NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX

ASSASSIN'S CREED ORIGINS

Ubisoft's art director **Raphael Lacoste** on his art team's epic journey

ART OF DESTINY 2

Jesse van Dijk on how to make your art memorable

SAMWISE DIDIER

Blizzard's art star speaks

BECOME A GAMES ARTIST

Leading art directors and concept artists share their **techniques and insight** on life in the games industry

WORKSHOP
DRAW YOUR WEAPON

Concept a sci-fi rifle using Photoshop and 3D tools

Future

MAKE STYLISED ART WITH HINTERLAND
GIORGIO BARONI'S CONCEPT SKETCHES
PAINT A UNIQUE GAME SETTING

INDIE GAMES! THE HIGHS & LOWS OF WORKING AT A SMALL GAMES COMPANY

ArtRage 5

Imagine Painting...

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Welcome to…

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX

Another month and yet another stellar line-up of artists just for you this issue. I really think this might be our best video games issue yet. First up, the incredible Raphael Lacoste from Ubisoft took the time to discuss his visionary craft on Assassin's Creed Origins, as did Bungie's Jesse van Dijk on his beautiful vistas for Destiny 2.

Each workshop comes from a fully fledged video games artist who's employed in the industry today. Elsewhere in the issue there's also insight into how artists work in games studios. I had a great time curating the themes and artists who helped me put this issue together, so please let me know what you think about it. I really love hearing from you.

Finally, why not make it your New Year's resolution to get your art in ImagineFX? To submit to our FXPosé gallery, just send in up to five images of either traditional or digital art, along with their titles and a short explanation of how or why you created it. Add in a small biography, a photo of you and then email it to fxpose@imaginefx.com. Alternatively, you could show off your art studio in our Artist in Residence feature, or send in your sketches… Simply email the address below!

Claire

Claire Howlett, Editor
claire@imaginefx.com

EDITOR'S CHOICE — Three of my top picks this month…
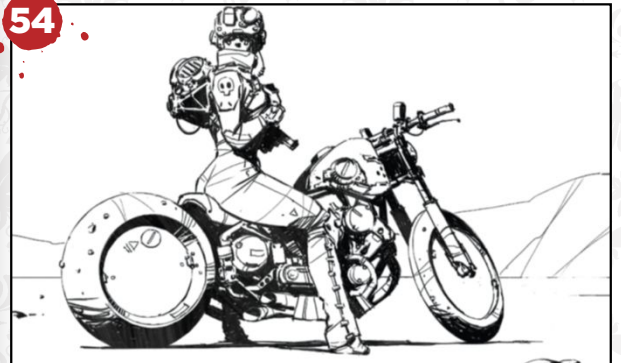
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Independent thinking
We talk to artists about the benefits of working at fantastic indie games companies. It's a great read!

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Concepts from an artist
Any insight into an artist's process is golden, but it's especially good when it's Giorgio Baroni's sketches.

78

Inspiring game environments
Llia Yu shares how she uses everyday objects to turn her concept art into something unique.

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Bespoke cover art!
Did you know that subscribers get beautiful text-free cover art? **See page 42 for more details…**

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THE ART OF
ASSASSIN'S CREED
ORIGINS

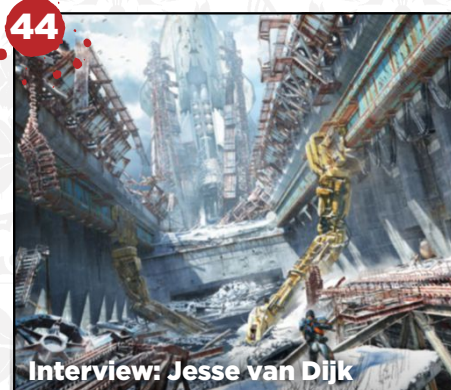"My objective is to create fantastic worlds of what could have been"
Raphael Lacoste

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Life at an indie game company
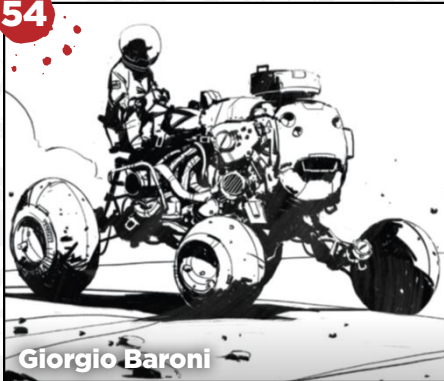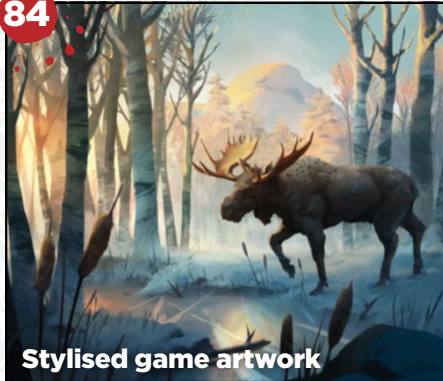

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Traditional art FXPosé

Create glazes
with watercolours

Workshops

Traditional Artist

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
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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/games157artist**

OVER 2 HOURS of video tutorials from pro artists to watch and learn from!

COVER ART VIDEO

KYLE Ultimate Brush Pen
KYLE Ultimate Brush Pen
Kyle Ultimate Brush Pen 2
Kyle Ultimate Brush Pen 2
KYLE Ultimate Charcoal Pencil 25 p
KYLE Ultimate Charcoal Pencil 25 p
KYLE Ultimate Inking Thick 'n Thin
KYLE Ultimate Inking Thick 'n Thin
KYLE Ultimate Oil Color Jitter
KYLE Ultimate Oil Color Jitter
KYLE Ultimate Oil Detail Brush 30px
KYLE Ultimate Oil Detail Brush 30px

Current Tool Only

Color

Layers

Kind

Normal   Opacity: 100%

Lock: Fill: 100%

Sketch

ADJUSTMENTS

00:56:34

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/games157artist**

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.

Design a playable video game character

Devon Cady-Lee draws on his considerable industry experience as he concepts an original game character. Watch his video, then turn to page 62 to learn more about his painting process.
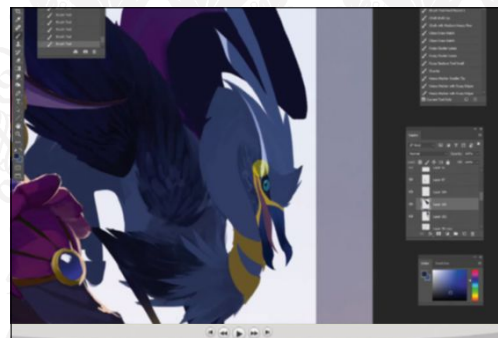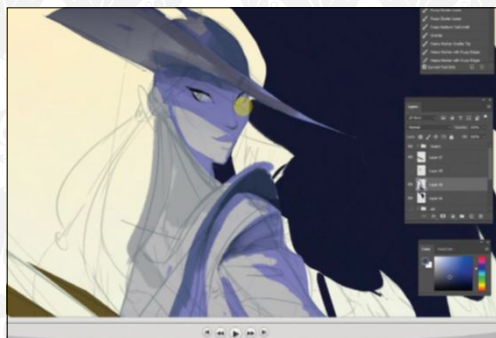
PLUS MORE VIDEO TUITION!

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

WORKSHOP VIDEO
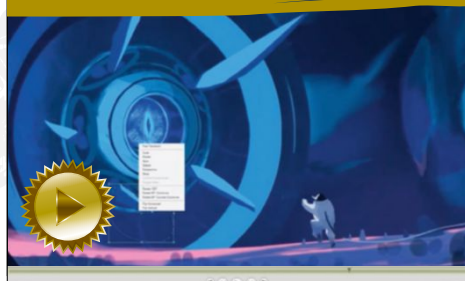
Paint a sci-fi game setting
Watch how Llia Yu composes a futuristic environment, based in part on a pot plant! Then turn to page 78 to read her workshop.
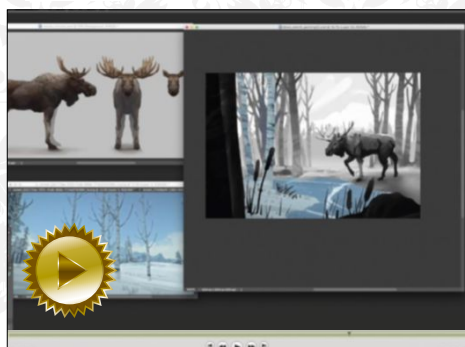
Create stylised game artwork
The Long Dark has a distinctive visual style, and in his video Roberto Robert reproduces its nuances. There's more on page 84.
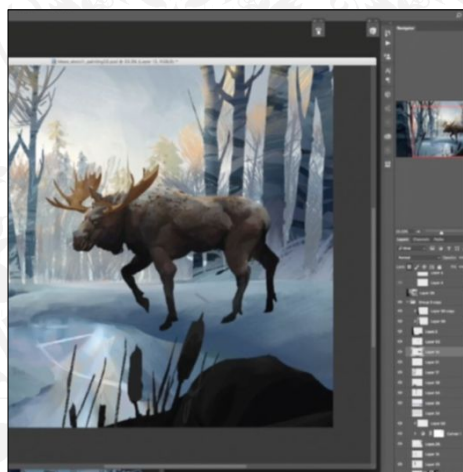
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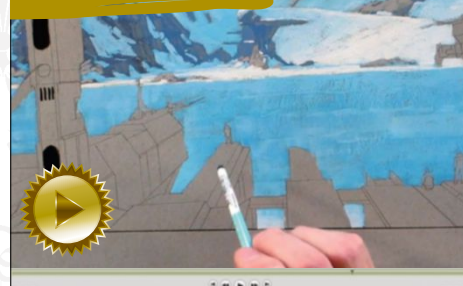
Gouache Painting
Over on page 95 we review Wayne Haag's video on working in gouache, which also contains plenty of advice on depicting light.

FXPosé

THE PLACE TO SHARE YOUR DIGITAL ART
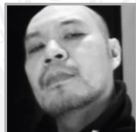
Lim Chuan Shin

LOCATION: Malaysia **MEDIA:** ZBrush, Photoshop, SketchUp, 3D-Coat **WEB:** www.shin500.deviantart.com

Growing up in Malaysia in the 90s meant art wasn't a career option for Lim, but eight years ago he decided to chase his dreams. "It's been a tough fight but it's all been worth it," he says.

1 MECH BAY

"This painting was created using interesting silhouettes in a flat black. I changed the tone of the shapes to create the illusion of depth of field."

2 DOCKS

"I wanted to recreate a cityscape seen in Blade Runner. You can't go wrong if you try to copy Syd Mead – he's a bona fide visual futurist."

3 SPACE NINJA

"This one is inspired by manga artist Masamune Shirow. I used a 3D model as a base, and painted on top in Photoshop. I added textures and lights from photos."
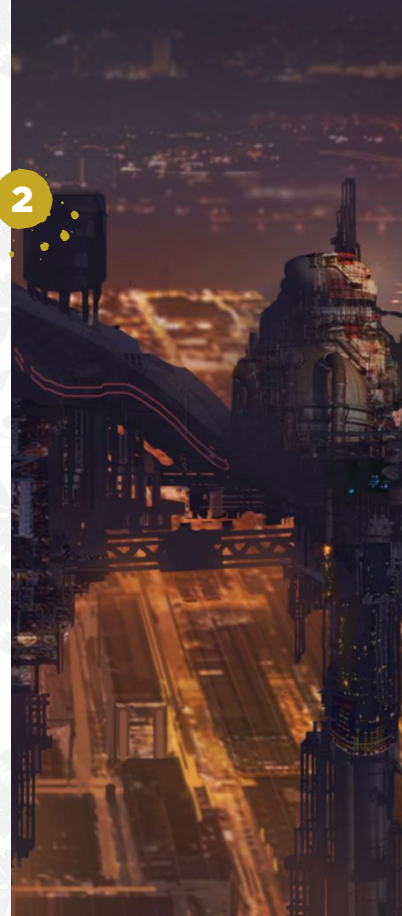
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FXPosé
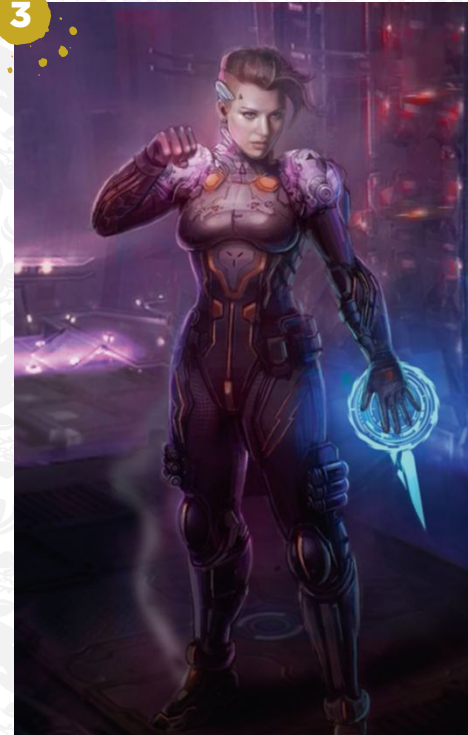
David Villegas

LOCATION: Philippines **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Daz 3D, Maya **WEB:** www.deivcalviz.com

David – better known by his alias Deiv Calviz – specialises in hyper-realistic, stylised illustrations. He chose to take art seriously after coming second in a contest by Blizzard Entertainment.

1 PREPARE FOR BATTLE
"This was interesting because it was commissioned to serve as a writer's inspiration for his story. He was very detailed with the elements required, but I still had fun arranging them in this epic manner."

2 DRAGON WATCHERS
"Inspired by Dark Souls and Game of Thrones. I really pushed myself with this – it was a rare chance for me to make something personal at this level of detail."

3 MEGARAH

"I entered this for a contest at the website Cubebrush. It's more stylised than my usual work; I've always wanted to copy the style of the splash pages of those popular games."

4 LILITH

"For a while I'd wanted to paint something that deals with themes such as mortality, humanity, innocence, or whatever message you can interpret. It's great doing something that isn't too commercial and in-your-face."

FXPosé
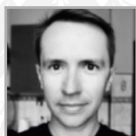
Michał Sałata

LOCATION: Poland **MEDIA:** Photoshop, Maya, Mudbox, Unreal Engine **WEB:** www.artstation.com/bohater13

Michał is a graphic designer working in the video game industry. He's always drawn figures and landscapes from his imagination, and in high school explored traditional art techniques.

1 AN UNEXPECTED MEETING

"This young girl is meeting an extraordinary mythical being. She doesn't expect what she finds. I wanted to create a place that looked real, but also felt magical."

2 CATHERINE

"I was keen to try to capture the effect of classical painting – the colour palette refers to the Dutch masters. I think the study of classical painting is very important."

3 ORC FEMALE

"She's a hunter, a killer and she goes to war. This character is well defined by the classic movie quote: 'I may be bad… but I feel gooood.'"

4 ELF ARCHER

"This work shows a portrait of a forest elf. As a big fan of fantasy and The Lord of the Rings, I often draw such characters."

4
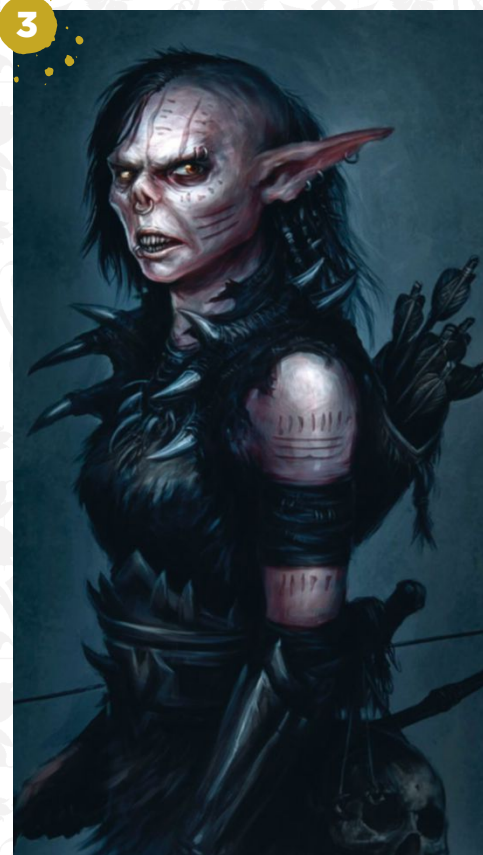
Abraham Matias

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Photoshop **WEB:** www.abrahamatias.com

Abraham's approach is influenced by magical realism, modernism and the rich culture of his native Mexico. He's worked for clients such as Warner Bros., Netflix, NBC and DC.

1 THE DANCE OF THE HUITZIL

"An ancient spirit summons the fallen warriors from the afterlife to guide him into the promised land of Aztlán. This is inspired by an Aztec myth in which warriors reincarnate as hummingbirds known as huitzil."

2 THE LAST FAREWELL
"A woman walking through the ruins of her old life receives an unexpected visit from an old friend, for a last farewell and a new beginning."

3 A MONSTER CALLS
"'Conor held tightly onto his mother. And by doing so, he could finally let her go.' (Patrick Ness). This is fan art of one of my favourite films of 2017, A Monster Calls."

Alexander Gustafson

LOCATION: US **MEDIA:** Photoshop, pencils **WEB:** www.illustratedpixels.com

Alexander grew up in the mountains of Vermont, where he drew stories and played D&D to ward off the cold. He now creates fantasy, sci-fi and steampunk art in Seattle's warmer climes.

1 THRONE OF BONE
"My take on the old first edition Magic: the Gathering card by the same name. My favourite part of this image is the tiny bows with little skulls in their centres."

2 HUNTER MOON
"A sci-fi book cover for which I was asked to put a smaller image inside the overall composition. The astrolab in the background was fun to paint."

3 SPINOSAURUS AEGYPTICUS
"Who doesn't love dinosaurs? This is my favourite of the carnivores – I love the idea of something this size being so specialised to its environment."

4
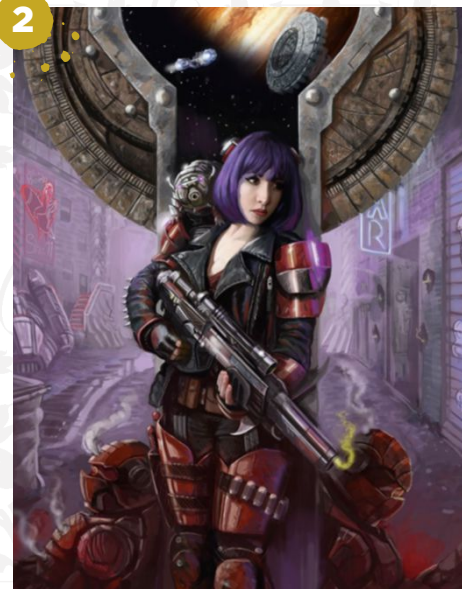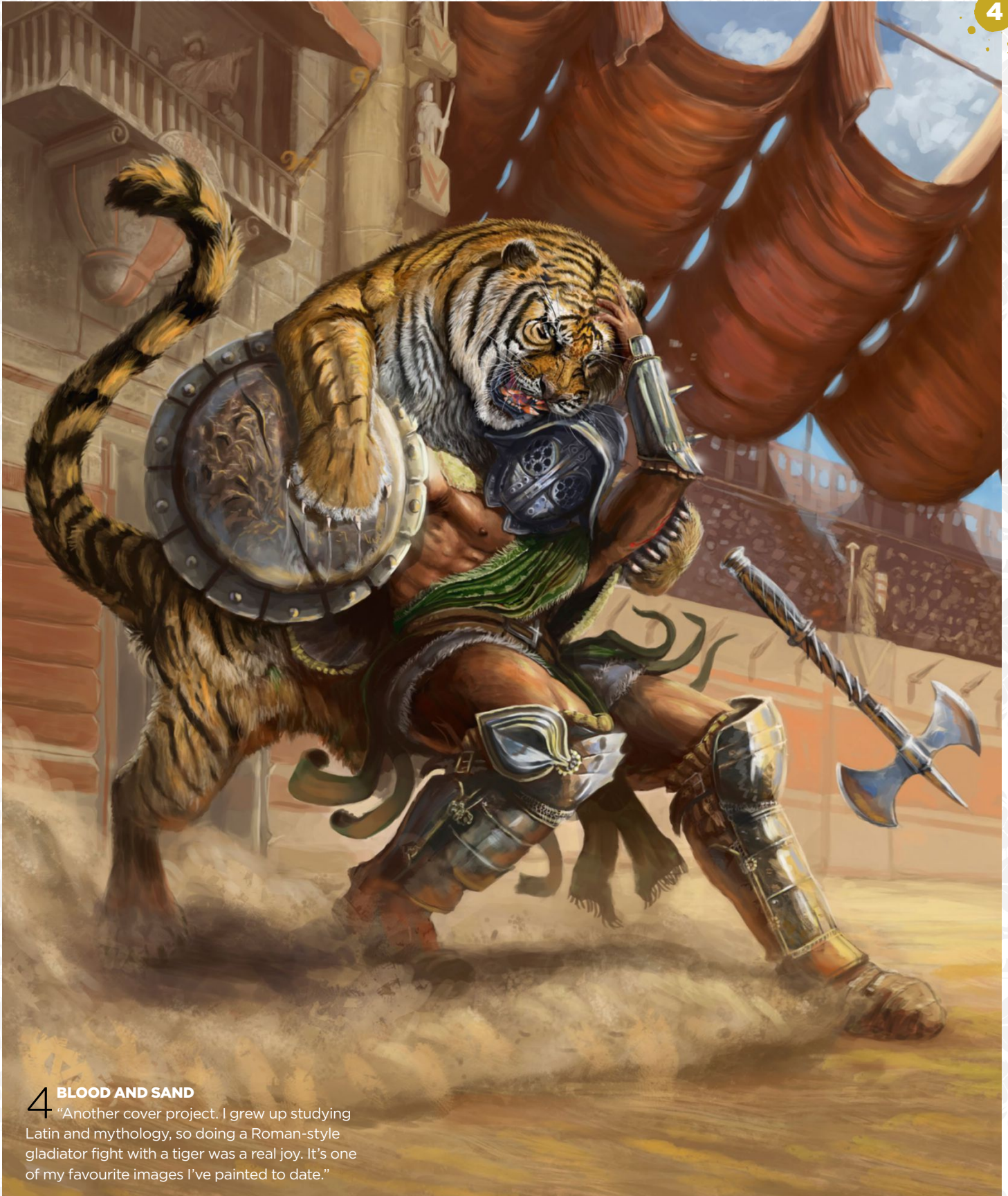
4 BLOOD AND SAND

"Another cover project. I grew up studying Latin and mythology, so doing a Roman-style gladiator fight with a tiger was a real joy. It's one of my favourite images I've painted to date."

Do you want to see your art on these pages? Then email five pieces of your work and a short explanation about each artwork, along with a photo and a few details about yourself, to **fxpose@imaginefx.com**

Lisa Evans' Growbot work is full of mossy textures and rich colour.
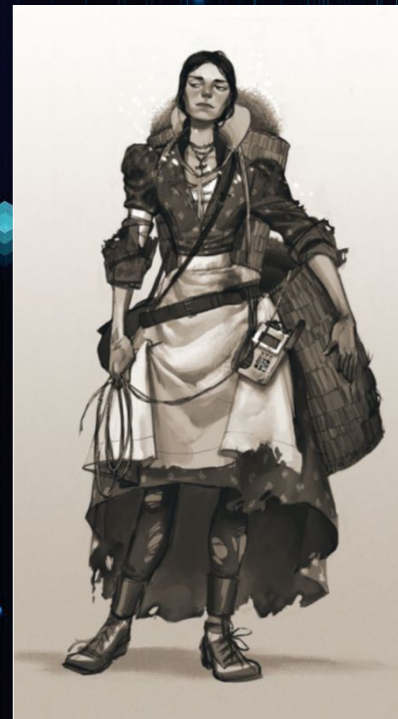
Claire Hummel's character sketches for Obduction include this settler, who's laden with gear.

Life at an indie games company

Small is beautiful **Philippa Warr** discovers how proactive artists can reap the benefits from putting in the hours at smaller game studios

Small games studios vary as wildly as their art styles. Yet for all their differences, the ultimate aim is the same: to produce a great game with far fewer staff than the behemoths of triple-A development. For artists, there are significant benefits to reap in these smaller spaces, as well as reasons why you might prefer to wait before going small.

Claire Hummel works at Campo Santo, the studio behind forest lookout game Firewatch. Before joining that team she was with Microsoft and then HBO. Back then, Claire's work was wide-ranging. She explains that she probably worked on around 60 titles in her six years, plus a freelance gig designing key characters for Bioshock Infinite.
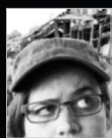
"At Microsoft I was in a small group, best described as a SWAT team, that was brought on to help projects at various stages: anything from contributing to early pitches, to providing additional concept work, to overhauling a project's art direction", she explains. "I'd jump between a number of different projects on any given day, which could be exhilarating and challenging, but it also meant that I rarely – if ever – got to see a project from start to finish."

Each of the biomes that Luis Antonio was responsible for in The Witness had a distinctive look.

At Campo Santo she's the only 2D artist on staff and the work is formed around her own artistic sensibilities. With that the sense of responsibility shifts. "I have to be way more proactive about doing everything for the game from storyboards, to visual targets, to orthographic prop diagrams and paintovers of models."

DREAM COME TRUE

Wei Wang, who spent 11 years at Blizzard and worked on titles like Warcraft 3, Diablo and StarCraft, describes a similar shift when he moved to Bonfire – a smaller studio working on its unannounced first project.

"At a big company there are a lot of processes in place. It's not a bad thing – a big company needs to make the trains run on time," Wei says. "But at Bonfire, I'm given a huge space to be creative, and draw whatever I want. I also get to be involved in the pitch process, and every part of what goes into making our game. This is a dream come true for any game artist."

Kate Craig works at Fullbright, the studio behind Gone Home and

Bonfire's website sparkles with Wei Wang's bright work, including this piece, The Moon Girl.

❝ I have to be way more proactive about doing everything for the game ❞
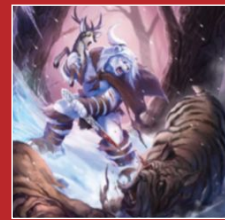
INDUSTRY INSIGHT
LUIS ANTONIO

The Portuguese artist talks about the appeal of working small

What are the biggest differences between working as an artist at a big studio and working on smaller projects?
The responsibility and ownership. You have to wear many hats and help put out many fires. On my last project, I was not only responsible for creating the art but also the trailers, the website, and the character animation as well as promotional material. It's fun and will make you venture outside your comfort zone.

Are there any specific skills you think artists should develop if they want to work for smaller/indie studios?
It's being able to redefine your role. You need to be able to look outside your specific expertise and see yourself as a developer, helping create a game, not a compartmentalised aspect of production. It can be frustrating, but when you make some unique, it's a rewarding feeling.

What's the biggest advantage of working at a smaller?
Usually, work hours are more relaxed as long as you deliver your work. There's a stronger sense of camaraderie, where you feel that you're in this together and if you fail or succeed, then it will directly affect you. You also get to be part of the whole game development experience, from setting up a booth at an event, to talking to fans, and play-testing the game. You can feel how your participation influences the final result.
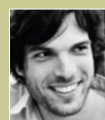
Luis has worked at Rockstar Games and Ubisoft Quebec, and is now developing his first personal game project.
www.artofluis.com

➤ Tacoma. Previously, she was part of a social gaming studio that grew from a single-digit team to nearly 100 people. Discussing Kate's experiences at Fullbright helped highlight how budgetary constraints of a small team can be a positive as well as a negative.

"At a larger game studio someone else goes to promote the game, or attend GDC or accept an award," says **Kate**. "Certainly not the (non-lead) environment artist. Working with four full-time people during Gone Home, everyone had a chance to travel and represent

Claire Hummel's work on Fable Legends' Evienne, the Lady of the Lake who tired of waiting for a king and went adventuring on her own.

Wei Wang's Friends of the Flame shows an audience enthralled.

66 Small studios are great for experienced artists who want to make new art and create new worlds 99

the game outside of the... well, basement in that case!" There's a palpable sense of inclusivity in that, which she found personally and professionally important.

On the flip side, a larger studio typically has more in the way of resources or budget to spend on licenses for creative 2D and 3D tools such as Maya, Photoshop, ZBrush and Unity.

Operating on a smaller scale also means that direct communication with the rest of the team is not only possible, but desirable. "Everyone at Campo has a good eye for the game we're trying to make," says Claire. "I trust when my non-art coworkers have input on the art, and it's great to be able to openly discuss anything from AI to music choices, despite them not being my particular specialities."

Campo Santo is working on its second game. While the look of Firewatch reflected the vision of art director Olly Moss, game number two will be inextricably Claire's.

NOT LOST IN TRANSLATION

"It's definitely been an interesting challenge, learning how to look inward at my own stylistic preferences and find ways to break them down for the purposes of style guides and art direction," says Claire. "So much of this game is what I love to draw –

Costume variations on Bioshock Infinite's young Elizabeth, by Claire Hummel.

Kate Craig's concept sketch for Amy's little ship in Tacoma.
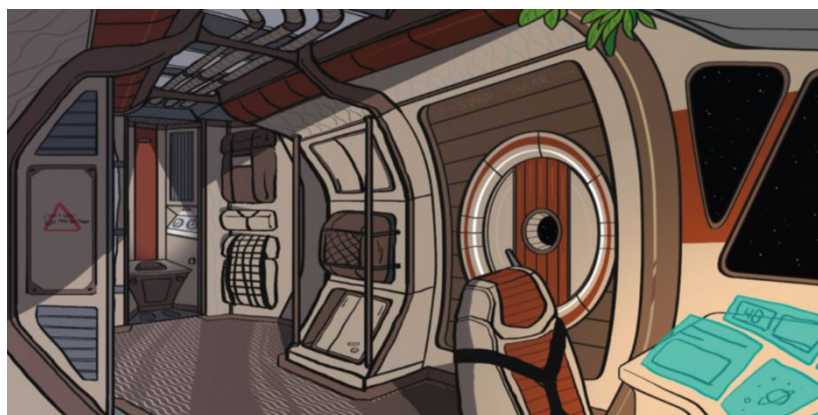
Starbelly is one of Lisa Evans' unique cast of characters in Growbot.

Even without details of what Bonfire's first game is, Wei Wang's Mask of Dreams gives a dramatic, dream-like impression.

This soldier is from Claire Hummel's work on Obduction – a companion piece to the settler seen on page 18. Influences include the American Civil War.

both in terms of the stylistic tone and the content itself – and it's oddly a lot of work to make sure that things don't get lost in translation on their way to becoming finalised, in-engine 3D assets."

Wei points out that small studios offer great spaces for experienced artists looking for more creative control, whereas large studios can contain valuable opportunities for those earlier in their career.

"You can learn so much about the game creation process," he says of big studios. "There are a lot of mentors for them to learn from, and you're not locked into one career direction. Fortunately, new artists love to work at big studios."

BIG CREATIVE SPACE

Wei points out a key difference: "Small studios are great for experienced artists who want to make new art and create new worlds. The studio may be small, but it offers space for creativity."

That's not to say going from big to small is the only solution. Taking the opposite approach, **Lisa Evans**, an artist and illustrator, is working on her first full game – Growbot – largely as a one-person studio. As such, her art no longer sits on a page, but provides an interactive space players can move in.

"When I'm designing a spread for a children's book, my focus is on how the reader's eye will move across the page, how the image will tell part of the story, and how it will work with the text." In Growbot, Lisa says it's more about "how I can draw attention to interactive elements and puzzle solutions, and how I can work around the UI and different screen resolutions."

Wherever smaller studio work fits into your career, that kernel of creative control and an attendant need to wear multiple creative hats – even if only in the art department – persists.

"You're responsible for concept art, visual targets, storyboards, paintovers, logo design… everything," says Claire. "Having that flexibility is essential, and it's definitely something you should be aware of going in."

"You need to think about how a motion-capture design will 'perform', not just how it looks in one image," says Joe Letteri.

"We super-modelled Caesar's eyes, handcrafting thousands of individual fibres in three dimensions."
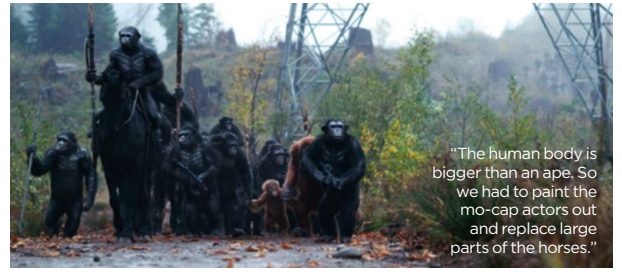
"The human body is bigger than an ape. So we had to paint the mo-cap actors out and replace large parts of the horses."

Going ape

Fur real Weta Digital's Joe Letteri reveals the challenges of creature design on the Planet of the Apes films

Creature design for the Planet of the Apes films wasn't quite business as usual, says Joe Letteri, director of Weta Digital.

"Rather than stemming from the imagination, as with our work on The Hobbit, these characters needed to look like real apes," he explains. "So the initial stage was similar to casting: looking for references of apes with characteristics we liked. Then we'd do design work on top of that, in Photoshop and ZBrush."

Later, anatomy tweaks were needed as the sci-fi element of the storyline kicked in and the apes learned how to talk. "So in the second and third films, while we made some changes to show their ageing, we also snuck in others to make their talking look natural," says Joe.

The Weta team shortened Caesar's muzzle, for example, and made alteration to the eyes. "Apes have quite dark scleras, which are hard to read," Joe explains. "So we added slightly more whites, to make it easier to read his expressions. Plus we took some of the features of Andy Serkis's eyes [the actor playing Caesar via motion capture], especially his eyelids, because that's so important to getting the emotions to come through."

Weta also took a little licence when it came to colouring. "So for example, we made Rocket a bit greyer than a real chimp would be, to make it easier for the audience to distinguish him in group shots," reveals Joe.

