main characters (**Fig.06**), I felt that the image was heading in the right direction and the end result

was going to look good. I find that there is always a point during the process of creating an image when I feel that it is going to end up how I want it to.

I started changing the background in a way that would enhance my main characters and story; I changed some colors and made some others brighter until I was happy with the result.

Finally I added as many details here and there as time allowed, from dead leaves to flowers,

water reflections and hair etc (**Fig.07**).

I ended by boosting some of my colors, shadows and light points. I did this by going to Image > Adjustments > Curves. I boosted my darkest darks and my lightest lights, and then I did the same with the Red, Green and Blue channels (**Fig.08**).

**Claudio Rodriguez Valdes**

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# 2DA next month

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Sketchbook of Eric Velhagen

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by Brian Sum

### The Six Realms

Chapter 5: Swamp / Marshland Realm  
by Richard Tilbury

### Cartoon Creation 101

Chapter 3: Loan Shark  
by Denis Zilber

### Custom Brushes for Characters

Chapter 3: Beaten Up Thug  
by Bart Toingson

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The Hell Saloon by Andrei Pervukhin

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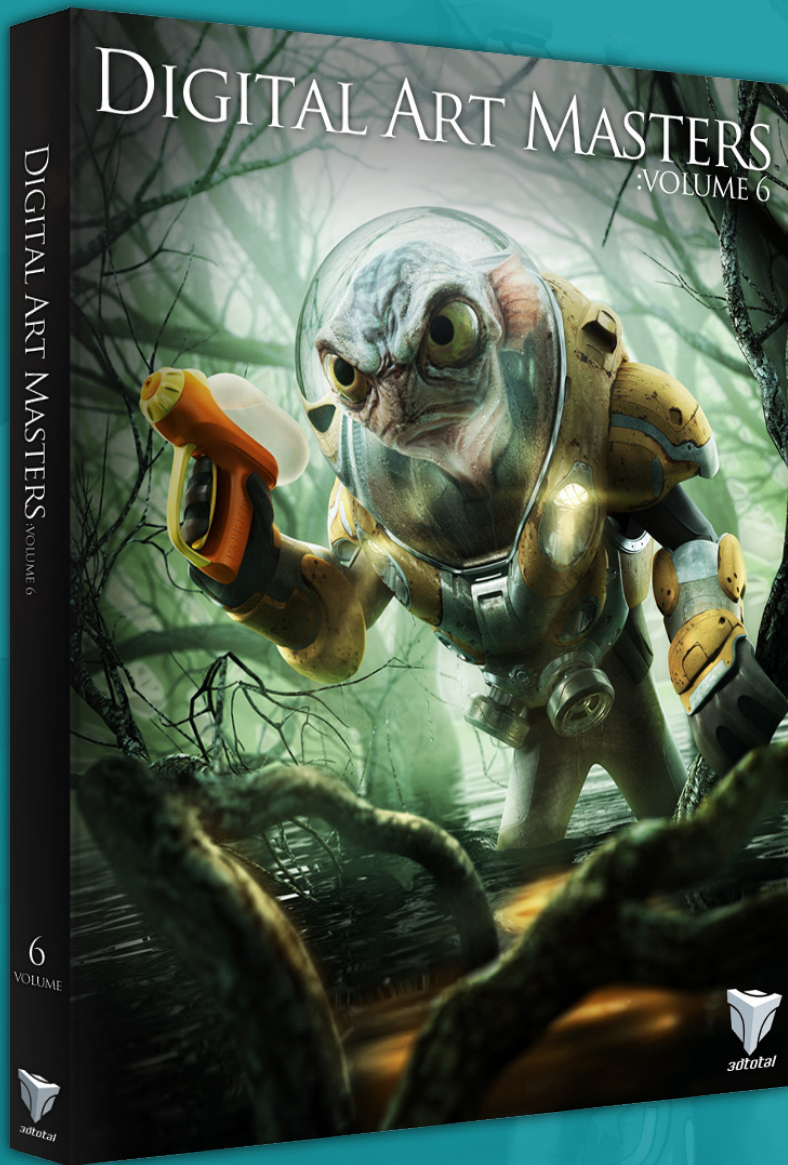
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# DIGITAL ART MASTERS VOLUME 6



With the release of *Digital Art Masters: Volume 6*, we have some exclusive chapters for you...

