NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX

TAKE THE VIRTUAL LEAP
How virtual reality is changing art

INSIDE
TRIBUTE TO LEGEND BERNIE WRIGHTSON
LEARN WET-ON-WET TECHNIQUES IN OILS
ANNIE STEGG ON LIFE AS A FREELANCER

PLUS!
38
INSPIRING SKETCHES
TO GET YOU DRAWING!

iPAD ART
MAKE YOUR IMAGE POP
Jana Schirmer shares her cover art secrets

Future

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ARTRAGE   REBELLE   BLACK INK   PROCREATE   SKETCHBOOK PRO

Welcome to…

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS ImagineFX

Here in the UK, spring has finally sprung (hooray!) and it's already brought warmer weather and lighter evenings to our bijou isle. I seem to relax a little more when I'm not having to scurry from place to place to avoid the biting cold, and I love not having to close the curtains on the world at 4.30pm because it's dark outside. Spring has so much optimism to it. There's a whole year ahead to look forward to.

Right now, digital art is definitely having its spring moment. There are so many technological innovations just about to blossom, it feels as though we're on the cusp of something truly transformative. Creative tech companies like Savage Interactive and Ambient Design are making great leaps with brilliantly packaged, affordable art software such as ArtRage and Procreate – and all without a subscription-based price tag to match. See our round-up of the best offerings on page 38.

Technology is an ever-evolving concept, but so many exciting changes are happening right now. We take a look another revolution in digital art – virtual reality painting – on page 18. There's so much going on, so leap into the issue…

Claire

Claire Howlett, Editor
claire@imaginefx.com

EDITOR'S CHOICE
Three of my top picks this month…

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Virtual insanity
We speak with the makers of the latest VR art tools that are changing the way artists approach their work.

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Artrageous ArtRage 5
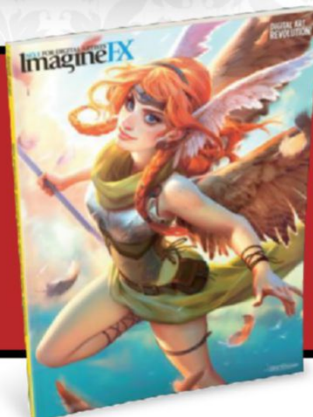Fed up with subscription-based software models, Nick Harris became an expert on the alternative tools.

106

Alla Prima
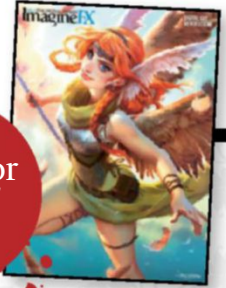Talented traditional artist Rob Rey gives us an insight into how he creates textured works of art in oils.

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See page 36 for more details…

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Resources

Getting hold of all of this issue's videos and custom brushes is quick and easy. Just visit our dedicated web page at **http://ifxm.ag/digi148rev**

OVER 4 HOURS of video tutorials from pro artists to watch and learn from!

COVER ART VIDEO

Make colours and light pop

Jana Schirmer uses Procreate to paint and light up this issue's striking cover illustration. See how on page 60.
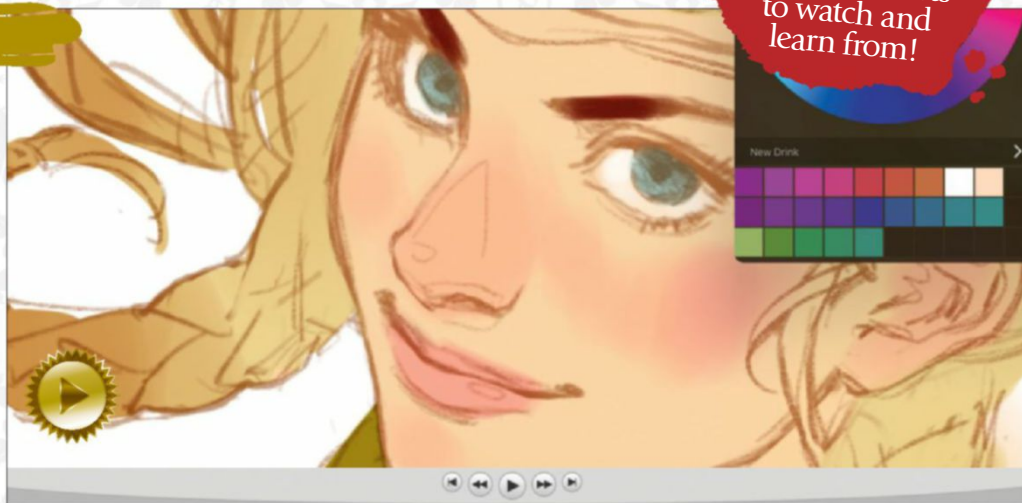
GET YOUR RESOURCES

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

1 Go to the website
Type this into your browser's address bar (not the search bar):
http://ifxm.ag/digi148rev

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.

EXCLUSIVE VIDEO TUITION!

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

WORKSHOP VIDEOS
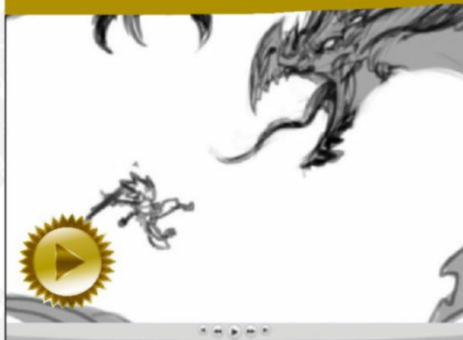
Paint a dragon
Learn how you can unlock the power of SketchBook Pro on page 82, with video tuition from Trent Kaniuga.
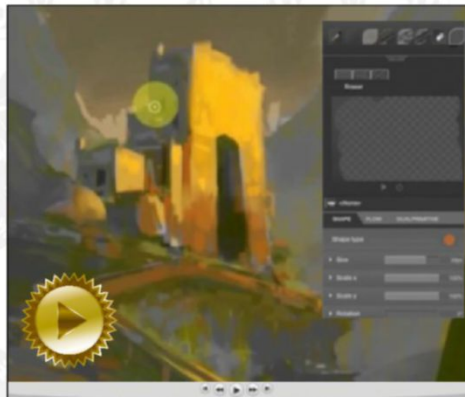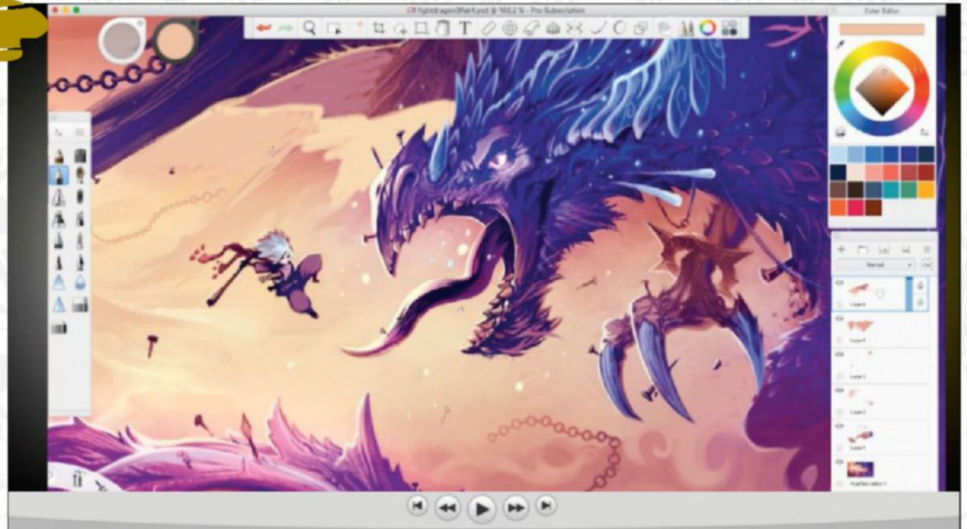
Create a scene in Black Ink
Take your first steps with the innovative, low-cost painting program Black Ink, with Ayan Nag as your guide, over on page 74.

Traditional art – alla prima
Watch how Rob Rey captures the wet-into-wet oils look in his art over on beforehand. See the workshop on page 106.

Q&A VIDEOS

Painting chrome
Follow Tom Foster's video to find out the secrets to painting chrome. See his step-by-step tutorial on page 33.
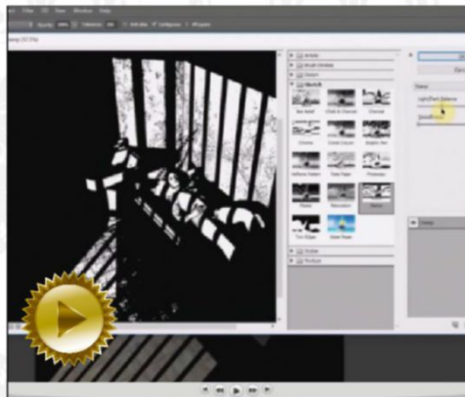
Dramatic cast shadows
Cast shadows can be tricky to get right first time – watch Tom Foster in action and follow his step-by-step on page 31.
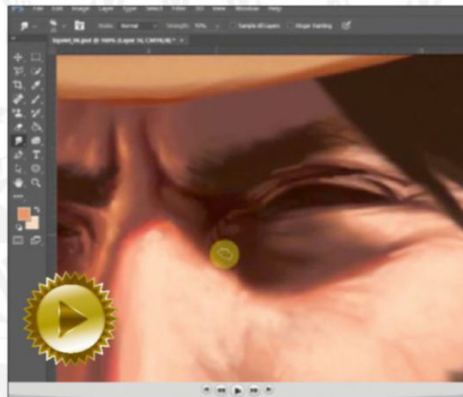
Squinting advice
Tony Foti shows how to portray a squinting person. Watch the video and see his step-by-step on page 35.
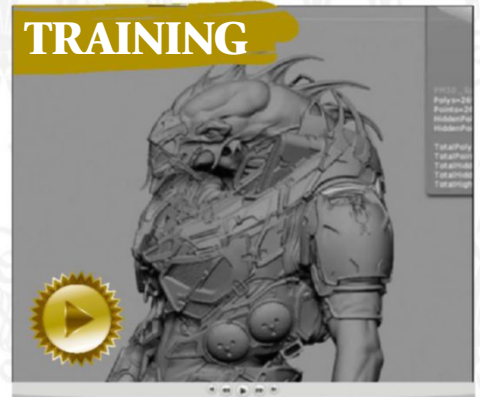
TRAINING

Gnomon training sample
You'll pick up plenty of animation-friendly modelling tips from Ben Erdt's video. Read our review on page 99.

FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART

Dang My Linh

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.facebook.com/dangmylinhART

Recently, Vietnamese concept artist Linh has been refining her portrait style. "I focus on observing people around me, the way light hits their face and changes colour," she says.

1 BRAVE
"I really like Princess Merida from the film Brave, and painted her with a different makeup look. I spent most of the time on her hair, and tried to make it detailed and natural looking."

2 PURPLE
"I wanted to paint a modern-looking male soldier, but still keep things realistic."

2

3

4

3 GOLD
"I didn't think too much when I painted this portrait – it was just a flow of emotion while I listened to music. I kept things simple, so the focus remained on the girl's eyes."

4 BLUE AND PINK
"These two figures were painted at the same time because I wanted to create a series of portraits. I was keen to use a new style that was different from what I'd done before."

Rita Fei

LOCATION: Canada **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.ritafei.com

Rita is a freelance concept artist and illustrator based in Vancouver, British Columbia. She uses her art to bring to life the worlds and characters she creates in her mind.

1 AERYS
"During my grad year. I explored how to keep the looseness of my pencil sketches, and countered my dislike of colour by trying out different overlays."

Email your submissions to fxpose@imaginefx.com
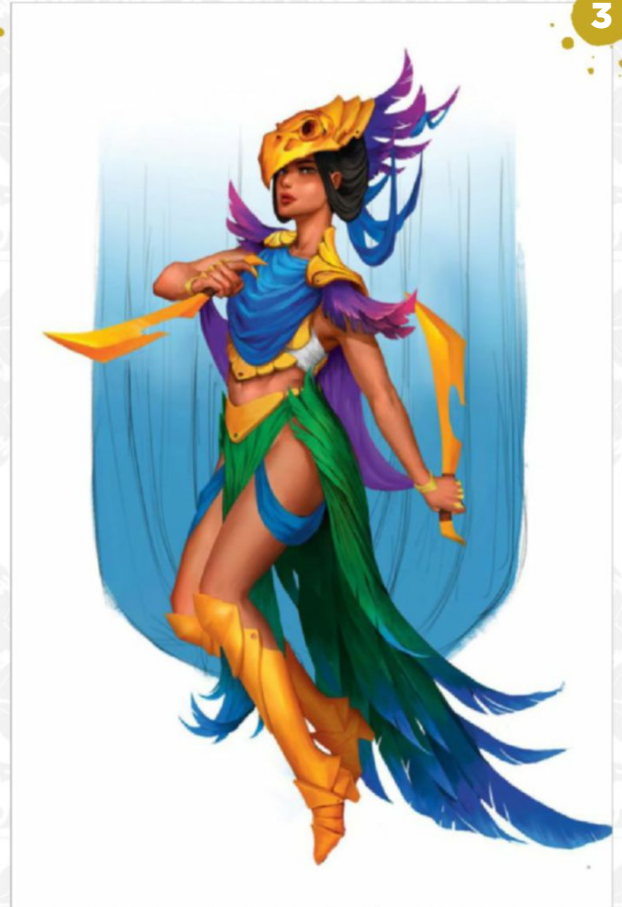
2 KEEPER THORN

"This illustration depicts a friend's D&D character, a dragon-born warrior, in all his brutality and ferocity. I tried to keep the background simple, but still dynamic."

3 GLADIATOR

"I wanted to develop a character that was bolder and brighter than I usually do, as well as practise being cleaner with the overall rendering. I learned quite a bit in the process."

4 CAPTAIN OF THE BRITISH AERIAL CORPS

"This character was inspired by the Temeraire books by Naomi Novik, which is a fantastic fantasy/alternate-history series. I imagine her to exist in the same universe, but much later in time."

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Markus Stadlober

LOCATION: Austria **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.markusstadlober.com

Freelance illustrator Markus gets his inspiration from RPG sessions. "A funny situation, or one not going as planned, can spawn a plethora of ideas," he says.
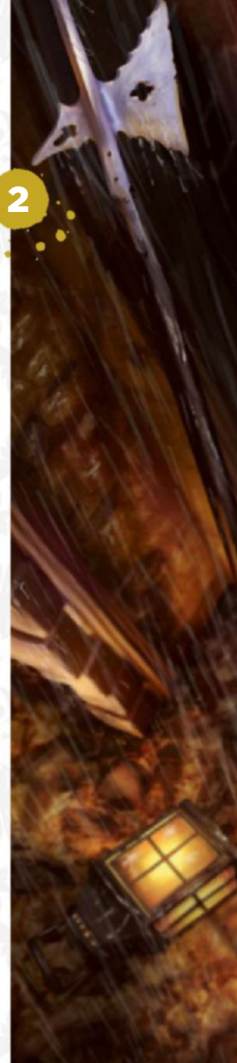
3

4

1 CASTERLY ROCK 1985
"Here's Game of Thrones set in an alternate reality, where each house is a heavy metal band from the 80s. Casterly Rock was a no-brainer as the Lannisters' band name."

2 LIFE STEAL
"A cursed being, sucking the life out of its victim to regain human form. As there's lots of foreshortening, I modelled the two figures in 3D to use as a template."

3 SHADOW POSSESSION
"A shadow-being possessing a victim. I used a Painter Particle brush to create the shadowy veil around the possession cord."

4 THE GUARDIAN
"This started as a doodle of a wild elf. I liked the sketch, so I started to develop a story around her. What could she be looking at?"

FXPosé

Inna Hansen

LOCATION: Norway **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.innaha.com

Inna is a freelance illustrator and concept artist who hopes to launch a game studio of her own. "I try to grab anything around me that makes me excited, then put it into my own universe."

1 **BALLET DEITY**
"This was inspired by the interesting history of ballerinas in the 17th century. I felt like it was appropriate to show a god-like manifestation of the dancers."

2 **DROWNED**
"This remake of one of my oldest pieces shows the moment after the struggle. I used to be more into surrealist horror and it was amazing to dive back into my younger mindset."

3 ROGUE

"This was done for a challenge on the theme Rogue. I wanted to paint something that would fit into a classic fantasy story. Something epic, something big."
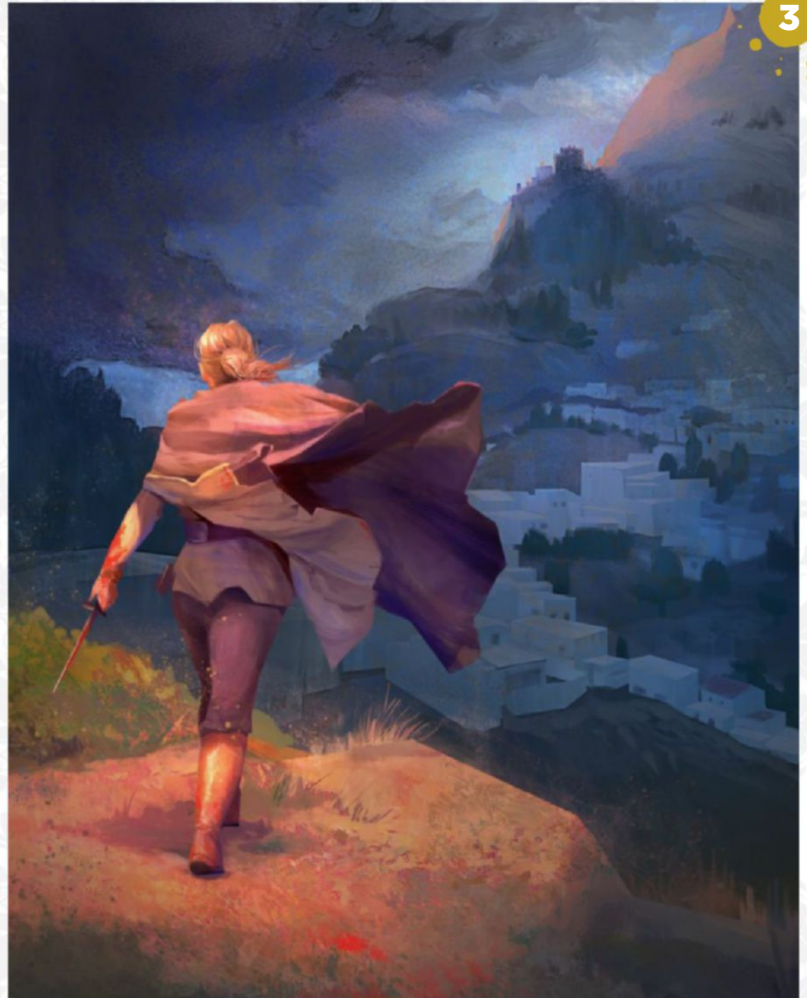
4 UNDERWATER

"Things are so mysterious under the ocean surface. So little is discovered that the imagination runs wild. It might be unsafe to dive in this particular part of the ocean bed."

Lamin Martin

LOCATION: Canada **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.laminmartin.com

Lamin is a concept designer who's created artwork for video games, feature films, TV, and even dipped into augmented reality. Lamin's also written and illustrated several art books.

2

1 CHARON
"In Greek mythology, Charon is the ferryman of Hades, who carries the souls of the deceased into the world of the dead. I decided to make Charon the boat itself."

2 MODERNITY DISTRICT
"I wanted my Blade Runner-inspired city to feel futuristic, ominous and dark. The cityscape is a combination of two of the most densely populated cities in the world: New York and Tokyo."

3 A QUARTER PAST
"This gentleman assassin uses a steam-powered sniper rifle to take out his targets, but in his free time enjoys his pipe and a good Scotch as he mulls over his position in life."

3
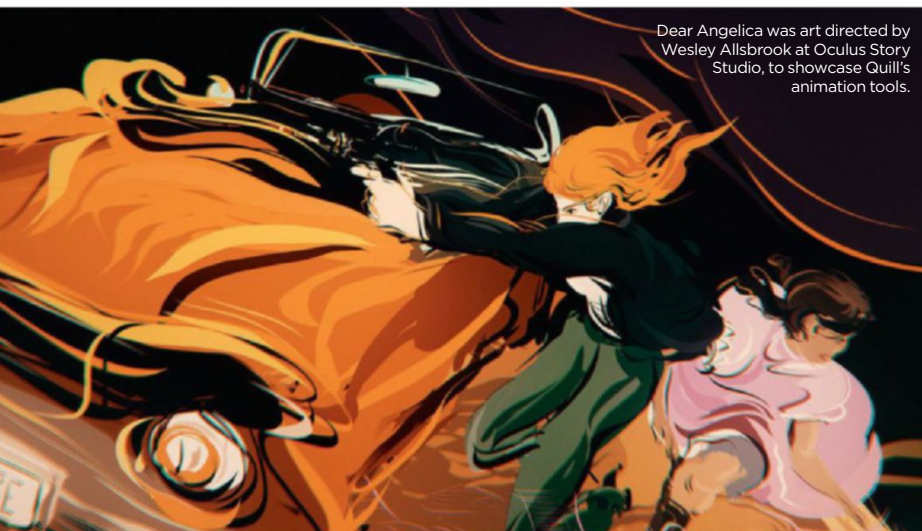
Dear Angelica was art directed by Wesley Allsbrook at Oculus Story Studio, to showcase Quill's animation tools.
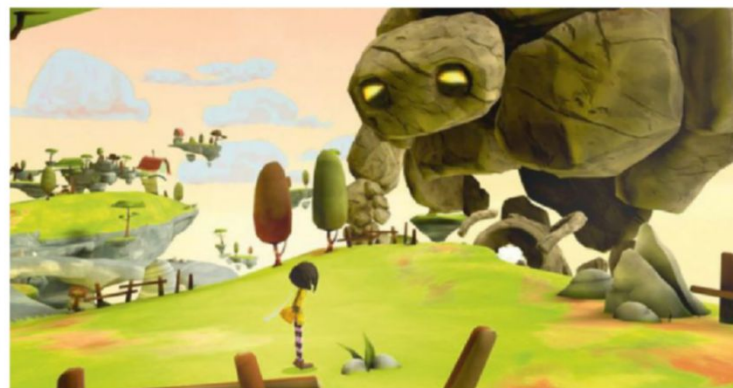
Is it time you went virtual?

In-depth art The Oculus Story Studio artists talk to **Ian Dean** on moving from 2D art into VR illustration

Don't be afraid of virtual reality. That's the message we hear from artists – 2D and 3D – who have made the leap from illustration into VR. As the technology develops, so has the accessibility of VR. The big leap came earlier this year, when artists were able to create directly inside VR. So is it time you went virtual?

Tools such as Tilt Brush for HTC Vive and 3D sculpting app Medium for Oculus Touch are beginning to change how artists create content for video games and film. But one of the standouts is Oculus' Quill, a 2D animation and drawing app that gives you a palette of tools to paint and draw with in a virtual space.

Oculus Story Studio's Goro Fujita co-developed Quill, which was then used on the award-winning VR animated film Dear Angelica, about a girl reconnecting with her dead actress mother by watching her old films on a VCR. Watching it in VR, we're right there with the girl on her journey.

"The idea was to tell a story entirely through illustrations in VR," says **Goro**, who explains several techniques, including 360-degree illustrations and line art mapped on a 3D environments, were tried and subsequently benched.

"None of those tests were convincing," Goro reveals, "because the art needed to look like it came straight from the artist without showing any technical gimmicks. So ideally we want the artists to directly illustrate in VR.

"That's when Iñigo Quilez happened. In a two-day hackathon the visual effects supervisor came up with a prototype for a VR illustration tool that later became Quill. Iñigo and I went

> ❝ **It's like being inside your brain. You can experience the world that you're creating** ❞

Screenshot from Climax Studios' Lola and the Giant VR game, which Anna Hollinrake worked on.

back and forth on ideas, and I'm lucky enough to say that I'm the first artist ever to have painted in Quill."

THINKING IN VOLUMES

The leap from 2D to VR painting didn't phase Goro. "Working in Quill is a dream come true. When I paint in 2D I naturally think in volumes, even if you only paint with one perspective. Now with Quill, you can paint volume and rotate your painting, which is an incredible experience.

"It's like being inside your brain where you can literally experience the

"I like painting traditionally so I'm used to manipulating colour as a substance. It's great to find that feeling in VR," says Carlos.

world that you're creating. It took me a few days to fully understand and utilise the third dimension, but now it's difficult for me to go back to a standard 2D canvas."

When you first start painting in VR there's a learning curve. Goro says that the biggest challenge is to learn the third dimension, and understand where your hands are, because the

Ric tells us how he got started: "Oculus Story Studio commissioned me to do an illustration for them and I wouldn't let them stop letting me use Quill since."

Oculus Touch controllers enable you to manipulate objects in the VR space. "A lot of people, including me, had trouble with that in the beginning but it doesn't take long for people to get used to it," he says.

"The tool itself is intuitive and easy to understand, but having basic understanding of shape and volume is definitely a plus," he continues. ➤➤

INDUSTRY INSIGHT
ANNA HOLLINRAKE
The video game concept artist talks about VR's possibilities

As a concept artist, do you need to work differently when developing for VR?
You've always got to be more conscious of how your asset or scene is going to be viewed – everything gets scrutinised from all angles and viewpoints! But that's very much the case for working with games as a whole.

Have you used apps like Oculus Quill to concept VR games and entertainment?
I haven't commercially but in the time I have spent in them I see enormous potential for creativity with tangible 3D space. There's an element of fluidity and dance that I see transferring over to gestures within the medium, not to mention the benefits of not being sat down all the time!

What opportunities does VR hold for digital artists?
VR is at the forefront of new technology, and that's always an exciting place to be. Everyone is figuring out the best approaches together, not to mention problem solving new challenges.

If you could offer one piece of advice to artists considering taking up developing for VR, what would it be?
Spend time working out which platform appeals to you. Each one has different benefits, and there's a considerable financial outlay depending on which headset you go for. Define your goals early so you don't overwhelm yourself with new tech!

Anna works at Climax Studios based in England. She's also created concepts for short films and board games.
www.annahollinrake.com

Ric Carrasquillo approached working in VR like a puzzle, using the third dimension to enhance his 2D drawings.

➤➤ Fellow Oculus Story Studio artist **Carlos Felipe León Ortiz** chips in: "I find it very enjoyable. I especially like the directness of the approach: it feels as though you're really in contact with whatever you're creating, while occupying the same space. I love the fact that colour feels dimensional, almost palpable."

In fact, Carlos says that the technology is the easy part. The real challenge for artists creating in VR is learning to understand and stay in control of shape, volume and colour inside a virtual space.

"A deep knowledge of these basic artistic concepts is definitely very helpful, but I would also argue that Quill can be a tool that helps you learn and understand them at a fundamental level," Carlos says.

Likewise, **Ric Carrasquillo** says he found it a challenge at first to adjust to drawing in a 3D space, "but I approached it like a puzzle. Instead of treating 3D like a constraint to composing a drawing, I looked for opportunities to enhance the original idea of the

"I'm not going to stop doing 2D illustrations, but I'm sure that I'll spend more time in VR in the future," says Goro.

drawing. Very quickly, you start to think in 3D space and the whole process becomes more intuitive."

DESIGNING A SPACE, NOT A FRAME
All three artists agree that their art, painting style and workflows have changed since using Quill. For Goro, his concept of composition has changed since painting in VR. "The reason is that the audience becomes the camera and you can't really frame

Goro explains the VR experience: "One of the challenges is to understand the third dimension. All of a sudden you can move your hand in space along three axes."

your paintings. The audience can freely move and look around in your paintings, so it's more about designing a space instead of a single frame, which is much more challenging."

Carlos agrees: "VR illustration is a format that forces you to tackle creative decisions differently. Not being confined by a rectangular frame, the usual tools for image composition don't work in the same way. Designing a space is harder than composing an
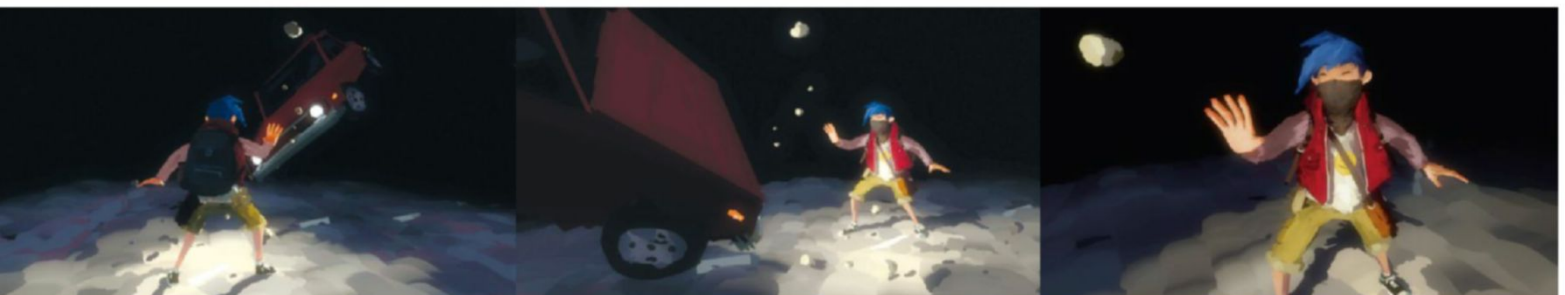
Carlos describes his Quill workflow: "I make a line sketch in VR, to make sure characters are expressive and environments support the illustration. Staging, scale and space are my primary considerations."

> ❝ Not being confined by a rectangular frame, the usual tools for composition don't work in the same way ❞

Goro's Worlds in Worlds embraces Quill's scope: "Quill has an infinite canvas and I wanted to put it to the test. It worked beautifully," he says.

image, but it offers unexpected possibilities as well! It feels more akin to designing an installation space. This is the most significant way in which my working process has changed."

Some of the artists we spoke to like to paint directly into Quill. Goro, for example, does daily warm-up "Quillustrations" set against a time limit of 30 minutes to test his creativity. Carlos on the other hand takes a more measured approach, preferring to plan and sketch on paper before donning the VR headset and entering VR.

These artists clearly find VR a creative space to work in, and one that doesn't feel too dissimilar to their traditional spaces. "Working in Quill is like having a personal art studio," says Ric. "You shut the door, pull out your favourite brushes, start drawing and just focus. That place where you go to when you're really into an idea and want to realise it. Quill is just like that space but even better, because you're standing in the middle of that idea and there are no edges to the paper."

STAYING TRUE TO A CONCEPT

Using apps like Quill can also speed up the artistic process, particularly as film, video games and animation begin to embrace a fuller 3D workflow. Being able to create complex 3D environments and characters as intuitively as drawing, in a 3D space, removes many of the development steps and ensures the final production drawing or model is closer to the artist's original concept.

Goro explains: "I believe that Quill will become a key element for VR productions. Early on we realised that if you design for VR then you have to design in VR. Quill enables the artists to do exactly that."

But will VR replace traditional ways of working? "I don't think so, nor would I wish for it to replace other mediums," argues Carlos. "But it's definitely a tool that can complement them."

Goro agrees: "I don't believe that Quill or VR painting tools in general will ever replace other mediums. In the end, it's another tool for artists and it will co-exist among other creation tools."

Putting everything into context, Rico views VR as a new, infant tool from a creative standpoint. Artists, including those at the cutting edge of the technology, are still discovering how VR art and animation can be created. The rules of the game are still being set.

"I'd say that VR is just the next stage in the evolution of animation," says Rico. "VR won't replace 3D just as 3D computer animation didn't eradicate 2D. Animation is, I believe, the purest art form and VR will just help influence and further inspire all of the animation landscape."

Bernie Wrightson, pictured at the Austin Wizard World Comic Con in late October, 2012.
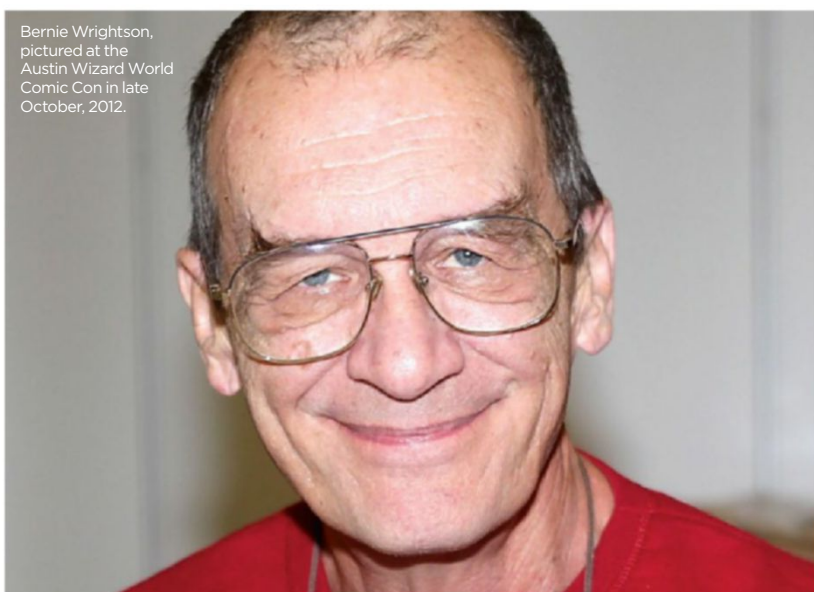
Swamp Thing and Bernie's illustrated version of Mary Shelley's Frankenstein guarantee the artist a place in the annals of comic history.
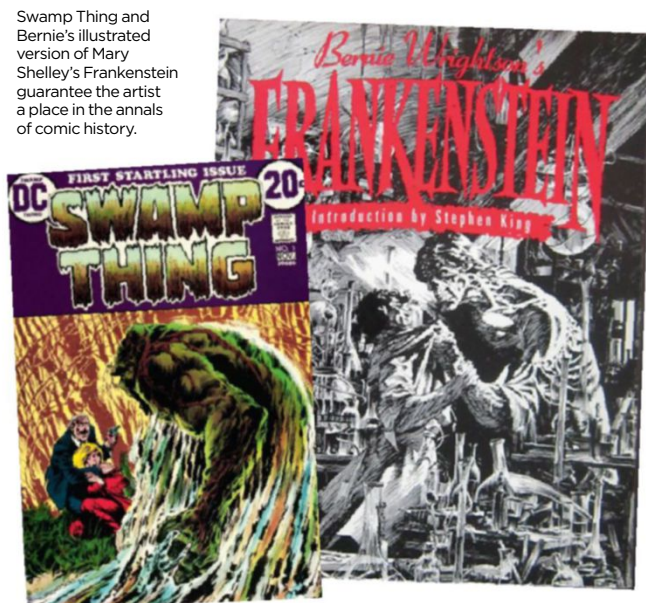
A tribute to artist Bernie Wrightson

Modern Prometheus Fans mourn the loss of the Swamp Thing and Frankenstein artist, whose illustrations made the grotesque beautiful

Bernie Wrightson, the master of the macabre adored by comic readers and horror aficionados for his deftly intricate illustrations for Swamp Thing and Frankenstein, passed away on 18 March, aged 68. The cause of death was brain cancer, which he'd been diagnosed with in 2014.