War for the Planet of the Apes is available on digital download, Blu-ray and DVD from Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment.
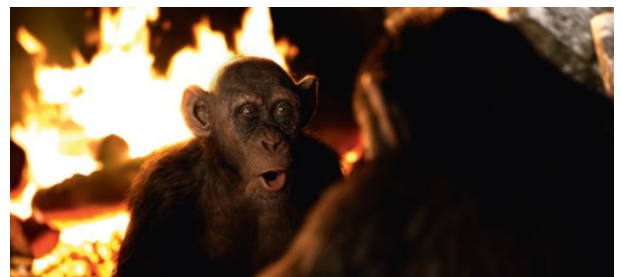
"You always try to bring some of an actor's characteristics to your design. It helps to bridge the gap between the performance and what you want on screen."

Jens Fiedler

Light box Professional creative kit, an organised setup and a lot of dusty figures comprise this artist's studio

My studio closely resembles my own character. It personifies my current career path of being a full-time, well-organised freelancer for over 10 years, and a long-time fan of video games (30 years and counting!).

I love to play with light both in my images and my studio. That's why I've chosen to work in a bright room with big windows, which also allows some fresh air into the room from time to time. The right lighting has a big impact on your workstation and the speed at which your pieces progress, especially at night. I've even chosen lightly coloured pieces of furniture to help brighten the room; they make the relatively small space feel bigger and less constricting.

But my studio also needs a bit of personality here and there, which helps me to feel comfortable and also makes for a more interesting place to spend most of my day. Because ➤➤

What I particularly love about my studio is that even if I create a mess – books, references and art materials everywhere – it doesn't take long to tidy up.
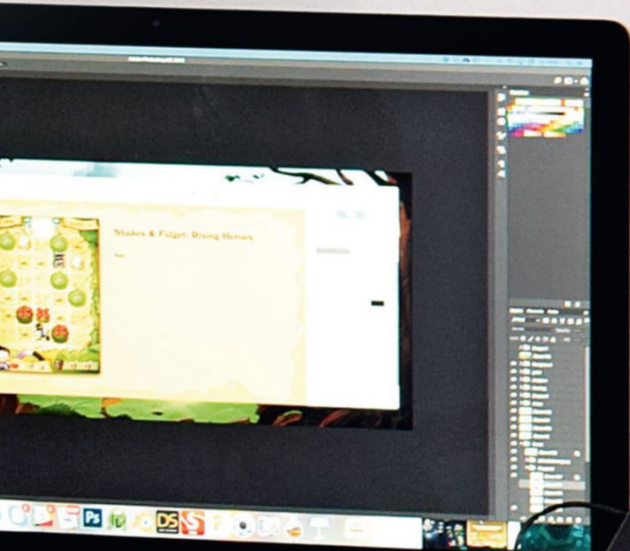
Here's Simba – he's scratching on my door to indicate I need some fresh air, even if it's in the middle of the night. That can be a scary noise!

I use this wall to display reference sheets. The number of tiny holes in the wall are proof of a constant flow of work assignments. Perhaps I should invest in a corkboard?

I like to look at the work of artists, because it keeps me inspired. They don't need to resemble my area of work or style – such paintings just get me in the mood to work.

An ever-changing collection of figures keeps my bank balance low, what forces me to work more. They don't serve any purpose – they just look cool!

A window takes up an entire wall, to let as much daylight in as possible. It helps me maintain a feeling of passing time, too.

Here's the muscles of my studio. My iMac, with its brilliant screen, enables me to focus on my work.

I couldn't do any work without my beloved Wacom tablet – it's the heart of my workspace. I use the 27QHD model, and like to alternate between sitting and standing at my desk.

➥ I like all kinds of visual stimuli, I make the most of my small space by displaying a wide range of different objects for inspiration. So I'm constantly collecting research materials such as comics, art books, books about nature, video games, and statuettes and figurines.
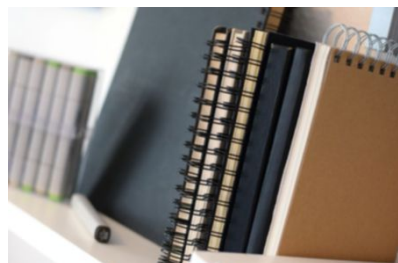
Even if I never show them to anyone, I love and hate my sketch books. They're proof that I have plenty of room to grow as an artist. I should use them!

However, I have a constantly changing collection. If I feel that a book or a figure isn't supporting my current art style or no longer has the same kind of impact, I'll replace it with a new one. This helps me to keep focused on my work, without giving up on the personality of my studio.

I try to maintain a good balance between objects that are either interesting to look at or remind me of my goals, and the functionality of my workstation. This ensures it's not just a room to work in – it's also a space to reflect my personal progression as an artist. So who knows what my room will look like in a couple of years' time...

Jens is a concept artist and illustrator working in the entertainment industry. See his art at www.jens-fiedler.com.

I often like to mix modern and traditional elements, to create interesting contrasts in my art.

My River Pig is one of my latest, more colourful pieces. I really enjoy switching my work focus from time to time.

❝ I'm constantly collecting research materials such as comics, art books, and figurines ❞

This is one of my favourite pieces – I love the classy look and setting. It's always fun to combine dark elements with a bright light source.

Yep, here's where some of my money goes if I'm bored. Books and figures… but I try to keep the collection small and also sell pieces that I don't like anymore.
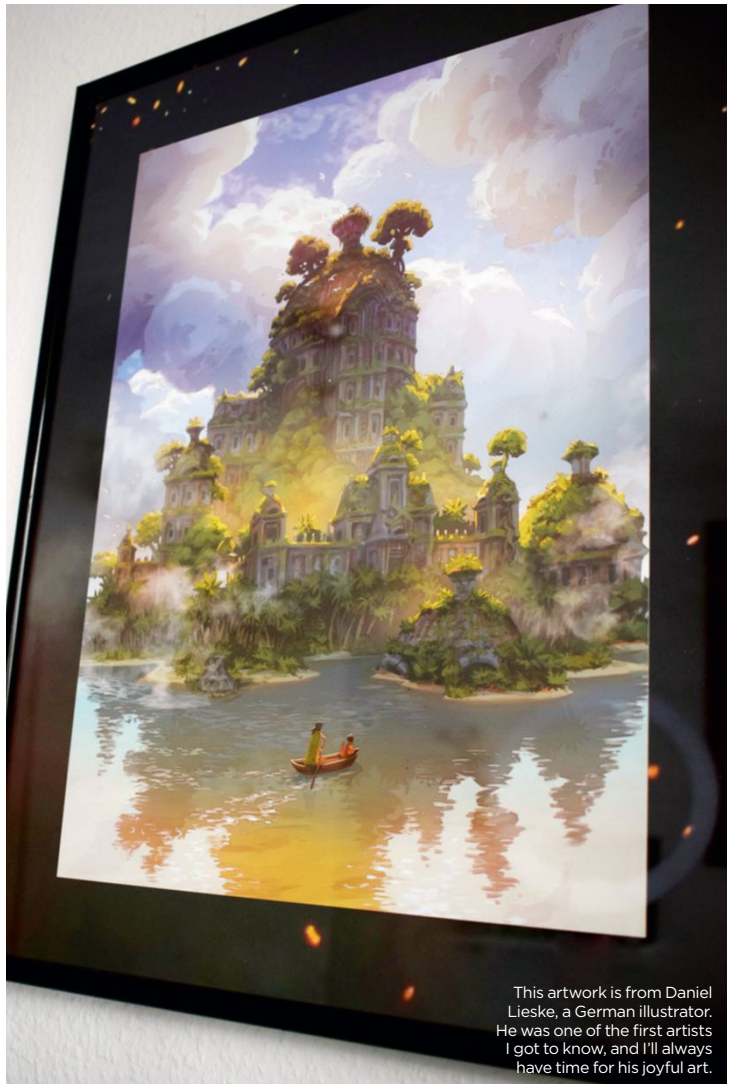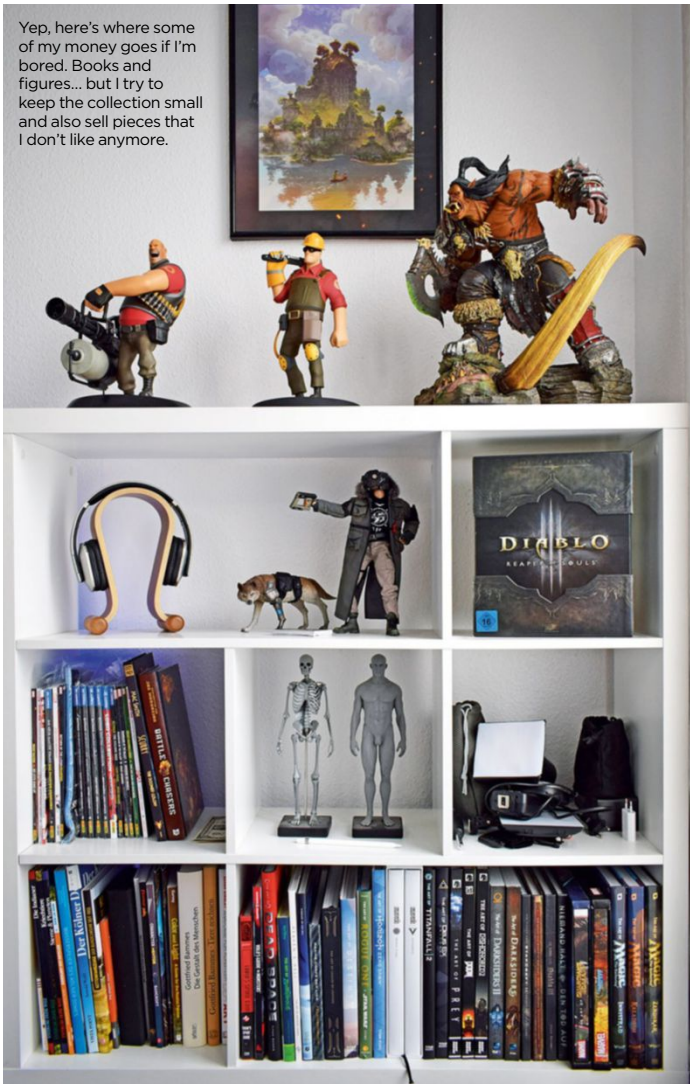
This artwork is from Daniel Lieske, a German illustrator. He was one of the first artists I got to know, and I'll always have time for his joyful art.

The Last Winter is the second book Samwise published in 2017, along with Grimbeard, Tales of the Last Dwarf.

The Last Winter is now upon us

Myth buster How did Blizzard's AD Samwise Didier find the time to write and illustrate a fantasy novel?

As if being the art director at Blizzard Entertainment wasn't enough of an achievement, World of Warcraft icon Samwise Didier also finds time to write and illustrate his own fantasy stories. The latest of which, The Last Winter, was published in October.

Telling the tale of a clash between clans and giants, The Last Winter was inspired by a children's book of Norse mythology which the artist read to his daughter as a bedtime story.

"As I was hearing the tales of Odin, Loki and Thor battling giants, it hit me how much I loved these tales and how much inspiration I've drawn from them, both literally and figuratively," says Samwise. "It was soon afterwards that I started creating artwork for my own heroes and giants, and writing my own tales to tell."

Juggling his duties as a father, art director and author seems to be no problem for Samwise, who tends to make the most of his time by working early in the morning and creating rather than consuming. "I have a saying I live by: Always Be Creating, or simply ABC," he says. "I tend to have my sketchbook or notebook with me every waking hour of the day and when I'm not working at my day job, I'm creating art at home."

Featuring a pure representation of his art and creative style, this book is sure to appeal to Samwise's legion of fans. "Expect to see lots of bold and saturated colours, and massively proportioned heroes battling gigantic monsters while frost and fire rain from the sky!" Samwise says.

The Last Winter is published by Simon & Schuster. For more details visit **http://ifxm.ag/last-winter**.
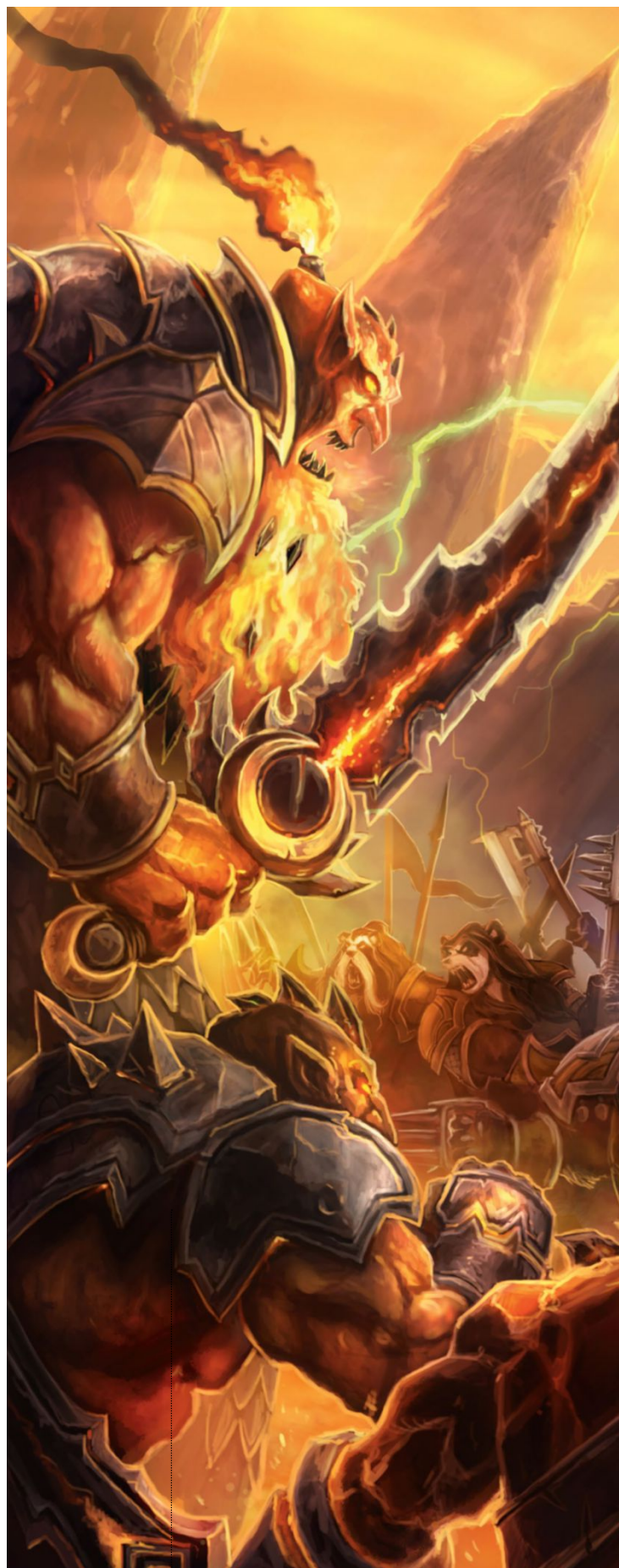
> **As I was hearing the tales of Odin, Loki and Thor battling giants, it hit me how much I loved these tales**

"I wake up very early and I do most of my personal art creation well before the roosters, crows or the sun are up," says Samwise.

Working on The Last Winter taught Samwise just how important it is to keep creating new things.
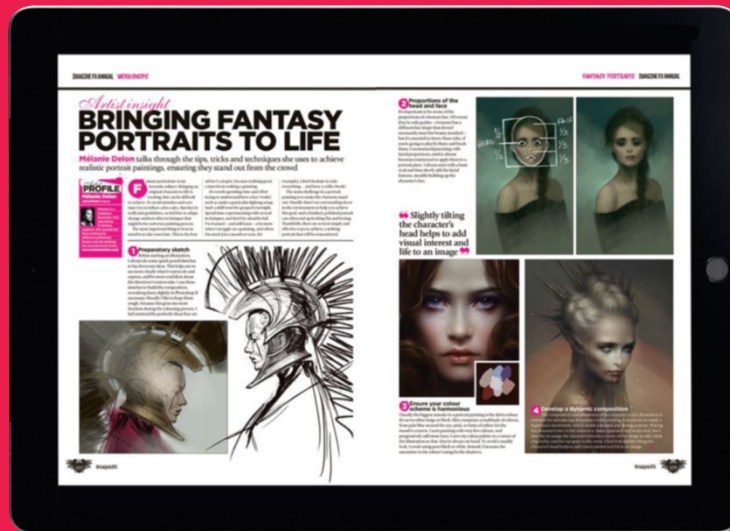
After completing the survey, you'll receive a digital copy of the **ImagineFX Annual** as a thank you for your feedback.

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Every issue, we do our best to create a magazine that inspires you to make art. But we're always looking for ways to make ImagineFX even better, so we'd like your help. To receive your free digital edition of the Annual, all you need to do is answer some quick questions about yourself and the magazine. We look forward to hearing from you!

Claire Howlett
Editor

Complete our reader survey at
http://ifxm.ag/ifx-reader-survey

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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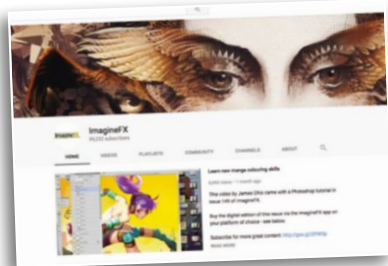
Not all our workshop videos have narration, because the artist may not speak English well enough, or may not want to talk through their painting process.

Resuscitated channel!

Can I just send a cheeky thank you for finally remembering that you have a YouTube channel? I've been a subscriber to that channel for ages and loved following the artists as they paint. But it went quiet for years! As as aside, why are some videos silent? I want to hear the artists explain what they do. At the very least you should have some music. Anyway, I started by thanking you and ended by complaining. Sorry and thanks!
Chris, via email

Claire replies Um,*cough* yes, we did forget that channel for a while didn't we! Apologies for that Chris and to the other 99,000 subscribers also. Happily, once again we're posting new videos all the time. For those that didn't know about our YouTube channel, make sure you subscribe here: www.youtube.com/imaginefx.

More traditional art, please

I'm new to your magazine. I picked it up after seeing issue Richard Anderson's concept art cover [issue 152] in Barnes & Noble. I thought it was a great read.

I'm studying illustration at college and while the subject matter of the

DID YOU MISS THE PREVIOUS PACKED ISSUE? Don't worry – you can still get hold of it. Visit **http://ifxm.ag/156-ifx** for details.

Our concept artist issue from earlier this year caught the eye of new reader Joel. Its bright cover did the trick!

magazine isn't really my usual bag (I don't mean to offend!), I did like seeing the story on Volta Studios and the Artist in Residence feature. Can you do more traditional art stuff? That would make it a must-buy purchase next time.
Joel, via email

Claire replies No offence taken. I'm glad that you found us. We're always looking to improve the magazine, so if other readers have an opinion on whether we should have more traditional art in the magazine, then please let me know.

Satisfying the inner critic

Your two features on giving and receiving art crits was very timely for me. I've recently hit a bit of a dark place with my art and I've gone through a phase where I think everything I do is terrible. After taking note of what the artists in the story said, I decided to take a step back and revaluate how I appraise my own work.

It's not been easy (this is such an understatement!), but I discovered that sometimes I've been able to separate myself from my work and see it as a separate entity to me. I concentrated on being critical with my own work in a way that I would learn from it and – crucially – without ending up devaluing every stroke that I'd created.

I know that your feature wasn't for this goal, but I thought I would let you know about how this helped my own inner critic. For now, anyway.
Carrie, via email

Claire replies That's powerful stuff Carrie. I'm sure if you could bottle the exact moment that you could extract yourself unemotionally from what you had created (read: put your heart into), you'd have a queue of people wanting to buy that potion. Thanks for writing in. I'll see if I can do the same. I'm not sure if everybody could do this, but I think it's worth trying as an exercise.

FRESH PAINT

New works that have grabbed our attention

Johanna Tarkela @lhuin

Sam Serridge @artof_sam

Miss Dee @xdark_as_my_soulx

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

THE ART OF
ASSASSIN'S CREED
ORIGINS

Raphael Lacoste, art director of the Assassin's Creed franchise, tells Gary Evans that he wants to take you to a virtual world where danger feels very real…
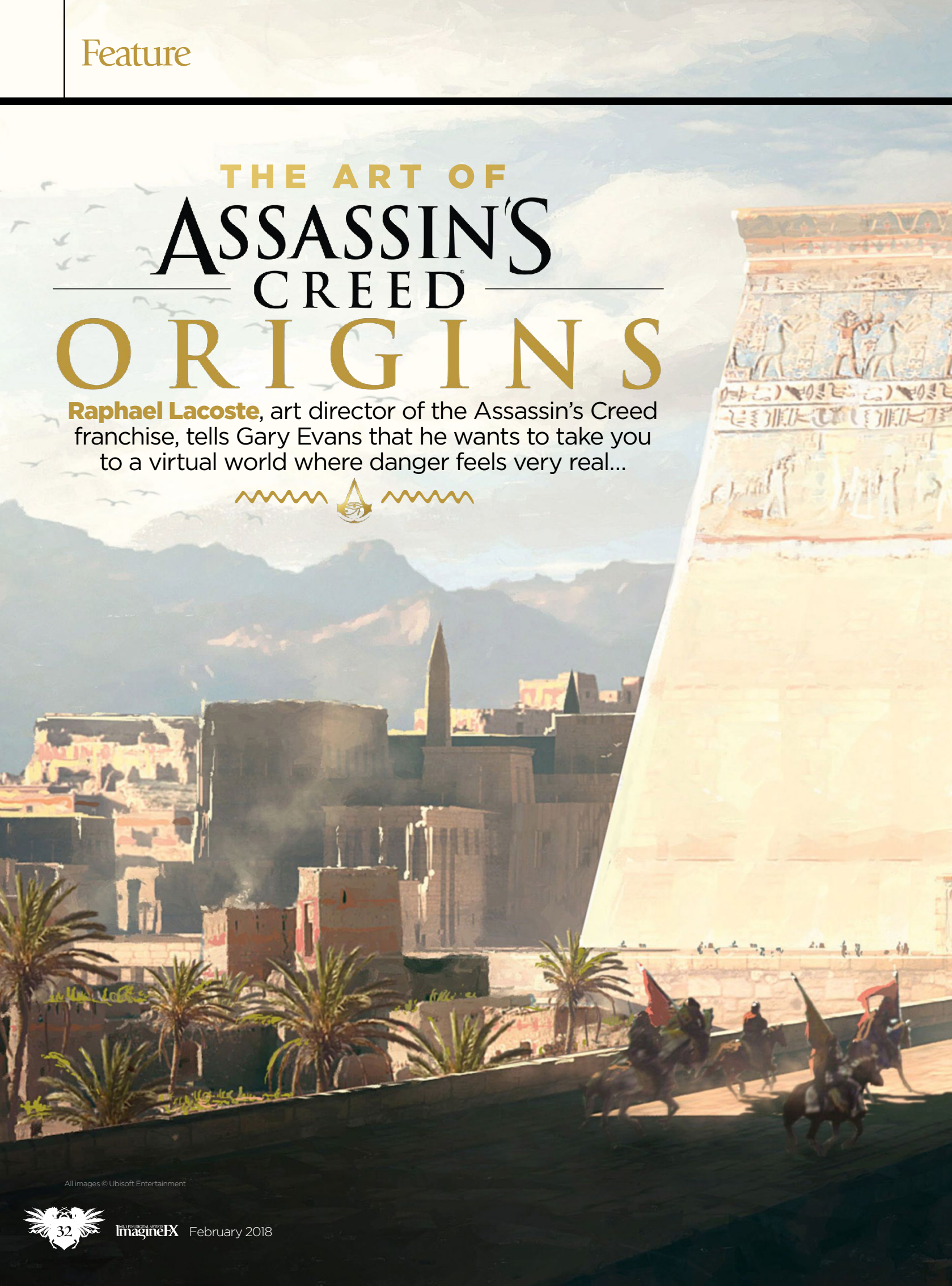
THEBES ENTRANCE
Assassin's Creed Origins is set in the ancient Egyptian empire. Franchise art director Raphael Lacoste shows the entrance to the city of Thebes.
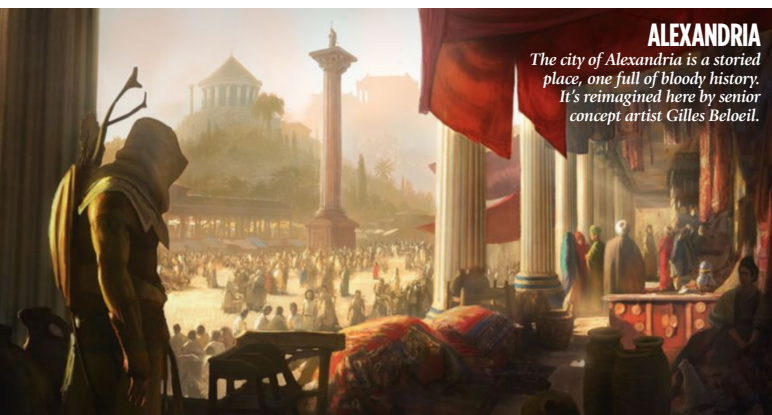
SPECTACULAR STREETS
Martin Deschambault, senior concept artist, takes us into the past and through the spectacular streets of the Egyptian city of Alexandria.

Watch a film and you're an observer. But play a game and you're a participant. For Raphael Lacoste, art director of Ubisoft's hugely popular Assassin's Creed franchise, this is an important distinction.

Growing up in the 80s, Raphael played games like Pitfall, Another World and Rick Dangerous, a platformer inspired by Indiana Jones. But even then, Raphael looked past point-scoring, beating the boss and completing the levels. He was interested in the story.

"It's funny to remember that visual quality at this time wasn't a big issue," the Frenchman says, "because our imagination was taking over. The rendering was really abstract, but the experience was still immersive."

Later on, Tomb Raider – the boss level in particular – scared him. Playing Omikron: The Nomad Soul and Abe's Oddysee changed something in the young man. Again, he felt "immersed in the game experience."

Raphael says: "If you watch a movie then you're moved and transported by the characters and their story – you

> **What I love the most is to be able to freely explore an immersive world**

A VIOLENT PAST
In the pre-production stage, Raphael and his team are looking for an "interesting" moment in history. And by interesting, they mean violent and duplicitous.

STORYBOARDING
Martin Deschambault works up a storyboard, as the team attempts to transform a good idea into a great game.
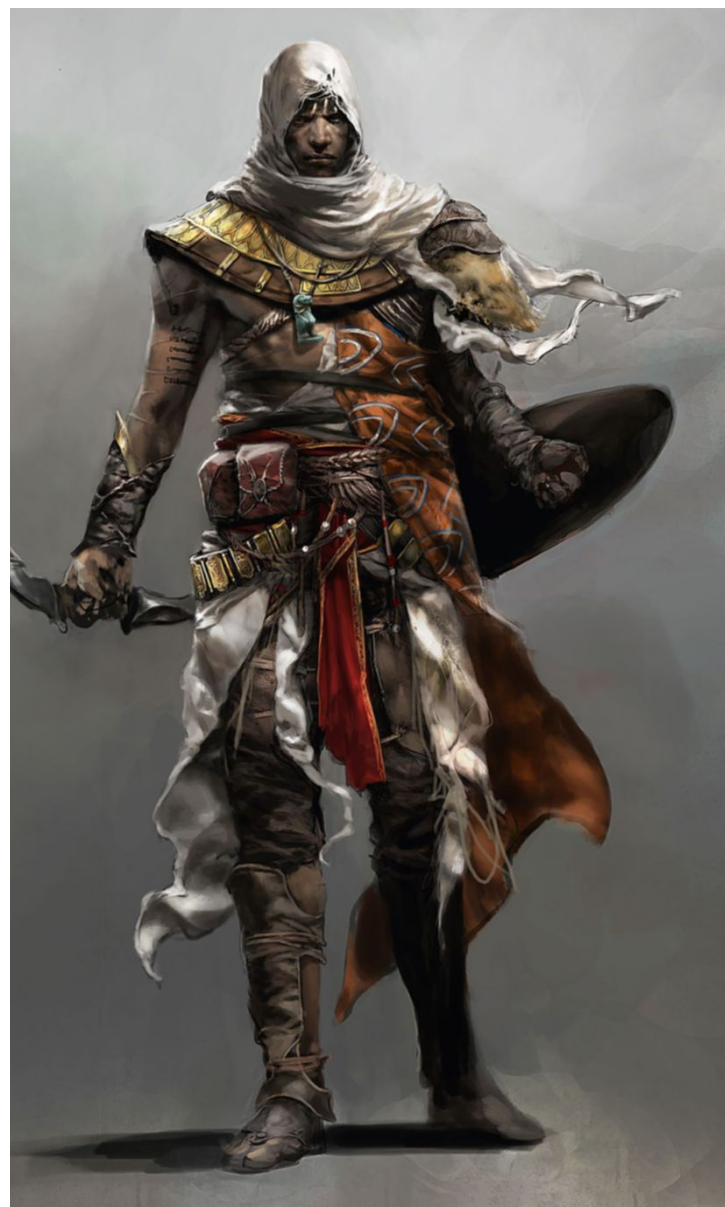
BAYEK
Senior art designer Vincent Gaigneux worked on lead character Bayek, a member of the Medjay. This was a powerful priesthood and elite paramilitary police force in ancient Egypt.

enter their world – but for the most part you receive information. You're just a spectator. In contrast, playing games makes you more proactive and gives you that feeling that you're playing your own story.

"If you're putting yourself in danger, you can feel this stress. You escape, hide and find your own strategy. What I love the most is to be able to freely explore an immersive world, through the vector of the hero that you occupy. Video games can literally take you into another dimension."

WHY RECREATE REALITY?

At school, Raphael was never much of a student. "Instructions were never, and still aren't, part of my priorities." He preferred to stare out of the window, wander about outside, or ➤➤

GREAT PYRAMIDS
No game set in ancient Egypt would be complete without the Great Pyramids, seen here in silhouette in Raphael Lacoste's artwork.

BAYEK FACING THE BRIGHT WALL

In this piece for Assassin's Creed Origins, Raphael wanted to create a simple, graphically composed image that represents "a moment of exploration" in the mountains of Egypt

1 Light and shadow

I start with a black and white composition, defining the overall light direction but also the simple, vertical shape of the door. I want to have two guards in the entrance of the temple, with Bayek facing the bright wall. The strong light on the wall creates an interesting contrast with the hero standing in the shade.

2 Graphical composition

I set a new layer to Multiply mode to keep an eye on my original concept, and then start to add textures and colours, while maintaining my original graphical composition. I gradually reduce the Opacity of the sketch, which enables me to work on the values, shading and details.
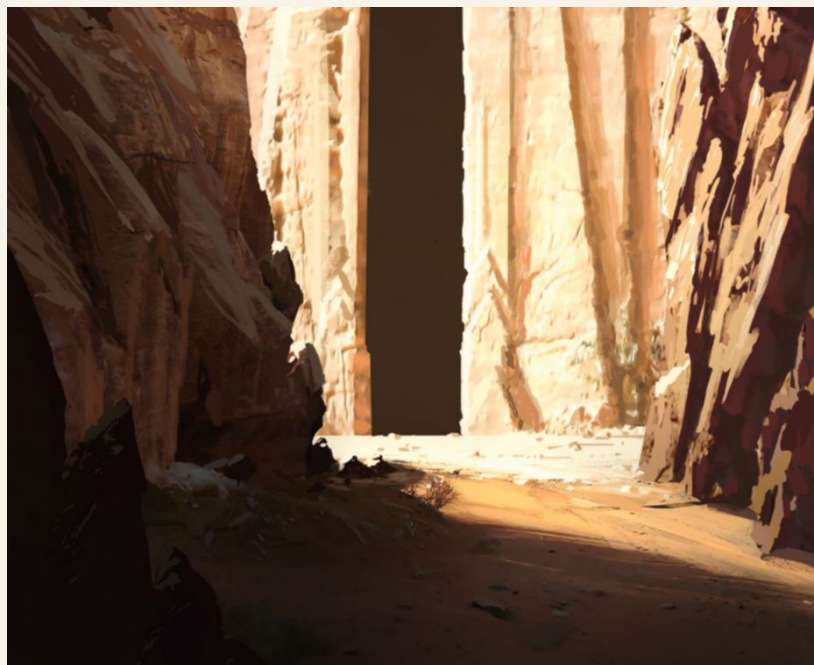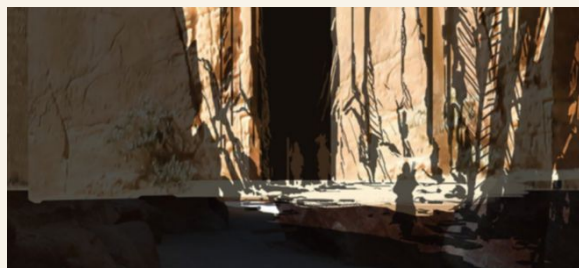
3 The painting

I get rid of the original sketch and focus on the painting. I want to use a simple colour palette for the overall mood and saturation in the indirect lighting and shadows, even if the overall mood looks pretty monochromatic. I like the values in the shade and the local colours of the sandstone.
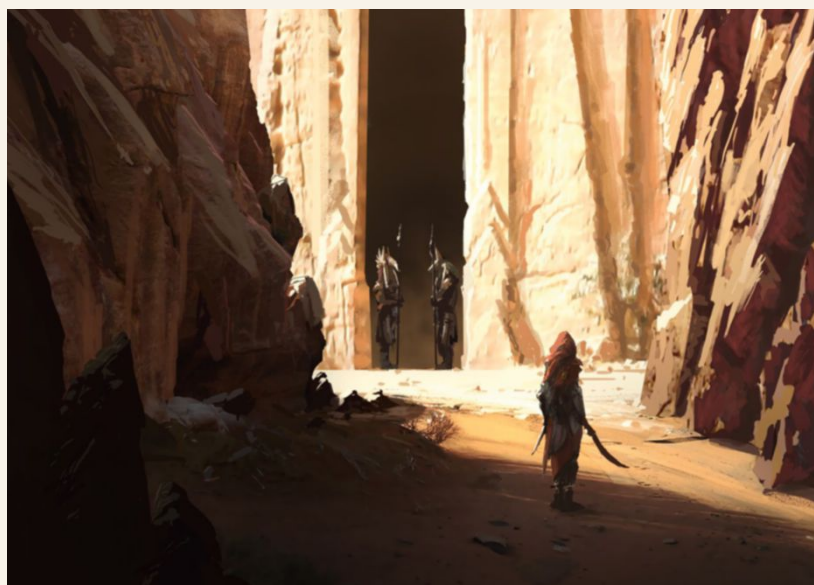
4 Adding figures to the painting

I bring the characters back in and polish some of the details. I don't use many textures because I want this image to look more painterly and graphical. I really enjoy painting light, even if sometimes I use 3D assets to help with the perspective and lighting direction. In this case the composition was organic enough to preclude the need for any CG rendering.

