

NO. 1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImageFX

EXCLUSIVE!

CRAIG MULLINS

Tutorial and interview from the digital art innovator

OUR GREATEST WORKSHOPS!

RAPHAEL LACOSTE

The art director creates an epic castle in Photoshop

TODD LOCKWOOD

Paint magical book cover art with the D&D artist

ERIC DESCHAMPS

MÉLANIE DELON

REBECCA GUAY

ROSS TRAN

SYD MEAD

BROM

And more!

"IAIN MCCAIG SHOWED ME HOW TO DRAW, BROM SHOWED ME HOW TO PAINT"

KARLA ORTIZ

Future

10th ANNIVERSARY COLLECTOR'S EDITION

Celebrating a decade of inspiration with the greatest artists in the world!

LEGENDS

BORIS & JULIE

Delve into the sketches of the fantasy art duo



TRADITIONAL TIPS PERFECT PENCILS

Allen Williams' advice for drawing unique art

ART & ADVICE

ROBH RUPPEL SHOWS HOW TO CREATE DEPTH
BRING WEIGHT TO YOUR ART WITH BOBBY CHIU
TRAN NGUYEN ON WHEN NOT TO APPLY DETAIL



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Welcome... to the big one!



What a difference a decade makes. Ten years and 130 issues. Good god, that went quick! Since year dot, we've had a blast discovering, meeting and celebrating amazing artists, and inspiring our readers to create great art... I'm exhausted just writing about it.

Yet the six or so years I've worked here have been a joy. Artists, you see, may be 80 per cent insomniac-workhorse-ninja, 1 per cent genius, and 19 per cent bananas, but they – you – are the most inspiring, driven and altogether groovy people on earth. And it's been ImagineFX's privilege to work with the best.

The names on this cover are proof of this, and I hope you'll agree we've put together an issue worthy of our 10-year landmark. I've met many of the artists featured in this extra big issue, including Karla Ortiz who I speak to on page 50, and one thing that always surprises me is how enthused they are to work with the mag. Without going all hippy, there's a lot of love in this 'small' world of ours... (Hold on a minute. I think I have something in my eye.)

Whilst I'm all emotional, I'd like to mention that the continued success of ImagineFX is in large part due to über-editor Claire Howlett, who's been on the mag since issue three (aaaages ago). She's on maternity leave right now, but her dedication to IFX has kept it at the top of its game for this long. You rock, Claire!

Oh, did I mention the calendar full of exquisite art, the Syd Mead workshop, or the Craig Mullins interview?! Crap, no room... enjoy!

Beren

Beren Neale, Acting Editor
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*Our special cover for
subscribers this issue.*



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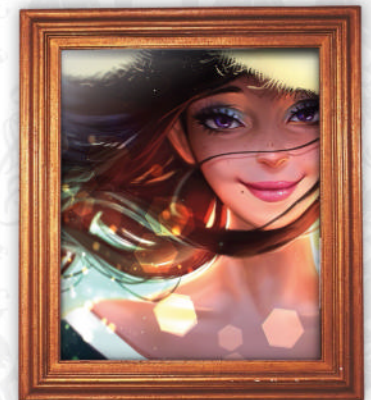
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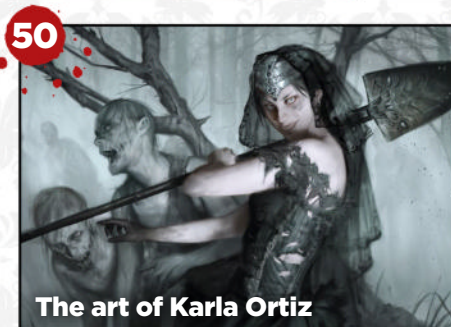
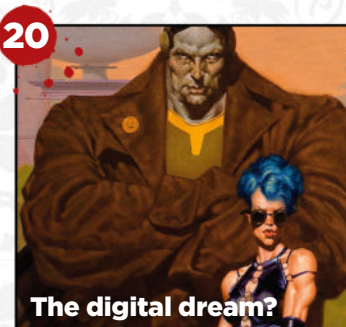


Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



See page 8 for the best new art ➔



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Channelling Frazetta



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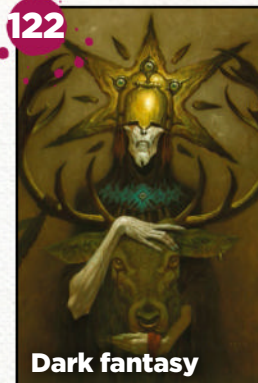
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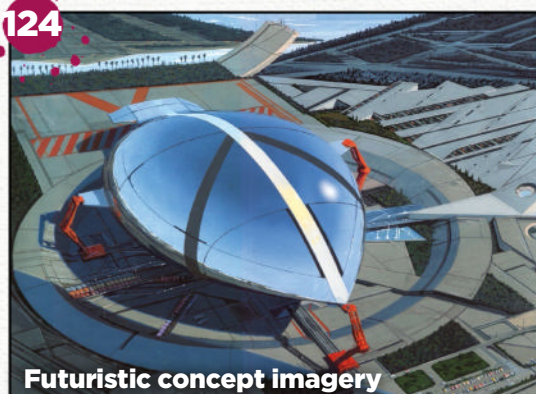
Emotional art



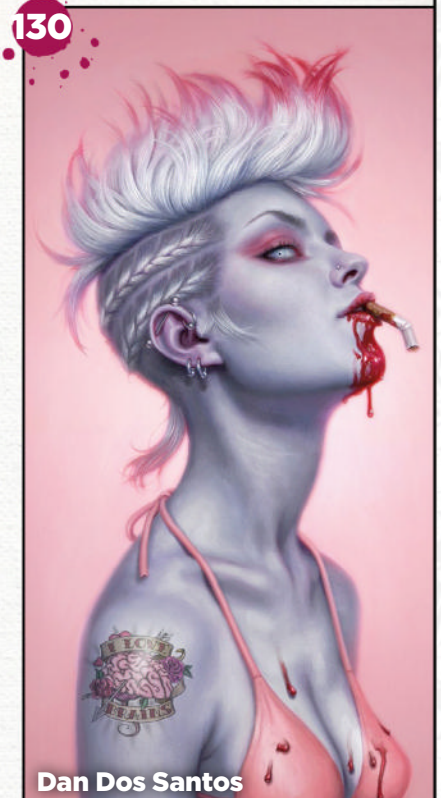
Rhythm & shapes



Dark fantasy



Futuristic concept imagery



Dan Dos Santos



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Resources

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

OVER 10 HOURS
of workshop and Q&A videos to watch and learn from!

WORKSHOP VIDEOS

Be inspired by Frazetta

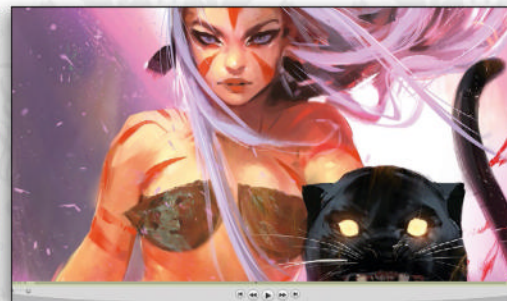
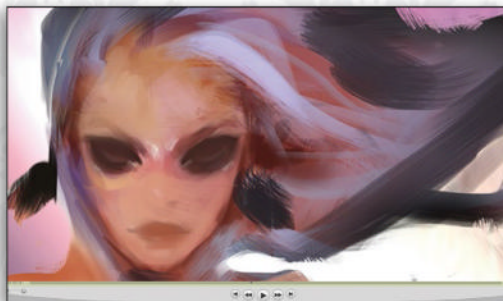
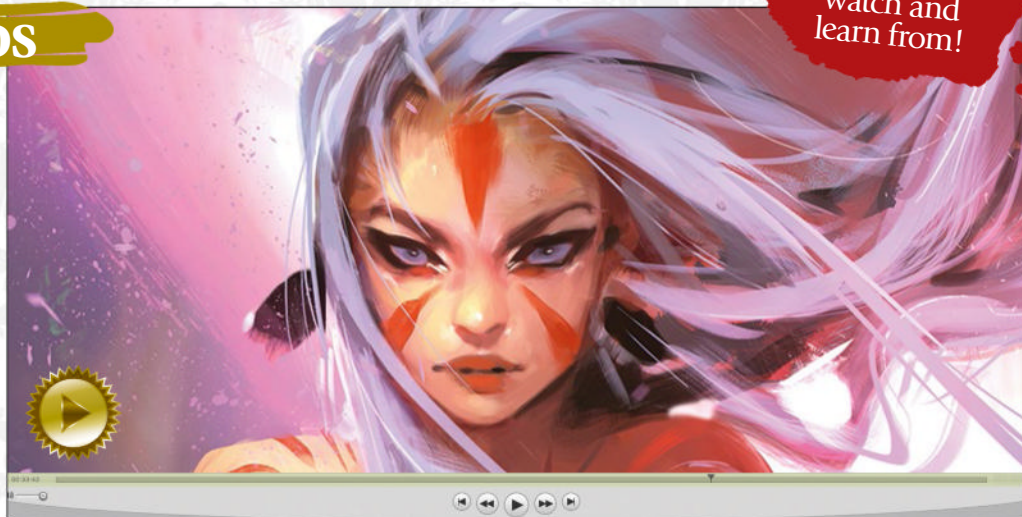
Ross Tran shows how to work up a strong fantasy image efficiently, while maintaining your artistic voice.



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/decadeifx>
- 2 Find the files you want**
Search through the list of resources to watch or download.
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ImagineFX

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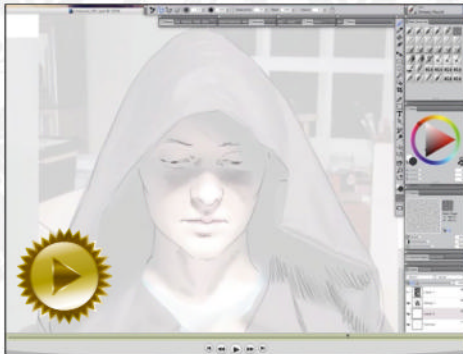
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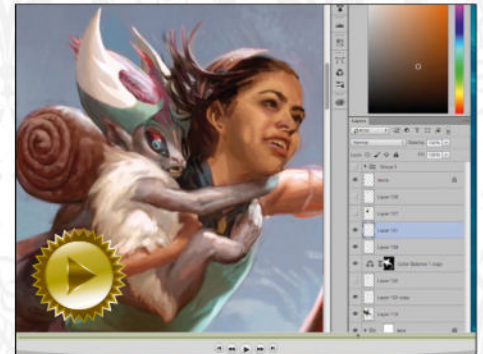
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Watch our videos to gain a unique insight into how our artists create their stunning art



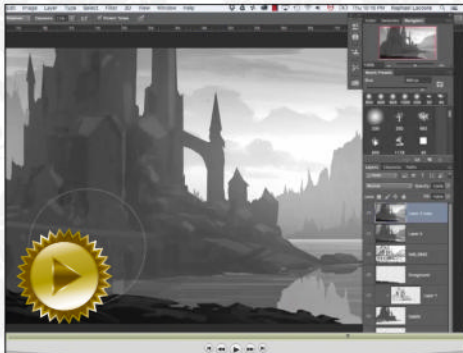
Todd Lockwood

Discover how to capture the spirit of a book of short stories with no overall theme, as the artist goes from developing a strong concept to polishing the final art.
Plus WIPs and final image



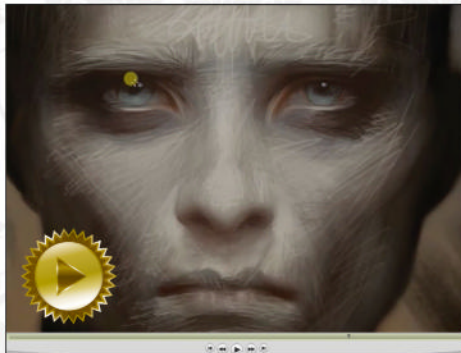
Eric Deschamps

Understand how to let the story shine through when painting an epic scene.
Plus WIPs, brushes and final image



Raphael Lacoste

Learn how to handle light and atmospheric depth when creating a film environment.
Plus WIPs, brushes and final image



Mélanie Delon

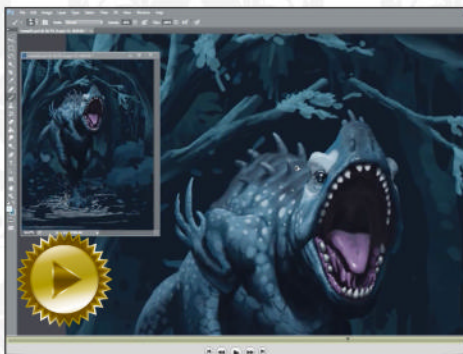
See how you too can use light to achieve a chiaroscuro feel in your artwork.
Plus WIPs, brushes and final image



Q&A VIDEOS

Bobby Chiu

Depict muscle tension and facial changes so that your art conveys a creature's roar.
Plus WIPs and final image



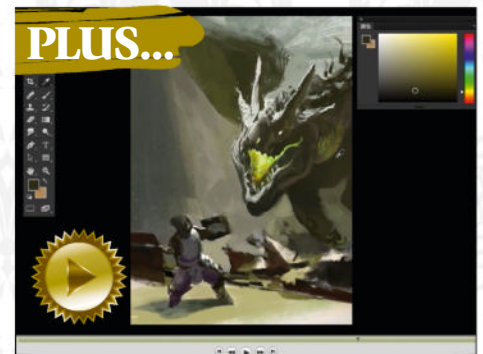
Bobby Chiu

Ensure that you capture the essence of a huge beast charging through a forest.
Plus WIPs and final image



Brian Yam

The film and video game concept artist passes on first principles in his video, The First Sketch: Quickstart to World Creation.



Ruan Jia

Watch how the concept artist, who recently worked on Halo 5: Guardians, paints a deadly encounter with a dragon.

AND ALL THIS! Detailed workshops with essential pro advice from Charlie Bowater, Tran Nguyen, Loopydave, Robb Ruppel, Craig Mullins, Shelly Wan, Thomas Scholes, Rebecca Guay, Allen Williams, Brom and Syd Mead.

71 CUSTOM BRUSHES, INCLUDING...

DEBRIS BRUSH

Ross Tran uses this brush to quickly add texture to his art.

DETAIL BRUSH

Mélanie Delon precisely defines elements in her art with this brush.

PLASTIC WRAP

This brush helps Eric Deschamps to add streaky-looking textures.



Reader EXPOSE

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

ImagineFX
ARTIST
MONTH

1 Ayya Saparniyazova

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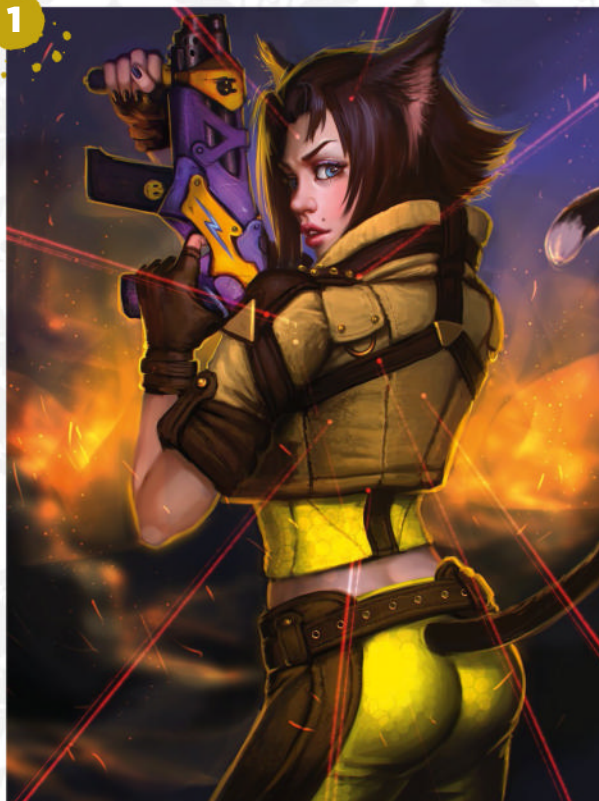


A few years ago, Ayaa discovered the exciting world of digital art, and couldn't tear herself away. "I realised that it's what

I want to do in life!" she says. "Digital art has enabled me to create without limits."

The artist likes to paint portraits and design characters, and in her work Ayaa expresses emotions, feelings and moods through a character's eyes, colours and lighting. "I take my inspiration from anime, computer games and films," Ayaa reveals. "They've all helped to form my own style." She freelances, where she has a great scope for creativity: "You can learn a lot and work with interesting people!"

1



2



1 KATRINA'S MISSION "Sometimes I just like to paint new characters, such as this cosmic cat. Actually, she's part human, part cat, a big fan of adventure and very curious – like any normal cat! She's trained in martial arts and weapons, loves adrenaline and risk, and often gets into dangerous situations where escape seems impossible."

2 HARLEY QUINN "I decided to draw Harley Quinn because I like crazy characters – you never know what to expect from them! She's playful, armed and dangerous."

3 SUMMER SMILE "I love the sea, the sun and the beach. Here I wanted to capture this happiness in the girl's face, the wind blowing through her beautiful hair, and the warm light of the tropical sun. My aim was to recreate the atmosphere of summer for the viewer."



Artist crit

Ayya's colourful work impresses Genzoman on many levels...



"Ayya's handling of light is exquisite, and she achieves the delicate balance between cartoon and realism. Her colours and softly rendered images are rich in atmosphere."

Mathias Zamecki

LOCATION: Poland

WEB: www.mathiaszamecki.com

EMAIL: mathias.zamecki@gmail.com

MEDIA: Photoshop, ZBrush, Blender

1



"I always used to draw on the back of my school notebooks," recalls Mathias. His digital art journey became more serious in 2009, his final year of high school. In 2010 he studied a one-year program of 3D animation and effects, after which he decided to paint, produce concepts and pursue a career in the video game industry.

"My first inspiration was Craig Mullins and the traditional feel of his digital art, and I try to apply this to my work. I'm like a dog chasing cars: I see something cool and want to learn it!"

Artist crit

Video game concept artist Remko Troost likes what he sees...



"Mathias has some gorgeous brushwork and storytelling going on here. His strokes imply plenty of detail, and yet he's able to maintain a lovely painterly feel."

1 RUINS "This painting was inspired by traditional artists Stepan Kolesnikoff and Mark Boedges. Ruins and knights are not the most original of ideas, but I wanted to give it my own twist with mark making and textures. I tried to illustrate the scene as if it were an oil painting, complete with visible textures and opaque layers of paint."



AJ Frena

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MEDIA: Acrylic, watercolour, Photoshop



AJ's main focus is on imagery that features animals and various forms of wildlife. "Utilising both traditional and digital media, I combine realism with the abstract and fine art with elements of pop culture," the artist says.

Born and raised in North Texas, AJ studied at the School of Visual Arts in New York City before moving to Pittsburgh, PA, where he lives with a lucky black cat and a lazy border collie.

Artist crit

It's thumbs up from Dinotopia artist and author James Gurney



"Super stuff, AJ! I love the unlikely heroes climbing on the heap of faded rubble. You rang my bell with the faded paint, the muted colours, the rich details and the sly pop-culture references in all of your works."

1 PLEASE STAND BY - FALLOUT 4

"This is a tribute to Fallout for New York Comic Con, celebrating the release of the new game. It's one of my favourite game series and so it was exciting to get the chance to bring this piece to life."

2 AVENGERS "A tribute to the release

of Avengers: Age of Ultron, in partnership with Marvel for Hero Complex Gallery. This was my first officially licensed piece. At the time I had done scientific illustration almost exclusively, so this was uncharted territory for me. Fortunately, it ended up being a success and opened up new opportunities for me."

3 NEAR THE CAMPHOR TREE

"This is my tribute to Hayao Miyazaki's 1988 film My Neighbor Totoro. I used acrylic and Photoshop to paint the scene."

4 WIZARD OF OZ

"When I was asked to do this piece for New York Comic Con, I knew that I wanted to tackle the books instead of the film. Dorothy is based on the likeness of a kid that I watched grow up, who I've persuaded into wanting to be an artist. Hearing that she recognised herself immediately in the image and got all excited about it still makes me smile."



2



3



4



Tatiana Vetrova

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MEDIA: Photoshop, ZBrush

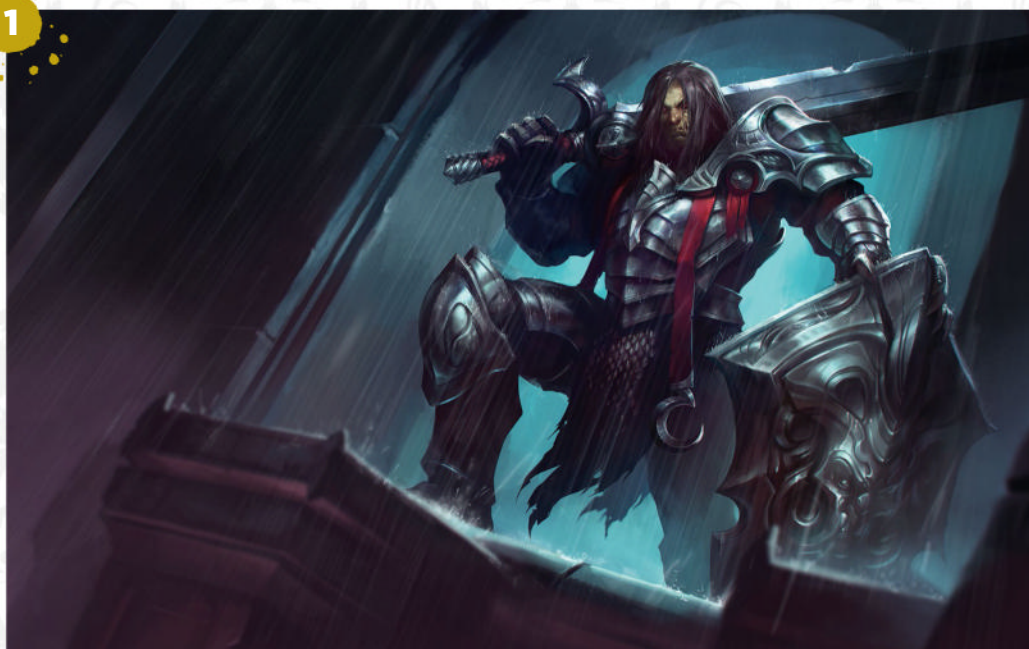


Tatiana started studying digital art in 2008, and by 2010 she was creating concepts and artwork for the video game industry.

"For me, art isn't just a job – I really love it," she says. "Mostly I work digitally, but sometimes I like to draw traditional sketches, using pencils, markers and ink. Most of all I love to draw dark fantasy art, villains and creepy devilish beasts."

Tatiana's a self-confessed video game nerd and a huge fan of films. Her greatest influence is Gerald Brom: "He has inspired me through all my life. And chocolate. I love chocolate. Best thing in this world, after art of course!"

1



2



3



Artist crit

Titiana has put a pleasing expression on Jeff Simpson's face



"Tatiana's stuff feels epic. It's good to see real expressions too.

An action pose and a cool sword are great, but unless there's an actual person (or character with person-like thoughts) it can be stiff and boring to me."

1 RAIN "It's no secret, I love the splash screens for League of Legends, and one day I decided to paint something similar. Rendering all the details on the shield was a challenge."

2 SAILOR DEADPOOL "This was my entry for the Comicon Challenge 2015 at GameArtisans.com. I had so much fun while doing this, and it seems other people like the work. It gives them a good laugh, too."

3 DEVIL IN HER EYES "This lady represents, for me, the key traits of feminine beauty: she's strong, dangerous and attractive. I later realised that the image would have been better without the owl, but I hate to go back and repaint finished work."

4 RED "This is a perfect example of what I love to paint. Grumpy devil guy with horns and glowing eyes? Oh yes! Here I tried out a new painting technique and one new brush, and I'm more than happy with the result."



Patrick Brown

LOCATION: Tasmania

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MEDIA: Photoshop, Clip Studio Paint



Taking inspiration from games, movies and even television, Patrick's favourite artists include Humberto Ramos and Ryan Ottley. "I'm best known for my fan art," he says, "I find it gives me a great reason to draw. With every picture that I produce, I learn more."

Patrick's made a name for himself with his action-packed comic style fan art, scoring cover features in PlayStation magazines and working for games companies such as Naughty Dog, IO Interactive and even Sony. His work also caught the attention of Marvel Comics, enabling him to quit his job as a graphic designer to become a full-time artist.

1 MARVEL VILLAINS "I came up with the idea of having all the villains from the Marvel movies of the past 10 years, all hanging out at a certain bar together, Stan's bar to be exact."

2 GUARDIANS OF THE GALAXY "This piece is my lifesaver. Since I released it in August last year, it caught the attention of director James Gunn who made the Guardians of the Galaxy blockbuster film, and also it brought me my Marvel career that I've been working at for the past eight months."

3 ALIENS "As a big fan of the Alien movies I felt the urge to do a piece dedicated to Aliens, showing Ripley in her bravest moment. I had a blast doing this, and learnt a few good tricks with lighting along the way."





3

Artist crit

Loopydave raises a toast to Patrick's kinetic, colourful art



"Not only does Patrick have a knack for dynamic figures and layout but he helps tell his story with engaging facial expressions as well. Pieces like his Marvel Villains image are full of those little extras that bring you back for another look."

1



2



Artist crit

**Christian Alzmann
sees a traditional
influence in Sean's art**



"Sean hints at hard and soft edges to tell the bulk of his story, adding just the right amount of details where needed. There's nothing more satisfying than a traditional style of painting executed well by a contemporary digital artist and Sean fits the bill."

Sean Sevestre

LOCATION: Scotland

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EMAIL: seansevestre@gmail.com

MEDIA: Photoshop



Sean was born in France, but now lives in Scotland where he works on games and films for clients such as Wizards of the Coast.

"I went to university to study product design, but very quickly realised that I wanted to do art instead. So I left after five weeks and have been doing all I can to improve as an artist since," he says.

Sean tells us that he's focused on improving every day and becoming more thoughtful and knowledgeable on painting and drawing, as he continues to push his artistic skills.

1 TRIO "Painting a large, vista-type environment is something I hadn't done for quite a while at the time of this image. I was interested to revisit the subject and see how far I could take it."

2 ESCORT "This began with some blobs of murky greens and reds; I knew I wanted that colour palette. Once the general blob palette and atmosphere were in place it was just a process of carving it into the finish."

3 RIVER "This was just one big experiment on water. I tried a lot of new things and learned how and why water looks the way it does."

4 HORSES "This started quite differently from where it ended up. Originally the horse troop was a much smaller part of the painting and the focus was on a bunch of lilies floating in the water. Eventually, I decided that the balance wasn't working and changed the focus completely."

**SUBMIT YOUR
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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.

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3



4



ARTIST NEWS, SOFTWARE & EVENTS ImagineNation

AT THE CORE OF THE DIGITAL ART COMMUNITY

In the last ten years, "rendering capacity has increased, but is the content better?" says Robb Ruppel, who paints his art both digitally and traditionally.



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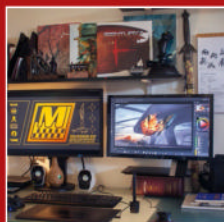




THE NAME'S BOND...

... comic book Bond. Secret agent 007 will appear in comics for the first time in 20 years. We discuss the challenges with artist Jason Masters.

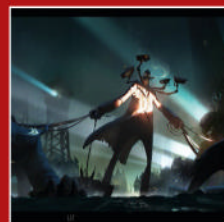
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BACK TO SCHOOL

The values of hard work and discipline, plus a desk from high school, are clear in concept artist's Long Pham's super-organised studio, in Montpellier, France.

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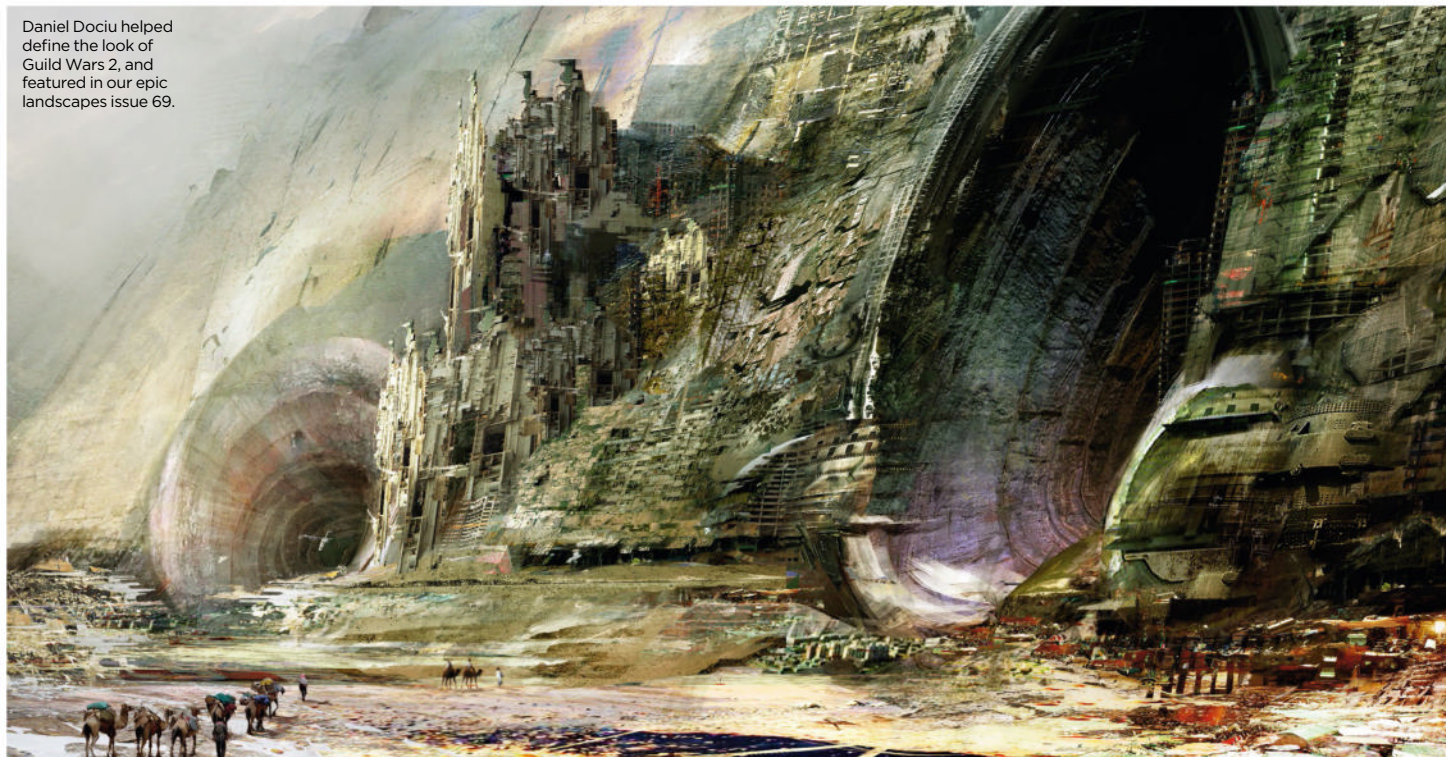


A NEW KIND OF HELL

Austrian visual production studio Salon Alpin has updated the circles of Dante's Inferno, in an atmospheric cinema spot for a newspaper.

Page 30

Daniel Dociu helped define the look of Guild Wars 2, and featured in our epic landscapes issue 69.



Artist Adam Hughes's cover for the Cat Woman comic - he drew her stealing ImagineFX's logo on issue 67.

10 years on...

The rise of digital art

All grown up Many advancements have been made, but is digital art any better than a decade ago? Garrick Webster finds out...



One of the most popular images on ArtStation since its launch - Rise of the Horde Sarnuk Bloodsoul, by KD Stanton.

Ten years have passed since the first issue of ImagineFX rolled off the presses.

Despite the predictions of some media gurus, we are very much still in print! And the reason the magazine continues to flourish seems pretty simple: sci-fi and fantasy art is a thriving area with a fantastic community to support it. Our readers are wonderful people.

Back patting and mutual admiration aside, now is also a great time to look at what's changed in the world of art since that first issue, which had a fantasy maiden on the cover by Korean artist Kyoung-Min Cho.

Flicking through the early issues and comparing them to recent ones, it's easy to make some subjective comparisons.

Is the artwork that we showcase better? Yes, it is. We're certainly able to show more epic pieces. There's generally more depth and much subtler lighting in many of the images. Often the anatomy of characters and creatures is better handled, and fewer elements in the images have an obviously digital feel to them. While software today is better for integrating disparate elements, artists are more adept at giving everything a more natural feel. ➔



INDUSTRY INSIGHT

CATHY FENNER

A co-founder of widely respected art annual Spectrum, Cathy has seen digital creativity come into its own in fantasy art...



When did you realise digital art tools would have a big impact?

Almost from the beginning. We went to the national launch of the Mac in 1984 and bought machines with a gigantic 8MB of RAM! It was the introduction of Photoshop and Painter that were the game changers: anything became possible at that point. The addition of quality desktop scanners opened further opportunities.

Did you ever see it as a face-off between digital and traditional?

As commercial artists we just saw it as another tool in our workshop. Anyone who dismisses digital art or diminishes the abilities of those who create that way is foolish. The computer creates nothing: it takes the skill and intellect of an artist to create.



The latest edition of Spectrum, with cover art by French artist Bastien Lecouffe Deharme.

www.spectrumfantasticart.com

What are the best and worst things to have happened thanks to artists sharing work digitally?

The best, perhaps, is the growth of the audience for all manner of fantastic art and the growing opportunities to interact and network with their clients, fans, and peers. The worst is a general devaluing of artistic skill and art in general: the internet has fomented a culture of something-for-nothing. Far too many want art, entertainment, information, whatever, for free without having to compensate the creator, much less respect their copyrights.

When you founded Spectrum in 1993, what did you expect?

We had no way of knowing what to expect. Spectrum could have easily been a one-and-done. But the art community got behind it and, 23 years later, Spectrum has the largest circulation of virtually any art annual – all thanks to the artists, art directors, and readers.

How much have women artists been able to advance over the previous 10 years?

There have always been women illustrators and gallery painters, but their accomplishments have often been overshadowed by their male peers for various reasons. As more women pursued careers in the arts it's not surprising the number of women fantasy artists has increased. Successful art relies on imagination, skill, intellect and focus. Whether it's created by a man or woman doesn't really matter, as artists like Cynthia Shepherd and Karla Ortiz among others prove.

Another digital art innovator, Stephane Martinière's art has featured in the mag many times over the years, most recently in issue 119's interview with the French artist.



Serge Birault's distinctive pin-up artworks, such as *Corpus Delicti* (above), made him a digital art super star on sites like cgsociety.org throughout the 2000s.



Depth, detail, dramatic lighting... Xiaodi Jin's *On the Way*, is another of the top 10 popular images on ArtStation.



Blizzard's Laurel D Austin's first featured in ImagineFX in the FXpose section, in 2011.



© Applebot Studio



Android Jones, who revealed his thoughts on art as the "ultimate truth" in issue 70.

➔ German artist Jana Schirmer has long been an ImagineFX reader and was a member of our forums back in the early days. She's noticed that sci-fi artists today are better informed than 10 or 15 years ago. "Sci-fi art seems more inspired by actual engineering and function, while back then sci-fi leaned towards fantasy. With advances in technology and our knowledge comes a more function-oriented art style."



She notes that there's been a move away from a Lord of the Rings interpretation of fantasy, to something broader with a global mix of influences. An illustrator in the Philippines might well take a Celtic-inspired

fairy and give it a Japanese mecha twist to come up with a very interesting-looking hybrid. While image references were available online back in 2006, today much more are available for artists to pull down and use as inspiration.



The online aspect of an artist's life has bloomed in other ways, too. Leonard Teo was involved in setting up Ballistic Publishing and its

Jana Schirmer's *Forest Spirit*, from *Legends of the Cryptids*, displays the artist's skill with light that was used on September's cover.

“Advances in technology and knowledge bring a more function-oriented art style” ➔

Exposé books, as well as the sites CGTalk and CGSociety. Back in 2006, the latter was a go-to community for illustrators, concept artists, and 3D and visual effects creators. These days, artists have different needs and ArtStation is his latest brainchild. It has a broad and butter purpose that goes beyond industry news and celebrating artists' work.

GLOBAL SHOWCASE

"Artists in the media and entertainment industries find it extremely difficult to market themselves to find work and make money," says Leo. "ArtStation solves this by providing a platform to showcase artwork, create a portfolio website, be found by studios, recruiters or clients, and eventually ➔



King of the Elves in animated 3D brings joy to Aaron Blaise.

ARTIST INSIGHT

AARON BLAISE

Hand-drawn animation is one casualty of the move to digital over the past decade, says artist and educator Aaron Blaise



Based in Florida, Aaron Blaise has worked on all kinds of animation projects for Disney and other big studios. For

him, there's something sad about how hand-drawn cel animation is now a fading memory, particularly for companies that pioneered the technique and supported it, such as Disney and DreamWorks.

"We've seen the virtual extinction of hand-drawn, feature-length animated films. I'm so happy that some small European animation houses are still out there creating them by hand. A great example is last year's Song of the

Sea, which earned a well-deserved Oscar nomination," he says.

On the other hand, he's happy working digitally because experimentation is relatively easy and you don't have to worry about making a mistake. For instance, he helped develop a Disney film called King of the Elves, seen below.

"The ink and watercolour images are pre-digital days. While I like them for what they are, they're a far cry from what the film would actually look like," says Aaron. "The digital images are from my post-digital days. These images much more closely resemble how I pictured the particular film."

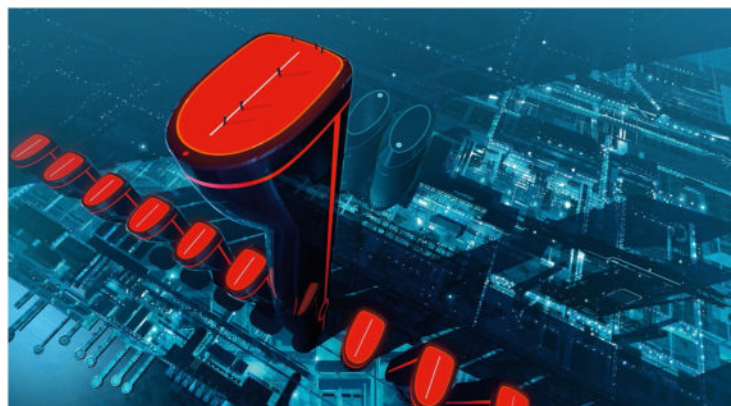


Aaron Blaise loves the ink and watercolour illustrations he created for King of the Elves, and the digital stills of the characters.

www.creatureartteacher.com



Look out for our interview with award-winning Julie Dillon in an upcoming issue.



One of Robb Ruppel's many concept images for the TV series TRON Uprising. "I am so proud to have contributed to its awesomeness," he said.



Among the 10 most popular images posted on ArtStation so far is video-game concept artist Andre Mealha's Paint Trade image.

Another ArtStation top image - Marek Okon's digital creation I've Got You (from the Illustration Unchained Gumroad tutorial series).



➡ make money. ArtStation is successful because there really is a need for this."

Then there's the proliferation of online learning. Artists aren't just finding inspiration online, they're able to tune into a huge array of tutorials and in-depth software guides. Each one they complete can be another step towards becoming a commissioned artist, provided the material they're following meets pro standards.

The mish-mash of styles and influences, and the spread of knowledge online, have had some unforeseen repercussions. The readiness of artists to borrow from several cultures at once can result in a lack of meaning, as everything blurs together. In professional arenas, phrases like 'concept art', which is a distinct practice, have morphed in meaning.

Leonard explains: "We've seen the dramatic birth and explosion of concept art, which is kind of a misused term. Most of the concept art we see is actually illustration. Most artists, when they say they want to be a concept artist, mean that they want to design their own things. We're also seeing a large blur now happening between concept art and production art. There is, in theory, a distinction between the two fields."

MORE ISN'T BETTER

Robh Ruppel - alongside the likes of Craig Mullins and Rick Berry - has been a pioneer in the move to digital. While software like Painter and Photoshop are globally available, and more or less affordable, there is room for improvement when it comes to their



Hawaii-born Kekai Kotaki's work for the video game Destiny.

© 2015 Bungie, Inc.

“More isn't always better, although that's a hard sell in today's world”



application. "Some of the stuff is unbelievably good," says Robh. "But I think there's a missing piece in a lot of the work. Strong design,

readable design doesn't just happen, it needs to be developed. There's a piece of the education pipeline missing.

"Rendering capacity has increased a thousand fold, but is the content better?" asks Robh. "More isn't always better,

although that's a hard sell in today's world. Roger Deakins is one of the best working cinematographers because his images are concise and beautiful, and that has less to do with the camera he's using."

What about the next decade? Perhaps the next phase of fantasy and sci-fi artwork will be measured by viewer experiences. "The



future of this genre will be the increased immersion into virtual worlds," says artist and animator Aaron Blaise. "That's exciting. To be the creator of a

world that you can place a viewer literally into is crazy! What we're seeing already is astounding. To project another 10 years down the road... who knows?"

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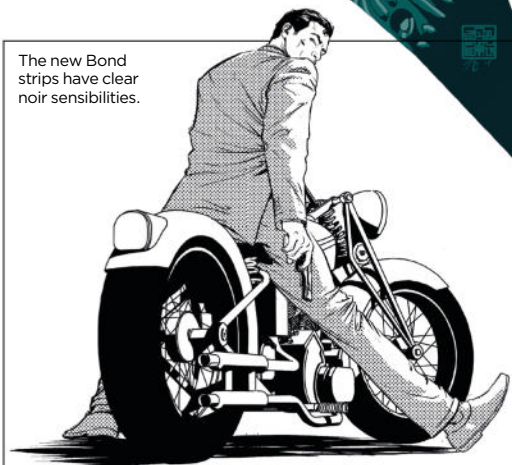


OXFAM



Illustrator Jason Masters searched long and hard for old Bond comics, to inform his work.