Bernie began his career as an illustrator for The Baltimore Sun newspaper. But it was after meeting Frank Frazetta in 1967 that he decided to create his own stories. Two years later, his first illustrated comic book story, The Man Who Murdered Himself, appeared in House of Mystery no. 179 under the name 'Berni'.

He then moved to New York and in 1971 co-created with writer Len Wein his most famous character, Swamp Thing, for House of Secrets issue 92. Following the success of the first short

story, Swamp Thing returned in his own series and gained a cult following.

During this time, Bernie also worked on numerous horror-comic magazines and co-created Weird Mystery Tales with writer Marv Wolfman. It was around this point he also started work on his adaptation of Mary Shelley's 1818 Gothic horror novel, Frankenstein.

Taking seven years to complete, Bernie's Frankenstein was a labour of love that he created in between paid work. The adaptation, published in 1983, is seen as Bernie's masterpiece,

Bernie co-created Weird Mystery Tales with Marv Wolfman. The comic ran from 1972 to 1975.
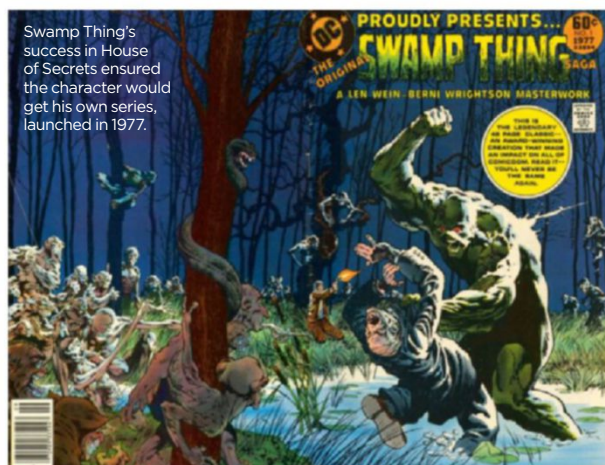
Swamp Thing's success in House of Secrets ensured the character would get his own series, launched in 1977.

with the illustrations showcasing the magnificent line-work and negative space that made his name.

Following the news of Bernie's death, friends, artists and colleagues took to social media to share their thoughts. **Neil Gaiman**, who featured Bernie's Destiny character in The Sandman, said on Twitter: "Bernie Wrightson was the first comics artist whose work I loved. Oddly, I don't mourn the artist. I mourn the lovely man who told bad jokes."

"Bernie Wrightson was quite simply one of the finest men I've ever known in comics," adds **Colleen Doran**, who also worked on The Sandman. "He was not only supremely talented, but also kind and giving. No other modern illustrator could match his incredible ink rendering, and we will never see better Frankenstein illustrations."

Film director **Guillermo del Toro** honoured Bernie's memory by not posting on Twitter for 24 hours, but before his silence he wrote, "As it comes to all of us, the end came for the greatest that ever lived: Bernie Wrightson. My North dark star of youth. A master."

Meanwhile, **Stephen King**, whose novel The Stand was illustrated by Bernie, was tellingly straightforward with his message: "RIP Bernie Wrightson, a good friend and a great collaborator. I will miss him."

> ❝ **Bernie was quite simply one of the finest men I've ever known in comics** ❞ **Colleen Doran**

Artist in Residence *(ImagineFX)*

A piece of memorabilia from the early days. I was presented with this gold disc for my artwork on English rock band Magnum's On a Storyteller's Night album.

A framed limited edition print of The Thief – an interpretation from Tolkien's The Hobbit. I've done a whole series of Tolkien illustrations, but my best seller is Rivendell.

Rodney Matthews

New roots The English fantasy artist can be seen with a drumstick or two in hand just as much as a paintbrush…
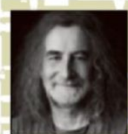
Together with Sarah, (my wife of four months!), we've moved from north Wales to the Cotswolds in England, and are living in a peaceful village, surrounded by wildlife.

Our recent move has meant that our studio (an art room, music room and office), has not yet had the time to become the untidy work room for which I've become known. Sarah is also my agent and general spokesperson, and we enjoy working together on projects in the same part of our home. Some days we wander in the nearby woods, taking a little break from what has become a busy schedule.

I've maintained the discipline that I picked up over 50 years ago – from my eight-year stint in an advertising agency, of starting work at around 8am and pushing through until 6pm or later, depending upon the urgency of the job at hand. Right now, The Rolling Stones job I'm tackling is wanted yesterday, so I can be found in my studio some nights at 11pm. My working day is punctuated by several cups of tea, walks round the garden with our elderly cat and answering emails that Sarah has set aside for me.

Before I pick up my paintbrush in the morning, and after a hearty bowl of porridge, I head to the studio and listen to the latest piece of music sent to me by "the band". I'm currently working alongside US guitarist Jeff Scheetz on our own album of music

This is Sarah's work desk with laptop. Here she more or less runs the show – sending and answering business emails, brokering deals, interacting with customers, publishers and fans – leaving me free to fiddle with my fantasy art.

During our recent move, I lost my old jam jar that I wash my brushes in. Any similar receptacle will do – I'm happy with the replacement and can recommend the cranberry sauce! Most of my illustrations are painted on artboard with the pigmented inks that can be seen hiding in the background. I occasionally use watercolours for children's book art.

based upon my images. The band, spread out across the world, includes musicians who have used my artwork on their albums: John Payne (Asia), Oliver Wakeman (Yes), Tony Clarkin (Magnum) and Rick Wakeman (Yes).

At night, I move across to the musical part of the studio and take out the day's frustrations on my drum kit.

Rodney's fantasy creations have come to life on posters and record covers, and in books, computer games and animation since the 1970s. You can see more of his work at www.rodneymatthewsstudios.com.

This is a partly completed album artwork. On the left is an earlier Rolling Stones vinyl, utilising my painting Another Time, Another Place previously published as a poster and later as a limited edition print. It's there so that I can keep continuity.

Here's my most recent illustration job: the first of two album cover artworks for a vinyl package featuring early US live recordings of The Rolling Stones.

Thomas, our 18-year-old kitten in the kitchen – the warmest room in the house – waits for me to make my regular cups of tea.

I keep a few pieces on the walls. This is the original pencil drawing of the album cover from On a Storyteller's Night by Magnum. Over the years, the band has used 21 of my images. To date my images have appeared on over 130 record sleeves.

My self-designed custom fibreglass kit – there are two other drums not shown. It must have been some time in 1984 that I decided to have it constructed. Those familiar with my work will notice that it resembles some of the drums featured in my art (Drumboogie, Encore at the End of Time, Drumtower, for example).

Since 1970 all my work has been done on this old ex-government office desk that I acquired from a closing-down sale in Bristol. The drawing board is even older, to the point that I can't remember where I got it from.

The compressor is new, replacing an old faithful beast that finally gave in after 40 years of use. It was always covered in a thick layer of dust and made a sound like a nearby helicopter, but it got the job done.

It's spring, and the snowdrops are everywhere in the garden. Nature inspires me. A snowdrop was behind my conceptual design for wind turbines for the green energy company Ecotricity.

Sir Squeakalot (left) and Sproggle (right), two of my stop-motion models from my children's TV series Lavender Castle with the late Gerry Anderson. They watch over my dad's home-made model of the Flying Scotsman, which believe it or not, influenced the artwork behind it: The Heavy Metal Hero.

Photos by The Schoolhouse Studio

Letters

YOUR FEEDBACK & OPINIONS

Contact the editor, Claire Howlett, on claire@imaginefx.com or write to ImagineFX, Future Publishing, Quay House, The Ambury, Bath, BA1 1UA, England

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Worth the money

Every month I tell myself to save my cash and check it's worth the cover price before buying it, and every month I check it, then go right ahead and buy it! What's kept me reading ImagineFX are the tips, inspirational imagery or pieces of artistic wisdom.

Even when there's only one or two of these in an issue that really appeal to me, they prove so valuable that I'm always glad I chose to get the issue. These nuggets of educational gold have occasionally saved me days of struggle and rescued a piece or improved it far beyond what I'd have thought possible.

Thanks for the years of good stewardship you've devoted to ImagineFX. I do get the digital version, but it would be great to buy one and get the other as well somehow, even if there were an increased price for this.
Tom Myfield, via email

Tom Myfield has put his reading of ImagineFX to good use See his art at www.runninghead.com.

Claire replies You've made our day, Tom! Our aim is to teach and inspire you to create, so it's nice to know that we're doing our jobs! As for a digital and print edition combined, we do have a subscription offer that combines both versions, but we don't have this available for single editions. Sorry.

Mischief, ArtRage and matte painting

First off, where the heck has Made With Mischief disappeared to? It's great for quick sketches and even detailed clean line drawing, but since being bought up by The Foundry it seems to have disappeared. No recent updates, no new versions, no news, nothing. The

Has Mischief been left out in the cold by The Foundry, wonders Tony. We were unable to find out more…

Foundry won't answer questions about it on their forums and don't reply to emails regarding Mischief. It would be a shame if it left the program to die.

Secondly, can you do a workshop on matte painting using other art software such as ArtRage, not just Photoshop. I've never gotten the hang of this style and haven't found good beginner guides on how to start a project.

Lastly, could you do a tutorial using ArtRage 5, SketchBook Pro or even Krita on how to create a book jacket and creating images that could be used for printing cards, T-shirts or posters.
Tony Cross, via email

Claire replies We also contacted The Foundry on Mischief and didn't get a response, so we're also in the dark about what's happening with it. As for your other points, well this issue we have workshop from most of the software tools that you mention, but not on the subject. So, perhaps we've been partially helpful! I'll look into some kind of feature or workshop on images for books, posters, T-shirts, etc.

Thoughts on small text

In answer to Eric's letter (Text too small) in issue 147. I'm lucky enough to own a Surface Book and read my digital copy of ImagineFX using Microsoft's free Windows 10 Zinio Reader app. Pages can be changed with a finger swipe and zoomed in and out with a finger pinch. When I zoomed in, all text is clearly readable. Thanks for a great magazine.
David Hine, via email

Claire replies Silly me, I hadn't thought of suggesting the digital edition. Although I'm sure there are many people who still prefer holding a print edition in their hands. I'm always reading things online, but there's something about reading words in print that make some things seem more real – to me, anyway. Do you agree?

DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE?

Don't worry – you can still get hold of it. Just see the opposite page for full details.

FRESH PAINT

Your art news that's grabbed our attention

Eric Messinger @ericmessingerart

"The first fellow has showed up on my piece of paper. I am anxious to see who will join him."

Samuel Serridge @samserridge

"New creature concept."

Luke @lukeartography

"Market – some Star Wars-ish art."

Just finished something that you want us to shout about? Then tag us on Twitter or Instagram, or find us on Facebook!

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PRINT AND DIGITAL BACK ISSUES

Issue 147
May 2017
Light, values, colour, 3D and 2D workflow... this issue is packed with advice on improving your digital art. Plus, pro artists give us their tips on making the most of social media, and we reveal the sketchbook of Scott Robertson.

Issue 146
April 2017
Our comics special includes an insightful interview with Batman artist Jock, sketches from Mark Brooks and Joverine, two Wonder Woman workshops, a look around Ryan Sook's studio, and comics' unlikely heroes.

Issue 145
March 2017
Our animation issue emphasises why story is important in your art – a message that comes loud and clear from Kenneth Anderson's cover art, to Armand Serrano's background art tutorial and Matt Jones' storyboarding workshop.

Issue 144
February 2017
From Patrick J Jones's cover art, to creating faces full of character with Julián del Rey, to anatomy advice from tutor Glenn Vilppu, this is an issue that's guaranteed to boost your knowledge of anatomy and figure drawing.

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Artist Q&A

STRUGGLING WITH A PAINTING TECHNIQUE OR TOPIC? EMAIL **HELP@IMAGINEFX.COM** TODAY!

The ImagineFX panel
NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

Tan Hui Tian

Tan is a senior illustrator with CDS in Singapore. She has a graphic design background, and so her works feature a strong design sense.
www.tanhuitian.daportfolio.com

Tom Foster

Best known for his work on 2000 AD and the Judge Dredd Megazine, comic book artist Tom also writes and performs stand-up comedy.
http://ifxm.ag/tom-foster

Tony Foti

Tony is an artist with Konami who also works freelance for books, magazines and games such as MtG and Fantasy Flight's Star Wars games.
www.tonyfotiart.com

Blending the more distant parts of the creature's body to imitate atmospheric perspective and layering fog in front of it makes it more three-dimensional.

Artist Q&A
Need our advice?
Email **help@imaginefx.com** with your art questions and we'll provide all the answers!

You can change the colours and feel of the material by using a layer set to Overlay. This enables you to tint the artwork without affecting the original layers.

Question
How can I paint smoke realistically?

Katherine Batts, US

Answer
Tan replies

Smoke is a fairly simple material to depict, because the airborne particulates are typically matte. Yet it differs in thickness and texture, and therefore requires a variety of brushes with differing Opacity levels. You can use a simple Round hard brush for the task, but it's often more efficient to use custom brushes for wispier areas.

Search for photo references for different types of smoke, which can vary from thick smog to wispy incense smoke. The Liquefy tool comes in handy for adding random movement to the smoke. Adding a creature into the mix makes for an interesting visual effect, contrasting the solidness of the creature with the transparency of the smoke.

For this article, I've chosen to depict a mythical creature that's a mixture of a horse, stag and zebra, to reflect the mysterious smoky atmosphere.

To subtly give more depth to the creature, I add smoke effects on top of the legs.

● Artist's secret
Use custom brushes wisely

Custom brushes are useful for rendering different materials after the form is finalised. You could use a fur and hair brush for details on a creature, and a smoke effects brush for the smoke. It's crucial to have the form painted first, though. Layering fur brushes from the start may make the form look muddy.
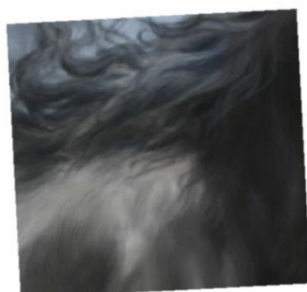
Step-by-step: How to illustrate a fantasy creature made of smoke

1 I put down undefined blobs using large brush strokes, and then slowly refine the shape by picking out the areas of highlight and shadow. The lighting should be consistent: here, the lighting is from the top, and the darker areas are below.
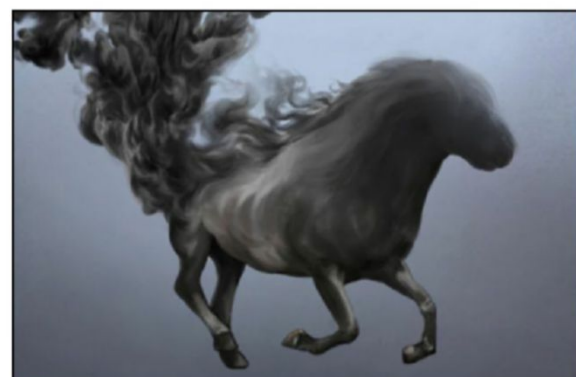
2 I warp the smoke using the Liquefy tool into the shape I want. It's easier to lower the Opacity of the smoke later than doing so the other way around, so the current smoke is more opaque than the end result. I've also roughly painted the creature in.

3 To ensure the creature blends in with the smoke, I use a colour scheme that's of a similar palette to the smoke. The creature is painted with a solid brush with Opacity set to Pen Pressure. I reduce the Opacity of the smoke with a large Airbrush.

Question

Can you give me some advice on foreshortening please?

Holly Mason, Australia

Answer
Tony replies

Foreshortening, like happiness, is all about perspective. If you want something to appear dramatic and grab the focus in a composition, have it pointing towards the viewer. Then place the vanishing point close to the object and have the camera in real close. With these three elements, you're going to feel the volume of your focal point a lot more.

Perspective is one of those things that can fill up several books. But the two main concepts are the horizon line and a vanishing point. The horizon line is a horizontal line that corresponds to the viewer's eye level. The vanishing point is a place on the horizon line that a set of parallel edges on your object will all recede into. Think about how telephone poles get smaller on a long road, and how they all seem to recede into one point. That's the vanishing point.

If you draw in your perspective and don't like how something's being distorted, change it. Moving the horizon line will alter the height of the camera, and moving around vanishing points will enable you to control the amount of distortion in the background and foreground.

In this illustration I've placed the vanishing point inside the image area and close enough to dramatically foreshorten a lot of the main figure.

Pay attention to the lines coming out of the vanishing point that's off to the left of the image, and notice how I've used them as a guide for the gun and woman.

🔴 Artist's secret
Perspective tool kit

Keep a Photoshop file around that has horizon lines, perspective lines, vanishing points and parallel lines ready to go. In school I'd often create a new grid for every image, but realised it's easier to just keep them handy.
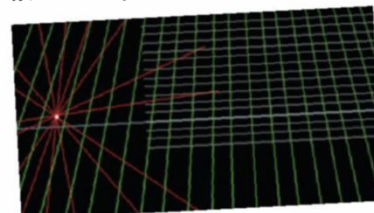
Step-by-step: Get some perspective

1 Start by loosely drawing the amount of foreshortening you want in a sketch from either your mind or reference, but don't use perspective lines. Just mess around until you have an amount of exaggeration that expresses what you're going for with the image.
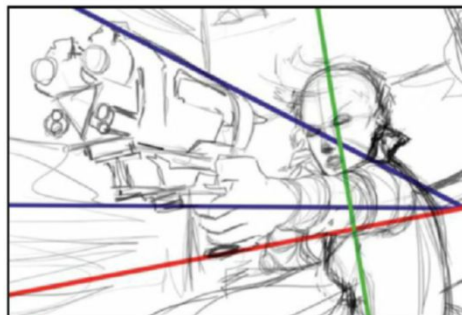
2 Now figure out where the horizon line and vanishing point would be. Do this by either finding parallel edges on an object (like around the gun) and finding a spot that they at least roughly point to, or create a vanishing point on its own layer and trying it out around the horizon line.
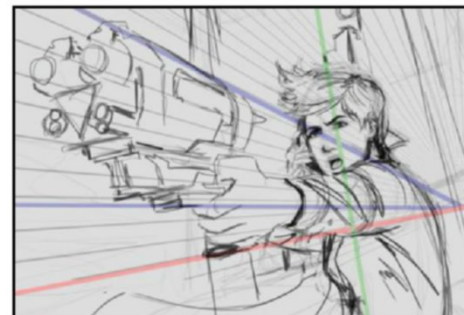
3 Then redraw the image, but this time using your new perspective lines. As you paint, leave your perspective on its own layer, on a low Opacity: you'll have a constant guide to make sure everything's correct in relation to one another. This will ensure believable foreshortening.

For this prison scene, working out my lighting in 3D saved me hours of working out the logistics of complex cast shadows.

Although 3D tools can make certain aspects of the job easier, a strong sense of composition and staging are still required for setting a scene.

Question

How can I quickly paint dramatic cast shadows?

Wilbur Hawthorn, US

Answer

Tom replies

The great comic book artist, Wally Wood, once wrote, "Never draw anything you can copy, never copy anything you can trace, never trace anything you can cut out and paste up." Indeed, there's no need to make drawing and painting any more difficult than it already is. Using photo references, applying textures directly onto an object… these are just two of the ways art software helps you to realise an image.

If I'm in any doubt as to the way shadows would fall in real life, I test them out with 3D posing software. I mock up a quick scene from some prefab models and primitive shapes and then I draw the finished piece over the top. This keeps my shadows accurate and enables me to focus all my drawing attention on the details that the reader is actually going to see.

● Artist's secret
Seeing the light

Looking from the point of view of the light source enables me to see which areas of my image will be lit, pre-render. Whatever's obscured will be in shadow. This is handy if I want to highlight specific elements in the scene.

Step-by-step: Using 3D software to help create dramatic shadows

1 I use DAZ 3D to set up my scene, carefully positioning all the crucial elements so they can be lit up by a relatively narrow area of light. The further I place the light source from the bars of the cell door, the less the shafts of light will fan out.

2 After rendering in 3D, I use Photoshop's Stamp filter to create something approximating a line drawing. I always upscale the resolution of the image first, because I want the filter to preserve as much detail as possible.

3 I create a new layer and draw the finer details using the Pen tool, putting more character in the face and making fixes to anatomy and clothing. In this instance, with big block shadows covering so much of the image, I barely had to do any drawing.
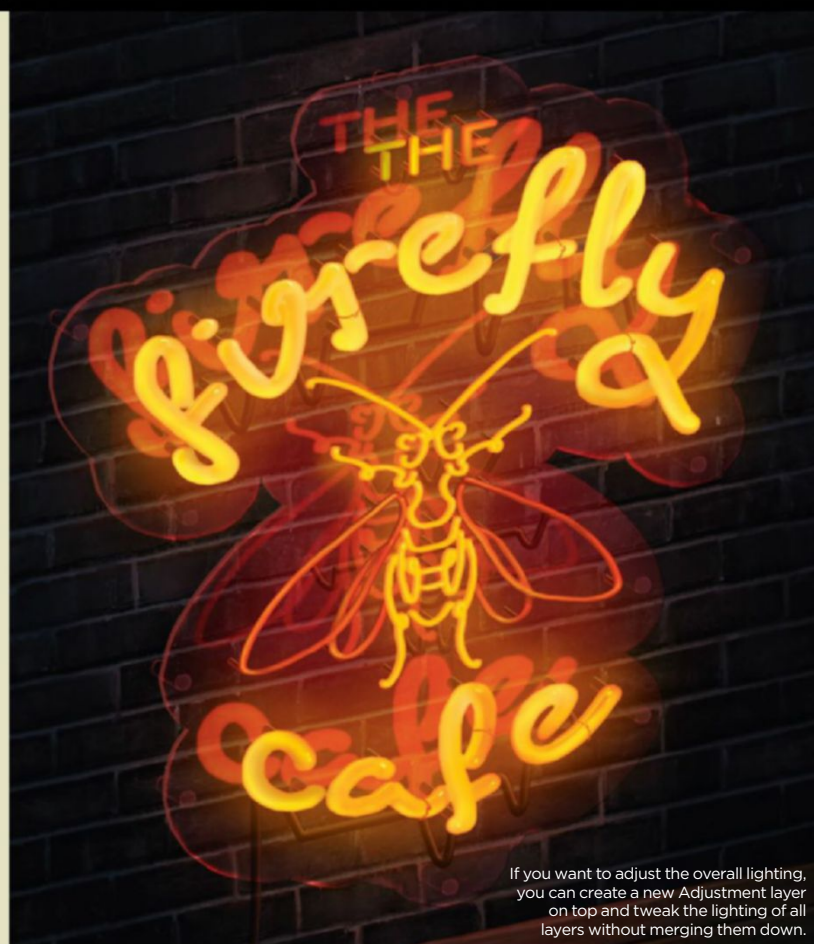
ImagineNation Artist Q&A

Question
Any advice for painting a neon sign?

Evan Atkinson, Scotland

Answer
Tan replies

Neon signs are a common mainstay of futuristic tech-noir science fiction such as Blade Runner and Ghost in The Shell. They symbolise the glitzy glamour of advertising, and add interesting lighting effects to an otherwise dark monochrome world.

They're fun to add to an illustration, but can also make it difficult to get the scene's lighting right, particularly if there are multiple light sources. It's tempting to use Photoshop's Blending options to create neon lights, and they are a great starting point, but that's usually not enough to make the lights appear three dimensional. Neon lights are encased in glass and have connecting wires to power them, and all these details, when rendered, make the illustration more realistic.

The most common type of neon signs are neon tubes that are bent into letters or other shapes. It's another

I sketch out the neon sign in a direct frontal view in black and white so it can be reproduced elsewhere if necessary. To place it in a scene I'll warp the perspective and fill it out in three dimensions.

detail to consider when creating an illustration with neon signs, because these tubes don't support tight angles. Neon signs have very distinct fall-off lighting as well. A yellow neon sign may not produce yellow reflections in the objects it casts light on, but may be reddish or orange-ish instead.

Step-by-step: Discover how to illustrate and light up a neon sign

1 I create the silhouette of the sign on top of a brick wall. I don't have to render all of the wall because the neon light only illuminates a small area. I grab a free texture from **www.textures.com** and then convert the lighting using Levels and Curves.

2 I mount the neon light on a glass plate for added visual interest. I Use Blending Options>Bevel and Emboss and Inner Glow to build it up in three dimensions. Then I blend them with a Soft Airbrush and add specular highlights using a Hard brush.

3 I then add the electrical hardware behind the neon sign: the rods that connect the tubes to the plate and thin wires on the tubes to secure it in place. The reflection of yellow neon signs is often reddish instead of yellow, such as the one on the glass.

Question

How can I convey a chrome effect in a line drawing?

Janina Rothstein, Germany

VIDEO WORKSHOP

Answer
Tom replies

Chrome effects can be a little difficult to create on the canvas, because sticking too close to reference material can often make for an overly busy drawing.

As an illustrator often working on comic books, I don't really want there to be any visual information in the image that I haven't put there for a reason. It would distract from the elements that best tell the story and, worse still, look fussy.

As such, I tend to keep any reflected detail to a minimum. A few lines that follow the contours of the object usually do the job; just enough to suggest that something is being reflected on the surface, but very little in the way of complex information as to what that might be.

With something a bit flatter, such as the sort of lens that's at the business end of this retro-looking ray gun, I can justify putting in a little more detail because it's a focal point for the image and will be less distorted by surface curvature. Keeping your painting approach relatively simple like this can make for a far more appealing visual and enhance the impact of the image.

For this image of a futuristic weapon, I wanted a sense of impact and drama, so it was important to keep the visual information simple.
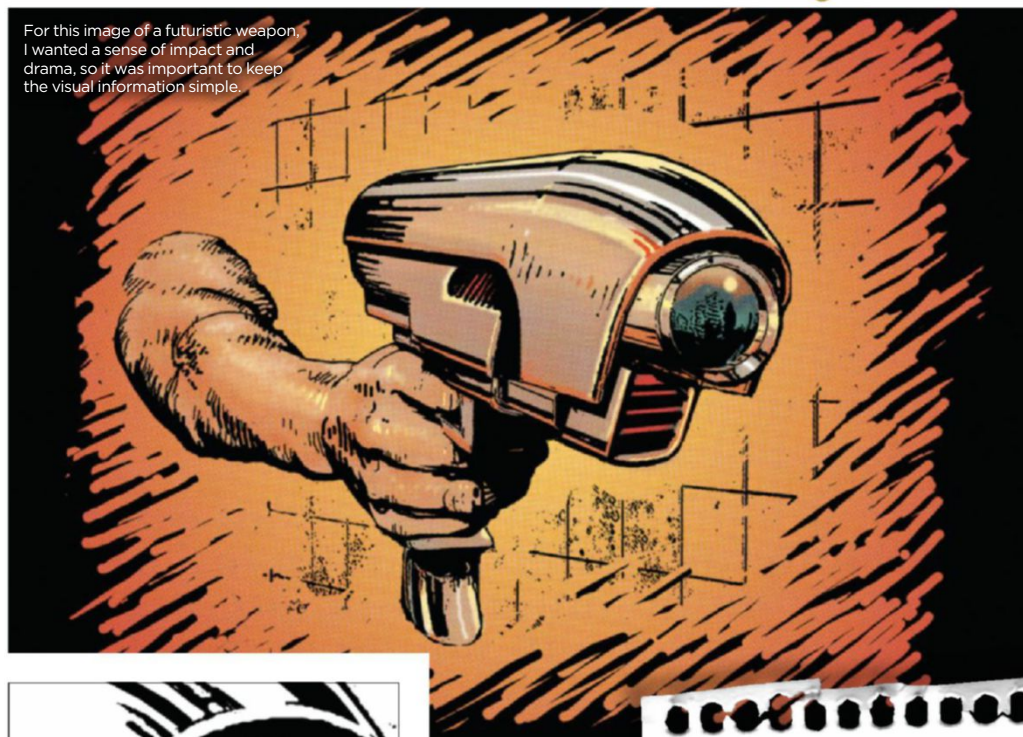
I try to balance black and white at the line drawing stage so that the image appears engaging, but not cluttered.

● Artist's secret
Go-faster stripes

Clean lines that straightforwardly conform to the surface of an object can give it a convincing gloss. I tend to approach it as if the object itself were striped. It's easier than trying to second-guess a complex reflection.

Step-by-step: Overcome the complexities of reference material

1 As with most drawings, I start with some kind of 3D render in 3D posing software to help establish composition and form. This gives me a lot of the information I need, but the reflections on the weapon are too busy and don't have much visual impact.
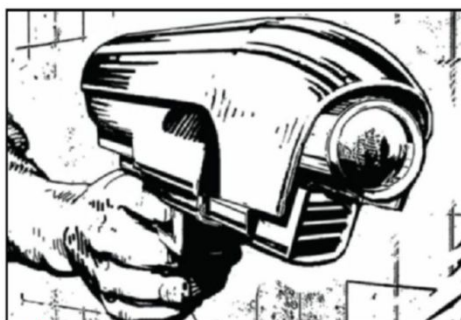
2 I use Photoshop's Stamp filter to convert the image to black and white and draw over the top, erasing much of the unnecessary reflected detail. I keep a few touches here and there that I think keep the device looking real, such as the reflection on the lens.

3 Finally, I introduce colour. The colour of the lighting in the scene will be largely reflected in the weapon's surface, but I do like to show the viewer the object's true colour by having a little of it peek through at points (along the top, in this instance).

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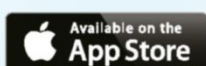
Use light to emphasise the wrinkles created from the muscle contractions around the eye. The eyeballs themselves will be simple, so go nuts with the detail surrounding them.

Question

Can you share tips on painting a character that's squinting?

Charles Quiles, Canada

Answer

Tony replies

My first thought when I read the question was, "Well, just draw the eyes tiny!" But then I reflected on just how many facial expressions involve having the eyes almost closed. Sleepy child, wise monk, suspicious Frenchman… the list could go on. So I've decided to focus on what makes squinting different, and just how much of the face is used. Which, as it turns out, is all in the muscles.

The eyes are surrounded by the Orbicularis oculi, a set of muscles responsible for closing the lid. It's like two sinewy Pepperonis on your face
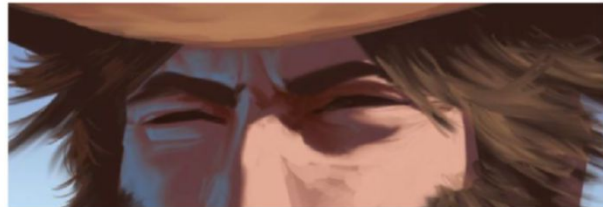
Even before any of the wrinkles are added, you should be able to tell from the angle of the eyelids and brows that Quick-Draw McDraw here is squinting.

with eyeballs in the middle. It stretches almost to the nostrils, and explains why so much of your face is used when you squint. The top of the cheeks raise, the eyebrows drop and the skin folds up as the muscles contract.

When painting, your focus should be on all the muscle contractions going on around the face and how the skin tends to wrinkle as a result.

● Artist's secret
Be a director

*Spend time while shooting reference figuring out which kinds of lighting emphasise the wrinkles around the eyes. I love having an excuse to paint all the lines in someone's face, and squinting is one of those situations where you want to push it.*

Step-by-step: Squeeze the face to capture a squint

1 The best way to figure out how these muscles work is to use a mirror and a camera. Try out different way of squinting, and compare how your face looks relaxed and tense. How do your features move? How much of the face is involved? There are a surprising amount of ways to squint.
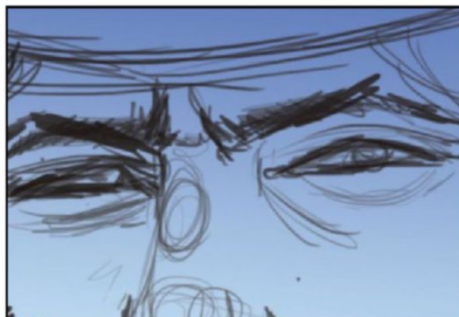
2 Use your best shot as reference. There are a few key sections of the face to pay attention to. The visible parts of the eyes are going to be dark, since the shadows and eyelashes will keep the whites of the eye fairly hidden. Basically, don't put too much detail in the eye.

3 The wrinkles around the eyes should be at their most pronounced. Most people are quick to remember the crow's feet, but don't forget that the Orbicularis oculi is surrounding the whole thing, being most visible around the eyeball (as much as it can be seen under the skin).

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DIGITAL ART REVOLUTION!

