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PRO VIDEO TUITION

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

# ImaginFX

## ART TIPS

### HAVE FUN WITH CARICATURES

- Break all the rules
- Exaggerate features
- Create with shapes

Follow Aaron's in-depth process, from sketch to final painting



*"There's a switch that flips when you start working from life..."*

Aaron Miller on life model drawing, page 20



## INSIDE

- SPEED PAINTING ENVIRONMENTS
- PAINT A HUMAN FLY IN PHOTOSHOP
- THE TOP 10 ONLINE ART SCHOOLS

## INTERVIEW

### DAN DOS SANTOS

The master artist on success, sacrifice and being invisible

## PAINT PERFECT

# ANATOMY

Work up your fantasy figure art with an edge of realism! **Aaron Griffin** shows you how...



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# Welcome... to figuring it all out



Whether you want to be a world-class artist or step up your game as a hobbyist, diving into the world of anatomy is always a good idea. Working on this issue, I was amazed at how many methods there are to depict the human form. Stan Prokopenko's approach gets to the bones of the matter over on page 106, but you'll find loads of different perspectives in these pages – not least of all in our anatomy-special Q&A section (page 32).

Inspired by the process of figure drawing, we asked Aaron Griffin to lay bare his method on the cover. There's something compelling about seeing those initial sketch lines morph into a realistic human form, and I think he's captured it in his painting, and explains it all brilliantly in his workshop over on page 64.

Of course, we like things fun and freaky in ImagineFX, so carrying the theme of anatomy into fantasy, Ed Binkley's workshop on creating a human fly will get the imagination going, starting on page 70. And Loopydave's take on caricature anatomy is packed with fascinating tips on page 76.

It seems fitting with all this art theory whizzing around this issue, that we take a look at some of the best online art schools around, and that's exactly what games artist, and all-round delightful chap, Paul Canavan does over on page 46. Along with this issue's workshops, I hope that's more than enough to get you excited about sharpening your anatomy skills, and creating some amazing art.

*Beren*

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



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# NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX Contents

## Your art

**8 Reader FXPosé**  
Unicorns, monsters, comic heroes, underwater geishas...

## News and events

**20 The naked truth**  
We find out if the ancient art of life drawing is on the wane?

**26 Artist in residence**  
"I'm an image junkie in a sea of possibilities," says Dave Seeley.

## Your questions

**32 Artist Q&A**  
Advice on twisting muscles, snarling beasts and more.

## Features

**40 Dan dos Santos**  
The illustrator talks success, sacrifice and why it's time to return some favours.

**46 Learning online**  
Artist Paul Canavan details the 10 most exciting online art courses available to you today.

**54 Studio profile**  
How Collateral Damage Studios went from local art group to global players.

**58 Sketchbook**  
Comic characters are positively leaping from the pages of Patxi Peláez's sketchbook.

## Reviews

**90 Hardware**  
**91 Software**  
**95 Training**  
**96 Books**

## Regulars

**3 Editor's letter**  
**6 Resources**  
**28 Letters**  
**30 Subscriptions: US**  
**38 Subs: worldwide**  
**52 Back issues**  
**82 Next month**

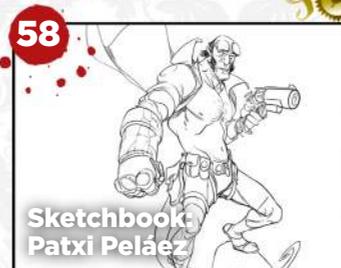


## Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



See page 8 for the best new art →



FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS  
**ImagineFX**  
**Workshops**

Advice and techniques from pro artists...

64

**DOWNLOAD RESOURCES** Turn over the page for this issue's art assets



**64 Develop a pose with personality**  
Aaron Griffin uses gesture and caricature.



**68 Add details with sculpting tools**  
Rob Redman introduces ZBrush's sculpting brushes.



**70 Draw and paint a hybrid species**  
Blend human and insect features, with Ed Binkley.



**74 How to work up a speedpainting**  
Alexander Nanitchkov paints a card art lizardman.

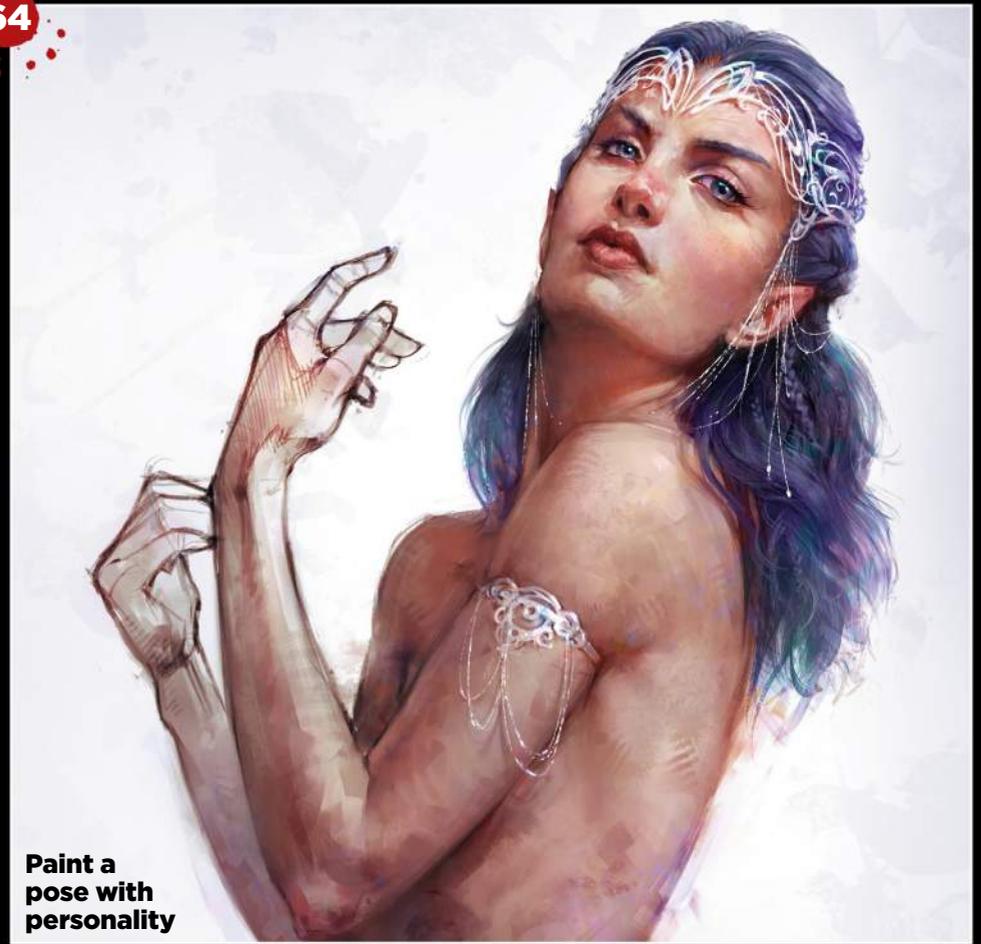


**76 The anatomy of caricature**  
Get an insight into Loopydave's figure art.



**84 Quickly kitbash your 3D models**  
Pascal Blanché uses a combination of techniques.

**Paint a pose with personality**



**FANTASY**  
*illustrator*

Inspiration and advice from the best traditional artists

**100 FXPosé Traditional**

**104 Composition tricks**  
Behold Lucas Graciano's dragon rider.

**106 Bones and muscles**  
Stan Prokopenko's anatomy advice.

**112 Use a master's palette**  
Anand Radhakrishnan on colour.

**114 First Impressions**  
Vanessa Lemen talks characters.

112



**A master's palette**

100



**FXPosé Traditional**

104



**Composition**

106



**Bones and muscles**

114



**Vanessa Lemen**





# NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX Resources

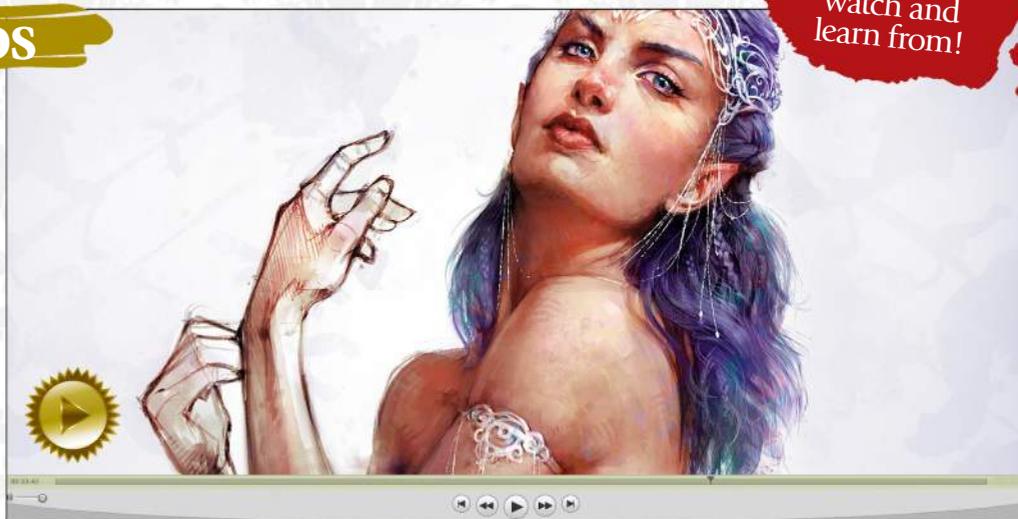
Getting hold of all of this issue's videos, artwork and brushes is quick and easy. Just visit our dedicated web page at <http://ifxm.ag/body135talk>

**OVER 7 HOURS**  
of workshop and Q&A videos to watch and learn from!

## WORKSHOP VIDEOS

### A pose with personality

Aaron Griffin shows how to use gesture and caricatured exaggeration to create a believable character.



### GET YOUR RESOURCES

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

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Type this into your browser's address bar (not the search bar): <http://ifxm.ag/body135talk>
- 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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# EXCLUSIVE VIDEO TUTORIAL!

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



### Ed Binkley

Blending human anatomy and insect features, to illustrate a curious fruit fly. **Plus WIPs, brushes and final image**



### Q&A VIDEOS

### John Stanko

See how there's more to it than the eyes, when depicting the face of a classic hero. **Plus WIPs and final image**



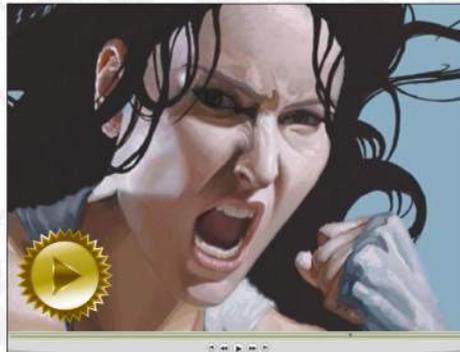
### Allison Theus

Depict a beast about to pounce by understanding animal muscle structures. **Plus WIPs and final image**



### Tom Foster

Know which muscle functions to emphasise and exaggerate for best effect. **Plus WIPs and final image**



### John Stanko

Learn to consider the whole body when painting an action shot, such as a punch. **Plus WIPs and final image**



### Allison Theus

Think about anatomy, environment and more, to create a believable creature. **Plus WIPs and final image**



### TRAINING

### Charles Hu

Reviving his series on anatomy basics, Structure and Anatomy of the Arm is a four-hour, in-depth exploration.

## 427 CUSTOM BRUSHES



### ... including over 400 from Alexander Nanitchkov!

The artist's collection of Photoshop brushes and Tool Presets helped him paint a dynamic lizardman on page 74.

### PLUS! 25 workshop brushes

Try out the Photoshop brushes created by this issue's cover artist Aaron Griffin, and Ed Binkley, who painted a human fly!

**AND ALL THIS!** Detailed workshops with essential advice from professional artists, including Pascal Blanché, Mike Corriero, Lucas Graciano, Loopydave, Alexander Nanitchkov, Stan Prokopenko, Rob Redman, Anand Radhakrishnan and others.



# Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



## **Cristi Balanescu**

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**MEDIA:** Photoshop, SketchUp



Self-taught Romanian artist Cristi's early influences include Frazetta, Brom and Alex Ross. Yet since the early 2000s his main source of inspiration has been Craig Mullins. "I also get a lot of ideas from films and books," he says. "My first job was as a 2D artist at Ubisoft. I went on to become an art director there, and at City Interactive later."

In 2012, he began freelancing full-time and is probably best known for his work on the Star Wars RPG books from Fantasy Flight Games. Cristi finds painting traditionally the most rewarding process, and he likes to use 3D as a guide.

1



**1 FLYING BUGS** "During one of my trips to Switzerland, I was fascinated by epic vistas at every turn. This is one of my attempts to capture that, and bring a little twist to it. I made use of a lot of photobashing on this one."

**2 JUICY SWEEEEEET** "I'm a big fan of Ridley Scott's films, and so it's no surprise that this piece ended up being heavily inspired by Legend. This also was a chance to play around with some contrasts - both visual and metaphorical ones."





## *Artist crit*

**Noah Bradley, known for his Magic: The Gathering art, comments on Cristi's art...**



"I think that Juicy Sweeeeet is a fantastic piece of work. Above all else, it's Cristi's beautiful use of texture that impresses me the most. Keep it up, Cristi."

**Michelle Hoefener**

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Michelle is an illustrator and concept artist working in the gaming and entertainment industry. She's been employed by companies such as Riot Games, Dynamite Entertainment and Cheesecake Girl LLC, and teaches at Riot Games studios in Santa Monica.

Now freelancing full time, Michelle recently worked on League of Legends illustrations and is also kick-starting her new project on Patreon, sharing her process and digital art tools.

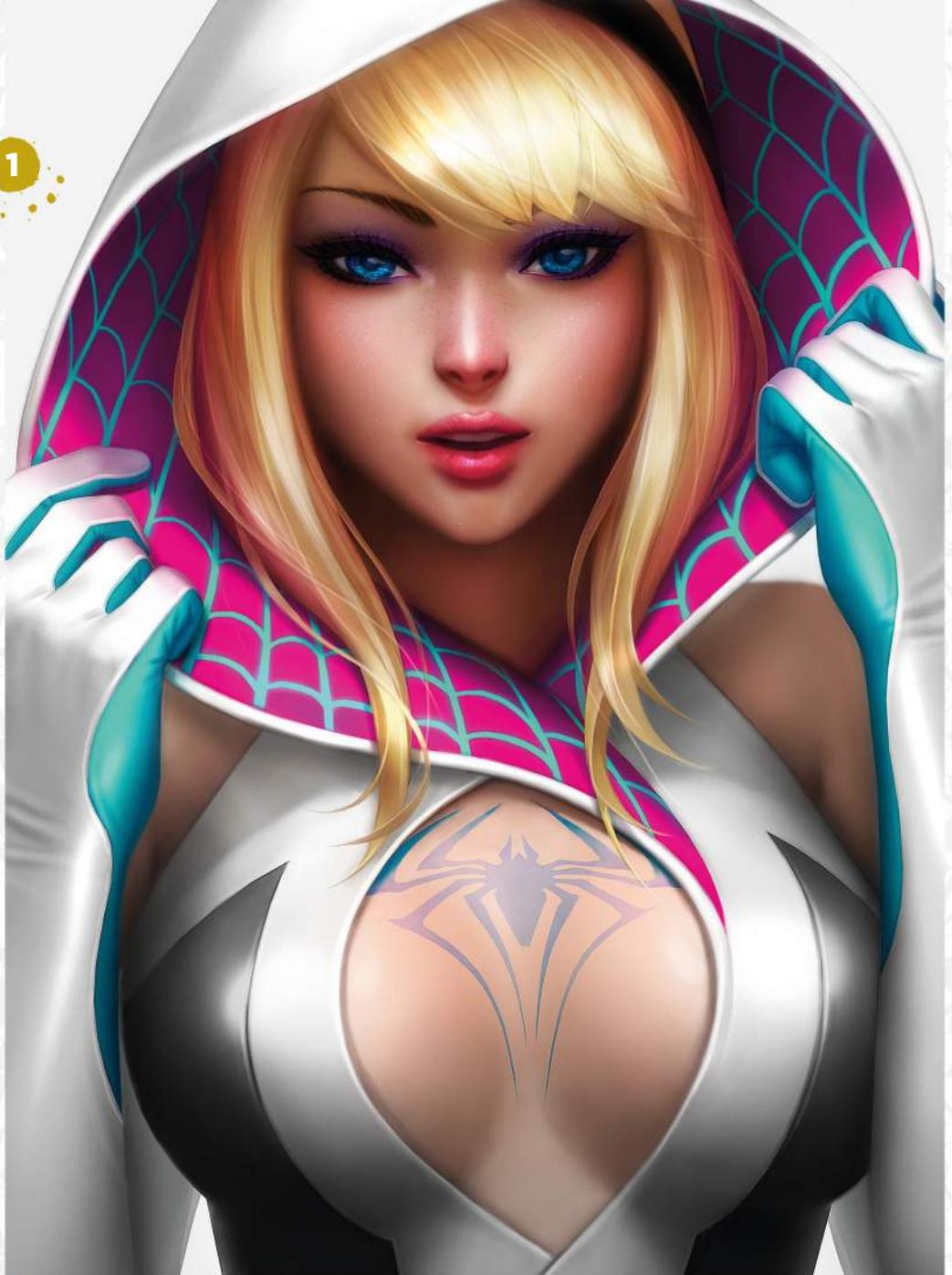
"I love to create fantasy and science fiction characters," she says. "Working with colour, light and materials to make each character come to life. Many of my illustrations feature beautiful strong women and dynamic compositions, poses and perspective."

**IMAGINEFX CRIT**



"Michelle's long-term devotion to video game art is clear in these savvy, accomplished images. There's a real boldness and confidence to her work that demands the viewer's attention."

**Daniel Vincent,**  
Art Editor

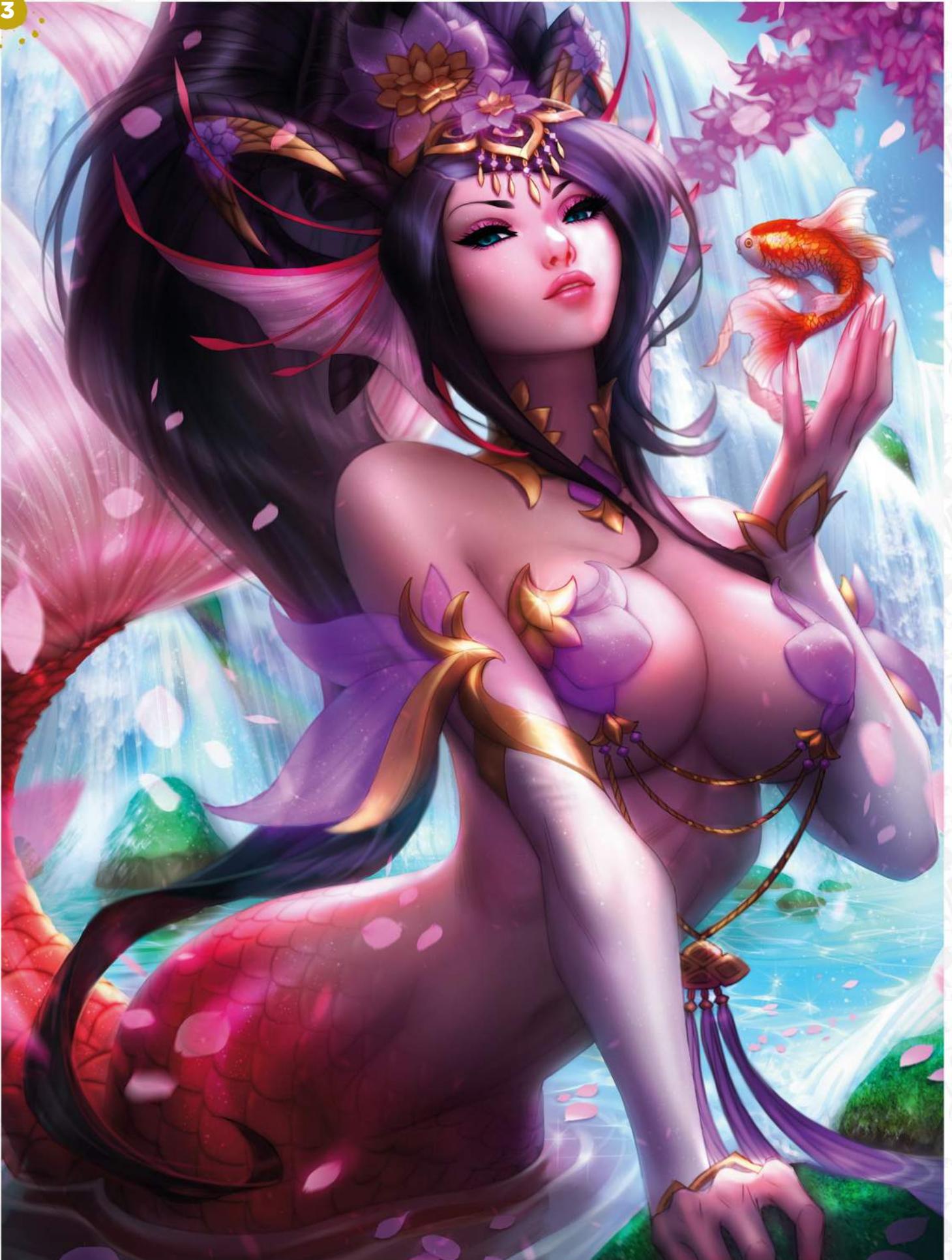


**1 SPIDER GWEN** "This is a portrait of Marvel's Spider Gwen. I really love her design and colours and wanted to do a new take on her outfit. I also wanted to add close-up details to her face and hair, to create a more realistic aesthetic."

**2 ORDER OF THE LOTUS IRELIA** "This is the splash illustration I did for Riot Games for the Order of the Lotus skin for the champion, Irelia, from League of Legends. I wanted to emphasise the tranquil, Zen, Chinese theme in this piece using vivid warm sunset lighting and colours."

**3 THE KOI EMPRESS** "This is an original mermaid I designed, named Mei Shui, the Koi Empress. She's a mythical empress who once ruled China in a forgotten fairy tale, and is usually only seen in her human form. It's rare to see her in her koi mermaid form in the lakes near the palace."

3



1



**Alex Dos Diaz**

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**MEDIA:** Photoshop, pencils



Alex is a freelance illustrator based in Pennsylvania. His interest in drawing and painting grew after relocating to the US from his native Uruguay in 2001. Alex's initial passion stems from video games and anime, but now the Art Nouveau and Baroque movements are key influences in his work.

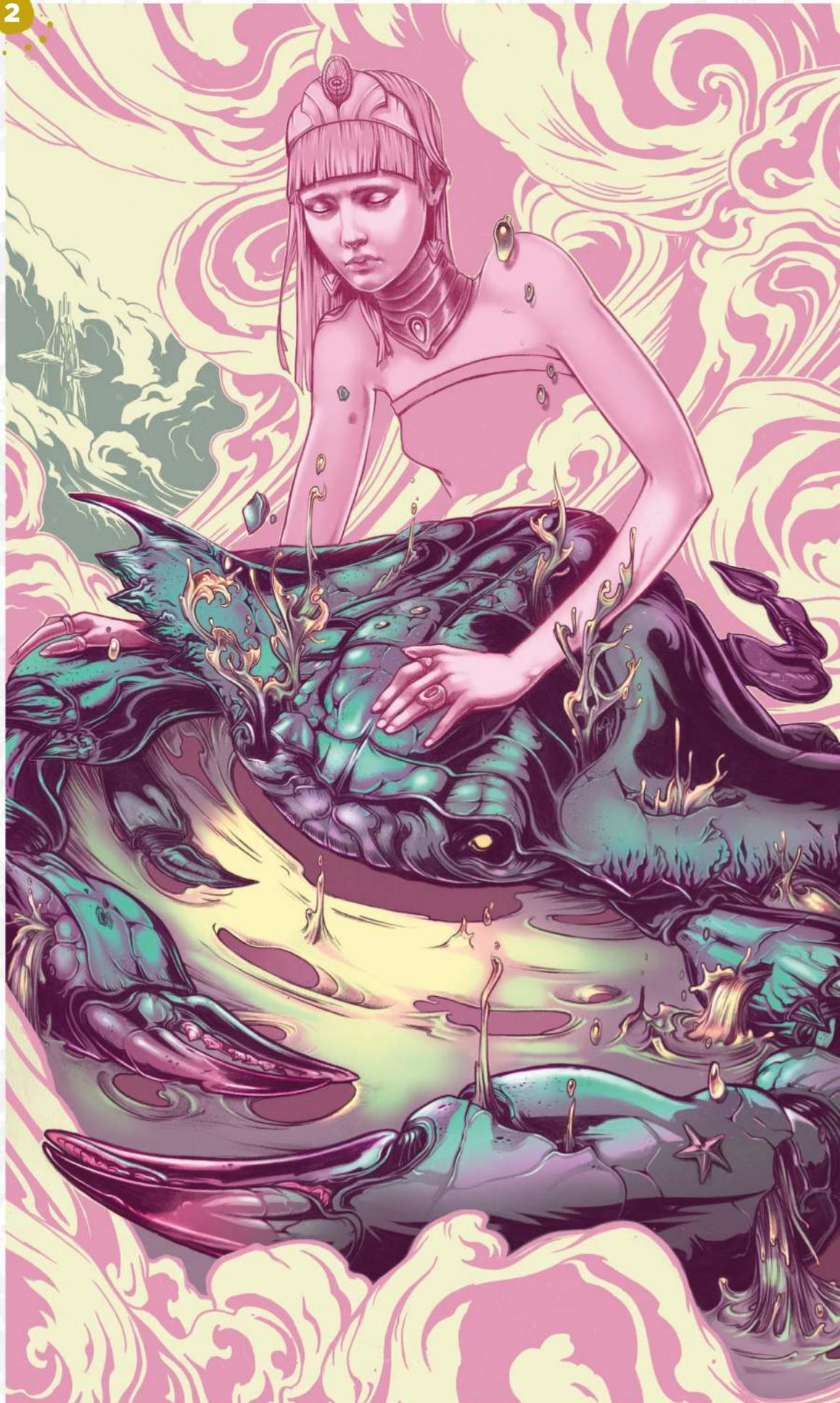
"Organic shapes and the four natural elements are reoccurring themes throughout my art," he says. "Smoke and water are two of my favourite elements to draw."

**1 SYMPHONY** "Music is a huge passion of mine, as well as an inspiration for my work. This piece showcases the organic nature of music from the heart and how it flows, breaks and manipulates into many other forms."

**2 ASCENSION** "This was featured in the Cosmos' constellation show at Light Grey Art Lab in Minnesota. For the constellation of Cancer, I depicted the goddess Hera taking care of the dying crab Karkinos as his astral body ascends to the sky."

**3 VELVET** "The majority of my work is based on research and symbolism, however once in a while I explore a stream of consciousness. It's a nice change of pace and I always seem to learn something new about myself."

2



**IMAGINEFX CRIT**

"The thing that strikes me first about Alex's art here is his beguiling use of colour. Initially the palette seems limited, but closer inspection shows all sorts of hues, tones and nuances. To create that clarity shows real skill."

Cliff Hope,  
Operations Editor



**+ Mark Lambert**

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Self-taught artist Mark started portraits around four years ago and took up digital art after the guilt of owning a Bamboo tablet and leaving it to gather dust grew too much to bear.

"Portraiture has led me to meet so many interesting people, helping my own confidence and self-belief in countless ways," he says.

Mark's technique roughly involves using a basic grid or method of plotting out the initial line-work before moving on to blocking in colour or values, before refining the piece. In the past few years his workflow has relaxed much more and now has an oil paint feel.

1



2



**1 REFLECTIONS** "A piece that had no real planning. I just saw the image online and knew I had to paint it. I liked how abstract it became, due to the refraction of the water."

**2 BOBA FETT** "One of my personal favourites and a real pain to complete. I wanted to get more variation into my art and push myself to bigger and better things, so the hard surface specular and matte fabrics really drew me in."

**+ Frida Lundqvist**

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**MEDIA:** Photoshop



Frida grew up in Sweden playing video games and they're still one of the biggest influences for her art today.

"Storytelling, character development and atmospheric music are all things I'm heavily inspired by", she says. "I've always been really interested in people. With my art I can visualise their stories and personalities in my own way."

Illustrations where the character's emotions are the focus are what Frida loves drawing most. She believes you can tell a lot about a person by body language and facial expressions.

"Charlie Bowater is someone I look up to a lot and I'd love to follow in her footsteps," she says.

1



**1 ALIVE** "I was in a bit of a rut, doing stuff that was too similar, so I wanted to go outside my comfort zone to break the block. I took risks, pushed the colours and went for something really different. It was so much fun."

**2 SEA CREATURES** "Every now and then I like to do a more realistic portrait to brush up on my anatomy. This one was good practice for drawing children and I learned a lot from it."

**3 GOLDFISH GEISHA** "This was a gift for my brother who requested I draw him a geisha. I love underwater creatures so I got the idea of having dozens of bright orange goldfish circulating her. I imagine she's a spirit with great power who rules the ocean."

**4 HERMIONE GRANGER** "This is one of my favourite Harry Potter characters. Normally I spend hours trying to perfect every detail in a painting, but here I relaxed and felt fine keeping things a bit rough."

2



3



4



**Maurizio Manzieri**

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Maurizio was an avid reader of fantastic literature during his youth, and admired the engaging book covers by numerous fantasy and sci-fi artists. In 1994, the artist got his first editorial commission to do the front cover of a magazine.

Today he works as an illustrator based in Turin, Italy and specialises in surreal worlds of the imagination. "While teaching digital illustration at the iMasterArt Academy, I keep exploring distant galaxies," he says.

**1 ATONING** "This belongs to my urban fantasy portfolio. I've created many covers for the Otherworld series by Kelley Armstrong, in the glorious limited editions series by Subterranean Press. This one was released in 2015 as an ebook, together with a set of black and white interior illustrations."

**2 PARADISES LOST** "This was commissioned for a novella by Ursula K Le Guin, which was included in Spectrum, and Infected by Art. It was Best in the Show at the 2014 WorldCon, and the Asimov's Readers' Award as Best 2015 Cover."

**3 ALICE IN BASEL** "This year I'll be a guest of honour at Fantasy Basel. I've been hired for the Key Visual Project and to paint the festival poster. I spent weeks in Wonderland experimenting with Alice, airships and steampunk versions of the Cheshire Cat. What joy."



**IMAGINEFX CRIT**



"I really enjoy the way Maurizio poses questions in Atoning. He places a potentially ferocious animal looking subservient next to an apparently harmless mistress. There's so much untold story there."

Alice Pattillo,  
Staff Writer



**Daria Theodora**

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MEDIA: Photoshop, inks



Daria isn't much of a painter. She prefers to put a lot of care and detail into her intricate line-work and then decide the colour scheme and motifs digitally.

"My weapons of choice for drawing are ink applied on paper with pen nibs (G-pen is the nib I used most often) or brush," she says. "Watercolour ones, Japanese ones, flats... anything I can use to enhance the line variety."

Early on in her career, Daria looked to manga for inspiration, but her influences have developed to include various illustrators such as Arthur Rackham, James Jean and Yuko Shimizu.

**1 SHAPE SHIFTER** "This piece was for the 2016 Month of Love challenge: Lost in Translation. For this, I interpreted translation as change or shift. It's difficult to know one's true nature: a sheep in a wolf's clothing or the other way around."

**2 SPACE TIME DISTANCE** "I was inspired by Shinkai Makoto's Voices of a Distant Star, hence the vague school uniform. As time passes, distance grows, but the longing is real."

## SUBMIT YOUR ART TO FXPOSÉ

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

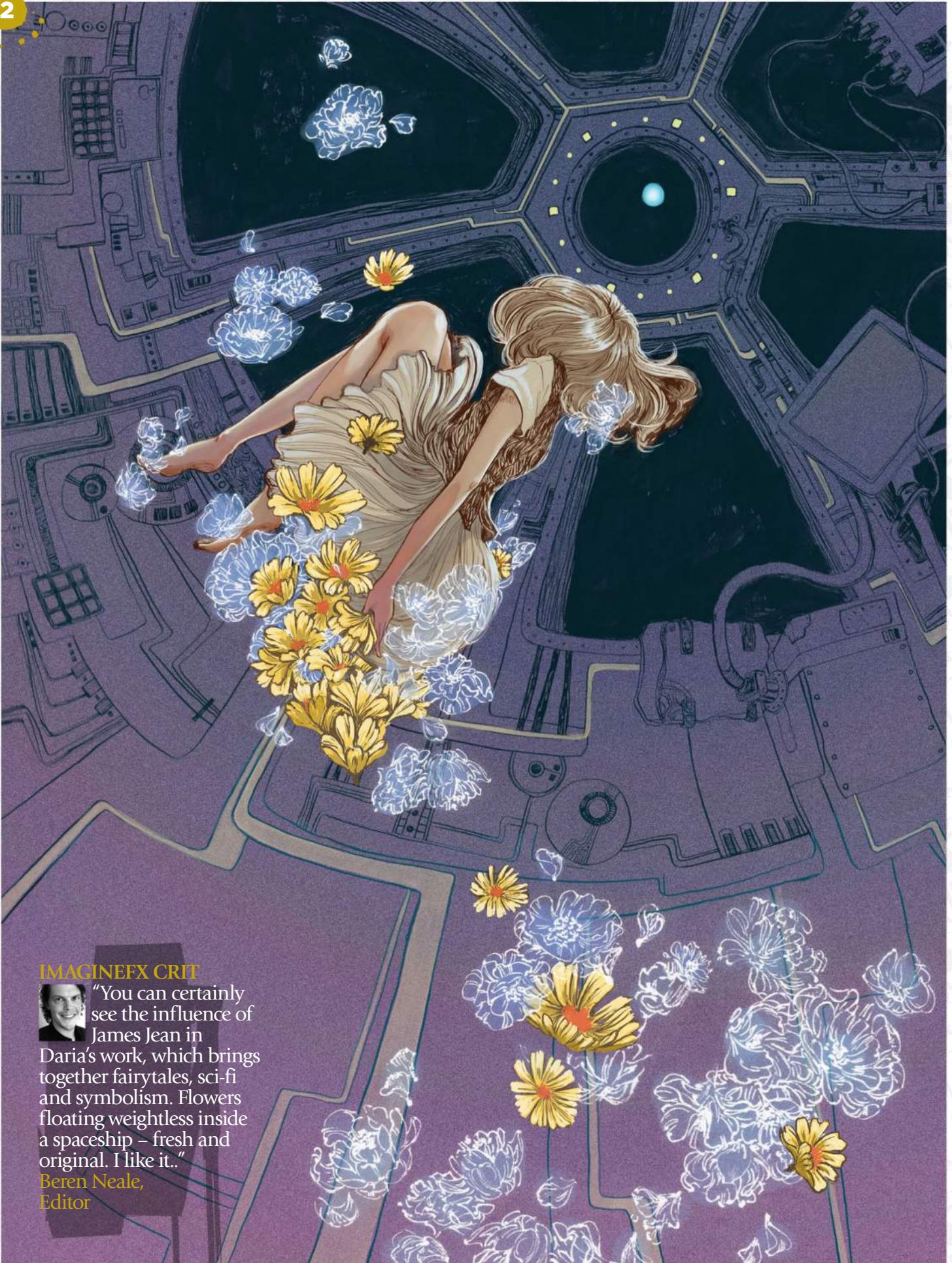
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2



**IMAGINEFX CRIT**



"You can certainly see the influence of James Jean in Daria's work, which brings together fairytales, sci-fi and symbolism. Flowers floating weightless inside a spaceship – fresh and original. I like it.."

**Beren Neale,**  
Editor

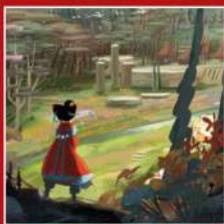
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# ImagineNation

AT THE CORE OF THE DIGITAL ART COMMUNITY

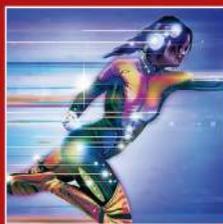
Aaron Miller's Figurative Illustration Workshops give him the opportunity to paint anatomy studies, feeding his fantasy art inspiration.





### ONCE UPON A TIME...

Chris Oatley believes magic happens when we share stories and that was his attitude behind his involvement with the IDEA Academy in Rome. **Page 24**



### KAPOW! KABOOM!

Design a superhero and help a very worthy cause. Screenwriter and visual effects geek Michael Papadakis needs your artwork to help save the world. **Page 25**



### WALL-TO-WALL ART

"I'm an image junkie floating in a sea of possibilities," says Dave Seeley, who surrounds himself with images, models and action figures in his studio. **Page 26**

# There's more to life drawing

**Naked truth** Artists have sought beauty in the human form since classical times, but is life drawing as popular as it was? **Garrick Webster** finds out...

From the embarrassing possibility that your girlfriend's mother poses nude for the local art group, to male models with nicknames like Tommy Salami, there are enough old clichés about life-drawing classes to keep a 1970s sitcom going ad infinitum. But are enough fantasy artists taking life drawing seriously these days? That's the question in this age of online self-tuition.

Online courses can be beneficial – that's not in dispute – but artists who do attend life-drawing sessions find they get more from working in the physical milieu, with a living model. It not only broadens their skills, it changes the way they see the world. And seeing the world differently is itself a core skill if you want to become a top-flight fantasy artist.

## HOW THE LIGHT FALLS



Patrick J Jones is an illustrator, author and university lecturer based in Australia, with lots of life-drawing experience. His latest book, *The Anatomy of*



These 20-minute poses painted by Andrew Theophilopoulos put the emphasis on instinctive and gestural strokes, giving the paintings a sense of life.

**“By learning gestural drawing you can become a better artist”**

Style, was published recently and covers the topic in detail. For him, sitting in front of a model and observing how the light falls on them is a very different experience from using online references. “Life drawing has taught me to quickly see and draw landmarks in the anatomy – such as the hip crest highlight and the shadow of the tenth rib,” Patrick points out.

Time pressures – because your model won't pose forever – force you to use your instincts. By learning gestural drawing you can become a better artist. “Photos give us too much time to labour and become confused over unimportant detail. Photos also have camera lens distortion. I can always tell if someone has traced a photo,” continues Patrick. ➔



Patrick J Jones works with a life model in his studio, making close observations on anatomical structure, in the flesh.

## INDUSTRY INSIGHT ANDREW THEOPHILOPOULOS

*The illustrator and educator on how life-drawing influences him*

### What kind of illustrations do you enjoy creating?

Science and human exploration have been consistent influences in my work and I most enjoy studying ancient and alien life. My dream job is to be the resident artist on the Starship Enterprise.

### When teaching at Ringling, what are your students' most common problems?

My students have a brutal sense of failure when their life drawings aren't accurate to reality, as though the goal of their art was to create photo realism, or that failure means you're not learning.

### What advice do you give?

I tell them the goal is to create a beautiful image within the boundaries of your canvas: eventually, the anatomy, structure, light, colour and mood will find its way in. Pushing through each failure will reveal the next step in your journey. Failed attempts are lessons learned.