The new Bond strips have clear noir sensibilities.



© Dynamite (colourist: Guy Major)

Gone are Bond's chauvinistic cheesecake days and insipid colours.

A view to a thrill

Shaken not stirred Artist Jason Masters reveals the challenges of reinventing Ian Fleming's James Bond for a comic book audience in the modern age

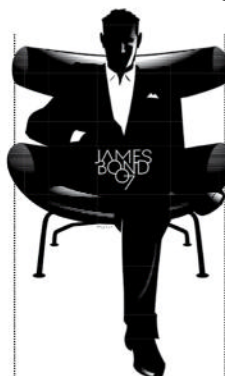
Dynamite comics' James Bond 007: VARGR marks the first Bond comic series to be released in over two decades. Penning the series is writer Warren Ellis, who hand-picked artist Jason Masters to bring the quintessentially English secret agent to life for the modern age.



"The initial joy was quickly followed by the terror of knowing the in-built audience will have a huge set of expectations," says Jason, "especially those inherited from the movie franchise. I spent a lot of time trying to figure out what I'd want to read if I were going to

buy a Bond comic. I wanted to make a comic that has an old-school feel about it, but with some more modern storytelling sensibilities."

Warren and Jason have injected new life into the franchise, with a Bond whose vibe isn't far from Daniel Craig's interpretation. Yet he harkens back to retro noir styles, with the operative oozing the hard-boiled edginess of Humphrey Bogart and a limited palette heavy on shadows. It's created entirely digitally: this is no chauvinistic cheesecake work composed of insipid colours and smarmy remarks. Jason looked at elusive, older Bond strips. "I really wanted him to look like his own character. This is the



The new Bond has elements of Humphrey Bogart about him.

first time the Bond from the original books is appearing in a comic."

There were strict guidelines from the Ian Fleming Estate, but once he got the Bond look right, he was trusted to draw more (with regular checks from the estate).

Warren wrote very detailed scripts. "It's fun bringing that sort of nuance to the page," says Jason. "Making sure he smokes the correct cigarettes, wears the right shoes, has only the top button of his suit done. It's world building and it hopefully makes the reading experience more immersive."

Find out more about VARGR by visiting Dynamite Comics at www.dynamite.com.



Here's my trusty Smudgeguard glove. It's hard for me to use a tablet without it, and I can't recommend it enough

Art textbooks, art books and other things - always handy for inspiration and when you're stuck.

Long Pham

Martial arts The values of hard work and discipline run throughout this concept artist's organised studio space



I spend my day at my small desk, which has everything I need to work. The desk itself I grabbed from a friend back in high school.

I love being at my desk. It's in a corner of my house in Montpellier, France, away from the windows to avoid any glare from the strong sun of the south. I cleaned up the place a tiny bit for this article - there's usually a few extra coffee mugs in view!

Working from home is the best approach for me. I haven't looked into shared studio spaces yet but I know friends who love it, so that may be something to think about in the future. I really enjoy not having to commute to an office, though.

I use two computer monitors so I have a lot of desktop space to play with. I also have a small part of my library up on a shelf that's within easy reach, with inspirational artefacts and art textbooks.

On an average day I just use my drawing tablet - an Intuos 5 medium that replaced my old Cintiq - and a small keypad for shortcuts. I feel that the Intuos is easier to work with than the cumbersome Cintiq. It's also easier to move if I have to travel. Having said this, I find 3D work is often more comfortable with the mouse. Other than the tablet I don't use anything special, just a computer that was built on a budget, yet has decent processing power. I love mixing workflows and experimenting with 3D, traditional media and Photoshop.

I do my work only during the day, especially in the morning. I find that it's a great way for me to stay organised and focused when deadlines are upon me. It can be especially challenging to work from home with so many distractions around you, so a solid schedule is a great help for me.

Long is a freelance concept artist and illustrator. You can see more of his work at www.longpham.net.



This is a small statue of Guan Yu that was given to me by an old friend. It's a symbol of discipline, loyalty and respect that's very strong, especially in the martial arts and more broadly in Asia.

Under my desk is my filing drawer where I keep pen sketches, written art lessons, inspirational bits and pieces, contracts and references. I'm rather lazy and realised that being more organised is faster and less tiring in the end!



I have good vision, but recently got glasses to help with fatigue from using the computer all day. If you don't wear glasses but feel tired or experience regular headaches, it's best to see an optician to check your eyesight.

After a long day of work in the entertainment industry, there's nothing like relaxing with a decent video game.

My old training sword that I keep to be reminded of the values of hard work and discipline from kung fu. Also, it just looks cool!

Even if I do mostly digital stuff, having a sketchbook ready with a few decent pens is great. It's always comfortable to use and offers a nice break from the computer screens.



I'm working on my own project: a small collection of illustrations supplemented by my good friend Flo's graphic design. I can't say much about it right now, so stay tuned!

I keep a good camera around and constantly take pictures, either for references and textures or general photography. It's also a good way to practise composition and lighting.



Hatboy
by Vaughn Pinpin



Hell for the 21st century

Burning up Visual production studio Salon Alpin has updated the circles of Dante's Inferno in an atmospheric cinema spot for a newspaper

Founded in 2011, Austrian visual production studio Salon Alpin creates a range of work that focuses on good ol'



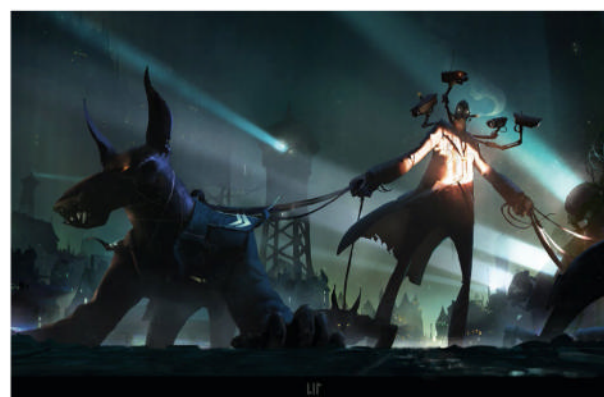
fashioned storytelling. For Philipp Comarella, the studio's co-founder, illustrating a modern, eight-level journey through

Hell meant delivering a clear style that carried with it simple statements.

The distinctive new cinema spot for Austrian newspaper Falter is filled with

contemporary trappings, from smartphone jails to factory farms. Luckily for Philipp, the creative side was "heavenly", as he worked closely with advertising agency Jung von Matt/Donau to develop a script that satisfied time and budgetary limitations.

As a small company, Salon Alpin uses regular hardware to create their images. "Frame-by-frame animation was blocked in Photoshop, then brought into After Effects for additional composition," Philipp explains. "All particles are recorded live action



Finishing an illustrated scene in Photoshop sped up production.

footage. We basically filmed real dust blown into the air by our vacuum cleaner!"

The spot was created in two months, and only introduced colour to accompany the paper's strap line of 'Get me out of here'. With the brief specifying greyscale, the colour scheme was expanded after a long dispute. "It was the right call to keep it as dark as possible, because it emphasises the timeless relevance of society's problems," says Philipp. "However, we added colour later for the print ads."

Learn more about Salon Alpin and watch Falter Inferno at www.salonalpin.net.



Philipp said he felt inspired by the work of Sergio Toppi and Mike Mignola.

The revolution has been televised

Horsepower Out of this year's Trojan Horse was a Unicorn art festival comes THU TV, so all can enjoy the event's unique user experience



Trojan Horse was a Unicorn offers an intimate feel to a global tribe of artists. And having finished its third year, THU organiser Andre Luis

hopes that THU TV will bring the event, along with exclusive content, to everyone.

For a lot of people THU TV will be the first time they get to see what happens at the Portugal-based digital arts festival, as the event's popularity meant that THU 2015 sold



80 per cent of its tickets in just nine hours. Artist and THU speaker **Marc Simonetti** has been fortunate enough to attend and watch it evolve



Anna picked up tricks at THU that built on what she already knew and improved her creative workflow.

over the past three years. "It's got better each year while keeping the same spirit," he says. "It's mainly got bigger with more awesome speakers, and each year I come back full of energy and inspiration."

THU TV also enables users to see an intimate side of their favourite artists, with the chance to interact personally with art icons being one of THU's main appeals. "I think learning about other artists' experiences and how they got to where they are now is extremely valuable,"



says attendee **Anna Fehr**.

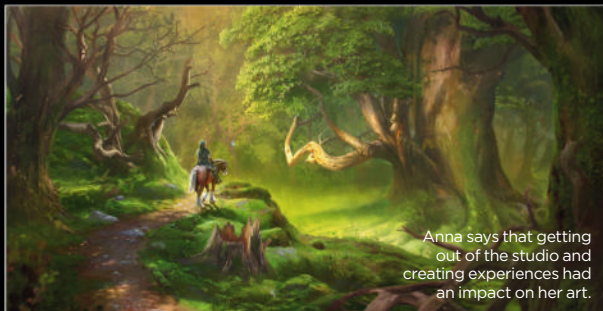
Organiser Andre Luis suggests that THU TV is a new direction for the conference,



Louie Tucci hosted the six-day event and will present some of the content on THU TV.

explaining that, "THU isn't just an event any more." With the future of THU still undecided, the permanent online channel looks like the best way to see how its changed how artists relate to digital arts events.

ImagineFX readers can claim 33 per cent off the price of THU TV's amazing content. Simply head to <https://trojan-unicorn.com> and use the code **IFX_33THUTV2015**.



Anna says that getting out of the studio and creating experiences had an impact on her art.



Marc says that THU makes you feel part of a strong and friendly community.

**EXCLUSIVE
IMAGINEFX
THU TV
OFFER!**



Marc felt that the festival gave him the chance to learn from the best and receive constructive feedback.

“THU's got better each year, and I come back full of energy and inspiration”

Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



Contact Acting Editor, Beren Neale, on beren@imaginefx.com or write to ImagineFX, Future Plc, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA, UK



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More comic goodness

I absolutely loved the indie comics issue with Tank Girl on the cover [issue 128], and just wondered if you were going to continue to inject more comic goodness into your issues? I really want to get serious about making sequential art – perhaps some tips on how to create your own storyboard, or how comic artists find/grab attention from writers to collaborate with! Anyway, keep up the good work.

Kath Earle, via email

Beren replies Great to hear you liked our Tank Girl issue, Kath, and all the comic art goodness inside (including 21st Century Tank Girl artist Brett Parsons' workshop. I love that guy's style!) It's always fun putting together issues that focus on comics, so much so that we're aiming to release two comic art-specific issues a year – previously it's been just the one.

Furthermore, by testing out 'indie' comics as the main 'hit' on the cover – as opposed to the usual supes of DC/Marvel – we've hopefully opened up the range that we can pool from. So yeah, plenty more to come!

Keep it special

I've been enjoying the latest special editions from ImagineFX, especially The Art of Film: Fantasy (Volume 2), and the Learn To Paint & Draw special. They've really inspired me to get back into art and illustration after a few years of inactivity! I was wondering if you have any more specials in the pipeline? It would be great to know what they might be focusing on as well. Failing that, an issue that explored illustration software for beginners would also be really useful.

David Brewers, via email

Beren replies Hi David, we've got a bunch of specials, or 'bookazines' as we call them... don't ask, planned for the future. I can say that a special one looking at



Brett Parsons' bright, bold take on Tank Girl on issue 128's cover heralded a new direction for ImagineFX: the world of indie comics.



SO, YOU MISSED OUR AMAZING ART OF STAR WARS ISSUE? Visit <http://ifxm.ag/ifxstore> to get hold of issue 129, other past editions and special issues!



The Art of Film: Fantasy (Volume 2) is a special edition that features artists who worked on classic fantasy films.

animation art, and featuring Disney's 12 rules of animation, is on sale from 10 December. As far as other titles and themes are concerned, we have to play that close to our chest, as getting the right content that would be relevant to the ImagineFX, and broader, audience, is a tricky business. I really like the idea about illustration software for beginners – so much so that I've gone back in time and planted single page Core Skills series looking at exactly that, on Painter, Paint Tool SAI, Procreate and many more, in each issue of the mag. You're welcome!

No Sith, Sherlock

Love this month's magazine, great work as usual. I have to correct you on the Star Wars reference in your editorial though. Kylo is no Sith! Merely a dark Jedi affiliated to sub-sect cult known as The Knights Of Ren... apparently. The Sith are long dead after the events from Return of the Jedi, so I applaud this focus on new factions in the Star Wars universe. Who wants a simple old repeat of the original trilogy?

Anyway, here's to the soon-to-be-annual Christmas-time treat from Lucasfilm/Disney that is the rejuvenated Star Wars franchise! Right, I'm off to try and win that Sphero BB-8!

Matt Squibbs, via email

Beren replies Yo Matt! Thanks for your letter – we always appreciate the eagle eyes of our beloved readers. However, I must correct your eager observation. I actually wrote of, "the possible Sith badass Kylo Ren." I know, this could be construed as pedantic, but I specifically whacked that qualifier in there because we knew so little about the film at the time. So much so, that I still wouldn't be surprised if Kylo Ren turned out to be a cruelly shunned Ewok, despised by his vertically challenged brethren who felt betrayed by his towering stature, destined to wear a mask of metal to cover his guilty hairy cheeks forever more... err, or something.



Your art news that's grabbed our attention



Kevin Dove
@Tymebandit



"Here's an old Rick Baker-inspired illustration that's been revamped."



Stjepan Lukac
@StjepanLukac



"Dinosamurai fun times on train ride home. Inspired by Brynn Metheney's Dino Astronauts"



Claudia Dluginska
@_Claudai_



"My self-portrait"



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Artist Q&A


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The
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX
panel

Bobby Chiu

Bobby lives in Toronto and works in the film industry, painting fictional creatures and characters. He founded Imaginism Studios, and teaches art at Schoolism.com.
www.imaginismstudios.com

Tran Nguyen

Tran Nguyen is a US-based artist with an interest in therapeutic imagery. Her paintings are created with a delicate quality using coloured pencil and acrylics.
www.mynameistran.com

Charlie Bowater

Charlie's a principal artist working at Atomhawk Design studios by day, and a freewheeling illustrator and doodler of anything and everything else.
www.charliebowater.co.uk

Loopydave

Australian artist Loopydave, aka Dave Dustan, started out as a graphic designer before switching disciplines and becoming a freelance artist. So far, so good, he says.
www.loopydave.com

Robh Ruppel

Robh is a production designer in games and films. He's worked on the Uncharted series and TRON Uprising, as well as with DreamWorks, Disney and Paramount.
www.robhruppel.com

Artist Q&A Need our advice?

Email help@imaginefx.com with your art questions and we'll provide all the answers!

Question

Can you help me convey the weight and motion of a giant stomping beast?

Floppy Thompson, UK

Answer

Bobby replies



A grizzly bear can sprint up to 60kph, which is surprising because grizzlies are huge, and great size and great speed are usually incompatible concepts. For this reason, conveying the weight of a giant beast crashing through the jungle can be difficult: we tend to think of giants as lumbering, not running with speed. In fact, even when a gigantic beast is being depicted as charging at something, it often looks like it's running in slow motion. Again, this is because our brains don't naturally associate 'big' with 'fast', so there's a natural dissonance there. With a giant beast, powerful and destructive is easy, but a fear response in the viewer comes from adding speed.

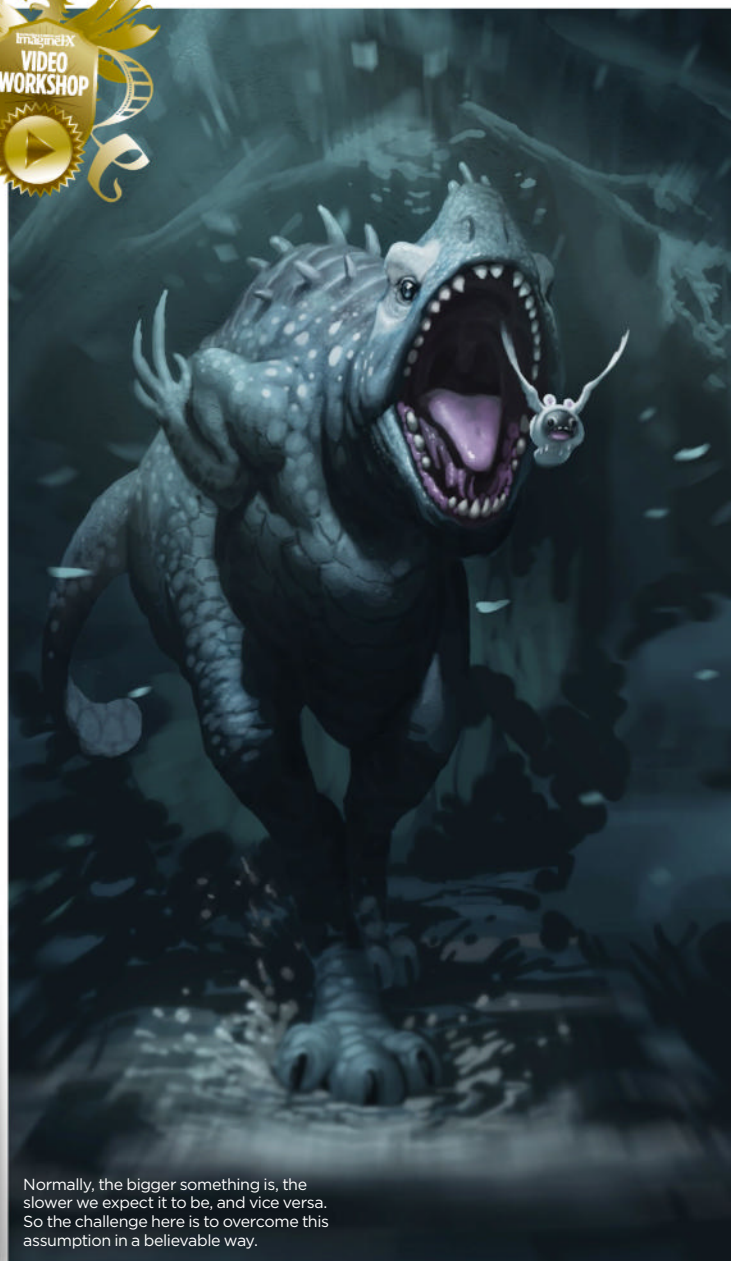
When I was asked to do this, my first thought was the "must go faster" scene from Jurassic Park. A T-rex is scary enough, but what makes that scene truly intense was that the T-rex was chasing the jeep and it was gaining on it.

For this question, the key to showing speed is in how the weight and energy of the beast affects its environment as it crashes recklessly through it.

Artist's secret

BECOME A MONSTER

Get into your creature's pose and act out its movement as much as you can. Even if you have a different anatomy, you can still feel where the weight is in your pose. This will help you capture the movement, weight and energy of your creature.



Normally, the bigger something is, the slower we expect it to be, and vice versa. So the challenge here is to overcome this assumption in a believable way.

Step-by-step: Something big is coming this way!



1 After I create a running pose for my creature, I add falling leaves, splintered branches and splashing water to show the impact the creature has as it charges through the forest. Because I want this image to feel menacing, I paint it face-on, with the beast coming at the viewer. It's the best perspective, and feels right.



2 To give the effect of motion I add a simple Radial Blur to a copy of the image. I then apply a mask to the blurred version and paint out the areas that I want to keep in focus. The resulting blur vs focus contrast helps to make the beast look like it's charging, and gives the viewer the feeling of retreating.



3 I add a little target fleeing for a better comparison. We can understand that a small creature is able to move quickly. By showing that the prey is in danger of being caught, I establish that the beast is just as fast, which alleviates some of the mental dissonance I mentioned and gives my beast some motivation.

Question

What advice do you have for adding details to an image, and when to leave it out?

Jet Carter, UK



For non-essential areas, let the spontaneity of the paint find itself. Consider leaving sections like the pink petals unrefined and flat.

Answer Tran replies



Selective detailing will direct the viewer's eye to the vital parts of the composition and help establish flow in the narrative. With the use of value, I can emphasise the figure by laying deep darks against the brightest whites, like the contrast between the black of her pupil and the lightness of her iris. For secondary components such as the wispy foliage, I keep it less rendered, with very little value change.

I like to keep some of the unrefined brush strokes as they are, to create a hazy feel (like that of the blur effect), which also creates depth without detracting from her face. I know most of us have a compulsive urge to refine every aspect of a painting, but keeping this under control will allow for more atmospheric depth.

It's also acceptable to use negative space to break up areas of heavy detail. I keep the larger leaf shapes flat as a graphic element. Again, contrast is key. The small fish shapes also serve a similar purpose, as well as adding movement to the composition. It's most important to have balance in your details: keep the focal point rendered with a wide range of values, while ensuring that its surroundings remain more expressive and obscure.



Push your lights and darks in the areas that you want to emphasise, such as the figure's piercing eyes.

Artist's secret

LOOSEY GOOSEY

start your painting with very loose brush strokes and paint with the full motion of your wrist. This will allow for dynamic shapes and textures. make use of not only the tip, but also the entire belly of your brush.

Question

How can I direct the viewer's gaze and strengthen the overall composition?

Pepper Sandals, Australia

Answer

Charlie replies



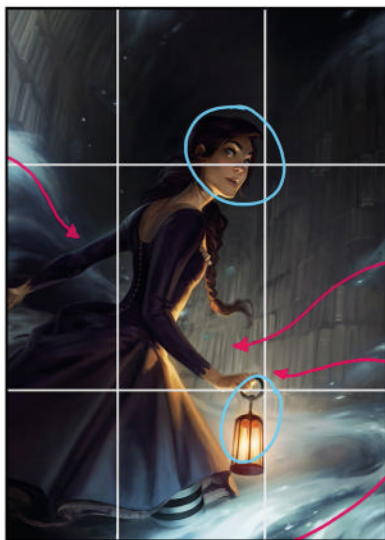
There's so many methods relating to composition, I like to keep it simple. I don't want to be overlaying Fibonacci's

Ratio over every one of my paintings!

A Rule of Thirds approach can help you check where you want the area of focus to be. You can draw in a simple box grid at the sketch stage. Having the focus of your painting lying close to one of the cross-sections can be more interesting than just drawing the viewer into the image centre.

Build on the focus of your painting by adding supporting elements. The focus in my example is the character's face, but I also want to lead the viewer around the rest of the image. The lantern is another area of interest, which again sits closely to one of the cross-sections.

Finally, framing can guide the viewer further around the image. I've used magical swirls to enforce the path that the character is taking, and to hint at what may be lying ahead of her.



Here's a simple grid showing the Rule of Thirds, how different elements can lie on the cross-sections, and how you can frame the image.



Artist's secret

THE EYES HAVE IT

Utilising the direction of a character's gaze is a great way of guiding a viewer around a painting. You can lead the viewer to a prop or direction by have the character looking that way. We move our eyes in the direction we see someone else looking.

The wide-open mouth is key here, along with tension in the body to emphasise the power and force of the beast's deafening roar.



Question

Please help me show a creature that's roaring

Bingo Little, US



Answer

Bobby replies



Many actions and emotions can be thought of as either energy expending or energy conserving. For example,

yelling, cheering and anger expend energy, while sleeping, hiding and sadness conserve energy. Energy-expending actions tend to stretch one out: reaching, pulling, stretching out. In contrast, energy-conserving actions tend to compress one in: huddling, curling,

squishing into a ball. These are the basic principles that I keep in mind when approaching a mighty roar.

A big part of successfully showing the emotion in a roar is effectively exploiting lines of tension. What's moving when the subject is roaring, where are these parts located, and what anatomy restricts them from moving any further? For example, on a roaring or yelling person, the mandible hinges at the top and pivots

Think about the sound that the creature is making. Even though nobody will hear it from looking at a picture, this detail will flesh out your story, which will inform the subtleties that will give your image life. Subtleties create a sense of believability.

down from the palette as far as it can go until the muscles and skin covering it prevent it from opening any further. These opposing forces – the mandible trying to open and the cheek muscles and skin preventing it from doing so – are what cause the stretch. Naturally, the greater the opposition of these two forces, the tauter the stretch. Look for these lines of tension and stretch them out to straight lines to exaggerate a good roar.

Step-by-step: Did you hear that?



1 emphasise the lines of tension around the mouth area to exaggerate the force of the roar. There's no better way to communicate stretching than with straight lines, which clearly say, "Any tighter and this thing will snap."



2 As the mandible pulls away from the palette and the mouth stretches open, the flesh and skin above and below the mouth should wrinkle and bunch up. You can see that the front of the muzzle is accordioning in multiple directions.



3 Think about motivation and emotion, and try to show that in every part of the body. I have my creature's shoulders up and arms back, elbows up to communicate force going forward. The mouth is open as wide as it can go.

Question

How should I treat shadows on a character's body?

Bolton Hole, England

Answer

Loopydave replies



There are various factors that will affect how shadows appear on a person's body. These include the colour and strength of the light casting the shadow, the nature of the ambient light, where on the skin the shadows fall, and proximity of the character's skin to other coloured objects. What this means is there are no simple rules for creating shadows, but here are some basic guidelines.

First, avoid applying flat colours to your shadows, because flat colours equals a flat image. And expanding on this, as well as tonal variety, try to use more than one colour in your shadows.

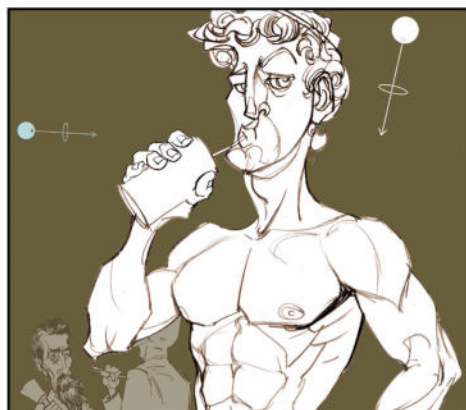
Unless an object is actually black, try to avoid painting with black because it will deaden the area that it's used on. As a general rule of thumb, I like to use cooler, less-saturated colours in my shadows, and warmer colours for my highlights. An exception, for example, would be a hand holding a red can – as in my example. In this case, I would use the red reflection in the adjacent shadows.

Finally, a shadow's softness or sharpness is dictated by the type of lighting and object's shape. Yet because sharper shadows help to make an image pop more, I like to work my lighting so I can have a few feature contrast and/or hard edge shadows on show, usually around the neck, under the nose or from an arm.



Drink Bere and learn a little bit about painting shadows on skin with Michelangelo and co!

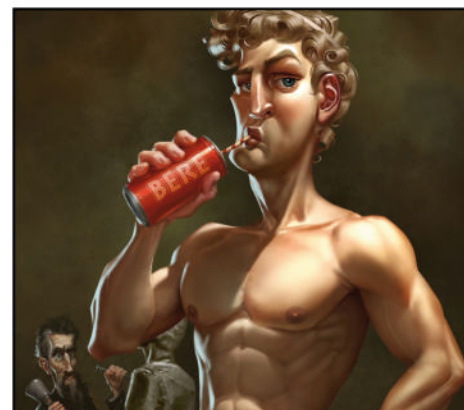
Step-by-step: Set your lighting, paint your shadows



1 Along with your preliminary sketches, work out your lighting source or sources before you start to paint. This step is pretty important: not only does the lighting dictate the type and direction of your shadows, but it'll also set the mood for your piece.



2 In this case I'm using a primary lighting source and a back or rim light for dramatic effect. When using more than one light source, it can be simpler to work out the shadows, shapes and highlights one light source at a time, preferably starting with your primary light source.



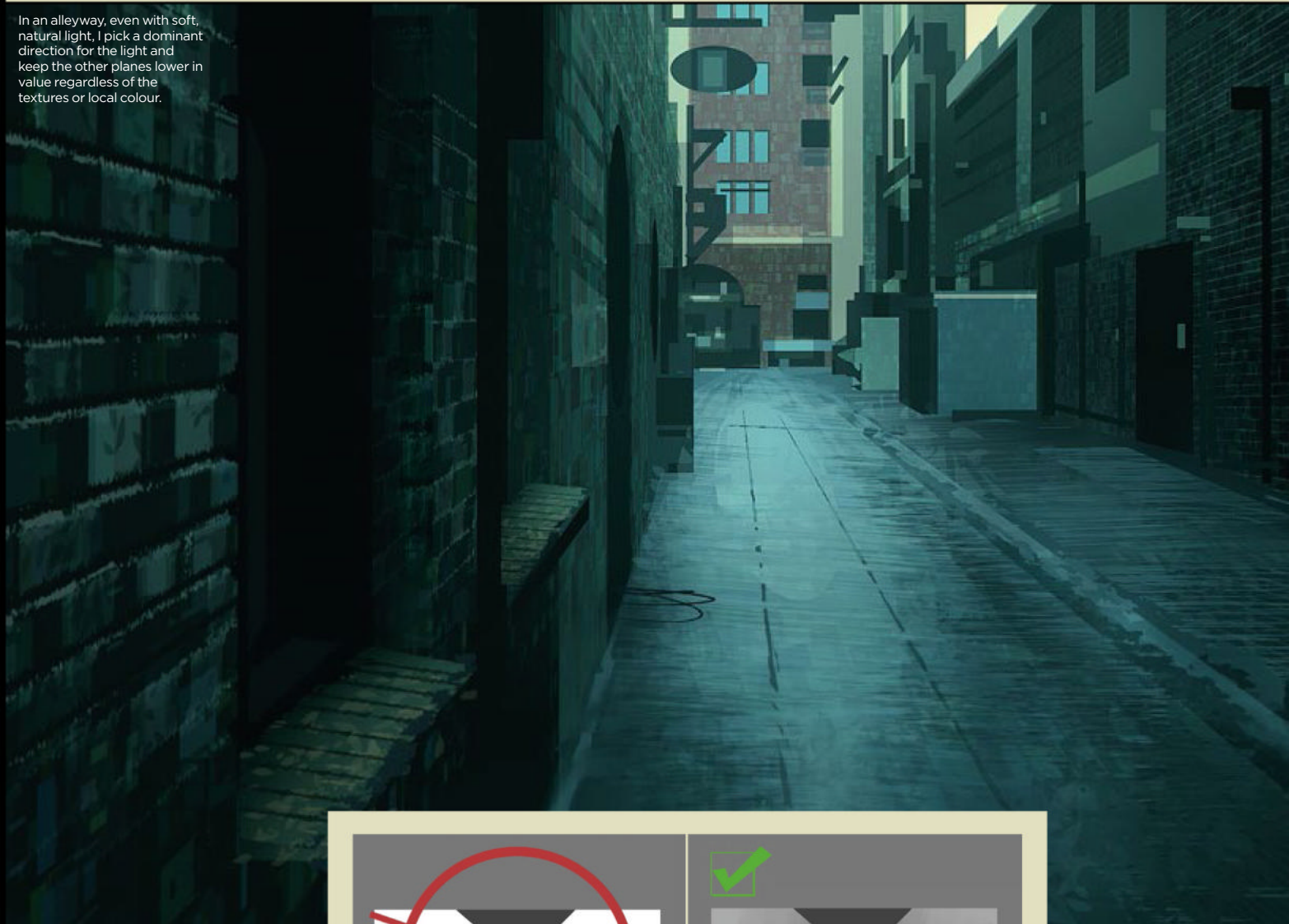
3 Although I usually paint my shadows as I go along, in Photoshop it can be helpful to create a test layer above your body's paint layer, set it to Overlay or Multiply, and test paint (usually with a mid-tone olive brush) shadow shapes and appearance until you're happy with them.

Question

What's the best way to indicate depth in a scene?

Ed Pheromone, US

In an alleyway, even with soft, natural light, I pick a dominant direction for the light and keep the other planes lower in value regardless of the textures or local colour.



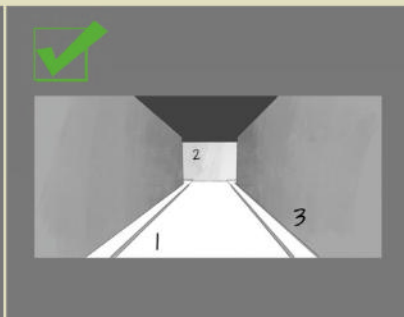
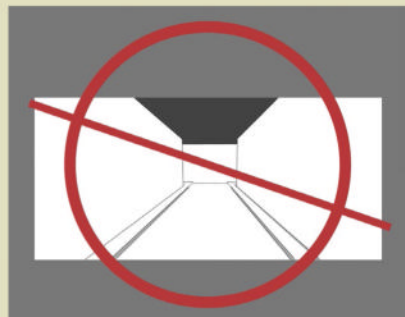
Answer

Robh replies



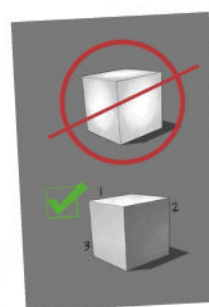
This is one of the fundamental challenges in art: overcoming the flatness of the paper or the screen by indicating as much dimension as possible. There are conventions for this, taught to artists and photographers alike, that are possibly getting overlooked nowadays with the increasing need to teach specific software rather than concepts. Yet the principles of readability remain.

Applying perspective in your basic design is just the start. Getting a shape to look three-dimensional can be done in tonal values with the 1-2-3 side read: each plane is assigned (or lit with) a value to show off its difference in space. If you light them all the same, the scene remains flat and lacks depth.



To add depth, always look for the 1-2-3 side reading. Make the planes read with different values, even if the changes are small ones.

This holds true if you're looking into a space as well. You want to show depth by having the 1-2-3 side read on an interior. If you render all planes with the same value and same falloff, even though this can occur in the real world, it looks bad. It flattens out the space; it makes the space confusing and ambiguous. This, more often than not, is not what you want to do. So, the secret is to pick a dominant direction for the light and subordinate the other planes to the dominant one. That way the image retains depth and readability on the flat surface. Exaggerate dimension, eliminate flatness.



Artist's secret

KEEP IT SIMPLE, STUPID
Always think in terms of simple readability. Imagine you're giving your design to a sculptor who will make exactly what you render. If your art is ambiguous or inaccurate, that's what you'll get back. The viewer will interpret your image in the same way.

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ImagineFX January 2016

Question

My artwork lacks any spark – what advice can you give me?

Girty Felt, England

Answer

Robh replies



The key is graphic design. Painting still comes down to making a compelling image, which exists on a flat surface of some kind. It needs to hold up as a design. The shape, including the figure-ground relationship, is the first thing to tackle. Is it an interesting design? Have you used the negative and positive spaces to their utmost? This applies to all styles of art – look at Jamie Hewlett, for example. He's a masterful designer of shape and negative shape. Who's going to argue with his iconic Tank Girl or Gorillaz?

Once I have something sketched out, I look at its silhouette. Sometimes I even design a page of silhouettes first and pick the most interesting one. If it doesn't work at this stage, it most likely won't get any better, no matter how much you add detail and render it to death. Particularly when a subject is invented (not referenced), I work better with a plan. Happy accidents are great, but certainly when painting in oil, you can't rely on them.

To minimise disaster I do a quick drawing to work out the major forms. I then paint in the traditional French Academy way of laying in flat colour and getting the form to turn by carefully modulating the values. Once the optical effect of turning form is right, I can lightly brush the tones together, barely fusing the edges. This way the strength of the form remains without the overly soft, ambiguous form you see so much of. The best painters control the form by controlling the value!



This fantasy portrait of an imaginary nightmarish creature is done in oil, which is how I learned to paint. I carry the same process into my digital work.

Step-by-step: Develop your shapes

1 Good painting grows from good graphic design. If it's dull at this stage then it won't get better. If it's exciting and interesting as a design, you may have a shot. It's easier to adjust proportion and



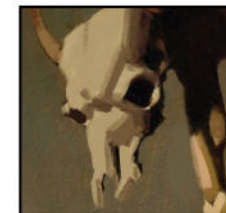
silhouette when it's just a black blob. You can move things around, check negative and positive reads, and design with both factors in mind.

2 If it's good enough for Michelangelo, Rockwell, Leyendecker and the rest, it's good enough for me. Painting isn't performance art. It's study and analysis. It's discovery. I look for solidity, simple but



accurate light and shadow, and design those half-tones. If you can get that down, you may have a chance at a great painting. Don't skimp on these steps!

3 Good form has integrity. You don't stumble on this, you make it happen. You control your values, you control your hue shifts. Squint and assess whether the form is solid. If you had to hand it over to



a sculptor, would they do it justice? Have you explained the form turns accurately? Hard and soft transitions are indicated with flat tones.

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STRIKING AT THE BEAST

Warriors attack Craig Mullins' huge winged dragon in this promotional image done for Dragon's Dogma by Capcom.





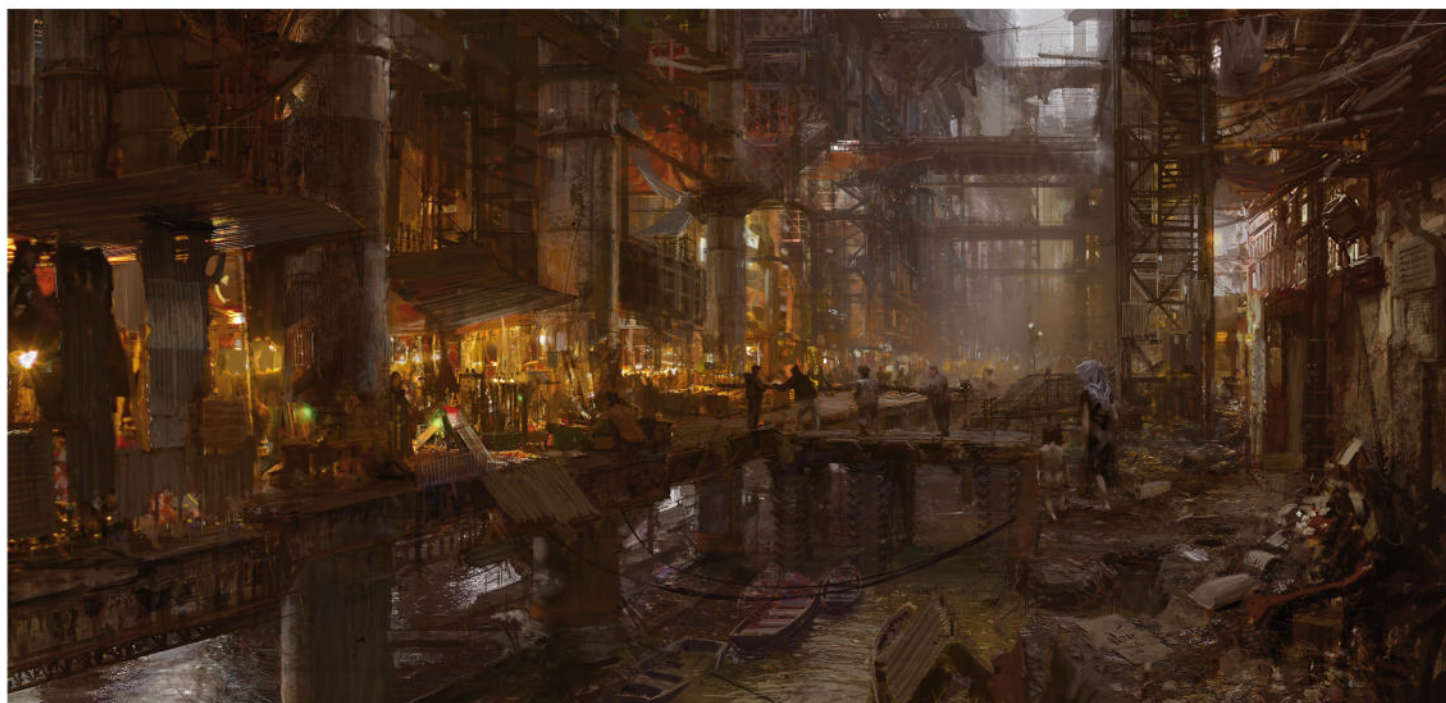
Craig Mullins

He's been a digital art innovator since the year dot, and **GARRICK WEBSTER** discovers that the secret to Craig Mullins' success is ignoring the mainstream



BOSS DEMON

Another promo painting for the 2012 Capcom game, *Dragon's Dogma*.



Often when we interview an artist, the first thing they tell us is that they were drawing at an early age. You always imagine a toddler prodigy drawing *The Last Supper* in crayon, one foot off the ground in the living room corner. Craig Mullins may well have been a talented youngster, but his stories refreshingly different.

For instance, it'll give many struggling young artists out there a little more hope to learn that Craig Mullins – today one of the most lauded concept artists in film and video games – was nowhere near the top of his art class.

"I got a D in high school art – that's pretty hard to do," he explains. "My dad was very upset. He said, 'You can't get good

TOUGH IN THE COLONIES

Concept art by Craig for *Aliens: Colonial Marines* by Gearbox Software.

“I think Craig's greatest strength is his honesty, his pursuit of his own vision, no matter what the mainstream trend”

grades in maths or science, you can't even get an A in art!”

You'll also be amazed that Craig's young career wasn't cut off in 1997 once you've heard his James Cameron anecdote. *Titanic* had just come out and Craig was waiting to meet with Rob Legato, who was an effects supervisor on the film. He sat reading a brutal review of *Titanic* in *Premiere*.

“So I'm looking forward to seeing *Titanic* and I'm sitting there reading this and laughing, 'cos it's so funny. Someone comes

into the office behind me and asks what's so funny and I'm like, 'It's so funny, this thing's ripping *Titanic* a new one.' It was Cameron. I saw it was him and pretended I didn't recognise him.”

We might not be talking about him now if the *Titanic* director had turned nasty, but Craig went on to do matte painting and concept art for films such as *The Matrix Revolutions* and *Final Fantasy: The Spirits Within*, as well as the *BioShock*, *Halo* and *Assassin's Creed* games. ➔



BEWARE THE DERVISH

A promotional image painted by Craig for Bungie's Halo 2.



ARRRR!
Entitled *Glowy Pirate*, this is one of Craig's personal pieces.

THE GLOWY PIRATE

We asked fellow concept artist Iain McCaig what his favourite Craig Mullins image is...

