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# NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

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Gnomon's new course

**ARTIST INSIGHT**

## MAPPING A WORLD

10 essential tips for painting  
memorable environments

*Sandra Duchienicz's  
six-page workshop  
rules the roost*

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**WARHAMMER**

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WORKSHOP  
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# EPIC GAME ART

Get inspired by **Total War: Warhammer** and  
learn Photoshop skills from its lead artist

**INSIDE**

**RIOT GAMES: A NEW  
STUDIO CULTURE**

**SMASH ARTISTIC BLOCK  
WITH 3D DOODLING**

**CREATIVE POSSIBILITIES  
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Future

**BLIZZARD!** LAUREL D AUSTIN ON THE POWER OF BEING WEIRD IN GAME ART





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# Welcome... to fun and games!



Leafing through this issue, the word 'epic' resounds – and not just because we put it smack bang on the cover in big letters.

Video games have always attracted the wildest of imaginations, and with gigantic titles like Total War: Warhammer, Fallout 4, League of Legends and World of Warcraft (all represented in this issue), studios are hiring armies of visionary artists to map out and fill all corners of these brave new worlds.

If you're wondering where the studios go to fill their ranks, the Gnomon art school is certainly one source, especially with its new Games Track course starting to spit out highly skilled, industry-ready creatives (see page 48). Blizzard's Laurel D Austin's path to senior concept artist was a combination of working up the ladder and embracing her weird side. Some of the amazing results for WoW and Diablo III can be seen on page 56.

As studios morph into complex organisations befitting their behemoth products, they become distinct entities. Visiting Riot Games' Santa Monica headquarters, I got to see its unique character – and culture – myself: a seemingly impossible mix of collaboration, focus and fun, all on a grand scale - head over to page 38 for more.

As ever, the workshops come from a range of insanely talented artists, but for a kick off I'd start with Total War: Warhammer lead artist Sandra Duchiewicz's awesome cover tutorial on page 64. A truly massive six-pager for a decidedly epic issue. BOOM!

*Beren*

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



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

## Your art

### 8 Reader FXPosé

A zombie apocalypse, rogue wizards, adventurous foxes, and much much more.

## News and events

### 18 Indie publishing

Could small-scale publishers be the answer for artists keen to see their art in print?

### 24 Artist in residence

Rovina Cai's Melbourne studio is filled with books and curios.

## Your questions

### 30 Artist Q&A

Advice from pro artists on cloaks, bubbles, guns, futuristic diving suits and much more.

## Features

### 38 Studio profile

We head to California to visit Riot Games' new home.

### 44 Sketchbook

Iris Compiet's sketches mix humour with dark art.

### 48 Gnomon

The first Games Track students are nearing graduation from their industry-backed course.

### 56 Laurel D Austin

We meet the artist who's putting the buzz into Blizzard's illustrious gaming output.

## Reviews

### 90 Software

### 95 Training

### 96 Books

## Regulars

### 3 Editor's letter

### 6 Resources

### 28 Letters

### 29 Subscriptions: US

### 36 Subs: worldwide

### 54 Back issues

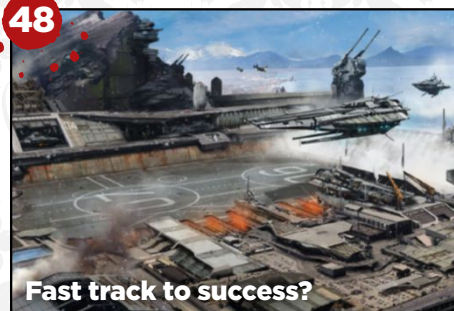
### 82 Next month

56



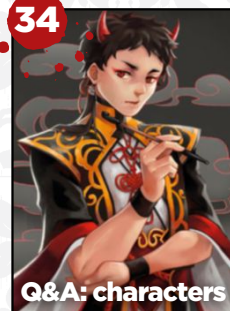
"I loved dinosaurs and mythical creatures. My parents said I'd either be a scientist or an artist"  
Laurel D Austin talks us through her art career

48



Fast track to success?

34



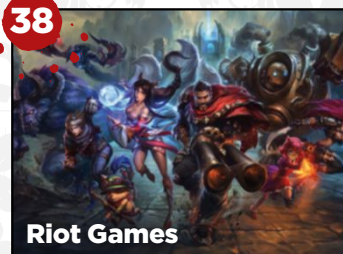
Q&A: characters

37



Q&A: body language

38



Riot Games

44



Sketchbook:  
Iris Compiet

24



Artist in residence

## Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



See page 8 for the best new art ➡➡

31



Q&A: bubbles

37

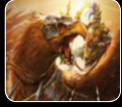


Q&A: body language



## FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX Workshops

Advice and techniques  
from pro artists...



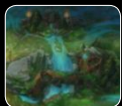
**64 Draw and paint  
epic game art**  
Sandra Duchiewicz on  
dynamic composition.



**70 Paint a heroine  
from Fallout 4**  
Zezhou Chen shares his  
relaxed way of working.



**74 Create card art  
that's romantic**  
Dong-Wook Shin uses  
light to create drama.



**76 Design engaging  
video game maps**  
Trent Kaniuga gives a  
concept artist's perspective.



**84 Get fresh ideas  
with 3D sculpting**  
Paul Canavan shows how  
to conquer artist's block.

## DOWNLOAD RESOURCES

Turn over the page for  
this issue's art assets



Paint a video game hero

## FANTASY illustrator

Inspiration and advice from  
the best traditional artists

**100 FXPosé Traditional**

**104 Fantasy chiaroscuro**

Patrick J Jones paints The Sentinel.

**106 Sculpting a concept**

Eric Wilkerson sculpts an alien.

**112 Painting from life**

Anand Radhakrishnan on colour.

**114 First Impressions**

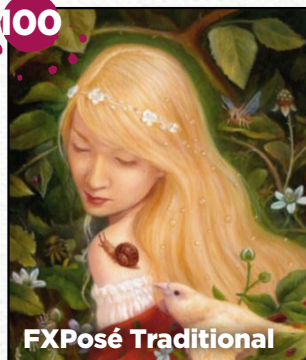
Chris Achilléos talks glamour.

**112**



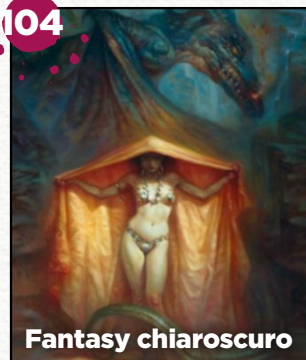
Life painting

**100**



FXPosé Traditional

**104**



Fantasy chiaroscuro

**106**



Concept sculpting

**114**



Chris Achilléos





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# Resources

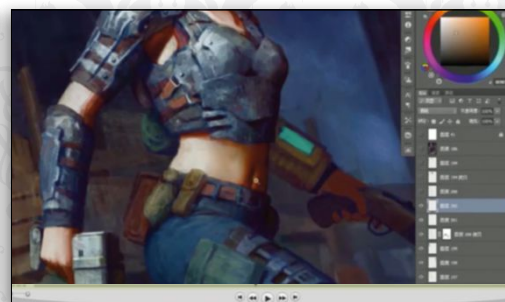
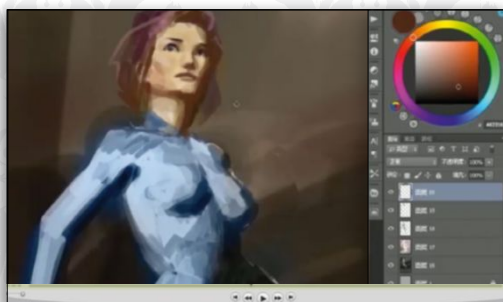
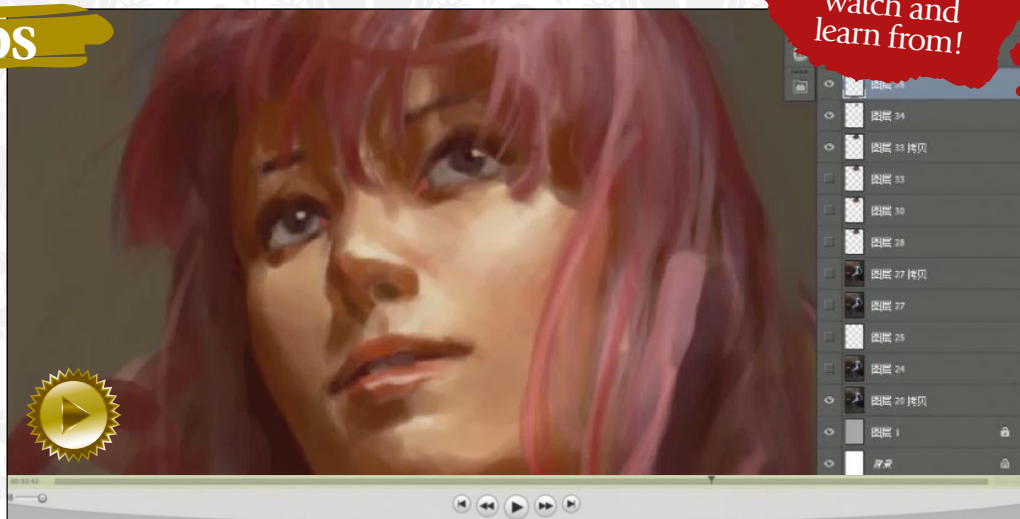
Getting hold of all of this issue's videos, artwork and brushes is quick and easy. Just visit our dedicated web page at <http://ifxm.ag/war-bird>

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

## WORKSHOP VIDEOS

### Paint a video game heroine

Ze Zhou Chen introduces you to a relaxed way of working, as he paints a character for Fallout 4.



### 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/war-blrd>
- 2 Find the files you want**  
Search through the list of resources to watch or download.
- 3 Download what you need**  
You can download all of the files at once, or individually.

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**ImagineFX**

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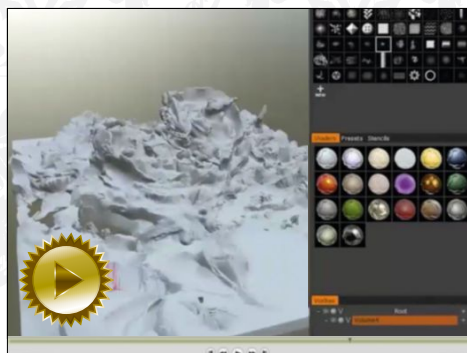






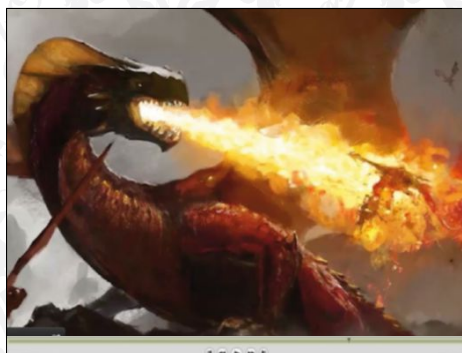
# EXCLUSIVE VIDEO TUTORIAL!

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



## Paul Canavan

Banish creative block by using 3D sculpting tools to generate ideas for your fantasy illustrations, such as this hostile dragon – which started life as a pile of virtual clay. **Plus WIPs, brushes and final image**



## Eric Wilkerson

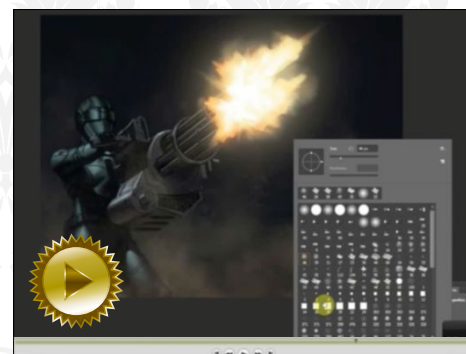
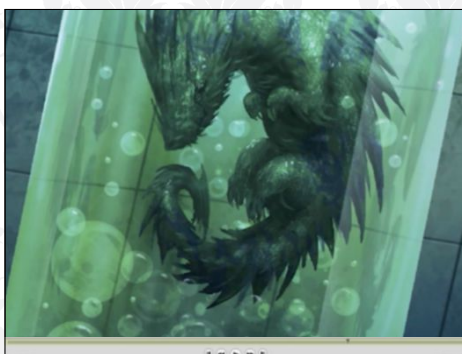
See why sculpting can be so useful for painting an imaginary alien concept. **Plus WIPs and final image**



## Q&A VIDEOS

## Mark Molnar

Understand why considering physical attributes, looking for randomness and other physical foibles, is key when painting real-life objects such as bubbles in liquid. **Plus WIPs and final image**



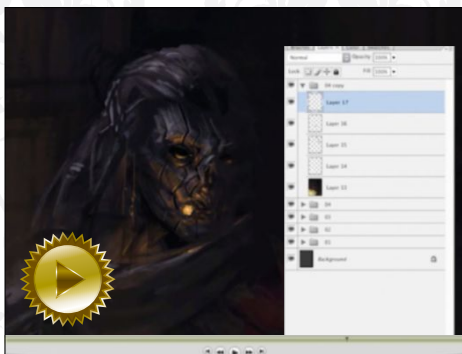
## Tony Foti

Master the art of exaggeration in order to paint a muzzle flash of a firing gun. **Plus WIPs and final image**



## Tom Foster

Why good reference is key to giving comic characters convincing body language. **Plus WIPs and final image**



## Mark Molnar

Play with lighting scenarios to understand the theory behind lost and found edges. **Plus WIPs and final image**



## James Gurney

The artist and illustrator shows how the outside world can take your art in new directions, in Fantasy In The Wild.

**AND ALL THIS!** Detailed workshops with essential advice from pro artists, including Zezhou Chen, Mélanie Delon, Sandra Duchiewicz, Patrick J Jones, Trent Kaniuga, Anand Radhakrishnan and Dong-Wook Shin.

## 66 CUSTOM BRUSHES, INCLUDING...

### BACKGROUND JUICER

Paul Canavan's default brush for laying down large chunks of colour.

### OIL BRUSH

Zezhou Chen uses this to simulate a traditional oil brush or add texture.

### SOFT BRUSH

Sandra Duchiewicz uses soft brushes for smoke and atmosphere.





# Reader FXPose

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



## Andy Walsh

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MEDIA: Photoshop, 3ds Max



Andy quit his job after ten years as a graphic designer in 2010 and, after some soul searching, realised that he wanted to follow

his childhood dream of working in the entertainment industry. "I began painting digitally in earnest around 2011 and have been furiously working on developing my skills ever since," he says.

The artist is a huge fan of all things dark and moody, which is pretty obvious in his work. "I do environments that reflect my passion. I would say I specialise in a somewhat under-represented area: urban, horror and historical environments."

1



**1 REBELLION** "This piece was created in 3ds Max initially and then brought into Photoshop to paint over. Unlike other 3D paint-overs in my portfolio, this one was brought to a more painterly finish. The goal here was to really push composition and drama via a dynamic camera angle. Many angles were considered before arriving at this one."

**2 THE MEETING** "I wanted to move away from 3D in this piece and so it's all Photoshop. A little bit of photo reference was used for the two guys, but this was quite heavily edited. This began life as a black and white thumbnail that was more contemporary rural horror, but evolved into a slightly historical-cum-fantasy piece."

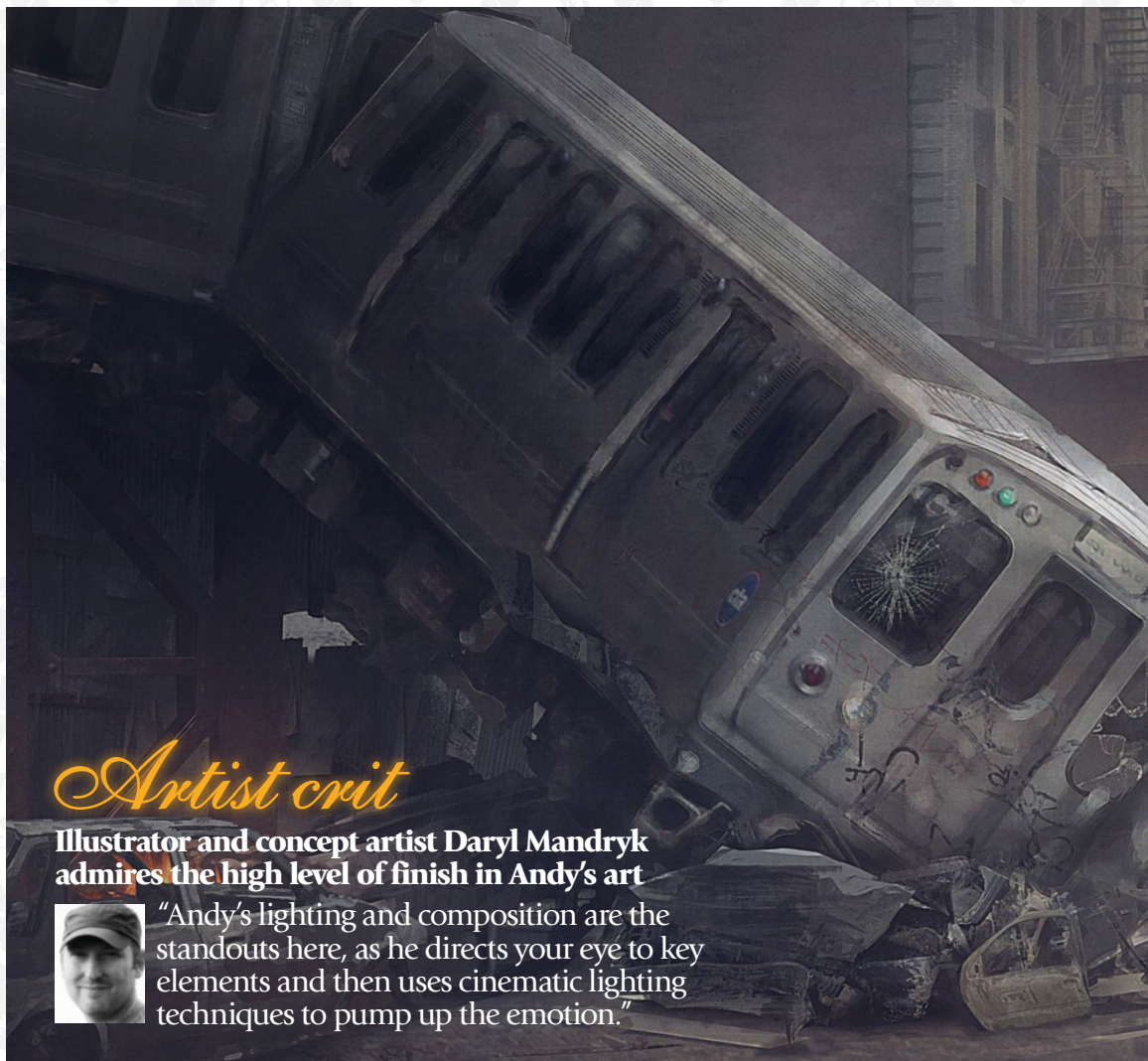
**3 INFECTED - ZOMBIE CITY** "I created this for a zombie RPG Kickstarter project called Infected. This is a kind of photo-bash or slightly loose matte painting. The guy in the foreground is me because I'm not very good at characters and the level of photo-realism was too high to just throw in a painted hero, so I dressed up like an apocalypse survivor and set up my camera. The gun was done in post though - I don't really own an M4!"

## Artist crit

Illustrator and concept artist Daryl Mandryk admires the high level of finish in Andy's art



"Andy's lighting and composition are the standouts here, as he directs your eye to key elements and then uses cinematic lighting techniques to pump up the emotion."



ImagineFX April 2016

Email your submissions to [fxpose@imaginefx.com](mailto:fxpose@imaginefx.com)



2



3









**Ursula Dorada**

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**MEDIA:** Photoshop



Ursula began working as an advertising illustrator, but when Ubisoft made a call for artists for its studios in Brazil, she

applied. "I worked there as a 2D artist for the brief period the studio operated in Brazil, igniting my passion to become part of the games industry," she says.

Making the move to freelance, Ursula now works for publishing and games companies. "I want to focus on fantasy, so I've been slowly working the more traditional finish into my work. As a kid who was raised playing D&D at the weekends, it's no surprise they're one of my biggest influences, along with video games such as Zelda and Warcraft."

2



**1 UNDEAD PRIEST** "The Warcraft series were a hit with my guild mates (yes, I still play it!), and my guild leader's birthday was coming up. I decided to paint her character as a gift, for all her hard work on keeping the guild going strong all this years. So this is her character, in her favourite set from the game."

**2 ORC HUNTER** "Here's a portfolio piece I created to build up my card games/Warcraft-style body of work. It's an honest Horde scout, complete with their most iconic bow and Orgrimmar flames. Now I need to work on an Alliance series, as soon as I have time."

**3 BERSERKER** "Here's an image for the game Ballistic, from Aquiris Game Studio. It's a class-based game, and each class has its own splash screen. This is my favourite from the bunch, and painting the broken glass was a fun challenge."

3



**IMAGINEFX CRIT**



"Ursula is certainly able to place her characters in dynamic situations, matched with great colours and lighting. I love the effect of the flying shards of glass in her Berserker artwork – that was time well spent!"

**Cliff Hope,**  
Operations Editor



## **Leesha Hannigan**

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**MEDIA:** Photoshop



Australian-born freelance illustrator and concept artist Leesha was fascinated by fantastical literature, Aesop's Fables and fairy tales from a young age. She was later drawn to video games, favouring high-fantasy role-playing games. "I tend to work in a painterly style with a particular focus on light, often inspired by what I see in nature and on my travels," says the artist.

Leesha finds lighting a powerful tool when it comes to setting a scene:

"Nature is inherently theatrical, and I endeavour to capture that in my work."

## **IMAGINEFX CRIT**



"Leesha's lighting techniques play a big part in her art, as is clear on these pages. From the handsome-looking chap holding the magical dagger, to the little woodland critter, she knows how to stage her subjects to best effect."

**Beren Neale,**  
Acting Editor

**1 SAFE TRAVEL** "This painting was done for a card in the upcoming Hi Rez Studios game, Paladins. The knightly character is stepping out of a dark forest into a sunny and open valley. I wanted to focus on the contrast between the shadowed foreground and the warm, picturesque background."

**2 A SMALL MEASURE OF COURAGE** "This was a painting done for a client, based on their beloved toy fox. They had invented a narrative for this little guy, so the goal was to paint him into one of his adventures and bring him to life."

**3 FREELANCE DEATH WIZARD** "An illustration done for the card game One Hit Kill. This character is a rogue wizard, a relatively unusual combination that led me to the spectral weapon design. He bills by the hour... or the corpse."



© Hi-Rez Studios



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## Anders Larsson

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**MEDIA:** Photoshop, Krita



"I aim to make people go, 'Hey, that's cool!'" says Anders. When he works, the artist often goes in with a vague plan and letting the piece evolve almost by itself. "It's a good way to inject some of myself into the piece and to spot what works and what doesn't as I progress," he comments.

"My big passion lies in digital paintings with fantastical and supernatural themes. I'm also very interested in games, and work with pixel art and concept art. Some of my big inspirations are Simon Stålenhag and Sergey Koleso."

**1 DEATH AT SEA** "I love skulls, and dark oceans are one of my big fears. Here, I got to paint both in a dramatic scene with pirates facing death at sea."



## **Brittany A Pezzillo**

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Brittany has always been fascinated by the fantastical and the surreal. Working both digitally and traditionally, a lot of her commercial work tends to be digital but her passion lies in oil painting and even mixing media. "Regardless of method, painting is this amazing battle of creating and losing edges, and I love it," she says.

Brittany is a graduate of The Kubert School in Dover, NJ, and paints mostly for traditional gaming products and comic books. "I grew up playing trading card games and video games. I looked up to Samwise Didier, Joe Madureira/Liquid!, Frank Frazetta, Brom, Thomas Baxa and Geof Darrow."

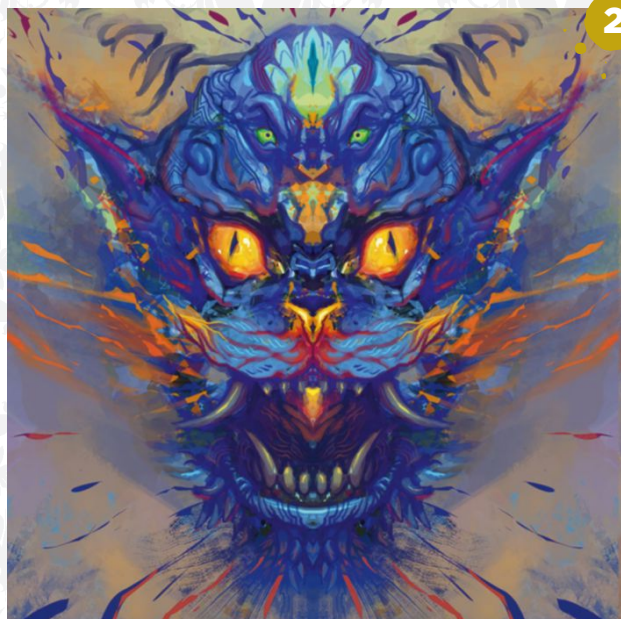
**1 ABERRATION OF THE MIND** "A piece inspired by the Lovecraftian notion of collapsing into the waves of madness, as skittering shadows become corporeal form and in an instant disappear. The Old Ones are all he knows now as the last threads of his sanity slip away, the poor soul."

**2 LYSERGICAT** "Pareidolia is an interesting phenomenon. We're programmed to find familiar patterns in things - especially faces - and I like to use this to my advantage when creating. Random mirrored shapes in Alchemy slowly became this somewhat feline face as I worked spontaneously."

1



2





**Çağlayan Göksoy**

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**MEDIA:** Photoshop



Çağlayan is a 20-year-old self-taught artist. "In January 2014, after I dropped my graphic design course at Bilkent University, I began practising digital media seriously – lectures were not for me!" he says.

The old masters are his biggest inspiration sources, along with fantasy: "I'm a huge Middle-earth worm!" Çağlayan reveals he usually hates his paintings after he finishes them. "People tend to think that this is a bad thing; I think this is the biggest factor that makes me keep pushing myself further."

**1 BRIDGE OF KHAZAD-DÛM** "Gandalf confronts Durin's Bane on the narrow bridge in Moria. I wanted to get as close to the action as possible, and recreate the scene as I imagined it when I read The Fellowship of the Ring."

**2 MANKIND DIVIDED** "I'm a big Deus Ex fan, and the news of the latest instalment made me really happy. After I watched the first trailer, which made me smile from ear to ear, I knew I had to paint something from the game."

**3 IMPERIAL MARCH** "A year ago there was an online challenge to redesign Star Wars. I painted my version of Darth Vader: I thought he'd be more badass if he didn't have any life-support tech, but instead used the Force to reduce the pain of his long-term injuries."

**4 HUNGRY** "This was an experiment painting. I tried new things, new approaches. I like to take characters, concepts and make them cooler, at least for my eyes. I like to say 'what if' while painting, and try to explore a background story. Why is this guy here, and what happened?"







4



#### IMAGINEFX CRIT



"As a long-time fan of the Deus Ex games, I enjoyed seeing Çağlayan's painting based on a violent encounter from Mankind Divided. It's clever how he's made it look more cinematic, simply by using a narrow aspect ratio."

Daniel Vincent,  
Art Editor

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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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All artwork is submitted on the basis of a non-exclusive worldwide licence to publish, both in print and electronically.





Philip K Dick's Variable Man, as visualised by Tommy Arnold for his collection of the author's short stories.

## A leap of faith

**Think different** Should more artists consider using indie publishers to get their work out there, wonders **Tom May**

**It's great to see your artwork online. But let's be honest, there's nothing like seeing it in print. So do you pursue a traditional publisher, with the likely loss of creative control that entails? Or self-publish your own work – then hit a wall when trying to bring it to the world's attention?**

Well, there is another way: the indie publisher, aka the small press. Small presses aren't highly visible, mind, and you probably haven't heard of most of them. So why are so many artists keen to work with them?

"I view my small press work as an apprenticeship every aspiring artist should go through," says Jim Lavery. "It's helped develop my discipline, technique and attitude to deadlines. It's also resulted in a catalogue of published work I can refer to and learn from."



Jim's work has been published in two indie comics: Little O Productions' *Horrere*, and Madius Comics' *Papercuts and Inkstains*. "The editors allow

Above: Tommy Arnold's cover for *Hold-Time Violations* by John Chu, published by Tor.com.

Madius Comics' *Papercut and Inkstains* issue 2 features artwork from Jim Lavery and Rory Donald.



© Tor.com

© Jim Lavery/Madius Comics





## PICK A CARD, ANY CARD...

Lacking inspiration for your next piece of character art? Clark Huggins' Reckless Deck uses chance to help kick-start your muse into action.

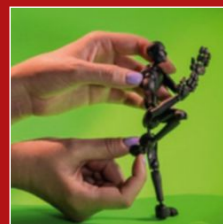
Page 23



## WISH YOU WERE HERE

Rovina Cai's Melbourne studio may be an all-white affair, but colour is prevalent throughout, partly thanks to her collection of holiday postcard.

Page 24



## DEM BONES, DEM BONES

Find out how an innovative mannequin, named Stickybones, is helping artists and animators capture the perfect pose for their characters.

Page 27

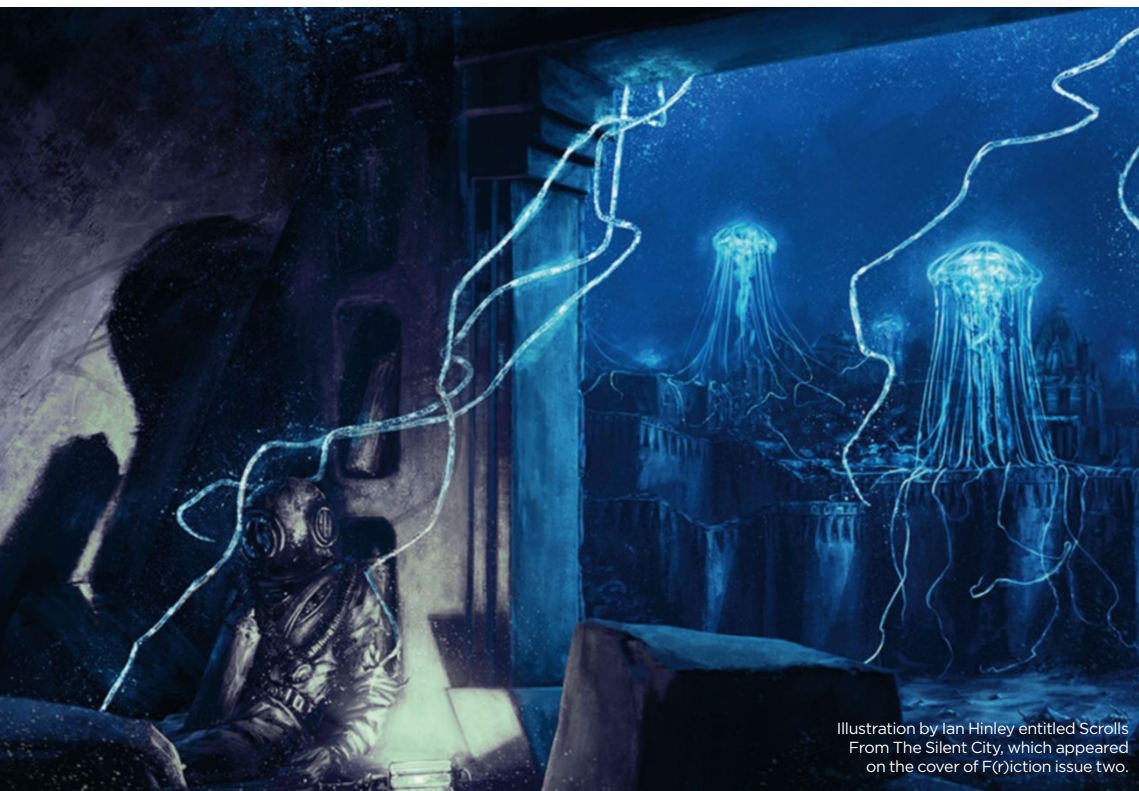


Illustration by Ian Hinley entitled *Scrolls*. From *The Silent City*, which appeared on the cover of *F(r)iction* issue two.

© Fiction/Ian Hinley

## “Indie publishers can help with the stress of preparing work for print...”

me a tremendous amount of freedom,” he enthuses. “On the downside; money, specifically the lack of it.”