### What do you draw with?

When I was in school, I was the first and only kid in the classroom with a tablet and an interest in Photoshop painting. Many of my teachers would frown upon digital art because they didn't yet understand the value of its ease of use. Now, I freely switch between oil paint and Photoshop.

### How can we benefit from doing life drawing?

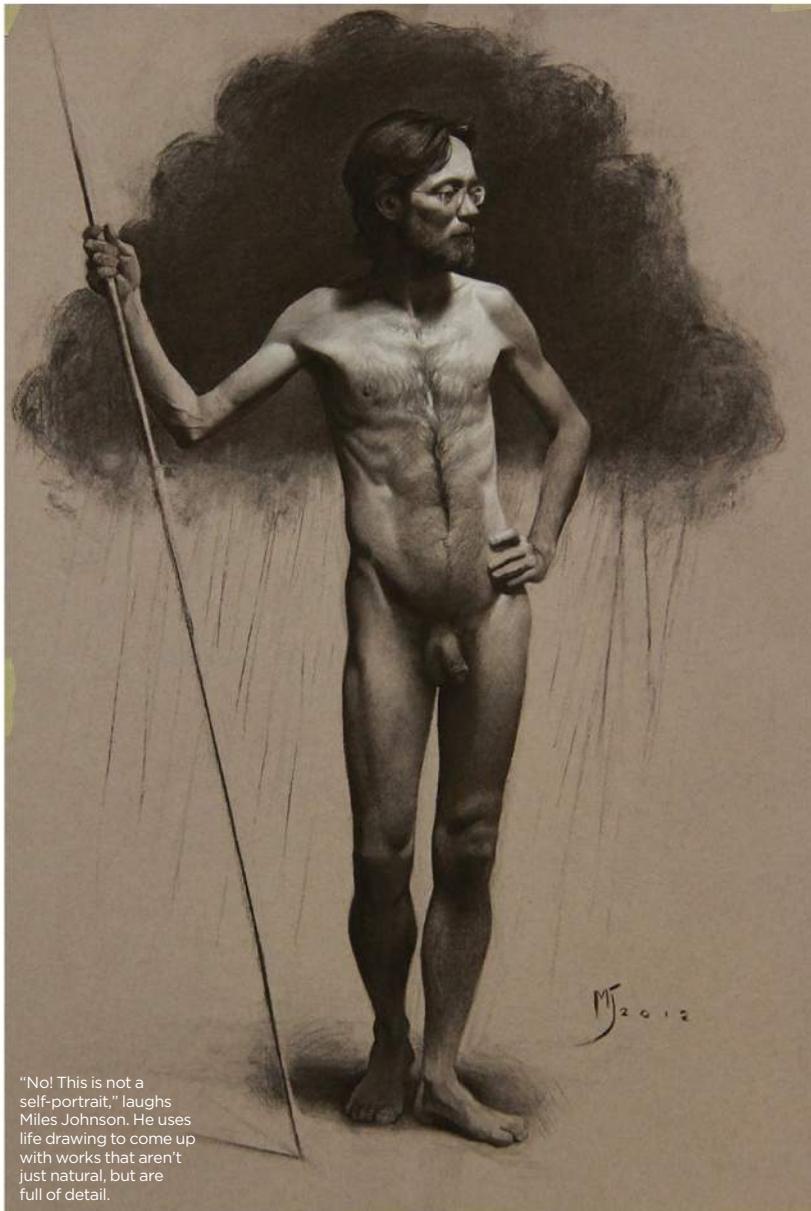
No two figure models are alike, no two lighting scenarios are the same. Studying from life will help you realise there isn't a formula to reality – only chaos. If you can't hear the breath of a character or smell its bizarre fragrance, your art may be following a formula.



Conceptual artist Andrew creates artwork for film, games and television, as well as the publishing industry.

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





"No! This is not a self-portrait," laughs Miles Johnson. He uses life drawing to come up with works that aren't just natural, but are full of detail.

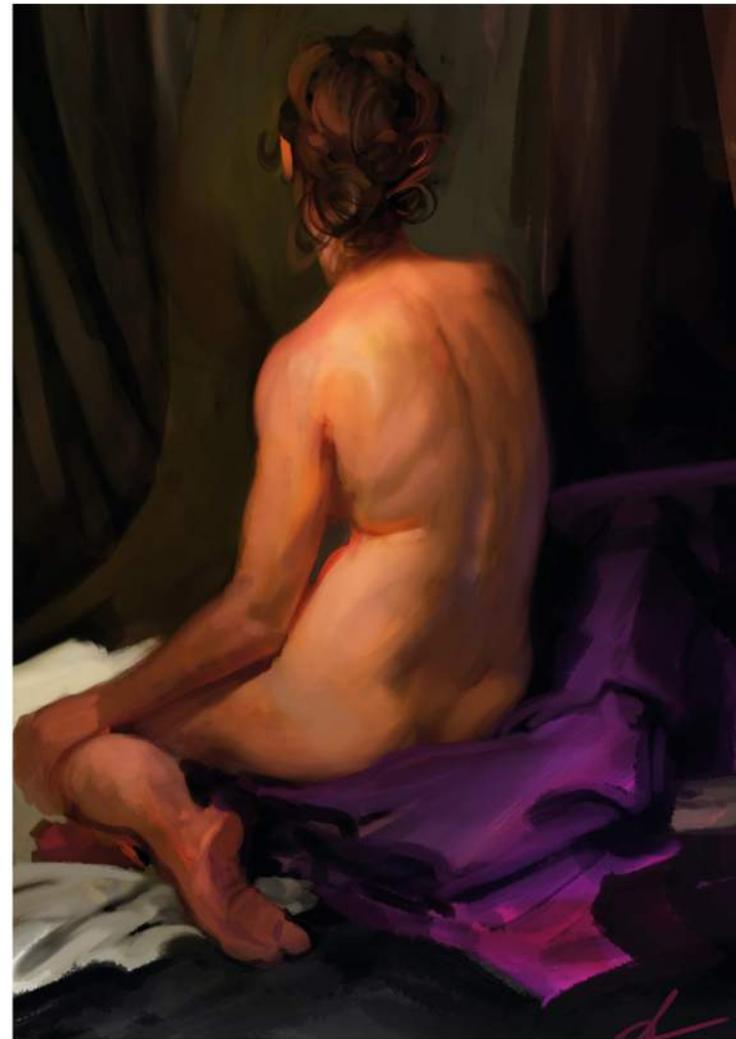


In Sarasota, Florida, **Andrew Theophilopoulos** teaches at the Ringling College of Art and Design, and recently wrapped up a 25-painting solo exhibition. He laments the fact that local drawing classes are getting harder to find. "Unfortunately, it's very tough to afford figure models multiple times a week. Ringling will actually be cancelling its much-loved figure-drawing club because of a lack of interest," says Andrew. "I've been attending the Ringling classes since I was in high school and now it's doomed due to a funding issue."

Plenty of life-drawing courses can still be found around the world. In New York, a two-hour weeknight session at Drawing New York is \$15, or an eight-session course at the National Academy School of Fine Arts for \$325. In London, City Academy offers life-drawing classes starting at £69 for a full day, and Life Drawing Manchester has two-hour sessions for £10 (£8 for students).

Increased online learning may be one factor, but students and young artists may no longer have the funds or time to justify classes. Even professional artists such as **Aaron Miller**, based in Chicago, find there's pressure to work from photos rather than a model. "Times have changed and illustrators don't have the resources they once did. The client's demands for speed and cheaper fees have made the processes of the past almost impossible. Yet, I still work from a model for almost every illustration," he says.

Like Aaron, the Sweden-based artist **Miles Johnston** wishes he had more time for figure drawing. In between teaching at the Swedish Academy of Realist Art and creating his own beautifully rendered fantasy art prints, he does quick studies to keep things ticking over. It's become a Zen-like ritual for him. Miles calls it "visual mindfulness": becoming



Capturing the mood as well as the anatomy, **Andrew Theophilopoulos** wishes there were more opportunities to do real life drawing.

conscious of how your brain renders the world around you.

He explains: "A camera captures light in a very specific way, which isn't exactly the same as how we perceive the world moment to moment. Understanding these differences can give your work an added sense of realism."

"Also, you have the ability to move around your subject and really figure out the form, along with practically unlimited resolution compared to a photo or a computer."

## FANTASY REALISM

Because subjects are imaginary by definition, there's always the temptation to dismiss the real world when creating fantasy art. Crucially, however, your work still needs to be believable and have its roots in the real world, and that's something that life-drawing skills deliver. Patrick J Jones loves painting mermaids because he can practise depicting the female form, and because they're alluring, romantic, mysterious and deadly.

Patrick recommends extending your anatomical work to animals and exploring new possibilities. "Understanding that most animals share some human anatomy, such as the scapula [shoulder blade], makes



The Story Design Conference will be held in Rome, and here's the key artwork as painted by Jenn Ely, who took visual cues from the Eternal City.



## The secret to storytelling

**Show and tell** Chris Oatley has joined forces with Rome's IDEA Academy to present The Story Design Conference – a week-long event where you can mingle with the pros



**While bonding over Italian cuisine with children's book illustrator Valerio Fabbretti, Chris Oatley discovered IDEA Academy in Rome,**

**which, he says, has "a relentless passion for its students' well-being and success, and a very collaborative approach to teaching." After Skyping with the team at IDEA, Chris was asked to fly out to Rome and do a workshop or panel, planting the seed for The Story Design Conference.**

Chris wanted his event to be unique: "I started thinking about what's not out there," he says. "I didn't want to create a situation where the rhythm of the conference was to sit quietly and watch famous artists be awesome. I wanted to create something that was collaborative and personal. I wanted a small venue: not this huge auditorium with thunderous applause, but rather a very personal space where magic can happen."

Chris believes the magic happens when we share our stories, so it was only natural

that the Rome-based event should tackle the difficult task of storytelling.

How do you create a story, visually? Whether it's The Legend of Zelda or The Lord of the Rings, dramatic stories ignite imaginations. "I almost guarantee you that most people enter this industry because of one of those great visual stories," says Chris,

**“I didn't want to create a situation where the rhythm of the conference was to sit and watch artists be awesome”**

As well as speaking to attendees, Claire Keane will be painting in pastels – something she's well known for.

"I recently realised that if I don't have to do things solo, I don't want to," he continues. "I'm very collaborative." So Chris brought a few other industry experts on board to create his "dream team", beginning with screenwriter and director, Brian McDonald. "For those of you who don't know, when Pixar gets stuck, he's the guy they call." Completing Chris' lecturer list are Disney's Claire Keane and DreamWorks' Jenn Ely.

The conference will cover everything from the practical nuts and bolts of your workflow to how to inspire your creativity. Claire's presentation will cover her speciality: creating believable characters, and she'll also be demonstrating her pastel skills. Jenn will be explaining colour scripts and providing a talk with Chris about discovering your own unique visual voice, addressing the question of specialisation and versatility. Brian, meanwhile, will tackle the integration



Jenn Ely believes that art truly comes alive when knowledge and technique collide with risk.

of production design and character development: how the two can relate and how you can tell stories about your characters through production design.

If that's not enough, the team will be on hand to review your portfolio and guide your personal projects. Generate your ideas throughout the week, get your creative juices flowing while at the conference and you have the ability to bounce them off the experts. "It's going to be empowering and inspiring, but also very practical," says Chris.

The Story Design Conference runs from 27 September to 2 October, in Rome, Italy. Check out <http://ifxm.ag/story-rome> for more information and tickets.





Hero templates make it easier for people to enter their ideas.

# Up, up and away!

**Caped crusaders** Create a secret identity and help support world-saving foundations with the Design a Superhero charity fundraiser



**Screenwriter and self-confessed visual effects geek Michael Papadakis is on a mission to make the planet a better place with his Design a**

**Superhero charity drive, and he needs your artwork to help save the world.**

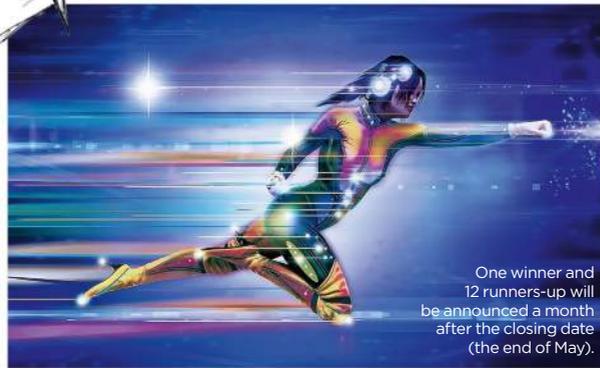
"I always admired the strength, love and compassion my mother had for others," Michael says when explaining the spark behind the project. Dedicated to her memory, Michael wants to inspire other

people to take positive action. "Only a hero dares to put his hand into darkness, to bring another into the light," he adds.

"The initial idea was to 'be a superhero' and as a prize costume designers would have brought the winner's vision to life," says Michael. However, to make the contest easier to enter, this was simplified into a character design competition.

With such a clear focus, it's a surprise to learn that the project is Michael's first professional fundraising experience, especially considering who'll be judging the entries. "We'll be working closely with Emmy award-winning costume designer Poli Kyriacou (X-Men: First Class), plus film producer and VFX editor Howard Berry (Kick-Ass, Sherlock Holmes and Scott Pilgrim vs. the World)," he reveals.

The judges are looking for original ideas rather than the best artistic ability. As well as supporting worthy causes such as the Superhero Foundation, the overall winner will receive 10 per cent of the money raised. Hopeful heroes can learn more by visiting <http://ifxm.ag/super-costume>.



One winner and 12 runners-up will be announced a month after the closing date (the end of May).

# The power of thought

**Mind bender** Find out why Derick Tsai has leapt into uncharted territory with his ambitious new animation project, The Lost Titan



**Having grown up with the likes of He-Man and Thundercats, Derick Tsai has a deep emotional attachment to animation. His creative agency, Magnus Rex, has worked for an impressive catalogue of clients, but he thought it was about time the company went all out and created for itself.**

The concept for The Lost Titan started with a simple premise. What if the location of the only weapon that can save the world was hidden inside the mind of an amnesiac?

"That setup lent itself to an epic search that takes place across multiple planes of existence, from the depths of the human mind to the furthest reaches of the physical world," Derick says. "Our hero has to enter her broken memories to learn where the pieces of the weapon are located and then go into the physical world to find them."

The aesthetic of the series is a "seamless blend of magic and technology called MagiTek," he continues. "Imagine the soul of a fallen warrior as the operating system for a robotic samurai or a chase through the



This promo poster highlights the heroine's quest into the realm of her broken memories.

clouds on mechanised stallions powered by fire spirits, and you'll start to get the idea."

The team are hoping to take the story further and create a franchise across multiple formats, and are talking to various agencies and producers, so watch this space. And visit [www.magnusrex.com](http://www.magnusrex.com) to see more of Magnus Rex's projects.

The Lost Titan combines aspects of psychological dramas like Inception with the thrill of Indiana Jones.



Blackreign is season one's main antagonist, who's also after the pieces of the weapon.



Small art works by friends and colleagues looking for a spot to hang; an elusive project that I'm perpetually looking forward to!

My euro-comics and graphic novels collection, banished to the studio until I finish building a mahogany book cabinet.



Envelopes for taxable receipts waiting to play their part in Tax Hell, playing annually in the first two weeks of April.

Unpaid bills to remind me to keep working, when other motivations don't seem to do the trick.

A sloped drawing table, cabinet, book shelf on heavy duty casters.

## Dave Seeley

**Critical mass** The Boston-based artist loves to surround himself with images, models and action figures. It's a maelstrom of inspiration



Since college, I've surrounded myself with walls papered in art, magazine pages and postcards. I've felt most at

home when barraged by hundreds (or thousands) of images, all competing for my attention in a steady din. I'm an image junkie floating in a sea of possibilities.

In addition to the pictures, models and action figures, over the years I've been lucky

to be able to collect small artworks from friends and colleagues, which surround me while I work. I think of them as a physical manifestation of their influences on me.

My studio is set up at the back of my loft residence in Boston, Massachusetts. When I jumped careers from architect to illustrator in the mid 1990s, I bought my first Mac. Over the next few years, it became an integral part of my process, so it makes sense that my studio is built around my computer

cockpit, while giving me the option to bust back into paint-slinging when it suits.

I tend to pile up things I don't know where else to put, so there's very little horizontal surface left to use. Typically, my desks will be cleared only when I need them for a project, but I do eventually get to some critical mass, and a (roughly bi-annual) purge.

Most of the time the maelstrom is contained in my densely packed 13x14ft studio. But I transform the living-room space

Big-ass Homasote-sheathed sloped wall easel, hinged at the top to access storage behind. It's 6x8ft, but the bottom tray flips in flush for floor standing canvases. Yup, I like to build stuff.



ImagineFX magazine on (not in) a trash can. No guilt by association inferred, but a small pedestal-like surface on which to delay its final destination.

A silver saxophone fragment - because it's gorgeous. I love beautifully made objects in various states of neglected natural decay.

at the other end of my loft into a photo studio occasionally, when my very patient wife is at her day job. I like to walk her to work in the morning as a way to touch base and start my working day. If I didn't need to interface with other people, I'd probably sleep till noon and work well into the night.

**Dave derailed his career as an award-winning architect to have more fun making images. Visit [www.daveseeley.com](http://www.daveseeley.com) to see his gallery of book art, film and video game concepts, and more.**



I fell in love with high-end genre statuary and sometimes get lucky when clients I'm working for send them to me for reference use... then let me keep them. There aren't a whole lot of perks in this job, but that is one of the best.

My main studio is the back portion of a downtown Boston loft space. The front of the loft is our living room and I have two roll-down nine-foot-wide backdrops for photographing models against.



# 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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## Bring us Tony D

I've always been a fan of Arthur Rackham and I know he's influenced loads of fantasy artists, such as Brian Froud. One that I hadn't come across before is Tony DiTerlizzi, whom you interviewed in your April 2015 issue. I'd love to learn more about how he works and what materials he uses. His Dungeons & Dragons work is amazing, not to mention The Spiderwick Chronicles.

**Bill Roberts-Cavanagh, via email**

**Beren replies:** I agree Bill, and I could stare at the Goblin Market by Arthur Rackham at least until my tea has gone cold. Tony DiTerlizzi is a great shout as a modern-day Rackham and we're in discussions with him as I type. We're hoping to bring you a look at how he creates creatures using natural media very soon.

## Problem solved

Thank you very much for spending time solving my problem. I received an email from Future Publishing's customer service and they confirmed that a new copy of the February issue has been sent to me. It's very kind of you, because I don't know if the original issue wasn't sent, or if it was lost in the post in France or the UK. Keep up the good work. Your magazine is really great and there's nothing like it in France.

**Erik Tesson, via email**

**Beren replies:** Bonjour, Erik. That's no problem and I'm really glad you are loving the mag now that your copy has arrived. Occasionally these things happen, so if you're a subscriber and your issue fails to arrive, please simply email [contact@myfavouritemagazines.co.uk](mailto:contact@myfavouritemagazines.co.uk) and one of our team will look into it. Keep in mind that if you live outside the UK it can take a bit longer for the magazine to reach you. If you see a new issue featured on our Facebook page or on Twitter, do give it a bit of time before making an enquiry. Your mag could still be in transit.



We interviewed "modern-day Rackham" Tony DiTerlizzi in issue 120.



**MISSED OUR BLACK AND WHITE ISSUE?** Turn to page 52 for how to get hold of it, and other recent editions, too!



Emma is a fan of our Sketchbooks series and loves reading the thought processes behind artists' work.

## Sketchbook love

This is just a quick one to say that as always your magazine is the most awesome thing on the shelves. I always get excited by a new issue, but the Sketchbooks series is the best thing ever! I absolutely love the thinking behind an artist's work. It's often more fascinating that the actual finished artwork. I just brought Sketchbooks Volume 3 today and was not disappointed. Every page is awash with inspiring sketches and obscurities from the artists' minds. Thank you for putting together such lovely volumes. I hope they never stop!

**Emma Sedgwick, via email**

**Beren replies:** Wow. Thanks Emma. Unstoppable awesomeness is something we try to specialise in. The Sketchbook pages in ImagineFX are always special and this issue we've taken a close look at the sublime character work of Patxi Pelaez on page 58, while next month we've got Rodney Matthews lined up for you. Any other readers out there who want to devour some more doodling and draughting wonderfulness can get hold of Sketchbooks Vol 3 at <http://ifxm.ag/svol3>.

## Equality revisited

Sometime last year someone wrote in to point out that the gender split of artists featured in ImagineFX favoured men. I hadn't really noticed before that, but I'm studying art and it got me thinking about the issue and paying more attention to who's in the magazine whenever I buy a copy. It seems there are still more men in the magazine than women, but if you look at other creative magazines I think ImagineFX is actually ahead when it comes to equality. For me it's not as much of an issue as it used to be. I wonder what other readers think?

**Caroline Prinz, via email**

**Beren replies:** Thanks Caroline. Our guiding principle is the quality of the art, and always has been. However, we're certainly aware of the issue of gender equality in the magazine and the industry in general. What excites us is discovering fantastic new artists no matter where they're from or what their gender or lifestyle choices are. That's how it should be, right?



Your art news that's grabbed our attention



**Shannon Rose**  
**@SacrinxiaArt**

"Sorrow Falls new art"



**Alexander Johanson**  
**@AJohanson89**

"Latest work!!... Aggron on the beach!!"



**Efrain Romero**  
**@efrainarte**

"So you like it?"



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# Artist Q&A

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**The NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX panel**

**John Stanko**  
John is a designer and art director whose clients have included TOR Books, Wizards of the Coast and Blizzard. He teaches graphic design at the University of South Florida.  
[www.stankoillustration.com](http://www.stankoillustration.com)

**Tom Fox**  
Tom is a freelance concept artist living in England and working on films and video games. Previous clients include Universal Studios and Aardman Animations.  
[www.instagram.com/tomfoxdraws](http://www.instagram.com/tomfoxdraws)

**Mike Corriero**  
US-based Mike has 12 years' experience as a freelance illustrator and concept artist for the entertainment industries. Creature design is his speciality.  
[www.mikecorriero.com](http://www.mikecorriero.com)

**Allison Theus**  
Allison is a concept artist and illustrator living in Austin, Texas, who works primarily in the video games industry and specialises in producing original creature designs.  
<http://ifxm.ag/a-theus>

**Tom Foster**  
Tom is a professional comic book artist, best known for his work on 2000 AD and Judge Dredd Magazine. Between assignments, he writes and performs stand-up comedy.  
[www.tomfoster.deviantart.com](http://www.tomfoster.deviantart.com)

## Question

How can I depict the face of a classic lantern-jawed hero?

*Danielle Law, England*

## Answer

John replies



Making a male face appear heroic involves much more than just capturing the steely look of determination in their eye. Facial structures are especially important tools for creating the visual bearing of a character, and thus strengthen their backstory.

The angles in the face should be sharp and clear, with little to no soft edges. The eyes should be narrow, and slightly smaller than normal. The nose should be on the smaller side, but chiselled. The character's cheek bones should be pronounced, and the cheeks themselves should be tight on the face. The chin should be slightly larger than normal. Finally, and most importantly, the hero's jawline should be boxy with clearly defined sharp edges.

The colour tones of the face should be slightly warm on the nose, with cool, bluish tones on the chin. Avoid the use of vibrant skin or lip colours to help prevent the character from appearing flushed or flustered. In addition, simple tricks such as drawing the character at an angle from which the viewer is placed slightly below them, adds to the impression that they're someone of importance, and should be looked up to.



## Artist's secret

USING LAYER EFFECTS FOR TONE  
Layer effects such as Overlay, Multiply or Screen can be a powerful tool to create either warm or cool skin tones after a face has been painted. It works a lot like glazing does in traditional oil painting.



Even though I've used every heroic facial feature in the book, in most cases just a few of them will help achieve the results you want.

## 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!

## Step-by-step: How to use classic heroic features



**1** Start with the sketch and be sure to take your time to get the sketch right. Because this is a masked hero, it's important that he has a strong jawline. I also add the chiselled nose, strong cheek bones and classic cleft to the chin. I give the eyes a bit of a squint, adding to his serious expression.



**2** Next, paint in all the skin tones. At first, I don't worry too much about the colour because I'm mostly concerned with getting the local values right. Once all the skin tones are in using Photoshop's layer effects, I add cooler tones to the jaw line and a warmer tone to the nose area. Be careful not to oversaturate at this stage.

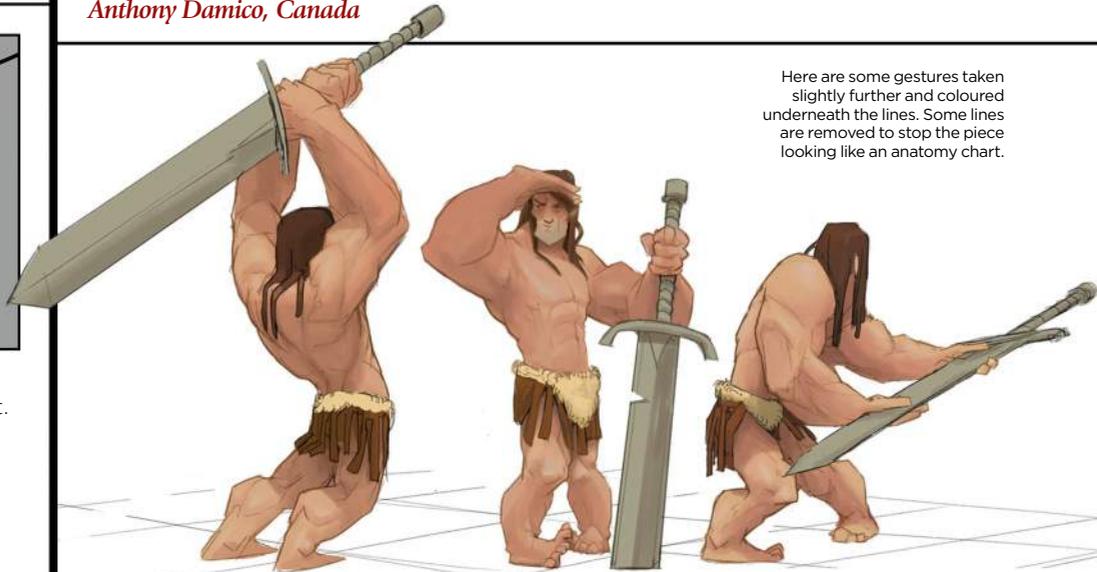


**3** Finally, add the mask and the hat. Apply the shadows where the face and mask meet, and ensure the shadow isn't even. There are going to be places where the mask is tight to the face and other areas where it's not. Furthermore, masks are a different material than skin and shouldn't be painted with the same value range.

## Question

Can you explain how to marry my anatomy knowledge with character gestures?

Anthony Damico, Canada



Here are some gestures taken slightly further and coloured underneath the lines. Some lines are removed to stop the piece looking like an anatomy chart.

## Answer

Tom Fox replies

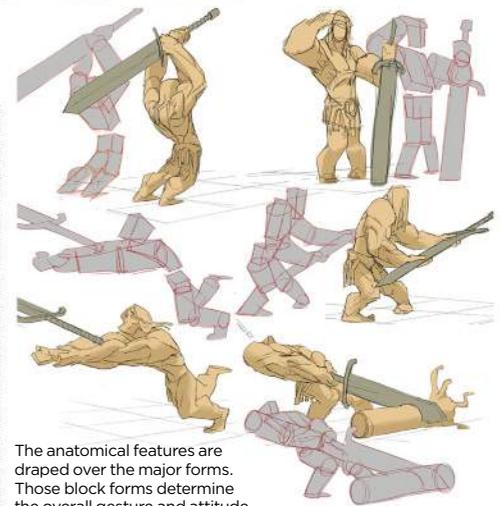


I want to use my own character concept here, going with something that will show off the anatomy that this issue of ImagineFX is focusing on. In the end I settle on a barbarian.

My process for gestures is three-fold. First, I lay down a floor grid to establish perspective and eye level, and I block in major forms of the figure and rough proportions. These include the torso and hips, the head and limbs. This is the most important part of the whole drawing, because if you finalise the pose at this stage, then the rest is just detailing.

Important things to remember include trying to include a twist between the torso and hips, using the feet and hands to reflect the attitude of the gesture, and finally, get into the pose and act it out yourself. This is possibly the most useful advice I ever received. All the great animators do it, so you should, too.

Second, lay over the anatomy and details such as clothing and weapons. You can see both stages in my work in-progress image. Over the years you develop a sense of how these forms



The anatomical features are draped over the major forms. Those block forms determine the overall gesture and attitude.

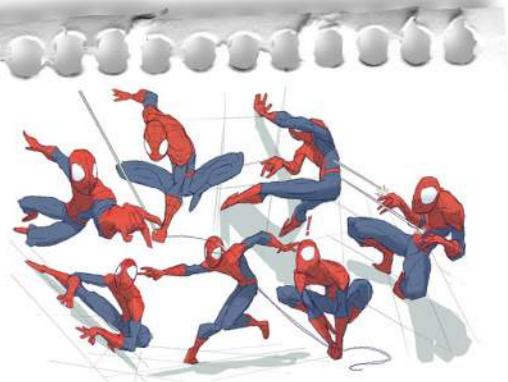
draped over the block forms that you've already drawn in the first stage.

Finally, I take my anatomy chart and paint over it. This is probably the most time-consuming stage, yet plays the smallest part in determining whether it's an interesting piece or not. A well-painted model in a stiff or boring pose will always lack visual interest.

## Artist's secret

WHAT'S IN THE BOX?

These Spider-Man gestures started out as simple box forms. If the box gesture hasn't perfectly captured the attitude of the character that you have in mind, then you simply start again without investing much time. It's an efficient working process that's helped me many times in the past.



## Question

### Help me show action with twisting muscles, like punching

Richard Boileau, Canada



## Answer

### John replies



When illustrating a character in action, it's important that the action be both believable and energetic. Many artists make the mistake of showing all the character's action moving in just one direction, which ends up looking flat and stiff. Others put all their focus on just the one part of the body doing the action, without regard to the natural responsive motion required by the rest of the body.

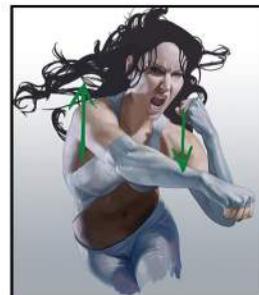
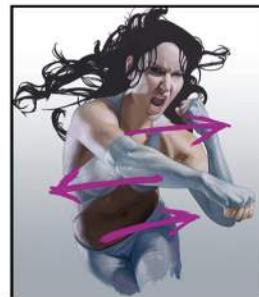
When any part of the body is acting in one direction, another part of the body naturally moves in the opposite direction. This serves to strengthen the action and keep the body in balance. Illustrating this is essential for an action to look both natural and energetic.

Artists can be more successful in their understanding of the body's motion, actions and reactions by studying the movements of athletes and gymnasts.



### Artist's secret

**DON'T FORGET ABOUT THE HAIR**  
Don't let hair be an afterthought, especially when trying to show action. Hair can be a great tool to aid in action scenes and general composition. Even short hair can be used to help make a figure stand out from a background.



As her shoulder moves up, the opposite shoulder moves down. As her punch angles down, her hips angle up. This can create plenty of action.

## Step-by-step: Illustrating a character in action



**1** Working out the action with a stick figure can enable you to see the overall action. This saves a lot of time and can help to solve any problems early in the drawing. The key here is to have as many different elements moving in opposite direction, but also have it look natural. Using basic lines, I indicate where the head, shoulders, hips, and so on are going to be.



**2** I flesh out the drawing, adding all the details. As she punches her fist forward in one direction, her opposite leg is thrusts back and the opposite arm and hand curl back towards her in a pendulum of motion, strengthening the punch. One shoulder is twisting forward, so the other is naturally back. While her head is moving in one direction, her hair flows in the opposite direction.

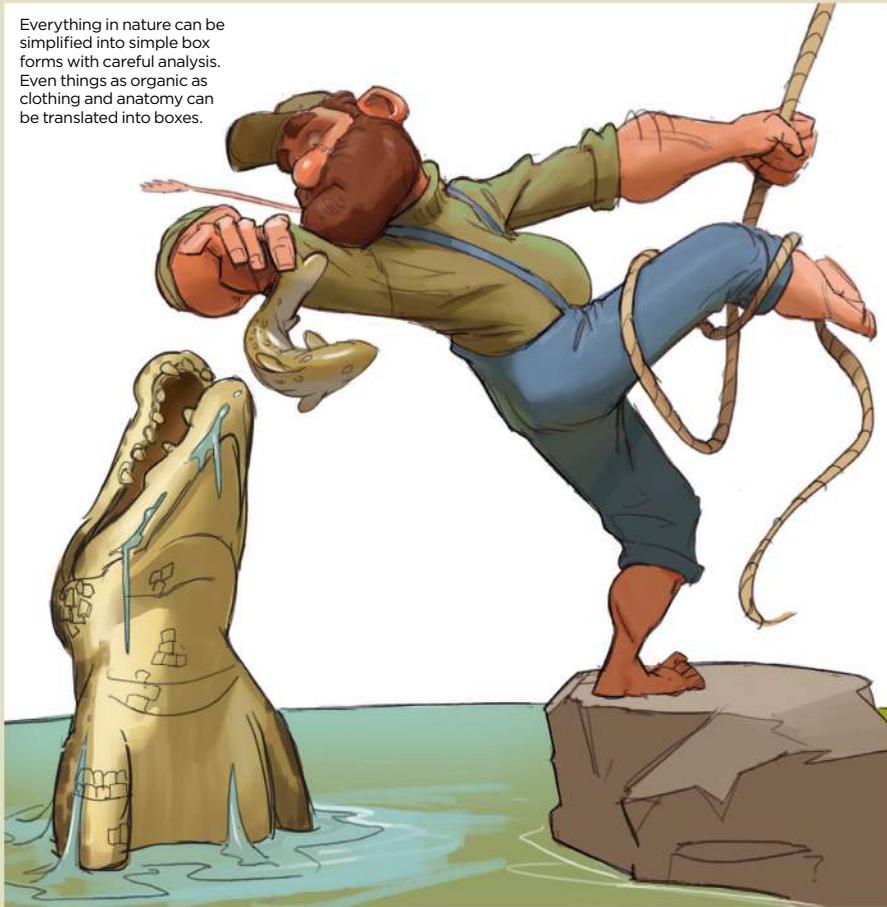


**3** I start adding skin tone, but pay extra attention to the shadows. Using shadows can help to add motion and energy to the character. For example, her lower torso and midriff are all in shadow, helping to emphasise that she's leaning forward into the punch. Furthermore, her punching arm crosses over the shadow, making it visually stand out from her torso.



**4** Finally, I paint the clothing and the hair. When adding clothes, remember that they should react to the motion of the figure. In many respects the clothing will react just like the muscles of the body. In some cases it will be stretched tight, like on her arm. In other areas, it'll be loose or bunched up. The key is to make sure that the clothing accentuates the anatomy.

Everything in nature can be simplified into simple box forms with careful analysis. Even things as organic as clothing and anatomy can be translated into boxes.



## Question

### Help me depict a figure who's off balance

*Klaudiusz Chmielewski, England*

## Answer

### Tom Fox replies

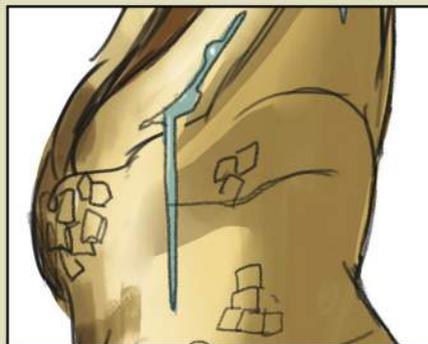


With a bit of practice, you can control not just if the figure is balanced, but how unbalanced you want them to be.

First, draw the ground plane, in the form of a grid, and the horizon line to establish eye level. Now draw the major masses as boxes – the torso and hips – and get them leaning to one side. If you can get some twist between those two, then that's even better. Once the ground and boxes are blocked in, the figure should already appear off-balance, without even having drawn the limbs. You can see these highlighted in my first process image.

Next, draw the legs. Draw a line down from the boxes to the floor. Now choose where you want the feet to be. If you draw them at a point directly below the torso, it'll add stability to the figure. The further you place the feet from the point below the torso, the more off-balance the pose will become. Imagine where the weight is distributed. Posing yourself is the best way to imagine this. Establish a clear lean and you're off to a great start.

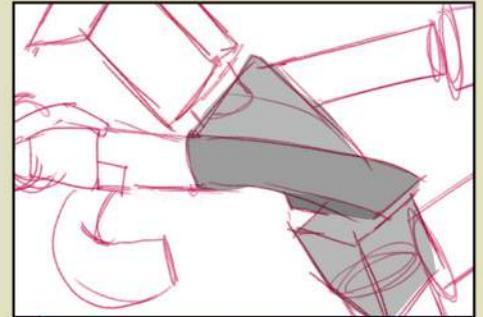
Finally, add the arms as cylinders and you've blocked out an off-balance gesture. Job done.



There's no need to overcomplicate your colouring. Flat colours with just two or three values to describe the values will do. Then just add highlights to show differences in material.

## Step-by-step:

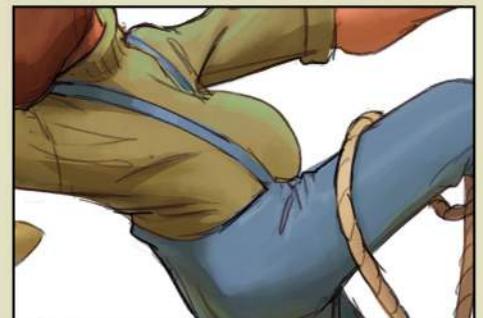
### Paint a character in a predicament



**1** Boxes for torso and hips establish the gesture and rough proportions. This gesture includes a nice twist in the torso, between the hips and the mass of the chest. Although the pelvis and ribcage don't bend, don't forget to keep these forms quite flexible, because they represent the masses of the body, not the bones.



**2** Now for the anatomy and detailing. Reduce the opacity of the box forms and draw straight over the top. Always try the pose yourself and imagine yourself in that position. What attitude does the pose suggest? Would legs turn inwards or out? The more you inhabit your character, the more dynamic your gestures will be.



**3** Fill the area under the lines to give a silhouette as a base layer, then paint flat colours on top of this base. Try to be delicate and use smaller jumps in value than you'd imagine. Subtle changes in value, hue or saturation can add a nice colour vibration, as you can see in the blue-ish highlights on the top of his jumper.



## Question

### What should I look out for when drawing a character running?

Brooke Sykes, Scotland

## Answer

Tom Foster replies



Depicting highly energised poses is about knowing what to emphasise for the greatest effect. A light exaggeration in muscle function in a few key areas can help me communicate my character's strain and adrenaline rush.

