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NO. 1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX



PHOTOSHOP

HARLEY QUINN

Key steps for painting the deadly comic villain



COOL COMICS
OUR TOP PICKS OF THE VERY BEST NEW RELEASES

INSIGHT

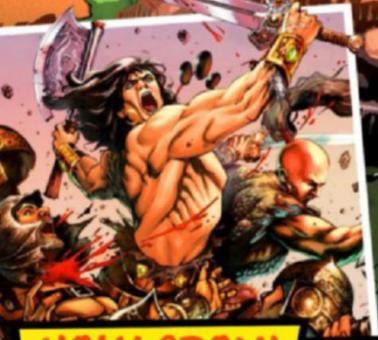
WATCHING THE WORLD

Change the way you look for great art ideas

Future

CREATE STRIKING COMIC ART

Master the pro colouring process of this ferocious **Black Panther** cover!



Current Conan artist Sergio Davila is one of many to feature...

GET INSPIRED

IAIN MCCAIG: JETHRO TULL TO JUNGLE BOOK
DOES ART THERAPY WORK? WE FIND OUT!
MAKE A HARBOURSIDE CONCEPT IN 2D AND 3D

HOLY CROM! EXPLORE THE RICH AND BARBAROUS HISTORY OF CONAN COMICS



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Welcome... to the comic crunch



The world of comics may be rich with fantastical stories and mind-blowing imagery, but it also has a serious side. The huge number of comics that are released on a weekly basis means there has to be a well-oiled production process behind the scenes, making sure deadlines are met, and readers get their fix of awesome.

This month I asked Ken Lashley to create a workshop on one of his favourite characters, Black Panther. After requesting to see his digital workflow and receiving it, I – perhaps a little demandingly – then asked to see a more ‘finished’ piece (I know. I’m a git). But being the pro that he is, Ken chose not to swear at me like a sailor, and instead asked for a few days to produce an image, “of cover quality”. The image that came back was so good it simply had to be this month’s cover!

Ken had gone into his comic-cover-crunch-mode, working up the pencils and inks, then handing the image to colourist Juan Fernandez – a process that hints at the real production speed of monthly and weekly comics. I hope you like Ken’s line art, and also get a lot from Juan’s explanation into how he achieved the image’s full potential in Photoshop, over on page 64.

There’s more comic content about, but if you’re looking to get fired up about art for, oh I don’t know, *the rest of your life*, may I suggest reading the piece on Iain McCaig (page 38). If you don’t finish it with a big smile on your face, check your pulse. You may be dead.

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
Including sci-fi slum vehicles, female Samurai, sirens, time travellers, corgis and more.

News and events

18 Art therapy
How effective is art at healing? We get expert opinions and examine the evidence...

24 Artist in residence
California-based Vanessa Lemen opens up her studio.

Your questions

30 Artist Q&A
Advice on painting old faces, footprints, shattering mirrors, atmosphere and much more.

Features

38 Iain McCaig
From Jethro Tull to The Jungle Book, how anyone can become a master storyteller.

46 Conan in comics
Hither came Conan, the Cimmerian, black-haired, sullen-eyed, sword in hand...

54 Studio profile
Escape Studios alumni work on blockbuster films.

58 Sketchbook
A love for films informs much of Edin Durmisevic's work.

Reviews

90 Comic round-up
95 Training
96 Books

Regulars

3 Editor's letter
6 Resources
26 Letters
36 Next month
44 Subscriptions: US, UK & worldwide
53 Back issues



"I experienced that surreal lift that comes from helping to create an icon, more than a piece of art"
Iain McCaig shares his artistic journey

Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



See page 8 for the best new art →



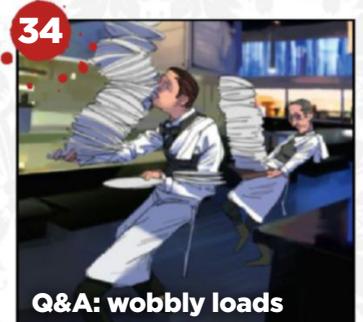
Q&A: 80s airbrush style



Conan in comics



Q&A: mirrors



Q&A: wobbly loads



Escape Studios



Sketchbook: Edin Durmisevic



Artist in residence



FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX

Workshops

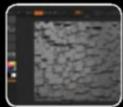
Advice and techniques from pro artists...

64



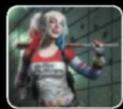
64 Bring colour to Black Panther

Juan Fernandez works on Ken Lashley's line art.



68 Replicate and duplicate in 3D

Save time in ZBrush, with Rob Redman's help.



70 Give Harley Quinn a realistic look

Admira Wijaya paints the Joker's unhinged sidekick.



74 Expressing life's passions visually

Zeen Chin depicts a witch, demons and an angry spirit.



76 New ways to watch the world

Create art that engages the viewer, with Somnath Pal.



82 Quickly create an environment

Philipp Scherer combines 2D and 3D art approaches.

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



Master comic cover colours

FANTASY illustrator

Inspiration and advice from the best traditional artists

100 FXPosé Traditional

104 **Recreate history**
Tony DiTerlizzi conjures up the past.

106 **Inking and colouring**
Chris Visions shares his process.

112 **Underpainting**
Anand Radhakrishnan's tips.

114 **First Impressions**
Bill Carman talks wildlife.

112



Underpainting techniques

100



FXPosé Traditional

104



Recreate RPG history

106



Colour a comic cover

114



Bill Carman





ImagineFX NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS 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/jungle137fun>

OVER 7 HOURS of Q&A videos from pro artists to watch and learn from!

Q&A VIDEOS

Draw an old woman's face

Learn about skin and fat storage in order to depict a convincing aging female face, with Tom Foster.



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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/jungle137fun>
- 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.

ImagineFX NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

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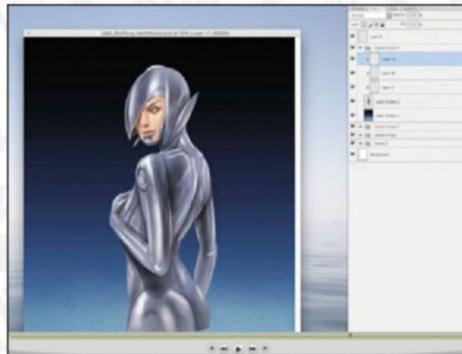
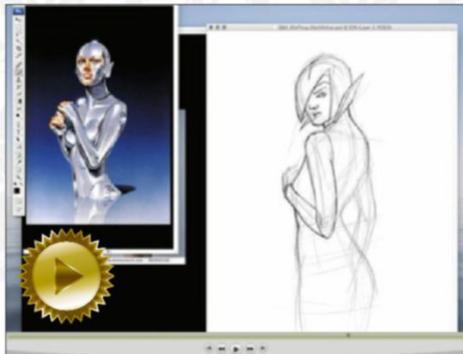


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EXCLUSIVE VIDEO TUTORIAL!

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



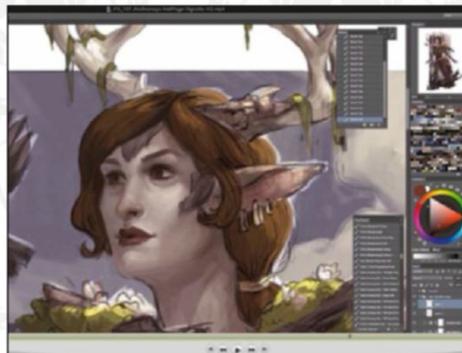
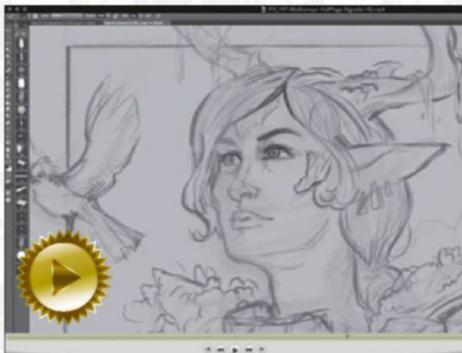
Mark Molnar

Understand how to think like a traditional artist and then reverse engineer their techniques, replicating small imperfections as you paint, in order to create an 80s-style airbrush look – in this case recreating the iconic early paintings of Hajime Sorayama. **Plus WIPs and final image**



Mélanie Delon

Learn how to increase the shading on muscles, using strong shadows and exaggerating a character's musculature, to convey a figure struggling to pick up an oversized weapon. **Plus WIPs and final image**



Alix Branwyn

Consider how creative use of environment framing, silhouette and well-designed breakouts could present your character in a fresh and interesting new way. **Plus WIPs and final image**

AND ALL THIS! Detailed workshops with advice from the best fantasy artists around the world, including Zeen Chin, Tony DiTerlizzi, Juan Fernandez, Somnath Pal, Ken Lashley, Anand Radhakrishnan, Philipp Scherer, Chris Visions, Admira Wijaya.

17 CUSTOM BRUSHES, INCLUDING...

SAMPLED BRUSH 631

Zeen Chin uses this brush to create a foggy texture, for colour blending.

COLOUR_DYNAMICS

This is good for a noisy stroke that isn't too clean, says Philipp Scherer.

HAIR BRUSH

Admira Wijaya uses this custom brush to paint delicate, smooth hair.



Reader FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART



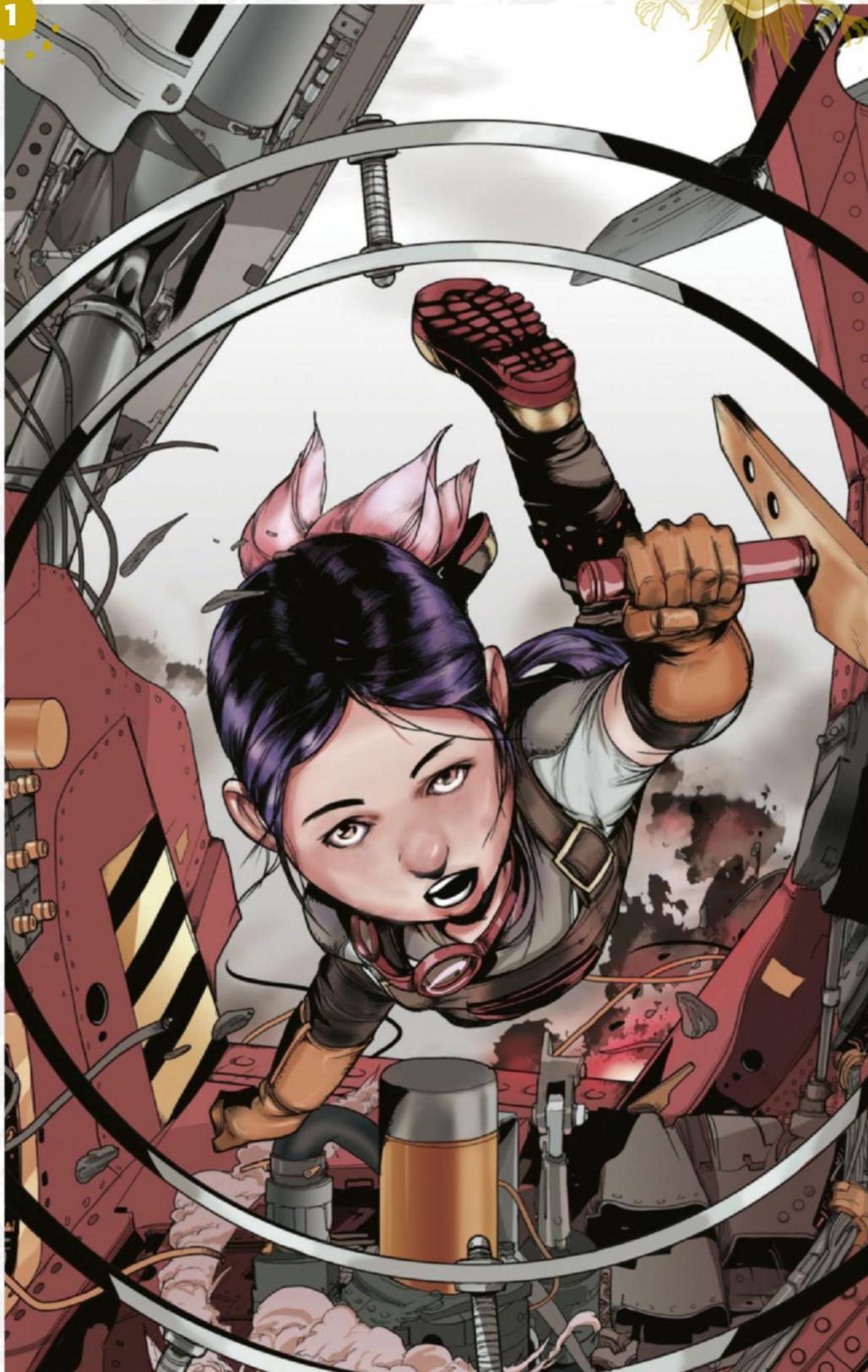
 **Jerome Walford**
LOCATION: US
WEB: www.forwardcomix.com
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MEDIA: Photoshop, Illustrator, Poser



Jamaican-born Jerome moved on from a kid drawing crayons on the kitchen floor to study art in high school and then college. However, it's only recently that the artist has rediscovered his passion for illustration.

"Manga has been one of my consistent influences," he reveals. "I really love intricate line-work, and disciplined colour application. Or perhaps it's just my subconscious from when was a kid."

1



1 MOON HANGS ON "This is the cover to Moon's Ostrich, published by Forward Comix. It features a young girl who goes on wild and crazy adventures in a steampunk world. I tried to imagine the most dangerous situation: attempting to board an airship as it was rocketing into the air."

2 TORCHING OF THE ART HOUSE OF CRANES "I wanted to do more studies looking at the connection between the arts, cultural diversity and industrialisation. This sparked the idea about a fashion icon, caught in the middle of a time of unrest. I really like this illustration."

© Forward Comix

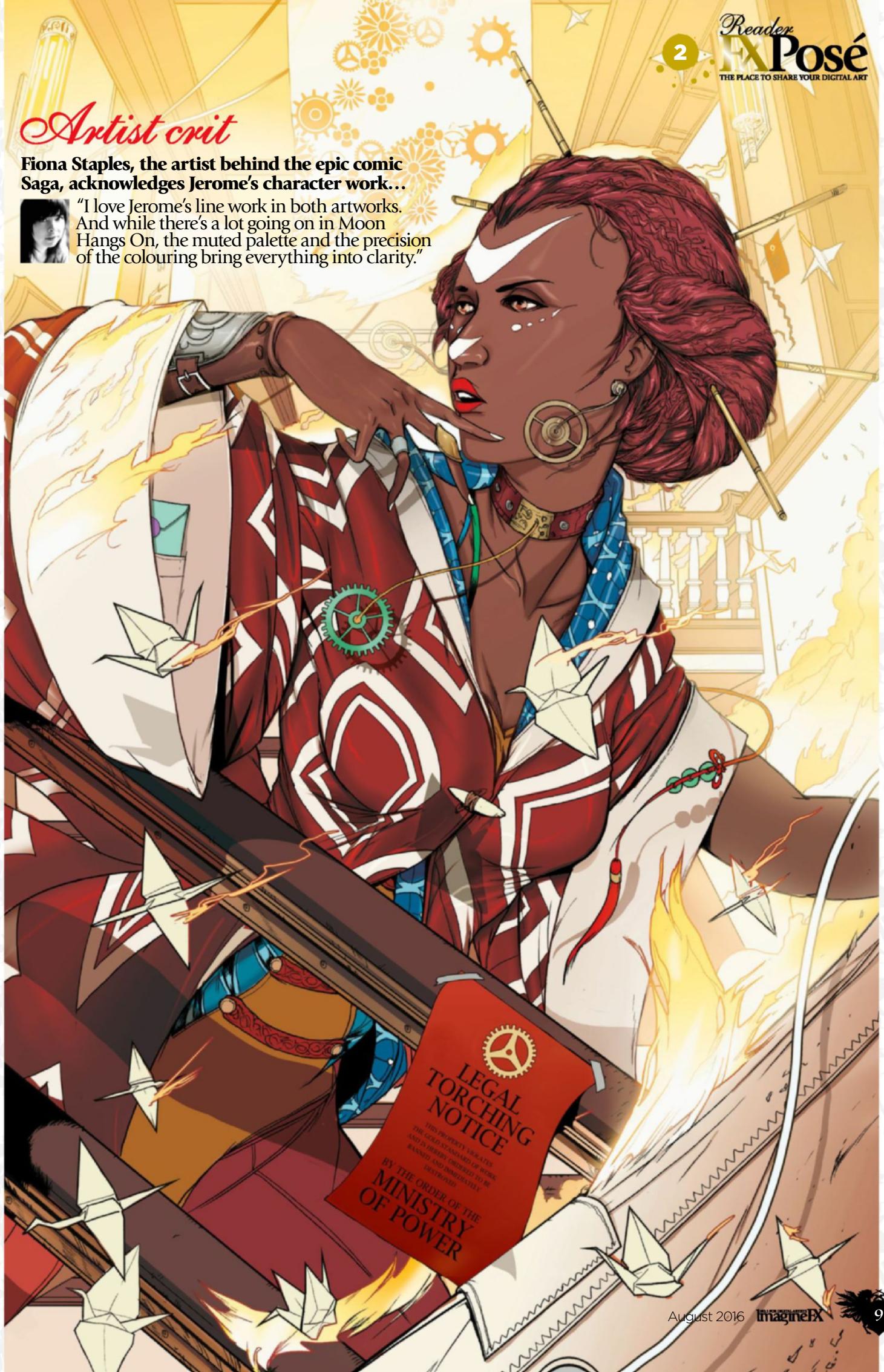


Artist crit

Fiona Staples, the artist behind the epic comic Saga, acknowledges Jerome's character work...



"I love Jerome's line work in both artworks. And while there's a lot going on in Moon Hangs On, the muted palette and the precision of the colouring bring everything into clarity."



1

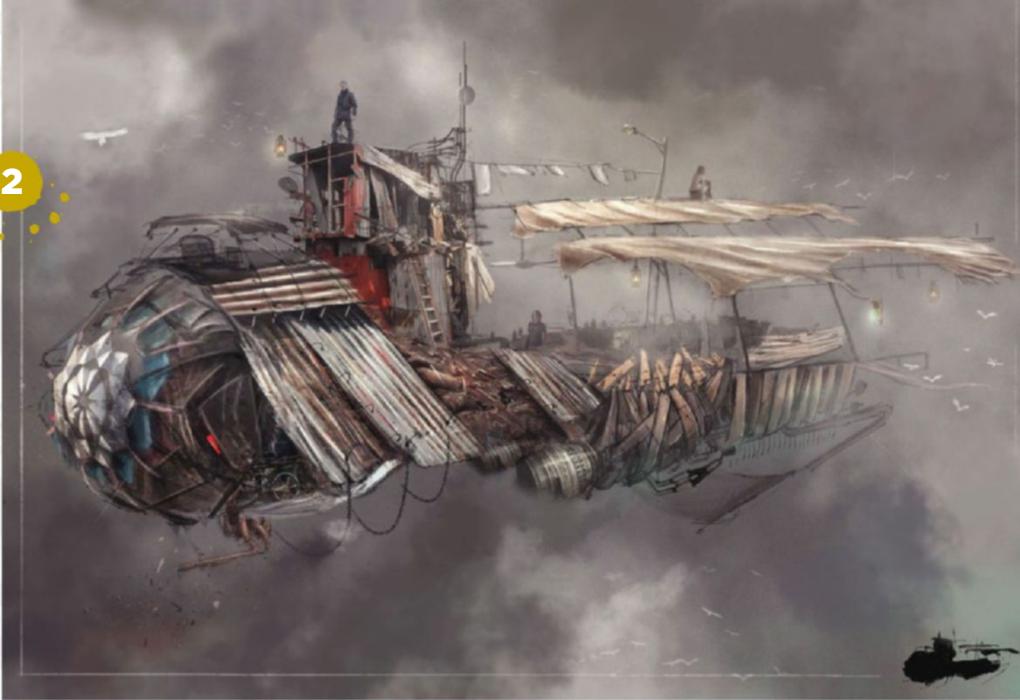


IMAGINEFX CRIT

 "It's refreshing – if that's the right word – to see cities apart from New York or Los Angeles get the sci-fi dystopian treatment. Kushal has perfectly captured the desperate feel of a future Mumbai."

Cliff Hope,
Operations Editor

2



Kushal Bharat Tikle

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MEDIA: Photoshop, Illustrator, Poser



Kushal spent most of his life in India, surrounded by beautiful food and festivals. His upbringing in such a vibrant city inspired his love of diversity and brings an Indian influence to his designs.

Studying interior architecture in university made the artist aware of scale, light, function and form and he is able to blend this with his love of comic art to create some pretty nifty art.

"I like to learn from the works of Craig Mullins, Daniel Dociu, Feng Zhu, Ian Mcque, Moebius," he says. "I thrive on the challenge to learn and grow as a designer using my skills and talent."

3



1 INDUSTRIAL WASTELANDS "I was keen to show the lowlife in Mumbai as opposed to the advancements of the corporation that's governing it. I looked for inspiration from the actual slums, the dhobi ghauts of Mumbai."

2 DHAKKAN CRUISER "Dhakkan in Hindi means a lid. It's also a slang word used to call someone an idiot or stupid. It's constructed and designed by the orphans of Mumbai from the junk available in the slums and the industrial wastelands."

3 DUKKAR "Dukkar means pig in my native language. The design is inspired by public transport vehicles from India (the rickshaw) and the Philippines (something called a jeepney)."

4 CRUISING THROUGH THE DENSE SUBURBAN AIR OF MUMBAI "Mumbai has an energy so intense that one soon gets sucked into it, and while doing this sketch I was looking to design an architecture that would achieve the same feeling. My inspirations were the city's Dharavi slums."

4



Kelley McMorris

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MEDIA: Photoshop



Kelley is a book illustrator working out of Portland, Oregon. Having lived in Japan, New Zealand and Australia, she says that, "I enjoy meeting people from different countries and learning about various cultures around the world."

Kelley's art is inspired by the many mythologies and costumes of the world, as well as the lush scenery of her home, the Pacific Northwest. She recently illustrated the covers for a fantasy YA series from Disney-Hyperion called *The Second Guard*. She also illustrates the Ranger in Time series for Scholastic, and participated in the fanzines *Ladies of Literature* and *1001 Knights*.



1 MOON KNIGHT AND SUN KNIGHT

"These two pieces were created for the zine *1001 Knights*. I dreamed up two orders of knights whose traditions, values and outfits are inspired by the moon and the sun."

2 TOMOE GOZEN "Tomoe was a female samurai who lived in the 12th century. This illustration was my own take on a Hiroshige print of Tomoe on a rearing horse. The battle was my own addition. Only after finishing the drawing did it occur to me that a samurai wouldn't be fighting a battle in the snow in a beautiful kimono, so I like to think that she was attacked during a dinner party, and only had time to grab her sword before jumping on her horse."

IMAGINEFX CRIT

"Kelley's characters are convincing in their poses and expressions, and I'm more than happy to overlook the samurai's kimono, because it adds a splash of colour to what could have been a monochrome, wintery battle scene."

Beren Neale,
Acting Editor

2

ミラモリスケリ



Jo Blakely

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MEDIA: Manga Studio



Jo began her career as a fashion designer, studying and working in Paris. "I still love playing with the folds of drapery and pattern in my illustrations," she admits.

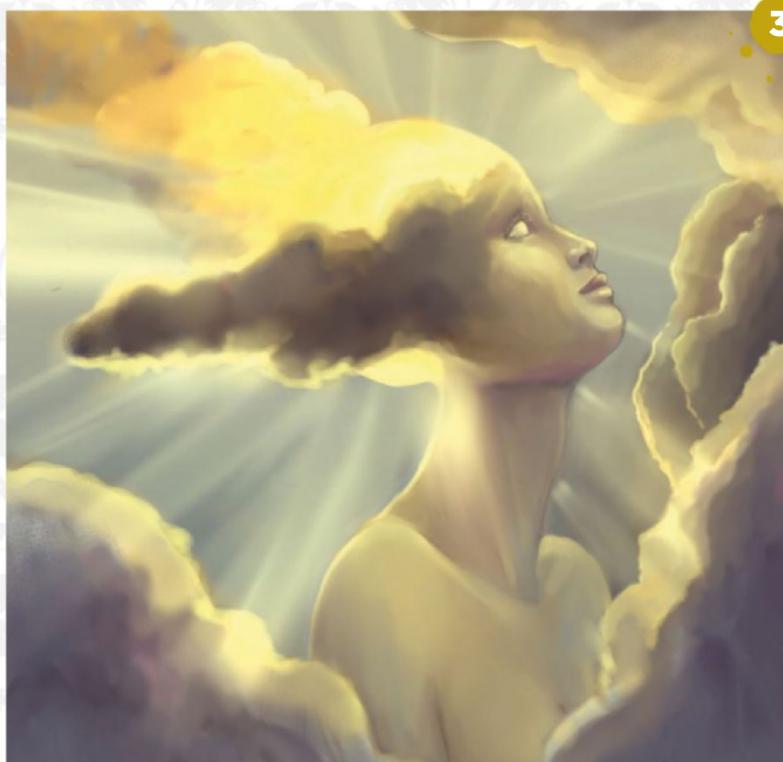
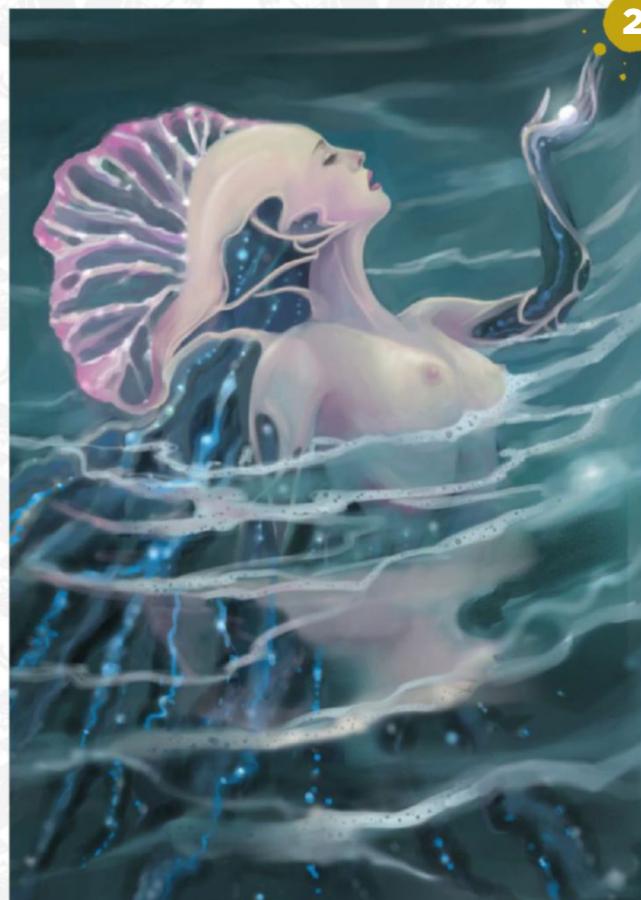
"Currently with my art, I'm playing with a fusion of abstraction and representational", she says. "I have always done both, but only recently began combining them."

Jo reveals that she enjoys illustrating myths, religions, folk and fairy tales, or expressing something personal through multi-cultural archetypes.

1 WILD SWANS "An illustration based on Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale Wild Swans. The swans are her brothers and she must knit them sweaters to restore them but can't speak until she does. There is so much sadness in this story and I love illustrating emotion."

2 A BEAUTIFUL DECEPTION "This was inspired by the Portuguese Man O'War: a deadly but beautiful siren. Bringing a bit more character design into my work."

3 AWE "Part of a series that's a bit of a recurring theme in my work, of the world and universe and everything in it animated by soul. I'm a spiritual person but hate talking about it - I prefer to express it through my work."



+ Irina French

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MEDIA: Photoshop



Irina started her artistic journey with black and white pencils, but after discovering digital media, she never looked back.

"The possibilities are endless in Photoshop, I have still so much to learn, which is very exciting," she says. "I'm drawn to emotional fantasy scenes featuring female characters. I aim for realistically depicted artworks with a symbolic meaning behind it."

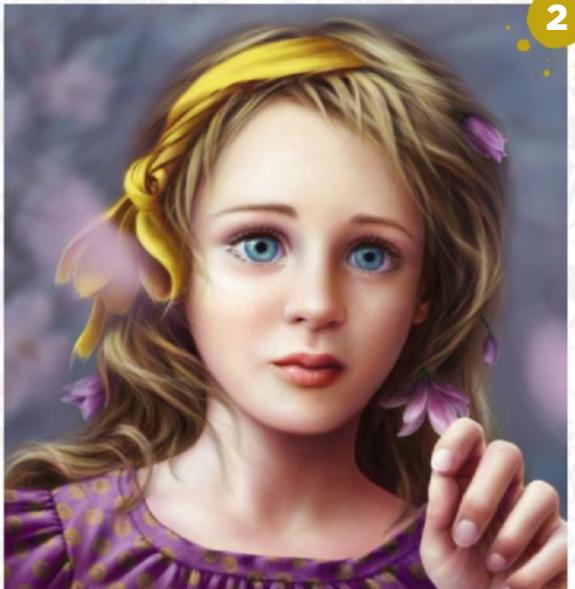
The artist is able to find inspiration in everything from a nature walk to a video game, and takes cues from Marta Dahlig, Henning Ludvigsen and Mélanie Delon.

1



© Levat Ravei

2



1 PRESS F5 TO LOAD GAME "The author's idea behind this book cover was to depict a time travelling character as she's about to disappear to different year. I loved the playful undertone, and enjoyed working on the distorting effect with the challenge of keeping the character's pose defined to a viewer."

2 GIRL WITH YELLOW RIBBON "This is a personal painting that started as a fun experiment. I asked myself what my daughter could look like, so I tried to paint a little girl with similar features to my two-year-old son. Interestingly, he adores his imaginary sister and even gave her a name!"

3 SUMMON "In this painting, I imagined a druid-like warrior who summons a vicious bear to help her in combat. I was aiming for a dark night scene, with magical lighting effects from her spell as a contrasting element. It seemed suitable as art for a board game or a video game."

3



IMAGINEFX CRIT



"There's so much to love in this painting, from the corgi's flapping ears and joyous expression to the fairy's unusual design, and the contrast between the serious and the ridiculous. Char really puts the fun back into digital art."

Daniel Vincent,
Art Editor

2



3



Char Reed

LOCATION: US

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MEDIA: Photoshop, Manga Studio and mixed media



"I think everyone draws as a kid, but a lot of people stop, whereas I never put the crayon down," says Char. A passion for drawing

fantasy animals and creatures means that the artist tries to blend wildlife art with caricature in her pieces.

"The goal for my art is to get people to smile and laugh, as well as view nature as something to be admired," she reveals. Having worked in digital media for years, Char is once again beginning to experiment with some traditional techniques, favouring oils.