### SHOULDERING THE BURDEN



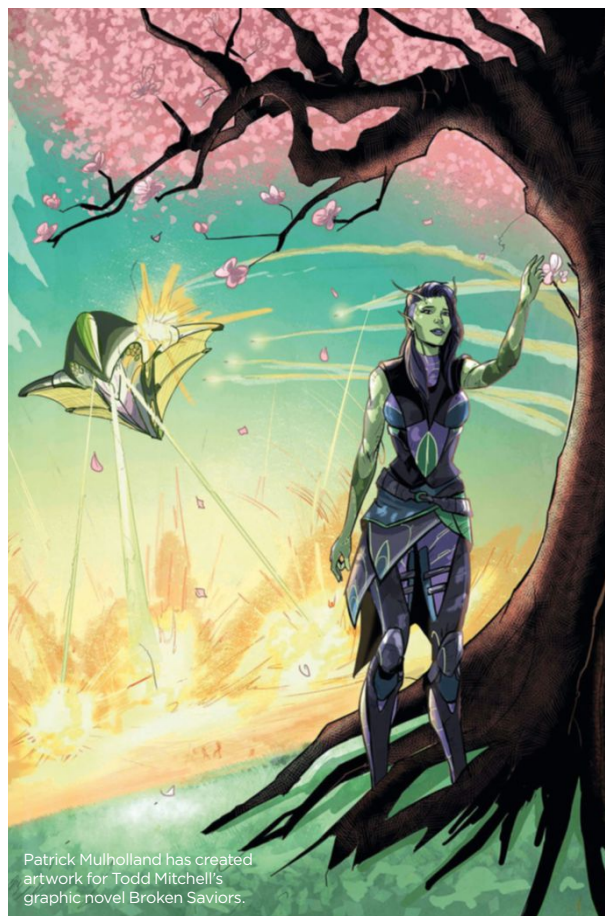
Alisdair Wood, the founder of Horrere, admits that cash is tight in the indie world, but believes it has a lot to offer artists. “An indie publisher can

take away a lot of the stress of preparing work for print for the artist, as well as the cost,” he says. “This gives them enough room to show off their talents without committing a huge amount of valuable time.”

Patrick Mulholland, who's worked with US indie publisher Broken Icon Comics, tells a similar story. He responded to its advert seeking an artist to work on graphic novel *The Cowboy Gauntlet*. Patrick initially accepted the role



unpaid, in return for exposure; the publisher was so pleased with the artist's work, though, it later agreed to pay him for it. ➔



Patrick Mulholland has created artwork for Todd Mitchell's graphic novel *Broken Saviors*.

## INDUSTRY INSIGHT

### TOMMY ARNOLD

*The illustrator explains how indie publishing works in practice*

#### What does your project involve?

I came to Jon Schindehette of ArtOrder Publishing with a fully fledged idea that originally I was going to publish on my own. There are a number of short stories by Philip K Dick that have fallen into the public domain. So I'm taking those stories and collecting them in an illustrated hardbound volume. It's about 240 pages and I've got a designer who does covers for Tor.com Publishing, Jamie Stafford-Hill.

#### How does working with ArtOrder differ from self-publishing?

It's similar in some ways. For example, there's no cash upfront so I'm still doing my regular schedule of freelance work. Any time I have a gap I try to fit in another illustration for this project. The main difference is that you're working with someone in your corner, so to speak. But there are still some of the typical hurdles of self-publishing.

#### Like what?

Well for one, we're not planning to print more than 10,000 copies so we won't be able to go through a traditional distributor, which means a lot of the responsibility for advertising and distribution will fall on Jon's and my shoulders. But in terms of those elements, Jon has pretty broad shoulders.

#### So what's the publisher bringing to the table?

Jon's got a wide online audience and a lot of pull and reach in a lot of places. So I'm bringing in an ally that, in exchange for a percentage of the project, is going to boost the project's success and efficiency. This means I feel a lot more confident about the project and seeing it through to completion.



Tommy lives in Atlanta, Georgia, and works as an illustrator of fantasy and science fiction pieces.

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



© Neil Ford/Little O Productions



➔ “One of the best things is the chance to build your own world and stories,” Patrick says. “If you’re starting a new series or pitch with a writer, you can have a lot of influence on the look and feel of the book. You can put more of your personality into it.”

Indies can be great for artists starting out, he adds. “You’ll gain experience in working on scripts and taking notes on your work,”



Patrick says. “You’ll learn to work in collaboration, taking ideas and giving them.”

That was certainly the case for Neil Ford. “I’ve not worked

for a big publisher yet – I’m very early in my art career,” he explains. “But Horrere asked me to do the art for a script by Rob Jones and Mike Sambrook, entitled *If You Go Down To the Woods Today*.”

“We had a great time assembling the comic,” Neil says. “Long Facebook group chats every night were both hilarious and inspirational. I thoroughly enjoyed it, and would definitely recommend getting involved in small press.”

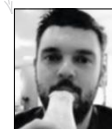
Neil’s collaborators agree, and see indie publishing as a growing scene within the digital art landscape. “People who were

Just some of the artwork by Neil Ford for Horrere Comics’ story, *If You Go Down To the Woods Today*.



unable to get their work out there before have way more options now,” enthuses Mike Sambrook. “I’m incredibly positive about the way that things are looking.”

Rob Jones is equally upbeat. “At the comic festival Thought Bubble, held in Leeds, England last year, New Dock Hall was wall-to-wall indie publishing,” he says. “It was incredible to see: this huge swathe of people



who had taken a half-formed idea that they may have had in the bath, then turned it into this dream. As well as Horrere and Papercuts and Inkstains, there’s amazing stuff from Redshift Press, Raw Edge Comics, Insane Comics, Fifth Dimension Comics and others coming out over the next few months.”

## INDIES CAN BE FUN



And it’s not just about new artists. Paul Williams, aka Sketchy Magpie, is a full-time illustrator of five years and has had work published by the likes of Macmillan and Oxford University Press. “But generally, those experiences have felt a lot more like ‘work’ compared to drawing comics for FutureQuake, which is always a hoot,” Paul explains. “I feel a lot more freedom to experiment and be creative, and that’s where the most valuable development comes from.”

The indie publishers themselves have similar motivations – creative passion



trumping the desire for big money. Take Dani Hedlund, editor-in-chief of F(r)iction, a literary journal featuring sci-fi stories and bespoke digital



Between his full-time assignments, Sketchy Magpie created this fan piece of *The Evil Dead*.



Issue three of F(r)iction featured Alyssa Menold's illustration *Interstellar Space*, for a short story of the same name by Scott O'Connor.

© F(r)iction/Alyssa Menold

“These artists are pouring their heart and soul on to the page and we believe that should be represented as beautifully as possible”

artwork. “Whenever I go to a publishing conference someone will say: ‘Dani, what the hell are you doing? This is not a viable business plan!’” she laughs. “And yes, we’re all living off ramen noodles and working out of coffee shops.

“But F(r)iction has this emphasis on weird work that would never otherwise see the light of day. These artists are pouring their heart and soul on to the page and we believe that should be represented as beautifully as possible.”

But while the indie publishers aren’t obsessed with money, that doesn’t mean that there isn’t money to be made. At a time when social media and crowdfunding are disrupting the old publishing models, artists are looking beyond traditional publishers and establish their own new wave of indies.

Creative director Jon Schindehette is one



of them. The author behind the ArtOrder blog is planning to launch a new initiative, ArtOrder Publishing, in the first half of 2016.

“I got the idea when I met an artist whose art book had been created by a well-known publishing company, but he’d made less than \$1 off every book sold,” Jon says. “With ArtOrder I’m working to cut out as many middlemen as possible to reduce costs, offer

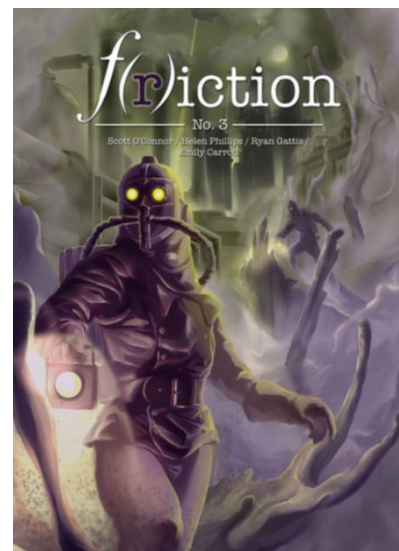
Commissioned covers for F(r)iction, as painted by Alyssa Menold (left) and Daniel Reneau (right).



© F(r)iction/Alyssa Menold

a wide spectrum of services, provide transparent pricing, leave artists’ rights intact, and put as much money back into the pocket of the creative as possible. I’m taking my last 30 years of experience, networking, and know-how to create new opportunities for all of the artists I know.”

Jon will only take projects where the project is owned and driven by creatives. “I have no desire to work with companies



© F(r)iction/Daniel Reneau

that are run by a bunch of suits and just freelance out art needs,” he explains.

So far, ArtOrder has a number of projects underway, including table-top games, art books, a poetry book, an artist/writer collaboration, and “some innovative apparel/toy development.”

Creative freedom and a decent amount of money – is this the future of indie publishing for artists? ■



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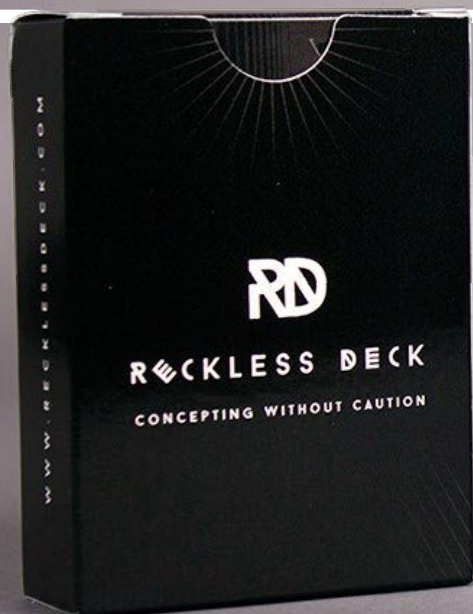
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Clark is constantly coming up with card ideas, usually when he's walking his dog

# Paint the hand you're dealt

**Creative cards** Generate surprising characters for your artwork with Clark Huggins' Reckless Deck, a pack of cue cards for illustrators needing that extra mental push



**Born out of a desire to spend less time thinking and more time painting, Clark Huggins came up with the concept of Reckless Deck.**

A couple of cannibalised decks of playing cards formed the basis of the Reckless Deck, which quickly produced crazy results unlike anything Clark would've produced on his own. His wife Kelly saw the deck's potential, and soon they were working on a prototype with New York designer Keith Coney. "It was extremely challenging to design, because we needed a look that was its own thing,

Clark is constantly coming up with card ideas, usually when he's walking his dog.

and wasn't weighted too heavily in the direction of any one genre," Clark explains.

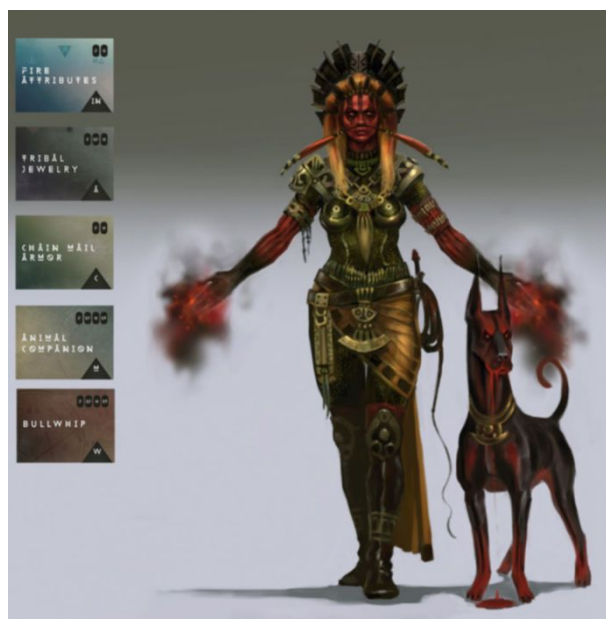
Originally drawing on recurring imagery from Clark's collection of Spectrum annuals and even back issues of ImagineFX, Reckless Deck has now gained significant attention following a successful promotional tour during 2015. "The Art Order Challenge we did with Jon Schindehette was extremely validating," Clark says. "His willingness to get behind Reckless Deck gave it legitimacy."

Emails from young artists and writers inspired by Reckless Deck have motivated Clark to get the cards into conventional

retails shops. He even has enough material for at least one sequel. "We'd like to do an environment deck for concept artists that you could use in conjunction with the character deck," he reveals.

The unpredictable nature of Reckless Deck has fundamentally changed how Clark approaches illustration. "For artists, this can feel very dangerous, but also very thrilling," he says. "And actually, it has a lot to do with how we came up with the name Reckless Deck in the first place."

You can order Reckless deck by visiting [www.recklessdeck.com](http://www.recklessdeck.com).



Clark says that Reckless Deck creates taboo and empowering artistic combinations.

© Subroto Bhattacharya 2015





I've begun collecting small original artwork. There's something magical about an original work that a reproduction can never capture.

Somehow I seem to be accumulating a teacup and teapot collection. First there was one and now I have stacks of teacups scattered throughout my studio.



This shelf holds drawing tools and various decorative bits and pieces. I like to change these around once in a while.

I use this table for bookbinding and other crafty projects. It's also a no-computer space that I use when I need to concentrate on a drawing.

## Rovina Cai

**Rover's return** After years on the move, the Australian illustrator has settled down in a Melbourne studio filled with books and curios



**Over the past few years I've moved around a lot, and have only recently returned to Melbourne and set up a studio. It's nice to have a dedicated space to work in, instead of painting on a kitchen bench or on my bed!**

I wanted to fill the space with things that inspire me: from books and images to curios I've picked up from my travels. I like to be

surrounded by things that I find beautiful, because it helps me get in the zone when I'm working. A space doesn't feel right to me unless there's a bit of clutter. I tend to be a hoarder and like to keep things. You never know when a piece of cardboard or some ribbon might come in handy, whether it's for a reference photo or a crazy craft project.

My work process involves drawing traditionally and colouring digitally in

Photoshop. As such, I have two work spaces: one desk for computer work and general tasks, and another desk for drawing. I'm often distracted by shiny things on the internet, so it helps to work in a separate, computer-free zone when I need to concentrate on a drawing.

I'm still trying to figure out a good schedule to stick to. I love getting up early and knowing that there's a long day



I have an eclectic mix of books for inspiration, from picture books to costume references to poetry anthologies. I think it's important to have a good variety of books to dip into for inspiration, and not just art books.



This is my main work area where I carry out most of my digital work, sketching and other day-to-day illustration tasks.



Some work for a gallery show at Krab Jab Studio. I've been playing with watercolours lately and I'm happy with the results; it's fun to play with things like metallic pigments. Here I'm about to add some decoration to the mat before framing the piece.



I love book design and bookbinding, so I have a special shelf for particularly beautiful and unconventional books. The hat is a Mad Hatter Hat that I made a few years ago for a costume. I've used it as reference many times.

I have a vast collection of postcards and little trinkets. When I moved around a lot, I took these things with me, and putting them up in each new location became a little ritual. The postcards are mostly of artwork from museums I've visited.



stretched out before me. But I'm also a night owl, and love working when I know that no one is around to bother me. That's why I work late nights and on weekends. I tend to switch between getting up very early and staying up so late that it's early.

**Rovina is an illustrator creating evocative images rooted in conceptual ideas. Her clients include Tor.com, Riot Games and The Folio Society. See more at [www.rovinacai.com](http://www.rovinacai.com).**



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# Strike a pose with Stickybones

**Flexible figures** Two animators have smashed their funding drive for their revolutionary poseable figure



Co-founded by Erik and Lauren Baker, a husband and wife team of film animators, Stickybones is a reference tool they both craved while

working on stop-motion projects.

The Bakers, who have worked on blockbusters including TRON: Legacy and The Peanuts Movie, say that Stickybones is a new kind of poseable figure that represents a cross between traditional artist's mannequins and animation puppets.

"It can hit the most expressive poses," says Erik. "Drawers, painters, sculptors and photographers can all push their art further by exploring many poses and expressions quickly before committing to one."

Erik envisioned the patent-pending joint system that makes Stickybones capable of hitting complex positions way back in 2000, while working on his final college stop-motion animation project.

"The biggest hurdle was perfecting the tension of each joint," Erik explains. "They had to be firm enough to hold, yet have the ability to be smoothly positioned into a



Character artists will appreciate just how easy it is to adjust the pose of Stickybones to suit their painting.

seemingly infinite number of poses." Indeed, it took a year of development to perfect the final design, yet the Baker's efforts have been worth it: Stickybones exceeded its crowdfunding goal in just ten hours. "We continue to make small tweaks to constantly push our designs even further," says Erik. "We aim for constant improvement."

You can stay up to date with Stickybones developments, and place pre-orders, by visiting [www.stickybones.com](http://www.stickybones.com).



Despite its metallic appearance, Stickybones is made of industrial-strength plastic.



# Letters

## YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



Contact Acting Editor, **Beren Neale**, on [beren@imaginefx.com](mailto:beren@imaginefx.com) or write to ImagineFX, Future Plc, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA, UK



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### Staying stress-free

I've always been interested in art, but over the years the hobby faded. It was a couple of years ago that I began to feel an urge to draw and paint again. Digital art enabled me to paint without the complexity of setting up an easel. At this time I also came across ImagineFX.

I'm 37, a father of three and I work as an IT consultant – which isn't especially fun or rewarding. In Portugal 25 years ago, drawing for films and video games was not a career path – at least, not one known to me. Today I regret not taking the professional art path and although a part of me keeps dreaming, it's probably a bit late for a career shift.

I do it for myself, for fun and as an escape from stress. I created a website at [www.nmp-art.com](http://www.nmp-art.com) and I also try to regularly publish my sketches on [www.nmp-art.tumblr.com](http://www.nmp-art.tumblr.com).

Keep up the good work and congratulations on a great magazine.

**Nuno Pinto, via email**

**Beren replies:** Thanks for getting in touch, Nuno. I really appreciate letters like yours – to know our little mag has been a companion to you over the past couple of years is rewarding for us. Art – digital or otherwise – is a healer, and if IFX can play any part in giving you time off from the stresses of the daily grind, we're doing our job. And thanks for sharing your art with us, it looks like you're well on the way to mastering digital. Keep up the great work.

### Little Kritas

I'm an ImagineFX subscriber and also a new user of Krita 2.9.10. Consequently, I was pleased to discover tutorials by Katarzyna Oleska in the November, December and Christmas issues. I was disappointed when I was unable to find her in the January issue, but delighted she's



One of Nuno Pinto's paintings. He says he regrets not pursuing art as a career earlier in life.



**DID YOU MISS THE FANTASY FILM-ART SPECIAL ISSUE?** Turn to page 54 for more details on our brilliant 132 issue and others, too!



Ronald Hughes enjoyed Katarzyna Oleska's Krita workshops. What do other readers think? Let us know.

back in the February issue. Could you please tell me in which issue the Krita articles started? It would be nice if you could include more workshops about Krita, written by people who use it regularly.

**Ronald Hughes, via email**

**Beren replies:** Hey Ronald, I really appreciate the feedback – it's always good to hear about specific tutorials readers find interesting. Kat's Krita series started in issue 124 and ran up to 131 (missing out 130). The series comprises seven individual pages, and you can go see if the print issues are still available here: [www.bit.ly/ifxbackissues](http://www.bit.ly/ifxbackissues).

### Searching for the sequel

Is there any possibility of purchasing a print copy of How to Draw and Paint Anatomy: Volume 2, or even the Complete edition? I bought Volume 1 many years ago and still use it today. I didn't realise there had been a second volume and after much searching I can't find it for sale anywhere unfortunately.

**Steve, via email**

**Beren replies:** Hey Steve. They are a popular series and unfortunately there's no immediate plans to reprint volume 2 right now. However, there's another ImagineFX special magazine called Practical Painter that might interest you. You can get it in print or a digital version. It covers plenty of anatomy – check out more here: <http://ifxm.ag/1W6YGqg>.

### A plea for wall art

Please could you tell me if I can purchase a poster of issue 132's cover, featuring David Bowie, Gremlins and The NeverEnding Story. I would love this as a poster for my studio wall. Oh, and I'm enjoying ImagineFX more and more each month!

**Michael McLaughlin, email**

**Beren replies:** Thanks for your kind words, Michael. That fantasy film art issue has been a big hit and our initial plan was to accompany it with a poster. We weren't able to do that in time, but it's something we may go back to – whether that's a subscriber's special, or part of a limited run, we're looking into options. If anybody else wants to see posters or prints of this issue – or any other – it would be good to know.



Your art news that's grabbed our attention



**Gülce Baycık**  
[@gulcebaycık](https://twitter.com/gulcebaycık)

“Hey @imaginefx you are a big inspiration source for me, thank you”



**Luke Artography**  
[@LukeArtography](https://twitter.com/LukeArtography)

“Say Arrrrgh”



**Sacrinxia Art**  
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# Artist Q&A

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panel

**Mélanie Delon**  
 Mélanie is a freelance illustrator who specialises in fantasy. She divides her time between working for different publishing houses and creating her own artworks.  
[www.melaniedelon.com](http://www.melaniedelon.com)

**Mark Molnar**  
 Mark is a concept and visual development artist for the entertainment industry, and is currently working for international film, game and animation companies.  
[www.markmolnar.com](http://www.markmolnar.com)

**Jia-Ying Ong**  
 Jia-Ying is a freelance 2D artist from Singapore, who has done work mostly for mobile games, books, and dabbles in animation every now and then.  
[www.circus-usagi.artstation.com](http://www.circus-usagi.artstation.com)

**Tony Foti**  
 Tony is a freelance illustrator from California who works primarily in the gaming and publishing industries, most notably on Fantasy Flight Games' Star Wars lines.  
[www.tonyfotiart.com](http://www.tonyfotiart.com)

**Tom Foster**  
 Tom is a professional comic book artist, best known for his work on 2000 AD and the Judge Dredd magazine. Outside of work, he likes to do stand-up comedy.  
[www.tomfoster.deviantart.com](http://www.tomfoster.deviantart.com)

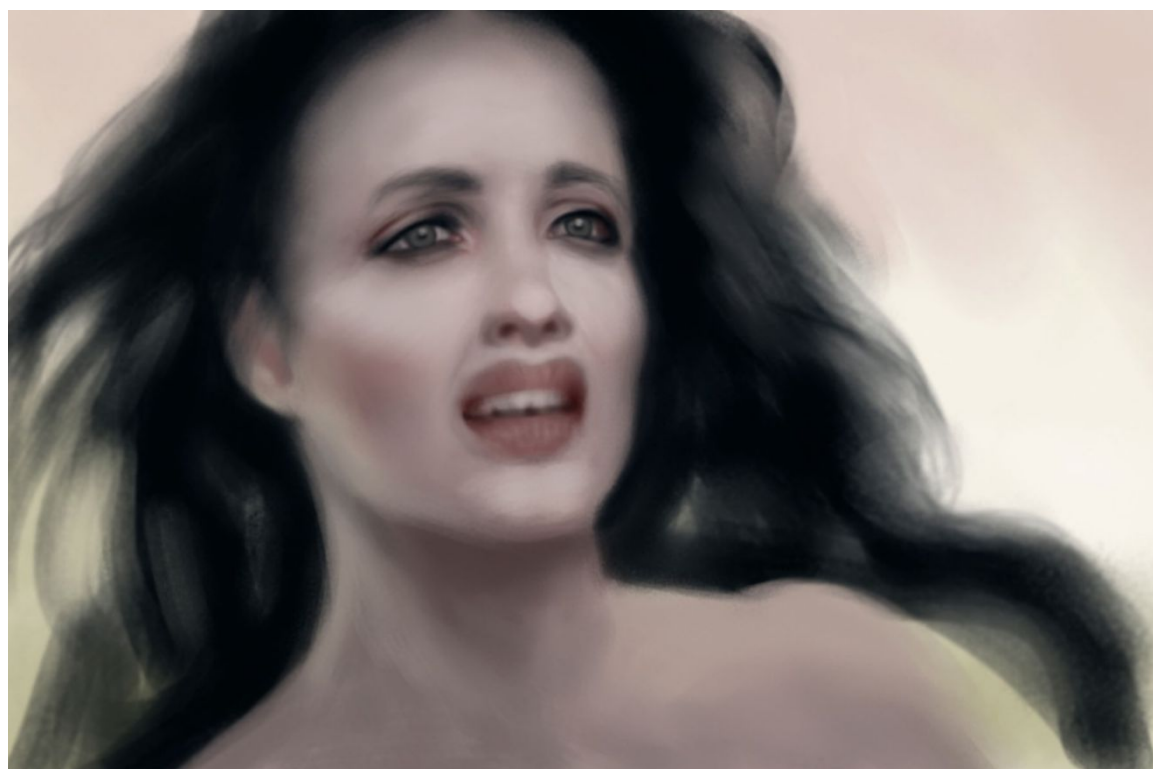
## Artist Q&A Need our advice?

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

### Question

I want to paint my character with a painful-looking expression. What should I take into account?

*Finley Curtis, England*



### Answer

**Mélanie replies**



I start this task by conducting some research, because however much I think I can visualise a painful expression, seeing one in front of me will be much more useful. I also have the options of either using myself as a reference, or asking a friend to recreate the desired expression. For convenience's sake I usually go for the self-reference: I have a small mirror placed next to my screen, which comes in pretty useful during the painting process.

Expressions are mainly conveyed by the eyes and mouth. As well as the size and

When painting a painful expression, accentuate and exaggerate. The more obvious the expression, the more the viewer will grasp what's happening to the character.

shape of a person's eyes, the inclination of their eyebrows and mouth are effective yet simple way to express emotion.

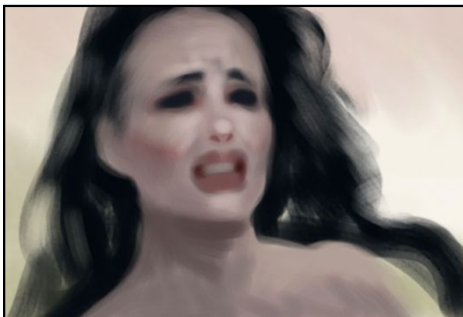
To work the expression's intensity – in this case, pain – I simply accentuate the facial movements, such as the mouth, which can be more or less open to simulate a cry of pain. The eyes could either be wide open or tightly closed with frown lines. And if the pain is intense, consider adding details such as tears, or extra pale skin, indicating the onset of shock. Here I've chosen not to show what's causing the pain, so that the viewer can focus on the facial features.



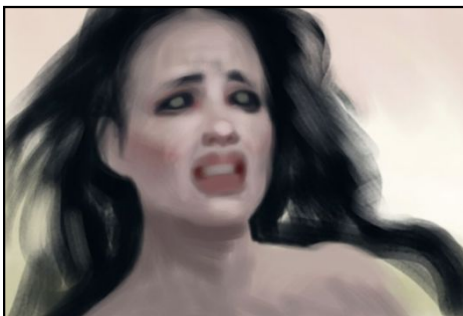
## Step-by-step: Capture the look of physical pain



**1** My first step is to determine the base of the face. My character is suffering, so I want to give the impression that she's crying. Her mouth will be open, with lips inclined downwards to indicate pain. The base of the face is crucial when trying to create a strong expression: this sketch helps to visualise the final expression.



**2** Now I start working the details. I refine the eyes and accentuate the position of the eyebrows. I want them to give the sensation of surprise but also of pain, so I depict them raised. I add a few more eyelid wrinkles to indicate slightly closed eyes, which will increase the overall intensity of the character's expression.



**3** I move on to the less-important parts of the face, such as the cheeks. This area reacts to the rest of the face, in particular the mouth. The shape varies little: I just need to make them more round than when the face is at rest, and add large wrinkles at the corners of the mouth to link the mouth and cheeks together.

## Question

I'm having trouble depicting bubbles in a liquid. Any ideas?

Bruno Shearer, Canada



When painting a bubbling liquid in a glass tube you have to focus on the lights, the material's reflective qualities and the slight distortions caused by the curved surfaces.

## Answer

### Mark replies



When painting materials, you should always consider their physical attributes. Bubbles usually appear in water or other liquids when heat is applied and the liquid starts to evaporate. It turns into gas because of the energy of the heat. We can see these bubbles, because the refraction index of the gas bubble is different to that of the surrounding substance's. Essentially, we're seeing the reflective qualities of the liquid inside the bubble.

Painted bubbles can go from a stylised sphere, to highly realistic with lots of reflections. However, it's more important to capture the randomness and other physical behaviours of the bubbles as they form. Bubbles occur around the source of heat, which is why I paint more of them at the base of the tank. They then migrate towards the surface, because they're lighter than the liquid most of the times. Multiple bubbles usually merge on the way to the surface, so it's always better to paint a few larger bubbles some distance from the heat source.

To give a bit of extra realism to the image I also play with distortion and the reflective qualities of the outer shell of the glass tube. In case of a tube the reflections are always going to be sharper and more distorted around the edges, before slowly fading away towards the centre, where we can more easily see through it. The tube also slightly distorts objects behind it, because the angle of the light changes when it strikes a different material.

## Artist's secret

### CREATE YOUR OWN BRUSHES

You can easily create random patterns, like the bubbles in this image, with your own brushes. The easiest way to do this is by customising Photoshop's default brushes. I created the base shape of the bubbles with a Hard Round brush by adding some scattering and Wet Edges.



## Question

My character's torn cloak looks too new and unrealistic. Can you help?

Gem Rolles, US

## Answer

Mélanie replies



There are several options to make a cloak look old and torn. For the colours, the tones must be desaturated.

Furthermore, the cloak isn't new so the fabric needs to look worn and weathered.

To give the fabric a sense of age, I add some torn areas all over the cloak, especially on the bottom and the edges where it's in contact with the ground. I also add some threads to accentuate the wear effect, and some patches to give the impression that the cloak has been mended several times by its owner.

I want to convey the impression that the cloak is made of rich fabrics, so I add some golden patterns around the hood. I don't overwork them or cover the whole cloak in them, though. I need it to suit my character's design, so I suggest that the cloak belonged to a noble family. Indeed, the storytelling element of the cloak is important. It's a part of my character's history and so the clothes will help me to bring the story into the illustration. I imagine that she's a destitute orphan, whose only connection to her family is the old cloak that she's always seen wearing.



I always spend more time on the important area of my composition. Here it's her face and the hood, so I increase the light here and add vibrant colours.



Add whatever details are necessary to enhance the storytelling element of a composition. They can tell a lot about the character's background.

## Artist's secret

### THE PATTERN BRUSH

To paint quickly repetitive patterns I create a brush with the desired shape. I quickly sketch the pattern: I don't need it to be clean or defined because I like to have a lot of texture for painting something realistically.

## Step-by-step: Illustrate a cloak that's seen better days



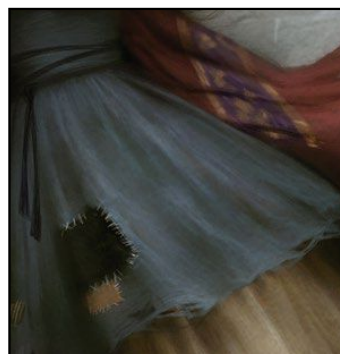
1 I start with a quick piece of line art, then choose a colour scheme. The character's costume will be quite dark with the bottom of the cloak floating in the air. My colours are desaturated, but I'll add brighter light and patterns later. It's important to find the general shape of the cloak. I want to show off the torn edges to enhance the aged look of the fabric.



2 I quickly paint the key fabric folds, following my line art and adding tears to the fabrics. I also want the cloak to look almost like silk so that it floats around my character. To achieve this effect I add more colour variations and tiny folds everywhere. I use a custom brush to paint and sketch because I need to have a lot of texture to make this element look convincing.



3 At this point the character needs to be brought to life. The cloak is too much desaturated so I boost the colour scheme with a more vibrant red. Then I refine the torn parts, using a textured brush to introduce more colour variations and realism to the fabric. I also add some holes here and there: this is a nice visual detail to accentuate the old, worn look of the cloak.



4 To give the fabric a decadent look, I add some golden and purple patterns. I use a textured brush with very soft edges because I don't want the result to be too neat; the patterns are old and worn. To reinforce this idea, I add some golden loose threads with a very fine brush. The embroidery pattern gives a story to the garment and hints at my character's tragic story.



I want to show a bounty hunter blending into the shadows, so applying lost edges around the character is a great choice to strengthen his personality visually.



## Question

Please can you explain the theory behind lost and found edges

Ally Demoray, US



## Answer

Mark replies



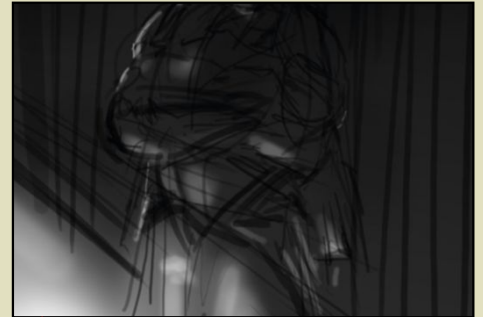
An edge can disappear when a foreground object has the same value as the background, and can become sharper by strengthening the contrast between those two values. On an illustration we can play with different lighting scenarios and create parts with disappearing edges in the shadows or lights.

It's always useful to vary your edges between soft and hard. This helps to direct the focus of your image, and makes it more interesting and painterly. You can define differences between forms with hard edges more clearly and you can create a resting point for your viewer by applying soft edges. The trick is to find a balance that supports the story.