In the case of a running pose, my obvious first consideration is the legs. It's important to remember that, just as the biceps and triceps of the arm bulge noticeably when bent or straightened, so too do the flexors and extensors of the leg. When extended (as with the advancing leg here), the muscles on top of the thigh become more pronounced, as they tighten to pull the leg straight. When the leg is bent (as with the receding leg), the muscles on the back of the leg are the more built-up, because they're responsible for pulling the lower leg up to meet the thigh. This causes the overall shape of the thighs to change, becoming thicker at the upper end of whichever side is operating harder.

Meanwhile, the upper body will twist from one side to the other (thrusting the right arm forward, if the left leg is extended and vice versa), becoming most twisted when the leg is advancing farthest, as the movement of the arms serves to counter-balance that of the legs. I make sure balance is maintained between the advancing and receding portions of the body, otherwise the character will look as though they are about to fall flat on their face.



I find that a strong silhouette is a good starting point for my images, because it helps me make sure the proportions and anatomy work as a whole.



A good knowledge of anatomy can be invaluable in depicting action poses. The key lies in knowing which muscles to exaggerate and which to play down.

## Artist's secret

RENDERING MUSCLE FORMS CONVINCINGLY  
The purpose of understanding underlying anatomy is to relay the larger forms of the body as a whole. Those larger forms take prominence in the rendering, while shading and not every muscle will be delineated visibly.



I want to depict an ominous fantasy beast snarling with elements similar to bears and felines, but with a bit of a twist in its bone structure.

## Question

### How can I learn to paint a more impressive snarling beast?

Mads Kristiansen, Denmark

## Answer

Mike replies



Whenever you're painting a creature that's showing a facial reaction, it's important to understand what's happening beneath the surface. The skull of the creature is a good starting point to figuring out how the musculature is constructed. The muscles of the face and the topical surface anatomy are what cause the reaction you see. So when I'm painting an angry-looking creature, I'm taking into account all of the muscles and folds of skin building up as they pull back and contract. The skull

itself doesn't change in position if a creature is simply snarling with its teeth clenched.

The amount of wrinkles, muscles groups and skin pulled back revealing the teeth, gums and the overall expression are all based on the type of creature and the facial muscles. So when researching, I'll look at the anatomy of humans, bears, big cats, canines and other animals that are capable of making that snarling expression. It helps to understand why an animal snarls in the first place and which real-world animals usually exhibit such behaviour, too.

## Question

### How do I make a fantasy creature out of a real-life animal?

Luca Lund, Norway



Nail down your silhouette and shape and a rough colour pass prior to any real rendering, so you don't wind up doing needless work.

## Answer

Allison replies



If you're extrapolating an animal's characteristics out to that of a fantasy creature, it's good to know something of the animal's anatomy, its environment, how it moves and what the disposition might be.

I begin with a rough body shape and then work out a close-up of the head to set the tone of the creature. This not only helps me come up with a solid silhouette and flow, but also enables me to decide what cohesive elements I'm going to use throughout. I use the Lasso tool to lay out where markings are going to be, and to define key shapes amid busy patterns to help balance the design.

Remember that form and function are 1 intertwined. I ask myself questions as I work and look for answers in real animals so that I can include more interesting elements into the creation. I don't just throw legs on a snake to make a dragon: there's snake, monitor lizard and crested gecko in there.

Disposition is also integral to honing in on the body language that will bring your creature to life. A tense, slightly hunched and low to the ground animal could be ready to pounce or about to retreat depending on limb position, body angle and facial expression. A confident animal may be the opposite. Once you know what your creature is feeling, you can work out the best way to express that.

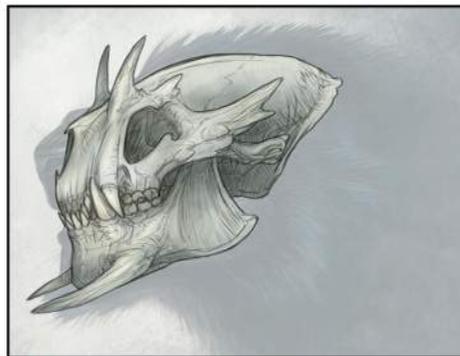


I try to replicate the feel of the original inspiration animal through pattern, anatomy choices, pose and personality.

## Step-by-step: Breaking down facial structure



**1** I almost always start with a line-work sketch when trying to figure out the anatomy. There's no point in getting too detailed when exploring the underlying structure, and the line-work will come in handy later on, once I begin the painting process. I just like to have fun at this point.



**2** Once the basic idea has been established, I'll lower the Opacity of the sketch or the final and produce a mock-up of what the skull might look like. This is important because it lays the ground work for the musculature, which provides the bulk of the topical anatomy.



**3** Working with both the sketch layer and the skull layer's Opacity lowered, I'll lay down the general outline and start to define the muscle groups. Look at musculature charts of similar animals like lions or bears, and figure out how the muscle would attach to your original skull.

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## Question

# Help me depict a beast about to pounce

Bailey Davis, England

## Answer

Allison replies



In tackling a crouching creature that's ready to pounce, you need to first know what animals you're basing the

creature off, understand what their muscle structure is like, and then be aware of the body language they exhibit when they're on the offensive. Most of the muscles found in humans are also found in other mammals – they're simply shaped a little differently. Remember, form dictates function and vice versa. If you understand comparative anatomy it can help if you physically act out the pose to see what muscles you're using, so you know what to accentuate in your piece.

Weighting and angles are hugely important in posing. Ask yourself how heavy is your creature, where is the tension, is it concentrated and focused or a little spread out? The chimera has the high ground here, so its head is down and forward, intent on you. Its weight is channelled into its right foreleg, which is bent to take some weight off the left arm, which is in turn extended. This isn't an optimal angle for a launch, but instead suggests that it's creeping forward. The left foot (unseen) steps down to the rock behind the body, while the right begins to pivot and is ready to step down after. The impression is not that it's going to pounce immediately (because the hind legs are the primary drive of the pounce and the weight is spread momentarily at the fore), but that it's simply moving into position to do so, and will launch itself once it's there.



I save almost all of the detail for the final rendering pass and instead ensure that pose, movement and landmarks are taken care of



I use a lot of Overlay, Hard Light and Multiply layers to build up lighting as I go, and work from large to small when I paint. Shapes first, detail second.

## Artist's secret

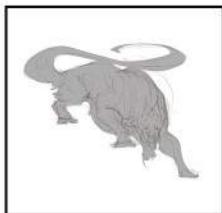
ILLUSTRATE FABULOUS HAIR



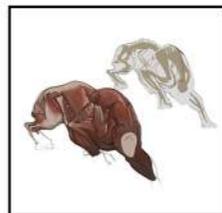
When painting either a creature's hair or fur, it's more efficient to work from large shapes to small. Don't fret over tiny details – focus instead on flow and how it impacts the overall silhouette.

## Step-by-step: Capture the moment before the beast attacks

**1** Start with a very rough gesture sketch and focus on the flow of the pose. I take the time to play with limb placement because this is essential for capturing a sense of movement. Don't be afraid to scrap what doesn't work and iterate on what does. For this example, I decide that I want the creature – a chimera – stepping down into position.



**2** When I start to work out the anatomy I do a quick sketch to figure out where all the joints should be, and more or less where I'd expect the bones to sit. Then I work out how the muscles would lay over it. Instead of agonising over 100 per cent accuracy, I focus on major landmarks that will influence lighting, texture and the depiction of weight.



**3** Now that the form is a little more refined I begin working out details such as toe and claw placement, and facial features. I also block in larger features such as hair and horns. Once I'm satisfied that the base sketch both solves the initial problem and contains all the information I'll need to proceed to the final, I begin rendering the beast.



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# Dan dos Santos

The American illustrator talks to **Gary Evans** about success in art, sacrifice and returning the favours he received on his way up



## HARRY DRESDEN

A private commission for a collector. "Unlike a book cover, there isn't a single story. Instead, I had 14 novels worth of inspiration to pull from."



By train, it's a long way from Shelton, Connecticut, to New York City. Dan dos Santos remembers the journey all too well. He couldn't get any drawing done – the train bumped around far too much for that. So he'd stay up all night painting and instead use the five-hour round trip to catch up on sleep.

While studying at the School of Visual Arts, Dan commuted between his parents' house in Connecticut and the college in Manhattan. He reveals that he was a serious student. He never left early, he never skipped class or handed a homework assignment in late.

"I do regret not enjoying my college years a little bit more," says the artist. "That lengthy commute definitely put a damper on the whole college experience. Tuition was prohibitively expensive for me, so I did everything I could to alleviate that financial burden – including making the decision to stay at home and commute in to school. That, plus the knowledge I was racking up exorbitant student debt in order to be there, made me very serious about school. Perhaps too serious.

**“The debt made me very serious about art school. Perhaps a little too serious”**

"But I managed to pay off my student loans much quicker than most. I'm now actually doing what I set out to do. The rest is history."

Dan graduated top of his class and quickly established himself as one of the most in-demand fantasy and science-fiction artists of his generation. He's best known for his book covers, but also works on comics, films and video games. The artist's impressive client list – Disney, Random House, Universal Studios – is matched by the many awards that he's won over the years.

While he had a bit of help on the way up, it's through personal sacrifice that Dan has achieved so many professional successes.



© Daw Books

#### ANGELIC ART

*Dan dos Santos has made a name for himself partly with his depictions of powerful women.*

He's at the stage of his career where he wants to not only build on this success, but to put something back by offering emerging artists similar support he received on the way up. He works as tirelessly today as he did as a student.

#### WELL COVERED

The assignment for a new book cover begins with the manuscript. Dan goes through the story and then produces three of four sketches based on what he's read – perhaps a portrait, an action shot and a romantic embrace.

The book's art director and marketing department look at his rough drawings and decide which is best suited to the title's target audience. They'll usually send a couple of revisions over with whichever sketch they choose for the cover.

To pay his bills, Dan has to do two book covers a month. With two decades' worth of experience, he has the trust of art directors he regularly works with, so at this stage he's left alone to work on

#### Artist PROFILE

##### Dan dos Santos



Dan dos Santos works as a freelance illustrator. One of the most in-demand fantasy artists of his generation, his clients include Disney, Tor Books, DC Comics, Universal Studios and Wizards of the Coast. He lives in Greensboro, North Carolina, with his wife and two children.

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

#### WHITE TRASH ZOMBIE

*The cover art for Diana Rowland's My Life As A White Trash Zombie. "Making it more sexy than scary was essential." The image earned Dan a Spectrum silver medal.*

the piece. The next time the team sees the drawing, it'll be finished.

"About half the time, the final art will need to be revised in some small way," he says, "usually something simple like, 'Can you lighten her face?' or 'Can you give her a tougher expression?' Because the painting is usually still wet at this point, and I don't want to scan the original a second time, I typically do these revisions digitally."

Dan works mainly with traditional materials. While he acknowledges the many advantages of working digitally – "faster turn around, no drying time, limitless revisions, and the ability to see multiple options incredibly quickly" – he sees one great disadvantage that tops them all. "The problem with digital lies in its perfection," he says. "The brush is always consistent, the gradation is always perfect and most effects are easily replicable from one artist to another. When you work traditionally, the hand of the individual artist plays a much greater role. The way a particular person draws a line is difficult to imitate. This offers more uniqueness to a work of art."

## HAPPY ACCIDENTS

"Accidents happen when you work traditionally. Those accidents lead to experimentation and unexpected new techniques. Working traditionally adds an X factor of sorts. Personally, I like having that variable tossed into the mix. It keeps things fun and exciting. Though the greatest asset to working traditionally is that I have a real, tangible work of art that will last generations."

Dan's first art teacher was his older sister. As kids, they'd work on huge murals together, drawn on rolls of butcher

© Tor Books

## THE FIRES OF HEAVEN

"Dan's talent for painting preternaturally beautiful women and his mastery of an intensely chromatic palette made him an easy choice," said Tor's Irene Gallo, on the cover art for the fifth book in Robert Jordan's *Wheel of Time* series.



## "WHY I QUIT PAINTING BALLERINAS"

A change of direction produced one of Dan's favourite paintings and put his career on the right path

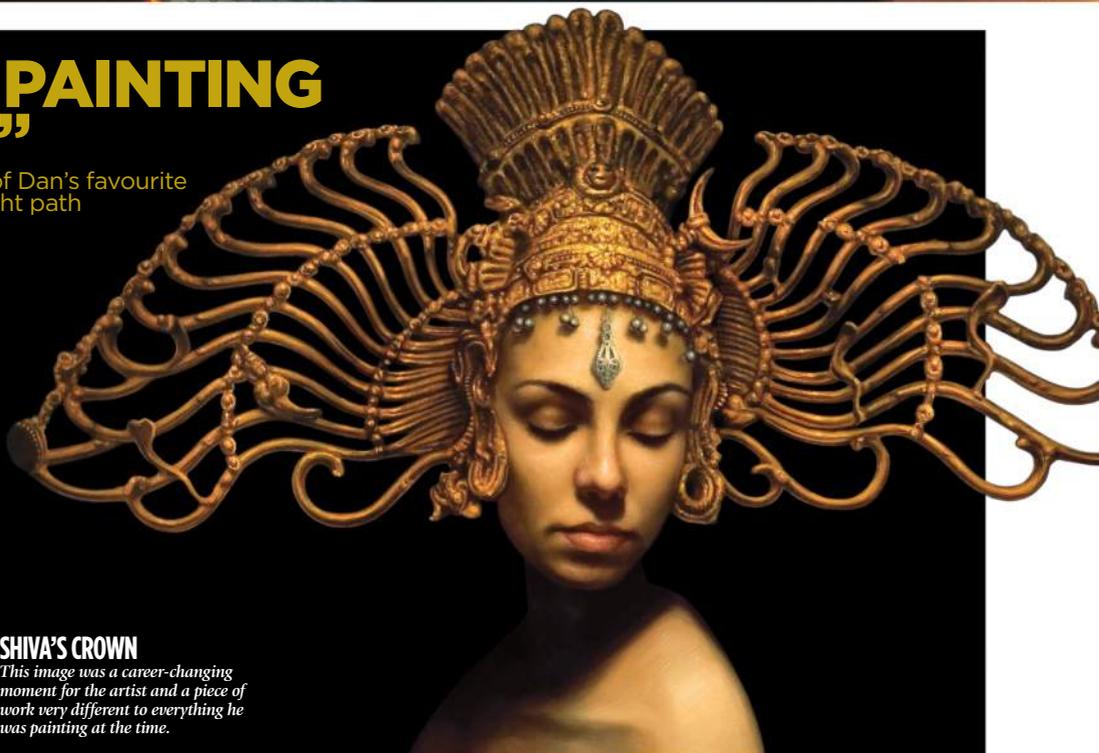
After graduating from the School of Visual Arts, Dan dos Santos was determined to make a living from art. "I did advertising work, portraits, private commissions, gallery work," he says. "Whatever would pay the bills." He wanted to be an illustrator, but these jobs covered the rent while he pursued the "right kind of clientele".

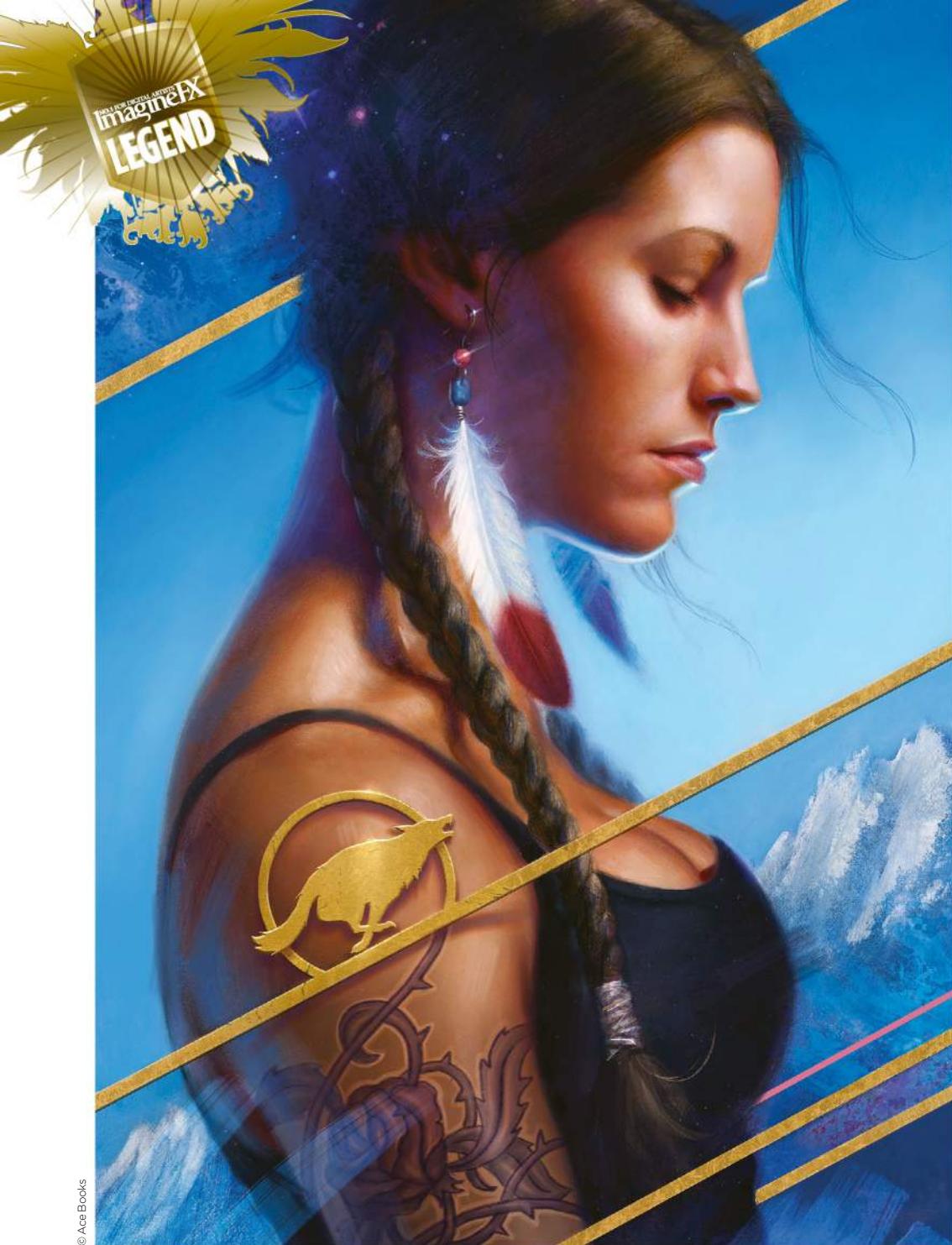
A year later he had found a niche and was selling paintings at a very good price. "They were mostly things like ballerinas. They were enjoyable, but not what I had set out to pursue. It would have been very easy to just keep painting ballerinas and cashing those cheques. But I realised the hole I was digging for myself and made a deliberate effort to turn in a different direction."

His next painting, *Shiva's Crown*, was, "The complete antithesis of the ballerinas". The ballerinas were "large, loose and done quite quickly". *Shiva's Crown* was much smaller, more detailed and took months. It's still a favourite. But more importantly, it helped Dan win his first illustration job.

## SHIVA'S CROWN

This image was a career-changing moment for the artist and a piece of work very different to everything he was painting at the time.





© Ace Books

### SHIFTING SHADOWS

For the novel *Shifting Shadows*, by Patricia Briggs. "The client specifically requested a close-up of Mercy's face – and that was it."

➤ paper which would take whole days to colour. Through a high school-sponsored internship, Careers in Art, he met his long-time mentor Steven H Stroud. From the acclaimed artist, Dan learned the basics of illustration and decided this was the subject he want to study at college.

To Dan, art is separate from the artist. For this reason, he tries not to take criticism personally. But if something prevents one of his images being read clearly, he wants to know about it. He strives to ensure his book covers are not only narratively accurate, but are eye-catching, legible from a great distance and stand out from other covers on the bookshelf. How the audience perceives his work is central to everything he does.

"I think about the reader a lot," he says. "Illustration, by its very definition, is about communication. If you're not

speaking to your audience, you're not doing your job as an illustrator. This form of art is not solely about self-expression, it's about telling a story your audience can understand."

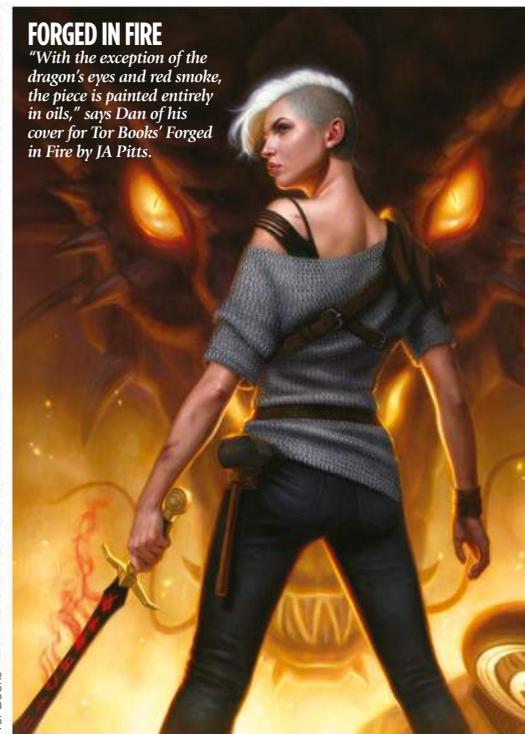
### CALL FOR CRITICISM

"The image was created for the audience's benefit, not mine. In fact, you might say that criticism is actually part of my artistic process. I correspond with other professional artists on an almost daily basis. I ask for criticism on all my work before calling a piece officially finished. It's these considerations for the audience that most separate a fine artist from a commercial illustrator."

After graduating the School of Visual Arts, Dan started by painting portraits out of his parent's basement, and soon made enough to set up a studio with Steven, his

### FORGED IN FIRE

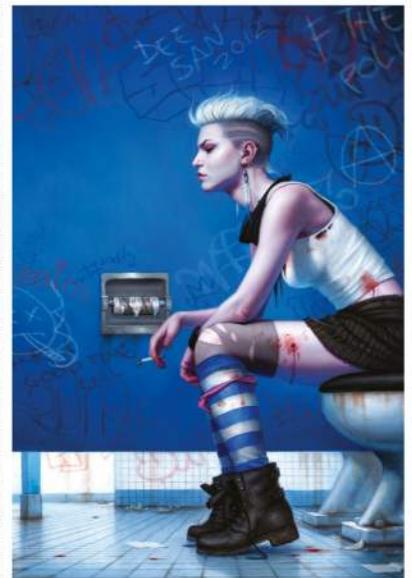
"With the exception of the dragon's eyes and red smoke, the piece is painted entirely in oils," says Dan of his cover for *Tor Books' Forged in Fire* by JA Pitts.



© Tor Books

### EVEN WHITE TRASH ZOMBIES GET THE BLUES

Dan painted the cover for the second book in the *White Trash Zombie* series. *Tor Books' Michael M Jones* calls it "brilliantly evocative" and "wonderfully skeevey".



mentor. But for a while he worked on "whatever would pay the bills". He began selling a particular kind of painting quicker than he could paint them. He found this work – figurative stuff, lots of ballerinas – quite enjoyable, but it was a long way from the art he imagined he'd be making.

So he decided to make the difficult decision of sacrificing the regular money these paintings brought in and focusing more on the kind of illustrations he always set out to do. His very next painting, *Shiva's Crown* (see page 43 for more), still one of his favourite ever pieces, helped him win his first proper illustration job.

In *Shiva's Crown*, we see many of the things that make Dan's work so great. The

“ This form of art is not solely about self-expression, it’s about telling a story your audience can understand ”

subject is one of the artist’s tough women. The costume she wears is elaborate, the colours bright. Her face photorealistic, but she has an otherworldly air. There is a story bubbling away beneath the surface.

Dan’s reluctant to describe his own work, but says his peers recognise a certain tone and mood: “There must be,” he says, “some sensibility that I am blind to.”

Dan works from home, which is in Greensboro, North Carolina, as does his wife. They have two young children, which, “Makes for a lot of noise and a lot of distraction”. So he paints at night, often working through until 7am. He says he doesn’t eat properly and rarely goes outside during daylight hours, which has caused, “Weight gain and a general decline in health overall”.

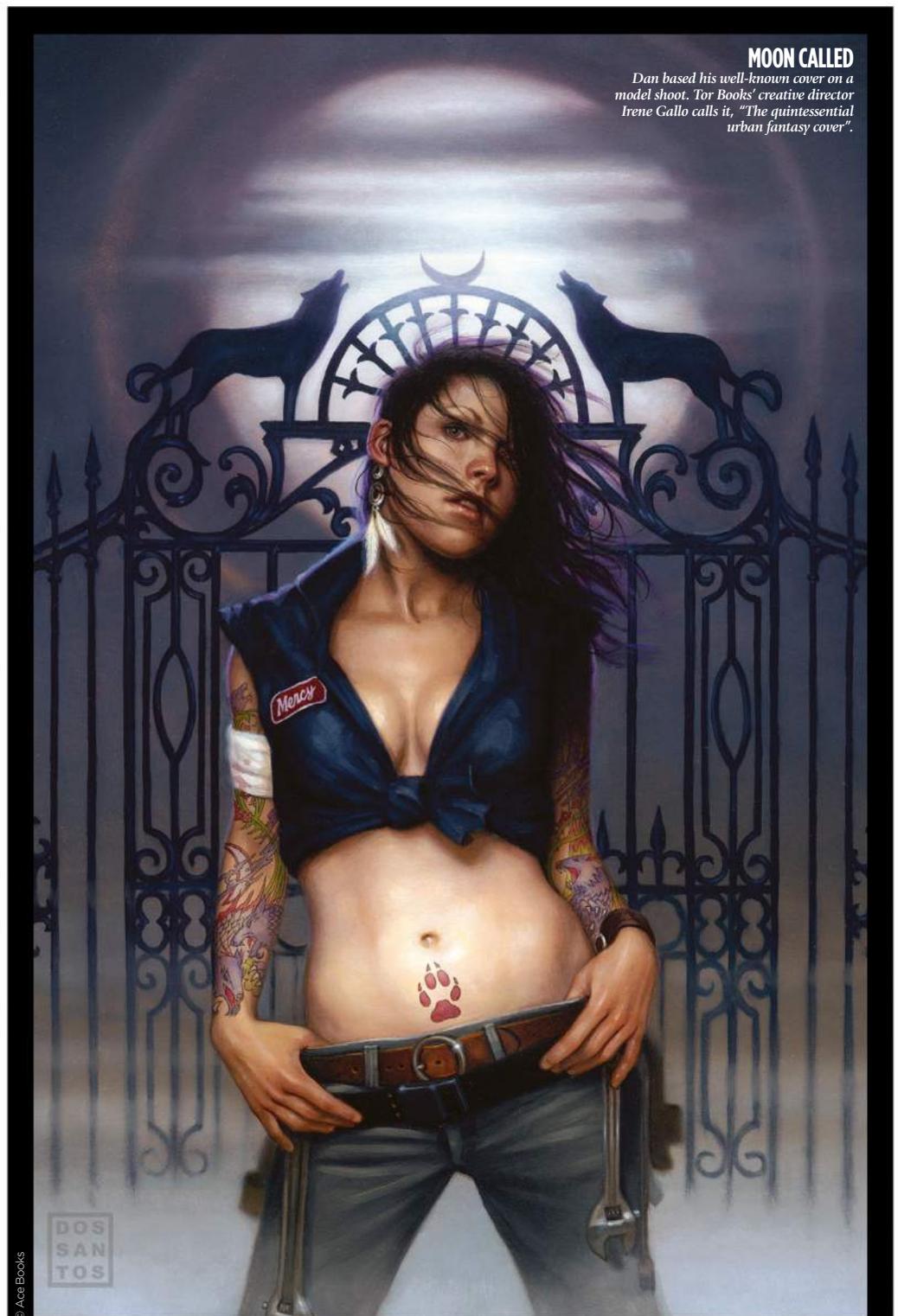
## HELPING HAND

Yet Dan is still generous with his time, willing to make further sacrifices to help out others in much the same way Steven H Stroud helped him in his early years as an artist. Dan teaches at colleges and workshops throughout the US, as well as hosting instructional demonstrations. He is also the creator and moderator of the very popular art-education blog Muddy Colors.

“I think our readers would be shocked to know just how many hours a day go into that blog,” he says, “and that is time I could be spending elsewhere, such as exercising or being with my children. We haven’t monetised Muddy Colors, and don’t accept ads of any sort, so there’s no financial boon to speak of. Really, the only pay-off is just the knowledge that we’re helping foster this community we all love so much.

“I seriously wouldn’t be where I am today were it not for the efforts of a few remarkably generous teachers. Muddy Colors is a chance for me to pay that generosity forward, and hopefully also help inform and inspire the next generation of young illustrators.”

No longer the bright young thing of fantasy art, Dan dos Santos is now spoken of in the same breath as the masters he originally learned so much from. But his dedication remains the same, little changed from the young artist who rode the train five hours a day to art school. “Like school,” he says, “real life is just about working hard and having clear goals. Learn from the competition, and play nice.”



### MOON CALLED

Dan based his well-known cover on a model shoot. Tor Books’ creative director Irene Gallo calls it, “The quintessential urban fantasy cover”.

© Ace Books

## REACHING OUT TO READERS

Book cover artists often receive little recognition for their work, but one particular best-seller introduced Dan’s art to a whole new audience...

“Probably the most important cover to me, career wise, would be for Patricia Briggs’ book Moon Called [above],” says Dan dos Santos. “This is the first painting I did for a series that would go on to become a New York Times best-seller, and still my best-known series to date.”

As an illustrator, Dan says, it’s not often that he receives recognition from someone outside of the industry. He gives the example of Harry Potter: “Very few people can actually tell you who the cover artist even is.”

The success of the Moon Called helped put Dan “on the radar of a lot of fans and clients alike”. When he attends conventions, where he sells prints and signs autographs, it’s the painting for that particular cover that people recognise most. “I continuously hear people tell me, ‘This is the first painting of yours I saw, and it made me buy the book’.

“Hearing that makes me really happy. Not because it means they know my name or might buy more prints, but because it’s confirmation that I did my job really well, and they noticed.”

# 10

## INCREDIBLE ONLINE ART SCHOOLS

Artist **Paul Canavan** explores the 10 most exciting online art schools available today, for all types of artists

**T**here was a time, not so very long ago, when art schools and ateliers were your only options for attaining a higher art education. Typically providing a strong, foundational background for artists with varied aspirations, they were (and still are) a fantastic direction to take when seeking out a career in the creative arts.

Unfortunately, that rounded, long-term education comes at a cost, and particularly for those living outside of Europe, that cost could be prohibitively high, leading to mounting debt and insecurity at the pivotal point in a young artist's career.

Luckily for our wallets, online art schools have emerged over the past few years that offer a vast range of courses which can rival the bricks and mortar schools in scope... as long as the student is willing to develop a strong work ethic and the drive to work from home. Online education options differ dramatically, from the more traditional foundational courses that can last several months, to individual lessons tailored to fit one subject, from class-based seminars to inspirational podcasts and more.

Through this article I'm going to explore ten of the most exciting schools and courses available online right now, tackling a wide range of subjects to give you a feel for the potential open to you. Whether you aspire to work as a concept artist or 3D modeller in the games industry, a matte painter or animator for films, or a freelance illustrator who gets to paint monsters all day long, whilst still in your pants, there's an online school for you. Hopefully, the selection will help you pick a path that best suits your personal goals and budget, supplementing existing studies or creating a plan for you to follow from beginning to end.

### 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>

Kei Acedera's acrylic painting Arya. Although mainly focusing on digital art, there are traditional media courses available.



Schoolism has gone for a broad range of courses, starting at the basics through to seriously advanced.



This school attracts the most famous names in the digital art industry, including Bobby Chiu.



Schoolism co-founder Kei Acedera created this beautiful painting, entitled Outlaws.

## Schoolism

A legendary school founded by a legendary digital artist, this is a school you can trust

**S**choolism has rapidly become one of the best-known online art schools. This is thanks in part to its prolific founder (Bobby Chiu being a well-known and supremely well-respected artist himself), and the diverse team of instructors it's collected. The roster includes the likes of Craig Mullins, Daisuke "Dice" Tsutsumi, Iain McCaig, Nathan Fowkes and other titans of the entertainment industry.

The courses available are as diverse as the people teaching them, covering more traditional topics such as gesture drawing (essential for aspiring animators and concept artists), portraiture, anatomy and colour and lighting fundamentals, as well as character and creature design, digital painting and storyboarding. Basically, pretty much all areas of expertise that you can think of in the industry are covered here.

Schoolism operates around a one-year subscription model for \$144/£102. Within that year you're able to work on a single course, but have the option to switch at any time for a minimal fee. It's a smart system that enables the student to cover several topics within that year if they have time available and are able to work efficiently. It's also possible to receive video feedback from the tutor directly, but this costs \$998/£706 and positions are limited.

Registering for a class gives you access to pre-recorded lectures, which are then available to be streamed throughout the duration of the subscription (assuming you don't switch course) and there's a Facebook group available in which to share work for critique by students.

 **schoolism** Founder: Bobby Chiu  
www.schoolism.com

## SmArt School

Get smart with this more trad-minded online art school

**S**mArt School, "A Smarter Art School", has an illustration-focused curriculum with a seriously impressive roster of teachers including Donato Giancola, Todd Lockwood, Greg Manchess and Brad Kunkle, alongside a varied selection of special guests such as Lauren Panepinto and Jon Schindehette.

It was founded by Rebecca Guay, known for her work on Magic: The Gathering and other high-profile clients. She says that, "SmArt School brings some of the most recognised, celebrated artists and illustrators working today to the small-scale teaching format. In these small classes, students truly mentor interactively with these great artists in very personal, productive ways to the great benefit of their work and their possible successful future in the art world or illustration industry."

Unlike the more traditional online school structure that typically revolves around pre-recorded tutorial videos with space for critique, SmArt School's classes are taught live using GoToMeeting. Classes are taught over 13 sessions across three months, priced



The school offers a full mentorship course that includes 13 sessions with Donato Giancola.

at \$2,500/£1,767 for each course, and while the majority of them focus on illustration techniques in a more traditional teaching environment, there are also bootcamp classes for new students who haven't had comprehensive figure-drawing lessons or any other foundational experiences.

**SMART SCHOOL**<sup>®</sup>  
A Smarter Art School

Founder: Rebecca Guay  
www.smarterartschool.com

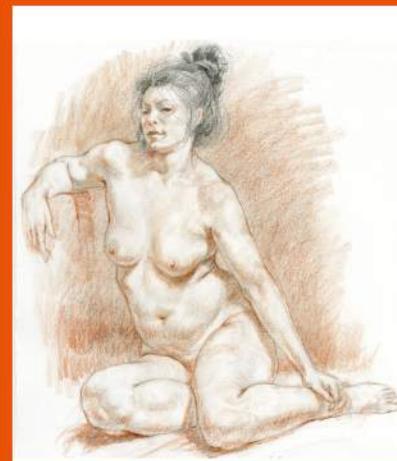


Rebecca: "In our small classes - no more than 10 people - students truly get mentored by great artists."



The LA-based school offers great classes in environment art.

Glenn Vilppu is an industry veteran with half a century-worth of figure drawing experience.



## CG Master Academy

Aiming squarely for the world of 2D and 3D concept art, Computer Graphics Master Academy has grown its brand over the past few years

**C**GMA, or Computer Graphics Master Academy to give it its full name, is unique in the online art school space in that it offers three comprehensive curriculums, which operate in a similar manner to a more traditional art school, with a heavy emphasis on structured learning.

The three programmes available are Foundation and Design, Character Design and Environment Design, and each begins with foundational training before taking the student through every necessary step to become adept in that particular field. This is achieved by undertaking a series of individual masterclasses presented in a set order, which are taught by an impressive range of industry professionals including production designer Nate Wragg, senior concept artist Aaron Limonick and head of story Steven MacLeod.

Students are presented with a certificate upon completion of their chosen program, along with individual certificates for each class attended.

Each of these masterclasses can operate as its own entity should the student be unable to undertake the full programme or wish to take on additional work. They cover topics including analytical figure drawing, Perspective, character design for film and games, building a personal brand, fundamentals of design, animal drawing, and many other areas of skills that are crucial for developing a successful career in the entertainment industries. Classes last 10 weeks and are priced at \$699/£495.



Founder: N/A  
<http://2d.cgmasteracademy.com>

Sona Sargsyan is one of the many instructors who teaches concept art at CGMA.



## Vilppu Academy

This gesture and figure course offers a solid art foundation

**T**he name Glenn Vilppu is well known among artists across the globe, in particular animators who often study his methods of gesture drawing when they begin their artistic journey.

As a veteran educator with over 50 years of teaching experience on the human form, it should come as no surprise that his school, Vilppu Academy, centres around figure drawing and anatomy. These skills are vital for artists in most fields, a deep understanding of the figure being crucial for concept artists, illustrators, modellers and animators, and Glenn's focus on communication through drawing sets it apart from the other schools listed here.

"All artists must deal with the differences in their interests and the order of importance they give to various elements," says Glenn. "I don't teach a style, I teach tools of communication and give direction to acquiring knowledge. Knowledge coupled with the development of skill and feeling is what creates the magic. There are no rules, just tools."

Vilppu Academy offers six courses with subjects ranging from drawing essentials through figure drawing, anatomy, sketching and composition. Each lasts from six to ten weeks, with prices ranging from \$600 to \$900 (from £425 to £637). "This classical-based programme provides artists of all levels with the fundamental tools of visual expression – understanding of movement, form, light and composition – to be applied to their particular style and genre through streaming lectures and demos, critiqued assignments and live video chats," says Glenn.



Founder: Glenn Vilppu  
[www.vilppuacademy.com](http://www.vilppuacademy.com)



# Learn Squared

This new school aims to innovate in its teaching methods, but still covers the essential topics

“The core concept we hope to get across is that everybody has to start somewhere”

**L**earn Squared was founded by veterans of the entertainment industry, and the site aims to innovate in the education space with its unique approach: rather than having a single tutor leading a class, here you're presented with two top-level professionals, one of whom teaches the other. Students receive the same tutorials and guidance you would expect on a traditional course, with the added perk of watching another artist put the knowledge into practice.

As Andrew Hawryluk explains, “The core concept we hope to get across to our

students and the artistic community at large is that everybody has to start somewhere. The skills you'd learn from these other, new fields of art might benefit your main artistic endeavours in ways you would've never previously imagined.” It's a fascinating angle on education, shedding light on the process of learning itself.

Each course contains eight weeks of video tutorials across a range of subjects including environment painting, 3D concept design and title designs for film. Modern art techniques are at the forefront of most of the courses, with a heavy focus on creating an

Jama Jurabaev leads the introduction to 3D concept design class.

effective pipeline for working in the entertainment industries. Pricing falls into three categories for all courses: \$100/£71 for the basic package, accessing a single course of video lessons and community access with lifetime access, \$200/£141 for the ability to download the files and engage with the apprentice journey; and \$1,000/£707 for live mentorship and reviews.



**Founders:** Maciej Kuciara, Ash Thorp, Anthony Jones, Andrew Hawryluk  
[www.learnsquared.com](http://www.learnsquared.com)



With over 20 years-experience in games, Pascal's course is popular.