This is more than just an artwork book. Not only does it feature full-color, full-page images, but each artist has given a detailed description, in their own words, of the creation process behind each piece of published artwork. And they've done it especially for this book!

This month we feature:  
“HIPPI-PIPPI-POCALYPSE”

BY DAVID SMIT





The following shots of the “Hippi-Pippi-Pocalypse” book pages are featured here in full-resolution and can be read by zooming in...



## HIPPI-PIPPY-POCALYPSE

BY DAVID SMIT

JOB TITLE: Freelance Artist  
SOFTWARE USED: Photoshop CS4



the whole concept came about and why.

### HIPPI-PROJECT

Just like everybody I know who draws (and I mean everybody), I've wanted to make my own project for a long time now. To create something where I cannot only pour out my heart, but which manifests my conceptual philosophical attitudes in something more than just a piece of color.

I wanted to create a sub-genre of speculative-fiction in which I could inject some personal and important values (in other words: what I



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TITLE OF SECTION



think is cool). One of these conceptual pillars was that there was nothing wrong in the world. There was no big "good vs. evil" battle. No "bad guys trying to take over the world", no "orc warlords fighting steam-punk wizards with blue glowing swords", just good people, doing their thing and aware that all their problems are small and luxurious. It's a world of peace, where self-development and self-expression are central. A world where diversity is encouraged, working is optional, money doesn't exist and all the basic needs are cared for by technology.

I'm not sure why it took me a while to connect all that to hippies, but eventually (whilst in the shower) I did! In that shower session I came up with the basic premise: imagine a future world where back in the 60s and 70s the hippies had won!

That was somewhere in 2010, and since then I've been developing the whole project slowly and carefully into a more solid state.

### MISE-EN-SCÈNE

After a period of sketching and trying to find a solid visual ground to build upon, I realized it was time to create a preliminary "Mise-en-scène". This comprised of an illustration featuring all the things I had thought of at that time: funky anatomy, colors, light, fashion design, motor homes, the organic community and the open atmosphere.

The great thing about doing a Mise-en-scène is that a lot becomes clear after doing it! I should probably make a new one now with more updated details!

### INSPIRATION

Before I started this illustration I had already done quite a few sketches and preliminary work, most of which failed horribly of course. I misjudged the toughness of doing a project like this, where you pretty much have to design everything. I made some vehicle designs (this was before space was included in the project) (Fig.01).

I wanted people in this world to appear stylized, as well as realistic. I felt that funky anatomy along with vibrant colors and a semi-realistic lighting would suit the whole project best and provide a unique signature (Fig.02 - 04).

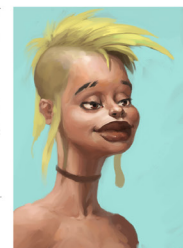
### THE ILLUSTRATION

This illustration took a long time to finish and may actually have been one of the most difficult illustrations I've done so far. Even though I had a clear idea in my mind, it was difficult to keep going. If an illustration takes too long to finish,

your vision gets clouded and you can no longer see it for what it is. That's the point where you either have to keep pushing, hoping you won't mess it up, or let it rest for a while with the possibility that you will never return to it.

### SKETCH

I made a really small sketch in my sketchbook, just to put my idea down quickly. I find doing this on paper with a simple pencil is the easiest way to keep me focused on the general idea without losing myself in details. Once I found