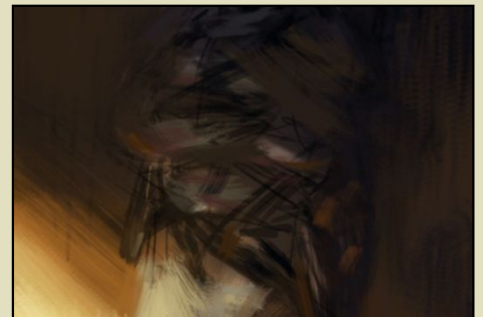
Sometimes it's enough to paint only a small part of an edge and leave the rest to dissolve into the background. The most important thing is to describe the dynamics and direction of the edge, but we can leave the rest to the viewer's imagination.

The face or the cape of this character is a great example for this. Because I've already painted one side of the character's face, it's fine to leave the other half fully in the shadows – the viewer's imagination fills in the missing details. The same thing happens with the cape on the right side. It's not necessary to depict its silhouette all the way. Instead, painting the bottom edge and hinting at the shoulder part is enough to describe the whole form.

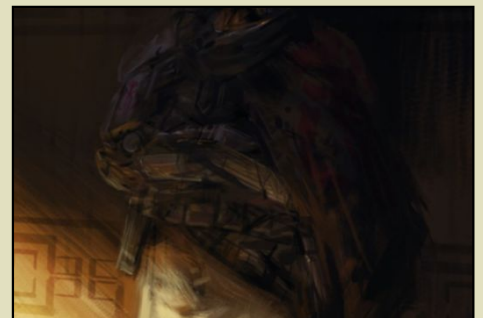
## Step-by-step: Building an image from soft to hard



**1** I want to break up the composition into a smaller lit area and a bigger one in shadow, making my character almost disappear. After a quick line drawing I quickly block in the lights and shadows, and also lay down the small reflected light patches in the dark, which will give shape to my character in the shadows.



**2** After a quick colour overlay, where I block in the darker cold and the brighter warm hues, I start to paint everything on top. I wanted to keep this step loose, so I use large brush strokes and almost smudge my forms into each other. I avoid defining shapes and adding hard edges, so that the figure is ghost-like.



**3** For detailing my character I use the desaturated cold bounce light of the sky above, which contrasts with the warm tones in the piece. I place the most contrast around the face to create a natural focal area and leave more lost edges on the silhouette, to keep the figure mysterious and to inspire the viewer's imagination.



## Question

### What are the basics of character design

Devin Tucker, US

## Answer

Jia-Ying replies



There are several ways to approach character design; there's no fixed process that you must adhere to. And rather than dwelling on the effectiveness of the finished art, I recommend simply enjoying where that process takes you.

I often begin creating a character from scratch by branching out ideas from a specific source of inspiration. Start small scale with thumbnail sketches and rough poses to convey the general form. Not having to worry about details will also give you more options. In the example, I chose to create a more or less neutral character (a supporting role, like a particularly flashy shopkeeper in a mystical underground district) drawn from Asian folklore.

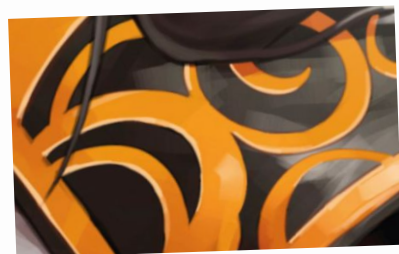
Next, do some research. This will help interpret the form in a way that's believable,

by borrowing elements from existing design or being inspired by them. If your inspiration stems from one main source, don't just limit yourself to that: look up subjects that are unrelated yet can help to enhance the concept. For this example, I base the golden swirls loosely on antique china tea set patterns.

For cohesiveness, I repeat colours, patterns and overall concept throughout. I use a single colour more than once, while maintaining a relatively strong contrast, makes certain elements pop. Bear in mind that details shouldn't be littered throughout the entire form, but concentrated on specific areas to avoid confusing the eye.

To round them out as an individual, factors such as your character's posture, fashion choices and even favourite objects should reflect their personality or lifestyle.

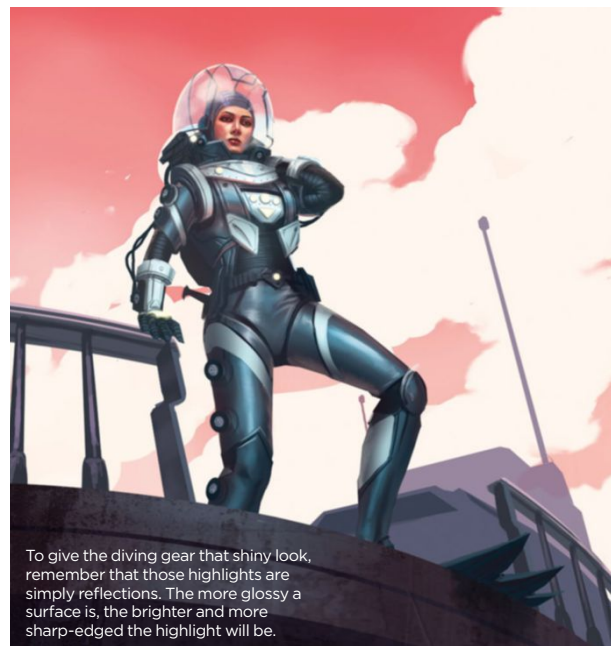
I usually stick with a maximum of four base colours that work well together, while keeping the design clean and simple.



## Artist's secret

### SHAPE IT UP

Photoshop's Pen Tool can help with keeping pattern lines polished, while using a basic soft brush will create a rougher, painterly effect. Go with whichever you prefer for the look you want.



To give the diving gear that shiny look, remember that those highlights are simply reflections. The more glossy a surface is, the brighter and more sharp-edged the highlight will be.

## Question

### Help me concept a futuristic diving suit

Brenden Grove, Republic of Ireland

## Answer

Tony replies



My first goal whenever designing something is to hunt down a mood. I'll write out some choice adjectives that succinctly describe the feel I'm going for, then narrow it down to a short list of just the most important ones. In this case, we know it needs to read as underwater gear, and that it should have an advanced, otherworldly feel.

Since this is sci-fi, a lot of the decisions you need to make are going to depend on what sort of path this world has gone down. Is it a clean, shiny apple of a future, where everything is eggshell coloured and looks a

bit like it's made of, well, eggshell? Or is it more a grim, gritty dystopia where modern technology feels more like a strange Frankenstein of older parts scavenged and assembled by survivalists? Your diving gear's design will tell that story, whether you want it to or not.

Beyond just reinforcing the narrative, you also want the outfit to look appealing and original. If it fits the adjectives, then the thumbnail stays. If it doesn't, I'll attempt to modify the silhouette in a way that makes the descriptors work. If the modifications aren't helping, I just move on to a new design. Wash, rinse, repeat.



## Question

### How do I paint the muzzle flash of a firing gun?

Laurie Bomford, England

## Answer

Tony replies

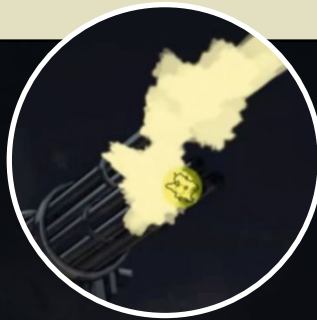


A muzzle flash is basically a small explosion. The core will be the brightest, with darker values and colour

being added as you move further out. I prefer a rough brush when painting the edges, because you're not going to find many clean lines anywhere in the blast. Once the main shape is in, stick a clipping mask over it and start adding the high-saturation warm colours to all around the edges.

Look up different muzzle flashes and pay attention to the shapes they make. These can vary, but this is a good time to use your illustrator brain to decide which kind of flash creates the mood you're looking for. It's up to you how much you want to exaggerate. Muzzle flashes in films tend to be over the top, because the blanks they use are specifically made to create large, dramatic bursts (especially when it's added in later with CG). But still, this is an illustration, and you may want to consider exaggerating the blast to push the art. The bigger the gun, though, the bigger the flash, so with things like mounted weapons you should be painting it pretty huge.

Once you're happy with the main shape, flatten it, copy it, then use Filter>Gaussian Blur to create a light halo effect. Adjust the Opacity of the layer to keep things as subtle as you like.



The core of the muzzle flash will feature the brightest colours, verging on white. Use a rough brush to lay these colours down.



Since any burst of flames in your painting is going to act as a light source, be sure its colours can be seen on surrounding objects.



## Artist's secret



**FROM CORE TO COLOUR**  
The core is generally less saturated, but having that transition from white to colorful makes the image feel more intense. Use a Color layer to experiment with different hues and see what works.

## Step-by-step: Ensure your design match your keywords



- 1 Begin with silhouettes, drawn small and quickly. The idea here is to not get bogged down with detail too early on. Just knock out as many as you can, as fast as you can. Then start curating the things you've come up with to see if they fit the list of adjectives you wrote down earlier.
- 2 Once you have some ideas, it's time to pick out the ones that appeal to you the most and start fleshing them out. I generally switch to a middle value and paint on top of the thumbnail silhouettes, trying out different smaller shapes inside the large ones. Eventually I add lines.
- 3 Now figure out a colour scheme. It helps to work in layers for this part, because then you can just adjust the hue and saturation easily. Use colours for their value. Ultramarine is inherently dark, so don't put it next to a lot of yellow or your new address will be in Contrast City.



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ImagineFX April 2016



## Question

# How can I give my comic characters convincing body language?

Hamilton Maddock, US



## Answer

Tom replies



Good reference material is a must when you want to convey a specific emotion in your characters, but I often find it difficult to source pictures of people emoting convincingly. Stock photography is often very obviously staged and using myself as a model relies too heavily on my own, pitiful acting ability.

A few canny changes in my image search criteria can make all the difference. For example, footballers are almost always either wildly elated or incredibly angry. This affords a tremendous opportunity to the student of human behaviour, as photographs from football and other sporting events often provide a unique glimpse of raw, unfiltered emotion. For subtler expressions, I turn to screen actors. I try to think of a memorable performance that conveyed the emotion I'm trying to relate and seek out screenshots from that film, or pause the DVD, if I have it.

I try to track down at least two pictures of different people for each expression. I then look for the commonalities, to divine what is universal about how a certain emotion affects the face and body. Once I isolate those visual cues, I apply them to my character.

Your characters have a potentially limitless range as actors, but utilising it can require a bit of homework. I used seven photographs for reference here.



## Step-by-step: Conveying specific emotions

- 1 A tense character will be a little hunched and have uneven shoulders, because the body is gearing up to have to either protect itself or run. The jaw will usually be clenched and the eyes wide.



I emphasise this by making the iris/pupil a little smaller. There might also be a hint of disgust in their expression, to suggest their sense of nauseous anxiety.

- 2 Laughter is often involuntary. While a person in the throes of hilarity may make themselves more prone by leaning back and dropping their shoulders, the body will sense its vulnerability and often



try to shield the face and vital organs with the hands. Nostrils will flare; the fat of the face will converge around the eyes; and the teeth and gums will be on show.

- 3 When your character is exhibiting an aggressive emotion, such as rage, the head and hands will typically be projected forward. Tendons and muscles will be tensed and the lips curled inward to bare the teeth: these are primal intimidation tactics. Be careful not to exaggerate the mouth too much though, as doing so can dehumanise the character.



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**LOCATION:** Los Angeles, US  
**PROJECT:** League of Legends  
**OTHER PROJECTS:** Blitzcrank's  
Poros Roundup (mini game)  
**WEB:** www.riotgames.com



## STUDIO PROFILE

# RIOT GAMES

**ImagineFX** heads to California to see the huge new home of Riot Games, the team behind League of Legends

**S**tanding guard near reception are life-sized statues of Annie and Tibbers, the Dark Child and the Shadow Bear. On the walls around them, a rogues' gallery of official and player-created art, characters with names like Amumu the Sad Mummy, Warwick the Blood Hunter and Gangplank the Saltwater Scourge. These champions and the 67-odd million monthly gamers who play them, helped League of Legends (LoL) become one of the biggest, and best loved, video games of all time.

ImagineFX is in west Los Angeles, at the offices of the team behind LoL. Except Riot Games doesn't call this place an office or a studio, or even its headquarters. This is a campus. The name fits: not just because it's sprawling, but because an important part of the work that goes on here has to do with learning, with striving.

In case you've been in a cave for a bit, League of Legends is a multiplayer online battle arena game. A really big one. Released in October 2009, it remains Riot Games' only title. A couple of gamers,

Brandon Beck and Marc Merrill, founded the company in 2006, and it's since grown into not only one of the most bankable game developers around, but also one of Fortune's 100 best companies to work for – debuting at number 13 in 2015.

### THE GRAND TOUR

Strolling around the campus, it's easy to see why. Walkways lead through the site's sprawling quad, among drought-friendly plants, past a giant chess set, with fairy lights leading the way overhead. There's a

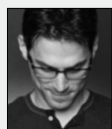




There's a riot going on in this epic 'splash' by artist Suke Su.

“Walkways go past a giant chess set. Fairy lights lead the way overhead”

basketball court between the canteen and cafe. Inside one of its wings, an old-school arcade room and a modern PC bang. There is, in fact, almost 300,000 square feet of space, housing well over 1,000 employees. When Riot moved here a year ago, The LA Times reported it as the “biggest new office lease in southern California in five years.”



On Adam Murguia's first day, the studio art director called his new team into a meeting: “I said, ‘Look, there’s a lot about the game’s look

that’s great. It’s original, it’s super, super broad, but it’s really inconsistent when it comes to quality and consistency across the board and that’s one of the things I think we need to fix.’” He braced himself for a backlash. But the team, to his surprise, agreed with him.

In the four years since, Adam has grown the art department from 20 staff to more than 200, a kind of dream team of digital artists. The campus on which they work is a flexible space, one designed to adapt to Riot Games’ collaborative approach. ➡➡

## JASON CHAN

When LoL needed a new look, Riot turned to the former Massive Black artist

### What do you like about at Riot?

Riot has done a very good job of providing a comfortable, uplifting environment, where people want to be. Everyone is professional, everyone is trusted to do their work. The crazy thing about Riot is that we allow the entire company to see most things. It doesn’t matter if you are in the art team or not, you have a voice. If you’re getting a large percentage of the company that’s not involved in the asset, but feeling strongly about it in a negative way, then you know exponentially that same feeling will exist elsewhere outside of the company.

### What does Riot do differently?

It places quality above speed and budget. There’s always an opportunity to talk about pushing something back and spending more time on it, turning it into something special. This was foreign to me when I started here. I was very obsessed with staying on schedule and I would get very nervous when a deadline was approaching and we hadn’t settled on a solution. I had to get used to the idea that it’s not about getting it out as fast as possible. It’s about making sure something is going to be valuable as art.

### Why does the company look for in an employee?

You’re spending more time with your team than your family, probably. So you want to surround yourself with people you want to be around. The company actively does that. Sure, you’re good at your job, but are you someone everyone wants to be around? It sounds like a high school popularity contest, but it’s just like a way of keeping everyone happy. If you’re around people who are inspiring, there’s no limit.

### How do you make an impression in such a big organisation?

By being a conduit for everyone’s ideas and being able to take those ideas and represent them in a cool way. You have to be very open to critique and to know that sometimes your idea isn’t the same as other people’s. That sometimes means cutting your idea out and running with theirs, even when you’re very passionate about your own. That can be a tough switch and I’ve seen people struggle with it. That’s a big thing at Riot. You’re not doing artwork for yourself anymore. Sometimes it’s nice to own a piece of artwork, but sometimes it’s just nice to know you’ve contributed to something bigger. It’s not your show.

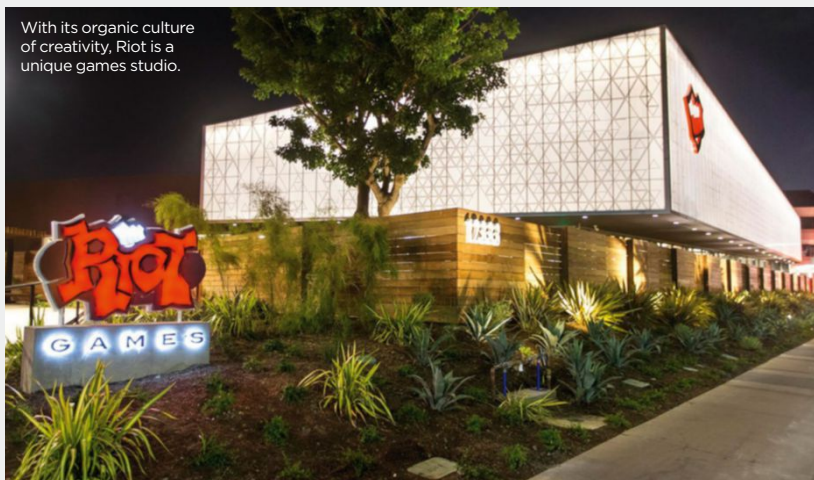


Before joining Riot Games, Jason studied at San Francisco’s Academy of Art, freelanced for *Magic: The Gathering* and worked at Massive Black.

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



With its organic culture of creativity, Riot is a unique games studio.



The Bilgewater Brew enables Rioters to get caffeinated for the day.

➔ “Our focus turned to the product, to holistic product quality,” Adam says. “So all of these desks, they’re all on wheels, they’re all plugged into the hubs, and literally the configuration is different week to week. Teams self-organise. One of the things we hire for is adaptability.”

Everything on campus is carefully thought-out: champion-themed conference rooms sit in the centre of workspace areas,

who has unique abilities and battle against a team of players or computer-controlled champions. The Riot team, or Rioters, can take around eight months to create and complete a champion. As many as 100 from various disciplines are involved in that process. Adam says there are over 120 playable champions and each can have multiple skins. Skins range from simple costumes to full thematic overhauls. They

**“We just say, ‘We need an awesome champion. Go do what you need to do to make an awesome champion’”**

so teams aren’t interrupted by Rioters rushing in and out of meetings. The Korean-style PC bang – the kind of large gaming room where many fans play League of Legends – is where work and play overlap. Nearby machines vend endless snacks. There are bars and cafes, and almost 100 breakout rooms.

“We’re not the company to say, ‘Hey, concept artists, do 10 concepts by Tuesday,’” Adam says. “We just say, ‘We need an awesome champion. Go do what you need to do to make an awesome champion.’”

In League of Legends, you play an unseen summoner. You control a champion

don’t boost the character’s stats, just changes their appearance. Paid-for cosmetics are where free-to-play League of Legends generates much of its money.

## ANYONE FOR ESPORTS?

‘League’ also has a huge competitive element to it. Regional competitions culminate in the annual World Championship, which in 2015 offered over \$2m in prize money and attracted almost 40m online viewers.

“Our audience is hardcore gamers,” Adam says. “We hire hardcore gamers, so we’re also very critical of the products we’re

## POPPY GETS A REVAMP

Based on a Jason Chan comic original (see page 43), Josh Smith works up a striking illustration

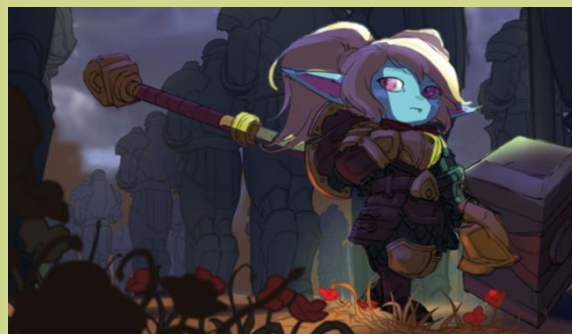


What started as a promotional comic from the stylus of Jason Chan, for the new look of a champion, ended in this beautiful and dynamic ‘splash’ illustration of Poppy, Keeper of the Hammer. Josh takes us on a step-by-step guide to how he created this lasting image.



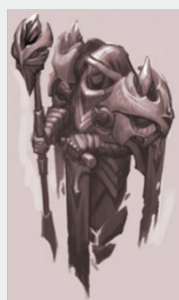
### Clean and confident

**1** I originally drew this for the cover of Poppy’s digital comic, but everyone was so smitten by it that we decided to make it her splash as well. In this step I have my composition and story locked in. I’ve found that a clean and confident drawing at this stage will make the rest of the process easier and more reliable.



### Rough colour and lighting

**2** With the help of masks for the major pieces, I do a rough colour and lighting pass. My focus is on finding a mood that suits the story and champion. I’m looking for colours and setting up a lighting situation that makes me feel something, while also complementing Poppy’s unique elements. This is the vision.



The art department transformed, and grew, four years ago when Adam came on board.

creating. We’re critics, man, we really are. And when something’s resonating internally, it’s a good sign. We’re very collaborative, we’re very competitive, we’re achievement driven, we’re a team. We’re not a family, you know. The distinction being that you can’t fire your grandma. We’re very plain spoken. Somebody’s not carrying their weight? They’ll know about it.”

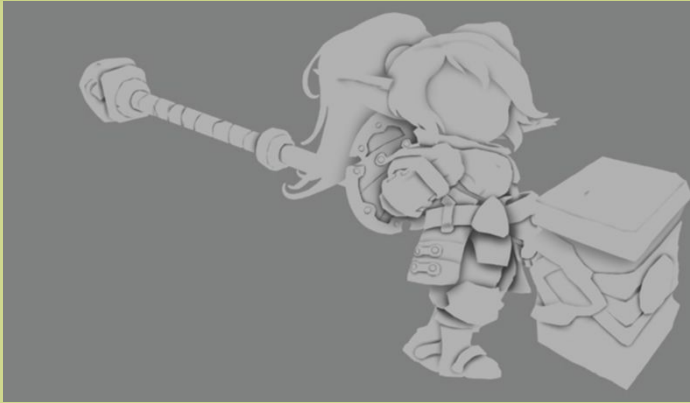
Recent ImagineFX cover artist (see issue 131) Alvin Lee was recruited by Riot’s



Splash Team just over a year ago: “Splash is basically just a name for an illustration team, which went from working almost as a standalone team

to following the rest of the company into being more integrated. If I jump into





### An ambient occlusion pass

**3** Next is an ambient occlusion pass. A term generally reserved for 3D renders, it refers to nooks and crannies light can't reach. By putting dark shadows with steep drop-off in areas two objects meet or overlap, I get an illusion of volume.



### Block in cleaner light and colour

**4** With my occlusion pass on a multiply layer above everything, I create masks to separate major materials. I then block in a cleaner version of the light and colour from step 2. I mask out and treat the background and soldiers in a similar way.



### Refining details

**5** I start to see the fruits of my labours. Masks keep me sane while I render materials, zooming out often. Once it looks clear and believable, I suck it up and keep painting. Our splash style is to feel like a photograph from a fantasy world, so I refine details further. Lastly, post-processing: light bloom, depth of field and colour adjustments.

working with another person, hopefully both of us will level up."

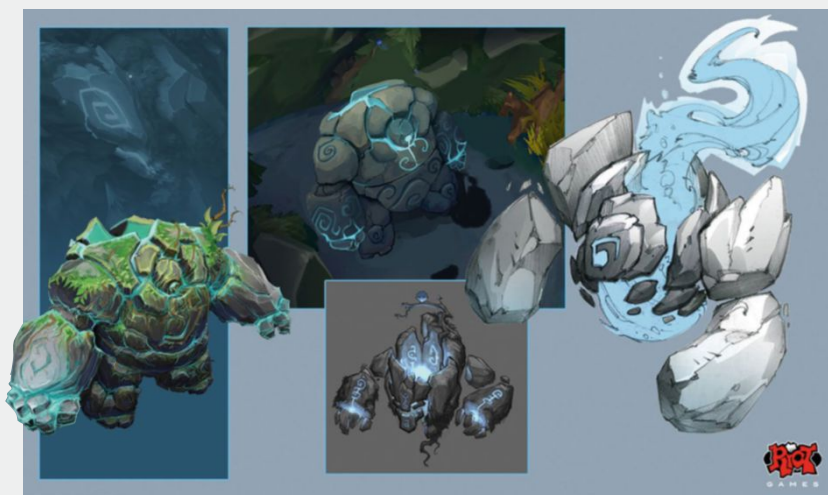
Around the campus, you hear terms like 'level up' and 'force multiplication' used a lot. Evan Monterro, an illustrator on the



Champ Team, is one of Riot's newest employees. He explains what these terms mean: "I was sort of a generalist. I had a good

amount of knowledge about a wide range of things. They want someone here that is a 10 in the thing we're hiring for, and a three in everything else. Not fives across the board."

Once they have the job, Rioters bump those threes up to 10s by collaborating, which is how they level up and force multiply. There are also on-site sketch



Some concept art from the Summoner's Rift map. It's the most viewed game maps in LoL and that's saying something!





## SION'S LEVEL UP

Tasked with producing 3D models for one of the original LoL characters Sion, Josh Singh helped update the champ for today

### Baby (monster) steps

**1** The art quality in League of Legends had far surpassed Sion's humble beginnings. He was a prime candidate for our Champion Update Team. We identified what makes Sion appealing and what wasn't hitting the mark. We identified the fantasy we were trying to deliver on. In Sion's case it was an Ancient Unstoppable warrior, who'd been brought back to battle through fell magic.

### Background's everything

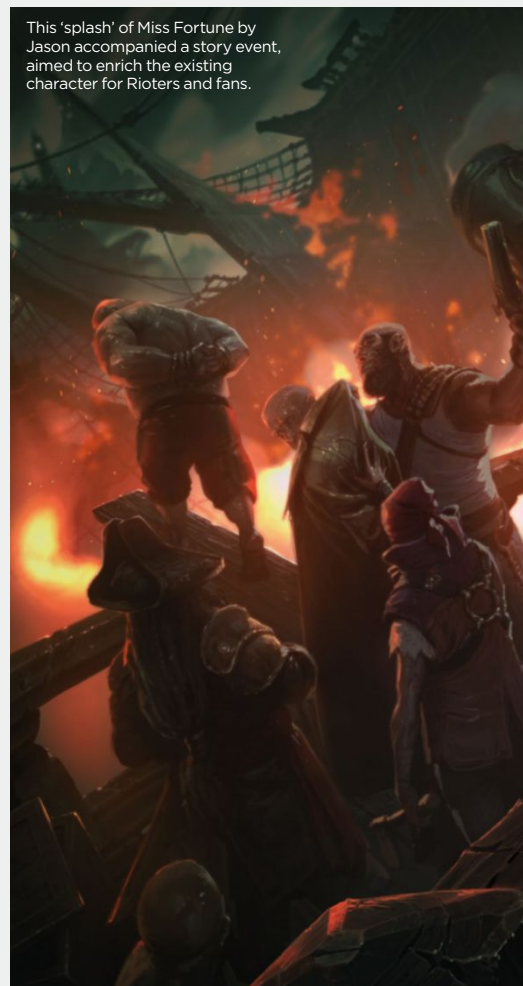
**2** After we found an idea and a few images we liked, we began to refine and add story to the design. We began to ask questions like, "What did Sion look like before he died?" We also asked things like, "Should Sion have any relationship or connections to champions who are currently in League?" We also began callouts of his weapon and character headshots, figuring out how undead we wanted to go.

### Seeing in 3D

**3** After we found a design we liked, I modelled Sion in ZBrush. We used the sculpt as a reference for the splash team as well as a source for the ambient occlusion map to speed up the texturing process. One of the key jobs of the splash is how we want people to feel when playing this character? In Sion's case I think the splash team nailed it. In the splash he's destroying his enemies, and seeing them driven before him. Perfect Sion!



This 'splash' of Miss Fortune by Jason accompanied a story event, aimed to enrich the existing character for Rioters and fans.



➤➤ groups, life-drawing classes and craft classes taught by Riot artists.

So how do you get a job at Riot Games? "Skill gets you in the door," says principal



artist Moby Francke, "but more important is you're a cultural fit." Moby's remit is broad. "I work with everybody. I'm making

characters sometimes, I'm doing paint-overs of somebody else's work, marketing, art direction for an event. Most things take six or seven months. This is a dream job for a lot of people. They let you take chances. They let you fail catastrophically, as long as you learn something from it. You're not just pigeon-holed. You're not a widget. We're extremely anti-widget at this company."

### NEVER CLOCK IN AGAIN

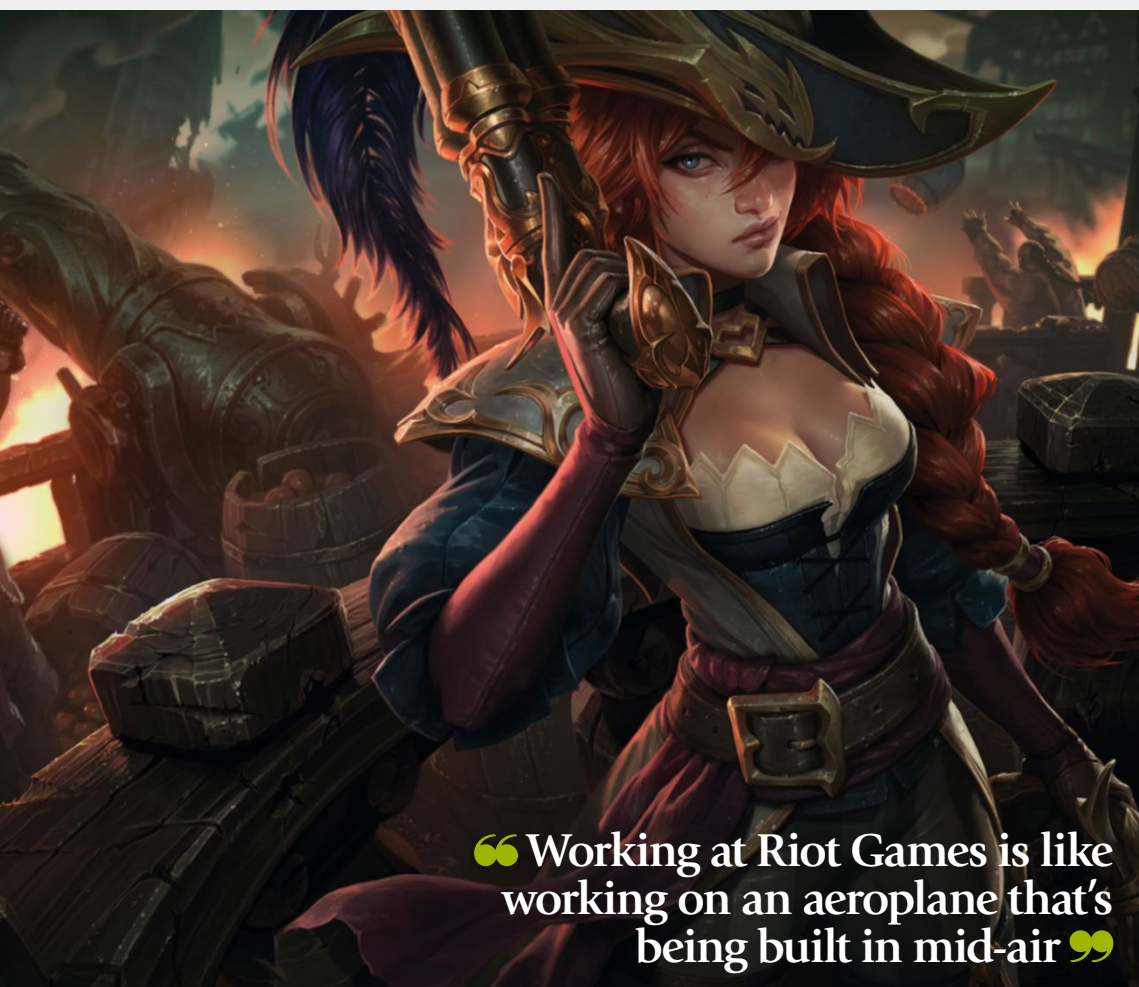
"They don't hire guys who come in for a pay check," concept artist Chris Campbell says,



"they look for the people who are passionate. My team's goal is to make a new character that's going to change the game. It's gonna

fundamentally blow everyone's minds and be the kind of experience that gets people excited to play. If it doesn't reach a level of excitement with us, we just don't put the character out."





“Working at Riot Games is like working on an aeroplane that’s being built in mid-air”

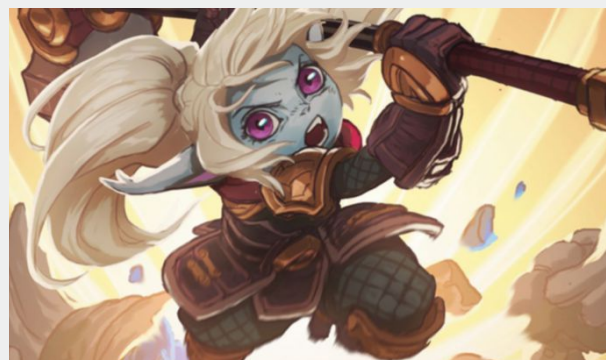
Chris’s job on the Champ Promo Team, he says, is to develop the nuances of a champion: who they are and what motivates them. “It’s never some solo project. It’s open, a communal gathering of thoughts and ideas.”



