

FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART

ImagineFX

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

Future

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Welcome... to tomorrow's world



We're living in the future. Isn't that how it feels? Our lives are filled with the sort of technology advancements that seem as if they've arrived from a place beyond today. (I wonder if life has always felt this way – as if we're already ahead of ourselves?)

When the likes of John Berkey, John Harris and Peter Elson created their futuristic imagery, did they believe that, one day, life would become like how they painted? Would space travel be a daily occurrence; alien life an accepted existence? And if some of this fiction becomes fact, would we treat it well? I dread to think.

Sci-fi art clearly represents the fantastical, but it's also a promise of what life could be like with a little imagination or discovery. There's something about it that's so... hopeful. Turn to page 38 for an inspiring wander through an amazing collection of Space Opera sci-fi art. Both classic and modern artists are represented.

As for you as an artist, you have the most amazing set of digital tools available to you to help create your art: Photoshop, Painter, Cintiqs and graphics tablets. Certainly, you should learn how to use this software and hardware to its best advantage (and from page 58, a collection of the finest artists share their digital art secrets with you), but make sure you remember what it is that makes your art unique. You. Learning an array of techniques will only get you so far. What happens beyond the Wacom pen is up to you – and it's this addition that will future proof your art and make it stand the test of time.

Claire

Claire Howlett, Editor
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Our special cover for subscribers this issue.



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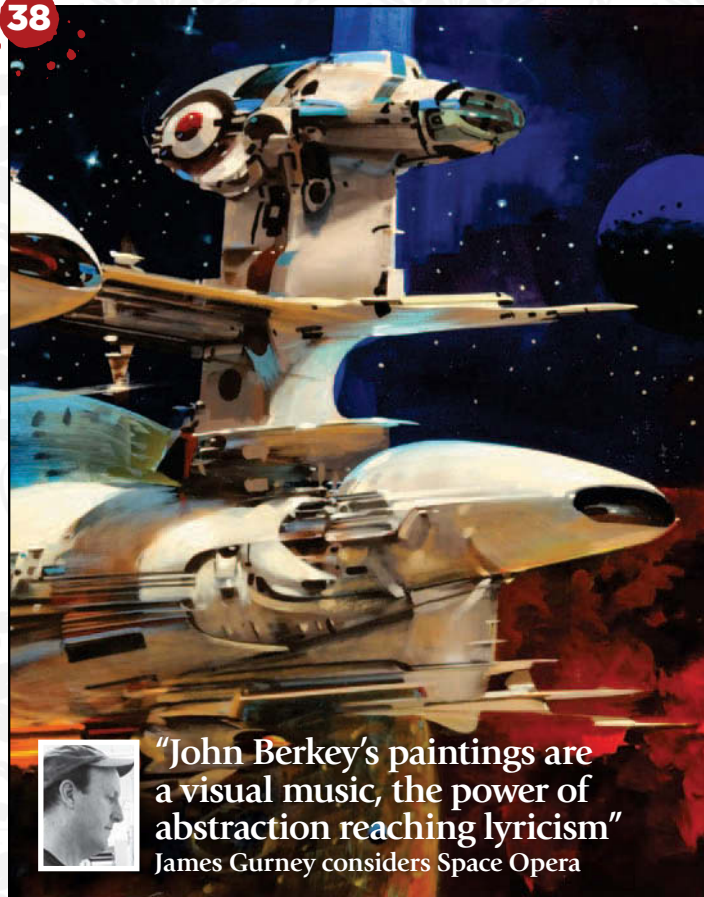
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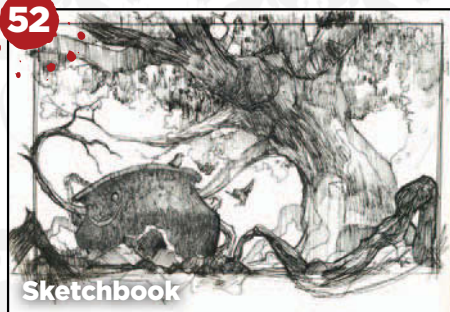
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"John Berkey's paintings are a visual music, the power of abstraction reaching lyricism"
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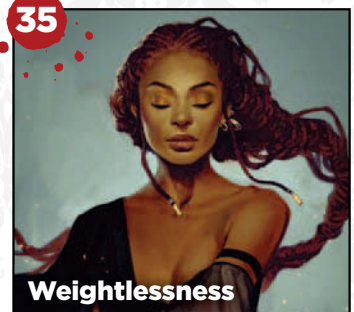
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Oppression

Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



See page 6 for the best new art ➡➡

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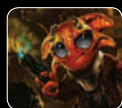
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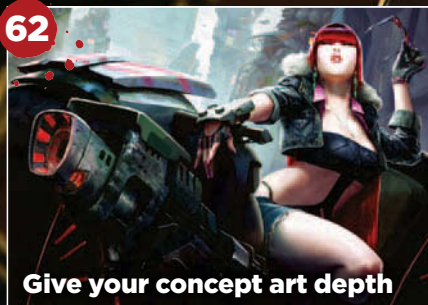


How to watch your video workshops

Where you see this play button you'll find an accompanying video workshop. Tap it to watch the artist at work.



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Give your concept art depth

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Depict a grand fantasy scene

Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR FANTASY ART



Sebastien Hue

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MEDIA: Photoshop, 3ds Max, Vue, ZBrush



Inspired by the likes of Dylan Cole, Sebastien decided to teach himself the ins and outs of digital painting, initially starting out with Photoshop. "I used to make logos for music bands, but I eventually progressed deeper into CG graphics, 3D programs and matte painting."

A far cry from band logos, Sebastien certainly had a hidden talent for imagining spectacular landscapes. Fuelled by his wider passions, the Parisian artist channels his love for science fiction and the diversity of the visual arts straight into his work, seeking to add scale, depth and drama into his intricately detailed designs.

1



2



1 SULPHURYGEN "This was a 2D matte painting from an original plate shot in a refinery. This overview was turned into a dramatic sci-fi scene with aliens living around it."

2 TERMINAL 13 "The aim was to create a massive space station inspired by sci-fi blockbusters. The terrain was modelled in Vue followed by heavy rendering in Photoshop."

3 THE VALLEY OF GAIA "Made for the Luminarium collective and mostly designed in 3D with Vue and 3ds Max, before heavily working on it in Photoshop. When modelling the ships I took inspiration from Warren Fu."

4 COMMANDER SUB ZERO "I made this entirely in Photoshop, and wanted to create a character based on three main strands of inspiration. Halo was one such source."

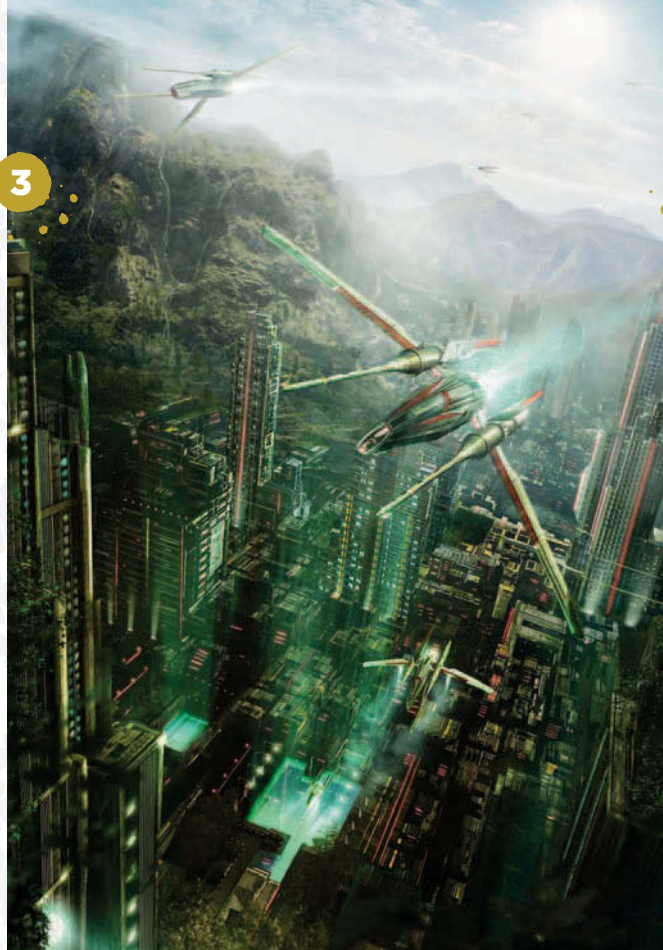


ARTIST OF THE MONTH

Congratulations Sebastien – you've won yourself a copy of Exposé 11 and d'artiste: Character Design! To find out more about these two great books, go to www.ballisticpublishing.com.



3



4



Artist crit

Seattle-based games artist Mike McCain is impressed with Sebastien's grand scenes



"There's a strong sense of scale here. The tilt of the camera engages us, and we're left to wonder just how far this colossal installation extends into the distance."



Aline Mendes

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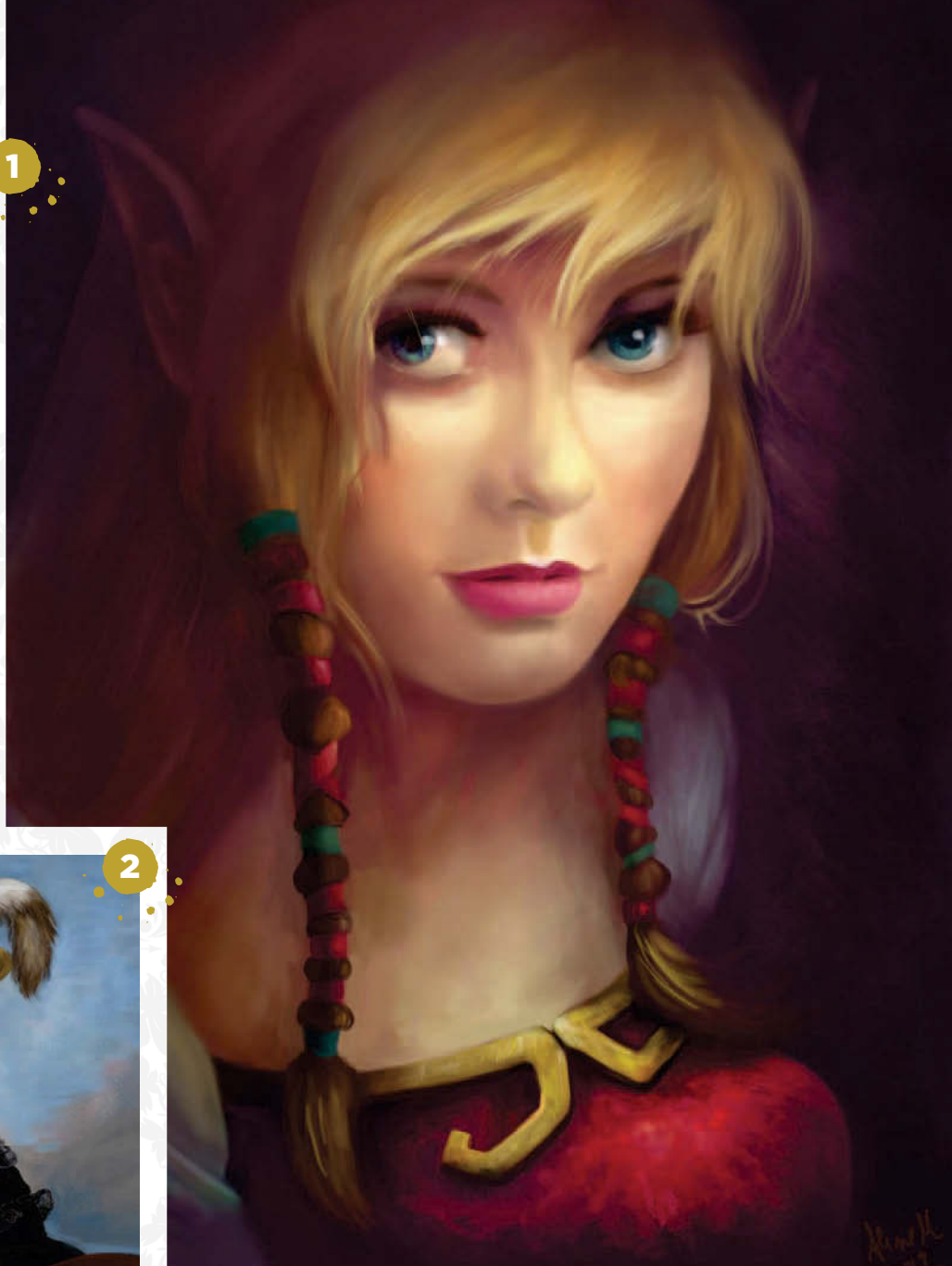


As a teenager, Aline grew up in awe of the creativity found in manga, animation and video games, which pushed her to explore the world of digital art.

"When I was 19, I wanted to sharpen my skills further," she says, "so I decided to study as hard as I could. Now I'm 22, my passion for art grows stronger every day, and I want to focus more and more on my own fantasy world."

When Aline isn't busy taking note of the old masters or her favourite video games, she can usually be found searching the internet for new sources of inspiration. "I'm also trying to get into working as a freelance artist, and am always on the lookout for things to help me along the way."

1



2



1 ZELDA PORTRAIT "I love the Zelda games, and Princess Zelda is one of my all-time favourite characters. Here, I wanted to make her appear more realistic looking."

2 SELF PORTRAIT AS VIGÉE-LE BRUN "My study of the artist Louise Élisabeth Vigée-Le Brun. I learned a lot copying from the old masters, and I love her artwork. I tried to mimic her style and brushstrokes, but wanted to change the features of her face."

3 EPIC OWL "Like many, I grew up watching Disney and have taken a bit of influence from that. My little sister asked me to make a cute owl for her, and it's become my mascot."

3



Daria Widermanska-Spala

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MEDIA: Photoshop



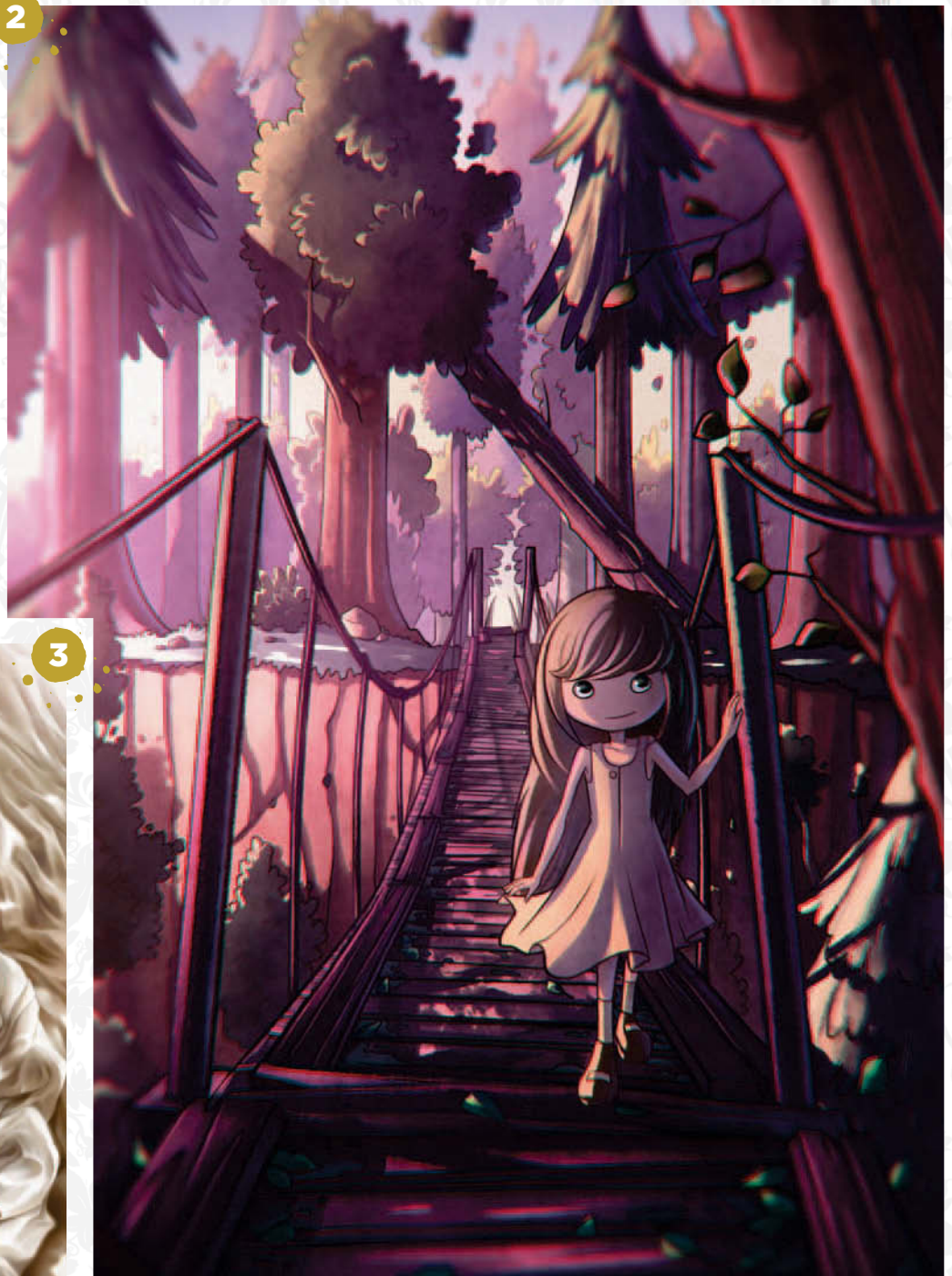
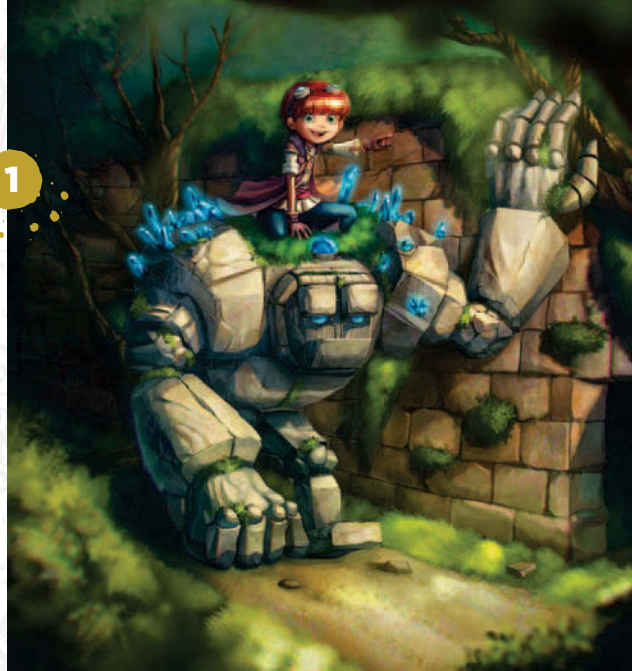
For Daria, one of the greatest things about digital art is that you can change your style on a whim to better suit your theme if you fancy. "I can't stick to one style!" she says. "Each of my pictures is like a totally different story, with a different approach and unique feelings. Maybe I'll find my own distinctive style one day, but for now I'm just happy with experimenting and being able to change depending on my needs."

The enigmatic artist has always loved creating art, but became really immersed in her late teens. Studying art at college opened her eyes to all kinds of techniques, from animation to 3D graphics. "I'm especially fond of creating characters, imagining their worlds, lives and adventures."

1 A BOY AND HIS GOLEM "The boy's name is Felix and he found himself a very peculiar friend - a golem! They travel across ancient cities and have many fantastic adventures. I've got an idea for a full story, and I'd love to write it out one day."

2 AT THE BRIDGE "I wanted to capture that fantastic time of a day when the sun is about to rise, casting a beautiful reddish light. I was inspired by the background styles of the animated series Gravity Falls, as they are a perfect example of creating amazing mood with light and colours."

3 THE MORNING AFTER "An updated version of a piece I made back in 2008. I wanted to challenge myself in painting fabric and see how I've improved overall. I love the early morning light when you can lazily lie in your bed dreaming..."



IMAGINEFX CRIT



"It's great to see not only some imaginative art work from Daria, but also the backstory behind images like A Boy and his golem. At the Bridge also captures a specific moment in time. This art is all about telling a story."

Beren Neale,
Digital Editor

Badr Douah

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MEDIA: Photoshop



With something of a soft spot for dreaming up environments, Badr spends his time working as a freelance concept artist in his homeland of Morocco. Since studying 3D modelling for videogames at Art College, he has worked for Ubisoft Casablanca on a number of projects.

"I'm always looking for new ways to learn and improve my creative skills," says Badr, often turning to his passions for adventure, travel, videogames and the arts for inspiration. Always keen for a new challenge to test out his skills, Badr is looking forward to the creative months ahead. "I can't wait to see where art will take me this year!"

1 BACK HOME "This was the last painting I did in 2012. It's about a man who usually lives far away from his old home coming back to celebrate Christmas with his family."

2 FACE À FACE "The title is in French. In English it would mean 'face to face', which is exactly what's going on here with these frigates. I've always loved tall ships and so wanted to paint them within a dramatic scene. They always prove to be an interesting subject."

3 SURPRISE "I originally wanted to paint a nice sea environment scene, but I suddenly had the idea of adding a bit more of a story to it."



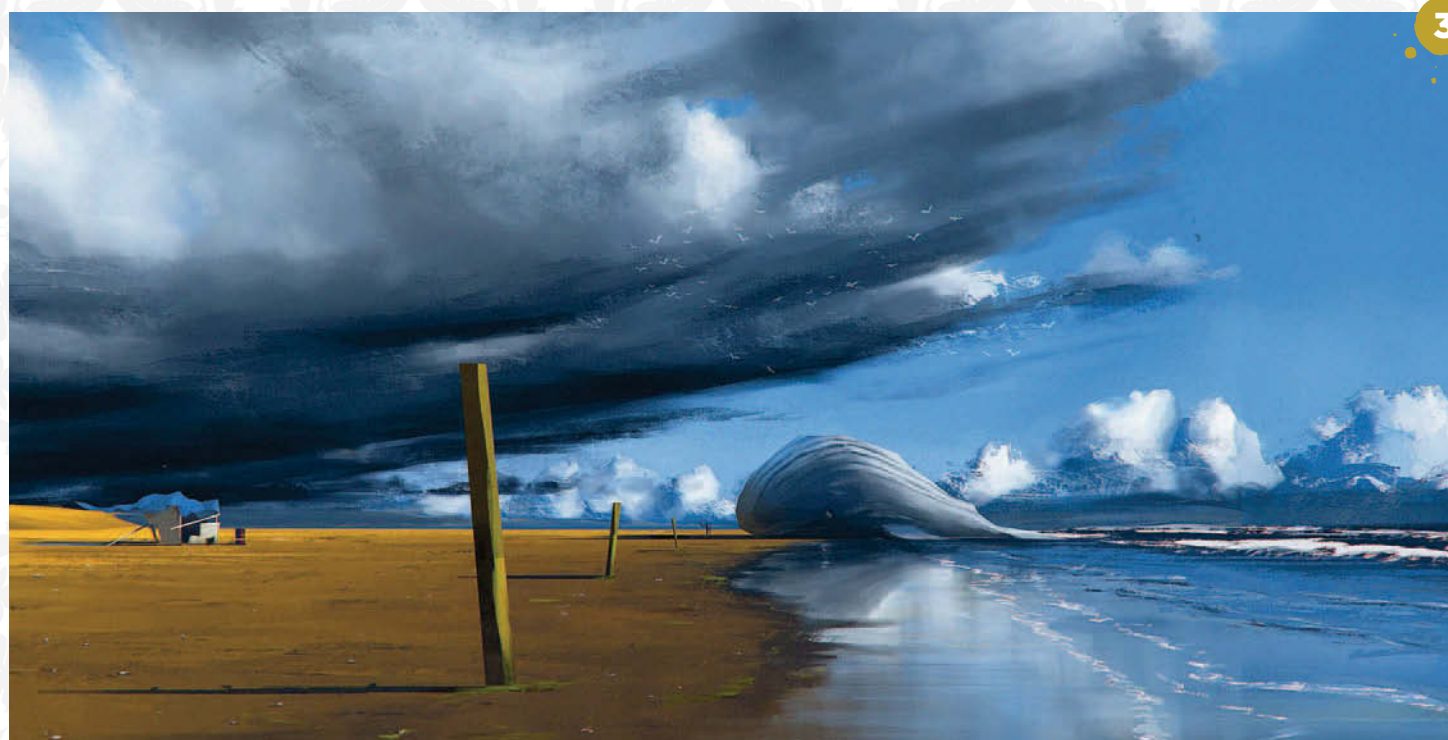
IMAGINEFX CRIT



"I'm struck by Badr's use of composition in the image

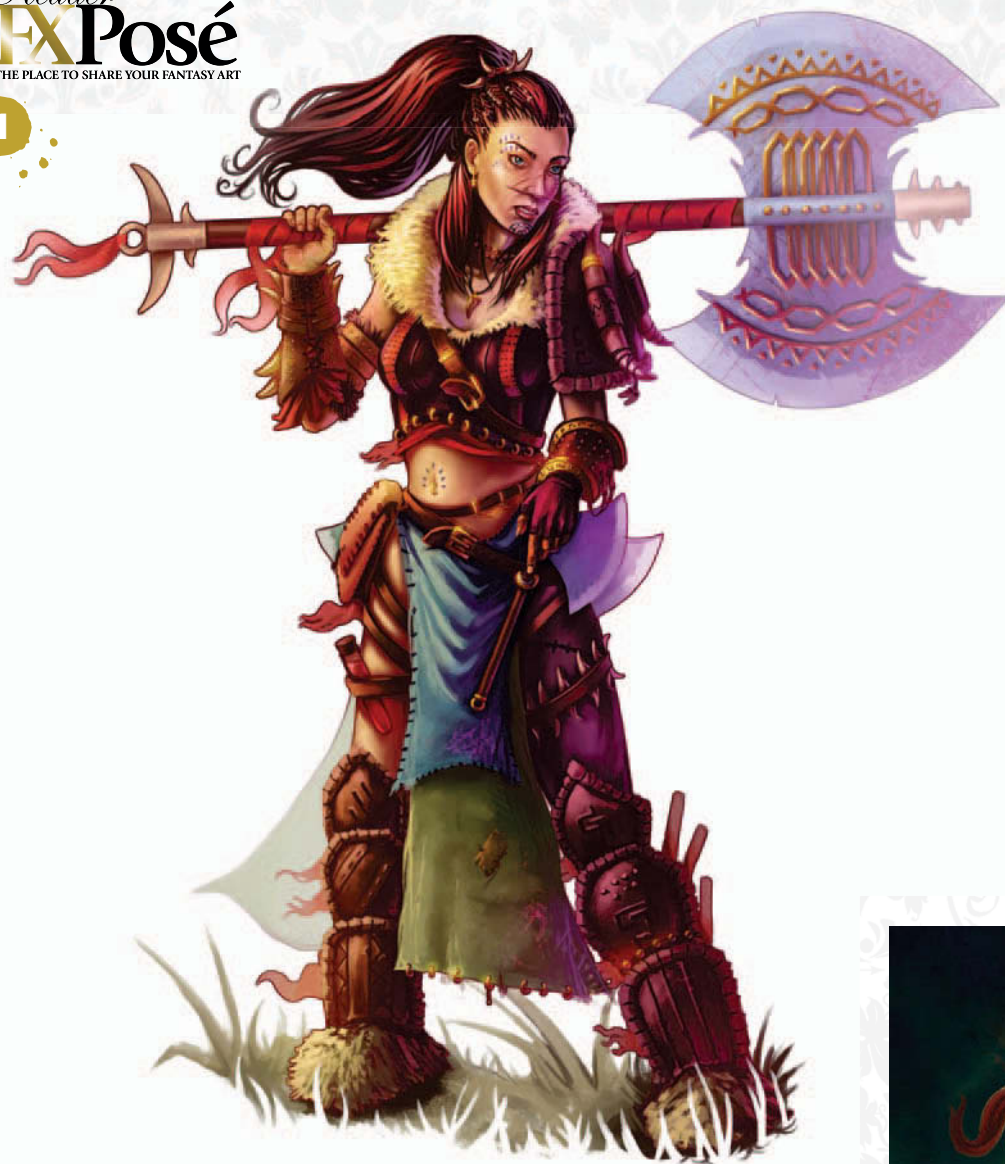
Surprise. The tumultuous clouds rumble menacingly across the painting, hovering over the calm waves, yet hinting at some form of trouble ahead for the beached whale."

Claire Howlett,
Editor



3

1



Evgeny Bakulin

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MEDIA: Photoshop



Evgeny managed to get an early break in the videogames industry while balancing his art studies with working as a 3D artist.

"After a few years of working in 3D, I shifted to becoming a 2D artist, as I felt it was closer to me," he says. "I started to attend evening courses in classical techniques while also studying digital painting."

All that extra work paid off, as he now works as a full time illustrator and concept artist, also taking commissions on the side. "When it comes to art, I've always been drawn to romanticism. I've always liked thought-provoking imagery and dramatic stories."

2



3



1 BARBARIAN "This is a portrait of my wife! I wanted to create a character that portrayed the savagery of the Barbarians, but who also had a lot of charm and beauty."

2 GOBLINS: "This was created for a CCG Berserk contest. Goblins are always interesting to paint. You can always get a sense of their mischief, no matter what."

3 BEAST "This character was drawn in a weekly art contest. I decided to give him a bit of an Indian heritage, like the Rakshas spirit in Hindu mythology."

1



Andrea Femerstrand

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MEDIA: Photoshop



We featured Andrea back in issue 62, but she feels her skills have grown so much since then she wanted to bring us up to speed. She's currently working part time as a concept artist at an online games company and as a freelancer for HarperCollins and Kamratposten.

"I've been painting digitally since I first discovered Photoshop when I was 14, and got totally hooked from there. I started to take it more seriously in my twenties, and tried to develop my digital skills as much as possible. Just like everyone else, I try to sketch and draw everyday. It's always been my number one obsession!"

2



IMAGINEFX CRIT



"Andrea's cat spoof of The Hobbit is purrrrfect. I love how the warm colouring of the cat really pushes him forward on the cool coloured background. The eye and hair details really set the persona of the character. I would love to see this as animation."

Daniel Vincent,
Art Editor

1 THE DONUT "This is just something really silly and spontaneous. I had a lot of fun painting this one!"

2 THE CAT HOBBIT "I was lurking around on the internet - just an ordinary day. Some people were posting about The Hobbit, and I looked over at our two sleepy cats next to me, and something suddenly clicked. Rosso and Java - they were just perfect for this!"

Beñat Olea Irureta

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MEDIA: Photoshop



If you're a keen follower of Hysterical Minds, there's a chance that you may have become acquainted with Beñat's intriguing blend of whimsical fantasy and playful horror.

"I see my work as a mix of darkness and beauty, but always with a touch of innocence," he says. "I love creating magical and quirky worlds with characters that are capable of touching the viewer and transporting them into their strange existence."

Beñat studied Fine Arts with Graphic and Web Design, and currently works as a freelance illustrator, primarily in the children's market (although toning down the horror accordingly). "I'm inspired by growing up with comics, videogames, animation and horror films, and all these together really influence my style."

IMAGINEFX CRIT



"The dark and whimsical design of Beñat's art can't fail to engage you, especially when he plays with composition in My Last Breath. I particularly love the wide-eyed owl's energy as it's released."

Ian Dean,
Associate Editor



1 DEADLICIOUS! "Illustration for The Zombook, an enormous art compilation about zombies by Allan Graves. 'Cos pin-up girls rock!"