66 Why recreate reality? I love to reconstruct reality and create new environments 99

➤➤ draw. Yet even then, he wasn't interested in copying the world around him. Instead, he wanted to create brand new worlds.

"Why recreate reality? It surrounds us. It's sometimes beautiful, sometimes disturbing. Reality can drive us to feel complex emotions and have deep thoughts. But I love to reconstruct reality in order to create new environments that push us to wonder, and allow us to escape.

"I like to blend cultures and landscapes, often exotic ones, to create something new, something different. What could an Icelandic landscape combined with the architecture of the ancient city of Petra look like? Or imaginary castles that defy gravity on a background of exaggerated Norwegian mountain peaks? My objective is to create fantastic worlds of what could have been."

CREATIVE UPBRINGING

Raphael studied at Bordeaux's School of Fine Arts and Decorative Arts, and worked as a photographer and set designer at a theatre company. He enjoyed the work, but it didn't pay much. In 1997, his dad – who also played games with Raphael and ➤➤

5 Adjustments and adding atmosphere

I make some minor tweaks to boost the atmosphere. This is the stage when I carry out colour balancing and saturation edits. I work on light diffusion, helping to further define the sunlight's direction. The final painting retains the original aim of the initial sketch, but brings this location to life with the overall mood, colour and storytelling elements.

❝ Research is our homework. It's the most creative time artistically, and also a quiet period ❞

PLANTATIONS
The franchise has never shied away from history's darkest moments. This is one of Gilles Beloeil's concepts for sugar plantations.

HUNTRESS
Character design by concept artist Jeff Simpson. The team was encouraged to experiment with new ideas in the early stages of production.

AYA
In Origins, you take on the role of Bayek and his wife Aya, seen in this concept by Vincent Gaigneux.

WHITE DESERT
Raphael Lacoste conveys how hot, vast and unforgiving the White Desert is – one of Origin's new settings.

taught him photography – bought him a computer. He learned 3ds Max, created his first demo piece, and built up a portfolio. He received a diploma from what's now called the ENJMIN Institute of Game Design, then secured a job as an environment designer at Kalisto Entertainment,.

Kalisto went bankrupt in 2002, but then Ubisoft called and Raphael took the company up on its offer. He moved to Montreal, Canada and became an art director at the games publisher.

MEMPHIS
Memphis, as painted by Martin Deschambault. The city was the capital of Egypt during the third millennium, a time known as the Old Kingdom, or the Age of the Pyramids.

Raphael now works as the brand art director on the Assassin's Creed franchise. In October 2017 Ubisoft released the tenth instalment of the game, Assassin's Creed Origins.

Raphael's job changes as a game goes through its many development stages. At first, he and the team focus on research, doing their "homework": lots of concept art, sketching, drawing and painting. "It's the most creative time, artistically," says Raphael, "and also a quiet period."

The team explores specific time periods and locations. They try to find "an interesting pivotal moment of history." It has to be something exciting, with a bit of mystery to it, an "inspirational playground" for both player and developer.

Once that's in place, they define some set pieces, work up illustrations to "sell" the chosen world and characters, and then start thinking about a hero. These first month are full of creative freedom. Anything

"NOBODY WANTS TO BE AN ART DIRECTOR"

Raphael says young artists shouldn't be thinking about going into art direction – especially if they think that it's a glamorous job

"Don't try to be an art director straight after school. You become a director after years of experience, after knowing what it's like to get your hands dirty.

It's a hard job and takes not only experience but also a knowledge of studio production. There's also the important human factor. The skills needed are more personal and artistic than technical, but it also takes also some technical knowledge to be able to understand all the challenges and deal with the technical directors.

Usually, if someone wants to join the team, they need to be interested in the game and have excellent skills in environment design, composition and storytelling. A good art director can communicate their vision through words. A great art director can not only communicate their vision through words, but also through their own art."

DEVIL IN THE DETAIL
The team enlisted historians and Egyptologists for help. Their attention to detail seen in characters like Hetepi, painted here by Jeff Simpson.

AUTHENTICITY
Critics have praised Assassin's Creed Origins' historical authenticity, something Raphael and his team paid particular attention to.

HISTORY ALIVE
Senior creative director Jean-Claude Golvin brought history to life with bird's eye views of the ancient world.
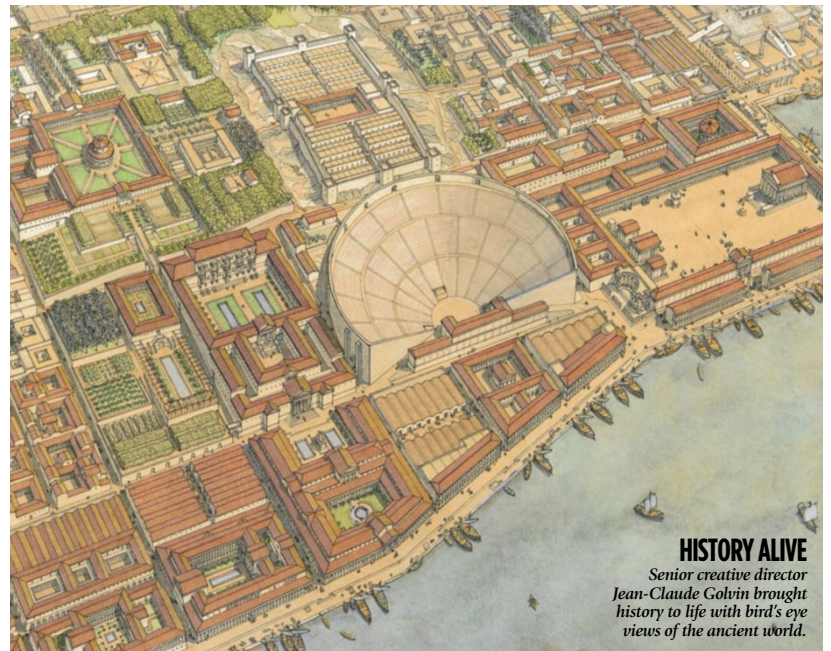
➤➤ could happen. The game could go anywhere. Raphael finds the blank page both stressful and thrilling. He's happy to try things, let them fail, then begin again. But at some point, the game must become something real. They need have a setting, artwork and gameplay prototype in place to sell the idea to headquarters.

The team throws in the overall game and level design with story and art to make the first playable version of the game. "This is where fights can happen," Raphael says. "It's both a challenging and crucial period. I spend more time in meetings than working with the illustrators."

Now Raphael goes from team to team and makes sure that the "original benchmarks and visual standard" are followed throughout. To join his team, you need a good mix of skills: "They need to have interest in the game and have excellent skills in environment design and composition, but also storytelling. Our levels are complex to create as they blend historical context,

FIRST SIGHT OF ALEXANDRIA
Martin Deschambault goes big in this piece of concept art, showing us the epic view as we ride into Alexandria.

ICONIC POSE
Martin Deschambault's Bayek strikes an iconic pose. In Origins, the character meets historical figures like Cleopatra and Julius Caesar.

❝ **Our levels are complex to create, and need to be epic and memorable** ❞

fantasy, gameplay interactivity, and need to be epic and memorable."

DEPARTING – AND RETURNING
In February 2007, Raphael finished work on the first Assassin's Creed and decided to leave the game's industry. "I felt that I needed new challenges," he says, "I wanted to learn new things."

He went to work at visual effects firm Rodeo FX, a small company at that time, creating matte paintings and concept art for Death Race, Terminator Salvation, and Journey to the Center of the Earth.

"The film industry is older than the video game industry," says Raphael. "I learned a lot at Rodeo, like mastering image composition, rendering, technical skills in Photoshop and even working in 3D software. I still use what I learned there now. But I felt that my job as a matte painter for film was a little too technical, less creative."

You watch a movie, but you play a game: "So I decided to come back." ◆

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Artist Portfolio
JESSE VAN DIJK

The Dutch art director of Destiny 2's "mythic science-fiction world" tells **Gary Evans** just what that entails

J esse van Dijk wants three things to happen when you look at his work. He wants you to relate to it, remember it, and to feel in some way surprised by what you see.

He paints imaginary places that are all in some way a version of a fantasy of being in another world.

"Accomplishing all three – relatable, memorable, surprising – in a single piece virtually never works for me,"

Artist PROFILE

Jesse Van Dijk
LOCATION: US
FAVOURITE ARTISTS: John Harris, Zdzisław Beksiński and Peter Gric. The art styles of classic films such as Solaris, Stalker and Time Bandits also influenced Destiny 2
SOFTWARE USED: 3ds Max
WEB: www.jessevandijkart.com

says the art director, who is originally from Amsterdam but now lives and works in Seattle, US.

"But it's just what fundamentally motivates me to do the work I do: a desire to go to these strange, alien places from the comfort of my couch. I'm a huge sucker for wide open spaces and epic views, rich with possibilities. The ones that raise more questions than they answer."

After high school, Jesse studied industrial design engineering at Delft University of Technology. The course included more maths and physics than visual design. He loved using drawings to sell the viewer an idea. But doing this for coffee machines and vacuum cleaners didn't really get him going. "I was a mediocre student," he says.

Around this time, he started to put a lot of time into making custom maps
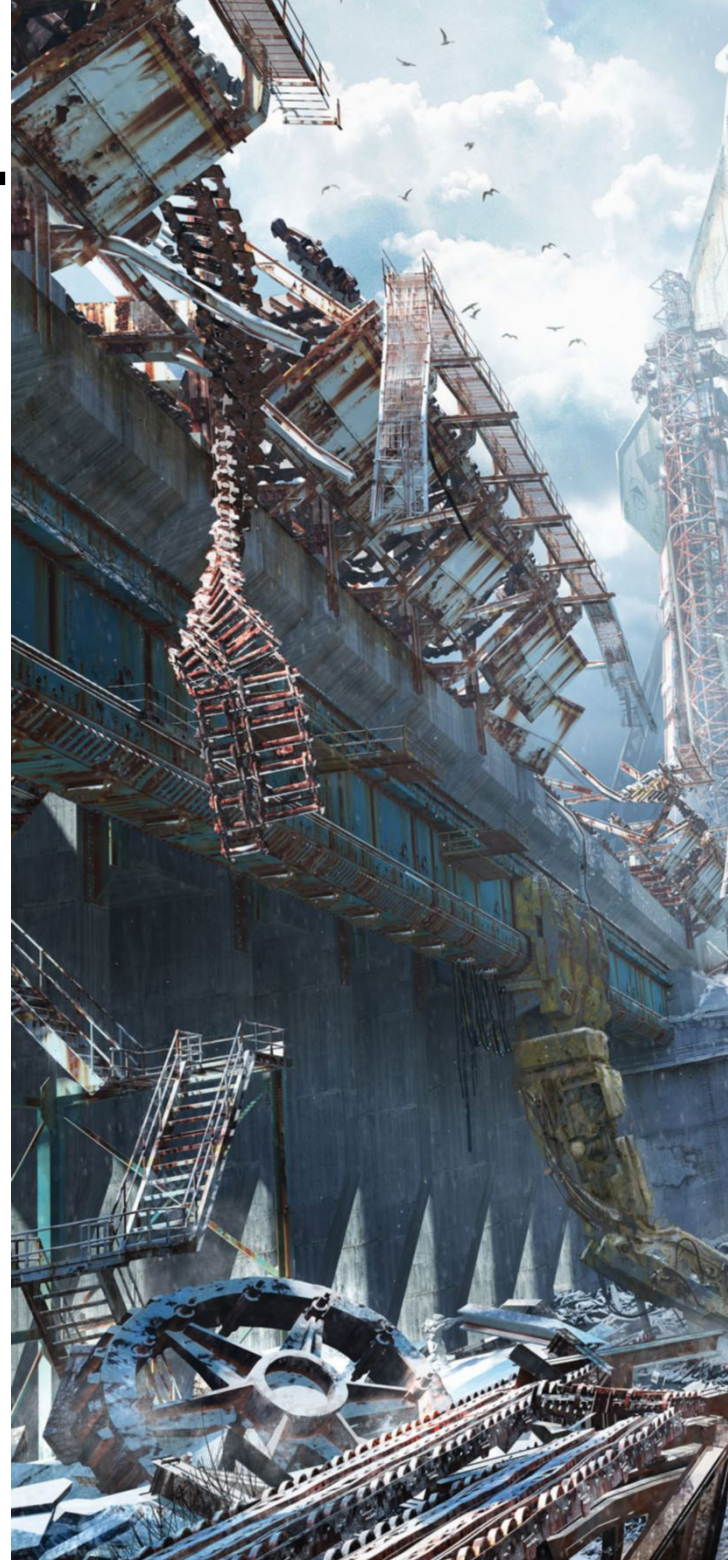
DESTINY FULFILLED
Jesse says great concept art must be three things: relatable, memorable, and surprising. But he admits he rarely nails all three in a single image.

for first-person shooter games such as Doom and Quake. Back then, level design as a discipline combined both art and game design, so he learned the basics of encounter design and general design principles ("valuable lessons later in my career"). He dreamed of getting a level-designer job at Guerrilla Games. The Dutch developer was at that time working on the first in its Killzone series. Jesse applied for roles

> **I'm a huge sucker for wide open spaces and epic views, rich with possibilities**

there several times, but it took years before he finally got in.

He ended up at the now-closed Playlogic Entertainment, a games company with "more good intentions than shipping expertise." Level design as a discipline started to change. Art and game design became separate disciplines. Playlogic didn't employ any concept artists. Jesse stepped into this new role. "Concept art was the perfect way for me to contribute to the development of the games that we were working on."

Later, when Jesse received a job offer from Bungie, he thought the American company had contacted him by ➧➧
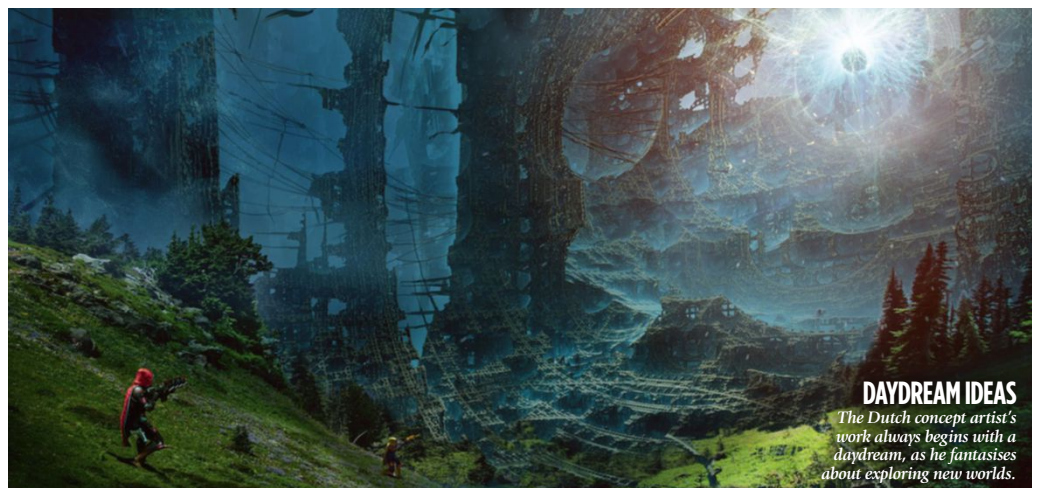
DAYDREAM IDEAS
The Dutch concept artist's work always begins with a daydream, as he fantasises about exploring new worlds.

ENGINEERED ART
Jesse studied industrial design engineering – drawing coffee machines and vacuum cleaners – which helps his vehicles look meticulously accurate.

➤ mistake. It wasn't an easy decision to leave home, but he knew he'd regret it if he didn't take the job. He made the move to the US, which was a "life-changing event in every way."

EXPLORATION IS KEY

Jesse now works as art director at Bungie. His team recently finished work on Destiny 2, which was released in September 2017. But what does that job title mean? And what exactly does an art director do all day?

"I spend a lot of time in meeting rooms," Jesse laughs. His job usually entails one of two things: creating new stuff or assessing complete work. "In the case of the former, the task at hand often amounts to defining clearly and concisely what the specific requirements for a piece of content is, so that people who are going to work on it are aligned and work towards a common goal. In the case of the latter, it's assessing the progress of a given chunk of content, seeing if it does indeed solve the problem it was

> 66 **Prototyping is like painting. You try out a bunch of ideas to see if they work** 99

intended to solve, and as it nears completion, deciding when to stop working on it.

"In preproduction, exploration is key, whereas during closing it's highly important to maintain focus on previously established and agreed-upon goals."

The initial phase of a big job like Destiny 2 is about coming up with an overarching vision for the game. As an art director, Jesse wants to define the tone and the mood of the world he's creating. He asks himself questions such as: "What does it look like? What does it mean for a world to be 'hopeful

BIG QUESTIONS
When starting work on Destiny 2, Jesse asked his team these questions: How do we strike a compelling balance between the strange and unfamiliar, and the relatable and the known?

and inviting'? How do we strike a compelling balance between the strange and unfamiliar, and the relatable and the known?" Answers to these questions will form "pillars" on which the whole game will be built.

KILL THE BAD IDEAS

The team then split off into their specialist disciplines to prototype. "Prototyping is like painting. You try out a bunch of ideas to see if they work. Some do, some don't. You take the ones that do, and try to combine them somehow, while simultaneously making them better individually."
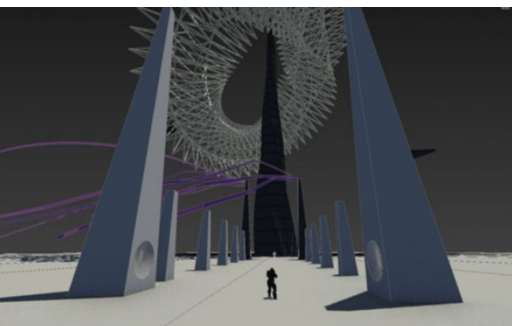
GAME PILLARS
Before Jesse's team splits into its various departments, they have to agree on the game pillars – the controlling ideas around which everything else will be built.

This, Jesse says, is what being a good art director is all about: you must be "hyper-conscious" of which ideas are good and which ideas are bad. You need to kill the bad ones as quickly as possible rather than waste time on them – even if those ideas are yours.

As an artist himself ('one of the best video game concept artists on the planet', according to Kotaku.com), Jesse knows what kind of art directors he liked to work with. "I always ➤➤
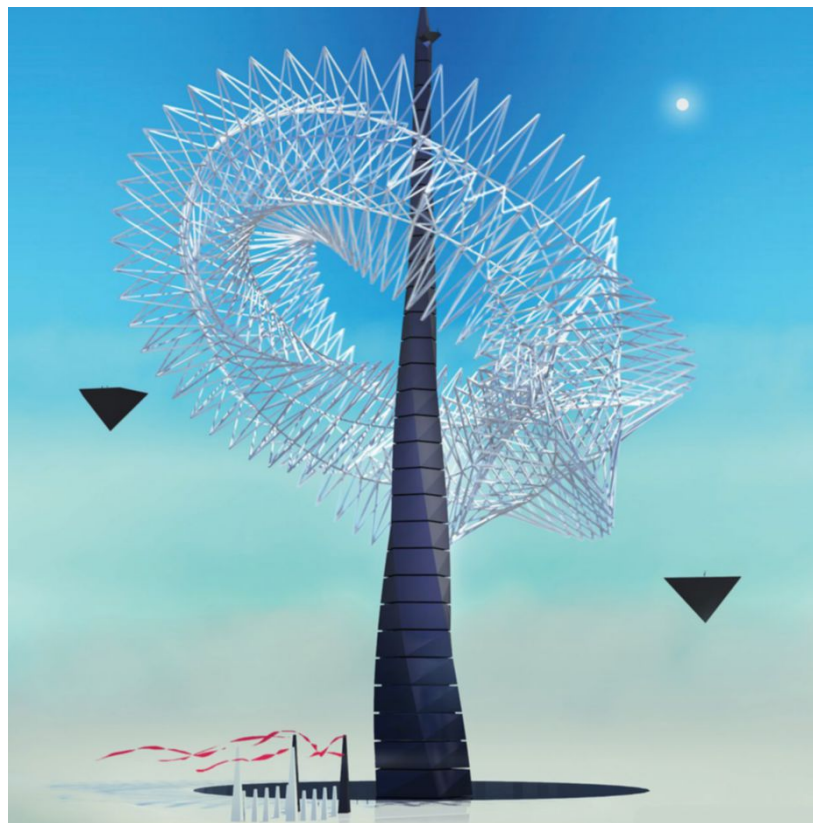
THE FRANCHISE BUILDER
Before Destiny, Jesse cut his teeth as a concept artists at Guerrilla where he worked on Killzone 3, Killzone: Shadow Dall, and Horizon: Zero Dawn. "All of those games have special places in my heart."

LIFE CHANGE
Moving from Holland to the US was the biggest decision Jesse ever made: "I don't regret taking the plunge. The experience of living in another country is unlike any other I've had and I can heartily recommend it to anyone."

VISUALISING AN OCEAN OF LIQUID METHANE

Jesse talks us through his process for creating fascinating new worlds

"I put together this concept artwork to pitch the concept of going to Titan in Destiny 2. The idea of travelling to this strange world with an ocean of liquid methane seemed so compelling.

I imagined what actually colonising this world would look like: I presumed there would initially be a steady stream of vehicles dropped in from orbit, which would slowly accumulate to form some kind of a flotilla on this moon. This is where the idea for the construction platforms and the actual arcology here came from.

In an effort to pre-visualise what the liquid methane ocean movement could look like, I made a simple animated version of it in 3ds Max.

Later on I discussed this art and my ideas with the amazing FX artists who managed to do an awesome job of creating the final ocean in the game."
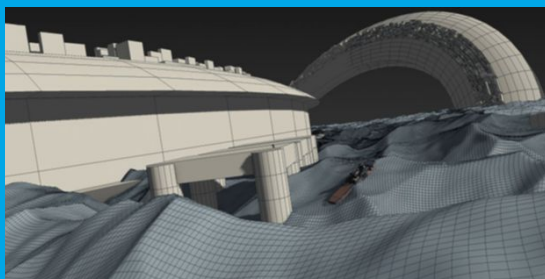
STRANGE WORLD

Jesse used this work-in-progress to pitch ideas for Titan, a "strange world" with oceans made of methane, he explains.

❝ I desire to go to these strange, alien places from the comfort of my couch ❞

A DATE WITH DESTINY
Destiny 2 was released in September 2017 to wide-spread critical acclaim. It reached number one in games charts around the world.

A GOOSEBUMPS MOMENT

Jesse's team waited for fans to deliver their verdict at a preview of Destiny 2…

"A breakthrough moment recently came during our 'reveal event' for Destiny 2 back in May 2017. When the first trailer played, and Zavala appeared on screen, the crowd went wild.

Most of Bungie was watching this on a large screen in the studio, and we were all a bit nervous – and excited, of course. But when we heard that first roar of excitement from the crowd at the event, we knew this was going to work out. It was very much a goosebumps moment for me.

Bungie is full of amazing people who routinely pull this off, and as such, it truly is a joy to be a part of their team. When that happens it's just pure magic."

enjoyed it most when art directors would delegate their design problems to me, rather than present me with prescribed solutions," he says.

"It means I spend a significant amount of time thinking about how to frame problems in such a way that they are devoid of unnecessary specifics, and to ensure I never define a vision further than I need to."

Lastly, being a good art director takes discipline. You must see a project through to the end, ensuring quality, keeping within budget, without burning out your team, he says.

The same way that you need to know when to kill a bad idea, you must also know when the good ones are finished and of a good-enough quality. You need to know when to let them go. "Even," Jesse says, "if they still might have room for improvement."

What Jesse finds most rewarding is seeing artists thrive, watching them surpass even his high standards. "The best moments of working on Destiny 2 were where a group or an individual had done something amazing, something nobody was expecting them to do."

THE UNKNOWN FRONTIER

As a freelance artist, Jesse worked in many areas of the entertainment industry, from big book publishers to major Hollywood movie studios. Each required him to use his skills in a slightly different way.

FUTURE OF GAMES
The thing that excites Jesse most about the games industry is that it could go in any direction in the future: "It's hard for me to predict what games will look like in 10 years from now."

Visual design for film, he says, is all about storytelling. Visual design for games is also about story, but there's more to it – more layers.

With games, he and his team are building places for the player to roam and options for them to explore once they reach each new location. Fitting multiple ideas into one cohesive package is a challenge, but it's what Jesse likes about video games.

"It's hard for me to predict what games will look like in 10 years from now, more than it is to imagine what films will look like at that time," Jesse says. "This is the aspect of game design as a medium that appeals to me most. I think of it more as an unknown frontier and I'm excited about what the future will bring."

💬 I think of game design as an unknown frontier and I'm excited about what the future will bring 💬

Interview Jesse van Dijk

"To a large extent, what kind of art director I'd like to be perceived as is informed by my own personal interactions with art directors as an individual contributor concept artist."

JESSE AS ART DIRECTOR
"To a large extent, what kind of art director I'd like to be perceived as is informed by my own personal interactions with art directors as an individual contributor concept artist."

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Sketchbook

ImagineFX NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

Giorgio Baroni

This artist likes nothing more than mixing ideas from the past with futuristic concepts. And if a robot's involved, so much the better!

Artist PROFILE

Giorgio Baroni
LOCATION: Italy

After working for 10 years as a children's book illustrator, Giorgio switched fields and became a character designer for any kind of game: tabletop, cards, miniatures, action figures, video games and even something for the film industry. Some of his clients include CMON, Modiphius, Paizo Publishing, John Wick Presents, Sparkypants Studio and Blur Studio. He loves to study objects from the past, and constantly marvels at how differently things were designed just a few decade ago. They inspire him in his sci-fi designs.
www.artstation.com/giorgiobaroni

WASTELAND WANDERERS

"My sci-fi version of an old tractor – one that was in use almost a century ago. I love taking old machines and their design principles and then thinking what they might look like in the future."
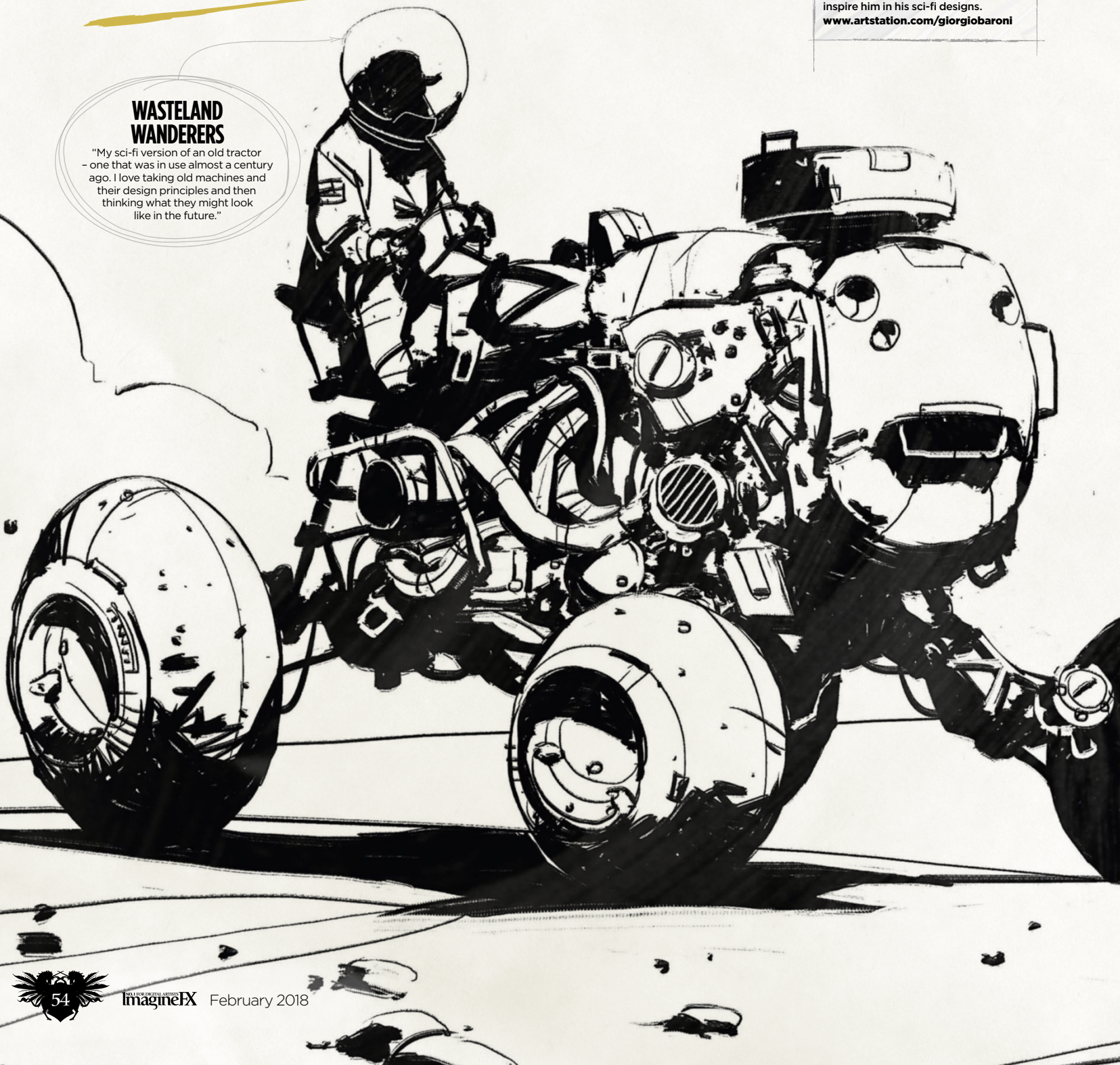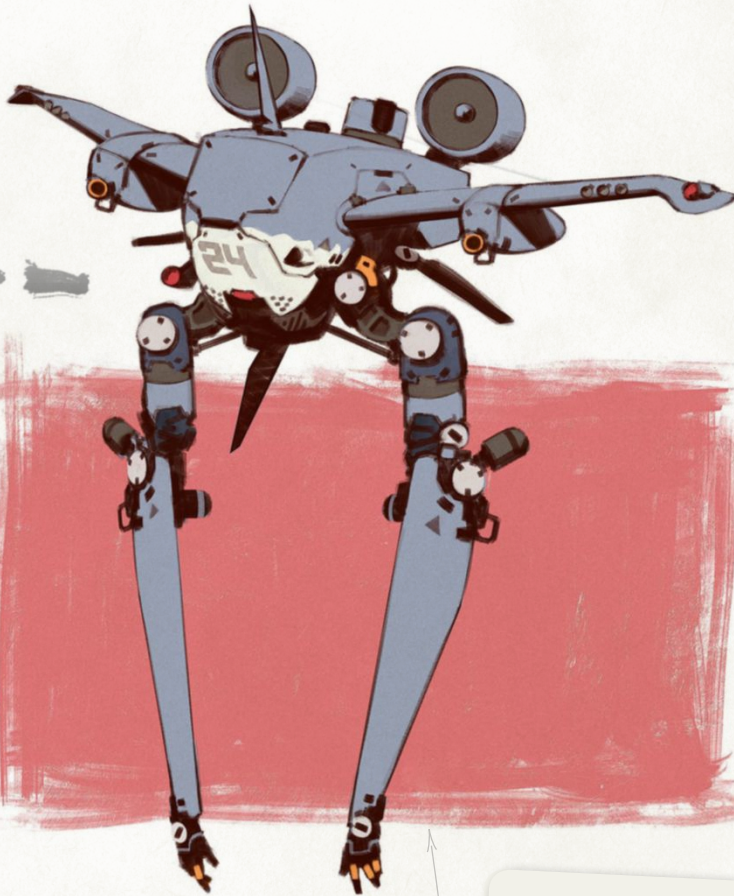
PRIESTESS
"This is my attempt at mixing fantasy and sci-fi elements. In this Inktober sketch I wanted to become better at line drawing, and limited myself to using only black ink on a white canvas."

MOR24
"This year I got right into the #MarchofRobots initiative, and had tons of fun designing mechs! This might look like a normal robot, but then you realise that those long limbs are actually arms. Working with silhouettes is like doing the Rorschach test – you can see anything in them."

GHOST RIDER
"Nothing very original here, but this sketch features two of the things that often inspire me: Spaghetti Westerns and robotics."