# Gnomon

As well as offering one of the best ‘bricks and mortar’ schools, this institution is building its online curriculum

**C**ertainly one of the best-known art schools, Gnomon was founded in 1997 by 3D artist Alex Alvarez and is based in Hollywood, California. Gnomon's online courses are designed for artists seeking visual effects training direct from Hollywood, with the added convenience of learning from home, and they cover a wide variety of subjects from 3D character concept design to compositing, modelling and sculpting both traditionally and in 3D, and pretty much any other avenue of training for the entertainment industry.

The range of professionals teaching at Gnomon is similarly vast, with big names including Pascal Blanche (left), currently a senior art director at Ubisoft Montreal,

Madeleine Scott-Spencer, digital sculptor at Weta Digital, and Craig Elliot, illustrator and visual development artist for companies such as Blizzard and Dark Horse.

Gnomon courses are taught live through its slick interface, which features webcam integration and screen sharing. Classes last 10 weeks and tuition costs between \$945 and \$1,319 (£669 and £933), depending on the course.

It's worth noting up-front that Gnomon's online courses are only available to residents of California and those living outside of the United States.



**Founder:** Alex Alvarez  
[www.gnomon.edu](http://www.gnomon.edu)



Robert Chang, who featured in early issues of ImagineFX, offers *Becoming a Better Artist*.

## CGWorkshops

Linked to CG Society – one of the oldest online social hubs for digital artists – this is great all rounder

**C**GSociety is a social art hub featuring industry news, features, forums and challenges, as well as a strong body of workshops dealing with the more technical side of artistic training. These CGWorkshops cover subjects such as advanced matte painting, video game animation, rigging techniques and cloth simulation, taught by a collection of film and game industry names such as lead character technical director Wade Ryer, Blizzard's David Luong and senior Houdini artist Niels Prayer.

Courses last between four and eight weeks, and prices range from \$349 to \$699 (£247 to £494). They operate along the same lines as other schools: each week students are presented with a pre-recorded lesson with homework and a social space to share work and critique. There's scope for exposure on several courses with some teachers sharing their student's work online, and student work is often featured on the main page of the website.

**CGWORKSHOPS**

Founder: N/A  
[www.cgsociety.org/training](http://www.cgsociety.org/training)

## Ctrl+Paint

Put off by all the triple-figure fees? This school is free!

**M**att Kohr takes a slightly different approach to the other online schools listed here, as his website, Ctrl+Paint, is predominantly free. This makes it accessible for artists of all levels and the fact that most of the material is available through YouTube just adds to that philosophy. It's a fantastic place to start developing artistic skills.

Ctrl+Paint focuses on digital painting, and its lessons are placed in order so that students are taken from the basics of traditional art techniques – learning how to study, create compositions, learn anatomy and perspective – through to digital painting techniques, using colour, rendering and more. It's an incredibly thorough resource with well-explained lessons condensed to engage with the varied audience it no doubt attracts. New videos are released every Thursday and there's free access to Matt's Photoshop brushes and tools.

Premium lessons offer an in-depth look at key subjects over several episodes, with prices running from \$10 to \$55 (£7 to £39). The Concept Art Starter Kit, as an example, contains videos on design basics, creating boss and house designs as well as icons and general world design, and would be ideal for artists interested in working for an indie game studio.



Founder: Matt Kohr  
[www.ctrlpaint.com](http://www.ctrlpaint.com)



Matt Kohr (this image and below) has created a great, largely free resource.

This school consists of several bite-sized video tutorials.





Espen Olsen Sætervik is one of hundreds of artists making the most of this popular service.

## Gumroad

Myriad artists and unlimited possibilities await for all...

Okay, this one isn't actually an online art school, but over the past couple of years Gumroad has become the de facto place to go for art tutorials and thus deserves a mention in this article. It was started as a space for creative types to share and sell their work, but more recently has been heavily adopted by professional concept artists, illustrators and 3D modellers as a space to sell their own tutorials.

Gumroad doesn't offer up a syllabus or comprehensive series of lessons in the manner of the other art schools discussed here, nor does it offer anything in the way of classroom support or feedback outside of email. Instead, it functions as a pathway directly into the minds of your favourite artists.

There is an enormous range of topics available through Gumroad, with an equally vast range of presentation styles. A typical Gumroad video might offer an hour or more of video footage with voiceover describing the process, bundled with the actual source files so that the student can open them up and tinker around, deconstructing the artist's process. Prices and quality can vary wildly, but are typically around \$3-\$20 (£2-£14). Think of Gumroad as a nice way to supplement a more complete course.



Founder Chris Oatley has created a brilliant school.

## The Oatley Academy

This is another cracking online school with an artist-founder bringing a highly personal feel to things.

Founded by Disney artist Chris Oatley, the school has a slightly different feel to the others in that its approach deals as much with the psychology and thought process behind becoming a professional artist, as it does with the actual lesson structure.

"We believe that education should mean transformation," says Chris. "There are many places where you can pay for information, but not many places that actually offer a true, transformative art education. We say that if we're not changing lives, we're not doing our job."

Community involvement plays a large part in this experience, with the site placing a heavy emphasis on engaging with fellow students and learning to critique each other's work in order to grow as artists. Courses fall under two categories: Mentored or Self-Guided. The mentors include Chris Oatley, visual development artist Brett Bean, Nickelodeon visual development artist Sarah Marino and Marvel Studios storyboard artist Justin Copeland. These real-time courses are priced between \$650 and \$850 (£460 and £601). For \$7-\$19 per month (£5-£13), The Oatley Academy offers self-guided classes on digital painting, storytelling and forging a successful career.



Brett Bean takes one of the mentored courses.

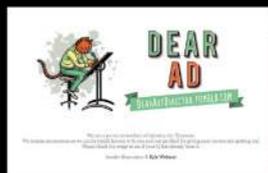
## FREE BLOG RESOURCES THE BEST BLOGS FOR ART INSPIRATION



### Muddy Colors

Muddy Colors is a blog run by an all-star lineup of illustrators and designers, featuring daily insights into the thinking behind the art of contemporary fantastic art.

<http://ifxm.ag/m-colors>



### Dear Art Director

Dear Art Director is a blog modelled on the 'Dear Abby' style advice columns of old, featuring a panel of art directors poised to answer the community's questions.

<http://ifxm.ag/dear-ad>



### Lines and Colors

This blog was created by Charley Parker as a space to feature interesting artists new and old, examine their work and generally provide endless inspiration.

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



### Collective Podcast

Hosted by designer/director Ash Thorp, The Collective Podcast is a weekly show featuring honest discussions with creative industry leaders from around the world.

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



### Facebook groups

There are plenty of fantastic communities on Facebook, highlights being Brainstorm, The Ultimate Study Group, Virtual Plein Air, Daily Spitpaint - and ImagineFX, of course!

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

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## PRINT AND DIGITAL BACK ISSUES



### Issue 134 May 2016

In this month's issue, learn how to manage values by following Karla Ortiz's cover workshop, improve your portrait skills, build a library of custom Photoshop brushes, get the most from your life model, and more. We also talk to Lois van Baarle and the ILM art department!



### Issue 133 April 2016

Level up your video game art skills! We talk to Riot Games and Laurel D Austin, reveal how Gnomon's tailor-made course for video game artists is shaping up, and explore map-making tips for League of Legends. Plus there's exclusive art advice for Total War: Warhammer!



### Issue 132 March 2016

We explore the fantasy film genre's golden age - Andreas Bennik'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.

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## RESOURCES ARE INCLUDED WITH PRINT AND DIGITAL EDITIONS\*



**Issue 130**  
January 2016



**Issue 129**  
Christmas 2015



**Issue 128**  
December 2015



**Issue 127**  
November 2015



**Issue 126**  
October 2015



**Issue 125**  
September 2015



**Issue 124**  
August 2015



**Issue 123**  
July 2015



**Issue 122**  
June 2015



**Issue 121**  
May 2015



**Issue 120**  
April 2015



**Issue 119**  
March 2015

GET YOUR DIGITAL EDITION THROUGH THESE OUTLETS:



\*Resource files are available from issue 85 onwards.

**LOCATION:** Singapore  
**PROJECTS:** Seika Project, Aether Captains  
**OTHER PROJECTS:** Karate Fight Ninja All-Stars Edition, Nihongo Master, Over the Hills and Far Away, Inori Aizawa  
**WEB:** www.collateralds.com



## STUDIO PROFILE

# COLLATERAL DAMAGE STUDIOS

Starting life as a local artist group, this Singapore studio is now a global player, as **Tom May** discovers



A still from AFASG15' promotional video, featuring SEIKA, who was designed by Low Zi Rong.

**B**ased in Singapore, Collateral Damage Studios has quite the backstory. It began in 2006 as a doujin circle: a group of friends who got together to share their work and inspire each other creatively. So how did a loose gathering of enthusiasts, focused on the art of anime, evolve into a fully fledged,

commercially successful creative agency?

"It was a gradual process," says projects manager KC Ng. "The group slowly grew in



prominence and expanded the circle to include other artists. It was soon being regularly featured in news articles about the indie scene, and we started to get approached to do commissions. We'd even get sent the occasional CV from professional artists."

### FAN ART FANS

But it wasn't until 2013 that the circle took its first steps towards becoming a more formal commercial entity – when Microsoft approached the group regarding a character

that had been drawn for fun. The anime-style character, a young girl called Inori Aizawa, had been created as a piece of fan art, after artist and producer Danny Choo had posted an image featuring human equivalents of the Safari, Firefox and Chrome web browsers.

Inori Aizawa is a sassy girl who fights robots, dresses in sexy geek clothes, and pets her cat while surfing the web. Microsoft loved the design, and wanted it to use it in its marketing campaigns for Internet Explorer in Asia. ➡➡



Ricky Li's Eroko made it on to various merchandise based on CDS' own original comic series, MON GIRL.



As artists delve into the anime subculture, the personal work area of each is filled with little things that inspire them.



“There is always a mobile games company looking for artists...”

Low Zi Rong based Tora Sleepover on MON GIRL and it was turned into wallpaper to reward CDS' Patreon supporters.

## TAN HUI TIAN

The senior illustrator on the industry and success

### Hello Tan. What did you do before coming to CDS?

I was a game artist at PD Design, and my portfolio consisted of character design, GUI and some environment art.

### What's been the highlight of your time at CDS so far?

Being able to set the art direction and helm projects from start to finish, such as the board game Aether Captains, has been exciting. I also really like working with clients such as GoBoiano [the global network for anime fans and creators]. They are open to wilder stuff and tend to set clear art directions as well.

### Outside of your day job, what kind of art do you tend to enjoy producing the most?

Currently I'm obsessed with creating fractal art using Mandelbulb 3D, and learning 3D to supplement my 2D art process. I also have a predilection for world-building though, and I still tend to be more motivated by that.

### It's a time of great change in the industry. But where, in your view, is it heading?

I think the industry has really expanded in the past few decades. Pop culture and even certain sub-cultures have become mainstream, and nowadays there's always a mobile games company looking for artists and so forth. There's even the option of crowdfunding now, too, by way of Kickstarter, Patreon and suchlike. It's an exciting time. Some sectors of the industry may be stagnating (traditional trading card games, for instance), but there are entirely new sectors which seem to be flourishing as well. I don't think it's necessarily easier in this digital age though. Because the competition is really high these days as well, with globalisation and the availability of educational resources.

### Lastly, what advice would you have for someone wanting to be a concept artist right now?

I would tell aspiring digital artists not to go to art school unless they're certain it's going to pay off for them. None of your prospective employers would ask to see your qualifications, and a lot of educational resources can be found elsewhere. Also, hang out with professionals who can offer practical advice. And most importantly, draw what you like and have fun drawing. Life is simply too short to be someone else.



Tan Hui Tian is a senior illustrator at CDS and an experienced game artist who has previously worked for an indie game developer.

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



A personal illustration by Tan Hui Tian, simply entitled Pale.



Tan Hui Tian and Lim Wei Lun worked on the box cover art of the boardgame Aether Captains, published by MAGE Company.

➤➤ “That was when a couple of the circle’s members decided to take the leap of faith and set up the studio,” says Ng. “Working closely with the Internet Explorer marketing manager in Singapore, Collateral Damage Studios brought together a team to produce an animated short. It went viral, and the rest is history.”

Since then, CDS has worked with international clients such as Wacom, Faber Castell and Soda Pop Miniatures to create a number of anime-inspired visuals and marketing campaigns. Recently, it’s even

Here’s Low Zi Rong’s original character design for Aizawa Inori, which launched CDS as a studio.



started widening its scope beyond anime, such as the company’s collaboration with board game publisher Mage Company on a steampunk-themed game featuring airships, called Aether Captains.

An animated music video produced for SOZO, the organisers of Anime Festival Asia (AFA), to promote its Anisong [anime song] concert, is another big recent project, reveals KC. “We did the storyboarding and the concept art,” he says. “Our resident character designer Low Zi Rong did quite a bit of the key animation, too.”

## SET APART

A self-trained illustrator and animator, Low is one of the studio’s best-known artists, having created both Inori Aizawa and SEIKA, the official character for Anime Festival Asia. Two things set Collateral Damage Studios apart, he believes: “We’re geared more towards a Japanese style of artwork creation. And we’re also willing to take on

“You need to accept all kinds of challenges. Passion is crucial”

different genres of art, at the request of our clients.” Low’s highlight at CDS so far has been, “Being able to involve myself in full 2D animation projects, which is rare in the Singapore scene,” he says.

Illustrator Ricky Li is a more recent recruit to the company and is in charge of developing intellectual property such as MON GIRL, an adult comic strip for the Lewd Gamer website, and cultivating the studio’s fanbase directly through creative mentor site Patreon. “I was first introduced to the doujin circle by a friend of mine,” Ricky says. “After I graduated, I joined the studio full-time.” Working on client projects such as My Little



CDS artists hard at work creating more great anime.

# COLLATERAL DAMAGE STUDIOS



Dictator, a visual novel from WarGirl Games, and Nihongo Master, an anime-themed website for learning Japanese, he's come to realise, "Time management is very important, and if you want to be a concept artist, you need to be ready to accept all kinds of challenges. Passion is crucial."

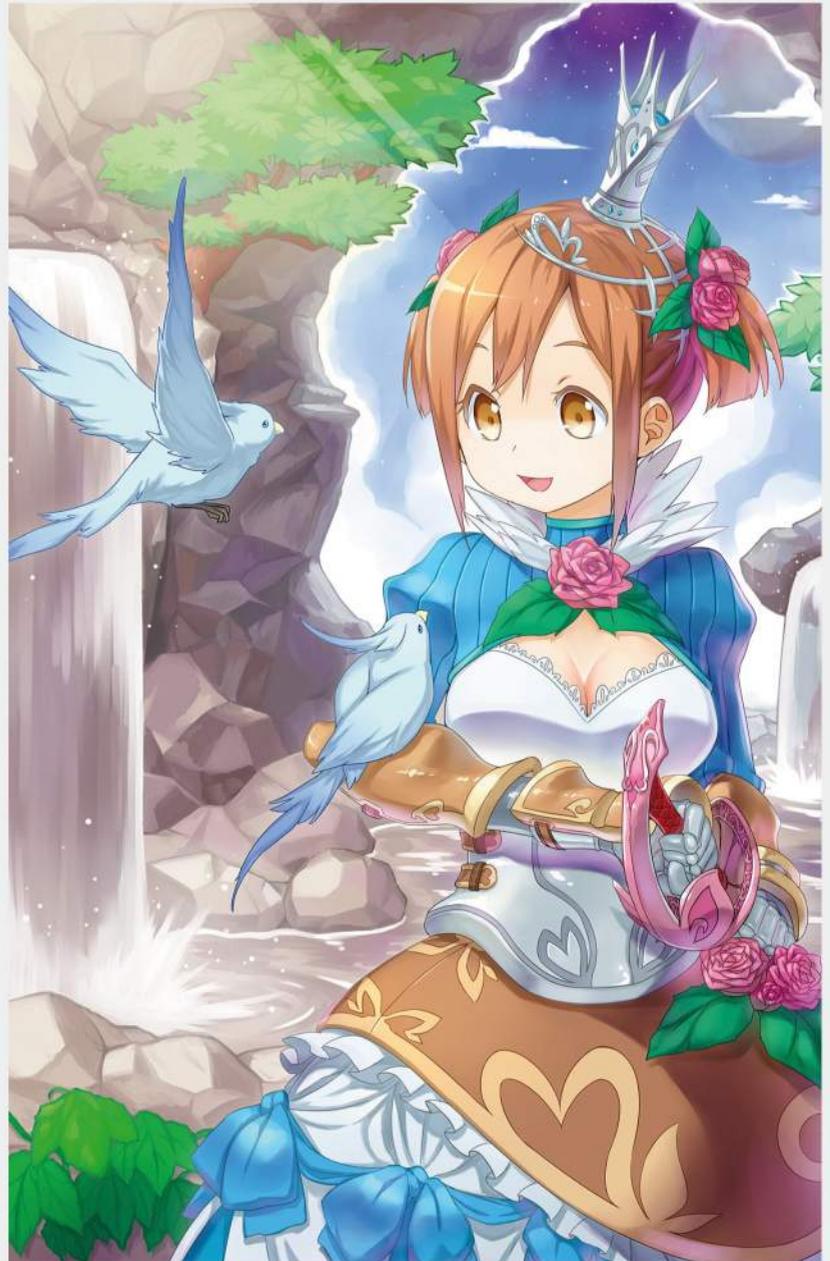
Senior illustrator Tan Hui Tian is another recent hire and an artist who previously worked for indie developer PD Design. "I was freelancing for CDS, so the job sort of fell into my lap," she says. One of the biggest challenges Tan feels the company faces is "the mindset that anime is somehow easier or cheaper than Hollywood-style concept art."



Though artists such as Hui Tian weren't around in the early days, the core doujin philosophy remains a big influence on the company, stresses KC. "The team still maintains strong relations with the original doujin circle's members outside of the formal studio," he says. "And when the need comes, we tap into the talent pool of the Singapore doujin scene."

And that relationship isn't just one-way: the studio is also keen to give back to the community and regularly supports ground-level initiatives that promote local illustrators. "We provide expertise to help the organisers of Doujima, a mini art fair for local doujin circles, and Extravaganza, an art competition organised by students for students," KC says. A virtuous circle – and the spirit of the doujin lives on. ●

Hoshizora is a personal work by Lim Wei Lun.



Beryl Princess by Low Zi Rong was done as a portfolio piece to pitch for a Japanese card game.

Lim Wei Lun painted Yun Yun Cosmica for Skytree Digital's mobile device rhythm game, Hachi Hachi.

## Patxi Peláez

Comic characters are trying to leap from the pages of this Basque Country artist's sketchbook

### Artist PROFILE

**Patxi Peláez**

LOCATION: Spain



Patxi lives in Basque Country, Spain, where he's worked in the animation industry for over 20 years, as an art director, character designer and in visual development for feature films and television. He's also an illustrator of children's books for various publishers in Spain.

[www.facebook.com/patxi.pelaez.7](http://www.facebook.com/patxi.pelaez.7)

#### BLADEMASTER

"A cartoon-style drawing. I feel very comfortable in this kind of style. It's closer to what I usually do in my animation work. And I love swords!"



#### WARRIOR DWARF

"A warrior dwarf. I'm not a fan of The Lord of the Rings saga, but I love this kind of aesthetic and character."



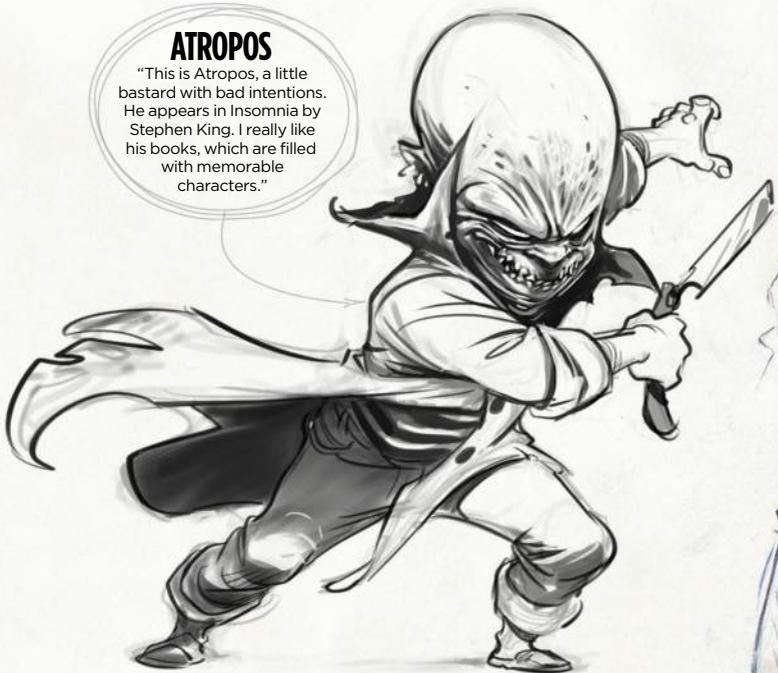
#### HELLBOY

"Before I discovered animation, my first love was comics, so I draw lots of comic characters. It's fun to give a personal view of some of them, such as Hellboy. A great character and a brilliant design."

"Before I discovered animation, my first love was comics, so I draw lots of comic characters"

**ATROPOS**

"This is Atropos, a little bastard with bad intentions. He appears in Insomnia by Stephen King. I really like his books, which are filled with memorable characters."



**ALIEN**

"I like playing with the anatomy of the characters. The creatures and monsters let me do these things. It's good fun."



**BIG GUYS**

"A drawing without direction or pretension. It's what happens when you doodle while you're talking on the phone."



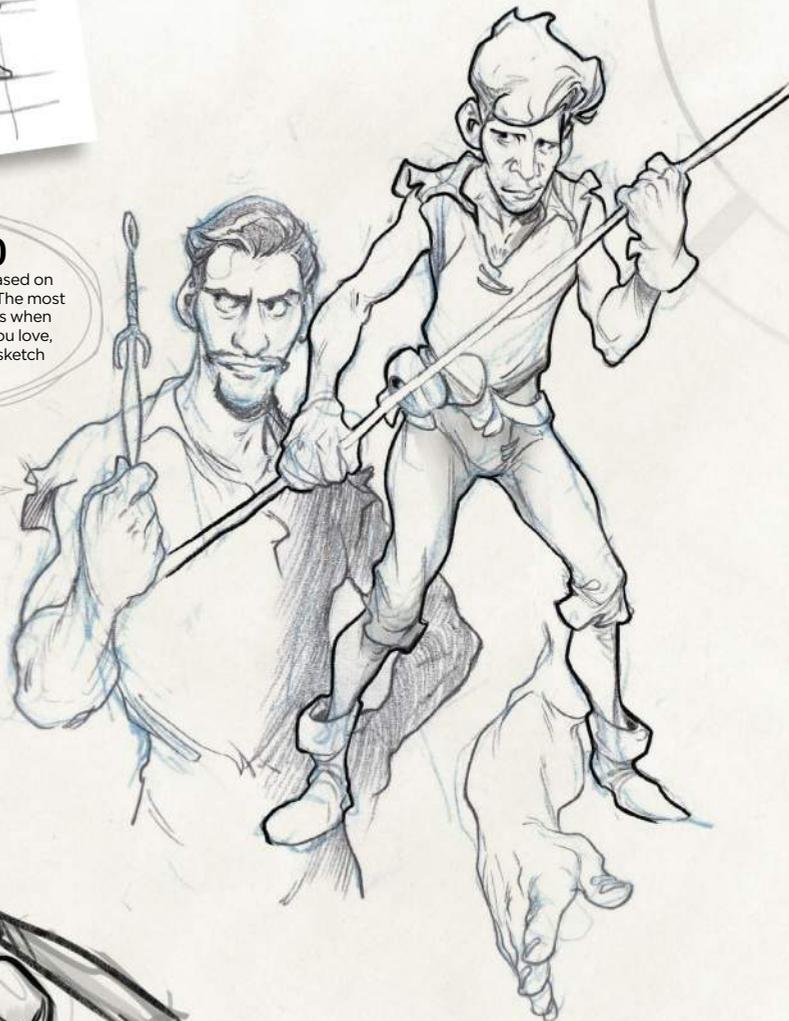
**GORGON**

"I love Marvel comics. Here's my version of Gorgon, an Inhuman. Marvel has an incredible gallery of characters to inspire."

# Sketchbook

## ROBIN HOOD

"Research characters based on the story of Robin Hood. The most fun thing about my job is when you are drawing what you love, without pressure. This sketch is one of those."



## THE BATMAN

"Despite my love of comics, I've barely forayed into the industry. Some of my favourite artists come from this medium and I hope to have time in the future to work in comics, whether as penciller or inker. For now it's just a dream though. Here's Batman and an Accidental Geisha."



## AZAZEL

"A quick sketch of another demon, done digitally. It's great, but I still prefer the traditional pen on paper."



*"The most fun thing is when you're drawing what you love, without any pressure"*



**JOHN CARTER**  
"Another personal version. This time of Edgar Rice Burroughs' character John Carter from Mars."



**EARINGS**  
"A small pencil sketch of some girls' heads. This was just for fun and to look deeper into my own style."



**VENOM**  
"I enjoy giving my own personal vision of familiar characters and this is Venom, a well-known character from Marvel Comics."

**HEROES**  
"Batgirl, a Ninja Turtle and Namor. When I draw I like the mixture of realistic and cartoon style. It's the drawing style that appeals to me the most."

**OLD CHINESE DRAGON**  
"Designs for an animated film in Spain. In my work, many versions are usually drawn before finding the final one."



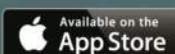
Want to share your sketches? Email us with a selection of your artwork, to [sketchbook@imaginefx.com](mailto:sketchbook@imaginefx.com)  
NEXT MONTH'S SKETCHBOOK: RODNEY MATTHEWS

Break into the card art industry with this essential guide from the **ImagineFX** team



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# NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX Workshops

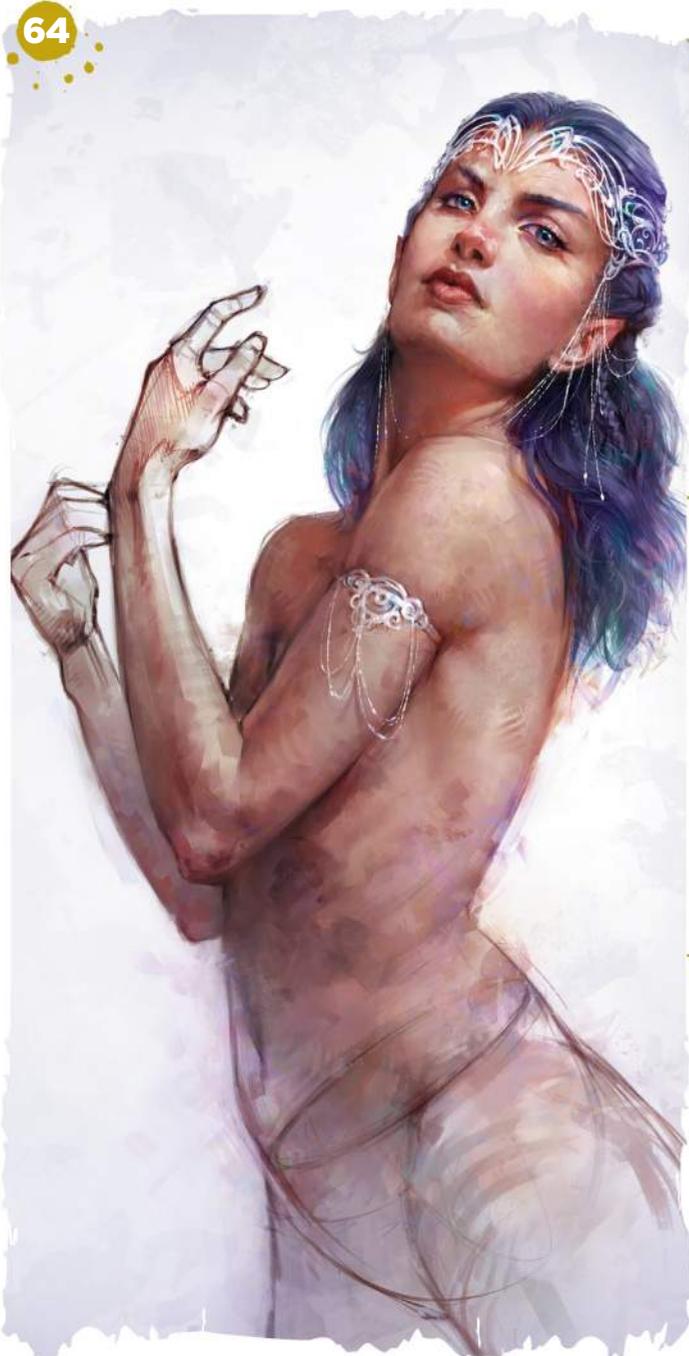
**Workshops assets are available...**

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



70



74



76



## This issue:

### 64 Develop a pose with personality

Aaron Griffin shows how to use gesture and caricatured exaggeration to help create a believable character.

### 68 Add details with 3D sculpting tools

Learn about ZBrush's core set of sculpting brushes, with Rob Redman.

### 70 Draw and paint a hybrid species

Ed Binkley blends human anatomy and insect features to illustrate a curious fruit fly with lifelike expressions.

### 74 How to work up a speedpainting

Paint card art featuring a dynamic lizardman, with Alexander Nanitchkov.

### 76 The anatomy of caricature

Loopydave shares some of his approaches to anatomy in his exaggerated figure art.

### 84 Quickly kitbash your 3D models

Follow Pascal Blanché as he uses a range of techniques to develop a striking figure.



Photoshop

# DEVELOP A POSE WITH PERSONALITY

Illustrator and concept artist **Aaron Griffin** shows how to use gesture and caricatured exaggeration to help create a believable character

**Artist PROFILE**  
**Aaron Griffin**  
 LOCATION: England



Aaron is a self-taught artist working in the games industry. He's best known for his delicate portrait art and character designs.  
<http://ifxm.ag/aagriff>

**GET YOUR RESOURCES**  
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**C**haracter design belongs to many areas of concept art and illustration, whether they're main characters or simply a small figure in the distance. One of the important aspects of character design is to create a sense of believability, so that these characters could really exist in the world you're designing them for. While dressing your character and styling their visual appearance helps to define their overall look, the most

important step to making your character believable – especially when adding them to a larger scene – is to portray their personality through gesture, and show how would they move and compose themselves. A great example of this is animation and the use of caricatured exaggeration to sell an idea. These same principles can apply to realistic character concepts, too. In this workshop I'm going to take you through my process of developing a figure

using Photoshop. We'll begin with gestures, landmarks and simple volumes, refine the sketch and then take it through to adding values in greyscale. I'll also explain the importance of working with thumbnails. I'll be colouring the image using different blending modes before rendering out the figure. Throughout the process I'll discuss the use of colours, brushwork and edge control. This will help to add variation to the image and single out key focal points.

**Shortcuts**  
**Liquify**  
 Ctrl+Shift+X (PC)  
 Cmd+Shift+X (Mac)  
 This will open the Liquify filter to make quick adjustments.

**PRO SECRETS**  
**Choosing your edges**  
 When it comes to edges I like to experiment, and make some clearer and lose others altogether. Where two similar values meet, try blending them out. This can work well to draw unwanted focus from an area and pull focus towards others. To blend them out I might use a crosshatch/scatter brush and Smudge tool. This will softly blend an edge out. Alternatively, you can paint over the edge or even fragment it.



**1 Sketching quick poses**  
 I start the process by gathering a page of reference material. I then sketch a range of poses, keeping the gestures simple and not going into too much detail. The idea here is to create basic shapes and movement. I receive feedback from the ImagineFX team, and make some refinements and changes. The team then chooses a final sketch for me to work up.

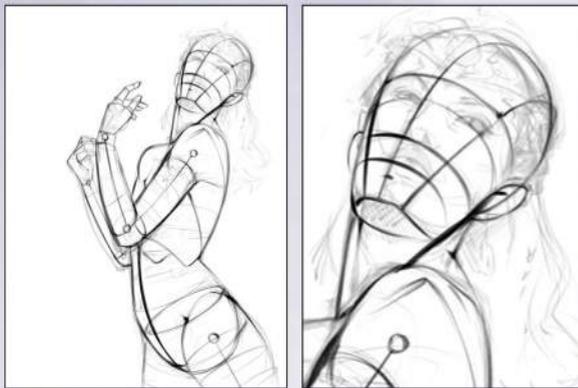
**2 Importance of gesture**  
 A solid figure gesture can set up your entire painting. You have the head, followed by a connecting line that will describe the longest movement of the figure. We then have feet placement and this is crucial for showing balance. Here I use the classic 'bean' technique to show torso twists and bends. I then add the rest of the figure. ➔



## PRO SECRETS

### Colour dynamics

Sometimes colours can appear a little monochromatic or flat. The following technique is great for adding a bit more variation. Open brush settings by choosing Window > Brush, toggle Colour Dynamics and uncheck Apply Per Tip. Pull the Hue/Saturation/Brightness sliders to the right. Each brush stroke will now have a slight variation. Using a Scatter brush and colour layers can add random hues to break up any monotone.



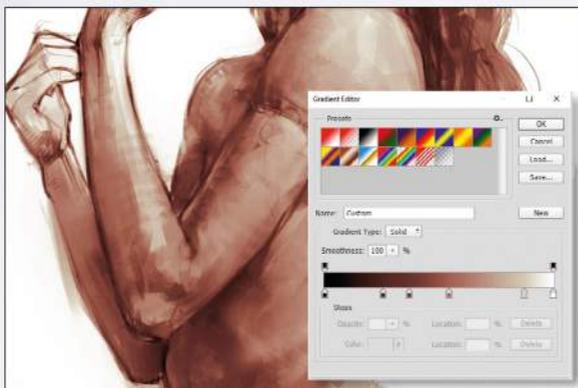
### 3 Refining the sketch

I imagine the figure as simple tube-like forms, then sketch a rounded bucket shape for the pelvis and a circular shape for the ribcage. External signs of the skeleton are great landmarks to show angles of the figure (hip bone, elbows, collarbone and suchlike). I pay attention to negative spaces around the figure to plan the silhouette and proportions.



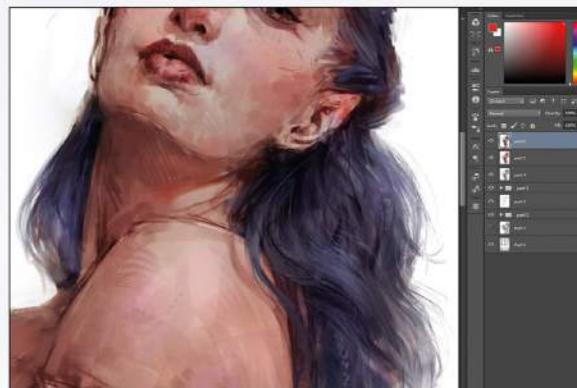
### 4 Adding values

On a new layer, I begin using large brush strokes to build simple shapes and forms. I brush around the contours to show volume more clearly. When it comes to value, less is more. My initial value range will rarely go beyond 20-80 per cent, meaning that I'll not go entirely black or white. I can always boost the image later on.



### 5 Applying colour

When adding colour, my first step is to use gradient maps. Red for the shadows, saturated pink/cream for mid-values and desaturated cream for highlights. On a Color layer above, I add purple to the hair, overall variations in hue and red to her cheeks, nose and ears. I use a Hard Light blending mode to add saturated colours and darken areas simultaneously.



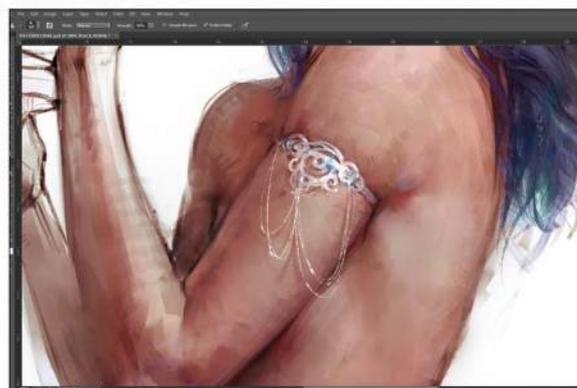
### 6 Painting realistic hair

I'm not fond of the term 'spaghetti hair', but it's an accurate description for something you want to avoid. A common mistake with hair is to paint every strand individually. Realistically hair doesn't do this; it will cluster and form groups. In this step I paint larger shapes first. Single strands are then added afterwards for an element of realism.



### 7 Painterly texture

To achieve a painterly feel in my work I use Hard-edged brushes at 100 per cent Opacity and Flow (in Brush Settings/Transfer set Control to Pen Pressure). I use fewer brush strokes, placed carefully. I apply them heavily and leave strokes more exposed. Using hatching and scatter brushes is a great way to blend areas together and add variety.



### 8 Arm ornament

Because my character is an elf, I feel I need a fantasy element to an otherwise nude figure. I decide to give her an arm ornament made of the silver-like mithril. The ornament curves around the arm to match its tube-like shape. Darkening the skin above shows the indentation of the skin and I add shadows around the edge, and finish with highlights and chains.

## RESOURCES WORKSHOP BRUSHES

### PHOTOSHOP

#### CUSTOM BRUSHES: HEAVY

This brush was used for most of the painting. Great for applying thicker brush strokes.

#### PENCIL

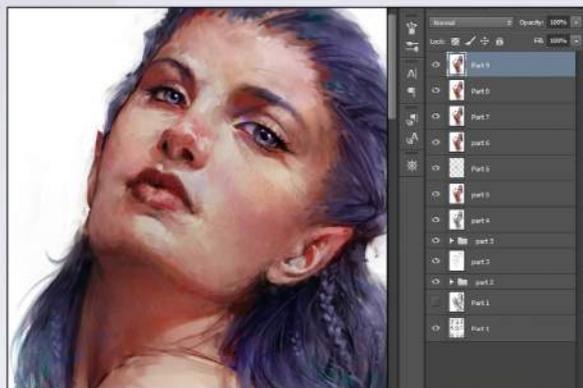
Used for creating the initial sketches.

#### SUBTLE COLOUR RANDOMISER

I added random colour variations with this.

#### CROSSHATCH 2

This brush was used with the Smudge tool for blending.



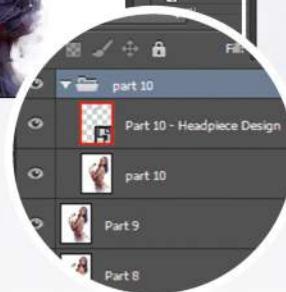
## 9 Rendering the face

I refine the face by reducing the brush size and working on smaller details. I blend out unwanted brush marks and focus attention on the face geometry (planes). Her face is looking a little flat, so I used the Liquify filter to correct the curvature. Increasing the saturation and sharpening edges helps to define the face as a stronger focal point.



## 10 Using Photoshop's Smart Objects

I want to bend and shape the object. So, using a flat design, I right-click the layer and select Convert to Smart Object. Holding Ctrl/Cmd+T for Free Transform, I right-click the bounding box and choose Warp. The design can be edited at any point by double-clicking the layer icon and saving it. The design will update automatically in the main file.