2 MY LAST BREATH "Created for Twisted Essence, the ninth Hysterical Minds exhibition. We had to avoid using a central composition, and I wanted to represent the last hope of someone with the power to create life."

3 FROZEN HEART "Created for Substantia, the twelfth Hysterical Minds exhibition. The challenge was to create a freezing environment."



ARTIST NEWS, SOFTWARE & EVENTS

ImagineNation

AT THE CORE OF THE FANTASY ART COMMUNITY

THE SANDMAN OVERTURE

1

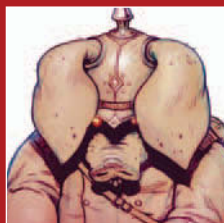
Original cover artist
Dave McKean is also
bringing his intimate
knowledge of The
Sandman to the
new project.





GOT AN INKLING?

There were some fantastic entries to our online sketch challenge and four lucky readers earned themselves Wacom Inkling for their inspired work. **Page 19**



THIS LITTLE PIGGY...

Ex Darksiders artists have made art for Substrata, including this menacing swine you probably wouldn't be tempted to recite nursery rhymes to. **Page 21**



GAME OF THRONES

With a Gothic throne (we want!) as the striking centerpiece, Anne Stokes shares her creative space with two other artists – in the Tower of Art. **Page 22**

Re-enter Sandman

Wildest dreams Neil Gaiman's shape-shifting protagonist is back – so what can we expect from the return of The Sandman?

The mid- to late-80s are considered a real turning point for graphic novels and their acceptance by the mainstream media.

Alan Moore's *Watchmen* turned typical superheroes into losers and fantasists, Frank Miller's *The Dark Knight Returns* gave Batman a dark and brooding twist and, perhaps most importantly of all, Neil Gaiman's *The Sandman* proved that



comics could tell a proper, allegorical story.

While *The Dark Knight Returns* informed Christopher Nolan's cinematic visions of

Gotham, and *Watchmen* was given a full-bodied film adaptation and prequel comic book series, *The Sandman* has sat – much like its titular character – imprisoned and unloved. Until now that is, with the announcement that Neil is to return to the series with a prequel, *The Sandman: Overture*, just in time for the original's 25th birthday.



"What did you most like in this story to depict?" we asked JH. "Everything," he said.

“The anniversary was a huge part of why I wanted to come back and do another one”

"The anniversary was a huge part of why I wanted to come back and do another Sandman story," says Neil. "Twenty-five years is huge in the lifetime of a comic. I grew up reading comics, and the high point for me would have been 1973, 74, 75. The idea back then that a comic that started in the 40s would still be relevant and exciting years later would have been unthinkable."

Overture will tell the story of how the Sandman found himself in such a sticky wicket in the original. If you haven't read it (for shame!), the story opens with the mysterious and supernaturally powered Sandman captured by an occultist who seeks immortality. What we don't know is why it was so easy to capture this all-powerful character, and why he was so

JH's first page of the first issue – a brilliant illustration of what's to come.



INDUSTRY INSIGHT

STEVE RUDE

Reviving classics isn't new, says the Before Watchmen artist

What was the biggest challenge you faced in rebooting something so popular?

The challenge, as I saw it, was simply to do a good job and get the completed pages in on time. I worked eight days straight on completing the painted cover (some of which got cropped due to the format they employed), and 48 straight days to finish the inside art, which for me included drawing, inking and lettering. An amazing, exhilarating and exhausting marathon of work for sure!

How did you approach the art? Did you consciously try to ape Dave Gibbons' style or use 1986-era techniques?

I approached the art with a mind for the late 1940s and 50s. A lot of period research was necessary throughout every page of the entire 24 page book, including clothing, buildings, cars, and every aspect of daily life during that time.

In what ways do you think Before Watchmen would have been different had Alan Moore been on board?

I'm not sure, since to my knowledge Mr Moore turned down any involvement with the *Watchmen* revival project.

Watchmen and The Sandman are considered classics of the genre – what do you think it is about these titles that has made them stand the test of time?

I recall reading the books when they came out, but not much more. I'm sure there was far greater enthusiasm from people other than myself at the time – and of course I know its popularity has thrived for several decades since its groundbreaking release.



Steve is working on the next *Nexus*, for *Dark Horse Presents*, and leading a class in figure painting in Arizona.

www.steverude.com

Continued from previous page...



We're looking forward to seeing more images like this dream-like painting of The Sandman.

worn out. According to Neil: "There are so many things that we never found out. And I knew them all."

Unlike the original series, which flitted between artists and styles, Neil is working with a single illustrator for Overture - Promethea and Desolation Jones's JH Williams III. Their



paths crossed years ago at San Diego Comic-Con. Neil had just stepped out of a

cab and was talking to others. "I very rudely inserted myself into the group, introducing myself and saying something stupidly gushing I'm sure," says JH. "That I was the artist on Promethea, and if he ever wished to work on something with me, I would love to draw a story of his."

A few years later JH received an email from Vertigo spelling out the new Sandman project. "Neil had never forgotten how much it clearly would mean to me to draw a story for him. And he sweetly still says that I wasn't rude all those years ago."

Despite JH's unabashed enthusiasm for working with Neil, he's aware he's taking on a mighty title. "It is quite different for me than coming onto something like, say, Batman or another well-known character," he says. "Sandman was so much beyond those things, so highly revered, not just by myself, but legions of readers. I just have to do the best work I can, and hope it's enough."

Having explored sci-fi in her fan art, Mélanie used her new techniques to paint this stunning sci-fi painting.



Past and future secret

Fan art How a love of Mass Effect helped Mélanie Delon step outside her artistic comfort zone – and in doing so develop her portfolio

Fan art gets a bad reputation, but professional artist Mélanie Delon uses her love of video game Mass Effect to broaden her skill set.



"It's a lot of fun and often quite different from what I usually do, so it's really refreshing and challenging," says Mélanie, who's better known for her beautiful and delicate female portraits than hard sci-fi. "I don't produce a lot of fan art – indeed, Shepard is my second one. It may sound crazy, but after finishing the game I needed to say goodbye to this awesome character, and painting her was the best way I found."

Focusing on drawing out key characteristics of the game's lead character, Mélanie's painting captures the Shepard's determination as well as a nostalgic yearning for the character's struggle. "It was important to have this tragic feeling in her eyes," confirms the artist.

With her fan art piece complete, Mélanie has fallen in love with sci-fi. "I love painting beautiful gowns," explains the artist. "But creating space suits, lens flare, and painting a crazy Milky Way is just so cool!"

Which all goes to prove that sometimes it pays to step outside your comfort zone. You can see more of Mélanie's art at www.melaniedelon.com.

Epic art on a small scale

Mini Marvels Marcio Takara has a unique way to warm up for work



Looking for a way to warm up every day before the hard graft of drawing comics for a living, artist Marcio Takara came up with the idea of rendering his favourite characters from comics, video games and movies in a miniature style.

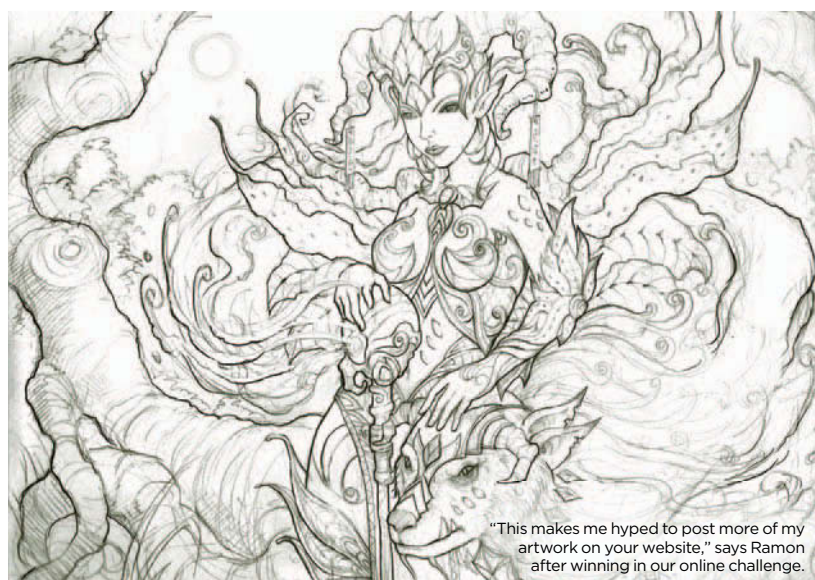
"The idea was for me to have an excuse to draw as many different characters as I could," says Marcio. "They're usually super fast to finish. But most of all, it was a great way to interact with fans online."

Each tiny portrait – about four-inches tall on paper – takes Marcio between 10 and 20 minutes to complete. He drafts them using pencil and ink before adding colour in Photoshop.

With 100 characters already drawn, Marcio admits it was hard keeping track of who was drawn. "After a while I was just drawing whatever came to my mind at the moment. Basically characters I like," admits the obsessed artist, who has now downed tools. "I told myself that I would never go back to them, but who knows..."

See more of Marcio's work at www.bit.ly/marcioart.





"This makes me hyped to post more of my artwork on your website," says Ramon after winning in our online challenge.



Mat's depiction of a space marine reclining with a cocktail caught our eye.

Inkling winners drawn

Daring doodles Did you win an Inkling? We reveal the lucky winners of our online sketch challenge...

Visitors to ImagineFX.com have been challenged to enter our Inkling weekly sketch jam competition, with the chance to win a Wacom Inkling. After being deluged with some amazing entries we've managed to choose four lucky winners, one from each of our categories.

In the Summertime in Middle-earth



category Lucie Hendrychova was chosen for her light touch and sense of fun, as she depicts Treebeard in playful mood by the river with Shire folk. "He likes their laughter and after the bathing, when little Hobbits are drying up on his branches, he starts a storytelling with 'A long looong time ago...'" embellishes Lucie.



"I wish I was there myself." In the Forest Nymph category Ramon Puasa Jr's wispy pen and paper sketch caught our eye. "When I think

about nymphs they should look really beautiful, as if they can bewitch whoever sees them," explains Ramon. "I really wanted my character sketch to have an ornate, very detailed outfit made of wood, leaves and flowers rather than a normal, naked figure with a leaf and twigs headdress."

Over in the Fantasy Festival Band section we chose Pascal Heinzelmann's inventive



take on the theme; many creatures scurry around a giant instrument carved from a tree. "I feel honoured," says Pascal at the news. "Being at the beginning of my career, it's very motivating to win a sketch competition."

Finally, we're pleased to reveal Mat Edwards won an Inkling for his Shore Leave sketch, chosen for its attention to detail and fantastically posed character.

Congratulations to all our winners and thanks to everyone for entering!



"I just did the opposite of a one-man band - many creatures playing one giant instrument," quips Inkling winner Pascal.



"One of my strongest childhood memories is of outdoor swimming, sunshine and tree shadows," says Lucie.

FRESH PAINT

Your art news that's grabbed our attention



Manuel Morgado

f "A naughty Snow White meets the Wizard of Oz..."
www.bit.ly/ifx-m-morgado



Noriyuki Kubo (@EISAKUSAKU)

t "Finished with highlights and details in white coloured pencil."
www.bit.ly/ifx-eisakusaku



Simon Sherry

t "So I figured, why not do this..."
www.bit.ly/ifx-simonsberry



Just finished something you want us to shout about? Send it our way on Twitter (@imaginefx), or find us on Facebook!



Hatboy
by Vaughn Pinpin



Fantasy talk Explaining the inexplicable
"Different types of strangeness can seem threatening, graceful, vulnerable, sophisticated, or primitive without being overt."

Keith Thompson attempts to define the essence of strangeness in an alien. Gracile? Wow! Page 64

Enter the CAVE

Cave of creativity Escape the winter weather and mix your passions at Autodesk's unique Las Vegas conference

If you want to brush up on your art skills and get inspired by talks from a roster of exciting speakers that includes Liam Sharp, Neil Gaiman and Lorne Lanning, then Autodesk's CAVE conference should already be in your diary. And if it's not, put it in there right now. Starting on 2 December at the Venetian Hotel in Las Vegas, CAVE aims to bridge the gap between design and fine art, fashion and sci-fi concepts.

"This new conference provides a new platform for creative professionals from all walks of life to bathe in the majesty of imagination," explains Autodesk's Chris Cheung of this interesting event. "Everyone can benefit from a major injection of knowledge and inspiration," he adds, excitedly, "mixing talent from cross-disciplines, the legendary veterans and the young emerging professionals is what CAVE Conference is about!"

The show will mix masterclass tutorials with lectures and informal meet and greets, so you can brush up on your Maya and

SketchBook Pro skills while picking up tips from Syd Mead and Scott Robertson over a coffee. And continuing the show's eclectic mix, even the legendary John Cleese will be on hand to inspire you.

"We're sculpting the program to expose a cross-section of ideas," explains Chris. "Our hope is that attendees will get that Wow! moment." Start planning your Wow! moment now by visiting www.autodeskcave.com.

Terry! Whitlatch will be among the keynote speakers and teachers that will pool creatives from the arts, film, games and book industries.





© Helen Rusovich

Our Colour and Light cover artist Helen Rusovich returns for another colour-themed character study.

The darkest kind of fantasy

Open world Introducing Substrata, the hypothetical video game from the creative visionaries of Darksiders and beyond

Earlier this year, the news of the closure of Vigil Games – the studio behind the Darksiders franchise – was a major blow. But as the saying goes, as one door closes, another opens.

As a bid to reunite former Vigil artists, Paul Richards decided to launch an open-submission art book based on Substrata, a hypothetical dark fantasy game in the early stages of pre-production. "The group is already steeped in dark fantasy, so this was the best way to get them excited," says Paul, who wanted the project to enable artists to experiment with twisted concepts that would scare conventional publishers. "We wanted all of the things you're not supposed to do, with an open-ended design brief where people could choose from an array of game-driven content. Some decided to deliver on one aspect, while others conducted a more thorough exploration of their own universe."

Substrata is expected to be released early to mid-2014. Keep checking www.autodestruct.com for more.



Although the brief was open ended, Paul's own version of Substrata revolved around an afterlife for plants.

We'd love to see these quirky creatures by Peter Boehme realised in a finished game.



© Peter Boehme



+deviantWATCH

Here are some of the many gems we found on the pages of deviantART...



Dibujante-nocturno

www.bit.ly/ifx-dnocturno

If you're into your dark fantasy, you should definitely take a look at the macabre works of Spanish artist Francisco Garcés. Along with many great digital pieces, we love his atmospheric ink drawings of unsavoury creatures and foreboding knights - there's plenty to fill your nightmares with.



Zephyrhant

www.zephyrhant.deviantart.com

Along with this rather awesome Game of Thrones fan piece, there are many gorgeous images to be found in this elegant collection. There's a hint of Ayami Kojima in Zephyrhant's Gothic style, with elaborate costumes, striking eyes and muted colours in abundance. You won't be disappointed.



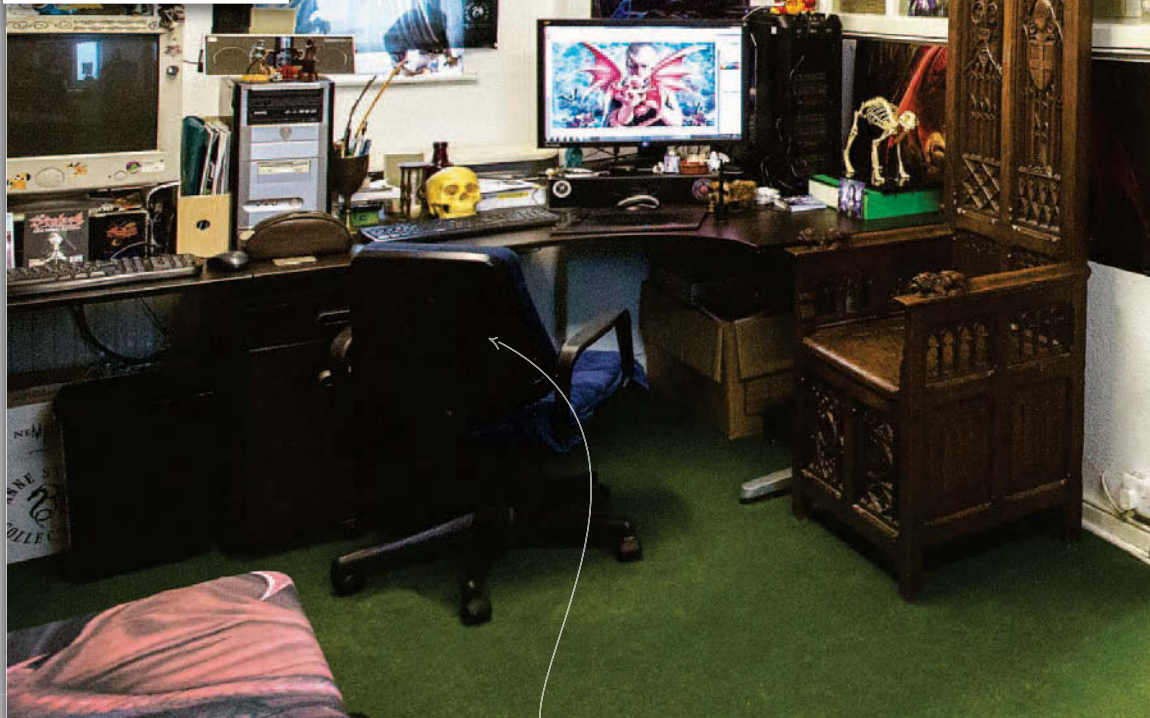
nosaj7541

www.nosaj7541.deviantart.com

Now here's one to watch for the future: nosaj7541 may only be a mere 17 years old, but he's certainly well on his way to developing a distinctive style of his own. Loose painting styles are all the rage, but we haven't seen many as delicate and authentically impressionistic as we see here.



The Tower of Art with Geof, John and myself standing in front of it.



I went to China last year to visit a sculpture company that I work with. It was an amazing experience to see such a different culture. I got this cute soft toy dragon on my travels, and he now lives on top of my computer.



This old chair may look a little tired, but is just the right height for me. I have had neck and back problems, and once I found a comfortable setup I have been keen to stick with it. The right posture and monitor height are very important to avoid such issues.

Anne Stokes

Black tower Deep within the mysterious wilds of Yorkshire, legend speaks of an old tower, home to many dark creations...



I work in a place called The Tower of Art, which is in Leeds. I share this building with two other artists, John Woodward and Geof

Banyard. The building used to belong to a furniture manufacturer before we took it over, and is a great space to have.

The ground floor is a workshop, the middle floor holds several offices, and the

very top floor is an open-plan studio. John and Geof are both great company, and collectively we have made a unique and inspirational place to work.

I start my day with a cup of tea, usually followed by answering a barrage of emails. The way that I work is to concept and paint ranges of fantasy-themed artworks, which are then licensed to various different companies for use on their products. I work

Bibliothek.

The cabinets in my office are filled with product samples of sculptures and other items made from my designs.



The fabulous carved wooden Gothic throne used to be part of the furnishings of a church. Great for sitting in and planning what to do!

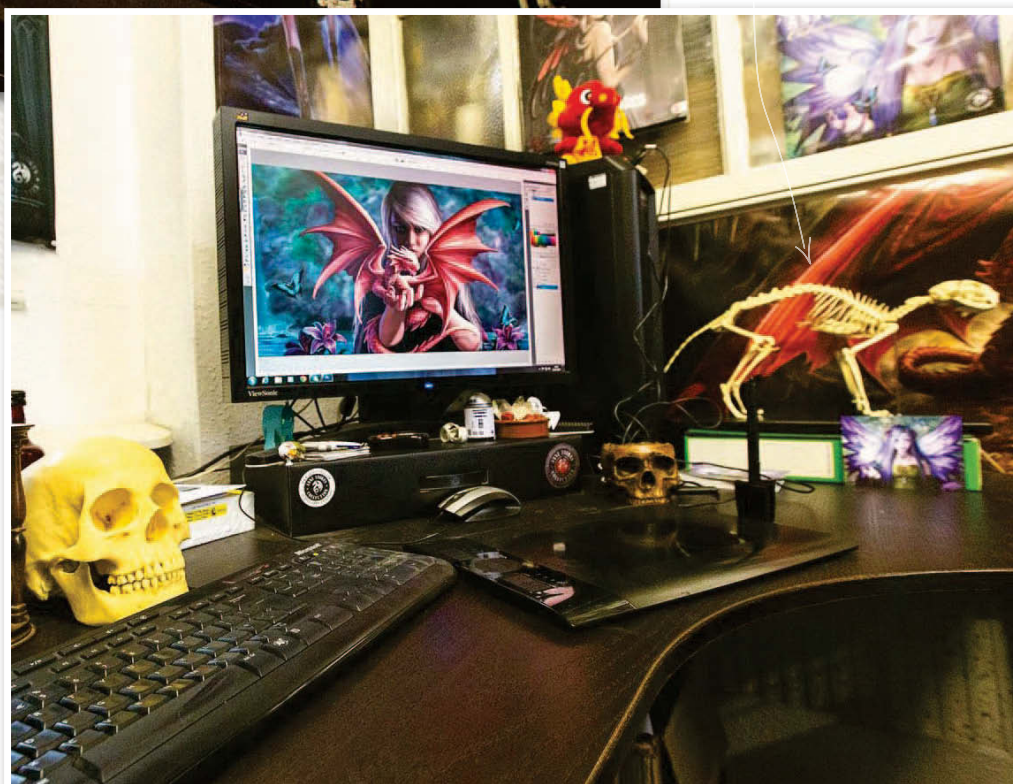
I have replica casts of a dog and cat skeleton, which are interesting to look at and great reference for anatomy. The basic structure of a cat can be especially useful when painting a dragon, albeit with a longer neck and wings.

with an art agency who deal with a lot of the contract and paperwork for me, although there are always enquiries and product approvals to deal with first thing.

Once the business side of things is taken care of, I can get down to the art. I have a fairly basic computer setup, using Photoshop with a Wacom graphics tablet to paint. I'm very used to my setup now, and you don't always need a lot of fancy equipment to produce good art.

The studio space we have upstairs is great for setting up reference photographs or for just getting a bit of a change of scene. It's great for doing a bit of sketching with pencil and paper. A real talking point of the studio is the Gothic throne, which was once part of an old church. I love this artefact and find it very handy for collecting my thoughts and planning future projects!

Anne has been a full time artist for over 15 years, and her artwork is licensed for a wide variety of merchandise, including T-shirts and posters. Visit www.annestokes.com for more.



Photographers: Neil Chapman @ Electricity Works



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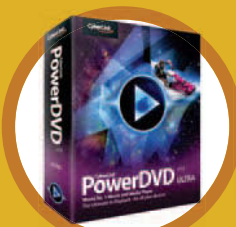
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Sony BDV-N590W home theatre system



Marin Palisades Trail 29er Mountain Bike



X Rocker Rockster gaming chair



Phoenix iPad security case



Monster® iSport Victory In-Ear Headphones

Sigma SD1 D-SLR camera and lens

The Sigma SD1 packs a lot into its relatively small body. It sports a 46-megapixel Foveon X3 sensor, which helps you capture every little detail, and its 7.5cm LCD monitor makes your images look bright and crisp. It also offers exceptional image quality, and is especially good at low ISO. It's got a strong, weather-resistant magnesium-alloy body, comes complete with the Sigma 17-50mm OS Kit lens, and retails at £2,150.





Hauppauge HD PVR 2 GE Plus



Air Hogs Helix 4



Air Hogs Atmosphere



Bladez Bubble Blaster and Water Blaster RC helicopters



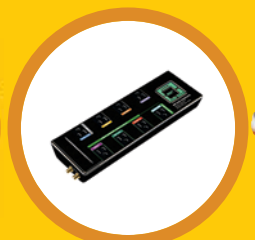
PURE Jongo S3 wireless music system



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Asics Gel Kayano trainers



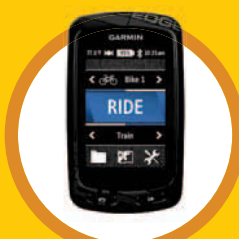
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Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



Contact the editor, **Claire Howlett**, on claire.howlett@futurenet.com or write to ImagineFX, Future Publishing, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW, UK



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Remember him

I'm a huge fan of your magazine. Could you guys please do an interview with Fred Augis, or have him do some kind of workshop? His work is amazing. He's a colleague of Aleks Briclot, who works at DONTNOD Entertainment – the company responsible for the game Remember Me. Anyway, here's a link to his gallery: www.fred-augis.cghub.com/images. His work is amazing. Thank you for taking the time to read this email from one of your fans.

D, via email

Claire replies Thanks so much for suggesting Fred – his work is indeed amazing. Look out for something from him in a forthcoming issue...

American girl

I'd like to submit my latest work done with SketchBook Pro. Attached you can find an image. Thanks for your attention.

Daide, via email



DID YOU MISS ISSUE 100?

We've still got a few copies, but you need to move fast! See page 78 for details on how to get hold of one.



This is Davide's painting, done in SketchBook Pro. Please keep sending your art in, readers – we love to see it.

Claire replies That's a very beautiful painting, Davide, thanks so much for sending this in.

Model interest

Since purchasing a recent copy of your magazine, Fantasy Art Essentials, I have a considerable interest in the person you featured on the cover. The cover model was alone and toting some sort of long axe and standing in front of a dormant relic of a tree. I am interested in this model's appearance and would gratefully appreciate you sending her this letter for consideration. I am trained in art from university and am considering some sculpture. I would appreciate any action you take in putting me in touch with the model in your magazine.

G Moore, England

Claire replies Thanks for your letter, G Moore. The beautiful cover art for Fantasy Art Essentials was created by the very talented Julie Bell. She would have chosen this model, and I don't know who it is. Julie sometimes uses herself as the model, but I don't think this is the case here. You can visit www.imaginistix.com for more beautiful art from Julie.

Issue 100 – your feedback

Chilling for the night, reading the 100th issue of your magazine and taking the tips and advice in like a sponge in prep for my degree and loving every second. Thanks ImagineFX. My aim is to get onto that top 100 artists list! Wahooooooooo!

Johanson Al, via Facebook

Got my 100th issue of @imaginfex today. Taken back a bit by the amount of content – great work guys 'n' girls! Good to see Claire back too.

@GerBeeDee, Twitter

Terrific 100th issue. Very inspirational and great to see the top 100 fave artists supplement.

Emlyn Boyle, via Facebook

Happy anniversary, ImagineFX staff! Thanks so much for your continued awesome efforts in putting out one of the absolute best art publications available. Here's to another 100 issues!

Jonathan Richard Walters, via Facebook

Just got my subscriber's issue 100 in the post. Super

pleased, well done ImagineFX! Here's to the next 100 issues.

Kim Bowman, via Facebook

We asked on Twitter what your favourite ImagineFX cover is...

@imaginfex Gonna go with this sci-fi beauty! #imaginfex100

@i_king



@imaginfex The Adi Granov - Cyclops and Jean Grey one! Watching the tutorial was the bomb!

@awkwarddesigner



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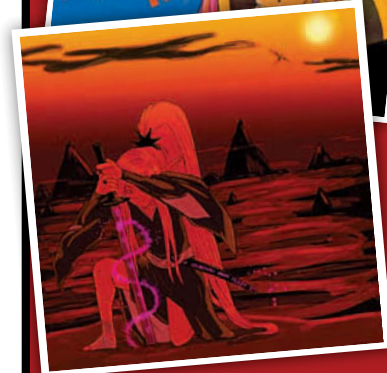
Magical gathering

I just wanted to tell you guys that the article on Magic: The Gathering artwork [issue 99] was phenomenal! It was time for those awesome artists to get a feature and I was instantly wanting to buy their art book.

Also, your workshops are top notch. A couple of years back I was kind of hesitant to get more into digital art, but I got the anime/manga magazine (issue 4!) and I was instantly trying to do all the tutorials! Attached are a couple of pics I've done recently using those workshops. Now my mother gets me a subscription to ImagineFX every year for Christmas. Best present ever.

Thanks – keep being awesome!
Brittany Foltz, via email

Claire replies Brittany, I agree – the Magic: The Gathering feature was a real treat to our eyeballs. There was just an embarrassingly huge level of art skill on show wasn't there? Thanks for sending in your paintings, too. We love them.



Brittany loved our Magic: The Gathering feature – and she sent some of her art in.

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The
FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART
ImagineFX
panel

Mark Molnar
 Mark is a concept and visual development artist. He's busy doing freelance work for international film, game and animation companies.
www.markmolnar.com

Manon Delacroix
 Manon is a busy freelance illustrator who specialises in high fantasy, horror and portraiture. Werewolves are her favourite.
www.artbymanon.com

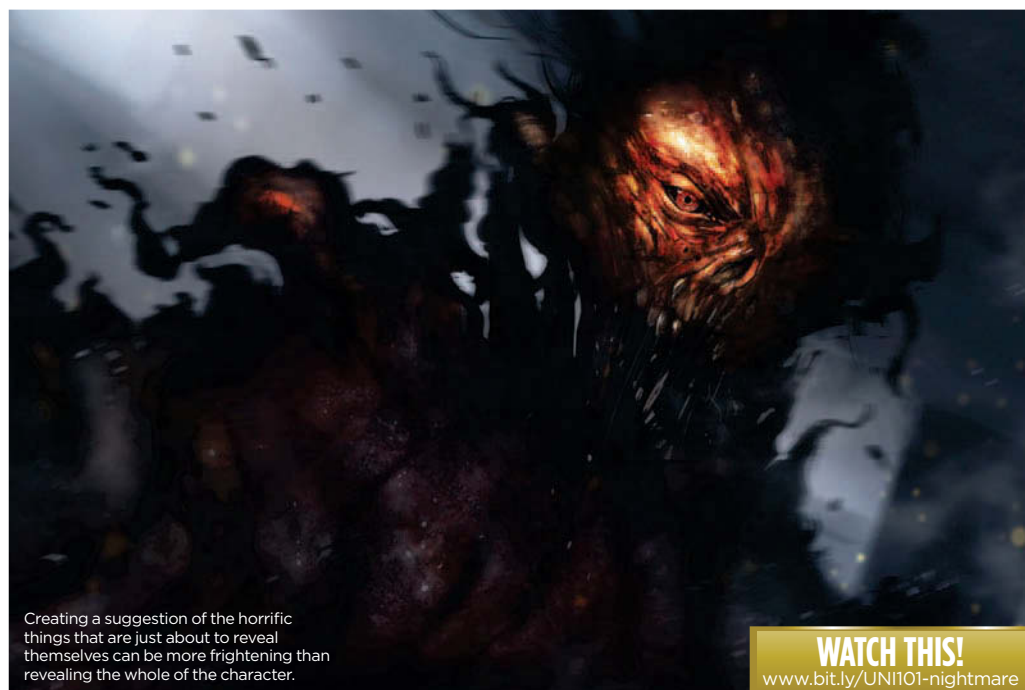
Nick Harris
 Gloucestershire-based Nick went digital in 2000 after 18 years working with traditional methods. He works mainly on children's illustrations.
www.nickillus.com

Charlie Bowater
 Charlie lives in the north east of England. She works as a concept artist for Atomhawk by day and is a doodler of everything else by night.
www.charliebowater.wordpress.com

John Staub
 John is an illustrator and concept designer based in the Bay Area who is currently specialising in the games and publications field.
www.dustsplat.blogspot.com

Tony Foti
 Tony is a US freelance illustrator who contributes to D&D and Fantasy Flight Games' Star Wars and The Lord of the Rings lines.
www.tonyfotiart.com

Francesco Lorenzetti
 Francesco is a concept artist at Atomhawk Design. He enjoys working in traditional media and often goes to life-drawing sessions.
www.bit.ly/ifx-francesco



Creating a suggestion of the horrific things that are just about to reveal themselves can be more frightening than revealing the whole of the character.

