

# NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX



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colours to generate  
the overall feeling  
of confidence"*  
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# Welcome... to a thrilling edition



Hello there! How are you? I imagine that you quite simply couldn't avoid Fred Augis' cover art sitting on the newsstand. It's a welcoming, bright and eye-catching image, isn't it? I'm always amazed and a bit humbled by the calibre of artists that we're able to get in the magazine – yes, even after being on ImagineFX for 116

issues. I still get a thrill when choosing my dream list of artists that I'd like to appear... and that these same artists agree to spend their time sharing their techniques and inspiring art with us. This issue is no exception. Workshop-wise we have cover artist Fred, who's a force of originality and style; there's Brenton Cottman, an artist who's worked on some of the biggest films ever made; and Donato Giancola, who's skill, dedication and execution of art makes me weep in awe.

I'm also a big fan of Stephan Martinière's art, and I loved reading about his varied career. I thought I knew a lot about his work, but was not only surprised to discover his love of comic art, but also that he worked on the Inspector Gadget cartoon TV series. If you were a child of the 80s or early 90s, you'll already have the theme tune stuck in your head after seeing Gadget's name again. Sorry!

Also, if you have any comments or suggestions about what we should (or shouldn't!) feature in ImagineFX, or any other feedback or news about what you're doing artistically, please write in to us at [mail@imaginefx.com](mailto:mail@imaginefx.com). We always love to hear from you.

*Claire*

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



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"I never sought a career in book illustration. I saw it as more of a fun thing I'd like to do one day"  
Stephan Martinière

## Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



See page 8 for the best new art ➡➡



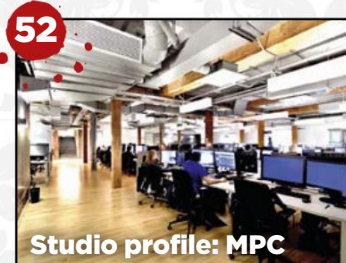
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Takin' on the streets



Artist in residence



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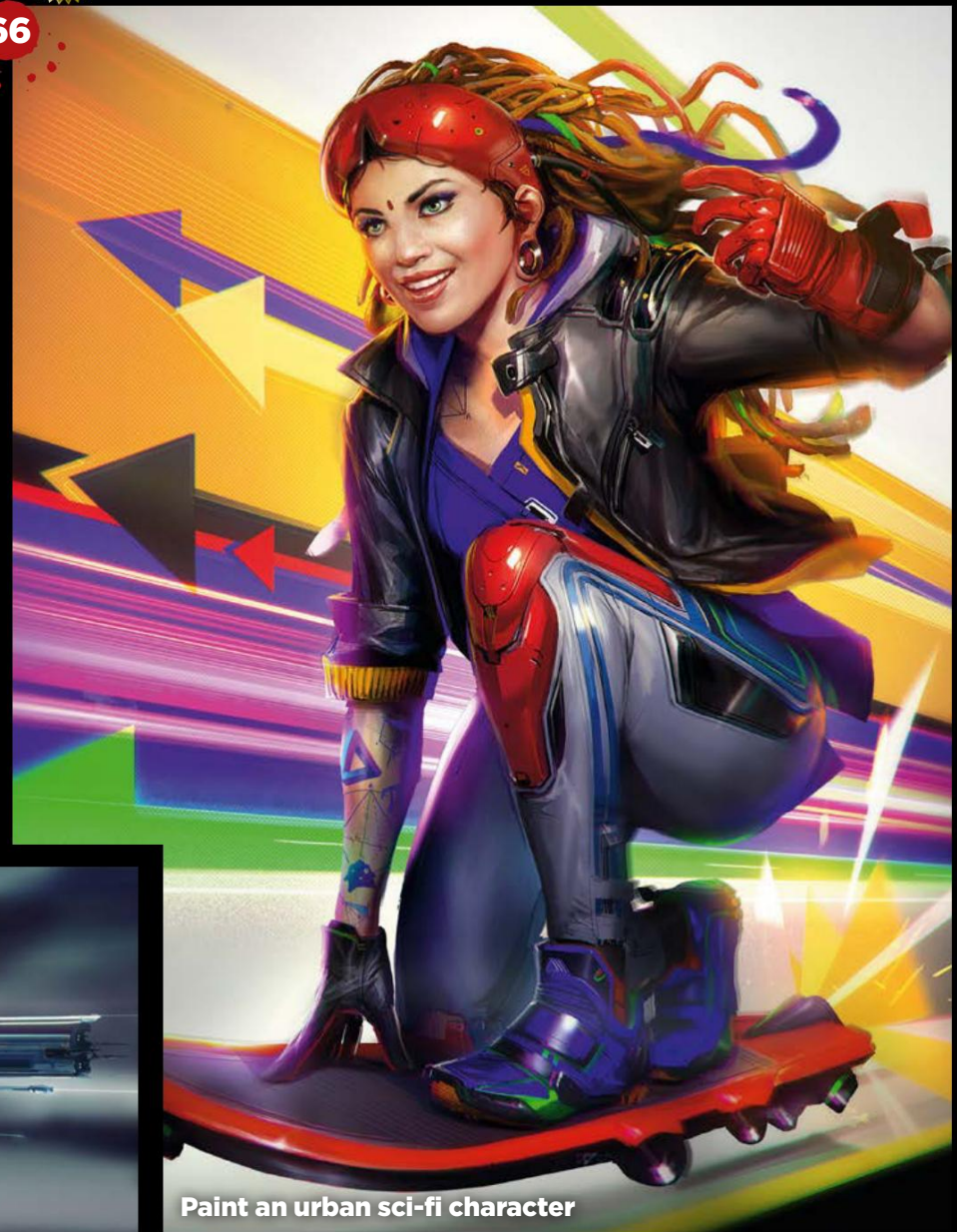
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Concept a spacecraft

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Turn over the page for this issue's art assets



Paint an urban sci-fi character

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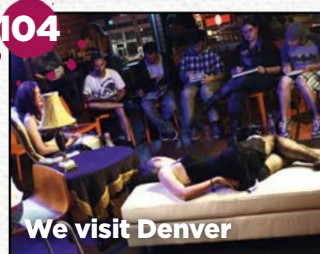
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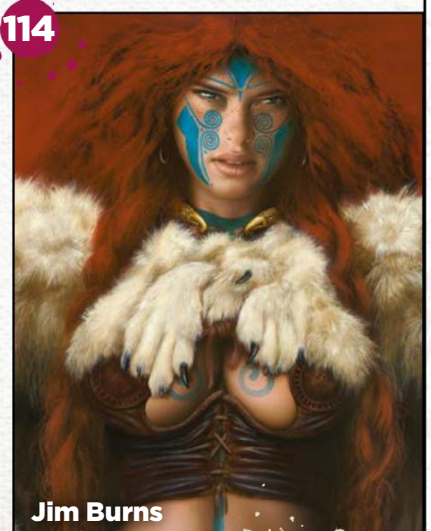
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# ImagineFX<sup>NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS</sup> Resources

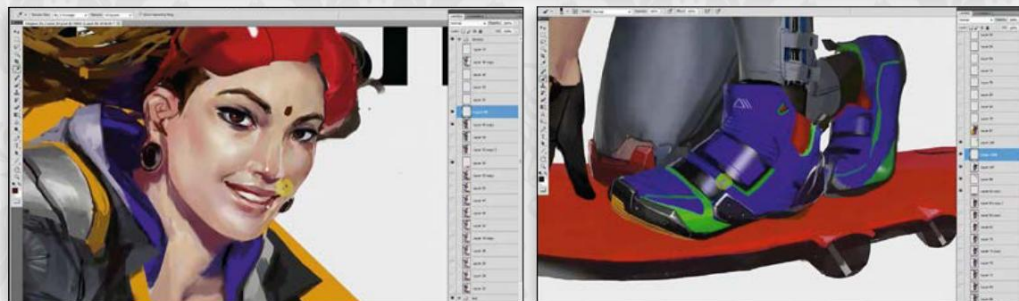
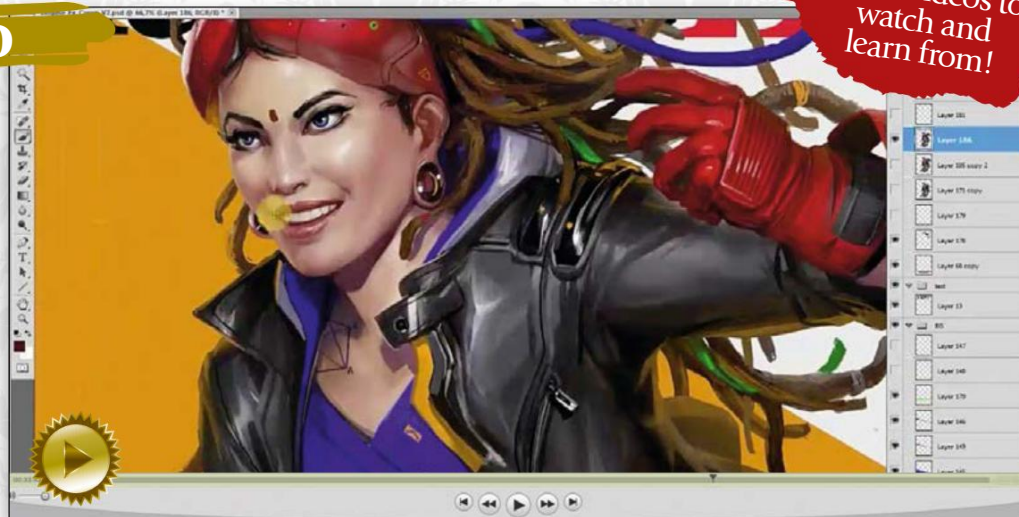
Getting your hands on all of this issue's videos, artwork and brushes is quick and easy. Just visit our dedicated web page at <http://ifxm.ag/street119scifi>

**OVER 5 HOURS**  
of workshop and Q&A videos to watch and learn from!

## WORKSHOP VIDEO

### Paint an urban sci-fi character

Fred Augis shows how he illustrates a futuristic figure with bright colours and bags of confidence.



### GET YOUR RESOURCES

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

- 1 Go to the website**  
Type this into your browser's address bar (not the search bar): <http://ifxm.ag/street119scifi>
- 2 Find the files you want**  
Search through the list of resources to watch or download.
- 3 Download what you need**  
You can download all of the files at once, or individually.

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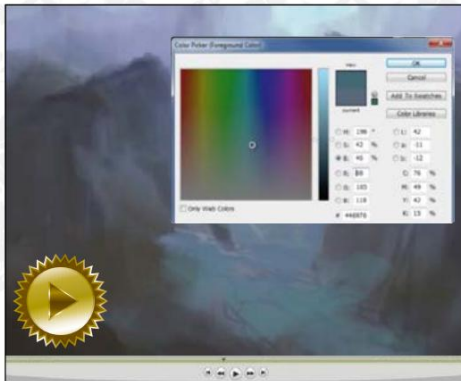
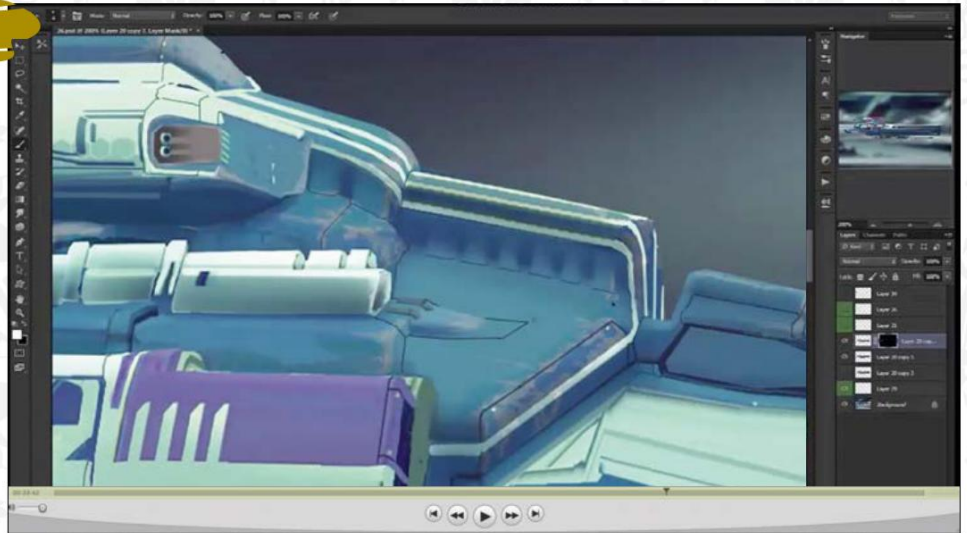
Watch our videos to gain a unique insight into how our artists create their stunning art

## WORKSHOP VIDEOS



### Long Pham

Experiment with light and workflow to create exciting spaceship concepts. Plus WIPs, brushes and final art



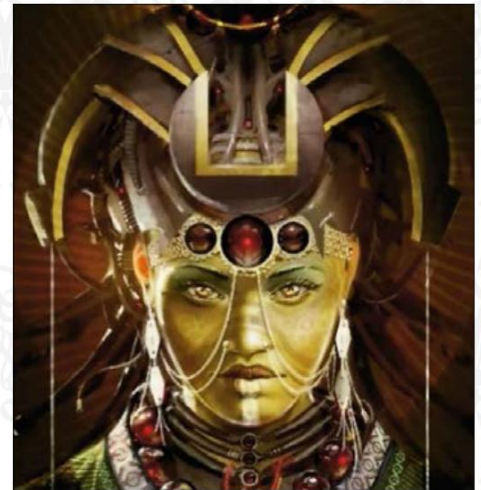
### Brenton Cottman

Illustrate a grand establishing shot of an expedition to a far-distant planet. Plus WIPs and final image



### Remko Troost

Create custom brushes on the fly to boost your creativity and increase your workflow. Plus WIPs, brushes and final art



## Q&A VIDEOS



### Donglu Yu

How colour temperature and lighting conditions can aid colour blocking-in. Plus WIPs and final image

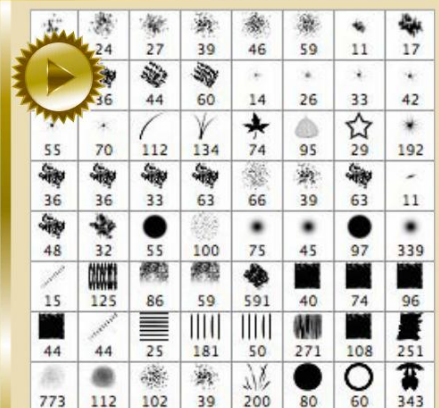
## TRAINING



### Making Frankenstein's Monster

Peter Zoppi's Gnomon Workshop video shows how he uses a range of 3D tools.

## 72 CUSTOM BRUSHES



### A world of brushes!

Be sure to try this issue's custom brushes, from our workshop artists.

**PLUS** WIPs and finished art available to download, created by accomplished professional artists from around the world, including Donato Giancola, James Gurney, Dave Braggalla, Bram Sels and Paul Canavan.





# Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

## Eric Gonzales

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MEDIA: Photoshop



Everything's fallen into place for Eric. Despite his origins as a traditional artist, he's recently embraced digital art and

Photoshop in particular. He's also focused on pursuing a career as a freelance concept artist: something he's wanted to do since he first glanced at a Frank Frazetta or HR Giger.

He also gets inspired by more contemporary artists, though. "There are many concept artists who influenced my present pieces, but Craig Mullins and Jaime Jones are my biggest heroes," he says. "Although a number of their works are digital, their strokes and colours show their superiority on traditional foundations."



**1 DRAGON HUNT** "This was a personal illustration done during a break from work. I enjoyed playing with the parallels between the dragon's head and the front of the speeder."

**2 ELEVAS VS ARCASIS** "I really enjoyed creating this concept art for HAVEN: Titan Command. I took me many more hours than my other works because it's fully rendered."





*Artist crit*

**Illustrator Steve Argyle offers his thoughts on Eric's action-packed work...**



"Eric has done a great job composing this piece. The warm hits of the rockets, the launch debris at the shoulders and subtle blurring create depth and draw the viewer into the action."





#### IMAGINEFX CRIT



"Oversized, angry beasts facing off against either each other or a lone human figure are a staple of fantasy art, so it's no surprise that Louise has chosen to depict them. The results bode well for the rest of her portfolio."

Beren Neale,  
Commissioning Editor



2



## + Louise Goalby

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**MEDIA:** Photoshop



Despite reading ImagineFX for many years, Louise has only just plucked up the courage to send some of her work in – but we just wish she'd done it sooner.

"I'm in the process of building up a solid illustration portfolio," she says. "Having had no training at all with digital art, I picked it all up from trial and error, and the plethora of tutorial info out there on the net. I know I have a long way to go and still lots to learn, but I'm dedicated and enjoy my craft!"

**1 DO I LOOK AFRAID?** "This was a challenge for me because the human form isn't my strong point. I painted this in greyscale first and then integrated colour afterwards."

**2 GYARADOS AND CHARIZARD** "I've seen a lot of Pokemon 'battle' art, and wanted to try my own version. I experimented with having a rough line-art layer integrated into the art style."

**3 FINAL SHOWDOWN** "I took a rough approach with this piece, because I didn't want to overly refine it. A greyscale layer helped with checking my values: I wanted to make sure the action in the background didn't distract from the foreground elements."

3





**Jennifer Weekley**

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MEDIA: Photoshop, pencils, charcoal, watercolours



Jennifer grew up with a deep love of movies and video games, and her passion led to her creating images inspired by her favourites. "When I was younger, I was influenced pretty heavily by anime and games like Final Fantasy," she says. "As I grew older, I got more into Tolkien and started researching artists."

Citing Mark Nelson, Wylie Beckert and Allen Williams as particular icons, Jennifer's keen to work in the book industry, either on their jackets or on the pages within. But she's also keeping her options open: "Branching out into new territory, such as editorial work or even game decks like Magic, would be fun."

1



**IMAGINEFX CRIT**



"Jennifer shows great skill in getting the most from her mixed media toolbox. I particularly like the drama of the scene shown in Emperor of Fools – the bright colour of the crown about to be extinguished by the weasel's bite."

**Daniel Vincent,**  
Art Editor

2



**1 OPIUM GUARDS** "I wanted the viewer to be struck by the contrast between the calm flowers and the snakes that guard them. I love the serenity of the blue against that almost violent red."

**2 EMPEROR OF FOOLS** "These mice should have been more humble! I loved using the weasel's shape as a graphic element, which I don't get to do a lot."

**3 ALL TOGETHER NOW** "My work is a push and pull between line and rendering. In this piece the lines won most of the battle. The glow in this piece is something I'm happy with, and you can see it in many of my pieces."







**Tamires Pedroso**

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**MEDIA:** Photoshop



Multi-disciplined Tamires has already bagged a degree in graphic design, but her real love is fantasy concept art. "I've been playing tabletop role-playing games since I was very young," she says. "I was always keen to draw my own characters while imagining where everything took place."

This passion for all things gaming still figures highly on Tamires' career plan. "The path that will most definitely work for me is as a freelance illustrator for big clients like Wizards of the Coast," she says. "Being part of something that had such an impact in my childhood is an experience worth aiming for."

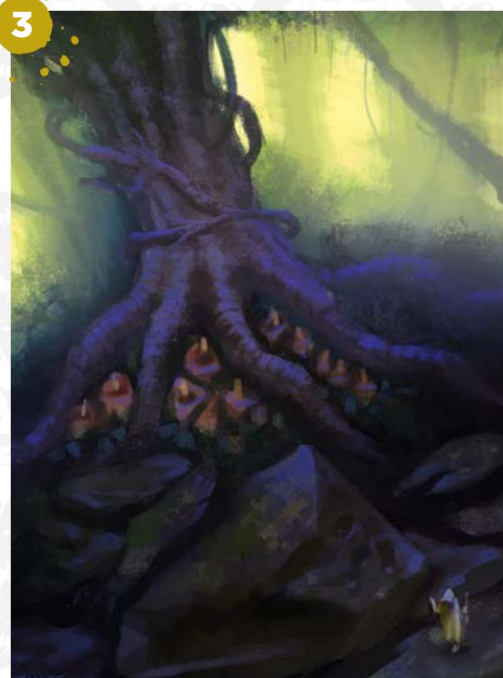
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2



3



**1 ANNE "THE X" FRANK** "An infiltration-focused character from a Dungeons & Dragons World War II campaign my partner started. I took the time to find reference for the Nazi costumes and her dress to match the period of time when it happens."

**2 HOLISTIC** "I used a complementary scheme here and tweaked the contrast so that the viewer's eye would go to her face and then follow the locks of her hair, as if her peacefulness flows through them."

**3 GREAT PASSAGE** "I reworked a sketch from 2012 that I thought had potential if warm and cool light was added. I upped the size to make it feel colossal. I kept imagining myself wandering about canyons, which helped me picture the sense of scale."



**Ho Yan Hao**  
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**MEDIA:** Photoshop



A great idea for novice artists is to use a series of pieces to depict a world or theme they're particularly interested in. Yan Hao has done just this with three of his pieces shown here, which all explore an epic post-apocalyptic universe in all its grimy glory.

Yan Hao has his sights set high, too: "I'm currently an art student at a local school and would love to specialise in environmental concept art," he says. "I draw obsessively on the go and I also create art with the Urban Sketchers group in my spare time."

1



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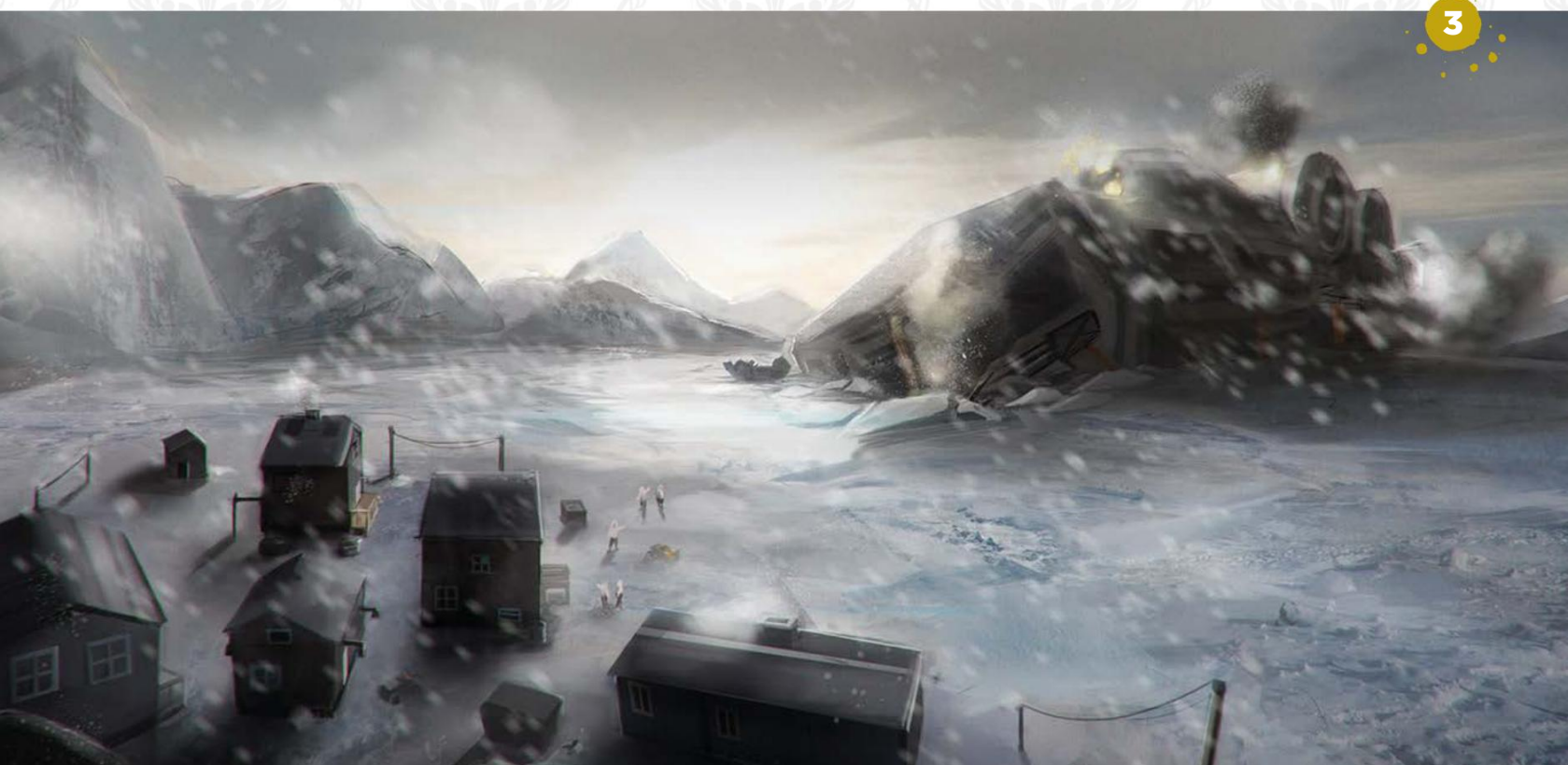


**1 QUIET SHANTY TOWN** "This is a safe area in my universe, where the local citizens take refuge in times of crisis. The large rock in the background provides a sense of scale."

**2 THE CHASE** "My bounty hunter heroes are being chased by a mutant scorpion creature while on their quest to collect waste materials."

**3 CRASHLANDING** "In this piece a spaceship has crash landed near an Inuit village. I used very little colour to imply a hostile, wintry environment."

3





1





## Jörg Schlonies

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**MEDIA:** Photoshop



Freelance character and fantasy illustrator Jörg "doJoerch" Schlonies trained at the Institute for Art and Art Therapy in Bochum under the expert tutelage of fantasy artist and entrepreneur Oliver Wetter.

Despite training in digital art, Jörg is keen to use real-world mediums as well. "I love to do drawings the traditional way," he says. "So now I mix up some of my pen drawings with digital techniques or use pen sketches as the base for my digital work."

## IMAGINEFX CRIT



"By showing the viewer the frame, Jörg injects extra personality into his work. Compare the neat, ornate frame from Sir Sedrick's image with the tangled thorns and skull that surround The Hunter Orc. It all adds to the fun!"

Cliff Hope,  
Operations Editor

2



*Sir Sedrick*  
*Lord Admiral of Her Majesty*

3



*Sir Pigham and his Preciositys*

**1 THE HUNTER ORC** "Framing is a technique that's often used by my idol, Ed Binkley. I like it because it gives you the chance to close a scene and make the viewer focus on your art."

**2 SIR SEDRICK - LORD ADMIRAL OF HER MAJESTY** "I started this picture as a pen sketch during a fantasy and role-play convention. I was amazed by all the steampunk cosplayers and their clothes, so I started this drawing. I designed the blimp by mixing up parts of photos and painting over them, which was a lot of fun."

**3 SIR PIGHAM AND HIS PRECIOSITYS** "This picture started as a pen drawing and was done for a fairy tale book of my own. Sir Pigham is one of the main characters in the book and I envisioned him as a hog farming goblin."



## **Ben Winfield**

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**MEDIA:** Photoshop



Ben graduated with a degree in sculpture and he's worked as a production designer and video editor, but in early

2014 he finally decided to take the plunge and work as a full-time freelance illustrator. "Since then work has begun to snowball and I've been picking up clients one by one," he says.

2015 will see Ben's work exhibited on an international level for the first time. "I will be participating in the showcase section of Illuxcon 8," he tells us. "It'll be my first time in America, and I'm very excited to be around so many amazing science fiction and fantasy artists."

**1 THEY TOLD ME THAT MY EYES WOULD GO SQUARE** "I recall being told as a child not to watch too much television because it would make my eyes go square. Oh, how terribly wrong they were."

**2 LYON: THE DRAGON HEART** "I'm providing illustrations for a comic book written by a friend from Angola. This is the cover for chapter two and it features Patara, one of the protagonists."

**3 WATCH YOUR KIDS** "As a child we aren't fully aware of all the horrible things that could befall us."

## **SUBMIT YOUR ART TO FXPOSÉ**

Send up to five pieces of your work, along with their titles, an explanation of your techniques, a photo of yourself and contact details. Images should be sent as 300DPI JPEG files.

**Email:** [fxpose@imaginefx.com](mailto:fxpose@imaginefx.com)  
(maximum 1MB per image)

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Bath, BA1 2BW, UK

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## **IMAGINEFX CRIT**



"Ben's style mixes cartoon art with gloopy tentacles and suckers – nice! And how many parents would like to show the artist's cautionary image to their children, in an effort to stop them watching too much television?"

**Claire Howlett,**  
Editor

© Massalo Araújo









David 'Meggs' Hooke created this piece in Hawaii with fellow graffiti artist Bask.

## Takin' it to the STREETS

**Can Gogh** We talk to the urban artists who are turning run-down cityscapes into grandiose galleries of astounding art



Andy Council's work often consists of fantastical creatures made up of smaller elements, like architectural features of well-known cities.

In the past few decades we've seen street art turn from being seen as vandalism to a business as big as more established art forms. Banksy's politically conscious stencils helped propel the anonymous artist into the same pop art circles as the likes of Damien Hirst and Tracey Emin, while Shepard Fairey's street art became the defining image of then-presidential candidate Barack Obama's campaign.

As a result, street art has been given the vital legitimacy it's always needed, and it's become a more complex, detailed medium. Cities have let artists loose on entire blocks, transforming them from unsightly grey concrete into explosions of colour and character. It's created new canvases on a previously unimaginable scale, and digital designs are playing a huge part in the way artists design and execute their works.

### A COMPETITIVE BUSINESS



"I use a combination of methods to create the composition and reference that I paint from," says

David 'Meggs' Hooke, a sci-fi and fantasy aficionado who's created work around the world for clients such as Nike and Stüssy. "I use Photoshop or Illustrator to compose a design by experimenting with a combination of my illustrations, sourced

Street text © istock.com/macrovect





## YOUR DAILY ART DROP

Looking for some cheap but decent pieces of art? Then check out Every Day Original, which takes the pain out of buying and selling paintings. **Page 25**



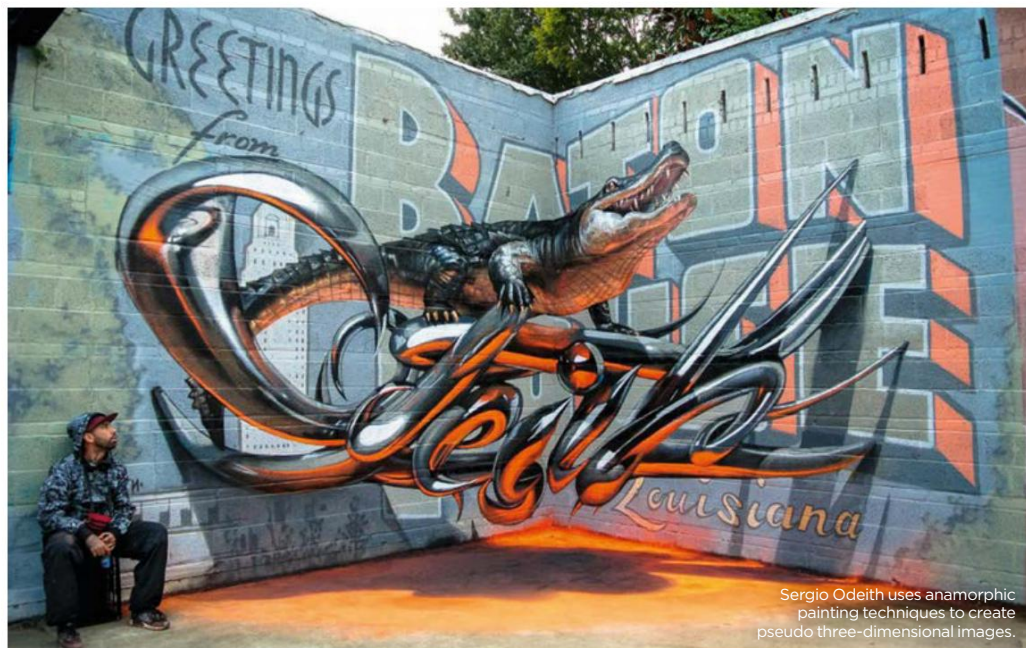
## PAINT LIKE A ZOMBIE

The Russian studio of Lora Zombie is as vividly coloured as her work – and indeed the artist herself. Come and take look at her primary-coloured pad. **Page 26**



## A SMARTER ART SCHOOL

If you wanted to enrol on an Illustration Master Class course, but couldn't get a place, the organisation has launched an online sister programme. **Page 29**



Sergio Odeith uses anamorphic painting techniques to create pseudo three-dimensional images.

## “It’s a damn lot of hard work and pressure to survive in the street art game”

images and reference photos. Once I'm happy with the composition, I use it as a guide to paint from, adding colour, texture and abstract elements intuitively over the painting process.”

The popularity of the medium, combined with its accessibility and the relative sparsity of available surfaces, means that street art is a competitive business, though. “I don't think it's come easily for me, ever,” says David. “It's a damn lot of hard work and pressure to survive in the street art game. The majority of commissions have come to me, rather than the other way around, but I feel that it's a result of consistently working hard,

Stik's piece Big Mother, in Acton, London, is the tallest mural in the UK.