Craig Mullins might prefer working on his own, but he's got lots of friends in the industry and has influenced many more. Iain McCaig first met Craig Mullins when they worked together on *Hook* at ILM. Craig went through a pirate phase some years later in his personal art, and the *Glowy Pirate* reminded Iain of the time they worked together.

"This image is quintessential Mullins: light transcendent, and detail only where you really need it. As usual, it's Golden Age of Illustration-classical, but so new you'd swear the digital paint was still wet," says Iain. "I think Craig's greatest strength is his honesty, his relentless pursuit of his own vision, no matter what the mainstream trend."

As for the future, although Craig's talked about winding down and doing more teaching, he's also doing a great deal of drawing with a view to painting traditionally again after all these years. "As far as Craig's work goes, as gobsnacking as it has been, I suspect the best is yet to come," says Iain.

Artist PROFILE

Craig Mullins



Location: Colorado, US
Craig has been working for film studios and games companies since the early 1990s. After making his name at ILM, he struck out as a freelancer and moved to Hawaii. He's since relocated to Denver, where he continues to draw, draw and draw.

www.goodbrush.com



THE MUSKET LINE

The redcoats assemble in *Age of Empires 3*, by Ensemble Studios.



GALLEON DISASTER

Sailors end up in the soup, as Craig paints a progress image for *Age of Empires 3*.



A TIME TO KILL

Craig has helped give the *Assassin's Creed* franchise its unique look and feel.

➤ After high school, Craig attended Pitzer College in Claremont, California to take classical art training before going to the Art Center in Pasadena – one of America's most prestigious applied art institutions. There, he discovered that reducing distractions improved his artwork. After the first few semesters, his tutors were telling him he had no talent and that he was wasting their time and his money. He needed to turn things around, so he shut himself away and put in some long shifts of hard work all on his own.

"I digested everything I'd been taught to that point. There were very contradictory ways of drawing a figure I couldn't make sense of, but by working on it alone without all the pressure of doing the class work meant I could digest those first three semesters, which are by far the most important as they're the basis of everything. I came back after 12 weeks and I was getting A-plusses in all these different classes I was failing before," he says.

A TESTER FOR PHOTOSHOP

After graduating, he found work in Hollywood creating concept art for movies in the mid-90s. He discovered digital tools and while working with ILM became an early beta tester for Photoshop. Originally embracing it in order to work with colour balancing, he practised what he calls 'photo bashing'. Using pieces of photos – figures, backgrounds, whatever – he'd comp together concept pieces.

Occasionally, he'd send feedback on improving Photoshop with concept art in

“Working alone meant I could digest those first three semesters...”

mind, but he feels the company saw the area as rather low brow. Nevertheless, the Scrubby Zoom function introduced in CS5 was his suggestion. Hold your cursor over the point you want to zoom into, hold both mouse buttons and move left to zoom in and right to zoom out. It's dead quick if you're using a stylus instead of a mouse.

Working digitally meant Craig could amend a piece faster than a painter, although there were plenty of limitations and lots of crashes in the mid-90s. He realised that thanks to this new thing called the internet, he might not have to work on-site anymore. He started demonstrating email to the people he worked for, but it took a while to convince them to get AOL accounts and look at his work when he sent it in. All the while, Craig grew frustrated with driving from Malibu to Los Angeles to work with art teams.

Eventually, he took the bold steps of going freelance, and moving to Hawaii. Similar to how he eliminated distractions when he was at the Art Center, moving away from the studios enabled him to get away from creative group-think and develop more as an artist.

"Doing it in isolation has been useful because I got to a place that I wouldn't ➤



INTRICATE DETAILS

The complexity of Age of Empires 3 was captured in Craig's images promoting the game.



IN A SMALL TOWN

Concept art for The Bureau: XCOM Declassified, by Australian publisher 2K Games.



IROQUOIS PARTY

Something's about to happen in this tension-filled artwork from Craig.



OUT SHOPPING

Concept art Craig did for Incinerator Studios, on an unpublished game.



CADAVER

Here's an example of Craig's personal work.

➡ have had I continued to work at ILM," he says. "I went off and developed on my own and the influences on my work are esoteric and a little bit geeky. If I was working in a place the force of the personalities I was working with may have imprinted themselves too much, whereas the influences that I ended up being infected by were more my choice. I had the whole world to choose from – great artists and musicians from the past – as opposed to people I'm working with."

Being far away in Hawaii didn't put production designers off working with him. In fact, it added to the kudos. "I think that because I moved to Hawaii, more

employers were like, 'Wow that guy's so good he can move to Hawaii, let's get ourselves some of that.'"

MOVING ON UP

After 15 years in Hawaii, Craig and his family went to Philadelphia for a year before moving to Denver in July. He's about 8,000 feet above sea level, which is a good metaphor for his career, seeing as so many of today's concept artists look up to him.

One of his favourite projects to work on was Darren Aronofsky's 2014 film *Noah*. The concept work he did for it is fantastic in both scale and detail, and he basked in the level of trust he received from the

“Through his brushstrokes, Craig leaves a lot up to the viewer to imagine and start creating their own story”

IROQUOIS PARTY

Remko Troost salutes Craig's strong storytelling skills...

Concept artist Remko Troost counts Craig Mullins as an influence, and his favourite Mullins paintings involve Native Americans – particularly this image of a group of Iroquois, with one brave standing forward and looking with concern at something in the brush.

"I love everything that's history-related, especially this period," Remko explains. "I'm also interested in myths and legends from different cultures. I have a lot of respect for Native American people and the relationship they had with the Earth and nature."

It's the tension in the image that makes it stand out, he says. Something is about to happen, but the viewer doesn't know what and while there isn't a lot of action in the image, the lighting makes it feel dynamic and alive.

"Through the brushstrokes, Craig leaves a lot up to the viewer to imagine and somehow start creating their own story," says Remko. "The colours and lighting add a lot to the believability – there's so much going on in his images each time. It's easy to get lost in them and start dreaming up stories."

production designer. Craig would draw it, and the crew would build it. Being an atheist, though, he had reservations about the film's message. Other favourite projects, he says, were the game *Age of Empires* and the all-CGI feature *Final Fantasy*.

However, it's the personal work he did between 2000 and 2005 that he believes catches the eye of other artists. It changed his style, he says, and it underlines his belief in cutting out distractions and focusing on being better at what you do. "I was staying up all night doing this stuff and I just had to do it. It was a compulsion, even though I should've been working on real work. I just had to go paint a pirate at night and it was gonna be so cool," he says.

Today, Craig is doing something similar again. The computer's been put to one side and he's drawing like a demon, filling up sketchbooks and thinking about how he'll tackle painting some of them. Printouts of digital work just don't have the same energy as paintings when hung in a gallery. Teaching is also a new avenue he's exploring, and he's been on the circuit giving talks throughout 2015. Watch for an upcoming tutorial on *Schoolism.com*.

What's his next goal as an artist? "Relax," says Craig. "I've been beating myself into dust for a long time. I don't have many more mountains to climb, I hope. To a certain extent, would you ask the same question of a plumber? You've reached the vista of fixing pipes. I sort of look at myself as a worker in that way. I don't think there's anything inherently special about being an artist. Artists who wait for inspiration need to just get at it." 🍷



FINE BALANCE

Artwork for a limited edition print for *Assassin's Creed 2*.



MORE MULLINS!

Turn to **page 68** to read our exclusive workshop with Craig Mullins.

INTO THE GRID

Background artwork for the Disney TV version of *TRON*.



GHOULCALLER GISA

"The challenge for this painting was to capture her demented smile. I painted her face many times before I finally found a toothy grin that captured her insanity!"





The Art of KARLA ORTIZ

Magic, all-nighters and feverish film art: **Beren Neale** enters Karla's non-stop world



Karla is talking about her childhood memories of Puerto Rico, and the day that she became an artist. Whenever her father was "feeling lazy", he'd take his daughter down to the local bakery on the Caribbean island and treat her. On one idle afternoon's walk, Karla noticed a new store filled with the wonders of witches and warriors, announcing itself to the neighbourhood with a large painting that stopped her in her tracks.

"They had this giant Magic: The Gathering poster of Brom's Desolation Angel in the window – this badass chick with crazy wings. It just looked so amazing," says Karla, "and I remember my dad walking ahead, and I walked into the store. My dad didn't worry about it. He was like, 'Of course she's in there, of course!'" The 13 year old got her first taste of illustration and was hooked.

Today, Karla's as in-demand as Brom. It's hard to pin her down for an interview, not because she's cagey about her craft – Karla's generous to a fault. It's just there are only so many hours in the day. Scheduled chats at art events are postponed by a flurry of fans asking for advice, or her working on whatever epic piece she's ➔

ARTIST TIP

USING REFERENCE

"I use references a lot in my work, as they give me the knowledge I need in order to mimic reality. But I never copy my references - that would severely limit my artistic choices. References should only be used as inspiration and information only!"

➡ got going. Skype interviews are delayed last minute with short, frantic notes: "Would it be possible to do this on Friday!? It's 5am here and I'm pulling an all nighter on a Marvel film. I'll be dead in an hour!!"

ART MARVEL

When I finally speak to Karla in her San Francisco studio, which she shares with Massive Black luminaries Wesley Burt and Kemp Remillard, she's exhausted, rundown and feeling like crap. Having just returned from talking at Bobby Chiu's Schoolism in Denver, Colorado, the artist is burnt out. Still recovering from a fever, it's back to balancing film art at Marvel with her fine art painting and ever-increasing workshops. The thinking behind this insane schedule is simple: "I work well with deadlines. If I don't have a deadline I don't do anything. So I reckon if I say yes to all these things, at least I'm getting stuff done."

There's order to this chaos. "Marvel's my main job, working on titles like Doctor Strange, then on the side I do my own gallery work, and somewhere in the middle I work for Magic, or book covers. Now with all the workshops I'm doing, and all the travelling, it's like, holy shit man! It's non-stop." As I write, Karla has a workshop planned in Bali, then she's going to LA in February, followed by a talk in Seattle, then off to London and Berlin in April and March. "Oh, I might be in Shanghai next year at some point too."

The pace was already picking up four years ago, working at Kabam Studios. She bagged her first Magic gig and the resulting painting Teyssa: Envoy of Ghosts (see right) became her own Desolation Angel. Yet her fans only know a slither of her work: personal, book and card art. "My Marvel work and everything I did for ILM before



that won't be seen by the public until next year, or the year after. So I'm being contacted for these workshops for stuff I've done already, not for the films. When the films hit, then it'll be really crazy!"

GODS AND MONSTERS

Creativity meant many things for Karla growing up. Her dad was a musician, her mum was a fashion designer, and her grandmother was a writer and painter with an envious collection of classically illustrated books. "I'd draw partly because my mum was drawing all the time. My dad was always playing music, so it was really normal for the family to have their own quiet time to do their own creative thing."

Local Spanish and African folklore, and Puerto Rican myths and legends filled the artist's mind. "I was taken to this crazy rainforest, El Yunque, and my parents would tell me these awesome stories from the Indian tribes and how their gods would be hidden in the mountain and all that really cool stuff. I guess it was also because I was kind of a solitary kid. My parents would move to places where there were lots of neighbourhood children, but they would fail miserably! I was always more comfortable drawing and painting, so they always had supplies for me."

BALI WORKSHOP

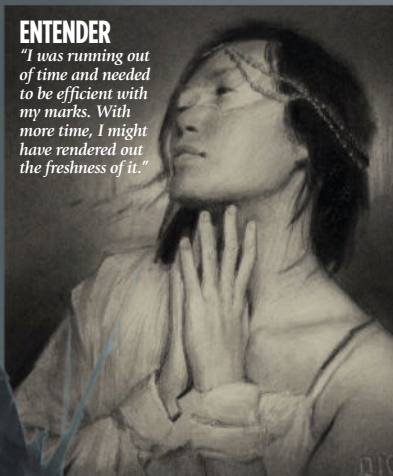
"This was painted live at a demo in Bali. It was surreal to paint live for so many people. It really made me feel love for this visual language of ours. It's truly universal and attracts so many wonderful people from all parts of the world."



"I was taken to this crazy rainforest and told awesome stories about gods hidden in mountains"

ENTENDER

"I was running out of time and needed to be efficient with my marks. With more time, I might have rendered out the freshness of it."



Karla Ortiz VITAL STATISTICS

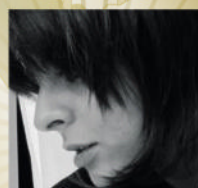
"I was kind of a solitary kid"

What's your age?

I just turned 30 last week!

Name your five favourite artists.

Hmmm... Anders Zorn, Sargent, Jean-Léon Gérôme, Iain McCaig and Craig Mullins!



When was your big break?

In 2012, I took on Jason Chan's book cover job and created The Order of Deacons.

What does the future hold?

More movie art, more fine art, and more workshops!

**TEYSA, ENVOY
OF GHOSTS**

"An illustration for Magic: The Gathering, Dragon's Maze, Teysa is the Orzhov Guild's champion. And she's judging you..."



**LILIANA, DEFIANT
NECROMANCER**

"I wanted to capture a moment where we see Liliana as an almost godly figure to the undead that her necromancy powers control."



**TEYSA, ENVOY
OF GHOSTS**

How focusing on joy helped Karla overcome the pressure of her first piece of art for Magic

"This piece was my debut for Magic: The Gathering. I remember being so frightened that it took me two weeks just to get a working sketch.

"There was a short brief detailing a smart, scheming, magnetic and ruthless woman in her 30s. She needed to be sat in a room with scrolls and hidden spirits that surround her. I looked at films for inspiration, including Black Narcissus and The Lord of the Rings.

"The whole painting was very difficult as there was the pressure of it being my first Magic card constantly on my mind. However, I realised that I needed to focus on just the joy of painting, and not the outside pressures. I learned a lot from this painting!"

© Wizards of the Coast

Traditional skills

OMENS

Karla explains how spending time on the foundations pays off in the end



1 An obsession with lines

"The drawing took a long time. It was complicated, and had a lot of very specific shapes that needed to be correct! I was also obsessed with getting the likeness of the model. It took me about four consecutive hours to get the lines just right."



2 Creating values

"Once the lines felt right, I immediately jumped in to render. I began by rendering the area with the lightest and darkest spot. This would help key the values of the entire drawing. In the case of this image, the hands were the first thing I rendered as they had the lightest and darkest spots in the entire drawing."



3 Rendering

"Once I finished the face and hands (my focal point), it was time to render the rest of the image. I jumped around a lot and rendered folds, or the background, or birds. It didn't take long till the image was done!"



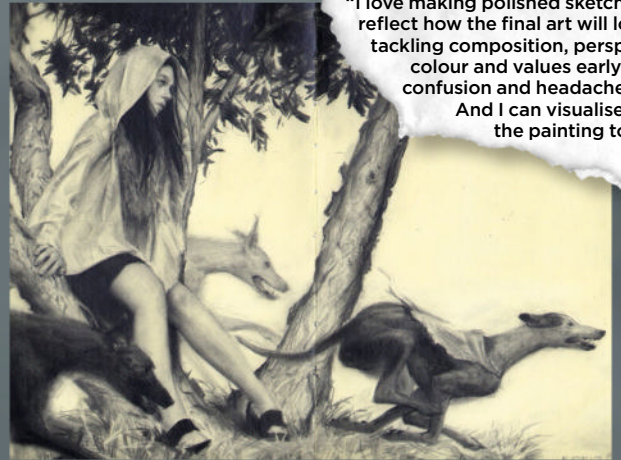
4 The final image

"This is the final image, called Omens. It's about a person who encounters themselves in the middle of a choice. The hooded crows around him represent a true omen. Is it a good omen? Is it a bad omen? Only our protagonist will know. This image was shown at the Moleskine Project IV at Spoke Art, SF."

The Art of ARTIST TIP

A POLISHED SKETCH

"I love making polished sketches that reflect how the final art will look. By tackling composition, perspective, colour and values early I avoid confusion and headaches later! And I can visualise taking the painting to final."



SERF AND HOUND

"This was for the Moleskine group shows. I was anxious because the roster of artists was amazing and I hadn't touched a sketchbook in ages."



THE SORCERER OF THE WILDEEPS

"This was a cover for Kai Ashante Wilson's *The Sorcerer of the Wildeeps* (Tor). I had recently come back from Europe and was obsessed with classic marble sculptures."

➡ Then there were games. To this day, breaking open a video game instruction book brings back floods of fond memories to Karla. "It's like one of my favourite smells in the world. I don't know why. Maybe it's the glue or something," she laughs.

Zelda and Super Mario were always on, and when *Final Fantasy VII* came out, Karla started drawing human figures. "When I was a kid I was so in love with Sonic the Hedgehog that I made a 120-page comic book about Sonic going to Africa, because I was also into *The Lion King*. My mother has the comic and she threatens me (I don't think she means it as a threat, I think she means it as a compliment) to release it online. And I'm like, 'Mum, no! This isn't something that would please me. This would suck.'"

JUST DO IT – ALL!

In September this year, when French filmmaker and artist Loïc Zimmermann screened *A Solitary Mann*, his documentary on painter Jeremy Mann, the crowd saw a Karla cameo at a painting party. Bedecked in their finest threads, it was just another day for the San Fran art contingent. "I've always kept myself active in the San Francisco gallery scene, and Jeremy is one of my dearest friends. I also host

The Monthly Fuck It All, where everyone just drinks. There's no painting at that one."

Karla stresses that she's pushed by, and loves, her concept art, but her personal art is where she's seen recent growth. "Early 2015 I did a drawing of this guy I'm dating, Joshua (see left), and during the creation something clicked. I felt really, really

LILIANA, HERETICAL HEALER

"A sister piece to *Liliana*, *Defiant Necromancer*. It's *Liliana* before her jump into darker worlds. She's surrounded by omens and premonitions of her not-so-innocent future."

"I was so in love with Sonic the Hedgehog that I made a 120-page Sonic comic book"



ORDER OF THE DEACONS

Book cover for Philippa Ballantine's *The Order of the Deacons*, Science Fiction Book Club, art directed by Matthew Kalamidas.

inspired and excited, because I could see my skill pushing somewhere new. It felt like this is a new place for me to explore, and it changed where I want to go in the next five to 10 years. I want to spend 50 per cent of my time on concept art, and the other 50 per cent on my fine art work that allows me to explore my thoughts, my skills and gives me a personal space."

Karla has a talk called Do It All, where she identifies herself not as a concept artist or an illustrator, but as an artist, period. "I think there's value in all kinds of things, it all goes hand in hand, it's all to do with balance. God, I sound like such a hippy!"

Perhaps, but she's echoing the bigger picture philosophy of another art hero of hers, and now a good friend, Iain McCaig. Discovering his *Star Wars* concepts at 16 was a thunderbolt for Karla. "I'd never seen drawing like that before, and it changed my perception of where I needed to go. Brom taught me about illustration and painting, while it was Iain who taught me about drawing."

Skip forward a few years of working feverishly at her craft, and Karla's making good with those early influences. But as the endless workshops attest, it's her time to make her own impression on a new generation of artists. ●

Boris Vallejo and Julie Bell

The husband-and-wife fantasy art masters give us
a glimpse into their respective sketchbooks

Artist **PROFILE**

**Boris Vallejo
and Julie Bell**

COUNTRY: US



Boris emigrated from Peru to the US and carved out a stellar career in fantasy art. In 1994 he married bodybuilder and model

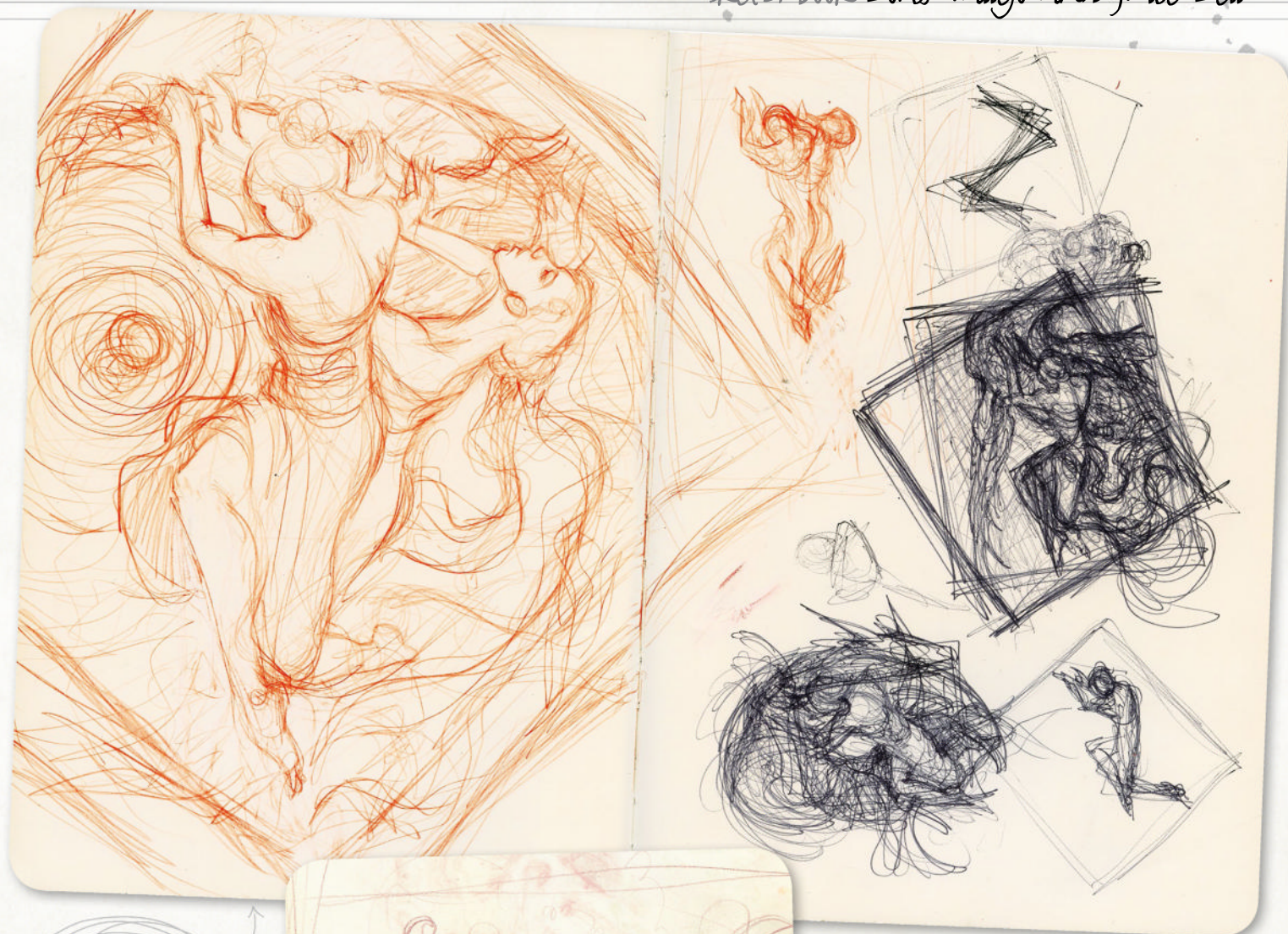
Julie, herself a successful painter. They now model for each other, frequently paint together or even get competitive: "Sometimes I look over my shoulder to see what she's doing," Boris quips.

www.borisjulia.com

MOUNTAIN ENCOUNTER

"Private commissions can be very enjoyable. This was one of those," Boris says, giving nothing else away...





NORN FATES

"On the right, working in ballpoint pen," Julie says, "I was establishing my thumbnails for basic composition. On the left, I'm thinking more about how those figures will support my composition's statement."

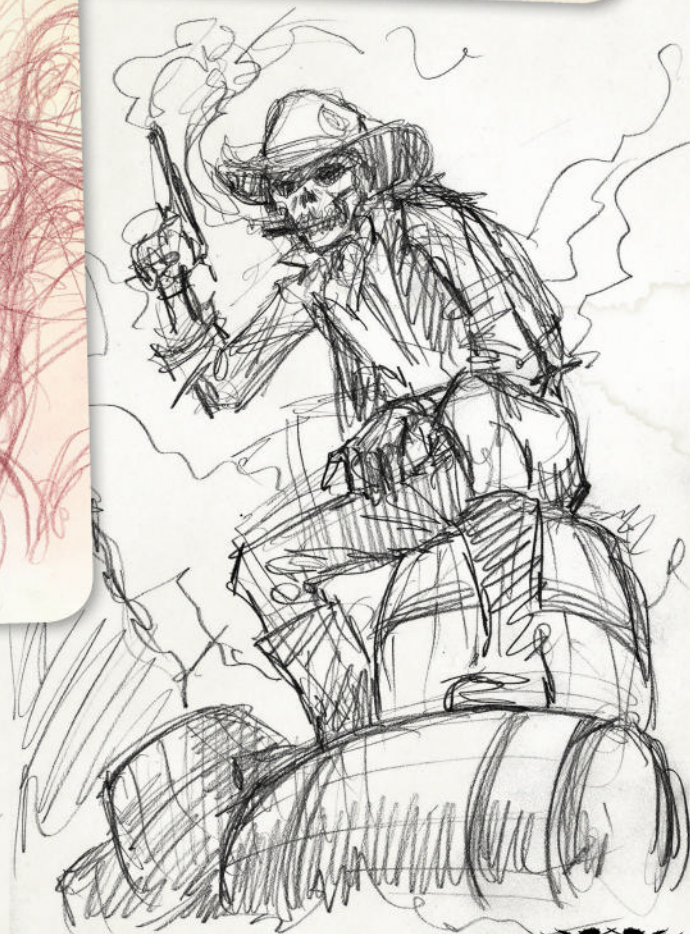
MOTHER OF APOLLO

"I had a photo of the model that I was very inspired by," Julie reveals. "Sometimes this is the best starting place for me. Then I just do very loose sketches that help me figure out the story that's happening in the painting."



WILD WESTERN

"A simple, very rough sketch can tell the story very effectively," says Boris.



"Sometimes a photo is the best starting place, then I just do sketches to figure out a story"

Sketchbook

SIREN

"I almost never work my sketches in colour," says Boris. "Often, however, I use duotone. I always start with pencil on tracing paper.

From there, I scan the drawing and add some touches in the computer."



FLAMINGO GARDEN

"Flamingos have so many possibilities in terms of shape and direction of energy flow!" Julie says. "It was important to make a decision that would create the framework for the composition."

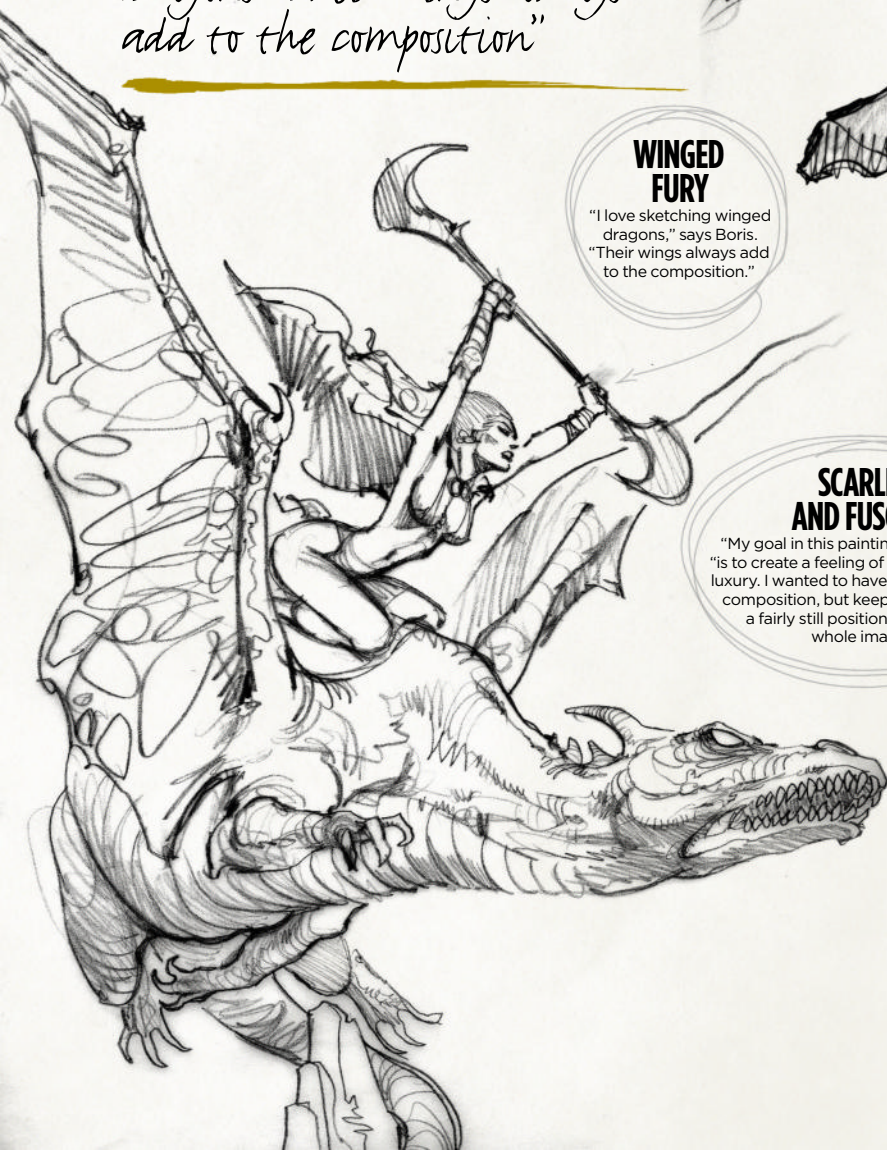


"I love sketching winged dragons. Their wings always add to the composition"



WINGED FURY

"I love sketching winged dragons," says Boris. "Their wings always add to the composition."



MYTHIC MAIDENS

"One of my favourite subjects is women in nature," says Boris.

SCARLET AND FUSCHIA

"My goal in this painting," Julie reveals, "is to create a feeling of peacefulness and luxury. I wanted to have movement in the composition, but keeping the figure in a fairly still position grounds the whole image."



Sketchbook

TAVERN SCENE

"A sense of humour
can be very refreshing
at times," laughs
Boris.

"Sometimes a model can
inspire the concept, other
times the concept dictates
what model you use"



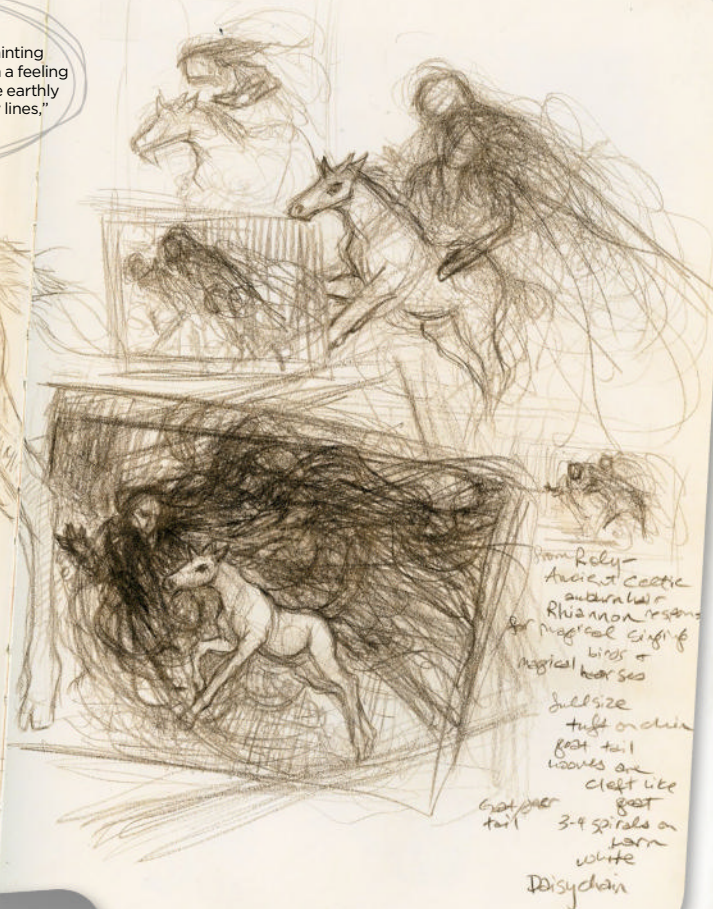
RHIANNON

"In making studies for my painting Rhiannon I wanted to have both a feeling of magical floating and a more earthly groundedness. Lots of swirly lines," explains Julie.



CONQUEROR

"Sometimes a model can inspire the concept very strongly," Boris explains; "other times the concept dictates what model you should use for the finished painting."



COMING OUT

"Sometimes I just like to let loose and allow the pencil to help me discover characters I didn't know were hidden in the page," Julie says.

Want to share your sketches? Email us with a selection of your artwork, to sketchbook@imaginefx.com
NEXT MONTH'S SKETCHBOOK: OLGA ANDRIYENKO

INSPIRED BY DIGITAL ARTISTS
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Advice from the world's best artists

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Photoshop

BE INSPIRED BY CLASSIC FRAZETTA

Ross Tran shows how to work up a strong fantasy image efficiently and with concise tools and methods, while still maintaining your artistic voice

Artist PROFILE

Ross Tran
LOCATION: US



California-based Ross is an artist who works on films, games

and entertainment properties. He's currently busy developing his own franchises and also presents a popular YouTube show.

www.rossdraws.com

GET YOUR RESOURCES

See page 6 now!

PRO SECRETS

Exaggerate

I love exaggerating. If something is soft, make it even softer. If something is hard, make it even sharper. For this one, I made the panther extremely dark. Even when I started shading it, I darkened the values at the end. Our brains love contrast. It provides stimulation for us. I also exaggerated the darkness of the panther against the white of the background. Contrast and stimulation will help make a piece pop and be more memorable.

This cover was a great challenge for me to embark on. My task was to take an old-school classic vibe and modernise it for today's audience with my artistic interpretation. One of the main inspirations I leaned towards was Frank Frazetta's art. It was tricky to take his essence, yet still keep my voice.

I'm going to be showing you how to create a great dynamic pin-up in a smart and editable format, while keeping your voice. Many artists and designers today

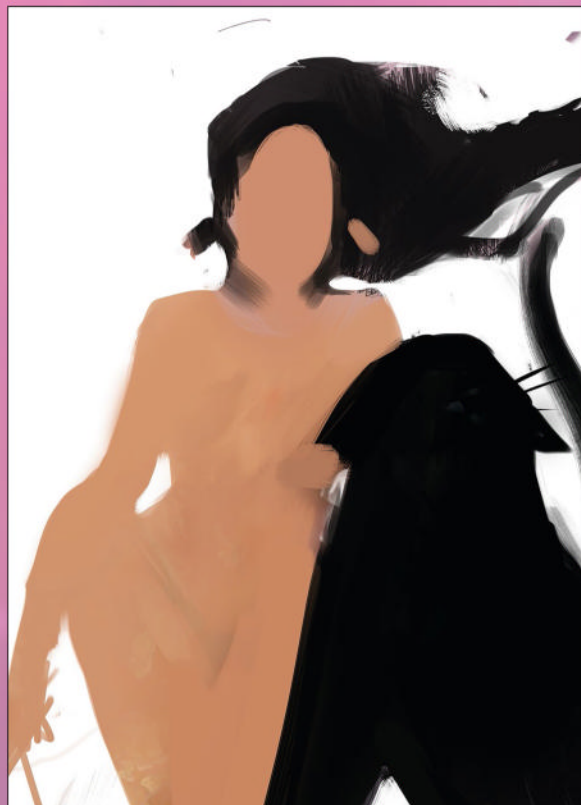
have a problem where either they start an image and jump into it too quickly with a messy workflow, or get so tied up by the process analytically that their voice doesn't show through the piece.

Versatility and communication are some of your best assets. Being able to communicate to the client about what they want, what you want, and how best to represent their product or project, yet still keep the integrity of what you want to say with your creativity are great skills.

What I like to do is provide at least three

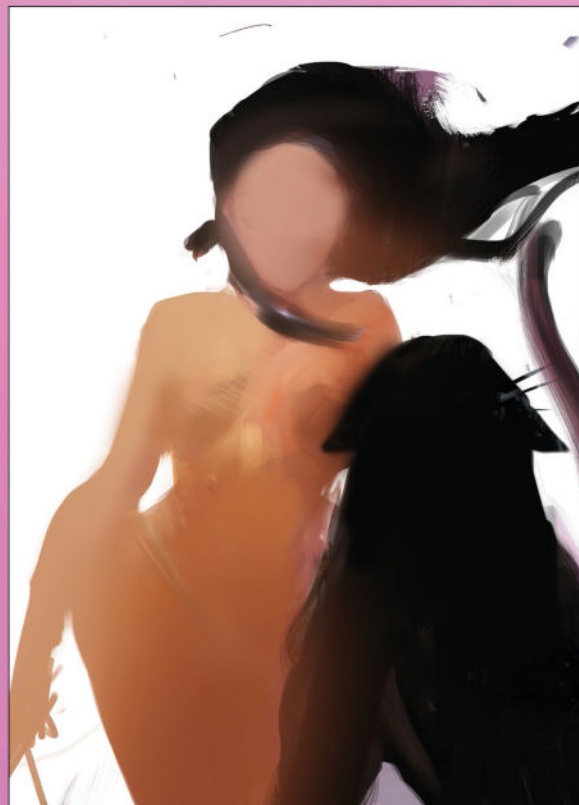
options: two leaning more on what the client wants and one that's more my own. Doing this will help communicate that you're a team player and that you take direction, as well as showing you're not afraid to jump outside your comfort zone to express your artistic opinion.

I hope this process will help guide you through the steps on how to approach things in an organic and structured way, yet still keeping the fun and energy. Ultimately, I'm really happy with the process and outcome of this cover!



1 Graphic shapes

I like to start simple. It's good to establish something clear and impactful. With a strong foundation, the rest of the process should be easier. After a couple of variations of the comp, we land on a barbarian-esque lady and a feline. I want the shapes and colours to be really bold and it's a good general rule to have things on separate layers when working for a client!

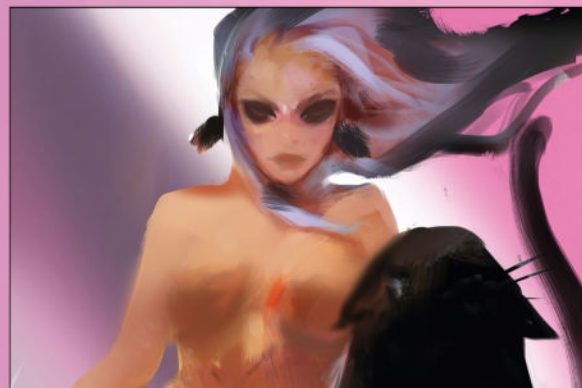
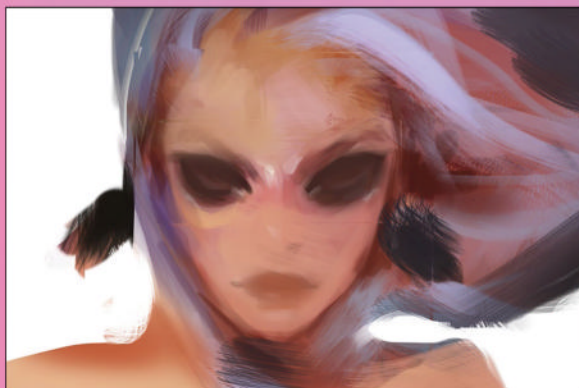


2 Shading and lighting

I want to establish my lighting quickly. I like to make concise decisions early, to serve as a foundation when I need to find answers to problems later. I quickly lay some tonal shadows with an airbrush. I put down basic shadows of the anatomy and try to establish a good value read. With the shape on its own layer, I lock the layer and have more freedom to experiment. ➡

In depth Inspired by a classic



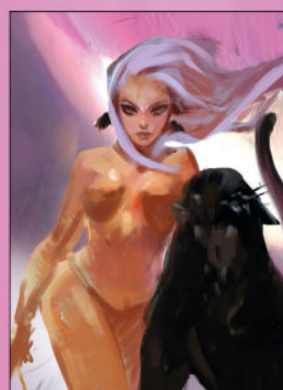
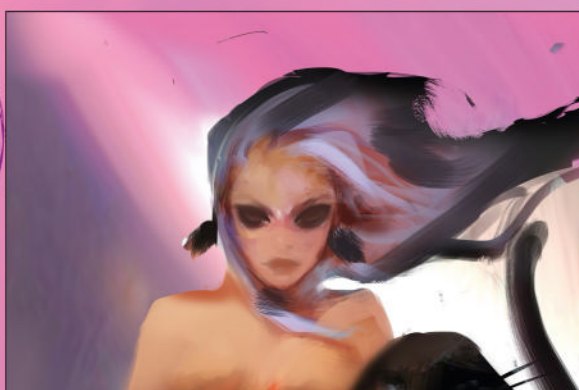


3 Refining and designing

I decide that black hair is too classic looking. I remember I want to use my own voice and create a modern piece. I love having a sort of white/purple hair. I think hasn't been done much before and it's fresh and exciting. As I put it down on the canvas, the results are clear and I'm relieved. I commit to that decision and start to refine and design. It's good to have your own inspiration up next to you. Your experiences and things you're inspired by translates into the pieces you make, so it's good have some things to draw from.

4 Background implementation

If I work on the character too much it might not fit its surroundings, so I start on the background. Mint Cyan and Salmon Pink are some of my go-to colours that I find appealing. I want to be loose, so I use an airbrush to find a nice, abstract composition for the background. I want the most contrast on the focal point, so I light the bright white light behind her head.