## 11 Eyes that come alive

Eyes are a very engaging feature for the viewer and they hold a lot of emotion. A common mistake is to make the white of the eye too bright – instead, adding subtle colour and shadow will improve their form. Here I add specular highlights to the eyes and a burst of colour around the highlight edge. I've found this to be a great way of making them pop.



## 12 Painting translucent fabric

On a new layer I sketch the shape of my fabric. It's important to keep true to the laws of nature by having the material fall naturally. With translucent material I ensure that any areas which overlap are more opaque. Using the dotted speckle brush I lightly add a glittery texture and finish with details to complement her jewellery.

### PRO SECRETS

#### Working in thumbnails

I always duplicate my viewing window (Window/Arrange/New Window for...) and reduce its size. Your goal is to have readability in the thumbnail. As a general rule, if your image reads small it will almost certainly read as a large image, too. This process is great for checking your silhouette, values, composition and so on. I also find it quicker to block in values because it removes any thought of detail.



## 13 Focusing on the figure

The team think that the fabric might distract from the character's anatomy, so I remove it. I brush white over the bottom half of the figure and use large brush strokes to loosely paint back in areas of my choosing. I reduce saturation in the lower body by using black on a saturation layer and I brighten the face using the Dodge tool, set to Highlights.



## 14 Final touches

The final stages to my paintings undergo similar refinements. These include the blending or sharpening of edges, a final Color layer where I scatter random hues to add interesting variations, lighting tweaks and a final overall sharpen. For this illustration I add a subtle purple vignette that frames her upper body and draws the viewer's eye to her face.

### Shortcuts

Copy all & paste  
Ctrl+Shift +C +V (PC)  
Cmd+Shift +C +V (Mac)  
Copy everything visible  
and then paste it  
in place.

*ZBrush*

# ADD DETAILS WITH SCULPTING TOOLS



**Rob Redman** introduces you to some of ZBrush's more usable sculpting tools, to get you started creating 3D art right away

**Artist PROFILE**  
**Rob Redman**  
 LOCATION: England



Rob Redman is creative director at a boutique animation and VFX studio, as well as being a regular speaker at industry events.  
<http://ifxm.ag/rob-r>

**W**hile more traditional 3D applications are great for many tasks, they fall down when it comes to high-density meshes, with polygon counts in the millions. This isn't a fault as such, but rather reflects the choices made in development – and highlights the fact ZBrush has been built to deliver the best results in this area.

However, the tools used to sculpt in ZBrush are very different to other programs, although in many ways they feel far more natural. The key to learning how to master the sculpting workflow is to combine the simpler push-and-pull style tools with some of the more focused options, and so in this article I intend to introduce you to some of them. To get things going I've already created a simple,

detailed, rocky ball. You can use this (it's included with this issue's resource files) or start with your own geometry.

The key is to have an object that has an uneven surface with various protrusions: this will help you understand what we're doing. We're going to look at a few very useful tools, some of which are brushes, while others are helpers, built to keep sculpting tasks as intuitive as possible.

The Lazy Mouse tool is a powerful way to keep strokes for elements such as seams, zips or rivets in order.

You can use the step setting to adjust the spacing between each brush mark.



Experiment with the smooth setting for curved strokes.

## PRO SECRETS

### It's all in the alphas

Using good-quality greyscale alphas, based on Heightmaps, will give you the best results. There are many free ones online, so experiment and see what suits best.

## 1 Smooth your strokes

It can be infuriating when you can't quite keep your stroke even. However, if you head to the Stroke menu and turn on the Lazy Mouse option, you can help keep things in order. Adjust the Step setting for the space between each mark and the LazySmooth setting for how your stroke either curves or remains true to your cursor's movement.



The Polish brush lives in the main Brush menu, accessed by clicking your Brush icon.

The brush averages your geometry, raising and lowering to find a smooth medium.

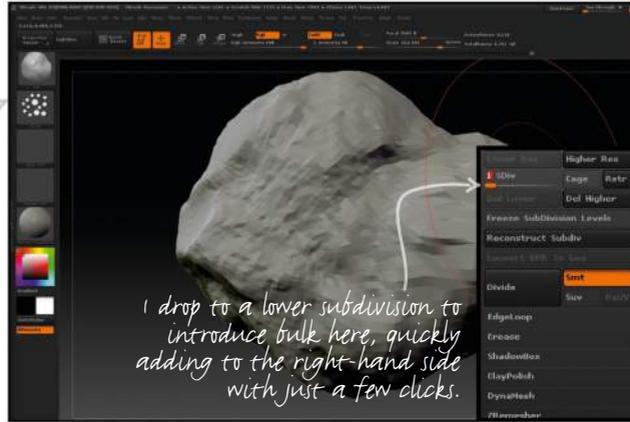
## 2 Add some spit and polish to a bumpy object

The Polish brush provides an easy way to add flat, smooth surfaces to an otherwise bumpy object. Of course, you define the shape of the smoothness with a different alpha, but I'm using its default settings. One thing to watch for is that the flat surface will face the direction of the polygon you start your stroke with.

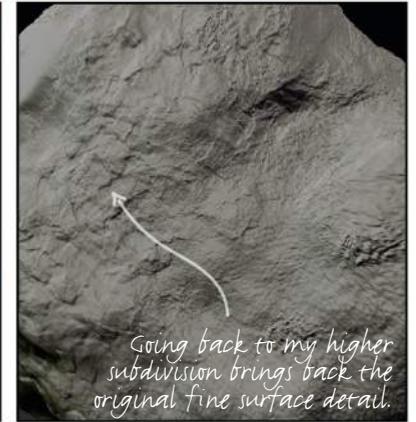
## 3 Digital clay

Clay Build Up brushes can add layers of material to your current geometry. The Clay brush, though, is more complex to use, yet achieves more refined results and is applied in the same manner. Both are great for adding bulk quickly, but in a controlled manner.

*I used a spray alpha, for a more uneven stroke, to generate a natural-looking surface.*



*I drop to a lower subdivision to introduce bulk here, quickly adding to the right-hand side with just a few clicks.*



*Going back to my higher subdivision brings back the original fine surface detail.*

## 4 Sweeping adjustments

In a similar fashion to the Clay brush we can also use brushes to move existing detail. We will look at complex masking and moving in the future, but for swift adjustments use the Move Elastic brush and control what you move by adjusting the Brush size and Focal Shift settings.

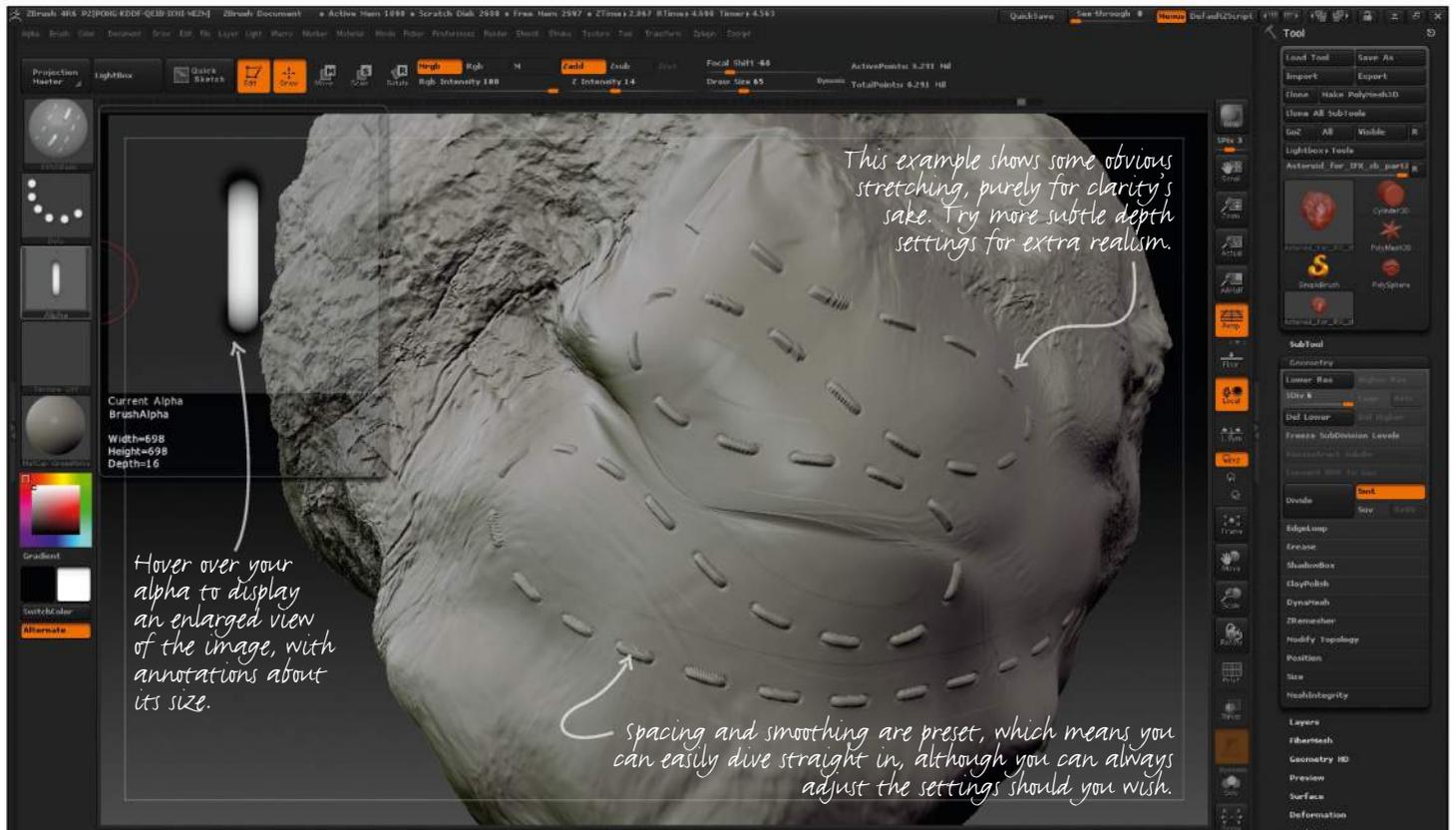
*The brush works from your point of view, so in order to move something sideways make sure you're looking at it straight on.*



*Adjust the size of the brush to make it easy to move an area in one simple click and drag.*



*Here I make an overhang by dragging an area that's protruding to the right.*



*This example shows some obvious stretching, purely for clarity's sake. Try more subtle depth settings for extra realism.*

*Hover over your alpha to display an enlarged view of the image, with annotations about its size.*

*spacing and smoothing are preset, which means you can easily dive straight in, although you can always adjust the settings should you wish.*

## 5 Stitches and more

ZBrush ships with a StitchBasic brush, which is great for repeating patterns. Just change the alpha for the pattern you like. This is similar to the way the LazyMouse works, and is excellent for rows of repeating elements with little needed in the way of setup.

# Photoshop DRAW AND PAINT A HYBRID SPECIES



**Ed Binkley** blends human anatomy and insect features to illustrate a curious fruit fly complete with human gestures and expressions

**Artist PROFILE**  
**Ed Binkley**  
LOCATION: US



A teacher and artist, Ed's work has appeared in 14 issues of Spectrum: The Best in Contemporary Fantastic Art, and includes a Gold Award and four other nominations.  
[www.edbinkley.com](http://www.edbinkley.com)

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

**C**reating a blended human and insect is one of my favourite things to do, so I'm honoured to be invited to demonstrate my approach for ImagineFX here.

Depicting animals with human characteristics (anthropomorphism), from your imagination can be fun, and creating believable anatomy from two very different species is a fascinating challenge. But there are surprising similarities across species that can be played with, and you'll find you can take advantage of fascinating mixtures by allowing happy accidents and other

creative opportunities as they present themselves to you.

There are plenty of examples of great artists who explore these cross-species inventions. Arthur Rackham, Edmund Dulac and contemporary illustrators Olga Dugina and Chris Beatrice are masters of anthropomorphised woodland creatures – birds, insects and a variety of small mammals who've taken on human features and personalities. The work of Travis Louie, HR Giger and a generation of concept artists has gone in a different direction, not only devising creepy hybrids from multiple species, but

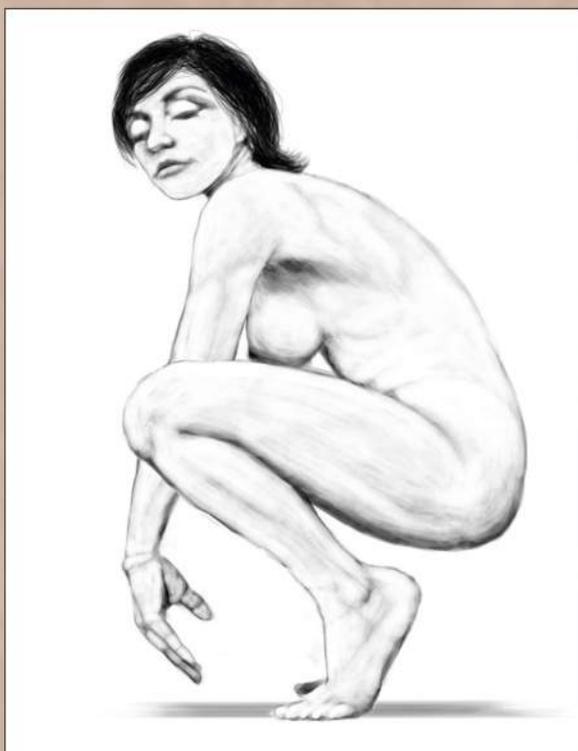
challenging our perception of the natural order or the traditional food chain.

Here we'll look at some of the challenges, technical and narrative, such a combination presents. I'll demonstrate some setup and organisational practices, some techniques I use to create the illusion of depth, lighting and texture, and we'll explore the unending, fun question: how much human and how much insect?

The illustration's background is not part of this workshop, but the objects in it were created using nearly identical techniques demonstrated here.

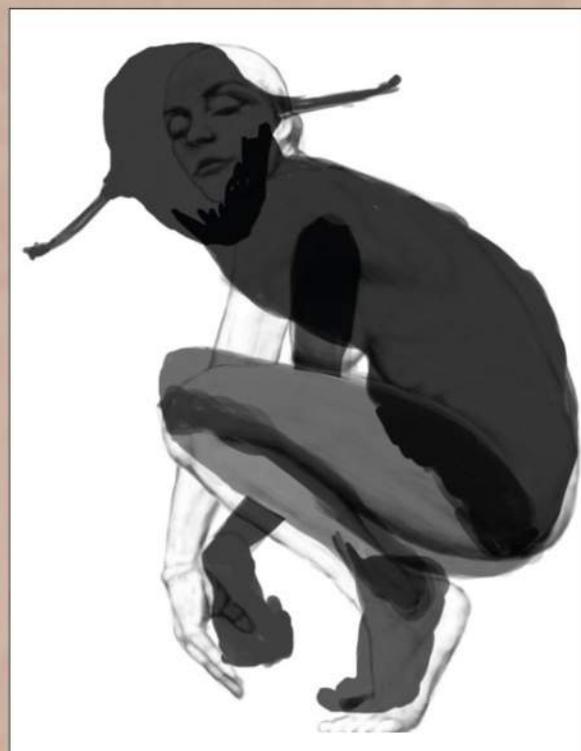
**Shortcuts**  
**Quick Opacity change**  
Number keys  
Single number keys change Brush Opacity in 10 per cent increments.

**PRO SECRETS**  
**Clipped layers**  
Clipped layers are ideal when working with solid silhouettes. Add a new layer above the sil, then Alt-click the line between the two layers. The top layer clips to the sil. Its contents will only show within silhouette borders. You can clip numerous layers to the sil, as long as they're contiguous in the Layer palette. You can merge clipped layers, and merge into the silhouette when ready to commit.



## 1 Initial figure study

After my art director approves the initial rough, I hire a model to mimic the pose from the sketch. I know of a female model who has the thinner, elongated limbs I need to get me a long way towards the insect form I envision. I work digitally even on figure studies so I can easily correct proportion problems, and I can even alter the pose later when the model isn't there.



## 2 Converting to silhouettes

I redraw all the body sections as solid black silhouettes, or sils. Then I repose them quickly and free-transform to distort them toward insect-like proportions, while maintaining familiar human shapes. Then I refine the sils to create fully detailed edges. I usually start an object with silhouettes, then draw lighter values over the black to create surface form and texture. ➔





## PRO SECRETS

### Keep on flipping

Set up a custom keyboard shortcut (there isn't one by default) for Image>Image Rotation>Flip Canvas Horizontal, and then use it often. Your mind forgives imbalances and flaws in a drawing as you work on it, and a flip makes the image new to your brain again. Strangers will see those imperfections even though your eye has become accustomed to them. And an inexpensive hand-mirror enables you to see your work backward in the middle of operations, such as Free Transform or Liquify.



### 3 Block in major form

Using my figure study as a guide, I block in primary forms with a dark value (about 70 per cent grey) and a large brush. This is to establish light/dark divisions and larger human anatomy features. I'm careful not to get pulled into details for now. I'm also beginning to think about possible insect features and watching for any accidental hints of them in looser sketching.



### 4 Looking for personality

I tend to jump fairly quickly to the head and face on most creatures, to establish personality. One of my early head sketches came out nicely, so I superimpose it here and enhance it on additional layers. Layers can make you courageous – the worst that can happen in an experiment is you won't like it, so you toss it and try again. It's a tremendously free and creative feeling.



### 5 Multi-pass values

To build form, I work dark-to-medium-to-light, each value on its own layer, until I arrive at a final light and shadow structure. I use 70 per cent grey, then 50 per cent, then 30 or 20 per cent, sometimes with a final pass of pure white. I clip each layer to its underlying silhouette so it stays within the sil shape. This approach is nondestructive and editable.



### 6 Human or insect?

In the last step I try to stay loose and sketchy, which simultaneously creates texture and lets in occasional accidents. This is great, because those accidents of texture and surface form can suggest unplanned creative ideas. I frequently scribble and then play the Rorschach test – the 1920s ink-blot psychoanalysis trial – to see what feature or texture the scribble suggests to me.



### 7 Fine details and texture

Final passes are lighter value and with a small brush, when I dive into whatever level of detail and finish I need. (If I want fine detail in a shadow area, I go with a medium value and its matching lower layer, and a small brush.) I match detail brush size to resolution: at 300dpi, a 10-pixel brush is 1/30th of an inch – tiny. There's no need for details smaller than that.



### 8 Layer consolidation

For the sake of efficiency, I merge and consolidate layers once I make a final decision. Art directors vary in terms of their likelihood to make late changes, so if I'm worried about that I can always save an increment of my file. But I keep my current in-progress file as efficient as possible by using layer groups, Smart Objects and merging when possible.

## RESOURCES

### WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

#### CUSTOM BRUSHES: MARKER

My standard workhorse brush, designed to mimic a felt-tipped marker but with pressure-controlled Opacity.

#### GRUNGE

An all-purpose texture creator, for a mottled base texture that can then be manipulated further.

#### SOFT-ADJUST

A soft-effect brush I use primarily on masks, to very gradually hide or show the layer's content.

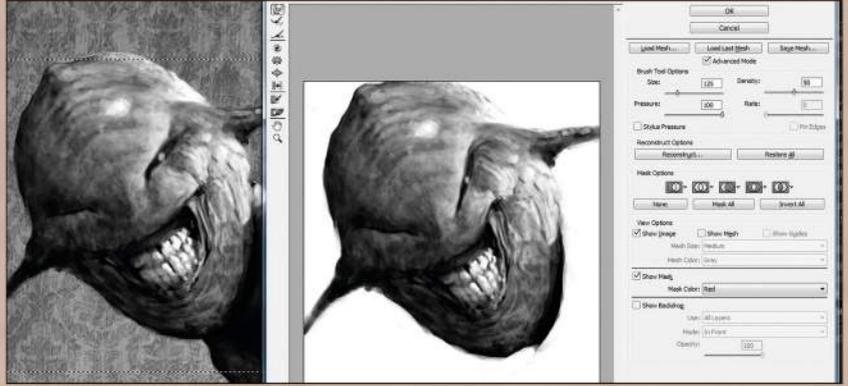
#### VALUE-BLOCK

An early-stage brush for blocking in primary form, light and shadow. Good for rough sketches.



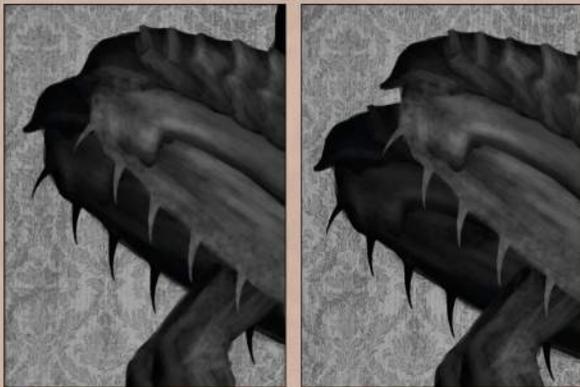
## 9 Masking to make repairs

The silhouette approach I use also allows for fast, nondestructive repairs, even very late in the illustration. Add a mask to the sil and draw on the mask to experiment with changes (you can Shift-click the mask icon to hide or show its effect). You can also add a mask to a layer group folder, so the entire contents of that group folder will be masked at once.



## 10 Liquifying the creature

The Liquify filter is a marvellous tool for making minor repairs and shifts in surface features and details. First of all I Marquee-select a local area to work on, then open Liquify (Ctrl-Shift-X or Cmd-Shift-X). Once there, navigation and brush size shortcuts are identical to the main Photoshop viewport. I don't try to achieve too much in a single Liquify pass, though. I find it's much better to carry out multiple subtle passes, then use the History palette to decide how far I want to commit.



## 11 Avoiding tangents

Tangents happen when two edges touch or align without either overlapping or allowing space between. An overlap tells us which mass is in front, while an open space relieves our need to know. Tangents can kill depth and create tension in the viewer's mind because we naturally want to perceive depth clearly. Rearrange elements, even body parts, to avoid them.



## 12 Maintaining depth

Spend some time late in the illustration adjusting values along edges, to make sure they lift forward from their immediate background. Darker edges can become lost against a dark background, with a resulting loss of depth. It usually doesn't take much to achieve that separation, so judge it with your peripheral vision (look slightly away) and make the changes gradually.



## 13 Drawing hands

Hands are intimidating because of their complexity, and because they are second only to the face in expressing emotion and mood. A combination of study, practice and good references is the key to graceful hands. Study hand anatomy and gesture so you can quickly proportion and pose them. Always find or create good, relevant reference images for every hand you illustrate.



## 14 The overall composition

The figure in any illustration is part of the overall composition, so pose it accordingly and adjust other elements to create a cohesive design. Make sure light direction and intensity are unified, that the figure isn't creating any tangents, and that negative spaces serve the overall design. Use frequent horizontal flips to reveal problems you may have become accustomed to.

### PRO SECRETS

#### Organise with Smart Objects

Smart Objects help to ensure that complex illustrations remain manageable. I created the fly in a separate Photoshop file containing multiple complex layers and layer groups, then imported it (File>Place linked) into the Master image file, where it's a single layer. The Smart-Objects layer can then be transformed, flipped and layer adjusted while keeping the overall complexity of the master file at a minimum.

Photoshop

# HOW TO WORK UP A SPEEDPAINTING

**Alexander Nanitchkov** paints a card art image for Spellweaver, featuring a lizardman...

## Artist PROFILE

**Alexander Nanitchkov**

LOCATION: Bulgaria



Alexander is a traditional artist who's embraced the digital canvas

in recent years. His favourite subjects to explore are conceptual environments and character design.

<http://ifxm.ag/alexnan>

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**T**his illustration started as a speedpaint for Facebook group Daily Spitpaint, which is a useful composition exercise. The group comes up with daily topics, and members can create and post speedpaints as long as they're done within 30 minutes and without using photo-techniques. If any of my speedpainting concepts either have potential or were well accepted, then I turn them into fully developed artworks.

This concept was chosen and commissioned for Spellweaver, a card game that I've been working. It features a mythical race I've had a lot of fun with: lizardmen. I wanted to convey the character as strong and agile, and I used the pose, tail and even the strain on the rope, to hopefully achieve that.

When working I regularly flip the image horizontally to look for mistakes in composition or anatomy. At the end, I applied Smart Sharpen at 100 per cent to tighten up the image.

## Photobashing the rocks

I browse my personal photo library and pick out relevant rock and cliff-side imagery. Then I photobash and overpaint, using normal brushes and the Smudge tool. It's important to continue expanding a library of good-quality photos, pictures and textures in order to have a wide variety of options when photobashing.

How I create...

## A LIZARDMAN ON THE LOOK-OUT



### 1 Thumbnail for speed

I start off by working on thumbnail sketches of the character, to be used as silhouettes for the character's pose. Then I do a line sketch over the thumbnail, enhancing the pose, outfit and items.



### 2 Adding details

I paint the parts of the lizardman's body, in particular his hands with a Normal brush, followed by a strong Smudge effect. This helps me to refine the smaller details, such as the veins in his hand.



### 3 The final touches

Painting takes many hours of rendering. Next is some photobashing for the background rocks and clouds, and a lot of overpainting. I polish with the Smudge tool and made final touches with sharp brushes.

## Chest details

I spend extra time on references, to make sure the chest is anatomically realistic. I start with normal brushes and continue with a Smudge tool, to softly blend the normal brushes and incorporate values. I also use a rock texture brush on 50 per cent Opacity, to depict the scaly skin.



## Leading the eye

I use diagonal shapes within the shades, cliffs and the overall composition, to direct the viewer towards the focal point. I use flocks of birds, as well as vegetation details at different distances, to add depth of field and a sense of scale.

## RESOURCES

### WORKSHOP BRUSHES

#### PHOTOSHOP

##### CUSTOM BRUSHES: NORMAL BRUSH



Good for rendering and blending, sometimes on 20 per cent Opacity, but in most cases on 50 or more, with Flow on 100.

##### ROCK TEXTURE



Good for skin and rocks. Sometimes I use this brush on a separate layer with the Overlay option on, for even more depth.

##### BIRDS

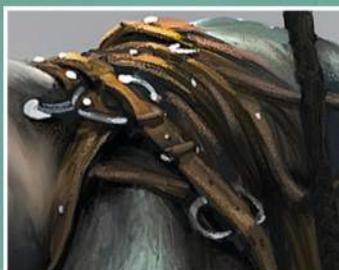


I find this brush comes in really useful for painting birds.

##### ARTBRUSH 1



Good for a more artistic approach. I also use it for aging surfaces, in this case the leather effect.



## History brush

I strive to give all the different materials a unique and realistic volume and texture, and dictate how they react to light. For the belt and quiver I use my custom artbrush1 (see right), set to Sample all Layers. This enables me to achieve a rougher, more artistic brushstroke with an interesting texture that can resemble leather.

*Artist insight*

# THE ANATOMY OF CARICATURE

**Loopydave** shares some of his approaches to anatomy in his exaggerated figure art. It may not be pretty, but then neither is he...

**Artist PROFILE**  
**Loopydave**  
**LOCATION:** Australia



Dave Dunstan, also known as Loopydave, is a freelance illustrator who hides out in his darkened studio cave in a secret location somewhere in Australia, surfacing occasionally to restock on peanut butter and caffeine, and to blink at the sun.  
<http://ifxm.ag/loopy-d>

**T**his is less of a technical look at anatomical construction, and more of an overview of my particular approach to using it in illustration work – and how this may be helpful to you.

As a full-time freelancer, I'm used to working across a range of styles. These include cartoon stuff for animation, mascots, children's books, medical-style technical illustrations, portraits, pin-ups, caricatures and book covers – topics that

are both serious and silly. One common factor in all of these is an understanding of anatomy, whether it's for a movie poster or a kid's comic. It's even useful for adding humour. After all, it can be handy to know where the funny bone is.

In this workshop we'll take a quick look at knowing and understanding the fundamentals, some useful ways to learn more, applying knowledge for effect and breaking rules after learning them – because who doesn't want to do that? I'll

also list a number of books that I've found helpful, possibly mention why I love painting hands so much and maybe even encourage you to pull some funny faces – so don't read this when other people are watching you. All this, plus some general and more specific tips, before leaving you to grab a pencil or stylus and create some work of your own.

Oh, and the funny bone? Despite what you may think, it's actually located between your ears.

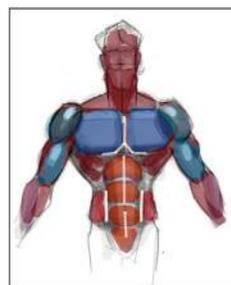
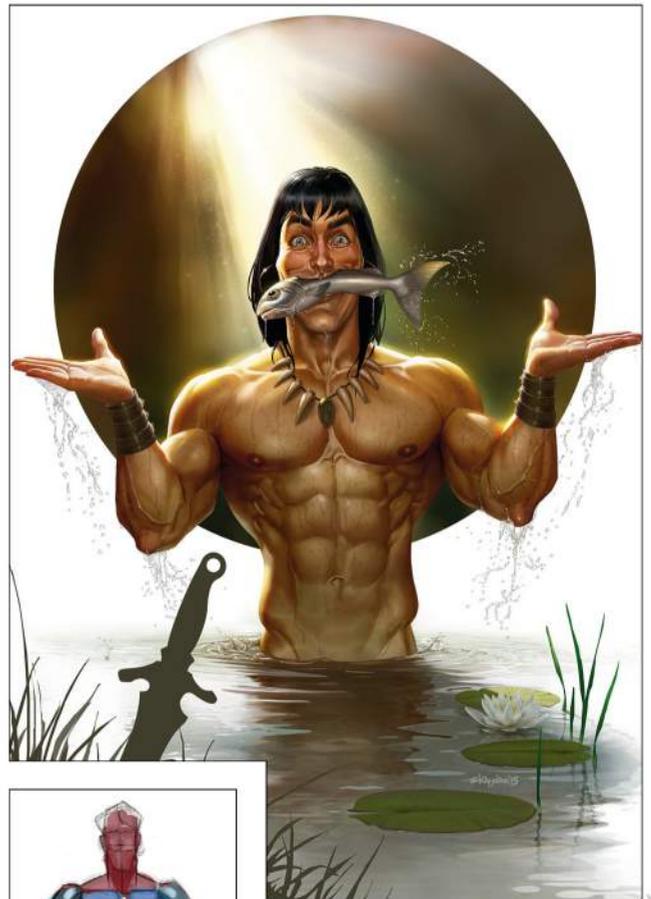


© John Bergerud, aka D.J. Shwinn.

## I KNOW YOUR FUNDAMENTALS

Whether you want to illustrate cartoony or more realistic character stuff, a good grounding in anatomy is pretty essential if you want to get the most out of what you do. You don't really need to know all the technical names (though it's handy to know that Gluteus Maximus wasn't the name of a Roman emperor), but you will want to know and understand the shapes of the various muscles from different angles, how they relate to each other, and how they act in different poses and actions.



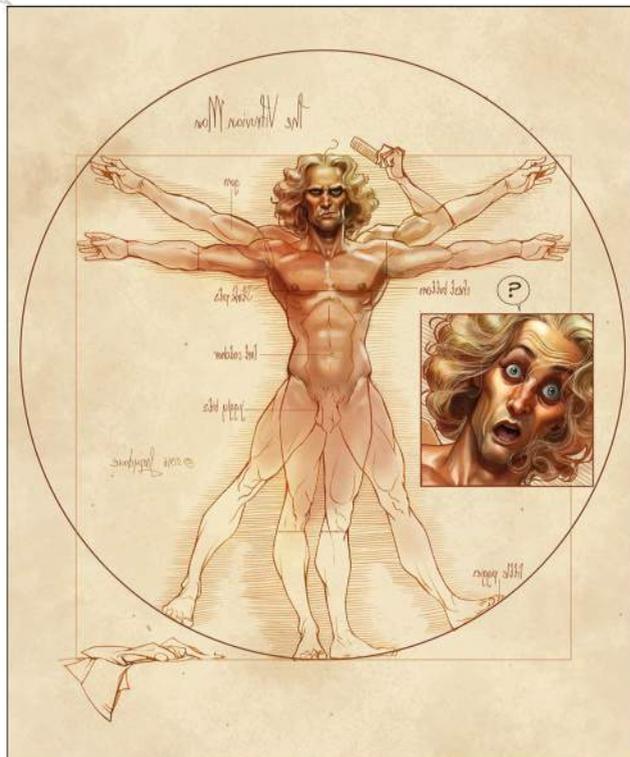


## 2 WHERE TO LEARN

I've learned from books, analysed the works of artists and practised from photos, but actual life drawing should be an essential part of your learning, too. Books will teach you ratios, where the muscles are and how they work, but life drawing will show you that every body is different and help you to sharpen your observational skills. Don't have access to life-drawing classes? Then try something like Croquis Cafe (<http://ifxm.ag/croquis-c>), an online figure-drawing class that's filmed in real time.

## 3 PROPORTIONS AND ANATOMY RULES

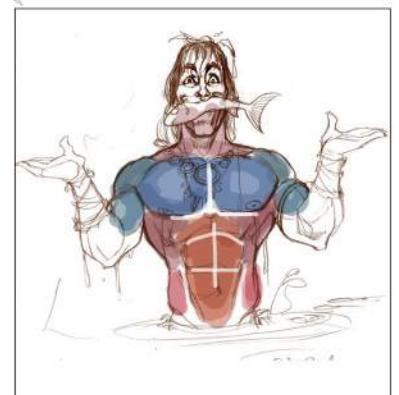
According to Leonardo's notes on his Vitruvian Man, an ideal figure is eight heads high. The common call is that an average person is around seven-and-a-half heads tall, while heroic proportions, such as with superheroes, often look more impressive at eight-and-a-half heads high. Good guides to know, particularly when you're having problems with drawing a figure, but maybe I'm just not an ideal or heroic kind of person, because I like to draw a slightly larger head and make the body more of a six to six-and-a-half head height, to give the image just a hint of caricature.



“Life drawing will show you that every body is different”

## 4 BUILD A FIGURE FROM SHAPES

Because this is ImagineFX's anatomy issue, I'm sure there'll be plenty of articles about breaking a figure down into its shapes and building it up from there, so I won't talk much about it, other than to say it's a great process to understand, particularly when repeating the same character from another angle. George Bridgman's book *The Human Machine* is an excellent resource for this approach, as is any of his other books on the topic. ➔





## 5 SHAPING UP WITH SHAPES

I like to work in a variety of styles, ranging from simple cartoons, to quite realistic. The unifying factor, particularly in terms of anatomy, is my love of shapes. Breaking down a figure into basic pieces and forms can be useful in understanding how things fit together. It's also fun to play with stylistically. If you look past the details here you'll notice that the image is built almost completely out of simple shapes.



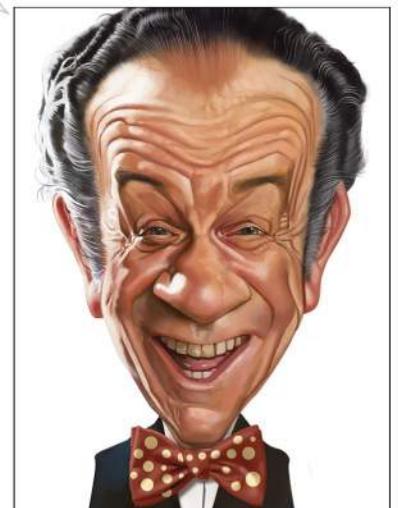
## 6 GIVE A BIG HAND FOR HANDS

Hands are both difficult and important. They can be just as expressive as a face and, at their very least, should complement the action or pose of the character. You can't fudge your way past them either – people notice. I usually spend nearly as much time painting hands as I do faces. I've found some comic book art useful for learning expressive gestures, instructors like George Bridgman are great for building shapes, while photos and using the mirror for detail and anatomy books are good for understanding structure. My goal is one day to graduate from doing good hands to doing great ones. Rule of thumb: don't get lazy on hands.



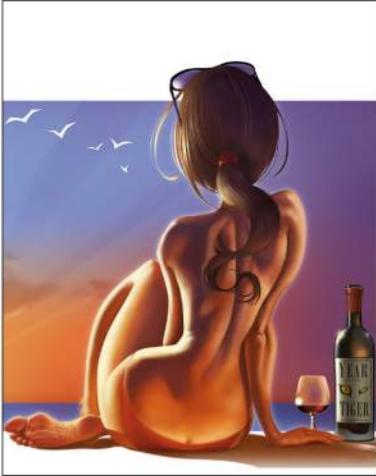
## 7 FUN WITH FACES

There are handy proportional guidelines for drawing faces, particularly useful when working without reference. Remember that they're guidelines and not rules, though: no two faces are alike and the fun part comes when playing with the ideal. I know I like to raise the eyebrow line higher than is natural for extra expression when I draw, as well as toy with nose length and the mouth-to-chin placement.



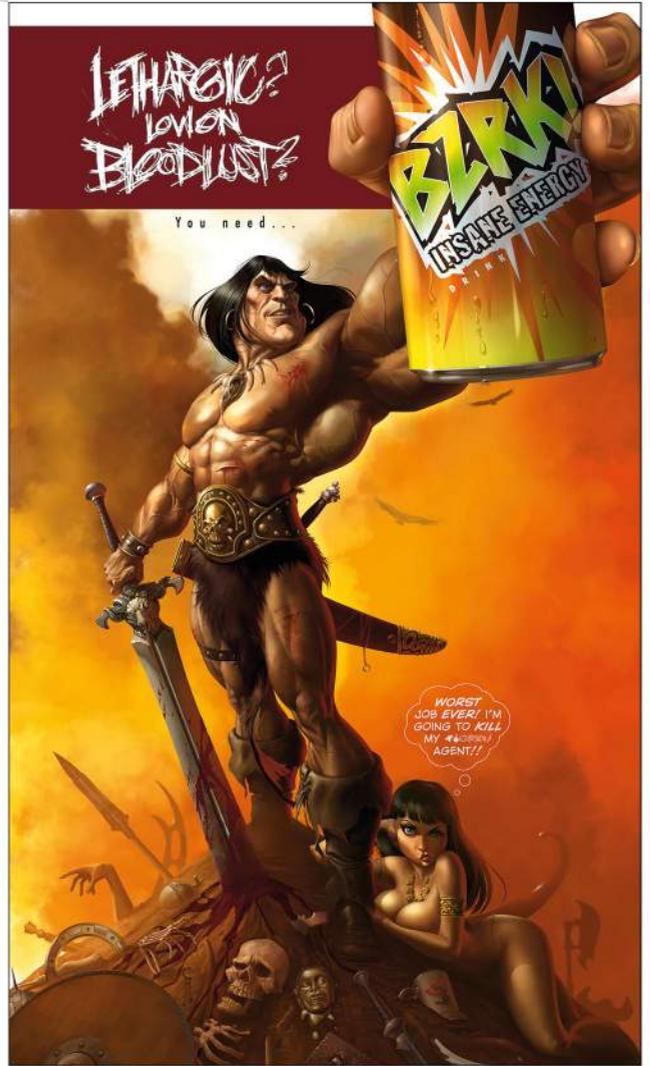
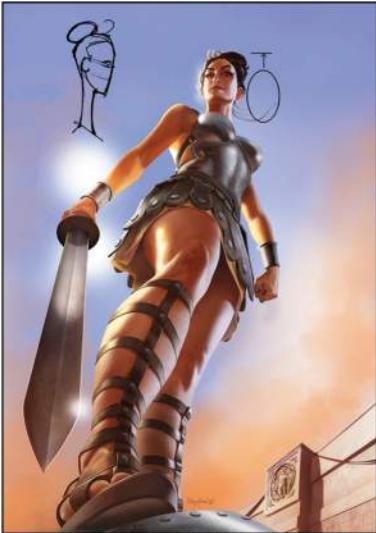
## 8 EXAGGERATION

A basic understanding of the structure of a figure and how the muscles relate to one another makes it possible to add a level of believability to the ridiculous. In this tribute to the late, great Frank Frazetta, both the message and the anatomy are pretty silly. The perspective is wonky, but hopefully what binds it together is the attention to anatomical detail. That, and an insanely caffeinated sugar drink.