> **Working with silhouettes is like doing the Rorschach test**
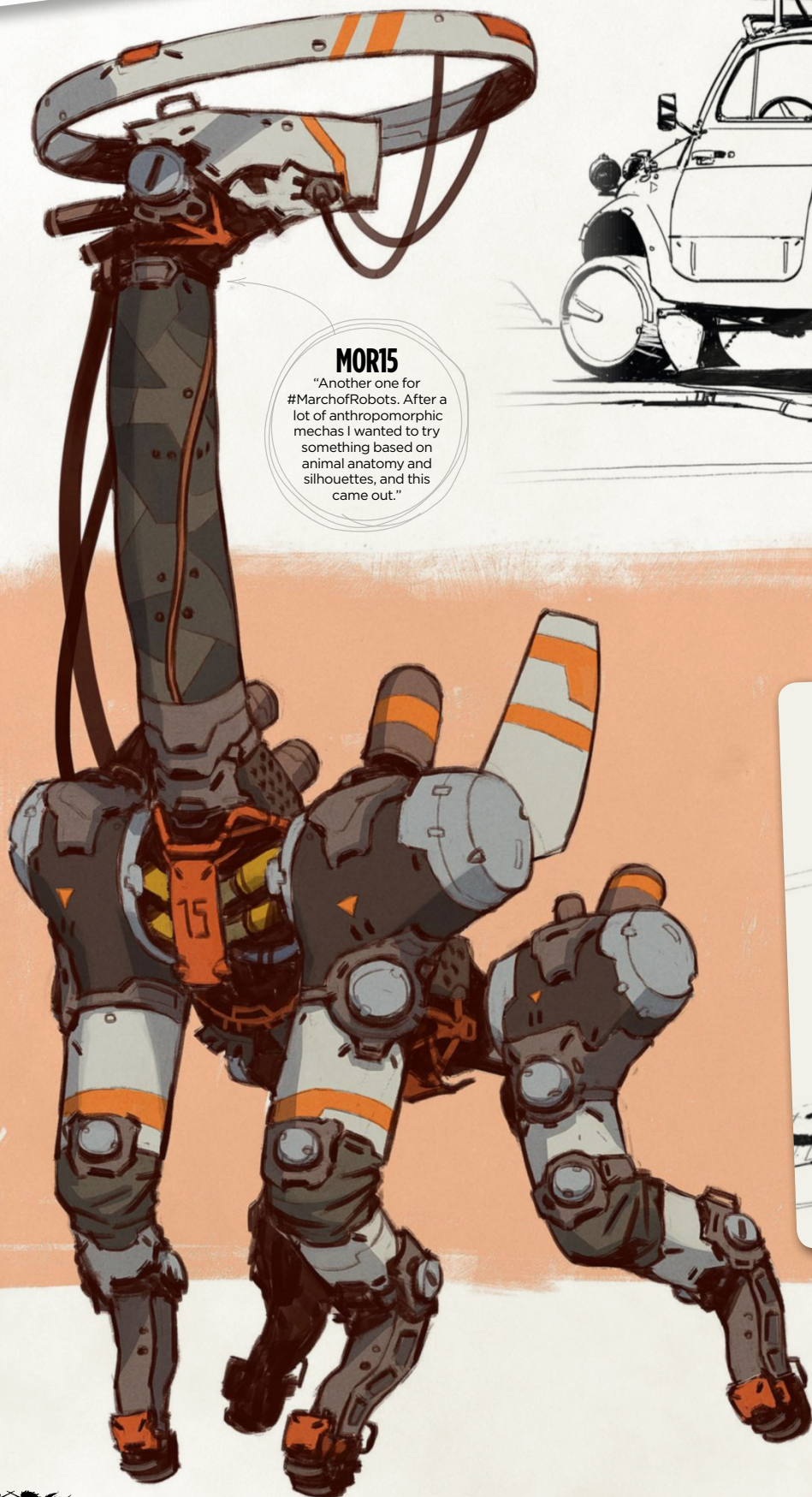
MOR15

"Another one for #MarchofRobots. After a lot of anthropomorphic mechas I wanted to try something based on animal anatomy and silhouettes, and this came out."
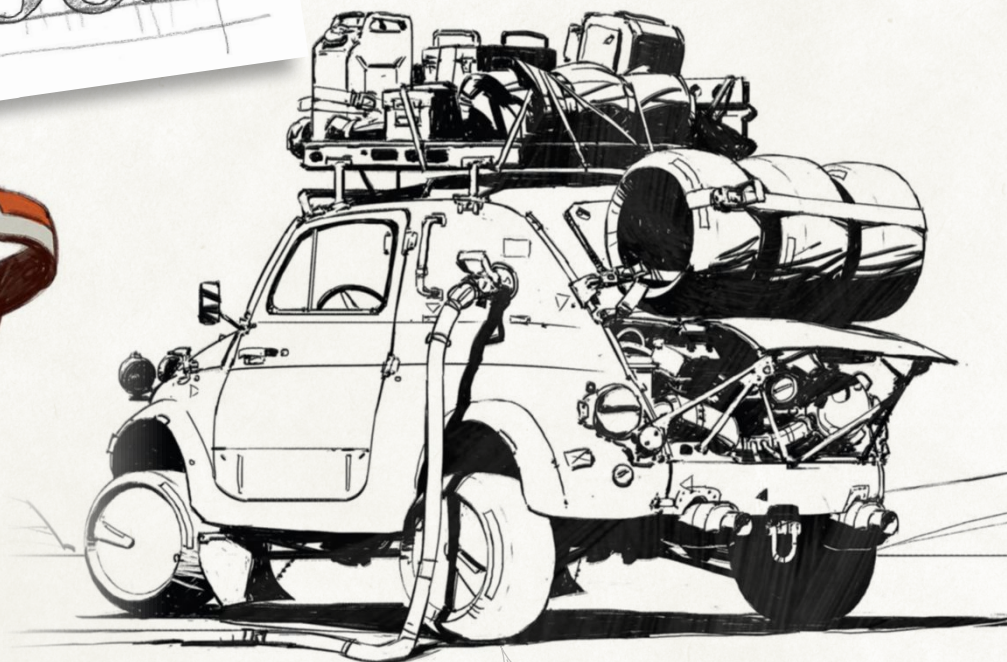
ESKORPIO

"This is basically an old Fiat 500 from the 1960s, repurposed as a scout desert vehicle a few years in the future."

MESSENGER

"I stumbled across a video of these electric unicycles and they really appealed to me. They're the perfect commuting vehicle in a futuristic wasteland."

SPEEDER
"Take some old WWII war plane models, glue them together, scale them down and make them rideable like a flying bike!"

❝ I wanted to try something based on animal anatomy and silhouettes… ❞

Sketchbook

LONG-RANGE RECONNAISSANCE DRONE 'LURD'

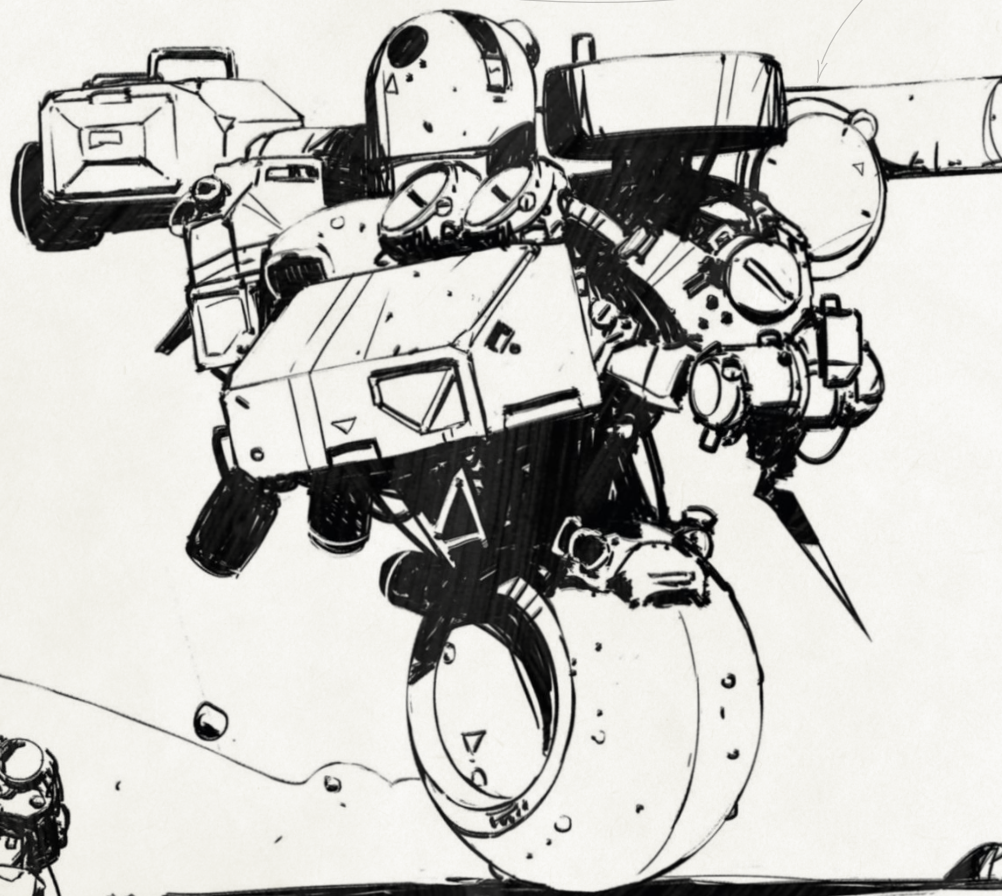"I love finding new and interesting designs for things, especially with robots and mechs. They can come in any size and shape, and like this one, comes packed with weapons and equipment. Yet it's still able to travel the desert on a single wheel!"

MOR13

"I'm always been in love with robots since I was a kid, and during the #MarchofRobots challenge I had fun pushing myself and my design skills to the max!"

"After finally seeing Akira I had to design my own cyberpunk bike"
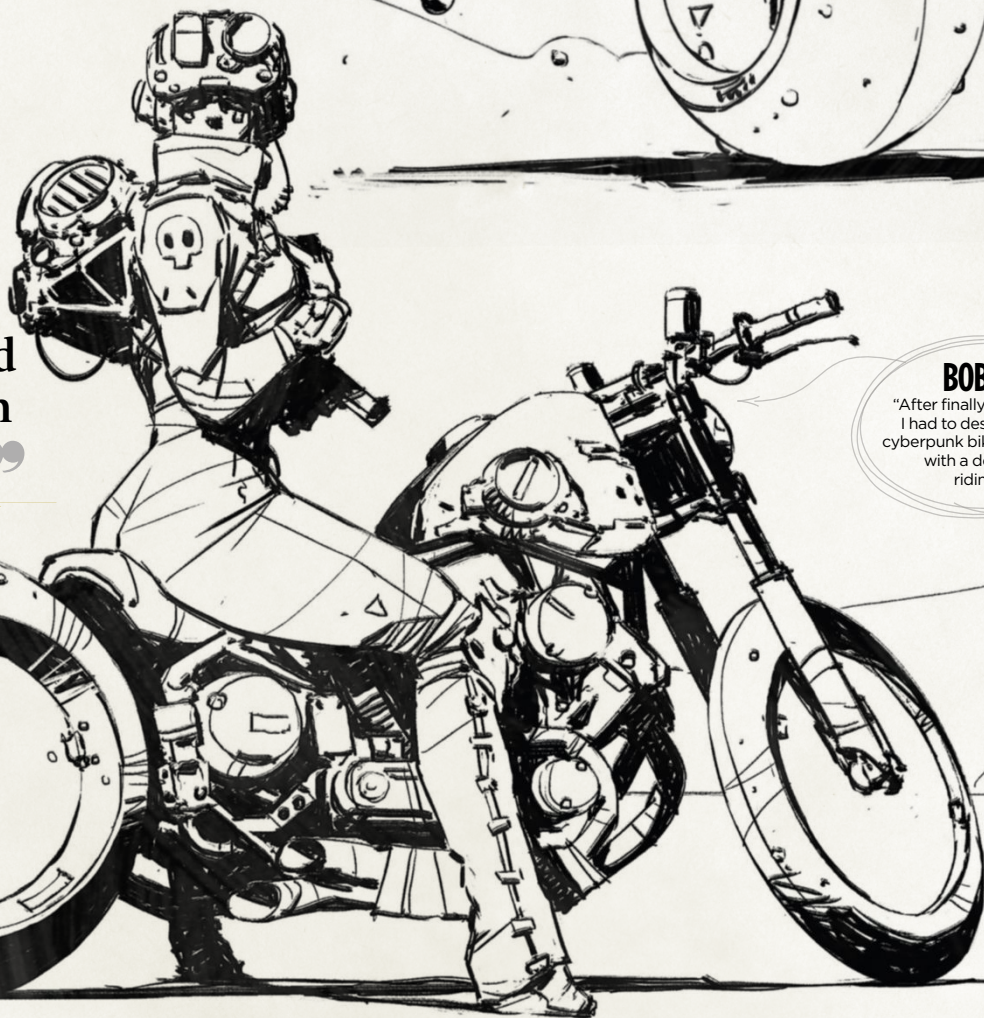
BOBBER

"After finally seeing Akira I had to design my own cyberpunk bike. So here it is, with a deadly girl riding it."

MOR19

"Another mech rolling on a single wheel. I might have a secret love for this mode of transport!"
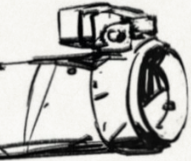
MOR22

"As with many other of my designs in the #MarchofRobots series, I've been hugely inspired by real-life robotic arms and machines. I love to take as much as possible from real life in all of my designs. This helps keep my ideas grounded in reality, while still keeping things enjoyable for the viewer."
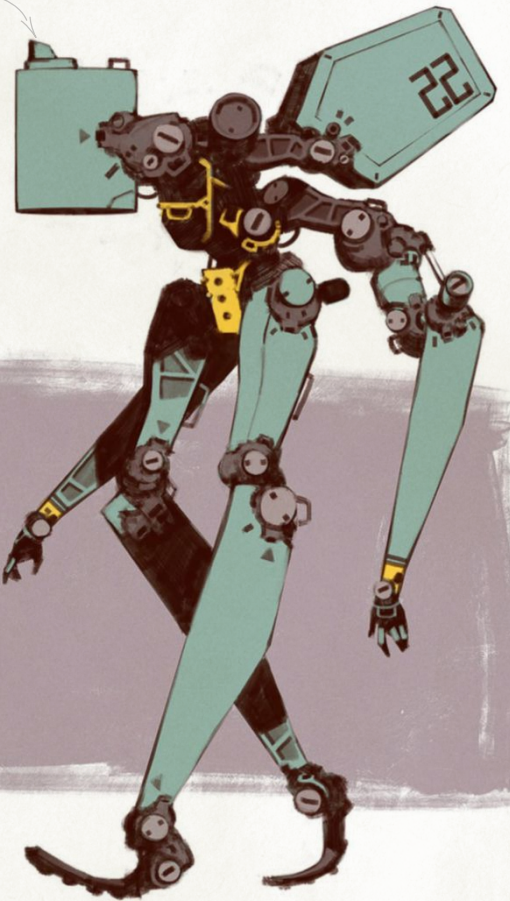
SEARCH AND RESCUE

"Nothing much than a quick composition sketch, mostly to study dark and light, and how to make them work together."

THE EVENT FOR THE CG COMMUNITY
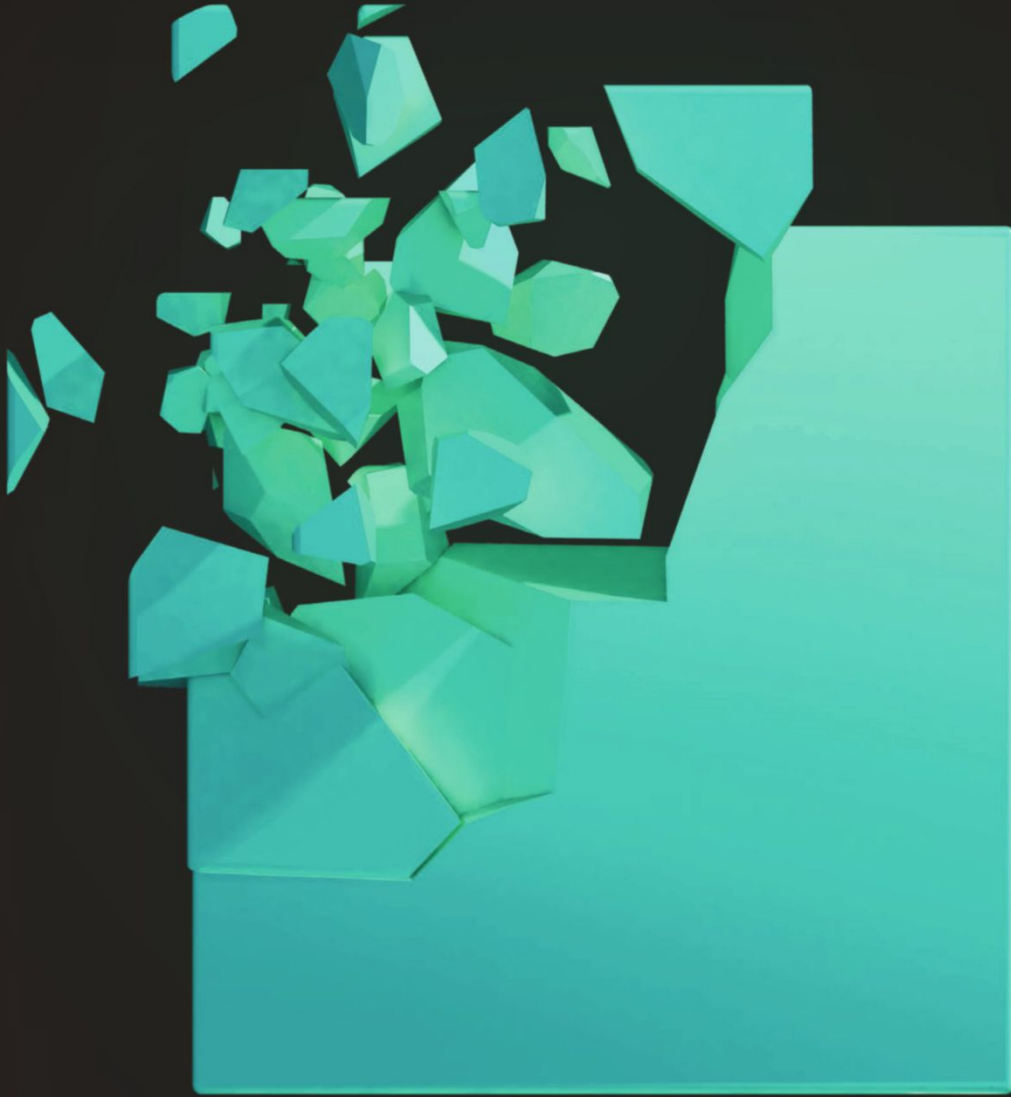
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NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

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This issue:

Photoshop
DESIGN A VIDEO GAME CHARACTER

Follow **Devon Cady-Lee's** design process and rendering techniques for creating a playable avatar and their loyal winged companion

Artist PROFILE

Devon Cady-Lee
LOCATION: US

Devon's been part of the video games and entertainment industries since 2006. Much of his work has been in concept art, illustration and art direction.
http://ifxm.ag/devoncl

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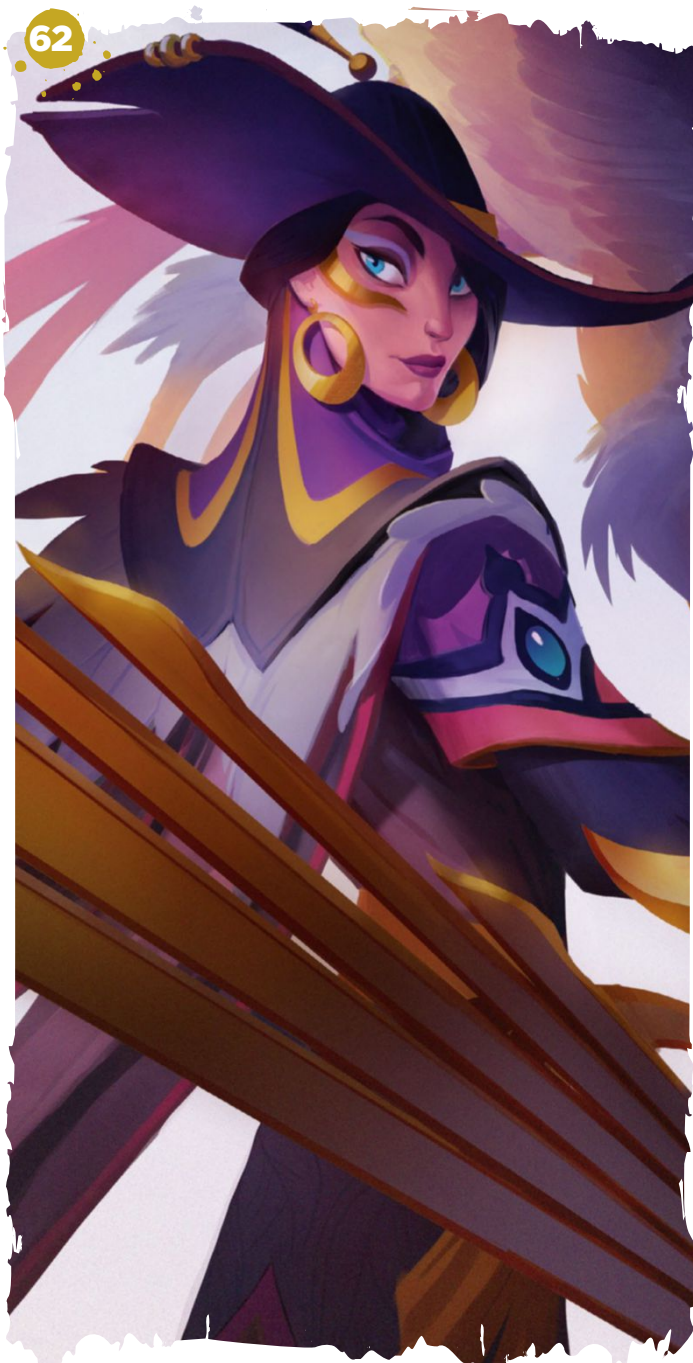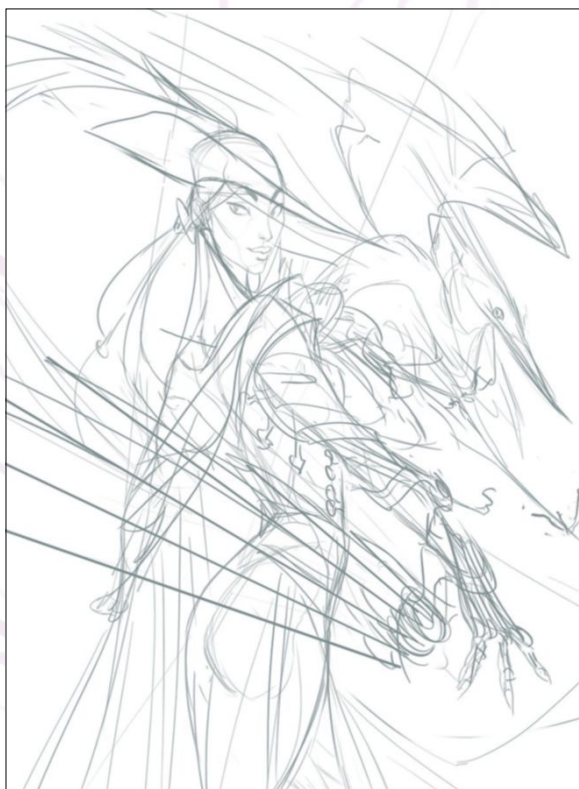For this workshop I'll be creating a playable human, female character for a fighting, action genre. I love video game heroes, because there's such variety in what the player can be. There's often a huge range in styles and personalities that the player may adopt, once they've got the game up and running.

When they choose a character, they're surrendering themselves to the quest of the hero. When I say hero, I don't mean the player's a protagonist or antagonist. I'm referring to the avatar the player experiences the rest of the game through. This is one of the most fascinating parts of video games: placing the player in an unfamiliar situation and seeing how they react.

Designing player avatars is a unique process that's different from designing other non-playing characters, simply because the avatar's personality, actions and appearance affect their ability to make the player interested in taking on their role. In a sense you're creating the boundaries that the player must adopt, ultimately embracing these limits by the end of the game.

PRO SECRETS

Less is more
I always try to maintain perspective on what's essential to the whole image; not just my need to render stitches and patterns! If my patterns are too intense, I knock them back, so they don't create their own shapes. I want my details to serve the image, and accent the bigger statements I'm trying to make.

1 Setting boundaries
This is often the hardest step for me. Without the rest of the game to show anyone, a single character provides a lot of information about the world I'm trying to create, so first impressions are key. Some boundaries from the assignment are that she be a young, female character with a fantasy-steampunk edge, and she has a pet.
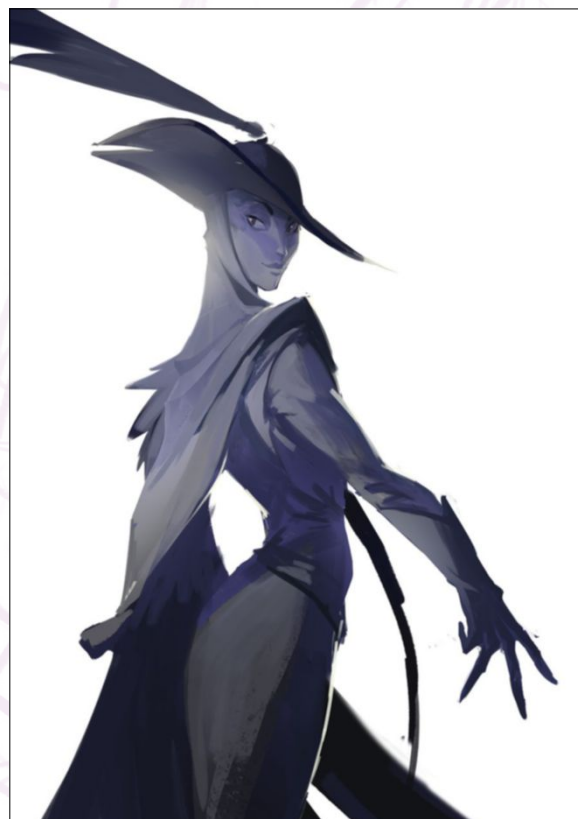
2 Creating a theme
I end up with a dark character wearing a wide-brim hat, and a pet that looks like a bird. Now that I have a loose idea of the pet, I want to design the costume to reflect the animal. A lot of this idea comes from theming around her weapon, which I need to start drawing! ➤➤

3 Setting the tone of the figure

I want the character to be dark and mysterious, with a sense of flair. Having the wing in the foreground will be important for my composition to show it off. At first I approach it with her back turned towards the viewer, looking nonchalant and confident, and maybe a little guarded with that wing in front of her. I also block in some colours that could fit her character.
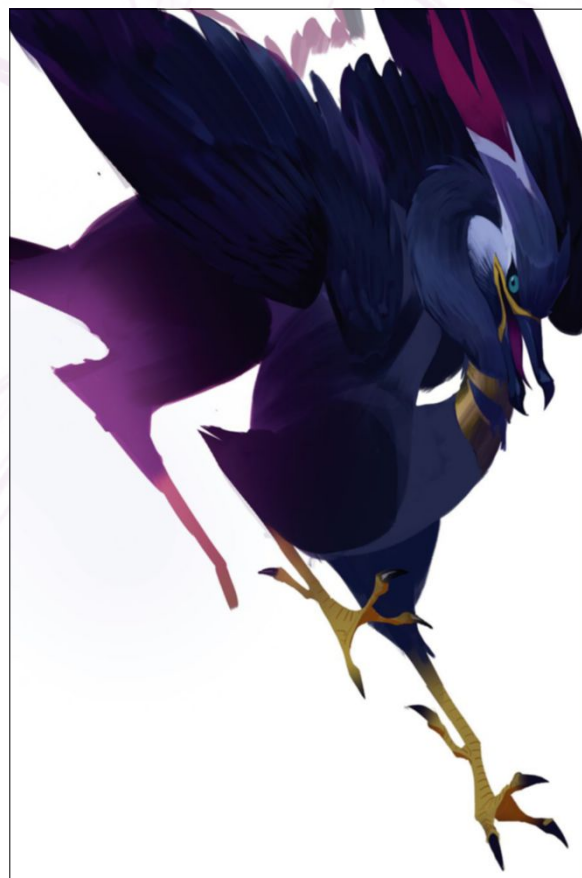
4 Designing her companion

The character is like a superhero who bases their costume on an animal, so what does that animal look like? I imagine something fantastical and pretty, but also predatory. Since I want the character to be something like an airship pirate, I try to design a pet that could fly but also looks like it would be comfortable in water.
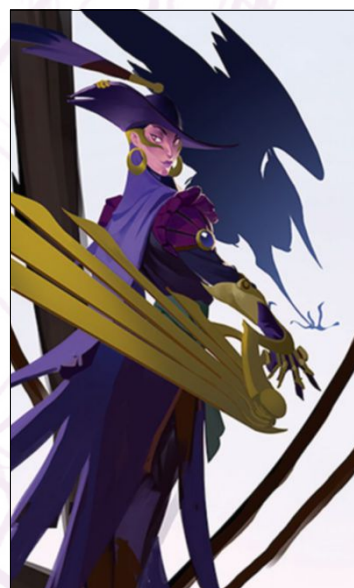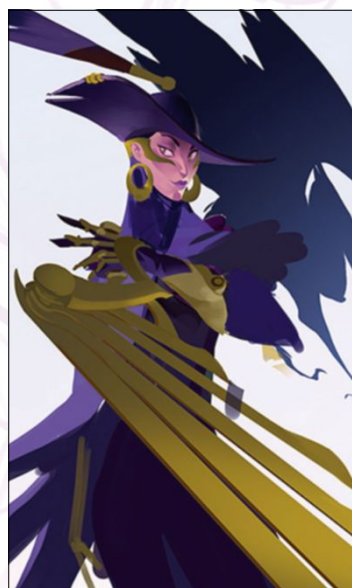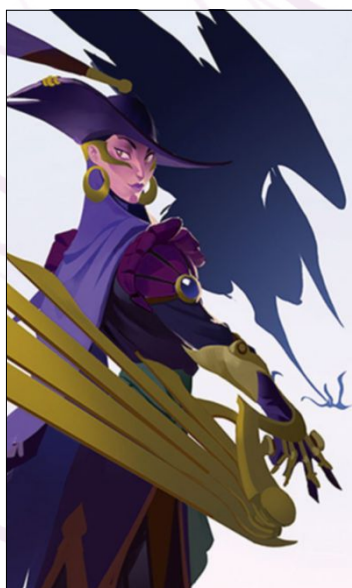
5 Playing around with the composition

I give exploring the composition a shot. Since the image is mostly about showcasing the design, I don't want her to be in an intense action pose. It'll also be cropped so I can only show parts of the character. Because the weapon is the most important, I try to make sure it's prominent in every composition. You can also see that I'm starting to explore the cultural aspects of the costume.
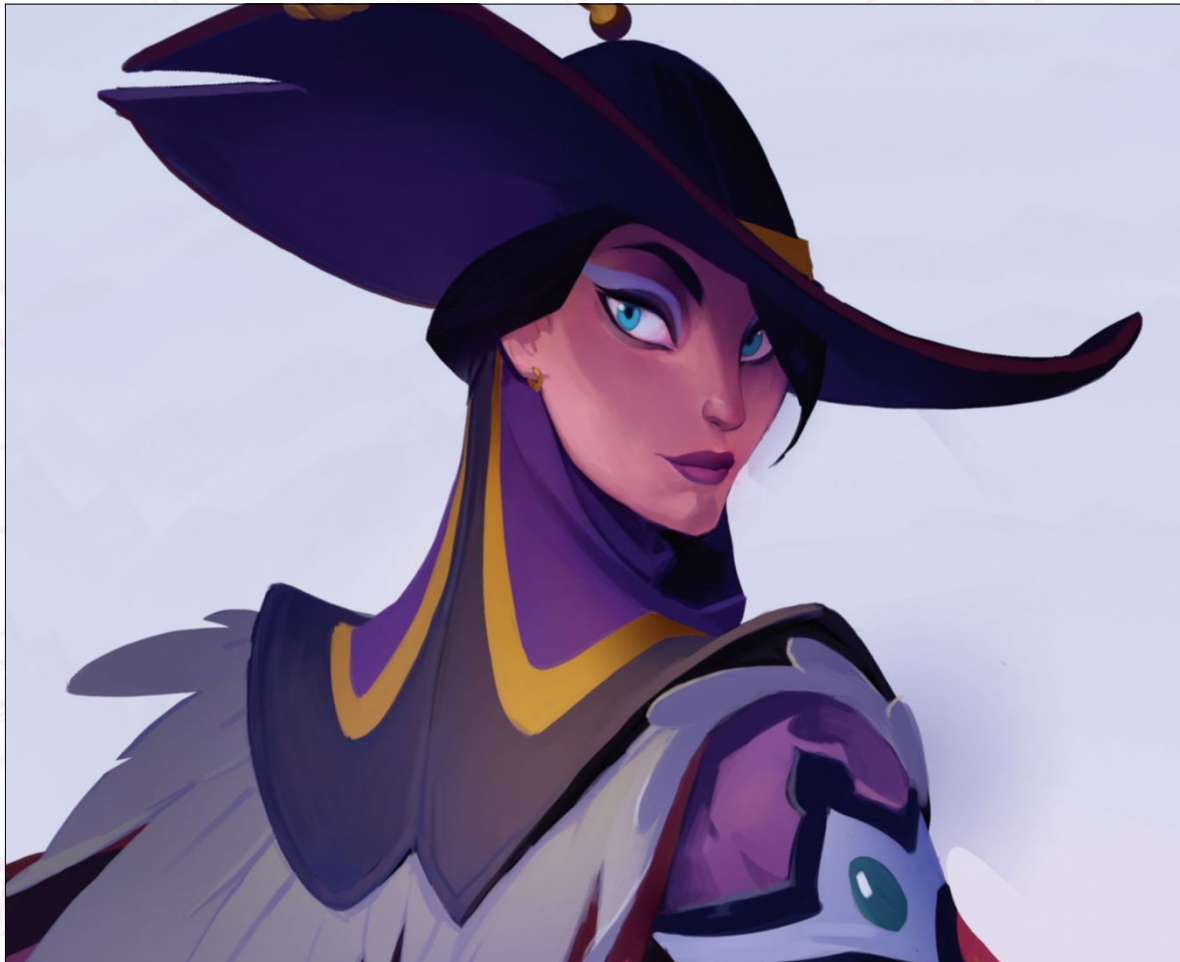
6 Ensure the player connects with the character

I end up staying with the original composition! I start to hash out details, especially in rendering the face. Her attitude is conveyed in her posture and costume choice, but the face is where the viewer really connects with the character before they play her. I want her to feel like she borrows some attitude from her fancy pet, too.
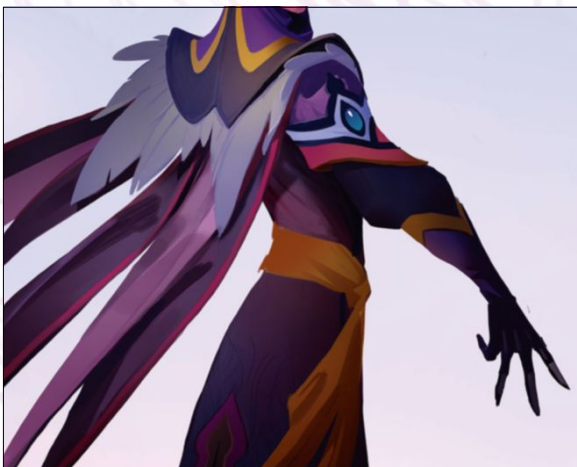
7 Dress to slay