The Meggs mural Rise Up in Detroit is painted on a massive scale. That tiny figure at the bottom is him standing in front of it.

painting hard, networking, and being open to opportunities to keep the ball rolling.”

But David still gets a thrill from creating his work. “It gives me a feeling of satisfaction to execute something and have it reflect my intentions, where the end product is what I envisioned,” he explains.

## POP-OUT ART

While street art and more conventional forms have much in common, there's another important aspect urban artists have to consider: location. Choosing the right piece for the right place can add meaning and substance to a work, and working in particular geographic or architectural

features can make it come to life. Portuguese street artist Sergio Odeith has nailed this approach. His anamorphic pieces appear to pop out



## INDUSTRY INSIGHT

### ANDY COUNCIL

The street artist who turns city skylines into dinosaurs

#### How do you plan your work?

I like to have an idea of the size and shape of where I'm painting, so that I can get the piece to fit well in the space. I spend a lot of time researching images to work from, and I work out the colours I want to use in Photoshop. I start my murals by putting a background layer of emulsion up and then marking out the lines of the design using spray paint. I work out the scale by hand, which can be tricky, but I have a bit of an eye for it now.

#### How do you make sure your work stands out?

My style is quite unique in the way that I create animals made up of lots of smaller elements. I always think of the surrounding area to where I'll be painting when I do my pieces. I study buildings and landmarks from the local area, and think of an animal that might be relevant and fit the space nicely. This often gets people who live locally on board, and makes my work recognisable.

#### What's been your most challenging piece so far?

All of the really big walls that I painted last year have been challenging. Working out how much paint would be needed, getting the scale correct over several levels and executing the work with the use of different access equipment, such as cherry pickers and scaffold, has been tricky.

I think the hardest one was the Ice Cream Dragon that I painted on a huge wall in Birmingham for the City Of Colours festival. I managed to paint it in a couple of days working non-stop using a very wonky ladder. I was pretty wiped out for a whole week after though!



As well as adorning walls throughout the world, Andy's illustrations have appeared in books, magazines and shops.

[www.andycouncil.co.uk](http://www.andycouncil.co.uk)





Andy Council reckons that his Ice Cream Dragon in Birmingham was his most challenging work.



Sergio's apparently three-dimensional pieces leap right out of the walls and bruise your eyes.

➡ of corners and levitate above the ground, but they're cleverly rendered illusions rather than chrome sculptures. It's all the more impressive considering his lack of formal training – another benefit of the open nature of street art. "I started painting in streets from the first time I saw a piece of graffiti," he says. "I left school at the age of 15 years old and I never went to art school."

Sergio's work demonstrates a mastery of perspective and shading combined with a blurring of the lines of reality in his blending of physical objects with painted ones. Like many street artists, he improvises additional details on the spot. "Sometimes I do freestyle, sometimes I use computers, and sometimes I use pencils," he says. "There's not a rule or a proper software." And this is one of the most appealing parts of street art: it's not subject to the same rigid genre and media classifications that sometimes



Andy Council's Xenomorph at the Southsea Skatepark is a departure from his usual style, and uses the contours of the bowl for full effect.

staunchly inhibit conventional artists. All that matters is the end result, not whether it was created using oils or acrylics or Photoshop.

## URBAN GALLERY SPACE



Stik, whose distinctive stick figures have adorned structures around the world, was attracted to street art for its analogue nature in a sea of digital art. "A decade ago it seemed everyone was starting to use the internet to share their art with the world," he says.

**“I used an industrial paint compressor, which gave me enough range to create five-metre brushstrokes”**

Another massive Meggs piece, Lone Wolf, adorns a big featureless wall in Miami, Florida.

"I have learning difficulties and the way that computers are designed meant I wasn't able to join in the party. The street became my website and I have millions of hits a day."

Stik's pushing boundaries in terms of how and where street art can be created. His piece Big Mother on the side of the 125 foot Charles Hocking House in London has been declared the tallest in the UK, and he's also decorated wind turbines on a Norwegian island. His relatively simple style makes it easy to create art on such an epic scale.

"I draw freehand without the use of grids," he says. "On Big Mother I used an industrial paint compressor, which gave me enough range to create five-metre brushstrokes. It's not that different to drawing small, except my arms really ache afterwards!"

While street art has evolved its own visual language and motifs, there's definitely room for more conventional artists to join the party, and it's just screaming out for some massive fantasy or sci-fi art. Next time you fire up Photoshop, consider what your piece would look like on the side of a skyscraper as opposed to a sheet of A4 paper. ●





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# Daily art drop

**Everyday people** Looking for some cheap but decent original art? Then check out Every Day Original...

**There's something lovely about ripping the bubble wrap off a new piece of art and slapping it on your wall – but finding good originals online can be difficult. A brand new website, Every Day Original, aims to take the pain out of finding and buying art, while providing a new platform for traditional artists to flog their wares.**

"There's a huge demand for entry-level original works, both from new collectors wanting to upgrade from prints and also from serious collectors who love small works," says Marc Scheff, the site's co-

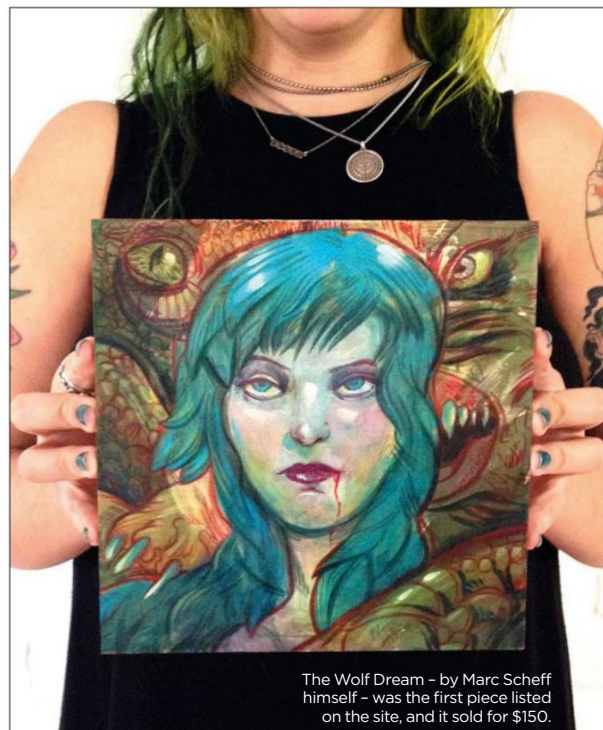


founder, alongside art director Lauren Panepinto. "In our philosophy everyone can be a collector – we just make it accessible."

As the site's name suggests, one new piece of art is posted every day. The rules are straightforward: it has to be an original piece of art, the art goes on sale at 10am EST (3pm GMT), the artist can set their own price – as long as it's less than \$500 – and they get to keep 85 per cent of the revenue.

An artist and art director himself, Marc's passionate about the project, and its focused nature make it feel like it's going to become an essential bookmark for art fanatics. "Art direction isn't a job, it's a calling, it's in the blood and we can't help it," he says. "Every Day Original is our playground. We get artists we love, and who we wouldn't get to work with otherwise."

See what's sold, and what art is still on sale at [www.everydayoriginal.com](http://www.everydayoriginal.com).



The Wolf Dream – by Marc Scheff himself – was the first piece listed on the site, and it sold for \$150.

Some pieces are marked down in price if they don't sell immediately. Elliot Lang's Traveler was reduced from \$195 to \$145.



“Through our website we get artists we love, and who we wouldn't get to work with otherwise”



Kristina Carroll's Intelligent Design is sold framed – a definite advantage of buying original art via the site.





## Lora Zombie

**Pop culture** The effervescent, self-taught, Russia-based artist's studio space is as vibrant as her paint-splattered artworks



**My studio is located in Saint Petersburg, Russia, and it's my favourite place to be, because it's my little world that I can fill up with my art.**

I try to make a new thing everyday, even if doesn't end up being finished or is just a sketch for a future idea.

The way I work begins with a degree of planning – I have certain ways that I'll approach something new. But once the creative process starts, it flows quickly and instinctively. And it's sometimes hard to stop – ha! I never see a final picture in my head before the work is finished. Instead, I like to let it take its own natural shape.

Also, I'll tell you a secret: a lot of people think that I use watercolours in my paintings. But no, I actually use liquid acrylics. And acrylic markers, brush pens, liners and spray paints, too.

My studio is part of my home, which is super convenient. I'm very happy to have this big, bright space in which to have my ideas. When I was younger I only used to create very small pieces of artwork. But I'm much happier having this room to paint on the large canvases that a lot of my work appears on. Plus I enjoy having the space to make such lovely paint splatters!

I love animals, and I always have animals close when I'm working. I have two cats: a hairless cat called Zhopsik, and a Siamese who goes by the name of Umsik.

As for what time of the day I like to make art, well, it's any time I can. My dream is to just have the freedom to keep on drawing, drawing, drawing all day long. I think it's more important as an artist to focus on always making new work, above all else. Popularity and attention for the work will follow in good time.

**Lora is from Russia and is an increasingly popular name in the urban art scene, where her grungy trademark style is gaining global recognition. See more at [www.lorazombie.com](http://www.lorazombie.com).**

My figurine of Jessica Rabbit from Who Framed Roger Rabbit? sits near the window, next to Shaun (from Shaun of the Dead). Pop culture is a big influence on me and I love to use elements of it in my work.

There are always animals and some flowers in my studio that keep me being sweet. I get a lot of my inspiration of colours from nature.

My favourite paints are always changing. Many people think I paint with watercolours, but I actually use liquid acrylics.





# Artist news, software & events

I love the big windows and studio lights. It's great having such a sunny space to draw, draw, draw in!

This beautiful photograph of Kurt Cobain is in my studio because a huge part of my work is inspired by music, especially Kurt's.

I use so many lively colours in my work that it helps to be surrounded by vibrant things, such as my bright red chair and rainbow pillow.



These vibrant paint splatters on the floor are typical of my way of working. You can't be afraid to get messy when making art!



If you missed it first time around, get your hands on our sci-fi special edition!



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SmArt graduate Clark Huggins made this image for Fantasy Flight Games.



## Get smart at art!

**Clever thinking** Illustration Master Class has launched a sister programme, and you can enrol now

**Now in its eighth year, IMC is arguably one of the most anticipated teaching programmes in the world, featuring award-winning artists and inspiring guests of honour. Getting in is tough, with most spots filled within a few weeks, so if you were unlucky in your IMC endeavour, you might be interested in its sister programme: SmArt School.**

Lasting 12 weeks, it's an interactive online training programme aimed at dedicated artists who aspire to develop their skills and refine their craft as image-makers and storytellers. From bootcamps with Marc Scheff to mentorship classes with the likes of Todd Lockwood, there's bound to be something to take your fancy. Book and

comic artist Scott M Fischer, award-winning illustrator Rebecca Lévêille-Guay and New York Times bestseller Dan Dos Santos are also among the faculty.

"After spending five years developing the Illustration Master Class and initiating my own individual online mentorship programme last year, I feel that the time has come to open up these experiences to a



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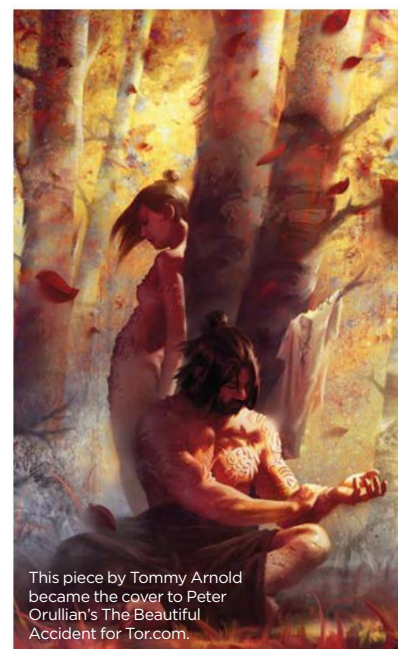
wider audience," explains Rebecca. "I believe the world of art and illustration is a big tent, and there is room for inspired, hard-working creators to succeed together." Find out more and enrol at the SmArt School website: [www.smarterartschool.com](http://www.smarterartschool.com).



Kirbi Fagan produced this spec piece for visiting lecturer Karen Berger, executive editor of the Vertigo imprint.



James Starr King produced this dynamic image as part of an assignment for the 2014 fall semester at SmArt.



This piece by Tommy Arnold became the cover to Peter Orullian's *The Beautiful Accident* for Tor.com.

“The world of art and illustration is a big tent, and there is room for hard-working creators to succeed together”



# Letters

## YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



Contact the editor, Claire Howlett, on [claire@imaginefx.com](mailto:claire@imaginefx.com) or write to ImagineFX, Future plc, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA, England



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### Dream company

Hey! I gotta say, being unable to lay hands on a copy of your magazine for a while has been my greatest disappointment. But finally, I managed to get myself to a book store in time to pick up issue 115 (We ♥ Game Art).

It was to my supreme delight to find that you did a spot on Carbine Studios. I've admired their style for such a long time, and they absolutely deserve the limelight. They bring such colour and personality to a genre notoriously desaturated in tone, and it's a true joy every time I get to see their work.

**Amy Phillips, via email**

**Claire replies** Amy, I've passed on your regards to Carbine Studios – I'm sure they appreciated your enthusiasm for what they do. Sorry to hear that you find it hard to get hold of ImagineFX. If there's a particular copy that you want, you can always buy from our store. When you click on your region for delivery, the price you see includes delivery. See <http://ifxm.ag/ifxshop>.

### Dedication's what you need

I really enjoyed your latest edition of ImagineFX on Comic Art, and I also liked the Manga Artist special edition of the magazine. Since going to the British Library's Comic and Graphic Novel exhibition in June I have been working on writing and illustrating my own comics and manga. I'm just getting to the point where I'm going to publish my first one. It was from reading about Manga Studio 5 in ImagineFX that inspired me to get a copy and a Wacom tablet and get drawing. Your step-by-step guides really make it seem achievable to create great looking art and comic pages. Have you considered a monthly/bi-monthly sister magazine to ImagineFX focusing on Comics, Manga and Cartoons? I would subscribe!

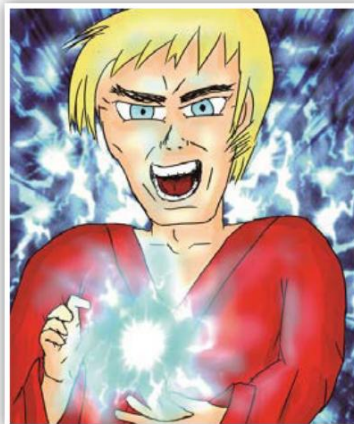


*ImagineFX fan Amy Phillips loved our feature on Carbine Studios. Well, who doesn't love them?*



### DID YOU MISS ISSUE 118?

Visit our shop at <http://ifxm.ag/ifxstore> for details on this edition and other special offers, too.



*Reader Ryan Davidson is working on bringing out his own comics, and hopes to give up the day job soon.*

As an aspiring illustrator it's inspiring to hear about others who are working hard at it, trying to break away from their day jobs. Like Daniel Tyka quitting his job and spending all day working on a Wacom tablet. I can't afford to quit my day job – yet! – but I do spend hours most evenings and weekends working on skills and techniques. I've attached a few of my illustrations to show you where I'm at so far.

**Ryan Davidson, via email**

**Claire replies** Thanks for sending in your art Ryan. The only other magazines that we currently produce are our special editions of the best content already featured in ImagineFX. Look out for a comics and manga one this year. It's great that you were inspired by Daniel Tyka's story (he was featured in issue 118's FXPose). His work ethic has resonated with quite a few readers. It takes dedication to succeed. Good luck with your comic publishing.

### Look after number one

I'm writing to you with a suggestion, since I know many artists face the same problem at some point when they don't watch out for their bodies and draw all day without breaks. I'm speaking of back and wrist pains, which can kick you out of business pretty fast if you don't watch out. So I wanted to ask if it's possible to feature an article about how to prevent these types of injuries before they start to become a major problem. I know many people only try to do something about it when it becomes hindering in their daily work, but that's usually too late already. I know this topic isn't fun, but I'm sure many people would be grateful for some tips.

**Your big fan Lisa, via email**

**Claire replies** That's a great idea Lisa. Artists may be fastidious in the cleaning of their art tools, or the maintaining of their software and hard drives, but often overlook how they can keep themselves in a good condition to be able to create. I'll look into getting this into an upcoming issue.



Your art news that's grabbed our attention



**Alexander Johanson**  
(@AJohanson89)

“Sketching to improve my creature designs, help from @imaginefx anatomy magazine, always learning #gamedev #indiedev”  
<http://ifxm.ag/a-johanson>



**Petar Dimitrov**  
(@AnirnPetar)

“Fantasy creature. #art #fantasy #painting #illustration @imaginefx”  
<http://ifxm.ag/p-dimitrov>



**Johnny Garcia**  
(@johnnysgarcia)

“@imaginefx Couldn't have done it without you guys. Inspired by the recent Dracula film.”  
<http://ifxm.ag/j-garcia>



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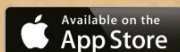
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# Artist Q&A

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**The**  
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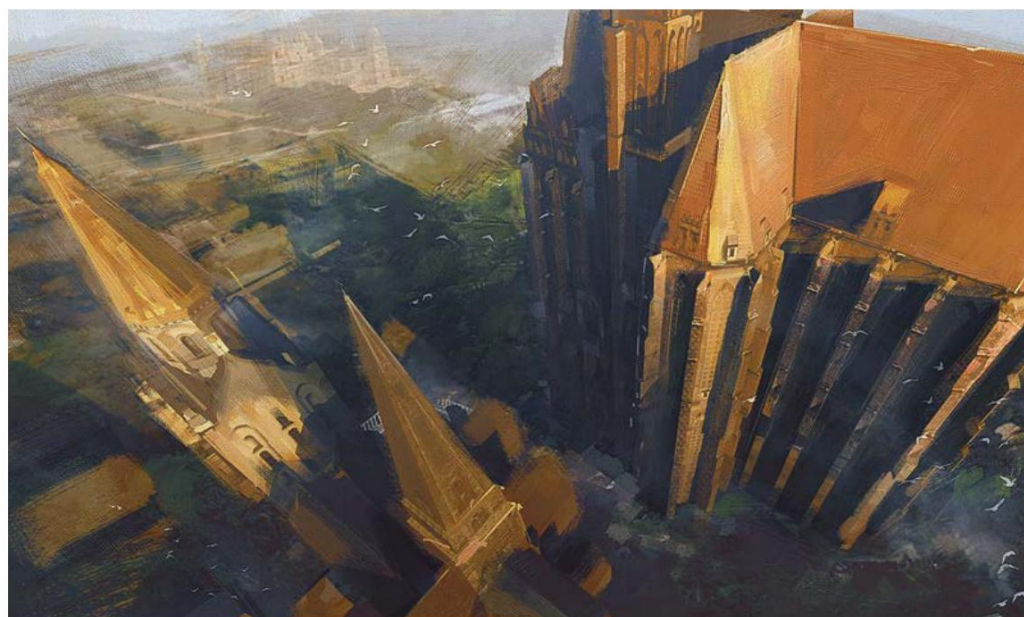
**Donglu Yu**  
Donglu is a senior concept artist at Warner Brothers Games Montreal. She's worked on the Assassin's Creed sequels, Far Cry 4 and Deus Ex: Human Revolution.  
[www.donglu-littlefish.blogspot.ca](http://www.donglu-littlefish.blogspot.ca)

**Bram Sels**  
Belgium-born Bram is a full-time freelance illustrator and concept designer who has worked in the entertainment industry since 2012.  
[www.artofboco.com](http://www.artofboco.com)

**David Braggalla**  
Dave is a graphic designer and illustrator from Stockholm who works both digitally and traditionally. He recently organised the Northern Light Workshop series.  
[www.pixelhuset.se](http://www.pixelhuset.se)

**Paul Canavan**  
Paul is the art director at Scottish indie game studio Blazing Griffin and a freelance illustrator. He says he wants to create art that makes game designers go "ooh".  
[www.paulscottcanavan.com](http://www.paulscottcanavan.com)

**Paul Tysall**  
Freelance artist and designer Paul has extensive knowledge of various digital art tools. He can be found writing about these in-between watching Blade Runner. Again.  
[http://studio\\_tysall.prosite.com](http://studio_tysall.prosite.com)



**Question**  
What advice do you have for blocking colour in environment paintings?  
*Antonia Bould, England*



**Answer**  
Donglu replies



The two most important aspects to consider when blocking colours are the colour temperature and the lighting condition. Colour temperature refers to the warm and cold colour palettes, while outdoor lighting conditions include direct sunlight, overcast and night time. Direct sunlight is dominated by the sun itself. The skylight is a diffuse, soft light that comes from many directions at once. Direct sunlight creates hard-edged cast shadow on the grounds.

An overcast setting is probably the best weather condition for photographers and painters. It enables the artists to see the true colours of a scene without the dramatic contrast of light and shadow.

There are two types of light sources present during the night: moonlight and artificial light. In a natural landscape

Here's my finished image. Notice that after blocking in my colours, they're visually interesting and benefit from the consistent lighting scheme.

setting, the moon is usually portrayed as yellow, to contrast against the dark blue vegetations. However, in a city night scene, the moon is often represented as blue, so it can complement the warm tones of the artificial light sources.

Once you've established your colour temperature and lighting, you can quickly generate a range of colour sketches with visually appealing palettes.

**Artist Q&A**  
**Need our advice?**

Email [help@imaginefx.com](mailto:help@imaginefx.com) with your art questions and we'll provide all the answers!



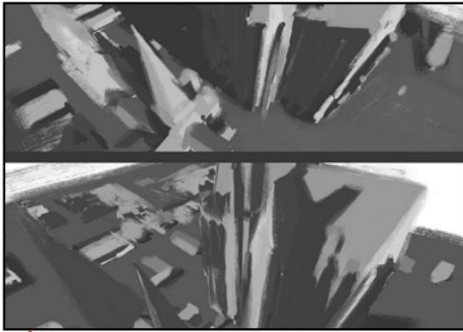
## Artist's secret

VALUE MASKING TOOL

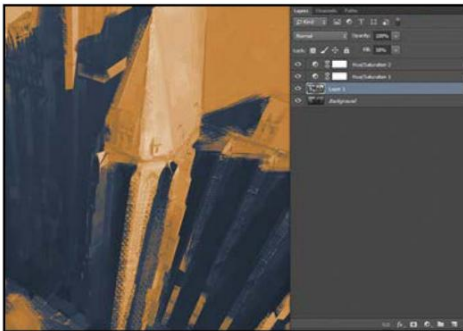
When you double-click the empty area alongside your layer name, the Layer Style window opens. You're then able to use the Blend if sliders so that the current adjustment remains in place, according to your chosen value range.



## Step-by-step: Block your colours with dominant hues



**1** Blocking the shadow areas is the key to defining your colours later on, because shadows establish the boundaries between cold and warm colours. Here I show how the shadows in the scene can fall on the ground and other building elements. They also offer interesting possibilities for the composition.



**2** I pick two dominant colour values to set the basic palette of the scene. The best choices combine a cool colour with a warm one, because they enhance each other's colour properties. You can achieve this using two Hue/Saturation layers: one for determining the colour for the shadow areas, the other one for the lit areas.



**3** Once the basic palette is fixed, I can continue refining the image by staying within my colour ranges for the shaded and the lit zones. The local colours of individual buildings and trees shouldn't conflict with the basic colour palette defined in step two, otherwise there will be distracting colour noises in some areas.

## Question

Can you help me paint a night scene with atmospheric lighting?

Georgina Hillier, US

Creating a convincing atmosphere becomes easy if you plan your approach.



## Answer Bram replies



The key to painting atmospheric lighting is to understand how light is transformed when moving through the thick layer of atmosphere. Think about the way sunlight casts dark and sharp shadows on a bright day. Now imagine what that same scene would look like on a foggy day. Shadows become blurrier and less intense, while highlights are nearly non-existent.

The first step when painting an atmospheric night scene (in this case an old misty inn) is to start with a limited dark blueish colour palette. With every colour you add, think about how the

dark blue atmosphere would influence it. Don't worry about secondary light sources or fog – those are effects that can quickly be added later. Instead, focus on the overall values of the objects in your scene and avoid using obvious cast shadows or highlights.

Once your scene is blocked in (this is about 80 per cent of the painting process) you can start adding your secondary warmer light sources on separate layers. An easy trick to boost the bright warm colours – and the atmosphere around them – is by adding overlay layers of the same colour on top of them. Finish it up by creating a new layer on top, and then with a big soft Round brush and a colour picked from the background, softly paint around the edges of your objects to make the dense atmosphere engulf them.



Eighty per cent of the painting process involves focusing on the scene's primary light source.

## Artist's secret

### BOOSTING THE LIGHT

One way to boost your light source is to add a new layer on top, put its Blend mode to Overlay and then paint over the light source with the same colour. Repeat this a few times depending on how bright you want the light to be.



## Question

Can you please help me paint the scarred wings of a creature warrior?

Graham Davis, England

## Answer

Bram replies



When painting scarred wings it's always a good idea to work with Layer Masks. These will enable you to tear and destroy your wings as much as you like, without actually losing your hard-earned pixels. So with that in mind you might as well start out by painting fully intact wings and cutting away on them later.

The first step is blocking out the form of the wings on a separate layer. Once you have the basic form laid down, start adding monochromatic values. Looking up some reference of insect wings will come in helpful. Carefully study how insect wings are constructed and try to mimic that in your painting. Notice how the big planes are made up of little facets. This will enable you to destroy them in a logical way later on in the painting process.

Keep on adding detail, and look for a support colour. Most insect wings are shiny and will subtly change colour towards the base of the wings. Finally, add a mask to the layer (click the Layer Mask button in the bottom of Photoshop's layer palette). With black as the foreground colour and a sharp brush you can now scar away as much as you want. Don't go overboard though, but try to make the wings looked scarred like they would be in nature. Facets can be cut out, but the skeleton of the wings will for the most part remain intact.



Blocking out the big form of the wings is an important first step. Details come later. For now it's crucial to get the proportions right.

To paint convincing wings, first look for good reference, such as the construction of insect wings

## Artist's secret

LAYER MASKS ARE YOUR FRIEND  
Instead of irreversibly changing your painting by erasing parts of it, paint them away on the Layer Mask. If later on, for some reason, you want to go back you still can, without having to paint the erased parts over again.



This creature is my interpretation of a vildvittra, a small but scary Swedish variant on the harpy of legend.

## Question

I want to paint detailed feathers using watercolour digital brushes. Can you help?

Eddie Carter, England

## Answer

Dave replies



Much of the charm of watercolour as a medium springs from its physical characteristics, and as a result the creation of convincing digital watercolour tools remains elusive. Recently I've been achieving good results using a digital workflow based on the William Stout recreation of Arthur Rackham's ink and watercolour technique. I sketch my line work in graphite, and ink it with Faber-Castell sepia artists' pens.

Theoretically, you could do the line work digitally with a tablet, but I find I get more

character by actually inking the lines on paper. I scan that inked art, and colour it in Photoshop or Procreate.

Whenever possible, I try to work non-destructively, which means lots of layer effects, layer masks and sometimes a Smart Object or two. This will enable you to easily try many variations on your colouring ideas – a big advantage to working digitally! Line work and colour are kept on separate layers, with mask layers for easily blocking in important areas. This practice will give you a lot of flexibility when experimenting with watercolour brushes and textures.



## Question

How do I avoid the dull-looking shadow when using chromatic shadow?

Kevin Groves, Wales

## Answer

Donglu replies



Shadow are not black. The dullness of the shadow usually comes with that pure black shadow block and very desaturated grey tones in the shadow areas.

Chromatic shadow is a quick way to give the illusion of details in shadow areas. Often a few strokes of saturated colours in the shade can trick your brain into thinking those strokes are a result of bounce light from the sky light.

To portray physically correct bounce skylight in shades is nearly impossible, or at least very labour intensive, but chromatic shadow is an easy way to achieve the impression of a complex lighting situation.

This artistic approach of shadow is especially prominent among famous watercolour artists such as Australian



The image on the left has the dark grey value for the shadow. However, with the same illustration, you can add colour vibrancy in the shaded areas by boosting the saturation of red in the shadow area.

illustrator Joseph Zbukvic, because the use of black is very often kept to the minimum with traditional painting.

In portrait paintings, shadow areas are often treated with saturated red instead of dark grey tones or black, in an effort to mimic the translucency of the skin.

When you're working on the chromatic shadow, you're also working with colour vibrancy. This is because you're making certain artistic choices to enhance the properties of certain colours.

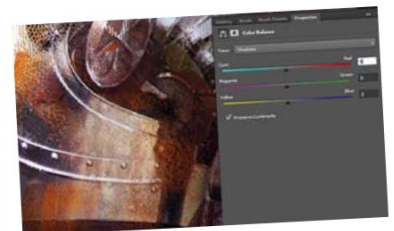
Colour vibrancy can be a strong design language, because it plays a significant role in how the brain analyses certain lighting situations. As long as you apply the basic rules you can have more stylised colour choices, which in turn will give a specific personality to your shadows.

You can further tweak the chromatic shadow by having some blue tone to mimic the bounce light of the sky.

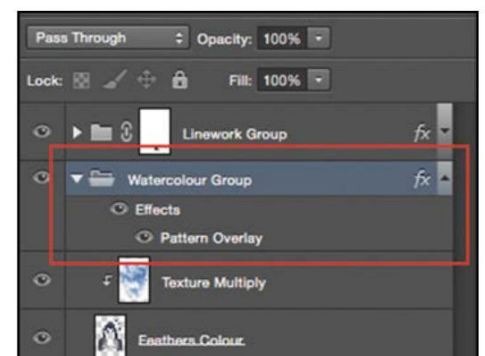
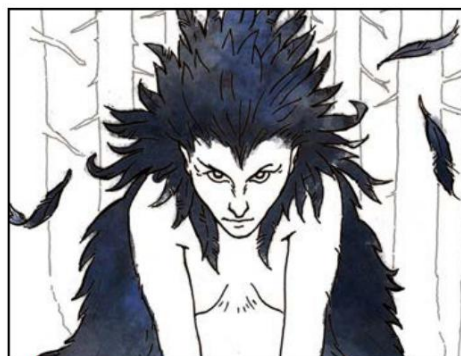
## Artist's secret

### ADJUST YOUR SHADOWS

Select the Color Balance Adjustment Layer. From the Tone menu, you can choose to tweak the colour of shadows, mid-tones and highlights. Pick shadows, and boost the colours accordingly.



## Step-by-step: Use inked lines with digital watercolours



- 1 I scan my inked line work and give it two Layer Effects: a sepia Color Overlay and a 25 per cent, 10 point sepia Outer Glow. You can add these effects to a Group folder and drop different layers of artwork inside this folder. Layer Mask your line work to make non-destructive edits.
- 2 I hand-paint two mask areas for the feathers and environment. With the feather area selected, I use custom watercolour brushes, trying for a wash-like feel. I let the line work edges suggest the mass of feathers. You can get pretty wild and even abstract inside the masked area!
- 3 The feathers and environment colour layers both sit in a Group folder with a Pattern Overlay: Gouache Light on Watercolour 40 per cent Overlay. All colour layers inside will pick up this texture. The Smudge tool helps create a few watercolour-like 'lost' edges.



## Question

### Please help me create a striking landscape concept

Stevie Adams, Scotland

## Answer

Paul Canavan replies



A successful environment painting relies on a few key factors: composition, colour, mood and, most important of all, narrative. If you can tell a story with your image and get the viewer excited, intrigued or scared, then you've done your job.

It's worth remembering that environments can be as character-led as the characters and creatures who inhabit them. Don't be afraid to be bold with your ideas and to have fun with the worlds you create!

I like to go into a new landscape painting with a theme, for example a fantasy painting set in winter with an ominous mood. Once I have that concept in mind, I can start to explore it in more depth. What are the key features of this world? Who lives here? Is it a pleasant place to be?

Once I start exploring these ideas the picture in my head solidifies a little and I can start sketching and gathering reference photographs. It's always worth doing a little research before starting a new painting, because it'll help you solve a lot of problems early on. Save out a few photos in a separate window and pull them up when you need to refer to them.

This huge tree immediately draws the viewer into the image. Features like this are the key to a dramatic environment.

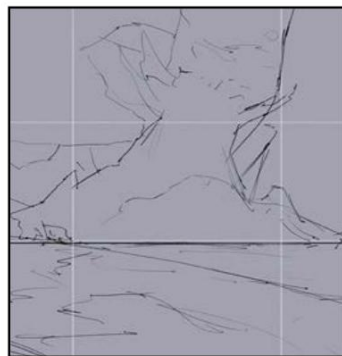


## Artist's secret

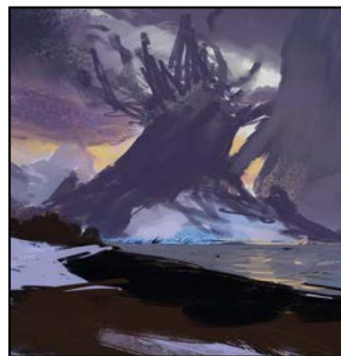
IT'S OKAY TO CHEAT

Nobody cares how you arrived at your results: the finished product is the only thing that matters. Use 3D, photobash... do whatever you want to make your work stand out.