Senior concept artist Trevor Claxton says working at Riot is like working on an aeroplane that’s being built in mid-air. And that’s not to

everyone’s taste. “I’ve seen people come on-site and work like that for a while and just not be happy. They need peace and space to create the best work they can possibly create.” It seems working the Riot way may not be right for everyone, and could even upset its specific culture.

League of Legends is a game of great scope, built on meticulous attention to



A detail from Jason Chan’s Poppy comic, a release to give backstory to the revamped champ.

detail. The Riot Games campus is exactly the same. A lot of care is taken to create what appears to be a care-free working



environment. And the results speak for themselves. “We are always trying to push, push, push,” says skins illustrator Chengwei Pan.

“In other companies you might get a week or two to produce an illustration,” he continues. “When other artists hear that they’re like, ‘What? It takes you four weeks to do one illustration?’ But we’re not wasting time. We have more iterations, more narrative talk and a lot more feedback than other illustrators get. That’s why the quality of the illustrations keeps growing. Riot has a fantastic culture.”

PC bangs are a common sight in Asia, and so Riot built its own in-house to keep Rioters connected with their gamer audience.

## ALEX FLORES

The chance to work at Riot was a dream come true for the senior concept artist

### With such a demanding job, how do you find time for your own art?

I find it hard to work on personal stuff these days because it’s also the stuff that’s done here at Riot. It’s super fun and there’s just a wide variety. I can be painting a robot one day, then a knight, then some kind of creature. It’s nuts. I remember in a previous job it was like a year and a half of medieval stuff. But with the amount of skins and champions in the League universe, it’s so colourful. Also, you might see a cosplayer dress up and you’re like, “Holy shit, they got that little detail that I put in!” That’s a good feeling and I guess it wouldn’t happen with personal art.

### What do you think separates Riot from other companies?

Previous companies I’ve worked at definitely want speed. They want quality as well, you know, but the timeline is very important. Pushing back on something because you don’t feel like it’s the best it can be is harder in other companies than here. Here, people understand.

### And what about Riot employees?

Everyone in Riot is passionate about the game. In other jobs I’ve seen people working on art and they don’t even play the game. ‘Hey what you working on?’ ‘I don’t know, this thing.’ Oh, man! Here, people are super passionate. They understand champions or other parts of the game and really make something.

### We’ve heard about collaboration and adaptability. How important are those things at Riot?

Very important. I once said to Eric Canete, ‘That looks so sick. How do you even think of that pose?’ He’s like, ‘Well, you know, it’s kinda broken – the anatomy.’ Wait, what? I thought things couldn’t be broken. He broke the anatomy just enough to push the gesture even further, and that’s why the axe swing looks so much stronger, like it’s really going to kill someone. So I try to tweak things and see if there are areas where I can break just enough to enhance the gesture, but so it’s not viewable to the human eye.

### How does an artist get a job at a studio like Riot Games?

It’s beneficial to be well-rounded and try different styles. If you think, ‘Oh my god, I have to do that, I want to be in that company,’ then research and see the kind of stuff they’re into. It pays off to put more work into that kind of style. That will help you get a foot in the door.



Alex Flores studied in the Philippines before moving to the US to work at EA as a concept artist for the Sims, before taking a job at Riot Games.

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



## Iris Compiet

A desire to learn, and to mix humour with her darker art, fuels many of this artist's sketches

### Artist **PROFILE**

**Iris Compiet**

**LOCATION:** The Netherlands



The Dutch artist studied at the University of Art in Breda, before carving out a successful freelance career. She's produced art for books, concepts for films and been commissioned for gallery shows. Iris cites European folklore, mythology, fairytales and ghost stories as just some of her inspirations behind her award-winning work.  
[www.eyeris.eu](http://www.eyeris.eu)

#### **LIGHT AND SHADE**

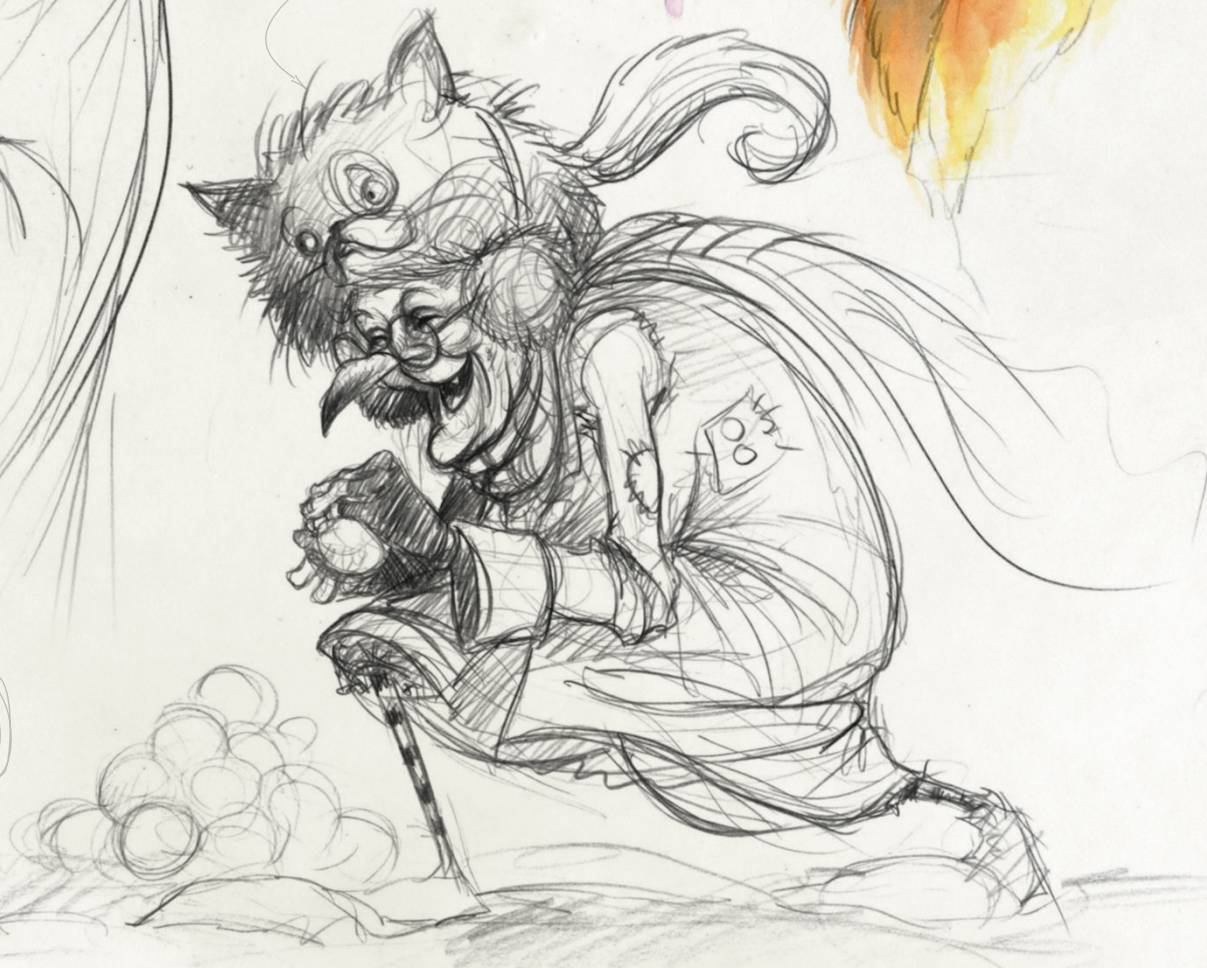
"I love horror: give me Edgar Allan Poe to illustrate any time! But I need to throw in some humour, too. By doing other styles I learn much more: in my comic stuff it's more about gesture - something I can use to loosen up my darker work."

#### **SOME WARM-UP FUN**

"Sketching characters like these is just about spontaneity and fun. They start out simple, yet by the end of the line I've got a complete story in mind."

#### **HARPIES**

"I love the structure of wings and birds, but I find it a challenge to depict them accurately, so I try to understand the anatomy and just sketch away, often with added birds claws! Harpies are such interesting creatures."





### YULE LORD

"I'm fascinated by Krampus and the lore around that creature. What better way to spend Christmas than to sketch my own version? I researched horns and creatures, mixed and matched elements, and a creature was born. But instead of a horrifying version I made him more of an impressive beast that's not all bad."

### TRAVEL SKETCH

"While travelling by train I sketch quick characters, like this chap. By exaggerating facial features to the extreme I gain a better understanding of how to draw correct facial anatomy."

"My comic stuff is more about gesture, which is something I can use to loosen up my darker work"



# Sketchbook



## JENNY GREENTOOTH

"This is one of the many sketches I've done to thank people for contributing to my Gofundme campaign to start oil painting. Sketching with watercolour gives me so much texture to play with. The happy accidents provide new insights and avenues to explore for the story that accompanies my finished pieces."

## PENCIL WANDERINGS

"My sketchbooks have no rules - I often let my pencil wander around the page. Sometimes a photograph captures my imagination. Here, I found a vintage photo I loved and that profile had to be drawn."

## TROPHY WIFE

"Often, imagination takes hold and anything can happen. This was certainly the case for my Trophy Wife sketch."



### WITCH WORLD

"I've got this imaginary world of weird witches. I draw them when I need a giggle. They're great practice for gesture and movement: they don't have to be perfect, so there's no fear of failure."

### EYES

"Eyes are the focal point for me. They tell the story. Here I'm trying to find a balance between human and eagle to create my version of a harpy."

"My sketchbooks have no rules. I often let my pencil wander around the page"

### CONSTANT LEARNING

"I never really know what's going to happen. Things start with a line, another line and from those two lines a character is shaped. Adding quick watercolours in a limited palette gives it life and stops me from overworking things."

Want to share your sketches? Email us with a selection of your artwork, to [sketchbook@imaginefx.com](mailto:sketchbook@imaginefx.com)

NEXT MONTH'S SKETCHBOOK: RANDY BISHOP



# RIGHT ON TRACK

Gnomon's first batch of Games Track students are nearing graduation – so how has this innovative art course fared so far? **Ed Ricketts** finds out

F

ounded in 1997 by its president Alex Alvarez, Gnomon: School of Visual Effects, Games and Animation was born into a very different industry environment than the present. Its inception was due largely to Alex's experience as a support tech at Alias|Wavefront, which produced the software which would become Maya, before being bought out by Autodesk. He realised artists desperately needed to learn it, yet there wasn't any formal resource where they could do. Thus the

## ENVIRONMENT

*Michael Sheffels graduated from Gnomon in 2013 and is now a concept artist at ILM.*

school was born, offering training for digital production aimed at Hollywood's entertainment industry.

These days Gnomon is a fully accredited teaching institution, and while its goals remain the same, the spread of subjects and industries it caters to has broadened considerably. In those early days, for instance, none of its courses covered game development, as there simply wasn't a demand among potential employers. But nowadays there's a roughly 50/50 split between those studying for television and film, and video gaming.

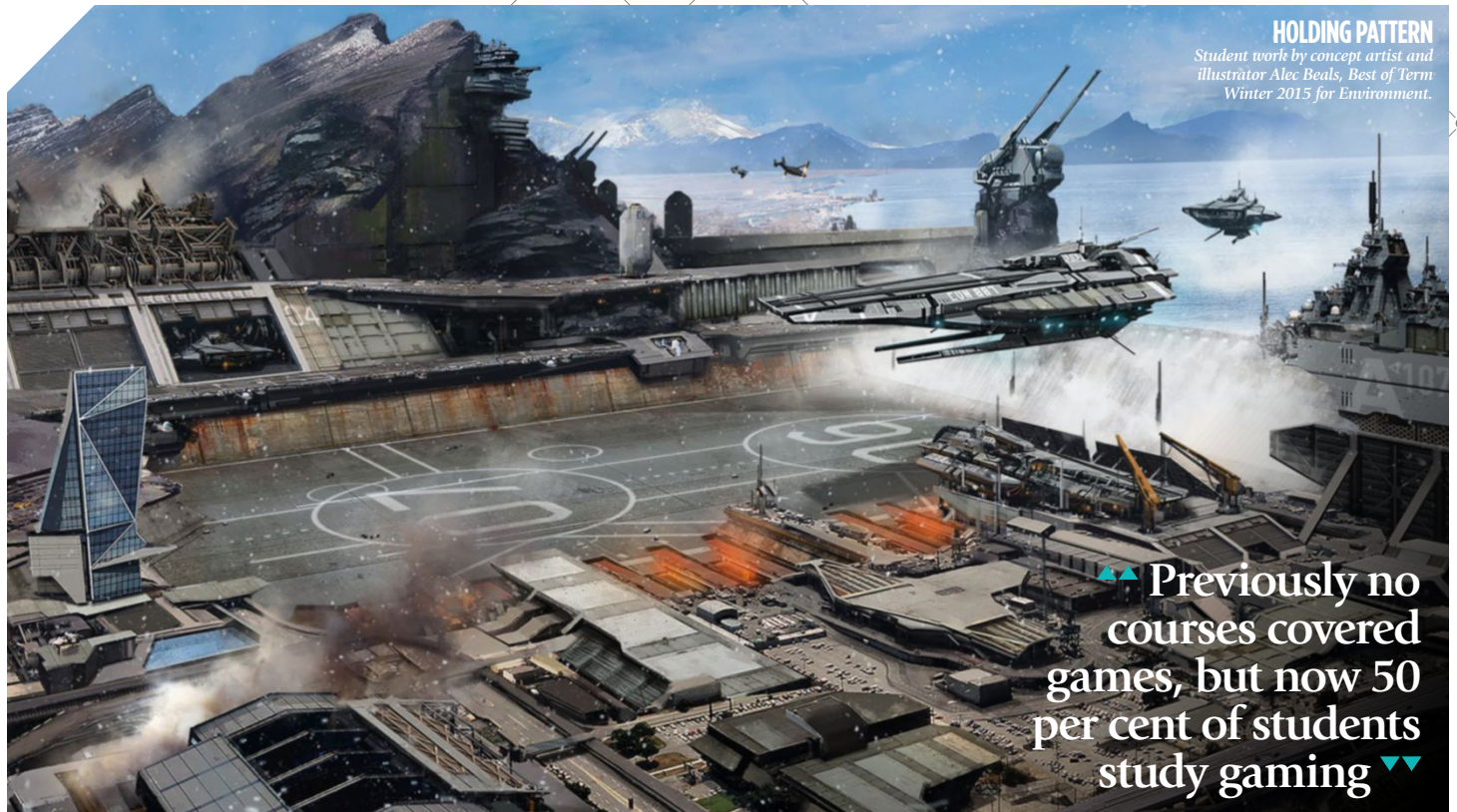
In fact, last year Gnomon introduced a new two- and three-year Games Track to its Digital Production for Entertainment course, specifically aimed at those who want to work in the games industry – be that on console, PC or mobile platforms. As well as traditional tools such as Maya and Photoshop, the course covers the Unreal 4 engine, Unity and Marmoset among other tools, so graduates get a well-rounded education in workflows and processes.

Next term will see the first crop of graduates emerging from the Games Track, and the results are looking very ➔





# GNOMON'S GAMES TRACK



## HOLDING PATTERN

Student work by concept artist and illustrator Alec Beals, Best of Term Winter 2015 for Environment.

Previously no courses covered games, but now 50 per cent of students study gaming



## HANDS ON

Gnomon currently has seven fully stocked study labs, with another two on the way.





➔ positive. Shannon Wiggins is the director of placement and alumni relations at the school, and therefore well-placed to gauge industry demand: "Blizzard, Riot, Naughty Dog, Respawn, Sony Santa Monica, The Workshop, Blind Squirrel, Fireforge Games, Disney Interactive, Infinity Ward, Treyarch, and Ready at Dawn, to name a few, are waiting to hire from the grad course," she says.



### VIRTUAL JOBS

Virtual reality is, naturally, one area that's seeing a rise in popularity, thanks largely to the imminent launch of PlayStation VR and the PC-focused Oculus Rift. And of course general gaming demand, on all platforms and all project sizes, continues to grow with each year.

### ENVIRONMENT INTERIOR, 3D

*Produced by student Rhonda Chan, winner of this category in Best of Spring Term 2015.*

### ENVIRONMENT FOR GAMES

*Servando Lupini is now an associate 3D artist at Blizzard and produced this at Gnomon in 2014.*

▲▲ A large part of Gnomon's success is due to its canny location: slap bang in the middle of Hollywood ▼▼

"The students pursuing the Games Track have been very happy with their coursework and the programme," says Anton Napierala, technology education lead at Gnomon.



"Although the programme is relatively new, as the Games Track-specific classes have been rolling out, even students outside the track have been eager to get in on the game art training, by picking up the classes as electives.

"Classes such as environment creation for games, taught by industry veteran Nate

Stephens, or props and weapons for games – taught by Nick Reynolds from Riot Games – are consistently full classes wait-listed by full-time students who get priority for seats in Gnomon courses," Anton adds.

A large part of Gnomon's overall success is due to one very canny decision by Alex: its location. Set slap bang in the middle of Hollywood, within the Television Center Studio lot, Gnomon has almost unprecedented access to major film and effects studios, and an increasing number of game developers. These are not small outfits, either: the LA area is host to ➔



### CONCEPT FOR GAMES

*Maria Carriedo's design won Best of Term for the 2015 spring term.*





# GNOMON'S GAMES TRACK

## GAME ART STUDENTS

Jenna Ruth is in term 11 out of 12 in the Games Track, with half a year to graduation. We chatted about her experience so far



### Can you briefly tell us a bit about your background?

I'm an LA native who studied fine arts in New York. I became interested in 3D art after school. I've been playing video games since 1994, so it was an awesome discovery to find out that making them was something I could do.

### What first attracted you to taking the Games Track option at Gnomon?

The possibility of being able to tell stories and create worlds. That sense of communication and exploration was something that I loved about art, and felt very strongly about in some of my favourite games. I just begun my demo reel, so hopefully I'll be able to start posting lots of cool stuff on ArtStation soon.

### What's it been like?

So far, it has been an incredibly challenging but also highly rewarding experience. There is so much to learn. It's exciting but also overwhelming sometimes. A big challenge is just adjusting to how different the workflow is from film. Normal-map baking is quite different from anything else, and the pace of the pipeline is quite different.

There are several aspects that I was surprised to find fun. It's immensely satisfying to throw a level blockout in-engine and get to run around in it immediately. Also, texturing has become incredibly fun. The combination of physically based shading and projection painting programs give you a solid start and really help to make the process fluid.

### What's next for you?

I honestly can't wait to get out there and make games. I would love to contribute to a passionate team of people making a game that they care about. The programme is fairly intensive, so there isn't much time for many outside activities. It's incredibly rewarding though, so for those just starting, don't get discouraged! So, I'm excited to get to work on personal projects with the extra time I'll have after graduating.

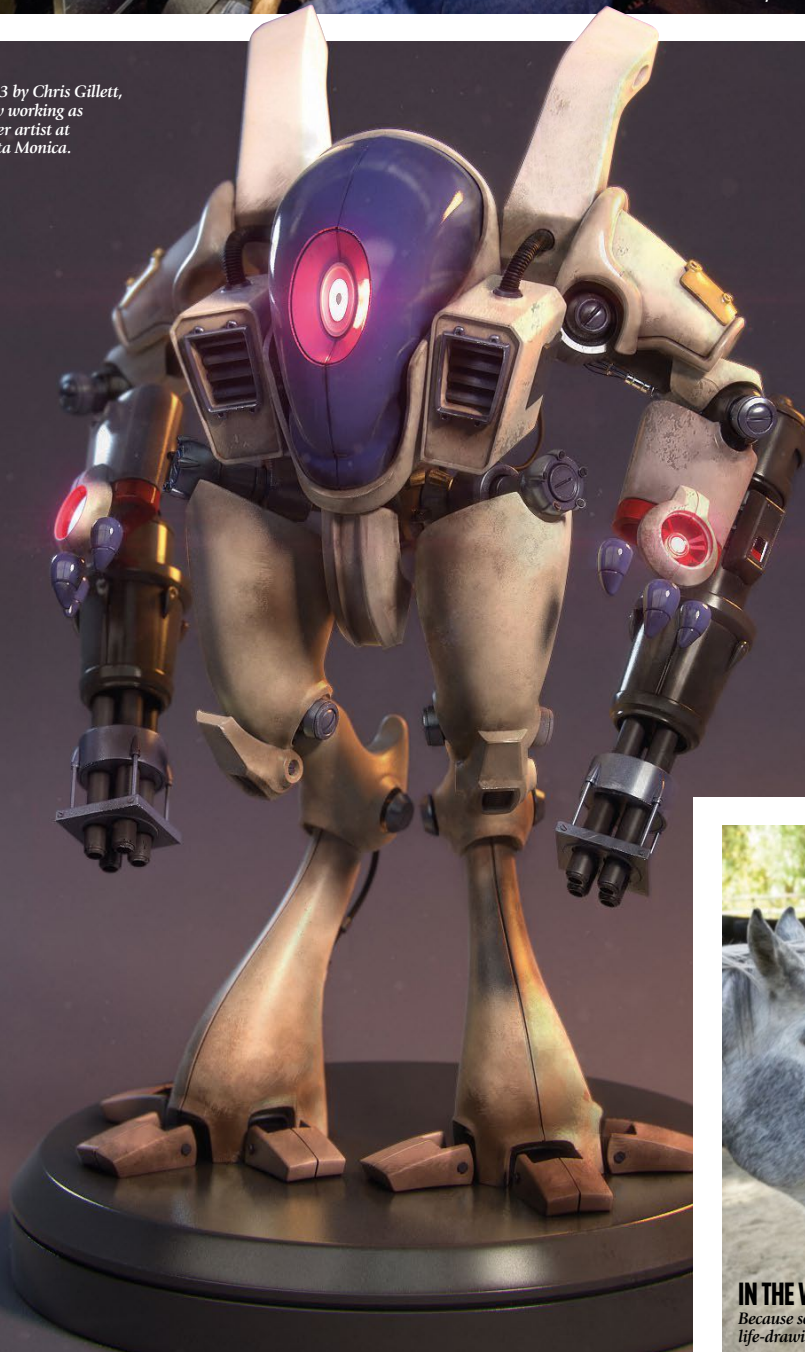


### ALTOGETHER NOW

Teamwork and peer review is a vital part of the study process at Gnomon.

### BOT

From 2013 by Chris Gillett, who's now working as a character artist at Sony Santa Monica.



### IN THE WILD

Because sometimes only a life-drawing trip will do...



# FUTURE GAMES

As with everything at Gnomon, the Games Track is something of a work in progress...

So far the results for Games Track are looking very promising. But there's always room for improvement, and progress has been a keystone at Gnomon. So what's next?

Well, the introduction of two new computing labs – to join the existing seven stocked with workstation PCs – ought to give students more hands-on time with software when they roll out in the spring. Based on feedback from the students, changes will also be made to Games Track where deemed necessary.

"Aside from constantly working to improve the quality of classes here at Gnomon, we're always looking for ways



to improve our students' educational experience," adds Anton Napierala. "Recently our different tracks have started to form student-run clubs. Easily the most active

group on campus, the Gnomon Games Club enables us to organise events such as exclusive Q&A sessions with industry professionals, presentations by interesting and important developers, and also has opened the door to students forming voluntary internal group projects such as game jams.

"My goal going forward is to build on and improve these extra experiences that will help to enrich our students and better prepare them for their careers," he adds.

## ORC FACE

Modelled, textured and rendered by Sameth Sim, who graduated from Gnomon in 2014.



## CHARACTER DESIGN

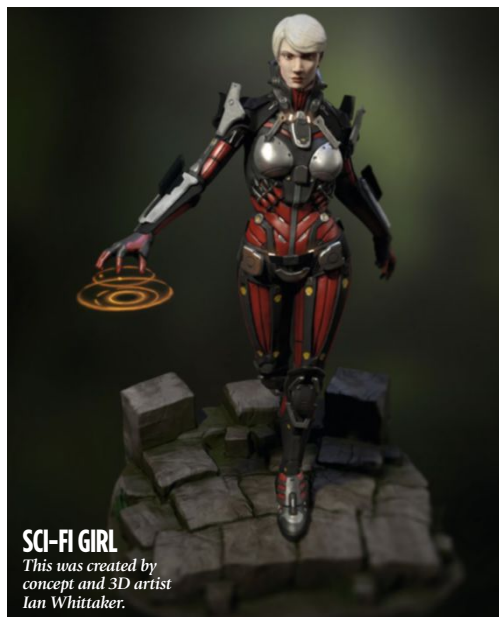
By Steven Womack, winner of this category in Best of Term Summer 2015.



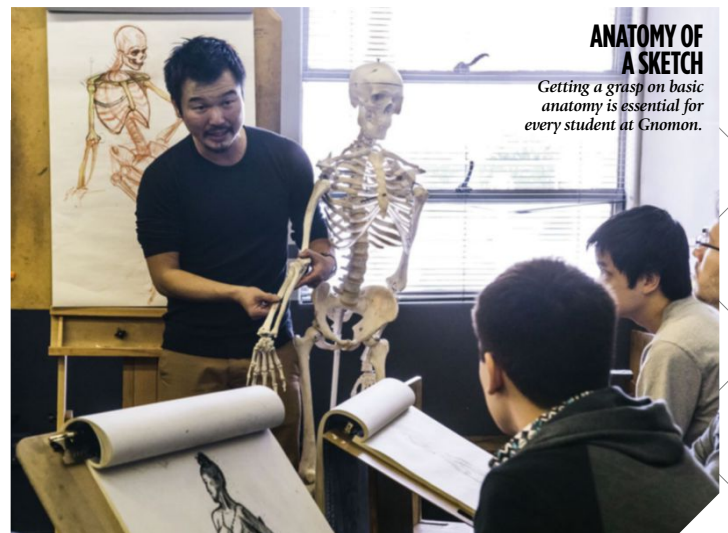




**R&R**  
Gnomon has plenty of cool stuff to keep students entertained (and inspired) during any down times.



**SCI-FI GIRL**  
This was created by concept and 3D artist Ian Whittaker.



**ANATOMY OF A SKETCH**  
Getting a grasp on basic anatomy is essential for every student at Gnomon.

➤ major players such as Sony Santa Monica, Naughty Dog (of Uncharted and Last of Us fame), Blizzard and plenty more.

With such weighty employers to hand – both in terms of corporate size and cultural heft – the Gnomon games track can benefit hugely. “Proximity is everything,” explains Jonathan Berube, VFX art director at Blizzard Entertainment and part of the Gnomon Advisory Board.



“This has enabled Gnomon to host panels with industry professionals who come and teach after work. A lot of busy professionals live in the area so they can save on commuting to work, which means it’s easy for them to come to Gnomon to teach.”

## THERE'S NO 'I' IN TEAM

Game development necessitates artists being more closely tied to the overall workflow process, as opposed, say, to a concept artist creating ideas for a film.

▲▲ We’re not at the stage where ‘I went to Gnomon’ has the same clout as ‘I went to Harvard’, but it’s not far off... ▼▼

Games Track emphasises this, with hands-on experience of working as part of an iterative team. Which specific areas does Jonathan feel are likely to be in most demand in the near future, when it comes to game art development?

“Well, animation has been assisted greatly with the use of motion capture over the course of the decade, but animation skills are still in great need as there are many things that are simply impossible to mo-cap,” he says. “Lighting has also become more and more accessible and automated over the years with the use of high dynamic range illumination maps and real-time ray-trace renderers.

“The bigger the worlds, the more asset creators are needed. Potentially, the next big

things could be related to VR – anything that has to do with this process may soon be in high demand. It seems like the Unreal Engine is well-suited for VR development, so to be familiar with the Unreal engine could soon lead to serious employment opportunities.”

The games industry is now the most lucrative entertainment medium in the world. In short, the art of making fun is big business, so potential employees really do need both the skills and attitude, which the Games Track aims to foster. We may not quite be at the stage where ‘I went to Gnomon’ carries the same clout as ‘I went to Harvard’, but it’s not too far away...

To learn more about the Games Track visit [www.gnomon.edu/programs](http://www.gnomon.edu/programs).



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### Issue 132

March 2016

We explore the fantasy film genre's golden age – Andreas Bennwik's cover homage kicks things off in style. Elsewhere, Min Yum takes on a Brothers Grimm fairy tale, Simon Dubuc fills an RPG with unique characters, and James Gurney paints a rogue construction mech.



### Issue 131

February 2016

Alvin Lee's art of Jinx from League of Legends heralds our manga issue, featuring a fresh take on Katniss Everdeen by Ilya Kuvshinov, advice from Legends of the Cryptids artist Laura Sava, and a sculpture workshop from the mighty Shiflett Brothers.



### Issue 130

January 2016

A host of top-flight artists help us to celebrate turning 10 years old. Ross Tran's cover art ushers in the likes of Craig Mullins, Syd Mead, Brom, Mélanie Delon, Todd Lockwood and Allen Williams, who all contribute workshops. Plus there's a free 2016 calendar.



### Issue 129

Christmas 2015

Andrew Theophilopoulos paints Kylo Ren facing off against Rey, in our spectacular Star Wars special issue. Also inside are Aaron McBride, Iain McCaig, Terese Nielsen, Feng Zhu, Brian Sum and Hugh Fleming, all revealing their art from a galaxy far, far away...

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**Issue 124**  
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**Issue 123**  
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**Issue 122**  
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WALK-ON-DIGITAL-ARTISTS  
**ImagineFX**  
**MASTER  
ART**

**DIABLO III:  
STORM OF LIGHT**

Laurel D Austin's cover art for the *Diablo III: Storm of Light* book. Her work also graces the screens of millions of gamers – the *Diablo* series has sold more than 24.8 million copies worldwide.

The art of  
**LAUREL  
DAUSTIN**

**Tom Dennis** catches up with the concept artist and illustrator who's putting the buzz into Blizzard



56

WALK-ON-DIGITAL-ARTISTS  
**ImagineFX**

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**LORDS OF WAR:  
GROMMARSH**

One of Laurel's concept animation pieces of Grommarsh Hellscream, the legendary World of Warcraft character.



© Blizzard Entertainment



**P**erhaps, like some of the readers out there, I was the weird arty kid in my class," says Laurel D Austin, senior illustrator at Blizzard

Entertainment, recalling when thinking about how she grew from small-town Canadian bedroom artist to becoming one of the leading concept illustrators in the video games industry.

Weird or otherwise, her dynamic, energetic style has served her well, finding her commissions working on big-name trading card series and numerous blockbuster games titles. It seems being weird can get you very far in the world of concept art and illustration.

"I was definitely an arty kid," says Lauren, "to the exclusion of a lot else,



**GREEN PARROT DRAGON**

An example of Laurel's skilful blending of animal attributes and anatomies for which she's famous.

I think! I was lucky that my parents were very encouraging. I loved drawing and they always made sure I had reams of paper and buckets of crayons, pencils and markers at my disposal. I was interested in a few subjects from an early age – animals of all sorts, especially dinosaurs, mythical creatures and worlds they lived in. My parents told me they knew I'd either be an artist or a scientist."

Science's loss is the concept art world's gain, though, and after studying a multidisciplinary art course at NSCAD University in Nova Scotia, Canada, Lauren embarked upon a career in the games industry with the London-based Splash Damage (creators of Wolfenstein: Enemy Territory, Enemy Territory: Quake Wars, Dirty Bomb and more).

Lauren was eventually let loose on the studio's first original title, BRINK. Under the stewardship of art director Olivier Leonardi she flourished: "It was a small team, but full of great talent. I learned a lot from artists like Georgi Simeonov and Tim Appleby. I was incredibly lucky to have my first few years in the industry at such a unique studio."

**MORE THAN A GAME**

Video game art seems like a calling to Laurel, and her passion for the broad imagination and creativity required to create whole worlds of believable characters and environments is evident when she talks. This isn't an artist who's simply treading water. Gaming development and art is her lifeblood, it seems.

"Since video games are such a young medium, the art surrounding them seems a lot less restrictive than other areas of entertainment," Laurel explains. "There's just more room to play around and do things that are fun. ➡

“Game art is a lot less restrictive than other areas. There's more room to play around and do fun things”



© Blizzard Entertainment

**STARCRRAFT II: LEGACY OF THE VOID**

Laurel's eye-catching poster art for the StarCraft expansion pack Legacy of the Void that was released at the end of 2015. She also directed the artwork for the game.



# ARTIST TIP

## LEARNING FROM THE BEST

"Seeing what pro artists were posting online, what careers were possible and what working to a professional standard meant, gave me a clear target to hit and showed me the resources I needed."



### LORDS OF WAR: DUROTAN

"The most enjoyable episode for me to work on..." she says. "I love me some wolves." Adding: "I can't help but feel more connected to Durotan as a character after drawing him so much. Funny how that happens, really."