1 FAIRY STEED "A story from Welsh lore is that of the corgi being the coveted steed of the fairy people. I like creating humour in my art by juxtaposing the serious with the silly and you don't get much sillier than corgis!"

2 GRABBY HANDS "I created this piece to see how far I could push realistic photo textures in my art while still keeping the caricature and silliness that I enjoy in creature art."

3 K'ARNOG THE HORSE LORD "This piece was a challenge for me, pushing everything I knew about perspective, character development, action, silhouette and colour theory. I want to thank my friends who helped critique this piece to make it better!"

SUBMIT YOUR ART TO EXPOSE

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.

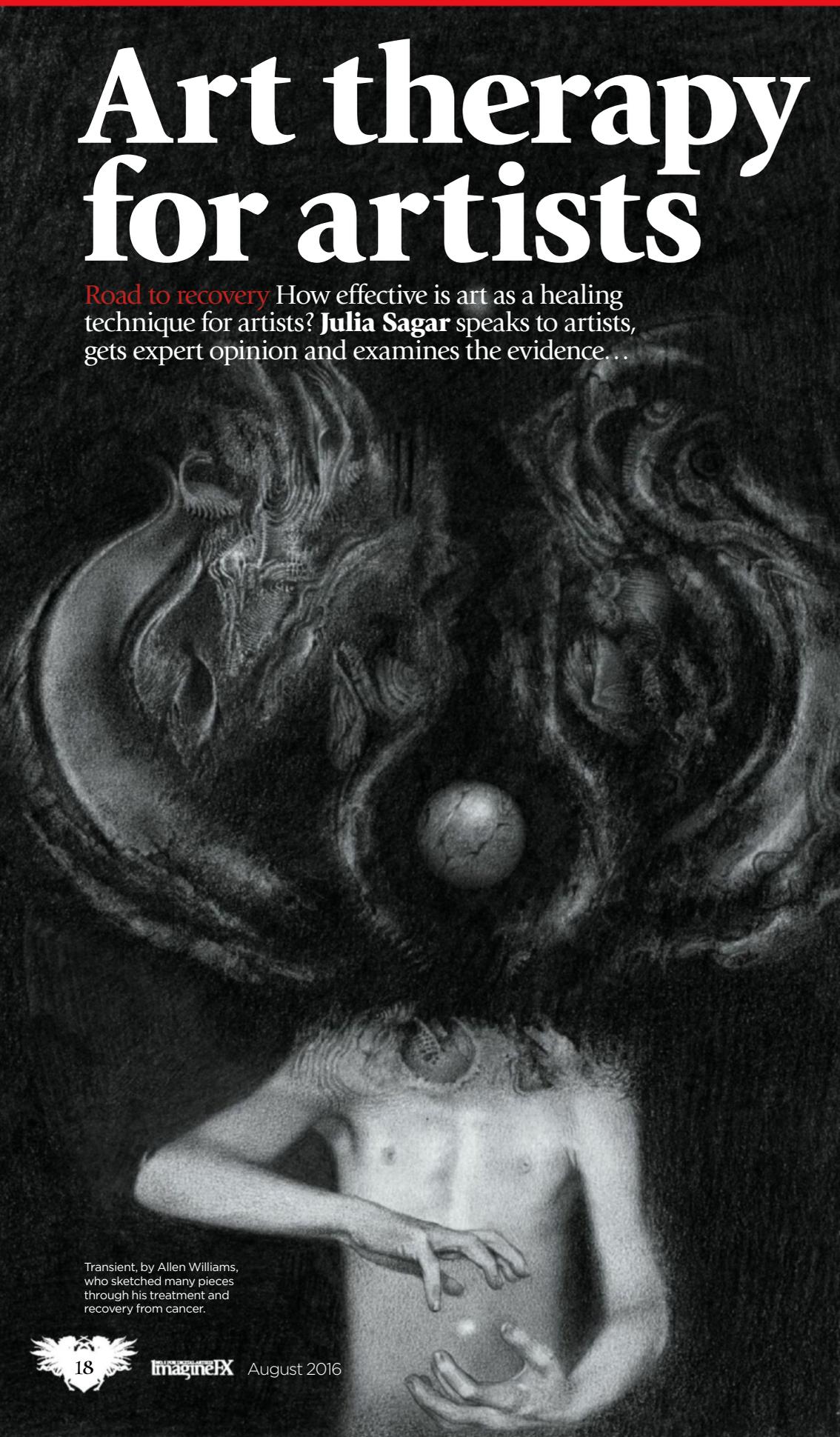
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Art therapy for artists

Road to recovery How effective is art as a healing technique for artists? **Julia Sagar** speaks to artists, gets expert opinion and examines the evidence...



Transient, by Allen Williams, who sketched many pieces through his treatment and recovery from cancer.

If you've bought anything from Amazon in the past three years, you'll have probably noticed a surprising number of adult colouring books topping the best-seller lists.

Once a niche, colouring books for adults are now big business, with users extolling their calming virtues. But why? How effective is art as a therapeutic technique? And does that mean artists are the most well-adjusted people on the planet?

Scottish illustrator Johanna Basford, whose colouring books for grown-ups have



sold over 16 million copies worldwide, attributes their popularity to two aspects: accessibility, and a nostalgic craving for non-digital

activities. "I get so many emails from people in all walks of life to say the books have helped them through a tough patch," says Johanna. "From stressed-out 911 call operators in the US, to teens recuperating at eating disorder centres, elderly folks struggling with Alzheimer's or new mums with post-natal depression."

The therapeutic benefits of art have long been documented. And while psychotherapists point out that colouring isn't an automatic ticket to mindfulness, they do agree that the process of art-making can be a health-enhancing practice, which positively impacts the quality of life.

Cathy Malchiodi is an international expert, writer and educator in the fields of art therapy and art in healthcare. She believes that while there are of course times when we need some professional support - whether that be from a therapist, doctor, mentor,



friend or a community as a whole - art exists as a natural remedy for many of life's challenges, loss and trauma in particular.



Darren Yeow says art - like this piece, *Astro* - can help as an outlet for certain feelings.



THE GOLD STANDARD

We find out what's in store for the latest edition of Spectrum, the world's longest running fantasy annual. Artists, judges and its editor spill the beans. **Page 22**



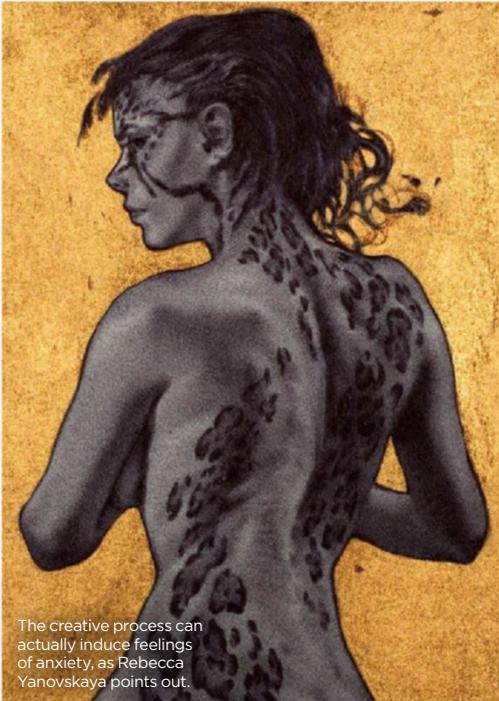
A WORLD OF ART

Vanessa Lemen's home is also her studio. We know this because paintings cover every wall. But Zoe, her pet dog, still has space on the sofa for a snooze. **Page 24**



READING UP ON RAPHAEL

Concept artist, art director and friend of the magazine Raphael Lacoste has brought a cartload of his art together into a new book. We check it out. **Page 27**



The creative process can actually induce feelings of anxiety, as Rebecca Yanovskaya points out.



In his younger years, Darren drew characters like Venom, Wolverine and Batman a lot.

"There isn't any one particular way that this occurs," Cathy says, "but many artists have used their creative process to cope with their depression or other issues. Each person has his or her own path to reparation and recovery."

A quick look at the rich heritage of famous artists who have explored intense psychological themes in their work proves Cathy right: Jean-Michel Basquiat, Edvard Munch, Vincent van Gogh... the list goes on. Whether the process is a vent, time out or something more complex altogether, it's

“ I liked to draw Venom, Wolverine and Batman – torment was almost a superpower for those guys ”

An illustration from Johanna Basford's adult colouring book, *Lost Ocean*.



clear that people have long sought therapeutic participation in art.

ONE STRATEGY AMONG MANY

For concept artist Darren Yeow, it's proven useful as one of myriad mental healthcare strategies he's undertaken over the years. However, he points out that art didn't cover up some serious aspects of mental health, which needed the guidance and feedback of a professional counsellor.

“Darren was a victim of sexual abuse when he was young and says that he struggled with the fallout for many years. As a child, he drew lots of monsters and “angry, scary-looking things”. He explains: “That’s probably why I liked to draw Venom, Wolverine and Batman: torment was almost a superpower for those guys. When I drew them, I felt like I channelled some of that hurt out on to the paper. It was just an unconscious act of self-soothing.”

In his teens, Darren turned to martial arts as a way of regulating his feelings of shame and hurt, preventing them from morphing into physical violence. Everything was ➔



INDUSTRY INSIGHT

ALLEN WILLIAMS

Why the concept artist sketched throughout his cancer treatment

Why did you produce and show art during this difficult time?

Drawing is what I do, it's everything. I wanted to make sure something that brings me such enjoyment when things are going well could also do that when things were at a low point. So I set up a desk and studio area in my living room, to be around my family and still have a space to do art.

Was the process therapeutic?

I'm not sure. Drawing did help me focus on something other than feeling awful. It let me look at what I was doing and remember that things won't stay like this. Last year nothing was normal. Our life, schedule, house: everything was disrupted and different. So when I could sit and draw and create it was like sinking back into my world. It enabled me to feel like I was still engaged in my life.

One of the main reasons I could focus on my work and not worry too much was because our art community, friends, family and people who didn't even know me personally helped us. Andrea and Chris Alzmann, Iain McCaig and Karla Ortiz started a GoFundMe page. We were floored by the support and can't thank people enough for everything that they did for us.

Are there times where engaging in art as a therapeutic technique could be a destructive process?

I think that as an artist you may have to be aware of how deeply you fall into your own brain. I have a wife and children and they keep me pretty grounded. I can go down some pretty dark roads, but I have someone there to tap me on the shoulder and not let me lose track of myself.



Allen is an award-winning illustrator, concept artist, fine artist and writer who has a passion for creating in graphite.

www.allenwilliamsstudio.com



For Revelation #1, Rebecca used ballpoint pen with 22k old leaf applique.



Mountains is a client piece by Darren, but landscapes have also featured in his self-administered therapeutic artwork.

➔ fine until a few years ago when, working as a professional artist, a period of significant business and personal stress brought up a torrent of latent anger.

"I found that I hadn't really tackled the underlying issues," Darren admits. "When a particularly stressful incident occurred and I couldn't recall that I had punched a hole in the wall as a result, I felt it was time I needed to seek out professional help in dealing with my emotions, before things spiralled out of control."

There's another angle, too. As every artist knows, the process of making art isn't always relaxing. For freelancers it can be lonely stuck at home in front of a screen all day, and for all creatives it can be frustrating – as Toronto-based illustrator Rebecca Yanovskaya knows only too well. "As much as I love art-making, it brings me a certain

“We're immersed in art... therapy for us might work better if it's something far removed from what we do”

amount of anxiety as well," she says, "because of the need to create great pieces and live up to my expectations."

So what about professional art therapy? Do artists have anything to gain in a professional forum? Rebecca has visited an art therapist before. She remains



unconvinced as to how effective art can be as a therapeutic technique for working artists. "We're immersed in art in a money-

Johanna's customers find solace in her adult colouring books – in the simple pleasure of putting pen to paper.

making capacity," she argues. "Therapy for us might work better if it's something far removed from what we do every day."

NON-ARTISTS CAN STILL BENEFIT

However, Cathy thinks there can be as much value for artists as for non-artists, as long as participants are committed to the process. "If one wants another perspective, and to experience art-making in a different way, then art therapy might be helpful," she says, "especially since one of its goals is to guide the individual toward new insights and experiences that support a sense of well-being through art."

For anyone thinking about getting involved, there are plenty of options. "Online art-making communities offer art-making experiences for self-exploration and self-care, rather than therapy per se," she says. "Artists who are new to the idea of making art as self-care or as self-exploration may find this approach uncomfortable at first, but give it a shot; it sometimes even provides a new direction for your own artistic style and intentions."

Just remember to leave your ego well out of it, warns Rebecca – and Darren agrees: "Don't turn it into a study session or illustration assignment," the artist advises. "There's no need to impress other people. Just let the stylus flow."

Readers – what do you think about this topic? How effective is art as a tool for healing, and what experiences have you had? Email mail@imaginefx.com with your thoughts.



Darren saw torment as almost a superpower for characters like Wolverine.





Darren is happy to share his therapeutic artworks, like *Scream*, but doesn't want commercial gain from them.



The Collector. "If you ever go through anything like this, feel all of your emotions - allow them," Allen advises. "Also, give yourself permission to feel joy amidst it all. The world is vast and there is much beauty."

Incarnations of Immortality, by Rebecca, is based on the series by Piers Anthony.



Building on past successes

Going for gold As the winners of Spectrum 23 Awards are announced, **Julia Sagar** acknowledges the role of the longest-running fantasy art book series in existence

The winners of the 2016 Spectrum Awards have been announced, which means the highly anticipated 23rd Spectrum annual is in production. Available from November 2016, Spectrum 23 continues the best-selling series of annuals, showcasing the year's most exciting creators of fantasy, science fiction, horror and surreal art from around the globe.

Spectrum has come a long way since the first annual was printed in 1993. Founded by

Cathy and Arnie Fenner, the weighty tome is the longest-running fantasy art book series in existence and has evolved into an influential who's who of the contemporary illustration world.

"It provides a salon for works of this genre to be seen, as well as a forum and support system," says illustrator and Spectrum 23 judge Terry Whitlatch. "It's a validation for art that, at



(Above) Shanghai Childhood September, part of Kejun Zhao's series on life in the Chinese city.

times, is looked down upon by The Art Establishment."

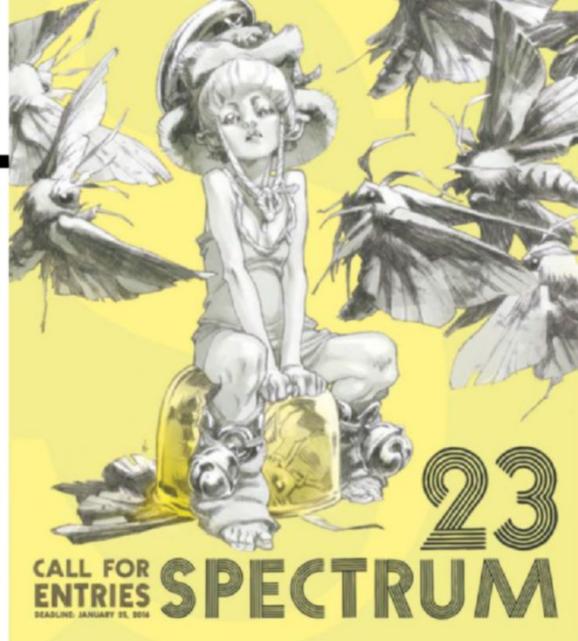
This year, says Spectrum editor John Fleskes—who took over in 2013—readers can look forward to a revamped design and new chapter opener sections, alongside other developments. "As the artists grow to reflect today's atmosphere, Spectrum grows right along with them," says John, adding that this is why he started including artist profiles for the award recipients in Spectrum 21. "It was important to highlight the artists behind these amazing works, and to highlight the art community, which is the beating heart of Spectrum."

UNIQUE TRICKS

Over 280 artists will feature in Spectrum 23. So what does it take to get into such a prestigious publication? According to Terry, a healthy dose of unique, out-of-the-box thinking and creativity: "The technical skill was very high across the board, so we looked to see if the art actually and clearly communicated an idea, concept or story element," she explains. "In other words,



Arnie and Cathy Fenner pose with some of this year's winners, along with John Fleske.



CALL FOR ENTRIES **SPECTRUM**
HEADLINE, JANUARY 15, 2021



Wangjie Li's Hunter in Snow is one of the many treats that await readers of Spectrum 23.

The Spectrum 23 call for entries poster.



Victor Maury's Pride helped win him Spectrum's Rising Star award.

did it fulfil any purpose, or was it merely created to 'look pretty'?"



"The only trick, really, is to enter and to put your best work forward," says illustrator David Palumbo, who served on the panel. "I recommend sending several pieces."

This year, the awards ceremony was held at the historic New York home of the Society of Illustrators. In May, the cream of the fantasy art community gathered together to celebrate their common passion for stories and the fantastical. "It's a chance to meet artists and fans, to share stories and grab



drinks with old friends. It's also a time to reflect on the last year's work and get inspired for the next year's. There's really nothing quite like it," says

Victor Maury, who was named by the judges as this year's Rising Star.

"I was very surprised," says Victor. "But after the initial shock, I was very happy, because this community's support means a lot to me. It's fuel for moving forward."

You can find out more about the awards by visiting <http://ifxm.ag/spect23>.

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There are paintings clipped to my bookshelves and practically any place I can stash them to dry.

On my easel you're likely to find a current WIP, maybe a recently finished painting, and other artworks clipped to it where there's room.

Sitting down to play the keyboard helps to clear my head for a bit.



I find that a dish drying rack is great for setting small paintings out to dry. It keeps them separated and organised.

At my desk, I've got my Mac and Wacom, an extra monitor (with a ton of Sticky Notes all over it), and a Cintiq, plus my speaker and printer off to the side, and a webcam for online instruction, tutorials and meetings.

I sometimes use a small folding table or my taboret to lay paintings flat if I need to add either splatters or marks that require the surface to be flat, instead of upright on the easel.

Vanessa Lemen

World of art The Californian painter shows us around her bustling studio space, where her art shares first billing with her homelife



I usually have several paintings going at once. It's important that they're surrounding me because the studio is the world that my paintings and I live in together and carry on an ongoing dialogue.

My husband, Ron, and I are both artists, and living and working go together hand in hand. I would say that our whole house is a studio space, but the second floor of the

house is especially set up for the purpose of working and creating.

The room I mostly work in at home – and what I call my studio – is a good-sized, open loft at the top of the stairs; the walls are covered in WIPs. I put small shelves and ledges up on one of the walls, so that I can interchange my work easily, to and from my easel. I can put wet paintings there to dry, and have them out so that they're there in my surroundings.

In other areas of that studio space, I have clips that hold smaller paintings in nooks and spaces – wherever there's room to store more wet paintings and have them around and visible to me. I also have a kitchen dish drying rack to place the smallest paintings in, which keeps them nicely separated if they're wet.

Music is also a big part of the creative process for me, and it's important to have it in my space while I paint. There's a nice

Artist news, software & events

I have various dry paintings stacked next to the couch, as well as in other places around the studio.

These ledges are great for placing larger, wet paintings out of the way, but where I can see them.

We have a nice chill-space on the patio in our back yard that's a cool spot to hang out and sketch.



I've been known to take up the dining room table and work there on a project. The two kittens are Mazzy and Rey, and they're constantly exploring. The fact that our house is one big studio space makes for a good amount of adventuring for them.

I have small paintings clipped in random places on bookshelves throughout my studio, to let them dry and to have them out around me.

To say that we have a lot of books is an huge understatement. This is one wall of our first floor living room, and the books are basically what fill most of the walls in all the rooms of our house.

comfy couch in my studio that's usually occupied by our dog, Zoe, who stretches out on it while I work. The couch also becomes a great communal spot for studio hang-out time with Ron and our friends, and is a good place for me to sit back and take a look at the work that's surrounding me in that space.

Vanessa lives and works in San Diego with Ron Lemen. You can see more of her work at www.vanessalemenart.blogspot.com



Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS



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



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An eventual event

I've just come back from the Independent Festival of Creative Communication (IFCC) in Croatia. I really enjoyed it and wanted to know if you're involved in that event, and if you would ever do a similar event?

Jay Greenwood, via email

Beren replies Man! This is something ImagineFX has wanted to do for ever. There's been a lot of growing film art teams in London recently, so it'd make sense to do an event there, bringing together some of the best artists in the world who we've worked with over the years. But the problem is finding the money to fund it all... we're hoping someone will see this for the gosh darn awesome idea that it clearly is and offer us millions. Hmm...

I'd love to know what other readers think? Would you want to attend a London-based ImagineFX art event? Tell us!

Manga software

Hello Team ImagineFX. I'm relatively new to digital art and love manga, and I just want to know, is there any manga-specific software I should look into using to help me on my journey towards becoming an accomplished manga artist? Any advice would be much appreciated.

Natasha Long, via email

Beren replies Hi Natasha, funny you should ask, because I've just discovered Clip Studio Paint (www.clipstudio.net/en). And though I haven't had a chance to use it, I noticed that the awesome NPye (<http://ifxm.ag/n-pye>) uses it, which is a good sign. And of course, there's Manga Studio, which is well worth looking into.

Feeling sketchy

Is there any way to get the digital versions of Sketchbook Volumes 2 and 3, other than from the iTunes store? I just can't find the physical version in my country. It says that a



The Croatian IFCC art event is now into its second year, and its popularity is growing.



Buy print and digital copies of ImagineFX's special issues at our dedicated website, MyFavouriteMagazines.com

digital version is available, but I can't seem to find where it is.

Christopher Prayogo, via email

Beren replies Hello Christopher. Simply visit www.myfavouritemagazines.co.uk to get physical versions of Sketchbooks Vols. 2 and 3 delivered to your door, and for non-Apple digital versions, we're available on nook, Zinio, from Amazon apps and Google Play!

Digital subscriptions

Hi. First of all, I want to tell how much I like your publication. I'm a happy amateur artist of 33 years (now aged 67) and it's so wonderful to see and read about all these magnificent artists all over the world. I have bought every issue since around number 50, and I have a webpage (www.enoft.se), if you want to take a look at my art.

Anyway, I have two questions. I have both a digital and print subscription and I have some questions about the digital form. I'm a little bit frustrated that the app starts so slowly. Very, very, very slowly. Is anyone else complaining about it? Or am I doing something wrong? And it seems that it's only possible to read when you're connected to internet. Is that right?

My husband is building a huge catamaran and when it's ready (in a year or two) we plan to be on the seas many months a year and then there is not so much internet. Is there any way to solve this?

Kind regards from Sweden in the beautiful springtime, where I got married a week ago!

Eva Susanne Bildt, via email

Beren replies Well firstly, many congratulations Eva, both on the wedding and on the awesome plans for living on the high seas. Don't forget your orange juice. Scurvy's a killer!

For the digital editions, you'll need internet to download the magazine itself, but when you've got it on your tablet, you can read it at will... so maybe get a bunch of them ready for those months at sea? As for the slow speed of the app starting, this might be your internet connection, or perhaps your tablet - we haven't got this feedback before. Readers! Have any of you experienced this. Please get in touch.



Your art news that's grabbed our attention



Keith Williams
[@CEB1980](https://twitter.com/CEB1980)

"I painted this on iPad Pro with Apple Pencil, hope you like it"



Pen Winter
[@Pen_Winter](https://twitter.com/Pen_Winter)

"I'm really happy how the bubbles turned out. On to an awesome summer!"



Simon Andrew Holland
[@simonholland74](https://twitter.com/simonholland74)

"The Crooner"

Just finished something you want us to shout about? Send it our way on Twitter ([@imaginefx](https://twitter.com/imaginefx)), or find us on Facebook!



When Worlds collide

Getting physical Raphael Lacoste turns his digital art archive into a book



For over 15 years Raphael Lacoste has challenged himself as an artist. He was the art director for games including Prince of Persia and Assassin's Creed, and was the senior concept artist for films such as Terminator Salvation. His latest challenge is to publish his digital art as a physical book, which he's calling Worlds.

Raphael had long wanted to create something tangible with his digital paintings, but it wasn't until he found the right time and contacts that things started to gather momentum. "Last year Patrice Leymarie, CEO and founder of IAMAG, offered to help me work on an art book project," Raphael says. "He presented me his previous crowdfunded work and I was very impressed by the quality of the print."

This focus on print quality ties in with Raphael's aims for his book. "I want to show how important it is to design and work on paper before detailing an image," he says. Filled with personal pieces and commissioned work, *Worlds* collects his virtual universe of imagined places.

Raphael hopes his book will inspire artists to learn more about environment design, in the same way that travelling inspired his work. "Sometimes making images from scratch, because I want to create something that resonates with my own soul, is a relief and a real need," he adds.

Complete with a layout design by art director Brent Ashe, *Worlds* will be released in September and can be ordered from www.itsartm.ag/worlds-lacoste.



Raphael is proud of developing his technical skills in his *Skye's Old Man of Storr* painting.



The project has enabled Raphael see how his work has evolved over the years.

The freedom of working for himself has given Raphael the chance to push his personal universe to the next level.

“I want to show how important it is to design and work on paper before detailing an image”







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Artist Q&A

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The NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX panel

Mark Molnar
Mark is a lead concept artist at Pixeloid Studios based in Budapest, and is busy developing designs for international film, game and animation companies.
www.markmolnar.com

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

Alix Branwyn
Alix is a Seattle-based illustrator for the games industry. Her work is primarily fantasy and horror in nature, with a focus towards the dark and definitely creepy.
www.alixbranwyn.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

Mélanie Delon
Mélanie divides her time between working for different publishing houses and creating her own artworks, which often depict her love of fantasy characters and scenes.
www.melanie-delon.com



Question
How can I illustrate an older woman's face convincingly?

Noah Waldock, Australia



Age doesn't have to be dehumanising and uglifying. Well-rounded anatomical forms can make an older character sprightly and playful.

Answer
Tom Foster replies



While there are noticeable differences between male and female facial anatomy, the aging process is much the same and the resultant facial types are no more different than in youth. The main difference tends to be the storage of fat.

Female faces store proportionately greater levels of fat, resulting in rounder forms, as opposed to the male, in which muscle is more visible, leading to greater angularity. As time goes on, gravity takes its toll on these deposits of fat and they travel to the lower half of the face, just as the skin that binds them loosens and does the same. This places a greater emphasis on the furrows around the mouth, and the



I gather more than one reference photo (of different people), when attempting difficult facial anatomy. This enables me to isolate the commonalities in expression, anatomy and ageing process from details that are specific to an individual. I can then apply these traits to my character.

migration of cheek fat southwards will often leave the fat storage under the eyes isolated in pronounced bags.

Don't think of these furrows and bags as lines, but rather the borders of three-dimensional shapes. Using these shapes to define areas of light and shade helps me create anatomy that looks more physically real than merely drawing laughter lines and crow's feet on to an otherwise youthful face. It also helps me keep the face characterful, rather than mired in detail that serves only to drown the viewer in the message that "this person is old." If I can do this convincingly, my character's age will be an asset to their expressiveness, rather than an impediment.

Artist Q&A
Need our advice?

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

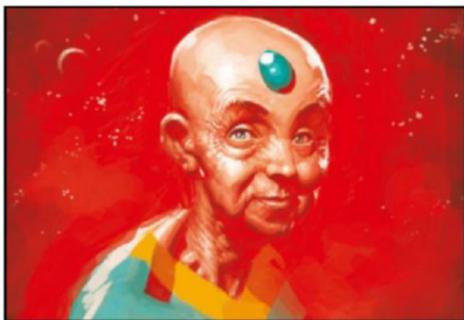
Step-by-step: Showing age in the face realistically



1 With the initial drawing, I try to capture the forms in monochrome, because this will define much of the form and shadow, without the distraction of colour to flatter everything. At this stage, it's an exercise in draughtsmanship. I save any expressive flourishes for when I've nailed down the fundamentals.



2 Now I apply colour and use it to bring out subtler forms for which a harsh line or deep shadow might be little overpowering, such as forehead wrinkles or cheek hollows. Having base colours defined also enables me to scrub over areas I feel I've over-rendered with a low-Opacity brush, thereby softening them.

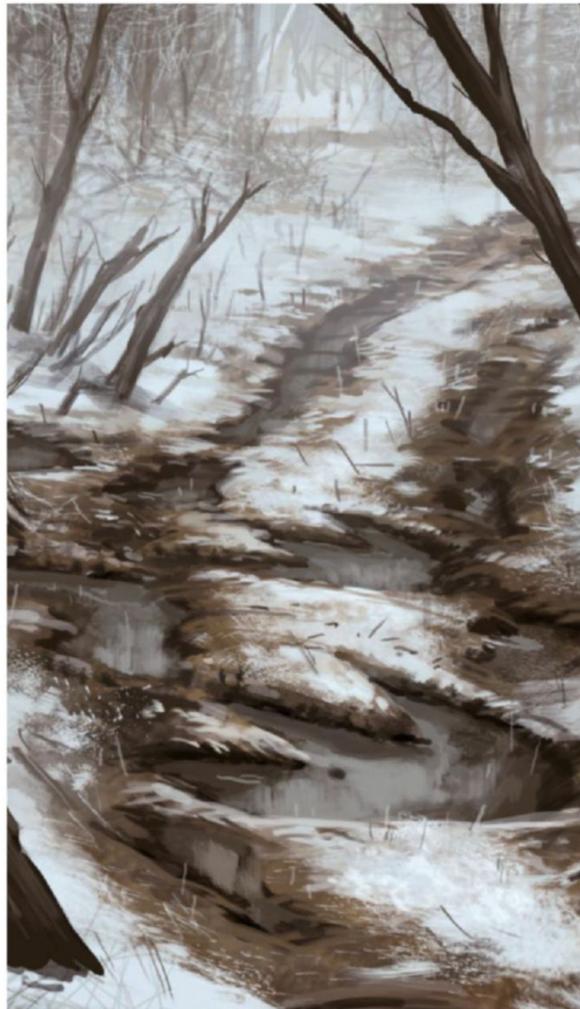


3 Now I can concentrate on the fine details and highlights, which help to give everything a sense of greater dimension. Here, I suffered from starting with a less solid foundation than I should have in step one. This led to edits and full repainting of some areas. The lesson being, always build a strong foundation.

Question

Help me paint muddy footprints

Ava Stone, Australia



The key for painting footprints in mud is to show the difference between the material qualities. Focus on the roughness and reflection and the edges, where the mud and the water-filled footprints meet.

I blocked in the footprints as simple silhouettes on the loosely painted background. This helped me to see them in the composition and I used these as layer masks in the painting process later.

Answer Mark replies



First we have to understand what's happening when we step into mud. It's basically soft, wet soil that forms after rain, melting snow, flood waters and so on. When we step into mud, we're compressing the soil layers together and squeeze out the water from between them. It's this water that fills up the footprints.