## Step-by-step: Paint something dramatic



**1** I start by sketching out an idea I had about enormous trees in a moody, frozen environment. I usually reference the Rule of Thirds grid to check how my composition is working. Ideally you should align features of your painting with the lines and intersections of the grid to create tension and excitement. This sketch will sit above the painting on a separate layer.



**2** I prefer to block in the overall colours of the painting early, ideally covering the entire canvas. The sky is the most important element at this stage because it defines your palette and light source. This is an icy environment and so I use a lot of grey-blues and cold tones, but to provide contrast and visual interest I introduce a hint of a yellow sun poking through the clouds.



**3** At this stage I can switch my brain off a little and focus on rendering out the different parts of the image. There's no real order to this stage; I just move around the canvas and focus on any areas that could do with some attention. I apply a photo texture, set to Overlay, to the foreground and then use the Mixer Brush to better integrate it into the painting.



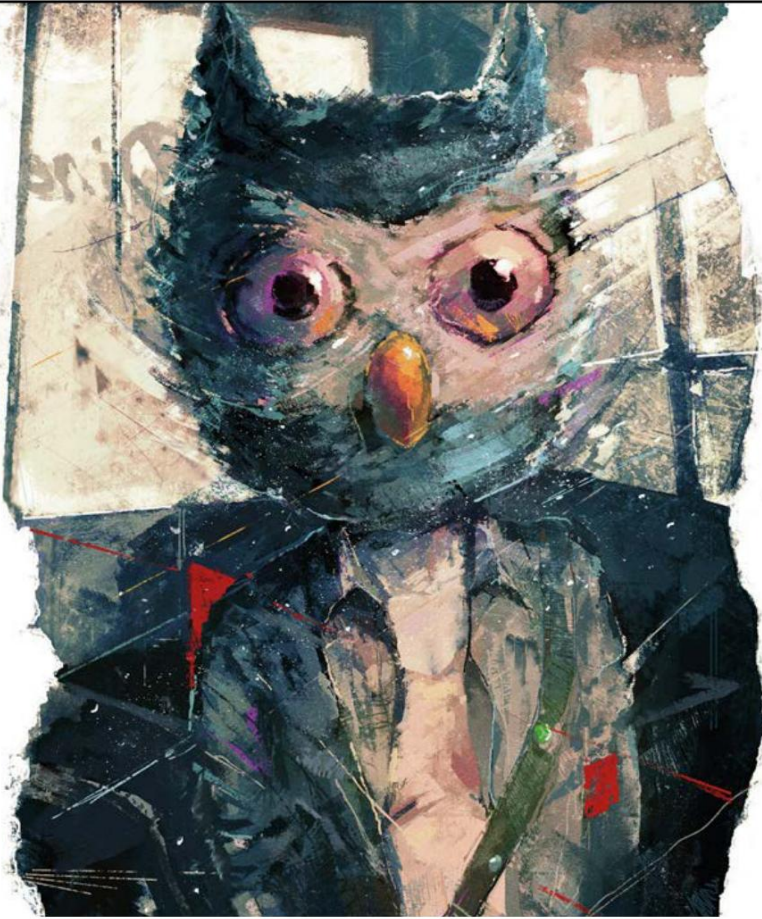
**4** Finishing the painting is a case of adding final details such as the trees and tweaking the lighting using the Dodge tool (subtly, mind!). Once I'm happy with the overall effect I like to adjust the Levels, Hue/Saturation and Color Balance to see if I can squeeze out a little more excitement out of the scene. A little Unsharp Mask and a cheeky signature, and we're done!



## Question

Any advice for configuring and using Photoshop's Mixer brush in my art?

Jade Koslov, US



Incorporating the Mixer brush into digital painting can greatly reduce that sanitised quality associated with digital art.

## Answer

Paul Tysall replies

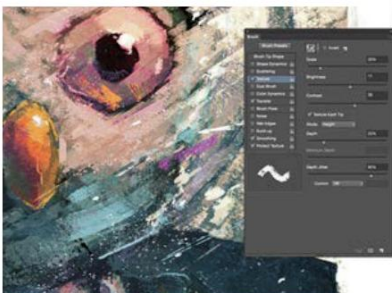


I, too, have experienced frustration at getting to grips with the Mixer brush. That said, I've discovered certain methods that have helped me achieve good results.

Brush properties: for my painting approach I like to keep 'Load and Clean the brush after each stroke' always on, incrementally changing the brush base settings – Wet, Load and Mix – as I paint. If you were working traditionally you'd adjust these each time your brush returned to the palette. It's a shame these options aren't in

the Brush window together with the other settings that I like to edit on-the-fly.

For the Edit the Texture setting, I have the Brush window open all the time so I can edit the Texture detail as I paint. I use my own bespoke textures, created by heavily modifying photos and adding them to the pattern library. I also adjust the Brightness and Contrast sliders when I need more or less texture. This is a great way to mimic light brush strokes across the canvass surface, and prevents your marks from becoming repetitive.



In this close-up you can see what a difference the Texture settings can make to mark quality.



## Artist's secret

APPEND TEXTURE LIBRARIES TO USE WITH BRUSHES

To load these open the Brush window, navigate to Texture and click the disclosure triangle. This opens the Pattern picker options. Click the cog icon: the Artists Brushes Canvas is a good starting point.

## Question

Can you show me how to put text on a slanted background?

Paul Rocastle, US



Painting the writing flat before transforming it saves me a lot of time, as opposed to drawing it into perspective by hand.

## Answer

Paul Canavan replies



Photoshop's Transform tools are ideal for changing the shape of objects. Distort is my favourite because it enables you to easily alter the perspective of an image to fit any surface.

The first step to getting your writing on to an object in your painting is to actually create the writing itself. For this question I draw an alien language directly onto the canvas in a new layer using a Hard brush, without worrying about the perspective. I use repeated symbols to make it feel a little more like a real language and keep the dimensions to roughly those of the obelisk if it were facing me.

Once I've finished, I go to Edit/Transform/Distort and move the points to match the corners of the obelisk, then press Return to apply the transformation. Once in place, I can make it feel a little more at home by clicking Layer>Layer Style>Bevel & Emboss and play with the settings. In this example I use an inner bevel set to Chisel Hard and then alter the angle so that the light comes in from the top left.

The glowing letters can be achieved either by simply painting over my newly beveled layer. Or, for a more complicated but accurate approach, by Ctrl+clicking the text layer (this selects only the letters), create a new layer above this and draw into the selection with a Soft brush.



Align the points to the corners of the object you want to transform. You can use a perspective grid to help with larger objects.



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## Question

I find it hard to pin down the right mood that I want with my final image. Any tips?

Nial Kendrick, England

## Answer

Paul Tysall replies



There's so much to the process of painting that, by the time we complete the image, sometimes we appear to be miles away

from the original image in our heads. This is why making a colour comp before the rendering stages will help you stay on track.

More often than not, when we're talking about the mood associated with a painting we're focusing on the subject, but it's the lighting and colour that enhances our emotional state. Obviously, you should be aware of the colours you're applying throughout the painting process, how they react with each other combined with their subsequent colour theory properties, but sometimes this can become lost as we render the final piece.

The notion of colour theory stems from dividing the colour wheel into two halves: warm and cool colours. Where the dividing line starts and ends is debatable. The emotional aspects of colour are purely associative: from the warm colours of the sun or a campfire feeling welcoming, to the fresh greens-yellows of nature conveying serenity, all the way round to the blues that remind us of the night sky or cold weather conditions. These associations appear to be fairly universal, another reason how visual art can transcend language.

So if the colour palette has strayed off course, how can we get it back on track? There's one powerful Photoshop colour correction tool among the Adjustment Layers options: Color Balance.

This is a sinister authority figure, so I've shifted the colours to a cooler state to convey detachment from the viewer.



The warm skin tones combined with that red background made sense in the original, but the message wasn't right. Some minor colour tweaks and we're back on track.

## Artist's secret

MAKE USE OF SELECTIVE COLOR

This works in the same way as Color Balance, but instead of targeting value ranges you can identify specific colours, including the blacks, whites and neutrals. Great if you want to increase (or reduce) the temperature of new hues arising from your colour correction edits.

## Step-by-step: Adjust colour temperature using Color Balance

**1** From the Layers window select the Create New Fill or adjustment layer icon and then scroll up to the Color Balance option. In the Properties window you're given a selection of sliders. From



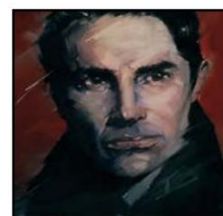
here you can edit the Midtones, Shadows and Highlights of your image; choose the relevant option by clicking the Tone drop-down menu.

**2** Slight increases and decreases with each of these options will shift the overall colour temperature. Moderate use can help to apply colour unity within an image by removing existing colours and



creating a more restricted colour palette. If you're still undecided about the direction of the colour palette, try using Color Balance to trial new options.

**3** Don't be too precious about minor aspects of colour in your image when you're colour correcting for the overall mood. If your colour correction has knocked out a key hue, you can always



assign a Layer mask to the Color Balance adjustment layer and then reintroduce the underlying colour back using a brush with a low Opacity setting.

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# Stephan Martinière

From Paris street gangs to creating the last Foo Fighters album cover, Stephan is an artist for all seasons

**A**ged 15 and still in school, it all seemed too good to be true for Stephan Martinière. The aspiring comic artist had been asked by an independent publisher to feature in a new magazine, Tac. With the first 10 pages complete, they wanted to run his 15-page story, five pages per issue, giving Stephan time to polish the final panels.

Yet the whole thing was a scam. The first issue went on sale with his art, but the publisher refused to cough up the money. "I did eventually get paid, though," says Stephan. "My dad got involved. Armed with a club he rampaged, demolishing the guy's office. Everyone ended up at the

police station, but my dad left with a cheque from the publisher. That was my first experience of the world of art."

With recent film work for Guardians of the Galaxy, The Hunger Games and this year's The Avengers: Age of Ultron; game art for Rage and 2015's Obduction; and a string of exquisite book covers in his portfolio, you may not have associated Stephan with comics. Likewise, the utopian sci-fi environments he's best known for seem light years away from a background in street fights. But talking to the artist about his 44-year career, which started in Japan when he was 19, and continues today with Disney theme park designs and blockbuster films, his adaptive skills and steely resolve are at the root of all his output.

## STREET FIGHTING MAN

Born in 1962, Paris, and brought up in Grenoble's suburbs until he was 15, Stephan wasn't a stranger to the odd rumble himself. While drawn to the creative world of French comics like Pif gadget, Spirou and Tintin, he ran with a gang from his neighbourhood, a low-income housing project on the outskirts of the city. The university town had created architecturally socialist housing – swathes of identical buildings tied together with ➡

## Artist PROFILE

### Stephan Martinière

Growing up in the suburbs of Grenoble, Stephan's first love was comics. He studied animation in Paris, and took his first job in Japan to draw the cartoon character

Inspector Gadget. He has since become a master of the sci-fi book cover, film and game art, and Hollywood theme park.

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



## THE NINTH CIRCLE

Stephan's a fan of Chris Foss, and this 2012 cover for RM Meluch's book pays homage to the British artist.



© DAW



© Midway Games





© Tor Books

**WALKING ENGINE**  
This is Stephan's recent book cover for  
The Walking Engine, by David Edison.

March 2015

ImagineFX





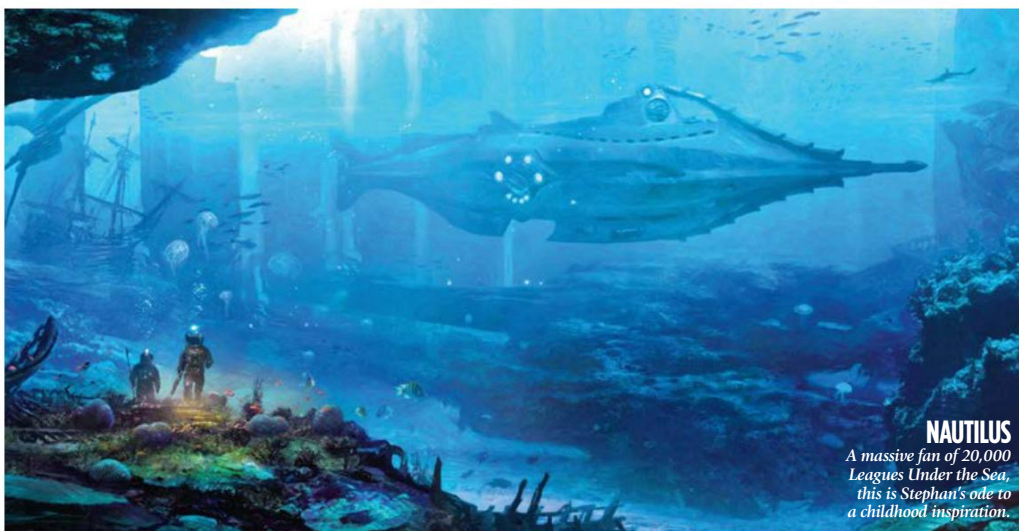


ImagineFX  
LEGEND

#### FOO FIGHTER

Although a fan of the band, Stephan's work for the Foo Fighter's recent album cover was "just another job." And his very first album cover!

© RCA Records



#### NAUTILUS

A massive fan of 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea, this is Stephan's ode to a childhood inspiration.

© Disney

➤ a big chunk of communal park – but there was always trouble nearby. “We were just kids from the same neighbourhood being there for each other. We didn’t have guns or knives, but we did have some old-fashioned fights,” he says. “While some gangs were more violent, ours was more into mischief and petty crimes.”

He returned to Paris at 15 with a tougher skin, and a new-found ability to sniff out con-men. It was a city altered by the May 1968 riots, where hundreds of thousands of students, teachers and workers had joined to demand the fall of Charles de Gaulle’s conservative government. To a teenage Stephan, the change in art was where the revolution had made its greatest mark.

“I remember the bell-bottom pants, the music too, but what impacted me more was



## LEARNING CURVE

From trench coat to stripy jumper: Stephan honed his cartoon skills with Inspector Gadget and Waldo

"This is a good example of my cartoon roots, from Disney to Frankin and Wasterlin. I've always enjoyed drawing in this style while I was very young and later in art school. I was 31 years old when I did this. Classic pencil and ink, comic book style."

"I wasn't always that comfortable. I didn't have a lot of opportunities to practise cartoon extensively, in fact, my first job was working on the animated series Inspector Gadget in Japan when I was 20, right after animation school, that gave me the opportunity to get better at it. The style for Inspector Gadget wasn't as crazy as the Waldo comic strips, but it got me to draw constantly and hone my skills."

"The Where is Waldo strip gave me the opportunity to go totally nuts with the style. I was doing a strip a week for four years. It was a great experience."



## GUARDIAN ART

The most recent film art that Stephan can share is for fan's favourite Guardians of the Galaxy.



## ORIGINATOR

This piece is for 2015's Originator: A Cassandra Kresnov Novel, by author Joel Shepherd.

## “Artists like Moebius, Druillet and Bilal changed how comic book art was done and how you show it”

the by-product of the 1960s in illustration and comics. There were already tons of different comics with a variety of styles, then Métal Hurlant [Heavy Metal] happened. Artists like Moebius, Druillet and Bilal changed how comic book art was done and how you show it. I was in Paris when I discovered that, and it completely changed my life and my art."

After four years at art school, Stephan was accepted to study animation – "I saw animation as comics that move" – in Paris' prestigious Les Gobelins. He left his mum in Grenoble to stay with family in the capital. Stephan went to the Louvre as part of his course, but pored over underground comics in his own time. A childhood love of US Swamp Thing artist Bernie Wrightson combined with the new French comic

radicals, took his art into new directions. There wasn't much employment, and blanket applications to animation studios came to nothing. Inspired as he was, things were starting to look bleak.

## GO GO GADGET!

Then he got a break. A studio director, impressed with Stephan's portfolio, asked him to draw some of the studio's 'bible': a mix of characters, props and environments. He worked through the night, reproducing the majority of it, and was hired the next day. Directed to the HR department to fill some forms and sign a contract, Stephan was surprised when they asked for his passport. "I said, 'I'm not going to be working here in the Paris office?'" And she said, 'No. In two weeks you need to be in



## NEO SHANGHAI

The artist contributed this piece to the Chinese World Expo in 2010.

Japan.' It took me about two seconds to say yes. Even though I had no passport."

With his documents fast-tracked, the artist found himself in Tokyo, working for DIC Entertainment's Asian department, on its new title, Inspector Gadget. "You might remember, for that company Inspector Gadget became huge," he says. "That was the first time a French company was trying to reach the American market. It did. It was made in Japan, and it was cheaper and better than Scooby-Doo, which was ruling the roost in the US at the time. So the TV networks were like 'Wow, this is a turning point in animation on TV.' We did it so







# STEPHAN MARTINIÈRE

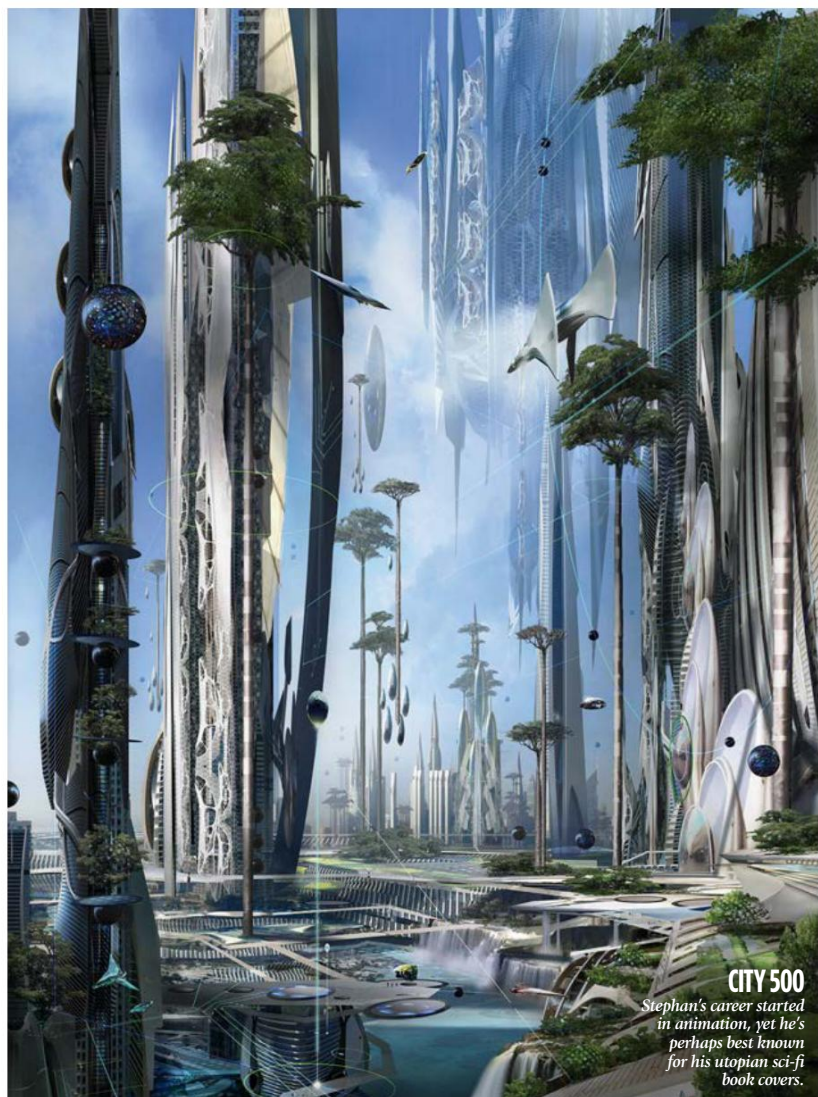
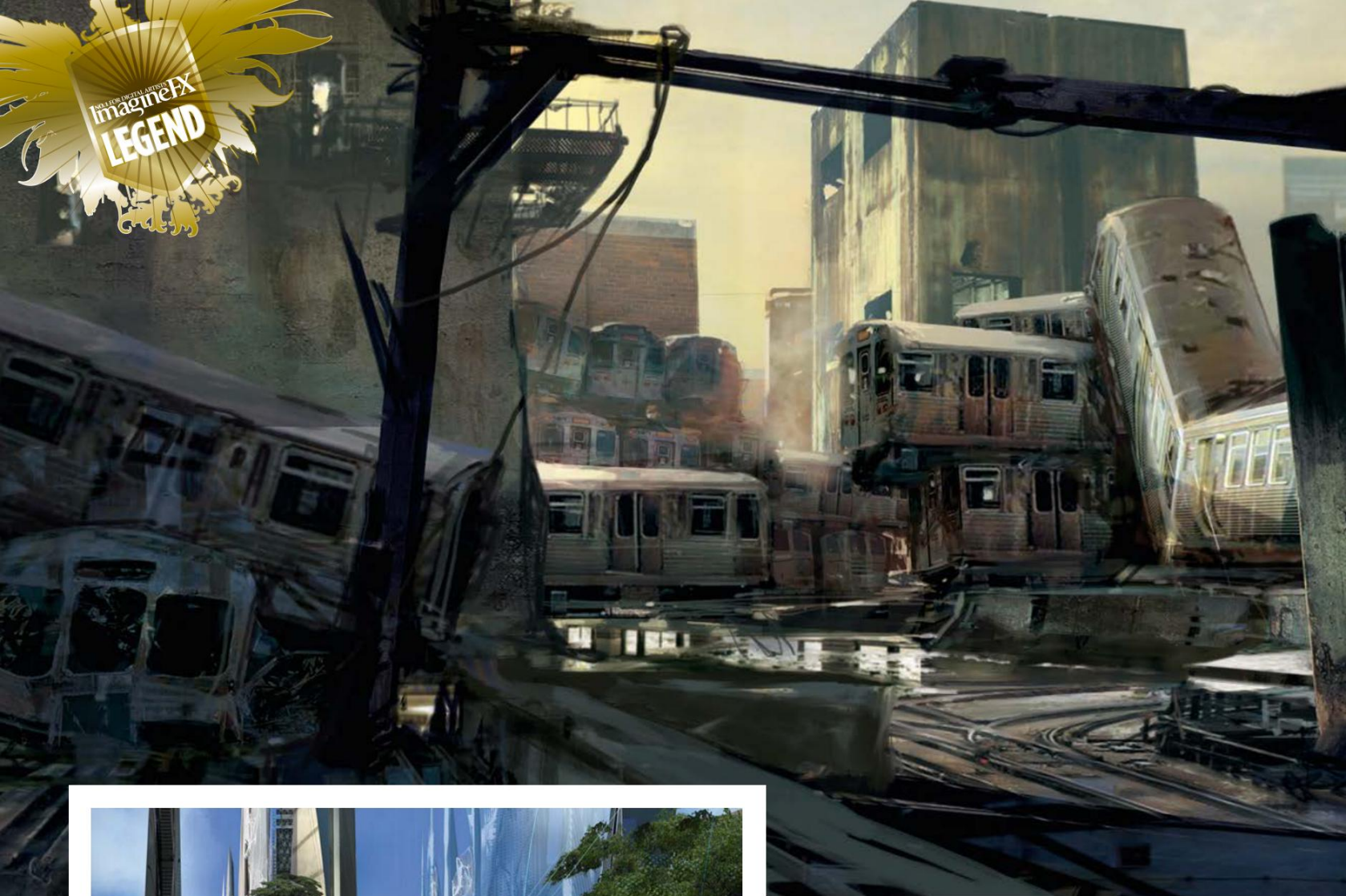
## RAGE POWER

*Before returning to the life of a freelancer, Stephan led teams on games such as id Software's Rage.*



© id Software





#### CITY 500

Stephan's career started in animation, yet he's perhaps best known for his utopian sci-fi book covers.



#### OBDOCTION – FARM

Stephan worked on this game, with the creators of Myst and Riven.



#### DESOLATION ROAD

A great example of using the book cover dynamics to create a inviting composition.





© Midway Games

## SLOW 'N' STEADY WINS THE RACE

Stephan's cover for Michael R. Underwood's *Shield and Crocus* reveals another side to the artist...

"This is one of my most recent book covers. A digital painting like this enables me to let go of the precision I apply in drawings or paintings when I produce concepts for film or games. A book cover is a very narrative and personal process."

"I do a quick sketch to get the main composition in place and then let the painting process slowly dictate the outcome. It's an organic process. I let myself be surprised as I layer different colour washes and references, and use different filters in Photoshop. I'm able to think in a more abstract and graphic way, and somehow it feels like a natural artistic progression."

"It's interesting because I never actively sought out a career in the book cover industry. I saw it as more of a fun thing I'd like to do one day. Embracing digital enabled me to develop a career in film and theme park design, and that's the work I was doing when I got into the book cover industry. It's by producing covers that I found my unique artistic voice as a painter."



© 47North

➔ fast and so big that the company opened a branch in America."

The next eight years saw Stephan move from character work to environments to animation and storyboarding. He was animation director by the time he was 27. Needless to say, he wanted "to be more than an animation guy." But in the mid-1980s the film art world was a unionised "private club", and the games art industry didn't exist. "And book covers? Not at all. It didn't seem like a job. I was buying books and admiring them, but never as a

preserve of traditional artists for some time after – but for Stephan it was time to have some fun. Trained in animation, the artist stresses he is no painter. Yet his protean skills, and knack in conveying stories, enabled him to make the most of the gathering digital tide. Living in the US, his ability to make clarity from chaos is perhaps best summed up by his work on *Where's Waldo*, the friendly red and white-striped chap hidden amid a noise of people. He produced the Sunday syndicated strip between 1994 and 1997.

**“I was buying books and admiring them, but never as a career. I never thought I'd be a freelance artist”**

career. I never thought I'd be a freelance artist. I was busy enough." Then the internet happened.

### BIRTH OF THE COOL

"It's only when the internet came along, the game industry took off, and new tools such as Photoshop came about, that my career exploded with possibilities. It created a cross-pollination between the industries," says Stephan. "I shifted gears when that technology happened, when I got my hands on Photoshop."

This brave new world wasn't for everyone – book covers remained the

Speaking from his New Mexico studio, today Stephan's enjoying a new audience, having created the latest Foo Fighters album cover. He's a fan of the band, but it was work as usual: figure out the idea behind the image – in this case a composite of some of the cities the band have played – and sketch out as many ideas as come to mind, working up the strongest. These days Stephan works to very different music: instrumentals and soundtracks to his favourite films, which implicitly convey a narrative.

But why draw at all? Stephan's more popular than ever with a new area of art opening up for him in covers, but does he

remember why he picked up that first pencil to make a mark back in the Grenoble tenements? "That's a giant question! That's like asking why the first caveman drew! I don't know."

"Maybe it's something instinctual that some people have more than others. It's a drive, it's natural. It's a way to express something. I think everyone has that desire to some degree. Some people are just better at it, or have better opportunities to explore it. It's a big unknown. Maybe it was my fairy godmother above my cradle who said, 'You will be an artist.' Actually, I like that answer better!" ●



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## PRINT AND DIGITAL BACK ISSUES



### Issue 118

February 2015

Learn new tricks for the New Year as we concentrate on boosting your art skills. A raft of top concept artists, including Khang Le, Feng Zhu and Ian McQue share their ideas, and Yoann Lossel shows you how to paint with gold. Plus we chat to Bruce Pennington.



### Issue 117

January 2015

Zap! Pow! It's all about the comic art this issue. Stanley Lau shows us how to create dynamic and compelling superheroes, Dave Kendall makes a horror page, and we chat to some greats of the comic field, including Alex Ross, Terry Dodson and Bill Sienkiewicz.



### Issue 116

Christmas 2014

Our creature design special gives you all the hints and tips you could need to produce better beasts, with advice and tutorials from Aaron Blaise, Bobby Chiu, Terry Whitlatch and more. Plus, we take a look into Wes Burt's sketchbook, and visit Jesper Ejsing in his studio.



### Issue 115

December 2014

All the skills you need to break into the games industry, whether it's painting better character art, refining spaceship concepts, or generating environment concepts quickly. We also explore the art of Destiny, and talk to the art leads behind the year's biggest game.

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November 2014



**Issue 113**  
October 2014



**Issue 112**  
September 2014



**Issue 111**  
August 2014



**Issue 110**  
July 2014



**Issue 109**  
June 2014



**Issue 108**  
May 2014



**Issue 107**  
April 2014



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Christmas 2013

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\*Resource files are available from issue 85 onwards.



## STUDIO PROFILE

# MPC

The visual effects studio enjoyed a remarkable 2014 – and artistic collaboration was key...

**LOCATION:** London (plus offices in Vancouver, Mexico City, Amsterdam, LA, New York, Bangalore and Montreal)  
**RECENT PROJECTS:** Guardians of the Galaxy, Godzilla  
**OTHER PROJECTS:** Life of Pi, Harry Potter series, Wrath of the Titans, Into the Woods, Terminator: Genisys  
**WEB:** [www.moving-picture.com](http://www.moving-picture.com)



**M**oving Picture Company (MPC) has been at the forefront of VFX for over 25 years. With eight offices around the world, including in London, Vancouver, New York and Amsterdam, its work is regularly seen on screens big and small, including in the Harry Potter franchise, Prometheus, Life of Pi, and in advertising campaigns for Samsung, Coca-Cola and Sony.

There have been numerous awards along the way and last year was another excellent one for MPC. The studio's work featured in

Godzilla, Guardians of the Galaxy, Maleficent and X-Men: Days of Future Past. "Our VFX artists are world leaders in this highly specialised medium," says Mark Benson, MPC's London-based global MD, "which demands a unique blend of creativity and technical finesse. We make moving art on an industrial scale." But what's the secret to their enduring success?

Collaboration is the word you hear time and again when learning about MPC and talking to its staff – as well as an emphasis on nurturing the right environment for



Movie and advertising work is done at MPC's central London studio.



artistic ideas. "We try to give our artists a genuinely creative environment to work in," says art director Ravi Bansal, "one that thrives on collaboration and co-creation. We run voluntary classes including life-drawing and sculpture, and also offer tech talks with experts on



everything from digital destruction to animal anatomy to basic physics."

MPC artist Jonas De Ro lauds the team ethos.



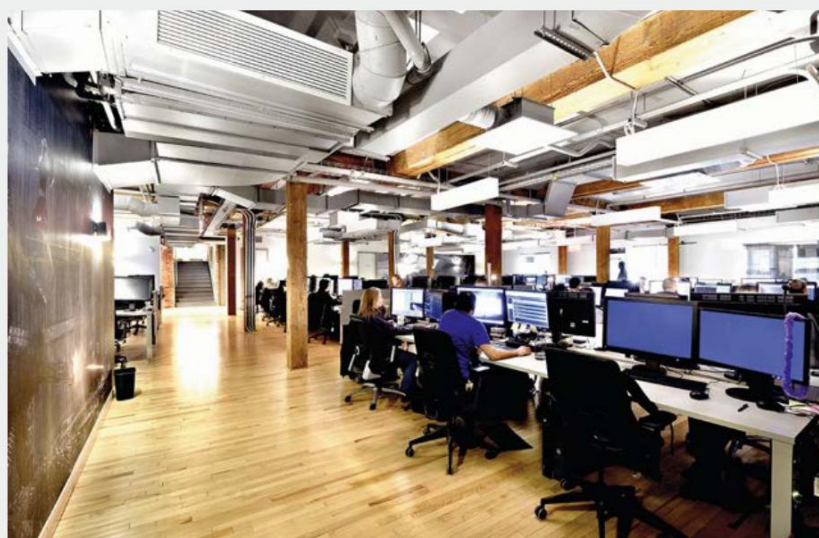


Angelina Jolie benefits from MPC's effects work as she brings the full menace of Maleficent to the fore.

“We offer tech talks with experts on everything from digital destruction to animal anatomy”



© 2012 Warner Bros. Ent. All rights reserved.



MPC developed the double-torso Makhai for Wrath of the Titans.

Artists at their workstations at MPC's studio in Montreal, Canada, which has recently established a trainee programme for graduates.

## MARK TOMPKINS

The visual development artist on working at MPC

### What does MPC offer its artists in terms of a creative environment?

There's a wealth of information from employees who are always willing to share their thoughts and processes whenever we may need them. It's very inspiring to be around such great talent and it's what pushes you to create your best work.

### What project has been particularly memorable one for you and why?

My most memorable project was on the last two Harry Potter films, Deathly Hallows Part 1 and 2. They were my first venture into the film world. It was fast paced, exciting and challenging all in one. I was learning on the job and my skills increased faster because of it.

### What's the initial process of collaboration for you on a film's visual effects design phase?

My usual process almost always starts with researching and referencing as much as I can about the subject. Sometimes I go quite far in terms of understanding a subject and will often take photos to help reinforce my knowledge and to use them later on for the concept work.

### What level of detail is your early conceptual work delivered at?

It varies quite a bit. However, we can usually be less tight on our rendering or finish and focus more on the idea.

### What's the relationship between 2D and 3D as working processes?

I like to use the tools I feel are right to get the job done. If I think it's faster to do a quick 3D model and render it to work on top of, I will. I'm not precious about tools and enjoy the energy switching between the two whenever it's necessary. Similarly, it makes a lot more sense to approach a huge environment concept in 2D, because to model, texture, light and render a whole cityscape would take until the end of all days.

### What are the challenges of being a concept artist on a film?

At times we're required to take directions that aren't to our taste, or that we think may not be correct, which can be disheartening. It's best not take feedback too personally and remember you're helping to create someone else's vision.