WATCH THIS!
www.bit.ly/UNI101-nightmare

Question

How can I give a scene the feel of a nightmare by using shadows and suggestion?

Austen Tassletine, England

Answer

Mark replies



Painting a nightmare or a horror scene is not necessarily about showing horrific things in a blatant and obvious way. If we go back to the classic horror movies or to the films of old masters like Hitchcock, we can see that what they're doing is more playing with the mind and imagination of the viewer – in lesser movies the suspense is blown as soon as you see the man in the rubber suit. The trick is still the same today: to paint a really frightening image we should only suggest most of the horrors we would like to show.

In this case I wanted to depict a nightmare where we can't really decide whether we are sleeping or we are awake. All of us know this state, where the

shadows of the moving curtains cast by the eerie moonlight could easily turn into weird monsters sneaking into our room.

I roughly painted in the silhouette of the creature, and I knew from the very beginning that I wanted to show only part of its face. With every aspect of the image creating only one clear focal point – the amount of detail, composition, contrast, saturation – I was able to focus the eye on just a small part of the image, which could hint at the rest of the scene.

I consciously placed the 'camera' very close to the viewer, and also added some cinematic effects as the last step. This creates the feeling that we are at the very moment before the horrific action begins – or hopefully just before waking up...

Step-by-step: Use suggestion to increase the fear



1 I blocked in the main silhouette of the monster first and established the overall colour scheme of the illustration. I wanted to use a slightly tilted camera angle to add more dynamism to the scene.



2 Although the lighting would suggest a more bluish highlight, I consciously used warmer colours for the creature's face. This helped to create a much stronger focal point with the strong colour contrast of the saturated yellows and reds, compared to the desaturated blues and greys in the background.



3 To achieve more visual noise and details in the foreground I applied photo textures to the creature. The final step was to add extra elements like the door frame at the back to support the story, then integrated the textures into the painting and added some effects to add more atmosphere to the image.

Question

I need some help with painting blood-splattered fur, suggesting that the blood has congealed.

Felix Cortez, US



WATCH THIS!
www.bit.ly/UNI101-fur

Good reference and simple techniques will give your fantasy creature a sense of realism.

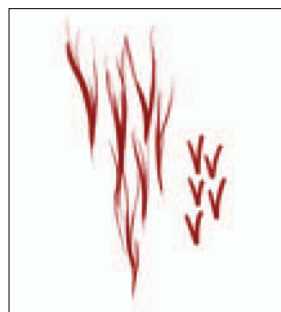
Answer Manon replies



The first thing for anything based in real life, like blood, is that you want lots and lots of photo reference. With things like blood spatter though, you need to be very careful what you enter as your Google search terms or you might not like what you find! My most useful search term was "Lion bloody face" – animals eating their prey are a great source of gore. (You might also get a lot of hits for anti-fur campaigns, but they get a bit nastier and less fun to look at.)

Blood tends to drip off fur in much the same way water does off an animal with a greasy coat – it doesn't necessarily just soak it through.

For the blood dripping from long fur, imagine the clumps of fur are V-shaped and then, using a very light brush stroke with light pressure, begin to shape your bloody fur.



I made my creature white so that I could illustrate the effect. I used a new layer and set that layer to Multiply. I then chose a deep rich red and a hard round brush with 85 per cent Opacity and 70 per cent Flow. In the Brush panel, I clicked Transfer and selected Pen Pressure (you can play around with that until you're comfortable), then under Shape Dynamics set a small Minimum Diameter. Now you're ready to paint in your bloody fur. Make sure the fur hangs off the animal – the blood will weigh it down and pull it toward the ground. Another Multiply layer may be needed on top for more intensity.

Artist's secret

CONTRAST AND VARIATION

Even if you're drawing something really gruesome, sometimes it will make it much more disturbing if you pair the gruesome with something actually quite cute. This sort of contrast is very powerful and can make the viewer uncomfortable.

Question

Got any tips for painting a militaristic animal?

Gemma Hastings, Scotland

Answer

Nick replies



There have been all manner of representations of anthropomorphic animals, in both illustration and more recently cinema, most particularly when using CG for amazingly convincing effects over the past few years. The original Planet of the Apes film and Tim Burton's recent re-imagining offer great examples that relate directly to this question.

Whatever the animal, you have to decide how humanised to make it. It needs to fit in with the tone of your tale or image. It's a common convention to have animals walk on two legs that really don't in real life. This requires compromising their anatomy. Animal Farm (traditional animation, 1954) has a combination of bipedal clothed and quadrupedal unclothed animals, but that goes with the tale. The armoured GC bears in The Golden Compass (2007) offer a nice example of how naturalistic and credible warrior animals can be. Obviously, my example here is far from photorealistic. Study images, film and reference books about the relative anatomy if you can get hold of them. Better still, try to study the live critter if that's feasible.

If you stand your creature up, try to convey the masses to reflect that you understand the anatomy of the real thing.



Question

What should I consider when composing an epic landscape?

George Kessler, US

Use aerial or atmospheric perspective to show the differences between the scale of the objects.

WATCH THIS!

www.bit.ly/UNI101-epic



Answer

Mark replies

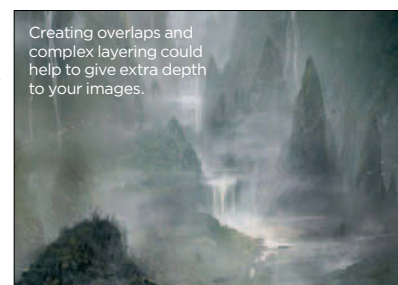


The key for a successful landscape painting is to handle the perspective right, and to have a pleasing variation in terms of rhythm and scale between objects.

A very effective technique is to focus only on silhouettes first and create lots of space segments (an array of mountains in this case) that are becoming lighter towards the horizon. After I blocked in the main shapes at the thumbnail stage I only had to add more details inside them and break up the space in between to achieve more depth.

The other thing you may want to try is to play with the size of the objects from the very small size through to the gigantic. When using vertical objects that are bigger than our canvas we can create an unusual feeling, because it is relatively rare that we

Creating overlaps and complex layering could help to give extra depth to your images.



cannot see the top of a mountain or building in real life. So by placing our horizon line closer to the bottom of the image we can create even more space for these massive objects.

It's important to add a point of reference, as without that the viewer won't be able to feel the actual size of things. The best method is to use an object that should be easily recognisable and has a definable size.

Question

Have you got any ideas for designing futuristic hairstyles for a game I'm creating?

Phil Thompson, US

Answer

John replies



Whenever the word futuristic comes to mind, I think of shapes that are simple, sleek and efficient. If these design elements can show through in the overall look then I think a convincing, futuristic hairstyle can be created. One thing I do is to look at fashion related media. By doing so I can get a good idea of what are the most modern and trendy styles.

Playing around with a variety of overall shapes can really get the ideas flowing. The key is to keep these shapes simple: they can even be geometric in design.



Simple crisp geometrical shapes offer a hint that these hairdos might come from the future.

Adding unnatural colours and bright, eye-catching shades is another element that could give your hair design that futuristic feel. I usually think of those bright neon and saturated colours that you would find in a club or bar. For me, colours that cannot be found in the natural world work best.

Artist's secret

STARTING IN COLOUR

Working in monochrome then colouring afterwards is a popular process. However for this piece I did the reverse. Working in full colour and then adjusting the Vibrance in PhotoPlus enables me to be more adventurous, and helps me deliver richer results to a muted piece.



As well as making the animal itself work, the choice of outfit and weapons is important. These sketches look more like a train guard than a soldier.

Question What are the best brushes for painting skin?

Rakim Aiko, Japan

Answer Charlie replies



I think this all comes down to finding which method works the best for you.

Plenty of artists have a specific set of brushes they use for skin. I tend to use very few brushes and keep things pretty simple. My favourite brush types tend to be hard edged and have a little bit of texture to them. I find these kinds of brushes to be very diverse and I can use them to paint pretty much anything: fabric, hair, and specifically here, skin. One brush I would absolutely avoid though is an Airbrush type.

It might be easy to fall into the trap of painting perfectly smooth porcelain skin, but it's very unrealistic and can easily suck the life out of any character. You'll end up with something very plastic looking. Using something with a bit of texture helps to emulate the skin's natural texture and imperfections. Even if the texture is really subtle, it adds to the end result. It also helps with painting the planes of the face.

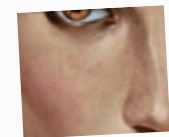
My preference is to paint in the main bulk of the face and not worry too much about detailing anything too early, like trying to paint individual pores for instance. As long as I'm using a hard-edged brush, the general texture will come naturally. I then like to add in final textures towards the end.



At this point I've blocked in all the main features and contours of the face, and then I'm going to add in a few subtle textures.

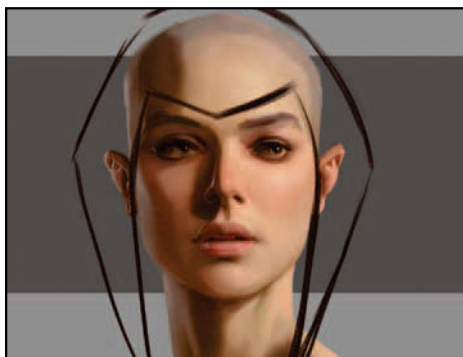
Artist's secret

A LITTLE MORE TEXTURE

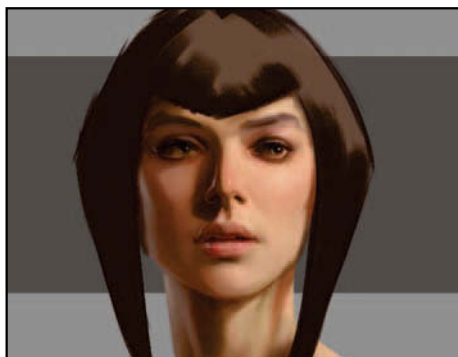


Here I've used a speckled brush on an Overlay layer and set it to around 10-20 per cent Opacity. The speckled texture is great for emulating either pores or freckles without hand painting layers of dots. The randomness also helps it to look a little more natural.

Step-by-step: Sorting your hair out



1 I'm using Photoshop CS6 to execute this demo. In this image I sketch out the overall design of the hairstyle. I keep it to a very simple shape to give it that modern feel. Here I have chosen a diamond type shape that's going to govern the overall design.



2 I block in the light and shadow areas of the hair. I have chosen a natural brown hair colour for this particular tonsorial design. It is important not to get caught up in painting the individual strands of hair at this point and focus on blocking in the large areas.



WATCH THIS!

www.bit.ly/UNI101-hair

3 I add the lighter values and colours to the hair and begin rendering in detail, slowly working on smaller areas until I begin painting in individual hairs. Even though I start rendering out details, I still make sure I don't break that overall diamond shape I established at the start.

Question

How can you paint trees and foliage without it seeming flat on the screen?

Rasheen Anderson, Brazil



Answer

Tony replies



I don't mean to sound like a broken record, but the key to making anything three-dimensional is descriptive lighting. When trying to understand form, the brain focuses on the relationships between light and shadow in whatever it is that you're looking at. With this in mind, painting trees and foliage with depth is about understanding the shape of what you're painting and then describing that shape with light – or the lack of it.

Choose a time of day and camera angle for the scene that have all the elements that you're looking for, and make sure you're closely using reference if any of this is new to you. Hopefully there's a location you can get to nearby that has some trees that you can take pictures of to use as reference. But if not, I'm pretty sure that the internet will have a few pictures of them that you could use! 'The Golden Hour' is a phrase you hear a lot in illustration, photography and cinematography. It refers to the first hour of sunrise and the last before sunset, when a

As usual, you want to start with a large brush and decrease size as you move into detail. Especially when painting trees, it's important to alternate between simple and complex areas.

low-hanging sun hits the planet with a strong side light. It's used extensively in all three fields, partially because that side light casts long, descriptive shadows.

Understanding the type of tree that you are painting, its trunk, its bark, and the shape of the leaves is all going to help tell the story as well.

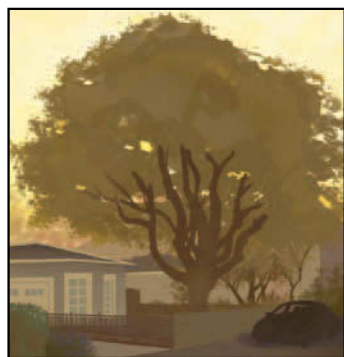


Artist's secret

PUT COLOUR IN YOUR LIGHT

Almost all light has a colour tint to it, so keep that in mind whenever you are painting an illuminated area. The shadows are influenced by any secondary light sources, and tend to be complementary to the colour of the light.

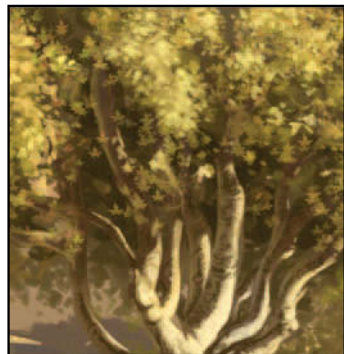
Step-by-step: Understanding the relationship between light and shade



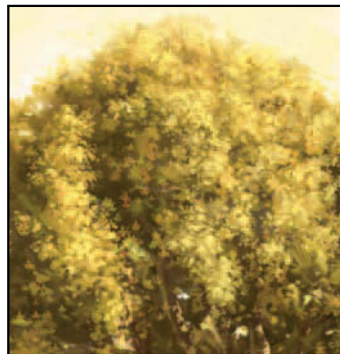
- 1 Pay careful attention to silhouettes. A big part of how our brains recognise objects is by their outline, and the silhouette of a tree speaks volumes about what sort of tree it is. The texture and gesture of each plant is greatly influenced by its two dimensional shape. Using different sized brushes with different tip shapes help distinguish contrasting edges.



- 2 Now that the shadows are in place, it's time to start building up the light. Pay close attention to the direction of the light, and how reflective the surface of any given object may be. The way that the light hits it is what defines a tree's volume. If it helps, imagine that the light source is a shower head, and everywhere the water touches is where the light shows up.



- 3 With the shadow and light in place, the picture should start to take shape. The relationship between the two is central to the composition, so don't proceed until you're happy. Once everything begins to feel right we can move into more detail by adding in the darkest part of the shadows. Contrast tends to be softer in low-lit areas, so rendering isn't as much of an issue.



- 4 Edges are an often-overlooked aspect of painting for newcomers, but considering your transitions will help bring out the depth in your image. If an edge feels too harsh, soften it. If transitions are too soft, try defining the edges more clearly. You can soften or sharpen with the Smudge tool, by changing the opacity, or with strict control of colour and value.

Question

How can I depict a sense of weightlessness in a character?

Mark Andrew Maguire, England

I think this character is pretty serene-looking, so I've tried to keep the weightless aspect of the painting fairly subtle, and possibly something you notice secondarily.



Answer

Charlie replies



I think the easiest answer to this is to make everything look as though it's floating! That answer obviously covers a lot of ground, and there's going to be a lot of variation in how a character floats, their pose and the situation they're in – but it's a good starting point. My character, for example, is in a very relaxed pose, and so I want it to look as though she's floating serenely. So everything you can see here is floating, but in a subtle way.

It's difficult to depict weightlessness through a character's body alone, but if you utilise the details like hair, clothing and accessories, it gets a whole lot easier. These are the details where you can really illustrate the lack of gravity – have a character's hair or clothing floating around them, for instance. Just remember to keep things



Don't forget the details! Her earrings are another opportunity to add in that floating feeling – a smaller detail to help support the bigger idea.

uniform and paint everything with that sense of weightlessness – if her hair is floating and her clothes aren't, for example, it's going to look weird. If you have a character in motion, remember to make sure things are floating and trailing in the same or similar directions.

Question

Should I draw loosely or always refine my sketches?

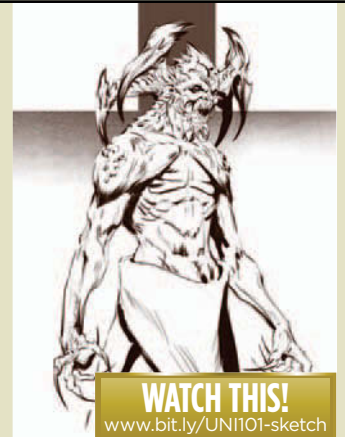
Brian Wokes, Australia

Answer

John replies



The decision to create a loose drawing versus a tight drawing is usually defined by the information you want your drawing to convey. If you want a lot of information with very accurate design and proportions and a lot of details and clear texture, then a tight drawing might be needed. If you want to capture the overall gesture and general silhouette of your character to get an overall feel for them, then something drawn more loosely that focuses on those aspects is what you go for. Usually when I have a character design figured out and want to know how the character looks when they are moving or expressing some sort of action, I resort to doing a lot quick and loose gestural sketches of the character doing things such as running or swinging their weapon.



This is a tight drawing that conveys a lot of specific information about the character, such as their expression and texture of their skin and body.



This image shows a few examples of character sketches that convey mainly the overall gesture and movement of their pose without too much detail.

Question

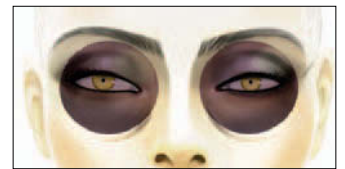
How do I paint the light that's reflected in a pair of glasses?

Diane O'Farrell, Ireland



What self-respecting day walker from the 1980s doesn't finish off her look with a pair of tinted shades?

For the glasses I used the Ellipse tool on a layer set to Multiply, and copied the first lens so the two are the same size.



Answer

Manon replies



Reflections on hard objects are easy to create without too many tricks. Once your character's painted, create a new layer and choose either the Ellipse or Rectangle Tool to make the shape of glasses you want. Once you've made one lens, set that layer to Multiply and fill it with the desired colour. Now duplicate that layer,

move the second lens next to the other, and drop both layers into each other. Use the Magic Wand to isolate both lenses, and use your brush on a new layer on top of that to add the reflections. Use a hard edged brush for the light reflections. For the rim of the glasses, use the Ellipse Tool with a thick line, and then slot in around the lenses and add the finishing light touches.

Question

Can you give me tips on painting a dynamic close up of a planet's rings?

SpaceMonkey, US



Here I conceptualise a huge ring of debris floating around a small planet in an imaginary solar system.

Answer

Francesco replies



The first thing I considered was the planet's ring. What kind of debris made up the ring? In this case I decided that the ring was going to be made of asteroids of different sizes, spaceships and satellite debris.

I do some quick line drawings to block out the composition, then look for some cool references of planets in space, so I can understand how a big floating object looks in space where there is no atmosphere. Here I gave particular attention to how the star that this planet is orbiting lights the surface.

I start to paint the planet. I make it a hot desert planet without oceans, and I add some small lights that refer to a colony or city on its surface. I decided to make the planet take up two-thirds of the image – the rest of the open space is left to help give more depth to the concept!

Now I move onto the debris. The first things I paint are very clean and sharp silhouettes of rock, asteroids and random sci-fi parts in the foreground. I try to put all those dark silhouettes onto separate layers so I can easily move them around, make copies, scale them down or flip them so they can be reused to save time when creating a more dense ring of debris.

I make sure to match the composition sketch. Now I paint the ring in the distance that wraps around the planet across the empty space we left. Remember that in space there is no atmosphere, so it's possible to see illuminated objects at long distances.

I put the 'sun' under the layer of the foreground debris, paint the rim light onto the pieces of debris that are hit by the light (remembering the direction of light on the individual pieces). I apply atmospheric effects to the planet with some lens flare to give a final touch, then add a small spaceship in the foreground area to help give a better sense of scale to the debris.

Artist's secret

FAST, CLEAN SILHOUETTES
Use the Free Lasso tool. You create a free random shape on a new layer, and fill that selection with the bucket, or use a round standard brush with all the settings turned off, so when you paint the edges they are sharp and clean.



Silhouettes are a good way to create a nice contrasted realistic image. Once I've done that, the image is already 70 per cent done.

Question

Can you help me paint light coming through blinds?

Karen Choi, South Korea



If you want the light to feel bright, make sure the rest of the room is dark. Without contrast, nothing feels particularly intense.

Answer

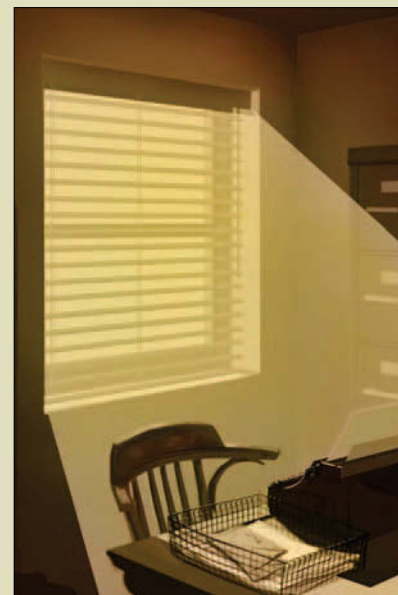
Tony replies



If you want to see dramatic light coming through a window, it helps to have a lot of dust in the air. Each particle absorbs a bit of the light, so the more there is, the more apparent the light beam will be. The way the dust floats makes some shafts of light look more intense than others, so try to ensure that the intensity isn't the same in each beam throughout the image.

Setting up the image is very similar to any other interior – just make sure that the window is your main light source. The blinds will of course be blocking some of the light, and how much they block has to do with how far open they are and what the angle of the light source outside may happen to be. Light shining through will be most intense when the blinds are open at the same angle the light is coming in.

How sharp the edges of your light beams appear to be is based on the strength of the light, the dust in the air, and how far the beam is from the source. Edges tend to be sharper near the window and blur as they move away from it.



I find it easiest to paint light into the room as if the blinds weren't there, and then erase away to indicate where the beams are blocking the light.



Question

How can I make someone seem oppressed in an everyday setting?

Dr Livingstone, England

Answer

Nick replies



Here is an image with a tangle of George Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four. Room 101 and all that. There are numerous ways

to imply, oppression/repression/threat/dread/foreboding/whichever particular blend you want. Making an image figurative immediately offers facial expression, clothing and body language to your arsenal. I've picked an every day cafe scene, but its retrograde style combined with dingy lighting and a general feeling of grime suggests a downbeat feel. You might prefer the opposite, with brilliantly lit but featureless surroundings – cold and dehumanised in a different way.

I'm splattering clues all round this scene. Eye-level looking down: the main figure is hunched over, wearing a rumpled, bland suit without a tie, and peers out from under furrowed brow. He is pale and drawn, boxed in by straight lines, be they furniture and fitting edges or cast shadows. He sits alone. With everything else in relative shadow he is effectively spot lit. Exposed. Negative and controlling slogans adorn many of the surfaces around him. A shadowy figure in uniform watches him. Why is not explained. It all adds to the sense of threat to the individual figure.

In the context of a sequential story you would not need to lay it on this thickly. In fact it's often more effective to drip feed the clues over time to build tension. The thing to make the viewer understand that is a sense that the men here are not in control.



WATCH THIS!

www.bit.ly/UN1101-oppression

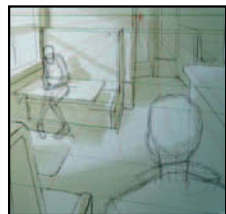


A combination of body language, viewing angle and elements composed around the figure to make him seem trapped all add to the atmosphere of oppression.

It's useful to leave stencils in place so you can revisit them to perk areas up knowing it will fit in with what you've already laid down.

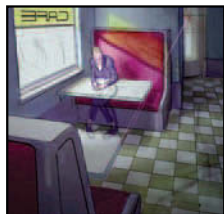
Step-by-step: Suggest at negativity and anxiety

1 I know roughly what I want, so I mark out some basic shapes in ArtRage 4, using one point perspective keyed to a vanishing point on a high horizon line near the top of the composition. The impression



of looking down, puts the focal character below the viewer. Once these building blocks are in place, it becomes easier to place the figure in its space.

2 I block in muted base colours using the Chalk tool, then build up tonal depth with layers of watercolour and a couple of flood filled Gradient layers, all set to Multiply mode. The flood fills are of different colours, so that by working into them separately with my chosen light colour (a cool blue/white here) I can introduce variation and interest.



3 I flood fill a layer with raw umber set to Multiply over the top, working back into it with my light colour again. To bring more interest/atmosphere and to suggest a dirty windowpane, I work through a



Textural Stencil set up to cover the entire image surface. I make it obvious at the window but soften the effect the further away from the light source.

Got a digital art problem? Is an image giving you art-ache? Our panel can help. Email your question to our experts at help@imaginefx.com or write to **Artist Q&A, ImagineFX, 30 Monmouth St, Bath, BA1 2BW, UK.**



LOST IN SPACE

Inspired by the international space race and a shifting public view of what science fiction could mean, a band of artists in the 1970s redefined the way we imagine space

OF MOON STARS

John Berkey's space art often depicted grandiose space crafts with loose brush strokes, as this acrylic on board piece from the 1990s shows.



BERKEY



© istockphoto.com

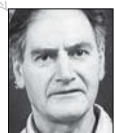
sing outer space as a backdrop to human drama has a suitably epic history. The term 'Space Opera' was coined in the early 40s to describe a trend in literature for melodramatic sci-fi action. Yet back in the 17th century, anyone who could read Latin could delve into the novel *Somnium*, which offered a tale of demonic trips to the moon. Projecting ourselves into the void has long been a human compulsion.

In the 1970s, this fascination culminated in a burst of visionary art that changed the way space opera stories were depicted forever. It was a reaction to several events. Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey propelled the sci-fi film into the realms of high art in 1968. This followed the work that the big three writers – Arthur C Clarke,

“I felt ‘the vast’ as a sensation in the body. It filled me with electricity and imagery I wanted to share”

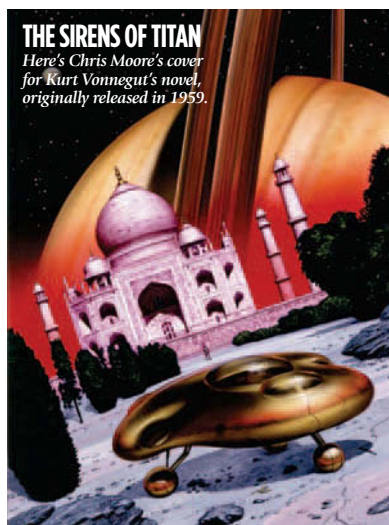
Isaac Asimov and Robert A Heinlein – who'd been creating hard sci-fi fiction since the 40s. The international space race and the Moon landing was also fresh in the collective memory.

Commercial artists such as John Harris rode the wave of public interest in science fiction in the 70s. For him the appeal of putting the human stamp on space went to the heart of why he was an artist. “I cannot remember a time



PORTS OF CALL

Inspired by meditation, John Harris has long tapped into “the vast” to create awe-inspiring art.



THE SIRENS OF TITAN
Here's Chris Moore's cover for Kurt Vonnegut's novel, originally released in 1959.

when I wasn't physically and mentally stirred by ‘the vast,’ he tells us today. “I always felt it as a sensation in the body. Mentally, I associate it with the future. It filled me with electricity. This energy sparked off imagery in my mind that I wanted to share.”

And this imagery was new. After the Second World War, Chesley Bonestell's remarkable art depicted space as it was – magnificent and isolated. His series of paintings of Saturn from the point of view of its orbiting moons (right) captivated people's imagination. These paintings were stark and beautiful, but there was little room for humanity.

Meanwhile, in the world of sci-fi book covers, aside from lone voices such as the visionary sci-fi artist Paul Lehr,



THE OUTPOSTER

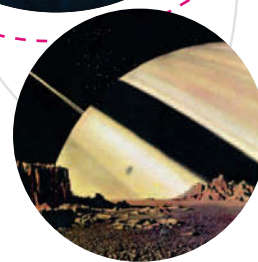
Peter Elson's cover for the reprint of the 1971 novel places the viewer on the ground looking up, for added drama.

SONIC BOOM

A warp-speed journey through 70s Space Opera art

FOUNDING FATHER

In the mid-40s Chesley Bonestell (1888-1986) redefines the depiction of space with his photo-realistic paintings of Saturn from the viewpoint of its moons, using models and photo references to achieve a stark, beautiful vision of space.



DAISY, DAISY...

Outside of the growing sophistication of sci-fi book cover art, film concept art such as Robert McCall's work for Stanley Kubrick's 2001: A Space Odyssey inspires a generation to paint dramatic space scenes pregnant with human drama.





SHIP FROM DOWN UNDER

As well as original space opera art, John created art for the Star Wars and Star Trek franchises.



FEATHER SHIP

You can pick up a print of this painting on the official John Berkey site for \$8,800.



END OF THE RUN

This 2001 original by John was originally used on a Japanese book cover. Now it's one of the most dramatic covers of ImagineFX.

SPACE MAN

Here's a look into the painting process of the late John Berkey, who died in 2008



John Berkey came to prominence after creating a series of self-initiated paintings for 1972's reissue for Ballantine Books' 'Star series. In an excerpt from an interview in the Society of Illustrators's book *Magic and Other Realism*, John explains how he went about creating his inimitable art.

"I generally make small colour schemes in tempera, looking for an interesting light source and colour combinations for the finished painting. I work seated and resolve the problem of being on top of the work with two mirrors: one reflects to a second one that I can see as I work. This enables me to see the piece from about eight feet without moving. It's easier to see the space within the picture this way. Also, shapes are evident from a distance when not detectable close up."

Amazingly, after John had finished his Star Wars art, he showed no interest in seeing any of the Star Wars films. He was resolutely all about the painting.

GENERAL PRACTICE

Digital concept artist Stephan Martinière has noted John Harris's style as making an impression on him as a young artist.



COMING OF AGE

Large-scale book cover paintings start to adorn more 1970s sci-fi literature, including Larry Niven's 1970 novel *Ringworld*, with art by Dean Ellis. The *Ringworld* mega-structure concept would be revisited in the 21st century in Bungie's *Halo* video games.

➔ illustration and photography ruled the day.

BAND OF BROTHERS

Chris Moore and Jim Burns both left art college in the summer of 1972, and went straight to work. "Unlike Jim, I wasn't a fan of science fiction at the time," says Chris. "I always considered myself a jobbing

illustrator, so we did a whole manner of things – Jackie Collins, Earl Stanley Gardner book covers, that kind of thing."



THE SIMULACRA

Once again, Chris Moore produces a great cover for a sci-fi classic – this time it's Philip K. Dick's 1964 novel.

Brian Sanders, a popular lifestyle magazine illustrator, who was tasked with drawing *The Making of 2001: A Space Odyssey*, saw the writing on the wall. "The 1970s proved to be a challenging decade for every illustrator in Britain pursuing a career in magazine illustration," he writes at his art blog (www.bit.ly/ifx-bsanders). "However," he continues, "the market for paperback book cover illustration remained buoyant."

In the UK in the early 70s, if you were a book cover illustrator and knew how to draw a spaceship, there was one obvious agency to turn to. "It was inevitable that when I showed people my work they recommended I take it to Young Artists," says John Harris.