The most important art elements for making this believable in an illustration is to shade the edges of the footprints correctly and to show the difference in the reflectiveness or specularly. The viewer has to believe that the footprints are sunken and filled with muddy water.

I start by creating the line of footprints as simple silhouettes, before distorting them into the perspective I imagine for the scene. After that I loosely paint in the winter forest with the surrounding trees to establish both my overall colour palette and my composition. Next, I add the shadows and water to the footprints, creating other extra pools of water on the road and painting in the child for scale.

From this point on the whole process is only about introducing more details to my key areas and to fine-tune the edges and reflections. I introduce small details around my focal areas and enhance the transition between the footprints and soil surrounding them.

As a final step I add some fallen trees to show the devastation of the creature, along with a layer of extra fog to help sell the feeling that the viewer is exploring a forest on a winter's morning, on the trail of a leviathan.

Artist's secret

ADDING SCALE REFERENCE

I always like to add a point of reference to my images to strengthen the sense of scale. If you're using a human figure alongside generic objects, such as trees and bushes in this case, you can also help the storytelling of your illustration.

Question

How can I replicate the 80s airbrush style?

Alicia Marsden, Canada



Answer

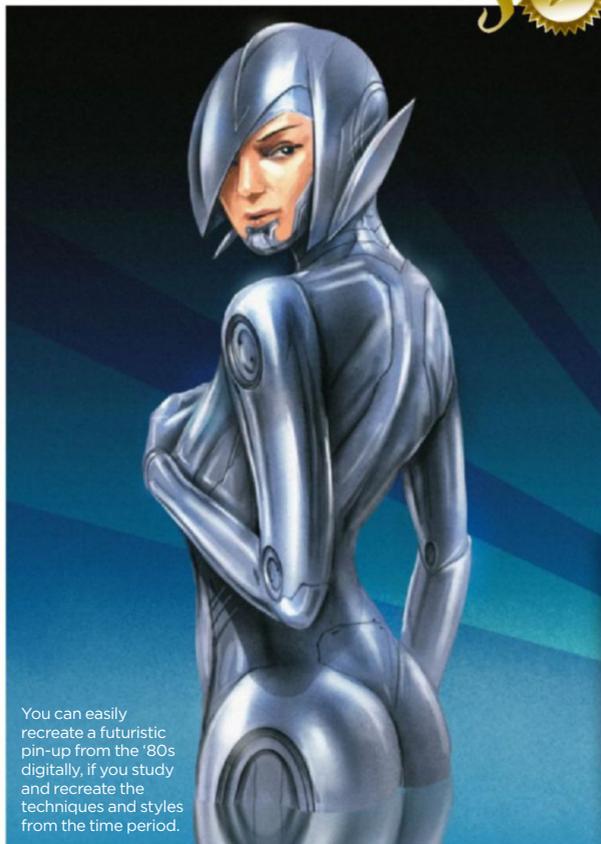
Mark replies



What instantly pops in my mind when heard about the topic for this article are the amazing early paintings of Hajime Sorayama. To recreate his iconic style digitally, I want to use similar steps in the work process, emulating what he would use with the traditional medium. I attempt to replicate the small imperfections of the airbrush, use digital masking techniques with selections, and vary the edges the same way as the artists of the 80s did to separate the main shapes.

I also want to show the key style points of this genre. These include using simple backgrounds with gradients, oversaturated colours, and highly reflective materials such as chrome, glass or shiny plastic that are relatively easy to replicate digitally.

I chose the style of Sorayama because I feel his works incorporate all the aesthetics of the 80s. If you'd like to mimic the work from a particular time period, the best way is to choose an iconic artist from the time, study their style and then reverse engineer how the artworks were created. If you understand the process with traditional mediums, you can recreate them digitally.



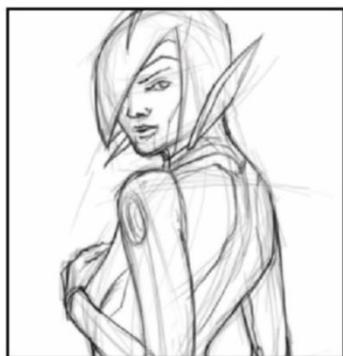
You can easily recreate a futuristic pin-up from the '80s digitally, if you study and recreate the techniques and styles from the time period.



It's important to find the balance between the softness of the shading inside the main shapes of the body and the hard edges in the darker reflections and outer edges of the parts.

Artist's secret
FROM TRADITIONAL TO DIGITAL
I paint one simple brush mark with the splatter and noisy, imperfect characteristics of the traditional airbrush in black and white. select the area and sample that to a new brush (Edit>Define Brush Preset...). I can now tweak the brush to suit my needs.

Step-by-step: Digital airbrush techniques



1 I create a rough sketch based on a reference photo of a model to get the correct pose, then do a more clean line-work version on a separate layer, which includes the key characteristics of Sorayama's robot girls. I do this pretty quickly to capture the overall feeling, but the more you spend on developing clean and accurate line-work, the better your final design will be.



2 Next, I paint a simple gradient in the background using my custom airbrush and block in the silhouette of the girl. I use a blueish grey colour to capture the plain material colour of chrome without reflections. From this point on I use this silhouette as a layer mask: this enables me to keep the outer edges of the robot/human character clean.



3 I gradually move from the mid-values in the painting towards the darks and lights. I only use Photoshop's Soft brushes to emulate the original technique and try to replicate the classic glowing reflections from the metallic surfaces. I also start to push back my original line drawing in the same way that I would cover it with paint, as if I were using a traditional airbrush.



4 I introduce hard edges, much like how traditional airbrush artists use physical masks. I use the Lasso tools to create selections and paint inside those. I also paint in thin seam lines as small details to break up the bigger shapes. As a final touch I paint the typical glowing reflections and add some grain and noise effects, to recreate the feel of early small-sized airbrush works.



For the sinister reflection, I largely left the sketch version intact. The looser brush strokes and harder-to-parse form can add to the creep factor.

Question

Please help me paint a shattering mirror

Shannon Schofield, England

Answer

Alix replies



Creating an image with a mirror shattering can be challenging on several fronts. The main elements to consider are establishing light sources and angles of the shards for the reflections to make a believable broken mirror, and creating motion and action in the scene that doesn't overwhelm the focal point: our sinister reflection and the reaction to its attack.

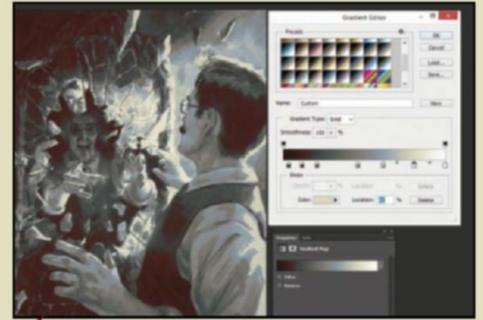
After developing a thumbnail that communicates the story within the frame, I take some photo reference in front of a mirror to get a better idea of how the light and reflections will work. Reference and thumbnail

in hand, I start working up a value sketch in Photoshop with some additional planning help from SketchBook Pro for creating a symmetrical outline of the mirror design to lay into the scene.

With a value sketch complete, I apply some base colours and begin rendering. As I render to final, I keep a close eye on edges that begin to distract from the focal point of the scene. I use a soft Blender brush on edges that draw attention to knock them back, as well as motion blurs and radial blurs on shards of glass to give them momentum while softening them from focus.

Step-by-step:

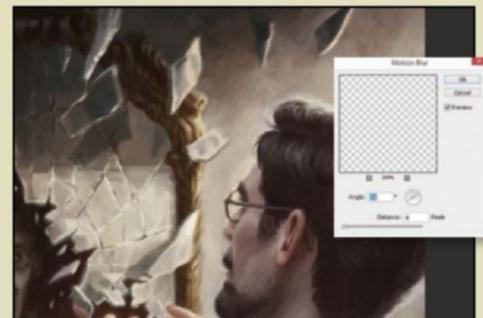
Gradually breaking the mirror down



1 Creating an initial sketch using values is a great way to begin your piece, but you can run the risk of introducing too much muddy black if you use it as a base unaltered. I like to play with gradient maps on my value sketches to introduce colour into the shadows, and create colour schemes I may not have thought of initially.



2 When tackling the broken glass of the mirror, I make use of the Lasso tool to create guides for the sharp cuts in the glass. I alternate between dark and light lines to show the catch of the light in the seams. I make sure to add a level of thickness to the glass edges, so the broken pieces can read as flipping through space.



3 Broken glass flying from the mirror can give some compelling action to the scene, but has the potential of distracting from the main focus of the image. I use motion blurs on some of the shards to imply a direction of force as well as to soften them up, leaving harder edges for areas closer to the focal point.

Question

How can I present my character in a different way?

Emily McCarthy, US

Answer

Alix replies



For some character art, corner-to-corner design with a fully fleshed-out scene may not suit the needs of the work. However, that doesn't mean your standalone character needs to lack for story and context. A creative use of environment framing and well-designed breakouts can help ground your character within their world, while still allowing the versatility of being a vignette.

To start, you need a really solid silhouette for the outside shape of the piece. Creating a lot of small thumbnails to experiment with the push and pull of the negative and positive space will help create a composition that isn't just a pleasing illustration, but also a strong design. For this example, I lay out a handful of

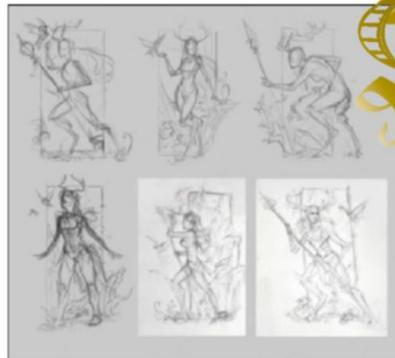
thumbnails using both pencil on paper and a Cintiq tablet with Photoshop, until I find one that strikes a chord.

After I have my thumbnail down, I flesh it out as a sketch in Photoshop. I mainly focus on how the edges work within the white space. With everything laid out, I create a simple single Color layer to form the basis for a clipping mask. Every layer that's created from this point onward will be clipped to this shape (using Alt while hovering over the layer panel).

For finer control of elements inside the larger clipped area, I use the Layer Transparency lock (the checkerboard box in the layer panel) to keep my edges tidy. Rendering out the remainder with everything locked to the mask makes finishing up this vignette a breeze.



I broke the frame with birds, petals, and plant life springing up around my Spirit of Renewal's feet to show her purpose in the charred landscape.

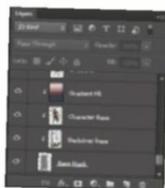


When locking down a design, thumbnails are key. I find that working on paper at first can help me loosen up and get a good flow down.

Artist's secret

KEEP IT TIDY!

Utilizing folders and naming your new layers can save you a lot of time and hassle, especially when it comes to clipping masks. Moving clipped layers that are grouped together in a folder saves you from having to reclip everything again.



Wide-angle lenses show both a large character, and plenty of environment. They create an unnatural relationship between the sizes of objects, adding to the feeling of imbalance.

Question

Help me pose a figure with a wobbly load

Jon Gael, England

Answer

Tom Fox replies



For poses to look off-balance, the weight has to be clearly drawn to one side or another.

One way to check the balance of your figures is to draw a straight line through your pose, which shows the direction of the lean. The closer to horizontal this line is, the more unbalanced the figure appears. To help accentuate the lean in your characters, put limbs into awkward positions. Feet turning inwards and arms thrown out for balance help create the illusion of panic.

Question

My cozy bar lacks atmosphere. Help!

Kerri Wicker, Scotland

Answer

Tom Fox replies



First, I consider what sort of lens and perspective to use. Here I've chosen to draw the characters with a mid to long lens. The vanishing points converge relatively slowly: it's very close to drawing in one-point perspective. A long lens creates an observational feel to the image, as if viewing from a distance and zooming in. Second, I think about designing the light. I want a cozy scene so I chose a warm, evening light, which implies a comfortable setting and lack of danger. This lighting, combined with the choice of lens, helped to create a relaxed scene before I even considered the subject of the characters.

Drawing people drunk is a challenge. Observing drunk people, you'll see often they talk in an intense way. They gesticulate, wave their hands around, stamp their feet and do just about anything to support what they're saying. It's hard to make yourself understood when you're drinking, so they use all the tools at their disposal. There are also varying degrees of drunkenness and it can be easy to misjudge it. Here, the characters are leaning in towards each other: they're relaxed and comfortable, but not dancing on tables just yet. I've painted the background loosely, to help draw attention to my figures.

Keeping the palette of the background muted and increasing saturation within the figures helps to draw focus on where you want to viewer to look.



Use Photoshop's Lasso and Paint Bucket tools to fill in a flat silhouette layer. Above, add colour layers for separate elements: skin, hair, clothes... and beer!

Artist's secret

BACKGROUND CONSIDERATIONS
These axes resolve at a distance, but actually contain very little detail. Paint at 100 per cent Opacity to force yourself to choose the correct hue, saturation and value.



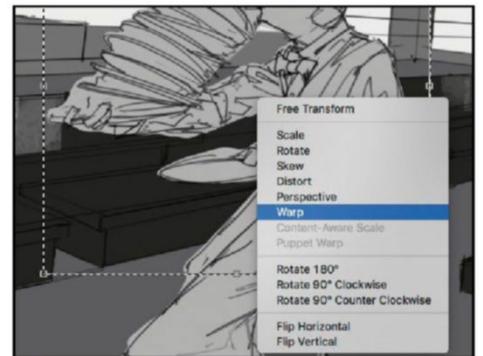
Step-by-step: Keep your balance



1 To get the "off balance" look, tilt the horizon line. Wide-angle lenses also help: they display more background than our eyes normally see. To achieve this, set vanishing points closer together than normal. At least one vertical vanishing point will strengthen the wide angle effect.



2 A loosely coloured background draws attention to the figures. If you decide that the figures are your focal point, then all choices should support that. Two more figures to help fill the scene, and add some narrative. The head waiter is calm, which highlights instability in the others.



3 Place a Multiply layer above the local colour layers to add some extra form. Once the character layers are flattened into a single layer, you can Transform > Warp the characters to tweak the gestures. Used sparingly, it adds extra life into an already well-developed pose.

Next month in...
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Atomhawk
artist Viktoria
Gavrilenko creates
the cover

Paint Titania

Take on Shakespeare's fairie queen and delve into a classic world of fantasy art

Featuring...

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Find out how the id Software art team worked to create this year's most awesome revamped video game.

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Rob Laro takes us through his process of making smart design choices that echo through his characters.

Back to basics

Our panel of pro artists answer art questions geared at people starting out with digital software.

Scott Gustafson

We speak to the award-winning fantasy illustrator about his wild and wonderful career.

ISSUE 138 ON SALE IN THE UK FRIDAY 15 JULY





Question

How can I convey to the viewer that a figure is struggling to pick up an oversized weapon?

Ronnie Jarvis, Wales

Answer

Mélanie replies



For a scene like this, I'm going to exaggerate the character's musculature to make it more obvious. I can achieve this simply by increasing the shading on the muscles, using strong shadows.

My character is trying to pick up a sword, so his arm and back are the most important part of the composition. It's where the action is happening so I choose to focus on this area, and detail those part more than the rest of the body.

I decide to show the upper part of his back to emphasise the physical effort. The character's whole body is working, not just the arms, so I must show muscular contractions on the back. The legs are also working under the strain – they also provide the anchor for the rest of the body – so the muscles must be also contracted and in motion.

The body movement is also important. Here it forms an arc; the body follows the action, and this helps the viewer to understand that the character is struggling with his task. You can exaggerate the curve if you want to accentuate the character's physical exertion. Furthermore, pushing the facial expression will help. The character can be in pain, have a look of concentration, or even crying with frustration. You can have fun adding details like sweat, a red face or protruding veins. The more details you add, the more convincing the final painting will be.

Facial expressions can also convey physical effort and struggle. However, in this example I choose to keep it simple, to focus on the body's efforts.



The body's curve brings movement and dynamism to the whole composition, and helps the viewer to understand what the character is doing. The more accentuated the body curve, the more convincing the action will be.

Artist's secret

PUSH THE BACKGROUND

The surrounding elements can also help to convey the feeling of struggle and movement. Here I choose to add some floating stones above the ground. This little extra detail brings the background into the foreground and unifies the whole composition.



Step-by-step: Depict a physical struggle

1 The base is important, because I can quickly see if my composition is working and can make adjustments if necessary. So I start with this sketch, and decide to keep everything simple to focus



on the character's body. I keep my line art rough because it'll be underneath the real painting, and be used as a base for the shadows in the scene.

2 Now I start to refine the body shape. I work the muscles on the arm and back, because it's where the storytelling takes place. The light needs to be strong here, to accentuate the muscles. I also add



strong lines on the legs, creating some tendons to add more intensity to the figure's effort. I work everything with a Soft brush to blend the colours together.

3 I refine the arm muscles and enhance their exertion with a strong light. The shoulder is the focus point of the body, so I add more light around this area to attract the viewer to this part. Then I work more



on the muscles and tendons on his forearm and on his hand. I use a basic Round edge set to Shape Dynamic to produce clear brushstrokes.

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APPLYING PATTERNS TO YOUR ART | TIPS FOR MASKS AND SELECTIONS | AND MORE!**



Iain McCaig

From Jethro Tull to The Jungle Book, the artist shares his most famous characters with **Gary Evans** and explains how anyone can become a master storyteller

On a jiggling London Underground train, Iain McCaig brushes the finishing touches on to an iconic album cover. The passenger in front acts as a makeshift easel. Another holds his water jar. Iain works in watercolours and adds detail to a hooded faerie, a mercurial creature resting on a broadsword in front of a painting of an ocean that seems to be coming to life.

The artist received the commission just a few weeks before. In Charing Cross railway station he returned a call to his London agent. Brian Froud had pulled out of doing an album cover. Would Iain be interested in taking over? He asked about the band.

"I whooped so loud," Iain says. "It's a big cavern-like space, so my whoop echoed and re-echoed off the walls and sent the pigeons flying. They must have thought someone had fallen under one of the trains."

Iain's 35-year career as an artist, writer and filmmaker has taken him from Glasgow School of Art to Skywalker Ranch, via Sesame Street. This year he helped shape Disney's live-action remake of The Jungle Book, the first film he saw in a cinema. But it's the album cover Iain created for his favourite band that he talks about most fondly – for more reasons than one.

It took 14 days and nights – with hardly a wink of sleep for much of the five days leading up to deadline – to create the cover

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST

"Contrast is the secret of life, and what a joy to play the beastly Darth Maul against Queen Amidala's beauty."

for The Broadsword and the Beast, the 1982 album by Jethro Tull. Only the final few details remained. Iain completed those on the Tube on the way to the record label. He remembers fellow passengers cheering him on as he leapt from the train and raced up the escalator carrying his painting. Singer/songwriter Ian Anderson waited for him at the offices of Chrysalis Records. Anderson liked the artwork, everyone liked the artwork. Now, what about the back cover?

"We hadn't discussed a back cover. But of course we had to have one. And so I staggered back to my easel for another exciting, creative hellride. It was a milestone for me in so many ways – I even proposed to my wife during the creation of it. For the first time I experienced that surreal lift that comes from helping to create an icon, a thing that hits the public just the right way at just the right time, and becomes more than a piece of art."

A DIFFERENT APPROACH TO WORK

Iain doesn't have an agent, he has an attorney. The topics he chooses to work on varies from project to project, often quite dramatically. This makes agents nervous. An agent, Iain says, is best at selling what you've already done. An attorney closes the deal on what you want next. "Actually, mine does a lot more than that, but that's only because she's part Yoda."

Iain began his career in animation, creating cartoons for Sesame Street, before moving to London to work as a freelance illustrator. He returned to his native California in 1990 to take a job at Industrial Light and Magic, the visual effects company founded by George Lucas. He then joined George's personal art department, based out in the Californian countryside at the legendary Skywalker Ranch.

As a concept artist working on the Star Wars prequel trilogy, Iain had to design a Sith Lord that George Lucas described as "a vision from your worst nightmare." He put pen to paper and tried to create a villain that would "out-helmet" Darth Vader. When he realised he couldn't top Ralph McQuarrie's original design, he took off the helmet and explored what lay beneath. ➔



WONDERLAND YODA

"Star Wars has many nods to Lewis Carroll. This lady Yoda caterpillar was one of mine."

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"I experienced that surreal lift that comes from helping to create an icon"

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Artist PROFILE

Iain McCaig



US artist and conceptual designer Iain worked for Lucasfilm on the Star Wars prequel trilogy and The Force Awakens. Notable character designs included Queen Amidala and Darth Maul. His other film concept credits include Terminator II, Hook, Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire and The Avengers. Iain lives in California and British Columbia.

www.iainmccaig.blogspot.pe





**THE GIGANTOPITHECUS
WHO WOULD BE KING**

"Director Jon Favreau wanted only animals native to India in his Jungle Book, which ruled out modern orangutans. The solution: a prehistoric predecessor."

© 2015 Walt Disney Pictures

August 2016 **IMAGINEFX**



THE MOUSE'S TALE

"I love the Alice books, and the notion that all these crazy encounters are taking place in Alice's head."

➔ Iain starts with a drawing from his imagination, then looks for areas that lack authority, sketching analogous shapes from real life. Finally, he blends the passion of his imagination with the precision of his studies in a third drawing. "Hide steps one and two," he says, "and everyone thinks you're a genius!" For the nightmarish Sith Lord, the character who eventually made it to cinema screens was Darth Maul.

Iain planned to train as a journalist, something that he pictured as "bootcamp for later novels, bestsellers and immortal

pieces of literature." But writing gave way to his first love – drawing – and Iain ended up at art school.

SUPER POWER STUDIES

Iain describes Glasgow School of Art in the late 70s and early 80s as "Hogwarts for mutants," where he joined a creative writing group and the drama club. He combined the two when he tried – unsuccessfully – to mount a stage production of Frankenstein. For the eponymous doctor, he enrolled a fellow classmate named Peter Capaldi, currently starring as the most famous doctor in the world.

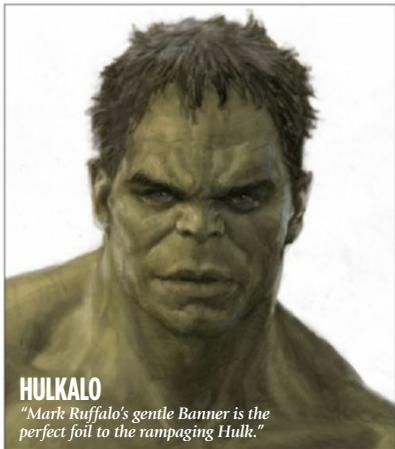
In his second year he specialised in design where he learned to set type by hand and draw an exploded diagram of a snare drum. "I'm saving those skills for the zombie apocalypse. I would have died for classes in concept design and visual storytelling, but those weren't real things yet."

Iain works not only as an illustrator, storyboarder and concept artist, but also as a writer, director and producer. To him, they're all pieces of the same puzzle. "As a wise guy once said: 'When you come to a fork in the road, take it.' I have a really big collection of forks by now. As long as the sign says Story Road, I take it.



TRAD-DIGITAL ART

"This painting began life as a watercolour, but I was never happy with the wizard's face. Happily, Photoshop enabled me to paint him a new one."



HULKALO

"Mark Ruffalo's gentle Banner is the perfect foil to the rampaging Hulk."

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KING LOUIE II

"As an animator, I learned that there are always two stages to bringing something to life: doing it correctly, and then doing it with character."



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“I would have died for classes in concept design and visual storytelling”



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STRANGE FROG

"Recreating icons often means going back to the source material. Kipling's Mowgli, which means 'strange frog', was a much more complex character."

"My art is me... I'm the thing that ties it all together. And I find people fascinating, the best fantasy creatures ever made. I have a fondness for certain kinds of characters; you can see those scampering through my work wearing different disguises. But my muse – She Who Must Be Obeyed – is story. I'm completely and forever under her spell."

Iain believes anyone can learn storytelling, something he says is hard-wired into us. "Every day we make up a story of who we are, and who we want to be, then contrive the plot of our lives to support it. We don't have much control over tsunamis and sunny days, of course, but our friends, our enemies, our hopes and dreams and what we do about them... all that stuff is ours to write. We make it up without a single class in character creation, just as we usually speak without scripting dialogue. Brush up your grammar and vocabulary, learn to draw and ➡

INTO THE BELLY OF THE BEAST

Iain recounts the genesis of his iconic album art for Jethro Tull's *The Broadsword and the Beast*

Iain McCaig was freelancing in London when his agent contacted him about creating an album cover for his favourite band, Jethro Tull. He met lead singer Ian Anderson and the rest of the band at their studio in Fulham.

Based on an unfinished song Anderson played, Iain drew a "mad bard in a mirror, many beasties perched on his shoulder and blowing music in his ear." A last-minute addition to the back cover was one of the winged creatures playing a flute while perched on one leg, Anderson's signature stage move. The singer decided he wanted that image on the cover. "Then he handed me a second song he'd just written called *Broadsword*," Iain says. "The song began with the image of a ship, its 'dark sail on the horizon,' rising towards us out of a storm. I combined both ideas – the beastie and the ship – and having just read *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*, I put the storm and the ship in a picture frame and had the ocean splashing to life around the beastie, who was now leaning on a broadsword."

The band settled on the title *The Broadsword and the Beast*, so Iain's art fitted perfectly. "It was also the first time that I started to understand watercolour. It's hard to judge the merit of those images, like my designs for Darth Maul and Queen Amidala, but it was a treat to discover that, almost 30 years later, Jethro Tull was still using the beastie at their shows."



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© 2016 Jethro Tull

BROADSWORD AND THE BEAST

"This Jethro Tull album cover has secret messages hidden among the ancient runes, and less secretly, Beastie portraits of all five band members."



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➔ overcome a fear of public speaking, and you're good to go. Learning storytelling starts with an awareness of the tools that you've already got."

BEHOLD THE GIGANTOPITHECUS

Iain temporarily rejoined Lucasfilm to work on *The Force Awakens*. In between *Star Wars* films, his credits include *Terminator 2*, *Bram Stoker's Dracula* and *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, and more recently *The Avengers*, *Guardians of the Galaxy* and the Jon Favreau's *The Jungle Book*.

When Iain heard Favreau (the director of *Elf*, the first two *Iron Man* films, and *Cowboys & Aliens*) was making a live-action version of *The Jungle Book*, he bypassed all the usual channels and called up the director himself. "I begged him to let me play. No way my inner child would let me sit this one out."

In Disney's 1967 film of *The Jungle Book*, feral boy Mowgli becomes friends with an orangutan named King Louie. But

BACK IN THE TRENCHES

"Working on The Force Awakens was like excavating a dinosaur that wasn't dead yet. There was a lot of wondering: 'What did George do?'"

“If it doesn't work for you, don't show it. And if you do, make it shiny. And add a floating droid. Never fails”

orangutans aren't native to India, where the story takes place. Favreau and the team were planning to turn Louie into a monkey, until Iain 'discovered' the Gigantopithecus: an ape that was twice as big as a gorilla, which once lived in the region. "Thank you, Wiki Gods!" he says.

Concept design on films typically lasts from three to nine months. Sometimes the script shows up during that time. Sometimes it doesn't. Iain never saw one on *The Jungle Book*, but that didn't matter because he knew the story inside out. Adapting ideas to suit a director's vision, Iain says, is a concept artist's job description.

"The director is the chooser, your job is to create choices. But you have to learn to take direction without becoming a 'wrist,'

the same way an actor takes direction without becoming a robot. The golden rule is: if it doesn't work for you, don't show it. And if you do, make it shiny. And add a floating droid. Never fails."

RETURN TO FRANKENSTEIN

Iain lives in both Victoria, British Columbia, and California. He doesn't keep "anything remotely like a regular routine." But ideally he's working by 9am, having already exercised and eaten breakfast, writing while "the inner critic is still snoozing."

He'll eat lunch at noon and be back in the studio within an hour a two. He draws and paints until dinnertime. Then he's back in the studio again and will work until 2am or later. His home has two



INNER MOWGLI

"Another way to reinvent an icon is to remember what it was like to see it for the very first time, and to recreate and magnify that experience as vividly as you can."

JOHN CARTER OF MARS

"Edgar Rice Burroughs' 1912 novel told the love-at-first-sight story of a human and a Martian princess."





THE WRATH OF KAHN
"Justin Sweet and I both worked on Shere Kahn. Justin gave him great power. I injected some personality."

© 2015 Walt Disney Pictures

ENTERING SHADOWLAND

Iain first wanted to be a writer, and recently combined art and literature in his debut book

Iain McCaig, best known for his work as a concept and storyboard artist, wanted to train as a journalist, which he thought would lead him to pen great works of literature. After three decades as an artist, he wrote his first book, combining words and pictures in the wildly inventive *Shadowland*. Even though he'd written screenplays, he felt something was missing from his work.

"I felt the call of that other, long lost fork in the road, only stronger now because I had something I really wanted to say. And so I wrote *Shadowline*: an art book-with-a-story, as a way of taking readers to that *Shadowland* realm of the artist, to show them what lies beyond the paint and pencils."

But what exactly is *Shadowland*? "For me, it's a place of eternal contrasts, of breathtaking muses and hordes of undead deadlines. I Hulk-out there, becoming a monster that thinks in a whole different way from this mild-mannered Iain. It's a place as real and familiar to me as the world I come back to, one of friends and family and interviews. I didn't write it to be a writer, I wrote it to communicate. Which is when I finally got an inkling of what writing was all about."



WELCOME TO THE SHADOWLINE

"...and a not-so fictionalised peek into my creative process. Part story, part art book, part art classes. I'm working on the sequel."

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SPEAKING WITH SPIRITS

"With Anakin now a ghost, I imagine he and Luke would have some long chats about life, the Force, women..."



STORY NUGGETS

*"Left to design without a story, I'll make one up. Some make it into the film, most go into the *Land of the Lost*."*

studios, each split into digital and traditional work areas. He prefers the latter, but spends half his time on each. When he's not in Canada or California, he's usually wandering the world, encouraging people to draw and to tell stories.

Where next for the concept artist extraordinaire who's done it all? Back to the beginning: Iain is retelling and illustrating Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, this time from the monster's point of view. "I'm doing it in front of a camera and recording every moment, including my trips to Europe to shoot location reference. The goal is an exhibition of paintings, an online workshop for Schoolism, an illustrated book, and no doubt a Snoopy dance when it's all over."

In the back of Iain's mind at all times is the "nice paradox" of the artist-reader relationship. But while engaged on the work, only one thing matters: story.

"As for compliments and criticisms, as Rudyard Kipling said: 'If you can meet with Triumph and Disaster. And treat those two impostors just the same... Yours is the Earth and everything that's in it. And - which is more - you'll be a concept artist, my son.' I'm pretty sure he meant daughters, too." You heard the man, people. 🍌



THE DARK SIDE ARISES

"Looking for the new 'worst nightmare', I proposed this flesh and metal Sith, leading an army."