### What advice do you have for aspiring concept artists?

It's important to know what you want to be doing and don't stop until you get there. Actually, don't stop there either! Push your limits and your work will talk for itself.



Mark trained at the Arts University Bournemouth. He has worked at MPC since 2010 and has expertise in concept design and visual development.

[www.marktompkinsart.blogspot.co.uk](http://www.marktompkinsart.blogspot.co.uk)



## ANIMATING A VOLCANIC GOD

Ravi Bansal, MPC's art director, describes the conceptual art development of Kronos



Wrath of the Titans reimagined a number of iconic characters from Greek mythology. In the film, Kronos, the father of three Greek gods including Zeus, became a walking volcano. But as Ravi explains, there was a challenge to balance photorealism with heightened reality...



### 1 Initial concepts and research

"Kronos is the father of Zeus, Hades and Poseidon, described in the script as a walking volcano who's breaking free from Tartarus, his underworld prison. After a reference-aided consultation with the client, we produce a first round of sketches. Some of these were done with archaic tools from a bygone age, called pencil and paper."



### 2 Turn the art into a 3D model

"We make a 3D sketch model using ZBrush. The design is refined here as much as anywhere else in the process. Increasingly artists are sketching straight into 3D to give them a base to work over."



### 3 End of the beginning

"The final concept is done over a model rendered out of ZBrush, KeyShot or even Modo, many of which can supply render passes such as depth, occlusion and shading-normal passes. Kronos is then put into the context of his scene."



### 4 Refine the core design

"We further refine and develop elements in colour that were approved, sometimes with the help of photographic textures to better sell scale and detail. We adapt dripping aspects of leaking lava to create logical surface patterns."



"We're fortunate to have a lot of creative freedom where possible, and to be surrounded by talented and diverse people who are willing to share and work together to create a better end product. There's also a lot of room for humour, tolerance and open discussion within the team. Everybody's opinion is treated with equal value and this is vital to keep up the morale and productivity of our team."

### TIME IS THE LIMITING FACTOR

There are no hard and fast rules when it comes to details or rendering, says Jonas, who goes on to say that, "Everything

Godzilla and a MUTO face off in the ruins of San Francisco, in Matt Allsopp's moody concept artwork from 2014's monster mash.

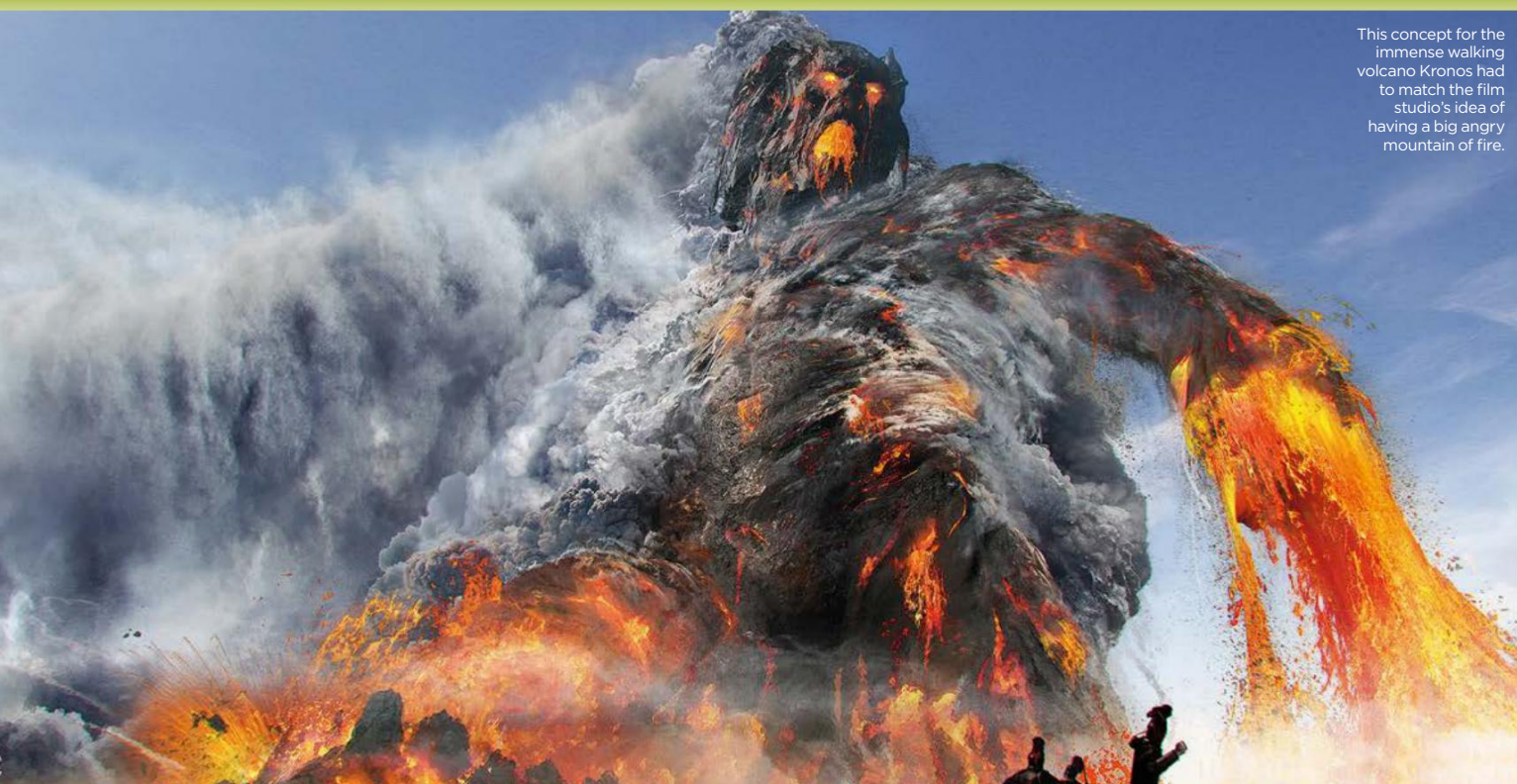
**"We're fortunate to have a lot of creative freedom where possible, and to be surrounded by talented people"**

depends on the time available, the amount of work needed to convey an idea and the ability of the client to respond to certain styles. It's important to think about the purpose of what you're creating. Often during the early production period, the overall narrative, ideas and mood have importance over the specific design."

"After an initial conversation with the director we rapidly produce mood boards," explains Ravi. "These are a fantastic tool to turn language into visual representations and help minimise what could be disparate interpretations of a brief or conversation. Our next step is producing quick(ish) concepts: work that's good enough to transmit an idea."

Courtesy of MPC Art Dept. GODZILLA TM & © Toho Co., Ltd. © 2014 Warner Bros. Entertainment, Inc. All rights reserved.





This concept for the immense walking volcano Kronos had to match the film studio's idea of having a big angry mountain of fire.

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"Sometimes it's enough to deliver a rough pencil or digital sketch to get a discussion with the client going," says



conceptual artist Chris Kesler.

"That way you can turn around lots of ideas in a short amount of time.

"Some clients, however, respond a lot better to highly polished pieces, which obviously takes a lot more time to do. In that case we mostly discuss a bunch of ideas within the department, with our art director and the other artists, to find something that we're all happy pursuing. Then we work it up until it's a final piece of artwork."

### ADVICE FROM THOSE IN THE KNOW

MPC artists are happy to give advice to aspiring artists hoping to break into the industry. "Be able to explain your work and ideas publicly," says Ravi. "And enjoy it!"

"Keep your curiosity fresh," says MPC artist Nadia Mogilev, who produced art for Guardians of the Galaxy. "Although



drawing and painting practice is important, no artist should neglect real-life experiences outside of the studio. Travel, go to

museums and art galleries, read blogs and magazines about science and history, watch documentaries, take pictures of things that interest you, sketch your ideas down. All of these enrich your visual library and are useful when you need to come up with a new concept."



The calm before the storm: MPC created this memorable scene for Marvel's Guardians of the Galaxy.

© Marvel



"It's a constant challenge realising someone else's idea and making it work for the film," says artist Po Sing Chu. "Similarly, it's great to be able

to see your input come alive on the big screen. However, my greatest opportunities have been the collaboration with other artists and learning from them. I believe the artists in the room are what contribute to a creative environment."

Working together. Listening to each other. Sharing ideas. It's this collective approach to its many creative visions that's made MPC the success it is today. ●



In this scene from Godzilla, the titular beast trashes the Golden Gate bridge.



## Tara Fernon

The appeal of wildlife – both friendly and aggressive – comes across clearly in this artist's sketchbook

### SEVEN SNAKES

"A seven-headed serpent is the symbol of Cambodia. You see it everywhere there, alongside religious symbols. I drew this when I returned home from holiday there."



"I tried to draw the beast's faces as if they were looking at something shocking. I love the goat's expression"

### Artist PROFILE

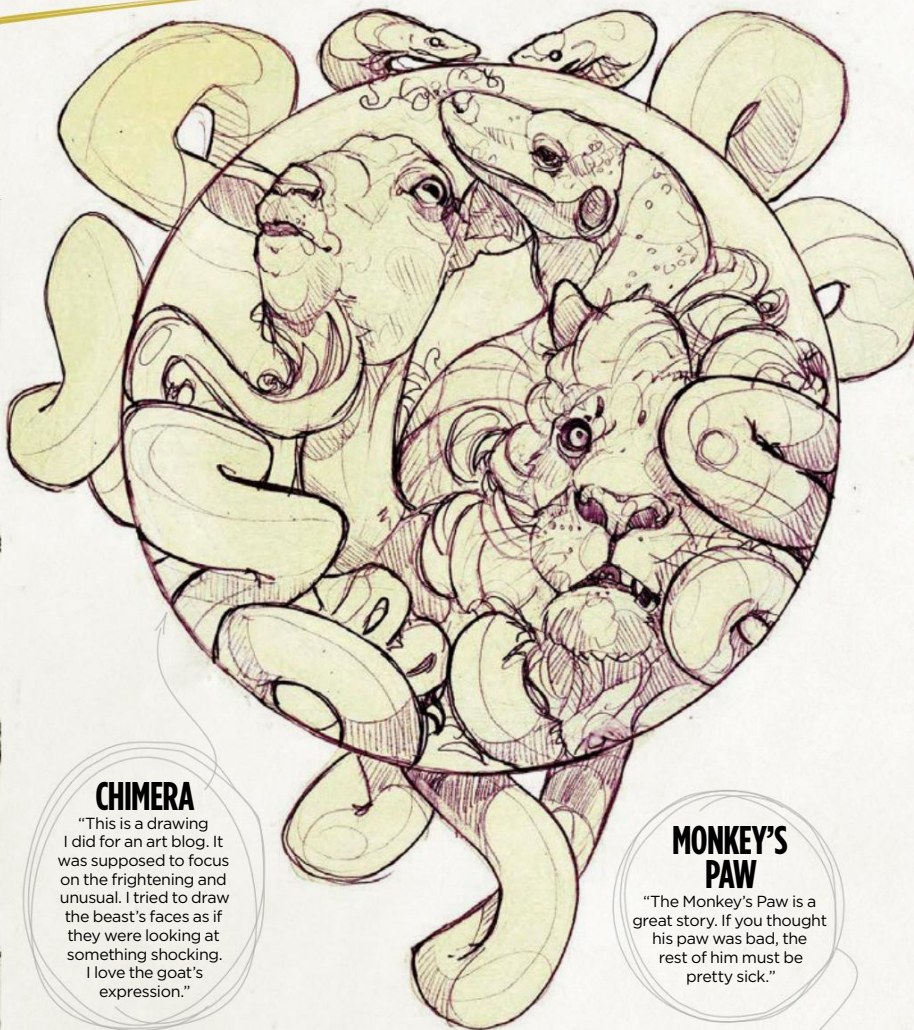
**Tara Fernon**

COUNTRY: US



Tara works on a sustainable-living farm in Redmond, Washington, US, and her first big break was when she was chosen by Jon Schindehette to be his concept art/illustration intern at Wizards of the Coast for a summer.

[www.tarafernon.carbonmade.com](http://www.tarafernon.carbonmade.com)



### CHIMERA

"This is a drawing I did for an art blog. It was supposed to focus on the frightening and unusual. I tried to draw the beast's faces as if they were looking at something shocking. I love the goat's expression."

### MONKEY'S PAW

"The Monkey's Paw is a great story. If you thought his paw was bad, the rest of him must be pretty sick."





**SICK**

"This will always bring me back to Vietnam because the circles in this sketchbook drawing were from me tracing around the cups in my hostel. This is another one for the odd art blog."





# Sketchbook

## WAR DOG

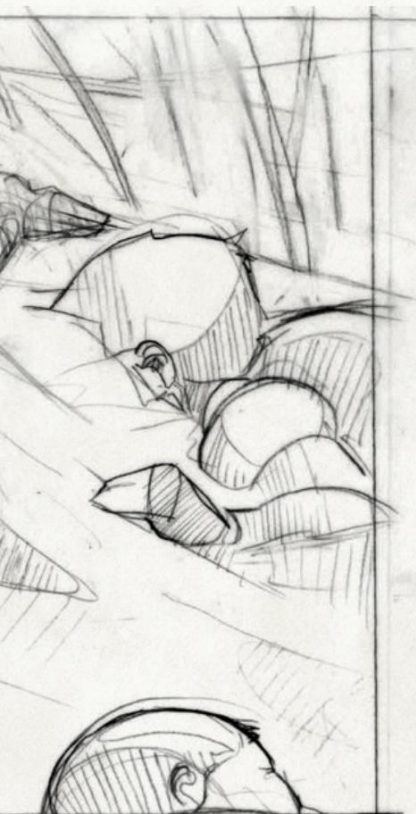
"While I was drawing this, I imagined the feeling of being laid out in the snow and just how cold it must feel. That's what high school in Colorado felt like during winter!"

## TIGER HEARTS

"Tigers seem to come up in my drawings a lot. I just feel like sometimes, you need to draw a demonic tiger over a platter of sacrificial hearts. Yeah, that looks good."







"Sometimes you need to draw a demonic tiger over a platter of sacrificial hearts"

### ODYSSEY CIRCE

"I started doing an artist's study of John Waterhouse's Vanity. I tried to transform it into something else. I love depicting stories so I turned it into Circe from the Odyssey because, I'm inspired by mythology. I love this drawing so much that I decided to do more of Odysseus' travels and am now working on a series of them."

### ODYSSEY SIREN

"This is my favourite drawing right now. This is the second piece in my personal project for illustrating parts in the Odyssey. Can you see Odysseus' ship in the waves?"



Want to share your sketches? Email us with a selection of your artwork, to [sketchbook@imaginefx.com](mailto:sketchbook@imaginefx.com)  
 NEXT MONTH'S SKETCHBOOK: FRED AUGIS



OTTOMAN SIPAHI AND  
ARAGONESE MERCENARY  
A scene set after the battle for  
Constantinople. A Christian  
mercenary has died from his  
wounds and is found by an  
Ottoman soldier. Close

“I went to university  
to become an architect.  
But after many years  
there, I decided to give  
illustration a try”





# JOSÉ CABRERA

The future looks fantastic for this Spanish concept artist and matte painter who's fascinated by the past...

José Cabrera has made a name for himself creating fascinating, colourful and detailed visions of both historical and fantastical war. "My methods are changing - I think that I'm now more chaotic," he says, and given the artist's skill at painting gritty, realistic battlefield scenes, this bodes well for the future.

José's artworks, which transport you into scenes of alarming warfare and somewhat calming, yet disturbing scenarios, are painted with both traditional materials and, more recently, with digital tools. "One thing I find important when painting something complex in oils is careful planning," he says. "Also, when painting in digital, having a lot of layers is useful! It helps keep my chaos under control."

Revealing more about his crossover to digital tools, José says that it was more a necessity than a conscious creative decision. "I was using digital for sketches. But I was forced to work in full digital when I was hired as matte painter for a 3D movie, Justin and the Knights of Valour," he says. "Then I saw myself being able to take on two or three times as much work as before. The main reason is we don't get paid enough in some areas of the entertainment industry to allow for the slow traditional painting process. We're forced to maximise production time."

After working on the 2013 film, José was snapped up for a confidential PS4 project for Sony Computer Entertainment, a senior concept art role that will hopefully see the painter move from his current home in Granada, Spain, to Sony's home in Santa Monica, Los Angeles.

## INSPIRED BY COMICS

Perhaps surprisingly, given the quality of his art, José received no formal art training: he's self-taught. "I was always drawing things in the corner of my school books," he says, before revealing how he became fascinated with illustration. "Later on I saw Rich Corben and Vicente Segrelles comics that my brother used to buy. These artists were more painterly than the standard comic artists."

Yet José did nothing to quench his thirst for the arts as he grew up. "I went to university to become an architect," he says. "But after many years there, I decided to give illustration a try: I would look for a job and if I failed to find something within a year, I would go back to architecture. I couldn't let my life go by without having given myself a chance."

José subsequently found work in books and magazines as an illustrator. "I learnt most of the things I know from experience and self-criticism," he says. "Keeping an active and critical attitude towards past and future works is the key." And what ➡

## Artist PROFILE

**José Cabrera**



**COUNTRY:** Spain

**FAVOURITE ARTISTS:**

Historically, Velazquez, Zorn, Sorolla, Repin and Gerome, together with

many contemporary artists such as Piotr Jablonski, Craig Mullins and Alexander Mandradjiev.

**SOFTWARE USED:** Photoshop

**WEB:** <http://ifxm.ag/j-cabrera>



**RONIN** This image graced the cover of an Osprey Publishing wargame rulebook, and was inspired by the Kurosawa movie Ronin. [Close](#)

© Osprey Publishing

## Gallery







**FAITH AND FEAR** Fan art of a Warhammer 40,000 space marine in terminator armour. "It's a slightly more realistic take on this fantasy universe," reveals José. [Close](#)



**IRON HANDS VS ALAITOC ELDAR** A space marines dreadnought enters the scene of a Warhammer 40,000 infantry battle. [Close](#)

© Games Workshop



© Medieval Warfare magazine

## THE EPIC CONSTANTINOPLE

Dive into José's incredible vision of the Fall of Constantinople...

This incredible image – commissioned by Medieval Warfare magazine – is undoubtedly one of José's standout pieces. "This artwork is about the Fall of Constantinople in 1453. The objective was to give the readers of the magazine a view of the fight in the three walls that protected the city," says José.

"The inspiration was the walls, and the Ottoman panoply as a whole," he continues. "I wanted to show a bit of diversity, and not make it look like a museum show. I just tried to make all the pieces fit the framing. The other challenge was to fit the horse in there, without giving it a staged appearance."

José then goes on to reveal the difficulties of this stunning, immersive piece: "The main challenge was to achieve the feeling of effort against the elements, using the lighting to help add to the general sense of the attacking force's efforts," he says. "That was the purpose of the backlight, with the wind blowing in the direction of the viewer."

When questioned how happy he is with the piece, José is rather ambiguous: "Overall I'm happy, but I like the small fragments of it better than the whole. A complex composition such as this always give me that weird feeling."

### Comments



Cliff Hope  
ImagineFX

"José's decision to show a small portion of the city's fallen walls has greater impact because the viewer is at ground level, and can see that the struggle to take the city has only just begun. You can almost taste the dust in the air."

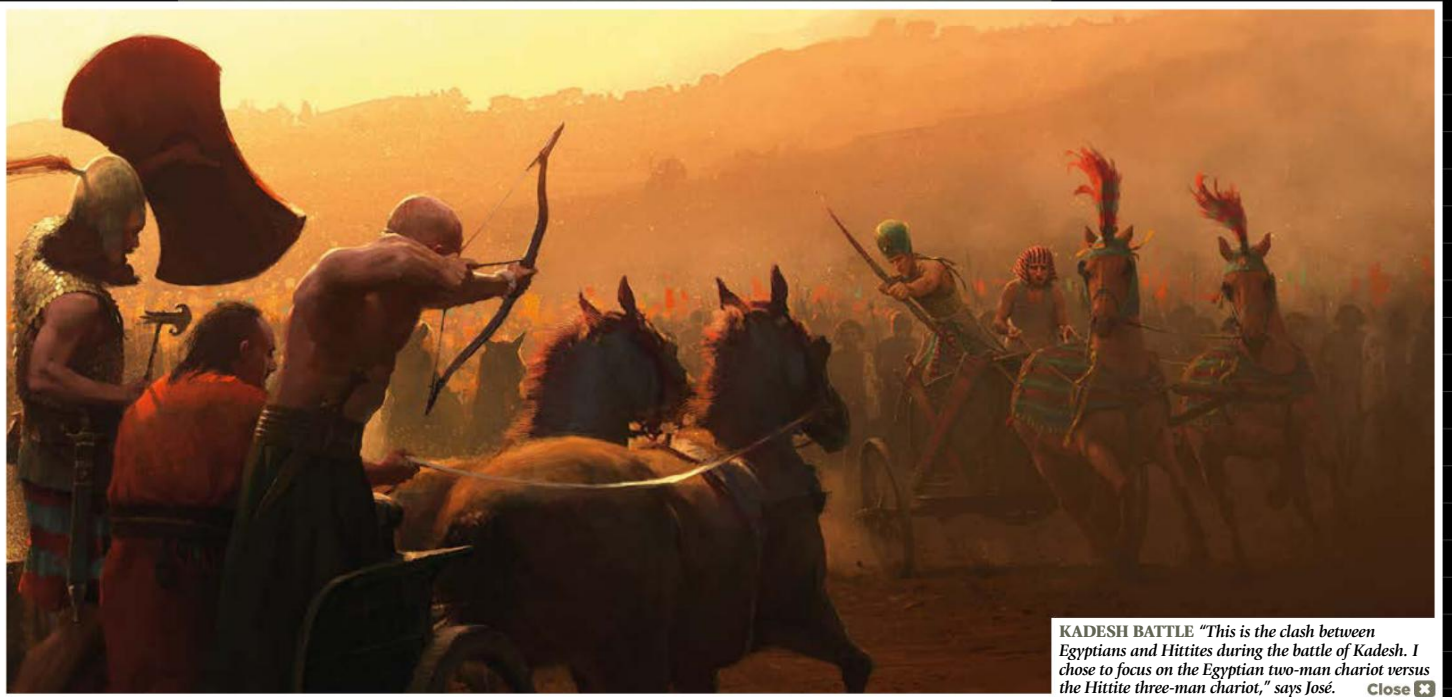


Lee Carter  
Pro artist

"What immediately strikes me about José's piece is the very tangible feeling of being pulled into the scene. It's almost as if I'm preparing to enter the stronghold myself. It's wonderfully done and I really want to know what lies beyond the brow of the rise."



# JOSÉ CABRERA



**KADESH BATTLE** "This is the clash between Egyptians and Hittites during the battle of Kadesh. I chose to focus on the Egyptian two-man chariot versus the Hittite three-man chariot," says José. [Close](#)

➔ did José have to do to start the ball rolling with his art career? "Work always to the best quality I could achieve – whether I was paid well or not," he says. "I used to think that only by improving my skills could better jobs be found. But I knocked on some doors, always trying to take on as much work as I could." This enthusiasm and work ethic paid off for José, but did lead to stress and anxiety – and to what the artist charmingly explains as "loss of bearded areas".

## JOSÉ'S PROACTIVE APPROACH

The high-pressure situations José found himself in meant he had to reassess his techniques and processes. "Being forced to do professional work from the beginning put me under the kind of pressure I needed to get the maximum from every job experience," he says. "So I moved from watercolour to oils, and searched for more stable and effective colours. Then from oils to digital, trying to achieve higher productivity ratios and easier sketch roughs. Then from simple book illustrations to matte painting in movies, to concept art in gaming studios." It all sounds far too simple, if you ask us.

What's certainly not simple – or simplistic – are José's finely detailed, beautifully toned paintings, each of which

tell a captivating story through their characters, environments and battlefield action. "Building a good story is what takes the most effort," he explains. "But as a lover of history and arts, it's more the beauty of the image that ultimately calms my anxiety."

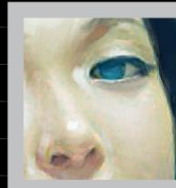
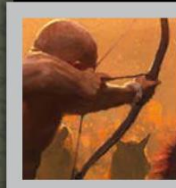
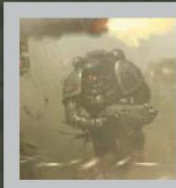
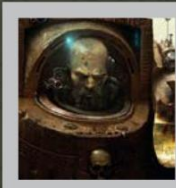
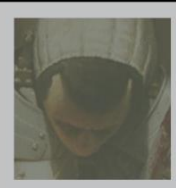
As for José's influences, historical battles are top of the list: just glance at the detail and sublime storytelling in his Constantinople piece (see page 62). In fact, the artist can nail it down to a specific period: "My favourite historical period is without any doubt the second half of what's commonly considered the Middle Ages," he reveals. "Some time around AD 1000-1500. It's mostly because of the rich materials that can be found in this period – you know, the armour!"

As José continues his freelance painting, as well as beginning his career in concept art and matte painting for major studios, it's obvious that there's a wise head on his creative shoulders, as he offers advice for anyone wanting to follow in his footsteps. "Working as a freelance artist, the most important thing to learn is never work to match what you're paid for, but to match your own career expectations. And if you're working in a studio, the most important thing is to learn from those artists who are more experienced than you." ●



**CHRISTINE** A straightforward portrait that José produced of one of his friends. [Close](#)

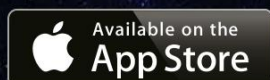
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Advice from the world's best artists

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## This issue:

### 66 Paint an urban sci-fi character

Fred Augis reveals his technique for painting a confident female character using bright colours.

### 70 Create art based on a photograph

Wangjie Li produces a colour piece using a photo study, including both abstract and concrete elements.

### 72 Concept and paint a spaceship

From experimenting with workflows to generating a lighting scheme, Long Pham creates a spaceship concept.

### 78 Give your art a cinematic look

Discover how to produce a grand establishing shot of a planetary expedition, with Brenton Cottman.

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Remko Troost creates custom Photoshop brushes on the fly, as he paints a priestess from the future.

70



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84







Photoshop

# PAINT AN URBAN SCI-FI CHARACTER

**Fred Augis** bestows his female character with bright colours and bags of confidence, as she flies in the face of deadly dull dystopian sci-fi visions

## Artist PROFILE

**Fred Augis**  
COUNTRY: France



Fred has channelled his video game concept art skills into

projects run at Arkane Studio, Dontnod Entertainment and Torn Banner.  
<http://ifxm.ag/f-augis>

**GET YOUR RESOURCES**

See page 6 now!

## PRO SECRETS

### Colour tweaks

You can create a colour fringe effect with the Lens Correction filter, but you're limited when customising and positioning your colours. One solution is to flatten your work and select Levels. Pick the Red, Green or Blue channels and move the middle cursor to 255. Check your changes, turn your layer to Lighten and move it. This can help to customise the Lens Correction effect.

**M**y workshop will reveal how to take a sketch and turn it into a polished illustration, creating a piece of art with plenty of impact. When I'm working on an illustration I try to check my progress after each step, because by the end of the painting process it's difficult to adjust the artwork if there are problems with a character's anatomy or the composition.

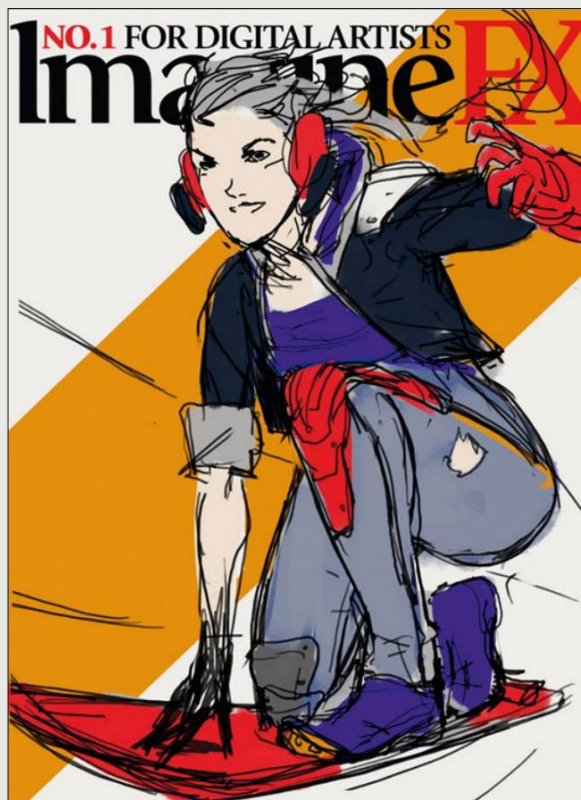
For this painting I'll put a lot of time and effort into getting her face just right. It's the focal point of the piece and the

viewer will notice this first, before moving on to the rest of the scene. I know this is going to be a sci-fi piece, but I don't want to depict advanced technology and clothing. Today's drone technology means hoverboards are just around the corner!

My approach towards colour is usually to use one or two saturated colours, but in this case I added many more to convey a bright, positive mood. This image is going to be used on the cover, and such a range of colours might hamper its readability, but I think the ImagineFX art editor will

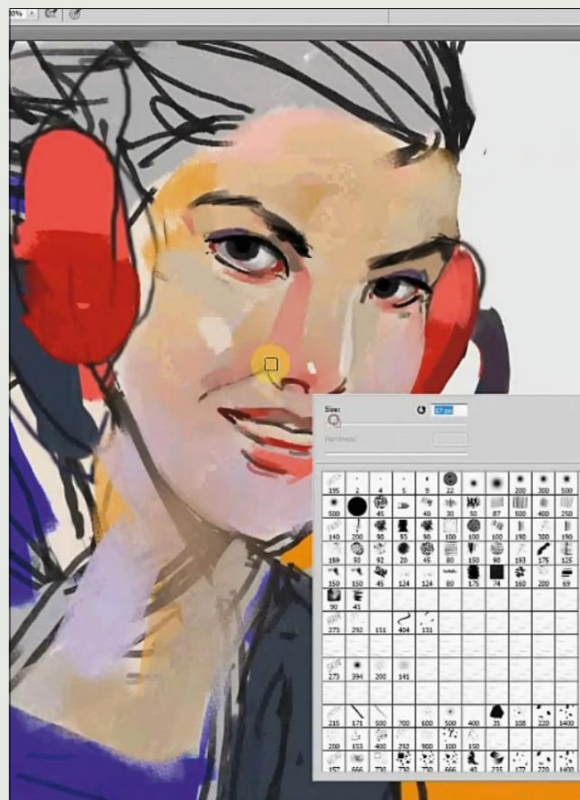
be able to balance things out through the use of contrast and saturation.

When starting any painting I think it's important to take the long view, and avoid getting bogged down in details early on. This will ensure your artistic vision stays true as it develops on the canvas. Indeed, I want to take a simple approach to this painting as a whole, using colours to generate the overall feeling of confidence, rather than employing specific storytelling devices. In essence, I want colours to bolster my shapes.



## 1 Early design concepts

After talking with the ImagineFX team, we decide that I'm going to paint a bright, dynamic female sci-fi character who looks like she's a member of a street gang. I lay down a rough sketch that helps me see the structure of the composition as a whole. I apply flat colours to the character as a starting point, while a simple orange graphic serves as a background.



## 2 Strengthening the focal point

I've often found that any character piece needs to have a solid base in place, before I can move on to other areas of the illustration. Furthermore, an attractive portrait requires many shades of colours for visual interest, so I add them directly to the character layer. I consider giving her direct eye contact with the viewer, to help pull them into the illustration.







## PRO SECRETS

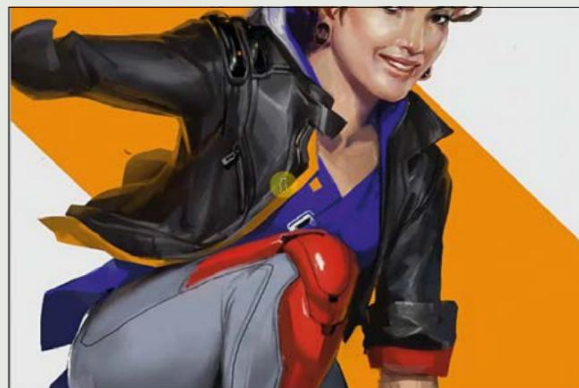
### Tap into your emotions

I would encourage having an emotional connection with your painting process. Where's the fun in just going through the technical motions of creating a piece of art? Apply colours that speak to your heart, which in turn should help to enrich your art.



### 3 Adjust her proportions

As the sketch develops, I concentrate on getting the proportions of my character correct. The best way to do this in Photoshop is to create a selection with the Lasso tool and then move the chosen element with the Transformation tools. It's more efficient and effective to work on small areas at a time, rather than try to correct a large area of anatomy in one go.



### 4 Define materials in the scene

I give her a leather jacket because it suits her street look, and because it contrast with other materials in the scene, such as the plastic on her shoulders or rubber on her shoes. When painting textures without references it's helpful to place two very different materials (matte and shiny, say) alongside each other.