## 9 BREAKING THE RULES

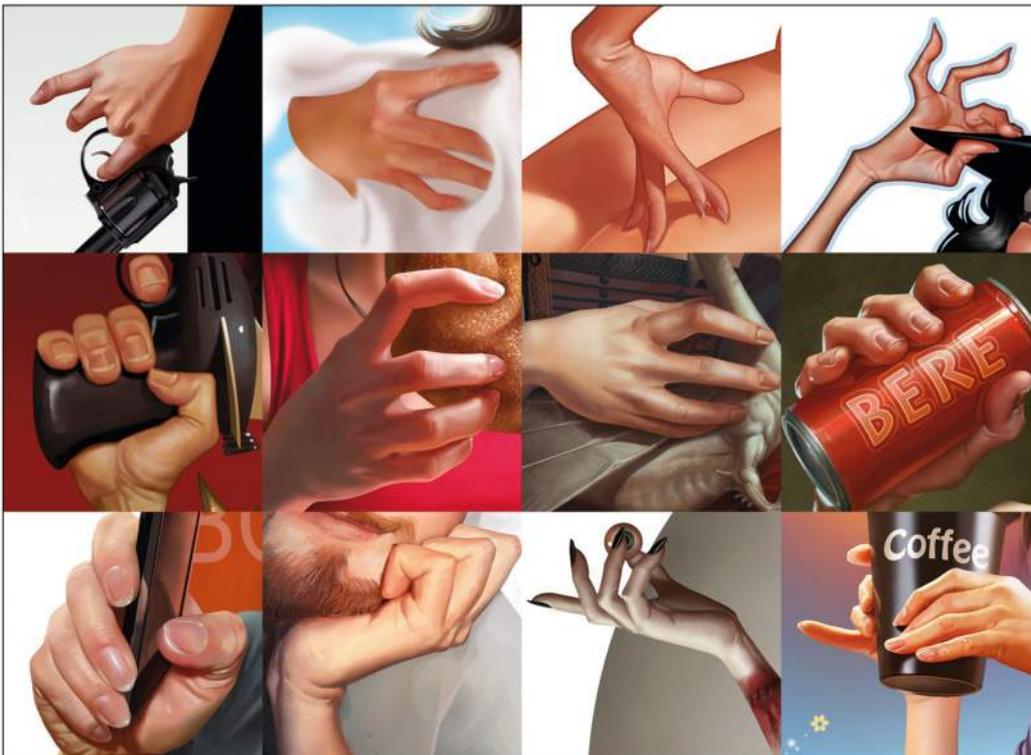
Even when I'm doing more realistic pieces, anatomical knowledge can be just as useful for knowing when to break the rules for effect as for adhering to them. For this Modesty Blaise image, which appeared on the cover of Agent X9 magazine, I deliberately gave her an unnaturally long neck. This gives the viewer a clearer picture of her face (it being the most important clue to the character's identity) and also adds, I think, a little elegance to a strong pose. The problem is, now that I've pointed this out, it's going to bother you... so let's just go back to before you read this and pretend I never said anything!



“No two faces are alike and it's fun to play with the ideal”

## 10 YOU CAN NEVER PRACTISE ENOUGH

As a young, jobbing artist who was desperately keen to boost his skill set, I soon got into the habit of taking a sketch book wherever I went, and drew people on buses, trains and in meetings. I looked through something like a fashion magazine and drew every hand I saw. Then another day I drew every ear I saw, and so on. This way I became familiar with individual bits of anatomy and also how they vary from person to person. ➔





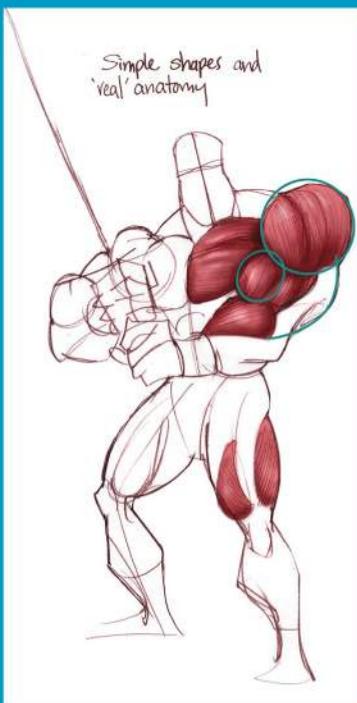
## 11 IMAGINARY ANATOMY

If you understand how anatomy works on something real and living, then you can apply the same principles to creating fictitious creatures and imaginary monsters, giving them more of a sense of believability and a place in the natural world. This isn't a particularly difficult stretch in this Monster Fest poster art, because the imaginary creature here deliberately has a bit of a 'man in a rubber monster suit' look about him, but the principle still applies.

“A character's pose and position should contribute to the story”

## MIX ACCURACY WITH EXAGGERATION

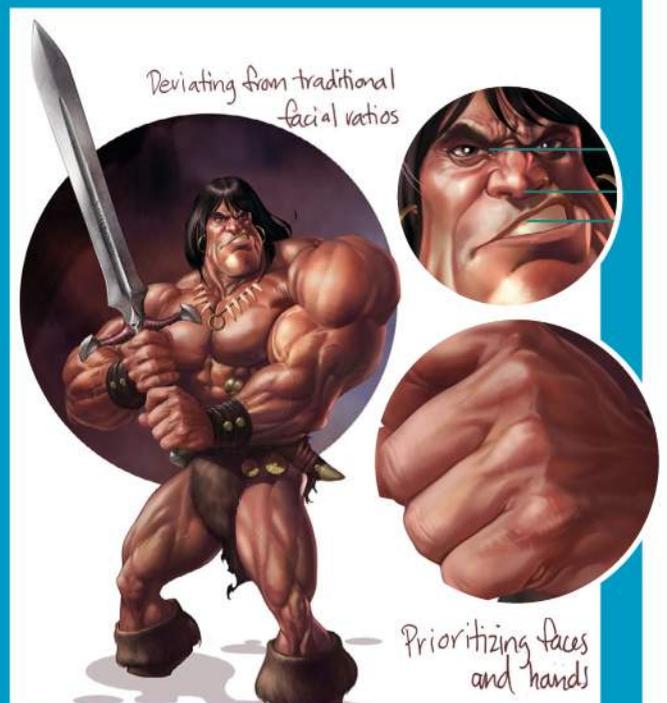
Once you've grasped the basics of anatomy, you can bring the fun into your character art by emphasizing certain body elements to suit the story you're telling, says Loopydave



**1 Simple shapes**  
This character piece features simple shapes that are still grounded in actual anatomy with room for exaggeration and yes, some deliberate inaccuracies for the sake of style - in this case, in the front shoulder.



**2 Head-to-height ratio**  
I'm aware of the more traditional seven- to eight-head height character ideal, but I like the effect I achieve with a six-head height. Maybe I figured that if his arms are the size of his head, he was plenty heroic already!



**3 Asymmetry adds visual interest**  
I really enjoy playing around with facial ratios and I like to avoid too much symmetry in my characters' features or expressions. I was once asked if my preference for uneven eye sizes was a drug thing and I had to assure them it was not... although I do know that I was dropped on my head as a kid, which probably explains a lot!

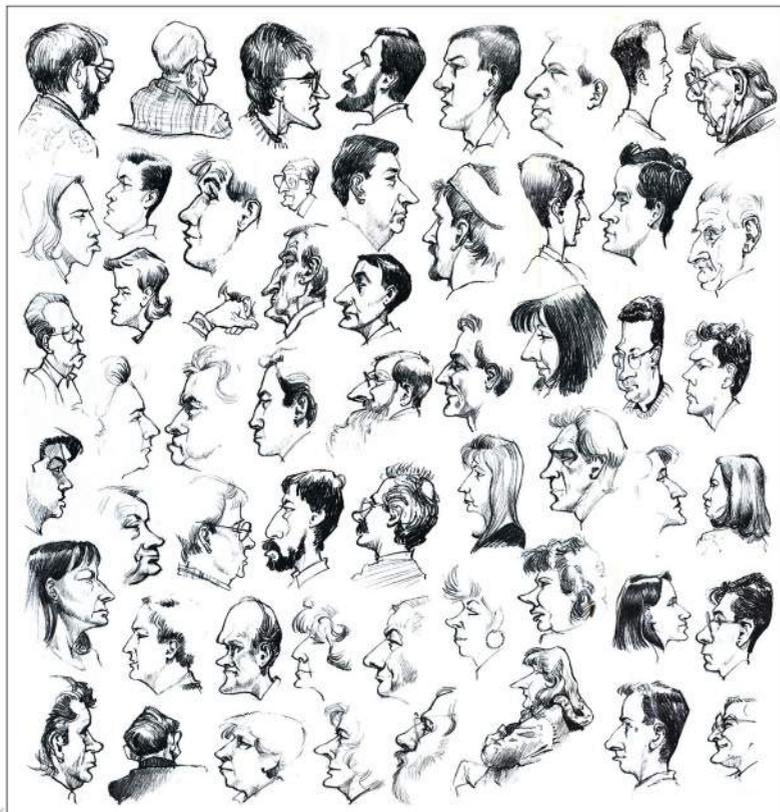
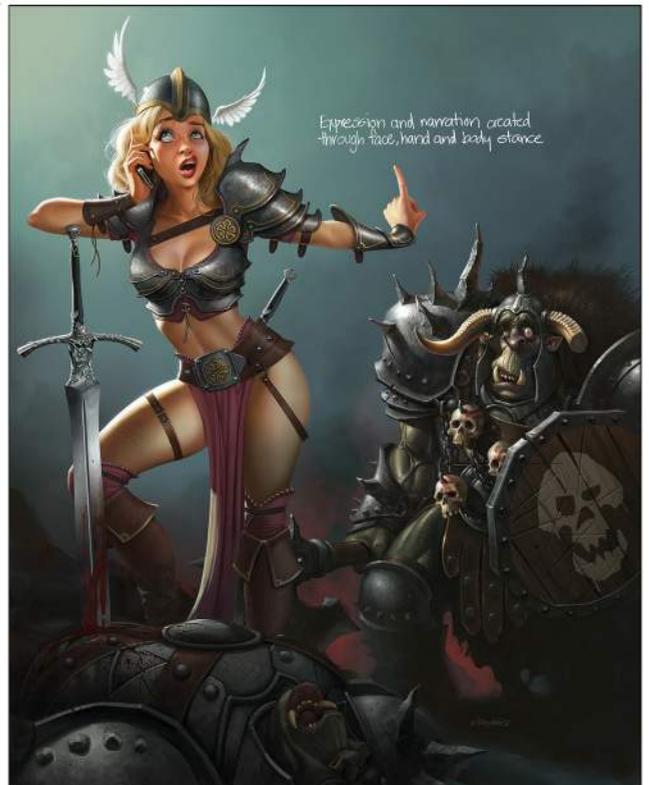


## 12 USE SHAPES TO DEPICT HAIR IN STAGES

While technically not part of human anatomy, I approach a character's hair much the same as when drawing up a figure, by breaking it down into basic shapes to create form and placement. After drawing up the shapes I then paint them in as similarly coloured blocks, before breaking them down into smaller parts and finally, painting individual hairs.

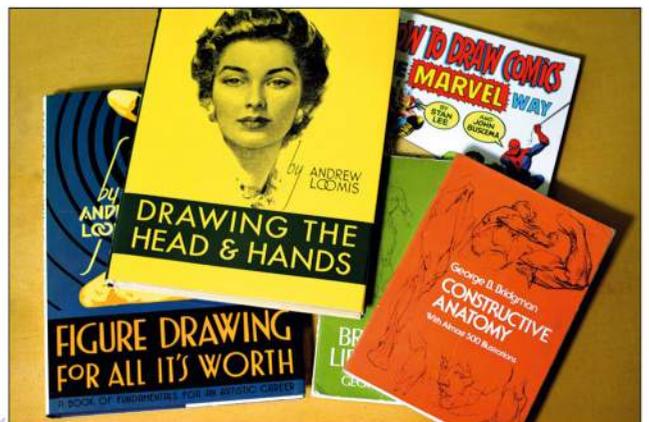
## 13 ANATOMICAL STORYTELLING

A character's pose and position should all contribute to the story behind the picture. Not only the facial expression or hand gestures, but also the stance and body language. When I was younger, I found artists with strong cartoon sensibilities, such as Uderzo, helpful for learning to tell a story through a simple stance or pose, no matter what style I was working in.



## 14 TURN FACES INTO CARICATURES

Want to improve your face drawing skills? Along with portrait practice, try doing some caricatures as well. It'll help you learn to pick up the features that define a person quicker, as well as helping you to see things a little differently. Friends and family are usually willing to sit for you, if you promise them chocolate at the end of it.



## 15 SOME USEFUL RESOURCES

Here's a selection of titles that are well worth adding to your book collection. George Bridgman's Constructive Anatomy and The Human Machine; and Andrew Loomis' Drawing the Head and Hands and Figure Drawing for All It's Worth. Finally, the Stan Lee and John Buscemi book, How to Draw Comics the Marvel Way was useful to me as a kid, too.

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

CARD ART SPECIAL

# MAGIC

## The Gathering®

The art secrets behind the latest spellbinding card set from Wizards of the Coast

**ISSUE 136 ON SALE** *Friday 20 May 2016*



Including art by Will Murai, plus  
Jaime Jones, Anastasi Ovchin,  
James Ryman and more...



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## Featuring...

### **Card art masterclass**

Create a stunning card art character with our cover artist Anna Steinbauer



### **Animal instinct**

Rovina Cai turns 1,000 furry forms into abstract, monochrome beast art

### **North Front Studio**

Meet the Toronto-based game art studio that's re-inventing space travel

### **Warped wonderland**

Take a look inside the fantasy sketchbook of Rodney Matthews





*3Ds Max, ZBrush, KeyShot, Photoshop*  
**QUICKLY KITBASH YOUR 3D MODELS**

**Pascal Blanché** shows how he takes existing 3D models and uses a combination of techniques to develop a striking science fiction figure

**Artist PROFILE**  
**Pascal Blanché**  
 LOCATION: Canada



Pascal has been part of the gaming industry for more than 20 years, working as senior art director at Ubisoft Montreal, and as a freelance artist.  
<http://ifxm.ag/blanche-p>

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

**K**itbashing is a technique used for building scale models for films. It was pioneered during the making of Star Wars, and essentially uses commercially available model elements to create new designs. By adapting this approach in 3D software, an artist is able to create complex designs relatively quickly.

This workshop will show you the simple steps I use to expand the possibilities of your designs. Here I'll be focusing on pieces of armour, but you can

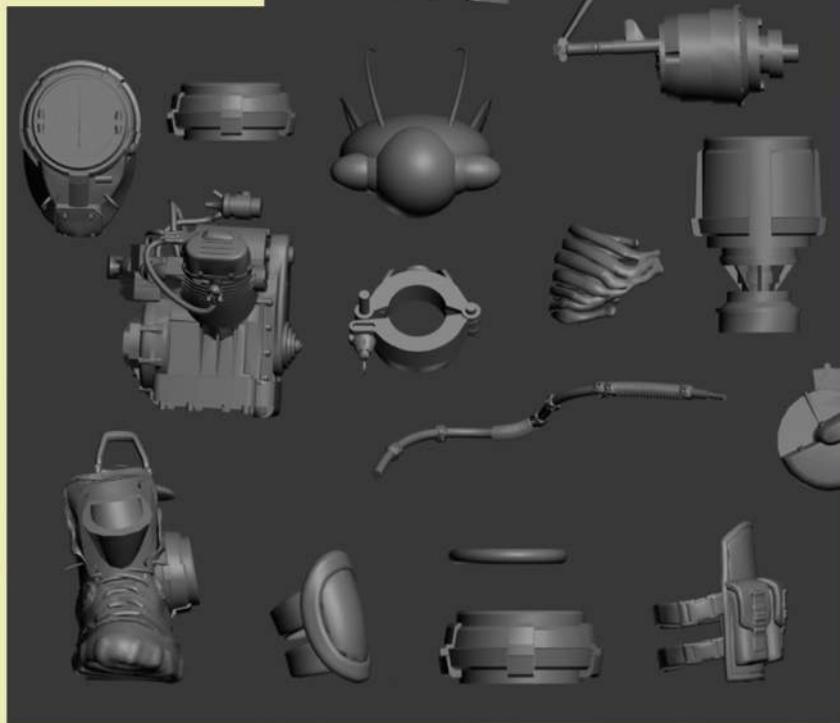
easily extend the technique to vehicles or creature designs as well.

Kitbashing has two main advantages. First, it enables you to explore new shapes and designs you wouldn't have thought of right away. It's like working out shapes and structures using custom brushes. Second, it doesn't require a high level of technical knowledge or time.

I view this technique as a useful first step for exploring shapes before getting to the real thing. For 2D artists it can become a powerful means of coming up

with new ideas and designs. For instance, this technique could then be combined with a 2D paintover stage to achieve concept art pieces.

Kitbashing requires a bit of research to start with. There are plenty of collections of 3D elements to be found online. You can look for greebles, nurnies or basic 3D models that already contain useful elements, such as tanks or motorbikes. You can download the 3D objects used in this workshop free from my Gumroad page: <https://gumroad.com/l/RMmv>.

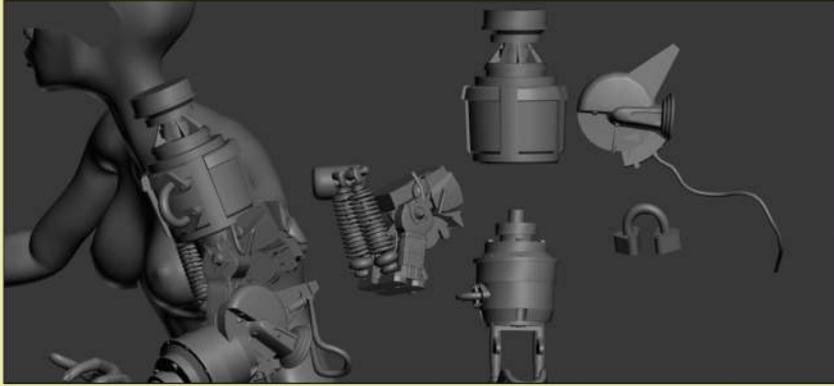


**1 Start a collection of nurnies and grebes**

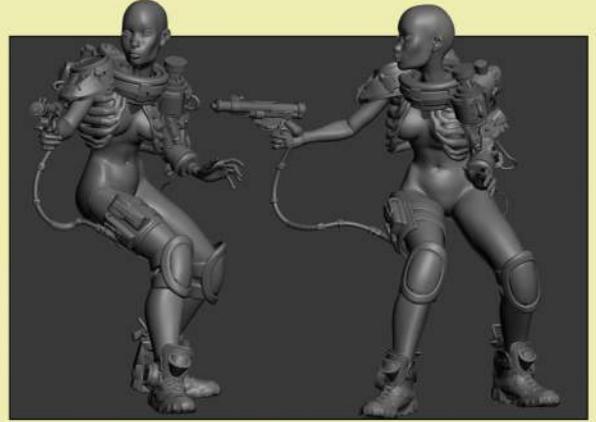
Start collecting parts using nurnies and grebes, or download all the elements I'll be using in this workshop from my Gumroad page (<https://gumroad.com/pascalblanche>). They are mainly pieces of motorbikes and some made-up items that I've collected and created over the years. But instead of mechanical parts, you could also start with insect bits, or bones and skulls. There are so many things to try and combine – the possibilities are endless.

**2 Let's get kitbashing**

I use my model as a first-base reference to build up the armour. I use 3ds Max, but any 3D package will be fine. You only need to move and rotate objects around. I'll be starting with a pose, then dressing up the character in armour. A pose that's established early on helps to give the subject a purpose, so you can then concentrate on the general look instead of practicalities. In my mind, the look of a design comes first, then I try to find a way to make it work, rather than the other way around. ➔



**3 Give yourself plenty of possibilities**  
When kitbashing, I tend to try out different combinations and always look for a good general silhouette, whether it's a character or vehicle. It's important not to limit yourself to existing elements. Sometimes it's also good to build up basic shapes and finish up with greeble elements. That's how I start to work on the torso part: I begin with a ring around the neck, then add a ribcage and finish with some more motorbike elements.

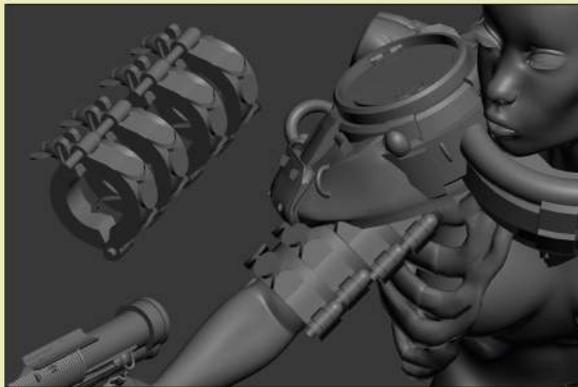


**4 Sometimes, less is more**  
I look for rhythm and balance. Readability is key, and an overabundance of elements will create too much visual noise. Complexity is good, but you need to be careful. For this design, for instance, I chose to buff up the upper torso and shoulders, and give the rest of the figure a simple, clean appearance. I add big boots to provide some balance.

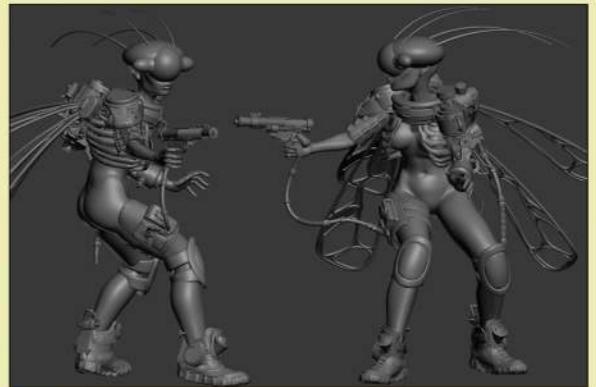
**PRO SECRETS**

**Use the Dam Standard brush**

The Dam Standard brush is a powerful one, used by many ZBrush professionals. Its effect greatly changes depending on its size and intensity. It can create very natural depressions for veins, clothes or hard-edge depressions for more mechanical shapes when used in combination with the Lazy Mouse. It gives you great sculpting possibilities and is definitely a brush worth investing time in.



**5 Repetition of shapes**  
One rule of good character design is to play with the repetition of shapes. Try to use only a limited set of elements (between three and five) with simpler elements that you can duplicate to build up a good sense of rhythm in the design. The viewer's eye won't notice it at first, but the use of patterns and repetition creates a strong shape language.



**6 Check the silhouette's readability**  
A silhouette should work from at least two points of view. From each you should still be able to read all the key elements. I like to think of my characters like possible sculpts, with a good balance of dynamic lines and patterns. I decide to explore an insect theme, such as a bee or wasp. I create a rough helmet design with bug eyes and antennae, and add wing-like shapes.



**Shortcuts**

Sort brushes  
Brush's initial letter  
(Mac & PC)

In ZBrush, quickly jump to those brushes that start with a certain letter.



**7 Export from 3ds Max into ZBrush**  
I consider each group of elements as one set and separate each armour set. I also separate each set with different colours. For export purposes I use the .OBJ format. When importing the files in ZBrush, the default settings work fine. I import them separately, then pick the main body and append all the elements I import into the Subtool manager to put all the pieces together.



**8 DynaMesh is your friend**  
In ZBrush, I select one of the elements I imported and go to Tools>Geometry>DynaMesh. The only value you need to change is the resolution. By default it's set at 128. Click DynaMesh to give it a try. I play around and find that 800 seems good enough. I save on a regular basis here, as pushing the definition too high can cause crashes on some computers.



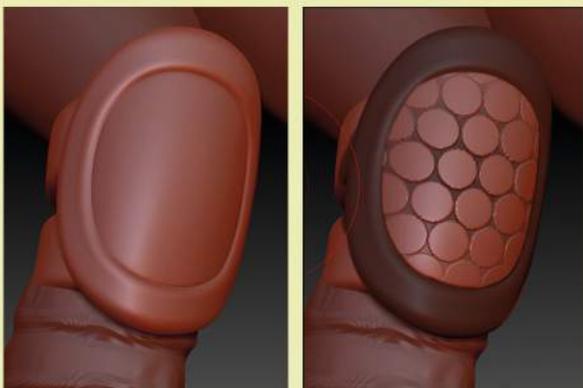
## 9 Start sculpting the figure

Using a Standard brush, I refine and create more consistency between the various adjoining shapes. I remove little annoying details, like geometry that pops out, or bad connections between objects. I also rework the flow of the shapes. I squint to look for shapes, and when I see something interesting, I resculpt it, to help it become what it's trying to be.



## 10 Adding details where appropriate

When the general flow of object feels right, I do a quick pass with the Clay-Build brush, to add more shapes here and there. I also use ZBrush's own kitbashing brushes. IMM (Insert Multi Mesh) brushes are sets of ready-to-use elements. I select one and press M to open the element list, choose an object and drag it to my mesh. When I'm happy with its size and position, I drag a square on to the canvas. I carry out a DynaMesh pass when I'm done.



## 11 The next level of detail

Alphas are a simple way to sculpt interesting surface details. Using the Masking tool, the Drag rectangle and some alphas, you can draw complex shapes. Once masking is set, I use a Standard brush, with a large Stroke and low Intensity, to determine where I want the model to be pushed in or out. Then I use more traditional sculpting to exaggerate lines and fade others.



*Shortcuts*  
**Edit mode**  
 T (Mac & PC)  
 In ZBrush, enter Edit mode when you drag and drop a new brush on to the canvas, to get the most from it.

## 12 Weathering using masking techniques

Another good trick to introduce details quickly is to use the Masking tool. Among other features, you can mask by Cavity, Smoothness (my favourite), and Peaks and Valleys, and achieve interesting results. After trying a preset I hit the Mask by... button. ZBrush automatically determines masking areas by following an object's topology. I then use a Standard brush to push topology in and out, until I'm happy with the results.



## 13 Cleaning and simplifying

From experience, I've found at this stage of the process that there are two tools that can produce good results quickly. The Clay Polish tool gives my art a more sharp and flattened look. I would recommend combining it with the Mask by Smoothness tool, to keep all those small details alive.



## 14 Keeping it smooth

The second trick for polishing kitbashed work without losing much detail is to use the Smooth Peaks brush (hold Shift and click the Smooth Brush icon). It will flatten and smooth large areas, while keeping ridges intact. You don't have to do this, but if you want a model to look more polished, then it's well worth a try.

**PRO SECRETS**  
**Use the Lazy Mouse option**  
 On the Options menu, activate the Lazy Mouse mode. It creates a dynamic drag and a tension when you use your brushes and gives you perfect control of your line work. I usually set it up to 30 for better precision. Keep in mind that using Lazy Mouse will require you to boost your output a bit, depending on the brush.



# Ready to play

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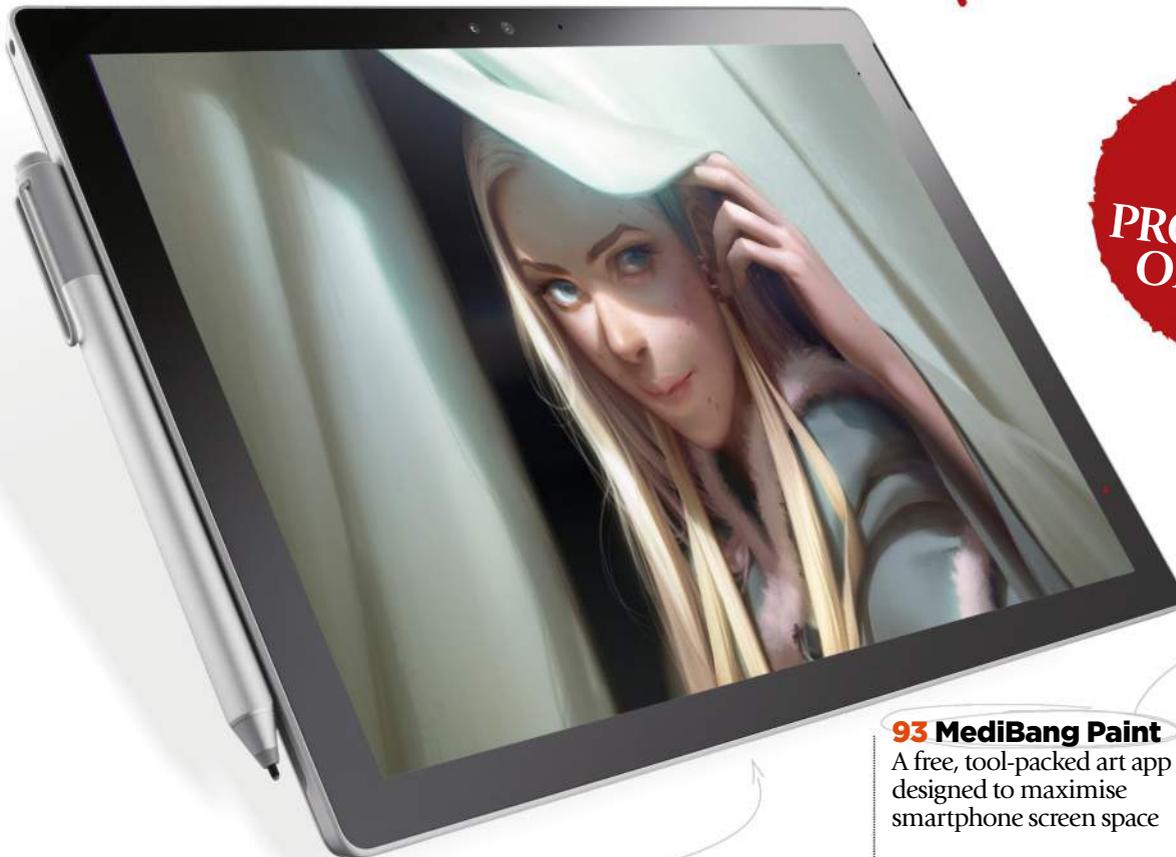
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# NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX Reviews



**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...



8  
PRODUCTS  
ON TEST



#### HARDWARE

##### 90 Microsoft Surface Pro 4

Will this Windows wonder woo fantasy and sci-fi artists with its excellent stylus and creative software capability?

##### 91 Fuji X70

Fuji takes the inners of its popular compact camera and squeezes them into a smaller body.

#### SOFTWARE

##### 91 PixelSquid

Manipulate a library of excellent 3D objects in Photoshop without needing any 3D experience.



##### 93 MediBang Paint

A free, tool-packed art app that's designed to maximise smartphone screen space



#### TRAINING

##### 95 Anatomy Workshop: Structure and Anatomy of the Arm

Artist and teacher Charles Hu revives his series on anatomy basics with an in-depth exploration of how to draw arms.



#### BOOKS

##### 96 Further reading

The Art of Fable Legends; Movie Posters Re-imagined; The Anatomy of Style: Figure Drawing Techniques.



RATINGS EXPLAINED Magnificent Great Good Poor Atrocious



The low-glare screen is truly brilliant and lines are displayed sharp and crisp.



The Pro 4 comes with a USB 3.0, mini DisplayPort and microSD card reader.



The tablet boasts an 8MP rear-facing, auto-focus camera (1080p HD) and a 5MP front-facing, 1080p HD camera.

## Surface Pro 4

**MOBILE SKETCHER** Will Microsoft's new Windows wonder, with its excellent stylus, outstanding screen and creative software capability, be enough to woo digital artists?

**Price** From £749 **Company** Microsoft **Web** [www.microsoftstore.com](http://www.microsoftstore.com)

**A**s touchscreens, graphics tablets and mobile devices begin to merge, all kinds of new options are appearing for artists. But it's hard to pick out something pro-grade enough for the serious artist that's also light on the wallet.

Microsoft's Surface Pro 4 certainly gets pro billing from its maker. It's a 12.3-inch tablet that comes with a stylus, and because it runs Windows 10 it can also handle the likes of Photoshop and Painter.

What really shines about Surface Pro 4 is its screen. The resolution of

2,736 x 1,824 at 267PPI means it's very crisp. It's bright too, with vibrant colour, and you'll have no problem using it outdoors on a sunny day.

The Surface Pen offers 1,048 levels of pressure sensitivity – four times better than Surface Pro 3's pen, but half the pressure sensitivity of the Wacom equivalent. Whether you notice 1,048 levels of sensitivity is

latency when drawing, similar to the iPad Pro. When not in use the pen snaps neatly to the side of the tablet.

Surface Pro 4 won't replace a top-level Cintiq, but then it doesn't cost over £2,000. If you want one to run Photoshop et al, you'll probably need a Surface with Intel Core i5 processor, 8GB RAM and 256GB SSD storage, at £1,049 (£109 more for a keyboard).

**“The screen resolution is very crisp. It's bright too, with vibrant colour and you'll have no problem outdoors”**

another matter. But the glide and traction feel smooth and natural when drawing. For an extra £10, you can order a set of tips meant to simulate 2H, H, HB and B pencil grades. B delivers greater friction for a softer graphite, while 2H translates to less friction and somewhat skates across the screen. Flip the pen around, and there's an eraser on the other tip – a nice touch that you don't get with Apple Pencil. There's a tiny bit of

At this price and spec, Surface Pro 4 beats Wacom's Cintiq Companion, which runs on Windows and runs Photoshop and Painter, but costs over £1,500. However, Surface gets stiffer competition from a similarly specced 12.9-inch iPad Pro at £949 (plus £79 for the Apple Pencil). For a tablet as your main device, on a budget, Surface Pro 4 is a great choice. However, for a secondary device, a 12.9-inch iPad Pro probably has the edge. ●

Microsoft has nearly perfected the glide/friction quotient with the Surface Pen.



### DETAILS

#### Features

- 12.3-inch 2,736 x 1,824 PixelSense Display
- Intel Core m3, i5 or i7 processor
- Graphics – m3: Intel HD Graphics 515. i5: Intel HD Graphics 520. i7: Intel Iris
- 4GB, 8GB or 16GB RAM
- 128GB, 256GB or 512GB SSD storage
- Windows 10 Pro OS
- Surface Pen with 1,048 levels of pressure sensitivity
- Weighs 786g
- 292.10 x 201.42 x 8.45mm
- Up to 9 hours battery life
- 8MP rear-facing, auto-focus camera
- 5MP front-facing, 1080p HD camera (1080p HD)

#### Rating



A classic look but a thoroughly modern snapper.



## Fuji X70

**SLIMLINE** The inners of Fuji's popular compact camera in a smaller body

**Price** £549

**Company** Fuji

**Web** [www.fujifilm.com](http://www.fujifilm.com)

**RATING**

Fuji's compact cameras have proved very popular, but some find the APS-C format X100T too big and the 2/3-inch sensor in the X30 too small. Well the X70 could be just right.

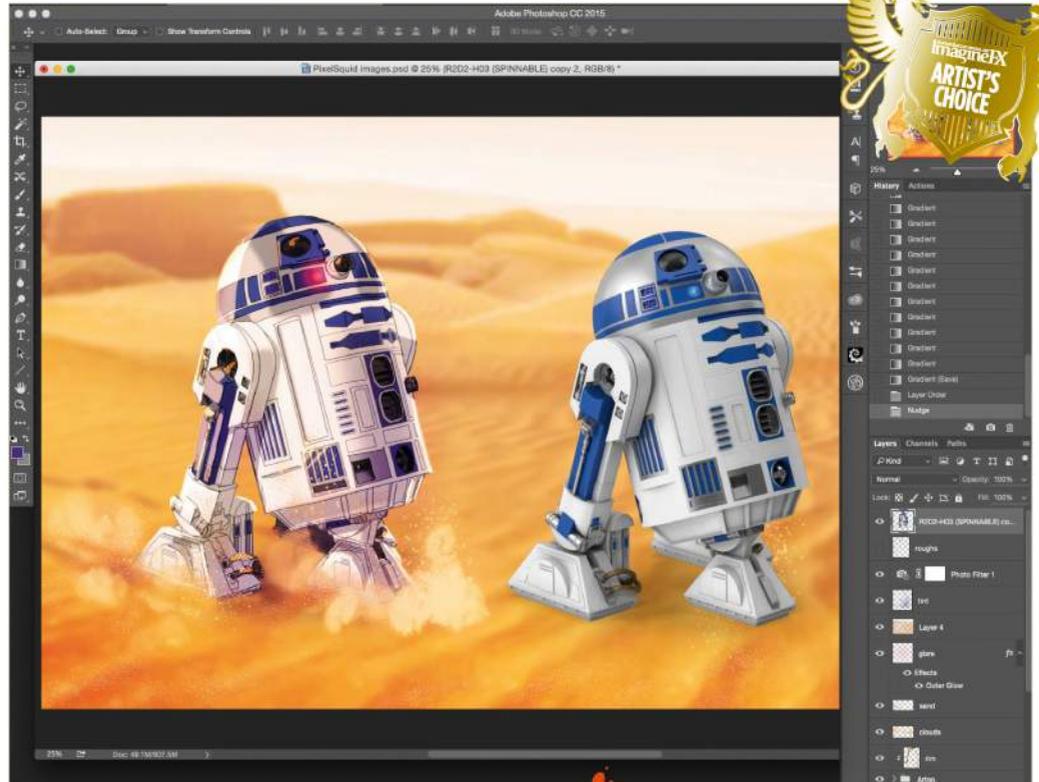
The new camera is aimed at enthusiast and pro photographers, and potentially artists, who want a compact camera with the better-than-average image quality that a larger sensor provides. There's the traditional styling and control with a lens ring for aperture adjustment. It has markings running in whole stops from f/2.8 to f/16 – and adjustment in 1/3 stops.

This new camera has the same 16.3MP APS-C format X-Trans CMOS II sensor and EXR Processor II as the X100T. However, these are joined by a new Fujinon 18.5mm f/2.8 lens which gives an effective focal length of 28mm, significantly wider than the 35mm (equivalent) lens on the X100T. There are also digital 'teleconverter' options that crop images to replicate 35mm and 50mm framing with interpolation to maintain image size.