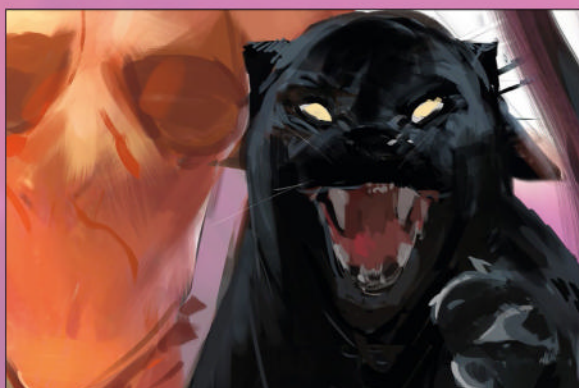


5 Background commitment

It's great to work loosely, but I need to commit or the stage will go on forever. I try to design all background shapes thinking of the overall impact I'm going for. I want an essence of a moon or sun behind her, cutting through the composition dynamically, fading off into interesting pinks. It's good to always keep in mind your intentions. Here, striking is my key word.

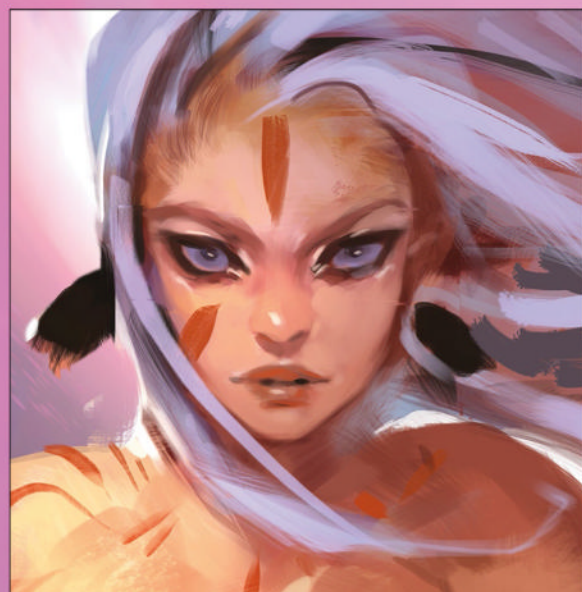
6 Designing and refining

Now I have my elements in order – the background, composition, girl and general shapes – I start to design my characters. I pull from what I know – I work the main placements like her costume and features. I want her to be soft and dramatic, so I give her a heavy cat eye to enhance her attitude. I begin to commit to the white/purple hair.



7 Polishing elements

I start to polish, making things clearer and identifiable. I know it's a panther so I look up some reference and start to polish away. The client wanted a knife of some sort, so I implement that. I start to light her a little better so it pops off the page. I'm beginning to see the vision come to life and start to get excited. So I bring in the elements I love most: tattoos!





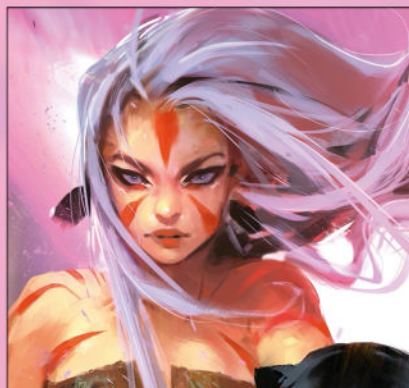
PRO SECRETS

Everything is intentional

I love this rule. I think about the old Master illustrators and how they paint. Every decision and shape reinforces and supports another. That's why all the shape on the girl's face has a general direction. It all points to the centre, which help gives her attitude. I also positioned the circle shape of my background to contain the heads of my subjects. It's the flow of my focal points.

8 Critique and foxes

I send my version to the client and receive feedback. I switch the side of the paw, because I thought it was the other paw. I think it's important early on to establish which way left and right are. Because 'the left paw' can mean the panther's left paw or the paw on the left side. I make the eyes smaller, which gives it more attitude, and change the knife. I start to implement the fixes.



9 Effects and layering

Everything's in order now: the pose, the shapes, the subject and the colours. It's time to add effects and layer some roughness to it. I love the roughness of canvas, so I introduce textured brush strokes throughout. I also add debris, dust and breakage, to give that extra layer of impact. I start to refine and polish things alongside of it. Everything starts to come together.

10 Applying Color Dodge

Once I've got the feline's pupils finished, I get to the stage that is the proverbial cherry on the top for all my images! At the near end of my process, around 80-90 per cent in, I like to Color Dodge my paintings. It stimulates a technique close to light. So I brush over my paintings with an airbrush on Color Dodge mode and it instantly pops my painting. I have to be careful not to overdo it. Too much of anything is a bad thing. This is an instant satisfactory step, so please enjoy! ●

Maya & Photoshop

PAINT A SCENE OF AWE AND BEAUTY

Craig Mullins paints a huge interior basilica using simple 3D techniques and Photoshop, and populates it with characters from his back catalogue

Artist PROFILE

Craig Mullins
LOCATION: US



Craig is seen as a pioneer of digital art. His work has graced book

covers and game cards, and he's created concepts for such games and films as Halo, Assassin's Creed: Brotherhood, Tangled and The Matrix: Revolutions.

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MORE MULLINS!

Turn to **page 42** to read our exclusive interview with Craig Mullins.

PRO SECRETS

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Welcome to my take on a Renaissance basilica, a bit like St Peter's with some steampunk influence thrown in. To do something like this you should be up on your basic linear perspective. I'm using simple 3D to get the some of the ellipses correct, because the lens is very short (wide angle) and things can distort in strange ways. In addition, the

concentric ellipses in the main dome are subtle and have to be done precisely (but not tight!) to look correct. I didn't use 3D to establish values, but that's up to you.

I've painted the girl in the dress and the boy several times now. I think they imply a larger world that I've been adding to over the years. It's interesting to see how much I've learned over time. Sometimes it's encouraging to redo a subject or way of

working, to see if new knowledge has any light to shed on things. Paint a self-portrait every year and keep them. In 20 years you might see some improvement. Ha, just kidding, let's hope you do!

One thing you might see is several years of non-improvement followed by a breakthrough year. Improvement in art is like that sometimes: just grinding it out hoping for a lightning bolt.



1 Simple sketch

The first comp sent for approval is a monochrome, low-contrast sketch. I know that the contrast will become higher and the colours more varied, but sometimes a simple sketch is all you need to get the go-ahead. I want to have the feeling of a space that's filled with light, and the easiest way to show this is to exaggerate the light and colour bounce of all that sunlight.



2 Applying 3D to the sketch

I want to stay true to the unusual perspective. I'm using a very wide-angle lens, so the distortion is difficult to do by eye. But the 3D is simple: I take a sphere and four cylinders, select all the vertices below the midpoint and drag them down. I model the steps out of duplicated boxes. There's a cheat in the perspective. Can you find it? I've done it for composition reasons. ➡



PRO SECRETS

Which brush?

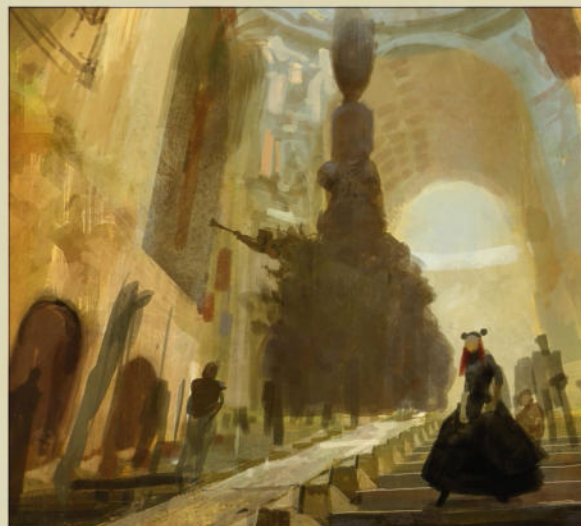
I have trouble remembering what brush does what, so sometimes my process is a little backwards. I choose a brush that I think is appropriate to do what I want, but I usually get it wrong. So I have a brush active that's doing something I didn't anticipate, and so I try to figure out - based on what it is doing - either where I could use it, or how I could use it in unexpected ways. It can slow things down a bit, but it can also open up ideas and ways of working that you never might have come across otherwise.



3 Control the contrast

Now I glaze over my cool colours with transparent warm ones. The entire architectural portion has a narrow value range, or low contrast, consisting of middle to high values. A lot of getting a painting to read properly involves controlling your contrast. Some of the textures are quite 'active' at this stage and I'd have a similar problem if I were to make a dark mark.

One of the keys to atmospheric perspective is precise control over contrast, the trick being to achieve variety in colour and value, but in a very narrow range. As I glaze (and scumble) over the image, I "quiet down" some areas, making the colour and value range more narrow. Make a selection on your image and hit Cmd+L. The histogram tells you how much contrast an area has.



4 Treat values with care

I continue to work mostly down in value, and take note of areas that are of a darker local value (meaning that they're just dark objects to begin with). How dark these objects are in your painting depends on how far away they are, the density of the atmosphere, how many particulates there are floating about, and so on. It's a matter of sneaking up on these values moving around the image, because all your values are so interdependent.

If you look at the final image and how dark that fountain is and tried to paint it that way at first, then you would have the 'hole in space' problem. So I would recommend gradually glazing down all the areas you think might be dark, so that they support each other and make sense overall.



5 Do it right first time

Here the darks continue and some of the shapes are becoming more defined. It's a dialogue between the artist and the painting. The fountain has more contrast than it needs, but I need those extra values to get those figures to read. I can always glaze back over the top of them to lower the contrast.

This is an interesting point, though. Best practice would be to paint things to their proper value at once, with no wash or glaze later. A lot of digital art abuses this, though. An example would be if I wanted a shaft of sunlight coming through one of the windows: should I paint all the information that's behind the sunbeam at a higher key, or paint it with no sunbeam and blot some light yellow at the end? Given that we've all done the latter, try to paint that sunbeam into the painting itself. It takes a lot of work, but the results could be worth it.



6 Practical considerations

Having said this, the time and lack of flexibility often makes cool stuff like this impractical when creating commercial art. What if the client doesn't like the sunbeam? The time that it takes to paint it into the image is considerable.

Another concern is that, as I explained in the previous step, I don't know what my final values are going to be. It's difficult to repaint that sunbeam at a different key several times. I usually take the middle road: paint it as close to the final value as you can, and then you can be delicate with an atmospheric layer at the end.

7 A fresh approach to the structure

Here I'm concerned with two issues. First, the image has too little variation in material, like it's a toy made out of plastic. Big complex structures like this have a million different materials, and suggesting them all means contrast, and that destroys the feeling of scale. The second problem is the design doesn't feel steampunk enough. It looks too much like St Peter's, which is the main inspiration for the space.

So to solve both problems, I stop worrying about glazing values from light to dark slowly, and start throwing in darks with abandon. The rationale is that there are many exposed structural elements made out of iron. I put all these darks on a separate layer and paint them in quickly (but not so quickly that the crudeness might affect my evaluation of them) to get an idea. In the end, I do keep some of them, as you will see as we move along. ➡



8 Study HDR imagery

So now I've backed off a lot of the structural pig iron, because it seems to have the space-punch problem. What I do instead is paint the foreground a little darker. The idea is that the tunnel the viewer's standing in has very little light coming into it.

This is a convention that I wanted to avoid, but time made it the best course. Imagine that you really were standing here, in that space: you wouldn't see this foreground as dark. If you took a HDR (high dynamic range) photograph you could expose the foreground just fine. Would the image become flat? Perhaps, but I think it would have an interesting look. Instead of showing volume through light and dark masses, it's shown through precise high-frequency detail. The dark foreground is a well-known painting convention. If you have the time, look at HDR imagery and analyse how it works: it's a different way to think about things. You now have one more possibility in your toolbox on how to show form.



PRO SECRETS

Use standard brushes

Contradicting my earlier Pro Secret, I feel that there's too much emphasis on brushes. I used the stock Photoshop brushes for the first 10 years of my career, mostly because Photoshop didn't have custom brushes. A lot of people have even said to me they liked my work better when I just used the Round brushes. I use the stock brushes all the time, and when I'm having trouble or trying to learn, I use the simplest brushes I can.

There are so many variables in painting, so do everything you can to simplify what could be causing you trouble. Custom brushes poorly used can make your work much more difficult. Fancy edges and textures won't hide a lack of understanding in the art basics.

9 Don't just push lights and darks

The basic space is reading okay, so it's time to start adding detail and figuring out what some of the architecture will be. I also set the bottom of my value range. Once you have that 'floor' you can reckon up in there. The opposite end of the value range is easy; the windows in the dome are always the top end. I figure that the paintings up on the walls would probably be the darkest dark. The local value is black and is receiving not much light, which means it will be dark. You can almost make an equation out of it. Local value x incident light x distance = value. As the distance goes up, value goes up too, depending on how much haze there is.

In addition, notice that I've decrease the value range of the figures in the fountain. Some of the light values are very overstated. This is an easy trap to fall into if something isn't reading: just push the lights and darks. Slow down, make better shapes and better drawings, and you'll improve as an artist.



10 Polishing the scene

At this stage in the painting process I'm just adding detail and defining materials throughout the scene. I'm mostly doing this by dropping down in value.



11 Don't trust your eyes

Sometimes it's important to really measure the scale of things. The girl in the black dress was gigantic: I didn't see this right away, and wasn't even sure that it was true. But measuring things in perspective is always a good thing to do. This is especially true if there's any type of wide-angle distortion or other unusual perspective, because your eye isn't as reliable in such cases where the eye doesn't have as much experience.



Photoshop USE LIGHT FOR A CHIAROSCURO FEEL

Mélanie Delon explains how to work a mysterious light, from two sources, into a scene while painting an intense male character

Artist PROFILE

Mélanie Delon
LOCATION: France



Mélanie's a freelance illustrator who specialises in fantasy. She divides her time between working for different publishing houses and developing her own personal works.

www.melaniedelon.com

GET YOUR RESOURCES

See page 6 now!

Shortcuts

Group selected layers

Cmd+G (Mac)

Ctrl+G (PC)

I use this to group layers that I don't want to merge.

Light is a crucial element in a portrait painting, because it brings life, shape and volume to a character. Light and colours are connected, of course, and I need to work with them to achieve the right result. The light can also tell different stories about the same character.

If I need to paint a complex lighting scheme I always take reference shots. I consider what lighting I'm after during the very first stage of the concept. It helps

me to develop the image, gives it a strong foundation, and saves time later on.

For this image I want the light to look magical but also mysterious and very contrasted, giving the scene a Chiaroscuro feel. Because it's a portrait, I decide to make the character's face the focal point and play with his eye colour. I want to give him a dangerous, unhealthy countenance. To strengthen this effect I'll have two light sources. The primary source will be cold and bright, and is

going to affect his face, while the secondary one will be warmer, more diffuse and will come from behind. I always try to work the light with complementary colours: this brings balance to the final illustration.

I start painting by working with big colours and light blocks, and keep the file size as small as possible. This helps me to develop a quick composition that's easy to correct or change if necessary. Okay, let's see how my portrait takes shape!



1 Find the concept

The first thing I do is to quickly find the concept and composition. I want to create a male fantasy character, with a touch of punk, surrounded by birds. So I start with a rough pencil line art and a messy colour test for the character's design. I like to be sure of the colour scheme before I start the painting proper. I also decide that the main light will come from the top.



2 Apply the first colours

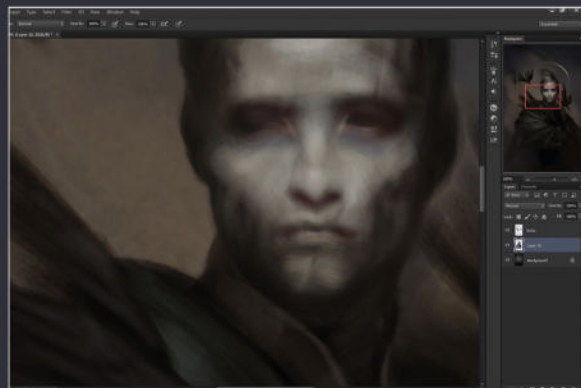
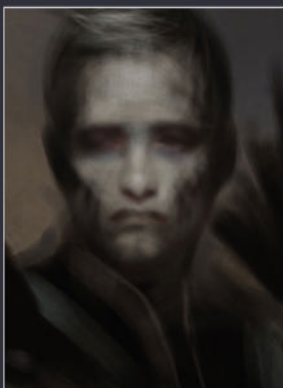
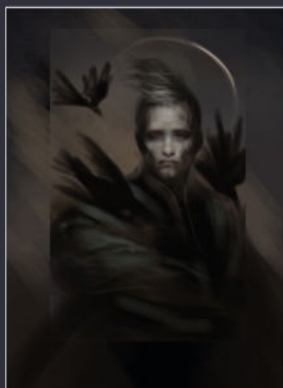
After scanning in my sketch, I choose my colour scheme. I want it to be very desaturated at first with few hints of colours; just enough to see the different elements. I like to keep everything simple at the beginning. The light here isn't defined because I'm still looking for the character. I use a soft Round brush because there's no need for details yet. ➡



PRO SECRETS

Make use of a special halo

I like to add a halo shape when I want to depict a special light. I've used it in the background of this portrait. It can be created from a basic round shape with blurred outlines or with a basic Round brush set to Wet Edges. I apply the shape on a separate layer and adjust the layer properties until I find something that looks interesting on the canvas.

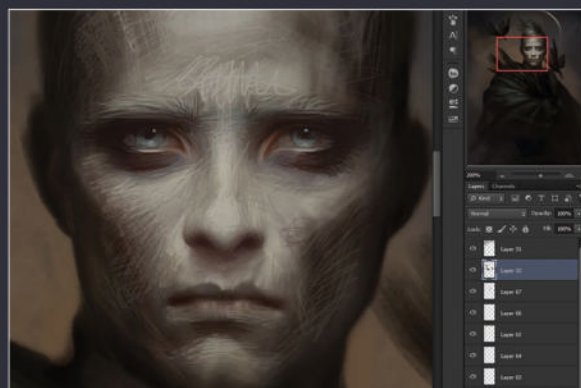
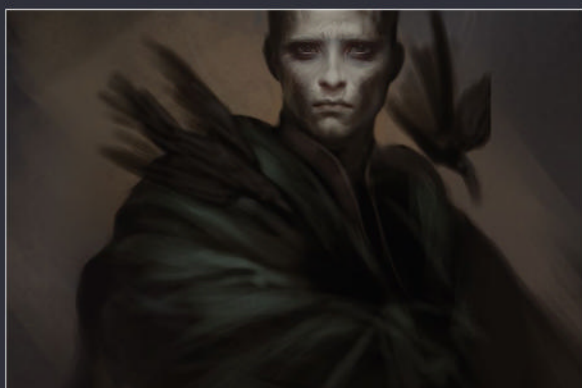


3 Reworking the composition

It may be a portrait, but I think I need to add some space around him. So I decide to crop the illustration and expand his environment. Empty space is important in a composition – my character needs to breathe! I increase the main light on his face slightly and then place the warm light behind him as a diagonal shape, just to add more dynamism to the composition.

4 Define facial features

With the same soft brush, but with Shape Dynamic sets to 0 per cent, I start to define his facial features. I'm adding some reds around his eyelids and a very light mauve to create some dark rings under his eyes. I like to use these two colours as a skin base because they add a realistic touch to any complexion.

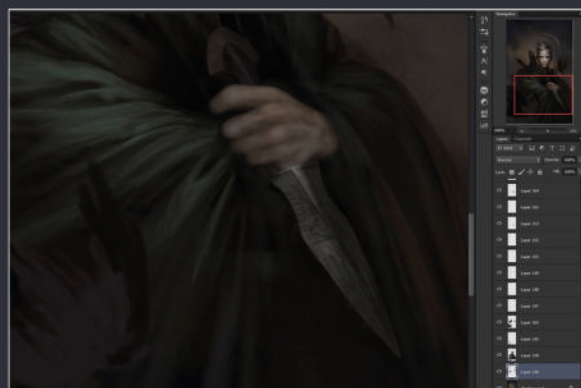
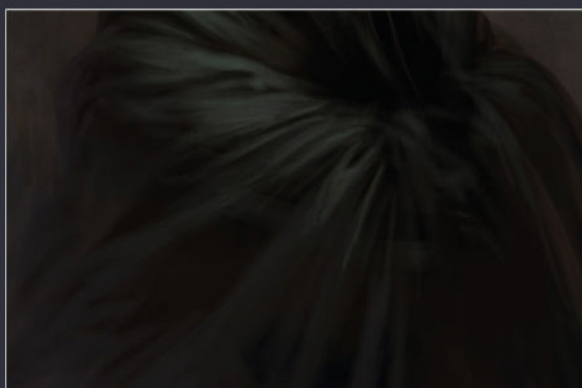


5 Defining the silhouette

I want my figure to be massive with the focus on his face. So I choose to wrap him into a huge, dark green cape. To increase the dynamism of the composition, I ensure the cape follows the same diagonal as the second light. This adds a subtle sense of movement. I light his arm slightly by adding a pale green with my soft brush. I want contrast while avoiding strong shadows.

6 Tell a story with the eyes

Now I work on his eyes. I choose a pale blue that will contrast with the red skin base. I want him to look ill, with almost translucent eyes. I use both my custom Texture and Detail brushes for the eyelids, and paint small dots of light on the eyeballs. His skin must also reflect his story, and adding some scars around his mouth is a cool, mysterious detail!



7 Develop the dark cape

I gradually bring more volume and shape to the fabric using my soft brush. I gently increase the light intensity and colour saturation. The light here is very diffuse and soft, and I want to suggest folding fabric folds with an Old Masters look. I keep my brush strokes visible: this adds texture to the fabric.

8 A hand with a dagger

At this point I think the composition looks a bit empty, and so I decide to introduce a hand holding a dagger. I choose not to add too much detail to this new element and keep it in the shadows for now. The lower part of the character is too dark, and the dagger will help me to break up this darkness, as well as give the composition extra dynamism.

RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: DETAIL



I use this one for tiny, precise details. It's extremely useful when I need to add definition to any kind of element.

SOFT

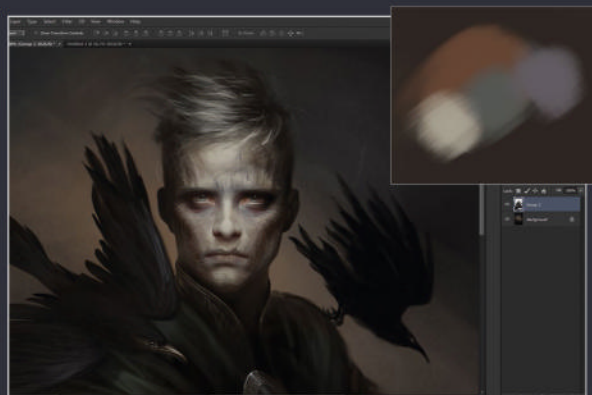


This is my basic brush, and I use it to sketch, blend colours, add light and even create texture.

TEXTURE

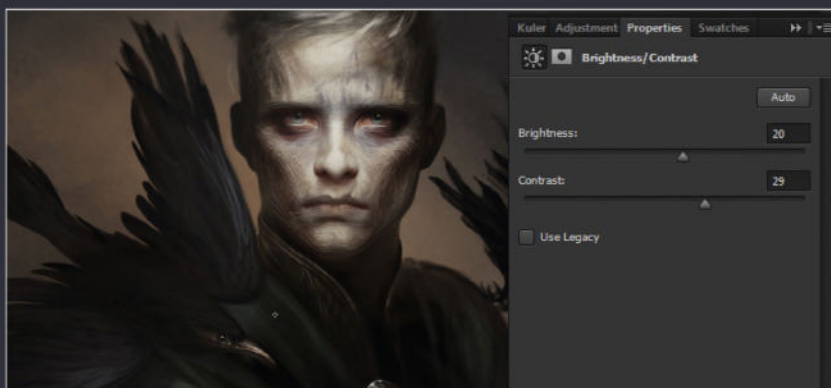


It's the brush that's between the other two. It's perfect to bring in more texture without too much definition, and has a lovely brush stroke.



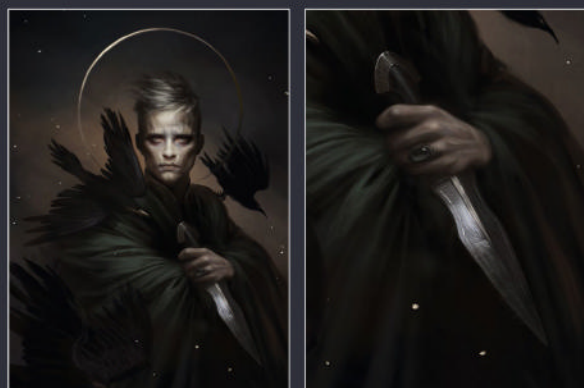
9 Colouring the skin

Now that the face is starting to come together, I decide to push the colours and choose a more vibrant colour scheme. I add some orange to the inner part of the eyes and increase the light and shadows to increase their intensity. I choose a pale violet and paint some veins on his forehead. Little details like these help to achieve a realistic look.



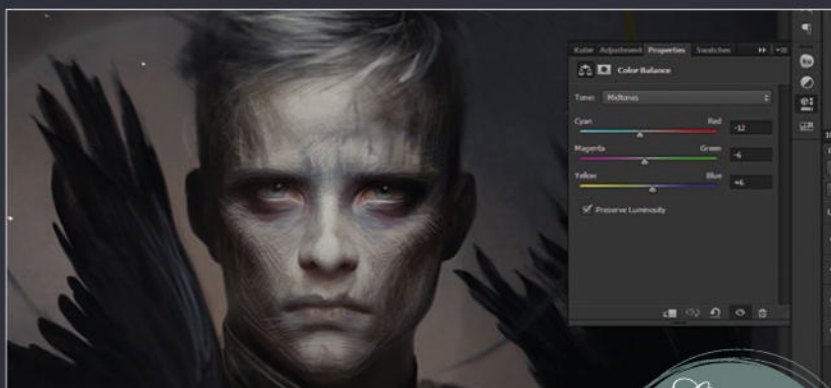
10 We need more contrast!

I bear in mind that the main light comes from above. As such, the forehead, nose and cheekbones all catch the light, so I have to apply more contrast on these specific facial features. To do this I simply use the Brightness/Contrast adjustment tool and play around with it until I'm happy with the outcome.



11 Completing the composition

I finish off the last few elements such as the golden halo and the hand. The dagger needs to stand out a bit more, otherwise it'll be lost in the shadows. I add a huge bright glow of light and refine the shape of the blade with the Detail brush. I also add some magical dots of light all around the character. This helps to emphasise the darkest parts of the composition.

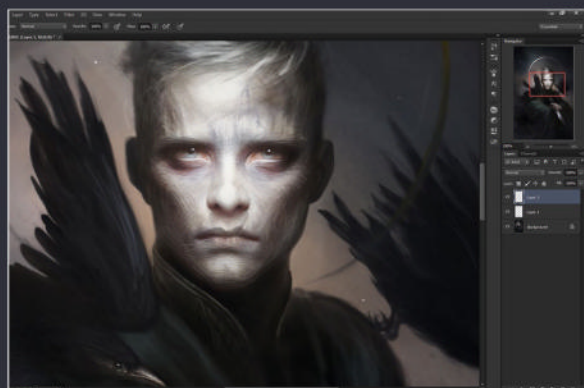


12 Adjust the colours

Photoshop's Color Balance tool is ideal for giving an illustration those finishing touches. It's good for quickly unifying the whole painting, especially when the light is really strong. I choose to apply a more subtle blue to my composition, because my background light is mainly orange.

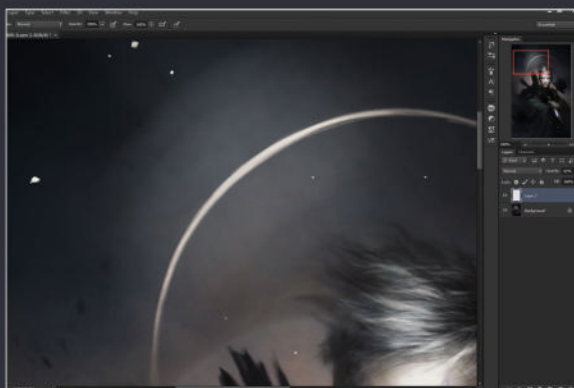
Shortcuts
Eyedropper tool
I (Mac & PC)

The wheel feature is extremely useful when I need to choose and compare different hues.



13 Boosting the intensity

It's now time to add the last touches of light to his face. I work it as a whole with a big Soft brush, like a glow. I pick a very light pale blue and apply it all over his face. Then I set the layer mode to Screen mode with a very low Opacity setting. I keep in mind that this light comes from the top and so I extend this glow all over his hair, too.



14 Adding the final details

The painting is almost finished. All I have to do is to add some extra glow on the halo, to make it a bit more magical. Then I slightly blur some parts of the silhouette to blend everything together. I use the Blur tool on a very low Opacity for this, because it gives me more control than the Blur filter.

PRO SECRETS

Compose a tone base

When starting a painting I tend to use mid- to dark-tone colours as a base. I find it's easier to add and work the light, than to start with a very light and bright base. It enables me to control the shadows from the beginning. I always colour them and never use pure black. Black usually makes any colour look 'dirty' if it's used for shadows.





Photoshop

HELP THE STORY TO SHINE THROUGH

Eric Deschamps illustrates an epic scene from his story Spirit Season, searching for the essence of adventure as he designs the composition

Artist PROFILE

Eric Deschamps
LOCATION: US



Eric is an illustrator for young adult novels and Magic: The Gathering. He has a love for bold colour and zig-zagging compositions! <http://ifxm.ag/eric-d>

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

PRO SECRETS

Put aside the keyboard

I try to use the keyboard as seldom as possible. Using keyboard shortcuts is an easy way to develop repetitive strain injuries in my wrist and I'm not convinced that they're any more efficient than mapping shortcuts to my tablet. Option/alt is on my pen for colour picking. Brush size is the slider on the underside of my Cintiq. Step Backwards, Flip Canvas, Merge Layers, Zoom in and Zoom out are mapped to the Cintiq's ExpressKeys.

My aim with this workshop is to work towards conveying one of the driving forces of the Spirit Season storyline: adventure. Specifically, I want to relate the girl's feeling of awe as she travels swiftly over a vast landscape.

Before you start, make sure you have a purpose to your piece of art. I decided early on before any pencil touched paper that I wanted to showcase action and adventure. The action didn't need to be as

intense as a full-blown fight scene, but it did need to provide plenty of motion to the composition. Aside from the action what else adds a sense of adventure to a story? How about an object or element that's out of the ordinary, which can hint at a story or past history. I will shoot for that as I move forward.

It's also smart to set one personal side goal for each piece you do. For this piece of art my goal is to capture a specific ethnicity for the main character, Aurelia.

One advantage of working digitally is also something that can hold an artist back. This is the ability to make changes at any point. A digital artist can always hit Undo and can endlessly work on top of an image. The same can't be said for traditional media. The drawback is that it can lead to too much trial and error, draining the life and spontaneity out of the art. I fought with this a lot in the past and it still creeps in at times. Plan ahead with plenty of thumbnails and sketches!



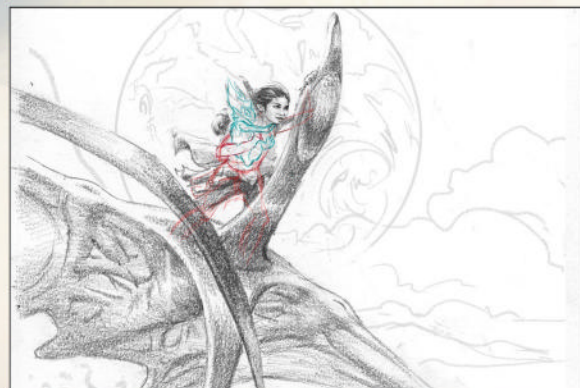
1 Sketching the action

I want Aurelia hitching a ride on the back of a creature with her pal Rohu clinging on tight. Once my rough sketch of the adventurous trio is complete, I scan in the page. I then look for any adjustments that can be made in Photoshop to improve the drawing. For example, I stretch out the creature's legs to increase the sense of motion and action.



2 Visualising the environment

I'm not sure what the background environment will be, so I experiment a bit more in Photoshop before I move back to my sketchbook. I ditch the idea of the trio emerging from an elliptical void. The edge of the canvas will crop the creature rather than a void. Even though it'll be cropped, I draw the creature in its entirety so that I get it right. ➔



Shortcuts

Rotate Screen R (PC & Mac)

Rotate your screen to find the best orientation when drawing smooth curves. Press Esc to reset the view.

3 Hinting at a larger story

The girl and her friends provide the action for the piece, but I want some mystery to hint at an underlying story. The landscape will serve that purpose. The rolling hills are carved up as if some enormous entity has sawed through them. I bring the closest hill even closer to the foreground. It now angles down the composition, adding to the angular motion of the big creature.

4 Drawing Through

The interaction between Aurelia and the clinging Rohu is tough to draw. I won't be able to pose a primate for reference, so I improvise and find plenty of internet reference. I draw over the top of my pencils – blue for Rohu and red for Aurelia – making sure I draw her arms and legs through the big creature. I want Rohu to look scared, while Aurelia hasn't a care in the world.

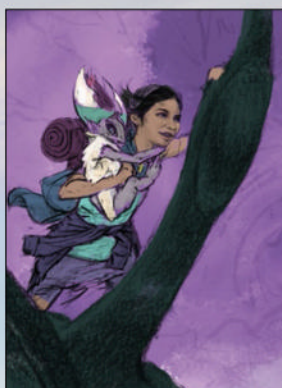


5 Time for more reference

I notice the perspective on Aurelia. We should be looking up at her from below, instead of at eye level. Lifting her head to see more of the underside of her chin and nose is an improvement. It may help with the friend's arm across her neck, which is also bothering me. We should also see the underside of her dress. So I go outside to shoot a few quick references.

6 Refining the face

The biggest challenge will be Aurelia's face. I want her to have facial features and skin tones most often seen in Central America. I don't have these features and am also not a 14-year-old girl! Up on my second monitor I have a slew of portraits of people from Nicaragua and Honduras. I study nose, lip and cheek bone shapes, as well as skin tones and even hairlines.



7 Exploring the colour options

With Aurelia and Rohu less of a mystery for me, it's time to try out some colour schemes. I first settle on a purple and blue scheme. This will only work if the scene takes place at night, which won't show off the landscape. I also want the viewer to see the planet in the sky, the way we would see the moon in the daytime, only much bigger.

8 Refining the colour

I start adding in blues and carving out clouds. I'm not interested in a typical blue sky and green hills scenario, though. An autumn foliage scene would give me more options. I use yellow foliage interspersed with evergreen and patches of red foliage. I tend to use saturated colours so I spend time trying to limit the number of colours in the image for counterbalance.

RESOURCES WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: THIN TEXTURE (INK)



This brush was used for the majority of the painting. It's my go-to brush at the moment.

PLASTIC WRAP - STANDARD



I have this brush set to the Smudge tool. It gives a bit of streaky texture when blending.

NATURAL BRUSH SPONGE W/ ROTATION



Used to lay in the general form of the foliage.

F FUN BRUSH EDIT



I used this brush to finish the finer details of the tree foliage.



9 Astronomical research

The story's set on a habitable moon with its parent planet large in the sky. I research how The Earth looks from The Moon and how The Moon looks from The Earth in the daytime. The darkest areas of the planet disappear, blending with the blue sky. It's difficult to resist adding lots of detail and heavier darks to the low-contrast planet. The subtle rim glow brings it to life for me.



10 Clouds should help the composition

The clouds aren't working with the composition. I don't like how they make a nest for the planet. I use the Transform tool to warp them into a more angular shape, adding to the overall sense of motion in the piece. Now the clouds cut into the planet rather than resting underneath. The right edge of the planet fades into the sky, which helps it feel less solid.



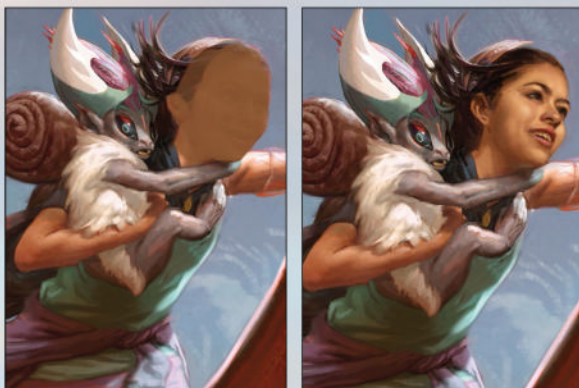
11 Subtle details help the concept

The cuts in the hillside reveal the bedrock. I describe the texture of the bedrock vertically. It's more interesting to show layers of sediments instead. The lines of sediment don't need to be exactly horizontal or vertical either. Angling the texture of the bedrock not only adds visual interest, it also gives the viewer a peak into the history of an active landscape.



12 Atmospheric perspective

The foreground hill is the darkest with the most contrast. Each successive hill going further into the distance is lighter in value with less contrast. Atmospheric perspective gives the viewer a sense of depth. Using repetitive shapes like the hills here is a device that works well to enforce a sense of space. The widening slices in the hills also help reinforce this feeling.



13 An overworked face!

Aurelia's face bothers me. The perceptive still doesn't feel correct. We should see less of her left cheek with more overlap from the nose. This face has gotten overworked. My time is best spent starting over. I should have done so earlier on! I take a solid colour and cover her face. I realise that I need better reference and so, with that new reference in hand, I start anew.



14 Making the final pass

With the face problem solved, I move on to putting the finishing touches to the artwork. At this stage I often save the image to Dropbox so that I can look at it on my iPad or phone. It's helpful for me to see the artwork on a smaller format and a different resolution screen. I also make sure I take a break, in order to come back to it with fresh eyes.

PRO SECRETS

Pen rotation

I don't use the standard Cintiq or Intuos pen. I use a Wacom Art Pen that detects Rotation. Most of my brushes are set to Rotation. Click Window>Brush>Shape Dynamics. Under Angle Jitter select Rotation in the drop-down menu. With this pen I can use a brush shape that's oblong, making thick or thin lines without the guesswork. As I rotate the pen in my fingers, I can see the brush rotate on screen.

Shortcuts

Full Screen

F (PC & Mac)

Toggle between full, standard and maximised screen to see your art without tool menus on show.

PRO SECRETS

Use Creative Cloud Libraries

Use the Libraries window in Photoshop to store commonly used elements (under Window>Libraries). I store my favourite texture overlay layers and my signature in there. Hold down Option or Alt when dragging them onto your image to avoid a parented image.

Next month in...

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX

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Learn from the techniques that the pros use, and go for the manga win!

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Crush Visual

Be a fly on the wall and find out what it takes to work at this top 2D and 3D concept art studio.

Laura Sava

Keeping warm in Iceland, Laura tells us all her tips for making amazing manga art.

Zezhou Chen

Follow the freelance Chinese artist as he creates a striking portrait with subtle lighting and colour.

ISSUE 131 ON SALE IN THE UK *Friday 31 December*



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ImagineFX January 2016



Riot Games' Alvin Lee
takes on Jinx from
League of Legends!



Painter & Photoshop CAPTURE THE SPIRIT OF A BOOK

Discover **Todd Lockwood's** process for illustrating the cover of a book of short stories, from developing a strong concept to polishing the final art

Artist PROFILE

Todd Lockwood
LOCATION: US



Todd lives on the wet side of Washington State with his wife Rita and his cat Paikaa, in the wondrous shadows of majestic mountains and giant trees.

<http://ifxm.ag/todd-l>

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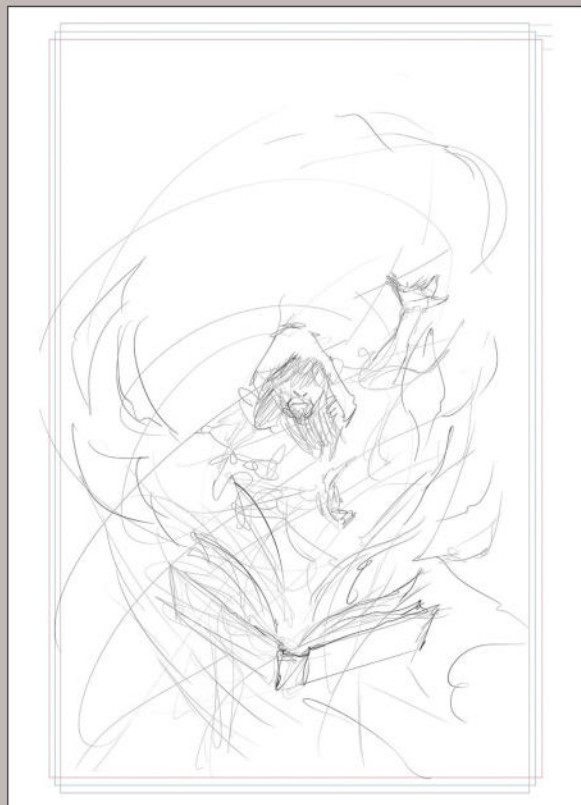
The truth is, I have no set way of working. What I do can be at odds with what I teach. The final image is always in the forefront of my mind however, and the image always begins with the narrative. In this case the client has a solid idea of what he wants to see. The book's title is *Unbound*, from Grim Oak Press, a collection of short stories with no overall theme. The simple idea is that a wizard causes the pages of a book to become literally unbound.

As I begin the task, the thumbnail is only in my head. I've broken rule number one. However, I know that I want a formal composition, with the figure facing the viewer and the book – which should look like a magic tome – hovering magically front and centre. With such a straightforward approach, it'll be more about the energy and the details. The magician will attract the eye first, so I intend to put as much emphasis on the book as I can. The star of this painting is the thing that's happening, so the tome is

important. By keeping these two prominent elements close together, I enhance that narrative.

I want this piece to look like it was done in watercolours, so I stick primarily with Painter's Digital Water set of brushes. They require a little more planning to take best advantage of their special qualities. By adjusting certain settings, and then working methodically, they capture the essence of wet-into-wet and the softness of watercolour paper.

Parameters set, I begin...



1 Beginning sketch

With my thumbnail in my head, I start sketching. I begin with the energy: loose swirling lines that more or less describe the paths of the pages or the flow of the character and his garments. Then I lay elements in along those lines.