## Shortcuts

### Master the tones

Ctrl+M (PC)

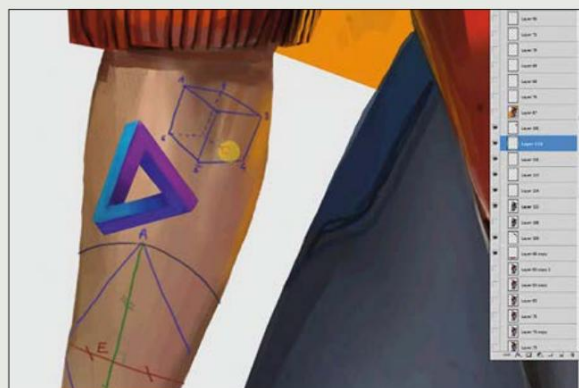
Cmd+M (Mac)

The Curves tool helps to lighten or darken areas, while maintaining the values.



### 5 Clothing design and functionality

Giving my character sporting accessories contrasts nicely with her leather jacket. I give her studs under her shoes and some protection on her trousers, to make her hoverboard ride more comfortable. The knee pads, gloves and her mask represent the peak of her personal technology: I paint them red to draw attention to this fact, but don't overdo their design.



### 6 Tattoos with a difference

Her tattoos are elements that evoke a little mischievous spirit. They depict geometric representation and symbols. I like to think that this particular sci-fi future world has its basis in mathematics. I use colours to indicate the character's playful spirit. The red mark on her forehead hints at a cosmopolitan state of mind and society in general.



### 7 Harmonious background colours

The background must be the graphical support of my composition, but also integrate with my character and other foreground elements. I select her most saturated colours to integrate them behind her. The red and blue structure the composition and are balanced by the black leather and the grey of her trousers. I add some colours for greater visual interest.



### 8 Polishing details on the character

I continue to improve the volume and details on and around her face. I also change the direction of her gaze, so that she's looking where she's going! Her dreadlocks don't react as normal hair so I imagine the weight of them and place them accordingly. I also add more reflections of her skin on the mask.

## RESOURCES

### WORKSHOP BRUSHES

#### PHOTOSHOP

#### CUSTOM BRUSHES:

01

I use this brush when I sketch out my designs.

02

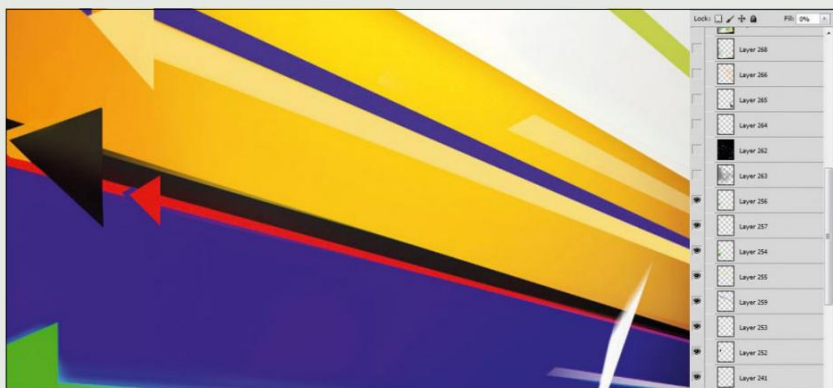
This brush help me to add more details.





## 9 Creating a speed effect

This is not as simple as selecting a particular area of the painting and applying the Motion Blur filter, because I need to take account of the perspective in the scene, or if an object is spinning as it moves. I apply this effect on the background by imagining that the viewer is moving at the same speed as the character in her hoverboard.



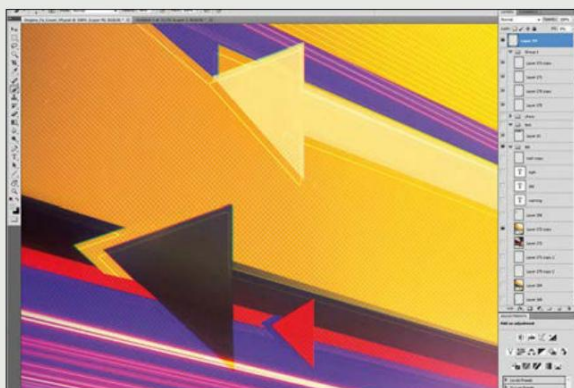
## 10 Symbols to support the theme

I want to represent this action using either symbols or logos. So the most interesting is the arrow. It symbolises the speed of the rider, the future and it's a strong graphic device that won't go out of fashion. I also stylise the hoverboard's engines so that they look visually interesting, rather than completely functional.



## 11 Add a photo texture

Sometimes photographs help me to improve areas in a piece that I'm working on. Here I place a picture of a brightly lit car driving on a highway. I use it on a Lighten layer when my textures have saturated colours and if my background is dark, such as my dark blue that I've chosen here. I adjust my colours using the Color Balance tool until I'm happy with them.



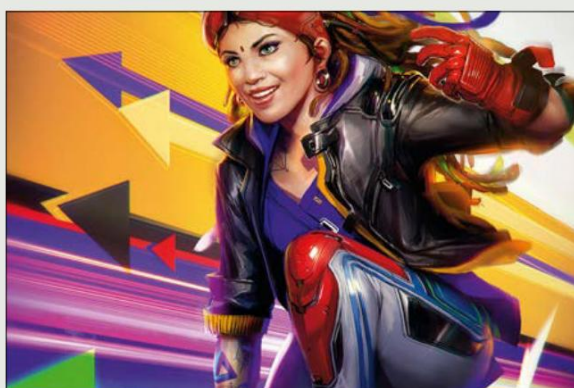
## 12 Add effects to improve definition

The Halftone Pattern filter adds noise to an overly smooth illustration. I need to make sure that the pattern doesn't contain too much contrast, which would be a problem if the image needs to be printed. I also use the Glowing Edge filter to adjust the halftone, and then change to layer mode to Lighten.



## 13 Finalising her look

I improve the volume and lighting on the woman. The Burn and Dodge tools help me to retain the detail of my work, as well as enabling me to adjust the lighting. I use a Color Dodge layer specifically for lighting. I work more on her freckled skin and tweak her expression. I want her to look as if she's living in the moment, and having the time of her life!



## 14 Adjust the last details

Almost finished. I check if all my tones are working in harmony with the colours. I place some light around the character to better integrate her with the background. Finally, I flatten my layers and apply a colour fringe effect using the Lens Correction filter, followed by the Smart Sharpen tool. And then I call the painting finished. I hope you like my work!

## PRO SECRETS

### Duplicate your workspace

In Photoshop you can create a clone of your workspace, via the Arrange Document option. This will enable to see your picture as a whole and see the effect you're having while you're zoomed in on your original window to work on details.



## Photoshop CREATE ART BASED ON A PHOTOGRAPH

**Wangjie Li** reveals how he approaches his photo studies to create abstract and realistic art

### Artist PROFILE

**Wangjie Li**  
COUNTRY: US



Wangjie started teaching art in 2007, but focused on creating concept art in 2009. He moved to the US in 2013 and is now a freelance concept artist living in Los Angeles.  
[www.wangjieli.com](http://www.wangjieli.com)



**GET YOUR  
RESOURCES**

See page 6 now!

### RESOURCES

#### WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSH:  
[SHOP COLOR]  
GRAFFITI

By using my texture brushes with the Smudge tool, I'm able to create a range of textures in my art.

Photo by Marta Bevacqua



### Face refinements

Using a base background created previously, I use a bit of red-orange to draw her facial structures, and further enhance the tip of her hair and eyebrow with a bit of pure red. Then I use a few saturated colours to create the impression of light on her chin.

### Choice of reference

I found this image by Marta Bevacqua ([www.m0thart.deviantart.com](http://www.m0thart.deviantart.com)). I realised I could work up the realistic elements of the figure and treat the environment as a more abstract feature. It's a beautiful photo, too!



## Selective details

I use the Brush tool to draw details, and the Smudge tool to smooth out the transition and add complementary colours to small parts of the face. Then I subtly adjust the colours in parts of the face, and introduce focal points by highlighting the tip of her nose and the contours of her chin. I avoid putting in too many details, though.

How I create...

## FANTASY ART FROM A PHOTO



### 1 Apply basic brushstrokes

I lay down brushstrokes in the style of an abstract painting, and fill the canvas with colour. Then I use the Smudge tool to mix colours with textures, developing a general colour tone and contrasting elements. For example, the head area is darker than the rest of the image.



### 2 Focal points

I brighten up the focal points of head and hand, and add colour on the bottom left of the painting to make the image clearer. I take a break and when I return I become frustrated by what I see. It's not what I had imagined...



### 3 Introduce warm colours

My subject needs warm colours! She's a human after all, with blood in her body and light on her skin. I add red and yellow, using a faint yellow to draw out her facial structures and arm. I top it off with a warm yellow highlight.

## Keep it loose

I draw freely in this area. There's no need to draw anything specific, but I'm aware that I should be laying down colours and brushstrokes with a purpose. Here the elements are unified by corrugated shapes, which gives each block of colour a sense of creativity and imagination. This works as long as I don't overdo the contrast!





# *Photoshop* CONCEPT AND PAINT A SPACESHIP

From experimenting with different workflows to quickly generating a lighting scheme, **Long Pham** reveals how he creates spaceships concepts





## Artist PROFILE

**Long Pham**  
COUNTRY: France



Long is a full-time freelance concept artist and illustrator.

He works with small game companies and publishing houses, as well as on his own personal projects.

[www.longpham.net](http://www.longpham.net)



**GET YOUR RESOURCES**

See page 6 now!

Over the course of this workshop I'll show you how I approach developing new ideas for designing my favourite subject in science fiction: spaceships. For this workshop you'll need to know your way around Photoshop and have a basic understanding of art, such as lighting, shadow, colour and perspective.

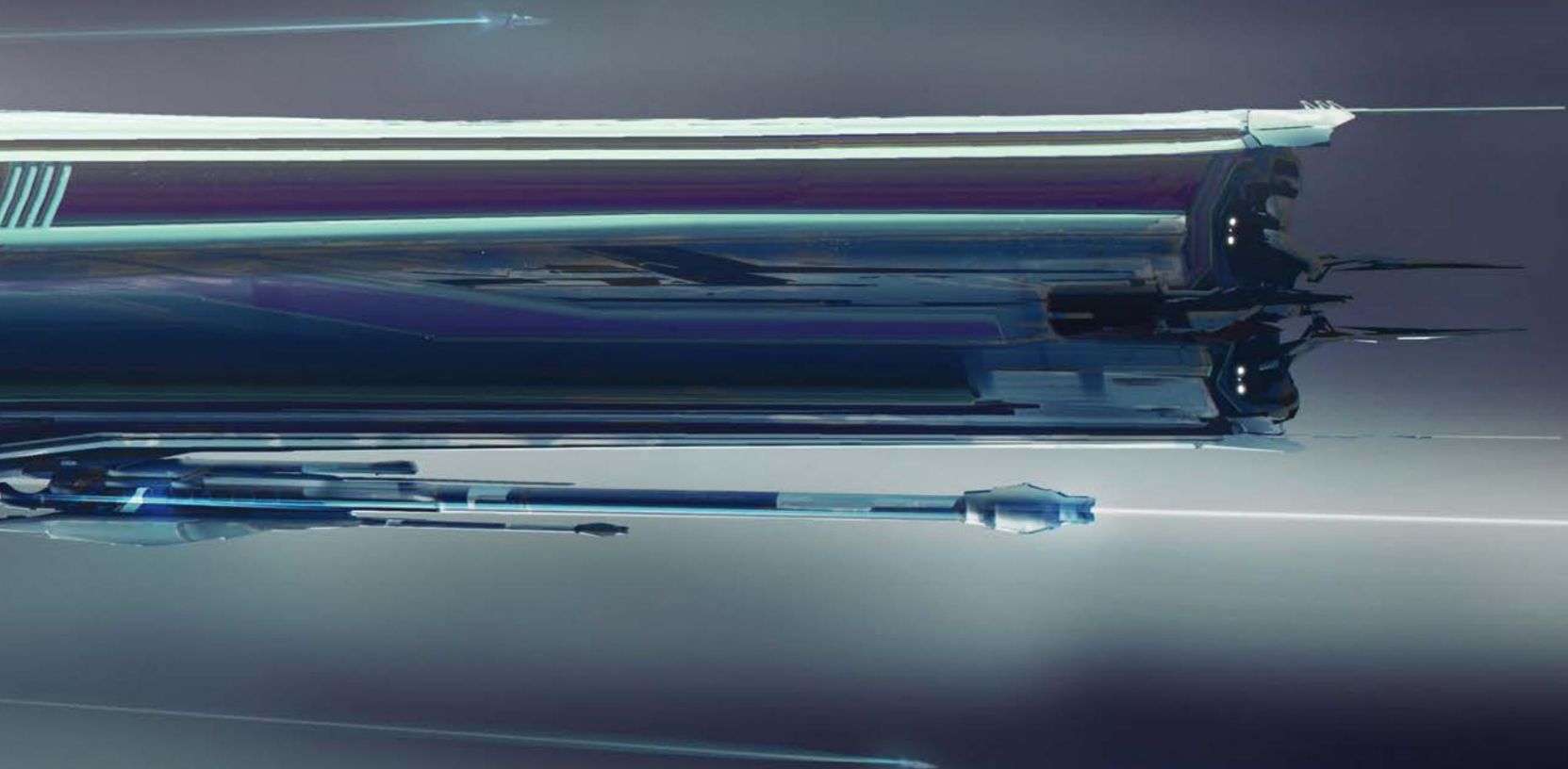
This workshop's theme revolves around spacecrafts, but you can use the same techniques and ideas to create other types of vehicles, robots, architecture... whatever floats your artistic boat!

I'll generate thumbnails using different workflows, select one and then complete a full illustration of a fantastical military spaceship. To produce a clear design from a rough sketch I'll show you how to convey scale, details, volume and create a worn feel to the ship.

I'll keep the following points in mind during the making of the final image. First, proportions are the placement and size relationships of the shapes that compose an object. The proportions of an object or animal relate to its functionality and capabilities: they relate information

on how it functions inside the world it inhabits. Think of the proportions of a race car compared to a transport truck, for example.

Second, shapes are attached to concepts. A thin pointy triangle can evoke the sharpness of a knife or claw, a rounded object can be soft, while a square or rectangle usually means it's been manufactured. Of course, these are simplistic examples and not absolutes, but thinking about shape language can give you strong insights when trying to come up with new design ideas.







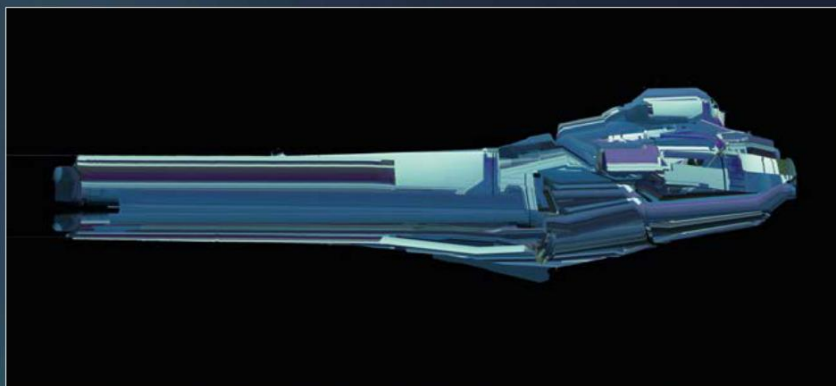
**Shortcuts**  
Content-aware  
scale  
Ctrl+Alt+Shift+C (PC)  
Cmd+Alt+Shift+C (Mac)  
Useful for refining  
the proportions of  
an object.

## 1 Choose your workflow

There are many ways to start generating ideas. I like to experiment with different techniques and mediums. You can paint directly in Photoshop or start on paper with pencil, an ink pen or even watercolour. Each tool has its own personality, and chances are that their differences will help you create something new. Here I use Photoshop's Smudge tool to sketch out my design.

## 2 Design on the fly

For this workshop I'm starting from a 3D image that I made in Modo. The purpose of this starting plate is to give me colours and values to play with from the beginning. The details don't matter because they'll be destroyed with the Smudge tool, so to get started you can use random brushstrokes, a photo or even an earlier painting of yours.



## 3 Kitbash your own painting

The Smudge tool gave me some interesting geometry, but I'm still looking for a more interesting silhouette. I duplicate areas of the design and use the Free Transform tool to change the silhouette or the interior details of my ship (select Edit>Free Transform>Scale/Warp/Rotate and so on). At this stage it's important to keep the overall design consistent. I'm reusing parts that are already present throughout the ship, to keep everything together.

## 4 Refining the silhouette

I'm pleased with the overall balance of my ship, but something's still missing so I spend some time trying things out. I won't move forward until I'm happy with the concept. I add fins and move them around until I achieve the look that I want. I duplicate them and try to introduce more shapes, to make the ship's silhouette more interesting and aggressive.

## 5 Add a gun to indicate the ship's purpose

This is supposed to be a military fighter so I add a big gun underneath it. I try to introduce weapons when I know that I'm going in the right direction, because anything looks cool with a big gun! I would rather have the canon complementing the design than dominating it. To build the gun I use Photoshop's Custom Shapes tool, which enables me to quickly place and distort shapes that I've already created.



RESOURCES

### WORKSHOP BRUSHES

#### PHOTOSHOP

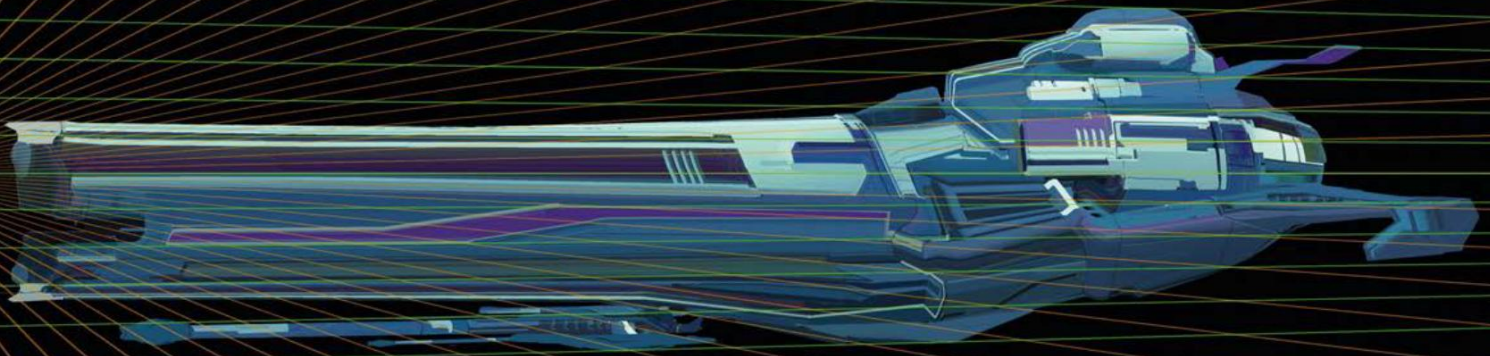
##### STANDARD BRUSH: ROUND BRUSH

Change its Hardness and you can draw anything with this brush. Adjust Transfer, Roundness or Spacing for more options.

##### CUSTOM BRUSH: SQUARE SMUDGE

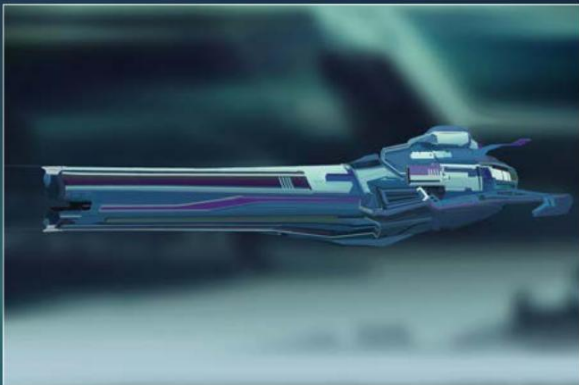
I use this square brush with the Smudge tool at 99 per cent strength to create the rough sketch of the ship.





## 6 Use perspective guides when giving volume to the concept

I'm now happy with the design so I can start showing volume. I select a point of view and trace a simple two-point perspective grid that helps me to define depth. Following the grid, I can now draw the receding far side of the object in correlation with the near side. I'm not tracing and calculating everything because at this angle I can get away with some guesswork, but having the perspective grid makes life much easier.



## 7 Introduce the background

I want a simple, out-of-focus background because the only focus of the picture is the ship itself. I use colours already present in the ship, and draw bold shapes and alternate darker and lighter values before blurring the background using Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur. I add gradients on top to describe the ground plane and add to the sense of atmosphere.



## 8 Choose the light direction

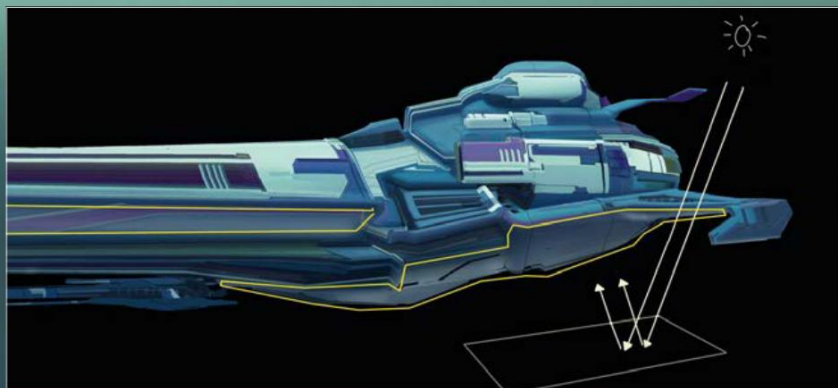
To keep things simple, I decide that sunlight comes from above the image. Following what I think my forms are, I paint light on the planes facing up and shadow on the planes facing down. If you're unsure about lighting you can render a simple sphere in a matching lighting scheme and then reference it when painting everything else.

## PRO SECRETS

### Leave your comfort zone

Experimenting and trying new things can produce surprising and creative results, give you new ideas and keep things fresh and interesting. Consider trying a new workflow, changing your software or medium, drawing with your non-dominant hand, exploring a completely new subject in your work or taking a class. In general, getting out of your comfort zone and trying to learn something new is, in my opinion, the best thing that you can do.





## 9 Remember that light bounces

Light bounces on all surfaces. If there's only one light source in the scene and the ground underneath the object is lit by sunlight, it then becomes a secondary light source that I need to take into account. Less bright than direct light, reflected light from the ground will appear in the core of the shadow and lighten its tonal values. Bear in mind that the intensity of the secondary light source is lower than that of the main one.



## 10 Improving the forms

I keep rendering the shadow side because I feel that it's a bit too light, adding a Multiply layer on top of the ship and refining the shadow shapes. I also use the Blend If function (see Pro Secret below) to control this Multiply layer. I'm trying to be subtle so I lower the Opacity of the layer blending modes, especially with dark areas. It gives me more control over values.

### Shortcuts

#### Color Picker Alt (PC & Mac)

Choose colours to paint with on the fly. Note that it only works if a brush is selected.



## 11 Cutlines and details

I now have a good base on which I can start adding details. This is the step where I can work on the scale of the vehicle. Right now it could be of any size: from a small airplane to a big cruiser. Adding details such as antennas, cutlines, a cockpit/command windows area, decals or any detail that has a size element to it will give the viewer a sense of the ship's scale.



## 12 Extra touches and cleaning up

I erase leftover pixels around the edges, refine the smaller forms, add colour accents such as decals painted on the hull, emergency exits, launch pods, a hangar door, tubes and tanks sticking out of the main hull. All these details reinforce the scale impression and make the design more complete and functional. I always research ideas for these elements from real-life vehicles.

### PRO SECRETS

#### The Blend If function

Blend If is a great feature that comes from photo-manipulation and can also be very useful when you're painting. It's located in the Layer Blending option window. It helps blend one layer into another, based on the value content of either of the two layers. It can be used to add lighting effects, change your colour scheme in subtle ways, or just neatly get rid of the blue sky to keep the clouds when you use a photo texture.



## 13 Refining the background

I add clouds in the distance to push the scale even more and add colour variation to complement the ship. I also tie everything together with an overall colour adjustment. For this I use Adjustment Layer>Gradient Map set to Soft Light and on a low Opacity. Gradient Map layers are a great way to tweak colour because they affect the whole picture based on its value structure.



## 14 Weathering pass

This vehicle looks too new: I want it to look like it's seen some action. So I duplicate the ship's layer and lighten it with Adjustments>Levels. Then I apply a layer mask to it and invert the layer mask so the layer becomes invisible. Now I can paint small scratches with a painting brush. This is a step where you can experiment and have fun, so take your time. ●



Next month in...  
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS  
**ImagineFX**

# Book Illustration

Discover the techniques, skills and people you need to know to kick-start your career!

## *Featuring...*

### **Make money!**

Professional book artists share their insights into how they earn a living in the publishing industry.

### **Gothic notions**

The best techniques to convey mood and emotion, from the stunning hand of artist Rovina Cai.

### **Tony DiTerlizzi**

Be inspired by the author and illustrator of the successful Spiderwick Chronicles children's books.

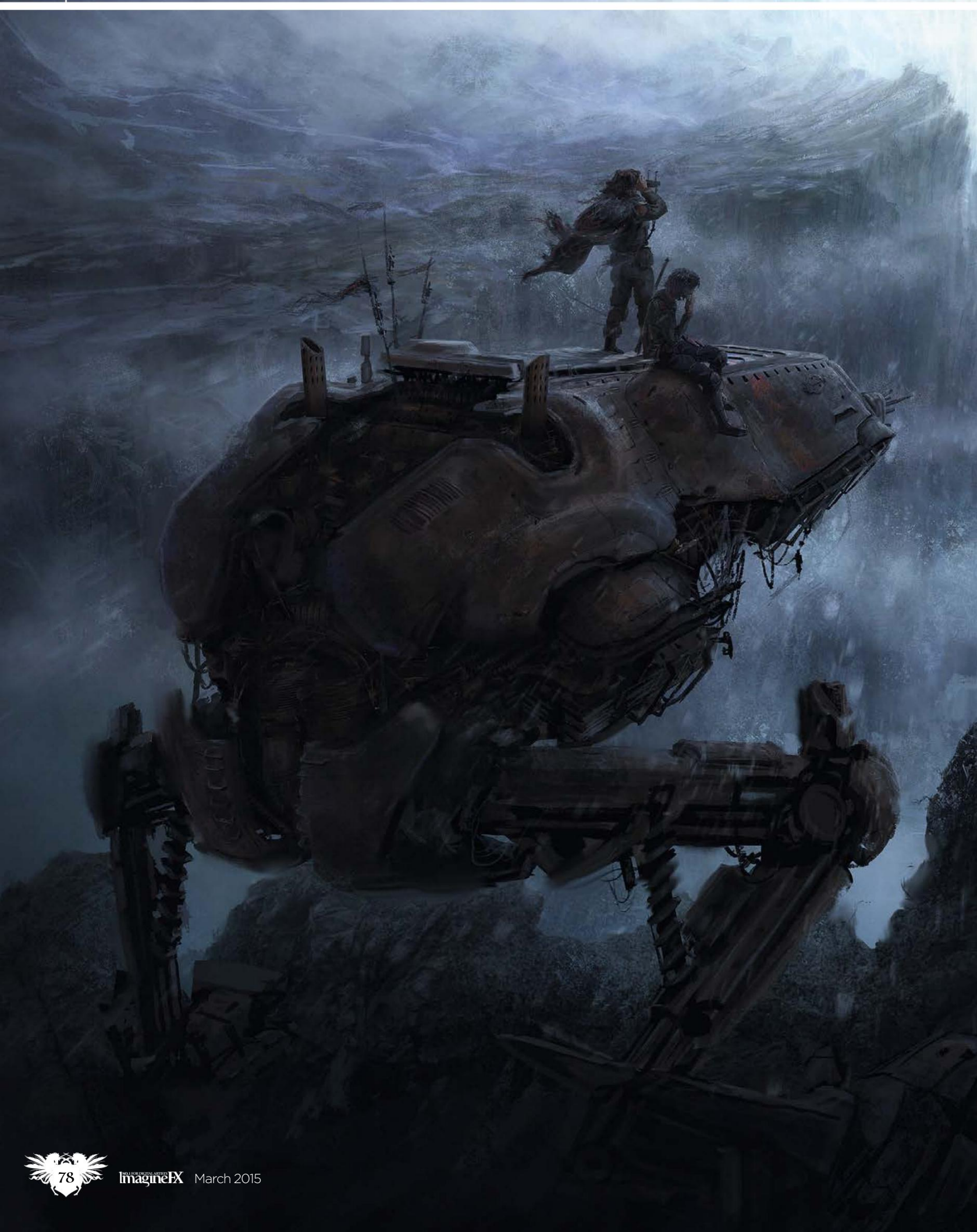
### **Get expressive**

Master artist and teacher John Stanko reveals how you can create different facial expressions.

**PLUS!** Stunning cover art and workshop from ImagineFX favourite **Justin Gerard!**

**ISSUE 120 UK ON SALE FRIDAY 27 FEBRUARY**







# GIVE YOUR ART A CINEMATIC LOOK

**Brenton Cottman** shares his painting process and illustrates a grand establishing shot of a sci-fi expedition to a remote planet





## Artist PROFILE

**Brenton Cottman**

COUNTRY: New Zealand



Brenton is a matte painter and concept artist who has recently

worked on films such as the Hobbit Trilogy, Avatar, Planet of the Apes and The Avengers.  
<http://ifxm.ag/bcotton>



**GET YOUR RESOURCES**

See page 6 now!

## Shortcuts

### Merge down

Ctrl+E (PC)

Cmd+E (Mac)

This merges all selected layers. Take care when using composite modes.

**W**ithin both sci-fi and fantasy genres, environment art offers an intriguing opportunity to convey complex ideas and back story, such as an alien history or ancient technology, with visuals freeing a story of otherwise burdensome exposition. In film, the classic establishing shot sets up a location in one shot and quickly brings the story back to the characters.

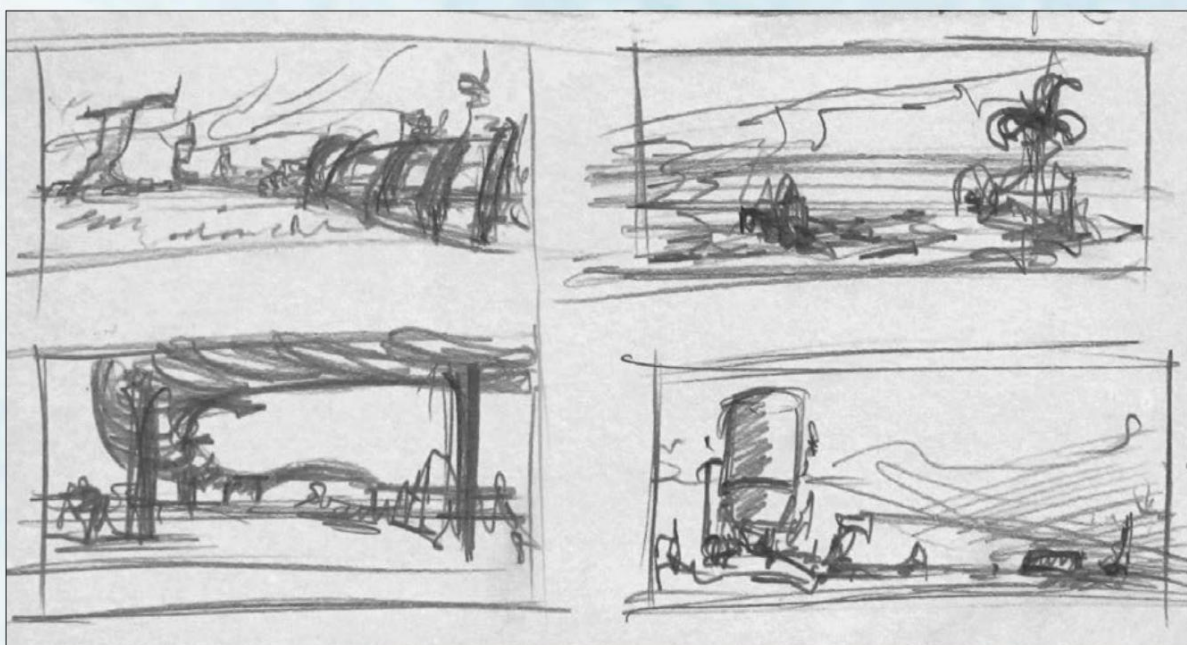
Creating an establishing view of a new environment for a film, game or printed publication can be one of the most

rewarding and elusive challenges to tackle as an artist. Success demands a solid understanding of broad topics such as composition, design and cinematography. Complicating matters, client feedback to environments tends to be a bit subjective. Where a character or vehicle might receive an explicit note such as changing its colour, size or material, an environment shot is just as likely to get a comment to make it more magical or ominous.