With its decent quality images, delightful retro-style body and light footprint, it's an ideal camera to have handy in your bag for shooting reference, or even model shots in the studio.



It has similar controls to X-series compacts, and a lens ring for aperture adjustment.



## PixelSquid

MAC & PC

PixelSquid includes lots of licensed models from popular properties, which can help you draw them correctly for your own artwork.

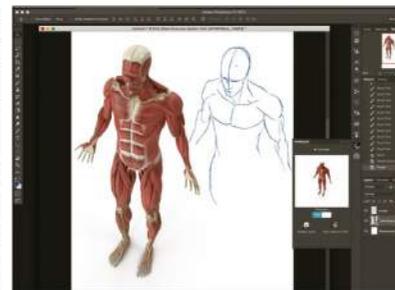
**PIXEL PERFECT** Manipulate a library of excellent 3D objects in Photoshop without needing any 3D experience

**Price** Free **Company** TurboSquid **Web** [www.pixelsquid.com](http://www.pixelsquid.com)

**P**ixelSquid is a Photoshop plugin that enables you to add, place and rotate photorealistic 3D objects directly. Helpfully, you don't have to worry about needing to know anything at all 3D related, because although you're rotating the images in Photoshop, they're still just 2D Smart Objects.

There are thousands of high-quality photo-based images in the PixelSquid library, and each of these "spinnable" objects are editable and adaptable. You can have up to 100 items in your lightbox at any one time and can replace them with more objects from the website. Objects in your library can then be added to your compositions in Photoshop. Each object in the library is available at any angle and as either transparent PNG or layered PSD files.

Those working in versions of Photoshop older than CC 2014 will need to rely on the PixelSquid website to find an object, get the perfect angle for your design, then download the file. But if you're running a new version, it's much better to use the plugin as you



PixelSquid's collection of models can be used for reference drawings and working out how something looks from more tricky angles.

can resize the Smart Object and tweak its rotation within your Photoshop document. Once satisfied, you can download a high-resolution PNG or a PSD file. The PSD files have a range of options to make editing them even easier and you can edit sections by selecting their base colours.

PixelSquid is a great asset for making photo comp images, using the models as drawing aids to be used as roughs to help you visualise an image, or as part of a paintover piece. Essentially, it's awesome and it's free. You should download it right now.

## DETAILS

### Features

- Spin and resize 3D models in Photoshop
- Download objects as PNGs or layered PSDs
- PSDs contain editable lighting layers and separate shadows
- High-quality photo-realistic models
- Easy to use
- Themed collections include licensed properties such as Star Wars and Batman v Superman
- Speeds up your workflow considerably
- Models can also be downloaded via PixelSquid's website
- Refresh your catalogue from within the Photoshop plugin
- New models constantly added

### System Requirements

**PC:** Photoshop 2014 or later  
**Mac:** Photoshop 2014 or later

### Rating

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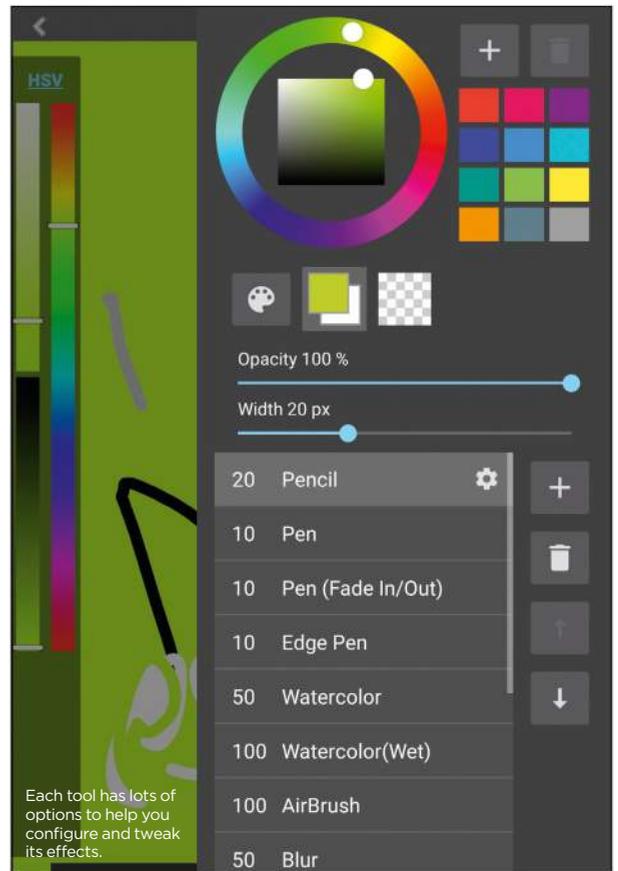
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Issue 208 on sale now!





# MediBang Paint

**MOBILE DRAWING** A free, tool-packed art app that maximises smartphone screen space

**Price** Free **Company** MediBang **Web** <http://medibangpaint.com/en>

**M**ediBang Paint is a free app that turns your smartphone or tablet into a portable digital canvas, making it possible to create art almost anywhere. Despite the absence of a price tag, MediBang Paint doesn't include any adverts that plague some free apps, but you do need to sign up for a MediBang account to get the most out of it.

Once you've selected your first blank canvas, you're shown a brief walkthrough on how to use the various

contextual interface makes it possible to configure the tools and fine-tune the effects, making it easy to create art that suits your painting style, all while making sure your screen doesn't become too cluttered or complicated.

The amount of tools on offer is impressive, with many included you'd often find in a full and expensive desktop application. Layers, for example, can be easily added and manipulated, while the amount of control you have over colour, brushes and effects helps enormously.

**“The interface is clear and feels like a lot of thought has gone into making it work on smartphone screens”**

tools. The interface is clear and uncluttered, and it seems like a lot of thought has been put into making it work on smartphone screens, where space can be scarce.

Shortcuts to the drawing tools, along with essentials such as being able to save your work, are situated at the top and bottom of the screen, with the colour selection on the left. This layout allows for most of the screen to be given over to the canvas itself, giving you plenty of room to use the touchscreen of your device to draw.

Depending on the tools you select, more options will appear, and this

Drawing on the canvas, using either finger or stylus, feels fluid and natural, with brush strokes accurately appearing on the canvas. There was no perceptible lag – and we weren't using a particularly powerful or new handset, either. If you sign up for a free MediBang account you can cloud-save your creations to the internet – handy if you want to transfer your art to another device to free up storage space – and download more objects and backgrounds.

Overall, MediBang Paint is an excellent app that enables you to paint while on the go – especially considering that it's free.

## DETAILS

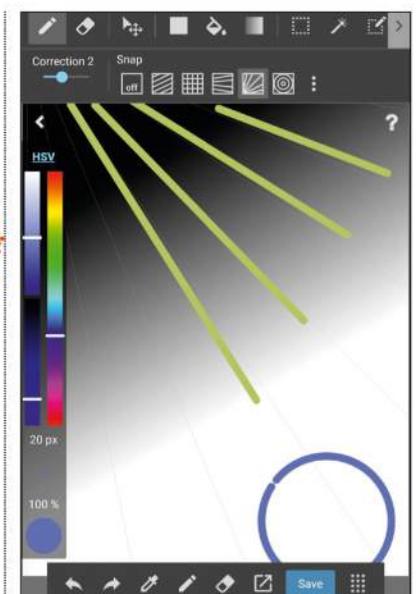
### Features

- Over 50 brushes
- Over 800 materials
- Cloud features let you save your art to the internet and work on them with others
- Collapsible windows can increase your drawing space
- Customisable shortcuts for accessing favourite tools and features
- Snap guides help draw lines and curves with precision
- Pre-made backgrounds
- Comic panel and organisation tools
- Large selection of free fonts pre-installed
- Minimalist interface for tablet and smartphone devices

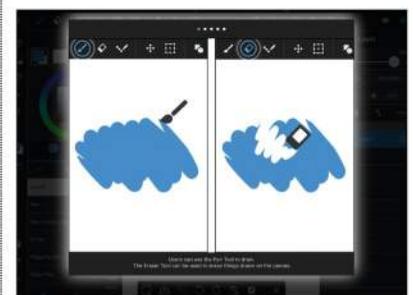
### System Requirements

**Android:** Android 4.0 or later  
**Apple:** iPhone 5S or later, iPad 4th Gen, iPad mini 2 or later

### Rating

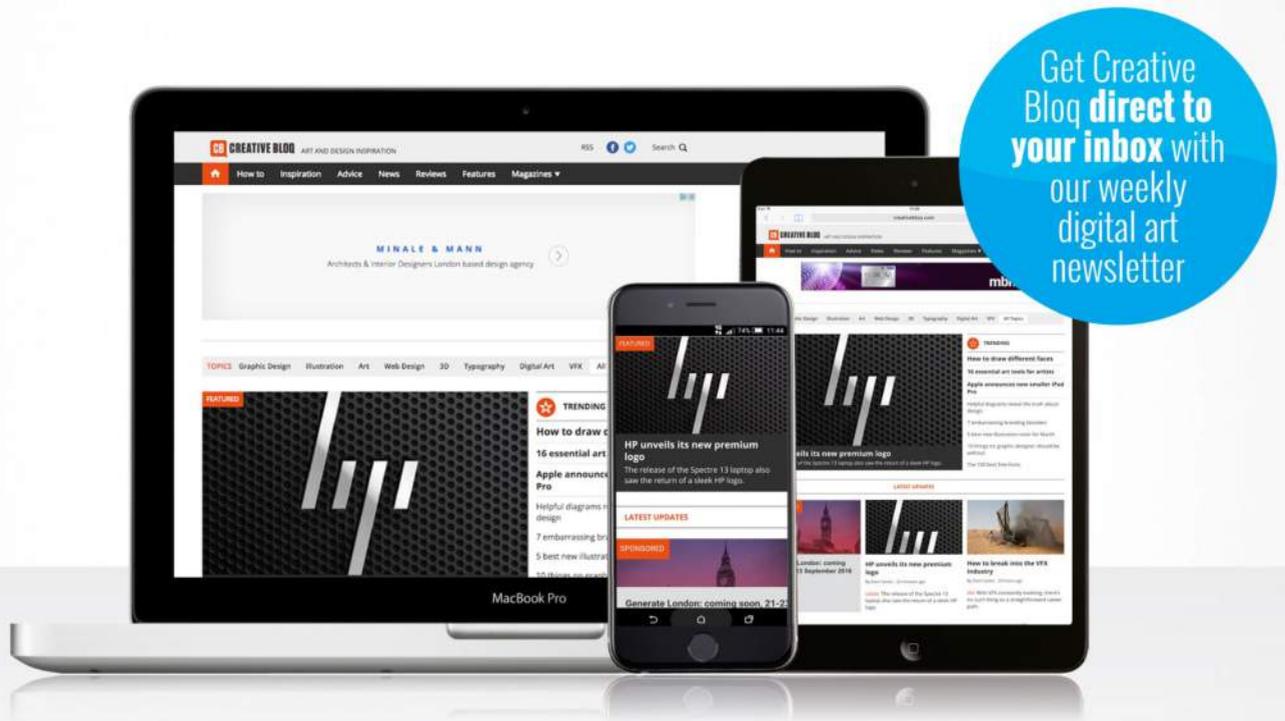


Grids can help you draw accurate lines and curves, even when you're using public transport!



A quick tutorial when you first start using the app makes it easy for beginners to get to grips with it.

The number one destination for **digital art** news, views and how-tos.



**CB CREATIVE BLOQ**

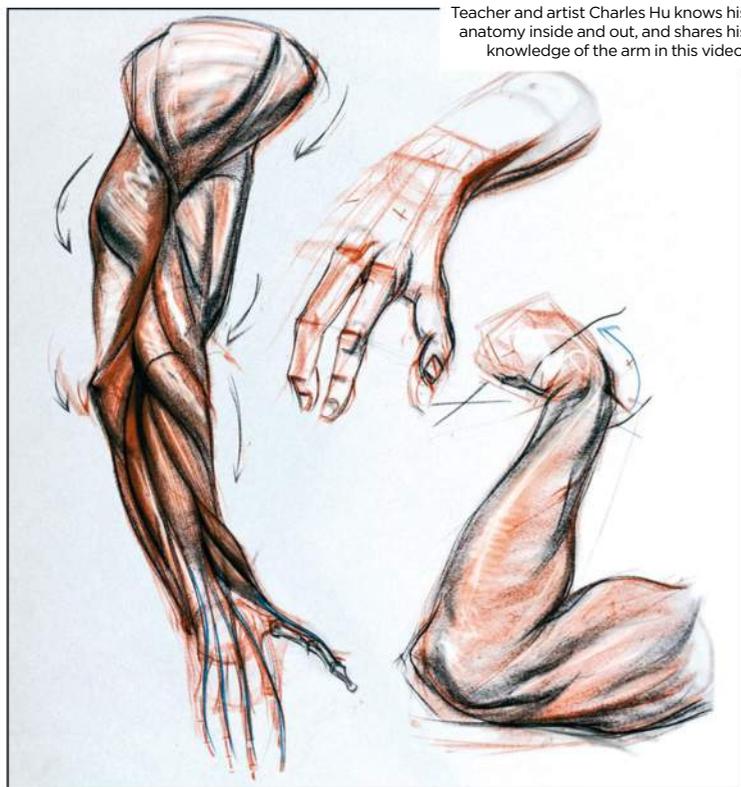
Graphic design

Web design

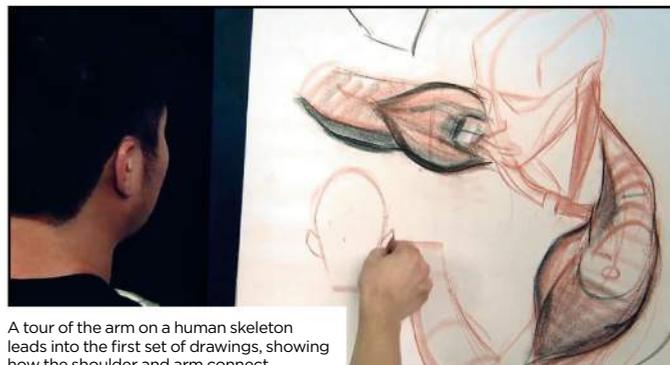
3D

Digital art

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



Teacher and artist Charles Hu knows his anatomy inside and out, and shares his knowledge of the arm in this video.



A tour of the arm on a human skeleton leads into the first set of drawings, showing how the shoulder and arm connect.



This pose enables Charles to show how to use light to define the various muscle forms on the arm.

# Anatomy Workshop: Structure and Anatomy of the Arm

**COMEBACK KID** Artist and teacher Charles Hu revives his series on anatomy basics with an in-depth exploration of how to draw arms

**Publisher** The Gnomon Workshop **Price** £27 **Format** Download **Web** [www.thegnomonworkshop.com](http://www.thegnomonworkshop.com)

**A**nyone who'd been eagerly following Charles Hu's top-notch series on physical anatomy for Gnomon would be forgiven for thinking he'd given up on the idea of continuing. It's been nearly a three-year wait for this sixth volume, following the quintet Charles released in 2012 and 2013 – but now your patience has been rewarded with just under four hours' tuition around the human arm.

If you're new to the series, you don't need to have seen any of the previous five, although they're worth taking out a Gnomon subscription for if you find this one helpful. Charles simply guides you through the mechanics of the arm, using a model, photos and real-time drawings to show how the muscles and underlying skeleton work.

While the knowledge he shares is largely technical, the intent behind it is always artistic: by knowing how the arm works, you can understand better what you're observing from a model



## DETAILS

### Topics covered

- The arm's skeletal system
- The main muscle groups
- Shoulder structure and anatomy
- Basic hand structure
- Balance and tension
- Arm poses

### Length

228 minutes

### Rating



or photography, and create better drawings. Charles frequently stops a main drawing to show you how the different muscles establish a rhythm you can take advantage of, to make your figures come alive. There's always a balance of tensions, even in the simplest poses, with some muscles stretching as other contract. Understanding this will go a long way to helping prevent your figure drawings seeming static or traced.

Charles patiently and methodically walks you through the entire arm structure, before starting to show how it changes as the arm assumes new poses. As with previous instalments, the advantage of seeing this in a video rather than a book is that you'll see how Charles builds up the drawing from the simplest forms, enabling you to do the same with confidence.

Let's hope further chapters are in the pipeline and we don't have to wait three years: a video covering the leg is notable by its absence so far.

## ARTIST PROFILE CHARLES HU

Charles is a figure painter and art instructor. In 2007, he co-founded his own fine art school, 3Kicks Studio, in Pasadena, California. He received his Bachelor of Arts degree from Pasadena's Art Center College of Design and began his instructional career at LA Academy of Figurative Arts. Charles also instructs at Art Center College of Design and Gnomon School of Visual Effects in Hollywood.

The artist's commissions include numerous portrait paintings, character designs for film and games, murals, and comic books.



[www.3kickstudio.com](http://www.3kickstudio.com)



## The Art of Fable Legends

**MYTH WORLD** This compendium of concept art reveals a rich new vision for a fantasy game that may never come out

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

**T**he latest in the Fable series of action role-playing games for Windows and Xbox, *Fable Legends* was highly anticipated. However, in March Microsoft Studios announced that Lionheart Studios, the game's maker, was to close. That most likely means the free-to-play, co-operative game set in the fantasy world of Albion, will not be released.

That would be a huge shame, as, unusually, a richly produced art book had been released before the game. It reveals a revolutionary back-to-basics move for the series, in aesthetic terms at least, and had seriously whetted our appetite for the game. With no game, the book is even more of a treat now.



"Sterling falls in love so easily, but the next morning he has got to be a hero," says the game's director David Eckelberry.

*Fable Legends* was intended to be a prequel, set in a time before the Heroes' Guild, in an older, more medieval Albion. Small towns and villages nestle among woodland inhabited by dangerous magical creatures. This lavish hardback is full of sumptuous, full-colour illustrations of the evocative fantasy period.

It's the heavily stylised characters – heroes and villains, humans and animals – that are the real stars of this stunning book, and who dominate the bulk of its 196, large-format pages. But there's no danger of monotony: with art by Billy Wimblett, Claire Hummel, Elliot Upton, Lauren Nichols, Mike McCarthy, Patrick Martin, Ross Dearsley and Sarah Morris, there's a huge variety of approaches on show.

We're particularly excited by the enigmatic yet sinister look of the pucks – pan-like creatures who flit between the sides of good and evil – and the beguiling Lady of Rosewood, a floaty, malevolent presence drawn in the style of Czech Art Nouveau painter Alphonse Mucha. Both illustrations highlight how much depth and originality went into the design of this game, raising it far above genre norms.



The idea here was for a feeling of the buildings being so ancient their origins are unknown.

For each character or creature, we get a game screenshot, a full-colour illustration and a 3D render in greyscale. Pencil sketches-in-progress are dotted throughout, plus sections on tools and environments, and detailed commentary by the art team.

The latter provides insight and backstories for the game's characters – though there's not much mention of art techniques employed. Nonetheless, anyone who works in the games industry, or has a passing interest in the fantasy role-playing genre, will find this fascinating and inspiring.

**RATING**

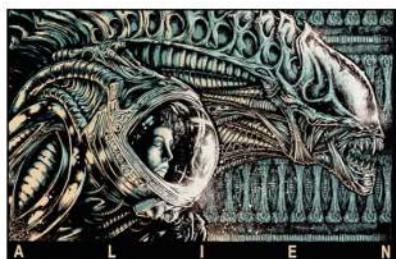
# Movie Posters Re-imagined

**FAN-TASTIC** This collection of innovative posters for cult films reminds us what we're missing in this era of soulless movie marketing

**Editor** Katriona Feinstein **Publisher** Graffito **Price** £25 **Web** www.graffitobooks.com **Available Now**

**W**hat ever happened to the art of the film poster? These days, you're more likely to see a bland, formulaic collage of Photoshop cutouts than the beautifully crafted artwork we used to enjoy from the likes of Drew Struzan and John Alvin. It's that lost age this collection seeks to recapture. And by and large, it succeeds pretty darned well.

Here, cult films such as Psycho, Blade Runner, Blue Velvet and The Big Lebowski get stunning new poster art



The artist Godmachine wanted to "show how Ripley and the alien are as important as each other."



by graphic designers such as Grimb, Coop, O'Connell, Alderete, Hertz, Pullin and more. We particularly love the Saul Bass-esque interpretation of Inception from Matt Needle, Rodolfo Reyes' art deco take on Iron Man, and Van Orton Design's reinvention of Teen Wolf (yes, really). Many of the films crop up more than once and it's fascinating to see different artists' take on films.

This isn't just a collection of pictures. Each poster comes with a quote or piece of trivia, information about the film and brief notes from the artist.

All in all, this hardback would make a cool gift for any cinephile. Or you could just buy it yourself and spend away an evening or two poring over it.

**RATING**

# The Anatomy of Style: Figure Drawing Techniques

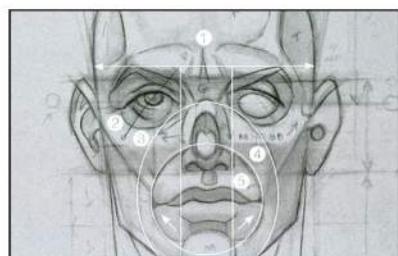
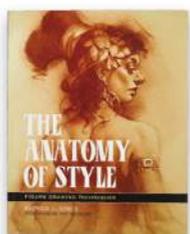
**BODY MATTERS** A master fantasy artist explains how to get human anatomy right, without losing sight of your creative vision



**Author** Patrick J Jones **Publisher** Korero Press **Price** £20 **Web** www.koreroPress.com **Available Now**

**F**ew art of anatomy books boast quite as much awe-inspiring style and originality as this one from fantasy artist and teacher - and ImagineFX regular - Patrick J Jones.

Using annotated versions of his own artworks as an example - pencil drawings until now glimpsed only by his students - Patrick explains techniques for drawing anatomically accurate figures. The illustrator offers



In his book Patrick demonstrates in great detail how to age a face. For more from the artist see our feature on life drawing on page 20.

practical tips on things like art supplies and, step by step, body part by body part, explains how to apply the principles of anatomy to your life drawing. He begins with short poses, progresses to the long pose, then extends those principles to creating human figures from imagination.

The first five chapters apply mainly to drawing, the sixth addresses

painting, the final features timed life drawings, showcasing the techniques outlined in the book. Detailed notes deconstruct every illustration.

Patrick strikes a careful balance, urging adherence to anatomically correct principles while encouraging individual artistic voices.

**RATING**

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# FANTASY

*illustrator*



## DRAW ACCURATE **BONES & MUSCLE**

Stan Prokopenko reveals how skeleton and muscle structure are key to great anatomical art **Page 106**

### This issue:



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



**104 Paint a dragon rider**  
Lucas Graciano on composition.



**112 A master's palette**  
With Anand Radhakrishnan.



**114 First Impressions**  
Vanessa Lemen talks characters.

# FXPosé Traditional

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL FANTASY ARTISTS

## Tiffany Turrill

LOCATION: US

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

EMAIL: [tiffany@tiffanyturrill.com](mailto:tiffany@tiffanyturrill.com)

MEDIA: Watercolour, white charcoal, watercolour pencils



Tiffany moved to California for college and stayed to work for various video game studios in the Bay Area for nine years.

Recently, the artist made the jump to go full-time freelance and seek out the stories she wants to tell. Her work has appeared in children's picture books, RPGs and tabletop games.

"I'm interested in telling stories with my images, especially those with a mythic or folkloric bent," she says, "but children's literature, sea creatures and dinosaurs will always be my first loves." When she's not working, she enjoys bad films, laughing at nonsense on the internet, or drinking too much tea.

## IMAGINEFX CRIT



"Despite the contrast in subjects, both of Tiffany's images show great composition and colour choices. And I really want to see more of her stories featuring a cigar-chomping, pistol-toting rat."

Alice Pattillo,  
Staff Writer

### 1 THE BUILDERS

Watercolour and white charcoal, 15x20in

"I had the pleasure of attending the Illustration Master Class, and this was the piece I produced while I was there. The prompt was a novella that could be described as *Wind in the Willows* meets *Sam Peckinpah*."

### 2 EAST OF THE SUN, WEST OF THE MOON

Watercolour, watercolour pencils and white charcoal, 13x19in

"A simple wintery image, pulled from the Norwegian fairy tale. Stories of children thrown into a forbidding wilderness with only animals to help them always resonate with me."





IMAGINEFX CRIT



"Cristina's muted colour palette perfectly suits the imagery that she's created, which ranges from the unsettling, as in her Fire artwork, to downright scary, which Psyche is a good example of."  
Cliff Hope,  
Operations Editor





## Cristina Bencina

LOCATION: US

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

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

MEDIA: Acrylic gouache, pastels, inks



Cristina studied illustration at the School of Visual Arts in New York City, where she's based today. Her technique includes subtle

layers of acrylic washes combined with various mixed media such as acrylic gouache, chalk pastel and sumi ink.

From this traditional starting point, she brings her pieces into Photoshop where they're detailed. "I aim to express the juxtaposition of dark and beauty within my work," Cristina reveals.

### 1 FIRE

Acrylic, 14x20in

"After reading *Firestarter* by Stephen King, I was inspired to paint a mock cover. I wanted to work with patterns, and a repeating pattern of fire was an interesting visual graphic to help create a sense of uneasiness that's a persistent element in the novel."

### 2 ROOST

Acrylic, 22x30in

"Roost was created in response to a juried challenge by Jon Schindehette of ArtOrder for the art book *INSPIRED*. The aim was to draw your inspiration and I chose the taxidermy displays at the Museum of Natural History in NYC, which I always loved as a child."

### 3 PSYCHE

Acrylic, sumi ink, chalk pastel, 11x15in

"This is preliminary cover artwork for a personal story called *Hindsight*, in which ravens are connected and sense telepathic powers."

### 4 HINDSIGHT

Acrylic, 22x30in

"More art for my personal story, *Hindsight*. I wanted to create a surreal visual for the moment when one of the characters in the story is corrupted telepathically by an otherworldly being. The imagery of an astronaut with wings was a strong symbol for the scene."

## SUBMIT YOUR ART TO FXPOSÉ

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The Ambury  
Bath BA1 1UA, England

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

Oils

# DEPICT A DRAGON RIDER

LUCAS GRACIANO uses composition and tones to create a dramatic fantasy image

**B**ack in 2015 I was invited as a guest artist to a Magic: The Gathering event being held in Montreal, and given the task of designing an image that would represent the show.

The image would be used to promote the event, be printed on playmats and given away as rewards for attendees who did well in the tournament. I was given free range on the subject. It just had to fit the Magic brand in style, and somehow relate to the Canadian location.

With the artistic freedom I was given, I set off to design a dragon-riding warrior, which was something I already had kicking around in my brain when I received the assignment. This was a chance to both create something I was really inspired to paint, and complete an assignment, in one.



Lucas is an award-winning illustrator who loves to capture fantasy images through his paintings. You can see more of his art at [www.lucasgraciano.com](http://www.lucasgraciano.com).

## GUIDING THE VIEWER

I make compositional choices to guide the viewer to the warrior first. I push the values on the dragon's head into a darker, less-detailed range, making it a simpler shape. The darker shape of the wing behind the dragon's head helps keep it from becoming too important. One of the lightest points in the image is directly behind the rider, which helps silhouette him. He's in a prime compositional spot at the top of the picture.

## STORYTELLING TRICKS

The accents of pink help push the range of colours and add a hint of story. It could have just been a character riding a dragon, but adding the idea the warrior is controlling the dragon by magic provides the little hook it needs.

## MATERIALS

### BRUSHES

- Robert Simmons White Sable rounds
- Robert Simmons Signet flats
- Langnickel Mongoose Hair
- Sable Brights

### SURFACE

- Gessoed Masonite

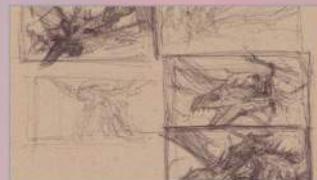
### PAINTS

- Various oil paint colours





## Step by Step: Bringing dragon and rider to life



### 1 CREATING THUMBNAILS

I always start with rough sketches, to help me figure out what the basic layout will look like. When I'm doing them I think about placement of each of the key elements and how to bring attention to the focus. I usually do these in ballpoint pen in my sketchbook, or digitally.



### 2 SKETCHING

After I find an idea I like, I proceed to a slightly more refined sketch. I start to think a bit more about form and what, practically, is going on. This phase enables me to spend some time considering the precise camera angle, lighting, graphic design of the composition, and maybe some values.



### 3 COLOUR AND OIL

Once I'm happy with the sketch, I add colour. I do this either with gouache or digitally using Photoshop. I like using digital media during this phase because it's easier to make adjustments to the overall colour scheme. Between the digital colour comp phase and the oil painting, I'll gather my reference and transfer my sketch to a surface that I've prepared.

#### THE WHITE STUFF

One thing I think of when I think of Canada is snow. So from the beginning I wanted this to be a snowy scene. This was one of the elements I used to help convey the Canadian location for the tournament. That, and the moose horns!

#### COLD PLAY

The colour palette is made up primarily of cool tones, to help give the image the cold feel I wanted. There are notes of warmer tones, but they're there to help balance out the overwhelming cold colours.

# Workshops

Pencil

## DRAW ACCURATE BONES & MUSCLE

STAN PROKOPENKO explains why understanding the human skeleton and muscle structure is the key to mastering anatomy... and therefore great art

Anatomy is a huge subject and requires a blend of scientific information and artistic practicality. For example, you need an engineering-like understanding of how the skeletal joints work to construct your figures. But if you can't draw well enough to get a good gesture, no technical understanding of the joints is going to save you from awkward-looking movement.

Too many artists get stuck on one side or the other: either having a complete

### MATERIALS

#### PENCILS

Conte 1710 B

Primo 59 B

Wolff Carbon 6B

#### SHARPENING TOOLS

Razor blade

Block of sandpaper

#### MISCELLANEOUS

Charcoal powder

Kneaded eraser

understanding of medical anatomy, but being unable to draw a convincing-looking bicep. Or having enough figure-drawing experience to be able to fake the form, but not really understanding what they're doing and inevitably drawing something physically impossible.

Yet when everything is in balance, anatomy is magic, and it enables you to create a human figure in any pose you want without reference. I'll do my best to get you started in this workshop, with an introduction to the skeleton and

muscle physiology as well as a few specific hints and tips on depicting the torso muscles. And if you want to watch video demonstrations or obtain more in-depth information on any of this, I have more tutorials on my website.

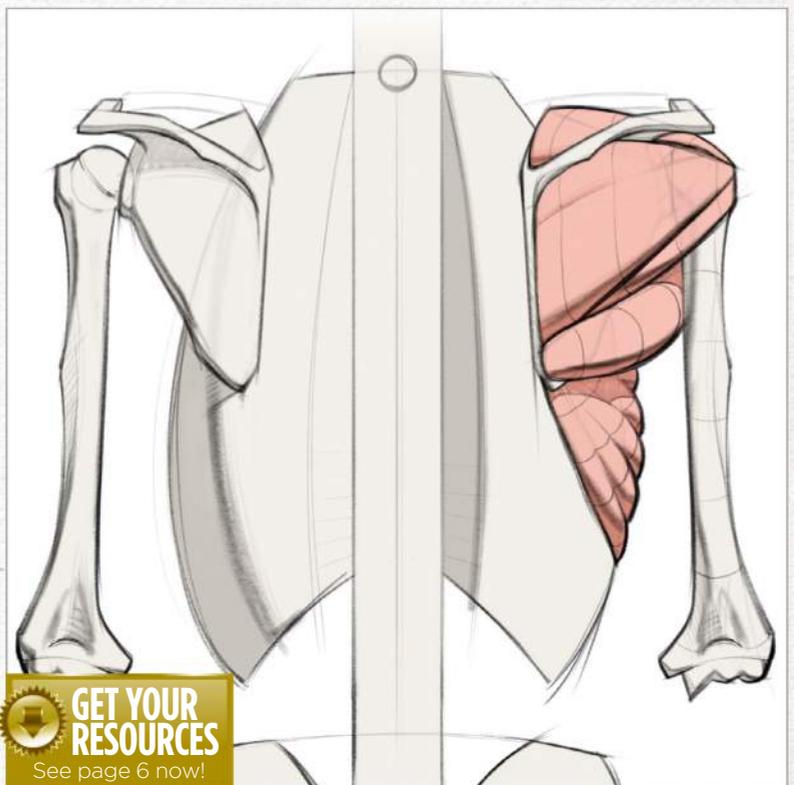


Stan is a fine art painter and online art instructor. He aims to make his tutorials entertaining and educational and says making art education enjoyable is at the core of his teaching. You can find out more at [www.proko.com](http://www.proko.com).

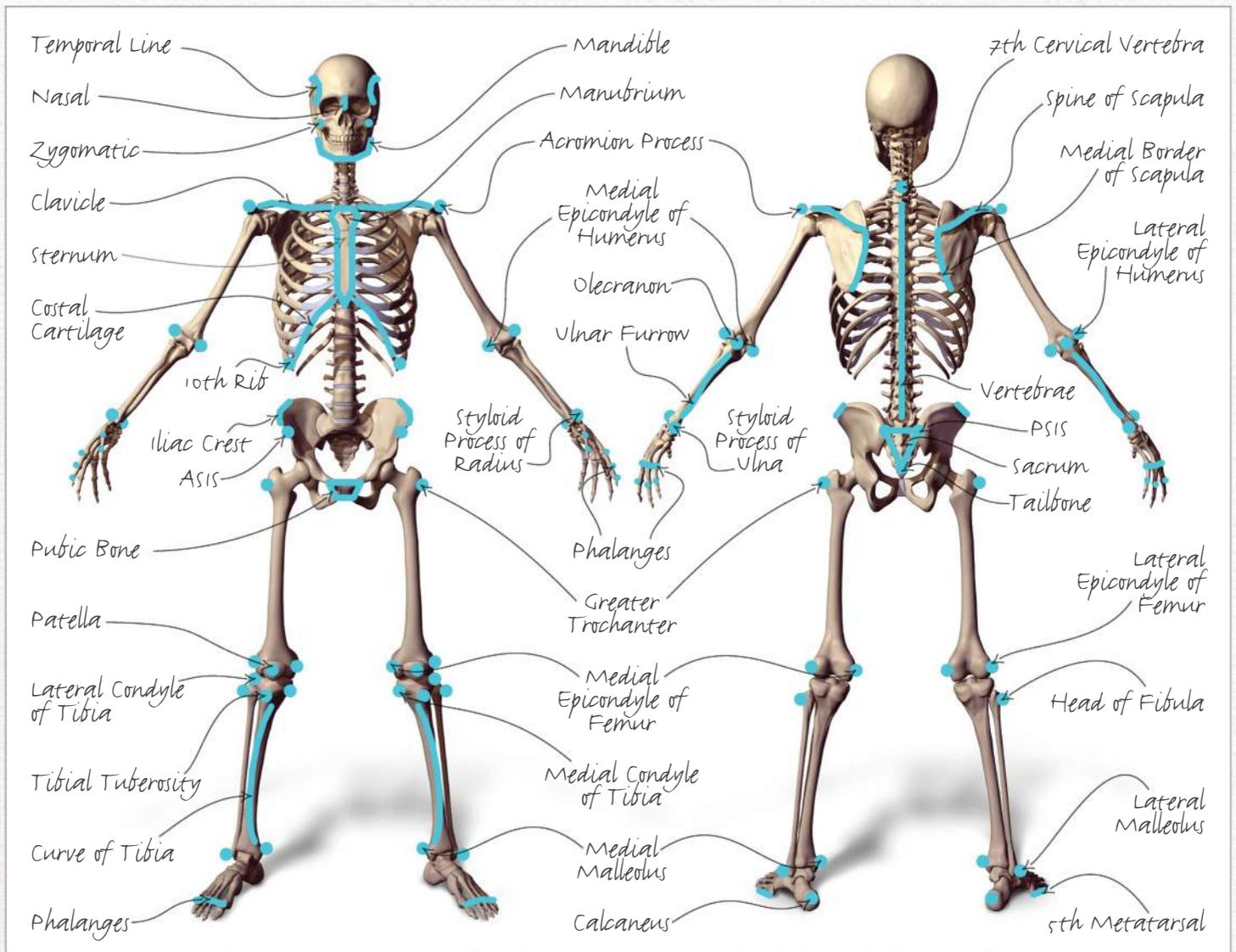


### 1 Study the skeleton

Bones are the foundation of the body. Muscle and fat, in contrast, can vary wildly from person to person and even throughout a lifetime. The skeleton, however, is much more reliable. Understanding it is vital for knowing where to attach muscles, and also helps with proportion. For example, the rib cage will always be as deep as the head is tall, no matter how much fat or muscle there is on top.



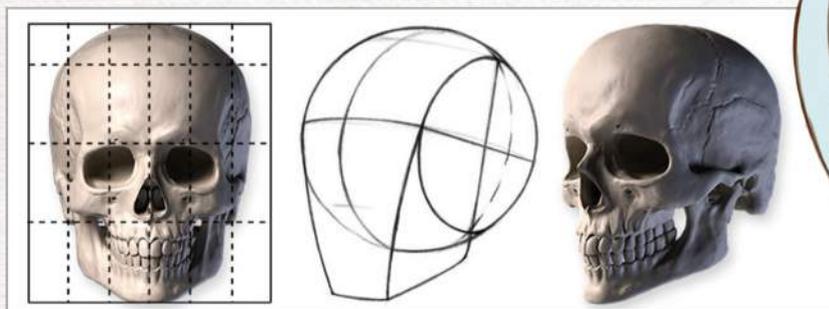
GET YOUR RESOURCES  
See page 6 now!



## 2

### Use the bony landmarks

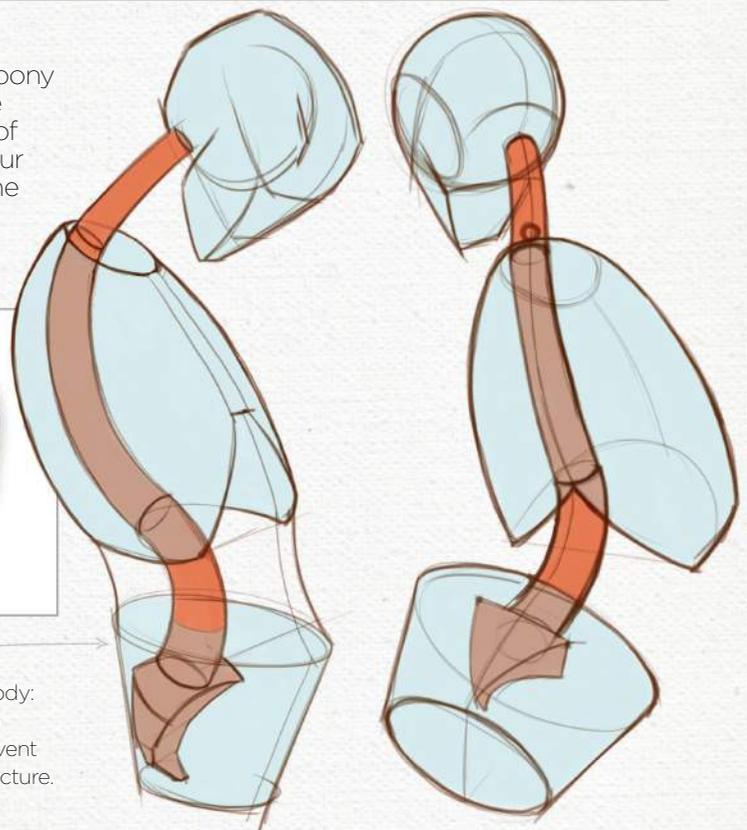
To help identify the placement of the skeleton, look for the bony landmarks. These are key spots on the body where the bones are superficial, with no muscle or fat blocking them from the surface of the skin, and include your collarbones, elbows and the back of your spine. They're more trustworthy than skin-based landmarks like the navel, because skin can sag and stretch. Trust me, the bony landmarks are your new best friend.