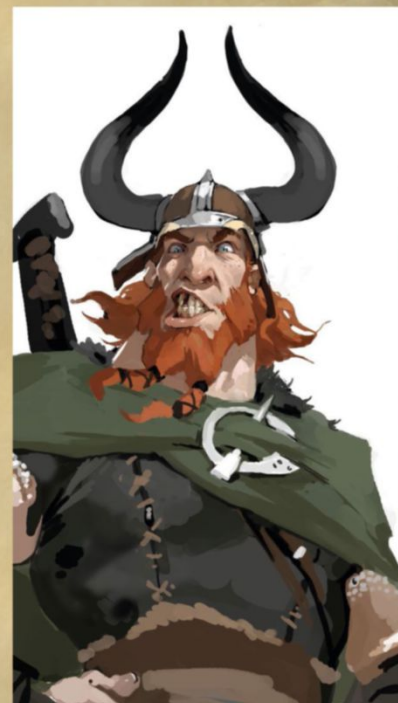
### SIGVARD THE VICTORIOUS

A character concept Laurel created for the online Game Artist Academy.



### HEARTHSTONE

The Hearthstone, Heroes of Warcraft expansion, is one of Laurel's favourite games, and features many of her character creations.



➔ "The way I look at it, the art for video games does three basic jobs. The art is certainly not the only aspect that can tell the game's story, but it's the medium that does the lion's share of the job communicating mood and background to the players. In games like Portal and BioShock, you actually get tableaus in the environments that describe events in the game – words scrawled on walls, and bloody trails leading to locked doors, for example – fleshing out the story and hinting that things may not be what they seem. The best examples of this are when the writers and artists work together to make truly engaging stories. Separately, it never works as well.

"The second aspect is in enabling the gameplay. Art can have a real impact on how fun a game is to play. It's frustrating when icons aren't large or clear enough, or important objects blend into the environment too much, or you just can't

tell where to go next because there's no environmental cues to guide you along. Like the story, this is achieved best when designers and artists are working very closely together to get the best results."

### THE ARTIST'S JOB

"Finally, art sells the game. The first moment anybody sees any media about a game, the thing we're most likely to respond to is the art style. If we like the art style, we're more likely to investigate more. This is true not only with the public, but also internally with the other developers on your team. As artists, it's our job to inspire our teams with how insanely cool the game we're making together is going to be. Giving people the warm fuzzes and getting them to say, 'Holy crap, that is awesome!' goes a long way."

And with Laurel's art and the games which it drives, there are a heck of a lot ➔

## Laurel D Austin

### VITAL STATISTICS

Laurel talks terror birds and choice of dessert

#### Current location

Southern California

#### Favourite artists

Too many to count! Some particularly important influences are: James Gurney

– Dinotopia was a revelation to me as a kid. Ilya Repin – there's just so much feeling in every story. Sebastian Krüger – nobody paints a better craggy face.

#### Favourite music

Do podcasts count as music?

#### Brush or pencils

Pencils



#### Sketchbook or canvas

Sketchbook

#### Favourite food

Candy. But as for real food... I'm spoiled by the great vegetarian food in southern California.

#### Irrational fear

Reanimated terror birds

#### Best holiday destination

Anywhere with a good natural history museum and good local food.

#### Cake or pie

What kind of monster would make someone choose!?

#### Web address

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







## SMAUG SCULPTURE

Laurel sees sculpture as an excellent complement to 2D art

After stumbling on a Peter König tutorial on an art forum a decade ago, Laurel decided to try sculpting. "He made this fantastic gliding monster and gave a super helpful rundown of all the materials and steps involved," says Laurel. "I tried it out and loved it."

"It's a nice break from the computer without taking a break from art. There's something about having an object in front of you that's extra cool. Plus you get a toy for your desk at the end of it. You can't lose!"

It's not a main focus for Laurel. She produces a couple of pieces a year at most. "Working in 3D is a nice complement to 2D," she says. "It helps me understand 2D forms a bit better - composing a sculpture that looks great from all angles is very challenging."

“ Giving people warm fuzzes and them saying, ‘Holy crap, that is awesome!’ goes a long way ”



### THE DRAGON'S IN THE DETAIL

Laurel's sculptures are highly detailed, as the scales on this work of Smaug shows. It was created for Gallery Nucleus's 2013 Out of the Shire show.



## THE LEAGUE OF EXPLORERS

This is an advertising piece created for Hearthstone, Heroes of Warcraft – another area that Laurel oversees at Blizzard.



## THE BUZZ AT BLIZZARD

Laurel on being the driving force behind Blizzard's concept art...

Blizzard Entertainment has been rocking the world of gaming since 1991, producing hits including The Lost Vikings, and the Diablo and StarCraft series. So what's the best thing about being senior illustrator there?

"The great people I work with," Lauren says. "The entire creative development department are exceptionally skilled artists and storytellers, and working alongside them has made me a better artist. I can't emphasise enough how important it is to get out of your own head and spend time with other artists you respect. Getting their feedback will help you become a better artist."

"At Blizzard I get to work on all of the IPs, a ton of interesting challenges and variety. Most of my work is focused on making supporting story art for the games and learning more about visual storytelling has been one of the biggest perks to being there."



### PLATYBELODON

Laurel's knowledge of animal anatomy is astounding and extends to prehistoric beasts.



### DRAGON DEMO

A piece that Laurel created for a talk at Gnomon, to demonstrate different material rendering possibilities for creatures.



# ARTIST TIP

## KNOW THY MUSCLES

"An interdisciplinary school helped me improve my figure drawing skills, and the absolutely stellar anatomy classes meant I understood the underlying structures in the human body. I can still name obscure muscle groups as a party trick."



### ANTELOPE RIDER

A new concept piece from Laurel. Even her rougher painting style captures the drama and movement in the scene.

of "holy crap" moments. Take Hearthstone, for example, which on the face of it is an online turn-based card game from Blizzard. Where it differs from most online card games is its depth of characters and classes of hero. Each character is much more than the traditional warlock or warrior, being given fantastical names like Garrosh Hellscream and Magni Bronzebeard complete with detailed backstories and oddball character traits. These enable Laurel to draw upon each character's traits and histories, and create players with far more depth of character than traditional online games.

### WHAT'S THE POINT?

In terms of artistic style and technique, it's these fictional personalities that Laurel begins with when working up a new piece. "When I'm starting an illustration the right way – which, being by nature somewhat impatient, I don't always do – I start by thinking what the point of the painting is.

“There is a ton of decisions to make, but always think about what you want your viewers to feel”



### CERATOPSIAURUS

A visit to the Royal Tyrrell Museum in Alberta, Canada, put Laurel in a "dinosaur-type mood."

I view illustration as communicating a story of some sort: a big one or a small one, or a little piece that hints at something larger, or the climactic moment of a great epic," Laurel says.

And story is key, she believes: "Whatever it is, you have to decide what your story moment is, and then figure out what's the best way to communicate it. A lot of considerations go into this, like angle of view, aspect ratio, character pose, lighting, and colour. There is always a ton of decisions to make, but always keep at the front of your mind, what you want your viewers to feel. Do they identify with the characters? Which ones? Do they pity them? Do they feel empathic? Are they

frightened for them? Frightened by them? And every choice you make, make it in the service of that goal."

Laurel's creative process has a strong sense of empathy about it. "I tend to start with black and white, working out the basics of the composition. What's the feeling, what are the characters doing, what are their faces doing, and only then go into colour," she reveals. "If I can get it working at the stage, the rest of the process is just expanding upon the idea and making sure to preserve what was nice about the sketch, which doesn't always happen. Sometimes it may take more than one attempt to capture in a final piece what you liked about a sketch. It can be frustrating when a piece just isn't working, but sometimes it takes a fresh start to nail what you liked about a sketch."

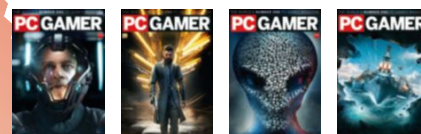
For illustration and concept art Laurel will usually use Photoshop with a Cintiq. But she uses physical media in her process too. "When I sculpt, I generally use Super Sculpey firm and acrylic paint. I keep a sketchbook with me, too, to do pen drawing. Though it never seems like I have enough time to do that much these days – usually just small drawings of animals or dinosaurs I toss on my Instagram. But overall, I much prefer to work digitally. Ctrl-Z is the best thing to happen to art since the brush was invented!"



# TRY A COPY OF THE WORLD'S BEST PC GAMES MAGAZINE

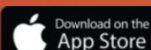


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# NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX Workshops

**Workshops assets  
are available...**

Download each workshop's WIPs, final image and brushes by turning to page 6. And if you see the video workshop badge, you can watch the artist in action, too.



Advice from the world's best artists

64



## This issue:

### 64 Draw and paint epic game art

Sandra Duchiewicz of Creative Assembly crafts a dynamic composition for upcoming strategy game Total War: Warhammer.

### 70 Paint a heroine from Fallout 4

Zezhou Chen introduces you to a relaxed way of working, as he paints a believable character who would fit into the Fallout game universe.

### 74 Create light, romantic card art

Dong-Wook Shin shows how to utilise light to create a warm but dramatic moment in a fairy tale.

### 76 Design engaging video game maps

Trent Kaniuga breaks down the process of updating and enhancing League of Legends maps, from a concept artist's perspective.

### 84 Get fresh art ideas with 3D sculpting

Paul Canavan reveals how he uses 3D sculpting tools to relax and generate ideas for a fantasy illustration.

70



74



84









# Photoshop DRAW AND PAINT EPIC GAME ART

**Sandra Duchiewicz** of Creative Assembly crafts a dynamic piece of artwork for upcoming fantasy strategy game Total War: Warhammer

## Artist PROFILE

**Sandra Duchiewicz**  
LOCATION: England



Sandra is the lead concept artist on Creative Assembly's Total War art team, and is currently working on Total War: Warhammer. [www.telthona.com](http://www.telthona.com)

**GET YOUR RESOURCES**  
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**T**his workshop will show the process I and my colleagues at Creative Assembly use to create dynamic and thrilling fantasy illustrations, while staying true to an established intellectual property.

When working with such a renowned universe, such as the Total War series, you have to be mindful of how characters, creatures, items and locations should be portrayed. Exercise your creativity while staying true to the spirit of the original. And that's in addition to the classic artistic struggles of composition, sense of

movement, anatomy, values, colour and polish. Fortunately, we have a wealth of source material to draw upon, and some incredibly well-defined miniatures and concept art to work with. At Creative Assembly we're doing our best to bring this fantasy world to life, and the bedrock of this process is research. Understanding the lore and embracing the source material is one of the most important things we do.

I hope that this artwork demonstrates our love for our job, and displays not only the special care we take to depict

Warhammer's fantasy-themed content, but also what a rich palette it gives us to work with. Having such a deep well to draw upon really gives you a lot of diverse options and directions to go in.

This composition has also been created with a destination in mind – that it will appear on the cover of ImagineFX – and as such it has to work with an extra level of editorial requirements. This naturally brings another layer of depth and intrigue to the task. This workshop showcases the approach I take and how the piece reaches its final destination.



## 1 References and preparation

This is the research phase, when I gather references and materials to ensure the final piece represents the original model design and the in-game assets as closely as possible. Fortunately, in this instance most of the game's characters are already complete, so I can use them as reference alongside the original concept art. Research is always important. I find it keeps the work on track and saves me time in the process.

## 2 Sketching and dramatic values

Next I explore different subjects. Battle scenes need dynamic movement to be successful, and for each of my ideas I try to convey a sense of action and motion. I also work out ideas for the lighting scheme and test out the overall composition, with other graphic elements in mind, such as the magazine's logo and any cover text. ➡➡



## PRO SECRETS

### Use vibrance not saturation

We all love juicy colours, but working with saturation makes everything... well, oversaturated. I suggest that you start working with adjusting vibrance instead. It can so much more subtle.

## Shortcuts clipping mask

Ctrl+Alt+G (PC)

Cmd+Alt+G (Mac)

Block in colours and add dramatic shadows easily.

## 28 CUSTOM BRUSHES! INCLUDING

## RESOURCES

## WORKSHOP BRUSHES

## PHOTOSHOP

Graphic brushes, such as standard hard Round brushes, are clean, precise, allow quick and accurate colour application, and are good for blending. Adding texture helps create surface quality. I use a lot of soft brushes, some smooth for gradations, others have texture and shape - for smoke and atmosphere.



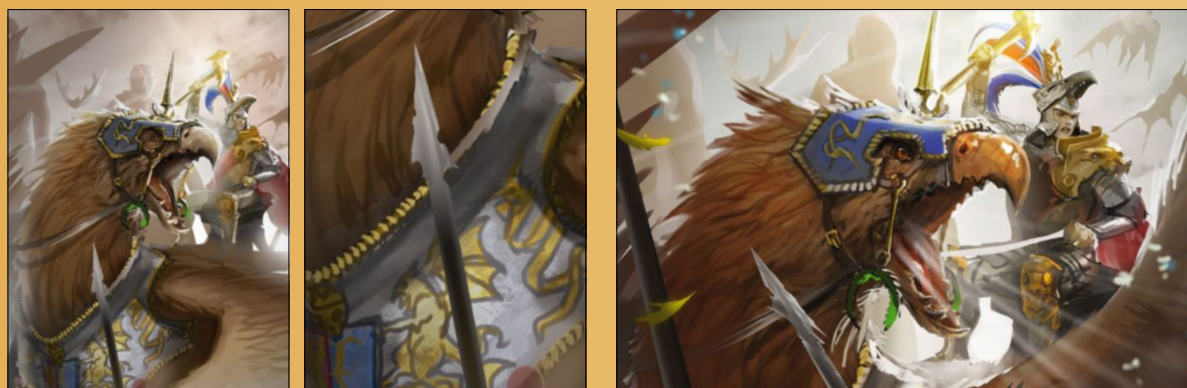
### 3 Setting on an idea

After some initial exploration and ideas from the ImagineFX team, we decide to feature a key character from the game. These characters are the cornerstones of Warhammer, famous heroes with distinctive, archetypal looks and they ride into battle on exotic creatures. It's between the Orc, Azhag the Slaughterer, and his wyvern Skullmuncha; and Karl Franz on his griffon, Deathclaw. After some consideration the forces of Order win, and I go with Karl Franz and Deathclaw.



### 4 Refining the composition

I take the general idea of Karl Franz atop his trusty griffon steed and work through more variations of the composition. In this stage, the changes are smaller yet just as important. I focus on how the image works with the cover layout and logo, where the focus of the composition is, and make positioning decisions to create the best visual flow. I chose a right-facing Karl Franz and Deathclaw, with both characters' faces in clear view for stronger impact.



### 5 Jumping into colour

Once the figures are spatially arranged, I add colour. An overall neutral warm palette and bright value gives a generally optimistic tone to the image, and details of the characters' armour and weapons add different colour hits to create points of interest. While adding colour, I maintain some value structure and keep the focal points around Deathclaw and Karl Franz.

### 6 Acknowledging a milestone

I've set up the composition, values and colours, but the hard work has only just begun. The core image is basically done, yet the final is really only halfway finished. This is the moment where most beginners like to stop painting. It's easy to lose focus and interest in the image, because what's left is a lot of monotonous and systematic hard work.





## 7 Going with the flow

I move over the image, refining areas, cleaning up edges, adding depth and interest by adjusting values and hues. It turns out to be quite freeform and I experiment with some lighting effects. This can be a useful stage because, with the base composition fixed, you're free to experiment in a number of small ways that can make a big impact on the final image. It also gives you a clearer idea of where you're heading. ➡➡



## Shortcuts

### Create layer

#### group

Ctrl+G (PC)

Cmd+G (Mac)

Organise documents  
and keep layers  
under control.

## 8 Layer count explosion

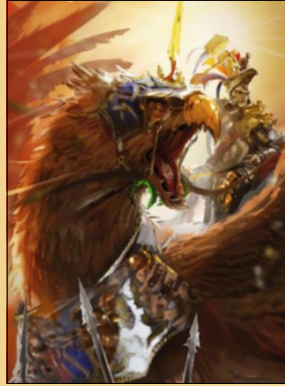
With a big painting like this, especially with some flow and experimentation in the process, it's easy to build a huge number of layers in your document. Working with layers is personal preference. They definitely offer benefits when used correctly, but can also become a nuisance if they get out of hand. So I find it's a good idea to exercise a little discipline and try to keep the numbers down.





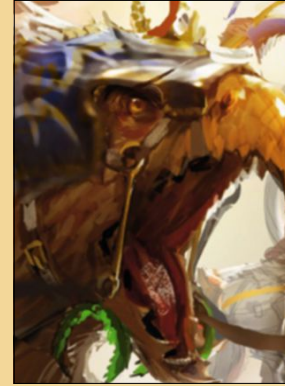
## 9 Organising the chaos

I organise the document and group related layers together. This ensures I get the best performance out of Photoshop, but maintain some flexibility. Layer groups in Photoshop are especially handy. Once organised, I do a pass of line art on the painting. This helps me to clarify and refine the image later, and tightens up the detail level consistently across the whole picture.



## 10 Paint, flatten, repeat

Next, I sequentially refine and overpaint the picture. I flatten the updated parts as I go, to keep the layers in check and gradually improve the image. Now is a great time to do a sanity check and refer back to the guiding light of your source material, so you know you're not going too far off-piste regarding minor but important details.



### PRO SECRETS

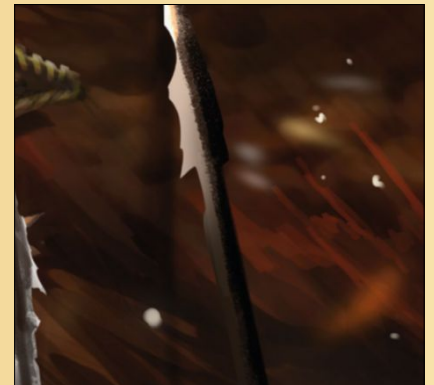
#### Use shortcut combos

My favourite sequential shortcut combo is as follows. First, Ctrl+click the layer to select it. Then Ctrl+Shift+C and Ctrl+Shift+V to copy and paste it. Then press Ctrl+U to change the colour balance, brightness and hue. Finally, press Ctrl+Shift+G to create a clipping mask. This will be visible only on pixels on the layer underneath.



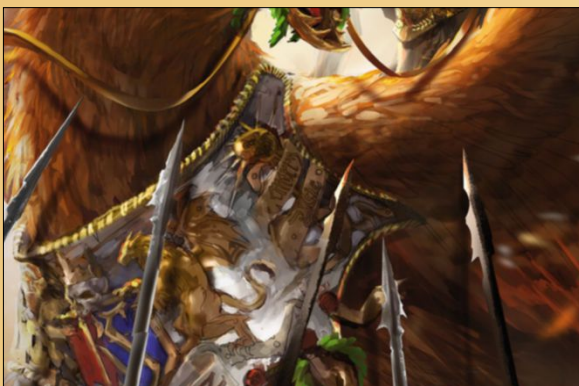
## 11 Adding background and foreground

To create depth, I place something both in front and behind the main characters. Overlaps help as well. In the background I add a dramatic sky, clouds and light shafts. To suggest a battle, I add giants and wyverns in the air, goblin and orc spears in the foreground. These details can come and go depending on how focused or busy I want the final image to be.



## 12 Adding visual effects

I attempt to add more drama, by using particle effects, dust, sun beams, flares, motion blur and the additional shadows cast by the strong light originating from the Warhammer itself, Ghal Maraz. Even if I place some visual effects at the beginning of the process, I always take extra time to try and fit some more of them in at the end. It helps create the impression that the image is richer in detail and more dynamic. Believe me, there's always space for some additional effects, and in most cases they make the image stronger.



## 13 Adjusting colour and contrast

Now I begin applying the final touches. I adjust the colours, make sure the balance of the palette is both pleasing and fitting for the subject, and ensure the entire image hangs together in a coherent way. I find that during the rendering process you can lose a bit of contrast, so it's good to check that the value structure is intact and the contrast is as intended.



## 14 Calling it done

The secret to a successful image is knowing when to stop. Look at your picture. Does something annoy you? Correct it. Look again. Is there something you think isn't right, but no one will probably notice? Correct it. Something else that you can't quite put your finger on? That's the artist's curse. You'll never be 100 per cent happy. Believe me, 99 per cent is enough. ●

### PRO SECRETS

#### Painting with Luminosity

Set a new layer's mode to Luminosity and then paint on it. This enables you to change values, without affecting the colours beneath it. It's very useful when you're happy with the palette but you need to adjust shapes or shadows and lights in the image.







Photoshop

# PAINT A HEROINE FROM FALLOUT 4



**Ze Zhou Chen** introduces a relaxed way of working, as he paints a believable character who would fit into the Fallout game universe

**Artist PROFILE**

**Ze Zhou Chen**  
LOCATION: China



Ze Zhou is a freelance illustrator and concept artist who also teaches digital art techniques to students.  
[www.zezhouchen.com](http://www.zezhouchen.com)

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**T**he Fallout series of games has long been a favourite of mine. So when Fallout 4 came out at the end of last year I spent a lot of time playing it, immersing myself in its fascinating, nightmarish world. And it didn't take long for me to start imagining designs for my own Fallout characters.

I suppose you could say that this makes my workshop a simple piece of fan art, but there's a twist. I don't want to adapt

too many references from the game. Granted, I'll get ideas for concepts from what I've seen in the game, but then I'll recombine and twist them in my mind.

When I think about my Fallout character, I actually have a image that basically conveys the same style and feeling of the game, but the details are quite different. For example, the character's armour is a variant of Fallout's metal armour. However, I still took a direct reference from the game. It's the

character's laser pistol, which is actually the same one I'm using in the game!

If you're unfamiliar with the Fallout premise, you only need to know that it's set in a world where life struggles to continue after a global nuclear war. Everything is broken and ruined. The basic idea of my painting is quite simple: I want to depict a female hero in the wasteland. I think it's interesting to put a beautiful female hero in such a brutal, desperate environment.

## PRO SECRETS

### Unify your shadows

Shadows are crucial for making objects in an image look consistent, especially when there's a strong lighting scheme in place. Unifying the direction of the shadows can build up the space in the scene. And making the shadow's tone consistent can enhance the presence of your light source. Treating your shadows equally will also help to make the image clearer and more effective.



### 1 Start with a loose idea

An important benefit of painting digitally is that it's so easy to make changes. So I don't need a clear-cut plan to start an image. For example, in this workshop I just have a very loose concept, and that's enough for me to start. I'll figure out all the specific design and details during the creative process. So it's actually a very relaxed, almost random way to begin a painting.



### 2 Pose and composition

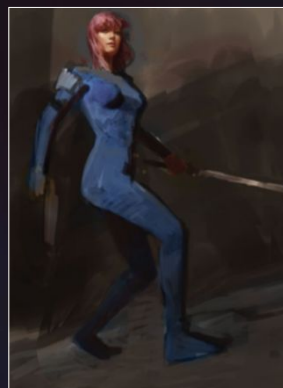
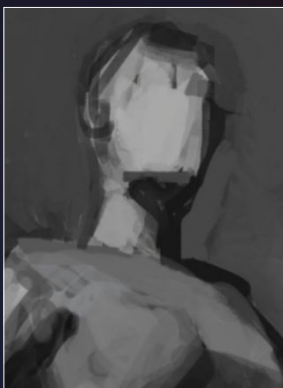
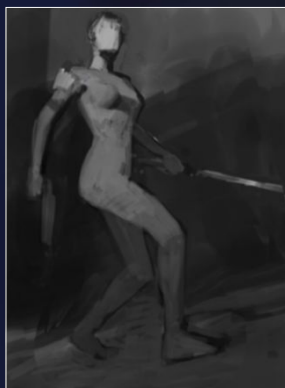
I'll put some clothes on the character and paint her face later. But for now I'm only looking at the big picture, considering the composition and her pose. It can be a rough and ready stage that usually doesn't look right at first. That's absolutely normal. I try several poses and different angles, before finally deciding on this one, where she's just about to turn around. ➡➡



## PRO SECRETS

### Key lighting

There are some basic composition approaches you can take that are especially useful for character illustration. If you have bright light shining on the character, make the background dark. If you have light shining on the background and it's bright, make the character dark. It's the easiest way to set the character off.

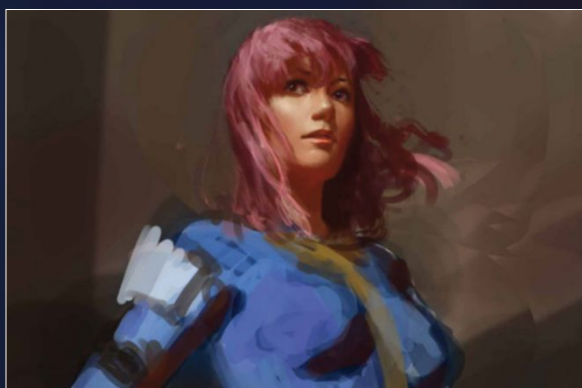


### 3 Correcting the pose

Now I work further on the pose, ensuring that the form, anatomy and lighting are correct. I try to find the edge of the body. This is the basis of the follow-up work. I examine the pose and ensure it's realistic. I often use the Flip Horizontal option when I'm trying to see what's wrong with an image. This function provides me with a fresh view of the work in progress.

### 4 On to the face

It's time to depict the character and details. I prefer to start from the face, because it's a key part of the image. Painting a 'good' face is worth almost any cost. Of course, sometimes 'good' doesn't mean 'beautiful'. In this case I'd like to give her a pretty face. At the moment I'm not happy with her facial features and expression, so I continue to work on them.



### 5 Setting up the lighting

I decide to use a strong spotlight on the character, which I had in mind when I was painting the face. This kind of light is also similar to the sun's light when the sky is clear. It's characteristics are that the edge between light and shadow is very clear, and the contrast between them is strong. This is perfect for bringing the character to the front of the scene.

### 6 Designing her outfit

An outfit is part of a character's design. It's visual shorthand for showing the role they play in their world. It can be easier to paint than a facial expression because there's little emotional element to it. I don't take reference directly from the game, but rather from memory. I use a dark tone for her clothing, ensuring there's strong contrast with her bright skin colour.

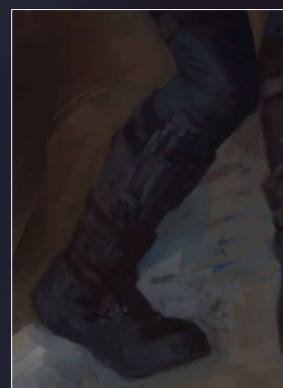
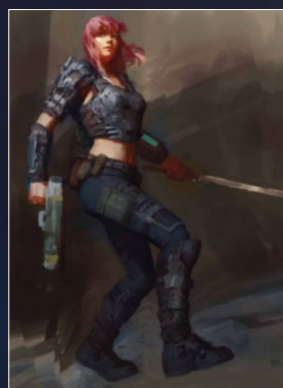
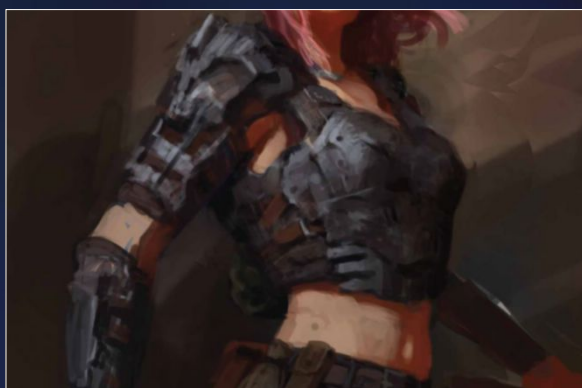
## Shortcuts

### Free transform

Cmd+T (Mac)

Ctrl+T (PC)

Use with Photoshop's selection tools to quickly adjust a small part of the image.



### 7 Specific visual elements

Now I paint specific details, and describe their form and the material they're composed of. I ask myself questions as I paint: what does this bracer look like? How many metal plates are there on the shoulder? How they are mounted? This figure survives in a wasteland, so her outfit has a crude appearance. And this means I don't need to make the elements look tidy.

### 8 Adjusting the character

I'm happy with how the character is looking, so I plan to only make minor tweaks to her design. I adjust the figure as a whole object, starting with the lightning. I adjust the brightness all over the body to make sure all the small details are unified. I also check the pose again, and decide to adjust the position of her back leg. This make the perspective look more natural.

## RESOURCES

## WORKSHOP BRUSHES

### PHOTOSHOP

### CUSTOM BRUSH: OIL BRUSH

Simulates a traditional oil brush. Adds particles and texture to the image.





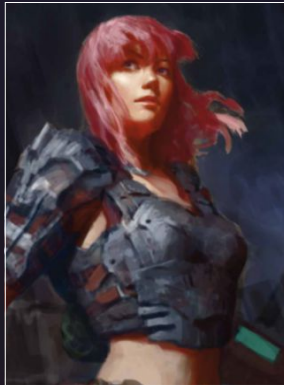
## 9 Developing the surroundings

I start on the background by treating it as concept art, which means I can keep my brush strokes loose. I follow the logic of composition during this step. I consider how to arrange the tone, the plane and the line. The job of the background is to contrast with the foreground subject – to make the edges of the character clear and to set off the figure.



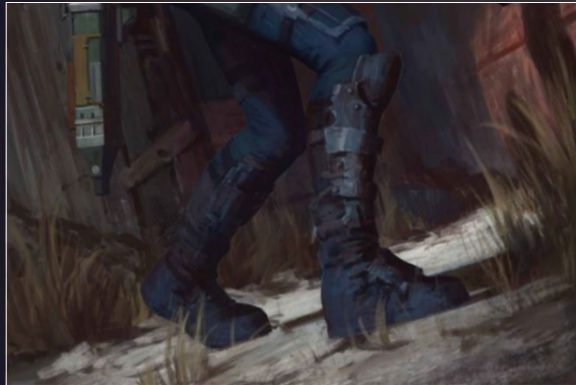
## 10 Exploring the setting

There are many objects that I could put into this scene: an abandoned gas station, wrecked cars, rubble, weeds and so on. The scene could be in suburbia or on a highway. It's an interesting task to choose what should be included, because there are so many combinations. I do some visual exploring and create several different variations. Then I save them, compare them against each other and pick out the best elements that will enhance the painting.



## 11 Making the lighting more dynamic

The environment's lighting should be generally the same as that on the character. But to make the image more interesting, I adjust the tone for the sky and make it even darker, to improve the contrast against the character's face. I also narrow the range of the light, which splits the foreground and the background. It now looks like a searchlight in the dark night – very dramatic!



## 12 Introducing specific details

I bear in mind that it's a character-led painting, rather than one depicting a grand environment, so I'm careful not to over-render the background. To enhance the scene's spatial aspect, I make the shadow darker at the front and on the figure. Doing this makes her more solid. Conversely, for the objects in the background, I weaken their shadow and the contrast.



## 13 Time for some polishing

The image is close to being finished. Time to relax and start polishing the details. There's nothing too serious or difficult in this stage, really. I just clean any rough strokes, make them more refined and improve the render around the character's face. I also repaint the hair and changed the colour of her shoes to make them more in keeping with the Fallout environment.



## 14 Adding the final touches

I use mostly filters and adjustment layers to do the work, including the Curves tool, Color Balance, blending layers and the Camera Raw filter that you can find in Photoshop CC. You could even put the finished work in your phone and try common filter apps such as VSCO. I just experiment and see what digital magic happens! ●

## PRO SECRETS

### Archive your art process

Save your painting at regular intervals, especially when you feel that you've turned a corner in your creative process. This means that you can go back and see exactly what you did. This will help you to understand how you achieved a certain look to your art. Perhaps more importantly, when you paint something you don't like, also save a copy. After a few days, seeing it with fresh eyes might reveal something of value.



## Photoshop GIVE YOUR CARD ART A SENSE OF LIGHT & ROMANCE

**Dong-Wook Shin** shows how he utilises light to develop an emotional moment between the king of the jungle and an unsuspecting princess...

### Artist PROFILE

**Dong-Wook Shin**

LOCATION: South Korea



Dong-Wook Shin, aka Bluezima, has been creating video game art and illustrations for more than 10 years.

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

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

### RESOURCES

#### WORKSHOP BRUSHES

##### PHOTOSHOP

##### CUSTOM BRUSHES: INK BRUSH

I use this brush for sketching – the larger its size, the more transparent ink effect it produces.

##### FAN BRUSH

I painted most of the picture with this, my favourite. It has a texture effect that's smooth, with Pressure Control.

**T**his image was designed for the card game Legend of the Cryptids. I'd recently read the story of Henry VIII and an idea came to me from that. What about painting a tyrannical Lion King who, for emotional contrast, is pictured next to a young girl? The story developed further...

Nobles from neighbouring kingdoms have gathered to see the Lion King, at his request, who will announce his new bride

at a banquet. The animal guests are surprised when he reveals that he plans to marry a princess from the human kingdom – and the princess had no idea of his intentions, either. The animal guests respond with surprise, while the princess isn't particularly keen on the idea.

When I pass my initial sketch on to show the art director, he says that while the Cryptids' current cards are generally dark, he suggests aiming to create a card

with a bright feel. This was kind of an adventure for me.

Overall, I tried to create a fairy tale atmosphere, as well as a light touch to help generate a realistic portrayal. The work was very highly saturated, to give a refreshing feel, with the warm colours.