From art apps that punch above their weight to inexpensive software that replicate traditional media, artists who want to get creative are spoilt for choice…

The days of digital art being monopolised by two software behemoths are long gone. Illustrators with tech know-how have started influencing – and in some cases producing – innovative creative software, with artists as their primary focus. The result is a wealth of idiosyncratic yet powerful platforms, each one meeting the various needs of the modern digital artist.

GIRL, ORANGE
This issue's cover artist, Jana Schirmer, creates another arresting portrait piece using Procreate on her iPad Pro.

Whether you want to go down the route of mimicking natural media (playing with paint in globs, and mixing it impasto on your screen), experimenting with digitised tools and brushes, or digitising your comic art just like a professional, there's a Photoshop and Painter alternative out there that shouldn't break the bank… and may even add to it!

Here's our selection of inventive, inspiring, and often eye-opening art software that we think you'll benefit from using. Many come in different flavours, priced according to how much of the full arsenal is offered, but for each of these there's a free trial version for you to have a play with – and we encourage you to do just that!

Whether you're working from your iPad, PC or Mac, venturing into 3D-based concept art, or aiming for a traditional media feel, there's something here for everyone…

MAKE ADJUSTMENTS
Procreate has powerful blur effects, in the form of Gaussian, Motion and Perspective blurs, Sharpen and Noise filters, along with colour adjustments like HSB and Curves.

REVVED-UP ENGINE
The new Metal Engine of Procreate 3.3 promises quicker, more responsive mark-making, a leap in the natural behaviour of mixing watercolour paints, and a faster Smudge tool.

BRUSH TWEAKS
Each brush is customisable with over 35 adjustable settings. Artists can use any of the defaults as a starting point to come up with a brush that better fits their style. You can also create custom brushes, either using source files from the built-in library, images you've created, or photos that you've taken.

Image © Chrissie Zullo

PROCREATE

The small iPad app with the big artistic brain, that's designed for rapid-fire creativity on the fly

Price
£5.99
Available
iPad only
Company
Savage Interactive
Reviewed
Issue 146
Rating
★★★★★

For those who haven't tried this art app, you're in for a treat! This may be an iPad-only product, but there's really nothing diminutive about it other than the asking price. And with the latest version, the app just got a lot more powerful.

First of all, there's the interface. It took the team behind Procreate a year and a half of design work to arrive at what you see when you fire it up, and it was time well spent. A set of powerful multi-touch gestures drive common tasks, making the creative process unlike anything else. The two-finger-tap to Undo is a good example. The developers designed this gesture so artists don't need to travel to a button or use a key command – instead, they just tap the screen with two fingers.

Procreate ships with 128 brushes, which are all customisable. They range from traditional media to spray paints and the humble Round brush. With professional artists in mind, version 3.2 enables you to import Photoshop documents and keep their layers and blend modes, and now you can achieve more with layers: speedier layer selection and alteration means more creative possibilities. You can also

❝ **Version 3.2 enables you to import PSDs and keep their layers and blend modes** ❞

record and play back all that creativity with the new video capabilities.

"It's an app that can definitely compete with any advanced desktop program" says artist **Chrissie Zullo**. "It has everything you need as a digital artist, in a simplified interface, and the way it works with the Apple Pencil is the most 'realistic' digital drawing experience I've ever had."

This is no happy accident. Speed and performance are the advantages of specifically developing for the iPad, and if you're using Apple Pencil on iPad Pro, it's taken to an entirely different level. All of which just got silly! ImagineFX has seen a beta of Procreate 3.3's Metal Engine in action (out soon), and things move four times faster than before. Standouts are a more accurate Smudging tool and advanced watercolour paints.

Procreate is perfect for art on the move, outside or in a coffee shop – all for the price of a nice sandwich! ➤➤

File   Edit   Layer   View   Window   Help

Tools

Watercolor

Size		43
Pressure		100
Loading		100
Water		100

Bamboo   Flat   Round

Color Set   Color

Color

H	0
S	11
L	18

Layers

Blending   Normal
Opacity   100
Lock

👁	Layer 4	100
👁	Layer 3	100
✳	Layer 4	12

Canvas

REALISTIC WATERCOLOURS

Martin Hanschild says, "The painting process in Rebelle is unique and closer to the traditional watercolour experience than anything else. It has the best digital watercolours out there."

NATURAL PAINTING TOOL

The watercolour simulation is the brainchild of artist Peter Blaškovič, who developed it as a drawing projects. His aim was to create the most natural painting tool possible.

Images © Martin Hanschild

REBELLE

Roll up your sleeves for the realistic traditional media software that's both experimental and seriously creative

Rebelle is all about getting your hands dirty – or at least feeling like you have. Think Corel Painter at a snip of the price, and you're close to understanding Escape Motions's ambitions with its flagship software.

"I love how the program encourages experimentation on the canvas," says artist **Martin Hanschild**. "I'll randomly paint spots, shapes and lines on the wet canvas, to see how colours flow across the screen, and then find interesting structures and shapes to change into characters or landscapes."

His job is made easier with Rebelle's tools. The Blow tool brings a breath of inspiration to your work – literally, as you can manipulate your watercolour marks as if blowing on the paper. The Tilt control enables you to make the wet media run and drip, or you can use the dry media brushes (pastel and pencils) to slow things down.

The newly released version two promises an even more realistic acrylic arsenal, while continuing its attention to detail in how the media and the paper grain interacts. The user interface remains beginner-friendly, so as not to put off traditional artists who are

making the jump to digital, and this might explain why Escape Motions haven't done much to develop Rebelle's tool customisation. All this takes a lot out of your computer.

"The math running behind the program's painting process is quite

❝ The Blow tool brings a breath of inspiration to your work – literally ❞

complicated," says Escape Motion's **Andrea Vachova**. "Rebelle has to compute around 25 layers, which include water simulation, diffusion, wetting, drying and all the different watercolour effects, so the computing speed will depend on your hardware's setup."

Basically, it would stand you in good stead to have at least Intel i5 or a similar AMD processor, although it's worth noting that new OpenGL brushes have been developed in Rebelle 2, which speeds things up significantly, especially when painting with large brushes. ➤➤

PRESSURE PAINTING
Some brushes enable you to change colour based on how hard you press with your stylus – ideal when you want colour variation without going back and forth to the colour palette.

CUSTOM BRUSHES
You can modify your brush strokes after you've made them, create new brushes using a huge range of controls, and paint directly into the preview window to see exactly what each tool will do for you.
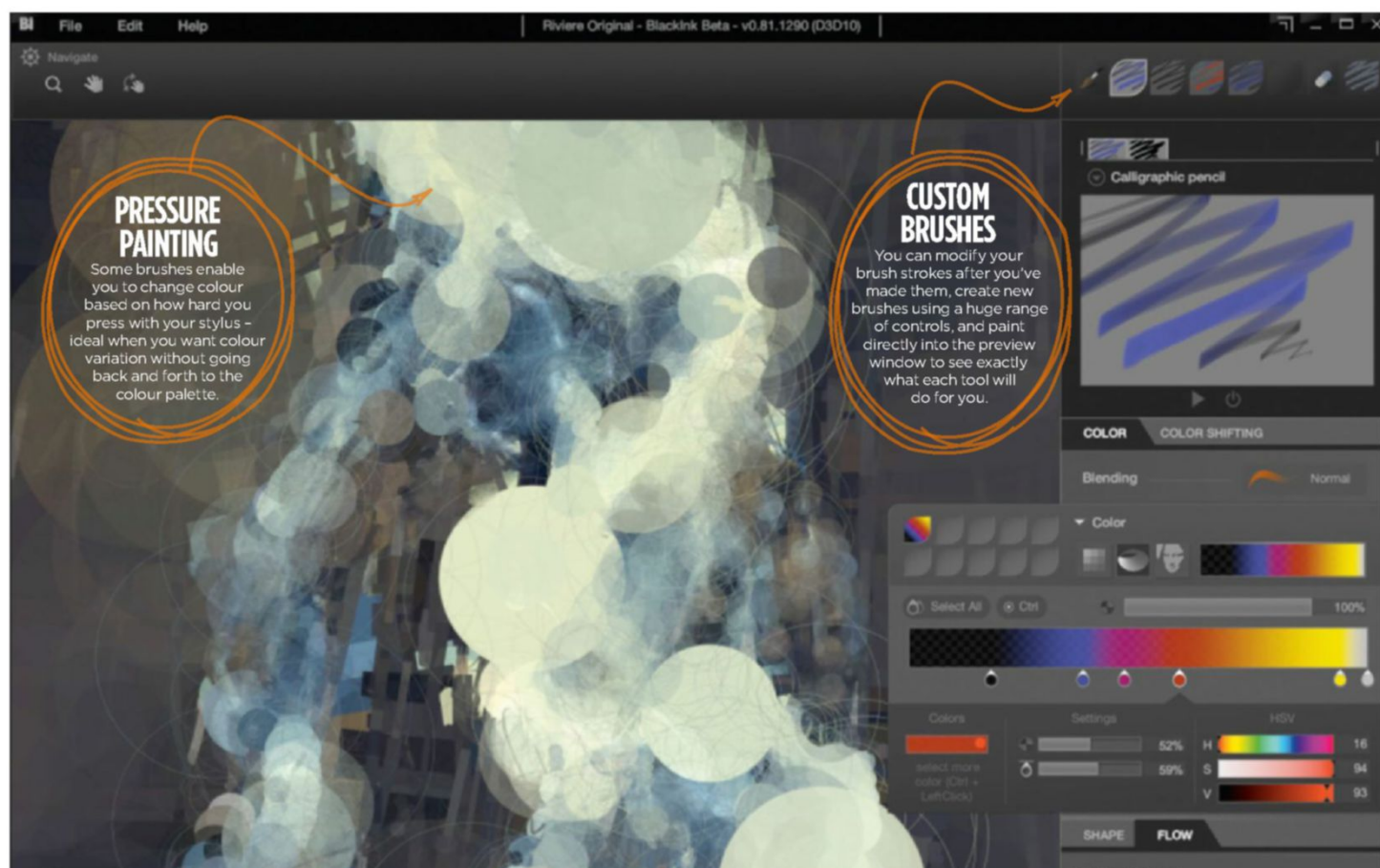
BLACK INK

Things can become a little abstract with this experimental software, but we say embrace its non-traditional nature!

Black Ink's publisher Bleank is honest with its aim. This isn't art software trying to mimic traditional media. It's digital embracing the nature of digital.

"The thing that I like most about Black Ink is how unpredictable the brushes are," explains **Tony Foti**.

"There are times when I need to design things with more of a random feel, and it can be difficult to not create something that doesn't look like a group of shapes. The chaotic nature of some of Black Ink's more animated brushes keeps you on your toes."

Black Ink isn't the best software if you want to paint representational art, and currently layers are limited to just eight. But if you respond well to experimental mark-making, there's plenty here for the interested artist.

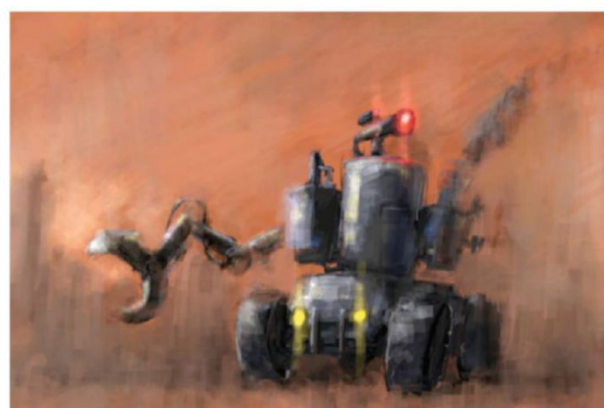Bleank had the mobile phone user in mind when it set out the user interface – a clear space with room for complex tools. Those tools include 72 default brushes: a few 'normal' ones like a Felt pen and Pencil, and a lot more random ones, all of which are customisable.

For **Ayan Nag**, the brush controller is a huge highlight in Black Ink. "It's a little complex when you start out, but the amount of variations you can come up with is unreal." He also likes how the way Black Ink utilises the graphic processor. "That's one of the reasons why the software performs so swiftly."

Price £50
Available PC/Mac
Company Bleank
Reviewed Issue 147
Rating ★★★★☆

> **The brush tip shapes can warp and pulsate with the movement of the stylus**

"The brushes are all so different, but one of the standout features is how many have a particle effect to them," Tony says. "The tip shapes can warp and pulsate with the movement of the stylus, which makes the process feel different from my usual workflow."

As well as saving out in its native BKD format, you can also save your chaotic artworks as JPGs and 16-bit PNGs, which doesn't enable you to save layers but retains pretty awesome precision in colours and transparencies. There are plans to soon export files as PSDs, due to popular demand, so watch this space.
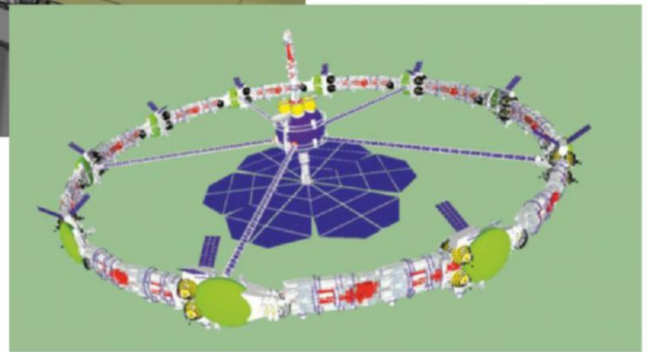
Images © Jort van Welbergen

SKETCHUP

Build entire worlds from the ground up, with this super speedy yet simple 3D art program

SketchUp definitely belongs in this roundup, especially when top concept artists such as Donglu Yu and Jort van Welbergen are using it for professional (and personal) work. As a piece of computer-aided design (CAD) software, you'd be forgiven for thinking that its sole purpose is creating bog-standard architectural designs. Well, in the hands of an artist the possibilities are practically endless!

"I love SketchUp mainly for its speed," says **Jort**. "Because actions are relatively simple, the number of key presses for tools and actions are reduced, which means you can work at a faster pace. You won't have to waste time looking through menus and lists.

"Another cool, unique element of SketchUp is that you can copy parts of geometry, like cut-in detail, super quickly – and make patterns quite easily, too."

Simplicity is both SketchUp's greatest strength and weakness. The

It's perfect for kit-bashing and making dynamic, mechanical models

Price Free (Pro version, £490)
Available PC/Mac
Company Trimble
Reviewed N/A

interface may be pretty standard, but it's modifiable. However, if you want to create complex, game-ready elements like landscapes, materials or animations, SketchUp isn't for you. It isn't great for smooth and curved surfaces such as cars, either.

But from a creative standpoint, SketchUp helps you to generate ideas quickly. "It's perfect for kit-bashing and making dynamic mechanical models such as robots quickly, thanks to the grouping system," says Jort. "And, of course, it's great for all things architectural. Even if I end up using another program to finalise a model, like MODO or Fusion360, I tend to use SketchUp for my initial sketches."

And it's free – or at least the standard version is. This will enable you to transfer files between SketchUp, Maya, 3ds Max and Rhino. However, if you want to export OBJ files to pick up in Photoshop, then you'll need the Pro version, priced around £490. However, we'd advise getting hold of the free version first, to experiment with.

If you're serious about getting creative quickly in the field of concept art, then SketchUp could be a powerful tool in your arsenal.

File | Edit | Tools | View | Help | Hornet finished

BETTER USE OF REFERENCES
Version 5 refines the concept of using reference images as part of your painting process. Now you can pin multiple images to your screen, but also resize, move them around or even zoom right into them, if you only need to focus on one area.

Stickers

Stencils

Settings

32%

Presets

CLASSIC TOOLSET
The default brushes focus on traditional media: oils, pencil, pastel, felt pens, watercolour and palette knives. Each tool comes with a selection of default presets designed to introduce you to the different possibilities, and enable you to jump straight into creating.

INTUITIVE INTERFACE
The interface is intended to be instantly easy to navigate, so that it's straightforward to choose tools and colours. After all, who wants to fight various menus while trying to paint?

Images © Phil Galloway

ARTRAGE

For artists with a traditional media background who want all the benefits of working digitally, this is the natural choice

Squarely positioned in the 'traditional media experience' class of digital software, ArtRage has come a long way since it was launched as a straightforward oil-painting program way back in 2007. Version 5, released at the start of the year, came with a more developed pastel and pencil arsenal, perspective guides, more options for customisation and an altogether swifter nature – all welcome changes.

Yet the program's main appeal remains the same. "What sets ArtRage apart is its ability to recreate the flow and texture of oil paint like a malleable medium, right there on the screen," says **Phil Galloway**. "The paint behaves as paint should – and for an artist with a fine art background coming into a digital art world, this is key. ArtRage ticks all these boxes for my loose style, enabling

❝ What sets ArtRage apart is its ability to recreate the flow and texture of oil paint like a malleable medium ❞

me to use swathes of colour and natural emotive strokes that other painting programs don't seem to be able to do without the process feeling a little unnatural."

Every tool acts differently, all responding to texture and blend in different ways, so picking the Felt pen versus an Oil brush is a much bigger leap than choosing a different-shaped brush. "This is the opposite of most digital art programs," says ArtRage's

Price £63 – or upgrade discount: 50 per cent from ArtRage desktop editions (2,3 and 4)
Available PC, Mac, (and iPad, Android for £4.99)
Company Ambient Design
Reviewed Issue 147
Rating ★★★★★
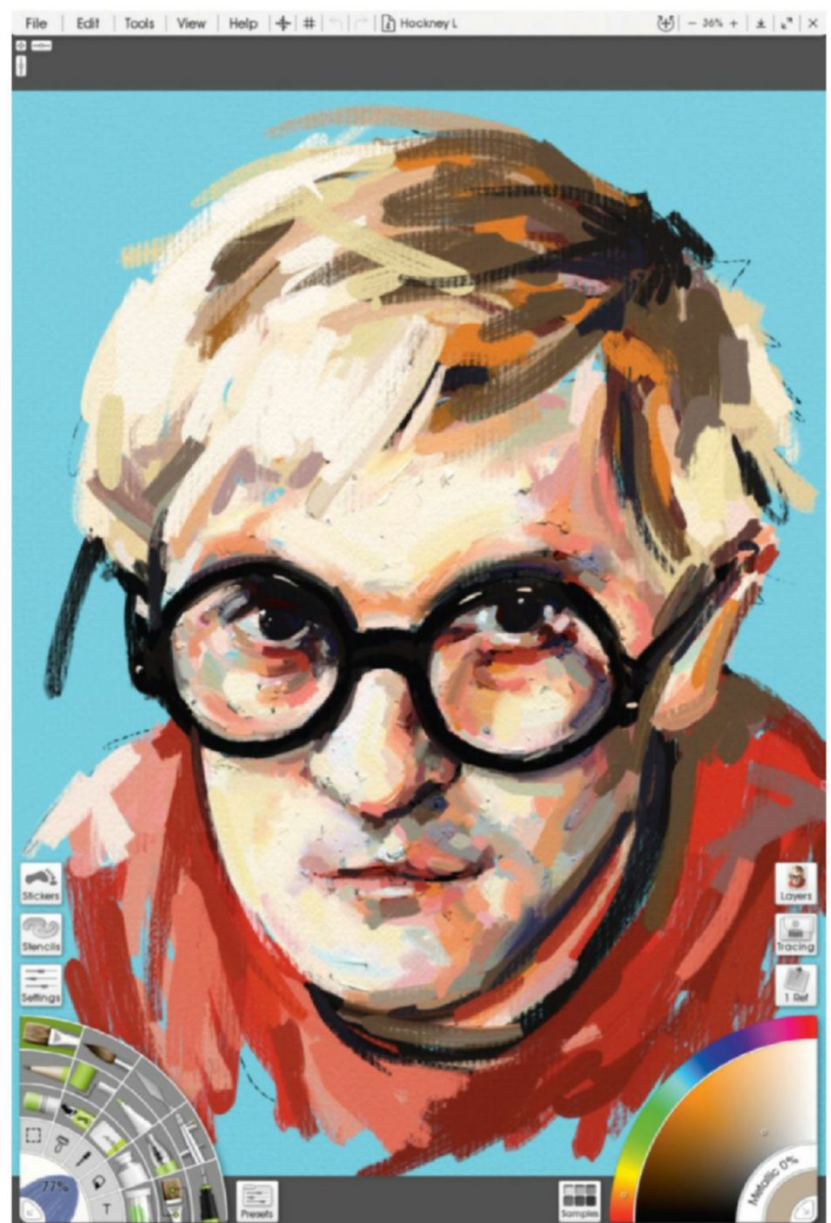
Uwe Maurer with more than a hint of pride. "Such programs have one 'basic' brush and then go on to create multiple variants based on it, and call them all different brushes." What cheek, eh?

Yet it's not just the brushes you can experiment with. You can adjust Thinners in the Oil brush and Watercolour tools to achieve much runnier paint; you can turn on Smoothing for the Ink pen to have it automatically smooth out a shaky stroke; or simply adjust the Softness

and Graininess of the Pastel and Pencil tools. We also like the way ArtRage has embraced mobile, linking up iPad or Android with desktops. The iPad and Android and version 5 editions can record script files, which can be played back in the desktop editions to recreate every brush stroke, and it can do so at any resolution, which enables you to scale your mobile paintings up to any resolution for printing larger artworks.

Whether the additions of the latest iteration sound interesting or not, ArtRage remains the leading traditional art painting program. ➡➡

Image © Paris Christou

BRUSHES
There are over 140 brushes to choose from, most of which are created by artists, with artists in mind.

EXTRAS
SketchBook Pro has also just revealed SketchBook Extras, giving in-app access to brand new brushes updated on a weekly basis.

SKETCHBOOK PRO

Focusing on sketching and drawing, this program encourages creativity through simplicity of use

SketchBook Pro is here to make you draw. Where other programs offer tools to design, to build architectural blocks, or to use photos as your starting point, Autodesk's 2D software is only interested in providing you with a digital canvas and 100-plus customisable brushes to start drawing with.

Straight from the off, it's made to make this goal as easy as possible. "I have plenty of experience with most leading artistic programs," says **Paris Christou**, "but the number one reason I chose Sketchbook Pro over the rest is for its user-friendly, fresh, modern environment. You're not overwhelmed when you first
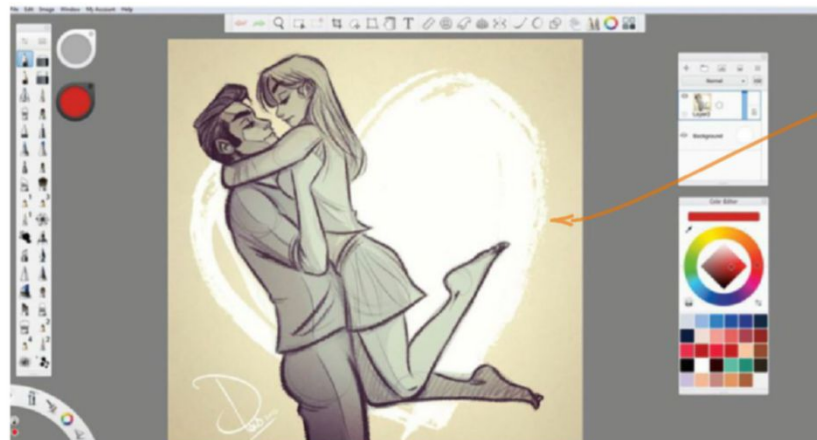
Price $4.99/month or $29.99/year
Available PC, Mac, (and iOS and Android with in-app pricing)
Company Autodesk
Reviewed N/A

launch the software, unlike most painting applications."

SketchBook Pro's best attributes are its 'straight to the point' access to any tool or action to speed up your workflow. Tools are accessed using a circular toolbar on the canvas, or lagoon, which you can fill with your most frequently used tools.

The program is pretty generous with its file support and compatibility for importing and exporting images,

> **❝ You're not overwhelmed when you launch SketchBook Pro for the first time… ❞**

UNLIMITED LAYERS
With limitless layers and the option of a huge canvas (does 100 megapixels sound big enough?!) you can produce huge, detailed drawings.

which includes PSD files. And although SketchBook Pro is all about the drawing, you still have the ability to build up a drawing in layers and use perspective guides. There's a fair bit to sink your teeth into, but once you've played around with it, the learning curve will be quickly mastered.

"When I first started exploring Sketchbook Pro, what shocked me the most was how I quickly adapted to the software," says Paris. "Sketchbook Pro also pushes an artist to solve problems practically instead of relying on software tricks to do the work for you."

PALETTES
Palettes are drawer-based and can be opened and closed as necessary. The UI can be customised, and artists can establish a range of settings for different workflows.

COMIC TOOLS
Clip Studio's core features revolve around pencilling, inking, painting and colouring. The colour mixing and blending options are great, as are the vector capable canvas and the perspective rulers.

CHOICE OF THREE
There are three main Save settings: Illustration (a blank 800x600 canvas that's easily customisable), Comic (includes preset or custom panels) and Animation, for frame-by-frame animations.

Image © PJ Holden

CLIP STUDIO PAINT

This user-friendly software has gone through some major changes over the years, but it remains the number one choice for comic artists

Previously called Manga Studio, Clip Studio Paint was rebranded by Smith Micro to give artists a better idea of what the software can do. What remains the same is a dedicated piece of kit, with hidden depths, that's aimed at comic artists and animators.

"There are two factors that make Clip Studio Paint stand out from its competitors, especially Photoshop," says long-time user **PJ Holden**. "They are its tools for comic artists, and its price. While Photoshop has introduced Perspective Rulers, Clip Studio Paint (back when it was Manga Studio) was doing it first. It has dedicated tools to help quicken flatting, it has a dedicated tool to add tones (aka Letratone, or Benday dots) to artwork that make it simple to go in and alter the density of the dots after the fact quick and simple," he takes a breath, "and it has a non-destructive method of

Price Clip Studio Paint Pro, £38; Clip Studio Paint EX, £168
Available PC/Mac
Company Smith Micro
Reviewed N/A

converting any layer into blue line that's as simple as a button press."

PJ also reveals that Clip Studio Paint can differentiate between pencil layers and inked layers, and enables you to exclude pencil layers from exports or prints while they're still visible.

While there are many cool templates and tools to start creating comics with the Pro version, PJ stresses that the

> ❝ Clip Studio Paint two key factors are its tools for comic artists, and its price ❞

more expensive EX version is the way to go, "for the simple reason that it can handle multiple page documents. Being able to set up a single page size, with bleed/trim/safe area, all within one document and then to have multiple page documents, each using the same page size, is a real boon for working in the industry."

There's also a wealth of hidden gems to find in the EX version of Clip Studio Paint. "I'm always surprised to find that many of the tools and hints that I post on Twitter is new information even to seasoned pros working in Clip Studio Paint every day," he says.

"So many of its tools are hidden. One layer, for example, can be set as a Reference Layer, then you can work on another layer while using the reference layer to select colours – utterly essential to colouring in comics. Because most people come to Clip Studio Paint from using Photoshop, where these tools don't exist, they keep working in the same inefficient way." If you're a comic artist, maybe it's time for a change?

Sketchbook

Cosmin Podar

Fantasy figures and grotesque creatures mingle with hints of
Romanian urban and rural life in this artist's sketchbook

Artist PROFILE

Cosmin Podar
LOCATION: Romania

A keen artist from childhood, Cosmin built up his painting skills by doing caricature art first, before securing a job at video game developer Gameloft in Cluj. After two years he was promoted to lead artist, and spent a further four years at the company before leaving to become a full-time freelance artist. He says his quest to become a better artist is never-ending, and that he's his harshest critic.
www.behance.net/podarcosmin

WOMAN FACES

"I'm usually reluctant to draw female faces, especially beautiful ones , but I gathered my courage and put the pen to good use."

FATA CU BUCIUM

"An homage to a traditional singer of our country."

> **I had the urge to draw something gross, that resembled insects…**

DAVID
"I was inspired by a picture online, then remembered the David vs Goliath theme and produced my version of it."

GHOST RIDER
"This was a funny one, I guess. I wanted to draw an exaggerated perspective."

MONSTER
"I had the urge to draw something gross, that resembled insect creatures. I was just keen to try different things."

Sketchbook

ALIEN
"This is an exploration of head decoration on an alien head. I was just passing time."

HORNED DEMON
"No real story behind this one, but I was pleased with this character's design."

AMPHIBIAN
"This was a special sketch, I wanted to see how you could make a recognisable face just by scribbling with a pencil."

> 66 I wanted to see how you could make a recognisable face just by scribbling with a pencil 99

CIOBAN
"This is my homage to a traditional Romanian sheep herder."

FACES
"This was an exploration exercise – taking a shape and rotating, flipping it and making different faces."

BLACKBEARD
"This is a popular pirate character, so I thought I'd try my hand at drawing him."

HANDS
"A study of hands, but how to make it more entertaining? Maybe this way…?"
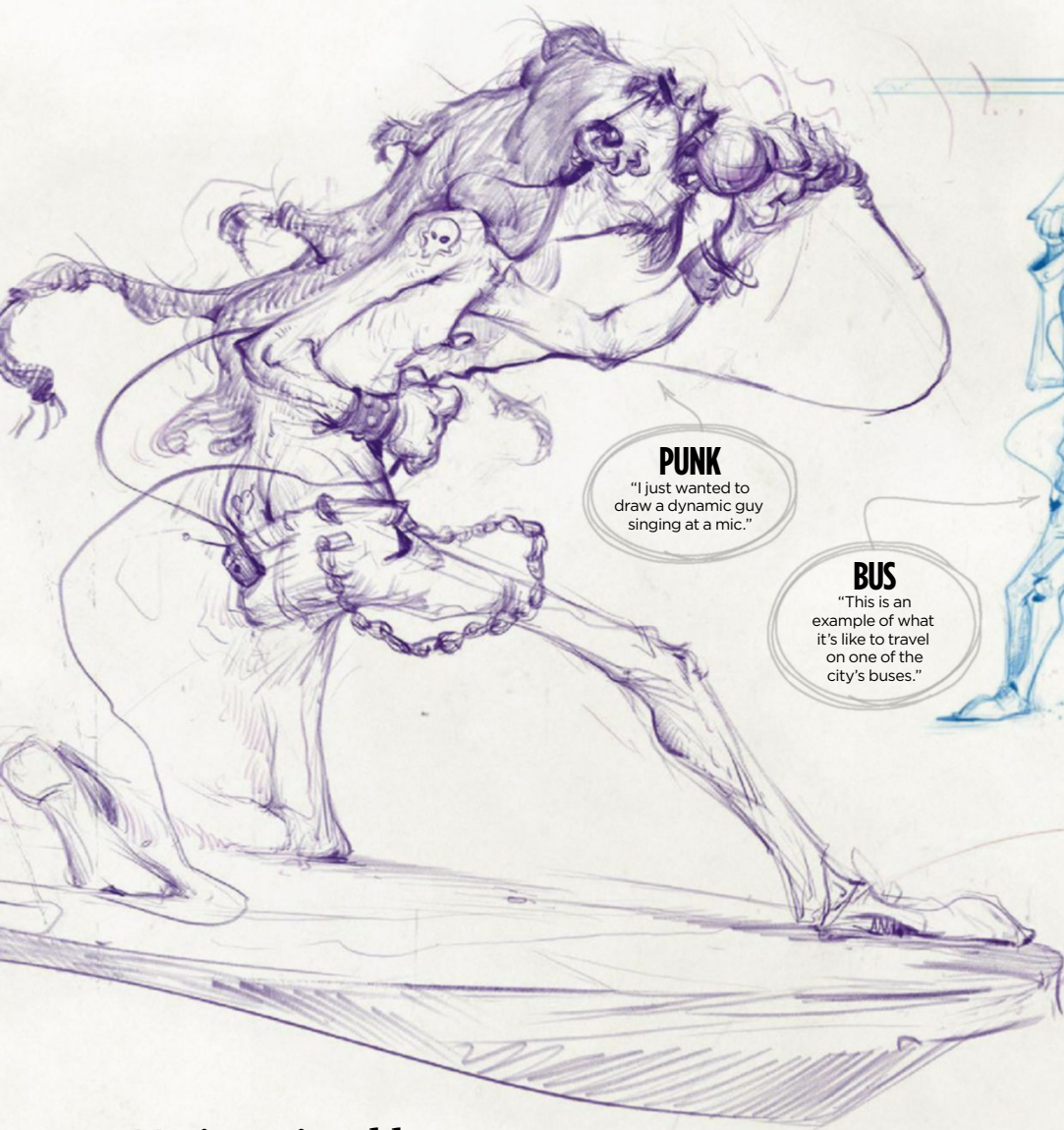
PUNK
"I just wanted to draw a dynamic guy singing at a mic."

BUS
"This is an example of what it's like to travel on one of the city's buses."

> ❝ I imagined how an underground DJ travels with his bulky luggage… ❞

TRIP
"I imagined how an underground DJ travels with his bulky luggage. Just out of shot: his decks and speakers."

MAN FACE
"I really like drawing men with ugly faces."

Sketchbook

Gareth Davies

The architecture graduate and concept artist loves nothing more
than chilling out and doing a few armour studies…

Artist PROFILE

Gareth Davies
LOCATION: England

Gareth has a passion
for video games, rugby
and beer. He studied
architecture and went on
to craft a career in concept
and game art. Gareth enjoys reading
fiction and has started to write short
stories around his designs, posted to
Twitter and Instagram (@Spudonkey).
www.spudonkey.com

ARCHITECTURAL DOODLES

"Done with no real
plan or reason behind
them – just you,
a pen and some
paper."