Young Artists' John Spencer and Alison Eldred had recruited a group of brilliant

“For monsters Les Edwards, Jim for women and spaceships... that was the scene”

sci-fi artists, including John, Peter Jones, Jim Burns and Angus McKie. In the agency halls you might bump into Chris Moore or Chris Foss, both friends of the agency. It was a close-knit group. "In the 70s if an art director wanted a cover done he'd flip a coin on who he wanted to get, out of half a dozen of us," recalls Chris Moore. "For monsters go to Les Edwards, Jim was very good at doing women and spaceships... that was the scene at the time." ➔

FANTASTIC PLANET

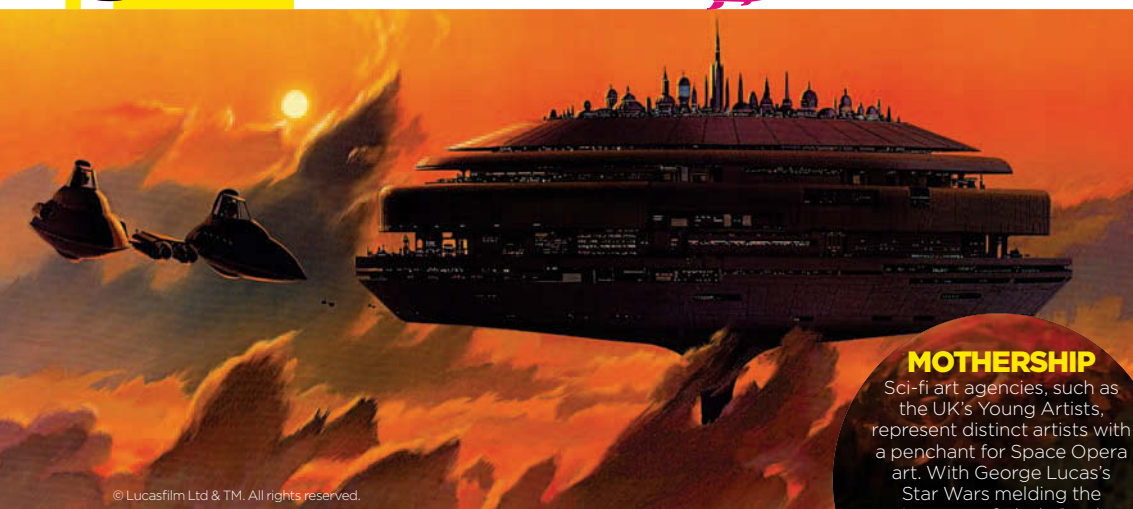
Peter Elson died in 1998, but his sister still champions his art



"Things started happening for Peter after he won first prize in *Science Fiction Monthly's* painting competition in 1975. "This was his *Fantastic Planet*," says Pam Elson. "It's probably the only sci-fi original I have which wasn't for a book cover. He then worked for various publishers, including Arrow, Sphere, Nelson, Orbit and Virgin, illustrating books by a great number of the major science fiction authors of our time."

MOTHERSHIP

Sci-fi art agencies, such as the UK's Young Artists, represent distinct artists with a penchant for Space Opera art. With George Lucas's *Star Wars* melding the enjoyment of *Flash Gordon* with the scope of *2001*, Ralph McQuarrie's concept art (above) adds fuel to the burning fire.



© Lucasfilm Ltd & TM. All rights reserved.

FANTASTIC PLANET

This dramatic painting won Peter Elson first place in Science Fiction Monthly's art contest, and launched his career as a book cover illustrator.



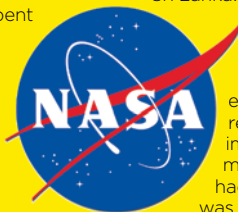


FOR THE BENEFIT OF ARTISTS

For artists who daydream of outer space, it makes sense to have a relationship with NASA

John Harris, Chris Moore and Sparth have all been inspired by America's National Aeronautics and Space Administration. For Sparth, it was a couple of formative years spent living at his uncle and aunt's house in Cocoa Beach, Florida, near the Space Center in Cape Canaveral. "They both worked for NASA for decades," he says, "so as well as seeing shuttles take off, talk was often space related."

Thanks to NASA, Chris's art crossed the stratosphere. Having painted the image of a commemorative 2001: A Space Odyssey cover for limited edition stamps, he and Arthur C Clarke signed it and then sent it off into space for astronauts to sign.



For John, working with NASA was an inspiring yet eerie affair. In 1984 he met Arthur C Clarke and Freddie Durant III in Sri Lanka. Taken by his art, they

suggested contacting NASA, and he was invited to document a launch. "The Shuttle launch was early in the morning," he recalls. "The sun was rising immediately behind it. Within a minute of takeoff the shuttle had gone, and all that was left was a pall of vapour from the jets shrouding the gantry, with the sun shining through it. I fixed that moment in a painting (Aftermath T+60secs)."

The painting was sent to Washington in Nov 1985, but got stuck in customs, only released on 26 Jan 1986, two days before the Challenger Shuttle disaster.



SKYLARKING

Apollo 8's Bill Anders snapped this image of the Earth from the Moon on 24 December 1968, and it still captures the fascination of our relationship with outer space.



TAKE OFF

This painting by John Harris atmospherically documents one of NASA's 1984 Shuttle launches.

LEGACY OF HEOROT

This acrylic painting displays Chris Moore's functional craft design, which is so important to the artist.

➤➤ Although the wave of inspiration they generated would build up for following generations to ride, this scene was for the time being limited to science fiction fans, today's international online fan base being beyond even the greatest sci-fi minds back then. Pam Elson, sister of 70s artist Peter, recalls: "As far as I'm aware he never knew his art was known in its own right," she says of Peter, who died in 1998. "He would have been delighted and humbled to have known that."

“Peter never knew his art was known in its own right. He would have been delighted and humbled”



Space renaissance

Today, artists like Stephan Martinière, John Picacio and Sparth channel their childhood love of 70s epic sci-fi art to bring it into the digital age, for book covers, games and film. Artists such as Martin Dechambo (and writer Jeffrey Campbell) create the sci-fi space opera Project 77 (shown here).

PEBBLE IN THE SKY

This Peter Elson cover for Isaac Asimov's book was 'carved' into the imagination of Halo artist Nicolas 'Sparth' Bouvier.



"From eight to 15 I was an avid science fiction reader," says **Stephan Martinière**, one of the most successful heirs to the 1970s art boom, "and many of the artworks from British artists were used for book covers at the time. I really liked Chris Moore's technique and Chris Foss was a big influence on my art."

But Britain wasn't the only hotbed of epic sci-fi talent. By 1977 Ralph McQuarrie had almost single-handedly created the look of

Star Wars, the most lauded Space Opera to date. "Ralph's was the Space Opera art that made me just as curious about the artists as the art," says modern book cover illustrator



John Picacio: "My mother bought me a folio of McQuarrie's paintings for The Empire Strikes Back. His Cloud City of Bespin was on the cover. That was it for me."

John Berkey produced early art for a Star Wars novelisation, and his dazzling style

SATURN 2049

John Harris's influence goes beyond the sci-fi genre, thanks to his impressionistic style of painting.

has become a favourite among artists. While Moebius had already laid the groundwork for Star Wars with The Incal comic in France, Berkey's impressionistic style brought its very own drama and power. "John's paintings are a kind



of visual music," says **James Gurney**, in Magic and Other Realism, "showing the power of abstraction to reach pure lyricism. Somehow that lyrical spirit fits perfectly with our dreams of exploring space."

INFINITE APPEAL

Of course, there are contradictions within the term Space Opera (because it was originally coined to describe a broad trend in literature, not specific narratives). In film, many cite Star Wars as Space Opera's zenith, but its fantasy heart niggles at others like Chris Moore and Sparth, who prefer a 'hard sci-fi' functionality to their Space Opera art.

Of course, there's room for both, as TV series Star Trek, Firefly and Battlestar Galactica can attest. Growing up within spitting distance from NASA's Cape Canaveral space station, Nicolas 'Sparth' Bouvier talked a lot about space in his formative years. "It helped

BACK TO THE BOOKS

With video games like Halo and Mass Effect, space opera art is no longer the preserve of epic films and sci-fi novel covers. When it does adorn books, however, artists like John Picacio still get inspired by previous masters.

Continued on page 48 ➔

DAVE SEELEY'S SPACE ARIA

Award-winning artist Dave Seeley uses his passion for architecture, maths, and science, to inform his space opera



In his piece *The Battle of Coruscant*, created for the opening spread for *Star Wars: Essential Guide to Warfare* book, Dave Seeley used a totally unique approach to creating great space opera art – unique even for him!



NASA knows

1 "The *Battle of Coruscant* piece was initially created using NASA photography, and image grabs from the *Star Wars* Episode III: *Revenge of the Sith* Blu-ray depicting the scene. The image grabs were possible only because Lucasfilm owns all copyrights, and allows use of its intellectual property when working for them."



Based on reality

2 "I overlaid two NASA shots, and stretched them into the two-page spread format I wanted. I then pieced together bits of the surface city lights from film grabs."



Let battle commence

3 "I then erased the blank areas back to transparent cloud cover. I mined the film grabs for ships, and collaged them into a composition that I liked, leaving the proper spot open for Anakin's Jedi Starfighter."



Photo op

4 "My mission was to show this well-documented scene from an angle that we hadn't seen before, so I shot a Starfighter toy, and chose my favourite angle within the composition."



Fog of war

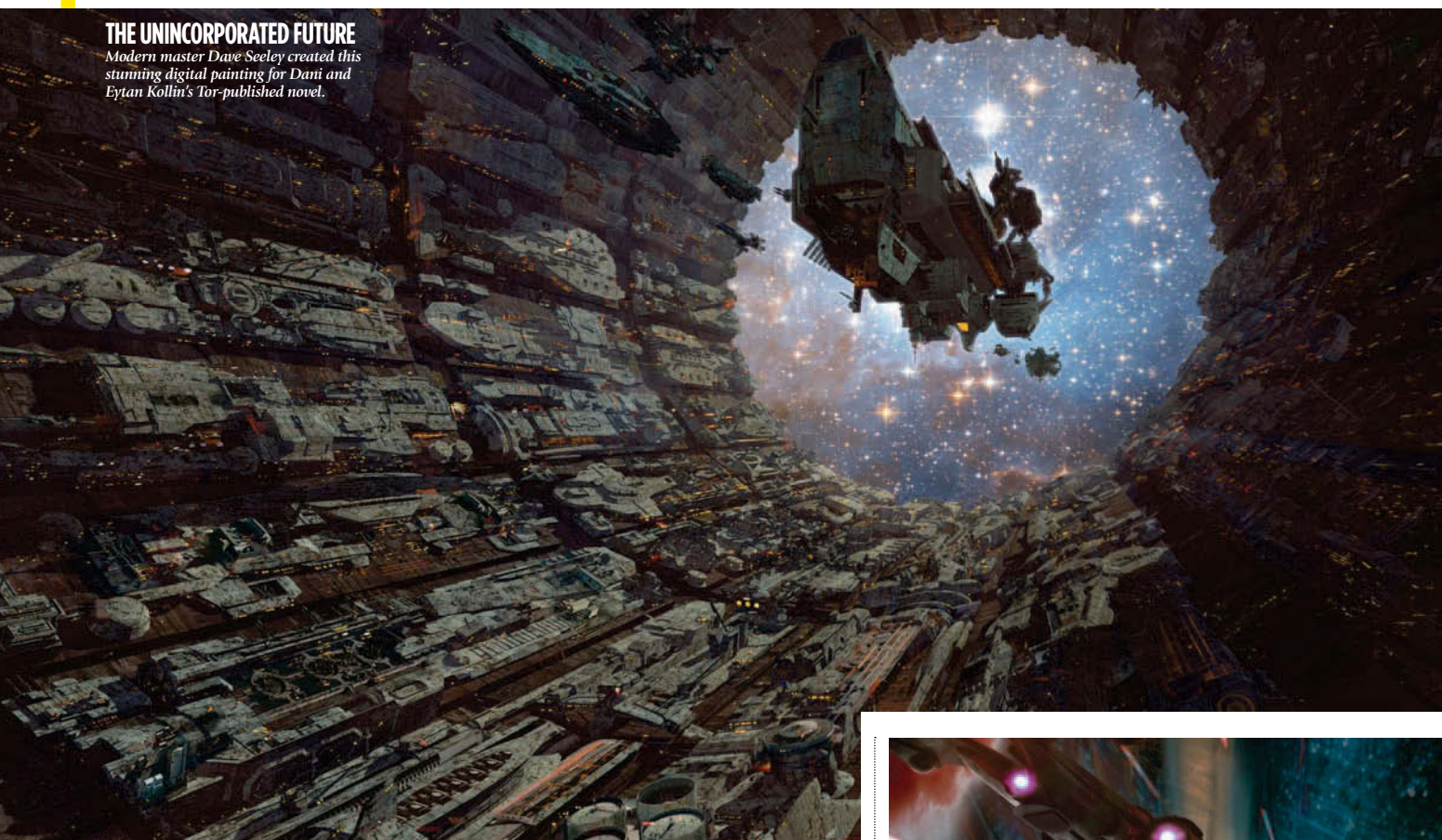
5 "Then I added the twirling missiles, laid in the title block, and sent it to my art director. After approvals, I printed the digital file on to archival paper, laminated it to a panel, and oil painted (the ships primarily), for a digital/oil hybrid final painting."

End result

6 "I then photograph the hybrid painting for the final digital print file, just as I would for a traditional oil painting."

THE UNINCORPORATED FUTURE

Modern master Dave Seeley created this stunning digital painting for Dani and Eytan Kollin's Tor-published novel.



me understand what space was, and how man was slowly entering into its vastness," says Sparth, "so my fascination with Space Opera art was rooted in hard scientific facts."



Although art has since covered books by Jack Vance, Iain M Banks and James S A

Corey, it was the artists of the 70s explosion that imprinted onto Sparth's imagination.

"In the late 80s I saw Peter Elson's cover for Asimov's *Pebble in the Sky* [see page 45] – it's still carved into my brain," he says, "I also remember several Philip K Dick books with Chris Moore covers. I still have these images in my mind."

For artists depicting 'the vast' today, the appeal is as varied as their styles. Dave Seeley gave up studying architecture for the star gazing. "By the time I drop-kicked architecture for making images, I had ingested a ton of sci-fi culture," he says, "and it shaped the way I saw Space Opera. I've also loved watching the space programme, following the Apollo missions, and musing about where it might take us. I think space is inherently a backdrop and

“I’ve loved following Apollo missions, musing about where it might take us”



ANGEL CITY

Growing up in Paris, Stephan Martinière was as much influenced by the sci-fi art of Moebius as Chris Foss.

doesn't obscure action. The view into the void, for me, is evocative of endless potential adventures."

The digital age holds the key to tomorrow's space opera art. "I'm an avid watcher of the Astronomy Picture of the Day that NASA put out," says Chris Moore. "Everyday there's a picture that's something current – it's fascinating. But of course, they didn't have anything like that in my day."

If you want a dose of that 70s inspiration, why not go to the movies. "Our influence?" asks Chris. "It's for all to see in films.



EXTREMIS: STARFIRE

Continuing the tradition of dramatic space opera art adorning the latest sci-fi literature, Dave Seeley's painting incorporates some model work by John Douglass.

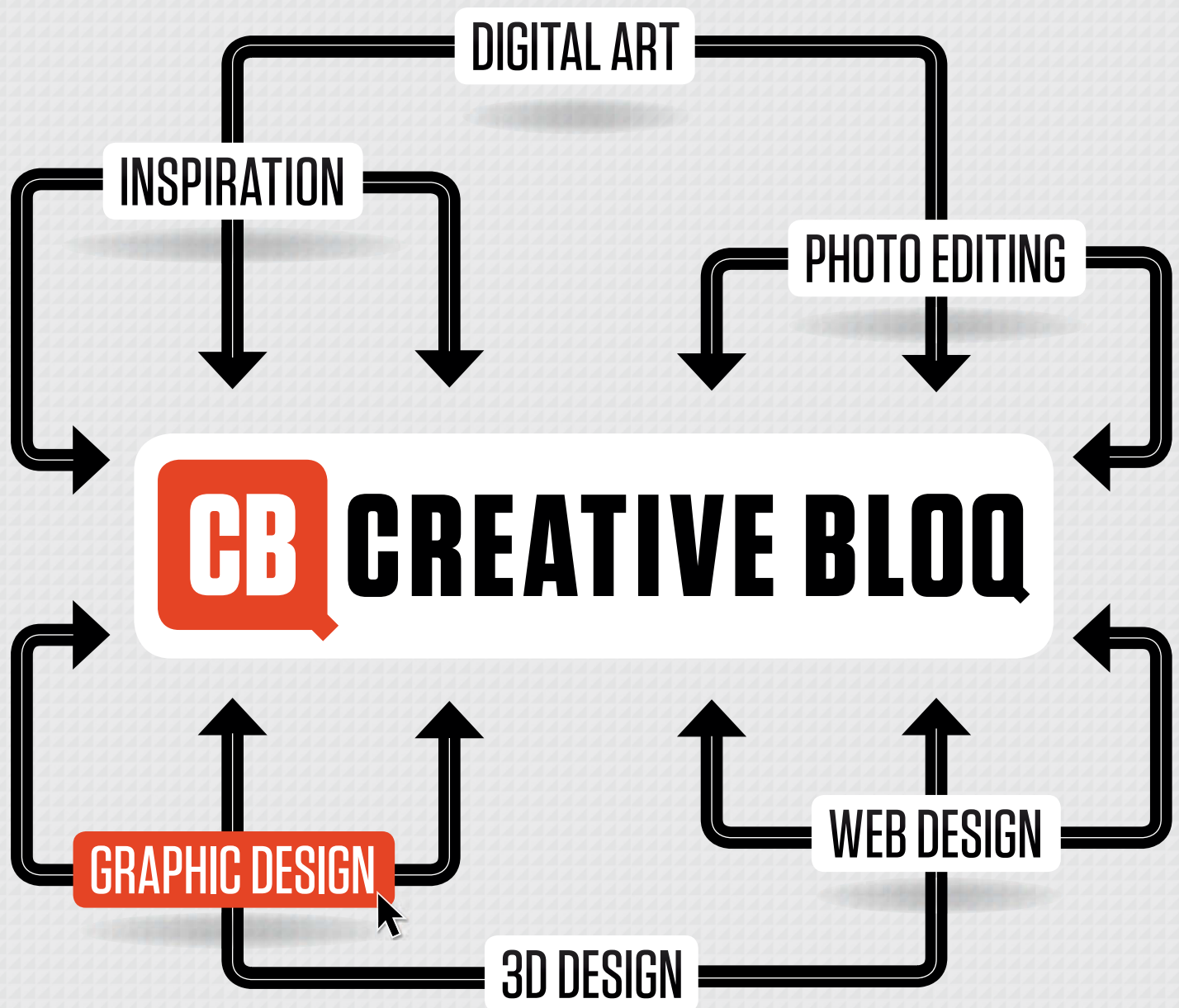
Our stuff has inspired films for the past 30 years. And that's just timing. We were part of a movement when there was an optimism in science fiction. This idea of colonising other planets, the next frontier. It was like the Wild West and it burgeoned a colossal amount of imagination because there were no bounds. Everything was up for grabs." ●



SHRAPNEL 3

As well as several book covers, Stephan Martinière has worked on films such as *Red Planet* and the big screen adaptation of Isaac Asimov's *I, Robot*.

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Sketchbook

Tuomas Korpi

Illustrator Tuomas creates concepts for marketing, so is a dab hand at sketching quick concepts. See for yourself...

Artist PROFILE

Tuomas Korpi

COUNTRY: Finland



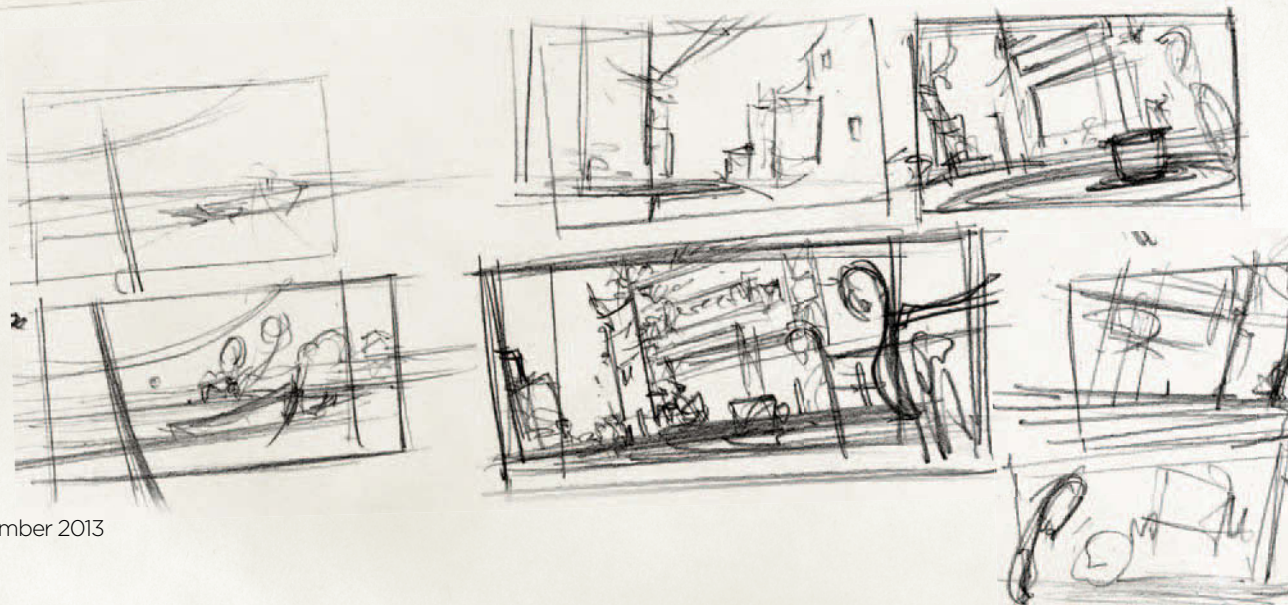
Tuomas is a 27-year-old production designer and illustrator from Finland. He has worked professionally in entertainment and VFX since 2005, and now has his own animation and illustration studio, Piñata. Most of the work he does is concept art or marketing illustration, and his clients include major VFX and gaming companies, individual directors and ad agencies.

www.tuomaskorpi.com



NEWS FROM THE HORIZON LINE ART

"A more developed line art drawing of one of the thumbnail sketches on page 54. Sometimes I scan the thumbnail on a computer and start refining the line art in Photoshop, and sometimes I prefer working with pen and inks."





TREE AND A CAULDRON

"Just something more carefully rendered. I like to do this every once in a while."

"I try to think of the big picture right from the start. Rarely do I go straight in"



THUMBNAIL EXPLORATION

"Some super rough thumbnails, exploring composition. My sketchbook is pretty much filled with this stuff. I try to always think of the big picture right from the start. Rarely do I go straight into drawing or thinking of the design."

VROUW MARIA

"A digital colour and lighting sketch for a painting of Vrouw Maria, a Dutch merchant ship in the 18th century. I usually start my more finished illustrations with these rough sketches to block in the lighting and key colours."



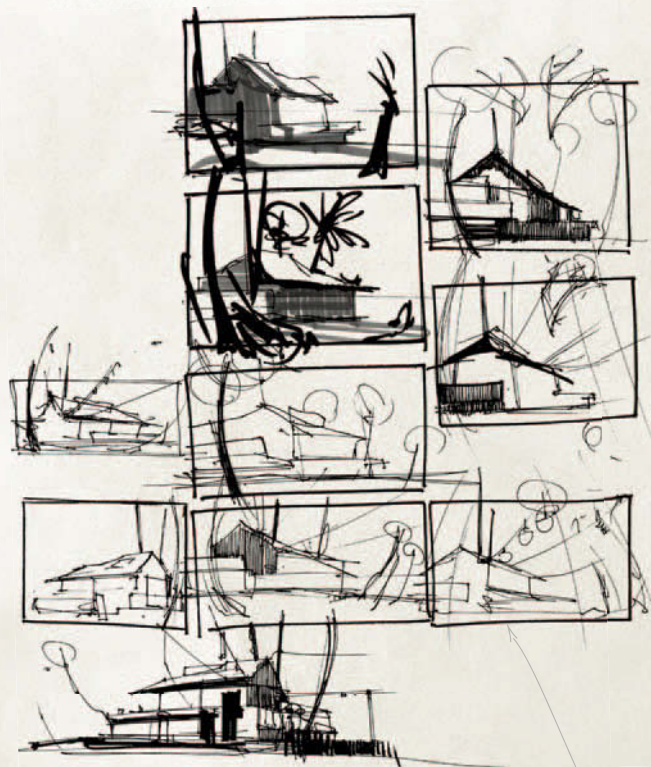
MOLESKINE

"Here is a set of sketches from one of my Moleskine sketchbooks. My sketchbooks are usually more like notebooks for scribbling down random ideas and madness than full of beautifully rendered and illustrated stuff."

Sketchbook

NEWS FROM THE HORIZON THUMBNAILS

A set of thumbnails and composition studies that later became the painting News From The Horizon. I usually start out by making these small matchbox size sketches to explore the composition of a painting.



BEACH BAR THUMBNAILS

"A set of thumbnails and sketches for my beach bar image. I wanted to explore the volume and shape of the beach hut before moving into more detailed drawings."



HOMETREE

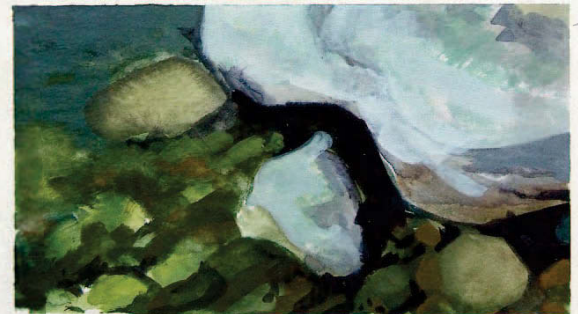
"A base lineart for another painting I've been working on lately. This time it's all digital, which makes it easier to change elements and rearrange composition."



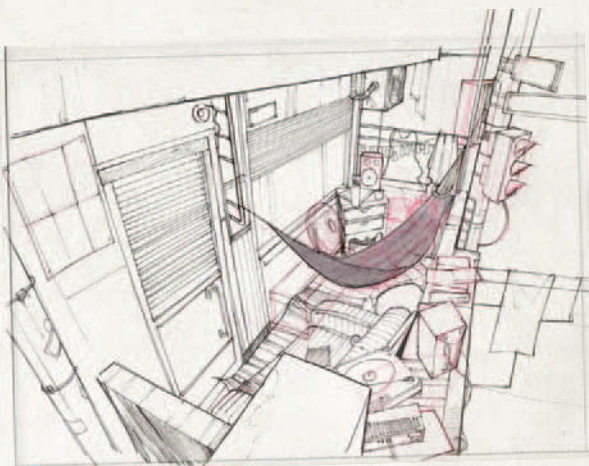


GOUACHE STUDIES I

"A set of gouache thumbnails I did at our summer place. I haven't painted much outdoors, but it was great fun and I should do it more."



"I feel doing the base lineart in a natural medium gives you a more organic approach"



BALCONY HAMMOCK

"A more detailed drawing or sketch for this balcony sweetspot painting I've been working on. I feel doing the base lineart in a natural medium gives you a more natural or organic approach, which works great with certain styles or themes."

GOUACHE STUDIES II

"Another gouache study from this summer. It's always interesting to see the subtle changes in colour while you paint, and how the palette can vary and change depending on the movement, light situation and all the other variations nature has."

Want to share your sketches? Then drop us an email, with a selection of your artwork, to sketchbook@imaginefx.com, or upload your drawings at www.imaginefx.com/sketchbook.

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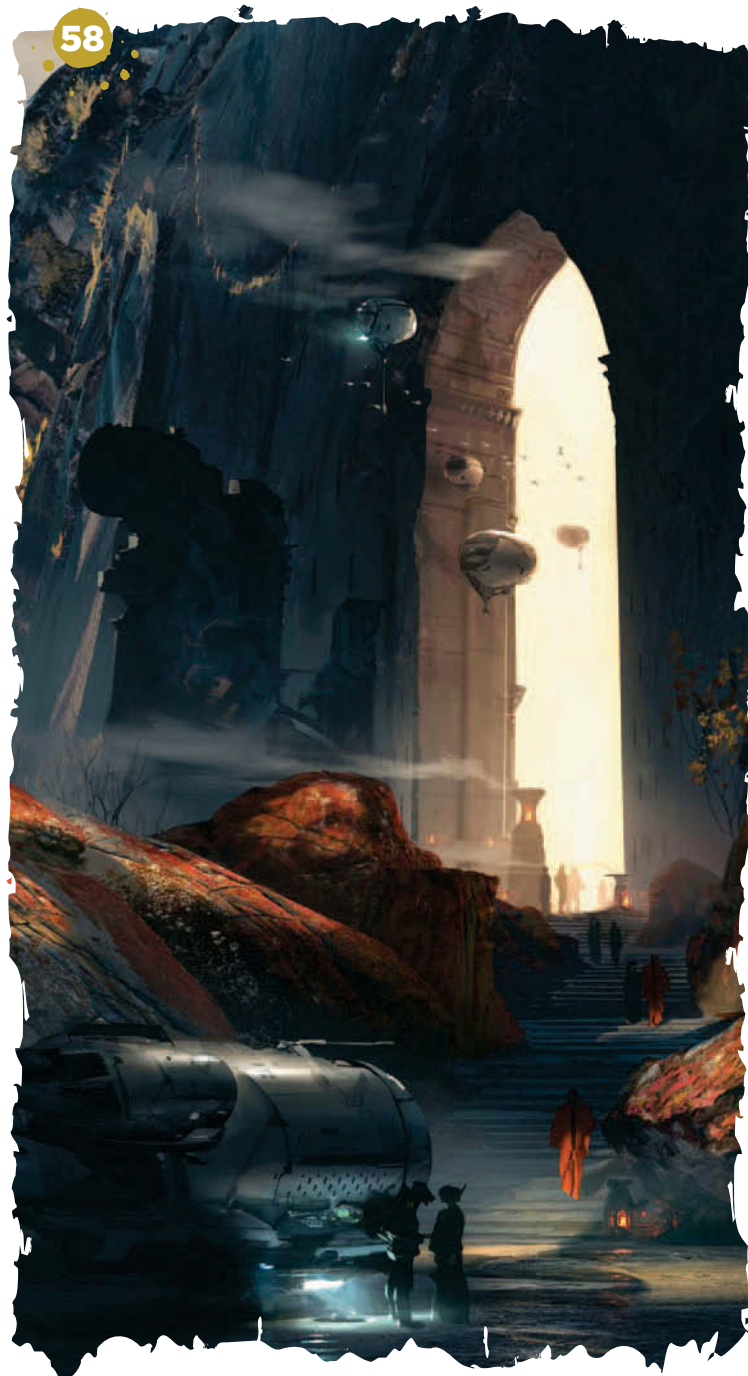
If you see this Watch This button, click the
link (or write it down) to view the video
that accompanies a workshop.

WATCH THIS!

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Advice from the world's best artists

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Emma Viceli shows how to add a bit of needle to your character situations.

Photoshop ILLUSTRATE AN EPIC ENVIRONMENT

Merge technological and fantasy elements into one epic environment with a technique that **Thom Tenery** likes to call photo-bashing

Having spent several years working in architectural design before making the transition to entertainment design, my approach to image making and the way I think about space is heavily influenced by my architectural education. I'm extremely interested in architectural history and historic period styles, so I naturally gravitate toward that subject matter regardless of the genre I'm working in. So with that in mind, this workshop

has given me the opportunity to merge both my architectural and my genre interests into one piece.

I'll walk you through my image construction process and share a few short-cuts and time-saving techniques for environment creation. I'll be pulling photos from past vacations to use as resource material for the photo-bashing part of the process. I'll be aiming for epic, but I'm going to attempt to balance that 'epicness' out with a human element.