I was told that sales of the image were quite good, as was the reaction from the card users. It was encouraging to receive such positive feedback.

### How I develop...

## AN EMOTIVE FAIRY TALE SCENE



### 1 Monochrome sketch

I picture the Lion King when he proposes the idea of marriage to the princess – as he pulls out the ring – and this determines the positions of the characters in the composition. I also concentrate on drawing a suitable loving expression for the Lion King and the princess's look of surprise.



### 2 Colour and light

I want the Lion King's colours to be authoritative, while in contrast the princess symbolises purity, with the help of a white dress. I allow incoming sunlight through the window to warm the scene, and I take further advantage of the blue sky by using it as the reflected light.



### 2 Describing details

I modify and supplement the more detailed parts of the painting, adding description to some other parts as I work my way around it. I also adjust the position of the hand holding the ring, so there's a good balance of colour. I also tweak the design of the characters' clothing in places.



## Reflected light

The blue sky reflects light back on to the characters. This type of reflected light atmospheric helps figure in a composition to look more vibrant.

## Transmitted light

The transmitted light passes through the transparent or semi-transparent material and affects the object underneath. This is mainly determined according to the colour of the light passing through the medium, but can be brighter because of refraction.

## Chromatic aberration

I work on the chromatic aberration – a phenomenon often associated with a camera lens and distorted light – by modifying the red channel and making it slightly larger. This helps to bring the viewer's eye into the centre of the screen.

## Highlights

This is the point on the princess that's the most saturated. Here, the clothes are wrinkled and folded, and where the shadows and highlights cross it creates a violet colour where the warmth of sunlight and the cold of the reflected light meet.



*Artist insight*

# DESIGN ENGAGING VIDEO GAME MAPS

**Trent Kaniuga** breaks down the process of updating, enhancing and re-envisioning Summoner's Rift from a concept artist's perspective

**Artist PROFILE**

**Trent Kaniuga**  
LOCATION: US



Trent has worked on World of Warcraft, Diablo 3, League of Legends and Final Fight. He's also the creator of the indie comic book CreeD and the Twilight Monk series of graphic novels.  
[www.aquatic-moon.com](http://www.aquatic-moon.com)

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

**O**f the many video games I've had the pleasure of working on over the past decade, few assignments have been as intimidating as being a part of the redesign for the new Summoner's Rift map in League of Legends. This is the most viewed game map of all time, with roughly 120 million active accounts worldwide.

A small percentage of the entire use of the internet is used by League of Legends

players. Their expectations for an updated version of Summoner's Rift were high, and I soon discovered that the map itself had its own unique challenges.

Because it's thought of more as an arena than a setting for an adventure, the world had to feel as organic as a natural fantasy environment, but it also needed to be as constrained as a sports arena, with clearly defined markers and barriers. This is a game that's played in

tournaments, so everything had to be precise in its measurements.

To reach this goal, we had to throw out a lot of our work, and spent two years in a constant state of critical refinement. We had to rely on experience, teamwork, communication and patience to meet player expectations, and give them environments that told a story they weren't expecting, while still pressing those nostalgia buttons from the original.



## 1 BLUE SKY EXPLORATION

The goal is to create artwork for the other artists and designers on your team that will get them excited about a fresh coat of paint on their classic map. Usually it's best to work from the in-game camera perspective for an accurate view of what you're proposing players would see. If you have it, paint over the in-game geometry showing the gameplay space. We were mostly looking for a vibe, a feeling through colour and shape as well as overarching, identifying elements that would make the location feel unique while still capturing what people loved about the original map. All of these elements would be refined later on.







## 2 CREATE AN ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

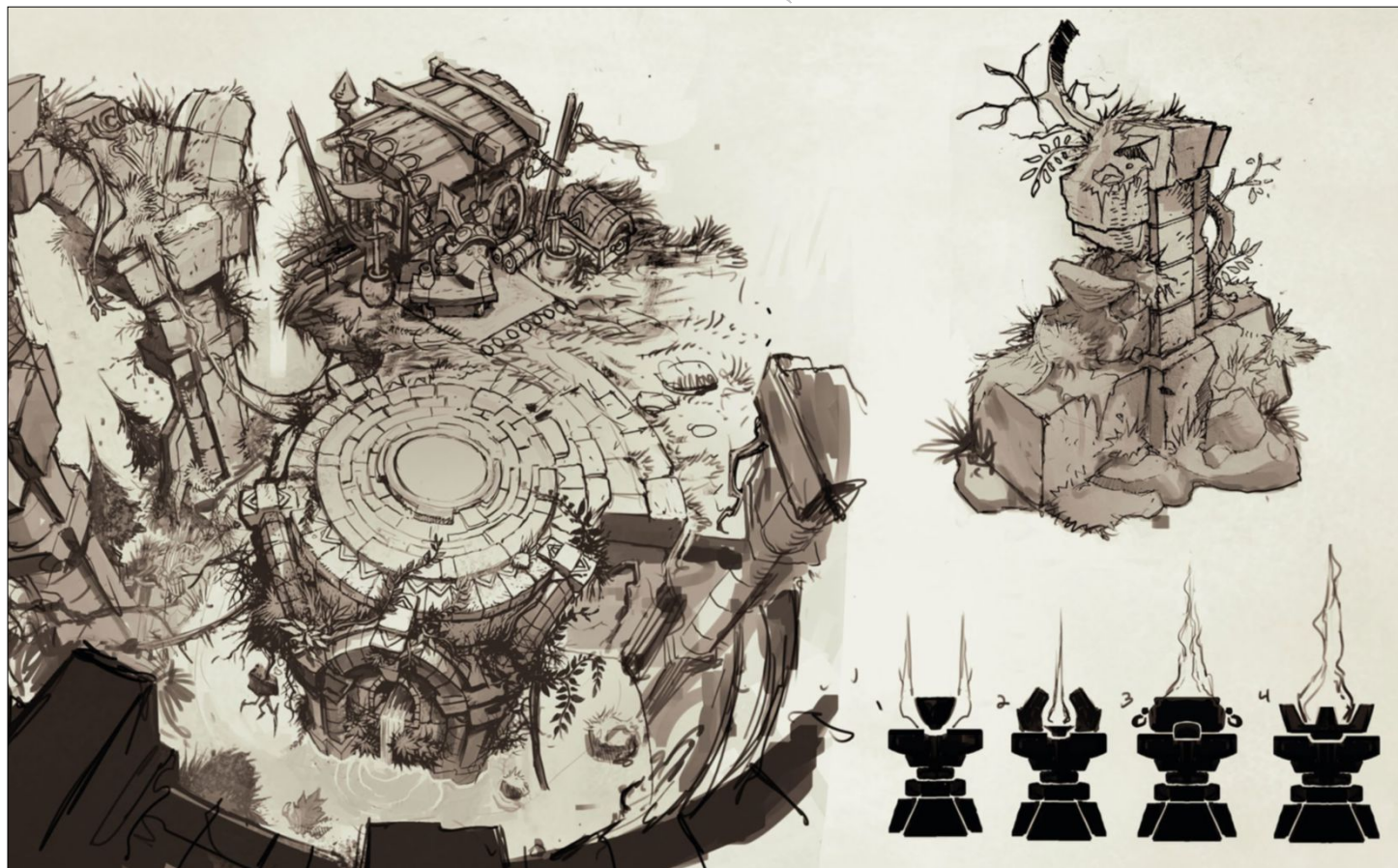
To develop an architectural style, I start out with small sketches of archways, doorways and pillars, pulling from real-world influences. I build up shape language and methods of construction that support the time period and setting. Even if most players never read the history of Summoner's Rift, their subconscious will relate to our world from their experience. This is a great opportunity to imply religious or faction alignments with deity statues integrated into the architecture, or simply a cultural fascination with star charts, for instance. Every pillar, brazier and brick is an opportunity to imply greater depth to the history of your world.

“More rounded shapes tend to be more welcoming, while pointed shapes create a sense of danger”



## 3 PLANT BREAD CRUMBS

The team wants more specific elements, so I start doing a number of black and white sketches. I usually work with small cutaways, or vignettes to create focus. Also note that more rounded shapes tend to be more welcoming to the viewer, while sharper, pointed shapes create a sense of danger. If I create enough story elements to show that the location is 'lived in', it'll make the player want to explore the rest of the world, and give the writing team plenty of breadcrumbs to write into the lore. ➡

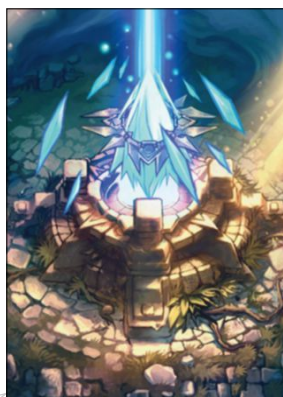
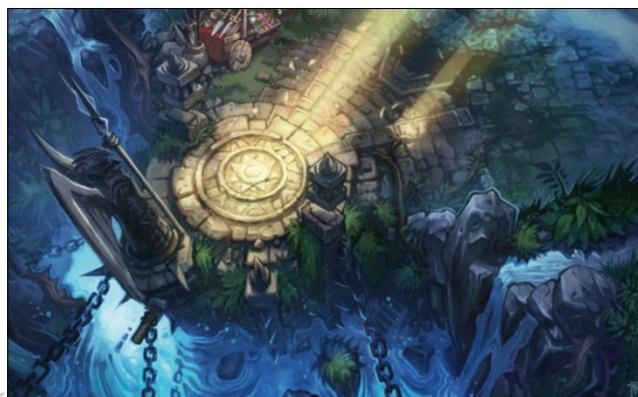
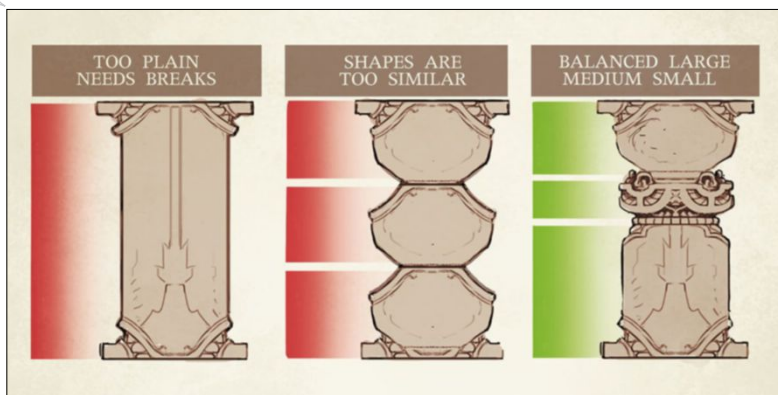




# Workshops

## 4 BREAK UP YOUR SHAPES INTO SMALL, MEDIUM AND LARGE

Avoid flat, straight edges wherever possible (the first pillar), and split up your shapes into a balanced hierarchy of small, medium and large. If all of your decorative elements are the same size, your designs will look too busy (the middle pillar), and will lack a focal point. If you've got a pile of rocks, mix their sizes! If they're all the same, it becomes boring to look at. In addition, try to avoid too much symmetry in your designs. There are exceptions to this, such as futuristic designs, but I'd still try to interrupt plain edges with a break of some kind.



## 5 ADD DEPTH TO YOUR WORLD

If you're working with an isometric game such as League of Legends, every opportunity to play with depth gives you a new area to tell more of your story. Here, I wanted to give the player a relaxed feeling, since the player spawns here and can't be attacked. The water looked almost like thick oil, but we agreed that it gave the setting a unique feel, so we tried to match that effect in game. With every game that I work on, I try to give it a unique identity.

## 6 CREATE A HANDFUL OF VARIANTS

I've found that three versions of a concept is a good number of iterations. Although Riot tends to explore far more: for instance, between two concept artists, we created almost 100 tower designs. This is why it's important to rough out ideas in sketch form, and not commit to painting anything until you've got a direction that your team is willing to invest in. This rule is up for debate, though. Most studios won't let you spend a week painting one idea. A concept artist's role is to serve your team. If you want to do your own designs, go and start your own game studio!

## ESTABLISH BARON'S ISLAND

Trent reveals how deciding on the look and feel of a setting for a big boss fight in Summoner's Rift was a collaborative effort



### 1 Rough sketches.

In these early stages, I merely intended to define the space, hint at locations of architecture and materials, and set the theme for the story in the location. There were very few constraints, and this could have been anything really. It's blue sky stuff, except that we knew that players expected to fight Baron, who is a large alien-looking serpent.

### 2 Plan out how everything works

In this case, we needed to be sure that when Baron did his spawn loop, he didn't pass through geometry, because the animation had to be the same every time. I used some geometry as a guide, since we already knew where the player couldn't walk, and where Baron needed to spawn.

### 3 Paint over the geometry

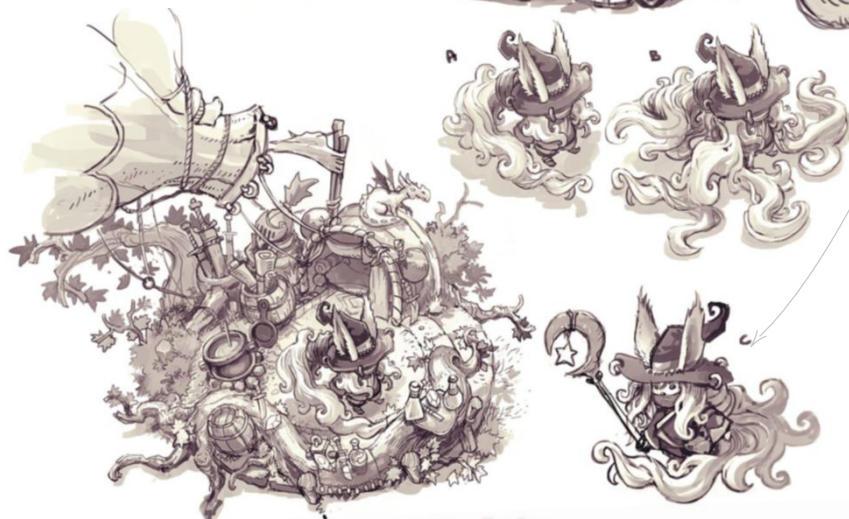
Once we know that everything works, we just need to paint it up. I try not to be too limited by lighting constraints or effects. Ideally, good final concept paintings should inspire the team to ask themselves "how can we do this thing/effect/animation that we've not done before?". Good concept art challenges the team, and the reward is found in delivering an exciting experience for the player.





## 7 YOUR WORLD TELLS THE STORY - GET WEIRD WITH IT!

Summoner's Rift is on a mountain, miles away from any large bodies of water. But that didn't stop me from presenting sketches of magical fish vendors! Being a concept artist is all about going to places that few others would even consider, and then making it all come to life in a fantastical world. When your team "gets it" and they all start vibing off of what you're doing, that's the reward. So don't be afraid to get weird with it, and throw in quick sketches of strange ideas. It's always easier to trim down a crazy idea than it is to take a boring, bland idea and make it interesting. ➡



“Being a concept artist is all about going to places that few others would even consider”



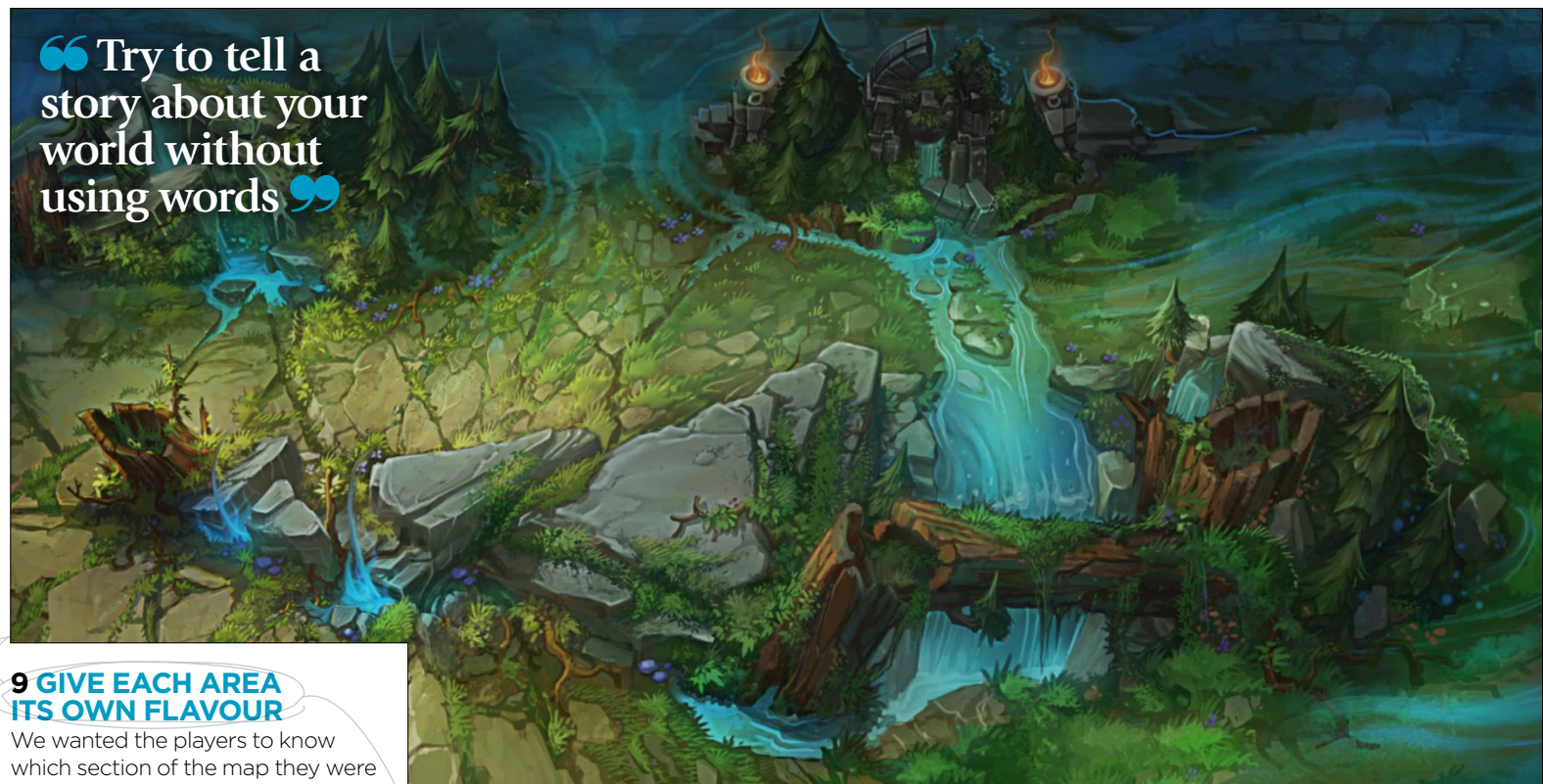
# Workshops

## 8 INJECT LIFE INTO YOUR ENVIRONMENTS

Here you can see subtle implications of story. Red buff scratches at the earth and digs up a bed-shaped hole for him to rest in. Red glows imply a magical energy residing nearby. In the Baron Isle, ancient statues form a ring around a central crater. I wanted to imply that a ritual had taken place here a long time ago. The lightning rods surrounding the epicentre glow with infused magical energy that never quite settled. Try to tell a story about your world without using words, and imply a history off camera, an interaction between NPCs, or creatures of the world and how they live in it.

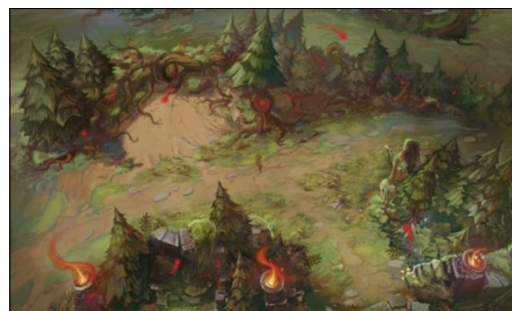
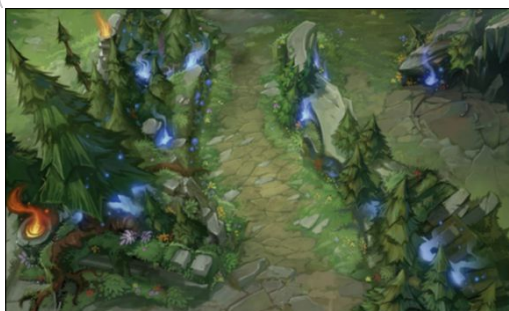


“Try to tell a story about your world without using words”

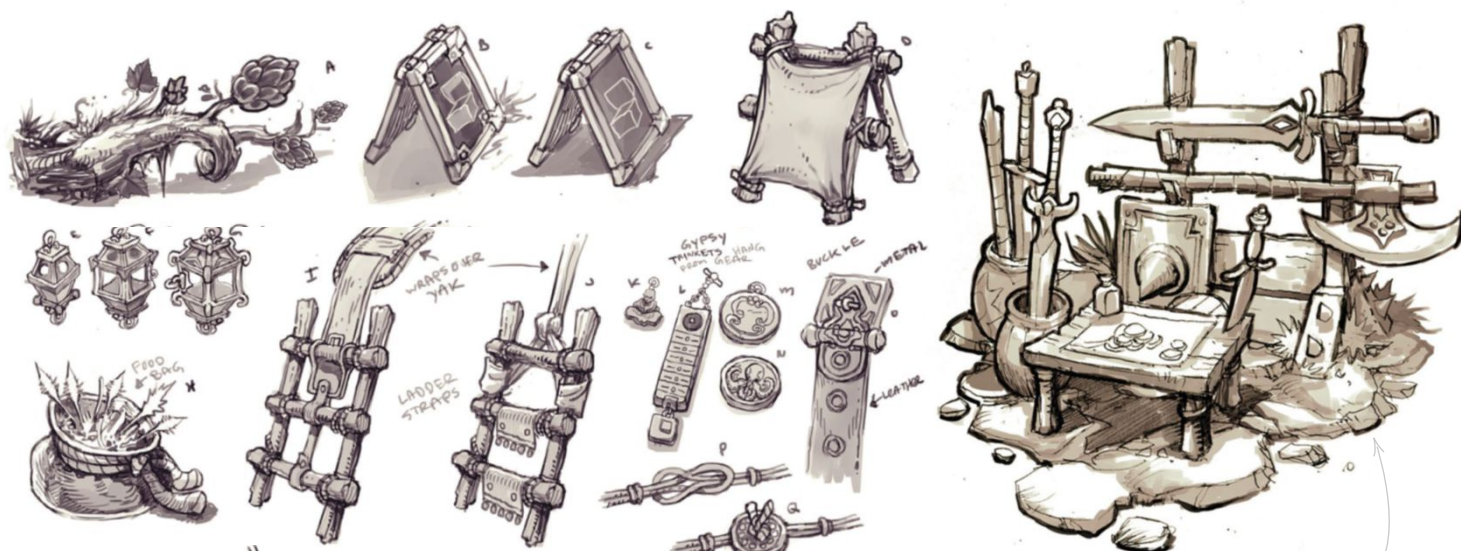


## 9 GIVE EACH AREA ITS OWN FLAVOUR

We wanted the players to know which section of the map they were in without looking at the minimap. To do this, we gave a unique colour scheme and/or weather treatment to each quadrant. This way, a player can see where they are without confusion. It also gave us an opportunity to make the environment feel more vast. Even though Summoner's rift is a single map, we put about as much time into developing it as we would for a continent in World of Warcraft.

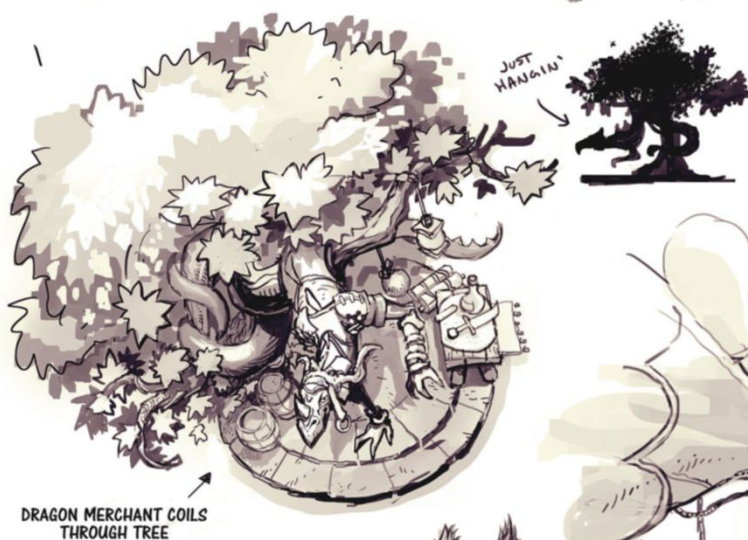






## 10 CREATE PROPS THAT MAKE YOUR WORLD MORE BELIEVABLE

The key to designing props is to make the world feel "lived in". This is your chance to tell the player about your world using visual cues. Imagine the needs of the people living in that setting that you've created. What kind of creatures would they hunt? What level of technology do they possess? What is unique about your setting, and how does that impact the people living there? What era are they in, in terms of technology? Most of your world's story can be told through the visual cues represented in your props. ●



## 2 SCAVENGER

THIS CARROT AIN'T REALLY DOIN' IT FOR ME MAN. COULDN'T YOU MAYBE SLICE UP SOME STEAK OR SOMETHING FOR ME?

STOP SMILING! YOU'LL SCARE AWAY CUSTOMERS!

CONVERTED BALLOON BASKET AS DWELLING

SPALDING IS HIS ONLY FRIEND.



## 3 CRASHED BALLOON HERMIT





Artist **Karla Ortiz** will  
bring her own brand of dramatic  
beauty to the cover



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

# Add value to your art

Follow Karla Ortiz as she explores  
light & dark in a stunning portrait

**ISSUE 134**  
**UK ON SALE**

*Tuesday*  
*29 March*

## *Inspiration and advice*

### **Get productive**

Warner Games lead artist Donglu Yu reveals the secrets to effective art processes in a new workshop.

### **Look in at ILM**

We explore Industrial Light and Magic's expanded art department, and uncover future plans.

### **Lois van Baarle**

The Netherlands-based artist recounts her art journey and breaks down her unique painting style.

### **Impressionistic**

Freelance concept artist Wangjie Li unveils his own take on impressionism and paints a digital portrait.



*3D-Coat, OctaneRender, Daz 3D, Photoshop*  
**GET FRESH ART IDEAS  
WITH 3D SCULPTING**

**Paul Canavan** shows you how to use 3D sculpting tools to relax and generate ideas for an illustration







**Artist PROFILE**  
**Paul Canavan**  
**LOCATION:** Scotland

Paul is the lead artist at Scottish indie game studio Blazing Griffin, a freelance illustrator and father to two handsome ferrets.  
<http://ifxm.ag/pcanavan>

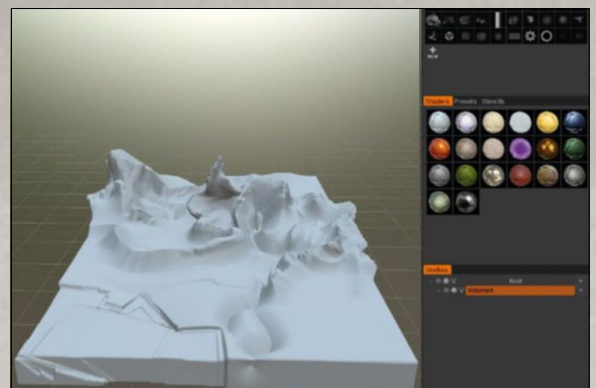


**GET YOUR RESOURCES**  
 See page 6 now!

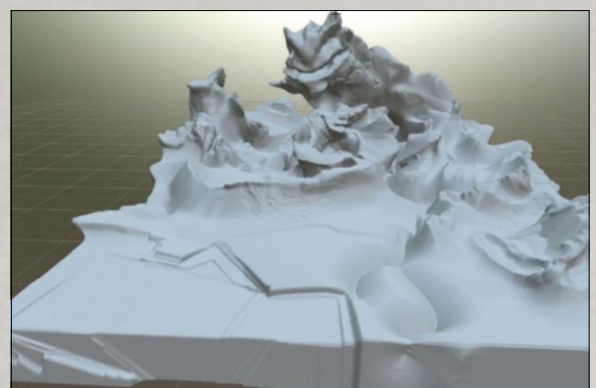
**E**very artist has experienced art block. Stress is a major factor that contributes to this condition: being unable to think of anything to draw, struggling with an existing painting or feeling inadequate when you compare your work to others leads to frustration and can ultimately stop you wanting to create at all. This is bad. Developing a process that would remove the stress of painting illustrations became a major goal of mine.

Pareidolia is a fancy word to describe the phenomenon whereby we see shapes such as human faces or animals in clouds or other places you wouldn't expect them. This has been used by artists for years, doodling in sketchbooks until an idea pops out, but for my art block-beating process I wanted to remove myself from drawing in the early stages altogether. Sculpting, whether using traditional materials like clay or with 3D software was the answer: it's tactile, relaxing – and fun! Spending an hour or so playing around in 3D led to interesting shapes and compositions every time and consistently gave me ideas for new illustrations.

I'll be using 3D-Coat for the sculpting phase (alternatives include ZBrush and Sculpttris), OctaneRender for rendering (lots of options here including Blender, MODO or KeyShot), DAZ 3D and Photoshop. No real 3D knowledge is required for this workshop – experimentation is the key here!



**1 Start playing in 3D**  
 I load up 3D-Coat and create a cube. This is what I'll be sculpting, grabbing different tools and pushing or pulling shapes out of it. At this stage I have no idea what I'll be creating, I'm just having fun and playing with the software. 3D-Coat works a lot like Photoshop and so it's easy to pick up.



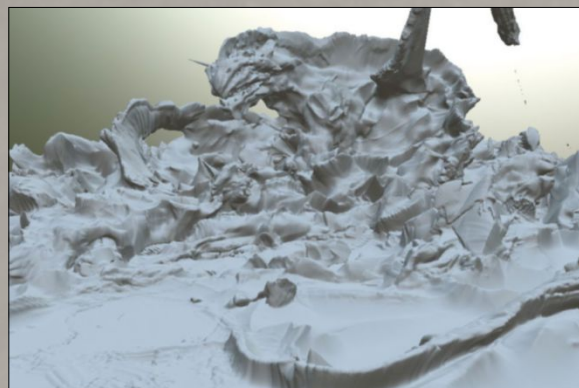
**2 Latch on to an idea**  
 As I'm experimenting I start to see a dragon-like shape emerging from a rock. It's incredibly crude, but I decide to work into it, using the Clay and Extrude tools to sculpt out the body. I like how it connects with the environment; perhaps this dragon is made of rock? A composition is forming... ➡





## 3 Expand on the concept

I like this rock dragon concept. He feels big and slow and heavy – perhaps he's been roused by smaller dragons? Already I've gone from a blank slate to something with storytelling potential. I continue to sculpt into the environment, keeping it loose which ensures it'll be easier to manipulate and paint in Photoshop.



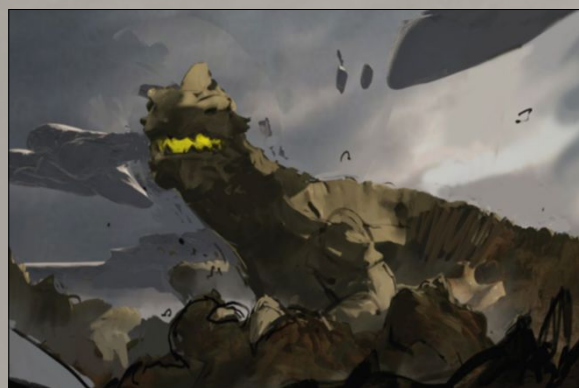
## 4 Light the scene

At this stage I'm happy with the overall composition. So now I export the model as an OBJ file and bring it into OctaneRender, my renderer of choice. Here I can easily experiment with lighting to get a feel for the mood of the piece, by playing with sliders relating to time of day and location.



## 5 Bring it into Photoshop

I render out the scene and load it up in Photoshop. The first step is to sketch ideas straight on top of this render. Everything here may change, so this is a chance to expand on the rock dragon concept and see if it'll stick. But first I need to fix the composition and make it flow nicely.



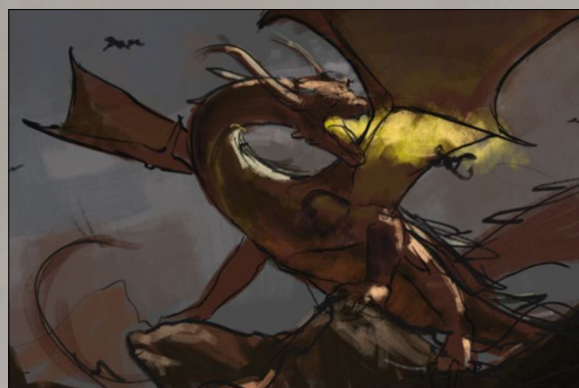
## 6 Correcting the composition

The goal of any illustration is for the viewer's eye to travel around the image and fall on the areas you want them to look at. I adjust the dragon's head and start adding depth to the scene by darkening areas that are close to the camera, splitting the image into sections using atmosphere painted with a soft brush.