## 3

### Giving yourself a head start

There are three main masses that determine the balance of the human body: the head, the rib cage and the pelvis. The spine connects these, and connects to the arms and legs. We need a strong understanding of these forms so we can invent them from any angle, which means simplifying them down to a manageable structure. For the head, that's a sphere for the cranium and a block for the jaw. ➔

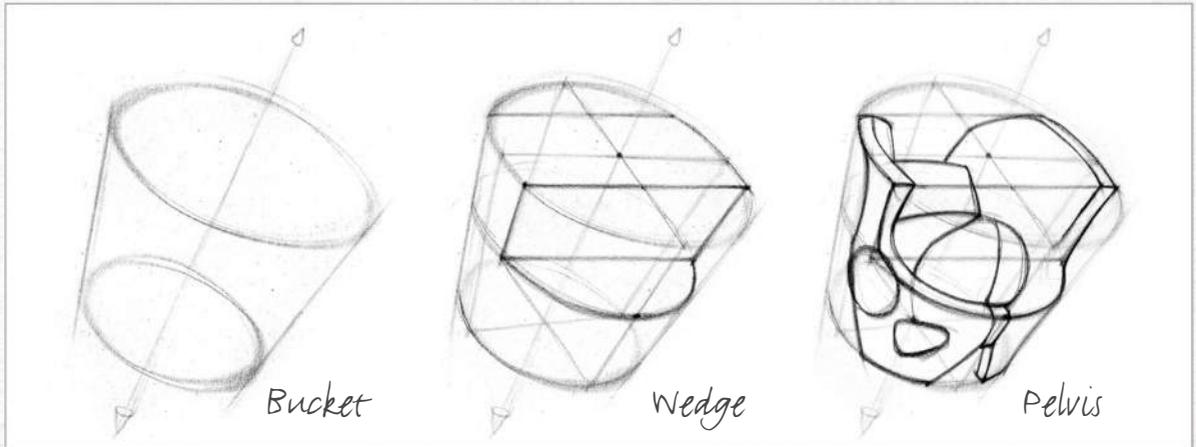
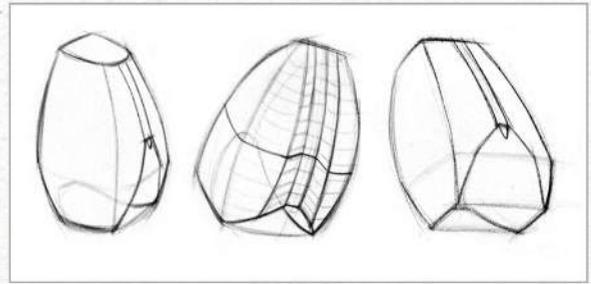


ARTIST INSIGHT

**BE AN ENGINEER**  
Even when studying something organic like the pelvis, take a mechanical approach. Start with the overall ratio and keep breaking it down, welding masses on, or slicing chunks off. Consider perspective and proportion with every line you draw. A carefully engineered drawing will teach you more than an out-of-control pile of guesses.

**4** *Depicting the rib cage*

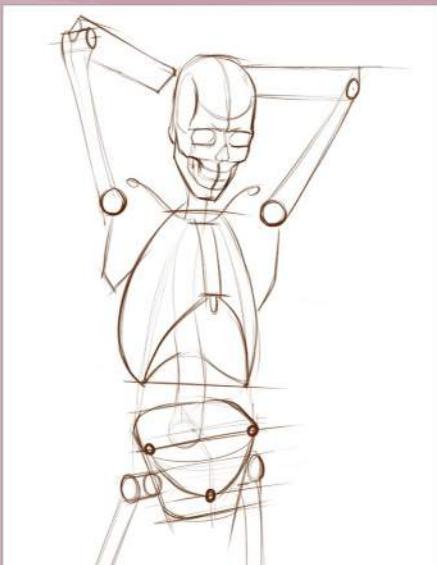
Simply speaking, the rib cage is egg-like, but we can do better than that. It has about the same depth as the head, but it's one-and-a-half head heights tall and one-and-a-quarter wide. It's thinnest near the neck and reaches its widest point about two-thirds down. Once you have the major proportions established, you can place the end of the sternum halfway down the rib cage, and construct the thoracic arch below it. Don't forget to define the edge between the front plane and side plane of the rib cage.



**5** *How to simplify the pelvis*

Okay, this one looks complicated, I know, but that makes simplifying all the more important. On a guy, it's roughly the same width as the rib cage and about as tall as the head. The female pelvis is wider and shorter. Keeping those proportions in mind, the pelvis is essentially a bucket. Take out a wedge from the front of the bucket to define the pubic symphysis and the front of the iliac crest. You can continue to shave sections off piece by piece to articulate a perfect pelvis.

**Step by Step: Turning reference into a drawing**



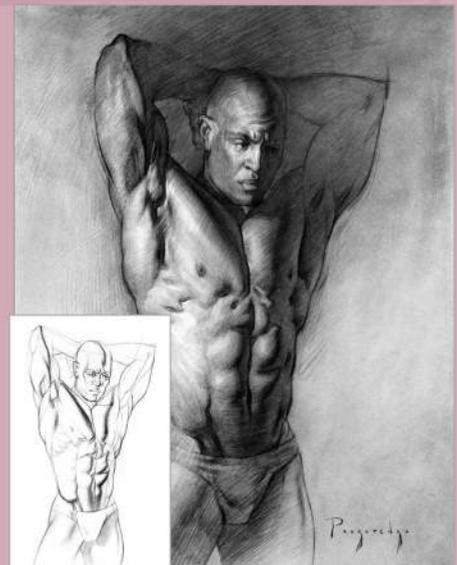
**1 SKELETAL STUDY**

I do a few preparation studies before the final drawing to solve all possible problems and make sure I really understand my reference. I look at proportions, gesture, composition and of course, anatomy. The skeletal study uses simplified structures, and here I've identified the three basic forms and all the bony landmarks.



**2 ANATOMY TRACING**

Next up I would do an anatomy tracing on top of my reference photo, blocking in every muscle in turn and then breaking them up into their main bundles. The whole point of this torso drawing is the anatomy, so I want to make sure I get this just right, to lay good foundations for my anatomy painting.

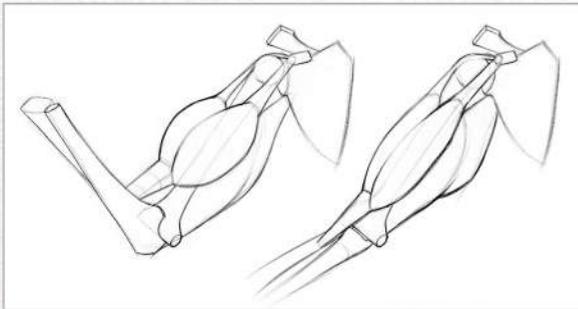


**3 FINAL DRAWING**

When the time to draw finally arrives, I break out the charcoal. I start with a line drawing and map in all my shadow shapes. Then I cover the dark areas of the drawing with charcoal powder to separate light from dark. Finally, I finish rendering the forms, establishing the highlights, half-tones and shadows.

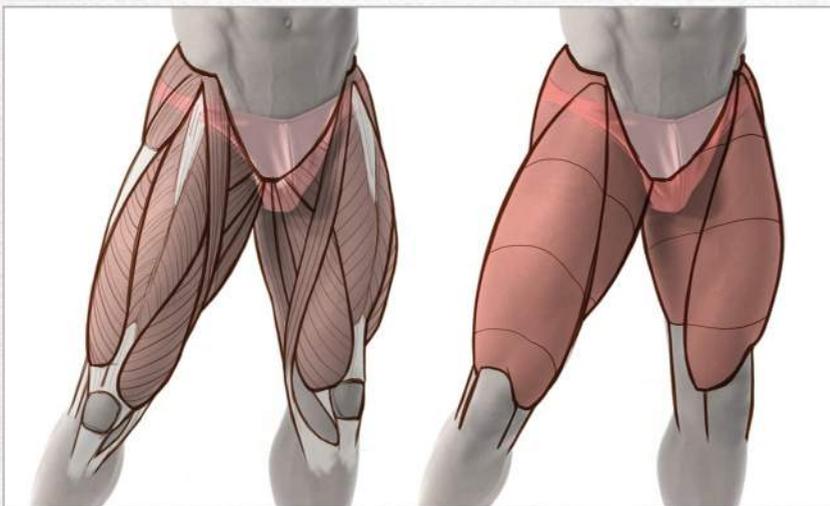
## 6 How to master muscles

To master a muscle, you should study its origin, insertion, function, antagonist and form. The origin is where the muscle attaches on the more central or stationary part of the body, and the insertion is the attachment on the outer or more movable part of the body. When the muscle contracts, it pulls the insertion closer to the origin. The most important aspect to study is the form. When you understand muscle in three dimensions (including its major planes changes and where it's the thinnest and thickest) you'll be able to draw it from any angle, and under any lighting conditions.



## 7 Learn the functions

As you already know, muscles contract to pull the insertion closer to the origin. They aren't capable of relaxing by themselves, so they need an antagonist to pull in the opposite direction and stretch them back out. The bicep bends the arm (flexion), and the tricep straightens the arm (extension). Understanding muscles' functions helps you draw a natural-looking figure by flexing and relaxing the muscles appropriately for that pose. Avoid the constipated bodybuilder look.

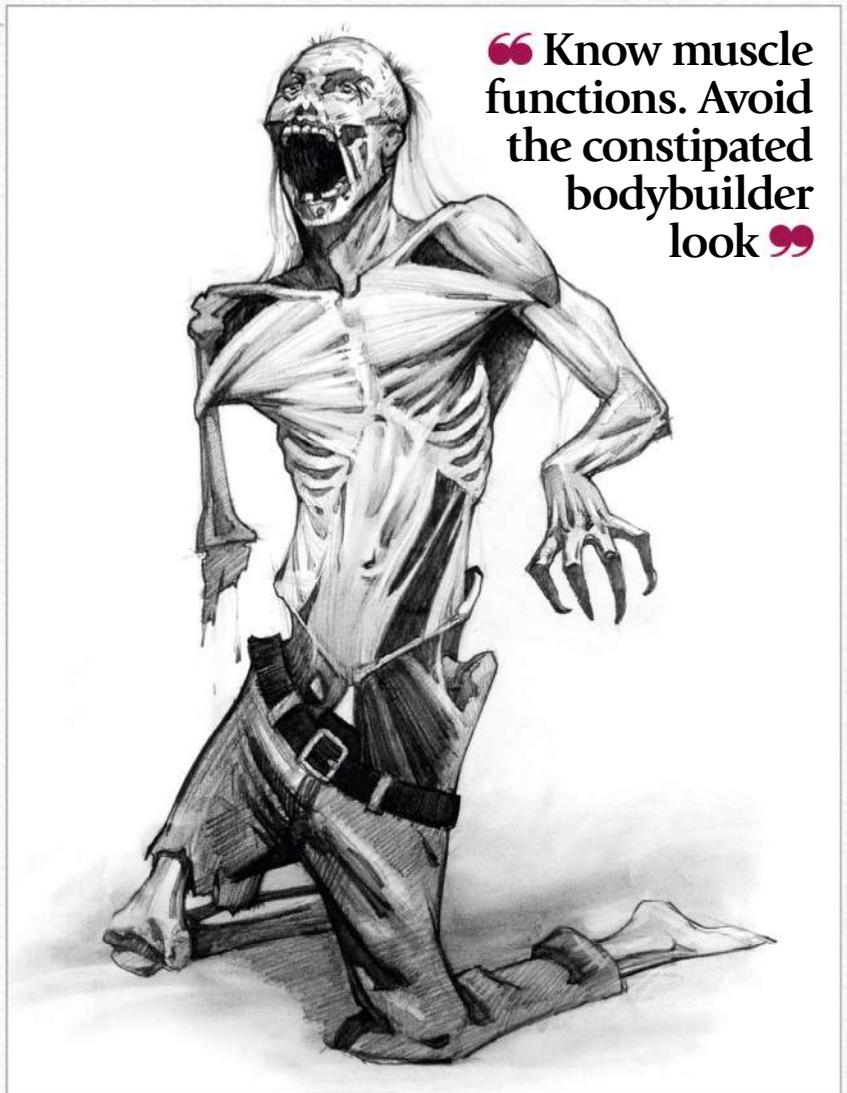


## 8 How to define the muscle groups

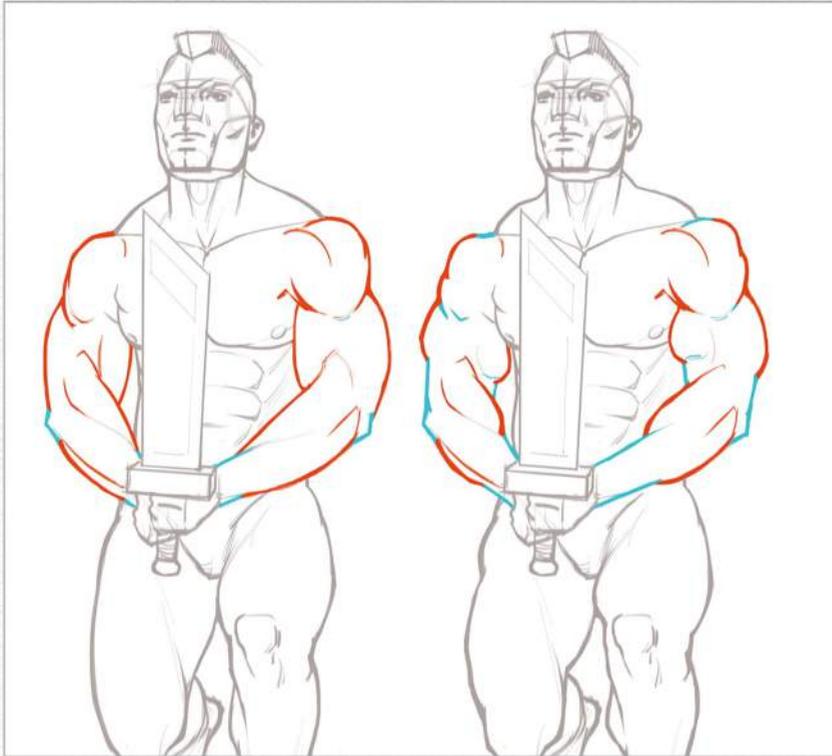
Neighbouring muscles with similar functions can be grouped together. When the muscles are flexed they'll pop out and be individually distinct. But if they're relaxed at the same time, they'll blend into one big, smooth form. For example, the quads of the leg (rectus femoris, vastus lateralis, vastus intermedius and vastus medialis) can be grouped together into one form. Use these opportunities for simplifying anatomy to create a balance of active and passive areas in your drawings.

## 9 Muscle fibres and tendons

Let's take a step back and look at what makes up a muscle. The red muscle fibre is what shortens when the muscle is flexed. It doesn't directly attach to the bone, but rather, it attaches to a middleman material called a tendon. Tendons can't shorten or stretch like muscles can. They simply tape muscle to bone. When the muscle fibres are contracted and bulging, the tendon will often appear as a flat depression or furrow. ➡➡

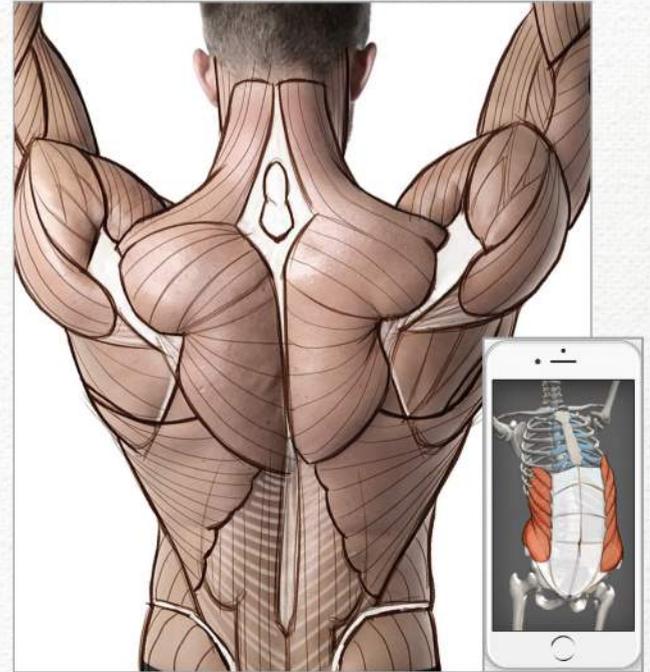


“ Know muscle functions. Avoid the constipated bodybuilder look ”



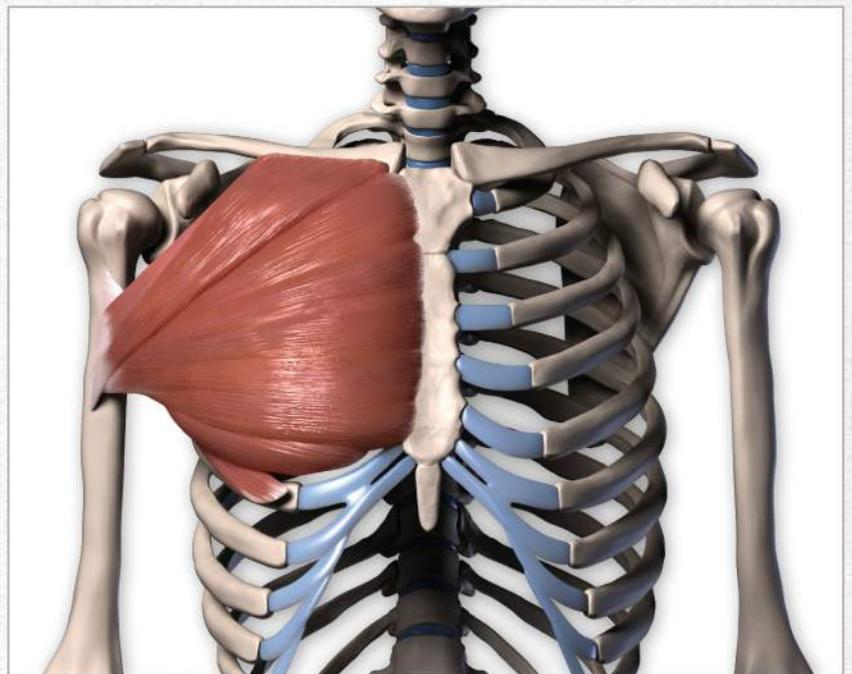
## 10 Long versus short muscles

People are born with different lengths of muscle versus tendon. It's a subtle difference that will affect how long and elegant, or abrupt and angular, their muscles look. With long muscles, when the muscle is flexed, it will appear smooth and graceful. Long tendons means there's less room for the muscle. They'll have a sudden start and end, appearing like mountain ranges. Compare different bodybuilders to see this effect in action.



## 11 Anatomy tracing and invention

Ready to practise muscles? A great exercise is called anatomy tracing, where you chart the muscles on top of a photo reference. It's a little easier for beginners because you don't have to juggle many drawing factors at once and can focus on recognising and accurately placing muscles. When you get comfortable with that, crank it up a notch and invent the muscles from your imagination on top of a skeleton reference. You can draw the skeleton yourself, or use the mobile app Skelly, a poseable anatomy model, to quickly pose an accurate reference to draw on.



### ARTIST INSIGHT

#### EMPHASISE THE GESTURE

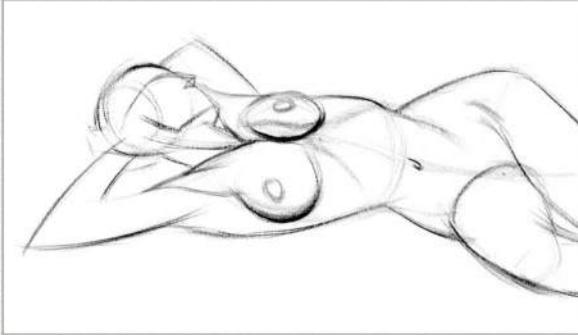
To balance your engineer side, look for the gesture. It's easy to get caught up with anatomical information, but don't forget to identify the motion of the pose. Look at how the body is stretching, compressing and twisting. It will add power and movement to your drawings.

## 12 Understanding the pectoralis major

Let's learn a muscle. The pectoralis major's form is akin to a flat box, tucked into the corner of the collarbones and sternum. Its three distinct portions (the clavicular, sternal and abdominal) overlap each other in a folding fan pattern, and twist over each other where the muscle pulls from the rib cage to insert on the arm. When the pecs flex, its muscular bundles become easy to see on the surface form. Fat gathers on top of the pecs along the outer-bottom corner in a crescent shape, and gives the pecs a distinct edge.

## 13 Think of breasts like water balloons

Think of the breasts as water balloons rather than spheres. Show gravity in your drawings by letting the breasts hang or wrap around the rib cage, depending on the pose. Keep in mind that the pectoralis major lies underneath. The pecs are easy to see where the breast tissue thins, on the upper chest and near the armpits. If the pecs are flexed, you'll see pec bundles, even on non-muscular women.

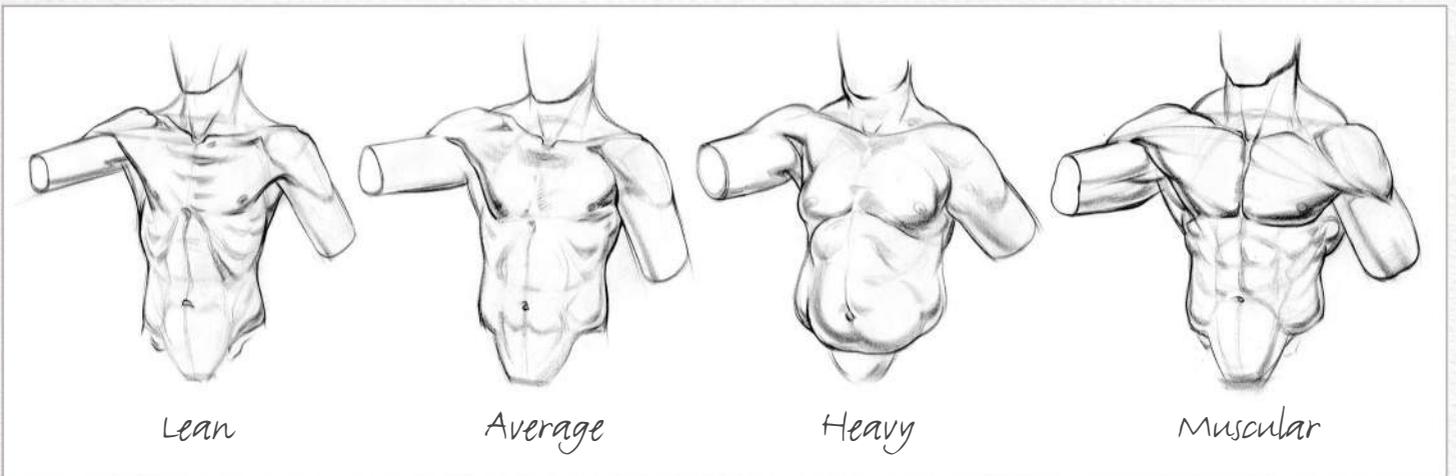


## 14 Putting some back into it

The upper back is an intimidating area. You have numerous shoulder muscles to learn to draw, going from the shoulder blade to the armpit, creating a bunch of thin tube-like forms. The shoulder has the widest range of motion of any joint in your body and it needs all those small muscles for that. The big masses of the back are the trapezius along the neck and upper back, erector spinae, which follows the length of the spine, and latissimus dorsi, which gives the torso that V-shape.



“Have you ever seen a skinny guy with a six-pack, or a strong wrestler with a belly on him?”



## 15 Decide on how much fat and how much muscle?

Have you ever seen a skinny guy with a six-pack? Or have you ever spotted a very strong wrestler with a bit of a belly on him? I certainly have. Fat develops on top of muscle. Even a thin layer of fat will smooth over muscular definition and soften the form. Body types are not a matter of fat or muscular, but “how much fat?” and “how much muscle?” Using those two factors together, you can create a variety of body types for a range of characters.

Graphite

Oils

Acrylics

# USING A MASTER ARTIST'S PALETTE

Illustrator **ANAND RADHAKRISHNAN** paints a narrative picture using colours from the palette of famous Italian master Antonio Mancini

**M**ancini was known to have a combination of sensitivity and energy in his paintings, a lot of which had children and women as the subjects. I'm amazed at the way he treated his subjects with softness, yet kept images vibrant and full of life.

Most master artists have a certain amount of restraint in the colours they use: in other words, they have a limited palette. Mancini started painting at a very young age and his work evolved through various stages, from studying under Domenico Morelli to eventually being

## MATERIALS

- Graphite
- Oil paints
- Acrylics
- Canvas
- Brushes

inspired by the impressionists and their loose brushstrokes. John Singer Sargent once famously said Mancini was the greatest living artist. While I think the ability to use a limited colour palette so effectively comes from many years of regular practice, it can at least be understood by copying or emulating the master's work.

Here I try to take a couple of Antonio Mancini paintings, break them down and use his colour palette for a narrative illustration that depicts an untold scene from the HP Lovecraft short story *The Dunwich Horror*. The young yet

abnormally tall and goat-like Wilbur Whateley is going through his grandfather's books looking for a lost page of the *Necronomicon*, when he happens to see a dog at the door. Dogs dislike Wilbur because of his strong stench and he's killed by one when he breaks into the Miskatonic University to steal a copy of the infamous tome.



**Anand is a freelance illustrator who works in Mumbai, India, and has recently forayed into the world of sci-fi and fantasy illustration. You can see more of Anand's work at [www.anandrktumblr.com](http://www.anandrktumblr.com).**



*Notice how most of the picture is painted using greys and tertiary colours.*



© Painting by Antonio Mancini

## 1 Understanding the palette

Mancini used a variety of colour schemes and techniques, so for simplicity I've chosen two paintings that share a common palette and subject matter. Using Photoshop's Color Picker tool I divide colours into warm greys, cool greys and accents.



*Cool greys.*

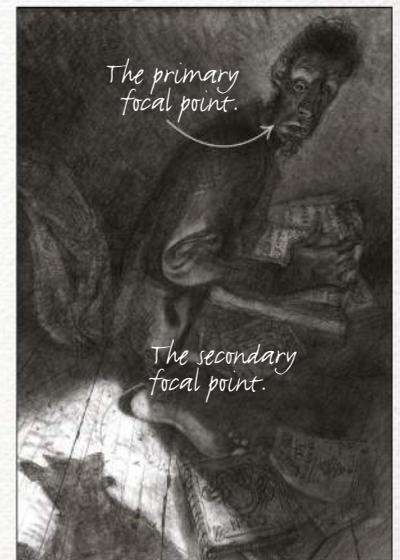


*Accents of colour.*



© Painting by Antonio Mancini

*The accents of reds help the eye to move around the painting.*



*The primary focal point.*

*The secondary focal point.*

## 2 Value study

After a round or two of rough pencil sketches, I fix on a composition and do a black and white study in graphite to understand the value scheme I want to follow for the final painting. This doesn't have to be super finished, but it's essential to avoid a lot of guess work during the final stages. Because the light falling on the ground is so strong, I treat it as my primary light source along with some ambient light.

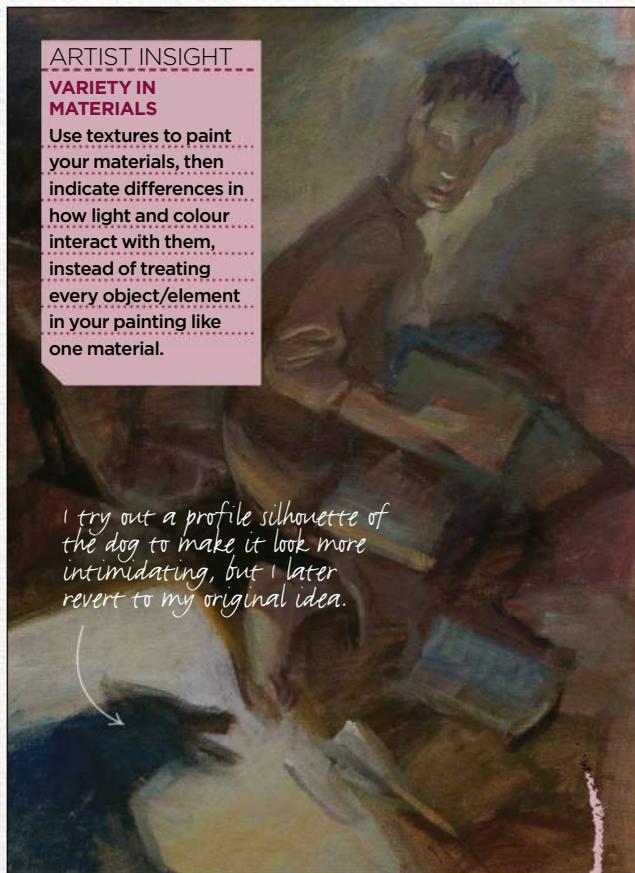
## 3 Underpainting and first pass

Keeping the value study in mind, I start on the canvas with acrylic very quickly and lay in the basic shapes. While applying my first thin pass of oil, I'm mindful of local colour (mostly warm) and the light source, and how it affects the objects in the composition and the colour palette.

### ARTIST INSIGHT

#### VARIETY IN MATERIALS

Use textures to paint your materials, then indicate differences in how light and colour interact with them, instead of treating every object/element in your painting like one material.

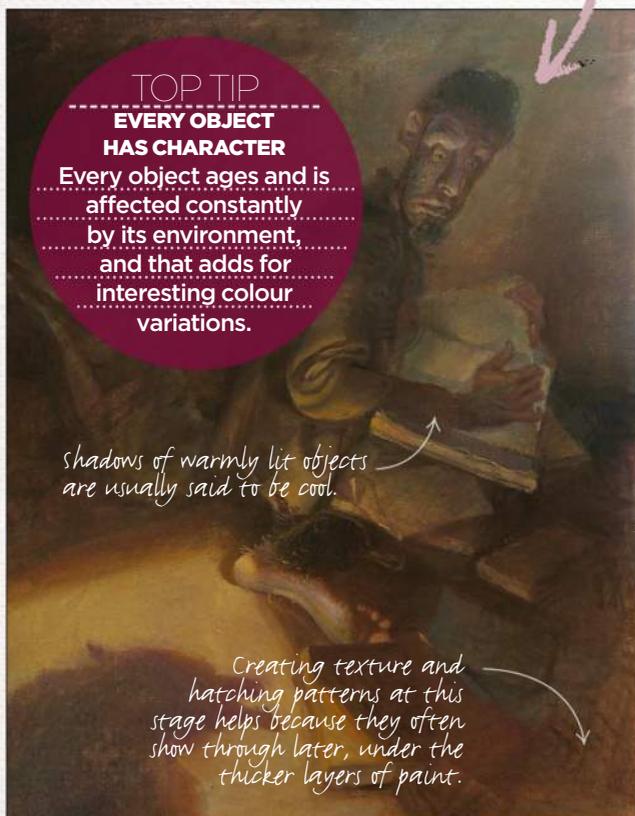


I try out a profile silhouette of the dog to make it look more intimidating, but I later revert to my original idea.

### TOP TIP

#### EVERY OBJECT HAS CHARACTER

Every object ages and is affected constantly by its environment, and that adds for interesting colour variations.



Shadows of warmly lit objects are usually said to be cool.

Creating texture and hatching patterns at this stage helps because they often show through later, under the thicker layers of paint.

## 4 Thin and thick application

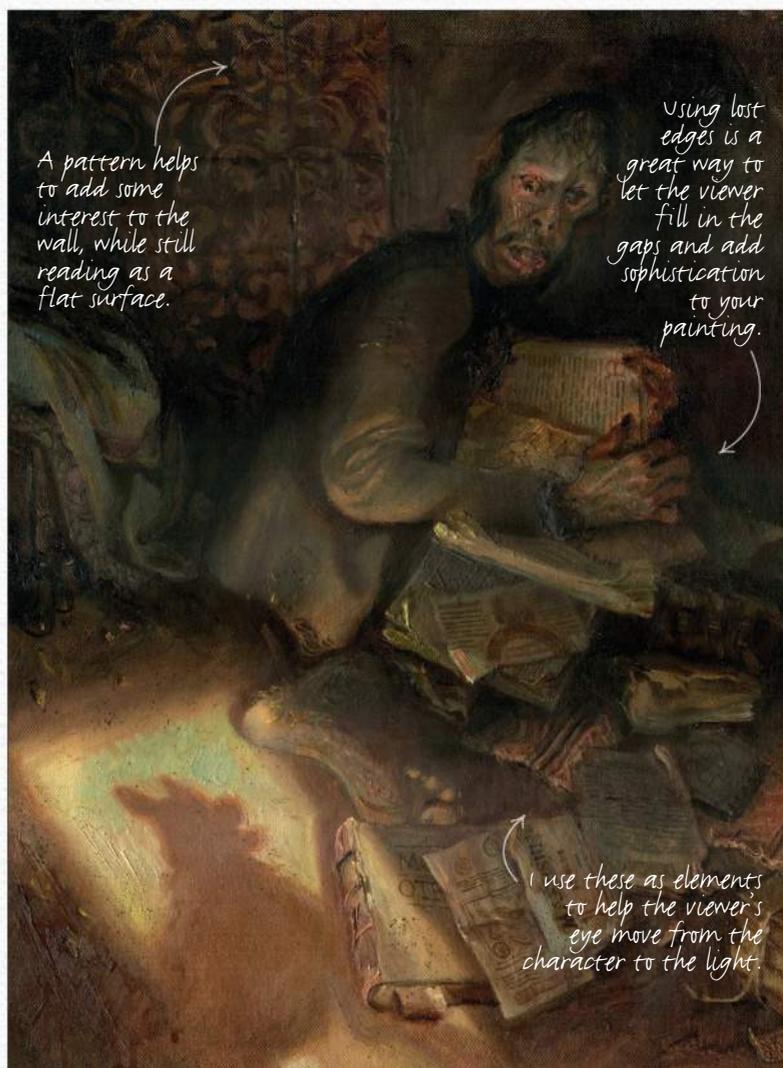
Now I use thicker paint on some areas while leaving some areas thin, to create contrast in paint application. I also start to observe and implement Mancini's palette more in this step while working on smaller shapes and defining forms.



I create this texture by dabbing paint on the canvas with the brush.

I retain this thinly applied section of the folds from my first pass.

The thickly painted areas on the face make it look more three-dimensional and textured, because they're placed next to the flat and thinly painted background.



A pattern helps to add some interest to the wall, while still reading as a flat surface.

Using lost edges is a great way to let the viewer fill in the gaps and add sophistication to your painting.

I use these as elements to help the viewer's eye move from the character to the light.

## 5 Applying the palette and finishing

I keep working on smaller shapes and forms until I'm finished. I try to take as much as I can from Mancini's palette, such as alternating between cool and warm greys for most of the painting, and using reds in accents to move the eye of the viewer around the painting. However, it's still quite different compared to Mancini's work, because of my chosen value scheme.

# First Impressions

✧ Vanessa Lemen ✧

Discover what paintings in the childhood home set this artist on her creative path



**Where did you grow up and how has this influenced your art?**  
I grew up in a town called Fair Oaks in northern California. We lived very close to the American River, and I spent so much of my time outdoors in the fields of oaks surrounding the river. The connection I got there was the same kind of connection I get with my surroundings and my surface when I'm painting.

**You're a child, you see a painting or drawing that changes everything... what are you looking at, and what effect did it have?**

My parents had an interesting collection of art throughout our house when I was growing up. The few that I remember distinctly were two very large wall-sized prints of Bruegel paintings *The Peasant Dance* and *The Peasant Wedding*, Toulouse-Lautrec's *Aristide Bruant dans son cabaret*, William Blake's *The Ancient of Days* and small prints of Klimt's *The Tree of Life* paintings. I've no doubt that these, as a whole, left an impression on me. Each piece had different roles to play



**HARVEST WHISPERER**

*"I was inspired by the autumn equinox, and painted the textures with a cooking spatula."*

in my influence, but as a whole, inspired me to be drawn to many different things, and glean from each thing to form who I am today.

**What was your next step in art? Did other interests vie for your attention?**

I've kind of always had a good balance of things I love in my life, and art has always been at the top of that list. Art, family and good friends, music, outdoors/nature, healthy living, and the furry family members – all of those are important to me.

**“My characters are a piece of me, at different times, from different states of mind”**

**What was your first paid commission?**

My first paid commission was in high school doing large murals for the local grocery store. Aside from being painted in traditional media, those were nothing like what I do now.

**What's the last piece that you finished, and how do the two differ?**

My latest painting that I've finished is for

**LETTERS TO A YOUNG POET**

*"The imagery and mood were evoked by the letters written by Rilke to a young poet."*

a show at Krab Jab Studio called *Dream Covers*. The painting is my interpretation of the book *Letters to a Young Poet*. The two are like night and day, in many ways.

**Can you describe the place where you usually create your art?**

I create my art in the depths of an infinite void. No matter where I place myself physically, the art will always come from that infinite space.

**Is your art evolving? What's the most recent experiment you've made?**

The work not only evolves from painting to painting, but from the start to finish of each individual painting. I feel like this would always be the case. At least, for me it is. As far as experimenting goes, it's kind of how I roll most of the time, so that's sort of always a given when I paint or I'm creating something.

**What character that you've painted do you most identify with?**

Each character that I paint is a character I can identify with. It would be tough to say that I identify with one more than another. They're essentially a piece of me in some way, at different times, from different states of mind, possibly. They're subconsciously revealing themselves to me, coming to me through a dialogue with the surface I'm painting on. Each has its own place and sense of purpose, neither being more important than another, really.

**What's the most important thing that you've taught someone?**

I have no idea. Who knows what each person takes home with them and stores away as something important to them? I just do the best that I can do, stay true to who I am in all aspects of how I float through this waking life, and if that makes some kind of positive impact on someone then – hey – that's great. Hopefully, those who do get something can pay it forward. As a teacher, I've found that reciprocity doesn't necessarily present itself back to me personally as a thing, but if it can go forth out into some place I might not have reached otherwise, then that's pretty great, too.

*Vanessa lives and works in San Diego, California, and enjoys spending time with her artist husband and their furry kids. See her art at [www.vanessallemenart.blogspot.co.uk](http://www.vanessallemenart.blogspot.co.uk).*



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