Now that I have my pose I can really start to highlight the costume details. Despite the European 'musketeer' influence present in the previous images, I begin to lean towards some Asian costume design. I can't help but think of Mongolian Eagle Hunters, and that starts to inform her look. I even start to incorporate what might be her pet's feathers into the costume.
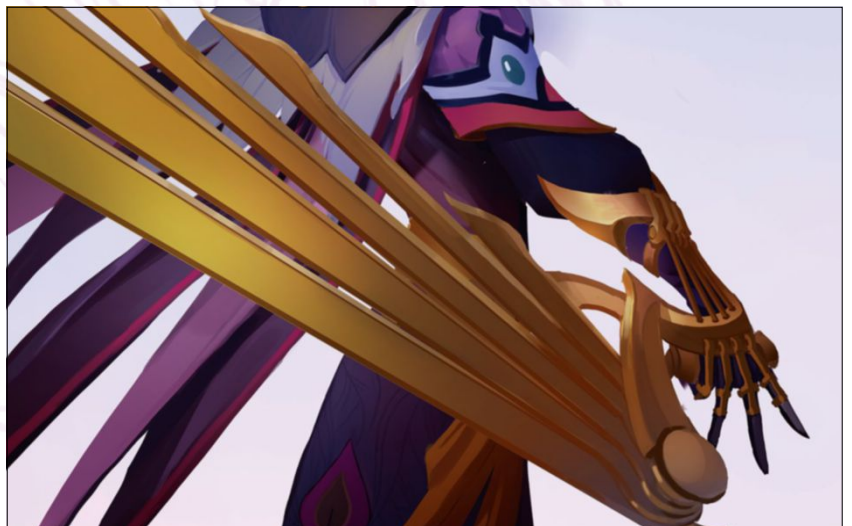
8 Winged and dangerous

I'm feeling more confident about the costuming so I move on to the mechanical wing. I want it to look like she could use it for fighting, but maybe it has other functionality, too. She could use it to glide from ship to ship perhaps? Cutting ropes and sails to sabotage them? Especially for a video game, props can become a huge part of the character's identity and could make them fun to play! ➤➤
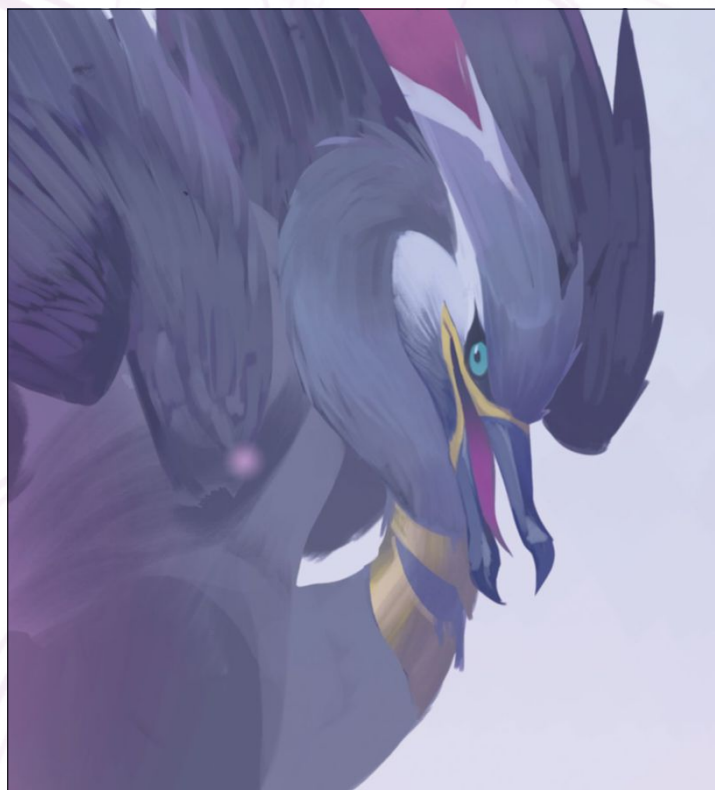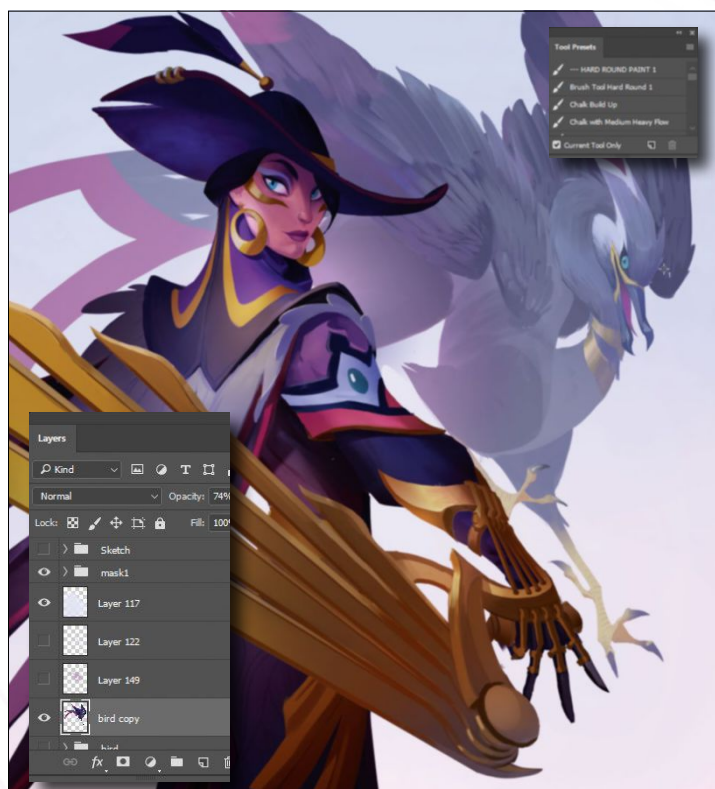
9 Together again at last

Seeing them in the same composition, it looks like I need to make some edits to make sure they're both framed clearly. I want to highlight both of their designs, but it's a tight space! I'll need to redraw the bird in a better position that flows with the same shapes and rhythms of the main character. A lot of this will be repositioning the wings and claws, which have very long, clear vectors.
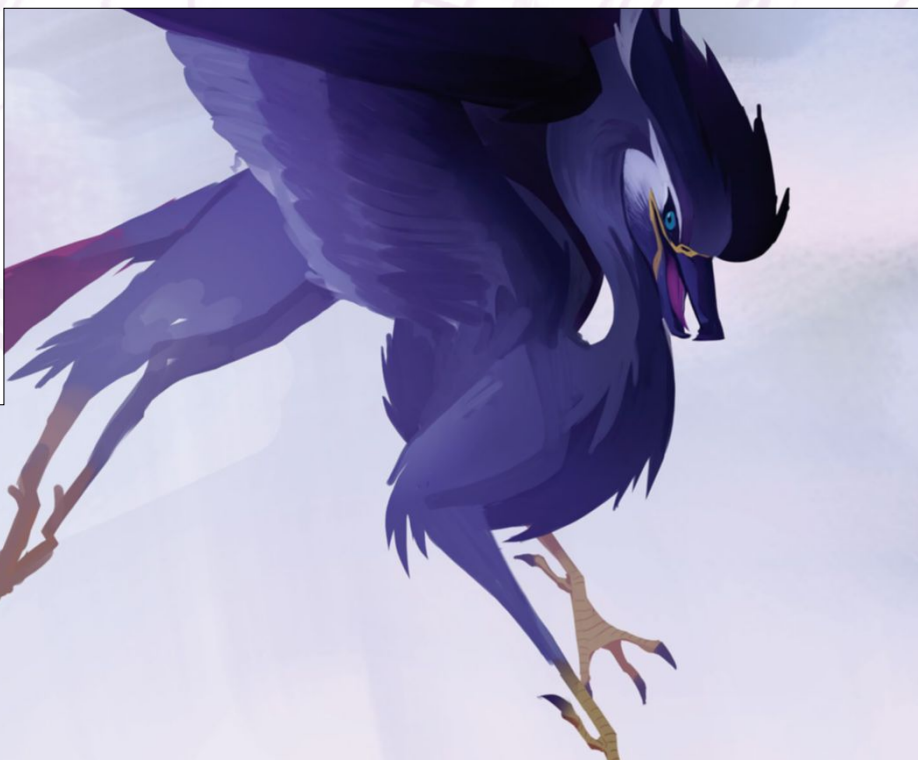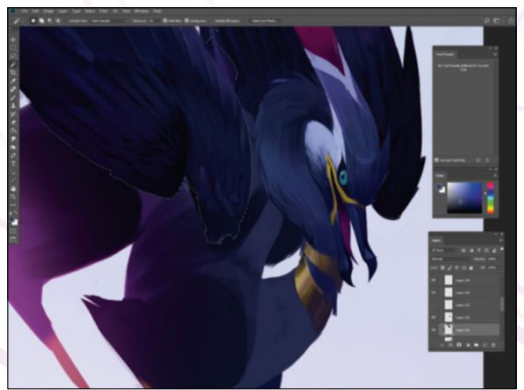
10 Bird is the word

I study how the characters frame each other and determine their relationship. From the design of the creature, I could see it being a swift, agile helper that assists its companion in fights and tasks. Maybe the hero could hang on to her pet's feet and use them to glide-travel across gaps, or steal things from her opponents like a terrible seagull!

11 Framed up

I feel like I've succeeded in allowing their individual silhouettes to be visible, with less overlap. I can start working on the overall lighting and atmosphere of the composition. Maybe an overcast day near the sea can work. All the bounce light will start to take on the neutral grey sky colour, which I've intentionally left at a low saturation so as not to compete with the vivid colours of the characters. Dramatic lighting or a detailed background scene aren't necessary in this case.
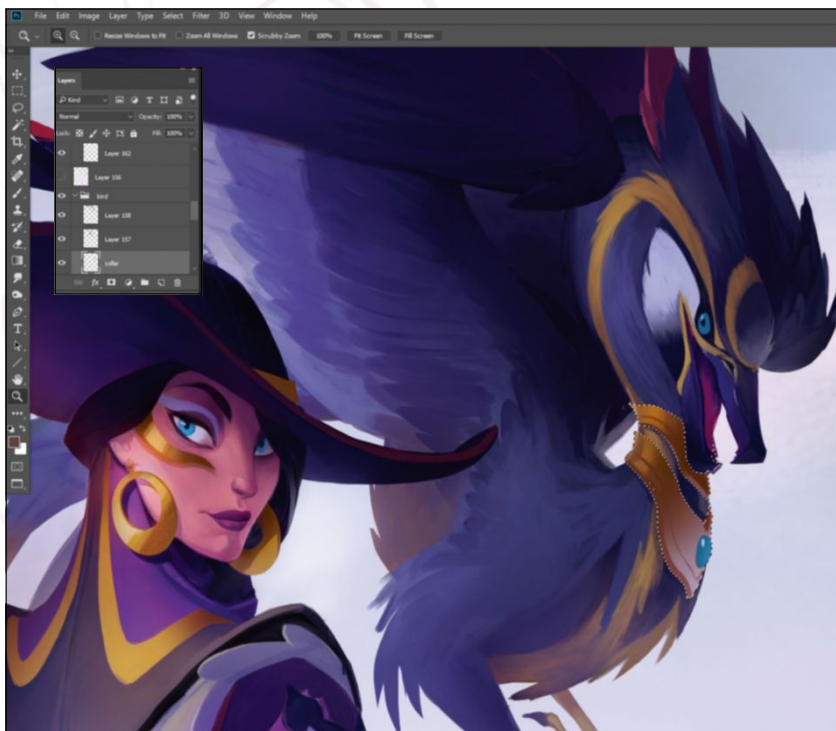
12 Reinforcing the bond

Now that I've resolved their compositional relationship, I want to start adding some storytelling elements to their appearance. The hero should look like they clearly got inspiration from this agile predator, and the pet should look like they have a relationship with its owner. An easy way to do this is with costume elements, such as a collar that resembles the same shape language as the hero.

13 Light the way

I start to separate my forms with light and make the image even clearer using Overlay, Hard Light and Multiply layer modes. With all the high-contrast costume elements, it can be difficult for shapes to read together and I want to control that as best as I can. I make sure that the hero and pet start to have some visual language shared between them, but I also don't want her to look like she's wearing a bird costume.
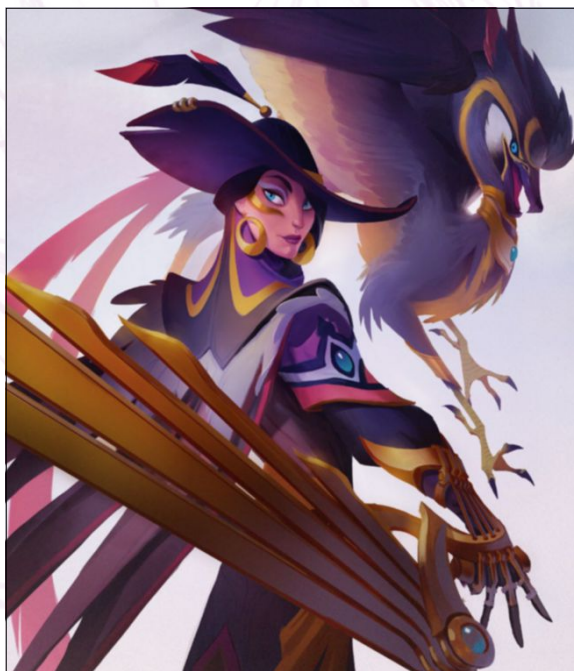
14 Final fight

In the end, I really want the silhouette of her hat to stand out, so I make the bird creature's wings a lighter value to pop it. I use some last-minute lighting changes to try and bring all the attention to the hero's face despite there being so much costume and weird animal themes going on. Player One is ready to enter the game!

PRO SECRETS

Keep it simple
One pet peeve of mine while using Photoshop is starting to paint on a layer and then realising it's the wrong one! The way I fight this is by merging down and committing to my changes as soon as I can. I'll also group my layers and label them by layer mode, so I know what they do without selecting them.
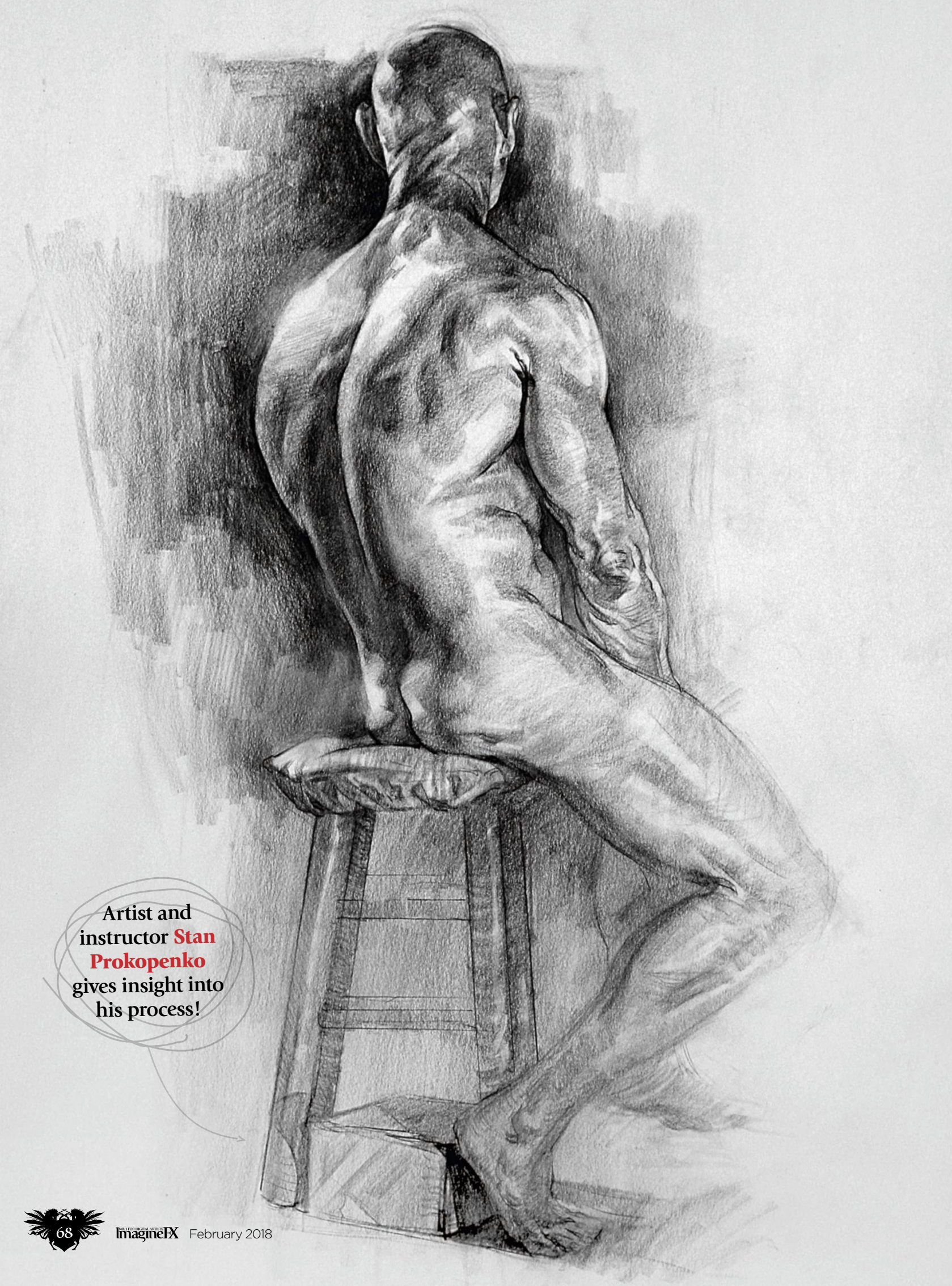
Artist and instructor **Stan Prokopenko** gives insight into his process!

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NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS

ImagineFX

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Stan Prokopenko shares his extensive knowledge on drawing the human form

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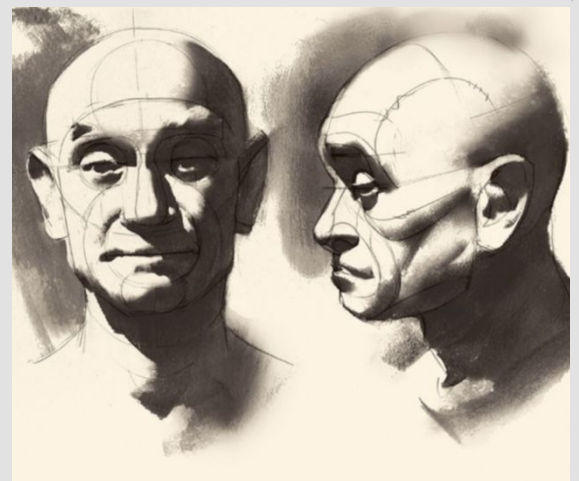
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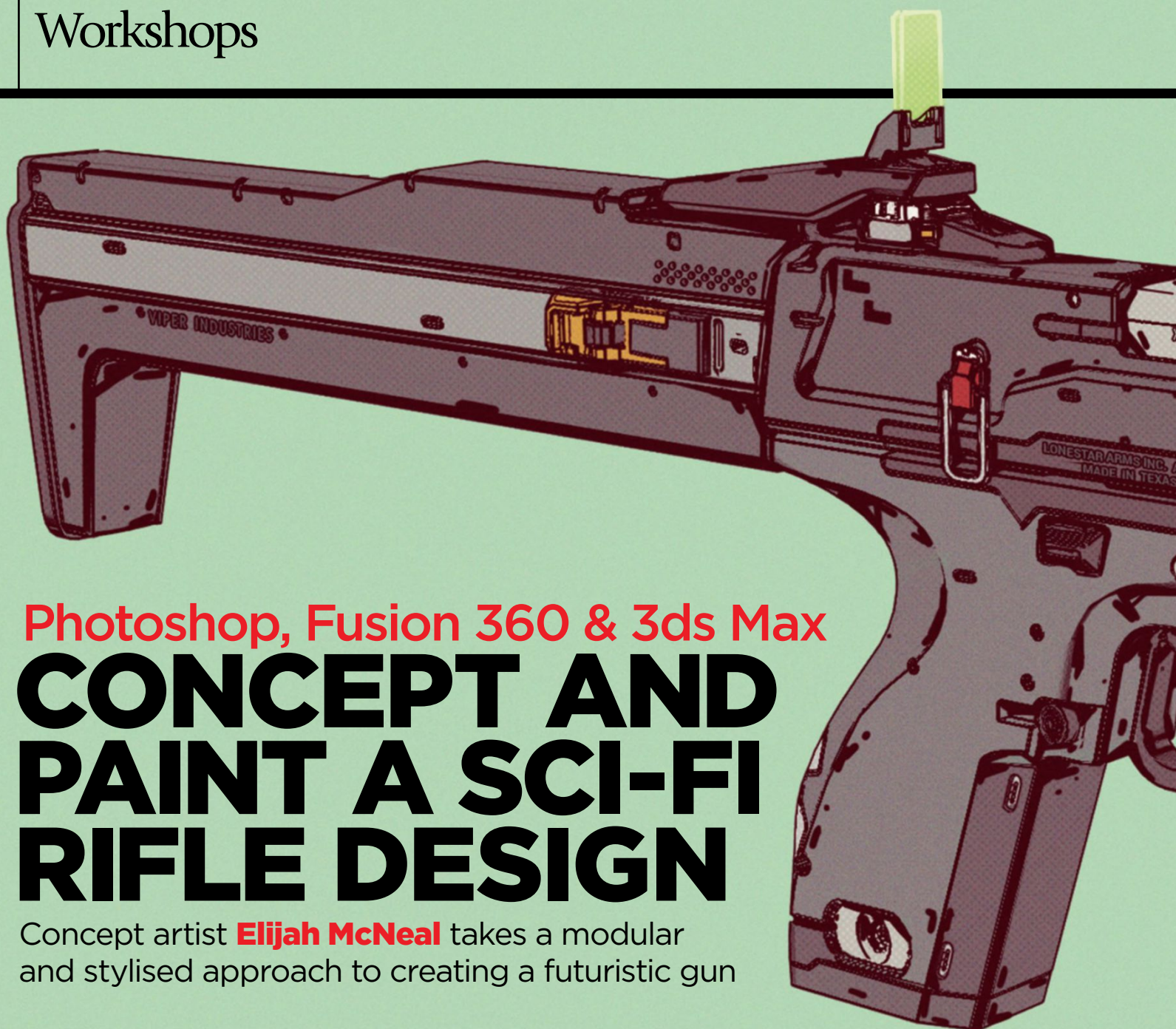
Photoshop, Fusion 360 & 3ds Max

CONCEPT AND PAINT A SCI-FI RIFLE DESIGN

Concept artist **Elijah McNeal** takes a modular and stylised approach to creating a futuristic gun

Artist PROFILE

Elijah McNeal
LOCATION: US

Elijah started his career as a concept artist for Star Citizen. He's since worked on the upcoming Shadow of the Colossus, Gears of War 4, Lawbreakers, Paragon, Fortnite and several other games and films.
http://ifxm.ag/e-mcn

There are often arguments about what concept art and design is – or isn't. This can feel confusing for young artists who want to develop a career in this exciting field, which can lead to work in high-profile video games, films and television programmes.

My approach to this specific type of art is to focus on capturing the viewer's attention and keeping it there as long as possible. I use different tools and mediums in my work, and may often use an entirely different style for a given project. One project may be almost entirely 3D, while another is a mix, and another might simply be made up of loose sketches.

The best advice I can give to someone who wants to become a concept artist is to remember that the goal is always to deliver the client's vision. For me, this is 'real' concept art. And it goes beyond doing that one thing all the time. Someone may be able to blue-sky some amazing robots, weapons, cowboys or key frames. But if you can't deliver the client's vision, then you're going to have a very hard time. The method and presentation should be the only real trace of yourself in your professional work.

1 Finding the form

I start out with some relatively detailed silhouettes based on real weapon parts. I usually have a good idea of what I want to do from the start, but I want to explore some ideas because I may overlook a good design.

2 Choice and reason

I chose the first design after all. It's what I knew I wanted and it's because of the AR-15 Bullpup look, but I like some of the things going on in the other silhouettes. I'll probably add those details as surface noise to keep the design interesting, while having a bold shape that gets the viewer's attention.

PRO SECRETS

Sticky fingers

Memorise the hotkeys and sticky keys for any program that you use to create your art. When you're an artist in this industry, you'll find yourself using all manner of software, often switching between programs quickly. Clicking through menus and sub-menus will only make it slower when you want to go faster.
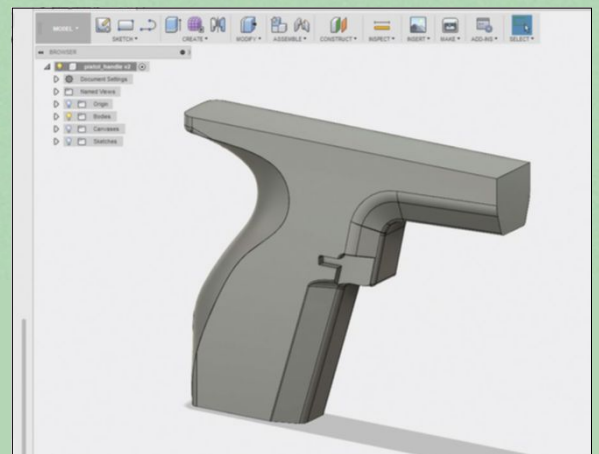
3 Forward thinking

Most of the process will be 2D, but I often rely on 3D tools, such as Fusion 360 here, for establishing my perspective quickly or even detailing certain parts. I have a idea for this swoop in the handle that may be difficult to express sharply when I get into drafting the design. ➽
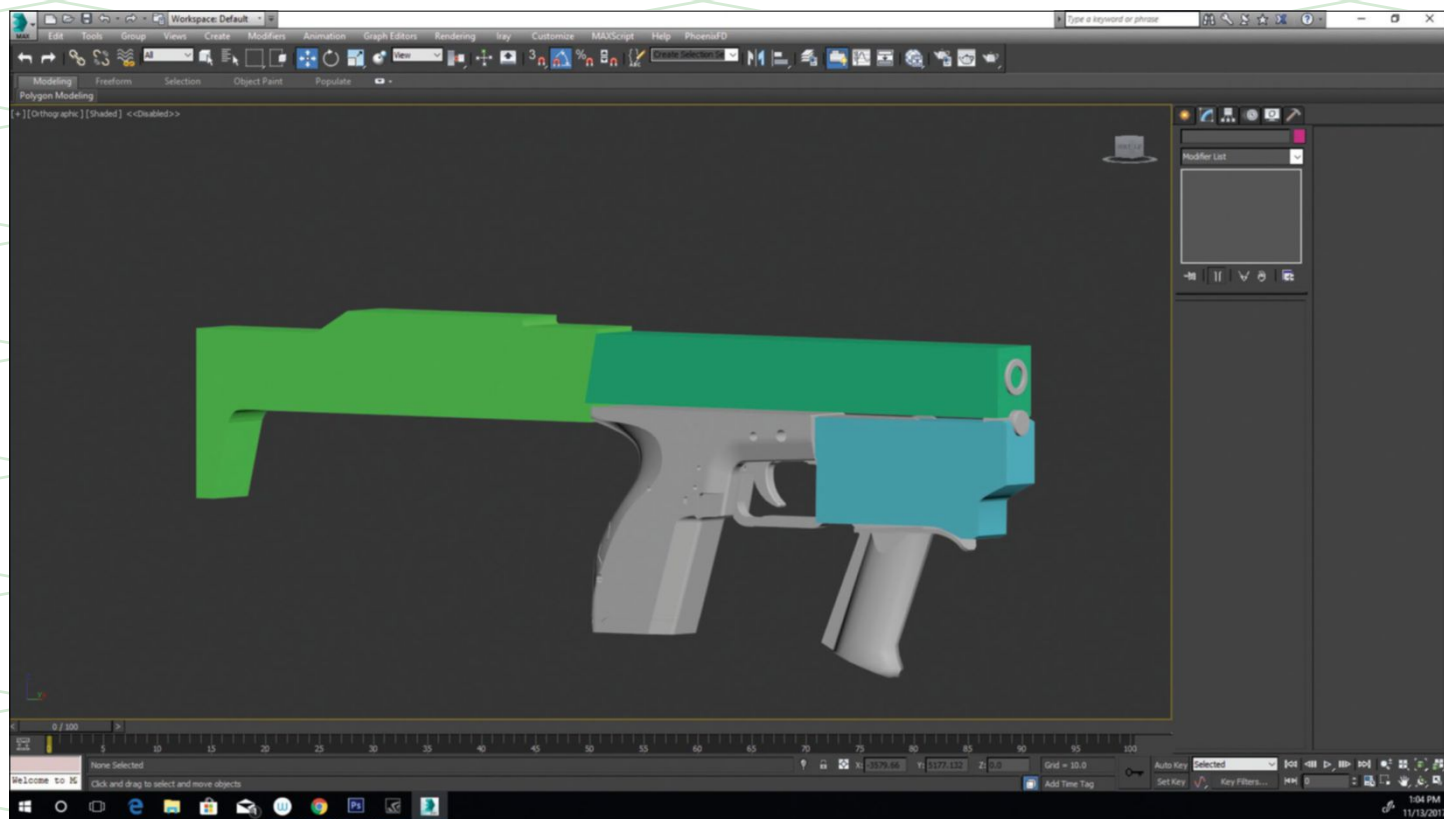
4 Are you using your 3D art program as a tool or a crutch?

Now I go into 3ds Max and block out the forms so I can work how best to present this design. In some of my older designs, I worked at a odd angle, but I think this approach hurt those designs. It's important to really think in three dimensions as you visualise your concept, and 3D tools make it relatively straightforward to produce a concept quickly. Many full-time concept artists will tell you that speed is of the essence.
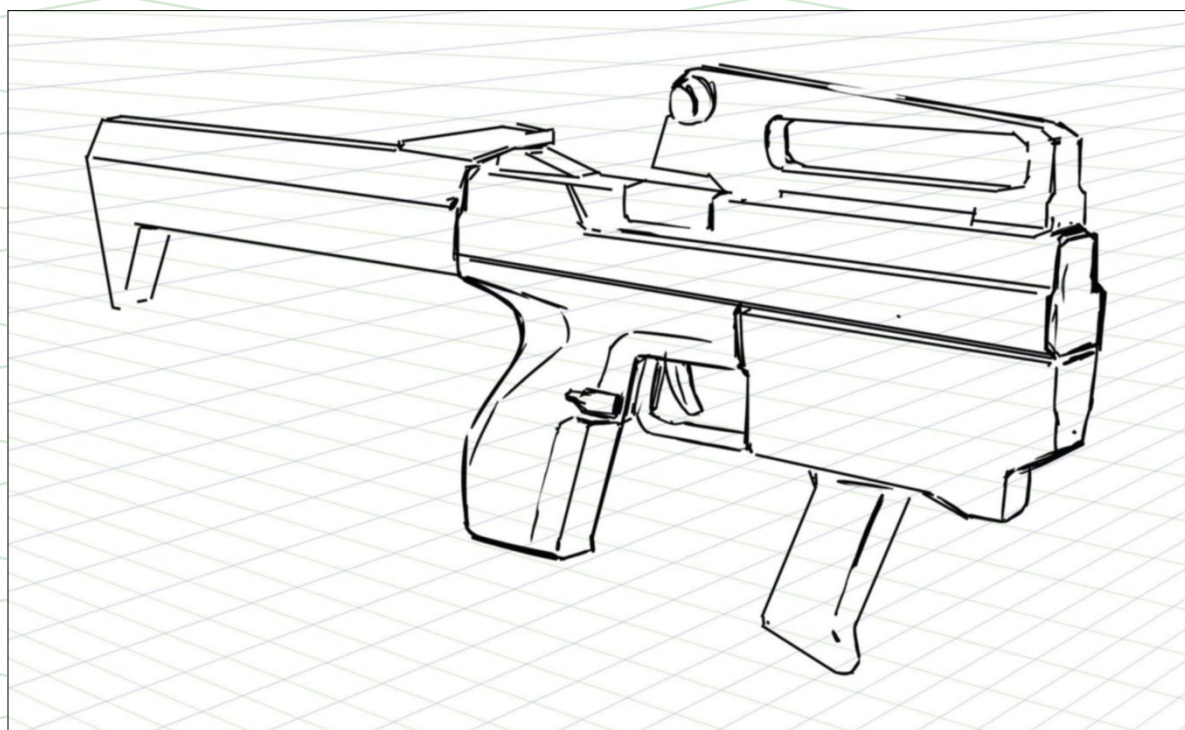
WORKSHOP BRUSHES

PHOTOSHOP

**CUSTOM BRUSH:
STANDARD ROUND**

I stick with the default Round, 2-3 pixel brush with no Smoothing, Size Jitter or Transparency. This helps me achieve a hard edge. Work at a high resolutions to reduce soft edges as much as possible.

5 Adding vanishing points to the rough idea

By this point I've chosen a decent viewpoint and have sketched out the design. Now I use EPIC Games' excellent and free Carapace tool (more details at **http://ifxm.ag/epic-carapace**) to capture the vanishing points from the view that I've chosen. We'll take this back into 3D for one last round before really digging into the weapon's details.

6 Maintaining speed in the concepting process

The weapon is almost ready for detailing, because I've worked out the forms in the 3D stage and have a viewing angle that I'm happy with. I look over the shape and there are some things that I'd like to change, but the extra seconds it would take to change the model, make a copy, and possibly creating subtle variations are valuable. It would be much faster to draw these ideas out later and then make a decision.
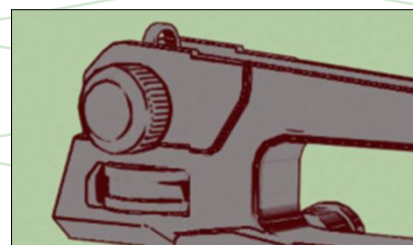
7 Reference, reference, reference

We're making an imaginary gun, and don't want to get bogged down too much in practicalities. However, no one can overstate the value of reference, especially when we're going with a design that has familiar features. The more convincing the weapons details are, the better.