## 7 Exploring the concept

I push the sketch further, adding dark foreground rocks and playing with the idea of painting smaller dragons into the scene. This would give some much-needed movement to the illustration, but the composition will need to change. Right now the rock dragon feels too static. That's okay: the process is to generate ideas, not finished 3D art!



## 8 Rethinking the composition

The story is now solidified in my mind: the rock dragon is being attacked by smaller dragons, perhaps of another species, and is in the process of incinerating one with his powerful flaming breath. This requires a more dynamic composition, so I sketch a new idea and track down some good lizard references to help with the anatomy.

**RESOURCES**

**WORKSHOP BRUSHES**

**PHOTOSHOP**

**CUSTOM BRUSHES:**  
**BACKGROUND JUICER**

This is my default brush for laying down large chunks of colour.

**HARD ELIPTICAL**

An interesting flat brush with some randomisation for carving out forms.

**CHALK**

A great, expressive natural media brush. I use this for drawing or adding texture.

**PAINTBRUSH 1**

This works similarly to the Chalk brush, but is excellent when used with the Mixer brush.





**9 Posing little dragons**  
I want the smaller dragons to feel dynamic in the air, and decide to pose them in 3D rather than spending time sketching anatomy. DAZ 3D is a great free piece of software that comes with a dragon model, so I load it up and position the body by dragging limbs into position. Once I'm finished I simply take a screenshot and paste it into Photoshop, ready to be positioned.



**10 Design work**  
With all the elements in place and a much more exciting composition laid out, I'm ready to start playing with the design of my main dragon. I spend some time browsing references of birds, snakes, lizards and dinosaurs, and experiment with different approaches to the beak and body shape.

## PRO SECRETS

### Smudge everything

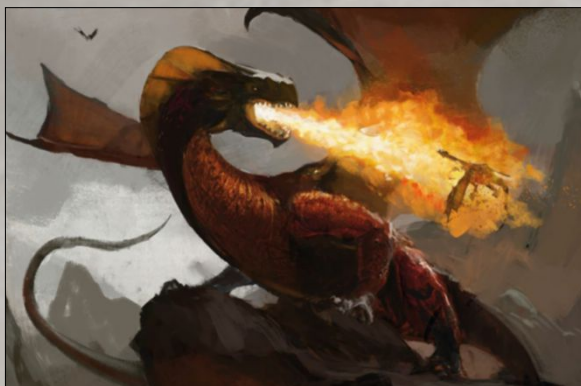
The Smudge tool is useful for concept design, making it possible to stretch shapes and play with silhouettes, but it really shines when you start experimenting with custom brushes. Try textured brushes and mess around with the strength to produce interesting effects. John Silva has released a fantastic brush set for the Smudge tool, and I can't recommend it enough. You can get it at <http://ifxm.ag/j-silva>.



**11 Exploring the background**  
Despite having a solid lighting reference from my 3D render, I'm still unsure of the location of this image and how that will look in the background. Mountainous terrain seems to make sense for the dragon's home, so I search through my photo reference folders to see what might fit, focusing on locations like New Zealand and The Alps.



**12 Remember to take a break!**  
It's always good to step away from your work as often as you feel you need to; returning to a painting after a night usually yields useful discoveries, as you see it again with fresh eyes. In this case I took a few days off and upon continuing noticed some wonky anatomy. The dragon's neck felt too long and the body too insubstantial.



**13 Rendering the scene**  
With most of the painting worked out I can now relax and render out some details. I'm referencing continuously during this stage, looking photos of bat wings, flamethrowers, mountains and frilled lizards as I move around the canvas. There's no real order to rendering: I'll do some work on the face and then move somewhere else when I get bored.



**14 Adding the final touches**  
I introduce more small dragons to add to the overall sense of movement in the scene and spend some time adding small details, such as the rendering of the fire and atmospheric. The spiky rocks were a quick experiment at the end, and I think they added a lot to the environment. Another happy accident! ●

## PRO SECRETS

### Use masks, not erasers

Layer masks give you great control over a layer in Photoshop, enabling you to add or erase content by painting in white or black. You can apply a mask to any layer by pressing the button at the bottom of the layer tab or by going to Layer>Layer Mask>From Transparency, then click the white box that appears next to your layer thumbnail.



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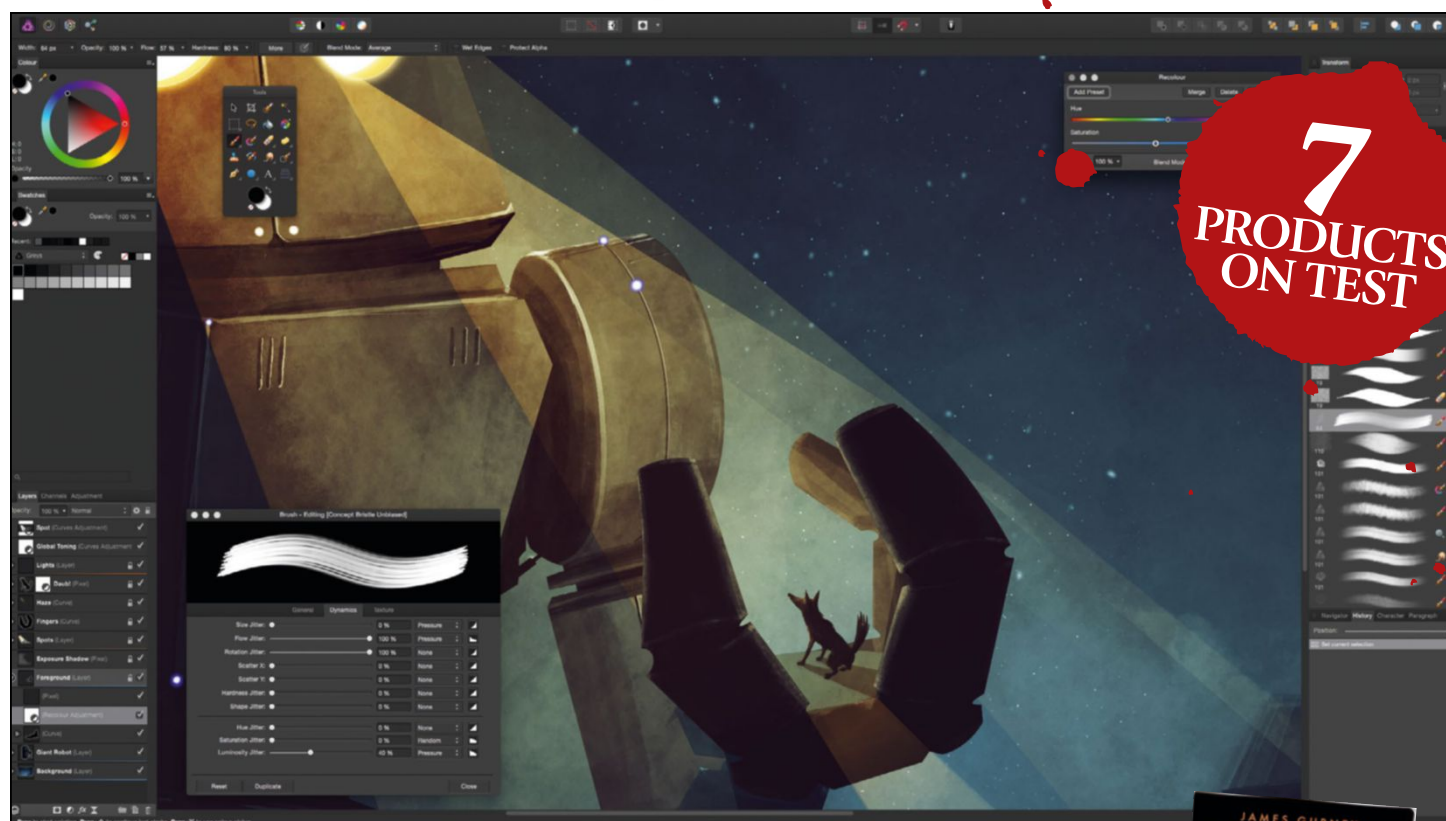


# NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX Reviews



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

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



## SOFTWARE

### 90 Affinity Photo 1.4

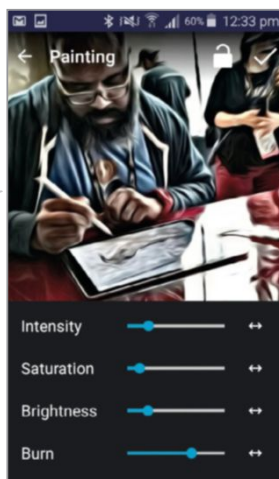
This subscription-free image editor is being heralded as a Photoshop killer. But are the bold claims true?

### 93 SuperPhoto Free

Tweak your snaps with this free app's fun to use and practical Painting Filter.

### 93 MobileMonet

This photo-to-painting conversion app has a neat productivity trick up its sleeve. Plus it's just become free.



## TRAINING

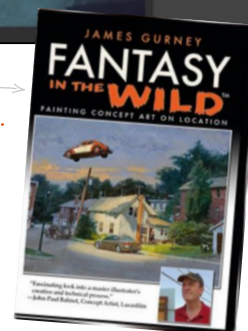
### 95 Fantasy In The Wild

Artist and illustrator James Gurney shows how the outside world can take your fantasy art in some unexpected directions.

## BOOKS

### 96 Further reading

The Art of Star Wars: The Force Awakens; Rise of the Tomb Raider: the Official Art Book; Beginner's Guide to Sketching: Characters, Creatures and Concepts.



RATINGS EXPLAINED Magnificent Great Good Poor Atrocious





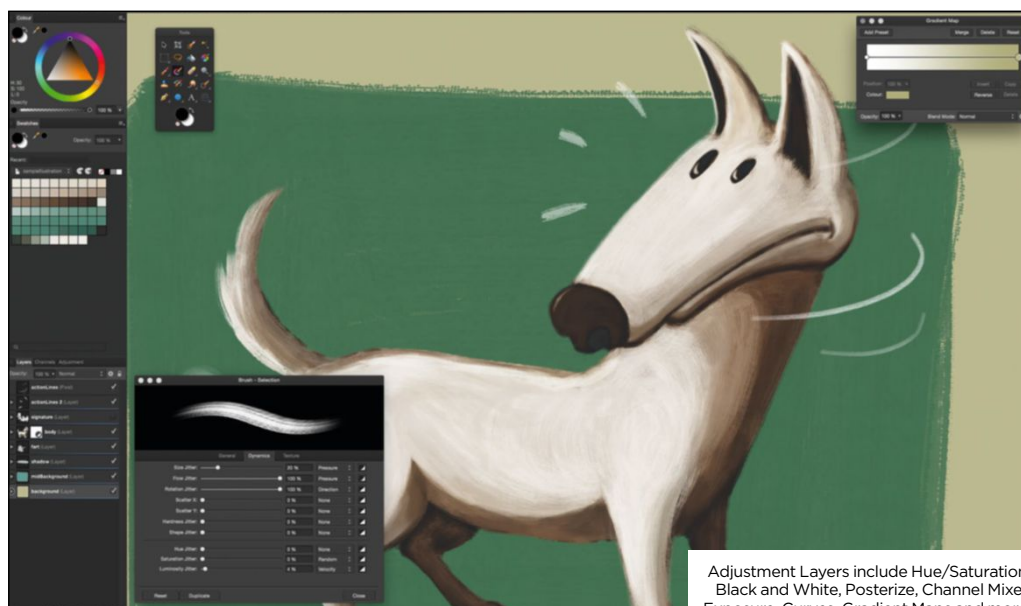
# Affinity Photo 1.4

**ADOBE ADVERSARY** This subscription-free image editor is being heralded as a Photoshop killer. We find out if such claims are true...

MAC ONLY

The Affinity Photo interface is similar to that of Photoshop, so it's easy to pick up.

**Price** £40 **Company** Serif **Web** [www.affinity.serif.com](http://www.affinity.serif.com)



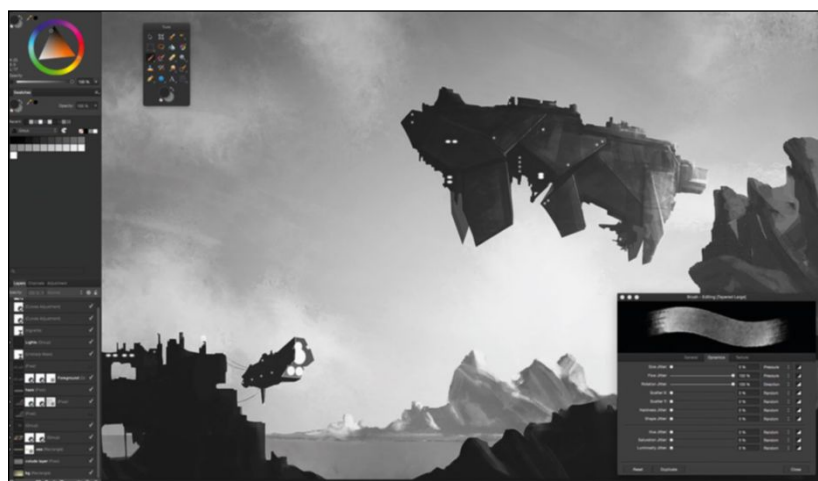
Adjustment Layers include Hue/Saturation, Black and White, Posterize, Channel Mixer, Exposure, Curves, Gradient Maps and more.

**S**erif has recently mounted a major challenge to Adobe's dominance of creative software. Its first release, vector tool Affinity Designer, was aimed squarely at pro users of Illustrator. Now its second, raster tool Affinity Photo, is aiming to take on the might of Photoshop.

So what does it have to offer digital artists? Well, if you're a Mac user and Photoshop is part of your workflow, the answer may be: quite a lot. That's because Affinity Photo doesn't just ape Photoshop's interface and features in a way that makes it easy to pick up and run with. In many ways, it offers a better performance.

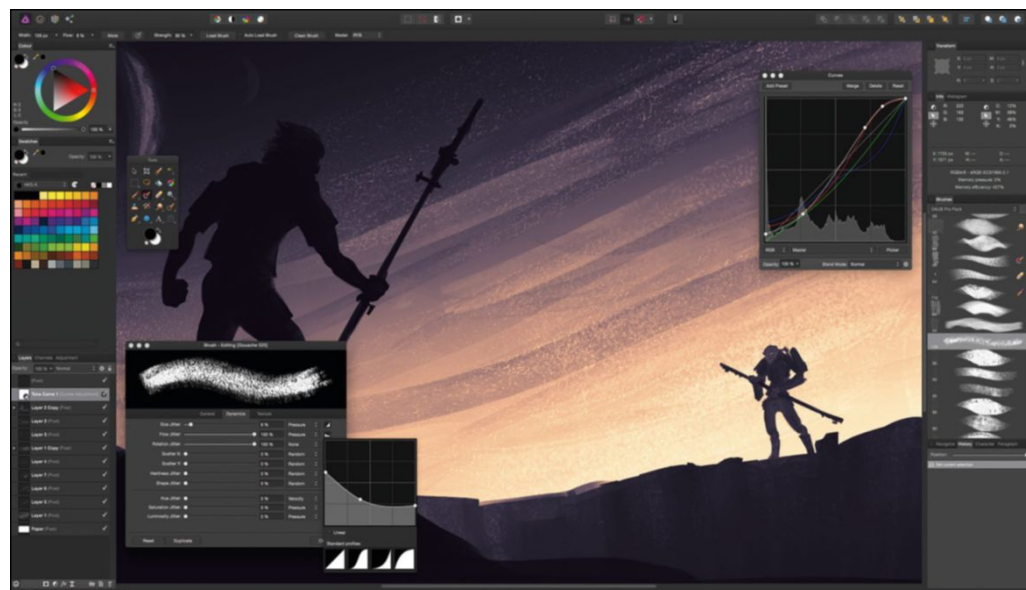
Named by Apple as the number two Mac app of 2015, the most striking difference it offers is speed. In Photoshop, you often have to wait a few





You can work in a range of colour spaces, including RGB, CMYK, LAB and Greyscale.

Daub Brushes has created 12 free blender brushes to download for the software. See <http://ifxm.ag/daubb>.



“It’s a young product, of course, but new features are being added all the time and for now, updates are free”

seconds for a changed setting to take effect. But using Affinity Photo on an iMac, every time we made tweaks they appeared instantly. In practice, that means you’re likely to get more ‘in the zone’ as an artist, without having your creative buzz interrupted by spinning wheels, frozen screens and the like.

We also love Affinity Photo’s non-destructive scaling, something absent in both Photoshop and cheaper rivals such as Pixelmator. Even if you downsize an image layer, Affinity Photo still stores its full resolution, so you can increase its size later if you’ve made a mistake. This is handy, for example, when adding objects to images in illustrations. There’s also the much-vaunted million per cent zoom, which is breathtaking to see in practice.

It’s a young product, of course, and not quite as feature-rich as Photoshop

– lacking the latter’s animation and 3D printing smarts, for instance. But new features are being added all the time and for now, updates are free. Panorama stitching, for example, was absent from the first release but has arrived in version 1.4.

Affinity Photo uses its own file format, but you can also import and export a range of file formats, such as PSD, PNG, JPG, TIFF, GIF, PDF and so on. As such, it’s more sensible to think of Affinity Photo as a companion to Photoshop than an alternative to it.

With a low price and no subscription, it isn’t a big financial burden, and its speed and unique features will save you time and effort with some tasks. A few clients might get nervous about you not using the industry standard, but as long as you choose the right export options, who’s to know? ●

## DETAILS

### Features

- Clone tool
- Dodge and Burn brushes
- Sponge and Smudge brushes
- Blur and Sharpen brushes
- Colour Replacement brush
- Healing brush
- Blemish removal
- Inpainting (similar to Content Aware Fill)
- Frequency Separation editing
- Liquify toolset

### System Requirements

Mac: OS X 10.7 or later, Core 2 Duo CPU, 2GB RAM, 630MB free disk space

### Rating



## ARTIST INTERVIEW

### PAOLO LIMONCELLI

*The artist and brush designer on his time with Affinity Photo so far*

#### What’s Affinity Photo appeal?

Affinity Photo is solid enough for professional work, so I gradually started moving some projects there. I still need Photoshop because it’s the standard. But honestly, licence costs are becoming barely tolerable.

#### How does the software fit into your workflow?

I use Adobe, Affinity and Celsys apps. Learning new tools and seeking new design strategies help you to stay ahead of the game.

#### What do you like best about Affinity Photo?

Flexibility. No matter whether your project is for digital media or print, vector or pixels, you can work directly in 16-bit per channel or CMYK flawlessly, even exporting vectors natively if needed.

#### And what do you like least?

Not all of its tools are top-notch yet. Some of them are still young in terms of options. Right now, Affinity Photo is rough and rugged.

#### What’s exciting in version 1.4?

Custom ramps for brush dynamics: a very specific feature, but one that’s useful for illustrators. The response of jitters available in dynamics is driven by a customisable curve and this helps to produce more usable and expressive brush strokes. You can shape your brush behaviour, cut-off pressure levels, invert or linearise. A great control over pressure/dynamics sensitive devices that Photoshop doesn’t offer yet.

#### Would you recommend artists buy Affinity Photo and Affinity Designer, or just one of them?

It depends on your working habits. If you’re doing vector illustration, Affinity Designer is the best choice. But the raster tools in Affinity Photo are far more complete. I’d say get both: no subscription, shared file format and seamless user experience. And Serif’s developers listen to their customers.



Paolo is an Italian artist, illustrator and brush designer. He’s probably used every art software ever produced.

[www.paololimoncelli.deviantart.com](http://www.paololimoncelli.deviantart.com)



# BREAK INTO THE GAMES INDUSTRY

Art directors from the world's leading game studios reveal what it takes to make it in the games industry



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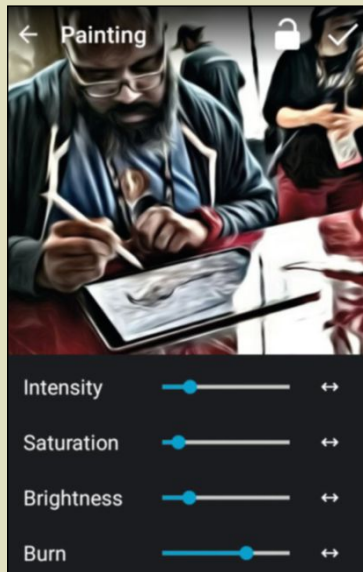
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Issue 206 on sale now!





Transforming your photographs into kitsch, 70s-style oil paintings is strangely addictive.



## SuperPhoto Free

**KITSCH IN-SYNC** Tweak your snaps with this free app's Painting Filter

**Price** Free

**Company** Moonlighting

**Web** [www.moonlighting.io](http://www.moonlighting.io)

**RATING**

**SuperPhoto is available for iOS, Android and Windows, and provides 208 free effects for your photos, and 1,300-plus others you have to pay for. It's the free Painting filter, though, that's been getting all the attention. Just search Instagram for #SuperPhoto and you'll see what we mean.**

Reminiscent of the Pixel Bender plugin for Photoshop, the Painting filter instantly makes your images look like abstract oil paintings – an effect that's surprisingly dramatic, in a hilariously kitsch kind of way.

It couldn't be simpler to use. Just open the app, choose your filter, then upload your photo (yes, it is that way around, weirdly).

You then have to wait about 30 seconds until the new image appears and you're done, ready to save it to social media, email, and so on. If you want a high-resolution version, though, you'll need to upgrade to the paid version of the app (SuperPhoto Full, priced £3.99).

This is bucketloads of fun. And while we can't see a lot of practical application for the serious artist, who knows, maybe the right creative mind could create something amazing with it?

# MobileMonet

**MONET SPINNER** This photo-to-painting conversion app has a neat productivity trick up its sleeve

**Price** Free **Company** East Coast Pixels **Web** [www.eastcoastpixels.com](http://www.eastcoastpixels.com)

**T**here are numerous iPhone apps that turn your photos into something resembling a painting – SuperPhoto Free is just one of them. So what's so special about MobileMonet?

Well for a start, the app, which has been around since 2010, has now gone free. But more importantly, rather than just applying a filter over the whole photo, it enables you to apply paint-like colour across specific sections of it.

In practice, this means it's easy to create original and eye-catching (albeit unrefined) visuals with just a few minutes of effort. You start by taking a photo with your iPhone, or importing one from your phone's library. MobileMonet then renders it as a black and white line drawing, and you can use a spray-can tool to add paint-like effects to the image.

You can choose from preset settings or adjust the controls for factors such as Brush Size, Grain, Colour range and Line Intensity. There's also a Sponge tool, and you can play around with Vibrancy, Brightness and Contrast. (Although given this app is all about doing something quick and easy, you're probably won't want to spend



The ability to apply effects to specific sections of an image is the killer feature of MobileMonet.

too much time on that.) As you're editing, your creations are saved in a recent edit list. Then once you're happy with your visual, you can print a high-resolution version from the app, or share it on Instagram.

A nice app, then, that does one simple task well. But what use is it to a digital artist? Well, if you like to take photos for reference – and they spark new ideas for art as you take them – this might help you get those ideas down in memorable form while you're still in the moment. Alternatively, if you wanted to convey an idea to a client, this could be a quick way to create a visual that's a bit more relatable than a notebook sketch.

## DETAILS

### Features

- Live controls
- Multiple undo
- High-speed brushing
- Pan and zoom
- Device orientation
- Continuous saves
- High-resolution printing
- Social media integration
- iCloud photo library support
- Pressure-sensitive brushing on 6s devices

### System Requirements

**Mac:** Requires iOS 8.0 or later, compatible with iPhone, iPad or iPod touch

### Rating



The app enables you fine-tweak settings such as line width, colour and line intensity.



# Colour Calm

Creative colouring for grown-ups



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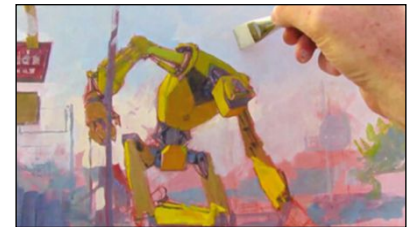




Everyday excavators provide James with inspiration as he works out how his robot figure should be constructed.



In *Fantasy In The Wild*, James Gurney shows how real-world observation helps him paint fantasy images you can believe in.



## Fantasy In The Wild

**LIVING THE DREAM** Artist and illustrator James Gurney shows how the outside world can take your fantasy art in unexpected directions

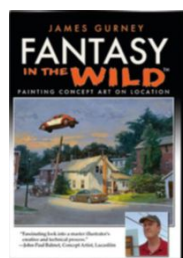
Understanding how ambient light affects hue means that James is able to make the car feel like it belongs in the sky.

**Publisher** James Gurney **Price** \$25 (DVD); \$15 (download) **Web** [www.jamesgurney.com](http://www.jamesgurney.com)

**H**ow do you follow *Watercolor In The Wild* and *Gouache In The Wild*, James Gurney's previous two titles in this series? Coloured Pencils In The Wild, perhaps? James has other ideas: with *Fantasy In The Wild*, he both stays true to the series concept of creating art outdoors and greatly expands the territory he could cover in future instalments.

James presents two projects in which he uses his surroundings as both inspiration and reference, adding fantastic elements to otherwise ordinary scenes. As an exercise, it's a test of your painting skills, because you have to interpret the light and colours you see and apply them to forms that exist only on your canvas. It's also a great way to generate new ideas you probably wouldn't have devised otherwise. And, above all, James makes it look like a lot of fun.

The first project sees James adding a flying vehicle to a suburban street.



### DETAILS

#### Topics covered

- Generating ideas and back stories
- Making a visual grid
- Painting from reference
- Using toys and maquettes
- Merging fantasy and reality

**Length**  
71 minutes

#### Rating



You'll see how James's knowledge of perspective enables him to make the floating car look natural in the scene.

In the second, more expansive, project, an excavator becomes a robotic digger. There are a few changes of tack along the way, and it's these changes that are the heart of the video. Imagination mixes with observed reality to send James down unexpected paths, and what started as a small-scale study becomes an epic tableau in which a giant robot inadvertently causes chaos in a small town.

The real world has another role to play, too. Being outside gives James the chance to meet people with their own areas of expertise to contribute, lending the scene extra authenticity.

*Fantasy In The Wild* doesn't offer the depth of technical detail that you might expect if you've seen any of James's previous videos, but it's full of both practical guidelines and creative inspiration that could see your daily commute firing up your imagination.

### ARTIST PROFILE

## JAMES GURNEY

James specialises in painting realistic images of scenes that can't be photographed, from dinosaurs to ancient civilisations. He's also a plein air painter and sketcher, believing that making studies from observation fuels his imagination. James taught himself to draw by reading books about Norman Rockwell and Howard Pyle. He received a degree in anthropology at the University of California, but chose a career in art. James has written the instruction books *Imaginative Realism* and *Color and Light*.



[www.gurneyjourney.blogspot.com](http://www.gurneyjourney.blogspot.com)





# The Art of Star Wars: The Force Awakens

**FORCE WITNESS** Not just for Star Wars fans, this stunning tome offers unparalleled insight into Episode VII's art direction

**Author** Phil Szostak **Publisher** Abrams **Price** £25 **Web** [www.abramsbooks.com](http://www.abramsbooks.com) **Available** Now

**F**or those of you who've seen the latest Star Wars and want to know how they made it all look so damn beautiful, this book will likely never be bettered. But even if you're not a fan, any artist will find a lot to be fascinated by in this colourful account of how concept artists drove this blockbuster movie.

The author, Phil Szostak, was embedded with The Force Awakens art department as a conceptual researcher and archivist from December 2012 right to the end of production, so he knows his stuff. And his explanation of how the team went from initial sketches and concepts to finished models, costumes and visual effects is in-depth and detailed.



The author reveals that early drafts of the story featured a Jedi Killer, seen here with a motley group of accomplices.

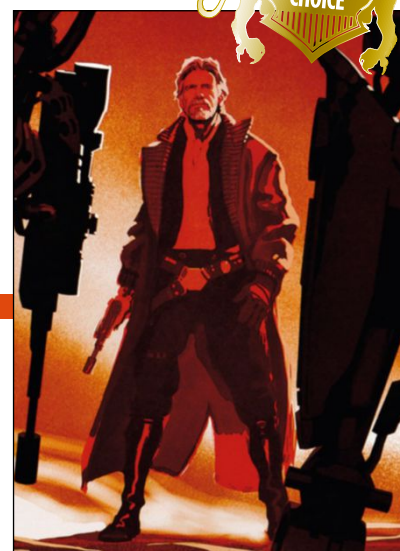


Phil recounts how producer Kathleen Kennedy gathered together an array of art talent, led by Rick Carter (who provides the book's introduction), Darren Gilford, and Doug Chiang to reimagine George Lucas's franchise for the Disney era. Exclusive interviews with these and other artists provide unique insights into how they brought director JJ Abrams' vision to life.

In fact, we'd probably have bought this for the text alone. But the real joy of this beautifully produced book lies in the 600 colour illustrations, including production paintings, concept art and sketches, storyboards, blueprints and matte paintings. There's no attempt to pad things out with movie stills; every spare inch of the 258 pages is crammed with breathtakingly imaginative art.

And you don't just see, as with similar books, rough versions of what eventually ended up in the finished film. The artists, known at Disney/Lucasfilm as the Visualists, went through a pretty wild brainstorming process to get there, and much of the art they left by the wayside is reproduced in all its glory.

We see the original storyboard for the opening sequence, for example,



An older Han Solo was inspired by the posters for the films of Sergio Leone, and Jeff Bridges in True Grit.

which precisely mirrors the start of A New Hope. We see initial designs for Jakku inspired by the shipbreaking yards of modern India - a far cry from the Wild West-inspired desert towns they later became. We experience the lengthy evolution of what eventually became Kylo Ren's mask, yet initially began as more of a twist on the original Dark Vader helmet.

More intriguing still are the concepts that didn't make it at all: the Emperor's Tower, crash-landed underwater after the second Death Star explosion; a four-person TIE fighter, called the Quad fighter; Luke tormented by Anakin's Ghost... How much of this, we wonder, will turn up in the Star Wars films yet to come?

**RATING**



# Rise of the Tomb Raider: the Official Art Book

**GAME FACE** From frozen battles to underground adventures, enter the modern world of Lara Croft



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

**T**his large-format book is packed full of concept art for the characters, settings, weapons and props in the latest Lara Croft game.

The artwork gets room to breathe, often across entire pages or spreads. Mostly painterly, but with some stunning examples of photorealism, there's inspiration here for any artist, whether or not you're familiar with the game. From Mark Castanon's opening



Lara surveys the entrance of an icy cavern in the Siberian wilderness.

portrait of a desperate, hunted Lara, right through to the final, epic cave scene by Brenoch Adams, the levels of expertise and imagination on show will take your breath away. It's accompanied by a commentary detailing the design process, and there's a foreword by Brenoch Adams, Brian Horton and Noah Hughes (the art

director, game director and franchise director, respectively).

Given that the similar Tomb Raider: The Art of Survival is now out of print and changing hands for large sums online, you might not want to wait too long to get your copy of this one.

**RATING**

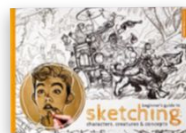
# Beginner's Guide to Sketching: Characters, Creatures and Concepts

**CORE SKILLS** You don't have to be a beginner to learn much from this guide to the fundamentals of drawing

**Editor** Jess Serjent-Tipping **Publisher** 3D Total **Price** £24 **Web** [www.3dtotalpublishing.com](http://www.3dtotalpublishing.com) **Available** Now

**F**ans of 3DTotal's CG training books have long been asking for one focusing on old-school graphite. Well, now that call has been answered.

In this 206-page book, 10 pro artists including Rovina Cai, Justin Gerard, Nick Harris and Rebeca Puebla, take you through the fundamentals, from gesture drawing and finding simple shapes to mastering line quality and shading. The cover doesn't make it



obvious, but the book's mainly geared towards the creation of concept/fantasy art – and that's fine by us!

The artists explain how and when to use different sketching materials; share top tips; show you how to draw everything from hands to an alien slave; and set practical exercises. There are also master projects that show how it all gets put together – how to progress from early concepts, through

poses, designs and costume elements, to a completed scene.

Despite the title, novices might find much of this too challenging. Yet artists ranging from students right up to advanced level should find much of value here, both in terms of refreshing your core art skills and raising your fantasy concept art to the next level.