2 Proof of concept

In relatively little time, I decide that I don't want the character to be a male wizard but rather a female sorceress, which gives a softer impression. I don't want this piece to look violent, but contemplative. Achieving the right mood and light will be as important as the movement in the scene. Composition is going to be key. ➡➡

PRO SECRETS

Star spotting

Know before you start your thumbnails, who or what the star of the painting is. This is the single most important thing or idea. Then give it the spotlight in your composition. If you're not certain who or what your star is, then try describing your painting in a short sentence, with subject, verb and setting. The first thing you name is probably your star.



Shortcuts

Flatten layers

Shift+Cmd+E (Mac)

Shift+Ctrl+E (PC)

If an experimental layer gives you what you want, then flatten it and move on.



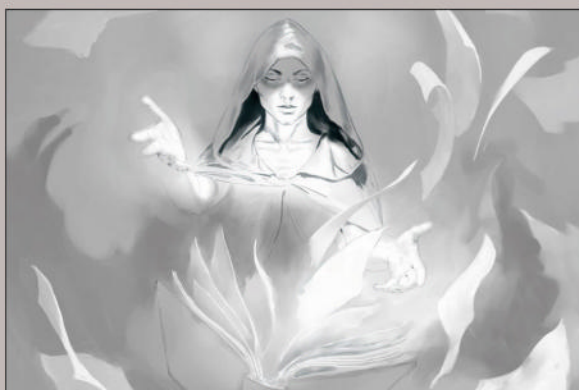
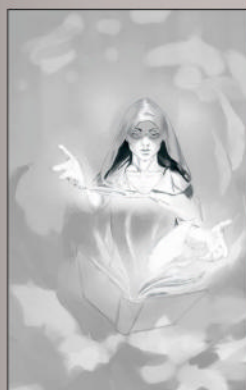
3 Reference is important

I photograph my assistant Stacie Pitt for the sorceress, under appropriate lighting. Then I gather what I call 'swipe' from all over the internet to get a feel for flying paper, swirling fabric and old, cabalistic texts. I arrange the best on my left monitor, take a screen snap, then stack those snaps for quick visibility.



4 The drawing begins

With my proof of concept sketch and my Stacie Frankenstein on their own layers, ghosted back to serve as guidelines, I begin my drawing. The client is after a specific look, so I use images from the internet to alter Stacie's features to my needs. Sorry, Stacie!

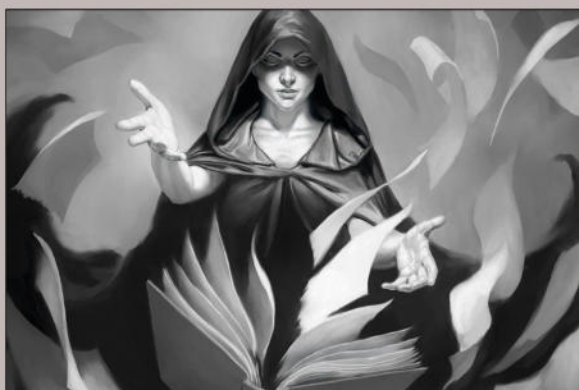


5 Depicting flow and movement

Satisfied with the figure and the placement of the tome, I begin the most exacting part of this painting: working out the flow and movement of all the flying pages. I keep my tones light, because I want to preserve the texture of the digital paper for the next stages.

6 Painted into a corner

The painting looks flat and lifeless to me. I realise that I've lost my movement as I worked on my paper shapes. To resolve this, I create some new lines of movement to build on. They'll become the prominent edges of sheets, the centre lines of moving masses, or the flow of fabric.

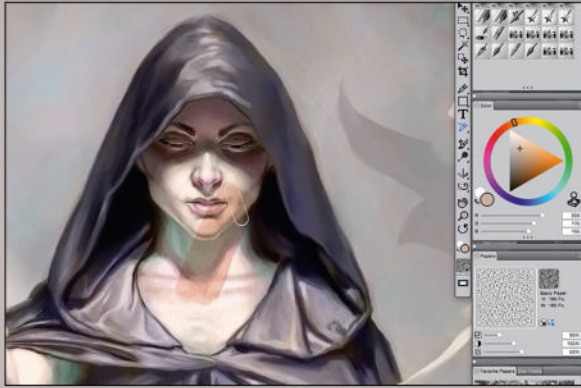


7 Refining elements of the image

I work out the flow and movement, designing the composition to highlight the star. I want the most contrast to be within the focal point: contrast not just of value, but also of texture, light, colour, motion, detail, focus, angle... indeed, anything that separates it from the rest of the painting and makes it stand forward. I concentrate on making sure that I maintain the overall texture of watercolour paper.

8 The colour underpainting

Using a combination of Color Balance, the Gradation and/or Bucket tool set in Color mode (in Photoshop), I apply warm tones to the centre of the painting and cooler tones to the borders, then pick out some specific areas for spot colours, such as cool flesh shadows and pink nose or lips with a brush that's also set in Color Mode.



9 Washing in tone

I was inspired by the art of Eric Fortune to build this piece slowly and carefully, using washes of colour in Digital Water that preserve the paper texture and exploit the strengths of this particularly wonderful brush set in Painter to create wet margins and soft transitions.



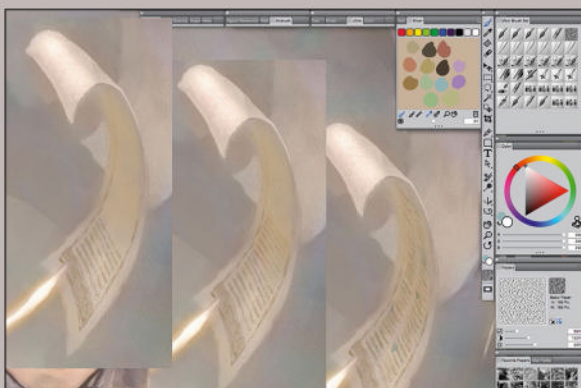
10 Introducing details

I begin with the details of the tome, using artwork that Stacie created for the interior of Unbound (you can see her art at www.staciepitt.com). Her lock medallion is the perfect centrepiece for the front cover. I warp it into the proper perspective in Photoshop and drop it down where I can paint over it, then create corner guards and a hasp in a similar style.



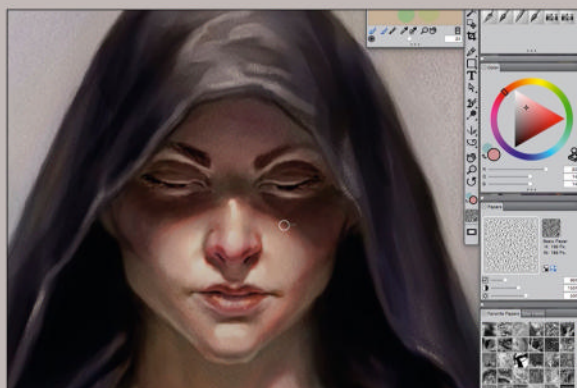
11 Tackle the contents of each page

Now I start decorating the many flying pages. At first I use copyright-free images from ancient books, employing Puppet Warp in Photoshop. It works, but it's tedious and awkward. I give up on it after a few pages – I scarcely had enough swipe for every page in any case.



12 Going old school

If digital paint can be 'old school', that is! I decide to paint the pages by hand. The challenge is to find simple ways to greek in the text and images without getting bogged down in minutia. The Digital Water serves me well, using a combination of the Round Water Blender and the Spatter brush.



13 Into the final stages

I balance my values, shading the sorceress down so that the pages leaving the book are the brightest thing, fine tune my shadow edges and add warmth to the transitions between light and shadow. And that's my artwork finished.



PRO SECRETS

Keep it simple in Painter

My palette of Painter tools is very simple. It's limited to selections from three or four brush sets and a range of custom paper textures. With them I can create an endless variety of expression. They emulate glazes (Digital Water), opaque oils (Smeary Oils being my favourites), various blending tools (the Blender Brushes), and a handful of others that give different effects. Some interact with the paper textures and others don't, so try mixing them up and switching paper textures for effect. Many of Painter's blending tools interact with the paper textures, making it simple to keep a consistent overall surface (that of watercolour paper).



Photoshop CREATE MULTIPLE LIGHTING SETUPS

Shelly Wan sets up a scene and then creates a range of lighting scenarios for it, to give the film's art director options and to guide the shading team

Artist PROFILE

Shelly Wan
LOCATION: US



Shelly is a sketch/colour artist at Pixar. She formerly worked

at Rockstar Games, Imagi Animation and Disney Imagineering.
<http://ifxm.ag/s-wan>



**GET YOUR
RESOURCES**

See page 6 now!

PRO SECRETS

Always try to simplify!

If you ever study a piece by Sargent or another traditional master painter, you'll notice that their values are organised in a very simple way. The middle greys are often grouped into the dark, or grouped into the light. To check your own paintings, place a Hue/Saturation layer on top and turn the saturation down to 0 to check the values. The more you can group and collapse the values, the stronger a statement your piece will make.

As a sketch/colour artist for Pixar, my job involves creating colour and textural design for sets and characters, and lighting designs for sequences or particular shots. Unlike in illustration works, my focus is not on producing a finished painting that's pleasing to the eyes, but on generating images that support the story and the director's vision. Because the story is constantly

evolving, the sequences/shots, characters and sets I work on are often changed, and my paintings must change to match on the fly. On top of this, my paintings need to serve as reference for the shading team, so I would need at least two versions of the same painting: one to show the textures and local colours, and another to show the lighting.

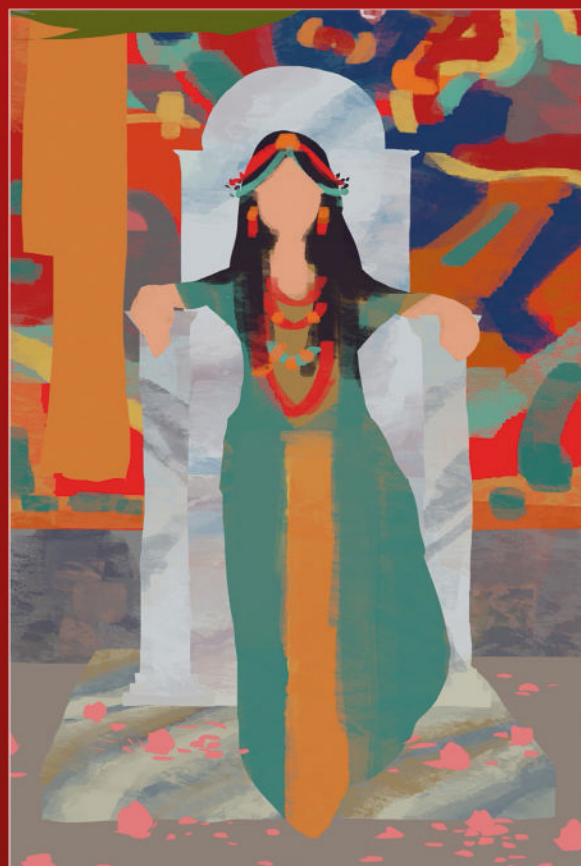
In this workshop, I'll show you how I structure my layers and adjustment

layers in my work assignments to best prepare for such changes, and take you through my steps for making changes when required. The goal of this workshop is to show you how designing for a movie (sequential images) is different from designing a single, standalone image: your image must take into consideration the big picture – the whole movie – and you need to be able to adjust the image to feed the needs of different departments.



1 Rough drawing

I'll use one character and a simple set with a flat-on angle, so deep space (perspective) is eliminated up to a point, because I know the different lightings I'll later create will seem more dynamic and different in contrast with this initial flat look. Ever since I took a trip to Tibet, I've yearned to create images that celebrate the brilliant colours I saw, so that's what I'll depict.



2 Shape blocking

Using the Lasso tool, I select the different elements from back to front (such as the drape, chair back, seat and chair arms), and place them individually on different layers. This way, when a small change is required such as a colour change on the walls or value change on the chair, it could be adjusted quickly, without affecting other elements of the painting. ➔

Shortcuts

Quick selection

Cmd-click on layer (Mac)
Ctrl-click on layer (PC)
Select the element on that layer. Handy for painting within that shape on another layer.



3 Colour/material rough-in

I often start by working all the layers up roughly, to adjust the colours and values as needed to create a harmonious image. I regularly use the option to lock transparent pixels on the different layers, so I can paint only within each of the elements. For the marble floor and throne, I'm drawing inspiration from Sir Lawrence Alma-Tadema's paintings.



4 Shadow adjustment layer

I add a Hue/Saturation layer, pull down the Lightness and push up the Saturation. Because I want to create an overcast lighting scenario to best show off the texture, the shadow in this lighting condition tends to be warmer than the light. I've tried to model out the form shadow and a soft cast shadow based on diffused light coming from the upper-right of the screen.



5 Add variations and modelling

While adding shadow to the forms, I decide to make the sleeve of the dress a semi-transparent material. The key to indicating this effect is that the material is entirely visible only where it's bunched up; in other areas it has just a slight influence over the colours underneath. Following the forms underneath the dress, I also indicate the wrinkles and folds on the bottom.



6 Composition changes

Now when I take a step back and examine the image, I notice that it has many vertical and horizontal lines, and is appearing too stiff and formal for my taste. So I add a free-flowing red shawl that stretches diagonally to the edges of the painting, to bring more dynamic energy into the composition.



7 Indicate materials in the image

I now work on each element as much as possible at this point, to illustrate its materials or patterns. I focus particularly on the different types of materials and with them, different reflectiveness and translucency. I also pay attention to the tonal values within each element. I've taken off the shadow layer here to show you the close-to-final textures.



8 More refining of the scene

There's some awkwardness with her left arm (screen right), so I adjust it. I also finish the bottom of the drape, and the slight translucency of the shawl. Now the white light painting is done, and this would be a good painting now to show to the director. If okayed, it would be handed off to the set department, to serve as a shading target for all the materials on the set.



RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: DICE

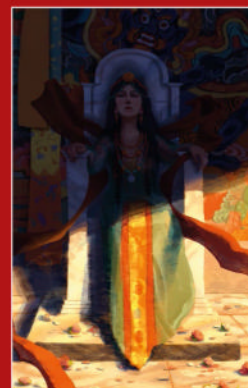
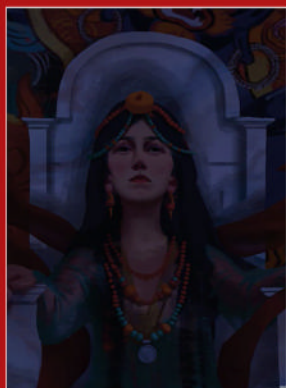
Dice is similar to a bristle brush, which I use to create a looser, more painterly approach.

RKONDO

Very textural under light pressure, building up to more opaque when pressed harder. For more pastel-like, rougher uses.

SCHMID_1

This is the brush that I use the most, because it feels very versatile and creates the most nuanced stroke. It also has texture when you paint with light pressure, and quickly builds up to semi-opaque.

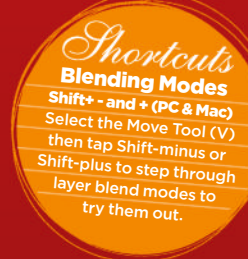
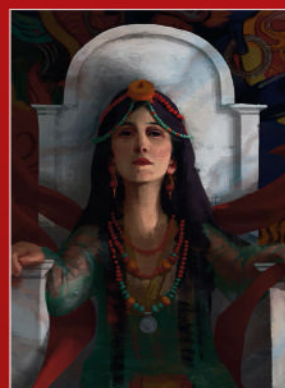
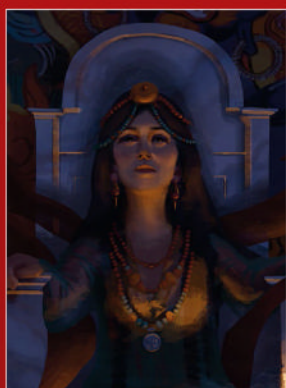
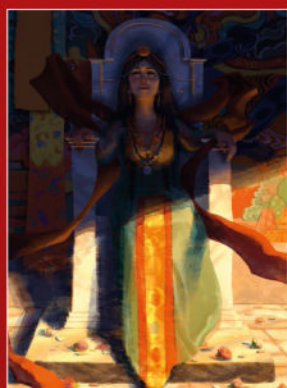


9 Create a dark interior lighting pass

Next I provide a different lighting pass on top of the existing white light painting. Again, the goal isn't to create a final image, but a possible lighting scenario for this set. I thought a dark interior would be a good start to contrast with the white light version, so I add a Multiply layer with dark blue. I also create a layer mask on the layer, to erase out a path for the light.

10 Notice the colour of light transition areas

Next I create another layer on top of the Multiply layer, set the new layer to Linear Dodge mode and fill it with dark orange. I created a layer mask for it as well, to erase the light and reveal the dark interior, and both the form shadow and the shadows cast. Pay attention to the transition between the light and shadow, because it's often a more vibrant colour.

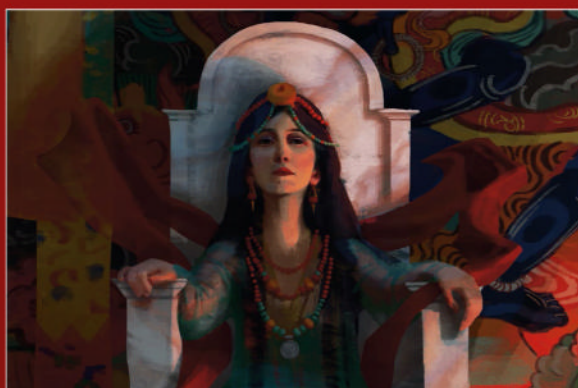
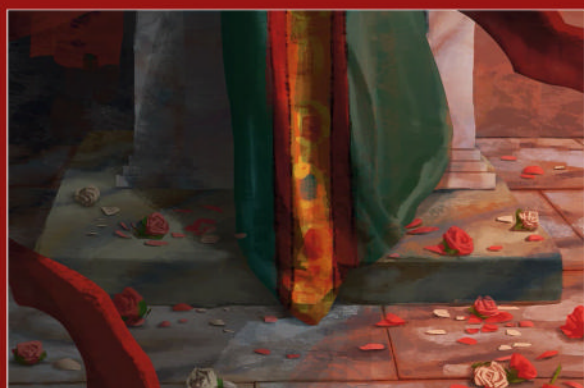


11 Adjust the shadow areas

The warm light I created is so strong, in reality it would affect the objects in the shadow as well. So in this step I paint directly on the layer mask of the light layer, to bring in the warm influence on the bottom surfaces of the forms. I also copy out the shadow layer, and manually adjust the shadow shape so that it corresponds better to the new lighting.

12 Establish a dusk lighting pass

For this setup, I first adjust the shadow layer so the light is from the lower-right. Following the surfaces, I darken half of the face and extend a larger shadow area behind the throne on the left. Note how sharp the shadow is under the screen-right hand compared to the shadow on the drape, because the hand is closer to the light source and the throne it casts shadows on.



13 Bring in a dark red colour

Next I create an Overlay layer with a dark red colour. I experiment with the layer mode and the colour to achieve the dusk light hue that I feel complements the colours in the image. I erase the red from the shadows. Following the bone structure, I refine the light shape and the shadow shape on the face. It helps to imagine that I'm turning on a physical light on the scene.

14 Take into account light from above

To soften the look of the piece, I decide to add a bluish top-down sky light above and in front of the figure. It influences the top surfaces in the image. It affects surfaces in the shadow as well, and is more noticeable on top than in the bottom. This is also an adjustment layer set to Soft Light, masked by painting on its layer mask. The colour could be adjusted to fit the painting.

PRO SECRETS

Questions to ask yourself

Whenever I paint, I always ask myself these three questions: "What colour/temperature is the light? Where's the highest contrast within the image? What's the area of the most saturation?" These questions help me put down mental guidelines on where the areas of most contrast are. And the simple rule of 'warm light equals cool shadow, cool light equals warm shadow' helps, so whenever I'm in any doubt of a colour's temperature, I would know if it's cooler or warmer by looking at the area it falls in.

Photoshop DEPICT AN EPIC ENVIRONMENT FOR A FILM

Raphael Lacoste shows how to handle light and atmospheric depth, when thinking big





Artist PROFILE

Raphael Lacoste

LOCATION: Canada



Raphael was art director on the first Assassin's Creed game

and Prince of Persia while at Ubisoft Montreal, but then left to create art and concepts for films such as Terminator Salvation and Jupiter Ascending. He's now at back at Ubisoft, as brand art director on the Assassin's Creed franchise.

<http://ifxm.ag/rlacoste>



GET YOUR RESOURCES

See page 6 now!

Shortcuts

Group layers

Cmd+G (Mac)

Ctrl+G (PC)

Useful when I need more organisation and fewer visible layers in my stack.

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

STANDARD BRUSHES



I only use standard Photoshop brushes. One has sharp edges for defining shapes, while another has its Pen Pressure reduced. I also use the Airbrush for quickly creating haze and atmospheric effects.

This workshop will take you through my process for painting a grand, fantasy structure set within an epic landscape. You'll see how to handle light, atmospheric perspective and depth, to create a interesting, moody scene.

My goal is to produce a memorable image of an immersive setting – an epic moment taken from a big-budget film. This workshop will appeal to those with a particular interest in environment design, keen to also develop their composition skills. With this in mind I think it's important to play around with contrasting shapes, apply the Golden Ratio and then choose an interesting

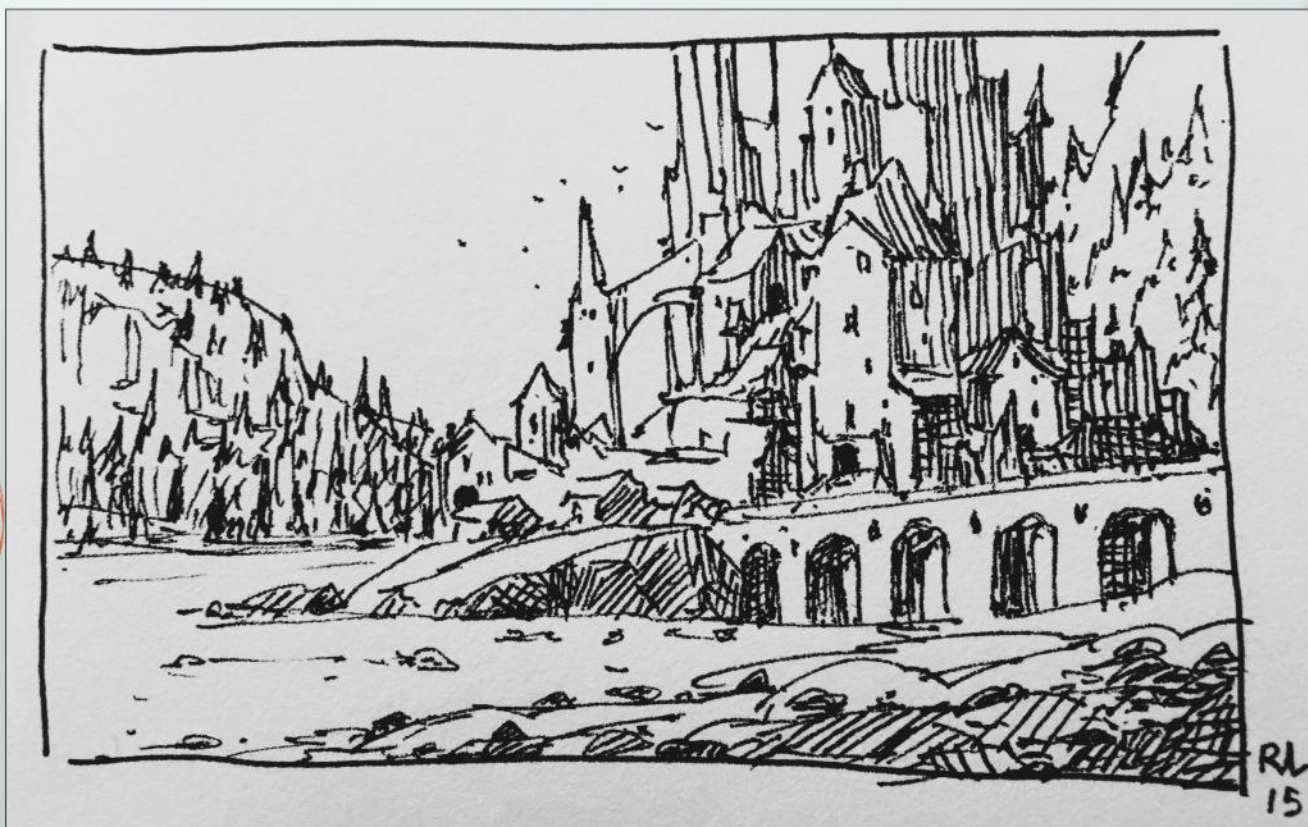
colour palette. I always start with a simple sketch, developing it gradually into a detailed illustration.

It would be a mistake to underestimate the usefulness of the sketches we use to decide on a composition. There's little point working up a detailed image if it lacks a memorable composition and has a dull palette. Such problems would have been highlighted at the sketch stage.

So here's my checklist. I like to make sure I have an interesting topic, and a great balance of shapes, proportions and contrasts in the volumes. I track down interesting references to inspire me: this could be photos I've taken, collections of images online or even masterpieces I've

seen in museums. I prefer to use my personal photo database as much as possible to avoid copyright issues, but if you're only looking for mood reference, you can have a lot more flexibility. Films are also a great source for inspiration, especially when it comes to the lighting and mood of a piece.

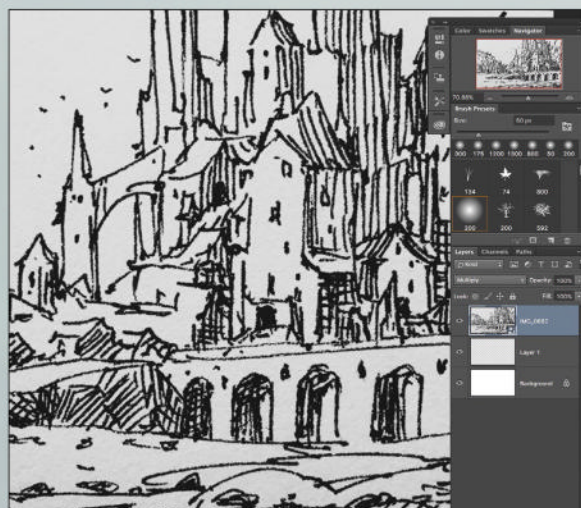
The final image should be an invitation to go on a voyage – a journey into a grand fantasy setting! Applying details will help to ground this epic scene, but this isn't the most important thing to get right in the painting process. Remember, composition is key. I hope that you'll have fun and enjoy this workshop. Okay, enough talk, let's get going!

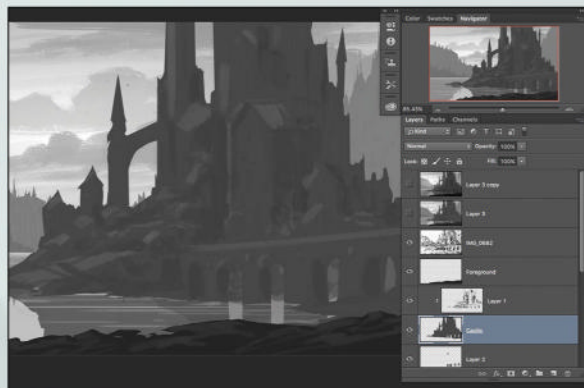


1 Sketch on paper

I think it's better to sketch on paper, rather than digitally. I find that my gestures become more direct and spontaneous, and the physical connection between my pen or pencil and paper fires up my imagination. My aim at this early stage is to quickly generate a range of interesting compositions. I'll draw some sketches and try out various compositions, with either a Uniball pen or Faber Castell pencil in my sketchbook.

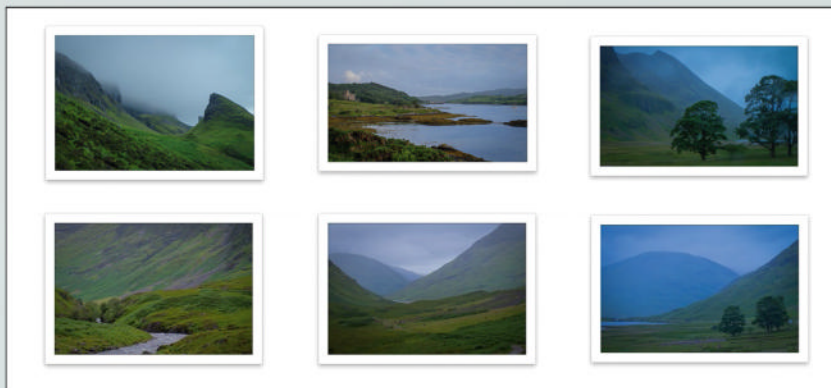
I take the time to explore a range of options, from landscape to portrait. I want to develop some elements of composition for the foreground, but always at the back of my mind is the need to present an interesting topic, achieve balance in the volumes and generate a detailed composition. I want to illustrate an immense castle with a medieval village at its base. I don't want the fortress to look too realistic, so I exaggerate the scale and the sense of classic fantasy in the composition, and place very small houses at the bottom, and huge towers, arches and buttresses throughout the castle's structure.





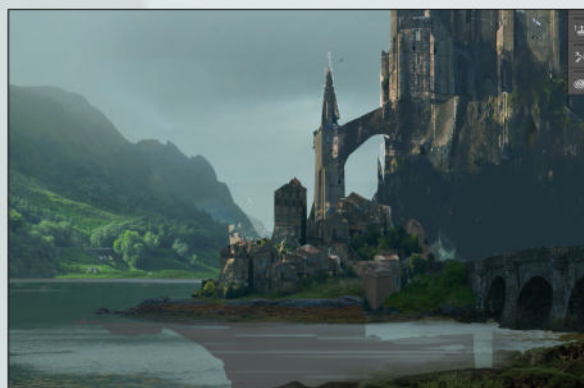
2 Values and mood sketch

I do a more elaborate sketch in Photoshop, using greys, blacks and whites to develop the mood and atmospheric depth. Using a brush set to 0 per cent Opacity helps me focus on positive and negative spaces, pushing strong contrasts and the composition. I also use the Selection tool to cut out shapes, before filling them with a flat value of grey.



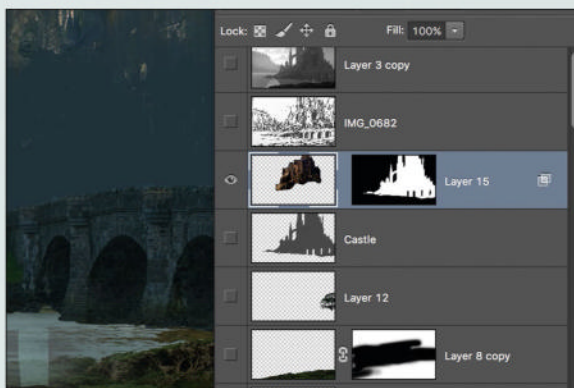
3 Gather references for mood, colour and detail

When painting an environment with elements such as recognisable architecture, it's important to use references – and the best inspiration is to go travelling! Being able to choose the right images to help you to create your own design is an important skill. It's a big part of the job. In fact, when I was working for film as a matte painter, finding the right photos and references was 60 per cent of the work. When you have the right elements to compose with, the work goes much more quickly and efficiently.



4 Blocking in the composition

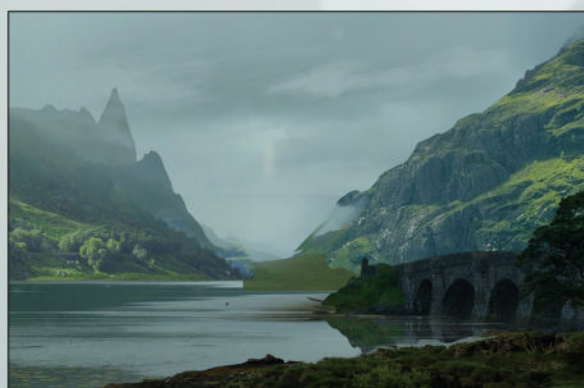
I put the initial drawing on the top of everything in Multiply mode, so I can follow the original concept closely. I try to keep the layers I did in grey values and I group my textures and references inside these. I don't paint every detail from scratch. This stage of an illustration is one of exploration, but you must know where you're going! This is why a sketch is so important. The other materials are just there to help efficiency and realistic rendering. I was lucky to do a fantastic trip to the Isle of Skye in Scotland, thanks to Ian McQue. I took many photos, which I've used here. I keep the composition from the sketch, but gradually replace the drawing with elements from my photos, while keeping a homogeneous colour palette. I also try to maintain consistency with the light direction.



PRO SECRETS

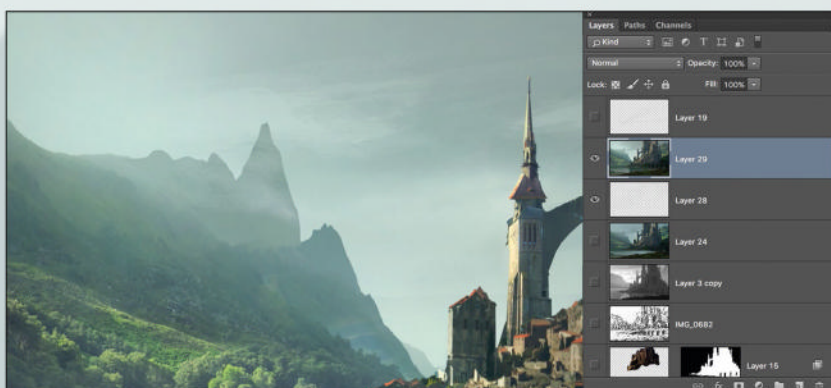
Light direction

When I draw, I keep defining the masses and then add light to my surfaces. This is a great way to create volume and light direction quickly without spending too much time on details. I can also generate interesting shapes in this manner, using a standard brush. Then I'll collapse my layers and do a Dodge pass on the highlights with a soft brush, to add some atmosphere to overexposed areas and local shadows.



5 Colour palette and mood

References are important for building a credible palette and atmosphere. When I bring references next to my painting, I try to choose one main direction for the colour palette and the values in the light and shade. For instance, in this painting, the colours of stone in the light and grass in the sun are important and have to be consistent throughout the painting.



6 Refining silhouettes and shapes

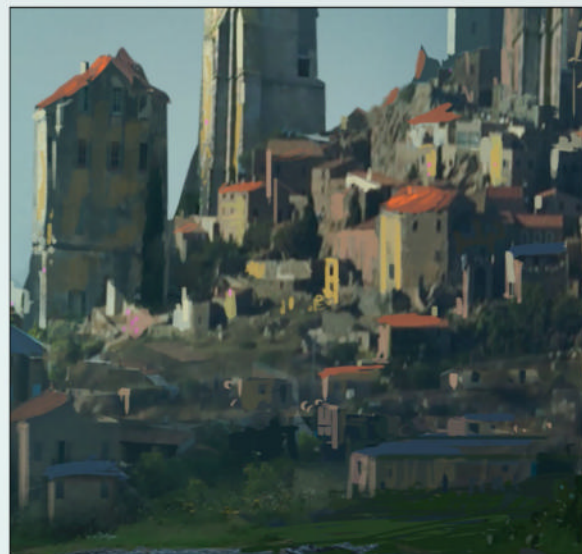
Now I refine the composition in the separate layers. This is also where I try to give the image a distinctive mood and style. Some details are important in the silhouette because they contrast with the sky or the brighter background. The great thing about working with layers is that you can colour balance them separately and fake atmospheric depth, as well as lose details in the distance (to create mysterious shapes). I create layers of mist between layers of architecture and backlight the silhouettes of the buildings. ➔



7 Adding details for scale reference

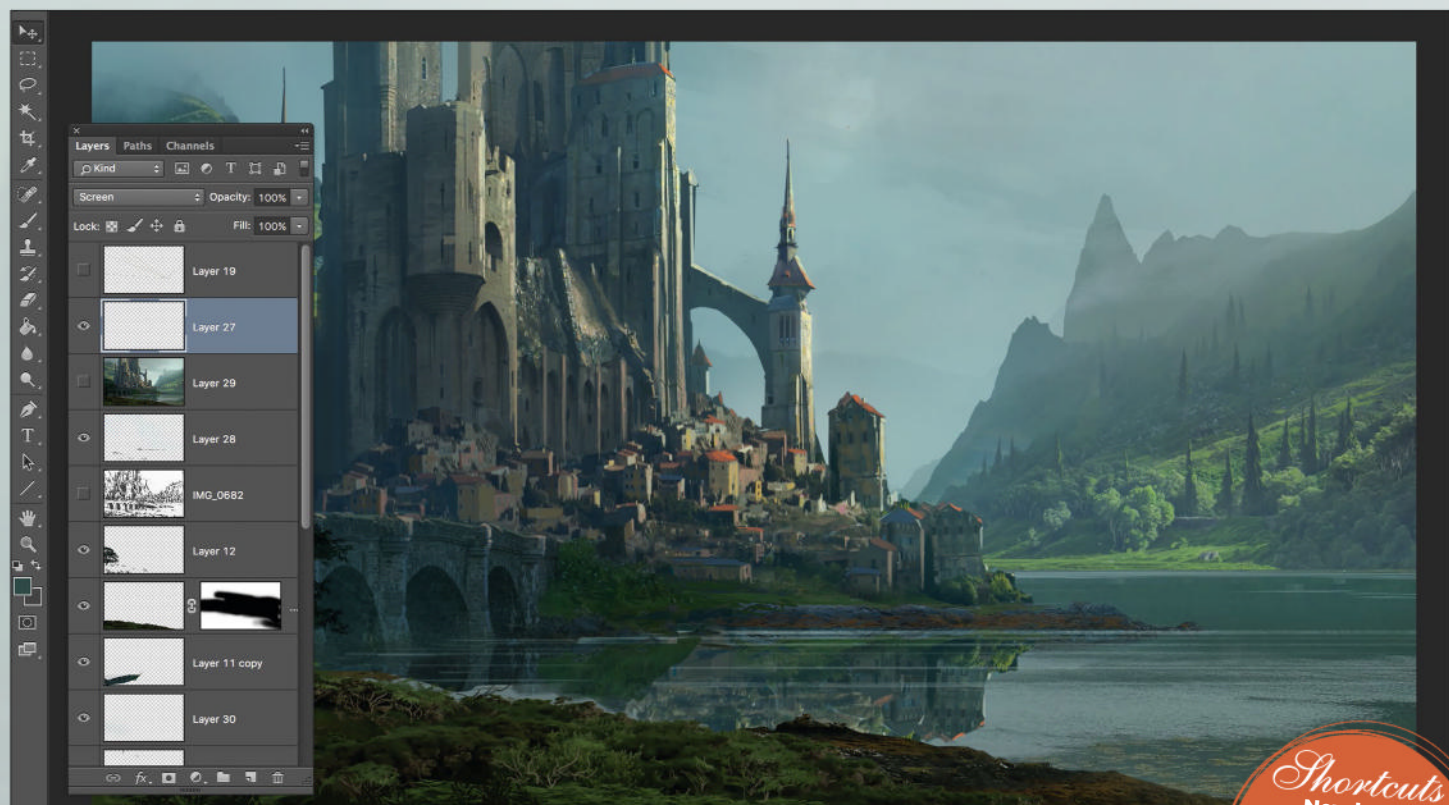
I like the overall mood and composition, but it's not there quite yet. I find that a good scale reference is important, to help the viewer's immersion in the scene. In conventional architectural design, details such as windows and doors are useful for giving the viewer a sense of scale, but in this more fantastical setting I need to define the scale in the foreground further. So I spend more time adding organic details such as grass, rocks and trees, that will add some life and a proportion to the overall setting.

I want to add some mystery to the picture as well: some huge trees in the mist are a great addition in among the mountains in the background. I also spend time adding highlights, some details in the rooftops and houses, reworking the perspective, and focusing on adding colour variations and local saturation – all to try and generate a richer mood overall.



8 Breaking the lines

Refining the shape makes everything look more painterly and is fun. It's time to get rid of the photographic texture as much as possible, and refine and stylise the volumes. I add more erosion, break the shapes, break the lines! Some elements were great for helping to set up the composition, and I like the silhouette to be simple, but it's also important to continue making the setting look less rigid and stiff, to refine lines to make them look more natural and organic. I also add colour variation: I choose more saturated values in the colour palette, but keep the luminance and add some variation in the local colour.



9 Assess what progress has been made

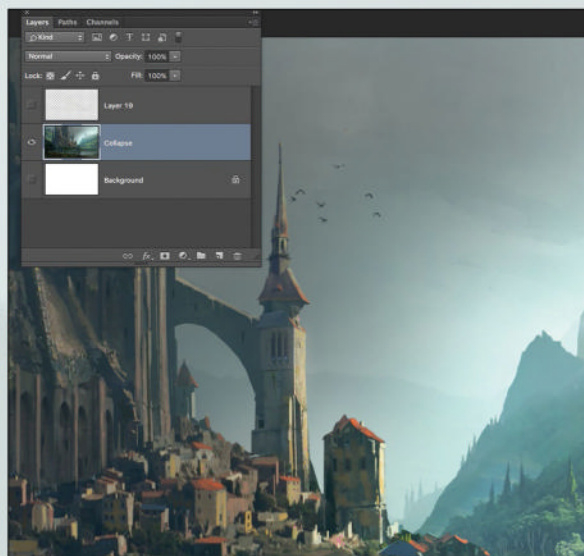
This is the moment to take a little step back. When I've spent a long time on a single image, taking a break, flipping the image horizontally and vertically is useful: you get to see the image with different eyes. In addition, before finishing a painting, it's good to show it to your house mate, girlfriend or boyfriend, or even to your kids. This is the time when you can still modify important elements of your picture, before going too far in the polish! Remember that polish is good, but first you need to have a good base.