SECURITY SYSTEM

"Thieves nicking your
power cores? Well we have
the solution for you! Armed
with double electrodes,
any likely thief will have
quite a shock."
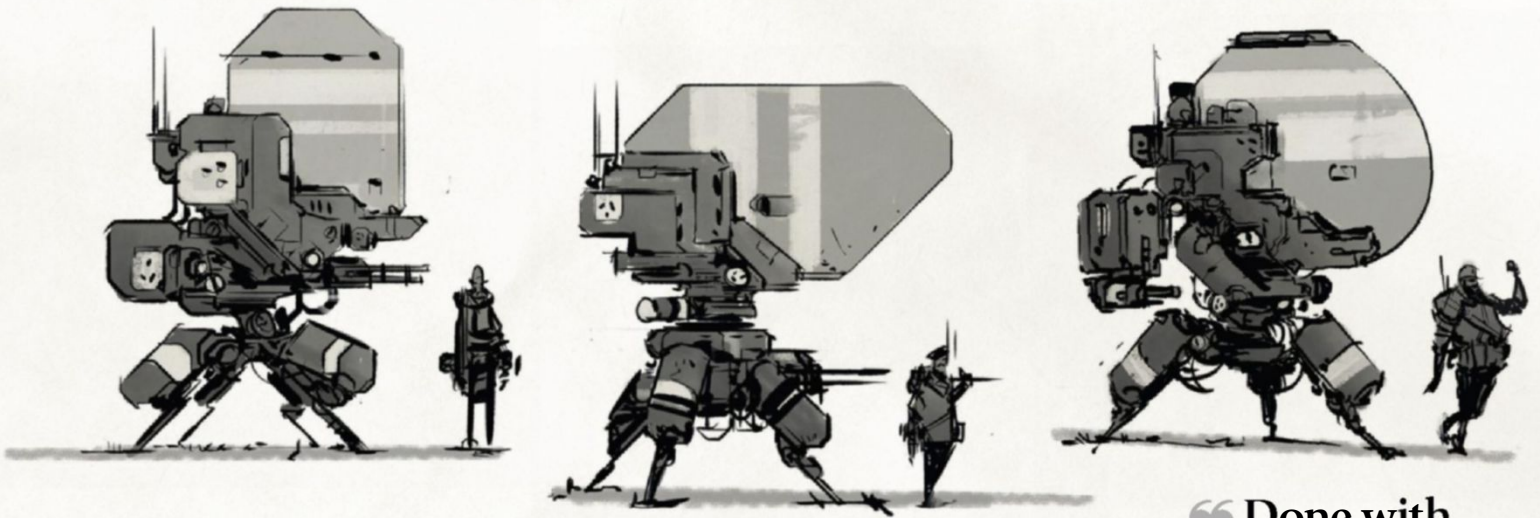
> **Done with no real plan or reason – just you, a pen and some paper**

ARMOUR SKETCHING
"Nothing is more relaxing than chilling out and doing some armour studies with music on in the background."

MOBILE GUNNERS
"Iterations on the design came thick and fast with calibre changes, instability and misfiring incidents."

?!

NAVIGATION ADVICE
"Sick of asking for directions to the latest outbreak? On board sat-nav now included as standard, which means less human interaction with plebs."

Sketchbook

VECTOR XVII

"The Vector XVII was the fastest speeder developed to date. Its only downside was a distinct lack of boot space."

MILITARY BITS N' BOBS

"Another study. Military vehicles are always fun to draw – their boxy nature with fun little knick-knacks and details."
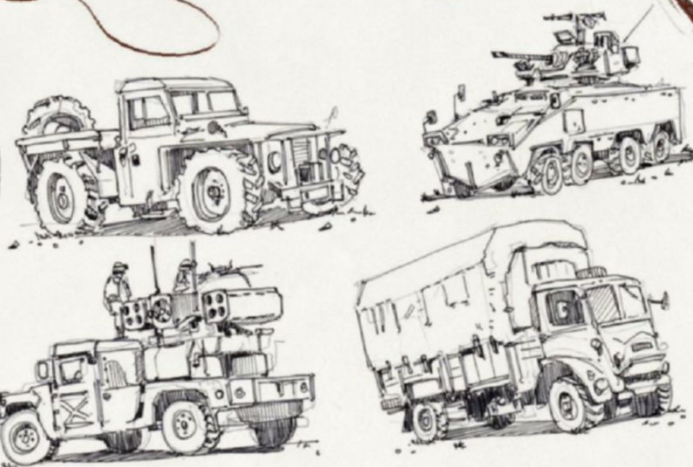
BIKER ERROL

"'Nah, de neh worry abou tit bud, got da airdbrake on dis bad boi nah, so tis goin nahwhere, can gah 120mph in a tite pinch,' says Errol the Biker."
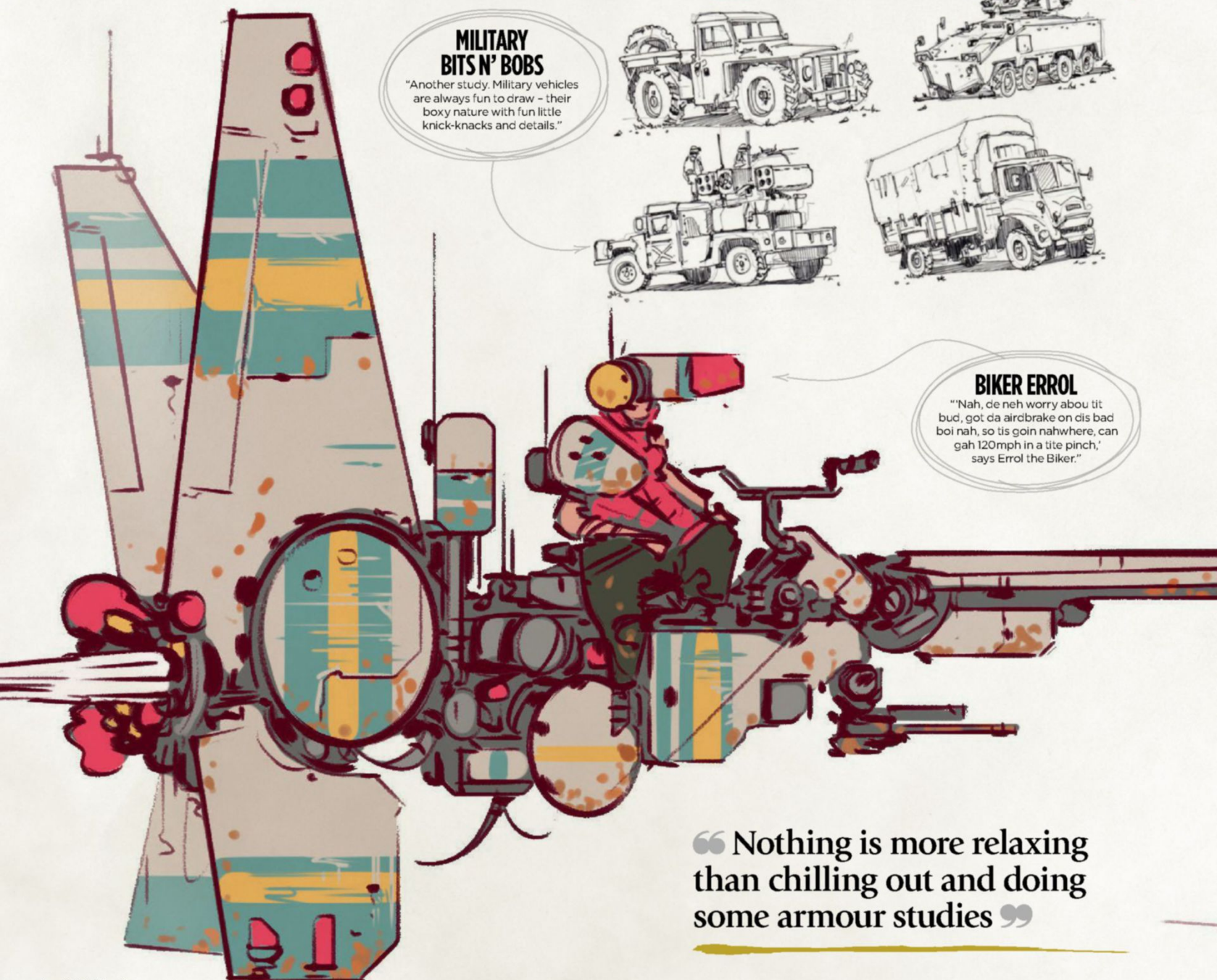
> 66 Nothing is more relaxing than chilling out and doing some armour studies 99
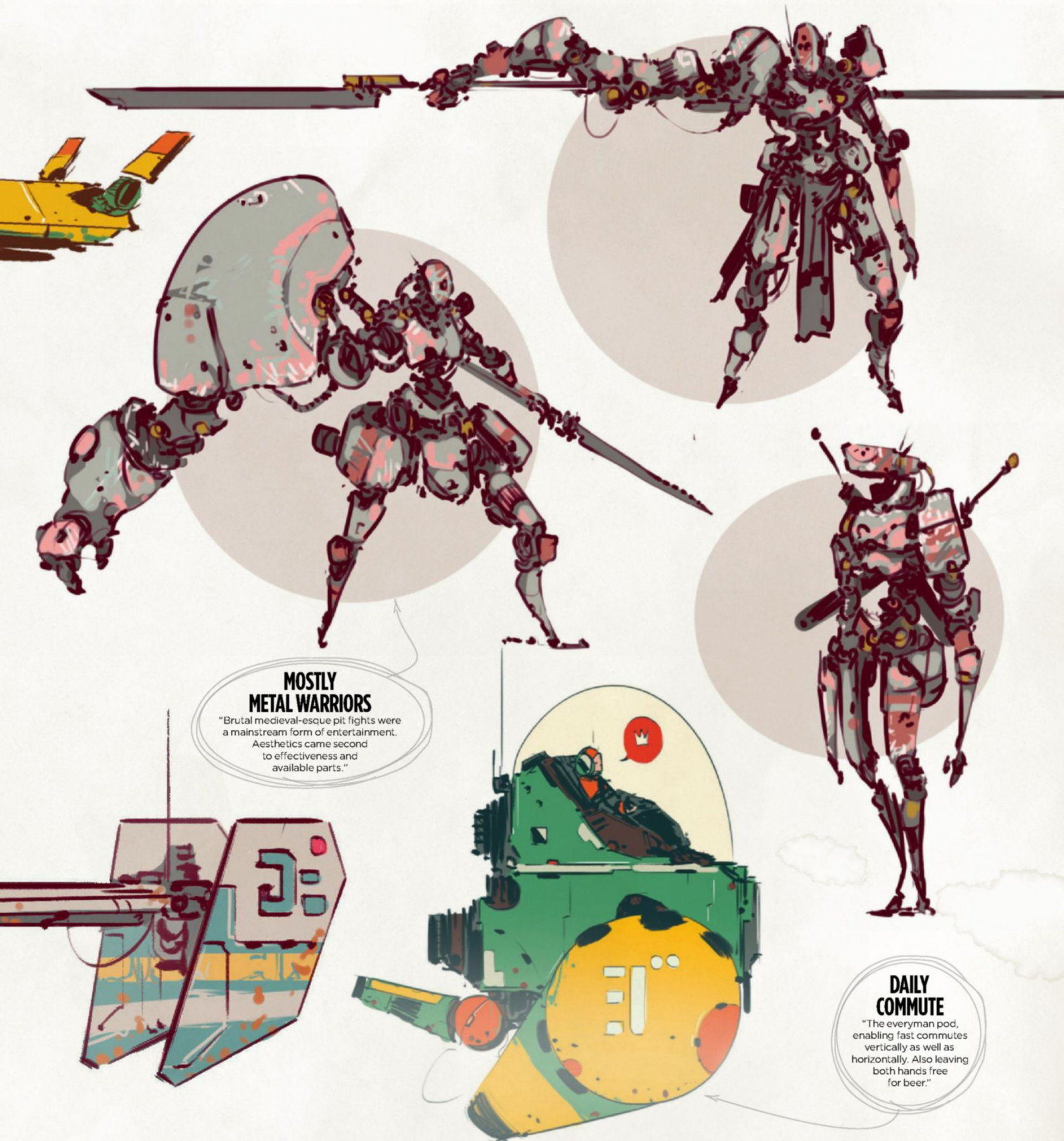
MOSTLY METAL WARRIORS

"Brutal medieval-esque pit fights were a mainstream form of entertainment. Aesthetics came second to effectiveness and available parts."

DAILY COMMUTE

"The everyman pod, enabling fast commutes vertically as well as horizontally. Also leaving both hands free for beer."

METAL HAMMER

& MORE

FEATURING
THE 50
GREATEST
IRON MAIDEN
SONGS EVER
PICKED BY METALLICA,
AVENGED, MASTODON
& MORE

THIS TIME IT'S WAR

MAIDEN
NEW ISSUE ON SALE NOW

Future

VIDEO WORKSHOP

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX
Workshops

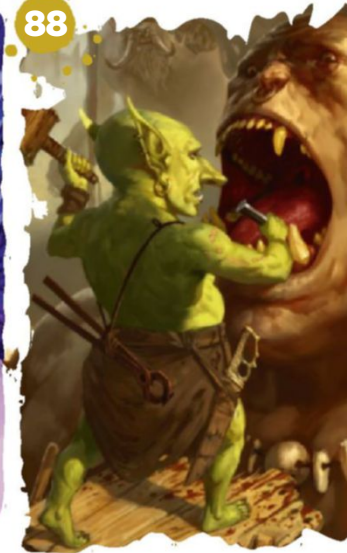## Advice from the world's best artists

60

68   82   88

This issue:

Procreate
MAKE COLOURS AND LIGHTING POP

iPad Pro in hand, **Jana Schirmer** paints a fantasy character in Procreate, showing just how much bang for the buck you get with the low-cost app

Artist PROFILE

Jana Schirmer
LOCATION: US

Jana is a German self-taught freelance artist living in California and working in the video games industry. She loves to collect stickers and masking tape.
http://ifxm.ag/insta-js

These days, Procreate is my go-to painting app, so I was excited when I received the request to paint a cover for ImagineFX entirely in Procreate.

I've been playing around in the app for almost a year now and I'm still discovering new ways to do things. In addition, the Procreate team is constantly improving the app and adding new features. Procreate is extremely fast and so far I haven't suffered from lags while painting. I love to take the iPad out and about, and work in coffee shops. It's fun to change your creative environment and leave your desk for a while.

If you're exploring Procreate's interface for the first time, don't be fooled by its apparent simplicity. It's a very powerful tool for creating pro-level artwork. And remember, you can always save your painting as a PSD and put it in the cloud to continue working up in Photoshop.

Here though, I'll be painting the entire picture in Procreate. I'll use much the same workflow that I use in Photoshop, with a few tweaks to take into account the lack of a Clipping mask in Procreate, but the app's Selection tool makes for a straightforward workaround.

I've been looking for a decent portable painting experience for years and I'm so happy that I've finally found one. I hope you enjoy this workshop. Shall we begin…?

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

**1 Coming up with the character and pose**
As with any painting, I start by sketching the general idea. I try to apply everything that I learned from my last ImagineFX cover (issue 125) and make the character engaging to the viewer. I love using Procreate's sketching brushes for this stage – they almost feel like real pencils. I've already created my own brush folder where I put all my favourite brushes that I'll use for this image, so I'm ready to go.
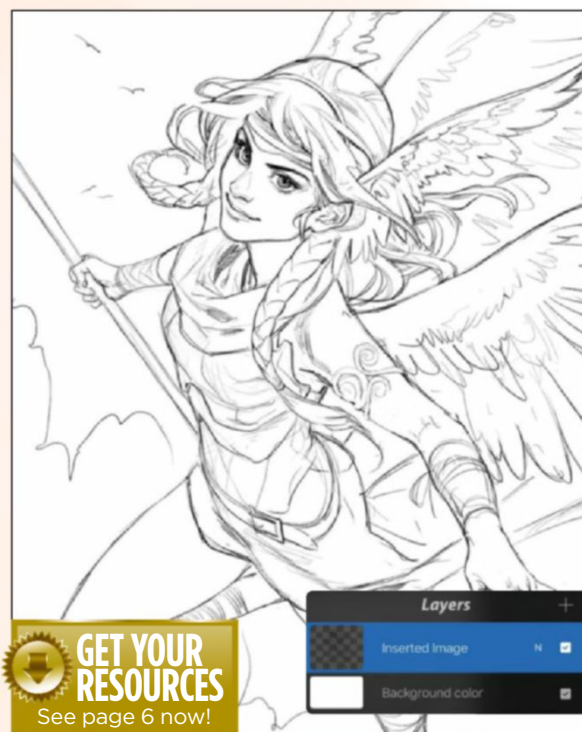
2 Refining the sketch
My next step is to further develop the sketch. The line quality isn't important at this point: all I need are some general guidelines for the painting stage later. I know I have to work up the face because this is what people usually pay the most attention to. Furthermore, I need to rein in her manga-like appearance slightly.
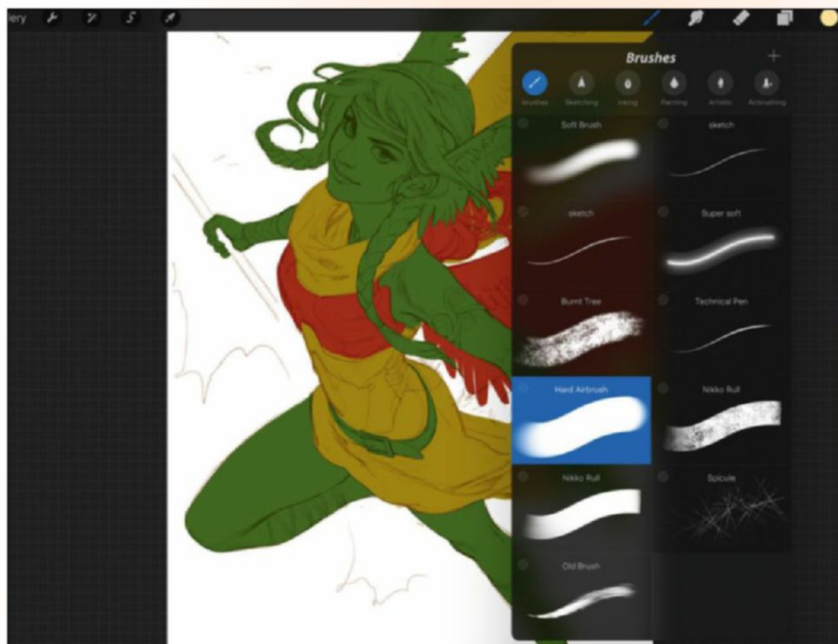
3 Moving on to colour block-ins

I fill in my selections using flat colours and the Hard Airbrush. This is my first painting step. Keeping all the important elements on different layers means I can select them easily, and makes for a more organised workflow. I try to use as few layers as possible, just to keep things manageable. Having said this, I'm not so strict with my hair layers, because I know I'll be adding more strands of hair on their own layers later on in the painting process.
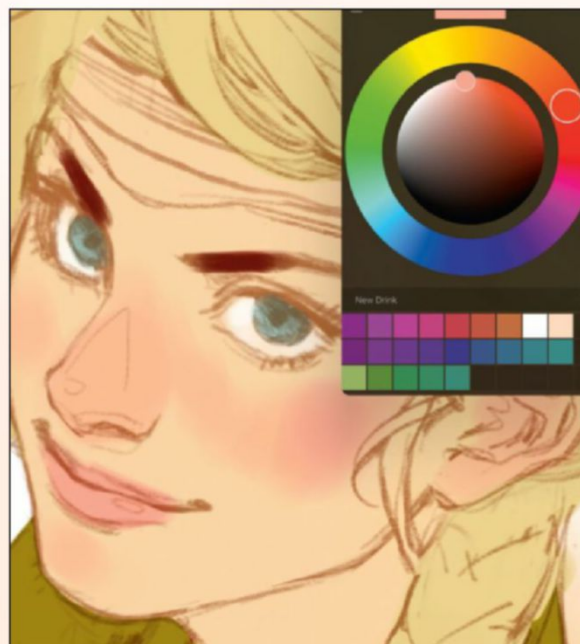

4 Choosing local colours

I lock the Transparency of the layers by swiping two fingers to the right on the layer. This means I can't draw over my selection and can focus on the local colours. These are the colours an object has without taking light and shadows into consideration. I try to identify harmonious colours that won't look over the top.
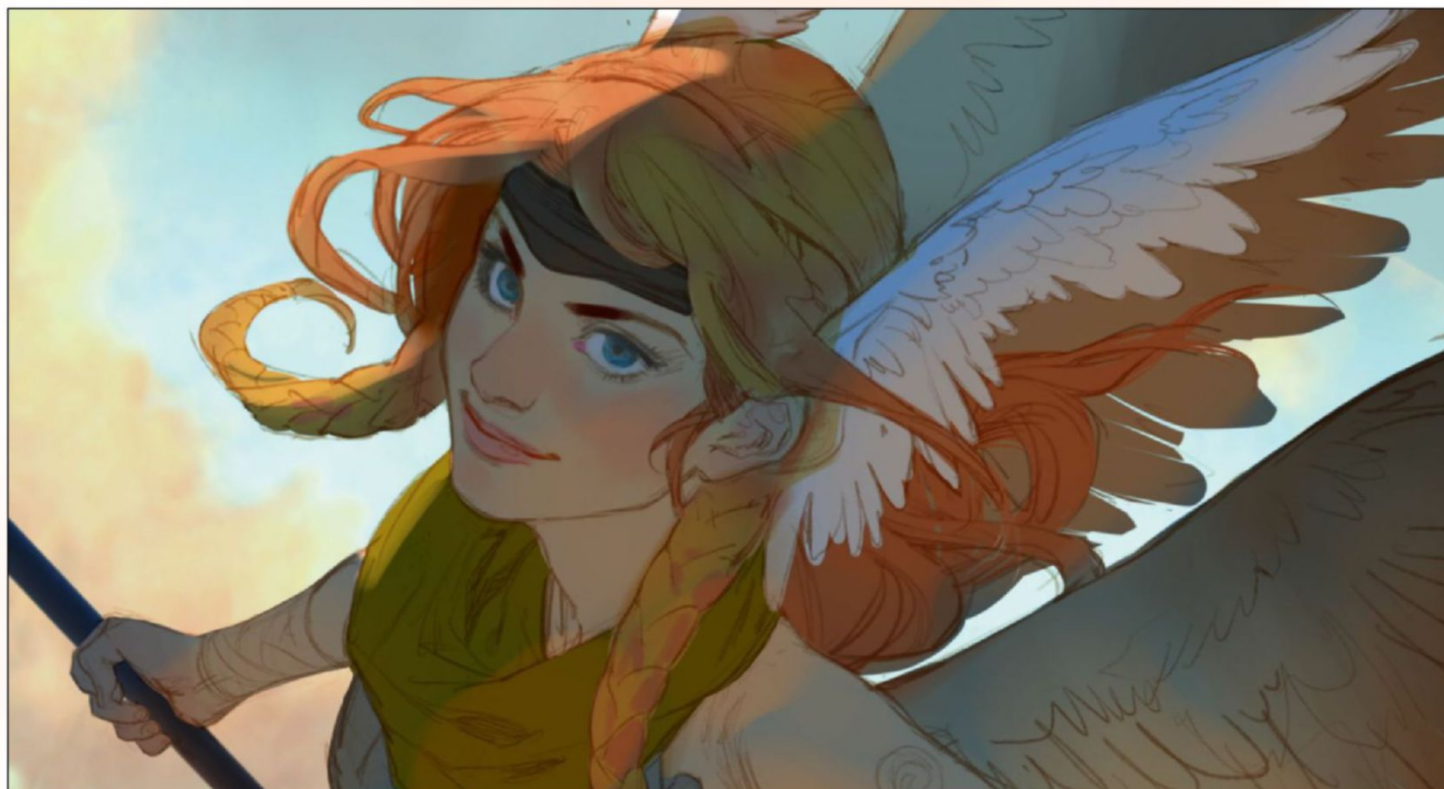
5 Time to consider the lighting in the scene

I want to put aside further rendering on the local colours and instead get a handle on the lighting setup. This is because I want to send the ImagineFX team another WIP. I select one colour layer after the other and make a single selection on a new layer that contains the selection of all the colour layers that I talked about in step three. I fill it with a blue colour and set the layer mode to Multiply. Then I erase into that layer wherever I want the light to hit my figure.
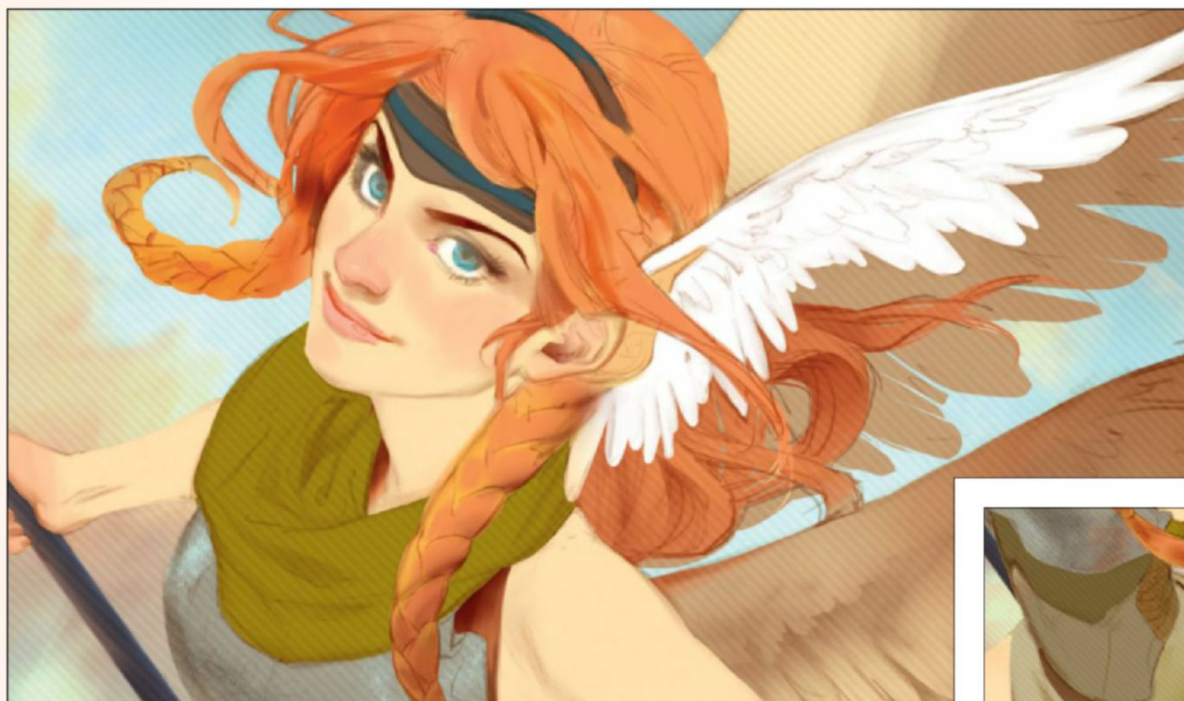
### 6 Back to my local colours and ambient occlusion

Now that I've planned out my colours and the lighting setup, and both got approved, I can start rendering the local colours. I hide the light and shadow layer for now because I won't need it for a while. I purely concentrate on rendering the local colours and ambient occlusion, because I want this image to work by itself, without the addition of light and shadow.
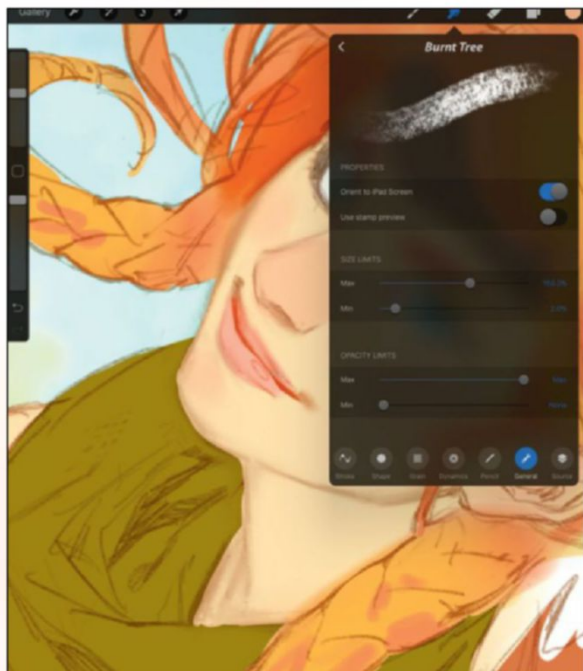
7 Working with the outlines

I use the Smudge tool to gently smooth the line-art. This makes the outlines less prominent and easier to work with, because my finished painting style doesn't feature them. I rarely use Photoshop's Smudge tool, but I love using it in Procreate. I advise trying all kinds of brushes for this. Some brushes are able to soften everything and some leave a nice texture in place. The Smudge tool can be used to develop all kinds of painterly effects.

8 Introducing more design elements

As you might expect, during the painting process I think of new things that I want to add to the illustration, such as the small pouch on the character's belt or some details on her dress. If you're unsure about any new elements, make sure you place them on a separate layer first. I also give her earrings and make the breastplate better fit her body. I would always recommend changing things or moving them around if you feel that something you've painted isn't working. ▶▶
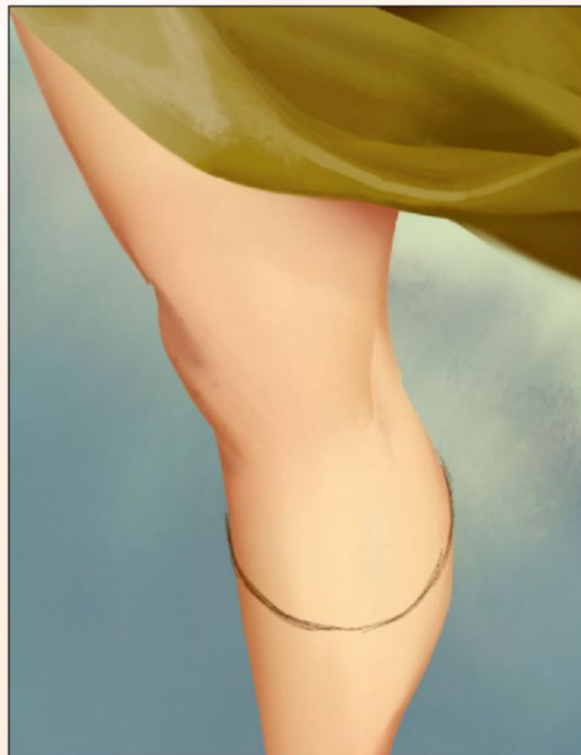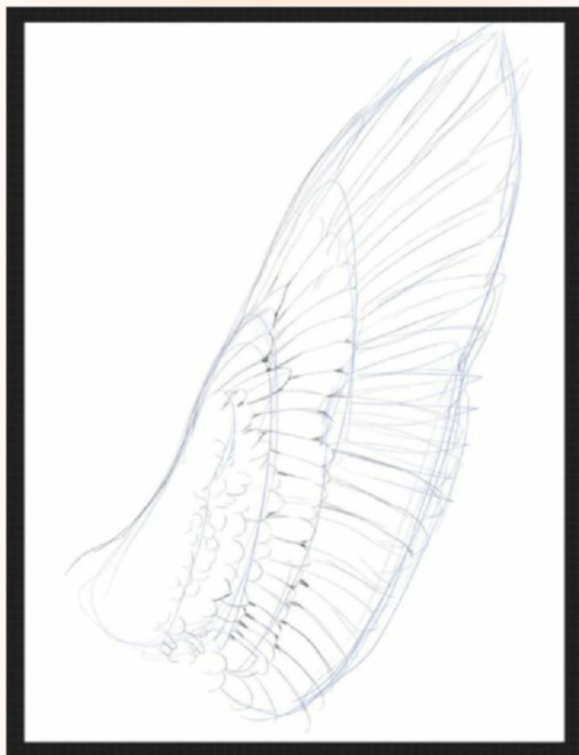
9 Gather reference for the wings

I'm not happy with the shape of the wings and think I should have researched them more. Procreate has a great Transform tool, so I want to draw the wings from reference first and then transform them into the right position. I sketch the wings in a new file and copy-paste them into the main file. You can copy-paste objects by swiping down with three fingers on the canvas.

10 Perspective with ellipses

This image features an unusual perspective. I want to make her pose and the perspective as readable as possible, which is why I add straps and bands around her hand and legs. Elliptical objects are a good way to show what direction something is facing. I've found that if you depict an ellipse correctly, it'll make the perspective in the scene automatically more readable.