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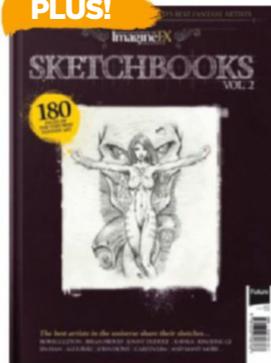
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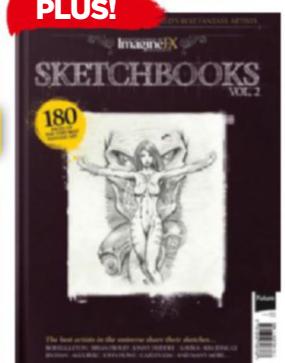
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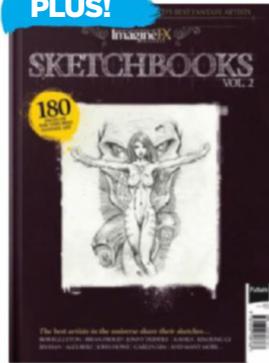
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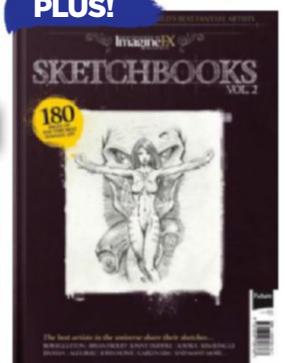
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LOOK OUT!
*Conan's back in
Conan the Slayer, and
Lee Bermejo's cover
captures his ferocity.*



“HITHER CAME **CONAN**,
THE CIMMERIAN, BLACK-
HAired, SULLEN-EYED, **SWORD**
IN HAND, A THIEF, A REAVER,
A **SLAYER**, WITH **GIGANTIC**
MELANCHOLIES AND
GIGANTIC MIRTH, TO TREAD
THE **JEWELLED THRONES** OF
THE EARTH UNDER HIS
SANDALLED FEET”

Article by **Garrick Webster**

Just that line, taken from Robert E Howard’s very first Conan story, The Phoenix on the Sword, is enough to set the heart of a comic or fantasy artist racing. And, since the character first appeared in the pulp magazine *Weird Tales* in 1932, dozens of artists have drawn or painted him – including many of the greats.

The latest to render the great barbarian is Spanish artist Sergio Davila. He’s on board with Dark Horse to draw its brand new series. The artist is relishing the freedom he has to visualise the Hyborian age. “I’m having great fun working in this fantasy world. It allows me to invent things, overdo some characters, and take some of the action to the limit in a way you wouldn’t be able to in real life. And all in my very own style,” he says.

Sergio’s Conan has a meaty, muscular look to him, reminiscent of Marvel’s Conan of the 1970s and 80s. In titles back then – like Conan the Barbarian and The Savage Sword of Conan – the pencillers Barry Windsor-Smith, John Buscema, Gil Kane and Pablo Marcos experienced a similar

kind of exuberance. The world Robert E Howard imagined was full of warfare, sorcerers, monsters and villains, and Marvel gave its artists lots of scope.

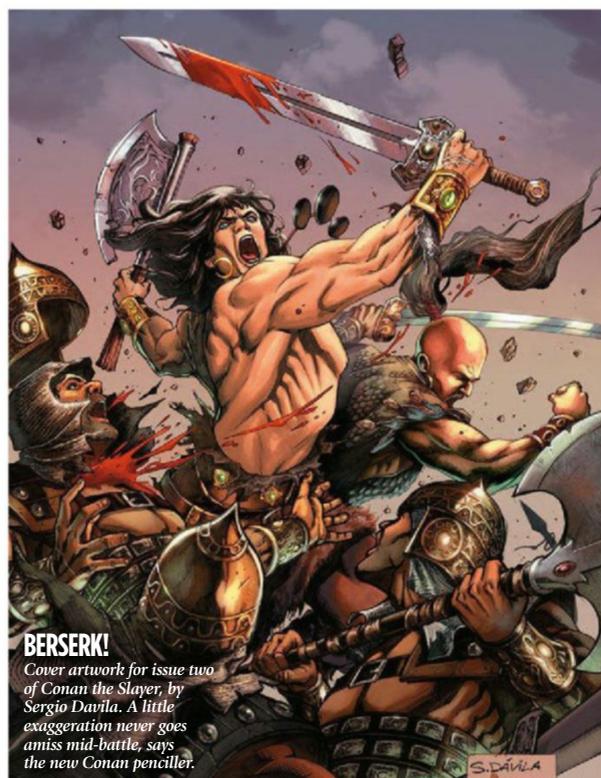
Like Sergio, but with 45 years of experience drawing Conan, the Peruvian artist Pablo Marcos revelled in the same sense of possibility. “He’s a fictitious hero, and that gave me all the freedom to create a lot of action,” says Pablo. “Exotic girls are always around him. I like Conan’s surroundings, and it’s easy to create scenery, monsters, animals and fighters. There are no limits. I really enjoy doing it.”



SAVAGE SWORD

Pablo still paints Conan commissions, but back in the 70s he drew the comic strips that Marvel syndicated to newspapers all over the US. His work appeared in *Savage Sword of Conan* for many years, and he also inked the pencils of another Conan great, John Buscema.

“The story I enjoyed drawing most was The White Tiger of Vendhya,” says Pablo. “It had two fantastic elements: an



BERSERK!
Cover artwork for issue two of *Conan the Slayer*, by Sergio Davila. A little exaggeration never goes amiss mid-battle, says the new Conan penciller.



► agile feline, and a strong warrior with big muscles."

During the same era, another breed of artist was helping define Conan's image. While those pencilling the comics told of a world of weapons, women, warriors and wonder, oil painters like Frank Frazetta, Boris Vallejo and Ken Kelly showed us Conan's battle rage on the canvas. Their paintings appeared on book and comic covers in the 60s, 70s and 80s, and their vision was of a single-minded warrior capable of great strength and brutality.

Boris Vallejo painted the very first cover of *Savage Sword of Conan* in 1974, then published by the Marvel imprint Curtis.



"I was very much into bodybuilding and muscular warriors, so painting covers for the Conan comics and books was very appealing to



GOLDEN GANESH

Julie Bell's impressive 'metal flesh' technique appeared on the cover of *Savage Sword of Conan*.

PROTECTOR

Boris Vallejo loved painting a mighty, muscular Conan defending a sexy woman.

THE CONAN COMIC TIMELINE

Some of the barbarian's highlights, beginning with his pulp days right through to the 21st century slayer

CRUCIFIED

This classic Conan image by Boris Vallejo appeared on issue five of *Savage Sword of Conan*.



“It'd lost all connection to the source material. I remember seeing him drawn with ridiculous giant battle axes”

me,” he recalls. “Most people, especially males, like the simple concept of a guy who can take care of himself and defeat any foe.”

Perhaps it's the oils and the Renaissance-inspired technique that gave covers by these artists such a visceral feel. Sometimes they show Conan suffering in biblical fashion. In one famous Frank Frazetta work he's chained to two columns – like Samson – and faces a giant serpent. For issue five of *The Savage Sword of Conan*, Boris painted him crucified in the desert to accompany the classic story *A Witch Shall Be Born*.

It was through his work that Boris met his future wife Julie Bell, another painter, who later became the first woman to paint



Conan for book and comic covers. Bright and fanciful, her work brought with it a special technique. “I was excited to do the Marvel covers where they wanted action,” says Julie. “They wanted me to use the ‘metal flesh’ look that I was becoming known for and had painted in *Heavy Metal* covers.”

FEEDING IMAGINATIONS

Marvel's Conan fed the imaginations of teenage boys for three decades, but it's worth noting that Robert E Howard only wrote 21 stories featuring the character, though five further incomplete pieces are



1932

Texan author Robert E Howard's first Conan story, *The Phoenix on the Sword*, appears in the December 1932 issue of pulp magazine *Weird Tales* with cover art by J Allen St John.



1936

Weird Tales carried its last Robert E Howard story – *Red Nails* – in July, a month after the author's suicide in Cross Plains, Texas. This time the cover was painted by Margaret Brundage.



CONQUEROR

Comic artist Cary Nord cites Frank Frazetta as the defining Conan painter. Frazetta painted this paperback cover in 1966.

part of the pantheon. Only so much could be done with Conan in the Marvel style. The colour comic Conan the Barbarian ended in 1993, followed by its black and white sister, Savage Sword of Conan, two years later.

"It'd lost all connection to the source material," says Cary Nord, who later revived Conan for Dark Horse. "I remember seeing him drawn with ridiculous giant battle axes and he was given that Jim Lee-style cross-hatching treatment."

Conan comics returned to mind-blowing effect in 2003. In the early 70s, artists such as Barry Windsor-Smith had won several Shazam Awards, and with the fresh work he produced in Conan issue 0, Cary Nord won a 2004 Eisner Award.

The look and feel of the books was entirely different, with Cary ➔

CONAN THE SLAYER

The latest Dark Horse incarnation of Conan promises a feast of muscle and fury

July 2016 sees the release of Conan the Slayer, Dark Horse Comics' seventh regular series. The artwork is being produced by Sergio Davila, and issue one will have a cover by Lee Bermejo, and an alternative cover by Mark Schultz.



"I can't say much about it because I haven't finished drawing issue two yet," says Sergio. "But I can say that these are the adventures of a younger Conan, before he turns 30. He's wilder, crazier, more powerful and more aggressive. He's also very confident and doesn't overthink situations. He's not scared of anybody or anything."

Dark Horse writers and artists have taken their lead in their story ordering from Dale Rippe's article *The Dark Storm Conan Chronology*, says editor-in-chief Dave Marshall.



"New readers will feel completely at home," Dave says. "But the events take place after Conan the Avenger. Just like in the previous Dark Horse series, Slayer will be a mix of adaptations of Howard stories connected together by original



CRAZY NIGHTS

The set of his brow reminds us of Frazetta's moody Conan, but Sergio Davila is promising a wild and crazy ride in the new comics.



TAKE TWO

Alternative cover for Conan the Slayer issue one, drawn by Mark Schultz.



LUCKY SEVEN

The art board for page seven of Conan the Slayer issue one, by Sergio Davila.



1952

The very first representation of Conan in a comic book was done in Mexico and entitled La reina de la Costa Negra - an adaptation of Robert E Howard's The Queen of the Black Coast.



1970

With art by Barry Smith, and written by Roy Thomas, Marvel released issue one of Conan the Barbarian. Barry pencilled the comic for two years, followed by John Buscema.



1971

Marvel's early-70s burst of Conan continued with Savage Tales, which frequently featured the Cimmerian. Issue one's brutal cover was painted by John Buscema.

1973

Marvel's first rendition of Red Sonja appeared in issue 23 of Conan the Barbarian. Gil Kane drew the cover, and Barry Smith the internal artwork. The spin-off character is still going.

Shelie Skrin © www.Stock.com/gmicholas

CONQUEROR

As he ages, Tomás gives him the look of a jaded campaigner, with grey beard to round it off.



CROWNING OF KING CONAN

Argentine artist Tomás Giorello, who's been drawing Conan since 2007, talks about his work on King Conan

How did you get into drawing comics?

After high school, I studied illustration and drawing comics with the Villagrán brothers. They taught me how to draw and how to get into the comic book field.

How did you end up drawing Conan?

I had finished a five-year run on a Star Wars title at Dark Horse and was asked if I was interested in replacing Cary Nord.

What media did you use for Conan?

I used 0.5 2B and 0.7 2B pencils.

You drew Conan, Conan the Cimmerian and King Conan. How have you developed him, and developed as an artist, over the last nine years?

I think I've changed a lot. For some artists, drawing the same character gets tedious, but for me it's the opposite. The more you draw something the better you get at it and the better it gets, and it's very exciting to experience it. As for Conan, I've always seen him as an experienced warrior, so drawing him in his youth wasn't easy for me. It was a great change when we jumped into his older years in King Conan. I got the chance to finally give his face harder features and darker expressions, and put scars on his body.

What's been your favourite storyline?

Hour Of The Dragon and Wolves Beyond The Border, both in King Conan. Those stories show more of his human side. He feels the weight of his crown, finds love, yearns for her once she's gone. It was a chance to show a wide range of expressions, a more complex Conan. He's not just a big guy with a sword.

Which is your favourite cover?

The first in the Wolves Beyond The Border set, because it shows his spirit. He's a king, he has everything power and gold can buy, but he stands there, sword in hand, his armour battered and covered with blood, eyes wild and filled with dissatisfaction, looking for new horizons.

Which other Conan artists do you admire most, and why?

John Buscema, Frank Frazetta, Alfredo Alcalá, Nestor Redondo, Alex Niño, Cary Nord and many others. They all made the character bigger and more real in one way or another, from the strength in Frazetta and Buscema's Conan to the dynamism and freshness in Nord's. But I tried not to look at them while drawing mine, so that I could come up with my own version of him.

NO SATISFACTION

The cover art for the Wolves Beyond the Border mini-series is one of Tomás Giorello's favourites.





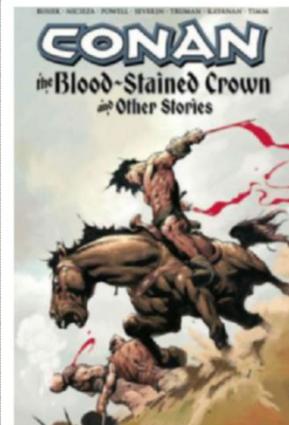
RENDITION

Cary Nord is the most respected of the Dark Horse Conan artists. Here he's recoloured his cover to the graphic novel *The Blood-Stained Crown*.



WANT SOME?
Brian Ching wanted to show Conan's 'gigantic mirth', but he's never shy of slaying a foe.

BIRTH OF CONAN
Greg Ruth literally showed the world how Conan was born on the battlefield in issue eight of Conan.



➔ championing enhanced pencilling, plus the digital colouring of Dave Stewart. More than that, they approached the character and his world in a more realistic way. With impossible muscles and weapons, a lack of humour, and constant recourse to violence, Conan had lost his way by the 90s. Dark Horse dug down to find the depth his originator Robert E Howard had given him.

BRIGHT EYES

"Conan is an intelligent character, which is easy to overlook. I always tried to have something going on behind his eyes a little deeper than just angst or rage or lust," says Cary. "The first book featured a young Conan who had just left his homeland, so in a lot of ways Dave Stewart, the writer Kurt Busiek, me and Conan were all

growing together. I think Conan learned to be less rash, that thinking his way out of trouble was as effective as using his fists."

Cary Nord's wonderful art on Dark Horse's first Conan series brought a level of detail and texture that was hard to sustain month in and month out. Every so often, an issue drawn by Greg Ruth was dropped into the sequence telling more of Conan's backstory. Born on The Battlefield is as rich as

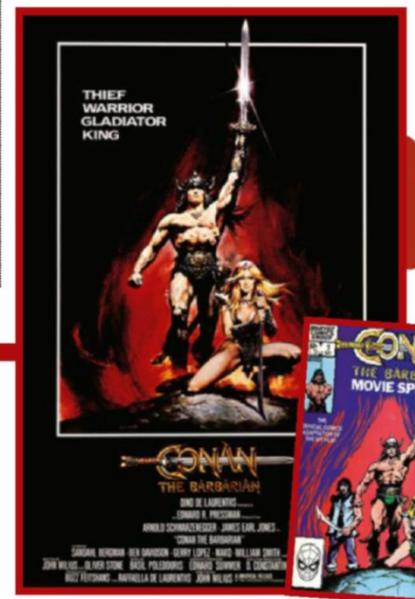


“I tried to have something going on behind his eyes... something a little deeper than angst, rage or lust”

ORIGINAL
Above, the original cover to the graphic novel that Cary Nord recoloured (above left).

Cary Nord's work, but feels looser and more gestural. And it's pretty bloody, too.

The book was a step away from the horror comic Freaks of the Heartland, which Greg had been drawing. "I knew they wanted a more vividly colourful palette, which was new for me, and they wanted a high fantasy, gritty realism," says Greg. "I had to do the first issue of ➔



© Everett/REX/Shutterstock



1974

Marvel's *Savage Sword of Conan* arrived with a cover by Boris Vallejo, and five black and white internal stories with art by John Buscema, Barry Smith, Gil Kane and others.



1980

Running alongside *Savage Sword* and *Conan the Barbarian*, Marvel introduced *King Conan*, written by Roy Tomas and drawn by John Buscema. It ran until 1989.

1982

Marvel tied in with the Arnold Schwarzenegger film, *Conan the Barbarian*, with a two-issue movie special for new fans. The cover of the first issue mimicked the film's poster art.



THE AVENGER

It's a lithe-looking Conan that Brian Ching drew in *Conan the Avenger*, with panther-like qualities.

➔ Conan while also doing the final issue of *Freaks*, and a lot of *Freaks* bled into Conan in a way that wasn't working. Conan needed to be crisper, Conan was action.

"When I look back at *Born on the Battlefield* I see it as a kind of crazy experiment that somehow worked. It's all because of Kurt Busiek's mastery of the story and the character. I learned more about comics and storytelling working on that book than any other time in my life."

The success of the Conan title grew, and Dark Horse has run several different Conan

series, each looking at a different era in Conan's life. They've all been kept close to the original Robert E Howard stories, with some bridging and improvisation here and



there. Tomás Giorello drew *Conan the Cimmerian*, about Conan's military feats, followed by *King Conan* in which he's an older, bearded leader. Brian Ching has recently finished drawing *Conan the Avenger* after 25 issues. His Conan looks angular and lithe.

QUICK AND AGILE

"Howard describes him as being panther like," says Brian. "He would need to be quick and agile in his world. Yes, he's strong but not the type of massive musculature that looks like he could tear the limbs off his enemies. I drew Conan with a little

“Deep inside all of us lives the desire to be just like Conan”



1996

After closing *Conan the Barbarian and Savage Sword of Conan*, Marvel experimented. The short-lived Conan carried this Brothers Hildebrandt cover on issue six.

2003

Eight years after Conan's Marvel run ceased, Dark Horse picked up the official licence from Robert E Howard's estate and Cary Nord pencilled issue 0 of *Conan*, which won an Eisner.



2008

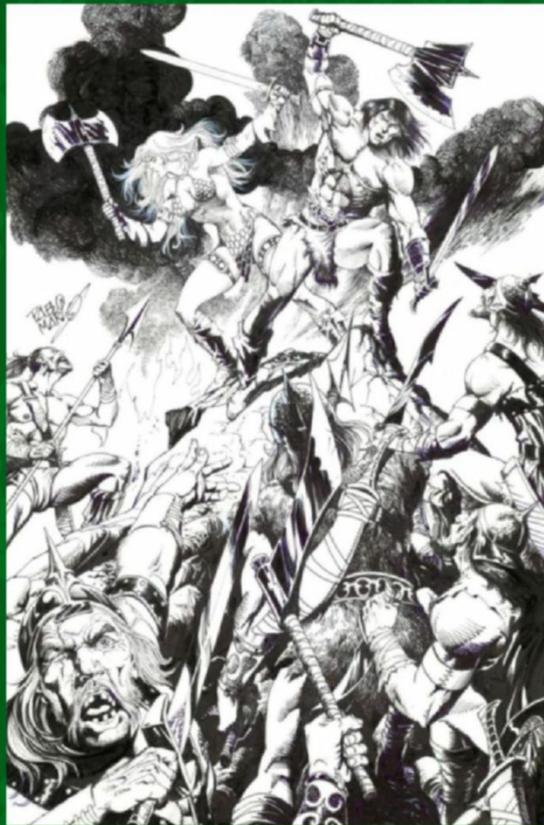
With Tomás Giorello drawing the art, Dark Horse began *Conan the Cimmerian* which would run for 26 issues. Next came *Conan the Barbarian*, *Conan the Avenger* and *King Conan*.

SONJA: THE LADY IN RED

Despite many imitations, Red Sonja is Conan's closest living relative in the world of comics?

From *Kull*, *Ka-zar*, *Tarzan* and *Sláine*, to *He-Man* and *Bran Mak Morn*, there have been many fictional savages in comics. However, Conan's closest comic book relative must be *Red Sonja*, also created by Robert E Howard. *Red Sonja* has been rendered by an array of artists, easily adapting from Conan to drawing the redhead in bikini armour, and vice versa.

"They live in the same period and they could even share adventures," says Sergio Davila. "I've had a great time drawing her. She's a warrior and not a typical girl who needs help or needs to be rescued – she's the one rescuing you."



DOUBLE THE FUN

When a fan asked Pablo Marcos to illustrate two of his signature characters together, he drew this for the commission.

smirk. My take was that he loves who he is. That there's a freedom to being so fearless."

Like many other Conan artists, it's the character's mirth rather than melancholy that Brian identifies with most. "This has been the best experience in my professional life," he says. "My artwork took a huge shift when I began this book – I started inking my own work, tried experimenting with different materials and techniques. It's such a liberating feeling."

Looking back across all the great Conan artwork as we prepare to savour a new chapter of the barbarian's artistic story, it's a little easier to appreciate why the character is so enduring. "Conan is such a special character that his adventures will never finish. Deep inside us lives the desire to be like him," says Pablo.

Snake skin © www.stock.com/gmicholas

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PRINT AND DIGITAL BACK ISSUES



Issue 136
July 2016

With the help of Magic: The Gathering and Fantasy Flight Games artists, we give you the skills you need to paint stunning card art, and reveal art from the latest Magic deck, Shadows over Innistrad. Plus, Rodney Matthews shares his brilliant sketches.



Issue 135
June 2016

Stan Prokopenko gets down to the bones of the matter in our anatomy special, Aaron Griffin lays bare his methods, Ed Binkley creates a human fly and Loopydave shares his learned tips on caricature. We also study up on the 10 best online art schools.



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!

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Students at Escape Studios work in classrooms that are designed to feel like a real VFX studio environment.



Photography by Simon Fenton

STUDIO PROFILE

ESCAPE STUDIOS

Tom May visits the college that trains illustrators and animators, with alumni that are working on some of the world's biggest films

Offering training in visual effects for the game, television and film industries, Escape Studios, part of Pearson College London, attracts a wide range of students. And they're not all what you'd expect.

Take Penelope Pochez. By 2015, she was working as an illustrator for animation studios. Having graduated from New York art college Parsons in 2009, she'd been gainfully employed as a background designer and pre-production artist at Curious Pictures, Titmouse NY and FlickerLab Animation Studios, on animations such as Adult Swim's *Superjail!*. So why on earth would she want to go back to school?

"I moved to the UK to follow my boyfriend," Penelope says. "And there's less



demand here for illustration for animation: the industry is more geared towards visual effects. So it just made sense to make that switch."

Allar Kaasik, one of Escape Studio's 2D tutors, oversees the progress of one of the student's projects.



Consequently, Penelope decided to train in compositing: the art of combining filmed footage and digitally created backgrounds and effects to make a single, seamless scene. And while there were a number of colleges teaching visual effects and animation, Escape Studios stood out.

"It seemed like it was the most practically focused, the most interested in getting us jobs and teaching us the right skills," she

says. Speak to the tutors there, and you'll hear a similar story. Escape Studios places a strong focus on practical skills, with all courses geared to producing showreels that can get students into jobs.

STRONG INDUSTRY TIES

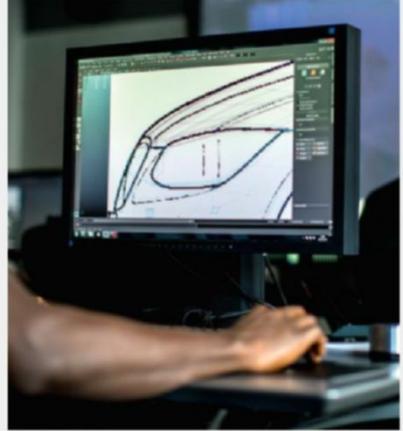
"Our teachers all come from the industry," points out Davi Stein, head of 2D, who's worked on movies including *The Dark Knight*, *Pirates of the Caribbean* and the *Harry Potter* films. "So we have very close ties with the big visual effects studios. And we're constantly in contact about what skills they want graduates to come out with."

The college now has more than 4,000 alumni (dubbed Escapees), who've worked on movies including *Star Wars: The Force Awakens*, *Ex Machina*, *Shaun the Sheep* and *The Jungle Book*. And this creates a virtuous circle, says Alex Williams, head of animation. "We're recognised as the place where people ➔



ESCAPE STUDIOS

Collaboration is key – the MA compositing students worked together to create this scene as part of their module.



Escape Studios maintains strong industry ties to ensure that its technology is state of the art.

Students get free coffee to keep them motivated during the day.



“ Escape Studios was most practically focused, the most interested in getting us jobs ”



A video game environment created by short course game art graduate Daniele Di Camillo.



No previous knowledge of 3D software is needed, but there is a steep learning curve.



Vania Alban-Zapata, one of Escape's 3D VFX tutors, lends his expert advice to a student.

➔ learn industry-relevant skills," he says. "And our Escapees are feeding back all the time. They're telling us: 'I'm working at such and such a place and this is a particular skill you need to do this.' So we're constantly tweaking what we do."

As important as the skills themselves are the way they're taught. "One of our big things is making sure the students get the real experience of a work in production," explains Mark Spevick, head of 3D.



"So I run the classroom environment so it's as close to a film production environment as possible, with ridiculous deadlines and client reviews. These may come from industry partners as well as ourselves, so students really feel the pressure."

FULL-ON LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

The work is hard and relentless, he stresses. "On our short courses, for instance, you're in the classrooms from 10am to 5pm every single day. It's full on lectures from 10 till one; the whole morning devoted to theory. Then in the afternoons we put that into practice on projects. By the end, you end up with two pieces for your showreel to get a job with."

Known for its postgraduate and short (three-month) courses, this September Escape Studios is launching a host of new undergraduate courses. But don't expect these to be any less practical, says Mark. "A big part of it for me will be screwing students up like you would in real movie production," he smiles.

"So in the middle of doing their projects, I'm very likely to come along and change the brief, like a director would. Or suddenly take the job off them and give them

“By the end, you end up with two pieces for your showreel to get a job with”



To enhance the feel of a real-life studio, lecturers will often throw spanners into the works, such as change the brief or even shut down the servers.

another job completely. We might even break the servers. So the idea is that when they get into industry it's not a culture shock – they know how it is in real life."

So how do you apply? First, attend a taster day. This will involve an actual day of study, so you really can try before you buy. If you're still keen, you can apply for the short courses directly via the website, while for the undergraduate and postgraduate

course, you'll need to go through UCAS, the UK's organisation for managing and assigning university places.

IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT THE GRADES

Mark stresses, though, that grades aren't the main thing you'll be judged on. "It's more about the potential that we see in people," he explains. "We're about creating artists who can craft and create wonderful things. You may not be academically great, but if we see an ability in you, we'll take you on. So if you've got a yearning to get into the industry and you've done a little bit outside, we're sure to be able to find a course that suits you."

Perhaps surprisingly, there's no requirement to be proficient in any particular software, says Davi. "Most students coming in have used a bit of



Photoshop. Some have done After Effects, or played with Cinema 4D. But some come in without any graphics experience at all. It is possible,



George O'Keeffe's Diner Diorama references a 1950s Seeburg jukebox in stunning detail.



This 50s diner is a game environment modelled in Maya by George O'Keeffe. Finer details were painted using ZBrush.

Escape Studios' close links with the VFX industry gives it access to the latest in software and techniques.

PENELOPE POCHEZ

The graduate looks back at her course at Escape Studios

What have you been studying at Escape Studios?

After six years working in illustration for animation, I wanted to switch to visual effects. But I realised it required a lot of skill that I just didn't have and that I needed to learn. So I took the compositing MA at Escape Studios, and I handed in my last project a month ago. I'm at the stage now where the college is helping me with my showreel and getting my applications ready. Even though the course has officially ended, they're being really helpful and proactive with their help.

Why did you pick Escape Studios?

My fancy New York art school was fun but it wasn't practical at all. After I graduated, I was just so clueless on the jobs for the first year. So I wanted to make sure that whatever school I went to actually taught me all the practical skills I needed to get a job.

What software have you studied?

Most compositing is done nowadays in a software called Nuke. It's a very complex, not very user-friendly software that takes time to understand. It's incredibly versatile, but you have to learn how to use it.

What were the other students like?

I was in a pretty small classroom. One of the other students had studied media at undergraduate level and another came from a fairly computer science-ish background. I found that at Escape, around a third of the students come from design backgrounds and two-thirds come from computer science backgrounds.

Did you work in a group or alone?

At first, we're on our own, because it's such a handful to understand the intricacies of how this software works. And then halfway through they have us work on a group project. That was probably the most fun. Learning to work with other people on a project, and combining each other's skills to make a shot look better than we could have on our own. The way they gave us projects was pretty well managed. At the end of it we really had a little bit of everything to show in our showreel.

At the start of your career, did you ever think you'd be working in this field?

Definitely not, but in hindsight, it does make sense that I would evolve into visual effects from the more illustrative aspects of animation. It offers a whole new world of possibilities: visual effects are incredibly interesting.

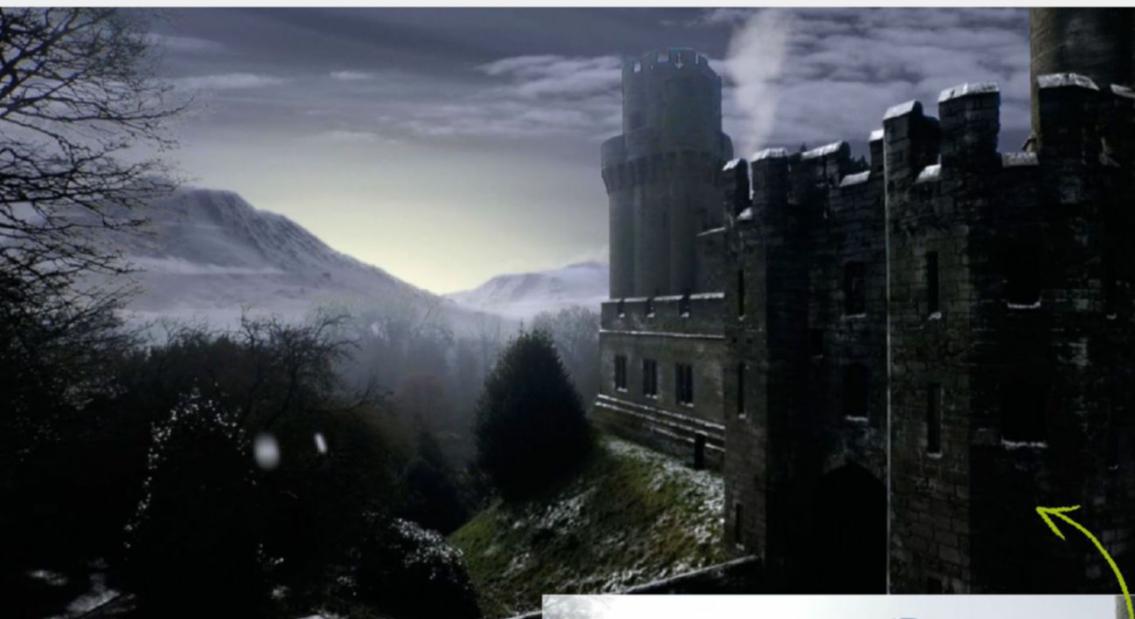


Penelope is a background designer and cartoon pre-production artist, and has worked on cartoon animation productions in New York.

www.penelopepochez.com



Class sizes are kept deliberately small.



although you'd have to practise quite a lot at the beginning to get your head around the general concepts – layering images, things like that."