8 Basic drafting exercise

I import the model into Photoshop. This is where we start to design the gun. All the details matter, because they can make or break a design. They will convince the viewer that the design could exist in our world – or another for that matter. ➤➤
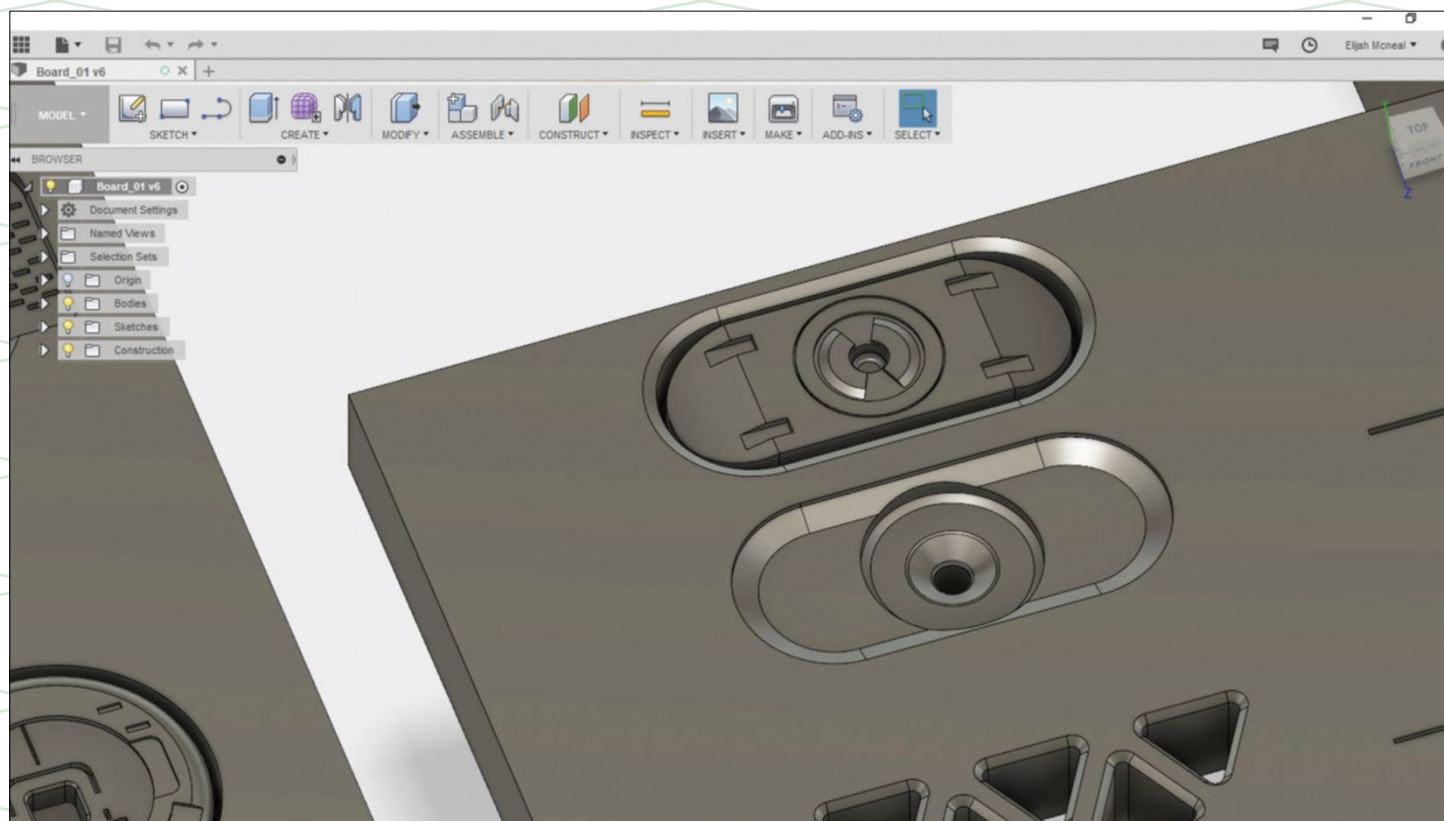
9 Taking a modular approach

Previously, when working in Fusion 360 I've created boards of details that I use often in my 3D concepts, but I also use those in 2D work. I take a screengrab, extract the lines from these models and use them in my design. This also give me fine edges that help make this feels like a traditional drawing. Because of the illustration's style, I can recycle lines from previous weapon designs for the details that fit the current concept.
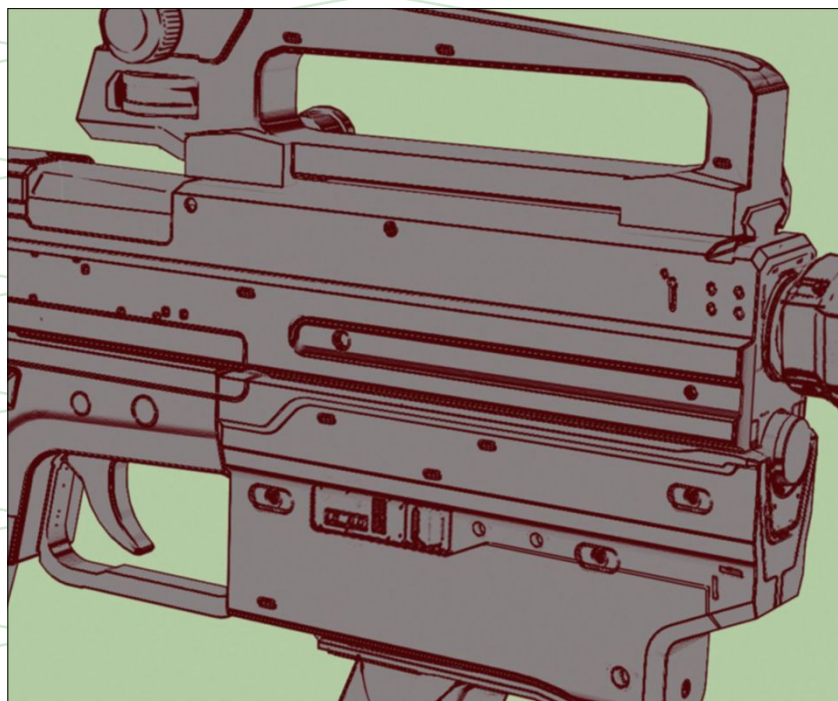
10 Advanced drafting

I stay in Photoshop now for the remainder of the painting process. Things are really coming together now with the details in place: items such as the release pins, clips, surface slots, and so on. The real feel of the gun is here and we can tell this in a sci-fi design rather than a simple rehash of real-world weapon parts.

11 Weighting the line

Most of the time I'm using the Line Tool and a Round brush with Shape Dynamics off. This keeps thing clean, but also leaves the art looking a bit like a sticker. I add weight by adding "ink" to various areas around the drawing. This can also be done to break areas apart, hint at lighting, or make parts feels closer to one another.

12 Ensuring that colour doesn't fight the design

This piece is largely subdued, but the colours play no less of a important role. In fact, I actually make geometry changes to the drawing on account of a colour that was placed well, but managed to dislodge some design elements because of how distracting it had become.
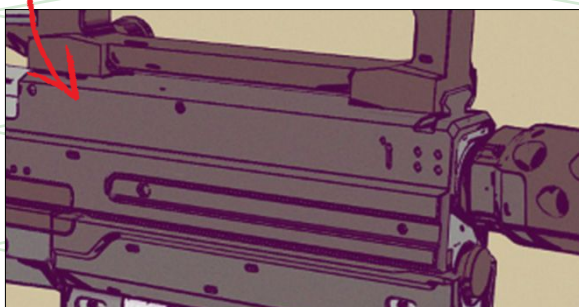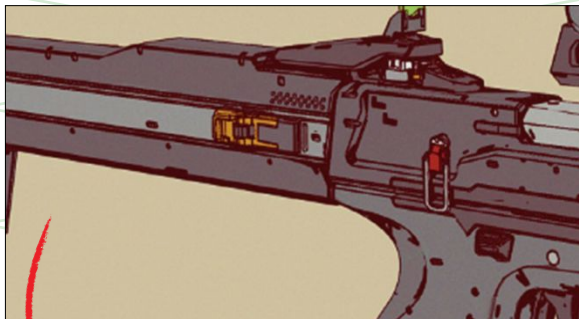
13 Balancing the elements

Now I check the hues of my line work and decide if there's anything I want to alter. Notice that the colour of the flats change because of the relationship between colours. Sometime I may repaint large areas of colour because one or more really make me feel that the piece would work better with different tones.
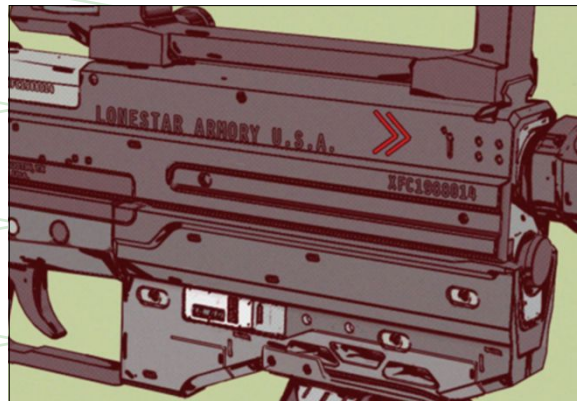
14 Last-minute detailing

Placing easily overlooked things such as branding, serial numbers and manufacturing information will further seat this design in the real world. The issue here would be how obvious it becomes because of the style, but the line weight and details across the rest of the surface helps blend those elements into the weapon. Changing the background colour brings a problem to my attention, and that's the holo sight. While we've broken down a design to its base expression, it would still help to further indicate a difference in materials. I add a gradient to the sight flat and lighten the line work to show this is some sort of semi-translucent glass. I also massage the line and flat colours to better work with the new background colour. Then I call the design done!

PRO SECRETS

Think in three dimensions

Being able to use 3D art programs is a great skill to have, but understanding the fundamentals is the key to successful design work. If you only work in 3D, you may find yourself limited to a certain style of art or even constrained in your capacity to design by that software. You won't truly understand form when you're allowing the software to do most of the work for you. Start by imagining a cube, orbit the cube, rotate the cube, scale and move it, and so on. Now do this with more complex forms and draw them. You'll develop an understanding of form and space that can't be done by leaning on 3D software all the time.

Core Skills: Part 6

USE ZBRUSHCORE'S POLYPAINT TOOL

Pablo Muñoz Gómez explores a simple colouring workflow, then tweaks ZBrushCore's brushes to develop additional texture and painting styles

Artist PROFILE

Pablo Muñoz Gómez
LOCATION: Australia

Pablo is a concept artist and animator. He's also an instructor in 3D techniques, and enjoys passing this knowledge on to his students.
www.zbrushguides.com

Polypaint in ZBrushCore is a fantastic tool that enables you to add colour and textures to your model. The best thing about Polypaint is that you don't need to have a geometry with UVs to be able to paint, because you're actually painting the polygons (or vertex) of your mesh.

Since Polypaint adds colour to the actual geometry, the resolution (density) of your mesh will play a huge part in the quality of your painte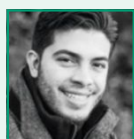d strokes. If you start painting on a model and notice that the painted colour has a jagged edge, then you need to subdivide your mesh or increase the Dynamesh resolution before continuing. The density or subdivisions of your model needs to be determined at the beginning of the Polypaint process, because subdividing a mesh after painting in a low resolution won't improve or fixed 'pixelated' lines.

Choosing the SkinShade material is one of the best options when Polypainting. Other materials like GrayMatcap or RedWax are great for sculpting, but not ideal for displaying true colours when Polypainting.

You can select specific RGB colours using the sliders within the colour palette.

To select an existing colour on your model, click and drag from the colour palette to the coloured area and let go.

If Alternate is enabled, you can switch between primary and secondary colours by holding Alt.

To remove colour, select a white colour and paint over the desired areas.

Try other Alphas such as Color Spray with the Spray stroke to create interesting patterns.

Change the Flow and Color options from the Stroke modifiers palette – this will alter the spread and colour variation of the Spray colour stroke.

1 Paint a sculpture

To start painting in ZBrushCore all you need to do is have a sculpture ready (or a sphere, for instance, if you just want to practise), then select the Paint brush from the bottom of the UI and begin painting. Use the colour palette to choose a colour to paint with: the square (in the Color dialog) on the right is your main colour and the one on the left is your secondary colour. You can press V to switch between them.

2 Choose your painting brushes

In the same way we customise sculpting brushes, we can modify painting brushes. With the Paint Brush selected, change the Stroke to Color Spray from the Stroke thumbnail and select Alpha 22 from the Alpha thumbnail. Now, when you paint the brush will act as a spray can, which is ideal for creating skin textures. You can also reduce the value of RGB intensity, using the slider at the top of the UI, to add more variations.

On

Off

You can leave either Zadd or Zsub enabled along with the RGB, and sculpt and paint at the same time.

Press C to sample a colour from your artwork, using your mouse pointer.
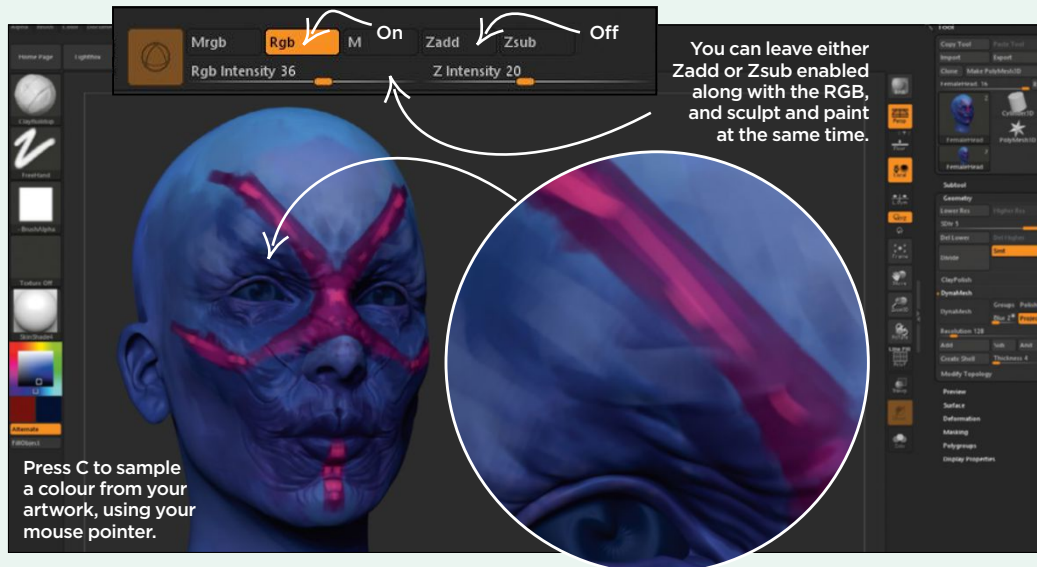
3 Any brush can paint

Note that you're not limited to the paint brush – most of ZBrushCore's sculpting brushes can act as paint brushes, too. Select the ClayBuild Up, and at the top of the UI switch off Zadd and turn on RGB. This will disable sculpting and enable painting. The rest of the brush's characteristics will still be active, so you can develop a sketch effect with the square alpha, for instance.

You can use the Color spray to create more colour variations.

Focal shift changes your brush's properties, from soft edges to hard edges.
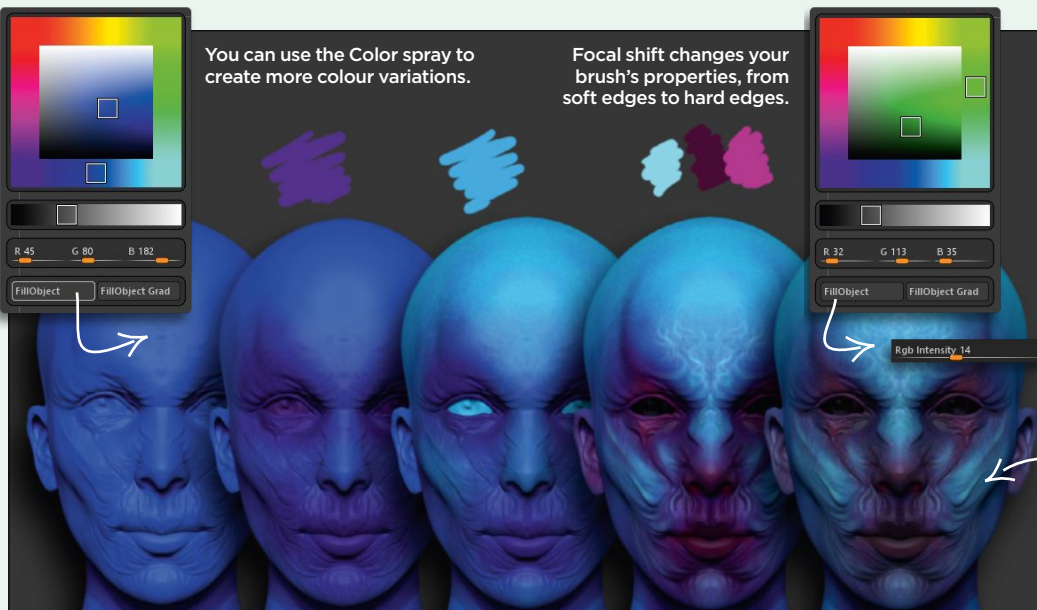
4 Workflow advice

A good rule of thumb when painting is to start with a base colour, select a colour and then click FillObject from the Color palette. Now select your paint brush and reduce the RGB intensity to 50. Select a darker variation of your base colour and start to paint with it. Choose a different colour and repeat this process, with RGB intensity at 50 (or lower), and then use FillObject to unify all of your colours.

Pressing L will activate the LazyMouse option, which gives you a greater degree of control over the strokes.
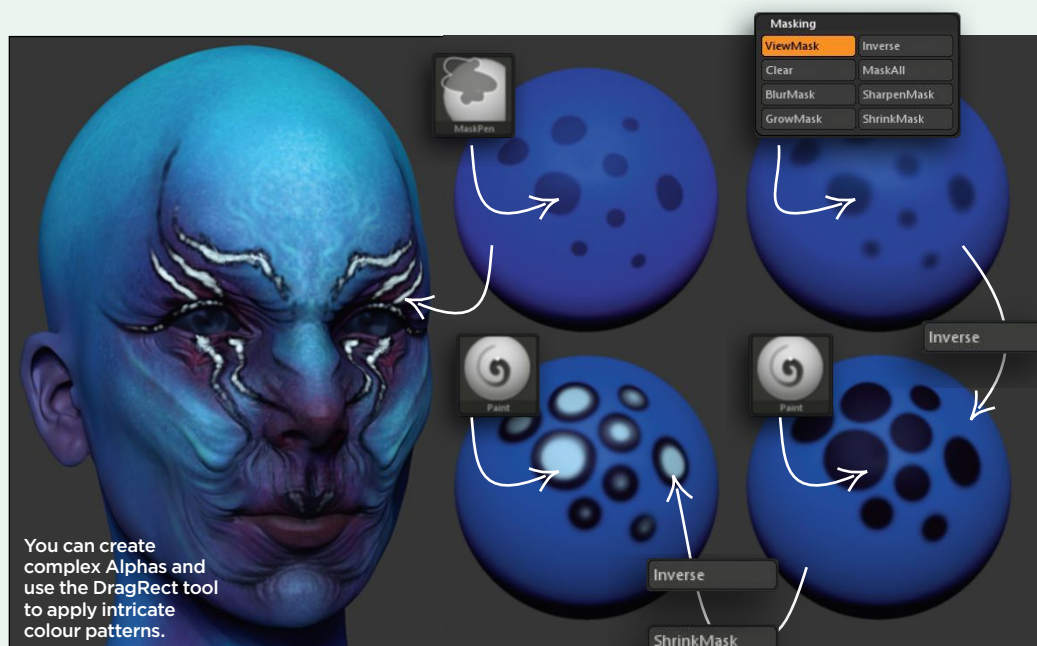
5 Texture details

Using masks with PolyPaint will help you to achieve interesting textures on your model. Mask a few points on your mesh and blur the mask, invert it and then paint the unmasked points. Now invert the mask again and sharpen it a couple of times, invert it again and paint the unmasked areas. This process will give you a visually complex effect in just a couple of easy steps.

You can create complex Alphas and use the DragRect tool to apply intricate colour patterns.

Turn on Gradient from the Color palette and paint with a gradient between your primary and secondary colours.

Photoshop
PAINT A SCI-FI GAME SETTING

Concept artist **Llia Yu** reveals how mundane objects from life can inspire originality in your environment designs

Artist
PROFILE

Llia Yu
LOCATION: US

Llia's a self-confessed cat lover who likes to draw elegant and strange things. She also works at Blizzard!
http://ifxm.ag/llia-yu

GET YOUR RESOURCES
See page 6 now!

VIDEO WORKSHOP

I've always thought that originality is found somewhere between what you like and what you observe. I love mixing sci-fi and organic elements, so I try to find things around me that lets me explore both. For this piece, I chose a pot plant on my desk to inspire a focal object. The plant's overlapping shapes and fractal structure enable me to combine a hard surface with organic elements for a more unique design.

I usually come up with a background story to add context to the design. The scene is a desolate alien planet, where the surface is covered with strange eggs. As a lone astronaut explores this mysterious planet, a huge structure appears in the sky. He's attracted to this magnificent totem, and floats towards it in awe.

With this image, I want to bring the mystery, elegant and sci-fi feeling to the viewer, and introduce an epic alien vista with a mixed sci-fi and organic design language. ➤➤
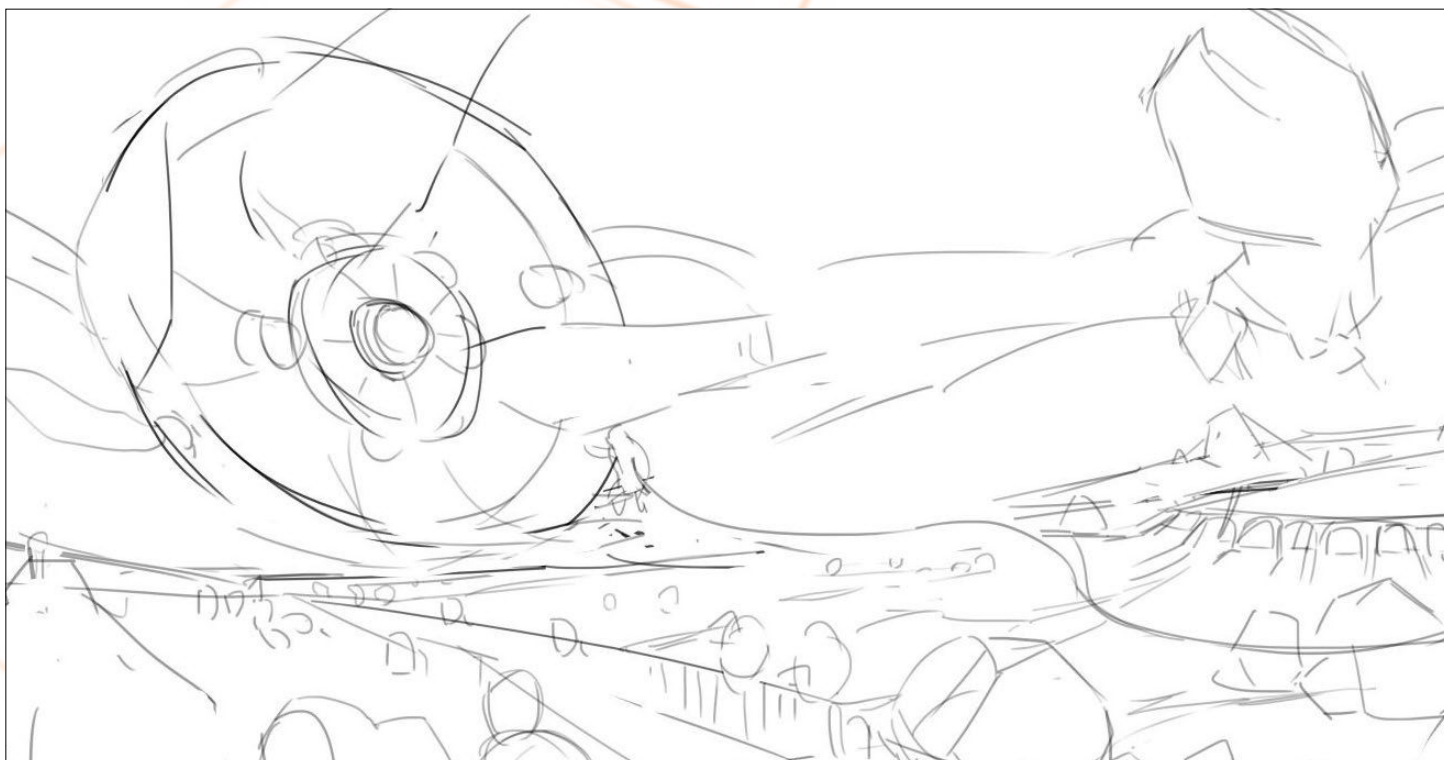
1 Produce a rough sketch to visualise the idea
I start by working up a sketch of my scene. I use a light line to draw the overall shape of the image, mainly focusing on developing a clear idea about the narrative, and making sure the focal point doesn't lie in the centre of the image. I don't want to spend time figuring out the details at this point, and only use the most minimal marks to plan out where to place the different elements in this scene so that it tells a coherent story.
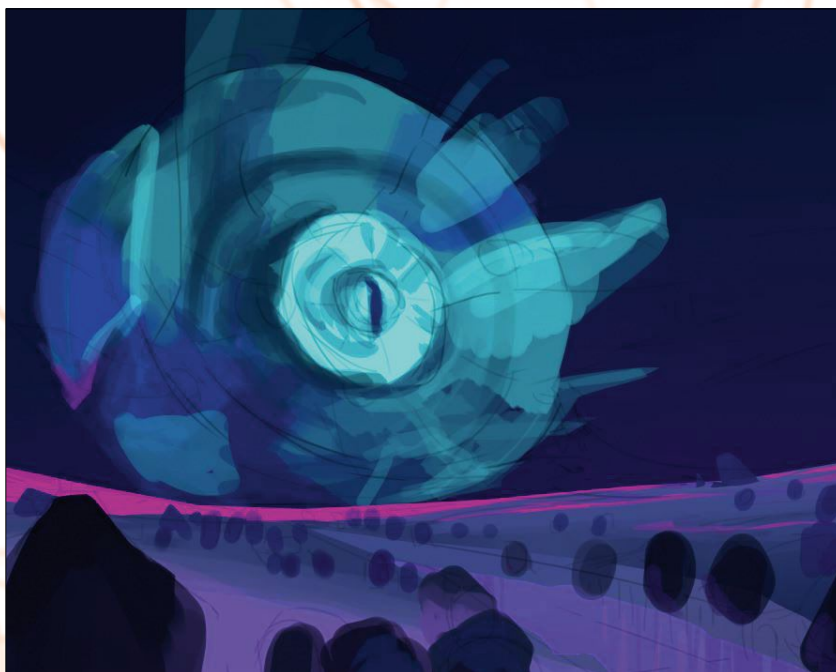

2 Rough colour pass
I do a simple colour block out, separating the fore-, mid- and background along with the character on to different layers. I choose a highly saturated colour for the background structure as my main focal point. The secondary focal point is the astronaut, so I decide on a desaturated but light colour for him, to blend him into the environment slightly more. This is similar to the previous step in that I'm still not thinking about details or designs or textures, and only plotting out where my colours go and how they interact within this image.

3 Searching for a design
I spend a little time working on my focal area. I feel that the background is a little empty, so I duplicate the structure multiple times. The idea here is that there are many floating mystery structures around the planet, and my character is attempting to touch the closest one in front of him. This is the optimal time to play around with design because I have loosely established all the basic elements in the scene, and can now properly gauge how each change will affect the image as a whole.
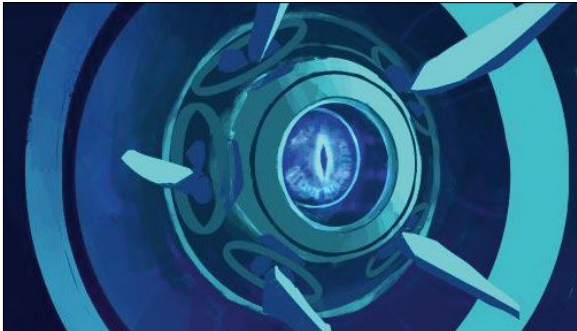
4 Polishing the main focal point

The shape of the structure was too simple; I want to make it more sci-fi. So I break up the shape from the large ellipse, adding more detail to the central area. I explore some circu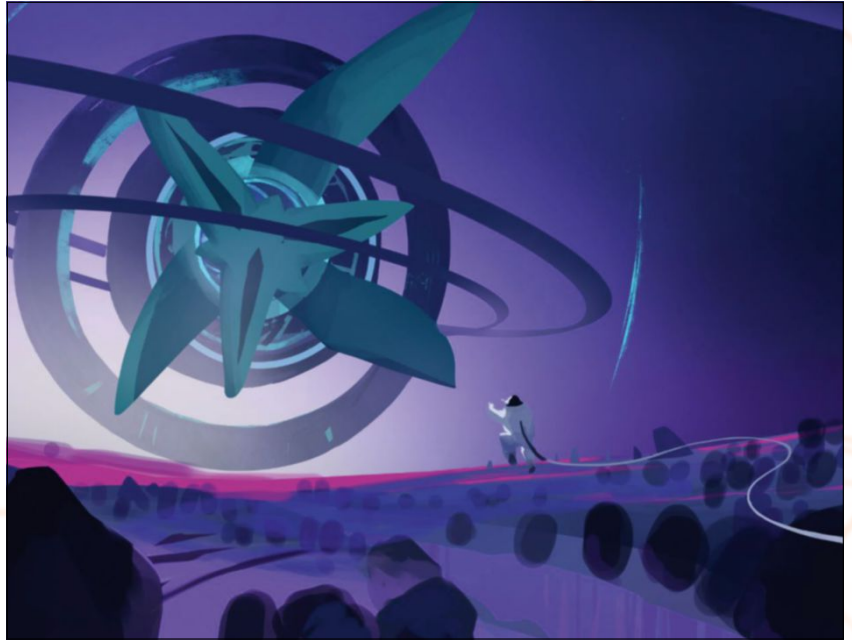lar shapes to match the same free-flowing and organic feel of the rest of the piece, while giving it some hard surfaces. I'm still trying things out during this stage.

5 Simplifying and balancing

After developing the design and shape of the structure in the previous step, I feel the whole image is getting busy. So I light up and simplify the background by deleting the repeated structures to the right. To balance this simplification, I add bolder shapes to the big structure. At this point, while I'm slowly finalising the final look of the image, I want to nail down the lighting.

6 Foreground elements

The base colour and lighting are in place, so now I began rendering the eggs in the foreground. I use the teal colour from my main structure on the eggs, which connects these two elements narratively. When setting up the colours in my paintings, every single colour should be affected by the colours around it. As I see it, the colours should have a relationship with each other.

7 Mid-ground elements

I want to make this planet surface look like a canyon using some organic textures on the ground. In addition, I'm trying to paint in some simple architecture in the background. This will support the perspective and scale of the space, as well as break up the monotonous horizon line and add some visual interest. ➤➤

8 Background elements

I spend some time on my colours, and lighten up the background. The sky now has a strong light source under the horizon line, and this brings a bright glowing colour to the sky. Furthermore, it helps contrast the structure from the sky, and the sky from the ground. These light effects can also generate a stronger sense of narrative and anticipation to the piece.
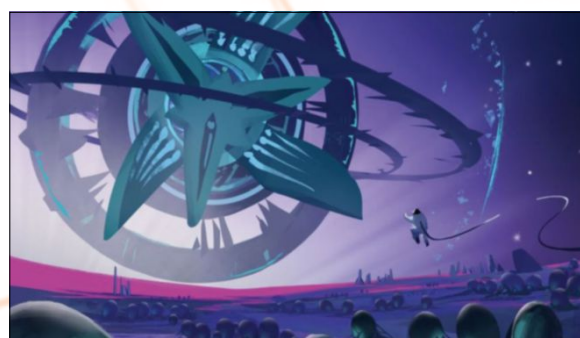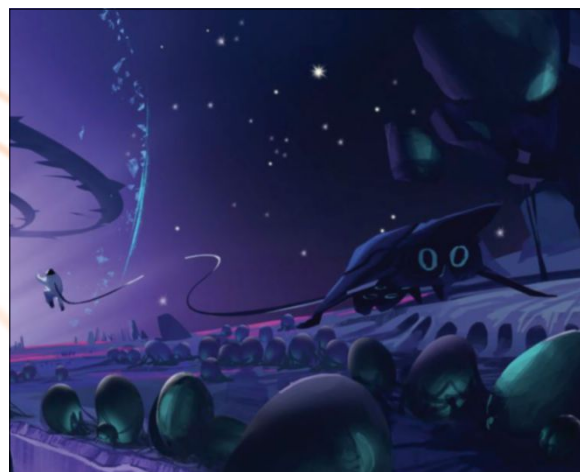
9 Defining the scale of the character

I realise my astronaut's scale makes the whole image look slightly confusing. Without being able to pin down the position where he's located in relation to the eggs on the ground, it's hard to tell how big he is. To solve this, I attach a spacecraft to the other end of the cord, which establishes that the astronaut's situated in the midground.
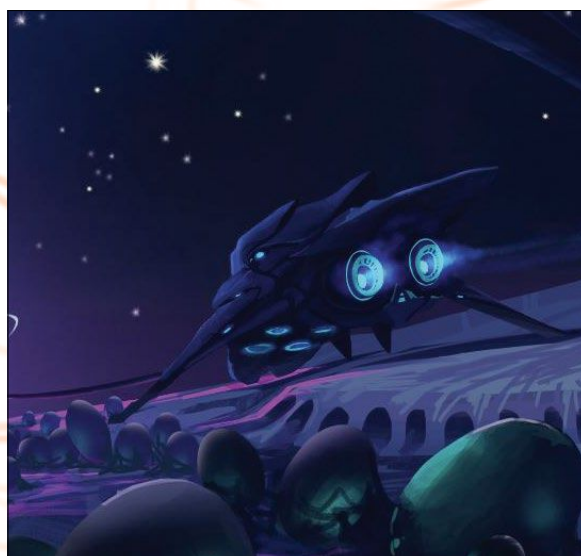
10 Scaling up the ship

I add some glowing exhaust rings to the engines of the ship, which serves to bring a little more interest to the right side of the image. I also scale up the ship slightly, so that its size is in keeping with that of the astronaut's. Finally, I add a blue atmosphere to the bottom of the structure to push it further back in space.