11 Redoing one of the legs

The leg nearest the viewer bothers me. The perspective seems off and I'm not happy with how I've painted it. Luckily, it's on its layer, so I drag it off to one side and paint in a replacement. I also ask my husband for advice, who comes up with some useful suggestions. It's always great when there's someone around to give you honest feedback.
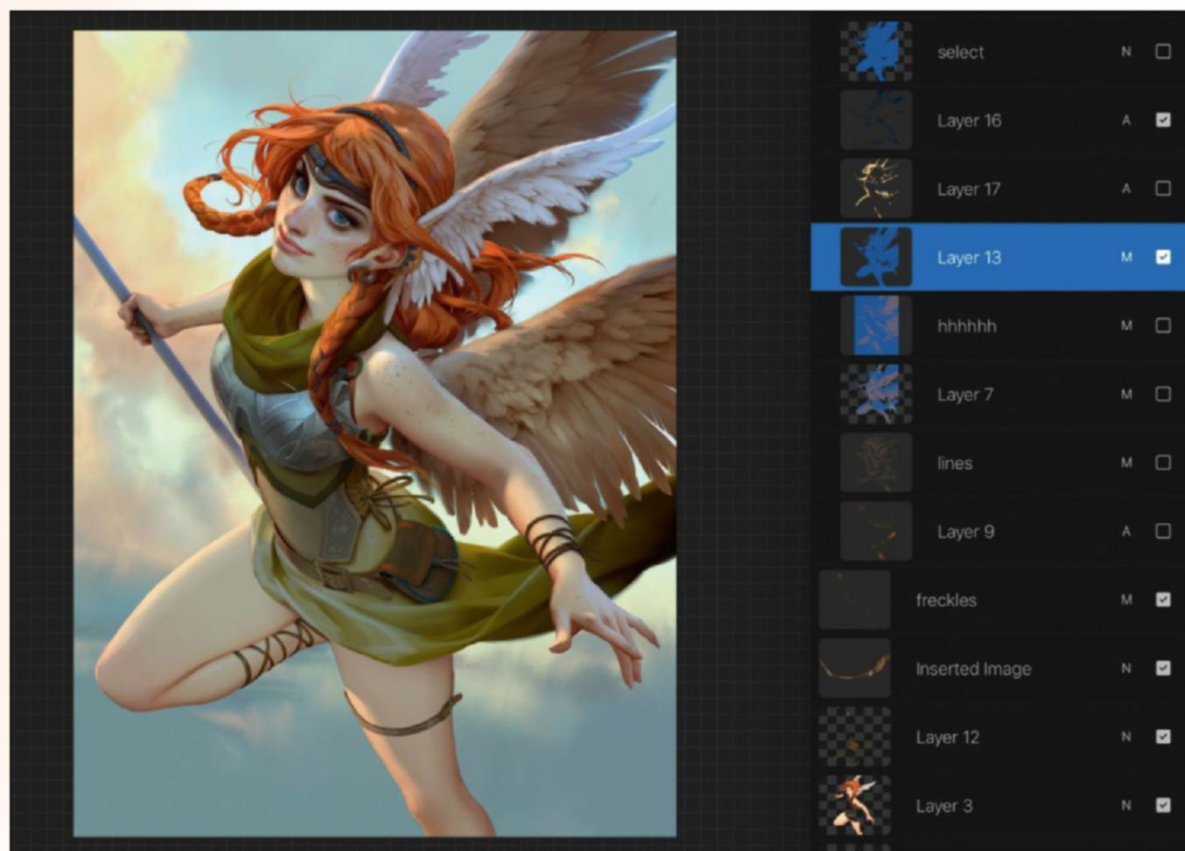
12 Refining the light and shadows
Now I finally return to the light and shadow layer that I introduced back in step five. I feel that the majority of the rendering is done and it's the lighting and shading which is missing from my illustration. Because the selection changed in some areas, like the leg, I have to reapply it on the image. I refine the layer and erase the parts again where the light hits the figure until I'm happy with it. Now I duplicate the shadow layer and drop it on every selection that I had before.
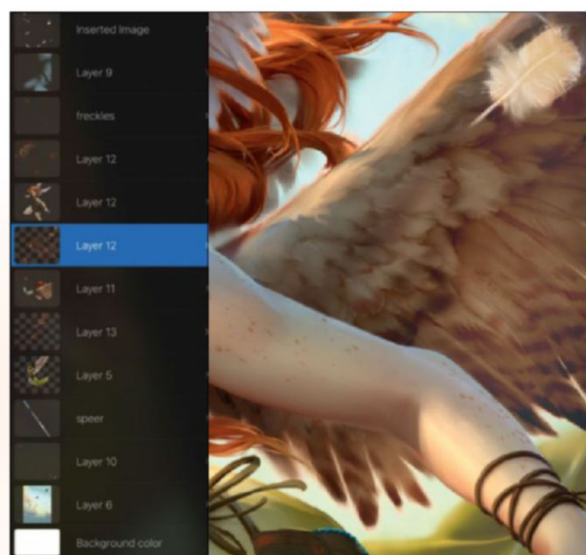
13 Last-minute changes
I decide to paint some loose feathers to give the image another dynamic element. My husband suggests adding a pattern to the wings, which now makes them look a little like owl wings. Certainly, they now look more interesting than simple, plain wings. This effect is easy to create on another layer in Multiply mode. I paint her freckles in the same manner.
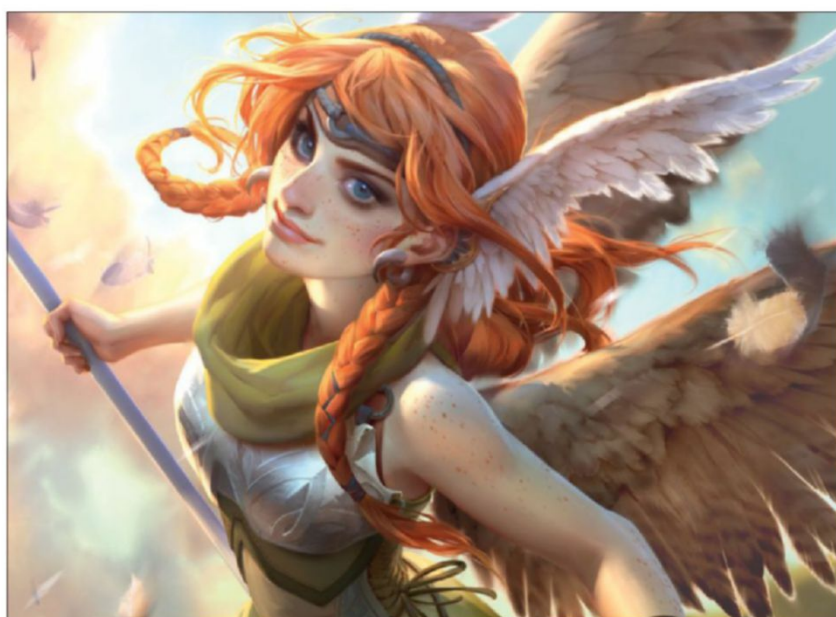
14 Making some final adjustments
This is my favourite stage because it's my chance to make the image pop. I use a variety of layer modes and colour adjustments tools such as Curves to make the colours a little more vibrant. I tend to make my colours slightly dull and dark, because I work in the dark and my iPad is on a bright setting. That's why it's always good to check your final image on a monitor or calibrated laptop. And it's done!

Core Skills: Part 4
REBELLE'S STENCILS AND SELECTIONS

Martin Hanschild reveals the new tools in version 2 of Rebelle that will keep areas of the canvas clean, and help you create 'controlled accidents'

Artist PROFILE

Martin Hanschild
LOCATION:
Czech Republic

Martin is a 2D and 3D character designer who works in Prague for motion art house Eallin.
www.hanschild.com

There's no transparent white colour in traditional watercolour painting, and so the white elements of the painting are the unpainted areas of the paper. To keep these areas free of paint you'd use masking tape, clear wax, liquid frisket and so on.

The first version of Rebelle lacked any kind of masking tool, so it was sometimes tricky to protect some parts from running colours. The Eraser tool came in very handy!

So it's with some degree of pleasure that I can reveal that version 2 of Rebelle features Selections and Stencils. These tools solve the problem of masking and can significantly help with your painting process. And even though both 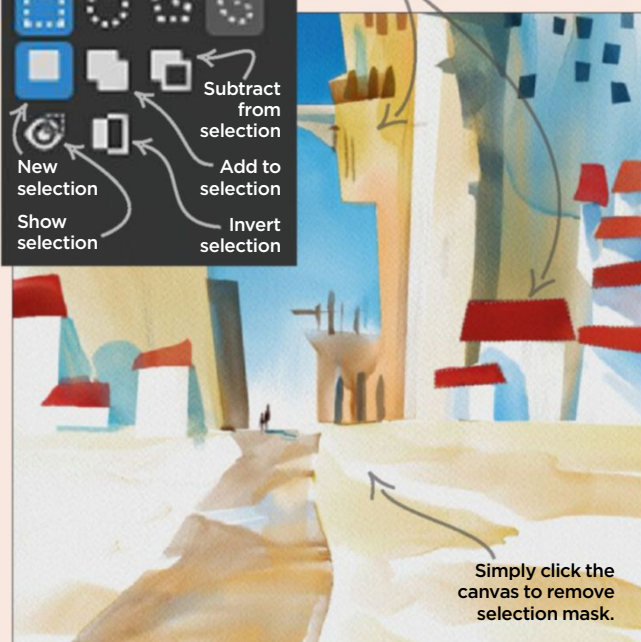are designed to protect the canvas, in use they're quite different. In the first part of this month's article, I'll explain how these new tools work and their key features.

The second part will be about some useful tools called Blow, Dry, Blend and Smear. I'll show you how to use them for creating artwork based on controlled accidents. You'll find a review of Rebelle's newest version in next issue of ImagineFX.

Here are the Selection tool panel options. You can use the Freehand, Polygonal, Elliptical or Rectangular tool for creating selections.
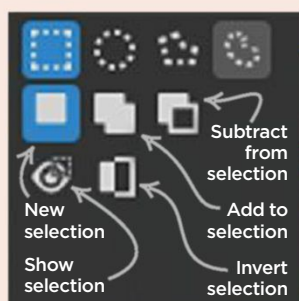
The Selection tool can be used to create a quick mask, define clean shapes, or transform or erase part of the picture. Erase a selected part of the image with Ctrl+X.

Subtract from selection

New selection

Show selection

Add to selection

Invert selection

Simply click the canvas to remove selection mask.

High-contrast images work best for imported stencils. You can create interesting abstract structures, geometric patterns, ornaments, or import images with text.

Stack of stencils

Show/hide stencil

Create Stencil from Layer
Create Stencil from Selection
Remove All Stencils
Close

Here you can choose how to create your stencil.

Add stencil from file

This is the Stencil panel. If it's not visible, go to Window and check the Stencil option.

1 Choose the right Selection tool
Working with the Selection tool is similar to either the Lasso or Marquee tools in other painting programs. Confirm your shape by pressing Enter (except those created with the Freehand tool). Press Ctrl+T to transform a selected part of the layer and, after confirming, Rebelle will automatically create a new layer with a transformed part.
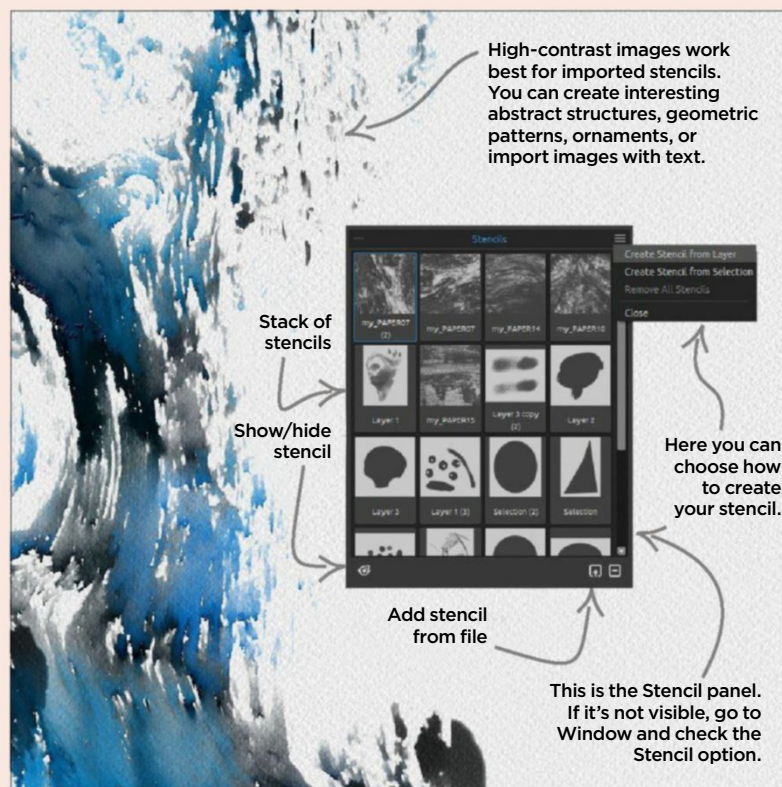
2 Creating stencil maps
There are three ways to generate a stencil map into Rebelle. It can be produced from a selection, from the layer or imported from a file. When a stencil is created from a selection and layer, it's based on the layer's transparency/alpha values. But when a stencil is created from a file, it's based on the black and white values of the picture, except when the imported file features an alpha/transparency element.

3 Manipulating stencils on the canvas

On a new layer, paint an area that you want to protect and then in the Stencils menu, choose the Create Stencil from Layer option. A new stencil will be added to the Stencil palette, and it will appear on the canvas when you select it. A light orange colour represents the protected areas.
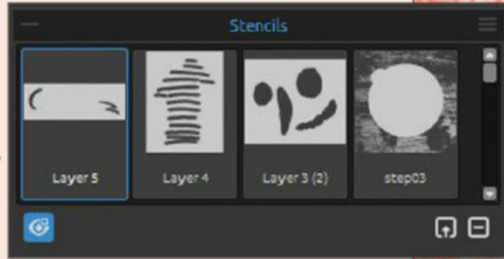
Rebelle enables you to place more than one stencil on the canvas. If you need to amend or manipulate one of them, select it with the right mouse button.
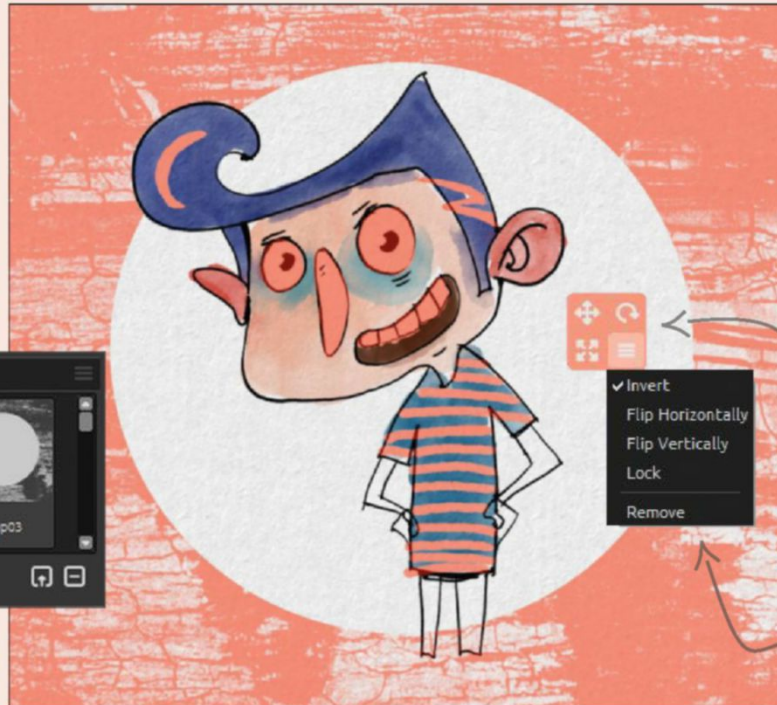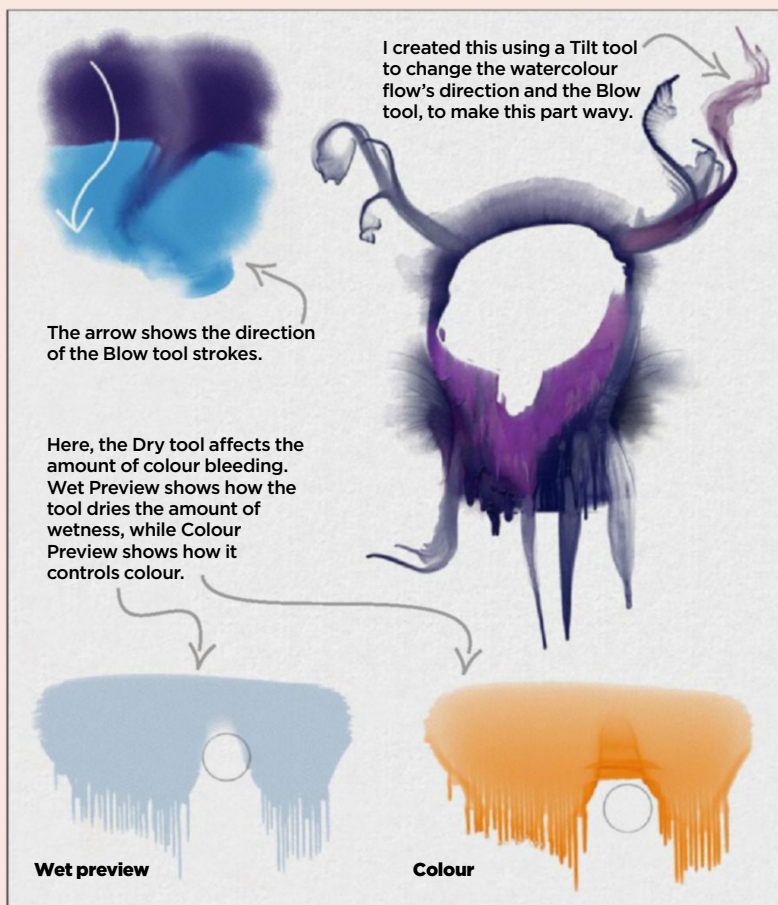
Drag these symbols to move, scale and rotate stencil. If you work on a tablet, you can use two fingers for rotation and scale.

You can invert the stencil by selecting the option that's bottom-right in the menu.

Invert
Flip Horizontally
Flip Vertically
Lock
Remove

I created this using a Tilt tool to change the watercolour flow's direction and the Blow tool, to make this part wavy.

The arrow shows the direction of the Blow tool strokes.

Here, the Dry tool affects the amount of colour bleeding. Wet Preview shows how the tool dries the amount of wetness, while Colour Preview shows how it controls colour.

Wet preview

Colour

I removed these edges with the Blend tool on a low Pressure setting, which gave me more control.

The Smudge tool worked well when I wanted to paint this creature's fur.

4 Rebelle's Blow and Dry tools

Here I've placed a simple stencil on the canvas and start to paint with a Watercolour brush. Then, with Caps Lock Key pressed, I activate a Blow tool and "blow" on the running colours to change their direction. To slow down or to stop flowing colours use the Dry tool (press D). It's a brush with an absorbency feature, which dries up specific parts of the canvas.
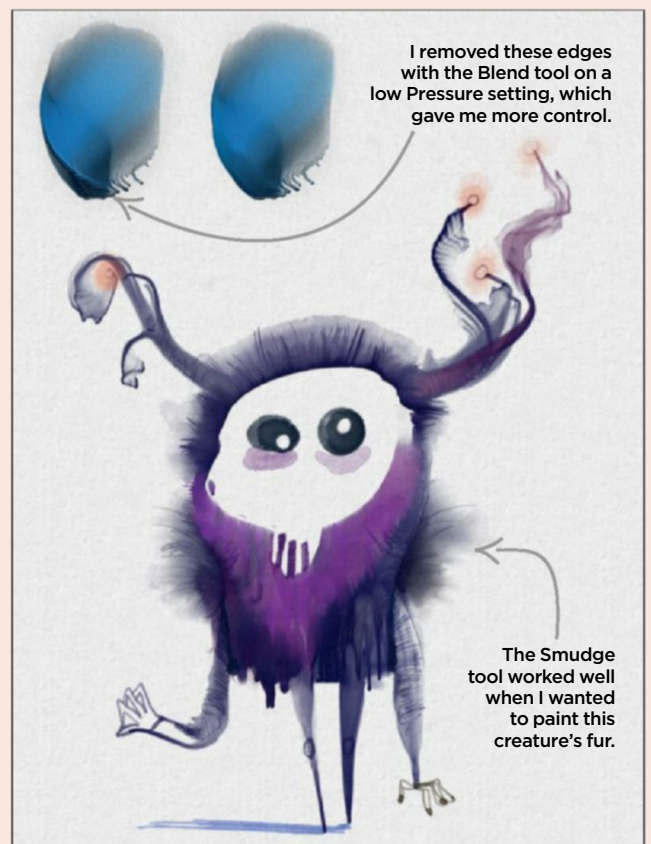
5 Blend and Smudge tools

Sometimes you can produce unwanted, edgy brush marks in a painting. You can blend them together with the Blend tool. You can also blend colours together, which works especially well with the Pastel and Pencil tools. The Smudge tool smudges the wet and dry parts of the painting. Note that you can choose various brush structures for creating different effects with both of these tools.

ArtRage

HOW TO GET MORE FROM ARTRAGE 5

Does budget limit your choices for software? **Nick Harris** doesn't see that as an issue these days, especially with the latest version of ArtRage

Artist
PROFILE

Nick Harris
LOCATION: England

Nick has been working
primarily in children's
publishing for more
than 30 years.
www.nickillus.com

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

With more variety of
painting software
around than ever,
we're spoilt for choice.
Yet the lure of the all-
powerful Photoshop is still strong.

That said, not everybody is a fan
of Adobe's subscription model,
preferring the older licence purchase
one. I sit in that camp. I was also
beguiled by a free version of Painter 5
when starting out (yes, that long
ago), before my budget would even
run to a version of Photoshop.

My eyes are always open to
alternatives, and the past few years
has seen me purchasing various
decent, budget-conscious painting
and drawing software. ArtRage,
SketchBook Pro, Mischief, Rebelle,
Paintstorm Studio and Clip Studio
Paint sit alongside Painter 2016 on
my system. ArtRage and SketchBook
Pro have proven to be my go-to
stalwarts for nearly all my work.
Hence it's with some delight that
I take a new version 5 of ArtRage,
which comes in at £64, for a spin.

Is it a viable alternative for
Photoshop? That's a question that
you'll have to answer for yourself,
dependent on just what you use
Photoshop for. If you mainly want to
draw and paint, in an extremely
competent and well-stocked
software, with a good choice of file
format import/export options, then
I'd say the answer is yes. Here we
tackle a multiple figure illustration,
going through how I use some of
ArtRage's arsenal, and touching on
a few new additions. ➡➡

Workshops
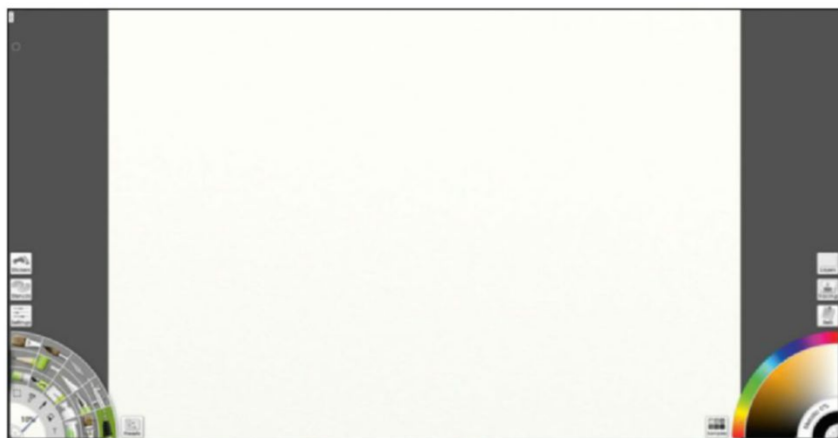
1 Starting out and establishing guides
Launch ArtRage 5 and the interface seems relatively unchanged from version 4, which offered a cleaner UI called Bench Mode. This one offers Docking Mode instead. You access it through View/Interface Mode. Both modes display three little boxes, top left of canvas. Drag out guide lines from these. Go through View/Layout Panel for edit controls, and do the same for Grids and Perspective.
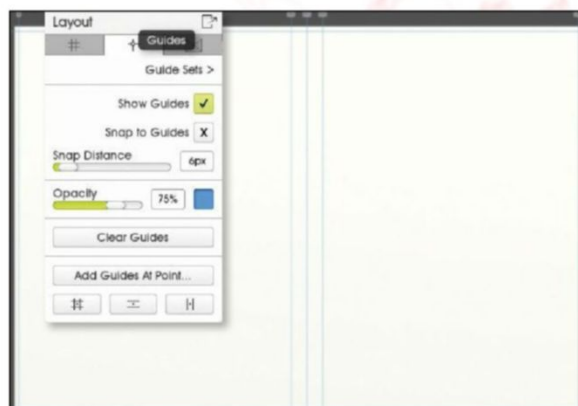
2 Customising the interface
I prepare a canvas and set up guide lines to represent the gutter and bleed for a double-page spread. I launch the Layer palette from the icon on the top bar, tear it off and dock to the right edge (drag the floating icon over to the side). Go through View to launch a new Toolbox Panel and then dock it to the other side.

3 Initial sketches
I select a Pencil and start sketching the idea of a circus troupe heading towards the big top. I load the Pencil tool into the Toolbox through the drop-down at the bottom of the pop-up Tool palette, which appears when you select a tool. I'm thinking of characters with fantasy tinges, and keep things loose for now.

4 First application of colours
I refine some of the line work, although it's still pretty crude. I'm working from my head without reference at this stage, but use whatever imagery works for you. I block in some base colours using the Pastel/Chalk tool on a layer below, and load a few favourite tools into the toolbox. I also save colours to it as Samples.
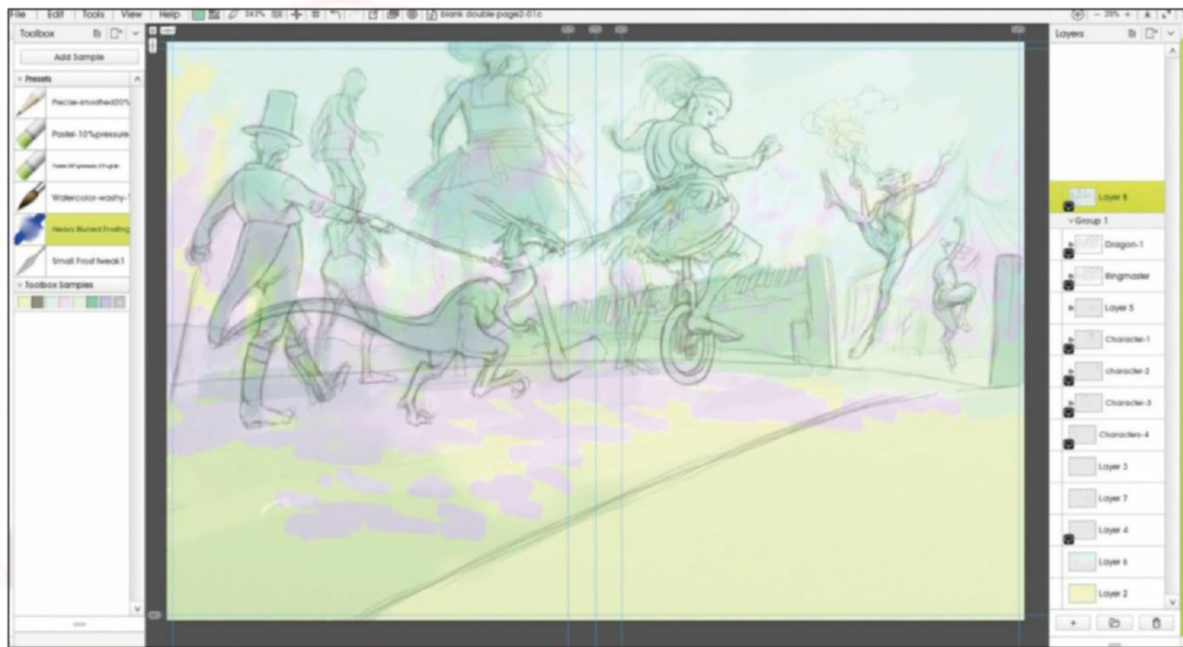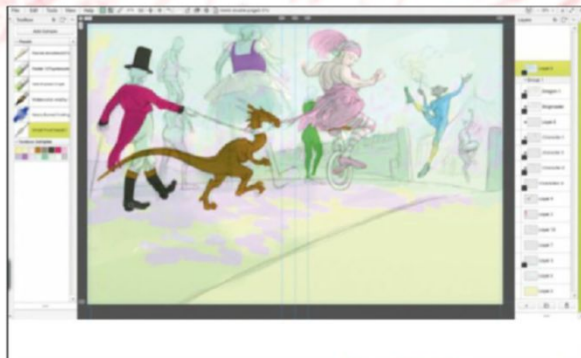
5 Placing the light and shadows
Everything's looking very flat at the moment, so I use the Watercolor brush on a layer set to Multiply to add some first hints of light and shade. I want sunset/sunrise light coming from behind the tent on the right. That informs where I lay the washes, the edges of which I soften in places using the Palette knife.

6 Benefits of colour blocks
Blocking in solid colour on the characters with the Pastel tool, on several layers below the shadow layer, helps me get a better idea of how shape and composition is going to work – or not. Building up colour interest overall also helps. The lower portion, left clear for text, can be reduced and so I move the circus troupe down.
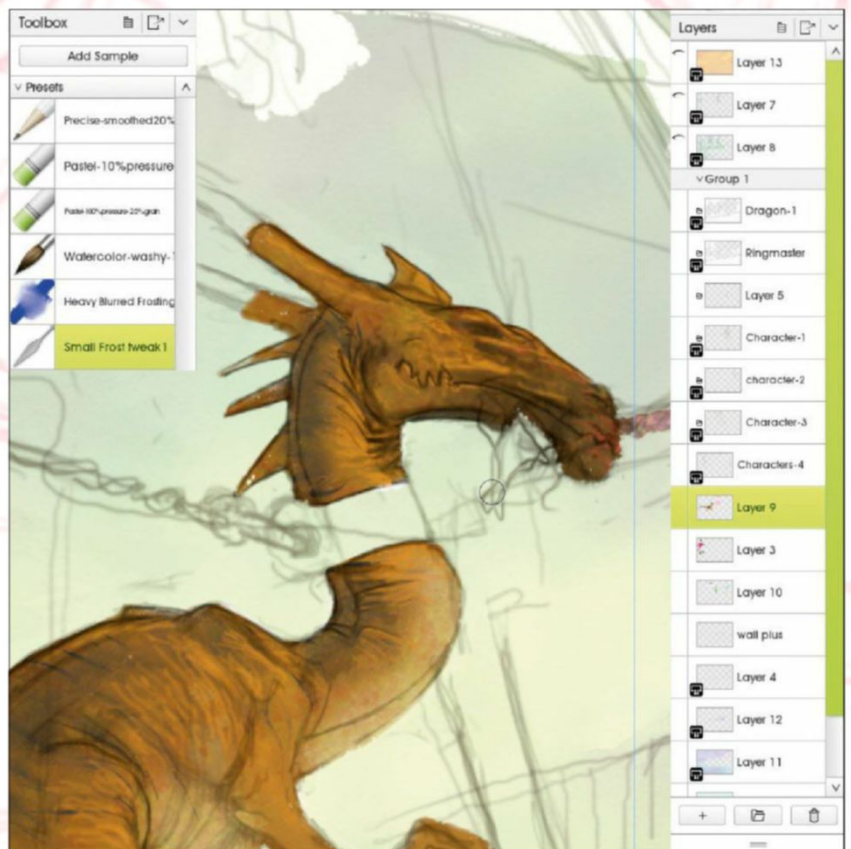
7 Apply textures with Stickers
ArtRage already had a custom brush system called Stickers. Now it has a second called Custom Brush. While Stickers are more akin to an image hose, this works more straightforwardly with a brush head. Open Tools/Brush Designer, load a brush head (painted white on black – try different sizes) and try the many controls, saving presets as you go. ➤➤

Workshops

8 Building up the composition

I add some texture to the ground plane, and keep working at solidifying the main figures. This includes working on both the solid colour layers, and also adding to the tones with more layers of shadow in varying colour. This helps towards a feel of richness and more naturalistic lighting. You can always merge those layers together later.

9 Creating a sense of warmth and depth

I want a warmer feel, so I duplicate a top glazing layer (ochre hues set to Multiply) and insert it lower down in the layer stack. This serves two roles, because as well as warming the overall feeling, by placing it behind the solid layers it helps lift them from the background more. It's a bit like instant atmospheric perspective.
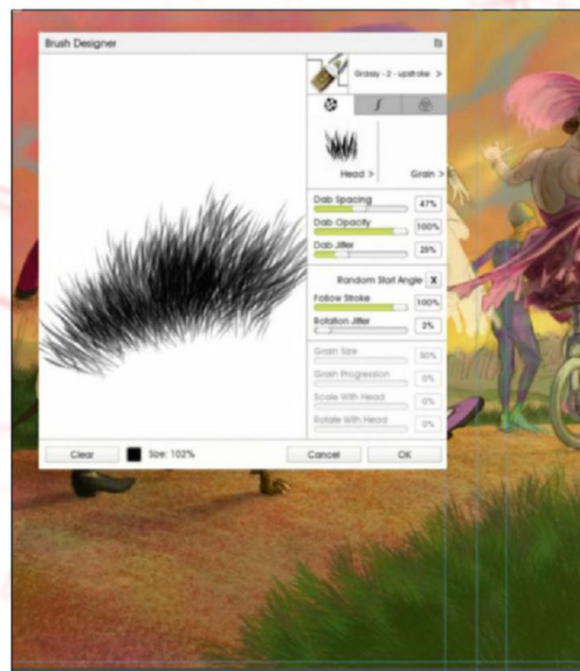
10 Painting blades of grass

I go back to the new Brush Designer to make a quick brush or two for blocking in grassy areas. I add some Rotation and Dab Jitter, and set their size to respond to Pressure, so that the blades don't look too uniform. I lay down darker strokes first and lighter second, while keeping the lighting scheme and perspective in mind.

11 Duplicate and strengthen
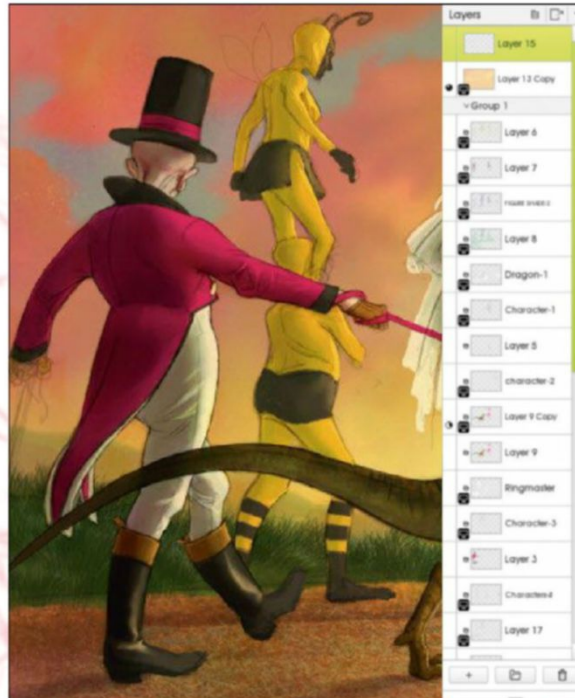I want the foreground figures to have stronger tones, so I duplicate their body colour layer and set it to Multiply blend mode over the top. That's far too strong on its own, so I adjust the Opacity and work back into the lighter areas in particular, to make the most of the contrast.