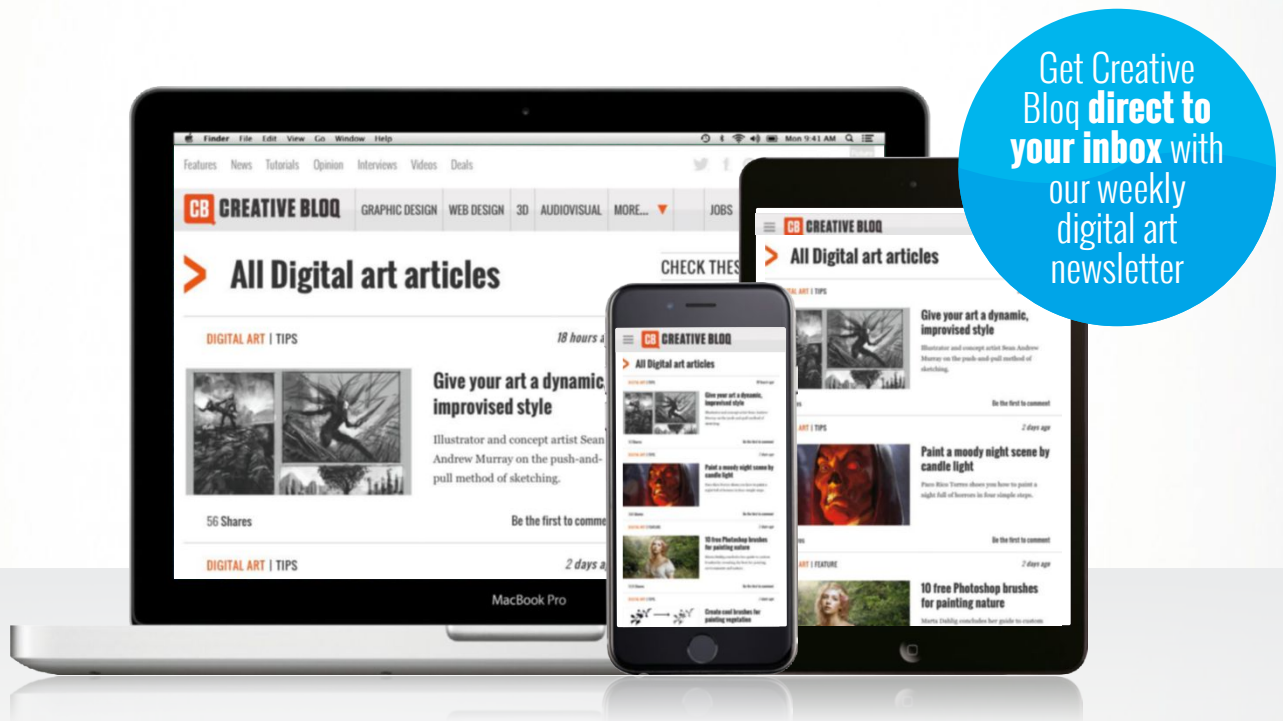
**RATING**



Rovina Cai 14-page article covers how to depict a winged fantasy creature using pencils.



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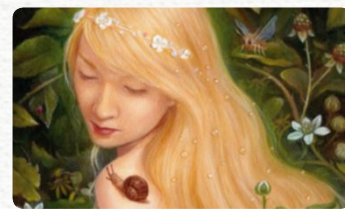
*illustrator*



## HOW TO PAINT... FANTASY CHIAROSCURO

Patrick J Jones paints The Sentinel,  
using timeless oil techniques **Page 104**

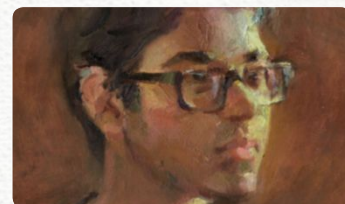
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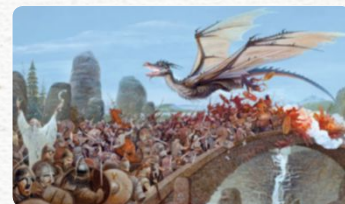
**100 FXPosé Traditional**  
The best traditional art revealed.



**106 Sculpting a concept**  
Eric Wilkerson gets creative.



**112 Painting from life**  
Anand Radhakrishnan on light.



**114 First Impressions**  
Chris Achilléos talks glamour.

April 2016

**ImagineFX**





# FXPosé Traditional

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL FANTASY ARTISTS

## + Katrina Sesum

LOCATION: England

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

EMAIL: [mail@katrinasesum.com](mailto:mail@katrinasesum.com)

MEDIA: Oils, ink and watercolour



Katrina's childhood was filled with fairy tales and mythology, and so a lot of her earlier art comprised reinterpretations of her favourite stories or characters, along with wildlife studies.

"Gradually, I became more interested in my personal mythology and my own stories, which is the focus of my work now," she reveals, "though it is, of course, heavily shaped and informed by the stories which came before."

Among Katrina's influences are the Pre-Raphaelites, artists from the Golden Age of Illustration and Renaissance art. "I enjoy experimenting with a variety of mediums and techniques, but feel most at home with oils," she says.

## IMAGINEFX CRIT



"Nature comes to the fore in Katrina's art, along with graceful compositions and earthy colours. While the white sparrow gives the second piece its name, I think the star is the snail on the woman's shoulder."

Alice Pattillo,  
Staff Writer

### 1 JEWELLED SWAN

Watercolour on paper, 9x13in

"Here's one of the illustrations from a series of fairy tales I'm writing, which I'd like to put together as a book. It's slow work, the writing more than anything, and likely a way off yet."

### 2 WHITE SPARROW

Oil on paper, 10x12in

"Some images take a long time to develop, and others pop right out fully formed and practically paint themselves. This little leucistic sparrow showed up in my garden one day, and brought with it a complete vision for this painting."









### Collette June Ellis

LOCATION: Wales

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

EMAIL: [collettejellis@hotmail.com](mailto:collettejellis@hotmail.com)

MEDIA: Watercolour, ink, Photoshop, Illustrator



Collette, better known as Flying Viper Illustration, is a full-time freelance fantasy illustrator with a love for dragons and a fascination for all things mythological.

"I grew up surrounded by the dramatic landscape of north Wales, and always felt most content when expressing myself through drawing monsters and dragons," she says. "This early interest in all things fantasy sparked a passion that would lead me to pursue an artistic career."

The artist mixes both traditional and digital techniques, working primarily in watercolour, ink and Photoshop: "I often start my artworks traditionally and go back and forth between traditional media and the computer."

#### 1 PEARL RIVER DRAGON

Watercolour and ink on cartridge paper, 12x17in

"The Zhu Jiang or Pearl River is a large river system in China, so named because of the pearl-coloured shells that lie at the bottom of the river section that flows through the city of Guangzhou. It's China's third longest river and its estuary is regularly dredged to keep it open to ocean vessels. Sadly, it's also one of the most polluted waterways in the world."

#### 2 LOVECRAFT STAG

Ink on hot-pressed smooth watercolour paper, 12x17in

"My friend suggested the idea, and I just had to draw it. The original was drawn in ink and then coloured digitally in Photoshop."

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#### IMAGINEFX CRIT

"Collette's Pearl River Dragon is like one of those magic eye paintings, that you look at for ages, until it suddenly jumps into focus. Here, it was quite a revelation when the green beast suddenly appeared."

Cliff Hope,  
Operations Editor



24





Oils

Acrylics

# MASTER THE DRAMA OF CHIAROSCURO

**PATRICK J JONES** paints *The Sentinel* using timeless oil painting techniques and methods, with an emphasis on dramatic lighting

Chiaroscuro is an Italian word meaning light and dark. As a kid I was enthralled by Disney's masterpiece, *Pinocchio*, and the beautiful chiaroscuro invisibly woven into the art. The Disney artists understood the power and magic conjured by a pool of light. It was my first sense of light as composition and even though I didn't understand it yet, it left an incredible impression.

The fact that our eye is drawn to dramatic light is a powerful hook, but the

light must also contain a captivating image. When painting *The Sentinel* I imagined the sound of the dragon's tail dragging slowly along the arid floor. To dig a little deeper I used allegory and symbolism. I chose the ageless allure of Beauty and Beast to engage the viewer's imagination. The princess's martyr pose may symbolise sacrifice, or any fantasy you dare to dream.

One art lover made my chiaroscuro composition and subliminal prompts worth the effort when he asked, "Which one is *The Sentinel*?" This kind of

## MATERIALS

### BRUSHES

■ Winsor & Newton  
(W&N) Cotman  
synthetic and sable

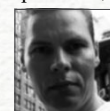
### PAINTS

■ W&N oils

### MEDIUM

■ W&N Linseed oil  
■ W&N Liquin  
■ Art Spectrum  
Artists' turpentine

connection with another enquiring mind is what makes art special. With a single image we're able to start an imaginative conversation that can go in any direction, opening up a world of possibilities. By pulling the viewer in they will ask questions, and dream the answers.



Patrick's new figure drawing book, *The Anatomy of Style*, is released worldwide this month. He is also the best-selling

author of *Sci-Fi & Fantasy: Oil Painting Techniques*. For more on Patrick and his art, visit [www.pjartworks.com](http://www.pjartworks.com).

## Step by Step: Transfer from pencil sketch to oil painting



### 1 PENCIL STUDIES

Nothing beats drawing from a live model. With no time for detail, a short life-drawing pose forces me to draw the essential forms quickly. This not only sharpens my drawing skills, it stamps a better understanding of the figure in my mind for the painting stage.



### 2 COLOUR ROUGH

The colour rough is a vague, miniature version of the painting. This is my most valuable preliminary stage because it has everything I need regarding value and colour strength. With the colour rough in the bag I know the painting will take care of itself.



### 3 UNDERPAINTING

As final preparation for painting I transfer a detailed pencil drawing on to my canvas. Here is the block-in stage, with some of the pencil still visible. I use mostly flat-edged, synthetic brushes to block-in the masses. This is the stuff that goes under the final painting layer.



## EDGING IT

Soft and hard edges are important for creating depth and atmosphere. Softening some edges such as the outer cloak adds to the glowing effect and creates a magical mood. Fading some of the tendrils on the dragon's head into mist suggests great scale.

## MYSTERIOUS LADY

When painting, I consider what's important and usually make that area highest in contrast. But as I already have the princess basking in light I can afford to be subtle. Keeping the face of the princess subdued here adds the spice of mystery and romance.

## LIGHT IT UP

Creating the pool of light was the trickiest part. By deeming the peak of the bust ornaments as the highest light I created a reference point from which every other highlight was less bright as they radiated from the centre. This forged the illusion of a glowing figure.

## LETTER OF THE DAY

Notice how the s-curve running from the tail to the dragon's head creates a coiled tension, making the serene pose of the princess more captivating and still. If composition is hard to grasp you can use the alphabet to get started. Look at the T-shape of the princess for instance. Letters are surprisingly effective compositional tools.



# Workshops



Acrylics

Clay

## SCULPT A DYNAMIC ALIEN CONCEPT

ERIC WILKERSON develops a sculpture beyond a simple reference maquette, and demonstrates why sculpting is so useful for painting an imaginary creature

Science fiction at its best has always been a form of social commentary. Precautionary tales and imagery that cover issues such as politics, race, prejudice and inequality.

'Alien Lives Matter' is a painting directly inspired by the demand for justice for victims of police violence and the institutional racism that continues to plague the USA. As an illustrator of science fiction, I ask myself, what would it look like if we as humans treated an extraterrestrial the way we treat ourselves? What might the outcry from a coalition of young multiracial activists look like?

I set out to create a composition that depicts a peaceful protest march through the streets of New York City. I challenge

### ARTIST INSIGHT

**STARTING OUT**  
It took a few tries to get the pose correct. I pushed, pulled and clipped the wire until I achieved the exact gesture I wanted. Gluing the right leg down helped keep things stable while I worked the wires.

myself with this project by deciding to have the scene take place at night, surrounded by the multicoloured neon lights of the city. For this painting to be successful I need to design and sculpt a reference maquette of the alien, which will be the focal point of the painting.

Not only do I need to stage multiple figures into clusters that surround the focal point, but the lighting that falls on the alien needs to match the rest of the composition. I don't believe in guess work when it comes to painting something that doesn't exist. Therefore I typically create a maquette so I know how light and shadow affect the form. Once the maquette is complete, I have a resource to refer back to or to photograph in any lighting set up I choose. When I move to

the final painting I can work quickly, knowing that all my light, shadow and texture questions have been answered.

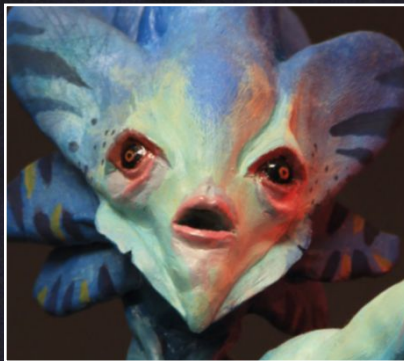
My approach to this workshop is to create a sculpt that's built from a loose sketch. I'll let the clay speak to me and develop the design as I go, instead of working from a refined 2D concept. Before we begin I want to share that this is part of a series of ongoing personal paintings. Therefore I spent extra time to push my sculpture to a higher level of finish for the sake of the future paintings.



Eric is a concept artist and illustrator for film, games and publishing. He's worked as a concept designer with Weta

Workshop and lead costume designer for Blue Man Group. [www.ericwilkersonart.com](http://www.ericwilkersonart.com)



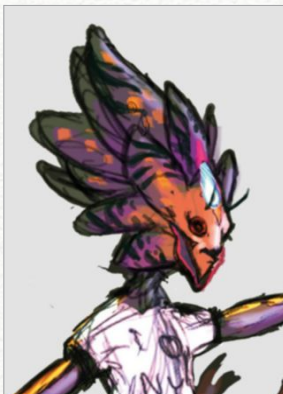
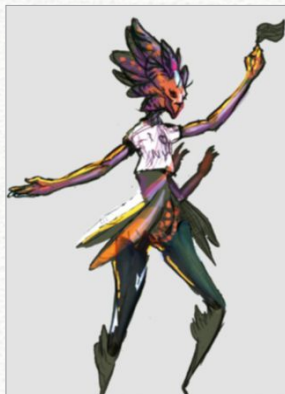




## ARTIST INSIGHT

### GO THE EXTRA MILE

Whether painting or sculpting, enjoy taking time to include subtle details. Even if nobody will ever notice or see the extra effort, you'll know it's there. That additional work always pays off in the end.



## 1 Concept sketching

I start sketching an anthropomorphic alien. Nothing too grotesque or beastly – it needs to look gentle, friendly, almost frail in appearance. The design is inspired by a tropical flower called Bird of Paradise, and seadragons, the only species where the male can become pregnant.

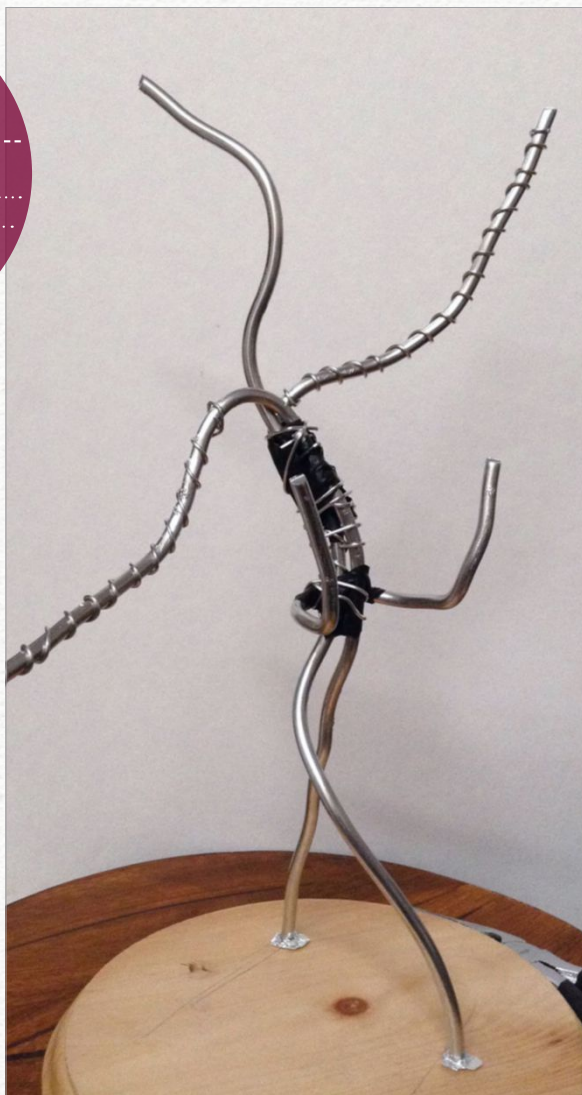
## 2 Tools and supplies

Among the sculpting tools is my pasta maker. I use it to soften and flatten a block of Super Sculpey Firm into thin usable strips. I add a few drops of clay softener before running it through. It takes a few passes through the roller to achieve the consistency I like to work with.

## STICKING EVERYTHING TOGETHER

### ARMATURE ADVICE

As you assemble the armature you can also use epoxy putty to join pieces together.



## MATERIALS

### MEDIUM

■ Super Sculpey Firm

### MATERIALS

■ Armature wire

■ Aluminium foil

### TOOLS

■ Masking tape

■ Rotating table

■ Pasta maker

■ Clay softener

■ Pliers

### PAINT

■ Acrylic paint

■ Acrylic gloss varnish

■ Grey-matt model kit spray-paint

## 3 Building the armature

After measuring the height of the inside of my oven to gauge how tall the sculpt can be, I make a cutout of my rough sketch and then build my armature to scale with the cutout. I explore the gesture and glue wire legs into pre-drilled holes in the wood base.

## 4 Coiling and bulking up

Next I begin wrapping a thin amount of wire around the armature, because this helps the clay have something to grip to. I find that bulking up a form with some aluminium foil is a quick way to build up the sculpt – and it helps save on clay, too!



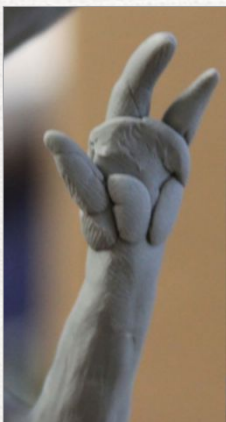


## 5 Blocking in the form

Next up, I add some thin strips of clay over the armature, to try and quickly build up the torso and extremities on my alien sculpture. I'm not all that worried about smoothing and making refinements to it at this point, because that can be done more easily later on.

## 6 Developing the head

The design of the alien's head is inspired by flower petals. I start trying to build it by bulking up with foil, before carefully blocking in the facial features based on my rough sketch. I support all the head petals by inserting additional armatures.



## 7 Sculpting the hands

For the next stage, I roll up and pinch little chunks of clay, to form the alien's hands and fingers. No armature is used for the individual fingers here, and this makes it easier to play with the hand gesture and finger positions later on in the sculpting process.



## 8 Making it up as I go

Initially, I couldn't decide if the alien should wear a shirt or not. But when it came to it, I figured it best to leave it out. This means designing the front and back torso on the spot, since there's no orthographic character sheet to consult. ➡



#### ARTIST INSIGHT

##### LIGHTING THE SCULPTURE

Various lighting schemes can be achieved by taking photos of the sculpt outdoors or by using coloured light bulbs.

I use a sheet of paper to bounce reflected light into the shadow side of the sculpt.



#### 9 Lower torso petals

Just like the head, I add a thin armature for the lower body petals. A very thin sheet of clay is wrapped over each petal and pinched to form what I need. In hindsight however, I could have used a more translucent material here, but this approach still works.

#### 10 Refining the details

I take time to study human musculature and define the back and upper arm muscles into something recognisable. At this point I'm just having a blast and pushing the sculpt as far as I can, even though for the purposes of my painting none of this work will be seen.

#### BAKING TIP

##### GREY SPRAY PAINT

After baking, spray with a coat of grey primer. It gives sculpt a uniform finish and prepares it for painting.



#### 11 Exposing his Younglings

The alien stands defenceless in a symbolic gesture of peace, with his petal extremities spread out, exposing his delicate embryos to our world. I roll up 40-50 balls of clay and bake them. Then I carefully inset the eggs into the belly in a tight grouping similar to a male seadragon.

#### 12 Painting the sculpture

This is the only stage I finish quickly. I need to block in base colours and establish values for the skin. I could have left it grey, but the coloured lighting I plan to use will affect the grey base coat differently than it will blue skin, especially in warm-to-cool and light-to-dark transitional areas.



#### ARTIST INSIGHT

##### THAT WET LOOK

When photographing a creature you want to look wet, apply a coat of acrylic gloss varnish or clear nail polish for a slimy look. Brushing on cooking oil is great for temporary results. It wipes off nicely, too.

#### 13 Costuming the alien

I have no experience of fabricating clothing, so I cut out the shape of a shirt from a plastic bag. It was thinner than any real fabric and offered great detailed wrinkles for the scale of it all. I wet the alien torso and the T-shirt stuck to the chest long enough to photograph.

#### 14 Theatrical lighting and photoshoot

I set up lights to match the colour sketch that I did earlier for the final painting. I use two Kuler Bulbs, which enables me to pick multiple colours and light intensities. A coloured flashlight on my smartphone provides an interesting rim light effect as well. I take dozens of photographs to capture what I need.



## 15 The final painting

I complete the final image in oils on birch plywood at 30x40in. In addition to my sculpture, an evening trip to nearby Times Square, NYC, supplies the perfect reference to complete my painting. ●





## Oils

# PAINTING ALLA PRIMA FROM LIFE

Illustrator **ANAND RADHAKRISHNAN** reveals his process of painting a live model in oil and also talks about his colour choices while depicting skin lit by sunlight

**P**ainting or drawing from life regularly is an important practice because of the many benefits of having the model present in front of you, instead of being a two-dimensional photograph.

Doing so trains the eye to see how the form turns and how light affects the colours on the human skin. It also encourages the artist to work faster and make colour choices on the go, because in most cases the model is available only for a limited amount of time. Another

important aspect of painting from life is that the human eye is capable of seeing more depth and colour on the live model as opposed to a camera or monitor.

The term 'alla prima' is simply the technique of oil painting where layers of wet paint are applied on wet paint, usually in a short space of time. Oil can be a challenging medium to use, especially when working fast from life, but it's also a flexible medium in the sense that you can layer it endlessly and simply scrape off parts that you don't

### MATERIALS

- Canvas
- Oil paint
- Brushes
- Turpentine or any other solvent
- Palette

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

particularly like, before repainting. It's one of the few mediums that give you large variety of textures and colours.

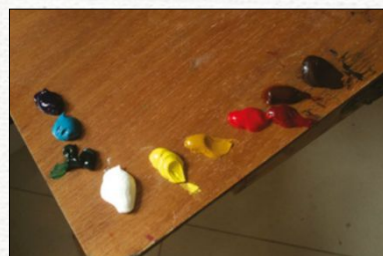
I usually have a friend or acquaintance sit for me in my studio space, where I can use sunlight as my source and pose the model accordingly.



Anand is a freelance illustrator who works in Mumbai, India. He takes his inspiration from masters such as Moebius,

Alphonse Mucha and Jeffrey Jones.

[www.behance.net/anandrkr](http://www.behance.net/anandrkr)



### 1 Arranging paint on the palette

I place paint on my palette from left to right and going from light to dark, with the cools on one edge and the warms on the other. The rest of the space on the palette can be used for mixing paint. It also helps to use separate brushes for cools and warms, to avoid developing muddy colours.

From left to right...

- Ultramarine blue
- Cerulean blue
- Viridian green
- Titanium white
- Lemon yellow
- Yellow ochre
- Cadmium red
- Crimson lake
- Burnt sienna
- Burnt umber

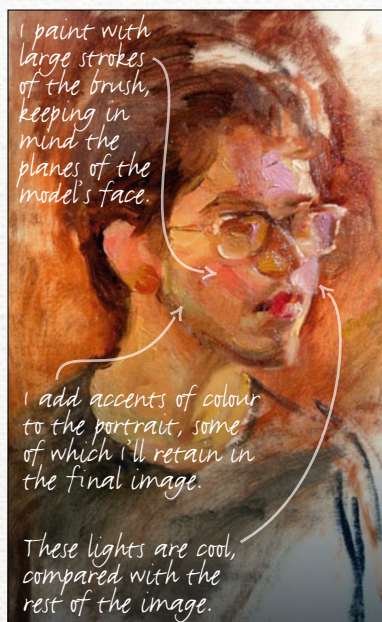


### 2 Blocking in large shapes

I start by observing the basic shapes of the head, and then block them in. I usually quickly draw in the simple head shapes using burnt sienna and then fill in the simplest light and dark pattern using mid-tone colours. You can also add the darkest darks, such as the hair shape, at this stage.

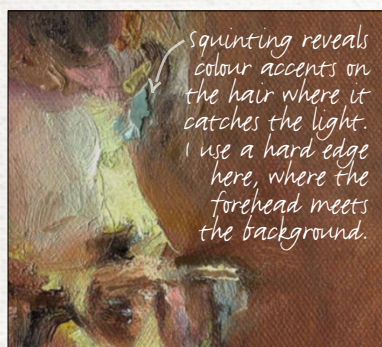
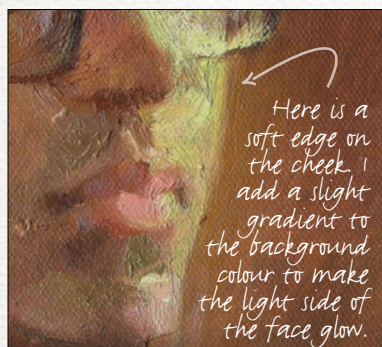






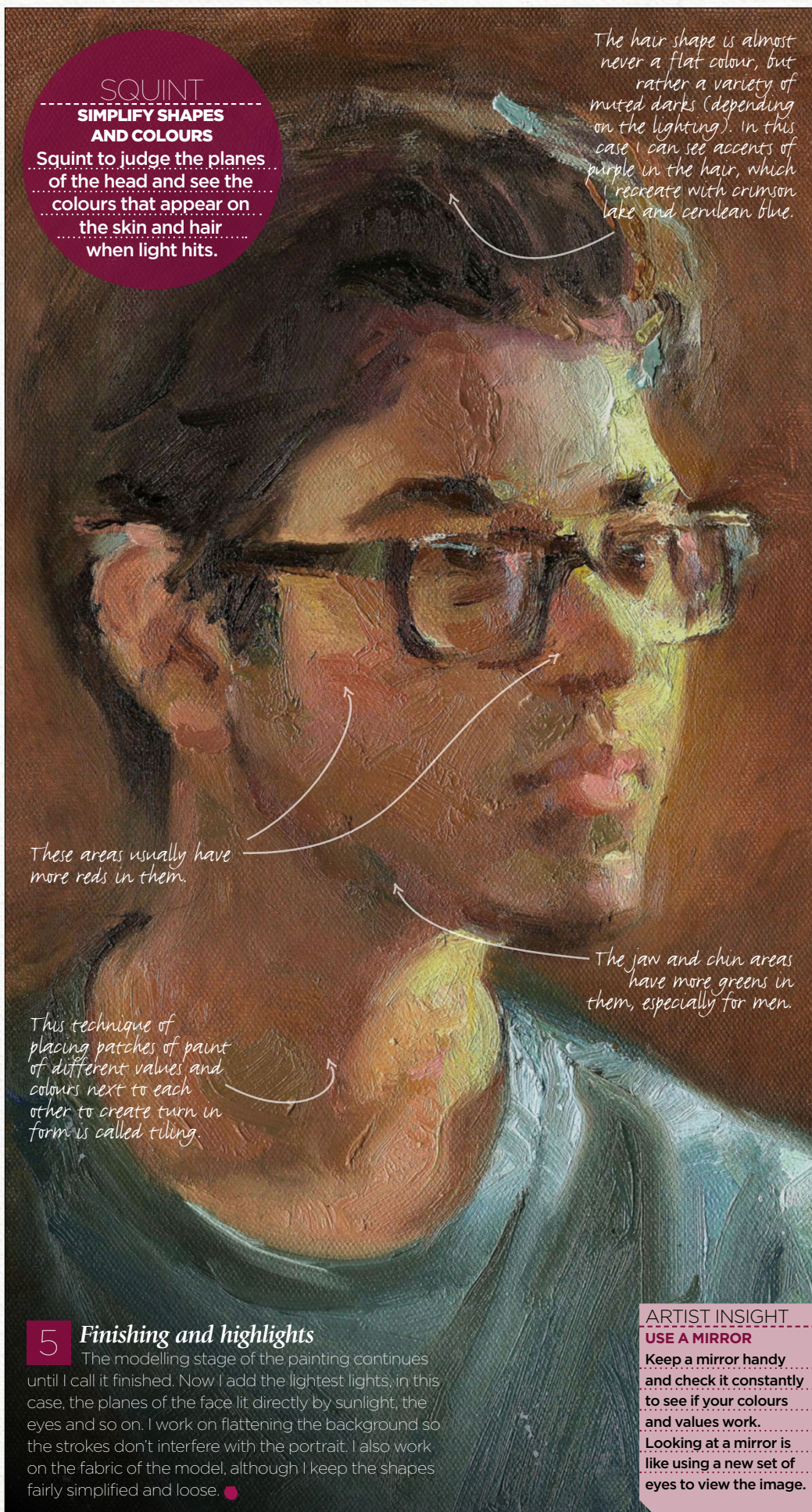
## 3 Building up form

In this step I work on defining the planes of the model's head and attempt to create the illusion of form. I also add the lights that I had previously left canvas-white, but these are still not as light as I see them on the model. However, I decide to leave these for the final stages.



## 4 Identifying edges and accents of colour

As the picture nears its end, I think about the various edges that make it interesting and use a variety of them to bring attention to the focal point. Adding accents of saturated colour in a few specific areas does the same job of directing the eye through the piece.



## 5 Finishing and highlights

The modelling stage of the painting continues until I call it finished. Now I add the lightest lights, in this case, the planes of the face lit directly by sunlight, the eyes and so on. I work on flattening the background so the strokes don't interfere with the portrait. I also work on the fabric of the model, although I keep the shapes fairly simplified and loose. ●



# First Impressions

✧ Chris Achilléos ✧

We talk to the Greek artist who made his name painting fantasy glamour...



**Where did you grow up, and when did you realise you had a talent for art?**

I was born in Cyprus and lived with my mother, grandmother and three sisters. My father died when I was five. In 1960 my mother made the decision to bring us all to London. I was 12 years old.

Throughout my childhood, I was always aware that I was quite capable and inventive. I was very good at making things. Yet I only became conscious of my ability to draw when I found myself more or less housebound in an upstairs flat in London. I escaped by losing myself in comics like *The Eagle*, where I would spend hours copying the wonderful illustrations within them.

**What was your big break?**

I don't know if I had a big break as such. I have stages in my working life where opportunities helped to move things along. For instance, when I was commissioned for my first book cover; when I had my work collected and published as a book; and when my work appeared on sets of trading cards.

**How did fantasy get on your radar?**

Fantasy in Greek means imagining or



## ELVEN WARRIOR

*"This was the most detailed work that I've ever done for a book cover. It was inspired by Michael Moorcock's fantasy works of the elvish hero Elric and his world."*

imagination. That's something that I seem to be blessed with. Early in my career, I was using my talents to work and provide for my young family, taking all commissions that came my way. At around the mid-1970s I made the brave decision to drop all other work and concentrate on only accepting commissions of the fantasy genre.

**Did anyone help you in your art journey?**

Certainly. The first was my school teacher, Mr Hue Gordon. He made me aware of my talent and enthusiasm for drawing and painting, but more than that, he arranged for me to go to art college. The other was the master,

**Next month**

**Heather Theurer**

“ Frank Frazetta's work showed me it was possible for me to work as a fantasy artist ”

Frank Frazetta. He helped me by showing me through his amazing work that it was possible for me to work as a fantasy artist.

**How has your art style evolved over the years?**

In the early days upon leaving college and starting to work, I would use gouache for painting and inks for air brushing. Later on I used watercolours on paper and acrylics on illustration board. Nowadays, I mostly use oils on board or canvas, unless the subject or commission demands one of my other techniques.

**What's been the highlight of your career so far? Any low points?**

There have been a fair few highs: I guess when my first book, *Beauty and the Beast*, was published in 1977. Furthermore, when F.P.G. (Friedlander Publishing Group) published my artwork as trading card sets and when I saw my paintings turned into figurines. Low points include the early 1980s, and when I had to take legal action against my own publisher.

**To date, what's been your most challenging commission?**

I guess that has been when I was hired to work on films as a conceptual artist. I'm not talking about the actual work, but rather when I had to deal with some of the people in the industry. At times, this presented quite a challenge.

**What advice would you give to your younger self?**

Ha – I wouldn't dare! Looking back at him, I'm amazed at that young man and how he managed to do so much work, meeting deadline after deadline and at the same time providing for his young family. Gratitude and respect, young Chris.

**How would you sum up your work, in under 10 words?**

You know, I'm not sure how to answer this! I'll leave this one up to the ImagineFX readers.

*Over the past 40 years, Chris has created some of the best-loved fantasy and glamour art, and is acknowledged as one of the top fantasy artists in the world. Find out more at [www.chrisachilleos.co.uk](http://www.chrisachilleos.co.uk).*

## DRAGON ATTACK

*"My latest personal piece, which was realised from a sketch done in the 1970s."*





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