11 Adding texture

In my experience, texture can give a painting a greater sense of intensity. I like to add a lot of creative materials to my artworks. I find that taking photos of real-life objects and manipulating them in Photoshop is the best way to create a fresh visual experience. For this piece, I use a photo of a crumpled-up piece of tissue, and apply it to the fore- and midground.

12 Value adjustment and polish

The image is looking a little dark, so I use an adjustment layer to crank up the brightness. At the same time, I'm also continuing to clean up all parts of the image. At this point, because I've established the design, scale and colour of every element in this image, it's safe to dive right into the polishing phase.

13 Colour adjustment

After the value is set, I use the Curve tool to adjust the colour of the whole image: saturating the background and adding a light blue tone on the top area. I also add a hint of blur to the eggs in the foreground. This mimics the field of view that camera lenses and eyes have when perceiving an image, and makes the painting more dynamic. At this point, the image can be considered finished. Of course, there are always ways to enhance an image even after hitting the point when it can be called complete. The key here is to not over-polish the painting.
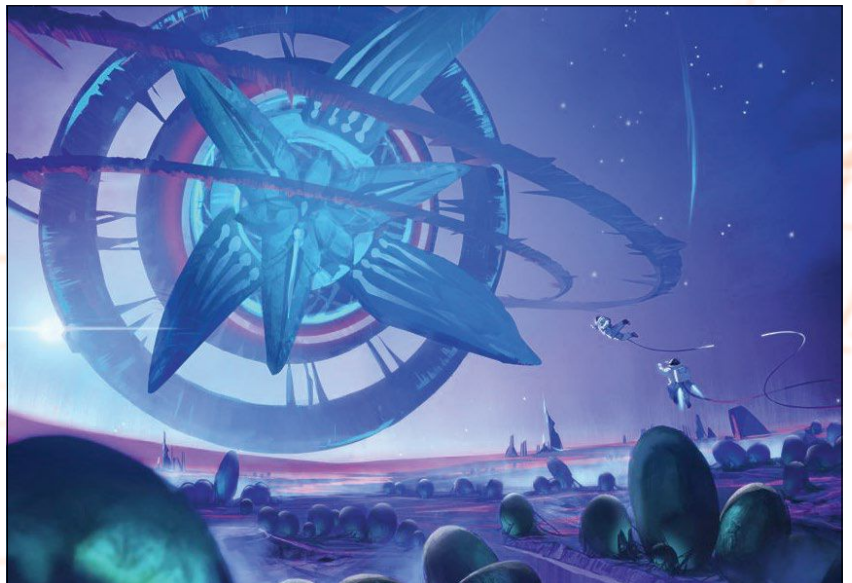
14 Adding a greater sense of narrative

There are still ways to push an image further. At this point, I feel that I can still enhance the narrative, so I paint another astronaut in the distance. This adds a more dramatic moment to the scene, as one astronaut loses control and tumbles towards the alien totem, while his partner flies out in an attempt to catch him. I also increase the density of stars in the background to imply a vast galactic setting.

Photoshop

CREATE STYLISED GAME ARTWORK

Roberto Robert shows you how to illustrate an environment scene The Long Dark way, using bold shapes and painterly brush work

Workshops

Artist PROFILE

Roberto Robert
LOCATION: Canada

Roberto works on concept art and visual development at Hinterland. He's collaborated with multiple game developers over the past 10 years, including Relic Entertainment and Microsoft Game Studios.
www.robertorobert.com

The Long Dark's art style can be deceptively difficult to capture. The style from the video game can end up looking either too realistic or too whimsical. We want the player to feel like they've stepped into a world that feels familiar but also unique – a world both beautiful and dangerous. In this workshop I'll walk you through my process of capturing the style of the Quiet Apocalypse.

From the early days of the game we wanted the art style to come across as painterly. The art style has been achieved in a collaborative process by the concept artists, the 3D artists, and the tech artists at Hinterland. I can sum up the basics this way: broad areas of subtle texture encased in sharp and simple silhouettes.

I'll take you through my process where we'll use the shapes that we achieve in the sketch as the basis for the final silhouettes. Using simple composition guides to ensure the overall image is balanced, we'll give the image a painterly look using texture brushes and bold brush strokes. We can retain those strong silhouettes and bold shapes with one of my favourite secret weapons: Photoshop's Lasso tool.

We're adding another wild animal, the moose, to the list of adversaries that you may encounter in the game. And we'll focus the illustration around this giant of the forest.

PRO SECRETS

Composition checks
Using tools to figure out the centre and Rule of Thirds. They can help you stage a pleasant composition and avoid silly and amateur mistakes, such as putting the horizon at the middle point of the frame.

1 Give yourself (or client) options

The task was to have the moose by water, near birch trees, and featuring cattails prominently, which they eat. There are many number of ways for staging these elements. I came up with 12 thumbnails to give myself options and generate ideas. I came up with both first- and third-person options, for the creative director and art director to look over.
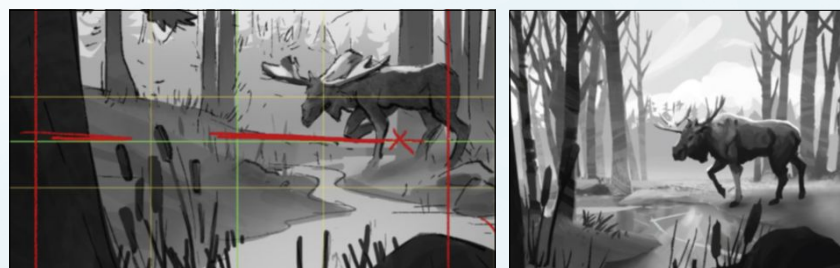
2 Solve as many problems as possible

The chosen thumbnail shows strong fore- and background elements and a good sense of scale for the moose. I refine it, using a composition guide that identifies the centre of the image, and the Rule of Thirds. However, the horizon line is at the centre of the frame, left and right are equally weighted, and the lower left cattails are distracting. So I lower the horizon to the bottom third, adjust the staging of the moose, and add the birch trees.
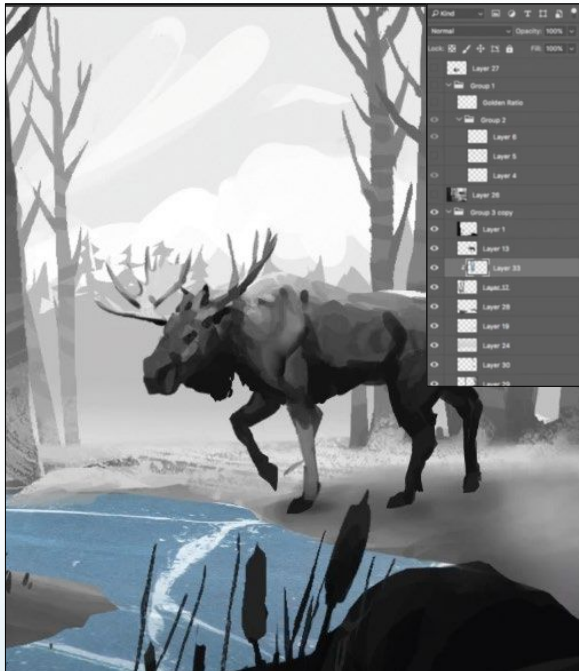
3 Organise your sketch

I spend time developing a well-composed sketch, and split it into the layers. This will help me use the sketch shapes in the final painting. I also take some high-resolution screen grabs from the game and use these screenshots as reference, to both keep the work in the style of The Long Dark and as a base for texture. I use the shapes of the sketch as a clipping mask (right-click> Clipping Mask) for the brush strokes and textures.
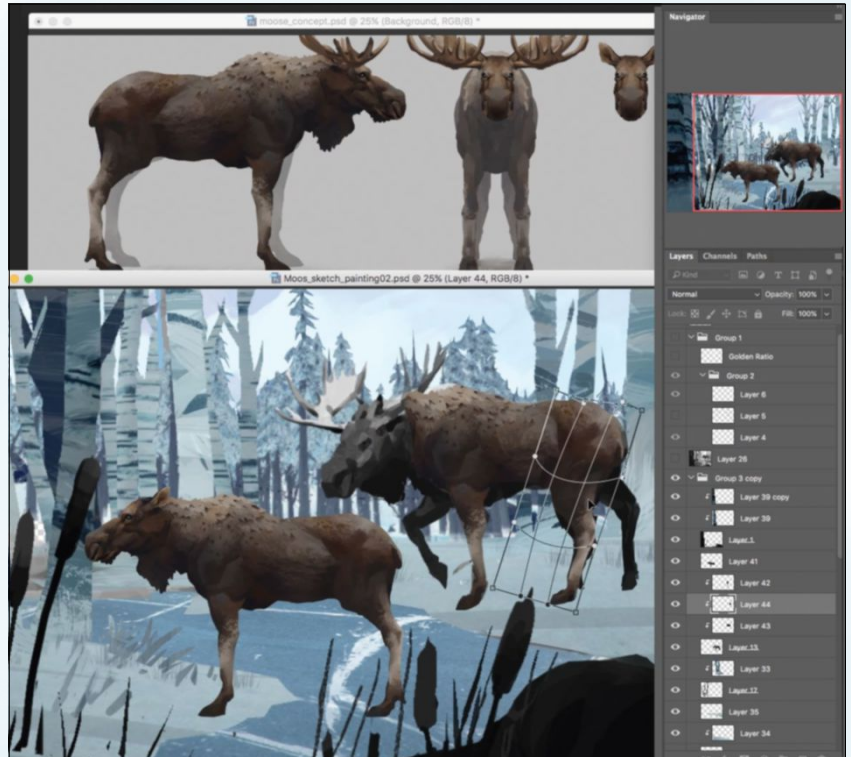
4 Don't be afraid to use the Transform tools

I continue to use the established shapes of the sketch as a clipping mask, starting with the moose. I concepted the original moose design for the game, so I use the established concept to help block in the shape of the animal. I use the Free Transform and Warp tools (Cmd+T, right-click>Warp) as necessary to get it looking mostly correct, and paint over any leftover problems.
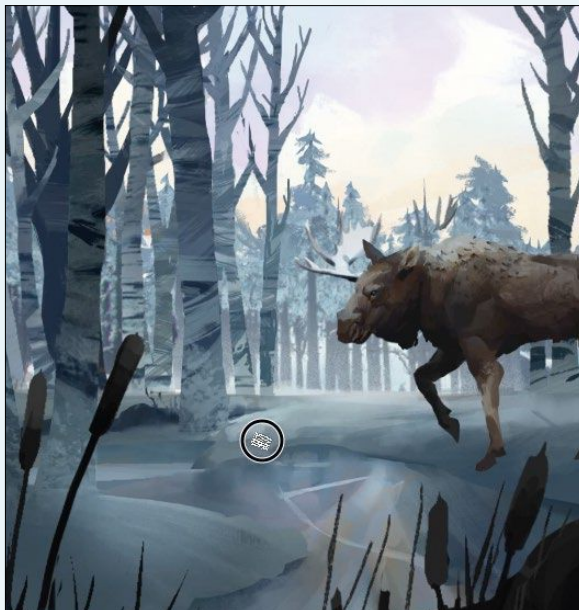
5 Enhance the focal point

I use a Hue and Saturation layer to darken the foreground and the trees to help frame the head of the moose. I then use the clipping mask again and duplicate the Hue and Saturation layer a number of times. Making sure I keep my bigger shape layers separated, I clip them above each individual layer before I flatten them. Then I start painting branches with my brushes.

6 Mask with selection

Another way I mask where I'm painting is by using my layers to create selections. I've painted in more branches and trees at this point. Now I want to start adding some light hitting the top of the trees. I create a selection mask (Cmd+Shift+click layers). ➤➤
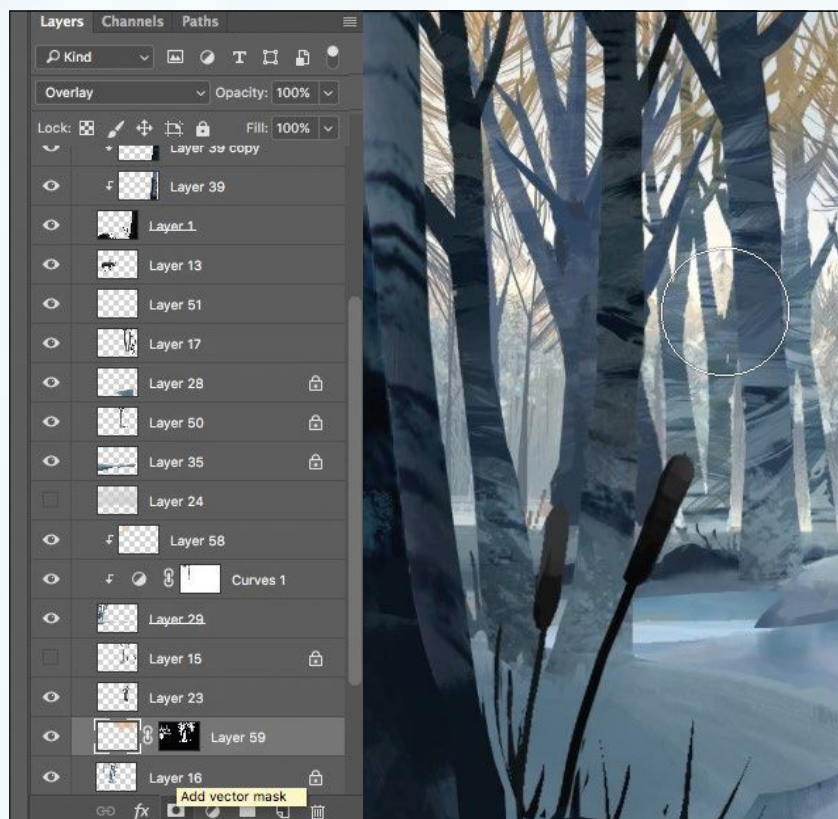
7 Reference the lighting

I then take the selection mask I made in the last step and turn it into a vector mask. I set the layer to Overlay and start adding some warmth of the setting sun to the top of the trees. With an idea for the palette, I spend a good amount of time getting reference and observing how the sun hits the top of the trees at sunset.
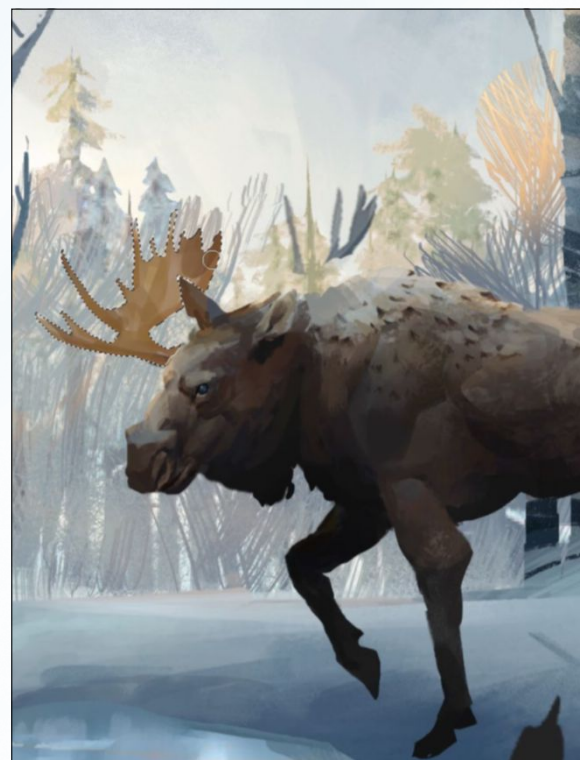
8 Lasso that selection

Now that I have an idea for the lighting, I turn my attention to the moose. I love using the Selection tool (L) to create strong shapes that I can fill with bold brush strokes. I trace over the sketch of the antlers with the Lasso tool and use bold and long brush strokes to hint at a subtle texture of the antlers.

PRO SECRETS

Lasso is my secret weapon

The Lasso Selection tool is one of my favourite Photoshop tools. I use it to draw shapes, and to combine organic round forms with sharp straight ones. Some shortcuts to keep in mind: L (Lasso tool); L+Cmd+lift stylus off tablet (get point-to-point straight lines); L+Shift (add to selection); and L+Alt (subtract from selection).
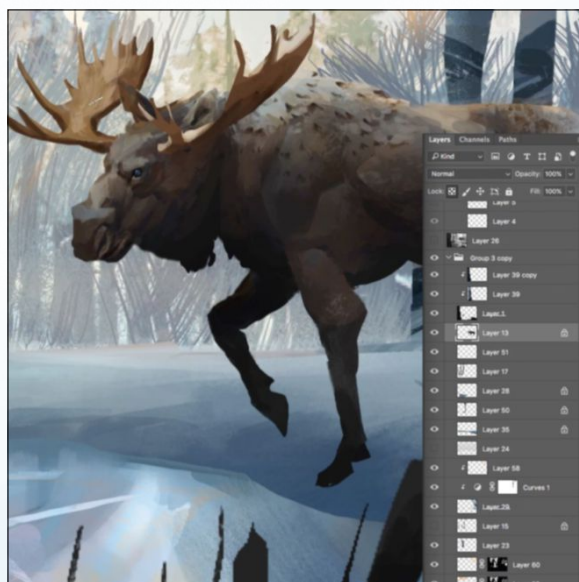
9 Bring on the texture brushes

Once I've blocked in the antlers I lock the transparency on the moose layer (click the checkered box at the top of the layer window) and start defining the form of the antlers and using textured brushes to give the image that subtle painting texture reminiscent of The Long Dark. I also have lots of reference of moose antlers to really understand their shape and how they catch light.
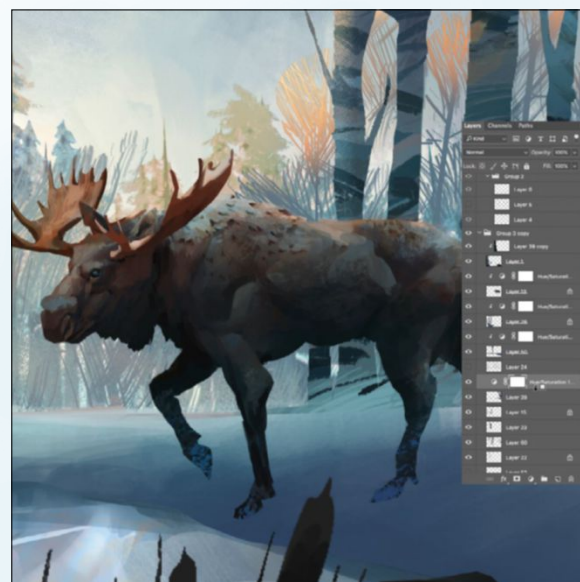
10 Refining the palette

I realise that the image is quite muted. The colours need to be bolder, so I use a Hue and Saturation layer. I increase the Saturation slightly and adjust the Hue, too. I then repeat the process in step 5. I duplicate the Hue and Saturation layer, making sure I keep my bigger shape layers separated. Finally, I clip the Hue and Saturation layers above each individual layer before flattening them.

11 Warmth of the sun

I start adding the warm glow of the sun poking through the trees on the left side of the image, using a Color Dodge layer. I put it behind some of the background tree layer, but not other trees in the foreground. I then add another Color Dodge layer and put it behind all of the trees to get that blown-out look of the sun.
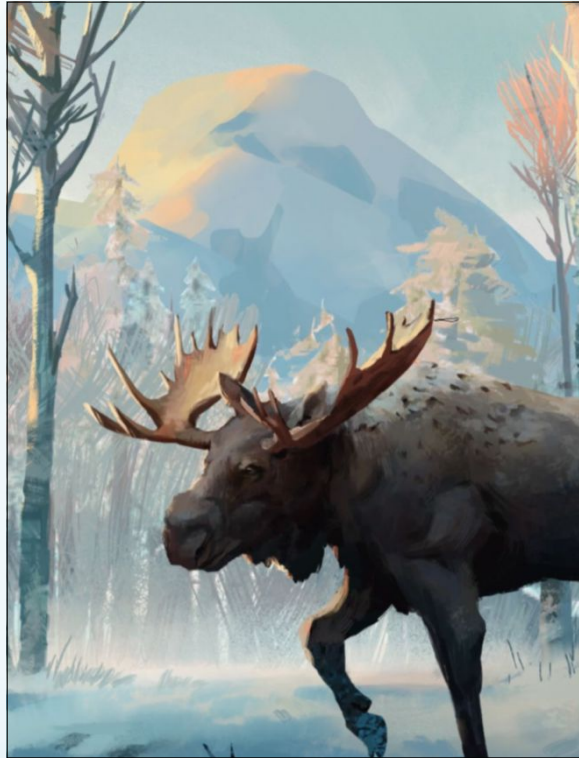
12 Enhance the focal point

I start working in the area around the focal point of the painting, which is the head of the moose. I make sure that the beast's eye looks correct. I also notice that the sky above the moose is introducing too much contrast to the area above the head. My solution is to block in a mountain with a simple Round brush.
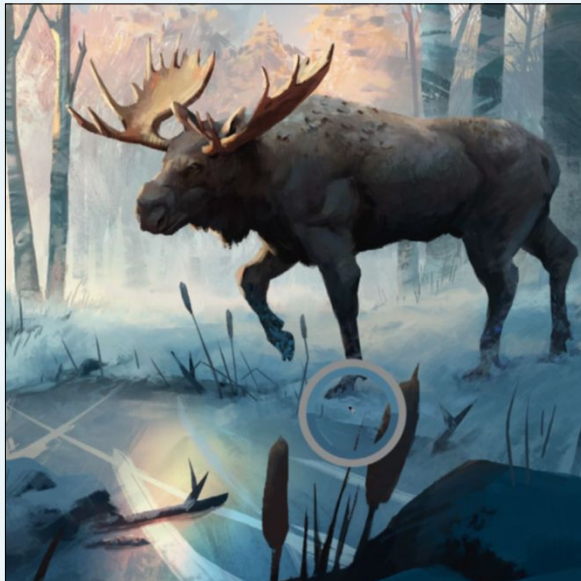
13 Start to add detail

I receive some feedback to exaggerate the size of the antlers, so I increase their size. And them, being mindful not to doodle too much, I start adding details to the scene. If I use texture brushes then I make sure to let the texture do the heavy lifting. This may take several strokes to get right so I Cmd+Z a fair bit until I get the one brush stroke that's perfect.

14 Finalising with fresh eyes

I spend some time away from the painting to see it with a fresh perspective and realise that further details are needed on the moose as the focal point. I also spend time loosening edges with painterly brush work, keeping in mind the style of The Long Dark the entire time. I then send the work to the creative director and art director to get the art approved. Once approved, the painting is complete!

NO.1 FOR DIGITAL ARTISTS
ImagineFX
Reviews

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

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

5 PRODUCTS ON TEST
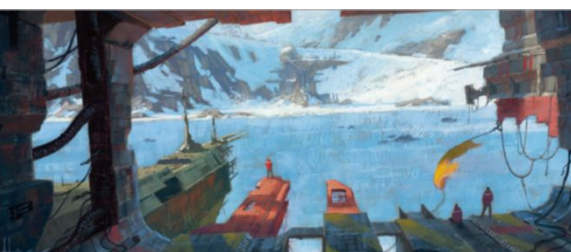
HARDWARE
92 PD2710QC monitor
BenQ's monitor combines colour accuracy with MacBook-friendly connectivity, wrapped up in a handsome design.

TRAINING
95 Gouache Painting
Concept artist Wayne Haag explores this traditional medium, but it's his approaches to depicting light that'll have you hooked.

BOOKS
96 Mythical Beasts
Thirty artists sketch a range of fantasy beasts and reveal their concept approaches. This engaging book is the result.
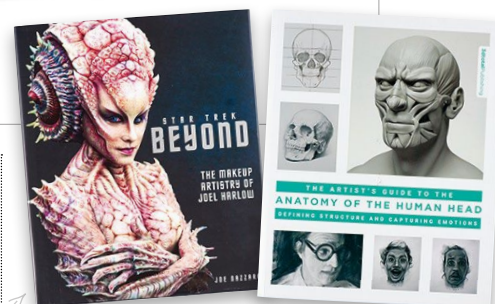
97 Star Trek Beyond: The Makeup Artistry of Joel Harlow
The imaginative looks of over 50 alien characters from the most recent Star Trek film are explored in detail.

97 The Artist's Guide to the Anatomy of the Human Head
Discover the anatomy basics of the human head, and then learn the musculature behind a multitude of facial expressions.

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VISION ON BenQ's latest semi-pro LCD panel combines colour accuracy with MacBook-friendly USB Type-C connectivity

Price £599 **Company** BenQ **Web** www.benq.com

High-quality IPS LCD panel? Check. Generous 27-inch proportions? All present and accounted for. Expansive 2,560x1,440 native resolution? Affirmative. One hundred per cent sRGB colour space support? You got it.

From the get-go, then, BenQ's new PD2710QC is an appealing LCD panel packed with features to please graphics professionals. But then there are plenty of other similarly equipped monitors to choose from. Happily,

however, the PD2710QC has one or two additional tricks up its sleek, minimalist sleeves.

For starters, it packs a USB Type-C dock with full support for DisplayPort alternate mode plus charging. The upshot, importantly, is that you can connect this monitor to a laptop computer via a single USB Type-C cable and both drive the screen at full native resolution and charge the laptop at the same time. You can also connect and use peripherals via the monitor's multi-port USB hub.

The BenQ PD2710QC's IPS panel makes for accurate colour control.

USB Type-C is popping up on all manner of portable computers, of course. But the PD2710QC's capabilities will be of particular appeal to owners of Apple's 12-inch MacBook system. That laptop has but a single USB Type-C port for everything: video out, charging, attaching peripherals, the works. So the PD2710QC's solves all your MacBook connectivity problems in one fell swoop.

As for anyone who isn't planning to make use of the fancy new USB Type-C interface, the PD2710QC also sports a pair of conventional Displayport sockets, a Mini DisplayPort input and an HDMI port. It's also a very simple screen to set up thanks to the full range of tilt, height, rotate and swivel adjustments, and a particularly user-friendly on-screen menu.

It's no slouch in the looks department, too, thanks to a slim-bezel minimalist design and high-quality construction. All of which just

Image below: Trent Kaniuga

The 27-inch screen comes with an anti-glare, matte finish that will help to reduce distracting reflections.

BenQ's latest LCD monitor boasts a slick, slim-bezel design with a base unit that incorporates a range of inputs.

You can adjust the height and angle of the monitor, but the base design means there there's no swivel option available.

BenQ's PD2710QC is factory calibrated and Technicolor Color Certified to ensure great out-of-the-box performance.

leaves the not-so-minor matter of image quality. Out of the box and without any calibration the PD2710QC is distinctly usable, with nearly perfect contrast, little to no evidence of colour compression together with all the usual benefits of an IPS panel, which include superb viewing angles, decent response and vibrant colours.

It's even better after calibration and achieves very low deltas to target values in terms of gamma, colour space and colour temperature. All of which means the PD2710QC makes for an extremely appealing overall LCD panel package.

The downsides are two-fold. First, this isn't a truly high-end professional

The display base includes a USB hub, video out and even an option for ethernet network connectivity.

> ## It's no slouch in the looks department, thanks to a slim-bezel minimalist design and high-quality construction

display. Its colours are eight-bit per channel, not 10-bit per channel, and it doesn't fully support the latest super-sized colour spaces. And yet at £600 it's a serious investment, even if that's broadly in line with similar semi professional-grade monitors.

For sure, you can get more screen inches and pixels to work with for the same money if you're willing to give up further colour accuracy. But if you're after a production-quality display with top-notch connectivity, the new PD2710QC is well worth a look.

Behind the panel are the four video input options, along with a headphone jack for audio out.

DETAILS

Features
- 27-inch IPS LCD panel
- 2,560x1,440 native resolution
- 100 per cent sRGB colour coverage
- 1,000:1 contrast
- Eight-bit per channel colour
- Two DisplayPorts, one Mini DisplayPort, one HDMI video connectivity
- USB Type-C with DisplayPort alternate mode
- USB hub
- Tilt, height, rotate and swivel stand
- Low blue-light mode

System Requirements
PC: DisplayPort, HDMI or USB Type-C connectivity
Mac: DisplayPort, HDMI or USB Type-C connectivity

Rating
★★★★☆

ProLite X4071UHSU-B1
Web www.liyama.com
Price £550

Image: Anna Hollinrake

Not only is Iiyama's 40-inch beast physically huge, it also offers a massive 3,840x2,160 native resolution. That's four times the resolution of a 1080p display and over double the resolution of BenQ's PD2710QC. This means the monitor's great for multi-tasking and also for viewing large images pixel-for-pixel. However, its VA panel type means this LG screen can't come close to the BenQ's accuracy. So it's not suitable for colour proofing.

ProArt PA329Q
Web www.asus.com
Price £1,275

At nearly double the price of the BenQ, this Asus panel isn't a direct competitor. But it does put the PD2710QC's capabilities into context. The Asus's first advantage is its full UHD 3,840x2,160 pixel grid. It also goes beyond the BenQ's 100 per cent coverage of the sRGB colour space and adds 99.5 per cent coverage of the Adobe RGB space, too. And with a quantum dot-enhanced backlight, the ProArt PA329Q boasts enough visual pop to make the BenQ look downright dingy.
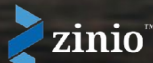
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Wayne Haag begins his light explorations by laying down a few value studies to find his preferred scheme.

As the painting develops, Wayne's command of light and colour leads to a composition that feels coherent and unified.

Gouache Painting

MAKING LIGHT WORK Concept artist and illustrator Wayne Haag offers a deceptively simple guide to using light in a whole new way

Publisher Wayne Haag **Price** $15 **Format** Download **Web** www.gumroad.com/l/VxSHo

They say you should never judge a book by its cover; perhaps the same is true for art tutorials and their titles. While Wayne Haag's two-hour painting guide offers some basics on how to use gouache, its real value lies in how Wayne approaches the topic of light: a fundamental that applies to every artist, whether you're using gouache, oils or an iPad. And Wayne's knowledge is such that every artist could gain something from watching this video.

Wayne kicks off with a light-mapping exercise, using monochrome markers to quickly lay down different approaches to value distribution on different print-outs of his initial sketch. He also introduces the proposition that, at least in artistic terms, there are five types of light – and that you should always be aware of which type you're painting at any given moment.

These principles guide Wayne as he starts laying down paint, methodically moving from area to area. He's always thinking about the colour temperature of each element, based on its own properties and those of the light striking it. This all seems pretty straightforward as he continues through the painting – yet you only see how clever he's been when he presents a monochrome scan of the painting to the camera. It's then you realise that his colour selection within each object, no matter how varied, gives that object a broadly consistent tonal value throughout. This makes the overall composition easier to read; it just feels intuitively 'right'.

Don't let Wayne's laid-back delivery fool you: there's some serious wisdom available here, with basic principles that could drive your painting – in any media – into a fruitful new direction for years to come.

SAMPLE VIDEO

DETAILS

Topics covered
- Light mapping
- Types of light
- Gouache materials
- Painting the background
- Painting the foreground
- Painting details

Length
134 minutes

Rating
★★★★★

ARTIST PROFILE
WAYNE HAAG

After completing a BA in photography at RMIT, Melbourne, Wayne started his professional art career at Digital Domain in the mid-1990s, matte-painting on The Fifth Element and Red Corner. He went on to matte-paint for the much-loved TV series Farscape and the first two Lord of the Rings films; and has also created concept art for films including Alien Covenant and The Wolverine He also teaches at Sydney's Production Art Department school.
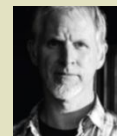
www.artstation.com/ankaris
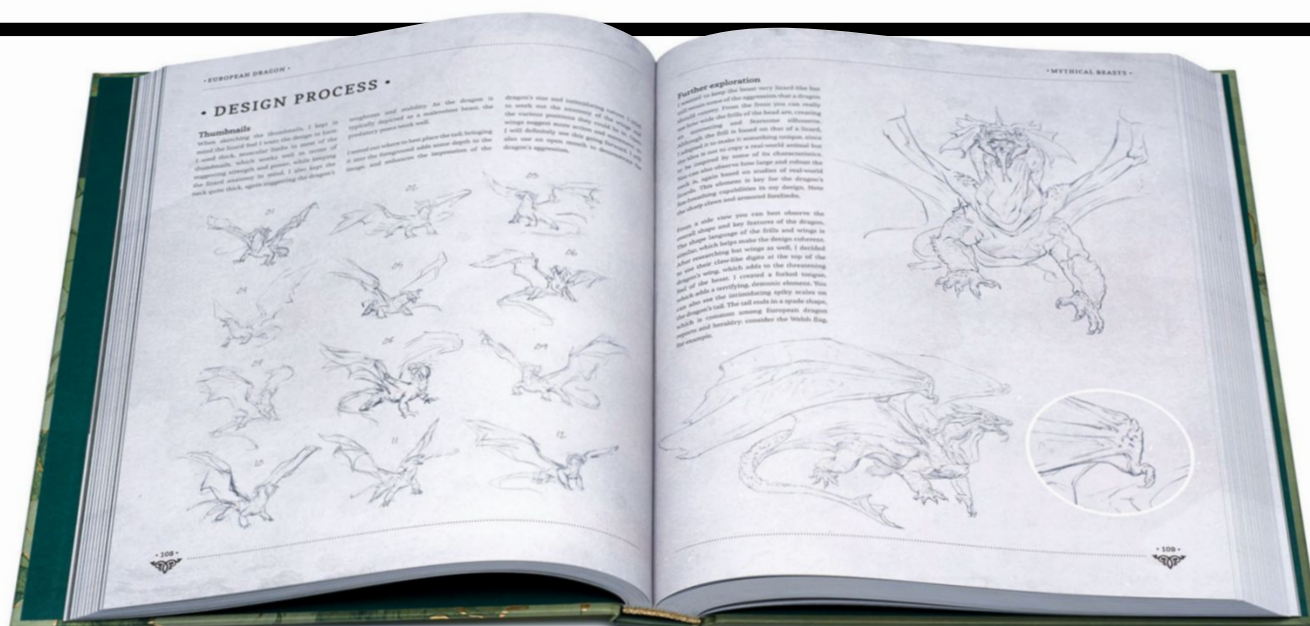
Mythical Beasts

CREATURE FEATURE Thirty artists were challenged to depict a different mythical creature. This book charts their creative processes
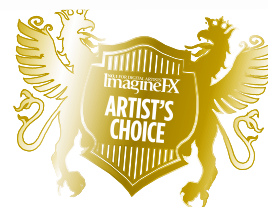
Editors The 3dtotal Publishing team **Publisher** 3dtotal Publishing **Price** £30 **Web** www.3dtotalpublishing.com

Mythical Beasts: An Artist's Field Guide to Designing Fantasy Creatures offers an unusual case of teaching by example. But it works brilliantly.