Shortcuts
New layer

Shift+Cmd+N (Mac)

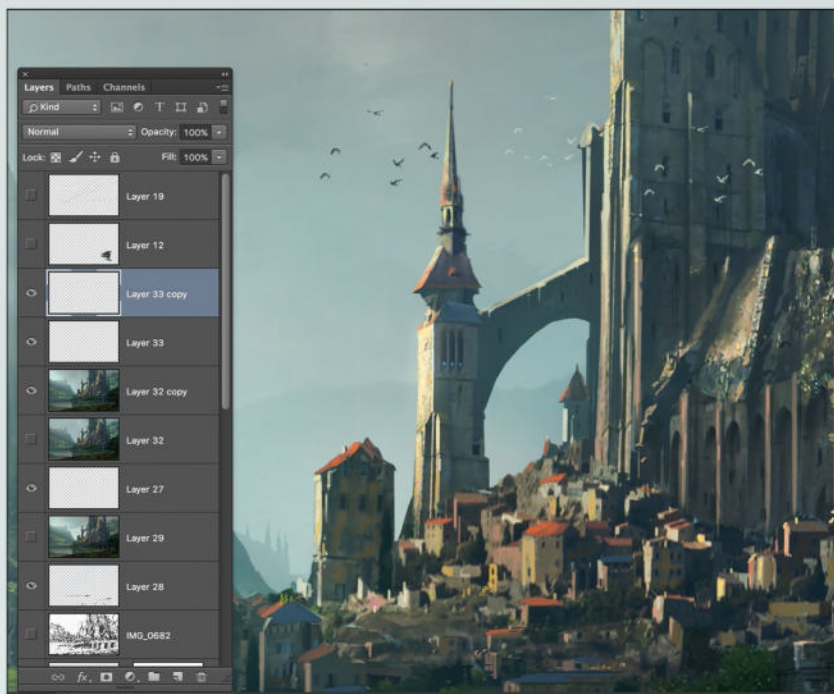
Shift+Ctrl+N (PC)

This is useful for adding a new layer when you want to work on a separate one.



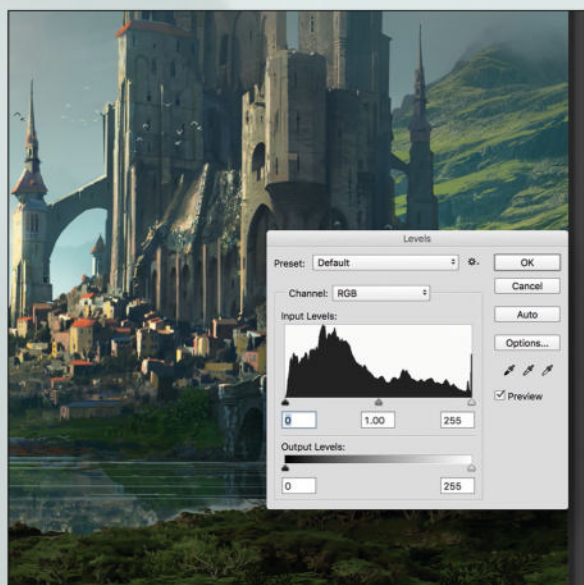
10 Time to commit myself

Painting with layers is good and bad. Yes, you can work separately, change local elements without compromising the others and there's great flexibility. But it's also more rigid! It's the moment to either collapse your stack, reduce the number of layers and paint over everything (brave, but interesting!). Or you can continue to work with separate layers, but blend them with several tricks. What I recommend is picking values and colours from the background and painting them over with a soft Airbrush, at a very low Opacity. This will affect local colour and simulate a fog that brings colours together.



11 Add storytelling elements

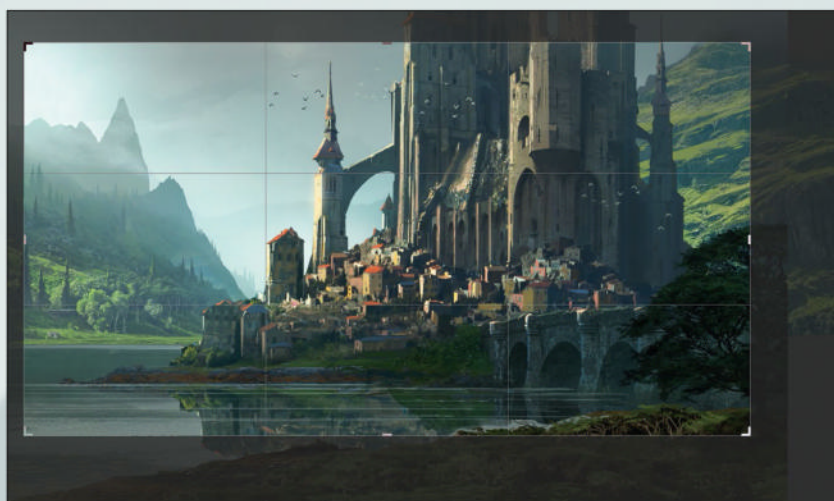
Usually I add some characters to my scenes to enhance the sense of scale, but also to give a sense of storytelling. I find in this case that the fortress itself is enough and I also want to consider it as the main character of the scene. I add some life, with the birds along the huge towers and buttresses. I also want to have a feeling of calm, grandiose landscape with an epic, mysterious architecture as a central point of interest.



12 Lighting polish

To ensure that the light comes from the same direction, I accentuate some light on a few key spots: the edges of the arches, on the top of the mountain on the left, and on the side of the castle. These touches will reinforce the direction of the light source in the setting.

I also want to have a stronger focal point in the scene, so I use the Dodge tool to darken some areas and lighten others. This stage is key to the whole painting process. I can really polish the lighting in various areas with this tool, and create vignettes in the corners to direct attention away from them. I use the Dodge Tool in Highlight mode, at 10 per cent. Using the Alt key enables me to switch between the darkening and brightening tool.



13 Re-cropping and filtering

Almost done! It's time to play around with filters a bit and try to crop my image, and again take another step back from the screen. Maybe the image works better if it's cropped? Sometimes, when the focal point feels a little lost, it helps to recentre it. And it can be interesting to test different options with the Rule of Thirds. Often we tend to put too much in the composition. We also might have made the corners too busy! It's time to get rid of these mistakes and crop in on the interesting parts of your image.

Filters can be applied to introduce some texture and blend the colours more. I like to simplify the details with a subtle use of the Smart Blur filter. There's also a way to use textures such as Stucco in Overlay mode on a separate layer at a very low Opacity, to add complexity to the blending of the colours. And this is the finished image! I hope you like it and have fun creating your own stuff! Remember: composition first, details after. 🍷

PRO SECRETS

Set up custom shortcuts

I set up a shortcut (F1) for the horizontal flip, as I often flip my image to get fresh eyes on it. It's good when you have a lot of layers to work with. The less you have in your stack (F7), the easier it is to find elements. I usually group layers by topics or depth planes (foreground and so on).

Artist insight

KNOW YOURSELF - KNOW YOUR TOOLS

Thomas Scholes shares his tools and process to help you stay motivated and creative, while also becoming potentially even more productive

Artist PROFILE

Thomas Scholes
LOCATION: US

Thomas is a freelance concept artist from Seattle, specialising in environments and pre-production development.
www.artofscholes.com

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

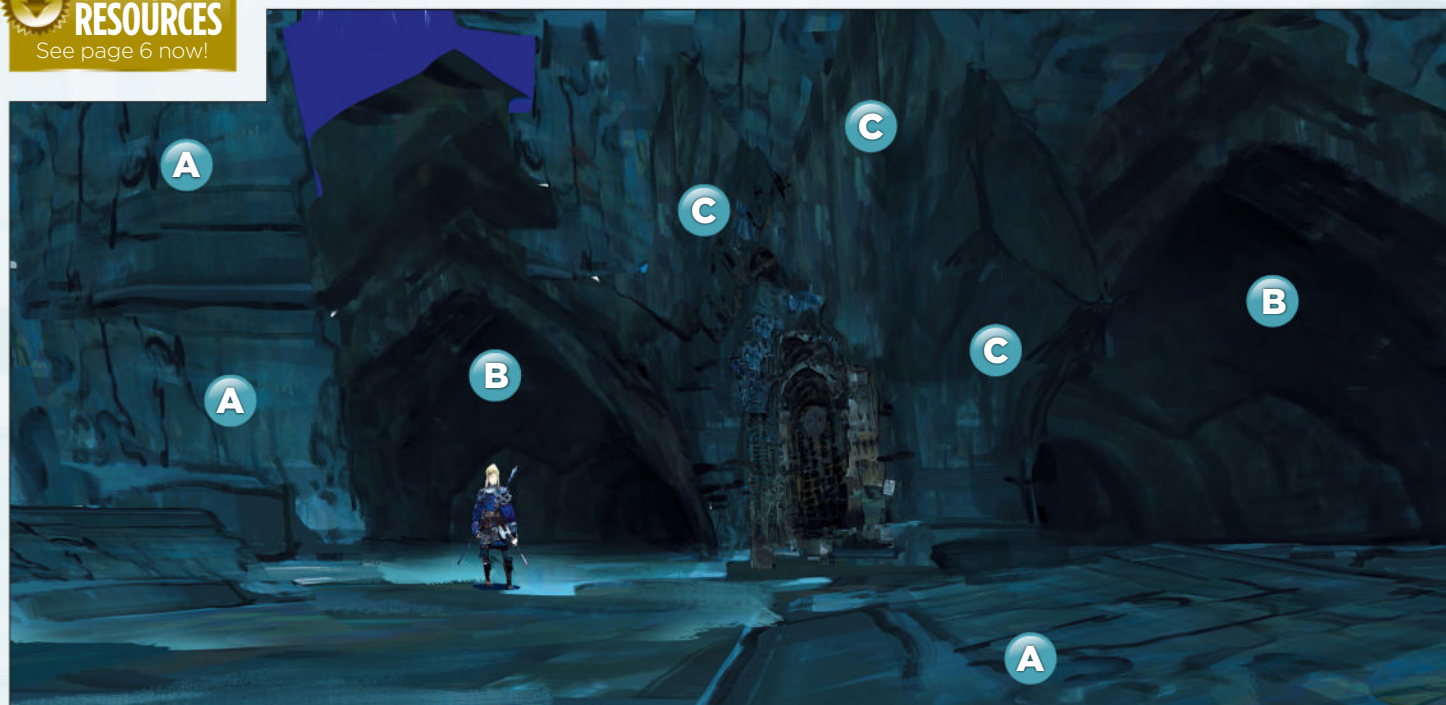
As I'm sure every student and professional will agree, it's rare to spend time exploring your own interests. The truth is that work often demands immediate results and there's no time for mistakes.

The shame here is that mistakes often contain the keys to continued success. If we can't afford to make mistakes, we can't progress. The idealist in me could nearly commit fully to artistic research and experimentation, but the pragmatist in me takes the lesson as this: fail more, fail faster but fail at the lowest cost possible.

In May 2015, I set out to complete and publish an image a day. My goal wasn't to produce a large quantity of work in a short time, but to create work I was happy with each day. The daily quota kept me from unrealistically over-investing in anything, but also prevented me falling victim to my insecurities and holding off until I deemed a piece completely worthy to display. Some images were done in the time available each day, others were iterated upon and improved slowly over the days and weeks of the month, and a few contained ideas and elements that

had been left unresolved and shelved at some point over the past several years.

This workshop features a sample of my art from that month, the Photoshop tools I employed and the processes I used and discovered. I'm hoping that in sharing this information I'll encourage you not to be more like me as an artist, but to be more like yourself as an artist. Please feel free to use these tools in your own way and put your own twists on these ideas, and then share them willingly. You'll learn as much from the diversity of others as you will from your own nature.



1 WASTE NOT, WANT NOT

The catalysts for this image are just three simple recycled parts reused multiple times to craft the idea and structure of an interior. Once the space was resolved I salvaged a doorway from another dead-end sketch that was also built from modular parts. The skills involved in a modular process are familiar to anyone who has played with toy blocks or LEGO, in that your options are few and restrictions many, but this limited palette has its own charm and creative advantage: simple shapes and simple places are the perfect primer to help spark simple stories.

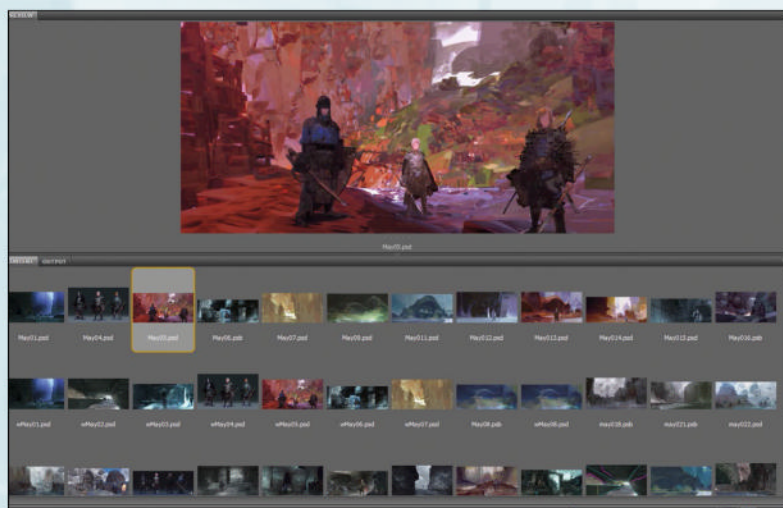
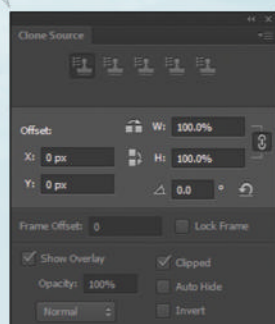


2 ORGANISE YOUR MODULAR APPROACH

Taking the modular concept a step further, it's a great idea to have your building blocks and elements separated, organised and ready to use when you need them. It's okay to group them haphazardly, as you won't always – and, if creatively minded, shouldn't always – know what you're looking for. The idea here is simply to save time and have your tools on hand so you don't interrupt your momentum. Even a moment's fumbling is enough to ruin the flow.

3 KNOW THE CLONE SOURCE PANEL

The Clone Stamp has long been a favourite tool in my process. Now's not the time to go into the details of how I use it, but take note of the Clone Source panel, which unlocks some of its best and – even though it was introduced back in Photoshop CS3 – often overlooked features. Most usefully, it grants you dynamic and immediate control over the magnification of your cloned source, from 0 to 400 per cent, as well as horizontal and vertical mirroring and rotation. With the magnification set in the range of between 300 and 400 per cent, I prefer painting with this tool rather than the paintbrush, because it can easily introduce much more texture and variety to your strokes and still remain a manageable workhorse.



4 BRIDGE MECHANICS

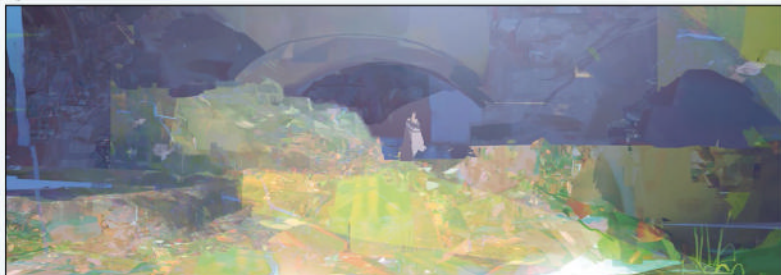
I keep just one bulk folder for the vast majority of my personal work and studies. This means that when I browse the contents with Adobe Bridge, it's easy to find something that piques my interest or strikes me as useful. Over time I've found it works best to take that initial energy you bring to a session and use it on the hardest work you can tolerate, which for me is usually the finish and polish stages, where there's little left to solve but still mileage to go before the job is

done. Once this energy has been used up I tend to switch to work that's still in the middle stages and has larger issues to be resolved. As I begin to work at solutions for these issues it seems my motivation to paint floods back. Finally, once I've expended that additional energy, the painting is usually near completion, ready to be polished another day, and I'm eager to start something new, knowing I can keep painting with the energy gained from brand new ideas, discoveries and problems to be solved. ➔

5 EXPLORE, THEN RE-EXPLORE

Work that feels like work is never my goal, but if work starts to feel like play then I know I'm on the right track. What greater gift can we give to ourselves than to discover as we create? Why not follow an image's natural potential rather than what we expect of it? When expectations are involved, it creates the immediate possibility of a wrong answer, and there's so much more to learn if we're just open to seeing it. Notice something interesting or exciting in your image? Follow it. Have an idea that's intriguing but a departure? Copy your image into a new document and follow it! You won't have to worry about messing up and you might like the results more, or at the very least have something fresh you can bring back to the original image.

You won't always have the time to explore, but it's often the best thing to do when you're stuck, deadline or not. Often my own explorations can only be taken up to a point, and the best get saved out for another try, for another day or to use as a catalyst. The trick is to try and try again. But don't polish dirt: keep digging and sifting until you find gold.



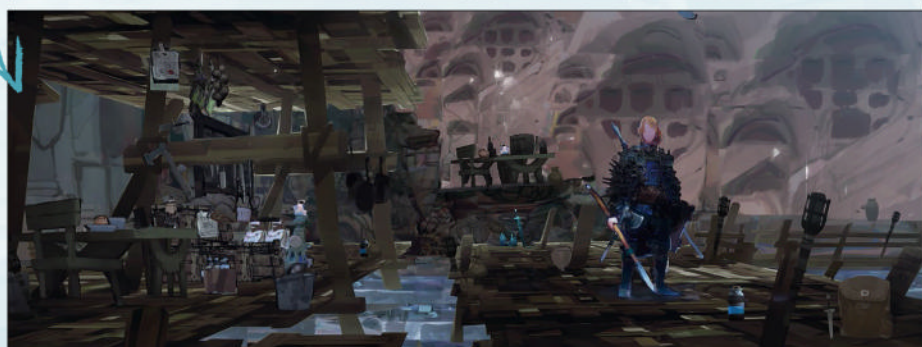
“If work feels like play, I'm on the right track. Explore your image, not what you expect of it”



6 TO THE BORDER

Sometimes the only way to truly understand an element or principle is to see how far you can take it. Explore it right up to the border of your understanding – and hopefully a little bit further still – and then come back to civilisation to store your findings. In this image I wanted to see just how much of an existing asset could I recycle and just how little I could paint but still enjoy the process and the results.

With that in mind I've borrowed the foreground structure from a painting done in 2011 (the small inset image), fully expecting a healthy challenge involved in crafting the existing perspective, lighting and palette towards a new idea. Why not try this for an hour? What have I got to lose? I have hundreds of dead-end sketches, what's one more? Doesn't a tree benefit from each branch, no matter how many or how few leaves it contains?



The crudely desaturated image

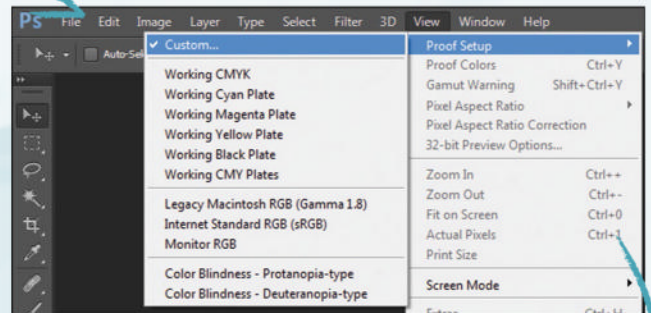


7 VALUE CHECK

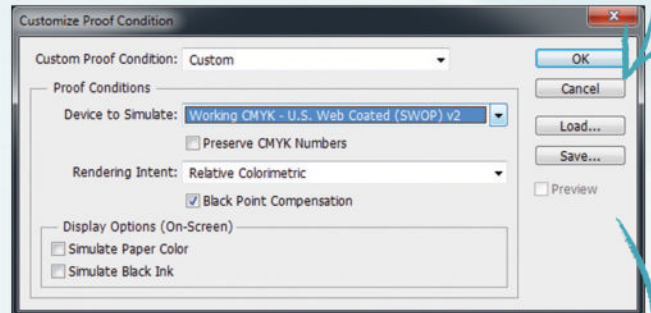
I'm sure you've heard it from a dozen different artists: value is king, check your values! Let's use the image from tip 5 (opposite) to talk about value and how to check it accurately in Photoshop. The most common methods I see use desaturation to translate a colour's value, but unfortunately this ignores the inherent value differences between the hues, and will give you poor results.

A greyscale version of the image is what we really need, but instead of the cumbersome process of converting it to greyscale there's an elegant method of achieving a

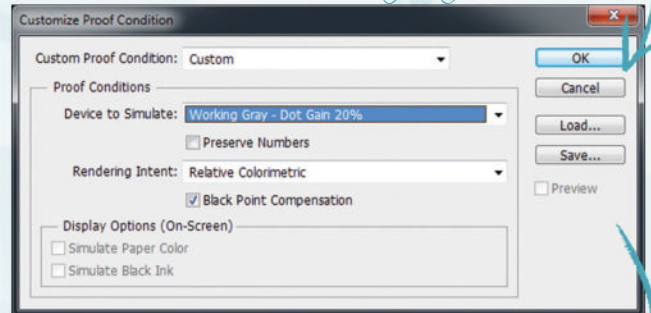
more accurate value analysis with Photoshop's Proof Colors function (Ctrl+Y). If you've tried it, chances are that your image just shifted into the default CMYK colour space – and if you're like me, you may have accidentally activated this shortcut in the past instead of Ctrl+T (Transform) and understandably been annoyed at the result. But you can turn what was an annoying slip into a new, if possibly unexpected, ally: go to View>Proof Setup>Custom, set Device to Simulate to Working Gray and click OK. The keyboard shortcut Ctrl+Y will now give you a useful, more accurate Value Check preview. ➡



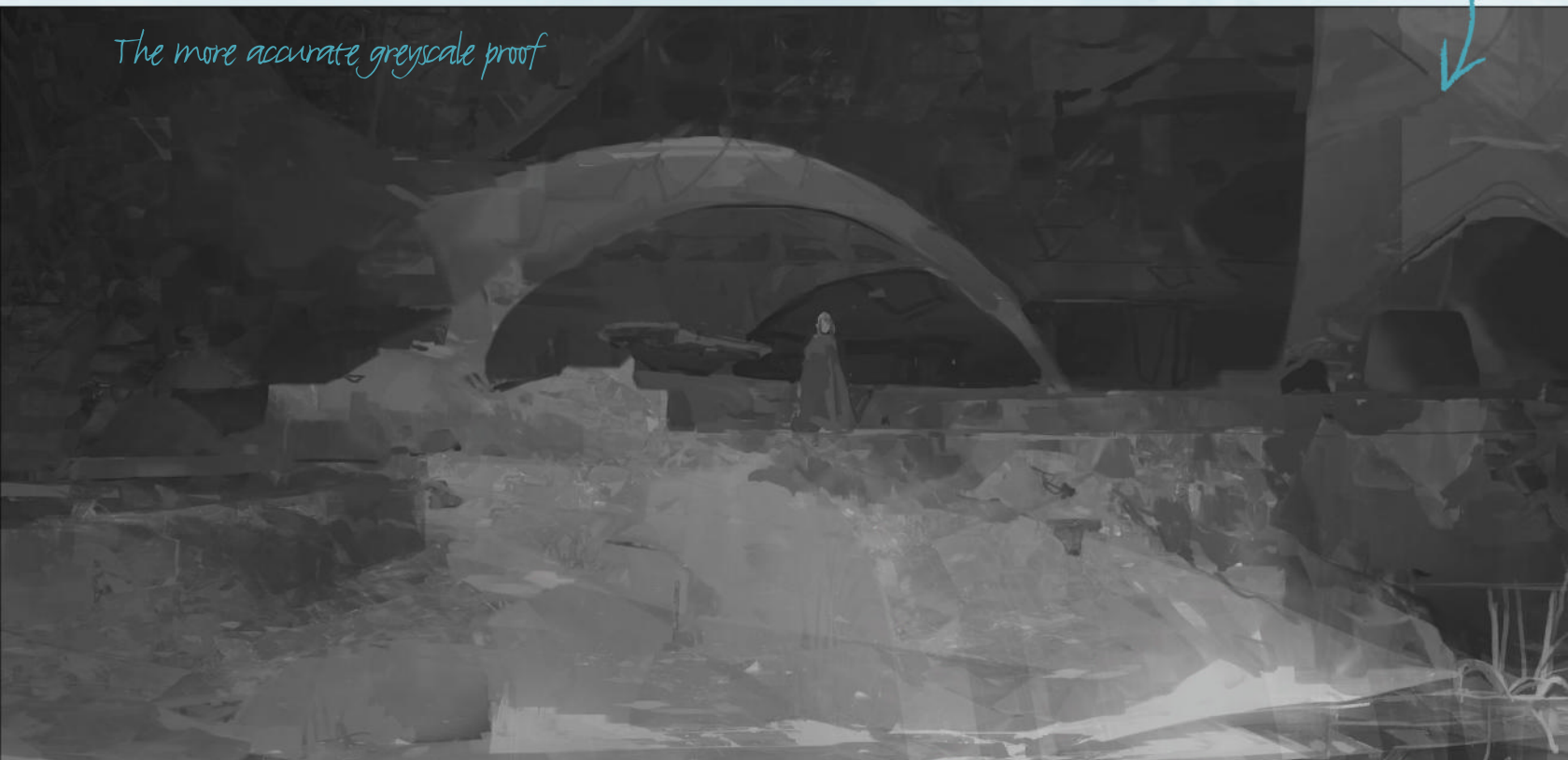
Open the Customize Proof Condition window...

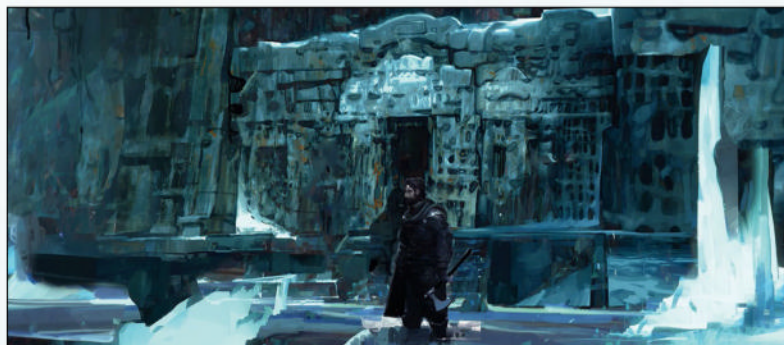


Switch Device to simulate to Working Gray



The more accurate greyscale proof





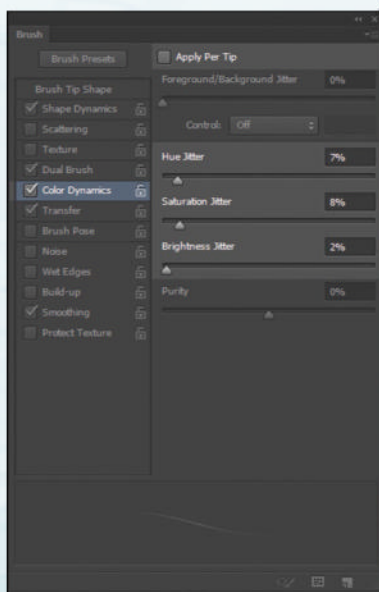
8 LIGHTING ROUND

Some sketches may have just one or two elements worth exploring, and aren't worth the investment to take to final. Yet rather than toss these away I try to extract the interesting elements whenever possible and combine them with previous and more stable results.

In this example I've introduced a more successful final painting on a Lighten layer over my sketch and have Color Balanced the original painting to suit the mood of the concept. Not all explorations like this pay off and invariably it takes a good mixture of educated guesses and a bit of luck, but at this point

the time invested is minimal and it's no great loss if it fails, but it's a near instant gain if there's any success.

I was pleased that I was able to get back and explore the idea and concept through this process, but wasn't entirely happy with the static composition. Rather than write this off as another dead end, I was curious to how I could solve this issue with the lowest cost and wanted to see what I could still do to introduce some dynamism by way of simple graphic lighting. With the use of a few gradients, layer modes and some polish, I do feel that the composition was made a bit more successful.



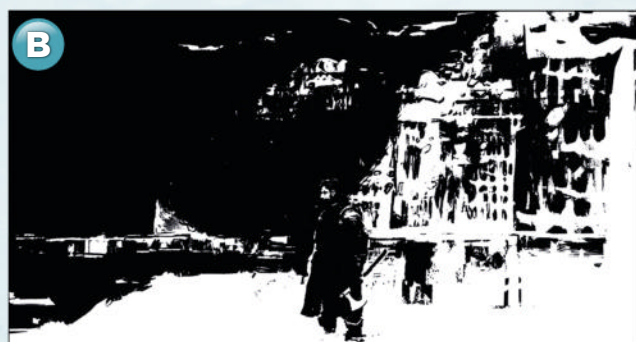
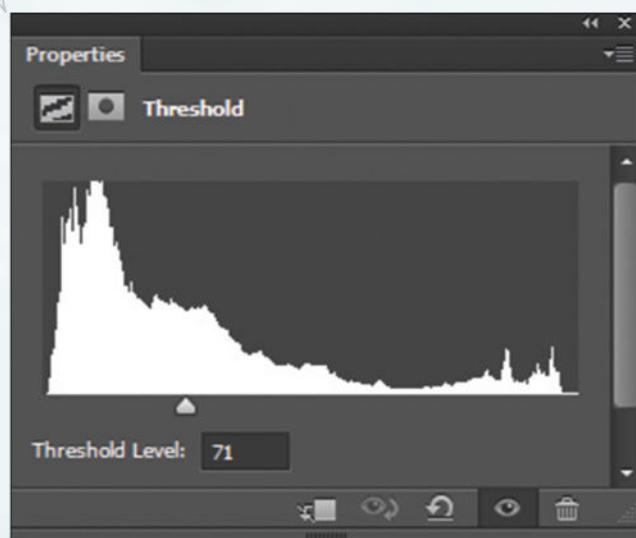
9 PIGMENT TO PIXEL

Although I love the Clone Stamp, there are plenty of tasks that only a paintbrush can perform. I recommend using Color Dynamics to introduce a healthy variety to brush strokes by utilising the Hue, Saturation and Brightness Jitter sliders. Go easiest on the Brightness setting: too much and it'll be impossible to control. Keep in mind we want just enough variety to create interest, not distractions! Most of all, make sure you untick the Apply Per Tip box at the top so that each Brush Stroke rather than each Brush Tip is altered.

10 IN ALL THINGS, VARIETY!

Let's use one of my favourite Photoshop tools, Threshold, to take a closer look at what my simple lighting changes did for the image in tip 8 (left). This tool enables you to reduce an image to black and white, and adjust the position of the midpoint. Image A below is far too chaotic and textured; it's hard to direct the audience with so much unordered variety. The lighting pass in Image B has camouflaged some of the noise and directed our attention through the use of value and shape contrast towards the character's face.

This legibility of light and dark is as important to an image as it is to human vision. Our eyes are much more concerned with the quantity of light they receive (value) rather than the dominant wavelength of the visible spectrum (hue) and purity thereof (saturation). This preference towards value, I presume, exists because it provides the greatest amount of information to identify and discern objects and their spatial relationships, and thus enables us to navigate and interact with our world. Make this light and shadow pattern legible and the shapes interesting, and you almost can't fail to make an interesting image.

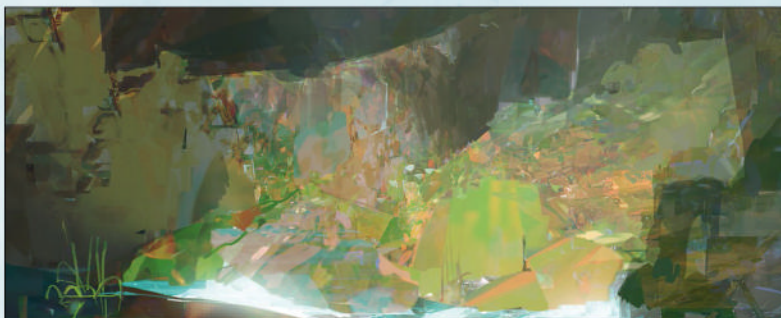
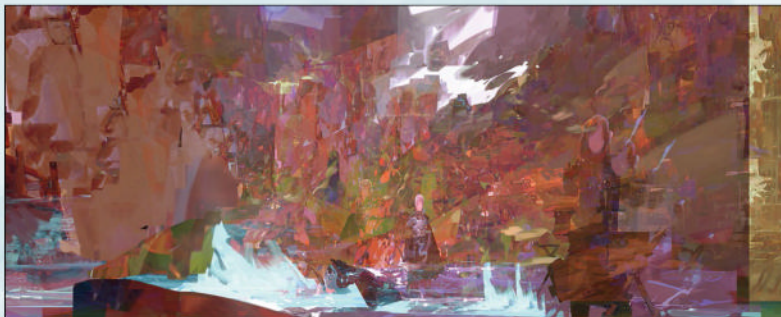




11 CHANGING HATS

The props in this scene could have been recreated and re-rendered from scratch, but having them on hand means I can work differently, think differently and find different solutions. I can become a set dresser or scene decorator and let the paintbrush rest. What's more, in reusing props I'm often able to pick them back up where I left off and enjoy the opportunity to take them either further or in a new direction. Even those I've left untouched this time give me the benefit of additional time and energy to spend elsewhere in the image.

“Some sketches may have just one or two elements worth exploring, but don't discard them – extract them and you can use them elsewhere”



12 GET MESSY

Even the most out-of-control mess may have potential if you spend some time with it. This image is layering at least half a dozen images selected at near random and was done as pure exploration; if an element helped create visual interest, abstract or otherwise, it stayed. Once there was enough

abstract potential built up, I aimed towards crafting a more tangible space. Some quick edits and lighting created a scene that, although I've not yet used it alone, has been a crucial catalyst for many paintings, both personal and professional, one of which you saw in tip 5. Don't be afraid to relax, control less and play more. ●

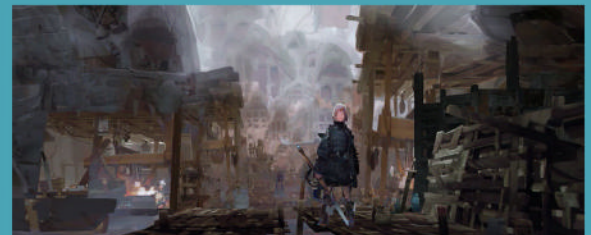
RINSE, REPEAT AND RENOVATE

Thomas explains how he applies his open, modular approach and mindset to creating an artwork



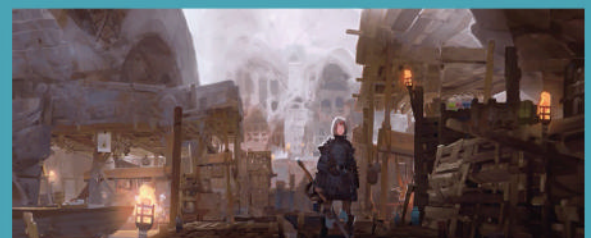
1 Building your set

Let's combine everything we've learned and see just how complex a scene we can create with these tools. I've combined several paintings for the background and am using assets from several others for entire structures. It's multiplicative rather than additive, paintings as medium rather than painting. Pay special attention to how much and how many times I've used the painting we've already discussed.



2 Casting the characters that fit

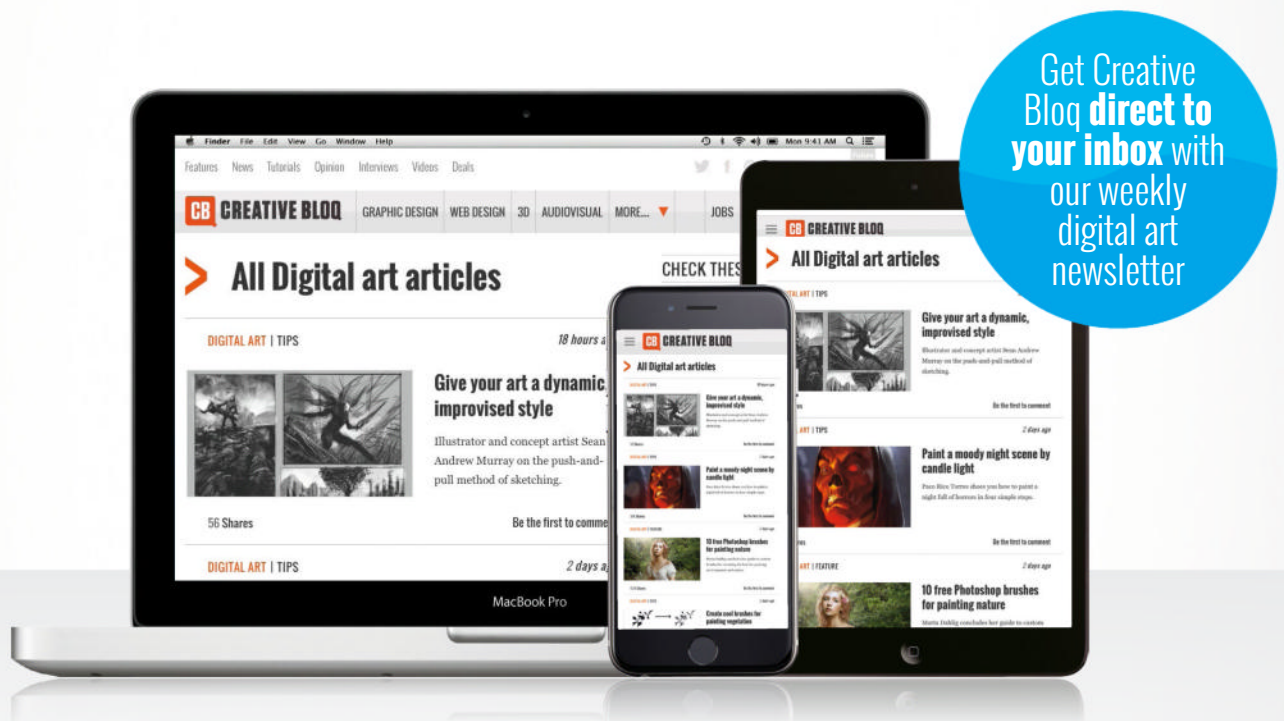
I use a similar process for my characters and generally work on batches of them isolated from the backgrounds. I'll usually wait until I have a good understanding of an environment before I'll 'cast' the right character, and I'm always looking for a natural fit. I'm happy to rework and add elements and lighting but I don't like to force it. If it doesn't work, I'll try to find a better fit later on for that character and will see who else could belong in the painting. It's been rather enjoyable to experience the narrative of the same character travelling through different scenes, and I've found that some of the best stories and moods have been created in this dynamic way rather than through a process of outright decisions.



3 Editing for graphic legibility

I've long thought of my role in the final stages of an image less as an artist or director and more as an editor, making sure that what I see and enjoy will be experienced by the audience. I do this by removing as many distractions and spatial errors or illusions as my skills and patience will allow. This legibility is, in my mind, as much about realism and rendering as it is abstraction and graphic design.

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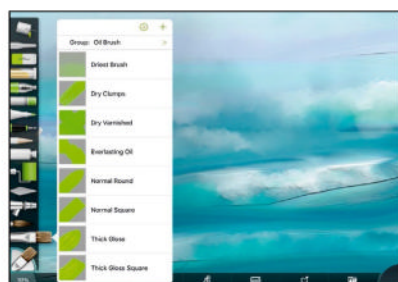
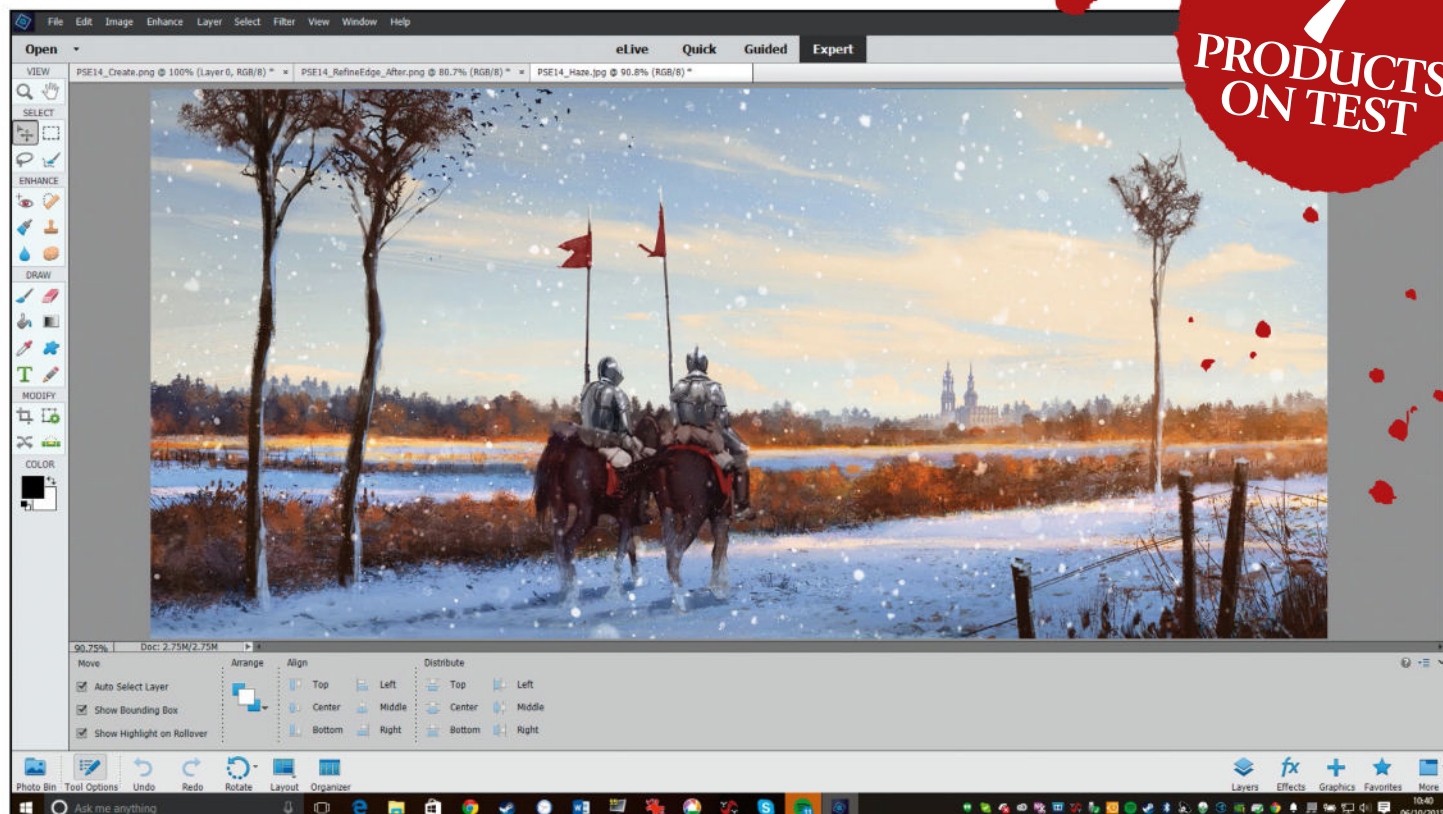
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX Reviews



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...