1 The sketch

I begin with a loose indication of the overall idea. This is not a value sketch, but a diagram of the primary scene components: a temple portal cut through a wall of rock, a large staircase meandering up to the portal and a ship in the foreground.



WATCH THIS!

www.bit.ly/UNI101-thom

2 Photo-bashing

The goal at this stage is to block the scene in with photographic material. Each time I paste a photo into the image I treat it using Filter>Noise>Median and set the radius to about 2 or 3. This knocks down the sharpness of the photos. I set the layer mode to Soft Light or Overlay depending on what looks best, and dial down the layer opacity. I use Image>Adjustments>Color Balance to key it to the shadow colour in the scene. I use Edit>Free Transform and Edit>Transform>Warp to stretch, scale, rotate and warp the photos into an interesting photo collage.



Artist PROFILE

Thom Tenery
COUNTRY: US



Thom has a degree in architecture and studied entertainment

design at Art Center College of Design. He's worked on TV and film productions and video game development, and has illustrated trading card games and book covers. His clients include Universal Pictures, Walt Disney Pictures and Wizards of the Coast.

www.thomlab.com

DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES
www.bit.ly/101-thom

I'm going to stage a scene where a ship has set down outside a remote mountain temple. We'll see elements of advanced technology, and elements of fantasy living together. The ship's pilot is meeting with a woman at the base of the temple steps, presumably on a mission of some importance. Since this is an establishing shot rather than a story beat centred on a character interaction, I'm not going to focus on the narrative beyond what the scenario implies tonally: a parting.

3 More photo-bashing

The initial photo-bashing process can look extremely messy. I'll often have dozens of photo fragments at a dozen different scales, all with slightly different colour attributes and all superimposed in an ugly little collage. It requires work to get all of these parts and pieces to work together and feel like they're occupying the same space. I use the Smudge brushes (included on the disc) to push value and colour around, to fill in areas around photos, and to paint out the edges of photo fragments. I'm keeping the contrast low and the lighting off at this early stage.





4 Even more photo-bashing

At this stage I'm beginning to tighten things up. When photo-bashing, be sure to make something new from the source material. Seize the opportunity to redesign it. I'm considering the shapes of the boulders and the graphic break-up of the wall of stone, and using the Transform controls to push and pull them into more designed shapes. I continue to stretch, rescale, rotate and warp the photos liberally. Everything is malleable when you're working digitally. Don't let the resource material enslave you. Make it serve the idea and the composition.



Shortcuts
Lock
Transparent Pixels
(PC & Mac)
Lock layer transparency without touching the layers window.

5 Altering the composition

I use Edit>Copy Merged followed by Edit>Paste to break off and relocate large pieces of the image. Along the way I use Edit>Free Transform to stretch and scale these pieces to manipulate their position and shape. I'm thinking about the overall shape statements at this point, and tuning the composition. I want the light graphic shape of the portal to be slimmer and taller and to adjust the positioning of the dark mid-ground element on the left. I want those big compositional decisions locked before proceeding.



6 Lighting choices

At this point I need to decide how I'm going to light the scene. I want most of the scene to remain in shadow, using the cool ambient lighting that I've already established. I'm going to have dappled sunlight falling across the boulders. Here is a quick lighting technique that I often use: make a new layer at the top of the layer stack and set the layer mode to Overlay. Select a warm colour (yellow) with less than 10 per cent saturation – almost white. Paint the areas where you want sunlight to fall with any fully opaque hard brush, and then soften the cast shadow edges using Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur. This provides a convincing effect of sunlight illumination.



PRO SECRETS

Color Lookup

In Photoshop CS6, go to Image>Adjustments>Color Lookup for a range of colour adjustment presets. Experiment with these to get unusual colour effects and refine your palette. It is added to your layer stack as an adjustment layer, so it's non-destructive to the image. For the best results, dial the opacity of this adjustment layer back to less than 100 per cent for more subtle and tasteful effects.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: BLOCK_SMUDGE

Set the Strength to about 98 per cent for very opaque, graphic effects, or dial it back to around 80 per cent for a more feathered look. Use it like you would a rag in traditional media to push paint that's already there all over the canvas.

DRYBRUSH

Set the Strength to about 95 per cent to achieve a very feathered, traditional media look. Use it like you would a large dry brush in traditional media to soften edges and obliterate unwanted texture or detail.

7 Adjusting colour and adding atmosphere

Image>Adjustments>Color Lookup will give you a range of colour adjustment presets. Use these to tweak colour and shift your palette. You'll have to set the opacity of this adjustment layer between 10 and 40 per cent to avoid overkill. You can layer up these Color Lookup adjustment layers to get more complex results. In this case I use Fall Colors and a couple of others to warm up the palette. After adjusting the colour I add layers of atmosphere with a soft, barely opaque brush, and silhouette areas against the background for greater shape clarity.



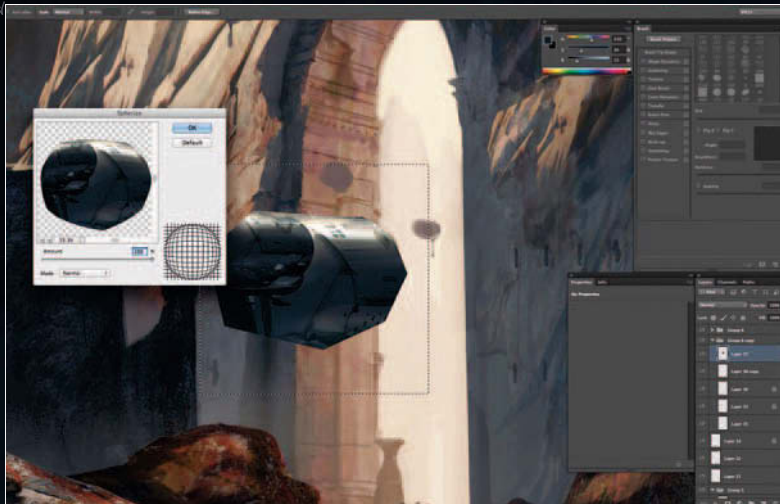
8 Designing the ship

I block in a rough silhouette shape for the ship in the foreground and then lock Layer Transparency (/). Then I open up three to four photos of random objects: a computer mouse, a car, an airport photo and a techy-looking spotlight in this case. I paste these photos into the scene one at a time and place them on top of the silhouette shape. You'll want to experiment with different layer modes like Overlay and Soft Light and reduce the layer's opacity for the best results. I use Edit>Free Transform and Edit>Transform>Warp liberally to distort, stretch and bend these photos until they resemble something interesting. I paint over them and use the BLOCK_SMUDGE brush extensively to manipulate the photos in an attempt to find the design. Add cutlines and other articulations until you arrive at something interesting. Follow the video on the disc to get an in depth look at how this process plays out. You really have to see it as it's happening to understand the process.



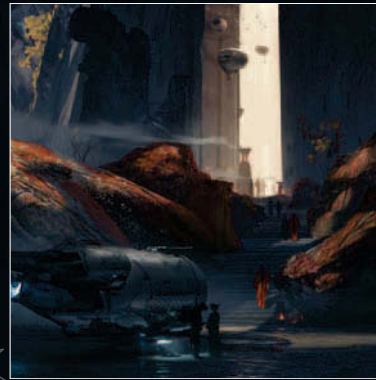
9 Drone design

I design the drones by photo-bashing the work I've already done on the ship. Using the Lasso Tool (L) I select an arbitrary area of the ship and then Edit>Copy Merged followed by Edit>Paste. I use Filter>Distort>Spherize to balloon out the form. Then set the layer mode to Overlay or Soft Light for the best effect. Paint over it to refine the design using the same process that I used to create the ship.



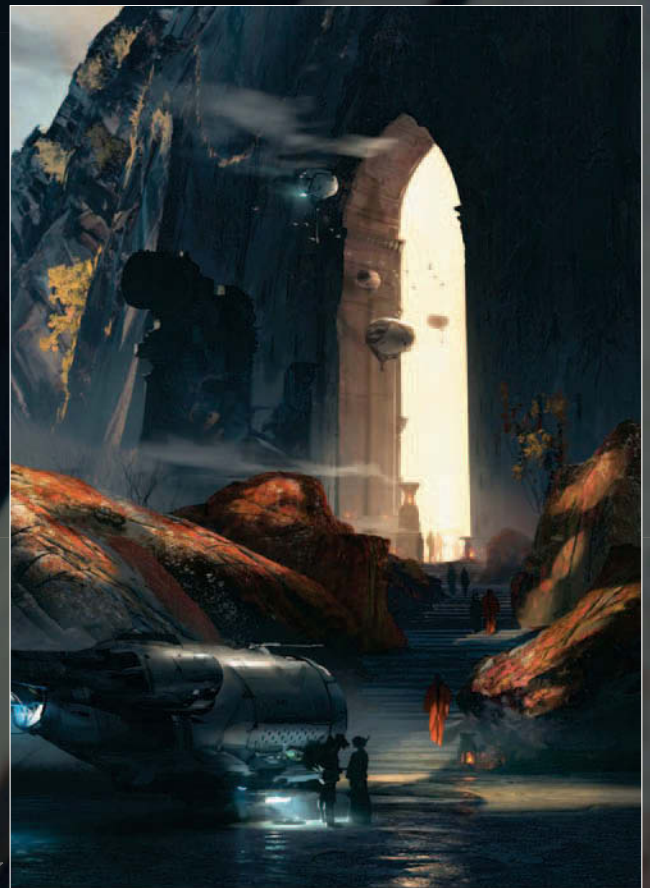
10 Unexpected changes

I'm not happy with the rock wall that comprises most of the background, so I grab a different photo and completely replace the background using the same photo-bashing method discussed in earlier steps. It's unusual for me to make such a huge change to an image this late in the process, but it just isn't working, so I have to make the change. The image is better for it in the end.



11 Detailing and narrative

I make a detail pass, adding additional elements to fill out the world: smoke, atmosphere, birds, artificial lights, ground reflections, lanterns on the steps, vegetation and many prop elements. I add the foreground characters and the lighting around them. This piece is all about the environment, but I want to see some sign of narrative. It helps anchor the image, adds a human element, and provides something for the viewer to linger on.



12 The finish

I go to the top layer in my stack and Select>All. Edit>Copy Merged. Edit>Paste. This creates a flattened version at the top of the stack. Select any large soft round brush and a light yellow or orange colour (the colour of key light). Adjust the brush settings to 15 per cent Opacity and set the Brush Mode to Color Dodge. Now you can pop the contrast of the lights and warm up light areas like the large temple entrance and the lights falling across boulders in the mid-ground.

PRO SECRETS

Entourage

It's helpful to have a custom library of simple character silhouettes on hand so that in environment concept art situations you can quickly drop a figure in for scale, or populate a scene with a few clicks. A dozen simple standing poses with some indication of costume or equipment saved as brush presets can save you a lot of time.

Shortcuts

Group layers

Ctrl+G (PC)

Cmd + G (Mac)

Organise your layers by grouping them rather than merging them.

Photoshop GIVE YOUR CONCEPT ART EXTRA DEPTH

Michel Donzé shows how making up a backstory adds subtle realism to an initial character concept

Artist PROFILE
Michel Donzé
COUNTRY: France



A graduate in 3D animation, Michel went into concept art and illustration. He recently worked on Watch Dogs.
www.micheldonze.com

DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES
www.bit.ly/101-anno

This image was commissioned by Applibot for its sci-fi card game Galaxy Saga. The brief was to show a pretty, long-haired woman taking off her sunglasses, leaning on her futuristic bike. The bike had to be mounted with huge pulse guns on the side of the front wheel. She also had to look like a rebel with a good fashion sense, based on denim and metal bracers. Thankfully, this brief left a lot of room for design and personal interpretation of the character.

So what's her life like? She could be an armoured memory-drug dealer, helping

the powerful keep the alienated masses in the slums of the lower megalopolis addicted to 'souvenir'. Maybe her fashion guise could be a foppish way to show her lack of interest in a world that doesn't make sense. Maybe she thinks she's helping her people by giving them the only accessible escape from a miserable reality. Would she be deadly? Or would it be an act? Or have I read too much Philip K Dick?

But in the end, making up a story helped me to add the subtle believability which I always look for in a character and which keeps me interested.

Refining shape and composition

The composition of a full body character on a bike in portrait mode is challenging. At the painting stage, it consists mainly of shape, value, sharpness and texture contrast (for example, the smoothness of the wet thigh versus the rusty detailed parts of gun) in order to guide the viewer's eye through each point of interest.



© 2013 Applibot

Get the lighting right


Lighting starts from the idea of a fashion-show mood in a grimy wet alley. I chose a bright top-down street lamp as key light, making the skin stand out, while the bike's technological details are lost in darkness. I also add rim lights behind to separate the subject from the background elements.



WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSH: BRUSHESCOMPIL



I made a compilation of brushes I found online. I switch brushes a lot during my painting, from very basic ones to more rough textured ones.

Build up form

Her latex glove is first painted with a grey diffuse rendering of the volumes. Then reflections and highlights, wrapping around the hand as a sort of varnish, are painted carefully on a middle Opacity layer with a Sharp brush. Finally, the pink line clarifies the volumes.



Focus on the look

Designing the character's face is the difficult part. I want to make her look badass while keeping a sense of mysterious beauty. I find that a scornful expression of disdain brings asymmetry and interest, and the overexposed lighting could justify the vanishing of unsightly skin folds. I introduce the abstract-shaped earrings to generate more contrast and focus on her head.

in focus...

FLESHING OUT A CONCEPT



1 Concept sketches

After taking a few days to think about the brief - letting ideas come, and gathering inspiration and references - I usually do a bunch of sketches to send to the client. It helps the company have visibility early in the process, and helps me understand what it expects in terms of composition and overall design.



2 Establish mass, mood and palette

Of course, the client picks the sketch for which I have no clear vision of what the final render could look like. In such cases it helps if, early on, I paint a quick rough to establish the general masses, mood and palette. This will serve as a guide in the rest of the painting process.



3 Adding colour

Now comes the time to draw a clean sketch of the bike and character, figuring out the design through a lot of trials and iterations, also making the bike and gun more imposing to contrast with the girl's thin shape. I apply the mood, painting colours with a few highlights, before starting the endless retailing and rendering process.

Photoshop

PAINT AN ORIGINAL ALIEN CHARACTER

Focusing on visual readability and storytelling to create his striking alien design, **Keith Thompson** explores the aesthetics underpinning it all

What makes an alien character really feel alien? In this workshop I'll show my process for creating an alien creature design. I'll explain both the technical process and the concerns when designing something that feels alien to the viewer, but still has clear visual reasoning and a sense of narrative.

I start with a pile of ideas that I find evocative and interesting, then whittle them down along the path of execution.

1 Genesis

Probably the most important step is where I lose myself in imagining what I will be working on. I will close my eyes and daydream for prolonged amounts of time. A whole host of images, sounds and experiences are explored. Over time, these vague, hazy daydreams will solidify into something I could describe to someone, both visually and in a storytelling sense. Depending on how you find yourself working later in the process, the big decisions at this stage will define how the art takes shape, whether you are conscious of it or not.

2 The loose thumbnail

This is where the alien is first tested in reality. The general idea and forms are quickly sketched out at a small size. If I don't react to this small doodle on an instinctive level I return to the previous step and come back to this step later. I do not explore multiple thumbnails in a sequential fashion, finding that it invariably simplifies designs and is a brute-force type of approach. I leave the automatic drawing to the Surrealists, even if it's a tempting method for exploring an alien design.



Artist PROFILE

Keith Thompson
COUNTRY: Canada



Keith has written three art concept technique books, and is

the illustrator of the Leviathan trilogy. Games he's worked on include Borderlands and Warframe. He designs regularly for Guillermo Del Toro.

www.bit.ly/keitht

DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES

www.bit.ly/101-thompson

It's good to really roll your initial concepts around in your head – for a few days if possible. Ideas and visions that speak to you will persist over this time, and half-baked ones will dissipate. Once those ideas start to really orbit each other in my thoughts it's time to test them, but tentatively at first – I keep myself free-flowing and explorative.

I collect absolutely anything as reference. Colours and textures that seem otherworldly can inform a design

as much as more literal things such as bizarre animals and mechanical objects. Remember that there still needs to be a discernible hierarchy to the weird and wonderful or it risks becoming an indifferent mush.

Keep in mind that when dealing with the alien what you're usually seeking is a sense of strangeness. Different types of strangeness can seem threatening, gracile, vulnerable, sophisticated, or primitive without being overt.

3 The full drawing

As long as I am compelled by the flow and form of the thumbnail I will move on to the full size drawing. Maintaining an organic and living gesture is extremely important when moving to the full size redrawing of the thumbnail. I start with a harder lead and develop the line work further with increasingly softer leads. Get a feel for the types of pencils and papers that you like on a textural level – everyone should explore their own preferences. Some original core concepts from the imagining are apparent at early this stage, I am specifically drawn to the symbiotic nature of three entities joined together as one body.





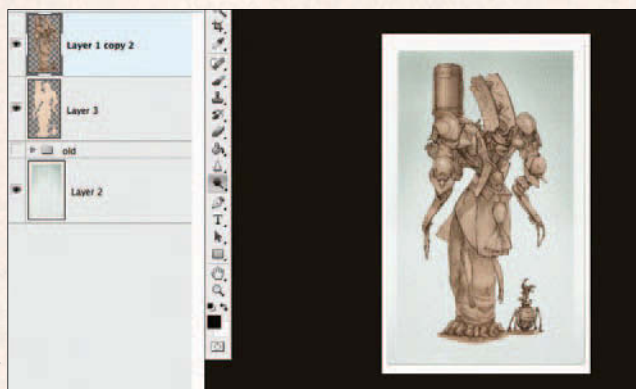
4 Scanning and cleaning

I take the completed drawing and scan it with every adjustment turned off in the scanning software. The surrounding of the alien creature is cleaned up digitally to bare white. The unadjusted scan leaves a faint grey texture within the body of the drawing. This textured grey gives a weight and denseness to the piece that will be worked upon in the later steps.



5 Canvases

I collect some canvas backgrounds from my library that connect with the alien and its technologically advanced culture. I use a warm compound of paper and rust in Multiply layer over the line drawing. I delete the clean white around the figure, then float it over a backing frame for contextual support and recedes behind the elaborate creature design.



6 Adjust the values

I intermittently flip the piece horizontally as I work for a fresh view, and iron out any flaws or kinks if they become apparent. I flatten the cutout character and begin to paint with black in Multiply mode over the design to create areas of shade. I then use the Dodge tool set to midtones to add lighter values back in. In essence this is a continuation of the drawing process, and the entire focus is on line and value.

7 Colour washes

I create a new folder and set it to Hard Light. This folder contains the colour glazes that I'll paint over the drawing. My first wash is an analogous gradient that imparts a subtle overall shift of colours, making a good basis to work on top of. I keep the general colour scheme homogenous and safe for the first stages of painting. I find that initial colour schemes can be traps if you're not careful – you can dive headlong into colour but have trouble backing out. So I ease into what I imagined at the start.



10 Go brave

At this stage I get more adventurous with testing my original vision of the colours. I leave the more eye-catching or contrasting colours to later in the glazing stages so I can view it against a more developed and harmonious relative scheme.

8 Distance

It's a good idea to constantly zoom out, or even work zoomed out, of an image when laying in general colours. The whole piece is in view so any added hues can be gauged relative to the whole piece.



9 Compounding

I can find it tempting to return to the value steps and go back to drawing in mono, but it's a good idea to resist this until the painting of colours is completed. If your value work is detailed and textural it'll seem to react with the flat one-colour glazes and add a complexity to them.

Shortcuts
HUD color picker
Shift+Alt+right-click (PC)
Ctrl+Option+Cmd (Mac)
Photoshop's HUD Color Picker has its drawbacks, but it's a quick and intuitive tool.

Shortcuts

Visually isolate

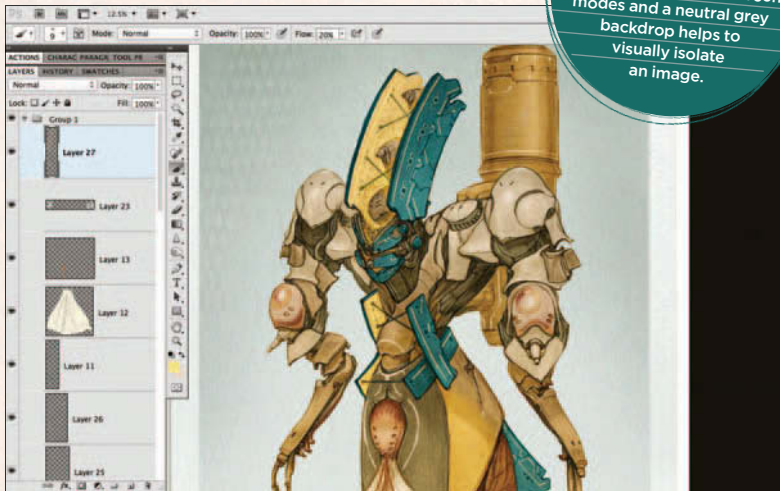
F (PC/Mac)

I often cycle through screen modes and a neutral grey backdrop helps to visually isolate an image.

PRO SECRETS

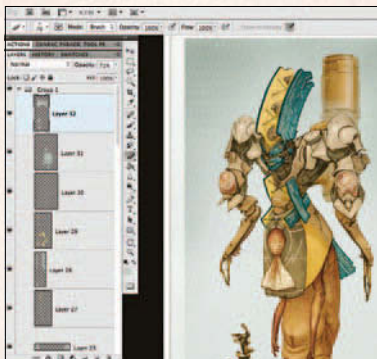
Stick to stock tools for a job

I try not to overly customise my digital workflow (hence using stock brushes). It forces me to use approaches that more resemble traditional art media. It also means I can work in different locations with ease. This applies to my traditional tools, too – I use certain materials, but all I fundamentally need is paper and pencils.



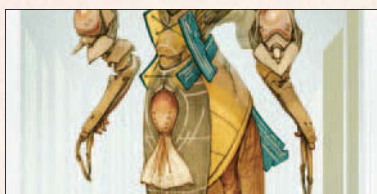
11 Layering details

Here I start to apply markings and layered complexities to the design. Despite what I said about not returning to value drawing, this step does resemble drawing again in the markings and designs running over the alien carapace. In addition, I also begin to lay a graduated sheen of white over the transparent coverings on the faces set into the arms.



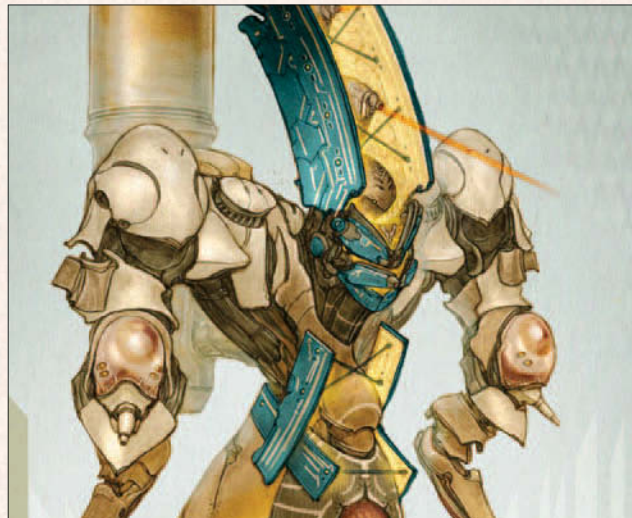
12 Atmospheric

I pick up some of the colours from the canvas backing and then return to the creature's body to apply some gradual glazes over the original glazes. I do this over areas I want to make recede from the viewer, or want to set back in space.



13 Add ornaments

I continue to add design details to both the alien and the background. Both are intended as visual ornament as well as hints of the alien's culture and aesthetics. Layering and harmony are important to any cultural motifs in a design, but avoid making these too analogous with the alien's physiology unless you intend the cultural motifs to instead seem organic growths of the creature and its body.



14 Flattening

I flatten the whole character but still maintain its separation from the background. I then return to more value work and use the Dodge and Burn tools (on differing settings depending on the quality and material of the part of the alien) to darken and highlight different areas of the character. It can be tempting to overwork this stage for added punch and vibrancy, but it can easily undo all the subtle work done earlier in the process if you are not careful.

15 Ground plane

A base for the character to stand on can be as simple as a deft drawing of the character's feet flattening out on an unseen surface. A cast shadow can work in addition. In this case I was tempted to further the aesthetic explorations of the alien culture and lightly painted in a fractured panel and branch network design over the ground plane. Finding a happy medium of how far to develop this touch is essential because I don't intend to paint a full background or setting for the creature in this particular case, just enough to suggest something consistent with the cultural aesthetic I've already established.



16 Clean Up

I use the Clone Stamp to fix up any little spills and rough spots in the piece. I work very zoomed in and scour the whole artwork until I'm content with the details.



17 Completion

I actually ended up growing very fond of how the alien looked flipped horizontally, so I settle on this alignment. If a piece looks strange when flipped it can speak of a flaw in the visual flow of an image, and if you're fond of both alignments you should be encouraged as you work through it.

shops



Photoshop & 3ds Max

DEPICT A GRAND FANTASY SCENE

Let an expert lead you through his thought process and provide tips on creating an epic fantasy environment. **Levi Hopkins** knows all the tricks

Creating a fantasy environment can be one of the most exciting tasks as a concept artist. The possibilities are limitless as to what direction you can take your fantasy environment. However, this can be a double-edged sword, with anxiety setting in if you have no clear direction. I've had multiple projects, even on a day-to-day basis, where I reach high levels of stress with the demands of creating fantasy environments. The key is to practise constantly, listen to your peers, incorporate new techniques, and constantly observe the environment around you to inspire you in your work.

In this workshop I'll demonstrate some of the thought process and direct techniques required to help overcome some of the obstacles involved in creating a fantasy environment. ➤➤

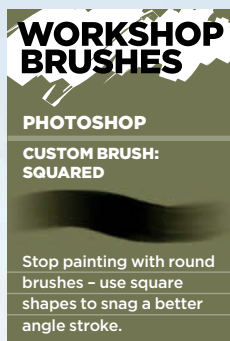
Artist PROFILE

Levi Hopkins
COUNTRY: US



Currently a senior concept artist working in the entertainment field, Levi has worked on a wide and exciting variety of projects including Guild Wars 2, Rift, and Infamous Second Son for the PS4. www.bit.ly/levih

DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES
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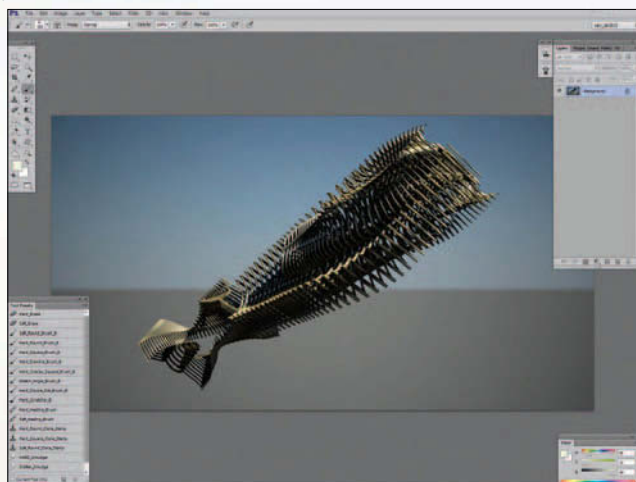


1 The beginning

The beginning of any concept can be the most daunting aspect of its creation. To tackle this problem I have a series of steps I follow religiously. If I fail to follow these steps I can almost guarantee a very, very long, restless night and a very annoyed wife. For the first step, I look through all the reference that I've collected over the years. I have one giant folder full of photography of my own or that I've collected from the web. Once I've found a few images that strike an emotion with me at that moment, I move forward.

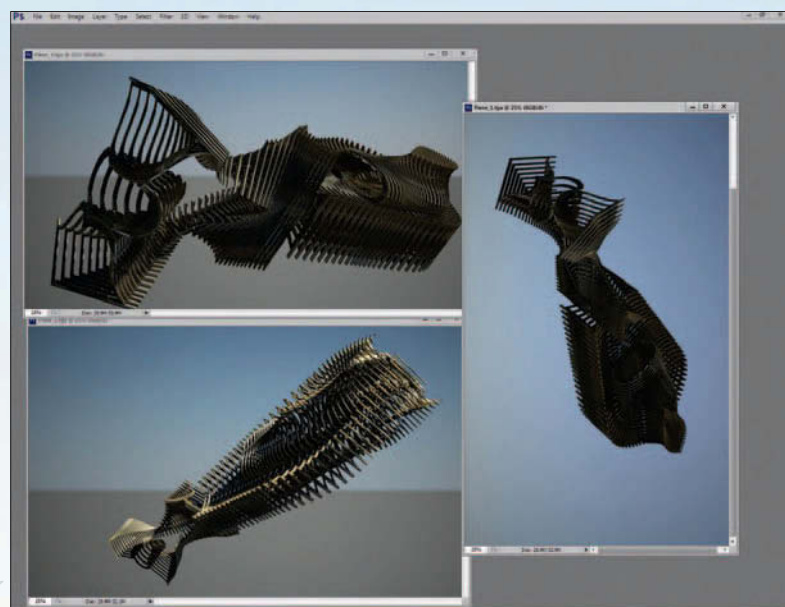
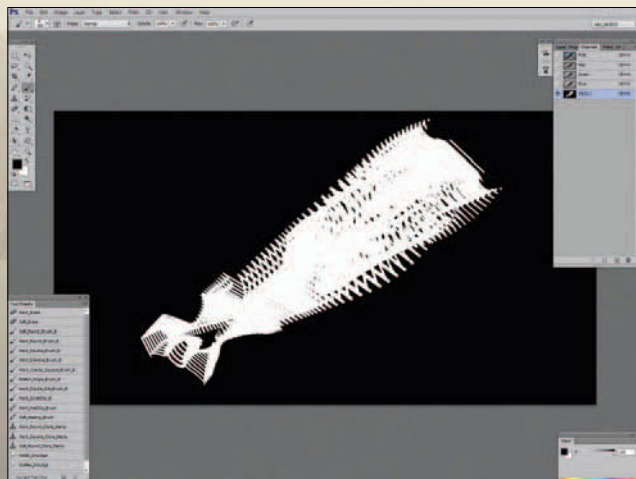
2 The 3D stage

For this workshop I decide to not block-out a scene in 3D, but to create a 3D mesh that I could then render out and incorporate into my concept like a custom shape or texture. To do this I could use any 3D program (here I'm using 3ds Max), and begin to model out basic shapes while keeping in mind the reference I've found for inspiration. I decide to create a bunch of wood scaffolding folding into interesting shapes. Once I've got some scaffolding modelled out, I render out a basic view.



3 Creating the mask

When using 3D in a concept I always remind myself of helpful techniques that can speed up my painting process. When I render out my scaffolding piece, I remember to save the image in Targa format. Targa images are 32-bit and come with an alpha channel - essentially a cut-out mask that can help you move the image around in your Photoshop file. You can find the alpha channel of the rendered image under the Channels tab in Photoshop.



4 The renders

Now that I have a basic model, I like to rotate around it looking for interesting viewpoints. At this moment I don't have a clearly defined agenda for my painting, so I like to keep things loose and hope for happy accidents. A good way to achieve happy accidents is to just experiment and take risks. With this in mind I just render out additional angles of my 3D model - whether I use them or not, it's worth the extra time.