Thirty professional artists, including Sean Andrew Murray, Bobby Rebholz and Kiri Østergaard Leonard, have each been given a different mythical beast to investigate, dissect and design. These range from the well-known, such as the yeti, phoenix, unicorn and kraken, to the more obscure, including the leshy, a Slavic woodland spirit; the Jörmungandr, a Norse serpent monster; and the nue, a Japanese creature with the face of a monkey, the body of a racoon dog and the tail of a snake.

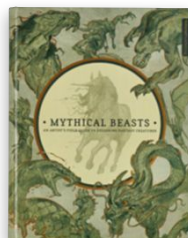But this isn't just a collection of finished work. Crucially, each artist

gets eight pages to show and explain their research, concepts and initial sketches, with the final two pages devoted to the completed design, which is coloured. So the effect of perusing this large, hardback, matte-printed book is less like visiting a gallery and more like looking over a number of artists' shoulders from start to finish.

> ❝ **Everything included is geared towards helping fellow artists develop their skills** ❞

Brynn Metheney created different designs of the nue. This breed prefers to live in mountainous areas.

The reason this works so well is that the entries are structured in a rigorous way, making them easy to follow, and compare and contrast with what others have done. So each artist begins with Field Notes, which describe the real-world animals, plants, patterns, textures and anatomy that have informed their mythical designs. Next comes Design Process, where they explain the evolution of their concept, from thumbnails to working on different poses. That's followed by a Subspecies section, which demonstrates how their basic design can be adjusted and expanded up to develop something related but new. Finally, we see the completed design,

Here's Tomek Larek's take on the harpy, which is inspired in part by Venetian carnival masks.

accompanied by a black-and-white line drawing that shows how it was constructed.

There's absolutely no ego on show here: everything that's been included is geared towards helping fellow artists develop their skills. So as you leaf through these well-crafted pages, you shouldn't fail to find useful tips and inspiration to create mythical creature designs of your own.

RATING ★★★★★

Star Trek Beyond: The Makeup Artistry of Joel Harlow

CREATURE FEATURE Make first contact with the aliens from Star Trek Beyond with this look at how Joel Harlow and his team brought them to life

Author Joe Nazzaro **Publisher** Titan Books **Price** £30 **Web** www.titanbooks.com

Seeking out new life has always been at the heart of Star Trek. In this book Star Trek Beyond director Justin Lin explains he wanted to go further and create more than 50 extraterrestrials in honour of the series' half centenary.

The bulk of the book is dedicated to how each Star Trek Beyond alien was

Close-up of an actor in full makeup for the character J-9 (named after Jeanine, the person playing her in Star Trek Beyond).

made, and it's the variety of characters on display that keeps these pages fresh. Even the apparently pedestrian creations like Orion girl are accompanied with interesting in-universe and filmmaking notes.

Most of the characters are accompanied by concept art, which makes it fun to see how the designs evolved. There could have been some more practical insight into how each alien was made as the book leans more towards explaining concepts, but both character designers and makeup artists are sure to find the contents enlightening.

RATING ★★★★☆

The Artist's Guide to the Anatomy of the Human Head: Defining Structure and Capturing Emotions

FACE FACTS Discover how the muscles of the head and face combine to portray human emotions, and how an artist can emulate them

Editor Debbie Cording **Publisher** 3dtotal Publishing **Price** £22 **Web** www.3dtotalpublishing.com

The first thing you notice about this book is that it's mostly images. But if you think it's a lightweight advice guide, think again.

Laser-focused on its subject, this book starts by subjecting you to medical textbook-levels of information concerning the skeletal and muscular structures of the head. Then comes a
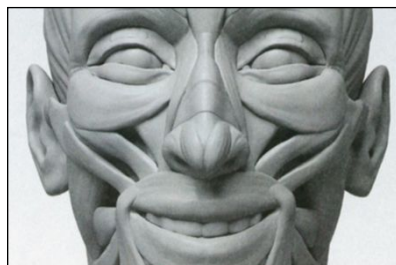
Using 3D models, six universal expressions including happiness and disgust are broken down in terms of what muscles are used to create them.

detailed explanation of how muscles stretch and combine to form common facial features like happiness, sadness and disgust, with clear 3D diagrams helping to show what's going on.

The focus then turns to the planes of the head, with the aim of giving you the tools to construct faces. We'd have liked some element of how to draw faces, but overall, this book does a good job of explaining how anatomy creates our expressions, and makes a complex subject simple without ever over-simplifying.

RATING ★★★★☆

TIME TO STEP OFF THAT TREADMILL

With so many demands from work, home and family, there never seem to be enough hours in the day for you. Why not press pause once in a while, curl up with your favourite magazine and put a little oasis of 'you' in your day?

(f) (twitter)

PRESS PAUSE
ENJOY A MAGAZINE MOMENT

To find out more about Press Pause visit:

pauseyourday.co.uk

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

Bonnie Helen Hawkins

LOCATION: England **MEDIA:** Pencils, coloured pencils, watercolour, ink, pastel, gold leaf, oils **WEB:** www.bonniehelenhawkins.com

Bonnie only started drawing a few years ago, after recovering from an illness. "Every so often we all wish we could start life all over again. That happened to me," she says. "I picked up a pencil and went back to the beginning."

1 THE DREAM THIEF
"Part of an ongoing personal project in which I'm trying to illustrate the nature of dreams. The birds are symbols of freedom. I love working in pencil – it can be both graceful and dramatic."

2 THE GIFT
"This is a character design for a new project. I used coloured pencil, watercolour, gold ink and graphite."

3 AS DREAMS TAKE FLIGHT
"I'm often inspired by folklore, and this is part of my personal fantasy project where people and animals change places and are symbols for thoughts and feelings."

Olivia Rose

LOCATION: England **MEDIA:** Copic/Pro markers, pencils, ink **WEB:** www.lalasdreambox.com

"I mainly specialise in drawing females with slightly gloomy appearances," says Olivia, whose striking illustrations often feature pretty floral elements and an eerie twist.

1 WISTERIA
"There wasn't a solid idea for this piece. I started out drawing the face and just kind of doodled the rest out. Flowers are probably my favourite thing to draw, so filling a page with them was a dream come true."

2 SOLITUDE
"A woman of the sea; someone who holds answers to the many questions that humans may have. I very rarely go abstract with my pieces, but for this piece I wanted a dream-like feel."
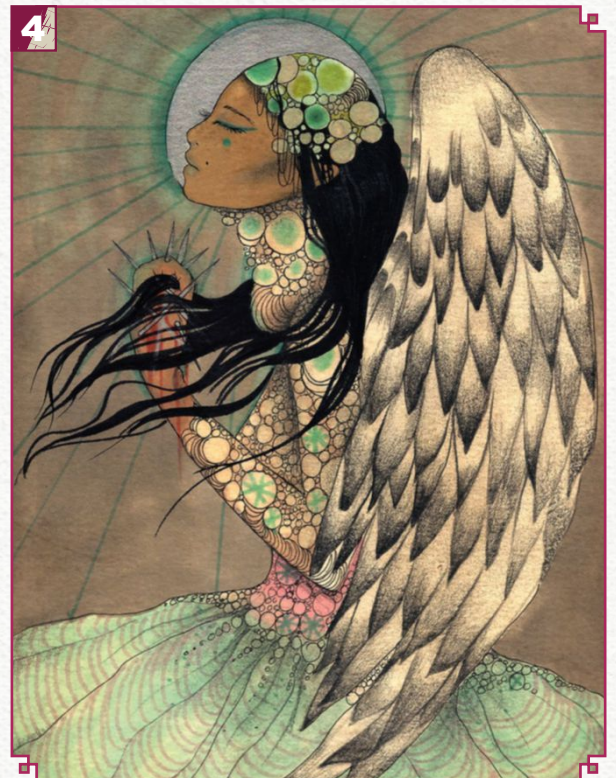
3 THE FORTUNE TELLER
"This is part of a series of fortune tellers I'm working on. Because of the way I draw these, each one comes out completely different, with a unique shape and feel."

4 THE BLUE ANGEL
"My aim was to create a visual representation of pain and loss. Initially, I wasn't sure where I was going, but I knew I wanted to create another angel to add to my series."

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**

Pencil *Watercolour*

CREATE GLAZES WITH WATERCOLOURS

TRACY LEWIS shares her watercolour glazing techniques for creating translucent and luminous paintings with a limited colour palette

For this workshop, I'll be taking you step by step through one of my paintings – from concept sketch to sharing my watercolour layering techniques, as well as palette choices and tips on honing your skills and finding your own voice in watercolour. Working with a fairly limited palette of mostly colours that stain into the paper enables me to keep my paintings clean and luminous through many glazes of colour.

Because watercolour is transparent, and I'm working with staining colours, I want to get everything planned out before I start painting. The first step is to get the drawing laid out as light as possible so that the pencil marks won't show through in the finished painting.

MIXING COLOURS ON THE PAPER

Then I begin working wet-into-wet in sections, by wetting the paper first and dropping in colours to let them mix on the paper. After the first layer is dry, I start building up layers of wet pigment on dry paper, adding more details and darkening up the background in sections.

People often say that watercolour is a difficult medium, but it just takes practice and some idea of the process. Letting the paper dry completely in between layers helps to keep the painting from becoming overworked and muddy.

This triad approach also helps me to retain a cohesive body of work, no matter what the subject matter. In working with galleries and in trying to get your work to be instantly recognised, a consistent palette and

Mess and clutter – begone! Tracy likes to maintain a tidy workspace as she paints her watercolour art.

skill set can help you stand out in a crowd. Creating a body of work that reflects your own vision is an ongoing work in progress. Think about all of the things you love, or what themes you're repeatedly drawn to. Keeping a physical or online mood board of the images you love or recurring themes you're interested in will help you put together a vision of what is unique to you.

For me, some of these elements have been my colour palette, nature,

Art Nouveau, mythology and fairy tales, to name a few. Putting all of these elements together, along with daily practice, has helped me to find my own voice in my paintings and to create a cohesive body of work.

Tracy teaches watercolour classes at her studio in northern California, and travel workshops around the world. She also exhibits her work in several galleries in the US and abroad. You can see her art at www.tracylewisart.com.

Traditional Artist Workshop

1 *Planning it out*

I make a quick concept sketch and makes some notes about the painting. These are really rough, just to quickly get the ideas down on paper. I keep in mind the arched shape of the antique frame I plan to use, although I'll be painting the image to fill a rectangle for prints.

2 *Gathering reference materials*

I usually work from a combination of my own photos and images I find online. Pinterest is wonderful for saving and organising reference photos and inspiration. I'm pretty low-tech when it comes to collaging my images: I print them out and play with the composition until I'm happy with it. Here's my home-made reference source for my painting Omniscient – it did the job!
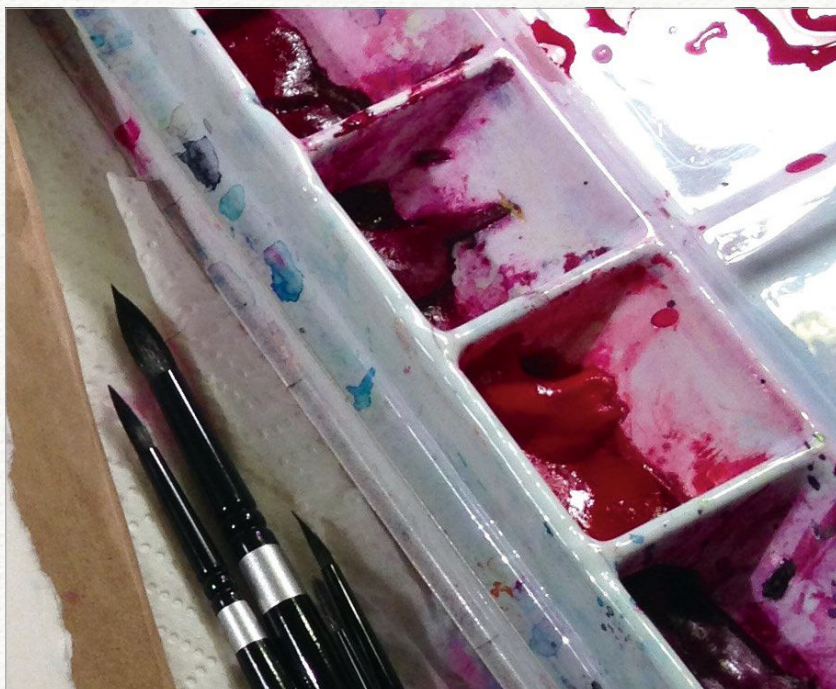
3 *Working with a limited watercolour palette*

Most all of my paintings are primarily made up of three colours - Quinachridone pink, Phthalocyanine blue (green shade) and Azo yellow. For this painting, I've also used Daniel Smith's Napthimide maroon and Phthalo turquoise mixed to make a black/grey for the nose and final details. Mixing a chromatic black gives me the option to make it cooler or warmer, as required.

4 *Other materials*

I use Arches 300lb Hot Press paper because I don't need to stretch it, and the hot press finish is wonderful for details. And these Kolinsky Sable and Synthetic/Squirrel blends, pictured here, are my favourite brushes. Both hold lots of water and have wonderful points. Finally, a 0.5 mechanical pencil with an HB lead and a rubber kneaded eraser are a must!

TOOL TIP
WATER SOURCES
Always have two large containers of water for painting. One to clean your brushes, and one for clean water.

5 *Get the drawing down*
I try to keep the pencil marks as light as possible on most of the piece, especially in the areas where I intend to keep the painting light. In some areas, like the details on the trees, I plan on having the graphite show in the finished painting so I can leave it a little darker.

6 *Why use a limited palette?*
I love this triad of pink, blue and yellow because I can mix almost any other colour that I need while keeping my palette cohesive. To illustrate, I've created this colour wheel using just this triad. These three are also pretty staining, which enables me to do a lot of glazing without the layers lifting up and becoming muddy.
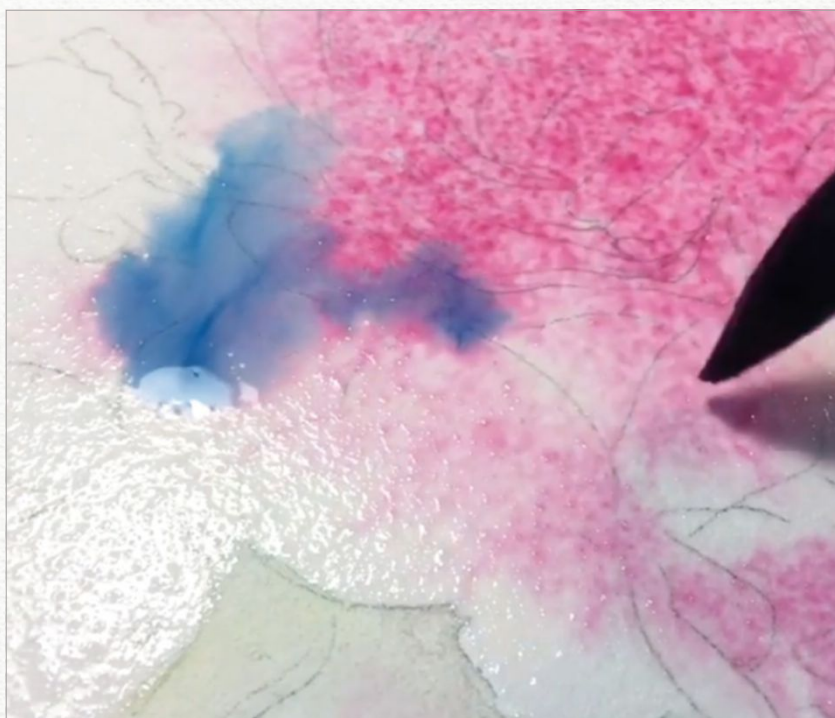
7 *Working wet-into-wet*
I start glazing by working wet-into-wet in sections. I saturating the surface with water and drop each colour in to mix on the paper. I use very little pigment on the face to keep some of it white and build up in layers. For the background, I'm dropping in a little heavier pigment and lifting out of focus shapes. ➤➤

8 Lifting colour

To create an out-of-focus effect in the background, you can lift out soft circles with a damp brush into the drying pigment. You'll want it to be still wet, but not shiny wet. This takes a little practice to get the desired effect, so don't be discouraged if it doesn't work the first time.


9 Wet on dry

The following glazes are achieved with a wet brush on dry paper. This gives me more control to start building up the details and begin adding some depth. I start out light and create a kind of roadmap of colour and detail. As I go along, each layer becomes more intensely coloured as I use less water and more pigment.

SUPPLIES TIP

USE QUALITY MATERIALS
Buy the best materials you can afford. You'll find they last longer and actually make your work easier.
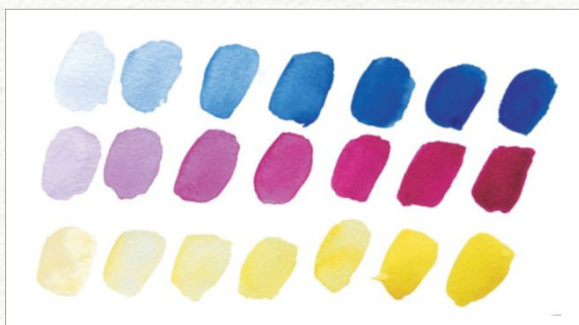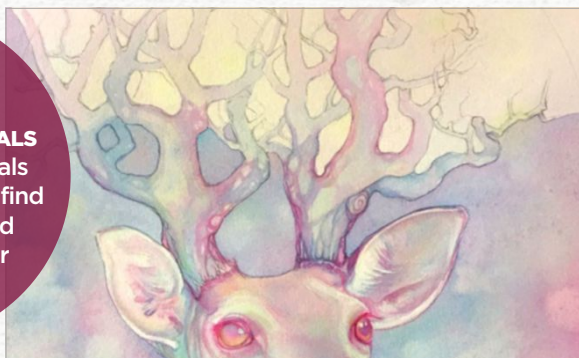
ARTIST INSIGHT

SWITCHING BRUSHES
Use the right size brush for the job. If you're painting with a small brush in a large area, you're working too hard, and can cause your painting to look overworked as well.

10 Water to pigment ratio

Having the right ratio of water to pigment is something that takes practice. Using the paper and clean water as your white, then add more pigment and less water in each step. Practising this can help you to create thin transparent layers or heavier applications of saturated colour when needed, without overworking or muddying your painting.

11 Introducing other colours

I work my way through most of this painting using my pink, blue and yellow triad until the final few layers. Then I add the black mixture to the nose and a little in the lower part of the background.

12 Adding and subtracting

After I've created my roadmap in colour, I can then use my eraser to remove any unwanted pencil lines. On the other hand, I also go back in with the pencil to create delicate lines in the trees and do some outlining around the outside edges of the trees and the deer.

13 Finishing up and reviewing my progress

When I think I'm just about finished, I prop it up and look at it from a distance, or take a photo with my phone. This helps me to see the piece as a whole rather than looking at all of the details, and quickly enables me to see if there's anything that needs to be adjusted.

14 A bit about framing

I often use antique and vintage frames to add another layer of interest to my finished paintings. Due to their odd shapes and sizes, I choose the frame before I draw out my image. I love shopping at flea markets and antique shops for them. They sometimes require repairs or repainting, but that's a process I enjoy.

15 Practice, practice, practice

Putting in the time to do studies, sketching and working from life really pays off. I try to fit in a few little paintings and lots of sketching in between larger projects. Playing with watercolour techniques alone is fun and meditative. It's a great way to improve your skills and try new things.

Core skills: Part 2
PLEIN AIR: SKETCH MOVING OBJECTS

CHRISTOPHER MOELLER continues his series on plein air painting by explaining what you can do when elements in your scene start to change position…

Photography's greatest gift to the artist is that it freezes motion – perfect for reference. So when I started painting en plein air, I had to contend with the fact that reality doesn't hold still. The sun moves across the sky, dragging every shadow around with it. It ducks behind clouds. It changes colour.

And that's not all. People and animals come and go. Trees move.

Waves roll in and roll out. Boats swing around as the wind shifts.

You don't realise how fluid reality is until you try to paint it. Sometimes the movement is slight, and it's easy to adjust your drawing or painting to match. Other times, say when you're trying to capture someone walking along eating an ice cream cone, you have seconds to capture the entire thing: posture, clothing, hair, lighting, dripping ice cream… It's

enough to make anyone hyperventilate. So take a deep breath. Everything is going to change while you work, yes, but the answer isn't to rush to get it all in before that happens. You can't win that battle. Instead, start by looking…

ARTIST INSIGHT

HOW TO PAINT A LIVING WORLD
The world isn't a photograph. It moves and changes all the time. Keeping up requires observation combined with a deep visual vocabulary.


1 Think of your eyes as your camera

Take a "snapshot" with your eyes, trying to pull in as much information as possible: the angle of her shoulders, the hunch of his back, the way the water catches the light. Calm down, and get as much information in as you can in the moments you have.
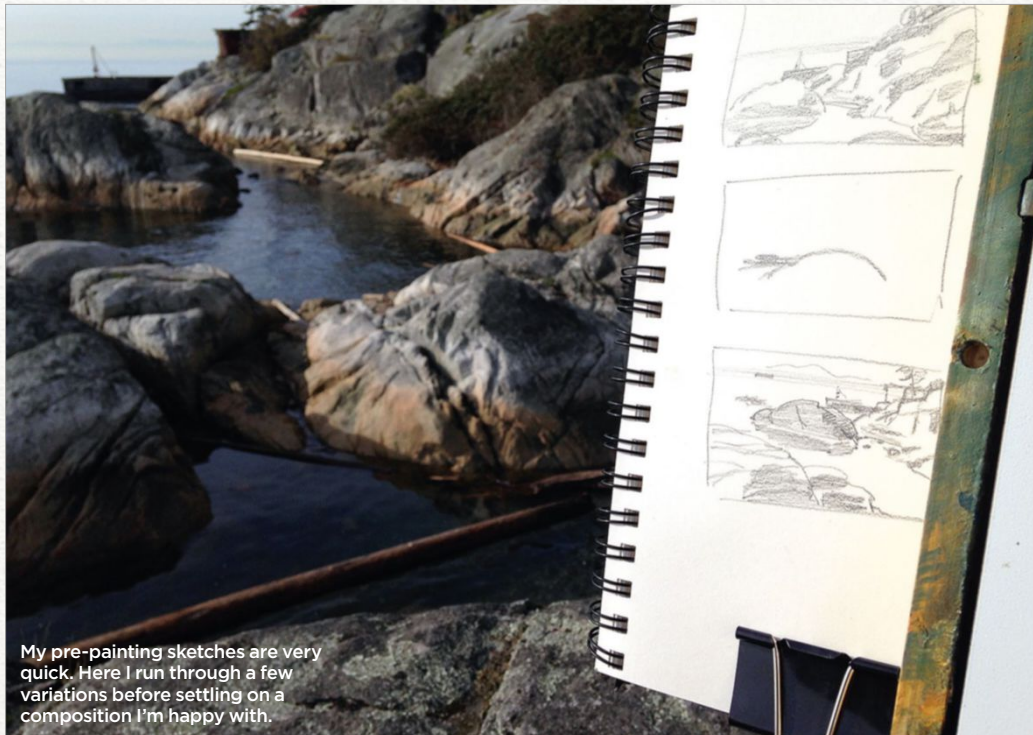
My pre-painting sketches are very quick. Here I run through a few variations before settling on a composition I'm happy with.

2 *Organise what you see*
Sketching is how artists take notes. So part of your opening snapshot should include a sketch. Make some choices about how to organise what you see into an artistic composition. When things change and you get distracted, your sketch will help bring you back to your idea.

3 *Draw what you see*
The beauty of working from life versus a photo is that life offers perfect information. The colours are 100 per cent accurate. The resolution is infinite. Now is the time to give your close observation muscles a workout. Really work to see what's there, as we so rarely do. ➤➤
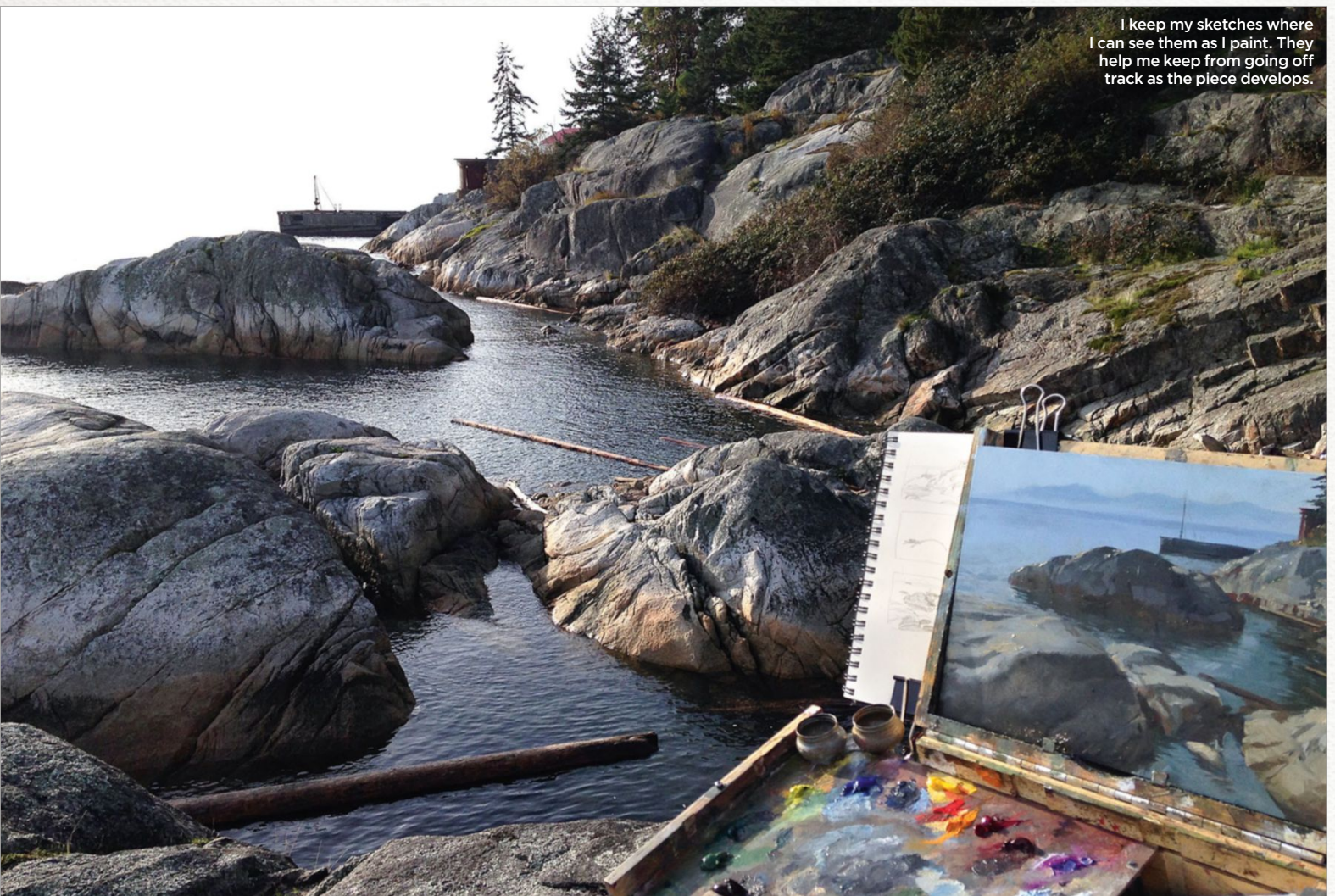
I keep my sketches where I can see them as I paint. They help me keep from going off track as the piece develops.

4 *Draw what you know*

Because you only have a moment to capture things that are moving and changing, you need a broad visual understanding to fill in the blanks. There's no shortcut to developing this, just lots and lots of drawing. Take notes with your eyes, then fill in the gaps with your understanding.

Because morning and evening light changes so quickly, I have just 15-20 minutes to catch the light on this harbour scene. Then it all becomes just a memory.
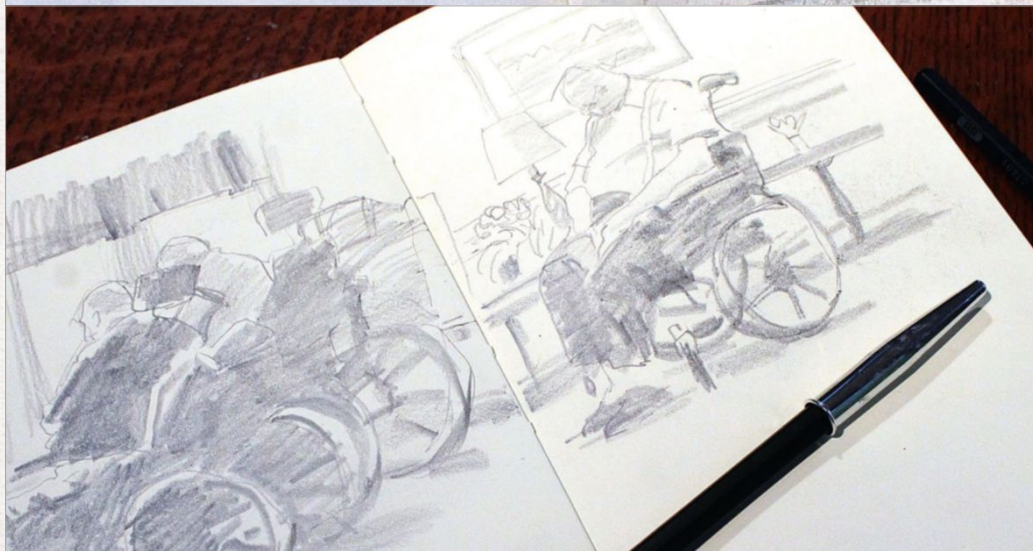
Coffee shops and retirement homes are prime sketching locations. People tend to stay still.

5 Lots and lots of drawing

Next time, I'll get into what sort of gear you need to begin your plein air adventure, but here's tool number one: a sketchbook. Keep one on you at all times. Pull it out instead of your mobile phone when you're at the doctor's office or coffee shop. Deepen your visual understanding.

First Impressions

✳ *Oliver Frey* ✳

A square-jawed comic hero left a huge impression on this illustrator...

**Where did you grow up and how has this influenced your art?**
I was born in Switzerland and growing up there, the UK and Italy gave me an international outlook on life and art, with Britain having the strongest influence.

What, outside of art, has most influenced your artwork through the years?
My love of films and two years at the London School of Film Technique (1969-70) shaped my need to create motion and drama in my pictures – but film is art, too…

You're a child, and you see a painting or drawing that changes everything… where are you and what are you looking at, and what effect did it have?
I've just arrived in London as an eight-year-old in late 1956, and I'm absolutely blown away by world
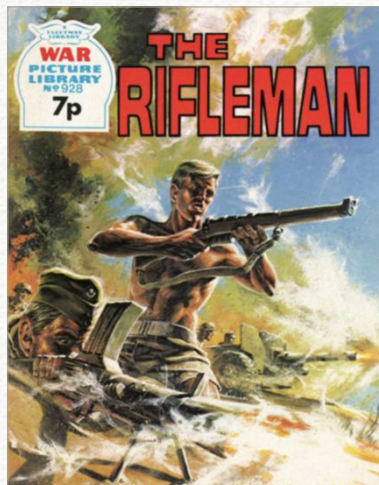
HEROICS
"My earliest pro work was painting war scenes (in acrylics) for Fleetway. This was the early 1970s."

of Dan Dare (and his fellow picture-strip heroes) in Eagle comic. And I never look back.

Tell us about your first paid commission. Does it stand as a representation of your talent?
Arguably my first professional work was a 64-page Fleetway War Picture Library picture-strip story together with a cover in 1969. In a rather crude way it embodied what I still strive for in my art.

What's the last piece that you finished, and how do the two commissions differ?
One of my latest pieces is the packaging art for PLANET GOLF a new C64 game by Antonio Savona. It shows my increasing use of the computer and Photoshop to achieve what I want; something that's happened over the past 20 years.

Is making a living as an artist all you thought it would be?
In 1969 my aim was to earn extra

ACTION
"Cover art for Crash magazine issue 11 in 1984, one of hundreds I painted for Newsfield Publications. I used inks with an airbrush and brushes."

SPACE
"An underpainting that was finished digitally, for Planet Golf, published by Psytronik Software."

money while studying. It worked, and I've managed to make a comfortable, steady living out of being an illustrator ever since. If you're prepared to work hard and be versatile to meet your clients' needs it's an exciting profession to be in. It has lived up to my expectations, and kept the inner child intact.

What advice would you give to your younger self to aid you on the way?
As a commercial illustrator never forget that, whatever your private opinion, you're there to serve your client – not the other way round. Doing the best for them brings the best out of you.

> ❝ **Illustration is exciting and has kept my inner child intact** ❞

Is your art evolving? What's the most recent experiment that you've made?
At 69 it's a stretch to say my work is evolving, but I have bought myself a Wacom Cintiq 22HD pen display that I need to get to grips with.

Can you describe the place where you usually create your art?
A cluttered, sprawling top-floor work area full of reference books, Macs, scanners, printers that I share with my partner who writes, edits and does layout work.

Do you have an art tool that you can't live without?
I'd be dead in the water without my pencil (HB), which I use to doodle, sketch and draw everything I create!

From Fleetway War Picture Library comics and the Trigan Empire to cover art on best-selling 1980s video game magazines such as Crash and Zzap!64, generations of teenagers have fallen under the spell of Oliver Frey's work. Check out his distinctive art at http://oliverfreyart.com.

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