12 Merge layers where possible
Once the number of layers starts to become more of a burden than a help, I spend five minutes consolidating my decisions by merging as many layer clusters and groups of layers as I can. It works to clear both the Layer palette and my mind for the final push. That said, I still keep a lot of separate layers.
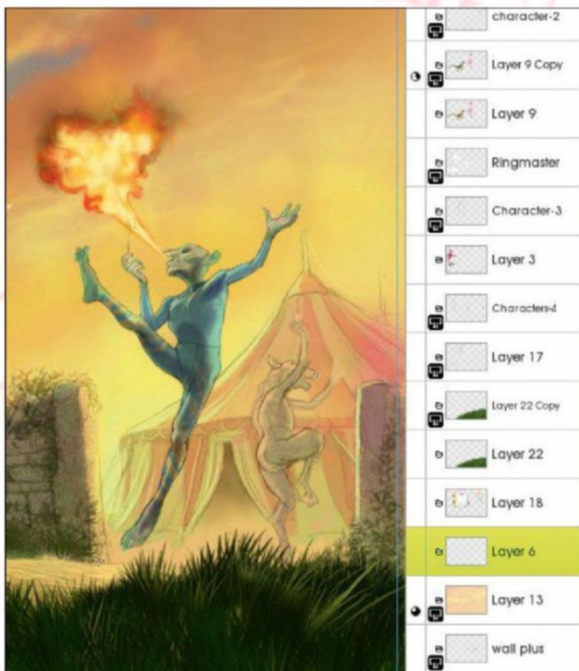
13 Pull the scene together
Take a step back and see if you think the image is working as a whole. It's easy to become involved in enjoying certain details at the expense of other bits… not that I ever do that, ahem! I duplicate an existing, blue wash and adjust the Opacity, before working into it to help the overall tonal balance.

14 Make those final tweaks
Now's the most enjoyable part, if you have time. Add highlight and accents. I do that on a layer on top of everything. Tweak those details you've been itching to tweak. Make sure things still work as a whole. I only use a few brushes and tools here, ArtRage has plenty more toys for you to play with. Enjoy them!

VIDEO WORKSHOP

Black Ink
CREATE A SCENE IN BLACK INK

Ayan Nag breaks down his process of concepting and composing a dramatic environment in this novel GPU-based painting program

Artist PROFILE
Ayan Nag
LOCATION: India

Freelance concept artist and illustrator Ayan loves travelling, plein air painting, dancing, playing cards and leaning new things!
www.artofayan.com

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

First of all, if you've never used Black Ink, it's a relatively simple program to use, so you should soon be up and running, but to help you get started I've created a beginner's guide on p78.

My approach to art is straightforward and my techniques can be easily introduced into your own workflow. I'll be explaining them in detail over the course of this workshop.

I generally start by choosing the canvas size and dividing it in four equal spaces. I'll then sketch rough thumbnails into these spaces, helping me to explore the possibilities of my initial idea while keeping all the concepts in one place.

Then I pick a sketch that appeals to me the most, and start to develop a colour palette that fits it. You can do this using a reference image, such as a photograph, a particular painting that you like, and so on. Just try not

to pick colours directly from them. From here on out I'll start painting while making small changes that help to improve the image.

I'll be using Black Ink's default brushes, although you can create your own custom brushes. So everything you need will be in the software when you install it (download it from **http://blackink.bleank.com**).

So without further ado, let's get going. I hope you have fun and learn something from my painting process.

DIGITAL ART REVOLUTION!
See **page 38** for our feature on the latest and greatest affordable art tools.

1 Coming up with thumbnails
This is the most important stage. It'll help you build the foundation of your painting, and gives you the chance to explore your idea and see how it can be improved. I divide the space into four equal parts and start sketching rough ideas. I then pick one sketch to develop further.
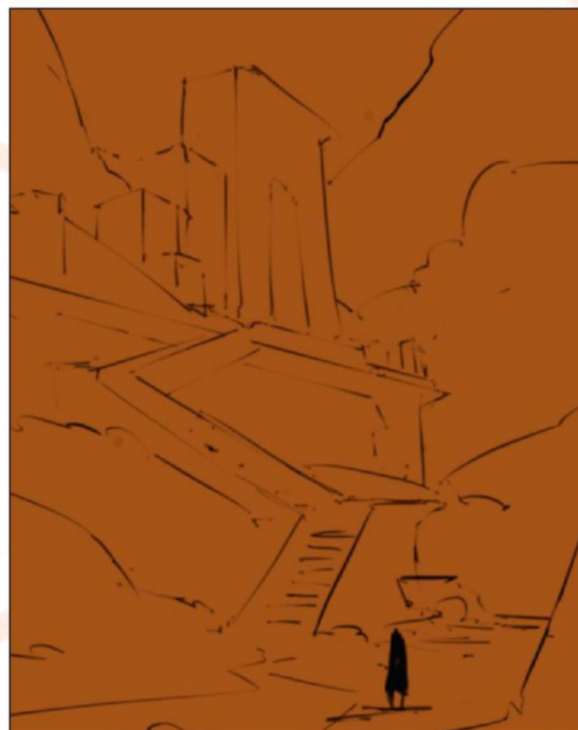
2 Put down the underpainting
The underpainting is the stage where you fill out the canvas with a single colour or gradient as a base for your painting. It's a standard method in traditional paintings. For this step, I create a layer below the sketch and fill it with a colour. Use a complementary colour (or a variation) of your main colour scheme to get started.

3 Blocking out the main shapes

I start painting colours on top of the underpainting and block out the primary shapes in the painting. Working carefully, I let some of the orange show up through the strokes. This will help me to quickly develop some interesting colours and make the points of interest stand out.

4 Introduce light to the scene

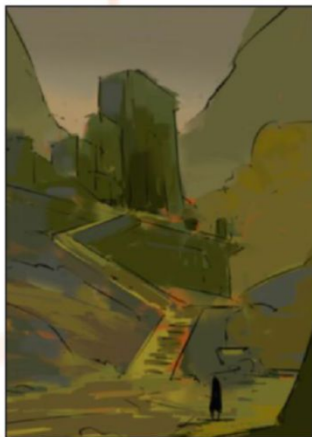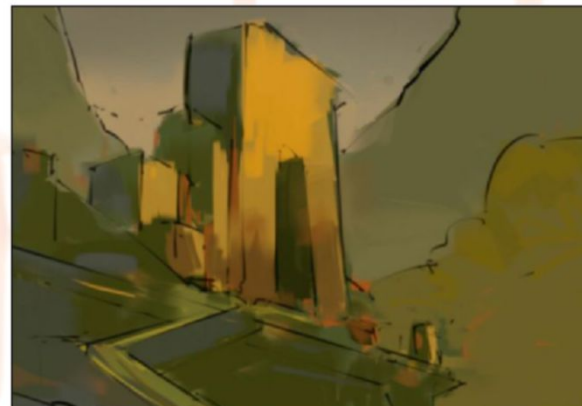Next, I identify the main light source and paint it with a lighter version of the existing colour. You can also complete this step by placing a Color Dodge layer on top and painting into it. I then add a hint of light from the sky using a grey colour. This acts as the secondary light source.

PRO SECRETS

Eliminate errors quickly

Regularly flip your canvas so that you see your work-in-progress in a new light. Doing this will also ensure that minor mistakes stand out, enabling you to correct them easily. You can even keep a duplicate window floating, where the image remains flipped. This enables you to keep track of both aspects of the composition.
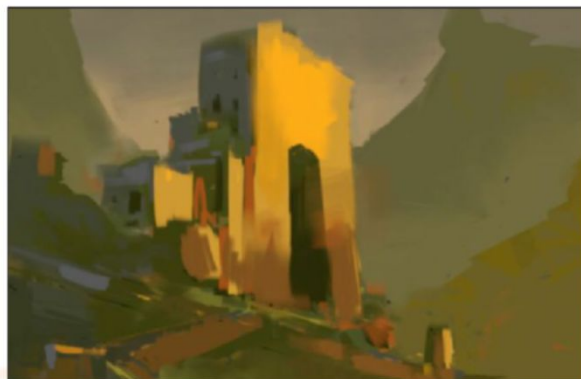
5 Getting rid of the sketch

After painting and further defining the shapes I erase most of the sketch. Now I have a rough painting that's free of any line art, which means I'm free to change objects and shapes around, to enhance the image. I recommend keeping the main objects on separate layers, because this will come in handy later on.
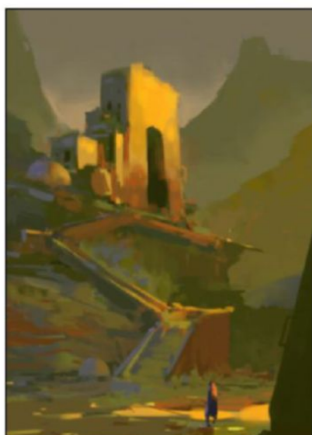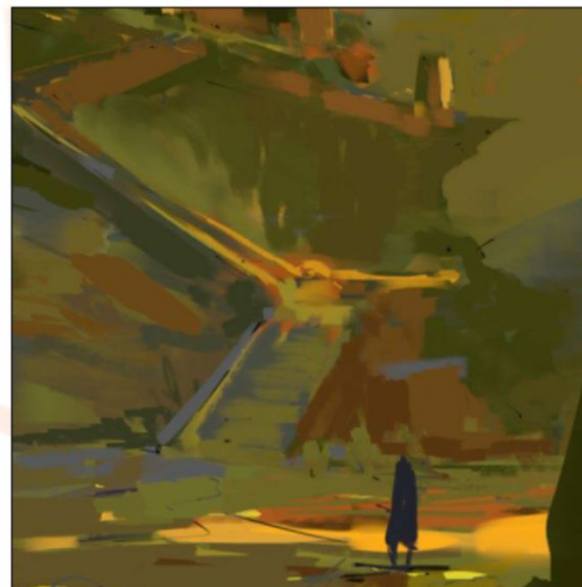
6 Bringing in new objects

After spending time tinkering with the painting, I start adding new objects to help enhance the scene. I refer back to my thumbnail stage for ideas, and keep going back and forth to discover what works best for this composition.
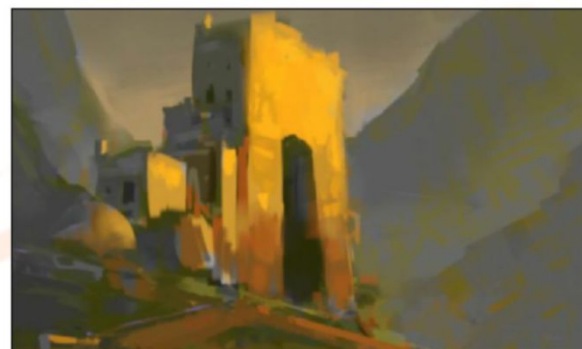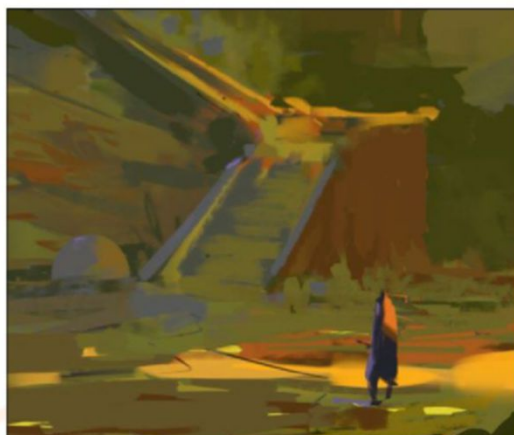
7 Controlling the saturation

Using saturated colours doesn't necessarily mean you'll produce a colourful image. Most often than not, using saturated colours everywhere will ruin a picture. So I carefully get rid of the extra saturation I had in place. I create a new Color blending layer on top and paint any affected areas with grey.

8 Refining shapes, adding new ones
I move on to refining the existing shapes and adding new structures, all the while thinking about the composition and how I can enhance it. I also lay down some more suggestive brushstrokes here and there, and just keep on painting.

9 Defining the focal points
Now I darken the surrounding areas of the focal points and points of interest. I also add some glow around the lit areas by painting on a new Color Dodge layer. These tweaks will keep the viewer's eye on the mark and thus give the painting greater visual impact.

10 Enhancing the depth of the composition
Emulating depth is an important part of creating a believable environment. The general rule of thumb is that the further away the objects are, the lighter and desaturated they become. Bearing that in mind, I create some fog to convey depth and keep on adding details. I also give the character an energy ball, just for fun!
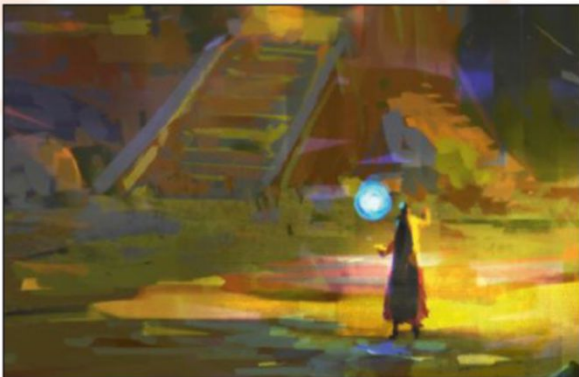
11 Get the most from Color Dodge
I use a lot of Color Dodge and other blending modes in my general workflow. Here I create a new Color Dodge layer and paint into it with bright colours and a Soft brush to indicate bounce light and refracted light. I'm now in the closing stages of this illustration.
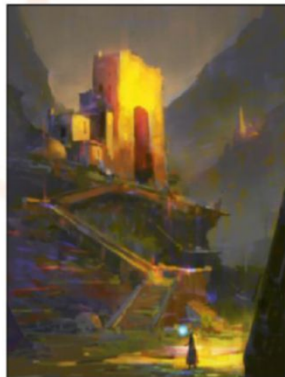
12 Final touches
I play with the value of the image and refine it that so the content reads better. I also carry out some colour adjustments and refine the brush strokes by sharpening them. To finish off the image I place minor noise on top of everything. This gives the image a more natural feel. ➤➤

PRO SECRETS

Start simply
Don't get lost in detailing an object too soon into the painting process. Start your image by using a big brush. Try to accomplish everything with fewer strokes of the brush. Make it simple and straightforward. You can always add details later on – or not, as the case may be.

BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO USING BLACK INK

Ayan Nag passes on a few key tips to help you get going with Black Ink and shows how you can adapt its features to your established workflow

1 ADJUSTING THE CANVAS SIZE

It's important to establish your document sizes before you start working. You can find the relevant option to do this by clicking Image>Resize. Once you open the panel, you can change the document dimension and resolution. You can also alter the dimensions to make the image landscape or portrait format.
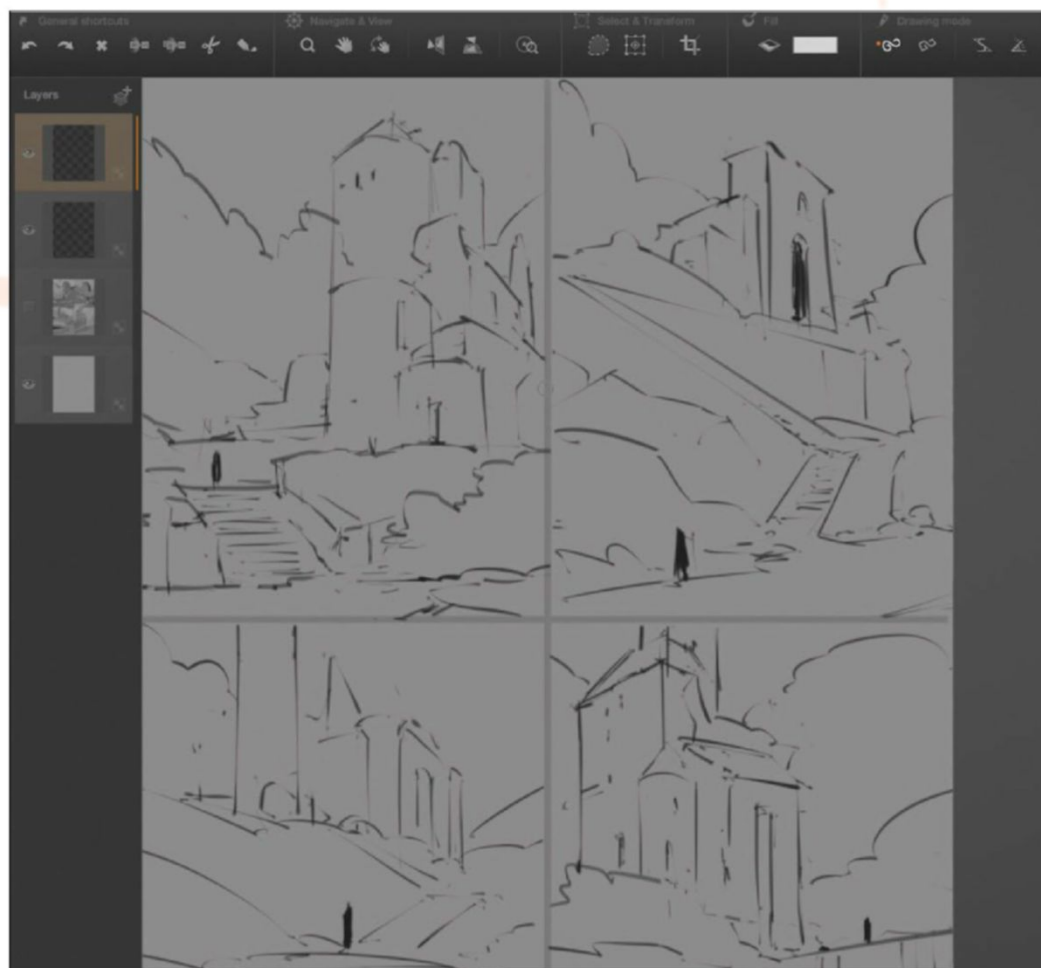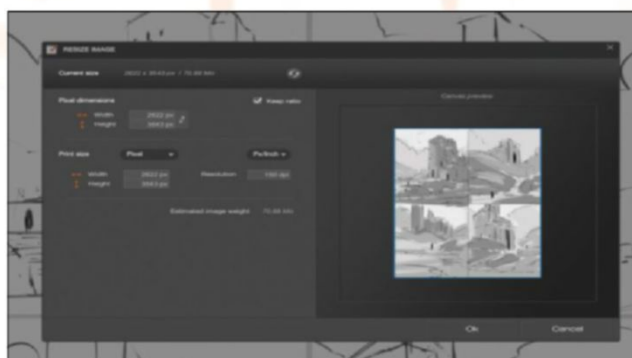
2 EXPLORE THE TOOLBAR

The toolbar lies just below the menus on top. Within it are a good selection of tools including Undo/Redo, Navigation, Flip canvas, Crop, Lasso, Fill and so on. Be sure to try them out.
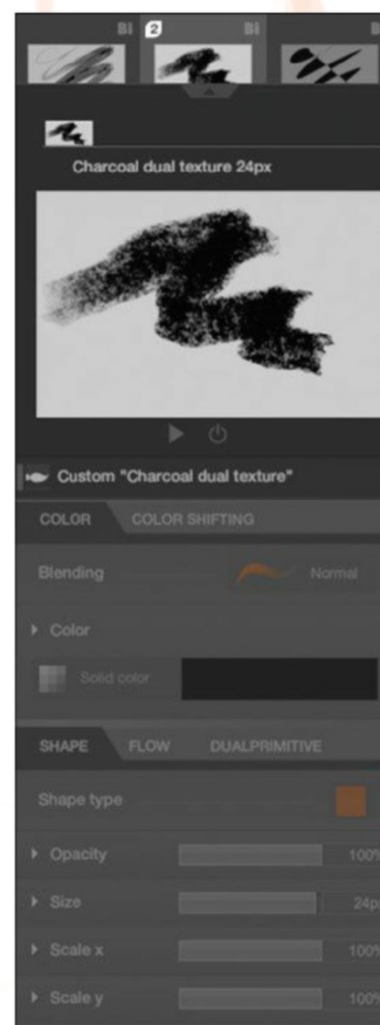
3 BRUSH PANEL

Press the small downwards arrow to extend the panel. This will give you access to all of the available brushes. There's also a panel just on top of the Brush panel where you can store your favourite brushes for easy access. I mostly use the default Charcoal Dual Texture brush. It's a great brush to paint – indeed, it's often the only brush I use to complete a painting.
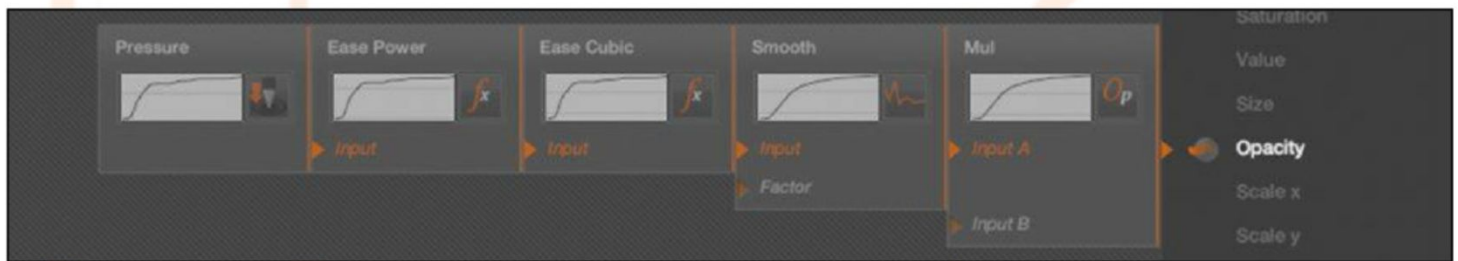
4 ALTER YOUR BRUSHES WITHIN THE CONTROL EDITOR

The Control Editor enables you to modify almost all aspects of your brushes. From controlling the Opacity to dictating how they handle colour and textures, everything can be modified through here. You can open the window by pressing C or from within the Windows menu. The Editor can look overwhelming at first, but don't be afraid to try it out and see what does what. You'll soon get used to how it works.
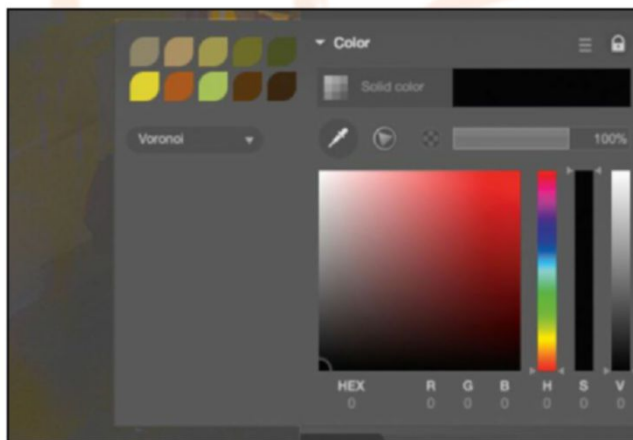
5 MANAGE COLOURS IN THE COLOR BOX

On the left side of the Color box you can store up certain colours that you often use. By pressing the Solid Color bar, you can access handy options such as Image-based color, Gradient color and Auto color-picking. Select this latter option and you can use the colour you're painting on top of, without having to select the colour first.
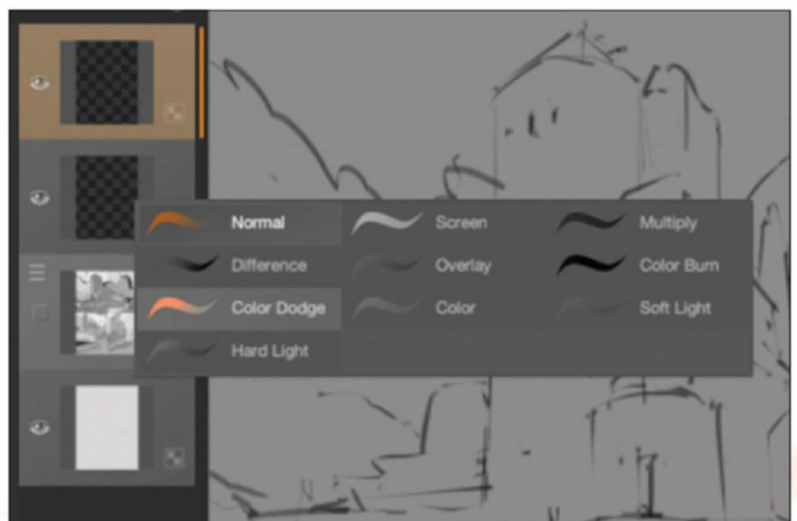
6 LAYER AND LAYER MODES

I use layers to keep the fore-, mid-, background and standalone objects separate, helping to create depth and manage aspects like colour and positioning. You can only have up to eight layers, so plan accordingly!

7 GET MORE FROM THE ERASER TOOL

Here's a technique that will make your Eraser much more powerful. Try holding down E while erasing. This will turn the Eraser pointer red and you can use the current brush you're painting with as an eraser. On releasing E you can go back to the Brush tool and keep on painting. In addition, using a custom eraser will produce better results and create interesting shapes to work with.
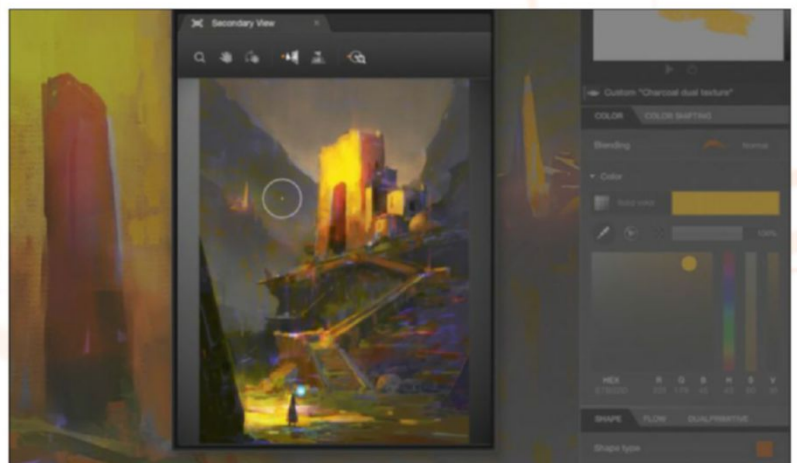
8 PRESS 'U' FOR A SECONDARY VIEW

A secondary view helps you keep track of your painting's overall progress, and highlights mistakes, too. So it's important that you keep a smaller preview open. You can also flip the image within the secondary view pane. It doesn't change the main window view, saving you the trouble of flipping your work-in-progress image.

Next month in...

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX

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Clip Studio Paint advice
How to set up a comic page with know-how from Neil Edwards.

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Udon artist JimboBox (aka James Ghio) share his masterful character art techniques.

SketchBook Pro
HOW TO PAINT YOUR DRAGON

Concept artist **Trent Kaniuga** unlocks the power of SketchBook Pro to add vibrant colour to your greyscale designs

Artist PROFILE

Trent Kaniuga
LOCATION: US

Trent's worked on World of Warcraft, Diablo 3, League of Legends, Overwatch and Hearthstone, and is the creator of CreeD and Twilight Monk. He teaches workshops around the world and online, and runs the Aquatic Moon art house. **www.aquatic-moon.com**

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

Anyone who's drawn on paper or dabbled with paint on canvas will instinctively grasp the basic interface of SketchBook Pro and be able to start drawing immediately. Yet the level of customisation and available functions establish this software as my first choice for illustration and conceptual design.

I'm normally not the kind of artist to do a lot of either photo bashing or photo manipulation. I like to dig in and get lost in the storytelling of character and environment design. SketchBook Pro removes the clutter of unnecessary functions from the main canvas, enabling you to develop an organic, natural grit and grain in your artwork without all of the fuss of menu diving. This means you're able to spend more time focusing on your character designs and getting your ideas down on the canvas.

Despite it's simplicity, I'm still discovering new ways to use SketchBook Pro's many features, and I'd like to share a few tips to get you started with it. In this workshop I'm also going to share with you my process from thumbnails, to basic composition, character design and finally how I use layer effects to add colour for a finished polish pass.

PRO SECRETS

Lay out your intentions
The most common question I get asked is how do I know when to stop adding details. If you set your intentions from the start, then you'll easily know when to stop once those requirements are met. If you don't establish a goal, how can you know when you've reached the end?
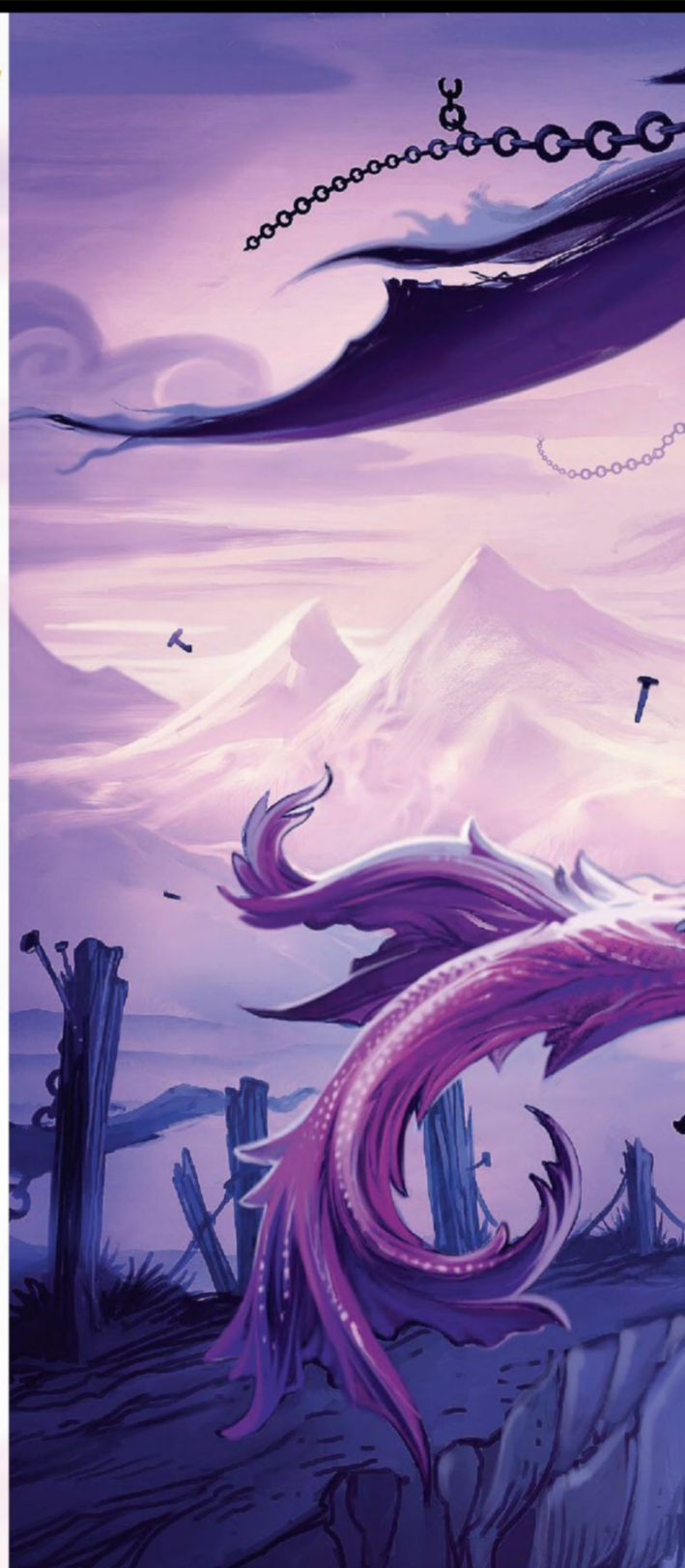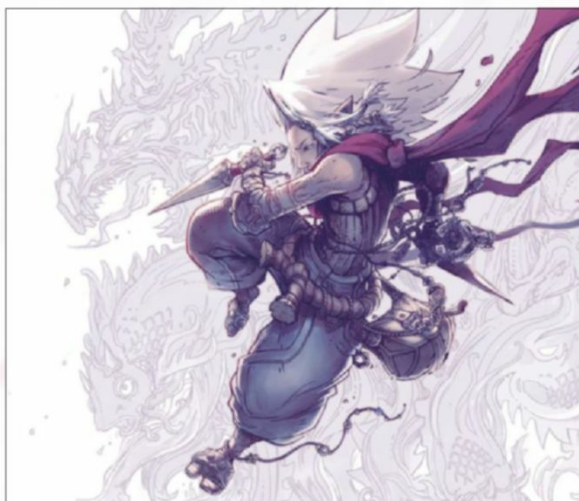
1 What do I want to paint?