More important than technical knowledge, though, is "the passion and the drive to want to learn that stuff and want to enter the industry," she says. "Dedication, passion, hard work – those are the most important things. As well as an open mind, to think a bit differently."



MA student Penelope Pochez demonstrates her advanced compositing skills in this castle scene.

Edin Durmisevic

A love for films informs much of this artist's character design and animation work, as his sketchbook reveals...

Artist PROFILE

Edin Durmisevic

LOCATION: Bosnia and Herzegovina



Once it was clear that Edin had a natural talent for art, he channelled that into his education, and graduated from Sarajevo's Academy of Fine Arts. He also achieved success when studying character animation at the online Animationmentor School. He has a particular love of developing and creating different creatures and funny characters, having worked as a character animator for over five years. Edin's currently busy working as a character and concept artist at a design agency, and loves watching films in his spare time.

www.edind.artstation.com

AKAN CREATURE DESIGN

"This is a drawing for one of my personal projects. Sometimes I build up a backstory for my creatures or characters, asking what do they do, where do they live, what do they eat and so on."

DIRTY BIRDY

"When I was in a Western film frame of mind, I drew cowboys constantly and watched a lot of classic Westerns. I love to take the time to focus on specific subjects and fully explore a genre."





JEKYLL AND HYDE

"My idea was to draw Mr Hyde like some rat-like, evil creature. Actually, these are just three designs out of 50 or so that I did on this subject. I love the exploration phase of the design process."

FILM CHARACTERS STUDY

"I like films and enjoy studying the personalities, mannerisms and emotional states of characters. This helps with my own figure designs."

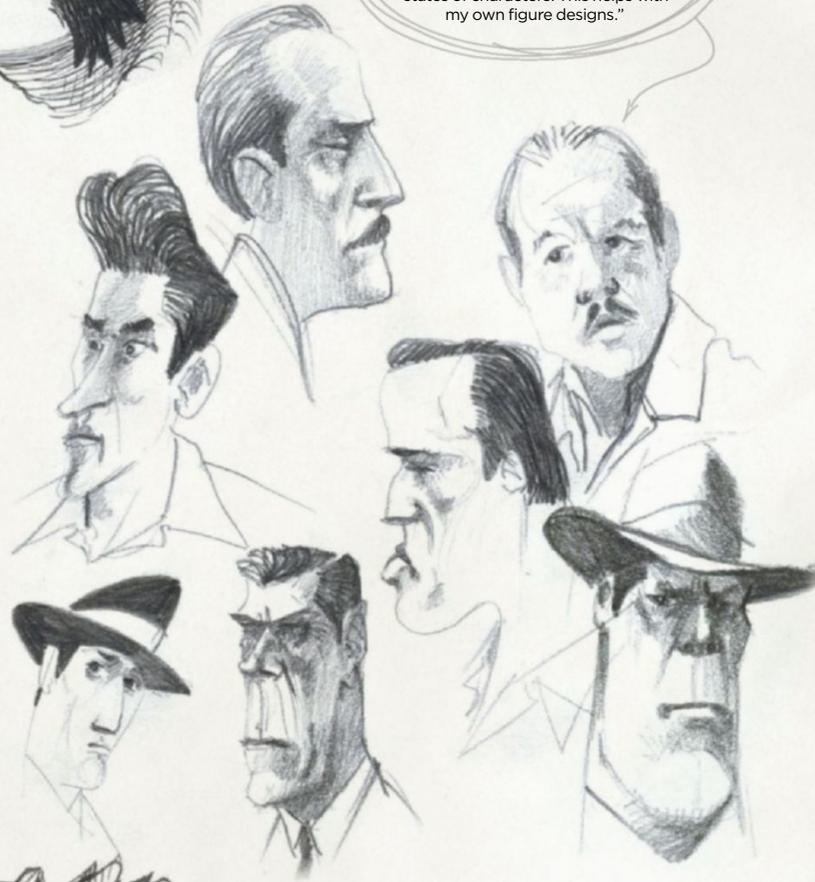


MIGHTY THOR

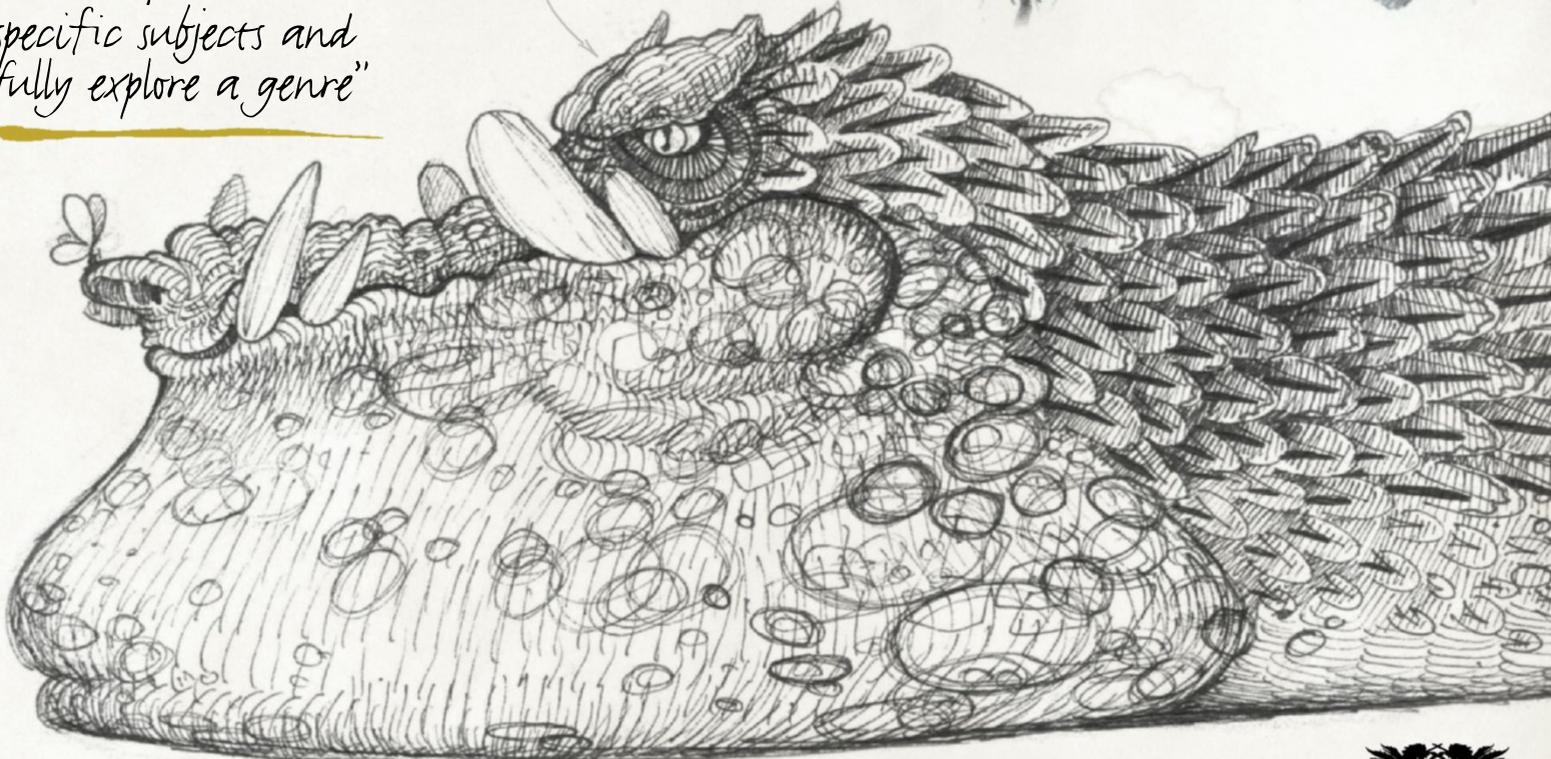
"Vikings, Vikings, Vikings... I like drawing those ferocious warriors."

BIG

"Art is a fantastic medium for working out abstract and complex ideas or premises."



"I love to take the time to focus on specific subjects and fully explore a genre"



Sketchbook

KAIJU DESIGN

"Interesting shapes, an organic design and a large scale, coupled with monsters and mythology often equals cool results. It's great fun playing with shapes and then spend time exploring different textures and surfaces."



CREATURE DESIGN

"Creatures and fantasy animals are my bread and butter. When I design creatures I try to base my design on existing creatures or combination of the creatures so they look more believable. Usually I use HB, B2 or B3 pencils to draw."

THUMBNAILS

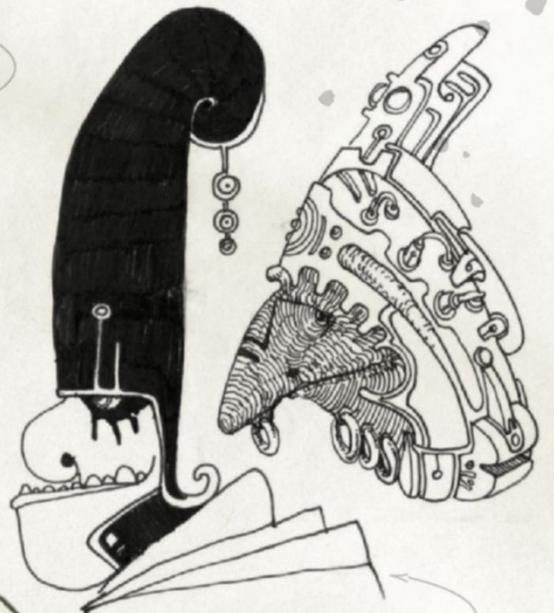
"My aim here was to come up with different shapes and designs. I do these type of sketches all the time, and the subject matter can be anything, because they're not based on a specific story or theme."

"A clear story and humour are crucial for drawing, painting or illustration"



LEAVE THE TREE ALONE!

"My girlfriend loves plants and has a fair few of them, so I decided to present myself as a hero to her through this illustration. A clear story and humour are crucial for drawing, painting or illustration."



ALIENS

"I wanted to draw an alien's face, but came up with this cool, black hat instead. Then I drew an alien's head using just one simple abstract design. I love to play with shapes."

GUARDIAN KNIGHT

"He looks scary until you notice that pathetic spear. But even then I wouldn't mess with him."



Want to share your sketches? Email us with a selection of your artwork, to sketchbook@imaginefx.com

NEXT MONTH'S SKETCHBOOK: JARED MURALT

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



74



76



82



This issue:

64 **Bring colour to Black Panther**

Ken Lashley's stunning line art is brought to life by colourist Juan Fernandez.

68 **Replicate and duplicate in 3D**

Save time when generating repeated elements in ZBrush. Rob Redman is your guide.

70 **Give Harley Quinn a realistic look**

Discover how Admira Wijaya uses Photoshop to paint the Joker's unhinged sidekick.

74 **Expressing life's passions visually**

Zeen Chin channels his emotions into a composition that features a witch, demons and an angry spirit.

76 **New ways to watch the world**

Learn through observation to create art that engages the viewer and carries a strong voice, says Somnath Pal.

82 **Quickly create an environment**

Philipp Scherer uses 2D and 3D to depict a bustling harbourside scene.

Pencil, inks & Photoshop

BRING COLOUR TO BLACK PANTHER

Ken Lashley's Black Panther is brought to life by **Juan Fernandez**, a pro colourist who passes on a decade's worth of comic industry advice

Artist PROFILE
Ken Lashley
 LOCATION: Canada



Ken is an in-demand comic artist with over 20 years' experience, who's created artwork for the likes of DC Comics, Marvel, Lucasfilm, Hasbro and Mattel.
<http://ifxm.ag/ledkilla>

Black Panther was the first superhero I really identified with. I'm a huge fan of the character. Over the past few years I've had the chance to work on the comic and it's always been a blast.

When showing the process of how a comic image is created there are always a few creators involved, usually a penciller, inker and colourist. I've been inking my own work for years now and I've become more comfortable as I move forward in

my career. So I decide to treat this workshop like I do my day job, and ask my colourist to do his thing over my inks.

I start my work the same way I do all my digital work: I lay down some rough areas and just get rolling. I open the work up by not overdrawing and letting the colourist have room to create. Juan Fernandez does some amazing work, and finishes the piece with great style.

I begin this drawing by laying down my red pencil. I use red because the lead

doesn't become waxy when I ink over it. I use a lot of smaller pens and build up the line weights. I don't do roughs usually – certainly not in this case.

After finishing the inks I create a 'clean' version. I take the full colour scan, turn the image to Black and White in Photoshop, then turn down each colour. I then go to the Levels function and increase the black and decrease the grey. Now it's saved and ready for the next phase. It's colour time. Over to you, Juan.

Artist PROFILE
Juan Fernandez
 LOCATION: US



Juan has been working as a comic book colourist for 10 years, providing colours for a variety of titles published by Marvel, DC Comics, Image Comics, IDW and Heavy Metal.
<http://ifxm.ag/juan-f>

GET YOUR RESOURCES
 See page 6 now!



1 Take the line art
 Ken passes over his detailed line art of Black Panther, and gives me a breakdown of what's going on in the scene. He tells me that the dark jungle is lit by a bright light source from behind, as the figure poses menacingly in the environment.

2 Use colour to separate details
 Every piece that I work on starts out by separating as much of the details as possible. These colours aren't necessarily the hues that I would use to work on, but just very contrasting ones to help with the separation process. ➡

Shortcuts
Smart Lasso tool
 Alt (PC & Mac)
 Hold Alt while using the Lasso tool to preserve a selection while moving to another area of the canvas.



PRO SECRETS

Don't be afraid to experiment

I often meet aspiring artists who have pieces that are either too stiff or resemble another artist's style too much. In this digital era there's no excuse for not trying different techniques. We're all inspired by the works of artists who came before us. Yet to establish an identity and a unique style, we can't just replicate what we've seen done. One must interpret that which inspires us and incorporate it into what we already know, building up a toolbox of techniques along the way and developing your own style.



3 Adjust the flats

I then go on to adjust the flats to the hues that I want to work with, preferably going for dark and desaturated colours. Taking this approach enables me to render from dark to light for the majority of the process. It's important for me to keep this layer locked, to avoid making any unwanted changes that could affect selecting areas with the Magic Wand tool.



4 Lighting considerations

The order in which I work is rather unorthodox. I start by roughly laying down a light source and noting how it would affect the main figure. I think it would be interesting to see some secondary lighting coming from behind and through the foliage, which would give us some interesting rim light.



5 Rays of light

I then like to tackle the main figure or focal point of the piece, and add elements to the background that may contribute to the overall rendering of the figure. For this piece I decide to introduce some light rays coming in through the trees. They help me achieve some depth and separation between Black Panther and the branches in the background.



6 Tweak the necklace and other adjustments

Once I'm happy with the rendering of the figure I go on to make a range of adjustments in the image. At this point I change the hue of the necklace from yellowish bone to silver accents, so that it stands out. The background starts to take shape, as I add details to the foliage. To avoid becoming carried away with over-rendering and wasting precious time, I like to paint in certain areas, instead of rendering individual leaves.

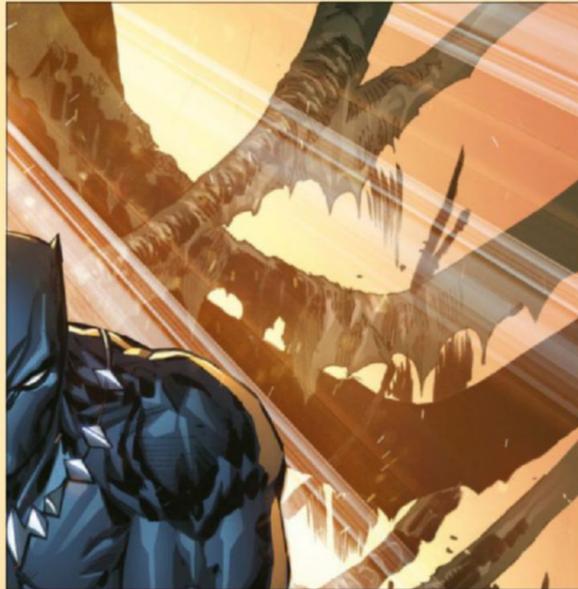


7 A faster workflow

To help me maintain a decent work rate I like to have a layer with all the swatches specific to the piece. This enables me to move faster while selecting hues to render with. Most of the time it's easy for me to recognise what every swatch is used for. However, if the swatch is used for something minor then I tend to write a note next to it, to remind me where the colour belongs.



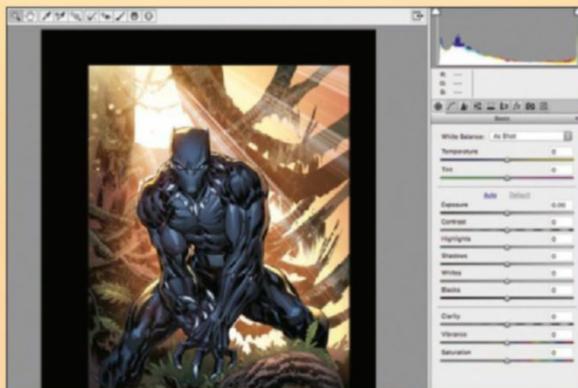
8 Adding atmosphere
It's time to introduce some accents and effects. The strong light source coming from behind means we should see some particles in the air and some fog near the bottom, which will help give the piece atmosphere. Through the use of layer styles such as Multiply and Overlay, I add cooler tones to the bottom of the piece. These help guide the eyes towards the focal point.



PRO SECRETS
There is no right or wrong
Yes, there are a lot of art rules and guidelines. However, what makes a piece successful is its ability to communicate an idea, tell a story or generate a feeling. It's best not to worry about how another artist did something specifically, and instead try new ways to communicate ideas. In summary, loosen up and stay creative



9 Thinking ahead
You'll notice that I keep all of my detailing in separate, transparent layers. It enables me to specifically adjust certain details in case it's required after turning in the preliminary piece to an editor or client. In this industry, speed is essential and most of these steps help me tackle revisions in the fastest way possible, without sacrificing the quality of my work.

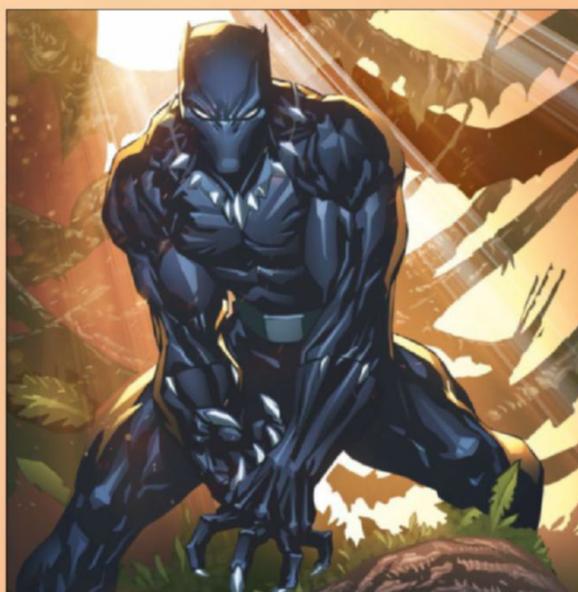


10 Ensuring visual flow
Before calling the piece finished I like to take advantage of the controls in the Camera Raw filter. It's perfect to adjust Levels and the intensity of specific hues, pulling out details and setting back others. This way I make sure the piece flows properly and the viewer's eyes are guided where necessary.

Shortcuts
Duplicate Hue/Saturation
Cmd+Alt+U (Mac)
Ctrl+Alt+U (PC)
Apply the same tweaks to another layer or selected area.



11 A balanced piece of comic art
Looking at the piece without the line art helps me check it's balanced and not overdone. This is the process I use with all of my comic book-related work and although some steps are a bit different, it's the standard process for colourists in the industry. However, there isn't a right or wrong way to achieve what you want to paint. I hope it helps you develop your own workflow.



PRO SECRETS
Maintain focus and balance
Sometimes we get carried away trying to add the most intricate details to a piece and in the process lose the focal point. Then, when we pull back to look at the piece as a whole, we wonder why the piece doesn't seem to work. To avoid this, before I get started I like to determine where I want the viewer's eye to go. This identifies what's important inside the frame, so I don't waste time on details that might clutter the piece and affect the focus. One good exercise to help out with this is gestural drawing. Get down simple sketches using suggested detail, instead of trying to capture and render every little detail.

ZBrush

REPLICATE AND DUPLICATE IN 3D



Rob Redman shows you how to save time and effort, with this guide to duplication in ZBrush to achieve the maximum of detail on an object

Artist PROFILE

Rob Redman
LOCATION: England



Rob Redman is creative director at a boutique animation and VFX studio, working across film, television and print.
<http://ifxm.ag/rob-r>

Adding detail to an object is a task that most 3D artists want to do, but it can be time consuming and difficult to get right. Luckily, ZBrush has a few tricks up its sleeve and you can add almost endless amounts of detail by creating the detail part and then duplicating it, spreading it in a controllable way across the underlying object.

It's possible, as shown here, to create huge amounts of detail, all with set levels of randomisation, without even having to create a detail mesh. ZBrush can take a preset tool, with a cube as a default (removing another step from the workflow), and then use that as the basis for the clones.

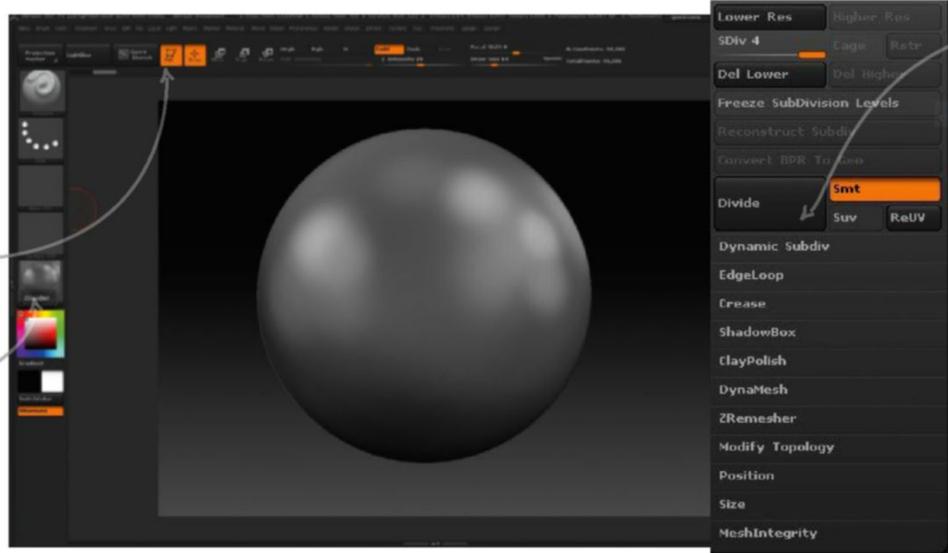
This has scope for many different applications, but the obvious ones are

greebles and nurnies, commonly used for such things as space ships, mechanical parts and of course, modelling your own Death Star, which is what we'll aim at doing here, because it's a good example that you should be able to follow easily. The Nanomesh tool, which we will use for this article, enables us to use just the simplest of geometry, yet can yield some very pleasing results.



Get your base, draw it on the canvas and then hit T to make it editable.

Try clicking the Material swatch to pick something more suited to your intended use.



Give it another division to make it as smooth as you want, but not so dense as it becomes unmanageable.

With the defaults you can see how a simple click and drag adds one mesh to another.



1 Quickly establish the base mesh

To start with we need an underlying mesh to which we'll add our details. Because I'm going for a spherical space station I'm using a simple Sphere ZTool, but you can use any shape you wish, and include sculpting details if you need to.

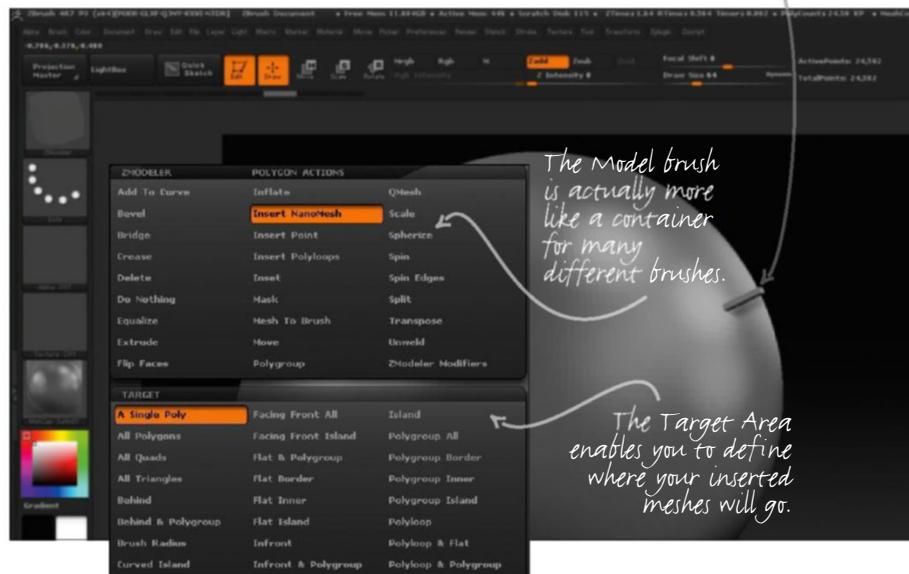
PRO SECRETS

Mix up the geometry

We worked with simple cubes here, but ZBrush is capable of using more complex meshes, so try covering a wall in stones or bricks, or a hill in boulders and trees.

2 Placing the clones

With your model brush active, press Space and click Insert Nanomesh. In the menu that appears below are the Target options. Leave this on the default setting to see how it works, by clicking and dragging on your base mesh. You should see a single cube appear, scaling and rotating as you move your cursor.



The Model brush is actually more like a container for many different brushes.

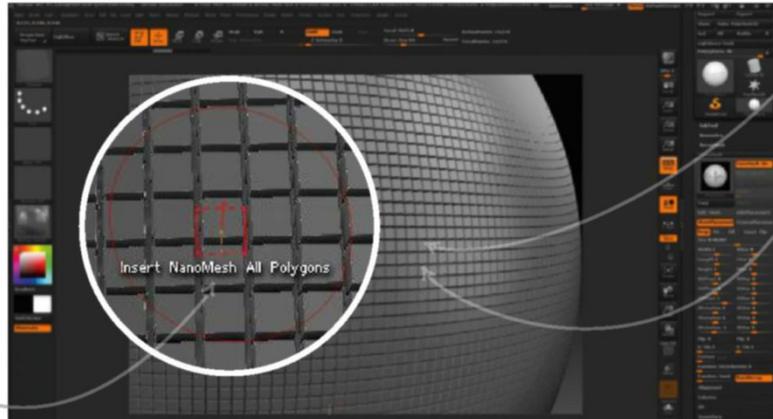
The Target Area enables you to define where your inserted meshes will go.

Quick technique Replicate & duplicate

3 Covering the mesh with greebles

Once you're happy with how the insert responds to your cursor you can undo it, giving a blank base. Press Space again and this time, from the Target menu, choose All Polygons, then draw out like before, this time with a cube on each face.

The Target menu has a lot of options, but for total coverage choose All Polygons.



Click and drag as before to add the cubes to the mesh.

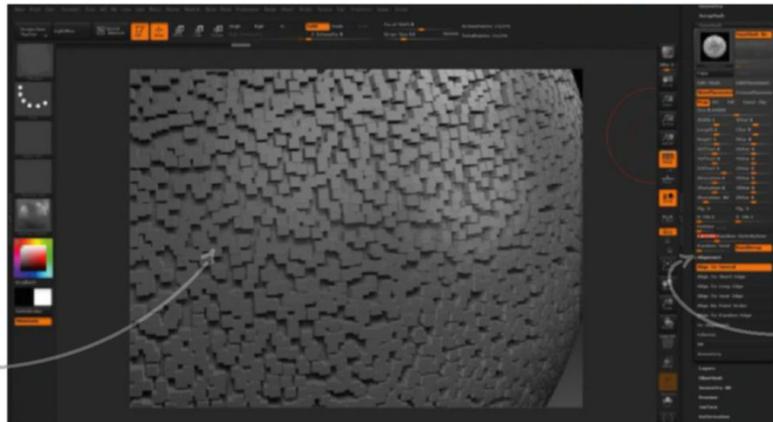
You should now have an even pattern of cubes covering your base mesh.

Randomise the cubes for a more believable appearance.

4 Random placement

At this point I like to control the placement, because this can help guide me when I later decide to change individual cubes, if necessary. Head to the NanoMesh menu and click Alignment. Change this to Align to Normal, then use the Random Distribution slider to adjust the position on the fly.

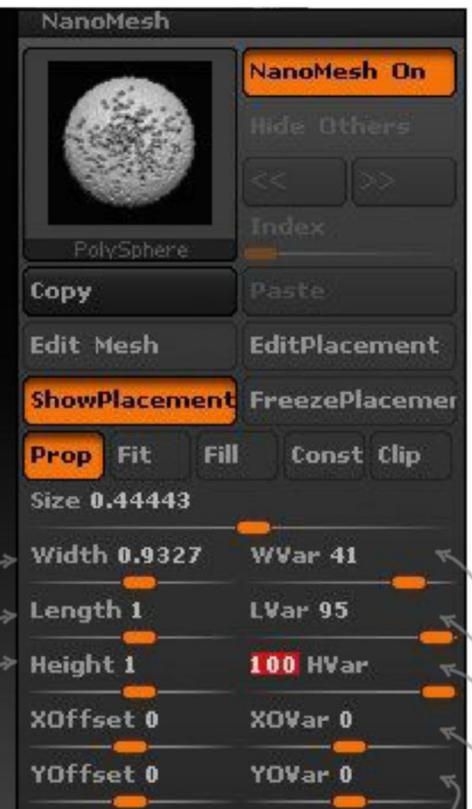
Even though the cubes are the same, the distribution is improving things already.



Changing the Alignment helps to keep things looking more real.



The Base mesh is now covered in nurnies and, while not a finished project, you can see how this technique can be applied.



5 Cube level changes

There are a few controls remaining, but what we're looking for are the top three pairs of sliders. These control the global scales for each axis, along with the variance for each. Adjusting these gives you that classic greeble look in just a few clicks.