Add to these challenges technical fluency with software for 3D modelling, texturing, lighting and compositing

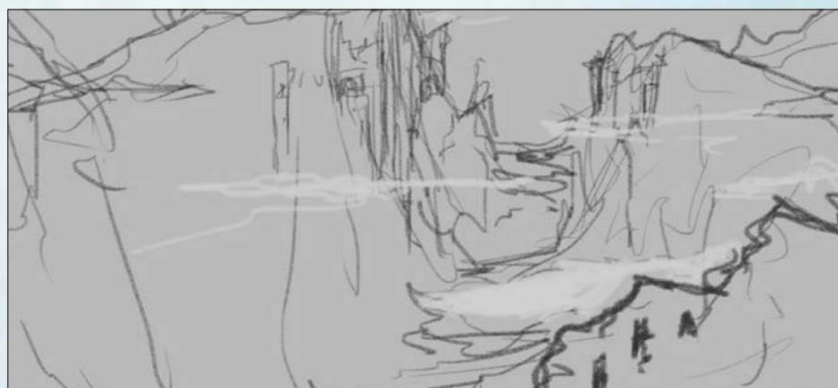
(standard for creating matte painting in film production) and you can quickly find the exciting opportunity of establishing the look of a new location to be a daunting prospect.

To simplify the topic for this workshop I'll focus on only the general process I use in my personal work to design a shot. I'll create a conceptual illustration for a sci-fi environment, which could be shown to a client or supervisor for approval and later serve as the blueprint to direct the final establishing shot for a film or game.



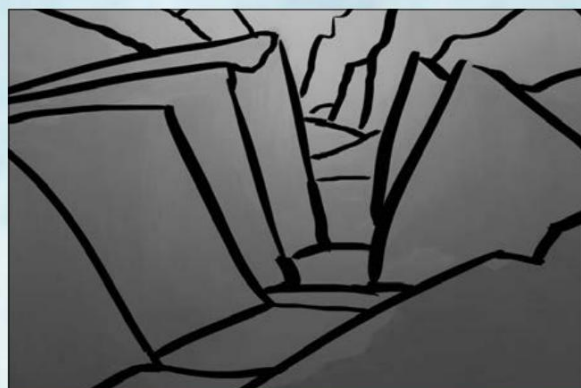
## 1 Start scribbling my rough ideas

New projects are exciting. But staring down a blank page is always stressful. The great ideas that typically seem bottomless never seem to surface when the page is empty. I find the most enjoyable way to start without direction is to just start filling paper with rough thumbnail scribbles until eventually one of the scribbles begs to be refined. These low-commitment scribbles are fun, easy to toss out, and quick to expand on.



## 2 Picture a sci-fi expedition

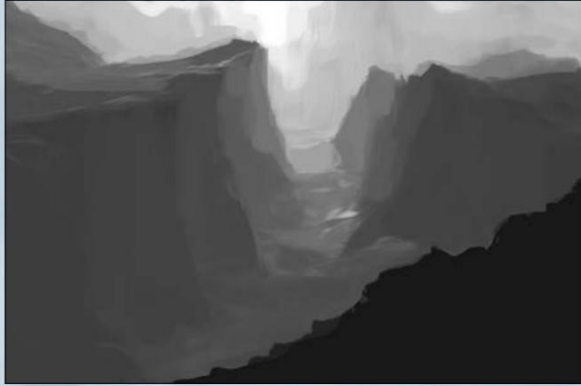
I narrow in on the idea of a group of technologically advanced explorers on an expedition into a uncharted wilderness, who unexpectedly discover a remote foreign outpost. I set up a composition showing a wide mountain view eroded into a canyon by glacial movement. Tower structures have been built into the far side of the facing cliff and an expedition party on this side of the canyon take a closer look, encouraging us to do the same.



## 3 Composing with overlapping shapes

When designing a composition I try to place the viewer within a scene in a way that will introduce as many overlapping shapes as possible within the terrain. Overlapping shapes are an explicit way to inform the viewer that one thing is behind another. Keeping this in mind helps give an image an inherent sense of dimension.





## 4 Composing value structure

I consider the placement of values while working on the composition: this encourages designing shapes that complement the cinematography. Using a tonal arrangement of just a few values, I try simple atmospheric back-lighting that seems to read well enough. The dark foreground diminishes the characters slightly, but helps draw the eye into the distant background.



## 5 A chilly feeling

I begin blocking it in, imagining the cold atmospheric wilderness I envisioned sketching the thumbnails. In the back of my mind is *The Icebergs*, an Arctic painting by Frederick Edwin Church that accentuated deep saturated blue/greens of scattering light through the ice. This is a good opportunity to push some of that effect on the glacier here.

## PRO SECRETS

### Get a fresh perspective

Working on large scenes, it's important to be objective and prepared for changes. Getting new opinions on your work early will help you stay open to feedback and spot problems you've overlooked. Show a respected friend, non-artist, or just flip the image yourself for a fresh view. Often comments will come improving an image at the expense of areas you've considered finished. If the changes seem overwhelming, take a step back and give them time to settle in.



## 6 Defining the features

I continue by adding more specific forms to the cliffs and glacier. Using standard Photoshop brushes I roughly paint texture into the rock, snow and ice. Next I begin introducing architectural structures into the terrain. I also begin to play with the placement of drifting clouds, which will help give the environment scale and make it feel like a living place.



## 7 Refining details

Using a Hard Chalk brush I continue adding detail. I bring in a few photographic elements I've taken throughout New Zealand and integrate these textures, changing the composite mode of each layer. I add layer masks to reveal portions I want and nest Curve Adjustments to Layers to balance them in.



## 8 Rethinking the concept

Some figures on the foreground ledge indicated in the last iteration clearly need more presence in order to be read. This shot is about a sci-fi expedition facing the bitter wilderness, but currently it's all about the glacier. I reframe the characters to a closer vantage point and rough in an armoured transport to clarify the technological aspect of the crew.



## PRO SECRETS

### Use sharp-edge brushes

When starting to paint digitally, try to avoid using soft brushes and air brushes wherever possible. Soft brushes can indicate indecision and overuse will produce a mushy painting. Painting traditionally, a brush stroke would leave a hard edge mark and require a second pass to intentionally soften unwanted sharp edges. The accumulation of sharp edged marks will read as detail and more confident painting. Then softening shapes can be a conscious process.



## 9 Designing the transport

I like the basic idea of this mechanical walker so I continue tweaking the design. Painting and erasing selections with the Lasso tool, I remove the arms, reshape the undercarriage, and refine the armour shell. I try more angular and boxy forms, but this rounded and slightly organic armour gives it a fun, bug like appearance.



## 10 Accumulating details

I paint in panel lines, vents, ladders, doors, rigging and exhaust. For details in the engine areas I import reference of engine parts, transform and overlay them to quickly indicate detail. I do the same using images of grunge and rust to mix some weathering into the surfaces. This tech should feel like it's been altered significantly since originally manufactured.



## Shortcuts

### Layer via copy

Ctrl+J (PC)

Cmd+J (Mac)

This shortcut will copy and paste a selection with a single command.

## 11 Revising the environment

I now continue working between the transport and the environment. I add surface details to the foreground and background terrain using brushes and photographic textures. I further customise the transport, adding details such as antennae and cables hanging from the undercarriage.

## 12 Introducing the characters

I move on to the crew and set up two characters perched atop the commander of the operation and his subordinate. I imagine the officer has stopped the transport to investigate their findings and his co-pilot has taken this as an opportunity for a break. I give them both slightly dishevelled appearance, but add some adornments to the officer to set him apart.



## 13 Adding movement with weather

I think that the shot is coming together; however, it's a bit serene and not the hostile wilderness I envisioned. I try to give some movement by introducing weather with wind, clouds and snow effects. I paint some additional drifting cloud shapes that succeed in framing the foreground, and drifting snow on a separate layer using the Motion Blur filter giving the layers a clear sense of direction.

## 14 Final touches

I add some final detail to the vista including additional architecture. Darkening the transport helps the eye pass over it, while warming its materials helps it feel less monochromatic. I add a slight vignette to the borders of the image and finish the image by tweaking some of the edges. I soften some edges using a Smudge tool or Mixer brush to diminish distracting details.





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Photoshop

# GET MORE FROM CUSTOM BRUSHES



**Remko Troost** reveals how he's able to create custom brushes on the fly, which in turn streamlines his workflow and boosts his creativity

## Artist PROFILE

**Remko Troost**  
COUNTRY: Canada



Remko is a senior concept artist working at Ubisoft

Montreal, where he designed characters for Far Cry 3, Assassin's Creed 3 and Assassin's Creed Unity. He also creates art for clients that include Paizo Publishing and Applibot. [www.pandraw.com](http://www.pandraw.com)

**T**he things that can be done with your brushes inside Photoshop's Natural Brush Media window are almost endless! I discover new possibilities almost every day, both at home and in the workplace. It's amazing how you can manipulate your brush to create patterns, textures, hair, skin, that painterly feel, happy accidents and so on.

If my work assignment requires a realistic finish, I try to avoid using photo

references. I'm aware that photographs can help you become familiar with a subject, but I prefer to approach my subject afresh. I'm then free to create and use suitable brushes on the fly.

I must admit that it's easier to take this approach with character design, compared to a complex composition featuring perspective, atmospheric depth and so on. But it's good practice to work without being dependent on a particular set of references.

My interest in brushes started when doing my first speedpaints. I soon learned how the right brush can make the difference, when I had to create a precise and readable visual in a short amount of time without the use of photos. Further investigation revealed the endless possibilities they offer and today they're a key part of my workflow. And of course, it's fun using new custom brushes! I've supplied 65 of my own with this workshop, for you to try out.



## RESOURCES WORKSHOP BRUSHES

### PHOTOSHOP

#### CUSTOM BRUSHES: METAL DAMAGE

This brush helps me to create damaged metal or leather borders. I paint the damaged borders with it and erase back to achieve a realistic effect.

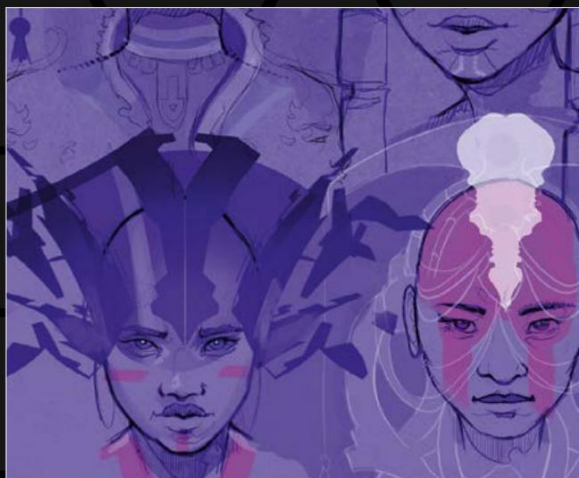
#### PAINT ON!

One of my all-time favourites. Try reducing either the Flow or Opacity. It's great for painterly effects.



### 1 Research and development

Before I start painting I like to explore and sketch around my subject to get the ideas flowing. Sometimes I do this using pen on paper, sometimes directly in Photoshop using a basic Hard round brush with both Opacity and Flow set to 80 per cent. I eventually develop a clearer idea of what I want to paint.



## GET YOUR RESOURCES

See page 6 now!



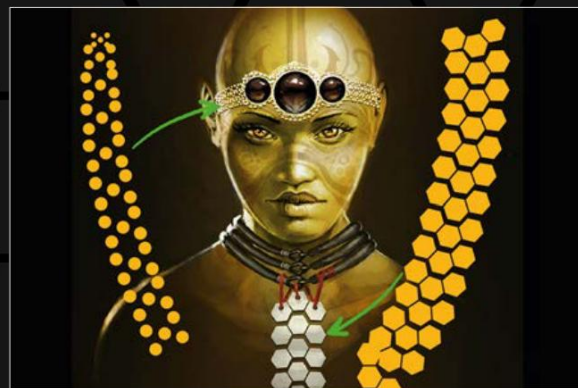
### 2 Base and values

Painting in black and white gives me better control over my values. It also enables me to concentrate on the shapes, light and shadows. For the skin I use my first custom brush: the mighty Spickel brush! I use it to create skin texture on areas such as the nose, cheeks and chin. I work on a separate layer and use effects such as Drop Shadow or Bevel and Emboss.









## 3 Introduce colours on different layer modes

Once I'm happy with my values I start applying colours on layers set to Overlay, Multiply, Color Dodge, Darken and so on. I try to vary my colours and pick new ones several times in the Color window. Because my character has yellowish skin, I use greens, browns, oranges, yellows and even some cyan. Then I drop my layers and keep on painting normally. Finally I draw some tattoo-like shapes on one side of her face, before flipping them to the other side. I consider turning these tattoos into custom brushes for later use.

## 4 Painting with pattern brushes

I introduce a few designs using some custom pattern brushes. I create one by taking a graphic, transform it into a brush and then play around with the settings within the natural Brush media window (Brush tip shape>Spacing and Shape dynamics>Angle Jitter set to Direction). Such brushes are ideal for creating clothing patterns, tattoos and scales, for example.

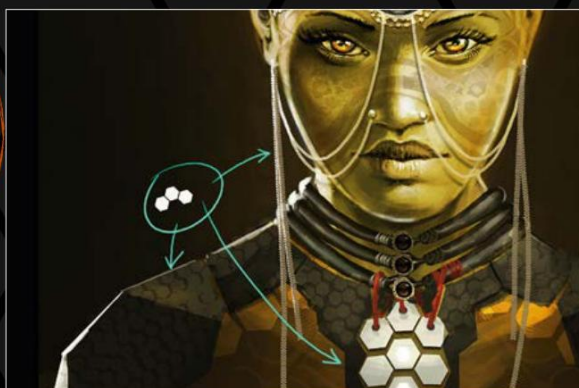
### Shortcuts

#### Curves

Ctrl+M (PC)

Cmd+M (Mac)

Great for adjusting values. Try tweaking your reds, greens or blues using the sliders.



## 5 Apply the Hexagone brush

I use my simple custom Hexagone brush in three distinct areas for three different effects. First to create a chest plate, then to make some facial chains and finally to introduce some futuristic-looking texture on her chest and shoulder armour. Using it on different layers enables me to create a mask of my patterns, so I can paint inside them to depict dirt or worn edges.



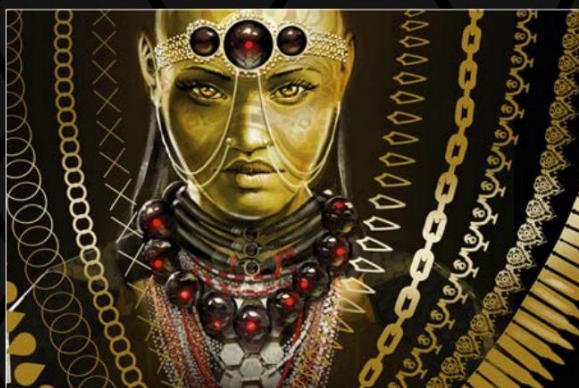
## 6 Using what's already been done

Reusing elements that you've already painted will save you time. Here I take the stone from her forehead to create a flying spy-bot collar (of course!). I select the stone using the Lasso tool and then copy-paste it on to its own layer using Shift+Ctrl+C and Shift+Ctrl+V. I repaint the highlights and shadows by hand to avoid the copy-pasted feel.

## PRO SECRETS

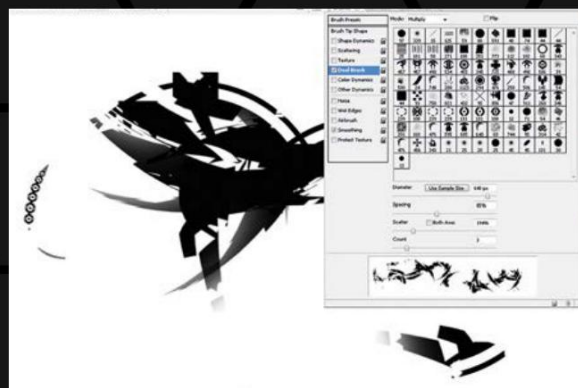
### Switch mediums

I love painting digitally and use it on a daily basis for my day job. It enables me to work fast and endlessly tweak my art to suit my client's need. But I also make time for many other art mediums such as sculpting, oil painting, and pen or brush pencil on paper. Switching between medium forces me to take a different approach and adopt a new way of thinking. I would encourage transferring techniques from one medium to another: you might be pleasantly surprised by what you can achieve!



## 7 Build up her collars

I use several pattern brushes to create the illusion that my character is wearing a lot of collars around her neck. These brushes are so easy to create and will save you a lot of time. I used them when working on Assassin's Creed 3 and Unity to make most of the patterns on the many costumes, like the yellow embroidery on Louis XVI's ornate outfit.



## 8 My Rorschach Techno brushes

My happy accident Rorschach brushes can be tricky to create and calibrate, but they're just amazingly fun! Create a technical-looking shape and transform it into a brush. Then in the Natural Media brush window put it on Dual Brush with another graphic-shaped brush and play around with the different sliders to get random shapes popping out of your brush.





## 9 Putting Rorschach to the test

I create some random marks on the canvas. No matter what comes out, I try to see something interesting in the resulting shapes. Then I double them, flip them, rotate them, and manipulate them with the Transform and Warp tools to generate something that look like either a helmet or a mask that my character would wear. This approach also works well when

quickly conceiving sci-fi vehicles, ships or robots. Once everything is in place, I often finish either painting my figure or using the rectangular Lasso tool to work out my shape into something that's more readable. Finally, I make a mask out of my shapes and start painting inside and outside of them to incorporate them into my painting.

### Shortcuts

#### Liquify

Shift+Ctrl+X (PC)  
Shift+Cmd+X (Mac)

A quick way to correct facial features. It feels a bit like sculpting sometimes!



## 10 Refining the headdress

I take a rake brush with a rust texture inside it and paint lights and shadows so that the headdress matches the rest of the painting. You can make your own textures to put inside your brushes by opening a texture photo and then selecting Edit> Define Pattern. It now appears inside your texture tab in the brush preset window. Reduce Flow to better integrate the texture.



## 11 Depicting folded cloth

For my character's kimono outfit I create a simple rake brush. Then I set Angle Jitter to Pen Pressure and add a dirt texture in Color Dodge mode. I give it a dual-brush setup with a simple Hard round brush, select Other Dynamics and choose Pen Pressure. Now my rake brush spins around itself in an irregular way – perfect for painting realistic folded cloth!

### PRO SECRETS

#### Organise your brushes

When you right-click while using the Brush tool you'll get a window with all your brushes. In the upper right corner there's a little arrow that opens a menu where you can find the Preset manager. Here you can organise your brushes to separate pattern brushes from texture brushes and so on. By holding down Ctrl you can select a couple of brushes. Once selected you can go to Save Brush Set and save a set that contains only those brushes.



## 12 Paint, smudge and erase

Custom brushes can be used for painting, but also for smudging, erasing, dodging, burning and so on! For example, you could paint a decoration on the clothes with a pattern brush and then erase inside your pattern using another pattern brush to achieve more cool effects and patterns. Dodging with a dirt brush can also be a great way to obtain realistic metallic surfaces.



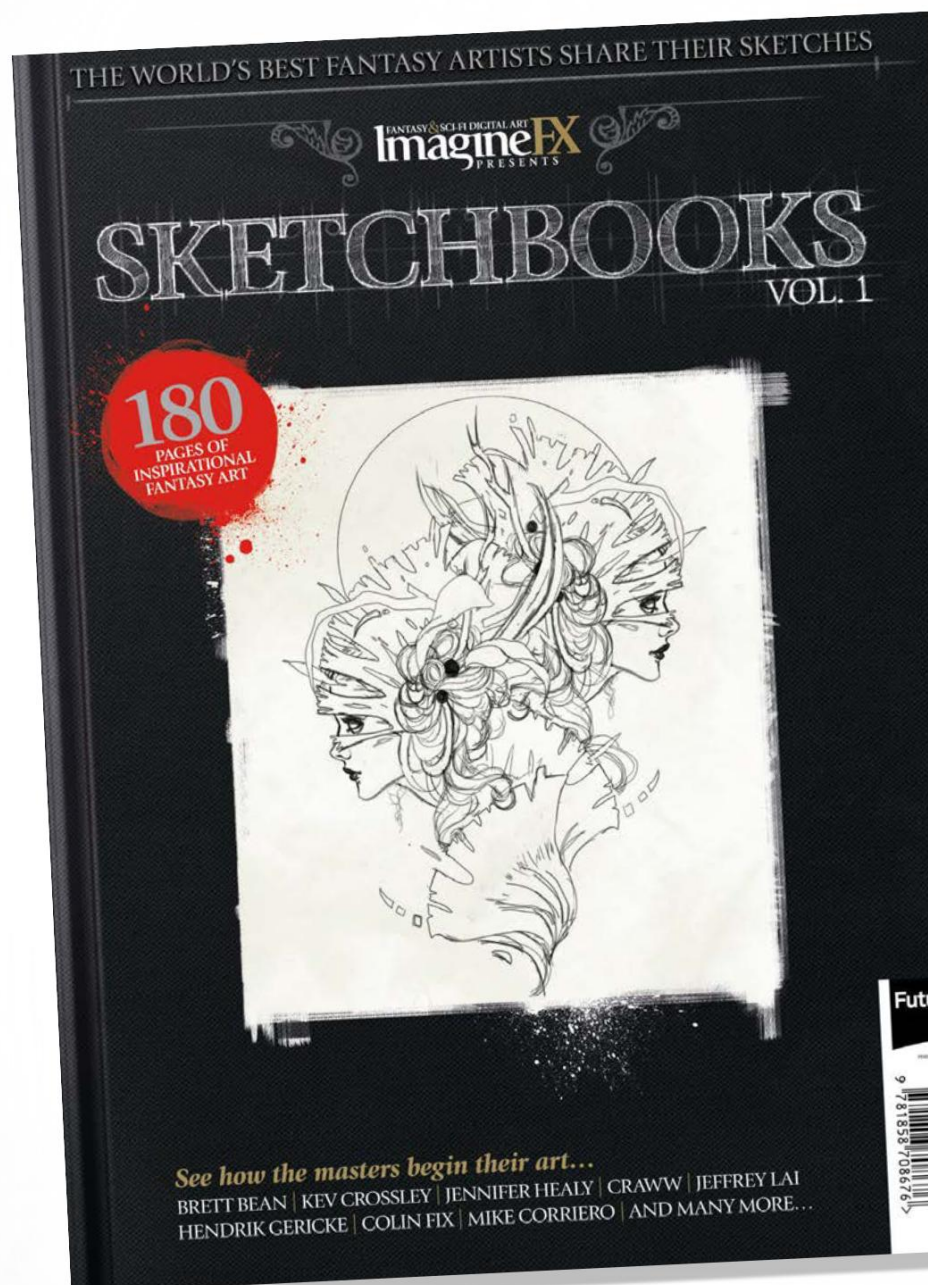
## 13 Putting those final touches to the painting

I drop all my layers and duplicate my background. Then I add a noise effect to the layer above (Noise set to 400 per cent). I repeat my noise effect a couple of times and then set the layer to Overlay with between 2 and 5 per cent Opacity. I also use Gaussian Blur and Filter>Other>High Pass to adjust focus throughout my image. Then I drop all my layers again and then go to Channels. I move the red, green and blue channel each one by one pixel. This creates a pseudo 3D effect. Finally I play around with Color Balance to do my final colour tweaks.



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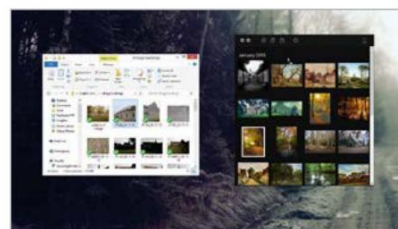


# NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX Reviews



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

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



## SOFTWARE & HARDWARE

### 90 Procreate Pocket

The iPad app for digital image creation has been squeezed into a pocket-sized package for iPhones.

### 91 Wacom Cloud

Connect your devices and sync your controls with this helpful service.

### 91 Poser Pro Game Dev

Could Poser's latest piece of kit for creating 3D characters soon become the essential tool for animators?

### 93 BDM4065UC monitor

A giant high-definition monitor that's packed with such rich colour and vivacity, it's better than your TV!



### 93 Evernote 6

This cloud-syncing note taker may look a little staid, but it's absolutely packed with useful features.

## TRAINING

### 95 Making Frankenstein's Monster

Character artist Peter Zoppi explains how to make a horror character with incredible attention to detail.



## BOOKS

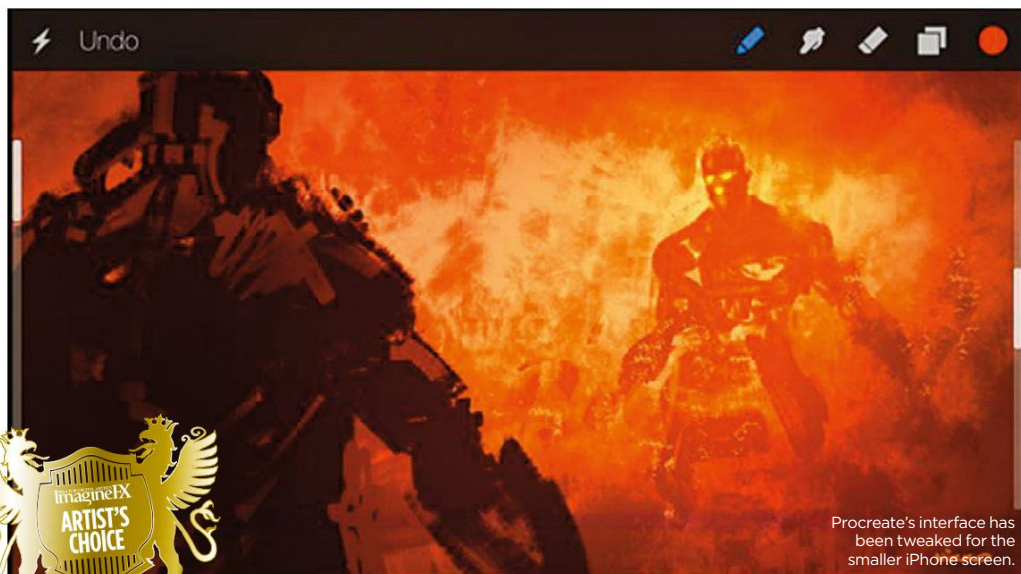
### 96 New reads

75 Years of Marvel Comics: From the Golden Age to the Silver Screen; The Art of Assassin's Creed Unity; Digital Painting Techniques: Volume 6.

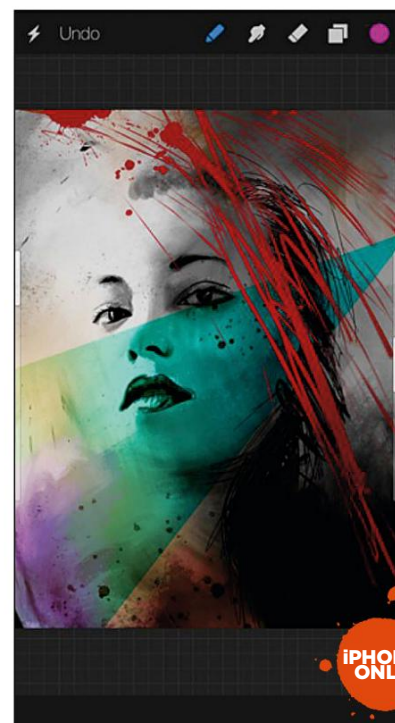


RATINGS EXPLAINED ★★★★★ Magnificent ★★★★★ Good ★★★★★ Ordinary ★★★★★ Poor ★★★★★ Atrocious





Procreate's interface has been tweaked for the smaller iPhone screen.



IPHONE ONLY

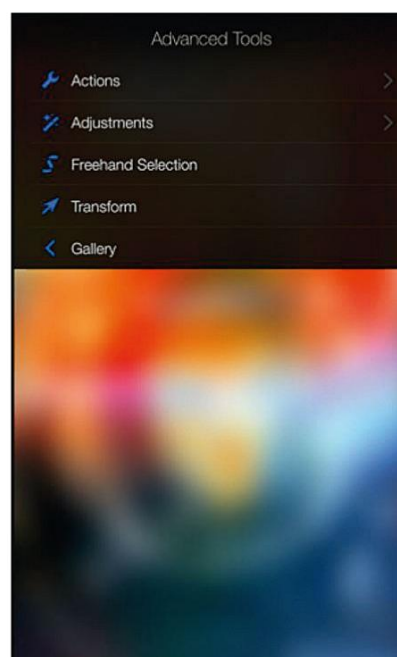
The 64-bit Silica painting engine does a great job of keeping up with your brush strokes for a smooth experience and an easy-to-use application.

## Procreate Pocket

**BIJOU BRUSHES** Think that shrinking the popular painting app will hobble its usability? Then think again...

**Price** £2.29 **Company** Savage Interactive **Web** <http://procreate.si>

**P**rocreate Pocket is a version of the well-received Procreate iPad app that's been specially designed for iPhones. Procreate on the larger iPad tablets, with their high-resolution screens and range of compatible styluses, makes sense. We were intrigued to see how the app fares on the smaller iPhone.



Procreate Pocket crams all the best features of the senior version of the app into the tiny iPhone.

When you create art you need your tools to feel responsive enough to register even the most subtle of movements, all while keeping pace with your drawing. The Procreate Pocket app does an excellent job of this, with every mark we made, either via finger or stylus, being faithfully recorded on screen. Input lag, which is where there's an annoying delay between your stroke and the mark being shown on screen, wasn't

**“Savage Interactive has put a lot of effort into redesigning the app's interface”**

noticeable: a crucial element that makes Procreate Pocket feel solid, dependable and responsive.

The biggest obstacle that Procreate Pocket faces is that iPhone screens are obviously much smaller, making for a rather cramped canvas. Unsurprisingly, Savage Interactive has put a lot of effort into redesigning the app's interface and its tools to work on the smaller screen sizes.

Yet just because Procreate Pocket's user interface has been scaled down for the iPhone, it doesn't mean the rest of the app is lacking in features, with

### DETAILS

#### Features

- 12 brushes for illustration and concept sketching
- Ability to import custom Procreate brushes that are available online
- Always available precision brush sliders for rapid brush size and opacity changing
- 64-bit Silica painting engine
- Optimised for iPhone 6 and 6 Plus
- 64-bit colour for professional accuracy
- 250 levels of undo
- Continuous autosave
- 4K Cinema Canvas for the iPhone 5, 5c, 5s, 6 and 6 Plus
- Share multiple file formats including procreate, PSD, JPG and 24-bit PNG
- Print via AirPrint

#### System Requirements

**iPhone:** iOS 8.1. Versions 6 and 6 Plus of iPhone recommended.

#### Rating



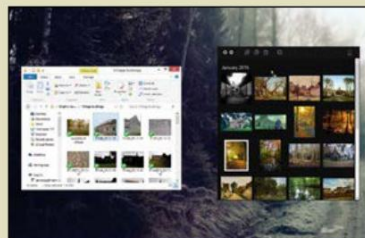
pretty much every tool found in the larger Procreate app present and correct, including a multi-touch colour wheel, and freehand selection and transform tools. Each of these tools has been carefully tweaked to work on the smaller screen. Brush sliders can be used with a single finger to customise the various brushes that come included with the app. It's a nice touch (if you'll forgive the pun) that gives you full control over the paintbrush without having to battle with an awkward interface.

The fact that recent iPhones, especially the iPhone 6 and 6 Plus, have got plenty of processing power in them means that Procreate Pocket does a good job of keeping up with your strokes, with the Silica engine running at 60 frames a second for a smooth painting experience.

Considering the price, Procreate Pocket app is an excellent tool for working on your art while out and about. The range of tools and settings is impressive, but perhaps best of all is the fact that Savage Interactive hasn't simply ported its tablet app to the smaller iPhone screen. Instead, the developer has taken the time and effort to carefully redesign the app to work brilliantly on the smaller iPhone screen. It's a powerful, well thought-out and useful tool, all for less than the price of a pint of beer.



Use the Dropzone app to quickly share your artworks with your other devices.



## Wacom Cloud

**CLOUD ART** Access your art from any device with this handy services.

**Price** Free

**Company** Wacom

**Web** <https://cloud.wacom.com>

**RATING**

**Wacom is much more than just a hardware manufacturer. As well as its digital creative kit you can get a host of Wacom apps, software and gadgets to help you create art wherever you are. But this can mean that your work is spread over a range of devices.**

Wacom Cloud is an internet-based service designed to avoid this problem by syncing all your work across your various Wacom devices and services. It means you can begin working on a drawing on your desktop PC, and then seamlessly move to your tablet and continue working without worrying about transferring over your files.

Ease of use is the key feature here, and Wacom Cloud does that brilliantly with Dropzone. This feature enables you to quickly drag and drop images and files into Dropzone – which will then share those files and images with your other devices. You can also share your preferred settings, so you don't have to configure your tools every time you use them on a new device.

You only get 2GB of online storage. Yet for a free service, Wacom Cloud offers some great functionality that's easy to use.



The Wacom Cloud dashboard gives you a quick overview of the remaining free space.

# Poser Pro Game Dev

**CHARACTER CREATOR** This is powerful tool for creating 3D characters, but it's got a steep learning curve...

MAC & PC

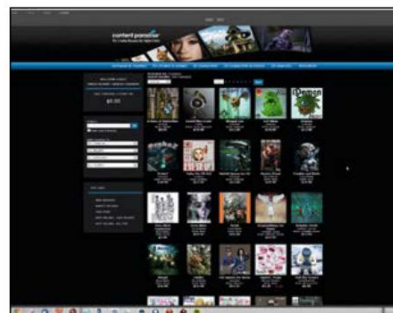
**Price** £333 **Company** Smith Micro **Web** <http://my.smithmicro.com>

**B** uilding 3D character and figure artists will know that knowledge of Poser will be a key part of this endeavour. After all, the program has been available in one form or another for nearly 20 years, and it's become an industry standard.