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PRODUCTS
ON TEST



SOFTWARE

106 Photoshop Elements 14

Adobe's stripped-back version of its popular software has a few new features, but embraces social networking in a big way. We find out if this was a good or bad move.

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Discover why the veteran iPad painting app can still pack a punch.

HARDWARE

109 Jot Dash

Adonit makes good the merits of a truly pen-like stylus. We help you decide whether it's worth a purchase.



TRAINING

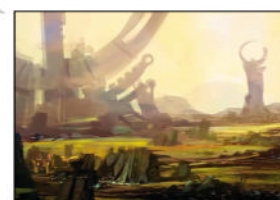
111 The First Sketch: Quickstart to World Creation

Concept artist Brian Yam offers a beginner-friendly guide to his craft that's deeper than it seems.

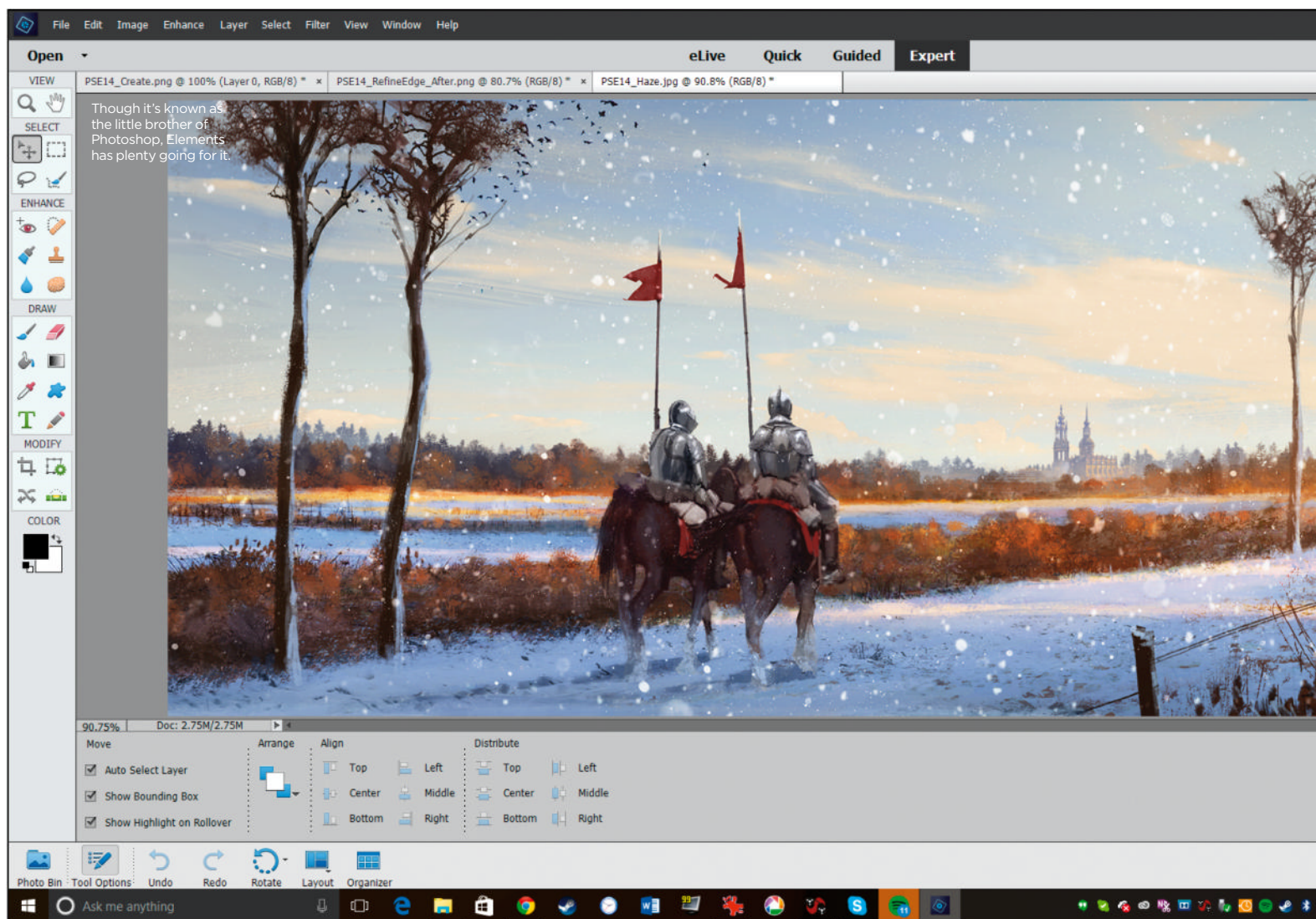
BOOKS

112 Further reading

The Art of Dave Seeley; Digital Painting Techniques: Volume 7; The Art of Rocksteady's Batman.



RATINGS EXPLAINED Magnificent Great Good Poor Atrocious



Photoshop Elements 14



ELEMENTAL POWERS Adobe's stripped-back version of its popular software embraces social networking, but will this move suit the budget-conscious digital art community?

Price £79 (£65 to upgrade) **Company** Adobe **Web** www.adobe.com

You might be tempted to dismiss Photoshop Elements out of hand. It's the Fisher Price version of Photoshop CC. The PG-13 cut. It's the kind of software your uncle uses. Boot it up and it brims with social media features: Facebook photo compilations, YouTube montages, Twitter sharing. And there's a quick edit feature so your uncle can perform vital adjustments, such as removing those dreaded red eyes.

Yet tucked away beneath this veneer of consumer-friendly features and enormous icons there's a semblance of the full-blown Photoshop CC. And, as

usual, the best features from the latest edition of CC have trickled down into this version of the software.

One of CC's most amazing recent additions was its Haze tools. Not only can these remove atmospheric artefacts from murky photos, but they can also add haze. Elements' version, however, is simply for removing haze, which means you can't add mysterious fog to your background layers. It's still a clever addition, but photo editors will use it more than digital artists.

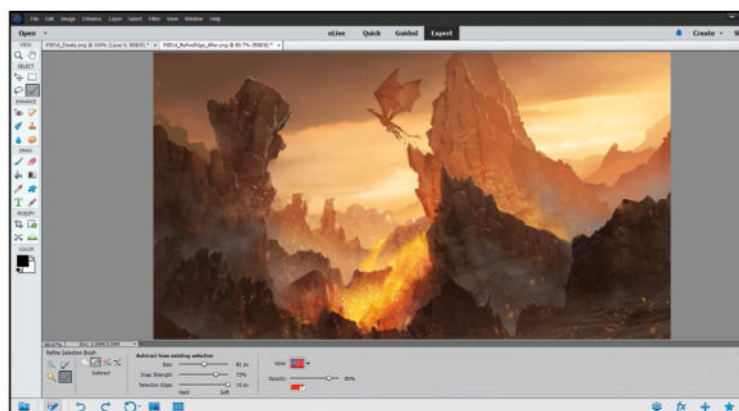
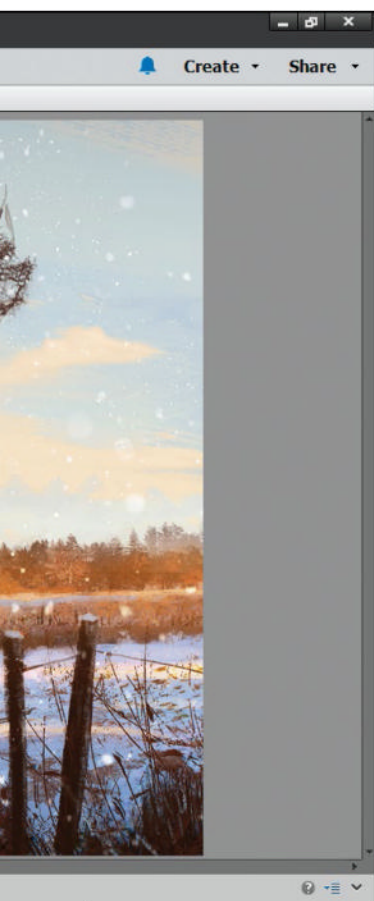
More useful is a Smart Selection tool. We often wake up in a cold sweat thanks to the nightmares of cutting out fine wisps of hair. In Elements you can

Most digital artists would prefer to have the ability to add haze than remove it.

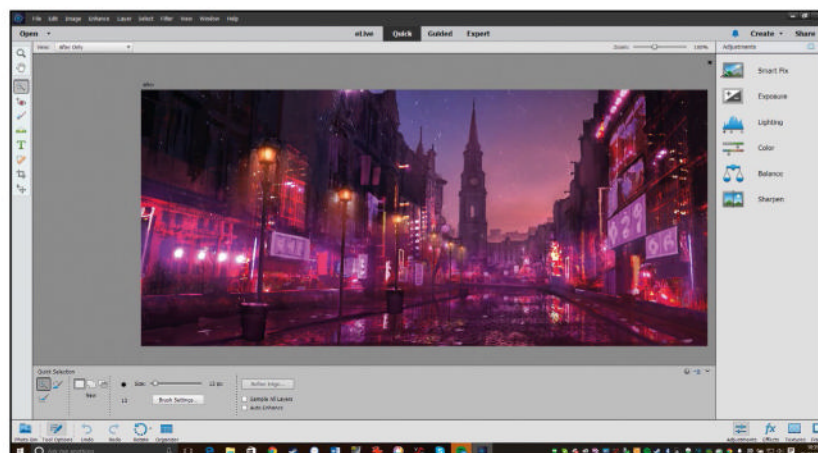
create a broad selection, then fine-tune it to tackle more detailed areas with the stroke of a brush. It makes selecting intricate and ill-defined characters a breeze, and it's particularly useful if recomposing someone else's art.

Elements lacks Photoshop's more advanced features. There's no Magnetic lasso, no 3D functions and

“At £79 it's good value for money, but you can pick up a year-long subscription to Photoshop CC for £105”



As you might expect, Elements lacks some of Photoshop's more advanced features, such as the Magnetic lasso, 3D functions and vector tools for example.



no vector tools. You will find all the essentials here, though: blur filters, a selection of brushes and transform tools will get you started with painting digitally, and it's tablet compatible so you can draw and paint just as you would in the real world.

The elephant in the room here is the price. At £79 it's good value for money as standalone software, but thanks to Adobe's weird pricing structure you can pick up a year-long subscription to Photoshop CC for £105. For that extra £25 you get the full Photoshop experience, with all the plug-ins and brushes you can chuck at it, as well as Adobe's Lightroom professional file

organiser. Yes, it's an annual cost, but think of what you could achieve with Photoshop CC in a year!

There's an exception, though – and that's if you're an absolute beginner. The guided tutorials included in Photoshop Elements are so hands-on that they practically glue your fingers to your stylus. They cover everything from colour tweaks to recomposition, and they're a great way to learn the basics and gently ramp up to the advanced features. We recommend this approach for anyone who's yet to reach Photoshop first base, followed by enrolment in CC once you get to grips with it. 🍌

All the essentials are included: blur filters, a selection of brushes and transform tools, to get you started.

Adobe puts all Elements' most eye-catching features up front, so you can quickly improve your photos with some impressive effects.

DETAILS

Features

- Shake removal
- Haze removal
- Guided edits
- Improved selection
- Facial recognition and search
- Custom photo looks
- Photomerge compose/group shots/panorama
- Object move
- Auto crops
- Social media sharing

System Requirements

PC: Windows 7 or later; 1.6GHz processor or faster; 2GB RAM; 5GB hard drive space
Mac: OS X 10.9 or later; 64-bit Intel processor; 2GB RAM; 5GB hard drive space

Rating



IN FOCUS THREE ELEMENTARY ALTERNATIVES

£80 gets you a lot of art program for not a lot of cash

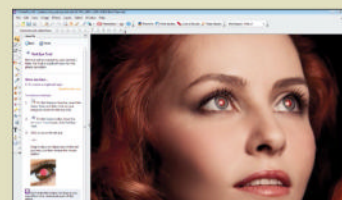


Paint Shop Pro X8 Ultimate

Web www.paintshoppro.com

Price £80

Sitting on the fence between Elements' ease of use and CC's plentiful features mean Corel's latest doesn't deliver the best of both. But extra creative software makes it worth the price.



PhotoPlus X8

Web www.serif.com

Price £80

PhotoPlus plays second fiddle to Paint Shop Pro, but it has some cool tricks up its sleeve. It now includes Surface Blur, as well as a defringe feature for intricate selections. Sound familiar?



Manga Studio 5

Web <http://my.smithmicro.com>

Price £32

What started as a specialist sequential art program is fast becoming a decent digital image studio unto itself, and even comes with Clip Studio Paint Pro. And you get all this for less than half the price of Elements.

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ArtRage 2.0.2 is optimised for the iPad Pro and Apple Pencil, both expensive artistic luxuries.



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PAINT FIGHT The veteran iPad painting app still packs a punch

Price £3.99

Company Ambient Design

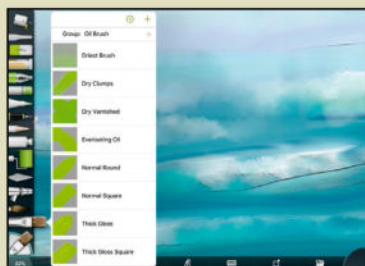
Web www.artrage.com

RATING

ArtRage was one of the first painting apps for the iPad, so it's enjoyed some refinement. Its oil and watercolour painting tools are the most natural-feeling you'll find, and the app includes a range of brushes, pencils, markers, an airbrush and more.

The brushes in particular are very customisable, enabling you to adjust size, pressure, paint load and bleed. You can also change the canvas to wet or dry. Blended layer modes and a History tool are included, reference images can be imported and you're able to save creations in different file formats for export. Those familiar with the desktop ArtRage will note that Effects and Utility tools are missing.

But there's plenty to keep things interesting – including the ability to record strokes for later playback.



ArtRage's longevity and popularity are testament to its solid range of art tools.

Jot Dash

TIP OFF Adonit makes a fine point about the merits of a truly pen-like stylus, with an impressive 1.9mm tip

Price £40 **Company** Adonit **Web** www.adonit.net

We've seen lots of Jots from Adonit, but the Dash has to be the thinnest electronic stylus from the company yet. The tip is just 1.9mm, while the clip-and-carry body has an 8mm diameter. Compare that to the 12mm of LynkTec's Rechargeable Apex stylus. The result is a balanced, pen-like feel that's comfortable, light and extremely precise to use.

How is this achieved? Bluetooth is nice if the apps you use support it, but the fact is that many writing and sketching apps don't. Adonit has therefore dropped the Bluetooth technology found in its earlier styluses, in favour of a more simplified feature set that works with any app or device you care to throw at it.

The drawback is that there's no palm rejection or pressure sensitivity, and no extra button support. But if you're just using the Dash to sketch a quick scene or mock up a storyboard, its lack of Bluetooth is no big loss. It even works as a navigational tool for swiping through screens to find your preferred sketching app.

A quick click on the top of the Dash turns it on, generating an electric field that simulates the conductivity of a human finger. It's powered by a rechargeable battery and Adonit quotes 14 hours' charging time – the power LED stayed lit throughout a



A click is all it takes for you to begin using the universally compatible stylus.

week of evenings testing the device with the Evernote, Paper and Notability apps. Mounting the pen in the neat little magnetic USB charging dock brought the pen back to full charge in under half an hour.

If you're looking for a simple, convenient, long-lasting stylus that you can pick up and start writing and sketching with just like a traditional pen straight away, then the Dash is ideal. But painting folks seeking different strokes should look at Bluetooth alternatives, such as the Jot Touch.



The Jot Dash is available in black and silver.



By dropping Bluetooth, Adonit has crafted a light and refined note-taking and sketching tool.

DETAILS

Features

- 1.9mm fine tip
- 14 hours' battery life
- 45 minutes charge time
- iOS & Android compatibility
- Single-click activation
- Carrying clip
- Charging dock
- Aluminium body
- 8.5mm diameter
- 141mm length

System Requirements

Works with Android and iOS devices

Rating

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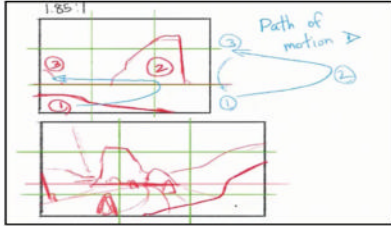
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The early stages of the video present some basic compositional ideas in a direct way that beginners will certainly appreciate.

As Brian draws these thumbnails, he talks about how balancing big shapes against small ones injects energy into the scene.



Brian uses examples drawn from across his career to show how he implements the principles he discusses on a daily basis.

The First Sketch: Quickstart to World Creation

ADDED VALUES Film and video game concept artist Brian Yam offers a beginner-friendly guide to his craft that's deeper than it seems

Publisher Game School Online **Price** £1.96 **Format** Video stream **Web** www.gameschoolonline.com

This short and sweet video comes from Game School Online as it branches out from its popular podcast into video tutorials. The First Sketch is offered through Vimeo's On Demand service: you can watch a trailer, then pay the small fee to keep the video. Unfortunately, there's no download option, so while the video stream is of a high quality, you're dependent on Game School Online keeping the video online.

At less than £2 for this tutorial, though, it's hardly a high-stakes gamble; and despite its brevity, Brian Yam's video offers plenty of food for thought, especially if you're relatively new to creating art. Brian shows you how to progress from blank page (or screen) to completing your first value study, and how to solve your biggest creative challenges along the way.

Brian starts in quite simplistic fashion, rattling through some compositional basics such as the Rule



DETAILS

Topics covered

- The Rule of Thirds
- Paths of movement
- Conveying depth
- Selecting your perspective
- Low shots, high shots
- Visual rhythm
- Lighting the focal point
- Grouping values

Length
38 minutes



of Thirds and paths of movement with some annotated examples. This will be familiar ground to most, but thankfully his tour of thumbnails has more meat to it, as he shows how various choices of viewpoint affect the information the image conveys. You'll also discover how you can establish visual rhythm within your thumbnail.

The heart of the video awaits in the second half, however, where Brian takes one thumbnail and works it up into a value study. It's a pocket-sized masterclass in manipulating light and shadow to direct the viewer around a scene, touching on ideas like grouping value ranges to keep the depth you achieved in your thumbnail. By this stage, you're even prepared to forgive the audio track's occasional scrapes as Brian knocks his microphone and the constant background music.

There are few artists whose work wouldn't benefit from embracing the principles Brian presents here: it's quietly brilliant. ●

ARTIST PROFILE

BRIAN YAM

After graduating from UC Santa Cruz with a degree in biology, Brian worked in science for two years before deciding to pursue a career in art dedicated in the entertainment field. In 1999, he enrolled at Art Center College of Design, studying illustration to ignite what's become his career. After graduating in 2002, Brian found work developing concepts for games and film studios such as Insomniac Games and Naughty Dog. He's currently a concept artist at ImageMovers Digital.



www.drawingmantis.com



The Art of Dave Seeley



MIX 'N' MATCH Epic is a word that gets bandied about a lot, but in the case of this collection of Dave's work, it's fully justified

Editor Chris Prince **Publisher** Titan Books **Price** £30 **Web** www.titanbooks.com **Available** Now

You know when a book is about to take you on an epic journey when you realise you've just been staring at pages four and five for the past 10 minutes. The image under close inspection is Dave Seeley's 2011 *The Unincorporated Future* for *Tor Books*, and is a great introduction to this illustrator's passion for detail.

Back in January 2009 we interviewed Dave, being the obsessed-with-process types that we are. We were intrigued by his work: pieces of grand space opera and unadulterated machismo-fuelled art, each one a stunning example of high-definition photorealistic imagery.

His approach sucked us into the narrative, while dynamic compositions grabbed and yanked us into fantastic worlds and action-packed scenarios. We guessed that a camera was involved somewhere along the line, but

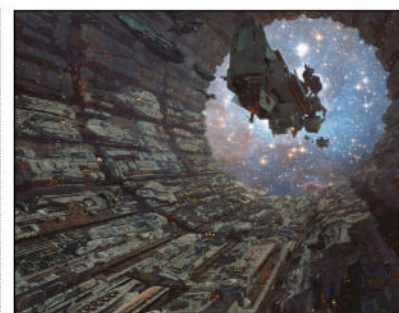


Snapshots of Dave's work process behind the cover for *Combat-K: War Machine*.

we assumed it was simply studio-based photographic reference Dave had taken. Turns out it went a little deeper than that...

Growing up in what sounds like a very creative environment, Dave was already fostering a healthy obsession with imagery, hoarding clippings from magazines, pinned to walls or stored in files. After walking away from a successful career in architecture to pursue more soul-food work within illustration, Dave's first commercial art gig came via painting buddy Rick Berry for the trading-card game *Heresy: Kingdom Come*.

How would this influence his painting approach? In the book the artist explains that although the work that followed kept the wolf from the door, the trading-card size restriction just wasn't scratching his detail itch. The desire to work larger found him gravitating to book jackets. Around this



Dave's *The Unincorporated Future* is detailed enough to take up 10 minutes of anyone's time.

time Dave had been collaging photos together in software and outputting the results, then painting on top of them using traditional media to *Frankenstein* his illustrations. When a potential client saw an example of this and subsequently hired him, the process die was cast.

Throughout the book we see how effective this approach has been. It's a refreshing reminder that how you get to the final image is fairly insignificant compared to the outcome. More notable though is how, in more recent work, the brush is coming to the fore, the marks are more prominent, and lost and found edges are replacing the hard focus of earlier pieces. Yet it all still feels, well... epic.

RATING



Digital Painting Techniques: Volume 7

SO MUCH VOLUME Another year, another selection of workshop greatest hits from the previously PDF-only 2D Artist magazine

Editor Simon Morse **Publisher** 3D Total Publishing **Price** £30 **Web** www.3dtotal.com **Available** Now

As we leaf through another great edition of Digital Painting Techniques we can't help experiencing a little déjà vu - in a good way! Featuring many tutorials repurposed from 2D Artist magazine, which is 3D Total Publishing's PDF-only mag, there's a rich array of workshops here, from creature design to vehicles and breathtakingly beautiful pin-ups, like Caroline Gariba's cover image.

The quality of the work is superb, and the range of artists, styles and



genres will appeal to all fans of digital art. The tutorials assume a level of software proficiency, but aren't inaccessible. Some tutorials, like René Chio's hazy light stylized female, feature welcomed annotations and boxes of tips that give it a nice pace - not all just columns of text.

If there's a criticism to level here, it's that there's so much covered, that one may not know where to start.

Potentially theming future volumes may get round this, but clearly there's a demand and interest for everything and the kitchen sink approach to tutorial-based books. If you get this book, you will at least get some great tips on understanding volume, the importance of sketching, and a heap of cool digital shortcuts and tricks.

RATING



Andrei Peruvkhin's Filipino witch is just one of over 30 workshops presented in the book.

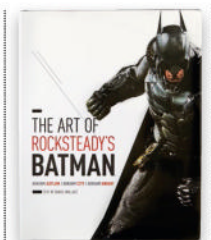
The Art of Rocksteady's Batman

HOLY CONCEPT! This is an impressive, detailed tome that shines the Bat Signal over the work of this creative London-based developer

Author Daniel Wallace **Publisher** Abrams Books **Price** £25 **Web** www.abramsbooks.com **Available** Now

Developing a game for an intellectual property like DC's Batman is a blessing and a curse. You're blessed with characters and lore that your audience are already familiar with, there's a wealth of costumes and gadgets to choose from, and every nook 'n' cranny of their world has been previously detailed.

Too much choice can be a curse, though - or at least a huge challenge. How do you decide which direction to pursue in order to appeal to both



gamers, comic-book and movie fans alike, while injecting your own ingredients into the toxic vat? Rocksteady's answer was to give its concept art team free rein to explore Gotham's dark avenues, to reveal their unique Arkhamverse.

Over the course of 320 pages we discover an array of weapon and vehicle concepts, and an abundance of character development: highlights

include ImagineFX regular Kan Muftic having fun painting Gotham's protector. You often hear about settings within narratives becoming characters in their own right. This is evident in the open-world games of the Arkham series, so it only seems fitting that there's a definite leaning towards environment art gracing these pages.

RATING



Kan Muftic's paints the Dark Knight watching over the dangerous streets of Gotham.

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FANTASY

illustrator



HOW TO... PULL VIEWERS INTO YOUR ART

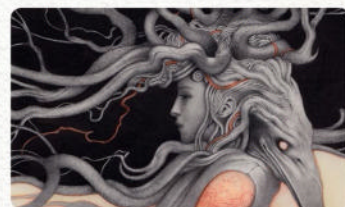
Brom uses contrast, lighting and detail to introduce a demon king **Page 122**

This issue:



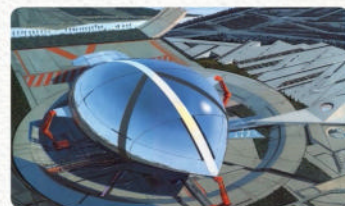
116 Embrace oils

Rebecca Guay's romantic secrets.



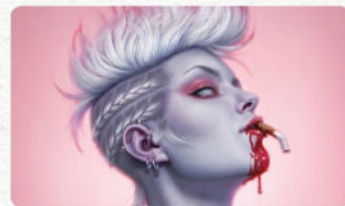
118 Give your art rhythm

Allen Williams shares his tips.



124 Paint an illusion

Syd Mead goes into detail.



130 First impressions

Dan Dos Santos on ad work.

Oils

EMBRACE GOLD LEAF AND OILS

REBECCA GUAY exposes the secrets behind her unashamedly romantic artwork

Red Sugar is a 48x60-inch fixed diptych in oil and 23K gold leaf, on two canvases. It's a very personal work that was shown at the Jonathan LeVine Gallery back in August. The painting explores the ideas of sensuality and surrealism that have been central themes in all of my work since I made the shift to gallery work in 2011.

I drew the artwork in graphite and powdered graphite and water over canvas, which had been gessoed and sanded multiple time to achieve a smooth surface. I then worked in oil to complete the final piece. I wanted to convey the sensuality of the embracing figures in a dream-like environment while depicting the weight and the gravity of the metallic in the gold. Thus there are two contrasting aspects: the

heaviness of the gold versus the fleeting quality of the embrace. My figures are drifting over a graphic and barren yet beautiful landscape below, which again underlines the surreal flight of passion.

Red Sugar is an unabashedly romantic piece that I painted in earnest and without irony. But I believe it exists beyond its surface beauty. My hope is that there's emotional complexity on show as well: complexity in the dark and the light of the piece, the grip of the figures, the intensity of their bodies, the hands and faces, the gravity of the embrace – within the floating, surreal world.



Rebecca's early work comprised artwork for RPGs, card games, comics and children's books. She's since moved towards more gallery-led work, with large pieces created in oils. See her art at www.rebeccaguay.com.

THE REAL DEAL

I use real 23K gold leaf. The fake stuff is fake looking. I also glaze and paint over it as required, to make it feel part of the painting.

WORKING THE SURFACE

My use of layers and glazing over the drawing is key to creating the complex surface finish. I use transparent glazes as well as opaque paint, followed again by transparent glazing. This results in a subtle surface and interpretation of colour.

SOLIDIFY THE SCENE

Large, abstract elements, such as the area of red fabric around the figures, help to anchor the composition

Step by Step: Merging human gesture with gold leaf



1 GESTURE SKETCHES

I start all my images with emotion-based thumbnails in my sketch book. These are not beautiful or impressive drawings; rather, I see them as useful thinking tools driven by the feeling I want to convey. You can see in this preliminary sketch that I'm working out the emotion and the gestures between the figures. The unusual moment as their torsos press together and the position of the hands is very important.



2 PREPARING THE CANVAS

I take two 30x48-inch stretched canvases, sand them down, coat them with gesso and then carry out wet sanding between five or six layers of gesso. I want the surface to be velvety and smooth with very little "tooth" of the canvas left. In most cases I'll freehand my drawing on to the canvas (although I'll sometimes use a projector). I draw with a large, woodless graphite pencil and a brush with powdered graphite and water.



3 FINISHING TOUCHES

I usually use gold leaf in negative spaces and large graphic areas. Then I glaze the piece with Galkyd and finish it in oil paint. The final piece is given a coat of Gamvar to protect it. I prefer simple framing for my work these days, because ornate frames are a distraction and don't allow for the work to be seen in its own right. I use painted black slats: the most basic finish framing. I love its clean presentation.

SHAPES, NOT OBJECTS

Think of the elements in the image as tools of composition, rather than real-life objects. It's the shape of objects that matters, not the fact that it's hair, cloth and so on. The shapes work to bolster a strong composition.

FACE FACTS

If a face is shown in a piece then I make it as wonderful and enigmatic as possible. A boring or simply 'okay' face won't engage the viewer. Make it special!

HUMAN TOUCH

I consider where to depict specific and recognisable physical gestures, to make that emotional connection with the viewer.

THE HUMAN ELEMENT

A clear and deliberate gesture with the figures in the piece is essential. If the gesture between the two characters falls short, is static or uninteresting, then the piece itself fails.

MATERIALS

MEDIA

■ Galkyd and Gamsol by Gamblin.

PAINTS

■ Gamblin, David Davis, Grumbacher and Old Holland.

BRUSHES

■ Windsor & Newton and Rosemary.

LEAF

■ 23K gold transfer sheets from Gold Leaf Factory.

VARNISH

■ Gamvar by Gamblin.

Workshops

Pencil

GIVE YOUR ART RHYTHM AND SHAPE

ALLEN WILLIAMS plays with rhythm, shape, value and texture to create fantastical images that feel – and sometimes are – truly spontaneous

Drawing, for me, has been a long and crooked path. I can remember copying images from comic books well before I could read. My family travelled as I grew up. Comic books, pencil and paper are very portable, so that's what I usually had with me.

I drew nothing but creatures for a long time until, aged 15, I met another kid and fellow artist who only drew nude figures. His mother was, shall we say, progressive and to support his love of drawing would supply him with magazines featuring tasteful nudes.



For a long time my work was mostly concerned with the female form, and to this day anatomy still plays a huge part in my work, sometimes even in the more abstract work that I do. I put a lot of effort into chasing styles and techniques that I would emulate, integrate or disregard.

About 13 years ago, around the time my first child was born, I had the growing feeling I was overlooking something crucial. I came to realise that I hadn't spent much time exploring what I loved to do.

This was a dramatic turning point for me. I started paying close attention to what it was that most excited me to look

at. I had reached a point where, for whatever reason, I couldn't find a frame of reference for the images that I wanted to make. I took this as a good sign that I was on a more personal track, and that's what led me to the manner and content of the work I do today. Hopefully, this workshop will inspire you have faith in your own vision.



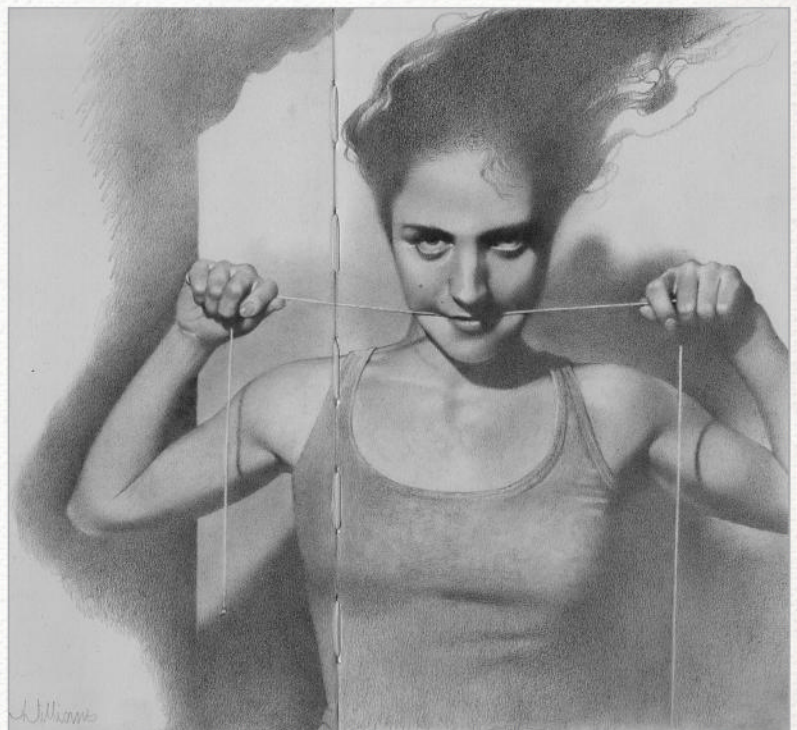
Award-winning illustrator, concept artist, fine artist and writer, Allen continues his passion for graphite every day, creating strange characters and creatures. See his art at www.allenwilliamsstudio.com.

1 Chose your own path

Before you pick up a pencil or brush, decide what is the purpose of your work: conceptual, personal, narrative, abstract, expressive? This decision – and often it's made on a piece-by-piece basis – can determine how you should proceed.

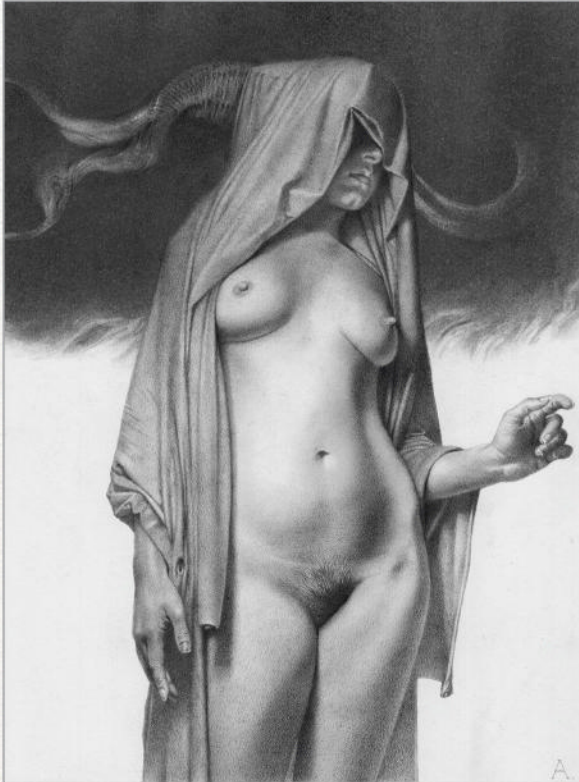
2 Knowledge is key

I have to say that you can make do with the most basic materials if you understand them thoroughly. In a pinch there's nothing wrong with a #2 pencil and a ream of plain white copy paper, but different tools have different qualities. Having a number of options can help keep your work fresh.



3 Your working surface

What kind of media do you want to work on? Digital or paper? If paper suits you most then, like me, bear in mind that you don't have to settle for one type or brand. In my opinion, you should have a variety of papers with different qualities that you've come to understand through your own experimentation. Smooth papers aid smooth renders. Rough papers aid textural renders. Sounds basic I know, but you'd be surprised at how many professionals struggle against their own media.



“You should have a variety of papers with different qualities that you’ve come to understand through your own work”

4 Use references to suit the piece

Reference can be models, nature or even out of the brain. I try to photograph all of my own reference, but I occasionally piece together (or ‘Frankenstein’) reference that I’ve found online. For figures I try to have the best reference I can afford. For natural reference, such as rocks and trees, I tend to shoot reference, study it and then put it away and work from the impressions left in my mind. Of course, all of that reference combines in my brain and that’s what causes the almost abstract quality of some of my art.

5 Take different approaches

If I’m doing concept work for a client I tend to follow a more formal process: sketch, line art, rendered drawing. It saves time in the initial concept phase if the sketches can be assessed before you waste time on an inappropriate rendering. When I do personal work I’ll begin drawing with the end result in mind. I’ll grow the creature out of a striking detail. That direction isn’t for everyone and you have to be sure of your ability to ‘find’ the form. It’s a fun way to work, and with practice can help you find shapes, forms and textures that you wouldn’t have necessarily thought of in the beginning. ➔



MATERIALS

PENCILS

- Tombow Mono100 4B
- Mitsubishi Hi Uni 10B

PAPER

- Stillman & Birn Zeta Series
- Fabriano Hot Press watercolour paper
- Stonehenge and Arches Hot Press watercolour paper (the reverse of the sheet)

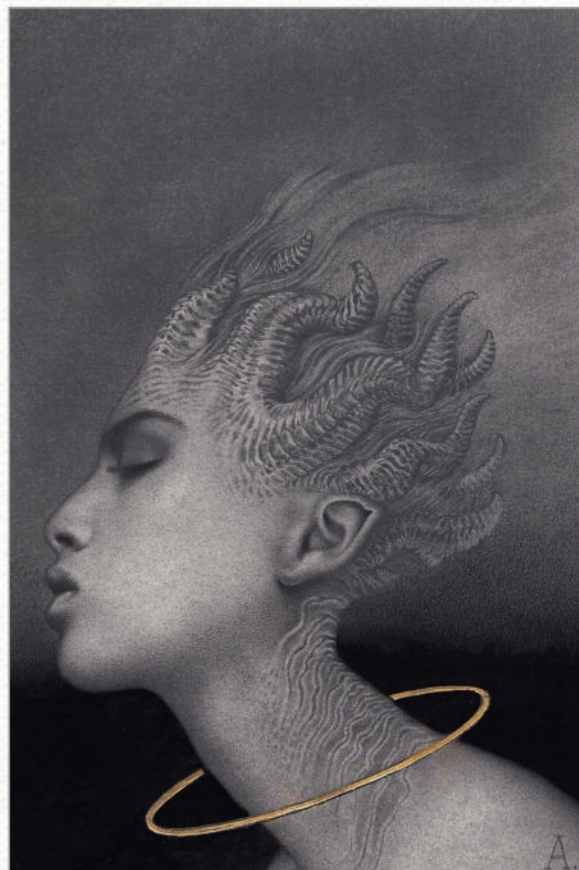
OTHER

- Kum Longpoint pencil sharpeners
- Dahle rotary sharpeners
- Graphite powder
- Kneaded erasers
- Pencil extenders to achieve the full life of a pencil
- Spray fixative
- Transparent acrylic matte medium

ARTIST INSIGHT

WHEN TO EXPLORE

Experiment as often as you can. Having said this, it's usually best to do it on non-client work, unless you have enough time to fail a few times.



ARTIST INSIGHT

TRY TO SEE THE BIGGER PICTURE

In your efforts to get better, don't forget to hold on to the things that you do well and realise that it's the differences in how you apply techniques that make your work unique.

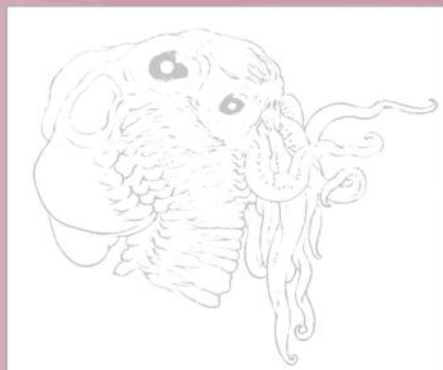
6 Rhythm and shape hierarchy

No matter what direction you take your art in, it's important to keep in mind the rhythm of the shapes within the work. This directly relates to shape hierarchy. It's really just another way of thinking about composition. Building interesting patterns of light and dark is a good skill to have. You don't want everything to be too similar in shape and size in your work because it can lead to an uninteresting or awkward rhythm (unless, of course, you knowingly deviate from that guideline).

7 Avoid designing around eyes

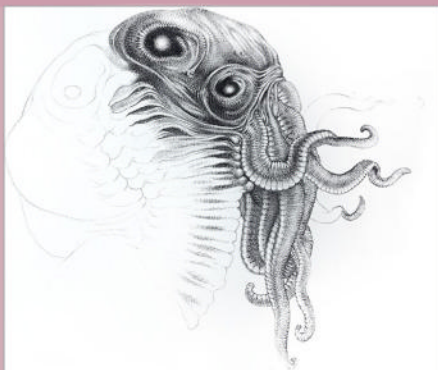
That's a rough and ready summary of something that Iain McCaig mentioned in one of his instructional videos. I'd like to give it a broader meaning here: try not to either design or conceive your creature, character or composition from the same starting place all the time. This is especially applicable if you find yourself producing images that feel like you've done them before.

Step by Step: Rhythm and shadows



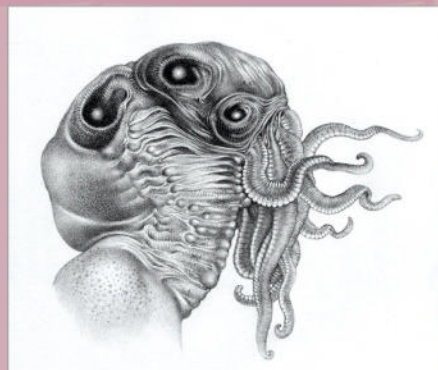
1 START BY EXPLORING

This is just a loose exploration of shapes and rhythm. I'm usually looking for pleasing shapes and interesting negative space. It's easy for me to get lost in finding details at any stage, and depending on my intentions for the piece I often just let go and explore in whatever direction the drawing seems to favour.



2 SCULPTING WITH SHADOWS

Now I find the shadows that will sculpt the form, image or composition. This can change the design and direction, and is a stage where you must be unafraid to use your eraser. Unless you have specific reference to draw from, you may have to chase the form until you find it. Once you find it, however, it may alter the form's hierarchy.