Width, length and height sliders set the axis scale, while the size slider is global.

The Var sliders for each is what creates the look we're after, making each cube a little different from its neighbour.



Photoshop GIVE HARLEY QUINN A REALISTIC LOOK

Learn how to use realism to emphasise a comic villain's naughty side, with **Admira Wijaya's** delicious take on the Batman adversary

Artist PROFILE
Admira Wijaya
 LOCATION: Indonesia



Admira has been creating comic and concept art for over eight years. At the moment he's busy creating covers for Dark Horse Comic's Conan the Barbarian.
<http://ifxm.ag/admira-w>

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To me, the appeal of painting digitally is simple. Unlike traditional media, I can create a piece of art without waiting for the paint to dry.

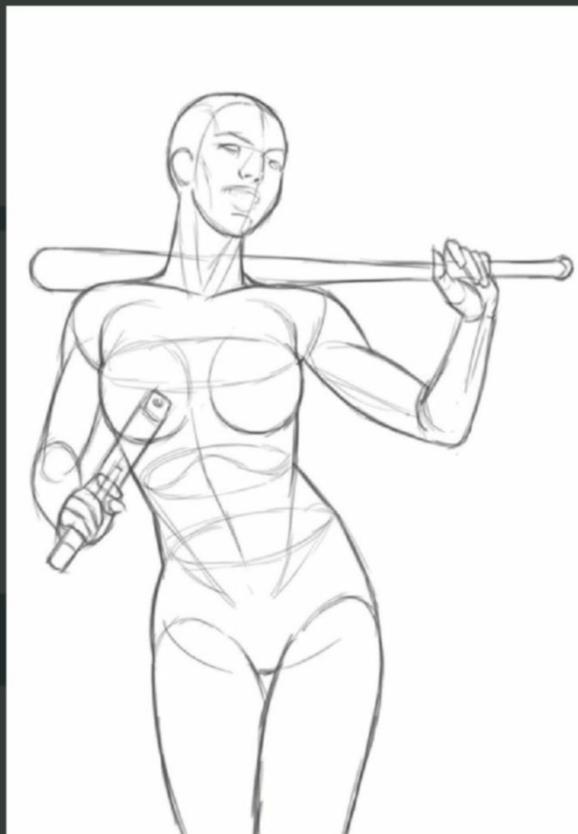
In my early days of working digitally, I had plenty of fun trying to get to grips with the software and while I explored more about digital media, it was also interesting and challenging. I also worked on traditional media, which made it easier for me to understand what to do with digital art software.

I'm still trying to improve myself and especially ways to get my illustration done in the fastest way – by applying different digital methods, and by experimenting with different layers and effects.

I've learned a lot from online tutorials and got some tips from magazines, which makes me more curious to practise with new techniques. Many of these tutorials are from ImagineFX, which always has plenty of workshops and beautiful artwork from great artists from all around the world, and it makes me so inspired.

Mistakes will always happen along the way, but I enjoy the process. Sometimes the computer crashes while I'm producing artwork, because the memory is over capacity. That can be painful, but it works out in the end when a client is satisfied with the result and I get paid enough to buy a new computer!

So don't be scared to make mistakes and prepare to go through some artistic pain. It will ease in time, and then you can look back at what you've been through... and smile. Enjoy the journey.



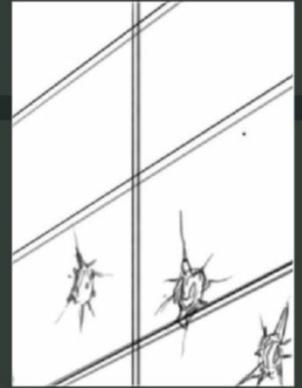
1 The initial idea
 I already have an idea of how to pose Harley Quinn – it's pretty much what you see here. It's always hard at the beginning to decide on what pose will be best, so I draw out a couple of options, then choose the best. I place the rough sketch on a default layer in Photoshop with a white background.



2 Build up the lines
 From the rough, on the same layer, I start to build up the lines. For this process I use Photoshop's default hard Round brush. I draw what is needed for now, and add some relevant detail. But I also try and maintain the composition's mood and momentum, into the next step... ➔➔

PRO SECRETS

Be prepared to experiment
 Don't settle for using just a few tried and tested digital art processes. You may find that a new technique gives you a better and faster way of creating your art. Some day you can be proud of the results you've produced and share them with the world.



Shortcuts
Liquify
Ctrl+Shift+X (PC)
Cmd+Shift+X (Mac)
 Quickly make adjustments to elements of your composition with the Liquify filter.

3 Cleaning things up
 I add a new layer on top of the overlapping line art, and then place the original rough sketch above that layer, which makes it easier to edit if there are any mistakes in the process. Next I start to clean up the lines, by tracing exactly along my original drawing of Harley Quinn.

4 Background considerations
 After finishing the character's lines, I move on to the background. I introduce a grid to create a strong perspective and add more layers behind the figure, to ensure the background is clear enough to make the character stand out. I'm portraying Harley Quinn standing in a subway – she's bruised and bloody, but victorious. Her enemies' bodies are just out of shot.

RESOURCES
WORKSHOP BRUSHES
PHOTOSHOP
CUSTOM BRUSHES: CANVAS 001
 Good for developing a painterly look, and smooth blending.
CANVAS 0
 I use this when I feel the artwork needs a canvas effect.
CANVAS
 To make the background appear like canvas.
CANVAS 2
 I use it on the background to enhance the Canvas brush.
HAIR BRUSH
 I paint delicate, smooth hair with this brush.



5 Applying colour
 Now it's time for some colour foundation. I add a new layer again below the line art and the background layer, ready for some rough colours. I start with Harley. Using the hard Round brush, I place some colour, working out where the light comes from and how much brightness I'll need. This will help me when I render (add final detail to) the character.



6 Lighting the scene
 Next I roughly colour the background. Adding a new layer below the background line, I use the Gradient tool for quickly introducing a dark to light graduation. Then I paint a light source – not the main one, just a secondary source – which gives a certain mood to the character and will help explain the ambient colour in the finished artwork.



7 Enhancing the face

Now I start rendering Harley's face. I use a soft Round brush for a smoother touch and my custom brush I call Canvas 001, which gives the artwork a more painterly look and helps me blend areas delicately. I change the eyes a little, aiming to create more impact with the viewer. This sort of change can be done whenever you want around the rendering stage, really.



8 Rendering the character

I continue to render the whole character, for now not worrying about the tattoos that are visible on the line art. I can sort them out later after the whole rendering process is done. I still use the same brush for rendering the character.



9 Don't lose details

I realise that I need to take more care when rendering my character. Because Harley Quinn is the subject of the illustration, I have to be careful with tone, mid-tone and shadow. A heavy hand and my character will suffer in darker areas and cause a loss of image detail. A delicate use of mid-tones is crucial during these final painting stages.



10 Final touches

Now it's time to render the background. In this case, I use marble and granite textures to lift the mood a little. Some details have to be fixed, and I paint over some unnecessary line work. I fix and clarify the background, and finally, add some lens flare effect and dust textures, to increase visual interest. ●

PRO SECRETS

Work to a plan

Mistakes always occur during the painting process, so don't be afraid of making them. Furthermore, take the time to put together a plan or some simple guidelines for how you're going to approach a project. Then, if you make a mistake, you'll be able to retrace your steps and get back on course.

Photoshop

EXPRESSING LIFE'S PASSIONS VISUALLY

Zeen Chin channels his thoughts and emotions into a multifaceted fantasy composition that features a witch, demons and an angry spirit

Artist PROFILE
Zeen Chin
 LOCATION: Malaysia

Zeen is a self-taught artist who approaches his work with passion, keen to cultivate his own style through the senses and feelings.
<http://ifxm.ag/z-chin>

GET YOUR RESOURCES
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Life is something that I've always been passionate about. I take a lot of inspiration by digging up my childhood – remembering the times that I spent with friends, the games that I played, the people that I met.

All these memories help me in terms of my work, as well as defining my painting style. For my next illustration project, I'm going to create something that relates to my past. It pleases me to put details from my life experiences into my art. Each

piece has its own concept and story that relates to me. This project is about my passion towards my life and I really hope to bring what I believe, my thoughts and ideas, into these artworks.

This piece is one from the project. The theme is Japanese in nature, in terms of the colours, style and design. The subject of the painting is a sword-wielding Japanese witch, while the groups of little demons are the sub-characters, who play a contrasting role. The title is My Spirit, which reflects my own spirit when it

comes to working and developing my project. Holding a sharp katana with the gaze of a hawk, the witch defines my determination and devotion. Meanwhile, the merry little demons represent the guilty pleasure I get from reading, playing games, watching films, or just passing time by relaxing.

Both subjects create a sharp contrast, which I feel makes the work livelier. The mural represents a fury spirit who is unleashed by the witch, and represents my enthusiasm and energy.

How I create...

A DETAILED FIGURE WITHIN A SCENE



1 Rough sketch
 Before starting every project, I take some time to visualise my painting. That's one reason why I don't spend too much time on details, because as I already have the overall look and design in my mind. I work on a rough layout and basic design; the line art will be covered up with colour later on.



2 Base colours
 This is my colour design stage. I play around with basic colours, and mix and match different colour settings to achieve the right combinations. There have been times when I've changed the entire colour scheme halfway through the painting process, so nothing is set in stone until I'm finished.



3 Introducing details
 When it comes to detail painting, it's crucial to study the materials on show, because each have different highlights, ambience and shadows. I enhance the main character, giving her a stronger contrast and emphasising the colours compared to the rest in order to make the figure stand out.

RESOURCES
WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: SAMPLED BRUSH 3 1

I use this brush for outline, painting and general touch-ups.

HARD ROUND 97 1

This is ideal for Dodge and Darken effects.

SAMPLED BRUSH 63 1

This brush has a foggy texture, which I use for colour blending.

Tackling hair

When rendering hair, I don't bother drawing individual strands. Instead, I prefer to render hair in bulk layer by layer, and then finish with some fine lines. It's usually best to work from a thick brush to a fine one. Get all the big shapes and bulk painted out according to the lighting, and then use a fine brush to add some hair strands. This will add volume and detail to the hair.

Rendering the mural

I start with an outline and render with a base colour, followed by another layer to create the washed-out effect. I don't put too much detail into the mural, because it might distract from the witch. I also make the mural's design work with the composition of the main subject. Keep things simple when there's a possible readability issue.

Painting skin

I avoid giving skin too many highlights; a soft matte appearance keeps things looking natural. For the witch's face, I refer to geisha makeup to emphasise the Japanese influence. It's a good idea to keep your flesh tones and colours fresh by applying more saturated, dark tones – especially if you're using warmer colours.

Cloth texture

Before putting the texture on the cloth, I design the folds and wrinkles, determining the position of the light and shadow that fall on the cloth. For cloth wrinkles, consider whether the materials are thick or thin. Thinner cloth will have more folds and wrinkles compared to a thicker material.

Little demons

The demons' bodies are semi-translucent. To render a semi-translucent or sub-surface scattering material, keep the darkest parts of the shadows lighter than solid surfaces. The highlights and shadows are soft because the material's surface is often matt, which softens the light that passes through it.

Artist insight

WAYS TO WATCH THE WORLD...

Somnath Pal talks about learning through observation and empathy, to create art that's emotionally engaging and carries a strong personal voice

Artist PROFILE

Somnath Pal
LOCATION: India



Somnath is an Indian independent artist, with a masters

degree in animation and film design from IDC, IIT Bombay. He illustrates, draws comics, works on films and drinks lots of decent filter coffee!

<http://ifxm.ag/som-p>

Five years ago, I was a brat who was overconfident about my art skills. I drew the same four poses over and over again, but since I drew them well, it just fed my ego!

And then I met one of my heroes, who was kind enough not to throw my sketchbook away, but harsh enough to let me know that I didn't know how to draw. "Your drawings have no life. You need to

feel what you are drawing. Your back needs to ache if you're drawing someone bending over," he said. Honestly, I didn't understand a thing. But it did set me off on a hunt to understand what he meant. Three years later, after having regularly sketched every day, I got the first glimpse of what he was getting at. While drawing a girl sinking into her sofa, I realised I was sinking myself, to feel the pose.

This wasn't my only experience, though: there were numerous more that shaped my observation. Each of them opened me up to a world of possibilities. Through this workshop, I would like to share my ideas that could give you that little push to explore the world for yourself. My aim is to help you personalise the worlds that you create through your art.



1 BEYOND REALITY

One of the exercises that I often do during my observational drawing sessions is stir things up for myself, just to turn the excitement dial a notch or two higher. I experiment with my drawings and go beyond the reality of the moment. Sometimes

I exaggerate the tension in the figure to levels that are not achievable by the human body, or push the existing scenario into a different world of physical laws. Purists might contest that this isn't observational drawing - and perhaps they're right - but I'm certainly having fun!



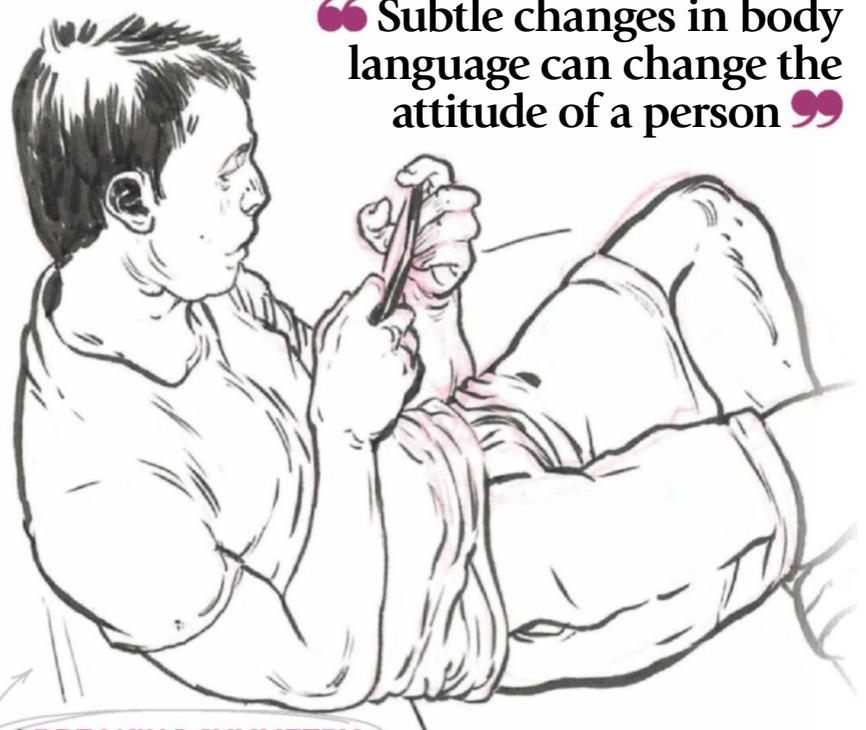
2 SPECIFIC PHYSICAL ATTRIBUTES

Crooked noses, hair styles, moustaches, tattoos, fashion accessories... there's so much to observe and recreate on the canvas when painting human characters. And don't forget the patterns on various surfaces. They just add so much to an illustration.



3 NUANCES

Observe how subtle changes in body language can change the attitude of a person. A raised eyebrow can add volumes, although there's little physical change. Nuances could be atmospheric, too. Imagine a young boy reading a book. On the wall is a poster of Lionel Messi. Switch the poster to one of Albert Einstein and there's a complete change in context.



“ Subtle changes in body language can change the attitude of a person ”

4 BREAKING SYMMETRY

Here's an early observation and important lesson that I learned: our actions are rarely symmetrical in nature. Even the simplest of gestures like sitting or standing aren't evenly balanced. You'll often hear artists say that symmetry is boring, and this is simply because it makes things feel too organised and forced. Generally, if a moment is something that calls for attention - say, an action that's grand or epic - is resorting to symmetry the best way forward? ➔

5 NATURE OF LIGHT

To understand light, ask yourself the following. Is the light warm, cool or neutral? Is it direct or is there ambient light? How intense is the ambient light compared to the main light source? Is there a secondary light source? What's the nature of these sources: direct, rim or diffused? And note how intense the light from one source is with respect to the other.



6 TENSION AND RELAXATION

Any form will generally have a combination of tension and relaxation. It's one of the things that brings life into the form. Keep observing the switch between the two states. Student artists often ask me why their drawings look stiff. One of the most glaring issues I see is that people overlook which areas of their character's body are tense and which ones are relaxed. They draw hands, legs, the torso and so on well, but everything is almost rigid. If the entire body is tensed then the artwork will look stiff, too.

“ You'll need a rich visual library to trigger ideas, so be on the look out for the stranger things in life ”



7 ACTING

Acting isn't just about the face. It's also body language. At any given point, the human form is involved in 'acting out', or communicating emotion. If you think it's enough to observe just the facial expressions, try acting in front of a mirror. Let's try anger. Do you feel your neck edging forward, or some neck muscles stretching? Some tension in your flexor group of muscles in the lower arm? Is your whole body moving forward? Now you see it, don't you? This is gesture drawing.



8 TAKE NOTE OF ANOMALIES

Is there something you observe that seems like a misfit? Okay, to tease your grey cells, imagine a pistol in the bedroom of a 15 year old. Now, that's wrong and highly unlikely, but maybe you'll come across something less dramatic, such as someone using a first-generation Nokia phone, or a Rubik's cube in the hands of a four year old. While you can cook these up from memory for your next project, you'll still need a rich visual library to trigger ideas at the right time! So, be on the look out for the stranger things in life.



9 SECONDARY STORY

Can you see a story evolve in front of you? Perhaps it's something as mundane as the struggle of someone holding a mug of hot coffee (conflict), then using a tissue to blanket the mug, and holding it more comfortably (resolution). Even if it's not the intended story, these little beats can help add a secondary level of narration to your artwork. ➔

HOW IT ALL COMES TOGETHER

Somnath explains how his observational techniques enable him to create a composition that speaks volumes



1 Contrasting elements

The brief is about a well-educated psychopath who kills people out of boredom. Her contrasting nature reminds me of the opposing forces of yin and yang, which in turn guides my composition. I'm particularly careful about the nature of clothes: how the folds in jeans would behave different from those in cotton.



2 Capture the emotion

For my values, I follow up on my thumbnail. The cultural aspect is reflected in the woman's clothing and personal style. The driving emotion is callousness, which I try to depict through the woman's irreverent attitude - checking her phone. The bowl of potato chips initially seems a total misfit, but actually adds to the irreverence.



3 Colour plays its part

I want the colours in the composition to be eccentric and choose to stay away from realism. Since the bottle of wine (originally bottom right) isn't adding a secondary story, I decide to replace it with a provocative magazine, but tone it down so that it doesn't grab attention away from the main story.

10 DRIVING EMOTION

I want to distinguish this from acting. The dominant emotion is the mood of a scenario before you. Here's an example: there's a frenzy among a group of fans because the home team has just won a league match. People may react differently, but the dominant emotion is one of euphoria. If it's a split-second emotion, you might not have the time to draw it, so just capture the essence in your memory and then make gestures to document it. You can also present it as the mood that you want to document.



11 TACKLING YOUR VALUES

I had trouble doing value studies. Somehow I couldn't put similar values together. So I reinvented the wheel for myself. I started with pure blacks documenting only in black and white. A nearby coffee shop was an excellent place for my studies because it had strong overhead spot lights on the seats. These created crisp shadows and were easy to document. Slowly, I started introducing greys. I still have to think about values though - they don't come naturally.



12 INTERACTION WITH SPACE

Have you ever observed a person positioning themselves in a way that they almost fit into a particular space? Or a person's arm going around the edge of the sofa while they lean on it. While a bowling ball

wouldn't make adjustments to fit in, we often do. It's enlightening to observe how we knowingly - or unknowingly - make adjustments to interact with our environment. You can also observe the tension and relaxation at such times.



13 NATURE OF MATERIALS

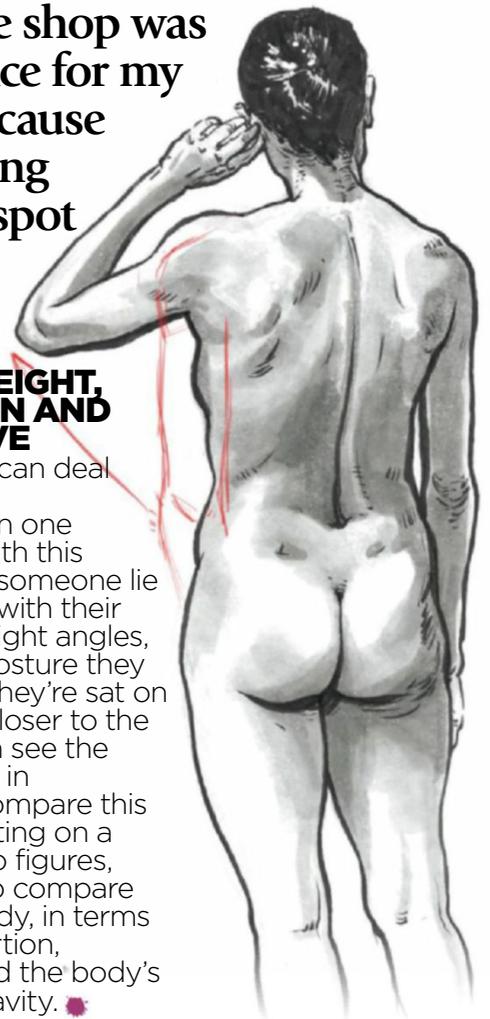
While I was working on the sets of a film, I noticed the nature of walls: how they reflected light, the way they age, their weight distribution, and so on. The nature of different materials means that they offer the artist a range of exciting possibilities. Only when you know how a material behaves under different conditions will you be able to portray it realistically. Observe the folds on a leather jacket and those on a cotton shirt, or the sharp highlights on a metal ball, versus those on a rubber ball.



14 CULTURAL UNDERPINNINGS

Culture is an all-encompassing term here. It includes regional, political, racial or even scientific culture. If you observe certain cultural underpinnings of a group or an individual and document them, then it'll help you define the personality of that group or individual a little more.

“A coffee shop was a great place for my studies because it had strong overhead spot lights”



15 FORM, WEIGHT, PROPORTION AND PERSPECTIVE

The only way I can deal with these four heavyweights in one paragraph is with this exercise. Make someone lie on the ground with their knees bent at right angles, similar to the posture they achieve when they're sat on a chair. Stand closer to the legs so you can see the figure receding in perspective. Compare this to someone sitting on a chair. In the two figures, you'll be able to compare parts of the body, in terms of form, proportion, perspective and the body's response to gravity.





In depth Create an environment



Photoshop & Modo

CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT WITH 2D AND 3D

Philipp Scherer invites you to examine his workflow and thought process for creating a bustling environment on an overcast day

Artist PROFILE

Philipp Scherer
LOCATION: Germany



Philipp studied game design at HTW Berlin. He's since been working

as an artist at Karakter Design Studio in Berlin and gives lectures at the city's S4G School for Games Institute.

<http://ifxm.ag/pscherer>

GET YOUR RESOURCES

See page 6 now!

Shortcuts

Feather selection

Cmd+F6 (Mac)

Shift+F6 (PC)

Add a feather to your selection – ideal for avoiding nasty hard edges.

PRO SECRETS

Get to know the vocabulary

I once listened to a professional winemaker talking about learning to taste wine. He pointed out that you must be able to name something so you can start to taste it. It's the same with painting: take the time to learn about specularities, anisotropy or fresnel-effects, for example, so you can recognise these visual effects in real life, and paint them. Also, did you know that staying awake for 17 hours leads to decrease in brain function, which is the same as having two glasses of wine?

Before I start working on a personal image I usually start thinking about what I want to see in the finished work. In most cases I'm interested in creating a certain effect, such as painting fire or illustrating a portrait under unusual lighting conditions.

When I read something about composition or a colour scheme, or an interesting thought comes to my mind, I make a note of it. Sometimes it's also about a specific painting technique, but almost never about a subject. I keep my

ideas in a text file: it's simple to maintain, and has grown in size over the years.

So here are my thoughts for this workshop. I want the setting to be an overcast day, with no cast shadows. This is partly because I can't remember ever painting a picture like that before. I usually like to use some strong lights or cast shadows to add visual interest and guide the viewer's eye through the painting, so I'll have to come up with alternative ways to do that. Of course, there'll still be shadows, they just won't be as obvious. I'm also keen to paint a

crowded locale with interesting-looking groups of people, or micro-compositions.

I know that the painting will appear in a print magazine, and will have to be a specific size to make the most of the page. Furthermore, I need to take into account the middle of the magazine – known in publishing circles as the gutter – and make sure that no important composition elements are lost in it. Because I want to create an environment that will feature a lot of visual elements, I decide to paint a widescreen image so I can show off more objects and characters.



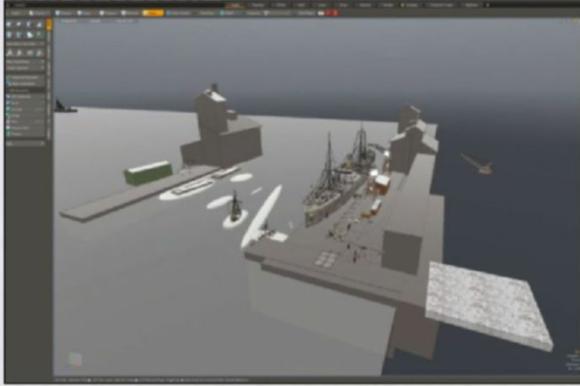
1 Brainstorming and sketching

I want to paint an overcast day, but what do I want the viewer to see? I have different scenarios in mind that I scribble down quickly. Some ideas sound great initially, but turn out to be visually weak or even contradictory. I go back and forth between different techniques and art programs. I find it useful to do line drawings, volume drawings or renderings in 3D, because the technique influences my finished image. I also gather some photo references.



2 Finding a colour scheme

These colours are influenced by the impressionistic painters of the Ashcan School, who portrayed the lives of the lower working class in New York in the beginning of the 20th century. I like the grainy, realistic feel of some of their paintings. My colour scheme has its roots in the sky: its dominant colour creates a unifying scheme in this environment. The colour of large objects, such as the buildings, change according to the environment. I choose some local colours to create a unifying look and add visual interest. I want harmony, but want to avoid a monochromatic image.



3 Blocking out in 3D

Now I build the scene in 3D together with my colour scheme. I create a ground plane and add some boxes. As I develop the scene, I subdivide my boxes, or replace them with objects from a custom 3D library: crates, wagons and so on. I often use them to populate a scene quickly. In most instances they're replaced by brushstrokes during my painting process.



4 Developing the ship's diffuse colour

This image shows an older texture concept that I did for personal purposes. I've never used it in 3D and I'm glad that it comes into its own now. I make a rendering from the side of this ship, paint over it and project it through the same camera back on to my ship. It provides a decent base for further painting. I use the same Imagemap to create variation in a Roughness/Gloss map and a simple Bump map. Both of these two maps are highly inaccurate, but provide me with an interesting variation in the ship's texture.



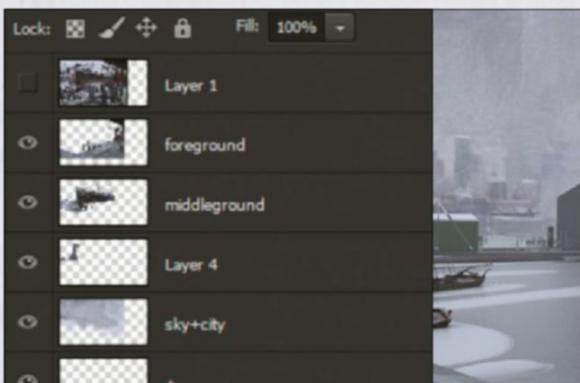
5 Preparing for the render

Before hitting the Render button I explore several variations with my camera settings – including position, height and focal length – to develop the best results. I also decide to create a water material. It's certainly worth doing, because I know that I'll reuse it in other projects. I also change the local colour of my objects according to my colour sketch.



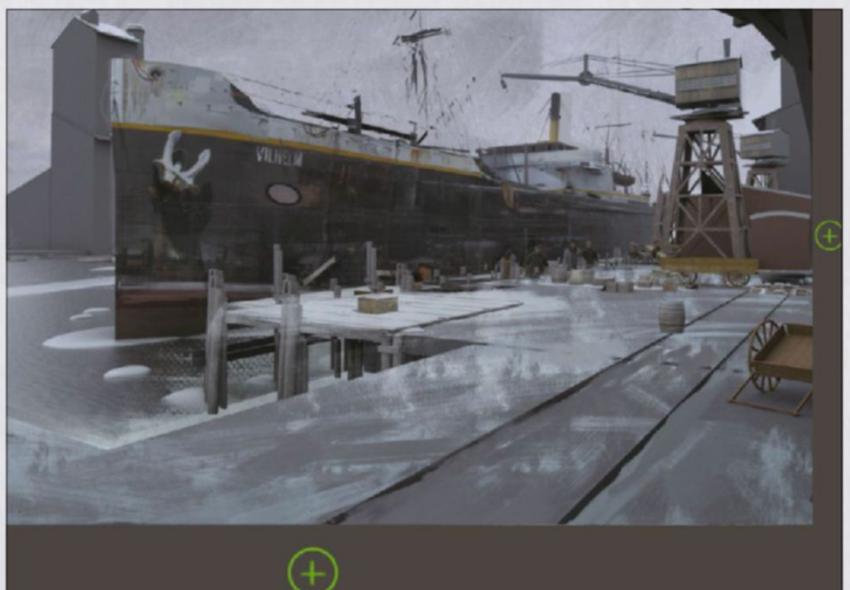
6 Gearing up for the painting stage

Now I process my rendering, focusing on Final Color, Alpha, Element ID/Material ID, Total Illumination, Ambient Occlusion, Normals and a Depth pass. I'll use my passes to achieve the best possible starting point before starting to put my brush on the canvas. I use my Ambient occlusion Pass and put it on a Multiply layer in Photoshop, set to 25 per cent Opacity. The Depth pass is used to create a fog layer. I render the people in my scene separately, so I can easily take them out of the painting later on, if necessary.



7 Layer preparation

I divide the scene into the fore-, mid- and background, and sky and city to speed up my workflow. I use Content Aware Fill near the edges so I can move my layers without the blank canvas showing through. My composition doesn't offer a lot of places for the eye to rest, so I crop the image. I also establish the background because it will affect my colour choices. ➔➔



PRO SECRETS

Get a fresh perspective

Learning new software and tools gives you a fresh and different perspective on your work. Lately, I've been doing some rigging and animation, and had a lot of fun with it. When you have to animate your design you'll see if it will work. Creating materials in 3D changed my view on surfaces. Now I can paint them with a greater degree of accuracy.



8 The darkest darks and lightest lights

I fill in the blanks. Sometimes I use Content Aware fill for this task: it's an amazing tool. Finally I can start painting. I can't wait to get my hands on the ship's surface. It's also good to put my first marks here because it's a focal point of my picture, where I can establish my darkest darks and my lightest lights. This will help me when judging what colours to use in the rest of the painting.