As graphics technology has progressed, Poser has become ever more adept at creating realistic and fantastic 3D images. Poser Pro Game Dev is a comprehensive suite of tools that enables you to create, animate and export 3D models. And as the name suggest, Smith Micro is hoping that it'll become a key part of the video game production pipeline.

Let the high price tag and inclusion of the word 'Pro' be a warning, however. This is a professional tool with a lot of depth that will take plenty of study and hard work to get to grips with. There's a huge amount of tools, settings and features that are presented with surprisingly little help. So if you're a beginner, don't think you can dive right in and create the next Toy Story, or an immersive video game cutscene.

However, once you get to grips with the software you'll find an immensely powerful creative tool. The Game Dev



Buy and sell creations with the integrated and vibrant ecosystem of fellow 3D designers.

version enables you to create 3D characters, props and whatever you like that can then be imported into game creation tools such as Unity.

Poser Pro Game Dev comes with a number of ready-made models, props and more that'll help you get started. These vary in complexity, but can all be tweaked and altered to create fully original characters. There's also an online store where you can buy and download other people's creations, and even upload and sell your own.

If you're looking to get in to creating art for the competitive video games industry, then Poser Pro Game Dev is a worthy investment. Just keep in mind that it requires time, patience, and a fair bit of money.

## DETAILS

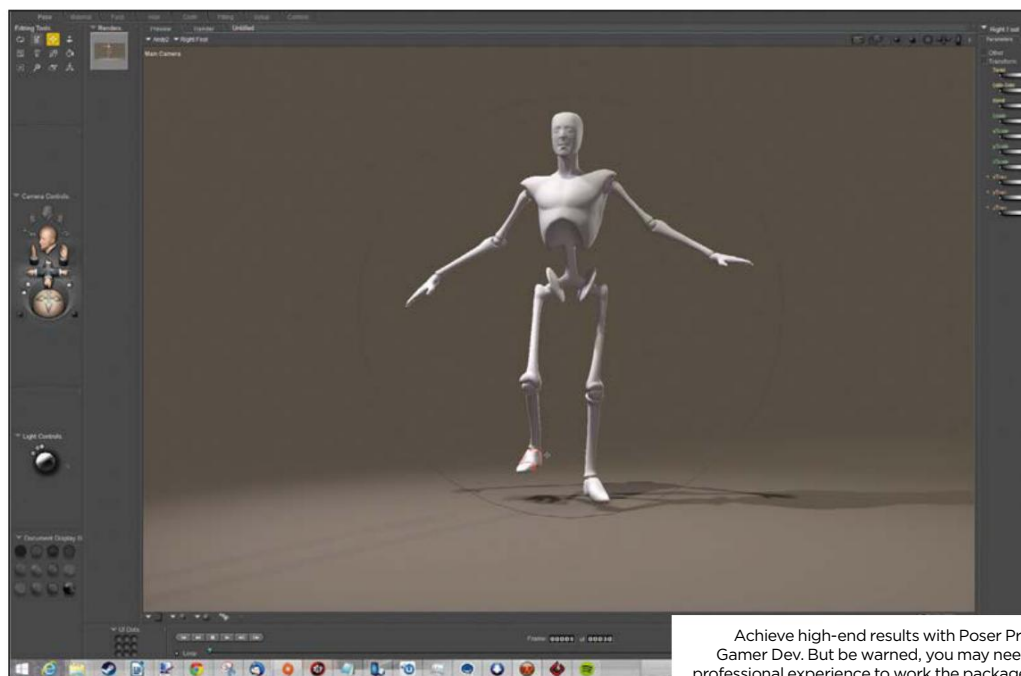
### Features

- Capture motion with KINECT for Windows
- Smart Polygon Reduction for faster rendering
- Unseen Polygon Removal
- Talk Designer
- Dynamic Hair and Cloth
- Face Room photo-matching

### System Requirements

**PC:** Windows 8 or 8.1, 7, Vista or XP, 1.3GHz Pentium 4 or newer, Athlon 64 or newer, Internet Explorer 7, 1GB RAM  
**Mac:** OS X 10.6-10.10, 1.5GHz Intel Core CPU (64-bit CPU required for 64-bit support), 1GB RAM

### Rating



Achieve high-end results with Poser Pro Game Dev. But be warned, you may need professional experience to work the package.



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A 40-inch 4K display with a pleasing HDTV-style chassis and bezel. It's cheaper than many 30-inch monitors, too.



## BDM4065UC 4K monitor

**MORE IS MORE** If you simply must have the biggest and the best...

**Price** £608

**Company** Philips

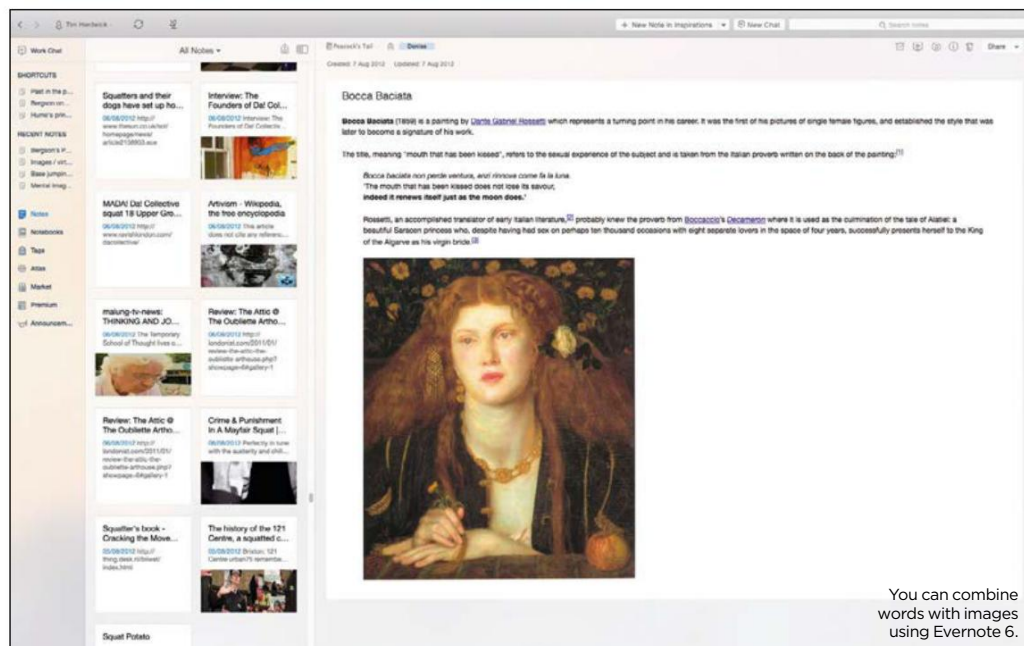
**Web** [www.philips.co.uk](http://www.philips.co.uk)

**RATING**

If you want a big monitor, why not use a high-definition TV? HDTVs offer better value than specifically designed monitors because they're cranked out in mega volumes. The problem is, until recently, they've all been 1080p models at best. Once you get beyond 24 inches, that means you can expect some pretty big pixels. Step that up to 40 inches or more and using a TV as a monitor isn't an option for making fine work. Until now, that is.

In action, this new monitor is a sight to behold. It delivers lovely deep blacks and nice, rich colours. Work with it and you may not want to look at another screen again. This is down to the panel's technical excellence, as well as an anti-reflective coating that's layered over the display. It works very well.

It's not all good news though. The monitor's stand doesn't allow for adjustment, and it offers a poor viewing angle. The problem is most obvious at the extremities of the display, especially along the bottom. If you sit back far enough the issue resolves, but the whole point is that you sit up close. Is it a deal-breaker? Probably not, but it's enough, along with the stand, to make us wonder whether the BDM4065UC is only suitable for early adopters willing to make compromises.



You can combine words with images using Evernote 6.

## Evernote 6

**TAKE NOTE** We find out if a digital note-taking solution increase your creativity and streamline your inspirations

**Price** Free/£4 per month premium **Company** Evernote **Web** [www.evernote.com](http://www.evernote.com)

**E**vernote is a way of organising and keeping track of, well, anything. On first glance the cloud-syncing suite of apps and browser add-ons may convey a business-like demeanour in its note-taking emphasis, but the flexibility of its Ever-notes, tagging system and notebook structure makes it versatile and a useful boost to creativity.

The interface differs slightly depending on the device and method you use to access your free or premium account (the latter offering attached document search and extra annotation tools), but all evidence of Evernote's earlier skeuomorphic tendencies has been happily removed.

On the minimalist iOS and Android apps you can create new notes with a tap by inputting styled text and pasting in images or filing photos taken

with the device's camera. These can be arranged in virtual notebooks, complete with keyword tags and geodata. Notes can be searched for either on a mobile device or from the desktop app, making the archival of pencil sketches by project or inspiration an easy task.

Cataloguing the steps you took to create an illustration or recording the thinking behind a thematic concept are what Evernote also works well at. The tagging system can be used to collate themed virtual mood boards on the fly. The browser extension, meanwhile, is useful for saving web clippings, URLs or whole pages for reference, which can then be annotated using the built-in SketchUp tools. The collaboration tools bring shared notebooks into the mix and the desktop clients enable you to chat with collaborators in-app.

Perhaps one of the best recent additions is – or was – Evernote's integration with Penultimate, the digital handwriting and sketching app, which made organising sketches extremely simple. The latest version of Evernote has been severely criticised by users for taking away many of Penultimate's best integration features. Overall, it's a doozy, but lovers of Penultimate should proceed with caution.



You can choose how you organise your folders, using any basis or theme that you prefer.

### DETAILS

#### Features

- Simple note-taking
- Record inspirations on the fly
- Auto-syncing across devices
- Search features
- Folder system
- Tagging
- Image annotation

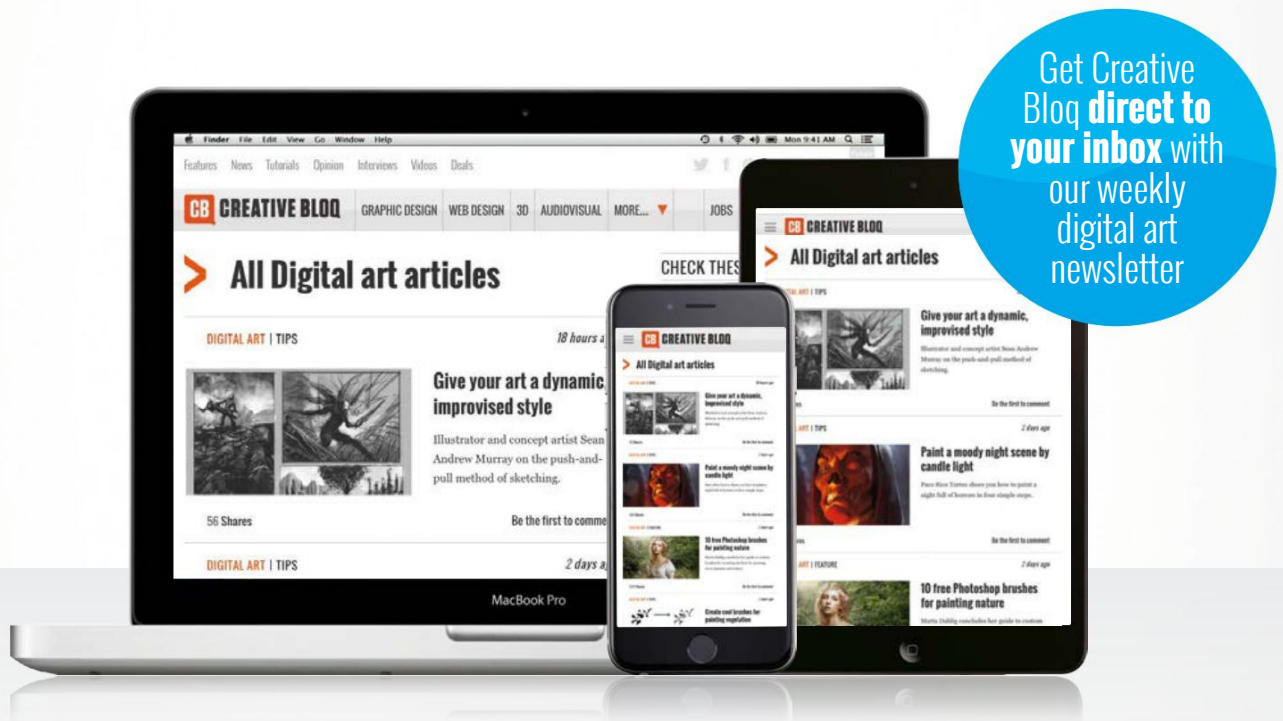
#### System Requirements

**PC:** Windows XP, 7 or 8  
**Mac:** OS X 10.7.5 or higher  
**iOS:** 7.0 or higher  
**Android:** all versions

#### Rating



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Graphic design

Web design

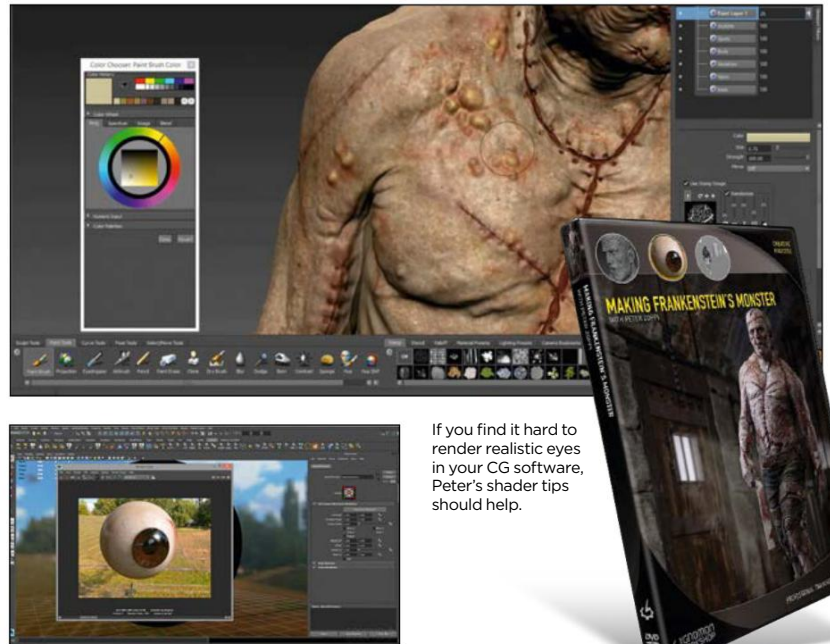
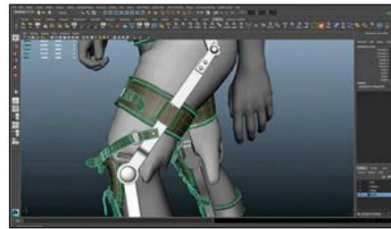
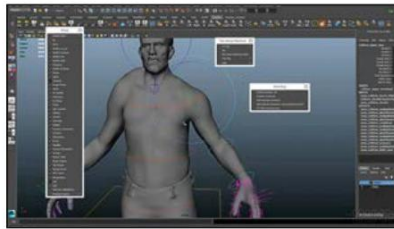
3D

Digital art

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



Peter Zoppi's game and film background means he has the skills to create hyper-real 3D renders – skills he shares in this video.



If you find it hard to render realistic eyes in your CG software, Peter's shader tips should help.

# Making Frankenstein's Monster

**HE LIVES!** 3D character artist Peter Zoppi reveals the attention to detail you'll need if you want to make renders of the highest quality

**Publisher** The Gnomon Workshop **Price** £39 **Format** DVD/download **Web** [www.thegnomonworkshop.com](http://www.thegnomonworkshop.com)

**M**ary Shelley created a monster in more than one sense of the word. Her 1818 novel *Frankenstein* has inspired countless interpretations of its reanimated creature. In the Showtime TV series *Penny Dreadful*, Peter Zoppi's CG render adopts a gruesomely realistic approach, showing every skin crease where staples hold patches of skin together.

Peter's making-of video is a bit of a monster, too, clocking in at over five-and-a-half hours. Yet even this amount of time is only enough to show fragments of his production process, but you at least get to visit every key stage of his creation in decent detail.

Early chapters are straightforward, showing the sculpting of the head and body in Mudbox. Peter displays bags of authority in his narration, but the process shown here yields few surprises if you've scoured YouTube and forums for ZBrush or Mudbox training. More experienced artists,



## DETAILS

### Topics covered

- Character concepts
- Sculpting in Mudbox
- Resurfacing in Topogun
- Rigging to enable posing
- Linear workflow
- Initial rendering
- Body refinement
- Painting textures
- Bump map painting
- Photoshop post work

### Length

335 minutes

### Rating



though, will appreciate Peter's tour of Topogun, a specialist tool for correcting the model's polygon distribution to make the thing easier to pose later on in the process.

The heart of this project, though, is Peter's meticulous application of textures and shaders to the sculpture. No detail is left uncovered, including a guide to linear workflow, which is essentially about ensuring your screen displays your render colour with complete accuracy. He also dives headfirst into node-based editing in mental ray, showing how he creates shaders for skin and eyes.

If you're guessing by now that this is an advanced-level video, you'd be right: Peter makes few concessions to inexperienced CG artists. But if you've got a few years in Maya and mental ray under your belt, careful study of this project will help you improve your own work no end. And whatever stage you're at, Peter's care over every detail in his work is inspiring. ●

## ARTIST PROFILE

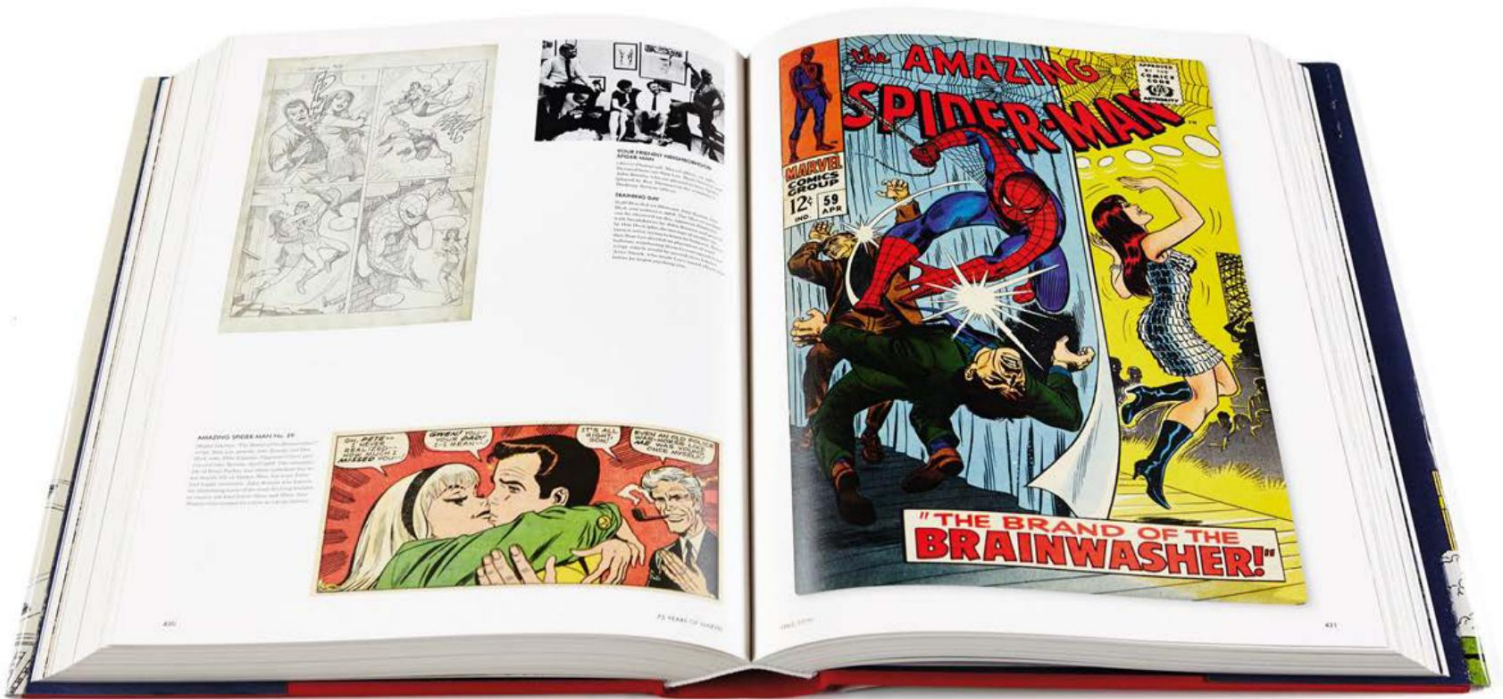
## PETER ZOPPI

Peter is a senior character artist at Treyarch based in California, where he's been for the past eight years. He's worked on Activision's *Call of Duty: Black Ops* and *Call of Duty: Black Ops II*, as well as the *James Bond* and *Kung Fu Panda* franchises. Before working in the video games sector, Peter was a character modeller and texture artist in the visual effects industry, joining Luma Pictures and Rhythm & Hues on films including *Night at the Museum*, *Underworld: Evolution* and *The Golden Compass*.



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





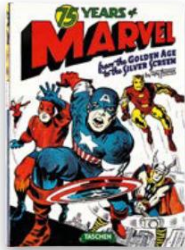
# 75 Years of Marvel Comics: From the Golden Age to the Silver Screen

**HEFTY TOME** Marvel celebrates its three-quarter century with a gigantic collection. You'll need to be the Hulk to carry it home!

**Author** Roy Thomas **Publisher** Taschen **Price** £135 **Web** [www.taschen.com](http://www.taschen.com) **Available** Now

**T**here are many art books that are inclined to make your arms ache, but this Incredible Bulk of a treasury signifies a whole new world of ostentatious triumphalism for the legendary Marvel comic-book universe. The tome is so super-mutated, it even comes with its own travel case, which barely alleviates the challenge of getting the book home without slipping a disc.

There was a time when publications of this size and weight were the most cherished items in a rich family's possession, worth more than the house it lived in – almost invariably a Bible, or some other collection of ancient legends. What better confirmation of



In an Amazing Spider-man story from the mid-80s, Mary Jane reveals that she knew Peter was Spidey all along! What a shocker!

the Marvel pantheon's claim to greatness than for this three-quarter-century celebration to be of suitably gigantic dimensions? All that's missing is a branded lectern with a Spidey mask carved into it.

Thankfully, it's not all bombast and shiny paper: there's depth and wisdom in Roy Thomas' text too, particularly when it comes to the early days of the artistic hothouse that gave the world Spider-Man, the X-Men and many other similarly messed-up men (and, increasingly but belatedly, women). This is no coincidence, because Roy was one of Marvel's editors during a particularly classic period, 1965-80, and still pens a number of comics to this day.

The depth of background detail is impressive, and even though this behemoth of a book was inspired in part by a similar offering for DC Comics, whose golden era pre-dated Marvel's, the inclusion of a breathtakingly comprehensive pull-out timeline bolsters this package's claims to omnipotence, taking us from the earliest human cave paintings, via prototype heroes like Gulliver and Frankenstein, to today's Happy Meal-fuelling blockbusters.



In a What If? story from 1984, Captain America isn't freed until 1980, and he doesn't like what he sees.

The tale of each generation is engrossingly written, but the visual element remains central, and the text is always followed by a lengthy section of lovingly blown-up classic pages and supporting material, shining Marvel's Golden Age out of exquisite spreads large enough to provide a reasonable spot for a picnic. Maybe Roy's focus blurs a little the closer we get to today's multiplex-filling Disney-fied Marvel, but there can't be too many fans who'd blame him for that.

**RATING**    





# The Art of Assassin's Creed Unity

**HISTORY REPEATING** The latest lavish outing for Ubisoft's historical hitman makes for a fine collection of predictably engaging artwork

**Author** Paul Davies **Publisher** Titan Books **Price** £30 **Web** [www.titanbooks.com](http://www.titanbooks.com) **Available** Now

**T**he era-skipping exploits of the Assassin's Creed game franchise demand a fair number of instantly recognisable tropes from generation to generation – stylish violence being wrought by a parkour-obsessed Hoody, for instance – but the breadth of variety in both time and locale in every game does offer the artistic types at Ubisoft Montreal a luxuriant degree of freedom to dazzle and astound both devout gamers and discerning bystanders alike.



This latest Assassin's Creed art tome shows us everything from the lush character art to the simplest concept sketches, all in glorious full colour.



This is the case more than ever for Unity, which this time doesn't just play out the latest reincarnation's life span, but (spoiler!) has a plot that spills out of time, exploring life in Paris in a whole host of periods, from the Middle Ages to WWII, with celebrities like the Marquis de Sade and Napoleon dropping by to spice things up.

Paul Davies is well seasoned in stitching together these lavish guides

to each game's visuals, and the images largely do the work, with only modest captions prevailing across most of the pages. The richness of the ever-expanding universe makes it an engrossing perusal even for non-gamers, but true followers will also be glad to have it on their shelves, long after their mission's completion.

**RATING**

# Digital Painting Techniques: Volume 6

**GETTING DIGITAL** This year's offering of casebooks not only takes us back to basics, but far, far into the future, all within one book...

**Authors** Various **Publisher** 3D Total Publishing **Price** £30 **Web** [www.3dtotalpublishing.com](http://www.3dtotalpublishing.com) **Available** Now

**T**he annual arrival of the latest bumper crop of artistic tips and casebooks from the DPT series has now become something of a welcome tradition. Although each costly collection could in some ways be seen as being just a smidgeon on the samey side, there's always plenty for the most obsessive and heavy-walleted designer to get stuck into, and take away with them as reference and influence for their next work of digital art.



Many of the master projects, like how to instil a cinematic mood into a scenery painting as seen left, are both highly useful and extremely beautiful.



Some of the best digital artists in the world are on hand to offer tutorials, offering a fresh perspective on fundamentals such as lighting effects or creating custom brushes, or how it feels to forge a career in concept art. And then, as the lush pages turn, the chapters grow in complexity, with unique tips on the art of caricature, or how to craft your own sci-fi wastelands from scratch.

The painters chosen have no problem in communicating their take on the task in hand with personality and clarity, and there's nothing here that any budding Photoshop wizard won't be able to transfer to their own work. Indeed, it's only the rather hefty price tag that may hold them back from adding this sixth offering to their library.

**RATING**



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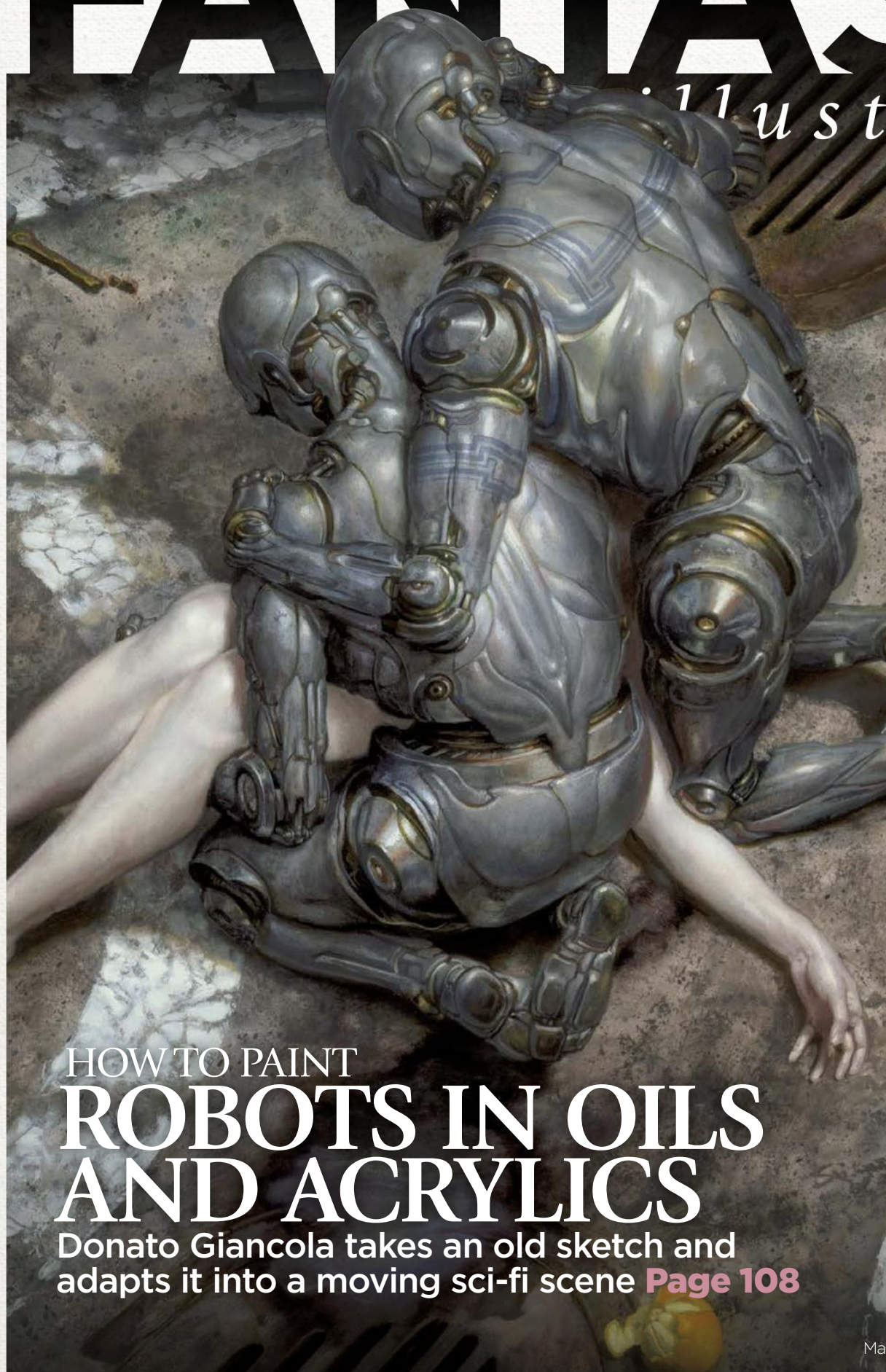
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# FANTASY

## Illustrator



## HOW TO PAINT ROBOTS IN OILS AND ACRYLICS

Donato Giancola takes an old sketch and adapts it into a moving sci-fi scene **Page 108**

### This issue:



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



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Denver Illustration Salon.



**106 Dinosaur maquette**  
James Gurney's DIY Pterosaur.



**114 First impressions**  
Flights of fancy with Jim Burns.



# FXPosé *Traditional*

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL FANTASY ARTISTS

## 🇨🇦 Ted Nasmith

**LOCATION:** Canada  
**WEB:** [www.tednasmith.com](http://www.tednasmith.com)  
**EMAIL:** [email@tednasmith.com](mailto:email@tednasmith.com)  
**MEDIA:** Gouache



Encouraged to get more serious about his art by a letter from none other than JRR Tolkien, Ted has forged a career as a go-to illustrator of all things Middle-earth – although recently he's paid visits to George RR Martin's not-dissimilar continents of Westeros and Essos.

"My general approach to fantasy is to echo the great traditional landscape painters such as Frederic Church, August Cappelen or Albert Bierstadt, and illustrators such as NC Wyeth, Maxfield Parrish, Gustave Doré and Arthur Rackham," says Ted. "I love the challenge of blending realism with romanticism and almost cinematic atmosphere."



### 1 ENTERING MIRKWOOD

Gouache on board, 18.5x15.5in

"Instead of worrying about the near darkness Tolkien describes within the forest, I chose to show the dwarves and Bilbo as just entering, with hints that the darkness will increase as they continue. Details such as spider webs, twisting roots and decay hint at the many dangers ahead."

### 2 A CONVERSATION WITH SMAUG

Gouache on board, 15x12in

"I've always loved Tolkien's own illustrations, and this is an homage to them, as well as an exercise in the art of illustration. I'm trying to give Smaug personality and yet be plausibly realistic and horrifying, as well as to depict the treasure hoard realistically and show evidence of the final stand of the dwarves. For the invisible Bilbo, I take artistic licence."

### 3 OLD VALYRIA

Gouache on board, 16x11in

"A commissioned painting for The World of Ice and Fire, I worked with author George RR Martin to create a vision of the legendary city of sorcerers and dragons surrounded by 14 volcanic mountains. I let my architectural experience and imagination have free rein in depicting the great towers that were raised through sorcery from liquid stone."







## IMAGINEFX CRIT



"Ted's art evokes the epic scale of these two great fantasy authors perfectly, and it's clear that he has a deep affection for them both. Well, not everyone has a letter from Tolkien under their belt!"

**Beren Neale,**  
Commissioning Editor



### + Marija Tiurina

LOCATION: England

WEB: [www.marijatiurina.com](http://www.marijatiurina.com)

EMAIL: [tiurinam@gmail.com](mailto:tiurinam@gmail.com)

MEDIA: Watercolour, pens, ink, pencil



Lithuania-born artist Marija came to England to study multimedia in 2009 – and has never looked back. She works as a video game artist by day, but any spare time is spent perfecting her personal work. By the very nature of her career she's heavily involved in digital art, but this is something she aims to change.