The most important step in creating any image is to know what you want to accomplish. This establishes our yardstick, and it'll define when the image is complete. In this case, my intentions are to create an illustration of an epic battle from my comic Twilight Monk, featuring one of my established characters. I use the text tool in SketchBook Pro to write out my idea: "Capture the intensity of a tiny monk fighting a mythical beast."
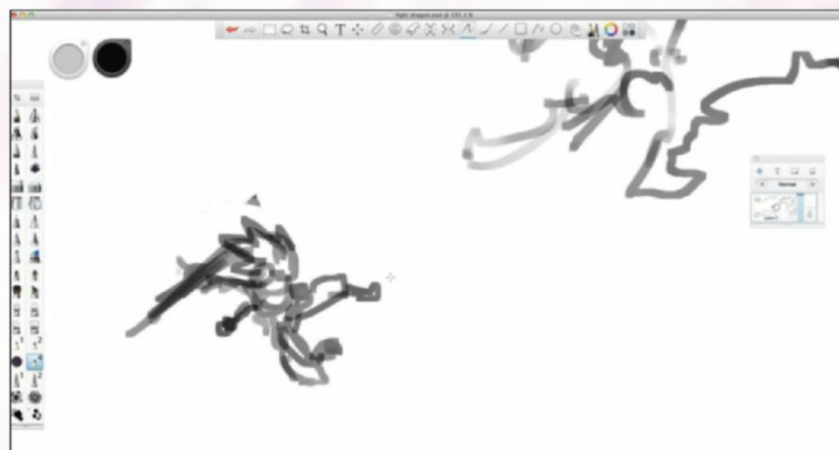
2 Get some shapes down

I set my canvas to 3,200x1,800 pixels, flood it with white and start to just scribble. It's important to not become intimidated by the blank page. Just blob down any old colour with any old shape. It doesn't matter what ends up on the canvas – just defeat the fear of the white page. You could also flood the image with a 50 per cent grey. Before long, I've got the hint of a small character who's up against something significantly larger… ➤➤

3 Produce thumbnails

To show the desired intense combat, I need to depict the main character, Mao Tenza, facing a mighty opponent. The image communicates a basic story arc in its entirety, and creates a few secondary questions. I could choose many angles for this, and create many thumbnails quickly. But I get something that I like right away.
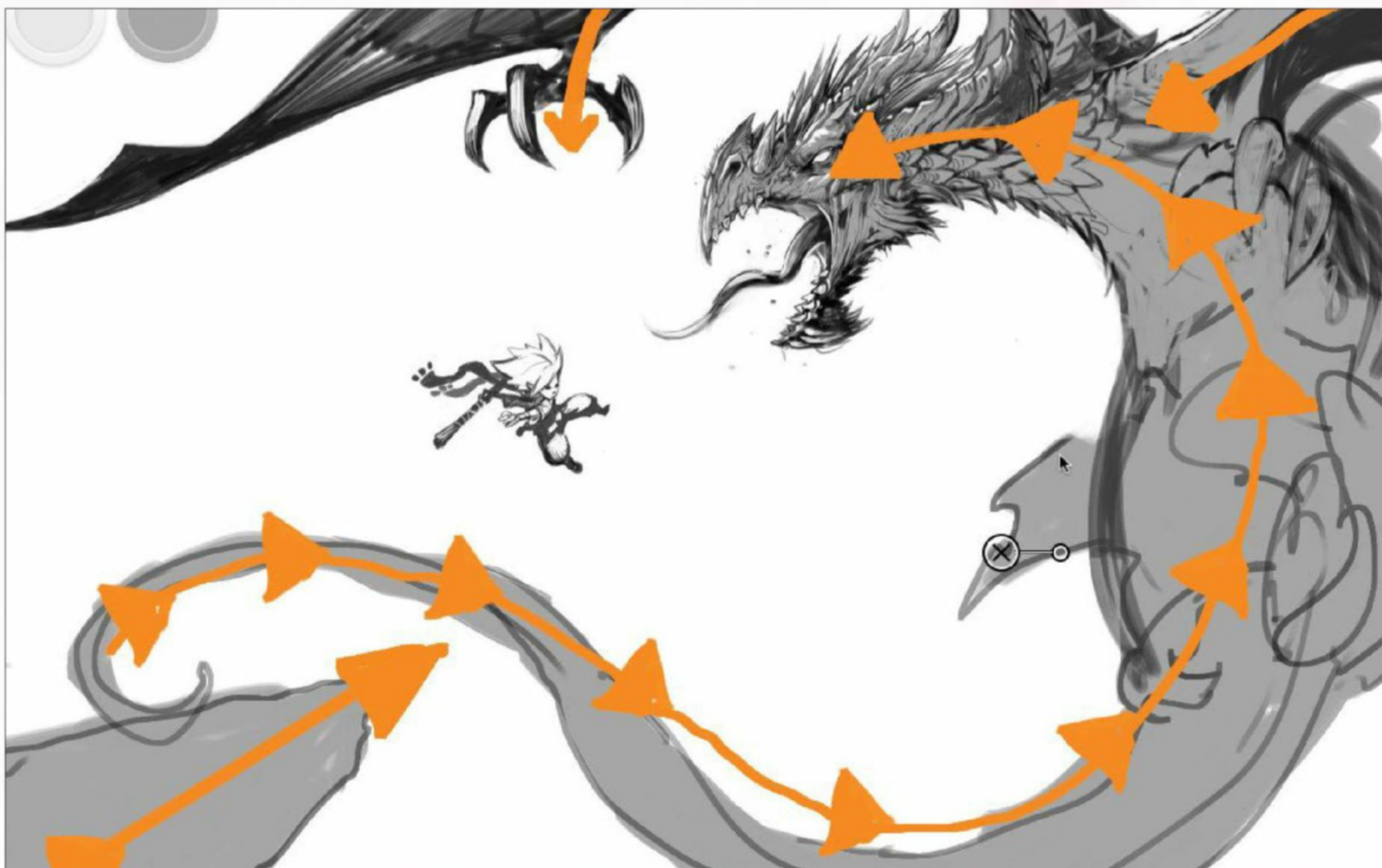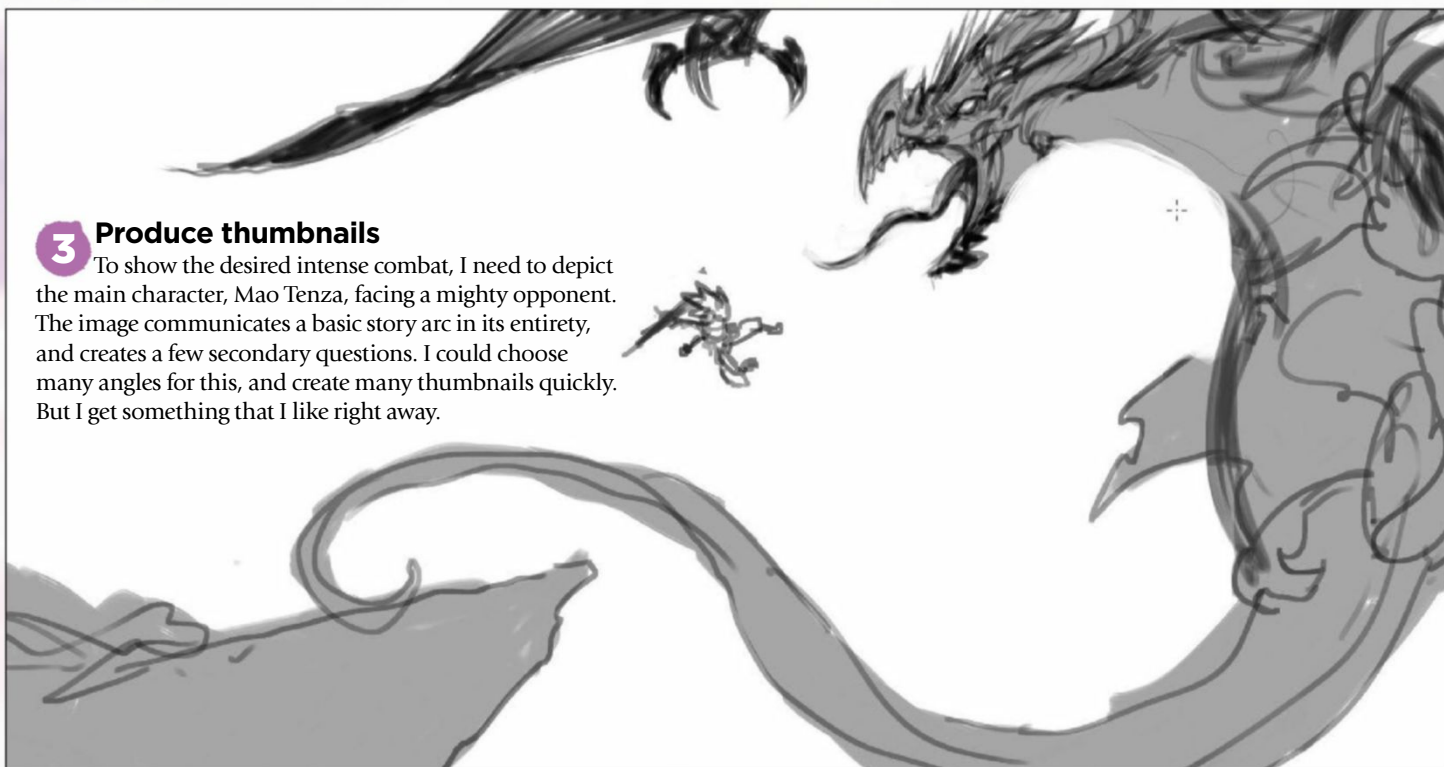
4 Ensuring that the image flows nicely

Here, I want to ensure that important elements in the image are pointing directly where I want the viewer to look. In this case, I'm confident that the viewer won't be able to miss the dragon's head (the primary focus), which happens to be pointing directly at the flying figure of Mao (our secondary focus). The beast's arms, his tail and even his wings will be enveloping the small humanoid figure. This layout further supports the intended story of our image – one of a fight scene where the odds are heavily stacked against the hero.

5 Blocking in with blobs

When you're blocking in your shapes, it's best to use large black or grey blobs and loose lines on a new layer, so that you can later adjust the Opacity and knock it back. It doesn't matter which tool you use, just a large blobby brush will do fine. Zoom out to make sure that your image reads as a thumbnail, and make sure that you're not creating awkward tangents in your composition.

6 Checking the value contrast

There are several methods that I use to create contrast in an image and control the focal points. But here, we're just focusing on the value contrast. Notice that nothing's touching the dragon's head, and there's nothing dark around it or connected to it apart from its body, which all supports the flow within the scene.

7 Define characters

After 20-30 minutes, you should be able to show someone your drawing and have them understand your aims. Don't add too much detail. We want just enough information to understand what we're looking at. Remember to recheck our intentions. Is this image telling the story that we really want to tell before we start rendering it? ➤➤

PRO SECRETS

Use your strengths
Eighty per cent of my paintings are things that I know I can do confidently. I always challenge myself with the last 20 per cent to do something that I'm not great at, but am keen to improve. This way, I'm always doing work that's a strong addition to my portfolio, but I'm also always growing as an artist.
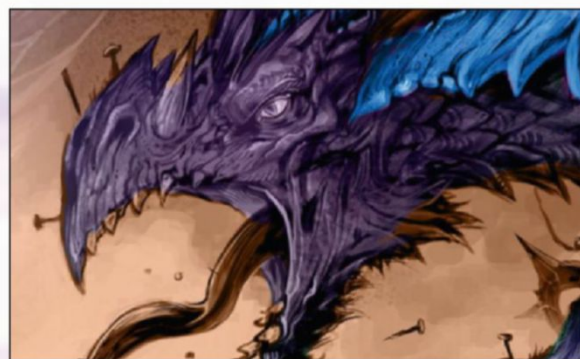
8 Noodling the details

Without worrying about colour, we're free to add details that enhance our story. Will the character have unique weapons or items in this image? Do we want to add any supporting characters? Is the essence of the image in place? Where's the character coming from? Where is he going? Would he be wearing anything that supports this particular story moment? This is where I spend most of my time on any image.

9 Colour flats

I use the Lasso tool to make selections and fill them with a desired colour. Set the layer to Multiply or Color blending mode. The advantage of using a Color layer that I can preserve all of my value rendering. If I use a Multiply layer then my changes will accumulate and I risk the image becoming too dark.

10 Colour changes and layer management

If I need to change a colour, I can simply go to Image>Adjust>Hue/Saturation and move the slider to produce the colour that I like. I also prefer to separate my objects into their own folders within the Layer panel. By doing this, I can lock the layer and just paint on that object, as well as making for a more organised creative process.
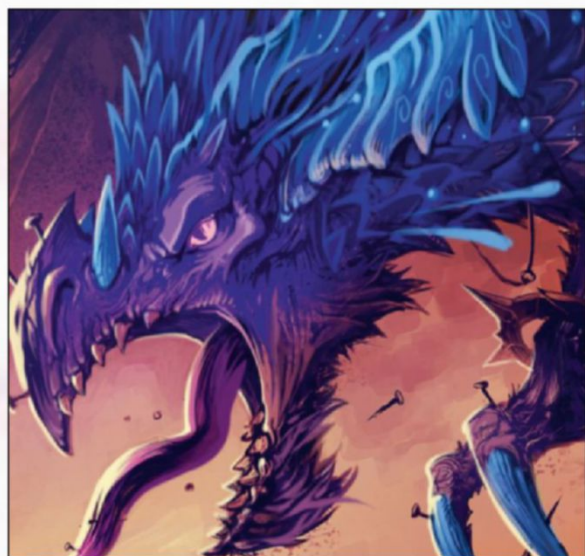
11 Color Dodge and Color Burn
Creating a layer and setting its properties to Color Dodge enables us to lighten the contrast of elements that we want to pop out, while creating a Color Burn layer means we can darken our contrast and increase saturation on areas that we want to disassociate from the focal point.
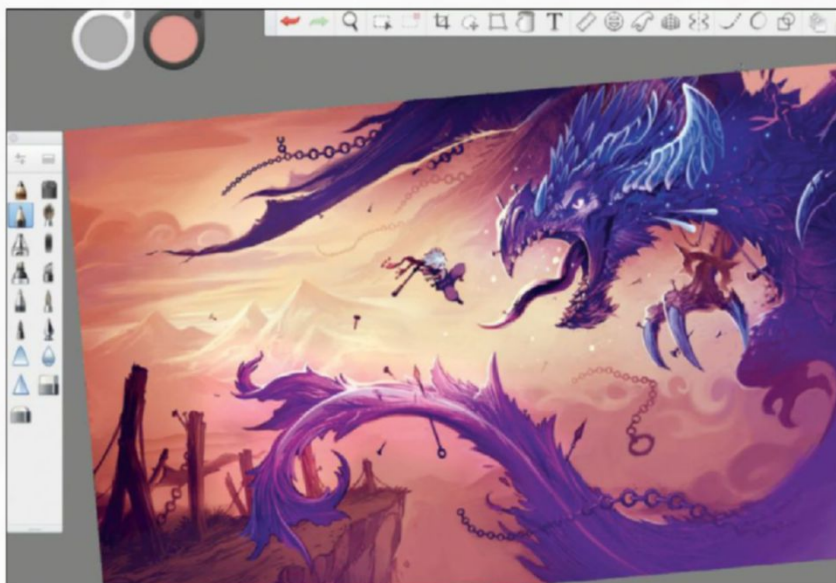
12 Painting in the colour details
This is where I zone out on all of the fun little colour details, colour dab and create fun details such as missing dragon scales. Try to create questions about the story in the viewer's mind. I try to choose contrasting colours for important elements to draw the viewer's eye.
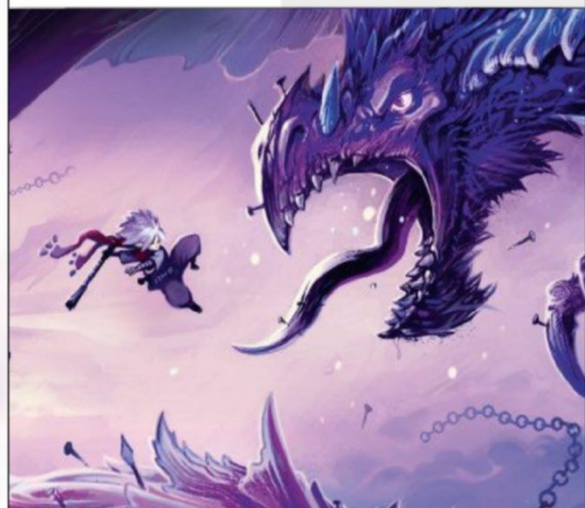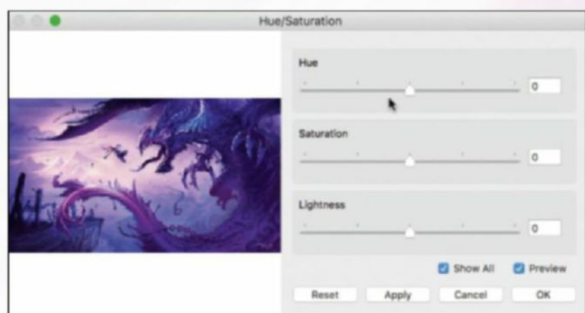
13 Making colour adjustments and turning forms in the scene
I try to pick a secondary light source that's off-camera, and then introduce a bit of edge lighting to my surfaces. This is a pretty cheap trick to turn forms, and apply a bit of dimension to our objects. I don't like how strong the orange was in the piece, so I use the Hue/Saturation slider to find a slightly cooler colour for the sky.
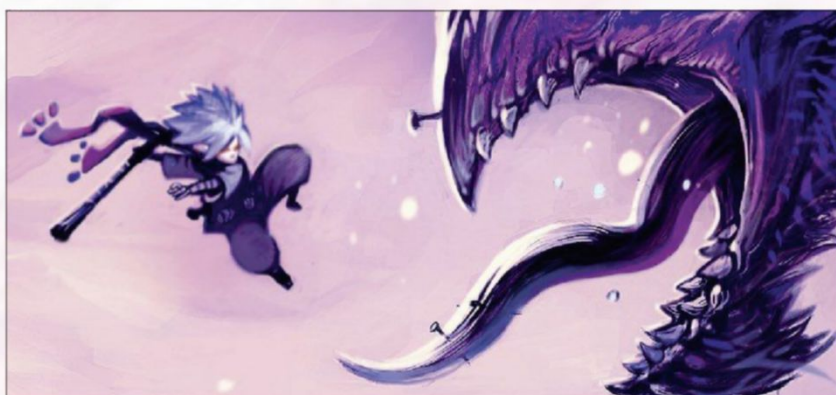
14 Making those final touches
This is where I put all of the finishing touches and add some rim light to pop out things that I want to pull more focus to, or edges that I want to strengthen. Does this image meet the intentions that we laid out in step one? If it does, then all good! But if not, we must be willing to repaint large portions of our painting to visualise that original, one-sentence summary.

Photoshop
FROM SKETCH TO FINAL CREATION

Pass the hammer… **Manuel Castañón** reveals how he came up with the idea of a diminutive dentist, and his perspective and colour approach

Artist PROFILE

Manuel Castañón
LOCATION: Spain

Manuel is a self-taught freelance illustrator from Mexico. In the past two years he's worked for Paizo, Panini, Games Workshop and Hex TCG.
http://ifxm.ag/mcastan

The idea for this image came to me during a visit to the dentist. As I was lying there anaesthetised while she was drilling one of my cavities, I wondered about how trolls, orcs and other fantasy creatures would maintain their teeth in a premium chomping state.

So the idea of a goblin working as a dentist came to mind, and since I was doing daily sketches during the month of January, I decided to make this scene my next sketch. I liked the idea a lot – it's something I hadn't seen before, and it introduced many quirky and fun elements. For example, the thought that the procedure posed more danger to the dentist than the patient, in case the latter became enraged by the pain. After all, I can't imagine goblins are very familiar with anaesthetics.

The sketch was well received, but I felt it had the potential to be developed into a finished image, so I made some thumbnails, and chose another pose and angle, while filling the background with other patients waiting to be seen.

I felt this image addressed many elements that are sometimes lacking in my work, such as interaction between characters, storytelling and an interesting composition. ➤➤

How I use…
PERSPECTIVE GRIDS TO GET IT RIGHT
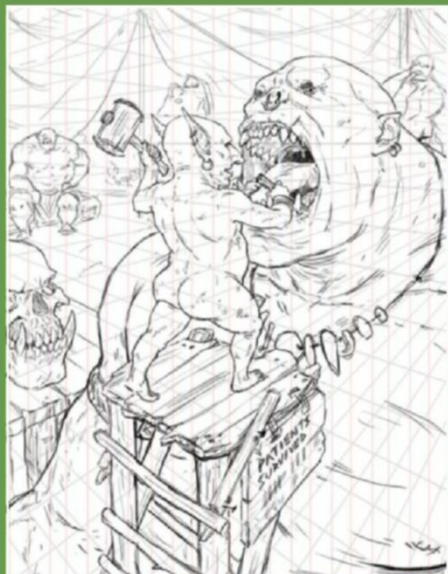
1 Line work in perspective
After the rough idea is visualised in a vague sketch, I drop in my perspective guidelines and start redrawing the scene as accurately as possible. To start with I don't concern myself with the characters' clothes – I'll draw those in a later step.

2 Rough colours
I usually try several colour palettes, using adjustment layers and layers to experiment with different variations, but for this one I had a pretty clear idea of what I wanted, so I just painted directly under the lines until I was happy with the results.

3 Painting over the lines
I paint over the lines, smudging and adjusting my way to completion. I like to work in just one layer because it's more manageable and makes it easier to use the Smudge tool. After the rendering is done I'll use adjustments to further pop the colours.

OPEN WIDE!

Patients who are impatient
The faces of the other ogres waiting for their turn in the background was my favourite part of the image to paint, and it's one that not many people notice. They're so tiny, it was really easy to paint them, and I loved painting their funny, bewildered expressions.
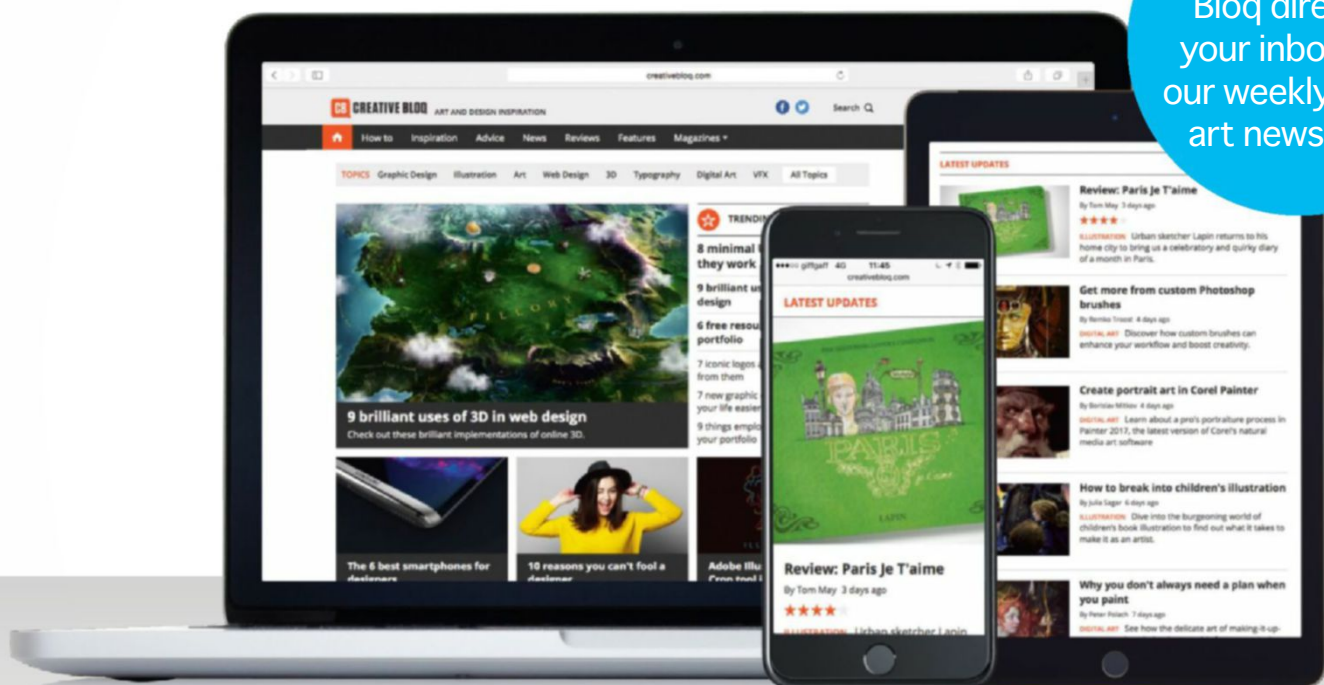
Tusks and teeth!
The mouth area was the hardest thing to get into perspective. I kept having to turn the grid back on and try my best at making it work, but by the end I really liked how it looks, and the expression of the ogre patient as well. Definitely worth the effort!

Skin and face
It was great fun to paint the skin – it has a lot of volume and subtle form variations. I have a confession: to better inform my painting of this guy, I studied a painted portrait of an old lady, and then just exaggerated what I learned!

Tools of the trade
The idea of putting some skulls, teeth and tools on a table nearby was a late one during the sketch process, but I'm glad I thought of it. Not only do these items add to the storytelling of the scene, but they also work to separate the foreground and the background.

A sign of what's to come
I like to joke in my work, and I just wanted to make it clear that the one in the most danger here is the "doctor" rather than the patient, so I introduced a board to check how many angry patients he's made it through.

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX
Reviews

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

7 PRODUCTS ON TEST
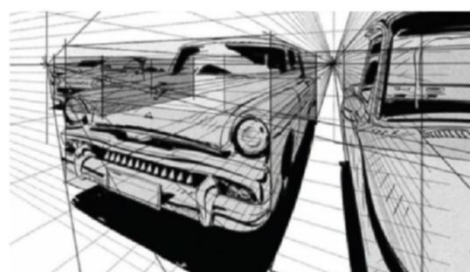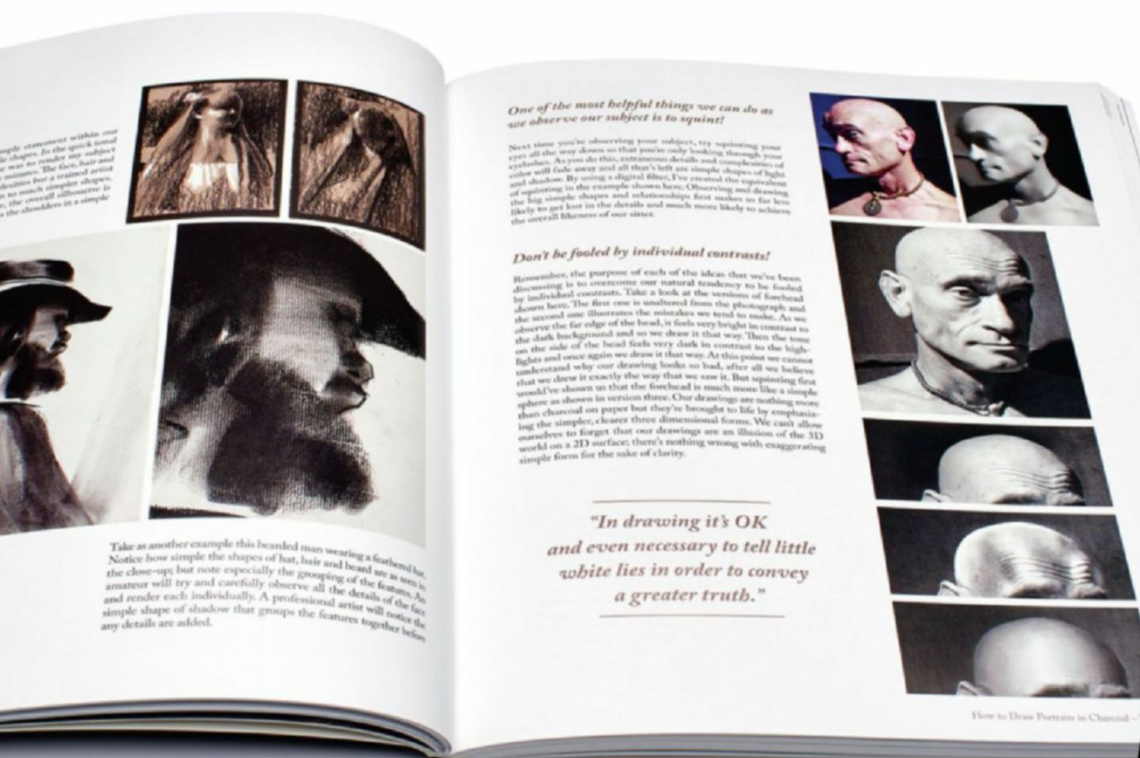
BOOKS

94 How to Draw Portraits in Charcoal
Animation artist Nathan Fowkes shares his techniques for drawing with charcoals.

95 The Pressed Fairy Journal of Madeline Cottington
Brian and Wendy Froud present stories and art from the Cottington Hall faeries.

95 Framed Perspective 1 and 2
Discover how to create perspective in comic and graphic novel environments.

96 The Great Wall: The Art of the Film
We check out a glossy guide to the recent fantasy film set on the Great Wall of China.

97 Beyond Watchmen & Judge Dredd: The Art of John Higgins
The artist reveals how he got to draw some of the best-known characters in comics.

97 Learn to Paint People Quickly
Watercolour artist Hazel Soan passes on her top tips for depicting human figures.

TRAINING

99 Creature Modeling for Production
Guerrilla Games' Ben Erdt takes you into the world of animation-friendly modelling.

RATINGS EXPLAINED ★★★★★ Magnificent   ★★★★ Great   ★★★ Good   ★★ Poor   ★ Atrocious

How to Draw Portraits in Charcoal

BLACK BEAUTY The veteran animation artist shares his techniques for drawing with charcoals, and presents a selection of his impressive artwork

Author Nathan Fowkes **Publisher** Design Studio Press **Price** £23 **Web** www.designstudiopress.com **Available** Now

As well as being a concept artist for the animation industry, working for the likes of DreamWorks, Disney and Blue Sky, Nathan Fowkes is also an art teacher who's won the hearts of the wider art community through his blog, where he posts a lot of his work. He draws on all these varied experiences in this guide to charcoal portraiture.

This book is not so much a linear 'how to' guide to charcoal drawing as a broad overview, outlining the basic principles and concepts you need to understand in order to master the discipline, documenting the author's own processes, and adding lots of tips and insight along the way.

Nathan begins with an exploration of some suggested materials and how to use them, via walkthroughs that

outline his own processes. The next section is based on four major roadblocks he's observed in his students. Inspired by this, he sets four challenges based on these concepts of practice, time limits, value limitations and perception, to get these obstacles out of the way from the get-go.

Nathan then outlines what he sees as the fundamental building blocks of

> ❝ **The book contains some fine advice, beautiful art and plenty of original touches** ❞

On the left, Nathan demonstrates the misinterpretation of light; on the right, he corrects the image.

charcoal portraiture, namely structure, clarity with artistry, the values of light and shadow, the design of edges and composition. There's also a chapter on common mistakes.

The final 70 pages of the 182-page book is more or less a gallery of drawings. Though Nathan' work is stunning, this feels like a bit of a missed opportunity, taking up space that could have been given to some formal exercises, or step-by-step tuition. The book's blurb promises "in-depth tutorials and valuable exercises". In truth, it doesn't deliver on this.

Overall, How to Draw Portraits in Charcoal contains some fine advice, beautiful drawings and plenty of original and welcome touches that
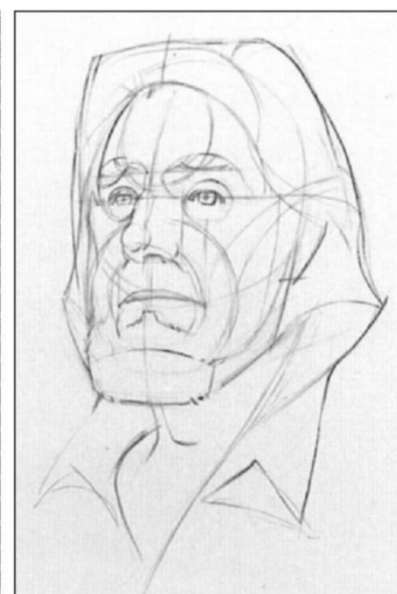
Here, Nathan explains how to give a good head of hair a tangible, three-dimensional structure.

pass on the benefits of Nathan's classroom experience. But on the whole, it feels a little unfocused.

To conclude, if you're looking for a formal study guide or reference work, then you may be disappointed. But if you're seeking to supplement existing knowledge and be inspired by a leading expert in charcoal drawing, then this book is still packed with impressive art and useful advice.

RATING ★★★☆☆

The Pressed Fairy Journal of Madeline Cottington

WINGED WONDERS The quirky and anarchic faeries of Cottington Hall are back in a brand new volume of stories from the Froud powerhouse

Authors Brian and Wendy Froud **Publisher** Abrams **Price** £16 **Web** www.abramsbooks.com **Available** Now

When it comes to the worlds of faerie and folktale art, you can't get much more preeminent than Brian and Wendy Froud. Wendy is best known as the fabricator of Yoda, while Brian worked with Terry Jones on the original Lady Cottington's Pressed Fairy Book, released in 1995.

Brian and Wendy's art visualises a host of weird and wonderful faerie folk in a variety of comical poses.

Now the Frouds have collaborated on a new Lady Cottington volume. This time it's a scrapbook-style journal telling the story of the Cottingtons and the faeries living among them, then spinning a new narrative about the new faerie-related adventures of Maddie, one of their descendants.

It's all gorgeously illustrated, with evocative paintings, quirky ephemera and steampunk-esque photography aplenty. These deliberately repulsive faeries are a world away from the delicate Disney archetype, and all the more interesting and intriguing for it.

Overall, there's a verve and spirit to the art within the book that brings the Cottington's story to vibrant life.

RATING ★★★★☆

Framed Perspective 1 and 2

DISTANCE LEARNING Two technical yet beautifully illustrated guides to creating perspective in comic and graphic novel environments

Author Marcos Mateu-Mestre **Publisher** Design Studio Press **Price** £32 and £20 **Web** www.designstudiopress.com **Available** Now

With 25 years of experience in feature animation, Marcos Mateu-Mestre is the perfect person to equip artists with the technical knowledge needed to create high-quality art for the entertainment industry.