9 The battleplan

I want to explain my thoughts about the composition, because everything that I do from now should support the composition and not harm it. I decide to create no key focal point, because I want the viewer to explore the scenery instead of being stuck in a specific place. Therefore I try to lead the viewer's eye in a circular motion through the picture.

10 Progressing through the paint stage

I keep adding colour, values and details to the image. I'm careful where I place my details: the surface of the big warehouse in the background is left blank on purpose. I only add some colour and value variation to it. I don't want the surface to attract too much attention: the silhouette is far more important because it'll guide the eye further in the aforementioned circular motion.



11 Establishing micro-compositions

The overall composition comprises several micro-compositions that follow the circular motion. These are basically paintings within the paintings. If you draw a vertical line through the middle of the image, the left and right parts of the image are micro-compositions, which in turn contain micro compositions. I do this to create visual interest.



RESOURCES

WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

CUSTOM BRUSHES: COLOR_DYNAMICS

Great for a nice, noisy brushstroke that doesn't feel too clean. I used it pretty much everywhere but was especially handy for the sky.

SQUARE

This works well with some texture on it. I constantly use it when sketching environments.

BRUSHBRUSH

Ideal for giving your brushstrokes a direction and to carve in the volume of an object.

SOFT_HARD

This can give you a pleasing transition between hard and soft edges. A handy tool that saves a lot of time.



12 Populating the scene

I add several people to the scene. I cut some of them out of historic photos, or paint them from references. If any figure stands out too much, I can tone them down by painting over them. I also notice that my crane isn't working the way I created it. So I jump back into Modo and rotate the crane slightly, so that it looks like it's able to put freight on to the ground.



13 Introducing more people

As you can see from my sketches, I planned to have a big crowd working at the harbour. So I keep adding more people and details. However, I find it difficult to add more details at this stage: the composition feels already quite complete to me and I'm worried I might mess it up. I add more people and some smoke anyway, only to take it away in my next step...



PRO SECRETS

Step back

Don't get too attached to your work. Asking questions such as should I do this or that, should I go for this idea, is this the best perspective and so on, can paralyse you. Instead, take a step back and remember that it's just another painting of many that will come, so don't think too much about it. Sometimes you just have to pull through – so just go for it!



14 Chaos and detail

I think I'm searching for visual interest on the ground. Something has to happen here, but painting more people doesn't help. Instead I add more objects lying around, creating a greater sense of chaos and activity, and informing the story of a busy harbour side. And in the end it's all about telling a story. Now I add values here and there, then call the painting done.



Shortcuts

Copy and paste visible
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Ctrl+Shift+C, V (PC)
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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...

11
PRODUCTS
ON TEST



COMICS

90 Round-up

Four packed pages of reviews of the latest comic releases, including Empress; Dark Knight III: The Master Race; Leaving Megalopolis: Surviving Megalopolis; The Tipping Point; Spider-Man/Deadpool; Silver Surfer; and Paper Girls.

TRAINING

95 Introduction to V-Ray

Feeling ready to take on the Rolls-Royce of render engines? Then this epic course from CG specialist Stephen DeLalla will help.

BOOKS

96 The Art of Zootropolis

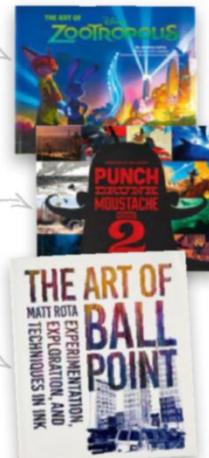
Discover how Disney's team of artists worked to create a world designed by animals, for animals.

97 Punch Drunk Moustache Round 2

Industry artists take time out from their busy day job and let their imaginations run riot.

97 The Art of Ballpoint

The pen is capable of a range of styles, and this guide explains how to develop your drawing techniques.



RATINGS EXPLAINED Magnificent Great Good Poor Atrocious



Mark Millar's characters have only the subtlest cartoon elements in their facial expressions.

Empress

SPACE OPERA The storyline is Star Wars-lite, but the artwork and script shine through



Millar manages to portray depth of emotion in characters without resorting to histrionics.

him work in a more mainstream tone like Ultimates or his underrated Fantastic Four run, than the throwback tales of Huck and Starlight or the self-aware world of Jupiter's Legacy, and in doing so he has created one of his best books in years.

RATING

Writer Mark Millar **Artist** Stuart Immonen **Publisher** Various **Format** Three six-issue arcs

Set 65 million years in the past, *Empress* feels like it could have been tagged “a long time ago in a galaxy far, far away...” as Mark Millar and Star Wars artist Stuart Immonen create a high-octane space opera with maniacal despots, dinosaur death matches and high-impact spaceship chases.

As Queen Emporia and her children attempt to flee from the evil King Morax with the help of her bodyguard Dane, there's more than a hint of *A New Hope* in this comic published by Icon/Marvel/Millarworld. Millar's rapid fire, ultra-lean script enables Immonen to give the story an



electrifying pace thanks to some truly stunning visuals. His figure work is exceptional, with the subtlest of cartooniness to the facial expressions giving every panel a sense of depth and emotion, without relying on histrionics. The detailed designs of the ships and landscapes are also truly breathtaking and a sign of how much the artist has upped his game by working on Marvel's flagship titles.

With *Empress*, Millar is continuing to confound his critics by creating a book that's both a perfect example of his distinctive style, but also a million miles away from the clichéd expectations that come with it. A return to Marvel's Icon imprint sees

There's doubt about how much of the DK3 eight-issue miniseries Frank Miller wrote.



Dark Knight III: The Master Race

Writer Miller & Azzarello
Artist Stuart Immonen
Publisher Various
Format Three six-issue arcs

Frank Miller's landmark *The Dark Knight Returns* has had one follow-up – the flawed *The Dark Knight Strikes Again (DK2)*. Now DC are giving us another, in time to capitalise on the Miller-esque movie action of *Batman v Superman: Dawn Of Justice*.

However, while Miller's name is front and centre on the credits, he's only contributing a small amount of art – this is largely co-writer Brian Azzarello's show. Each issue also features a back-up story illustrated by a guest artist. Meanwhile, main series artist Andy Kubert does his best Miller impersonation, capturing the right visual style.

This miniseries sees Batman return to Gotham, just as the science experiments of Ray "The Atom" Palmer accidentally release a horde of crazed Kryptonian religious fundamentalists and a worldwide rampage begins. But while the series has attention-grabbing moments, it steers away from the crazier, less coherent elements of Miller's work. Despite slick and efficient storytelling, there's little to distinguish it from other Dark Knight-influenced grim superhero sagas.

RATING   



The cover for the second comic in the new series, but Frank Miller is only part involved.

Leaving Megalopolis: Surviving Megalopolis

CITY SLICKERS Beginning where Book One ended, our Megalopolis residents have a mission on their hands

Writer Gail Simone **Artist** J Calafiore **Publisher** Dark Horse **Format** Six-part series

Leaving Megalopolis might have been a high-concept mash-up of every post-Marvelman super book, spliced with *The Walking Dead* and *Escape From New York*, but boy it was a page-turning blast.

The fact that Gail Simone had to crowdfund to get this sequel off the ground is all the more remarkable, given the stellar results. *Surviving Megalopolis* follows immediately on from the last scene in Book One, which saw our motley crew of Megalopolis residents escape the City's "afflicted" superheroes.

Simone and Calafiore thrust you straight back into the action. With female lead Mina (a nod to Alan Moore's League member, perhaps?) missing and presumed dead, the remaining escapees join a small team of specialists who have been handpicked to rescue their benefactor's husband from the City – the idea being that they will also retrieve Mina at the same time. It's an unrelenting ride with plenty of



The remaining escapees join a small team of specialists to rescue their benefactor's husband from the stricken City.

surprises to augment the action. The exposition, Congressional hearings and childhood flashbacks never slow the pace, and chances are you'll charge through the series with the speed of Simone's Flash-analogue, Fleet.

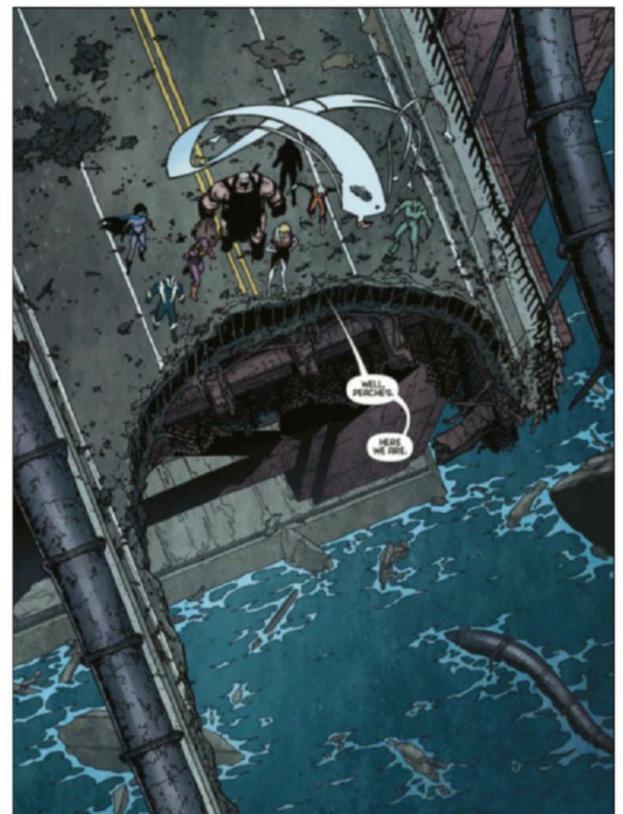
Speaking of whom, Fleet is a fabulously realised speedster: super-skinny because he's moving too fast to stop and eat, with a skeletal grin revealed by his broken helmet. In fact, all of Simone's 'analogue-lite', supers are great fun, and they're all bastards. Except for one...

You might have thought that there was nothing new left to add to the dog-eared superhero genre, but Simone has found a great angle, even if it does involve borrowing heavily from what has gone before. The fact that *Surviving Megalopolis* manages to better its predecessor is an even bigger achievement.

RATING     



Nothing new left to add to the superhero genre? Gail Simone has found a great new angle here, even if it borrows heavily from the past.





The Tipping Point is diverse in tone and mood, but it's accessible too, with some beautiful art.

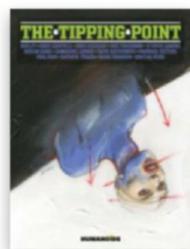
The Tipping Point

SURPRISE ART That unexpected moment in life where everything changes is celebrated in this anthology

Writer Various **Artist** Various **Publisher** Humanoids **Format** Anthology

One minute you're happy in the routine of your day-to-day existence. The next something happens that changes you completely and unexpectedly. The Tipping Point chronicles these moments. It's an anthology of 13 tales, broad in scope and very varied in style, all elegantly presented by publisher Humanoids.

Hannako's Fart by Taiyo Matsumoto is a tale that begins with the titular guff and closes on the world turning, having taken in life, death and baseball. It's a quiet, intimate tale and Matsumoto's art - focused almost entirely on human faces and expressions - is powerfully emotive.



Can your life really change forever in the time it takes to release trapped wind? It can in The Tipping Point.



The book isn't simply quiet, emotional vignettes, however. Naoki Urasawa's Solo Mission mashes up its futuristic setting with the mundanity of family life. It feels like an extended Future Shock - complete with a daft, but amusing, sting in the tail. Frederik Peeters' Laika, meanwhile, sees the titular space dog return to Earth with vengeance in mind, and Bastien Vivès' monochrome The Child is a deliciously creepy horror story.

Picking favourites is difficult. Paul Pope's Consort To The Destroyer is an oblique little tale, but his art, which lands somewhere between Hergé and Jack Kirby, is astounding.

Diverse in tone and mood, this is a beautiful book. It's also very accessible. Someone who'd only ever read American comics would get it just fine. So it's as much a wonderful entry point to the wider worlds of comics, manga and bandes dessinées as it is a lavish treat for more seasoned readers.

RATING 🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷

This is perhaps a more intelligent and linear-minded Deadpool than we're used to.



Spider-Man/ Deadpool

Writer Joe Kelly
Artist Ed McGuinness
Publisher Marvel
Format Ongoing

There's no way that even Spider-Man can out-chatter the Merc With The Mouth. Instead, Spidey is forced to be the mature adult when Deadpool decides to start hanging out with him in order to learn how to be a better hero. Little does Spidey know that Deadpool's been hired to assassinate Peter Parker - except no-one told him that Spidey and Parker are the same person. Shenanigans and penis jokes inevitably ensue.

The art by Ed McGuinness is dynamic and expressive - quite a feat considering both leads are wearing full-face masks - and writer Joe Kelly gets as close to the wire as Marvel will allow with the genitalia-obsessed Deadpool's dialogue.

Deadpool here is also close to the film version of the character - weird as hell, but likeably earnest and devoted to those he loves.

The only downside to Spider-Man/Deadpool is that, inevitably, Spidey is cast as the killjoy and his usual wit and charm are lost. The fun of Spidey-Deadpool team-ups is always Spider-Man's resistance to them, but that could be better balanced with his sense of humour.

RATING 🍷🍷🍷



In most Marvel team-ups, Spidey is the chatty one, driving others to distraction. But not here.

A 1950s-inspired psychedelic adventure with the Silver Surfer and pals.



Silver Surfer

Writer Dan Slott
Artists Laura & Michael Allred
Publisher Marvel
Format Ongoing

The new Silver Surfer volume brings the same pep and verve that made the last one a sleeper hit. Once again Dan Slott teams up with Michael and Laura Allred to create a psychedelic adventure inspired by the best of '50s sci-fi.

The story is backed up by sumptuous artwork from Laura and Michael Allred. The pair's upbeat cartoony aesthetic has always leant itself well to the more high energy and high concept entries in Marvel's stable and in Silver Surfer, they've found the perfect vessel for their Kirby-esque style.

Our titular hero is still travelling around with small-town Massachusetts girl Dawn Greenwood. Slott's move to give Norrin Radd a human companion effectively turns Silver Surfer adventures into Marvel-flavoured Doctor Who romps – a good thing.

Dawn and Norrin are back on terra firma as the Silver Surfer faces imagination thieves and old enemies in a peppy opener. Pals Ben Grimm and Alicia Masters are on hand to provide background colour on what's a great jumping-on point for new readers, just in time for the 50th anniversary.

RATING    



If you're looking for a fun breezy introduction to cosmic Marvel adventures, pick this up.

Paper Girls

COOL KIDS Career-best artwork from Cliff Chiang and a unpredictable script make Paper Girls a hit



Writer Brian K Vaughan **Artist** Cliff Chiang **Publisher** Image **Format** Ongoing

Paper Girls takes the kids-meet-aliens aesthetic of '80s movies like *ET* and *Flight Of The Navigator* (and recent homages like *Super 8* and *Earth To Echo*) and turns it inside out and upside down.

You'll find career-best artwork from Cliff Chiang, mixing elements of Art Adams and Michael Allred and making visual storytelling look effortlessly easy. The colouring by Matt Wilson takes a little adjusting to, using as it does a palette reminiscent of an aerobics instructor's leotard collection, but it's era-appropriate and candy-beautiful.

Our protagonist, Erin Tieng, is 12 years old and starting her first day bike-delivering the Cleveland Preserver in her Ohio hometown. She soon falls in with fellow paper girls KJ, Tiffany and rough, tough local legend Mac. But it isn't just neighbourhood bullies or intolerant cops the four have to worry about. After discovering a weird, organic spaceship-like machine in a basement, they become embroiled in a conflict between opposing otherworldly factions, one deformed-looking and clad in rags, the other tech-armed and angelic. But which side should they trust?



Vaughan doesn't push period detail hard; instead going for gentle references to Asteroids, and politicians such as Reagan and Michael Dukakis.



One person is deformed-looking and clad in rags, the other, tech-armed and angelic. Who to trust?

If you think you know where the story is headed, you're wrong. As ever with a Brian K Vaughan script, expectations are overturned. The guy delights in wrong-footing readers, and readers should be glad to be wrong-footed so delightfully. In this initial five-issue arc you'll find time travellers, giant pterodactyl-like monster steeds, and a mysterious recurring apple motif that embraces the Garden of Eden, The Beatles and Steve Jobs and a whole lot more besides.

The sci-fi touches are well thought through and sometimes sublime. For instance, the English-variant language one of the alien factions speaks, a fusion of Shakespeare and Nadsat. Issue 5's ending is as time-twisty as anything in the Back To The Future trilogy and will leave you impatient to learn what comes next.

RATING     

Paper Girls is about the coolness of being in a gang and the confusion of being on the cusp of teenhood.



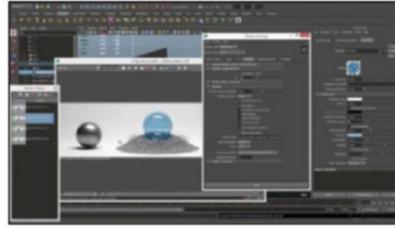
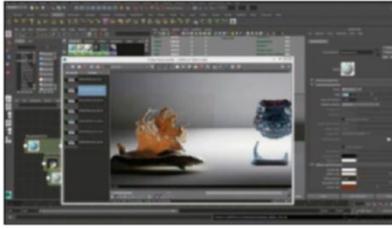
ImagineFX presents a collection of some of the finest concept art in the world!



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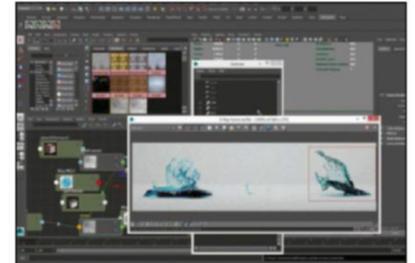
For print and digital: http://ifxm.ag/concept_artist



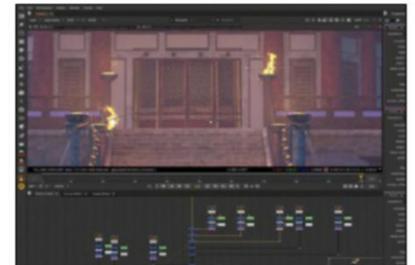


With its semi-translucent qualities and complex textures, skin is one of the most difficult surfaces for artists to depict.

Stephen DeLalla's exhaustive video reveals how to achieve top results in V-Ray, but you'll need to have some prior 3D knowledge.



Early chapters cover some of the basics of working with V-Ray materials and shaders.



The final hour sees Stephen guiding you through the process of creating the video's promo image.

Introduction to V-Ray

V-GOOD Feeling ready to take on the Rolls-Royce of render engines? This epic course from CG specialist Stephen DeLalla will help



Publisher The Gnomon Workshop **Price** \$49 per month (subscription) **Format** Stream (subscription) **Web** www.thegnomonworkshop.com

Chaos Group's V-Ray is arguably the Rolls-Royce of third-party render engines, software you can bolt onto your existing CG software to generate superior results. Its superb renderings are achieved via no small amount of settings, custom materials and lights. This puts the challenge of creating an accessible introduction to V-Ray on about the same plane as writing an introduction to quantum physics.

So it shouldn't come as any surprise that Stephen DeLalla's Introduction to V-Ray video runs for over 10 hours and requires both prior knowledge of CG principles and a readiness to revisit. In this respect, 'Introduction' is a little misleading - those new to the principles of 3D software are best off looking elsewhere for guidance.

Stephen starts with a half-hour tour of how the software integrates with Maya: some details will be different if you're using another host program,



DETAILS

Topics covered

- Getting started
- Linear workflow
- Materials and shaders
- V-Ray Lights
- Displacement
- Global Illumination
- Render elements
- V-Ray Physical Camera
- Scene workflow

Length

639 minutes

Rating



such as 3ds Max, but the bulk of the video is applicable to V-Ray with any host. Then it's time to dive in, with overviews of linear workflow, Adaptive DMC (the system V-Ray uses to calculate the render) and materials. Stephen moves on to topics including V-Ray's own lights, using Global Illumination and Render Elements. The final hour brings everything together as Stephen explains how to create and render a single image, to help your understanding of how to start with the end-stage of V-Ray in mind.

Nearly 2GB of Maya files are supplied if you want to study any settings in even more detail than Stephen's offered. It adds up to a monumental endeavour that's worth the time of anyone who works with V-Ray.

In common with other Gnomon Workshop releases, Introduction to V-Ray is available only in a monthly or annual subscription to Gnomon's training library, and not as a stand-alone download.

ARTIST PROFILE

STEPHEN DELALLA

Stephen is a 3D artist who specialises in lighting and look development. After graduating from Gnomon in 2008, he started as a generalist in commercial production. In 2010 he joined the Psyop team, where he's working as a CG supervisor. His professional work can be seen in many commercials, most notably in Supercell's Clash of Clans, as well as the Cricket Wireless ad campaign.



He's been teaching at Gnomon since 2011, where he has helped to integrate V-Ray into the curriculum.

www.stephendelalla.com



The Art of Zootropolis



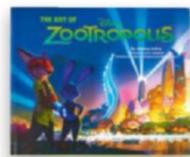
ROAR MATERIAL Bringing a city built by animals to life is a challenge, and this book shows how the Disney artists did it

Author Jessica Julius **Publisher** Chronicle Books **Price** £25 **Web** www.chroniclebooks.com **Available** Now

Zootropolis, Disney's 55th animated film, has been the surprise critical hit of the year. Its story envisions a world entirely created and populated by animals – and this book examines the unique art challenges that seemingly simple idea presents. For example, how do you design a world that's accessible to both a mouse, an elephant, and every other creature in between?

Written by Jessica Julius, with a preface by John Lasseter and a foreword by the film's directors, Byron Howard and Rich Moore, this hardback beautifully reproduces both final and cut art from Zootropolis. And for fans, that might justify the cover price alone.

But that's only one half of the story. The smartly structured chapters also take deep dives into the thinking behind the look of the film: both



Zootropolis's buildings were designed with animal shapes and patterns. It's an animal world. Not animals living in a human world.

its inventive characters and astonishing, imaginative environments.

It's evident that an immense amount of thought and research has gone into Zootropolis's architecture, and the book showcases early sketches and concept art for the different towns and cities within it, along with insights into its development. We learn that in an early iteration of the film, for example, prey animals were dominant, so the motifs in building focused on this, incorporating vegetable patterns, leaf shapes and flower murals into the design of the buildings.

Each area is discussed in detail, from Tundra Town, that's made of snow and ice and incorporates Russian and Italian influences in its construction, to the tiny mini-city of Little Rodentia, where streetlights are made from a single Christmas lightbulb.



Foxes' thought processes overlap with their actions, something artists tried to capture with Nick Wilde.

The Art of Zootropolis is also packed with detail about character design, with back stories and insights for major and minor characters. We hear where lines were drawn between reality and artistic licence. For example, in nature, otters are bulkier than weasels and look like they have one big muscle. But Mrs Otterton needed to appear frail enough to ask for help, so the artists gave her thinner wrists and neck. Broader issues are also discussed. How does a herd of wildebeest dismount from a train? Which animals can and can't wear trousers? How can an ice cream shop cater for elephants?

In short, each of the 164 pages is full of amazing art and fascinating insights into the making of a landmark animation. Anyone interested in character design or world-building should find this a riveting read.

RATING



Punch Drunk Moustache Round 2

FREE RADICALS Unleashed from the demands of their normal client work, 10 pro artists show what's been lurking inside their imaginations

Authors Various **Publisher** Design Studio Press **Price** £21 **Web** www.designstudiopress.com **Available** Now

The premise of the first **Punch Drunk Moustache** volume was simple: if you gave a bunch of concept artists free rein, what would they come up with? The results were certainly interesting, and now Design Studio Press is back for more.

In this second volume, 10 artists – John-Paul Balmert, Molly Denmark, Andre Kirk, Dela Longfish, Jim Moore, Will Nichols, Carlos Sanchez, Amy Beth Christenson Smith, Jeff Sangalli and Chris Voy – present a whole new



Jeff Sangalli's *Stitched* is an enchanting tale about the adventures of a childhood toy.

selection of concepts and stories. And as you'd expect from creatives who have worked on the likes of *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* and *Batman*, it's all pretty mind-blowing stuff.

The book mainly lets the artwork speak for itself, with a refreshing range of creative directions taken. We're particularly entranced by Amy Beth Christenson Smith's opener. She brings a real dystopian intensity to her tale of a lone Inuit who may be the last human on Earth. Elsewhere, Molly Denmark's

surreal, soft-focus *Chimney City* develops its "the land of lost socks" concept in unexpectedly brilliant ways, while Dela Longfish's *Wilted Flowers* sees real and mythological worlds collide in a stunningly original fashion.

If you're feeling like you're treading water creatively, this inspiringly offbeat volume will remind you just what artists can be capable of when the shackles are thrown off.

RATING

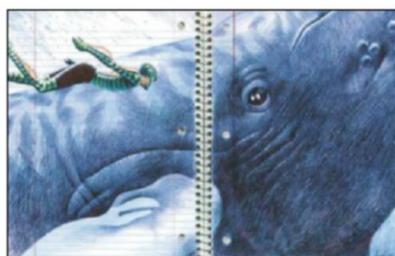
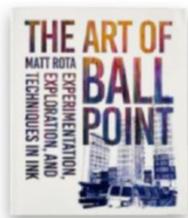
The Art of Ballpoint

PEN PUSHERS From inspiring examples to lessons in technique, this book contains everything you need to know about ballpoint pen art

Editor Matt Rota **Publisher** Rockport **Price** £16 (£13 for Ballpoint Art pack) **Web** www.quartoknows.com/rockport-publishers **Available** Now

Ever tried making art with a ballpoint? **The Art of Ballpoint** showcases just what incredible work can be created with this humble yet versatile tool.

Written by ballpoint artist Matt Rota, this book covers the history of the discipline, profiles some of the best contemporary ballpoint artists and analyses their work, which ranges from mutant animals to wall-sized abstractions. The contributing artists discuss their methods, the messages in



Jim Rugg's *Abe Sapien* comes from a "strong sense of déjà vu" for his school days.

their work and their personal connections to the pen.

The exhaustive book covers classical drawing, modern abstraction, graphic illustration, contemporary realism and sketchbook styles, and is peppered with exercises to help you develop your own technique. These explore everything from line drawing and cross-hatching to photorealism, mixed media and contour drawing.

The large-format, 162-book is also available as a *Ballpoint Art Pack*, which combines a condensed version of the book with a companion sketchpad, featuring prompts and drawings to get you started. Yet whichever format you opt for, it's a great resource on ballpoint art for both artists working in the medium and those who wish to.

RATING

generate

The conference for web designers

SAN FRANCISCO 15 JULY 2016

Learn about SVG animations, design sprints, modern workflows and more, from the likes of **Mike Monteiro**, **Lyza Gardner**, **Wes Bos** and **Braden Kowitz**

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The first time in Oz! The show features **John Allsopp**, **Nick Finck**, **Erika Hall** and **Zoe Gillenwater**, and will explore flexbox, animation and responsive web apps

LONDON 21-23 SEPTEMBER 2016

A two-day, one-track event, plus a whole day of handy workshops! Speakers include **Ida Aalen**, **Jeff Veen**, **Brendan Dawes** and **Mike Kus**

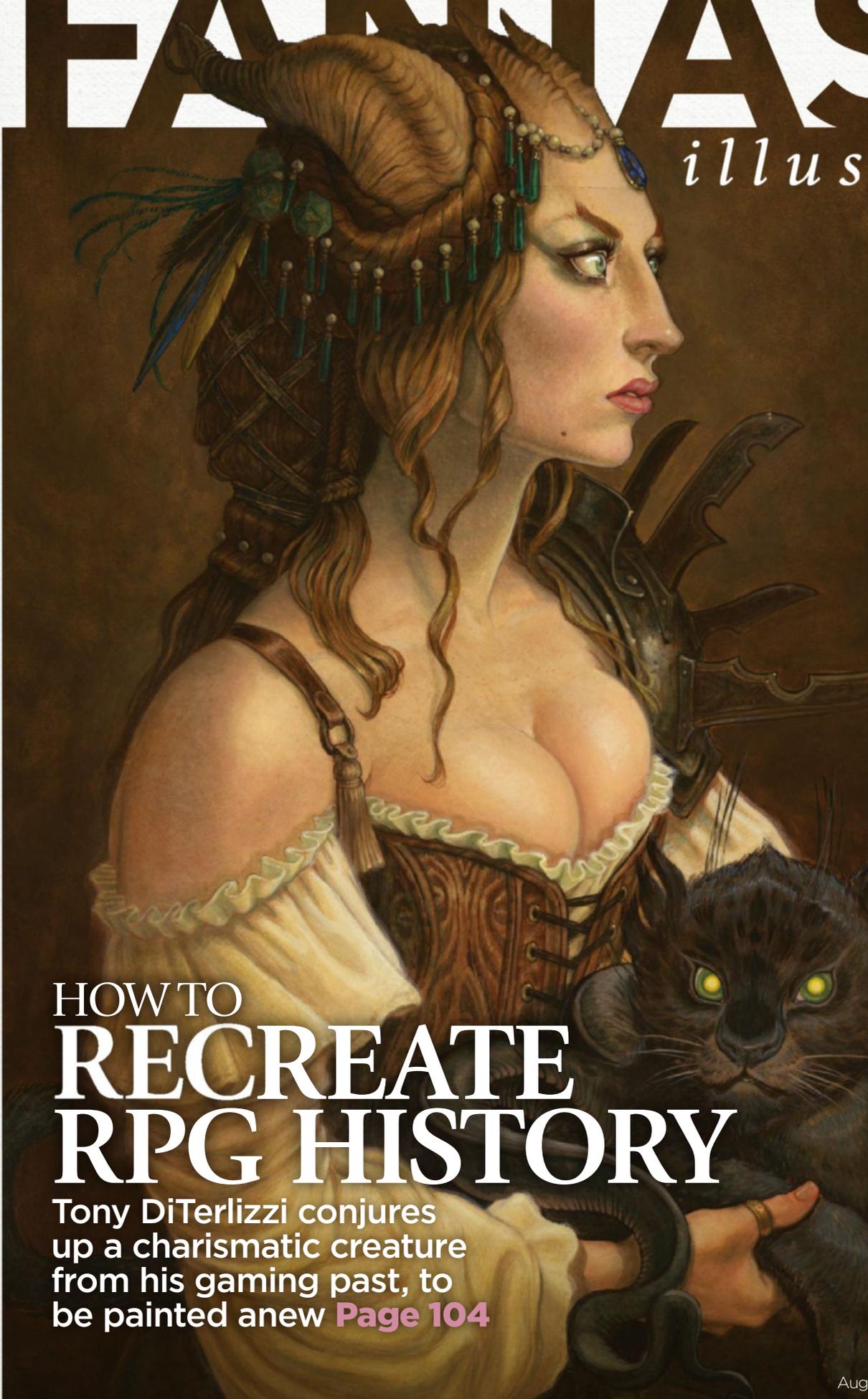
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FANTASY

illustrator



HOW TO RECREATE RPG HISTORY

Tony DiTerlizzi conjures up a charismatic creature from his gaming past, to be painted anew **Page 104**

This issue:



100 FXPosé Traditional
The best traditional art revealed.



106 Colour a comic cover
Chris Visions shares his tips.



112 Underpainting advice
With Anand Radhakrishnan.



114 First Impressions
Bill Carman talks wildlife.

FXPosé *Traditional*

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL FANTASY ARTISTS

+ Carne Griffiths

LOCATION: England
WEB: www.carnegriffiths.com
EMAIL: carne@carnegriffiths.com
MEDIA: Graphite, ink, tea and alcohol



Working primarily with calligraphy inks, graphite and liquids such as tea, brandy and vodka, Carne's drawing focuses on

creation and manipulation of the line.