"I'm trying to move away from digital painting and design, and go more in the direction of fine art and drawing," Marija says. "That's what I think has true meaning and value when it comes to personal artwork."

#### 1 THE TOWN OF THOUGHTS

Ink on paper, 16.5x23.4in

"This piece is about the state of mind cluttered with thoughts, which can be hard to control when there are too many of them. Although it was tiresome working on the detail, it led to a composition that has weight to it."

#### 2 THE FLOATING ISLAND

Watercolour, pens, ink and pencils, 16.5x23.4in

"I started working on a drawing of an odd-looking town based on an island floating in space. The island has its own rules of life that are different to what we're used to, so goodness knows what's happening there!"

#### 3 TUBCEPTION

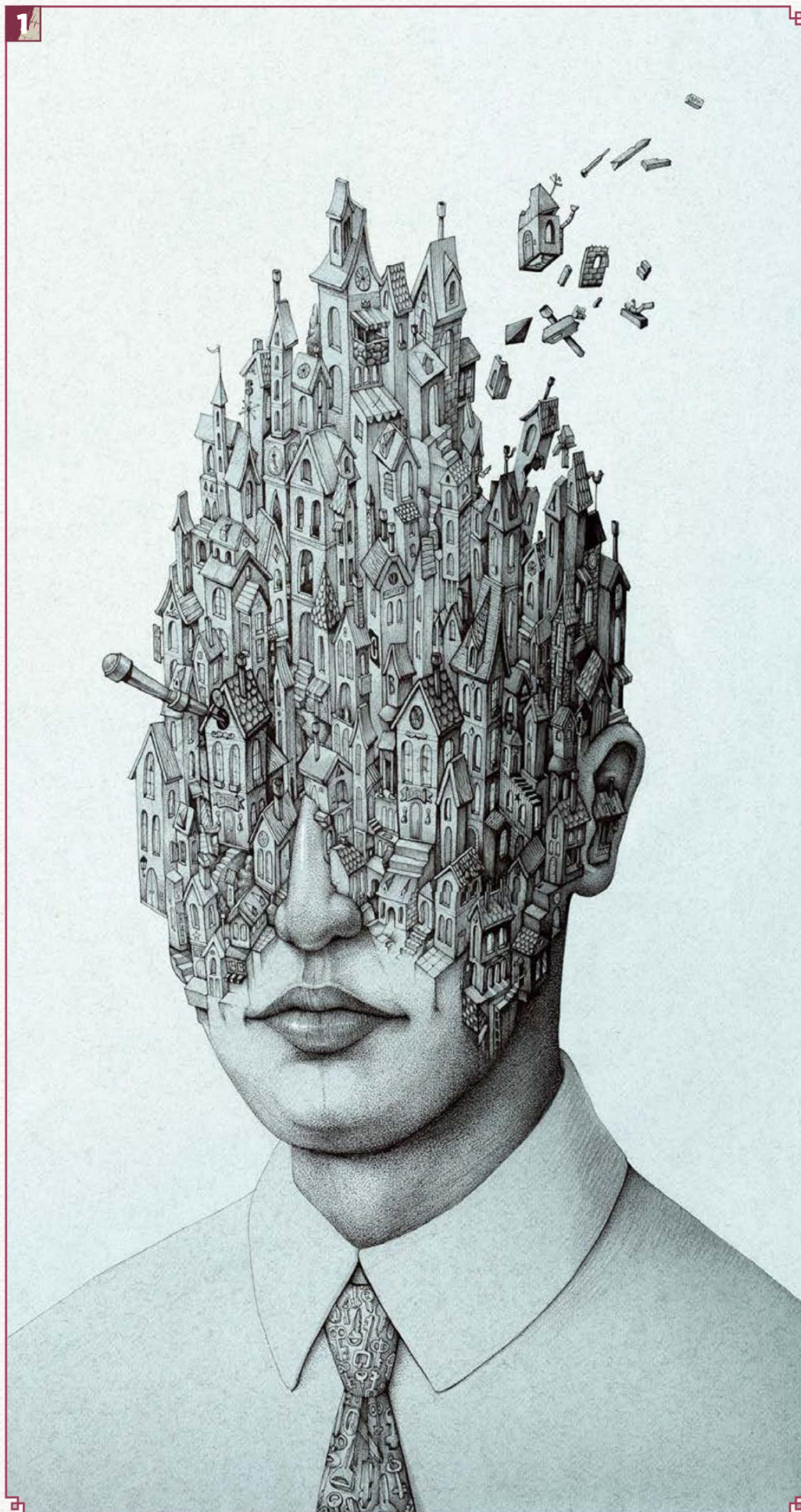
Watercolour, 11.7x16.5in

"I started sketching out a girl, but this soon developed into something more complex. Creating it was satisfying because the simple shapes enabled me to be more flexible with mixing the watercolour paints and gave me more freedom in filling out the blanks."

#### 4 BIRD TRAINING

Watercolour, 11.7x16.5in

"The piece was partially inspired by a 1960s Soviet horror film that used to terrify me as a kid. Based on a selection of creepy short stories published in mid-19th century, the film covered remote village churches, coffins, corpses coming back to life, demons, priests losing sanity and other fun topics."





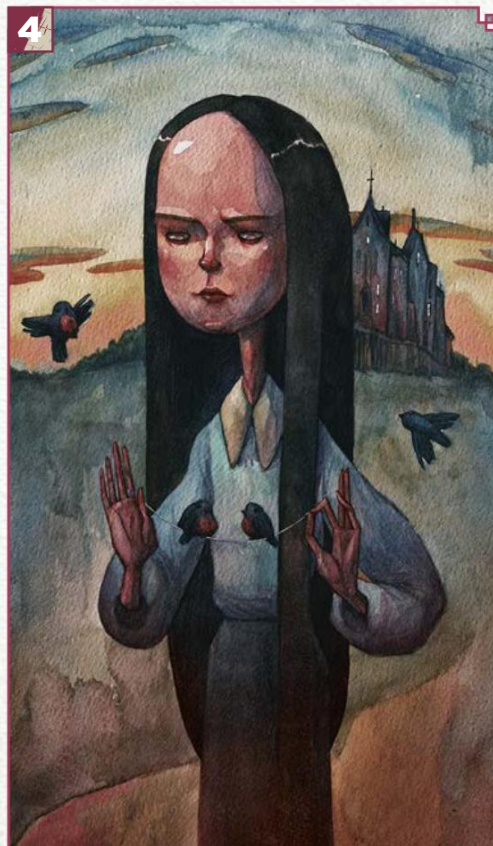
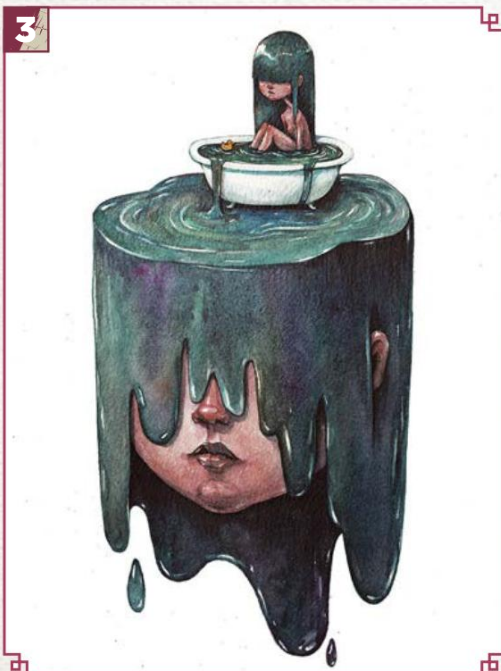


## IMAGINEFX CRIT



"There's a dark, dreamlike feel to Marija's work that's both endearing and a little bit creepy. Her use of understated colour palettes and pastel shades only adds to the discomforting atmosphere here."

Daniel Vincent,  
Art Editor



## SUBMIT YOUR ART TO FXPOSÉ

Send up to five pieces of your work, along with their titles, an explanation of your techniques, a photo of yourself and contact details. Images should be sent as 300DPI JPEG files.

**Email:** [fxpose@imaginefx.com](mailto:fxpose@imaginefx.com)  
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All artwork is submitted on the basis of a non-exclusive worldwide licence to publish, both in print and electronically.



# Creative Space



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

## DENVER ILLUSTRATION SALON

**JON SCHINDEHETTE** explains how he took the seed of Seattle's art scene  
and grew a sturdy art oak in the heart of Colorado

When ImagineFX hero Jon Schindehette relocated from Seattle to Denver, he was shocked to find that despite a vibrant art scene, there was nowhere for artists to gather, share techniques and make friends. His solution was to create the Denver Illustration Salon with local artists Jeremy Aaron Moore, Crystal Sully, Dylan Pierpont and Angela Schmer.

Based on the 16th-century Italian intellectual gatherings, this particular salon was established in November 2013. It's already included a number of events such as drink and draws, costume life drawing, plein air painting and zoo

sketches – all of which Jon has enjoyed as much as his fellow artists.

"I love to attend the events, both as an organiser and an attendee," he says. "The energy is almost palatable. I get recharged every time. I'm able to try out new stuff, knowing that there's never any pressure. I'm not worrying about grades, costs or anything else that usually comes along with organised schools or workshops. We just share, learn and enjoy."

An egalitarian approach extends throughout, with Jon describing his role as "cheerleader, rally point, networker, big picture guy." Each new member brings something fresh to the events, and expert talks have included lawyers offering copyright advice and ImagineFX



The rugged Colorado terrain provides the perfect subject for some plein air painting.

contributor Dave Rapoza giving a painting demo. Jon's "big picture" for the coming year is an expansion of the salon into a permanent space, rather than just borrowing local premises.

"We want to offer workshops with visiting artists, low-cost studios with community-based infrastructure, and a gallery and store space," says Jon. "We know this is a very aspirational goal. But if you'd asked us a year ago if we could have created the community that we have growing here in Denver, we would have called that a very aspirational goal."



Visit [www.theartorder.com](http://www.theartorder.com) for  
Jon's insight into the world.  
For info on the Salon go to  
<http://ifxm.ag/denveris>.



# Creative Space Denver Illustration Salon



Jon Schindehette introduces artist Dave Rapoza at a special event.



A drink and draw event in full flow.



When not painting plein air, artist Clay Brooks creates sci-fi environments.

## GREAT PLEINS

What the Denver Illustration Salon get up to in their plein air sessions...



Denver provides an eclectic mix of urban and rural environments for painters to capture.

Dave Collins' take on an industrial part of Denver.



Ryan Morse perfectly captures this bucolic scene.



A successful plein air painter knows the importance of finding the right scene.



Pencil

Oils

Ballpoint pen

Clay

# BUILD A PTEROSAUR MAQUETTE

**JAMES GURNEY** shows how he recycles a plastic envelope to make the wing membrane for a cheap DIY pterosaur maquette

One of my clients commissions me to paint a flying Pteranodon for a double-page title spread. I imagine the creature skimming low over the edge of the ocean surf, looking for fish.

I begin the task by travelling to the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto to sketch pterosaur fossils. I also study photos and videos of modern birds, such as albatrosses and pelicans. From my research, I'm able to draw a set of small

colour sketches to show the art director, incorporating some space for the headline and text.

Next, I build a maquette to see how the forms look in 3D. I take the maquette outdoors and set it up against a simple blue paper background. True sunlight is difficult to simulate using either studio light or computer software. I photograph it with a digital single lens reflex camera. Every photo is full of little surprises.

I use the tough plastic material from a modern mailing envelope for the wing

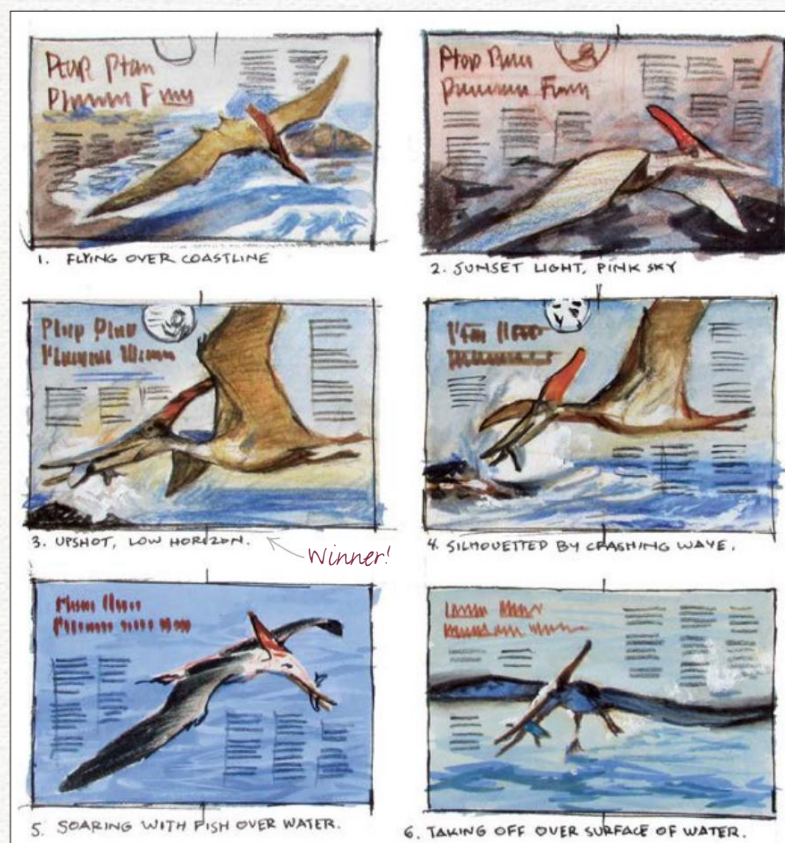
## MATERIALS

- Aluminium armature wire
- Wood base
- Flexible polymer compound
- Hot glue
- Polyethylene envelope
- Grey spray primer
- Acrylic paint
- Gloss medium

membrane: It's flexible, strong, and resistant to tearing. This envelope material is just one unorthodox material that I use for maquettes. I also use clear plastic spheres, recycled styrene models, various kinds of packing foam, wooden popsicle sticks, chopsticks, broken twigs, pipe cleaners, and ragged chunks of anthracite coal. Whatever it takes!



James is the author of the *New York Times* bestseller *Dinotopia*. See his work at [www.jamesgurney.com](http://www.jamesgurney.com)



## 1 Sketch colour thumbnails

I do these thumbnail sketches in watercolour, water-soluble coloured pencils and white gouache, about 1.5x2 inches each. The art director chooses sketch #3 and suggests flipping the design so that the Pteranodon faces right.



## 2 Make a wire armature

I make a skeleton out of aluminium armature wire, matching the size of all the parts to my scale drawings. I mark the bone joints with a marker. The wire skeleton enables the maquette to be posed in any position, which makes it reusable for future jobs.

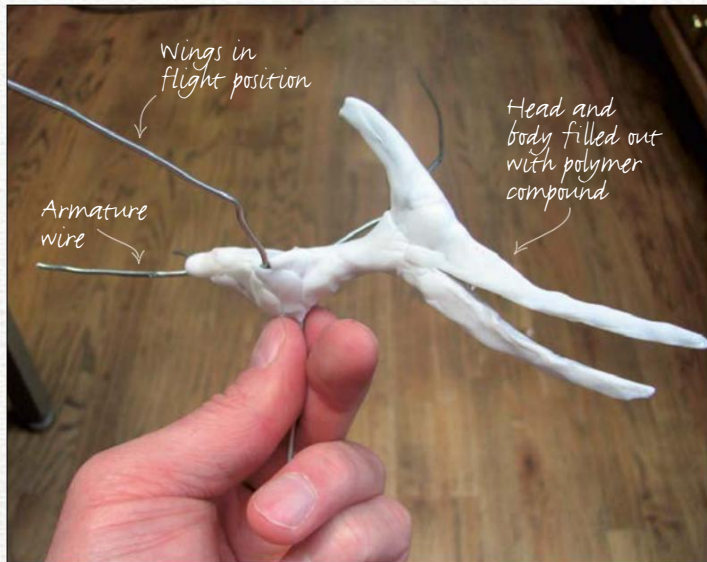
## ARTIST INSIGHT

### IMPASTO MADE EASY

To get thick white impastos in oil, squeeze out some white from the tube on absorbent blotter paper or shop towel material to suck out the oil. By mixing a drop of cobalt drier into the white, even thick passages will dry overnight. I use a palette knife to build up the impasto texture in the foam and rocks.

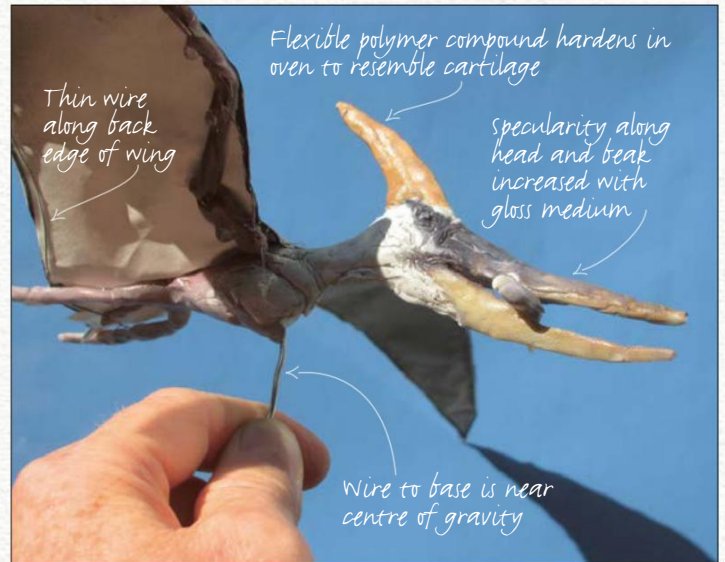


# Artist insight Pterosaur maquette



## 3 Bulk out the body

I beef up the head and chest with a flexible polymer clay called Fimo Effect, which is less brittle than Sculpey. For the wing membrane I use the Tyvek material from a FedEx envelope. Tyvek is much stronger than paper, and less prone to wrinkling. I run thin floral wire along the back edge of the wing to hold it in position.



## 4 Paint the maquette and take it outdoors

I spray the whole assembly outdoors with grey spray-on primer, and paint it with acrylic paint. Where I need a little more specularity on the beak and head, I paint on some acrylic gloss medium. I use a digital SLR camera at a high f-stop for maximum depth of field, and then print out the reference.

## 5 The final painting

I paint the final picture in oil, starting transparently, and build up to thick impastos in the crashing waves behind the head. I use information from the maquette photos and from my location-based outdoor paintings to help me decide on the placement of light and shadow, and the colour scheme. ●

### MATERIAL

#### WIRE IT

Aluminium wire can be bought at art and craft stores, or floral supply centres. Stock up with wire of various thicknesses.





# Workshops



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

Photo © Greg Preston

Oils

Acrylics

## RENDERING EMOTIONAL ROBOTS

Join **DONATO GIANCOLA** in his studio as he takes an old sketch, adapts the nature of the figures and creates robots and flesh for his painting *Sorrow*

The power of emotion is a favourite inspirational source that I draw upon to create narrative dramas. By leaving the story ambiguous, I invite interpretation to the resolution as the viewer personalises their experience with the painting. I make a conscious effort to find and preserve those forms of expression that best define our humanity.

Here I'll be revealing how to bring conceptual narratives to a concrete reality. From having models act out the emotional moment to acquiring the right photographs for textures, the key word in developing this painting is 'reference'.

I spend hours walking the streets of New York to dig up the perfect artefacts, and troll through dozens of books to discover images to embellish my concepts with. On a typical commission I may have up to 20 elements of reference from which to source ideas. Once these references are gathered, I pay close attention to what they reveal to me, from the way light reflects off a greasy metal

### ARTIST INSIGHT

#### WRAPPING IT UP

**Framing is the aspect of final presentation I don't skimp on. High-quality framing makes a statement about you and your work, much like a beautifully crafted portfolio, or a well-designed brochure or website. When you take yourself seriously, others will do so, too.**

surface, to the spacing and size of the cracks in painted pedestrian crossings. Sensitivity to details bring an image to life, instils within it a convincing voice, and creates a visual dialogue that I use to draw the viewer into my artistic illusions.

A defining characteristic of my work is the process I go through in creating a highly detailed preliminary drawing. This drawing is not only a wonderful way to solve compositional issues before stepping into colour and paint, but it's an intermediate step that enables clients a chance for input into the project.

By sharing a precisely executed drawing I'm able to clarify my compositional and structural intent in the image, while implementing client changes in a media that's easily and quickly manipulated. Time and aggravation is saved on both sides of the professional relationship. My mind is cleared as I step into the oil painting phase, knowing major changes from the client are now behind me. I may now concentrate on my process and deliver the best art possible.



Donato has won multiple art awards: Chesley Awards from the Association of Science Fiction and Fantasy Artists; Hugo Awards from the World Science Fiction Society; silver and gold medals from Spectrum and he's completed hundreds of book covers. He will be holding an online lecture series with the SmArt School. Learn more at <http://ifxm.ag/dg-smartschool>.







### MATERIALS

#### PAPER

- Strathmore 500 Series drawing paper
- Toned drawing paper
- Birch veneered plywood

#### DRAWING TOOLS

- Chalk pencil
- Coloured pencil
- Kneaded eraser

#### OIL PAINTS

- Alizarin Crimson
- Brown Pink
- Burnt Sienna
- Burnt Umber
- Cadmium Orange
- Cadmium Red
- Cadmium Yellow Medium
- Davey's Gray
- Emerald Green
- Greenish Umber
- Lamp Black
- Mars Violet
- Naples Yellow Light
- Paynes Gray
- Raw Sienna
- Raw Umber
- Sap Green
- Sepia Extra
- Titanium White
- Transparent Yellow Green
- Ultramarine Blue
- Yellow Ochre
- Warm Gray

#### BRUSHES

- Winsor & Newton Kolinsky Sable watercolour brushes, sizes 0, 1, 2
- Rekab Kolinsky Sable watercolour brushes, sizes 0, 1
- Masterstroke Sable Filberts, sizes 8, 10, 12
- Squirrel Hair Blender, size 2cm
- Ox hair flat, size 3cm

#### OIL MEDIUM

- 2 oz Damaar
- 1 oz Sun-thickened linseed oil
- 1 oz Venice turpentine

#### ACRYLIC PAINT

- Titanium White
- Ivory Black
- Raw Umber
- Ultramarine Blue
- Yellow Ochre
- Acrylic Matte Medium



### 1 Concept sketch gestation

It's within my sketchbook that concepts are experimented with. In some cases ideas gestate for years before I bring them to finish. My first thoughts regarding this portrayal of the feeling of emotional tragedy from a loss of a young child began not with robots, but with humans.



### 2 Preliminary drawing and reference

Once I've photographed my models and gathered my references, I create a highly detailed preliminary drawing. It's here that I work out any compositional and lighting issues in a monochromatic format, which will dictate the path I take as I move forward with value and colour.



### 3 Initial acrylic washes

With the preliminary drawing transferred to my panel and sealed beneath clear gesso, I then begin laying in washes of acrylic paint. The speed at which acrylic dries enables a multitude of layers to quickly build up as I test the directions of value and colour further.



### 4 Bring out the oil paints!

The serious tools are now brought in for the heavy work! Oil paints are my main workhorse for rendering. With the detailed drawing providing guidance, I go right to for the kill, attempting to place final colour, value and edges in the first pass on each area with oil paint.



## PLANNING PRELIMINARY DRAWING

Good planning will save  
you rendering time as  
you avoid structural  
and anatomical  
corrections.

### 5 *Rendering with care*

I'm careful to follow the contours and volumes that are suggested from my initial drawing. I proceed shape-by-shape in the rendering, implementing what I see in my photographic references for metallic textures and lighting effects.





## 6 Unifying the image with glazes

The versatility of oils flexes its muscles at this next stage. A second pass is taken on any areas that I painted the day before as I glaze over them with transparent, tinting layers of pigment and oil medium. The glaze unifies the areas and imparts a wonderful optical mixing with the colours beneath to give the painting extra depth and fluidity.



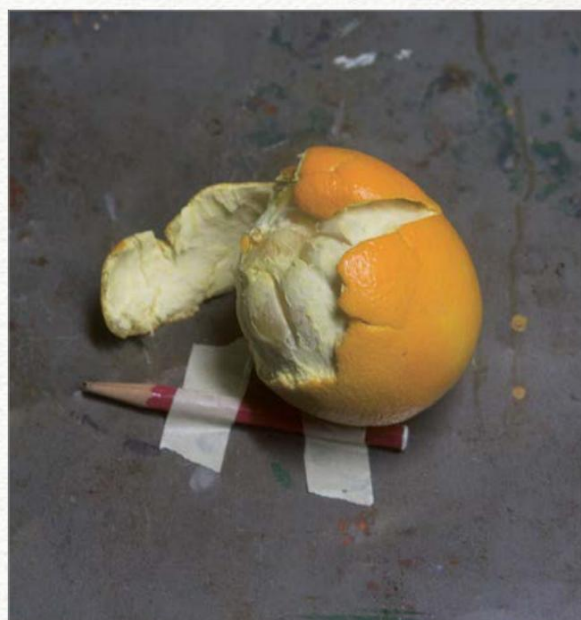
## 7 Refining the details

I take another pass on areas that need further refinement and precision, such as the hips and shoulders of the robots. With the robots established, I now bring out detail in the background, such as the stripes on the concrete and grating on the sewers, to reinforce the focus.



## 8 Paint from still life

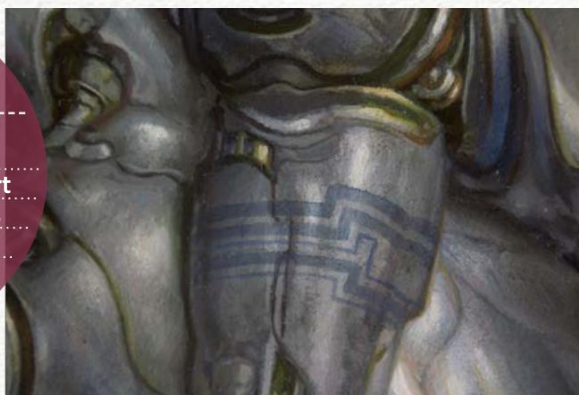
Real-life observations trump the imagination! To place as much symbolic power as possible within the dropped orange, I turn to nature to inform me with a late-night still life. Half an hour later I have the perfect rendering of the unfortunate uneaten fruit in oils.



### THINKING AHEAD

#### PANEL SUPPORT

Using birch veneered plywood as my support panel means the art is easier and less expensive to frame.



## 9 Tattoos on an artificial life-form

I want to provide a sense of character and individuality to my robots, so I decide to tattoo one of them. I'm inspired by a recent exhibit of my work at the gallery of the world-class tattoo artist Paul Booth at the Last Rites Gallery in New York City. You can see what's on offer at the gallery by visiting [www.lastrites.tv](http://www.lastrites.tv)







## 10 *Painting lifeless flesh*

With the environment well established and the robots almost finished, I start painting the skin of the fallen adolescent. The tones are far cooler and more desaturated than I would typically use because of the lifeless nature I wish to convey, coupled with the scene's cool-blue cast.



## 11 *Assessment and corrections*

With the rendering nearly complete, I give an overall assessment and check back at my references, which flags a slight structural problem with the head design of one of the robots. It's a minor issue, but being a perfectionist I can't let it go. It's easily corrected after ten minutes of careful brush work.



## 12 *Apply more glazes*

In the final phases of painting, I turn to glazing to unify elements, masses and colour balances. It's here that a white palette is useful because it shows the intensity and colour of glazes before I apply them to the panel.





# First Impressions

✧ Jim Burns ✧

Dinosaurs, Dan Dare and a brief flying career helped shape Jim's career...



**Where did you grow up?**

I was born in Cardiff in South Wales, and resided in and around that fine city until leaving home

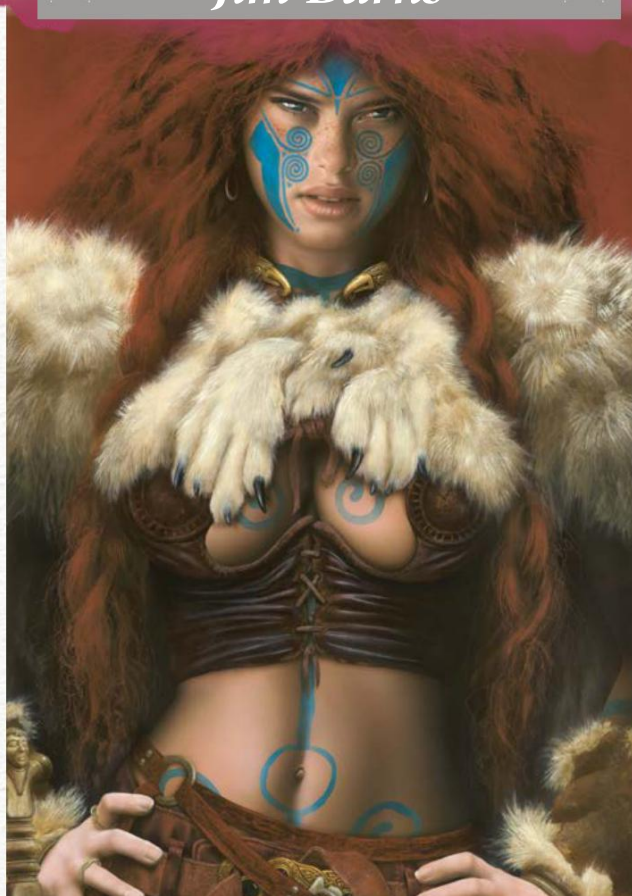
at the age of 18. I think living for much of that time in deep countryside and enjoying solitary wanderings I developed a fair knowledge of natural history. I think that has informed a lot of the work I do, which focuses on strange life forms where I try to convey a sense of an evolutionary direction different from ours – creatures and beings that make sense from an evolutionary viewpoint, rather than just being peculiar collisions of weird biology.

**What has most influenced your work?**

Natural history remains a great passion, but I also love machinery. My brief sojourn in the RAF must have played a part in my depictions of strange machines and mechanical contrivances. I'm not happy unless a machine looks right, even if its rightness is not sensitive to human biological requirements or aesthetic sensibilities.

**You're a child, you see a painting or drawing that changes everything...**

I can summon up a couple immediately. One was on a large spread in a book my dad bought for me. One of those travelling salesmen knocked on our door and persuaded dad to part with his money and go for the Odhams Encyclopaedia For Children. The image was of a Jurassic period scene with a variety of humongous great dinosaurs milling around a swampy jungle area. I loved the image and I loved the names of these reptiles, and it fed a passion that I still have, sparking that fascination with strange biology. But alongside that image I would have to pluck out Frank Bellamy's front page illustration for Dan Dare's Project Nimbus showing us the weird alien spaceship, a design that makes no sense to human eyes.



## THE ICENI GIRL

*The work of Jim Burns may be fantastical, but it's always firmly rooted in the biologically possible, as evidenced here in his piece, The Icení Girl, from 2012.*

**What was your next step in art?**

Not only did I love reading the Dan Dare strip in the Eagle, I rather fancied myself as Dan Dare! Well he was 'The Pilot of the Future,' and it seemed to me that the route to that was to join the RAF.

I commenced life as a pilot in 1966 in what was to prove a very short-lived career, as it became evident that I was

“If I see another cloaked figure on the cover of a book I think I'll scream”

not very good. And so after 18 months I left the Service and tried for art college instead. It was useful to have a Plan B!

**Who helped you on your way?**

At art college, the general attitude to my stuff was one of head-scratching bafflement. One visiting lecturer though, the children's book illustrator Fritz Wegner, was encouraging. He didn't really get what I was doing, but he could see that it was a passion, and he was one of those sympathetic 'follow your own

muse' types. He got me an interview with Cecil Smith at New English Library who was looking out for artists at the time. My work didn't compare favourably with that of Bruce Pennington, but I learned from the experience.

**What was your first paid commission?**

My very first was a book called The Lost Command for Transworld back in 1972. I was still at college when I started that one. It was a World War 2 novel executed in coloured pencils, and in no way really represents my later work.

**And the last piece that you finished?**

It was a digital effort for the Ray Cluley novella, Within the Wind, Beneath the Snow. I think it would be hard for anyone to look at The Lost Command and to guess they were by the same person. I like the fact that my work is variable, but others tell me that it's not hard to tell that a painting is a Jim Burns, a fact I find amusing and baffling as I can't see what that identifying factor is.

**What gripes do you have about the fantasy art industry right now?**

The character seems to have gone into hiding rather. If I see another cloaked figure, Assassins' Creed-style, on the cover of a book I think I'll scream, and if anyone asked me to do one I'd refuse (well I could be persuaded, but it would have to be accompanied by a fat fee!). Very lazy thinking in my opinion.

**Is the industry still the best place to be working?**

Well for me personally it's the only place to be working for the simple, rather mundane reason that I have no other skills from which I could earn a living! To have a creative streak in oneself is a real privilege, and not one given to everyone. I cannot imagine stopping painting pictures conjured by my imagination. Imagination is something that I'm sure can be inculcated and encouraged in any young child, and it's almost criminal not to do that with the developing brains of children. For the life of the imagination is the best life of all, and should be available to all.

*Jim has been painting sci-fi and fantasy for over 30 years. His latest book is*

*Hyperluminal, published by Titan Books. You can see his work at <http://ifxm.ag/jimburns>.*

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