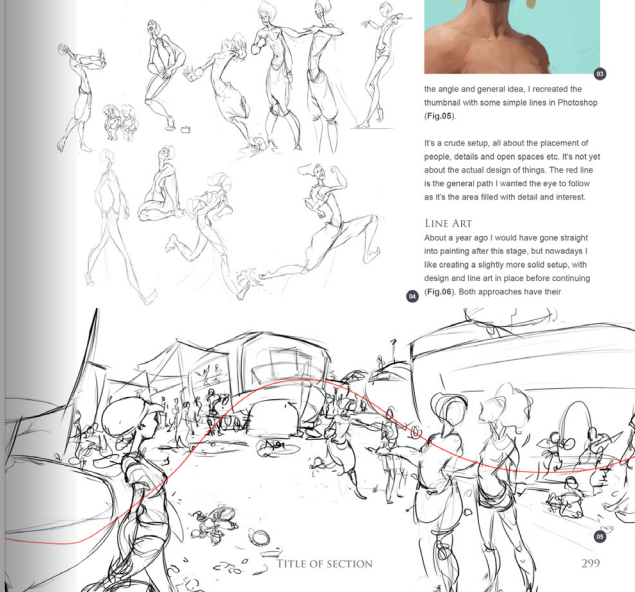


the single and general idea, I recreated the thumbnail with some simple lines in Photoshop (Fig.05).

It's a crude setup, all about the placement of people, details and open spaces etc. It's not yet about the actual design of things. The red line is the general path I wanted the eye to follow as it's the area filled with detail and interest.

### LINE ART

About a year ago I would have gone straight into painting after this stage, but nowadays I like creating a slightly more solid setup, with design and line art in place before continuing (Fig.06). Both approaches have their



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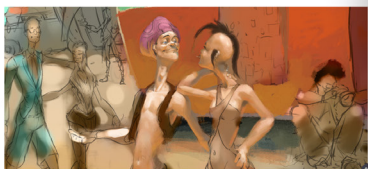
advantages, but I like using line-art because it reassures me that my designs are okay before continuing.

As you can see I've created a crude perspective setup. I don't like to spend too much time on perspective (I find it boring) and often tend to ignore formal perspective if it's a scene where things can be a bit funky and loose.

I'm not sure if I use perspective incorrectly because I want things to be funky and loose or if perhaps things tend to become funky and loose as a result of not using it correctly!

#### BASIC COLORS

This setup pretty much failed (Fig.07). Sometimes this works and sometimes it doesn't. When I was trying out a few rough colors and patterns, I couldn't convince myself of one thing or another. It's hard if things don't go as you want them. Usually it means that I want two or even three completely different



things from a single illustration (not a good sign). However I decided to push as it still provided a bit of structure to work with.

#### START OF THE ACTUAL PAINTING

One of the things I like to do when I actually start painting is to get at least one face or a part of the illustration about 90% complete (Fig.08). It keeps me interested and I can see where the rest is going if something is already at a certain point. It defines the light, color, brush work, detail and expression etc., supplying a guide for the rest of the painting.

#### HALEWAY POINT

This part is the hardest. Here you can see how it will look, if things don't go wrong, but it also reveals all the things it hasn't become (Fig.09). With every brush stroke I put down during the painting process, alternative possibilities of what could have been disappear.

For me it's really important that I change my state of mind at this point. I really have to get my mind into a state where I no longer care

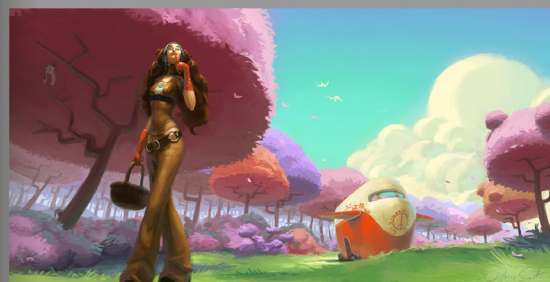
about time or other goals, and only about painting each little thing. I don't allow any doubt to creep in otherwise I know it will become a lost cause.

#### FINISHING

Whereas the previous stage was the hardest, this is the part where it becomes fun again – the details! I'd been holding back with details and highlights until now, but it was time to release the brakes! At this point I went in and painted small flowers, car paint, flags, clothing hanging from ropes and tattoo's etc. With every little detail, the image became exponentially better (Fig.10). Details really gave the illustration the life it needed. It's important to remember though that the details should serve the general composition, which is why I tried to add details that served the general path I wanted the eye to follow.

And that's it! The Mise-en-scène is done. I should start making a new one, and maybe I'll get the chance to go over that process in the next volume of this book!

#### ARTIST PORTFOLIO



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