In the first of these two volumes, he focuses on breaking down the art and science of perspective and showing how these principles can be used to create entire, believable environments

In-depth captions alongside technical diagrams help the reader to demystify this daunting art topic.

for visual storytelling. In the second, slimmer volume (120 pages to the first's 228), he covers more intricate challenges with scenes, such as projecting shadows on to environments and depicting figures in perspective, and in different situations.

Both volumes explain the technical aspects of drawing in a manner that would sit happily in any academic textbook. And by teaming this with expressive and exciting comic art, which help clarify the points made with reference to his real-world workflow, Marcos has created a unique learning resource. Plus the final sections of each book – notes on composition, glossary and index – work together beautifully to pull all the advice and information together.

RATING ★★★★★

The Great Wall:
The Art of the Film

BRICKING IT This guide to the recent Matt Damon non-blockbuster lacks both art and insight, despite the fantasy setting of the film

Author Abbie Bernstein **Publisher** Titan Books **Price** £30 **Web** www.titanbooks.com **Available** Now

The Great Wall is an historical action fantasy film starring Matt Damon about a horde of monsters attacking the Great Wall of China. It garnered mixed reviews and did disappointing business at the box office.

But there's one thing everyone's agreed on: it looks amazing. So we were looking forward to checking out this coffee table tome that purports to focus on the art behind it. Yet just like the film itself, this book is full of promise but fails to deliver.

What you expect from an 'art of the film' book, especially one costing £30, is a detailed insight into how the visuals were created. You want to see how the production designs were built up, from original thumbnail sketches through concept art and storyboards, to VFX breakdowns. But while there is some of that, there's far too little. Instead, the bulk of the images are film stills, and much of the text is more broadly focused on the making of the film, rather than its art and design.

That's a shame, because in terms of sheer production quality, this is one of the most nicest looking books we've seen in a long while. Each of the images is beautifully reproduced across the 210 large-format, glossy pages. And where concept artwork is included, it's stunning stuff. But there's simply not enough of this, and worse

> 66 **The book's strongest section is the 44 pages that are devoted to the Tao Tei** 99

Concept art featuring an early design for a Tao Tei Queen. Annoyingly, the artist is uncredited.

A Tao Tei Drone attacks: one of the few instances where storyboards are reproduced in the book.

still, the artists behind it aren't even credited, which indicates where this book's priorities lie.

The strongest section is the 44 pages devoted to the Tao Tei. We get to see how these monsters from Chinese legends were created for the film, from start to finish, including research material, a range of early and developed concept art, through to maquettes and 3D sculpts, along with artists' insights about the thinking behind each design.

If the rest of the book had been like this, we'd have been happy bunnies. Unfortunately, it isn't. Granted, it's well researched, and includes interviews with the director and producer, a range of character studies, and a ton of detail about how the film was made. And physically, it's a beautifully produced book with some exquisite finishes, most notably the ancient scroll-style binding. Bottom line, though: it just isn't an 'art of' book – it should have just been called a 'making of'.

RATING ★★★☆☆

# Beyond Watchmen & Judge Dredd: The Art of John Higgins

CHARACTER BUILDING The veteran English artist reveals how he got to draw some of the best-known figures in comics…

Author John Higgins **Publisher** Liverpool University Press **Price** £20 **Web** www.liverpooluniversitypress.co.uk **Available** Now

John Higgins is best known as the colourist on Watchmen. But he's far more than that, as this 272-page softback book reveals.

This book is a companion piece to an exhibition at Liverpool's Victoria Gallery & Museum (on show until October), and lets John tell the story of his career in his own words.
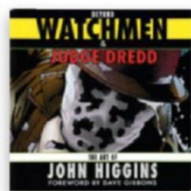
John worked with Alan Moore and Brian Bolland as the colourist on The Killing Joke.

There's a lot of text here, but it's not just all backstory and backslapping. Instead, John's account is full of refreshing honesty, including a lot of useful, practical information for aspiring artists, such as how page rates are broken down and the benefits of working in book publishing versus comic publishing. He also reveals some neat tricks of the trade.

As you'd expect, carefully curated examples of John's excellent artwork bring everything to life. And with fascinating anecdotes from across a 30-odd year career, and a foreword from his Watchmen collaborator Dave Gibbons, it all adds up to a fascinating account from a great graphic artist.

RATING ★★★★★

Learn to Paint People Quickly

QUICK STUDY The well-known watercolour artist passes on her tricks and techniques for depicting human figures, in this accessible book

Author Hazel Soan **Publisher** Pavilion Books **Price** £10 **Web** www.pavilionbooks.com **Available** Now

Perhaps best known from Channel 4's Watercolour Challenge series, Hazel Soan is an internationally successful artist who loves sharing her insights through books and teaching. Her latest guide focuses on painting human figures realistically.

It begins with the basics (understanding proportions, symmetry, foreshortening and perspective) before moving on to finer
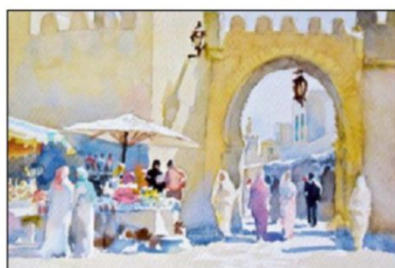
Hazel uses her painting of a Tunisian market to explain how to convey the effects of lighting on people and objects in a scene.

details (plausible poses, indicating movement, lighting and shadows). Then it looks at more advanced areas such as folds and creases in clothing, depicting people within café scenes, and skin tones and colouring. Each tip, pointer or lesson is illustrated by an example of Hazel's artwork; mostly watercolours, all fully captioned.

If the ambiguous title confuses you, we should point out it's the learning process that's quick, not the painting itself. In other words, this is quite a small, short book filled with tips rather than lengthy instruction.

If you're after a more detailed and comprehensive introduction to painting people then, you need to look elsewhere. If, however, you want a series of bite-sized pointers, this pocket-sized hardback offers a quick, fun and colourful way to get started.

RATING ★★★★☆

You've got your 2D concept in place – now it's time to turn it into a 3D asset. Ben shows you how.

Ben's ZBrush sculpting revolves around ensuring that the anatomy works at all levels of subdivision.

Retopologising the model in Modo is time-consuming and tedious, but necessary.

Creature Modeling for Production

GOOD TO GO Guerrilla Games' Ben Erdt takes you into the world of animation-friendly modelling – with bags of design tips along the way

Ben's video helps you create models that not only look great, but are technically ready for animation.
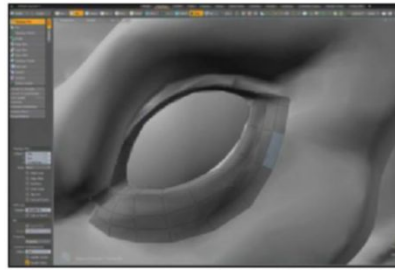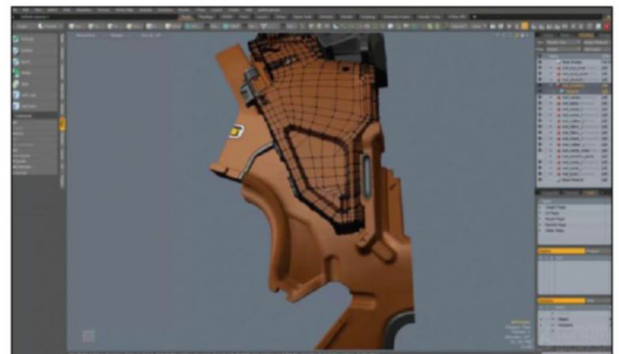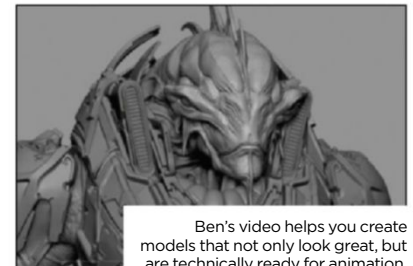
Publisher The Gnomon Workshop **Price** Subscription only (from £39 per month) **Format** Streaming video **Web** www.thegnomonworkshop.com

Even if you've no intention of exploring the 3D tools that Ben Erdt's video majors in, the first section of his seven-hour tutorial is essential viewing. It's as good an overview of how to relate personality and environment to character or creature design as you're likely to see.

The creature Ben goes on to model doesn't just look cool: every part of its anatomy and costuming relates to the back-story and setting that Ben has created. Whether you're into 2D or 3D, watch and learn from this.

After the humanoid alien creature is introduced, the focus switches to 3D production for games or film, as Ben presents his workflow for building a character or creature that's ready to hand over for animation.

Ben creates his base model in ZBrush, adopting a pragmatic mix-and-match approach to his choice of

tools: some DynaMesh sculpting here, a little ZSphere modelling there. He shows how to relate the level of detail you need to production requirements: if the hands are never shown in close-up, for example, there's little need to place every pore on the skin there.

The model transfers into Modo for the rest of the video, although the principles Ben covers here apply to any 3D software with decent modelling tools. Retopologising the model (rebuilding it so that it'll deform correctly during animation) is a necessary grind, he reveals.

Ben's a personable tutor, offering some broader insights into working within a production team and punctuating his technical overview with quirky tips. There's a moment when he zooms the camera so far back from the creature it becomes a speck on the horizon: the ultimate way of reading a model's silhouette.

DETAILS

Topics covered
- Character design
- Base modelling
- Preparing a model for export
- Modo modelling tools
- Retopologising
- Soft-surface and hard-surface tools
- Modelling details
- Test animations

Length
417 minutes

Rating
★★★★☆

ARTIST PROFILE
BEN ERDT

Ben is a character and creature designer and modeller, working at Guerrilla Games as a senior character artist. His initial interests in creating CG characters as a hobby turned into a career, and he enjoys drawing, sculpting, modelling and texturing as well as rendering. After graduating from Vancouver Film School, he started at Guerrilla Games working on Killzone: Shadow Fall as well as Horizon Zero Dawn. Ben's artworks have been featured on websites and magazines.

www.ben-erdt.de

Workshops assets are available...
If you see the video workshop badge then you can watch the artist in action. Turn to page 6 to see how you can get hold of the video.

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX
Traditional Artist
Inspiration and advice from the best pro artists

This issue:

FXPosé

SHOWCASING THE FINEST TRADITIONAL ARTISTS

Chuck Grieb

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Casein, oil, acryla gouache **WEB:** www.chuckgrieb.com

A fan of fantasy art since watching Jason and the Argonauts as a child, Chuck has worked for Disney and Nickelodeon, and is now a full-time teacher.

1 SQUIRE
"A young faerie Darryn poses for a portrait. This was picked for Infected by Art Vol 5."

2 DOGFIGHT
"Goblins and faeries battle in the skies. The goblins in steam-powered flying machines, the faeries on feathered steeds."

3 TUCKER'S RACE
"I'm writing stories and creating illustrations describing the Garden Clans faeries. Here they race through the trees."

4 LIZARD RIDER
"A rabbit warrior and lizard rider pause as they return from a skirmish."

Jessica Douglas

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Watercolour **WEB:** www.jessicamdouglas.com

Jessica combines traditional paint with precious stones, gems and wire. "I stick with projects close to my heart," she says.

1 LEVIATHAN
"I have an intense fear of the ocean. There's no telling what's below us when we sail, and it has filled my nightmares many times."

2 PEACOCK DRAGON
"I wanted to make things a little more 3D than usual, so parts of the tree were twisted wire, and the flowers were sculpted from thin foam. It made this piece a real challenge to frame."

3 SLAG
"Often, what a culture leaves behind is its gods… and its garbage. This is part of a series exploring the juxtaposition of spirituality and our discarded goods."

4 KNOWLEDGE
"This painting was also part of my What we Leave Behind series, and shows the embodiment of knowledge residing in a broken-down library."

Fancy sharing your traditional art with your fellow readers? Then email five pieces of your work and a short explanation about each one, along with a photo and a few details about yourself, to **fxpose@imaginefx.com**

Oils

GET PLANNING FOR ALLA PRIMA OILS

The wet-into-wet oil painting technique yields great results if done correctly. Follow ROB REY'S workshop as he achieves this distinctive look in a stellar piece of art

Alla prima, or wet-into-wet painting, is a technique that I've long admired. A single layer of thick paint can create a beautiful, buttery effect on the canvas, while multiple layers of built-up paint texture tend to look crunchier and rougher.

Unfortunately, my paintings almost always take several days to complete. Of course, the paint never stays wet that long, which makes achieving that buttery look difficult. Primarily for this reason, my process is heavy on planning and preliminary work. In addition to familiarising myself with the anatomy and forms I'm about to paint, working out the colours and other details of my final image ahead of time helps me to move quickly.

More importantly, this enables me to finish one wet section at a time,

ARTIST INSIGHT
SQUEEZE-CLEAN YOUR BRUSHES
Between colours, rather than slosh my brush in solvent, I squeeze my brush out in a clean cloth rag. The low surface tension of solvent can actually muddy your colours more by allowing paint deep in the ferrule of the brush to fluidly mix with your next colour.

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

already knowing how all the different sections will work together. The result is a painting with the fresh look of alla prima, but the complexity, accuracy and detail of that comes with several days of work.

This painting is part of my Stardust series, a visual representation of the fact that many of the atoms which make up our bodies and everything around us were once created by early stars, whose exploded remains formed new generations of stars, including our own Solar System, the Earth, and everything on it. If you think about it, we're literally made up of the remnants of stars!

Painting stars has created some interesting challenges for me. Neither the soft gas clouds of space nor the short gradients of starlight easily lend themselves to the bold, chunky brushwork that I like most, but I find ways to enable these elements to

coexist in my work. With this piece I'll guide you through the multiple planning stages that inform my final painting, my sectional painting process, and how I handle the delicate details of starlight.

Rob's foremost passion is for learning about the world, and this pursuit often influences his painted work. He strives to make paintings that are not only beautiful, but thought-provoking as well. You can explore Rob's art by visiting www.robreyart.com

Traditional Artist Workshop
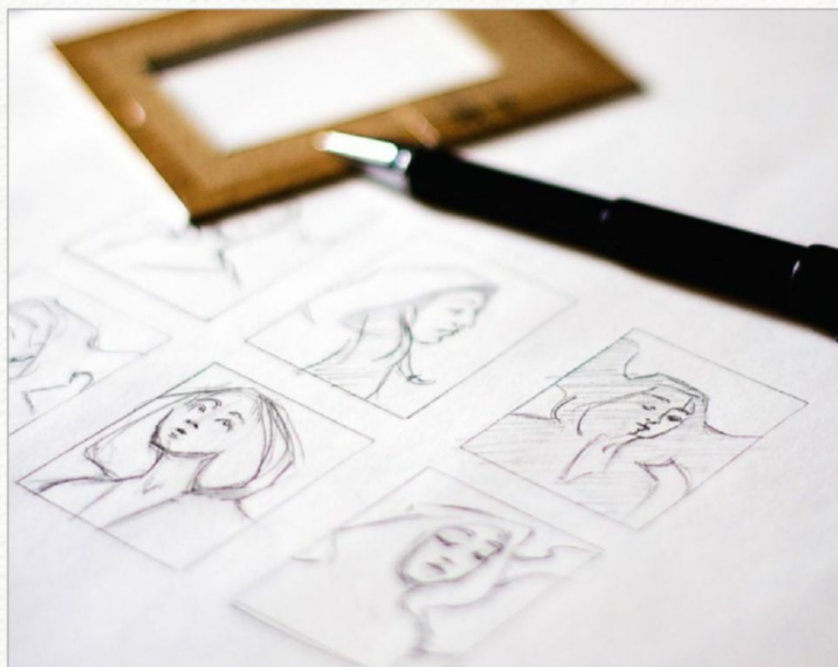
1 Rapid-fire thumbnails generate ideas

Every painting begins with thumbnail sketches, where I jot down my ideas and explore compositions quickly on a small scale. I'll usually generate many thumbnails before choosing one to develop as a larger drawing. This concept is a simple portrait, so I skip the drawing stage and go straight to my first colour study.

2 Create a digital colour study

With my drawing complete, or in this case, my thumbnail, I gather references and use them to work out the forms and colours of my image. Photoshop enables me to experiment with colour and make changes quickly. I decide that a blue cast will give this painting the mysterious and other-worldly feeling that I'm looking for.

MATERIALS

SURFACE
- Quarter-inch MDF board, 16x20 inches Utrecht Gesso, toned

OIL COLOURS
- Titanium white
- Quinacridone magenta
- Dioxazine purple
- Phthalo blue
- Phthalo green
- Phthalo green (Yellow-shade)
- Ivory Black

SOLVENT
- Gamsol

MEDIUM
- Refined linseed oil

TOOL
- Utrecht Natural Bristle long flat size 10
- Rosemary Series 279 long flat sizes 5, 3 and 1
- Q-tips
- Crow Quill dip pen
- Small Bridge (four inch), made of MDF and mat board
- Richeson palette knife 897

3 Create a sketch in oil

Using my digital colour study as a guide, I paint a small oil sketch. This determines my choice of pigments, stroke direction, texture, colour complexity (jitter), as well as where I want thin washes or thick impasto. The sketch affords me one more level of refinement.

4 Digital experimentation

Sometimes, after seeing the oil sketch as a physical object, I decide more experimentation is in order. Here, I feel my original colour plan needs to be livened up a bit. I photograph the oil sketch and, in Photoshop, use masks and Selective Color to alter the colours.

PAINTING TIP
DON'T HOLD BACK
Using paint more freely will help you discover the many things that paint – especially oils – can do.
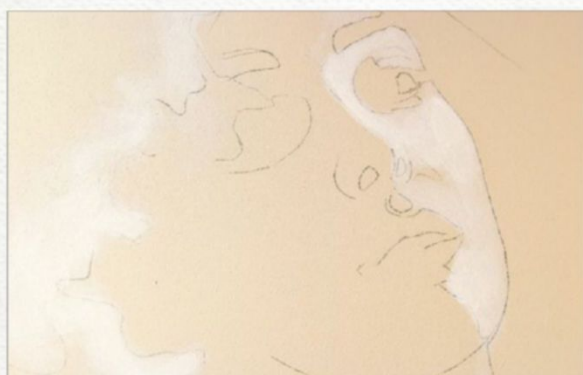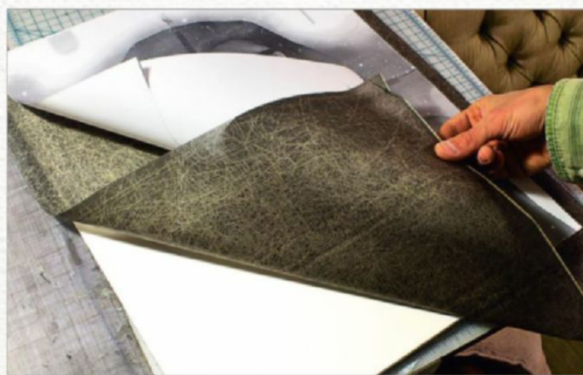
5 *Transfer the study*
I choose one of my studies to print out at the full size of my final painting. I then use transfer paper to lay out some rough lines on my final, toned surface. With this guide in place, I use untoned gesso to lighten any areas that will underlay the final painting's highlights.

6 *Plan out the painting sequence*
I establish the sequence of the areas that I'm going to work on to maximise my wet-into-wet painting time and make a seamless whole. This often means working from background to foreground, or one adjacent area to the next. This image will be painted in three sections: starfield, background and portrait. The stars and background textures will be a second layer.

7 *Laying in the starfield darks*
I tend to work from dark to light. The subtlety of the shadow side of the face as it recedes into darkness means I need to pay attention to slight variations in value as I lay in the dark colours of the starfield. It can't all just be black; the form of the face needs to be present and accurate, but subtle, in a low-key value range.

8 *Blend in the dust clouds*
Working in the lights of the starfield, these gas clouds require smooth transitions. Small steps in value, blending strokes, and sometimes even fan brushing help these areas look as soft and ethereal as they should. Blocky strokes can be beautiful, but they risk breaking the illusion of the depth of outer space. ➡➡

9 Placing a background wash

In some sections, I may want to leave areas looking unfinished or transparent. Here I lay down a solvent wash to start, which I'll have the option to leave visible as I paint. In this painting's background, I let the wash dry and apply texture in a second layer. In the face, I work into the wet wash.

10 Going from dark to light in the face

Building from dark to light, I follow the natural gradients in the form with my stroke direction and fade, as the new colour blends into its adjacent colours. I'm looking for a balance between accurate, smooth gradients and value-stepped, blocky, or impressionistic marks.

PAINTING TIP
VARY YOUR EDGES
Overpaint your edges and then paint them back to create more interesting variations.

ARTIST INSIGHT
CHOOSING BRUSHES
Stiff bristles rake through paint, mixing colours and creating soft edges. Softer brushes lay paint over previous layers with less disturbance, creating harder, sharper edges. Stiff bristles tend to soften edges, while soft bristles tend to harden edges.

11 Varying my mark making on the canvas

While there are smooth gradients in the focal point of the face, I allow my marks to be more impressionistic in the chest area. Varying the pressure of touch, the angle of the brush and paint quantity yield a variety of effects here.
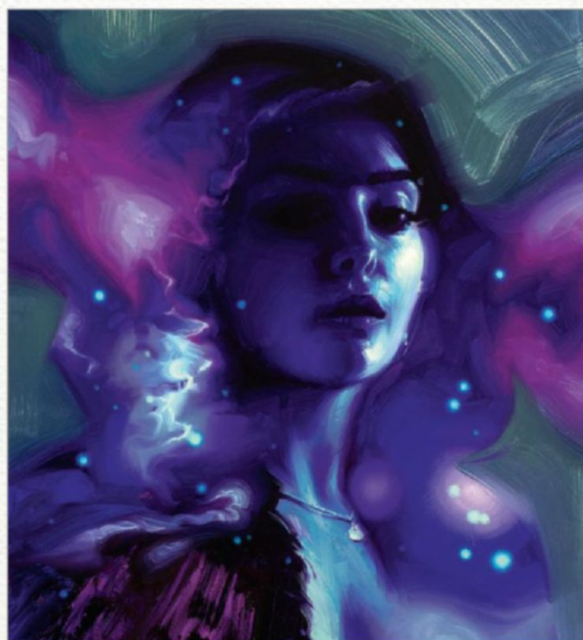
12 Developing the star coronas
I've now let the painting dry. This makes it easier to build up the soft gradients around my stars without muddying their vivid colour corona. A soft Q-tip enables me to dab in these circular gradients with successively lighter colours. A simple dot won't appear to glow without this important foundation.

13 Recreating the star diffraction spikes
To accent some stars, I paint in the diffraction spikes we're used to seeing in space photography. To make these convincing, I thin my paint down with Gamsol until it flows off the tip of an ink dip pen. A small, straight-edged bridge helps to guide my stroke, carefully varying line thickness with pressure.
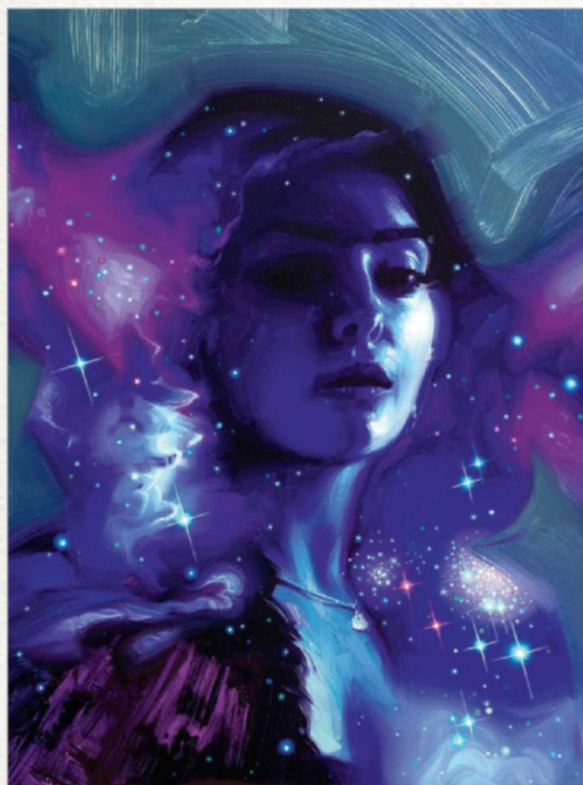
14 Give the stars highlights
Finally, to give each star a particular point in space and to be sure it reaches the appropriate lightness of value, I apply the highlight of each star using the handle of a small brush, or if the star is small enough, a toothpick.

15 Introducing texture to the background
To contrast the smooth starfield, I texture my background with thick impasto. Lots of thick or "short" paint over a dry surface results in interesting, sharp-edged separations of the applied paint globs. In addition to brushes, a palette knife is particularly good for applying these textures.

Core skills: Part 4
CANVAS STRETCHING AND SETTING UP

HOWARD LYON continues his five-part series that will help you begin using oil paint. In this instalment he focuses on preparing the canvas, and drawing for painting

Cotton canvas, linen, wood panels, copper, paper, glass and stone are just some of the surfaces I've seen oil paintings on. Cotton is a cheap alternative to linen, but is less durable and not as strong.

If you stretch your own canvas then you can save a lot of money. Learning to do so isn't hard, but it takes a little practise to do it consistently. I recommend investing in a good pair of canvas pliers and an electric or pneumatic stapler.

Canvas, linen and panels are the most commonly available primed and unprimed surfaces. Priming your own can give you a lot of control, is another chance to save money and you can create textures that add to your painting.

Unless you're painting completely from imagination or from life, you'll need to gather reference. I'll often make little sculptures or wooden models to photograph. Your reference can never be too good, so go the extra mile.
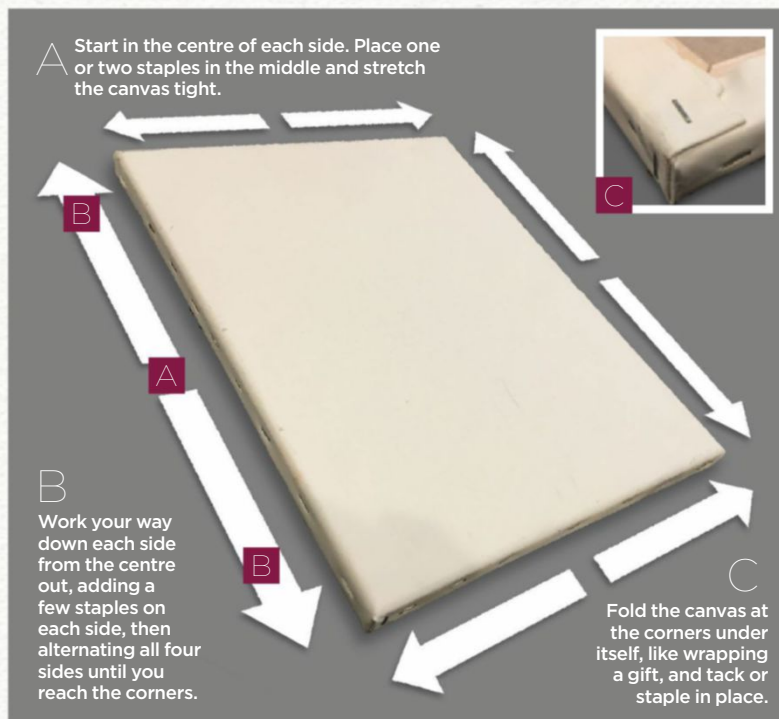
I use a grid to transfer my drawing to the canvas or panel. Projectors and carbon paper are great tools, as long as they aren't replacements for time spent developing your drawing skills.

Once your drawing is accurate, ink or fix it, so that when you begin painting you won't scrub out all of the hard work you've done!

Howard has worked as an illustrator and art director as well as a fine artist for galleries and collectors. You can see his art at www.howardlyon.com.

A Start in the centre of each side. Place one or two staples in the middle and stretch the canvas tight.

B Work your way down each side from the centre out, adding a few staples on each side, then alternating all four sides until you reach the corners.

C Fold the canvas at the corners under itself, like wrapping a gift, and tack or staple in place.

1 Stretching your canvas
Cut your canvas with 2-2.5 inches overlap of the stretcher bars, then place a few staples in the middle of one side and stretch the opposite side. Move to the other sides and repeat. Work from the middles to the corners.

Thicker gessos can be applied with a spatula. I bought this one on Amazon in the Kitchenware section.

Putty and spackling knives are handy for producing a variety of textures when applying heavier acrylic gels and pastes.

Standard house-painting brushes are cheap and excellent for applying gesso.

2 Gessoing panels and canvas
Oil-based gessoes on canvas require a sizing before applying. Rabbit skin glue is traditional, but you can use GAC 100 or PVA size, too. Acrylic gessoes and pastes don't require sizing and can be applied directly. Brushes, rollers and trowels are all useful for gessoing.

Carbon paper is a useful tool. Projectors work well, too. There's no cheating, but if you're using it as a crutch then you're robbing yourself of a chance to develop your skills.

Building models is a great way to get realistic reference when you don't have access, due to size or availability.

Start collecting interesting objects whenever you can. Thrift stores and garage sales are often full of cheap and interesting objects.

I keep some clay around in case I need to sculpt a quick head or figure for imaginary subjects.

A grid is a useful drawing aid. Put a grid of the same ratio on your reference and on your panel or canvas, and it'll make it easier to create accurate transfers.

Charcoal pencil works well when drawing directly on a panel or canvas. Once that's done, I'll ink the drawing with India ink and erase any lines that I don't need.

3 Gathering the best reference

Take the time to really learn how to use your camera. One of the biggest issues I see when reviewing student work is terrible reference that handicaps the work. Learn to make costumes and create models for reference. This can be an invaluable and fun part of the process.

4 Transferring a drawing

Take your time when transferring your final drawing. A strong drawing is the basis of any good painting, so don't rush through this stage and have your work suffer. I think a grid is the best method because it'll reinforce your drawing skills.

RESEARCH
LEARN FROM OTHERS
Read up on art materials and ask other artists for advice. This could save you from buying unnecessary kit and media.

Spray fixative is an easy way to make sure your drawing doesn't bleed through or disappear when painting.

I've used Liquin to apply a colour wash directly over a drawing. If you don't scrub hard with brushes, it'll preserve your drawing underneath without the need for a fixative.

My go-to method is to use India ink and ink the most important lines of my drawing before erasing the rest. India ink is permanent and durable with vigorous painting.

5 Securing your drawing

Once your drawing is done, it's good to make sure it's secured so that when you paint it won't dissolve or smear. I like to go over my drawings with India ink. It enables me to scrub in paint or wipe off paint, and not remove the drawing.

First Impressions

Annie Stegg

It's the tiny worlds of unseen dramas that appeals to this fantasy artist...

Where did you grow up and how has this influenced your art?
I grew up in northern Georgia, on a property that backed on to a beautiful stream and forest. Many of my formative memories were created in those woods. An entire world could exist under a rock. In my work I attempt to capture moments like those. The tiny hidden worlds that exist in our own.

You're a child, you see a painting that changes everything… where are you and what are you looking at?
Growing up, my mother kept our small library stocked with children's books. One of my favourites was Maurice Sendak's Outside Over There. The art is so magical.

There's one painting in particular, where a young girl has just discovered that her baby sister has been stolen by goblins, and replaced with a doppelgänger made of ice. The atmosphere of the illustration is so different from the previous spread. Nature seems to have gone wild, with sunflowers bursting from the windows while a storm rages over the sea outside. It's such a wonderful and interesting narrative.

What was your first paid commission?
When I was in high school, I liked to sculpt small figurines of creatures in clay. I hadn't intended to sell them, but I started receiving requests from my classmates. One of my teachers asked me to create a custom chessboard. I was amazed that someone would want to pay me for something I loved doing for fun.

> ❝ I love having my own little sanctuary where I can feel a world away ❞

MOONCHILD
"This is Karkinos, one of the 12 groups of star constellations from Greek mythology."

SECRETS KEPT
"The first image for my Halcyon Garden series, showcasing secrets waiting to be discovered."

What's the last piece you finished, and how do the two differ?
I'm working on a collection of paintings for my solo show at Haven Gallery in June, entitled Halcyon Garden. It's going to be an exploration of the small, hidden worlds that exist in our own backyards and the drama that unfolds with their unseen inhabitants. Although the medium and subject matter are different from what I was creating in my younger years, the underlying message is the same.

What character that you've painted do you most identify with?
I love exploring beauty in the unexpected. When I was younger, I had a menagerie of unconventional pets. Toads, lizards and salamanders filled the many terrariums in my room. One of my favourites was a small axolotl. I painted him in my Lilaia the Naiad painting, so I'd have to say that's the image I most identify with.

Where do you create your art?
A few years ago I built a small studio on the back of my house. It was nice to create a space with specific requirements for my painting. It has a tile floor for easy cleaning.

Natural light and good ventilation are important to me, so the new studio has windows from floor to ceiling. It's filled with plants that I've been collecting over the years. I love having my own little sanctuary where I can feel a world away.

What advice would you give to your younger self?
I wish I had the resources accessible to me when I was very young, that children are growing up with now. The incredible amount of tutorials available online and magazines like ImagineFX would have been so helpful. I think I would tell my younger self to visit libraries and museums more often, and to look at as much art as possible.

Is making a living as an artist different to how you thought it would be, and why?
I worked in a gallery while going to school. During my time there, I painted the types of things that I thought would sell well in a gallery. I sold mainly landscapes and commissioned portraits.

I was grateful to be making a living through my art regardless of the subject matter, but I never dreamed that I'd be able to eventually support myself working on the types of subjects close to my heart. I think that's been the biggest surprise to me.

Annie is inspired by nature, folklore and myths. The 18th century Rococo painters have influenced on her own method. You can see her art at www.anniestegg.com.