3 PUSHING THE VALUES

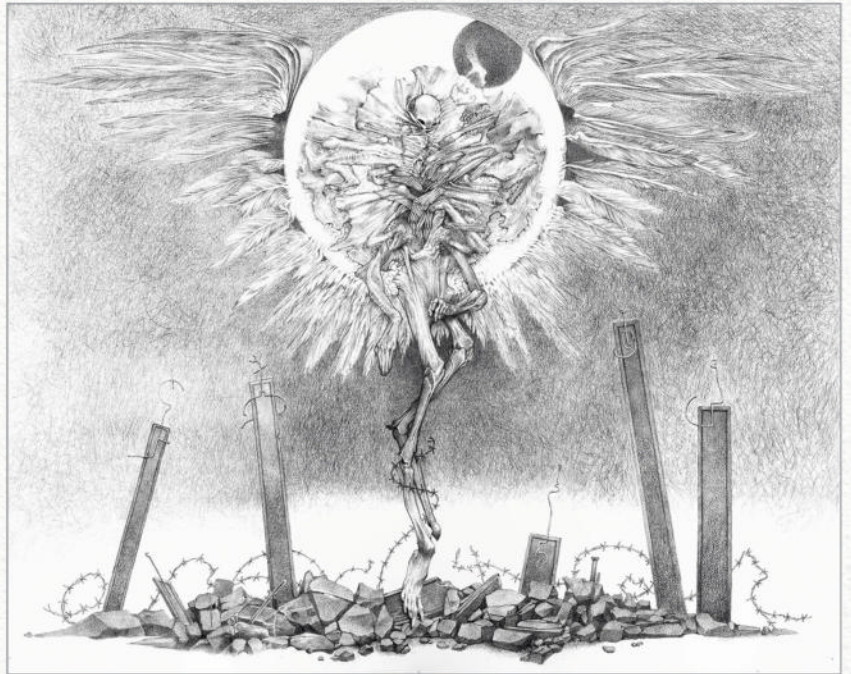
Now I push the render and look for values that need to be coaxied into place. Often this is the most fun stage of my drawing process, but significant changes can still happen within the piece. I try to stay open to the possibility that large areas might need to be erased and then redrawn at any stage.

8 *Lost and found edges*

It's very important to understand how edges create depth, resolve elements and imply dimensionality. With concept work, lost edges aren't always an issue. A clearly defined silhouette is often what's required but in illustration, personal work and so on, it tends to make an impression.

9 *Add matte fixative*

After a graphite piece reaches a certain point and everything is in place, I'll spray it with a matte fixative. When it's dry I use a broad soft brush and apply ultra-matte medium mixed with a bit of water (use a thick paper for this to work without buckling). This kills the graphite gloss but it also lightens the values a bit. You can now punch the value range if you tweak your image with a darker drawing tool, such as Nero black extra soft pencil or even Prismacolor black. The image will also scan better because it's all matte.



“It's very important to understand how edges create depth, resolve elements and imply dimensionality”

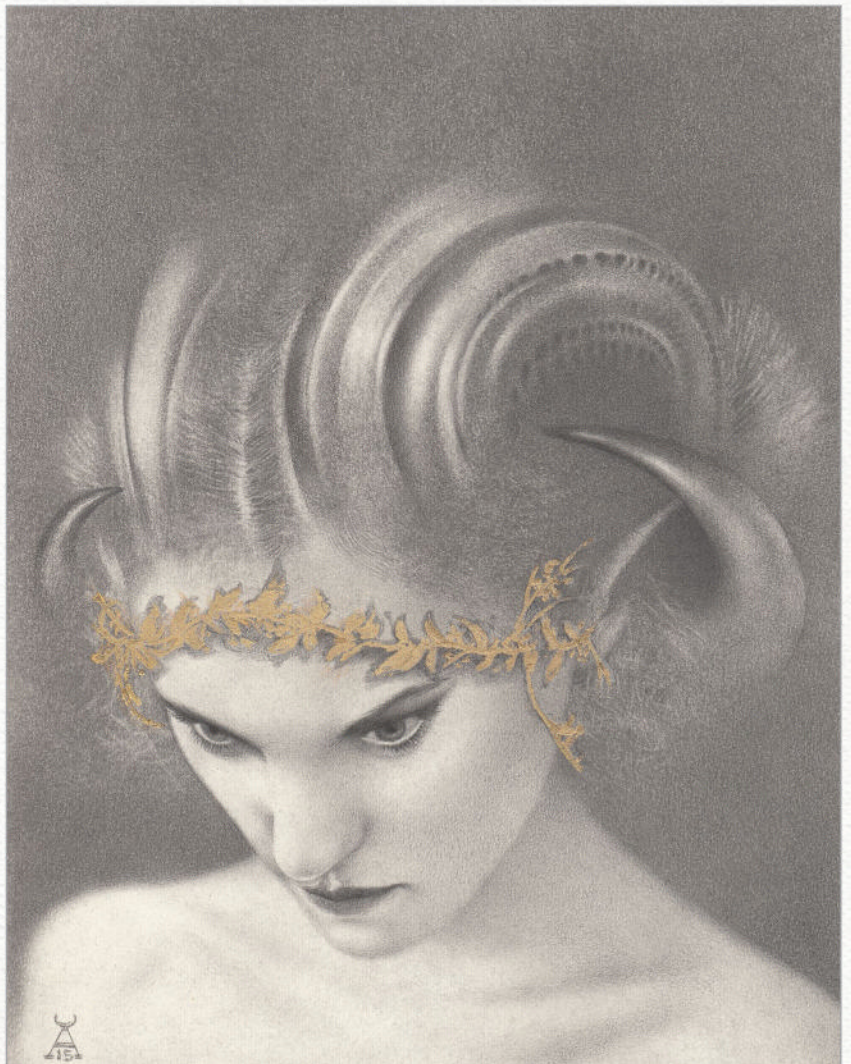


10 *Don't be afraid to get dirty*

As long as you clearly understand what your lightest value in a piece will be, light smudges and erased values that leave a grey ghost aren't any cause for alarm. Very many beginner artists' drawings are less successful because they leave too much white on the paper. In other words, there's not enough drawing in their drawing. I'm a very pale person, but the lightest areas of my skin are still darker in value than a white or even a cream-coloured piece of drawing paper.

11 *Rubbing for a reason*

Draw as much with an eraser as with a pencil. It's often much easier to find shapes and textures with the broad stroke of a kneaded eraser than with a pencil. I often discover my best accidents with the eraser.



Oils

Acrylics

PULL THE VIEWER INTO YOUR PAINTING

Discover how **BROM** uses elements of contrast, lighting and detail to introduce the viewer to a character from *Lost Gods*, his latest illustrated novel

Somewhere in my early 30s my love of painting began to wane. I found the cover work that I was doing to be repetitive and confining. I longed for more creative control and craved a vehicle to showcase my own characters and situations.

I've always considered myself a storyteller, whether through pictures or words, so the combination of the two seemed a natural progression. I dug out some of the stories I'd outlined over the years and started pecking away at them.

My obsessiveness took over and the prose began to flow. Soon I couldn't wait to paint the characters and settings that I was writing about.

Interestingly, my time spent developing stories on the page revitalised my enthusiasm for painting. I've found that the two disciplines feed off one another, that I love the creative back-and-forth that bringing a story to life in two mediums can provide.

Now, some 20 years and five illustrated novels later, I've just completed my latest, *Lost Gods*, which is due out in the

MATERIALS

BRUSHES

- Synthetics
- Grumbacher Goldenedge

PAINTS

- Daniel Smith oils
- Rembrandt oils
- Liquitex acrylic

MEDIUM

- Daniel Smith Painting Medium

summer of 2016 from HarperCollins. This is Lord Kashaul, one of the characters from *Lost Gods*. In this portrait I use a range of painting techniques and elements to draw in the viewer, leading them to discover the subtle details.



Brom says he's long been obsessed with the creation of the weird, the monstrous and the beautiful. Working in books, games, comics and films, he's achieved this goal and more besides. You can experience more of his art at www.bromart.com.

Step by Step: Don't be fearful of making mistakes



1 SKETCH THE IDEA

I start by laying down a number of gesture sketches, trying to come up with an interesting and unusual shape, working up to a tight sketch. I often use photo reference but in this case, as with most of my creatures, I enjoy painting completely from imagination.



2 DEVELOP THE LIGHTS AND DARK

Once I'm happy with it, I transfer the finished drawing to the board and then apply acrylic for the underpainting, which establishes the lights and darks in the image. This also helps to create an interesting background, as well as help speed up the drying process later on.



3 APPLY OILS TO UNIFY THE SCENE

This shot shows the first pass with oil. I finish with oils to unify the colours, mould the forms and work out the details. My technique varies with every painting, because I'm always experimenting, often failing – but it's these screw-ups that often lead to the most interesting results.

LIGHTING THE HELM

The brightest elements and strongest contrast of the painting draw the eye to the focal point.

GUIDE THE EYE WITH COLOUR

Notice how the intensity of colour heightens towards the focal point. In this case it's the blue flowers that contrast with the gold helmet.

COMPOSITION TRICKS 'N' TIPS

I place design elements such as the deer horns and lines of the helmet so that they all lead toward the character's face.

VARYING THE FOCUS

The crispest details are placed on the most important aspect of the work, while some edges are left soft to give depth and a feeling of the demon materialising out of the gloom.

Workshops

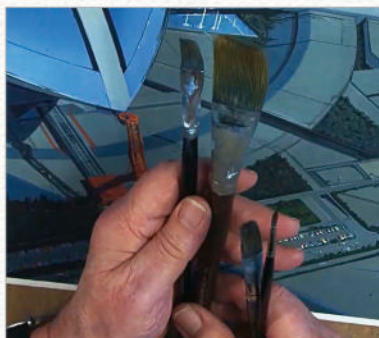
Gouache

PAINT THE ILLUSION OF REALITY

In this workshop, adapted from his Gnomon video *Airship Arrival*, **SYD MEAD** paints with enough detail for a convincing look of realism

My medium of choice is gouache, which is an opaque watercolour. The somewhat annoying part of gouache is that some colours dry darker than when they are wet and some dry lighter, but you get used to this. I use only around 12 colours total, or in this particular illustration only about six. In my whole career (56 years and counting) I don't have crimson, or screwball colours like chrome orange.

For detail work you've got to have a very good detail brush. I use a Winsor & Newton Series 7 Number 2, and there's about two or three tip hairs, which enable you to make hair-thin lines in paint. The nice thing about gouache is that you can make a white hairline highlight over jet black if you want to. When the end hairs go, you need a new brush. Even on this size of painting, which is 15x20 inches, I'll go through two of these brushes.



I work from background to foreground. So here we're coming up from ground level and we'll repeatedly trace down our detail edges over what we've already painted. You're essentially cleaning up edges as you go. The final rendering of the dirigible will define its edge. Some of its graphical markings will be the last things we do. Everything else is like dressing a stage for a performance.

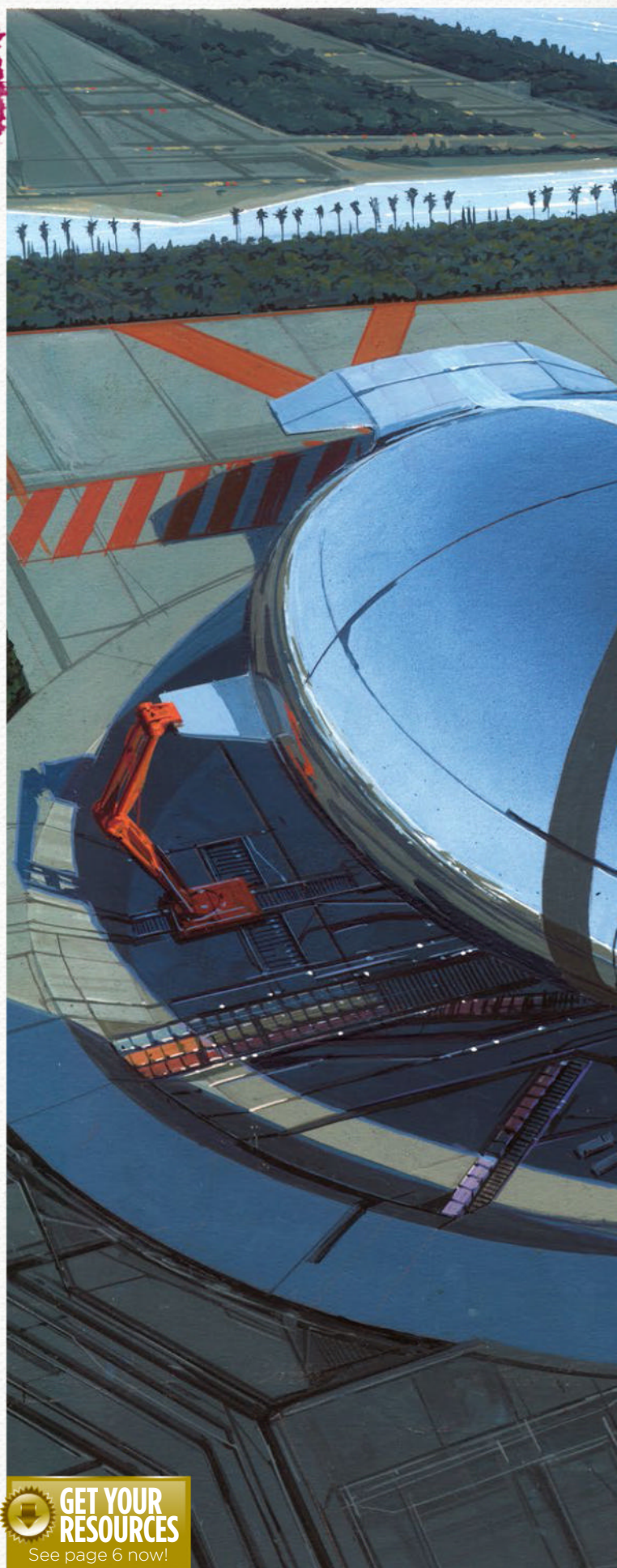
I paint standing up. It's the only way you can float the upper part of your body with your arms free to manipulate your bridge and your brush. And I paint on a flat desk, not an easel, because I'm dealing with something that's wet, and I don't want it slopping all over.

When I finish an illustration I'll scan it in, both for delivery and for archiving – when gouache dries it is essentially a dried powder layer on the board, so it's very fragile to the touch, and it fades rapidly in sunlight. Once the artwork is scanned you can play around with the colour balance and make several pictures using the same base painting.

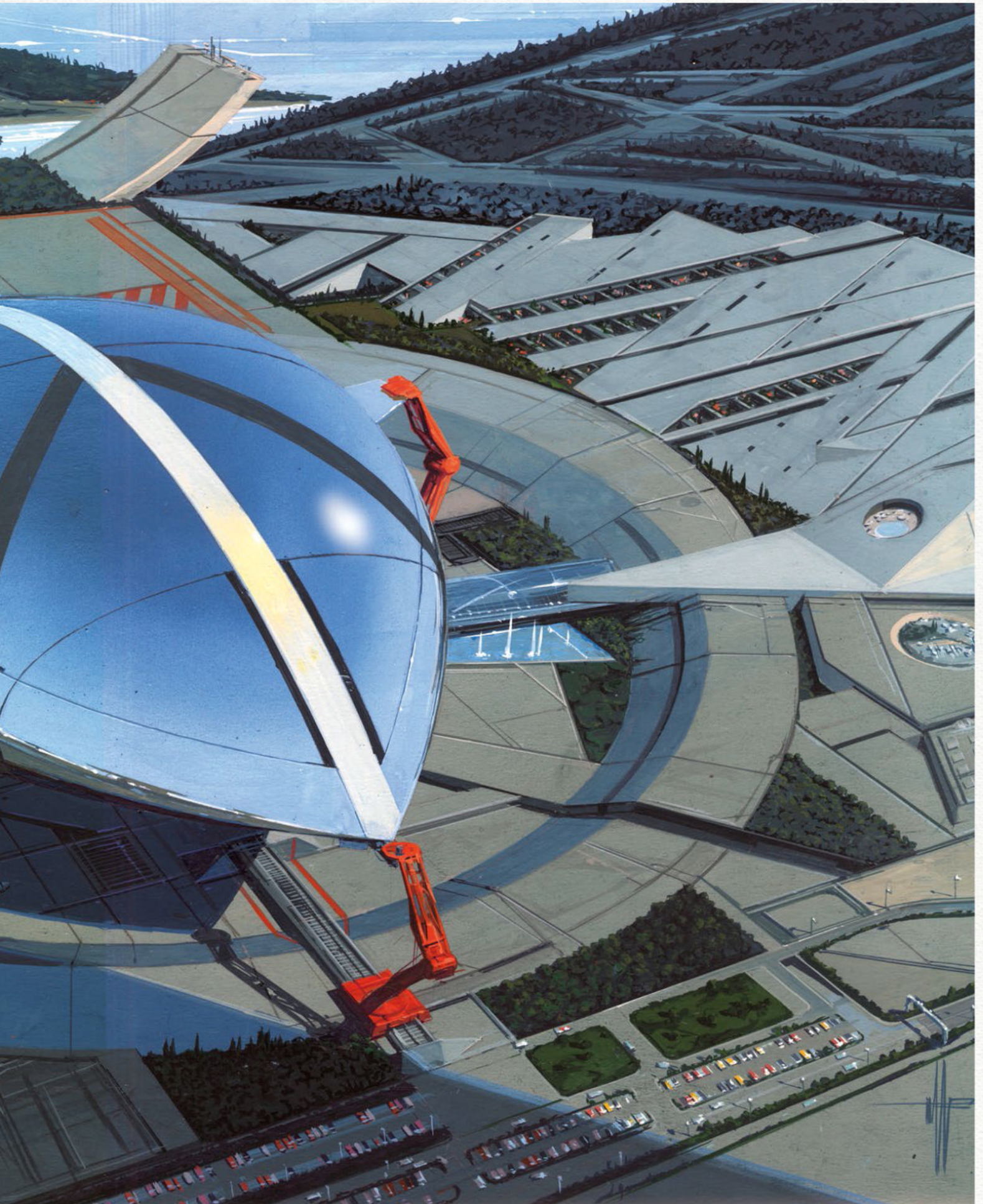
I've done illustrations for movies in preproduction, and the idea is to visualise what a particular scene could look like. You've got to make it look believable. So here's how I create the illusion of reality.



Syd began his art career at Ford, but is more famous for his concept work on films such as *Blade Runner*, *TRON* and *Aliens*. See more at www.sydmead.com.



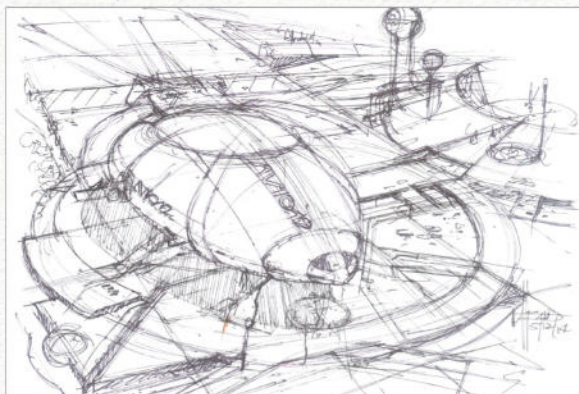
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See page 6 now!



ARTIST INSIGHT

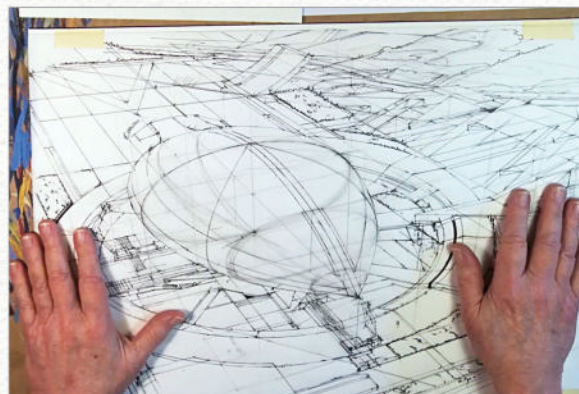
IT'S ALL AN ILLUSION

The brain is fairly easy to trick; if you create the right cues, your brain will fill in the rest of it. So if it looks right, it is right. That's the general rule I follow. If it doesn't look right then you haven't sufficiently tricked the eye by using the right colour and value in the right place.



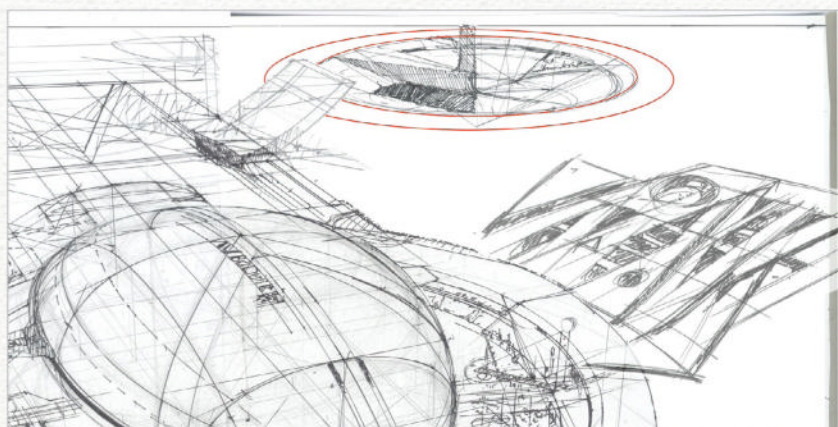
1 Initial sketch

My original sketch was done quickly to work out the perspective and composition. This is a 1,500 foot long luxury passenger dirigible. If I were doing this digitally this could be created in 3D, but to draw it accurately I have to measure everything up and make sure it looks believable.



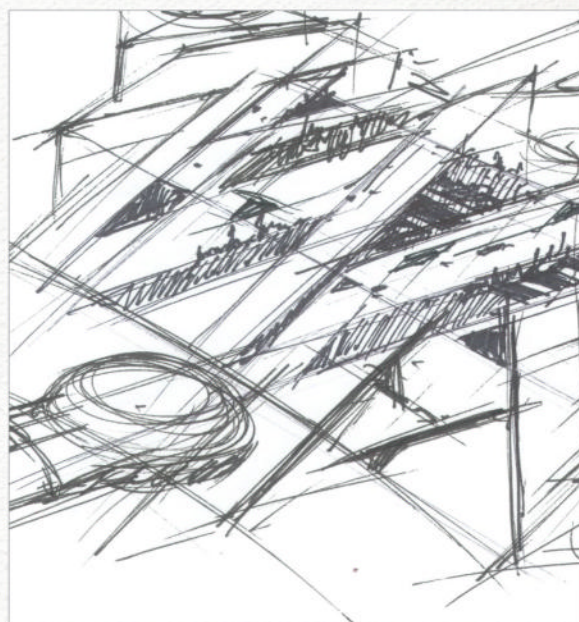
2 Final sketch

I tighten up the design and rough in a longitudinal section. I decide the sunlight angle and create a shadow line along the length of the vehicle relative to this curve. Then I scan the sketch in and blow it up to the size I'm going to paint, 15x20 inches, on my final trace-down vellum.



3 Building the hotel

The hotel structure at the right is there to suggest scale and make it look interesting. Originally it was a round thing but I decided I didn't want to duplicate the ellipse geometry, so I did a sketch offline. I'll often do little bits and pieces of the rendering as a separate sketch. This is architecture, but it's on a slant and has an interesting graphical look to it. So when I have all this ready, I'll trace this down, too.



MATERIALS

ART BOARD

■ Crescent Cold Press

GOUACHE

■ Winsor & Newton

FLAT EDGE BRUSHES

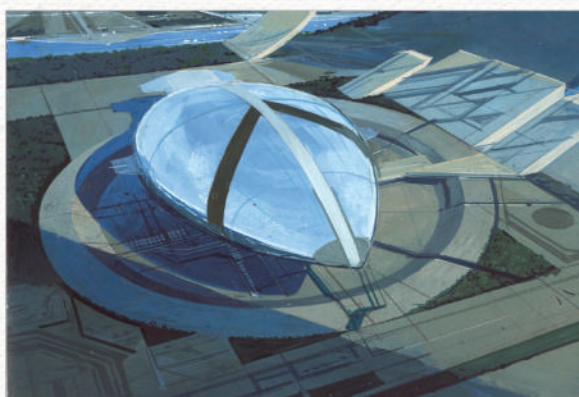
■ For base colours (for a 15x20 inch painting, half an inch across)

DETAIL BRUSHES

■ Winsor & Newton series 7 number 2

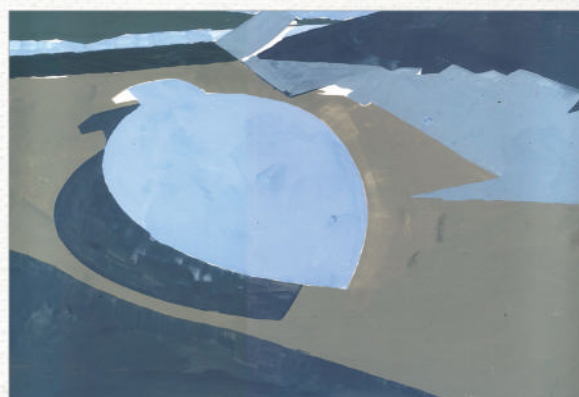
AIRBRUSH

■ Iwata



4 Colour rough

Next I paint a quick colour model, a small scale version of the illustration, to decide the colour set. Once that's done I mix about 10 or 12 matching colours in cups, so I can start to paint and not have to think each brush stroke about the correct colour. I then wet both sides of the art board so it won't warp when the wet gouache goes on.



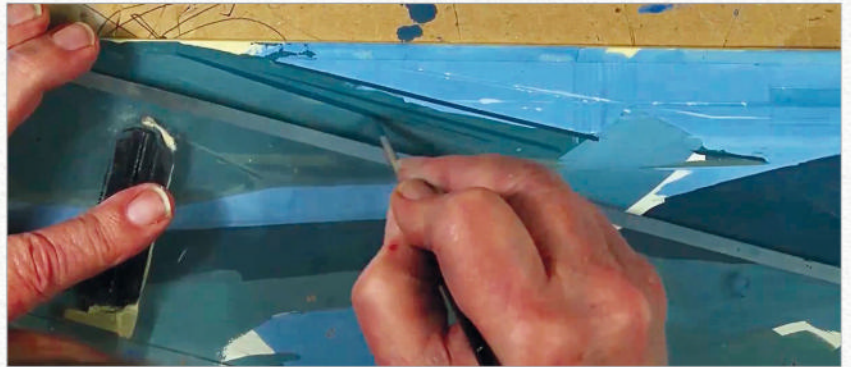
5 Blocking-in colours

Now I block-in the basic shapes as fast as possible so I'm ready on my second pass, which is detailing, to work just with tones of the premixed colours. Using a flat-edge brush, I can carve out areas accurately. Then, because the light is coming from the lower right, I lighten up the base ground tone in the lower right to give it a more realistic appearance.

6 Trace down and start detailing

I've created the shadow-light-shadow progression back into the distance, and next I trace the line drawing back over what I've blocked in. After doing this, I start to redefine some of the object lines in the picture. Then I turn my attention towards the background detail, adding some indication of habitation, lines that could be architecture, pathways, roads and so forth.

For accuracy I use a bridge, which is like a ruler on little feet. You lean the ferrule of the brush on the bridge to make a clean line. You can make a slightly curved line with the brush on the bridge by moving your wrist or your hand in and out. It's good for a very smooth, very controlled edge.



7 Implying foliage and other details

I now render some foliage against the crisp and controlled edges, to break it up and suggest that the architectural or mechanical sits on top of this terrain. Look at aerial photographs and you'll see how to suggest the idea of foliage without having to render each and every tree. I know you can paint tree textures electronically, which is amazing, but you still have to be aware of what you're doing.

The tool is, to me, much less important than the idea. You have to make a relative value call as to why something is dark or light way over in the background. Little highlights indicate metallic edges, tracks and who knows – you don't know what's back there, but it looks busy and visually intriguing, and at this point that's all I'm after.



8 Scumbling in the trees

Palm trees are really silly plants: a little puff of foliage at the top of this long stick. But they're a great scale device. I'm sure you've out looked over Los Angeles and in the distance seen a row of these palm trees, and it's an instant scaling sort of thing. Now I'll detail inside the overall foliage area and add in some tall trees, probably Italian Cypress. The detail is very random. It's not a system, it's an idea. It gives the overall feeling of a forested area with trees at the far edge. This kind of rendering is called scumbling, and it goes very very fast. It's a brush strokes illusion rapidly created, and you can do it with any technique, charcoal or chalk or paint. ➡➡

PAINT

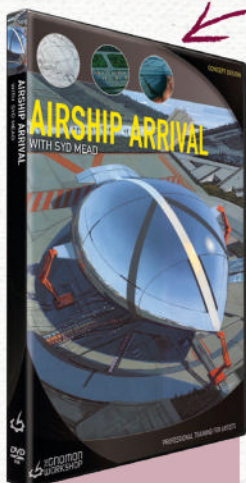
VISCOSITY CHECK

The paint's viscosity on the board is critical. When I pick up some colour, I flatten the brush or wipe it on a board, to achieve the right consistency.

ARTIST INSIGHT

DON'T GIVE UP

At school our rendering instructor said, "Every picture goes through an awful stage where it looks really crappy. Don't give up! If you have planned the composition well, keep at it and trust yourself and eventually it will take on an organised illusion of reality that you've planned from the start."



VIDEO LESSON

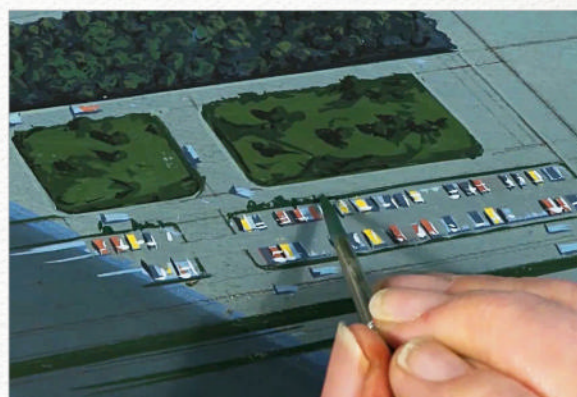
AIRSHIP ARRIVAL

This workshop has been adapted from Syd's video, *Airship Arrival*, published by The Gnomon Workshop. You can purchase it from <http://ifxm.ag/gm-ws>.



9 Mask and work forward

Gouache is sensitive to touch and finger oils, so when I finish an area I cut out paper masks to protect it. I now do the same as before on the right-hand slope – again feelings of mechanicalness overlaid on to a forested tree texture. We're in the shadow, so I start creating the transparency of the shadow. You start seeing colour in areas rather than just shades of grey, and we're slightly closer to the camera, so now the detail of the tree texture has to be a little bit finer. For the ground detail – it could be tracks or roads – I'm following lines that I've traced in over the blocked-in tone.



10 The illusion of detail

This fine detail is all mechanically precise. These lines, even though they are short, are lined up with perspective back into the distance and has the illusion of organisation on the ground plane. The shadow cuts across this vast settling basin for my dirigible, so I use darker values for parts in shadow and lighter values for lit surfaces.

11 Depicting parked cars

For the parking lot I do a row of quick dabs of random colours. Then I cut across them with the concrete colours. The real world is actually fairly colourless. It's the accents that make it look real. So I put a little dark spot on the shadow side of each car, then a few white highlights on the sunlit side – randomly, not on every single one, mind.



ARTIST INSIGHT

THINK YOURSELF INTO THE ARTWORK

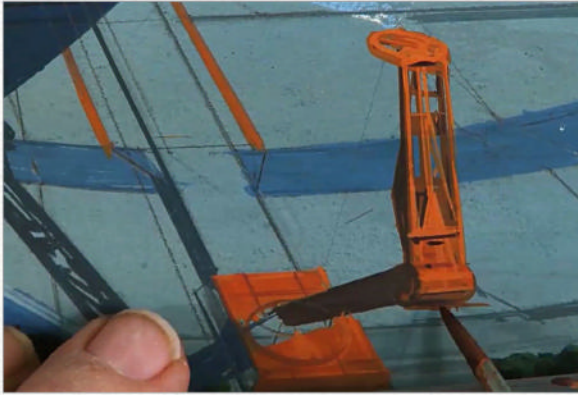
When you're painting, you do think that you're there. In your mind, you have to be there in full three dimensions, otherwise you can't make this stuff up on the fly. You have to be there in your mind, experiencing why it would look this way and not another way.

12 Into the shadow

Now I work back into the shadow, doing the same but with colours lower in value than those in sunlight. Then I add detail in the shadows of the settling basin. Shadow isn't exactly razor sharp, and I like to make a buzz line where the shadow gradually shifts to sunlight – not much, but all it takes is a little bit of an edge and it will look more real.

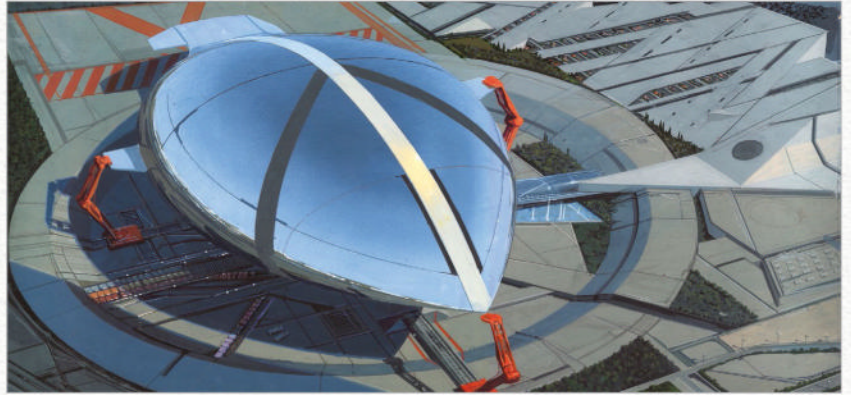
13 Detailing the hotel

On the hotel, I indicate edges of balconies and little spot windows, which gives it scale. These balconies are facing up, so they have a little bit more highlight on them. They call it "rusticating": randomised detail inside an established area. You're breaking it up, because in the real world you'd have little variations in lighting.



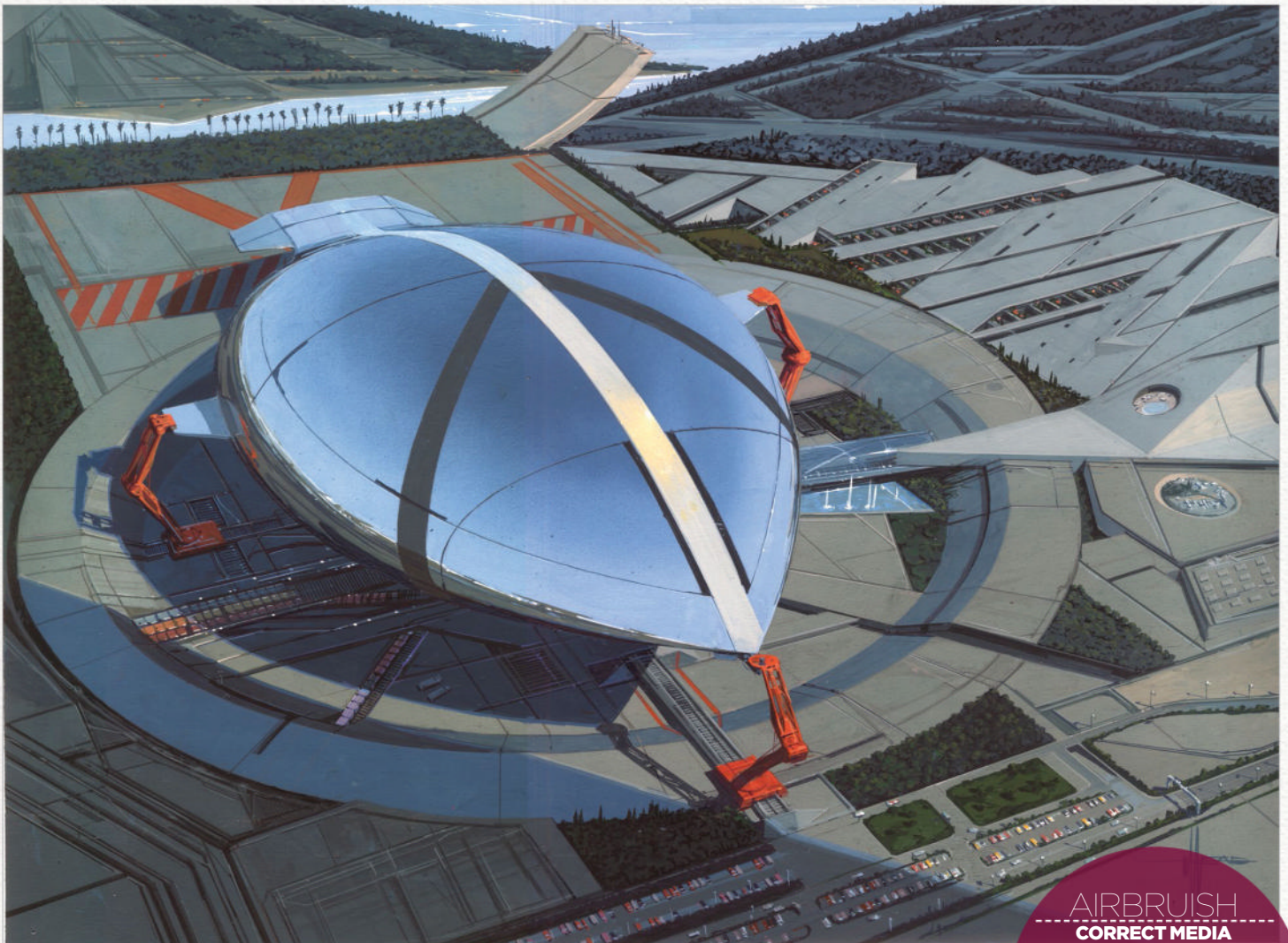
14 Surrounding superstructure

Now I put in the gantries that hold the dirigible in place. This gantry is 200 feet off the ground, so it has to have enough fussy details to make you believe it's the right scale. The last step is a highlight to make it look real. A little bit of light and shade and detailing makes this believable.



15 Painting the dirigible

To make the dirigible look shiny, I put on a horizon line reflection, suggesting the trees and ground details. To create the illusion of roundness and reflective texture, we need a soft progression from the base colour to a darker blue reflecting the sky. So I mask off the shape and gently shade the top with an airbrush. We need to dress that top stripe, so its colour varies convincingly. I use small strokes – dry-brushing, almost.



16 Finessing details and finishing

I highlight that return edge a little bit because it's facing the sun. Now I go over little bits and pieces, and sketch in some of the hairline feature details. I accent some a little bit, to suggest that they have a dimension to them, a little bit of an edge. I finesse the reflection on the underside a bit, suggesting some reflections. I add what could be a little outdoor area with a pool and umbrellas sitting around – again, it adds a little bit of detail to a very severe architectural angularity. At this stage you start going back over and think “well, that needs a little bit more to fix that”... But when the signature goes on, it's done! ■

AIRBRUSH CORRECT MEDIA

I use an Iwata instrument, which is stainless steel. I'd never try to use gouache with a Thayer & Chandler, like we used in school.

First Impressions

✧ Dan Dos Santos ✧

The artist talks about teaching, advertising work and investing in tech companies...



Where did you grow up, and when was it that you realised you had a talent for painting?

I grew up in Bridgeport, Connecticut, in the US. I loved drawing as a child. As for when I specifically realised I had a knack for drawing, that was probably when I started school and realised most other kids couldn't draw. Until then, it simply hadn't occurred to me that other people didn't draw all the time, too.

Did your upbringing influence your style of painting in any way?

My upbringing didn't really influence my style as much as the era I was born in. I was raised on 1980s cartoons, such as Transformers, ThunderCats and He-Man. In addition to great cartoons and comic books, various artists and styles of the era also left an imprint. Artists such as Earl Norem, Jim Lee and Patrick Nagel still influence my work.

Why does fantasy art float your boat?

I think fantasy art is a very wide genre... encompassing anything that isn't real life. I don't take as much pleasure in imitating things that already exist. I like to create new scenarios, new worlds, new people. Fantasy art enables me to be as creative as I want to be.

How do you think your art style changed over the years?

Honestly, not that much. I like to think that I've gotten better, but I'm not entirely certain my sensibilities have changed much. Though I'm admittedly blind as to what my own style actually is, so assessing it is a bit difficult.

What's been the highlight of your career so far? Any low points?

I've had lots of highlights, such as winning awards, and working on the very properties that influenced me as a kid – Star Wars and Magic: The Gathering, to



“Just because you're a good artist, it doesn't make you a good teacher”

WHITE TRASH ZOMBIE

"Created for the cover of a zombie romance novel. It's still one of my favourites to date."



name but a couple. Yet the best moments have definitely been getting the chance to meet some of my artistic heroes, and realising that they are now my peers, and even better, my friends. Julie Bell and Michael Whelan in particular – but I admire so many artists' work in one way or another, that it's silly to isolate just those two when that feeling really encapsulates so much more.

What's been your most challenging commission or assignment?

Pretty much every advertising job ever. It doesn't matter if it's a movie poster, or a pharmaceutical ad. Advertising work will test your skills, your speed and your patience like no other genre.

Are internships something that all established artists should consider?

Definitely not. Just because you're a good artist, it doesn't make you a good teacher. Teaching is something I happen to be very passionate about, and I've had interns for most of my career. But I know lots of professionals that just aren't cut out for it. The creative process is deeply personal for a lot of artists, and sharing that process with someone else takes a lot of trust, time and commitment.

What advice would you give to your younger self?

Invest in Google.

How would you sum up your work, in under 10 words?

Strong, sexy women in colourful, dynamically lit settings.

Dan Dos Santos' award-winning work spans novels, comics and film. You can see more of his art at www.dandossantos.com.



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