"My images explore human, geometric and floral forms," he says, "in a combination of both literal and abstract translation, and in response to images and situations encountered in daily life."

Carne records his images on to the page where, "physical boundaries are unimportant". His art focuses on scenes of awe and wonder, "projecting a sense of abandonment and inviting the viewer to share and explore this inner realm."

IMAGINEFX CRIT



"I find Carne's art both satisfying and unnerving, the juxtaposition of nature and human beauty compelling and uncomfortable. It's both thought provoking and – appropriately – beautiful to look at."

Daniel Vincent,
Art Editor

1 JUST OUT OF REACH

Ink and tea, Bockingford watercolour paper, 50x70cm

"I wanted to push the boundaries of texture and surface pattern. It's about questioning what is beautiful and what is valuable."

2 ENTWINED

Ink and tea, Bockingford watercolour paper, 50x70cm

"I wanted a fairy tale atmosphere. It's about the importance, value and beauty of nature, the idea we should see it as a desirable luxury, in the same way we see jewellery – except it's free and in abundance. I reintroduced automatic writing in the lower half of the picture to bring a storytelling feel to the piece."





Montse Rubio

LOCATION: Spain
WEB: www.montserubio.com
EMAIL: montseluna@gmail.com
MEDIA: Watercolour



A watercolourist illustrator, specialising in fantasy and folklore, Montse's surroundings have a direct influence on her art. "I'm fond of the smell of autumn evenings, older trees with a lot of history and the sunset in good company," she says.

The artist lives in the bustling Spanish city of Barcelona. "I feel at home in any well-stocked library full of dusty books."

In her works she looks for the hidden magic of everyday scenes and characters, giving them new viewpoints and perspectives. For more than a decade she's been working among elves, goblins and witches, illustrating books for all ages.

IMAGINEFX CRIT



"There's an unmistakable fairy tale drama to Montse's art, borne out by the incredible attention to detail and facial expressions. You instantly feel you want to know more about these characters."

Cliff Hope,
Operations Editor



1 PEALLAIDH "THE SHAGGY ONE"

Watercolour, cotton paper, 10.2x9in
"This character from Anglo-Saxon folklore seems to me highly inspiring and haunting but very alive. It belongs to one of my illustrated projects: Seelie and Unseelie court."

2 MOTHER TROLL

Watercolour, cotton paper, 17x19.7in
"Illustration of the outstanding Selma Lagerlöf from the book *The Youngest Elf and Other Stories*. It belongs to the Lletraferits exhibition at the Terrassa School of Art."

3 QUEEN OF HEARTS

Watercolour, cotton paper, 19.7x19.7in
"This illustration of Alice in Wonderland by Lewis Carroll also belongs to the Lletraferits exhibition, about fantasy classical literature. The Queen is my favourite character."

4 WIZARD

Watercolour, cotton paper, 19.7x12.6in
"I've never been able to resist the urge to draw sleeves, wizards and witches. They are my weakness. This wizard will peddle village to village, selling mixtures, potions and infallible spells."

3



4



SUBMIT YOUR ART TO FXPOSÉ

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

Email: fxpose@imaginefx.com
(maximum 1MB per image)

Post: (CD or DVD):
FXPosé Traditional
ImagineFX
Quay House
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.

Acrylics

Gouache

RECREATING A SLICE OF RPG HISTORY

Award-winning illustrator **TONY DITERLIZZI** conjures up a charismatic creature from his past to be painted anew, to see what he's learned in 20 years of illustration

Although many may know me from the books that I've written and illustrated for children, I began my career as a freelance artist working on games such as Dungeons & Dragons and Magic: The Gathering. Last year, Dark Horse Comics and Kitchen Sink Books released REALMS: The Roleplaying Game Art of Tony DiTerlizzi, which collected the best of my early work.

Although I was happy to see some of these old images back in print again, I yearned to return to the fantastic

characters that I drew way back when. I was curious to see how my technical ability had progressed over the 20 years that I've been illustrating professionally.

Tieflings are a race of half-fiends created for the RPG Planescape, and were showcased when the game debuted in 1994. These uncanny beings have remained popular ever since, having been featured in all subsequent editions of Dungeons & Dragons. My old drawings of the tiefling were the first ever to be published, so I wanted to revisit the subject for a formal portrait.

MATERIALS

PAINT

- Liquitex acrylic
- Holbien Acryla gouache

BRUSHES

- Synthetic

MATERIALS

- Strathmore 500 series four-ply Bristol canvas
- Liquitex Clear Gloss medium

These annotations are from a 40-something artist with some years of experience behind a paintbrush, but still with much to learn. However, if I could go back in time to 20-something Tony, here are some the tips and tricks that I would suggest...



Award-winning author and illustrator Tony has been creating children's books for over a decade. With Holly

Black, he created the international multi-million bestselling Spiderwick Chronicles. See more of his art on Instagram: @diterlizzi.

Step by Step: From The Renaissance to an RPG



1 INSPIRATION FROM THE CLASSICS

This portrait was inspired from Renaissance portraits of young ladies by the likes of Botticelli and Raphael. The initial sketch was drawn from my imagination. Afterwards, I photographed a model and began a second, more detailed, drawing using the photo reference.



2 GET SOME DIGITAL HELP

Here, the tonal underpainting is finished. I use acrylics because I can move the gouache layers around on top without disturbing it. Before I apply the local colour, I adjust my photos in Photoshop and print it in both warm and white light. This helps me see the skin tones more accurately.



3 SPOT MISTAKES IN THE MIRROR

After many hours of working, day after day, your eyes grow accustomed to the piece and it becomes harder to discern mistakes. I take frequent breaks and often turn the painting upside to see the elements afresh. Holding the painting up to a mirror will also reveal errors.

WHAT'S THE POINT?

The focal point of this portrait is the face, and therefore the highest point of contrast is the eyes. All other elements (the clothing, armour and pet) reveal additional details, but the contrast in these areas is more subdued than the focal point.



CONTROL WITH COLOUR

This is a fairly monochromatic painting. Colour is used sparingly and to guide the viewer's eye. Here, the feathers point to the 20-sided die hiding in her headdress.

REFERENCE!
REFERENCE!
REFERENCE!

Every aspect of this piece was painted with some form of photo reference, from the horns on her head to the stitching on her leggings.

STAY FOCUSED

I applied a vignette after I varnished it in Liquitex Clear Gloss Medium. Then I added umber and feathered it towards the figure from the edges.

Workshops



Photography by Tyler O'Tuohy

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

Pencil

Acrylics

Ink

Photoshop

INK AND COLOUR A COMIC COVER

CHRIS VISIONS shows how to compose an image in your sketchbook using value, pencilling and inking, while colouring with both traditional inks and Photoshop

For years I was intimidated by working digitally. Something about the plastic nib on a plastic surface felt too jarring to me. I love the sway of a brush on paper too much, the pop of the ink from a pen nib – there's a romance in traditional work that I can't separate myself from.

Now, Cintiq's and Kyle Webster brushes make this gap a little more bridged for me, but I still love paper. So here I present you with a process that enables you to keep your traditional connection strong, while utilising the power of digital.

I dance back and forth in the beginning, drawing my sketch in my sketchbook, scanning and changing my lines to blue, and then printing it out to give it more detail traditionally again. I encourage you to keep a sketchbook:

ARTIST INSIGHT

HOW TO SOLVE PROBLEMS EARLY ON

Make your thumbnail image as solid as possible, establishing use of dark, medium and light tones to create an interesting composition. Small problems here will only get bigger later, so fix them now.

this is the place where you can hone your skills, play with different paper types and drawing materials, and see how you can lay layers and washes.

Go crazy in your sketchbook and enjoy yourself. You're making art, an act that rewards innovation and the new. Not only do your skills come out in your final pieces, but the fun you have in a piece naturally shines through as well. Learn to enjoy your process, and keep that level of excitement high and the skill will come.

Going back to my sketch, you may notice there's no strong mid-tone. This is because I was working a certain way with pen, had an idea in my head on how the lighting would work, and I was itching to start the piece. Be sure to use reference, and use a mid-grey or coloured marker to act as a mid-tone in the layout stage. Your presto pen will also be handy in this stage

to mark your light areas as well. That foresight comes from a lot of drawing and a lot of observing.

So, after I've printed out the sketch, it's on to the inking, which I love. This is where you really mould your piece, much like a sculptor. I like to jump around, building up the whole piece, not just focusing one area. This keeps your piece balanced. Working with washes and strong values enables me to build my form, which you'll find guides you throughout your digital colouring, and works towards your goal of creating a striking piece.



Chris describes himself as an "art maker and ground shaker" working in the fields of illustration, comics and

wherever the creative wind pushes. Find out more at www.chrisvisions.com.





1 *Layouts and concepts*

I play with shapes and values on paper to create an interesting composition. I stay loose – sometimes doing literal scribbles, moving my pen around and falling in love with the motion of the marks. Here's a rough one, which enables me to have fun in the inking stage. I like to play with three values: dark, medium and light. This helps to create depth and balance.

PHOTOSHOP TIP

ADJUST YOUR LEVELS
Each eye dropper in the window enables you to focus on the dark, medium or light areas.



2 *Scan and tweak*

Next I scan in my sketch at 600dpi and print it out larger to save time redrawing the image. First, I take it into Photoshop, scale it to size, and add a layer of Cyan, with the Lighten or Screen layer option. You'll see a lot of options in your Layer dialog that you'll be able to play with in later steps.



MATERIALS

INK

- Sumi ink (black and Chinese red)
- FW acrylic ink (white)
- Homemade ink wash (roughly 10 per cent Sumi/90 per cent water mixture)

BRUSHES

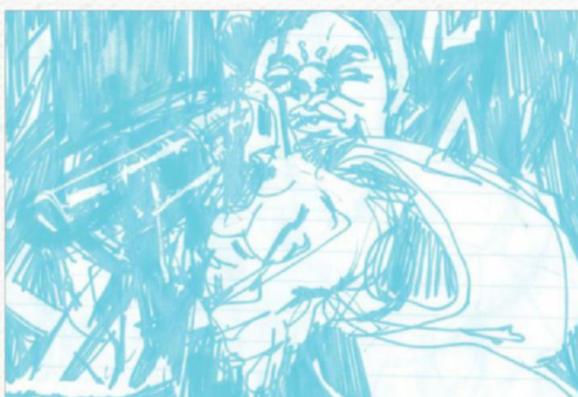
- Sable fine point brush, #2
- Qval wash brush

PAPER

- Strathmore blue line
- Comic boards or Bristol Paper, heavyweight

OTHER

- Presto! White Out pens
- Clean water
- Col-Erase blue pencil
- Photoshop



3 *Print your blue sketch*

I use Strathmore Comic Art Boards (100lbs/270g/m2), but there are so many options with paper, and it's fun to explore. I mainly use this because of the guideline, but with a large enough printer you can make your own. The only trouble is that the blue lines sometimes peak through, and need an additional clean up in the digital phase.

4 *Blue pencil touch ups*

Now I have a large physical copy of the sketch and can touch up any details. I've been able to retain the energy and looseness in my sketch by working smaller, but now it's about the details. Reference is highly recommended for beginners. Col-Erase Indigo Blue pencils are great: dark enough to see, but light enough not to stain the paper.

5 *It's inking time*

This is my favourite part of the process. Here I like to jump around the piece, starting in areas that grab my interest first, going through and moulding my image. I love Sumi Ink, and keep Copic's Super Black in on the side to get those solid black areas. Some people can't stand the smell of Sumi, but I love it, like gasoline or liquorice. It comes in black and Chinese red, which enables you to create areas that can be easily selected in the computer. But more on that later... ➤➤

ARTIST INSIGHT

KEEP YOUR BRUSH CLEAN

When transitioning from black to red/white, it's important to have a source of clean water so your colours stay bold, and don't become muddy. This helps your values stay strong as well.



6 Washes

My wash is a 40 to 60 per cent grey mixture in tone (0 per cent water, 100 per cent ink), a consistency that enables me to start relatively light, but I can add layers to achieve a darker grey. It's important to know how much water your paper can take, so test, test, test!

PHOTOSHOP TIP

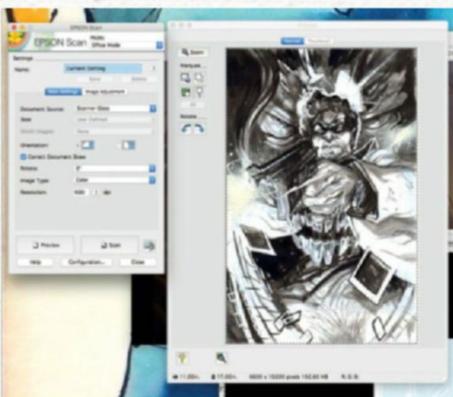
HUE & SATURATION

Play with colour and how it relates to the others. A quick shift in colour can transform a piece.



7 Keep your values strong

I check my values, trying to not have too much grey, and keeping a nice balance of black and white. Contrast is important. Squint at your image and if you can still make out your shapes, it's good. If it loses contrast and focus, punch up black and white areas. I use White-Out pens and FW Acrylic ink to resurrect highlights and white areas.



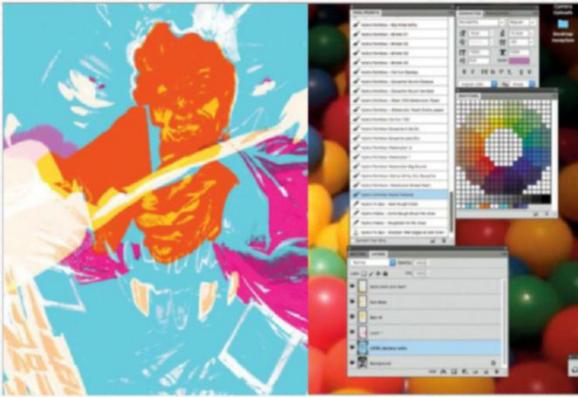
8 Scanning in the artwork

Now I scan in my inked image at 600dpi to capture all those details. I don't mess too much with the settings quite yet – I can do that in Photoshop, where you can fine-tune it a little more accurately.

9 Duplicate layer to create your first tone

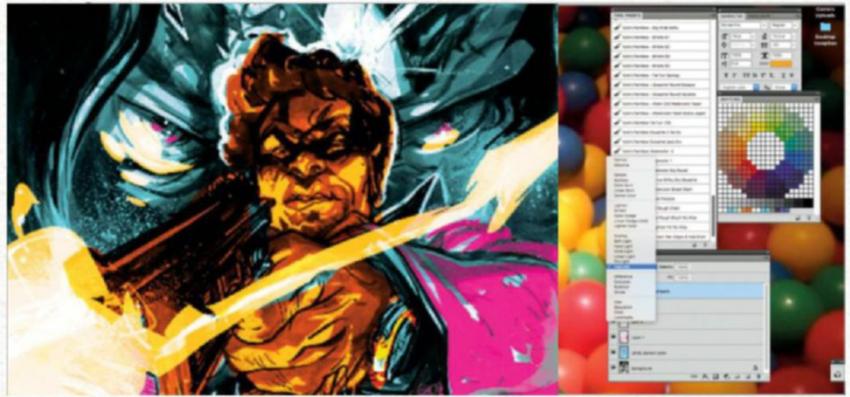
I open the scan in Photoshop and duplicate the inked art layer. I adjust levels (values) and contrast. On a second layer I exaggerate the dark levels, so the dark range overtakes the piece. I create a new layer, choose a base colour (cyan), and select the Screen layer option. Then I merge this layer with the darkened image.

In depth Inking and colouring



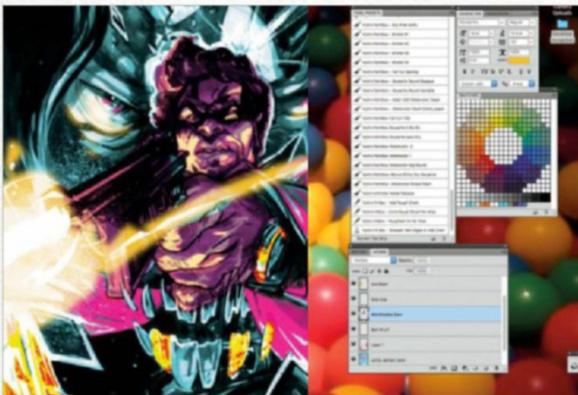
10 Make selections and save them

This is where the red ink comes in handy. I select those areas by using Color Range and the stylus turns into an eye dropper, for selecting and adjusting colour ranges. Selections can be saved by clicking Select Menu>Save Selection. Label them to cut down on confusion.



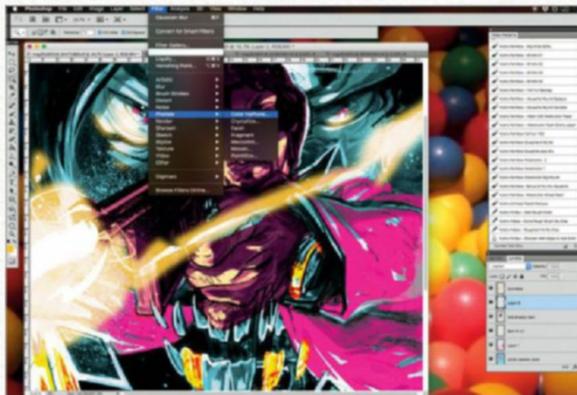
11 Adjusting the order of layers

Now you can start filling in flat colours and playing with how your shapes lay on top of each other. In the comics industry this is known as flattening. I usually use cyan, magenta and yellow, as they are bright and different enough that you can easily select them with the Magic Wand. Layer order also enables you to play with how your layers affect each other, depending on the layer option you use and what's below it.



12 Finding your palette

I like to have a set palette that reflects the mood of the piece, and sometimes I like to just find it. I start to shift Saturation, Lightness and Color using Ctrl+U. Colour is relative, meaning your perception of one colour will change depending on its surroundings. So a lot of the action here is shift, react, shift, repeat. If you feel stuck, search the internet.



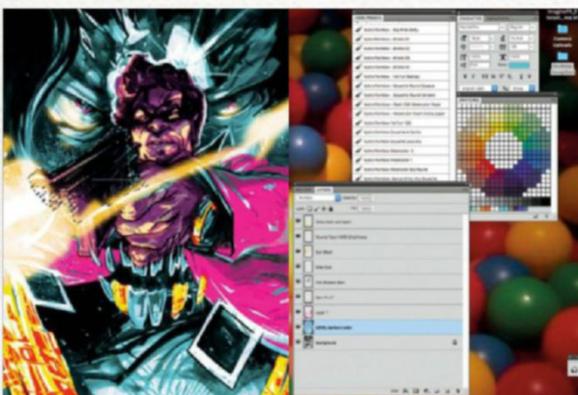
13 Fine-tune your lighting

Thankfully with all the work I've done in the traditional stage, my values and lighting are set. But now, it's time to make them sing. I pop them out with Color and Layer options. I want the muzzle flare to be softer, so I go to Filter>Blur>Gaussian Blur and adjust. To give it some texture, I go to Filters>Pixelate>Halftone.

ARTIST INSIGHT

EXPERIMENT AND ENJOY YOURSELF

My tools change often. This keeps my process exciting. Don't be afraid to pick up new and unfamiliar supplies and test their boundaries. Have fun making your images: it will come through your piece. Keep a sketchbook handy as well, and just go crazy.



14 Final touches

Now I save a layered file, and then save a flattened file. Having a layered file enables me to go back to make bigger edits, but if I think that the image is good to go, then now I can flatten and edit the piece as a whole, playing with Color Balance. This makes the piece more cohesive and ready for print.



Oils

UNDERPAINTING TECHNIQUES

In the first of a two-part article, **ANAND RADHAKRISHNAN** examines underpainting using burnt umber and white, and discusses the merits of painting in layers

The underpainting sits under a number of mostly transparent layers of paint. It's generally a monochrome version of the finished painting, and would usually be worked upon in a system of thin layers of colour called glazes.

There are many reasons why the multiple-step process of underpainting and glazing is preferred by some artists. First, underpainting establishes the composition, and makes it possible to apply changes and corrections at an early stage without involving colour. It also fixes

the value scheme that will most probably remain the same until the painting's finished. Second, it makes it easier to model form without the added complexity of mixing colours. The glazes of colour will add to the underpainting without running the risk of blending or muddying.

The most popular ways of creating an underpainting are: *bistre*, where the underpainting is warm and transparent using the wipe-out method; *grisaille*, which involves neutral greys; and *verdaccio*, the process that uses a greenish-grey underpainting.

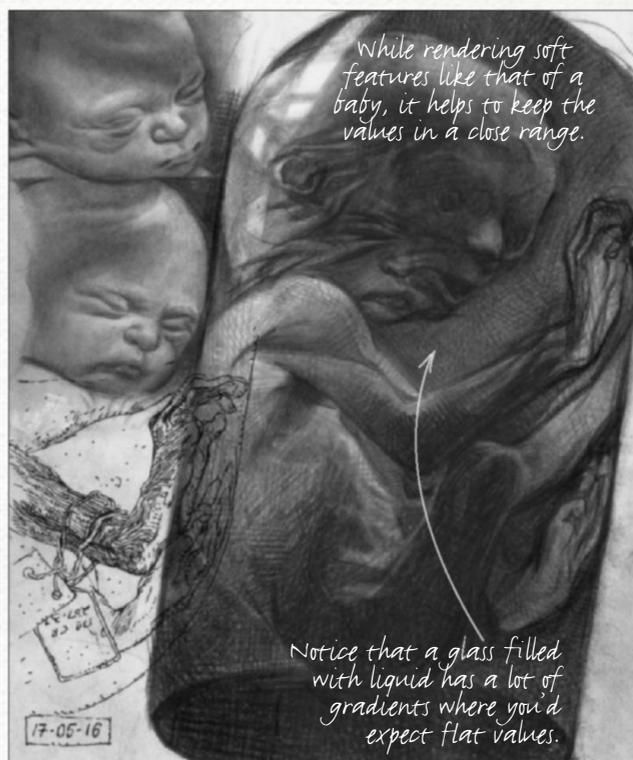
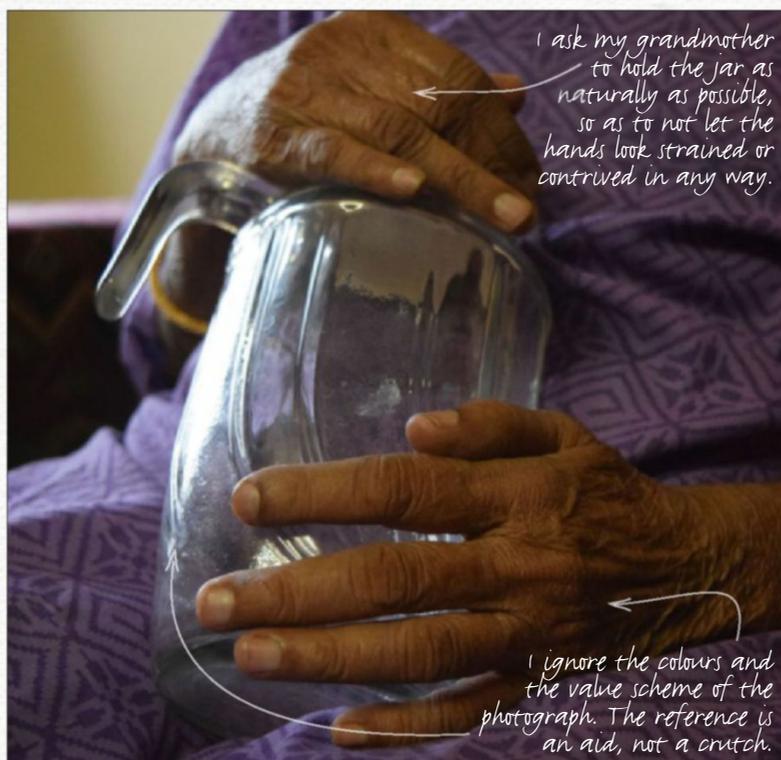
MATERIALS

- Brushes
- Canvas
- Burnt umber
- Titanium white

For this article, I've chosen to paint a composition where I can render and paint three different materials: skin, velvet cloth and glass using burnt umber and titanium white. Although the final result of this month's instalment is still a work-in-progress, I can proceed to add colour to it once dry using glazes, then work on the subtleties and details at a later stage – find out more next issue!



Anand is a freelance illustrator who lives and works in Mumbai. See more of his art at www.behance.net/anandr



1 Photographic reference

For the reference shot, I photograph my grandmother's hands holding a glass jar that's close to what I want to eventually paint in, to understand how it would react under the lighting scheme. I have stark sunlight coming in from the left, which makes the objects in the composition stand out in three-dimensions and fits my design well.

2 Generate quick studies

Next, I do some rough sketches and studies to help me determine the contents of the jar that she's holding. I want to achieve that creepy-cool luminescent effect, so I study photos available online of creatures and foetuses preserved in glass jars of formaldehyde.



Burnt umber used on its own is a warm colour. I apply it transparently to achieve that warm 'glow' that I'll retain in a few places.

3 Drawing and blocking in

I start by staining the canvas with a thin layer of burnt umber, followed by drawing the general forms with a brush. I then scrub in the basic value scheme. At this stage things are very loose and I'm open to compositional changes and improvisation.

Using a variety of edges to give the illusion of form and distance is key at this stage.



I use a combination of soft, hard and lost edges here.

4 Rendering the hands

After laying in the light/dark shapes with a large brush, I use a smaller brush to add finer shapes and forms such as wrinkles on the skin and veins. Although this is time consuming – especially in an underpainting stage – most of this is going to show through under the thin layers of paint that I'll eventually add on top.

5 Grouping the values

The function of this stage is to bring the painting together, linking the darks together into a larger mass. This is called grouping of values, and will support the movement of the viewer's eyes through the various compositional elements while still adding a sense of stability to it, thereby giving it contrast. Furthermore, the lost edges within the darks means the viewer can fill the gaps in their mind's eye. ●

ARTIST INSIGHT

INACTIVE AREAS IN PAINTINGS

Flat, muted areas in paintings accentuate the activity in 'live' areas by contrast. They also help to frame the image and to bring all the other areas together, to make it look like a unified whole.

This is my focal point. The hands act in diffusing the tension and the darks in turn anchor the image.

TOP TIP

EVERY FOLD HAS DIMENSION

When studying skin or cloth, understand that every fold exists in three dimensions, not two.

First Impressions

✧ *Bill Carman* ✧

This artist, who paints fantasy with a capital 'F', reveals that he sees hawks on a daily basis...



You're a child, you see a painting or drawing that changes everything... where are you and what are you looking at, and

what effect did it have?

This one is really hard. There seems to be a build-up of many moments, rather than one "holy crap" moment. I do remember a couple of impactful images though, including an illustrated book of Andersen's Fairy Tales by Arthur Szyk and, of course, comic books.

What was your next step in art? Did other interests vie for your attention? What was the deciding factor?

The next step was album art. Music was always competing for my attention. Playing in bands, going to concerts. A big moment came from discovering The Allman Brothers album *Eat a Peach*. It had a huge impact on my musical tastes, but the greatest impact came from the discovery of the cover and inside artwork. Someone had to do this cool stuff and maybe they even got paid. This



MONOCULAR EMERGENCIES

"This is an 8x10-inch acrylic painting done for a group show at AFANyc in Soho. It was accepted into *Spectrum 23* and *Society of Illustrators 58*."

lead to really noticing album cover art and the discovery of artists such as Roger Dean and Patrick Woodroffe, Ian Miller and Frank Frazetta.

Can you name one person who helped you on your way? And someone who tried to block your progress?

“The beauty outside my studio is a perfect contrast to the mess inside”

Next month
Chris Dunn

I would say the person who helped me most on my way to making art was James Christensen, one of my college professors. He helped focus my undisciplined creative energy. Really, the only person to ever get in my way was myself. I seemed to always be surrounded by supportive people.

What was your first paid commission, and does it stand as a representation of your talent?

Okay, another difficult question. I did commissions for kids when I was in grade school. But if you mean a professional turning point moment then it would probably be a cover for a computer game

SWISS ARMY MONOCLE

"An 6x8-inch acrylic and watercolour on handmade watercolour paper, which was accepted into *Spectrum 23*."

called *Ringside Seat* for SSI back when computer games were played on grids. I ended up doing a whole bunch of covers for the company, and others because of that. I wouldn't say it stands as a representation of my talent today, but it was a significant historical moment.

What's the last piece that you finished, and how do the two differ?

The last piece I finished is a painting supporting a cause called *More Than a Cone*. They help animals. It's light years better than *Ringside Seat*.

Can you describe the place where you usually create your art?

My studio is on the second floor of my house in Boise, Idaho. North-light windows look out on fields and hills. I watch hawks fly by every day and it's not unusual to see a fox or coyote out in the field. The beauty outside is a perfect contrast to the mess inside.

What's the most important thing that you've taught someone?

That's an impossible question to answer because "most" is an absolute, and once we've reached an absolute the journey becomes boring or is over. Furthermore, every person is different and so importance varies according to need or want. But one of the important things I hope people learn from me is that having the answers is knowledge. Knowing the right questions and when to ask them is better knowledge, maybe even wisdom. Awareness.

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

That flying narwhal and armoured octopi aren't as popular as dragons and faeries, and I seem to be the only one who cares about that.

And why is it still the best place to be working?

Because even though they might not be the most popular things, flying narwhal and armoured octopi are still welcomed with open arms.

*Bill's been a designer, illustrator and art director during the course of his career, and is now a professor teaching illustration and drawing. His book, *Imagery From the Bird's Home: The Art of Bill Carman*, is out now. www.bcarman.wix.com/billcarman*



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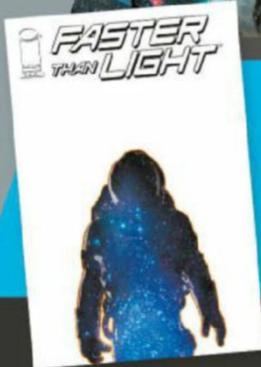
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