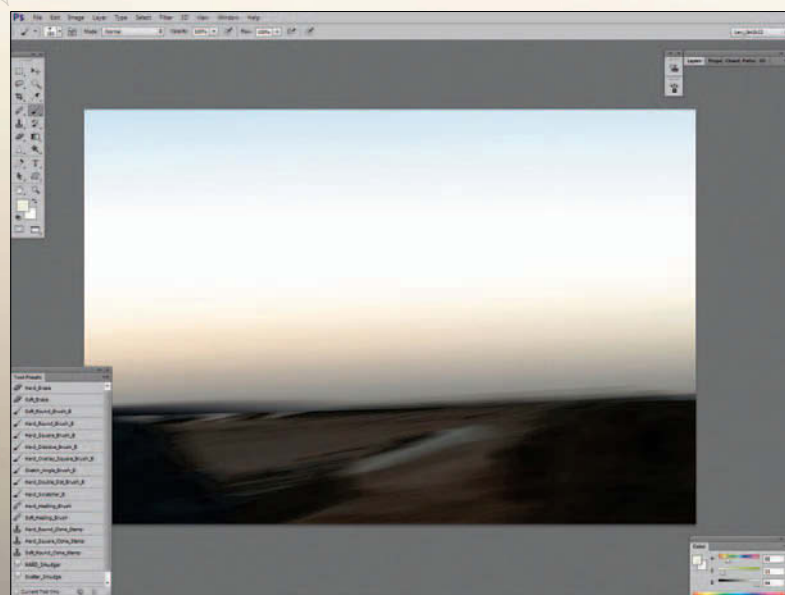


6 Breaking the abstraction

Adding some detail to my abstract canvas can define the area. There are many ways you can achieve this in Photoshop: add brush strokes, textures, custom shapes or old paintings on layers. Here I decide to use the Clone Stamp and sample some areas my reference. I like to do this on a layer above the initial painting and lower the opacity. You can use any of the layer modes by cycling through with the up-and-down arrow keys just in case you stumble upon a happy accident.

5 The painting begins

Now I've completed all the renders, I move on to the fun stuff. I like to wipe out the white canvas in Photoshop, so I take an old painting and run a Motion Blur filter on it with Filter>Blur>Motion Blur. This distorts any detail, leaving an abstract image with an interesting palette and values. I'm still in the experimental phase, so I don't worry about any total commitment to what's on the canvas.

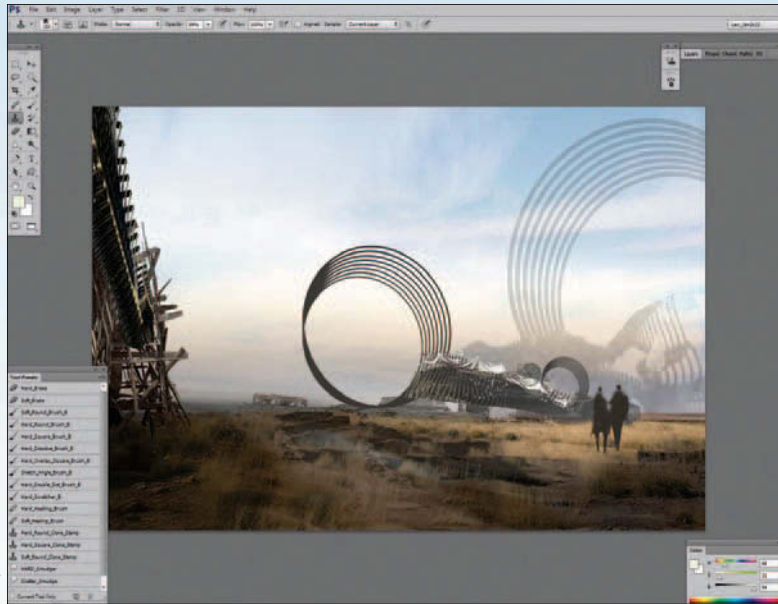


In depth Grand fantasy scene

Shortcuts

Visible layers

Ctrl+Alt+Shift+E (PC)
Cmd+Alt+Shift+E (Mac)
Merge all visible layers in Photoshop, but keep any layers and layer masks below.



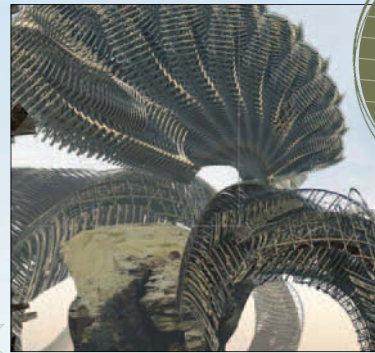
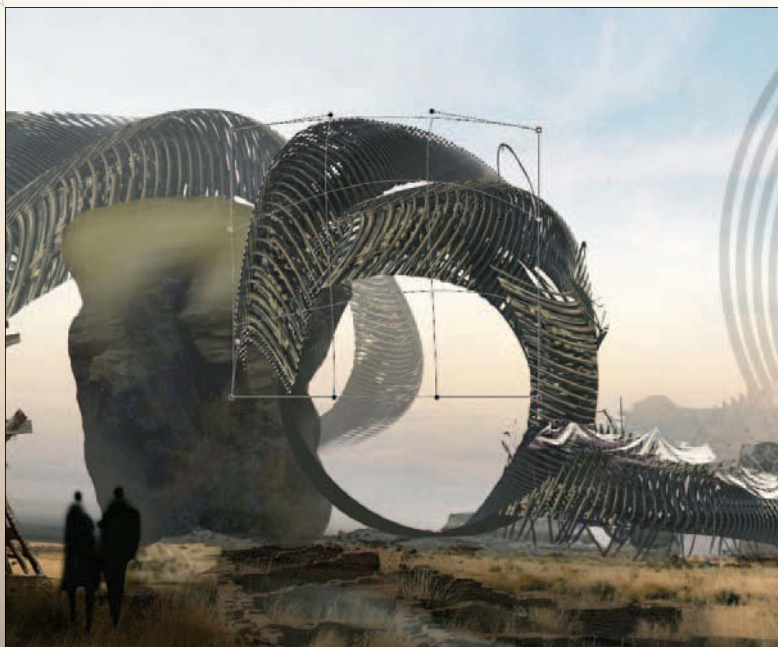
7 Searching for a trigger

This is the favourite point of any painting for me – the point where exploration opens up your mind and you begin to add and subtract, push and pull, and search for something that triggers your mind. I loosely add some brush strokes to start breaking up the open space. I also quickly block in a few scale figures with absolutely no commitment to their placement. The reason I do this is to help my mind start picturing the scale of the environment I'm creating.



8 Adding shapes to the scene

With the few elements I've added so far I begin to get a mental image of where I want to take this piece. I now start bringing in the 3D renders I created earlier and use them pretty much like custom shapes. When I first drop them in, I tweak their appearance a bit with Color Balance (Image>Adjustments>Color Balance). This enables them to mesh more closely with what's already been created. I then take the newly adjusted renders, which are on layers, and use the Warp tool (Edit>Transform>Warp) to bend and push them into perspective.



9 Transform more

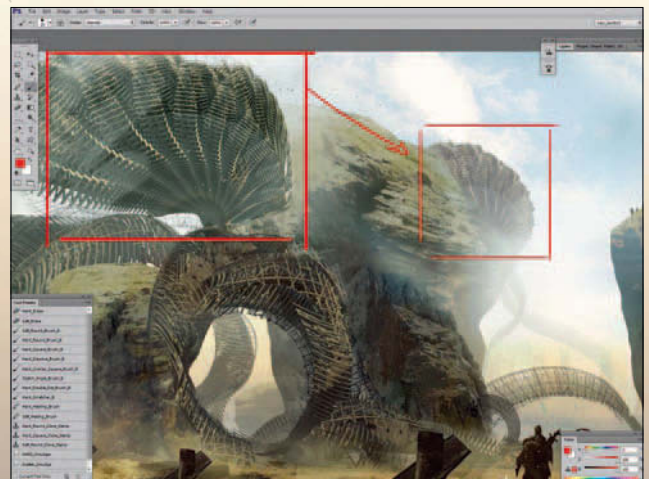
I've got a ton of layers with the renders I created bent into a variety of shapes. I keep pulling from this library, blocking in different areas of the image. I imagine a larger mass of scaffolding at the top of this rock, potentially imitating some sort of aquatic life. I create this shape by using Free Transform (Edit>Free Transform), offsetting the pivot point, then replicate and scale copies of the layer.

10 Back into balance

The image is feeling a bit lopsided to me at the moment. There's too much weight on the left side of the canvas, with the rock and large scaffolding structure being built on it. I alleviate some of this lack of balance by just taking the rock layer I created earlier, duplicating it, scaling it, and then moving it around the canvas until it reads right to me.

11 Introduce depth

I want this image to have a bit more depth to it, and one of the best ways to achieve this is to repeat an element into the distance. I decide to take the newly created large scaffolding mass at the top of the first rock and duplicate that layer. I then move that layer, scale it down, rotate it and attach it to the rock in the middle of the canvas. The initial values have too much contrast, so I take the layer and adjust the saturation (Image>Adjustments>Hue/Saturation), using the Lightness slider to pull out the blacks. ➡➡



PRO SECRETS

Adjustment layers

I use a ton of Adjustment layers in Photoshop. One great technique is to hit Ctrl+G to group any number of adjustment layers you have in your file. Once they are grouped together, I click the Add Layer Mask button, which will add a mask for the entire group. From this point, feel free to paint out some of the effects created by your adjustment layers.

Shortcuts
Curves adjustment
Ctrl+M (PC)
Cmd+M (Mac)
Open the Curves dialog
and tweak values in the
RGB channels.

12 Greater cohesion

I realise the environment needs a bit of unity. One of my favourite methods for achieving that is by using adjustment layers. Don't be afraid to experiment constantly with this. One I use on this piece is a Curves adjustment layer. Within the Curves dialog I drop down through the different channels available (Red, Green, Blue) and tweak the values separately. By doing this I create a bit of harmony and pull everything together.



13 Group elements

Now that I've got a good set of adjustment layers pulling the image together, I place them all in a group with Ctrl+G. With this group of adjustments you can do a variety of things. You can add a mask to the entire group and paint out the effect it creates in some areas of your painting, you can lower the opacity to lessen the overall effect, or you can turn the visibility of the group off and continue to paint below that layer, then turn it on later to bring back the cohesion.

14 Image manipulation

Once I've pushed a painting quite a way, I like to create a 'stamped' layer, merging the whole image together but without losing the layers. I'll sometimes leave some of the layers that were created below the complete merge to use them as masks later in the painting. Once I've merged the whole painting together I like to take entire chunks of the canvas and free transform them. For this piece I take the large structure on the left and push it a bit more into perspective.



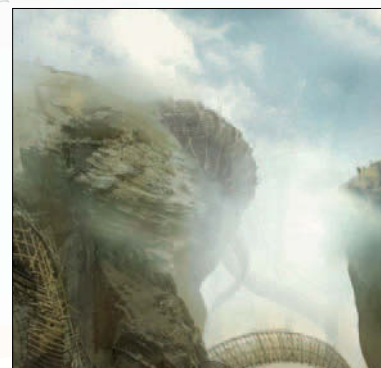
PRO SECRETS

Clone Source

The Clone Source panel is a great opportunity to explore the wide variety of options available for either the Clone Stamp Tool or Healing Brush. You can open the Clone Source panel by going to Window>Clone Source in Photoshop. Within this panel you can rotate your sampled area, flip it horizontally and vertically, and scale it up or down.

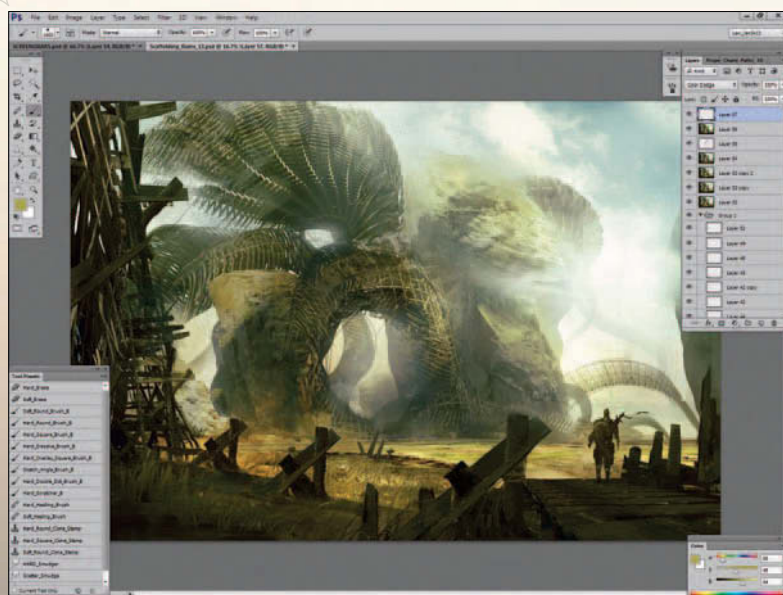
15 Healing brush

Having the painting on one layer enables me to use some cool tools in Photoshop. One of my favourites is the Healing Brush. With this great tool you can Alt-click to sample any area of your painting. You then can take that sampled area and paint it on top of another area of your image. Photoshop then blends the two together, sometimes giving you nice effects. For this piece I sample the open sky and then paint it on certain areas to soften the image.



16 Enhance the lighting

I'm rapidly heading towards the finish line for this painting. At this stage I like to hop around the image adding small details and brush strokes, and push the depth between the layers. I notice it needs the directional light to be a bit stronger. I decide to add this with a layer set to Color Dodge and then paint a lighter value over areas of the painting, simulating light. And then I call the image finished!



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www.darenbader.blogspot.co.uk

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ISSUE 102 ON SALE IN UK 11 OCTOBER 2013

Photoshop DESIGN A SPACE OPERA CHARACTER

From the initial rough concept to its flawless execution, discover how **Devon Cady-Lee** develops a character that fits the Space Opera genre

Space Opera is a difficult thing to properly define, and that's why I love it. Perhaps these days it's easy for anyone to separate fantasy from science fiction, but once upon a time (a time long before we physically sent humans into space), the thought of living on another planet was a much greater mystery. I really enjoy looking back at the unique time before these genres were so well established. There isn't a demand for storytellers to explain how technology works or obey the laws of the natural world – the

Artist PROFILE

**Devon
Cady-Lee**
COUNTRY: US



Devon is a concept artist in games who moonlights as an illustrator.

He has worked in the profession since 2006 and has produced concept and illustration work for videogames, RPGs, card games, FX studios and film.
www.bit.ly/cadylee

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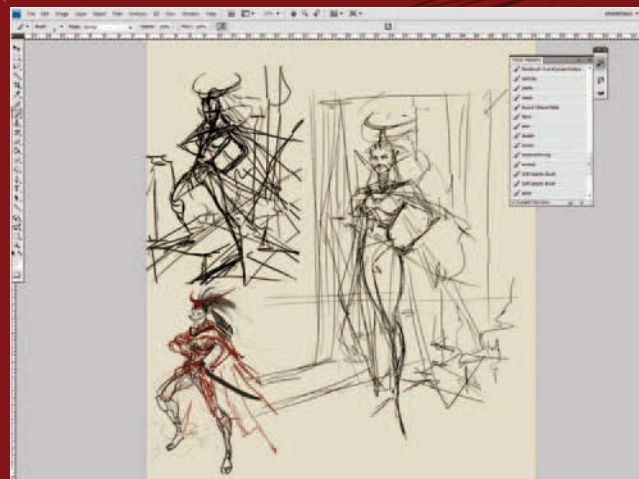
audience simply accepts these realities, much like in any fantasy tale... But this time it's in space!

They've got romances, feudal wars, and epic journeys to exotic locations – all with lasers and spaceships. In contrast to other genres of science fiction, there is a strong emphasis on values that have lost their glamour in the modern age; ideas of tradition, a code of honour, chivalry, and so on. Space Opera tries to bring these values back, and attempts to show that they are relevant, regardless of time passing, no matter how far into the future.

So my prime directive with this workshop is to make a Space Opera character. This implies that I need to create a whole world to accompany the character itself. Using a few visual queues and conventions that come with the territory, I can tell a story through imagery. I draw inspiration from classic space operas like Star Wars, Princess of Mars, Amazing Stories and Dune. I also look to the work of Orientalist illustrators, because they are a fitting inspiration for anybody who is trying to capture the allure of a foreign world.

1 Getting started

For this workshop I shall be working in Photoshop, at an image size of about 5,000DPI lengthwise. I feel this resolution is just about adequate to get the level of detail that I want without killing my machine in the process. I intend to only really use the History, Layers, Tool Presets and Navigator windows in the execution of this image. I have my character-related layers and my background-related layers grouped separately; this will save me time when I want to see the character without the background, or vice versa.



2 Eyes on the prize

I decide to illustrate a Captain of the Guard. I'm not a great planner, but I'm comfortable repainting anything that looks wrong no matter how far along I get. I start making marks to get a sense of the general composition and posing.



3 Let the brush serve you

I use a simple array of brushes to paint with, all with Pressure Opacity. For this image I'll use a hard round brush (which I use to sketch and paint delicate things); a Chalk brush (which I use for most of my rendering); and a Chisel brush (for planar work like buildings). What's most important for me is to use something that can give me a hard edge on the sides, but blend more evenly in the middle. ➡



Shortcuts

Toggle tools

Shift+any tool (Mac & PC)
This will cycle through all the tool variations. This is especially useful when using Dodge and Burn alternately.

4 Juggling act

Often I try to concept a strong design before posing and lighting it for the illustration, because doing both at the same time is difficult. I keep the pose simple to focus mainly on the costume. The background will exist only to support the character. I paint very opaquely in the beginning to get a sense of my flat shapes, and then blend with lighter strokes.

5 Make it clear

The lighting needs to complement my design, so I choose it to be sunlit from the front and above her for clarity. The background is there to draw the eye across the design and not steal too much attention while remaining interesting. The theme is the power of the character; all my judgements revolve around this.

PRO SECRETS

Adjustment Layers

I always experiment with Adjustment Layers to see what I'm missing. Taking out the saturation helps me see my value mistakes, and playing with Color Balance helps me see what's missing in my range.



6 Concepting the character

I want to make a bold, solid silhouette with my character's cape to imply her position of order and power. I give her a pose that includes a half-drawn sword, which is explicitly a sign of tension and wariness. I make sure this is reflected on her facial expression, using parted lips and alert eyes.

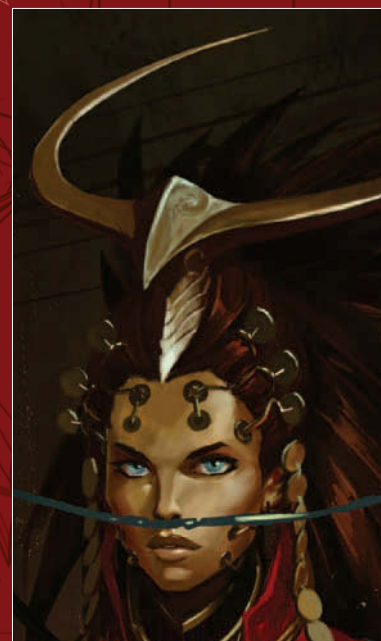


7 Storytelling with shapes

To convey a sense of the warrior, I make sure she feels aggressive with sharp shapes along her silhouette. However, I choose to decorate her with softer, round shapes closer to her face so she doesn't come off as malevolent. The power of shape design can tell a story without words.

8 Funny hats

Elite guards and armies of the king always have distinct costumes and headware that aren't really functional, but serve to stand out and put them higher than normal soldiers. I take inspiration from historical warriors to combine them into a culture that is uniquely my own. Space Opera is fun for me, mainly because I get to design new cultures!



9 Some context

I play a lot with the background throughout the rendering to see what shapes give a nice flow. I'm trying to establish a fore-, mid- and background, and try to keep her face from being dead centre. I wait until I have a clear camera angle to start checking perspective. I also imply some building shapes for context.



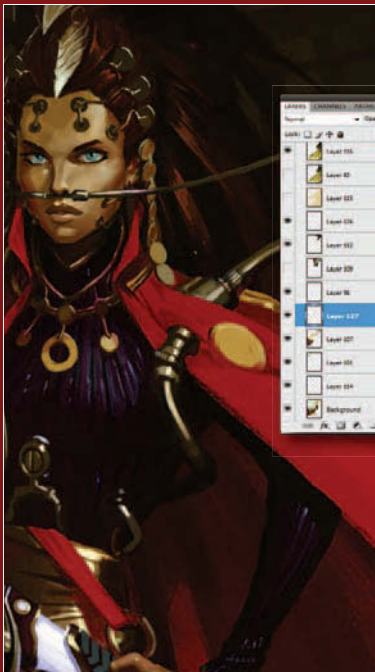
10 Support the character

I change her footing to appear as though she's stepping off the stairs behind her, in order to make her feel like she's heading towards the viewer. This, of course, adds more tension. I render the cape on her left side to come towards the viewer a bit, again drawing them in. I'm adjusting elements to fit the story that I'm trying to tell as I go.



11 Layer management

I'm constantly making new layers, but I merge them down when it's time to move on. As a general rule, I just don't want to have to extend my whole layers tab to the bottom just to see them. I also name the important ones that I always return to, and group them when I feel there are too many to manage.



12 Stage treatment

It's becoming clear to me I need to start caring about the background. I create a simple perspective grid by drawing lines across my image horizontally, and then I modify them with Perspective Warp. Next I use a line grid to define my horizon line and keep it in mind at all times. I can use shapes in the architecture to start relating to my character.

13 Not in Kansas

We need some Space Opera conventions. How about a battery-powered sword? A breathing tube to filter her air? Spaceships? Weird, double-mooned skies? I'm fitting them all in. I'm making it clear this is not Earth, that she is well adjusted to her environment, and that the only alien here is you.



Shortcuts

Paste in place

Shift+Ctrl+J (Mac)

Shift+Cmd+J (PC)

Copies your selection and pastes it into a new layer in exactly the same spot.

14 All about feeling

Material definition is extremely important when explaining a new concept, and in this illustration it's no less important. I make most of the materials very familiar, and I even make the metal elements feel old. I only make a few tweaks to the construction of her outfit that really imply that it is science fiction; I don't especially want to go overboard with explaining function.

15 Keep it together

I make sure to make my cast shadows feel consistent, as well as bouncing colours off of one another to define their relationships. I sample colours from the sky to reflect off her skin and cape, and the ground colour bounces off from the side of her boot. New patterns, like the tiling, can't overpower the rest of the image.



PRO SECRETS

Finishing touches

Keep Navigator open so that your drawing remains in perspective. Take a snapshot and flip it to see rendering errors. Ask any friend, artist or not, what they see. It's important to get fresh perspectives while you paint in order for you to see your mistakes.

16 Final touches

Keeping the lighting and colours consistent is important for making the character feel as though they are a part of the environment – although I do fudge them to my discrepancy. I prefer to merge down my adjustments before I start painting on the layer again so it doesn't become a headache.

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Issue 95 May 2013



Manga and mechs make up a large portion of this month's cracking issue. Our packed workshop section will give you the skills to compose manga fight scenes and heroic characters, and explain the secrets of manga's masking techniques. And we discover what it takes to paint the perfect mech.

Issue 96 June 2013



Immerse yourself in the world of classic fantasy art with the help of John Stanko, who channels the skills of Frazetta to produce this month's stunning cover. Our workshop artists will also help you depict moving fabric, paint a magical forest and give your digital paintings a traditional feel.

Issue 97 July 2013



How could ImagineFX not celebrate the 50th anniversary of Marvel's X-Men, or 75 years of DC's Superman, in this month's comic special issue? And with workshops on mood lighting in your comics, how to pose two heroes and beating creative block, you'll soon be a digital art superhero!

Issue 98 August 2013



Be inspired by Simon Dominic's monstrously good cover art, then discover how paleoart has evolved over the years, as we talk to the artists who paint dinosaurs as realistically as possible. Workshops from Katie De Sousa and Weta's Christian Pearce also riff on the Lost World theme!

Issue 99 September 2013



To celebrate Magic: The Gathering's 20th birthday, we talk to some amazing card-art artists, such as Jason Chan, Scott M Fisher and John Stanko, while workshop artists include Aleks Briclot and Volkan Baga. Elsewhere, Sparth 'sculpts' a sci-fi vista and Dave Rapoza paints a dark, brooding scene.

Issue 100 October 2013



Our bumper 100th anniversary issue looks back to our past, and casts an eye over the artists of the future. There's a countdown of your 100 greatest artists of all time, a review of your favourite covers, plus workshops from Jason Chan, Raymond Swanland and the mighty Genzoman!

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ImagineFX November 2013



Procreate

MASKING WITH FREEHAND SELECT

Procreate stands out because of its versatile yet restrained toolset. The latest version adds more masking flexibility, as **Paul Tysall** finds out

With version 1.8, Procreate artists can now mask areas of a painting with the Freehand Select Tool. In traditional art this was done using masking fluid; in airbrushing and photography a film was applied. Photoshop has several masking features available to digital artists. In typical Savage Interactive style this feature is a simple but powerful addition

to Procreate, working seamlessly with pan and zoom gestures to maintain workflow. Furthermore, you can add to a selection and subtract from it as you go along, and even select outside the canvas area.

Beyond masking, the tool makes it a lot easier to isolate a specific area so you can use Procreate's Transform tools – handy for correcting any perspective or proportion mistakes. Let's take a look...

1 Creating a selection

Start by selecting the S-ribbon icon from the top left of the menu bar. There are two methods of creating a selection in Procreate: you can draw a continuous line (Freehand) or you can tap from point to point (Polygon) – or you can use a combination of both. You can still use the Undo and Redo options at this stage, in case you need to go back and alter the path of the selection. To close it, tap the blue start node.



2 Making a mask

At this point you can activate the Mask mode by choosing the Paint, Smudge or Erase tool. Or you can tap the Plus and Minus icons on the sidebar: the Plus icon will leave the pixels inside your selection active, while the pixels outside remain dormant – indicated by a series of diagonal moving lines. You can still create further selections at this stage using the Plus and Minus icons to refine your mask.



3 Extra features

Some additional selection features to note include masking from a target layer. So if you already have an overall shape of your subject on one layer you can choose 'Select layer contents...' from the pop-over panel to generate a mask from it. You can also use the Selection tool with the Transform settings to isolate parts of an image to be distorted. Procreate also remembers your last mask – simply tap and hold the Selection icon to activate this.



Artist PROFILE

Paul Tysall

COUNTRY: England



After four years as ImagineFX's art editor, working with

the elite of the digital art world, Paul is now a busy freelance designer and illustrator.
www.tysall.com

GETTING TO KNOW PROCREATE'S SELECTION TOOLS

A. Freehand Select Tool icon

Tap here to begin using the Selection Tool.

B. Plus icon

Select this to add to your selection.

C. Minus icon

This will remove pixels from your active selection area.

D. Remove icon

Tapping this once will remove your current selection. If you have a mask already active, which you were adding to or subtracting from, then a second tap will remove the entire base mask.

E. Invert icon

This will invert your mask area, so what was selected is deselected and vice-versa.

F. Starting Node

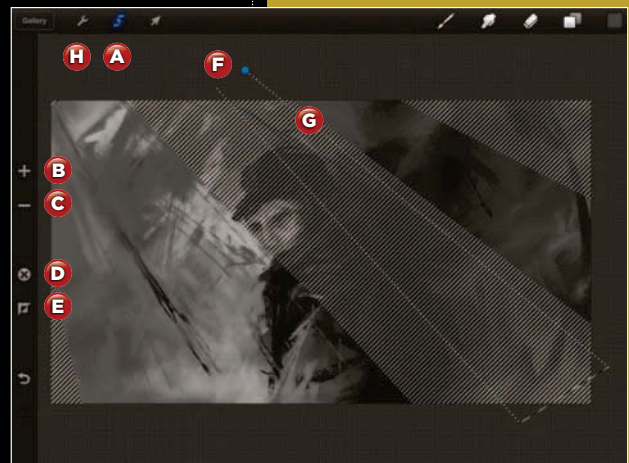
This blue circle indicates your start point – tap it to close the path.

G. Active Selection

These 'marching ants' denote the outline of the path you've plotted.

H. Actions

You can also set the mask's opacity by going into the Actions settings – navigate to Prefs and use the slider to achieve the desired visibility.



Painter X3

USE REAL REFERENCE TO DESIGN AN ALIEN

Peter Stapleton explores the new features of Corel Painter X3 to design a cute but tough alien, using some unlikely reference along the way

Artist PROFILE

Peter Stapleton

COUNTRY: Australia



Peter is new in the illustration game, having started only working fully professionally this year. He's already keeping busy as a freelance artist and specialises in concept art.

www.bit.ly/pstapleton

DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES

www.bit.ly/101-painter

PRO SECRETS

Brush tracking

Be sure to adjust Painter's Brush Tracking setting. This greatly affects the way it feels when you paint. Play around with the settings until it feels comfortable. I tend to use the following settings: Velocity Scale 18.53, Velocity Pressure 0.55, Pressure Scale 0.92, and Pressure Power 2.69.

The design of an alien is really only limited to your imagination, but borrowing from nature is great for making a believable creature. I want my alien to feel lovable, but I'd also like it to be tough and believable.

I immediately thought that a frog would be a great jumping off point for the design. The slimy, scaly texture of frog skin is perfect. Before I start, I decide to

gather some reference photos of a variety of frog breeds. The alien needs to be designed to be cute, so I need to think of the necessary elements. Big eyes, soft features and a lack of sharp pointy bits are a sure fire way of keeping things cute. Frogs are cute – at least I think so.

I've decided to keep him anthropomorphic and give him some futuristic gizmos to keep with the futuristic, sci-fi, alien theme.

I feel that putting him in a bar with a bunch of ne'er-do-wells would be a suitable environment to showcase his talents. Here his cute aspects will conflict with the inferred aggression of the scene. I still need to make sure that he is the centre of attention, though.

In this workshop I get to use the latest version of Corel Painter – X3 – for this painting, so I'm excited to use the new features to speed me along.

WATCH THIS!
www.bit.ly/UNI101-painter



1 Line art start

I create a few thumbnail sketches to get the creative juices flowing. They're quick and really messy, but I make sure the silhouette and design are interesting. Adding cheekbones, a brow and an eye shape similar to a human is a good way of keeping them relatable. I experiment with different shapes, enlarge and stretch different elements, add horns, scales, bumps, lines to see if anything looks good. I choose a thumbnail to refine.



2 Value mock-up

Here, I put the line art on a Multiply layer and create another layer underneath to do a quick value painting. I know I want to have a warm atmosphere in the final painting, so I paint everything in a warm tone. I've decided to have a rim light coming from the top right of the image and another coming from the left. I do this quickly, as I know that I'll be able to apply much more accurate light later on down the track.



3 Froggy colour

Now it's time to choose my colours. I use the new Reference Image feature in Painter X3 to have photos of frogs to look to when I need. There were a couple of frog colours that really caught my eye, but I really like one that has a bright saturated orange with a yellow highlights. The eyes had to contrast with the skin so I chose a desaturated grey. I wanted the head to be the centre of attention so I paint the clothes with more muted colours.



Shortcuts

Resize brush

Ctrl+Alt+drag brush (PC)
Cmd+Alt+drag brush (Mac)
Use this shortcut to resize your brush on the fly. It's quicker than using the [and] keys.



4 Building the foundation of the skin

Now I'm starting to render the skin. I use a Round brush with the resaturation level low at around 50 per cent. With low pressure applied to the brush the more it blends, while pressing hard applies more opaque paint. Looking at the frog reference, I want to make the skin quite shiny. I start with a small range of middle values, because later on when I'll add the specular highlights the skin will really pop.



5 Give the skin texture

The lighting is from the front and slightly to the top right of the image, so I make sure the light is hitting the forms in the correct place. I add scales to the skin in a way that follows the form and has a random quality to it. I reference the frog photo often. Once I feel the basic skin lighting is at a suitable level I move on to the rim lighting. For this I choose a warm yellow light.



6 Starting to apply the rim light

I apply the light where the form turns towards the direction of the light source. I'm constantly thinking of the form and the perspective of light. I look at plenty of reference material of different examples of rim light to give me an idea as to how the light should be applied. I use my drawing brush in order to be able to create the sharp paint strokes I require to be suitable for applying accurate rim light. To add a slight subsurface scattering effect I use the Glow brush, or in some cases an Overlay layer to give it a more realistic feel in the way the light reacts with the skin.

PRO SECRETS

Save, save, save your work

Save often and be sure to keep iterative saves along the way. There's an iterative save option in the File menu that creates a copy with a sequential number whenever it's selected. During this project I made quite a large mistake which I then saved, but fortunately I was able to go back to a previous save, having only lost about 20 minutes of work.



7 Blend the light

The Blender brush is my best friend here to make the rim light seem to flow over the form. I use the Blender often to soften features that are looking too sharp and hard. I start with splotches of paint and blend in where I need to. It's a great way to remove line art.



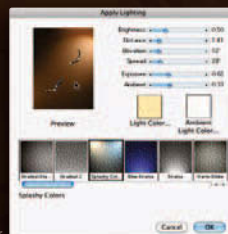
8 Make it feel alive

I use the Overlay layer to apply secondary lighting. Using the Airbrush, any value above 50 per cent will lighten and saturate anything beneath it and anything below will darken but still saturate. It takes getting used to, but helps your images pop. I apply brightness to the brow, nose, mouth and chin and apply darker value to the edges of the form.



9 The good part

I selectively apply 100 per cent white value spots to the appropriate areas. I refer to the photos of frogs to help me out. Don't go overboard with the specular highlights – it's useful to study the different ways light reflects on different materials. This is the only area in the painting that will have 100 per cent white applied as this is the centre of interest.



10 To the background

Now that our alien is coming along nicely, I feel it's time to move onto the background. I create a new Normal layer and fill it with a warm middle value, then use the Apply Lighting effect with a few slightly different coloured spotlights to the layer. You'll notice I place the lights where the rim light from the character originates. I do this as I feel it is a nice starting point to the background.

Shortcuts

Free Transform

Ctrl+Alt+T (PC)

Cmd+Alt+T (Mac)

This tool just got a lot more useful. It enables you to transform multiple layers at once.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PAINTER X3

CUSTOM BRUSHES: PETE'S DRAWING BRUSH

As the name implies I use this brush for drawing and sketching out my drawing. But I also use this for fine, sharp lines and details.

PETE'S PAINTING BRUSH

This is the brush I use for the majority of my painting. It has a low resaturation setting, so the less pressure I use the more it blends. I use it to add paint and blend at the same time.

PETE'S AIRBRUSH

I use this brush on my Overlay and Multiply layers to add large swathes of light or shadow. I also use it to soften areas with too much contrast, and to add smoke and dust.

PETE'S BLENDER 2

This is a slightly modified version of the 'Grainy Water' default Blender. I use this all the time with a nice paper selected to smooth out forms and to blend out line art.

GLOW

This is a great brush to add light to images. When I use this I keep the colour I select with a very dark value as to have a greater control with the brush.



11 Add some friends

This is where I'll start to add our ne'er-do-good pals in the background. I have plenty of fun creating different silly aliens using the same techniques I used when making our main character. They don't need the same level of detail, as I have a plan to apply a lens blur effect at the end. Therefore, I don't worry about the very fine details. I experiment at this stage with the Soften effect, which I'll detail at the end.

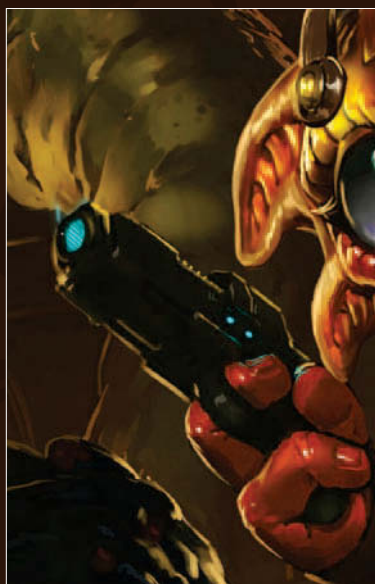


12 Transform the image

I still work away at different elements throughout the painting as I go along. I've decided to add a Dutch Tilt to the painting to make it a bit more dynamic. This is where the new Transform tools in Painter X3 come in really handy. They allow me to select multiple layers at a time so I can transform them all at once. This speeds up things greatly and means I can keep the different elements on different layers.

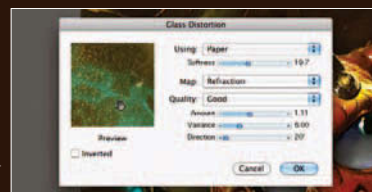
13 Change it up

To make the image appear more balanced, I flip the foreground elements and change the hand and gun on the main alien. I feel the previous gun and hand was looking a little too bland. I also feel that there is also a bit too much flat space in the far background, so I add some alien-looking, drink dispensing bar technology. Again, I don't worry too much about the fine details, because this will all be blurred later. I just try to make the silhouettes appear as interesting as possible.



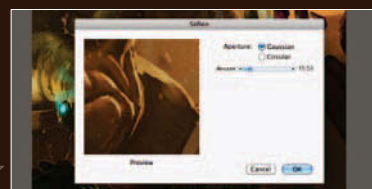
14 The weapon

I start to detail the new gun. Technological, man-made elements need to contrast with organic elements, and here geometric shapes, lines and hard edges are the name of the game. I add interesting bits and bobs (the odd greeble here and there) and try to break up elements with odd shapes. It's handy to look up reference at every stage to get ideas flowing. Adding lights is a great way to create interest. I decided on a blue colour to offset the orange of the alien.



15 Use some effects

Out of the gun (and the purple alien's hand) I paint some energy tendrils. I just use the Airbrush at various sizes and then apply the Glass Distortion effect (Effects>Focus>Glass Distortion). At this stage I also start to add atmospheric effects like smoke and dust.



16 Selective focus

A nice technique to use to keep something at the centre of interest is to try to simulate lens blur. I use the Soften effect (Effects>Focus>Soften) to blur each object according to how far they are from our main character. I raise the amount that the further-away-from and closer-to the viewer's perspective the element is, relative to the centre of interest. After a few more tweaks, the image is done.

Manga Studio & Photoshop

CREATE TENSION IN A GROUP SCENE

Discover how to add a feeling of unease to your figure designs, then create a character for **Emma Vieceli's** upcoming book and win prizes!

Elves and dwarves are long-established elements of the fantasy cannon. In the Oni Press-published series *The Avalon Chronicles*, which I co-created with Nunzio DeFilippis and Christina Weir, several tropes of fantasy storytelling are turned around and challenged – and these established races definitely don't escape that treatment.

In this workshop, I'll be explaining my design process using the characters Kolinarr and Jourdain from the series as examples, and I shall give an insight into

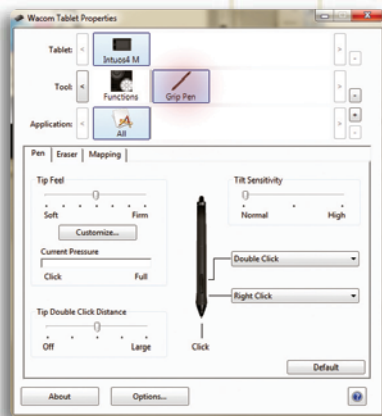
our Avalonian elves and dwarves. We'll think about the key points of character creation, visual motif, societal impact and how wider world building is vital to creating a believable character.

I'll also be talking a little about my digital tablet of choice – a Wacom Intuos – and I'll be extending an invitation to all you lovely people to respond to the workshop and add a third character to the scenario for a chance to win some Wacom goodies. Whether you feel more inspired by the dwarves or the elves, that's totally up to you!

1 Setting up your tools

Using the Express keys option in the tablet's properties (in the Start menu in the Wacom folder) you can customise the function of the keys. Your shortcuts appear as LED titles next to each key on the tablet. Setting your pen's pressure sensitivity is

important for health as well as art, as if you find your wrist aching after using the tablet, you may be pressing too hard. Try shaking up your nib settings, too.



2 Roughing it out

I generally pencil my comics on paper and then scan in for inks. But for this workshop I'm working entirely digitally. If I were to flow-chart my digital work process, it might look something like this: Make a mess>Draw over that mess with a less messy mess>Refine mess, and so forth. Working digitally is liberating. My digital process is all about speed and having fun. I draw roughs, then I draw over them, refining as I go.



WATCH THIS!
www.bit.ly/UNI101-emma

Artist PROFILE

Emma Vieceli
COUNTRY: England



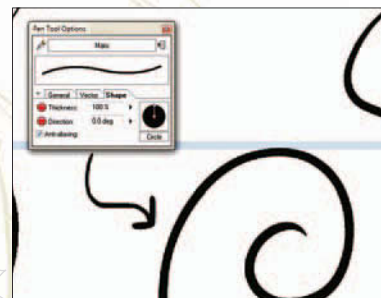
Emma loves telling stories with pictures. She's now working on the Alex Rider series for Walker Books.

www.emmavieceli.com

DIRECT LINK FOR WORKSHOP FILES
www.bit.ly/101-emma

If you're interested in seeing in detail how these characters got to the ink stage, check out the free ImagineFX disc. You'll find a video showing my process, from rough shapes using Manga Studio's Pencil tool, up to the finished inks. Be warned: I'm not a tech-wizz, so it's warts-and-all with no mistakes edited out. You'll see how many redraws and edits I work through to reach my final inks.

If you want to further explore these characters, and plenty more, check out *Avalon Chronicles* Volumes 1 & 2, available now from Oni Press.



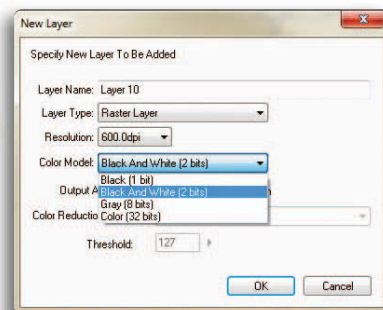
3 Preparing inks and colour models

I generally work in pure black and white when I'm inking for print, but if you prefer your lines to be anti-aliased, change your layer's colour model from pure black and white to grey or colour. In these modes, you'll see a small anti-aliasing tick-box available in your Pen tool options.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

MANGA STUDIO
CUSTOM BRUSH:
INK NIBS

I pencilled this image using the Manga Studio Mechanical Pencil, set to 0.3mm, and then I inked it with the Maru nib, set to 0.6mm.





Emmavieceli2013

Shortcuts

Rotate screen

Ctrl+R (PC)

Cmd+R (Mac)

Handy for achieving long, smooth lines at awkward angles for your drawing arm.



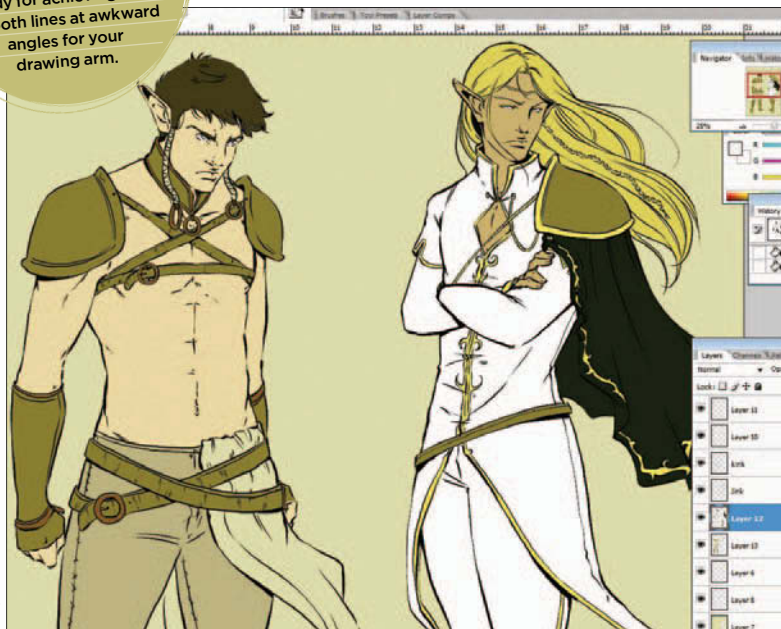
4 Evoking a feeling

The characters I'm drawing here are Kolinarr on the left, a dwarf; and Jourdain on the right, an elf. You'll note their heights aren't that different and their ears are similar. In Avalonian lore, the elves and the dwarves are actually the same race. Divided centuries ago through dispute, the elves took to the high ground, and the dwarves to the low. A lot of our understanding of the races comes from the jibes they've slung at each other for generations. No wonder these guys don't seem to be getting on...

PRO SECRETS

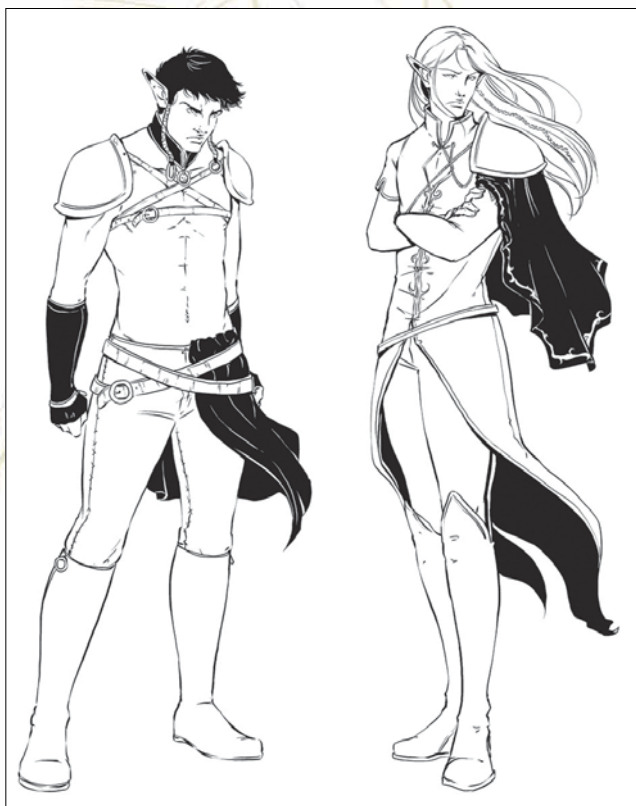
Layer usage

The Layer Select tool enables you to select a few different layers at once. Once they're highlighted blue, you can manipulate them at the same time, or merge them into one layer. Handy if you tend to work over several layers.



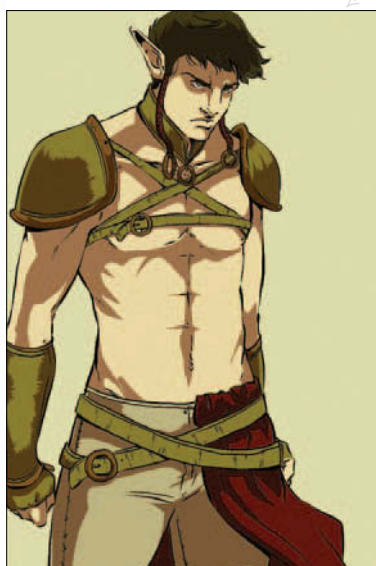
6 Racial differences

Inks done, it's time to add my flat colours in Photoshop. Although the dwarves' jibes would have us believe the elves to be pale and ghostly looking creatures, Avalonian elves are in fact fairly dark. They live closer to the sun, after all. Their dwarven counterparts on the other hand spend a lot of time working close to the ground and tend to be the paler of the two. By the same token, dwarves grow only an inch or so shorter on average than the elves – not that this has stopped elven jokes about their 'short' cousins being passed through to our world and vastly misunderstood.



5 Strike a pose

Facial expression goes a long way to telling a story in a single picture, but body language will amplify it massively. Kolinarr's expression is fierce, but his head is bowed. His stance is strong, so he's not cowering, but he's also not raising his chin to pick an outward fight. Jourdain meanwhile is turning his head and closing his posture. He's an elven stop sign right now, but his eyes aren't looking away.

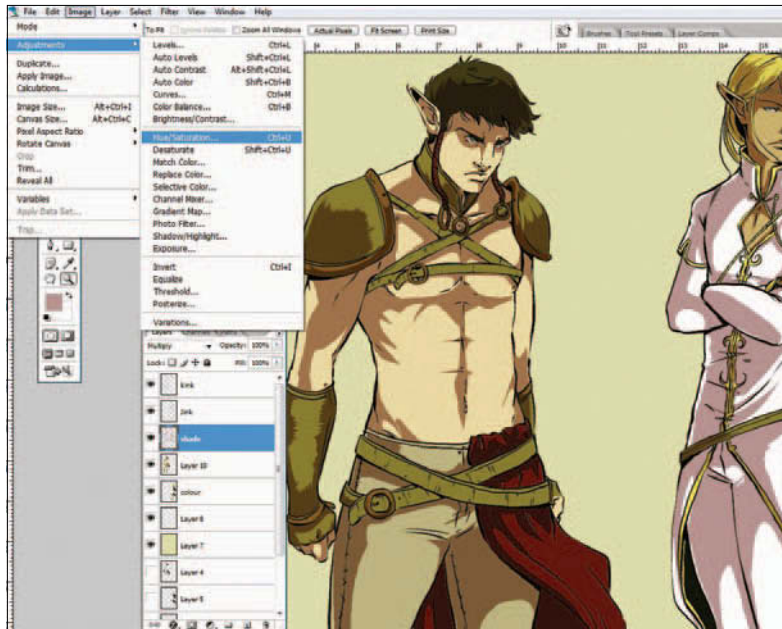


7 Create a shade layer

I hide base colours to work in a single shade layer across the image, taking into account light source, and the different edging to the shadows for different surfaces. The elves are a proud lot, but not whimsical or airy-fairy in any way. In fact, quite surprisingly, they're a very military-minded people. They're strict, disciplined and adhere to the rules. As such, there are military elements to their design, merged with what we recognise. Younger elves will sport a cutout at their chest in open mockery of a certain dwarven tradition.

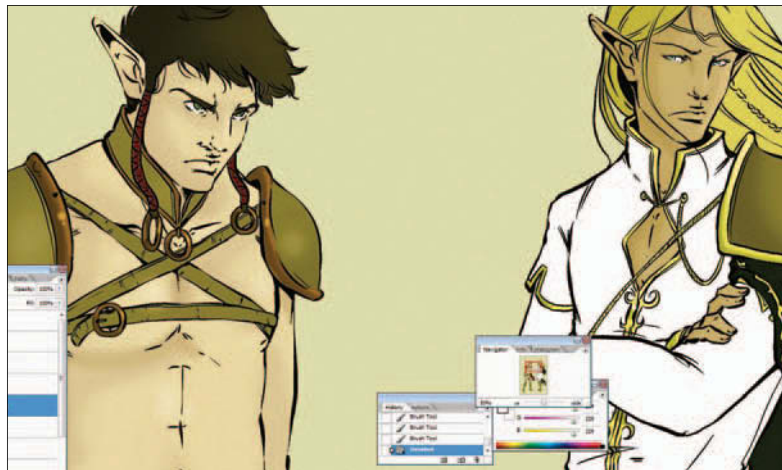
8 Customise the shade

Now that I've created a shade layer, I bring back my base colours and set my shade layer to Multiply. This has the effect of picking up on the colours beneath. The individual dwarf clans are denoted by the colour of the ribbon worn on their hair. The hair is grown long in front of the ears, and supports metal rings. These rings are repeated throughout the design. Dwarves leave much of their upper body uncovered, because they wear their achievements on their skin. As a dwarf grows and learns, he or she will earn markings on their torso for life goals, their arms for work goals, and their back for the past. So you only need to take a glance at a dwarf to discover who they are, where they've been and where they intend to end up in the future.



9 Colourising the figures

Now I can tweak the Hue/Saturation levels on my shade layer while still picking out the base colours beneath. This can produce some great effects. Try playing about with it and see how different the mood of your piece can become! The elves, of course, find this practice of marking a little tacky and dirty. Their skin will remain unblemished throughout their life, but a high-performing elf may well receive medals, ranks or trinkets to mark their achievements instead.



10 Mixing shade styles

I hide my shade layer and start laying down simple shade with the Brush tool. Mixing this softer style with the sharper cel-shaded layer on top adds more depth to the colours. Elves attach a lot of value to their hair, perhaps tied with their link to the unicorns. A braid or a hairstyle may well signify an aspect of their character. The dwarves, however, tend to wear theirs short and practical, and the parts of their hair that they keep long are wrapped up in their clan colour.

11 Overlay and texture

To add a final level of depth to the colour, I create a gradient over the characters and set it to Overlay on the layer drop down. I then tweak this in the same way I did the shade layer. Finally, I import a texture, set to Multiply, and lower its Opacity. It only needs to add depth rather than be seen. It seems that the elves and the dwarves can't even agree on when to cover up.



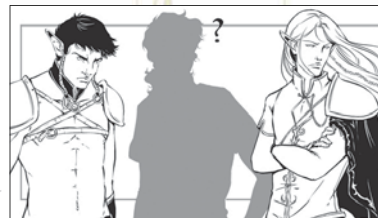
Shortcuts

Clear selection

Ctrl+D (PC)

Cmd+D (Mac)

If no line comes out, a small active area may still be selected. Hit Deselect to free your pen again.



12 Over to you - show us your character!

What we have here then are two characters engaged in quiet dispute... for now. Hopefully, you feel inspired to try your hand at designing an elf or dwarf to join this scene. Consider the design elements and racial traits I've mentioned, and consider too their expression and body gesture. Is your character going to be siding with someone, defending someone, or despairing of the pair of them? Are they a successful, military elf with braids and medals, or are they an accomplished dwarf with markings on their skin? Have fun with it!

PRO SECRETS

Try new nibs

It's not just the shortcut keys and dial that you can tweak to your tastes. Once you're comfortable with working on a graphics tablet, why not try customising the experience a bit more? Wacom provide several different nib types inside the pen holder. Just twist the top off and try mixing and matching some different levels of flexibility, texture and hardness. See what works for you.



WIN! A WACOM INTUOS & MORE

It's now your turn to invent a character, for print in Emma Vieceli's upcoming book. Get your creation chosen and win one of three Intuos Mangas!

How to enter

Simply follow Emma's workshop then design a character and enter it at the URL below. Two runners-up will win an Intuos Manga each, and the winner will also have their character featured in Emma's upcoming book (with full credit of course!).

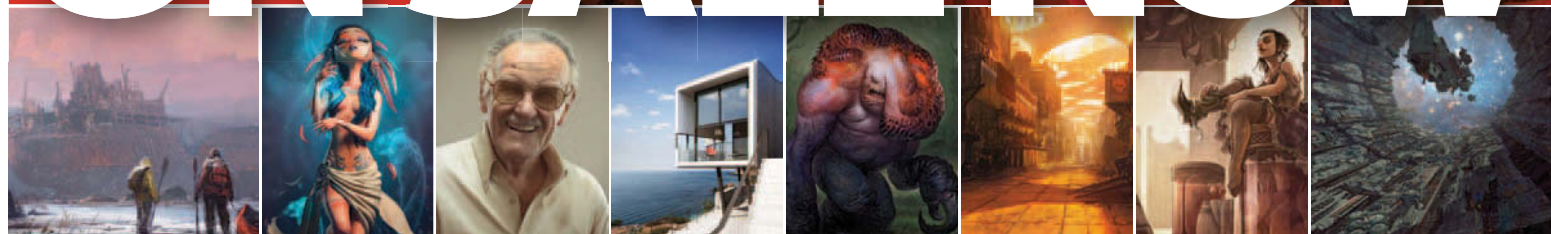
To enter, download Emma's art to use as a template from the competition website: www.futurecomps.co.uk/afx-intuos. This competition closes on 13 November 2013. For all terms and conditions for this competition visit the website.

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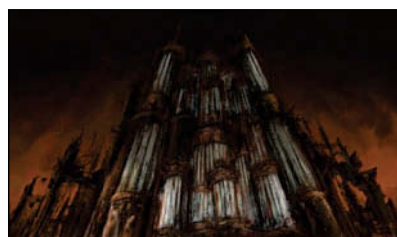
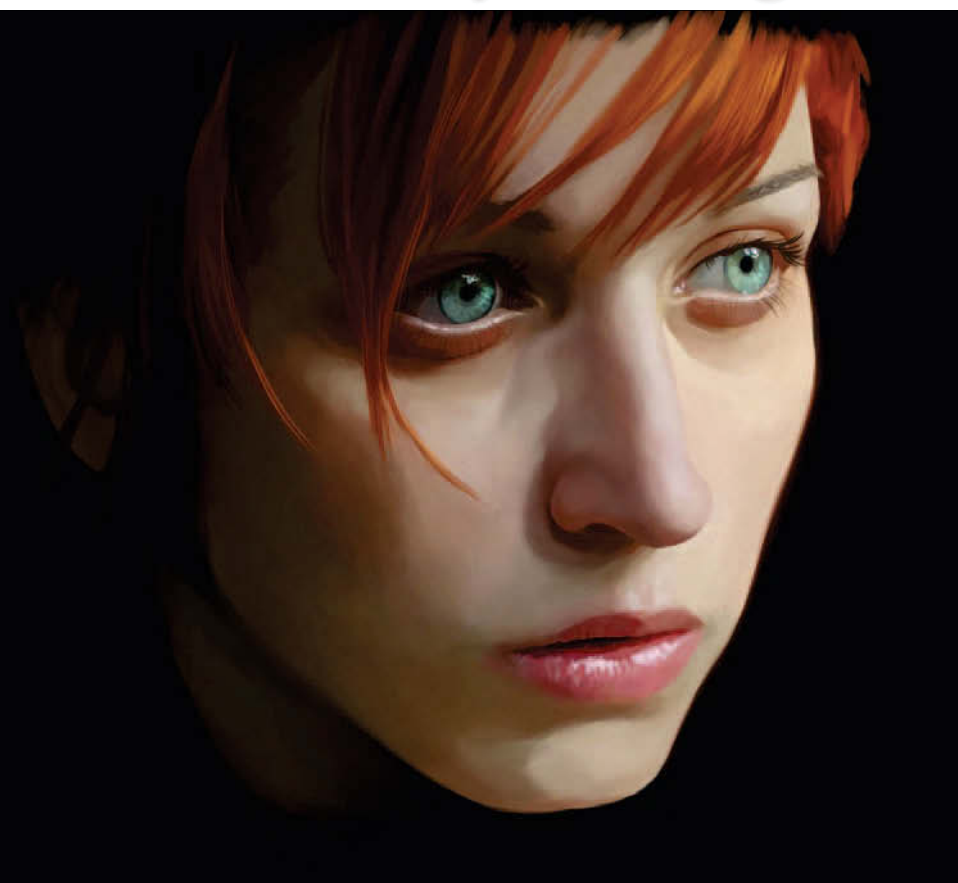
FANTASY & SCI-FI DIGITAL ART ImagineFX Reviews



Artist's Choice Award
Software and hardware with a five-star rating receives the IFX Artist's Choice award!

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

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ON TEST



SOFTWARE

90 Mischief

62 Solutions' endless canvas promises to push the boundaries of art software.

SOFTWARE

92 Black Ink

The otherworldly brushes in this complex art package truly put the 'abstract' into 'abstract art'...

SOFTWARE

92 iClone 5.5 Pro

It promises to take the pain out of creating 3D movies by supplying you with everything you need.



TRAINING

93 Sculpting a Stylized Character

Movie sculptor David Meng shares his techniques for building characters full of life and detail.

BOOKS

94 New reads

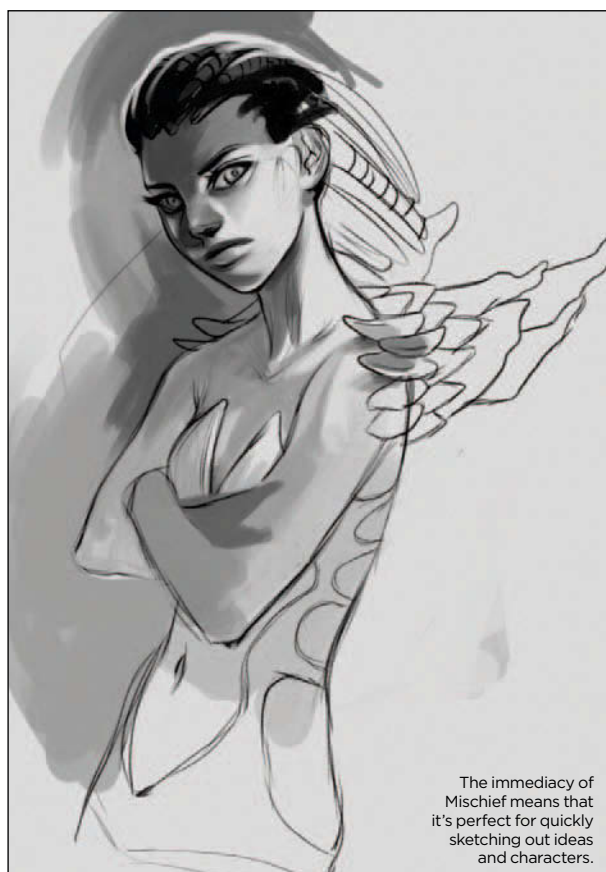
Burning Inside; Stan Lee's How to Draw Superheroes; World War Z: The Art of the Film; The Shining Girls; Sick; The Secret of Abdu El Yezdi.



RATINGS EXPLAINED Magnificent Good Ordinary Poor Atrocious



The beauty of Mischief is that images can be at once incredibly, infinitesimally detailed in some parts, and broadly sketched in others, such as the eyes in this image by Carly Sanker.



The immediacy of Mischief means that it's perfect for quickly sketching out ideas and characters.

Mischief

MAC
&
PC

TO INFINITY... AND BEYOND Mischief's endless canvas promises to push the boundaries of art software

Price \$65 **Company** 62 Solutions **Web** www.madewithmischief.com
Contact support@madewithmischief.com

Upon first glance you'd be forgiven for thinking that Mischief is a tablet app for creating art. It has a similar minimalist layout to, say, SketchBook Pro, with little in the way of tools, menus and brushes. But there's something very clever and potentially revolutionary going on behind its stripped-back exterior, something that would probably push the limited hardware of a tablet.

Mischief's mischievousness lies in its approach to the canvas and brushes, and it's something we can confidently say we've never seen before. Rather than being constrained by the dimensions you enter when you create a new image in Photoshop, Mischief presents you with a nigh-on infinite

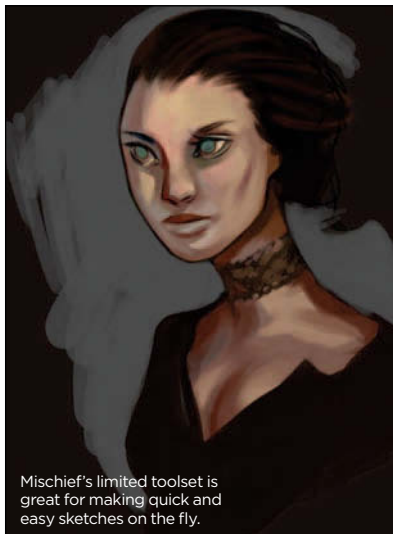
canvas, which can be zoomed and panned in just about every direction.

It's mind-blowing stuff. To begin with we found ourselves drawing a line, then zooming in a little and drawing another, and so on. Before we knew it we had created a fractal that would have made Benoit Mandelbrot blush. More impressive is the fact that the lines don't pixelate as you zoom in on them – Mischief is a little like a vector illustration program in this regard.

As a result of Mischief's infinite nature it's a far more liberating experience than other art packages, and it's perfect for people who just like to sit down with a stylus and see what happens. Draw a tree and you could zoom in and create an army of tiny elves inhabiting it, or zoom out and



As well as a pencil/brush tool, you'll have the ability to create lines, squares, circles and shapes – although you'll find yourself using the Pencil brush more often than not.



Mischief's limited toolset is great for making quick and easy sketches on the fly.



The infinite zooming in capabilities mean you can paint in incredible detail.

“A nigh-on infinite canvas that can be zoomed and panned in just about every direction”

create an epic fantasy landscape of which the tree is only a tiny element. Or you could do both.

A somewhat inevitable limitation of Mischief's semi-vector approach lies in its brushes. There are a mere 12 to choose from, including pens, pencils, crayons and markers. Although each can be altered in terms of width and opacity, there are none of the crunchy textures and viscous blobbiness of Painter, nor is there the ability to save

and load brushes as in Photoshop. Fortunately, layer support is really good, and there's a neat twist in that you can turn on 50 per cent transparency for the entire screen, which is great if you're working from a film still or an image you've found online. Its file system is incredible in itself – the detailed image we created weighed in at just 250kb. You can also export your images, or portions of them, to JPG and PSD formats.

Mischief is a refreshing approach to drawing programs, and it makes Photoshop and Painter feel archaic in the way they're restrained by traditional media. The brushes, or lack thereof, can be forgiven, as they're a necessary evil due to the way Mischief works. We'd recommend giving the demo a go before you splash out, but we're sure you'll be up to mischief with it in no time. ●

DETAILS

Features

- Infinite definition
- Infinite canvas
- 50 trillion to one zoom
- GPU parallelism
- Small file sizes
- JPEG import
- JPEG and PSD export
- Window transparency
- 22 Layers
- 18 brushes

System Requirements

Mac: OS 10.6 or greater
PC: XP, Vista, 7 or 8

Rating



ARTIST INTERVIEW

CARLY SANKER

An early adopter explains how she uses the program for digital art

Why do you use Mischief?

I use Mischief because it's lightweight and incredibly responsive. I always find myself wanting to draw with quality markers on Bristol board, but worry about wasting the expensive supplies. Mischief's Highlighter tool has the same feel and appearance as high-quality markers, but in a digital format.

Did you find it easy to pick up?

Mischief is incredibly intuitive. It has the standard functions of any essential digital drawing or painting program, but with technology that artists haven't been able to play with yet! You don't even need experience as a digital artist to pick up a stylus and start creating art in Mischief.

Has the infinite canvas changed the way you work?

Absolutely. I feel free! I can fit multiple character sheets in one file. I can zoom in to display an entire new drawing. You have to see it to believe it. I really think it's going to change the way we create and interact with art.

Do you find yourself using any programs on top of Mischief, or does it do everything you need?

I've done almost all of my freelance work using only Mischief.

Sometimes I export my finished drawing into Photoshop to alter the Brightness/Contrast and Hue/Saturation, but all of the drawing is usually done in Mischief.

Are there any features you'd like added to Mischief in the future?

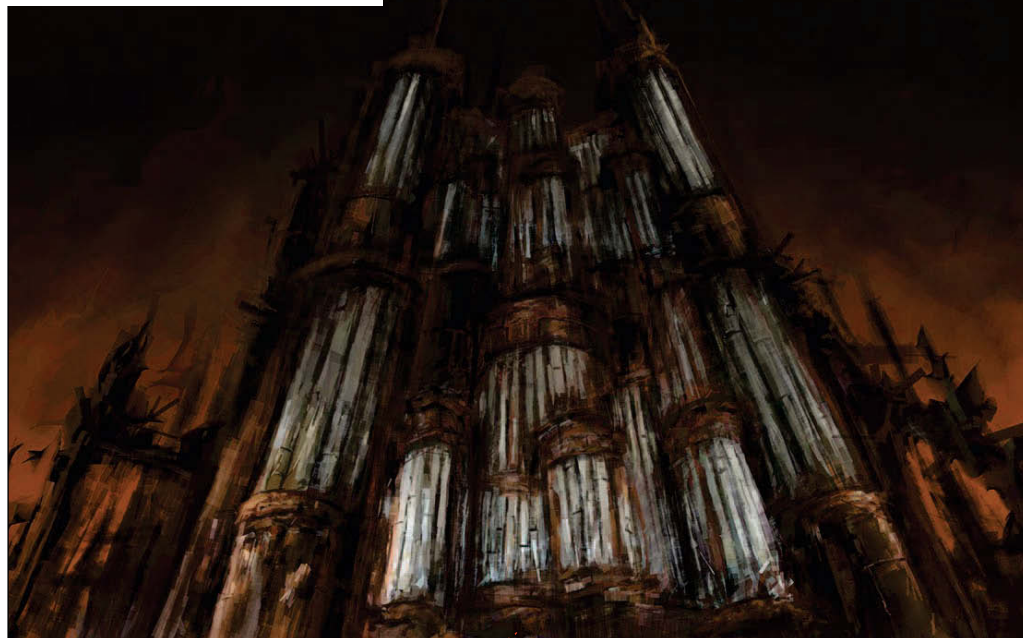
Having mass manipulation tools is essential, but bringing my final drawings into Photoshop is quick and has just become a part of my process. At the end of the day, there are a few features that Mischief can't do that other programs can – but there are things that Mischief can do that no other program can.



A freelance artist and 3D modeller in Boston in the US. She's done work for Marvel, Mitsubishi and Harmonix.

www.carlysanker.tumblr.com

Get to grips with Black Ink's brushes and they're perfect for creating dramatic and moody images, such as OrganCastle by Benoit Onillon.



Black Ink PC ONLY

HIGHER MATHS The otherworldly brushes in this complex art package truly puts the 'abstract' into 'abstract art'...

Price €35 **Company** Bleank **Web** www.bleank.com **Contact** products@bleank.com

Like Mischief, Black Ink takes a less-conventional approach to digital art. The focus here is on brushes rather than an infinitesimal canvas, and it employs your computer's GPU to give a fluid and responsive experience.

When you first boot it up you're given a range of predefined brushes, and they're absolutely stunning. The Black Ink Felt and Round pens naturally expand and contract with pressure-sensitivity, and interesting brushes such as Volute and Crepe undulate with colour and transparency.

Where Black Ink gets a little more complicated is in its controller. If you've ever used the effects tools in Premiere Pro you'll know what to expect: stroke parameters can be dragged and arranged linearly, allowing a huge degree of customisation in terms of pressure, speed, time and length. Altering the order in which effects are applied can result in dramatic changes to the way brushes work.

Where Black Ink gets really complicated is in its mathematical equations. Clicking these enables you to set what happens with an oscilloscope-like graph, where you can



alter variables such as amplitude and period. It's all a bit mind-boggling, but the preview enables you to see how it's going to affect your brushes.

It's telling that Black Ink is going up for sale on Steam (Valve's PC gaming service): it's likely to appeal to geeks who love tweaking with formulae, and it feels like a piece of musical software at times. There's certainly an audience for it, and some incredible pieces of art have already been created with it. But we'd say stick to Photoshop or Painter if you want a more immediate and less-experimental experience. ●

From the Bleank forum, Bonnie's Rey D Panda the Pirate King shows Black Ink's rather ominous name doesn't necessarily result in darker images.

DETAILS

Features

- Unique brush customisation tool
- Rich colour modes
- High performance
- Huge picture size
- 64-bit rendering engine
- 100-megapixel canvases
- GPU optimisation
- Brush history
- Colour history
- Real-time brush preview

System Requirements

PC: Windows XP, Vista or 7. 1.6GHz processor, 1GB RAM, Pixel shader 3.0 graphics card, DirectX 9, 50MB hard drive space

Rating



iClone 5's supplied characters are a little rudimentary. This one looks like Ben Stiller...



iClone 5.5 Pro PC ONLY

HIDDEN COSTS A solid first into 3D animation and character creation

Price \$200

Company Reallusion

Web www.reallusion.com

Contact 1-408-573-6107

RATING

Dabbling in the world of 3D animation is a natural progression for digital artists, but the learning curve is traditionally quite steep. Thankfully iClone promises to take the pain out of creating a 3D movie by supplying you with everything you need to get going.

Anyone who's ever used a game engine to create 3D Machinimas will feel at home here, but beginners might find it a little frustrating to begin with. There's plenty of documentation online, and lots of videos on YouTube, but 3D is an intricate field. Fortunately, iClone is a 'what you see is what you get' package, so what you're seeing in the editor is the same as the outputted render.

Microsoft's Kinect is supported, too, so you can jump around your bedroom and the on-screen characters will copy your moves. However, this is an extra purchase that will set you back \$140, and if you want to import 3ds Max models you'll also have to invest \$100 in 3DXchange. It's annoying to have to spend so much extra to get fun and important features, so we'd recommend sticking to the defaults.



You can easily create a fantasy landscape by playing with iClone 5's height maps.



From the armature (above) to the finished, life-like sculpture (below).



Just like a painter, David pays the most attention to getting the face's expression and detail spot-on.

Sculpting a Stylized Character

GO APE Movie sculptor David Meng shares his process and expert techniques for building characters full of life and detail


Publisher The Gnomon Workshop **Price** \$49 **Format** Download **Web** www.thegnomonworkshop.com

We've come so far down the digital path that traditional hand-made crafts seem positively exotic when we see them in action. But there's still a great deal that even the most technologically progressive artist can learn from the old ways, as sculptor David Meng proves in his second video for The Gnomon Workshop.

In two-and-a-half hours, David shares the key moments of a painstaking process that can take days, as he forms a clay orangutan figure over a metal armature. He presents the bewildering array of tools he keeps to hand: rakes, scoops and more. If you own ZBrush, you'll appreciate seeing the physical counterparts to some of the digital brushes you use daily.

After constructing the steel armature – effectively the creature's skeleton – David gets to work on adding and shaping clay, applying a flame where he needs to keep the

material pliable. He follows a familiar process of blocking out main forms – concentrating on gesture to invest energy into his figure – then refining the forms and finally working on the details. Non-sculptors will appreciate the parallels David draws between sculpting and illustration, name-checking artists including Claire Wendling as he frames his modelling decisions in terms of creating design elements and controlling detail to focus attention towards the face.

Even if you've no ambitions to take up sculpting, David's methods and principles will help you look at your own art through fresh eyes. But the video's primary value is as an introduction to a fascinating creative field. James Gurney is one of many artists who recommend creating physical models of figures and environments as the ultimate reference source. David should give you the confidence and practical foundations to join them. 

DETAILS

Topics covered

- Tools and supplies
- Assembling the armature
- Blocking in large forms
- Refining secondary forms
- Skin texture techniques
- Sculpting fur
- Detailing

Length

150 minutes

Rating



ARTIST PROFILE

DAVID MENG

Interested in the bizarre and grotesque from a young age, David had a natural leaning towards creature and character design in the film industry. He worked as a designer and sculptor for effects houses in Los Angeles. In 2004 he joined Weta Workshop and worked on King Kong, The Chronicles of Narnia and District 9, where he served as lead creature designer for the movie's Prawns.



Most recently David was part of the concept team that designed the Kaijus for Pacific Rim.

www.davidmengart.blogspot.com



Burning Inside

ART ROCK One of ImagineFX's favourite artists explains his classic rock-fuelled pieces in this celebration of his work

Author Jean-Sebastien Rossbach **Publisher** CFSL Ink **Price** €36 **Web** www.cfsl-ink.com **Available** Now

Jean-Sebastien Rossbach's **Burning Inside** takes its name not from a bout of severe gastroenteritis, but from a song by US industrial metal band Ministry. They're one of Jean-Sebastien's favourite bands and his love of music is evident throughout the book. Chapters start with lyrics from David Bowie and The Velvet Underground, and his personal work nabs names from songs and artists.

It's telling that Jean-Sebastien names Iron Maiden as one of his favourite bands, as some of the art here exhibits a certain 80s album cover quality. His work *Disturbing the Beast*,



Jean-Sebastien lists Iron Maiden as one of his favourite bands in his rock-influenced art book and it's easy to see the influence.

which is broken down later in the book, depicts a warrior tackling a huge monster, and it looks like something from one of Bruce Dickinson's nightmares. Morrigan gives us a brooding, levitating temptress that could well adorn an ancient gatefold LP found in a dusty record store.

A big part of Jean-Sebastien's appeal and success is down to his versatility as an artist, though, and it's not all permed quiffs and big riffs. His work for *World of Warcraft* apes the game's recognisably chunky, brightly coloured style, but Jean-Sebastien brings his own sense of perspective and power to it. The same can be said for his *Magic: The Gathering* artwork. His suitably seedy comic covers for *The Punisher* switch to a pulpy style, whereas his take on *Thunderbolts* is airbrushed to perfection.

In his introduction, Jean-Sebastien puts his success as an artist not down to doggedly pursuing leads, but to producing really good art and letting the word spread among important people. But it's in his personal work that a real darkness shines. Most interesting of these are his *Alligator* series, based on a song by French



Several of Jean-Sebastien's paintings could easily be mistaken for rock album covers.

singer Hubert-Félix Thiéfaine. They're representations of ecological disasters, featuring dismembered, ghostly women spewing oil into sickly oceans.

Jean-Sebastien refers to his failed music career in his introduction, stating that music is a relatively "pure" artform in its abstraction and intangibility, whereas the works he produces are more of a craft. From where we stand, it's the other way round – Jean-Sebastien's ability to turn his hand to a range of styles and genres, and his skill in creating drama and gut-churning reactions, make him feel like the artistic equivalent of an 80s rock god.

RATING



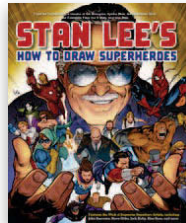
© Wizards of the Coast, Inc.

Stan Lee's How to Draw Superheroes

SUPER ART The X-Men and Avengers co-creator shares his comic art secrets in a must-have book

Author Stan Lee **Publisher** Watson-Guptill **Price** £18 **Web** www.watsonguptill.com **Available** Now

We get plenty of 'How To' books in the ImagineFX postbag, but very few are written by an industry legend. X-Men and Avengers co-creator Stan Lee's *How to Draw Superheroes* follows similar tomes *How to Draw Comics* and *How to Write Comics*, and like those – and



the man himself – it's colourful and larger-than-life.

Stan briefly touches on heroic tales of yore before moving on to comic archetypes – the upstanding S-type (Superman) and the darker, more grounded B-type (Batman). He shows how to create nemeses, sidekicks and pets, peppering the book with examples from his work, and other illustrators. Stan uses freshly created superheroes to illustrate his ideas on making human characters work.

He may be over 90, but this book proves that Stan still has lead in his pencil and a thorough understanding of the genre. Admittedly, we are slightly suspicious about the three co-writers employed here, but it's still a must-have for anyone thinking about creating their own super-powered protagonist.

RATING



Stan creates new superheroes to illustrate some of his points.

World War Z: The Art of the Film

CROWD PLEASER? A belts-and-braces attempt at an 'Art of' book that, oddly, doesn't have very much art in it

Screenplay Matthew Michael Carnahan, Drew Goddard, Damon Lindelof **Publisher** Titan Books **Price** £17 **Web** www.titanbooks.com **Available** Now

Rather than going down the straight-up art book route, Titan has taken an interesting, if not entirely successful, approach to its *World War Z* tie-in. This 'illustrated companion' to the zombie apocalypse movie includes both art from the film and the complete shooting script – a move which may well be designed to capture both film art buffs and wannabe screenwriters



who like to pore over every detail of dialogue and plot.

The problem is that screenplays consist of massive amounts of text, and as a result behind-the-scenes insight into the creative process is reduced to mere single-sentence quotes from the film's makers. The exception to this is – somewhat bizarrely – a mere double-page spread dedicated to the film's weapons.

The art that's represented at the back of the book does go some way to offer an insight into the design of the movie's brand of zombies. But again, very little exposition of the whys and hows of the design are revealed.

While we appreciate the idea of being able to compare a film's narrative to its art, we'd rather have a book dedicated to either, than this asynchronous mishmash of the two.

RATING



The book aims to please art buffs and wannabe screenwriters.

Also look at...

Be inspired by the latest recommended fiction

Sick

Author Tom Leveen

Publisher Amulet **Price** £11

Available 1 November



A virus turns a Phoenix school into a zombie playground, young minds ripe for eating. With the military at the gates and the undead in the halls a group of teens must find a way out. The teen angst is subdued in favour of smart one-liners and genuine teen-voices. Gruesome discoveries and well-paced writing take *Sick* away from the norm and a smart twist or two leave you wondering who the real monsters actually are.

The Secret of Abdul Yezdi

Author Mark Hodder

Publisher Pyr **Price** £12

Available Now



Daring Victorian explorers, rogue ghost informants and an assassinated Queen Victoria – the fourth

Burton and Swinburne is packed with suitably outlandish historical characters in a web of intrigue.

Captain Richard Francis Burton has been knighted, but things are about to get strange quickly as he gets embroiled into a secret society. This is funny, imaginative steampunk prose, well worth the price of the ticket back in time.

The Shining Girls

Author Lauren Beukes

Publisher Harper **Price** £13

Available Now



The usual dry descriptions of crime scenes and criminals merely heighten the strangeness of Lauren

Beuke's tale of a time travelling serial killer hell-bent on murdering his "shining girls" before they can change history. You could be reading any number of well-researched crime novels until the decades slip by and the race to find a killer across time takes a quantum leap into the past, and the future. A memorable and unusual triumph.



LOCATION Singapore **RECENT PROJECT** The Powerful: NYC, League of Legends, Galaxy Saga **WEB** www.imaginaryfs.sg

Imaginary Friends Studios

ARE FRIENDS ELECTRIC? How this Singapore-based studio straddles both the East and West – and has built up an impressive client base

Stanley Lau is known online as Artgerm, and whether you interpret his avatar to mean he's been bitten by the art bug, or his art is infectiously popular, it's befitting. His Pepper character became an online sensation, inspiring countless digital artists to engage with Stanley's clean, colourful, manga-inspired style. On top of achieving more than 50 million views of his deviantART

page, he founded Imaginary Friends Studios, one of Singapore's most renowned graphics houses.

"We just wanted to create a collaborative environment to do commercial illustration," says Stanley.

"Our mantra running the studio was 'for artists by artists' and it still is." Stanley's friends and co-founders of the studio, Kai Lim and Kendrick Lim, are



anything but imaginary. "As kids, everyone had imaginary friends, and as adults now we want to be represented by that fun spirit that imaginary friends provided."

Stanley and his very real chums had a huge range of skills they felt they could use to establish the studio back in 2005. "We had experience ranging from advertising, editorial, graphic design, animation, and 2D and 3D illustration," he says. "I believe this

“Everyone had imaginary friends as kids and now we want to be represented by that fun spirit”

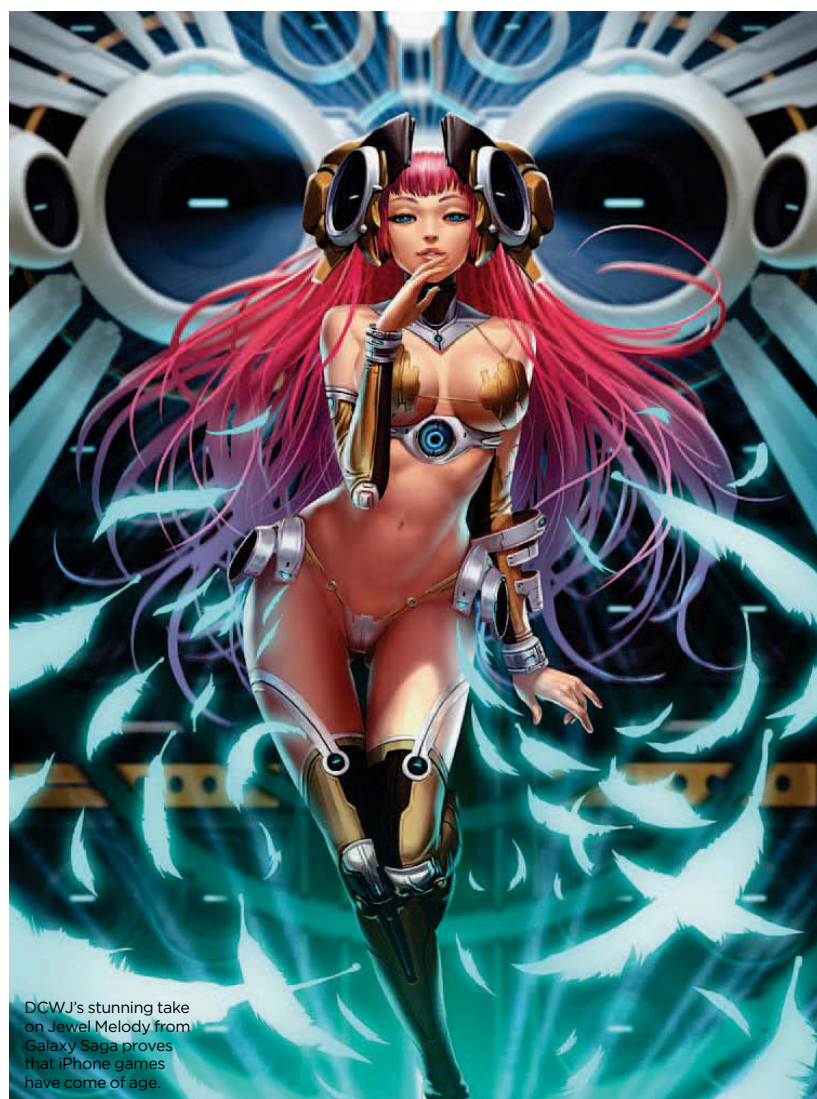
gave us a more holistic approach to our service and philosophy, enabling us to tackle a wider variety of creative challenges or offer unique solutions for people."

In its eight years Imaginary Friends Studios has picked up work for major players in gaming such as Ubisoft, Square Enix and Capcom. Part of its success lies in its location: Singapore has historically been a trading post between east and west, and even in today's hyper-connected world it maintains that role.



Tears of a Distant Sun, by Kai Lim, is suitably epic with a good use of golden-hour hues.

"It's an advantage to be at this part of world," says Brandon Chng, a digital artist with the studio. "We get great exposure to



DCWJ's stunning take on Jewel Melody from Galaxy Saga proves that iPhone games have come of age.



ARTIST INTERVIEW

DERRICK CHEW

The senior artist on what it's like to work for the company

How do you all complement each other's skills?

Each of us have a skill set that we're more specialised in. Sometimes a project is broken down into phases where one of us would work on sketches and line art, while another bring it to final paints. It's like collaborating with two artists and we can get really interesting results or a style that shows the best of both worlds.

What does an artist need in a portfolio to get noticed at Imaginary Friends Studios?

It's good to see a variety of works from line art, sketches and conceptual stuff to full illustrations. It's always nice and interesting to see the range of what someone can do with their art.

Why would you recommend working at IFS?

It's a great place for artists to pick up new skills and grow. Since we're always around each other during our creative process, it's easy to get opinions, exchange tips and explore new ideas together. Mostly it's about inspiring and encouraging one another to improve on what we do best and have fun while at it!

How important is it to experience working with clients from different countries and what has this brought to Imaginary Friends Studios?

It's great experience working with clients from all over because we interact with different cultures and expectations, and are exposed to learn and develop new skills and try out new stuff.

What advice would you have for someone wanting to be a concept artist?

Have the desire to improve and learn. Sometimes we get too comfortable applying the same style on our artworks. It's important to try out something different once in a while.



Derrick - aka DCJW - spends his spare time fighting aliens while wearing a figure-hugging Ultraman jumpsuit. Apparently.

www.dcwj.deviantart.com



PROJECTS Star Wars - The Essential Guide to Warfare, Street Fighter III: Third Strike Online Edition



"More often than not we get treated like a boutique, where clients approach us for the services of individual artists on our roster," says Stanley.

Brandon completed the earlier stages of sketch and lines for Valkyrie, while Derrick went on to paint up and complete the image.

both the east (anime) and west (American comic) illustration styles. We tend to be more flexible and are given fair opportunities to work on various different projects. As a gamer myself, it feels really great to work on projects and property that I love."

Despite his many successes, Stanley is acutely aware that the studio needs to be in a process of continual transformation, in order to stand out in the increasingly crowded world of digital art. While it used to train



Brandon's take on Magic: The Gathering - Tactics' Serra Angel shows the studio's versatility.

beginners in their craft, it now employs what Stanley terms a "hit the ground running" approach as tutelage drained the company's resources and didn't inspire growth among established members of staff.

"It's a natural tendency for people to stay in a comfort zone, but the truth of the matter is everyone needs to evolve or die," says Stanley. "In constantly trying to push our own boundaries, we hope we're doing our own part for the industry, and for the arts which we love. Our diversity, interestingly enough, has proven to be our core strength over the years, because we get to leverage on every artist's personal style."

Brandon echoes Stanley's views on the studio. "Occasionally, when I meet a creative block while illustrating an idea or concept, the guys around will help out by providing some ideas," he says. "There are times when we're more engrossed with certain fun and exciting jobs and want to spend more time on them. But as this is contracted work, and schedule-based, it's usually a challenge to balance the work-fun ratio and meet the deadline."



Website

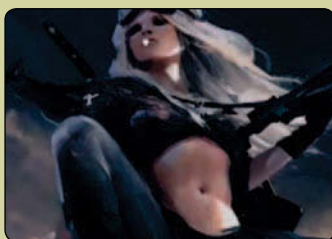
Delve into our website and get more from your ImagineFX community



Watch the latest video tutorials



Follow our pro artists advice as they guide you through their painting processes



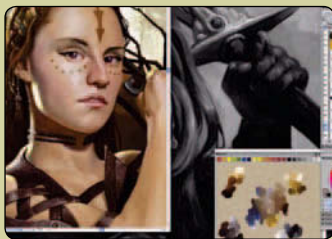
Unify fantasy genres

Maciej Kuciara designs a fantasy heroine using different elements:
www.bit.ly/ifx-fantasygenres.



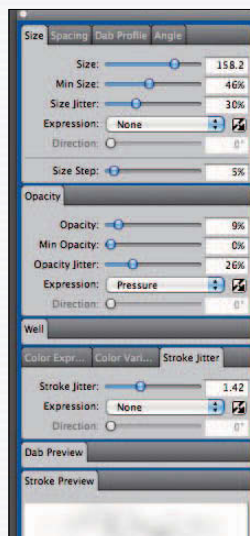
Paint an alien character

Follow McLean Kendree's advice on conceiving a humanoid alien:
www.bit.ly/ifx-aliencharacter.



Adapt Frazetta's approach

See how John Stanko painted this stunning cover image for issue 96:
www.bit.ly/ifx-jstanko96.



Professional tutorials

Learn from our ever-increasing library of workshops from your favourite artists, including Simon Dominic, Raymond Swanland and Peter Stapleton: www.bit.ly/ifx-pstapleton.



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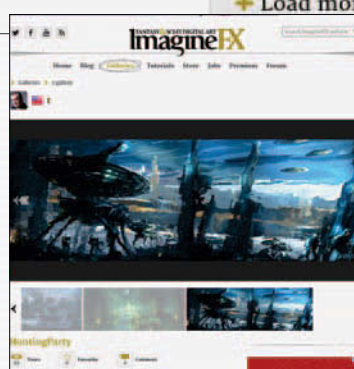
Uploading your art is easy and quick. Once registered you can join our friendly community, learn new skills and enter weekly challenges.

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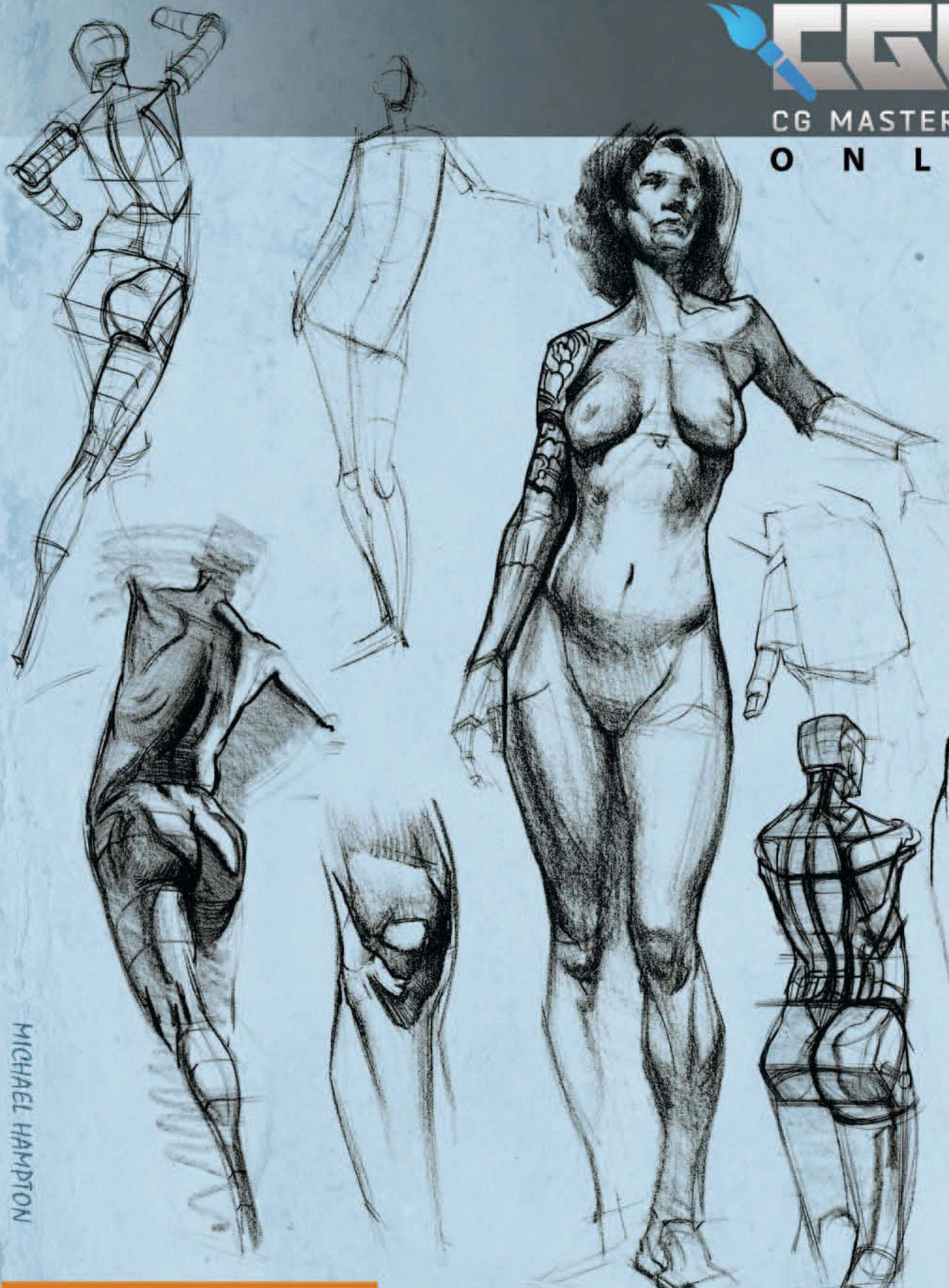
3D ACADEMY



WORKSHOPS



INTERVIEWS



MICHAEL HAMPTON

Foundation
DESIGN PROGRAM

Environment
DESIGN PROGRAM

Character
DESIGN PROGRAM



W W W . C G M A 2 D A C A D E M Y . C O M